*Hans Nathaniel Whitmer*

*Aimee Christina Whitmer*

[Theology of the body](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology_of_the_Body)

QUESTIONS:

* How are the kids? (How’s Madine? How’s Cecilia? How’s Nicholas? How’s Brigid? How’s Maria? How’s James? How’s George?)
* Any updates on the other siblings?
* Cooking anything good lately?
* Reading anything ?
* Watching anything fun?
* How are the Lion’s doing?
* Playing any music?
* How’s your cycling going?
* How’s the flow of things?
* What are you guys looking forward to? Anticipating anything good coming up?
* Anything GR news of interest?
* Talk to any of the sibs recently?
* Talk to mom and dad recently?
* Hear anything about Mom’s trip?
* Mine my siblings for information on the other siblings and my parents. That is our interface. Our family is our interface. Our safe, stable, shared knowledge and interest base.
* Is Aimee’s health and Hans’s ambivalence about career development going to be a problem. Especially as the kids really start to stretch them out.
* Dear Hans,

A work in progress…

The gambit…

Time as our most valuable resource… how much would I be willing to sell it for.

Racing towards some inchoate end… sustaining vision…

The work room— trashed after a day or two. I need this order, books where they are, charging cords where you would expect them.

Helena crying through the door.

My goliath of self-doubt.

Funds going out, going out…

Stubborn independence… not looking for external validation…

Writing code without much feedback… it works… but am I doing it right.

Every time I connect with someone about Tech they offer me work…

Skills… manipulating data.

Understanding complexity…. What just looks complex.. what is actually complex.

There have been valleys, inefficiencies, stretches of things getting unaligned.

Reduce friction, anticipate…

Be a good partner.. lose my mind and learn a completely new skill.

Taking me down to the studs…

I have been here before.

It’s a personal goal.. I know where I am at.

I am not an evangelist.

I have a process… that is all..

Make some goals, commit to a path,

The power of committing to your own reality… you might not get a majority of the people to like you, but if you do it right, you just might get a tight following of radidly dedicated supportors.

There is that warming, drawing near, where disparate threads of information begin to coalese and the unclear becomes clear. There is also that straining, stretching, thinning feeling, like the abdominal wall wrenching itself towards herniation.

Stop the recriminations— you don’t know how to that… you’re dumb…

And I feel dumb sometimes… I read it… and I don’t get it.. I read it… and I don’t get it… I read it a few months later and holy shit… I get it…

What I know right at this minute is only a part of the story… and I have faith that there is more information out there that will make my work clearer… there is still more to learn, not because there is still more to know, knowing in and of itself is a stagnate cul-de-sac, but living, experiencing through knowing…

I don’t give a shit about the Lions… you analysis was sad and uninspiring. But we have some archetypes there.

Mangers would try to manage by impressing upon us some degree of crisis.

The personality of the leader has a lot to do with how much you believe the ciris to be real and how much faith you put into that leaders ability to solve the problem. Framing the problem is everything.

Framing the problem is the whole problem.

Is the problem that I don’t let abortion drive my voting?

Is the problem that I don’t accept your conservative Catholic worldview which seemingly locks you into no-nothing partisan zealousness?

Is the problem that I don’t visit enough (mitigating factors or limited time-off, working weekends, small children, pandemic, being unemployed)

I am in crisis

What makes this not a negative crisis?

A positive outcome = career change to a more engaging, skills-based career that will provide economic stability and sustainable career engagement (proper work/life balance).

How do I ensure that I achieve a positive outcome = putting in the time.

How do I put in the time without freaking out about how much time is still left to put in and running that amorphous number up against our limit resources.

Dwelling on the worst possible outcomes.

Escaping this crisis modeling and entering the PRACTICE model. What do I like to do (like is a confluence of good- individual and collective- ordered in such a way to allow goods to mutually enhance and benefit and synergize)

Tangible crisis— managing self, staying clear on the TANGIBLE crisis, paying attention to the opportunity.

Cynical or experienced? Cynical or pragmatic?

What does it mean to be depressed?

What does it mean to be an alcoholic?

What does it mean to be lazy or ignorant?  
So you are going to made about something that you have no objective evidence for…

So there was fraud?

So there is a Catholic god that demands that the only legitimate mode of living is the North American conservative Catholic variety?

Without proof we are left with impression and rhetoric and power.

I have opted out of your apocalypse. And if lands me in hell of an eternity then so be it.

You can keep your insecure, capricious conception of God.

My God makes fucking hurricanes and sunsets and they invented

We are small. We can either invited reminders of our smallness or they will be provided for us against our will.

We are small. What we do ultimately does not matter. You can say that everyone has an ordained part to play and while this is pop-psychologically affirming it flies in the faith of the canonized theological rejection of Predestination. This line of thinking only makes sense if the integrity of the whole is maintained regardless of the individual free-will actions of the free radicals within the soup. We are integrated into the whole regardless of our individual decisions. If this is the great plan that you talk of, if this is the great vision of unity and perfection, then so be it. We all need to work pretty hard to structure our thoughts on these things.

You conservative politics, patronizing tone, and rhetorical foundamentalism makes you disturbing to talk to. You have “strong” beliefs that have directed you to live your life in a very specific way— do you really think that you have figured it out and you are in a place to judge other people’s religious and spiritual beliefs and conclusions?

What we know… what we believe… what we do… what we practice…

I am trying to find a vocation that allows me to support my family without turning me into a full-blown alcoholic. You responds with a quick little switcheroo that what I am really doing is pursing God. I am trying to learn new things, gain wisdom, and thus obviously just trying to connect with the godhead. I would respond to this— sure, yes, we all would like a nice little loch side caravan up in the godhead, but for sooth I just want a job that allows me to support my family without turning me into a full-blown alcoholic. My family has always framed this journey, or at least since I stopped going to church, as movement back to God, which initially was a Protestant God, but circa 2005 switched his vestments and became an Evangelical tinged Catholic God.

Now they have a Catholic in the White House and they are so pissed-off about it. And I am left feeling kind of pissed that they are pissed-off about this. The current Pope is too liberal, beloved Pope John Paul II whose ring like DVD series on Sex led to the conversion of the whole family, is now being historically reassessed due to his unwillingness to respond to the clergy sex abuse scandal. Wisdom has limitations.

You are a very tiresome individual. Talking to you about football made me feel depressed and the distance between us was palpable.

Being vulnerable. Being open. It takes a lot of energy- emotional and mental to stay open and responsive to people and to subjugate your own needs, wants, desires, thoughts, to the personality, impressions, needs, wants, and desires of another.

There is this dance with releasing control and taking control. Children are an interesting experience in this.

Stop fucking telling people anything. Ask questions if anything? You don’t need to convert anybody. You do not need to convince anybody. Stop fucking selling, you have never been good at it. You have never had that conviction so deep in your heart. You have never wanted the other person to want it. You want them to want it, if they want it. You have always just wanted to be and let others be.

My Dad wrote me something that I can read and understand how I want to. We can do whatever we want to.

Vocation— Let’s not pretend this is a small question.

I feel like all vocational questions, and psychological questions, and even sometimes physical ones all get routed back through Religion. Now, I do not discount the unifying power of a cohesive and extensively traditioned world view, but you know sometimes, you want to just be able to talk to your mom without having a representative of the all knowing Lord. You think you represent Him. You do and you do not.

Beth’s legs, Aimee’s obesity, Dad’s tenseness, Mom’s listless, overwhelmed lashing out bouts.

I have been set up to accept certain patterns.

I have been set up to engage in certain patterns.

I have made decisions to accept certain patterns.

I have made decisions to engage in certain patterns.

How do you confront soemtone who has hurt you without hurting them?

How can I love you, Hans. I am sorry and I ask for your forgiveness. I have harbored frustration about your performance at our wedding, not for anything that you said, but for how distant it made me feel from you. And a lot of this distance is due to family life and that is good. I’m sure there are a lot of stressed out wives that deal with brothers disappearing off to do whatever- golf, hunt, sport. Which I would love to do all of those things with you. I truly hope the future phases of our lives yield more brother time.

But we have grown a part and it begs the question of when we were ever all that close. When are the halcyon days of our relationship? And whatever those are let’s base our relationship on that, because it is clear there are limits to our relationship both real and imagined.

I find myself in a different state than my family geographically, politically, economically, and religiously and that has put some strain on our relationship.

After my mother framed the up-coming Vice-Presidential debate as an opportunity to see the face of Satan himself in the visage of the Democratic nomination Kamala Harris and all the vileness she represents. How dare she uphold the law as Attorney General. She had it in her power to outlaw abortion and she did nothing. Then she conspired with Planned Parenthood to sell body parts of babies to Science!! Black babies!!! To study them for Aememia treatments!!! They wanted to use the unwanted babies to save people!! But they were stupid because the people who wanted to buy the baby parts weren’t really scientists, they were pro-life operatives fraudenlently attempting to buy baby parts, not for Science, but to just expose the sale of the baby parts. Obviously the whole story is gross and spun and there are many, many court cases on-going. Which is why I ultimately appreciate our courts. Its an abstraction we can count on. And one that has a pretty strong approval rating among the people, which is important, cause you know, its all about the ratings. Likes. Engagement. And hey divisiveness will get you places. It will stir up interest and support, but it is ultimately not an overall winning strategy, nor a sustainable one. Its difficult to court the middle when you play so heavily to one side of a divide. It’s a great way to build perceived strength, which does translate to actual strength if you control all the key levers or have at least neutralized or held at bay the levers you do not directly control (law, media, public opinion, external threats, internal threats).

