

Valda's pregnant in 1962 when David joins Judy'n Robert Dunn's workshop at the Merce Cunningham studio. Everyone I know'n don't know already joined'n hasta make a "dance" for the workshop to Eric Satie's *Gymnopedie*. In the "railroad" apartment at St Marks Place n'Avenue A, where Valda'n me 1st live, I dance from the kitchen through 2 middle rooms n'hop, skip'n jump, kneel'n pretend to planta flower, move my hips'n lips to imitate Billy Eckstein singing "Old Black Magic". I make notes on yellow paper describing and listing.

[CLICK TO SEE ORIGINAL NOTES FOR HELEN'S DANCE]

I work without music but I perform to Satie, at the 1st Judson Church showing, July 6, 1962 while Valda's in NY hospital having given birth to son Ain Heller Bern, July 4th. My own birthday is July 14, my father Sam is July 1, Valda is September 17, September 15 is my mother Rose and September 8 is Helen Seitelman. Julys and Septembers. Ain's 1st middle name is Heller after Helen and I leave NY Hospital July 6 and taxi downtown to Judson Church 1st performance to show the Satie solo I call *Helen's Dance*.

Helen Lee Seitelman's father is a teacher in my junior high. I meet Helen in high school. She is smarter than me'n works harder and gets better grades. She wears her glasses to see. Not like my rose colored lenses, prescribed by Dr. Lew, for the effect I want of taking off'n puttin' on glasses to emphasize words like actors in movies. I think Helen and me love each other. But what do I know, about love, in high school? How do I even know how ta ask for a date? "Here's a dollar" Rosie'll say, "ya too young for a date." Where d'ya take a girl with a dollar? I write a note on a torn piece-a toilet paper: Dear daddy, I need money to go to a movie with Helen. In the toilet I wrap it around Sam's toothbrush. He goes ta work before I go ta school. Leaves \$5 unda my bureau cover. Helen'n me subway uptown to now disappeared Capitol Theater to see movie *Quo Vadis*. I'm in Sam's shirt'n tie'n she wears her aunt's black flower print dress'n high heel black pumps'n takes off her glasses till it's time to watcha pictcha.

"Hadagoodtime?" Rose waits up reading at the kitchen table. "Yeah." "Wheredyago?" "Square dance at Grand Street Settlement, 50 cents." I lie. "What'dyadoafta?" "Hadda egg cream." Lie fa years. Hafta not mention Quo Vadis. "Never saw Quo Vadis. Read the book." Lie'n lie. Sam comes from work, wrinkles his nose'n winks. It's his signal.

I am a boy who begins to resemble a man because a really smart girl likes me. Next time, or the next, inna Loew's Delancey balcony, put my arm onna backa Helen's seat. Don't move for a long time. Begin to slide my arm slow around her shoulder. Don't move again. Lean over'n kiss her neck and she turns her head to me and I kiss her lips. We turn back to the movie'n my hand slides slow into her blouse'n her brassiere top. I hold my breath like I useta if I slid my hand into the job lot carton in my pushcart peddler grandpa's living room. Sam's father. Helen's warm breast is in my hand'n I feel her nipple'n she don't stop me. I am so grateful.

I take her home to Knickerbocker Village after the movie and her mother, father and her kid brother Leon are asleep. It's dark inna living room and we don't turn onna light. We "neck" onna couch. Am I excited being in junior high teacher Mr. Seitelman's living room with my hand in his daughter's bra? I'm asking the question now but did I ask the question then? Light goes on'n we pull apart and sit up. Mr. Seitleman, putting on his eyeglasses, appears in boxer shorts. "Helen, time for bed." I'm surprised. My father never wears shorts at home or anywhere. He's shy of shorts even in summer but Mr. Seitelman don't worry I see his legs.

By the time of the senior prom at Seward Park some of the high school girls decide to up the ante and go with college freshmen dates n'Helen does too but that's another story.

Gonna make a helluva entrance at the prom widda pretty girl nobody knows from anudda school. Riva Wachtel is gonna go with me. Helen's my age but she grows up faster'n gets herself a college boyfriend so 1st I'm not gonna go to the prom but what if it's like a movie'n I make the theatrical gesture, right? So, we rent a tux'n 1 week before the prom Sam takes me to the now disappeared Latin Quarter night club. "This is my son David", Sam palms folded dollars for the headwaiter. "He'll be with his friends'n I hope he gets a good table near the floorshow". I give Riva Wachtel a red rose wrist corsage to go with her white net dress dotted with red pussy willows'n the headwaiter at the Latin Quarter says, "Ah, Mr. Gordon, this way please, here's your table" n'everyone including me is impressed.

