

A Tapestry of Quotations, Musings, Aphorisms,
and Autobiographical Reflections

By

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My passion for economics and unusual personalities has been the basis of my past papers. My economic papers went outside my realm of expertise, but within the discipline. The temptation was to do that again. I cannot imagine another time but now to be in the classroom with an economic topic. But, I have decided to do something else. First, I must set the stage or give myself a platform or permission to do this or "my" thing. This may be a risk, but I am over 72 and probably will not give any more papers and I want you to be an audience for this experience.

I spent two days with Studs Terkel in the late 60's. Studs Terkel was a resource person in a program that I am going to tell you about later. He was a master of oral history. Although a lawyer, he did not look the part in dress (baggy pants, flannel shirt, red socks), tact, words, or methods. He looked like a stevedore. During his life, he just talked to people –thousands of them. He listened, recorded and wrote stories. Studs Terkel did not like the computer, even had trouble with the Selectric. He did not like the new technology, statistical analysis, economist, he just like listening and talking to people. He magnified oral history. He was a story teller and at 95 he says, you become freer in your ability to relate what is on your mind. Even at 72, I am feeling freer to tell somethings I feel.

Louis "Studs" Terkel (born May 16, 1912) is an American author, historian, actor, and broadcaster. Terkel was born in New York, New York to Russian Jewish parents, but at the age of eight, he moved with his parents to Chicago, Illinois, where he has spent most of his life. His father, Robert, was a tailor and his mother, Anna (Finkel) was a circus performer. He had three brothers Joe, John, and Horacio. From 1926 to 1936, his parents ran a rooming house that was a collecting point for people of all types. Terkel credits his knowledge of the world to the tenants who gathered in the lobby of the hotel and the people who congregated in nearby Bughouse Square. In 1939, he married Ida Goldberg

and had one son, Paul (also known as Dan), named after Paul Robeson. Terkel graduated from the University of Chicago in 1934 with a law degree but says instead of practicing, he wanted to be a concierge at a hotel and also joined a theater group. He joined the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project, working in radio, doing work ranging from voicing soap opera productions and announcing news and sports, to presenting shows of recorded music and writing radio scripts and advertisements. Terkel is well known for his radio program titled *The Studs Terkel Program* that aired on 98.7 WFMT Chicago between 1952 and 1997. The one-hour program appeared each weekday during all of that time. He interviewed guests as diverse as Bob Dylan, Leonard Bernstein and Alexander Frey. Terkel has never learned to drive. Terkel is perhaps best known for his oral histories, such as the 1970 book *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*, for which he assembled recollections of the Great Depression spanning the socioeconomic spectrum, from Okies, to prison inmates, to the wealthy. His 1974 book *Working*, in which (in the words of the subtitle) "People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do" was also highly acclaimed. (*Working* was made into a short-lived Broadway show in 1978 and telecast on PBS in 1982.) Terkel won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for *The Good War*, which challenged the prevailing notion that, in contrast to the Vietnam War era, World War II was a time of unblemished national solidarity, goodwill, and unified purpose. In 1997 he was elected a member of The American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 1999 received the George Polk Career Award.

This learned group (I am talking about the Holland professional Club) presents papers with unbelievable thought and content --extensive background work, literature search, and statistics. Presenting and defending a premise or position. This will be a different experience. The title may not be self explanatory. In short, I am going to tell some stories, mostly my stories. The trouble with telling stories, there is no literature sourced, you can't tell if the situations are stretched or if even true. I am going to tell you some situations and experiences I stumbled onto during the past 50-60 years --not theme based, not necessarily in chronological order, most are not complete or exhaustive, not always funny, not necessarily gems, but they have meant a lot to me and it has lasted. The title of the paper is, "A Tapestry of Quotations, Musings, Aphorisms, and Autobiographical Reflection". This is the first time I have written sanye of this down. If I do not appear to be sticking to the notes --I know the material. Mark Twain once remarked, if you always tell the truth you do have to have a very memory.

Transition story #1. There are stories and then there are stories. My 98 year-old father-in-law told stories (hundreds of them) to his friends at Freedom Village two or three times a day --always by memory, with great timing in front of encouraging audiences. I am not going to tell his type of stories, but I am going to share the last one I remember before his death in October of 2007. It is one of my transitional stories or interludes.

"A mother was having great trouble in getting her child to be good. Her efforts were tireless and ineffective. His proposal was money; if you give me \$10 I will be good. The Mother's response was -- sometimes I wish you would be more like your father and be good for nothing."

