

My First Hundred Years is the memoir of Dr. Will Adams, sharing stories from his childhood, his quest for higher education, and his days as a Ballroom dance teacher, board game inventor, band leader and keyboardist.

My First Hundred Years

By Dr. Will Adams

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**MY
FIRST
HUNDRED
YEARS**

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Dr. Will Adams

Political Science Professor

Keyboardist

Band Leader

Ballroom Dance Instructor

Board Game Inventor

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Chapter 7: Music

I took my first piano lesson at age six. Before that, I was already picking out melodies and harmonies (chords) by ear. My teachers were Miss Love and Miss Watson, partners at their home studio in Devon, a few miles west of Wayne on the Main Line (Route 30). They taught me traditional classical music, with one concession: They recognized that I had an ear for music, and they let me experiment.

When they had a new piece for me to learn, I would say, “Play it over for me so I can hear what it sounds like.” I never learned to sight read although I can decipher sheet music. So, when I got home, I would struggle through it several times, and by then I would know it. If I did not like a part, I would change it, and my teachers let me!

My brother, Bert, took lessons too. Twice a year, Christmas, and Spring, we took part in our teachers’ recitals. I remember the first time (Christmas) I played Good King Wenceslas. I had never heard it before and was disappointed that I was not allowed to play a carol that I could have played without any music.

Several years later, Bert and I worked out some “special music,” and Miss Love and Miss Watson listed it on the program. No one knew what we planned. When our time came, we sat down at the keyboard and started playing “Yankee Doodle.” I played treble and Bert played the oom-pah chords. We played the first line, then stopped. I turned toward the audience and played the second line by knocking my knuckles on my head. I controlled the pitch with the shape of my mouth. We then played the rest of the song on the piano. I thought our mother was going to fall off her chair laughing. Later Bert switched to vocal music and became a distinguished operatic baritone.

When I was in the 8th grade, Radnor schools were producing a stage play. I was not much of an actor, but they wanted me to play piano in the middle of it. So, they wrote me into the script as the leading lady’s boyfriend. All I did was walk on stage, then go down to the piano in front of the stage. I was a devoted fan of the Lone Ranger and had learned all four movements of the William Tell Overture (the theme song for the radio program that ran from the 1930’s to the 1940’s, then the television show from 1949 to 1957, and in subsequent movies). I played the entire overture. Near the end of the finale there is a momentary pause. When I paused, someone in the back yelled, “Hi Oh Silver, Away.” I finished with a grin.

After ten years of classical lessons, we moved to Kansas City, Kansas. A lady at the Seminary, where dad was president, taught jazz piano. I took lessons for two years and learned what is meant by C7, Gm, E+, F dim, etc.

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Kansas, I often attended a youth fellowship at the local Disciples of Christ church. We met every Sunday evening, and after the lesson we would hang out and visit. A girl in the group played piano very well. One Sunday evening she said she had something to show us. She sat down at the keyboard and played Chopin’s Military Polonaise. It was brilliant. When she finished, I said, “Play that first theme again.” She did, then I sat down and played it. Then I asked her to

play the second theme. Before we quit, I knew the entire piece. “It took me three months to learn that” she said.

When we were in New York in 1965-67 for me to write the dissertation, we bought a piano for our small apartment. Both our sons took lessons from a lady that lived in our building. When we returned to Liberty in fall 1967, they took lessons from Betty Dunham, wife of Dr. Dean Dunham, the English Department Chairman at William Jewell. James continued piano longer than William. From time to time, I taught them how I do what I do by ear. Both learned very well. Later, William switched to guitar, and since he already knew chords, all he had to do was find them on his new instrument. James stayed on the piano, and to this day plays a lot like me—even better sometimes.

In fall 1968 our family had tickets to the Harriman concert series at the College. We had seats in the front row for a concert by Jose Iturbi. Just before he began one of the numbers, I told James, “This is a concerto in G major.” It started out with arpeggios on an E7 up and down the keyboard, then on an A7, then D7. James whispered to me, “I thought this was in G major.” “It is,” I replied, but that’s not the only chord in it.” “Oh,” he said. A moment later Iturbi hit a G major. “There!” James said.

In 1972 Jerry Litton was elected to Congress from my District. He launched a series of public meetings where he had prominent Democrats as featured guests. He hired me to play piano during the dinners. See also Chapter 10 below.

