Listing My Life Away

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Preface

Listing My Life Away records many of the interactions I have had with popular music throughout my life. It ends with various lists including my favorite songs and shorter lists as mentioned in the Table of Contents. My only goal is to entertain the reader. I expect some readers to despise my taste, others to discover hidden gems, many to catch a few of the oblique references, and a few to catch many of these references. Some readers might wish to analyze my top song list and provide songs that they think I missed. Let me know, and maybe you'll be acknowledged in a second edition!

I once gave a math lecture to people I didn’t know, and the audience had the chance to provide written comments. It delighted me when someone wrote how great it was to hear a mathematician with a sense of humor. I hope readers of Listing My Life Away will second that emotion.

For full effect, the reader should have access to the internet. When you see a reference you don’t know, google it. When you see a link, click it. When the link is a song, play it. I have highlighted song titles in blue, in honor of Dylan’s Tangled Up in Blue.

I wish I had videos of the people who appear in this tale, but I’m sad to say I’m on my way and won’t be back for many a day, and no such videos will ever exist. A student once asked me what I was doing outside of teaching. I happened to have with me a print-out of a draft of a (research math) book I was writing, which I showed her. She responded “I think I’ll wait for the movie”. For this paean to lists to become a movie is equally unimaginable, but I’ve tried to make it as entertaining as possible. One of my former students wasn’t worried how I referred to him in this story, but was rather more concerned who would play him in the movie version.

Perhaps my stories here suffer from some confabulation and my efforts to corroborate them provide evidence of the Mandela effect. I sincerely believe however that every story here happened as I describe it. On the other hand, consider the game of telephone. The following happened in Cub Scouts. There were two lines of about 15 kids. An adult whispered “A Cub Scout is Loyal” to the first person in each line, who whispered it to the next and so on. I was last in one of the lines and I swear that the person prior to me had said “Tommy Doyle” (a name none of us knew), so (knowing it had to be wrong) I said “Tommy Doyle”. I felt like an idiot when the person at the end of the other line said “A Cub Scout is loyal”. Could some of my stories here suffer from the same issue? Each time I recall a story there is a possible small change. As every mathematician knows, no matter how small a positive number $\epsilon$ is, the number $(1 + \epsilon)^N$ can be arbitrarily large if $N$ is big enough. I once saw the German proverb “Viele wenig machen ein viel” translated as “Little and often makes a heap at last”. A current web site translates it as “Many a mickle makes a muckle”. Why not “Lots of little makes a lot”?
I have tried to help the reader by providing an index. Sometimes an artist is listed in alphabetical order by last name, such as Berry, C. for Chuck Berry. I listed some major artists this way, especially those who are mentioned independently of specific songs. Other times an artist is listed by alphabetical order of the way the name appears on the record, such as Edwin Starr or Del Shannon. I doubt that this distinction was done consistently, so a reader should try both if needed. I listed Ricky Nelson as Nelson, R. because I didn’t wish to choose between Ricky Nelson and Rick Nelson. I would rather drive a truck.

I am not a musician. My sense of rhythm is rather weak, although I have a better appreciation of harmony. I am haunted by minor chords and I most enjoy songs where the words and music fit. I love it when both the words and music take a sad song and make it better.

This story resembles a musical telephone directory; it contains lots of good songs and a great cast of characters, but it lacks much of a plot. Don’t expect a surprise ending. Thanks go to the many wonderful characters who made this story possible. That includes both the musical artists and the friends whose antics spice up the story. I wish to acknowledge Steve Bell, Peggy Currid, my son Henry D’Angelo, Tom Gehret, Brad Goldberg, John Marden, Amy Needham, Jim Needham, and Bob Northington for enjoyable quips and for useful comments on my lists and various drafts of this story.

Making the lists and writing about them has been a labor of love. I cannot resist mentioning that Sam the Sham once said “I know a lot of hard work went into making Wooly Bully possible”.

In the slim chance you want to know more about my mathematical career, try

\[https://faculty.math.illinois.edu/~jpd\]
\[https://math.illinois.edu/directory/profile/jpda\]

You can contact me by email at: \[jpda@illinois.edu\]
CHAPTER 1

The early days

In the summer of 1962, when I was eleven, my mother announced that we are all going to see (the movie version of) The Music Man. She had no idea what it was about, and she gave the impression that it was a biopic of some serious musician. I didn’t want to go, but we all went. I adored the plot, relished the music, was awed by the ending scene playing 76 Trombones, and fell in love with Shirley Jones. I sensed, without any understanding, that 76 Trombones and Goodnight My Someone were similar. To this day I marvel at how much the signature impacts the sound. To me $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ should sound the same! The David Bennett Piano YouTube site provides a serious analysis comparing $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$.

A few years later I was playing with a few neighbor kids in the driveway. For some reason I started singing Till There Was You and Chuck told me to stop singing a Beatles song. I pointed out that it was from the Music Man, but Chuck said “not the way you are singing it”. I would have given the world to sing it one tenth as well as either Jones or McCartney. According to Wikipedia, the wife of Meredith Willson said that Willson got more royalties from this song’s appearance on Meet The Beatles than he got from the musical itself. To quote Maxwell Smart, “I find that difficult to believe”.

It was summer 1963 and I was twelve. There was a creek in our back yard; it was about four feet wide but seemed bigger back then. A dad a few houses up had built a wooden bridge across the creek. As a result kids on both sides of the creek got to play together all the time after school and in the summer. We played lots of touch football back in those days. One time the Donnelly kids brought along some older friend. Someone called a penalty in the touch football game and I said “penalty denied” instead of “penalty declined”. This older kid corrected me and I felt like a moron. A few days later the Donnelly kids brought another older person along, a girl named Sheryl. She was singing “My boyfriend’s back and you’re going to be in trouble.” I guess I realized it must have been a hit song, but I wasn’t yet listening to pop music. My favorite composer was Charles Wesley; if I had made a list back then, all of my top songs would have come from either the Methodist Hymnal or “The Music Man”. I think this girl Sheryl liked me but I was scared of girls back then. I wasn’t ready. I was neither able to speak with her nor to start listening to AM radio.

It was February in 1964 and I was at Sunday school. Some kid I barely knew asked me if I were going to watch the Ed Sullivan show that night. I think I said “hunh” or some such sound. He told me the Beatles were going to be on but I had never heard of them. I didn’t watch but it was soon impossible not to become aware of them. My Dad was musical but not interested, although years later I convinced him of their quality. By then, he, like David McCallum, adored Michelle. He thought Yesterday had great lyrics. I am glad he never heard “Scrambled Eggs”,

5
THE EARLY DAYS

with the lyric baby baby I really love your legs or the subsequent verse rhyming waffle fries with love your thighs. My Mom, although brilliant in almost everything else, seemed to be tone deaf, and I doubt she had any opinions. My older brother had emotional problems and had been sent away (a court order) to a place not quite a reform school but not exactly heaven. When he came home for Christmas in 1964 he was singing songs such as I Saw Linda Yesterday, Haunted House, and I Saw Her Standing There. I had no idea what either of the first two of these songs was called until I heard them fifteen years later. My brother was ahead of his time; he mangled the lyrics badly but he got the rhythm right. It was quite the epiphany for me when I heard Haunted House for the first time and realized the lyric was not Tee apt to be when the morning comes. I also heard I Saw Linda Yesterday for the first time around then, and my heart went up, down, like a merry-go-round. Hearing it filled a fifteen year-old gap; I finally knew what he had been singing.

It wasn’t my brother though who came up with Sunday monkey won’t play piano song or The sky’s in love with you. By the way, I saw Hendrix live in March, 1968. He sang “Excuse me while I kiss the sky”. I have read that in his last few performances he would sing Excuse me while I kiss this guy and then plant a big kiss on his bass player. Like many others, my first misheard lyric was The cross-eyed bear. Perhaps my most ignominious misheard lyric (or mondegreen) was when I thought anyone caught trespassing will be shot on sight was anyone caught dressed passive will be shot on sight. That evokes one of the greatest grunts in pop music, following the sign said you’ve got to have a membership card to get inside. Sorry to the Boss, but the grunt in Signs beats out the one in Born to Run and also anything by the wicked Mr. Pickett, including the shouts in his rendition of Hey Jude and his sounds in Mustang Sally.

My Mom bought my brother “Meet the Beatles” for Christmas, so I got to know that album a bit. I discovered that I held her hand in high-eeb” was I held her hand in mine. I don’t recall whether he had sung How could I dance with your mother, a standard misheard lyric from the same song. At some point he also was given the soundtrack to Ferry Cross the Mersey. I quite liked it, although I thought never turn you away was never tan your a. I also discovered my older sister had a Ricky Nelson album, and I secretly played Half Breed a bunch of times. I doubt he played it at the Garden Party. The controversy about cultural appropriation regarding Cher’s number 1 hit in 1973 of the same name would have been even more absurd.

I was in Boy Scouts and eventually became an Eagle Scout. That journey is worth many stories, but (to quote Kosinsky) that’s for another ride. I remember in the late spring of 1965 being on a camping trip and our troop had a joint campfire with a girl scout troop. The girls did a skit where one of them was painting a picture, but she sought a title. She had my Scoutmaster running around the campfire while everyone else extended their arms. The punch line came when she was asked if she had found a title; she replied “Trees, while the sap is running”. A friend in the troop took a liking to one of the girl scouts and the next day he and I walked over to their campsite. We watched unseen from afar as a few of them were singing “Today, while the blossoms still cling to the vines”. Fifty six years later the song remains in my top 10. Once I heard Ravel’s “Pavane for a Dead Princess”; it reminded me of Randy Sparks’s Today but it wasn’t as good!
On camping trips the highlight for me was the campfire, where the troop sang all sorts of stuff. One popular choice was You Can’t Get to Heaven. One of the scoutmasters was originally from the Frankford area of Philadelphia. He would sing “You can’t get to heaven on the Frankford El, cause the Frankford El goes straight to (dramatic pause here) Frankford”. We were encouraged to sing our own verses. One time I tried replacing Frankford with Helsinki; of course I moved the dramatic pause to between Hel and Sinki. For punishment, I was sent back to my tent. Another time Zooey and I were reprimanded for our pseudo Henry Higgins imitation. We loudly changed there ain’t no more to there is no more. The troop leader had sung there ain’t no more as a way of announcing that we were done with that song; he thought we were suggesting that there would be more. I will not include a list of grammatical errors in popular music, although I often notice them. One example that particularly bugs me is from Touch Me by the Doors: I’m going to love you till the stars fall from the sky for you and I. The rhyme of sky with I happens too close. I keep expecting more lyrics to follow for you and I other than come on, come on, come on, now touch me babe.

A year later at Summer camp an older scout was playing a guitar all the time. His repertoire was limited to Hanky Panky and Tom Dooley. As an aside, there is evidence that this scout couldn’t write a business letter. Years later I knew someone who had thought the lyric to Hanky Panky was my baby doesn’t hang a penny. The friend who had liked the girl scout adored the song Sweet Pea. (I wonder whether he would admit that now!) He had taken German 1, and his favorite line of dialog was Wiilst du ihr kennenlernen?. That summer I started becoming more aware of pop music and its social possibilities.

When I came home from camp, a few neighborhood kids had begun to listen to music at Tacko’s house, next door to mine. I heard all sorts of things for the first time. I became acquainted with the WIBG top 99 list. I learned who the Cyrkle was; a few years later I found out that the spelling was due to John Lennon. In teaching a multi-variable calculus class years many later, I reduced a complicated calculation to finding (half) the area of a circle, which I spelled cyrkle and said the spelling is due to John Lennon. He was still alive then. I began learning about pop music that summer of 1966. The song that haunted me the most was I Never Will Marry. The best rendition is that of the Highwaymen, but I don’t think that it is the version I heard then.

That summer I heard one of the worst novelty songs ever, Batman and his Grandmother. I worry that my entire story has been influenced by the premise of that sort of novelty song, a mediocre tale interspersed with snippets of pop music. Batman had other impacts; for example, once I heard a song called Those Oldies but Goodies by Caesar and the Romans but I misheard the band name as Caesar and the Romeros. I told this story to Brad in 2021, saying I am not joking. He said that I was Jokering. Years later someone I didn’t know well was impressed that I knew Neil Hefti had done the Batman theme. I wonder what he would have thought if I mentioned that Jan and Dean had released a record called Batman around the same time.

Fall of 1966 saw an important development in my pop music education. We were required to take a class in public speaking. On the first day the teacher made the students fill out a form answering a few questions. One item asked for a list of hobbies. A certain person, whom I will call Sterling and I still know 55 years later,
listed popular music. It had not occurred to me until then that popular music was something at all.

I should mention a few stories from that public speaking class. Sterling got special permission to talk about long hair. He paraphrased Richard Lovelace by saying “Long hair does not a prison make”. He missed an opportunity; he didn’t go on to say “nor public speaking class a cage”. A student named Joe gave the following speech: “I want to talk about automation. Did you know that last year computers put thirty one hundred people out of work? They did not add this many jobs. I think this is bad”. Then he sat down. Joe was ahead of his time! Citing made-up numbers, keeping it brief, and presaging speeches from politicos in 2020. Freas talked about cheating in sports, concluding with “people want a good team, not an honest team”. Freas was in over his head in our physics class. He once sarcastically said “I want to build a workbench. Let’s see: \( \frac{\sin(I)}{\sin(K)} \)”. One of my speeches showed how to multiply numbers quickly in your head using tricks like \((a + b)(a - b) = a^2 - b^2\). For example,

\[ 63 \times 57 = (60 + 3)(60 - 3) = 60^2 - 3^2 = 3591. \]

I cannot recall any speech by the smart-mouth Elad; most likely he wasn’t in the class. If he had been there, surely he would have given a memorable speech. I also cannot recall any of the speeches by the girls in the class, nor whether anyone mentioned the wheat fields of St. Paul. (That would have been FOUR YEARS before Roland Kent Lavoie dominated the charts.)

That Christmas my mom got me and my brother little blue transistor radios. I started listening to AM radio. There was a football player on this basketball team I was on. He was a macho guy. Five of us were in a car when Happy Together came on. He told everyone to shut up so he could listen to it. I was stunned. Soon after, I started making weekly top 13 lists. Some of the big hits on my early charts were Happy Together, When I Was Young, and Let’s Live for Today. For the reader’s amusement I include the first and last of these lists in Chapter 8.

Sometime that spring I discovered that Sterling also made lists. His list was a top 19, and it was agony to get him to reveal it. He would come to my house and I would say Number 19 to try to get him to start his countdown. It took hours for him to finally start. Fifty-four years later it occurred to me that perhaps the number 19 evoked the Rolling Stones song 19-th Nervous Breakdown, which incidentally was included in Batman and his Grandmother. Hearing the countdowns was always worth it, even though San Franciscan Nights didn’t do as well as it should have on Sterling’s charts. We discovered that WOWO in Fort Wayne, Indiana had a pop music station that could be heard in Philadelphia at night time. Once a week they would play guest top ten lists. One week the list was by a young lady named Becky Blessing. They began playing her top ten. It was remarkably close to Sterling’s top ten, at least from 10 down to 2. It included We Ain’t Got Nothin’ Yet, Listen People, No Milk Today, and Mr. Tambourine Man by the Byrds. Sterling and I were going nuts wondering what number one would be. It turned out to be an instrumental by the Rolling Stones called 2120 South Michigan Avenue. It was the most inexplicable thing I had ever heard.

Sterling got me excited about a record sale at E. J. Korvette, commonly called Korvettes. I thought that this cheap department store’s name was eponymous; years later I was told that the name referred to veterans of the Korean War. Years
after that I was told instead: According to Korvette’s founder, Eugene Ferkauf, who died in 2012, the name “E. J. Korvette” was coined as a combination of the initials of its founders (Eugene and Joe) and a re-spelling of the naval term corvette, a nimble sailing warship and later World War II sub-destroyer. Mono was getting replaced by stereo and Korvettes was selling all their mono albums for $1.29. I bought a bunch of Beatles albums: Rubber Soul, Revolver, A Hard Day’s Night soundtrack, Yesterday and Today, Beatles VI, and maybe a few more. I forget whether I got Sgt. Pepper that night, or whether I got it a bit later. I listened to these albums constantly, as a look at my top 150 reveals. The summer of 1967 was of course a major time for the explosion of popular music as part of the hippie culture. The Monterey Pop festival happened that summer, but I didn’t know too much about it. Philadelphia radio stations were somewhat conservative, although they did play both Somebody to Love and White Rabbit by the Jefferson Airplane. Feed your head! To quote Johnny Rivers, “everybody kept on playing Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band”. My favorite tune by Rivers was not Summer Rain but rather Secret Agent Man, from the previous summer. Spies and secret agents were big back then, and I doubt anyone misheard secret agent man as secret Asian man, although the internet suggests that it is a common mondegreen. My summer job in 1967 involved urinalysis and blood work in a hospital lab. Each lunch hour I went to a nearby place called Penn records; they displayed the Billboard top 100 and I would copy it. Radio stations also had lists. Once the WIBG top 99 had a tie at number one! It was between All You Need is Love (backed by Baby You’re a Rich Man) and Ode to Billie Joe. Perhaps what happened was (a category on Black Jeopardy; BTW Kenan Thompson is a genius) that they expected All You Need is Love to be number one, but just before the list came out Ode to Billie Joe was selling and getting requested at unimaginable levels. So they did the best they could, along the way demonstrating how hard it is to make a list. It is even harder to check it twice. I remember mentioning this tie in a car when AYNIL was on the radio and Elad said “I think this stinks”. Elad had no taste in music; once he brought It’s a Gas by Albert E. Neumann into school and somehow received permission to play it during an English class. Tenth grade English class had a unit on King Arthur. A few of us did a project at my house and Dave D. played some creepy piano music while Rich and I did a bit of reading from A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court. Here is a true story; there was an exam question, intended to be trivial, to which the correct answer was supposed to be The Knights of the Roundtable. Marshall read too much into the question and didn’t know what to write. So he put The Jive Five. When he told a few of us that he had done so, I said nothing, because I had no idea who or what the Jive Five was. A few years later I heard My True Story as an oldie. For years after I thought it was called “Cry Cry Cry”. In the fall of 1967, I often walked to and from the Bazaar of All Nations, a weird conglomeration of stores. It had cheap clothing stores, really cheap food outlets, and so on, but it had a good record store. By then my younger sister Laurie was playing trumpet very well and listening to Herb Alpert and the TJB all the time. I bought her a few of their albums. Laurie thought I dressed like a dork and once she went into a boy’s clothing store at the Bazaar and was looking at pants. The
A greaser who worked there asked “What size you looking for?” and she said she was just looking. He then asked her if she made it a habit of spending time in men’s stores. I continued to dress like a dork.

