

THE PEAS
WERE COLD

THE COLUMNS OF BARRY DAMSKY

The opinions expressed in this manuscript are solely the opinions of the author and do not represent the opinions or thoughts of the publisher. The author has represented and warranted full ownership and/or legal right to publish all the materials in this book.

The Peas Were Cold
The Columns of Barry Damsky
All Rights Reserved.
Copyright © 2014 Barry Damsky

Cover by FosterMartin Creative, Utica, NY

This book may not be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in whole or in part by any means, including graphic, electronic, or mechanical without the express written consent of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

ISBN: 978-0-692-02123-1

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dedication

In the mid-70's, I showed my writing to my mother's sister, Flo Federman, a reader. She didn't tell me to go be a writer, but I knew I had gotten through to her.

And then in the early 90's, I showed my aging mother, when she was visiting us, a piece I had written. She sat on the side-enclosed porch of our house and when finished, well – her response let me know that I had something, something I could call my own, a gift. Where it would take me, if anywhere, I had not the slightest clue, but it was like a flame was lit deep within me, a flame of hope.

Hope - Hallelujah!

I showed some pieces of my writing to Bill Mudge, my dear friend and then Methodist pastor and was absolutely thrilled at his remarks. A true turning point in my life. Years later, when I wrote the *Boonville Herald* columns, I'd occasionally send him some potential columns I wasn't quite sure of, seeking his advice. He was always remarkably positive about all of them.

My New York theatrical agency boss in the mid 60's, Bobby Brenner, has been privy to my life since then. I'd mail him my columns throughout the years, and when I told him I was going to publish the best of them in this book, he excitedly responded, "You've made my day!" Coming from him, hearing that, meant the world to me.

I want to thank my incredible wife who has patiently witnessed a good portion of what you will read.

She makes me laugh.

I love her so.

Gratefulness to my daughter Melissa and son Deane, precious gifts beyond words.

Special thanks to Cindy Sue Panara for her Herculean editing effort and to Ann Walseman, a pivotal contributor in so many ways.

I would be remiss and a coward were I not to thank my Lord Jesus, who took me from darkness to light. None of this would have been possible without Him. None of it. Nor what is to be.

By all means, be groovin with, *The Peas Were Cold*.

Barry Damsky

Foreword

I absolutely love this book.

I know you're supposed to "love" people and "like" things, but what I love about *The Peas Were Cold* is how it engagingly, inspiringly, and, with great attitude and humor, tells stories about – people!

With columnist Barry Damsky as its main character, in a sense, this book takes you to "life's stage" where he shares stories about the famous and not-so-famous that he's met along the way.

Since 2002, Barry has penned a weekly column for the rural weekly upstate New York newspaper, the *Boonville Herald*. These stories remind us to enjoy every moment of life, relish the love of family and friends, keep dreaming our dreams and to be open to new people and experiences along life's way.

If you're like me, you'll be sure to chuckle, or perhaps find yourself laughing-out-loud. The next moment, you'll find a lump swelling up in your throat, and your heart will feel a tender emotion.

In the over 25 years that I have known Barry, we have shared a similar passion for singing, songwriting and performance. It wasn't until recently that Barry told me he has been documenting and writing his experiences since the late 1960's because he needed an expressive outlet in addition to all of his other creative pursuits. I think God had been preparing Barry all along to write this book because he is, inherently, a creative person who desires to generously share his "voice" and heart with the rest of us.

Which brings us to this moment – the publishing of *The Peas Were Cold*.

Quite often, it has been mentioned by friends and acquaintances that Barry should publish a book because he has such

interesting stories to tell. They were right.

So, without further ado, I am most honored and humbled to introduce author, storyteller, columnist, singer/songwriter, friend, former theatrical agent and actor, mouse-catcher, Casabubu's friend, husband, father, and Christian – Barry Damsky!

Applause, and, particularly laughter, is permitted at any time as you read *The Peas Were Cold*.

Enjoy!

