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GOLFNOTES

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SHAME TIME, NEXT YEAR

In his 70's, Allan Grim admitted he had stage fright and no talents, and was self-conscious. Why would he try to perform every year in the Capon Springs Talent Show?



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**Elvis Presley,
Indiana Jones,
Snow White,
Andrea Bocelli,
Professor Kingsfield,
and a few other
big names,
try to play
Capon Springs**

Martin J.H. Povser

I'll never forget the book cover. A man lies dead on his back next to a lectern. Although this book wasn't a mystery, most people would know the man was murdered. They'd also know his killer.

Part I

The act for which people would rather die

I will never forget the book cover. A man lies dead on his back next to a lectern. Although this book wasn't a mystery, most people would know the man was murdered. They would also know his killer. Why they'd know was confirmed a few years ago. A survey asked college students their greatest fears. Some of their choices were heights, dying, poverty, robbery, flying, and deep water. The worst one of all was "speaking in public."

College students aren't alone in this fear. Most of us seem to confess it too. We'll watch and listen to a speaker. Just don't make us get up there and do the talking. How many times have you heard someone say they would rather die than say anything in front of a group? It's odd to utter but common to hear. You thought that death was a force to avoid. Yes, it is, but society puts it below public speaking. My guess is that it passed death and became number one when our ancestors stopped grunting and growling and began grouping and growing into graspable sounds. Groan. In his standup act, Jerry Seinfeld questions the dread of dying's rank below public speaking. That means "if you have to go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy."

Can it get any worse for some of us? Having to express words while conveying thoughts in front of our fellow beings is hard enough. Let's say you must present a speaker, or at Thanksgiving, Grandma says, "Why don't you say Grace for us." These are tougher. But they are only words spoken. To *perform* in front of an audience surpasses

them all. It requires special, added skills that test the person so brave to try it. If the actions on stage are to sing, act, or be funny—much more daunting. Only a morsel of humanity wants to be near the stage, except to watch, admiringly. To entertain and impress the squirming crowd, we see only stares, and scowls, and instant verdict (Guilty of Bombing). It's not for me or you to even try. Told we must sing, act, or do comedy, most of us would sprint to our death.

The popular term for our terror is stage fright. It comes from that fight-or-flight concept we learned in psychology. It began when we were rumbling, mumbling cave men with clubs, fretting over survival, a warm hovel and food. Although we would readily do so then, today we rarely take off and run. In front of a group, it's unthinkable. Unlike ancient days, we are also less likely to club anyone in the audience. So we are left standing, naked while clothed, wanting to hide but without a closet, alone in a vast room full of people. We are present but not yet accounted for, dying without a priest, wishing for a lawyer with our will and a pen, and drowning in a pool without water. When we must speak, we are uncertain what will emerge from our mouths Will it come from our lungs via our voice box or from our stomach?

We know it as stage fright. Mental health people call it performance anxiety. When it afflicts us, we also suffer other shame the group out there may observe. They can include—



Racing pulse
Rapid breathing
Dry mouth
Tight throat
Trembling hands, knees, lips, and voice
Sweaty and cold hands
Nausea and an uneasy feeling in our stomach
Vision changes
Blushed face

At some time we all must face a group, introducing, announcing, presenting, speaking, hosting, or performing. It may be as brief as informing the gathered, introducing a speaker, or toasting a friend at a wedding. It might even be a small group or one person who commands the power of a group, as in a job interview. It can even arise suddenly when you are among friends. You just thought of a great joke and you yearn to tell it. When you realize, Oh, no! the position you put yourself in, you fumble the words or they hide within your quaking mouth. Since you can't run from the table, floor, stage, lectern, or podium, you stay. The result is one or more of the physical symptoms from that wretched list. Or, your body mortifies you even worse with a panic attack.

These results may plaster us common folks with anxiety. What about the people we worship who must regularly appear in public? Surely they have conquered the stress and reached a haven of peace? No, they suffer too and more than you know. Thomas Jefferson gave only two

speeches, both inaugural addresses in his eight years as President. In his late 50's, consummate actor Sir Laurence Olivier had it for five years. Dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov suffered and he never uttered a word. Vladimir Horowitz, probably the most acclaimed pianist of the late 20th century retired four times over it, once for twelve years. Barbra Streisand botched her lyrics in her famous 1967 Central Park concert. Except for some charity events, she refused to perform live for 27 years. And, would you believe, brash and funny Bette Midler? She has confessed that she coveted to be a dramatic actress but lacked the courage.

Solo performers have it worst. Actors usually have other actors to support and cue their lines and actions. Many youngsters in classic music training practice several hours a day. Yet their social maturity stagnates with their lonely settings. Thus, they may lack confidence to go in front of an audience. Today a perfectionism has invaded much of our society. Pushy parents badger their green, unfocused children into constant stress. They must perform in public and the nervous youngster feels the pressure to prove their excellence.

**Sir Laurence Olivier,
Stage Frighter**



Coping with stage fright has spawned dubious cures. Drugs, mostly beta-blockers, have been tried. They only ease the physical symptoms of anxiety. You may not hear your heart pound but you still think you'll blunder. Mental and behavioral exercises abound, few with any science to support them. Cognitive behavioral therapy

might help to avoid your bad thoughts. Yoga and meditation can soothe your breathing, guiding you to positive thoughts and deeper realms.

What's the fuss? Isn't it normal or desirable to don a suit of nerves when we perform? Must we have butterflies to do better? Can you be indifferent and excell? Relaxed and carefree? For a few, just another day at the office. Some performers feel a moral duty to their audience. They paid for you to give them your practiced best. If you're being paid, don't you have a professional obligation to do well? What about your personal pride? Some performers think if they're tense, they're serious about their work. Others are more blithe. They say, no one will die, so relax. Easy for them to say, humph those who were in the spotlight and thought they would. Have those calm people even tried doing it themselves?

On the downside, a few see the throngs as not watching a show; they're glaring at a flop. No, reply the cheerful and positive. Take an able musician passionate about his music. He is sharing music with those wanting to enjoy it. Can't you at least act as if you are thrilled in your actions? Better yet, try actually to be elated. Those who do have reached a sublime state. Noted pianist Charles Rosen has said that the physical symptoms a performer feels are like the Medieval ones for falling in love.

Part II

The scourge that cannot speak its name when you stare at it, and it's too long to say anyway



Selfie vs. Self-c

The terms self-consciousness and self-conscious are too long. I couldn't find any shorter synonyms for them. "Ill-at-ease," "shy," and "modest" don't fit; we're talking about a psychological tendency. "Self-aware," seems too positive. From now on, for the affliction called "self-consciousness" I will shorten it to self-c-ness. For the word "self-conscious" I will shorten it to "self-c." Contrast this with "selfie" for that photo millennials take of themselves with their little devices, and have us all doing it now. Sometimes millennials do it when they're naked. The self-c takes no photo but **feels** naked in front of a group. Also, a self-c thinks that everyone is taking a mental picture of them and he does **not** like it. A selfie is one taken by a millennial of himself and expects everyone to **like** it.

We each perceive the audience in our own uneasy way. For the self-c, the view is a raging forest fire coming at them. They won't go near the stage or the lectern. If they do, they will need a shove to reach them. Or a reverse vaudeville hook, yanking them to that lit circle on the floor. They will stagger, not stride. If they do make it, the patrons will sneer at their actions, self-c's are sure. The crowd may be rooting but self-c's aren't the home team. Self-c's imagine only a mob of French Revolution witnesses to failure. They see fingers wagging at their frightened faces, ending in thumbs pointed downward.

Readying their mouths to convey anything, self-c's must first untie their tongues. When they pry open their mouths, they join the crowd as a listener to their own voice. They hear words that wobble as they stumble from a quivering mouth, reeling over a pounding heart. If self-c's pause to re-group, they are reminded that nature abhors a vacuum. She especially does so when people try to converse. Silences between friends are not golden. Self-c's know this from harsh lessons. They rush to fill that air with ahhs and umms and quick giggles. Sometimes nothing comes out. If

words do appear, they spew or sputter, clash or race, all between blushed cheeks.

Self-c's first instinct is to dodge attention and to avoid making a scene. If they can't avoid the stage, fate thrusts them to their next Daunting Inferno. Now that they must perform, they will work hard not to look bad in front of other people. Self-c's are humble, not a virtue for wanting to grab a microphone. Their egos like to play by themselves. When they enter a room, they don't go to you and me. Either they rush to a close friend or they stand around hoping they can survive the next few minutes with a group. Even while ignored, they may feel watched.

Compliment them and they lower their gaze and deflect the kindness with a shrug and an awshucks before they can raise their worth from hiding. They believe others will not accept them so they second that demotion with confirming acts. If they do volunteer work, don't expect them to do public acts of charity. That puts them in the limelight, which only violates them. If they apply for work in your business, don't hire them for cold-call sales. They dread lifting the phone or getting into their car. They see a customer's nothankyou coming before it's in their sights. For fun, they choose whatever avoids notice. If they like to sing, they will hide in the chorus. Since fear strangles their voice, they shun a solo. It clutches their vocal cords and diaphragm, reducing them to thin, tight notes.

Self-c's don't need a group of people to cower from the blast of earthly judgment. One mortal being can do it to them. Put a self-c behind the wheel and they drive with one eye on the road and the other at their rear view mirror. They worry that a tailgating car scorns their speed and badgers them to drive faster. Or it silently sneers to get the hell out of the way so it can pass. One

HR person sitting across from them can wield mighty power on the self-c job applicant. They squirm as they await one of those questions, like "So, what is your worst quality?" Do they dare say "self-conscious"? An imperious teacher is a chronic threat to the self-c. In their seat they keep their hands down and duck behind the student in front of them. Their fellow students gawking at them only inflame the hurt. If a self-c competes in a sporting event, they almost wish they'll lose. They shrivel from praise, handshakes, hugs and media, especially interviews. These are public scrutinies to avert.



Too bad for the self-c. The Bible knows human nature. We are not that quick to judge others; we cringe from the blowback, fretting about our own merit. This should console the self-c. They wouldn't worry what people thought of them if they knew how little they did. Or how little they cared. You can chestpoke this lesson to a self-c and they will ignore its wisdom. A self-c senses others as black-robed judges, stern and humorless, ruling against them. Someone smack them with this: Most times people are only glancing, briefly, at you, while they think of anything but you. It's usually about them.

Yes, a performer in front of a crowd knows that attention is fixed on him, especially at the start. Even those on their iPhones will defer for the initial moments of any presentation. A self-c knows he has the laser eyes and elephant ears of these human beings as a jury of almighty judgment of super peers on him. He believes that is the reason they are there. And that is sobering and an act of personal horror.

How do I know how self-c people think and act? I'm a close friend and handwriting analysis colleague of Allan Grim.

Part III

To be or not to be on stage—that was not his quest

Allan Grim and his extended family have been vacationing at the Capon Springs resort off and on since 1954. Allan's parents are deceased. He has three brothers and a sister. Together they have 19 children, with oldest brother Jim corralling nine of them. There are 38 grandchildren of Allan Grim's parents. Only a minority of the family typically goes to Capon. Once in a while the total members there will run to over thirty. Extended family members and friends of the family attend each time too. Most of this grand cluster attend Capon's talent show.

As of 2010 Grim had never appeared in the talent show. "I was never in it for a good reason. I had no talents," he readily admits. Didn't he ever sing anywhere? "Only if you count in a church pew and Happy Birthday, with a group, of course," he chuckles. How about karaoke? "Nope. Not even while drunk."

In the shower? "Yeah, okay, once in a while. Why, I don't know. Doesn't everyone at some



point? Your feeling refreshed and alive and you're getting clean, so you're feeling good and you wail away." Loud enough so that anyone can hear you? "Hopefully the sound of the water muffles your voice."

Grim thought he was like most people then. He didn't have a good singing voice. But he never thought much about it either. He never acted, not even in high school. "I didn't even **try out** for anything. Why would I?" What about comedy? "Are you kidding? I couldn't even tell a good joke if it went for more than three lines."

Once in a while we daydream how it would be if we could perform in one of these areas. "But I didn't **aspire** to perform either. I think you'd need some base of talent to consider it," he says today. In 2010 Grim was close to 70 years old. He thought his voice had deepened in recent years. Was it from aging or what? "I don't know, but I noticed it. Is it one of those things that changes as you age? If anything, it probably declines, like everything else. No?" Yes, that's my understanding also. We gradually get worse, just like everything. Except red wine. We are white.

He did confess to wondering what it **feels** like to get up in front of a crowd of people and try to

sing, act, or do comedy. But he believes it was no more than idle curiosity shared by other mortals. He couldn't imagine himself doing any of these feats on stage. "I would clutch with stage fright. Is that any different from most other people? It would be foolish and end in fiasco," he would've thought then. "Isn't that how most of us view entertainers?" he tunders. "We sit in the audience and admire their talents. For me, I also marveled at their nerve to do it in front of a large crowd." He pauses and I can see he's not done. "Especially how actors remember all their lines. They never seem to forget or bungle them. I know it happens. But I don't see it."

His views aren't mere musing. They stem from a separate vantage point that few have. It's been a menace for these select people faced with a public appearance. Grim has another barrier to stepping on stage. He has had a chronic case of self-consciousness (self-c-ness).

I want to know where he got this affliction. "I don't know why I ever got it. Nothing in my past scarred me from a single event or even an extended one. That's why I think for me it was

inborn. From my work as a handwriting analyst, which deals with personality, I'm convinced that more of our social traits are there at birth than we think. At least the serious ones."

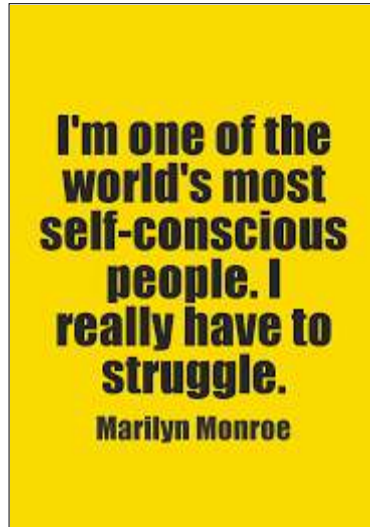
So I follow up with, what does our environment do about them? "I think it only sits on them or strengthens them. They never really disappear. As I stated in my book *Strokes*, they can sometimes be banished to the third-floor closet of our minds. But you don't lock the door because you can't. We hope they stay put, but we don't always know when they might reappear."

Since he is now 75 years old, he says he has gradually lost this scourge. He had been a lawyer for thirty years before retiring in 2000. He has also been a professional handwriting analyst since the mid 1990's. In this he speaks and teaches, and runs a public forum. With this as background you would think Grim should be at ease or less fearful of appearing in front of people.

I ask him about his self-c story. Is it merely smothered under a clutter of experience, or has it really dissolved? "I think



some of it is still there. How much, I don't know. I can't discern what's left in me and what most other people feel—the natural panic of appearing in front of a group.”



Age must play a part in lessening its impact, he is sure. He has joined other seniors voicing their rising indifference to the views of others toward them at this point of their lives. He declares: “Take us or leave us. This is who we are and this is what we’re doing.” I see it as mellowing or maturity or battle fatigue or thickening of the sinking skin, or a sense of approaching mortality.

One morsel of evidence bothered him, though. It's clout would seem to prevent any **waning** of self-c-ness in Grim. He and I both knew that handwriting analysis has a separate stroke for self-c-ness. “It still appears in my handwriting today,” he confesses. I wrote about this in *Strokes* after he surprised me with it. In fact, it was a major factor convincing him about the subject's validity during

his education by the International Graphoanalysis Society.

I remind him of this and he gestures for more to say. “It helped me to understand the deep insights of handwriting analysis. As we say, it reaches down and gets at the real you. But it didn't make me feel any better, because it told me I hadn't lost its spell.”

You believe you still have it? “Well, yes, to a degree. The question is to what degree.”

If you fear the water and can't swim, the only way to overcome it is to jump in or get thrown in, some would say. Grim may have lost his self-c-ness by the glut of his public encounters in his work over the years. Some he jumped in and some he was pushed because duty called. Surely this would help.

But when you've entered the water, you can't soon do the backstroke. Time, lessons, practice, and experience need to follow. It's also one thing to appear in front of a group and merely talk or give a speech. It's another to **perform** something with **artistic skill** in front of a group. Singing, acting, or doing comedy? Those are three new and different plateaus. Anyone bold enough to try them faces more exacting tasks. You don't **suddenly** become adept in performing areas that you never tried before or never believed you had any talent for.

Grim agrees. “That was certainly me up until 2010.” Now I wonder about all of this myself. Can a talent be repressed or suppressed for these many years? Wouldn't it have emerged earlier at some point? The person himself or someone around them would see it expressed. A worthy skill would probably tell you it exists.

“You would think so,” he replies. “I can only answer for myself. I won't tell you I found I had talents after so many years and they suddenly came out in front of an audience at Capon.”

Well, what did come out at Capon, I want to know? “I can't evaluate myself and I don't even want to,” he is quick to reply. “That's not something I feel capable of doing. I can tell you how I reacted at the time and how I felt I did versus what I expected. With the passage of time, no serious appraisal? “No. That's for others,” he declares. “I just enjoy performing. If anyone listening and watching enjoys it too, fine.”

If I can't get him to evaluate himself, I want to ask him at least this: If it's possible to develop or suddenly display talents late in life, what would trigger them or how would they be discovered? And how could they even be expressed by someone who confessed to stage fright and self-c-ness, and someone who believed they had no talents. Wouldn't these be enormous obstacles to any stage performer?

“I can't answer those,” he responds. “I can tell you what I went through at Capon and you can judge for yourself.”

Continued on page 14. See Part IV—Showtime! Pages 8-13 provide background about Capon Springs the resort.

