

## **Preamble**

Forty pages into these biographical ramblings I asked myself why? I was initially driven by the thought of how much notes of this kind, made by my parents, would have meant to me. Mother promised to write something “one day” but never did. So, I lived with verbal anecdotes, eventually shored up by my five-year assault on genealogy in the 1990’s. But as one nears life’s end, “replays” become very satisfying. Putting one memory to paper provokes another and that yet another so I write mainly to relive, in some way, the richness of a long, adventurous and eventful life. Thus, these writings are largely for my benefit.

## 1. Roots

As children of immigrant parents, my siblings and I enjoyed both the blessings of an American up-bringing and the enrichment of close ties to Norway and Scotland; ties which endure even now to countries to which our aunts and uncles emigrated, i.e. Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Our mother, Josephine, the youngest of six children, is responsible for the strength of those ties and sense of family we all felt. She was a prolific and enthusiastic correspondent with both her and my father's relatives. First meetings with those relatives, known to us only through Mother's stories, has often prompted them to give me old letters from Mother and photos of us as children.

Mother was born Josephine Salmon in 1894 in Corstorphine, a small town near and now a suburb of Edinburgh, Scotland. She lived there until the death of her father in 1918, shortly after which, at age 22, she made her first trip to Canada. Her father, Sidney Charles Salmon, born in 1851 in Ashford, Kent was the son of a surveyor, engineer and architect. Sidney Charles' mother, Elizabeth Homewood, came from Maidenstone, nearby. Mother recalls that her father was proud to be English.

Little is known of Sidney Charles' education or early career except that as a young man he worked at the Woolwich Arsenal. He married Frances Forbes in 1878 and remained in England at least until 1884 after which the family moved to Glasgow and later, to Corstorphine between 1886 and 1890.

His wife and our grandmother, Francis Forbes, was the daughter of Charles Forbes and Francis Mudie. The latter was the daughter of Robert Mudie, a friend of Lord Byron who was a naturalist, and prolific author. Three of his books, a mixture of science and romanticism typical of that era, are on my bookshelf as I write this. Francis Forbes' father, Charles Forbes, was a nephew of Sir Charles Forbes, the first baronet of Newe and founder of the House of Forbes which was prominent in the India trade and establishers, with the East India Company, of the Bank of Bombay in 1840. The family includes a distinguished lineage going back to John de Forbes of the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. <sup>1</sup>



**Sidney Charles Salmon**  
Sep. 6, 1851-Apr 6, 1918

Mother was the youngest of eight children:

1. Sidney Charles, who died at birth in 1879.
2. Katharine, who went to Australia and lived in Albury, NSW until she died in 2003. I visited her several times - the last with my wife Deborah about 1999. Katharine never married
3. Charles Graham Salmon, born in 1879, who also immigrated to Australia. He left a large family, many of whom live in Dubbo, NSW. His son, Lindsay, was an important player in development of the Ski industry in Australia. Lindsay's daughter, Gillian Magnaboska

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 - a complete family tree and history prepared during the years 1998 to 2003 and including descendents in England and Scotland, the U.S., South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

and her son Franz Zikesch have been quite close to us over the years. Franz now lives in Seattle with his wife Megan and two daughters.

4. John Salmon was born in 1884 and immigrated to Canada where he was an engineer for the Canadian National Railways. We saw Uncle John from time to time as children. He visited Northwestern University while I was there and was present at my graduation...proud to have another engineer in the family. He married and had one adopted daughter with whom we lost touch.
5. Percival Homewood Salmon who was born in 1886 but died at the age of 5 from injuries sustained in a fall. Deborah and I visited the flat where they lived, on Ormiston Place, and saw the rail-less staircase that could have caused that fall.
6. Phoebe Salmon who was born in 1890 and immigrated to South Africa. Phoebe's daughter, Joan married Viktor Conrad, an émigré from Poland. They lived in Durban for many years. We see a lot of her children, Lydia Conrad, who was a teacher in Johannesburg and died of Parkinson's disease in 2017 and Julian Conrad, founder of a water resource engineering company near Cape Town.
7. Lionel Salmon remained in England. His son Graham dropped his last name and used Blanchard, his middle name, as his surname. Graham died in 2011, his wife Heather, in 2012. We remained in close touch his sister Mildred who died about 2016, while living at a retirement in Montrose, Scotland. Graham had a son, Ian, with whom I've kept close touch. We remain in closer touch with Graham's daughter Sally who married Alan Barrett and live in Gosport, England.
8. Our mother, Josephine Dorothy Ashburner Salmon, was born July 17, 1894. She died November 20, 1991 at the age of 97 while in a nursing home in Denver.

The 1871 Corstorphine census lists the Salmon residence as 7 Ormiston Terrace, a building that still contains several rented flats. Deborah and I visited there in 1999. My grandmother, Francis Salmon died in 1915, after which the family moved to a smaller flat nearby at 2 Belgrave Terrace where my Grandfather, Sidney Charles Salmon died on May 6, 1918 at the age of 66. He was a highly regarded photographer and his works, most of which were produced in his studio on Manse Road, comprise an important part of the historical records of Corstorphine from 1890 to 1915. His photos also appear in several books of those times. Sidney Salmon's photo studio provided little or no income to the family, primary support for which came from a trust, a copy of which I retain in both the original and a digital copy. That trust was funded by Sir Charles Forbes for his (yet to be born) grandchildren. It is apparent that the Forbes and Salmon families were close to one another before my grandmother's marriage since that marriage was "arranged" by the families, to my grandmother's dismay. A Salmon was among the trustees of a trust funded by the Forbes family.

Surviving members of the Salmon Family - Probably about 1906. From Left to right: Josephine, Lionel, Frances, Sidney Charles, Phoebe, Katharine, John, and Charles.



Our Grandmother, Frances Salmon, was an accomplished pianist and singer. I saw her piano and music in Jersey (Channel Islands) during a trip with mother about 1975. The piano was then owned by our cousin Eugenie Thompson, my Aunt Katharine's daughter, who lived there through WWII, suffering the insult of German occupation. She died in 2002 and the piano was sold by the estate before we were able to intervene. Her musical scores included very difficult pieces.

Mother's cultured home environment notwithstanding, she did not go beyond high school. She did speak a smattering of French to the point where she could ask us a relatively complex riddle in that language.

Both my maternal grandparents and two of their sons, Sidney Charles and Lionel are all buried at the Old Parish Church in Corstorphine. No marker was put in place at the time of their death, but the family dedicated one, with a most impressive ceremony (including a piper) during a visit by Deborah and me in 2001.

On my Grandfather's death and the termination of the family trust, each of the living brothers and sisters inherited a modest sum of money. Mother used some of hers to book a ticket for Canada aboard "The Empress of France." She joined her brother John there, only be criticized both for her extravagance and her Scottish attire. She returned to Scotland briefly in 1920 or 1921 and then came back to Canada where she got a job as Governess to the Swetman family. It was in this capacity that she visited Great Barrington Massachusetts where she met my father.

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My Father, Walter Jensen Barthold, was born in Oslo (then Christiania), Norway January 12, 1892.<sup>2</sup> He was the seventh of eleven children. They were:

1. Tora, born in 1881, who married Einar Peder Fjelstad. When she died (1920) her sister Louise returned from Chicago, married Einar and raised their children.
2. Aagot, born in 1883, who married Thor A. Jacobsen. She has a lot of descendents, including her Grandson, Tor Løken, with whom Walter and I correspond. Aunt Aagot was the first to come to the US but returned to Norway.
3. Louise Agathe, born in 1895, came to the US in 1912 or earlier. She was at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago when her brother Walter (my father) arrived in 1913 and Finn and Leif (twin brothers) arrived in 1914. Louise returned to Norway to marry Einar Fjelstad in 1923.
4. Nancy, born in 1887, married Olav Ofigsbø, who was responsible for reforestation of the Ardennes Forest after World War I and active in the Norwegian resistance during World War II. I met him and his wife, Ruth, in a visit to Trondheim shortly after that war.

