

## **MY HANDS ARE DIFFERENT**

Two fathers. Two paths. One realization.

Written and composed by

Martin J. Gallagher

Produced and Hosted by

John F. Barber

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Re-Imagined Radio  
Season 13, Episode 09

Final draft

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Final Draft

Premier broadcast: September 15, 2025

Produced and Hosted by John F. Barber

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### **Synopsis**

Re-Imagined Radio presents "My Hands Are Different," written and produced by Martin J. Gallagher, an independent composer and sound designer based in Portland, Oregon. Imagine having two fathers. Each a different model for your life. Your adoptive father wants you to use your hands to stand up for yourself. He gives you boxing gloves and a training schedule. Your birth father, a mystery until after his death, when you are given a box of his tape recordings, has inspired your hands for a career in music and creative media. From our Guest Writer/Producer series. Content copyrighted ©2025 by Martin J. Gallagher. Used by permission.

### **Color Code**

**Yellow highlighted text** = sound effect(s), either pre-recorded or created for episode. Pre-recorded audio is used as content in this episode.

**MUSIC** = pre-recorded

**MUSIC** = bespoke, created for this episode

COLD OPEN

JOHN HARRISON      Okay kid. Ah, 1:28 in the morning and I just had another stroke, it appears. But it's intermittent on one side of my body. This one was on the right side, which would indicate then that . . . the occlusion, or whatever it is, is occurring in the left hemisphere of my brain. There was a visual aberration, where I was looking at a hand that I couldn't, I couldn't influence it, and I didn't know where it was or why, why it refused to respond to my desires. This could well be part of the oxygen deprivation brought about by the emphysema. Everything else seems to be functioning normally it seems to have abated for the moment . . . and that means right now it's five minutes into the occurrence. Whatever it is.

MARTIN  
GALLAGHER      You've just heard a recording made by my birth father, John Harrison, who I never met. I received this recording three years after he died. Who was this man who helped give me life? Why did he have an audio recorder next to his bed at 1:28 in the morning? What makes him want to document this stroke in such detail? And who is this recording for? He was a mystery to me, and I am only now learning about him and what I have inherited from him purely through sound recordings.

JOHN HARRISON      Who knows, this may be my last will and testament! (LAUGHS)

SFX: LAUGH ECHOES OUT. CROSSFADE TO RIR THEME.

THEME AND ANNOUNCER

MUSIC: RIR THEME

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to Re-Imagined Radio, a program about radio storytelling. With each episode we explore how dialogue, sound effects, and music can promote storytelling and engage your listening imagination. Here to tell you about THIS episode is John Barber, producer and host.

HOST OPEN

HOST

Thank you, Rylan. Hello everyone. Thanks for joining us.

This episode is called "My Hands Are Different." It's written and produced by Martin J. Gallagher, an independent music composer and sound designer based in Portland, Oregon.

We featured Martin's work earlier this year in the episode "Waters and Ruins," two short stories, each framed by music.

"And the Waters" remembers William (Sam) Gregory, a Portland playwright/poet, who died in 2024.

"The Ruins of Mauripol" (a response to the Russian invasion and destruction of Mariupol, Ukraine) is a three-part

string quartet by Vancouver composer Daniel Truschov.

This time Martin shares a personal, and poignant, memoir about finding his birth parents.

Thank you for listening as Re-Imagined Radio presents "My Hands Are Different," written and produced by Martin J. Gallagher.

### PROLOGUE

HOST

Martin Gallagher was adopted when he was six months old. He discovered and met his birth Mother when he was thirty years old. His birth father died before Martin could meet him. Martin learned about his birth father through interviews with friends, and a box of tape recordings.

The influence of both his fathers and their focus on Martin's hands is an underlying theme. Martin's adoptive father wants him to use his hands to [QUOTE] "stand up for himself" [END QUOTE]. He gives Martin boxing gloves and a training schedule.

Martin's birth father, a mystery until after his death, has inspired Martin's hands for a career in music and creative media.

This is a poignant story. A memoir. A coming of age tale. A journal of discovery. And enlightenment.

As a tagline for this episode we say, "Two fathers. Two paths. One realization."

As you will hear, Martin learns how both his fathers influence his life, and combine to make Martin the unique and talented individual he is.

**MUSIC: "TOUCH" (COPYRIGHT 1997 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER) BEGINS FADING UP FOR "PROLOGUE"**

HOST Let's listen now to "My Hands Are Different," written and produced by Martin J. Gallagher.

**MUSIC: UP FULL.**

MARTIN J. GALLAGHER Prologue.

**MUSIC: DUCKS UNDER THE FOLLOWING.**

MARTIN J. GALLAGHER As an adoptee, I have two sets of parents. I have the family that I mostly grew up with, the Gallaghers, who lovingly adopted me when I was six months old. I will refer to them respectfully as my step-parents, Martin and Ruth.

But I have another set of parents who were a mystery to me for thirty years. These are my biological parents who I

will refer to as my birth parents. John, and Mary. They were not married.

MUSIC: UP, THEN DUCKS UNDER THE FOLLOWING.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

This story of discovery is told in four parts. Part One is about my childhood and what I thought I knew about my father.