Helen marries a young accountant'n I buy wood salt'n pepper shakers in Greenwich Village'n take 'em to her wedding. How long is she married? Divorced, she moves to Clinton Street. We sorta get together again'n I take photos of her in Central Park with my college camera but it's all about who we useta be not who we are or who we're gonna be. She gets good smart jobs'n meets her 2nd husband'n has a back room abortion or she thinks she has an abortion but she has cancer. How do I know? I go to the hospital. How do I know where? Helen's dying. Her eyes'n teeth look big in her shrunken face. She's in terrible pain if she's not drugged'n I sit at her side'n watch her sleep. She wakes'n I hold her hand. What to say? I say I gotta go. I go'n go again daily. Nobody warns me the day I go and her bed is empty. Sam, Rose'n me drive to her funeral in bad traffic. Gonna be late. I jump outta the car'n run crying on the highway'n up a hill to the cemetery. Where was that cemetery? I stand at the back. Mr. Seitelman reads Helen's poetry aloud at her graveside. I know 1 of those poems. She wrote it to me when we were girlfriend and boyfriend.

After the 1st Judson performances the artists continue working together as a kinda collaborative family in church basement spaces but I'm a lifetime member of the Wunderlich/Gordon family'n I have Valda'n Ain. Don't want no more families. I stay away but Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer invite me to join 'em in a Judson concert'n I'm flattered so I do but people boo'n hiss my new solo *Walks And Digressions* so I quit making dances for 5 years. I agree, however, to dance with Yvonne. If people boo they boo her not me. We perform in Brooklyn at Pratt, NY at the Whitney and in Philadelphia for Bnai Brith. After the 1st Philly show we get in a regular elevator'n change to a carpet covered elevator to a penthouse party with a pool'n an orchid garden. Greeted by a woman in tapestry fabric short shorts, in the 60s, called "hot pants" she tells us: "We always present what the Whitney presents."

Late '60s Yvonne begins to not wanna be boss'n I say: "how about we take a new name without "dance" in it? How about Grand Union like the supermarket? Like a rock group?"

[CLICK HERE FOR GRAND UNION ROCK STAR POSTER]

Yvonne says maybe we can make work together'n everyone but me says ok. I stop making work in '66'n I don't wanna start again. We are, I don't remember why, rehearsing in artist Claus Oldenberg's studio on east 14th Street. Steve says to sit on a giant log in the studio'n do invisibly miniscule moves'n we do till we don't wanna. Barbara Dilley wantsa circle dance to Terry Riley's music so we do till we don't wanna. I offer nothing. We don't really wanna do each other's work. They talk about improvising'n everyone but me says ok. I don't know how ta improvise so, in many performances, I do versions of Yvonne's Trio A upside down'n backwards. I am improvising but I don't know it but that's another story:

Steve gets sick'n hasta go to St Vincent's Hospital. He's in a room with an old guy wrapped in a sheet on a naugahyde chair who slides outta the chair'n says: "Oh Lawd, I'm slipping. I'm slipping Lawd." So, next GU performance I "improvise" slipping'n slippin'ng saying Ohhh, Lawwd, I'mmmmslippppping and Barbara'n Nancy do what I do'n say what I say so we do an improvised "slipping trio".

Trisha Brown's persuaded to come to Grand Union rehearsal in Yvonne's Greene St loft. She talks about a house with many floors'n I add floors to her story'n laugh into crying. Trisha gets interested in me'n talking'n moving so, next GU performance Trisha balances me on her feet n' her hands'n says to talk n'keep talking no matter what but here's Barbara'n Nancy but Trisha says "don't pay attention to them" so I don't'n I do what Trisha says and after, when Trisha says to buy the loft at 541 Broadway I do that too.

