

GOLFNOTES

June 2017



FIFTEEN MORE MINUTES OF SHAME

*Rhett Butler, Scarlett O'Hara and Ashley Wilkes
blow into Capon Springs and, like that, they are
gone with the wind*

NOTES from the Bench on No. 6 Tee

How will I know I have succeeded? When they introduce my talk, they say I am a man who needs no introduction.

Until then, I will be satisfied if people will fight each other to get my autograph. It will be for them, not their son. The lines will be long.

When I'm retired, or worse, after I'm gone, they will name an award after me.

If I'm shot, the media will call it an assassination.

If someone is evaluating how good a handwriting analyst is, they will say, "He is good; he is really good. But he's no Allan Grim."

My obit will not be in the obit section of the newspaper. And it will be above the fold.

To the millenials looking for a spouse—Ladies, when you look for the perfect guy, he won't marry you because, alas, you aren't the perfect girl. Lighten up, but keep your standards high.

I have finally found a photo taken before the 1920's of a person who is smiling. It is an unposed photo of Queen Victoria riding in her fancy carriage. It was taken in the mid-19th century. It's ironic because all the other photos of her our posed and show her serious and dour.

Political Science is not a science. Language Arts are not art. A liberal arts education is not liberal. Physical Education? Stop. Please.



Who named these? Are they still running around loose?

Hackneyed. Why haven't I heard anyone utter that word since I learned it for the SAT's in 1958? I haven't said either.

The USGA is revising several parts of

the Rules of Golf. They have indicated they will not change the rule that gives no relief for a ball in a divot hole. They said we have to learn to take the good with the bad. Ah, you say, life is not fair.

I disagree. We try to make the rules as fair as possible, not fall back on taking our lumps and doing nothing in an obviously unfair circumstance. When I hit a drive 300 yards down the middle of the fairway and it ends up in a divot hole, I should not be penalized by having to hit it from there. I should be rewarded for my perfect shot. We currently get relief for ground under repair. The divot hole is actually "ground under repair." Treat it as such. But only on the fairway.

Six pellets of deer scat that should no longer be uttered as universal wisdom by rational people—

Everything happens for a reason.
There are two sides to every story.
Be yourself.

Never give up.

If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it.

Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

A gentleman is a guy who glances at a lady's tee shirt and wonders only what the message is.

Are postal workers allowed to read our postcards? If not, how do they enforce it? The bosses must have relied on their workers being bored of reading weather reports from distant places.

Consider the saliva in your mouth. You put some out on a plate. It's now called spittle or spit. Would you lick it and return it to your mouth? Why not? Guess where it just came from? And it's still just *your* saliva. How many will say yes?

We have doppelgangers in our groups. They are our physical doubles. Someone who resembles you will appear in any social group we belong to. I'm not sure how big the group must be to qualify. Still working on that. But it's uncanny how it occurs.

Oxywore-on: A guy who wears a sweater with bermudas. Any guy who does that is proud of his legs and wants to show them off.

When you come to a fork in the road, pick it up. Someone will be upset when they start dinner and it's not there.



Or, someone might step on it and it could fly up and jab their face. If perchance you find two forks, pick the one that's less dirty. Would Robert Frost even look down and see any fork? Now I understand

where Yogi Berra was coming from. But where was he going with that fork he took?

Everybody has a comb-over. Some are just harder to see than others. Most aren't even on our heads.

The joke was so funny the geezer had to change his diaper and go for a new knee.

An old person in line never looks behind them. An old person walking is always in the way.



Questions you do not ask:

How much do you make a year? How often do you have sex each month? With whom?

To a retired person, What do you do all day?

To an author, How many books have you sold?

All should be answered with silence. But if you must, say, Next question, None of your business, Pass, That's private, or Why do you want to know? Or even, how often do you have sex?

I'm so old, everything I do is a near-death experience.

If you're meeting someone for lunch at a restaurant the other guy is not that familiar with, don't ask him if he knows how to get there. Ask him how he will get there. Then you will know if he really does. And make sure you both have your cell phones and each other's phone number. GPS? Kiss my S. Okay, go for it.

When I die, I want to go peacefully in my sleep, like my grandfather did, not screaming as the people who rode with my grandfather did. Darn. Wish I'd said that.

Sure are a lot of people under that bus. Apparently all were thrown there.●

ANOTHER GIG FOR THE PERFORMING PIG

*Allan Grim
ponders
a movie scene
and
more songs
for the
Capon Springs
talent show*

by
Martin Povser



When you call Allan Grim about meeting for lunch, he asks you where you wanna go. When you respond, he tells you the place we're going. The two choices may not match. Too bad. He'll also tell you to meet him there at 1 pm. He says it's because the workday lunch crowd has thinned. Although he prefers diners, it isn't because they're cheap, cozy, and welcoming. Okay, maybe a bit. He likes that the booths have soft and wide benches, allowing you to adjust your butt and slouch for comfort.

After one occasion there, you'll see why. You squirm often. Lunch will extend past the last munch of your burger and the last swig of your Diet Coke. You may be there three hours, give or take a large swath of your earthly time. It's not only because he's retired, where there's time to spare before time becomes spare. His mind percolates, free associates, agitates, and now and then irritates.

His chatter is unique. Unlike TV talking heads, he butts into his *own* words with new thoughts. *Your* words aren't immune either. He may jostle your try at launching

them. The result is verbal pingpong with hip-checking ice hockey. Your head may spin and your headlights may dim as you both yak past your server's duty.

Today Grim picks The Keystone Restaurant, a home game for him. It's a few Dustin Johnson drives from Grim's home in the Upper Bucks County countryside near Sellersville, Pa. We arrive a few seconds apart. A brutal mid-June sun overhead has chased the clouds. Before the macadam can scorch are feet, we scurry inside the restaurant. Grim wears Walmart sandals with black socks below his khakis. He asks for a booth. We get one. "We lucked out," he whispers. "We got the last booth with a window." Grim insists we sit next to one. It may be a view of parked cars or a dumpster. He wants daylight and an outside view, any kind.

Grim wears a long-sleeve shirt with an undershirt, a light brown jacket, and a "US Open at Merion 2013" golf cap on this sultry day. As a USGA member, they are an annual perk. He has many and he wears them. I snipe about his heavy clothes. "I get cold easily," he faux whines. "And we

could be here a while in this cold diner air," which he *really* means.

He has a point. His natural cover is sparse. He is slim, like a marathoner, and five feet ten inches tall, like most guys. His limbs are lanky but toned. His trim waist never sniffed a beer flowing inside. "It's true. I haven't had a whole beer ever," he is glad to admit. He is narrow of shoulder and thin of thigh. My cat Lily insists on sitting on my lap every day," he says. "I don't know why, because I have no lap. Her legs keep slipping between my thighs. I pull them up and we carry on."

His hair *was* blond, buffed golden by his golfing summers. Now it's blah—a mix of Old Yeller, amber waves of mane, stressed-lawyer grey, and grandpa white at his scraggy sideburns. He always needs a haircut. Maybe he waits because his head needs cover. His forehead expands while his backhead creeps to link up. They're engraved with mini-tats from decades of golf, nasty gifts from the firm of Basal, Squamous, and Carcinoma. His blue eyes are framed on top with dense, flailing eyebrows. Below are shaded smileys, suggesting fatigue. No. They're just a family blight. When

Grim grins, his face shows more ruts than the parking lot at Woodstock. They don't come from mere age and blasts of sun. They and a letter-l crevice above his thrusting nose betray missed putts, wayward drives, and thirty years of law and disorder.

As I order a BLT, he peeks at our server's pad. He doesn't tell her he's a handwriting analyst. She looks at him puzzled, then turns back to me. I wanna tell her, but he looks at me with big round eyes and an oval mouth of NO. I don't mind revealing we do handwriting analysis. Grim does. He worries that the waitress will tell her cohorts and we'll be analyzing the whole staff, free, of course. Grim is slow to promote his skill. She says nothing about it and Grim orders a Reuben and an iced tea. When she goes for the drinks, I ask him what he saw. "You look for soft and rounded strokes in a waitress's handwriting, with a big middle zone. She's got those strokes. These people live to please others."

We're not here about handwriting analysis. At least I'm not. What will fill our time otherwise? You name it. Grim will slather you with cultural trivia, high and low. His material seems boundless, endless. He will also probe your life and your thoughts about a diversity of items. Don't ask him about his personal life; he will shy from it. If you don't press him to disclose, he will pass. He would rather hear about your world, not fuss about his own.

Here I sense that Grim knows why I want to meet with him. It's the middle of June 2016, months from our last lunch. The next Capon Springs talent show is in a month and a half. I want to know if he will perform at Capon in 2016. I know he won't want to talk about it. I understand. He wants to hide it from everyone in his family and other prying ears. I will do what I can to get him to open up.

I listen for the diner's music in the background. Grim sometimes sings rocknroll music at Capon. He believes rock music should be played loud, "especially when I'm dancing to it." Even so,

he loathes restaurants playing what he calls "loud and raucous music." If a rock song lurches into an electric guitar riff, his face will Grimace. He may rise from his now uncomfy seat and direct us to a more placid eatery. Some restaurants he avoids because he already knows the music will unsettle him. He frets at how people today abide the blasting. "We are blistered so often with loud music that we've become inured to it," he rails. He is not inured. A few years ago he was bothered enough to write a screed and send it to the Lehigh Valley's newspaper, *The Morning Call*. They published it as an essay. He has also posted it on his GrimHandwritingAnalyst.com, where it still vents.

I ask Grim how his website is doing. I note that on Google it appears on the first few pages of his topic's key words "Handwriting Analyst" and "Handwriting Analysis." He says it's doing fine at the moment. "I need to revise a few website pages to change the date of the next Pennsylvania Handwriting Analysis Forum," he says. He's been the Director of the Forum for several years. One was concluded in May. He must tell the public when the next one is in September. The website has the May date on a few pages. "Details," he grumbles. "They hassled me as a lawyer. I thought I was done with them." After each Forum, Grim also publishes a formal Review of it. He sends it to a mass of recipients and adds it to his website. "That Review is a lot of work. I don't mind rehashing the lessons we learned. It's partly to inform many of the people who are far away about what we do at the Forum. I have to promote my business and handwriting analysis itself," he declares, sipping his tea.

Grim continues to practice handwriting analysis. As a professional he has done it for twenty-three years. That datum is misleading. He has been analyzing handwriting since the 1950's, when he began learning about it from his mother. She did it as a hobby. Since Grim is serious and does it

professionally, it sped up his leaving the law in 2000 after thirty years. He was only fifty-nine.

Does he miss the law? "Not a bit. I had done it all. And thirty years is enough time for anything." Starting out in a small firm of his two second cousins and their father, he was thrown into a wide and tall pile of legal matters. "We took everybody who walked in the door," he shrugs. "I got all the matters that they didn't want to handle. In a small firm that's how you start and that's how you learn too." When he left the practice at the end of 2000, the firm had swelled to thirteen lawyers.



An empty counter at the Keystone Restaurant. This only occurs when it's closed. The stools, booths, and tables are usually crowded for this upper Bucks County, Pa. institution.

Apparently he really means he had done it all. Until they got big and the new attorneys grabbed their areas of the work, Grim had practiced in almost every area of the law. Few attorneys can say that today in the age of specialties. He adds: "Not many lawyers have done divorces, estate planning, criminal defense, commercial litigation, bankruptcy, real estate, debt collection, business contracts, and municipal law. I tell him that's quite a lifetime of work. He corrects me. "No, I mean at the *same time*, not over my whole career. That's only a partial list."

I seek reflection. I wonder what he says now about his law career. "Now that it's all over I can enjoy the pleasant memories and laugh at the tough moments," he

responds. “But at the time, it was daunting. I would be learning on the fly. I did a lot of court room work with little experience and no one with good experience to mentor me. My partners were busy with their clients and didn’t do a lot of court work.”

Without the day job as attorney, he has become a mini-handwriting conglomerate. He analyzes handwriting for both personality and the other major area known as Questioned Documents. “Most of QD’s are forgery cases,” he emphasizes. “It also includes graffiti, anonymous notes, threatening messages, and suicide notes. Anything handwritten. I’ve done the Ramsey ransom note for the media.” Handwritten items are still an issue now that tech devices have taken over? “Yes, they still plague our society despite our digital technology.” Much of his QD work has involved hospitals, schools, and other public institutions.

He’s also taught handwriting analysis in eighteen (Yes, you read it right.) adult schools, including four community colleges. Most of his time now is talks to the public and seminars to other analysts, writing articles, and running the Forum. He will handle a personality analysis and a forgery case here and there. He’s published articles and essays in newspapers and magazines. Some are posted on his website.

