

About My Family Tree

Writing has always been a way for me to process life. My Family Tree, is no exception. It's a companion to this website, offering more stories, photos, and reflections that didn't make it into these pages.

If you're curious about the behind-the-scenes details of the films, music, and adventures I've shared on this site, My Family Tree dives deeper. It's not just about the milestones but the little moments that give those milestones meaning.

Feel free to send a note if you'd like to know more or want updates about the book's progress.

I hope to have it finished by the summer of 2025. Here are a few stories and the planned table of contents.

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My Dad **Harold (aka HH)**

My Dad was my hero. To me and almost everyone I knew, he was larger than life. I didn't get to spend much time with him as a youngster - he was always on location somewhere or at the studio.

I don't really remember my parents as a couple. Later in life I came across some old 8mm home movies. One was of their honeymoon in Venice, they looked happy together. I hope they were.

I knew my life was going to change when I was around 10 and they told me they were getting a divorce. Within a year or two we moved to New York when my Mom remarried. But she never got over her former life. She and my Dad were one of the most powerful Hollywood couples with money, prestige, a yacht and a private art collection that rivaled most museums.

She knew my bias was for him. I didn't keep it a secret. He was my guy. I was on his side.

I would spend summers with him and sometimes go to the studio and sit on his couch during story meetings where I was exposed to some of the most memorable moments of my life, hearing writers come up with scenes and plots for movies he was going to make.

But slowly it all got away from him. He was drinking more and more and spending his own money. After he lost his deal at Columbia it became a crippling amount of money. He saw it all falling apart. I saw him falling apart.

I graduated high school in '68 and couldn't wait to live my life. I didn't want it to be materialistic — I was part of the counterculture and didn't want to be part of what had come before.

In the early 70's I went to a few colleges including the inaugural year of Cal-Arts and traveled a lot and had some great experiences but realized I needed a job when I came back to America after a year out of the country.

I visited my Dad who was semi-retired and started doing odd jobs for him. Just minor stuff like picking up clothes at the dry cleaners, reading a script and telling him the story, not really thinking where it might lead. But I soon became his assistant, a job that lasted six or seven years, including when he hit bottom and got into AA and got sober.

But nothing stopped his spending. He wanted to become a player again and that cost him a lot, maybe everything. Why couldn't he get it back? Same person, same talent. But times changed, studio heads changed and he had a history of drinking and going over budget.

A few days ago, I'm writing this in the summer of 2024, I saw a photo of him on the internet. He was standing with David Niven (Best Actor Oscar for a HH movie), his business/creative partner Burt Lancaster, Wendy Hiller (Best Supporting Actress Oscar for a HH movie), Rita Hayworth, director Delbert Mann (Best Director Oscar for a HH movie) and HH himself (Best Picture Oscar 1955). It was so clear in that photo what he was capable of and what he had accomplished.

His Mom was alive to see his success. He loved her, we called her Nana. I didn't know anything about his father Joseph because no one ever talked about him. He was my Grandfather but not a word. Father and son had some kind of fight over money when Dad was living with them in the Bronx. Even Nana never mentioned him.

He was also very close to his sister Janet. Bought her a house on the GI bill after the war. He didn't go overseas, worked on arranging talent for the USO shows in Culver City. One of the safer jobs in WW2.

So except for Joseph, he clearly loved family. But what about Steven, Duffy, and Alma?

Most fathers when asked why they're working so hard, why are they doing it — the answer almost invariably is this: for my kids. Not him. In his own way he loved us, but he wanted what he wanted and that was a singular thing — to get back on top. To stand again in a room full of artists he hired on a project he developed that went on to win awards and be a box office success.

How was he as a producer? He had an amazing string of hits. But he was clearly one tough boss. Along the way he ended up in lawsuits with just about everyone he worked with: United Artists, Burt Lancaster, John Frankenheimer, Ernest Borgnine and many others. He had the best lawyers in town who were also the most expensive.

The two of us never had a problem. He paid me a good salary and one year I got to work at Paramount on a project that got close (Jack Nicholson in talks to star) but never got made.

After years we both knew he wasn't going to get another picture made and I knew I had to make a change. But how do you quit your dad?