People often ask how I do this. I really don’t know, but consider this: When people talk, one makes combinations of sounds, and the listener recognizes them. If I say “ball,” I make the sounds “b-aw-l” and you think of round objects. Some say music is a language, and in many ways, it is. A C7 chord is a combination of sounds that I recognize when I hear them. And since I know where that chord is on the keyboard, I can play what I hear. It is nothing to brag about—it’s just something I can do. Eleanor used to say that she thought my music ability and my facility with foreign languages. I think she was right.

Many friends have offered to pay me to show them how I play by ear. I will not take any money because I can show them in 20 minutes. I did this for years. I would write out the information on paper until it occurred to me to put it on the computer. The document I created appears on the previous two pages.

There are only 12 major keys in all of music (assuming you are not playing a Sitar from India). And there are only about nine common chords in each (according to my list). That is only 108 chords. Think of the number of words you know in your native language, and it is obvious that anyone should be able to memorize these 108 chords.

Many pieces of pop music are available in what is called fake books. In some places these have been illegal but can usually be found. A song’s melody is written in the treble clef with notes displayed in the usual way. But no other notes appear there. Rather, the names of the chords are written above the melody line, with a different chord appearing wherever the chord changes. I can sight read these pieces of sheet music! With practice, you can learn all 108 chords and be able to play from most fake books. Some people may be able to begin to recognize these chords and play by ear.

In the early 1970’s when Jo Hullender and Gail Danforth got Eleanor and me started teaching ballroom dance (Chapter 8), I also discovered that Gail was a gifted keyboardist. Her piano playing reminded me of me. Occasionally we would go into the two piano rehearsal room and make music together. Once Steve Krause, Political Science major and skilled ballroom dancer, came in with us. He was director of the College radio station KWPB. He recorded our two pianos on cassette tape and broadcast it a few days later. . I recorded it on 8-track tape (look it up). I still have the tape and a tape player, but the recording has faded.



In the 1970;s I got interested in forming a band. At one point I had three College students. Debbie Gillespie (Mitchell) was an excellent vocalist. We also had two guys whose name I can't recall. One played the saxophone, the other percussion. Since we were all from from William Jewell, we called ourselves "The Academics." My wife, Eleanor (a great artist!), made us a banner with the name of the band and, on an upper corner, an academic cap with a tassel.

Later I met a couple of African American musicians who were exceptionally gifted. One played percussion (and keyboard) and sang, the other had played saxophone with well-known bands. We worked together several years. Both are now deceased. More recently I have a band called "The KC Jazz." Some of the originals are gone. Today Fino Andrade is on percussion, Richard Blessing on guitar, Gary Olsen on trombone, and Richard Krueger on bass. Of course, I'm on the keyboard. See photo next page

Chord Systems

By Dr. Will Adams

Glossary

Half Step: Two adjacent notes, with none between. Examples: C, C#; E, F; Bb, B.

Whole Step: Two adjacent notes, with one between. Examples: C, D; E, F#; G, A; Ab, Bb.

Major Scale (start on any one of the 12 notes of the chromatic scale):

Start, whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half.

Major Third: Two notes with three others between. Examples: C, E; D, F#; Bb, D; G, B; Gb, Bb.

Minor Third: Two notes with two others between. Examples: C, Eb; D, F; Bb, Db; G, Bb.

Tonic Note: The root note of a chord. Examples: C, F minor, G7.

Root Position (of a chord): A chord played with the root note at the bottom. Examples: C, F minor, G7.

First Inversion: A chord played with the second note at bottom.

Second Inversion: A chord played with the third note at bottom.

Third Inversion: (Etc.)

Introduction: *While every song is written in one of the twelve possible keys (example, key of C, key of F, key of Bb), each chord has its own key. The most common chords are listed below. The left column gives the name of the chord in the key of C. The second column gives the notes that make up the chord in the key of C. The third column gives the number of the notes of the scale that make up the chord. In the key of C, C is 1, D is 2, E is 3, etc. Where a note of the scale is sharpened (#) or flatted (b) to fit the chord, the # or b is present. The fourth column gives the intervals that make up the chord.*

The first two columns are specific to the key of C. Columns three and four, however, apply to any key. Change C in column one to any other note and follow columns three and/or four and you have the same chords in that key. For example, an F chord starts on F and adds the third and fifth notes of the F scale (column 3), or adds a major third followed by a minor third (column 4).