I analyze handwriting too. I know all of this about him from professional ties over the years. In the early 2000’s he approached me to write a book about the subject. He wanted to make it part about the subject and part memoir about an analyst’s encounters. He had hoped the memoir would be about someone else. That became impractical. He was faced with writing about himself. He couldn’t do it. He detests opening up about himself. He drafted me to do it. The book **Strokes: Inside the**

Fascinating, Mysterious World of Handwriting Analysis was published in 2007. In time some aspects of it gnawed at him. Publishing formats improved too. He had me revise it in 2009 with several changes. Much was converting text to dialogue between the two of us. “We added more creative non-fiction,” Grim says. “Most readers prefer dialogue



A few words from the author

This article is written as creative non-fiction. Everything I’ve written here, filtered through the memory of Allan Grim, is true. Most of what he said and did at Capon Springs is also confirmed by family video and Grim’s written scripts for his presentations. The events before and after Capon Springs involving Grim also are true from his recollection. Although any dialogue between Grim and me may never have occurred, all his words and actions are realistic portrayals of what he might say and do.

Martin Povser

over text for the same info. It makes it more readable.”

In the last issue of *GolfNotes* I wrote about his stagework at Capon from 2010 through 2015. To prepare that lengthy article I got him to bare some of his embedded soul about his performing career. “Yes, it was wrenching to reveal my private thoughts and my drawbacks,” he admits. Since I’d written an entire book on handwriting analysis, and some of it was a memoir about his handwriting exploits, I have leverage. He helped with the *Strokes* book and my *GolfNotes* article about his performing at Capon Springs. Grim’s entire performing ventures are his annual productions at the Capon talent

show. He sings, acts, or does comedy there. Sometimes he does all three the same evening. “As I’ve told you before,” he insists, “I have never performed smashed or sober in a karaoke bar.”

Another strange factor about his performing is Grim’s age, now 75. Grim is not a health fiend but he eats in moderation, I can verify from personal shock. He takes

small bites and chews slowly. “Yeah, I will eat pizza and other junk, but I don’t fold over my slices.” He does regular, modest exercise. “The idea is to mimic a shark—I keep moving.”

Experts say your singing voice declines with age. What about *his* voice? “Believe it or not, I think my voice has improved over the last several years. I’m not saying it was great before that. I think it’s from doing mostly what’s right for my health. I sleep well. I read about how so many people really don’t.” What’s he noticed specifically about his voice? “Mine has gotten deeper and stronger. I didn’t notice it from singing, but from speaking. That’s one reason I decided to start singing. When I spoke, I could feel it in my throat and hear it in my voice.”

A Grim resumé for performing

We’re now over two hours into our lunch. We both get decaf coffee, mine black, his sweet mud. We share a coconut custard pie slice. These don’t stir him to reveal anything without prompting. When I prepared the original article for *GolfNotes*, I didn’t address one important issue. He says he’d never done karaoke. What was Grim’s experience performing

before Capon Springs? He must have done something that foretold his latest actions. Or suggested an ability in the areas he's tried at Capon—comedy, acting, singing. Although this is one more item Grim is loathe to discuss, he admits he's thought about it. I suggest he ponder it and see what surfaces. I tell him he should be more than curious about it. Anybody who saw or reads about his Capon stagework would want to know what came before. Why'd he start doing it in 2010 after nothing in his past? Or is there something? I persist. Grim resists. After a while Grim yields. "I guess people want to know. I do too. But, look, I'm only delving into this to satisfy my own wonder."

To dig he says he must go far into his background. He cites some mawkish lines in 8th Grade at a Campus Junior High Christmas pageant standing at a lectern in the Schaeffer Auditorium at then Kutztown State Teacher's College. As a tableau appeared on the stage, he can still recite the opening words: "There was never a jollier time than in England at Yuletide a few centuries ago..." or something close to it. That public act likely occurred in December 1954. That is far, I must say.

Amazing memory for a trivial event too. But I don't stop there. Why he did it, he doesn't know. He's amazed he recalls it. "I must have volunteered. I got through it. I don't remember faltering." He never tried out for any play or anything else in junior high or high school. "I was into sports but so were some of the guys in the plays and musicals. I had no interest, no talent, and had that fear of performing in public, and memorizing lines." He can't imagine appearing in any kind of play in high school.

He does recall one other notable moment on the stage at Schaeffer Auditorium in junior high. He vied for his grade's two-person spelling championship. "I missed a word on purpose to avoid having to be up there any longer.

Can you believe that?" Was that early self-consciousness, or stage fright as puppet master?

That's it? No. Another stage event occurred when he was in junior high. He played the King of Tarts with classmate Diana De Ragon, who herself played the Queen of something. He had only a few lines. The scene was done in his later Kutztown Area High School theater. "That's all I remember. Apparently I didn't bomb forgetting my lines or anything else traumatic where it

downed my half of the pie. I guess he didn't notice my way of eating it.

He resumes discussing school days. He says he has some added comments on appearing in front of classmates and judging teacher. "I wish it was required more, not reciting poems, but making you present something in front of the group. We all face groups over our lives, especially if you are part of one and you are an officer or want to speak your mind at a public gathering. Maybe it's part of most



Schaeffer Auditorium at Kutztown University, where Grim initially performed in Campus Junior High School. Also there, he intentionally misspelled a word during his grade's spelling championship to avoid being on stage any longer. He grew up five houses and a library from it. He says it's his favorite theater in the world.

plagued me for years," he adds.

In school when duty called, students obeyed. In his day each student would have to recite a poem in English class, starting in junior high and into high school. "I remember being nervous about that. But then I guess I wasn't alone. We all had to do it. Most dreaded it, I'm sure. I don't recall any of the poems."

Grim takes tiny bites of his pie. I tell him so and he sits and stares at me.

Eventually he begins: "Eating is a genuine pleasure of life. We shouldn't be gorging our food. That's not enjoying our mealtimes." He likes to needle people he catches shoveling it into their mouths. He says he addresses those rushing it: "You know, they say people eat like they make love." Gulp. I'm lucky; I have already

schools today, but I don't know. It wasn't in my college. Public speaking should be a required course or part of one. That would've helped me in the law and handwriting analysis."

His junior high acting seems trivial. Didn't we all do something like that? Maybe not on stage, but in front of a class or playing an instrument. He says that he took piano lessons for about a year or so when he was ten or so. His musical mother, an adept pianist herself, insisted he take the piano lessons. A co-ed from Kutztown State Teacher's College across the street, was his piano teacher. Somehow he recalls her name—Gladys Boyer. Despite a good recall of phone numbers, he has trouble remembering names. Odd. But is it significant? Don't ask me.

His older brother Jim, thirteen or so, also had to take up the piano. Grim recalls being cool to playing the piano and not being proficient or dedicated. "I think practicing was an issue. Isn't it always?" He yearned to be outside playing baseball in the spring and summer, football in the fall and basketball in the winter. Their family's five kids had a big back yard where they could all be played.

After a year or so, his obliging mother let him hit home runs instead of ivory keys. "I've told people that I regret my attitude and my mother letting me out of the lessons," he says now. "I even told *her*." He thinks he's always had deft hands for the piano only because he had them in sports. His songs would have been physically smooth, if nothing else. For several years Grim's home had a piano for his son Douglas. During that time Grim hoped to resume the piano. He never did. His son played only for a while, then he played the saxophone, although briefly too. With two grandchildren, Grim



Grim says he doesn't watch "The Voice" or any other of those shows. He does confess to viewing the initial portions of "American Idol," when it was on TV. The raw auditions were one factor stirring his interest in singing at Capon.

eventually gave the piano to his son and two granddaughters to play it. Grim never had tried it.

On his space room (aka office/study) bookshelf sit tapes and DVDs on playing the guitar and the piano. He bought them for himself a few years ago, but has



never opened them up. He actually bought the piano set *after* he gave the piano to his son's family. Wishing can toot its horn as much as it wants. It must be loud enough to awaken slumbering action. "I've never gotten motivated enough to delve into any of them. I think of them once in a while. I guess it's only because I happen to see them sitting there staring at me," he says, shaking his head. "I sometimes look at them and say to myself, 'What are you waiting for?'"

Grim claims he likes most kinds of music, including classical. He says his prime interest is pop music, especially from the late 1950's through the 1980's. He says he never watches "The Voice" and "America's Got Talent" on TV. He has watched "American Idol" since its start but stops after the initial auditions in front of the three judges. "That was part of my impetus for trying Capon." Those contestants sing in their own voice; Grim does not. "But 'American Idol' is hard to watch since they are under thirty and sing mostly obscure songs for me." He can't recall the last time he watched the Grammys or American Music Awards.

When working at his desk and computer he never listens to pop music. He listens to a classical music station, keeping the volume low. He recently purchased a Chevy Malibu with Sirius XM Radio service. It has a Brazilian channels, most of them music. He has programmed the initial music channels to these pre-sets: Elvis,

Blue Grass, Sinatra, Broadway, 1940's Big Band, and Classical. Like most people, he enjoys movies, but he rarely sees them in the theater, or rents them, or watches them on TV. I ask the last film he saw in a theater. He looks up for a few moments, scrunches his face, then, "I need to think about that some more." He views only portions of the Golden Globes and Oscars.

I enquire about any comedy ability. He thinks his comedy *sense* is above average but his comedy *ability* is poor. "There are plenty of funny people and many who aren't afraid to try it in public," he declares. He slams the vulgar deliveries of many comedians and prides himself on never using any, what he calls, "bad words" in public. His comedy idol is Mort Sahl, (*photo below in red sweater*) a cerebral standup comedian, who began in the 1950's and still appears here and there.

Before Capon 2016 I was curious about several pieces of Grim's performing there. After writing extensively about his productions from 2010 through 2015 (*GolfNotes* for July 2016), I wondered what he would try in 2016. Would Grim do more songs? Film scenes? How about more humor and less music? Would he perform with anyone else in his family? An outsider Capon guest? Would he try to inspire another family member to appear themselves on stage to perform? Has he performed anywhere else in



the last year? If not, why not? Has he finally tried karaoke? If not, why won't he at least do that?

How will talent show night go? Will the MC continue to introduce Grim as a "legend" at the resort? And will that continue to concern him? I especially wanted to know how Grim will introduce himself this year. He has roasted his own singing with jabs of gashing humor. Before performing, he declares that he "stinks" as a performer but he's trying again because he's "shameless." He puts his mouth close to the mike to say it deeply and slowly. Was it time to retire that shtick? What does Grim think of his ability now? How is his self-confidence when he's on stage?

Still no shame

Grim says he will perform again at Capon. Although now 75, he says he is still motivated and physically able to try again. His desire was bolstered when he learned that about fifty of his family members would be at Capon that week. With a record crowd of Grim's son Douglas and wife Kelly along with daughters Elaina and Lauren, who rarely come, were stirred to join the family crowd. After signing up for the whole week, Capon told they must leave on Thursday. That last part of the week had been sold out. Guests prefer it, as the activities and food and everything else get better. Also, the talent show is in that part of the week—Friday evening.

Had Grim performed anywhere else since his last time at Capon? "No, I haven't. Not even karaoke," he swears. Grim then paused and wanted to clarify that

statement. He says he technically has done some performing outside of Capon since he began in 2010. From about 2013 to 2016 he tried improv, which is spontaneous acting with no script. No singing occurred either. He had mentioned to a Pennsylvania Handwriting Analysis Forum guest, Stephanie Larson, who had been an actor herself, that he was thinking about taking acting lessons but that no one around his area taught adults. The lessons were all for kids. "If you want to act, you must try out



Some of the members of Grim's improv troupe called "Unusual Suspects." He says he's in the middle of the photo by accident.

for community theater to be in a play or musical. That was a bridge too far for me," he asserts.

She suggested improv as close to it. She herself belonged to a troupe in Doylestown, a few miles from his Sellersville home. He says he's never aspired to acting. He pursued improv to find out if he could be creative on the spot, how hard it was, what it felt like to act, and doing it all in front of an audience. Improv does not require memorizing; it demands the opposite—creating plausible lines unprompted. He thinks he's creative. The other parts would be tough. "Yes, I was interested in these aspects. But not that much," he says now. He had already done

the initial play at Capon in 2010 where he wrote and acted by himself in a one-act play. He played the father and the son in dialogue, traipsing back and forth after each short line. The next one was in 2012 when he played both Indiana Jones and his father in a scene from the film "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade."

He thought his time of improv at "Unusual Suspects" troupe was worthwhile. "It makes you think on your feet and create and express thoughts in front of others," he explains. "It's not easy; you must focus. Not only must you think up your next line but while doing so, you must listen to the other actors and address where they are going with the narrative. They may be heading away from your idea. You accept what they say and go with it; you don't disrespect it."

How did he do? "I thought I did okay— nothing great," he reflects. "I thought I would be more creative than I was. I didn't seem to be getting much better at it. When you are inhibited, taking up improv will test your ability to overcome it. Since you must focus while being imaginative, the moments are intense. You are so engaged with spouting words that you hardly create any with worth."

Does he recommend it? "Everyone should try it," he says, pointing. "You learn about yourself and what's on your mind. You address your fears in front of others. You do it the hard way because you are on your own. No one is sitting there with a script to prompt you. Since you're on your own, your instinct is to be funny when you are tense and facing chaos. They tell you not to try being funny. If it happens, okay."