At the beginning of October of 2020 I ceased really caring what my family thought of me or my life decisions. It was a very liberating development. The seventeen-year-locust had emerged at last.

Brother I love you, brother of chicken pox and Bless you Boys, brother

08/24/2021

* lost in a Sam’s Club Parking Lot
* sick to death before a mountain bike race

04/03/2021

* tribal or societal or hierarchal and ego driven, insecure, exposed, incumbent, personally responsible, on-the-hook, self-determined, saddled with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
* Bringing up the Play Boy with the Van Antwerps
* Drawing scantily clad action heros with embarrassingly pointy and asymmetrical boobs. These embarrassingly pointy and asymmetrical boobs then hanging out on poster board behind our the various pieces of furniture we had along our walls.

04/09/2021

Hans and family are in Wisconsin. Visits Waterloo, WI with Maddie. Borderline exhaustion. Who knows where this road leads? VW vans set up at Wisconsin Dells-- food trucks, an open air bar. Fires outside with logs. It was Rockin’ all night long.

He tells me he doesn’t know if this strain is less deadly. You gotta take your vitamin D, he says. They’re saying that people with darker skin doesn’t synthesize Vitamin D as well.

10/10/2020

You don’t seem very independent, Hans. How is that a constructive comment. He found his lane. It’s fine. Why does he feel empowered to be an aggressive bully. This is his mid-life crisis. I have having this worried thoughts that something is physical going to happen to him cycling that is going to comlcate their lives. Or that something will physically happen to Aimee and Hans will be ill-prepared to take over as the financial driver of the family.

Thank you for demonstrating to the Brits and the family at large where we are right now— my conscience is clear. You heart is a big red MAGA hat full of shit. You barred your fangs and claws and your ugliness was amazing! Suck it up? Bite your tongue? Why the hell would you say that when I was merely following up on something that everyone but you and Mom seemingly had agreed to. Your rabid partisanship is fucking out of control. And I know that everyone saw you as I see you and felt about you as I feel about you and I hope you understand that I felt like I was acting reasonably, but also felt an uneasy intuition that proved exactly correct that my innocuous request would be met with an aggressive response or out right attack: Suck it up? Bite your tongue? Have some respect for your mother who loves you more than you will ever know. In these ataches you showed yourself to be exactly what I don’t want to be. Intoleratnt. Insesnitive. Mawkish. Reactionary. Unkind. Blindly partisan. Inept. Inappropriate. Tactless. Self-righteous. In short you perfectly embodied your parties contemporay tone. And I don’t mean tone as like a singular quality of voice, but rather as a soul beaming sublingual spirit that has infused itself in your AMERICAN identity politics. We are the REAL Americans. Don’t you want to be a REAL American?

I have worked under a mean boss, a narcissistic boss— a boss who cared very much for his profits and guns and boat and Florida home— but hade little regard for his employees.

He would talk about who he liked to run things lean.

He created or at least tolerated a incomprehensible management structure which led our defacto “Regional Manger” to scold us for not doing a good enough job managing our managers. Who despite numerous requests to change the procedure was unable or unwilling to produce a working schedule for us in a timely manner, making planning both professional and personal activities an unnecessary contingency and source of stress and franlkly resentment eroding my goodwill, trust and loyalty to the company. There was no clear procedure for requesting days off or receiving confirmation that your request was even received, much less approved, making it necessary to hound mangers (who would pass the buck) to the owner/president himself, which turned even vacation requests and approvals into this uneasy “favor” giving or withholding.

11/11/2020

Adam Hoestler’s father recently died. He had just moved back to the area and was taking over ownership of Mr. Bike and Ski. Hans was heading back to Delta County for a quick weekend to attend the funeral and see Matt Maranger and all the old Mr. Bike gang. A significant bridge community for him. Extending from post under grad through to his marriage to Aimee and beyond as his relationship especially with Matt has seemed to extend through time. Two biking focused Catholic guys with big sprawling families and a caffeinated go, go, go sensibility. Ideas, schemes, bank loans, acquisitions, specs, deals, opportunities, doing deals, meeting needs, taking care, creatively finding solutions, giving back, living, striving, climbing, staying grounded.

Wattage/weight = power ratio: stay light, pump like hell

VISION: exercise, diet, equipment(Trek- super caliber, suspension)

We had a good chat. No fighting. I don’t think I was even marginally annoyed with you.

You’ve lost 20 lbs. since July and are feeling fit and active and engaged with your training. I share with you a little bit about my research into stretching and Yoga and Osteopathy.

11/26/2020

Saw that significant snow is coming to GR next week. Get your skis shined up grab a stick of juicy fruit…

12/15/2020

Just texted Hans the Sufjan Stevens album recommendation.

12/23/2020

Shambolic

Tell me about the lions, about their subpar organization, their lack of leadership credibility. But what about your lack of leadership and credibility—which you piss away more and more each day through your cellular telephone as you overwhelm your way through middle-age. And how do you judge without falling into the fallacy of a zero sum game?

12/24/2020

**A Process not unlike Skydiving**

Parachuting, skydiving, the world is so open, from the stuffy confines of the hermetically sealed LuxRetail fuselage, and I am gone, out the door, the bottle service and unobtainable merchandise receed, I am flying, of sorts, that equilibrium of falling and gravity, maximum velocity is achieved and you are no longer falling. Take in the view. The horizon line is a circle, I take it all in, dizzy, overwhelmed, engaged by all the newness. I see my new life below. My new organization. My new system. There is a big fucking target down there somewhere, I don’t see it just yet, but I am heading in its general direction for sure.

It’s at this point in the process that occasionally my thoughts turn to the parachute in my pack. Is it in there? Will it work? Is it strong enough to catch me… catch my family? I am knitting the parachute as I fall. What will come first- the ground or my completed parachute….

Listing why Hans is such a shit and how he has probably saved me from a lot of heartache. His crazy spending. His sexual exploits with younger women while he was in a ministry leadership position. His saga with Sarah Tackman and the abortion.

I don’t have to feel guilty about distancing myself from you. You are kind of a bastatd. Well, at least you have a plan. I like to read these books they are like thought experiments. I feel joy out on the trail. I want to see how fast I can get and race against other 45 year olds. You only race yourself at this point. The cyclists are inhibited introvert types with cycling as an interface for making friends through their obsessive personality. Obsessing about stupid shit that most people don’t care about. It is technical. It takes a sort of baseline knowledge to appreciate. What exactly are we looking at there now?

Write Hans a congratulations card for getting so deep into his cycling and hitting new milestones at this point in the game. Grandmas laughing in her sleep and Grandpa just joining in laughing with her. In the dark. In the winter. During a Pandemic.

02/04/2021

I felt drunk and hollow when I told my brother I had probably written 1500 pages of coding notes. He probably felt the same way when he told me he was trying to bike 10,000 miles to commemorate his 45th year on the earth. We don’t seem to really know how to give a shit about one another.

Strength and madness, strength and sadness.

02/10/2021

Who won the 2020 Presidential Election?

Was it free and fair?  
What are you going to do with that opinion?

Was 9-11 an inside job? Who killed Kennedy? MLK? Bay of Tonkin? Was it really so bad under the crown? Weren’t there a lot of good things about the South?

**02/13/2021**

My brother out in the American night with his need for speed and meaning.

Family- secure, thriving, time—work, life balance, financial, intellectual pursuits: tech and writing and Chinese answer all of these questions for me.

**02/18/2021**

The last time my brother came to Chicago by himself we went to a basketball game and had a burger in Wicker Park and then—my grown-man brother, conservative Catholic, father of daughters, long-time husband, gets a couple of beers in his head (and not that many at all, we were spacing our drinks out between Divvy rides around the near north west side. I certainly wasn’t drunk enough to not be incised when waiting for the bathroom he completely offended a young African American women by touching and commenting on it and having her turn around totally livid, because, you know, she didn’t want some creepy fucking go-teed white guy’s unbidden investigative stroking of her hair. The women walked right away and that was kind of that, with my brother playing the clueless card, a George Bush era maneuver in which you strategically trade in your usual hyperaggressive defensive tactics for a bemused and oblivious—“what, what?” A tactic which seems especially hard hearted since at least when someone is hyperaggressive and defensive you at least sense some insecurity in there—if not why would they be blowing up the relationship up over this difference of opinion that neither of you can control? My redneck past keeps nipping at my heels . Either with them or against them. And then I discovered that I had been intimately released…

Annette and Jason and Zack visiting and getting into a scuffle with an ex-Marine, a white guy, because Jason is rambling on about some story about his truck getting broken into when he left it at a bar overnight and he drops the N -bomb like we are in a soundproof room or within the safe confines of our own personal racist wired brains, instead of walking down the North Avenue in Chicago where there are many passing pairs of ears of people of many races who’d take offense to being subjected to a random N-bomb. He was explicating on how not all people of color were n’ers, but just the bad ones, the nasty ones, the criminal ones. The tricky part though was that it was really hard, basically impossible to distinguish the n’ers from the normal no problem general population.