Part Two is about the friction that comes in adolescence.

Part Three is a brief history of adoption in this country and why it made my discovery so difficult.

And Part Four contains recordings that helped me discover John and the genetic influence hidden in my life.

MUSIC: UP, THEN DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING. SLOW FADE OUT.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

My story is all about nature and nurture. About characteristics that are wired in at birth and behaviors that were taught to me as a child so that I could survive and make my way in the world.

But nature and nurture are different. It's like the clay that a potter uses and the pattern that the potter tries to put on that clay. If the clay is not familiar to the potter, the pattern may turn out a little fuzzy, out of focus.

And, as I grew and became my own person, my personality and sense of myself was also a little fuzzy and out of focus. Ehhhm, these things would take a lifetime to discover and bring into focus.

**MUSIC: FOR TRANSITION**

PART 1. AS A CHILD: THE PERSON I THOUGHT OF AS MY FATHER.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Part 1. As A Child: The person I thought of as my father.

**SFX: RECORDING OF MARTIN HERALD GALLAGHER SINGING.**

MARTIN HERALD  
GALLAGHER

Oh, I had a hat when I came in and I hung it on the rack, and I'll have a hat when I go out or I'll break somebody's back. Now I'm a peaceful man I am, I don't like to shout, but I had a hat when I came in, and I have a hat when I go out.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

That was a tape recording of my stepfather, Martin Herald Gallagher, singing in 1959. He had bought a reel-to-reel tape recorder to document the voices of his family, and when there was a family party, everyone had a turn on the tape recorder. It was a novelty. No one in my family had ever heard their own voice like this. Do I really sound like that? So let's listen to that song again. Remember, this is at a family party at night and the folks are lubricated by strong drink to loosen up.

SFX: RECORDING OF MARTIN HERALD  
GALLAGHER SINGING.

MARTIN HERALD Oh, I had a hat when I came in and I  
GALLAGHER hung it on the rack, and I'll have a hat  
when I go out or I'll break somebody's  
back. Now I'm a peaceful man I am, I  
don't like to shout, but I had a hat  
when I came in, and I'll have a hat when  
I go out. (LAUGHS, Ho-Ho!)

MARTIN J. Did you notice that line about "or I'll  
GALLAGHER break somebody's back"? It is sung in  
jest but remember blue collar Irish  
learn to take no guff from anyone.

This was the first song that my father  
ever taught me. The message was, "Stand  
up for yourself. Be a man. And don't  
take any guff from anyone." Sung with a  
smile

Let's move forward in time. . . . Now it  
is Christmas 1961. I am 10 years old.  
The family is opening up presents around  
the Christmas tree and my stepfather  
gives me a gift that he feels is very  
important.

SFX: CHRISTMAS RECORDING FROM  
MARTIN HERALD GALLAGHER'S TAPE  
RECORDER.

MARTIN J. Ahh . . . From Daddy.  
GALLAGHER

RUTH GALLAGHER Can't open it until you tell us what it  
is.

MARTIN HERALD Come on, Mart. Tell us.

GALLAGHER

MARTIN J. I don't know.

GALLAGHER

MARTIN HERALD Come on now.

GALLAGHER

MARTIN J. I don't know!

GALLAGHER

MARTIN HERALD Come on, make a guess.

GALLAGHER

MARTIN J. I guess . . .

GALLAGHER

MARTIN HERALD What do you call them, Mart?

GALLAGHER

MARTIN J. Boxing gloves.

GALLAGHER

MARTIN HERALD Now, if you got problems, then you'll  
GALLAGHER fight them out. Practice. Only practice,  
Mart. That's all. Practice The Art of  
Self-Defense.

MARTIN J. After Christmas, my stepfather gave me  
GALLAGHER instructions for practice. I was to go  
down to the basement and with my new  
boxing gloves beat and punch his old  
Merchant Marine rucksack filled with  
sawdust. I was to do this for 20 minutes  
every night. After that, I was to take  
off the gloves and punch the rucksack  
with bare fists for 10 minutes to build  
up calluses on my knuckles.

I did not like this "practice." While it did let me blow off steam from time to time, this "practice" was the first indication of just how different in nature my stepfather and I were.

I was a slender kid, and I had the usual fear of getting into fistfights at the schoolyard.

My stepfather was a big barrel-chested Irishman. His grandfather had been a blacksmith back in Ireland and was known as "The Hammer."

My stepfather thought that learning how to fight would help me stand up for myself. Once, he said to me, "Fight as hard as you can. Even if you lose the fight, they will never want to fight you again."

The boxing gloves were followed up by barbells a couple of years later.

Martin Senior was an electrical engineer at a steel mill, a trade he learned in the Merchant Marines. He tried to teach me basic electrical projects, wiring a light switch, wiring up a working thermostat to turn on a light, making a basic electrical motor.

These projects were "okay," and I enjoyed them, but what really got my attention was using his tape recorder. I recorded songs from the TV. I made up silly recordings with my friends.

