

# Public Notices, Private Questions, Musical Dreams

By [Edward Curtin](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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- Two women out walking do not stop talking. An elderly man and woman out dining do not start talking.

Who says the most?

[“Hello in There,” John Prine](#)

- Every morning at sunrise, a simple, mild, and gentle man, seemingly somehow disabled, a camera hanging around his neck, stands stock still and half-hidden by reeds and bushes at the edge of a lake. For hours he waits to take photos of wildlife – deer, coyotes, bear, herons – emerging from the woods and lake’s edges.

What is it about wildness that he seeks to capture with his camera?

[“The Wild Colonial Boy, The Irish Rovers](#)

- In a small New England town known as a haven for tourists and wealthy second-house owners from the city, the local Saturday morning farmers’ market features a parade of dogs being shown off by their visiting owners.

Who is on the leash?

[“Hound Dog,” Elvis](#)

- A new 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher reports to her department head that she is disturbed by the large number of her students who want to be addressed as “they.” She recounts how she just returned from taking her daughter to college at a prominent state university where all the professors who gave talks to parents and new students introduced themselves by saying how they wished to be addressed: he, she, they, etc.

Is this what it’s all about in today’s schools of show and tell?

[“What Did You Learn in School Today,” Tom Paxton](#)

- A liberal New England regional newspaper refuses to publish an op ed article by a well-known local writer about how the chief U.S. propagandist has recently been named the new CEO of National Public Radio. When the writer asked the paper’s editor if he would consider it newsworthy if the newspaper named the chief propagandist it’s CEO, he received no reply.

Why might that be?

["I Ain't Marching Anymore," Phil Ochs](#)

- On an old town road in the hills of western Massachusetts, passers-by comment on a certain small stretch where the smell of wild thyme overwhelms the senses when they go by. No thyme can be found.

Are these people imagining that the time has passed away, or they?

["Who Knows Where the Time Goes," Judy Collins](#)

- A violent thunderstorm with massive lightning bolts brings down scores of trees and power lines

in the early fall evening. Roads are flooded and rivers and streams overflow their banks.

Where, asks an eight-year-old boy to vacant faces, was the lightning before it flashed?

["Chimes of Freedom," Bob Dylan](#)

- In Afghanistan, the U.S. military kills 32 sleeping pine nut farmers and 40 other civilians at a wedding, including children, between September 19-23, 2001 as part of the American "war on terror."

Whom does this keep awake at night and who sleeps soundly thinking they are safe?

["A Love Song to Americans," Edward Curtin and David Neal](#)

- An old woman named Martha is overheard saying to her son, who is sitting beside her, "Martha is dying." The son asks, "Why are you referring to yourself in the third person?" The mother answers, "It's more comforting that way."

Is this truth or denial?

["Changes," Phil Ochs](#)

- Another old woman is heard to say to her daughter, "Sometimes you don't know where you are until you've left."

And when we've left, where do we want to be?

["Where've You Been," Kathy Mattea](#)

- Graffiti spray painted on a wall near the railroad tracks: "You come early of late, but you used to be behind before, but now you're first at last."

And you?

["It's Too Late," Carole King](#)

- The orange and black sign by the winding lake road up the hill from the twisting river announces “Rough Road.” It sits there in the fall air like a glowing jack-o-lantern announcing some enigmatic truth. The town authorities wish to repave the road and remove the sign. A poor man protests to the Select Board, a group of successful residents. They are flabbergasted by his reasoning. He says they are trying to smooth over the truth of life.

Which side of the road are you on, or do you usually walk the line?

[“Walk the Line,” Johnny Cash](#)

- Julian Assange’s father, after visiting his son in prison, where he is ill and held in solitary confinement 22 hours a day, is asked by an interviewer what are his concerns if his son is extradited to the U.S. under the Espionage Act. “They will murder Julian one way or another,” says John Shipton.

Why do so few Americans and Aussies care that their countries are run by mass murderers?

[“And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda,” Liam Clancy](#)

- Radio announcer: “I’ll talk about the weather with you in a few minutes.”

Is this the intimacy we crave?

[“The Dangling Conversation,” Simon and Garfunkel](#)

- A big sign on the wall inside a General Dynamics military defense plant announces: “Nothing important ever shows up in the newspaper. Reality is top secret.”

What is this reality that we are not supposed to know?

[“Follow,” Richie Havens](#)

- The local community college announced in the fall of 2018 a new certificate program: Training to become an Addiction Recovery Assistant to work in the substance abuse field. In the fall of 2019, as the college’s enrollment continued to fall and pot stores were springing up all around the area, the same college offered a new certificate program: A Cannabis Certificate Program that offers students training in cannabis cultivation, processing, preparation, retail, and outreach.

Guess what’s next?

[“Sunday Morning Coming Down,” Kris Kristofferson](#)

- On March 28, 2019, the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, David Trachtenberg, testifies in front of a Congressional committee that the American policy of first use of nuclear weapons is necessary for American security. In August 2019 the world is given notice that the U.S. has officially withdrawn from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. In September 2019, the Pakistani

Prime Minister, Imran Kahn, warns the world that the conflict with India over Kashmir is making the chance of nuclear war far likelier. As the U.S. continues to surround Russia with military forces, Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to warn of the growing threat of nuclear war.

It looks like the world is heating up, doesn't it?

["A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," Bob Dylan](#)

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