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<sup>2</sup> My genealogical archives also show considerable detail of Father's family, though not in the detail that I've been able to find for Mother's family.

5. Astrid, born in 1890, married Rolf Marius Johnsen. Their son, Rolf is well known to Walter and me. He worked for the power company in Norway and was active in the same international professional organization (CIGRE) as I. He has visited us in the U.S., and we have been to their home several times.
6. Dagny, born in 1893, married a Dane, Bent Brandt-Madsen. I visited her home in Oslo on two occasions before her death in 1978.
7. Walter, my father born in 1895, came to the US in the fall of 1913. He never returned to Norway.
8. Hein Barthold, born in 1896, married Catharine Bernhoft. Walter and I have both met two of their three children, Else and Guri.
9. Finn Barthold, Hein's twin brother, arrived in the US aboard the SS Bergensfjord at the age of 16. His wife's first name was Dorothy. They ran a home Laundry near us in Winnetka, Illinois. They had no children, but he was a favorite uncle to all of us.
10. Leif Barthold, born in 1898, accompanied his brother Finn to the U.S. He was 18 at the time. Leif married Cora. She lived in Seattle and died in 2012 at the age of 104! Cora had three children, one of whom, Ruth Sievert, I have visited several times and correspond with.
11. Ruth Barthold, born in 1901, married Atilio van Moos from Holland. They had a large family. Over the years we have been in touch with Karin and Grethe, their children, and their grandchildren, Katrina and Dag.



*From Left to Right: Aagot, Finn, Grandmother, Nancy, Leif (In sailor suit), Ruth (Seated) in very front), Walter (standing in back) Thora, Dagny, Astrid and Hein. Louise is missing. Probably taken about 1910*

The name “Barthold” first shows up on the family tree when Hein Barthold was born in 1654. He bought a castle in Hurum in 1711 where he died in 1740 at the age of 91. It is said that he came from Holland.

Hein Barthold’s children had the surnames “Heinsen” (Hein’s son) or “Heinsdotter” (Hein’s daughter). One of his sons, Bertil Heinsen had seven children whose surnames were, according to the same tradition either Bertilsen or Bertilsdotter, depending on gender

That surname convention continued until Per Jensen, my great grandfather switched to the English system where the surname was passed to succeeding generations. Thus, all my father’s brothers and sisters grew up with the last name “Jensen.” It was only by petition to the King that the three sons Leif, Finn, and Walter who, anticipating immigration to the US, sought a surname that would distinguish them from hundreds of thousands of other Scandinavian immigrants, were allowed to adopt the 17<sup>th</sup> century family name.

Peter Ludvig Jensen, Dad’s father, died when Dad was 7 years old. The family of eleven was brought up by Ida, his mother. Though doubtless not well off, they lived in one of the better sections of Oslo. Dad completed normal school and was then sent to a very strict military high school where he was very unhappy. He told of being thrown into a pool in order to learn to swim. Though he had an outstanding baritone voice and could read music, he had no formal musical training in Norway.

Dad arrived at Ellis Island on September 16, 1913 aboard the SS United States. He was 18. The name on his certificate of arrival is Walter Jensen. Immigration records show him as single, able to read and write, having \$10 in cash plus a ticket to Chicago paid for by his sister Louise who then lived at 2108 Richmond Street. She worked as a nurse, both in Chicago where she also attended Moody Bible Institute and later in Minneapolis. Immigration records affirmed that my father had never been in prison, was neither a polygamist or an anarchist, and was not entering the US under contract of labor.

On arrival in Chicago Louise gave my father an unabridged English Dictionary as she had done for both his brothers, Leif and Finn. Walter then went directly to Rushford, Minnesota where, on October 1, 1913 he enrolled in the Rushford Bible Institute – then under auspices of the Norwegian-Danish Free Church. In 1916 that church affiliated with the Swedish Evangelical Free Church of Minneapolis which later moving to Deerfield, Illinois.

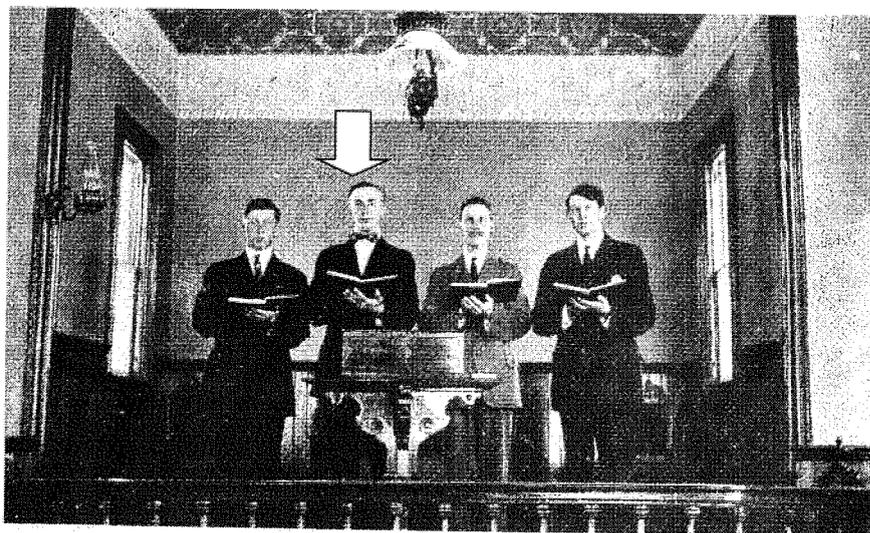
Dad’s program is identified on Rushford Bible’s records as “Preparatory.”<sup>3</sup> He remained there until January 1, 1915 when he left without graduating. Historians note that during 1914 Rushford had an unusually strong music program. Relatives in Norway recall that Dad had a remarkable voice as a young man...hence his attraction to Rushford’s choral activities. Their choir was then under the direction of Carl Bjuge who is described as a “musical perfectionist” in references. He also taught Greek and

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<sup>3</sup> Information on registration dates of Leif, Finn, and Walter Barthold was kindly provided by Roy Fry, Archivist, at Trinity International University of the Evangelical Free Church of America. The latter is the successor to both the Norwegian-Danish Free Church and the Swedish Evangelical Free Church.

Theology. Even now Trinity offers a C. B. Bjuge award - though in theology, not music.

Rushford had a male quartet in which Dad sang bass. A photo of that quartet shows him looking much like he did in photos taken before he left Norway.



Male Quartet of the Bible Institute Rushford, Minn.

Because either of Dad's attendance at Rushford or his sister Louise's urging, both Finn and Leif also enrolled there in January of 1915, Leif on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Finn on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Finn stayed only until May 20<sup>th</sup> of that year. Leif stayed on, ultimately graduating October 1, 1919 - a tenure interrupted by army service WWI. He and his comrades were having lunch in France, their gas masks temporarily removed, when a canister was lobbed into their midst. Leif was hospitalized before returning home. School records show that he later attended the Minneapolis campus (perhaps by correspondence) for a post graduate program in May of 1924.

Aunt Cora recalled that Dad traveled through the Middle West with a quartet that sang gospel songs in support of an evangelist, William Edward Biederwolf, who in those days enjoyed the stature that Billy Graham did several decades later. There is no evidence (yet) linking Biederwolf to the Rushford Institute, yet one can speculate that Dad left Rushford in 1919 to join him and to make other appearances. Homer Rodeheaver who worked for Biederwolf from 1904 to 1909 made more gospel recordings on more labels than any other singer of that era. This legacy may have given Dad the inclination to pursue that path, as he did successfully some years later.

Leif's trail also gives a clue to Dad's whereabouts after he left Rushford. Shortly after Leif graduated from the same school in October of 1919, he went to North Dakota with a friend, Toby Christenson, where they rented a farm.

Leif met his wife Cora while in North Dakota. Her family, the Gjerdings, lived nearby and Cora, who worked in Minneapolis, came home to help during the busy season. Leif quit the farming enterprise and returned to Chicago when his farming partner, Christenson, got married. In Chicago he worked at Carson Pirie & Scott, first in landscaping and then in their warehouse. Dad may have returned too since Cora recalls him saying he worked at Carson Pirie years ago.

