

“Mr. M”

In spite of being a precocious 7 year old, I squeezed my father’s hand securely as we walked along Fifth Avenue in the Upper Fifties in New York City. Normally more independent and not known for hand-holding, even I could see the need to grasp my father as we passed thousands of people on the sidewalks and streets, numerous automobiles of all shapes, colors, styles, and sizes, and buses crammed to capacity with additional masses. The scene was just like the description in my favorite childhood book: *This Is New York* by Miroslav Sasek. A gift from a previous trip, my mother had purchased this book as a souvenir a few years earlier in order to introduce me to her favorite American city. New York’s assault on the senses – sounds, sights, and smells – was incredible and overwhelming; as delightful as the book’s portrayal, the city was so much more.

Having traveled with my parents extensively from places ranging from Chicago to Miami Beach in my first seven years of life, I had never encountered a place quite like New York, where my neck strained upwards to view the tops of the aptly named skyscrapers. All of this combined for amazing experiences which has made an indelible impression upon me, some 53 years later.

Caught up in the pace of the city, my father briskly walked along Fifth Avenue, causing my little legs to work double-duty. It was a hot August day in 1964, made even more so with much concrete, glass, people, and transportation. In all of this sweltering heat, discord, and cacophony along New York streets, I began to notice that a number of people – perfect strangers – kept greeting my father as “Mr. M”. I wondered how did these people, whom we had never seen before, know that my father’s name began with an “M” for Maxwell? As I pondered this, I remembered from the previous day that two American Airlines stewardesses had greeted my father in the same way. At the time, I was so excited boarding the shiny new Boeing 727 aircraft with its rear three-engine configuration that their greetings didn’t seem unusual given my father’s frequent New York trips. However, with many strangers addressing him in the identical manner, it all seemed very curious. If people were to confuse him with a celebrity, my father resembled Raymond Burr of “Perry Mason” fame – another “Mr. M”, but that seemed doubtful given all of the same responses. After at least another dozen greetings from strangers, I finally asked my father about these occurrences. He explained that the public recognized him from the Enro Shirt Co. ad campaign which had been running every week for almost the past year. Appearing first in *The New Yorker*, the ads were soon added to *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *Gentleman’s Quarterly*, and *Playboy*. Normally, an advertising executive would never be recognized for his ads; the point of

most advertising was to have the public notice the product instead. My father, though, never did anything conventionally.

When my father, Stewart Maxwell, created the Enro Shirt Co. ad campaign in 1963, he based it upon a couple of noteworthy popular cultural icons: Charles Schulz's "Peanuts" cartoon strips and Ian Fleming's James Bond series of books and movies. The overall layout of the Enro ads adopted the 9-frame cartoon format of "Peanuts". For the visual appearance, however, he chose black and white photography instead of drawings or color. The ads consisted of only three characters: "Mr. R" (James Rosenblum, Enro's owner); "Mr. E" (Mr. Euling, the head of Enro's manufacturing); "Mr. M" (Stewart Maxwell, as the prospective ad executive continuously seeking, but not quite securing Enro's account). With clever writing, turn-of-phrases, and always a punch-line, the genius of these ads was running them initially in The New Yorker every week. As a full page, they stood out from the rest of the magazine's advertising and cartoons. In each issue, New Yorker readers looked for these ads, the same way they looked for their favorite William Hamilton, Charles Addams, Saul Steinberg, or Mary Petty cartoons. Fleming's James Bond influences on the ads were the suggestive banter of the text and the use of an initial such as "M" to represent characters. Each Enro ad showed "Mr. M's" attempt at trying to receive their allusive approval and account, owned by "Mr. R" and run by "Mr. E". Through questioning, my father would try to learn more about the company's history, different products, and style innovations of this venerable Louisville family-owned business.

In the first ad, "Mr. M" jokes as an aside to the readers that the name "Enro" has to go, until he finds out from "Mr. R" that they represent family initials of the founder. Quick to respond, "Mr. M" exclaims that he has the company's new logo: "Enro, the name that's hard to remember." Subtly with humor, these ads told the company's story and sales soared. With the success in The New Yorker, the campaign soon expanded to the other periodicals. With weekly ads in Time, Newsweek, Playboy, et. al., that is how an advertising executive becomes recognized by perfect strangers.

