

## CHILDHOOD

*I've got to B natural  
and have faith in what comes to me  
and what comes through me.*

*I've got to B sharp  
and be aware of all the possibilities that lie before me  
so that I may take action in those specific directions.*

*I've got to B major in positivity  
and B minor in negativity.*

*I've got to B diminished in the old  
and B augmented in the new.*

*I must not B flat  
and allow the light of my enthusiasm to fade.*

*I must B natural  
and allow the sunshine of my positivity to nourish my ambitions.*

I WAS BORN IN NORWALK, CONNECTICUT, on September 2, 1928. My parents are John Tavares Silver and Gertrude Silver, two of the greatest parents a guy could ever have.

Dad was born in the Cape Verde Islands, off the coast of west Africa, somewhat near Angola. The island where he was born is called Maio, or the Isle of May. Dad worked his way to the United States on a boat. I don't know just how old he was when he came to this country, but I do know he was a young man. He settled in Massachusetts at first and then

lived a short time in New York City before finally settling in Norwalk, Connecticut, where he met my mom.

My father worked at the Norwalk Tire Company, a factory that made automobile tires and rubber soles for shoes. He was in charge of a small department that made rubber cement.

Dad spoke with a slight accent, but he spoke good English. When my uncles or some of his Cape Verdean friends who lived in our town would come by the house, he would speak Portuguese. Dad was one of four Cape Verdeans who lived in Norwalk—uptown, as they called it; South Norwalk was called downtown. There were a few other Cape Verdeans who lived in South Norwalk, namely, Nick Santos, the barber, who played music with my dad; and Mr. Perry, who managed a poolroom and also played music with my dad. You might say they were pretty enterprising in the black community. Dad returned to Cape Verde just once, but I don't remember him saying a hell of a lot about it.

Mom was born in New Canaan, Connecticut, and did domestic work. Several Hollywood movie stars had homes in Connecticut: Mom worked for Patsy Kelly, Boris Karloff, Bette Davis, and Ellery Queen, author of the popular mystery series.

My mother's marriage to my dad was her second. Her first was to a man named Fletcher. They had a son, Eugene, so I have a half brother named Eugene Fletcher. Gene, as we called him, was a grown man and married when I was just a little boy. My first recollection of him and his wife, Elizabeth, was when Gene, my dad, and my mom took me to the hospital to visit Elizabeth and their first baby boy, who was named Eugene Fletcher Jr. A few years later, they had a second son, Alfred Fletcher. I was the uncle of these two boys, but I was just a few years older than they were, and we often played together. When Alfred married, he and his wife had a daughter named Michelle, for whom I assumed the role of godfather.

Gene made his transition to the next life at the age of eighty-six. Because of our age difference and the fact that he lived in the neighboring town of Bridgeport and was busy with family responsibilities, we didn't

see much of each other when I was growing up. He seemed more like a cousin than a brother to me at that time. After I reached adulthood, we got to know each other a little better. My dad loved him very much. Dad would always say to me, "If you grow up to be as good a man as your brother Gene, I'll be happy."

Two other children were born to my parents before me, a boy and a girl. John Manuel Silver lived six months, but he contracted pneumonia and died. Maria Silver was stillborn. I look forward to meeting them and getting to know them when I make my transition. I've always been a family person. I love my family dearly, and I was blessed to be born into what I think is one of the greatest families in the world.

Originally, Dad spelled his last name "Silva," which is the Portuguese spelling. When he married my mother, she changed the spelling to "Silver." I was baptized Horace Ward Silver. In Cape Verde, it is customary for a son to take on the father's middle name. When I was confirmed in the Catholic Church, I also took the name Martin for my confirmation name, after Saint Martin de Porres. Therefore, my full name is Horace Ward Martin Tavares Silver. I use only Horace Ward Silver when I sign documents.

I was named after my great-uncle Horace, my mother's uncle. He worked as a cook and candy maker. He was one of the few black people who owned their own home in those days. I enjoyed it when Dad took me to visit Uncle Horace, because he would always have homemade pie or cake and, at Christmas time, candy canes. He always had something good to eat in the house. He had a cherry tree in the front yard and a vineyard in the back. He had a little vegetable garden and raised chickens. He would feed us when we visited and give us plenty of goodies to take home.

