Many years later, the Duke of Wellington, hero of Waterloo, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was enjoying a leisurely stroll along Piccadilly, when a gentleman approached him saying, "Mr. Robinson, I presume?"

The great Duke drew himself up to his full height and, staring down at his interlocutor, replied, "My good fellow, if you believe that, you'll believe anything. Then he proceeded on his walk, perhaps amazed by the encounter, or perhaps reminded by it of the now famous Battle of Gildersleeve.

Robert H. Allen

IN THE ZONE

March 1, 1999 — Herbert C. Flessa

For at least a decade sports announcers have been using the term "in the zone" or "took it to another level" to describe performances beyond the norm, even for super stars. These memorable experiences, well documented in athletes, occur --albeit infrequently -- in other performers including writers, artists, musicians -- and for that matter all of you in the listening audience tonight. Such experiences, called the optimum human experience, or "flow," has several dimensions. These, as outlined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, include "deep concentration, highly efficient performance, emotional buoyancy, a heightened sense of mastery, a lack of self consciousness, and self-transcendence." It is worth noting that there are no specific biochemical or physiological parameters which announce or measure the arrival "in the zone". I have chosen this evening to present some details of the optimal experiences which have occurred in several individuals whom I have observed, read about or interviewed.

The first of these is **TED WILLIAMS**, whose Major League baseball career spanned four decades. His composite batting average was .344, with of course, the .406 batting average he achieved in 1941, an average most likely never to be achieved again. He struck out fewer than one out of ten times at the plate, and during his major league career, he played in 2,219 games, hit 521 home runs, had 2,654 hits, and walked 2,019 times. It is said that he could follow the seams on a baseball as it rotated toward him at 95 miles an hour and that he could read the labels on a record as it spun on a turntable. As you may recollect, he missed parts of five baseball seasons, serving as a Marine pilot in World War II and later in Korea. When serving in the Korean War he served as John Glenn's wingman during many of his missions, and often when they jetted deep into enemy territory, Williams was leading one of America's greatest pilots. On September 10, 1949, I had the opportunity of watching Ted Williams in person. The place was Yankee Stadium where a crowd of 51,548 gathered to watch one of the many struggles between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees during the 40's and 50's. The Yankees team that day included Phil Rizzuto, Gene Woodling, Dr. Bobby Brown, Joe DiMaggio and Yogi Berra. The first baseman was Billy Johnson and the pitcher was "Steady Eddie" Lopat, a pitcher of considerable skill whose out pitch was a nasty curve ball. The Red Sox team, which finished the year with a team batting average of more than .300 but yet lost the pennant by one game to the Yankees, included Dom DiMaggio, Johnny Peske, Vern Stevens, Bobby Doerr, and of course, Ted Williams. The pitcher that day for the Red Sox was Ellis Kinder. I'd been a fan of Ted Williams since his arrival in the American League nearly a decade previously. That day I watched him very carefully. In the first inning, while on deck, he remained practically motionless while staring at the pitcher. As the third batter in the first inning with men on base, Williams entered the batter's box, and while leaning on his bat dug a hole with his back foot deep enough that I thought his foot would disappear. While digging he stared at Lopat the pitcher. The audience of about 50,000 was nearly completely quiet. After fouling a couple of pitches, Williams was called out on strikes on a 3 and 2 pitch which to my eye appeared to bounce on home plate. Williams spun on his heel and headed to the dugout. The crowd, interestingly enough, remained

largely silent with only scattered "boos" and "cheers." My guess was that the fans didn't want to get Williams riled up. An inning or two later Williams repeated his performance. On this occasion, first ball hitting, he crushed a vicious line drive down the right field line toward the first baseman Johnson who was playing on the line in the outfield grass as part of the positioning required using the famous Boudreau shift. The first baseman leaped. The ball was hit so hard that it tore the glove out of Johnson's hand dropping it 20 to 30 feet in the outfield grass. The crowd responded with a loud OOOOOH. The ball continued on into right field. A single. Later in the game he lined a double off the distant right center field fence hard enough that it was fielded by Joe DiMaggio who was able to whip the ball back to the infield, holding Williams to a double. I don't really remember the rest of the game. I know the Red Sox beat the Yankees, but obviously I have not forgotten his performance. Regarding Williams performances on this day, I am reminded that Oscar Wilde once warned that, "memory is the diary we all carry about with us but it often chronicles things that never happened." So be it. When asked about his hitting and his game preparedness, Williams responded, "I hit better when I'm mad. I'm sharper. Reactions are quicker. My sensibilities are keener." When asked how he managed to navigate his fiery and shell racked jet fighter back to base after a mission during the Korean War, Williams responded, "I fly better mad."