So, the Grand Union with Yvonne, Steve Paxton and Trisha Brown, life changers for me, and Becky Arnold, Barbara Dilley, Nancy Lewis Green Peck'n Douglas Dunn become faux "family". Yvonne stays matriarch. Her name gets the gigs only ya can't trust a ma who tries to bump herself off but that's another story:

We rehearse at Yvonne's loft on Greene St. No weekend rehearsal. Friday g'byes'n hugs. 1 Friday Yvonne says to me, "Why d'ya always say g'bye like you'll never see me again?" I laugh'n don't know why. Now, I'm self conscious. G'bye. That weekend Yvonne plans to kill herself. She's got pills. She takes 'em. Gets found before she's dead. Taken to the now "disappeared" St Vincent's hospital. Days'n nights I walk in the street round and round the hospital chanting "don't die, don't die, please don't die" until she don't die. Years later Yvonne says we been friends a long time, haven't we'n I say "I don't think we're really friends." And she says "If we're not friends what are we?"

David's own 1st "company", post Yvonne and pre legal incorporation, is Valda Setterfield. He makes group work but doesn't want full time responsibility of another "family" so 1st he hires dancers Valda suggests and when he hasta audition dancers he tells 'em it's just for 1 project and but that's another story:

I'm still dancing with Yvonne and the Grand Union when I meet Suzanne Weil, curator of rock concerts for Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis who figures out howta "piggy back" commercial rock concert profits to present Merce and Yvonne and Twyla at the Walker in Minneapolis and Sue is the 1st presenter to show my early duet work with Valda outta NY and my 1st group works too and Sue Weil changes my life. Sue morphs into Dance Program Director at National Endowment for the Arts'n says to David at dinner in NY, "Come to Washington to talk to the dance panel?" "About what?" "What you talk to me about." Ok. Panel book arrives and I'm on the NEA dance panel. 1st meeting a panelist asks about an application: "Is this company or a pick up company?" I ask what is a pick up company and they tell me it's a company ya put together for the performance ya wanna do and I say that's what I do and what people I know do and I say to Sue Weil before I head back to NY I think I'm gonna go to Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts and incorporate under the name Pick Up Performance Co. Sue says "run don't walk".

David incorporates'n uses Pick Up Performance Company as the not for profit legal name and it's written into PUPCo by-laws we are project based with numbers of performers as needed. I say to dancers who work with me: "at the enda the project thanks'n'g'bye. Go away please. Don't wanna keep ya, take care of you, love you or fall out with you and feel bad".

As a teen, David never, or nearly never, tells family or anybody any "truth" at all. Truth, he finds, ain't everyone's cuppa tea. If adult David wantsa not blab truth when he opens his big mouth he betta not drink. As a "working adult" he hardly does drink unless he hasta go to a big party. Then he buya packa Newports n'has a cigarette and 2 drinks before he says hello.

He's never a smoker like Sam. No cigarette 1st thing in the morning. After age 70 Newports get to be 10, 11 or 12 dollars a pack in NY so he just stops. He mostly drinks imported non-alcoholic beer, which is like beer soda so it's easy not to feel the urge to be truthful so he keeps lying. Remembers his lies and who he tells 'em to better. Maybe he forgets the truth.

David don't tell Rose or Sam he don't know what he wantsa do in college or what he's gonna do if he finishes. None-a Fannie's kids go past high school except Rose who graduates Hunter College as a librarian because immigrant illiterate grandma Fannie has ambitions for her oldest daughter but Rose disappoints when she meets'n marries Sam, the smart'n handsome Marine who never makes it outta junior high so truth is I'm Rose's oldest son so I gotta go. Truth is, also, David meets a coupla people in college who up the ante on the otherwise predictable course of what might be his very ordinary life. Accepted at Hunter he changes to City College. Don't know why. Manhattanites I know go to Brooklyn College so I change to Brooklyn'n major in English. I'm rewarded in school for 2 "talents". I can draw'n I can write. Okay, I'll teach English but 1st 4 English teachers bore me or I bore 4 teachers who love teaching English more than I ever will so I abandon my English major in 1953'n never tell Rose'n Sam n'don't take 1 education class. I become a Visual Arts major but that's another story:

I win an Art medal on my way outta Seward Park HS but I start college'n they test me with colored circles n'ask what number do I see but I don't. I don't see no numbers. So, at 17 I find out for the 1st time I'm red/green colorblind. This kid can't see right'n he don't tawk right, dey say.