Ann M. Walseman

Contents

4/28/98	Linda Eastman McCartney.....	1
9/16/01	9/11 Response.....	3
12/14/11	Winnie Said That?	4

The Early Years

5/8/02	I Dwana Go to Camp.....	9
10/3/12	Training for the Indianapolis 500.....	11
5/22/02	<u>You</u> Get the Bike!	15
6/5/02	Dogs I Have Known.....	18
6/18/02	You Hit It Where?	21
7/20/02	Say Something – Anything!	23
8/6/02	All Because of Pennies.....	26
8/14/02	Just One Second, Doc.....	30
10/1/03	A Scholarship I’ll Never Get.....	33
1/28/04	“Oy!”	35
7/13/05	I Flunked? You Don’t Say!.....	37
6/13/07	Fool That I Am	39
10/19/11	I ... I Just Don’t Know	41
11/2/11	Cheese It - the Cops!	44

New York City

1/9/02	Stella! Stella!	49
3/27/02	It Ain’t Me Babe.....	51
4/10/02	Feline Slavery.....	54
3/5/03	Run the Projection Machine? Shoot Me Now!	56
2/9/05	You Call That an Introduction?	59
2/23/05	There’s No Business, Like	61
4/6/05	Should Have Asked Where He Hung Out	65
4/12/06	Ever Been to Utica, Sammy?	67
7/5/06	A Killer? A Thief, Maybe.....	69

9/19/07	You Want Me to Get – What?.....	72
5/21/08	Suh, Suh, Suh, Sal, Is That Really You?	74
12/17/08	Life on 72 nd Street.....	78
10/14/09	He Was All in Black	81
10/28/09	Rod – Wow – So Pleased to Meet You!.....	83
9/15/10	He Was Very Low-Keyed.....	85

Los Angeles

5/2/07	Second Fiddle to Hot Chocolate.....	89
7/16/08	It’s Really Him! Heart Don’t Fail Me!.....	92
7/30/08	What You’ve Got to Go Through	95
12/3/08	Don’t Hover Over a Pool in a Helicopter.....	97
5/13/09	The Palomino	99
5/27/09	I Auditioned on That Stage.....	102
9/1/10	A Singing Newscaster?.....	104
10/5/11	Crime, Ah, Doesn’t Pay.....	107
1/4/12	Danny	109
6/13/12	I Wanna Be in Pictures	112
6/27/12	All for Sanity.....	114
7/11/12	The Words and Music Just Came Pouring Out	117

Here and There

6/11/03	Romeo, Romeo, Where Art Thou?	123
8/6/03	A Guinness World Record Stomach.....	125
9/3/03	Dogs and Cats of the World, Let’s Talk.....	127
9/17/03	Well-Deserved Role Models	130
8/11/04	A Shark! Holey Moley!	133
8/24/04	There It Is, Hope!	136
6/29/05	Some Toreador	139
11/16/05	A True Heroine	142
1/4/06	Can’t Be That Much Farther to Heaven	144
3/15/06	Who Meets a Famous Mother?	146

5/24/06	Only in New York.....	149
11/8/06	Two Ships in the Night.....	151
2/21/07	Land of the Dictator – Right There!.....	153
3/26/08	Old Blue Eyes.....	156
4/9/08	Canine Superiority?.....	158
9/24/08	He Found Me. What Are the Odds of That?.....	160
1/7/09	We’ve Got to Leave - Now!	162
3/18/09	True Love	164
11/25/09	Floating Almost Magically.....	166
1/20/10	Hope We Learn.....	168
2/17/10	Look How Close We Are!	170
4/14/10	Seek and Ye Shall Find.....	172
4/28/10	Rain, Rain – Enough Already!	174
5/12/10	A Hundred Thousand – Dollars?.....	176
11/24/10	Freedom Land, Isn’t That Near Jersey?	178
2/9/11	Is That Boonville Down There?	182
4/4/12	His Height Got Me	184
4/24/12	A Spellbinding Story	186
5/15/12	Duhhhh	189
5/30/12	Advertising? Nah... ..	191

