



NS News Bulletin

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The Education of an Evil Genius

Part 2

My mother's side of the family also had its share of stories.

Your great-grandfather had come to America first before bringing over your great-grandmother. He took her to a special shop to taste a brand-new food sensation.

He told her: Blow on it, it's hot!

She did.

Everybody in the shop laughed. Then she tasted it, smiled and slapped him.

It was ice cream.

* * * * *

Grandma called out to grandpa, who was sitting on the front porch, to come in for supper. But he didn't come. So she sent me out to fetch him. I saw him sitting there watching three pretty young girls walking by. I told grandma. She came out and pulled him by the ear back into the house...I guess you're never too old to look.

* * * * *

When your father showed his expensive brand-new pipe to one of my uncles, he misunderstood, thought it was a gift and thanked him profusely. Your father didn't have the heart to say anything. Years later, after he had died, the family, who knew what had happened, returned the pipe. They said he had only smoked it on Sundays.

Half the population of a small town in Wisconsin is related to my mother. My great-grandfather had six sons. I saw an old photo of them and can confirm that I look just like my mother's father, Otto, who was born in the Old Country and named after Otto Bismarck.

My family is German on both sides. Lauck and Hein on my father's side. Preuss and Pahl on my mother's side. The Lauck family goes back to Hessian officers, brothers who served in the American Revolutionary War. The name "Lauck" itself goes back to Old High German, which died out around 1050 A.D..

Many years later, my mother told me two distant relatives of mine had died in 9/11. I hadn't met them, but she did.

I've seen photographs of two other doubles for me. Furthermore, still another double had stayed in a barracks with me. He was even my height! Sometimes other guests got the two of us mixed up. I played with the idea of hiring him as a decoy.

Catching Critters

My favorite pastimes included catching tadpoles, frogs and turtles, climbing trees and exploring the adjacent fields and forests. Animals were – and still are (!) – my great love.

On weekends my father and I would go catch turtles at "the grade". Or he'd take a nap in the car while I caught frogs by myself.

One summer just the two of us drove hundreds of miles on *The Great Snake Hunting Expedition*. Although disappointed about not getting any rattlers, I was pleased with the haul: a neat hog-nosed snake, a pair of blue racers and dozens of grass snakes.

When my mother found one of those snakes, a tiny baby grass snake, in her bed, they were exiled to outdoors. Fortunately, she figured out my father was the culprit. His fiendish grim and my look of horror upon hearing of her discovery made the solution of the "how-did-it-get-there" mystery all too obvious. Besides, what boy in his right mind would risk the loss of a perfectly good snake through such a

stupid stunt!

When we finally removed the oil tank for an old furnace from the basement (where it had sat under the old coal shoot), I cut it in half lengthwise with a chisel and sledgehammer. This was time-consuming and noisy (!), but I round up with a good-sized turtle tank.

As a boy and even as a teenager, I loved to pour over field guides on animals. I could even identify many subspecies.

Not surprisingly, our family had a wide variety of pets over the years. They included frogs, toads, tadpoles, fish, salamanders, newts, birds, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, chickens, cats and dogs.

I would need to sacrifice more trees in order to list all the species, subspecies and breeds.

Our garages have been home to wildcats, foxes and owls in addition to more cats than some towns around here have people.

Suffice it to say I've always loved animals.

I Was a Child Militarist

I liked to draw pictures of battles between tanks and airplanes. Instinctively, I choose national insignia that would not pose a "conflict of interest". I didn't want to offend any kinsmen. Even if they had fought on the "wrong side".

My battles with little plastic toy soldiers lasted hours. Sometime I drafted animals, in which case the animals were always the protagonists and the human soldiers were the antagonists.

I built a formidable fort complete with underground tunnel. The tunnel was a big help getting dirty. After all, every little boy worth his salt knows you can't have fun if you don't get good and dirty.

Combat training included use of handmade wooden swords and shields. I would routinely take on three kids at the same time and win.