I wanna know why Grim hasn't performed elsewhere. Or at least I wanna know why he confines his performing to the West Virginia resort and waits a year to do it again. "I'm not a performer. I don't aspire to a career as an amateur, let alone as a professional. I'm 75 and I have my handwriting analysis business, which takes up a fair amount of time. I'm in retirement mode and I don't need more hassles and travel, which I detest anyway, for more stress in my life. If I wanted more of that, I would've stayed in the law," he chuckles. He has performed only at Capon Springs and once a year since he began in 2010. He missed performing in 2011. Why he didn't perform that year, he doesn't remember.

Grim says it's time to go. We took so long our waitress has gone off duty. When we reach outside, the boiling sun has reduced to a simmer. A breeze has wandered in, nudging us for an easy welcome. Shadows won't stretch long for a while. This lures golfers to the links or a range where they renew their flaws. With a prolonged lunch, Grim is miffed for sitting so long. We were both lost in our gusher of words. He says he wants to head to a golf driving range to hit a bucket of balls. I will go along.

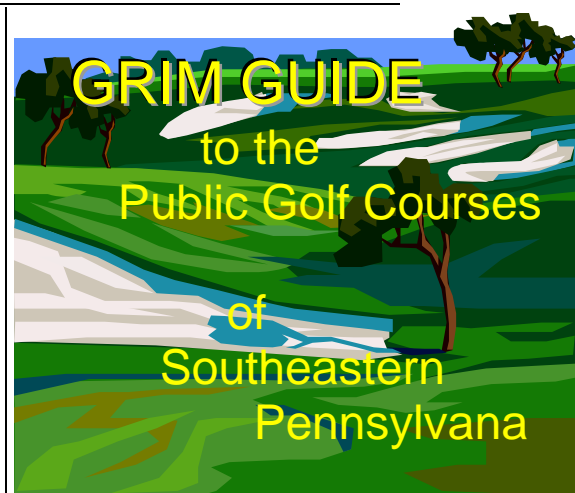
His game has plunged in recent years. Not that it had far to go. Why, he says he doesn't know. He refuses to believe it's from aging. Yes, he has passed 70 years but claims to be in good health and remains active, especially playing golf. He is so upset at his golf decline that he plays little on actual golf courses. Most times he practices in his backyard, plopping wedges with regular balls and bashing the current types of whiffle balls. Grim plays *Almost Golf Balls*. They look and feel close to a real ball and go about a third the distance of a real ball. They won't put your eye out or crack that Anderson window. His ventures out of his back yard are mostly at driving ranges vainly whacking buckets of balls.

Now and then he will play on a real golf course. Nothing seems

to boost his former meager talents. He is now, as he calls it, "awful" and has reeked for several years. With only a slight slippage, his passion endures. He says he enjoys golf's challenges and the uniqueness of each course, the outdoor experience, and the escape from life's travails. "Golf invaded my blood in my teen years. A thoroughbred must run. I must thwack and thump. With all the good courses we have around this area of Pennsylvania, how can I not take advantage of our good fortune."

Grim says he is less interested in the golf swing and golf equipment than golf courses. He scoffs at the expertise golfers pursue to better their games. "Oh, I read the magazines with the golf tips. Then I forget what they said, if I read them at all. I'd rather talk about a golf course than a golf swing," he declares. Wow. Grim focuses on the playing fields of golf. They beat a bowling alley. Being outside and sprawling, they *are* unique. A few years ago, he published a volume for golfers called *Grim Guide to the Public Golf Courses of Southeastern Pennsylvania*.

His focus on the links rather than the swings led him to a bold move. In *GolfNotes* magazine he confronted America's shrine at Augusta National. After reading in *Golf Digest* that it was rated the Best Golf Course in America, he put his 5 iron down and grabbed his pen. In a controversial cover article, he called it the "most over-rated golf course in America." It wasn't mere hype and kvetch. Renewing his law license to golf, he marshalled evidence in support and published a lengthy contra brief. (*GolfNotes* April 2015) He wasn't done. No, he didn't send it to Augusta National's Chairman. He sent it to Bradley Klein, probably the pre-eminent golf course authority in America. Klein is a writer for *Golfweek* magazine, the golf industry's Bible. Klein didn't ignore it. He wrote back defending Augusta National. They continued the dialogue on Augusta and other courses. Grim published it verbatim in the same *GolfNotes* (April 2015).



What also animates him is that the annual Grim family golf tourney will be held at Capon Springs. Since the "Grim Open" is played among often-farflung family members, its streak of fifty-six straight years is astounding. Its current 18-hole format sandwiches nine holes on either side of the talent show. (The course itself is only nine holes.)

With the decline in his game, Grim is not buoyant about his chances this year. Although he covets to win it, he is 75, and so do the other Grim family golfers. All who play are younger (if oldest brother Jim doesn't attend) and most are better. A silver trophy is awarded and a plaque is updated with the winner's name. The Capon course is special to the family, which Grim says he will explain in the next *GolfNotes*. (*That has come out since then. See the July 2016 issue.*) The Grim family esteems the Capon course in its own way as do all golfers with Augusta National. It provides a handy venue where many of the Grim golfers are able to gather each year.

A golfer myself, I meet Grim at Lederach Golf Club, a links layout about twenty minutes southwest from the restaurant. It's in *Golfweek's* Top Ten public courses in Pennsylvania. We aren't playing the course. Grim and I dispense a metal basket of balls for the driving range. He likes this facility, especially this time of day as the sun is behind you on the practice

range. The balls are quality, without those circles denoting schlock. You can hit from good natural turf, not mats.

We begin with our wedges, focusing on our games, saying nothing. I wait for him to loft a few wedges and, on a backswing, I inquire why he doesn't practice or rehearse before performing. Rather than gripe at my faux pas, he laughs and pulls his club down. Without a pause, he says, "Ha. Good timing, Marty. *(He pauses)* I don't like doing either one of them for music or acting. To me,

He resumes his work down the line of irons and takes on his hybrids. He adores them, as do many golfers finding them in recent years. He discarded his 3 and 4 irons a few years ago. I'm not satisfied with how Grim prepares for the talent show. I must press him further on practicing and rehearsing. "Oh, I'm not saying I won't do either. But I limit what I do to areas where I don't feel confident, or where I just need work. If I'll be acting, I'll spend time learning my lines." Most of his time is selecting the genre and

the artist and the song, and finding the background for a song, or other selection. "Yeah, the background in singing is key. It lifts the presentation from rank amateur to cultural worth," he explains. "Some of the backgrounds are good quality, close to the original. That was one reason I

was inspired to try singing at Capon."

So little preparation for the event. Indifference? Disdain? Can a golfer practice his driving but ignore his putting? "I remember when people would compete in talent shows and have only a live piano to accompany them," Grim recalls. "Mikes? You had to project louder. You were your own sound system. The bad old days." I remember too. We've all witnessed that in amateur shows over the years before electronics propelled it upward. Most of the time you had to stay at a mike stand. When mikes became hand mikes, removable from the stand, they were tethered to a cord. After some years they lost their cords. Often you'd get a nasty feedback from the sound system. And you'd have to check it. "Testing, one, two, three." You don't see and hear that much these days.

I let Grim go till he's half way through blasting his driver, having skipped his 3 wood. He's given up on it, he says. He can neither

launch it nor hit it for length. He had tried a new one last summer and still can't hit it well. When I ask Grim about his agenda for 2016, he looks away, then nods a No. I remind him of the full piece I wrote about his prior routines at Capon. He sees I may write about him at Capon in 2016. Okay, he knows it for sure. Why else would I approach him now seeking details on what lies ahead? If there's an article, he knows I won't write only about his preparation "Okay," he groans, sounding more serious than he should. "Even if I don't cooperate, you will write an article and it may be wrong in several ways. I'd like to see it accurate. I also reckon that your doing it may help me to understand myself." He's right. I remain baffled and desire answers. Why has he performed in the face of age and self-consciousness and no history of performing songs or acting or even comedy? Should I throw in no apparent prior ability too?

Our ball buckets are now empty. Instead of strolling to the practice green for chipping and putting, we linger in the late afternoon sun. On the range our sweat has been minimal. For some time the sun has slipped behind bulbous clouds. I am now direct. What exactly does he plan for this year? As my price of sole knowledge, he asks me to keep it to myself. I agree. He says he wants to do three songs and a scene from a famous movie for his 2016 Capon Springs routines.

Capon gets a lot of performers and wants their time on stage limited to a few short minutes each. Grim has abused that rule. He and his large family have been attending the resort since 1954. This imparts leverage for Grim. Although he admits feeling guilt, apparently it's not enough to bind him to the time limit. He thinks he will flout it once



Lederach's 5th Hole, a par 3 with an elevated tee to a wicked green 180 yards downhill from the White tee on this links layout.

practicing and then acting is a form of cheating. If I do something over and over, eventually I can perfect it. Or at least make it passable. I prefer a challenge to see if I can do it well without the constant rehearsing."

I'm astonished. Since he's a stage novice, why would he allow it to be confirmed? I say nothing and let it go for a while. While spanking some mid-irons, he stops to elaborate: "I don't want to overdo this. Capon is a non-competitive talent show on a vacation. They don't pick a winner. Yes, it's grown in stature over the years—more guests have entered it, the place fills up, and the theater features have improved. I enjoy doing it among family and longtime Capon friends and new guests too." Sounds like a big deal now. "Okay, it is much bigger and it's one reason I keep doing it," Grim replies in a view from several paces back.



The 18th Green with clubhouse behind it at Lederach Golf Club

more, believing he must do several songs and a film scene. I will want to know details.

Finally this rouses Grim to amble to the nearby putting green to practice. I join him and we each hit a sleeve of balls from several spots. I know the time limits alter how Grim presents himself on the Capon stage. He will not sing any song all the way through. With more curiosity than impatience, I wonder when he will sing a whole song. I do more than that; I ask him. “Good question,” he begins. “I sing only once a year. I’m always interested in doing several songs, and different from each other. I want to challenge myself to do a variety of them in public.” Well, then, do some outside of Capon for once, I insist. He smiles. “Not likely to happen. Where would I do them? I would need my chosen background music. I don’t know much about the karaoke scene but I think they play synthesizers or a small combo or something else that is shabby background.”

Jonathon Bellingham, the veteran Capon MC, has never chided Grim for his time abuse. One year his productions were so long he allowed Grim to break them into two segments around other performers. Grim has taken one step to ease the MC’s odds of action against him. Since performers appear in the order of their name on the sheet, Grim has signed up near the 5 pm Thursday deadline. He says this holds up no other performer. How about the audience? “Yes, I know they’re affected. They are all on vacation, get in the hall for free, and are welcome to stay and hiss, or get up and leave, even abruptly.”

I want to know more about the songs Grim has selected for Capon. And I’m especially eager to know what movie scene he is doing. I won’t bother trying to guess. Grim will surprise you. He’s never done folk music, country music or opera. I shudder to think he may do one of

these. I want to know how he decides what to perform and how he prepares for the talent show. When I press him for details, he waves me off as we finish some putting. With that he’s now ignoring me. I don’t follow up and he ends the inquiry with “It’s close to dinner time and I must go.” As he leaves, I ask him if we can meet again soon to address these items. He pauses with a frown, then mutters a reluctant “Okay.” Before getting into his car, he warns me not to leak his agenda at the talent show. I say no problem and we go our separate ways. I see that the sun has re-appeared and is still bright near the Indian Valley, Montgomery County, horizon. As I open my trunk to load my clubs, a cheerful zephyr freshens my neck.

Grim seeks the shoes of the King

Some few days later, I email Grim about another session. He suggests I come to his home below Sellersville in Hilltown Township, Bucks County. Grim lives in a colonial home he and his wife built in 1988 out in the country in a small development of homes. In the warm weather mowers growl all day. Leafy trees flaunt their greenery. Most of the homes were built shortly before Grim’s. When you pull into his driveway, you are drawn to a 25-foot silver flagpole in his front yard. It has four flags on it. At the top, an American flag; below, three with no apparent link to each other. Since they vary by color and



design, they remind me of his history of unlike song choices at Capon. One year it was Elvis,

Johnny Mathis, and Andrea Bocelli. “I have some seasonal and topical flags. Otherwise, I just go for random variety,” he explains.

He has over fifty of them. He recently gained a free one from a local South Korean exchange student. Grim had flown a Japanese battle flag from WWII. She came to his door with her own country’s flag. She knew her Korea’s ugly history. Japan colonized it from 1910 to the 1945 defeat of the Rising Sun’s Pacific empire. Chastened by her upset, Grim told her he was not glorifying it—just displaying it as an historical marker. “I love flags. The colors and the design. Their importance is secondary. But I have no Confederate or Nazi flags and wouldn’t fly them. I have my limits,” he insists.

He waves me up to the second floor where his office is located. He calls it his “space room,” meaning “where I get to enjoy my space.” It is mostly what used to be called a den. He explains: “When we first moved in, it was going to be off-limits to the rest of the family. That lasted about twenty minutes.”

