

Rocket Norton

Lost In Space

By Rocket Norton

Dedicated to:
Peter, Ron and Bruce who have gone on ahead
and:
Steve, John, Geoff, Lindsay, Al & Jim.
Oh, the adventures we have shared.

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Foreword

As I researched this book, I interviewed more than 40 people starting with all my old bandmates: Geoff, Lindsay, Steve, John, Howard the roadie and our manager, Jim.

We all agreed on two things: 1) The Seeds of Time played a gig out in the trees somewhere; and 2) I forgot my drum sticks. Geoff and Steve said it happened up on Grouse Mountain, Lindsay and John remembered it at a lodge in Lynn Valley, Jim thought it took place at a frat house and Howard couldn't remember where it happened – only that it did.

Geoff then told me how he saved the day by carving sticks for me out of kindling, Lindsay said it was he who did it from tree branches, Steve positively remembered breaking up a kitchen chair and whittling sticks out of the legs, John recalled chopping up a fire log with a hatchet and Jim insisted that HE carved the drum sticks from a picket fence. Howard couldn't remember how he did it, but was sure it was he who had somehow produced the sticks.

I only remember that I played the whole night with these big clunky hunks of wood for drum sticks.

I knew after those first interviews that the truth would be a moving target in this story and I would have to sift shit with a spaghetti strainer to make sure that I did not cross the line from fact into fantasy.

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* If I forgot you please forgive me. Remember, I took 200 acid trips ...

* * * * *

Please visit www.rocketnorton.com to view our ever-expanding collection of photographs. Most of these images have never been published and are private, behind-the-scenes pictures of life with the bands; others are personal memories of the story's participants and still others have been researched and acquired through hours of diligent work and in spite of police evidence rules.

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Before There Was Me

The long, sleek, inky-black limousine careened down the winding dirt road at breakneck speed. Rocks spewed out in every direction and thick billows of dust choked the people who stood lining the path all the way from the Artist's Village to the backstage holding area. I was tossed around in the cavernous backseat like a bronc-bustin' cowboy.

I could feel the presence of the enormous mass of hysterical humanity awaiting our performance. I couldn't see them but I could hear them, I could smell them. They produced a force so powerful it shook the earth and sent a surge of electrical energy crackling through the air. The excitement was mind-numbing.

The car skidded to a stop in the dirt. For a long time there was nothing but anticipation and we sat in silence trying to bridle the adrenaline; I didn't want to restrain it, I wanted to harness the rush and ride it for all it was worth. At last, the doors were yanked open and all of us in the band were dragged out into the pandemonium. People were running in every direction. Everyone seemed to be shouting orders at each other. I struggled to remain relaxed in the midst of the fury raging around me. Suddenly, we were pressed together at the bottom of the steep wooden staircase that would lead us up to the stage and our ultimate glory ... or obloquy, if we fucked it up. I was acutely aware that this show would make us or break us.

I focused on the top stair. It seemed so far. I thought, 'How did I get here? What fates conspired to lead me down what roads to this time and place?'

I heard someone yell, "Okay, this is fucking it boys."

I thought about 'The Road' - Thousands of shit gigs, millions of miles travelled; the sex, the drugs, the music, was it real or a dream ... or a nightmare?

Then the voice screamed, "Let's fucking do it!"

A hundred thousand voices erupted as one. I scrambled up the stairs thinking, 'Where did it all begin?'

Chapter One

1964

I had no reason to believe that anything was ever going to happen to me. I was thirteen, a chubby, self-conscious kid with no ambition and less confidence. And worse, I played the accordion. I was just trying to grasp the significance of wet dreams and acne and wondered if they were connected in any way because I had a lot of acne. Still, I was happy to learn that my penis was good for something other than passing water through.

At five minutes to eight o'clock on the evening of Sunday, February 9, 1964, I waited anxiously in front of the family Philco television set somehow aware that this would be the most important night of my life.

It has become a cliché of my generation, but the heart-pounding exhilaration that overwhelmed me that night, when *Ed Sullivan* delivered his historic introduction and *The Beatles* exploded onto the screen, changed my life completely and absolutely. Like most, I saw instantly that *The Beatles* were more than great music. They were a raw, wild and uninhibited force of nature. History likes to paint *The Rolling Stones* as the bad boys and *The Beatles* as their tidy little well-mannered cousins; nice boys, good lads, but I sensed that they were dangerous and I liked that; I wanted to be a part of something dangerous too.

The next day I traded my accordion in on a snare drum and a cymbal. In my youthful enthusiasm, I forgot to include a snare-stand. Just as a baseball catcher's equipment is called 'the tools of ignorance', it may also be said of a drum set. Before the day was out, I was up at the home of my friends, Owen and his brother Clyde, organizing a band.

Owen was eleven, had skipped up two grades and was still the smartest kid in school. When he was four he had told me he was going to be a nuclear physicist; I couldn't even pronounce it. Clyde was nine and was also at the top of his class.

Owen played the guitar and Clyde the piano. I should say that Owen had a guitar, one of those cheap little nylon-string folk guitars, and there was a piano in their house. Suggesting that they actually played these instruments was generous at best. The three of us struggled through old folk songs *Oh Susanna* and *Camptown Races* found in a *Stephen Foster* songbook in the piano bench and attempted but failed to play a few contemporary songs like *California Sun* by *The Rivelas* and *Be My Baby* by *The Ronnetts*. It was immediately obvious that I could not sing so I just bashed away as best I could. Tragically, my first session was a disaster. I could mash the cymbal okay and did so with as much frenzied abandon as I could muster, which I'm proud to say was considerable, but because the snare had no stand, it had to lie on a cushy chair which sucked all of the properties of the snare sound into it. All I could produce was a weak 'cluck' every time I hit it. So, my first music sounded like this:

Shhhhhhhh-Cluck
Shhhhhhhh-Cluck

Shhhhhhhh-Cluck
Shhhhhhhh-Cluck

At least I got the 'cluck' on the downbeat!