On the way home from the Bazaar, I would pass by the lot of a place called Block Distributors. The most gorgeous girl in my high school worked there, but I doubt I ever had the courage to go in. One night I decided to walk by Block Distributors hoping for a glance, and I brought my blue radio along. I heard the greatest non-Beatles rock song ever, for the first time. The chords going from D to D-minor to A-minor to E-minor and back to D stunned me. “It’s too late to say you’re sorry, how could I know, why should I care. Please don’t bother trying to find her, SHE’S NOT THERE”. I saw the Zombies live in 2019; Rod Argent and Colin Blunstone were still at it. I went with Sterling, his wife, one of their daughters, then in her upper twenties, and my youngest kid, then 17. It is great to see young people still appreciating real music. The failure of She’s Not There to make the WXPN top 2020 of all time cost that radio station a large donation.

I was in a science club that used to do cool things like watch meteor showers. November 1967 resulted in a big disappointment. We had been given permission to watch the Leonids from the high school roof, but it was cloudy and rainy all night. Every 33 years this shower is supposed to produce a spectacular show. Weather also intervened in 2000. If I make it to 82, I want to see a major Leonid display. The club decided to put on a Rock and Roll Contest to make some cash. Local bands auditioned in the school band room, a few of us chose the better ones, we hired some judges, and we bought some cheap trophies. Then we held a big contest in the school auditorium. The first year the winning group was called Sredni Vashtar, the name of Conradin’s pet ferret in a Saki story. I think that they sang She’s Not There along with two or three other songs. One band blasted Sock It to Me. A group of kids from my home town did their version of She Cried and the lead singer won for best vocalist. Another group from my town had a female drummer. She was good, but she was no Honey Lantree.

In the fall of 1967, the Strawberry Alarm Clock reached number 1 on the Billboard Charts with Incense and Peppermints. We were doing a lab in advanced chemistry class when the teacher suddenly slammed his yardstick on the demonstration table in front of the room and yelled “Hey D’Angelo, what do you think of that?” I instantly replied “A yardstick for lunatics, one point of view”. Years later I told this story to Jim, who was not yet 2 years old when the song came out. He said that the song sounds as if it were made in a chemistry lab. To me, the lyrics sound as if they were made by random splicing of words from other classes: meaningless nouns, dead kings, beatniks, persuasions cluttering your mind, little to win but nothing to lose. In the subsequent spring semester, I have a faint memory of the same chemistry teacher saying something was a question of temperature, but I doubt anyone in the class referred to the Balloon Farm record out at that time. I do know that both Sterling and Brad knew the tune.

Two of the biggest hits in my last semester of high school were Love is Blue and Dock of the Bay. I vividly recall the first time I heard Dock of the Bay; it was on a car radio, and as the whistling closed the tune, the DJ said only “the late great Otis Redding”. Otis had died in a plane crash just a few weeks before. The line this loneliness won’t leave me alone has stuck in my head ever since. The melody for Love is Blue is also stuck there. Even though Mrs. Robinson was a big hit that
spring as well, it didn’t mean much to me; I didn’t see The Graduate until several years later.

By then Philadelphia had two competing pop AM stations, WIBG and WFIL. WIBG had a contest where the N-th caller would win something or other. WFIL had a contest where, if you answered your phone with I listen to WFIL, and they were calling, you would win something or other. WIBG dissed WFIL by saying that Their contest is don’t call us; we’ll call you. When I expected it to be a friend of mine or of my younger sister, I would answer our phone with I listen to WFIL. Once, however, it was the Minister from church; he replied “And I bet you also listen to WIBG”.

The sounds of Philadelphia

When bored in college classes, I had this Beatles Bracketology idea. I listed 200 Beatles songs by the alphabetical order of their initials. I slowly played out the tournament. The final four, in some order, was If I Fell, Yesterday, Here, There, and Everywhere, and I’ll Follow the Sun. I never finished. I didn’t want any of them to lose.

The listing by initials had an amusing consequence. I could pass from the initials to the titles with ease. I became known for being able to instantly reply to AYNIL with All You Need is Love, to IIF with If I Fell, to B with Birthday, Blackbird, Boys and so on. Some upperclassman I didn’t really know (his girlfriend was the older sister of someone in my class) walked up to me and said KGMDH. I sneered Komm, gib mir deine hand and walked away.

In 2021 I sent this story by e-mail to Tom, a roommate of mine sophomore year. He replied with a text that said only the four letters TMAL. I was vaguely aware of That Means a Lot but he could have named at least thirty obscure Beatles songs I wouldn’t have known. For example, I found out in 2021 that Buddy Holly had a song called Mailman, Bring Me No More Blues and that the Beatles had recorded it. Holly didn’t write it, and it was the flip side of Words of Love. It is interesting that the Beatles covered both sides. I would have known My Bonnie for MB, but I would have been unaware that Moonlight Bay also existed. I wonder if some younger person knows the names of all the songs in the Beatles Bible; even better would be if they were known by initials!

Sometimes I would win “name it and claim it” and similar contests on WXPN, the University of Pennsylvania station. One time, I identified the group that did Don’t Let the Rain Fall Down on Me as the Critters. I think the prize was their album. The DJ announced that he had just received a phone call from someone whose most meaningful song is Mr. Dyingly Sad and who really wanted the album, but, as usual, the winner is John D’Angelo (101 Bishop White). So I called up and told them to announce that I would forego the prize. I don’t know what happened thereafter. I also remember requesting I Will multiple times in the few days after the White album came out but before I owned it. Classmates on my dorm floor thought I was nuts, partly for liking the Beatles so much, but more because I then listed The Best of It by Thorinshield as my favorite song.

I am not going to say much about the Paul McCartney is Dead rumors, which were hot at that time, but I do recall the first time I heard Revolution Number 9 played backwards. What a freaky sound. To this day I believe the last line of Strawberry Fields Forever is not I buried Paul, but rather either straw-ber-ry fi-elds or I’m very bored. Years later Lennon sang to McCartney “Those freaks was right when they said you was dead”. Lennon was at his biting best with “the only thing you done was yesterday and since you’re gone you’re just another day”. Was John
14 2. THE SOUNDS OF PHILADELPHIA

responding to Paul’s Too Many People? In November of 2020, we got an extra hour upon going off daylight saving time. Some wag cracked that getting an extra hour in 2020 was like getting bonus tracks on a Yoko Ono album.

Freshman year we had an assignment to bring in a weird poem, and I brought in the lyrics to I Am the Walrus. The professor thought it was great. I didn’t include the unintelligible ending lyrics about everybody. One classmate griped that my version was incomplete. I did go see Magical Mystery Tour and found it surprisingly good, although it couldn’t compare to A Hard Day’s Night.

In the fall of freshman year, Hey Jude was the top song on Billboard for nine consecutive weeks. I cannot resist recalling a few related stories. Hit Parader magazine listed putative lyrics to top songs, and, amazing as it seems, they butchered the lyrics to Hey Jude! They published for well you know that it’s a fool who plays it cool, by making his wealth a little golder. (sic) WTF? I often quote the correct lyric ending with making his world a little colder to people and hence this absurd mon-degreen irked me. The word consecutive also suggests a story. It happened around seven years later, when Philadelphia Phillies announcer Andy Musser stated that Jay Johnstone had hit in eight straight consecutive games in a row. As a result I jokingly claimed that Hey Jude topped the Billboard charts for nine straight consecutive weeks in a row. In 2005 McCartney played it at the Super Bowl halftime show; at one point he said I love you super bowl. I vaguely recall a review that made a big fuss that the super bowl was inanimate and hence this line made no sense. What a lame criticism.

In Fall 1968, WXPN pushed Time Has Come Today by the Chambers Brothers very hard. I recall a conversation where a fellow freshman said that he had never heard of them until he came to Penn and therefore thought they must be a local band. They seem to have been from Mississippi; it would have been ironic if they had come from Philadelphia, Mississippi, but they did not. The Chambers Brothers played in Philadelphia PA at the First Quaker City Rock Festival that fall. I did not attend, but that festival did include such acts as Janis Joplin and the Vanilla Fudge. In addition to the obvious You Keep Me Hangin’ On, the internet claims that the Vanilla Fudge played versions of She’s Not There and Season of the Witch. I cannot predict how I would have reacted!

Three years later the local DJ was called Lee Sax. I met him and was amazed to find that his name was actually Lee Sachs. I remember once that someone had requested American Pie and he said “The next request is from a caller who hasn’t yet had his fill of American Pie”. I think that AP is one of the greatest songs ever, although I sympathize with a DJ who had to play it too often.

In early 1969 the Beatles released the Yellow Submarine soundtrack. I knew nothing about any of the new songs. The local radio station had played All Together Now and Sterling thought it was the new Beatles single. I had neither heard it nor heard of it. We were shooting baskets in my driveway and he asked “Well, what you think of it?” I said “what”, and he replied “the inevitable question, the new Beatles single.” I excitedly anticipated hearing a new song called “The Inevitable Question”. When I did hear All Together Now, I realized it was but a children’s sing-along and could not possibly be the A-side of a new Beatles single.

In the summer of 1969, I first heard In the Year 2525, on an AM station on a car radio. I had no idea that doomsday would be 2020, four fifths of the guess by Zager and Evans. I used to go crazy over “pick your sons, pick your daughters too,
from the bottom of a long glass tube”. Lists of one-hit wonders abound, and this
tune often leads. They had another release, called Mr. Turnkey, but it wasn’t a
hit as it only bubbled under the top 100. A year later another song also brilliantly
presaged 2020, Ball of Confusion by the Temptations. Their lyric “That’s what
the world is today, ball of confusion” could be the most quoted line from that era.
Surely it beats out “psychedelic shack, that’s where it’s at”. Another hit by the
Temptations said that the third of September was a day “I’ll always remember”.

Sophomore year in college I shared an off-campus apartment with Tom and
Mitch. One time Tom and I had the radio on when Mitch came back from some-
where; the song No Time was playing. Mitch tried to dis it by asking “Is that the
Archies”? Later Tom told me that he felt this comment was “uncalled for”. I was
not a fan of the Guess Who, but I completely agreed with Tom. There was a bit of
a flap in 1970 when the Guess Who, perhaps at the request of Tricia Nixon, was to
play for President Nixon and his family. The band was forced to remove American
Woman from the playlist. They replaced it with Hand Me Down World.

I first saw the film King of Hearts somewhere on South Street in Philly. I
found out in 2021 that the first record Tom ever bought was South Street by the
Orlons. He must have liked the word baby in songs. Back in 1969, his favorite tune
was Don’t Worry Baby. Years later he claimed it had been I Should Have Known
Better. Of course ISHKB is great early Lennon. Written in the key of G, there is
a B chord on “can’t you see” that still blows my mind today.

I was once discussing with math students how the printed word can be am-
biguous; tones and emphasis in the spoken word are crucial to understanding. The
normal derivative provides a good example. The plot in the movie “The Conversa-
tion” depends upon whether kill or us is emphasized in the sentence He’d kill us if
he had the chance. I should have known better takes on slightly different meanings
depending on which of the five words has maximal emphasis. Lennon always had
fun with words; let’s mention but not discuss now they know how many holes it
takes to fill the Albert Hall, Fixing a hole in the ocean, or Boy you been a naughty
girl you let your knickers down.

I traded my copy of “Through the Past Darkly” album to Tom for his copy of
the soundtrack to “Advance to the Rear”. It takes character to admit that I was
happy with this swap. The New Christy Minstrels above the Rolling Stones? Egad.
But, yes. Was Jagger ever mentioned in Creeque Alley? Lo dubito. McGuire was!
By the way, my favorite line about swaps was from the sportswriter who claimed
that the Grant Jackson for Roger Freed trade in 1970 was “one of those trades that
hurts both clubs”. Fifty years later I wondered why the Phillies would pick up
both Hembree and Workman in the year of the pandemic. Perhaps the trade on
August 21, 2020 of Brandon Workman, Heath Hembree, and cash for Nick Pivetta
and Connor Seabold might actually turn out to be the one that most hurt both
clubs in baseball history. It certainly hurt the Phillies.

Back in 1969 the big news in pop music was the breakup of the Beatles despite
having just produced Abbey Road and Let it Be. As I look ahead to ending this
story, I wonder whether I will conclude with And, in the end, the love you take is
equal to the love you make or with some day I’m gonna make her mine. Maybe I
should just say “I like the Beatles”.

I had a college friend Steve P. whose taste in pop music was far more advanced
than mine. He knew well The Grateful Dead, Paul Butterfield, Frank Zappa, and
Captain Beefheart. He also became a mathematician. One of the few Grateful Dead songs I knew well was *Truckin*, because it was played on AM radio. I was a bit embarrassed when I told Steve this piece of information. The Grateful Dead keeps coming up. A few years later I had a female friend who had been to 100 Dead concerts. Sometimes I bought Cherry Garcia ice cream. Once I was teaching an honors advanced calculus class; there was an exam at 9:00 AM. One of the students showed up, asking to be excused from the exam because he had been to a Grateful Dead concert the night before and had stayed up all night. He didn’t say what drugs he had taken. I said something to the effect, “Look, you are here. Try the exam; if it doesn’t go well, I’ll give you another chance.” He didn’t need the second chance; he got the highest grade without it.

I knew Jamison from high school. Maybe twice a semester in college we would exchange letters. I swear he sent me the identical letter twice! It read "Hi D, How the hell are ya’? I met a new girl the other day. To quote Tommie James and the Shondells, I don’t hardly know her but I think I could love her. Later, Jimi." Jamison was a huge Phillies fan; he loved it when the Human Beinz sang *do the Philly* in their rendition of *Nobody But Me*. I was with him and his wife Elaine in a car sometime, and *Don’t Give Up On Us* by David Soul came on the radio. Elaine expressed surprise that he could have done such a nice, soft song. I watched little television and I didn’t realize that Soul played Detective Hutch. Most likely I had never even heard of Starsky and Hutch. Reading today about Soul’s five marriages and his various difficulties confirms her feelings of surprise from more than forty years ago. I cannot resist another Jamison story, from high school days, when several of us made heroes lists. He liked several songs by the Grass Roots. One of their albums listed the singer(s) of each song. For one song, but I forget which, the album cover named *Rob Warren*, perhaps missing a comma, referring to Rob Grill and Warren Entner. One of Jamison’s heroes lists included the name Rob Warren.

Some people call songs by their correct titles, some call them by key words, and some abbreviate the titles. There is little rhyme or reason to it. One example is *New York Mining Disaster: 1941* by the Bee Gees. In the summer of 1967 I was at a swimming pool party and someone was strumming a guitar. *New York Mining Disaster: 1941* was requested, although not by me. I would have felt that including the 1941 sounded pedantic and uncool. I have heard it called "Mining Disaster" but that seems too short. Also common was “New York Mining Disaster”; it seems most people know it as “Have you seen my wife, Mr. Jones?” Susan Jacks sang a haunting melancholic song called *That’s Where I Went Wrong*. At least thrice in my life I have mentioned this song and each person claimed not to know it, until I said “This bus is awful cold” and it was immediately recognized.

*Being For the Benefit of Mr. Kite* also seems too pedantic; I suspect most people call it “For the Benefit of Mr. Kite”. When the Let it Be bootleg album came out, the producers didn’t know the actual song names. For example *Across the Universe* was called “Nothing’s gonna change my world” and *Two of Us* was called “We’re on our way home” on at least one version I saw. Speaking of *Let it Be*, it was sung in the Methodist church by the whole congregation, but the minister of music changed *Mother Mary* to *many people* because he thought McCartney was referring to the Virgin Mary, and Protestants thought that was too Catholic. In
fact Paul’s mother was Mary; nowadays you can hear him tell James Corden the story of the song by checking out Corden’s carpool karaoke with McCartney.

While in college I had a part-time job doing verifying computer cards for a bank. Soon after I started working there, the movie Midnight Cowboy came out and everybody there was talking about it. I once mentioned Harry Nilsson and Everybody’s Talkin’; it irked me when the supervisor called him Nelson. I once asked a few co-workers to name a few of their favorite songs. I was shocked that someone named Happiness is a Warm Gun. Another person was always saying (not singing) “Sail on Silver Girl” to people of both sexes, so I wasn’t shocked that he named Bridge Over Troubled Waters. Born to Be Wild was named by several people, as Easy Rider had been out the summer before. I recall one of the supervisors singing along with “Ruby, don’t take your love to town”, but I had not asked her for her favorites. Two years later, as my job at the bank was close to ending, I again asked a mostly different collection of people for their top songs. I wish I remembered the responses. I have only a vague recollection that Troglodyte was mentioned, surely ironically.

In fall 1969 Bobby Sherman was ripping the charts on AM radio. It was hard not to hear Little Woman. It was also unbearable to hear it. Soon after he released La La La; it seemed to be essentially the same song, except that hey little woman and you’ve got to were replaced by c’mom, la, la, la. To make matters worse, in the summer of 1970 there was a cereal box with Sherman’s Easy Come, Easy Go on the back of the box. I cut it out and played it to see if it worked. It did. Thus I willingly played a Bobby Sherman record, one of the nadirs of my listening career.

When I was a senior in college I took beginning French to prepare for the language exams required in grad school. One of my classmates was a DJ on WXPN. For a good reason I won’t say, he ended each show with Rocky Raccoon from the White Album. Several of us in that class tried to mention songs when possible, as language classes provide opportunities to say amusing things to illustrate grammatical points. I remember once saying Je ne suis jamais allez en Espagne for that reason. The group Three Dog Night had 13 top forty hits during my college years. I learned in 2021 that they authored none of them. I was aware then that Hoyt Axton had penned Joy to the World and Never Been to Spain. I never understood why Joy to the World was such a big hit. The line Jeremiah was a bullfrog made no sense at all. I find it pretty cool that Axton’s mother wrote Heartbreak Hotel, which had been a number 1 hit for Elvis fifteen years before.

I saw Steppenwolf perform Born to Be Wild and Magic Carpet Ride at a place in Philly called the “Electric Factory”. The Youngbloods also performed there, and so did a hard blues rock band called Great Jones. I also saw Booker T and the MG’s, Santana, and a few other groups at other places. By the way, in 2018, the other Carlos Santana played for the Phillies and was a big disappointment. I wrote to an e-mail fan group that he had to change his evil ways. One member of the group chastised me for wrecking his enjoyment of an otherwise good song. I also attended a Rolling Stones concert, at a much larger venue, during my college years.
CHAPTER 3

Graduate school

I worked hard in grad school, and hence I didn’t listen to much music during this time. I did find a few other people who had been listeners. For example, Rob was good at Math, sang in the choir, drove an MG, and was a lady’s man. He referred to one of his many female friends as California girl. He once chastised me for not taking a California girl I knew to a Beach Boys concert. It is amazing but true that the first time I saw (some of) the Beach Boys was in 2019, when Brian Wilson and Al Jardine were still doing it. Rob had a pretty cool tape that included such uncool things as Moody River by Pat Boone. He had also taped Deteriorata from the radio. There was a guy who lived in the grad college with a gorgeous girl who wasn’t a student, but somehow was allowed to live there. We heard she was going to be away for a few days and Rob serenaded this guy with a rather spectacular rendition of the first line of Are You Lonesome Tonight and appropriately altered subsequent lyrics.

