

PART I

Crossing the Rubicon

Dan Peterson

Peterson was a very successful basketball coach in the United States and Europe. He lives in Milan, Italy, and is Italy's favorite sports commentator. Growing up in the United States, he remembers a man who struck terror in the hearts of many Americans.

A kid down the street named Ralph Chute had just graduated from high school in 1950. He was a great guy. He always chose me in neighborhood softball games, though I was much younger than everyone else. One day word came: "Ralph Chute was killed in Korea." I had an awful time with that for months. Now communism had become my enemy on a first-person basis.

Many guys slightly older than I had joined the Reserves. When the war broke out, those Reserves, most of them 17 and 18, were called up. Some still had a year of high school to go. Another slightly older kid named Jimmy Schutz was called up, as was Jim Marshall, older brother of Jack Marshall, one of my closest friends. So, the Korean War was all around me and had me involved personally.

At the start of 1950, things were abundantly clear: the USSR was our prime enemy. They had the atomic bomb, they had purchased the secrets for the atomic bomb through devious means, they wanted to rule the world, they would use force to do it. Stalin was far worse than Hitler, there was a Cold War, they were saying *nyet!* in the UN, and, worst of all, there were spies in our midst. Who would smoke them out? Up stepped Joe McCarthy.

He set his course on anti-communism in 1950, January 7, 1950, to be precise, at a dinner with some prominent anti-communists. McCarthy was up for re-election in 1952 and one of the dinner guests, Father Edmund A. Walsh, brought up the subject of needing an issue. McCarthy lit up, *That's it! The government is full of communists. We can hammer away at that.*

He was an unusual man for the job, vulnerable to attack on many fronts: special interests, [he] played the lobby game, [was] a gambler

and heavy drinker, and a liar, passing off an accident in the Marines in World War II as a battle wound. But he was a born politician, a worker, ambitious, a man who loved to speak in public and who perfected the technique.

He spoke at the Republican Women's Club in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9th, 1950, and delivered his famous statement that he had in his hand a list of 205 known communists in the State Department. All hell broke loose, but that didn't slow him down as he repeated the speech across the nation, changing the number of communists each time he spoke.

Sen. Joe McCarthy had found a nerve. Funds came pouring in. It is said he diverted most to his bank account to invest in the stock market or waste on gambling. But he was backed to the hilt. Today it is fashionable to criticize McCarthy, but his poll numbers showed him with well over 50 percent approval ratings. The greatest demagogue in United States political history had the backing of the majority of the people.

There is no calculating the people he ruined. He was close to the truth, but didn't have proof to back it up. Recently declassified documents from the CIA and KGB confirm there were, indeed, communists in the government, exactly as McCarthy had said. The problem was that McCarthy thought he could bluster his way through, that accusations would suffice. They did, for a while.

No group was safe. It was said that blacks were susceptible to the lure of communism, as they were poor and disenfranchised. No less than Jackie Robinson, who broke baseball's color barrier in 1947, came forward to testify in 1949 that his people were not communists.

Hollywood also took a hit. Actors, producers, directors, and others were destroyed when the House Un-American Activities Committee asked if they were communists or not. Those who could not or would not answer, found they were "blacklisted" in Hollywood. Others denied affiliation but were smeared anyway. Some testified against others, as did Oscar-winning director Elia Kazan, a pariah in Hollywood fifty years later. It was ugly.

In April 1954, McCarthy made a big mistake: he took on the U.S. Army. The world would be watching. In fact, the so-called Army-McCarthy Hearings had twenty million television viewers daily, a staggering number in 1954, representing about 50 percent of the households in the country. No one had ever had an audience like this—and we weren't the only ones watching.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower had followed the McCarthy goings-on from the start. In fact, during his 1952 presidential campaign he had stumped for McCarthy in Wisconsin, helping the Senator get re-elected. Ike was criticized for this and it revealed the clout McCarthy had.

Ike now drew the line. He did not openly oppose McCarthy or his methods, but he turned some powerful machinery on him and backed his secretary of the Army, George Stevens, to the hilt. You couldn't go around accusing high-ranking Army officers of being communists under Eisenhower and expect to get away with it. What is more, McCarthy crossed the wrong man in the hearings, Army attorney Joseph N. Welch.

More importantly, McCarthy had earned the enmity of America's foremost television news commentator, Edward R. Murrow. Murrow was a true giant in the industry, a living legend. In 1954 no one challenged Joe McCarthy. To do so was to call attention to yourself and have his wrath turned on you like a white flame. Everyone laid low and hoped he would not see them. He had the mass media cowed, terrified, but not Murrow.

Murrow challenged McCarthy publicly on March 9, 1954 on his television program "See it Now." Murrow said, "Show us your proof." McCarthy had no proof. He was bluffing. He was all form and no substance. Murrow used film footage of McCarthy in action and commented that the man was unscrupulous. A "god" had spoken and McCarthy had been condemned.

On the heels of Murrow came Joseph Welch, the Army's attorney. McCarthy could not compete with the brilliant, impeccable, articulate, and totally honest Welch. It was all over in a matter of days. Welch, after McCarthy attacked one of his people in the hearing, looked at McCarthy and said: "Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. Have you no sense of decency, Sir?"

The effect was devastating and total.

In all of this, even the Senate had been reluctant to raise a hand against McCarthy. Again, it was the times; to be anti-McCarthy branded you as pro-communist. So even the cream of the Senate was reluctant to make a move until Murrow and Welch had taken their respective stands, Murrow exposing McCarthy as a bluff, Welch exposing him as a bully. With this, the Senate censured McCarthy, on a 67-22 vote, on December 2, 1954.

This was only the third such censure in 165 years and stressed the abuses of his senatorial powers and “conduct contrary to senatorial traditions.” It was all downhill from there. Already a heavy drinker, McCarthy drank even more. He died on May 2, 1957, of cirrhosis of the liver. He’d gone from being a hero to an outcast in merely seven years. Though he looked much older, he was only 49 at his death.

It’s impossible to add up all the damage he inflicted. One thing is clear: no one he accused was ever convicted of being a communist or of having committed a treasonable act on behalf of communism.