I was a small boy when Dad's brothers, Uncle Charlie and Uncle Jack, entered the United States illegally. They were living in our apartment in the attic room. They both had jobs. One night, in the wee hours of the morning, when we were all asleep, there came a knock on our kitchen door. Dad, Mom, and I awoke but were hesitant to open the door at that

time of the morning, not knowing who was on the other side. When Dad asked who was there, the reply came back, “This is the FBI—open up.” Naturally, we were all very frightened. Dad opened the door, and they came in. They arrested my Uncle Charlie and Uncle Jack because of their illegal status and took them away to be deported to Cape Verde. Mom and I were very fearful that they would take Dad also, but he had entered the country legally, thank God. Although we were saddened to see them take Uncle Charlie and Uncle Jack away, we were relieved they didn’t take Dad.

I WAS RAISED A CATHOLIC because my dad was a Catholic. I remained in the church until I was in my mid-twenties, when I became involved in the study of metaphysics and Spiritualism. The Catholic religion didn’t seem to have the answers to a lot of spiritual questions that I was asking myself. I became and still am a dabbler when it comes to religion. I investigate as many religious concepts as I can, use what I can accept from each, and discard the rest. My mother was a Methodist. I attended her church occasionally and enjoyed the black gospel singing.

Dad played the violin, guitar, and mandolin, strictly by ear. He loved the folk music of Cape Verde. Mr. Nick Santos and Mr. Manuel Perry, friends of my dad who were Cape Verdean, played these instruments also. Occasionally, they would give a dance party in our kitchen on a Saturday night. The women fried up some chicken and made potato salad. The men would get whiskey and beer and invite all their friends, Cape Verdean and American blacks, to come and have a good time. They pushed the kitchen table into a corner of the room to make way for dancing, and Dad, Mr. Santos, and Mr. Perry provided the music, playing and singing all the old Cape Verdean songs.

I was a little boy and could not stay up late to witness the festivities. Mom would put me to bed before the party started. I would go to sleep, but eventually the music would wake me up, and I’d get out of bed, wearing my pajamas with the button-down flap in the back, and go downstairs to the party and sit on the steps, looking and listening. Usually,

some of the women would see me, come over and embrace me, and bring me food to eat. Then Mom would take me upstairs and put me to bed.

MOM DIED WHEN I was nine years old. I loved my mom and my dad both, but Mom was always my favorite. I ran to greet her whenever she came home from domestic work with her shopping bag in her hand, for I knew she would have some goodies for me—cookies, candy, peanuts, sandwiches, left over from some white lady’s bridge party. I could confide in Mom and tell her things I couldn’t tell my dad, certain things I felt that he wouldn’t understand or that would get him upset. I wasn’t ashamed to tell anything to my mom, even my innermost secrets. I would sit at the kitchen table while she was cooking and pour my guts out to her. She always calmly listened and advised and comforted me if I had any problems or worries or doubts, and I would feel relieved.

Even though I loved Mom very dearly, I could be nasty sometimes, a real pain in the butt. When I went to St. Mary’s School, we had to come home and get our lunch at twelve o’clock and then go back to school at one. One time, I came home for lunch and got into some kind of an argument with Mom. I was nasty—I mean, I wasn’t cursing or anything, of course, I was just a kid—but I said some unkind things to her. And then it was time to go back to school. I got halfway there, and my conscience was bothering me so much. I wanted so bad to go back and say, “Mom, I love you. I’m sorry. Why did I say those things to you?” But if I’d done that, I would’ve been late and would have had to stay after school, so I kept going. But I felt terrible and guilty because I loved her so much.

The night she passed, she and I went to the Norwalk Theater to see a movie called *Ziegfeld Follies*, starring Fanny Brice. My brother, Gene, had come down unexpectedly to visit with us that evening, but we had already gone to the movies. My dad was home, so Gene visited with him but had to leave before we returned from the movies because he had to work the next day. When we came home, Dad told us Gene had been there. Usually, Mom and Dad slept in the same bed in the bedroom, and I slept on a couch in the living room, next to the bedroom. But on that

particular night, for some reason or other, my mother slept on the couch, and I slept in the bed with my dad.