SFX: RECORDING OF YOUNG MARTIN  
GALLAGHER.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER Hello nice kind people out there. We . .  
. this is one day after Thanksgiving and  
the night before we have dinner. uh . .  
. we have Kevin . . . ahm Whoj-a-ma-  
flop-it (LAUGHTER) and Martin Gallagher.  
A little sketch that we were going to  
put on. I will be known as Martin Louie  
and Kevin will be known as Kevin Louie  
and all that razzmatazz and jazz.

MARTIN J  
GALLAGHER And I started recording my piano  
playing.

SFX: RECORDING OF YOUNG MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER PLAYING PIANO.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER I started asking for piano lessons at  
seven years old, three years before the  
boxing gloves.

My piano teacher was a classical pianist  
who told me to pay attention to my  
hands. Don't crack your knuckles, keep  
your fingernails short and well-groomed,  
and do your fingering exercises to  
develop hand posture, dexterity, and  
independent hand movements. Needless to  
say, the hands of a piano player are not  
the same as the hands of a street  
fighter.

During a drive one evening with the  
family, there was a string of cars  
coming toward us on the street. The  
fifth car in line had his bright lights  
on. Dad turned on his bright lights to

get the fifth driver to dim his. The first four cars flashed their bright lights at us. My stepfather said bitterly, "I'll fight 'em all just to get to that one with the bright lights on."

You can see that behaviors like this that my stepfather had, were very useful to him as a street scrapper who stood up for himself easily and quickly in any encounter. That was useful in establishing boundaries. However, it inhibited his career. He was always more comfortable around machinery than people.

**MUSIC: FOR TRANSITION**

PART 2: AS AN ADOLESCENT: THE  
DISSONANCE BEGINS.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Part 2: As An Adolescent: The Dissonance Begins.

**MUSIC: "TOUCH," 3RD MOVEMENT  
(COPYRIGHT 1997 BY MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER). UPBEAT TRANSITION,  
FINISH AND DUCK UNDER THE  
FOLLOWING.**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Do you ever feel that you don't quite "fit" with the world . . . with other people? That if you could just do things differently, or act differently . . . be someone else's idea of normal . . . that that would smooth everything over and make everyone like you more.

Please understand, I will never complain about my life with the Gallaghers. Any alternative life possible would have been *institutional* life.

My adopted parents were fine people. I was carefully brought up as their own and given a university education.

I received opportunities which I'm sure I wouldn't have received from my birth parents. Although I have no idea what my life would have been if my mother had kept me, I have never doubted that I fared better by being adopted.

However, in adolescence, I started to feel friction between my natural inclinations and the teachings of my adopted family. I gravitated to music .  
. .

**SFX: RECORDING. MARTIN J. GALLAGHER  
AND HIS ROCK BAND BEGIN TO FADE IN.**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

. . . and started playing in a rock band with my friends.

**SFX: RECORDING. MARTIN J. GALLAGHER  
AND HIS ROCK BAND, UP FULL,  
ESTABLISH, THEN DUCK UNDER.**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

My step-parents were not especially musical and they thought that this rock and roll music and the time spent with the band was a bad influence on me.

During this time I was struggling in high school. I flunked out in my senior

year from a private Catholic High School.

My family knew that I was failing and they didn't know what to do about it. They assumed that I was lazy and unfocused, that I didn't apply myself with self-discipline, and that it was all the fault of that rock and roll band.

**SFX: RECORDING. MARTIN J. GALLAGHER  
AND HIS ROCK BAND UP FULL, THEN  
FADE OUT...**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

During an argument with my stepfather about . . . something . . . I don't know what, he pulled me into the backyard and said that we were going to have it out.

His way of dealing with frustration in his OWN life was to become aggressive and belligerent. My nature was to avoid direct confrontations, so I turned and I walked away. I was no street fighter.

Soon after that, I left home. I got a job, moved into an apartment with high school friends, and bought my first car. I was seventeen.

My life got better after leaving home, and I eventually graduated from college with a degree in television production.

**MUSIC: BEGINS TO FADE IN**

MARTIN J. GALLAGHER I also continued playing keyboards in pop music bands, but my journey was only beginning.

**MUSIC: "TOUCH," FIRST MOVEMENT.  
(COPYRIGHT 1997 BY MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER). UP FULL TO END (WHICH  
REPEATS SEVERAL TIMES.**

**MUSIC: FUSEBOX THEME FOR BREAK**

**THE FUSEBOX BREAK**

HOST You're listening to "My Hands Are Different," an episode of Re-Imagined Radio. Time for a short break while I tell you about *The Fusebox Show*.

Produced by Marc Rose, Milt Kanen, and Jeff Pollard, each episode of *The Fusebox Show* features a full course of what they call "Ear Food," wit-slathered conversation and commentary about current events and contemporary culture. Here's a sample.

**SFX: THE FUSEBOX SHOW TEASER**

HOST Learn more, and subscribe to the podcast at *The Fusebox Show* website, thefuseboxshow dot com.