For him, the road to the zone was paved with anger.

In the spring of 1995 a notice crossed my desk announcing **SIR ROGER BANNISTER** as a guest physician participant in a special Neurology conference to be held three days hence. Bannister is today the most recognizable name in the annals of track and field. In addition I learned that he is a famous neurologist and author of multiple medical papers in the general field of neurological diseases. I quickly changed a Friday noon time engagement and attended the Bannister conference. As expected, the conference hall was packed Friday at noon. Sir Roger was introduced and a patient with a very complicated, extremely rare brain disorder was discussed in the presence of the patient. Sir Roger, with great skill and grace, interviewed the patient and made him and

his wife feel comfortable. The 200 of us in the audience were entranced. He gave a scholarly analysis of the situation. The hour sped by. I thought I would be remiss if I didn't approach the podium after the conference to thank Sir Roger for his appearance in Cincinnati and for the conference. He was in Cincinnati as the announced celebrity who would also speak at the American Heart Association Heart Marathon dinner to be held subsequently. As I was approaching the podium, one of my friends asked if I could do him a favor. "Do you have time to take Sir Roger to lunch?" I nodded an immediate assent, and with several colleagues found our way to the dining room in the University Hospital where we had a simple lunch but a very pleasant hour-long discussion. In April of 1997 I wrote to Sir Roger wondering if he would permit an interview and discuss with me his experiences as a runner. Shortly after, I received a handwritten letter, declining a personal interview, but referred me to an autobiographical book The Four Minute Mile. In that book I learned that Sir Roger "went up to Oxford" in the autumn of 1946 having been asked to wait a year before entering Cambridge University. "Too young", he was told by the Cambridge registry. It was during his time at Oxford that Sir Roger took up running seriously. Throughout the winter of 1953 and the spring of 1954 Sir Roger and several of his teammates trained in earnest pointing toward the Oxford-AAA games to be held in Oxford, England on May 6, 1954. The aim was to seek peak conditioning and give a try to break four-minutes in the mile run. A high wind nearly aborted the record-breaking attempt, but as the start of the race approached, the wind dropped slowly and the attempt was on. I quote now from Sir Roger's book The Four Minute Mile and read for you the most exciting description of an athletic event that I've ever had the pleasure of reading. I felt like I was there.

> "The gun fired – Brasher went into the lead and I slipped effortlessly behind him feeling tremendously full of running. My legs seemed to meet no resistance at all as if propelled by some unknown force. We seemed to be going so slowly! Impatiently, I shouted 'faster' but Brasher kept his head and did not change the pace. I went on worrying until I heard the first lap time of 57.5 seconds. In excitement my knowledge of pace had

deserted me. Brasher could have run the first quarter in 55 without my realizing it because I felt so full of running that I should have had to pay for it later. Instead, he made success possible . . . I barely noticed the half-mile passing in 1 minute, 58 seconds nor when round the next bend Chattaway went into the lead. At three-quarters of a mile the effort was barely perceptible: the time was 3 minutes and .7 of a second and by now the crowd was roaring. Somehow, I had to run that last lap in 59 seconds. Chattaway led round the next bend and I pounced past him at the beginning of the back straight 300 yards from the finish. I had a moment of mixed joy and anguish when my mind took over. It raced well ahead of my body and drew my body compellingly forward. I felt that the moment of a lifetime had come. There was no pain, but only a great unity of movement and purpose. The world seemed to stand still or did not exist. I felt at the moment that it was my chance to do one thing supremely well. I drove on, impelled by a combination of fear and pride. The noise in my ears was that of the faithful Oxford crowd. Their hope and encouragement gave me greater strength. I now turned the last bend and there were only 50 yards more. My body had long since exhausted all its energy but went on running just the same. The physical overdraft came only from greater willpower. This was the crucial moment when my legs were strong enough to carry me over the last few yards as they could never have done in previous years. With 5 yards to go to the tape that seemed to recede, would I never reach it? The last few seconds seemed never ending. The famed line of the finishing tape stood ahead as a haven of peace after the struggle. I leapt at the tape like a man taking his last spring to save himself from the chasm that threatens to engulf him. My effort was over and I collapsed, almost unconscious, with an arm on either side of me. It was only then that the real pain overtook me. I knew that I had done it even before I heard the time. The stop watches held the answer. The announcement came, "The result of one-mile time 'three minutes' and the

rest was lost in a roar of excitement. The official time was 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds."