The 1920 census shows Dad at a rooming house at 1625 North LaSalle Street in Chicago -one of 12 boarders at Unit #6 - his occupation: "Janitor, Apartment Building." Aunt Louise lived in Chicago until she returned to Norway in 1923.

Dad evidently continued his singing career in earnest. The program issued at a recital at the Methodist Church in Marshalltown, Iowa dated December 14, 1921 feature's Dad as the soloist.

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SONG RECITAL

WALTER BARTHOLD

NORWEGIAN BASS-BARITONE

Assisted by

MISS LOIS ROGERS, PIANISTE

MISS ALFREDA BUSCH, VIOLINISTE

MISS MARJORIE BUSCH AND RALPH PYKE  
ACCOMPANISTS

Methodist Church, Marshalltown, Iowa  
Wednesday, December 14, 1921

P R O G R A M M E

O Thou Sublime Sweet Evening Star (Tannhauser).....Wagner  
Vulcan Song (Philemon et Baucis) .....Gounod  
When two that love are parted.....Secchi  
Mr. Barthold

The Chase ..... Paganini-Liszt  
Miss Rogers

SCANDANAVIAN FOLK SONGS

The Great White Throng ~~Den store Hvite Flue~~.....Grieg  
Serenade ..... ~~H. Y. T. E. N. F. P. I. L. K. E. T.~~ Kjerulf  
Wedding Song ..... ~~D. A. T. E. R. S. A. A. Y. M. D. I. G. T. C. A. T. J. U. L. G. S.~~ Weyse  
Swedish National Air ..... ~~D. U. G. A. R. T. A. O. U. T. A. R. S. T. A.~~ Lewerth  
Mr. Barthold

Meditation (Thais) ..... Massenet  
Spanish Fantasie ..... Potastalk  
Miss Busch

Serenade ..... Fr. Schubert  
Sacrament ..... Mac Dermid  
Sorter Miss You ..... Clay  
One Fleeting Hour ..... Dorothy Lee  
Mr. Barthold

Pilgrims Chorus (Tannhauser) ..... Wagner  
Miss Rogers and Mr. Pyke

That Sweet Story of Old ..... West  
Prayer Perfect ..... Stenson  
Oh Loving Father ..... del Riego  
Oh Dry Those Tears ..... del Riego

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By May of 1923 Dad was in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn where he recorded several records for Columbia Records, all in Norwegian, listed below, - now referred to as “ethnic recordings”<sup>4</sup>.

**Columbia Recordings by Walter J. Barthold, Baritone**

Columbia Number	Titles	Date Recorded*
17001-F	Hei Huskon I Hei Se Norges Blomsterdal	May 22, 1923
1702-F	Gud Signe Moder, Jeg Er Traet	
17006-F	Alt Som Glaeder Mig Er Jesus - Evangelistik Sang Naar Solem Daler - Evangelistik Sang	July, 1926
17007-F	Det Gamle Aervaerdige Kors - Evangelistik Sang Alt, Men Ikke Jesus - Evangelistik Sang	
17008-F	O, Hvor Herligt Min Synd Naar Eg Aa Jesus Aaleine Er	
17009-F	Jesus, Du Som Har Mig Kaer Klaeder I Glids Frelse	

\* All recorded in New York

We had the whole series in our home off Happ Road in what is now Glenview, Ill. While our neighbors, the Gersdorfs, borrowed them, their son Norman sat on the whole stack and broke all but one, 1708-F, of which I still have two copies, one bearing a slight crack as testimony to that event. I’ve made tapes of that record plus a privately recording made by Dad. An internet search for others was futile. Dad remained very active in music through most of the time we were in Winnetka, those ventures being addressed in a later chapter.

The family recalls two tales of his difficult days in New York.

Being very hungry one day, he walked into Child’s Restaurant<sup>5</sup> and ordered a full meal even though he didn’t have a penny in his pocket. When finished, he confessed his sin to the manager who admitted that he’d suspected Dad’s situation the moment he walked in. Dad did his penance in the kitchen, washing dishes.

Dad also admits to having collapsed on the street from hunger. He was carried to a doctor’s office by passers by. The Doctor, appalled by Dad’s physical condition, suggested that he go to work on a farm in Massachusetts with which he had some connection. The farm, just west of Great Barrington, was owned by the Van Dusen family. The 1920 census shows such a family living on Dresser Avenue in the middle of Great Barrington. Presumably they also owned a farm on the outskirts where Dad worked and recovered. The farm also gave him access to the piano in one of the farm buildings.

Copake Falls, NY, a favorite summer vacation retreat fourteen miles west of there, was where the Swetman family of Toronto had a summer home.

Mother was then their governess and accompanied them there the year Dad arrived. They must also have spent time in Great Barrington since mother talked of hearing a rich, piano-accompanied baritone voice emanating from a cottage she passed on evening walks. Returning the next evening, she was again rewarded with that voice. Since Dad had been tipped off that a

<sup>4</sup> “A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893-1942” by Richard Spottswood (University of Illinois Press, 1990)

<sup>5</sup> A well know moderate price restaurant chain popular at that time.

lovely-looking young lady was enjoying his singing. On the following evening he walked out the door and asked how she liked his performance. The rest is history.

Mother went back to Canada with the Sweatmans, but Dad did not forget his Scottish admirer and eventually went to Toronto where they were married. Walter was born there on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1924. The following July they returned to Great Barrington, where they lived in a rather run-down house where sections of missing plaster revealed the building laths. It was later referred to as "The Broken Home." Walter recalls playing with "Buddy" Van Dusen who was roughly his own age. "Buddy's real name was Floyd.

Dad, despite his remarkable Spenserian script and skills at written expression, seldom wrote to the family in Norway. Mother, a prolific letter writer, did this for him. Many of the photos of our childhood also show up in Norwegian albums.

Dad never spoke Norwegian at home believing, as many adults did then, that teaching a second language would weaken our abilities in English. Both Walter and I later learned Norwegian on our own – I with mixed success, Walter with a degree of fluency that impresses all our relatives.

Not that there weren't opportunities to do so, my father had no interest in going back to Norway for a visit. There had been a major overhaul of the language and I think he felt he'd be embarrassed to speak as they did during his childhood.

Except for Walter, who visited Norway almost every summer for many years and spoke the language fluently, we children learned much more about our mother's childhood and family than we did about our father's. Being more communicative, she loved to tell us anecdotes, and show us photographs and correspondence. Her family was very important to her. Dad seemed more content to live his own life and was a solitary person. I recall him going down to the town beach on Lake Michigan, finding a location in the sand, screened by brush and well beyond the crowd, then settling down on a towel with the Sunday paper or a book.

In April of 1945 Mother and Dad moved from our Hawthorn Lane house in Winnetka, Ill. to 69 Park Avenue in Glencoe, just north of there. Dad had abandoned his musical pursuits and was then driving a taxi. About 1947, they moved back to Winnetka into a small 3<sup>rd</sup> floor apartment at 910 Elm Street. I recall riding my bicycle there for visits while going to Northwestern. They took a break about 1950, the year I graduated from Northwestern, and drove to Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Being very fond of the area and the people they'd met there, shortly thereafter they went back and bought a small, inexpensive cottage on the corner of White and Elk Streets. A rocky garden struggled for life in the dry soil between the front porch and the picket fence that surrounded the property. They were immensely proud. It was the first home they had ever owned a house.

They made their final move from Winnetka to Eureka Springs in an old Buick which I'd given them. It was the first car I'd ever owed, had very bad front wheel bearings, and barely ran... but Dad kept it going for another five years. All their possessions were packed into an old box trailer they'd bought for the move. The trip went fine until, on a lonely Arkansas road just short of their destination, the coupling between the trailer and the car broke loose dumping most of their belongings onto the road and down the nearby bank. A nearby farmer helped them get themselves back together for the last few miles to their new home.

Dad did his best to make the home comfortable. He painted the house and even built a dresser for their bedroom. They joined the church just down the road and rapidly made lasting friends.

