

A Matryoshka Doll of Coincidences

Berlin in the 1960s was to espionage what Las Vegas is to gambling. It was where the Cold War came to a head. So many spy movies take us back to that place and time, most recently in Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies* starring Tom Hanks.



That movie captures a lot of the flavor from that time. The dampness, the darkness, the never distant smell of fear and betrayal in the air. But as with everything, the Berliners on both sides of the Wall braced their way through it, living life in a city still officially occupied by the Allies.

The Cold War reached its crescendo in Berlin during 1964 and 1965. East-West tensions ran red hot, and I was there to see it all. It was at once exhilarating and frightening. It had all the thrills of a spy movie. Except I was in it.

First, an obligatory shaggy dog story to background the bigger story:

I. Bellevue, 1983

A mini-specialty of my law practice in Seattle in the 1980s was representing German-speaking people who wanted a German-speaking lawyer. Most of these clients were referred to me by the West German Consulate General in Seattle where I, after having sufficiently cultivated relationships with key people there, was awarded the honorific title of *Vertrauensanwalt*, “trusted lawyer,” certifying I was on their list of approved local attorneys with the requisite level of competence in both the law and the German language.

Germans have always loved titles, and they affectionately gave me that one. It made me feel good. I would have felt better if my title came with a silk sash or some kind of official-looking signet ring. Or a sash *and* a ring. But I didn't push it. *Vertrauensanwalt* looked good on my resume. Things people don't understand but are afraid to ask questions about always tend to look good.

Among clients thus referred to me by the Consulate General was Rainer Huber, an Austrian who owned a business in Bellevue, Washington, selling sturdy rustic kitchen furniture handcrafted from oak. The kind of heavy blond wooden tables, chairs and benches found mostly in homes and inns in rural Bavaria and Austria. Furniture that lasts for generations. Furniture that makes you want to yodel.

How this *Oktoberfest* kind of furniture could be sold profitably back then in suburban Bellevue, Washington, was a mystery to me. But as soon as I walked into Rainer's store I was immediate-

ly transported back to the many pubs and inns I had spent time in in German-speaking countries where these hefty objects dominated the decor. There were tables like these in Austria when Mozart carved his initials in them.

Rainer had a past-due debt he wanted me to collect for him, so he had invited me to his store in order to give me various documents, some in English and some in German, for use in my demand letter or, if needed, the lawsuit. The delinquent customer owed him around \$15,000, not a small sum in 1983 or now.

We chatted, and he asked the usual questions I often got about how I knew German so well. I told him I had studied the language for a long time; in fact, I started teaching myself a good chunk of the language when I was 14 by taking language records out of the library and buying a German grammar book.

I told him what motivated me then was my desire to figure out what the opera singers were singing in an opera by Richard Wagner (the 8-record set of which I shoplifted from a record store. I also learned even more German by listening to Adolf Hitler's speeches on records my crazy next-door neighbor Albert owned, but I kept these additional details from Rainer. Actually, I keep those bizarre details from everybody).

I added I had done graduate work at Harvard in "Germanic Languages and Literatures" (at Harvard, just "German" wouldn't do), and how I'd spent stints of nearly a year each as an exchange student in Zurich as a high-schooler and again in Berlin as an undergrad, and how my wife and her family were German, and blah blah and so on.

I always felt self-promotion should never want for detail.

He asked where I studied in Berlin and when, and I said at the FU, the Free University in West Berlin, during 1964-1965. He said, though I thought somewhat haltingly, "Aha, oh...I see, yes... those were years when I was in Berlin, too," spoken without the kind of enthusiasm you would expect upon discovery of a pleasant coincidence. It should have been a time for something like a fraternity handshake, or a cliché about the size of the world.

That coincidence got me reminiscing about those days in Berlin in the '60s, when so often the Cold War would come to a head at a place where the two superpowers most directly confronted each other, when any accidental move beyond inevitable brinkmanship bravura could lead to World War III and the end of civilization as we knew it.

I would have been among the first to be incinerated at the flashpoint in West Berlin. That possibility often served as a handy excuse to forget about homework and classes.

Actually, there was never any homework, and for that matter, no classes either, in any sense understood by Americans. I could read whatever I wanted to read and attend or not attend the many dull lectures droned out over microphones by bored professors into cavernous empty spaces. At German universities you could fuck off for years and nobody would much know or care — or, well, at least not for the first 12 years or so. I knew German "students" who were true academic lifers in limbo, and happy to be there.