**MUSIC: FUSEBOX THEME, FADE UNDER  
AND OUT FOR THE FOLLOWING**

HOST This is Re-Imagined Radio. Our episode is "My Hands Are Different." It's written and produced by Martin J. Gallagher, an independent composer and

audio producer based in Portland,  
Oregon.

In the first part of his story, Martin has unraveled different influences from his adoptive father, Martin Herald Gallagher, and decided that what he has learned does not fit what he feels.

Martin's search for his birth parents takes on a new importance. Let's continue listening to "My Hands Are Different," by Martin J. Gallagher.

**MUSIC: FOR TRANSITION**

PART 3: THE SEARCH FOR MY BIRTH PARENTS

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Part 3: The Search for My Birth Parents

**MUSIC: "RUSH." (COPYRIGHT 1975 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER). UNDERSCORE ESTABLISH, THEN UNDER, AND OUT.**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Searching for birth parents was not a pressing, overarching concern. But I was curious enough to take this next step in my life.

In 1979, I had a chance encounter with a 70-year-old woman who immigrated to America many years before and became a U.S. citizen. She told me about her difficult search for her birth parents in Europe.

She suggested I contact Jean Patton at Orphan Voyage, a national clearinghouse for information about open records laws state by state and the legislative efforts to establish open records for adoptees and birth parents. This chance encounter guided me on my journey.

MUSIC: "BRIGHT EYES." (COPYRIGHT 1976 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER).  
ESTABLISH, THEN DUCK UNDER AND OUT.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Jean Patton was a seminal figure in the adoptive rights movement, the movement to allow birth parents and birth children to reconnect.

She herself was an adoptee, and she searched for and found her birth parents. She published *The Adopted Break Silence* in 1954, which collected stories of 40 adult adoptees.

This book began the discussion of the concept of so-called illegitimate births by scholars and adoptees. If the birth was not authorized by law or not in accordance with accepted legal standards or religious rules, then what rights should be given to children born out of wedlock and their birth parents?

Beginning in 1950, Patton dedicated herself to advocating for adoptees and facilitating meetings between birth parents and adoptees. She personally counseled thousands of adoptees and birth mothers on how to begin their searches, and in 1980, she personally

advised me on how to search for my birth parents.

Even with help, discovery and connection with birth parents was not easy.

Janet Bowman is a retired social worker with the Department of Human Services in Multnomah County, Oregon. She tells the story of a particular young unmarried woman who was pregnant in Ohio during the middle of the last century. She explains what it was like for that "special" young woman.

MUSIC: "SONG OF MY LIFE" (COPYRIGHT 2007 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER). FOR SCENE CHANGE, DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING RECORDING OF JANET BOWMAN.

JANET BOWMAN

It's 1950. Marty's birth mother, Mary, is fifteen years old, pregnant, and not married. She has three options. First, marry the birth father, an Army trainee she met in Clarksville, Tennessee, outside Fort Campbell, Kentucky. That's what Mary's mother wants.

Second, have an abortion which Mary's grandmother wants. Remember this is 1950 and this will be an illegal backroom abortion.

Mary is going against both wishes to choose the third option to bring the baby to term. This is quite a decision for a 15 year old to make.

In December 1950, Mary goes to the Florence Crittenden Home for Unwed Mothers in Cleveland, Ohio. She lives in the home for four months, and in April, she gives birth to an infant son, whom she christens John, named after his birth father.

MUSIC: "SONG OF MY LIFE" (COPYRIGHT 2007 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER). UP, THEN LONG FADE OUT UNDER THE FOLLOWING

JANET BOWMAN

Organized as a branch of the National Florence Crittenden Mission, the home cares for fifteen unwed mothers during pregnancy and for them and their infants for six months after delivery. It stresses the redemptive benefits of motherhood.

There are social mores and attitudes surrounding these pregnancies. So the mission guarantees anonymity and emphasizes spiritual reclamation.

(PAUSE)

A matron manages daily activities, part-time nurses and a visiting physician provide medical care, and volunteers from women's organizations supply auxiliary services.

Catholic Children's Services, now called the Diocese of Cleveland Catholic Charities Adoption Services, facilitates adoptions. When Marty is six months old,

he is adopted by Martin and Ruth Gallagher and christened Martin John.

MUSIC: "SONG OF MY LIFE" (COPYRIGHT 2007 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER). UP FULL, THE DUCK UNDER AND FADE OUT

JANET BOWMAN

In 2010, researchers estimated that there are about 5 million adoptees in the United States. To imagine it, think of all the people who live in Oregon and Alaska. About that many adoptees are alive in America today.

There are several common reasons why adoptees or birth parents search for their birth relatives. They may need legal information on the circumstances of the adoption.

It may be urgent to have medical history information.

They may want general family information or to know about family traits and personalities.

Finally, they may long to re-establish a connection.

This search takes time and determination. There are many roadblocks to getting information. First, adoption statistics are not gathered in an organized manner.

Public adoptions, through child welfare and the foster home system, and

international adoptions, in which the children are considered immigrant orphans, are tracked by government agencies.

Private adoptions, through agencies or within families or by private decision of the birth family, might never be counted or reported. State agencies who learn of these may report them voluntarily.

