

I Guess That's Me (A Reflection)

Foreword

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Easily amused

Foreword

My Life in Bars, my first book in this series, did not begin as part of anything, much less the third of a trilogy. It started out to be this book, the second of the three, begun in 1995 after the sale of my parent's one and only house, in Union, New Jersey.

That summer, our family gathered at my brother Robert's house in Scotch Plains, a few miles from Union. One task was distributing items from the now nonexistent family homestead. One item was a box containing hundreds of photographs my mother had been saving since the thirties. Some were memories captured in time. Others recreated lost events, places, and people. Still others generated the question, "Does anyone know who these people are?"

As we sorted through the piles, I began to notice a pattern. All the photographs of me displayed different hairstyles. Not some. Not a few. All. I gathered these into my own pile as the rest of the family sorted others into their own needs and curiosities. After I had plucked a dozen or so, I pointed out my hairstyle anomaly to our

gathering. A year later, I'd added many more such photos from dozens of my own unorganized assortment. I had no recollection of this strange preoccupation with rearranging my coiffure. Since I couldn't easily explain it to myself, I thought it might be interesting to explain it to others.

The Great Haircut Mystery! A book about haircuts? Nah. My next impulse was a book that had nothing to do with the photos, merely using them as interesting pictures unrelated to the text. But what text? Something—it seemed appropriate—about me. But what? I had neither need nor compulsion to write an autobiography. Presumptuous, is what I thought. I could, however, write observations based on my experiences and somehow *My Life in Bars* took shape. My whim to use these unrelated photos vanished like the siblings in the photo from *Back to the Future*. No longer relevant to the direction *My Life* had taken, these photos continued hanging around in the background. As I wrote that book, they stayed vaguely in mind, dimly nagging my writer's subconscious.

In the natural process of writing *My Life*, I accumulated many stories that didn't fit the subject. Never one to throw away anything of possible value, I realized I could adapt many of them to my collection of strange haircut photos—the germ of this book. The idea for the next book appeared as soon as I saw I had two books loosely labeled as autobiographical. What was missing, after I conceived the first two, you'll see when I write book three, *Borderline Genius*.

As this is a foreword, I should apologize for even the whisper of the "A" word. If this book were part two of an autobiography, then people should expect it to follow the years of the first book. However, these three books have no chronological connection. The first covers my birth to the time of its writing, and this one—if it were the next book in a normal autobiography—should pick up where the previous left off. Sorry, and this is why I must prepare

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you here, before you begin reading this book, for my particular (if not downright peculiar) approach to writing about myself.

This book, *I Guess That's Me*, is the second of three different views of my life. The first used the perspective from places called bars. This one employs the above-mentioned photos, remembered images, and my reactions. These are descriptions of how I appear to the world and to myself. The third will take still a different approach. The three overlap in time. If this formula works, the three will harmonize. If not, each may survive on its own. Each book is, if you will, an exercise in taking one point of view, holding it up to the light, and seeing how much of the world it reveals.

Some people think they know how they appear to the world, how others see them. Some work very hard to create an appearance, a persona, for the world. This, they believe, is how they're actually perceived. Usually they are wrong. I do none of these things because, in truth, I have no idea how I appear to the world. That's what this book is about, appearances, a look in the mirror. It's not who I think I am or who I say I am. It's just an attempt to describe how I appear—to myself and to others.

Some words (since they still apply) from *My Life In Bars*:

This book, and I, are what we are because of everyone we've ever known. Obviously, the closer the relationship, the greater the influence. Parents, relatives, friends, and strangers have all assisted in that order. If these pages don't do justice to their contributions, the fault is mine.

Enough preface, let's find out who this kid is already.

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