
Chapter Thirty Seven

The Truth Belongs to the Teller.

Visiting JV and Susan Varney

Two rounds at Ohio State University Scarlet course

(Saturday and Sunday - May 31-June 1)

Saturday at “The House” sponsored by
RDP Foodservice, Corazon Club & Spa, ConstructionOne,
Four Points Real Estate and others.

“Lies, Lies, Lies,” Jim insists that my accounts are fictional. Jim Varney (JV) probably doesn’t appreciate Mark Twain who said “I tell the truth, mainly.” Besides, I say, “The truth belongs to the teller.” As the teller, I will call ‘em like I see ‘em every time.

My mother used to own the truth. Growing up, she’s say things like “Greg is the best navigator...Dan is so sensitive... Rob is a hard worker...Wes is the oldest of the four” (whatever that means). It’s hard to know if these are self-fulfilling prophecies or, left unchallenged, generally accepted as truth.

Sometimes, traditions happen. What started as a home and away series of visits between St. Louis and Columbus, has now evolved into an annual golf classic. Over the past decade, trip highlights have included: Ohio State Football (vs. Mizzou 1998 – I still have the ticket stub), Flying Pizza, Inter-league Baseball (St. Louis vs. Cleveland), hacking up Gordy’s country club, completing 18 holes at Gary Player designed Tapawingo minutes before a lightning storm, Missouri Bluffs where JV tried to talk to my boy Ben about Tempo, Annbrier in Illinois (“Hold my club, will ya?” JV asked. “No thanks I’m not your frickin’ caddy”), Normandie (JV broke his 8 iron on a tree there), Black Hawk and Cook’s Creek (Susan, Jim’s wife used to

work there). Jim and Susan have been married nine years. Has it really been that long?

Jim prefers home-field advantage and thereby has sweetened the deal for me to travel to Columbus. We'll get VIP All Access passes to "The House" adjacent to hole #17 and a around the corner from hole #18 at Muirfield Village Golf Course. And we'll get passes to Jack Nicklaus' Memorial Golf Tournament. But wait, there's more - two rounds at OSU (scarlet course), which is in tournament condition, a site for U.S. Open qualifying. Top it off with a case of Heineken beer in the garage fridge with my name on it. For-get-about-it, I'm there.

Kenny Perry's third win at the Memorial was handed to him on Sunday. His playing partner in the last group, Jerry Kelly, made it interesting when he missed a putt no longer than a club length on #17. Perry won by 2 strokes and Kelly finished in a four way tie for second place. JV was betting Perry all the way. "He loves this course." (True enough. Wouldn't you, if you won over 3 million bucks playing here?)

How ironic (and cruel) is it that the woman that monopolized the truth for so many years in my life, now has lost her grasp of it. My Mom was a woman who, by her own admission, was an A student because of her memory. She was an actress in community theater productions and could learn lines in no time. As a Director, she could even step into a supporting role when a player could not go on due to illness. (I saw her do it in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* at Clague Playhouse. She effortlessly transformed herself into a Nun in that production.)

I wasn't always a fan of Mom's version of the truth. Given to theatrics and drama, she could distort facts at times. I accepted that, I think, because she toned it down some after my brother Sundance (formerly James O'Connell Morgan Jr.) and my sister Lynn had there formative years. (My brother and sister are 11 and 3 years older than me, respectively.)

Lynn is Jim's Mom. Jim's house contains the most representative collection of my father's paintings. At least two of which were acquired in a shrewd exchange that backfired

on the seller of the Key Biscayne Allendale house. Thank God. Those painting would be in someone's basement by now had JV not intervened. The guy actually thought Dad would sit out in the hot Florida sun at an Art Fair and hand over the proceeds (however modest). Sad but true – maybe. I'm glad JV put the painting in his trunk and drove 'em back to Ohio.

Lynn's apartment on Slade Avenue is full of museum-like artifacts too. Family pictures, water colors and stuff that has managed to stay with her through moves: Edgewater Drive, Mars Avenue, Bay Village to the Berkshire Apartment and now Columbus.

It's hard to fathom how one of my Mom's rings would become part of Jack's stool – Well not the ring – just the stone (which is coincidentally Netti's birthstone). Okay I can't verify this as fact – but the ring was tied to Jim and Susan's beagle for safe keeping. (Lynn thought that was a safe place for it.) I prefer to think he swallowed – processed it...and pooped it.

Dan and Nettie were good enough to drive down from their Farm in northeast Ohio to visit on Sunday afternoon. It was a lovely chat made even lovelier with Susan's grilled chicken followed by blackberry cobbler for dessert. (The cobbler had been partially devoured by JV earlier in the day. "I was going to put a note on it – DO NOT EAT," Susan said, but she was not at all surprised that Jim dove in to that treat before Lynn, Dan and Netti arrived.)