The FU was far ahead of its time; as far as I could tell no student in the liberal arts ever went to class. It was a rare university for Germany, in that it had an American-style campus and was modeled after U. C. Berkeley, proof enough that the CIA built and funded it (though, ironically, it was the site of many an anti-CIA demonstration).

Students I lived among at the Student Village (a strange mix of dorms run as a commune) spent a lot of time smoking and painting protest signs and arguing obscure far-left political ideas while barely still sensate after drinking most of my beers and corn liquor I thought I had sufficiently hidden from them.

So I could do any damn thing I wanted to at the FU, which seemed quite appropriately abbreviated. I chose to learn Latin and Italian and to look up in a German-English dictionary every word I didn't know when reading Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*; I would write the word and its translation down in a spiral notebook. It took me six months to complete that project, interrupted by Cold War showdowns, daily letters to my fiancée, and bouts with said beer and corn liquor.

I celebrated my Magic Mountain achievement by throwing the spiral notebook away. I figured only the words worth knowing would and should remain in my head. No need to truck around a lot of ballast.

Thomas Mann is no longer the big literary hotshot he was once believed to be. I should have devoted my time to painting protest signs. Or cheating on my fiancée, which I could simply not do, earning me endless amounts of ridicule from my fellow inhabitants of Haus 12.

I recalled to Rainer how on certain tense Cold War days I could make out the heads of pilots in MiGs as they buzzed West Berlin overhead at speeds faster than sound, at what seemed like 30 feet straight above me, leaving in their wake sonic booms like derisive farts in my general direction, long after the jets disappeared from view.

I asked Rainer if he remembered the occasional crises where columns of huge American Abrams tanks rumbled down the city's major avenues, denting the pavement and crushing cobblestones, clanking their way towards the Brandenburg Gate and possibly Armageddon. You could hear them making their scary noisy way down Potsdamer Chaussee, just blocks from the Student Village.

And there was the time when Nikita Khrushchev said West Berlin "stuck like a bone in the Soviet throat" that had to be removed. Then — boom! — he was suddenly deposed overnight and Leonid Brezhnev became the new leader of the Soviet Union. "Now wasn't that something?" I asked Rainer, suddenly realizing I had been talking too much.

But that question collided with one Rainer asked so I got no answer: He asked if I remembered the thin aluminum coins that functioned as money in East Germany, they were worn so thin and bare they often became unreadable, so you guessed its denomination by its size, and it was easy to lose them. They seemed to disappear into thin air all on their own. And he also asked: Was it not strange that the East German People's Army wore Nazi-style uniforms and goose-stepped? How did that square with claiming to be the Anti-Fascist Germany?

We laughed. He opened a drawer and pulled out a bottle of brandy and two glasses and filled them.

We both toasted to our health in Russian at the same instant — *na zdorovya!* — and we laughed again. Down the hatch.

We shared memories of drinking Berliner *Weisse*, a sour white beer served in half-shell mugs and mixed with a thick, sweet raspberry syrup, to be slowly savored in the summer at outdoor tables near the edge of my beloved Schlachtensee, a tree-lined lake with graceful swans floating by. It reminded me of my beloved Lake Harriet in Minneapolis, the anchor to the neighborhood where I grew up.

The Schlachtensee was a pleasant stroll from the Student Village past opulent homes that miraculously survived World War II.

And I reminisced of trips taken to the beaches of the Wannsee, a really big lake like Lake Minnetonka back in Minnesota, to ogle all the pretty bikini-clad girls. Afterwards to drink hot tea mixed with lemon and rum and play power chess with my Norwegian pal Geirr at a quaint pub near the elevated train station.

And so I babbled happily on with the aid of a second glass of brandy, encouraged by Rainer's attentive listening manner. I talked about visits to my fiancée's aging aunts in dimly lit East Berlin apartment buildings with bullet holes still in the facades, the flights of stairs up, there being no elevator, and the timed hall lights, a timer ticking away that would turn off the lights before you got to where you wanted to go.

These were ancient Baltic German aunts who entertained with the one prized possession that survived the war, a big silver Russian samovar from Former Times in Riga, when the world was still right.