Jane and I were Danforth Associates and many opportunities were provided. Matter-of-fact, I met Roger Reitburg, also a Danforth Associate, in the 60's long before Holland was even thought about in our life. At Mills College, in San Francisco bay area, there was a Danforth experience. At the first gathering there was man holding a sign that said Dave Armstrong. I worked my way over and introduced myself. He was in his 30's, black, and forthright and wanted to be called Al. He's first words were something like, "I am not sure I like you or that you like me. I am your host and I will do my best. I will be in touch" and left. Now, remember 1969 in San Francisco –Little Huey shot, Black Panthers, Haight Ashbury, Berkley and more. At about 2 a.m., there was a knock on my door. It took me awhile to respond, opened the door and there was Al. Get dressed he commanded, we are going to discover the inner city at night. It's a little chilly. I'll wait out here.

I need to stop here and tell you that this conference was organized by Benjamin Mayes. I will be brief, but you need to know this man and then you will know why I met Al. Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays an African-American minister, educator, scholar, social activist and the president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He was also a significant mentor to civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., his student, and was among the most articulate and outspoken critics of segregation before the rise of the modern civil rights movement in the United States. Mays emphasized two themes throughout his life: the dignity of all human beings and the gap between American democratic ideals and American social practices.

Back to Al, we walked the streets all night long, by-the-way, that is a long time! The homeless or street people are all awake at night. Standing around fire barrels for a little heat, listening to the street gossip, observing the word-of mouth communication network, the cries and signals, I was an out-of-place white. By-the-way, they accepted me better than my comfort accepted me in walking the streets for hours. There are more stories here, but I need to keep moving. After stopping by the Black Panthers Headquarters and seeing where Little Huey was shot, we meandered down the alleys to a breakfast hole-in-the-wall then to a stop I'll never forget. Through the doors, that looked like an old garage, was a class in session, with lights out, but the slide projected haloed the instructor and the 10-15 attendees. Instructor shouted to Al, "Bring your friend up front". Two rickety chairs waited. The title on the screen said it all, "How to fill-out whitys' application forms".

That was my first day, the week was memorable. I was on the faculty at Berkeley and Davis in the early 60's and crossed the Bay Bridge hundreds of times, but I had no idea what was on the south side. To this day I thank the Danforth Foundation, Benjamin Mays and Al for the week. I learned another obvious truth, that I have practiced over-and-over again. You absorb more by yourself, than in teams and pairs.

Transition story #2. Larry Boger, former President of Oklahoma State University, was one of my mentors. When he accepted the job at OSU, he was pulled aside by the chairman of the board and told, your first task will be to fire the athletic director. His reply is perhaps we should re-do my start date, because you will need time, if you have

already made up your mind, you need to take care of the problem. If you wait until I start, I may like the guy. Larry also had a unique characteristic; he always arrived at meetings on time or a minute early, with a clean pad –no brief case. About five minutes before the scheduled adjournment time he would ask for the floor and say I believe this meeting was scheduled to end at 10am and I am booked and the meeting doesn't look like it is ending. To make sure I am not out-of-touch, I have observed the following –his points always made the minutes. He didn't have the pen, but very tactfully got his way without marathon meetings.

One of my favorite paper titles, over the years, was by a professor at the University of Illinois, "Didactics, Heuristics and Philetics". It is so clever and philosophical. When you teach, the facts or "didactics" are critical. However, didactics does not substitute for the power of logic and discovery or the "heuristics". Every student knows if you do not have the passion or love for the classroom none of it works -- thus the word philetics. Teachers whether informal or in the structured classroom, that are memorable, do all three, use stories, metaphors, memory, exercise and good old fashion rigor. The mix is orchestrated in a special way. Often, when these professors were asked how you do this –I mean how do you do your thing. Their typical answer is I don't know –I just do it, I guess it developed over time. That is why classes on "how to teach" often are filled with didactics, but do little to make the "listening or participating student" a good teacher. Testing, testing and more testing may not be producing of best educated product, even if we have the scores to prove otherwise. At least this is my commentary on the subject – Hope professors the exception of course.

I took those, 'How to Teach' courses and until I was 44, I was in the classroom –and it was good to me and I was recognized and rewarded by the students. I would like to stay on this teaching topic for a couple of minutes. As everyone, I had two professors, in particular, that I thought had this "thing" –the "DHP" factor. Their names were Ralph Wooden and William Tynsnik . These men had it and I wanted to be just like them. The problem was they were very different, but I set out to study and copy their style and techniques. I studied these guys but could never "bottle" the happening. It changed and moved and did not appear consistent or always good, but it worked. After my first student teaching experience, Dr. Wooden was observing and summoned me to a private conversation. His exact words, "I do not want to be discouraging, you will still make a teacher, but not on what you did today. It took me several years to jettison the copying and develop my own style.