Most Common Chords

Chord Name Notes

(Key of C) (Key of C) Notes of Scale Intervals

C C, E, G 1, 3, 5 Major third, minor third

Cm (minor) C, Eb, G 1, 3b, 5 Minor third, major third

C+ (augmented) C, E, G# 1, 3, 5# Two major thirds

C dim(inished) C, Eb, Gb, A 1, 3b, 5b, 6 Three minor thirds

C7 (seventh) C, E, G, Bb 1, 3, 5, 7b 1 major 3rd, 2 minor 3rds

Cmaj7 C, E, G, B 1, 3, 5, 7 One major 3rd, 1 minor 3rd, 1 major third

C6 (sixth) C, E, G, A 1, 3, 5, 6 1 major 3rd, 1 minor 3rd, 1 whole step

C9 (ninth) C, E, G, D 1, 3, 5, 9 1 major 3rd, 1 minor 3rd, 1 fifth

Cmin9 C, E, G, Db 1, 3, 5, 9b 1 major 3rd, 1 minor 3rd, 1 fifth flatted

Other chords are defined by counting from the tonic note. For example, C7+9 means C, E, G, Bb, D (1, 3, 5, 7b, 9, or one major third, two minor thirds, one major third).

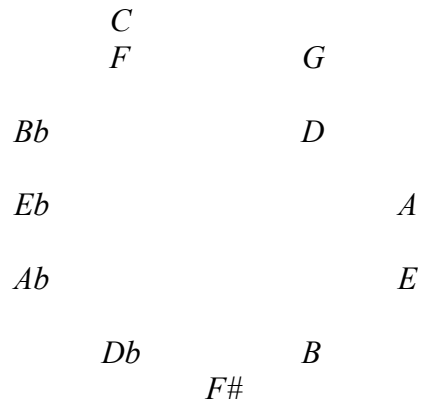
Practice finding the several chords in the key of C until you can go to them immediately. Then pick another key (perhaps F or G to start with), find all the chords, and practice until you can play them without hesitation. When you have done this in all 12 keys, you can play almost any chord merely by seeing the chord name printed above the treble clef on most pop music.

Note: There are only three diminished chords, and four augmented chords. For example, a Cdim (C, Eb, Gb, A) is three minor thirds. Move the C from bottom to top of the chord and you have a Cdim in first inversion. But that is also an Eb diminished. Move the Eb from bottom to top and you have a Cdim in second inversion, Eb diminished in first inversion, and a Gb (or F#) diminished. Move it once more and it is an A diminished. Thus, three diminished chords (C, C#, and D) can each be called by four different diminished chord names and embrace all 12 keys.

Similarly, a C+ (augmented) is C, E, G# (1, 3, 5#, or two major thirds). Move the C from bottom to top and you have a C+ in first inversion, but also an E+ in root position. Move the E to top and it is a C+ in second inversion, E+ in first inversion, and a G# (or Ab) in root position. Thus, four augmented chords (C+, C#+, D+, and Eb+) can each be called by three different augmented chord names and embrace all 12 keys.

Wheel of Chords

The Wheel of Chords is but one of several methods of substituting one chord for another to produce a different effect in the harmony. Any chord straight across the wheel from one of these can be substituted for the first one. For example, a standard ending is dominant seventh followed by the tonic chord (G7, C; or Bb, Eb). Db is directly across the wheel from G, so try Db7, C instead of G7, C. Similarly, E is straight across the wheel from Bb, so try E7, Eb instead of Bb7, Eb.



There are many standard chord sequences. For example, the “A” theme from “Blue Moon” has the chord sequence, C, Am, Dm, G7. Exactly the same sequence is found in “Heart and Soul,” and many other pop songs. Playing from “fake books” (music with the melody written in the treble clef and chord names above) will gradually acquaint you with many such sequences. Then there are many techniques, such as the wheel of chords, for working out chord substitutions that add to the unique sounds of harmony. Finally, experiment with “fillers”—notes not part of the melody which may fill in the gap when the melody has a half or whole note.

