**H. Shrager (1909 - 1982 )**

Preliminary draft.

His first name was Hymen, but he was always called H. (Pronounced "Aitch. "). He was my first cousin. He was a modest man, with hidden depths, a sense of humor, a life-long bachelor, a story teller with a strong interest in people and their eccentricities.

In 1930 H. graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, probably with a degree in Chemical Engineering. I hardly knew him in those early days (generation gap : I was the runt of the family) . Born in Lawrence, Mass and a high school graduate of Lawrence High School, he may have picked up an interest and expertise in textiles from some experience he'd had in the woolen mills of Lawrence. In later years, he owned and operated a felt mill in Westerly, Rhode Island.

H.'s father ran a small market cum variety store and delivered orders via horse and wagon. I suspect this was his first encounter with the noble animals. But more than that, growing up in the shadow of Rockingham Race Track in Salem, New Hampshire ; later: Suffolk Downs in East Boston, and Narragansett Race Track in Pawtucket, R.I., H. loved the gee gees.

At some point when he was in his early twenties and I was about ten. H. and two partners bought a race horse. With a bit of hypno-therapy I should be able to recall the name of the nag. Let me call her Sunday's Sweetheart. What with feed, water,, blankets, stable , trainer and jockey charges, entrance fees, the purchase price was only the tip of the expense iceberg. H. gave me an empty notebook and said to me "I hear you're good with numbers, so I want you to mark down the expenses."

The Sweetheart ran twice and didn't make it into the money. "We've decommissioned her," H. told me, "Off to the glue factory." My little notebook had only one entry.

After he retired, H. used to drive down from his apartment in Methuen just to tell us stories and get a good home cooked meal. His stories , after straightening out the convolutions of narrative, seemed mostly to be about investments in small businesses, bankruptcies, guys that had cock-a-mamie ideas for everything under the sun and ended up with fortunes.

One day, H. said to me "Let's go to the races." WE drove to Narrangansett. Walking towards the grandstand from the parking lot, he was buttonholed by a guy whom he knew. He bought a sheet of paper from him. "That's Clocker Walker," he explained. The Clocker has a printing press in his station wagon and prints out his Selections of the Day. "He's much better than Max the Maven. "

I accompanied him to the paddock where , he said, experience trumps theory. He said he wanted to "talk to the horses." Meaning the jockeys, I guess. From the jockeys, honest fellows ! , seeing there was nothing in it for them, a few grunts issued.

H.'s motto was: "If you hear about it, it's too late." I like to believe he invented the saying, even if it had been around for years. In any case, it would have been an appropriate epitaph for him.