I tawk like a Noo Yawk Jew, like Fannie'n da Wunderlich sisters. He sez dis n'dat, gawna'n hafta so dey wanna fix him so, he hasta go to Speech Clinic. He stops tawkin' fa a coupla years'n listens ta strangers inna street. Listens ta actors in da movies'n on TV'n practices tawking to himself. If I gotta start ova can I pick what I wanna sound like fa da resta my life? When I finally begin to talk again'n people ask:"Where were you born? You have such an interesting accent."

1st 2 yearsa college I listen to who's talking'n how they say what they say. I try to say it like they say it and study, in Art labs, howta see and identify colors other people already can see. Secretly talk in my head in bed at night or in the street or in the toilet. My goal is get ridda the braces on my teeth'n figure out who the hell I am outside the Wunderlich/Gordon shtetl. David meets Norma Beverly Fire, sociology major? N'Barbara Joan Kastle, visual arts major. Both of 'em change his life. My life. David, right away, calls Kastle "Kastle", not Barbara. She likes it and she begins to introduce herself to everyone as Kastle and she's called Kastle still.

Kastle's mother Peggy's a high school science teacher. Her accountant father is another Sam. Kastle has breasts and hips, a long pony tail'n "Bette Davis eyes". She wears plastic fishbowl earrings with fresh flowers or guppies swimming in water. In the Art lab she arcs, pivots, swivels'n fills whole pages of an 18 X 24" newsprint pad with swoops'n slashes. 10 pages to my 1 page of erased and re-drawn constipated doodles. Kastle is also a dancer. I trail her like a puppy, or a stalker, across campus to the Modern Dance Club in the women's physical education department and to the "classical" lounge. There's a classical and a popular lounge in Brooklyn College and Norma Fire sits alone in the classical lounge, shoes off'n shapely legs crossed in black tights, strumming on her guitar.

I don't know classical music or music. I think Ravel's *Bolero* is called the *Rose Bolero* because auntie Ruthie runs from Fannie's kitchen on Ludlow Street to our kitchen yelling: "Rosie, put on da radio, quick, it's da *Rose Bolero*". That's what I think she yells. I'm not a dancer but I know howta rhumba and foxtrot. Rosie teaches me in the kitchen so I can dance at weddings n'Bar Mitzvahs with the aunts. Norma's also in the Modern Dance Club so right away I'm in a kinda calypso piece by a student named Anita and after that Kastle, Norma n'me, do a trio called *People*. We write a text for the 1st n'only public performance in the campus Gershwin Theater. Norma narrates'n me'n Kastle wear home made burlap costumes n'hats we sew on a machine in Kastle's family Brooklyn basement where her unmarried aunt Sarah lives.

I discover Norma's a comic'n a singer with a surprising deep voice and 1 wandering eye and scoliosis. 1st time she takes me home Miriam Fire, her mother, vacuums behind my footsteps from the foyer to the living room till I get to finally sit down onna clear plastic covered couch. Norma's father, another Sam, sews lingerie'n her brother Philip, a scientist, 10 years older than Norm, lives with wife Jan in San Francisco and nephew Andy Fire grows up to be a Nobel prize winning scientist and invites Norma to Sweden to see him accept the prize.

I don't tell Rose or Sam about Norma or Kastle or I'm drawing'n painting inna lab or learning not to tawk like my family. Now I'm also dancing and because I'm dancing and I'm tall'n I got good balance'n can stand on 1 leg, and a boy troll ain't easy ta find in Brooklyn College so I also get to be a troll in the college production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. That's when I meet actor, singer, lyric writer Judy Weinberg who plays Anitra and invites me to join the theater crowd lunch table in the school cafeteria. They all act'n joke'n perform for each other'n for me. Sanford Beresovsky, who becomes comedian Sandy Baron, is at that table and later he's also the narrator at the Stage Deli table in *Broadway Danny Rose*, the Woody Allen movie.

I keep my mouth shut and practice sounding like them when I'm alone. I'm accepted as Judy's new mute "friend" and when she says "come with me to watch an audition in the theater department" I follow her to the final auditions between 2 would be actors up for the lead role of "Witch Boy" in a play called *Dark of the Moon*. I'm in the doorway with Judy when the directing professor calls out, "You, there, come here" so I do and he hands me the script and says ta read the part so I read with a sorta hillbilly accent I never heard me do before, like in the movies, and I get the part and get to act'n dance as a Witch Boy.