I remember standing by a cupboard, I don't know where . . .

HH: I need you to be somewhere Monday morning.

DH: I can't do that.

Dad had a slow-build anger. His face would turn red and soon erupted into an explosion. All of the kids would mimic it, it was scary and real and happened a lot, but he held it in. I don't think we looked at each other.

HH: You have to.

DH: I'm not going to be able to do that.

And that was it. I didn't show up on Monday and that's how I stopped working for him. We talked after that but not a lot. I soon left for Northern California and lived off the grid for a

couple of years, a wonderful experience. When I came back to “civilization” and started working in Santa Barbara, I would visit him fairly often and we watched sports but almost never talked about my years working with him.

A few years ago a Canadian writer wanted to write his biography. We worked together for a few months but he finally dropped it for a variety of reasons.

But not before we collaborated on his Wikipedia page (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Hecht). It’s worth reading. My Dad had a truly incredible career.

He grew up in the Bronx with little education, never went to college. Started working in the theater as a dance director and did quite a bit of work under Roosevelt’s WPA project. He came out to Hollywood as a choreographer on a Marx Bros film and another one with Mae West.

He soon became a literary agent and met the actor Burt Lancaster who only a few years before had been in the circus as an acrobat. My Dad proposed they produce movies together — this became an incredible partnership that lasted decades including my Dad being offered the job of running MGM studios which he declined because he thought he had a better job. He did.

Sometimes I imagine those guys out on the town on the weekend. The clothes, fancy cars, going to the best clubs, beautiful women everywhere that only wanted a chance to be with the hot guys in town. Over the years Hecht-Lancaster has been written about a lot - the small independent company that broke the back of the Hollywood studio system.

They’d go on locations to places nobody had filmed before like Ischia, an island near Italy where I took my first steps.

They made classic after classic like *Sweet Smell Of Success* and *Marty* and blockbusters like *Trapeze*. For that one they shut down the Champs Elysees for a parade.

But the odd thing was my Dad would never talk about any of his accomplishments. He was always looking to the future and except for his Oscar he had no posters or anything about his long career.

He just wouldn’t look back. He had so many accomplishments, met and worked with everybody. Sometimes they’d make pictures together and sometimes they didn’t . . . Elia Kazan, James Jones, Norman Mailer, Ray Bradbury, Clifford Odets, Paddy Chayefsky, Jessamyn West, Roger Corman, Carol Reed, Robert Wise, Jacques Tourneur, John Frankenheimer and many, many others.

About 10 years ago I had a movie in the Telluride Film Festival. After our screening someone said - Hey Duffy. It was Peter Bogdanovich. He said he liked my movie and then touched his heart: I knew your father.

Dad never displayed a big ego, but he was reserved and spent a lot of time in his interior life. I met and worked with some of his contemporaries like Max Youngstein, one of the heads of United Artists, who told me there was no one like your Dad working on a script. He’d go page by page and line by line which I saw first hand.

Could he have spent some time with me talking about producing when he found out that's what I wanted to do? Undoubtably yes. I wish he had. There were few people who were better. Did he stick with his career too long, of course. The Daily Beast estimated his worth in his hey day at around \$150 million (in today's dollars). How? He was gambling on himself to get back on top, mostly on expensive writers.

He ended up in a one bedroom apartment without enough to cover his funeral. My brother and I paid for that. He had some debt at the dry cleaners and market and a few other places. Ironically, he died just before the home video boom that created significant royalties. What would he have done with those \$'s? Well, if you've read this chapter I think you know.

During the last few years he didn't want to go out because he might run into someone who'd ask him what he was working on. I think privately he was unhappy but it'd be hard to tell. If he saw you looking worried, he'd turn on the charm and you'd go away thinking he was fine.

His death in 1985 was in all the papers. My stepmom had come back into his life to help him at the end and was shocked to find out he'd cashed in his life insurance to pay for one of his projects.

Before the pandemic, his kids and extended family would get together once a year at one of his favorite Hollywood restaurants, a place where beers were a nickel when he first got to town. We'd share stories and toast HH - a man who always seemed larger than life.

