

## *4. Continuing Education*

During the spring and early summer of 1946, these are some of the news items I remember: Indonesia was fighting for its independence. I was entirely sympathetic and Sukarno kind of impressed me. There were proposals for German unity, predictably shot down by the Russians. Meanwhile, Russia was looting anything of value in East Germany, Austria and Hungary including entire factories, infrastructure, resources and state possessions. More than 30 years later Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union, "The Evil Empire". He was right, but that should have been realized and understood half a century earlier, rather than when he stated the obvious.

Meanwhile, there was a pogrom in Poland in July, where 26 Jews were murdered. China was in the throes of all out civil war and the people were suffering terribly. USA had tried to help and to mediate, but it was all but hopeless. Closer to home, there were massive ports and maritime strikes all over USA, with all kinds of disruptions and problems. I think the country was fortunate to have had a firm hand at the helm in the person of Truman. A lesser leader would have been stymied. For the first time, smoking was seriously considered a cancer risk in 1946, and lung cancer was six times more common among men than women, because women had only fairly recently started to puff on cigarettes like men.

As soon as the soil could be worked, I would put in an hour or two every day. As far as I remember, I planted peas, lettuce, carrots, kale and even two rows of potatoes. Lee laughed about my potatoes: "That is not economical!" he said. "No, \$ for \$ it is not; I know"; I told him; "but just you wait, and taste my home grown, home made chips, and you will know the difference. That is something you cannot buy for \$\$!" Lee hugged me, and agreed. Then I went to work on him about something else. In Lou Ann's garden, there were magnificent rhododendron bushes and magnolia trees. I couldn't get over how well they grew.

In front of our house, we had a long stretch of empty lawn, and then along the sidewalk, the white picket fence, which wasn't very high, four feet perhaps. Right at the corner of the lot, there was an enormous elm tree, and on the corner of our driveway, a similar elm of about the same size and age. These trees were majestic and very tall, but in between, there was nothing. I took Lee by the hand and walked over between the two elms, and I said to him: "Now, consider yourself in Lou Ann's garden, down by the birdbath facing towards the neighbours on that side. What would you be facing, right now, at this time of year?"

"You mean those bushes with all the big purple flowers?"

"Exactly my love; rhododendrons, one of the most beautiful flowers in any garden or park at this time of year!"

"Hmm; this is what you would like here between the trees?"

"I would love that, but only if you could live with it. It would in due course give us some degree of privacy. We have none now, you will agree."

"This is true. That was how all these lots were laid out, and most people just left it like that, but of course by now, quite a few houses have started to plant shrubs and small trees along their fences. But tell me now, aren't rhododendrons very expensive?"

“Yes, they probably are most of the time, but just this week, there is a store advertising potted nursery stock at senselessly low prices, and in two colours.”

That was all it took to convince my sweetheart. He took me by the hand, and we drove straight to the market I told him about. I would have been happy with two pots, but Lee bought no less than 8! I remember it made quite an impression on me, that something I thought of as valuable and very desirable, could be offered at such a low cost; the American economy at work. We got 4 of the usual lilac-purple colour, and 4 in a new lovely rosy hue I had never seen before.

I had not told Lee these plants need special soil, decomposed leaves and black muck, but we had enough of that at a spot behind the house, where raked leaves had been dumped for many years, where the drainage was not good, and the ground soggy and obviously acidic. Lee happily helped me haul loads of wheelbarrows of that black muck and those little bushes thrived in the semi shade of the big elms. Every fall, we mulched them with fallen leaves, and they grew very contentedly and bloomed every spring. Then a neighbour offered us several small forsythia plants, I planted along our driveway, and colour had truly made an entry in the Prentice garden.

During the winter and spring I worked very hard and very determinedly at my high school studies. Lee helped me to the best of his ability, and even Susan chipped in on some subjects. I had found some college level text books on a few subjects second hand very inexpensive, and since I am naturally a fast reader, I was able to make good use of that extra input, as it were. The exam was late May and early June, and I was going to be ready.

In April, I think it was, the parts plant where Lee worked, decided to send Lee and his immediate superior on a two week quality control seminar. Lee was very pleased and happy, they were showing so much confidence in a young fellow like him. It did not surprise me in the least. I knew, Lee was exceptionally mature and level headed for his age. He was self-disciplined and dedicated, and his common sense never ceased to impress me. In a number of ways, he reminded me a lot about my adored father, and I couldn't help telling him that on occasion.

I asked Lee, if it was all right with him, Max and I would go and stay with Lou Ann and his mother for the two weeks, and he thought that was a great idea. I actually loved to spend time with them. Lou Ann was a lot of fun. She was a great story teller, and she and Lee's mum got along so well, and kind of brought out the best in each other. I looked forward to two very entertaining weeks.

I knew I was not going to be seeing my dear Reverend for the two weeks Lee was away, because it was too far to walk from Lou Ann's, so I spent more time there in the weeks prior. I remember, at that particular time, we got into a very interesting conversation about the existence of God and other reverential subjects. Reverend Jennings was someone of great tolerance and lack of prejudice. When we came to talk about the subject of the existence of God, he said: “I never tell people, parishioners or otherwise, that they must believe and accept God's existence. I tell them, I will give you excellent reasons why you should, but you must choose to do so yourself. I will never make that decision for you, you

must do it!”

I liked that very much, it impressed me and I always kept it in mind. Jennings said: “You know, in science, there is a lot of talk about the fossil record, which it is claimed, proves our evolutionary origin and so on. But even Darwin admitted, there are major gaps in the fossil record and, as it were, “missing links” and what not. I have another piece to add to that puzzle. Consider the other primates, chimps, oranges and gorillas. I will not dispute there are great physical similarities between them and us. The chimps in particular are very, very close to us in numerous details, and yet, we are miles and miles apart. Why not accept, for example, that God decided to use chimps as the raw material, from which he fashioned humanity. That explains why we are so physically similar, but in every other respect so very far apart, and why that gap never will be bridged.”