A year or so later Dad found a 40-acre abandoned farm, overgrown with grass and brush, for sale on Mundell Road, west of Eureka Springs. There was a small cabin on it, long since abandoned

and in very bad condition. Dad's intent was to restore it and move in. Sporadic attempts to repair the cabin never got it habitable. It burned down several years later.

To earn some money, Dad got a job representing Boye Needle Co. as a traveling salesman - still driving the old Dodge that took them down to Arkansas. On October 27<sup>th</sup> of 1953, while driving through Heber Springs en route home to Eureka Springs he had a flat tire and, while attempting to change it, had a heart attack and died instantly. He was only 58. The news reached us by phone at our house on Sherwood Lane in Burnt Hills while I was helping Skip and Scott carve pumpkins for Halloween. I took the next plane to Arkansas. Sylvia and I helped mother with arrangements.

My father was buried among a cluster of pine trees in the Eureka Springs Lodge 83 I.O.O.F. cemetery, in Eureka Springs (plot S1/2 or S1/2 of Lot 8, Block 31) surrounded by pine trees which he often said reminded him of Norway. Mother was buried nearby some years later.

Dad's life was not an easy one. He left his home country at 18 with little prospect of returning, struggled hard to make a success of his musical talent, yet was not too proud to do whatever it took to keep his family fed, clothed, and housed. He enjoyed his children and watched each of them find their way through college on their own. I often felt that his children's success in college and success in professional careers, while the fulfillment of any immigrant's dream, was cruel to him in the sense that our sophisticated lives in suburbia somehow set us aside from him. He never visited us in our homes.

I wrote mother and dad every Sunday night while they lived in Eureka Springs. I once wrote a long letter to Dad, expressing my admiration, love, and gratitude for the wonderful upbringing he'd provided. He didn't answer the letter, but mother, a compulsive letter writer, made it clear that it meant a lot to him. That was about two months before he died.

Mother stayed on in the White Street house a short time, but then found a house down the hill at on Elk Street. It was bigger and in much better condition, and an easier walk to town for groceries. After she'd moved in, with no income other than social security, my brother Walter and sister Louise urged her to accept some monthly support from her children. She wouldn't think of it. As an alternative we suggested she sell us all the Mundell Road property accepting monthly payments over a five-year period. As we hoped, she lost track of the pay-down schedule and we kept up payments for the remaining 33 years of her life. The payments were shared for a few years, after which I then assigned her some stock in PTI, (the company I had founded) the dividends of which were more than enough to take care of her. We sold the Mundell Road property after her death and recovered most of our support payments - its value having been enhanced by proximity to a new artificial lake - the reservoir for Bull Shoals hydro-electric dam.

Mother enjoyed life on Elk Street even though her walk down the hill down to town was very steep and got harder for her each year. Her memory was also showing lapses. Each time I visited she made me promise to tell her when she started to get "whifty." By then she was on her way there and we feared she would have an accident. Sylvia, Louise, and I eventually took her to several retirement homes, ultimately settling on the Good Samaritan Center in Boulder Colorado. It was a good choice.

Mother had two adjoining rooms; one used as a bedroom the other as a living room. She settled in very quickly, yet long after her Eureka Springs house had been sold, she thought it was still hers and longed to go back to life in Eureka Springs.

She made a lot of friends at Good Samaritan and during visits, took pride in introducing me to people. She often apologized in their presence for not remembering their name. It was with special pride that she once took me to their weekly dance, telling me I was to watch for "Johnny," an immaculately dressed 90-year-old that all the ladies were crazy about. He showed up, as

handsome as advertised, but with his walker which served as his sole dance partner. "It never steps on my toes," he told me.

Sylvia was very loving and unselfish in making weekly visits to mother. She looked after all her needs. Deborah, Sylvia, and I visited her once, well after Jeanne's death and after mother's memory had gotten very bad. We hadn't told mother about Jeanne for fear she would dwell forever on the tragedy. Deborah, introduced as Sylvia's friend, came up with the idea of preparing signs. Our visit was on Mother's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1989. The signs read "I'm Sylvia," "I'm Sylvia's Friend," "Happy 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday," "We love you," etc. Each sign brought her memory back to the moment for a short while.

Eventually she was found walking outside the building, quite confused, and was shortly thereafter moved to an acute care section. Her general health deteriorated, and she died while I held her hand...long since having lost touch with the world.

In youth I recall fearing the day when both parents would be gone, and I would remain as the oldest generation...as if somehow the presence of yet an older generation would shield me from mortality. I was 65 when she died.

She had come a long way from her childhood in Corstorphine. I never remember her being anything but optimistic, nor did she ever lose her wonderful sense of humor. Even with severe Alzheimer's she would interject humorous remarks when the conversation left an opening. The funeral was in Eureka Springs and she was laid to rest alongside Dad.

I've often thought of the legacy given us by our parents and struggled to find ways to do as well for my own children. My parents couldn't provide us with vacations, with financial help for college, or with any inheritance. Yet they taught us kindness, consideration, creativity, strong family values, an appreciation for culture, and independence. Where my mother learned French puzzles me, but I remember her telling us a riddle in French which I tell French-speaking people who never heard it before. Translating: "*I am the captain of 24 soldiers and without me Paris would be taken.*" "*Who am I?*" The answer is the letter "a," the first in the alphabet. If you remove that letter from the word "Paris" you get "Pris" which is the French word for "taken."

While there were clear professions of Christian faith in our household, we never went to church except as (paid) members of a choir. I recall sitting in the choir loft at the Church of the Holy Comforter (Episcopal) in nearby Kenilworth, Ill, being mystified by sermons I didn't understand and looking down on an altar resembling a very large closed box. I presumed that God might be in that box and gave it a wide berth.

## 2. "The Old House"

I suppose everyone has a *first* memory. Mine, which must have been at the age of four, was walking outdoors to the side yard of our house, pitcher in hand, to pump water from a well to bring in for the family's breakfast... memorable to me for the anger I felt towards my older brother, Walter, with whom I shared that task on alternate days, had left the pump handle in its uppermost position where I couldn't reach it. I must have been four or five.

That house, "The old house," as we later called it, was in an area, now part of Northfield, Illinois and about twenty miles North of Chicago. It was on Avoca Road...narrow and unpaved... that lead east off the main north-south highway, Happ Road. Some half-mile beyond our house, Avoca road's rutted tracks disappeared into a dense forest and thence, for all we knew, to Siberia. Helped by Mother's creative mind, those woods were the venue of countless imaginary stories including all the dark mysteries of Grimm's Fairy Tales. That whole area is now unrecognizable. Avoca road is no more. The Skokie Valley route of the North Shore Railway was abandoned shortly after we moved to Winnetka, about 1930.

Across Avoca road from our house was a large field belonging to the Gersdorf's farm the buildings of which were across the highway, the western boundary of our world. As children we witnessed an old threshing machine, powered by a steam engine and linked to the thresher by a long leather belt, do its work in that field. The rusty skeleton of an abandoned steam driven tractor was parked in that field.

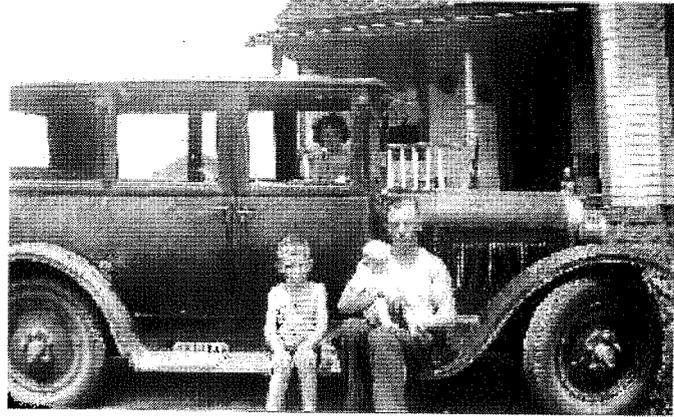
Whatever heat we enjoyed during long Northern-Illinois winters, came from a black cast iron coal-burning stove in the kitchen. The day's first heat was slow to find its way from there to other first-floor rooms and eventually through grates to the second floor. Yet on sub-zero mornings, just the smell of a new fire took the edge off the chill we felt stepping out of warm beds onto a cold floor.

