Author Biography

Before this life, the mission I chose for myself was to accelerate humanity's conscious evolution through authorship of the highest caliber. To support my pursuit of this lofty goal, I joined a family whose roots in publishing reach back to the late 19th Century.

My great-grandmother, Josephine Turck Baker, established the International Society for Universal English and founded the Correct English Publishing Company in Evanston, Illinois. She was a renowned author, speaker, composer, actress and tireless advocate for women's suffrage and other liberal causes. Her elegant home at 1742 Asbury Avenue was the center of Evanston social life in the early 1900's.

My grandfather, F. Sherman Baker, grew up on this estate (as did my mother, Penelope). Josephine adored her son, and as a child, Sherman was indulged in his every wish. He received a Pope motorcycle on his 13th birthday, a new Ford on his 16th birthday and a Stutz Bearcat for his 18th birthday.

My grandmother, Margaret Darlington, came from a Chicago banking family, and for her 18th birthday, she received a debutante ball which was covered extensively in the *Chicago Tribune*. (I can still remember her showing me the newspaper page which she had kept.)

After graduating from college, Sherman married Margaret and the couple received a year in Europe as a wedding gift, which they extended to three years, living primarily in England and Italy. During this time, Sherman completed his postgraduate work at Oxford. (When I first expressed literary ambitions at the age of 17, Sherman gave me his writing textbooks from Oxford and began tutoring me in the craft of authorship.)

After working in his mother's publishing company, Sherman and his family moved from Chicago to New York in the early forties where he joined Appleton-Century. He went on to become editor-in-chief of one of New York's largest and finest publishing houses, St. Martin's Press, where he was also vice president and a director.

The Baker family lived in a charming home in Hastings-on-Hudson built by Admiral Farragut in 1862. Dozens of champagne bottles were suspended on wires from rafters high in the kitchen ceiling, each commemorating a special occasion Sherman and Margaret had shared.

I did not receive a Stutz Bearcat or a debutante ball for my 18th birthday. Instead, my father and grandfather took me to Brooks Brothers in Manhattan to be fitted, and then to Sherman's club, which was near his office in the Flatiron Building. The club had dark mahogany paneling, overstuffed leather easy chairs, billiard tables, a well-stocked bar, and men smoking cigars. Women were not allowed.

Sherman and Margaret had three children, Priscilla, Frederick and Penelope. After Harvard, Frederick had moved to California, but Priscilla had settled in East Hampton with an artist. After years of visiting East Hampton, Sherman and Margaret fell under its spell, and in the sixties, they moved into a home on Egypt Lane, a short walk from the Maidstone Club.

The property had a quaint guest house where our family stayed whenever we visited, and a long backstretch leading to a nature preserve where my sister Margaret and I would go to feed the ducks. Priscilla's sons, my cousins Mark and Steven, were natural athletes, and they taught me how to surf at nearby Georgica Beach and Ditch Plains. Their lessons paid great dividends when I lived in Southern California later on.

My mother, Penelope, was raised by a nanny until she was twelve, and never developed a strong connection with her mother. Perhaps to compensate for this, she showered me with love and affection in my early years. This left me with a deep-seated feeling of well-being which, in retrospect, was a great asset in reaching higher states of consciousness in meditation.

After WWII, Penelope married a dashing Air Force Captain, Frank Mee, who was a hero in the European theater. Before going overseas, Capt. Mee completed his basic training in Shreveport, Louisiana. The city has three bridges over the Red River, and several tall buildings which are situated close together. This layout apparently provided a good landscape for aerial fun and games. I have heard stories about my father flying his heavy bomber on daytime "training missions" under the bridges and sideways in between the buildings downtown. I think they are probably true.

It gets worse. The landscape around Shreveport in the forties was dotted with cotton farms. When the crops were harvested, the cotton balls were temporarily stored in open aluminum cylindrical containers around 15 feet high. Apparently, when one dives a Martin B26 airplane at high speed from sufficient altitude, pulling up just before reaching one of these containers, the prop wash is powerful enough to send a flurry of thousands of cotton balls up into an aerial geyser. The same principle can evidently also tip over sailboats on Lake Ponchartrain.

Flying over Louisiana in nighttime "training missions" (*translation:* joy rides) my dad would spot drive-in theaters and approach them as if attempting a landing. The heavy bomber would come barreling in at the drive-in's parking lot with its wheels down and its landing lights blaring, pulling up just before reaching the movie screen. This would cause a feeling of unease among the theater's patrons, but the cars would generally stay put. After two or three passes, though, the drive-ins would usually clear out.