I found that argument so powerful, I was stunned. I had never heard it before, and I would never argue against it. Jennings went on: “What sets us apart is the mind and the spirit. Nature functions instinctively. Animals, even primates do not choose anything. They are moved and motivated by their instinct. When God created humanity, he took away the instinct, and obliged us to think and to choose. We must choose whatever we do at all times, and we must think; that is God’s demand of us. In so doing, God gave us limitless horizons, but he also enjoined us to use our powers gracefully, benevolently, with the utmost patience and generosity. Creation should be seen and appreciated, not so much as something physical, but as God’s turning of our minds, hearts and spirit. The physical part took care of itself over tens of thousands of generations, but with one stroke, God created humanity, out of existing nature, by taking away our instinct, and giving us the human mind. Only God could do that, and the theories of evolution will never explain it. At the same time, we have to accept, we are God’s creation “of nature”. We are God’s chosen exaltation out of the raw material that is nature. Our physical roots and beings are all of nature. We need to respect and accept that. Our minds, spirit and feelings are God’s creation.”

“That is beautiful”, I said: “I love the way you explain it. Who can argue with that ?” Then I thought about it for a minute, and I said something like: “So, the story of creation and Adam and Eve in paradise is kind of a fairy tale ?”

“Yes, it is folkloric. In fact, all of the Old Testament is folklore. These are the fables and tales of early church fathers and prelates, spun and built to help try explain, what God did and how he created humanity. I would have preferred, if they would have stuck closer to what really happened, but that may not have been so easy several thousand years ago.”

“What about the New Testament; do you agree, that is factual ?”

“Yes, just about all, except for the virgin birth. That part is fiction, obviously.”

“So creation, the kind of watershed, when God took away our simple instincts, and “improved” us with minds and spirits, and the potential, I hope and assume, for grace and goodness; that probably occurred much further back in time, than you would assume from the stories in the Old Testament ?”

“Yes absolutely, perhaps 20.000 or 40.000 generations ago; that is to say 100.000 to 200.000 years ago. And of course, it wound itself through numerous twists and turns. You know, for example, that Europe, and presumably other parts of the old world, was

populated with a human species referred to as Neanderthals. Then out of nowhere, perhaps the Middle East, perhaps the Indian subcontinent, perhaps Africa, no one seems to know for sure, the present dominant species, we know of as Cro-Magnon, shows up and takes over the world. I believe they mixed, reasonably peacefully, and that the Cro-Magnon genes won out. That explains the disappearance of the Neanderthals.”

“But how did we end up looking quite different from other primates ?”

“Once our given mind replaced our old instincts, the life we chose to pursue slowly and certainly changed our physique and appearance. We lost the use of our toes, which at one time were as dextrous as our fingers. We lost our fur, for the most part, and our heads grew, to accommodate the evolving brain. All of these changes can be traced straight back to our choice of life, as opposed to the instinctual motivation, we used to follow. Then, within the last few hundred generations, we started to use garments and footwear. That made it possible to inhabit any point on the planet we chose and where we could feed ourselves.”

These were subjects we discussed in my childhood home, and we had no comparatively simple answers like this. I liked Jennings’ faith in God’s creation and I have never found any scientific explanation, that is any more convincing. Jennings had another strong argument for God’s omnipotence. He told me to consider the universe. “Humanity will never comprehend the beginning or the end or the extent of the universe”, he said; “that is for God alone to know. It will always remain beyond our given mind to grasp, and that is good, because it will and it should always remind us of our rightful place in the scheme of things.”

On my next visit with Jennings, we came to talk about church history, specifically the reformation and its effect historically. I remember Jennings saying something to the effect, we all owe the catholic church a great deal, for its defence of our world and civilization through centuries, for spreading Christianity far and wide and for all the social services the church alone provided for many centuries. Today, that is largely forgotten. Through the tumultuous middle ages, the catholic church stood as a pillar of strength and stability, coordinating and imploring the defence against marauding Ottomans, Vikings, Magyars and others.

I remember Jennings saying, two fundamental mistakes sooner or later would destroy the catholic church unless they are changed. The first is the doctrinaire catechism, which no sane individual today can take seriously. It is absurdly ridiculous. The other, of course, is the preposterously outdated celibacy. An intelligently conducted synod could change and reform the catholic church in a single year, but the leadership is lacking.

Specifically about the reformation, Jennings observed how primitive we were just 400/500 years ago, that we had to engage in vicious, violent wars, just to agree to disagree about whether we wanted to be Catholics or protestants. It is important to keep in mind, he said, it is only 20 to 25 generations ago, we fought over that, as if it was the most important thing in the world. Note as well, he said, this is where the Islamic faith is at present. Two branches, Shiite and Sunni are killing each other over some triviality, we can barely comprehend.

The reformation was very important for a number of reasons. It is inconceivable we would have had the Enlightenment without it, and that was critically important for all of Europe and subsequently all of the world. Secondly, the countries that pushed the Catholic church aside 400 odd years ago, were the ones that grew and prospered and were the first to benefit from the Industrial Revolution. Those countries, that rigidly stuck to the Catholic church particularly Poland, Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal missed out on so much of that development, or caught up with it so much later, it materially affected their standard of living literally for centuries. The fact that USA largely was founded by people adhering to protestant churches and denominations, was of the utmost importance for the establishment and development of the country. Had USA been founded by Catholics, the country might look more like Argentina or Venezuela today.

The wisdom, knowledge and cultural history I received from Reverend Jennings was priceless to me. I do not know where I would have been without it.

It was strange to take leave of my precious sweetheart and husband even though only for two weeks. We had, so far, never been apart for even a day and I felt so dependent on him in every way. I don't really know why that should have been, because I was, after all, quite resourceful on my own, and I had prevailed in challenges to my survival, far exceeding, what nearly any girl my age ever had to deal with. I think it was because Lee was such a sweet and lovable guy, whom I adored so much, that I did not want to be without him, even for just a day, let alone two weeks, but also because I was still so young.

Lee dropped us off at Lou Ann's on his way to work. They were going to leave that morning and drive to Wichita, where the seminar was being held. Lee was actually as reluctant to be without me for the two weeks. He had even tried to figure out if he could take me along, but that would not have been workable. It was much too early for the ladies to be up and about, so I made myself comfortable in the large kitchen with the two housekeepers. The senior of the two, Agnes, was originally from Georgia. She was probably in her late 50's, but very energetic and very much in charge. I had no problem getting her to tell me stories of her life, which had not been easy, and also hilarious recollections of life in KC in the 1920's and 30's. KC was the popular term for Kansas City.