I notice he has two TV sets. Grim is a multi-tasker. “Yes, I watch a fair amount of TV and sometimes both at the same time. He doesn’t apologize for the TV’s. “Anyone who watches TV and sits on their couch and does nothing else? Shame on them. Life is short and TV deserves your divided attention and disrespect,” he proclaims, smiling with dignity. “I’m never just watching TV. I will be doing something else too—eating, exercising, reading, writing, emailing or googling. Even catlapping,” he adds. He hates commercials. They are intervals not to be wasted on watching and

The Japanese Battle Flag from World War II. This flag incensed Grim's neighbor's exchange student from South Korea. How so?

absorbing the message. “The mute button is one of the best advances in technology,” he declares.

We both sit on a dark brown leather couch that faces his larger TV. I don’t waste his time

with weather or sports or Trump. I know he is thankful for that. I notice he has a few bookcases. Some have several books and notebooks on handwriting analysis. Some have books about literary writing, mostly essays and articles writing. One surprise is a whole row of books about religion and church. He belongs to a local Lutheran church. I find out Grim has been a leader in his church's Confirmation classes for twenty-seven years. "I enjoy it," he says. "It's more teaching for me. With handwriting analysis, my classes have all been adults, usually older ones. With this, I get to deal with seventh and eighth graders. They are informed today and have strong opinions."

Grim is conservative and fond of history and tradition. He is proud of not swearing in public. "It's more of a test of my self-control than anything," he says. He's also a creature of habit and custom. He respects and delves into items from the past. "Yeah, I do," he confesses. "I'm not thrilled with the present and not cheerful about the future either. I suppose I spend too much time in the past. I will attend reunions and visit historical places and enjoy reading about a country's past, especially its leaders. I'm reading a biography of Henry Kissinger. It's over 700 pages, and it only goes to 1968. I can't wait for the second volume." From the book he learned that Kissinger was a strong advocate of handwriting analysis. This adds to Grim's questing comment raised in our book *Strokes*: "Why do the smartest people in history believe in my sainted subject that many condemn? Aristotle, Confucius, Einstein, Freud, Disraeli, Shakespeare and now Kissinger."

With that Grim reaches into the cabinet beneath his larger TV screen and pulls out containers of peanuts and sourballs. He offers me some and I decline. He unwraps a sourball and grabs a peanut. He put them both in his mouth. The sourball is in his left cheek; the peanut in the right. It's a ritual he's been doing for years. He says he used to do it with

peanuts and raisins. After some years he replaced the raisins with sourballs and other hard candy, like lollipops. "I don't remember why I switched. It certainly wasn't healthier." He eats them in the afternoon and in the evening. He has thought about stopping this "vile habit," but not enough to quit. "It's a minor addiction, I guess." Don't we all have something?" he muses.

At last I ask about his lineup for Capon. I want to know what his first number will be. He says "Blue Suede Shoes." Over the years at Capon, he had done Elvis's "Loving You" and "Stuck on You." One more King tune? "I revere Elvis," he blubbers. "His career took off just as I was slogging through junior high and high school in the latter 1950's. I was lucky." I know why. That was the Golden Era for rock's rise, with American Bandstand to herald it every day after school. Although Grim has sung Elvis at Capon, none was a good rocking Elvis number. His first Elvis tune in 2012 at Capon was special. It was the first time he sang in public *anywhere*. "Loving You" was snail slow, but on purpose. Two years later "Stuck on You" was upbeat but plodding. "I like doing Elvis; the backgrounds are virtually the same as the originals. I had the Jordanaires back me up."

I am familiar with this trailblazing rock song about those weird shoes. I liked it then. It reminds you what rock fans relish. We want the words fast and the music loud. They can snarl and shriek the lyrics and hide them with noisy backups. Make sense? Doesn't matter.



He wrote Blue Suede Shoes. He recorded it, and it was a huge hit. His name was not Elvis Presley.

I ALWAYS WONDERED where that song came from. In the 1950's, when Johnny Cash was in the U.S. military in Germany, he noticed an airforceman whose military shoes were blue suede. He told fellow Sun Records singer Carl Perkins he should write a song about them. Perkins said he knew nothing about shoes. When Perkins played a dance, a couple was near the stage. When the man's partner scuffed his suede shoes, he exclaimed: "Uh, oh, don't step on my suedes." Perkins was now inspired to write a song about them. Soon after, he recorded "Blue Suede Shoes." Released at the start of 1956, it went to the top of Billboard's Country Chart.

LIKE PERKINS AND CASH, Elvis had recorded for Sam Phillips, head of Sun Records. In 1955 Phillips needed money to save his minor company. Since Elvis was getting too big for Sun Records, Phillips shopped around Elvis's contract. With the best offer, RCA bought Elvis's contract for \$35,000 in November 1955. In early 1956 Elvis sang "Blue Suede Shoes" twice on the CBS *Stage Show* TV program. Although he also wanted to record it, Elvis asked RCA to delay it. Perkins, his Sun artist buddy, had been seriously injured in an auto accident. Perkins's hit was still hot on the charts too. Eventually that year Elvis recorded it but as part of his first LP called *Elvis Presley*. That famous black-and-white cover album, (see it on the next page) with Elvis, guitar fronting his chest, his eyes closed, as his open mouth wailed, soared to Billboard's Number One. The single of "Blue Suede Shoes" hit the record stores in September 1956. It went to Billboard's Number 20.

Carl Perkins



But have a good beat. I youtubed “Blue Suede Shoes” by Elvis and it is swift and spirited. Trying it would be hard for anyone. Could Grim achieve that lively pace without seeming silly and slipping into wretched spoof? “I think so,” he says. “That’s my concern. If I think they’ll jeer, I won’t pursue it.” Whether Grim could pull it off with Elvis’s voice and manner was doubtful. You need to address more than his Southern voice and style. His pounding, whirling, twisting body moves are a critical part of his staging. I say it’s unlikely.



Blue Suede Shoes

(Grim’s lyrics)

Well its-a one for the money
Two for the show,
Three ta get ready
Now go, cat, go,
And don’t you, step on my blue suede shoes,
Well, you can do anythang
But stay-hey offa mah blue suede shoes.
You can knock me down,
Step on mah face,
Slander mah name all over the place,
Do anythang that you wonta do,
But ah, ah, honey, stay offa mah shoes.
And don’t you step on mah blue suede shoes.
Well, you can do anythang but stay-hey offa mah blue suede shoes.

“It won’t be easy for other reasons too,” adds Grim. His music producer Jill Sardella found a good background for it. “But the snags strike at the song’s start. Most tunes begin with a music intro and then the words. This song begins, not with instruments, but with Elvis singing, ‘Well, it’s-a one for the money, two for the show...’ then the guitar and drums

jump in. To synchronize those with your voice when you are playing a background on a fast song is not easy,” Grim asserts.

What did he do? “After I played it a few times, I realized it had some clicking sounds before anything began. They seemed to be signals that the instruments were about to begin. This is all before the words and music jump in and race together.”

Since he’d be focused on the singing, he couldn’t handle the background too. He has to mesh with his music engineer, niece Kelsy, 19, a Temple University student, who has helped him with the music from the start. “I have to rely on her to time the music. It has to begin a brief moment after my words. *We both* have to match the melody with the lyrics.”

His prior Elvis tunes were mostly Grim mimicking the words and music. His gestures were few and meager. “That’s right,” he admitted. “For ‘Loving You,’ a very slow song, I stood there and sang. But I did two gestures with my hand. Where I repeated a few words for emphasis as Elvis does, I pointed to a girl in the audience as if I was singing to her. “...loving you. Just you.” Elvis didn’t do that in the movie. He played the guitar so his hands were busy. That was my own idea but Elvis might do that in concert, especially with no guitar to strum. Otherwise, with his slow serious songs, he doesn’t move.” Many singers will raise an arm or two or look up or close their eyes when they go upscale or the emotion intensifies. “Yeah,” says Grim. “I think when he sings ‘Love Me Tender,’ he just stands there in dignity to the music and the moment.”

Elvis moves are tough to copy. He seems to have a set for each fast tune. And they aren’t always cloned each time he sings the song. Did Grim think he was equal to that task? “They are tough” he admits. “I was concerned that if I did *any* movements, people would laugh. They would see it as parody.”

Grim is not an Elvis twin. On that he remarks, “You know, when I began doing Elvis moves for

‘Stuck on You,’ the audience, mostly the kids, giggled. It’s slightly upbeat. The one video I saw of him singing it, he was on a TV variety show. With a playful smirk, he snaps his fingers. I couldn’t see me doing any of that. I guess it helps that no one knows those gestures from that song. I certainly didn’t.”



Elvis’s first album, which featured “Blue Suede Shoes”

For most of Elvis’s early songs we only hear them; we don’t see a video of them. Yes, initially he was on TV and live. The producers and censors curbed his moves. They wouldn’t show his loins. Once he came out of the army and did his gaudy movies and filmed concerts, we had a better grasp of his movements.

Elvis probably altered what he did. He seemed to move based on his impulse at the moment, not by thoughtful design. He has been quoted that he couldn’t stand still. He couldn’t help it. “Yeah, says Grim. “His movements were spontaneous. They came from inside. In ‘Stuck on You,’ when I sang the words, ‘... cause I’m, ahn, ahn, stuck on you,’ I twitched my shoulders, as Elvis did. They snickered more. I knew they would. When you saw Elvis do it, you couldn’t help at least a mirthful smile. Girls would yelp. But when those words ‘ahn, ahn’ are sung, they’re a vocal pause. They demand some kind of physical move.”

What would Grim do for props and gestures for “Blue Suede Shoes? “I’ve thought about doing exactly what he does. For this he holds his basic guitar, which he hardly ever plays in his songs. It’s a virtual prop. He wasn’t even that great a guitar player. Elvis would

rely on his backup group's instruments or his Jordanares singing group for the accompaniment. Anyway, the guitar *looks* good as a prop."

I must return to the critical issue. Is Grim really going to do the King's moves for this song? "I am," he says without apparent doubt. Although he concedes Elvis seemed to change his gestures for each song and each version of the same song, Grim would do his own take. YouTube had a segment from a TV stage show in the late 1950's. (*See a still from it on page 13*) While Elvis plunks his guitar, which looks undersized, his leg movements are unique. He rocks up and down, his knees slightly flexed, his toes on the floor, while his heels rise from the floor, and drop back down, all in a constant rhythm.

Would he deploy both the guitar and the foot lifts? "I know they are a large part of the act, but I don't know if I can bring myself to do them. I can't play the guitar, not that I even would try for this song. The background music picks up any guitar sound anyway. Those rocking legs would draw chuckles." No—guffaws, I think to myself.

This all seems too much for him to try. Might Grim be forced to do a virtual studio version? I suggest that maybe the audience close their eyes and just listen? He says a firm, "That's novel. I don't think so. But I should consider it." He's not done. "You know, it seems you can't do rocking Elvis in public without some of his movements. That's why I'm forced to ponder them for 'Blue Suede Shoes.' I've seen segments from his big 1960's concerts. He does little gesturing at all, even when he reprises his hits from the 1950's." I think I know why. Eventually Elvis was too heavy, sweaty, and high on something to do much else.

I can't ignore the droll image of Grim appearing as Elvis. For the initial two songs, Grim wore no Elvis clothes and used no props. He's sure that would have drawn laughter from accidental parody. I agree. Grim's artistic choices are tributes, not parodies, he will

remind all nearby. When he xeroxes the King, Grim is resolute.

Grim's outfits have been spare. No link to his artists—vacation casual, as if he were part of the audience—brownish khakis and Capon-emblem tee shirt. "Yeah, you're right. You know, I don't wear any Elvis clothes, nor do I don any dark hair piece with sideburns or glitzy shades. I like to keep the décor simple and let my voice convey the person." Loading up on Elvis glitter would be knee-slapping burlesque. When Elvis did "Blue Suede Shoes," that was early career. He hadn't reached Las Vegas excess. In late 1950's photos his hairstyle was slick DA, gleaming from Charles Antell Formula No. 9 or something, while blackening over the years. Few know that evolved from young teen Elvis with light, sandy hair.

I tell him that his natural look and casual male clothes wouldn't capture Elvis. He would lower Capon's raised eyebrows only if he approached Elvis's gestures. I doubt he could approach them. Even if he did, it would work only with an ample Elvis voice. "Okay, I guess I agree," Grim says. "I wonder, though, what do people know about his gestures for each song, especially 'Blue Suede Shoes.' It won't matter. Elvis wouldn't stand still for an uptempo rock song. I figure I must do *something* to move my body. He certainly would." He's right. When the King was on his throne he needed his gestures. Can Grim summon his own? We'll find out. Bring on the gestures!

Grim wants it that way

Ask Grim about any song after the late 1980's. "You can have it," he says. He knows few anyway and isn't interested in any. "I don't care for the period when songs started losing their melody and evolved into rap and other non-musical kinds of songs. I couldn't look or listen anymore," he fumes. Not that he was immersed in pop



📺📺📺 This song was recorded in 1999 by the boyband Backstreet Boys. It was nominated for three Grammys including Song of the Year and Record of the Year. It reached Number One in twenty-five countries but only Number Six in the U.S. In 2000 Rolling Stone/MTV rated the song Number Ten of Greatest Pop Songs of All Time. In a readers' poll by Rolling Stone, the Backstreet Boys were rated the Best Boygroup of All Time.

