



October 10, 2013

We all remember Bernard Simbari. He was the studious, reserved, courteous classmate, who along with his equally gifted twin brother Russell, often set "the curve" in Latin, English, Chemistry, and other classes. He and Russ were my best friends. When I was a new student to FLHS in the 11th grade, they befriended me as though I had attended Bennett Elementary School and Naval Air Junior High and had been a resident of Fort Lauderdale all my life. They introduced me to Gayle Sawyer, Nancy Pell, and many of you who today I cherish as life-long friends. We studied hard to get the grades that would allow us to enter college and in my case even go to college on a scholarship. When not studying, we palled around together frequenting the A&W stand across the street from FLHS, the Gooney Golf on Broward, the Brunswick bowling alleys on Broward, movies at the Gateway Theater, and of course the beach. In addition to being my friends, Bernard and Russ were friends of my family. It was a great time to attend public school.

They went off to U of Florida for undergraduate and med school becoming doctors and then officers in the Air Force. I took a different tack heading to Auburn and becoming a Navy officer. Our careers and paths continued to diverge over the years as Bernard settled in Salt Lake City and Russ first in California and then Tucson while the Navy sent me coast to coast. Post-active duty Navy civilian endeavors saw me in Florida, California, and now Texas. During some of this period without the ability to instantaneously connect through social media or emails, we lost touch. But fate would reunite first Russ and me 30 years ago when I lived in Los Angeles and performed Naval Reserve duty in San Diego where Russ lived. We would get together frequently, almost monthly including a tour of a nuclear sub. On two occasions, business brought me through Salt Lake City where Bernard and I found time to reconnect over dinner.

Our occupational endeavors prospered. My career as a Navy officer flourished as did my civilian occupation as an investment manager. In my spare time, I worked for the YMCA and now the National Multiple Sclerosis Society for which I ride a bicycle to raise money.

Russ became a successful Occupational Physician in great demand on the West Coast. In his spare time he sang (and still sings) opera with performing companies in Arizona and California.

Bernard became a renowned dermatologist who, when I mention his name to friends from Utah who now live in Houston, say "I know him well. He's my/my wife's/my mother's etc. dermatologist". In his spare time, he also performed opera as a baritone in local productions such as "Merry Widow" at the old Theater 138 in Salt Lake. He would regularly hold "musicales" at his home where musicians and singers would come to informally perform in ensemble and enjoy each others' company. When not practicing medicine and singing, he became a master swimmer, hiker, and cyclist. I find this amusing because you all know that none of us were known as "jocks" at FLHS. As a matter of fact, we never went out for a varsity sport and here Bernard and I have often ridden 100+ miles a day on a bicycle.

But something dramatic happened to Bernard in 2007. He had a stroke. Initially mostly paralyzed, extensive physical therapy helped him regain some ability to walk so he is not totally confined to a

wheelchair. He can communicate but his verbal skills are mostly in response to questions or statements that you make to him. He does write and uses hand gestures well (he is, after all, Italian!). While the effect of the stroke impacted his body, it did not diminish his mind. He is lucid and his thoughts are clear. He understands everything you say. You can communicate with him but not in a traditional sense.

Unlike most stroke victims, the paralysis mostly impacted the right side of his body. Recognizing that he had some ability with his left arm, his therapists put him through physical therapy in 2008 to help develop his left arm and hand functions. The therapy was *art therapy*. Yes, art therapy as in painting. And wouldn't you know, it worked. Who would have guessed that beneath the white coat exterior of a physician lurked an artist? Russ joked recently that the only art class that they ever took was a "cryp" course in college just to get an "A" to help their GPA. Bernard's skill as an artist quickly developed. My wife and I were in Salt Lake City three weeks ago and Bernard has his portfolio which now totals more than 375 works chronologically assembled at his home i.e. those he hasn't yet sold. One can see the outstanding progression of his talent as time went on from 2008 though today as his paintings have become more complex and varied. So great is his talent, that he is now one of the most sought-after artists in Utah. In September, he was the featured artist of the prestigious *Avenues Street Fair* in Salt Lake City. When we had dinner that night, his life partner Bill Barnett, showed us some of his press clippings and his new web site. Linda and I are now honored to exhibit one of his paintings in our home.

The Lord has a purpose in life for all of us. Sometimes, He lets us figure out what that is. Sometimes, He gives us challenges which we must face. In all cases, if we use the talent and gift that He has given us and accept the challenges, we are doing His work.

I am the point in my life when I am thinking in terms of legacy. What legacy will I leave to my children and grandchildren, to my community, to mankind. I cannot speak personally for Bernard but I think there might have been times when he thought that his legacy was that of healing and physical body repair. While that may be true, it is my opinion that his legacy will be that of beauty created out of need to repair the devastating effects of a stroke...art. When we think of legacies that endure, art is at the top of the list. Mankind cherishes art. From rudimentary paintings on cave walls to carefully sculpted Greek bodies to interpretations of master painters, we go to great lengths to preserve that art. It is art that endures. We all remember Bernard Simbari. Generations to come will remember Bernard Simbari for his beautiful and interpretive art.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bernard Simbari". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and elegant.

Bernard's web site: <http://www.bernardsimbari.com/>

Utah Artists link: http://www.utahartists.com/bernard_simbari.html