Sadly, that was the end of Owen and Clyde's short music career. When I last heard of Owen he had earned his doctorate along with two others and now flies research planes into hurricanes in an effort to better understand them. I don't need a degree to understand that there's a lot of wind going really fast. Clyde grew up to be doctor and a Professor of Medicine at the University of British Columbia.

For me, despite this inauspicious beginning, I was already dreaming the dream. I wasn't even sure what it meant; was it the music, or the adventure or something else? The only thing I was sure of was that I was suddenly empowered with the resolve to pursue it. Even though the rainbow that I was to follow was itself a bit fuzzy, I had faith that it would lead me to the treasures that I desired. There was no backing out now. The journey had already begun and I was determined to make it all the way to the end of the road.

I was born and given the name Gary Wanstall on July 18th, 1950 in Chilliwack, BC, Canada, a little town in the Fraser Valley about sixty miles east of Vancouver. My father, Harry, was working for a meat packing company. I don't know what he did there but it was some kind of an office job. He was a passive, gentle man and so, to my knowledge, he never hacked-up any cows. My mother, Margaret was, at that time a home-maker. She had this wonderful belief that the world should be fair. The only time she would ever get cross would be if someone acted unfairly towards someone else; her harshest reprimand was, "that's not fair", and that has kind of stuck with me through the years. I had a sister, Diane who was very nice, but she was eight years older than me so we never had a close relationship. She was in high school before I even started First Grade and was married with child and gone by the time I was fourteen.

My first real memories are in Vancouver at my grandparent's house at the corner of Second and Trafalgar in a neighbourhood called Kitsilano. The family had returned to the city and lived there while my dad started working for a bank; I'm certain he didn't harm any livestock there. Groucho Marx is alleged to have said, "As a baby I was very young." I agree. I have no recollection of Chilliwack. I have always considered my grandparent's place to be my first home. It was 1952, the dawn of the golden age of the automobile, but milk was still delivered by horse-drawn wagon and there was even a junk man that came round with a big old horse pulling his cart.

My parents bought a little house at Oak Street and Fiftieth Avenue in 1953 when there was an actual working farm across the street. It was the Baby-Boom era and the farm was quickly subdivided into a breeding ground for punks like me. Eventually, every house on the block had kids. We would all meet up spontaneously in gangs of twenty or thirty or more and play hide & seek, kick-the-can, red-rover and such until it was dark and our moms hollered for us to come in.

While I was playing tag with my friends, a fifteen year old radio deejay named *Red Robinson* began to sneak an occasional rock & roll record onto the

turntable during his program on CJOR Radio. On June 27th, 1956, *Red* presented *Bill Haley & His Comets* at the Kerrisdale Arena and rock & roll arrived in Vancouver. Later that year, on September 24th, *Little Richard* also played the Kerrisdale Arena where he was mobbed by fans and a near riot erupted. *Red Robinson* moved over to CKWX Radio. He became one of the important deejays in rock & roll when the station went to 50,000 watts – making it the most powerful radio station north of San Francisco and west of Winnipeg.

When *Red* introduced *Elvis Presley* at Empire Stadium on August 31st, 1957, all Hell broke loose. Vancouver teenagers went crazy and the police had to shut the show down after *Elvis* had sung only one song. They restored enough order to allow him to return but he only managed four more songs before he had to be whisked away for his own safety. He did a total of nineteen minutes. This was my town.

Little did I know, but rock and roll bands were springing up all over Vancouver. *The Hi-Fives*, *The Orbits* and Vancouver's first recording stars, *The Stripes* with vocalist *Jim Morrison* and a guitarist named *Ian Tyson* had a double-sided single, *Ready To Rock* and *So Long Goodbye* on the Arctic label. *Les Vogt & the Prowlers* came out with *Rock Me Baby*, *Get a Move* and *I'm Feeling Sorry* all recorded at Al Reusch's Aragon Studios and released on Aragon records. All these great bands played teen dances throughout the Pacific Northwest.

In 1958 I got a Sony transistor radio for my eighth birthday. It was an aquamarine plastic beauty, top-of-the-line, with a genuine imitation leather carrying case. I carried that radio everywhere I went and listened to all of the glorious rock 'n roll stars of the fifties; *Little Richard*, *Elvis*, *Chuck Berry*, *Buddy Holly*, *Fats Domino*, *The Everly Brothers* and every single one of the Bobbys.

Even though I gave no conscious thought to music, it was having a powerful influence on me. I loved 'novelty' songs like the '58 hits, *Witch Doctor* by David Seville and *Chantilly Lace* by *The Big Bopper*. Whenever I hear those songs today I think back to long hot summer days in a time when I had no cares in the world. In a case of 'youth is wasted on the young', I remember *The Purple People Eater* by *Sheb Wooley* playing on the radio one day as a cute little girl named Debbie Turpin from my Grade Two class chased me all over the playground for a kiss. At the time it was sickening . . . Years later, in high school, Debbie developed into the prettiest girl in school and would sooner have stuck a fork in her eye than kiss me. *Frankie Avalon's*, *Venus*, in 1959, is another mint song that invokes strong childhood memories. It was probably on the radio when I was home enjoying an unearned day-off from school with some faked illness. In the summer of 1960 *Ray Peterson's* sappy hit, *Tell Laura I Love Her* made me cry when I first heard it on my way to baseball practice.

There was something in the story of the young would-be race car driver who gets killed trying to win a thousand dollars to buy his girl an engagement ring that really got to me. It's odd because, as a ten year old, I had no real concept of love. I felt safe and secure in my family, and nobody could ask for a better childhood, but there were never any displays of affection or talk of love at my house.

I believe that it was my willingness to accept pretty much any story

wholeheartedly, to feel it as though it was real, that has always made me an overly sensitive audience. When I went to see the movie, *Plan Nine From Outer Space* (universally lauded as the worst movie ever made), at the Orpheum Theatre on Granville Street in 1959, I thought it was so real and got so scared that I had to run out and wait in the lobby. All my little friends came out laughing at the absurdity of the film while I had to sleep with the lights on for days after so that the fake monster with the long fingernails wouldn't get me.