A Note from Mr. Povser

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This article is creative non-fiction. Everything I have written filtered through the memory of Allan Grim is true. What he did and said at Capon Springs are his actual recollections. They were buttressed by two other sources. Most of his stage remarks and performances were scripted. Family videos also were taken of his presentations. Therefore, I could verify those recalls. Although Grim may not have spoken the words in our dialogues, everything he said are his actual memories, thoughts and emotions. **Separately**, I also must credit a *New Yorker* article entitled “I Can't Go On!” by Joan Acocella from August 3, 2016. It gave me insights and examples on stage fright.





## **CAPON SPRINGS THROUGH THE EARLY YEARS** (1765-1932) *Thank a bear and that divine water*

**C**apon Springs is a modest, genial family resort set in a slim, deep glen by Great North Mountain in the Allegheny Range near West Virginia's eastern boundary with Virginia. Your drive is about 40 minutes west from Winchester, Virginia, which lies along that lengthy corridor of Interstate Route 81 that begins where mid-upper New York adjoins the St. Lawrence Seaway just east of Lake Ontario at the Canadian border above Watertown, New York. Route 81 plunges into Pennsylvania, skirts Scranton, and, with the northeast-to-southwest line of the Appalachian Mountains, eventually grazes Harrisburg's crown, then waves at Carlisle, Shippensburg, and Chambersburg, dashing its way into Old Dixie, down the Blue Ridge Mountains, and halts

worn out west of the Great Smoky Mountains at Morristown, Tennessee.

You can thank a bear for the birth of Capon. In 1765 Henry Frye was hunting for one when he found a spring that dispensed smooth, clean, nourishing water. When he returned with his ailing wife, Fanny, she got better. Word spread and more people visited. The place was remote and horses and wagons were the only travel options. More travelers brought tents and blankets to stay a while. In time American enterprise took over in the beehive-busy 19th century. Its founders expanded this wilderness retreat by hyping the "healing powers" of the enchanted springs. Since other springs resorts spread across the US, this was no casual ploy. Vacationers flooded the springs.

At mid-century a massive hotel was erected and was called The Mountain House. It commands the Capon portrait at the head of this piece. (The depiction is circa 1900.) This grand edifice had room for 500 and a dining room for 600. Several other smaller buildings were added on the grounds to lodge the growing list of tourists. It became a popular refuge for many from Washington DC, and other areas as an escape from the stifling summer heat and humidity. It was only a pluribus unum, however. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century over 600 springs resorts pumped their waters in the U.S. That was the apex of these holiday escapes.

**T**heir appeal was singular. Compared with today, medicine's progress was woeful. A common belief was that many diseases came from foul air. Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America had several epidemics of infectious diseases. The fresh air and the curing aspects of the spring water through bathing and drinking attracted the elites of the South and the North. Robert E. Lee visited, date unknown, and President Franklin Pierce arrived in 1854. Daniel Webster, a senator and twice Secretary of State, appeared there to dedicate The Mountain House. At Capon he also announced that he was running for President in 1852. (He didn't win and he is not the dictionary guy either. That was Noah Webster.) He brought a guest from England—British Foreign Minister Henry Bulwer.

In 1911 Capon suffered a huge blow when The Mountain House and close structures were destroyed in a massive blaze (cause never determined). The darker building at the bottom right of this piece's drawing of Capon survived. It remains today as the primary facility for the guests. It's now called The Main House. Built in the 1880's, a dining room was added to it in the 1940's. In recent years an addition was erected. It has a library, a fireplace, some guest rooms, and spacious rooms for indoor activities.

**A**long with its leisure pastimes, the water would've been enough. It was also a great social site. Some ventured there to seek a wealthy, urbane partner. One journal wrote that you could find "a bevy of Richmond's finest" at Capon. Much of the Southern gentry lived in rural areas. Traveling afar to a water resort, as many did, boosted your prestige. When you got to Capon, you could not only hook up with an upscale partner for fun or for life. You could also network for business and politics.

After years as a pleasure and health spot of America's Gilded Age, it lost its principal owner, William Sale, a Confederate Captain, who died in 1900. Oddly, Sale had been running his resort in a state friendly to the North. Spurred by Union sentiment in the west of Virginia in the Civil War, West Virginia was hacked off from the state of Virginia and added to the US in 1863.

**H**is son-in-law, Charles Nelson, improved the properties. In 1905 he added the baths and springs to the complex and almost five thousand acres of mountains and forest. He also purchased the baths and springs at auction from the state of West Virginia. Finally Capon's owners had everything in their ledger.

After the destruction of The Mountain House, Nelson sought buyers and found one only in 1917. Although the successor, Will Atkinson, had great plans for Capon's remaining buildings, he couldn't maintain and expand the resort successfully. He did begin national marketing and sales of bottled Capon water. By 1927, however, springs resorts throughout America had declined to 271. Capon struggled and The Great Depression withered it. Rundown and with only modest income, Capon was sold at a tax auction in 1932. The buyer was a Philadelphia entrepreneur, Louis Austin.

## About that word "Capon"

*It isn't what you're thinking*

**The name "Capon" is not from a rooster fattened and deprived of his manhood. Its origin is uncertain. It may come from the Shawnee word "cape-cape-hon" meaning "medicinal water." It might also come from the Algonquin word "Cacapon" meaning "to be found again." The Lost River flows underground from Wardensville, a few miles away.**

**The locals say the word like this with a soft p: Kay'pin. Outsiders say it with a harder p: Kay'pon. A sideview Indian appears as Capon's logo, as shown below.**



## Lou Austin: *The Man Who Saved the Springs* (1893-1976)



**Lou** Austin saw hope in growing the business of the wholesome and hygienic spring water and reviving the now frail resort. The odds were long. By 1932 The Great Depression had thrashed the US economy. Travel? Those thick red and blue highways on the map were decades away. Medicine had also advanced to combat diseases and improve health with fresh insights and new drugs. Along with this progress, better sanitation and health led many Americans to veer from the resorts that promoted their springs. Travelers were finding other distant locations for their free time, aided by cars, instead of horses, and more rail lines. They also found new places of bliss, especially natural and amusement parks, seashores and lakes.

From advances in health science, Austin faced more formal and potent hurdles: the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and West Virginia Health Department. They doubted his claims about the waters' healthful qualities. They also raised their own, alleging the water was polluted. In 1929 (before Austin took over) a chemist had tested the water and found it "as close to perfection in purity as natural water could be."

They went ahead. When they filed legal actions against him, he was stunned and contested their absurdity. These agencies were relentless, battling him in several courts. Buttressed by testimony



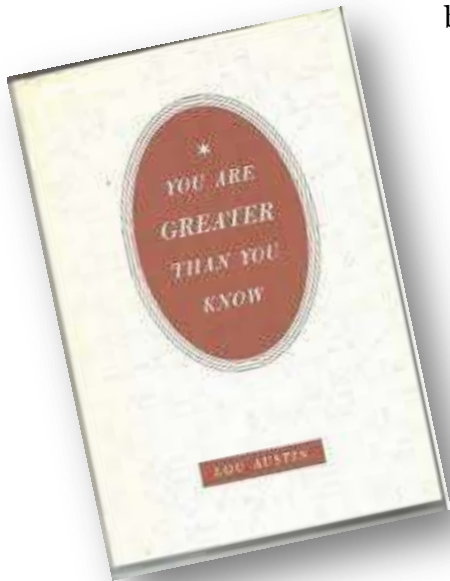
from several medical authorities, he won trial court decisions. But Uncle Sam and West Virginia refused to go away; they appealed them. An FDA case in 1943 sluiced on into the year 1955. One case the FDA appealed to the US Supreme Court after he had won in the federal district and circuit courts below. The Supreme Court never decided if the Government's arguments held water. It refused to hear the appeal.

The American Medical Association and the Federal Trade Commission also battled Austin over health benefits. At least he wasn't the only target. They confronted other American springs resorts and their bottlers of the water, sneering at their health claims ads. These cases had some amusing names. *United States vs. Five Cases of Capon Springs water*, and *United States vs. 94 Dozen, more or less, half-gallon bottles Capon Springs water*, and *United States vs. Five cases, each containing one demijohn five-gallon size, of Capon Springs water* are examples.

**W**ith resilience and toughness, he vanquished them all. By standing fast he had legally and publically confirmed the benefits and purity of his waters. He could now wave goodbye to his pestering Uncle Sam and Far-from-Heaven State of West Virginia. More upbeat, he could now welcome new vacationers, and refresh his link with his prior guests.

Austin faced other initial snags. He bore business strife in gaining Capon and

its other assets. After tendering fifty thousand dollars for the rights to sell the bottled water for fifty years, he found out the seller didn't have the contract rights nor the right to the money. It was in receivership and facing imminent foreclosure. Soon the investment company he had worked for was charged with stock fraud over the water company shares. His own investors grumbled over these struggles and fought among themselves over the quantities of bottled water.



At the resort were the issues of plumbing, heating, and electricity for Capon's buildings. They lacked modern systems. Austin eventually wired them and piped them.

Existing fireplaces were quaint and gave some heat. Austin augmented it with other sources.

Handling these troubles with mounting business skills, determination, and patience, he slogged his way to resolving them. But, as he wrote later, he endured by a calming epiphany in his religious views. Slowly but steadily he nurtured the resort and its bottled-water portion through The Great Depression and World War II. By the late 1940's he elevated it to a thriving resort, sustaining its growth till his death in 1976 at age 83. Not bad for a man who had lost his father at age five and was placed in an orphanage.

He said he got through the business setbacks and revival of the resort by a sudden change in his personal view of God's role in everyone's life. He later admitted that he was an introvert and self-conscious and wasn't qualified to run a resort when he took it over. He told the

inspiring story of how he overcame his own drawbacks and his business travails and how he reached his religious re-birth. These are all in his book *You Are Greater than You Know* published in 1955. There he credited the survival and later success of Capon to "the Creative Spirit," of God, which he asserted was within each individual. For him God is "our senior partner," who can guide us all into attaining "an understanding heart, love of friends, work that serves, inner peace, radiant health, and a deeper, more satisfying life." His spirituality and leadership were a strong presence at the resort, even after his retirement in 1959.

At first his primary help in managing the resort were his wife Virginia (both Lou and Virginia shown sitting in photo) and later their four children, followed by their grandchildren.



Marketing was simple but effective. Word of mouth from his family and prior guests. It wasn't his idea but necessity was the mother of frugality. With his high costs to restore its rundown facilities during The Great Depression, he couldn't afford to advertise. He wrote in his book that it was a blessing. It brought the guests closer to him and his resort. They were motivated to promote it by spreading the word on its behalf. His later generations still run it and have revised the business model to include ads, an ample website and other media.

When Austin retired in 1959 the resort no longer sold the water. Now you can get it free and you don't have to be a guest. Just bring your containers and fill them up. Capon prospers as one of the few surviving springs resorts in America. ●



Sunset over the Golf Course at Capon Springs

## Capon Springs in recent times (1976-2016)

The resort has almost 5000 acres of mountain and valley shielding those splendid springs and its many buildings. Today it has rooms for 200 adults and 50 children. A heaping stack of activities and events keep the relaxed and well-fed patrons as busy as they want to be. Working off some of its delicious meals keeps many busy who want to fall into a hammock. Much of the food comes from its own farm and facilities. It's served family style three times a day at specific times called by a dinner bell Pavlov would cherish. Many of the guests come for a week, and every year, and for the same week each time. Capon has its own golf course so close that you can walk to it. Next to it is a pitch-and-putt course. They call it "The Prep Course."

Capon has a library and a huge lounge for reading and chitchat next to a game and card room. All of these are air-conditioned. What else can you do there? Swimming pool, three tennis courts, badminton, two ping pong buildings, basketball court, shuffleboard, croquet, fishing pond, disc golf, fling golf,



several hiking trails, horseshoes, volleyball court, movies, concerts, adult and kids' softball, bocce, more game and card rooms, music pavilion for concerts, weddings and other public events, Honeymoon Cottage, Log Cabin, President's Cottage, children's areas for play inside and out, and more.

Capon has many buildings around its complex. Most of them house the guests and

the family-managers. Some were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are either Greek Revival or Victorian Vernacular styles. Most have no air conditioning but they do have ceiling fans.



Nature supplements the cooling and shade with many stately trees. Capon helped over the years too. Buildings are next to a mountain and Capon is among other mountains. Capon's mostly old but quaint structures and other amenities add to its special appeal. A separate modern building lodges a bathhouse and spa where guests can get massages, exercise,

morning before breakfast, and casual dress even at dinner. It has a laundry for guests, its own busy store selling Capon items, and a *Capon Weekly* newspaper. Hammocks, swings, and benches

abound, many paid for by grateful guests. It also has a series of events and activities that run every week in the summer. A mile race, sports tournaments, bingo, a front-porch dance, a peanut-shelling campfire sing-along with hot dog roast, nighttime Star Party, and a treasure hunt/history puzzle. Not all meals are served in the dining room. It has two special dinners (one chicken, one steak) and a lunch, all served under an open pavilion called Sunset Lodge. It's on a hill to the left of the golf course's first fairway. Capon also has a talent show.



facials, pool exercises, soaking baths, and reflexology. A backporch for relaxation is visited by hummingbirds and overlooks a woods. In 1994 Capon

Capon's talent show is held every Friday evening during its summer months. The event is not a competition; there is no winner. But the crowds are typically large and lively. Any guest may enter but must sign up by the day



before at 5 pm. Rehearsals are at noon on Friday.

The number of performers will vary widely but run between ten and fifteen. Some evenings twenty or so have performed. Most of the participants are under eighteen. The event is held in a theater of a large building called The Meeting House, which has a few card, game, TV, and computer rooms. It also has a modern presentation room for 50 or so. The theater has a modern stage, curtain, and floor. It can hold 200. The Meeting House was built in the late 1950's on the site of the Mountain House destroyed by the 1911 fire. ●



was dedicated to the Register of National Historic Places. A gently but strictly enforced 11 pm curfew, no alcohol, except in your room, no TV's in the rooms, but if you must, a TV room exists, only pleasant music wafting through the immense trees, a flag-raising and National Anthem after coffee or tea on the terrace every

## Part IV Showtime!

2010

### The power of a drink of water

Few of the Grim family members had performed in the Capon talent show. That always bothered Grim. In 2010 Grim was at Capon with his family and tried to get them to sign up. He thought it was time for more to enter the show. They do most of the other activities during the week. This should be added to the list, he insisted. We make up a large portion of the guests and we should honor this one tradition by doing something in it. He adds, "Besides, I thought we owed our contributions to Capon for their hospitality and service to us over the years." *It's not that simple, Allan,* were their typical responses. *You must first have a talent to perform before you enter it. And you need some courage to get up and do it too.* In the years prior to 2010, Grim continued to believe he had nothing to supply either. Besides, he was not about to submit his insecurity to his fellow guests and suffer ridicule. He had to face them and his many family members there for the rest of the week, and then the rest of his life. He pondered what he would do as a talent and nothing surfaced.

Around that time, fresh thoughts swilled in his mind. They began as Grim was driving his 2004 Honda with Satellite XM Radio. As he listened to a comedy channel, he heard what he thought was an amusing joke. Actually it was more of a short narrative with a punchline. It lingered with him. Grim is a professional handwriting analyst and was featured in a book he insisted I write about handwriting analysis. It was published in 2007 and is called *Strokes: Inside the Fascinating, Mysterious World of*

*Handwriting Analysis.* (Revised in 2009) It was a comprehensive book about the subject, featuring Grim as a practitioner. Much of it is a memoir of his encounters. As a solo professional analyst, he's always alert for ways to promote the often-scorned subject and his own business. In time the joke embedded in his mind, refusing to fade into oblivion. I was revising the book when he approached me about adding the joke. He insisted that it carried a forceful message about handwriting analysis and its unique impact on society.

Stroke-trait handwriting analysts believe that one small stroke inside a letter is laden with meaning and can reveal a single, sturdy personality trait of the writer. Using the analogy of the tiny atom and its geometric power to create an atomic bomb blast, he combined the two into a dialogue between a father and a son. The joke's punchline was the metaphor to convey a cogent lesson about our children. Although a child may speak only a few words, those words can reveal an array of their superb qualities.

With the joke as a base, Grim crafted a dialogue between the father and son. I inserted it into the revised *Strokes* book in 2009. Along with the words between the parent and child, he explained their meaning for handwriting analysis. Whereas a few words uttered by your child can say so much about him, a few strokes of handwriting can yield a hoard of character traits. Grim decided he would use that dialogue and its meaning as a one-act play and perform it in the talent show. The

joke's punchline became the play's last line. The play would last no more than a minute or so.

"My motive really was less personal than promotional," he recalls. He sought to share a touching father-son vignette and do some handwriting analysis marketing than to overcome any self-consciousness. He also explains that "I wasn't trying to flaunt my acting ability, because I didn't have any." He also wanted to contribute his effort for the family in Capon's tradition of the talent show. "You



must understand this is a special place for us. They say West Virginia is 'Almost Heaven.' Well, Capon Springs is above that; it's 'Heaven' for us. I thought we should be more involved in this popular event."

Since he considered himself in vacation mode, Grim spent sparse time rehearsing and learning lines. He offset this by writing the dialogue on a small piece of paper, which joined him to the stage. He also decided he would play both the father and the son. Awkward, since the setting was the father in one room watching TV after tucking him into bed. The son would be in

another room in his bed presumably falling asleep.