In the irony of all ironies, McCarthy’s humiliation and fall was a great benefit to the anti-anti-communists. In other words, the pro-communists now had a bulletproof cover. You could no longer call someone a communist or you earned the label “McCarthyite.” So, the moles had a free run thanks to the misdirected efforts of Joe McCarthy.

The name Joseph McCarthy carries shame even today. There are people in their 80s who were ruined by him. Earning accolades early on, he later earned epithets. He remains one of the most controversial figures in the history of the U.S. Senate. But he had his own form of genius. He understood the basics that still apply today: scandal, television, Congress. An explosive cocktail.

Whenever I hear someone describe TV or music or journalism or cinema as shocking, I think of where shocking really started. Why the shock approach? To gain attention. If you are 17 on the shock scale today, you must be at least 18 tomorrow or people will tune you out. You must top yourself.

Thus, if Ice-T takes rap music to one level, Eminem must take it to another level. If *Silence of the Lambs* takes film violence to one level, *Natural Born Killer* must top that. If there is a Monica Lewinsky story today, there must be an impeachment tomorrow.

McCarthyism even today is synonymous with “ungrounded accusations.” Some revisionists have tried to resuscitate his image after the declassification of those CIA and KGB documents confirmed what McCarthy had been saying . . . but could not prove. Too late, as Joseph McCarthy remains engraved on the American mind as . . . our most hated Senator.

Why did Joseph McCarthy fail in his mission? Theories abound, but the most plausible remains the simplest: he was more interested in grandstanding than in the facts. In baseball terms, he was a “hot dog.”

There are other reasons for his demise. Certainly one was challenging the integrity of the U.S. Army. Inferring national hero Gen. George C. Marshall [was] a communist was simply political and public relations suicide.

He died before the Vietnam War, but by now the anti-anti-communists had a free hand. No longer were people reluctant to criticize the U.S. Government for intervention against communism. People protested, dodged the draft, burned flags. Now the anti-communists were reluctant to voice their opinions.

Joe McCarthy set the tone for much that occurred during the last half of the 20th century. He was the Father of Shock, grandstanding on TV in the early 1950s. All future scandals followed his lead over the past fifty years of American culture.

Television, film, and music companies are constantly looking for the next big scandal. McCarthy whetted the U.S. appetite for such things and Richard Nixon, O.J. Simpson, Bill Clinton, and others have simply fueled the fire that he started fifty years ago, a fire that is still raging in all sectors of American life.

America has changed over the last fifty years and for the worse. No one in his right mind would pick up a hitch-hiker today; but no one thought twice about it in 1950. In 1950 no one thought about drugs, school shootings, missing children, sexual abuse, child pornography, and falling test scores. But they are realities today, and that is only a short list of such problems.

Do we blame Joe McCarthy for all that and more? No, that's not possible. The point is this: he set the tone, set the table, and set the pace. In his ignorance, he was a genius. He was like many so-called "artists" of today: it doesn't matter if you are good; what matters is drawing attention. Who cares if that singer cannot sing? He has production, technology, and one hell of a video.

That was Joe McCarthy: all video and no talent. He had what I call SST before there were SSTs: Scandal, Senate, Television. Put them together and you have an audience. Joe McCarthy grasped that. He had scandal with the issue of communists in government, the Senate with his hearings, and the vehicle was television. He hit the mother lode for national fame.

But he failed in his declared mission. He did not convict a single person of being a communist or of committing treasonous or criminal acts

in the name of communism, but he gave rise to the anti-anti-communist cause. He remains the man who made being important . . . important.

His was the first major ego fed by TV. All others who followed are his children, his grandchildren or stepchildren. He may not have crushed communism, but he certainly gave rise to the attention-seeking culture in America today. His legacy lives on, stronger than ever.

Richard Fried

A professor of recent American history at the University of Illinois—Chicago since 1972, Fried has written two books on Joe McCarthy. He believes America had already lost the solidarity of World War II when McCarthy made headlines in February 1950, and that he poisoned the political climate far past his time in power.

There is a sense the country was united during World War II but that is a bit deceptive, for there were many divisions. Still, what Americans remembered—and many experienced—was unity. Even before the war was over, some observers began to lament the end of wartime unity. Civic leaders became concerned that postwar conditions were eroding that unity.

At many levels they sensed a pervasive selfishness, and feared Americans were identifying not as citizens of a totality, but as members of smaller, more parochial groups—labor unions being an obvious instance. Much of the politics of the late '40s, and after, was about trying to bring things back together.

The effort was not particularly successful, and various critics of the centrifugal tendencies in American society nominated different groups as the culprits. “Communist influences” were one obvious candidate for blame, and that’s where Joseph R. McCarthy came in.

“McCarthyism” is a convenient name that people on both sides applied and continue to apply to a deep running phenomenon. It’s easy to talk about McCarthyism; it’s a nice, neat label, but it’s a label for a very sloppy and diffused set of social and political phenomena, something much broader than the antics and exertions of the senator himself.

The institutional aspects of what we came to call McCarthyism—loyalty oaths, loyalty and security programs, broadcast accusations of disloyalty—mostly predated McCarthy himself. To his advantage, he managed to identify himself closely with these developments and

with the communist issue and thus to take historical credit for things most of which he did not invent.

At the time there were questions and doubts about national identity, and McCarthy was able to play on these. But these were eventually going to be resolved with or without McCarthy. Take the rise of mass consumption, for example: in the 1950s we experienced a prosperity that in a way made McCarthyism over the long term impossible. William Levitt made the remark that a guy who owns his own home is going to be so busy he doesn't have time to be a communist. He also, I would add, is not going to have time to be much of a McCarthyite.

McCarthy voted fairly conventionally as a Republican, but he certainly had no great reputation as a budget cutter. In fact, in early 1950 he was briefly enthusiastic about a super Social Security program to enlarge retirement benefits. His critics said it was like Dr. [Francis] Townsend's program in the 1930s and, like that scheme, fiscally irresponsible. He dropped the idea at the point he was beginning to focus exclusively on the communist issue.