In retrospect, the remarkable thing is that this instant catapult to celebrity status had little impact upon my father's psyche. He correctly realized that fame is fleeting and mercurial, and that, in time, his face and initial would disappear from people's memories. Eventually all good things come to an end, and he orchestrated the ad campaign's transition from cartoon format to product promotion. While maintaining the 9-frame full page ad structure, my father introduced color to show the merchandise, while retiring "Mr. R", "Mr. E", and "Mr. M". In less than two years, my father managed to transform a sleepy, Southern haberdasher manufacturer into a nationally recognized label, carried by some of America's finest stores.

To prove that this fame and attention did not go to my father's head was what happened upon our arrival in New York. Prior to our trip, he had made reservations for 1½ weeks at The Plaza in order to visit the New York World's Fair. In his world, to be in New York and not stay at The Plaza was simply unthinkable. His family had a long-standing tradition in frequenting it – from his parents who honeymooned at the hotel to his Aunt Alice Woodrow Shillito who had an apartment there, complete with a grand piano. The Plaza's management and staff knew him and looked forward to his stay; in club terms, he was "a legacy". Through the years, he even had a bar stool reserved for him at the end of The Oak Bar by Vince, the bartender, whenever he was in town.

With this knowledge, you can imagine The Plaza's horror when they realized that our 1½ week reservation had been "lost"! Under normal circumstances, this mishap might have been solved in a 1,000 room hotel. However, the World's Fair and a number of conventions had not only filled The Plaza to capacity, but also most of the competitors. Upon learning of this predicament while attempting to check in, my father remained quite composed. Instead of exploding in a childish tirade to Paul Sonnabend, the hotel's Vice President and Managing Director, my father took a very conciliatory, understanding view of the situation. Distraught about this reservation mishap, Mr. Sonnabend found us a room in the newly opened New York Hilton a few blocks away at Rockefeller Center, so we wouldn't be homeless. He also extended the added hope of obtaining better accommodations several days later. Although unable to stay at The Plaza on this trip, Mr. Sonnabend was a man of his word and secured a suite for us a few days later across Fifth Avenue from The Plaza at its sister hotel, The Savoy. After all of these years, I cannot remember a more commodious and splendid suite, complete with a fireplace, crystal chandeliers, high ceilings, moldings, numerous rooms, baths, and walk-in closets. To top it off, the suite commanded a breath-taking view of Central Park and Midtown Manhattan.

To a 7 year old, my father's attitude and conduct spoke volumes by not losing his temper in The Plaza's lobby and instead taking a regretful, sympathetic tone. Mr. Sonnabend went out of his way to take care of us then, as well as many future stays. In hindsight, it was fortuitous that we were able to stay at The Savoy, because a year later, this grande dame hotel on Fifth Avenue between East 58th and 59th streets was demolished to make way for the General Motors Building, now owned by Donald Trump. The Edwardian elegance of The Savoy with its beautiful carved paneling in its lobby recalled a London hotel or club. A fond memory that I have is watching a footman constantly polishing the already polished brass hardware of the hotel's front doors. Instead of touching them, I discovered the adjacent revolving doors which offered much

amusement in their constant spinning, until the doorman gave me a very stern look of displeasure!

Experiencing the World's Fair with my father was especially worthwhile. He had attended both the 1933 Chicago World's Fair as well as New York's previous World's Fair in 1939, and the latter particularly had a profound effect upon him. Although he enjoyed visiting this 1964 World's Fair with my mother and me, he preferred New York's earlier one, because it introduced to visitors so many futuristic ideas, many of which had come to fruition.

As one of the last major world's fairs, I am quite glad that we experienced it together, since my father died 22 years later in 1986 at the all-too-young age of 58. Unlike many who pass so early in life, he accomplished much, met many interesting people, and did a number of remarkable things. Brilliant in so many ways, he coupled that with great imagination, multiple talents, and a sense of humor and laugh which are still legendary and remembered by many.

Born into a patrician family in 1928, Stewart Shillito Maxwell – known as Stu – was the son of Nathaniel Hamilton Maxwell and Mildred Trimble Shillito. His father was a major attorney who specialized in Constitutional law, and presented a number of cases before the U. S. Supreme Court; his mother was the granddaughter of John Shillito who founded the department store in 1830, which is the oldest west of the Alleghenies, and continues today as Macy's. A descendant of European nobility, his background is liberally sprinkled across the continent dating back to Charles Martel, Charlemagne, and English kings, along with the added genealogical spice of Oliver Cromwell. On American shores, he was related to many leaders in our nation's founding, its governance, and commerce.