He had achieved the impossible. He had entered the zone during the race -- where time had stopped, and there was only unity of movement and purpose. As you know, that record has been broken innumerable times since, but Sir Roger was the first. He retired from competitive running in 1954. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1975.

In the summer of 1997, while the Senior ATP Tennis Tournament was taking place at Kings Island, I was fortunate to be able to interview **STAN SMITH**. The interview, arranged by my friend Paul Flory, took place in the players' locker room immediately after Stan had completed a match. Stan was still dressed in his tennis outfit with a towel wrapped around his neck. I think all sports enthusiasts recognize the name Stan Smith as being one of the world's finest tennis players during the past two and a half decades and currently a major player on the Senior Tour. I asked Stan to explain to me, if he could, why on some days and some matches he was absolutely unbeatable. "It's probably a matter of confidence. You feel like you can get to any ball, you're moving well." I asked again how he prepared to get to the optimum level, or does it just happen? "You have to give yourself the opportunity to make it happen. It can happen at almost any time. I think most of us play unusually well when we reach a certain serenity on the court -- not anxiety, but serenity. On such days there's a general feeling that no matter how you're playing you can turn around and give yourself the opportunity. I think the best players give themselves the opportunity to play 'in the zone' more often than others. External forces -- such as stress at home, a bad night's sleep, or a poor practice -- might carry on to the court in a negative way. But sometimes it works the other way around. You get on the court, and all of the conflicts happening off the court are no longer present and you feel relieved." Stan cited as an example Stefi Graf who has been stressed in her private life, but when she gets on the court she's a killer. She feels free from all other distractions. For Stan and Stefi serenity assists them in reaching the zone.

CHUCK STUDLEY, a football player and graduate of the University of Illinois, coached football for 38 years. Currently, he's a part-time scout for the New York Jets and the Baltimore Ravens. We talked a little bit about the change in the football players in the last 30 years. He pointed out that the offensive linemen obviously are larger and stronger and better able to protect the all-important quarterback. "Wide receivers and some cornerbacks are world-class sprinters. Football players now are required to maintain a program in conditioning year round. Offensive linemen, on the other hand, although their muscle strength has greatly improved, their cardiovascular stamina is not nearly as good as it was two decades ago. The injury rate in today's football athletes is higher, primarily because the game is faster and the players are larger. Artificial surfaces contribute to injuries. Team psychology is very interesting and very complex. The assistant coaches working with small groups know the players intimately, and thus in large measure are responsible for the intensity, desire and attitude developed in the players. Intelligence of individual players is a positive aspect in preparation for the whole game. It's difficult to measure exactly the readiness to play a game. One play, such as a recovered fumble, a completed long pass, or a return of a punt for a touchdown, can change the whole emphasis of a game and maintain intensity of the fortunate team throughout the entire game. That's when the team is 'in the zone.' As a group they are confident that despite all obstacles they will be the winners." We talked a bit toward the end of our interview about selection of players. Is the selection based on perceived intelligence or just perceived athletic ability? "You've got to watch a man in action before you make the final judgment on it, even though his test scores, his intelligence scores, might be borderline. Obviously someone who's smart and performs well in pressure situations is the person we want. Thus, talent and conditioning and the proper state of mind are all important in competitive athletics, but state of mind is the most important." He closed our meeting with a poem, which I present to you in part:

"Think big and your deed will grow.

Think small and you'll fall behind.
Think that you can and you will.
It's all in the state of mind."

I have told you of several athletes who have had the optimal experience or who on occasion have reached "the zone." I now move to another arena – the musical arena. In the early fall of 1997 I interviewed **ERICH KUNZEL** in his backstage office at the Music Hall at about 7:30 in the morning. Erich, the conductor and arranger for our famous "Pops Orchestra", is known in the U.S. and throughout the world for his creative and dynamic style. We are reasonably well acquainted with one another and chatted casually for a few minutes until I posed the question, "How do you get to the optimal experience for yourself, and how do you get the musicians there?" Erich views himself as the facilitator of musical technique. A communicator. "Once you get all these basic elements that you're trying to put together to make 100% perfect performance, then you're also trying to do that inspirational super heavenly thing that will create that excitement, adrenaline, that shock, that other zone that will get everything working so that there's fireworks on the stage." I asked Erich to more specifically take me to his last performance where he and his group were "in the zone." He described it as follows:

> "I conducted on a Sunday a while back the last of five concerts with the Detroit Symphony. Dave Brubeck was my 78 year-old soloist. Saturday's performance was a little bit weak. But on Sunday, our last performance, Dave and the orchestra redeemed themselves. His improvisation was sparkling. He was on his own high. All of a sudden that performance started to become very electric and everything started to gel. I began pumping faster tempos. When we got to the last piece, I was driving him and the orchestra to the point where it was almost unplayable but still playable. I took it to a hell of a speed. Brrump, brrump, brrump! It was a driving type of thing. All the performers clicked in and by the end we were 'hot'! The audience bounced up and roared approval. The whole performance was on a

plateau that was amazing. The audience knew that they had heard something special."

We chatted a bit more, and then I asked him what it was like to reach the pinnacle as a musical arranger. "I have a vision in my mind of what the music is supposed to sound like. With that vision I try to paint a picture. It's like I have a palette of colors and I'm going to paint that picture with the woodwinds, or the harps, or the strings. Then I'm going to balance the whole picture. Sometimes I'm an inventor because I'm inventing sounds. Some days are not very productive. At other times, however, when you're on a roll you keep working with the music even though you may not complete the painting until long, long, wonderfully conductive hours later." An average work day for Erich may be as long as 18 hours.

On Friday, October 24, 1997, I met with **DOC SEVERINSEN** who was appearing with the Pops Orchestra here in Cincinnati as part of a show to be televised called the "Big Band Hit Parade." Appearing with Doc in addition to the Orchestra and Erich Kunzel were Patti Page, Eddie Daniels and Ed Shaughnessy. We arranged to meet after the dress rehearsal about mid afternoon. I came early and was ushered into Doc's star dressing room (a room approximately 8' x 6' with one mirrored wall.) Covering one wall entirely was a clothes rack filled with about a dozen and a half of Doc's coats, ranging from standard sports coats to spangled, striped, starred, and multicolored coats which he must have used in some performances somewhere. After a few minutes, he arrived in the dressing room, trumpet in hand, and sweating profusely form the recent rehearsal. We had met previously and were comfortable enough to have a relaxed conversation. As a matter of record, let me note that Doc, in addition to being a superb trumpet player, is the principal Pops conductor of the Phoenix Symphony, the Buffalo Symphonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Milwaukee Symphony. Before I could ask a question he announced, "Take your time. I don't have to be on stage again until 8:00." I asked him if he had heard the term being "in the zone". He nodded to the affirmative. He continued by saying, "I'm very seldom in the zone. I'm very critical and off hand I can only think of one time in

my career when I had a performance when I walked off and said, I would settle for that over and over and over again." That's the one I want to hear about. Take me there.

> "I was at Hollywood Bowl and we played a concerto which was written for me that was very difficult. The setting was perfect with the Los Angeles Symphonic and a great conductor Larry Forest. I had practiced my part probably beyond what I thought I needed to, and I'd had a previous public performance of it. I guess when you're "in the zone" you really don't know what's happening because you look back on it a couple of times and try to figure it out, what did you do then, because if I could do it again, I think I would be able to improve all of my performances. In this instance I was never able to figure out specifically what I did. I was physically prepared and strong. I was mentally alert. And I was spiritually calm. I had everything going for me that you need, and this in front of 15,000 people who were just waiting. It's not like a jazz chorus where if you miss something you can make believe you meant to do it and do it over a few times, and everybody will say, that's a cute trick. This was classic. It was extremely difficult. It's hard for me to say what happened that night. Obviously, the orchestra and I and the conductor got into a synchrony that night that happens only rarely on the stage."

I moved the discussion to perhaps a more mundane topic, namely, preparation for any concert. "I seek calmness and tranquility before a concert. For an hour or longer before leaving for the auditorium I turn the lights out in my room and meditate. I am aware only of my surroundings and my imminent appearance on stage, but I am not aware of anyone being near. If people talk to me during that time and I reply, the words that I've spoken I do not remember nor do I remember to whom I've spoken them." For Doc, calmness, tranquility and intense preparation are components that may lead to a zoned experience, similar to Roger Bannister.