Using McCarthy's name as a label for a broader set of phenomena, which for rough convenience we might call "excess anti-communism," was handy, but entailed disadvantages. His ability to identify with this issue, and his opponents' complicity in that identification, had the tendency to inflate people's perception of how powerful he was.

The communist issue was a factor, though not often a major one, in the 1950 [elections] and, to an even lesser extent, the 1952 elections, but McCarthy, by managing to achieve a unique identification with that issue, managed to foster the sense that he was a critical factor in the results. He was not a real factor in 1952 at all, though he was a very visible presence.

When he became a discredited figure in 1954, this had the effect of discrediting the more hard-nosed version of anti-communism he professed. Some perceptive conservatives at the time, notably Whittaker Chambers, saw and lamented this effect. Conservatives in the 1980s would also come to rue the extent to which the term "McCarthyism" could be used as a club by the Left. When we got rid of McCarthy, we got rid of extreme anti-communism, which is good from my point of view, but we also got a heavy but imprecise rhetorical club which some groups on the left were able to use rather too facily.

In the late 1950s and beyond, to the resurgent right, many things had gone wrong, some political, but many moral. Conservatives in

the broadest, least sectarian sense of the term might rue the decline of a simpler, small-town-oriented life rich in face-to-face personal relationships. The evaporation of this older sort of community and the coming of the larger society were accompanied by the rise of remote systems of power and the loss of individual control.

Some people saw in McCarthy a lever to use against such loss of control. Some Americans tried to reassert control through religion. Some of them—as well as conservatives of a more secular bent—got the notion to mobilize politically. The Goldwater movement became a vehicle for them, a vehicle beyond the intentions of Goldwater himself.

I don't see Goldwater as a conscious leader of such a social movement. His candidacy did mobilize and did benefit from an effort by conservatives to control the Republican Party in the '60s. That was the real trend going on, and what looked like a colossal disaster for them in the wake of Goldwater's 1964 defeat was actually a victory in that the GOP would come under increasingly conservative direction from that point forward.

In the late '60s, there was a sense of disorder in American life. Vietnam was distant, but what were not distant were the anti-Vietnam protests in the streets, and these became associated in the public mind with other forms of disorder. The smarter student protestors very quickly understood that they had acquired a negative power—whatever they were protesting against had a tendency to swing significant groups the other way. Thus, while on balance the '60s moved us culturally to the left, politically it was the right which would benefit.

During the 1950s, much of what happened culturally was largely independent of politics. It was prosperity, demography, the baby boom, and attitudes promoted by economic plenty. Sometimes politics was not so much what was moving the vehicle as the vehicle that was being moved by deeper social changes.

Elmer Bernstein

One of Hollywood's greatest composers, Bernstein won an Academy Award for *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. He has written the music for a host of other films such as *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Man With the Golden Arm*, *My Left Foot*, and *The Ten Commandments*. He was investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1955 regarding a possible communist affiliation, which resulted in his being "graylisted"—working, but not making much money. It took the intervention of Cecil B. DeMille to have him "unlisted."

I came to Hollywood in August 1950. At the time, the major studio apparatus was still in place. Harry Cohn was the head of Columbia, Jack Warner was the head of Warner Brothers, Louis B. Mayer was at MGM, [Darryl] Zanuck was at Fox, and they still had contract players.

In fact, after I did my first film for Sidney Buchman, who was then vice president of Columbia Pictures, the first thing Harry Cohn did was to offer me a seven-year contract; they still had those kinds of things. I very wisely turned it down. Wisely, because they were sort of chattel contracts, and independence was already in the air by 1950.

The studios were in some ways very comfortable places. They were quite grand. They had wonderful cottages for the stars. Wonderful offices for the people who worked there. They had tremendous back-up because they were heavily staffed. If you were a composer, you had an office and a librarian to help you with anything you needed. It was in many ways a very comfortable situation.

I remember the first time I ever saw Harry Cohn. I was having a meeting with my producer, Sidney Buchman, who, as I say, was his vice president. I was coming up to the office and this rather large man was backing out of the office. I remember he had a huge red flower in his buttonhole and a jacket that looked like a horse blanket. He was backing out, absolutely purple with rage, and screaming at the top of his lungs, "You're a thousand percent wrong!"

That's the first time I'd heard that kind of mathematics. I walked in and said, "Sidney, I presume that was Harry Cohn."

He said, "Absolutely!"

I never met Louis B. Mayer, unfortunately. I did meet Jack Warner because I did a picture over there. He was a very, very colorful character. Harry Cohn wanted to entertain the public. Warner went a step further. He wanted to entertain the public, but he had the sense that he had some intellectual responsibility.

He did, in fact, develop a studio full of pretty good writers. He did some fairly serious subjects. He was a very colorful character who couldn't say a single sentence without a few four-letter words. A writer friend of mine told me this story about Warner:

He had a party at his house. It was a weekend, daytime, and he had his infant son with him who fell into the pool and he jumped in and saved him. Later he ran into Jack Warner, and he said, "We had the most terrible time back there in the pool. The kid almost drowned." And Warner said to him, "Well, don't worry about it. We're insured."

One of the things that hurt the studios was that the pioneer guys like Sam Goldwyn, Harry Cohn, and Jack Warner were getting old. They'd had their great pioneering days and, quite honestly, I don't think they kept up with what was happening with the advent of television. Instead of realizing what an amazing tool television was going to be, they fought it all the way.

In fighting television, they found that they had these vast studios with tremendous overhead. The number of pictures they had been making diminished because people began to watch television. They weren't going to the movies that much anymore. I think it was lack of forward vision. They'd run out of vision.

I was caught up in the "blacklisting" of the '50s. I think one of the things that happened to everybody, on every level, was fear. It was a fascinating phenomenon, looking back at it now. I remember experiencing the fear. It is amazing what fear these people were able to generate. I mean, '53-'54-'55—we were less than ten years away from Hitler.

