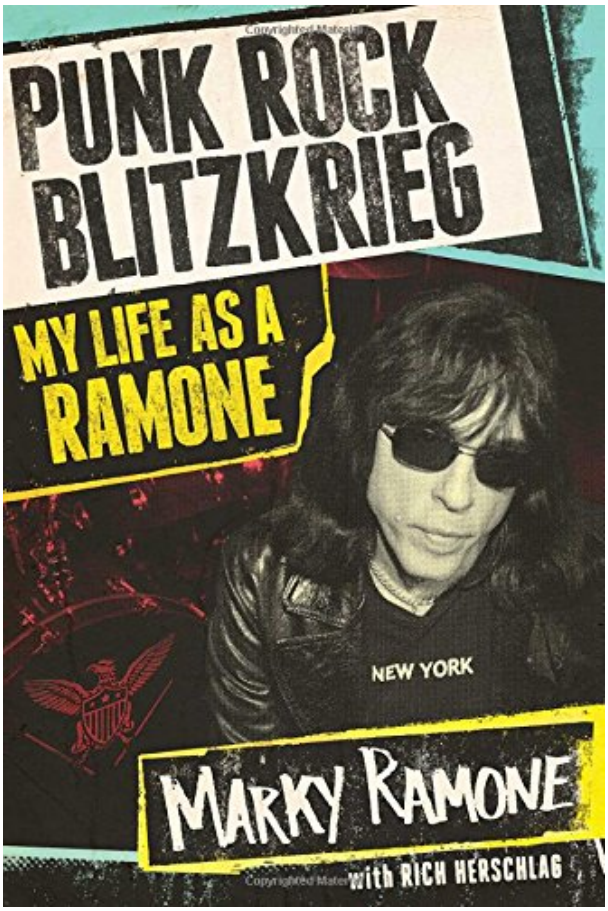
PUNK ROCK BLITZKRIEG: MY LIFE AS A RAMONE BY MARKY RAMONE, RICHARD HERSCHLAG



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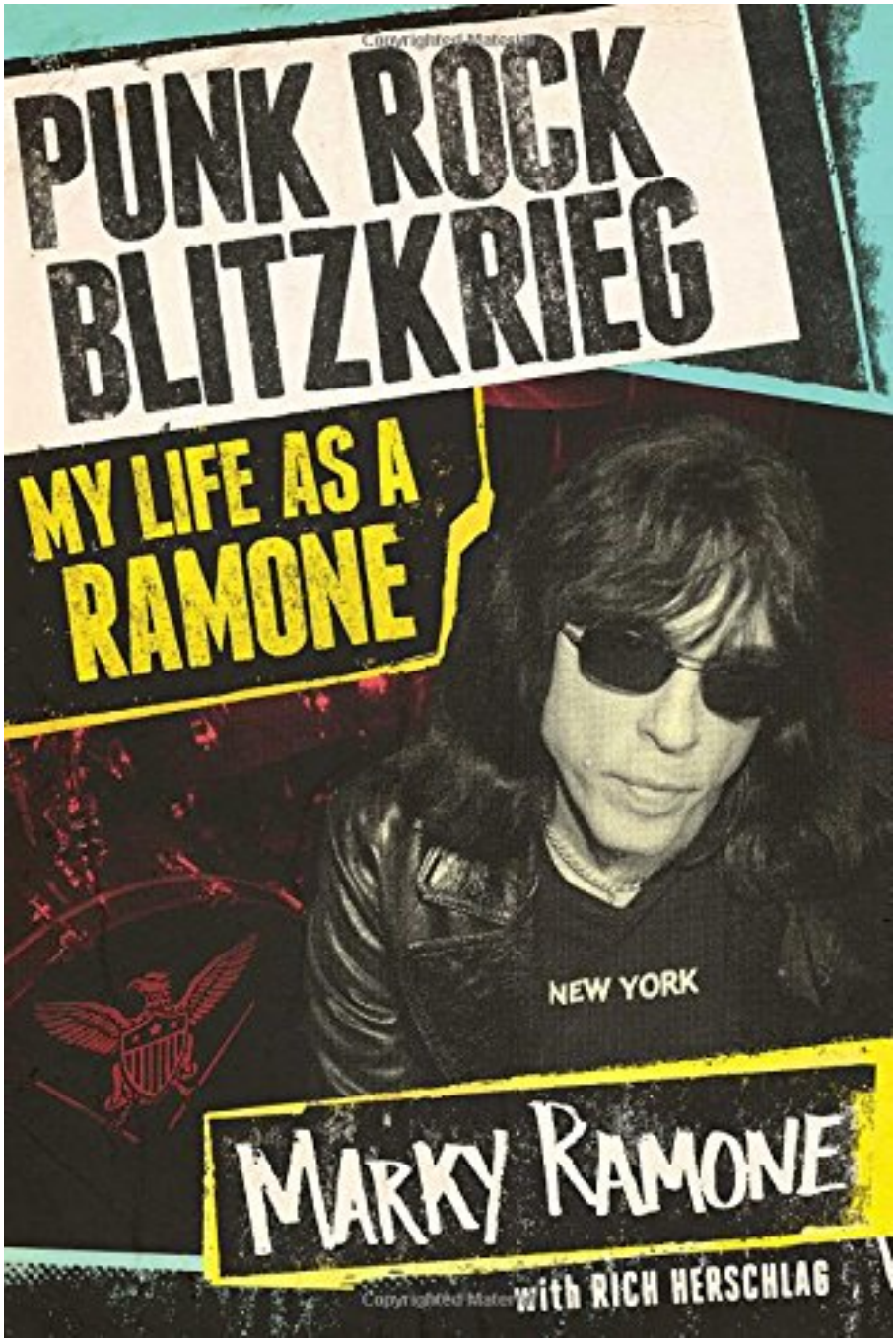

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Is **Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life As A Ramone By Marky Ramone, Richard Herschlag** book your favourite reading? Is fictions? How's about past history? Or is the best vendor novel your choice to satisfy your spare time? Or even the politic or religious books are you hunting for now? Here we go we provide Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life As A Ramone By Marky Ramone, Richard Herschlag book collections that you need. Bunches of numbers of publications from numerous fields are offered. From fictions to scientific research as well as religious can be browsed and also found out right here. You may not fret not to locate your referred book to read. This Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life As A Ramone By Marky Ramone, Richard Herschlag is one of them.

Review
“Marky and I are from the 70's; as a drummer from the 70's, he can show the new boys a beat or two! He's legend!!!” (Peter Criss of Kiss)

"Marky was an integral part of not one, but TWO of the most important bands in rock and roll. He saw everything from ground zero and lived to tell about it. Absolutely vital document!" (Anthony Bourdain)

“Marky's music and style defined the punk rock movement and has influenced countless artists, entertainers and designers. As a musician, he harnessed the energy of the 1970s counterculture into a truly new movement, one that resulted in a seismic shift in fashion, art and music. While playing in great groups like Wayne County and the Backstreet Boys, Dust, Estus, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, and of course The Ramones he became known as one of the best drummers of our time, rivaling Keith Moon. I first saw him perform with Estus in 1973 in Horseheads, New York when they opened for B.B.King. It will forever be an amazing memory.” (Tommy Hilfiger)

"The Ramones are one of the three or four most influential American rock bands of all time, and their story, as related by surviving member Marky Ramone, is both entertaining and enlightening. So put on your old leather jacket, scream Gabba-Gabba-Hey at the top of your lungs, and dig in." (Stephen King)

About the Author
Born Marc Bell, Marky Ramone, a Brooklyn native, joined the Ramones in 1978. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2002 along with Johnny, Joe, Dee Dee, and Tommy, and has received both a Grammy and an MTV Lifetime Achievement Award. Visit him online at MarkyRamone.com to keep up with all the latest.

Punk Rock Blitzkrieg 1

THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM

My father's father, Peter Bell, came to America from Holland in 1920 along with my grandmother. My father was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on August 11, 1931, and christened Peter, after my grandfather. My grandfather was a chef at the Copacabana for ten years before becoming the head chef at the "21" Club. The Copa, as it was known, was located on East Sixtieth Street in Manhattan and was owned by mob boss Frank Costello. Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin made their debuts there. If you were a singer, bandleader, or comedian in the forties and fifties and made it to the Copa, you had made it, period.

My grandfather worked at "21" for eighteen years, right through its heyday. Established during Prohibition and located on West Fifty-Second Street in Manhattan, you could always spot the place thanks to all the painted statues of jockeys above the front entrance. Everyone who was anyone ate at "21." My grandfather got to meet and hang out with stars including Humphrey Bogart, Jackie Gleason, and Judy Garland. These weren't just a bunch of tall tales—my grandfather had the pictures to prove it! Whenever we visited my grandparents' house, I would just stare at those photographs in awe that my grandfather actually knew the same people I saw on TV and in the movies.

In 1944, my father and his parents moved from Hoboken to Brooklyn. My dad went to PS 217 elementary school on Coney Island Avenue, and that's where he met my mother. My mother's maiden name was Gertrude Joest. Most people called her Trudy. Her mother, Johanna, was French, and her father, Julius, was German. They immigrated to America in 1923 and settled in Willoughby, Ohio. My mother was born on September 10, 1931, in her parents' home. Julius was an electrical engineer, and the family was middle class, but most babies at the time were still delivered by a midwife instead of in a hospital.

When my mom was only two years old, her mother died. A few years later, Fredrick, my mom's older brother, died of pneumonia at the age of ten. Little Trudy and her dad moved to Cleveland for a few years before relocating to Brooklyn, New York. They lived on Ocean Parkway for a couple of years, and then moved to a four-story brick apartment building at 640 Ditmas Avenue, a few blocks south of Prospect Park. It was a solid working-class neighborhood made up mostly of modest private homes.

Mom and Dad were friends for quite a few years before they started dating when they were around eighteen. About a year later, on December 15, 1950, they got married at city hall in Lower Manhattan. On July 15, 1952, my twin brother, Fred, and I were born at New York Infirmary Hospital.

Our family lived with my grandfather Julius in a three-story brick walk-up, off the corner of President Street and Rogers Avenue in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. The buildings were all attached, usually with a little store on the ground floor and a separate stairway to the apartments above. Fred and I shared a room with bunk beds, which was fine with us because we got along really well.

My father was a card-carrying longshoreman, and my mother worked as a secretary. They sent Fred and me to a racially integrated nursery school in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a neighborhood just to the north. In the mid-fifties, most neighborhoods were segregated, but Fred and I were happy to be with kids from different cultures and made friends right away.

One strange thing about our nursery school was the school bus. We didn't have one. What we had was a Cadillac hearse converted into a kind of station wagon minibus. It was big and black and came rolling up to the school like there was a funeral to attend. When the kids saw the hearse coming up the block, we would

all run to try to get into the backseat first. It was roomy and padded back there, and it was cool to think this same compartment was once used for dead bodies. I loved riding with the window down. We all loved looking out the back window and making weird faces at the cars behind us.

The only thing I really didn't like about nursery school was when they put us all down for naps in the middle of the day. I thought it was weird the way they set us all up on little floor mats and turned the lights out. There was plenty of daylight still coming in through the windows. I knew I was supposed to be quiet like everyone else, but it was hard. I knew there was no way I was going to fall asleep, so the best I could do was lie there with my eyes closed.

I daydreamed about doing anything else but taking a nap. There were toys put away on shelves all around the room—wooden blocks, a Slinky, Play-Doh, Mr. Potato Head, a Lionel train set—and they were begging to be played with. After our nap, the teachers let us play a little rough, especially outdoors where we could just run around in the yard and make up our own games. To me, lying down on that mat and faking a nap was just a big waste.

In 1957, Fred and I turned five, and we moved along with Grandpa Julius back to the four-story building at 640 Ditmas Avenue, where my mother had lived when she was little. The bunk beds moved with us, so I still had to share a room with Fred. That was fine, because we still got along.

Dad and Grandpa Julius put their mechanical skills to work for Fred and me by helping us build a huge electric train set, which we played with for many hours. Dad also got us started building plastic models of cars, airplanes, and battleships. Fred loved making models of the Universal Studios monsters—the Mummy, Dracula, the Wolf Man, and the Creature from the Black Lagoon. He painted them almost lifelike.

All the models required Testors glue, which had a very powerful smell that hit you sharply way up your nostrils. The smell was so bad it was good, and we got a little buzzed from it. That was the bonus of building models.

There were no more naps once we got to elementary school. PS 217 was the same place our parents first met. Mom packed our lunch boxes. We got to play in the schoolyard at lunchtime. I got along with the other kids for the most part but got into a fight here and there. One time some kid in the bathroom accused me of stealing his grape juice. Why the hell would I want some kid's grape juice? So we got into it right then and there by the urinal until one of the male teachers burst in and broke it up. It was just kids' stuff.

When Fred and I got home, our grandfather Julius watched us until Mom and Dad got back from work. The deal was we would usually get our homework out of the way before we played. If the weather was bad, we would watch reruns of The Three Stooges Show, Abbott and Costello, or Adventures of Superman. The Three Stooges Show was probably my favorite because they were out of their minds with the slaps, hits, and smacks, but at the same time they were a unit—a team. It was like three times as much comedy packed into a half hour as anybody else.

Most days, I'd be waiting outside our apartment building for my father to come home from work. When I saw my dad, I'd run toward him to give him a big hug. I really looked up to my father. He was very relaxed about most things but firm when he had to be. My dad was six-foot-two-and-a-half, 230 pounds, and wore the thick, black-rimmed glasses that were popular at the time. He reminded me of Clark Kent. My mother looked like an actress. She was outspoken, and she was tough when she had to be. But my parents seemed to have a great relationship. I don't think I ever heard them argue, even once. If they did, it was never in front of us.

When the weather was decent, Fred and I would usually play punch-ball or stickball with our friends from the neighborhood. Stickball was basically street baseball using a broom handle. When that got boring, we moved on to more exciting things like climbing fire escapes or sneaking into boiler rooms. We got into fights with kids from other blocks in the neighborhood, usually because someone was on someone else's turf. We were just your average kids from Brooklyn.

On one particularly boring day, a friend had a cool idea to take a bunch of pillows and blankets, tie them together, and make a human dummy. We did a pretty good job considering we weren't pros. We carried the dummy up to the roof of our building and waited for a passerby.

Timing was everything. When someone was walking along the sidewalk about fifty feet away from our target, we would toss the dummy over the parapet wall and scream at the top of our lungs like someone jumped. It worked. When you had less than a second to look up and figure out what was happening, it really looked like a falling body. People flipped out.