That morning, I woke up to hear my dad crying. He came into the bedroom and said, “Son, your mother has just died.” I started crying and jumped up and ran into the living room. I knelt at the foot of the couch. She was dead. The next-door neighbors heard us crying, I guess, because they knocked on the door and came in, and we told them what had happened.

It was a big shock to both of us, because she hadn’t been sick a day. She just—bam!—went in her sleep. It was a good thing, in a way, because, much later, I was told by a psychic person that Mom had had a stroke and that if she had lived, she would have been paralyzed. She was such an active person that it would’ve been a drag for her to spend the rest of her life on earth paralyzed. So thank God she went that way, quickly. But it was a hell of a thing for me and my dad, especially for me—for my dad, too, but for a nine-year-old boy who loved his mother so much, it was hard.

I became very bitter. I was mad at God for taking my mother away from me. I rebelled and was unruly in school. I got bad grades and stayed back a year. I used to have dreams that my mom was away but would be coming back soon. Then I would wake up and realize she was not coming back, and I would lie there silently crying.

Dad raised me with the help of my great-aunt, Maude, who took on the responsibilities of motherhood for me. Aunt Maude and her husband, Uncle Nate, were very helpful to me while I was growing up. Aunt Maude was a great cook and made all kinds of goodies for me. I was a skinny, rather weak kid, and I caught all the childhood diseases—chicken pox, mumps, measles, you name it. Aunt Maude took it upon herself to fatten me up. She gave me tonics and cooked good, wholesome food for me to eat. I couldn’t have any dessert unless I ate all my dinner. She made some great desserts, so I forced myself to eat everything so I could get the dessert. Within a matter of weeks, I had gained weight and was no longer a skinny kid. She and Uncle Nate always had the family for din-

ner on holidays. She had a recipe for baked beans that all the family wanted, but she carried that secret to her grave.

Also, Aunt Maude would sit down with me and explain our family history and teach me right from wrong. She and Uncle Nate loved music, and they regularly took me to vaudeville shows in New Haven and Bridgeport, Connecticut. I was privileged to see and hear many of the big bands of that era.

WHEN I WAS A SMALL BOY—younger than seven, I believe—a white family moved next door to us. Mr. and Mrs. Parcell were hillbillies, real country folks. Their daughter, Alti, was a grown woman, but she was retarded and had the mind of a child. Mr. and Mrs. Parcell had day jobs. I don't remember much about Mr. Parcell, except that he stayed drunk most of the time. But Mrs. Parcell and Alti were the kindest and most loving people I've ever known.

When I or someone in my family got sick, Mrs. Parcell would fix an old country remedy. I remember having a bad chest cold with plenty of phlegm in my lungs. She gave my mom a bottle of skunk oil and told her to take a teaspoon of sugar, put a few drops of skunk oil on the sugar, and have me swallow it. After I did that, the phlegm in my lungs began to loosen up, and I could cough it up and spit it out.

Mrs. Parcell often cooked some good old country food and shared it with us. Alti frequently looked after me when Mom and Dad were working. She had no schooling except for what her mother taught her. She could not read or write, but she and her mom exemplified the true meaning of neighborliness—they judged people by their character and not their color or nationality.

A lady named Mrs. Cooper and her family lived down the street. She had four children, two girls and two boys, and no husband. The boys were much younger than I was, but the girls were my age and we often played together. Sometimes Mrs. Cooper would call the girls into the house and give them twenty-five cents to go to the local butcher shop for her, and I would go with them. They usually got a huge bag of either chicken feet

(the claws) or neck bones. Mrs. Cooper would cook up a large pot of chicken feet with dumplings or a pot of neck bones with beans. She really knew how to cook—I would leave my mother's steak dinner to go down to the Coopers' house to eat chicken feet and dumplings or neck bones and beans. Although they were very poor, her children never went without food. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention. It's amazing how far you can stretch a few dollars if the situation necessitates it.