It seems funny now, imagining a communist threat in the United States. It's a joke. We had to worry about the Soviet Union, that's

different. But internally, it was a joke. Most of these guys were clowns. What they did do successfully was to instill fear, and that's what you remember most from that period—fear. If somebody was named a Red, did you want to associate with them? Did you want to be seen in public with him? They did a very, very good job of that, and it really worked. But the reason it worked was that they were able to frighten the studio heads.

It started at the top. There used to be a morals clause in every contract in those days. In the '20s, with the Fatty Arbuckle—Virginia Rapp scandal, movies began to get a reputation for being immoral and full of immoral people. They were very worried about public relations. They got this czar, Will Hayes, to make sure everything was sanitized. So the heads were very vulnerable to feelings of where the public was, so to speak. And they were afraid that these Un-American Activities people would convince them (the public) that Hollywood had a communist hue.

My official status in those days—because there were fine gradations—I would have been “graylisted” rather than “blacklisted.” “Graylisted” was when they weren't sure you were a card-carrying member of the Communist Party, which I wasn't. But if they weren't sure, they wouldn't put you on a list where you couldn't work at all. I didn't realize I was being listed at all. But I suddenly realized I wasn't working. Finally, I was doing things like *Robot Monster*. I got \$800 to compose, orchestrate, and conduct. That was \$800 for two months' work.

I believe somebody in the Allied Artists' organization let it slip that I was in trouble. There was a guy called Mike Connelly. He was [with] the *Hollywood Reporter*. He carried an item in his column that I had been named, among others. He said, “So far, none of these people has come forward to either confirm or deny.”

When this happened, I was working for Cecil B. DeMille. He had engaged me to work on *The Ten Commandments*. DeMille called me into his office when it became public. I was very fond of him. I know he is a very controversial character, but he was kind and nice to me. Semi-arguably, [he was] the most interesting person I ever worked for.

Anyway, he called me into his office and asked if I was a member of the Communist Party, had I ever been a member of the Communist Party. I did not stand on my constitutional rights to refuse to answer. I said no.

He was very well connected and took it upon himself not to clear me, because he couldn't do that. No person could clear you, so to speak. He spoke to people in Washington—I overheard the phone call—and said he had spoken with me and he was satisfied that I was not a communist. Subsequently, I was called before the House Un-American Sub-committee, but I daresay that without DeMille's intervention in this matter, things probably would have been much more difficult for me.

I was lucky. By the time I was called, McCarthy had been censured and they were being much more careful. This was 1955, and they kept asking me whether anybody I knew was a communist. I replied the only way I could know if anybody was a communist was if they told me they were a communist. That was already inadmissible. They wouldn't allow evidence like that because that was third-person testimony. And obviously, if I weren't at a Communist Party meeting, I couldn't identify anybody as a communist.

I was lucky. Also, DeMille's help had a lot to do with it.

Many people were injured. They were injured in their souls. I believe there were a couple of suicides; illness, people whose lives were never the same, who never recovered their composure or their sense of well-being. There was broad injury.

Robert Ferrell

According to Ferrell, noted presidential historian, 1950 marked the beginning of societal and cultural change in America. President Truman, speaking at the University of Missouri in mid-June 1950, said America was entering a new era of economic prosperity. A few days later, the Korean War broke out and America began a forty-year period of impermanence.

He believes the Korean War was the foundation for the anti-war movement and the riots and protests of the '60s and '70s and that unresolved issues beginning in 1950 have led to a culture much different from that of mid-twentieth century America.

The year 1950 was a turning point in the history of the American people. One employs the phrase with hesitation, as historians, political scientists, and journalists have overused it so often in seeking to make or underline their points. And yet it deserves use, for after the Korean War opened there could be no continuation of the ways of thought that had gone before.

The war introduced a basic uncertainty that marked a new way of thought in the United States and has persisted through the decades that followed, down to the present day. Before that year, 1950, there had been plenty of uncertainty, not least during World War II's opening months when in Asia the forces of Japan seemed capable of carrying everything before them. And in Europe the divisions of Hitler's Germany appeared unconquerable, despite what seemed a setback before the Russian capital. Surely, it seemed, the German armies would take Moscow that difficult (for American and other hard-pressed supporters of freedom) spring of 1942.

But then the World War turned in favor of the democracies and victory finally came. In the next few years uncertainties arose over the behavior of our former Russian ally, causing substantial changes in American-Soviet relations. But even the Cold War, as it was announced by the journalist Walter Lippmann, who took the phrase

from a publicist of Bernard Baruch, did not shake the optimism of Americans in the way that the Korean War did.

Despite the invocation of such anti-Russian measures as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the people of the United States retained their feeling for a continuing improvement in international relations and in their domestic concerns, until the coming of the war in Korea brought their hopes up short, which is the state in which they have been ever since.

The war that opened in 1950 came without warning, and not least to the president of the United States, who early in June of that year traveled to Baltimore to dedicate the new Friendship Airport. He thence flew to Missouri, where he spoke at the University of Missouri in Columbia and then in St. Louis and sounded the most optimistic of notes about the future.

The president told the students in Columbia, and repeated the message to his audience in St. Louis, that the American nation was about to enter a new era of indefinite prosperity. He reasoned that World War II, despite the consequent troubles with Russia, had ensured the end of wars large and small, that the nations had tired of conflict and understood at long last their futility, and that everything had opened for a lasting development of economies everywhere that would ensure the development of the human spirit.

In his enthusiasm for the wonderful prospect he was holding before his auditors, the president was reminded when speaking to the two thousand friendly students who stood before him at the university in Columbia of the lines from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" that he had written out years before when he was in high school and had carried ever since in his billfold—lines he had rewritten again and again as he contemplated them, the pages frayed from use over the years.

He spoke earnestly to the students about the new reality predicted by the poet long before—Tennyson had seen the future when he wrote at the height of the Victorian Age—about a time when the battle flags would be furled in the Parliament of Man.

The Korean War rudely interrupted the presidential prediction and changed the confidence that had preceded it.

One of the changes was a feeling, sure and confirmed, that America was being attacked by foreigners and fellow travelers within its midst. They had observed the two trials of the former state department employee, a graduate of the Harvard Law School, Alger Hiss,

who in 1950 was convicted and sent to prison actually for refusing to admit that he had known his accuser.