One time we nailed a young couple carrying grocery bags. As the dummy plummeted to his "death," the man and the woman both dropped their bags, and the groceries rolled all over the sidewalk and the street. Up on the roof we laughed so hard our eyes watered and our stomachs hurt. It was one of those laughs where you weren't sure you were going to be able to breathe ever again. If it wasn't for the parapet wall, I think we might have rolled off the roof and wound up like the dummy.

The dummy always lived to see another day, and we kept getting better at throwing him. One time we threw him way out to the middle of Ditmas Avenue in front of an oncoming '55 Plymouth. The driver hit the brakes hard and skidded just short of running over the dummy's head. The problem was that the driver and the passenger both hit their own heads on the dashboard. The other problem was the size of the driver. He was huge. And he was pissed off. He stepped out of the car, looked up, and spotted us up on the roof. It didn't help that we were laughing, but we stopped laughing when he shouted he was coming up there to throw us into the street next.

We disappeared fast onto the rear fire escape, down the building stairway, anywhere to safety like a bunch of roaches scattering when the light comes on. There were places to hide in the basement. I came out when I figured it was safe. Whenever I thought about the stuff we did, I told myself that if you were a kid living in Brooklyn, getting in trouble was your job. Eventually the dummy got kind of beat-up and the prank got old, so we moved on to other things.

I had a friend named Joel who lived in the building. He was a chubby kid. We hung out all the time, and Joel would do whatever the rest of us were doing. There was an empty lot close to our building where a bunch of us kids would go to have rock fights. One time I hit Joel with a rock and blood squirted out of his head like a fire hydrant. It was like a scene from a horror movie. One of the kids knew enough to apply pressure to the wound and stop the gusher. Amazingly, Joel didn't need stitches.

Another time Joel and I were in a neighbor's yard trying to squeeze between two one-car garages to get to another yard, but Joel's big belly got stuck and he started to cry. I wanted to help him, but I was laughing so hard I was pretty useless. As I stopped laughing, I told him maybe we'd have to get a crane and fish him out. Or maybe we'd have to demolish one of the garages. Or maybe he would just have to lose some weight. Finally, I got him to stop crying and relax a little, and we wriggled him out. The next day, he told me his mother wouldn't let him play with me anymore.

Not long after that, I was playing in my room with a kid named Robert, who I really didn't like that much.

We were darting and jumping around the room and throwing whatever we could get our hands on. At one point I was on the top bunk and grabbed an old wooden milk crate off a shelf. I tossed it down to Robert, who tried to catch it and missed. One of the metal edges on the box caught him in the head.

Blood was everywhere. It was like the sequel to the horror movie with Joel—this time indoors with blood shooting all over the blankets and the walls. A few days later, I ran into Robert with a Band-Aid on his forehead, and he told me he wasn't allowed to play with me anymore. This became a pattern in my neighborhood. Ten years old and I had a reputation. As far as I was concerned, it wasn't deserved. I didn't want to hurt anyone. I was just out to have some fun.

PS 217 was strict. In the morning we had to line up in the schoolyard and march into the building, grade by grade, like an army. Boys were required to wear a tie, a button-down shirt, and a sport jacket. For girls, the dress code was a skirt with dress shoes. The girls wound up looking like miniature versions of their mothers. Sneakers were forbidden for boys or girls except in gym.

In the classroom, seating was in size order with the short kids at the front and the tall kids in the back. The desks were made of old dark wood that looked like it had been there from the day the school was built or maybe before. To get into your seat, you had to flip the desktop. There was a groove at the top for pens and pencils, and an inkwell with a brass lid. There were so many names carved into the desk that there were names carved over older names. Maybe if I looked hard enough, I could find Mom's and Dad's.

Every day started with us standing, placing our right hands over our hearts, and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Once we sat down and started the lesson, we were expected to remain silent unless called upon. If anyone made a sound or caused any disruption, they'd be punished. That usually meant standing in the corner and facing the wall. I had the corner memorized—the little crack, the missing paint chips. Usually the teacher would also call your parents and let them know you had behaved badly.

Once every week or two, a loud bell would ring, and we would do an emergency drill in case an atomic bomb was dropped. A few years earlier, the Soviet Union had developed its own atomic weapons, so we were expected to live on high alert. The drill was called "duck and cover." There was even a goofy civil defense movie by the same name. The teachers marched us all into the auditorium and made us watch Bert the Turtle show us how to survive a nuclear holocaust. There were kids in the movie about our age, dressed neatly like us, who saw a flash of light in the sky. Instead of freaking out, they all calmly crawled under their desks, knelt down, and covered the backs of their heads and necks with their hands and shirt collars.

It was hard not to laugh. Like squatting under a table was going to do anything in a massive atomic blast. But we did what they did, because what we were afraid of was not getting fried by a radioactive shock wave but getting sent to the corner to look at the wall. If we ever did see a flash of light in the sky and knew what was coming, I doubt we would have been quiet or gotten under the desks. I mean, this was Brooklyn.

From the late fifties into the early sixties, things were pretty stable from year to year. That included our school, which stayed just about the same. The only thing that was changing was my attitude, which was getting more negative every semester. I was a hyper kid to begin with, so I had a really hard time sitting still. I'd bang on the desk, melt crayons on the radiator, and constantly disrupt the class. I was fidgety. I had a hard time paying attention, and my mind would drift off. The teachers called my parents in so often that it got to be a drill—as stupid as duck and cover.

My father would sit me down and try to talk to me about my behavior. He'd explain how important education was and that it's something I'd benefit from later in life. "It may not seem important now, but

when you grow up, you'll understand." He meant well, but it didn't have much of an effect once I was back in the classroom, bored and drifting off.

But there were still some cool teachers, even if most of them ended up yelling to get their point across. And I did like certain subjects. I liked to read, so I always got an A in English. Science was cool, too. Just like with the train set at home, I enjoyed trying to figure out how things worked. I was able to do well if I was really interested in something and was allowed to move at my own pace.

That was the reason I entered the fifth-grade science fair. I built a three-stage rocket out of wood and galvanized steel. It wasn't a working model, just my idea of what the inside of a spaceship might have looked like based on all the sci-fi movies and news stories I saw. My ship was split open in the middle, like a cross section, so anyone could look in and see the controls, the seats, and the living quarters. My dad helped, but I was the captain, and the project took first place. For the sixth-grade fair, I built a working telegraph system with wires, a tapping machine, and two large Eveready batteries. The telegraph was combined with a model train set to look more impressive. That project took first prize, too.

All of this made my parents very happy and made up for some of the other problems I was having. They knew I had potential. But it didn't always carry through the way they would have liked. I didn't care much for history, because as far as I was concerned, that was for people living in the past. I was more concerned about the present. Math was one of my least favorite subjects. I knew the basics, and that was good enough for me. I could figure out the change when I was buying candy, and I didn't think there would ever come a day when I would need to use a polynomial.

Sometimes I didn't need to worry about how much a Hershey bar cost because I stole it. We lived about ten blocks from PS 217. In the morning, on the walk to school, I'd usually stop at Maudie and Eddy's candy store, slip something small from a shelf into my pocket, and walk out. Until one day about three steps from the door, right near the newspaper stacks, Maudie grabbed me by the wrist. His hand was like a vise grip, probably from many years of moving boxes and stacking shelves. I knew Maudie wasn't about to let me go under any circumstance, so I punched him in the stomach and ran out of the store. I decided never to come back to the store, but really only to avoid Maudie. My mistake was getting caught. I saw other kids stealing candy all the time, so I didn't consider it a big deal.

One day in class, my friend Sandy Stock and I waited for the teacher to turn his back on the class and we nailed him with a couple of spitballs, which were small rolled-up paper balls soaked in saliva. The teacher wheeled around quickly, but we were even quicker. We did this a few times until he finally faked us out and caught us in the act. I was the head troublemaker, so he started yelling at me in front of the class. I thought the teacher would calm down after a minute or so, but he actually got louder, walked right up to my desk, and got in my face. I felt attacked, so I punched him in the stomach like I did to Maudie.

There was no running away this time. The teacher grabbed me by my arm and dragged me out of the classroom, down the hall. He opened the door to the science storage room, shoved me inside, and locked the door behind me. The room was a small concrete-and-steel prison cell filled with test tubes, which I started knocking off the shelves and smashing to bits, kind of like Frankenstein. When I got through with the test tubes, I moved on to throwing books, Bunsen burners, and anything that wasn't nailed down.

The storage room door opened, and the teacher stood in the doorway. I knew I had crossed a line and thought that might be the end for me at PS 217 or anywhere. Instead, the teacher asked me to step out into the hallway. He calmed me down, reasoned with me, and explained that we didn't have to go another step down this path. He said there was no reason the principal or my parents had to know anything about this. It would

just be history and never happen again. I thought he was the coolest teacher who ever lived.

Record albums were too expensive for a young kid to buy, but I would scrounge together enough money once in a while to buy a single, which was a small disc that spun forty-five revolutions per minute. The first single I ever bought was Sheb Wooley's "The Purple People Eater." The song was about a Martian who came to earth and joined a rock-and-roll band. He was purple with a long horn on his head, which he used to blow out rock music. I thought that was a pretty cool story.

Since I was a big sci-fi fan, the lyrics and the story they told were as important as the music. I was also into all the monster movies I saw in theaters and on TV. On television, Chiller Theatre and The Twilight Zone were my favorites. On The Twilight Zone, there was always more than just a good sci-fi story. There was usually a real point to it. In one episode, a bookworm bank teller locks himself in the bank vault so he can read without being disturbed. While he's in there, an atomic bomb is dropped. When the teller steps out of the vault, he's actually glad that everything and everyone is gone so he has nothing but time and books. Then, as he begins to read, his glasses fall off and break.

For Christmas 1961, my parents bought me my first transistor radio. It might have been the happiest day of my life. I loved that radio. It was an RCA 3RH10 transistor. It was AM only, as FM was just getting started. It was very basic—small enough to hold in your hand with one big dial in front for tuning. On the side was the volume control dial along with a small port to plug in an earphone.

A whole new world opened up for me. Murray "the K" Kaufman was the big DJ on 1010 WINS. He was a real character, all over the place cracking jokes, playing sound effects, pulling pranks. In 1966, Murray the K worked at WOR-FM, one of the first progressive rock radio stations ever, and was still occasionally calling himself the fifth Beatle. It wasn't true in 1964, and it was even less true in 1966. There were dozens of people who might have laid one claim or another to that title—producer George Martin and, later, keyboard player Billy Preston and even John Lennon's controversial other half, Yoko Ono. Murray the K was not near the top of that list.

Bruce Morrow ("Cousin Brucie") and Dan Ingram were to the left on the dial over at 770 WABC, a very powerful station in terms of wattage and musical influence. The guys at WABC were fast-talking and clever, leading you in and out of a song as if they were part of it but without stepping on the lyrics. These DJs were smooth. They were breaking new, exciting groups like the Four Seasons and Jay and the Americans. The airwaves were like one big party.

In the summer of '62, the song "Monster Mash" by Bobby "Boris" Pickett was released. Pickett sang like Frankenstein's monster would have sung if he could. It was funny and catchy with a good rocking beat. Not only that, Frankenstein was my favorite monster movie of all time. I loved the way the monster was pieced together from body parts. I listened to my transistor every second I could that summer and into the fall hoping I would catch "Monster Mash." I also built a little radio holder for the handlebars of my bicycle. I was hooked.

At night, I'd listen to the radio under the covers in bed. If it was too loud and Fred was trying to sleep, I'd use the small plastic earphone that came with the radio. AM radio waves traveled thousands of miles at night. Sometimes I'd pick up a station from California, Texas, or even Mexico. I had the planet at my fingertips, so it was really hard to switch off the radio. Usually, I would fall asleep with the earphone still in my ear.

On February 20, 1962, our fourth-grade class along with all the other classes filed into the auditorium to

watch astronaut John Glenn lift off from Cape Canaveral and try to circle the earth aboard Friendship 7. All eyes were on a black-and-white Zenith TV set not more than about twenty-five inches across. This was sci-fi come to life. When the countdown was through and the rocket launched, you could see and feel the power even on that little screen. As the ship passed through the thick part of the atmosphere, the normally calm newsman Walter Cronkite actually shouted out, “Go, baby!” That’s how exciting it was.

No American had ever been in space more than about fifteen minutes, and over the next five hours John Glenn circled the earth three times. Reentering the atmosphere was not a sure thing. There was a real chance that the ship’s heat shield would fail and Friendship 7 would go up in flames. For about a minute or two—which seemed more like an hour—there was a blackout. There was no signal from the capsule, and you knew you might never hear from John Glenn again. When the ship came back into focus and you could hear the astronaut’s voice, we all stood up and cheered. It was more than just a sigh of relief. It was a thrilling moment when we were all on the same team. You don’t forget that feeling.

The summer of ’63 was special. My dad customized a Volkswagen camper to look like our kitchen at home. We drove that “kitchen” cross-country. The engine was air-cooled and only 40 horsepower, so you couldn’t push a Volkswagen camper over fifty-five miles per hour for too long. Including the stops we made in the Midwest, we took about two weeks to work our way across the US. We stayed at campgrounds, hiked, caught little fish in streams, learned the names of trees, and soaked in nature. I had my transistor radio with me, so no matter where I slept, I was still at home listening to all the latest hits.

When we stopped in town there were sometimes signs in store windows that said “Whites Only.” But for the most part, people were really friendly and happy to talk to us. I got a sense of how big America really was and how much there was to see outside Brooklyn. It was endless. I liked the road.

The road ended in San Francisco. The camper barely made it to California and needed major work if we hoped to make it back east. We didn’t have the money to pay for an overhaul. But we did have the longshoremen. The union was very strong—a real nationwide community. We were able to stay with union friends for a couple of weeks while my father picked up a temporary job on the docks. In the end, the van was fixed, we took care of the bill, and we headed east again. For me, the change of plans and how we handled it wasn’t a problem. It was an adventure.

On November 22, 1963, I was in my sixth-grade class when one of the other teachers walked into the room and told us that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Our teacher started crying and when they saw her, a few of the girls in our class burst out in tears, too. I was sure my mom would be doing the same thing. President Kennedy was a star—a young, brilliant man so many people connected with. Kennedy was not a typical president. He was always talking about the need for change. I felt sad, especially watching the girls around me crying. But it was one of those days, like most days, when I just didn’t want to be at school. A thought popped into my head. I hope we’re dismissed early. And we were.

When my parents got home late that afternoon, it was like the president was assassinated a second time. My mom and dad were big supporters of Kennedy. They believed in equal rights and equal opportunity and in the idea that America’s best days were ahead. My parents were crushed. You could see it in their every step, and it stayed with them for a long time.

