



THE BOOKS I WANTED TO WRITE

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In the interest of full disclosure, I am not a real author. It's true that I wrote and published the biographies *Vati* and *Mutti*, which reveal an obvious ethnic bias. Yes I am German-born. But the 65 copies of *Vati* and the 20 copies of *Mutti* can't qualify me as an author. Nor can *Pontiac, Michigan: A Postcard Album*, whose sale of 2000 copies must be attributed more to the nostalgic illustrations than the minimal text. Does my "Laboratory Manual for Organic Chemistry", or my modest list of scientific papers qualify? How about the various essays in the less than well-known *Cranbrook Peace Foundation Newsletter*, which I edited for 20 years? In a deliberate act of praeterition, let us pass over these, and come to the main subject: What are the books that I wanted to write?

I use the past tense because I am nearing the octogenarian stage of life. Yes, I know it's now regarded as the sixties, but contrary to most real authors who hesitate to reveal exactly what is on the drawing-board—unless it's another serial paperback of *Modern Romances* or *Harry Potter*—I can divulge my list in the hope that someone will pick up the thread.

Let's start with *Mountain High!* This would have been a Krakauer-style analysis of what makes people crazy enough to risk life and limb to "conquer" high mountains repeatedly. That's not the only venue where people voluntarily risk their lives of course. Racing cars at excessive speeds, beating up one another in "extreme" boxing, and walking over burning coals

would be a few other examples. I also need to mention the strange phenomenon of the “professional” soldier, who returns again and again to the world’s battlefields as much for the thrills as for the only sometimes-considerable pay. Just what is the physiology of this extreme behavior, and can’t we just get it with a pill?

The next title would be *The Peace of War*. I know this sounds like a contradiction, but ever since the Roman invasion of Carthage, the saying “They make a desert and call it peace” epitomizes the futility of war. Nevertheless humanity is addicted to war. If not all are overcome, then at least certain individuals designated by self or others as “leaders” and their compliant or compelled followers must be so characterized. It seems that the aftermath of war, for a period of time, say 25 years at least, is peace, the peace of exhaustion and rebuilding for the next war.

I dearly wanted to write *Never Enough! A History of Greed*. This could have been the one with which I could have made some money. Why are there no field trips to Fort Knox? Perhaps caressing those mountains of bullion would give some poor souls relief from the ever-present itch to have more than they need or deserve. It would be nice to think that education and family background, along with a reasonable family fortune, would incline one to leisure and contemplation, but instead most of the available time, energy, and fortune is devoted to multiplication—Cui bono? The ghost of Horatio Alger also still works its magic, and it turns out that lack of education, family background, and fortune leads to much the same outcome for the self-made man.

My chef-d’oeuvre undoubtedly would have been *Order or Chaos?* Here we take a long look at the disasters that Mother Nature regularly but unpredictably rains down on us—no pun intended. Physicists speak of a Law of Nature by which they refer to the concept of entropy, the inexorable tendency for things to get disordered. Look around your room or office! Is this principle not evident? Here however we humans play the major role, and so it is in the world. What nature has started,

we augment in a most spectacular fashion. England has about five percent of its primeval forests today. That's Man's work. We dam the rivers until there is no more water left at the end. Too bad for those that live further down the former stream. We procreate without a thought about who will house and feed the multitudes. I know it is this kind of endless drama that mostly stirs readers, so what will it be: Order or Chaos? The answer to that would be in a sequel.