I Want It That Way

(Grim's lyrics)

Yeah
You are my fire
The one desire.
Believe when I say
I want it that way.
But we are two worlds apart.
Can't reach to your heart
When you say
That I want it that way.
Tell me why.
NO—Ain't nothin' but a heartache
(background group only)
Tell me why.
NO—Ain't nothin' but a mistake (tell
me why) (background only)
I never wanna hear you say
I want it that way
'Cause I want it thaaat way.

music in those years anyway. In the 1980's he got most of his pop music from music videos on MTV. You know, the ones with scenes full of sound and fury and you-know-the rest. Then MTV drove to the Jersey Shore and he stopped checking it out. One tune he does know from the 1990's is "I Want It That Way" by the Backstreet Boys. "I've heard it here and there over the years and always liked it," he said. "At least it's musical. But its lyrics are strange." He's not alone. Critics say it makes no sense. "Somehow I still like it. Lyrics aren't key in a pop song. Maybe in folk music. If a pop song has the rest, I can like it," he clarifies.

It has a solid history, with more acclaim than Grim realized. (See the sidebar on page 14)

Why this of all pop songs for Grim? "I heard it one more time in May. Where, I don't recall. It impressed me enough to want to try it," he replies. "I like that it presents a separate challenge— the contrast of high-pitch teens with low-pitch Elvis. I thought the younger crowd at Capon would enjoy it. If I like it, maybe some other adults might also."

Any problems to resolve in putting it together? "Yes. Aren't there always?" he blurts. One drawback is that the song takes a while to develop. Remember, Capon wants you to do your stuff, keep it short, then get off the stage. I wouldn't be doing the whole song, just my few verses and quitting each song. When I don't sing a whole song, I can do a few songs within my time limit. Although I've stretched it each year, Jonathan has been extra-tolerant. What can I tell you?"

I've listened to the Backstreet Boys's song and it's a slow starter. Why would he choose it when he's limited by time? "Yeah, I know," Grim replies. "I liked it enough to stop when it quickened as the backup group of boys joined the lead singer."

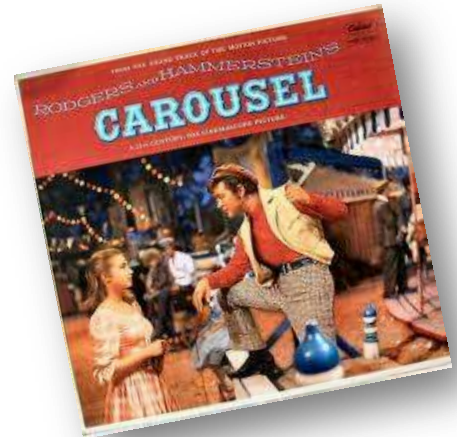
I youtubed it and noticed that this group had separate hand gestures as they sang. Was Grim going to try any or stand stiff? "I'm considering their moves. They're easier to mimic than Elvis's. Many pop artists deploy their hands but few their legs. Elvis has restless legs. He is physical and unique. Three different guys from this group take over the lead. Each lead singer at the time and the backup singers have their own actions. They seem to be practiced, which I get, as long as they do the job. Elvis's creations seem to be spontaneous. I know his desire to gyrate is. But he probably did some rehearsing at times for most of them, you know."

I want to know what's special about the boygroup's moves. "Their moves are youthful, distinctive and modern. Elvis would never have tried them," Grim is sure. "I admit I'm almost a studio singer. I hardly look youthful as they do. I wonder, though, did Elvis display his movements when he was recording his songs in the studio? He said he couldn't help himself."

Riding the Carousel

For the 2015 talent show Grim sang five songs, all after doing a scene from the 1973

film *The Paper Chase*. He played that haughty law professor, Kingsfield. This year, fewer songs? "Yes, only three," he replies. So what's the last one? "I want to end with a dignified, familiar song. At least the adults would appreciate it. I've always liked 'If I Loved You' from the musical *Carousel*, especially the film version from



1956 starring Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones. The song is in the first half where it sung by the two main characters, Billie Bigelow and Julie Jordan, who are attracted to each other. They're not yet dating, let alone in a courtship. They imagine what it would be like if they were a couple." I youtubed it and noted that they sing it in each other's presence, yet not together. I guess it's because they're not yet an item."

That's not the version Grim wants to do. He wants to sing the MacRae "Reprise" part from the end of *Carousel* (See sidebar below.) at Capon, not the one earlier in *Carousel*. They call it "Reprise" because they are repeating the song. It's different. Why

IF I LOVED YOU (REPRISE)

(Grim's lyrics)

Longing to tell you
But afraid and shy,
I let my golden chances
Pass me by.
Now I've lost you,
Soon I will go in the mist of day
And you never will know
How I loved you
How I loved you...

Gordon MacRae as Billy Bigelow is given one day to return to earth to see his wife Julie Jordan and his daughter he hardly knew. He wants to redeem himself and tell Julie he loved her. Here is Billy Bigelow during that one day standing next to his daughter at her graduation.



this song? "I like its somber quality," he declares without seeming irony. "And I won't need to find a Julie Jordan to stand near me." I recall there is fantasy to this part of the film. "You're right," says Grim, adding, "Billy Bigelow is no longer alive but he has this free day to see his daughter, granted by Heaven, I guess. I especially like the background music for it from the film. Problem is you can't find anything close online. The most Jill or I can call up is an instrumental intro to a version of "Reprise." When that ends, a swirl erupts, as it's really the *start* of that version."

Well, if not that intro, did he find anything else worthy? "Yes. We found an orchestral arrangement of the whole song by the Polish City Orchestra. Although I like it, it's too elaborate and forceful for me." What's he mean? "It was lively and rousing. Remember, I am looking for something more dignified. Also, it doesn't run close enough to the actual background earlier in the movie or at the end in the 'Reprise.' Nothing else was close."

So after all this, where is he? "I have to decide to use the orchestra or the intro to the actual 'Reprise' at the end of the film. The intro was just long enough since I don't sing more than a few lines for all three

CAROUSEL

The 1956 film



In 1999 *Time Magazine* called *Carousel* the best musical of the 20th century. It opened on Broadway in 1945. The film version in 1956 starred Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones. They sing the song "If I Loved You" as a duet early on as Billy Bigelow and Julie Jordan. They imagine being in love with each other. At the end of the film, MacRae, given a day to do good things on earth after dying from his own knife wound after a botched robbery. He only got involved in the crime because he had no job and wanted to support his wife and new child. At this point, he doesn't imagine *if* he loved Julie but *that* he did and now wants to tell her. He says "how I loved you," not "if I loved you" in this version of the song at the end of the film. It's called "Reprise" because it's a repeat. Moral: if you love someone, tell them now, or at least before you croak. You only get a free day from Heaven in movies. ●

Below is the duet scene early in the film.



songs. Or I could sing a cappella. But that would leave me with no inspiring uplift of the poignant mood conveyed." Yes, good music stimulates emotions. He needs all the stirring background he can muster. Of course it helps hush up poor singing too.

I wander some more around Grim's study and see a shelf of videocassettes. Several are music videos from the 1980's. Those with several covers are "The Larry Sanders Show" from the 1990's. I know that Gary Shandling was the producer and star. He does subtle, neurotic comedy. This series goes behind the scenes of a talk show he hosts. The other multiple is "The Muppet Show." Grim points out, "Yeah, those were two great TV shows." "The Muppets" was really an adult show disguised as a kids show. When you see them today in their movies, it's the same." When Grim did his Disney medley in 2014, he did a segment from the film "Muppets Most Wanted" where he played a nasty Russian threatening Kermit the Frog. He enjoyed doing the Russian accent. He savors accents. Which one hasn't he done at Capon? "I haven't tried a Spanish accent. If I do any more of them, it will be in the routine."

Although he's selected three songs to sing, I'm curious what other songs he considered for Capon this year. I'm sure he did. Three stand out in his recent memory. "I thought about 'Love Will Lead You Back' by Taylor Dayne, 'Long Tall Sally' by

Little Richard, and “There Goes My Heart” by Johnny Mathis. Dayne’s was too hard to mimic. It’s one of her noted songs but it’s not widely known outside of her fans. She is a belter, which I admire in female singers. I go all the way back to Teresa Brewer and Brenda Lee. I would actually go further back and consider Judy Garland as one. I idolize her but have never thought of doing an impression. I relished the chance to try Dayne.” (*Her photo is shown below.*)



That’s interesting. Grim is willing to try women’s voices. He sees my point. “Yeah, I don’t rule out anyone, male or female. I don’t know why I do that. Dayne has a fairly deep voice for a woman. I guess I think I can reach her ranges without much trouble.” That’s cocky. He’s doing what he considers earnest impressions. Thus, he must approach not only their range as females, but also their voice and style. He soared falsetto high a few years ago with a man’s song. Jiminy Cricket finishes “When You Wish upon a Star” with a famous altitude at “your dreams come true.”

The song and artist that stuns me is Little Richard’s “Long Tall Sally.” (*His photo is shown below.*) Really? I say. “Yes, I did think it for more than a moment. In fact, I looked at his other songs too. Although “Long Tall Sally” is a classic, it sprints the entire song. He’s got that raw, shouting style that refuses to slow down. He also sings it fairly high and then you have the ‘Woooooo’ too. I mean, I’m white and 75 years old. Come



on. But I liked the challenge.” Yes, I like challenges too, but doable ones. “It was special. I want to try a black voice and especially his,” he confesses. “Although we did find a good background for it, the challenge was beyond my ability, whatever it is.”

I absorb that without comment. He seriously considered it? Is that arrogance or confidence or indifference? When I review his Capon productions, I think of that old sharp query, “Just who do you think you are?” I must convey it to Grim. “I know. It would’ve been intriguing to see how the crowd responded to it,” he wonders. “It’s catchy. What also detracts from my using it is ending it early on. It bursts out like a drag racer, but, like a dragster, it needs a parachute to stop soon.” I also tell him if he does it poorly the audience will see it as a spoof and will hoot. “I know. That’s a risk, especially with youngsters in the theater, and adults sitting through an array of acts. They are primed to be entertained,” he laments.

Johnny Mathis? (*Photo below*) I remind him that he did “Misty” at Capon a few years ago. His rejoinder: “You’re right. Mathis has so many great tunes. I was surveying them last winter and I played it out of curiosity. I don’t recall “There Goes My Heart” from way back when or since. I was inspired to try it.” After he’d done “Misty”? “I still like Mathis for a



change of pace from Elvis or even Gordon MacRae. And I think I can do Mathis okay too.” Yes, but if you don’t do it right, it can be laughable, rather than laudable. He is tired of hearing that, I know. “Well, I recall that when I began “Misty” with that Mathis lilt, the kids in the crowd couldn’t keep from snickering. They probably didn’t know him, but had an

inkling I was trying to be funny. I wasn’t.”

But why this obscure song hardly any would know? “I didn’t want to do one more famous song of his. “There Goes My Heart” is minor enough that we couldn’t find any background for it. Otherwise I might have tried it. I don’t prefer unknown songs of even famous artists. The audience can’t tell if I’m doing a good impression. But I didn’t realize how great a romantic melody it is. This one should be better known. He has so many it’s gotten lost in the shuffle.”

Grim is gone with “The Wind”

Somehow in recent years Grim has been captivated by the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*. He marvels at all the stories about its creation and production, especially its people. One prominent one is David Selznick, the producer. He was deep into all its elements. With his sharp instincts, tenacity and vigor, he was the force that not only saved it; he achieved its grandeur. He obtained Vivien Leigh for the role of Scarlett O’Hara only after a long, agonizing nationwide search. With a self-imposed deadline to find the right lady, the filming had already begun on set with the burning of Atlanta. As Selznick observed the massive flames of old movie sets, he turned to see his agent brother Myron standing with Vivien Leigh. “Here’s your Scarlett O’Hara,” said Myron.

Leigh was in America with her new paramour, a guy named Laurence Olivier, while her husband remained in England. Selznick agreed she looked the part. A quick screen test and she was selected to play this role of a lifetime that countless women sought. Her hazel eyes and dark brown hair matched Scarlett’s. Her father was Irish and her mother French. Vivien’s father was French and her mother Irish. Le Yin and O’Yang do Dixie.

Grim has a 1980's video of the film. He's not sure how he got it. He believes it was a gift to his now-deceased mother. He gets it out once a year before Capon Springs. He began playing it an extra time a few weeks ago. Why he did that, he doesn't know. He never plays it all the way through. It's almost four hours long. It reminds him of the Old South.

Capon lies in West Virginia, part of the Old South, only a few miles from staunch Old South Virginia. West Virginia was so pro-North that it elected to become part of the North during the Civil War.

