



# Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here

*Joseph Heller*

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## **Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here** Joseph Heller

The demented Army Air Force of **Catch-22**, the lethal business world of **Something Happened**, the dysfunctional family of **Good as Gold**--all these, we have assumed, had their roots in Joseph Heller's own past. Now, more than thirty-five years after the explosion of **Catch-22** into the world's consciousness, Heller gives us his life.

Here is his Coney Island childhood, down the block from the world's most famous amusement park. It was the height of the Depression, it was a fatherless family, yet little Joey Heller had a terrific time--on the boardwalk, in the ocean (dangerously out of his depth), playing follow-the-leader in and out of local bars, even in school. Then a series of jobs, from delivering telegrams (on his first bike) to working in a navy yard--until Pearl Harbor, the air force, Italy. And after the war, college (undreamed-of before the G.I. Bill), teaching, Madison Avenue, marriage, and--always--writing. And finally the spectacular success of **Catch-22**, launching one of the great literary careers.

The strengths of **Now and Then** lie in the energy, humor, and mischief that have characterized all of Heller's work, along with the dark undertones that lie beneath them. He brings back a Coney Island that is not only a symbol of fun and fantasy around the world but a vision of what seems today to have been a golden age of carefree innocence. For the first time, he writes about the people and the events, both tragic and hilarious, he was eventually to translate, in **Catch-22**, into such memorable characters as Hungry Joe, Orr, Major--de Coverley, Natel's whore, and (of course) Yossarian, and such moving and frightening scenes as the death of Snowden. **Now and Then** is both an account of a remarkable life and a glimpse into the creative process of a major American writer.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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