At the time of Stu's birth, his father was 48 and his mother was 42; both clearly anachronisms from the 19th century trying their best in tolerating the 20th century and the "Roaring Twenties". Rounding out their family was my father's elder sister, Mildred, nicknamed "Dolly" to distinguish her from their mother of the same name.

Stu's father, Nathaniel (1880-1943) was not just a jurist, but also an accomplished writer of short stories in the O'Henry and Guy de Maupassant styles. His work regularly appeared in Collier's, Saturday Evening Post, and Harper's.

Stu's grandfather, Col. Sidney Denise Maxwell (1831-1913) was considered the nation's #1 statistician, head of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce from 1871-1891, a Union Colonel in the Civil War, head of the Associated Press in the late 1860's to the early 1870's, and a poet, composer, published author, historian, and booster of Cincinnati, while trained as an attorney. His book, *The Suburbs of Cincinnati*, describes in great detail the development of our city's neighborhoods and architecture, still an excellent and much quoted reference book for historians and researchers 147 years after its publication. While heading the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, Sidney was the major advocate in the creation and building of the Cincinnati Southern Railway, a city-owned rail line built between Cincinnati and Chattanooga. Its construction was to restore our city as a commercial "Gateway to the South" like it had been before the Civil War. Today, the leasing of this mainline to the Norfolk Southern Railroad earns Cincinnati millions of dollars in revenue. Sidney's most lasting and significant contribution to our city, though, was his delivery in 1878 of the initial lecture at Pike's Opera House proposing the establishment of the Cincinnati Art Museum. This well-received proposal was made when there were only approximately a half dozen major art museums in America, and within three years the Cincinnati Art Museum was founded.

Stu's father and grandfather are mentioned, because he also was multi-talented and a writer – described in his self-deprecating manner as a "hack-writer". In his case, Stu's literary talents were confined mainly to his creative copy for clients as an advertising executive, and his expert ability at editing and proofreading. My brother John and I particularly benefited from this latter attribute which was a great assistance on many school papers.

Suffering from asthma and allergies almost from birth, his early years were often spent as an invalid being poked and prodded by doctors trying to bring him comfort. Instead, my father resented this treatment, and by the age of 8, he decided to rebel. While lying in bed on a beautiful, sunny day, he was awaiting the arrival of Dr. Wagner who was coming to administer more injections. Realizing that his bathroom window was directly above his Hyde Park English Tudor home's front door, my father began to plot a scheme. Filling a bucket to its brim with water, he waited for his target to arrive. Dressed in a dapper white linen summer suit with a matching Panama hat, the doctor strolled along the walk leading to the front door. Just as the doctor rang the doorbell, Stu opened his window and poured the bucket of water all over his target at the moment his mother answered the door! After this episode, it was decided that he had endured enough and would no longer be subjected to endless shots, which weren't very effective anyway. This act of defiance at Dr. Wagner's expense was seen as my father standing up for his rights, something he would do for the rest of his life.

Overriding influences in Stu's teenage life were the loss of his father in 1943 at the age of 63 (Stu was just 15) and the anticipation of military service in World War II. Stu tended to gravitate to an older crowd, and thus many friends not only served our nation, but were tragically killed. Many decisions on Stu's part were determined with the thought that he might not live to be 20. As luck would have it, the war concluded when Stu was 17½ years old, and thus he was spared.

He often would jokingly state that he had the benefit of a "classical" education which began at The Lotspeich School, then Walnut Hills, The Asheville School (a top Southern prep school attended by a number of male family and Literary Club members including Otto Geier), and finally the University of Cincinnati. As a voracious reader, education came easily to him with straight A's as the norm and he had an amazing encyclopedic knowledge. Growing up, I marveled at the number of daily newspapers and weekly magazines which were delivered to our home. Stu read each one of them, and could speak intelligently on almost every topic. For some people, this could be quite intimidating, but Stu possessed a jovial personality that put people at ease. He would gradually reveal his intelligence rather than overwhelm people all at once.

Although not known to be routine and predictable, Stu did have certain idiosyncratic habits which organized his daily life. His breakfasts consisted of a 2½ minute boiled egg in a particular Spode egg cup, eaten with a stainless steel spoon, accompanied with a large glass of tomato juice, and 2 cups of coffee in a non-coordinating Lenox bone China coffee cup, stirred with a sterling silver repoussé spoon. Not known as a "morning" person, one never spoke to my father until he finished his second cup of coffee. The family always took note of which cup of coffee he was drinking – 1st or 2nd? Adhering to his wishes made for a much more pleasant day for everyone.