A couple of Canadian grad students liked to play touch football on Sunday afternoons. They would ask me to join the game, and I would refuse until they either played The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly or loudly hummed America the Beautiful while I read excerpts from Gordon Sinclair’s editorial The Americans from the Toronto Star. My favorite line was probably “there are many smug self-righteous Canadians”. Just a few years later Ronald Reagan cited Sinclair for providing the United States with an inspiring tribute in one of its darkest hours. I found out later that Sinclair was the then second oldest person to have a top 40 (solo) hit on Billboard. Andy Williams holds the current record, and I don’t know how far Sinclair has fallen. It is worth noting that The Americans got additional airplay after the terrorist attacks 9-11-2001.

In the summer of 1973 I heard Uneasy Rider for the first time and I immediately bought the 45. There actually was a “Dew Drop Inn” in Ravenna, Nebraska and my wife had been there. It was still there in 2020. On a few occasions I have introduced people by saying “you may not know it, but this man’s a spy” without eliciting any sort of reaction. I have also quoted “I laid it on thicker and heavier as I went” and I used this line as motivation in writing this current document. The lyric “sure proud to see” never made any sense to me, but I loved it. Sometimes I say “He may look dumb, but that’s just a disguise”. The Billboard book of hits calls this tune a novelty song, but its rich lyrics make it much more than that to me. Like the greatest novelty song ever, Convoy, discussed below, and the poem “Limited” by Carl Sandburg, the work unexpectedly concludes with Omaha. Eight years later, Charlie Daniels came up with his brilliantly altered version of “L’Histoire du Soldat”. The Devil Went Down to Georgia looking for a soul to steal, but Johnny played his fiddle so well that “the devil knew that he was beat”. This song has many covers and parodies I will not discuss.
In the fall of 1973 American Graffiti came out. A brilliant fellow grad student Phong from Vietnam often trashed the tag-line “Where were you in 1962?” using his inimitable French-Vietnamese accent. One consequence of the film’s existence was an oddball question I posed now and then: name three people named “John Milnor”. (The spelling was allowed to differ.) Those who knew the name of a world renowned mathematician were not likely to know also both the New York Met who hit 23 homers in 1973 and the character in American Graffiti who drove the fastest car in the valley. Many years later I received a phone call in which an unidentified caller asked me to name three people named John Milner. After my doing so he asked if I knew who he was. I said “Of course, and I also know the fourth letter of your middle name”. I had known him for one year in grad school; he was perhaps the second or third biggest smart mouth I had even known, after Elad and possibly Rich. I happened to see his full name once, learning his middle name was Anikam and I somehow correctly inferred that he disliked it. As I had hoped, my answer succeeded in annoying him. He still wanted to meet me, as he was in Urbana. The reason for his visit will go unsaid, but it had nothing to do with me. Anikam had not been around when American Graffiti first came out, but apparently he had heard of my question. He was the kind of person who knew all three Milnors (Milners). Years later Anikam and Phong did important joint work in complex geometry.

One day in the late spring of 1973 I heard Tommie Roe sing an upbeat song called Working Class Hero. It had spent a week on the Billboard charts, at number 97, that May. Roe’s song was quite the antithesis of the John Lennon piece (from 1970) by the same name. I switched from the AM station to an FM station. A bit later that evening I heard the John Lennon song, with its f-bombs and cynical lyrics. Thus I heard them both, almost consecutively. I wonder whether any DJ ever played them consecutively. As a DJ for his college radio station, Sterling had once played Patches by Dickey Lee and Patches by Clarence Carter consecutively, a striking contrast for sure, but not comparable to what Roe and Lennon would have been. It would be fun to create a playlist of strikingly different pairs of songs with the same titles. One possibility would be Venus by Frankie Avalon and Venus by the Shocking Blue. Another might be I Get Around by the Beach Boys and I Get Around by 2Pac.

In November 1973, I attended a concert at Alexander Hall in Princeton featuring both Dr. John and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Dr. John’s Right Place Wrong Time had been somewhat of a hit earlier that year, but Lynyrd Skynyrd was not yet well known. Free Bird was not released for another year, but perhaps they played it that night. While they were setting up, someone from the audience yelled out “Hey Leonard” and a band member replied “Ain’t none of us named Leonard”. Their tragic plane crash happened four years later.

Radio stations often counted down their top records of the year on New Year’s Eve. On 12-31-1973, I was home from grad school at the house I grew up in. Sterling was also home from grad school; neither of us had any other plans so we decided to listen to a few of these countdowns. The basketball hoop in my driveway was equipped with lights. We had several radios going simultaneously and we had several pens and pads of paper. Because we were outside on a cold winter’s night, radio reception was good. We copied the lists as we heard them. We spent New Year’s Eve listing the night away.
The most interesting countdown was from CKLW, a station based in Windsor, Ontario, across the Detroit River from Motown. *Uneasy Rider* came in at 39, *Live and Let Die* at 28, and *Time in a Bottle* at 22. Given that a large number of the songs could be classified as soul music, the placement of these songs surprised me. *Right Place Wrong Time* checked in at 17. It seemed also strange to me when Al Wilson’s *Show and Tell* made it to number 11, as I thought it had just come out and I hardly knew it. To me Al Wilson was the singer who had done *The Snake* a few years before. In fact *Show and Tell* peaked on the Billboard Charts at number 1 three weeks later and made the Billboard top hundred for the year 1974. (I had wanted to end the previous sentence with an exclamation point, but I was worried that some readers would think I meant the gargantuan number 1974! This number is of the order $5 \times 10^{5649}$.) The biggest surprise on the list was that *Brother Louie* by the Stories was the number 2 record of the year. I knew the lyrics well enough to sense that it was too controversial to be such a big hit in most places. I should have known that it would be a smash in the Motor City. It did reach 13 for the year on Billboard, as I found out in 2021.

Of the top songs on CKLW for 1973, numbers 1 and 3 (*Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown* and *Killing Me Softly With His Song*) were numbers 2 and 3 on Billboard, thus evincing some consistency. I adore Roberta Flack’s rendition of “Killing Me Softly” and I despise the Billboard number 1, *Tie A Yellow Ribbon*. The history of the song *Killing Me Softly With His Song* is worth looking up: Don McLean, Lori Lieberman, disputed origin, law suits, and so on. Nearly everyone agrees that Flack’s version is by far the best; in 1973 it won a Grammy for the top record and also for the best performance by a female artist.

I first heard *Convoy* in 1974. I thought it was the greatest novelty song ever. I found out later that Bill Fries (a/k/a C. W. McCall) was an Omaha advertising agent. The Princetonian diner had a jukebox. Rob and I kept feeding it with quarters to play *Convoy*. After 8 times, we tried the flip side *Wolf Creek Pass* and a chorus of boos came from the crowd of truckers, who could have listened to *Convoy* all night long. Even now I find opportunities to say *we ain’t a gonna pay no toll*. Years later I was heading west on Highway 2 a few miles out of Lincoln and crossed Wolf Creek. Most sequels to novelty songs reek. A good example is *Round the World with the Rubber Duck*. It never hit the Billboard top 100, peaking at 101 in 1976. Ten years later Bill Fries became mayor of Ouray, Colorado, sometimes known as the Switzerland of America. I wonder what percentage of voters knew he was C. W. McCall. That same year Clint Eastwood became mayor of Carmel. Later on I will briefly mention a few of the songs of 1986. *Convoy* will make another appearance as well.

I suppose the greatest song to come out while I was in grad school was *Bohemian Rhapsody*. This song reached only 9 on Billboard’s weekly lists. It often ranks higher on best songs of all time than it did at its peak on a weekly list. Another major event was Bruce Springsteen appearing on the covers of both *Time* and *Newsweek*. I was aware of these things, but I was too focused on mathematics to really notice. A few of us once drove to Asbury Park just for fun.

While a grad student, I was playing informal volleyball outside an undergrad dorm called the Princeton Inn. It had been a hotel, but it was bought by the University and converted to dorm space when Princeton went co-educational in 1969. Several of the women playing were on the women’s volleyball team. One in
particular made a few nice sets but then spiked one into the net. I muttered, I thought inaudibly, that she sets just like a woman but she spikes just like a little girl. I found out later that it was her favorite song and she was impressed that I could both spike and that I knew Dylan. I wish I knew him better. Two of my favorite Dylan songs are My Back Pages and Positively 4th Street. There are stories about both. Also, I have long wondered what is the true meaning of “some are mathematicians, some are carpenter’s wives”.

The YouTube video of My Back Pages from the 30-th anniversary concert in 1992 is perhaps my favorite video of any genre. Bob Dylan, Roger McGuinn, Tom Petty, Neil Young, Eric Clapton, and George Harrison perform the song together. It is also among the favorite videos of Neal, whom I will mention a bit later.

As a high school student, I had played the version by the Byrds over and over again. My younger sister Laurie therefore knew the tune and most of the lyrics, which are certainly Nobel prize worthy. When she was a high school student, a young male teacher she didn’t know was singing it in the hallways. Laurie asked him “were you just singing My Back Pages?” He was so impressed that a 16 year-old would know the song that he asked her out! She naturally refused, but the story indicates the power of the song. I could write pages interpreting and praising the lyrics, but my own writing could never measure up, and hence I will say nothing.

Two other girls who played volleyball at the Princeton Inn were from Los Angeles and both were in the glee club. One of them had the favorite group Fairport Convention; from her I learned the word “lief”. She also taped a Dr. Demento countdown for me. I suggested they form a duo called “The Beach Babies”. I was told that they would try, but only if they could change the name to the “Beetch Babies”. (I never found out the preferred spelling, but the pronunciation was clear.) By the way, go read the Wikipedia page about the song Beach Baby by First Class; some of the info in that article is incredible.

A chemistry grad student Howard was in Princeton for just one year. I think he has the lowest Erdős plus Bacon plus Shusaku number in the world. He taught me the chords for I Should Have Known Better. He was one of the nicest and most sincere people I ever met. He was responsible for making the tape of music they played in the de-Basement Bar. I didn’t go there, but I did once hear Love the One You’re With coming from that tape. I told him I was surprised that he would have included it. Howard replied that he had hesitated before including it, but decided to go with it because it was popular, and doing so weighed on his conscience. He became a computer scientist.

One of the greatest computer scientists of all time is Donald Knuth. He published (in 1977) a spoof paper called “The Complexity of Songs” in which he claims that there exist arbitrarily long songs of minimal complexity. For the proof he cites the song That’s the Way (I like it) by KC and the Sunshine Band, which hit number 1 on Billboard in November 1975. A few years later my friend Steve B. (not the Steve who liked Captain Beefheart, but also a mathematician and someone who could play multiple musical instruments) wrote a program on his TI 99-4A that contained an infinite loop of the computer saying “that is the way, oh oh, I like it. oh oh”. Back in those days computer speaking vocab was quite limited, and uh and huh were not available. KC and the Sunshine band had at least five songs top the Billboard charts in the second half of the 1970’s. Neil Young should have changed his lyric to “Look at mother music on the run in the 1970’s”.
3. GRADUATE SCHOOL

Now and then I worked as a debate judge when I was a graduate student. The topic of one particular debate was “Resolved: President Nixon should resign”. One contestant (rather brilliantly I might add) likened Nixon to The Boxer in the Simon and Garfunkel hit. A year later, the same contestant participated in an undergraduate speaking contest, of which I was one of three judges. Each speaker entered a small room where only the three judges sat. As he entered, I whistled the “I am just a poor boy, with my story seldom told. I have squandered...” part of that song. He prefaced his speech by saying “It seems some of you have heard me speak before”. I remember this part vividly, but I have no recollection of what else he said or whether he won anything. I do vividly recall an incident independent of music. Back in those days there was a Princeton vs. Univ. of Virginia heckle debate. The president of the Princeton debate society began by providing some history of the debate and trashning Virginia throughout. He closed his intro by first saying something to this effect: I don’t want anyone to think Virginia is a bad school. I will be attending Law School there next year. He then ended with “In fact, Virginia is a school of fine academic renown. It is often referred to as the Rutgers of the South.”

Several of the graduate students put on a skit in the fall of 1975. We called ourselves the Heisenberg Group; apologies for the mathematical humor. Mike played the guitar, and we all sang mathematical take-offs on well-known songs. Rob did a version of Ringo Starr’s No No Song that spoofed the time we wasted playing boardgames in the common room. One of the verses began “A man walked up to me named Takagawa. He smiled because I did not understand. Then he held out 100 handicap stones and said go is the best game in the land.” Our classmate Daryl was an absolute genius at writing such lyrics. Among many great lines, he sang “it turned out exactly right for two lonely modules in the night” and his take-offs on If I Were a Rich Man and Sunny were priceless. To get started I had done a take-off on Barbara Ann, singing “I went to a class, looking for a thesis, saw $\partial_b$ (pronounced d-bar b), and thought I’d take a chance....” All of us closed the performance with my tribute to Skeeter Davis: “Why does this integral diverge, why isn’t epsilon small, don’t they know it’s the end of my thesis, it looks like I’ll be back next fall”. But next fall I moved to Boston.

My father died in August of 1976. He was only 66 years old. Early in life he had been a musician, playing clarinet and saxophone in New York City nightclubs. Eventually he became an internationally renowned endocrinologist, researcher, and Professor at a medical college. He had retired earlier that summer and had to give up his lab. That summer I spent considerable time driving back and forth between Princeton NJ and Springfield PA. Just after he died, I vividly recall sobbing while driving on I-95 and hearing Gilbert O. Sullivan sing I remember I cried when my father died. He was sixty five years old from Alone Again, Naturally. In order to keep this story more on the humorous side, I wish to mention another quote from this song. I enjoying playing the card game Hearts. Once an opponent intended to shoot the moon. He had only one loser in his hand. On trick two, I was void in spades, discarded a heart, someone else won the trick, and he was stuck with 25. I simply quoted a heart so badly broken.
 CHAPTER 4

Cambridge

I have a few musical recollections of my two years as a Postdoc at MIT. For my 26-th birthday a female friend played Lather by the Jefferson Airplane. I suppose the implication was that it was time for me to grow up. Another time Let ’em In was on the radio, and a friend Hans asked me as a test if I knew who Phil and Don were. By that time I was a big Everly Brothers fan, because their harmonies inspired the Beatles. I doubt that Martin Luther was also knocking at that door. Hans had a tape with some songs by the Chad Mitchell Trio, a group I had never heard of. But they did a version of Dona, Dona, Dona which was one of those songs I knew really well, but didn’t know how I knew it. The version by Joan Baez appears on my top hundred. In 2021 I wish that more human beings would treasure freedom and like the swallow learn to fly.

It is interesting to seek a precise definition of folk song. A web site by Mary Elizabeth called “What is a folk song” discusses whether Dona, Dona, Dona qualifies as a folk song by mistake, or instead by an expansion of the term from its original meaning. She also mentions Grandfather’s Clock as a song often mistaken for a folk song, at least by the more restrictive meaning. By that definition, it cannot be a folk song, because its authorship by Henry Clay Work is documented. The song once arose in a conversation with my former student Jim. I told him that its author was H. C. Work. He humorously suggested that he and his wife Amy should be getting royalties, as Work is Amy’s maiden name. BTW, she gave me permission to tell this story, as she has used her maiden name in published work.

The Kingston Trio provides a fascinating case study about this issue. Folk musicians from the 1950’s had contempt for the Kingston Trio because the trio was not sufficiently political and because it had much commercial success. The group, however, never regarded itself as recording “folk music”. It hit number 1 in 1958 with Tom Dooley. It deserves praise for its rendition of Where Have All the Flowers Gone?. The Kingston Trio recorded Seasons in the Sun years before Terry Jacks made it popular. The MTA song is enjoyable, despite an obvious flaw. Why doesn’t Charlie’s wife give him a nickel instead of a sandwich, so that he can get off of that train? I often rode the Red and Green lines in my two years in Cambridge. Dylan himself said “I liked the Kingston Trio. Even though their style was polished and collegiate, I liked most of their stuff anyway”. I personally adore many of their songs, in particular Greenback Dollar and its line “a wailing song and a good guitar - the only things I understand”. Oh, boy.

The calendar year 1977 was strange regarding pop music. Excellent songs such as New Kid in Town and Hotel California by the Eagles, Dancing Queen by Abba, and Southern Nights by Glen Campbell, hit the Billboard top spot that year for exactly one week. Yet somehow Debbie Boone’s rendition of You Light Up My Life was number 1 for TEN weeks. Egad.
One strange memory I have of those two years was going to hear Sleepy La Beef at a place called the Cantab Lounge. Three math graduate students and I screamed “Go Sleepy Go, Go Sleepy Go” when he performed Johnny B. Goode. He also sang my girl is red hot and boogie woogie country man. At one point he did a song ‘specially for those guys in the back’, but I don’t recall which one it was.

Near Harvard was a restaurant called Elsie’s. Mr. Kim, who was the strongest go player at the Harvard Go club, pronounced it something closer to Alice’s. I was with a fellow go player looking for a quick meal. I suggested Alice’s and was delighted that the reference was appreciated. The exchange evoked my pal Brad from high school who could recite Alice’s Restaurant in its entirety. I found out more than forty years later that Brad once wrote and performed a radio ad ending with "you can get anything repaired at Scott’s Vinyl Repair."

The biggest news from my two years in Boston was not the Bee Gees or Andy Gibb holding the Billboard top spot for 14 consecutive weeks beginning in February 1978. It was instead the blizzard of 1978. It started snowing on a Monday afternoon and 27 inches fell. A few days later a second snowfall of 26 inches hit. The Boston area was shut down for weeks and 29 people died. I remember that high school kids missed 19 days of school. Think about that: Tuesday through Friday in week 1 and all of the subsequent three weeks! Drifts were so high that people took bets on whether there would be a car under a random snow drift. Since there was a driving ban for weeks, there was no reason for car owners to bother uncovering their vehicles. I walked or took the subway everywhere I went during these two years, and I was not directly impacted. BUT, that winter was severe in many parts of the country and had a major indirect impact on me. The University of Illinois Mathematics Department had a position for a tenure track professor. They offered the job to someone else, who visited there during a similar blizzard in Illinois. His visit must have been a nightmare. I heard he was stranded in the old Williard airport (a truly dismal place) for several days. He naturally turned down the job offer, and I was next in line. My visit in March went well.
CHAPTER 5

A booth in the midwest

I moved to Illinois in August, 1978. The biggest difference was in the pretentiousness of my address. It changed from “Suite 47, 287 Harvard St., Cambridge MA 02138” to “Apt. 323, 502 W. Main St., Urbana IL 61801”. Sometime in 1978 I heard Crystal Gayle’s Ready for the Times to Get Better for the first time. I do not recall whether I first heard it while in Boston or while in Illinois, surely because things were going well for my personally at the time. I adore this record. I am haunted by its melody and lyrics, but somehow the song barely reached my top 150. I sometimes wonder; had I first heard it when I was down, would it have climbed higher on my list? Moving to the Midwest meant that “Changes are coming, no doubt”. I was optimistic that things were passing from good to a different good, and I am delighted to report that popular music played a big role in that passage.

