

Dave Olson
"Facing the Wind" by Julie Salamon
Part 1 Annotationsⁱ

Whilst considering "Facing the Wind," many questions which come to mind:

"What it would take for me to 'snap?'" - I don't want to dwell in excess self-reflection here, but in thinking about stresses in my own life and comparing my decisions and perceptions with Bob, I cannot find a bit of me that believes that I would snap to the extreme he did. I suppose in protecting my woman and my step-son or protecting the innocent in a spontaneous act of defense. Everyone maybe says so, but I am really affected by war, death, destruction of life, art, words, work or nature – Odd fact: on this day in history, Hitler assumed control of Germany (1933) and Gandhi was murdered (1952?).

"What makes me different from Bob" - Lordy, I do know about stress. I've run down bank accounts, late on mortgage payments, flailed through new businesses, fielded warrants by federal agents, watched stock diminish into bankruptcy and more but, ... c'mon ... Dude needed an outlet, though he seemed to always be up to something though he clearly needed something else. Author Julie Salamon in an interview said:

"Bob Rowe was a very physical guy. He did the martial arts stuff, he was a sailor, he was an athletic man. But no one saw him display a temper, nobody ever heard him yell at anybody, he never raised his voice, he was a quiet guy. He was a little sarcastic, at worst."

Maybe his demon was that he was holding his stress issues in (about his mother, war memories, self-esteem, whatever). For me, though I *really* do get bogged down, I try to be conscious of the pressure - it must be all that playing hockey, soaking in hot springs and or wearing my heart on my sleeve that keeps me from breaking up.

“Why don’t/wouldn’t I snap?” - Is it my nature? Chemistry? Attitude? Beliefs? Anyhow, I am no mental health professional but even for experts, there is a vast land of subjectivity which analysts and counselors must navigate. Combine, the possibilities of the human mind with the myriad ways of interpreting the data and behold, you have infinite possibilities. As Dr. Schwartz pointed out in Rowe’s trail:

But, Dr. Schwartz admitted, his analysis couldn’t be more than a supposition, a hypothesis, an attempt to make some sense out of the inexplicable. “This is speculative, because there were not conscious delusions that he had.” Schwartz said, trying to explain the artful aspect of his science. “What we are trying to do is see if we understand unconsciously what was happening.”

“At what point was he in-control, hence responsible for his actions and at what point did he become out of control so not-responsible for his actions?” Salamon says in an interview,

“There were certain aspects of his personality that always seemed dubious to me. He had this desire to be perfect, this desire to be the best at everything. But a lot of people have *that* trait and it’s, at worst, annoying. It’s not terrible. It’s not pathological. But there is a psychological *truth* to his actions. He had all these pressures bearing on him, but the suspicion is: How could he be a psychopath, and then immediately *not* be a psychopath? For a lay person, which I am, that’s really hard to understand.”

“Is it my conscious or unconscious that make me different from Bob?” – Bob was always trying to be the very best at everything he did and bring an element of art to his every part of his life. He was a bit of a renaissance man, into many intellectual and athletic pursuits. This sounds great, in fact, I aim to do many of the same things. Also, I am somewhat of a perfectionist – if not doing things perfect, then doing things interesting and unique and challenging. This seemed

to be attributed as a contributing factor to Bob's mental health problems, specifically, self-esteem or the lack thereof. Eg: saying (in reference to his killed wife), "She loved me too much," illustrating the disassociation he felt. However, at the same time, he would reveal the gnawing at him and his attempts to fit his predicament into his ideal of life – organized, on-top-of-it-all, over-achiever Bob:

"Our major theme has been that we are going to be happy, and if we can be happy with Christopher, great. If we can't be happy with Christopher, if he is going to be a tragedy, if he is going to make a tragedy of our life and our family, then he has to go."

This is all easy for me to say, as I haven't walked in his moccasins, but I have hunch if he walked in mine, he would've melted down anyhow. I am going with the chemical-imbalance theory for the time being.

ⁱ Empathy for the devil, By Amy Benfer April 24, 2001
<http://archive.salon.com/mwt/mothers/2001/04/24/empathy/index.html>