My sister

Alma Hecht

Sept. 20th, 1955. I'm not sure if this is a memory or something I saw in a photo a long time ago, but I think I remember the day Alma came home from the hospital. I was 5, Steven was 7. I was leaning against one of the cars in the driveway, maybe the Cadillac. I had on a leather coat with one of those fake fur collars. She was wrapped in a blanket. Someone carried her inside. I think it was our maid, Velma.

65 years later when she was approaching the end of her life, I wrote Alma a song with lyrics about something she told me years before. When things were bad, she'd put on her cowgirl outfit and pack up her red wagon and head out for the Purple Hills. She crossed rivers and climbed mountains and when she finally got there she'd camp out until she was ready to come home. It was her journey, her terms when to go and when to come back.

I played the song for her at Maravilla in Santa Barbara. She had moved from Berkeley to be closer to her two brothers as you'll see in the story that follows.

Her close friend Shelley wrote this wonderful account of her life. I'm going to let her tell it, and then add a note at the end.

Thank you Shelley. Miss you Alma.

(Obit goes here)

(After obit, back to DH . . .)

DH: I'd visit her on Sundays at Maravilla. "Let's go for a walk," she'd say. So I'd push her around the grounds in her wheelchair. I didn't ask her how she felt about losing her life, but I wanted to. The disease got so bad her doctor okayed her plan to stop eating or drinking and that's what she did. I don't know anyone now or then who could summon that much courage and inner strength.

She asked me to make a playlist for what she called her journey. We listened to some of it together as she slipped into a coma.

I see Shelley quite often these days (2024) sharing memories, not sparing Alma for her stinging criticisms. We laugh about it and cry a little and have a cocktail or two like she would've wanted.

Alma was a fantastic person, so full of life. She was my life long pal. We'd get stoned and laugh and talk about the family and movies and listen to music late into the night. Once a year her friends and family get together online to raise a glass to our missing friend.

My half-brother

Adam Hecht

Adam would call me late at night. He spoke in a kind of gibberish, trying to make a point but couldn't quite get there. Maybe he was stoned, hard to know.

Adam was the second son of my dad's second marriage. I was the second son of his first. We weren't that close mainly because of the age difference, 15 years.

A few months, I'm writing this in the fall of 2024, I was interviewed by Heather Graupmann, a Chicago writer with a website devoted to unsolved mysteries. She has a big following and Adam's story is one she's talked about more than once. I'll link it below.

It's a strange case. Adam was a tennis teacher to the kids of Hollywood stars. He was making money, had a BMW and a nice apartment in Beverly Hills. And one day he went missing. His car was found not far from his apartment, his wallet on the front seat with cash inside, keys in the ignition and we've never heard from him since.

Here's an excerpt from Heather's podcast.

"Adam's family also sprang into action, doing everything they could to try and track down their brother. Duffy had fliers made and hired a crew to assemble a database and mail them out to many PD's, campuses, coroner's offices and even to Europe where Adam had visited in the past. They searched everywhere they could think of and also spent thousands of dollars on a PI who followed up every lead, interviewing people, traveling to different cities, etc. The PI worked for them for about 6 months and did a comprehensive job, but sadly wasn't able to come up with any solid information."

Adam's older brother, my half brother Harold knew someone on Robert Stack's TV show Unsolved Mysteries, and they produced an excellent episode. Harold was in it, so was Harold's Mom, my stepmom Martine, and an actor playing Tony.

Adam invited a homeless guy Tony into his apartment a short while before he disappeared. Tony was a suspect in but no one could ever prove anything.

A few years after Adam's disappearance, Harold and I found out Tony was in prison in Atascadero. It had nothing to do with Adam but it was an opportunity to find out what Tony might know so we drove up there to interview him. I offered him money, no strings attached, just for some information. Tony refused.

He's still spotted around town, not far from Adam's apartment. The police have keep an eye on him, Harold too. He takes videos and sends them to me - "Look who I spotted today." Tony's a street guy, wiley. I don't I don't think we'll ever find out what he know about Adam's last days.