On Sunday evening, February 9, 1964, my mother called Fred and me into the living room to watch the Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show. The buildup was going on all week with the Fab Four landing in New York and giving press conferences, imitating Elvis, and joking about their long hair—which wasn’t even that long. When they appeared on the black-and-white TV screen in our living room, it felt like things were

changing right before our eyes. There was electricity in the air you couldn't exactly describe, but it was impossible to be sad. It took about two minutes to get through the first song, "All My Loving," and the girls in the studio audience were hooked. The country was hooked. I was hooked.

The next morning, I started to comb my hair down in front like the Beatles did. My brown hair wasn't long enough for real bangs, but I figured in a few weeks it would be. John, Paul, and George were great, but I wanted to be Ringo. Sitting back behind the drums, pounding away, and giving the music all that power and rhythm was something I wanted to do. It was something I knew I could do.

There was no drum set in the house, but that didn't matter. At any given moment, I would be tapping my hands on the kitchen table, thumping on pillows, playing with a knife and fork like they were drumsticks. My mom would constantly ask me to please stop banging. That would work for about five minutes. Riding on the subway, I would listen to the rhythm of the steel wheels on the tracks and tap along with it on my legs.

Around my twelfth birthday, my parents got me my first snare drum. It was a cheapo Japanese piece but better than a table and utensils. I convinced my parents to take me for some lessons at a local place called Bromley's Music. Bromley's wasn't much of a music school. It was basically a drum set in the basement of someone's house. The instructor taught me how to hold the drumsticks military style and some rudimentary techniques like flams and paradiddles. After about three months, I didn't think I was getting much out of the lessons and I stopped showing up. What I really needed was my own drum set.

A few weeks later, my parents took me to Milton Arfin's music store on Church Avenue, where they bought me a very basic drum set. The deal was they wouldn't get me anything expensive until they were convinced I was going to stick with the drums. The kit consisted of a bass drum with a single tom mounted on it, a hi-hat, and a ride cymbal. Of course, I already had a snare.

The new kit was a Zim-Gar brand with the logo printed on the bass drum head. That wasn't going to cut it, because Ringo used Ludwig drums. So I wrote to Ludwig and asked them to send me a large sticker. When the Ludwig sticker came in the mail, amazingly, I immediately stuck it over the Zim-Gar logo. Right below it I spelled out The Beatles in black electrical tape.

I spent almost every spare moment practicing the drums, which were set up in the small bedroom I shared with Fred. I had a small phonograph with only one speaker, and I would listen closely to the drum parts on my favorite songs. By concentrating, I could figure out the bass drum patterns, off-time beats, rolls, accents. By the time the Beatles movie A Hard Day's Night opened in theaters in the summer of '64, I not only had maybe a dozen Beatles songs down on the drums but also was playing along with other British Invasion groups like the Rolling Stones and the Dave Clark Five.

Fred's reaction to the Beatles and the British Invasion was to take up guitar. So my parents made another trip to Milton Arfin's and bought Fred a starter Harmony electric guitar and a small Fender Princeton Reverb amplifier. Fred's early favorite band was the Dave Clark Five. But Fred soon gravitated to the blues, which led him right to the Rolling Stones. Before they got into writing most of their own songs, the Stones were covering all sorts of old blues numbers. Fred also liked the surf music pioneers Jan and Dean.

By this point, our room could barely contain the bunk bed, the drum set, and the Fender Princeton Reverb amp, let alone the noise we made—especially when Fred and I played together. So everyone in the family was really glad when we were able to move into a three-bedroom apartment. Even better, the apartment was on the first floor of the same building we had lived in for years at 640 Ditmas. We were twelve years old, in junior high school, and needed our own space personally, and now musically, too.

My new room faced the alleyway on the side of the building where the super kept the garbage cans. It was hard to ignore the smell of tossed-out banana peels and grease wafting through the window, especially during the hot summer months. But it was a small price to pay for having my own room—my own studio. The more I played the drums, the less I noticed the stench.

Fred had a friend in the building who soon turned him on to the Blues Project, with Danny Kalb on guitar, and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, with Mike Bloomfield on guitar. I was moving in a slightly different direction. In the spring of 1966, the Who released the album My Generation. An earlier Who single, "I Can't Explain," was a tight, melodic four-chord song. But it was the title track of the album, "My Generation," that really grabbed me. The chords came on fast, hard, and powerful. And drummer Keith Moon was doing things I had never heard before. Not even close.

The drumming style was manic and all over the place to the point where it was almost confusing. He added wild drum fills right over the top of the music and accents at parts of the verses and chorus no other drummer would ever have thought of. The weird thing was, it all worked. Moon's drumming made the songs more exciting but never completely took them over. I went right back to the drums and started experimenting with some of these techniques, putting in as many hours as I could.

As a thirteen-year-old self-taught drummer, I felt I was good enough to start a band. Kenny Aaronson was a bass player my age with a Fender bass and an Ampeg B-15 amp. He had the same musical influences as I did and was developing into a good player. The problem was, he lived twelve blocks from my building. But Kenny did what he had to do, carrying the bass in one hand and wheeling the amp in the other across streets and up and down curbs over a half mile to get to my building. He became the other half of the rhythm section.

The guitar player lived a block or two away. The vocalist was my friend Steven Bakur. We would all pile into my room after school. Between the drums, guitar, and bass amps, and a separate amp for vocals, we were packed in, and the room got smaller once we cranked it up. Because we were on the first floor, there was no one to complain in the basement below because there was no apartment there. The people above us weren't so lucky. We got a few complaints but not nearly as many as we thought we would. It had to be a pretty cool apartment building. My parents were very supportive, making sure we had enough to eat and letting us know when it was too loud even for them.

We called ourselves the Uncles, a tribute to the TV series The Man from U.N.C.L.E., which was based loosely on the James Bond spy movies. Because we were getting ready for a show—our first ever—for the student government at Ditmas Junior High, we were allowed to rehearse a few times in the school auditorium after class. It was my first time on a stage, and it was a thrill. With no bodies in the audience to absorb the sound, it bounced off the walls and made everything louder. We weren't in my bedroom near the garbage cans anymore.

At our first show, I was a little nervous, and I think the other guys were, too. As ten, twenty, fifty kids filed in, I knew rehearsal time was over. If we sucked, there would be nowhere to hide the next day. At the same time, we were excited, and as the show grew near, for the most part I wanted to show people what we could do.

Our set included "My Generation" by the Who and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" by the Rolling Stones. The rest of the set was mostly Top Ten hits from bands like the Animals, the Beach Boys, the Searchers, and Jan and Dean. A few minutes in, I noticed that we had a tendency to speed up a bit. That was a natural reaction to the excitement of playing live. It could start anywhere, with a guitarist speeding up first, then the

bassist, and so on. As far as I was concerned, it was up to the drummer—to me—to keep the song on track and lead rather than follow. I did it the best I could that day under the circumstances.

The kids at Ditmas liked us. It was not a typical experience for me. I could see right away there was newfound respect from the guys, the girls—and yes, even some of the teachers. That included some of the tougher male teachers who had fought in World War II and were not your obvious fans of rock and roll. But drumming—whether it was jazz, big band, or even rock and roll—was a very physical thing that clearly took some real strength and coordination. It was something they could relate to. They looked at me a little differently from that day on.

The Uncles got to play a few of the dances at Ditmas and a few private parties around the neighborhood. Our home base was the Jewish Center on Ocean Parkway between Ditmas and Eighteenth Avenues. This was the same place where I went to Cub Scout meetings with Pack 27 when I was eight or nine, with the same kids who were now coming to see the show. They were saying, "Wow, look at Marc up there. He can really play." I was very comfortable around the Jewish Center. There was such a rich history of entertainment in the Jewish culture. If you weren't a musician, actor, or comedian, you had an uncle who was.

We didn't play only the Jewish Center. We played wherever and whatever was available to us—churches, parties, people's basements. I was happy being appreciated for what I wanted to do, and I was always trying to develop. I was a big fan of drummer Hal Blaine, who was a member of the famous Wrecking Crew, a group of California studio musicians who always worked with Phil Spector and played on more Top Ten hits than anyone could count. If you were listening to Nancy Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beach Boys, the Ronettes, or Simon and Garfunkel, you were probably listening to Hal Blaine.

I got to the point where I could tell in under a minute if Blaine was playing on a given record. He had a very distinctive style with signature off-the-beat drum fills, and that style stood out even more at the end of a song. I was constantly committing these musical elements to memory and using them where it made sense.

Part of being in a band for me was looking the part. I grew my hair out like the Beatles. By 1965, that meant kind of shaggy hair with bangs. By 1966, that meant an inch or two longer. I wore Beatle boots, and suits that looked a bit Beatle-esque. I looked sharp for a kid in junior high school, which definitely helped attract the girls.

But my look had its downside, too. Some of the teachers at Ditmas gave me a hard time about it. My gym teacher, Mr. Gross, was an ex-marine in his late thirties. He picked on a lot of the guys in the gym class for any number of reasons, including not being able to drop down and give him forty push-ups. It was as if he had never left the marines. In his mind, he was still a drill sergeant preparing a bunch of fourteen-year-old string beans for the Korean War. Of all the guys, he really singled me out. I did every last push-up, sit-up, and chin-up he called out. But it was never enough.

One day, I was walking down the hallway wearing a tie loosely around my neck, when out of the blue came Mr. Gross, who was completely bald. He looked like Mr. Clean minus the earring. He grabbed me by the arm and marched me into his office. I thought fast about what it was I had done but honestly couldn't think of anything. Gross slammed the door, turned to face me from about a foot away, and started yelling at the top of his lungs. "I've had it with you! You don't pay attention in class. You're disruptive. Do you think that just because you don't want to be here that you have the right to ruin things for the other students?"

"I'm not ruining anything for anyone. You're ruining it for me."

I was ready to argue some more when Gross started poking me in the chest. I was surprised, and when I pushed his hand away, he reached back and slapped me a couple of times across my face. I used everything I had to control my temper, but when Gross's open palm made solid contact with my cheekbone, I lunged at him with my head down. The next thing I knew, I was seeing stars. He had hit me hard in the back of the head. It was all I could do to stay on my feet and pretend to listen to the rest of his tirade.

When I got home, I gave my father the blow-by-blow. He just sat and listened very calmly, asking a few questions here and there. I was not called into the dean's office the next day at school, and that was a relief. My dad was home from the docks early that afternoon. He had taken a half day off to pay Gross a visit. In the same office where Gross had knocked me almost unconscious, my dad called him a sadistic bastard and said that if he ever laid a hand on me again, it would be the last thing he ever did.

Mr. Gross never bothered me again, but a few of the other teachers kept putting me down in class. It was my hair. It was my clothes. It was my attitude. Some of the other students went after me, too. There was tension between the kids who dressed like it was still the fifties and those of us who were changing with the times. I wasn't the only target. But I was target number one.

I was glad junior high school was almost over. The one thing that made the final few months livable was my first real girlfriend. Alyson and I started going out in April of '67. I would walk her home every day after school, and we would hang out whenever we could. She came to some rehearsals. Just a few more weeks and I would not only be out of Ditmas Junior High but we would have the whole summer together.

Then she broke the news. For a moment, I thought we were breaking up. Instead, Alyson explained that her parents had a bungalow up in Connecticut and were making her spend the whole summer with them. That was better, but not much better.

The Uncles played their last show at a club on St. Marks Place in Greenwich Village called the Electric Circus. The club was situated in an old town hall and ballroom carved out of three very old four-story brick row homes. Just a few months before our gig, the place was taken over by new management, renamed, and decorated with a large modern dance floor, sofas, strobe lights, and projector screens all over the place. The four of us played our usual cover tunes okay, but we were definitely not the main attraction. On the screens, there were psychedelic images that were constantly morphing. The club had circus acts like jugglers, fire-eaters, and trapeze artists. It was hard to compete with that unless I was going to pour kerosene on my drumsticks and light them.

PUNK ROCK BLITZKRIEG: MY LIFE AS A RAMONE BY MARKY RAMONE, RICHARD HERSCHLAG PDF

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The “entertaining and enlightening” (Stephen King) final word on the genius and mischief of the Ramones, told by the man who created the beat behind their iconic music and lived to tell about it.

When punk rock reared its spiky head in the early seventies, Marc Bell had the best seat in the house. Already a young veteran of the prototype American metal band Dust, Bell took residence in artistic, seedy Lower Manhattan, where he played drums in bands that would shape rock music for decades to come, including Wayne County, who pioneered transsexual rock, and Richard Hell and the Voidoids, who directly inspired the entire early British punk scene.

If punk had royalty, in 1978 Marc became part of it when he was knighted “Marky Ramone” by Johnny, Joey, and Dee Dee of the iconoclastic Ramones. The band of tough misfits were a natural fit for Marky, who dressed punk before there was punk, and who brought his “blitzkrieg” style of drumming as well as the studio and stage experience the band needed to solidify its lineup. Together, they changed the world.

But Marky Ramone changed, too. The epic wear and tear of a dysfunctional group (and the Ramones were a step beyond dysfunction) endlessly crisscrossing the country and the world in an Econoline—practically a psychiatric ward on wheels—drove Marky from partying to alcoholism. When his life started to look more out of control then Dee Dee’s, he knew he had a problem. Marky left music in the mid-eighties to enter recovery and eventually returned to help the Ramones finally receive their due as one of the greatest and most influential bands of all time.

Covering in unflinching detail the cult film Rock ’N’ Roll High School to “I Wanna Be Sedated” to Marky’s own struggles, Punk Rock Blitzkrieg is an authentic and always honest look at the people who reinvented rock music, and not a moment too soon.

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Review
“Marky and I are from the 70's; as a drummer from the 70's, he can show the new boys a beat or two! He's

legend!!!” (Peter Criss of Kiss)

"Marky was an integral part of not one, but TWO of the most important bands in rock and roll. He saw everything from ground zero and lived to tell about it. Absolutely vital document!" (Anthony Bourdain)

“Marky's music and style defined the punk rock movement and has influenced countless artists, entertainers and designers. As a musician, he harnessed the energy of the 1970s counterculture into a truly new movement, one that resulted in a seismic shift in fashion, art and music. While playing in great groups like Wayne County and the Backstreet Boys, Dust, Estus, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, and of course The Ramones he became known as one of the best drummers of our time, rivaling Keith Moon. I first saw him perform with Estus in 1973 in Horseheads, New York when they opened for B.B.King. It will forever be an amazing memory.” (Tommy Hilfiger)

"The Ramones are one of the three or four most influential American rock bands of all time, and their story, as related by surviving member Marky Ramone, is both entertaining and enlightening. So put on your old leather jacket, scream Gabba-Gabba-Hey at the top of your lungs, and dig in." (Stephen King)

About the Author
Born Marc Bell, Marky Ramone, a Brooklyn native, joined the Ramones in 1978. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2002 along with Johnny, Joe, Dee Dee, and Tommy, and has received both a Grammy and an MTV Lifetime Achievement Award. Visit him online at MarkyRamone.com to keep up with all the latest.