But to the American public the issue had been one of Hiss's spying for Soviet Russia. Meanwhile, President Truman had confirmed his concern over spies and spying by creating a federal loyalty program that involved questioning all federal employees to discern if they had been disloyal.

The Korean War then gave an opportunity for a hitherto obscure Wisconsin senator, Joseph R. McCarthy, who for several years would hold national attention as he asserted the intrusion of agents and spies into the very heart of American government.

The marked sense of unease—some described it as a national malaise that came with the Korean War—was caused in some part by the war's uncertain origin—uncertain until the opening of Soviet archives many years later showed that the North Koreans, who desired to take over South Korea, had received the green light from the Soviets.

The Russian government then controlled by Joseph Stalin had not merely trained the North Korean army and given it planes and tanks that the South Koreans had been refused by the United States, but had encouraged it to attack. At the time this was not too clear, although the Truman administration believed it to be the case.

Korea supported the feeling of the American people that the war possessed an undefinable danger and in itself was almost incomprehensible. The intervention of the government of mainland China confirmed this feeling. There followed the near rolling up of the American Eighth Army in the war's initial months, when the attempt by Gen. Douglas MacArthur to occupy all of Korea brought the Chinese intervention and the driving of American forces south of the 38th parallel, the border between the two Koreas.

From that point, the Americans under Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway rolled back the Chinese and North Koreans to a line roughly that of the 38th parallel. There followed a period of months when the two forces fought a seemingly aimless series of battles for hills and useless territory that did not have much to do with a viable border between the Koreas.

The jousting, for such it seemed, ended not in clear-cut victory for either side (although the United States really had won the war by preventing the overrunning of South Korea and had forced numerous

casualties upon the bunched-up Chinese attackers in November-January 1950-51), but in a cease-fire that continues to the present day.

The uncertainties that accompanied the war, including exploitation by the anti-communists such as Senator McCarthy, thereafter were followed by the Vietnam War in the 1960s and early 1970s and by other occasions of fighting or threats of fighting that kept before all Americans the endangered nature of world peace. Vietnam was not nearly as important as Korea, but it held the world stage for longer. Together with the collapse of the presidential administration of Richard M. Nixon in 1974, after months of congressional investigation and preparation for impeachment, Vietnam and Nixon—almost in the public mind twin disasters—poisoned the wells of public thought in the years after Korea.

Korea, the McCarthy controversy, Vietnam, Nixon, all brought a belief that the government was something apart from the best in American life and that the American people had created a monster, not an instrument for their protection. The sense that government was the problem flourished in the years after Korea—a silly notion, but the feeling was undeniable.

Lastly, there were other conclusions drawn or drawable about Korea, but this one is worth mentioning: the Korean war had much to do with inspiring changes in American life, American family life.

The Norman Rockwell portraits of family life that flourished in the *Saturday Evening Post* in the 1930s and 1940s, however apart from the reality of divorces and domestic contentions that were present all along, became explicit in family life after Korea, and some of them were hardly admirable. The reasons therefore are not easy to state and may be incapable of definition.

The movement of the American economy to ever higher plateaus began with the Korean War and had much to do with domestic familial confusions. With economic plenty, the doubling and tripling of the American economy that began in 1950, it was possible to do things that before would have meant personal economic disaster. Whatever the economy of plenty, some force or forces were at work.

Surely involved was the national unrest that began with Korea. When two jobs within a single family became possible, notably in the 1970s and thereafter, children within the busy family work ethic sometimes received less attention than hitherto, and the former

niceties of family life, wherein children behaved themselves generally, and in particular showed care in dealing with their elders, in or out of a family, came to a crashing end.

The Age of Uncertainty began in 1950. Utterly confirming it are the events of September 11, 2001. No one, in or out of New York City, is likely to forget September 11, for the rest of his or her life.

Dick Clark

When ABC went national with “American Bandstand” in 1957, the program became an overnight success. Dick Clark, the host, instantly became the most powerful man in Rock ‘n’ Roll.

When “*Bandstand*” went on nationally in August 1957, every kid in the world watched it, and radio stations began to copy what was played on television. There were no restrictions on that show. White radio—you couldn’t get a black record on the air, that’s why there were so many covers (whites singing black hits).

But “Bandstand” was one of the first to play black music. Freed (Allen Freed) aired black artists on his radio station in New York, and when he was in Cleveland, but “Bandstand” was the first national exposure.

Locally, in Philadelphia, when the show was on, there was never any problem playing black-oriented music. That’s why it was so popular.

In the mid-’50s I was in my 20s, playing records for a livelihood. My problem was I couldn’t convince management to allow me to play “kid music.” They insisted we play the old music, then couldn’t understand why the audience wasn’t young. They called the radio show “The Bandstand,” hoping to draw off some of the popularity of the television show. There was a radio show and a television show with the same name running simultaneously—but the radio show was Perry Como, Eddie Fisher, Don Cornell, Ralph Flannigan, and so forth. It was a frustration.

Eventually, bright people in radio began to play *kid music*, and it was highly black-oriented, and that’s when they [achieved big ratings].

There was a disc jockey in every town who discovered if you played Rhythm ‘n’ Blues, or Rockabilly, or anything of that nature, kids would come to you in great numbers.

I remember the period vividly. I was young, impressionable, and very naive, and it was the beginning of everything. I have fond memories of it. The biggest problem you have as you get older is not to hang on to the old days. Let them go, have them become part of your

life's scrapbook. I don't think those were the best days of my life, but they made the biggest impression on me because I couldn't ever, in my wildest dreams, believe where my life was going to go.

I'm afraid we won't see those days again. The audience has become far too sophisticated in its tastes. We've raised generations of people who are very particular about what they want to listen to. You see it exemplified in radio formats that proliferate yearly. They're going after narrower and narrower slices of the audience.

It's really hard to visualize the day when Fats Domino, Pat Boone, Perry Como, a big band record, The Chords, The Hilltoppers, Chuck Berry, and Don Cornell were all in the same stack of records.