Early in the film, as the Civil War looms, Scarlett is at Twelve Oaks, the estate of the Wilkes clan, for a barbecue. She asks Ashley

Wilkes to join her in the library to convey her love to him, hoping he will propose marriage. He politely rebuffs her, declaring that he is marrying Melanie Hamilton, a Wilkes cousin (played by Olivia DeHavilland). Furious, Scarlett slaps him. He takes it like a Southern gentleman. He looks at her, says nothing, and strolls from the room. She watches him, turns, sulks, paces around looking for release. She spies it with a vase, hurling it across the room. It smashes against the wall next to the fireplace, arousing an unseen Rhett Butler from his nap on a couch facing the fireplace. Although he had seen her from afar and was intrigued, he had never met her. (See photo above) He rises and ambles toward her, lobbing snarky words at her, soon declaring that he hopes to see more of her. She is miffed by his barbs and stomps out.

Grim fancied this divine scene enough to consider it for Capon.

One reason is the famous actors playing weighty characters flaying each other with verbal zings. With three actors, Grim thought about using other family members. No one seemed to fit (as if Grim does himself) nor would they want to try the roles. Grim brooded over having to play all three characters. One was a shrewish, young

motivates me to wander outside of my comfort zone. I don't need to go far. It's narrow to start." Intention good. Selection bad. I stare with open eyes at him and he knows what I mean.

I try something else. Another act to escape the fading but still here self-consciousness? I ask. "I won't deny that factor. Each time I

perform, I feel more confident. Actually, the more I think about this one, I realize it's going out on a huge limb," he adds. I would say so. With an imminent threat of breaking and crashing to the ground. And a long fall to the ground. It will hurt and not just his skin and bones and innards.

He appears unbowed. He admires the scene, that's clear. Can't his

fondness comfort itself with nostalgia? "I agree that my aim is odd," he observes. "Enjoying it by merely watching it now and then should be enough. It's a classic." Right he is. You don't go about trying to copy renowned actors in legendary films. "Well, I would be honoring the scene. I esteem what they've done," he states. I'm unconvinced. I tell him even parody would be tough. I think but keep to myself, "Who would do this?"

Indeed. Apparently and unbelievably, Allan Grim. This is like none other he has done at Capon. He will have much to consider in trying it. "Well, I won't be wearing Southern threads, that's for sure," he announces as a starter. I wonder which of many aspects will worry him most. "Believe it or not, what concerns me is memorizing all the lines," he offers after a pause. "I don't know



As Rhett Butler, Clark Gable gazes up at the alluring Scarlett O'Hara at the top of the stairs in the Wilkes family mansion. This was his first look at Scarlett (played by British actress Vivien Leigh). He would soon meet her under odd circumstances.

Southern belle, who was Scarlett O'Hara. When he told me of his plans, I had to intervene. Don't confuse this with the current term "do an intervention." That would occur only if my intervening failed. I wonder who would join me for this last step.

What made him think he could do it? "Well, the initial problem is not having anyone else to play the other two parts," he replies. "I could scrap it. Why do I want to do them alone? I wish I knew. I've been mouthing their words and somehow think I might be able to imitate them."

Whoa. I must challenge that and I know he understands. "I'm not so intent on doing it and trying to avoid a fall on my face. I just want to try it," he insists.

Might it be a realized fantasy? "Those are your words. I don't think so, at least not consciously. I want to broaden my acting horizons, I think is part of it. That

how actors learn lines they must speak for hours on stage. I know they're not always in a scene, but they have a lot to memorize. I know they rehearse but still it's a barrel of words to learn. Maybe you had a bad day at home or a sleepless night. I suppose for an actor it's just another day at the office." Is that his self-consciousness speaking? Won't it vanish after these last few years of performing?



Scarlett O'Hara confronting Ashley Wilkes in the Wilkes mansion library, where she professes her love for him. He spurns her, declaring that he is going to marry Melanie Hamilton. Scarlett does not take it well. She slaps him and he walks out on her.

What about Scarlett? Especially this film icon. Does he really think he is up to playing her? "You know, I'm not sure why I think I can play her," he grants. "I'm stirred by a scene from a movie and then just go and decide I want to do that myself." Yes, you may relish a scene. But replicate it *yourself* and *by yourself*? No.

I want to explore further. He may be bolder and more assured in his later years. Why does Grim believe he's capable of carrying it off? "I'm not an actor and I've never done any outside of Capon. I don't know why, but when I'm saying the lines, I don't feel the tug in my throat and the tension I'm sure I would have felt years ago. Playing these three celebrated actors will be a challenge. I'm not deluded."

So he says. I do tell Grim that he will face a major task switching from one person to the other and suddenly uttering their voice's

style and accents. Leslie Howard is British playing a Southern gentleman. He is poised, with a dignified, Shakespearean voice. He doesn't try to speak Southern with his British accent. Playing Rhett, Clark Gable, is an American but grew up in Ohio. He plays an enterprising Southern rogue with a potent voice and manner. Gable doesn't bother to try a Southern accent either.

It's tough for a female trying to portray Scarlett. But a 75-year-old male with token acting background? Vivien Leigh, who is British, plays a Southern Belle, who he is actually a Southern Rebelle. She is feisty, passionate, and enterprising. How she did it is a wonder. She was superb and gained an Oscar. Gable and Howard did not. She starts the scene pleading her love to her man, Ashley Wilkes. After rejecting her plea by saying he is about to marry someone else, her Dixie vixen erupts. She is no prim, gentle Southern lady. She dives easily into scorn, accusing him of cowardice for not wanting to hitch his future to her hoopskirt.

Rhett first surprises Scarlett by rising from behind a couch where he had been resting. He re-ignites her, mocking her exposed tryst with Ashley and her femininity. Although they had just met, sparks fly. You know the two will soon join, they will clash again, they will split, and you will give a damn, wondering how it ends.

What else worries Grim? "I'm concerned with the timing of the dialogue. The characters engage in verbal duels. Nobody drops their weapons. They wanna fire more bullets. Not a timid lady, Scarlett is riled twice in one scene by strong men." Yes, it's elegant repartee, compelling speed. Grim'll need to march from one spot to another, maybe even run, turn around and reply in a new voice and new sex of the character. He can't avoid Scarlett's Southern accent as against two men with none. One is British. He will also need to snare her rising fury at each man's unwelcome remarks.

With it all I must convey that this seems an inapt scene for him

to play. For anyone to play. "Logically yes," Grim confesses. "I shouldn't do it, I know. Yet I thought the scene was so absorbing that I haven't let these factors deter me moving ahead." Okay, but he must know he has much work to do. "I *do* know," he replies. "As we approach Capon, I hope to work to overcome the obstacles. If I don't think I can succeed, I will ditch it. Although it may be daring, I'm not reckless. I'm fairly conservative, believe it or not." I know but. He may have huddled in that conformist box a few years ago. He's mellowed through age and public acts. More poised, he may try it. Though I won't be surprised, I doubt he can pull it off. But I won't tell him so. Don Quixote flashes on my mind's screen. I crinkle my face in stifling myself. I say no more. I hope Grim takes his lance with him.

A crashing vase

One untidy spot Grim must resolve is the tossing of the vase. When Scarlett slaps Ashley Wilkes and watches him leave, she is livid. Veering around the room, she could strangle a Bengal tiger. She gazes down, spying a porcelain vase on an accent table. She grabs it and turns toward a fireplace across the vast parlor. She heaves the vase against the wall next to the fireplace, shattering the vase into pieces. Facing the front of the fireplace is a sofa, hiding Rhett Butler. It seems he is there for a snooze or a moment to himself.

Grim had to craft a vase that would hit the side wall of the Capon stage, make a loud crashing noise, break into pieces, and not damage the stage wall. "I realized I can only simulate a vase breaking and the noise it makes," he says. His producer Sardella had some good suggestions. Grim considered several items for the vase. Nothing would work. He finally selected a brown and white knit cap from winter clothes in his attic. He gave it bulk but with softness by inserting an oblong of yarn inside it. "This would suffice," he says. "I

wanted only an object that suggests a vase. It was far enough from the audience to hide its real nature.” For the sound, Sardella explored the internet. She found an audio of the actual breaking sound from the film itself.

The stage scenery would be sparse. From his Capon room Grim chose to put the vase on a simple folding suitcase table. In the lobby of The Meeting House sat a wooden bench with a back. Even with open slats, it would become Rhett Butler’s couch. Grim would have his niece and nephew carry it to the stage and fling a blanket from his bedroom over its back for a cover and to hide the napping, eavesdropping Butler.

After reviewing the movie scene on YouTube, I note that the scene is long and wordy. It has two distinct segments. Will he be doing the scene as played in the film? “That’s a good question,” he

admits. “I’ll probably re-write the scene, simplifying the dialogue and cutting some words. It’ll make for easier recall for me and I’m doing it in front of a diverse audience.”

And no doubt it will be too long for the MC’s taste even after trimmed.

He paused, then said, “You know, I don’t want to do it, but I think I need some backup for my lines.” Yes, he does. He must speak both ends of two separate unpleasant encounters. The fast pace will test his poor ability to memorize dialogue. I suggest it’s a good idea to go with prompts.

The Capon scenes have been short segments. What does he have in mind? Having his niece or nephew nearby with a script? “No, I won’t put them through that. I will make up script cards for each of the two dialogues. They must be small enough to hide in my one hand. I would first carry one for Scarlett and Ashley. When I get to the table with the vase, that initial dialogue is over. I would drop it

and pick up the one between Scarlett and Rhett.”

Three folks at Twelve Oaks

It’s now the last week of July 2016. I check in with Grim by phone. He seems glad to talk and deal with my inquiries. Is he still serious about doing the movie scene? “Still on schedule to do it. Well, almost. I haven’t learned the lines fully. I don’t like memorizing lines and I’m not good at it. And I don’t like rehearsing,” he grouses. This all sounds familiar. His background of learning lines is scarce. Why so assured? “When I played Professor Kingsfield last year, I had idiot cards but found I didn’t need them. Although the scene wasn’t long, I had practiced

Scarlett, enraged after being rejected by Ashley Wilkes, heaves a vase across the library room of the Wilkes mansion. When it smashes against the wall, it arouses a napping Rhett Butler hidden in the couch at the fireplace. They would meet for the first time. They would also clash. It wouldn’t be the last time.



only a bit his distinctive snooty voice and bearing.”

Will he rehearse or do some kind of run-through at Capon? “Not likely,” he answers with casual certainty. “I’ve never done any of that at Capon. I’ve run over the lines to see if I could say them without prompting. I didn’t want to miss any. They each build on the prior line. That’s typical. I didn’t want any gaps. Their words build to separate climaxes. They would throw everything off.”

When he did Indiana Jones and his father a few years ago [*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*] Grim came flying on his bullwhip into the castle room of his father. Then he forgot, as his father, to clobber Indiana over the head with a vase. That was major because the next line was “Dad, why did you hit me over the head with that vase.” At least it wasn’t a line missed, but an action, confirmed by the question. Thus the idea was conveyed. But the effect was embarrassing.

How is he doing with his efforts to memorize? “I’m not recalling the lines easily. I expected this,” he shrugged. The Scarlett-Ashley part ends in her slapping him and his leaving. The Scarlett-Rhett ends with her stomping out in disgust, while he stays and chuckles in a mocking adios. Sounds like Grim will be doing those script cards he mentioned in June. “Yeah, I plan on doing them. I realize I need to work with a net.”

Although his views on it leaked out in our June confab, I hadn’t broached it then. I’m curious about the state of Grim’s self-consciousness. “I don’t feel much apprehension anymore,” he declares now. “It’s dissolving, I think. This will be my sixth time on the Capon stage. What pesters me now are the side issues when I perform.” Well, how about worry over his actual performance? “Really, I don’t focus on it that much.” That’s odd. It’s not as though he’s repeating a song or a scene that he’s done before, I tell him. “I know, but somehow I’ve acquired some, I don’t know what to call it?” Nonchalance?, I say to myself while waiting for him. I

want to hear his word. Finally it’s this: “I don’t know why, but I’m more comfortable up there on stage. That’s all I can tell you.”

What about his self-consciousness outside of performing? “I’ve thought about that. Although I’ve had it a long time, it’s faded.” Perhaps he has disgorged this demon from his makeup. I want to know where he feels it *outside* the theater. “When I’m in line at the bank or the grocery store,” he says quickly. “I tend to be overly aware about the people behind me. Am I taking too long and are they getting upset by the minute? Except it’s only by the seconds. I try not to tarry at the grocery checkout. I glance behind me. Maybe that’s a normal concern for most shoppers. I never buy much. I’m always using the express checkout because my items are few. That puts more pressure on my self-consciousness. I can feel it. To quell it I chat with the next customer. Sometimes I will also gush, “Sorry to hold you up.” That’s neurotic, I guess.” Yes, it’s not so much courtesy, as self-consciousness loitering and refusing to move on, I think to myself.