There were two stairways to the second floor. A landing on the narrow, curved back stairs that led directly down to the kitchen was home to an enamelware chamber pot. The job of emptying it into the outhouse behind the house was, like the water pumping, shared by Walter and me. Mother called that pot the "Jube." I long assumed this was just one of those strange words bred within a family, usually from a child's mispronunciation and having no real meaning. I later learned later that Jube is an old Indian or Persian word for open sewer and must have been attached to the chamber pot by Mother's Scottish forebears.

There being no running water in the house, baths were taken in a round galvanized tub. A photo, long since lost (or destroyed in shame) showed four nude Barthold children lined up for our turn in a tub set up outside the kitchen door.

A small barn behind the house was full of old farm machinery and junk, leaving no room for Dad's car. That car, an old relic, allowed us to see the street going by while looking between the floorboards as we drove. We associated the exhaust fumes, which would cause a toxic alarm nowadays, with adventure and excitement since we didn't get away from the house very often. Car trips, a rare excitement for us, weren't always planned. Walter and I once hid

in the back seat of the car as Dad took off for work. Halfway there we jumped up and said BOO. Once his pulse returned to normal, he laughed and patiently drove us home.



*Walter, Dad, Louise & Sylvia*

We moved from Great Barrington Massachusetts to “the old house” in 1927. Walter had just turned three, I was two and Sylvia just a few months old. While birth certificates cite Great Barrington as my place of

birth, I recall mother telling me that this wasn’t quite true for me. A March snowstorm kept her from making it to the hospital in time, so I was borne in transit.

Mother later recalled that, while we waited for a train to take us from Massachusetts to our home in Illinois, Walter and I restless and Sylvia crying inconsolably, a stranger saying to Dad, “I’m glad I’m not in your shoes.”

How and why we moved to Illinois is not clear. Dad’s sister Louise lived nearby in Chicago having immigrated some years before him. His brother, Finn, also in the US ahead of Dad lived just a few mile west of us in one of the less fancy sections of Winnetka, the major part of which was one of several very wealthy communities extending north from the city along the north shore of Lake Michigan. Finn’s twin brother Leif worked at Carson Pirie & Scott in Chicago. He and his wife Ruth would return to Minnesota two years later. Some or all of them were probably instrumental in our making the move to Happ Road.

While we lived in what we later called “the old house” Dad worked at the Standard Oil Co. gas station on the corner of Spruce Street and Greenbay Road in Winnetka, a station owned by the Winnetka Coal and lumber company who then still made deliveries by horse and wagon. Walter accompanied Dad from time to time on his week-end commutes to Winnetka where he was allowed to feed and water the delivery horses. Those were days of the great depression when any job was a good job and Dad’s job probably a step up from the farm work in Massachusetts.

I recall walking to the yard of a childless couple living next door to us on Avoca Road when I was very little to watch, in wonder, as the house was being painted. While changing position of the scaffolding, the painters inadvertently laid a heavy plank on the ground, one end of which somehow trapped my foot. They couldn’t understand my crying until they saw what they’d done.

Frederick (Grandpa) Gersdorf, owner of the field across from us and a large complex across Happ Road, was in his seventies. His sons, Herman and Edward ran the farm. I recall them setting the field across from our house on fire one day by dragging a flaming kerosene-

soaked rag through it. Burning fields was a common practice those days. Norman Gersdorf, Walter's age, could help with the burning. We were not.

I was once allowed to cross Happ road to visit the Gersdorf farm to watch, horror-struck, as a pig was butchered.

Stanley, Louise, Sylvia and I played mainly with one another. Walter (often called "Buddy" in those days) played some with Norman Gersdorf and Charlie Graf who lived next door to us. As with many children left to entertain themselves, our lives were full of make-believe. One game, the purpose of which escapes me, was "Mans in the Barn." It somehow involved trips in and out of the small barn behind the house with all its barn-like trappings and smells, sometimes acting out undertakings at the Gersdorf farm. Mother fed our fantasy with her boundless imagination. One day she handed us an empty Quaker Oats box and suggested we try some magic with it...specifically to put the box upside down inside a baby carriage in one of the bedrooms...then to say some magic words (from a distance). When we returned and lifted the box it disgorged small toys that she'd somehow managed to buy for each of us.

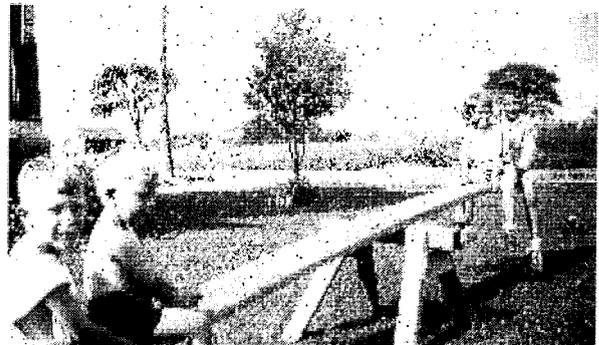


*Lionel, & Walter*

Even snacks, when available, were made interesting...laid out on the white enameled kitchen table while we were elsewhere at play. Mother then walked by just within earshot, singing a lilting tune "Something on the kitchen table!"

We were generally very healthy children but were all taken down once with diphtheria- a serious matter in the days before antibiotics. Stanley was in very bad condition. A visiting doctor told Mother that we'd all get better but he "wasn't so sure about the little fellow." I recall us seated side by side on the front porch, covered with quilts. Mother brought us junket, jello and tapioca...again with a tune, "Here comes the showboat, here comes the showboat," a line from a current musical of that name.

Milk was delivered in glass bottles ...homogenization yet unknown. On cold mornings when we failed to bring the bottles in early enough, the skim milk froze, pushing a chimney of cream out the top. Our milkman noticed us playing football one day with a tightly bound bundle of rags and stopped the next day with a real football, explaining to us that some children that didn't know how to take care of things had left it out in the street. Mother recognized it as brand new and wept at his kindness.



*Lionel, Stanley, Sylvia, & Walter*

Dad once brought home a bicycle for me... an incredible gift in those days. He took me out onto the road to teach me to ride it... patient at first but increasingly impatient as I didn't get the knack of it. His frustration closed off whatever learning channels I had, and the scene ended badly; he returning to the house and me standing beside the bike in tears. I then tried it alone and on the third try got the trick and rode the bike back into our yard.

Sylvia had dolls and a toy Scotch terrier which she'd called "Sniffy" after Shirley Temple's dog. Walter and I liked to capture it and hold it hostage. We teased Sylvia more than we should have.

Our life was centered around the house, the barn, and the fields that surrounded us. But my father's ancient dodge took us further afield from time to time...a big deal for us. I still associate exhaust fumes with excitement. Those excursions sometimes took us to the Wilmette beach on the shore of Lake Michigan. Dad would often stop at an ice cream stand, returning to the car with a cardboard holder supporting seven ice cream cones. Sometimes we'd walk to Wilmette Harbor and gazed in awe at the hundreds of big boats tied upside-by-side or moored there.

Our "Old House" was some ten miles west of Winnetka, a town populated by weather Chicago commuters. Dad's first cousin from Norway, our Aunt Nancy, lived in a second-floor apartment in the southern part of Winnetka "Indian Hills" near New Trier High School. She was divorced but bringing up her son, Carl and her daughter Edith. Edith ultimately moved to Hawaii and died in her mid-fifties. Carl Peters was five years older than Walter. Carl and Dorothy were always well dressed and major heroes to us. Their spacious apartment was kept immaculate and was very well furnished. We often visited for Christmas dinner, a vastly fancier meal than we were used to...with *cloth* napkins. Their tree was trimmed with real candles in the Norwegian tradition, not electric lights. A bucket of water was always nearby. Carl became a lawyer and lived in Tennessee until his death about 2015. Edith married a much-decorated Dutch WWII hero and settled in Hawaii. She died of emphysema in the 1970's. Aunt Nancy worked in a bank, having earned her master's degree from Northwestern University at the age of 60. She spent her retirement traveling to exotic places, sending us cards postmarked Borneo, Thailand, and other spots not then on the normal tourist routes.