The Boonville Years

1/23/02	Over the Heart, Huh... ..	197
2/13/02	A Basketball Miracle.....	200
9/24/02	What’s That on My Chicken Soup?	203
12/17/02	Say It Isn’t So, Lady.....	206
2/5/03	Nashville.....	208
4/16/03	Sports History! We Saw It With Our Very Own Eyes!	210
4/30/03	Casabubu and the Turkey Thing.....	212
5/28/03	Duck? Under What?	214
7/23/03	Fried Clams Heaven.....	217

11/26/03	Where Did She Say?	220
12/10/03	He Called You (gulp) - What Time?.....	222
2/25/04	My Son, the Jumbo - Headed Juggler	225
6/2/04	Shocked	227
7/14/04	Kiss a What?.....	232
10/19/04	If Elected I'll	234
12/22/04	The Umbrella Massacre	237
5/4/04	What Bothers Me	239
5/18/05	Fatherly Pride	241
9/7/05	Yain't Gonna Believe It.....	245
10/19/05	Bye Son	247
11/30/05	Yes, Sir!	249
12/14/05	Eeny Meeny Miny Moe.....	250
1/18/06	Dead What? Where?.....	255
2/1/06	Old "Mousey's" Revenge.....	257
4/26/06	Mission Accomplished	259
5/10/06	Play It Again, Meowsa	262
10/11/06	What Seats!	264
1/10/07	Did You See How Close He Came?	267
8/8/07	Playing the Hand You're Dealt.....	270
1/16/08	Wondering – Uh Oh	273
8/13/08	There He Is! There He Is!.....	276
8/27/08	Hope	279
8/5/09	An Unscheduled Dancing Guest	281
7/7/10	Let's Not Get Too Crazy	283
8/4/10	Action!.....	285
10/13/10	Yes, Dear	287
12/8/10	The Executioner	289
1/12/11	Casabubu on World Politics and More	291
3/23/11	A Break - Possibly - Maybe?.....	293
4/20/11	I Wonder, Wonder, Wonder	295
11/16/11	Let Me Explain, Officer	297

1/18/12	I've Heard Everything.....	299
9/5/12	I'm So Glad I Asked.....	301
8/22/12	Write a What?.....	303
	Epilogue	305
	About the Author.....	306

Linda Eastman McCartney

(First published submission)

Published in the April 28, 1998 *Utica Observer-Dispatch*

My wife and I were watching TV when the news came crawling at the bottom of the screen that Linda McCartney had died from breast cancer.

It was in the early summer of 1968. I was heading into the home stretch of my first three-year job in New York with a large theatrical agency. Home stretch meaning I was fired and was given some time to find a new job. One of my responsibilities was to make a weekly call to *Record World*, a music publication, to find out what number an artist or group's record was on the pop charts that week. The higher up on the music charts the talent climbed that we represented, the more valuable they became.

Since I was single, I asked my contact at that magazine who he'd recommend dating in the record business. One person he suggested didn't respond; another, Linda Eastman, did.

We made arrangements to have lunch. When Linda walked into my office, she had a flowing beauty about her I had never seen on any female.

We went to a nearby restaurant where we discussed many subjects. She asked me about my job in great detail. She had a simple and earthy quality about her, but it was her inner spirit that was so stunning. She had a pure and fresh outlook on any subject we discussed.

Our lunch went smoothly and all too quickly. She spoke passionately of her photography, specifically her work with the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. I could hardly believe I was

☞ THE PEAS WERE COLD

talking to someone on such an intimate level about two of the most influential pop musical groups of all time.

Since I knew I'd be leaving my theatrical agency position and although I conveniently left out the part about my being fired, we talked of my desire to enter the area of show business management. A talent manager is intimately involved in all phases of that talent's career. Linda was extremely encouraging about that possibility.

We walked the few blocks to my office and wished each other well, perhaps sensing this was one of those brief encounters in life.

After that lunch date, I called her a couple of times. During our last conversation, she told me she was flying to London the next day and would be there for awhile for her photography.