The aunts sat in the dark high-ceilinged living room, all in an orderly row upon an overstuffed sofa behind a round table with plates of snacks and cakes atop a faded fringed tablecloth, and they talked just long enough to ask questions about America and me. They stared and grinned and clicked their tongues and smacked their lips between bites of cake and were obviously quite in love with me. Perversely or kindly — I don't know which — I flirted back. They giggled like school girls. "Oh, *Herr Larry!*"

II. Half time! And now: a footnote to East Berlin, a place that fascinated me more than West Berlin, as we momentarily step out of the conversation with Rainer...

Walking out of the Friedrichstrasse railway station in East Berlin was like walking onto a movie set where suddenly the Berlin of the 1930s was alive again. The traffic cops had those old odd pointy hats and longcoats, the yellow wooden streetcars were still from the 30s, the clothes, the street lighting, the smell of dirty sulfur coal smoke in the air. There were still even horses pulling carts laden with odd things like milk cans or coils of rope.

The pollution blurred out the sun to add to the drab grey-brown everywhere, the total absence of color — the buildings, the clothing, the putt-putt sewing machine cars, the aging busses and trams, the Russian Army troops, the smell of harsh Soviet disinfectant in the subways and train stations, the grim and suspicious faces on the streets, the dirty greasy beer mugs and watery-gravy dishes in the public eateries, the forced sharing of tables in restaurants with people who

refused to look at or engage you, the lack of laughter and joy except from drunks late at night in some of the bars. The dark empty night streets lit with bare lightbulbs at distances far enough apart so there were only separated pools of light, just like when Jimmy Durante would say good night to Mrs. Calabash, wherever she was.

Only generic state-owned stores were allowed to exist, and there was only one brand of everything, such as soap or toothpaste. There was the “People’s Owned Bakery No. 47,” or a shop labeled “Meat” with mostly empty shelves inside. The good stuff never made it into the stores.

There was an exception: in an “Intershop” one could buy rare Western goods, but only with hard currency such as dollars, pounds, francs or West German marks. Locals with their East German marks need not apply, their money was no good in these stores. Only the party elite and foreigners had the right kind of money.

All a poor East Berliner could do is stare into the window at all the goodies and dream about them. This two-tier cash and store system was common to all Communist countries. So much for classless societies. No wonder Communism failed.

The drabness was endless: no neon signs, no ads or billboards anywhere, just joyless banners atop buildings of banal hortatory Marxist-Leninist slogans, emblazoned in big block white letters over bright red backgrounds (“Fulfill the Five Year Plan!”, “Eternal Solidarity With The Working Masses of the Soviet Union!”), always ending in explanation points and always ignored by everybody.

Most of the people on the streets looked young or middle-aged. If you reached 65 in East Germany you were then free to leave for the West: you were no longer of any use to the regime and a burden. Thus, many old folks left to be supported by relatives in the West, and they were only too happy to leave.

There was a definite and visible elite in this “Workers and Peasants State” — well-dressed government types and high military brass congregated in classy restaurants, theaters, night clubs and cafes, most of which the average person could not afford. There were tourist hotels where anyone who didn’t dress like a foreigner or the elite was stopped and checked for their ID, then told to buzz off.

To the distinct anger of one such gate-keeper, I once escorted a woman I had met back in 1978 in Dresden at a theater production into that city’s fancy Intercontinental Hotel where I was staying. She had always wanted to see what the hotel looked like inside, this would probably be her only chance, she said, and she said that innocently, not as a come-on. I told the prick at the door she was my guest, and he could do nothing about it.

She looked around the hotel and my room, she thanked me and left. Earlier, she had sat next to me in the playhouse, and we struck up a conversation about what we were about to see before the curtain opened. She was married and so was I, and all we wanted to share that evening was our love of Goethe’s *Faust* and some coffee afterwards.

She was such a nice person and pleasant to know. I have found this phenomenon to be true in my travels through Communist countries: the governments were awful, but the people were so incredibly strong, brave, nice and polite. I have often pondered the cause and effect of that.

Maybe adversity is needed to produce quality. At least, that is, in certain cultures. Conversely, freedom is no guarantee of quality, a point I no longer have to elaborate nowadays. We have an oversupply of political and cultural dumb fucks.

But I digress, that was 1978 and then the detour to now, and now it's time we should return to the Berlin of the '60s.

End of footnote.

III. Back to the furniture store; Bellevue, 1983

Rainer was intrigued by my fascination with East Berlin. Like my brother Paul, who is an excellent listener, his facial expression signaled: *tell me more*.