Upon World War II's conclusion, Stu married Elaine Brenner and he adopted her daughter Linda from a previous marriage, and they had a son, Geoffrey. Although not a successful marriage, he was particularly proud of an accomplishment during this period: at the age of 21, he hired former Literary Club member Woodie Garber to design one of Cincinnati's first modern houses in 1949-50, built in Indian Hill. Stu placed one stipulation in granting the architectural/

interior design commission to Woodie: my father would allow him to design anything, if Woodie would first explain every aspect of it. Happy to agree to this condition, Woodie immediately told my father that his "homework assignment" was to read a half-dozen books ranging from Space, Time, and Architecture by Sigfried Giedion to several books

on the artwork of Wassily Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, and Japanese tea houses. Once read, they discussed each book in detail before any mention of the proposed home, various needs, or its design. This condition was given to Woodie, because Stu was interested in learning about architecture and construction, and that he would be an excellent teacher. Realizing that Woodie would have a reason for doing everything proposed, Stu chose to be actively involved and learned much. The design and construction of this home was a tremendous success, and it was photographed by Hedrich-Blessing, a top photographic firm. The home was known for its advanced design and construction techniques, and many in the architectural world came to tour it, including Mies van der Rohe. By the time it appeared in *Better Homes and Gardens* in 1955, my father had lost this home to his ex-wife in a divorce settlement. Often when traveling to Indian Hill in later years, he would turn onto Rock Hill Lane to drive past it. Once I asked if the loss of the home was painful for him, and he responded with a very profound statement: "The important thing in life is not the possessing, but the doing."

My father's second marriage was to my mother, Marilyn Michiele Boster, who upon marrying him became "Mrs. 3-M" from a monogram standpoint. Their union brought them great happiness, purposes in life, and my younger brother John and me. It was truly love at first sight, at least for my father who, upon seeing Marilyn enter a room, announced to his companions that he was going to marry her – even though he had no idea who she was.

At the time they initially met, both were recently divorced – my father from Elaine Brenner and my mother from Dr. Harry Fox – and were moving into apartments at the gracious residential hotel, The Vernon Manor. Certainly, my mother's beauty, validated and confirmed by the fashion and publishing worlds as a "cover-girl" model, and my father's handsomeness with his deep blue eyes brought them together in the beginning. As their relationship blossomed, it was their love and knowledge of music, art appreciation, interest in model railroading, sense of humor, brilliance, and cleverness which bonded them. Mutual interests and viewpoints are essential in a marriage, but of greater importance was that their personalities were complementary, yet different. My mother needed a strong, self-assured man who could say "no" to her. Having been told her entire life that she was gorgeous, smart, and talented, Marilyn craved someone with the confidence to rein her in when needed. Conversely, my father suffered from what would probably be diagnosed as mild melancholy. Outwardly, his outgoing personality, quick wit, and piano playing masked someone who was looking for another who was as bright as he. Surrounded by many yet suffering from loneliness, my mother understood this about him; her steady, buoyant personality coupled with intelligence helped balance my father's temperament and moods. Theirs was a life filled with fun, laughter, and love, often with inspired repartee being bantered about effortlessly, recalling the best of Oscar Wilde or the antics of Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy in the movies.

The day before being married, my parents purchased the old Longworth-Wallingford mansion on Grandin Road in order to be married in the foyer on February 19, 1955. Located in what is considered today as Hyde Park, this 1825 farm house was originally built by Nicholas Longworth and gradually tripled in size during the 19th century achieving 30 rooms, not including an adjacent two story coach house and servants' quarters. The transformation of this lovely but antiquated and out-of-date home evolved over a ten year remodeling with the expert guidance of renowned New York interior designer, Michael Greer, along with my mother's unerring good taste and influence, and my father's understanding of architecture, structure, and proportion. This project became a family affair and influenced me to become an architect and interior designer. With the encouragement of my parents and Mr. Greer, I took an active role at the age of 11 in the design of my two floor bedroom suite, including several trips to New York – these times staying at The Plaza – to select furniture and fabrics and consult on its overall design.