OUR OTHER NEXT-DOOR neighbors were the Griffin family. Mr. and Mrs. Griffin had two daughters, Dorothy and Mildred, and a son, Jimmy. Dorothy was around my age and Mildred was a few years younger, so I used to play with them. Jimmy was a grown man in his twenties who played ragtime piano at home and in local clubs and bars. I loved to listen to him practice. The wall between our living room and theirs was very thin, and I could hear everything he played.

Whenever Dorothy got a bike or a sled or a pair of skates, I'd ask my dad to get the same thing for me. So when Dorothy started piano lessons, I asked Dad if I could take piano lessons. It was not a case of my wanting to play the piano, but a case of monkey-see-monkey-do.

My Uncle Harry, my mom's brother, had worked as a gardener for some rich white folks out in the country. They were getting ready to move from Norwalk to somewhere in the South, and they wanted to get rid of an old upright piano. Uncle Harry told Dad about it, and they found someone with a truck, went and got the piano, and brought it home.

I started taking lessons, but after about four weeks I told Dad that I wanted to quit—I found the scales and exercises I had to practice very boring. Dad said, "No, you're not going to quit. You asked for this, and you got it, and now you're going to stick with it. One day, you'll thank me for this." I most certainly do thank him for making me stick with it. As Dad used to say, "There are only two professions a black man can be successful at in this country at this particular time, and they are sports and music."

I had three piano teachers. The first was Miss Elsie, who was my Uncle Louie's girlfriend. The second was Miss Tilley, and the third was Professor William Schofield. A friend of mine, Billy Booker, was taking lessons from Professor Schofield, and Billy took me to see him in the hope that he would teach me. Professor Schofield was a pianist and organist at one of the big white churches in Norwalk. He was a great classical pianist. He had also traveled abroad accompanying opera singers.

When I met him, he asked me to play something for him. I hadn't brought any music with me, and I told him that I couldn't play anything without the music except boogie-woogie. He said "Play me some of that." I played a boogie-woogie tune I had made up called "Silver's Boogie." He liked it and agreed to take me on as a student. He charged all his white students eight dollars a lesson, but he knew that Billy Booker and I could not afford that, so he charged us each four dollars a lesson.

With all respect to my other two teachers, I learned the most from Professor Schofield. He was strict. If you didn't have your lesson prepared or if you made too many mistakes, he would holler at you or sometimes curse and crack your knuckles with a ruler. I was afraid to go to my piano lesson unprepared, for I knew he would get on my case.

As a means of earning some extra money, Dad used to cut men's hair in our kitchen on the weekends. He charged one dollar a haircut. One of his customers was a man named Bud Mills. Music was not his profession, but he played piano in the Harlem "stride" style of James P. Johnson, the great pianist and composer who mentored the likes of Thomas "Fats" Waller and Duke Ellington. After his haircut, Dad and I would ask Bud Mills to play the piano. He would oblige and then ask me to play. I was always embarrassed to play my little kiddie piano lessons for him after hearing him play à la James P.

I WAS QUITE A PRANKSTER when I was a young boy. I liked to play practical jokes on people. My dad used to take Doan's Kidney Pills to flush out his kidneys. I was in the bathroom one day when he was taking a leak,

and I saw that he was pissin' green. I asked him how come his pee was green. He said it was because of the Doan's Kidney Pills he was taking. I immediately got a bright idea.

The next day, I took some of Dad's pills, drank a lot of water, and waited until I had to take a piss. I then called to one of the neighborhood boys to come into our apartment. I bet him a dime I could pee green. He didn't believe me, so he pulled a dime out of his pocket and put it on the kitchen table. I put up my dime, and we went into the bathroom. I pulled out my johnson and proceeded to piss green. He was shocked and said I was sick and should go see a doctor. I didn't tell him I had taken Dad's pills in order to piss green; I just picked up his dime from the kitchen table and put it in my pocket.

It's a good thing I didn't repeat this episode and try to take a dime from another kid. I might have damaged my young kidneys by taking this medication when it was not needed. But I got a big kick out of pulling off this practical joke. Dad never knew that I had taken some of his pills; if he had found out, I probably would have got a spanking.