However, when a child is born, there is a birth certificate filed with the government. That brings us to the next obstacle, state laws. There are fifty states plus Washington DC. There are fifty one different laws governing access to birth and adoption records. Ohio has open access for people born before 1964, but when Marty travels to Columbus, the Ohio state capital, to get his birth certificate in 1980, he learns that there is a problem. The Ohio legislature is in the process of passing a law to restrict access. That puts Marty's request in a gray area.

The state records officer suggests this. "Go into the next room. I will pull up your birth record card and leave the room. You may not write anything down, but read carefully and remember as much as you can. When you come back out, I'll have pencil and paper for you to write down what you remember.

The kindness of the records officer helps Marty locate his birth mother. She helps him learn the name of his birth father, John. But John lives in Idaho, which has different records laws. John's Idaho birth record is sealed for a hundred years. John's death record is sealed for fifty years. So Marty's search for John is delayed for 35 years.

MUSIC: "SONG OF MY LIFE" (COPYRIGHT 2007 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER). ESTABLISH THEN UNDERSCORE.

PART FOUR - NATURE CLICKS INTO PLACE

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Part Four - Nature Clicks Into Place

Jean Patton helped me start my journey to reconnect with my birth parents. She referred me to a sympathetic paralegal. This man had access to privileged records not available to most of us. After some digging, he sent me the address and phone number of a person who he believed to be my birth mother.

"Believed to be." This statement is important, because he said that he could only give me an educated guess at the identity of this woman, but that I would have to make the final determination if she was my birth mother or not.

After writing an introductory letter to Mary, she responded. Thanks to a chance encounter with a 70-year-old woman at a party, and thanks to Jean Patton, I was

able to begin a warm and rewarding reconnection with my birth mother, Mary.

I was 30 years old. Mary sent me a photo of herself with a group of people. She did not put a circle around her face to ID it. But I was shocked at the photo and knew right away that this was my birth mother. I had never seen a person who looked like me and Mary looked just like me.

Soon, Mary and I met in person. She told me what she could remember about the brief and sweet affair with John. They met during a warm, sultry summer in Tennessee, near the Fort Campbell Army Base. John was a handsome soldier training to go off to the Korean War, and Mary was a pretty and smart young girl living away from home with her grandmother. She told me that John was from Idaho, and more importantly to me, he was a piano player and a singer.

I sat in stunned silence.

**MUSIC: "DOORS OPENING." (COPYRIGHT 1997 BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER). BRAIN CONNECTIONS CHANGING.**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

I felt doors opening in my mind, brain connections being severed and reconnected differently, and an unfamiliar joy settling around me.

Thirty years of confusion and self-doubt started dropping away. I had to learn

more about this man, but John and Mary never married after their brief and sweet affair, and John was from Idaho, and Idaho had very different rules about adoption records.

The big break came courtesy of DNA. In 2017, I mailed my DNA sample to Ancestry.com. About one year later, a distant genetic cousin, a third cousin, and I, connected and talked about searching for my birth father. She was an enthusiastic researcher of her family tree. She mentioned that there was a friend of my birth father who I should talk to. She had found him on a funeral guest book. Funeral guest books are considered public record.

So, in 2019 I traveled to Boise to interview this friend, Dexter. He generously agreed to meet me and also allowed me to record our conversation at a restaurant.

SFX: FROM RECORDING BY MARTIN  
GALLAGHER

MARTIN J. So here we are on a Tuesday, ah, what,  
GALLAGHER the nineteenth of February.

DEXTER Yeah. February nineteen.

MARTIN J. And I'm meetin' next to Dexter. I  
GALLAGHER brought my laptop so you can see how  
this developed.

DEXTER Yeah, I'm really curious to see how that connection was made.

MARTIN J. Yeah.  
GALLAGHER

DEXTER One of his relatives is that how you . . .?  
.?

MARTIN J. A third cousin, if you could believe  
GALLAGHER that.

DEXTER Oh, yeah. So a third cousin, uhh?

MARTIN J. A third cousin. She took DNA tests and a  
GALLAGHER number of people in her family took DNA tests, and she shot me a note. It's all anonymous. It's all with handles, all with usernames, so she didn't know my name or anything like that.

MARTIN J. I asked him many questions about John  
GALLAGHER Harrison. As I listened to Dexter describe John, I kept finding so many parallels between John's life and my own.

Here are some excerpts from our conversation. Remember, John and I never met one another, but our lives had parallel arcs.

SFX: FROM RECORDING WITH DEXTER BY  
MARTIN J. GALLAGHER.

MARTIN J. Do you see any family resemblance?  
GALLAGHER

DEXTER You're bald.

MARTIN J. Ha! (LAUGHING) Yeah.

GALLAGHER

DEXTER John was bald.

MARTIN J. Heh! Yes, I'm bald. Baldness is a  
GALLAGHER genetic trait.

DEXTER I would guess, 5'11"?

MARTIN J. Yeah, that's about what I am.

GALLAGHER

DEXTER Skinny guy?

MARTIN J. Yeah, I was pretty slender my whole  
GALLAGHER life.