I didn't buy records. Firstly, what little money I had was spent on baseball cards. I had a huge collection comprised of thousands of pristine cards including *Mickey*, *Willie*, *Whitey* and *Yogi* as well as *Ted Williams*, *Stan Musial*, *Warren Spahn* and all of the immortals of the time. I may have buried the entire priceless collection somewhere in the back yard. I wish I knew. It would be worth a fortune today. Secondly, my sister bought all the *Ricky Nelson*, *Connie Francis* and *Johnny Horton* 45s I could handle. For some curious reason, *He's So Fine* by *The Chiffons* in 1963 was the first 45 rpm record I ever bought. Seems like an odd choice but I liked their 'Doo Lang Doo Lang' Doo-Wop sound. Following that, I got on track right away by making *Twist and Shout* by *The Beatles* my first album purchase.

I never liked school. On my first day in Grade One I cried so long and with such indignation that the principal telephoned my mother to come and pull me out of there. When I discovered that this was something I had to do five times a week for twelve years I believed that my life was over. I despised school so intensely that it physically hurt to attend class. I hated those big clocks they had in every classroom. I would sit and watch the second hand plod from one digit to the next as if I were trapped in some sort of purgatory for dummies. For most of Elementary School I thought I was stupid but as I squeaked into High School I realized that I just wasn't interested in any of this.

It was around this time when I discovered something I did find interesting ... Girls!

If this is a story about sex, drugs and rock & roll (and I'm certain that it is) then it begins in the classrooms of Grade Eight, where half the population was most definitely of interest to me, an obsession that has lasted a lifetime. I don't think I was abnormal in this way of thinking. It seemed that every boy in class had trouble keeping his stuff on his desk. And while he was down there picking it up, who could help but risk a quick peek up the dress of some not-so-unsuspecting female. Once begun, this was an endless game because there is so much mystery about what goes on up there that no boy ever really figures it out no matter how many pens and pencils are sacrificed. Perhaps *Bobby Curtola's*, *Three Rows Over*, was written just for me?

In 1964 girls got pretty dolled up to attend school. In fact, the girls at Sir Winston Churchill High School were forbidden from wearing slacks or pants. I was much in favour of this particular rule because skirts and dresses allowed for the possibility that some lacy under thing might be spotted by accident or sweet fortune. The flash of a slip, garter, hook, belt, whistle, strap, wire or anything frilly would certainly provide an immediate thrill and it could also be stored in my depraved adolescent memory and conjured up later; again and again ... and again,

when alone in bed in the dark. Then there was the mother-lode - panties! But this was about as common as a unicorn sighting as girls are taught from infancy that a flash of their panties is a crime of the highest level; “knees together - a lady reveals nothing.” Hence the little ditty, “I see London, I see France, I see ___’s underpants” is about the most severe scolding any little girl can suffer. Women’s lingerie was pretty complex in those days but, fortunately, by the time I got in there, we were in a full-blown sexual revolution and nobody was wearing anything. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

There was nothing indecent going on. But there was a power greater than all of us at work here. It inspired all the young maidens to unloose their pigtailed and backcomb their hair into billows of hair-sprayed hives, to exchange their sneakers for pumps, to spend endless hours at the make-up table and douse themselves in intoxicating perfumes. It was all too confusing at that point so I continued with my strategy of peeking by day and whacking off at night.

At the end of the school year, in June, they had a dance for Grade Eighters. The band was a Top-Forty band called *The CFUN Classics*, so named because they were sponsored by the most popular radio station in town, CFUN Radio. Their leader was a sax player who doubled on organ named *Claire Lawrence*, the bassist was *Glenn Miller* and their vocalist, the great *Howie Vickers*. Guitarist, *Brian Russell*, went on to play many years with *Anne Murray* and drummer, *Gary Taylor*, became a nightclub owner in Vancouver later on. They were fabulous, playing their instrumental hit, *Ace’s High* as well as current hits like *Dawn (Go Away)* by *The Four Seasons* and lots of older rock & roll songs like *The Night Has A Thousand Eyes* by *Bobby Vee* and *Telstar* by *The Tornados*. I danced once when they played *The Twist* by *Chubby Checker* because that was the only dance I could do. The event itself was depressing but seeing a good band up close excited me even more.

For parents who had grown up during a depression and lived through a World War, my mom and dad accepted my seemingly frivolous intention to become a drummer better than I would have expected. I’m sure they thought it would be a passing phase and, instead of discouraging me, they supported my efforts, such as they were. My dad even drove me to drum lessons. Being consistent with my status as a bad student, I hated drum lessons too. Even though I believed that this was a waste of time, I learned the sacred drum rudiments from the bible of drum books, *Syncopation*. I practiced the various stroke-rolls, the ratamacue and all of the paradiddle family including the double-paradiddle, flam-paradiddle and the classic paradiddle-diddle. My teacher, who was an ancient man with a smelly studio in his ratty little shack on the East Side, conveyed these rudiments to me sanctimoniously as if this was the Masons’ secret handshake but all I could think was, what fucking use to me was a paradiddle anyway? Years later I was astonished to re-discover the paradiddle, and all of its rudimentary relations, and I incorporated them into my drum solo.

1964 was an amazing year for music. The British had begun a musical invasion of North America led by *The Beatles*. Eight of *The Beatles’* songs hit

Number One that year including, *She Loves You*, *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, *Can't Buy Me Love* and others and combined *The Fab Four* held the top spot on the Canadian charts for a total of nineteen weeks. Their first feature length movie in black & white, *A Hard Day's Night*, drove us all crazy with Beatlemania. When *The Beatles* played at Empire Stadium in Vancouver on August 22nd the fans repeated the *Elvis* riot of 1957. At one point the police chief forced emcee, *Red Robinson* to interrupt the concert and beg the audience to calm down. *John Lennon* was not pleased. "Get off the fuckin' bloody stage," he shouted at *Red*. I believe that *Red* is proud of that to this day. The riot was so frightening that *Beatles* manager, *Brian Epstein* called an audible and by-passed the hotel in favour of a quick departure at the airport. International reporters called the concert riot a "slugfest". Vancouver had done it again.