Unknown to you are **MICHAEL AND DONNA PHILLIPS**, talented amateur dancers. Michael, a retired Armco foreman, and Donna, a retired registered nurse, began dancing at age 45 and continued until Michael's knees said, "no more" 15 years later. One day about 10 years before this interview Michael found out he had cancer, a form of lymphoma. That night he prayed to his God and reached a tranquil peace where he felt that he was above everything, almost like floating. He and Donna both have described similar but not as intense experiences on occasion when dancing. Michael described, "On nights when you're dancing better than you ever have before, it seems like the music has entered your body and makes your body do and go where the music wants it to. On these special nights, you and your partner together feel as one. You're relaxed -- your arms, your ankles, your legs, your styling. Everything falls into place. You do everything together. You're oblivious of other people on the dance floor. Of these special nights we were not competing, just dancing. Dancing for the pleasure of dancing. The day of a major dance event has to be an orderly one, one with no distractions. On arrival at the dance hall the music soon begins, and on a special night enters your body and demands an exceptional performance from you." For Michael and Donna, the extreme dance experience was in some measure spiritual.

Michael has since died of another form of cancer -- he was not afraid or angry. He had found peace.

DR. BOB NOLL is the last in my series of "zonal" interviewees. Bob is Professor of Clinical Pediatrics and Psychology. He is a member of the team which meets one afternoon a month at the Children's Hospital Cancer Clinic where patients who have survived cancers for longer than five years who are now adults are interviewed, examined and tested on a regular basis. The total number of patients in this group treated originally as children is over 400. Our team consists of Dr. Noll; Judy Correll, a nurse practitioner; Dr. Cynthia deLaat, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics Hematology/Oncology, and myself. Participating in this clinic has become one of the more rewarding experiences in my lengthy medical career. Not too long ago I learned that Bob was a jet pilot who had flown an A-7

attack jet bomber off the U.S.S. Midway, a carrier, during the Vietnam War. I remind you that the carrier jet pilots are among the top select pilots in the entire Navy. One of the especially difficult tasks of the carrier pilots is to land the plane on the flight deck of the carrier at night, often with no visibility. He volunteered that on at least two separate occasions he became "zoned out" while performing night landings on the U.S.S. Midway. The real work of a night landing begins, according to Bob, when the plane is approximately 10 miles from the carrier and ends roughly during the last 1,000 feet just before the landing. The aerodynamics of the landing are beyond my understanding. Bob made it clear to me that his skills improved enough after multiple such landings that he wanted no information from the controller of the ship and that he was able to tell them that things in his airplane were under control. Inside the airplane, having made the final adjustments, he was able to lean back in the pilot seat and literally fly for a little bit no handed and land successfully without touching the controls. "In the zone!" In addition to his description of night landings, Bob described in some detail a bombing mission deep inside Vietnam. The aim of the mission was to destroy a huge concrete railroad bridge approximately 30 miles south of Hanoi. The mission included bombing runs on the bridge by approximately 40 planes. None were successful. Toward the end of the mission Bob described his run on the target. "I rolled in on the target. There's screaming on the radio. There's heavy fire from down below. I released my bombs. The first four went right down every span of the bridge, but I was so low that two of the six dudded because they didn't have time to arm before they hit the ground. As I pulled off and kicked back my wing to look, I could see that the bridge was just smoke and nothing else. I got back to the carrier without any trouble. If a pilot achieves something special on the mission, e is allowed to have a fly-by, a low level, high speed passing of the carrier before approaching again for landing. I took the fly-by at 100 feet and 500 miles an hour. It was another zone." Bob received the Silver Star for this battle performance.

My mission is now complete. I have explored in some detail the ultimate human experience of several performers with different skills. The exact reason for the zonal experience remains unexplained. I paraphrase a statement known to all of us. We know that it's a place, but a map won't get you there.

1. Bannister, Roger. The Four Minute Mile. Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1955, 1981.

2. Michael Seidel. Ted Williams: "A Baseball Life". Contemporary Books, Chicago, 1991.

3. Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. The Psychology of Optimal Experience.

THE FATE OF FRANKLIN

March 8, 1999 Frank Louis Blair Koucky III

Thirty years ago I heard the English group "Pentangle" sing a beautiful old English ballad called "Lord Franklin" with a cryptic theme of brave men lost:

"Twas homeward bound one night on the deep
Swinging in my hammock I fell asleep,
I dreamed a dream I thought it true
Concerning Franklin and all his gallant crew.

With a hundred sailors he sailed away,
To the frozen ocean in the month of May,
Seeking a passage around the poles
Where we poor sailors do sometimes go.

In Baffin Bay where the whalefish blow,
The fate of Franklin no man may know,
The fate of Franklin, no tongue can tell
Franklin, alone, with his sailors does dwell.