I also became a budding *militarist*!

A children's book about famous battles in world history made a strong impression on me. Military history became one of my big interests aside from animals.

My father bought a kid-size version of an U.S. Army uniform for me. I had my parents inscribe my name and "rank" of "Captain". When it wore out, I got a replacement. By that time, I was already a "General". Naturally, I liked to wear it whenever I "played army".

"The enemy" had nicknamed me "General Doolittle". Apparently, they didn't know their history and simply found the name amusing.

These armies did not consist of “friends” simply dividing up into “teams” in order to “play a game”. We viewed ourselves as “soldiers” who were “fighting a war” against the “enemy” over disputed territory.

Our combat consisted of bombarding the opposing army with dirt clods. This limited warfare resulted in a little pain, but no serious injury.

Throwing rocks, on the other hand, was frowned on. Akin to a violation of the Geneva Convention.

We never had any intention or desire to inflict serious injury on the “enemy”! These “armies” were neither “gangs” nor “teams”. They were something in-between.

I sense much more than a mere game in these children’s armies, namely sociological, perhaps even anthropological ramifications.

As a veteran of many battles, I had developed some degree of skill in dodging these projectiles. Unfortunately, I was a poor marksman.

The battle usually ended in a glorious victory. I would charge straight at the enemy, enduring the pain of being struck by a full volley. They would flee in terror.

One campaign in particular provides a good example of our mentality.

One day we discovered a strange wooden raft floating in a small pond in the “no man’s land” that often served as our battlefield. Obviously, an enemy incursion! We piled rocks on it in order to sink it. Then we broke bottles on the rocks so that the broken glass would make it harder for the enemy to salvage his vessel.

Days later, we discovered an enemy patrol attempting to salvage it. We charged and they took flight. Except for one poor devil. He had climbed a tree overhanging the pond. Now he was holding onto a branch with one hand while sword fighting one of my men with the other. I was impressed by that enemy soldier’s bravery.

What should we do? The situation looked dangerous. Nobody wanted anybody on either side to get seriously hurt. But calling a truce, even in the middle of a heated battle, was unprecedented.

I ordered my men to pull back. The enemy commander understood what I was doing and why, so he did not attempt to take advantage of our chivalry. Instead, he shouted over to his cut off soldier to make a dash through the gap that I had intentionally allowed to form. He understood and did so.

After some time had passed, I happened to encounter that brave former foe under peaceful circumstances. We became friends.

The first time he took me over to his house to play, he stopped in front of the entrance, turned to me and said: “Don’t tell my mom you’re a Protestant. She says all Protestants are pigs and won’t let me play with you.” Several years later,

I learned his mother's own religious group, Catholic, was considered a "minority" on the national level. In that area, it wasn't.

My father took his sons camping, fishing and canoeing. When we were old enough, he also taught us how to handle firearms and took us hunting.

When he first started to show us boys how to use a gun, my mother was very concerned. Her father told her: *Don't worry! He'll teach them the right way!*

My training went like this.

The *first year* hunting, I carried a shotgun *without a bolt*. Just to learn how to be safe when crossing fences and such.

The *second year*, I got the bolt. But no shell! Each time I wanted to shot, I had to ask my father for a shell.

The *third year*, I had both bolt and shells.

Of course, both my shotgun and rifle were single-shot weapons. They cost \$20 and \$30 respectively. New, not used.

We later swapped guns. When he had the stock lengthened, he failed to allow for the winter clothing. He also preferred the lighter weight of my single-shot. I liked the fact the double-barrel had less recoil.

Many years later, a friend, an ex-policeman, asked to see my new revolver. I fetched the revolver from its drawer, opened the cylinder, removed the bullets, put the bullets back in the drawer, turned the revolver so it wasn't pointing at anybody and then, holding it flat on my palm with the cylinder still open, offered it to him. – This impressed him.