So I did.

I went to many posh elite places with my fiancée's cousin Ingrid, a medical student in East Berlin. She was very nice and intelligent and appreciative, but also quite on the shy side and awkwardly self-conscious, so she could be pretty boring, but still good company, and I was determined to remain chaste and faithful to my fiancée, so "dating" her cousin helped keep me that way.

In retrospect, if I hadn't followed that stratagem I just know that the lures of sex in Berlin would have undoubtedly caused me no end of trouble and grief. That's how the sex stuff usually played itself out for me later in life, making a mess of things, so who knows what bad choices I spared myself at that Berlin time in my life.

The choices you don't make may be more important than the ones you do.

Also, my other passion then, besides my fiancée whom I wrote almost every day, was politics. I was at that time both a convinced "socialist" as well as a pain-in-the-ass intellectual snob, so it made perfect if twisted sense to me that a "socialist" country like the German Democratic Republic (official name for East Germany, or GDR) should be entrusted to only a trustworthy and "aware" elite. So I, too, can lay down my own claim to dumb fuck status, then and now. There's room for plenty more.

I met regularly with Ingrid, about twice a month, bringing her things like textbooks available only in the West, paid for by her aunt in Düsseldorf, along always with delicacies that were extremely rare in East Germany: bananas, oranges and chocolates. In turn I would often be rewarded with sumptuous meals at what had to be one of the top restaurants in East Berlin, the Coburger Hof, where the waiters wore tuxedos and where Ingrid's father, whose name was Walter but whom everyone called Jim since his childhood, peeled off hundreds of East Marks whenever the check was presented, more money than most East Germans earned in a month, perhaps in a year.

I lived on the equivalent of \$100 a month from my scholarship, which in today's money is about \$800, with free housing, tuition and books thrown in, and student discounts for all kinds of things, like bus and theater tickets. I ate mostly eggs, spaghetti, toast, butter, jam, Corn Flakes, beer and corn liquor, with an occasional fried chicken once a month, the specialty dish offered in a student bar nearby. So whenever I went to the Coburger Hof in East Berlin, I loaded up on

amazing dishes that included such wonders as Beluga caviar on crackers, beef roulades, sausages, cucumber salad, rolls, pickled herring, various cold cuts, asparagus, cheeses, soups, black bread, fish of every kind, potatoes, wine, vodka, Siberian meat dumplings, filets of beef, veal cutlets, ice cream, cakes, pies, coffee, liqueurs, cognac. You name it, they had it, piled high and with all kinds of silverware spread out for me on the linen (*Doctor, you can operate now*). I pigged out. That place was my Disneyland. Capitalism could not top it.

One of the most sought-after jobs in East Germany was that of waiter in an elite joint like this. Not only could you earn sizable off-the-books cash tips, you'd have access to food of the sort scarcely available anywhere else in that country. They would take leftovers in a napkin and barter them for other rare goods on the black market. You had to know somebody who knew somebody to get into waiter school.

Oh yes, and in posh joints like this, there were only waiters, no waitresses.

(Uncle Jim was the only von Mende not to flee the Russians after WWII to settle in the West, and I think he was OK with his lot despite that. He was the Chief District Pharmacist in charge of all the state-owned pharmacies in an area covering several of what we would call counties, and he lived in a large old single family house with a yard and garden in a lovely little city about 40 miles south of Berlin, in Luckenwalde. Like all émigré Baltic Germans he spoke flawless Russian and subscribed to the Soviet party organ *Pravda* and read it regularly, which I am sure was a feather in his cap with his superiors. He was surely solidly part of the elite).

So back to the conversation with Rainer:

Rainer listened to me rattle on attentively, nodding in apparent approval about my observations about why, despite its many flaws, I thought East Berlin was more interesting than West Berlin, which seemed like a gaudy neon-lit showroom to highlight the benefits of capitalism in order to poke Communism in the eye. West Berlin was a PR piece of Americana rah-rah and seemed like a transplant where once a German city stood.

Capitalism did win in the end when the Wall fell, I guess, though back in that furniture store in 1983, neither Rainer nor I could have possibly predicted that the Wall's collapse would come in just six more years. As Hemingway once observed, "At first you go bankrupt slowly, then all at once." So it was with the GDR.