The B-26 airplane, which carried a crew of six, had an occasional tendency to lose its number two engine 90 seconds after takeoff, earning it nicknames like "widowmaker" and "flying casket." A few weeks after arriving in England, Capt. Mee caused a panic in his British air base. On his approach to the field one day, he shut down the engines in his B-26 and coasted in for a power-off landing "just to see if he could do it." The control tower spotted the powerless aircraft approaching and sounded the alarm. Fire trucks and red cross jeeps swarmed the field as the silent bomber glided in. They

witnessed a perfect landing. Captain Mee was escorted to the base commander's office to be chewed out, but the colonel's tirade was only half-hearted. They both knew my father was one of the best pilots the Air Force had.

My father taught me rugged self-reliance and strong determination, providing an invaluable counterpoint to the more ethereal Baker influences. He also taught me how to build things. Our house on the north shore of Long Island had a large, unattached garage, and in it, my father and I built a sailboat, which I often sailed in nearby Laurel Hollow. Larger sailing trips were made out of Huntington harbor on Uncle Wally's yacht, the *Crescent Moon*, which carried parents, children and dogs across many happy leagues of Long Island Sound.

My father always supported my career ambitions. When I made the dean's list at Wesleyan, he gave me a key to his club in Manhattan. When I started a laser printer company in my twenties, he introduced me to his friend Pierre Rinfret on Wall Street, who was economic advisor to President Nixon. When we met with Mr. Rinfret, one of his analysts pointed out that if a laser printer was such a good idea, IBM would already have one. (They didn't.) Mr. Rinfret's firm did not invest in my company. A year later, IBM announced their laser printer. Shortly thereafter, IBM's largest competitor hired me into product planning. I rose rapidly in this company (Honeywell) and became the youngest father of a mainframe at the age of 37.

My parents were avid entertainers, and hosted or attended parties with their friends almost every weekend over the span of four decades. They travelled extensively, and at their social zenith, they had friends in 20 states and 11 foreign countries. Despite the non-stop social whirlwind (or maybe because of it), they enjoyed perfect health.

As her mother had done before her, my mother served dinner by candlelight most evenings. The dinner table was where the children learned the social graces and the art of conversation. Dinner was always preceded by The Cocktail Hour (when children may be seen, but not heard).

Our summers were divided between East Hampton and the Adirondacks, where we would stay at Uncle Wally's boyhood summer home, High Huddle, overlooking Trout Lake (near Lake George). A long driveway through the woods opened up to a big lodge with a dozen bedrooms, a boathouse, canoes, a dock, a guest house, a badminton court, an outdoor sleeping porch, and a winding trail leading down to a dock on the lake. The children always outnumbered the adults, and we favored the outdoor sleeping porch and the crisp, refreshing Adirondack night air. In the mornings, we would fill aluminum buckets with fresh blueberries from the bushes outside the house and bring them into the kitchen where our mothers would make fresh blueberry pancakes.

In the summer of my 17th year, my parents sent me to Europe to broaden my cultural horizons. I used this golden opportunity to acquaint myself with alcoholic beverages (the legal drinking age was lower in Europe) and to do idiotic and sometimes dangerous things. The pinnacle of stupidity came in Switzerland, when a friend and I decided on a whim that we could traverse the top of a massive glacier at the source of the Rhone River in Gletch, Switzerland without training or equipment.

(Fortunately, we were sober that day. So going across the glacier was a *rational* teenage boy idea. The mind reels at what we might have thought of with a few beers.) My friend and I successfully crossed the glacier before nightfall, proving once again the existence of Divine intervention, without which teenage boys would rarely live to see 21.

My father had one brother, Bill. After Harvard, Uncle Bill entered advertising on Madison Avenue, and eventually moved from New York to New Canaan. My father followed his brother to Connecticut, settling in Farmington. Later in life, the two families moved to an enclave in Florida, where they lived for a quarter of a century. In my forties, I moved from California to Florida, where I met my wife Rita Ann Ariano, who is the ideal partner for my journey.

The high point of my life was a six hour out of body experience I had during meditation when I was 19, which has been described at length elsewhere.

As discussed in my book *Future Life Design*, one of the most liberating ideas of our time is that we are citizens of a universe which is teeming with life, and that physical distance is not a factor in reincarnation. This concept opens up a myriad of exciting possibilities for future lives which are limited only by our imagination. We can mentally connect to people in higher societies to build bridges to our future selves.

The thought of forging psychic connections with sentient beings in advanced civilizations is an idea whose time has come in 2015. A hundred years ago, though, it was truly ahead of its time.

“Julia quote.”
The Burden of the Strong, Josephine Turck Baker, 1915

That’s the punchline.

NOT USED
My sister, Margaret, also received a strong dose of the Baker genes. She is a professional translator and a well-known Japanese environmental pioneer who has been profiled by National Geographic and the *Japan Times*. Where great-grandmother Josephine wrote books about correct English, my sister Margaret translated Japanese texts into correct English. Where Josephine campaigned for liberal causes of her era like women's suffrage, Margaret campaigned for liberal causes of her time like environmental activism. The acorn does not fall very far from the tree.