Agnes was a very astute woman. It didn't take me too long in USA to appreciate, that black women, particularly older women, often were more naturally perceptive and astute, than their white counterparts. Agnes also asked me some more about my background and history. She already knew some, but wanted to know more. The fact that the Russians had raped every human female they could get their hands on, and subsequently murdered millions, didn't seem to surprise her greatly. She seemed to take a "men are men" attitude to that, and "what else is new?" Deep down, I don't think Agnes had a very high opinion of men, regardless of colour, creed or ethnicity, and much later, when I knew her much better, I determined, the men she held in the greatest contempt of all, were blacks pursuing or lusting for white girls or women.

That morning, she was interested in me. I think she said: "So you are 19 are you?" She knew full well I was 19, to her anyway: "Yes Agnes, I was born in 1926." I don't think she really believed me, but she couldn't prove or disprove that either way. I went on: "You think I look older?"

"You sure you are 19 ?, I have you more like 16 or 17."

"I will take that as a compliment!"

She mumbled something, then she wanted to know more about what happened to me before Lee caught up with me. I told her how Inga had led me out of the Russian zone of Berlin, but that wasn't really what she was after. She wanted to know, what the Russians had done to me personally. I told her, they had murdered the 3 remaining members of my family, and that it was upsetting for me to talk about. She would have liked to know more, but realized she wasn't going to get anymore out of me. I didn't hold it against her, that she was inquisitive. After all, she would tell me anything I asked her about.

Lou Ann and Lee's mum couldn't have been happier to have me there for the two weeks. We talked and talked about anything and everything. They were so happy I was interested in gardening, and loved to hear about what Lee and I were doing. Then, I had to tell them about our garden at Grunerhof, and I told them about our friends who moved to Argentina to escape from Hitler and what they viewed as certain war. They were also very interested to know about our forest, the lake, the brown coal pits, our little railway and everything else about my childhood home. It warmed my heart, they showed such interest. I nearly had to tear myself away to do my studies.

Already that first night alone in bed, I missed my lover terribly. I had had forebodings, it was going to be a hardship, but it was worse than I had imagined. I had no idea how dependent I had become on Lee's warm and loving body, and what we did for each other, when we embraced and made love. It was as if I was totally addicted to Lee sensually and erotically. I knew we both responded to each other like an eruption of lust, and I could never keep my hands off him, whenever he was without clothes, in the shower or in bed. How had I become such a little sexpot I wondered. I never previously acted anything like that, and I had to believe, it was Lee who caused me to be like a minor nymphomaniac.

One of Lee's bosses was a long winded older man. Occasionally, he would call Lee in the evening and talk to him at length about some relatively trivial business matter, and Lee being ever polite and patient, would listen and respond, yes, no or maybe as was needed. One night, perhaps around nine, he called, and I knew that was going to drag on for at least an hour or more. I was already hot to trot, and had had my mind set on a nice early shower and lots of love play with my favourite man. So, I started to tease Lee, while he was on the phone, standing by a chest of drawers. First of all I undressed and just kept one of his shirts on, but open. I knew, that always did a job on him. Then I really started to tease him. I stripped him and caressed him. I ran the back of my hands and nails gently up and down his legs. I fondled his lovely muscular hind quarters. I teased his strong, flat belly, but I never touched his beautiful dick, just teased around it over and over. The poor boy was aching for

sex, and clearly was starting to say no and yes at the wrong time. The old geezer finally gave up on him, and Lee immediately chased me all over the house. He caught me in the kitchen, and I got the banging of my life on the kitchen floor, with Max watching us with some degree of interest. It was that kind of life we had together, which caused me to suffer being alone, and aching for his touch and moving presence.

The next day Lee called me after supper and told me, he was suffering like I was, and that they had decided to come home for the week-end, since it wasn't that far, and there was nothing going on for the two days. I was so relieved. He picked me up late Friday night and we went straight home to bed. I don't think we got to sleep until 2 or 3 in the morning. What a relief.

The next week, Lou Ann told me she had some contact with the Red Cross and suggested I should give her the full names of the Ulrichs and any knowledge or recollection I might have about where in Argentina they might have settled. That was kind of her, and together we wrote it down, because I had nothing in writing and it all had to be from memory. I did in fact remember some localities they had mentioned in correspondence, and Lou Ann was confident, they could be located sooner or later. It would certainly take time, but she was quite sure, we would find them.

Late that week Clarence came for dinner, and it was very festive. Clarence regaled us with stories from Berlin in the mid 1920's, where he had been with his parents at least a couple of times, and early 1930's in Paris as well. He told us about the cabarets in Berlin and the boisterous life he witnessed, the frenzied entertainment and the carefree working girls, even mother/daughter teams, and all with a gloss of decadence and cynicism.

Paris in the 1930's might have been more down to earth, but no less entertaining. Beauty contests were staged some years without clothes, and very popular. The expatriate American dancer Josephine Baker was a sensation appearing nightly "attired" with a few bananas loosely distributed around her waist and nothing else. Paris was, much like Kansas City, a heaven for hedonistic and freedom loving Americans during that decade, and lots of Americans resided in Paris for great length of time.

Clarence had brought with him invitations to the opening of a show of regional American painters at the magnificent art museum in the city. Lou Ann and Lee's mum got one invitation for two, and I got one for two visitors, but already then, I had a suspicion, Lee would beg to be excused. I knew, I might be able to drag him along for just the two of us, but a public event with many people present, no sir, that was not his cup of tea. Either I would have to go with Lou Ann and Lee's mum, or find someone else. Anyway, there was plenty of time, and I would think of a solution.

It was getting close to my high school exam, and I was doing trial runs using collections of old exam questions, over seen by both Lee and Susan. Their concern for my success was very generous and encouraging, and I was able to perform with great confidence. The outcome was very good. Mine were among the top scores in nearly every subject. Susan

made us a lovely dinner to celebrate, and she said to me: “Renata, you are set for a great career in whatever you choose. You have the ambitions and the moxie to do anything!” So there, that reminded me of something my grandfather used to say: “If you have the ability, you also have the duty!”

Lee loved touring all over the country side in our trusty little pick-up truck, but we had not really had much time to indulge in that until my exam was over and done with, and Lee promised me, we were going to make up for lost time. There are a lot of rivers around the city, and attractive landscapes to explore, places to go hiking and swimming in summer, and even camping in due course.