Arlene Sullivan

The program went on the air at 3 P.M. Eastern Time. Millions of teens would rush home from school to see a studio full of high school kids dance to the latest hits and rate records, and hosted by someone adept at leading this mass of pimples, greasy hair, angst, and teenage affectations. That someone was Dick Clark, the program “American Bandstand,” and it was the first teenage dance show televised coast to coast.

Clark, always the master of the situation, created romance and drama for young America in the persons of Arlene Sullivan and Kenny Rossi and Justine Carrelli and Bob Clayton. They were the focal point, the love interests of “Bandstand.” The girls thrived on it while the boys put it down. Arlene Sullivan was on “Bandstand” from 1956 to 1960, more than her allotted fifteen minutes.

She was strolling and bopping when Rock 'n' Roll was in its infancy, while television was still experimenting, the performers new and exciting. The sky was bluer, the grass was greener, and the summers were softer. Arlene still gives it a ten, likes the beat, and would certainly buy it—except the studio is empty and the artists are gone.

I first went to “Bandstand” with a couple of friends and it was difficult to get in. If you were a regular, you got in automatically. If you weren't, you'd have to stand in line. They only allowed a certain number of kids in and if you didn't make it, tough luck. We didn't get in that day so we went down to the corner drugstore called Pop Singer's. We were drinking cokes and the next thing you know a lot of the regulars came in from the show and we started to talk.

On our way home we met one of the regulars whose name was Roe and told her we didn't get in that day. She told us to come back and she'd try to get us in. She did and introduced me to a lot of the regulars and they had a party the next week. I went to the party, got to

know everyone, and became a regular. By knowing them, I got in—it was who you know. That was the end of '56.

One summer day in 1957 we arrived and there were these huge cameras; completely different cameras than before. They told us we were going national, and you didn't realize what that meant until you started getting letters. When it was a local show, we would get some fan mail, but now I really started getting mail. Dick Clark would interview you on the show, mention your name, ask how old you were and what school you went to. That's how people got to know you.

When it went nationwide, it became a phenomenon; we would get 500 to 1,000 letters a day sometimes. Bob and Justine were the blond couple and Kenny and I were the dark-haired couple. They were very, very popular, probably the most popular couple on the show.

I became a regular before Kenny and was receiving some fan mail and getting noticed a little bit. One day I was on the floor and looked up and saw this cute little guy sitting in the stands and asked him to dance. That was not done in those days, but I asked him to dance because he reminded me of myself.

We liked each other and then he came back and I would get him in and he became a regular. We started dancing together all the time, then kind of became boyfriend and girlfriend. The next thing you know we were a couple and started to get very popular like Bob and Justine.

There was a scandal before Dick Clark took the show over. The DJ before Dick Clark was an alcoholic and got involved with some other people, not kids from the show, but with real young girls. They were caught drinking on somebody's boat or something, a big scandal, and they fired him. They hired Dick Clark and he was squeaky clean and he didn't want to mess up anything. He kept his distance from us so there wouldn't be any scandal. He was nice to us, but he never wanted to get too close.

Dick Clark would go to the suburbs on the weekends and appear at big school dances. We would meet at Pop Singer's and Pop would take us to Dick Clark's dances. Dick really wanted us there. We were a draw.

There were only certain kinds of dances we could do. Dick Clark would not allow us to do a slow dance with a grind in it or anything like that. Any kind of dirty dancing was out. The Stroll came along because this kid Frankie always wanted to make up dances. So he started The Stroll and we all started doing it. The Stroll was a big deal.

We were famous all around the country and when talent that performed on “Bandstand” went to different cities, the kids used to ask them about us. They used to come back and say, “Do you know how popular you are?” We didn’t have a clue.

Annette Funicello came on the show and sought me out and said, “Every place I go people say I look like you.”

I said, “That’s funny, because I get letters saying that you and I resemble one another.”

Dick Clark told us that when we became 18 we had to leave the show. Most of us were 17½ or 18, so this was the end. He cut the room in half with the regulars that were so famous. We were gone. Gone. Completely gone. It was like being in the middle of Manhattan one day and then being in the middle of Siberia the next.

We were just totally blown away. He told us the reason he had to get rid of us was because the business people were asking questions about the kids doing commercials. He said because we were not professionals there was no way we could do commercials and because we were amateurs you couldn’t be a professional dancer. You couldn’t be a professional of any kind.

To dance on the show you had to be an amateur. If you were in a magazine, you were kicked off the show. Once you made a record, you were kicked off the show. Kenny made a record and Dick Clark called him in the office and said that was his last day. One girl was hired by *Teen Magazine* and it made every single newspaper in the United States that she was kicked off.

We were used. It was unbelievable the money that was made from us. The problem is you didn’t know. Nobody was greedy.

Sixteen Magazine used me. They would write stories and use my name and give me a few dollars, pay for my New York trips. Then I got a job and got over it. I never took myself seriously, thank God. I never wanted to be a movie star or a singer, but I guarantee if I could sing I probably would have tried it just like some of them did.

The ’50s were so great. There weren’t any wars, any drugs. Kids did not do a lot of drinking. Smoking was rare, but we all tried it. I think the majority of the kids in the ’50s would get in the back seat of a car and they would make out and touch, but nobody really had sex. I didn’t have sex when I was a teenager, didn’t even think about it. None of my friends did.

The sad part about kids today that are having babies at 12 and 13

years old is they're missing all the fun. The fun part, the exciting part of being a teenager in the '50s, was making out in the back seat and not doing it. Kenny and I did not have sex, we respected one another. He respected me, I respected him. Today we are friends and we still respect one another. We still kid about not doing it and all that stuff.

Kids today don't get it. They really don't get it. It's so sad to see 13-year-old girls having babies and the boys not caring about these little human lives.

It's a lot of things. It's the media. It's the parents. It's the parent not being home when these kids come home from school. It's not having dinner at 5 or 6 o'clock like we used to and everyone [was] at the table. It's not sharing the living room with one TV and everybody watching the same program with your mother and your father and your brother and your sister.

