My Unresolved Life

If you’ve ever heard Billy Joel’s achingly beautiful song “And So It Goes,” it’s played very simply with just piano and vocal. Although the song’s lyrics talk about a man who is giving his heart to a woman knowing she’s going to break it (and in fact it was written about his short-lived relationship with model Elle MacPherson, who was 19 while he was 34), the most interesting thing about the song for me is the music itself. The song is full of unresolved chords—intentionally dissonant chords, which then with the addition of the “correct” notes are resolved. If you listen to the song, listen to the piano chords for the first stanza—“In every heart, there is a room….” And at the word room, he hits an unresolved chord, then drops into the notes half a beat later that resolve the chord. Those notes complete the chord, if you will. The song is full of them, and it ends with a bar of perfectly resolved chords. All is then right with the music world. (Not so much for the relationship between Elle MacPherson and Billy Joel…..)

Like most everyone, my life has been full of unresolved chords. Issues, ambitions, desires, and relationships that wound up at a point of dissonance and left me needing resolution. Sometimes it’s that I didn’t know how to handle, where to turn, how to go forward. Through fortune, determination, or Providence, nearly all of them resolved. The latest one is the problem, however. When I retired from Southwest Airlines I did so with the intent of writing, full-time, and making money at it. A double rainbow and the “inner voice” played a large part in me making that decision. I always thought that was some sort of sign. Yet I never found the discipline to see the task through—so at least for a time I flunked retirement, and that’s how I wound up working at the hotel. And while it’s been a lot of fun, the chords of my life have been increasingly dissonant with no definitive resolution. I knew I wanted to write. But how, and what about my hobby-job at the hotel?

So a couple of months ago, we spent four glorious days in one of my favorite places, San Francisco, celebrating my birthday and the one-year anniversary of my retirement from “my” airline. After three days of frolic, I was going to take the Cable Car over the hill to North Beach for a nice breakfast. I was running late, but as I’m walking past the line of people waiting to board so that I can get my ticket, an elderly black homeless man sitting in the sun looks straight at me and says “Hey! You sleep late or something? I been waiting for you! I need to tell you something.”

I wanted to ignore him but something told me to stop. “I’m sorry? Are you talking to me?” “Yeah, you!“ he replied. “Let me just axe you—why you ain’t writin’?? You know that’s what you’re s’posed to be doin’ but you ain’t doin’ it!” I felt like someone had hit my ass with an electric cattle prod. “Most folk don’t get even one sign, let alone two. You better pay attention! You don’t want to piss you-know-who off!” By now people were looking, whispering, and pointing. All I could think to do was turn around and head back to my hotel. Quickly.

As I passed the Burger King right up the street I heard him yell after me “Don’t you forget what I told you, now!!” I turned the first corner and, breathing heavily, went into first bar I saw and ordered a nice double Bloody Mary and think about what had just happened.

So, I’m significantly downsizing my time commitment at the hotel, and spending a lot more time writing here at thebillowen.com as well as on three books that I’m working on. The chord of my life is still unresolved but now I know which notes are needed for my resolution!

Please come back frequently. I plan on at least two updates to this page and to the food page per week (take THAT, Ree Drummond!!). Updates to the Gaming page as well as the Travel page at least once a week. The comments section is now useable without having to joining WordPress, and I’ve got a firm that is going to help me with Search Engine Optimization. That beautiful resolving note is coming soon! I’ll update this page on Monday, Memorial Day, May 25.