DEXTER Ahm, had pale blue eyes

MARTIN J. I have pale blue eyes. Another genetic  
GALLAGHER trait. How'd you meet him?

DEXTER I met him at a television station.

MARTIN J. Really? In, in, in . . . Boise?

GALLAGHER

DEXTER In Pocatello [Idaho].

DEXTER I work at a station called KPVI . . .

MARTIN J. Uhmm, hum

GALLAGHER

DEXTER . . . and John was a master control  
operator at KPVI.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER A master control operator. What's that do?

DEXTER He's the guy that sits and plays back the shows.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER My degree is in television production. And one of my early job was as a master control operator. Would you say he was kind of an opinionated guy?

DEXTER Yeah, that would be one way to describe him. Yeah, hyper-opinionated was he. He wasn't always the person who would compromise, or keep his opinion to himself, when it best suited him. He had a hard time determining that.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER I have been known to have firm and loud opinions of my own.

DEXTER He was very, very smart. He knew about a lot of things. I mean, he had many fields of study that interested him, and he spoke very eloquently . . . about the things that he was passionate about.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER I don't know about smart or eloquent, but I have had many interests in my life.

DEXTER Uhmm, you know, choir boy in the Catholic Church.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER I was raised Catholic. Went to Catholic grade school and Catholic high school and sang as a choir boy.

MARTIN J. GALLAGHER Finally, Dexter suggested that I travel to meet another friend of John's, Kirk.

Kirk and John met at a party thrown by a woman who they were both interested in, but when they went to the party, the woman was forgotten and they became fast friends.

Kirk allowed me to record our conversations. I found I had even more similarities with John.

SFX: FROM RECORDING WITH KIRK BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER.

KIRK He liked gadgets. He was a gadget man, and so usually when I'd go over there he'd have something I hadn't seen before that he'd taken apart or was playing with, and I could see that.

MARTIN J. GALLAGHER Yes, I enjoy gadgets. My studio is filled with them. You know anything about his dad?

SFX: FROM RECORDING WITH KIRK BY MARTIN J. GALLAGHER.

KIRK I think he was a Baptist preacher, and John told me that he used to take him to the different congregations to sing, and I think he sang solo, and I think he was a boy soprano.

MARTIN J. GALLAGHER I sang soprano in Catholic church choirs when I was in grade school.

Kirk then gave me the hard drive from John's computer. This was an incredible gift. On it were John's music collection, his writings, and most importantly, conversations with Kirk. Just normal friends talking together, unedited and unrehearsed.

I began to learn more about him.

SFX: RECORDING BY JOHN HARRISON OF HIMSELF TALKING

JOHN HARRISON

I don't know. It's funny. I've always been severely inhibited because I had so many conflicting messages in my skull. It's against God's laws. Why do people talk about . . .? Oh my god sex is terrible . . . Did you see that chick. Not some of them . . . Jimmy Swaggart sitting in the front seat of his car while there's a girl sitting beside him and he can look at her . . . oh boy isn't that just terrible and he and he turns right around and preaches all this from the pulpit . . . oh come on . . . what is this?

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Yes, he was pretty opinionated and he didn't keep those opinions to himself and he therefore went through a number of jobs. But this was his character and there are elements of that character at play throughout my life also.

Dexter and Kirk told me several stories about John. I'll include them here with the help of Mark Rose, host and producer

of *The Fuse Box Show* on Apple Podcast.  
He'll narrate for us.

SFX: RECORDING OF MARC ROSE

NARRATING A STORY ABOUT JOHN

HARRISON

MARC ROSE

A story about John Harrison. He had an interesting sense of humor. John owned a bar in Denver, Colorado, back in the 1980s. In the bar was a phone booth. Being an audio engineer, John hooked up a speaker in the ceiling of the phone booth. Connected to the speaker was an audio cart machine, something like a tape recorder.

The audio cart machine had five different ambient sound effects. A customer would come up to the bar and say, "Hey John, I need to call my wife." And John would say, "Okay, where are you right now?" And the customer would say, "Uh, oh, I guess I'm at the doctor's office."

So, John would punch up the ambience of a doctor's office, play it through the speaker in the phone booth, and then his customer would call his wife and say, "Sorry, honey, I can't be home right now. I'm still at the doctor's office."

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

In today's social environment, this story would seem a bit rude, or even misogynistic. But I would guess that John was trying to curry favor with his bar customers, and he obviously used his

talent for gadgets and his knowledge of audio to rig up a system to suggest different environments, and I do the same thing in my sound designs for live theater, creating different settings and environments on stage. This is crucial to telling a story rich with meaning and circumstance.

Another wonderful gift in these recordings is a peek into John's medical history. Throughout most of my life when a doctor asked me for family medical history like, "Do you have a history of cancer in your family?" I had to say, "I don't know. I'm adopted."

So I couldn't give the doctor any information about markers that might indicate future health problems to look out for.

Here's another audio clip where John talks about his health.

SFX: RECORDING OF JOHN HARRISON  
TALKING ABOUT HIS HEALTH.