Let me share a note taking technique I used in College. I would draw a line down the middle of the page on the left –were the notes of the course or the day's content. On the right –were the notes on the Prof. They, the Profs, would tell me a great deal about themselves and what was important in the class. When they got excited –notes on the right grew. They told me their hobbies, playing in the symphony, good books, travel, resources in the field. I worked for me –my kids thought it was very deficient in logic.

Transition Story #3. Karen, my middle daughter, loved hand gliding. When in Malibu, she flew with an instructor off the cliffs out over the ocean. Her instructor said during

flight that the wind currents were dying and doubted they would be able to return to the cliffs. The instructor said they would circle and land on the beach. With detailed instruction, which ending with –“run like hell when we touch the sand”, they landed on a nude beach. Their emergency landing looked a little scary and they instantly drew a crowd. One young woman was especially attentive and wondered if anyone was hurt and indicated she would help carry the plane to the top of the hill, but she had to get some clothes first. She returned with shoes.

A program that changed my life, and I should say Jane and I or our lives, was a program funded by the Kellogg Foundation in 1967. Dean Tom Cowden, said that leadership in rural America had to be changed. The Dutch and the European influence were hiding our young minds in rural America and Michigan during their most productive years. You understand what I mean with such a comment. You participated, but you could not lead until your turn –that occurred when all the others had died or became weary. Could the calendar be advanced so these younger minds could they be in leadership positions, because of the desire, interest and aggressiveness, in their early 30's? Dave Boyne, prominent young agricultural economist and a colleague, was selected to write a proposal to the WKKF to alter the pattern. In brief, 30 successful farmers were selected each year. The program was three years long and nothing in the program study was directed to their economic life or in-other-words focusing on making them better technicians or more profitable farmers or agribusiness men. But there was the premise that they did not know their communities, state, country and world in the depth required to be considered a leader beyond their day-to-day existence and hard work. They were in the classroom sessions four weeks per year. The first year they studied Michigan and traveled Michigan for two weeks -- understanding the Great Lakes, living in the inner city of Detroit, traveling with a theater troop, shadowing legislators and more. Not everyone did the same thing. The second year we studied the U.S. and traveled the U.S. and the third year the world and went around the world in 47 days. I lead Group V and we finished in 1972. Studs Terkle spent two days with this group. Our first stop on the world tour was Sweden. I had 30 envelopes on a table at our hotel, the individuals picked their lot and received the instructions for the next four days. My meekest farmer drew the fattest packet –train tickets up into Norway. When they gathered after these visits, they could not stop talking about their experience and arranged a procedure for doing so. We have met often in reunion fashion, the most recent last August. They were telling me the value of the program. Not for them, but for the impact on their children. WKKF documented the success of the program in a book. The farmers paid tuition for the program. The impact is so evident. When the Pfizer and Michigan State deal in Holland was announced, it was announced by Don W. Nugent, MSU board member and former chair –a Kellogg Farmer and the developer of the dried cherry and the fruit and vegetable extract business. What I learned is we could get almost anyone as resource person to work with this group, usually no fees, there were maxed to five hours of content. Nearly every high profile resource person asked for one hour with the group alone –no PhD's to influence -trying to find out why they would pay money, take time away from the business, asking what are your plans, and more and more. Several become legislators (state and national), community college board members, planning commissioners at an early age. They wanted these responsibilities now. Dave Diehl, Gary DeWitt, Russell

Saw and Stan Van Single from west Michigan were in the program. Cecil Williams was a recurring resource person. Leadership programs can not make leader, but it can provide self discovery, shorten the time horizon and change a passive attitude to an aggressive mode. One little story, that fits the Don Luidens experience base. When in Lebanon –“In the new Holiday Inn in Beirut, Group V was having a magnificent dinner with a high ranking official; he asked one of the Michigan Farmers, if he liked Lebanon? Yes very, very much. Does your Country like Lebanon? I started to intercede, but a hand jester stopped me. I am sure they do. Does your Country support Lebanon? Does Lebanon have a militia? This went on-and-on, I tried to intercede without success. He ushered us to veranda and said do you hear those gun shots they are your bullets and they will be here in a matter of months. A few months later, in the news were photos -- the new Holiday Inn in rubble.