Grim sat in the audience and heard his name called. He went to the stage stairs, was handed a mike, mounted the stage, and walked to the center. He was now officially called to stand and deliver, like it or not. He announced: "I've been coming to Capon for over fifty years. I have never appeared in the talent show. That's because I have **absolutely no talents**. Tonight I am up here on **sheer guts**. Here goes." Grim introduced the play by urging the gathered parents to "... listen to your children. Their simple words can tell so much about their qualities for success and achievement later in life." He told them about the link between his profession as a handwriting analyst and the joke he had heard on his car radio. Dropping to his knees to lower his height, Grim began with the words of a three-year old child. When he finished the child's line, he got up, strode to another area of the stage where a chair was (the only prop), and sat down. Staring ahead as if watching TV, he uttered his response, rose, trudged back a few steps to his son's bedroom, and knelt down again at child height to speak his son's next line. And back again and so forth. Since the play is short, here it is as presented by Grim:

(Father with TV remote has just tucked in his son for the night. Or so he thought.)

*Daddy, can I have a drink of water?*

*Jason, go to sleep.*

[Pause]

*Daddy, I want a drink of water.*

*No, stop asking and go to sleep.*

[Pause]

*Daddy, I really need a drink of water.*

*No, Jason, if you don't stop asking for a drink of water, I'm going to come in there and spank you.*

[Longer pause]

*Daddy, when you come to spank me, would you please bring me that drink of water?*



The modest sketch ended with that humble, sixteen-word punchline. Grim sprang from his knees, bowed, and began explaining. Despite the brief final sentence in the dialogue, its sixteen words "resonate with early evidence of at least seven superb qualities this child has." He listed them along with their source:

1. **Honesty** (He really did want a drink of water)

2. **Persistence** (He refused to take no for an answer)

3. **Courage** (He knew he would be spanked if he spoke up again)

4. **Foresight** (He knew that if he asked for the water again he might get it. His Daddy could bring it with him to the spanking)

5. **Intelligence** (It was brilliant strategy that probably avoided a spanking)

6. **Tact** (First, he said please. Second, he didn't demand the drink. He asked his Daddy to bring it **only** when he came to spank him)

7. **Sense of Humor** (It might make his Daddy laugh, reduce the tension, and change his attitude toward his son's insolence)

Grim expanded on the play's meaning beyond the father-son sparring. From the moment of a few spoken words in his young life, he explained to the assembled guests, we can learn so much about his potential for leadership and achievement in life. Similarly, when someone *handwrites* a few words, a handwriting analyst can review the individual strokes and discover important traits of his personality. By combining these strokes and the traits, he can construct the character of this human

being. This can be done whether the writer is young or old. That is the massive power of handwriting.

He then implored the attendees to "Listen to your children. They may be telling you how great they are." He added that this sketch appeared in his book *Strokes* where he "... tried to show a connection between that father and son and the power of handwriting strokes to reveal personality traits."

Since Grim had been sitting in the audience, I wanted to know how he was feeling right before his name was called (Performers are called in the order they signed up.) "I felt anxious before being called, but not as much as I thought I would," he now says. "I was slightly more tense when I got up there." Although he had taken his script with him as a safety net, he doesn't recall looking at it. He did employ his notes to tick off and explain the meaning of each of the seven qualities the child had.

What worried him the most? "Not knowing my lines," he said. "I read one time that actors are



less worried about that than over-acting.” What he produced was brief. Since he was among friends and family, he at first thought this curbed his anxiety. “After more thought, I think this made me more nervous,” he added. “I had to live with them and answer to them.”

When it was over, he didn’t feel a great relief. He hadn’t botched any lines or gestures. His intro didn’t waver. He even approached the child’s voice. Although he isn’t sure how the crowd reacted at the end, he thinks they somewhat cheered and clapped after the play finished. He returned to the audience where, “I think my sister gave me a supportive hug.”



***The Meeting House, site of Capon's theater and other facilities***

Generally he felt good about doing it, and was surprised how little unease he felt. Would he consider doing it again? “Yeah, I would, is my recollection. But it gave him no rush to want to do it again. Anyway, what would **it** be? Another playlet? A movie scene? Tell some jokes?” Although he believed he had a decent sense of humor, he admitted he would botch a lengthy joke to a friend standing nearby. It would be worse if it were two or three people listening. A crowd of critics? “That’s about how I would have seen the Capon crowd. Gentle ones but looking for flaws.”

What about singing? “Really? What about it? At that point, Why would I even think of it?

I’d never done any and didn’t know if I could. And in front of a crowd? Right.” Behind a hot and wet shower curtain is one place. In front of a cold, dry curtain on a stage with friends and family looking on? Maybe you do something like it at a wedding reception. You get up and dance—with someone else, after a drink, and badly, and you smile and sit down And others are thrashing about looking silly too. But that’s not singing and you’re not the center of attention.

He tries to remember his stance then. “I don’t recall thinking of any singing. If I did, I must have thought what would happen when I opened my mouth? Anyway, what song would I sing? Wouldn’t I need

some kind of accompaniment? How on earth do you arrange that? And, don’t you need a singing voice to even try it? Who would want to hear me sing?”

What about acting? “I had done something easy and short. I think I thought that I didn’t need to do anything again. If I did, the next time should be more of a challenge. But who needs that stress on your vacation? Acting is hard. You have to relax or at least not look tense while you try to concentrate. You must know your lines, be aware of the other actors, and remember your actions, while being stared at and blasted by bright lights.”

**2011**

## **Not getting cold feet—just cooling his heels**

**A**nother year came around and Grim and family were at Capon. They were at the talent show on Friday evening of their week. Grim was in the audience. His name was never called. He hadn’t signed up. I ask why. “I don’t recall specifically. I think I decided I wasn’t ready to try anything new, and certainly hadn’t worked on any talents.”

When he entered The Meeting Hall, Grim noticed changes to the auditorium where the talent show is held.

Electronic music had played as background for a few acts. More performers signed up for the show. The crowds had grown too. The ambience had changed. They had installed overhead stage lights that bathed it in a warm light. The stage had a tan, shiny floorboard. Was that new or just better lit now? The overhead lights in the audience area still shown their lab whiteness. But during the performances they had been doused. The stage with its focused lights contrasted with the darkness in the seats. At the stage front right sat a new sound system with a large speaker that hooked into playing devices. A mike stand now graced the stage front and the MC had hand mikes for himself and the performers. Before, the only accessory in place was a grand piano. Capon’s talent show locale now resembled an imposing theater.

In the recent evolution of music, Grim was uninformed and

naïve. He had never injected himself into the music milieu swelling on the internet. He got his music from the radio or CD's, or MTV videos at least into the 1980's and part of the 1990's. Although karaoke had been around a while, Grim never tried it and had only passing knowledge of it. But he noticed that personal karaoke machines had become popular. With the internet, music had exploded. Amateurs and aspiring professionals were more able to perform music with refined accompaniments. Even instrumental music wasn't merely combo music or synthesizers fashioning notable tunes by their original artists. Backgrounds now virtually copied famous pieces. Also, with YouTube and the rest of the internet, a couple of clicks get you to a video or an audio of almost any old song and its famous artist.



"I began watching American Idol when it first appeared on TV. I liked best the auditions, which were primarily done with no accompaniment," he says. "That started me thinking about the process of singing. A lot of amateurs were putting themselves into the spotlight." He watched the later portions in Hollywood as the competition progressed for those who had gotten a "Golden Ticket," but enjoyed them less and less over the years. "They would sing obscure current songs that I never heard before. I also didn't care for the modern styles of artists I usually didn't know," he explains. "Finally I just followed the auditions but got turned off by never knowing or liking their song choices. Too many from recent years. I enjoy most of

them until the 1980's. It seems that after then, music evolved into mostly rhythm mayhem with no melody."

**I**n these changes in the culture of performing at Capon and in America outside the resort fomented Grim's interest in doing something again at Capon. He began thinking about what he should try. He considered doing another play or even a scene from a movie. But you need to do serious acting and have other actors. He doubted he could continue playing more than one character. And what about scenery and props? After surveying his family members to join him on stage, they declined. He was on his own with acting.

With American Idol and all, wouldn't he think about singing? "Yeah, I did," he admits. "I began thinking about it because I had performed that one-act play without falling into a heap on the stage. That gave me some confidence." Yet he had never done any singing; he didn't think he could sing, let alone in front of a large crowd. And what on earth would the song be?

His doubts persisted: "I wondered what would happen with my first few notes. What will they sound like?" He would be 71 years old. Does anyone suddenly perform at this stage of their life if they've never done it before? "I was inspired a bit by the improvements to the Capon theater and the availability of old hits and their background music on the internet. I know I still wanted the Grim family to be in the talent show more. And I had this feeling that this large family should contribute to a Capon tradition as a kind of duty to help it thrive." Still, singing was not close to a choice for Grim. "You still need a voice and the courage to do it. My natural stage fright and whatever self-consciousness I still had would hang over everything."

In reflecting on the father-son playlet, he realized the Capon crowd wasn't hostile. They weren't rooting for him to fail or stumble; they wanted him to succeed. He had told them he never acted before. He thought it was crucial to disclose that



as backdrop to his performance. "I also liked that the theater was dark. I wasn't able to see the audience that well. That helped." He was also concerned that his singing might lower the bar of quality to limbo height. "That bothered me. I didn't want to do any singing that was mediocre or worse just to prove I did it on stage in front of a crowd."

**2012**

## **Elvis enters the building and Indiana Jones crashes it**

For many years Grims have gone to Capon the week that straddles August 1. As the trip to West Virginia arrived in the summer of 2012, Grim was in the talent show audience. But he always attended the talent show, as did his family and many Capon guests. If he did perform, what would it be this time? Didn't he confess to having no talents and the other leaden obstacles.

Several acts were called and performed. Then toward the end MC Jonathon Bellingham called Grim's name. He had signed up to perform. Usually the MC has the performer's info on his specific talent and any needed music accompaniment. Grim had supplied only "scene from movie." Would Grim even get up there and do it? Or would the ogre of self-c-ness bully him to lose faith before he lost face? Or would he get up and try but suddenly turn and march out of the theater into a balmy summer evening suddenly turned stormy for him?

Grim rose from the audience, strode to the stairs and climbed onto the stage. With the hand mike again, he began: "A few years ago I foolishly stood up here and told you I had never performed in the talent show because... I had no talents. Then I did a one-act play and confirmed it. Why on earth am I back? I'd like a chance to redeem myself. This time I'm doing a scene from a movie."

Why the self-contempt? Why another body-slam taking down his esteem in a mock hold? His defense: "I was glad to laugh at myself up there. I thought it would relax me and it did. I also now realize I felt the impulse to add some humor to my performing. That was new for me." Fair enough, I suppose. But would anything he did now be taken seriously? After a two-year hiatus, what film and scene was he going to do for the Capon patrons? And was he doing this alone?

He had chosen a scene from the film "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade." A Spielberg production, it came out in 1989. Most Capon guests have seen it, he was sure. The gist of it and the actors and their characters would be familiar. They could also evaluate his acting by comparing it to the actual movie and the styles of the popular actors he would portray. Grim thought the scene was funny and memorable. He announced, "I will do my version of a scene from 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade,' where Indiana, played by Harrison Ford, is trying to find his father, played by Sean Connery, who has been snatched by the Nazis and is being held high up in an Austrian castle. I will play both parts. Indiana Jones here and [stepping a few feet to his right] his father over here. It begins as Indiana has climbed up the castle wall and used his whip to propel him crashing through the window into his father's room."

Connery had been captured by the Germans because they thought he had a diary with maps and diagrams showing the way to find The Holy Grail, Christ's cup from The Last Supper. Apparently it



**Sean Connery playing Jones Senior and Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones. They're in his father's castle prison room, where Indiana had just crashed through the window on his bull whip to save his father. Here are father and son with the expensive vase father used to conk his son over the head. Senior is showing him that it's a fake. So no harm done. Indiana questions that.**

would grant eternal life to those who drank from it. Indiana, played by Harrison Ford, traveled to his father's prison, Brunwald Castle, on the border between Austria and Germany. He had located his father's prison as he traveled with an Austrian colleague of his father's, a pretty, blonde German lady, Dr. Ilsa Schneider. Indiana thought he could trust her; she was a Nazi agent.

The scene begins with Indiana landing near his father after his crash through a window. When his son lands, his father bashes him over the head with an expensive vase. The only prop for the scene was a small plastic wastebasket that Grim corralled from his Capon bedroom in the Pavilion. That was to be the priceless pot.

Grim knew the two characters would be serious challenges. Although Harrison Ford has a deep, resonant voice, he is a monotone. When you try to mimic it, you sound flat and seem a poor actor. Connery's voice is a distinctive Welsh brogue, familiar from his James Bond movies. It's not easy to copy. Here it was hardly Bondian. He was playing an older man, Indiana's father, a goofball and a klutz, while aping a convincing academic.

Grim yelled, "Action!"

*(Aided by his bull whip, Indiana Jones has climbed the castle walls and reached the outside of his father's prison room. He*

*crashes through the castle window, landing near his father sitting in the room.)*

*(Seeing a figure come flying into his room, his father picks up an expensive vase and clobbers the man over the head, breaking the vase.)*

*(He looks to see who the person is.)*

Jones Sr.: Junior! It's really you, Junior!

Indiana: *(Dazed, he holds his head.)* Of course it's me, Dad! And stop calling me Junior! Why did you hit me over the head with that expensive vase?

Jones, Sr.: I thought you were one of **them!**

Indiana: They don't come through the window, Dad. They already have you. They come through the door.

Jones, Sr.: Oh..... Say, this vase is a fake. See, it has a crack here.

Indiana: It has a crack because you hit me over the head with it. And the fake ones hurt too.

Jones, Sr.: Oh....You know that pretty blonde German girl, Ilsa, you've been traveling with? She's a German spy.

Indiana: How do you know that, Dad?

Jones, Sr.: (He pauses) She talks in her sleep. (He grins toward the audience.)

(Indiana responds with a somewhat puzzled look, which soon changes to seething anger.)

Grim then got up and said, "That is all." \*

[\*"That is all" is a patented remark of MC Bellingham, also a caller of the day's activities in the dining room. He likes to say it when he is finished any of his announcements.]

In his actual staging, Grim began the scene by pretending to be sliding down Indiana's bull whip with a crash onto the floor in the castle room. But he had no bull whip or other prop, and no mike. Grim actually had rehearsed that one time the day before the show. He wanted to see if he could do it, how the stage floor handled his landing, and if he could do it without breaking his leg.

"I kept thinking about what happened to John Wilkes Booth after he had just murdered President Lincoln," he says. "Booth caught his leg on a banner as he jumped down onto the stage of performers doing 'My American Cousin.' He broke his leg during the contact with the stage." Grim was going to run a bit, jump up and land with his legs and feet extended and his arms above him as if he were holding onto a line strung out using the bull whip. In his early years, Grim had played baseball. Sliding into a base was the closest he had come to the act. He found out the stage wasn't as forgiving as the loose dirt of a baseball field. He tried it once in practice. It went okay but seemed risky. Grim wasn't jumping from twelve feet as Booth did. How did it go? "I did a hesitant slide and it went okay. The stage isn't slick. But a bull whip would have helped."

He looked at the script but says he didn't practice the lines at Capon. At home he spent little time with them. He explains: "I am in vacation mode at Capon. It's only a talent show and there's no winner. I didn't want to overdo this." He had



**Here is Indiana with Ilsa, whom he befriended and more as he looked for his father. She helped him, but, as his father informed him in his castle room, she was a Nazi spy. As it turns out, his father had more than befriended her also.**

his script folded in his hand. He did glance at it briefly for a prompted line.

He should have referred to that paper when he had to slug himself with the vase as the father, then rush to take the impact as the son. That was the first action after he landed as Indiana through the castle window. Grim forgot to grab the little wastebasket (vase) and crack

## Leap into History

*Here is Booth's famous leap from Lincoln's box after the assassination. He has just caught his leg in the American flag bunting and apparently fell awkwardly, breaking his leg. Some historians doubt the break from this fall. As he fled, he told someone his horse had fallen on him and some witnesses didn't notice any immediate limp. He did break his leg. History confirms that he sought medical help from a Dr. Mudd for it.*



Indiana on his head.

The father and son's conflict was some absorbing drama, Grim thought, heightened by the audience's knowing the actors. Some funny lines helped too. This scene was a crucial test for him acting on stage in front of an audience.

"I enjoyed doing the scene and I think the audience did too," he recalls. "I'm fairly sure they clapped and cheered. Doing Connery was a hoot and some people later told me they liked it too" Despite having to copy the voices of two famed actors, he says he didn't mind it. "I actually welcomed the challenge. Why, I don't know. I had no reason to think I could carry it off." That he wasn't cowed by it puzzled him. He enjoyed doing the humor, which he had never done at Capon. Reflecting on it now, he thinks the witty clash between father and son overcame any worry he felt about playing these two prominent actors. He offered, "Overall I wasn't as nervous as I thought I would be. That helped."

Although he was bothered about the vase gaffe and the line-prompt, he felt good about his effort. He was spurred to try something more. That something would be soon. Grim sauntered to the front of the stage, got a hand mike from the MC, and announced, "My bucket list said sing *Il Pagliacci* at the Metropolitan Opera." [For the record, Grim says he never actually had a bucket list.] "I came to realize that was not realistic so I'm here singing at the Capon Springs Talent Show. I've never sung in public—not karaoke or outside my open shower window."

Before that evening, Grim couldn't decide what to sing because he didn't even know if he could. More important, he didn't know if he could assemble the nerve even to try it. "I still wondered what would come out of my mouth when it first opened on stage," he says. He had done only talking on stage with his one-act play two years before. At least he had survived the Indiana Jones scene. But going from acting right to singing was another trial. He had prepared something

before Capon but he had to wait and see if he was valiant enough to try it.

In deciding to sing for the first time, Grim knew he was an ardent Elvis fan. Still, why he wanted to focus on one of **his** famous songs as his initial attempt, he didn't know. Would he just sing it in his own voice, or would he try to copy Elvis's voice and style? Would he try one that was challenging in its range and gestures? Couldn't he just pick a song he liked and sing it in his own voice? After all, he didn't know if he could sing and wasn't even sure what his voice into a mike would sound like. He had never done that before. More importantly, he didn't even practice singing or record himself singing while he made his decision. "The more I thought about it, the more I wanted to try some other voice. I'm not even sure why," he remembers today.