So just as he dropped this N-bomb a short ex- Marine, a white guy was walking by and took offense and shoved my cousin, he just kind of looked like somebody that need to be shoved. His dad was named Whitey for godsake. He was a bastard born to a teenage. His adoptive father was an arrogant, narrow-minded prison guard. Hella stepfather material.

**02/24/2021**

Laughing like the Buddha, belly in the sun, in the soft win, warmed from the southern warmth, melt the snow in the obscenely large piles in the bank employee parking lot behind the cocktail bar run by the brothers who are all lawyers and one of the lawyers got his degree from Ave Maria in Florida. You are friendly as fuck. Connecting. Kidding. Getting us a free whisky. And then we get home and you say something super dark and passive aggressive about that guys parents being super disappointed with him that he has a law degree and is just being a long-haired loser running a late night bar instead of practicing law. You saw this real conspiratorially, setting us both up to have a good laugh at this assholes embarrassing shamelessness, but instead I want to pop you in face for being such a weird, insulting, twofaced piece of shit. You had broken away from our conversation to engage this guy in more chatting multiple times. He was friendly to you. He gave us great service and then you go home and make insecure jokes about what an asshole he is so what, so you feel better about not being cool and how you thought he was cool, but not that you have rationalized that his cool is not really as cool as you though at first when you were face to face with him and you found his cool sort of, you know, like cool and intimidating, now with a little bit of a buffer between you and that animal charisma you realize that he wasn’t cool, but was a real loser and probably a total disappointment to his ever-loving Catholic parents who you now felt more of a kinship with which was fine, but why all the twofacedness, honestly I find it very off putting and unsettling and frankly just kind of meanspirited and trite. You are not a person that I want to deeped my relationship with, if anything I want more distance from you, more insulation against your insecurity and venom and selfish narcissism.

I recall my brother’s two non-brother groom’s men two, now unsurprisingly divorced arrogant assholes who were just assholes enough to put up with Hans’s caustic sense of humor. I remember them talking shit about Hans at his wedding. In kind of a joking way, and hey, they had made the trip for the wedding, but seriously, he is kind of an untrustworthy asshole, the three of them perhaps finding common cause …

And you can’t seem to just get over your own insecurity and communicate and just come into your own and be at ease with that.

So programmed to perform—give your splits. How’s your training. Are you getting faster. Go, go, go, be disciplined. Don’t be lazy. Don’t you dare be exhausted. If you fly into a rage its because you are tired, because you are working so hard. Your anger is righteous anger—now get the fuck out of my way!!

Resented that I had to make you my best man. And your rambling, offensive speech, seemingly building on the rhetoric and delivery of Rush Limbaugh and presaging the Donald himself. You somehow managed to offend and offput everyone in attendance—complementing all the young people for attending, complaining that often at weddings its just a bunch of old people. This said directly in front of a table of a bunch of old people. I know the observation—he didn’t have that many college friends attend his own wedding and he is probably feeling some sour grapes.

Is that it. I don’t have the sense that you want me to succeed. If I succeed without God then I prove you wrong? Is that how you are choosing to frame this? Whereas if some other random person believes whatever, it really doesn’t matter. Could wee meet not as brothers but just people. How do we meet each other as people? I don’t know how to meet you as a brother. I don’t think we have that relationship anymore, or maybe never did.

Then he praised me for bravely living in the inner city where all he ever saw when he visited me were cop cars. The Racial dog whistle seemed to kick up at this point. Look at all these people! And all these brown people! And all of these Cops! This place must be super fucking prohibitively dangerous and maybe almost unliveable!! And so it goes… I travel to China, living abroad for a total of three years and then return to the decaying liberal cloister of my urban existence while I hustle to reinvent myself and find a sustainable answer to my vocation question. Meanwhile, my brother foregoes pursuing a career for a hurried and chaotic existence as a house husband—a monotony broken up by long hours of escape to the basement or out to the trails or road shoulders to pedal out his aggression and equalizing and balancing need for speed. A steady diet of conservative talking points and sporting news to keep him intellectually stimulated, ever folding over deeper into his own biases and entrenched in position.

How do you avoid without condemning? How do you eschew without becoming some sort of reactionary mirror? I don’t know, actually. I guess you just try. I guess you just make an effort and see what is possible.

If I make a mistake, but I don’t tell anyone about it and I don’t make a big deal about it then it is almost like the mistake did not happen at all.

Oh, the secular, oh the worldly.

*This Present Darkness*, Rage and peace

Where did Jesus say that you needed to be so mad—

I don’t really need to be right at all.

By then I had already traded in my mother bed Zoroastrian apocalypse for my own equally manufactured existential conception of our inevitable cessation: *not with a bang, but a whimper*—not with an explosion, by implosion, not to the evermore, but to the never was.

I am not exactly sure why, but just ceasing to exist doesn’t really botehr me all that much. I am not ready to cease to exist. I think there are still more things that I would like to write and certainly things that I would like to read and experiences I would like to have and I want to live for my girls and be a good father for them, but just simply boilded down to the physical dynamics of being here and then not and after not, just not existing, that doesn’t freak me out. I go to bed each night with little concern for walking up the next morning, though up until now, I have always been fortunate enough to do so.

Our strength makes us available, our weakness pulls us together.

**02/26/2021**

When have we been close? In your conception of things? When have we been close? When have we mutually got each other? I’ve tried to remain flexible and pliable with you guys, but somewhere along the way I began to feel mushy and insubstantial. My “real world” neglected and stagnating”, my Chinese identity unfulfilling, at arms length, unable to contain all of my hopes and dreams—inchoate though they were, and then my sales trailblazing ripping through my days—powering through, drinking, coffee, junk food, pack it on, you can just hustle it off later, maybe skip a few meals in the morning, then later eating predominantly vegetarian , ashewing most sweets, drinking less beer, fewer deserts, fewer snacks, fewer calories at breakfast and then writing and then stretching that is the same as writing and writing that is the same as stretching, working in tandem, unison, harmony, both pursue the same single mind-body goal of settling in to work and settling into this world, maintaining my ability to work in this way and maintaining my body’s ability to recover and flourish and not hold on to all of that negative tension and stress which had me all stiff and crumpled and intermittently crippled me as near as a year ago.

I think back to those periods where I would try to write and just nonsense would come out—inchoate flow of gesticulating nouns and verbs and adjectives—some fort of poetic filabusting act of self-preservation, run by my mind to avoid writing something truly terrible perhaps.

Then along came my Obsidian Stone and it sat on my chest and squeezed poetry out of me that left me feeling like a failure. That said, I would later return to some of the writing later and feel something—something of the inchoate rage and insecurity about the future and my habits and my consuming and my relationships—something was happening then—though I did not realize it at the time. I was never going to be some zingy a la mode voice of the generation, some psycho-zeitgeisty talent youthfully combusting in a buzzy burst of media coverage. And that is fine. I got free. I can still sing about it. My song can be the song of someone else. Perhaps not ever last soul, but are we such a one experience fits all sort of species. I don’t believe so. Theirs is a robustness to our collective soul though. That’s for sure. My writing, my material seeks to speak to people. Directly. Humbly. Enthusiastically. Perhaps sometimes a bit bumbly. I want it to be encouraging! I want it to occasionally positively exhort!

I don’t want my letters to turn into some sort of personal agony fest. The agony is there, yes, we tend it daily, and strain out the best encouraging bits and post our gold fragments out to the good people of our experience inscribed existence.

The postcards were important because right at this moment when I was stripping away ideas, pasttimes, habits, I felt a resolute conviction to reach out to people.

Getting settled enough not to question the process any more. Let’s cease this inquisition of instinct, not question the time invested, not disparage it as sent to sea. Finding the good solid ground of my being and working and living from there.

**04/10/2021**

You called me on your way back from the Dells. Driving the van. Backing up the van. Sam’s Club Parking lot, looking for the gas fill up. Beverly Clearly. Oh, yearh, we were just reading her Wikepedia page. Yes, she had quite a life. I never read those books. Didn’t like to read at that age. “Chronicles of Narnia”, “The Hobbit”, “This Present Darkness”, “Piercing the Darkness”, “Treasures in the Snow” and then later the “Left Behind” series and “Left Behind for Kids” and *Focus on the Family* and *The Impress* and later ETWN and the *The Global Times*, the anti-liberal rag published by the Falun Gong. And you are navigating the Sam’s parking lot and Ceci is yelling at you and I say I can let you go because I want to go because it isn’t fun to talk to someone who is so obviously and yet so cheerfully not paying attention to anything I say. I let her pratter on until he finally askes a question and then I do my best to answer it and he gives me back- “cool, I love it, that’s great” just obviously not even fucking listening to anything I say, at least that is the sense that I get. He asks the same questionos he has been asking me all year about eh time line etc. Are you working for someone he says? I think I would tell him if I got a job, no? Maybe not now. This is crazy. Are you kidding me. Jeez o’ pete’s. You gotta be kidding me. Most locked down state. Now leading the nation.

06/06/2021

You and your family looked great in the pictures from Caitlin’s baby shower. That was super sweet of you guys to make the trip.

Here’s hoping the summer rolls out smooth and full. Very excited for you about your Colorado trip. Just driving sounds pretty nice. Being away. Out of normal routines. Normal rituals. Breathing new air. Mountain air. Having enough time to acclimate.