I remember playing a practical joke on Dad one April Fool's Day. I emptied all the sugar out of the sugar bowl and filled it with salt. After he ate his dinner, he had his usual cup of coffee, but this time it was with salt instead of sugar. He took one sip and spit it out. I told him I did this as an April Fool's joke, but he didn't think it was funny. I had to do a lot of talking to convince him he shouldn't give me a spanking, because it was only a joke.

WHEN I WAS ABOUT TEN years old, I fell in love with the movies, and I went to the afternoon matinee every Saturday. These matinees were geared toward kids. They always started off the program with a cartoon, followed by a feature film, usually with the Bowery Boys or the Dead End Kids. The middle of the program showed coming attractions, followed by an episode of a serial. Some of these were twelve episodes long, and some were fifteen. Among the serials I saw were *Drums of Fu Manchu*, *Dick Tracy*, *Captain Marvel*, and *The Lone Ranger*. They ended

the program with a cowboy feature film. Hopalong Cassidy was my favorite cowboy.

Once, when I had seen fourteen episodes of a fifteen-part *Lone Ranger*, I was anticipating the last episode, in which he was to be finally unmasked—a big moment for Lone Ranger fans. I asked my dad for money to go see the final episode, but he said I couldn't go. I said, "Dad, I've seen fourteen episodes of *The Lone Ranger*, and today is the final episode, in which he is going to be unmasked. Can I go, please?" He still refused.

I was very angry with him and sought revenge. I had a BB gun, and Dad had just bought a brand-new set of bedroom furniture on the installment plan from Sears and Roebuck Company. I took my BB gun and fired it at the headboard of the brand-new bed. It penetrated and left a big hole in the headboard. When Dad discovered this, he called me and said he was going to give me a beating I would never forget. He made me take all my clothes off, and he beat my behind with a leather belt. I was determined not to give him the satisfaction of making me cry. It hurt like hell, but I gritted my teeth and held the tears back.

Years later, when I became a man, I asked him one day why he hadn't let me go see the last episode of *The Lone Ranger*. He said, "You should have asked me." I said, "I did ask, but you refused. I had been a good boy and hadn't done anything wrong, but you still refused to let me go." Dad was a good, kind, loving father, but maybe he had a rough day that day and took it out on me. In any event, I made my protest and took my punishment without a whimper.

Before the age of eleven, my ambition was to become a movie projectionist, to work in the projection booth and operate the camera and see all the movies free of charge. I've always loved the movies and still do. Dad bought me a 16-millimeter silent projector one Christmas, and I used to rent cowboy movies and cartoons from the local camera shop on weekends and show them to the kids in the neighborhood. When I went to the movies, I always sat way up in the last row of the balcony and tried to peep into the projection booth to see the projectionist loading

the camera. I wished for an opportunity to go into the booth and watch the projectionist at work.

I finally got that opportunity in my early twenties, when I was working and traveling with Stan Getz. We played a week in Wildwood, New Jersey, and a projectionist who was a jazz fan came into the club to check us out. I met him and told him about my childhood ambition. He invited me to come by the cinema where he worked and watch him in the projection booth. I went, and it was very interesting to see him load a camera and switch from camera one to camera two when the film in the first camera ran out. For a smooth transition from one reel to another, a little dot appeared in the upper righthand corner of the screen notifying the projectionist to start camera two. In those days, they didn't have lamps in cameras—they used carbon rods to generate enough light to project the film. Carbon rods were effective, but they could be dangerous and could start a fire if not watched carefully.

AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN, my interest was diverted from becoming a movie projectionist to becoming a musician. It happened like this. On Sundays, Dad and I often went to an amusement park called Rowton Point, located in Rowayton, Connecticut, not far from where I lived. We had a great time, eating cotton candy and hot dogs and riding the merry-go-round, the bumper cars, and the roller coaster. We always made tracks for home when it started to get dark. I had to get to bed early because I had school on Monday.

There was a dance pavilion at Rowton Point, and every Sunday evening a famous big band would play there for dancing. One Sunday, when Dad and I were leaving the park, a big Greyhound bus with a sign that said "JIMMIE LUNCEFORD AND HIS ORCHESTRA" pulled up in the parking lot. I saw all these black musicians get out of the bus with their instruments in hand. I asked Dad if we could stay and hear them play, but he said no, because I had school the next day. I pleaded to stay and hear just one song. He consented, and we waited for them to set up and start to play.