He had heard that everyone can sing; it just takes time. He thought most people could not sing and knew they couldn't and weren't about to try. He always wondered if certain famous singers ever auditioned. "I mean, how did they convince anyone to hire them? Take Johnny Cash, Rod Stewart, Dionne Warwick, and Joe Cocker. How did they succeed? They can't sing now."

He had no voice or style; they weren't even in the back of his mind. "I guess that's why I began focusing on famous artists and their famous tunes. I didn't know my own voice and had no style, and I admired theirs. It would be more fun too," he added. Yes, and tougher for sure. And fine if you can actually do it without sounding like a smashed karaoke-bar patron.

Before Capon his thoughts remained on doing Elvis. He finally decided that if he was going to sing, it would be an Elvis song. He knew it wouldn't be easy and that many have gone before him. He considered doing one of his familiar rock songs. He soon rejected that as too hard.

He would appear as a buffoon doing a silly parody. Even with a lot of work, Elvis is distinctive in voice and style, especially his gestures. For The



**Elvis Presley in his second film, "Loving You," in 1957. He began as an actor in "Love Me Tender," a year earlier. In "Loving You" he plays a singer. He actually sings the title song twice, once indoors and once outside. They appear to be the same recordings. His 45 rpm record was done with his backup group The Jordanaires. Grim sang that one as his tribute.**

King you need the whole package. "I know it helps if you wear the clothes or the sideburns or the glitzy glasses. I wasn't going to use any of those gaudy props." He would do Elvis only as a serious tribute.

**N**oble thought but ignoble in execution chugged through his mind. He confined his search to a slow song, one not too tough to sing. "Listening to a few tunes, I realized that Elvis has a fairly deep voice. I don't, but somehow it has deepened over the years," he noted. He thought he could reach Elvis's register with some effort. He wanted to select a memorable tune. He couldn't find any that excited him. Either he didn't think he could do them or he didn't like them.

Grim's taste limited his choices. Ask about him about his later songs: "I don't care for most of Elvis's songs after he went into the Army around 1959. In his movies or his concerts or recordings."

Almost by elimination he picked the song "Loving You." It was the title song to Elvis's second movie in 1957. He liked the song and its

pleasant background. He was concerned that the song was unfamiliar. Even people of Grim's age hardly remembered it or the film. With a memorable song the audience could better judge his version. Grim could have chosen "Love Me Tender," the title song from Elvis's first film. But he didn't care for it then or now. He knew most people preferred it to "Loving You." Why then this of many slow songs? "I decided I wanted to sing a tune that moved me. I realized I couldn't just sing anything. That helped me to want to sing it well."

He wanted to sing an Elvis song with a background close to the original. It needed to sound authentic as possible. He was doing an impression of Elvis, a genuine homage to his greatness. He has always been a fan of Elvis from the first time he heard "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Heartbreak Hotel"

in 1956, as he finished 9<sup>th</sup> grade. He contacted a long-time friend and music authority, Tom Moore. A year younger than Grim, he had a special expertise for rock'n'roll from the mid-1950's to the early 1960's. Moore found him the background music from the original recording. Moore told Grim he got it from websites for karaoke songs on the internet. These are the music, either instrumental or group singing, that accompanied the vocal of the lead singer. This rash of music available on the internet was new to Grim. It roused him: "I didn't know much about that internet and YouTube stuff. When Tom showed me what was available from the internet, it spurred me even more to want to sing at Capon and do a famous song too."

On the "Loving You" record, the Jordanaires backed up Elvis, along with a solo piano. This was the actual 45 rpm disc issued to the public, minus Elvis's voice. In the film itself Elvis sings another version outside at a ranch for his girlfriend and her family. He casually strums a guitar, escorted by quiet strings. He repeats it indoors on a stage holding a guitar. It

appears to be the same recording for both. Using the version with the Jordanaires, Grim rehearsed the song a few times before going to Capon.

**A**lthough Capon Springs has a formal rehearsal time at noon on the day of the talent show, it conflicts with a Capon Best Ball (Scramble) golf tournament. First things first for Grim and his passion for golf. And his view that this is only a vacation gig and not a competition either. "I wouldn't have come to a rehearsal anyway. I didn't want to overdo my first act of singing. Somebody else might have," he declares now. Was this relaxation, indifference, confidence, or arrogance of ego?

Grim sang "Loving You," the background coming from a tiny CD player on the front of the stage to the side with his niece Kelsy Grim in control. He didn't try to look like Elvis or project his gestures, except for two moments where he repeats the words "Don't you be blue." He pointed into the audience as if a young lady was his object. Although jarring, it was Elvis, except Elvis hadn't done it in the film "Loving You" or elsewhere that Grim ever saw for this song. Grim was taking a chance with those acts. They seemed unfitting since he was doing no other Elvis-like acts. But neither did Elvis when he sang it in the film. He sang with control, not lapsing into any of his gestures. Usually Elvis sang his

slow songs direct and pure and dignified. An amateur impression of Elvis can easily be seen as parody and arouse snickers. Grim remembers: "The audience didn't stir for my two gestures. I thought they were respecting my first attempt at a song and for an Elvis rendition." No snickers for the rest of the song either.

When done Grim did not say, "Thank ya, thank ya, vera much." At that point the audience didn't hold back. They erupted with their hands and their mouths. Grim counted the warm reaction as for both the movie scene and the Elvis song. Grim's singing was decent, he thought frankly. He slid down to the heavier weight of Elvis's voice and seemed at ease there. Grim was surprised with his effort. "I thought I was on pitch and in control. It even felt natural. It's better when you revere the artist you're doing."

Before the start, Grim again wondered what would happen when the first notes left his mouth. How did he feel when it actually happened? "I felt no initial panic," he replies. "I was nervous only a bit when I began the song. I didn't feel any special tension during the song itself." He had the lyrics on a portable stand next to him and did glance at them. But he didn't need them. He doesn't think he could have gone without them. He was relying on music memory to not forget them. Somehow we recall

lyrics to a song better than reciting it, like a poem. A great melody? Even better.

What concerned him most? "I was more concerned about missing lyrics than singing off-key, believe it or not." That does sound unusual. Wouldn't a novice singer worry more about his pitch than his words?

Why his first public foray into singing wasn't awful, he doesn't know. He has thought about it some more. "I think I must have thought I could sing adequately, or I wouldn't have tried. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not gloating and thinking I was great. But honestly it was all right. More than that I won't say." Grim doesn't recall asking for anyone to evaluate his performance, except for one person. Why he does is because of his response and standing. Ryan Grim is the son of Grim's brother George. He lives in Washington DC and is a manager and political commentator for *The Huffington Post* and TV, especially MSNBC. Ryan is smart, well-read, and funny. He was a disc jockey in college. The next day Grim was strolling with his nephew and his infant daughter Iris. He had been at the performance. Grim asked him what he thought. Ryan replied, "Which version's **better?**"

**A**fter his launch into singing and more serious acting, Grim had a decision to make. Would he sing again? Act? What's the purpose anymore? He wanted to know what it feels like to sing and act in front of an audience. Now he knew. He wanted to know if he had grit to do them. He did. He sang and acted without crashing. Stage fright wasn't a problem. He hadn't been as nervous as he thought he would be. He also didn't feel the pang of discomfort a self-c should feel in front of that Capon crowd.

He was also gratified at what he had done. He had sung and acted in front of a large audience. He was singing and acting in his 70's for the first time and after declaring he had never thought he had any talents for them. He wasn't just singing easy melodies and doing them in his own voice. He had tried an impression of a famous singer and a scene from a familiar film doing two famous actors. These were all hurdles jumped over. Would there be more?

To go further, would he try to prove that he could sing well or act well? What's the point? Many people can sing and act. It wasn't to pursue a career. He was old for this,

*Here is Elvis outside singing "Loving You" as his love interest, Dolores Hart and her family listen and admire his singing. In 1963 Hart quit the movie business and became a nun. She remains one today, residing in her Benedictine monastery in Bethlehem, Connecticut.*



ancient maybe. Perhaps it was an act of ego excess to pursue it further?

He decided to try again. His rationale? "I wanted to continue with the challenge the songs and artists presented. When I reflect on it, I must have developed some confidence," he explains. With Elvis done, he would center on a variety of song genres and singers, not ruling anything out. As for films, he was willing to try anything. The music and the films didn't need to appeal to a full hall of listeners. Just to him. Wasn't he being brash to aspire to these heights? What made him think he was that good and that versatile? "You know, I've thought about this and, believe it or not, I didn't see myself as that skilled. I was just following an impulse to perform at this place that is special to our family and choosing pieces I liked to do, even though they were hard. The air about this place inspired me to take the initial steps and to keep going."

He also discerned a side effect from his performing. He hadn't escaped his personality's self-ness. It wasn't the extra-tension in front of people. "I didn't especially feel that," he says. "It was the part where we shrink from too much spotlight on us. We really don't relish clapping and cheering. Even laughing to our humor doesn't give us that rush. I guess we prefer hearing them to boos and heckling. I know it sounds odd, but that's how we feel. At least that's how I feel."

## 2013

**"If you have no talent too, shameless nerve will get you through."**

**I**n 2013 Grim returned to Capon and entered the talent show. What would he do this year? He had done a short one-act play, a scene from a famous movie, and an Elvis song. He also added a bit surprising to him and the Capon through. When he opened his act, he mocked his talents. Was this to lessen the sting of a bad attempt? A



**Ryan Grim, Grim's nephew, son of his youngest brother George. Ryan, age 38, is a manager and a political analyst for *The Huffington Post*, and a talking head on TV. His daughter Iris first sang in the talent show in 2013 at age 2 years 10 months. She has sung every year since.**

path of humor to develop too? Or an act to replace his singing?

This year he avoided the theater until just before he was called to perform. He hadn't yet conquered his nerves before performing. Who does? He was too tense to abide the crowd while he awaited his turn. Outside the hall, he loitered with his nephew Tyler, who would shoot video, and his niece Kelsy on that humble CD player. When called, he came in the main door, which opens to a foyer on the side of the auditorium. He entered the hall, trudged to the stage stairs, and began the climb. Suddenly, he shouted: "Everyone put your hands together!" He paused, put his hands together, but as in prayer, glanced upward, and resumed, "...and pray for me!" Some laughter arose as he got to the center floor mike. Now what would follow that opening jest?

He began: "I know what you're thinking. Why is this man up here again? He cannot act. He cannot sing. I saw him at Tom's record hop\* last night and he couldn't dance if a gunslinger shot at his feet."

*[\*Capon Springs has a dance with electronic music on the terrace next to the Main House every Thursday evening in the summer. No records, though. It's iPhone electronics hosted by Tom Austin]*

More self-smackery. "I'm going to try again tonight because I am still shameless, and sometimes

we should let our fantasies unwind, to quote a famous phantom. I had hoped to inspire others to come up here and act foolish. But maybe next year." Grim had tried again for fellow family performers. But no one from the family would appear that year.

He announced that he would sing some songs. He had to explain. "The bad news is there will be five of them. The good news is I'm singing only a verse or two from each one. The first four are personal favorites. The last is for all Disney lovers and the kids in the audience."

Despite Grim's search for a diversity of artists and songs, Elvis had not left the building. Grim had chosen another Elvis song. This time it was uptempo but not hardrock Elvis. The song was "Stuck on You," which few had ever heard of, let alone heard. Grim thought it was

**Capon's Front-Porch Dance on the terrace of the Main House every Thursday evening in the summer.**



time to do an Elvis **rock** song. When Grim considered other Elvis rock songs, he dismissed them as too hard to do. As before with “Loving You,” he insisted on a serious homage, not one skidding into farce because it reeked. Tributes take work but gain cheers; parodies are easier but arouse jeers.

He could have done his own cover of this tune. No, he wanted to sing an Elvis song that cloned The King’s unique tone and timbre, along with a gesture or two. That would be a risky stretch for the unpolished Grim. Since he was doing only a few lines, Elvis’s style had to be revealed early on. “Stuck on You” has much Elvis in the beginning. Since his producer, Tom Moore, had found a good “Stuck on You” background close to the original, Grim was satisfied to do it.

The whole song was almost an Elvis self-parody. He sang it with a sly grin and mirthful mien. Grim wanted the audience to know he was doing Elvis as a serious impression. He’d already done “Loving You” with what he sensed as approval. He was willing to sing “Stuck on You” as Elvis and bear any downward thumbs from Capon citizens. “I knew it was a bold step for me as a rank amateur,” he recalls. “I revere the guy, as many do. Somehow I just wanted to do it. It could go silly but it would be fun trying to pull it off.” In and out of his mind darted a survey Grim had read about challenges. People regret not trying those they faced more than those they did and failed.

**Elvis snapping his fingers as he sings “Stuck on You” on black and white television in 1960. It was his first hit single after his release from a two-year Army stint.**



Grim started slow, realizing that when you introduce your own song, then promptly begin singing it, you don’t easily get up to speed. Especially for a rock song. He had been too busy blabbing to the patrons to focus. Grim began a few lines and got to the words “I’m gonna stick like glue...stick, because I-ah unh, unh, stuck on-a you...” When he sang the two “unh, unhs,” he twitched his shoulders. Capon chortled. When he said “...stuck on-a you,” he pointed down into the audience, as Elvis would do. More yucks, and the earnest was fading into the silly.

Capon audiences are primed to enjoy themselves while on vacation. Even blasé adults are gleeful when they see The King’s gyrations. As he finished his shortened version, Grim repeated the twitching at a second “unh, unh” moment. His finish was more Vegas Elvis. When he pointed again to the mythical lady of his affection, he dropped to one knee in faux respect, drawling “becawze ahm uhn, uhn, stuck on-a you.”

Grim stood for a segway, declaring that he should really stick to slow songs, like something by Johnny Mathis. “He was huge during my teen and college years. Last week I went on the internet and it said his songs were known as ‘necking music.’ ....Why didn’t anybody tell me?” Capon Springs tries to limit each performer’s time on stage to under five minutes. Grim knew he wouldn’t make it with his five songs and his intros to each along with his initial moments on stage. His unique performances had bought him some liberal time at Capon. Still, he worried that the host’s hook would appear any moment. Mathis songs begin with long intros before his gushy lyrics. Any Mathis song he chose needed to have a short intro.

One reason Grim pursued a Mathis melody is that he wanted to test his higher

notes, contrasting with the low-range Elvis. Although he liked the Mathis style, he didn’t know if he could approach its higher ranges, let alone mimic it. He wanted to sound authentic. Grim selected a famous



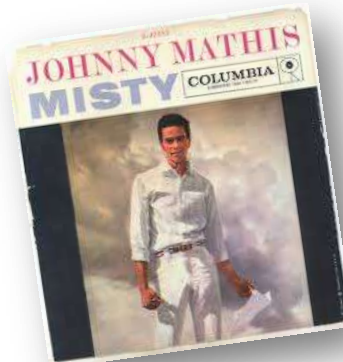
Mathis tune and Tom Moore found Grim a virtually-original backing. After trying out some of the high notes, he had decided to go with it. Grim announced to the assembled: “In 1959 Johnny Mathis recorded a romantic song that went to Number 12 on the charts. I thought I should try it. It’s called ‘Misty.’” Grim began—

*Look at me, I’m as helpless as a kitten up a tree*

*And I feel like I’m clinging to a cloud*

*I can’t understand. I get misty just holding your hand.*

When Grim sang the words “clinging” and “cloud,” he channeled Mathis by inserting a “huh” sound in “clhinging” and “clhoud.” It seemed overdone as some in the crowd tittered as if hearing parody, or hapless karaoke. Unknowing youngsters, as they had in “Stuck on You,” joined in. Otherwise, Grim reached close to the Mathis style,





including a tolerable grasp of the high notes. Still, Grim was far from his act of head tilted back, eyes closed, hands extended, as he climbed a rising sequence of high notes. He focused on the melody and the tender Mathis voice amid “a thousand violins.” With his moves curbed, Grim seemed more in studio than on stage. He just needed headphones.

Grim enjoys Broadway musicals. He googled his own memory for a tune to sing and recalled one from *Camelot*. Robert Goulet sang “If Ever I Would Leave You” and made it famous in that 1960 Broadway musical about King Arthur. Grim had seen Goulet sing it in his native Canada in 1963. The more Grim pondered it, the more he yearned to sing that song. He knew copying the assured, resonant style of Goulet’s baritone would be an ordeal. He was growing less hesitant to try celebrated tunes and the artist who made them so. “I liked it enough that I was willing to take the chance despite doubts about my abilities then,” he says.

While considering it, he tried singing the first few lines. When he got to, “Seeing you in summer, I never would go,” his voice struggled. In a fast few notes, those words ascend an octave to heights rough for a man. Meanwhile Tom Moore couldn’t match a background close to the Broadway cast album. Despite his own rule to sing a song only if the background was close to the original, Grim accepted Moore’s closest version. He craved to sing this song with Goulet’s voiceprint as the model. Why? “I wish I could tell you why. Some songs just hit you right,” he responds. “But it demands a solid macho effort.” Grim knew a 1967 film version of *Camelot* followed Broadway’s. That film’s version of the song didn’t stir him nor the singer, whom he couldn’t name. [Maybe because a Gene Merlino’s voice was dubbed into Franco Nero’s moving lips.] The day before the show, Grim practiced those tricky rising notes. It was still a strain. He chose to go ahead



**Robert Goulet**

with the song anyway. What does he say today? “You know, I recall being more nettled by that meager background than anything else.” How about the rest though? “I didn’t bungle those taxing high notes. But they weren’t great either. I was okay with the rest, but no more than that,” he says.

