

OCTOBER 1998

Trident: Three Nano-Stories From the Book of Life

STORY ONE

My daughter... Yes, I know, I know. You are all saying to yourselves, "Stephen St.Croix is far too young to have a daughter." Well, you're right, I am far, far too young. Roger Nichols is certainly old enough, but not me. But I have one nevertheless. She came as part of a special promotional deal with her mother. Sort of one of those Two-for-the-Price-of-Ten deals.

Anyway, one day Daughter (whom we'll call Lauren) came running up to me in typical manic abandon, crashed into me, climbed up my chest and yelled in my ear, "Do you know Steven Tyler?"

I was stunned, impressed and validated. My little Lauren, with wisdom beyond her 11 years, was aware of Aerosmith! This almost restored the faith in mankind that I lost a decade ago (see next story).

So anyway, Lauren asks, "Well, do ya?" I say I am impressed that she even knows who the band is, much less Steven. I start to ask her how she... But I am intercepted with a second excited, "Well, do ya?"

I ask why, and get, "I just read that Steven Tyler knows Zak Hanson!" I hold my breath in disbelief. "Do you think he could ask Zak for his autograph for me?" comes out next, the one-two punch bringing me to my knees.

She has her room plastered with pictures of Zak Hanson. I found a 2,000-year-

Suggested Soundtrack

"Dark Side of the Moon"
Pink Floyd

old Farrah Fawcett poster in my basement last month. Now come on—you know the poster, don't you? You can see it. Admit it, so we can move on.

NEXT STORY

I once found myself lying on an isolated tropical white sand beach next to a young woman whose beauty even the mosquitoes respected enough to leave unpunctured. In a charming effort to strike up a conversation, she looked over and sweetly said that she had recently heard that Paul McCartney was once in a band before Wings, and had I (being in the music business) ever heard that rumor.

LAST STORY

Some time ago, I found myself on the north shore of Kauai, in a place called Princeville. As I sat in the outrageous condo on the cliffs, drinking wine while dinner was being prepared, I watched—through a glass floor—the sun set in the surf under us. A gecko scurried across the glass and stopped directly in front of the half-set sun, creating the perfect organic Hawaiian graphic. I had a Steinberger hooked up to a little Zoom, and from my earphones flowed what I felt was the perfect mellow, bluesy tribute. As the sun dove ever deeper into the crashing surf below me, I played myself to sleep—that special secure, warm, peaceful sleep you can only get when you pay too many thousands to vacation

in a place that makes you forget what your life is really like back home. I remember my last thought before fading out was maybe I should just pack it up and stay there for a few years. Having had that thought before, on the isle of St. Croix and a few other places, and having actually done it, every time I think it again, there is the added rush of knowing I might actually do it—yet again.

The next morning I awoke preoccupied with the view through the glass floor and decided that I should see the entire island through a glass floor, since I was considering making it my home. So I dropped by the local tourist helicopter joint to check out the options. Pretty dismal—big old loud Rangers packed with big old loud hung-over tourists, giggling and shouting in fear and loathing—not part of the Magic Dragon I was here for!

But as I started to leave the tarmac, I saw a nice, tiny, new A-Star fly in, doing 50 knots at about 15 feet. Now this was more like it—small, powerful, very quiet, and both the pilot and co-pilot sit in a transparent bubble that extends all the way under their feet. My glass floor to the world. It took some time to convince the desk that I really wanted this bird, early in the morning, with a real pilot—maybe the one that had just brought her in. They warned me that though the A-Star was the newest, most maneuverable and by far quietest bird they had, the only guy who flew it was, um... well, he was, um... perhaps not the best choice for tourists. I took it. How could I not?

Days later (he only flew on certain days at certain hours that he picked), I got a sunrise call saying it was time. As I drove past endless surf crashing on endless lush beaches, I realized that perhaps I should

FEEDBACK

Based on a True Story

I'm in total agreement with the overall concept of Stephen St. Croix's "Three Nano-Stories From the Book of Life." Stephen, I too have an 11-year-old daughter who hits me with those kind of threaded questions that make you shake your head. I also think I met that same "tropical white sand beach young girl" in St. Croix (or was it St. Martin, Orient Beach?) just as a 12-inch mix that I did almost 20 years earlier, and had forgotten about, played in the distance from the French-speaking Tiki beach bar.

Indeed, you are so correct. "You experience life as you hear the music, and so it becomes a living part of that experience—forever. What amazing stuff is music." Great records can be ten times greater when they are glued to reality. Stephen, excellent writing, and I could not agree with you more.

Thanks!

Gene Leone

have at least asked to meet this pilot at some point before now, and that maybe my best move was to stop and catch a wave, and simply blow off the flight. But as soon as I thought it, I was there.

I turned into the lot, got out and went into the office, where a young woman greeted me with a form that released them from any responsibility for anything under any conditions. She said the form for the other pilots was much smaller. What the hell? Though you may die a thousand deaths, you only live once. I swallowed. I signed. I sat down. I had to.