Something which also interested each of us in the family was model railroading. Beginning with my father's 0-gauge layout from the early 1930's that he designed in his childhood home's attic, he graduated to the smaller scale HO when marrying my mother. My father was in charge of train layouts which he carefully researched, while my mother and I did scenery. Later, my younger brother John joined us enthusiastically with this hobby. Many trips were spent on trains, and we documented stations, railroad yards and bridges not only in Cincinnati but also Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. After nearly 20 years of working on the HO layout which extended through half of our basement, Stu announced one day that we were going to dismantle it in favor of the even smaller N-gauge. His feeling was that the reduced scale would enable us to depict much more. I must admit that my mother and I were disappointed with the loss of the HO layout, having worked on it for so many years, but we soon came to agree with Stu's reduced scale reasoning. One remembrance that I had working in N-gauge was the meticulous photographing and documentation of Philadelphia's 30th Street Station, originally built for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Once compiled, we made an exact model of the station for our N-gauge train layout, completely electrified inside and out. With the use of trip-relays, Stu managed to have a train departing each time one arrived, allowing much interest and action. In his last year, my father acquired an even smaller scale – Z – which gave him much enjoyment. This time, however, it did not replace our N-gauge which had extended itself through six rooms of our basement.

My father always downplayed his talents, preferring a low profile if possible. He communicated in a simple yet clever style, and subscribed to the art of plain speaking

and writing. One memorable situation which resulted from his writing and affected me occurred on a Sunday afternoon when I was almost 9 years old. The telephone rang, I answered it, and the voice on the other end of the line asked to speak to Stewart. Replying that "I am Stewart", they said that "The White House is calling, and The President wishes to speak to you." Hearing that, I was certain that one of my friends was pulling a prank on me. After repeatedly challenging the person on the telephone, my mother happened to walk by me and wondered who was calling. When I responded to her question with a roll of my eyes that it was "The White House calling", my mother grabbed the phone out of my hand, realizing that my father had recently written President Johnson about the Watts Riot in Los Angeles in August, 1965. L.B.J. was so impressed with his impassioned letter that he wanted to speak to him personally. The voice at the other end of the line was the Press Secretary, Bill Moyers, and my mother explained to him that I was indeed "Stewart", but my father and author of the letter went by the nickname "Stu", thus the confusion. Coming to the telephone, my father spoke to The President for about 20 minutes, with L.B.J. saying that he was impressed with Stu's views. The President asked if he might periodically call my father to find out what a typical Midwesterner had to say on a particular topic. Stu responded that he wasn't sure how typical he was, but that he would be honored to speak to him anytime. Before leaving office, L.B.J. placed several more calls from The White House with no further confusion over the name "Stewart".

Another example of my father's understatement and lack of hyperbole was something which I learned in the last year of his life. While discussing something else, Stu happened to mention in passing that he had played dueling pianos with Arthur Rubinstein. Considered one of the greatest pianists, Rubinstein appeared in Cincinnati for a performance with the Symphony. Afterwards, my father performed with him at Lucien Wulsin's home, "The Hermitage", in Hyde Park (where The Regency is located today). Undoubtedly, they performed on two Baldwin grand pianos, since Mr. Wulsin was its owner. When my father told me about this, it was in the form of an aside, and I made him repeat himself to make certain that I heard him correctly. Trained as a classical pianist from the tender age of four, he was also excellent playing jazz, often being asked to perform.

Always the life of the party, his imagination and rapier wit were constantly working in overtime. He could even compose limericks extemporaneously with the greatest of ease. All of this was why he was hired by Farson, Huff, and Northlich (later known as Northlich-Stolley, and now simply as Northlich) as Director of Creative Design when he was 27 years old. Considered as the next generation of executives at this advertising agency, former Literary Club member Alex Stolley was in charge of client relations, and Stu created and devised the firm's ad campaigns for each client. After five years, my father left Farson, Huff, and Northlich to found his own advertising/public

relations firm, S. S. Maxwell & Co. Several years after its establishment, Stu landed the Enro Shirt Co. account, and the rest is history.

While placing my mother's fashion collection in various art museums around the nation following the death of both of my parents, it also gave me great satisfaction to be able to make a gift in my father's memory. While assembling for donation my mother's swimwear collection, I discovered some bathing suits, sport shirts, and cabana jackets from Enro which had been featured in Stu's ad campaign decades earlier. Donating these items to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, I also included artist's proofs of these ads featuring the clothes. In addition, my father's distinctive green spectacled sunglasses with brass rims, the color preferred by him due to his sensitive blue eyes, were also given to the museum for posterity.

As my father's ad campaign stated, Enro may be the name that is hard to remember, but it and "Mr. M" will live forever as a part of the permanent collection of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.