Transition story #4. My Father. When I was in the 7th grade, I asked my Dad, while working together on the farm, if we were making any money. He said David, I was never nick named, is there something you need? I guess not. Then I guess we are doing a pretty good job. There are a couple of more things here, if I have time

Max DePree gave me a fantastic suggestion in the late 80's. He said, David you need a Secretariat. I have one and it has worked. My ignorance on what he was talking about was ever present, so with no response I listened. Corporate cultures, regardless of what you do, become cultures of their own –they are controlled cultures and become private or close-to-the-chest attitudes. Collegueship appears good and probably works for awhile, but it wanes. You need to get good advice and help outside that circle. You do this without fanfare. It is quiet, private, rigorous and committed. There are very few rules. I would suggest no more than four resource persons. Fields should be executive building in nature and not from the furniture or associated industries. The resource persons will be paid. They must agree to (1) meet with you 3-4 times per year –one time in multiple day sessions (2) return your calls promptly –within the day they are made and (3) agree that this priority and commitment will not be broken and can renewed for a second year. My belief is that Max does that for others even at the present time. Three of my four resources worked extremely well and one failed the test of commitment. Three of the four were in the process of books. One or more will be well known to you. Peter Senge, Stan Davis, James Botkin and Len Marella were my secretariat. The concept is rich, get yourself out of your circle, work on your own, learn to articulate your concerns and remain vulnerable for help.

Transition story #5. As a member of a four person team on a USAID team in Brazil, we were charged with establishing a National Academy for the County. It was a four year experience, extensive travel, burdening government involvement, high inflation (150% per year) and major differences in academic quality throughout Brazil and great food and beaches. The Group visited nearly all four year colleges in the country. The Team included the Acting President of the University of Iowa, Dean of Medicine at Baylor, Vice President of Research at MSU and me the young academic kid. I was in temporary residence in Piracicaba from time-to-time with many week long trips. My daughter, a junior/senior in high school, joined me to lived in Brazil for six months. She attended

regular school and learned to speak the language. A progress meeting was held in Fortalaza which is actually on the equator. There were about 40 in attendance. One of our team insisted he be the lead off speaker. I have to say, it was what you would politely call a disappointment. I was scheduled second. Before I talked we had a break and upon our return, there was one person in the third row center, very attentive, but definitely alone. Our team leader, said where are the rest. He responded that they were returning home based on the content of the first speaker only one person was needed to absorb the content. He would share with the others later. Yes, an unforgettable experience, an American embarrassment, and the best diplomacy I have ever seen to pull it back together. It ended well.

At Southern Illinois University my office overlooked a green stretch of unobstructed lawn. Buckminster Fuller used that lawn as a laboratory in his design classes. During the time I was there, most of the attention went to the geodesic dome structures. Little ones and big ones dotted the lawn. Every building material available was used by the students. Triangles made of bamboo were lashed together, twigs, pipe, angle iron and more. Students would try to crush their inventions with multiple bodies laying on the structures. How could anyone observe this and want to wander down there and get a flavor of the dialogue and excitement. Yes, I did time-after-time and for several days. Buckminster Fuller would tolerate his observers, but dialogue was brief and a bit impersonal, but if you persisted you got more and more attention. He was building his geodesic home just a few blocks from the lawn and he drew his own poparattzi, with Walter Cronkite doing a major special from his house. In little old Carbondale, Illinois, this was a big deal. From a vicarious attitude, I was involved. He gave several lectures on the campus. Perhaps attending these was more of an experience than seeing geodesic dome being played with in front of my own eyes. The lectures were rarely titled. They were marathons with no apparent beginning or ending. A gathering lasting hours and makes no difference when you arrive. They often appear very disorganized. I was lucky to be a particular lecture that received much publicity. It started with Bucky saying let's all think blue tonight. While he paced in silence nothing was happening. But, that was the night he designed a floating island off the coast of Japan. During another of my experiences, the session was long, disconnected, boring and any other such adjective and decided to leave. I told my friend that I had enough and was leaving. He remarked, you do not understand Bucky. You fell every time you lecture; you have to have a good idea. Buckminster Fuller believes four in a lifetime is a lot.

Transition Story #6 In 1960, I received my PhD. With no money and a position at the University at California at Berkley/Davis, I bought a used Frito Lay step van, filled it with my belongings, towed a 1957 Volkswagen and headed from Ohio to California. I did everything wrong on the trip, drive too many hours with sleeping, picked up a hitchhiker, drove through snow storms instead of stopping and more. This rig would not go 55 mph downhill. In Death Valley, it was running rough and I stopped at a shack that said "Mechanic on Duty 24 hours". This place was bad. I told my story – this thing is not running very well and I do think I can get over the mountains. The owner/ mechanic/whatever, said to me, sit down on those bags over there and take a nap. I'll wake you up in awhile. He woke about late evening, close to sundown. He said start

it up and don't stop until you get to Davis. I said what did you do? Nothing. That's an old truck, the diaphragm in the fuel pump is old and stretched, the cool evening temperature will firm up the situation and I think it will get you over the mountains. No charge.