Here is a cautionary tale: Despite all his safety measures, my father darn near blew his head off once when his shotgun discharged and shot a hole through the roof of the car! He pointed this fact out to me as a reminder how dangerous guns are. And how important it is to always be extra, extra, extra careful!

The "men folk" repeatedly traveled all the way to Canada for three week canoe trips. We were so far out that there were no roads or other signs of civilization. We had to paddle the canoe across a lake, "portage" across a dirt path to the next lake and repeat the procedure.

The following stories all come from these Canadian canoe trips.

On one trip before I started coming along, one of my brothers got a toe infliction. The crew, which included other adult family friends, didn't have time to get him back to civilization. So they got him drunk with whiskey, sterilized a bayonet in the fire, had three full grown men sit on his chest...and then my father cut off part of his toe with that bayonet.

My father was the official medic. He said his own father always followed the same two steps when treating a minor injury. First, he asked what happened. Second, he put chewing tobacco on the wound. Gee, with training like that, I'm sur-

prised he didn't become a famous surgeon instead of an engineer!

They swear he nonetheless managed to somehow lift his body up six inches from the ground. And that people twenty miles away across the lake later claimed they could hear his scream.

I'm glad I wasn't on this particular trip. I was deemed still too young to come along on the first couple trips.

* * * * *

We had discovered an abandoned ranger's log cabin complete with cast-iron wood burning stove and an outhouse. This became our base camp.

My father had made a deal with his sons: *I'll buy anything you want to eat, but YOU have to CARRY it!* – We broke our backs, but we ate like kings.

On portage, my brother was carrying a canoe and carrying a backpack to boot. He felt he was a pretty tough guy.

Then he heard footsteps approaching rapidly from the rear.

What he saw next amazed and impressed him.

Somebody shot past him. Running. Carrying a canoe and two backpacks: one on the chest and one on the back...

It was a woman!

Talking with her at the end of the portage, he learned she was a professional dancer.

I had a similar experience years later. I was a young man doing heavy labor. My predecessor had been 65 years old.

* * * * *

Stop complaining about the darn mosquitoes! I don't feel any biting me. You're just making it up, because you don't want to carry the canoe anymore!

That's what my father, annoyed, barked at one of my brothers.

But when it was his turn to carry the canoe, he learned the truth.

The mosquitoes had swarmed under the canoe. They mercilessly attacked the poor devil carrying it. He had his hands full and was unable to slap them.

* * * * *

While still a boy, I considered writing a diary. But I decided against it. I figured the most interesting things in my life had *already* happened.

This doesn't mean I didn't think about the future. I made a deal with my father.

When I was old enough, we would move to the Canadian wilderness and become trappers. Being an engineer, he would tell me how to build our log cabin. I would pay him in whiskey and cigars.

* * * * *

One day the government made use of eminent domain to buy some of our land cheap for an expressway. When the bulldozers started to ravage our orchard, I grabbed my bow and arrow and ran for the door. I had every intention to defend my home! My parents stopped me. They had to lock me in my room.

Eventually, we had an expressway running through our backyard. Things weren't the same after that. I didn't think of it at the time, but I'm sure this greatly reduced our home's resale value.

Then my father changed careers and we moved away.

Pre-Teen and Teen

I grew up (the rest of the way) in the west. This is where I've spent half my life.

I could pet a horse on the neighbor's ranch simply by walking to the edge of my yard and reaching over the fence. Like all aspiring young cowboys, I spent a lot of time outdoors. But I also liked to *read books*.

My family was large. But the combined number of degrees held by its members was even larger. While still in elementary school, my father started to teach me a few very basic math concepts.

My father often got his children mixed up. He called them by the wrong name. This always annoyed my mother. However, he claimed it was all her fault. After all, she had insisted on giving them names. He had wanted to just assign them numbers. Like the famous detective Charlie Chan.