A few weeks went by and I concluded my last day at the theatrical agency. On the way to my apartment, I had to pass a newsstand. I couldn't help but notice a blaring newspaper headline on one of the New York tabloids, with a big picture of Linda Eastman on its cover, telling one and all she was in England and further, announcing her engagement to Paul McCartney of the Beatles.

Surprise!

I saw Linda two more times after she married. I was living in Los Angeles and had a small theatrical agency. Paul McCartney's band, *Wings*, was playing the big sports arena and I went with a friend. It was the greatest act I'd ever seen. Linda was onstage with the band, playing the keyboard and singing back-up to her husband. I went again three days later on the last night they performed. They were as incredible as the first time I saw them days earlier.

Linda McCartney's death at age 56, prompted sadness for a person I knew for a brief, but impressive, moment. She died too young. What a tragic loss to her husband and family.

May her soul rest in peace.

9/11 Response

Published in the September 16, 2001 *Utica Observer-Dispatch* as a Letter to the Editor

As I stood in the lobby of Utica's St. Luke's Memorial Hospital last Tuesday, the TV hanging from the ceiling in their lobby was being watched by about 15 people. They were viewing the latest wrenching reports from the World Trade Center, along with the two airplane carnages.

I noticed an African-American woman near the wall in the corridor, watching so intently, it propelled me to stop and view what I really didn't want to see. Seeing the reports and playback of both towers being struck made me feel helpless and so sad. As the devastation unfolded, I heard a barely discernible voice in back of me uttering, "Jesus, Jesus."

At first, I thought the person was swearing, but as the TV drama unfolded, I realized her voice was quietly asking for strength from Jesus, and not using His name in vain.

I then heard a faint walking away of that person.

I then asked Jesus for that same strength and peace.

Winnie Said That?

December 14, 2011

Perseverance ... You hear about it as being essential to success. It sure makes sense. *Webster's Dictionary* has this to say about the word persevere: "To persist in any purpose or idea; to strive in spite of difficulties or obstacles".

There's a story that is hard to believe about Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of England, known for his leadership during the Second World War. That story is that it took him three years to complete eighth grade.

Why?

Because he had difficulty learning English.

Another story about Winston was that he was invited to give the graduation speech at Oxford University, to this day, a most prestigious institution of higher learning.

When he gave the address, he had his usual cigar, cane and top hat. When introduced, the respectful audience rose, giving him a resounding welcome.

In that unmistakable dignity of his, the crowd settled down as he stood before those there that held him in the highest of esteem.

He put his cigar and top hat on the lectern, hesitated, and with his famous authority the world became familiar with, cried out, "Never give up!" Pausing for a short time, he stretched himself, this time shouting, "Never give up!"

He then picked up his cigar, top hat and cane – and left.

Those six words were the sum total of that profound commencement address, probably the shortest speech ever given at any school of higher learning.

Would you guess those brief, yet penetrating words of wisdom, were ever forgotten by all those there?

What was Winston's commencement address message?

Perseverance...

Do only the Winston Churchills of the world have it? Those who persevere more than others... are they the only ones who truly "make it?"

It's hard work, this perseverance business. Blood, sweat and tears – perseverance – all one, right?

I've pretty much written since the mid '60s as a form of self-expression, so no one, publically, saw it – save the Linda McCartney and 9/11 Utica *Observer-Dispatch* pieces – until 11 years ago, when I started writing these columns.

I'm deeply involved in the intricate planning stages of having published – what I would like to think – are the best of those columns, soon to be released in electronic and hard copy book form. The title will be, *The Peas Were Cold*.

When you self-publish, as I'm doing, your chances of success are pretty slim. Not "pretty" slim, I'm told; unbelievably slim.

But if it's "in the cards", or what I believe to be God's will, then anything can happen. One thing is for sure, if I don't do it, there's absolutely no chance of success. I don't want to be rocking on my front porch in years to come remarking to my wife, "I wonder what would have happened, if with some editing, I had put the columns out in book form?"

I keep thinking from time to time about good old Winston and his incisive perseverance lesson at that long ago commencement exercise.

I hope I've learned his lesson, at least with respect to pushing through this column's book idea.

Perseverance, don't fail me now!