The first part of Lee’s haunts I remember, was around Platte River just north of the city. By now it is undoubtedly entirely privately owned, besides the Clay County Park and the Trimble Lake, but in those days, there were many places, where you could go hiking along the shore. There were abandoned farms and homesteads, small forests, thickets and just open land, where you easily could lose sight of other people. Lee knew places along the lake, where he had gone with his dad and Susan, when they were kids, and where you safely could go skinny dipping, particularly since we had Max with us to alert us to anyone intruding on our privacy.

It was delightful, and that first summer, we stuck in particular to an abandoned property with a farm house, that looked like it had been taken out of a Wyeth painting. At the foot of an overgrown field, there was a thicket with a lot of bushes, but once you made your way through the brambles and cane bakes, there was a lovely and entirely private spot, with a small finally gravelled beach along the lake. That became our favourite hang out that summer, where we swam and frolicked, took the sun, picnicked and tried earnestly to conceive a baby, but however hard we tried, that part did not work out. Other than that it was heavenly.

Max also went in the water with us, and on occasion, we took the opportunity to soap him there. That worked out perfectly. Lee took a picture of me there with my arms around Max, and both of us covered in suds and nothing else. He loved that picture so much, he had it enlarged to something like 7” x 11”, framed and he put it up in the bedroom. Some time in august, we insisted Susan and her family come with us for a picnic there. We each brought various foods, which was enjoyable, because they had their specialties, and we had some others. The guys also took special beers, and we brought freshly home baked bread, which they all loved. It was a perfect day. We even, for a long time, played some kind of ball game in the water, and finally made our way home late in the day. Then a major thunderstorm blew up, but we were safely in our cars, and it just slowed us down for a while.

Besides everything else, Lou Ann’s husband had left her, he had for many years owned a somewhat ramshackle beach house outside Pensacola, Florida. It had on more than a couple of occasions over the years been damaged by hurricanes, but always patched up enough so it could be used for a few weeks or even months. Lou Ann called it the “beach shack”, but it was much more than that. Certainly, it was rustic, but also cozy and spacious,



and who cared anyway. In summer, at a place like that, you wanted to be in the water or on the beach all day long.

Lou Ann insisted we come and spend a week there in July, which Lee agreed to with a degree of reluctance, because it is a long drive from KC, and remember, the interstate highway system did not exist in the 1940's. The roads were indeed primitive in parts, long, rough and very dusty. We blew tires both coming and going, but we survived. Lee was an expert at dealing with things like that, though he cursed a bit under his breath on at least one occasion.

Pensacola was amazing and the beach shack was delightful. It had a large patio in back facing the beach, ringed with flowering bushes, where we ate most meals. The beach was heavenly and the water crystal clear. I felt like a child again, even though I was obliged to wear a swimsuit there. I could not help myself collecting sea shells, of which there were many, and haul them back with us. Lee took me on a drive some distance, and we hiked some more after that. There we were utterly alone and could skinny dip to our hearts content. I was totally serene, in love and I finally felt Prussia ebbing away from my mind, being replaced by all these new realities, new life, new culture and a reborn future.

Before we got started on the summer living, the memorable event of the season was the exhibition of the regional painters, we had been invited to by Clarence. It took place some time in June, and as expected my dear husband pleaded to be excused. He claimed the "museum crowd tended to be pompous and pretentious", and he said, he wasn't very comfortable in that company. In all fairness to Lee, I could sympathize with that, but that prospect did not bother me greatly. I looked upon anyone pompous and pretentious as a source of amusement and entertainment for myself, and whatever they might think of me, left me entirely unconcerned.

I am sure there was another reason as well. Lee wanted to attend some sports event, probably football, which he actually wanted me to come along for also, but that left me as uninterested, as he was in the museum, so we agreed to disagree for that day. Then it came to my mind, I would try to let it slip in conversation with my dear Jennings, that I had been invited, and if by any chance he should show the slightest interest, I would encourage him to the best of my ability. That worked out much as intended. Jennings was happy to hear I had been invited, and he told me, he intended to see this exhibit at a later date, since it was going to be open for about ten weeks. I immediately asked, if we couldn't go together, since Lee was not coming with me. He was a bit taken aback, but to my delight, after a minute, he said: "Why not. We should have a great time!"; and indeed we did.

So, on the day, a Saturday if I remember correctly, Lee dropped me off at Jennings' house, with the remark: "Are you sure the good Jennings does not want to adopt you?"

"No, I am not sure, but I doubt it. You already did!"

"I did?"

"Yes, when you married this pitiful little orphan last year."

"Oh, I forgot; so I have nothing to worry about then?"

"No, I don't think so. The orphan loves and adores you, as you might know."

After that we dissolved into laughter and kissed tenderly.  
“I will go and see this exhibition later, if you think I should. Then you can be my guide.”  
“I hope it will turn out to be so good, that you should come.”  
And with that Lee went off to his football game.

Jennings and I went to the museum by taxi. He did not drive and did not keep a car. The museum was a revelation. I could not have imagined such a magnificent collection with priceless art from so many of the greatest painters in history. I fell in love with that place instantly. To me, it ranks with some of the very best museums in all of the Western Hemisphere.

I can't specifically remember the actual title of the exhibition, but it was concerned with, what was known as the Regionalist Painters in America; painters who aspired towards art, that was uniquely American, realistic and naturalistic. Personally, I have over the years come to view this school as quite similar to contemporary social realists, such as for example many painters and sculptors in Scandinavia from that same epoch. Today, this style and school of painting is looked upon as kind of provincial and mediocre, but it will have its renaissance, of that I am certain. Apart from being great art in its own right, this American social realism, is an artistic time capsule, that will live and be appreciated by future generations, both nationally and world wide.

There were several painters represented, but only one really, for me, stood out, Missouri's own Thomas Hart Benton. As much of a social realist as he was, Benton was also well grounded in classical art and drew extensive inspiration from painters such as El Greco, which is quite discernible in some of his work.

I took an immediate liking to Benton's work, and I have remained an admirer ever since. General Douglas MacArthur's famous saying “You are remembered for the rules you break” applied very much to Benton. He was outspoken and righteous and he was very dedicated and hard working. Later in life, he and Harry Truman became close friends; no surprise considering their similarity in character.

