

Jim's Perspective...

Card Club

Janie and I hosted Card Club a few weeks ago. The Card Club consists of six couples. All six couples have been together in this Card Club for over 40 years! Pretty amazing that six couples can all stay together in the same town and play a card game together roughly once a month for that many years! Actually, the host couple chooses the game for the evening. While we call our gathering "Card Club" we also played other types of games such as "charades" or "name that tune." We all grew up in the 1950's and 1960's. Three of the couples went to Catholic schools and three of the couples went to public schools. We all got to know each other in school or through social activities in Lincoln.

Our card game for Card Club at our house recently was actually a form of bridge. There were three card tables with four people at each table. All cards are dealt out to the four players except the last card is turned over, face up, in the middle of the table, and this card signifies the trump suit for the bridge game. This card is then placed in the dealer's hand and the player to the left of the dealer starts the game and plays the first card. Every trick a player takes counts as one point. We keep playing at each table until all four players have dealt the cards. Each player adds up their total points which are maintained on a bridge tally. After the four hands are played, each player moves to another table as set forth on the bridge tally. We played two more rounds of four-hands of bridge. What is neat about this game, is no one has to figure out how to bid their hand!

For this Card Club event, I added an additional activity to look at and discuss during the evening. I have collected and saved all of my issues of Rolling Stone Magazine dating from March 30, 1972 through March 22, 1979. The March 30, 1972 issue arrived at our apartment roughly four months after we were married. Everyone had a lot of fun recalling and visiting about some of the rock and roll singers and bands from the 1960's and 1970's found in the magazines. In my March 30, 1972 issue there is an article about Atlantic Records and their new idea of producing some vinyl records that consisted of old rock and roll big hits from past years. The Rolling Stone article included a discussion of some of these artists on these historical vinyl records. It included:

Eddie Cochran, *Summertime Blues*.

Fats Domino, *Blue Berry Hill*.

Jan & Dean, *Dead Man's Curve*, *Little Old Lady From Pasadena*.

Ricky Nelson, *Travelin' Man*, *Poor Little Fool*.

Al Green, *Let's Stay Together*.

Bread, *Baby I'm-A Want You*.

Jimi Hendrix, *Purple Haze*, *Hey Joe*.

I also displayed for Card Club the 10th Anniversary issue of Rolling Stone (December, 1977) which included pictures of many famous rock and roll stars from the ten years that Rolling Stone had been published. The pictures were all taken by Annie Leibovitz who I remember from her

years at Rolling Stone. Annie started working as a photographer at Rolling Stone in 1970 at age 20. Her first cover photo for Rolling Stone was John Lennon.

One other Rolling Stone magazine that I showed to Card Club members, was a March, 1979 issue which included an 11 page interview with the famous Nebraskan, Johnny Carson. I finish with a few excerpts from that interview:

Well, what was your first exposure to something funny while growing up?

Gee, that's tough, I've never really thought about that. I was always involved, even in grade school, in school plays or just screwing up or being silly in front of an audience. Maybe it was a self-defense type of thing, but I can remember doing that clear into high school.

I remember once in grade school - this won't sound funny now, but I thought it was very funny then - we had to do a fifty-word speech . . . on dogs. I can still remember it, and I got up and just recited names of dogs. It's not funny now, but at the time it was successfully silly.

I wrote a column for the school newspaper in high school, called "Carson's Corn."

You have become so much a part of this culture. This sounds very sentimental, but if there's nothing going on, on a weeknight, and your home, and there's very little to look forward to, you can always turn on The Tonight Show and see you.

That's flattering. I think one of the things is that we're about the only show that does day-to-day humor. There's no other show that does it. Saturday Night Live is on three times a month; they do sketches. The monologue [performed by Johnny at the beginning of The Tonight Show], for example, to me is a very integral part of the show. Being out there every night, it's the only show that I know of on television where anybody is commenting on what's going on in the country every single day.

[The question (too long to type it all out), with the answer below, involves a book, *The Human Comedy*, written by William Saroyan, and it relates to when you know you are making transitions in life. When did Johnny transition to being a comedian in front of an audience?]

I know what Saroyan's saying. There comes a time or a moment, I don't know whether you can say it precisely, when you know which direction you're going to go. Even when you're young.

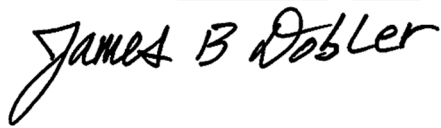
But you don't know why exactly. I know it happened to me when I was quite young.

You go through those phases - "I'll be a doctor or I'll be . . ." - the standard things. But I think it's when you find out, at least for me, that you can get in front of an audience and be in control. I think that probably happened in grade school, fifth or sixth grade, where I could get attention by being different, by getting up in front of an audience or even a group of kids and calling the attention to myself by what I did or said or how I acted. And I said, "hey, I like that feeling."

How many of us can recount or have a good idea of when we transitioned into what we are today? It can involve more than one specific event. It might involve a series of experiences which moved our lives in a certain direction. In another book that I read, these moments of transition are called "nuclear moments."

Fun to read about Johnny Carson in the Rolling Stone Magazine. Johnny was born in Iowa, but grew up in the Norfolk, Nebraska area. Johnny attended the University of Nebraska. He was a member of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity, which went by the nickname "Fiji house." I had some very good friends in this fraternity which was located one house west of my fraternity house, Beta Theta Pi. My Fiji friends had some great stories about Johnny from the time that he lived at the Fiji house in the late 1940's. Johnny was often the subject of many discussions at social events! His reputation at the house lived on for many years!

Everyone at Card Club always watched The Tonight Show back in the late 1960's, and thereafter until Johnny retired from the show in 1992. Johnny was 79 when he died at his home in Los Angeles.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James B Dobler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jim Dobler, CPCU

PIA Legislative Coordinator

Questions or Comments? Please email jbdobler@outlook.com