While living at "The old House" I recall visits to Uncle Finn and Aunt Dorothy's house too. They then operated a laundry business. Every room in their house was draped with sheets and clothing...drying and waiting to be ironed. Finn had once owned a bigger laundry and two houses but after losing both to foreclosures in the depression, moved to Northbrook. Unlike Dad, Uncle Finn retained a Norwegian accent. He was full of fun and seemed to have laughter in his voice when he talked.

Mother insulated us from the hardships she endured and the worries she and Dad must have shared. Both had been brought up in good families with substantial homes. Mother's optimism was too strong to let her brood. Dad was less sure of himself and given to

depression. He had more than his share of frustration in life. Yet I don't ever remember being without a piano where he spent hours on end, playing and singing.

In 1929 Dad got his first regularly scheduled radio program on WGN, Chicago's biggest station. It featured the "Tonecasters" but was, as I recall, primarily his own singing of gospel songs. We didn't have a radio but listened once or twice, with headphones, on our neighbor's radio. The fact that it lasted at least through 1930 is attested by fan mail which I still retain...one fan letter from our Aunt Nancy. In a private note to Dad she confessed that WGN needn't know she was his cousin! He had at least one other radio program on another station, but I don't remember when. Walter recalls his singing in Norwegian on WLY's "International Hour" and coming home with a check for \$200.

In the program for the forty-sixth annual concert given by the Norwegian Glee Club Walter Barthold is cited as assistant to the Director and featured bass soloist. One of the songs on the program, "John Peel," was a favorite of Dad's. In my memory I can still hear him practicing it. The concert was April 28, 1929 and was at the Harmonien Hall in Chicago.

Dad's love of music got us our first phonograph while in the "Old House" on Happ Road. It was a hand-wound device, a tone arm supporting a heavy cylindrical head. A steel needle transferred vibrations from the record surface to a membrane in the head which then served as the loudspeaker... without benefit of electrical intervention. One day, with Dad away at work, I wondered what would happen if the record player were turned on with the cast iron turntable removed. I tried it, excited to hear it squeal in agony. I showed my discovery off to Walter and Stanley...eventually destroying the gears. Dad was angry but spared me a spanking.

Though we didn't go to church in those days, we knew two angels firsthand. "Miss Queen" and "Miss Garrison;" sweet gray-haired ladies, usually dressed in white, who came to our house bringing bags of groceries and occasionally a toy or two. Quite taken with us - well behaved and speaking the King's English - we assumed they were just good friends. In fact, they were from a welfare office in Winnetka. It was through their initiative that we later moved to Winnetka and its nationally-acclaimed progressive education" system.

Our initial visit to what was to be our first Winnetka house blew our minds! .... faucets that gave either hot or cold water without any pumping...toilets *inside* the house that didn't smell...a bathtub that drained itself...a stove that didn't need any coal...and heat coming into *every* room.

We didn't leave the Old House without ceremony. The magic of the new house somehow, with childhood logic, made the old house evil. One afternoon we circled the Old House armed with jars of water, somehow transformed into poison which, as a parting gesture, got sprinkled on its foundations.

Fifty years later I first went in search of the Old House. Avoca Road was gone, as were the train tracks and the fields. As near as I could tell, we lived then on what is now a modern

Chicago suburb and the site of “New Trier West,” one of the most advanced high schools of its day.

### 3. 1046 Pine Street

The Pine Street house in Winnetka, set at the very back of a very narrow lot, was square, with brown shingle siding and had just one floor... perhaps a third the size the “old house.” A long living room stretched across its front. Behind the living room was a small kitchen, a single bathroom, and one small bedroom. Stairs led from the kitchen down to a landing that gave access to the back door and another half-dozen steps further down, to a basement. The landing also opened onto a partial crawl space with a cement floor. The previous tenant (or our welfare angels) had left a big box of toys on that landing.... more than we’d ever had before. The landing was also where mother put her home-made root beer, the bottles capped with a hand-operated clamping device. We helped her make the brew in a large grey crock. One batch developed enough pressure to pop all the corks, flooding the landing with half-made root beer.

The house also had a porch across its front, closed in as an afterthought but not heated. It was big enough for four cots; two at one end for Walter and me, two more at the other end for Sylvia and Stanley. Louise, the baby, slept in the bedroom with our parents. I recall once going to bed at the extreme end of the porch, harboring a serious grudge against Walter. Afraid to confront him on equal terms, I waited until he was asleep, lifted his head and banged it on the iron bedstead to even whatever score I had against him.



Walter, Stanley, Sylvia, Louise, and Lionel



Lionel, Sylvia, some neighbors and Louise in the first row - Walter & Stanley in back,

An open outdoor area between the house and the alley was big enough for Dad's car. He announced his arrival one evening by miscalculating his approach and bumping the house hard enough to make the windows rattle.

The alley behind us, like the street in front of us, led up a hill steep enough to get a bicycle going very fast. I once sped down it fast enough to lose control, fall over the handlebars and arrive home bleeding, bruised, and crying. Alleys ran behind most of the older streets in Winnetka. I knew them all from traveling up one and down the next, inspecting trash and carting home whatever was of interest...broken toys, bicycle parts, and inner tubes capable of being repaired for use at the beach.

The living room had a piano (a necessity for Dad), a dining room table and our first radio; a large floor model that brought us all the old classic including Amos n' Andy, Jack Armstrong, and Little Orphan Annie. I was sitting on the floor behind the radio one evening after supper, my feet extended under it into the living room, listening with everyone else to "The lone Ranger." I had taken a box of matches with me and, being concealed, lit one after the other, blowing each out and imagining that my mischief was hidden from view. Dad smelled the result and gave me the only spanking of my life.

A narrow front lawn in front of the house, perhaps 150 feet long, separated us from a public sidewalk that bordered on Pine Street. Close to one side of the house a natural arbor of Sumacs surrounded a large crab-apple tree. Dad built us a big sandbox there. I recall once falling from the tree's upper limbs, bouncing off a few others, and hitting the ground, unable to breathe. I also recall secretly building a fire in that arbor and accidentally burning a hole in my trousers. The crab-apples from that tree served as ammunition for crab-apple wars between groups of neighborhood children. A crabapple, given a mechanical advantage by being impaled on the end of a three-foot stick spun vigorously overhead, was not something kids did not enjoy being hit with.

On the east side of the lawn, also near the house, was another area partially enclosed by bushes. It was there that Dad erected a wooden slide he'd found somewhere. We used it to slide on our rumps in the summer...on sleds in the winter... a source of both fun and slivers. Nearer the house was a clearing with two pits for games of horseshoes. We played with our own rules, including those governing safety. Sylvia once blocked the tossing path as I was about to shoot. That led to a heated exchange concerning the relative rights to occupy a chosen spot that was *family* property on the one hand and the rights to pursue a game unimpeded on the other. I decided two warnings gave me the right to toss. Mother ran from the house responding to Sylvia's screams after the shoe hit her forehead. After proclaiming my innocence based on fair warnings, Mother's disappointment in me hurt more than any spanking could.

### **The Neighborhood**

The hill on Pine Street facing our house was, in childhood's exaggerated perception, quite steep and an exciting venue for sledding and roller skates. With a good running start, one could keep a sled's momentum for most of the block and, absent snow cover,

have an exciting run with a wagon. I recall "inventing" a supplemental framework for my American Flyer sled which would raise it off its runners and onto a set of wheels when bare spots would otherwise have ground it sled to a halt. I don't recall it ever working, but the principle was good.

Winnetka's streets were all bordered by sidewalks. In those days steel-wheeled roller skates were popular. They were clamped onto the soles of your shoes, a leather thong holding the skate to your ankle. Length and width adjustments, for which you needed a special key, allowed any skate to fit any shoe size. We skated to school, to the beach, and often raced on them. The pathways from people's front door often ended in a few steps before reaching sidewalk level. We had contests to see who could jump the most steps without falling.