We could not go into the dance pavilion because blacks were not allowed there. The pavilion was an enclosed structure overlooking the ocean, but it had open slats so that people outside could look through and hear the music. There were white people and black people outside, looking in and listening.

When I heard that band play, I said to myself, “That’s for me. I want to be a musician.” They turned me on. I was eleven years old when I heard the Lunceford band, and I made a vow that very night that music would be my life. I immediately became a big Jimmie Lunceford fan. I collected every record of his that I could get my hands on. I used to play his records and stand in front of the mirror in my living room with a big long stick in my right hand, pretending that I was Jimmie Lunceford leading his band. I was so wrapped up in the Lunceford band that I missed out on Duke Ellington and Count Basie and their great bands; I had to catch up with their work later on.

Although I still love the movies, there’s nothing I love more than music. Since the moment I heard the Lunceford band, I have believed that God destined me to become a musician and composer, and I’m sure glad He did. Without music, my life would be empty and void of purpose. Music gives meaning to my life. And I hope my music will bring joy and happiness into the lives of all who listen to it.

NORWALK WAS A NICE LITTLE TOWN, but it was a prejudiced town. No one was burning a cross on your lawn or lynching anybody, but the white folks would let you know you were black and should stay in your place—or the place they had designed for you as a second-class citizen. I resented this. My dad always told me that God created everybody equal and that no man was better than another because of the color of his skin.

There was one black bar and restaurant in South Norwalk at that time, and one black restaurant in Norwalk. Blacks could not eat in white restaurants. The only other places that blacks could eat were the Woolworth’s five-and-ten-cent store counter and a Japanese-owned restaurant. I liked the hot dogs at the Norwalk Diner, but if I wanted one, I

had to order it to go; I could not sit at the counter and eat it there. And blacks had to sit in the balcony at the local movie house—they could not sit downstairs.

I remember my dad telling me that he took my mother to the movies one night and sat downstairs. My mother looked so much like a white woman that when I went shopping with her, white folks would stare, as if to say, “What is that white lady doing with that black boy?” Her complexion was white, and she had long, straight hair. An usher at the movies approached Mom and Dad and said that the lady could remain downstairs, but that Dad had to sit upstairs in the balcony. Dad asked for his money back, and they both left. Even after the theater’s policy changed years later and blacks could sit anywhere, it took a lot of talking on my part to get Dad to go to the Norwalk Theater with me to see a movie.

The Catholic sisters and priests at St. Mary’s Grammar School always treated me nice. I was the only black student in the whole school. It was rough growing up as a black kid in those days. Everything in your surroundings seemed to be telling you that you were inferior to the white race. I refused to accept that concept, so consequently I was always in conflict. One of the sisters at St. Mary’s found out that I played the piano and played boogie-woogie, so she would ask me to play for the class on different occasions. I also sang in the St. Mary’s Boys Choir. But the prejudice of Norwalk people was like a dark cloud over my head. I couldn’t wait to grow up and get the hell out of there, to travel the world and be a great musician.

I was invited back to Norwalk in 1996 to be honored by the city and Norwalk High School as a graduate who had moved on to a successful life and career. I was amazed to find out that Norwalk High School now had a black principal and that his ancestry was Cape Verdean, like mine. This would never have happened in the days when I was a kid there. I used to think that the only good thing about Norwalk was that it was close to New York City—you could get to New York by train in an hour. I still carry with me a few emotional scars from Norwalk, but I have for-

given those who caused them. Norwalk and its people have grown, and I'm very proud of the progress they have made.

FROM THE TIME MY MOTHER died until I was twelve years old, I slept in the same bed with my dad. When I reached the age of twelve, Dad gave me my own room. I felt so grown up having my own room. Every Saturday, I would give it a thorough cleaning. I bought a little radio at Sears and Roebuck that cost me five dollars, so that I could enjoy some music and some of the great comedy programs, such as those with Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Eddie Cantor, Fibber McGee and Molly, The Great Gildersleeve, and Amos 'n Andy. I also enjoyed some of the dramas that came on, such as *Inner Sanctum*, *Gang Busters*, *The Fat Man*, *The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Mr. Keen*, *Tracer of Lost Persons*, and *Lux Presents Hollywood* (Lux Soap was the sponsor).