Around this time, I had the nicest thought in my life. It did not announce itself with fireworks, fanfare, or a drum roll. It simply tiptoed up behind me, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, *I've never been happier*.
Trade this off for the Crescant Moon. (Behind the garage was the 21 acre Coe Estate – now subdivided – where I spent many happy hours with my sister and our friends.)

Farmington
and when they moved to Connecticut, they furnished their home in Farmington with chandeliers and decorative ceramics from Italy.
My parents bought the beautiful crystal chandelier in their dining room in Italy. The two fireplaces in my parents' home in Farmington were lined with blue tiles they bought in Italy.

New Canaan
Cousin Binky went to Brown. Cousin Bruce went to Harvard like his father (Uncle Bill).

Hastings-on-Hudson
My mother grew up in an historic, four story gingerbread house built by Admiral Farragut in 1862.
Like her parents, my mother was raised by a nanny until she was twelve.
My mother grew up in the house on 128 Washington Avenue in Hastings built by Admiral Farragut in 1862. The high kitchen ceiling at 128 Washington Avenue was hung with wine and champagne bottles.
Player's Club. Mahogany paneling, overstuff leather easy chairs, billiards, bar, no women.
Uncle Fred went to Exeter and Harvard.

East Hampton
My grandfather was editor-in-chief of one of New York's largest and finest publishing houses.
My grandparents lived on Egypt Lane in East Hampton, a short walk from the Maidstone Club.
Our family stayed in the guest house when we visited.
The back yard led to the dreen; a nature preserve where people came to feed the ducks.
When I was 17, my grandfather loaned me his writing textbooks from Oxford and tutored me in the craft.
Cousins Mark and Steven went to boarding school in Suffield and went into boat building.
Uncle Ted had a trust fund and was an artist who had many exhibitions in EH galleries.
Surfing Georgica Beach and Ditch Plains

Evanston

My grandfather and mother grew up in Ashby Crest. Sherman received a Pope motorcycle on his 13th birthday, a new Ford on his 16th birthday and a Stutz Bearcat for his 18th birthday.
Margaret Darlington's debutante ball received half a page of coverage in the *Chicago Tribune*.
My grandfather received a Stutz Bearcat for his 18th birthday and was educated at Oxford.
My grandmother received a debutante ball for her 18th birthday covered by the *Chicago Tribune*.
Josephine Turck Baker 1742 Asbury Avenue the radiant social center of Evanston. ballroom.
Ashby Crest, named for her mother, Sarah Ashby.

My dad and Uncle Bill bought homes together on a private golf course in Florida. enclave.
I played this course one or both of them many times, and it was here that I learned about reincarnation.

Achieving liberation from rebirth is like having your white golf ball go clink into a tin cup on the green. When the average player tees off, they can be looking at a par 3, par 4 or par 5, depending on how much baggage they are carrying and their skill level in the game. It is possible to shoot a hole in one, and I saw my Uncle Pete do it on the third fairway of my dad's course. But the number of people who achieve liberation in one lifetime is comparable to the number of people who shoot holes in one.

When a player is too far away to drive for the green, conventional wisdom suggests taking a lay up shot to position oneself closer to the goal. Future life design is like a lay up shot which advances a player to a more favorable lifetime where they are better positioned to reach their ultimate goal.

Long driveway through the woods. Boathouse, canoes, skittles, blueberries, badminton, ice cream linseed oil.

Syosset

Grew up on the north shore of Long Island ten minutes from Sagamore Hill.
Our family had dinner by candlelight almost every evening. Each member of the family was required to bring one item of dinner table conversation to the table. Social graces, art of conversation,
Dinner was preceded by The Cocktail Hour (when children may be seen, but not heard).
My parents hosted or attended parties with their friends almost every weekend for decades.
At their social zenith, my parents had friends in 20 states and 11 foreign countries.
My parents sent me to Europe for the summer of my junior year. I travelled and stayed with Uncle Cornelius and Aunt Puck. Uncle Cor's chauffeur drove me around the countryside.
My On my 18th birthday, my father and grandfather took me to Brooks Brothers in Manhattan to be fitted.
My father gave me a key to the Gaslight Club in Manhattan on my 21st birthday.
Sailing at Laurel Hollow and Huntington.
My father and I built a sailboat.
My sister and I were frequent guests at the neighboring 21 acre Coe Estate. My sister's contributions to Japanese environmentalism were covered by newspapers and television.

Dean's list at Wesleyan.
My parents enjoyed perfect health.