One of the highlights of moving to Illinois was meeting Jalone, who seemed to be the Illinois version of Sterling. Jalone was a world famous statistician, but completely unpretentious. He was a huge Cubs fan and extremely knowledgeable about pop music. It was he who provided the WIND top 1000 of all time that started the resulting contest. That list included songs from 1955 to 1971. A group of us had to hear the songs without requesting them or playing them ourselves, and could then check them off. Number 1 on that list, and of course easy to hear, was Twist by Chubby Checker. We all laughed at the missing definite article. Some of the songs seemed self-titled. For example, it was hard to get Hard to Get by Giselle McKenzie. After a few years, everyone had heard at least 990. The only song missed by all was Open Up Your Heart by the Cowboy Church Sunday School, although one can hear that by listening to old Flintstone episodes. I thought the most over-ranked song on the list was Tossin’ and Turnin’ by Bobby Lewis.

In the spring of 1979, my second semester at Illinois, I was asked to teach two sections of a pre-calculus finite math class. There are several stories worth sharing about the intrusion of pop music in the class. An amusing development evolved from problem 11 on page 298 in edition 2 of the book Finite Math with Applications by Goodman and Ratti. The discussion concerned Markov chains. There were three tanks, called $I, J, K$, joined in battle, with tanks $J$ and $K$ united against tank $I$. After giving the probabilities of various scenarios, part (d) asked for the “probability that I survives”. Gloria Gaynor was dominating the airwaves at that time, so I slightly reworded the problem by asking “What is the probability that I will survive?” When I solved it in class, getting $\frac{2}{7}$ for the answer, I said that the only doubt I had about that answer was that, of each seven songs played on the radio, it seems that five of them were I Will Survive. Years later I roared with laughter at Charles Barkley’s rendition.

Later that year The Gambler seemed to be on all the time, and on every kind of station. Once in the fall of 1979 I turned on the radio and The Gambler was
on three stations simultaneously. I scrolled to a fourth, relieved that something else was on, but horrified to discover it was a new release by Kenny Rogers called *Coward of the County*. I had loved *Just Dropped In* back in 1968, when Rogers sang lead for the First Edition. The first time I heard “letters on a Dead End sign” I thought the words were “big black letters on a ding ding sign” and wondered what that was. I never understood the meaning of the lyrics until Brad explained them to me in 2021. While Rogers was more commercially successful as a solo artist, IMHO none of his solo efforts compared with *JDI*, and some were simply bad. Back to the Gambler: *Knowing what to throw away and knowing what to keep* would be a great lyric if it weren’t so trite.

The study of Markov chains includes a concept called an *absorbing state*. In that class I defined it by saying such a state was like the *Hotel California*: you can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave. That class also included various counting problems, including many featuring a standard deck of cards. I never had the guts to recite *Deck of Cards* in front of the room, but I often wanted to. Jalone once cracked me up by singing a version of *Duke of Earl* that began *Deck, deck, deck, deck of cards*. In that class I did allude to the Statler brothers singing “playing solitaire till dawn with a deck of 51”. I recommend also the rendition of *Flowers on the Wall* by Nancy Sinatra. One student mentioned the Statler Brothers on my course evaluation forms.

The two sections of this class met at 8:00 and 9:00 AM on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays. I held office hours at 10:00 AM and also sometimes on Tuesday and Thursday. I would go home for lunch and listen to the super oldies show on KMOX in St. Louis. I got lots of tough ones from the top 1000 list that way. I believe that I first heard *Haunted House* by Gene Simmons on that station, discovering that the lyric was actually “say yes I’ll be here when the morning comes”. I became quite familiar with *When* by the Kalin twins. One day I heard *Gotta Travel On*. It was one of those experiences where you hear a song you thought not only that you had never heard, but that you had never heard of. (A good circumstance for ending a sentence with a preposition.) Upon hearing it, I realized both that it was on the list, and that I knew many of the words. Sometime in 1958, as a 7 year old, I must have heard it, but to quote Dion, “I don’t know where or when”. It was that semester when Jalone used to play a pinball machine called “Trident”, named after the missile system. He commented “Dentists recommend Trident for those patients who play pinball”. Another pinball machine in the same arcade was called “Nugent”, after Ted Nugent of the Amboy Dukes. Come along if you dare.

A few months into the contest, both Jalone and I had heard exactly 499 of the 1000. Surely the most ignominious common miss was *Light My Fire*. We went to a place called Lox, Stock, and Bagel late one afternoon, and it came on the radio. I think we commented that baseball cards were such that number 500 was typically a superstar (examples include Mantle, Aaron, Marichal, Ryan). By a few months later we were both approaching 800. Poor Jetter, stationed in Germany, was falling behind. But he came to Champaign-Urbana for a few days, and Jalone, Jetter, and I spent hours on a Saturday listening to oldies stations. Although Jetter must have checked off 20 songs, my most vivid memory is when *Baby Can I Change My Mind* came on. I knew Jalone didn’t have it, but he didn’t bat an eye. I started teasing him for not realizing he was hearing something he needed. He defended himself by saying that such songs didn’t penetrate his hearing filter.
Jetter mentioned several interesting things; one of them concerned Jan and Dean. Jan Berry had written a song called *The Universal Coward*, which was a vitriolic attack on those who opposed the Vietnam War. To his credit Dean Torrance refused to be involved in recording it. The song itself received little airplay. According to Jetter, the 1978 made for TV film *Deadman’s Curve* about Jan and Dean gave an incorrect impression of Jan’s views on the Vietnam War. The three of us discussed various records from that era, including the spoken *An Open Letter to my Teenage Son* by Victor Lundberg. Jalone humorously referred to its response *A Letter to Dad* as “An Open Letter to my Teenage Father”. Wikipedia lists ten responses to Lundberg’s record. Perhaps they should be grouped together as *open letters to teenage fathers*. I vaguely recall that the three of us also discussed the atrocious response song *Dawn of Correction*.

Sterling lives in Pennsylvania and got rather competitive in this contest. Rumor has it that, when he was driving in the Appalachian mountains, his car radio caught the sounds of Ray Durkee’s Sunday at the Memories. Knowing it would fade out if he kept driving, he pulled into a turn-off and played his transistor radio for the duration of the show. This circumstance, however, was NOT when he got *When* by the Kalin twins. He was at a statistician’s meeting in Detroit, listening to the radio station CKLW from Windsor Ontario and a song came on with the lyric “When, when, when you smile” over and over again. He wondered what was the title (duh!) and who was the artist. He called the radio station and the DJ verified that he had played *When* by the Kalin twins. The call appeared on Sterling’s hotel bill as an international call, and he had to justify making such a call when his expenses were reimbursed. Cell phones have really changed things.

In the summer of 1979 I flew home to Springfield PA to see my Mom. The blue transistor radio was still available and one night I was listening to a Phillies game, played at San Diego. My favorite player, Mike Schmidt, had tripled and homered; the Phils led 5-3 going into the bottom of the eighth. But Dave Winfield hit a dinger to tie things up. The Phils didn’t score in the top of the ninth, and things headed to the bottom of the ninth tied at 5. Ron Reed, an NBA player after college, had switched to baseball and was an effective pitcher for a long time. He struck out Rollie Fingers, the opposing relief pitcher, to begin that half inning, but the next player reached second on an error (scored as a single and an error by the shortstop). The next three hitters were Ozzie Smith, Gene Tenace, and Winfield. Any sensible manager would hope to retire Smith (a great fielder, but hitting .192 at the time) and Tenace to end the inning. But Danny Ozark ordered an intentional walk to Smith. After Tenace popped out, Winfield singled in the winning run. The FM station was directly opposite the AM station on the radio. Disgusted with the loss and Ozark’s decision making, I pressed one button and switched from AM to FM. *One More Kiss* by Paul McCartney and Wings came on. Several years later I told Sterling the story, and he had done precisely the same thing. Decades later I read that Mike Schmidt had said this particular game, which Sterling and I call the *One More Kiss* game, caused the team to lose respect for their manager. Ozark was fired later that summer and replaced by Dallas Green. One year later Green led them to their first World Series triumph.

Early in my time at Illinois I sat in on a graduate class in the Physics department. The professor used what is called classical tensor notation to express all the formulas. Once he used some more modern (but not really state of the
art) mathematical notation and boasted “I’m using your notation. What do you mathematicians think of that?” I responded instantly: “to quote Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, ‘A taste of honey is worse than none at all’.” I have found other occasions to use the same line.

Illinois hired Mike White as its football coach in 1980. A huge campaign erupted in Champaign. Suddenly The 80’s belong to the Illini was painted on store windows throughout campus town and bumper stickers with these words were the rage, “uh uh”. The phrase was spoken on local radio even more than the Gambler had been played. By then McCartney’s Give Ireland Back to the Irish was passe, but I may have helped it regain some popularity with my parody: “The 80’s belong to the Illini. Make the 80’s Illini this decade.” and the subsequent “Illinois you are tremendous, nobody knows like me.” The football team under White improved and reached the Rose bowl on January 1, 1984, where it was crushed by a lower-ranked squad from UCLA. White resigned in 1987 after being cited for recruiting violations. He was 47-41-3 in his years at Illinois, losing all three bowl games. I don’t think any historian would write, without irony, “The 80’s belonged to the Illini”. I still hum the tune decades later. While this essay concerns music and not athletics, I should say that Illinois often has had excellent basketball teams, for example the Flyin’ Illini in 1989 and the national runner-up in 2005.

Champaign-Urbana was a good place for music in the first half of the 1980’s. For example, REO Speedwagon had several smash hits, reaching number 1 on Billboard in both 1981 and 1985; this group is commonly described as a soft rock quintet from Champaign, Illinois. The name comes from Ransom E. Olds, after whom the Oldsmobile was named. The group formed at the University of Illinois in the late 1960’s but didn’t become mainstream until about 1980. Gary Richrath joined in the group around 1971, and Kevin Cronin a year later. The group was well-known in Champaign-Urbana throughout the seventies, but it took them until 1980 to hit the Billboard Charts. I think they played on campus when I was first there, but I wasn’t paying enough attention. I do remember a local crossword puzzle which used the clue Speedwagon for the answer REO. Also in 1981 a local group that called themselves Champaign reached number 12 on Billboard with How ’bout us. Alison Krauss and Union Station got going around this time as well. I find her version of I Will to be quite good; she obviously liked the song, although I once read that some music critic called McCartney’s lyrics “the sickliest cliche”. I never saw her perform.

In Spring 1983 I went back to Princeton for a semester. I was completely out of it regarding popular music that term; for example I never heard of Billie Jean back then, and it was the number one record on Billboard for seven weeks. When I looked up this information in 2021, I saw that Billie Jean and Beat It combined for ten out of eleven weeks at the top. The song in between was Come on Eileen by the Dexys Midnight Runners. Until seeing these names in print as I was typing this paragraph, I had heard of neither the song nor the artist. I played it as I typed, and it was completely unfamiliar! Later that year, after I returned to Illinois, I became aware of two songs from 1983 I actually liked, Total Eclipse of the Heart and Making Love Out of Nothing at All. Sometimes I sing the Italian words niente affatto when I think of this latter tune.

While I was in my mid-thirties, a local radio station played an eclectic mix of the old and new. They had a contest: the first caller who named the Penguin’s
greatest hit would win a free haircut. I was the first caller, naming Earth Angel. I frequented a restaurant bar near my office; the next time I went there the girls behind the counter broke into a chorus of Earth Angel. It was especially good because my last name means of the angel in Italian. I wanted to tell the story. When I began to tell it to Jalone, he quickly answered in his Lou Boudreau voice, “a grand slam home run, Lou”, thinking the Penguin was Ron Cey.

My stunt of quoting from an obscure song can be amusing. I do it for fun, mostly for my own benefit, not expecting it to get noticed. I suppose people do it to me far more than I realize. Once at Illinois, a new post-doc called Slice arrived. While hanging out, at the restaurant bar mentioned above, with a motley crew of math people, someone asked him what did you do there or some such thing. Slice dead-panned “We laughed, told a few jokes, but that didn’t ease my pain.” I was on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. Years later he claimed to actually like the song Have You Seen Her. Slice also seems to have best described the day you know you’ve finished a Math thesis or paper, “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to prove”. Thinking of its author evokes the tagline for the movie Convoy: “starring Kris Kristofferson, Ali MacGraw, and a thousand screamin’ trucks”.

One time in 1988 I turned on the AM radio and heard Sky High. I felt somewhat vainglorious that I knew a current song. After it was over, the DJ said “That’s Jigsaw, from 1975”. I was thrown down in a spin. My student Jim cracked up when I told him the story. He had been a DJ on his college radio station. Years later he asked me for my list of top songs. Of my top ten he (and his wife Amy agreed) found only one of my songs incongruous: Washington Square by the Village Stompers. It is my favorite pop instrumental. Decades later I discovered a version with lyrics by the Ames Brothers. The lyric “we cannonballed into New York on good old US 1” reminded me of a time when I was a little kid and my parents drove the family from Springfield PA to New York on US 1.

Part of the tenure process involved my writing research and teaching state-ments. I had several colleagues named Robert. One of them informed me of this task by placing a piece of yellow paper in my slot in the mail room. It was addressed to “Sloop John D”. I was surprised at the time that this particular colleague knew any pop song, but years later I was reminded of proof that I should have known. He had altered lyrics both to Hey Jude and to Jesus Christ Superstar to tease another colleague. Once this unnamed colleague asked a pretentious question at the collo-quium, which was held in a room seating around 200 people. I was on the other side of the room, and I quietly whistled the first few bars of Hey Jude. Robert turned to me and said “You be good”. Years later, in a tribute to yet another colleague who had passed away, Robert quoted from Those Were the Days.

Back then the mail room was the most important place in the department. We got all our information from there. The technology revolution changed things, but I still go into that room out of habit. Only seldom is there anything in my box. One can also photocopy and scan there. In 2017 one of the student helpers in the mail room had an I Am the Walrus sticker on her computer. We discussed music from all eras. I told her the Becky Blessing saga, and she agreed to pretend to be Becky if Sterling ever came to Urbana.

1985-86 was a sabbatical year for me. I spent it primarily in New Jersey. The Princeton Univ. radio station WPRB FM introduced me to the song Bitchin’ Camaro which I still find hilarious. It was considered by some to an important spoof
on white trash culture, by others to be surf punk, and by a few to have a great bluesy bassline. Whenever I meet someone named Jack, I ask “Hey Jack, what’s happening” knowing full well that no one will get the reference. I also remember hearing Hendrix’s Are You Experienced on that radio station. Any station that would play both of these tunes could play anything, with the possible exception of Open Up Your Heart by the Cowboy Church Sunday School, the only song I never got during the top 1000 contest.

I returned to Illinois in the summer of 1986. I paid little attention to pop music at that time, although I did like Manic Monday and Walk Like an Egyptian by the Bangles. I wish they had stayed together longer. A big hit that year was Rock Me, Amadeus but its appeal was lost on me. I was also aware of the remake of Venus. The original, far superior IMHO, hit number 1 in 1970.

Jalone and I often played tennis. He had some clever ways to announce the score. For example, love two was Donna Summer and two love was Summer Donna. An overtime score of 7-to-6 was trombones and its opposite was bonetroms. If the next game tied things up, we would say sprite. Jalone used Sandberg for set-point and double Sandberg for double set-point. For those non-baseball fans, a game played in 1984 is commonly known as The Sandberg game. On June 23, 1984, Ryne Sandberg, en route to an MVP season, went 5-for-6 with game-tying home runs against Cardinals closer Bruce Sutter in both the ninth and tenth innings to lead the Cubs past the Cards. When either Jalone or I hit a shot way out, the other would somehow mention Afternoon Delight, referring to the line “sky rockets in flight”. When Jalone once missed a shot that was right in his wheelhouse, he exclaimed “Richard Wheelhouse Nixon”. I laughed so hard I had to call a time out.

I spent three months in the winter of 1988 at the Mittag-Leffler Institute near Stockholm. I stayed in a single room that had once been servant’s quarters. At some point during my stay, Steve B. arrived and got to stay in a several bedroom apartment where the famous Harvard professor Yum-Tong Siu was also staying. Steve told me that his roommate was a boy named Siu. A few years later Siu and I co-organized a meeting in honor of two famous mathematicians. Siu was at an airport and his flight was slightly delayed, so he had a few extra minutes. He called and asked me to do something (I forget what) right away. He made it seem urgent. It was a small hassle, but I did it immediately. Then he didn’t get back to me for weeks. I shrugged it off by saying “Life ain’t easy with a co-organizer named Siu”.

I told these stories years later to a group of mathematicians and discovered that my Swedish friend Peter had seen Johnny Cash perform A Boy Named Sue and also Folsom Prison Blues live in Sweden. I never saw Cash perform, but at least the family saw a live performance of the musical Million Dollar Quartet and we visited the Johnny Cash museum in Nashville.

In July 1989 the American Mathematical Society ran a three week long summer meeting at Santa Cruz. I was a member of the organizing committee. At one point that spring I had sent an e-mail to the other co-organizers which I ended with “To quote T-Rex, Bang a Gong, Get it On” because I felt we were working too slowly. The head organizer (yet another) Steven replied to the effect that we were in trouble if we were quoting T-Rex. I have a faint memory that this particular Steven was a Del Shannon fan. The members of the organizing committee arrived in Santa Cruz a day early and had breakfast together at a nice place on or near the boardwalk. I felt as if I had been transported back to the era when the Beach Boys ruled the
pop scene. That day I saw someone in his fifties, carrying a surfboard, who looked like Mike Love had looked in his twenties.

One of my PhD students in the early 1990’s was an Indonesian dude named Marcus Setya-Budhi Wono. I used to hum to myself “Set ya budhi wono” to the tune of “Get your motor running” from Born to be Wild. Budhi won the UIUC intramural badminton championship one year, and he produced a nice thesis. In particular he gave a complete list of all the proper monomial mappings from the two-ball to the five-ball. Another PhD student of mine at that time was Asher. One time he was saying something and I was objecting, sufficiently strenuously that he began chanting Sit down John from the musical 1776. Sometime later my wife and I took him and his wife to a production of 1776. I cannot resist another story about Asher. Some years before, on student evaluations for a class I had taught, a student wrote that the professor was hard to understand, and that he used big words like pendent. (sic) I had told this to Asher, who thereafter called me Penndantic. I naturally tried to fight back by calling him Harvardantic, but it lacked the same ring and never caught on. Asher suggested that I should have used Harvardontic, as it sounds like a member of an a capella group. Returning to the music from 1776 might be a mistake. A review by Vincent Canby said “The music is resolutely unmemorable. The lyrics sound as if they’d been written by someone high on root beer.”