After half an hour or so, the front door opened—the same door I had come in—and time folded back onto itself in a way that sent a cold chill down my spine all the way to the coffee in my cup. Before me stood the quintessential stereotypical combat pilot. It was instantly clear that nobody had dared to tell him 'Nam was in the past, nor that scotch leaves stains, Hanalei spliffs don't look enough like cigarettes to leave them sticking out of your pocket, or that you can buy coffee with little plastic covers on the cup so you don't shake the contents out before you can drink it. I glanced over to the woman who had originally scared the hell out of me with the release forms but who now, by comparison, felt like my lifelong friend and confidant. She understood and did that slow, microscopic, left-right, lowered-head sweep that says, "don't..." I didn't.

I didn't ask, I didn't talk. I also didn't stand, or, now that I think about it, breathe. Pilot said nothing, walked directly up to me and then said with some effort, "Let's go." These were obviously the first words he had spoken that day. I looked up and found myself looking directly into the leather face and silvered Captain's Ray-Bans of the twisted cinder of skill that I had just signed up with. He looked hauntingly like a cross between Jeff Baxter in the Doobie days, and Dennis Hopper in Easy Rider. He wore camouflage. For the first time ever, I could actually relate to those silly people on Hollywood Boulevard who lock their car doors when I pull up next to them at a light on the Harley.

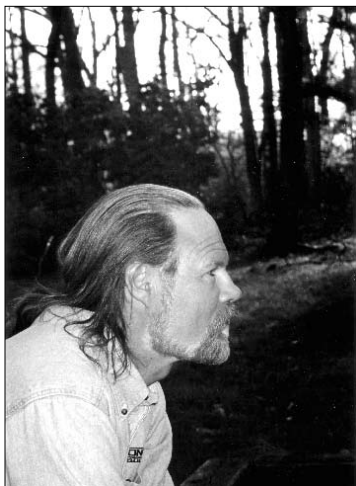
Well, I finally stood up. He turned his back to me and walked out the door. A quick glance to my new Spirit Guide returned a small head-nod toward that door, so I followed. We walked up to the chopper, and he said, "Back or front? Most like the back. It's a little less scary." What could I do? I told him front, of course. I was, after all, a pilot myself. He nodded and pulled himself into the pilot's seat. I walked around and did it the same way in the co-pilot position. He did a pretend pre-flight, looked at me, and said, "Rotary?" I answered, "No, fixed wing." He thought for a second, and then responded with, "I'll fly you for free if you can tell me when we leave the ground."

What a deal! This thing is all glass. I can see the skids on the ground right under my feet. "You got it," I say back, not taking my eyes off the skids for a second. "You lose," he says. What? I look down even harder, and the skids are still on the ground, I have felt no liftoff, but... the shadows are wrong, and getting more wrong. We are about 15 feet above the tarmac, pulling away in a backward peel. Nice trick. I felt nothing. Okay, so this guy can fly.

"Where do you want to go?" Oh, what the hell do I know about where to go? "Where do you want to go?" "Okay. Music?" "Uh, yeah. Whatcha got?" "I got the right music..."

We pitched starboard, leveled out at 15 feet, and tore out over an endless plain, straight into the rising sun. Pink Floyd joined us with... The Dark Side of the Moon.

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Ahhh. It was all starting to come together now. As the music built in its own smoky, Quaalude way, cows loomed at the horizon. I looked over at the pilot, but as near as I could tell, he was asleep, so I didn't bother him. Dark Side got bigger. So did the cows.

Just as we got over (actually, into) the cows, Floyd exploded, cows scattered, and the earth ended. Big Time. The plain was history, and our cruising altitude went from 15 feet to 3,100 feet in a little under one second. Floyd knew. As the bottom dropped away, the viscous swimming fullness of the music held and supported us and then gently eased us into the depths of the red clay canyon, which looked remarkably like... the dark side of the moon.

We flew under and through waterfalls, between green cliffs and over fractal black sand shores. We flew to a grassy shear drop, where he—this is literal, it actually happened—mowed the grass with the rotor blade tips so we could see the local mountain goats hiding within! Floyd played along, perfectly. They were there, with me again as they had been for so many flights decades before.

This, my friends, was truly a profound experience. One of those that changes you forever. Life imitating Art imitating Life. A convoluted hybrid of music and reality that can never be separated into its original components. Music underscoring the beauty and majesty of this planet while the fear of death welds it into my memory for all time. And realizing that this feeling is known by others—why else would the pilot have planned, practiced and timed this to transform a big bad guy like me into a humble, teary-eyed, silent observer of the grandeur of it all? Why else would Floyd have recorded this? It was perfection. Loud, expensive, scary fossil-fuel technology aside, it was organic beauty beyond my ability to fully absorb.

And why tell you about it here, in Mix? Because the music held it together, both wrapping me in familiarity while establishing the exact pace at which the wonders before me would unfold. Like a parent holding the hand of his child on his first walk into the world, the music provided the protection and set the pace. There was nothing to do but experience it.

The power of music. Music is a statement that the creator makes, showing the listener that he understands. He calls on your past, a common past, to evoke emotional reaction. You experience life as you hear the music, and so it becomes a living part of that experience—forever. What amazing stuff is music. How deeply woven it is into the fabric of our lives. Amazing. Just amazing.

P.S. The helicopter place, as did most others, went away shortly after this ride, as accidents forced tighter controls and insurance rates became unbearable. But it comes back every time I hear Floyd.

If you sit Shakespeare down in front of a typewriter long enough, he would eventually write a monkey sound.