



## Raking Leaves

In last October's column, I talked about songwriting. I'm reluctant to do this too much, because not everybody wants to write songs. Then again, I have been told that people like to read about the process anyway, and I can understand that, as how-to books are some of my favorites, even though I've never done what most of them describe. I'm also reluctant to talk about the process because, honestly, I do not feel like an expert on the subject. Then again, I have been reminded that since I've made a living at it for thirty years, I must have stumbled across a few handy tools along the way, and I guess that's true.

So. I may have mentioned before that I am NOT an organized person. My dad always carried a tiny loose leaf notebook, and, with a fountain pen, wrote decades of scrunchy notes to himself. No doubt he taxonomized these notebook pages precisely and stacked them in tidy piles aligned with magnetic north.

But I do have a system, which is today's Big Tip. My system is, write notes on whatever paper or cardboard or oak leaf or two by four is in grabbing distance. To indicate a song idea, beside the note I make a quick star-shape and write "tuna" beside the star. This way I can dig through my grocery lists and Menard's receipts and quickly pull the ones with song ideas, which I jam into the song idea jar. Eventually I go through the collection and, except for truly horrid or completely illegible units, I type them into a document on the eMac.

Some people say writers shouldn't show their working notes and experimental scribbles. Since I feel that just about all of my writings are working notes and experimental scribbles, this frees me up to expose even more raw scratchings, because what the heck. So as an example of today's Big Tip, here's a recent flurry of tuna jar leaves, all pertaining to songwriting in one way or another, though often quite tangentially, sometimes cryptically, but usually dubiously. Read at your own risk, and overlook the grammar, punctuation, and etc.:

- My imaginary good-for-nothing lazy butler (& my imaginary no-show chef)
- It's Tuesday at last
- Lunchbox tuna: a thermos in the gable, and nothing for a table; shaped like a house; heartbreaking handle; latch lunch; maybe just each verse an analogy
- Go nuts. atmosphere, mood, above all: character. Be sinister, irreverent, criminal, inventive, odd...have statues, monsters "to remind you you're silly." Listen to peculiar music, listen to house noises and valley girls at the food court. Be a mad detective. Write write write. Write prose. No more BRIT. No more MABLE. Write conversation --- Input! How-to! Writing experiments! Hats!
- Busy...staring...into...space. No expression on my face; eyes focused on infinity; tv on but lookin elsewhere
- Did you pay it with a visa, did you maybe write a check, did they give you a receipt. Can you count the ones remaining, didja take it after lunch, is she someone from the office, is she don & janet's daughter, husband or a wife
- Woman sez: "Friend (& Freud) ask what does woman want - I can tell you this with authority: I don't know."
- Beethoven studied for years at the U, Rembrandt is buried at Johnson and Few; Right near where Elmer invented his glue
- Hole in the donut, gaping maw, cave, manhole, empty toaster, shoe top, yawning pipe, crevice, open fly, fabric tear, mouth, doorway, deep well, skin cut, tire puncture, bullet wound, hatchway, cup
- Watching the robots navigate a 130 mile course & one was doing okay but came to a hill & something was wrong with the engine & it kept slipping back down & I got misty. Over a robot!
- Write a soaring song; shangri-la, somewhere over the rainbow
- (illegible) ...from far far away, cruise back and forth over brittingham bay, while blimps and dirigibles moor every day, to the top of the capitol dome; Businessmen strap on their jet packs at dawn, wave to their fam'lies from out on the lawn, fire up their engines and pft they are gone, till ev'ning when they jet back home
- There's more to doing something than buying the supplies
- I'm watching her, she's watching jim, he's watching me watching her watching him
- Conceptual songwrite: make a rube goldberg songwriting rig & sing the songs it makes
- Atmospheric trucks
- Like subtitles of foreign (french) un-

derground flick or Edward Gorey: I went to the co-op to look at the bulletin board for roofers. Nothing but yoga instructors and dancing troupes. I went to vinnys and was drawn to a lamp shaped like a crayon but bought two ties at fifty cents each.

- In for the night
- the poor aren't th cause but th result.
- Lets try it then I'll be quiet
- The remington ramp and a right on regina, keep left on latoya then left on laroo, continue on collins to cozyton corner, then detour down davis to damon and drew
- Give me bad recordings, cheap shoes, dollar store tape, rusty cars, curled notebooks, dirty pens, uncombed dogs, worn shingles, cracked cups (but couldn't we brew a fresh pot of coffee)(no) remember the chewed pencils of john charles anderson
- No worries! But...No snowflake falls in wrong place, but: a seatbelt? (why a seatbelt if no worries. No carcrashes in wrong place? too much perspective)
- Like old ship painting in conservatory, but old airplanes; song like old ship painting? (also) Like jacket painting, song of backlit dark Wright Flyer.
- Restored my faith in something tho I'm not sure what.
- Didja look in all your pockets
- Practice calls: Do you have silicone grease? Excuse me, I was wondering, do you carry silicone grease? Hello I need some silicone grease.
- Some things were more clear than others
- as the lady said in maine, you gotta do more than one thing around here to make ends meet
- the shoes are old, the soles are cracked, oh up the stairs, oh down the stairs
- precious, cryptic, apocalyptic
- smell duos: pilates for the olfactory imagination; can you smell a tin o sardine, with a whiff of gasoline
- High school classmate names as a blues song.
- Be still oh rapid brain o rattling rapping brain oh rapid rappin brainmobile be still oh thinkpot quizzler cranium shh be quite so quiet quit oh quash be still
- WIS Hwy 136 closed from WIS Hwy 154 (Rock Springs) to WIS Hwy 23/33 (Reedsburg) (Sauk County). WIS Hwy 136 closed from WIS Hwy 154 (Rock Springs) to WIS Hwy 23/33 (Reedsburg)
- all i wanted was little kiss, hadn't counted on the rest o this
- crumble & cry like a baby