Punk Rock Blitzkrieg 1

THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM

My father’s father, Peter Bell, came to America from Holland in 1920 along with my grandmother. My father was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on August 11, 1931, and christened Peter, after my grandfather. My grandfather was a chef at the Copacabana for ten years before becoming the head chef at the “21” Club. The Copa, as it was known, was located on East Sixtieth Street in Manhattan and was owned by mob boss Frank Costello. Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin made their debuts there. If you were a singer, bandleader, or comedian in the forties and fifties and made it to the Copa, you had made it, period.

My grandfather worked at “21” for eighteen years, right through its heyday. Established during Prohibition and located on West Fifty-Second Street in Manhattan, you could always spot the place thanks to all the painted statues of jockeys above the front entrance. Everyone who was anyone ate at “21.” My grandfather got to meet and hang out with stars including Humphrey Bogart, Jackie Gleason, and Judy Garland. These weren’t just a bunch of tall tales—my grandfather had the pictures to prove it! Whenever we visited my grandparents’ house, I would just stare at those photographs in awe that my grandfather actually knew the same people I saw on TV and in the movies.

In 1944, my father and his parents moved from Hoboken to Brooklyn. My dad went to PS 217 elementary school on Coney Island Avenue, and that’s where he met my mother. My mother’s maiden name was Gertrude Joest. Most people called her Trudy. Her mother, Johanna, was French, and her father, Julius, was German. They immigrated to America in 1923 and settled in Willoughby, Ohio. My mother was born on

September 10, 1931, in her parents' home. Julius was an electrical engineer, and the family was middle class, but most babies at the time were still delivered by a midwife instead of in a hospital.

When my mom was only two years old, her mother died. A few years later, Fredrick, my mom's older brother, died of pneumonia at the age of ten. Little Trudy and her dad moved to Cleveland for a few years before relocating to Brooklyn, New York. They lived on Ocean Parkway for a couple of years, and then moved to a four-story brick apartment building at 640 Ditmas Avenue, a few blocks south of Prospect Park. It was a solid working-class neighborhood made up mostly of modest private homes.

Mom and Dad were friends for quite a few years before they started dating when they were around eighteen. About a year later, on December 15, 1950, they got married at city hall in Lower Manhattan. On July 15, 1952, my twin brother, Fred, and I were born at New York Infirmary Hospital.

Our family lived with my grandfather Julius in a three-story brick walk-up, off the corner of President Street and Rogers Avenue in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. The buildings were all attached, usually with a little store on the ground floor and a separate stairway to the apartments above. Fred and I shared a room with bunk beds, which was fine with us because we got along really well.

My father was a card-carrying longshoreman, and my mother worked as a secretary. They sent Fred and me to a racially integrated nursery school in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a neighborhood just to the north. In the mid-fifties, most neighborhoods were segregated, but Fred and I were happy to be with kids from different cultures and made friends right away.

One strange thing about our nursery school was the school bus. We didn't have one. What we had was a Cadillac hearse converted into a kind of station wagon minibus. It was big and black and came rolling up to the school like there was a funeral to attend. When the kids saw the hearse coming up the block, we would all run to try to get into the backseat first. It was roomy and padded back there, and it was cool to think this same compartment was once used for dead bodies. I loved riding with the window down. We all loved looking out the back window and making weird faces at the cars behind us.

The only thing I really didn't like about nursery school was when they put us all down for naps in the middle of the day. I thought it was weird the way they set us all up on little floor mats and turned the lights out. There was plenty of daylight still coming in through the windows. I knew I was supposed to be quiet like everyone else, but it was hard. I knew there was no way I was going to fall asleep, so the best I could do was lie there with my eyes closed.

I daydreamed about doing anything else but taking a nap. There were toys put away on shelves all around the room—wooden blocks, a Slinky, Play-Doh, Mr. Potato Head, a Lionel train set—and they were begging to be played with. After our nap, the teachers let us play a little rough, especially outdoors where we could just run around in the yard and make up our own games. To me, lying down on that mat and faking a nap was just a big waste.

In 1957, Fred and I turned five, and we moved along with Grandpa Julius back to the four-story building at 640 Ditmas Avenue, where my mother had lived when she was little. The bunk beds moved with us, so I still had to share a room with Fred. That was fine, because we still got along.

Dad and Grandpa Julius put their mechanical skills to work for Fred and me by helping us build a huge electric train set, which we played with for many hours. Dad also got us started building plastic models of cars, airplanes, and battleships. Fred loved making models of the Universal Studios monsters—the Mummy,

Dracula, the Wolf Man, and the Creature from the Black Lagoon. He painted them almost lifelike.

All the models required Testors glue, which had a very powerful smell that hit you sharply way up your nostrils. The smell was so bad it was good, and we got a little buzzed from it. That was the bonus of building models.

There were no more naps once we got to elementary school. PS 217 was the same place our parents first met. Mom packed our lunch boxes. We got to play in the schoolyard at lunchtime. I got along with the other kids for the most part but got into a fight here and there. One time some kid in the bathroom accused me of stealing his grape juice. Why the hell would I want some kid's grape juice? So we got into it right then and there by the urinal until one of the male teachers burst in and broke it up. It was just kids' stuff.

When Fred and I got home, our grandfather Julius watched us until Mom and Dad got back from work. The deal was we would usually get our homework out of the way before we played. If the weather was bad, we would watch reruns of The Three Stooges Show, Abbott and Costello, or Adventures of Superman. The Three Stooges Show was probably my favorite because they were out of their minds with the slaps, hits, and smacks, but at the same time they were a unit—a team. It was like three times as much comedy packed into a half hour as anybody else.

Most days, I'd be waiting outside our apartment building for my father to come home from work. When I saw my dad, I'd run toward him to give him a big hug. I really looked up to my father. He was very relaxed about most things but firm when he had to be. My dad was six-foot-two-and-a-half, 230 pounds, and wore the thick, black-rimmed glasses that were popular at the time. He reminded me of Clark Kent. My mother looked like an actress. She was outspoken, and she was tough when she had to be. But my parents seemed to have a great relationship. I don't think I ever heard them argue, even once. If they did, it was never in front of us.

When the weather was decent, Fred and I would usually play punch-ball or stickball with our friends from the neighborhood. Stickball was basically street baseball using a broom handle. When that got boring, we moved on to more exciting things like climbing fire escapes or sneaking into boiler rooms. We got into fights with kids from other blocks in the neighborhood, usually because someone was on someone else's turf. We were just your average kids from Brooklyn.

On one particularly boring day, a friend had a cool idea to take a bunch of pillows and blankets, tie them together, and make a human dummy. We did a pretty good job considering we weren't pros. We carried the dummy up to the roof of our building and waited for a passerby.

Timing was everything. When someone was walking along the sidewalk about fifty feet away from our target, we would toss the dummy over the parapet wall and scream at the top of our lungs like someone jumped. It worked. When you had less than a second to look up and figure out what was happening, it really looked like a falling body. People flipped out.

One time we nailed a young couple carrying grocery bags. As the dummy plummeted to his "death," the man and the woman both dropped their bags, and the groceries rolled all over the sidewalk and the street. Up on the roof we laughed so hard our eyes watered and our stomachs hurt. It was one of those laughs where you weren't sure you were going to be able to breathe ever again. If it wasn't for the parapet wall, I think we might have rolled off the roof and wound up like the dummy.

The dummy always lived to see another day, and we kept getting better at throwing him. One time we threw

him way out to the middle of Ditmas Avenue in front of an oncoming ’55 Plymouth. The driver hit the brakes hard and skidded just short of running over the dummy’s head. The problem was that the driver and the passenger both hit their own heads on the dashboard. The other problem was the size of the driver. He was huge. And he was pissed off. He stepped out of the car, looked up, and spotted us up on the roof. It didn’t help that we were laughing, but we stopped laughing when he shouted he was coming up there to throw us into the street next.

We disappeared fast onto the rear fire escape, down the building stairway, anywhere to safety like a bunch of roaches scattering when the light comes on. There were places to hide in the basement. I came out when I figured it was safe. Whenever I thought about the stuff we did, I told myself that if you were a kid living in Brooklyn, getting in trouble was your job. Eventually the dummy got kind of beat-up and the prank got old, so we moved on to other things.

I had a friend named Joel who lived in the building. He was a chubby kid. We hung out all the time, and Joel would do whatever the rest of us were doing. There was an empty lot close to our building where a bunch of us kids would go to have rock fights. One time I hit Joel with a rock and blood squirted out of his head like a fire hydrant. It was like a scene from a horror movie. One of the kids knew enough to apply pressure to the wound and stop the gusher. Amazingly, Joel didn’t need stitches.

Another time Joel and I were in a neighbor’s yard trying to squeeze between two one-car garages to get to another yard, but Joel’s big belly got stuck and he started to cry. I wanted to help him, but I was laughing so hard I was pretty useless. As I stopped laughing, I told him maybe we’d have to get a crane and fish him out. Or maybe we’d have to demolish one of the garages. Or maybe he would just have to lose some weight. Finally, I got him to stop crying and relax a little, and we wriggled him out. The next day, he told me his mother wouldn’t let him play with me anymore.

Not long after that, I was playing in my room with a kid named Robert, who I really didn’t like that much. We were darting and jumping around the room and throwing whatever we could get our hands on. At one point I was on the top bunk and grabbed an old wooden milk crate off a shelf. I tossed it down to Robert, who tried to catch it and missed. One of the metal edges on the box caught him in the head.

Blood was everywhere. It was like the sequel to the horror movie with Joel—this time indoors with blood shooting all over the blankets and the walls. A few days later, I ran into Robert with a Band-Aid on his forehead, and he told me he wasn’t allowed to play with me anymore. This became a pattern in my neighborhood. Ten years old and I had a reputation. As far as I was concerned, it wasn’t deserved. I didn’t want to hurt anyone. I was just out to have some fun.

PS 217 was strict. In the morning we had to line up in the schoolyard and march into the building, grade by grade, like an army. Boys were required to wear a tie, a button-down shirt, and a sport jacket. For girls, the dress code was a skirt with dress shoes. The girls wound up looking like miniature versions of their mothers. Sneakers were forbidden for boys or girls except in gym.

In the classroom, seating was in size order with the short kids at the front and the tall kids in the back. The desks were made of old dark wood that looked like it had been there from the day the school was built or maybe before. To get into your seat, you had to flip the desktop. There was a groove at the top for pens and pencils, and an inkwell with a brass lid. There were so many names carved into the desk that there were names carved over older names. Maybe if I looked hard enough, I could find Mom’s and Dad’s.

Every day started with us standing, placing our right hands over our hearts, and reciting the Pledge of

Allegiance. Once we sat down and started the lesson, we were expected to remain silent unless called upon. If anyone made a sound or caused any disruption, they'd be punished. That usually meant standing in the corner and facing the wall. I had the corner memorized—the little crack, the missing paint chips. Usually the teacher would also call your parents and let them know you had behaved badly.

Once every week or two, a loud bell would ring, and we would do an emergency drill in case an atomic bomb was dropped. A few years earlier, the Soviet Union had developed its own atomic weapons, so we were expected to live on high alert. The drill was called "duck and cover." There was even a goofy civil defense movie by the same name. The teachers marched us all into the auditorium and made us watch Bert the Turtle show us how to survive a nuclear holocaust. There were kids in the movie about our age, dressed neatly like us, who saw a flash of light in the sky. Instead of freaking out, they all calmly crawled under their desks, knelt down, and covered the backs of their heads and necks with their hands and shirt collars.

It was hard not to laugh. Like squatting under a table was going to do anything in a massive atomic blast. But we did what they did, because what we were afraid of was not getting fried by a radioactive shock wave but getting sent to the corner to look at the wall. If we ever did see a flash of light in the sky and knew what was coming, I doubt we would have been quiet or gotten under the desks. I mean, this was Brooklyn.

From the late fifties into the early sixties, things were pretty stable from year to year. That included our school, which stayed just about the same. The only thing that was changing was my attitude, which was getting more negative every semester. I was a hyper kid to begin with, so I had a really hard time sitting still. I'd bang on the desk, melt crayons on the radiator, and constantly disrupt the class. I was fidgety. I had a hard time paying attention, and my mind would drift off. The teachers called my parents in so often that it got to be a drill—as stupid as duck and cover.

My father would sit me down and try to talk to me about my behavior. He'd explain how important education was and that it's something I'd benefit from later in life. "It may not seem important now, but when you grow up, you'll understand." He meant well, but it didn't have much of an effect once I was back in the classroom, bored and drifting off.

But there were still some cool teachers, even if most of them ended up yelling to get their point across. And I did like certain subjects. I liked to read, so I always got an A in English. Science was cool, too. Just like with the train set at home, I enjoyed trying to figure out how things worked. I was able to do well if I was really interested in something and was allowed to move at my own pace.

That was the reason I entered the fifth-grade science fair. I built a three-stage rocket out of wood and galvanized steel. It wasn't a working model, just my idea of what the inside of a spaceship might have looked like based on all the sci-fi movies and news stories I saw. My ship was split open in the middle, like a cross section, so anyone could look in and see the controls, the seats, and the living quarters. My dad helped, but I was the captain, and the project took first place. For the sixth-grade fair, I built a working telegraph system with wires, a tapping machine, and two large Eveready batteries. The telegraph was combined with a model train set to look more impressive. That project took first prize, too.

All of this made my parents very happy and made up for some of the other problems I was having. They knew I had potential. But it didn't always carry through the way they would have liked. I didn't care much for history, because as far as I was concerned, that was for people living in the past. I was more concerned about the present. Math was one of my least favorite subjects. I knew the basics, and that was good enough for me. I could figure out the change when I was buying candy, and I didn't think there would ever come a day when I would need to use a polynomial.

Sometimes I didn't need to worry about how much a Hershey bar cost because I stole it. We lived about ten blocks from PS 217. In the morning, on the walk to school, I'd usually stop at Maudie and Eddy's candy store, slip something small from a shelf into my pocket, and walk out. Until one day about three steps from the door, right near the newspaper stacks, Maudie grabbed me by the wrist. His hand was like a vise grip, probably from many years of moving boxes and stacking shelves. I knew Maudie wasn't about to let me go under any circumstance, so I punched him in the stomach and ran out of the store. I decided never to come back to the store, but really only to avoid Maudie. My mistake was getting caught. I saw other kids stealing candy all the time, so I didn't consider it a big deal.