Betsy and I biking on the Tibetan Plateau and walking across a field of tundra grass where we found dry yak bones and betsy passed out from dehydration and the altitude. We made it up to the temple and a monk in one of the side buildings offered us bowls of a greasy stew. In another room a month who is chanting beckons for us to come closer and he ties a red thread to our wrists. We make a pack not to cut the thread off and to just let it fall off when it falls off.

The red thread sees Alex back to Portland and betsy and I on to Songpan for a very tame, though still kind of arduous horse treks way up into the mountains in northern Sichuan. Cannabis was growing along the rode. There were honest to god Tibetan cowboys and cracker jack campfire cooks who whipped up bread and soup, always making sure we have a fresh pair of chopsticks whiddeled from sticks found near by. We made it up the mountain and back down and slept two nights in a tent in the mountain cold and ate with an appetite at every meal and when we came back to the town and before we got on a bus, which would prove one of our more harrowing journeys, we ate a big meal, arranged to have our laundry down and then crashed out early in our clean, simple room.

When we awoke we took a bus that meander through the mountains, getting stopped multiple times by mud slides that came down from the sloping or sheer cliffs adjacent to the road we meandered on. The bus would then pull over and wait for the nearest back-hoe or bobcat could hustle over. Once the machine arrived and laboriously removed the sludge and mud and rock payload by payload we would get back on out way. After forever we arrived in Jiangyou. After setting up night train tickets to Xi’an—a leg of the trip we were really looking forward to as it was a return to familiar territory. A good place to reintegrate back into urban Chinese life before jumping full on back into life back in Beijing. In Jiangyou we sat by the river where there were tables and chairs set up and tents to block the sun and their were men going around doing some kind of ear treatment on patrons with long metal implements and sometimes flame. A couple of chatty men attached themselves to us and we ended up spending several hours together, drinking lots of tea, smoking lots of cigarettes and then before we rushed off to hope on our night train to Xi’an we all had noodles snagged from a restaurant by one of the men. They were very nice and even thought they gave us shit about beating our asses in the Korean War, and they were kind of braggy about how much money they were making and the new house that they were building, but I couldn’t blame them. They were my wealth. I was traveling. I was on vacation. I was storing up memories.

Very seriousness now. Concentrating:

“Have… you… tried… the fish.” And then once again much more confident and decisive. It was back now and he had obviously said this sentence many times in the past.

“Have you tried the fish?” This time motioning with his right hand to present the imaginary fish. And his pronunciation is pretty solid, pretty clear. Though the ‘i’ in ‘fish’ elongates to an ‘’ee’’ and the “sh” is kind of swallowed in a too early taper that makes it sound like a flash of static, crackling and unsure. I wonder if he could learn to hang those “sh” sounds out a little longer, a little looser, let them taper just a little slower, the hush of the waves, Malibu sunset soothingly in view, hush, hush, hush…

“Have you tried the fish?”

In Xi’an we had more random kindness in the form of a mini-van ride back across town to our hotel room from the Indian Restaurant near the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. We had a lovely dinner and walked out into a monsoon. After waiting at a bus stop for some time and trying to flag down a taxi (regular or irregular), a guy in a mini-van stopped and offered us a ride. He turned out to be very nice. Things got a little awkward the next day when he showed up at our hotel offering to take us out to dinner. This was incredibly sweet, but we begged off as it was our last night before heading back to Beijing and we were transitioning out of road mode. We needed time together, just the two of us.

We have had a lot of time together just the two of use, pre-kids and I am very grateful for that. **Chicago, Germany, Xi’an, Grand Marais, Guatemala, Chicago (got married), Beijing, Chicago**

04/04/2021

Run yourself against your peers. See where you stand. Where do you stand? How far can you push yourself for health? For passion? For a rush of blood to the head?

04/09/2021

Lions, your cycling our political differences, your running, your nostalgia (old car museum with old machines, only open on Tuesdays near Mt. Pleasant where I was born. Stahlf’s?

*The Way We Were*, the amature athlete, mids having to chose career over sport, my father, the art of house husbandry, home improvement, baking, cooking, noodles, lasagna, fettucini, spighteti, pot pies, enchiladas tacos chili, ground beef salty in a cup. My father didn’t know what to do with my anxiety and neither did I. I had a panic attack in the gym. My wet shoes dripping on the floor, feeling like I did not belong at all, confused, lost, lights, high walls, banners, raised hoops, the flag, how was the flag there, hanging or just up on the wall? The color guard came to every game, or just some of the games? One game a year? Get people out on a cold winter’s night. Sing the national anthem. The fight song. Watch the back and forth brawl of the cagers. Then read about it under Denny Gralls byline in the local paper. The local sports writer who haunted every gym in the regin for a number of long decades. A point of view need not be didactic. Universal dignity, tradition, dreams, desires, inspirations, Family raising is culture creation.

11/10/21 => Bit your tongue and shut your mouth-- back tracking, he was kidding, it is his sense of humor when he is called out on it a year later. I called "Fucking Abuse" and you said it is a case of your sense of humor coming out differently than it seems in your head. What is that process of thinking of something and then processing it and then deciding to say it-- sharing one's heart? What is the heart? Instinct? Conviction? Impulse? Inspiration? Intuition?

11/07/2021

I try to call him out on his sanctimoniousness, and he acts like he has no idea what I am talking about. AN dI believe that he does not because he is in sanctimonious mode and receives the csriticism woodenly, strategically so, you can see him thinking through it. I suppose kind of reflecting on it, but not really.

11/05/2021

Mawkishly disappointed that Marcus isn’t doing it “the right way”

They have worked very hard-- their hard work and sacrifice and suffering somehow bolsters their sense of rightness. It has to or else it is a fucking waste.

**30-Mar-22**

Hans: Just thinking about our conversation yesterday, I wanted to clarify what I meant about Marcus entering adulthood. Getting a college degree was not my point. He's always been a dreamer, like you and like me. Maybe like everyone. But he has struggled to consistently take the steps necessary to achieve his dreams. Its seems like he is on that path now and he's been consistent enough to begin tasting the fruit of his labor. To me, the path of adulthood is defined by our journey in relation to this path of a fruitful life. All I want for you and Marcus and all who I love is to eat of the fruits of a life lived well. I don't believe this life of surpassing fruitfulness can be lived without an intimate relationship with God. Who has lived such a life apart from God? I pray that you will come to know God intimately because His love is so good, and you need His love. Your wife needs His love.

 Your children, your precious children, need his love. Admittedly, I am a flawed spokesman for His love. But please don't let my shortcomings keep you away from God. May God bless your efforts my brother. May He lead you to the peace and security you are seeking for you and you beautiful family. Reach out Aaron. He is waiting to take your hand. I love you and am always here for you as best I can be whenever you might need me. Peace🙏

**8/21/2021**

Back from the trip.

Hans is such an ass. How can I get over this and accept him when his home WAY is just something that I want to avoid.

His snide jokes— harvest of Catholic religious iconography from elderly victims of Covid. He’s all jazzed because he got a bunch of icons on a big sale. I mean usually like the cheapest painting thing you can find is like $35. I got all of this for $38. He shows me the virgin of Guadalupe. And some Mary imagery. And he had just come from visiting the Grotto on the campus of Notre Dame. Just amazing. Just incredible. And the food was so good. We just had such a great time.

That combination of oscillating from SANCTIMONIOUSNESS to OFFENSIVE BOMBAST .

I don’t care.

Loved being with you guys.

What is this tracking that I am doing— what am I trying to understand. How can I have a relationship with my brother and keep it from being both dismissive as well as confrontational. He says so many things that just make me feel tired. The closer people are, the more comfortable, the more likely he is to say something inappropriate. This is natural, but his scope of who he feels empowered to say inappropriate things to is pretty broad. He says things assuming a certain shared knowing or perspective or shared sense of humor, sort of attempting to force the moment to its crisis. Insensitively abstracting things. Making light of really serious things. These declarations are caustic and callous and express a sort of trans-pessimism. A freedom from the horror of what the jokes humor is implying. I didn’t mean it. It was just a joke. I didn’t mean to imply that it was funny that so many elderly people have succumb to Covid and that there is thus a glut of used Catholic iconography to sell at a big discount at the UP State fair, so that you can spend $38 dollars for a few bags full of meditations knickknacks and Virgin Mary iconography. We stand in the sun watching Papa and the girls go round on the big Ferris wheel and betsy and Esme approaching the front of the line for the Ski- run (Artic Runner). The Virgin of Guadalupe. Like G who our medical doctor mother has already declared will be slow but that that was God’s plan all along and so it is really special. Just like Beth’s lost kidney, the twins she lost in the 35th week of pregnancy, Mariel’s terrible vision and dyslexia, Gianna’s hearing lose, Adam’s bad back, etc, etc, two year old G who is largely non-verbal looks around with he stunned, but kindly wide set eyes. Breathily repeating creatin things. Saying Ya—asking for her Ya, ya. Madeline was also a really slow talker. Just saying “Ma” over and over again.

**6/14/2021**

06/14/2021

Has been a gorgeous blue sky and billowy, pillow cloud kind of day, Helena— now 2 and a robust towheaded brute— and I are out in the yard and she is ambling over inquisitively toward our small garden plot, bee-lining, in fact, straight at a recently planted maroon and forest-green shock of leaf-blades.