Sidewalks and curbsides in Winnetka provided a good place for kids to just sit waiting to identify cars as they went by. "A Ford!" "A Chevrolet!" "A Packard!" Our skills at the game were learned at the annual (free) Community House Automobile Show where we probably showed more interest than potential buyers.

"Kick the Can" was a favorite game which we once started in the immaculately manicured yard of Spanish-style house on the corner of Pine Street and Rosewood Avenue. The occupants had no children nor any tolerance of them. Not far into the game, when the mistress emerged in a fit of anger to disburse us, my get-away was towards the lawn's Pine street border, separated from that street by a thick waist-high hedge. In leaping over it I didn't see the wire fence embedded in it, caught both feet on that wire and hitting the pavement on the opposite side with two outstretched arms. I ran home in tears trying to think up a reason for my swollen wrists that wouldn't incriminate me.

Each of us had friends of our own, but we also played together a lot, inventing games as we had at the Old House. To mother's chagrin, Walter and I invented a game consisting of pitching a ball as fast as we could and as close as possible to the centerpiece on the dining room table. "Skim it across the Oranges," was its name.

Winnetka's "Community House" was a large, city-owned stone building complex that served many of the town's social needs. It housed a theatre, recreation rooms, bowling alleys, a rifle range as well as offices for Boy Scouts and other organizations. Movies were ten cents for children, including both a feature attraction, a cartoon, and an episode of an ongoing series as an incentive for coming each week for the next movie. Among their programs, was a class in basket weaving. My parents enrolled me in it despite my begging not to go. It was even worse than I feared...mainly girls and old people. I made such a fuss I was eventually allowed to quit, but still remember how to make baskets!

The Community House once organized an overnight for children at the Isaac Walton Lodge in a forest preserve just a few miles west of Winnetka. Enrolled involuntarily, I knew none of the children and was terrified at the prospect of sleeping away from home. I recall bedding down on a cot alongside twenty or so other children in a second-floor dormitory... worrying I might have to get up to pee. The thought itself was enough to

bring the call, so I got up, walked down the stairs and over the lighted path to the outhouse. Nobody commented when I returned. But within ten minutes, the same fear in my head produced the same result...hence a second trip. The snickers that greeted me on my second return made me mortally afraid of getting a third call. That fear produced the urge again. However, many trips I made, earned me the title, "Twelve Can Jake" the following morning,

The Lowry family, our next-door neighbors to the west, lived in a large stucco house on a much more generously sized lot. Mr. Lowry, advertising manager for Quaker Oats, was very good to us. Whenever Quaker Oats sponsored radio programs advertised some box-top trophy, we knew he'd bring one home for each of us – no box-top required. The Lowry children had a wooden slide in their yard. To this day I carry a scar where few will ever find it, inflicted by a protruding nail that sent me limping home with bloody trousers and shattered pride.

The Retties lived near the top of the Pine Street hill several houses east of us in a house set back like ours but with a dense wood between themselves and the street. They, like Mother, were from Scotland... but they from highlands with a very thick accent. The Retties introduced us to "The Scotch Baker," who delivered his delicious home-baked scones and Scotch pastries every Wednesday. We were never late getting home from school that day.

## **School**

Walter entered third grade and I entered first when we moved to Winnetka; both at Horace Mann School, a two-story red brick building near Winnetka's main business district. I never went to Kindergarten. Our tenure at Horace Mann ended very suddenly when school officials realized we should have enrolled at Hubbard Woods School. My teacher there, Mrs. Van Cleve, was a matronly lady with pince-nez glasses, a stern face, but with a heart as soft as a marshmallow. I learned how much she loved her children when, for the first time, I was given the "privilege" of carrying class's used paint brushes down the hall to the washroom for rinsing out. I did so, more-or-less well, then walked back down the hall and, while daydreaming, ran the brushes along a (previously) white wall. Another teacher followed the trail, seized me and marched me, in tears, to Mrs. Van Cleve for punishment. She hugged me, assured me that the world would not end and that I would be forgiven.

Before school and during recesses we assembled in large playground behind Hubbard Woods School. When it was time to go in, "Mr. Pete," one of the janitors marched ceremoniously around the grounds ringing a large hand-held brass bell. Ignoring our lessons in spelling, the chant arose: "The Bell," "The Bell," "The B. E. L." He was a jolly fellow and I was quite sure it was him behind the Santa Claus beard in the school's Christmas festivities.

Hubbard Woods School was six blocks north of us...an easy walk along the sidewalks bordering Rosewood Avenue. There were no busses. Because easy walks get tiresome to

young children, we found a dozen route variations, many through woods and back yards. I recall once, while walking to through the woods to school, spotting a hole in the ground at the edge of a tree stump...obviously the vestibule of a rabbit's home. Lost in thought and anticipation, I sat and waited for him to appear. When I arrived half an hour late, I was too embarrassed to cite the real reason for my tardiness.

Once while walking home with Charlie Sheppard, a close friend at Hubbard Woods, a nice man offered us ride in his pick-up truck. He dropped us off where he picked us up with a promise to take either one of us, not both, on a ride the next day. I was a little late home and explained to Mother what a treat we'd had. To my consternation she called the police and gave us all some very explicit instructions about treats of that kind.

Telephoning then then meant picking up a handset and waiting for the operator to ask, "Number Please?" Dial phones were a high-tech rarity. My father, who had a great sense of humor, when asked "number please" responded with his own question, "Well what numbers you have to choose from?"

Many children rode their bikes to school. In Hubbard Woods School's basement was a "wheelhouse," accessed by a long set of stairs on either side of which was a smooth ramp for rolling your cycle. That was before the advent of a school bus system. While visiting Winnetka in the 1990's I noted that, while the school remained much as I remember it, the wheelhouse was gone.

I looked forward to each day at school, though recall being very conscious of the difference in our economic status compared to other Winnetka families. The insides of their homes were like the ones in the movies... and their clothes were new. Ours came mostly from "The Thrift Shop," a second-hand clothing store, first operated within the Community House and later moved to Green Bay Road near Willow Road. I recall sitting at my school desk holding my hand over my knee, embarrassed by a hole in my trousers. I also recall mother helping us cut pieces of cardboard to slip into our shoes to cover holes in the soles. But I also recall how, in those days, boys coveted leather boots that laced well up one's calf and had a small pocket on one side with a jackknife in it. I was treated to a brand-new pair on one of my birthdays. Somewhere in my stack of memorabilia, I've a miniature calendar produced by our 4<sup>th</sup> grade class, the cover of which is a photo of me and Charlie Sheppard my close friend. I'm wearing those boots.

Our gloves and mittens were not second class. Each year, just before Christmas, we received a bundle from our grandmother in Norway. Each of us got a pair of hand knit Norwegian mittens or gloves, often accompanied by a hat. Mother kept her informed of our sizes.

Winnetka, as other towns on Chicago's "North Shore" bordered Lake Michigan and had several public beaches. During our Pine Street days, Dad often took us to Winnetka's "Tower Road" beach. The drive from down from Sheridan Road to the pier on which cars were parked was steep and narrow. I lived in mortal fear that our brakes would fail, and we'd roar down the hill, over the pier's edge, and into the lake. We later got old enough to

walk there by ourselves and spent day after day either Winnetka Beach or Tower Road beach where they also allowed fishing off the pier.

Although there were no boat harbors along Winnetka's shore, we enjoyed watching boats go by from our vantage point on Winnetka's piers. I once watched in horror as a hydroplane speedboat flipped over in a heavy wave several hundred yards offshore. Another boat rescued the unconscious driver and brought him to an ambulance. The next morning, while walking along the shore with Charlie Sheppard, we saw a black bundle rolling in the surf. It was the body of the hydroplane's passenger. I ran back to the public beach house to report it.... the first time I'd seen someone dead.