One day in class, my friend Sandy Stock and I waited for the teacher to turn his back on the class and we nailed him with a couple of spitballs, which were small rolled-up paper balls soaked in saliva. The teacher wheeled around quickly, but we were even quicker. We did this a few times until he finally faked us out and caught us in the act. I was the head troublemaker, so he started yelling at me in front of the class. I thought the teacher would calm down after a minute or so, but he actually got louder, walked right up to my desk, and got in my face. I felt attacked, so I punched him in the stomach like I did to Maudie.

There was no running away this time. The teacher grabbed me by my arm and dragged me out of the classroom, down the hall. He opened the door to the science storage room, shoved me inside, and locked the door behind me. The room was a small concrete-and-steel prison cell filled with test tubes, which I started knocking off the shelves and smashing to bits, kind of like Frankenstein. When I got through with the test tubes, I moved on to throwing books, Bunsen burners, and anything that wasn't nailed down.

The storage room door opened, and the teacher stood in the doorway. I knew I had crossed a line and thought that might be the end for me at PS 217 or anywhere. Instead, the teacher asked me to step out into the hallway. He calmed me down, reasoned with me, and explained that we didn't have to go another step down this path. He said there was no reason the principal or my parents had to know anything about this. It would just be history and never happen again. I thought he was the coolest teacher who ever lived.

Record albums were too expensive for a young kid to buy, but I would scrounge together enough money once in a while to buy a single, which was a small disc that spun forty-five revolutions per minute. The first single I ever bought was Sheb Wooley's "The Purple People Eater." The song was about a Martian who came to earth and joined a rock-and-roll band. He was purple with a long horn on his head, which he used to blow out rock music. I thought that was a pretty cool story.

Since I was a big sci-fi fan, the lyrics and the story they told were as important as the music. I was also into all the monster movies I saw in theaters and on TV. On television, Chiller Theatre and The Twilight Zone were my favorites. On The Twilight Zone, there was always more than just a good sci-fi story. There was usually a real point to it. In one episode, a bookworm bank teller locks himself in the bank vault so he can read without being disturbed. While he's in there, an atomic bomb is dropped. When the teller steps out of the vault, he's actually glad that everything and everyone is gone so he has nothing but time and books. Then, as he begins to read, his glasses fall off and break.

For Christmas 1961, my parents bought me my first transistor radio. It might have been the happiest day of my life. I loved that radio. It was an RCA 3RH10 transistor. It was AM only, as FM was just getting started. It was very basic—small enough to hold in your hand with one big dial in front for tuning. On the side was the volume control dial along with a small port to plug in an earphone.

A whole new world opened up for me. Murray "the K" Kaufman was the big DJ on 1010 WINS. He was a real character, all over the place cracking jokes, playing sound effects, pulling pranks. In 1966, Murray the K

worked at WOR-FM, one of the first progressive rock radio stations ever, and was still occasionally calling himself the fifth Beatle. It wasn't true in 1964, and it was even less true in 1966. There were dozens of people who might have laid one claim or another to that title—producer George Martin and, later, keyboard player Billy Preston and even John Lennon's controversial other half, Yoko Ono. Murray the K was not near the top of that list.

Bruce Morrow ("Cousin Brucie") and Dan Ingram were to the left on the dial over at 770 WABC, a very powerful station in terms of wattage and musical influence. The guys at WABC were fast-talking and clever, leading you in and out of a song as if they were part of it but without stepping on the lyrics. These DJs were smooth. They were breaking new, exciting groups like the Four Seasons and Jay and the Americans. The airwaves were like one big party.

In the summer of '62, the song "Monster Mash" by Bobby "Boris" Pickett was released. Pickett sang like Frankenstein's monster would have sung if he could. It was funny and catchy with a good rocking beat. Not only that, Frankenstein was my favorite monster movie of all time. I loved the way the monster was pieced together from body parts. I listened to my transistor every second I could that summer and into the fall hoping I would catch "Monster Mash." I also built a little radio holder for the handlebars of my bicycle. I was hooked.

At night, I'd listen to the radio under the covers in bed. If it was too loud and Fred was trying to sleep, I'd use the small plastic earphone that came with the radio. AM radio waves traveled thousands of miles at night. Sometimes I'd pick up a station from California, Texas, or even Mexico. I had the planet at my fingertips, so it was really hard to switch off the radio. Usually, I would fall asleep with the earphone still in my ear.

On February 20, 1962, our fourth-grade class along with all the other classes filed into the auditorium to watch astronaut John Glenn lift off from Cape Canaveral and try to circle the earth aboard Friendship 7. All eyes were on a black-and-white Zenith TV set not more than about twenty-five inches across. This was sci-fi come to life. When the countdown was through and the rocket launched, you could see and feel the power even on that little screen. As the ship passed through the thick part of the atmosphere, the normally calm newsman Walter Cronkite actually shouted out, "Go, baby!" That's how exciting it was.

No American had ever been in space more than about fifteen minutes, and over the next five hours John Glenn circled the earth three times. Reentering the atmosphere was not a sure thing. There was a real chance that the ship's heat shield would fail and Friendship 7 would go up in flames. For about a minute or two—which seemed more like an hour—there was a blackout. There was no signal from the capsule, and you knew you might never hear from John Glenn again. When the ship came back into focus and you could hear the astronaut's voice, we all stood up and cheered. It was more than just a sigh of relief. It was a thrilling moment when we were all on the same team. You don't forget that feeling.

The summer of '63 was special. My dad customized a Volkswagen camper to look like our kitchen at home. We drove that "kitchen" cross-country. The engine was air-cooled and only 40 horsepower, so you couldn't push a Volkswagen camper over fifty-five miles per hour for too long. Including the stops we made in the Midwest, we took about two weeks to work our way across the US. We stayed at campgrounds, hiked, caught little fish in streams, learned the names of trees, and soaked in nature. I had my transistor radio with me, so no matter where I slept, I was still at home listening to all the latest hits.

When we stopped in town there were sometimes signs in store windows that said "Whites Only." But for the most part, people were really friendly and happy to talk to us. I got a sense of how big America really was

and how much there was to see outside Brooklyn. It was endless. I liked the road.

The road ended in San Francisco. The camper barely made it to California and needed major work if we hoped to make it back east. We didn't have the money to pay for an overhaul. But we did have the longshoremen. The union was very strong—a real nationwide community. We were able to stay with union friends for a couple of weeks while my father picked up a temporary job on the docks. In the end, the van was fixed, we took care of the bill, and we headed east again. For me, the change of plans and how we handled it wasn't a problem. It was an adventure.

On November 22, 1963, I was in my sixth-grade class when one of the other teachers walked into the room and told us that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Our teacher started crying and when they saw her, a few of the girls in our class burst out in tears, too. I was sure my mom would be doing the same thing. President Kennedy was a star—a young, brilliant man so many people connected with. Kennedy was not a typical president. He was always talking about the need for change. I felt sad, especially watching the girls around me crying. But it was one of those days, like most days, when I just didn't want to be at school. A thought popped into my head. I hope we're dismissed early. And we were.

When my parents got home late that afternoon, it was like the president was assassinated a second time. My mom and dad were big supporters of Kennedy. They believed in equal rights and equal opportunity and in the idea that America's best days were ahead. My parents were crushed. You could see it in their every step, and it stayed with them for a long time.

On Sunday evening, February 9, 1964, my mother called Fred and me into the living room to watch the Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show. The buildup was going on all week with the Fab Four landing in New York and giving press conferences, imitating Elvis, and joking about their long hair—which wasn't even that long. When they appeared on the black-and-white TV screen in our living room, it felt like things were changing right before our eyes. There was electricity in the air you couldn't exactly describe, but it was impossible to be sad. It took about two minutes to get through the first song, "All My Loving," and the girls in the studio audience were hooked. The country was hooked. I was hooked.

The next morning, I started to comb my hair down in front like the Beatles did. My brown hair wasn't long enough for real bangs, but I figured in a few weeks it would be. John, Paul, and George were great, but I wanted to be Ringo. Sitting back behind the drums, pounding away, and giving the music all that power and rhythm was something I wanted to do. It was something I knew I could do.

There was no drum set in the house, but that didn't matter. At any given moment, I would be tapping my hands on the kitchen table, thumping on pillows, playing with a knife and fork like they were drumsticks. My mom would constantly ask me to please stop banging. That would work for about five minutes. Riding on the subway, I would listen to the rhythm of the steel wheels on the tracks and tap along with it on my legs.

Around my twelfth birthday, my parents got me my first snare drum. It was a cheapo Japanese piece but better than a table and utensils. I convinced my parents to take me for some lessons at a local place called Bromley's Music. Bromley's wasn't much of a music school. It was basically a drum set in the basement of someone's house. The instructor taught me how to hold the drumsticks military style and some rudimentary techniques like flams and paradiddles. After about three months, I didn't think I was getting much out of the lessons and I stopped showing up. What I really needed was my own drum set.

A few weeks later, my parents took me to Milton Arfin's music store on Church Avenue, where they bought me a very basic drum set. The deal was they wouldn't get me anything expensive until they were convinced I

was going to stick with the drums. The kit consisted of a bass drum with a single tom mounted on it, a hi-hat, and a ride cymbal. Of course, I already had a snare.

The new kit was a Zim-Gar brand with the logo printed on the bass drum head. That wasn't going to cut it, because Ringo used Ludwig drums. So I wrote to Ludwig and asked them to send me a large sticker. When the Ludwig sticker came in the mail, amazingly, I immediately stuck it over the Zim-Gar logo. Right below it I spelled out The Beatles in black electrical tape.

I spent almost every spare moment practicing the drums, which were set up in the small bedroom I shared with Fred. I had a small phonograph with only one speaker, and I would listen closely to the drum parts on my favorite songs. By concentrating, I could figure out the bass drum patterns, off-time beats, rolls, accents. By the time the Beatles movie A Hard Day's Night opened in theaters in the summer of '64, I not only had maybe a dozen Beatles songs down on the drums but also was playing along with other British Invasion groups like the Rolling Stones and the Dave Clark Five.

Fred's reaction to the Beatles and the British Invasion was to take up guitar. So my parents made another trip to Milton Arfin's and bought Fred a starter Harmony electric guitar and a small Fender Princeton Reverb amplifier. Fred's early favorite band was the Dave Clark Five. But Fred soon gravitated to the blues, which led him right to the Rolling Stones. Before they got into writing most of their own songs, the Stones were covering all sorts of old blues numbers. Fred also liked the surf music pioneers Jan and Dean.

By this point, our room could barely contain the bunk bed, the drum set, and the Fender Princeton Reverb amp, let alone the noise we made—especially when Fred and I played together. So everyone in the family was really glad when we were able to move into a three-bedroom apartment. Even better, the apartment was on the first floor of the same building we had lived in for years at 640 Ditmas. We were twelve years old, in junior high school, and needed our own space personally, and now musically, too.

My new room faced the alleyway on the side of the building where the super kept the garbage cans. It was hard to ignore the smell of tossed-out banana peels and grease wafting through the window, especially during the hot summer months. But it was a small price to pay for having my own room—my own studio. The more I played the drums, the less I noticed the stench.

Fred had a friend in the building who soon turned him on to the Blues Project, with Danny Kalb on guitar, and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, with Mike Bloomfield on guitar. I was moving in a slightly different direction. In the spring of 1966, the Who released the album My Generation. An earlier Who single, "I Can't Explain," was a tight, melodic four-chord song. But it was the title track of the album, "My Generation," that really grabbed me. The chords came on fast, hard, and powerful. And drummer Keith Moon was doing things I had never heard before. Not even close.

The drumming style was manic and all over the place to the point where it was almost confusing. He added wild drum fills right over the top of the music and accents at parts of the verses and chorus no other drummer would ever have thought of. The weird thing was, it all worked. Moon's drumming made the songs more exciting but never completely took them over. I went right back to the drums and started experimenting with some of these techniques, putting in as many hours as I could.

As a thirteen-year-old self-taught drummer, I felt I was good enough to start a band. Kenny Aaronson was a bass player my age with a Fender bass and an Ampeg B-15 amp. He had the same musical influences as I did and was developing into a good player. The problem was, he lived twelve blocks from my building. But Kenny did what he had to do, carrying the bass in one hand and wheeling the amp in the other across streets

and up and down curbs over a half mile to get to my building. He became the other half of the rhythm section.

The guitar player lived a block or two away. The vocalist was my friend Steven Bakur. We would all pile into my room after school. Between the drums, guitar, and bass amps, and a separate amp for vocals, we were packed in, and the room got smaller once we cranked it up. Because we were on the first floor, there was no one to complain in the basement below because there was no apartment there. The people above us weren't so lucky. We got a few complaints but not nearly as many as we thought we would. It had to be a pretty cool apartment building. My parents were very supportive, making sure we had enough to eat and letting us know when it was too loud even for them.

We called ourselves the Uncles, a tribute to the TV series The Man from U.N.C.L.E., which was based loosely on the James Bond spy movies. Because we were getting ready for a show—our first ever—for the student government at Ditmas Junior High, we were allowed to rehearse a few times in the school auditorium after class. It was my first time on a stage, and it was a thrill. With no bodies in the audience to absorb the sound, it bounced off the walls and made everything louder. We weren't in my bedroom near the garbage cans anymore.

At our first show, I was a little nervous, and I think the other guys were, too. As ten, twenty, fifty kids filed in, I knew rehearsal time was over. If we sucked, there would be nowhere to hide the next day. At the same time, we were excited, and as the show grew near, for the most part I wanted to show people what we could do.

Our set included "My Generation" by the Who and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" by the Rolling Stones. The rest of the set was mostly Top Ten hits from bands like the Animals, the Beach Boys, the Searchers, and Jan and Dean. A few minutes in, I noticed that we had a tendency to speed up a bit. That was a natural reaction to the excitement of playing live. It could start anywhere, with a guitarist speeding up first, then the bassist, and so on. As far as I was concerned, it was up to the drummer—to me—to keep the song on track and lead rather than follow. I did it the best I could that day under the circumstances.

The kids at Ditmas liked us. It was not a typical experience for me. I could see right away there was newfound respect from the guys, the girls—and yes, even some of the teachers. That included some of the tougher male teachers who had fought in World War II and were not your obvious fans of rock and roll. But drumming—whether it was jazz, big band, or even rock and roll—was a very physical thing that clearly took some real strength and coordination. It was something they could relate to. They looked at me a little differently from that day on.