KIRK How's your breathing been lately?

JOHN HARRISON Not too good.

KIRK Is that right?

JOHN HARRISON Neither during the day or at night. I have had to fight with many allergies most of my life. (GROANS).

KIRK

You still have this?

You said you had a pain in your side for the first time.

JOHN HARRISON

Well, I think I discovered what it is. It's a combination of factors. Poor muscle tone. Lack of exercise. Old injuries. And age. Lying in bed last week was a bitch, because I don't have any more Oxycodone from the surgery on the skin cancer.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

This recording is so important to fill in my family medical history. First, I am lucky that I've never had problems with allergies. I don't get hay fever or pollen allergies.

Next, remember the first recording at the beginning of this program where John mentions emphysema? He thinks emphysema may have caused the stroke. I'm gonna have to watch out for that in my future.

Next, a medical friend of mine thinks that when John made this recording, he was suffering from opioid withdrawal, as this recording was made before the days of opioid lawsuits and regulation. He was taking this medication, Oxycodone, to alleviate the pain of skin cancer treatment. I also have to watch out for skin cancer as I have already had a small bout of it due to my fair skin. Family medical history is important.

SFX: RECORDING OF MARC ROSE

NARRATING A STORY ABOUT JOHN

HARRISON

MARC ROSE

Another story about John Harrison. John wanted all his friends who smoked cannabis in the 1970s to save their seeds and give them to him.

He wanted to put these seeds into a large jar. Then, he wanted to fly an airplane over the nearby river and drop the seeds from the airplane.

In the springtime, when the pot plants would begin to grow all along the river bank, he thought it would be hilarious to watch the police go crazy and get muddy trying to rip up all the pot plants.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

I've got no comment here.

SFX: RECORDING OF JOHN HARRISON

TALKING ABOUT SPUTNIK SATELLITE.

JOHN HARRISON

When I went into radio, ahh, the Russians put up Sputnik. The Russians had a vehicle in orbit and it was broadcasting a signal. It was a min-ip, min-ip, min-ip, min-ip, min-ip, you know, and and there were special bulletins all over the landscape and amateur radio operators listening for the signal on so-and-so megahertz and and re-broadcasting it on local radio stations. In the middle of all of this, women were calling me up at KFVI radio

and chewing my ass out because they missed an episode of their favorite soap opera.

SFX: RECORDING OF MARC ROSE NARRATING A STORY ABOUT JOHN HARRISON.

MARC ROSE

Another story about John Harrison. John Harrison took a motorcycle tour through the Pacific Northwest one summer. He packed his golf clubs on his motorcycle. He would stop at all these private golf courses and pose as a writer for a fictional golf digest magazine. The managers of the golf clubs wanted to make a good impression, so they would arrange for John to play eighteen holes with other members of the club. That way, John got to play golf at some very exclusive golf clubs for free.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

I saw a photograph of John's house taken back a few years. In the corner of his carport, I spotted a beautiful Honda CBX motorcycle. That was a beautiful machine. Six cylinders, very fast, with a beautiful sound only a six-cylinder bike could give. That sound was remarked on in a number of motorcycle journals.

I've owned several motorcycles in my life, but none of them as nice as that CBX, and I did quite a bit of motorcycle touring, but no golf clubs. Meh. Naah.

I'd been a musician for most of my life. I started composing when I was in high

school. All of the music you've heard in this program was composed and performed by me. I'm happiest in my life when I'm composing and recording.

I don't really compose in a particular genre. I just compose what I feel. Nevertheless, some of my music has been heard in television, film, live theater, and radio.

But I didn't know that my birth father was a musician. I didn't know my birth father at all before these discoveries. When I heard these next conversations, I sat down hard on a chair and listened closely, for here was my father, discussing music. These recordings went straight to my heart.

SFX: RECORDING OF JOHN HARRISON  
TALKING ABOUT MUSIC.

JOHN HARRISON

I'm in some of the same deal right here with two pianos, a big record collection and a wall-full of books back there.

. . .

But his tone is so pure . . . and he's, he's blind. In this second chorus here he goes up for a E flat over High C. And he's . . . I don't know . . . he floats right up there and takes that tremendous high note.

One of the reasons I enjoy music . . . I enjoy it so much . . . I've been

singin' most of my life. Recitals. Quartets. I sang with a twenty-five-piece orchestra here in the Bannock Hotel in Pocatello for ten years. But the thing is . . . when you try to play the piano, and you know how difficult it is, and you know the limits of your own abilities, and then you hear somebody like Chic Corea, or when you hear a singer, years and years of practice and . . . Desire.

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

And then, something I never expected to hear: My birth father, John singing. It brought me to tears. Solid Gold!

SFX: RECORDING OF JOHN HARRISON  
SINGING "BRAZIL."

JOHN HARRISON

"And now, when twilight dims the sky  
above

"Recalling thrills of our love

"There's one thing that I'm certain of

"Return, I will . . . to old Brazil."

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

The next piece of gold.

SFX: RECORDING OF JOHN HARRISON  
SINGING "CABARET."

JOHN HARRISON

"Life is a cabaret old chum

"Come to the cabaret."