In spring 1990 I had a one semester sabbatical at Washington Univ. in St. Louis, during which I wrote my first math book. I often ate at Blueberry Hill, a place filled with pop music memorabilia and where Chuck Berry often played, even as he reached his upper eighties. Blueberry Hill is located near the St. Louis Walk of Fame. Studying the list of inductees is lots of fun. The musicians honored there include Scott Joplin, Chuck Berry, Johnnie Johnson, the Isley Brothers, the Fifth Dimension, Nelly, and the father of Bobby McFerrin.

I cannot resist mentioning that Yogi Berra is also on the Walk of Fame. It is often even more delightful to quote Yogi in common conversation than it is to quote the lyrics of popular songs. Berra once advised to never answer an anonymous letter. Nowadays that advice is on the mark; we all get large numbers of anonymous spam e-mails, and it is surely a mistake to reply. As far as music is concerned, I can imagine Yogi saying you can hear a lot by just listening.

Three mathematicians from Wisconsin were being honored; in my talk there I began by telling the audience who Yogi Berra was and providing a few of his better quotes. I continued with “Yogi Berra was being honored and he began his speech with I’d like to thank the baseball writers for making this night necessary. While our students don’t know the difference between necessary and sufficient, Yogi didn’t know the difference between necessary and possible. With that in mind, I would like to thank the organizing committee for making this conference possible, and I would like to thank Alex, Jean-Pierre, and Pat for making this conference necessary.”

The song Blueberry Hill itself was first recorded circa 1940, by people such as Gene Autry and Glenn Miller. It is the version by Fats Domino though that ranks among the biggest influences in popular music history. In addition to his many hits, Domino earns points for being the inspiration for Ernest Evans changing his name to Chubby Checker. An urban legend claims that Pat Boone attempted to sanitize Domino’s Ain’t that a shame by singing “Isn’t it a shame”, but that claim
seems to be false. I have wondered whether George Harrison’s Isn’t it a pity isn’t it a shame is any way connected to Ain’t that a shame.

During my time at Illinois, I occasionally drove to W. Lafayette to visit colleagues Steve B. and Dave at Purdue. The first time I passed a Cargill plant in Linden IN, I was reminded of the obscure song Skip a Rope by Henson Cargill. It seems that I must have said “Listen to the children while they play” sometime in my life, but that this obscure reference was missed. I first heard the Beatles version of I’ll Be On My Way while driving to Purdue; I had known that the Beatles had given the tune to Billy J. Kramer and that a Beatles recording existed, but I never imagined hearing it. Today of course it is easy to find on-line, and it is one of my favorite songs of all time. It seems to be a tribute to Buddy Holly.

I want to tell the reader another Purdue story. My co-author Dave is a professor there. He once told me about the first time time he had visited Purdue to give a job talk. He had rented a car from Indianapolis and he heard Treat Her Right by Roy Head on the car ride. Dave was primarily interested in classical music, but he was sufficiently bemused that he told me. It is the only song I know with the lyric if you practice my method. As I am typing this story, It’s Now or Never is playing. Dave plays an excellent O Sole Mio on the piano.

On one of my Purdue trips in the 1980’s, I met Neal, then a grad student at Purdue, in an elevator. Neal, now a Professor at The Ohio State University, is a huge Dylan fan and appreciates My Back Pages as much as I do. In this case ∞ ≥ ∞. Some years later Neal described an occurrence at a math meeting as follows: He was “being ass-kissed by a group of younger people in a special session, between talks. One of them was going on and on, spouting nonsense about math he/she didn’t understand, but still wanted to pronounce about.” Neal went on to say that D’Angelo “came by, tasked with getting us to rejoin the session for the next talk, and loudly said let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late. Neal laughed out loud, the orator was shut down, and the group rejoined the session.” When Neal was asked if D’Angelo were always so poetic he said yes, knowing that it is always poetic to quote Dylan. It could have been worse for the person pronouncing, I could have quoted from Positively 4th Street.
CHAPTER 6

Transition to fatherhood

Both my brother and mother passed away in January of 1991. A month before I had sung Blue Christmas to her in the hospital. Her hospitalization greatly stressed my brother, who was still living at home, and he died unexpectedly of a heart attack ten days before she died. In the days between I sang Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past to her. It was played again at her funeral. I spent much of that winter and spring back in the house where I had grown up. My wife-to-be taught my course back in Illinois. I remember almost nothing about the pop music of the time, except that I heard Don’t Give Us a Reason by Hank Williams Jr., as the Gulf War had begun two days before my Mom died. The rhyme of poison gas and sassafras helped me through a tough time. I also remember the following amusement. Sometime later that year I had gone back to Illinois and then returned to Pennsylvania. I called Sterling on the phone, said just got home from Illinois, and he quickly responded, bother me tomorrow. Both these lines come from Looking Out My Back Door by CCR.

I got married in 1992, bought a house, and stopped listening to pop music. In 2021, I looked up the Billboard top 100 list from 1994, the year our first child was born. The number one song of the year, and two others in the top ten, were by Ace of Base, a group name I had never heard! I played The Sign and I don’t think I had ever heard it before. Some of the other group names were familiar to me, but the specific songs were not.

As my kids grew up, through them I became a bit more aware of current pop music. I looked at the Billboard lists from 2010 through 2014 and things were more familiar. For example, I saw and heard a version of Dynamite by an elementary school class including one of my kids. I knew Ludacris was from Champaign. My kids thought that Don’t Wanna Go Home was new with Jason Derulo until I made them play Harry Belafonte on YouTube. Another time I heard a sixth grade class do Cups; the kids were surprised when I told them that the song essentially came from the 1930’s. My daughter Lucie accused me of being obsessed with Ke$ha because I knew who she was. I had seen her on Dick Clark New Year’s Rockin’ Eve on 12-31-2010, one of the few things I watch other than sports. I would have preferred listening to top 100 countdowns. Lucie took dancing lessons for 14 years. From the yearly recitals, which featured kids from 2 to 18, I became acquainted with some of the current popular songs, discovered some older hits I had missed such as Car Wash, and became reacquainted with the Hokey Pokey.

By now I am certainly an L 7. It is generally a mistake to criticize something one doesn’t know well, but I feel it is accurate to say that popular music has declined since the era of my top listening. I once defined getting older as no longer liking current popular music. Perhaps, however, it simply isn’t as good. When the Snake Charmer song morphs into Take it Off, you know you are in trouble. If that doesn’t
convince you, try playing Friday by Rebecca Black. I did some volunteer teaching for gifted high school students. One of the problems I posed was:

EXERCISE 1. Rebecca Black wants to know if there is a Friday the 13-th sometime each year. Can you help her?

By the way, the answer is yes, whether or not it is leap year. The best approach is to start with the date of the first Friday in March and thus avoid having to reason separately during leap year. Comparing Friday by Rebecca Black with Friday on My Mind by the Easybeats provides convincing evidence of the decline.

It is unreasonable to expect four children to embrace the same songs I do. (It is even more so when my wife dislikes both folk music and the Beatles. She and I both do like Another You.) As of March 2021, the kids are now 19, 21, 23, and 26. There are stories. Lucie’s middle name is Jeanne. When a teacher sang “Cheer up Lucie Jeanne” to her, she knew the reference. She once went to a dance with a guy named Kai, who had a younger brother named Kaelen. I amused myself by calling them the Kalin twins. When Henry was little we played tapes of Herman’s Hermits just so he could hear I’m Henry VIII, I Am. His older brother Paul got The End of the World into his head, not realizing it, perhaps similar to my knowing Gotta Travel On and Dona, Dona, Dona without knowing how I knew them. Paul heard TEOTW when he was 21, wondering how he knew it. Once Henry, Paul, and I were in San Diego and we drove to LA. The drive back was a bit stressful, as “LA is a great big freeway”. I told them they had to keep me awake and engaged. To do so, Paul played his Beatles tape for me! I hadn’t known he had such a thing, and it kept me going for the whole ride. Henry adores such Beatles songs as Girl, HTAE, and IIF. The oldest, John, likes ADITL. He also likes Losing My Religion, which is one of the few songs since 1990 I have liked. Once in 1991 I was playing a go game against a druggy type would-be musician. Even though it was unsound, I invaded and lived in a corner he had controlled, just so I could say “that’s me in the corner”.

My kids know all sorts of newer things I cannot stand. John clearly enjoyed the first time I was Rick-rolled. BTW, I find it incredible that the internet meme developed 19 years after Never Gonna Give You Up hit the charts. Lucie would sing along when Icona Pop came on the radio. Paul and Henry love to freestyle rap. Henry attended a Smino concert. He told the lead singer that it was his birthday and was invited on stage to dance. Once I was mentioning how songs in the mid-fifties tended to be number one on the Billboard charts longer than songs later on. I suggested that it was a matter of competition. Henry then told me about Old Town Road, the current record holder for most consecutive weeks at number 1. Each time it looked like the record would drop from the top spot, a slightly new version would be released and it would stay there. It seemed illegitimate to me, but it did reinforce my thoughts about lack of competition. What else was out then? The very word “competition” evokes for me the time my boy scout troop held an “inter-patrol competition” (sic).

Paul and Henry ran cross-country in middle school, and the mascot was a tiger. I heard Eye of the Tiger many times back then, filling in a gap in my knowledge of pop music from more than 25 years earlier. It made me wonder what else had been out in 1982. I remember only a few of the top songs of the year; the only song from then I ever find myself whistling is the theme from Chariots of Fire. After
seeing the film back then, I recall going to the Communications Library, locating a copy of the 1924 London Times, and reading about the 1924 Olympics. Nowadays of course such information is readily available on-line.

Henry had a high school soccer teammate named David Sun. He played defense, but one particular time he dribbled the ball the length of the pitch. As he neared the opposition goal, I sang out Here Comes the Sun to the delight of the other parent spectators. Sun then scored! One of the other parents was from Australia. I told him once that the Seekers were one of my favorite groups of all time. He told me that his parents had liked them. I felt old. BTW, the best song to come out of soccer is Wavin’ Flag by K’Naan. That it only reached 82 on Billboard is a national disgrace.
Additional thoughts

A coauthor of mine got married in 1998. At his wedding he sang a version of Billy Joel’s *The Longest Time* to his bride. Most of the lyrics were unchanged, but he did sing “there would still be math books left to write” (A great take-off on a great line). Several other Billy Joel songs are worth a mention. *Piano Man* is excellent, although I didn’t hear it when it was first out in 1974. By a few years later, however, I knew it well and even had occasion to change its lyrics. I won’t offer them here; it was a song that I only sang to just a few. I later taped *She’s Always a Woman* and played it often my first year in Urbana. It well described someone I knew in those days. Joel had at least 33 songs that hit the top 40, and several that reached number 1. I have a feeling that he would have ripped my charts if his songs had been out when I was actually listening. This feeling suggests a fundamental flaw in list making. Yes, the very top songs would be there no matter what. Some good but not great songs appear because of the context in which I first heard them, and other possibly better tunes don’t, because it must have been the wrong time.

BTW, I have been called Dr. D’Angelo and Dr. D., but I don’t recall ever having been called Dr. John. I do know for sure that I have never been called Dr. Hook. *Cover of the Rolling Stone* was a hit a few months before Dr. John’s hit *Right Place Wrong Time*. I remember once playing pick-up basketball with three of my usual pals. We picked up a dude named Sugar for the fifth. I wanted him to inform the other team that we were hot stuff, so I said “Hey sugar, tell them who we are.” It didn’t happen, but I would have paid a decent amount of cash if he had answered “Well, we’re big rock singers, we got golden fingers” or something similar. It irks me a bit that Billboard classifies *Cover of the Rolling Stone* as a novelty song. They seem to have it in for Shel Silverstein, as *A Boy Named Sue* is also listed that way. On the other hand, they regard *The Unicorn* (a hit by the Irish Rovers, but written and done first by Silverstein) as a typical song.

A good friend Kenneth got married in 1999 in a beautiful outdoor ceremony in Santa Barbara, California. The words he read at the wedding were the lyrics to *In My Life*. Without explaining why, let me say that it fit beautifully. He and his wife Lynn, whom he has known since kindergarten, now have two college age boys. Kenneth and Lynn recently sold the house in which she had grown up. Two posters remained on the wall of her room. One was Bjorn Borg. The other was Davy Jones. Years later Davy’s daughter became a good friend of theirs. Kenneth told me that he was embarrassed that both he and Lynn had independently liked the Monkees TV show. I saw it at most twice, but I now often watch YouTube videos of songs played during the show. Two of my favorites are those of *The Girl I Knew Somewhere* and *Sometime in the Morning*. 
Kenneth and I once had a lengthy discussion about the movie Yesterday from 2019. We both found it great; our biggest disagreement was over Kate McKinnon. He thought she was over-the-top and therefore a negative in the film. I thought she was over-the-top and a positive in the film. Himesh Patel was spectacular; his heartfelt rendition of *Help!* was perhaps the biggest highlight of a film with many great scenes and sounds. I even enjoyed Patel as a grade school music teacher; *Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da* seemed the perfect choice in that context. It is well-known that John Lennon hated this song, but he was just jealous of Paul’s versatility.

In 2018 I was fortunate enough to attend several mathematical meetings in Europe. While in Slovenia, I chatted with a group of younger mathematicians who were discussing (in English) popular music. I told them I was a big Beatles fan and I didn’t know too much about the current scene. Someone asked me if I liked any song from the 21st century. I admitted to having liked *Viva la Vida*, which had been released in 2008. One of the young people I didn’t know mentioned that it was plagiarized. Several different artists have accused Coldplay of ripping off the tune. At some point I read about the suit brought by Joe Satriani and settled out of court. There is no doubt in my mind that the similarity is more than coincidental. On the other hand, writing brilliant lyrics to an instrumental is impressive. Although the French Revolution cannot be televised, it can be put to song.

Later on that trip I was hanging out by myself in Brno, in the Czech Republic. I listened to an outdoor musical festival, with many different performers, for an hour, and recognized only one song. It was a Czech version of the German folk song *Muss I Denn*, which had been made into *Wooden Heart* and a hit by both Joe Dowell and Elvis Presley around 1960. Speaking of the King, everyone knows that *It’s Now or Never* is lifted from *O Sole Mio*. Yet I have seen music books that credit Schroeder and Gold for both the music and the lyrics to *It’s Now or Never*. According to Wikipedia, Aaron Schroeder once appeared on the CBS television game show *To Tell The Truth* along with two imposters.

On many occasions I have attended mathematics meetings at the Radio Hotel in Serra Negra, Brazil. The word *radio* refers to the low level of radioactivity in the water there, and not to anything related to music. A band playing at that hotel once played *Guantanamera* in Portuguese. I recalled from high school that Jamison pretended the lyric was *once on a meadow*. I doubt many people sing it as *a girl from Gitmo*. I also heard a barely recognizable rendition of *Hotel California*. Serra Negra features a very large statue of Jesus; participants of the meetings often hike to it from the hotel. One year a bunch of us did so, but we returned in several groups. At a later meal, people were asking each other what those in the other groups had done on the return walk. A few people had taken a zip line ride. I reported that *we stopped into a church*. I was surprised and delighted when Ravi followed up with *that you met along the way*. He was a graduate student at University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Perhaps he was dreaming about returning home, although *California Dreamin’* had been a hit 25 years before he was born.

One of my former postdocs, George, had received his PhD from UCSD. After spending three years at Illinois and some time elsewhere, he took a permanent job in 2013 as a professor at Oklahoma State University. He has done well there, perhaps partly because of my advice to him when he accepted the job. I said “It’s no *Rose Garden*. You better look before you leap, Stillwater runs deep.” George taught me the meaning of the computer science term *easter egg*. I hope he never
sneaked one into any of our joint papers. He and I do agree that *math doesn’t have to be so melancholy.*

It is good to know some pop music while at the ballpark. For example, when a player named Jim Morrison came to bat in Philadelphia in 1978, the organist would play *Light My Fire* (which was a hit in 1967). The organist at Wrigley field would play *The Lonely Bull* for Leon Durham. Larry Bowa’s wife was named Sheena. Once the organist played *Morning Train (Nine to Five)* by Sheena Easton when Bowa was up. Sales of *Sweet Caroline* rose dramatically when Neil Diamond performed it at Fenway Park a few days after the Boston Marathon bombing. Diamond donated all the royalties to victims. Nowadays there is an MLB walk-up music database. For example, consider the world champion LA Dodgers. Corey Seager has *Let the Moonshine,* Justin Turner has *Old Town Road,* and Cody Bellinger has *Hotel California* as their walk-up songs.

My colleague Thomas N. occupied an office next to mine for many years. He was a brilliant mathematician and teacher who developed brain cancer and died at age 48 on Feb. 1, 2020. He left behind a wonderful wife and two boys. Thomas and I talked of many things besides math, including Lewis Carroll but neither cabbages nor kings, and popular music often arose. We would start talking about something related to teaching, and somehow things would evolve into references to various songs. For example, once I said about someone “this guy is a bad mathematician”; Thomas muttered “shut your math” and paused to see if I knew he were quoting *Shaft.* I believe I replied “I can dig it”. The first few times I heard the theme from Shaft I wasn’t sure if the lyric were “Watch your mouth”, “Wash your mouth”, or “Shut your mouth”. Another time Thomas and I had discussed Homer Simpson and *In a gadda da vida;* one morning I arrived by 8 AM, he was already in his office, and he started doing (the word ‘singing’ isn’t quite right) the “dun dun da da da dun dun dun dun” part. I am thankful he did it for about 17 seconds and not for 17 minutes. Thomas once made a tape of some popular music for me. No one else would have included the Beatles, Isaac Hayes, Ricky Nelson, Emil and Friends, and Iron Butterfly in one tape. By the way, did you notice that the previous list provides strong evidence of the superiority of the Oxford comma? Without it, one might think “Emil and Friends and Iron Butterfly” was a single entity, or perhaps that “Friends and Iron Butterfly” was a band name.