In 1995, I gave a speech at the Brigham Young University summer dance camp explaining the various dance beats.

“The Academics”



Will Adams, keyboard

Debbie Gillespie Mitchell, vocalist

Percussion

Saxophone

KC Jazz, 2012

Dan Hamilton,

Guitar

Fino Andrade,

Percussion

Gary Olsen,

Trombone

Jim Sander,

Bass

Will Adams,

Keyboard

You can find this photo and some samples of our music [here](#).



The KC Jazz Band

Gary Olsen
Dr. Will Adams
Richard Krueger
Fino Andrade
Richard Blessing



Chapter 12: Messianic Complexes and Depression

Messianic complex: A state of mind in which an individual holds a belief that he or she is destined to become a savior. In a milder form, an individual may believe that he or she has discovered a truth that would benefit humanity. Such a person may feel driven to achieve great purposes.

My father, William Walter Adams, Sr. (September 16, 1892, to December 24, 1977) was one of eight children (five boys, three girls) born to William Foster Adams and Nancy Martin Adams in Chelsea, Alabama. Chelsea is an unincorporated wide place in the road eighteen miles southeast of Birmingham. They were farmers, and my dad was the only one to go to college. He not only completed Howard College, known as Samford University since 1957. He also earned Th. M. and Th. D degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

He once told me that his mother wanted one of her children to become a minister. She also said that when he was born, she knew that he was the one. As a teen, he was baptized in Liberty Baptist Church, in Shelby County, Alabama. Soon after, he was ordained as a minister. When he earned his Th. D. in 1924, he and mom married and were planning to go to Japan as missionaries. Something fell through, however, and he was the first professor hired in the newly established Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He taught Greek New Testament there for 21 years (I was born in 1929), served as President of Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Kansas, 1946 to 1954, joined the Southern Seminary faculty 1954-62, and New Orleans Baptist Seminary 1962 to 1970.

I remember him saying numerous times during World War II that “The world is going to turn a corner.” I thought he meant when we win the war. Only later did I figure out what he actually meant.

My father was motivated by two convictions. (1) That if he could persuade a modest percentage of those who call themselves Christians what it means to be Christian, it would change the world. (2) That his many years of teaching from the ancient Greek what the Bible actually says, would accomplish that end. I think he was right in the first conviction, but wrong that he could bring that about through 45 years of teaching future ministers and religious leaders.

To illustrate his first conviction, note that he and mom were both born and raised as Southern Baptists in Alabama only a generation or so after the Civil War. We can only imagine what sort of racial attitudes they were exposed to during childhood, yet before I was born, he concluded from his study of the Greek New Testament that a true Christian could not be a racist. That was what he taught, long before his view became politically correct.

When one has chosen a particular work as a means to promote a higher purpose, disappointment is certain. As part of his work, he refused to recognize the parochial differences between Southern and Northern (later American) Baptists. I think that is what attracted him to the offer of the Central Seminary presidency—it was at that time the only Baptist Seminary dually aligned with both Conventions. Most of the money came from the North, most of the students from the South. At the end of his eight years as president, the factions split apart and Central became a Northern Baptist institution. Enrollment plummeted. I am almost certain that’s why he left.

Looking back on it, I also realize that he was severely depressed in his later years. I wish I had had the perspective that I have now; I might have been able to reassure him that his life was not a failure and that he had done a huge amount of good. But I only achieved that perspective after my own life experiences.

One of my earliest memories of connecting with world affairs was September 1, 1939. I was about seven weeks past my tenth birthday when I remember listening to the radio and hearing Adolph Hitler declare war on Poland. I had a vague idea of what war was since I had heard about the Japanese marauding around Asia in recent years. But this brought it home to me, and I followed the war news attentively. I was appalled by the wartime destruction and death, and at the end, by the revelations of the holocaust. I considered how humanity might avoid such tragedy in the future and concluded that we needed to establish a world government.

In the April 1945 edition of the Monthly News, I published an editorial advocating this idea (below).

I was, of course, rather naïve to think that the world would react rationally to such an idea. When I went to the University of Kansas in fall 1948, the first student organization I joined was the United World Federalists. The national organization was formed only a year before. Under the slogan, “World peace through world law,” the group campaigned to convince leading countries to call a world constitutional convention to establish world government.