Given my romantic view of socialism back then and my hatred of LBJ and the Vietnam war, I would have been very vulnerable to any overt recruitment by the KGB had they done so. I signed left-wing petitions in West Berlin, I attended anti-American rallies, I told my fellow students in the Student Village I was a socialist; when they teased me that I must be related to President Johnson I told them to go fuck themselves.

Rainer again nodded in response, pleasant but noncommittal. I liked that he listened and I talked. A lawyer's foible. You notice that listeners get more out of conversations than talkers?

My long tale to Rainer, who politely never interrupted me, ended with my telling of my filling out an East German travel permission form to do my last kissing-up-to-the-future-inlaws trip to Ingrid and her family in Luckenwalde, but this time it was to be my first trip into East Germany proper beyond the city limits of East Berlin, for which I needed a special visa. Travel had always

been easy if I confined it to within East Berlin only, since all of Berlin was still legally an occupied city, and citizens of the four Allied victors — USSR, US, Britain and France — had the right to travel freely within the city, GDR or no GDR.

Only at the last minute did I back out of the trip and instead went to Norway on the invitation of my Norwegian pal Geirr. His invitation simply sounded like a lot more fun to me. He promised a week-long marathon game of Monopoly using unlimited bank credit if one were down in funds, plus several bottles of Scotch and some cute girls who'd be easy pickings (though, ever true to my fiancée, I never plucked what would have been easy to pluck, — or think of another word that rhymes with that).

East Germany proper in Luckenwalde promised to be more teas yet again with aging aunts in dismal apartments with photos on the mantelpiece of dead husbands killed in the war and faded lace tablecloths and chair doilies, all of the ladies seated again in a row together and staring in happy disbelief at the American who could speak such good German and could make them laugh with his silly jokes.

IV. Luckenwalde, 1965, and the FBI visits me at Harvard, 1968

I wind up my marathon yack with Rainer by making an almost offhand comment about my missed trip into East Germany: "The funny thing about my passing up that trip to Luckenwalde is what happened three years later, when I get a visit at the Harvard German Department from two agents of the FBI. I was yanked out of class to meet them in the TA room. They were right out of Central Casting, complete with raincoats, hats and badges they called 'credentials.' They wanted to know why the KGB 'had been interested in me.'"

The FBI had it on reliable information that the KGB wanted to make contact with me with intent to recruit me once I arrived in Luckenwalde. The FBI said they had copies of my visa application from an informant in East Germany, so there was no use in my denying it, they wanted to know what happened while I was in Luckenwalde, and I told them I had decided to go to Norway instead and never went to Luckenwalde.

They rolled their eyes.

They gave me that hard cop look with a long steely silence to show they thought I was lying, so I kept sputtering denials, and that only made me look more like a liar.

Anyway, that happened in 1968. The FBI gave me their cards, told me to contact them if I should remember anything. Remember what?

In 1978 I decided to take a tour of East Germany to see Dresden, Leipzig and Weimar, places where so many things had happened in German culture that I had studied and wanted to see, and at trip's end I stopped at Ingrid's home in Alexandersdorf, a suburb just east of Berlin where she lived with her husband, a fellow doctor.

I told her my FBI story of ten years earlier, a story I just now told to Rainer, and she said, "You know, funny you should mention that, I remember now there was an odd man who came to our house, looking for you at the time you were scheduled to come, saying he was from the International Youth Peace League. He had a bunch of brochures for you and several balloons in

his hand, and he said he was very disappointed to have missed you.” She thought nothing of it at the time and had almost forgotten all about it.

“Well,’ I said to Ingrid then, and now to Rainer, ‘he was probably from the KGB, so it’s just as well I missed him.’” What I didn’t tell her is that at that moment in time I would probably have been a promising prospect for recruitment, as I just told you a little while ago. In my goofy way of thinking then, I thought in a number of ways the life people were living in East Germany was “purer” than the hedonistic West Germany. East Germans were forced into something like an urban Amish life style of simplicity, I thought. I was oblivious to the fact that all of East Germany was in effect a giant prison that only a very select few were ever allowed to leave legally.

Rainer: “When did you say you had planned to be in Luckenwalde?”

Me: “In May, 1965, over the Pentecost holidays.”

Suddenly he turned a little pale, and he lowered his gaze at me, as if he had just been struck hard by something, and he said:

“That man would have been me.”

Me: “*What?* You’re Austrian, you sell furniture, how could you have been that guy?”

Rainer: “Well, it’s complicated.”