And the British Invasion was supported by other English bands like *Dave Clark Five* with *Bits & Pieces*, *Gerry & The Pacemakers* and *I'm The One*, *Peter & Gordon* with *A World Without Love*, *Manfred Mann's Do Wah Diddy* and *The Animals'* classic rendition of, *House of the Rising Sun*. The U.S. fought back with the most loved frat-house anthem of all time, *Louie Louie* by *The Kingsmen*, and number one hits like *Memphis* by *Johnny Rivers*, *Rag Doll* by *The Four Seasons* and *Roy Orbison's* biggest hit, *Oh, Pretty Woman*.

All of these great songs were played on C-FUN Radio by the 'C-Fun Good-Guys'; *Red Robinson*, *Fred Latremouille*, *Mad Mel*, *Jolly John Tanner* and *Daryl B*. *Daryl B* soon jumped ship and went over to the new competing top forty station in town, CKLG. Their jocks were called the 'CKLG Boss-Jocks'. They were; *Daryl B*, *Roy Hennessey*, *Rick Honey* and *Russ Simpson*. There was a heated rivalry between the stations and both the Good-Guys and the Boss Jocks would appear at any public event including supermarket openings and charity car washes.

In the fall, I entered Grade Nine. The Good-Guys showed up at a back-to-school sock hop with *The Nocturnals*. *The Nocturnals* were genuine recording stars with a national hit record titled, *Because You're Gone*. C-Fun used them as background to promote the radio station. Deejay *Jolly John Tanner*, who was about six foot eight, sang a rendition of *Ian Whitcomb's* *You Turn Me On* in falsetto while doing *The Freddy*. That's not a sight you forget easily.

In the late afternoon of September 28th, Good-Guy, *Fred Latremouille* appeared on my television as host of a new local Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television program called, *Let's Go*. It was supposed to feature music and fashion for teens and the first show included, as co-host, a stiff young woman, obviously without broadcast experience, who reported on fashion. There was a house band featuring members of *The C-Fun Classics* and local singers such as *Howie Vickers*, *Tom Baird*, *Susan Pesklevits*, *Rosalind Keene* and *Mike Campbell*. By the third episode *Red Robinson* had elbowed the uncomfortable fashion reporter aside and took over as co-host. The show was very popular and continued as *Music Hop* in one form or other until June of 1968.

While I was shopping for back-to-school stuff at the downtown Hudson's Bay Company department store one Saturday in September, I lucked upon a performance by *Terry Jacks & The Chessmen* who were set up in the boys wear

department. They had a big hit locally with an instrumental titled, *Meadowlands*, which featured their guitarist *Guy Sobell*. They played some really great rock & roll and put a charge into the huge crowd packed into the store. Standing there with my little bags of socks and shirts and corduroys, I realized how stimulated I was. Seeing this done on television was one thing but, live and in person, I understood that it could be done and done well even here in my home town.

By this time some of us had started to stop using gloop in our hair. This simple process caused the hair to fall naturally and made it appear suddenly longer. This was a serious issue at Sir Winston Churchill High School. Our Principal was a Rhodes Scholar and a severe disciplinarian. Shortly after *The Beatles'* first appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, a senior at school named Brian, had arrived in class sporting a *Beatles'* haircut or, his regular hair without a-little-dab'll-do-ya. He was sent home and told not to return until he had a proper hairstyle. This story made the front page of the Vancouver newspaper with a quote from our Principal in which he said, "We don't want anything outlandish here that would cause undue giggling and silliness in class." He was obviously ill prepared for what was about to happen.

When I pulled the same stunt, the same thing happened to me. This was the first shot in a sociological war that waged at Churchill, and at other schools, for the next five years. It wasn't just about hair. It was about freedom ... and, there was an entire dress code at stake!

Then there was the matter of smoking. In 1964 every person on the planet smoked cigarettes. People smoked everywhere; if you were seeing your doctor he might light up a snipe right there in his office. I had begun smoking around the age of twelve and contributed my fair share of toxic fumes into the immediate environment. At Churchill, students were forbidden from smoking within a block of the school. This was a definite violation of my basic human right to inhale poisonous tar if I wanted to. Something had to be done about all this and it would all start with hair. There would be many casualties but it was a war that had to be fought, and I was willing to fight at the front.

After my disastrous first attempt at playing music, I had retreated to the small den of my parent's house where I set up my cymbal and snare drum in private. I had no one to play with so I put *The Beatles' Please Please Me* on the Hi-Fi and matched drummer, *Ringo Starr*, as close as I could on the cymbal and snare over and over and over again. It's a good thing my mother was out of the house working as a secretary at that time or she might have closed down my show long before I could get it out on the road.

At Christmas that year my drum kit expanded to include a floor tom. I should have added a bass drum but I didn't know any better and wouldn't have known what to do with it anyway. My record collection also grew with the addition of two new *Beatles'* albums, *Beatlemania - With The Beatles* (which was actually *The Beatles'* first Canadian release in 1963, but came to me second) and *Long Tall Sally* (both titles released in Canada on Capitol Records) and two albums by *The Rolling Stones* titled, *The Rolling Stones*, and *12 X 5*, (both released on London

Records).

Even though it would be *Ringo* who would shape my eventual style as a drummer, those early *Stones* albums were to be profoundly influential on my overall musical taste, especially songs like the raw and sexual, *King Bee*, the crude and powerful, *Not Fade Away*, and an instrumental track titled, *2120 South Michigan Avenue*, in tribute to the legendary Chicago blues recording studio at Chess Records, where *12 X 5* was recorded (and named after the recording company's address).

As 1964 came to an end I was ensconced in Grade Nine and pretty much a loner. I had had two best friends as a kid. Michael was a year older and Kenny was a year younger. I had been close to both pals but we had never really been a trio. Mostly, I played with one or the other. For most of my childhood I was practically adopted into Mike's family. I spent almost all of my pre-teen summers at their country cottage near Ferndale in Washington State. When Mike graduated into high school a year ahead of me, he dumped me. And, when I entered high school a year ahead of Kenny, I dumped him. There were a few guys that I hung out with but, for the most part, I watched a lot of television.