“Do NOT pick my Chard!” I preemptively scold, nearly adding “or I will spank your bottom,” though I do not ultimately add that last part because I know how deadly serious I am, and I sense how deeply uncomfortable it would feel to threaten a child with violence over a salad.

Little backstory, recently she has been insisting on picking the buds and leaves off all of our botanicals almost as fast as we plant them. I, being somewhat more experienced with these kinds of things, find this approach to gardening messy and self-defeating.

We had a similar difference of opinion just the other day about whether or not it was appropriate to re-pot a goodly amount of loamy topsoil into my tantalizingly sweating mason jar of chilled water.

Years ago, before I had kids, I was once at a brunch get-together where I observed one of my friends, who was already the father of three, being a little short with one of his girls over some issue with a cup of orange juice or something. At the time I remember feeling kind of surprised at how impatient or even almost unkindly you were addressing your angelic little Tomte. Maybe, he’s having a particularly stressful day I had thought at the time. Now I realize he definitely was having at least a partially stressful day because, you know, he had children and he was likely not being mean to his child at all, but was, in fact, exerting incredible, if not saintlike-level patience, artfully teasing out and expanding just a bit more your reservoir of that most precious of parental commodities, that greedily gobbled up resource that well before this cup of juice or even this very morning had been pulled and stretched as thin as a gossamer shroud though still somehow holding— together and true through some miraculous act of superhuman effort. Love?

I also now realize that our children are in essence sociopaths that we have been charged with by fate to reform as penance for our own past, if not present, sociopathic behavior. Which is all just to say, I hope you both are well and that your kids are well and that everyone is keeping the sociopathy to a loving minimum.

Best,

**5/24/2021**

The omelette what is it about the omelette. The instensity. The unnecessarily elevated words. The woodenness. Done in a sense of play? Insecurity? Exactness? Revealing of your anal exactness. The detpth of your practice. How fulfilling you find this omelette-- this best omelette with the white pepper, the chives, the onion gives it something different.

Did you do something different with the Quinua salad he keeps asking and he asking during dinner. We had to feed out questions about their house and he seemed stressed and like he had been living on a ship for the last few years. Hopefully the bedrooms were super cozy. People put up with very many different inconveniences. There are no good restaurants around sometimes implies that there just aren’t enough people around like me who would appreciate good restuarants, or something about this place is not evolved or developed as the place that I came from. How do we talk about things without unintentionally poo-pooing them, shitting o

That omel;ette is very good. Everyone loves the omelettte and he can make it over and over again the same way. Bnaging the pan and making a racket. Melting the butter all over the top. The omelette is good, but it gets a little too much attention. It is served as part of a pretty dire dining experience. People not really eating togethering. People just consuming calories. Butter and egg. Richness. Custardy, at the table with the walls closing in all around.

**5/21/2021**

People believe a lot of different things. People have very personal experiences of God and religion. How can you mandate how someone experiences God. This idea that you know so much better about how to experience God is truly an inhumane (though very human sentiment).

That sense of superiority. We’re not like them. Mom and Dad will pay for it. I deserve this…

**05/20/2021**

Your awkward use of language baffles me— weirdly causal and jokey about really important things and really sanctimonious and serious about others.

Beard oil.

That’s the kind of story you only tell your wife, buddy.

Ave Maria University.

Connected with the bartender.

Later— man, that guys parents must be really disappointed with him. He’s got a law degree and his running a bar. Give me a break.

My brother was always saying these cruel things about people behind their back. I remember being at his wedding and having his groomsmen bitch about him and what an ass he was. This was after one of the groomsmen have gotten divorced and just a few years before the other one did. They were both kind of assholes, which I had always kind of gotten the sense of, but had tolerated because I was younger than them and perhaps deserved some stern patronizing for all the important things I still had yet to learn which they had learned years ago and were now so bored with the information that they could hardly be bothered to go into it… but it they must… eye roll, head eye, minor seizure trying to access the deeply recessed esoteric fucking knowledge which has incrementally built up in their grey matter like feces impacted into the block colon.

**05/17/2021**

You and Madine were just here. Seriously good to see. You. I am glad it worked out to use us as a stop over. You an Aimee will need to come back. Get some couple time. Impossible. Betsy and I are pretty disconnected. Have you ever despaired about your career every day of your life. Trying to cope by working. By grounding myself. By changing and evolving. By becoming myself. By settling into myself. By no longer feeling so fucking conflicted about everything.

You an Aimee have so much on your plates have some sort of saintly wherewithal about you to keep your troop a running.

You want to become a deacon in the church. You want to discuss the lion’s front office and slowly, slowly become a competent cook.

So, yeah, I got real judgemental about carbs and given that I was not expending as much energy as I was previously, work on consuming fewer calories, especially empty calories which are often carbs. Candy, sweets, chips, corn chips especially, I love them so, but I was not longer commuting like French Voyager. My eat all, drink all, hustle off all excess calories was ultimately a stress coping mindset that was getting the job down, but running me at about 30 pounds overweight. This is a little frightening, considered even at 30 pounds overweight I was considered slim and fit.

I like the feel of my trimmer form, my slimmer physique. Its strange how a body changes over a life time. It has been nice to be in my 40s and have a positive change occur. I think what has been key to this is the stretching and really working my stress and tension and frustration conscientiously out of my muscles and common stress holding locations. The drill has been to follow the tension, follow the tightness: extend, contract, find connections and ways to resist and build tension. Staying within yourself. Focusing on the subtle body. Finding lines of engagement throughout your body. In your upraised wrist and forearm, down through your shoulder and upper back and along your hip and down your femur and through your ankle into your heel where you feel yourself planted and pushing up as your simultaneously feel your hand on your upraised wrist curl its fingers in and stretch the forearm with a twisting grip, the burn connects through the body to all of the parts you have been following and so you follow them again up and down the chain, holding what you can hold, releasing what you can release. Thinking about extending and contracting. Flexibility being strength and balance being strength. Being patient. Making the time. Greeting the morning. Having a defacto activity. What should I be doing right now? Par-core of stretching. On the porch. With a rope. In the tub. In door frames. On a chair. On the couch. Getting leg up on all manner of things. Railings. Dressers. Mantels. Finding baseline strength with planking and pushups only encourages more planking and pushups. Being more mindful about not overdoing it. Different mindset. Not about quantity, but frequency and comfort. My calisthenics have become much more stretching focus. Less about achieving some arbitrary quota of reps and more about getting into to certain positions with a certain degree of frequency. The idea being that strength follows flexibility and balance. And flexibility and balance amplify strength. Strength and performance have dominated my thinking about athletics for way too long. I’m over that conversation and much more focused on flexible and intuitive body maintenance, health and nourishment, and promoting these things in our culture— nuclear family, extended family, neighbors, etc.

I tried to show you something of my stretching and you didn’t ask a goddamn single follow up question. It’s like if uncle Paul had come to visit. We are all so stuck the fuck in our heads. Our worlds. Stuck in our worlds. Stuck in our fucking worlds. The artist does not need any other world. The artist must learn to pretend to care about other people’s worlds. These types. My family loves fucking types. Categorize. Analyze. Natural ability. Lots of talking. What does it all matter. I had very little support with basketball. I just went out and fucking did it.

Is it healthy that Madine seems to want to be out of the house constantly. And now Ceci is rebellious and in her moods. She is into appearances. Hair products and skin are products.

He father stirs the eggs over a low heat and is weirdly tetchy and argumentative to the facts that I state. Oh, yeah, you have to get this pan fairly hot. Well, this kind of omlette can’t get too hot. Oaky, why the aggressive tone. Is this guy fucking wound up like a top?

He analyzes my pan concedes that it has a couple of inches on his. He asks if wee have chives and white pepper. He’s not good at multi-tasking. His kids love it. He loves that is cheeseball little 4-year-old asks for white pepper. I am uncomfortable about how self-conscious he is about this whole thing.

“Children learn to see the world through the eyes of their caregivers,” Lis warns. “If parents are putting themselves down or are fearful or distrustful of others, they are likely to pass down these traits to their children.”

And you talk up how anxious you get before the races and you talk about it multiple times. And you ramble on about it. And I realize it is an emotional bowel movement and I am being asked to wipe your ass and I am forced to decide if I am up to the ask of wiping your ass or not. Should I just do and then ask you to wipe my ass too? Is that how this works.

I don’t trust you politics, your religion, your parenting style, your diet, you family digital culture, possession culture, consumption culture.

You spent a while breaking down the body types of your kids deciding who had more natural ability and what kind. And then emphasizing that they are all very unskilled. Very raw. Their athleticism is seemingly not being supported by the parents. Direct engagement. Camps. A hoop at home. A paved area to dribble etc. It feels like date puts a helluva lot of time and energy into his sport and developing his talents— “learning new skills”… that accomplish exactly what for your family? Burnish your self-esteem a little bit? What is your intention here? You are excited about this and need to share it with someone. The rock garden. You told me about the rock garden like three times. And the odd cat that taught you about it and what a gift it was for him to have the chance to share his gift with you. This was the real gift of this whole thing.

As he visibly struggles to maintain his conviction that this whole trip was worth it. He is so tired. He has hours to drive home. Back to the kids. The grind of meals and cleaning and laundry and screens and activities. He doesn’t know if one of his daughters is in choir. I know it is hard, but if it is important, if it is your responsibility you make yourself an expert at it. And if you have to sacrifice your preoccupation with Detroit sports and your obsession with your training and race results then there you go, there is a concrete sacrifice that you could make to free up time and wherewithal to be there mentally and emotionally and physically for your kids. You are the constant gardener.