Furthermore, boys were often named after uncles in my family. When my grandpa was buried, my father nudged his brother and pointed to a nearby, but very old, tombstone. It was inscribed with the same names as the three brothers! His name was at the top. From then on, he would tell them: *Remember, I'm the top man on the tombstone!*

But don't get the wrong impression! My family was very "folksy". If you'd met my father, you'd have sooner reckoned him to be a *rancher* than a *college professor*. He got along just as well the custodian as with the other professors. Possibly better!

Many years later, FW purchased a rifle from this custodian. He had made the ri-

fle himself and even given it a name: "Old Meat On The Table". My father went to a shooting range to test its accuracy. He fired three rounds at a target just over 100 yards away. They were grouped so close together that you could *cover all three bullet holes at the same time with a quarter!* – Naturally, he waited ten minutes between rounds in order to give the barrel time to cool.

I learned chess while still a boy. I wouldn't even try to checkmate the opponent until I had done two things. First, taken every single one of his pieces. Second, used my remaining pawns to get back my queen and both castles. Obviously, this overkill was simultaneously thorough and inefficient.

One of my brothers stunned everyone by defeating a very skilled chess player within five minutes. He used his favorite lightning fast queen attack. His opponent was too busy implementing a complicated plan to notice.

In junior high school I played a lot of chess. Almost always with college students and professors. Generally, I won two out of three games. I beat my father the last three games we played. Then I lost interest in chess. It was too static. Really good players had to memorize old moves from chess books. That wasn't for me.

My father had the last laugh. He brought in a literal chess genius to whip me good. At the time, I was also sick as a dog with a liver infection. For months, I lived on tea, toast without butter and eggs. It took me months to fully recover. So much for a *fair fight!*

Afterward, he explained to me there are three levels of chess player.

The *first* level player, like him, has *no strategy*.

The *second* level player, like me, has *one strategy*.

The *third* level player, namely the chess genius, has *multiple strategies*. He reevaluates the whole situation after every single move. Then he selects the best strategy. (If a level two player tries to do this, the usual result is chaos.)

For a while, the family still played cards. But the locals didn't know the Old World games we knew so we had nobody else with whom to play.

My father enrolled all of us in a dance class. We learned the foxtrot and waltz. This wasn't useful for us young folk. (We had already learned square dancing back in elementary school.)

Adolescence was probably no harder and no easier for me than for anybody else. But it was different. There was no "teenage rebellion". My family and ethnic bonds made me immune from "peer pressure". I was an outsider. My standards were simply different.

My father once commented to me: *Neither your grandpa nor I had a very high opinion of our own [respective] generation. You're the same way.* – This was neither contempt nor arrogance... Years later, I heard an exiled Russian aristocrat say much the same thing.

Instead of saying: *If the other kids jumped off a cliff, would you do the same thing!*, my parents would say: *A good German does not jump off a cliff!* – This was very effective!

I had already learned not to show weakness or pain. This only encouraged tormentors. While still in high school, I took this a step further. I conducted two experiments in psychology.

In the first experiment, I kept an opponent on the edge between punching me and backing off. I maintained this balance by alternating between provocative and reconciliatory remarks.

In the second experiment, I pretended I thought mockery was actually just friendly teasing. At first, this confused the opponent. Then it aggravated him as he tried to explain his actual negative intent. Finally, he realized I was toying with him. Instead of him getting my goat, I was getting his. This made him angry. I had bounced the attack back on the attacker without employing either force or negative language. This pleased me for practical, ethical and even aesthetic reasons.

I liked my high school journalism class. First, the teacher was pretty. Second, I liked to write.

Once I asked a student teacher to a dance. This wasn't a kinky sex thing. I simply related more to people her age (and older) than to my own age group. Besides, she was beautiful and her legs looked great in a mini-skirt.

Years later I met a young woman who had done something similar. Except in *her* case it *was* a kinky sex thing. I guess this just goes to show that girls mature faster than boys. And are more skillful at getting what they want.