I wish I had done more for Adam. When I was working in the music business, I would get concert tickets and I got him into Madonna or Cyndi Lauper and he appreciated that.

We still get an occasional fake sighting. Usually from someone after a rerun of Unsolved Mystery or on Heather's site. Nothing more than sad sick people with nothing better to do.

Even sadder is when his mom calls usually around Christmas or on Adam's birthday. She half thinks he's still alive, maybe living in a cult, everyone else in the family are resigned to something worse.

Here's another excerpt from Heather's podcast.

"Adam Hecht was a very kind, successful and compassionate person who appeared to be searching for answers to the same questions and ponderings most of us will have at some point in our lives. His desire was to be a help and comfort to those less fortunate and that is very commendable. Whether Adam did meet with foul play, developed amnesia, committed suicide or just wanted a different life, it appears we will never know. Adam's

family still has so many questions as well as a deep sadness with his disappearance that will never leave. Now 30 years later, there is one thing they want almost as desperately as they want to find Adam. It's closure."

You can listen to Adam Hecht - Searching For Answers" by Lostnfoundpodcast <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/lostnfoundpodcasts/episodes/Adam-Hecht---Searching-For-Answers-e2kakcj/a-abalh4u>

Some DH Short Takes on Music and Movies

1. Bob Dylan and The Kinks

The other day I was asked who I admired most? I picked Bob Dylan.

There was a lot of chaos growing up with my parents (one in LA and one in NYC) but even so they had one important/helpful thing: money. We moved to NY when I was 13 in the 8th grade and I got to go to a private school. It was on 78th, we lived on 84th and Madison, upper East side. I'd walk to school. The year before I was in military school in Hollywood. Not as a border, I took the bus home every day. I was a staff sergeant, something totally ridiculous for such a young guy but what did I know. I just accepted it and did my best.

One of my best friends in high school was Jonathan Fields. His dad was a pianist, but also an author of cookbooks. So Jonathan and his family asked if I wanted to go to Europe, by now it was the summer of '65 and kind of suddenly I was in Julia Childs' house in the South of France while Jonathan's dad researched local recipes.

One night Jonathan was taking a shower or something and a song came on the radio. Desolation Row on Dylan's Highway 61 album. One of the lines was about TS Eliot and Ezra Pound fighting in the captain's chambers. It one was of those moments. Literature and music collided in my teenage head. It was weighty and profound, melodic and hit me like nothing I had heard before.

Yesterday (July 31 2024) I had a two hour jam with a friend of mine while they were working on soundproofing the second floor of my condo. I'm turning my office into a recording room. The guy I'm playing with is the son of Robert, a very good friend and lawyer on death penalty cases. Anyway, the guy I'm playing with grew up listening to me and Robert play Bob Dylan songs in his living room. Masters of War, I Shall Be Released. Now he's a great musician with a band on Spotify. Bob Dylan has been a constant in my life.

2. Waterloo Sunset:

I had a crush on Julie Christie. She was the one for me when I was a teenager. Darling and Dr. Zhivago and Far from the Madding Crowd. And I know there's a little controversy about one of the lyrics, but it's also my favorite line: Julie meets Terry (at) Waterloo Underground. It's an

inside movie reference — Terry is the actor Terence Stamp and Julie is of course, Julie Christie. They were the stars of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. As the son of a movie man, it added a level of interest for me beyond the crush. Also, I loved the song with that great guitar opening and chord progression. The Kinks will always be one of my favorites.

My folks were divorced in 1962 when I was 12 but I don't remember them as a couple. My Dad had me for summers and during one of them when I was at his house, I don't know where my stepmom was and I'm pretty sure it was before they had kids, I got a call from the great movie director John Frankenheimer who I knew pretty well. He had directed a couple of movies for my Dad and I was even in the first one, just in the background in a swimming pool. Duffy, it's John, and then he said it, you gotta come and get your Dad. Oh God, no.

So I drove out to the Malibu Colony from Bel Air and when the door opened there was John, Laurence Harvey, Joan Collins and other stars and my Dad who was really drunk. I was embarrassed, hurt and pretty much beside myself on that long ride home but then almost magically Waterloo Sunset came on the radio and it absolutely helped me lose myself from the emotion I was feeling, just listening to the song and its story. I remember that more than my Dad sitting next to me.