I have abdicated a fair amount of this to betsy and I need to recalibrate. Many of my reasons for doing less of these things has to do with work responsibilities and the necessary time and energy I cordoned off to finally and definitely answer my vocational conundrum. The affects of not having this question definitely answered are corrosive. Especially in our capitalist society where so much identity one’s adult identity and role in society are all expected to be tied up in your career and the resources that you have at your disposal. Money in the abstract does not appeal to me, but money in the sense that it gives you access to any and all resources and offers you protection, support, and peace of mind, abstracting a lot of the pressures and tensions in life. The money will provide a dike from deeper despair. This is obviously not always true, despair can always sneak through, it is a very complicated and contingent creature.

Many of these issues are unsolvable. Much of what we achieve is in the tone that we set and the love tone we emanate. What do we leave in our wakes. What vide to we put off. If a couple of chords can change a room around then what do you do to a room. What are the unconscious seeds of your legacy. What might they be. What d you hoe that they are? What do you hope that they are not?

How’s the stretching going.

We are tense beings humans, in general, Whitmer’s perhaps moreso.

In my effort to conserve enery, lower calorie intact and cut down o the amount of time I spend on exercise (getting ready, warm-up, work-out, cool-down, showering), the periodic stretch sessions that I do throughout the day that have some light (resistance more than repition) strength training components.

I am feeling more limber than ever.

I think a lot of my stress release from not building back up can be attributed to my general hopeful outlook on things—

Despite ll the turmoil, I am home with the girls and we are set, all things being equal to comfortably tick along another 6 months without income. But the ticking continues….

I have been wearing my speed master most days recently. It seems a little silly to be sporting around the most expensive thing I own, but the symbolism has been earned I think and after looking at the scree all day it is kind of nice to look doen at the Matte analog display of my Speedmaster. And isn’t that the same view the Astronaughts had out on their space walks when they checked the time on their Speedmasters when they were floating above the earth? I also, actually use the chronograph function to time little “focus” bursts (as in, okay, 15 more minutes on this and then move on to something else, this is a means I often use to redouble my efforts when I feel my concentration is slipping. I often find that the 15 minutes turns into a bit more, something about giving myself a split goal or a tangible goal, objective, parameter to hold onto in that moment when I am floundering around is super helpful.)

I have no %$#@ing idea what is happening….I want to throw the computer out the window. Trying to become a littler bit more Zen about the shit you don’t know seems to be a big part of this gig. Your forced into this brutal feedback loop of grasping for what you do understand and starting to trace the connections back from there. I think this is ultimately where my experience with Chinese study comes into play— still to this day when I read Chinese, I have to read creatively, focusing on what I do know, sometimes in a sea of unknowns, or only hazily grasped tangibles, much less connotations. Knowledge is a strange thing and the way we know things. I have learned to know things many different ways. By sight. By sounds. By impression. Faith is a whole other sense of knowing. The doctrine of faith being a gift

The doctrine that faith is a gift is something that I shall put faith in. I have had a hard time in the past with feeling guilty about losing my faith and the chasm that that creates between my family and I. What the @#$% did I do? But if I am to truly accept the faith that your God is offering, then I too am subject to the … oh my god… I am so tired of talking about God within the context of why I don’t believe in your very specific God and set of traditions that I only hve a tenuous connection to. I am fine with this exhile. I have been searching for a more solid ground since leaving your plain and I have attempted crudely to moved about without ever really planting down a flag. Which was really only a hypothetical solution and one that entailed me just playing dumb a lot of the time. We are tense people and I feel like you make me more tense than less tense and thatn is too bad. I hope we can move past that someday, but for now that is the reality. And I want ot forgive you Dad and I have forgiven you Dad but still there is this distance and I don’t have to curse it. I rode the train out to the dam and sat their awhile and listen to the locusts scream in the late summer mug.

Hot personalities.

Nothing is decided.

Perparing to die to preparte to live.

Don’t want to be a prescriptive writer.

I desire to be an experiential writer.

Or that is a least one thesis I have put forward.

I don’t know exactly what I am doing, but I am working hard at it

John Henry as metaphor for my attempt to work.

Coding, writing, Chinese, family, body, middle-age, Manopause.

And that feels right. I am finding a way to work that works. I have worked in other ways and at times well in the other ways, but the overall arch of the effort was a bit tweaked. Something about this blast through mentality. This John Henry mania. I will show them, I will push through all this darkness to the light. I was trying to take the hard effort, head down hack through the mountain approach. John Henry makes it, but then he dies on the other side. His strength literally killed him, his capacity for effort doomed him to an early grave. You never hear much about John Henry’s kin in this scenario. Where were they? What of his widow? His children?

Here I am out in the desert.

It feels like the conversation has been completely tweaked. It seems all questions have a trigger in them. A trap door standing by. This divisive politics is apparently affective.

Hans,

Pistons

Midwest

We shall not go hungry.

Talk therapy- I can go Monday or Friday of next week.

You called me and went on and on about the Lions organization. I don’t care. I really don’t care. I think we find ourselves at very different places in our lives and very different people. I can appreciate you. I can love you. But we can stay distant. I am fine with that. I don’t think either of us really have enough time to put much into the relationship.

03/22/2021

My apologies for my part in the chasm that has crept in between us.

Sufficiently all fraught up in our own lives we lived past one another with ease.

Do dream of a better, more family friendly yearly schedule. My technological deep dive has been 100% motivated by reconfiguring my professional life.

It hasn’t been easy. Concurrently I have also experienced an unprecedented creative impulse to write. This writing explosion has evolved into a process that has spawned a bunch of poems, personal, letters and an elaborate warren of forking material depositories. I may not in fact be writing at all, but rather simply following some sort of nascent rodential instinct to brace up for an impending psychic winter of something.

At any rate the writing keeps surprising me. If you are reading this right now that is a solid sign that there is some flow. I don’t presume to have any idea what I am doing on the writing front, but I am trying my best to manage it and I am very grateful to at long last have a few personal letters to send out. Over the last several years it has been a goal of mine to write more personal letters, but the process always seemed kind of overwhelming, beyond me or any wherewithal I might have at any given moment. Somehow this new process has given me some ends around all of that inertia. Also, perhaps not the most efficient process, but I suppose that is part of the point as well. A letter is very different than a tweet and I think that is a good thing. And while there is certainly room for both—the letter and the tweet—is there time for both? The tweet certainly… easy, no problem, just slip one in here and one there. Easy. A letter though… the planning… maybe a little brainstorming… some calisthenics to … all of the procrastination that can go in…should I write it out by hand… should I type it. I could get the typewriter out…

Today I read up on RESTful APIs feeling stone over stone the mysteries of web-mastery realms. It is all very nerdy and I love it—truly. It engages my interest in language and structure and workflow design.

My weight has settled right around 190 lbs. Stretching and light calisthenics have really supplanted jogging as my baselines health maintenance practice. The stretching has really complemented my long hours of sitting or standing and a reduced carbohydrate diet is helping to reduce some of the excess flesh from my bones.

Stretching is a challenging practice, but one that found me at just the right time and has been in large part why this year has been so transformational.

Candida Monologue???

Commodity Monologue???

I have wanted to have longer thoughts.

I’ve been having more frequent long thoughts.

Letter writing has become a practice. A form a repetivie connection and reconnection. Ironically I have not sent any of the letters. , not because the content is overly confessional or I am afraid to send the text, but simply because there is no urgency. Time has collapsed. My sense of forward positions has ceased . There is only this process. This process holds together time. Contains time. Movement in time the illusion of remaining still.

WRITING IN 8:08

Losing myself in labriyths of ancient character based language and 21st century Japanese produced computer language. While simultaneously experiencing an explosion of creativity and connectivity with my body through ygoa and writing thanks to my new agile structure and process.

02/05/2021

Being at peace with music and feeling grateful for it. Peace that passeth understanding. Florida. Seeing Jurassic Park in the theater that too loud and too cold, and then fist fighting with my brother at the water park where our parents had trustingly dropped us off, he is egging me on and turning everything into some sort of embittered competition, he punishes me for his insecurity. I can’t stand his sneariness and am bewildered that he can be such an asshole even when we are supposed to be having such a fun time at a waterpark in Florida. Hans buys a multipack of *Spawn Comics* and I read them in the back of the van heading north feeling pretty stomach-

churning sick at certain parts. Swimming with the alligators. The pontoon driving tour guide whacking the side of the boat in a rehearsed gag that made all the tourists jump cause they thought a huge snake had just dropped onto the boat. Playing *King’s Quest* with my Grandmother. Eating shrimp fried in butter. Watching the Suns and the Bulls battle in the NBA finals out on the sun porch on their color TV.

10/23/2020

My brother is depressed. How can I help him?

Man is the sum total of some irreconcilable tension.