Openings of exhibitions of art are in fact often not such a great time to actually view the art. They are much more of a social occasion, and it is easier, indeed preferable to study the exhibit some quiet day, when there are no crowds. Lee had been so right, when he declined to come to the opening. In the event, I did behave gracefully, and remained with Clarence for quite a while, which he encouraged me to do. Nubile young females are much favoured on occasions like that, and it seemed I fitted that label. Jennings soon met up with many friends, who evidently were delighted to find him there.

Anyway, I wanted to see the art as well, and Lou Ann showed up just at a good time and helped extract me from the PR functions I had gotten stuck with. Lee's mum had decided not to come. She had only a limited interest in art. Lou Ann also liked Benton, and was actually the one who initially introduced me to his work. I found his “regional social realism” very appealing and it reminded me distinctly of something I had seen in Oslo, Norway on that wonderful vacation with my parents, when I was around ten years old.

Then we came upon Benton's magnificent "Susanna and the Elders", which took my breath away. To this date, I personally consider this the most interesting, artistic and splendid painting, ever done in USA. It had been painted just 8 years prior, and had upset a number of puritanical mid-Westerners at the time. For example, a local commentator in St. Louis was quoted to have declared this painting to be "lewd, immoral, obscene, lascivious, degrading, an insult to womanhood, and the lowest expression of pure filth"! And all I could see was pure beauty, transcendental knowledge and expression of humanity of the highest order! Oh well.

The Old Testament has been one of humanity's greatest sources of subjects for artistic rendition for upwards of a millennium, and the story about Susanna and the Elders one, if not the, all time favourite, because the story is sexy, the woman involved apparently beautiful and nude, the tale is readily believable and the outcome and the moral is popular. You can't ask for much more than that. The number of paintings done on this subject would fill a large museum. Many painters even produced several versions of this story. Rubens and his studio alone painted some Susanna's.

According to the biblical story, Susanna was spied upon by two old lechers "elders", while bathing. They pestered her for sex, which she bluntly refused. Subsequently they sought to blackmail her, and accused her of criminal immorality. She would have been condemned, but the elders were then cross examined, found to have been lying and blackmailing, and they were then convicted. End of story.

The classical painter, who rendered the best and most factual rendition of this story, was the then 17 year old Artemisia Gentileschi, and she painted a second and also very good version 12 years later, the first in 1610 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1622. These paintings are magnificent, and 400 years later one is astonished at the accomplishment of this young girl. She deserves to be much better known and appreciated.

What has always amazed me, is the number of classical painters, who took it upon themselves, to paint something, which does not follow the story factually, but in many cases portray Susanna as anything but virtuous. Specifically, many painters show her as either not being rejecting at all, or at the very least, quite prepared to listen to and consider the elder's proposals. Others show her as, something like, slightly reluctant, and yet others as if engaged in very civilized negotiations about what is going to happen. None of that fits the biblical story, unless there are other translations making it possible.

A few painters, Michelino, Allori and Millet have chosen to paint a rape scene. That does not fit the biblical story either. A Hungarian painter, Gyula Tornai, produced one painting, where the "elders" in fact are a couple man and woman, making indecent proposals; and yet others show Susanna as quite welcoming to the extent at least one of the elders fondling her bare breast, another painting has both men touching her, and so on. In all these cases, the painters were men. I can't help sense wishful thinking on the part of these artists, straying so far from the narrative.

To fully appreciate Benton's wonderful Susanna, I devoted some time over the years to

study the background, as I have indicated here, and what evidently shocked some of the public, and probably still does to this date, was so obviously, to find one of their own depicted just as the original biblical Susanna. Here she is, looking every bit like a young woman from the mid-West with her red finger nails, contemporary hair style and hat, high heeled shoes, and the two elders straight out of the 1930's with a typical little village church in the background and an old car. Of course, the whole scene is very structured and quite artificial, but so are most Susanna paintings. That does not detract from the story at all. In addition, the model is realistically chosen, not a seductive teenager, but an unadorned, healthy 30 year old, you might encounter in any workplace. She is fit and sound, believable and delightfully nude. Today this painting hangs in San Francisco, but is easy to find on the internet.

Benton's other allegorical nude painting "Persephone" was at this show as well, and that painting remains in the museum in Kansas City. I noticed already at this exhibition, so many people avoided these paintings, either rushing past them, or walking as far away from them as possible, and even then averting any sight of them. I mentioned that to Lou Ann and she chuckled.

"Renata, you will notice, many Americans have a morbid fear of the naked human body. There are even people, who are afraid of looking at their body in private!", she said. And I came to understand, she was right. That was in 1946, and things have improved a little since, but there are still very few nude paintings in American museums to this very date, and that gives a peculiar impression of cultural immaturity.

It had been a momentous event for me, and I promised myself many more visits to that lovely museum in the years to come. Lou Ann most gracefully offered us lifts home, and that gave me time to prepare a nice supper for my husband. I also greatly enjoyed to see Jennings surrounded by many friends, who evidently had not expected to see him there. We left him very happy at his doorstep, and when we reached our little house Lou Ann was delighted to see our new fruit trees, the rhododendron bushes and my vegetable patch. She stayed and chatted while I cooked, and she told me, she was ever so happy Lee had found me. She said something like: "He deserved more than some Ozark hillbilly, and I was always afraid, that was what he would have ended up with. Every time I think of how Reverend Jennings managed to finagle you out of Berlin, I have to admire that man. How are you and Lee getting along?"

"Heavenly, I think, at least for my part. Lee gives me the impression, he feels much the same. Of course, he would like me to go the football games with him, but I find it so violent and disagreeable. Do you think I should make more of an effort?"

"No, absolutely not. I don't like it either. I always refused to go. Baseball, I didn't mind."

"Me too. We even played something resembling that as kids."

"Tell him, you will meet him half way, doing the baseball, but not the other."

"Yeah, I think we are working towards that."

Just around that time Lee came home happily surprised to find us there, but otherwise not in a very good mood. His team had lost, and he was very dissatisfied with their overall performance. Lou Ann and I found it difficult to take that very seriously, and tried to cheer him up. It was on that occasion, she insisted we take a week and spend with her in the beach

shack in Pensacola. Lee was non-committal at the time, but I, of course, was very interested. It was only after Lou Ann went home for supper, Lee told me, it would be an arduous trek to get there, but he eventually relented.