It's having one telephone so when one person's on the phone, you can't be in another room having secrets with anybody else. It's having one automobile and you had to walk. We survived with one car, one telephone, and one TV. Today everybody has to have their own TV, their own phone, their own car, their own computer. Kids have been spoiled, spoiled rotten.

Parents thought kids should have everything they didn't have. I don't agree with that. I didn't have any children, but I probably would have done the same thing. Every Christmas I wanted a bicycle. I never got a bicycle. I won a car on "Bandstand" at 15, and my parents sold the car. I gave them the money and told them to buy a bike for my baby sister. So you see, I didn't have any children and I'm already spoiling my little sister.

It's just unbelievable what they allow now. I know there's freedom of speech but limit [the violence] on TV for kids. I don't like censoring anything. I don't believe in it. I think everybody should do what they want to do. But it's completely out of control, just out of control. It cannot get any worse unless somebody on a music video actually kills somebody. I mean, what else is left?

Shelley C. Rountree

In 1959 people married at an early age, in Shelly's case at 19. Her marriage quickly began to deteriorate, and, not working, she watched a great deal of television, "American Bandstand" being one of her preferred programs. Her favorite couple was Arlene Sullivan and Kenny Rossi, and she would fantasize that her marriage could be as happy as they appeared to be.

Everyone knew Dick Clark and the music he played, but I didn't pay much attention to his program until I moved to Dallas, Texas, with my first husband in 1960. The marriage wasn't going well so I began watching daytime TV to escape the unhappiness of a bad situation. "American Bandstand" was uplifting and romantic and I could identify with it because the people on the program weren't that much younger than I was.

I loved the music and loved to watch the couples dancing and interacting. I, like everyone, liked Dick Clark. I adored watching these happy people and I thought I'd love to feel that way again. They were interesting and I was fascinated by the life they were leading, which was beyond me by that point.

I liked one couple in particular. She was short, and dark, 5-foot-2 at most, and he was taller than she. They looked Italian and just so in love and adorable and were wonderful dancers. I was mesmerized, I couldn't take my eyes off of them.

Once in a while I'd see one of them dance with someone else and it upset me, unhappy to see them not together. Dick Clark mentioned them one time, and I remember the girl's name was Arlene. It's been a long time, but I would know them if I saw them today.

In our day we were innocent, naive, and I'm glad of it. It was the best of times. You grow up too soon as it is and I don't envy those who are growing up today. Now, nothing is sacred.

Kids today are jaded and unhappy because they don't know what

morals are. They don't know what it is to wait to experience things as we did.

The music today, if you call it music, is noise and racket. It's sexual, but not romantic. There's no illusion.

The media has exploited people terribly, we've lost our innocence as a nation. We don't need to be naive and stupid, but rather innocent with something to look forward to, to wait for. The romantic aspects are gone. It's sad.

Pat Boone

The year 1957 was a turning point in American culture. Pat Boone, clean-cut, handsome, and attending Columbia University, was an enormous success as a singer. The only singer more popular was Elvis. The majority of America's youth entered Elvis' camp, opting for long hair, surly looks, and muddy lyrics. Not only America, but the world took a turn toward rebelliousness, and things have never been the same since.

Nineteen fifty-seven was a fabulous year for me. I had "Love Letters in the Sand," "April Love," and two movies, *Bernadine* and *April Love*. I was voted the most popular male singer, beating Elvis, but that was the last time.

Elvis was definitely a watershed performer. A white singer who could sound black, though he certainly didn't sound as black as Little Richard or some of the other performers. He opened the door to the acceptance of Rhythm and Blues and I did too in my way because I had the more cleaned-up versions.

My very first record, "Two Hearts, Two Kisses," had me competing with Frank Sinatra, Doris Day. I was unknown, so Randy Wood at Dot Records sent me all over the country to promote it, and I wound up having a hit. So here I was, right out of the chute, competing with Frank Sinatra and Doris Day, not Elvis. Elvis had not had his first record on RCA released yet. Thank goodness for me.

While running around the country there were several times when the promotion guy would bring me into a radio station and say, "I've got young Pat Boone here. He has that record 'Two Hearts, Two Kisses', and the program director would look up at me skeptically and say, 'Sure, that's Pat Boone.'"

He thought Pat Boone was black, so I had captured enough of the flavor, even on "Tutti-Frutti" and "Ain't That A Shame." I had ten or eleven records on the Rhythm and Blues charts and was accepted as

a Rhythm and Blues artist, which was very rare for a white guy during that period of the late '50s.

But Elvis, even more of course, sounded like he was influenced by black music. He was knocking the door down because up until then so-called black or race music couldn't be played on most radio stations. Even the phrase Rock 'n' Roll, a euphemism for sex, became accepted.

More and more taboo subjects began to be accepted, experimented with. Elvis in his show was hyper, to say the least, and on "The Ed Sullivan Show" they kept the camera focused above his waist in case his pelvis got to twitching. He became the emblem, the symbol of broken taboos. He was the guy . . . he was the rebel, breaking the restrictions in the code and getting away with it, becoming bigger every day because he was defying accepted cultural tradition, was handsome and charismatic, and the kids loved him and it seemed like nothing could restrain him.

There was a press conference at the time and they asked, "Elvis, when are you going to get married and have kids like Pat Boone?"

He gave that lopsided grin and said, "Why should I buy a cow when I can get milk through the fence?" That sent shock waves through parents, teachers, ministers, and a few legislators around the country.

Elvis was more of an influence, more of a cultural phenomenon, than he knew. I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt, but I don't think he understood the repercussions of some of the things he said. I think he was trying to get a laugh from his buddies. I don't believe Elvis had any notion of the lasting consequences or the influence he was exerting on young people and on the culture. I saw some of it then, and of course I was extremely influence-conscious. I realized from the beginning that if I had influence, and if kids were going to imitate me in any way, I wanted it to be a positive influence.

I wrote a book, *Twixt 12 and 20*, which was a non-fiction bestseller for two years, and I said, "Whether we want to be role models or influences or not, we are, because kids tend to imitate people they admire and look up to." I wanted to be a good influence.