1/11/2021

My brother is so embedded in conservatism because he was never able to make the leap from the family fold. He clings to the conservative truth because he was too afraid to reach out beyond it. He ran home to Imammy and Daddy when the balancing act of finding a vocation on his own became too overwhelming. He sought financial and ideological support from a partner with the same level of commitment to his conservative vision of life, one very much patterned after his own parents. This seems to speak to a lack of creativity, a journeying on the path of least resistance. The fact that this desperate commitment is underpinned by a pious absolute rightness makes it a complicated position to approach. This act of desperation becomes lore as the embrace of right. The ultimate achievement. The ultimate success. The zero-sum win. Tired of not winning we reframed the issue as one in which we could not lose.

Please don’t waste my time with discussing the Lion’s organization. Who fucking cares? You are losing your goddamned mind. You are doing what you can do and I am doing what I can do. We need to stay kind. We need to stay positive. We are leading. We are teaching by example. We have committed to certain things and we have relinquished commitment to other things.

Perhaps we will find some aspect of closeness, but when? I was rather happy when You went off to college. My freshman year you were the one having the nervous breakdown and feeling suicidal, you were a senior

I am over caffeinated. Esme is shoving a super tangled metal slinky towards me- some kind of a metaphor there. Helena is knocking around my empty tea mug. Esme is saying, dad, dad, dad, wait, one second, dad, look, Helena is saying Daddy, Daddy and banging the tea wand against the metal thermos with a scraping metal on metal rap. I am over-caffienated and should break for lunch. I have spent the whole morning in writing mode trying to move towards my programming mind. Sometimes it is right there and I can just jump right in. Sometimes it is very far away and I have to spend the whole morning wandering back towards it. My simple conviction and simple commitment keep me from freaking the fuck out.

The quality and quantity of my wandering shall define my career.

My girls are good. My body is good. My mind feels good. We still have a least a six month reserve.

Time sometimes moves slowly and sometimes it suddenly begins to accelerate. I can feel something accelerating. Something approaching from far off. The SUBTLE mind is what I would like to understand more deeply. Just as my SUBTLE BODY seems to be more in reach. I want to find that SUBTLE mind. That stretching that leads to the pops and associates and connections. Finding that connection between all the parts of the brain. That’s interesting actually. Read Pete Egoscue as talking about the mind instead of the body.

Pursue personal music.

1/14/2021

Is the issue at hand you should feel bad because you don’t know what you would have done career wise without Aimee, or is the narrative that you have an incredible partner that answered that question for the both of you freeing you up tp answering a whole bunch of other questions and meet a bunch of other needs. Is it ideal. No it literally never is. Is it a disaster . No way. Iis it better than average absolutely. Is it the best possible child rearing situation ever in the history of mankind. That is a myth, but certainly a standard we can’t help bu adopt as a suicidal opponent. We set ourselves up for failure.

What is the question? Is it even a question? What is the issue. It is really all about how we frame the issues. This issue is the most important. No this one is. No this one is not in practice, but ideologically and so forth down the rabbit holes of our logical fallacies.

Becoming a writer is the hardest thing I have ever done. It has transformed me as a being. My body, my mind, my habits, my health- mental and physical.

11/18/2020

Shut your mouth, belly up, too much love, depressed? Buy something new. Shadows and light return to cycle through.

1/22/2021

When did you become such a fucking meathead? Your new home gym, intense cycling, fawning following of American football and sports talk radio and right wing politics. The government is not right wing enough for you though. Your heretofore political party is not right wing enough for you.

Religion is ultimately a PRACTICE catalyzed by faith.

What is religion to you? What is prayer to you? What happens after death to the vast majority of human beings who live and then die and never enter into the Catholic church?

If the election was a fraud, then where is the evidence. Why was every legal challenge so transparently insubstantial? Why did Donald Trump hold as rally on the 6th of January and then send the mob towards the capital? Why was he not immediately contrite and why did he condone the attack by telling the attackers that he loved them and that they were very special? Why did he say that the Corona Virus was just like the flu and that it would go away like a miracle? What does it mean that we are a nation of miracles. And if a black fly lands on a white head of hair on national television is it hilarious or kind of unsettling. How often do you listen to Rush Limbaugh? Do you think he is a kind and good hearted man? Do you think the way he talks about politics is constructive? What do you see as the role of the opposition party in politics? What is your definition of slander? What is the bible verse about bearing false witness.

Images of home gym.

Fat wife lifting weights in the basement with the low roof.

Cat’s litter box stinking to high heaven.

House going to shit.  
Dad off on some roid induced.

You are such a fucking meathead!

All man pain and animal achievement.

2/5/2021

Are you really an introvert or is that just your excuse to be lazy.

AM I judging you to make myself feel better.

I know you are just rying to hold it all together.

It can’t be easy.

Celebrate your family.

Iciclies are a symptom of heat lose.

That’s good that Madine is talking to people. Ideas are important and being able to talk about ideas is very important. As is being kind.

02/11/2021

“Washington Monument By Night”

* Carl Sandburg

1.

The stone goes straight.

A lean swimmer into night sky

Into half-moon mist

2.

Two trees are coal black.

This is a great white ghost between

It is cool to look at.

String men, strong women come here.

3.

Eight years is a long time

to be fighting all the time.

4.

The republic is a dream.

Nothing happens unless first a dream.

5.

The wind bit hard at Valley Forge one Christmas

Soldiers tied rags on their feet

Red footprints wrote on the snow…

… and stone shoots into stars here

… into half-moon mist tonight.

6.

Tongues wrangled dark at a man.

He buttoned his overcoat and stood alone.

In a snowstorm, red hollyberries, thoughts,

he stood alone.

Spirt of my silence I can hear you,

But I’m afraid to be near you.

And I don’t know where to begin.

And I don’t know where to begin.

Somewhere in the desert there’s a foreest,

And an acre before us

But I don’t know where to begin

But I don’t know where to begin.

Again I lost my strength completely,

Oh, be near me tired old mare

With the wind in her hair.

Amethyst and flowers on the table,

Is it real or a fable?

Well I suppose a friend is a friend

And we all know how this will end

Chimney swift that find me be my keeper,

Silhouette of the cedar

What is that song you sing for the dead?

What is that song you sing for the dead?

I see the signal searchlight strike me,

In the window of my room.

Well, I got nothing to prove.

Well. I got nothing to prove.

I forgive you mother, I can hear you

And I long to be near you

But every road leads to an end,

Yes, every road leads to an end

Your apparition passes through me,

In the willows and five red hens.

You’ll never see us again.

You’ll never see us again.

01/23/2021

Why are you such a sanctimonious meathead?

01/22/2021

The lies of Trump.

The lies of Lance Armstrong.

12/26/2020

If you were a farmer in a kinder garden

I’d compliment on your crops growing so strong.

12/17/2020

Throws a bean bag on the roof of the house in frustration when he gets smoked in cornhole by only more athletically gifted in-laws. In the fall tells me that the political diide between us and why we cdan’t talk about it is because we love each other so much. He cares about me too much. Which is why he told me to “bite my tongue and suck it up and a call to respect my mother followed by an implication that I did not appreciate the depths of her sacrifices and love for me.” Much like the January 6th attack on the Capitol building, this moment stands out to me as afn objectively lunatic moment in our family’s religious-political dynamic. On a feed that has already seen my sister’s Cambridge educated sister-in-law chased off for my family’s atrocious and insensitive reaction to the George Floyd killing and Black Lives Matter. Frachescka left with a pleasant promise to donate 5 lbs. in all of our names to BLM.

They flash forward a few months and my mother is calling for prayer for poor sick Right-to-life warrior and secular saint Rush Limbaugh. And then in the run up to the Vice-Presidential debate she posts a rambling diatribe on the diabolical nature of KH and how she represents the worst kind of darkness. My blood is boiling. I take a few breaths and simply request that we stick with the agreed upon “politics free zone idea” and the story is that I am so grateful for it! The family feed can’t turn into Fox News, which it has now with Tucker Carlson posts and “A lot of questions, not a lot of answers” sorts of tag lines. And Dad getting in an enthusiastic “Thank God for Great Americans like Tucker Carlson!”. The guard rails are off. I can’t say anything without picking a fight. I am the self-excluded. I have been trying to protect my IN and my OUT processes and paths and purposes. Your Tucker Carlso seems angry and sad. Is your Christ angry and sad.

I refuse to be your liberal whipping boy.

I choose not to be your liberal whipping boy.

I am a peace with my values, I am at peace with my path.

Your partnership and relationship and friendship and bond with Aimee is incredible. I marvel at you guys. I truly do. Two children have deeply split my psyche a couple of ways already, I cannot imagine the daily executive matrixes you two have to loop through. Hats off, my friend, hats off.

Or perhaps I am not deep enough, my liberal view too narrow.

Why do you seem so angry and insecure and threatened?

Are you enlightened? What does that mean for you’re your insight into the world as compared to someone like, say, me?

The way you politic is mean and unkind.

12/14/2020

Supported herself through PA school, built professional, high demand skillset career, has made 7 c-sections, works full time, willing to take on overtime and extra responsibilities to be a team player and build credibility of a leadership position by pitching in and learning the “business” thoroughly. But you’re having a hard time. You almost wanted to talk about it, but then you didn’t. You are her sidekick right? Or whatever arrangement the two of you have worked out.

Loving brother? Selling my toys. Making me “buy stock” in his gaming system. Nintendo’s flung at my head, basketballs flung at my head, Risk Boards flipped.