**MUSIC: "TOUCH," FOR TRANSITION.**

**ESTABLISH, THEN DUCK UNDER.**

PART 5, EPILOGUE

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

Part 5, Epilogue

My birth father died in a two-room concrete block house in a blighted section of Pocatello, Idaho. He died alone, with no family. His useful body parts were donated to medical research and the rest were cremated. When no one came to claim the ashes, those ashes were thrown in a dumpster and taken to a landfill.

John was very talented and skilled and knowledgeable in many areas. But his willingness to go it alone, his unwillingness to compromise in his hyper-opinionated and narcissistic nature caused him to lose his jobs, his colleagues, and his wives. He finished his life in isolation with no family, besides me, who he never met.

**MUSIC: UP, ESTABLISH, THEN DUCK UNDER.**

MARTIN J.  
GALLAGHER

I thank John for the basic clay of my nature. Likewise, I thank my Gallagher family for attempting to imprint a stamp on that clay that would allow me to produce something useful in this world.

When I think about all the things I inherited from John, I think about the natural characteristics of the man that

are hardwired into me, for better or for worse. There are the fears and desires. There are the physical attributes of my body and my mind. And there are . . . the hands. I was not meant to be a street fighter. I was not meant to be a boxer. I was born to work in music and media. My hands are different.

MUSIC: UP AND TO CONCLUSION.

THE RIR BREAK

MUSIC: RIR THEME. ESTABLISH, THEN  
FADE OUT UNDER THE FOLLOWING.

HOST

This is Re-Imagined Radio, a program about sound-based storytelling. With each episode we experiment with dialogue, music, and sound effects to create storytelling for your ears and imaginations. Here are some examples.

SFX: RE-IMAGINED RADIO AUDIO

TRAILER

HOST

Upcoming episodes of Re-Imagined Radio include "Frequency 43," in October, another Cinematic Radio Storytelling Collaboration by Jerrel McQuen and Marc Rose. They tell a story about the morphing liquidity of dream and nightmare and how that calls the very rules of what we consider reality into question. Join us, for this one.

In November we present "D.B. Cooper's Last Interview" sampling a short story

by Tom Vandel about what happened to Cooper after he jumped from the back of that jet passenger airplane Thanksgiving Eve more than fifty years ago.

In December, Re-Imagined Radio presents our fifth volume of radio holiday stories. This year we sample from "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas" by Norman Corwin told in rhyming verse, and "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, starring Lionel Barrymore.

More information is available at our website--reimaginedradio DOT FM.

**MUSIC: RIR THEME, ESTABLISH, THEN  
DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING**

HOST CREDITS/CLOSE

HOST

You've just listened to "My Hands Are Different," an original work by Martin J. Gallagher, independent music composer and sound designer based in Portland, Oregon.

As you heard, Martin had two fathers. An adoptive father. And a birth father.

Martin never met, never knew, his birth father. Through difficult research, Martin learned his birth father's name, John Harrison. Martin also learned his birth father had died four years earlier, thus preventing any meeting between father and son.

Instead, Martin learned about his birth father through conversations with his friends.

But the biggest revelations came from a box of sound recordings his birth father had made.

Martin hears his father talk about his life. His health. His various careers. And he hears his father sing. The experience is a revelation.

Martin realizes that each of his fathers provide models for his life. The differences are located in his hands. His adoptive father wants to train Martin to box, to be able to [QUOTE]"take care of himself." [END QUOTE]

His birth father genetically influenced Martin's hands for music. So now, at last, Martin knows that his birth father's love of music inspires his own creative efforts.

"My Hands Are Different." Two fathers. Two paths. One realization.

**MUSIC: RIR THEME UP, HOLD, THEN  
DUCK UNDER THE FOLLOWING.**

HOST

Support for Re-Imagined Radio comes from KXRW-FM (Vancouver, Washington), KXRY-FM (Portland, Oregon), and the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver.

Visit our website for more information and listening opportunities for THIS and all our other episodes, as well as lots of interesting EXTRA information and listening opportunities about radio storytelling. That's reimaginedradio DOT FM.

Re-Imagined Radio podcasts are available from many distribution platforms. Subscribe to our podcast and never miss an episode.

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Follow Re-Imagined Radio on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, Blue Sky, LinkedIn, and especially our YouTube channel . . . [at sign] reimaginedradio.

Re-Imagined Radio acknowledges the debt we owe to previous and contemporary radio artists, and we hope our curation and stewardship of their artifacts and efforts demonstrates our sincerity.

This is John Barber, producer and host.  
Thank you for listening to Re-Imagined  
Radio.

MUSIC: RIR THEME UP, THEN DUCK  
UNDER THE FOLLOWING

ANNOUNCER CLOSE

ANNOUNCER

This is a production of Re-Imagined  
Radio. To learn more, visit our website,  
reimaginedradio (all one word, no  
punctuation) DOT FM.

Please join us for another episode of  
Re-Imagined Radio where we will continue  
our exploration of sound-based  
storytelling.

MUSIC: RIR THEME UP, AND TO END.