The Uncles got to play a few of the dances at Ditmas and a few private parties around the neighborhood. Our home base was the Jewish Center on Ocean Parkway between Ditmas and Eighteenth Avenues. This was the same place where I went to Cub Scout meetings with Pack 27 when I was eight or nine, with the same kids who were now coming to see the show. They were saying, "Wow, look at Marc up there. He can really play." I was very comfortable around the Jewish Center. There was such a rich history of entertainment in the Jewish culture. If you weren't a musician, actor, or comedian, you had an uncle who was.

We didn't play only the Jewish Center. We played wherever and whatever was available to us—churches, parties, people's basements. I was happy being appreciated for what I wanted to do, and I was always trying to develop. I was a big fan of drummer Hal Blaine, who was a member of the famous Wrecking Crew, a group of California studio musicians who always worked with Phil Spector and played on more Top Ten hits than anyone could count. If you were listening to Nancy Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beach Boys, the

Ronettes, or Simon and Garfunkel, you were probably listening to Hal Blaine.

I got to the point where I could tell in under a minute if Blaine was playing on a given record. He had a very distinctive style with signature off-the-beat drum fills, and that style stood out even more at the end of a song. I was constantly committing these musical elements to memory and using them where it made sense.

Part of being in a band for me was looking the part. I grew my hair out like the Beatles. By 1965, that meant kind of shaggy hair with bangs. By 1966, that meant an inch or two longer. I wore Beatle boots, and suits that looked a bit Beatle-esque. I looked sharp for a kid in junior high school, which definitely helped attract the girls.

But my look had its downside, too. Some of the teachers at Ditmas gave me a hard time about it. My gym teacher, Mr. Gross, was an ex-marine in his late thirties. He picked on a lot of the guys in the gym class for any number of reasons, including not being able to drop down and give him forty push-ups. It was as if he had never left the marines. In his mind, he was still a drill sergeant preparing a bunch of fourteen-year-old string beans for the Korean War. Of all the guys, he really singled me out. I did every last push-up, sit-up, and chin-up he called out. But it was never enough.

One day, I was walking down the hallway wearing a tie loosely around my neck, when out of the blue came Mr. Gross, who was completely bald. He looked like Mr. Clean minus the earring. He grabbed me by the arm and marched me into his office. I thought fast about what it was I had done but honestly couldn't think of anything. Gross slammed the door, turned to face me from about a foot away, and started yelling at the top of his lungs. "I've had it with you! You don't pay attention in class. You're disruptive. Do you think that just because you don't want to be here that you have the right to ruin things for the other students?"

"I'm not ruining anything for anyone. You're ruining it for me."

I was ready to argue some more when Gross started poking me in the chest. I was surprised, and when I pushed his hand away, he reached back and slapped me a couple of times across my face. I used everything I had to control my temper, but when Gross's open palm made solid contact with my cheekbone, I lunged at him with my head down. The next thing I knew, I was seeing stars. He had hit me hard in the back of the head. It was all I could do to stay on my feet and pretend to listen to the rest of his tirade.

When I got home, I gave my father the blow-by-blow. He just sat and listened very calmly, asking a few questions here and there. I was not called into the dean's office the next day at school, and that was a relief. My dad was home from the docks early that afternoon. He had taken a half day off to pay Gross a visit. In the same office where Gross had knocked me almost unconscious, my dad called him a sadistic bastard and said that if he ever laid a hand on me again, it would be the last thing he ever did.

Mr. Gross never bothered me again, but a few of the other teachers kept putting me down in class. It was my hair. It was my clothes. It was my attitude. Some of the other students went after me, too. There was tension between the kids who dressed like it was still the fifties and those of us who were changing with the times. I wasn't the only target. But I was target number one.

I was glad junior high school was almost over. The one thing that made the final few months livable was my first real girlfriend. Alyson and I started going out in April of '67. I would walk her home every day after school, and we would hang out whenever we could. She came to some rehearsals. Just a few more weeks and I would not only be out of Ditmas Junior High but we would have the whole summer together.

Then she broke the news. For a moment, I thought we were breaking up. Instead, Alyson explained that her parents had a bungalow up in Connecticut and were making her spend the whole summer with them. That was better, but not much better.

The Uncles played their last show at a club on St. Marks Place in Greenwich Village called the Electric Circus. The club was situated in an old town hall and ballroom carved out of three very old four-story brick row homes. Just a few months before our gig, the place was taken over by new management, renamed, and decorated with a large modern dance floor, sofas, strobe lights, and projector screens all over the place. The four of us played our usual cover tunes okay, but we were definitely not the main attraction. On the screens, there were psychedelic images that were constantly morphing. The club had circus acts like jugglers, fire-eaters, and trapeze artists. It was hard to compete with that unless I was going to pour kerosene on my drumsticks and light them.

Most helpful customer reviews

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.
New stories, even for die-hard fans
By Pacific Northwest
My wife's reaction when I started reading this book pretty much sums it up: "You're reading ANOTHER Ramones book?"
Like a lot of fans, I've read em all- Johnny Ramone's book, Dee Dee's, Mickey Leigh's, Monte Melnick's, and several other general bio books of the band. That on top of watching the End of Century and Raw documentary DVDs, left me wondering what other stories could be left.
Well, this book proves that there are plenty more great stories about the Ramones, and Marky Ramone's got em. All the anecdotes in this book are either totally new to me, or offer new details on well-told tales. For example, Marky's account of the Phil Spector sessions adds a whole different perspective from any other version.
In short, full of stuff you probably haven't read before, even if you're a hardcore Ramones fan.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.
it's an entertaining and good read. I came away feeling like I knew ...
By Christopher Koehn
I've been a fan of the Ramones for many years but have never read much about them or delved into their history. "Punk Rock Blitzkrieg" offers a unique view from the drummer's seat: the personalities, the neuroses, the endless touring, and not least, the addictions. Marky was not an original Ramone. He cut his teeth in other influential bands of the time and was asked to join when Tommy stepped back in 1978. Excepting a hiatus to deal with his own alcohol addiction he remained with the band until the end and is today the sole survivor of the primary line-up.
By reading "Blitzkrieg" I learned more about being in a punk band and how the music is played than I thought I would. The book offers a musician's view, explaining Johnny's guitar style, how Dee Dee approached the base, and how these techniques were critical to the sound.
The book is clearly written by a guy from Brooklyn. It has attitude, it has chutzpah. It sometimes comes off as a string of somewhat unrelated memorable incidents, without the continuity one comes to expect from an autobiography. But read with an eye on who the author is, and taken at face value, it's an entertaining and good read. I came away feeling like I knew more about the Ramones, and certainly about who Marky is. And he's quite a guy. I'd love to buy him a seltzer some time!

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.
Marky Ramone's Candid, Funny, Emotional "Punk Rock Blitzkrieg" is a Rock and Roll Grand Slam
By Josh Brewster

Marc "Marky Ramone" Bell's excellent Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life as a Ramone runs chronologically from his upbringing to musical beginnings, followed by an in-depth reportage of his time with the Ramones, through the deaths of his bandmates Joey, Johnny and Dee Dee.

Bell's honesty and sense of humor compliments a passionate and emotional recounting of his life and work.

The Ramones were as dysfunctional as could be, highlighted by a chilly relationship between Johnny and Joey. Dee Dee, for his part, was a hugely creative force despite his rabid drug addiction. The band was a study in contrasting personalities, all sewn up in their famous van, a symbol of the stripped-down, economical, disciplined schedule put forth by Johnny, who took charge of the band's internal affairs.

So many great inside stories here: Joey's strange scar; Johnny stealing Joey's girl, who he later married; Dee Dee's wild times; the filming of "Rock and Roll High School"; visiting the Berlin Wall and a tough incident with German locals; the Phil Spector affair. Too many to name, so much good humor from Marky, with an excellent co-writer in Rich Herschlag, who deserves a ton of credit for pulling this all together. The book is meaty at 388 pages yet moves at a blistering pace.

Impressively, Marky is very candid about his struggle with alcoholism, which contributed mightily from his being asked to leave the band in the 1980s. He returned for the final years of the Ramones' run, sober and carrying the message of recovery to Joey and Dee Dee, both receptive to some degree. Marky's account of his alcoholism is so candid it's worth the price of admission alone. Indeed, this section of the book would be good enough for inclusion in the famous "Big Blue Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous, an organization Marky credits for his 30-plus years of sobriety.

A brilliant, clear-headed account of the history and relationships amongst the Ramones, this is a deeply introspective book that deserves a wide audience.

See all 170 customer reviews...

PUNK ROCK BLITZKRIEG: MY LIFE AS A RAMONE BY MARKY RAMONE, RICHARD HERSCHLAG PDF

Spending the extra time by checking out **Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life As A Ramone By Marky Ramone, Richard Herschlag** can provide such great encounter also you are just seating on your chair in the office or in your bed. It will not curse your time. This Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life As A Ramone By Marky Ramone, Richard Herschlag will certainly direct you to have more precious time while taking rest. It is extremely satisfying when at the noon, with a mug of coffee or tea as well as a publication Punk Rock Blitzkrieg: My Life As A Ramone By Marky Ramone, Richard Herschlag in your kitchen appliance or computer system display. By enjoying the sights around, below you could begin reading.

Review
“Marky and I are from the 70's; as a drummer from the 70's, he can show the new boys a beat or two! He's legend!!!” (Peter Criss of Kiss)

"Marky was an integral part of not one, but TWO of the most important bands in rock and roll. He saw everything from ground zero and lived to tell about it. Absolutely vital document!" (Anthony Bourdain)

“Marky's music and style defined the punk rock movement and has influenced countless artists, entertainers and designers. As a musician, he harnessed the energy of the 1970s counterculture into a truly new movement, one that resulted in a seismic shift in fashion, art and music. While playing in great groups like Wayne County and the Backstreet Boys, Dust, Estus, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, and of course The Ramones he became known as one of the best drummers of our time, rivaling Keith Moon. I first saw him perform with Estus in 1973 in Horseheads, New York when they opened for B.B.King. It will forever be an amazing memory.” (Tommy Hilfiger)

"The Ramones are one of the three or four most influential American rock bands of all time, and their story, as related by surviving member Marky Ramone, is both entertaining and enlightening. So put on your old leather jacket, scream Gabba-Gabba-Hey at the top of your lungs, and dig in." (Stephen King)

About the Author
Born Marc Bell, Marky Ramone, a Brooklyn native, joined the Ramones in 1978. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2002 along with Johnny, Joe, Dee Dee, and Tommy, and has received both a Grammy and an MTV Lifetime Achievement Award. Visit him online at MarkyRamone.com to keep up with all the latest.

Punk Rock Blitzkrieg 1

THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM

My father’s father, Peter Bell, came to America from Holland in 1920 along with my grandmother. My

father was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, on August 11, 1931, and christened Peter, after my grandfather. My grandfather was a chef at the Copacabana for ten years before becoming the head chef at the “21” Club. The Copa, as it was known, was located on East Sixtieth Street in Manhattan and was owned by mob boss Frank Costello. Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin made their debuts there. If you were a singer, bandleader, or comedian in the forties and fifties and made it to the Copa, you had made it, period.

My grandfather worked at “21” for eighteen years, right through its heyday. Established during Prohibition and located on West Fifty-Second Street in Manhattan, you could always spot the place thanks to all the painted statues of jockeys above the front entrance. Everyone who was anyone ate at “21.” My grandfather got to meet and hang out with stars including Humphrey Bogart, Jackie Gleason, and Judy Garland. These weren’t just a bunch of tall tales—my grandfather had the pictures to prove it! Whenever we visited my grandparents’ house, I would just stare at those photographs in awe that my grandfather actually knew the same people I saw on TV and in the movies.

In 1944, my father and his parents moved from Hoboken to Brooklyn. My dad went to PS 217 elementary school on Coney Island Avenue, and that’s where he met my mother. My mother’s maiden name was Gertrude Joest. Most people called her Trudy. Her mother, Johanna, was French, and her father, Julius, was German. They immigrated to America in 1923 and settled in Willoughby, Ohio. My mother was born on September 10, 1931, in her parents’ home. Julius was an electrical engineer, and the family was middle class, but most babies at the time were still delivered by a midwife instead of in a hospital.

When my mom was only two years old, her mother died. A few years later, Fredrick, my mom’s older brother, died of pneumonia at the age of ten. Little Trudy and her dad moved to Cleveland for a few years before relocating to Brooklyn, New York. They lived on Ocean Parkway for a couple of years, and then moved to a four-story brick apartment building at 640 Ditmas Avenue, a few blocks south of Prospect Park. It was a solid working-class neighborhood made up mostly of modest private homes.

Mom and Dad were friends for quite a few years before they started dating when they were around eighteen. About a year later, on December 15, 1950, they got married at city hall in Lower Manhattan. On July 15, 1952, my twin brother, Fred, and I were born at New York Infirmary Hospital.

Our family lived with my grandfather Julius in a three-story brick walk-up, off the corner of President Street and Rogers Avenue in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. The buildings were all attached, usually with a little store on the ground floor and a separate stairway to the apartments above. Fred and I shared a room with bunk beds, which was fine with us because we got along really well.

My father was a card-carrying longshoreman, and my mother worked as a secretary. They sent Fred and me to a racially integrated nursery school in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a neighborhood just to the north. In the mid-fifties, most neighborhoods were segregated, but Fred and I were happy to be with kids from different cultures and made friends right away.

One strange thing about our nursery school was the school bus. We didn’t have one. What we had was a Cadillac hearse converted into a kind of station wagon minibus. It was big and black and came rolling up to the school like there was a funeral to attend. When the kids saw the hearse coming up the block, we would all run to try to get into the backseat first. It was roomy and padded back there, and it was cool to think this same compartment was once used for dead bodies. I loved riding with the window down. We all loved looking out the back window and making weird faces at the cars behind us.

The only thing I really didn’t like about nursery school was when they put us all down for naps in the middle

of the day. I thought it was weird the way they set us all up on little floor mats and turned the lights out. There was plenty of daylight still coming in through the windows. I knew I was supposed to be quiet like everyone else, but it was hard. I knew there was no way I was going to fall asleep, so the best I could do was lie there with my eyes closed.

I daydreamed about doing anything else but taking a nap. There were toys put away on shelves all around the room—wooden blocks, a Slinky, Play-Doh, Mr. Potato Head, a Lionel train set—and they were begging to be played with. After our nap, the teachers let us play a little rough, especially outdoors where we could just run around in the yard and make up our own games. To me, lying down on that mat and faking a nap was just a big waste.

In 1957, Fred and I turned five, and we moved along with Grandpa Julius back to the four-story building at 640 Ditmas Avenue, where my mother had lived when she was little. The bunk beds moved with us, so I still had to share a room with Fred. That was fine, because we still got along.