**G**rim sought to do a notable tune of someone with a booming voice, but not as daring as opera. He had done a Southern Elvis and a Welsh Connery. He was eager to try another accent while crooning. He thought of Andrea Bocelli, the blind Italian tenor, who splashed a cannonball into America’s singing pool through his PBS specials several years ago. Grim saw Bocelli and Reba MacIntire in a duet of “Blue Christmas” on a David Foster Christmas TV special. Since Grim



**Reba MacIntire**

liked the song itself, he linked that to Bocelli’s strong style and Italian accent and considered it for Capon. He had heard “Blue Christmas” first when Elvis sang it on a 45 RPM Christmas album Grim owned in the late 1950’s. He never liked Elvis’s odd rock version with the goofy background. He savored the Bocelli slow version, which better evoked the blues the singer is feeling.

Bocelli’s duet version with MacIntire was backed by Foster’s piano and a string orchestra. No background could be found that ran close enough for Grim. He decided to do a clumsy compromise. He would borrow the instrumental intro from Bocelli’s duet arrangement and snip it when Bocelli started his vocal. (MacIntire joins him only a few bars later.) Grim was singing only the first few lines anyway. He was willing to use that intro as background because he liked it so much. That left him with no background when he himself began. Otherwise, he would have been singing over Bocelli himself from then on. Since Grim’s version would be brief anyway, he was willing to sing his part a capella.

Doing Bocelli allowed him to do the Italian’s heavy accent. Bocelli speaks little English. Grim had Latin, German, and French in school. Grim enjoys accents, especially Italian ones. He tried “Blue Christmas” with an accent in the talent show. He explains: “I wanted to prove to myself that I could sing like Bocelli and with a passable accent.” The crowd, roused by his Italian accent, smelled parody with each “without-a you.” First youngsters giggled and that seemed to arouse the adults to join them. They did. It wasn’t mortifying, but Grim was upset that he let it happen.

After watching Bocelli’s version later, Grim realized he had overdone his Italian accent. Bocelli’s English is still not-a so gouda. But Grim thinks that much of his Italian accent has vanished from experience and focus. How

**Andrea Bocelli**

does he assess his effort today? “I was pleased with my version.” Grim is easily bugged over his backgrounds. He vented again: “I regret the giggles from my overdone accent. But I was bugged more having to sing Bocelli’s vocal without the rich orchestra background. At least I had it for the instrumental intro.”

**F**or his finale, Grim thought about the kids that had to sit through his stage capers. He picked a song that was familiar to all, pleasant and uplifting. It was the theme song for the Walt Disney TV show for many years. “When You Wish upon a Star” originally appeared in the 1940 Disney animated film *Pinocchio* and was sung by an insect named Jiminy Cricket. His voice was a 45-year-old man named Cliff Edwards. Grim wanted to sing the end of the song. That was a problem. It ended with a stairway of notes rising to female heights above the Goulet number. Grim practiced it and says he had no problem going ahead with it. He did it and says, “I’m actually proud of that one, including the high reach ending.”

The background was readily available. A few versions were close to the theme at the end of each episode of Disney’s 1954 anthology series. That show had ten different names. Two of them were not *Disneyland* and *Disney World*. Grim couldn’t escape his now-official addiction to humor. It was coursing through his stage intros and performances. In the second verse of “When You Wish upon a Star” where the notes ascend to Jiminy’s falsetto finish, Grim altered the lyrics to this—

*If you have no talent too,*

*Shameless nerve will get you through.*

*When you wish upon a star, your dreams come true.*

How nervous was Grim for these five disparate songs? “I wasn’t feeling it that much and I don’t know

why.” Dare I ask him how good he considered himself now that he had these presentations well in his past? “No, I won’t go there,” he replies. “I’ve given you some aspects of my songs. But beyond those, it’s for others to say. It’s really not that vital for me to receive any evaluation. That’s for others to do if they want. And I’m not seeking praise either.”

When he was done with his Disney finale, a veteran Capon guest, Scott Foerster, who plays classic piano every year in the talent show, played his music next. As he ambled to the piano, he remarked, “I wish I could sing like that.” The next day, *The Capon Weekly*, the resort’s newsletter issued its usual weekly edition. It summarized the talent show participants, saying this about Grim: “Allan Grim returned with a



**Jiminy Cricket**

*The figure in the cartoon was actually portrayed as a grasshopper. He got the name because Walt Disney gave it to him. But Walt didn’t create his name. Around since 19<sup>th</sup> century England, it even appeared in a prior Disney film. In *Snow White the Dwarfs return home and find their lights on. Guess what they said?**

monologue and five-song format, with genres, including Elvis, opera, country, and Disney. His comedic timing and vocal efforts had the crowd howling with delight.” Grim remarks, “Of course the opera was merely Bocelli singing a pop tune. As for any howling, I hope they meant only the parts where I was trying to be funny.”

With these five songs Grim was evolving into a more composed performer. He was no longer timid about singing specifically and performing generally on stage. He was now singing a breadth of songs

by famous artists. He had repeated Elvis, not with another slow tune but a fast one. Although the crowd is on vacation and wants to be entertained, Grim won’t tie himself to pop favorites. He also doesn’t like to practice or rehearse. He prepared by mostly listening to the original versions and working on troubling parts. “I actually don’t care for practicing, especially having to hear my own voice,” he declares.

**N**o acting in a play or movie scene for 2013. Although he sang only slices from them, he had sung five songs. Thus, their time span ruled out anything else. His performances were his choices. Does he now wish he had picked any other songs? “No, I still stand by them. I was glad to do them and glad to get through them. But I didn’t wipe my brow with relief when it was over. I felt a comfort that I can’t explain.” With comedy already an occupant of his intros and staging, it had also crept into his primary performances. His take? “Yeah, I couldn’t help it. I began to wonder if I shouldn’t do more of it as a main feature. Maybe cut some of the music. It got me thinking, no question.” With Capon’s time constraints for performers, he was already beyond his generous, host-granted extensions. That was an issue to confront in his growing presentations.

After three years of Capon Springs appearances, Grim had appeared nowhere else, not even at a karaoke bar. It was now only a same-time-next-year event. He had plenty of time between gigs to come up with a program. The question now was, Is he done or would he perform again at Capon? Or anywhere else. If so, what would he try next time?

## 2014

### A snail, The Animals, and a large dose of Disney

**G**rim and his family came again to Capon. This time it was a buzzing swarm—over thirty of them. Would he perform again? Was the mass of family enough to demand it? If so, what would it be this time—acting, singing, or comedy? Or something new? He hadn't done any tap dancing, magic, playing a tuba, or Irish Step Dancing.

He did try again. This time he didn't come from the outside just before his time, nor from the audience. He was in a room to the right and behind the stage until introduced by the host Jonathon Bellingham. This time he had more to say about Grim. He declared that Grim had become "a local legend" and that "No one knows what he will do up on the stage." Grim didn't emerge from the side door below the stage until introduced. When he did, he grabbed the hand mike from Bellingham and promptly hollered "What up, Capon Springs!.....unincorporated!" [A sign at the entrance to the resort says Capon Springs, Unincorporated.] At center stage he began again: "I know you are all wondering why I'm up here again since I have no talent whatsoever. (Pause) Me too. Actually, I **do** know why I do this to myself and to you. (Pause) I have no **shame**."

He proclaimed that tonight he would sing some songs. Then he would return later and do some moments from Disney films. He had checked with Bellingham and he asked him to split them up with other performers between them. Before singing, Grim wanted to do something else first. He noted that he had never done any standup comedy at Capon. "Since I knew I would be standing, I thought I could get in a short joke. When you're through laughing, I'll tell you about the songs."

No joke yet and the audience was laughing.

*I guy named Jack is home one night and hears a knock at his*

*front door. (Grim taps the mike a few times.)*

*He goes and opens his front door, looks out sees nothing, and looks down. There's a snail there. He picks it up and hurls it as far as he can into the night. (Grim does these gestures.)*

*A month goes by. He's sitting there watching TV one night when he hears another knock at the door. (Grim taps a few times on the mike again.) He goes over and opens the door, looks out, and sees nothing. As he turns to go back in, he looks down.*

(Grim kneels down on the floor, and looks up.)

"What the heck, Jack!"

As the gathered guests chuckled, Grim added, "And I had to clean up that last line."

Grim said that this evening he would be singing songs the artist made famous and trying to imitate their voice and style. The songs are vastly different. "First, the bad news. I will be singing three songs. The good news is I will sing only a verse or two from each." The crowd



snickered and a few mock "hoorays" erupted.

**E**ven with the new Capon sound system, Grim still employed his cheap CD player with its paltry speaker for background music. Again he had his niece Kelsy Grim, a Temple college student, to assist in playing the background music and do whatever

else was needed. Grim should have learned from prior productions. The player's sound volume and quality faltered as it projected to the hall, diluting his work. He could have hooked into Capon's sound system and boosted the volume and quality. But he didn't and he bore the results.

He began his singing program by telling the Capon audience that his first song was a number one hit in the UK, USA, and Canada. It was released in 1964 by the British invasion group The Animals and called "The House of the Rising Sun." Most oldsters had heard of it, he was sure. He had found a near perfect background for the song. Although it was a group, no one sings backup; they all play instruments. One is an electronic organ, which is featured in "Rising Sun" with a spirited riff.

Grim recalls that when the song came out in 1964, he was only warm to it. It was mysterious and the lead singer shrieked and sang odd lyrics. As with many rock songs, the words are lost amid the musical frenzy. You don't care anyway. It's the beat and the presentation and the energy and the notes. When Grim heard it again in 2014 on a TV rock oldies show, it stirred him like never before.

He began to think about using it. In time he was sure he wanted to sing it and the whole song. Not a good idea. If he was singing other songs too, he couldn't do it all. The lead singer is Eric Burdon, a punk-with-pimples British growler. It's sung slowly, allegedly telling of a young man's misery as part of his parents' New Orleans gambling house and bordello. At first, Grim believed he couldn't approach his remorseful screeches and gravel guilt. Since it was a weighty challenge, he wanted to try it. Of course.

He was also enthralled by its strange mystery—a young man's early life and its effect on him. He cites his father's gambling. We must surmise the sins that occurred in the house, which is in decadent New

Orleans. Probably sex for money and gambling. The city authorities have never confirmed any actual site for the song. The phrase “rising sun” in its title has no clear provenance to a bordello either.

It’s a rock song with no déjà vu vintage. Your face contorts as you ask, “What was **that?**” You never heard it before and you doubt you will hear it again. This distinction cheered Grim. He also relished the chance to sing a British group rock song from the early 1960’s and, at last, something other than Elvis.

Grim was pleased with the background music for “Rising Sun” obtained by his new music producer, Jill Sardella (shown above) from Collegeville, Pa. (Grim had had a mysterious falling out with his local music authority Tom Moore.) The



Apparently humor stalks Grim without mercy. Sometimes he just yields to it. He prepared to sing his own Capon lyrics for his two-verse rendition of “Rising Sun.” They would’ve reduced the gloom of the actual one and skirted the unseemly subject of the song. After all, Grim was presenting it at a family resort. In the end, he shelved his alternative lyrics. He thought it would just arouse snickers again. He wanted a serious cover of this arrangement. Here are the actual lyrics he sang shadowed in italics by those he had created but kept home:

There is a house in New Orleans they call the Rising Sun  
*There is no house in Capon Springs that sees the rising sun.*

And it’s been the ruin of many a poor boy  
*And it’s been the ruin of many a pure morn*

And God I know I’m one.  
*And God I know a ton.*

My mother was a tailor  
*My mother was a housewife*

Sold my new blue jeans.  
*Packed up all our things.*

My father was a gambling man  
*My father was a golfing man*

Way down in New Orleans.  
*Way down in Capon Springs.*

Grim explains his own lyrics’ meaning. Capon Springs guests stay in the large Main House and smaller scattered buildings. Some of them sit close to a



mountain on the east. The morning sun doesn’t shine on them until later. As for his parents, Grim’s mother was a typical mid-20<sup>th</sup> century housewife. With five children, she assumed much of the burdens of the household, including getting the family ready for a vacation. This was of course years ago when the family was intact. Her husband was an avid golfer, especially at Capon Springs. The golf course was a major draw for the family’s decision to holiday there in 1954.

Shunning an intro, Grim leapt to the next song. He sang the solo “Who Am I, Anyway?” It’s an appendage to the initial song from the 1975 Broadway musical, *A Chorus Line*. The rousing opener (there is no overture) “I Hope I Get It” lead-in features a group of dancers tense as they perform their final audition for a show’s chorus line. Grim liked its uneasy, desperate quality. It reminded him of his Capon angst. His producer Jill Sardella turned up no background for it on the internet. All the versions had the singer’s voice fronting them. All were from cast albums, including the one from London and the 1985 movie version starring Michael Douglas.

Grim waived his rule to sing only songs with a background close to the original. He thought the background to the Broadway and other versions especially enhanced its appeal. Still, he saw this as a chance to sing one more song a cappella. It was a short solo and he could sing the whole song. Its notes ran higher than “Rising Sun’s” and thus it



background was virtually original. At Capon, when Grim tried to mimic the growling and shrieking of Eric Burdon, the sound projected as feeble for a rock song. Rock requires loudy and roudy. That CD player should have been dumped. The song otherwise went okay, except for one important series of notes. The second line “And it’s been the ruin of many a poor boy” demands a quick drop from high whine distress to low register agony and guilt. Grim didn’t tumble well and lost his control. What happened, I asked? “It’s the only portion I practiced more than once. I listened to the song several times. There’s a great color video on YouTube from 1964. It was tough to do that quick transition down the scale. I was glad I tried it though. It’s an odd song but a classic,” he says.

presented another greater but welcome challenge.

What does he think now? “I thought it was fine even with no background. I realized how naked you feel singing with none. You can’t help hearing your own voice,” he replies. “That’s not good for a self-conscious person.” Why so? “You should remember this. We already are too aware of it.” Grim isn’t done. He wants to vent some more about background music. “I’ve listened to a version with its background since then. It really does make it better, especially with the intro,” he asserts.

Grim is fond of the Italian language, especially when it’s sung. In 1958 when Grim was in high school, Dick Clark’s American Bandstand program on TV was right after school and AM radio was blasting the hits all day. Grim provided some history for his next song. An artist singing entirely in Italian recorded a song that vaulted to the top of the pop charts. No song in a foreign language had gone to number one in America before this one. “Volare,” or “Nel Blu di Pinto di Blu,” was recorded by an obscure Italian crooner, Domenico Modugno.

**G**rim had always liked it and wondered if he could sing it at Capon. He would have to memorize all the Italian words and craft an ample Italian accent. While trying to stay with the melody, this task would be daunting.

Sardella got him a superb background that copied the hit version with its celestial piano intro atop soaring violins. They descend and halt abruptly for the first words—“*Penso che un sugno così non torni mi più...*” As before, Grim didn’t like to practice his songs. Although he did on this one, it was mostly to see if he could handle the Italian. He even tried it in the shower and finally was satisfied enough to go ahead with it. He now says, “Why I felt that way, I don’t know. It was tough. But I love the Italian language. It seems erratic but sounds lyrical. These clash but are its appeal to me. Without that I might not have done it.”

For his allotted time his lines were lengthy because the song doesn’t reach the word “Volare” until after a long intro. The gloomy intro dissolves and the rest of the tune is cheery. When Grim began those intro lyrics, their faster pace and familiar ring spurred the SRO crowd to join Grim in, “Volare, oh, oh. Cantare, oh, oh, oh, oh...” At that moment Grim himself thought, “Uh, oh.” He knew he was about to stop to satisfy his MC already concerned about Grim’s excess time. When he stopped, the vacationing patrons weren’t happy. They had gotten into it with him and weren’t ready to quit. Although he had his safety-net notes with the Italian on them on a nearby lectern, he never used them. Magnifico! His musical memory had served him well.

Grim was satisfied with his rendition including the Italian words and accents. He had listened to the Modugno original plenty of times and it stuck with him. As indicated before, Grim doesn’t usually seek out reviews of his performances. He recalls a brief chat with his then 36-year-old son, Douglas, attending with his wife Kelly and their two daughters. They had never heard him sing there or anywhere else. When he saw them after he performed, they praised him before he could speak. He then asked his son only if he knew his Italian words were real. He said he couldn’t tell.

Grim sang the opening of “Volare” in Italian. Here are the English words for what he sang. They are strange. He still doesn’t know what they are unless he reads this.

*I think, that dream does not come back ever again.*

*I painted my face and hands blue.*

*Then suddenly I was being kidnapped by the wind.*



*And I began to fly in the endless sky.*

*Flying, oh, oh!*

*Singing, oh, oh, oh, oh!*

*In the blue painted blue.*

*Happy to be up there.*

As arranged with the MC, after some other presenters had taken the stage, Grim returned to do his final portion. These were moments from Disney films. He announced that he was doing this for both the kids and their parents and grandparents. Grim had sat through several Disney films and had been to Disney World with his two granddaughters, Elaina and Lauren, then nine and seven years old. Both were in the audience. He said he would not identify the film his segment was from before or after he did it. Some would be songs and some just famous scenes. See how many you recognize, he instructed.

**H**e zipped right to the start of the film *The Lion King*, jolting the audience with the loud opening words, “Nants oygwaynya etc...” of that African lady adorned with headdress and staff. He had considered a stick as a staff she holds while gazing to the heavens. He also thought of recreating her tall headdress by recycling that little wastebasket from his bedroom that he used in *Indiana Jones*. It didn’t fit his head. Grim had tried to memorize those exotic African words she bellows. After singing the first line of them on the stage, he repeated it, as required. When he stumbled with the next words, mostly on purpose, he gave up, declaring, “Squat. No one can say dem words.”