V. Rainer, the indentured KGB agent

Rainer’s East Berlin was quite a contrast to my naive, romanticized version of the noire Amish movie set of poorly-lit streets.

He quietly got up and returned with a copy of the book he wrote in 1978 that tells his life story. The book is authored under the pseudonym of Rupert Sigl. It is entitled, “In the Claws of the KGB: Memoirs of a Double Agent.”

He is now the talker and me the dumb-struck listener.

He was blackmailed in 1947 by Soviet occupying forces in Vienna into joining their intelligence apparatus or finding himself jailed for a crime he did not commit. He was at first tested with trivial assignments to see how well he would obey, then given ever bigger tasks until he was trusted enough to receive formal training in Moscow. He was then sent to East Berlin, ostensibly to work for the East German Stasi, but was in fact a secret agent for the KGB. The Russians did not trust their East German comrades all that much.

He felt his only way to get back to the West was to climb the KGB ladder and assemble enough valuable information to trade to the CIA in exchange for his freedom.

His tale is one of his own cruel exploitations of others and a ruthless hypocrisy as his only way to find his way back to freedom, made all the worse by the fact that every Westerner in whom he might have found some hope to help him get out turned out to be only too easily fooled and

manipulated to the KGB's purposes and, in an ironically twisted way, to his real purposes of ensnaring more bait for the CIA.

I could undoubtedly have been such a naive fool ensnared by him, I am sure, had he tried to "recruit" me for his ultimate, real end game.

He said he had to write his book under a pseudonym since he knew he was still on a hit list with the KGB, and he had had to assume different identities and residences since he "defected" to the West. He hinted the name he was using now, Rainer, was just another invented one.

It occurred to me, too, that the furniture business was possibly also just a front.

And this occurs to me only now: was his reason for hiring me as his lawyer another ruse, that he just used that to meet me and round out our story together? That he already knew from the CIA or FBI who I was for quite some time? Had he finally set me up after all? To spring this on me?

He said he used to feel remorse about how his deal with the CIA caused the incarceration or death of those KGB spies he exposed once he was a free man again, but he rationalized all of that in two ways. First, these people could have always said no to his recruitment attempts, and many did. Or, second, they were unfortunately another moving part in a machine they consciously chose to support, prolonging the life and spread of the evil monster called Communism. They chose, they took their chances, and they lost.

For my part in this story, I was given the chance to see something human beings rarely get a chance to see: A look back at a pivotal moment in my life, not known or seen by me then as pivotal, a seemingly innocuous moment where I chose to have fun in Norway rather than to perform a perceived dull family duty.

Going to Luckenwalde could have gone horribly wrong for me, and sitting right across from me now was this vision of what a different me could have looked like, a man spending his life desperately trying to escape a wicked trap. Me given the chance, by retrospect, to see what another possible me might have become.

Some say life can only be lived forwards but only understood looking backwards. The corollary of that: things in life only start to make sense once you grow old enough to have seen enough.

I promised Rainer/Rupert I would not tell his story beyond what he told in his book until after he died, should I survive him. He was around 20 years older than I, so I am sure he has passed on. He'd be around 94 now, but nevertheless I still tried to find him recently to make sure. I made inquiries with the publishers of the English and German versions of his book, and I scoured the Internet for clues. Those efforts failed.

I saw him only a couple of more times in 1983. His claim for payment settled after a few nastygrams from me to the debtor.

The KGB died before either he or I did. Within only a few years of my meeting Rupert in his furniture shop, and as miraculous as the coincidence of our discovering each other so strangely, the Wall and East Germany disappeared and were no more. Dust. A blip of 40 years in the history books.

Looking back, it was like a long dream so bizarre I sometimes wonder if any of it really happened.

So much of life is a barely remembered dream.

VI. The final doll within the doll

A year ago, I looked for the German version of the book Rainer gifted me, with his handwritten inscription to me inside. I sadly discovered I had accidentally let the book get carted away with a bunch of other books I had read and wanted to see recycled out into the world.

After I told my siblings this old story, and given to nostalgia these days, I decided to see if I could find a used copy of Rainer's book through Amazon, and to my surprise there was a book dealer in Chicago with two used copies in fair condition.

When the book arrived, I was glad I had it again. I didn't realize how literally true that was. When I opened it up, there was Rainer's inscription to me on the title page. It came back like a determined, loyal dog.

His story is meant to be stuck to me for the rest of my life.