Dad and Grandpa Julius put their mechanical skills to work for Fred and me by helping us build a huge electric train set, which we played with for many hours. Dad also got us started building plastic models of cars, airplanes, and battleships. Fred loved making models of the Universal Studios monsters—the Mummy, Dracula, the Wolf Man, and the Creature from the Black Lagoon. He painted them almost lifelike.

All the models required Testors glue, which had a very powerful smell that hit you sharply way up your nostrils. The smell was so bad it was good, and we got a little buzzed from it. That was the bonus of building models.

There were no more naps once we got to elementary school. PS 217 was the same place our parents first met. Mom packed our lunch boxes. We got to play in the schoolyard at lunchtime. I got along with the other kids for the most part but got into a fight here and there. One time some kid in the bathroom accused me of stealing his grape juice. Why the hell would I want some kid's grape juice? So we got into it right then and there by the urinal until one of the male teachers burst in and broke it up. It was just kids' stuff.

When Fred and I got home, our grandfather Julius watched us until Mom and Dad got back from work. The deal was we would usually get our homework out of the way before we played. If the weather was bad, we would watch reruns of The Three Stooges Show, Abbott and Costello, or Adventures of Superman. The Three Stooges Show was probably my favorite because they were out of their minds with the slaps, hits, and smacks, but at the same time they were a unit—a team. It was like three times as much comedy packed into a half hour as anybody else.

Most days, I'd be waiting outside our apartment building for my father to come home from work. When I saw my dad, I'd run toward him to give him a big hug. I really looked up to my father. He was very relaxed about most things but firm when he had to be. My dad was six-foot-two-and-a-half, 230 pounds, and wore the thick, black-rimmed glasses that were popular at the time. He reminded me of Clark Kent. My mother looked like an actress. She was outspoken, and she was tough when she had to be. But my parents seemed to have a great relationship. I don't think I ever heard them argue, even once. If they did, it was never in front of us.

When the weather was decent, Fred and I would usually play punch-ball or stickball with our friends from the neighborhood. Stickball was basically street baseball using a broom handle. When that got boring, we moved on to more exciting things like climbing fire escapes or sneaking into boiler rooms. We got into fights with kids from other blocks in the neighborhood, usually because someone was on someone else's turf. We

were just your average kids from Brooklyn.

On one particularly boring day, a friend had a cool idea to take a bunch of pillows and blankets, tie them together, and make a human dummy. We did a pretty good job considering we weren't pros. We carried the dummy up to the roof of our building and waited for a passerby.

Timing was everything. When someone was walking along the sidewalk about fifty feet away from our target, we would toss the dummy over the parapet wall and scream at the top of our lungs like someone jumped. It worked. When you had less than a second to look up and figure out what was happening, it really looked like a falling body. People flipped out.

One time we nailed a young couple carrying grocery bags. As the dummy plummeted to his "death," the man and the woman both dropped their bags, and the groceries rolled all over the sidewalk and the street. Up on the roof we laughed so hard our eyes watered and our stomachs hurt. It was one of those laughs where you weren't sure you were going to be able to breathe ever again. If it wasn't for the parapet wall, I think we might have rolled off the roof and wound up like the dummy.

The dummy always lived to see another day, and we kept getting better at throwing him. One time we threw him way out to the middle of Ditmas Avenue in front of an oncoming '55 Plymouth. The driver hit the brakes hard and skidded just short of running over the dummy's head. The problem was that the driver and the passenger both hit their own heads on the dashboard. The other problem was the size of the driver. He was huge. And he was pissed off. He stepped out of the car, looked up, and spotted us up on the roof. It didn't help that we were laughing, but we stopped laughing when he shouted he was coming up there to throw us into the street next.

We disappeared fast onto the rear fire escape, down the building stairway, anywhere to safety like a bunch of roaches scattering when the light comes on. There were places to hide in the basement. I came out when I figured it was safe. Whenever I thought about the stuff we did, I told myself that if you were a kid living in Brooklyn, getting in trouble was your job. Eventually the dummy got kind of beat-up and the prank got old, so we moved on to other things.

I had a friend named Joel who lived in the building. He was a chubby kid. We hung out all the time, and Joel would do whatever the rest of us were doing. There was an empty lot close to our building where a bunch of us kids would go to have rock fights. One time I hit Joel with a rock and blood squirted out of his head like a fire hydrant. It was like a scene from a horror movie. One of the kids knew enough to apply pressure to the wound and stop the gusher. Amazingly, Joel didn't need stitches.

Another time Joel and I were in a neighbor's yard trying to squeeze between two one-car garages to get to another yard, but Joel's big belly got stuck and he started to cry. I wanted to help him, but I was laughing so hard I was pretty useless. As I stopped laughing, I told him maybe we'd have to get a crane and fish him out. Or maybe we'd have to demolish one of the garages. Or maybe he would just have to lose some weight. Finally, I got him to stop crying and relax a little, and we wriggled him out. The next day, he told me his mother wouldn't let him play with me anymore.

Not long after that, I was playing in my room with a kid named Robert, who I really didn't like that much. We were darting and jumping around the room and throwing whatever we could get our hands on. At one point I was on the top bunk and grabbed an old wooden milk crate off a shelf. I tossed it down to Robert, who tried to catch it and missed. One of the metal edges on the box caught him in the head.

Blood was everywhere. It was like the sequel to the horror movie with Joel—this time indoors with blood shooting all over the blankets and the walls. A few days later, I ran into Robert with a Band-Aid on his forehead, and he told me he wasn't allowed to play with me anymore. This became a pattern in my neighborhood. Ten years old and I had a reputation. As far as I was concerned, it wasn't deserved. I didn't want to hurt anyone. I was just out to have some fun.

PS 217 was strict. In the morning we had to line up in the schoolyard and march into the building, grade by grade, like an army. Boys were required to wear a tie, a button-down shirt, and a sport jacket. For girls, the dress code was a skirt with dress shoes. The girls wound up looking like miniature versions of their mothers. Sneakers were forbidden for boys or girls except in gym.

In the classroom, seating was in size order with the short kids at the front and the tall kids in the back. The desks were made of old dark wood that looked like it had been there from the day the school was built or maybe before. To get into your seat, you had to flip the desktop. There was a groove at the top for pens and pencils, and an inkwell with a brass lid. There were so many names carved into the desk that there were names carved over older names. Maybe if I looked hard enough, I could find Mom's and Dad's.

Every day started with us standing, placing our right hands over our hearts, and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Once we sat down and started the lesson, we were expected to remain silent unless called upon. If anyone made a sound or caused any disruption, they'd be punished. That usually meant standing in the corner and facing the wall. I had the corner memorized—the little crack, the missing paint chips. Usually the teacher would also call your parents and let them know you had behaved badly.

Once every week or two, a loud bell would ring, and we would do an emergency drill in case an atomic bomb was dropped. A few years earlier, the Soviet Union had developed its own atomic weapons, so we were expected to live on high alert. The drill was called "duck and cover." There was even a goofy civil defense movie by the same name. The teachers marched us all into the auditorium and made us watch Bert the Turtle show us how to survive a nuclear holocaust. There were kids in the movie about our age, dressed neatly like us, who saw a flash of light in the sky. Instead of freaking out, they all calmly crawled under their desks, knelt down, and covered the backs of their heads and necks with their hands and shirt collars.

It was hard not to laugh. Like squatting under a table was going to do anything in a massive atomic blast. But we did what they did, because what we were afraid of was not getting fried by a radioactive shock wave but getting sent to the corner to look at the wall. If we ever did see a flash of light in the sky and knew what was coming, I doubt we would have been quiet or gotten under the desks. I mean, this was Brooklyn.

From the late fifties into the early sixties, things were pretty stable from year to year. That included our school, which stayed just about the same. The only thing that was changing was my attitude, which was getting more negative every semester. I was a hyper kid to begin with, so I had a really hard time sitting still. I'd bang on the desk, melt crayons on the radiator, and constantly disrupt the class. I was fidgety. I had a hard time paying attention, and my mind would drift off. The teachers called my parents in so often that it got to be a drill—as stupid as duck and cover.

My father would sit me down and try to talk to me about my behavior. He'd explain how important education was and that it's something I'd benefit from later in life. "It may not seem important now, but when you grow up, you'll understand." He meant well, but it didn't have much of an effect once I was back in the classroom, bored and drifting off.

But there were still some cool teachers, even if most of them ended up yelling to get their point across. And I

did like certain subjects. I liked to read, so I always got an A in English. Science was cool, too. Just like with the train set at home, I enjoyed trying to figure out how things worked. I was able to do well if I was really interested in something and was allowed to move at my own pace.

That was the reason I entered the fifth-grade science fair. I built a three-stage rocket out of wood and galvanized steel. It wasn't a working model, just my idea of what the inside of a spaceship might have looked like based on all the sci-fi movies and news stories I saw. My ship was split open in the middle, like a cross section, so anyone could look in and see the controls, the seats, and the living quarters. My dad helped, but I was the captain, and the project took first place. For the sixth-grade fair, I built a working telegraph system with wires, a tapping machine, and two large Eveready batteries. The telegraph was combined with a model train set to look more impressive. That project took first prize, too.

All of this made my parents very happy and made up for some of the other problems I was having. They knew I had potential. But it didn't always carry through the way they would have liked. I didn't care much for history, because as far as I was concerned, that was for people living in the past. I was more concerned about the present. Math was one of my least favorite subjects. I knew the basics, and that was good enough for me. I could figure out the change when I was buying candy, and I didn't think there would ever come a day when I would need to use a polynomial.

Sometimes I didn't need to worry about how much a Hershey bar cost because I stole it. We lived about ten blocks from PS 217. In the morning, on the walk to school, I'd usually stop at Maudie and Eddy's candy store, slip something small from a shelf into my pocket, and walk out. Until one day about three steps from the door, right near the newspaper stacks, Maudie grabbed me by the wrist. His hand was like a vise grip, probably from many years of moving boxes and stacking shelves. I knew Maudie wasn't about to let me go under any circumstance, so I punched him in the stomach and ran out of the store. I decided never to come back to the store, but really only to avoid Maudie. My mistake was getting caught. I saw other kids stealing candy all the time, so I didn't consider it a big deal.

One day in class, my friend Sandy Stock and I waited for the teacher to turn his back on the class and we nailed him with a couple of spitballs, which were small rolled-up paper balls soaked in saliva. The teacher wheeled around quickly, but we were even quicker. We did this a few times until he finally faked us out and caught us in the act. I was the head troublemaker, so he started yelling at me in front of the class. I thought the teacher would calm down after a minute or so, but he actually got louder, walked right up to my desk, and got in my face. I felt attacked, so I punched him in the stomach like I did to Maudie.

There was no running away this time. The teacher grabbed me by my arm and dragged me out of the classroom, down the hall. He opened the door to the science storage room, shoved me inside, and locked the door behind me. The room was a small concrete-and-steel prison cell filled with test tubes, which I started knocking off the shelves and smashing to bits, kind of like Frankenstein. When I got through with the test tubes, I moved on to throwing books, Bunsen burners, and anything that wasn't nailed down.

The storage room door opened, and the teacher stood in the doorway. I knew I had crossed a line and thought that might be the end for me at PS 217 or anywhere. Instead, the teacher asked me to step out into the hallway. He calmed me down, reasoned with me, and explained that we didn't have to go another step down this path. He said there was no reason the principal or my parents had to know anything about this. It would just be history and never happen again. I thought he was the coolest teacher who ever lived.

Record albums were too expensive for a young kid to buy, but I would scrounge together enough money once in a while to buy a single, which was a small disc that spun forty-five revolutions per minute. The first

single I ever bought was Sheb Wooley's "The Purple People Eater." The song was about a Martian who came to earth and joined a rock-and-roll band. He was purple with a long horn on his head, which he used to blow out rock music. I thought that was a pretty cool story.

Since I was a big sci-fi fan, the lyrics and the story they told were as important as the music. I was also into all the monster movies I saw in theaters and on TV. On television, Chiller Theatre and The Twilight Zone were my favorites. On The Twilight Zone, there was always more than just a good sci-fi story. There was usually a real point to it. In one episode, a bookworm bank teller locks himself in the bank vault so he can read without being disturbed. While he's in there, an atomic bomb is dropped. When the teller steps out of the vault, he's actually glad that everything and everyone is gone so he has nothing but time and books. Then, as he begins to read, his glasses fall off and break.

For Christmas 1961, my parents bought me my first transistor radio. It might have been the happiest day of my life. I loved that radio. It was an RCA 3RH10 transistor. It was AM only, as FM was just getting started. It was very basic—small enough to hold in your hand with one big dial in front for tuning. On the side was the volume control dial along with a small port to plug in an earphone.

A whole new world opened up for me. Murray "the K" Kaufman was the big DJ on 1010 WINS. He was a real character, all over the place cracking jokes, playing sound effects, pulling pranks. In 1966, Murray the K worked at WOR-FM, one of the first progressive rock radio stations ever, and was still occasionally calling himself the fifth Beatle. It wasn't true in 1964, and it was even less true in 1966. There were dozens of people who might have laid one claim or another to that title—producer George Martin and, later, keyboard player Billy Preston and even John Lennon's controversial other half, Yoko Ono. Murray the K was not near the top of that list.

Bruce Morrow ("Cousin Brucie") and Dan Ingram were to the left on the dial over at 770 WABC, a very powerful station in terms of wattage and musical influence. The guys at WABC were fast-talking and clever, leading you in and out of a song as if they were part of it but without stepping on the lyrics. These DJs were smooth. They were breaking new, exciting groups like the Four Seasons and Jay and the Americans. The airwaves were like one big party.

In the summer of '62, the song "Monster Mash" by Bobby "Boris" Pickett was released. Pickett sang like Frankenstein's monster would have sung if he could. It was funny and catchy with a good rocking beat. Not only that, Frankenstein was my favorite monster movie of all time. I loved the way the monster was pieced together from body parts. I listened to my transistor every second I could that summer and into the fall hoping I would catch "Monster Mash." I also built a little radio holder for the handlebars of my bicycle. I was hooked.

At night, I'd listen to the radio under the covers in bed. If it was too loud and Fred was trying to sleep, I'd use the small plastic earphone that came with the radio. AM radio waves traveled thousands of miles at night. Sometimes I'd pick up a station from California, Texas, or even Mexico. I had the planet at my fingertips, so it was really hard to switch off the radio. Usually, I would fall asleep with the earphone still in my ear.