Opening night I climb a ladder in backa the chicken wire'n paper mache mountain'n they take the ladder away. I gotta hang till the curtain goes up. I swear in my head if I live through this night I never will talk onna stage again and I hear the sound of the curtain rising'n climb over the toppa the mountain for my 1st entrance in black tights singing "hillbilly":
 "A witchboy from the mountain came a-pining to be human..." No family sees me because the Wunderlich/Gordon family credo is: "nobody gotta know ya business" so I don't tell nobody.

Last yeara college, Paula Levine, ex Brooklyn College dancer'n Hollins College dance department Dean, auditions dance Club kids for *Thy Kingdom Come*, "1st religious outdoor drama of the south." I get my 1st professional dance job'n Sam puts me on a train to Roanoke, Virginia'n says, "be careful, they still think we have horns". By "they" he means southerners and by "we" he means Jews. Sam'n Rose drive south the summer I'm 20, July 14, 1956'n see me pose'n posture in faux Roman skirts'n capes in an outdoor arena facing a cremator-um that issues smoke nightly to a half full audience. Only full night all summer is "ladies get in free". I hear the recorded overture *Thus Spake Zarathustra* nightly'n not again till Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I'm surprised to learn it's classical music. Enda the summer we all go to Washington DC to see an outta town tryout of *West Side Story* n'we cry'n say g'bye. There's family'n history you inherit'n family'n history you may be lucky to create for yourself n'there's intense passionate love affairs with temporary show biz families called theater companies that, for a time, are like nothing else exists. I imagine I'll know dancers'n actors in *Thy Kingdom Come*, my 1st theater company, forever. Howell Hardie, blonde Tampa Florida debutante who plays the lead, thinks she loves me for a minute with her charming southern accent so I love her back for a minute with speech patterns I develop since speech clinic. She changes my life by being like nobody I ever knew.

I am distanced further'n further from my family by people I meet who change my life, which they don't intend. I don't notice I change till I do notice and when I do I get nervous so I go to an advertised discount shrink who says to me after my 1st visit: "you think you're the only person in the world." I'm 17'n I figure now i know my problem I must be cured so I stop going after 3 visits and Kastle'n Norma move outta Brooklyn parent's homes'n move in together, when college ends, in Greenwich Village on 8th St between 5th'n 6th avenues. I move outta Coney Island'n from sublet to sublet. I run outta sublets'n move in with Norma'n Kastle'n Kastle's birds'n cats and Natasha the dog. Never lived with animals before. I meet Michael Malce who's maybe a coupla years younger and who changes my life by hiring me part time on 8th Street in his new store, Papier Malce, accent over the final "e" and I use my "visual arts" college training to put stuff inna store window to get customers to buy candles'n greeting cards and i don't know I'm gonna put stuff in store windows to earn a living for my 1st 20 married years. I also go with him to wholesale showrooms to choose new merchandise for store shelves'n windows and I don't know I'm gonna choose'n design merchandise for Azuma shelves'n windows for 1st 20 married years after I meet Valda Setterfield who arrives from Britain which is after I meet James Waring but that's another story:

I meet choreographer Jimmy Waring in Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. "You must be a dancer", he says and I say no. I perform for the 1st time with Jimmy's company at Masters Institute on 103rd Street and at Fashion Institute of Technicology and I don't remember how or why but did Rose'n Sam see Jimmy Waring's concert at F. I. T. and did they come backstage after and was I surprised to see 'em n'did they wait to take me home with 'em and did Sam Gordon turn to Rose'n say "C'mon Rosie. We betta wait outside" and was I still in costume and was I still in make up? Valda thinks this happened and she was in the concert too and now I think this may have been the concert in which visual artist Larry Poons designed my costume which was his old army fatigues and I sang "Over there" by Irving Berlin. And did Sam say to me "hurry up and get changed and get that shit off your face"?

Kastle has 4 finches, 2 cats'n a German Shepherd named Natasha as well as a short white boyfriend'n a tall black boyfriend'n a fling with a blonde lesbian named Robbie. Kastle draws and paints but don't get shown or sold so she teaches biology, for money, like her mother Peggy. Norma auditions for acting roles she don't get but she sings'n does a kinda "stand up" at the Showplace, a Village cafe, and I help to put together her "act" but she's also a serious social worker for money'n acts the role costumed in tailored clothes n'rubber soled oxfords. She has lovers since her teens, she says, n'her 8th Street boyfriends include a young novelist, an alcoholic middle aged sailor, the married director of a medical employment agency and the married director of a community settlement house. Norma's also my date at the 25th anniversary party for Rose'n Sam. She's a college grad'n a Jew and my family are immediately comfortable with her so Fannie tells her to marry David'n: "I'll buy ya a car, mammelah".