Monthly News, April 1945, pages 1-2: WORLD FEDERATION, by Will Adams

From the experience after the last war, all must agree that the main object of this war should be to keep it from happening again. Another war would mean even more powerful weapons with which we "civilized" people would tear each other's sons and brothers to pieces. It would mean more destruction than ever to cities, to say nothing about the destruction of life and resources. And the taxes! It would be cheaper not to earn anything. Yes, another war must be made impossible. But how? That is the biggest question.

The Dumbarton Oaks Conference made certain proposals as to a world Federation of Nations after the war. But these proposals do not go far enough. This is only a beginning.

Battles are being won on the battlefield today, using the same strategy employed by generals of early American history. Why not use "historic strategy" to win this bloodless battle of keeping world peace?

Looking back 130 years, the (un)United Colonies had just won the Revolutionary War. Loosely united, bound together only by a few basic principles, they were more like thirteen separate nations than one. Immediately after the Revolution, a very inefficient government was set up under the Articles of the Confederation, which had many defects. Some of these were: there was no head of the government, they could not collect taxes, they could not regulate commerce between the states, they could not support an Army or Navy, and they could not settle disputes between the states. There was no national court to decide questions which could not be satisfactorily settled in state courts.

If you will look back over these defects, you will notice that they are the same defects which the League of Nations had. Under the Articles of the Confederation, there were strong state governments, and a weak central government. Was it not the same under the League of Nations? To have world Democracy, we must have a world democracy. There should be a world F. B. I., and a world police force. Trade and production should be encouraged, and there should be an international supreme court. Among international offenses would be, waging war, and spying or any undercover work. All nations should be restricted in the manufacture of arms, and no nation should be allowed to have a conscripted army.

The states had to "try again" before they attained a perfect union, and so must the world. Remember, history repeats itself!

Some time in my first two years at KU, I read Clarence Streit's book, *Atlantic Union Now*. He recognized that uniting democracies, communist countries, monarchies, and the broad variety of cultures in the world was an idea whose time had not yet come. Therefore, he recommended a "union of the free," a federation of the democracies. I was comfortable remaining active in both groups. As I secured my B. A. and M. A. at KU, I came into a better understanding of what it would take to realize my dream. My hopes were kept alive by a graduate school professor (Dr. Walter Sandelius) whose message was, "Government is the only alternative humanity has ever found to war." As my knowledge increased, I learned that the statement was not quite true. The 19th Century Concert of Europe, League of Nations and United Nations, the household system in Byzantium, and other arrangements have kept the peace for protracted periods of time. And of course, government does not always keep the peace; civil wars and revolutions do occur. But certainly, government seems the most likely arrangement to keep the peace.

In summer 1958 I left my pregnant wife at home in Liberty, Missouri, and went to New York to start my Ph. D. course work at Columbia University. I took two courses. One of them was International Politics, taught by Dr. Henry L. Mason, political science chair at Tulane University in New Orleans. He was a guest

instructor at Columbia. This was the most comprehensive single course I ever had in any subject. Later, I modelled the International Politics course I taught at William Jewell on the structure of his course.

Somewhere along the way I learned that stable government must rest on a consensus, an agreement on fundamentals. So, I began to focus on means to promote such a consensus. I hoped that the growth of interest groups that crossed national boundaries might erode the exclusivism of nationalism, and eventually evolve into a world where international organizations might be better able to keep the peace. See Chapter 9 above on Political Science for a discussion of my ideas on pluralism.