We were set to watch the dramatic conclusion of the Memorial on TV on Sunday, but it was clear that Nettie wasn't even up to faking an interest in the PGA event. So we made our way to the deck in back of the house. Lynn, Susan, and Jim sat down. Dan settled into a spot and Netti and I sat next to each other on the outdoor couch-swing. Dan, my little brother, is going to be 50 this year. Yikes, Rob will be 49 this year. How can this be? By 50 or so you would think the Morgan kids could get some sort of handle on things. (The truth?)

The good, the bad, the ugly. We all have vivid memories. Collateral damage happens when we try to get our wives

(spouses) to listen to the absolute truth of it all. (Like a car crash at an intersection. The observers at each of the corners will all provide a true (but inconsistent account). Usually the police and insurance companies have to sort out. (Six children and 11 marriages – allows for exponential possibilities on “the truth.”)

Edgewater Drive was a kind of Camelot. The Morgan Mystique was Kennedy-esque. Black Lincoln Continental in the garage (with suicide doors) and all of the trappings of a Hyannisport compound. (Our compound was in Lakewood, Ohio - on Lake Erie though.) The facts include open charge accounts at Charlie Geiger’s sporting goods and clothing store, Rosie’s Winehouse deliveries, a Baby Grand piano, 15 foot ceiling-heights in the living room, The Cleveland Yachting Club (CYC), Cleveland Browns Season Tickets (going back to the days before Jimmy Brown quit to become a Hollywood actor). And yet the historical accounts are flawed. (Because we – the tellers - are all flawed human beings).

Jim has so many fond memories of the Morgan compound. He is sweet and emotional about the time he spent with his uncles. (I’m flattered by that.) He was a baby in that house – more like a baby brother than a nephew now. He has a fondness for the good life but he’s smart enough to stay within his means. JV is trading stocks and teaching himself about the market. He invests up to 60 hours a week on this pursuit. He’s reading charts and reaching out to dozens of experts and fellow traders on-line. (I hope he strikes oil and/or hits the jackpot. I really do.)

The Columbus Dispatch is full of headlines about the mortgage crises and speculation about how many people will lose their homes to foreclosure. They have a beautiful house with a pool. Susan does the landscaping and cuts the grass. It’s one of the prettiest houses in the neighborhood. They are “Livin’ the dream.”

“Livin’ the Dream,” is something we heard Russ say a lot on Sunday. Russ graduated from Ohio State in 1974. His pal Mark joined us on the tee box. Mark works for alumni relations. He

works for two-time Hiesman Trophy winner Archie Griffin (1974, 1975). It's fun to meet people this way. During a four and a half hour round you are bound to learn something about your fellow golfers. Mark was a wrestler in college at Wisconsin. (He has cauliflower ears but no "crazy eyes.") Russ' life has been touched by tragedy. His son was in a car accident that left him brain damaged but functional. The boy is living independently now. My guess: Russ is not exactly Livin' the Dream but he's making the best of things.

I guess you have to count your blessings. Be grateful for what you do have. It's all kind of relative. Sitting at the Corazon Spa overlooking the pool and small lake on a sunny afternoon in the middle of Ohio may not be La Jolla, California or Palm Beach but for that moment we are "Living the Dream." I can almost hear the live band playing Jim Morrison and the Doors extended version of L.A.Woma.

Well, I just got into town about an hour ago
Took a look around, see which way the wind blow
Where the little girls in their Hollywood bungalows

Are you a lucky little lady in the City of Light
Or just another lost angel...City of Night
City of Night, City of Night, City of Night, woo, c'mon

L.A. Woman, L.A. Woman
L.A. Woman Sunday afternoon
L.A. Woman Sunday afternoon
L.A. Woman Sunday afternoon
Drive thru your suburbs
Into your blues, into your blues, yeah
Into your blue-blue Blues
Into your blues, ohh, yeah

Mr. Mojo Risin', Mr. Mojo Risin'
Mr. Mojo Risin', Mr. Mojo Risin'
Got to keep on risin'
Mr. Mojo Risin', Mr. Mojo Risin'

Mojo Risin', gotta Mojo Risin'
Mr. Mojo Risin', gotta keep on risin'
Risin', risin'
Gone risin', risin'
I'm gone risin', risin'
I gotta risin', risin'
Well, risin', risin'
I gotta, wooo, yeah, risin'
Woah, ohh yeah

Jim Morrison died in Paris, France on July 3, 1971, in his bathtub at the age of 27. Fans and biographers have speculated that the cause of death was a drug overdose. The official report listed "heart attack" as the cause of death.

Sometimes It's hard to know the truth. Maybe it's just better to go through telling yourself that you are "Livin the Dream."