Judy Weinberg graduates from Brooklyn College'n right away marries Pratt graduate architect Michael Brill'n Mike gets a 1st architect job in Michigan'n they make 2 sons, Jason and Adam. Norma wants her next life role ta be "wife" so she goes to San Francisco and finds husband #1, a Jewish school teacher. Miriam'n Sam Fire fly out for a proper Jewish white wedding'n Norma writes she's happy in the role of housewife'n buys "wife" costumes and irons/n cooks. She also, I hear later, does local theater and works in an unemployment office for money'n meets husband #2. Before Norma goes, me'n her'n Kastle give a 1st and last 8th Street party and we steal alla food from local supermarkets: tinned ham, smoked oysters, kosher salami'n packaged fancy foods. We buy a coupla items for cover'n at the cash register and I hold what I steal under my coat in my armpits. We don't get caught'n we don't never do it again.

Judy'n Mike'n the kids move back to NY and get a Greenwich Village apartment in a Charles Street brownstone off 7th Avenue. I imagine them as a model contemporary married couple with family. I'm still gathering identity information'n looking for good examples of how to be me and be married but that's another story:

Norma's still in San Francisco'n David introduces Valda to Judy'n Mike. Judy'n Mike live on the Charles Street parlor floor. Poet Alfred Kreyborg'n his wife live on the top floor. He musta been as old as I am now'n he can't walk upstairs no more so, he says, they have to move. Valda'n me move outta St Marks Place'n Avenue A, our 1st apartment, before Ain is born to the Kreyborg apartment. Jimmy Waring moves into 131 Avenue A where David n'Valda useta live'n where he lives until he dies.

Valda'n me visit her family in England'n I ask Judy'n Mike, who agree, to look after my pal Kastle. Mike seriously looks after Kastle and divorces Judy and marries Kastle and Norma'n hubby #1 take a trip to NY before we go'n she asks me: whattaya thinka him? I think her asking what I think ain't a good sign. She divorces #1'n marries #2, an artist'n a "goy" named Dale. Miriam'nSam pretend #2 never happens.

Norma returns to NY in a new role: artist's wife. Dale's a "serious" painter n'Norma now has the role of a serious painter's wife in a classic tan shape less raincoat'n boxy tweed too long skirt. "Ya don't cut lettuce", Norma tells Valda, "hafta tear it". Norma Fire, ex-musical comedy actor, can't abide restaurant music" and must see a manager to turn sound down. Mike moves in with Kastle on 8th Street where Norma, Kastle'n David useta live together. Judy'n the kids stay on Charles Street till Frank Zappa'n family move outta the garden apartment n'Mike ruthlessly move in'with Kastle and Judy moves outta the parlor floor'n raises the kids on the upper west side'. Valda'n I lose contact with her but Norma stays in touch and Dale meets young artist Robin'n divorces Norma or she divorces him? Norma gets an apartment on Clinton Street near where Helen useta live'n where I useta go with 1 or more of my aunts to buy fancy blouses for Mother's Day gifts when I lived on Ludlow Street and Judy begins to live with a man Valda'n me never meet'n she gets cancer'n they get married'n take a trip to Mexico, like in the Margaret Sullivan dying wife movie, before she dies. Nobody, absolutely nobody, who's married when Valda'n me get married stays married except Rose'n Sam.

Michael gets work in Washington DC so he'n Kastle move. Gets work teaching architecture at the university in Buffalo so they move again. She paints'n writes poetry'n sons Ringo'n Zeke get born. Kastle'n Mike have a messy divorce n'Valda and me work to stay friends with both of 'em. Kastle has a new alcoholic boyfriend we never meet'n she never remarries. Mike has lotsa young women'n we meet mosta them. None of us knows about Sue, a mature married farmer n'architect teacher who he sees at conferences around the country for years. She has 1 son'n she divorces her long time husband and marries Mike'n he buys a house in Buffalo around the corner from Kastle so Ringo'n Zeke can be in both houses and Mike buys a Lake Erie Canadian beach front property with 3 cabins n'persuades Kastle to buy 1 of the cabins. Kastle still has cats'n dogs'n Sue has cats'n dogs'n a horse and a birdhouse. Sue eats pork chops for breakfast and shoots a rifle'n Kastle, Michael and Sue sometimes fly to New York'n Norma, Valda and David useta fly together to Buffalo every summer to visit Kastle, Michael'n Sue at Lake Erie.