In teaching mathematics courses I often thought of Joe South and his hit *Games People Play.* I would tell students to *say what they mean* and *mean what they say.* The lyrics of this tune are excellent; I wish it would be re-released in 2021. Professors *wile away the hours in their ivory towers* having no idea what is going on in society. *It’s a dirty rotten shame.*

Sterling made an interesting observation about my list of top songs. The list includes *Yesterday, When I Was Young,* and *Yesterday When I Was Young.* Now a septuagenarian, I cry whenever I hear Roy Clark sing “The time has come for me to pay for yesterday, when I was young”. The friends I met have drifted away and (like Otis) my loneliness won’t leave me alone. Like both Elvis and Roy, but in different songs, the stage is bare and I am standing there. BTW, I still find that rhyme among the lamest of all time. Among the best is Ray Davies singing “And he goes to the regatta; and he adores the girl next door, ‘cause he’s dying to get at her” in *A Well Respected Man.* The song *Eve of Destruction* also exhibits many great rhymes.
Which is true? To list is the reason I exist or To exist is the reason I list? I can imagine Frankie Valli singing “To give, is the reason I live.” I regard it as one of his worst efforts. It surprised me that no Four Seasons song made it to the WXPN top 2020. Adding to the surprise is that Jersey boy Bruce Springsteen did better than anyone other than the Beatles. There is a proverb in the game of go: Big groups don’t die. I used to sing it to the tune of Big Girls Don’t Cry. When Tony Orlando came on the radio I would sing Dawn, go away. Thus the Four Seasons arise more for me than Vivaldi does.

By name, but not musically, the Four Seasons evoke to a small extent Donovan’s effort Season of the Witch. It is natural to discuss the role of Donovan Leitch in this story. In college I wrote Sterling a letter that began by saying that I hoped he would not find my epistle too dippy. I have read both that Dylan despised Donovan and that they had developed a friendly rapport. I learned the word dessicate in 1967, when I had bought Mellow Yellow and read a newspaper article about its meaning. I am still mad about saffron risotto. Catch the Wind still haunts me today. I once paraphrased Sunshine Superman during a go game and my opponent got the reference. He seemed to dreamily drift back to 1966 and happily started making mistakes. Maybe he was thinking about Sue Lyon.

The song Till has the line “You are my reason to live, all I own I would give, just to have you adore me”. That is how I feel about making lists. The version released by the Angels was spelled with just one L. Another lyric from that song, till the rivers flow upstream, evokes the time in Fall 1981 I saw a tidal bore while at a conference in Hangzhou, in China. Every September a wave heads the wrong direction on China’s Qiantang River, because of tides entering from Hangzhou Bay. The conference participants took a long bus ride to some location along the river. We were seated in some kind of makeshift bleachers and fed moon cake while locals stood crammed. It was both an example and a counterexample of social distancing. Steve B. and I went into the crowd and threw frisbees. After awhile the wave came. On some years it reaches 30 feet, but that year, in the words of renowned Mathematician Eli Stein, “it was a crashing bore”.

While on the China trip, I sent a few postcards. I sent Sterling one with a big picture of Mao, and I wrote “if you go carrying pictures of chairman Mao, you ain’t gonna make it with anyone anyhow”. Another had a picture of someone pushing a barge using a long pole. I sent it to a rock musician I barely knew, but who had once told me his favorite song line came from Sea Cruise by Frankie Ford. So I wrote “Let me take you on a sea cruise. Frankie Ford”. A few years later I saw this person on a train heading to Chicago. I asked him if he had ”got my postcard”. After some time and a few hints he realized what I meant. He had thought one of his band mates had sent something to the Shanghai post office and asked them to send this card back. Not many Americans got to go to China in 1981.

The participants of that meeting stayed in the West Lake hotel, but we did visit the Hangzhou Hotel one evening; a band was playing an instrumental that sounded familiar to several of us. It took me several minutes to identify it: YMCA. Decades later my kids were adept at the hand movements needed to make these letters. I found it amusing that none of them had heard of Macho Man. The Tide is High had been made into a hit by Blondie in 1980, but no one mentioned it at the tidal bore. It is possible that an instrumental version of this tune was played at the Hangzhou Hotel, but I am not certain. The original version was released by
a Jamaican group called the Paragons in 1967 but never charted in the USA. A group called the \textit{Paradons} did reach number 18 in 1960 with a doo wop song called \textit{Diamonds and Pearls}.

A mathematician Denny told me the following story. Sometime back in the late 1960's, in Palo Alto, California, he was waiting for some takeout Chinese food. In front of him was one of the best folk singers of all time, Joan Baez, a true heroine for him. He was so flustered he couldn’t start a conversation. Finally, as Joan got her food and was leaving, Denny worked up the courage to say ‘I love you’. She replied ‘I love you too’. By then, Joan had already paid” for her Chinese food. \textit{Diamonds and Rust} is my top pop song by a female artist, but this story has nothing to do with why.

My dentist is a former star swimmer from southern California. She swam for U Cal Irvine and got her dental degree at Southern Cal, where Paul and Henry are now in college. She invariably tells the patient what is about to happen, including things like “I am going to rotate your chair slightly”. At a recent appointment when I was getting prepped for a temporary crown, she said “there are going to be vibrations”. I said “I hope they are good vibrations” and she didn’t react. Later on in my appointment I got out my phone and played \textit{Good Vibrations} for her and the dental assistant. Apparently the story spread throughout the office. When I went back for the permanent crown, the other dentist referred to herself as a midwest farmer’s daughter, which is true. I said only that midwest farmer’s daughters make their patients feel alright. I left unsaid “I wish they all could be California girls”.

The year 2021 provides many more stories. For example, some wag produced a sign saying that \textit{The employee shortage is so bad that long haired freaky people can now apply}. On a chilly spring day in April, 2021 one of the clues in the New York Times Crossword Puzzle was \textit{Davis who sang Can I Change my Mind}. The answer is of course \textit{Tyrone}. A harder clue would have been \textit{Fetson first name}, as the birth-name of Tyrone Davis was \textit{Tyrone D. Fetson}. Jalone informed me of the clue over e-mail by writing “this time I got it” referring to his failure to hear the tune back during the Jetter visit. In his reply to my reply, he mentioned that he didn’t recall the discussion that day about \textit{Dawn of Correction}, adding \textit{if only I could Turn Back The Hands of Time}.

In May 2021 my wife and I drove from Urbana, Illinois to Los Angeles. Pop music references arose constantly. Although we were going the opposite direction from C. W. McCall’s \textit{Convoy} near Tulsa, I did spot a small convoy of trucks heading east on I-44. I couldn’t help but sing \textit{by the time we got into Tulsa town, we had 85 trucks in all}, even though all we had was one Camry. Much of I-44 has tolls; even though I paid them I found myself singing \textit{we ain’t a gonna pay no toll}. The route taken in \textit{By the Time To Get to Phoenix} was also the opposite direction from us; Glen Campbell went from Phoenix to Albuquerque to Oklahoma while we did the opposite; nonetheless the tune often played in my head when Convoy wasn’t playing there. A few times the tune to \textit{Indian Reservation} afforded my ear some variety, but it was hard to keep Convoy away. One of the highlights of the trip was visiting the Petrified Forest National Park; some of the petrified logs there are 220 million years old. (Oldies but goodies.)

Later on the trip we stopped at \textit{Standing on the Corner Park} in Winslow Arizona. The intersection of Kinsley and 2nd has a statue of Glenn Frey, who co-authored \textit{Take It Easy} with Jackson Browne. There is a flat bed Ford parked
there, and a mural of one as well. Quite a few tourists took pictures while standing
on a corner in Winslow Arizona. While we were there I heard Hotel California
but not Take It Easy. I had a great time, although I lost 51 cents. A gift shop
had a machine outside the door. One put 2 quarters in slots and a penny in the
third slot. Supposedly one turned a crank and pressed the penny into some kind of
souvenir. I cranked for 7 minutes without effect. A few blocks away is a wonderful
hotel called La Posada. We had an excellent lunch in their turquoise room, and
then walked back to the corner. I turned the crank a few more time, again to no
avail. I bought a Take It Easy t-shirt in another gift shop. The cashier told us
about a time when Jackson Browne actually made a purchase there; she had saved
a copy of the receipt on her phone to serve as proof.

I could tell many more stories about the trip, but few of them had to do with
music. One of my kids took a picture of me and my friend Brad, whom I had not
seen for 53 years, in front of the Trojan horse on the USC campus. I reminded
Brad, who had been in a rock band back then, of the instrumental The Horse by
Cliff Nobles and Co. This song was simply a version of the flip side without the
vocal track. Hence Cliff Nobles himself doesn’t even appear on the record for which
he is famous. Brad sent me a photo of his band from 53 years earlier. I mentioned
earlier that it had a female drummer and the band had participated in the rock
and roll contest from my high school days.

While driving through the city with the kids, we passed a few Hollywood bung-
alows. Neither of the kids knew L. A. Woman and I didn’t get a chance to ask
them to find an anagram of Mr. Mojo Rising. We left the car in LA with the kids
and flew home, through Chicago. I had a strange thought while at O Hare. If there
were a minor skirmish, they might have to bring up reinforcements from the Illinois
National Guard. I think this story needs reinforcement from the Fab Four.

We Can Work It Out includes brilliant use of suspended chords. McCartney
seems to have learned from Bach. The chords on both my way and your way
are suspended, creating intentional dissonance. This dissonance gets resolved both
lyrically and musically with we can work it out. Similarly, in Hey Jude, the chord
on sad song is suspended and it gets resolved both lyrically and musically with and
make it better.

My favorite mood is the subjunctive. I recall the phrase “only vestiges of the
subjunctive remain in English” from a high school German text. Of course the
subjunctive is common in Italian and other Romance languages and it gets used
throughout mathematics, because of the profusion of if clauses. Two nice uses of
the subjunctive in pop music are If I Were a Rich Man and Let It Be. I find it
amusing that the Bangles sing “I wish it were Sunday, that’s my fun day” but the
original lyric seems to have been “I wish it was Sunday...”. I doubt the internet is
sufficiently reliable to know for sure, but the subjunctive seems better to me. To
quote the Yardbirds, “I’d give the moon if it were mine to give.”

For regular verbs in English, the subjunctive is the simple past. Thus If I fell
is subjunctive. The music is subjunctive as well! The ending lyric is “if I fell in
love with you”. The notes then go from A to B♭ to C to D to E to F♯, ending on
a third, while the chords pass from G-minor on the B♭ to D at the end. The entire
song is thus an if clause without a then clause, leaving the listener hanging. The
combination of harmony and ambiguity make it my favorite song of all time. By
the way, I am aware that John and Paul often trashed it by calling If I Fell Over.
CHAPTER 8

Lists

In the end, the lists you take are equal to the lists you make.

1. Top songs

- This top 150 list considers “popular music”; there must be a specific artist. I like lots of classical music but it makes little sense to list things like “Fur Elise” by Ivo Pogorelich.
- The plethora of Beatles songs allows me to boast about the best joke I ever invented:
  “Knock, Knock”
  “Who’s there?”
  “The”
  “The who?”
  “No, the Beatles”.
- Sometimes a song appears because it carries emotional baggage. If A) is rated higher than B) it means only that I respond more to A) than to B), not that I think A) is necessarily better musically or lyrically. Sometimes a song appears because it wowed me when I first heard it; who knows whether such songs would have maintained their rankings if played as often as I played songs by the Beatles.
- The list also reflects a time bias. My capacity for being haunted by a sad melody has not been constant over time.
- I have not listed any song twice, even if two renditions are both worthy of inclusion. Here are three examples of songs I could have listed twice: “Yesterday” by Judith Durham, “All Along the Watchtower” by Jimi Hendrix, and “My Back Pages” by the Byrds.

The play Man and Superman by George Bernard Shaw ends with a Revolutionist’s Handbook, which includes a subsection on Golden Rules. One of the stray sayings there is “Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may be different.” In the context of popular music, tastes vary greatly. I won’t be offended if you tell me my taste offends you. You should regard my lists as a handbook for amusement; you know, we all want to change the world.
Top 150

1. If I Fell (Beatles)
2. Yesterday (Beatles)
3. Here, There, and Everywhere (Beatles)
4. She’s Not There (Zombies)
5. Diamonds and Rust (Joan Baez)
6. Today (New Christy Minstrels)
7. I’ll Follow the Sun (Beatles)
8. The Best of It (Thorinshield)
9. Hey Jude (Beatles)
10. Washington Square (Village Stompers)
11. And I Love Her (Beatles)
12. Scarborough Fair/Canticle (Simon and Garfunkel)
13. I’ve Just Seen a Face (Beatles)
14. Shades of Gray (Monkees)
15. I Am the Walrus (Beatles)
16. Girl (Beatles)
17. Eleanor Rigby (Beatles)
18. Norwegian Wood (Beatles)
19. I Will (Beatles)
20. After the Gold Rush (Neil Young)
21. Silence is Golden (Tremeloes)
22. Greenback Dollar (Kingston Trio)
23. My Back Pages (Bob Dylan, Roger McGuinn, Tom Petty, Neil Young, Eric Clapton, and George Harrison. 30-th anniversary concert.)
24. Summer Wine (Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazelwood)
25. Frightened Little Girl (July Four)
26. Time in a Bottle (Jim Croce)
27. I’ll Be Back (Beatles)
28. I’ll Be On My Way (Beatles)
29. Sunny Afternoon (Kinks)
30. The End of the World (Skeeter Davis)
31. Someday Soon (Judy Collins)
32. We Can Work it Out (Beatles)
33. Help! (Beatles)
34. Things We Said Today (Beatles)
35. House of the Rising Sun (Animals)
36. Dangling Conversation (Simon and Garfunkel)
37. Red Rubber Ball (Cyrkle)
38. By the Time I Get to Phoenix (Glen Campbell)
39. While My Guitar Gently Weeps (Beatles, Love version)
40. Another You (Seekers)
41. Strawberry Fields Forever (Beatles)
42. California Dreamin’ (Mamas and Papas)
43. She’s a Must to Avoid (Herman’s Hermits)
44. How Do You Do It (Gerry and the Pacemakers)
45. Twelve Thirty (Mamas and Papas)
46. I Want To Hold Your Hand (Beatles)
1. TOP SONGS

(47) I Never Will Marry (Highwaymen)
(48) Lola (Kinks)
(49) Five Hundred Miles (Peter, Paul, and Mary)
(50) Eve of Destruction (Barry McGuire)
(51) A Well Respected Man (Kinks)
(52) Positively 4th Street (Bob Dylan)
(53) The World We Used to Know (Glen Campbell)
(54) Carol (Al Stewart)
(55) Like an Old Time Movie (Scott Mackenzie)
(56) Sound of Silence (Simon and Garfunkel)
(57) Just a Little (Beau Brummels)
(58) Kiss Me Goodbye (Petula Clark)
(59) For No One (Beatles)
(60) San Francisco, Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair (Scott Mackenzie)
(61) Gotta Travel On (Billy Grammar)
(62) Catch the Wind (Donovan)
(63) In My Life (Beatles)
(64) Waltzing Matilda (Seekers)
(65) Dona Dona Dona (Joan Baez)
(66) The Boxer (Simon and Garfunkel)
(67) Light My Fire (Doors)
(68) San Franciscan Nights (Animals)
(69) Let’s Live for Today (Grass Roots)
(70) American Pie (Don McLean)
(71) Hotel California (Eagles)
(72) Two of Us (Beatles)
(73) Maybe I’m Amazed (Paul McCartney)
(74) New York Mining Disaster: 1941 (Bee Gees)
(75) Bad to Me (Billy J. Kramer)
(76) P. S. I love You (Beatles)
(77) I Love You (Zombies)
(78) It’s Now or Never (Elvis Presley)
(79) Learning the Game (Buddy Holly)
(80) It Doesn’t Matter Anymore (Buddy Holly)
(81) Cryin’ in the Rain (Everly Brothers)
(82) Somewhere My Love (Ray Conniff singers)
(83) Peggy Sue Got Married (Buddy Holly)
(84) I Had Too Much to Dream (Electric Prunes)
(85) Sunshine Superman (Donovan)
(86) Greenfields (Brothers Four)
(87) Yesterday When I Was Young (Roy Clark)
(88) It’s Gonna be Alright (Gerry and the Pacemakers)
(89) No Milk Today (Herman’s Hermits)
(90) Michelle (Beatles)
(91) Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood (Animals)
(92) Mellow Yellow (Donovan)
(93) Girl You’ll Be a Woman Soon (Neil Diamond)
(94) Play with Fire (Rolling Stones)
(95) Take it Easy (Jackson Browne)
(96) She Loves You (Beatles)
(97) Maybe Baby (Buddy Holly)
(98) All Along the Watchtower (Bob Dylan)
(99) The Green Leaves of Summer (Brothers Four)
(100) Golden Slumbers/ Carry That Weight/ The End (Beatles)
(101) You Only Live Twice (Nancy Sinatra)
(102) Just Dropped In (First Edition)
(103) How Can I Tell Her (Lobo)
(104) Holiday (Bee Gees)
(105) We Gotta Get Out of This Place (Animals)
(106) Love Me Two Times (Doors)
(107) Gentle on My Mind (Glen Campbell)
(108) Only a Northern Song (Beatles)
(109) It Don’t Come Easy (Ringo Starr)
(110) Think for Yourself (Beatles)
(111) Puff the Magic Dragon (Peter, Paul, and Mary)
(112) Flowers Never Bend with the Rainfall (Simon and Garfunkel)
(113) Both Sides Now (Judy Collins)
(114) Solitary Man (Neil Diamond)
(115) Lies (Knickerbockers)
(116) Maggie May (Rod Stewart)
(117) Not a Second Time (Beatles)
(118) The Night Before (Beatles)
(119) California Nights (Leslie Gore)
(120) I Can’t Help Falling in Love (Elvis Presley)
(121) For What It’s Worth (Buffalo Springfield)
(122) Baby the Rain Must Fall (Glenn Yarbrough)
(123) The Rain, The Park, and Other Things (Cowsills)
(124) Lady Greensleeves (Brothers Four)
(125) Lodi (Creedence Clearwater Revival)
(126) Heart Full of Soul (Yardbirds)
(127) Losing My Religion (REM)
(128) Happy Together (Turtles)
(129) The Girl I Knew Somewhere (Monkees)
(130) Green Green (New Christy Minstrels)
(131) Going Up the Country (Canned Heat)
(132) Taxi (Harry Chapin)
(133) Where Have All the Flowers Gone (Kingston Trio)
(134) When I Was Young (Animals)
(135) Knight in Rusty Armor (Peter and Gordon)
(136) A World of Our Own (Seekers)
(137) I’m Only Sleeping (Beatles)
(138) Laugh Laugh (Beau Brummels)
(139) Let It Be (Beatles)
(140) Purple Haze (Jimi Hendrix)
(141) The Carnival is Over (Seekers)
(142) Imagine (John Lennon)
1. TOP SONGS

(143) Loch Lomond (Ella Roberts)
(144) A World Without Love (Peter and Gordon)
(145) Ready for the Times to Get Better (Crystal Gayle)
(146) Sheila (Tommie Roe)
(147) Hooray for Hazel (Tommie Roe)
(148) I’m Into Something Good (Herman’s Hermits)
(149) Image of a Girl (Safaris)
(150) Apache (Shadows)

Special Mention

• Abbey Road Medley (Beatles)
  This medley consists of nine songs from side 2 of Abbey Road, beginning with You Never Give Me Your Money and lasts about 16 minutes. I listed Golden Slumbers/ Carry That Weight/ The End as number 100. It is difficult for me to rank the medley as a whole, as I don’t like all nine songs equally well. An argument could be made for it to appear much higher than 100. A subtle point concerns the location of Her Majesty; on my album it appears after The End but there is evidence that it was intended to appear somewhere in the middle of the medley.
On the bubble

The following songs are ordered only approximately.