There certainly were no girls in my life, at least not real girls, but there was no shortage of alone-under-the-sheets imaginary action. All I had to do was visualize the womanly shape of my young French teacher, or the flash of a knee of the cute little girl in Math class or *Elly May Clampett* in those tight, frayed jeans she wore on the *Beverly Hillbillies*, and I'd be popping off all night long.

Chapter Two

1965

As my ninth school year plodded on into 1965 I still had no reason to believe that the high-risk, adventurous life that I had envisioned for myself would ever actually happen. Then, everything happened at once.

In January, driven by that magical force that thrusts the sexes together, a healthy specimen of a teenage girl, named Marsha, took a liking to me. I had shot up to about six feet and had dropped all of the chubbiness, but I remained painfully shy and far from being any kind of a prize in the looks department. Still, Marsha gave me her school photo with the inscription, 'to a very sweet boy' and I thought I was Casanova. One day, at school, driven by hormonal excretions I knew nothing about, I plucked up the courage to pat her hips. This was the first time that I had touched a girl with even the most innocuous sexual intent. It was done subtly, as if by accident, but it sent a charge straight between my legs. Either she didn't notice or she didn't care, or maybe she accepted my impertinent but innocent advance. I got away with it and hungered for more. I rushed home to my room and indulged in a fantasy-frenzy. After that, every time I heard *Shirley Ellis*, sing Marsha's name:

Marsha
Marsha Marsha bo Barsha,
Banana Fanna fo Farsha
Fe Fy mo arsha, Marsha

in her hit, *The Name Game*, I got hard.

Churchill was a mid-sized school of about twelve hundred students. It was unusual because of the diversity of ethnic, social, religious and economic groups. There was incredible wealth on one side of Oak Street and poverty on the other. There was a large Jewish population and a balance of Catholics, WASPs and religions that I did not yet understand. It wasn't the friendliest environment. The school halls were flush with little cliques. I did not fit into any particular group but was accepted by most as a fringe player. My family situation was middle-class so I guess I was border-line with both economic groups and Marsha was Jewish so that got me in there.

For my first date, I took Marsha to a school dance in the gym. I was hoping for a chance to mount an even more brazen assault on her young womanly body. The band was one of the most popular rhythm & blues bands in Vancouver. It was called *The Night Train Revue*. They were a big band with a full horn section and a revolving-door of vocalists including *Sy Risby*, *Chuck Flintroy*, *Billy Dixon* and *Miss Suzanne*. I drooled over drummer, Doug Cuthbert's green sparkle Ludwig Super Classic drum kit. *The Night Train Revue* came on with *Ike & Tina Turner*, *Mary Wells*, *Ray Charles* and more. They wore sharp suits and did steps. They were very slick and maintained a furious energy all night.

After the dance, my premeditated mauling of the nubile Marsha was never

realized; not even a kiss goodnight. It was my fault. She hinted that she was willing to allow a little abstemious groping but I was so unsophisticated, I simply did not know how. I was embarrassed and humiliated by my failure. My infatuation with Marsha fizzled quickly after that. By compensation, I was invited to hang out with the rich Jewish clique more often.

Their leader was Mark Wosk who came from a wealthy and prominent family. He was decidedly more mature than the rest of us and tall, dark and handsome in a *Sean Connery - James Bond* kind of a way. (There always seemed to be a *Pussy Galore* hovering around his locker). He played a bit of piano and was interested that I played drums. One day, in March, we took the bus downtown and met his father, who was a successful merchant. We walked up to Ward Music on Hastings Street where Mark picked out a double manual Honer electric organ and an amplifier with four plug-in jacks, reverb and echo; top of the line gear for early in 1965.

While we were there I noticed a full-set of blue-sparkle Cornet drums with Zyn cymbals. I don't believe that the entire kit cost more than a hundred dollars but it was ninety-nine dollars more than I had. Somehow, I talked my parents into it and the kit was mine.

On weekends, Mark and I, and brothers, Bruce and Les Ames on bass and guitar, would haul our gear into someone's rec-room where we would butcher songs like, *Tall Cool One* by *The Wailers*, *The Witch* by *The Sonics* and the big-daddy, *Louie Louie* by both *The Kingsmen* and *Paul Revere & the Raiders*. All of these bands were from the music-rich Pacific Northwest. *The Kingsmen* and *Paul Revere* became famous but *The Wailers* and *Sonics* were two incredible Seattle bands who never broke out.

Now that I had a whole drum kit I had to graduate from "Shhhhhhhh-Cluck" to something more complicated. So now while my right hand still went "Shhhhhhhh" and my left hand graduated to "crack" (the sound a snare drum makes when placed on a proper stand), I had to tell my right foot to press down on a pedal that made a beater hit the bass drum and get my left foot to rock back and forth on another pedal to open and close the hi-hat cymbals. The hi-hat is a stand with two cymbals that open and shut, crashing together, by pressing a foot down on a pedal. And then there are the tenor and floor toms which must be struck from time to time. All of this is like playing the piano while riding a bike. When executed properly music is created, but when practiced my way, it's an offensive racket.

Liquor first passed my lips in a similar manner to that which it does for many teenagers. I snuck a little Canadian Club Whiskey from my dad's stash in the back of a cupboard above the fridge. He drank so infrequently that I believe this bottle was already ten years old and still half full. I had to be careful because he would have certainly noticed if too much went missing. Actually, I suspect that he did know but he never said anything. I poured a small quantity into a 7-Up bottle and hurried out the back door. My childhood friend Kenny and I still hung out on occasion and this Saturday night we wandered the back alleys of the neighbourhood guzzling CC & Seven and smoking cigarettes. The booze was bitter

and I didn't like it. I got a little stupid and we knocked over a few garbage cans. The experience that night failed to kick-start what would eventually become a life-long addiction (alcohol – not vandalism).