Those are the last times I see Mike, the smartest funniest guy I ever know'n the last times I have with any frequency, with anyone, the sorta argumentative talks we useta engage in, in which I purposely alter my position more than once or as many times as it takes for the pleasure of not stopping arguing with my good friend who also changes his positions for the pleasure of it and changes his life and changes my life more than once. He gets diabetes and gout and heart trouble'n hasta get regular dialysis'n who knows what else'n becomes fastidious about testing his sugar and eating and makes an art of preparing rice'n vegetables and the enormous beef tomatoes Sue grows in the garden and Sue'n Kastle stay friends and co-owners of the Lake Erie property when Brill dies.

Dale stays in touch with Norma the rest of his life n' Norma begins, finally, to live alone, on 11th Street between 5th n' 6th Avenues and doesn't stop having boyfriends for a while but lives by herself, for a while with a cat named Esme, all the rest of her life and rediscovers how funny she is and how funny she thinks I am. She's outta NY part of the year for theater work in Minneapolis/St. Paul. Back in NY she does readings of plays n' acts in plays for 1 night or 1 week runs n' she's in "experimental films" by NYU students. She acts at the Kitchen Theater in Ithaca a month or more at a time n' is good friends with Kitchen Theater director Rachel Lampert and is a great local favorite. She also plays a recurring judge character with a real name on TV's Law & Order n' plays an ethnic grandma type happily eating pasta in an Olive Garden commercial which pays a lotta residuals n' makes her very happy. Pick Up Performance Co(s), that's Ain n' David, hire Norma for voice overs and to act and dance when we can n' when she wants a job. In Ain's *End Over End*, *It's All Talk* and *93 Acres of Barley*. In *The First Picture Show* for both of us and *Punch & Judy Get Divorced*, *The Birds*, *Uncivil Wars* and *Beginning of the End* for David. *Beginning of the End* is the last time Norma n' David get to work together but that's another story:

I'm a real good shopper from my work in store windows n' in stores. I shop costumes for work I make but I don't say so inna program n' Norma n' me shop to find clothes to disguise her curvature of the spine.

1st of the cancers, in the 80's, is in 1 of her breasts. She decides, after diagnosis, to have a double mastectomy. We walk together on 6th Avenue at 8th Street, near a "disappeared" Nedicks frankfurter joint n' I ask: "shouldn't ya see another doctor? Or get a "lumpectomy? Or only 1 breast off"? She says, "I'm not a gambler."

After an unlucky clumsy reconstruction we get good at buying clothes to disguise her back n' also her front until her scoliosis worsens n' she gets shorter n' she's in pain so a steel rod is attached to her spine to stop the curve from curving more. She has to wear a brace till the rod stays where it's supposed to stay so we shop for kinda glamorous wide wale corduroy overalls to cover the body brace n' go on easy n' come off easy. When the brace is off there's a new vertical scar visible just below the back of her neck.

In the 70's Norma joins Smoke Enders to quit smoking unfiltered Lucky Strikes (or Camels?) and Smoke Enders says, she says, if she smokes a cigarette, she has to stop doing what she's I laugh but she doesn't. She don't think it's funny but she thinks I'm funny. I don't know I'm funny till we meet. At times she laughs so hard at what I say she cries. 1 time at a party she wears false eyelashes that get so wet from laughing n' crying n' collapse n' droop over her eyes which makes me laugh which makes her laugh. I hardly ever make my family family laugh or friends or strangers or nobody else at all. Nobody before Norma but after Brooklyn college Norma and me make each other laugh for 60 years until she dies in 2013.