Capon Springs, August 2016

The Friday of Capon week early August 2016 has arrived. The talent show is this evening. With the extended Grim family and a few friends, over fifty of the clan are at Capon, which was sold out for the latter part of the week. On Wednesday the Grim family tested Grim’s nature with a surprise birthday event after dinner at the Capon gazebo a few yards from The Meeting House, the talent show’s venue. Grim had turned 75 in April. He abhors birthdays and any other milestones. Is that related to self-consciousness? That kind of person shuns attention. If you want Grim involved, it will need to be a surprise. That is what happened. His family surprised him in the evening as they got him



Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara finally meet in the Wilkes mansion library, where he had overheard her emotional exchange with Ashley Wilkes. He banters with her, then says he wants to see more of her. In a few caustic words, she says no.

to the bandshell on the pretext that his granddaughter Lauren, age nine, was going to perform something. Grim’s son Douglas had got him to play tennis and had him go from there to what he thought would be The Meeting House. “I was really surprised. I had no idea. My birthday was way back in April and I never want a fuss then or now,” he confirms. Family members had festooned the bandshell with giant artistic letters spelling HAPPY BIRTHDAY 75. When he had a chance to speak to the large gathered family, he had little to say. A few family members had to ask him some questions to fill in the silence. Even then, he didn’t say much noteworthy. He did shower the family organizers with thanks and praise. It helped to fill in the awkward gaps in the moment.

On Friday that week, talent show day, Grim again missed the rehearsals at noon. He played in the Better Ball golf tournament, which finishes close to lunch at 1 pm. He played his first round in the family Grim Open the day before and he can relax on that. He is already out of the running with nine holes to go. That finish will be Saturday morning. Grim did go over some of his three songs and the lines from *Gone with the Wind*. He also took a nap, which he doesn’t do much at home. Capon



The Meeting House at the Capon Springs, West Virginia, resort. It's the locale for the resort's theater and weekly talent show, which draws large Friday evening crowds.

will lure you into it, especially if it's hot, which it was. He also says it was for his voice and his memory. "It's amazing what sleep does to clear my mind and enhance my voice. I suppose that works for most people. But I've noticed how much better I am after a good nap," he exclaims. What about Capon water? I don't drink much Capon water. I get most of it through their iced tea. But then I don't drink much at home either. I should drink more at both places. They say it aids your singing voice." Just drinking Capon water would help him since it has those healthful qualities.

As Grim trudged into the Main House at 6 pm for dinner in the Capon dining room, it was raining. When he passed the front desk, Grim saw MC Jonathon helping out. He saw Grim and stopped him, telling him that he had moved the talent show up from 8:30 pm to 7:30 pm. He also mentioned that each performer should shorten their act. At dinner he announced it over their dining room PA system. He said it was because it was raining; several of the 14 performers were young kids; and the Rio Summer Olympics Opening Ceremony was on TV at 7:30.

One of the fourteen performers was Grim's nephew Ryan's daughter Iris. Ryan had to leave that day with Iris after lunch, along with his twin daughters. He

had injured his knee the evening before in a softball game. Her performing streak at Capon ended. She had first appeared at two years, ten months in 2013.

Where was Grim with the three songs he planned to sing? Their issues remained. Since the MC wanted his act pruned, Grim had to decide what goes. Since the song hitches remained, he decided to cut them—all three. "Blue Suede Shoes" was hard to manage at its start. He still doubted his ability to copy Elvis's unique style. At Capon he tried a few notes and it seemed a spoof, not a salute. He meant to be serious. Elvis delivers his words with Southern rock style. That's one reason Grim wanted to do it. You must also sing it fast; a slow version will flop. Since the background is spirited and fast, you must stay with it. He didn't know if he could, while trying to mimic the Elvis sound.

That Backstreet Boys tune "I Want It That Way" also irked him. For the slow opening, his timing wasn't right and he wasn't sure he could match their special gestures. Despite thinking he could capture the lead voice, he could accept dropping it. As for the *Carousel* song "If I Loved You," the dismal choice between the two background versions remained. Still, he thought he could sing close enough to Gordon MacRae's baritone. Wow, I said to myself.

Grim has struggled with the sound on Capon's stage. "I had the same trouble as last year—my hearing the background on stage. We still had my woeful, little CD player. That can be upsetting when you blare a fast rock song." Right. If they don't blast, their impact is puny. He hasn't gotten good sound to the back of the hall. "I was too lax again. I thought I could resolve it this time by just plugging in my CD to Capon's sound system. I asked Jonathon about doing it. I found out late that it couldn't be done unless I was doing it from an MP3 or other computer source with a thumb drive, or something I don't understand." Time to learn about sound systems once and for all, I would say. But I don't.

The only other option was to place a mike in front of his CD player. He was okay with that. He also found out late that Bellingham had his own CD player Grim could have used. It had a better speaker too.

Under pressure to shorten everything, Grim also decided to cut his stab at a humorous intro. He had inserted a typical mockery admitting he lacked any talent. He would follow this with "I'm going to perform anyway because I am *shameless*." Instead, he made up a quick intro where he came in from the side door at the right of the stage and offered some comments while his niece Kelsy and grand

nephew Tyler set up the *Gone with the Wind* items.

The Capon theater was packed, aided by the Grim clan. Grim was listed at the end of a lineup of now thirteen performers. MC Bellingham introduced him and finally omitted the “local legend” words he had used the last two years. Grim was grateful for that. With residual self-consciousness, Grim admitted it was awkward and added pressure to perform well. He had never approached Jonathon about his discomfort. He respects him and thought his words were just amusement, which Grim could tolerate.

While nephew Tyler and niece Kelsy set up the scenery for *Gone with the Wind*, Grim took the hand mike. He shouted, “What up, Wardensville!” As he mounted the stage he glanced over at the MC with a puzzled look, then corrected himself, “Capon Springs? I don’t do no chicken farms.... Oh, *that’s* right. Wardensville is *tomorrow* night. Some guy is celebrating the opening of a door.” [Wardensville is a nearby tiny village]

He introduced his movie scene. He read from a statement because he wanted to be clear with his serious message:

“Tonight I am doing a scene from *Gone with the Wind*, arguably the best film of all time. The backdrop is that the South has left the Union and the Civil War is about to begin. The scene takes place during a barbecue at the Wilkes’ family estate called Twelve Oaks. Gorgeous but fiery Scarlett O’Hara is at the party and asks Ashley Wilkes to meet her in the parlor. Neither knows it but someone else is also in the room. Rhett Butler, a sly rogue and businessman, has never met Scarlett but he has seen her and is entranced, as is every other man in the county.”

Grim had worried that when he assumed Scarlett’s lady’s voice, the crowd would titter. He was bothered because the words were of profound love toward Ashley Wilkes. He also fretted about how to present changes from one character to another. He thought it

vital to follow the intro with these words, which he spoke:

“To tell an audience how to respond to a scene on stage can be unseemly. I’d like you to help me to this extent. Since I will be playing three different characters, I hope you will bear with me as I switch from one character to another. I will signal a change in character by a hand signal. Also, the first dialogue is between Ashley Wilkes and Scarlett O’Hara and is a serious encounter. I hope you will respect that and not be inclined to laugh. The second encounter is between Scarlett and Rhett Butler. For that one, respond as you wish.

Okay, action!”
(*The actual scene is in two parts. You will find them on the next two pages in separate sidebars.*)

Halfway through the first dialogue between Scarlett and Ashley Wilkes, Grim paused. He couldn’t remember the next line. He stayed calm, briefly paused, then pulled his hand up with the prompt card. He said the right words and continued apace. He didn’t slip again. He was glad he had prepared the cards. Did he rely on them too much? “I don’t think so. To me they weren’t a crutch. They were like a backstop. A crutch you need now: a backstop only if you can’t recall your line,” he gamely tries to explain.

Grim had no mike during the scene. He needed one. Although his sound wasn’t quiet, it failed to project to the last row. He learned it from his sister Virginia, an audiologist, who was there and sat toward the back. The video taken from the few rows in front of the stage suggest it. Grim thought about the hand mike but rejected it as bad in a scene with maneuver and emotion. In his other hand also was the prompt card.

What does he say now? “I should’ve rehearsed with someone evaluating me,” he carps. He’s right. That’s why they have rehearsals, stagehands, and directors. “For most of it, I was just glad enough to recall my lines. Saying them in character and loud enough were almost secondary.” Not good. An actor should know

his lines so he can focus on everything else, including how to speak in character.

Grim got Butler’s volume right, however. “Yeah, I made sure of it. He’s a powerful guy with that commanding voice and manner.” Demure in her initial words with both men, Scarlett would be gentle. Grim was. He was also hampered by having to stand first at the back of the stage for his Ashley-Scarlett dialogue. Ashley’s exit door was back there and Grim (as Scarlett) needed room to wander to the front after Ashley leaves her. The table with vase was there.



Telling Ashley Wilkes she will hate him till she dies, Scarlett O’Hara raises her right hand to slap him for spurning her.

In the film Scarlett’s hand slap to the face of the snubbing Ashley startles you. Grim’s right hand smack seemed feeble. Since he had no one to slap but himself, he put his left hand up and out where Ashley’s face would be and struck it with his right hand. This would impart a slap sound and an object where Ashley’s face would be. His left didn’t open much as it was holding the prompt card. The sound was dull. When he rushed to Ashley’s spot to react to the slap, he intended to put his left hand to his left cheek and turn that cheek slightly in recoil. He did neither. He merely stared at Scarlett and calmly told her goodbye. “I forgot to do them both. They would have added to the effect,” he regrets.

The porcelain vase toss was another matter. After Ashley leaves the room on the right side, (Grim opened the door and started entering it but stopped and turned around to become Scarlett watching Ashley leave) Scarlett sulks into a fury, soon noticing and reaching the table and vase. Grim looked at the knitted-cap, ball-of-yarn prop, dropped his one prompt card on the table, picked up the other and grabbed the vase. As he turned, niece Kelsy was to start the audio from the movie and match it with his toss to the wall beyond the couch at stage left. The audio included a brief build-up of suspense music from the film, then the sound of crashing porcelain. Grim had the audio on a CD after the three backgrounds for the music he had cut from his performance. The CD had been inserted into his meager CD player. Just before Grim went on, they realized that MC Bellingham had his larger player there. They elected to put the CD in it. Before that (they had no time to try it out), Grim told Kelsy that if anything went wrong, she should make a crashing sound herself. When the audio moment arrived, Kelsy hit the play button for the fourth portion of the CD. No sound came out. Waiting a few seconds, Grim turned and heaved the vase to the wall. It was a solid toss despite his grabbing the soft, thick, knitted vase with his one hand (as did Scarlett but with a hard vase). Kelsy faithfully replaced the audio of the crashing sound with her own word “crash.” Though timely, it was meek. In fairness, she had no time to practice it. Anyway, how do you make a sound with your voice of a porcelain vase bursting into pieces against a wall?

After “The Wind” has Gone

The next week I email Grim to talk about his performance of the “The Wind” scene. He replies that he’s not ready to talk about it. “Wait a few weeks,” he says. “Let this all ferment,” he puts it. Same

with the video, which nephew Tyler shot from a few rows back. I do wait a few weeks and ask if we can have lunch again. “Okay, you win,” he says.

I begin with *his* overall assessment. “I thought I did fine, believe it or not. I wasn’t that nervous, which surprised me, and thought I was mostly in character.” His chief worry as he did the scene? “That’s easy,” he says. “Knowing my lines and then speaking them slowly enough to be grasped.” He should have been more focused on projecting them loud enough to a theater audience. He had no mikes and the initial portion with Ashley was back stage. A clip-on mike or some other amplifying system would’ve helped. (Capon has no clip-on or hanging mikes.) He should work on projecting his voice on stage. You realize a crowd at Capon consists of people with varying ability to hear, especially sitting in a decent-length hall. You must carry to the back row and take care of the oldsters with impaired hearing.

He also realized he should learn his lines. Anything else? “I learned I talk too fast, even when I think I’m not talking fast. You can’t do that on stage. I already knew that. It’s a chronic problem for me off the stage too.” I try to pacify Grim by telling him I think he’s part of an epidemic throughout the land. Turn on your TV and listen to the talking heads. They don’t get much time to speak with these short segments and the commercial breaks that must be honored because they are “hard breaks,” which wait for no one. You often see several people on the screen itching to make their point and counter what they’re hearing. It spawns talking faster and louder, interrupting, and at home, a mass of indignant viewers. This is a spectacle from the last few decades. “I didn’t get it from TV,” Grim insists. “My part in it began a long time ago. I need better control of my brain thinking fast, I guess.”

I’m silent after that. I know many bright people who don’t speak so rapidly. And fast doesn’t mean you’re bright. But I have evolved to realize that the TV

Ashley and Scarlett in the Library *Grim’s Version*



Ashley: What is it, Scarlett?

Scarlett: Oh, Ashley, I love you. I really do.

Ashley: I’m going to marry Melanie.

Scarlett: But you can’t, not if you care for me!

Ashley: Scarlett, you are so young and unthinking. You don’t know what marriage means.

Scarlett: I know I love you and want to be your wife...You don’t love Melanie!

Ashley: She’s like me. We understand each other. You have all the passion for life that I lack. You and I are too different.

Scarlett: You’re a coward! Admit it; you’re afraid to marry me. You’d rather live with that little fool who only says yes and no and would raise a passel of mealy-mouthed brats!

Ashley: You mustn’t say those things about Melanie.

Scarlett: Who are you to tell me that? You led me on. You led me to believe you wanted to marry me.