In May, I saw a revolutionary film at the Vogue Theatre on Granville Street. It was called *The T.A.M.I. Show* (The Teen-Age Music International Show). It was a film made by a television director named Steve Binder of a concert that took place at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium in 1964 featuring dozens of the world's biggest music stars including *Chuck Berry*, *The Rolling Stones*, *The Supremes*, *Jan & Dean* and a performance that would impress me almost as much as *The Beatles* on *Sullivan*. When I saw *James Brown & His Famous Flames* do *Please Please Please* I was mesmerized. Even *The Stones'* vocalist, *Mick Jagger* looked shaken after *Brown's* electrifying performance.

The next weekend, I attended my first rock concert. It was *Paul Revere & The Raiders* at the Agrodome in Vancouver. The opening act was *The Syndicate of Sound* (who would later have a Top Ten hit with a song titled, *Little Girl*). The Agrodome was an acoustic nightmare, designed and built for horse shows. Their sound system consisted of two Vox Super-Beatle speaker boxes on each side. This was grossly inadequate for the venue but it was the state-of-the-art in sound reinforcement at the time, and nobody knew any better. *Paul Revere & the Raiders* sounded great to me. They wore bright red, white and blue American Revolutionary Army costumes and had exciting choreography. I didn't see any reason why I couldn't do that - except that I didn't have a band to do it with.

That was about to change. I was approached by two Grade Eleven students named Bob Kripps and Frank Brnjac. They had a reputation around school as hipster guitar players in a band called, *The Surfs*. I learned quickly that *The Surfs* was partially a myth. They had played one dance on April 30th with a drummer named Barry and an organist named Keith - no bass player. Barry and Keith were not serious. Bob and Frank were very serious so they turfed Barry and Keith and went looking for me. I guess they thought that I was serious too because they asked if I was interested in trying-out for them.

This was my chance! This is what I had been waiting for! If I passed the audition I too would be a musician, a member of an elite global musical family, brother to *The Beatles*, sibling to *The Stones*, friend to *Freddy & the Dreamers*. I would be entitled to all that came with it, the benefits, the spoils, the women. All I had to do was pass that audition. Every day after school for a week I ran home and practice. I practiced until I wore out every *Beach Boys* record I owned.

When the big day arrived, Bob and Frank crammed into my den with all the pomp and circumstance that the gravity of the event warranted. The situation was made even more tense with the added embarrassment of having my mother hovering around the house. I put a record on and played along with *Surfin' USA* and *I Get Around*. Then the worst happened. Bob asked if I could play the signature drum solo made famous by drummer *Ron Wilson* on the 1963 surfing classic, *Wipe Out* by *The Surfaries*. For a piece that was recorded as an

afterthought “B” side and made up on the spot, it became the benchmark for drummers at the time and is still miss-played by most drummers today. I had a pretty good feel for it and attacked it with gusto.

After I had finished, it was awkward for all of us; I had no idea of whether I had nailed it or not. Bob and Frank stepped out into the narrow hallway and closed the door so that they could discuss me in private. My mother, who was just down the hall, and could hear them clearly, told me later that all they said was, “Well, he can play the roll to Wipe Out and he has good hair”. Based on that, I passed the audition, got the job and took my first major step in the pursuit of my dream. I was finally on the road to somewhere.

Bob and Frank were impressive. Firstly, they had great gear. Bob owned a rare Hofner guitar and a Fender Showman amp. Frank played a Fender Jazzmaster guitar and a cherry-red Gibson ES335, and had a Vox Super-Beatle amp. It turned out that both of their amps were fakes; perfect copies that they made themselves in Frank’s basement. First lesson of show business - it’s all make-believe.

Frank was tall with long dark brown hair and a sharp nose. He was plugged into the newest sounds coming out of England. He had albums and 45s by groups like *The Kinks*, *The Who* and *The Yardbirds*. He knew who *Jimmy Page* was, and *Eric Clapton*, *Jeff Beck*, *Pete Townshend* and *Ray Davies* as well. He could play songs like *Tired of Waiting*, *I Can’t Explain*, *For Your Love* and others. He had a wacky sense of humour but was very serious about his music.

Bob was a good looking guy; super hip and full of confidence, and he attracted the attention of all the girls. He was also all-the-rage when it came to fashion. He resembled *Brian Jones* of *The Stones*. He dressed like him and wore his blond hair like him. He was our lead singer and rhythm guitarist and understood the importance of having a strong presence out front.

Bob was more worldly than Frank. He was an inspired leader who ran focused, intense practices. He knew who *The Pretty Things* were before anybody. And, he introduced me to one of the best pure rock songs I have ever heard, *The Nazz Are Blue*, by *The Yardbirds*.

The summer of 1965 was spent in the rec-room of Bob’s parents’ house. Although we didn’t have a bass player, we still felt that we were a legitimate band. We renamed the band, *The Aztecs*, because we weren’t playing surf music anymore. We were now into the hard core British rock sound. The popular groups in Vancouver were still big rhythm & blues show-bands like *The Night Train Revue*, *Kentish Steele & The Shantelles* (with guitarist *Paul Dean*), *Jason Hoover and the Epics*, *Rosalind Keene & The Apollos* and *Billy Taylor & The Sectors* (with a trumpet player named Bruce Fairbairn) or Top Forty rock bands like *The C-FUN Classics*, *The Nocturnals*, *The Centaurs*, *The Shadracks* (with guitarist *Craig McCaw* and bassist Bob Verge), *The Stags* and *The Shockers* (with drummer *Dave Johnson*). We weren’t even a garage band - we were a rec-room band. Still, even without a bass player, we could rock-out on our hip repertoire of material that I called, 'noise music'. These were songs like *I'm A Man* by *The Yardbirds*, *The Who's My Generation* and anything by *The Pretty Things*.