Over our supper, I told Lee all about my experiences and how I had fallen in love with Benton's art. I insisted we had to visit the exhibition together on a quiet day, when we could really delve into the finer details and contemplate everything in peace. To my surprise, Lee actually knew of Benton and told me he was a major painter of murals all over the country. He said: "Dad was a supporter of Benton and showed me many of his murals over the years. Dad also admired him, because he is courageous, and not afraid of speaking his mind."

Lee's dad had left a large collection of books on many subjects, which no one paid much attention to, except just for occasional reference purposes. Lee had read nearly everything there was and most books more than once, so he knew the collection and the subjects well and was able to suggest particular topics, he thought I might find interesting. One of these was American utopianism as it blossomed during the previous century. In particular, he suggested a couple of books about the Oneida Community, he thought I might find interesting. I read them and re-read them during the fall and I was fascinated. I had never heard of anything as adventurous and daring in Europe, and I felt a great deal of sympathy for these people, who made such a courageous effort to try re-arrange human lives and our destiny.

Of all the utopian experiments during the half century 1850-1900, Oneida was almost certainly the most radical and the most interesting. For about some 30 years, they managed to live without pair coupling, but in solid consonance and harmony, far exceeding that, which would be possible among a similar number of pair coupled human beings. The idea, that hundreds of people in fact, can live together like that with unhindered and happy sexual access to each other, is and indeed should be very attractive to any normal individual, but what particularly struck me as exciting, was the evident state of compatibility, mutual sympathy and friendship, that reigned at this amazing community. The concept and ideas of Oneida captivated me, and I have read and collected anything I could find about it ever since.

Lee told me, his dad likewise was very interested in everything about this community and studied all about it he could find. He said, among the reasons, it did not survive as a free-loving, non-coupled community, was because of a lack of internal democracy, and because women were not treated as complete equals of men. There were other issues as well, but not as important. It was too bad, because they got so much right, and could conceivably have continued to grow and flourish. Most important for the future, Lee felt, was the fact, Oneida had proved, women and men can live very, very happily communally, completely avoiding compulsory pair coupling.

"But wouldn't there be serious jealousy quite regularly ?", I asked.

"Dad's idea on that, was that jealousy is a matter of insecurity. He said, if you must "own" and "possess" a lover or spouse exclusively, then it is because you are insecure. We are

raised to believe pair coupling is the only possible way we can live and procreate. Oneida proved otherwise, and there is really no doubt, this is the way human beings originally lived, survived and raised their children. Our present life style, is almost certainly of very recent date. In fact, less than 100 years ago, you could find human beings living communally without exclusive pair couples.”

“But Lee, if you and I were in a commune like that, and I saw you with a voluptuous girl, I would certainly be jealous, very jealous, and I do not think I am particularly insecure!”

“Ah, but you forget, at the same time, you would have really good looking guys vying for your attention and much more. Don’t you think that might distract you from jealousy ?”

“I suppose it might. I wouldn’t want to try it out. That much I know for sure.”

We had a good laugh about that, and the whole idea of Oneida became a dear and recurring subject of interest to us both, we would discuss and contemplate at length.

During that summer, there had been atomic bomb testing on and around the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific. For reasons not entirely clear to this date, the new, by contemporary standards, miniscule two piece swimsuit, which had been designed in France, was named the “Bikini”. I can’t remember when I got my first one, but as soon as Lee and I saw pictures, I wanted one, and we both loved bikinis, when I started to use them.

Vicious fighting was continuing in Palestine, and why the British did not simply extract themselves from a place, where they in no way were wanted, and could not conceivably accomplish anything, no one can quite explain even 60 years later. In July, the Philippines ceased to be a de facto American colony, none too soon. Civil war threatened India because of Islamic separatism. During the fall a number of convicted Nazi leaders were hanged, but Goering managed to swallow cyanide to die at his own hand. Serious fighting got under way in Vietnam against the French colonial power. The French killed some 6.000 in bombing of Haiphong. That was the beginning of the protracted anti colonial war against France, which dragged on for years, and which later morphed into the dreadful and utterly pointless American engagement in that country.

During the first week in September, I made the start on my academic career, the two year course to be a dietician, to be followed with another two years, to be a nutritionist. Jen had been a constant help with my application and all the other details, and I was as enthusiastic as a kid entering school in grade one. It bothered me more than a little, I had no income of any kind, and Lee would be paying for all my costs, courses, books, transport and what not. We talked about it at some length, and Lee insisted we could afford it. His only real concern was, presumably my studies would be interrupted by a pregnancy or several, but he agreed to my course of action.

Then something curious and very unpredictable happened. After no more than perhaps two weeks, someone came to our class and asked me to come along. I was apprehensive. Why was I being singled out, and where was I being led to (?). It was a middle aged lady who had come for me, and she told me nothing. We walked through corridors and went up several floors, when we finally came to a door, where it said something about “Research & Documentation” . There I was introduced to two older gentlemen, who asked me to sit down, while they looked me over. Finally, one said to me: “You are German, correct ?”.

Now, I was really apprehensive. What on earth was this all about. Was I about to be deported? “Yes, I am”, I responded. I could not very well deny it. Then he went on: “You were educated in Germany for how many years?” I started to relax a little. This seemed to be more about my educational background, and I had to think fast, not to expose certain missing years. I told them about my kindergarten time, and then school and high school, and I added for good measure, I had been obliged to work as translator for the Russians for about half a year. To my delight, my interlocutor seemed very pleased. He said to the other gentleman: “Could well be, what we are looking for!”

They both nodded in agreement, got up and asked me to come with them. This office was in two sections; the front office where the two gentlemen were located with several ladies and a back part, which was a science library and storage area with numerous old file cabinets full of catalogued science papers. They brought me to an area on the front right side, where there was a large, older desk, more file cabinets and shelves.

“Here we have many years accumulated papers, publications and books in German, we need to get translated. We used to have a full time translator, who had to retire for health reasons, and we no longer have a budget for replacement, but we do have allocation for 15 to 20 hours part time per week. When we discovered, we had a German student, we wanted to find out if you might be able to tackle this assignment?”; the gentleman told me.