Ashley: Be fair, Scarlett. I never at any time...

Scarlett: You did. I shall hate you till I die! I can’t think of anything bad enough to call you! *(Slaps him.)*

Ashley: *(Pause)* Goodbye, Scarlett.

(She watches as he leaves the room. After he leaves, she turns around seething, and stalks around the room. Finally she looks down and sees a vase on a table. She picks it up, turns toward the fireplace and hurls it against the wall, breaking it into pieces.)

culture has impacted Grim and others. He wants to add another problem area. "I could speak more clearly. When you talk fast, that suffers. I am starting to talk as you do on the street to one other person. It's a struggle for me." Grim stumbled in his try at a witty opening. When he took the mike he uttered some hayseed humor (*previously detailed on page 23*) hoping for quick laughs. Only a few people seemed to stir. He explains: "I think the audience was prepared for a serious performance. I began with some humor that hardly aroused any snickers."

I offer that you never know how a crowd will react to comedy. "I found out at Capon," he says. When I reviewed it, the attempt at humor seemed too subtle, especially when the crowd is mixed with young and old. Nephew Tyler's video was fine as a basic video, although several rows back and weak sound pickup. Grim adds, "I noticed how degraded my acting appeared on the video." Although the picture is okay, you can barely hear Grim's lines. "I'm not surprised," he declares. "The video is not a professional job. I knew it wouldn't be and it's not anything Tyler did."

I want to know more about his choice of a movie scene and *Wind* itself. "I don't especially go looking for movie scenes to do," he says. "When one appears that hits me right, I'm inspired to consider it. I don't really seek to do *any* movie scene, or sing, believe it or not."

A shock for me. What did I just hear? And what would he rather do? "I'd rather *write* about anything using creative non-fiction. And not about *me* doing anything, especially performing." Grim has now done six years of performing. He skipped the second year, 2011, he knows not why. "I think I've grown," he reflects. "I'm more composed, if that's the right word. I wouldn't have done *Gone with the Wind* a few years ago, for sure. I've gotten better in performing. But who wouldn't? And am I any good?"

I wonder if he aspires to further roles in acting. Maybe a longer scene or something with



Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara in the Library *Grim's Version*

(After the vase crashes, a figure rises from the couch)

Rhett: Whee uuu. (Looking at the wall, then out toward Scarlett, holding up his hand defensively) Has the war started?

Scarlett: Oh! Sir, you should have announced your presence.

Rhett: In the middle of that beautiful love scene. That wouldn't have been very tactful now, would it? (*Walking toward her*) But don't worry. Your secret is safe with me.

Scarlett: Sir, you are no gentleman.

Rhett: And you, miss, are no lady. But don't think I hold that against you. I don't care much for ladies.

Scarlett: Oh, first you eavesdrop on me. Then you insult me.

Rhett: I meant it as a compliment. And I hope to see more of you when you're free of the spell of the elegant Mr. Wilkes. He doesn't seem good enough for a girl of your, what was it? passion for life.

Scarlett: How dare you! You aren't fit to wipe his boots! (*She turns around and begins to stalk out of the room.*)

Rhett: Ha, ha, ha! And you were going to hate him for the rest of your life! (*As she leaves the room*)
Cut.

other actors for once? "Not really," he is quick to say. "Oh, I'd like to act with others. To get into a scene it must hit me right. I don't go looking for a role or a scene or even a certain film. As for music, it's something constantly in our lives. But I have to look around for songs because I enjoy doing several but only a few verses of each."

His song choices can be baffling. "Sometimes I don't understand them either. I mean, I wanted to do "Long Tall Sally" by Little Richard. Just listen to that song. He shouts it at breakneck speed and pitches here and there. I suppose it's the dare of it that incites me. From that I want to do Backstreet Boys singing high-pitched teen notes, then baritone Gordon MacRae doing "If I Loved You." Yes, they certainly are diverse, radically so. It doesn't all add up for me. What old man with issues of self-consciousness and no prior experience or apparent talent seeks these challenges? They would more likely pursue safer choices and sing in their own voice. Start out in karaoke and do it way before age 70. Start from scratch.

Grim doesn't seem to seek many challenges otherwise in his life. "Well, I don't have a bucket list of things I want to do or a special list of risky challenges, like sky diving or bungie jumping off a bridge. Improv was one I've done recently. I might not have done that without Capon. I was in Disney World with my family a few months ago. I hadn't gone on any of those scary rides, except for Space Mountain, which was years ago. They shamed me into going on the rides merely by their attitude. They pranced into all of them with out a hint of fear. I think my recent progress on stage bolstered me and I joined them on some rides. The Tower of Terror? No. I'm not *that* fearless yet. Ha."

Will we ever hear Grim sing in his own voice? His response is puzzling: "I still have no desire to sing in my own voice, believe it or not. Usually when I sing outside of Capon, it's with a group, like in church or Happy Birthday." I want to know when that Grim voice might debut.

“You know,” he says, “I’ve never written a song. Maybe if I do that, I won’t have a famous template to follow. I might sing in my voice then.” I wonder if that’ll be soon. “I have no plans to write any song. I don’t play the piano, as you well know or anything else. That would help.” Not even a song sloshing around in his skull? “Well, no. I know they say everyone has a book in them. No song here.”

Again this year Grim skipped Capon’s Friday rehearsal at noon. No doubt you can rehearse other times if you want too. The Meeting Hall is not locked. He didn’t. Once again, he shunned rehearsal and played in the Scramble golf tournament. His excuse? “I don’t like to rehearse. I did practice the words several times in fragments. I was trying to see if I had memorized them.”

What, no attempt to speak the character’s voices? “I know it’s hard to believe. Mimicking the actor’s voices was secondary. I never worry about that part. Same with the music.” Why, I want to know? “For some reason,” he says, “I worry more about all the other details and the choreography. Jill is a great help with all of that. And I have Kelsy and Tyler. It may be misplaced but I guess I think I can do the characters well enough.”

Wow. He focuses on other than the singing and acting? Grim should now grasp the series of names scrolling down a screen in a film or printed in a playbill. Acting is more than the actors speaking on stage. It’s a grand production with several parts and people merging to a coherent whole. With *Wind* the actors were all distinguished by experience and success. Throw in some established charisma too.

I don’t get his sound problems. Apparently he will never get it right. He says, “I’m now realizing how important that is. I must learn to put myself in the audience and in the last row too. Grim’s sister Virginia, a professional audiologist, has spoken to him about these aspects. I guess he’s never heard her. Grim has never been a techy or mechanical buff. “I suppose I’ve never thought they were that

important to me. What was critical was the act of performing, not the meshing of all its parts.”

I want to lecture him about this but I’m discreet this time. You may focus on your stage performance but unless it can be seen and heard well, especially from the last row, you performed for yourself to a room full of deaf mutes. Or it was a silent film without the captioned words or the sprightly piano. Or the audience hears okay but the actors are mimes.

Everything counts in the production. Grim even recognizes how poor an iPhone video shot from rows back can be. “I think of all those parents and grandparents of kids performing on stage and they’re far away in the audience shooting video of them. Or the dance recital and the picture starts wavering.” He’s right. The sound for all of these is never good enough and somehow the video or the sound itself never satisfies the viewer. How does it come out? It’s always too far away to see and too weak to hear. We accept them for what they are—flawed primitive treasures.

With the distance of a few weeks from Capon and a video to review, I’m curious what Grim now thinks about his presentation. One way to find out is the decision a performer makes for when he wants to review a video of his performance. Will they rush to see it that night or soon after or hold off indefinitely or maybe never want to see it? I’ve read of many noted actors refusing to see their rushes or their edited versions. I’m compelled to ask Grim and I’m shocked. He is not shy about disclosing, “I never want to see it right away. Or even soon after. I couldn’t bear to see it for several weeks. When you contacted me about reviewing my performance the other day, I thought it was time to see the video. Before then, I still didn’t want to watch it.”

I wonder what this means for Grim’s own evaluation of everything and I ask him. “I was concerned about the things that didn’t go well and didn’t want to



see them again so soon. The poor sound, the forgetting of the one line, the lack of a crashing sound for the breaking vase, the failure of Ashley to react to the slapping by Scarlett. The sound was the most distressing aspect of it.”

What about those things that went right? “I don’t think about them so much. I ignore them and tell myself that too many things went wrong to be satisfied. But all in all I thought the acting was okay, but not great. I guess more than that I shouldn’t have expected. I’m not an actor and I’ve done acting only at Capon. That’s fulfilling enough for me.”

Often a wide gulf appears between the performer’s perception and reality. Did you do as well as you thought after viewing it long after the performance? And are you harder on yourself than others might be. What was it for Grim? “It’s sobering. After I was done, I thought I was expressive. When you watch the video, it’s less than you thought. You realize when you act, you must focus and generate energy and passion within the character and you must do it from the start and maintain it all through. I guess some of it is the distance of the camera from the actor where the video is from the audience. But I wonder what the people in the back of the theater see. Something even worse?”

Grim should be gratified that he even tried this daunting task. He’s played three disparate and renowned characters flinging oral acid at each other in a famous movie. All of this in front of a room full of skeptical patrons. “When I review what I’ve done, I can’t believe I really did all of this

without collapsing into a heap,” he says. I must follow that with the large question of why he even tried the acting, the singing, and the comedy. And not just singing but diverse kinds of singing too. He pauses, looks up, and replies, “I don’t really know. I’m old and mortality is creeping closer. I have always wondered what it’s like to perform in front of an audience. Who hasn’t? You know you’re up there all by yourself, bright lights blasting you, dark ahead of you, and no one will help you.” There’s family present too. “I thought our large family should do more to support Capon’s talent show over the years, especially when it became more of a real theater and setting.



I hoped my performing would spur more family members to get up and do something too. (In 2016 only two other Grimms performed out of fifty or so Grimms. Sidney Eyamie, a granddaughter of brother Jim, She danced with a non-Grim, and Courtney Follweiler, a daughter of sister Virginia. She danced and sang “You Are My Sunshine” while playing the ukelele and hipswirling a hoola hoop.)

“My self-consciousness was also a factor, I think. It has waned much over the years. Yet it was a special obstacle to performing for me. I’m aware most people have a fear of appearing in front of other people. Having to perform is worse. That was one motivation to try it.”

He’s also interested in creativity by itself. “I’ve found that I like to craft routines that haven’t been done before. I would be happy composing them for the stage for someone *else* to perform.”

To perform, your heart must believe you have some talent to display. Your head will decide whether you should go ahead with it. Sometimes your heart says you must do it and disdains the head. Grim began performing in 2010 with a short play, then in 2012 advanced to a movie scene and singing. He did not sing in his own voice but Elvis’s. Over the next years more music and acting followed, and even standup comedy as the intro to his performances. Did he believe he was good enough to do any of these? Or was he just doing them to say he did them and hope he feels good after? “I’ve thought about this,” he responds. “I think deep down I must have thought I had *some* ability. Who gets up in front of a crowd of your family, friends, and other people, thinking he has no ability and knows he’s likely to stink and embarrass himself? You just don’t even try.”

I ask about the source of his initial impulse then to try. “Where I got a belief in any ability, I just don’t know. I wish I could be more revealing.” Did he feel a deep need to be noticed on stage? “You know, I heard that Sir Laurence Olivier once said why actors do what they do. He said, ‘Look at me, look at me, look at me.’ That’s never been mine.

A self-conscious person doesn’t get a rush from applause or laughter. I don’t have a lot of knowledge about actors and motivation, but I question Olivier’s statement. It might be that for *most* actors or singers. But I can also see a desire to express themselves. They say, ‘I believe I can dance, or whatever, and I want you to see me do it, and I hope you enjoy it.’ I think I wanted to prove things to myself, not to others. But I won’t deny part of it is wanting to show it to others. But I don’t really *feel* it much at all.”

In the uptight 1950’s they asked Elvis why he persisted with those often-vulgar gestures. He said he had tried, but he couldn’t stop them. “I know that some actors like to transform themselves to another persona because they don’t like who they are,” Grim observes. “So I guess it’s a kind of

escape from themselves. When I began singing at Capon, I wanted to do impressions of famous singers, not my own voice. I still feel that way. But I don’t feel any need to escape. Or to be noticed and acclaimed.”



Sir Laurence Olivier here with his wife Vivien Leigh. Both had been married before.

What does that say about Grim? He doesn’t hate his voice and he feels sure he can mimic someone else’s. But that is only half the challenge. You must also have the nerve to test it in front of your staring fellow human beings. Where that comes from is the mystery. Many people have the talent to sing or act or do comedy. Most of those believe it in their soul and are right to think so. But how many will take the uneasy steps, mount the stage, grab a mike, and try to prove it? Add to this, Grim, at age 70, with chronic self-consciousness, no prior belief in his ability, and no experience doing any of them in public.

You can dissect Grim’s acting, singing, and humor. Yes, there were glitches and off-pitches. He didn’t crumble into that wretched pile of disaster we all dread. Even if he had, so what? What is foremost is not how well he performed; it’s *that* he performed on stage in front of a crowd of people, most of whom will never do the same. ●