With the hand mike in his right hand, he stuck his left one up and pointed all four of his fingers out to the audience and his thumb underneath them as a primitive Kermit the Frog. He looked like he was doing a shadow puppet. Grim was now in Russia with the Muppets in the 2014 film *Muppets Most Wanted*. Now a part of Disney, the frivolous group spent much of the film in that alien nation. Grim had always enjoyed the Muppets. He thought they were more for adults than children. He also couldn't resist the chance to try out another foreign accent. Grim could now try a Russian accent. He imagined that, when they speak English words, they start slowly as if their mouth is full of borsch. Instead of escaping by typical American jailbreak speed and chaos, they roll from your mouth.



He produced some syllables with that distinctive Russian inflection. He spoke slowly and lowly, as if he were a menacing Russian stuck in Siberia: "You know, Kee-yare mit, een dRussia we ate-a (*eat*) note justa thay legs, but thay whole feerog." As Grim uttered each word, his left hand shook more and more and his thumb moved down from his four fingers. With the final word, Grim's Kermit dropped, suggesting the poor frog passed out or, worse, died of fright. Neither the words nor the gestures appear in the



movie. But Grim does recall a Russian figure terrifying Kermit. That was enough to inspire him to bring both to the Capon stage.

**S**now White and the Seven Dwarfs was Disney's first full-length animated film. It opened in 1937 and has become a cultural icon. Grim had seen it again recently when his granddaughters saw it for the first time on DVD. From the film Grim selected the tune "I'm Wishing" to sing. He marveled at its sweet schmaltz, with birds around her and with the handsome prince about to surprise her at the scene's end. Grim saw a chance for some adult levity. He also wanted to try a young maiden's high voice, but not merely as an obvious stretch. He wanted to see if he could do it fighting nerves in public. Snow White is at a wishing well and each line she sings echoes from the well below. This time Grim used that wastebasket from *Indiana Jones*. After speaking Snow White's first words at the well, "If you make a wish at a wishing well, your wish will come true," he sang, "I'm wishing..." and the rest of the brief lyrics. When he finished a line he dropped his head into the wastebasket and repeated the words as that echo. Easy titters dashed from the crowd.

When he was done he declared (still in Miss White's angelic voice), "Birds will believe anything you tell them." Grim didn't mention that in the film scene around the well sat several birds listening to her (a common Disney touch for its heroines, often with several, small adoring animals). No one laughed, as they either could not hear him speak in her sweet high register or they didn't recall that birds were all around her.

He tried another line for laughs still gushing with her angelic innocence: "I guess he won't come if I keep putting my head in a wastebasket." The crowd didn't seem to hear these added lines either. Grim was still in her virgin voice, which didn't seem



to carry. Perhaps he needed to explain who "he" was—Prince Charming, who soon is to appear out of nowhere. (Grim didn't portray him.) Besides, the crowd wasn't finished reacting to those faux echos, and his droll try at copying her voice. "I should have quit earlier," he muses now. "No matter how well I did her voice, I should have known that a man doing a maiden's fluttery voice would draw snickers."

**P**eter Pan is a cartoon Disney movie released in 1952. In the last year it has appeared live on TV and on Broadway. It's been done and in other film versions in recent years. From the sweetness in *Snow White*, Grim travelled afar to Neverland to a Captain Hook wailing, "Schmee! Heh-heh-hel-l-l-l-l-lpp!" as a crocodile snaps at him. (Grim didn't do the croc.) Then he became a scheming, vengeful Hook, vowing, "Drat, that Peter Pan. I'll run in him throu-ou-ou-gh!" as Grim thrust an unseen sword through the air. "I'll get him if it's the lahst thing I doooo," raising his other hand, his index finger curled into a hook that slowly scratched his cheek.

Grim had seized another chance to act, this time as a savage cartoon pirate hounded by Peter Pan and his companions. No music here—just violent action. Hook's British upper class voice was noted American character actor Hans Conried (who also played the voice of the children's father, Mr. Darling). Grim relished the chance to break out another accent. He could try to clone Conried's Shakespearean spit style. Although Grim held the spit, he flaunted his English accent as the wicked Hook roared his fury over that young Peter Pan. Conried is shown at the bottom left of page 30.

Grim eased into the next scene. He was now a refined maitre di candlestick welcoming the heroine Belle to a feast of French delights at the manbeast's mansion. Finally some music background and a song to sing. From Disney's 1991's *Beauty and the Beast*, Grim began the song "Be Our Guest." In a joyfully overwrought French accent, Grim declared, "Relax, pool up a chayair, as thee dining room proudly preezenz.....your deenair." Then he sang, "Be our guest, be our guest, put our sayerveece to thee test..." As he invites Belle to try an array of French cuisine, Grim savored the chance to utter "hors d'oeuvres" and "soup du jour." He dished them out with



panache. Another foreign accent checked off his growing list. But of kayorse.

Grim flew across the wavy pond to the American South to portray Uncle Remus singing "Zip-a-dee Doo Dah" from *Song of the South*, the 1946 Disney film, part cartoon (Br'er Rabbit, Br'er Fox, etc.) and part real (Uncle Remus but with some animated touches). He wanted to try a lower range tune to contrast the much higher Snow White of "I'm Wishing." Remus has a deep, rich tone. Grim swears he saw

the original *Song of the South* film in 1946, when he would have been only five years old. He says movies were king then, with hardly any TV in the late 1940's. He and his older

brother Jim, then eight, would walk to the Strand Theatre down in the center of Kutztown from their home on College Hill. [Yes, they would do it without any adults. Same with school when they lived on the opposite side of town from their school.]

He also saw it repeated in the Disney TV series in the 1950's. After the 1980's you probably wouldn't have seen the entire film anywhere; you would get only the video of the



song. Uncle Remus was a freed slave. Activists opposed re-release of the entire film because of its alleged racist overtones.

In the film, Uncle

Remus told children tales of characters Br'er Rabbit and his foes Br'er Fox and Br'er Bear, who appeared in the animated portion. Moseying with a cane down an idyllic country path, the jovial oldster offered a short intro. Grim tried to copy his Southern slave dialect:

*"It happened on one of dem zip-a-dee doo dah days. Now dat's da kind a day you cain't open yo mouth without a song jump right out of it."*

The hard part was having his assistant Kelsey start up the music as soon the initial spoken words were finished at "...jump right out of it." They had prepared for that fast segway and she deftly started the background music on

time. Grim stayed in dialect for the familiar lyrics and tune "Zip-a-dee doo dah, zip-a-dee aye, my oh my what a wonderful day..." He eventually sang about that blue bird on his shoulder and the rest of the first few lines, then cut off at "...everything is satisfactual."

Grim figured this popular tune would stir up the crowd, and it did. They joined in and mostly drowned him out. It's not easy to stop this song early on. You start it up and the bouncy rhythm, catchy words and appealing tune propel you along. When Grim stopped abruptly, the crowd seemed disappointed. Grim was too. But, he was keeping his promise to sing only a few bars of each song and had already abused his overall time limits.

Grim thought little of the 1955 Disney animated film *Lady and the Tramp*. He had seen it in the theater when it first came out. He remembered only the Peggy Lee songs and that romantic restaurant scene. He adored that scene where the Italian café owner Tony served a spaghetti (nka pasta) dinner to the two lovedogs, Lady and



her Tramp. He was a stray mutt and she a refined Cocker Spaniel from a good human family. Grim had seen it again on DVD with his granddaughters Elaina and Lauren. The film itself is in the American Film Institute's 100 Top Romantic films of all time. The scene is an icon of animation and fable. Grim was keen to re-create that film's poignant moment, which included Tony and his chef serenading the two pooches with the love song "Bella Notte" (Beautiful Night). Grim also could do one more Italian accent and croon that romantic tune. He knew it would be fun and gain laughs.

The scene begins with the two canines showing up one evening at Tony's Italian eatery. Somehow they made each other's tail wag and were keen on getting out of their dog-day afternoon lives. The Tramp was a favorite visitor of Tony's. Supposedly the dogs were on a date and looking for a special dinner.



When Tony's chef spies them, he readies a few bones for them to gnaw on. After informing his boss of his decent gesture, Tony explodes and insists that "Butchee," as he calls Tramp, had told him he wanted a special meal. How he conveyed that isn't explained. In fact, his chef points out "But, Boss, dogs don't-a talk."

Instead Tony serves them "Tony's best-a spaghetti." The dogs are hardly treated like dogs, but then every dog has his day too. They are given a low table and settle in to share one plate (with no cutlery of course; they're dogs.) Tony grabs an accordian (aka concertina) and his chef grabs a tiny guitar (aka mandolin) to join him, and Tony serenades the chomping dogs with "Bella Notte." As they dig in with their mouths, Tramp nose-nudges a meatball to his Best Bitch. They were so doggone in love that neither was dogged in their attention. Soon a



single spaghetti strand linked their mouths in an accidental bond short of dog-eat-dog. This touching made him a hot dog and she a, how can I put this, cold dog. She pulled away embarrassed.

Apparently Grim couldn't let slurping dogs sigh. He felt a connection too. He had to do this scene at Capon.

Putting on the dogs would be easy for Grim. They don't talk and barking is easy to mimic. But these dogs bite—spaghetti. So Grim had to do some acting. Grim played both



Here is the sequence of the famous spaghetti strand in "Lady and the Tramp."

Tony and his chef in dialogue over serving a meal to the dogs. He also became Tony the singer serenading the dogs, moving his empty hands close then apart side-to-side as if playing a concertina. Sardella had found a good background for Bella Notte. Here is the full scene as re-written slightly by Grim:

**Chef:** I have some-a bones for the pooches' dinner.

**Tony:** **Bones!** Shut uppa you face! Butchee tole me he wanted Tony's best-a spagayetti.

**Chef:** But boss, dogs don't-a talk.

**Tony:** He's-a talk-a too **me!**

**Chef:** Okay, boss. Comin' up.

**Tony:** Now I sing-a to Butch and heez-a lady.

*(Tony grabs a concertina and his chef a mandolin and they begin serenading the two dogs with "Bella Notte.")*

*(As they sing, the dogs eat their spaghetti from one dish. Unknown to them, they have each bitten on a single long strand of spaghetti. Not watching closely, they slowly work it into each of their own mouths. Soon their mouths touch, accidentally.)*

Grim mimicked the two dogs with munching hand puppets. As both hands came together, the hand for Lady instantly dropped down in prim shame. The Tramp's hand opened up, moving up and down in panting delight. In the film



the camera then panned up slowly between two tall tenements to glistening stars and a full moon. Grim could only gaze upward with his two hand puppets joining in. Cut to the next scene.

Capon woofed with tails wagging.

The final Disney scene was another *Beauty and the Beast* moment. This was the rowdy, light tune by a group of guys in the local tavern lauding their favorite bully, Gaston. He lusts after the comely Belle and is cocky enough to think he can win her. Sardella got Grim the fitting background for the song. The foreground was the problem. It's a gang of drinking buddies praising their chief chum Gaston. No instrumental-only background. Grim said it didn't matter; he would skip any background and do it with just his own voice. No, he wouldn't somehow mimic a group. That would



take some electronics and copies of his own voice. He would do the words and the melody solo, then walk a few steps to the side and become Gaston, blaring about his vain, blowhard, muscular self.

**T**he song is simply called “Gaston.” Grim picked the words for the shred of the song he would sing. They were from different parts of the song, all laughable. If he couldn’t simulate a few guys *singing* together, Grim would at least sing loud. He would also add some of his own words. He whined:

No one’s quick as Gaston

No one’s neck is incredibly thick as Gaston’s.

In a wrestling match no one bites like Gaston.

*(Grim slides over a few paces and is now Gaston. He raises his right arm, pulls his sleeve back, and flexes his bicep.)*

As you can see, I’ve got biceps to spare

And I’m roughly the size of a baaarrgge!

*(Grim looks at his bicep and looks out at the audience.)*

*(Meekly)* ...a raft?

*(Grim slides back to the spot where he began and extends his free arm and hand out toward Gaston’s spot in presentation of him.)*

My what a guy that Gast-o-o-h-h-n!

That was it. Eight moments from Disney, most with Grim unable to hold the humor and spare the crowd, but stirring them to enjoy it all. Grim knew that even a greenhorn doing scenes from childrens’ films would loosen the Capon adults’ reserve and unleash their guffaws. They might laugh **at** him but they would be enjoying their evening in the hall. Whether he intended a dignified xerox of the films’ words and actions wouldn’t matter. So, he pursued it, injecting



his own stabs at wit and snark. The kids could still be thrilled and many would still get the nuances flying over their maturing heads.

With the three serious songs from the prior segment, Grim had now covered eleven performances in one evening. All were only fragments of songs or film scenes. Time for Grim to get the heck off the stage? Yes, no doubt for the audience and the clock-checking MC. But Grim had to do an encore. He had planned for a grand finale number, which left him clanging louder against the show’s time limit for performing. The Capon MC raised no hook, apparently allowing Grim slack from his family’s over half century as Capon guests.

**H**e had chosen a song from *The King and I*. It appeared in the 1951 Broadway version and the 1956 film. But Grim was taking his from a 1998 animated non-Disney version he never knew existed until he began youtubing the song. If you know *The King and I*, you probably know the song “I Have Dreamed.” Grim always liked it and looked for it on the internet. When he discovered the 1998 film version, he wanted to try it. It was apt, as it finished with a lively, optimistic high crescendo. It supplied joy and uplift to the Capon flock at the end of his evening. After a few bars by the

young man, his girlfriend joins in as a duet till the end.

Grim didn’t know the obscure young man who sang it. He found out he wasn’t that obscure. It was Peabo Bryson. Grim wouldn’t try to copy his blissful version (which actually was recorded in 1992 at the Hollywood Bowl as a studio cast recording). He would sing it solo and try to imitate a young man in love addressing his nearby girlfriend. The piece had added luster. The nasty ruler prevented them from coupling up. After all, a King beats a pair of hearts.

Sardella got him the film’s lush orchestra background for it. He sang it once or twice before arriving at Capon. Why would he do only that? “I thought it was so melodic,” he responds. “After all, it is a Rogers and Hammerstein production. It almost sings itself. I just needed to know the words.”

Grim had shunned intros for any of his Disney moments . As a finale, this song deserved one. He began, “In *The King and I* Tuptin and the girl he loves are forbidden to come together. They can only dream of their love while they plan to escape from the King of Siam. Tuptin sings to Thun Lee of what he imagines their love would be. For my finale I will sing his song to her, ‘I Have Dreamed,’ when he has a moment with her.”



In a switch, Grim sang the **last** two verses because they came to an appealing climax. He tried to sound like a teenage boy, reaching a bit high and feeling his passion. “I was happy with it. I think I stayed on pitch and didn’t flub anything. Rogers and Hammerstein made it easy.”

Grim had done twelve separate performances for his 2014

annual return to the Capon stage. Much singing, many foreign accents, some acting, some gestures, and periodic humor. All of it doing the roles and voices and gestures of others, including cartoon characters. Was it time now to quit? What more would he want to do? Would he want to try just singing in his own voice? Is there an accent left he hadn't tried? It's a whole year between Capon visits. How can someone apparently devoted to singing and performing in general wait so long between gigs? Why not elsewhere in the meantime? Maybe instead of Capon?

## 2015

### Professor Kingsfield scowls at Capon

Grim decided to return to the stage in 2015 and the theater was SRO full. He again came from a back room when called by perennial host Jonathon Bellingham, who repeated his "local legend" and "don't know what he will do" intros. Grim strolled in the stage-right door, took the hand mike from the MC, and climbed the steps to go to center stage. This time no shouting before reaching it. He began:

"After my performance in the Capon talent show last year, I did an informal survey in the dining room and asked should I continue to perform in the Capon Talent Show next year... And **regardless**, I intend to try again tonight... And a simple "No" would have sufficed."

"Why on earth am I doing this again, I said to myself. These Capon audiences have eyes and ears. I have tried to find some talent and I have come up empty. So I am up here again because I am simply SHA-A-A-M-M-ELESS (*sticking his mouth close to the mike and saying it slowly and emphatically*)."

He added, "I hope also to inspire others with absolutely no talent to come up here and make fools of themselves. I'm going to continue doing what I enjoy doing. Tonight I will first try doing a scene from a movie. Then do some singing. I'm performing things **I enjoy doing**."

**T**he movie was a scene from the 1973 film *The Paper Chase*, he told them. "It's about the first year of law school. A law student falls for the daughter of his mean, imperious Contracts professor, Kingsfield. He was played by John Houseman, who won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his role. You may recall Houseman from the commercial for Smith Barney investment firm. He would say, "Smith Barney makes money the old fashioned way...They **earn** it." When Grim uttered the last sentence, a few patrons joined him along with his stress on the word "earn."

Grim said he would play the professor in his first class in Contracts law. His first cousin once removed, Tyler Grim, age 25, would play a first-year law student, Mr. Hart. Grim's script varied from the actual scene but it captured the essence. He then barked, "Action!"

*Mr. Hart takes his seat in the classroom with his law book. Professor Kingsfield approaches a lectern with a law book and a seating chart. Wearing a scowl all the way, his head flung slightly backward, his nose in the air, and his eyes a squint, he begins:*

K: Class, you teach yourselves the law; I teach your minds to think. You come in here with a **skull full of mush** and, if you survive, you leave thinking like a **lawyer**.

To be enforceable, a contract must have a meeting of the minds. The facts in the case of Ferguson versus Jennings...

*(Kingsfield opens his seating chart and looks up and out to the class.)*  
...Mr. Hart.

H: At an estate auction John Ferguson purchased a cabinet for the sum of three hundred dollars. After Ferguson took possession of the cabinet, he examined it and found a secret drawer. In it was seven thousand dollars in cash. *(Hart pauses.)* Sir, I didn't read past the headnote.

*(Kingsfield's eyes widen and he stares in fury for a few moments.)*

K: Mr. Hart, come down here.