About 10 years later after I got back from a year traveling with my girlfriend through Mexico and Central America and ending up as a working partner in a restaurant in Costa Rica, I came back to the States and within a few months started working for my Dad who was semi-retired. I think it's fair to say I helped him start up again, working on scripts and hoping to get another movie going and I also think it's fair to say I helped him when he hit bottom.

I opened up the office one morning having seen his Lincoln Continental parked in a haphazard way in the parking lot. I asked him what happened. He told me he was driving with my very young half-sister and that's all he could remember. And somehow after decades of drinking that was the moment he knew he had to stop. Over the next few months I'd go with him to AA and got to meet his wonderful sponsor Clancy.

My Dad died 10 years sober. Proud of you Dad. And if I ever see Ray Davies of the Kinks, I'll thank him for writing the song that kind of saved my life that night. That's how I think about it. And just to end this long rambling memory, I have a good friend whose parents have a beautiful home on Rincon Point. I've been there many times. A few houses down the beach is where Julie Christie spends part of her summers. My friend and her parents know about my crush but haven't said anything to her as I write this in the Fall of 2024.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=N_MqfF0WBsU

3. Mexico & the Mordita A few of us thought it was overkill but once a year the department heads at Seymour Duncan would take off for a think tank. We put together our objectives and what we wanted to accomplish in the upcoming year, and share it with other department heads

in interesting places. One time we went to an exclusive hotel in Santa Barbara with nice rooms but it seemed odd we couldn't go back to our own homes only a few minutes away.

One year we went to Loreto in Baja. A custom officer stopped us when we landed and told us we couldn't bring our chalkboard and binders into his country. "You need to buy these things here." I was the only one who spoke a little Spanish so I became the interpreter and soon realized what he wanted - the mordita, a payoff, the bite. When he got our \$50, he smiled and waved to the rest of our group: Bienvenida.

Jeff Beck . . . Seymour and I drove to the Mojave desert for a photo shoot with Jeff Beck. Jeff was Seymour's close friend and wanted to help him introduce our new amp line, one of his first and only endorsements.

The shoot went great but when I got back to the factory my boss Cathy Duncan was mad as hell at me.

You can see in the photo we're in the desert with no electricity anywhere in sight but, even so, the volume on the amp was at zero. I missed it. So did Seymour and the photographer and Jeff Beck but Cathy was right, it was my fault. It hurt but still it was hard to imagine just a few years before I was hanging out with my friends in Berkeley listening to Blow By Blow and Wired. And there, somehow, I was standing next to the guy who played those incredible solos on "Cause We've Ended As Lovers" and "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat."

One more moment from that trip. When we got back to our motel, we didn't have any music except for Seymour's Walkman and he wanted me to hear a song from 1965 when Jeff Beck was in the Yardbirds. So we split the two earbuds and put the Walkman between us and played "Train Kept A-Rollin'."

Guitars . . . have been a constant in my life. In the late 50s I had a few guitar lessons but I was more interested in following the Dodgers and reading Jim Murray in the LA Times. I tried again when I was in 10th grade in New York City. There was a Chinese guy above a tailor shop on 82nd or 83rd who showed me how to play Day Tripper, a 100% terrible experience (and turned me off to lessons ever since). But then the big day happened. June 16th, 1970 - my 21st birthday and my Mom said: "Bring it out." I opened up the case and there was a beautiful red Gibson 335 that I've played in living rooms in LA, Oakland, Vancouver and Humboldt. It's upstairs as I write this in the fall of 2024.

The next big moment for me was when I walked into work one morning in the mid 80's and Seymour said I found it. He had. Among his huge collection of guitars and amps he pulled out a sunburst reissue '62 Fender Strat. Having gone through a ton of fire evacuations and earthquake scares, it's what I would grab first. No doubt.

Photos below: 1) JB and me in the Mojave desert. 2 and 3) With my two bosses— Cathy (in Mexico) and Seymour (in Laurel Canyon after the Jeff Beck photo shoot).

My Family Tree