In those days, big bands would broadcast late at night from different ballrooms and nightclubs throughout the country, bands like those led by Jimmie Lunceford, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Harry James, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Guy Lombardo, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Stan Kenton, and Claude Thornhill. You could hear them on several of the major stations, so you could turn from station to station until you settled on the band of your choice. They usually started broadcasting at about eleven o'clock in the evening and went until about two A.M.

I wasn't supposed to be awake at that time of night. Dad always made me go to bed by ten P.M. at the latest. I would go to bed at ten but stay awake until eleven and then turn the radio on at a very low volume, so that Dad couldn't hear it, and scan the dial for some good music. His bedroom was on the second floor, and mine was on the third. Sometimes he'd hear my radio playing, and he would yell upstairs to me to shut it off and go to sleep. I would shut it off and wait a while, until I thought he'd gone to sleep, and then turn it back on very low, putting my ear to the speaker to hear the music.

The local Norwalk newspaper was called the *Norwalk Hour*. My family and I lived just in back of the newspaper building, at number 5 Brook Street, an old dirt alley. A brook ran through the alley, and my parents told me that if they caught me playing around that brook, I would get a spanking, because I would get hurt if I fell in. One day, I was playing with an older group of boys who were daring each other to jump from one side of the brook to the other. All of them had jumped and made it safely, and it was my turn. I was afraid, but I didn't want to be called chicken or a sissy, so I jumped, missed my footing on the other side, and fell in the brook on my back. My back ached me for about two weeks after that, but I didn't tell my parents because I didn't want to get a spanking. That fall was the cause of my spinal scoliosis, which has intermittently given me problems all my life. Chiropractic has helped me greatly through the years with this problem.

At number 5 Brook Street, we had no hot running water and no central heating. Heat came from a wood and coal stove in the downstairs kitchen and a potbellied wood and coal stove in the upstairs living room. In the winter, before we went to bed, we banked the stoves with ashes to keep the fires burning throughout the night. This kept the house reasonably warm as we slept, but often the fire would go out, and we would wake up to a freezing cold house. We'd have to start a brand-new fire with newspaper and wood and then heap on the coal. Sometimes the water pipes froze up, and Dad had to crumple up some newspapers, put them in the sink under the frozen pipes, and take a match and light the paper to get the water flowing again. As a small boy, I took a sponge bath at the kitchen sink every morning before I went to school. Every Saturday evening, I took a proper bath in a big tin tub. I had to boil the water on the kitchen stove, pour it into the tub, and then mix in some cold water to get a comfortable temperature.

Our apartment had three levels. The kitchen was in the basement. The living room and Dad and Mom's bedroom and toilet were on the second level. There were two bedrooms on the third level, one of which was mine. We had rats in the basement. They would stay out of sight in the day-

time when we were active in the kitchen, but at night when we turned out the kitchen light and went upstairs to listen to the radio, they would come out. I was deathly afraid of them. If I had to go downstairs to the kitchen at night, for whatever reason, I first stomped hard on the steps until I heard them scattering across the floor. I then would turn on the light and cautiously go downstairs.

In the summer, we had bats in our roof. The bedbugs they carried would find their way through the walls and reach our mattresses. I often woke up in the middle of the night after they had bitten me and sucked my blood. I would turn on the light and see them crawling on the bed sheet. I squeezed them between my fingers until blood popped out. Dad burned a sulphur candle in the room to try to get rid of them. It helped some but did not solve the problem.

I remember the Salvation Army bringing food baskets to our house when I was a small boy. We were poor, but I never went without a meal or warm, clean clothes to wear or medical attention when I needed it. Dad and Mom saw to that. As I look back at my childhood and compare what I had then to what I have now, I realize how far I have come and how much God has uplifted my life and blessed me through the gift of music. I now live in Malibu, California. I own my own home, and I am financially secure. My music has been and still is going forth to bring pleasure to the people of the world.

What more could I ask for?