What sweethearts, I thought. Here I was accusing them in my mind, of wanting to deport me, and here they were, actually offering me my first gainful employment in USA. I was ecstatic, and of course elated. The Good Lord and my father’s spirit was watching over me. This seemed to me, to be a magnificent opportunity, but the gentlemen, appeared to consider it more like potential drudgery. I asked: “Would I be able to do this work at home, and bring it here?” They thought about that for a minute, as if it might not have occurred to them. Then the other gentleman said: “There is really no reason why that could not be the done. You could come every day and drop off the drafts, and pick up the next papers. That would give you more flexibility. If you had the time and inclination, you could do some work on week-ends, when rainy weather might keep you indoors for example.”

They told me they had budget for 15 to 20 hours a week, and what they offered me per hour was in my opinion very generous. A quick estimate in my mind, suggested it would pay all my school costs, at least the ones I knew of. I couldn’t wait to tell Lee, but he would also have to help me, because as much as I might be able to translate adequately, he would have to read it as well, to make sure I got the proper sense and connotation.

Lee was delighted and very proud of me. He said something like: “Good things will come to you, because of your positive and constructive disposition. Everyone notices that. You never sit around and wait for things to come to you. My grandfather, who passed away many years ago, used to repeat Pasteur’s famous words “Chance favours only the prepared mind” to Susan and me, when we were small. That reminds me of you. You always appear to be prepared, that is why chance favours you!”. Then he put a waltz on the record player, and we danced a couple of nice waltzes to celebrate. The love and support Lee gave me, more than anything helped me over all the suffering and sorrow I had endured, before he

found me in Berlin.

Fortunately, my employers had provided me with two German-English dictionaries, one common usage, and one specifically scientific. Without those I would have been lost, because I did not even have a regular dictionary of my own. This all happened on a Thursday, so it was limited, what I could provide the next day, but I promised them, I would have something worth while by Monday, and indeed I did. I had by then translated one entire paper concerning certain observations and experiments with vitamin D, which, of all places, had taken place in East Prussia. Not only was the paper itself interesting and informative, and I was particularly motivated because it came from my home state, but it was also much easier to translate, than I had anticipated, and that was particularly encouraging.

My two employers were delighted. I had far exceeded, what they had hoped for. I claimed to have spent 2 hours each day, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, which was not true. In fact, I had probably spent closer to ten hours total, and Lee had no doubt taken another hour reading it through for me, but I looked upon this job as contract work, and if my employers were happy, I was happy. I knew, it would be easier and easier as time went on, so why not give a little extra from the outset. Lee loved watching me at work. He said: "You achieve and you accomplish the way you go about the assignment. Renata you are an inspiration!"

I delivered the translated texts in hand written copy, and the ladies in the office then typed it with the appropriate headings, references, entries, etc. It wasn't so very long before I got the department to provide me with a good, sturdy Underwood typewriter, similar to the models used by reporters and journalists at the time, and from then on, I delivered all my translations neatly typed. The ladies loved me for that and my two bosses could not have been happier. I once overheard one of them comment, saying something like: "We have got a real crackerjack!"

Well, back to my actual studies. The very first thing I remember, was our basic text book, because I loved it, and still do. It was called "Nutrition in Health and Disease", and had been written and continually updated by 4 women, Cooper, Barber, Mitchell and Rynbergen. I admired those ladies for that book, which I found so thorough, informative, easy to read and use and up to date for that time. It was nearly 800 pages and should have been kept "alive" and updated in the form I knew it then. For reasons hard to fathom, the publishers who now own the book chose to change it completely into some kind of boring "nutrition encyclopaedia" called Modern Nutrition; oh well.

The other thing that really stuck in my mind, was Christiaan Eijkman's famous experiments starting in 1896, showing beriberi (vitamin B1 deficiency), could be caused simply by feeding hens white, polished rice as opposed to unpolished, whole grain rice. These experiments are so simple and so elegant a small child can understand them, but even though we have now had that knowledge for well over a century, the vast majority of people still eat white rice, which is nothing but pure starch devoid of minerals, vitamins or anything else of real nutritional value.



I remember saying to Lee, when I had learned the real difference, white rice should carry a consumption surtax of at least 20% and that was in 1946. I have not changed my mind about that, and the same applies to white, sterile flour. In fact, wherever you encounter something white in grain or powder form in the realm of foods, try avoid it! Even table salt should be light grey, the natural unrefined colour of sea salt, and white sugar, indeed any sugar, should be avoided under all circumstances.

As it turned out, nutrition was the perfect subject for me. I enjoyed it all so completely and it came together with so many aspects of my young life, upbringing and early life experience, it could not have been better chosen. "A nutritionist is one who investigates and gives information on nutrition to others so that they may use it" according to my basic text book, and that was what I was going to do. Also, from the very beginning, I learned Hippocrates' wise dictum: "Let food be thy medicine, and let thy medicine be food." From very early, I resolved to follow those simple words as closely as possible.

We all learned, to our astonishment, that little if anything was discovered for nearly a millennium, after Galen about 200 A D, and that we really need to get as far as the 1600s before medical and physiological discoveries started to have an impact on the lives of people. With regard to nutrition and the understanding of its impact, the watershed in our knowledge came with Liebig in Germany and Pasteur in France. From that time on, our information and insight accumulated at an ever greater speed. We learned about the influence the veterinary sciences had on the study of human nutrition and how they overlapped extensively. To this very date animal husbandry remains one of the best sources for nutritional discoveries affecting human beings as much as animals. It is as simple as this, if something benefits a cow or a hen in a material way, there is a fair chance it may benefit human beings in various ways as well.

Nutrition was in fact very much in its infancy during the 1940s and the belief, that public administrations could and should be active in this area, and had the capacity to accomplish improvements in health and common dietary habits, was only then really taking hold. Malnutrition, in its many forms, could safely be said, to be more prevalent globally at that time, than anything resembling ideal nutrition. In much of Europe, there were serious shortages of the most basic foods, and a majority of people in Asia and Africa, never had enough to eat. Even in North America, the widespread consumption of white, depleted flour, had caused chronic vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

The logical solution, would have been to educate the public to stop using the stripped and reduced flour, and instead mandate only 100% whole grain flour be sold. That would have solved the problem forthwith, but that would have been too simple. Instead, depleted, white flour was to be "enriched" with some of the vitamins and minerals, that are removed in the process of milling white flour. It was going to take the better part of half a century, before people slowly started to realize, it would make more nutritional sense, simply to buy whole grain flour and whole grain bread. A little more nutritional leadership would have gone a long way back then. Those were some of the issues, we budding nutritionists were studying and were going to have to deal with.