You were often such an asshole to me—making me cry and then covering up my mouth so that mom and dad wouldn’t hear, which would only freak me out more because I wouldn’t be able to breath between the crying and the hand smothering my airway. I do thank you for two wonderful lessons though provided to me by the shitty example that you set.

1. Sexual purity—however you want to frame this, but your enthusiasm for getting embroiled in sexual charged escapades. This was something that seem to really get going after college with you hooking up with younger girls. Connecting with them as a youth group leader, as a spiritual adviser, like those creepy well-groomed guys in college that would have girls up to their dorm rooms to pray. You creepy example really grossed me out and only deepened my guilt and discomfort towards sex. Certainly it remained a fascination and goal, but the whole conquest game that you seemed to get off on struck me as kind of sociopathic and pathetic. Why would you waste time going after a girl that you really weren’t interested in? I just couldn’t do it. That inauthenticity felt terrible, even if it got my lips kissed or my dick rubbed or whatever.
2. Money—you profligate spending and credit card blowing up ways convinced me that there must be a better way, like living within your budget and getting good at saving money and building up a reserve. Being more conservative about money was very helpful to me. Thank you.

And so did you convert to Catholicism to try and save face somehow. Seek a new flavor of redemption, one that you can throw your whole self into, catalyzed by a particular whole-hearted zeal by your acute failure and mental breakdown in Chicago. Mother’s path into medicine seemed to ride the rocket fuel of her shame at being a team mom, her doctorate was her redemption. Her committed, enduring marriage was her redemption, her 5 other kids and 19 grandchildren were her redemption. Her blessings have followed with force.

And Hans followed his father’s footsteps into becoming a Hausmann. Accepting the Hausman precepts as part of the gig:

1. Be handsome
2. Stay in great shape
3. Be up for taking care of as many children as your wife is willing to have
4. Be able to fix anything around the house
5. Be thrifty, good saver, good accountant

12/13/2020

Dear brother, I don’t feel like I did a good job listening to you. We were at a real moment. You were trying to say something. I ran over what you were saying with my own rationalization of the issue without really knowing what the issue was. I didn’t give you the proper environment to share you struggle or uncertainty or whatever you were wrestling with.

How much time do you spend a week reading about and watching sports or reading about and watching political coverage?

12/02/2020

I should have loved you more.

You narrow liberal world view.

Ignorance.

Self-exclusion

Selfishness.

Only care about my own children and only in as much as they represent an extension of myself.

I was at an incredibly low, stressed, beaten down, vulnerable, protean, addicted, unhealthy stressed, imploding states… and then to be told to “Bit my lip and suck it up and implying that I do not respect my mother or appreciate her.”

You guys made these rules and then you walk all over them and claim victim or go on the war path if anyone applies the rules in a way that you find inconvenient.

Politics goes from a basic difference in opinion to nastiness and derision very quickly in our family it feels like.

White man’s burden… I feel like you still kind of believe in the white man’s burden.

You seemed just completely bowled over by the fact that this Chinese man, who had had such a radically different set of lived experiences, could have such a different world view from you.

I feel like you kind of think you have it all figured out, even though you know you do not. Or you have some obligation to make up for all that you do not know with an aggressive conviction and absolute certainty about the things that you know or think you know. Which is a normal human defense mechanism I suppose, but it is still pretty annoying. Where is the balance. I am not saying going around feeling bad about all the things you do not know, or feeling like you can never speak to anything you don’t have a full grasp on… but your desperate attempt to move from certainty and speak with authority hamstring you from engaging in actual nourishing communication. You are regurgitating facts without only a tenuous awareness of your surroundings and the social and family dynamics. You disappoint me. You are cheesy and corny and too often your jokes are uneasy, perhaps too easy of a joke, obvious, but ultimately kind of meaningless, a distancing sort of humor, a are we laughing about the same thing here, for the same reason…

11/24/2020

Hans prays and he goes into that husky, super earnest Christian youth leader prayer voice that I have always found so fake, so false, so performative. Why so much performance at the moment when your being is the most raw. Addressing being itself. Address existence itself. There is nothing beyond God. The otherness of God is very strange to me…

Creepy ass, arrested development youth pastors. You know, God just sort of closed every other door except seminary. This was on you’re the back porch of your cabin with one of your dad’s seminary students. 20 years later I am still thinking about this woman and that delicate moment, that flex point where path can be both an admission of failure and a releasing of other paths while at the same time being a triumphant choice. Is triumphalism always and only just marketing?

2-20-2009

Dear Hans,

Can you feel it where you are?  Spring is coming in here. The land is shifting around.  Maybe not a permanent thaw yet, but the sun shines down.  It melts all the snow from three consecutive snowy mornings.  The new sun speaks to future times just as the snow woke me in the morning to the past.

I woke and looked out my window at the streets and the cars covered with snow. The big school uard beyond our apartment compound was covered too.  People moved through the snow at street level.  Beijing people all bundled up.

The sight sent my mind to snow country.  Snow country in my mind is Newberry.   Frozen in time, in photos and reamed memories that are what I return to when I return there in my mind.

The streets covered in snow in Beijing make me think of old photographs with rounded corners.  People in snow suits and hats with colored stripes and chimney smokes and kicking my boots off in wood shed entry way just off the laundry room at Grandmas.

It seems strange to have thirty lived years behind us.  Strange to have the old chapters of our lives be the stuff or photographs.

Nostalgia fell with the snow and I woke to find the whole world covered.

My birthday came and went and the new year turned over in transit from where I live now in China to where I lived before.  We boarded a train from Beijing in the evening- betsy, Becca Smith and Susan Golland- and traveled through the night.  We slept on bunks stacked three high as the train clicked station to station through the Chinese country side where lights are few.

In the morning we arrived in Xi’an.  The winter greyness of that city which threads itself through all of my lonesome winter memories of that place remains.  We stayed two days.  The sun never appeared.  Every hour was the same.  Noon was as animated as nine and three. After five it was dark.

We went up on the city wall at dusk.  Figures made of cloth stretched over wire frames glowing with lights inside of them were set up in scenes on the top of the south wall and around the south gate- decorations for the Chinese New Year.  There were scenes from Chinese fairy tales and Chinese history and there were dinosaurs and camels and an alien rock band and giant cartoonish insects.  The lights came on as the light in the perma-grey sky faded.  The power switched on and some of the illuminated figures which were automatons began to shift in sad semblances of real, animated motion.

And you came to Chicago from Michigan to watch the Pistons and the Bulls with me at the United Center. And the black athletes put on a show. And then we got a burger and had a beer at that place in Wicker Park you touched that black girl’s afro without her consent when you were waiting for the bathroom. And when she was offended you were like What? What?

I want a beer your annoying son yell on the bus, your annoying son yelled for a beer.

Uncle Billy bragging at the bank to Potter.

Accidently leaving his deposit in the news paper with the favorable headline about the Baileys. Potters inscrutable obfuscation. He has the money. He knows where the money is, but to press his advantage he calls in the bank examiner. George ultimately has the trust and love of his wife and his family and the community. A community that is grateful that he never left them and that believe he is a great man for being in their lives and showing them daily kindness and good will and good companionship and character over time.

02/23/2021

Esme’s brain scrambling rambling patters on. Psychadelic? Psychotic? Recorder riffs jar in from the living room. Betsy is just back from her late afternoon walk. My head is buzzing with caffeine and the white buzz of the forced air blower keeping us cozy in our third story walk up tree house on the lovely tree-lined Cuyler, two and a half blocks from the Irving Brownline stop, or just as close, not one, but two microbreweries. Our neighborhood encourages walking, rewards it. Trader Joes is just a jaunt down Lincoln. Jewel is up equidistant the other way. There’s a Mariano’s due north a mile at Lawrence. Took a Divvy there on Mother’s Day morning for some flowers and breakfast items, it was all very lovely even riding in the rain. The girls have definitely dampened the depth we’ve been able to dig into the many diverse flavors of the city. That said, doing so much more cooking at home has definitely taken us a couple of clicks deeper into the world of urban grocery stores. It is reassuring that I know several places where I can get like 100 different kids of Feta cheese.

07/14/2021

Writing, cycling, performance, vocation, aging, children. How do you push past that desperate tenor, that obsequious tone, slow time down- filter out the evil rounds, the barbarous ones. Lessons learned. Play and losing one’s ability to play

07/09/021

My brother I am lost to myself. I lost some materials.

28JULY 2019

First entry in the family log. Trying a new approach to both keep track of my family and friends. Stay connected to them. Organize my connection and engagement with them. Pull together my thoughts. Record my letters/notes etc. Remind myself of the treasure they are.

03/21/2022

Not practicing Christianity is tantamount to damning your children to hell and existential awfulness because they are separated from God.

If I believed that I would be a Christian like you. But I don’t. And in fact, who told you that? Is it the same people that are demanding 10% of your income? Cause that kind of language and that kind of transaction seems a little cohesive no?

As I struggle and work and attempt to transform you levey that I am working in vain. As I struggle with my existential task of can I become, can I get over the hump with this (and I can and I will and I have) and there you are on the side lines shrilly telling me that I am being willfully ignorant, damaging to my family, toiling in vain, your idealism has made you inhumane. Why would you try to kick me when I am down. When I am locked into a struggle. When I am struggling with many of the same things as you. You emphasis over and over again that I must bow to your worldview and it is disgusting to see such a loving religion deployed so hamfisted. You are truly an overstuffed piece of shit.