I ring the bell at 11 West 11th Street between 5th n' 6th Avenues. "It's me. I gotta pee." "Why don't you use your key?" "I don't have it with me, buzz me in." Or, I ring the 11th Street bell for Scrabble n' Norma buzzes, steps out in the ground floor hall n' we hug our way inside and Scrabble's set up on the round dining table. Webster's Second Dictionary's open on Michael Brill's red rolling cart. He designed n' made it for her to hold the dictionary. Rolls smoothly. Weighs a ton. "It's warm in here." "I'll open the window", she says, "wanna cold drink?" I spend years of hours on 11th St before, during & after our semi-invented and interminable Scrabble games but that's another story:

We never challenge each other's word n' we're allowed to look words up in Webster's 2nd to see if they're real n' we can use the dictionary to look up imagined reasonable logical words or possible alternative spellings of words n' also unreasonable illogically spelled words n' we look 'em up for each other n' offer them as gifts to help each other n' we attempt to make and we do make very many 7 letter words with double n' triple word scores n' we are not content to not make 'em and I get grumpy if I don't get good letters.

Norma puts up with my bad behavior'n I put up with her bad memory. She looks up a word she thinks "oughta be a word" n'she's sure it is but she looked it up once'n it wasn't and it still ain't. We argue, laugh, commiserate, laugh n'nosh chocolate covered apricots from Jan Fire or terrible "spicy chips" from Trader Joe's or "best big Union Square Farmer's Market cherries" or take out Chinese from around the corner or leftover cold Chinese from the frig. Norma's phone rings'n rings. She answers: "Oh, how are you?" she says sweetly. "Can I call you back? David's here and we're playing Scrabble."

On Feb 29, 2012, at 1:42 PM, Norma Fire emails: "Ever the incurable optimist, I thought I was to have 2 cycles of the dreaded infusion/heightened poison pills. No. After 2 cycles they would evaluate the progress. Expect 3 to 4 months of it. Ever the incurable. On the other hand, after 1 week of the above, bad numbers have gone down. A nice day to be home." N.

Norma Fire, my friend since Brooklyn College, who tries to teach me to drive in her father Sam's car in a parking garage in Brooklyn and who acts for Ain in his very early play *Women in Black and White* at the now disappeared Dance Theater Workshop and for Ain and me in all the NY workshops and San Francisco and LA productions of *First Picture Show* and as the Detective in *The Mysteries* in NY and on tour in America and as Hoopoe, Queen of the Birds in *Aristophanes in Birdonia* and in *Uncivil Wars/moving w/Brecht & Eisler* and in our last work together, a Pirandello/Puccini project, *Beginning of the End of the...based on Six Characters In Search Of An Author* in which Norma acts and dances the role of the mother. It runs 4 weeks in the Spring of 2012 at the now disappeared Joyce Soho and then in the fall of 2012 Norma Fire, my friend and family for 60 years, is dying of her latest'n last cancer, in costume for the featured role of a patient in a limited run, in a Bellevue Hospital Hospice.

I'm rehearsing for *The Matter/2012: Art & Archive* at Danspace in NY. I ask Norma to dance in it so she has something to do beside be sick and she says maybe she can't but I say she can'n I'll make special steps for her. I pretend she ain't dying. She can't die before me, I won't have it. I can't. She says yes but she gets sicker. Hasta say no. I visit her before rehearsal. I wanna make her laugh. I can't. I lean in to whisper "gotta go, I love you. She says, "I loved you the minute I saw you."

I get a call in the night to say Norma's "gone". I taxi to Bellevue Hospital. I pull a chair over to the bed'n sit at her right side. Is this her good or her bad side? Is she breathing? I can't imagine she's not breathing. Someone has tucked a fresh flower over her right ear. I don't wanna not like it. It musta been meant lovingly. My taste is a pain in the ass right to the end but I get to sit with her for an hour before other friends arrive crying, whispering'n hugging. I don't wanna witness other people's grief. I look at my friend 1 last time. G'bye. Norm.

Email negotiations begin for a cremation date, a boat trip to spread her ashes on the water, an evening of friends gathered in her 11th Street apartment before it's emptied'n surrendered and I stay away. Norma Fire's phone number's in my cell phone, my computer address book, in my head. Her address is in my rolladex, in my "daily reminder, in my head. I imagine I'll be able, eventually, to delete my friend Norma's name but I'll never get her outta my head.

Quote from *Temporary Kings*, 11th book of *A Dance to The Music of Time* by Anthony Powell:
"I told you nostalgia would get me. It did. Absolutely spun me over like a ninepin...I can't take it as i used. They say you lose your head for nostalgia, as you get older. That's also the time when waves of it come sweeping down without warning. You have to ration yourself, or a sudden dose knocks you out, as it did me."