- What Am I Doing Hanging Round (Monkees)
- God Only Knows (Beach Boys)
- Tangled Up in Blue (Bob Dylan)
- Knocking on Heaven’s Door (Bob Dylan)
- I Should Have Known Better (Beatles)
- I’ll be There (Gerry and the Pacemakers)
- Wayward Wind (Gogi Grant)
- Steppin’ Stone (Monkees)
- Where Were You When I Needed You (Grassroots)
- Runaway (Del Shannon)
- Get Together (Youngbloods)
- Johnny B. Goode (Chuck Berry)
- Singalong Junk (Paul McCartney)
- Honky Tonk Women (Rolling Stones)
- I Fall to Pieces (Patsy Cline)
- Your Wildest Dreams (Moody Blues)
- Grandfather’s Clock (Johnny Cash)
- Wavin’ Flag (K’Naan)
- I Go to Pieces (Peter and Gordon)
- Midday Sun (Kinks)
- Good Vibrations (Beach Boys)
- Don’t Worry Baby (Beach Boys)
- Sloop John B (Beach Boys)
- That’s Where I Went Wrong (Susan Jacks)
- Every Day (Buddy Holly)
- Killing Me Softly With His Song (Roberta Flack)
- As Tears Go By (Marianne Faithfull)
- Hello Mary Lou (Ricky Nelson)
- Will You Love Me Tomorrow (Shirelles)
- I Second That Emotion (Smokey Robinson and the Miracles)
- Making Love Out Of Nothing At All (Air Supply)
- Easier Said Than Done (Essex)
- Penny Lane (Beatles)
- Eight Days a Week (Beatles)
- Another Girl (Beatles)
- Drive My Car (Beatles)
- Long and Winding Road (Beatles)
- If I Needed Someone (Beatles)
- Garden Party (Rick Nelson)
- California Sun (Rivieras)
- For Your Love (Yardbirds)
- Bus Stop (Hollies)
- Long Cool Woman (Hollies)
- A Taste of Honey (Herb Alpert)
- Master Jack (Four Jacks and a Jill)
2. My first and last top 13 lists

Looking at my weekly lists cracks me up. I made them from March 1967 until December 1969. In May, 2021 I found the book where I had hand-written these lists. They reveal to some extent what songs were played at the time on Philadelphia AM radio and to some extent my own immature taste. I encourage the reader to mock me for my choices. Looking at my first and last lists, and considering how I regard the songs more than fifty years later, it seems that the quality of songs on the first list far exceeds that on the last list. Is there an explanation? Did the quality of my judgment regress? Was current pop music better in March 1967 than in December 1969? Were fewer good songs made into single records by then? Did I like the earlier songs more simply because I knew fewer songs at that time, or perhaps because I was 16 rather than 18? I can’t explain.

March 28, 1967
(1) Happy Together (Turtles)
(2) Penny Lane (Beatles)
(3) There’s a Kind of Hush (Herman’s Hermits)
(4) No Milk Today (Herman’s Hermits)
(5) Ruby Tuesday (Rolling Stones)
(6) Western Union (Five Americans)
(7) Dedicated to the One I Love (Mamas and Papas)
(8) Sunshine Girl (Parade)
(9) Ups and Downs (Paul Revere and the Raiders)
(10) The Loser (Gary Lewis and the Playboys)
(11) Return of the Red Baron (Royal Guardsmen)
(12) The Girl I Knew Somewhere (Monkees)
(13) Sock it to Me (Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels)

December 23, 1969
(1) Cold Turkey (Plastic Ono Band)
(2) She Lets Her Hair Down (Tokens)
(3) No Time (Guess Who)
(4) Come and Get It (Magic Christians)
(5) Midnight Cowboy (Ferrante and Teicher)
(6) Fortunate Son (Creedence Clearwater Revival)
(7) Early in the Morning (Vanity Fare)
(8) Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head (B. J. Thomas)
(9) Walkin’ in the Rain (Jay and the Americans)
(10) She Came in Through the Bathroom Window (Joe Cocker)
(11) She Belongs to Me (Rick Nelson)
(12) Up on Cripple Creek (Band)
(13) Evil Woman (Crow)
3. Some rhymes

- Regatta & get at her. (A Well Respected Man by the Kinks)
- Truth from lies & selling out from compromise. (Shades of Gray by the Monkees)
- Have no shoes & front page news. (I’m not your Stepping Stone by the Monkees or by Paul Revere and the Raiders)
- Illinois & Oh Boy. (Looking out my back door by Creedence Clearwater Revival)
- Bring me some wine & we haven’t had that spirit here since 1969. (Hotel California by the Eagles)
- Unconsciousness & another kiss. (The Crystal Ship by the Doors)
- Jukebox tune & August moon. (Vacation by Connie Francis)
- now on her list & couldn’t resist. (Hooray for Hazel by Tommie Roe)
- poison gas & sassafras. (Don’t Give Us a Reason by Hank Williams Jr.)
- don’t be a fool & the golden rule (Skip a Rope by Henson Cargill)
- do whatever steps you want if & you have cleared them with the Pontiff (The Vatican Rag by Tom Lehrer)
- meditate & cheat your fate (Games People Play by Joe South)
- your sanity & your vanity & humanity (Games People Play by Joe South)
- Every line of Eve of Destruction by Barry McGuire

4. Some misheard lyrics

This section is devoted to Sylvia Wright and Lady Mondegreen.

- The way she accents the color of her hair (She’s Not There)
- Anyone caught dressed passive will be shot on sight (Signs)
- We’ll never tan your a (Ferry Cross the Mersey)
- letters on a ding ding sign (Just Dropped In)
- I can’t even eat my luncheon meat (I Can’t Stop Dancing)

5. Some grunts in popular music

- Signs by the Five Man Electrical Band
- Born to Run by Bruce Springsteen
- Mustang Sally by Wilson Pickett
- War by Edwin Starr

6. Some one hit wonders

- Sea Cruise by Frankie Ford
- In the Year 2525 by Zager and Evans
- Mr. Big Stuff by Jean Knight
- Nobody But Me by The Human Beinz
- Na Na, Hey Hey, Kiss Him Goodbye by Steam
- Concrete and Clay by Unit 4 + 2
- Let it Out (Let It All Hang Out) by the Hombres
- Shame Shame by the Magic Lanterns
- Afternoon Delight by the Starland Vocal Band
7. Some records with responses

- He’ll Have to Go (Jim Reeves) 1959. He’ll Have to Stay (Jeanne Black) 1960.
- Back in the USA (Chuck Berry) 1959, California Girls (Beach Boys) 1965. Back in the USSR (Beatles) 1968

8. Some B sides

Some of the B-side tunes listed below are very well known. Others are obscure. Artists such as Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Fats Domino, and Ricky Nelson had many double-sided hits. The list below includes just a few flip sides that have meant something to me.

The internet has a wealth of information about B-sides. Here is a stunning example. According to Wikipedia: although eventually released as a Beatles song, You Know My Name (Look Up the Number) was nearly issued as the A-side of a Plastic Ono Band single.

I remember from high school conversations that the song Yellow Balloon, by the group also called “Yellow Balloon”, had a flip side called Noollab Wolley, which was simply the song played backwards. An obscure piece of information is that a second version of Yellow Balloon by Jan and Dean also exists, but it never made the Billboard top 100, and only Dean Torrance appears on the record.

It might be interesting to study the topic of B-sides in some systematic way; for example, how does the average ratio of quality of the two sides of a 45 change with time? It might also be amusing to determine how often the letters BSIDE appear as an answer in crossword puzzles, and what clue the puzzle maker provides.

- Hello Mary Lou (flip side of Travelin’ Man) by Ricky Nelson, 1961
- If I Fell (flip side of And I Love Her) by The Beatles, 1964
- The Coming Generation (flip side of Lies) by The Knickerbockers, 1965
- Wipe Out (flip side of Surfer Joe) by The Surfaris, 1963
- God Only Knows (flip side of Wouldn’t It Be Nice) by The Beach Boys, 1966
- Ruby Tuesday (flip side of Let’s Spend the Night Together) by The Rolling Stones, 1967
- Strawberry Fields Forever (flip side of Penny Lane) by The Beatles, 1967

- I Am the Walrus (flip side of Hello Goodbye) by The Beatles, 1967
- Mr. Miff (flip side of Frightened Little Girl) by The July Four, 1968
- Lodi (flip side of Bad Moon Rising) by Creedence Clearwater Revival, 1969
- We Will Rock You (flip side of We Are the Champions) by Queen, 1977
- You Know My Name (flip side of Let it Be) by The Beatles, 1970
9. Exercises

A mathematics book requires exercises. Sometimes exercises are fun. I have added a few here for the reader’s enjoyment!

**Exercise 2.** Name the tune where the match occurs! The year provides a hint.
- muscle ******** blood ********* skin ********* bones (1956)
- Hearts that are broken ******** love that’s untrue (1959)
- colorful clothes ******** the way the sunlight plays (1966)
- Willie ********* Sam (1965)
- drunkenness *********** cruelty (1967)
- ticket ********* tears (1966)
- pay your dues *********** sing the blues (1971)
- wreck my bed ******** kick me in the head (1971)
- father ******** son ********* holy ghost (1972)
- holding hands ******** skimming stones (1972)
- unimaginable *********** impossible (1975)
- afraid *********** petrified (1979)
- mirror *********** sword *********** shield (2008)

**Exercise 3.** Multiple choice: What was Tennessee Ernie Ford’s middle name?
- A) Ernie
- B) Jennings
- C) Fightin’
- D) Trouble
- E) All of the above

**Exercise 4.** Name a Quintet such that the first word in the group’s name is **FOUR**. Hint: They had a Billboard hit in 1968. Bonus: Explain the meaning of the lyrics.

**Exercise 5.** Who was the lead singer of the Dave Clark 5?

**Exercise 6.** Who was the lead singer of Paul Revere and the Raiders?

**Exercise 7.** Who was the lead singer of the Spencer Davis Group?

**Exercise 8.** Two French composers wrote an instrumental that, when words were added, became hits for Ricky Nelson and Little Peggy March. One of these composers had a second number one song as an orchestra leader. Who was it?

**Exercise 9.** True or False? **Zero is Just Another Even Number**

**10. Retrospective, For What It’s Worth**

Retrospective is a noun, an adjective, and the title of an excellent Buffalo Springfield album from 1969. The dictionary definition of the noun retrospective is a compilation showing the development of the work of an artist over time. As an adjective, retrospective means looking back on or dealing with past events or situations. The precise album title is retrospective: The Best of Buffalo Springfield. The album contains the historically meaningful hit For What It’s Worth and other songs written by Stephen Stills, Neil Young, or Richie Furay. The word itself has motivated me to attempt to draw some conclusions about Listing My Life Away.
Although popular music improved throughout the 1960’s, AM radio did not fully reflect this improvement. As a larger portion of good songs appeared only as album cuts, the top forty (consisting of single records) was weakened. How else can one explain Sugar, Sugar being the Billboard top record of the year in 1969? What about the Abbey Road medley? The weekly lists I made more than fifty years ago were of current singles, and hence the choice of songs was impacted by this evolution. I recall the first time I heard Girl; it was on my blue transistor radio and WFIL played it as their very occasional album cut. That was of course before my purchase of Rubber Soul. On the other hand, the top songs list in Listing My Life Away has stood the test of time. My top five songs have been the same for more than forty years.

Some of the following conclusions are patently obvious.

- Writing Listing My Life Away was fun and living it was even more fun. I hope only that the reader enjoys it.
- List making is capricious. How much one likes a song depends on several complex variables (the branch of mathematics in which I work).
- How high a song ranks on my list depends upon its harmonies, its lyrics, its overall sound, and whether the sound and sense fit.
- My sense of rhythm is poor.
- How high a song ranks on my list often depends upon the time and context in which I first heard it.
- How high a song ranks on my list can vary over time.
- Single records tend to rank higher than album cuts, except when I owned the album and played it often. AM Radio therefore influenced this story more than it deserved. Please don’t hold it against me.
- I like the Beatles.
Index

12:30, 48
2120 South Michigan Avenue, 10
2pac, 22
76 Trombones, 7, 54

A Boy Named Sue, 34
A Hard Day’s Night, 11, 16
A Taste of Honey, 92
A Well Respected Man, 13, 43, 49, 53
A World of Our Own, 90
A World Without Love, 101
Abbey Road, 17, 57
Abbey Road Medley, 51
Ace of Base, 37
Across the Universe, 18
Advance to the Rear, 17
After the Gold Rush, 48
Afternoon Delight, 54
Air Supply, 52
Al Stewart, 19
Al Wilson, 23
All Along the Watchtower, 50
All Together Now, 16
All You Need is Love, 11
Alone Again, Naturally, 25
Amboy Dukes, 40
American Graffiti, 22
American Pie, 16, 49
American Woman, 17
Ames Brothers, 33
And I Love Her, 48, 55
Angels, 43
Animals, 48, 50
Another Day, 14
Another Girl, 52
Another You, 39, 18
Apache, 51
Archies, 17
Are You Experienced, 34
Are You Lonesome Tonight, 21
Argent, R., 12
As Tears Go By, 52
Autry, G., 79
B. J. Thomas, 59
Baby the Rain Must Fall, 50
Baby You’re a Rich Man, 11
Baby, Can I Change My Mind, 30
Bacon, K., 23
Bad Moon Rising, 55
Bad to Me, 10
Baez, J., 27, 46, 48, 49
Ball of Confusion, 17
Balloon Farm, 12
Band, 53
Barbara Ann, 23
Barkley, C., 29
Barry McGuire, 49
Batman, 5
Batman and his Grandmother, 0, 10
Beach Baby, 24
Beach Boys, 21, 22, 31, 32, 35
Beat It, 32
Beatles, 7, 11, 12, 16, 17, 27, 35, 42, 44
Beach VI, 11
Beau Brummers, 49, 50
Bee Gees, 49, 50
Being For the Benefit of Mr. Kite, 18
Belafonte, H., 37
Bellinger, C., 43
Bennett, David, 7
Berra, Y., 35
Berra, Yogi, 35
Berry, C., 35, 52, 54
Billboard, 16
Billie Jean, 32
Billy Grammar, 49
Billy J. Kramer, 30, 49
Bitchin’ Camaro, 33
Blondie, 16
Blue Christmas, 37
Blunstone, C., 12
Bobby Lewis, 29
Bobby Sherman, 24
Bohemian Rhapsody, 23
Booker T and the MGs, 19
Boone, P., 79
Borg, B., 41
Born to Be Wild, 19
Born to Run, 8, 54
Both Sides Now, 50
Boudreau, L., 33
Bowa, L., 43
Bracketology, 13
Bridge Over Troubled Waters, 19
Brother Louie, 23
Brothers Four, 49, 50
Buddy Holly, 15, 36, 49, 50, 52
Buffalo Springfield, 50, 56
Bus Stop, 52
Butterfield, P., 18
By the Time I Get to Phoenix, 45, 48
Byrds, 24, 47
C. W. McCall, 23, 45
Caesar and the Romans, 9
California Dreamin’, 32, 48
California Nights, 50
California Sun, 52
Can I Change my Mind, 45
Canby, V., 35
Canned Heat, 40
Captain Beefheart, 18
Car Wash, 37
Carol, 39
Carroll, L., 45
Catch the Wind, 44, 49
Cey, Ron, 33
Chad Mitchell Trio, 27
Chambers Brothers, 16
Chariots of Fire, 38
Charlie Daniels, 21
Cher, 8
Chubby Checker, 29, 35
Clapton, E., 24, 48
Clarence Carter, 22
Clark, Dick, 51
Cliff Nobles and Co., 40
Cold Turkey, 35
Coldplay, 72
Come and Get It, 53
Come on Eileen, 32
Concrete and Clay, 34
Connie Francis, 54
Conversation, the, 17
Convoy, 21, 26, 45
Convoy, the movie, 43
Corden, J., 19
Coward of the County, 30
Cowboy Church Sunday School, 29, 54
Cowboys, 50
Creedence Clearwater Revival, 37, 50, 53
Creeque Alley, 17
Cronin, K., 32
Crow, 53
Cryin’ in the Rain, 49
Crystal Gayle, 51
Cups, 37
Cyrcle, 9, 38
Dangling Conversation, 48
Dave Clark 5, 51
David Bennett Piano, 7
David Soul, 18
Davies, R., 45
Davis, T., 45
Dawn of Correction, 35
Debbie Boone, 24
Deck of Cards, 30
Dedicated to the One I Love, 53
Del Shannon, 34, 52
Derulo, J., 47
Deteriorata, 21
Dexys Midnight Runners, 32
Diamond, N., 44
Diamonds and Pearls, 45
Diamonds and Rust, 45, 48
Dickey Lee, 32
Dock of the Bay, 12
Domino, F., 35
Don McLean, 49
Don’t Give Up on Us, 18
Don’t Give Us a Reason, 37, 54
Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood, 49
Don’t Let the Rain Fall Down on Me, 15
Don’t Worry Baby, 17, 52
Dona, Dona, Dona, 27, 38, 49
Donna Summer, 51
Donovan, 24, 49
Doors, 9, 19, 30, 54
Dr. Demento, 24
Dr. Hook, 11
Dr. John, 22, 41
Drive My Car, 52
Duke of Earl, 30
Durham, J., 47
Dylan, B., 5, 24, 27, 36, 38, 50, 52
Eagles, 59, 53
Early in the Morning, 53
Earth Angel, 33
Easier Said Than Done, 52
Easton, Sheena, 49
Eastwood, C., 23
Easy Come, Easy Go, 19
Easy Rider, 16
Easybeats, 38
Edwin Starr, 54
Eight Days a Week, 52
Eleanor Rigby, 48
Electric Factory, 19
Electric Prunes, 19
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ella Roberts, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elvis Presley, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil and Friends, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entner, W., 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistle to Dippy, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erdős, P., 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex, 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve of Destruction, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody's talkin', 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Brothers, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Day, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evil Woman, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye of the Tiger, 38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Fairport Convention, 24  |
| Fats Domino, 54  |
| Ferrante and Teicher, 53  |
| Ferry Cross the Mersey, 49  |
| Fifth Dimension, 59  |
| Fingers, R., 31  |
| First Class, 24  |
| First Edition, 39  |
| Five Americans, 59  |
| Five Hundred Miles, 49  |
| Five Man Electrical Band, 54  |
| Flack, R., 52  |
| Flowers Never Bend with the Rainfall, 50  |
| Flowers on the Wall, 30  |
| Flyin' Illini, 52  |
| Folsom Prison Blues, 34  |
| For No One, 39  |
| For What It's Worth, 50  |
| For Your Love, 52  |
| Ford, F., 44  |
| Fortunate Son, 55  |
| Four Jacks and a Jill, 94  |
| Four Seasons, 43  |
| Frankie Ford, 53  |
| Free Bird, 22  |
| Freed, R., 47  |
| Frey, Glenn, 45  |
| Friday, 38  |
| Friday on My Mind, 38  |
| Fries, B., 25  |
| Frightened Little Girl, 48  |
| Fur Elise, 47  |
| Furay, R., 56  |
| Games People Play, 43  |
| Garden Party, 58  |
| Gary Lewis and the Playboys, 53  |
| Gentle on My Mind, 50  |
| Gerry and the Pacemakers, 48  |
| Get Together, 52  |
| Gilbert O. Sullivan, 25  |
| Girl, 45  |
| Girl You'll Be a Woman Soon, 49  |
| Giselle McKenzie, 29  |
| Give Ireland Back to the Irish, 32  |
| Glen Campbell, 45  |
| Glenn Yarbrough, 50  |
| Gloria Gaynor, 29  |
| God Only Knows, 52  |
| Gogi Grant, 52  |
| Going Up the Country, 50  |
| Golden Slumbers/ Carry That Weight/ The End, 50  |
| Good Vibrations, 50  |
| Gotta Travel On, 48  |
| Grandfather's Clock, 47  |
| Grass Roots, 58  |
| Grateful Dead, 18  |
| Green Green, 50  |
| Green, Dallas, 31  |
| Greenback Dollar, 27  |
| Greenfields, 49  |
| Grill, R., 18  |
| Guantanamera, 42  |
| Guess Who, 17  |