On February 20, 1962, our fourth-grade class along with all the other classes filed into the auditorium to watch astronaut John Glenn lift off from Cape Canaveral and try to circle the earth aboard Friendship 7. All eyes were on a black-and-white Zenith TV set not more than about twenty-five inches across. This was sci-fi come to life. When the countdown was through and the rocket launched, you could see and feel the power even on that little screen. As the ship passed through the thick part of the atmosphere, the normally calm

newsman Walter Cronkite actually shouted out, “Go, baby!” That’s how exciting it was.

No American had ever been in space more than about fifteen minutes, and over the next five hours John Glenn circled the earth three times. Reentering the atmosphere was not a sure thing. There was a real chance that the ship’s heat shield would fail and Friendship 7 would go up in flames. For about a minute or two—which seemed more like an hour—there was a blackout. There was no signal from the capsule, and you knew you might never hear from John Glenn again. When the ship came back into focus and you could hear the astronaut’s voice, we all stood up and cheered. It was more than just a sigh of relief. It was a thrilling moment when we were all on the same team. You don’t forget that feeling.

The summer of ’63 was special. My dad customized a Volkswagen camper to look like our kitchen at home. We drove that “kitchen” cross-country. The engine was air-cooled and only 40 horsepower, so you couldn’t push a Volkswagen camper over fifty-five miles per hour for too long. Including the stops we made in the Midwest, we took about two weeks to work our way across the US. We stayed at campgrounds, hiked, caught little fish in streams, learned the names of trees, and soaked in nature. I had my transistor radio with me, so no matter where I slept, I was still at home listening to all the latest hits.

When we stopped in town there were sometimes signs in store windows that said “Whites Only.” But for the most part, people were really friendly and happy to talk to us. I got a sense of how big America really was and how much there was to see outside Brooklyn. It was endless. I liked the road.

The road ended in San Francisco. The camper barely made it to California and needed major work if we hoped to make it back east. We didn’t have the money to pay for an overhaul. But we did have the longshoremen. The union was very strong—a real nationwide community. We were able to stay with union friends for a couple of weeks while my father picked up a temporary job on the docks. In the end, the van was fixed, we took care of the bill, and we headed east again. For me, the change of plans and how we handled it wasn’t a problem. It was an adventure.

On November 22, 1963, I was in my sixth-grade class when one of the other teachers walked into the room and told us that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Our teacher started crying and when they saw her, a few of the girls in our class burst out in tears, too. I was sure my mom would be doing the same thing. President Kennedy was a star—a young, brilliant man so many people connected with. Kennedy was not a typical president. He was always talking about the need for change. I felt sad, especially watching the girls around me crying. But it was one of those days, like most days, when I just didn’t want to be at school. A thought popped into my head. I hope we’re dismissed early. And we were.

When my parents got home late that afternoon, it was like the president was assassinated a second time. My mom and dad were big supporters of Kennedy. They believed in equal rights and equal opportunity and in the idea that America’s best days were ahead. My parents were crushed. You could see it in their every step, and it stayed with them for a long time.

On Sunday evening, February 9, 1964, my mother called Fred and me into the living room to watch the Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show. The buildup was going on all week with the Fab Four landing in New York and giving press conferences, imitating Elvis, and joking about their long hair—which wasn’t even that long. When they appeared on the black-and-white TV screen in our living room, it felt like things were changing right before our eyes. There was electricity in the air you couldn’t exactly describe, but it was impossible to be sad. It took about two minutes to get through the first song, “All My Loving,” and the girls in the studio audience were hooked. The country was hooked. I was hooked.

The next morning, I started to comb my hair down in front like the Beatles did. My brown hair wasn't long enough for real bangs, but I figured in a few weeks it would be. John, Paul, and George were great, but I wanted to be Ringo. Sitting back behind the drums, pounding away, and giving the music all that power and rhythm was something I wanted to do. It was something I knew I could do.

There was no drum set in the house, but that didn't matter. At any given moment, I would be tapping my hands on the kitchen table, thumping on pillows, playing with a knife and fork like they were drumsticks. My mom would constantly ask me to please stop banging. That would work for about five minutes. Riding on the subway, I would listen to the rhythm of the steel wheels on the tracks and tap along with it on my legs.

Around my twelfth birthday, my parents got me my first snare drum. It was a cheapo Japanese piece but better than a table and utensils. I convinced my parents to take me for some lessons at a local place called Bromley's Music. Bromley's wasn't much of a music school. It was basically a drum set in the basement of someone's house. The instructor taught me how to hold the drumsticks military style and some rudimentary techniques like flams and paradiddles. After about three months, I didn't think I was getting much out of the lessons and I stopped showing up. What I really needed was my own drum set.

A few weeks later, my parents took me to Milton Arfin's music store on Church Avenue, where they bought me a very basic drum set. The deal was they wouldn't get me anything expensive until they were convinced I was going to stick with the drums. The kit consisted of a bass drum with a single tom mounted on it, a hi-hat, and a ride cymbal. Of course, I already had a snare.

The new kit was a Zim-Gar brand with the logo printed on the bass drum head. That wasn't going to cut it, because Ringo used Ludwig drums. So I wrote to Ludwig and asked them to send me a large sticker. When the Ludwig sticker came in the mail, amazingly, I immediately stuck it over the Zim-Gar logo. Right below it I spelled out The Beatles in black electrical tape.

I spent almost every spare moment practicing the drums, which were set up in the small bedroom I shared with Fred. I had a small phonograph with only one speaker, and I would listen closely to the drum parts on my favorite songs. By concentrating, I could figure out the bass drum patterns, off-time beats, rolls, accents. By the time the Beatles movie A Hard Day's Night opened in theaters in the summer of '64, I not only had maybe a dozen Beatles songs down on the drums but also was playing along with other British Invasion groups like the Rolling Stones and the Dave Clark Five.

Fred's reaction to the Beatles and the British Invasion was to take up guitar. So my parents made another trip to Milton Arfin's and bought Fred a starter Harmony electric guitar and a small Fender Princeton Reverb amplifier. Fred's early favorite band was the Dave Clark Five. But Fred soon gravitated to the blues, which led him right to the Rolling Stones. Before they got into writing most of their own songs, the Stones were covering all sorts of old blues numbers. Fred also liked the surf music pioneers Jan and Dean.

By this point, our room could barely contain the bunk bed, the drum set, and the Fender Princeton Reverb amp, let alone the noise we made—especially when Fred and I played together. So everyone in the family was really glad when we were able to move into a three-bedroom apartment. Even better, the apartment was on the first floor of the same building we had lived in for years at 640 Ditmas. We were twelve years old, in junior high school, and needed our own space personally, and now musically, too.

My new room faced the alleyway on the side of the building where the super kept the garbage cans. It was hard to ignore the smell of tossed-out banana peels and grease wafting through the window, especially during the hot summer months. But it was a small price to pay for having my own room—my own studio. The more

I played the drums, the less I noticed the stench.

Fred had a friend in the building who soon turned him on to the Blues Project, with Danny Kalb on guitar, and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, with Mike Bloomfield on guitar. I was moving in a slightly different direction. In the spring of 1966, the Who released the album My Generation. An earlier Who single, “I Can’t Explain,” was a tight, melodic four-chord song. But it was the title track of the album, “My Generation,” that really grabbed me. The chords came on fast, hard, and powerful. And drummer Keith Moon was doing things I had never heard before. Not even close.

The drumming style was manic and all over the place to the point where it was almost confusing. He added wild drum fills right over the top of the music and accents at parts of the verses and chorus no other drummer would ever have thought of. The weird thing was, it all worked. Moon’s drumming made the songs more exciting but never completely took them over. I went right back to the drums and started experimenting with some of these techniques, putting in as many hours as I could.

As a thirteen-year-old self-taught drummer, I felt I was good enough to start a band. Kenny Aaronson was a bass player my age with a Fender bass and an Ampeg B-15 amp. He had the same musical influences as I did and was developing into a good player. The problem was, he lived twelve blocks from my building. But Kenny did what he had to do, carrying the bass in one hand and wheeling the amp in the other across streets and up and down curbs over a half mile to get to my building. He became the other half of the rhythm section.

The guitar player lived a block or two away. The vocalist was my friend Steven Bakur. We would all pile into my room after school. Between the drums, guitar, and bass amps, and a separate amp for vocals, we were packed in, and the room got smaller once we cranked it up. Because we were on the first floor, there was no one to complain in the basement below because there was no apartment there. The people above us weren’t so lucky. We got a few complaints but not nearly as many as we thought we would. It had to be a pretty cool apartment building. My parents were very supportive, making sure we had enough to eat and letting us know when it was too loud even for them.

We called ourselves the Uncles, a tribute to the TV series The Man from U.N.C.L.E., which was based loosely on the James Bond spy movies. Because we were getting ready for a show—our first ever—for the student government at Ditmas Junior High, we were allowed to rehearse a few times in the school auditorium after class. It was my first time on a stage, and it was a thrill. With no bodies in the audience to absorb the sound, it bounced off the walls and made everything louder. We weren’t in my bedroom near the garbage cans anymore.

At our first show, I was a little nervous, and I think the other guys were, too. As ten, twenty, fifty kids filed in, I knew rehearsal time was over. If we sucked, there would be nowhere to hide the next day. At the same time, we were excited, and as the show grew near, for the most part I wanted to show people what we could do.

Our set included “My Generation” by the Who and “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” by the Rolling Stones. The rest of the set was mostly Top Ten hits from bands like the Animals, the Beach Boys, the Searchers, and Jan and Dean. A few minutes in, I noticed that we had a tendency to speed up a bit. That was a natural reaction to the excitement of playing live. It could start anywhere, with a guitarist speeding up first, then the bassist, and so on. As far as I was concerned, it was up to the drummer—to me—to keep the song on track and lead rather than follow. I did it the best I could that day under the circumstances.

The kids at Ditmas liked us. It was not a typical experience for me. I could see right away there was newfound respect from the guys, the girls—and yes, even some of the teachers. That included some of the tougher male teachers who had fought in World War II and were not your obvious fans of rock and roll. But drumming—whether it was jazz, big band, or even rock and roll—was a very physical thing that clearly took some real strength and coordination. It was something they could relate to. They looked at me a little differently from that day on.

The Uncles got to play a few of the dances at Ditmas and a few private parties around the neighborhood. Our home base was the Jewish Center on Ocean Parkway between Ditmas and Eighteenth Avenues. This was the same place where I went to Cub Scout meetings with Pack 27 when I was eight or nine, with the same kids who were now coming to see the show. They were saying, "Wow, look at Marc up there. He can really play." I was very comfortable around the Jewish Center. There was such a rich history of entertainment in the Jewish culture. If you weren't a musician, actor, or comedian, you had an uncle who was.

We didn't play only the Jewish Center. We played wherever and whatever was available to us—churches, parties, people's basements. I was happy being appreciated for what I wanted to do, and I was always trying to develop. I was a big fan of drummer Hal Blaine, who was a member of the famous Wrecking Crew, a group of California studio musicians who always worked with Phil Spector and played on more Top Ten hits than anyone could count. If you were listening to Nancy Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beach Boys, the Ronettes, or Simon and Garfunkel, you were probably listening to Hal Blaine.

I got to the point where I could tell in under a minute if Blaine was playing on a given record. He had a very distinctive style with signature off-the-beat drum fills, and that style stood out even more at the end of a song. I was constantly committing these musical elements to memory and using them where it made sense.

Part of being in a band for me was looking the part. I grew my hair out like the Beatles. By 1965, that meant kind of shaggy hair with bangs. By 1966, that meant an inch or two longer. I wore Beatle boots, and suits that looked a bit Beatle-esque. I looked sharp for a kid in junior high school, which definitely helped attract the girls.

But my look had its downside, too. Some of the teachers at Ditmas gave me a hard time about it. My gym teacher, Mr. Gross, was an ex-marine in his late thirties. He picked on a lot of the guys in the gym class for any number of reasons, including not being able to drop down and give him forty push-ups. It was as if he had never left the marines. In his mind, he was still a drill sergeant preparing a bunch of fourteen-year-old string beans for the Korean War. Of all the guys, he really singled me out. I did every last push-up, sit-up, and chin-up he called out. But it was never enough.

One day, I was walking down the hallway wearing a tie loosely around my neck, when out of the blue came Mr. Gross, who was completely bald. He looked like Mr. Clean minus the earring. He grabbed me by the arm and marched me into his office. I thought fast about what it was I had done but honestly couldn't think of anything. Gross slammed the door, turned to face me from about a foot away, and started yelling at the top of his lungs. "I've had it with you! You don't pay attention in class. You're disruptive. Do you think that just because you don't want to be here that you have the right to ruin things for the other students?"

"I'm not ruining anything for anyone. You're ruining it for me."

I was ready to argue some more when Gross started poking me in the chest. I was surprised, and when I pushed his hand away, he reached back and slapped me a couple of times across my face. I used everything I had to control my temper, but when Gross's open palm made solid contact with my cheekbone, I lunged at

him with my head down. The next thing I knew, I was seeing stars. He had hit me hard in the back of the head. It was all I could do to stay on my feet and pretend to listen to the rest of his tirade.

When I got home, I gave my father the blow-by-blow. He just sat and listened very calmly, asking a few questions here and there. I was not called into the dean's office the next day at school, and that was a relief. My dad was home from the docks early that afternoon. He had taken a half day off to pay Gross a visit. In the same office where Gross had knocked me almost unconscious, my dad called him a sadistic bastard and said that if he ever laid a hand on me again, it would be the last thing he ever did.

Mr. Gross never bothered me again, but a few of the other teachers kept putting me down in class. It was my hair. It was my clothes. It was my attitude. Some of the other students went after me, too. There was tension between the kids who dressed like it was still the fifties and those of us who were changing with the times. I wasn't the only target. But I was target number one.

I was glad junior high school was almost over. The one thing that made the final few months livable was my first real girlfriend. Alyson and I started going out in April of '67. I would walk her home every day after school, and we would hang out whenever we could. She came to some rehearsals. Just a few more weeks and I would not only be out of Ditmas Junior High but we would have the whole summer together.

Then she broke the news. For a moment, I thought we were breaking up. Instead, Alyson explained that her parents had a bungalow up in Connecticut and were making her spend the whole summer with them. That was better, but not much better.

The Uncles played their last show at a club on St. Marks Place in Greenwich Village called the Electric Circus. The club was situated in an old town hall and ballroom carved out of three very old four-story brick row homes. Just a few months before our gig, the place was taken over by new management, renamed, and decorated with a large modern dance floor, sofas, strobe lights, and projector screens all over the place. The four of us played our usual cover tunes okay, but we were definitely not the main attraction. On the screens, there were psychedelic images that were constantly morphing. The club had circus acts like jugglers, fire-eaters, and trapeze artists. It was hard to compete with that unless I was going to pour kerosene on my drumsticks and light them.