With all of this hipness going on, it was unimaginable what was about to

happen to me. My stage debut would not include the music of *The Yardbirds*, *The Who* or *Pretty Things*. Instead, I appeared as a monk in the *Royal Ballet's* Vancouver presentation of *Romeo & Juliet* at the new Queen Elizabeth Theatre (opened in 1959). The Grande Dame of British ballet, *Dame Margot Fonteyn*, and the world's greatest dancer, *Rudolf Nureyev*, were the two principal dancers. *Fonteyn* was a legend and *Nureyev* a temperamental, hot-headed, brawling, smoking, boozing phenomenon on feet.

Bob's mother was the chair of a local dance committee and enlisted Bob, Frank and I to take part in the chorus. We showed up at the stage door and were herded down a metal spiral staircase into the bowels of the theatre. One of the army of wardrobe mistresses (not all of whom were biologically female) assigned Page costumes to Bob and Frank but was annoyed because I looked about twelve years old. She settled on a monk's costume and ordered me to keep the hood up so that the audience didn't see a baby-faced Father. As I struggled to squeeze back up the tight staircase I tripped on my robe and did a face plant on the floor. "Fuck!" I cursed meekly. I heard giggling and looked up at the tiny, dainty and very famous feet of none other than the Prima Ballerina, *Margot Fonteyn*, herself. She was sitting pretty, like a delicate porcelain doll, on what might as well have been a throne, surrounded by the company of flawless young ballerinas. She gazed upon me for a moment and then laughed out loud. It was a bigger laugh than I would have expected from such a noble creature but she really let it go; even her eyes danced. I guess the sight of this little baby-faced cherub blurting out "fuck" really tickled her funny-bone (assuming that anyone so refined would have a funny-bone).

Now red-faced, I quickly picked myself up and hurried along to the stage where I was to receive my final instructions. An assistant stage manager in charge of minute details ran me and another padre through our assignment. As the curtain rose, we were to stroll diagonally from down stage left to up stage right (that's from the back of the stage on the audience's right to the front of the stage on the audience's left – everything in show business is mixed up). Then we were to take up a position in a set-piece doorway down stage and watch. It was from this spot that I first saw him. He was standing about ten feet away from me in tights and a sweat shirt. He raised his hands above his head and struck a god-like pose. Then he effortlessly leaped about ten feet into the air, twirled about and landed like a feather. Even though I was only fourteen years old, and had never seen a male ballet dancer in real life, with that one move I knew that this man was the greatest dancer in history. I wanted to say something to express my awe and admiration but I remembered another of the assistant stage managers cautioning us not to speak to *Rudolph Nureyev* and better yet, not to even look at him directly with the naked eye. The rumour was that he beat the crap out of a waiter in a restaurant the night before for the brazen audacity of offering a compliment to the great man.

I did three performances with the *Royal Ballet* but, when the company moved on, I wasn't invited to continue. My career in the ballet was over. Good thing I still had a drum set to fall back on.

I turned fifteen that summer. I was over six feet now and had developed a

strong physical condition. I ran a lot and got a good workout playing drums. More importantly, my hair was getting longer and was dark and curly.

Bob had turned sixteen and had earned his driver's license. He had use of his mom's '63 Chevy Impala and we cruised all the way to Labour Day.

It was difficult going back to start Grade Ten that fall. There was so much musical excitement in my life that it was tough to concentrate on science and math.

I still had no clue when it came to girls. As much as I fantasized about them, and to the extent that I lusted after them, they scared me. I tried not to be too obvious as I ogled them parading by me in the halls. I pretended to look at the floor as my eyes darted from one to the next, afraid I might miss a pretty one. Fashions were changing rapidly. Skirts were shorter and tops tighter. In their fresh summer tans they all looked so much older, so much more womanly. It was going to be real hard to keep my pen on my desk this year.

Bob met a girl who had just moved to Vancouver from England. He started going steady with her. She loved the British sound and brought with her stories of the Rockers and the Mods and the Hard-Mods; enormous gangs separated by a dress-code that clashed all over the streets of London. Her name was Anne and she was smashing. She came on like a woman of the world with oceans of make-up and sexy short mini-skirts. One Saturday night Bob invited me to join him and Anne and her friend, DeeDee, on a double date. I didn't have to be asked twice. Any friend of Anne's had to be luscious and she was.

DeeDee was a walking wet-dream in a blue mini-skirt, white blouse and go-go boots. I was even more intimidated because she looked like *Mick Jagger's* girlfriend, *Marianne Faithful*, who was about the cutest girl on earth at that time. She slipped into the back seat with me and we drove around for a while. I couldn't keep my eyes off her bare thighs and now, as if I wasn't nervous enough, I also had to contend with my emerging hard-on. We ended up parking somewhere out by the beach and Bob and Anne started necking in the front seat. I was way too naïve to make any advances on DeeDee and so we sat there in silence suffering the sounds of Bob and Anne slurping, sucking and moaning in the front seat. Just when it became unbearable, I made a move. I lunged at her and planted an awkward kiss in the general area of her mouth. Surprisingly, she responded with raw enthusiasm. We achieved a full-on, sloppy-wet lip-lock. This was accompanied by a flurry of petting and pawing but, in the passion of the moment, I do not believe that I felt-up anything important. We both hung on for as long as we could but she was as inexperienced as I, and had not yet mastered the skill of breathing while kissing, so eventually we burst apart. At that moment Anne also came up for air. She recognized the awkwardness of the situation and decided to take a break. She lit up a cigarette, slid around with her knees on the bench and rested her arms on the back of the seat facing DeeDee.

"All the Mod birds in Chelsea are teasing their hair bigger," she lectured DeeDee, "and you've got to use more spray. It's all in the spray!"

Bob, suddenly bored, turned on the radio. *Barry McGuire's, Eve Of Destruction* filled the car.

“But I back-combed until my arms hurt,” DeeDee whined. “Why do I have to do it like they do in Chelsea.”

“Cos I'm older and I know these things,” said Anne.

“Well I'm almost ...”

Anne turned suddenly to Bob. “How old do you think I am?” She baited him.