I forgot to mention, Lee and I did get to the exhibition at the museum together. I had forgotten all about it, and one day Lee asked me, when it was closing, because he actually would like to see it together with me. We got there one of the last days it was open, and we got a nice little bonus, because there was then a small additional show, by another painter I had never heard of, Joseph Stella. He was a contemporary of painters like Georgia O’Keeffe, Edward Hopper and others of that time. His charcoal drawings of industry, and in particular Pittsburgh made a strong impression and his art deco style renditions of the Brooklyn Bridge are striking and unique. I feel, he is another painter, who deserves a great deal more attention today, than he is getting.

Lee enjoyed the whole exhibition very much. His art and history orientation was very much national and American, something I found endearing in its own way, and I had no difficulty sympathizing with. I, on the other hand, would always be cosmopolitan in my outlook, because of my upbringing and background. In that regard, we supplemented each other nicely. I was keenly interested in American art, culture and history, of which I knew so very little, and my husband was able to provide a great deal of insight and motivation for my inquiry.

Some issues and important news concerns I remember from late 1946 and early 1947 were, that Truman terminated the four year prices and wages controls. “Supply and demand will serve better”, he said. In January 1947, the WWII military leader general Marshall was named secretary of state. Personally, I felt he was far more successful in the political field, and accomplished a great deal during his tenure. The dreadful and evil polio virus was isolated for the first time at Stanford University in California. The world owes America enormous gratitude for this discovery and the subsequent vaccines. Today, that is all but forgotten, but I remember polio like it was yesterday, and the countless victims of this horrible disease. Also in January 1947, the infamous gangster Al Capone died of natural causes.

Where previously, I had lived a life of comparative leisure, in one fell swoop it all reversed, and I was now working 10 to 12 hours a day, studying, doing assignments, translating and typing, cooking, doing laundry, cleaning the house and gardening, but it suited me well. I am by nature energetic and I need challenges. At that age I was particularly full of vigour and zest, and it was good it was put to constructive use.

We celebrated new years with our friends, and Jack’s new girlfriend was there as well over the holidays. This was the first time we really got to know her. Her name was Jania and I found her to be a sweet, warm hearted soul. Lee had mentioned at some point, this poor girl likely always would have it held against her, she had been a “working girl” at some point in her life, and I wanted to go out of my way, to show her, it meant nothing to me. She was some ten years older than me, but when she and I were together, it was as if there was nearly no age difference.

She told me about her family and how hard it had been for them to get out of Europe, and then in America, they had had a hard time making ends meet. In Hungary her father had

been a university professor of history and literature, but in USA his education and experience did not count for much. These were among the reasons, it had been so difficult for her to pay for her studies. I asked her, if “doing trade shows and conventions” as she previously had told us about was not a hardship. She admitted it was at times, but with a sly smile, she said: “I like men. I enjoy being with men. That helps! For me, Jack is a real man, who appreciates a girl like me.”

It really amused me to hear Jania say things like that, because her demeanour was polite and neat. You would not dream, she had had “working girl” experiences at any time in her life. I wanted so much to tell her, I had been a sex slave to the Russians for the better part of half a year, and survived it, but I knew that would not be astute. These are the events of our lives we do not go around and advertise. Some day, I thought, I might be able to tell her. Now was not the time. I told her I liked her very much, and how happy Lee and I were, Jack and her found each other. Jania also told me, she had in fact had quite a number of offers from men during her working girl career, but none that seemed very serious or otherwise appealed to her.

Later Lee told me, some of the things Jack had mentioned about Jania: “She is sweet, beautiful and a real man’s woman. She makes me very happy.” Apparently, “a real man’s woman” referred in Jack’s parlance to a girl or woman with lots of sexual energy. Lee told me, Jack had at one time been going out with a local KC girl for some time. She was from a fairly well to do family, but in the long run it did not work out. Jack had stated, she was prissy and picky, and apparently routinely disappointing in bed.

Two things seemed to preoccupy the guys over the new years. They all wanted us to get active in camping in summer, which was really taking hold during those years. There did not seem to have been anything quite like the Wander Vogel movement in America. Of course, I was all for it. We would stick to established camp grounds, of which there were nowhere near the number we have today, but also access to private land, where that might be possible. We would all try to do this in coordination and together, making it cozy and companionable.

The other subject receiving keen interest, was an acquaintance of Jacks, who was also known to Lee and Gary, but not personally. He was a local KC based commodity broker, Cees Sherman, who despite his young age, he was only in his mid to late thirties, had been exceptionally successful trading grains, cattle and fertilizer and had accumulated considerable wealth.

Mr. Sherman was single, at least most of the time, and liked to devote his spare time to trendy pursuits, but also some worthwhile causes. He contributed to my favourite arts museum, for example; something bound to heighten his esteem in my mind. He owned a lovely river bank area in the Ozarks south of the city, where he liked to invite and entertain interesting and amusing people. Jack had been invited “with friends” for at least one week-end some time in the summer of 1947, date to be agreed later. There was just one minor caveat attached to invitations to Napali, the name of his place; you were expected

not to wear clothes anywhere inside or out, while on the premises. Mr. Sherman was a keen believer in American Naturism, and sought to promote this cause in a serious way.

Jack had our rapt attention, when he explained all that in some detail. Sherman was generally well thought of and a somewhat popular figure around town, so it was an honour to be invited, but the business of not wearing any clothes needed careful consideration. I was the first to pipe up. I told them, all my kindergarten years were spent without clothes, and likewise our summers were enjoyed in the same way, so this was no challenge for me. I also knew, Lee, Susan and their dad were keen skinny dippers, so I was reasonably sure, he would be comfortable. Jania said: "We can do that. The only nice tan is an all over tan. I did that a lot in summer in Hungary as well." That pretty much decided it. We were an adventurous lot, and we were young. This was the time of life for adventure. We had something to look forward to that summer.