I was lampooned for that. People sneered at the idea that an entertainer had to try to be a good influence on his fans. Sinatra at the time was asked about being a good influence and said, "I owe my public nothing but a good performance. What I do in my own private life is my business."

Well, it's his business alright, but it's reported universally so it is an influence on others. I've always felt we owe our fans the best we have to offer, including our behavior, which they're going to emulate.

The Rolling Stones, and so many of the acts of the '60s, sang about and bragged about their drug usage, the groupies and the sex, and kids thought that was great. So they, in their own spheres, would try to emulate and get away with the same things. So many singers after Elvis brought bottles of Jack Daniels on stage—Jim Morrison was one—and would wave the bottle and say, "This is my inspiration." The kids would say, "Right on," and they started smoking pot and using other drugs. It was a progression.

I don't think you can blame pot, alcoholism, and drug usage on Elvis. What he did was unintentional. Elvis opened the door to this rebellious attitude that kids could reject the moral teachings of their parents and their predecessors and do their own thing. Jerry Rubin said *if it feels good—do it*. Elvis was the precursor, the trailblazer of this attitude.

I told him once, "Elvis, I felt sorry for you when I saw you on TV that first time."

He said, "Sorry for me? Why?"

I said, "Well, that hip problem. I know it was embarrassing."

He said, "Oh, man, I can't help it."

I said, "What do you mean, you can't help it?"

He said, "Well I don't know. The music starts and something comes over me. I just can't help it."

I said, "If you can't help it, I am in trouble because I *can* help it."

How was I going to compete with that?

The kids thought it was terrific, that's what they wanted to do. They felt urges, too. They wanted to let them go and here was their idol encouraging and exemplifying it, dating one starlet after another and saying openly, *I don't need to settle down and get married 'cause I can get my milk through the fence*.

He and I visited each other in our homes in Bel Air. We lived for many months just a few blocks apart. I would visit him sometimes in the evening and he had a couple from Memphis that would cook for him, take care of his house. His dates consisted of having one of his buddies go pick up a starlet or a young girl, bring her to his house, and Elvis would go over and kiss her and introduce her around.

They'd laugh and kiss and maybe have something to drink and

we'd have chicken-fried steak, okra, black-eyed peas, cornbread and that food from Memphis. Then he'd say, "You all excuse me. I want to show (the girl's name) something," and he would disappear to another part of the house. The stag party would carry on and then after a while she'd come back with him and he'd have one of his buddies take her home. That was her date with Elvis.

He'd come to my house and the contrast was incredible. He'd come up with a buddy or two and have his collar turned up, his dark glasses, his jumpsuit, and get out of his Rolls and walk around to the back where he heard us splashing in the pool with our four daughters. They didn't know much about him except he was a friend. They liked him. They knew he liked them. So they would run across the grass and jump up on him. They'd be sopping wet and get him wet, and I'd say, "Girls, girls, hey, wait a minute."

Elvis would say, "Leave 'em alone. I love it."

And he did.

He wanted so much to have a wife and kids and family. He knew he was missing all that. I didn't know at the time that he had Priscilla stashed at Graceland. Of course they got married and had one child but he never relinquished his buddies.

He'd be in Palm Springs. There'd be two or three of his buddies in his house all the time and now his wife was the one he took into another part of the house. They tried to have a life, but his buddies were always welcome. Priscilla had gotten used to that back at Graceland, but nothing much changed after they got married. His existence was always a strange, cluttered one, and not the life he really wanted. But he just didn't feel secure without his buddies around.

Now it's a new era. There is a stirring of the old American spirit. Once we were attacked and confronted, as horrifically as we were, you have seen the flags break out. Wal-Mart, Target, all the stores—they just can't supply the flags fast enough.

There has been a generation of kids not learning, not being exposed to patriotic songs. "I'm Proud To Be An American" and "This Is My Country" were never heard. The parents themselves didn't know the songs and that bothers me because they are part of our national DNA, of our identity. If we don't proclaim musically and verbally who we are and don't teach our kids, then it vanishes.

We still have Peaceniks emulating the peace movements of the '60s against the Vietnam War, thinking it's cool and necessary to advocate

pacifism and non-violence—love, not war. Many of the adults that were Peaceniks in the '60s are saying, *Wait a minute. Back then I went to Canada rather than go to Vietnam because I didn't think our national interest was involved. But now, we've been attacked on our own soil. Thousands of Americans have been killed in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania and we've got to do something about it.*

You can't fight that kind of terror and violence with peace slogans. You don't say to Osama bin Laden, "Please, Mr. bin Laden, we won't hold that against you, so please don't do it again. We don't want war." Can you imagine how he'd sneer at that?

There is something that is in danger of being lost. I hope its revivable in the American spirit. You don't come to our soil or attack our countrymen overseas without expecting retaliation. You just can't let hoodlums and terrorists run all over you and hope that by being peaceful and loving that's going to deter them in some way. It's not going to happen.

I've heard Dan Rather and others commenting that people are reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, saying *one nation indivisible*, leaving out *under God* in the name of political correctness, not wanting to offend anyone. The reason there is an America today is because people sought the freedom to express their faith in God and openly ask for his help. Every president we've ever had has publicly asked for the prayers of the people for their administration and for the country.

We were attacked by these madmen, these zealots, and all of a sudden there were senators and representatives on the steps of the House singing "God Bless America" and meaning it, and everybody was saying, "Yes, we need that." I didn't hear anything from the ACLU or People For the American Way. They are not representative of the true American way, which is to grant everybody the freedom to express their faith openly. Muslims, Hindus, whatever they might be, even atheists, but don't throttle and silence the great majority that want to express their faith openly, because there might be three or four people who are offended. It's a total perversion of what was intended by the framers of the Constitution, and we've let a few liberals browbeat and intimidate us into cow-towing to them.

We're either going to reclaim who we have been and who we felt we would always be, or forever lose our identity and just melt into the sea of commonality. Instead of being a role model for the world, we will become invisible like everybody else and suffer the same fate.