Our family had a condo at the Homestead, in Glen Arbor, in the 1970.s. About 30 years ago, during one of visits, the spare bedroom phone rang. It never rang, we didn't give out that number and it just wasn't used. I ran hard to answer the phone and breathlessly answered before a hang-up. A voice at the other end, said this Peter Drucker. The temptation was strong, to say, "Who is pulling my leg –who's the jokester". Probably because I was out-of-breath, I refrained from using some kind of a barroom response. He said I understand you are starting a new business and I am offering my services. Here is my proposal. Bring yourself and three colleagues to my home in Claremont, California for a full day of discussion. I will not charge a fee, but you agree to return with the team, if they still exist, in one year and my fee will be \$4,600 for the day. Do you accept my proposal? I said yes. I have November 3, 10 and December 8 open. Which would you like? Now, I am a little shook by this whole experience and a little shaky and answered November 3. Good. When will you be back in your office. In a couple of days. Please send the following packet of information to 2222 xxx in Colorado. I said fine, oh, you must be on vacation and he responded this is a business call. I walked in the main rooms of the condo and I said to Jane you will never guess who was on the phone –Peter Drucker. Sure, she answered –now, who were you talking so long?

Two days with Peter Drucker. You will notice I never was close enough to call him Peter. Both sessions were excellent and the learning unforgettable. When we were settled in the living room, he started with some administrative details. We will break at 12 noon for lunch and adjourn promptly at 4:30 this afternoon. We have three choices for lunch and you can help me decide. There is a Chinese restaurant within walking distance, but always seems so dark in there, but it is good. We also have a Mexican restaurant, also within walking distance, but I have never been very taken with the way they spice their food of we can eat at the Colonial Inn where I made reservations.

He was direct and put all of us on the spot more than once. About every 20-30 minutes a clock, placed under his chair, would buzz and he would promptly get and leave the room. We wondered where he went, but John Adams, colleague said do not say anything because every time he returns he has a gem to share. While talking, he would reset the clock and unwrap an elastic bandage on his knee carefully rewrap and we would move on until the clock would buzz again One of my colleagues could not resist any longer and said Dr. Drucker where do you go when the clock buzzes; he looked up calmly and said I change the lawn sprinklers. If you want to know about our content during these sessions, you will have to ask a question.

One year we returned with the same team. He said do you have the check? Yes. You all seemed to like the Colonial Inn so I have reservations there again this time. The second trip a much more relaxed feeling. After one year of experience, we also had more to talk about. During the day I said. Peter, I have a question, he said it is Mr. or Dr. Drucker. Dr

Drucker, he said yes David. You have written about organizations all your life, but you have actually never been part of one. His response was classic. Almost like Groucho Marx's comment, I would never belong to an organization that would have me as a member. I do not like organizations and it is doubtful they would like me. David, do you have another question.

Transition Story #5 I received a call from my youngest daughter Amy. She was part of a vendor day for a large corporation and there was a golf outing. The invitation said to be creative, it would be great if everyone played golf. Dad, I don't play golf and I am not going to miss this thing, what do I do. They need my answer today. I said reserve a cart just for you; we will work out the details later. She dress-up her friend with black shirt, pants, hat and sunglasses. On the back of the shirt it said "Driver". She wore a long yellow flowered dress, large white hat, white golf shoes and carried a putter. They pulled up to the first tee, "Looking like Driving Miss Daisy". Amy got out of the cart placed the tee and her driver hit the ball. When the ball got on the green, she putted. At the recognition dinner, she won the little memento for the longest drive, the most puts and the most creative idea.

A contemporary Studs Terkel, Dave Isay founded StoryCorps and wrote a best seller, Listening is an Act of Love. It is all about telling and sharing stories. My guess is my stories are no better than yours. However, the blessing of good mentors, great experiences, stretched dimensions, are worth sharing. My grandson actually inspired me to write this paper. He is nine. His mother and father are divorced and we have a special bond. He likes to go on boat outings with just the two of us. Pack our food, sleep on the boat and work out the schedule on the way. He didn't want to eat in restaurants -I do that all the time. Why don't we just mess around, walk and tell stories.