Bob was the apotheosis of cool. He was pretending to listen to the song on the radio but, he had told me that he really wanted to find out how old Anne was, so it was great act. “What? Sorry, I was listening to Barry McGuire.”

“You lie!” She laughed and punched his shoulder. “Come on, guess, how old am I?”

“I don't have to guess,” he replied, “I know how old you are.”

“You do not!” She punched his shoulder again. “You don't. You can't ... Can you?”

“Yeah I can. You're fifteen.”

“Hah! You're wrong! I'm thirteen!” She cried.

“Thirteen!” Bob shouted. “You're only thirteen?”

“Oh shit!” Anne said, “You tricked me!”

“Well, it's not fair. You look so much older.”

She smiled, satisfied that she did look older; she was a woman. Then she began to laugh. She turned around and looked at me. “Do you know how old DeeDee is”? She asked.

“Uh, no,” I replied weakly.

“Can you guess?”

I looked over at DeeDee in her false eye-lashes and thick pink lipstick, now being expertly reapplied after I smeared it all over her face (and mine). “Fifteen?” I guessed, “Or, maybe sixteen?”

Anne and DeeDee squealed with glee and collapsed in convulsions of giggling only possible in young girls. Finally, Anne gathered her composure, looked at me and said, “She's eleven ... DeeDee is in Grade Seven; she's eleven!”

I sat, stunned, my teenage mind racing frantically evoking the images of what had just happened. Did I have my hand between her legs? God! No! I couldn't have! She's only eleven years old!

I went out through the window.

Halloween was approaching and *The Aztecs* caught a big break. Bob's mother was on the Committee at the Marpole Community Centre and she convinced them to hire us to play the Halloween Dance. Mark Wosk agreed to play organ with us and Bob found a bass player through an ad in the paper. When he arrived at our first practice we were alarmed to discover that he was an East Side greaser. His name was Neil. He looked like a chubbier version of the fifties rocker, *Gene Vincent*. The Committee had specified that we play a variety of songs so we could not play all our British 'noise' music anyway. This was my first lesson in compromising artistic integrity for a gig. Neil was helpful here as he knew a lot of songs.

In honour of this significant event we re-renamed the band *The Statics*.

My first professional gig happened on Saturday, October 30, 1965 in the gym at the Marpole Community Centre. We were dashing in black collarless blazers, white pants and turtlenecks; kind of a *Dave Clark Five* look. The dozens of fans that had gathered that night heard us play rock, rock & roll, surf, British invasion, blues, rhythm & blues and pop. We played *The Stones' Satisfaction* and set a world record for continuous performances of *Louie Louie*. We also played *The Beatles' Ticket to Ride* as well as *Wooly Bully* by *Sam the Sham & the Pharoahs* and *Bob Dylan's Mr. Tamborine Man* by *The Byrds*. Our 'waltz' was *House of the Rising Sun* which was repeated several times so that the boys and girls could press together pelvis-to-pelvis right under the watchful eyes of the chaperones. Dances had chaperones in those days to save teenagers from their own pernicious lust.

During the breaks, Neil poured whiskey from a micky he kept in his bass case into a Coca-Cola bottle and got plastered. As the end of the night approached, I became aware of a gang of leather jacketed hoods pointing at the bandstand. When we were done they came around back to the stage door and started banging on it.

The fear on my face must have been obvious. Mark laughed and teased, "Hey Rock! You gonna pound those punks?"

Frank joined in, "come on Rock! Go get 'em Rock!"

Neil calmly packed up his bass, took his twenty dollars pay from Bob, threw open the stage door and pushed his way into the mob. The door slammed behind him and I never saw the hoods or Neil again in my life.

After we had packed up our gear Mark and I walked home. I was exhilarated by my first gig. I waxed on philosophically about what it took to succeed in the music business, as if I knew.

"Mark, The Beatles started in a tiny club in Liverpool." I said with absolutely no knowledge of whether this was correct or not. "And now they're the biggest band in the world. It's because they're tough; they're hard as rock."

"Yeah," Mark agreed, "They're hard as rock, Rock."

"That's right, Rock." I said. "We have to be hard as rock too."

"Okay, Rock." Mark answered.

"Okay, Rock." I concluded

At school, whenever I passed Mark in the hall we would call each other "Rock"; we were both Rock. Then others began to call me Rock and the name stuck. It was somewhat prophetic as I was very dependable, reliable and dedicated to the band and was already considered The Rock by Bob. Soon all those in the know called me Rock or the more formal, The Rock.

I was finally beginning to establish a place for myself in the school society although not an insider with any particular group. There were two powerful sects at school. The first, the Jewish circle, was still very much the in-crowd and, as Mark was their leader, I was invited to tag along to parties and to other events.

One of their group was Howard Diner. Howard was small and uncommonly skinny. He couldn't have weighed much more than a hundred pounds and most of that was nose. He was cursed with a *Cyrano de Bergerac* sized nose but it was a thing of awe and beauty and, like his fictitious counterpart, Howard wore it well.

He was a zany guy with an hilarious frat-house sense of humour. He was also our driver. A bunch of us would go out in his mom's '65 Parisienne and we'd cruise the avenues honking at girls and looking for trouble. One time we found more than we could handle when we were chased by a car full of tough-guys. Our lives were at risk but we had nothing to fear as tiny, fragile Howard, barely able to peer over the steering wheel of the gigantic Pontiac, expertly maneuvered the car, careening down back alleys and flying over side streets at frightening speeds, until our would-be attackers chickened-out, gave up and sought easier prey.

The other force at school was the 'Hershey Bars'. This was the madras shirt, Converse running shoe set. They loved surf music, sports and necking. They were led by the coolest guy at school, Steve Walley. Steve was tall with shaggy blond hair and intelligent blue eyes. He was a *James Coburn, Our Man Flint* kind of a guy. He was his own man and had confidence that all around him was his. He could do no wrong and even a cursory "Hi" as he passed by in the school halls sounded perfect and made you wish you'd said that. The man was KOOL!

The Hersheys had formed a band of their own and they called it *The G.T.s*. Steve was the bass player.