Farmington

My parents travelled to Europe 20 times.
My parents bought the beautiful crystal chandelier in their dining room in Italy. The two fireplaces in my parents' home in Farmington were lined with blue tiles they bought in Italy.

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Cousin Binky went to Brown. Cousin Bruce went to Harvard like his father (Uncle Bill).

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Josephine Turck Baker 1742 Asbury Avenue the radiant social center of Evanston. ballroom.
Ashby Crest, named for her mother, Sarah Ashby.

Huntington

Uncle Wally went to Princeton. Our families sailed together on his yacht, the *Crescent Moon*, out of Huntington fifty times on Long Island Sound.

Trout Lake

Our summers were divided between time at Trout Lake in the Adirondacks and East Hampton. High Huddle overlooking Trout Lake (near Lake George). Uncle Wally's boyhood summer home. Most of its dozen upstairs bedrooms were unoccupied because the children favored the outdoor sleeping porch and the crisp, refreshing Adirondack night air. Children outnumbered the adults. Long driveway through the woods. Boathouse, canoes, skittles, blueberries, badminton, ice cream linseed oil.

NOT USED:

My father had one brother, Bill. After Harvard, Uncle Bill entered advertising on Madison Avenue and settled in New Canaan. The two Mee families got together regularly when I was growing up, and later in life, my dad and Uncle Bill bought homes on a private golf course in Florida. Several of my Mee cousins and I also migrated to Florida, and our families have remained close.

My parents sent me to Europe for the summer of my junior year. On a whim, my friend Jeff Hudson and I traversed the massive glacier at the source of the Rhone River in Gletch, Switzerland without training or equipment, proving once again the existence of Divine intervention, without which teenage boys would rarely live to see 21. Later, we stayed with Uncle Cornelius and Aunt Puck who were in living Dusseldorf at the time, and Uncle Cor's chauffeur drove us around Germany. We decided this was a safer way to travel.

I have played this course many times, and it taught me an important lesson about reincarnation.

The lesson happened on the third tee, which is a par 3 that doglegs around a large water hazard. I was playing with my father, my Uncle Bill, and my Uncle Pete. People on the third hole usually play around the water hazard and approach the green from the fairway.

Uncle Pete was a big, athletic guy, and as he stepped up to the tee, he was thinking: *The hell with the water hazard. I'm going for the green*. His ball rocketed off the tee, sailed over the lake, landed squarely on the green, and rolled into the cup. A jubilant cheer erupted on the course. Uncle Pete had sunk a hole in one.

Needs work

Achieving liberation from rebirth is like having your white golf ball clink into a tin cup on the green. When the average player tees off, they can be looking at a par 3, par 4 or par 5, depending on how much baggage they are carrying and their skill level in the game. It is possible to shoot a hole in one, and I saw my Uncle Pete do it on the third fairway of my father's course. But the number of people who achieve liberation in one lifetime is comparable to the number of people like Uncle Pete

who shoot holes in one. Most professional golfers have sunk holes in one at one time or another in their careers.

When a player is too far away to drive for the green, conventional wisdom suggests they take a lay-up shot to position themselves closer to the goal. Future life design is like a lay-up shot which advances a player to a more favorable lifetime where they are better positioned to reach their ultimate goal.

I achieved spiritual realization at age 19.
I graduated in the top two percent of my high school class and made dean's list at Wesleyan.
I have had happier marriages than anyone I know (and more of them).
I went to the gym 2000 times, ran 1000 times and surfed 300 times.
I achieved my boyhood surfing dreams in my forties in Southern California.

Barry Sample, Battle of the Bands, Paid equipment ten times over. Offered to go pro. Valedictorian. My best friend John V, the valedictorian and I had a rock'n'roll band for 3 years. There were two black children at our high school, a boy and a girl, and we convinced the boy, Barry, to be our lead singer. The band took off. We had so many jobs we paid for our equipment ten times over, won the senior class battle of the bands, played alternating sets with / along side Billy Joel, and got offers to go pro. Instead John and I went to Wesleyan.

Quote from Burden of the Strong Julia

Grandparents

My dad lost his father when he was six, so I only had one grandfather, Sherman Baker, but he was larger than life, and his personality and *joie de vivre* ~~filled the void~~. The genetic legacy I inherited from him was a seminal influence in the development of my character, so his life bears examining in some detail.

Sherman Baker grew up on an estate in Evanston, Illinois which his mother, Josephine Turck Baker, named after her mother, Sarah Ashby. Josephine owned a publishing company for 40 years and was a renowned author, speaker, composer, actress and tireless advocate for women's suffrage and other liberal causes. She entertained extensively in Ashby Crest's large ballroom, and the Evanston Public Library describes her home as the "radiant social center" of Evanston in the early 20th Century. (My mother also grew up on this estate.)