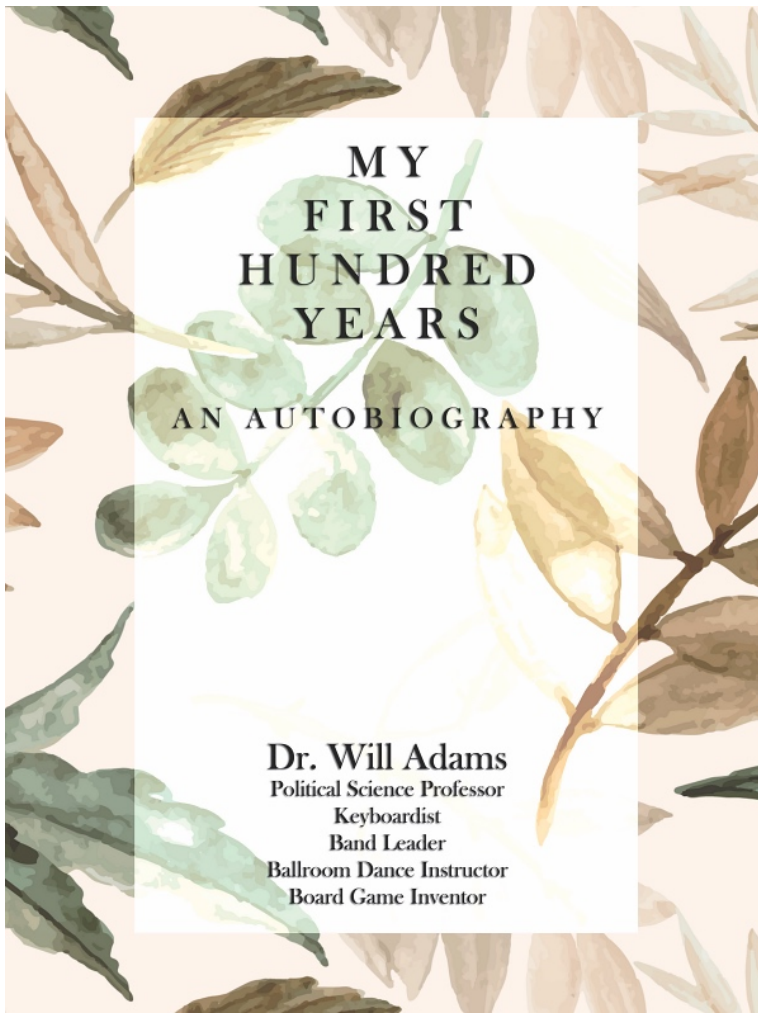
In my early 40's (1970's) I realized that those dreams would never come close in my lifetime. So, I lowered my sights. In 1968 I had won election to the Clay County Democratic Central Committee. In 1970 I was narrowly elected County Chairman. At this time, the national Democratic Party was undergoing major reforms designed to make internal processes more democratic. Senator George McGovern led the party's reform efforts. I was an enthusiastic supporter of these reforms and took steps to make local activities of the Party more transparent.

In 1971 a Clay County Democratic office holder came to us and urged us to reform the local Party along the lines of national reforms. The chapter above on Politics describes my efforts to create a real local Party with dues paying members. Despite great efforts on our part, nothing came of these reforms.

I went off the Central Committee in 1976. In late August, I suddenly lapsed into a severe depression. Looking back on it, I recognize a combination of factors that contributed to this development. My dream of creating a world government was to go nowhere. My efforts to make the local Democratic Party more democratic had failed. My parents were in a nursing home in declining health. My depression affected my marriage. Like my father, I realized that my most extravagant dreams were not to be realized.

I was suicidal for three years. I was coasting in my teaching. I knew my materials well enough to do that—I doubt my students noticed, but I did. At this same time, I clashed with the Dean (who was campaigning for the College presidency). I cut back on all the academic activities that were not required by my contract and limited myself to only my contractual obligations. I buried myself in teaching ballroom dancing with Eleanor—an area in which we were highly successful (see Chapter 8 on Dancing, above). I remember being present at a campus music program where a student sang “To Dream the Impossible Dream.” I had always been inspired by that song, but this time it made me angry. At first, I didn't realize why, but then it dawned on me that Don Quixote was nuts! Dreaming impossible dreams and fighting impossible fights were the ravings of a madman. I realized for the first time that I should dream possible dreams and fight possible fights.

I managed to get through the next ten years, then retired five years early (age 60). The moment I retired; the 13-year depression lifted. I went on to teach dancing another 28 years, thoroughly enjoying it and feeling that I was doing something constructive. Lesson: It is well to set goals that are high, but when they are impossible, disappointment is inevitable. My father never recovered from his disappointment. I managed to enter another field (ballroom dancing) and recover from a lengthy depression. So, second lesson: Develop a Plan B!



My First Hundred Years is the memoir of Dr. Will Adams, sharing stories from his childhood, his quest for higher education, and his days as a Ballroom dance teacher, board game inventor, band leader and keyboardist.

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