I discovered a professional survey designed to gauge political and social views. The whole class took it and I spent a heck of a lot of time on tabulation and analysis.

The interesting part of this survey was that it was not *one* dimensional, i.e. a *line*. It was *two* dimensional, i.e. a *plane*. *There was a "x" axis and a "y" axis!* The coordinates of traditional ideologies were displayed. Conservatives and Communists were far apart on the "x" axis, but close together on the "y" axis. Liberals and Fascists were far apart on the "y" axis, but close together on the "x" axis.

This illustrates the sometimes curious similarities between otherwise radically different ideologies. (My own coordinates were far away from anybody else.)

Beyond this, I later observed in a college ethics class that two people can provide the same answer for two totally different reasons. Lumping them together in the same category would be extremely inaccurate.

Here is an example.

My college ethics professor related his own ethical dilemma to the class.

In the last days of World War Two, I was a gangly young lieutenant. My helmet was too big for my head. I was given the assignment to take a jeep over to the German lines and negotiate their surrender. I took a few men with me.

When my jeep reached the German lines with a white flag of truce, SS men gave me a smart salute. A little ways down the road, we encountered trucks driven by German soldiers. There were what looked like concentration camp prisoners in the back of the trucks.

Just after we were out of sight, we heard machine gun fire. We figured it was probably the Germans killing the prisoners. We debated whether or not we should turn around and try to help them.

I decided not to. I figured the few of us in the jeep probably couldn't save them anyway. But if our mission to arrange the surrender wasn't carried out, fighting might resume and a lot more people would get killed.

Did I do the right thing?

When I encountered him in the hallway after class, I comforted him: *I think you did the right thing. It would have been a shame, if more SS men got hurt!*

A puzzled look appeared on his face for a moment. Then he smiled. Perhaps it dawned on him just who had said this to him.

High school bored me. I always tried to finish my homework in study hall. That way, I had more time to read college level books in the evening. Mostly philosophy, history and some politics. The honor roll was self-evident.

Thanks to summer school courses, I was able to skip my senior year.

I finished a one semester course in three days, took the test on the fourth day and got an "A".

While still in high school, I audited a college course on how to play the stock market. I did it, too. The first year, I paid attention and made money. The second year, I just listened to my stockbroker and lost it. At least I got to impress the co-eds.

I spent one summer with my father, when he worked with NASA on the space shuttle. We stayed in an apartment complex right next to the university. I liked to hang out around the swimming pool. I would play chess and watch the pretty young bikini-clad co-eds. Sometimes they would play chess with me. But they would "cheat". Namely bend over the chessboard to try to distract me with their cleavage. This was *half* successful. Yes, I looked. No, I didn't let them win.

Nomination to one of the U.S. Military Academies was a feather in my cap. But,

frankly, I suspect it was owed largely to family connections and the unpopularity of the Vietnam War. My parents were on a first name basis with congressmen, senators and governors, who occasionally stopped by our house.

When I entered his office, the military doctor about to give me an examination in connection with my nomination to a U.S. Military Academy took one look at me and said: *You're from a military family, aren't you?* – I didn't quite know how to respond. On the one hand, yes there have been a lot of soldiers in my family. On the other hand, most of them were a few generations back... Furthermore, my family is very “democratic” in the sense that we often have kinsmen fighting on *both sides* in a war!

Although I had various interests, nothing appealed to me as a *career*. I attended the state university for two years in order to be viewed as “educated” by European standards. But instead of pursuing a degree, I only took the courses I liked or considered useful. And that didn't include business.

I had enough credits in my foreign language major for a Bachelor's Degree, but would have needed to take two more years of “nothing courses” to get one. I saw no point in it. The courses I liked included philosophy and creative writing.

Of course, the best part about college was making out with my girlfriend.

Back in those days, it was actually possible, and not uncommon, for a student to work his or her way through college *without* a loan or a grant! This is what I did.

I feel sorry for today's students!



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