*(Hart pauses, then slowly rises from his seat, and cautiously wanders to*



*in front of Kingsfield.)*

K: *(Reaching into his pocket and pulling out a coin)* Mr. Hart, here is a dime. Call your mother and tell her there is serious doubt you will ever become a lawyer.

*(Hart takes the coin, pauses, then slowly turns around and begins trudging out of the classroom, reaching close to the door. He halts and wheels around, facing Kingsfield.)*

H: *(Shouting)* You are a mean jerk and a bully, Kingsfield!

K: *(Loudly)* Mr. Hart, that is the most intelligent thing you have said today! You may re-take your seat.

Grim said, "Cut!" and reached his hand out toward Tyler. He shouted above the fervent cheering and applause, "Tyler Grim!" who took a bow. Grim then walked to center stage, still in his scowl, stopped, appearing to begin his own bow. Instead, he waved his hand at the crowd in dismissal, turned and marched down off the stage, his scowl intact.

This was Grim's first playing with others. None of this one was comedy. He needed another actor because the distance between the professor and the student would be too far and detract from this solemn scene. It also demanded good timing. The audience would be inclined to laugh if he rushed back and forth between the characters as they sparred with each other.

Grim family members were averse to joining him in his performances. This time he asked his niece Kelsy to play the law student's role. He showed her the brief script and she reluctantly accepted. After a sleepless night, she came to her uncle and declined. He understood; he might have been shy about it at her age (19) too. One



reason he had asked her was that he thought it would be good for her growth to try it. She remained as his sound engineer.

**D**istant nephew Tyler was his next target and he accepted. His sister Kyleigh is a musical actress. He now had a chance to show her and his parents what he could do. He had been a



physics major in college and was pursuing that as a career in nuclear subs. His parents Mark and Sherrie were there. Kyleigh had returned home a few days ago in a surprise act from her theater studies in Europe after finishing college. She had come home, not for her brother, but her mother's birthday. They would all be there and could see him perform. By the same token, Kelsy's parents George and Melissa and sister Olivia, 12, would be attending too. George is Allan's youngest brother in a family of five children. Mark is Allan's first cousin, the son of Allan's father's brother.

Grim said he had a Kingsfield in law school. Most law schools have them, he was sure. They claim their manner helps the green student to handle the rigors of law practice, especially in the court room. Most people can identify having at least one bully for a teacher in school. Grim wondered what it would be like to be a law school ogre. He could flashback to his years of law school and step in the shoes of a nasty professor. He recalled some other instructors near mean in their own ways. A few intimidated students marched out

the first day of classes or never returned. Others lasted a few classes.

"It was scary," Grim well recalls. "The law books never had any pictures in them. Ha. We didn't need to volunteer an answer or to recite the facts of any case. We would soon be called on. There's a lot of back and forth in law school. You are taught how to think. That's its main thrust. Learning the actual legal principles and laws are secondary. It's how you apply them."

When the Capon horde settled down, Grim returned to the stage to begin singing. He took the hand mike and began, "This is the music portion of my performance. I'm going to try to imitate the artist and their version of the song they made famous. First, the bad news. I'm going to sing five songs. Now the good news. I will sing only snippets from each. And then I will get the **heck** off the stage."

Grim mulled over how to handle his prior problem of unsought snickers, especially for high notes and accents. He dealt with it by declaring, "These songs are all serious. I hope you are not inclined to laugh, unless you think my singing is very bad."

Without delay, he announced, “When Roy Orbison sang, he hardly moved. He wore sunglasses and black outfits. He wasn’t blind, as some believe. He had poor eyesight and he was shy and his sunglasses helped to shield him from the audience. Between 1960 and 1964 he had 22 songs on Billboard’s Top 40. The song I’m singing is none of those great tunes but a song he recorded in 1988 as part of a comeback album. Roy Orbison singing “You Got It.”

He was intrigued by the Orbison timbre that often reached



skyward with a country-fried rock tone. He didn’t realize Orbison had so many hits. He liked most of the ones he knew. He was struck by “You Got It,” one he did only late in his career and life. Grim tells me, “I had never heard it until the year before Capon. I don’t know where that happened.” It was a single from his comeback album that came out in early 1989. Orbison had died suddenly of a heart attack at the end of 1988. When he was inducted into the Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, he was introduced by admirer Bruce Springsteen. He was only one of many. Grim heard that Elvis told one of his concert audiences that Orbison had “a perfect voice,” and was “the greatest singer in the world.”

Grim liked the song’s insistent beat, aggressive bass guitar and rare kettle drums. He loved the ending. Grim likes abrupt endings to songs. He calls the device “hitting the wall.” He cites two examples: Elvis in “Hard-Headed Woman,” and Jerry Lee Lewis’s “Breathless.” But he couldn’t do it here. “It comes at the end. Since I would be doing only

a few lines from the whole song, I would be confined to the opening lyrics,” he laments. “I wanted to sing the entire song, but I had committed to singing four others that evening.”

As with others, Grim hardly practiced the song. He preferred mostly to listen to it a few times and go from there. Grim considered wearing shades and strapping on a guitar. But he thought they might incite yucks. Orbison appeared flairless behind the mike, strumming his electric guitar, wearing a stiff, timid smile. Grim relates to that; he hardly moves himself or wants to, even when copying artists who flail about. “Actually, I’d prefer working in a studio without the gestures, if I could,” he confesses. Sounds like a self-c guy speaking.

Grim should have practiced more or focused more that night. His voice was too slow for the instrumental pace early on. His words dragged, then caught up late. Grim had the same initial trouble with Elvis’s “Stuck on You.” He tries to explain: “It’s like basketball. You need to shoot some baskets before the game starts to get into it. With these songs I give a long intro and right away I must jump into a rock song and its speed. It’s hard to get up to speed.”

Soon he had to soar to the Orbison falsetto. He couldn’t match the speed there either. Having to copy these famed artists voices and styles made it tougher.

Although the tune’s tempo isn’t that fast, he wasn’t keeping pace. “I could hardly hear the background from my woeful CD player. That didn’t help.” But he got better and he concluded okay, with his Orbison Texas accent outdoing the singing. Apparently that wasn’t saying much.

*South Pacific* has survived in revival films with its compelling racial story and a hoard of hummable Rogers and Hammerstein tunes. Grim went back to the original Broadway version from 1949 for his selection “Some Enchanted Evening.” His interest in this renowned song was more personal. Although he liked it, its singer intrigued him more. He wanted to re-create the voice of the man who performed its original Broadway version. That was Ezio Pinza. (Shown above) As Grim explained to the crowd, Pinza was Italian and a member of the Metropolitan Opera in NYC. Grim could sing virtual opera with this song.



Maybe so, but he would need to reach down to a heavy baritone to do it. In the James Michener-inspired musical, Pinza played the role of French planter Emil deBecque, which made Pinza a celebrity and won him a Tony. Grim coveted to sing his resonant tones. That would contrast with the lofty pitches of Roy Orbison. Although

Pinza wasn’t singing opera in *South Pacific*, his natural quality would be close enough for Grim. A feat for Grim to drill to Pinza’s depth? “Yeah, no question,”

Grim concedes. “I thought it was worth a try. Besides, I could do another Italian accent.” Sardella got him a good background. That was important for him.

His verdict? His impression was adequate, his voice flirting with baritone. His latest



crack at an Italian accent was good. He relished rolling out the fluttered r's. No one laughed and Grim was pleased he got to try something close to opera with a legendary Broadway tune and its artist.



Grim has always liked Frank Sinatra's "All the Way." In recent years Celine Dion revived it in her duet with Sinatra's video image. That provoked Grim to consider it for Capon. He wanted to try a duet with Dion and sing Sinatra's end of it. But it would require some electronic magic he couldn't fathom doing. He still would sing the song solo. He chose to try Sinatra's initial recording from 1957. As Grim told the Capon listeners, the song first appeared in the film *The Joker is Wild*. It was written by two pop-song stalwarts, Jimmy VanHeusen and Sammy Cahn. It won an Oscar for Best Original Song that year.

Grim didn't want to practice singing the first few lines as much as listen and study them. That's a daring approach for a music tyro. In the long shadow of Sinatra, this is a hard song to imitate. It's a romantic ballad backed by sweet strings. Frank does it slowly and reverently. He caresses the melody while handling the lyrics as if they're a Tiffany lamp. With a measured tempo, if you fumble a note, your shabby becomes blabby, especially up against The Chairman of the Board. Grim appeared to get by without dropping any posh lamps. He adds, "This is a tough one to stay on key. You have to focus on each note. It's a rush to sing a song in public that you cherish. This was one of those. To do one you like, I think, heightens your effort."

Grim wanted to do something for the young in the crowd. He told the hall that he was gripped by the haunting song of pop

star Lana Del Rey from the 2014 Disney film *Maleficent*. An odd choice as it's not a youngster's song. Grim never saw the film, although of course his granddaughters had. He heard the song somewhere else, but where he doesn't recall. He didn't know Del Rey either. He checked further and decided he wanted to do it at Capon, mostly because it was unique and another kind of test. It was a female voice, but more sultry and strange. When Sardella found a solid background for it, he was primed to try it.

He told the audience, "Angelina Jolie was *Maleficent's* villain star and directed it and selected Del Rey (real name Elizabeth Grant) to do the song. Originally it was the theme for the Tchaikovsky 'Sleeping Beauty Ballet.' Disney borrowed it for the 1959 animated film of *Cinderella*. There it acquired a pop name and some lyrics as "Once upon a Dream."

Some have called Del Rey's version sinister and somber. Her voice is gravel and smoke; she has been called a torch singer. Grim thought he should alert the crowd with this: "I will try to sing this song seriously. I am not trying to make you laugh. I hope you will respect that." No accent this time but a woman's eerie voice all the way through. She sounds like she's falling asleep while in a medical haze as she descends from another dimension. The female tone wasn't Grim's longest stretch. Del Rey sings low. Conveying her rare tone and odd style would be trying.

It sure was. Coming right after Sinatra, not to mention other vastly different song types, he struggled to approach its beguiling strangeness. Since he barely practiced it, he shouldn't have been surprised.



Lana Del Rey

He doesn't recall when he first heard it. Grim always liked the American Songbook classic, "I'll Be Seeing You." It's one of those songs that appear often somewhere. Everyone has heard it, even if they don't know it. He recalled Liberace ending his late 1950's TV show each week by singing it while playing it on his piano against an orchestra background. It might have been his theme song.

Grim explained its obscure start. Introduced on Broadway in 1938, its musical show "Right This Way" closed after twelve shows. In 1944 Bing Crosby was the first of its many cover artists. Briefly his



wartime recording reached number one. Its message was timely, enhanced by its emotional heft, Grim explained why: "It gave hope to soldiers overseas just trying not to die, so they could return safely to their loved ones." He threw in this gem: "The Japanese would blare the song toward the American troops, hoping they would become homesick and go home."

Over the years Grim didn't just like the song; he revered it. "Everyone who doesn't sing secretly wishes they could sing a noted song," he says. "Mostly we just admire those who can. Now I had the chance to realize one of my lingering wishes. It actually goes way back." Despite his new optimism as a singer, he thought he wasn't ready to sing it at Capon. After a time, the chronic itch demanded a scratch. Still doubtful about his skill, he decided to try it and abide the public decree. Anyway for Grim, their response wouldn't be that important. Still, he thought it was arduous and risky. But whose version to cover? He couldn't bear Liberace's maple syrup or Crosby's detached crooning. Was this time for

Grim to try a voice he'd been avoiding—his own?

He explains its appeal for him: "One reason I embraced it was the ending. It climbs to emotional heights. So do other songs. But this had two alluring pauses at its peak." He had heard versions by other artists where the final words were sung with passion as they reached a climax, (*I'll find you in the morning sun and when the night is new,*) then paused, then started again, (*I'll be looking the moon,*) then paused, and then the final visual exclamation (*but I'll be seeing you!*) He had heard the acclaimed version of the song itself from the 1940's-1950's singer Jo Stafford and liked her mournful intro. After that, the rest didn't stir him. Grim sought a rendition where the melody runs up to a high, moving crescendo with those two special pauses that inspire the words right after. Stafford's version dipped at the end, giving it a doleful finish that mirrored its start. That dismayed him. Grim likes pauses toward the end of songs. This one granted him a rare two of them.

Grim admired the version of opera and film singer Mario Lanza. (His photo is below right.) He was a bright comet from the late 1940's into the late 1950's, when he died suddenly at age 38. His usual sing-from-the-heels style throughout his effort closed with his voice rising to a loud and towering peak. Grim thought Lanza captured the song's deep sentiment and melancholy. But there was no worthy background from it for Grim to use. He and Sardella both scoured the internet for other artists' cover of this venerable song. Yes, some turned up, but none excited him.

**H**e still wanted to do the song. Since he was no longer wedded to any artist, he was free to find any suitable background. He even checked some of the many instrumentals of the whole song, but none was right. Finally, Grim settled on a stitched version for his



rendering. He took the sober Stafford instrumental intro (before she begins her vocal) and found a passable generic background for the start of the climax and ending.

Not a good suture. The linkage between the two didn't work. You could tell they came from different musical sources. More technically, the intro is slow and rueful; the ending he chose has some emotional steam that builds faster and higher to its crescendo. It was jarring to hear the one right after the other. At least the end had its two

pauses that Grim liked.

In singing it, Grim swayed too. He lagged behind the second part's speed and its background climax. Finally, he caught

up, aided by the two pauses. Then, as if to convey he was in step, he held the final longing, passionate "you" for an extra moment. Here are the entire ending lyrics he actually sang:

(Instrumental intro from Jo Stafford version)

*I'll be seeing you in every lovely summer's day,*

*in everything that's light and gay.*

*I'll always think of you that way.*

*I'll find you in the morning sun*

*and when the night is new,*  
(pause)

*I'll be looking at the moon,*  
(pause)

*but I'll be seeing you!*

This last moment of 2015 at Capon's theater was special for Grim. He finally was able to sing in public that moving end to this song he esteemed. "I got to sing a classic song in my own voice," he reflects, "even though I didn't really want to hear my own voice. Ha."

The next day, Grim was headed toward his room in the Pavilion, one of the outbuildings that houses its guests. On its porch steps was a family of four whom Grim didn't know. As he approached them, one of their boys, about 12 or so, suddenly exclaimed, "Like a LAWYAH!"

2016

**"Don't kill me; I'm just a mockingbird wanting to sing for you."**

**R**ecently I accosted Grim to ask his current views on performing and his plans for Capon this summer. I asked if he was going to Capon this summer and if he would still perform in the talent show. "I am going and our family will have a large crowd there this year. The resort is sold out for the last half of the whole week our family typically goes. Some of them were turned away for now. Capon doesn't have the room."

Will he enter the talent show again? "I plan too. I'm not definite with my actions. I want to do some singing, a little comedy, and likely a scene from a movie." Any specifics he can give me at this point? "No. I'm still thinking about all three and have some ideas but

nothing certain. I have a film in mind I would do if I decide to act. It's an all-time classic. I'm thinking of doing three characters, two men and a woman." No hints on the film? "It is definitely in the top ten of all time. Aside from that and the two men and a woman in the scene, you'll have to wait and see."

I ask him his current views on performing. "I still want to sing only great songs by famous artists." No desire to finally sing in his own voice? "No change on that. I did my own voice with "I'll Be Seeing You" last summer. That was of course by default since I couldn't decide on an acceptable version of the song and a background worthy of that version."

At this point what goals does he have? He pauses, then replies, "I just enjoy singing. I want to sing songs that I really like, not those that might appeal to a certain audience. The comedy and acting are secondary. A thoroughbred needs to run. A Golden Retriever just wants to be your friend. I guess I'm like that bird Atticus Finch talks about in that famous novel. It just wants to sing for you. I just want to sing too but mainly for me, and for you, if you desire to listen. I'm not looking for applause and cheers. I will do my piece then get off the stage. Don't kill me; I'm a mockingbird just wanting to sing for you."

I wonder if he has sung anywhere else since last year. "No," he says quickly, "and I have no desire to either." Not even karaoke? "Please, no. Singing is only a hobby. I don't seek to sing anywhere but Capon once a year. That's enough to wag my tail." Is he going to do any more practicing this time? "As you know, I do as little as possible. I focus on the hard parts. Actually most of these famous tunes are hard because you're trying to emulate the sounds and style of renowned singers. I will probably rehearse

some of that movie, not just to learn the lines, which is not easy for me, but to capture the voices of the actors."

What about the threat from self-consciousness? "I guess I still have some of that in me," he readily admits. "I don't like being stared at as before. But also I don't need the roar of the crowd." He shifts in his comfy chair and readies himself to speak further without my intrusive inquiries. He finally speaks: "I still can't believe I appeared on stage and sang, did comedy, and acting."

We can't either. Between the stage fright, the self-consciousness, the admitted lack of any talents. And then he doesn't just sing or act; he does impressions of distinguished singers and actors singing their noted songs or delivering their famous lines. That is tougher because people are generally familiar with that version. Therefore, they know when the singer has fallen short. If it's your own voice doing your own song, it's harder to evaluate.

"The truth is," he adds, "I really don't know why I did these things. They weren't really me. I'm not a performer. And how I got the nerve to do them is beyond me also. I know I was trying to inspire my family and other guests to do it. The improvement in backgrounds and the TV singing on American Idol and Capon's theater improvements. They only greased my path. I tried to explain the rest to you. I evolved into it. People can judge for themselves. Sometimes we do things we never thought possible. Hey, in May I rode both the Seven Dwarf's Mine Train and Expedition Everest at Disney World. I never would've guessed I would ever do them." Did he have his arms raised in touchdown pose? "No. you **would** ask that. And I didn't do the Tower of Terror either. Maybe next time. Life should be pursued onward and upward." ●



## Capon Sprang to Mind

*What the Capon Springs Golf Course means to the golfing Grimms*

Our Grim Open, begun in 1960, has been played there many times. Capon is a gathering spot for our family. In 1963 our family hadn't been to Capon that summer. (I'm not sure why). It would've been our first miss since we began coming in 1954. In early September 1963 the only Grim Open contenders were my three brothers and me. Oldest brother Jim couldn't play. He had just gotten married to Diane Checket and was a Philly med student. We were left with Bob, 19, George, 16, and me, 22.