| Half Breed, 6  |
| Hand Me Down World, 17  |
| Hangzhou, 24  |
| Hanky Panky, 41  |
| Happiness is a Warm Gun, 19  |
| Happy Together, 48  |
| Hard to Get, 29  |
| Harrison, G., 24  |
| Harry Chapin, 40  |
| Harvard, 54  |
| Haunted House, 8  |
| Have You Seen Her, 43  |
| Hayes, I., 43  |
| Heart Full of Soul, 50  |
| Heartbreak Hotel, 19  |
| Hefti, N., 9  |
| Heisenberg Group, 25  |
| Hello Goodbye, 53  |
| Hello Mary Lou, 52  |
| Help, 52  |
| Hembre, H., 11  |
| Hendrix, J., 41  |
| Henson Cargill, 60  |
| Her Majesty, 61  |
| Herb Alpert, 11  |
| Here, There, and Everywhere, 18  |
| Herman's Hermits, 48  |
| Hey Jude, 10  |
| Highwaymen, 91  |
| Hit Parader, 16  |
| Hokey Pokey, 37  |
| Holiday, 50  |
| Hollies, 32  |
| Holly, B. (see Buddy Holly), 52  |
| Hombres, 54  |
| Honky Tonk Women, 32  |
| Hooray for Hazel, 51  |

---

**Notes:**
- The index contains entries for various artists, songs, and other musical references.
- Some entries are accompanied by page numbers indicating their positions within a larger text or publication.
- The index is organized alphabetically by artist or title, with page numbers listed for each entry.
Hotel California, 30, 43, 46, 49, 54
House of the Rising Sun, 48
How Can I Tell Her, 50
How Do You Do It, 48
Human Beinz, 18, 54
I Am the Walrus, 16, 43, 48, 55
I Can't Help Falling in Love, 30
I Can't Stop Dancin', 54
I Fall to Pieces, 52
I Go to Pieces, 52
I Had Too Much to Dream, 49
I Love You, 49
I Never Will Marry, 9, 49
I Saw Her Standing There, 8
I Saw Linda Yesterday, 8
I Second That Emotion, 52
I Should Have Known Better, 17, 24, 52
I Want To Hold Your Hand, 45
I Will, 32, 48
I Will Survive, 29
I'll Be Back, 48
I'll Be On My Way, 36, 48
I'll Follow the Sun, 15, 48
I'm Henry VIII, I Am, 38
I'm Only Sleeping, 50
I've Just Seen a Face, 48
Icona Pop, 38
If I Fell, 15, 46, 48, 54
If I Needed Someone, 52
If I Were a Rich Man, 26
Illinois, Univ. of, 28, 29, 31–33, 37, 42
Image of a Girl, 51
I'm Into Something Good, 51
I'm Only Sleeping, 50
I'm Into Something Good, 51
I'm Only Sleeping, 50
I've Just Seen a Face, 48
Jackson Browne, 45, 50
Jackson, G., 17
Jan and Dean, 9, 31
Janis Joplin, 50
Jay and the Americans, 53
Jean Knight, 54
Jeanne Black, 55
Jefferson Airplane, 11
Jigsaw, 33
Jim Croce, 48
Jim Reeves, 55
Jimi Hendrix, 8, 34, 47, 50
Jive Five, 11
John, J., 35
Johnny B. Goode, 28, 52
Johnny Cash, 34, 52
Johnny Rivers, 11
Johnson, J., 35
July Four, 48, 55
Jumpin' Gene Simmons, 8
I Just a Little, 49
Just Dropped In, 30, 44, 54
K'Naan, 39, 52
Kalin Twins, 39, 35, 38
KC and the Sunshine Band, 24
Ke$ha, 37
Kenny Rogers, 30
Killing Me Softly With His Song, 28, 52
Kiss Me Goodbye, 49
KMOX, 30
Korvettes, 10
Kristofferson, K., 33
Joy to the World, 19
Krauss, A., 32
Knapp, C., 55
Korvettes, 10
Kosinsky, J., 8
Krauss, A., 32
Kristofferson, K., 33
L. A. Woman, 46
La La La, 19
La Posada, 46
Lady Greensleeves, 50
Lantree, H., 12
Laugh Laugh, 93
Lavoie, R. K. (see also Lobo), 10
Learning the Game, 29
Lehrer, Tom, 54
Let It Be, 18, 49
Let It Out, 54
Let the Moonshine, 49
Let's Live for Today, 10, 49
INDEX

Let’s Spend the Night Together, 55
Lieberman, L., 23
Lies, 50
Light My Fire, 30, 43, 49
Like an Old Time Movie, 49
Listen People, 10
Little Peggy March, 50
Little Woman, 19
Live and Let Die, 23
Lobo (see also Lavoie), 50
Loch Lomond, 51
Lodi, 50
Lola, 50
Long and Winding Road, 52
Long Cool Woman, 52
Looking Out My Back Door, 37, 54
Losing My Religion, 38, 50
Love is Blue, 12
Love Me Two Times, 50
Love the One You’re With, 24
Love, M., 35
Lovelace, R., 10
Ludacris, 37
Lundberg, V., 55
Lynyrd Skynyrd, 22
Lyon, S., 44

MacGraw, A., 38
Macho Man, 44
Maggie May, 56
Magic Carpet Ride, 19
Magic Christians, 58
Magic Lanterns, 54
Magical Mystery Tour, 16
Making Love Out of Nothing at All, 19
Mamas and Papas, 48, 53
Marianne Faithfull, 52
Markov chains, 29, 30
Mary Elizabeth, 27
Mass. Inst. of Technology, 27
Master Jack, 52
Maybe Baby, 30
Maybe I’m Amazed, 20
McCall, C. W., 23, 46
McCallum, David, 27
McCartney, P., 18, 16, 31, 32, 42, 46
McFerrin, B., 35
McGuinn, R., 24, 28
McGuire, B., 17, 43, 56
McKinnon, Kate, 22
McLean, D., 23
Meet the Beatles, 7, 8
Mellow Yellow, 44, 49
Michelle, 7, 19
Midday Sun, 52
Midnight Cowboy, 19, 54
Miller, Glenn, 55

Million Dollar Quartet, 54
Milner, J., 22
Milnor, J., 22
Miracles, 52
MIT, 27
Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels, 53
Mittag-Leffler Institute, 53
Mondegreen, 8, 54
Monkees, 30, 50, 52
Moody Blues, 52
Moody River, 22
Moonlight Bay, 15
Morning Train, 24
Mr. Big Stuff, 54
Mr. Dieingly Sad, 15
Mr. Miff, 55
Mr. Tambourine Man, 10
Mrs. Robinson, 12
Muss I Denn, 42
Musser, Andy, 16
Mustang Sally, 54
My Back Pages, 34, 50, 54
My Bonnie, 34
My Boyfriend’s Back, 7
My True Story, 11
Na Na, Hey Hey, Kiss Him Goodbye, 54
Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazelwood, 58
Neil Diamond, 49, 50
Neil Young, 48
Nelly, 30
Nelson, R., 8, 13, 16, 53, 55, 56
Neumann, A. E., 11
Never Been to Spain, 19
Never Gonna Give You Up, 38
New Christy Minstrels, 17, 38, 50
New York Mining Disaster:1941, 18, 49
Nilsson, H., 10
Nixon, R. M., 23, 24
Nixon, T., 17
No Milk Today, 10, 20, 53
No No Song, 25
No Time, 17, 53
Nobody But Me, 18, 54
Norwegian Wood, 48
Not a Second Time, 30
O Sole Mio, 36, 42
Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da, 42
Ode to Billie Joe, 13
Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past, 37
Ohio State, 30
Oklahoma State University, 12
Old Town Road, 39, 53
One More Kiss, 31
Only a Northern Song, 50
Open Up Your Heart, 29, 33
Orlons, 17
Oxford comma, 43
INDEX

Ozark, Danny, 31
P. S. I love You, 49
Parade, 53
Paradons, 46
Paragons, 45
Pat Boone, 24, 35
Patel, H., 42
Patsy Cline, 52
Paul Revere and the Raiders, 53, 54, 56
Peggy Sue Got Married, 49, 53, 54, 56
Penguins, 33
Penny Lane, 52, 53, 55
Peter and Gordon, 50, 52, 56
Peter, Paul, and Mary, 49, 50
Petty, T., 24, 48
Petula Clark, 49
Piano Man, 41
Pickett, W., 8, 54
Pivetta, N., 17
Plastic Ono Band, 53, 55
Play with Fire, 19
Pogorelich, Ivo, 17
Positively 4th Street, 36, 49
Presley, E., 12, 43, 49, 60
Princeton, 23, 25
Psychedelic Shack, 17
Puff the Magic Dragon, 90
Purdue Univ., 36
Purple Haze, 50
Queen, 55
Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head, 23
Ravel, M., 8
Ray Conniff singers, 19
Ready for the Times to Get Better, 51
Reagan, R., 21
Rebecca Black, 38
Red Rubber Ball, 48
Redding, O., 12, 43, 60
Reed, Ron, 34
REM, 50
REO Speedwagon, 22
Return of the Red Baron, 55
Revolver, 11
Richrath, G., 32
Right Place Wrong Time, 23, 25
Ringo Starr, 25, 30
Rivieras, 52
Roberta Flack, 48
Robinson, S., 32
Rock Me, Amadeus, 34
Rocky Raccoon, 10
Rod Stewart, 50
Rolling Stones, 18, 19, 29, 52, 55, 58
Rose Garden, 12
Round the World with the Rubber Duck, 29
Roy Clark, 49
Roy Head, 90
Royal Guardsmen, 55
Rubber Soul, 11, 57
Ruby Tuesday, 53, 55
Runaway, 52
Rutgers, 25
Safaris, 51
Saffron, 44
Saki, 12
Sam the Sham, 6
San Francisco Nights, 19, 49
San Francisco, Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair, 49
Sandberg, Ryne, 34
Sandburg, C., 21
Santana, 19
Santana, Carlos, 19
Satriani, J., 42
Scarborough Fair/Canticle, 48
Schmidt, Mike, 51
Schroeder, Aaron, 12
Scott Mackenzie, 49
Sea Cruise, 27, 54
Seabold, C., 12
Seager, C., 25
Season of the Witch, 16
Seasons in the Sun, 29
Secret Agent Man, 11
Sedaka, N., 50
Seekers, 39, 50, 56
Sgt. Pepper, 11
Shades of Gray, 48, 54
Shadows, 51
Shaft, 13
Shame Shame, 54
Shaw, G. B., 17
She Belongs to Me, 53
She Came in Through the Bathroom Window, 59
She Cried, 12
She Lets Her Hair Down, 58
She Loves You, 50
She’s a Must to Avoid, 48
She’s Always a Woman, 41
She’s Not There, 12, 16, 48, 54
Sheila, 51
Shirelles, 52
Show and Tell, 23
Shusaku, 24
Signs, 8, 53, 54
Silence is Golden, 48
Simon and Garfunkel, 29, 48, 50
Sinatra, N., 80, 48, 59
Sinclair, G., 21
Singalong Junk, 52
Siu, Y. T., 74
INDEX

Skeeter Davis, 25
Skeeter Davis, 25
Skip a Rope, 30
Sky High, 33
Sloop John B, 52
Smart, Maxwell, 7
Smino, 38
Smith, Ozzie, 31
Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, 52
Sock it to Me, 12, 36
Solitary Man, 59
Somebody to Love, 11
Someday Soon, 48
Sometime in the Morning, 11
Somewhere My Love, 49
Sound of Silence, 49
South Street, 17
Sparks, R., 8
Spencer Davis Group, 66
Spokesmen, 55
Springsteen, B., 8
Starland Vocal Band, 54
Starsky and Hutch, 18
Statler Brothers, 30
Steam, 54
Stein, E., 14
Steppin' Stone, 52
Stills, S., 56
Stories, 29
Strawberry Alarm Clock, 22
Strawberry Fields Forever, 48
subjective, 46
Sugar, Sugar, 56
Sun, David, 39
Sunny, 25
Sunny Afternoon, 48
Sunshine Girl, 33
Sunshine Superman, 43, 49
Superstar, 33
Surfari, 49
Surf Joe, 49
Susan Jacks, 18, 52
Sutter, Bruce, 39
Sweet Caroline, 43
Sweet Pea, 16
T-Rex, 34
Takagawa, 29
Take it Easy, 36
Take it Off, 37
Tangled Up in Blue, 9
Taxi, 50
Ted Nugent, 30
Temptations, 17
Tenace, Gene, 51
Tennessee Ernie Ford, 56
Terry Jacks, 27
That Means a Lot, 15
That's the Way (I like it), 24
That's Where I Went Wrong, 18
The Americans, 21
The Best of It, 16
The Boxer, 20
The Carnival is Over, 50
The Coming Generation, 55
The Critters, 15
The Crystal Ship, 16
The Devil Went Down to Georgia, 21
The End of the World, 45
The Gambler, 29
The Girl I Knew Somewhere, 44
The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly, 21
The Green Leaves of Summer, 50
The Horse, 25
The Longest Time, 41
The Loser, 53
The Music Man, 4
The Night Before, 60
The Rain, The Park, and Other Things, 60
The Tide is High, 44
The Twist, 29
The Unicorn, 41
The Vatican Rag, 54
The World We Used to Know, 49
There's a Kind of Hush, 53
Things We Said Today, 48
Think for Yourself, 56
Thompson, Kenan, 11
Thorinshield, 15
Those Were the Days, 33
Three Dog Night, 19
Through the Past Darkly, 17
Tie A Yellow Ribbon, 23
Till, 41
Time Has Come Today, 16
Time in a Bottle, 23
Today, 8
Tokens, 53
Tom Dooley, 6
Tommie James and the Shondells, 13
Tommie Roe, 24, 51
Tony Orlando, 44
Too Many People, 16
Tossin’ and Turnin’, 29
Total Eclipse of the Heart, 32
Touch Me, 9
Travelin’ Man, 46
Treat Her Right, 30
Tremeloes, 48
Troglydote, 19
Truckin’, 18
Trucks, a thousand screamin’, 33
Turn Back The Hands of Time, 19
Turner, J., 43
Turtles, 50
Twelve Thirty, 48
Twist, 29

63
Two of Us, 18, 49
Tyrone Davis, 46

UCLA, 32
Uneasy Rider, 21, 23
Unit 4 + 2, 54
Univ. of California, Irvine, 45
Univ. of California, San Diego, 42
Univ. of Virginia, 25
Univ. of Wisconsin, 65
University of Illinois, 28, 29, 31–33, 37, 42
University of Pennsylvania, 18, 18, 25
Vacation, 54
Vanilla Fudge, 16
Vanilla Fudge, 16
Village Stompers, 33, 48
Vivaldi, A., 44
Walkin’ in the Rain, 53
Waltzing Matilda, 49
War, 53
Washington Square, 39, 48
Wayward Wind, 52
We Ain’t Got Nothin’ Yet, 10
We Are the Champions, 55
We Can Work it Out, 46, 48
We Gotta Get Out of This Place, 50
We Will Rock You, 55
Weinberg, Charles, 7
Western Union, 53
WFIL, 13, 57
What Am I Doing Hanging Round, 52
When, 30, 31
When I Was Young, 10, 48, 60
Where Have All the Flowers Gone, 24, 60
Where or When, 50
Where Were You When I Needed You, 52
While My Guitar Gently Weeps, 48
White Rabbit, 11
White, Mike, 32
WBIG, 9, 11, 13
Will You Love Me Tomorrow, 52
Williams Jr., Hank, 37, 44
Williams, Andy, 21
Willson, Meredith, 7
WIND, 20
Winfield, Dave, 31
Wipe Out, 55
Wolf Creek Pass, 23
Wooden Heart, 42
Wooly Bully, 6
You Keep Me Hangin’ On, 52
You Light Up My LIfe, 27
You Never Give Me Your Money, 51
Your Wildest Dreams, 52
Zero is Just Another Even Number, 56
Zombies, 12, 48, 49

Words of Love, 15
Work, H. C., 27
Workman, B., 17
Wouldn’t It Be Nice, 55
WOWO, 10
WPRB, 33
Wright, S., 53
WXPN, 12, 15, 14
Yardbirds, 40, 49, 52
Yellow Balloon, 65
Yellow Submarine, 56
Yesterday, 7, 16, 33, 48
Yesterday and Today, 11
Yesterday When I Was Young, 33, 49
Yesterday, the movie, 42
YMCA, 13
You Keep Me Hangin’ On, 16
You Know My Name, 55
You Light Up My LIfe, 27
You Never Give Me Your Money, 51
You Only Live Twice, 50
Young, N., 28, 48, 66
Youngbloods, 19, 52
You Only Live Twice, 50
Zager and Evans, 16, 54
Zappa, F., 18
Zero is Just Another Even Number, 56
Zombies, 12, 48, 49