Where did we play the 1963 Grim Open? We drove about four and a half hours to Capon from Kutztown, Pa., for a weekend of golf. Our duffel bags and our big golf bags joined us in my tiny Simca French car. We would play a nine-hole practice round on Saturday morning, then the Open: 18 in the afternoon, and 18 on Sunday for a 36-hole championship. The tournament turned out controversial. That story was in a prior issue.

This is only background for our Friday evening arrival. Almost dark, did we check in and take our items to our room in The Main House? No, we drove past the Main House up the steep hill to the golf course. No lights anywhere. After parking next to the small, wooden clubhouse, did we go inside to put our clubs and golf shoes in lockers? No, we strode to the first tee, a few steps from the clubhouse, then a few more and we were on the last green, the 9<sup>th</sup>. It was close enough that we knew it was there. The stars gave us only dim light above the Main House bulbs, down a woody slope. The green itself has a severe sideslope. We didn't mind. We weren't putting yet and that slope confirmed where we were. We didn't need to see the course. Knowing it was there beneath our penny loafers and sneakers, we now felt this course's blissful presence. We also heard a sound golfers aren't used to. In the woods behind the green, crickets chirped their welcomes. ●

You may have been wondering, “If this is a golf magazine why are there no articles about golf?”

There is one. Please go to the next page.





## The Golf Course at Capon Springs

*Quaint and scenic, it's fun to play amid the Capon aura and those marvelous mountains.*

If it wasn't for this golf course our family never would have begun our annual trips to Capon Springs. Yet it wasn't the course itself. A family resort with an attached golf course was the original draw for the Grim family fathers Allan Grim Sr. and his brother Mark Grim. At the time our father and his brother Mark, who recommended Capon, knew only that it was a family resort with its own golf course.

We love that you can walk to it. It's several steps from The Main House, although the trek is a backthigh ache up a steep hill. Only nine holes, its venue among Capon's mountains is dazzling. Built by Capon's 1932 savior Lou Austin, he raised Capon from moribund to moreandmore fun. (Read his inspiring story on page 10 of this issue.) The course was built

partly on pastureland and partly on wilderness he had to chop away. A golfer himself, Austin completed it in The Great Depression mid-1930's with mules as tractors and local help. The trees he planted have grown to majestic maturity and gained golfer's ire. Along with several kinds of deciduous, he lined most of the holes with Cedars and a few Pines. The Cedars grow to modest height and width, giving errant golfers a chance. The soil underneath is shale, yielding a quick dry after a rain. The turf is unusual. When you strike a ball you don't throw up a typical divot; you launch a flying squirrel of ground and grass. For some reason, the surface and grass is so light that it carries along more sod than usual for a golf course.

Capon is in my top five of courses I've ever played. And that's weighed against 18-hole

layouts. The last hole, the 413-yard dogleg left 9<sup>th</sup>, I think, is the best **finishing** hole I've ever played. All things considered, it might be the best **hole** I've every played. It starts with a splendid vista you have standing on the tee with the grand view of its background mountains. You must play this hole honestly. If you try to finesse a drive, you may fall short of the massive tree at the left corner of the dogleg. If you try to hit your next shot safely to the right side of the fairway, you risk dumping your shot into two large fairway bunkers. My brother George has won many Grim Opens at this emerald of a course in the West Virginia mountains. He often crushed one of us as he sank a crucial putt on that last grueling green of the 9<sup>th</sup> hole. It is a rarity, a small surface that inclines sharply from right to left, diverting your ball to a large left greenside bunker. Any putt

from the right side of this green is treacherous—a wide-curving, downhill-chasing test for your wrangled nerves already reeling trying to get to this green.

How much does this course and that hole mean to George? He wants his ashes spread there, especially on that ninth green. (Query if they would be deemed loose impediments or part of the course, or ground under repair.) Photo of the hole on page 42.

### “The Monster”

Our mother wasn't a serious golfer in the golfing Grim family, although she did play the adjoining Prep Course over some of her 96 years. Yet some of her ashes were sprinkled on the 7<sup>th</sup> tee by her golfing daughter, Virginia, in 2009 after her death a month before. We had a little ceremony for our Mother. The hole is an uphill par 5 of 511 yards that is dubbed “The Monster.” That is hardly why our mother's ashes are partly there. She was the opposite. We had a stone bench erected on that 7<sup>th</sup> tee in the early 2000's to honor our mother and father. It's inscribed with the words, “In honor of Judge Allan K. Grim and Ruth Grim Leestma, please approach the bench.” Our father was a Federal Judge.

It was more ominous for golfers when it had its mighty White Oak tree. For many years it was the largest tree on the course. Austin didn't plant that one. It was God himself—way back when. On photos of the course from the 1930's, you can see it already looming. It stood in the middle of the course and could be seen from any point. It was the cynosure of all golfers' eyes and a serious threat when they played the hole. Austin selected its diabolical spot on the course, next to the 7<sup>th</sup> fairway. It swatted away many sliced drives, tossing them behind its

trunk and its spreading branches. Sadly, God took it in 2004 with one fierce lightning strike. I still mourn that loss and I'm not ashamed to say it. Golfers are funny. We hate any obstacle in our way. But if you remove it, we'll whine. A stone monument erected by other grieving golfers marks its spot. With every sliced drive I hit on that hole, I feel like a lucky man, but I am soon reminded of the loss.

If you're trudging up the fairway, your legs will ache, as you climb gradually to the green the entire 511 yards. A steep bank awaits in front of the green, which resembles a stage. The bank is straight, perpendicular, the green wider than deep, and it's rectangular. Once you're on it, however, you don't get a flat floor to perform on. The green has a large downslope from back to front.

### Charming par 3 holes

Capon's par is only 34; there are three par 3's and that one par 5 demon. The par 3's are diverse in length and look: 114, 168, and 238 yards. That short one is the signature hole but the 9<sup>th</sup> is close behind. Dubbed “The Postage Stamp” because its green is tiny, rectangular and level. It just needs serrated edges. Instead, it has much sand on three sides and a steep fall-off of deep rough toward woods on the left side and the back. The right side is open but falls into nearby rough and trees sloping deeply to more woods. The front bunker is a giant square sandbox. You just need shovels and buckets. It's another rare feature at Capon. It sits above the green on this hole that



The par 4 third hole from the elevated tee. Note the right slope of the fairway. The margin for error on tee shots is small. If you go too far left, the rough slopes down into the woods. A ball on the right edge of the fairway will roll into the tree line or into the 5<sup>th</sup> fairway.

inclines downward all the way from tee to green and beyond to the woods. It is wide enough to deter a rolling drive from reaching the green. The green is a tiny target. From the tee it looks like you're hitting at an actual stamp. It's also obscured a bit by that sandbox in front. If you can hit the green, the hole rewards you by giving you a smooth and short putt.

The 168-yard (scorecard says) par 3 No. 2 hole is only 156 yards, according to a permanent marker on the middle of the tee added a few years ago. It has a huge banked bunker in front and baby twin traps pretending to guard the right and left front of the green. On the other three sides the ground banks, then slopes away to rough and trees. The green is distinctive by its slope from front to back. Otherwise it is mostly level.

It had a tall White Pine tree growing from its front left bunker until a few years ago. Over many years it slowly died and was removed in the early 2000's. It was a potent force to pulled mid-irons, denying them a chance to land near its green. When Capon removed the tree, it re-did two front bunkers, leaving one large one that looks like, um, a man's full package. If I knew why it was



**The 9th hole from the first tee. It's a long par 4 dogleg left with a severe slope in the green from golfer's right to left. In the foreground is the green. The large tree middle left is at the dogleg.**

rebuilt to that odd shape, I would tell you.

The card says No. 8 is 238 yards long. It's about 210 yards and slightly downhill. It's length is the trouble, as twin bunkers in the front sides of the green are small and only show you the target you should aim for. If your drive is short, which is typical because of the hole's length, you have some tricky work left. Since the green slopes away from the tee, you have a delicate pitch to a surface which itself slides downward to a back sandtrap and a Godzilla tree.

The third hole is a short par 4 about 320 yards and bowling-alley tight. The hole is shown on the page 41 photo. I have never figured out what club to hit off the elevated tee. You need to bowl a strike just to remain on the fairway. Miss it left and it tumbles down a steep rough hill into the woods that lines the hole all the way to the green. Hit the right side of the fairway and your ball rolls downhill into a tree line or beyond to the 5<sup>th</sup> fairway. That fairway itself slopes more sharply as it runs down a long incline. The 5<sup>th</sup> Hole is

parallel to the 3<sup>rd</sup> but in the opposite direction. If you tee off the 5<sup>th</sup> and pull a short drive, your ball will run down this incline into thick rough aside a parallel ditch and woods on the other side. The incline is so steep that if you want to ski down it in winter, your loved ones will ask about your will. Ironically, at this springs resort, it's the only spot on this course you will find water. It's in a thin, shallow ditch, which dries up in a parched summer.

### **Lunch and dinner on the first hole**

The first hole is voluptuous, rocking and rolling as it ascends to a green on an Olympian mesa fronted by a bunker and banked on all the other sides. To the right front is a large Maple tree as bouncer for any shot seeking to enter the green from the far right. The scorecard says it's 347 yards. Although it's uphill to the

**Sunset Lodge next to the first fairway. Three meals are served at this facility each week. Steak and chicken dinners and a barbecue and other choices lunch.**

green, it's only about 280 yards from the middle of this tee that's long enough to land a Piper Cub on it.

Only a few feet from the rear of this tee is the clubhouse. You have a liberal driving area for your tee shot over a small rise, which was reduced a few years ago to provide a better look at the landing area and golfers ahead of you. If you hook your drive, you might plunk or enter the open Sunset Lodge, a large pavilion set on a hill. Guests are served three special meals each week there. Two are for dinner; one for lunch. The sun sets as you sit there and look beyond the golf course to a gorgeous panorama over distant mountains. Some tables are outside next to the first fairway. No golf is allowed on this hole when meals are served. When the meal is done, the fairway area also becomes a giant play yard for kids and adults, chatting, tossing frisbees or footballs or rolling bocce balls. Guests also seize the chance to take family photos. A nearby sandtrap becomes a sandbox for youngsters. Next to the sand is the American flag, which used to be lowered with Taps at dusk years ago. On Tuesday evenings the kids have their own softball game in an open area between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> fairways. Thursday evenings we walk to the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> fairway and play adults' softball.

The greens are all small, as they were built in the 1930's before the modern mowing and toppings and the trend toward large surfaces. Today golfers demand that greens retain their splendor. The Capon greens are eccentric but



appealing. You can tell they are old. They have many straight edges, not the modern curved. In fact, all the front edges are straight across. They are the slowest greens I have ever played, yet they are still true. They are well-kept and lush. A decent backspin approach shot will land and stay like a good puppy.

Two greens have a feature rare if you see it once on any course: they slope from front to back (No. 2 and No. 8). Four of them are mostly flat. (Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 6) The other five are not easy. The 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> especially slide and curl. Besides the marvelous vista at No. 9, the other holes pose well, especially when the sun is behind the golfer. The view beyond is a bonus delight on five of them. On each tee, when you look out at the hole, you want to play it, even if you're a hacker. My favorite scene is not from a tee. In the late morning I cherish the look from behind the green on No. 7. You are on a hill looking down the fairway with a panorama of every hole of the course. With the sun behind, the view of the course and the mountains is stunning.

## The old scorecard

The hole lengths on the scorecard haven't changed since the arrival of the distance

devices with sharp accuracy from lasers and other sources. As I've been saying, the hole lengths are mostly overstated, except for "The Postage Stamp," which is so short anyone can guess it right.

Not only haven't the scorecard distances changed in my memory going back to 1954, but the card design and words themselves remain, except for a minor new font decades ago. The cards are still small with the stymie six-inch width most cards were in the old days. The card even mentions it is six inches wide. The stymie was abolished by the USGA in 1952. That year is not a typo. The Wimbledon white card color survives too as a bygone facet among modern cardcopies. Today cards have blazing colors, tawdry ads, tri-fold pages, and a size large enough to ensure that you will rent a motorcart to carry it with you. You can't fit them in your traditional back pocket.

On the back of the card are six "CAPON FREE AND EASY RULES." Thanks but no thanks to most of them, I say. Improving our lies anywhere, including the rough and sand traps, and no penalty for a lost ball, are too liberal for my oldschool outlook. I have the most trouble with the last rule that advises you to "Enjoy it" and "remember it is just a game!" I wish I could do both, but I appreciate the sentiment.

I'm sure Lou Austin, rest is soul, wrote that one, and probably the rest too. I cherish the card's date line for your round. It's long, unlike the minute spaces these modern cards give you. They force you to decide which of the three parts of a date you will exclude from the blank date space.

## Quaint touches

I mention all these items not to mock Capon the course. I proclaim them as part of its special charm. Some other items boost this appeal. Every hole has a name. A diagram of the hole with that name is posted on a colorful board fixed to a metal pole stuck in the ground on each tee. The clubhouse has a bin with free, white tees. Each hole itself has more on their tees for you to stab into the ground with a ball on top. After the 5<sup>th</sup> green is an old soda chest with free apple juice, ginger ale, and Capon water, all stuck in ice. This is the only hole with water on the tee.

Then you tee off on the par 4 dogleg right 6<sup>th</sup> hole with two cross bunkers no more than 50 yards from the tee. Why are they there? I don't know, but let them stay, like that big, loopy bunker no one goes into on the 10<sup>th</sup> fairway at Augusta National. The Capon hole otherwise is a dogleg right and the card says 379 yards in

The par 4 No. 5 Hole of about 320 yards. Note the severe slope to the left down a hill to deep rough and eventually to a narrow creek. This photo is from behind the ladies' tee. The men's is farther back to the left.



length. Not even close. It's about 315 yards. It has an aged tall oak tree at the corner. It has few wide branches defending the spot where a solid drive will try to cut that dogleg of this wide fairway hole. Trees line the right side all the way to the green. Although the tree is tall, it has decayed over the years and is now a fragile old man with iron at his base to keep him standing and steady. A few years ago, other trees were added just beyond to aid that tree in keeping golfers from abusing the privilege of shortening that hole. The green is a small, rectangular target lying somewhat below all approach shots. It's surface is flat, with a slight welcome slope toward arriving balls. You better hit the surface because bunkers lie on both sides and a steep bank behind makes your ball disappear, leaving a touchy pitch back.

Deer often visit the fruit trees to the right of the 5<sup>th</sup> green. To the left is a solid structure to run to if it rains. It's open with walls to your waist and has a roof. It seems to be a gazebo with storage shelves. Behind the 3<sup>rd</sup> green on your way to the short 4<sup>th</sup> is a modern set of bathrooms. Every hole has sturdy stone and composition benches nailed to the ground. They all honor someone worth recalling and their part in making this venerable golf layout so special to its Capon guests. The old wooden clubhouse at Capon has separate lockers and rooms for men and women and plenty of clubs anyone can borrow to play with. It also has a modern bathroom. On top is an observation deck with chairs.

Okay, Capon has gnats that harass you everywhere, but not all the time and mostly near the woods that surround the course and in sultry weather. We accept them as one more feature to make the course tougher. But they also add to its appeal as a singular spot for



**Par 4 No. 6 Hole with those two traps just in front of the tee.**

golf. You can fight them. Put your clubhead above your head when you're not swinging it. Gnats go for the high point around you. Yes, you can bug spray your face and head and hat. That helps. Some of us use punk sticks that resemble sparklers. You light them with a match and keep them smoking. But you have to carry them or put them in your mouth or stick them in a crevice in your golfbag. A good breeze thwarts your try to light them but, as with cigarettes, a person in need will get it lit. Stick it in a trash can on the tee to avoid the air flow. A cigar will do too and it doesn't need to be Cuban. Just get it lit and puff away. Gnats will not nag a good smoke.

Capon has a scramble golf tournament on Tuesday and Friday mornings. It's very popular and teams are often five players each. Each golfer hits a tee shot and the team chooses the best shot. They each hit their own next shots from there, and so on until they all putt from the last closest spot to the hole and someone sinks their putt. Even guests who never play golf during their stay can enjoy it with the friendly social occasion it presents. Capon has installed alternate tees on four of the holes. They are used on the Friday scramble. Capon has also added some new tees that are yellow and in front of the regular ones. Now oldsters can

blast away with their drives and land where they used to.

## **Stepping back a few paces**

Beyond the pleasures of its unique holes and its superb vistas. Capon's ambience drifts throughout the course. You are in a relaxed, friendly place. The atmosphere is casual and informal. Capon is old-fashioned and simple in many of its ways. Yet it still has plenty of modern modes and items. After a few days on the course you feel that the course has a roof over it. The mountains form the walls for it; the clouds the ceiling. You feel as if you're in an intimate place and it's all your own for a while. You know you are sharing it with others who feel it too. And that's fine.

You can hear the ghost of devout Lou Austin whisper how blessed you are to be on this part of the earth. But he would deflect any credit for making it so. He would point upward for that. He would be right and he would be wrong. God created the springs but Austin saved them, promoted them, and made them available for everyone to enjoy their healthy benefits, eventually for free. God created the setting for Capon the resort, but Austin saved that too and grew it into a prosperous vacation spot. And God created the land on which the Capon Golf Course lies. But Austin designed and built the golf course itself, moving the precious earth around, planting the grass and trees, installing its other parts, and shaping them into a landscape now grown into graceful maturity. Like a red Bordeaux, the older this course is, the better it gets. You're just glad to be there at Capon to enjoy its sight. We thank them both. ●

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