Dad Cousin, Nancy Peters, lived in an apartment near Winnetka's New Trier High School with her son Carl and daughter Edith, both of whom were then going to New Trier. We met them once for a picnic in the small park in front of Winnetka Beach. I was deeply impressed when Carl arrived, having paddled his kayak some ten miles from Evanston, near their home. Our Aunt Christine from Norway was staying with them and joined us. She was old, spoke no English, and walked with a cane. Especially fond of Stanley, she predicted that he would be either a comedian or a minister. He was both...a comedian in his high school play and a minister in his career.

Carl Peters would grow up to be a corporate lawyer. Edith would marry Bram Vanderstock from Holland. He was a fighter pilot in WWII, twice shot down over Germany, interned and eventually authored the book "Pilot of Orange," one of many accounts of how a group of prisoners tunneled their way to freedom from a Stalag inside Germany. They had no children. Both died in the 1970's.

Our days on Pine Street were happy ones. Our home life was very positive. I felt no insecurity but clearly recognized our difference, economically, from those we went to school with. I don't remember being hungry but do remember occasional dinners of dry cereal. We ate what was before us because we were hungry, not because it was a virtue, as is often seems to be the case in today's world.

We never doubted the love of our parents. I remember mother as a mother should be remembered, a caregiver with intense love and the ability to make us whole again regardless of our distress. She was a woman of boundless imagination and somehow made each of us feel important and at peace with the world around us.

We never doubted Dad's love either, though he was emotionally much more distant. Dad had an unusually difficult and, in many ways, unfulfilled life...one filled with false starts in the career of his dreams...music. He smoked. Mother never did. Though our house and car always smelled of nicotine, we never thought it strange.

Dad liked to be by himself. On summer weekends he'd go down to Tower Road Beach, find a spot screened from the crowd by reeds, and spend hours sunning and reading books or newspapers. He didn't play with us much, but certainly stood up for us. One example will suffice.

One of the McGuire boys took advantage of the fact that we were shy and easy prey. They once made us line up and march in step. Their timing was unfortunate. While passing in his car that day, Dad caught them in the act. He held up one of the McGuires by the shoulders, looked at him eye-to-eye, and, shaking him, said, "If I catch you doing that again, I'll wring your neck." That ended intimidation from McGuire clan.

Those were the days of the great depression and efforts by Pres. Franklin Roosevelt to get the economy back on its feet. The Civilian Conservation Core (CCC), a quasi-military job creation program, was building a large series of lagoons west of Winnetka. (They were simultaneously building the Saratoga Springs Halls and golf courses) The National Recovery Act (NRA) had been approved by congress – an attempt to raise prices and get businesses back on their feet. But Winnetka, as other Chicago North Shore suburbs, populated largely by wealthy commuters, were strongly republican. I recall anti NRA billboards pleading **Never Roosevelt Again!**

Every Memorial Day, the town fathers conducted an outdoor service on Winnetka's Village Green, including bands, speeches and lots of good things to eat. The ceremony included a roll call of names...each followed by "Died, in the honorable service of his country." Civil War veterans got recognized as well, perhaps a dozen of them, seated in a separate group and. It's hard for a veteran of WWII to realize that a service of that kind in 1935, seventy years after the end of the civil war, would correspond to 2015, 70 years since the end of WWII.

WWI was still fresh in people's memory then. Bubble gum came in sheets about 2 inches square, each with a printed picture card to entice kids to form collection...scenes labeled "Horrors of War" that many of their readers would witness firsthand some fifteen years later.

The cramped quarters on Pine Street must prompted my parents, perhaps with some help from Winnetka's welfare operation to find us a larger house, scarcely three blocks away on Spruce Street early in 1937. That move was just before my registration in "Skokie" Junior High School.

Years later, driving by the Pine Street location, the hill that I remember as steep, was hardly a hill at all, the sidewalks were the same, but the house had been replaced by a larger one, more consistent with local property values.

#### **4. 1092 Spruce Street, Winnetka**

When we moved to Spruce Street in the spring of 1937, I was 11, Roosevelt was president, Hitler had taken power but there was no talk of war in Europe. That move took us a small step closer to the quality norm in Winnetka, at least with respect to house size. We had bedrooms enough for a boys' dorm and a girls' dorm upstairs as well as a separate room for Mother and Dad. The dignity of male segregation, even though it meant bunking with two brothers, was important to an 11-year-old.

The house, set back about fifteen feet from the sidewalk, was a grey two-story stucco cube with a covered but open porch across the front. A small unheated pantry separated the kitchen from the back door leading to a modest size back yard. We had an icebox, no refrigerator.

Both our front and back lawns, irregularly mowed with a hand mower, were full of crabgrass and dandelions which migrated annually to the Van Buskirk's immaculately kept lawn immediately to the west of us. Mr. Van Buskirk, a good-natured soul, spent hours digging both scourges from his lawn, weed by weed. We sometimes got engaged to help him at the then going wage of ten cents an hour...enough to buy a double dip ice cream cone at Phalen's Drug Store... or admission to the Saturday matinee at The Community House.

The Community House was a source of income for Walter and me while we lived on Spruce Street. The days of un-automated bowling alleys required manual pin setters. After watching the pins scatter about the pit, pin-setting boys with their feet hoisted to avoid the carnage below, jumped down to the track, put the ball back into the return gutter and the fallen pins into the setting rack. A large handle then dropped the framework which put the pins into their pattern for the next play. The rumble of the oncoming ball was warning enough to exit the pit again. Daydreaming or ignorance of the rules meant bruised shins and even more painfully bruised feelings from the players' shouts of outrage. We earned ten cents a game plus tips for our hard work and exposure to flying wood.

Adjacent to the bowling alley at the Community House (and accessible during off hours to those who knew the right door), was an indoor range for 22 caliber rifle practice. Among the empty shells one could always find a few rounds that hadn't gone off. The jaws of the vice in our basement made a good substitute breach, and a carpenter's hammer an alternative to the gun's hammer. Sluggish rounds could be fired that way, exciting (and fortunately not executing) young experimenters as the slug ricocheted about the basement.

The Spruce street backyard was separated from the alley behind it by a small one-car garage whose doors were designed to be mounted and swung by emulators of the then-popular series, "Tarzan of the Apes. A good push-off with one door would send you its full arc with enough bounce to get back within jumping distance of the other.

Not far from the back door was a maple tree, the upper branches of which gave view to our neighborhood universe. Directly across the alley one could see over the walls of a very large, modern house from which strange sounds emanated. This was the Dushkin School of Music. Mr. Dushkin, a refugee from Germany taught children both how to build and how to play recorders. It was largely through his efforts that interest in the recorder blossomed in America. His qualities as a musician and teacher earned him a laudatory obituary in the New York Times.

The same maple tree also witnessed a tragedy still indelibly etched in my mind. For months I had poured over catalogs of air rifles. The "Daisy" model I eventually selected had a lever action, adjustable sites, and a carved wooden stock. When it arrived by post, I was immensely proud. I was Buck Rogers, I was Renfrew of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, I was Daniel Boone. I strode down the front steps around the house, into the back yard, gun in hand, aimed at my prey perched on a limb high in the tree and fired the first and last round that gun would ever release. A plump robin fell at my feet and looked up at me. Its wings flapped in despair as suffering gave way to a death I had caused. With the death of that robin came the death of any interest I may ever have had in hunting.

If, leaving our house, you turned right on the alley behind it, you would, in several hundred feet emerge onto Glendale Road and, crossing Glendale, enter a large wooded area. Instead, going left for one block on Glendale, would take you to the curved entry drive to what was then Skokie Jr. High School. The athletic fields behind Skokie's sprawling building were immense. The school had a big gymnasium too... and a basketball team that I agreed to play on, being tall for my age... my first and last taste of school sports. During my second game I came down wrong on my foot and was sidelined for the season. Shortly thereafter, during a school physical examination, a thoughtless nurse muttered something about my having a heart murmur. Ten years passed before I realized I was *not* living with a life-threatening defect.

I recall being bored in mathematics at Skokie and doing very poor work before a very perceptive teacher tried putting me in an advanced class with algebra and word problems. I was in heaven and gained immeasurable self-confidence at realizing I was better at something than other kids.

Though individual classes and schoolmates have long faded from my memory, Skokie School is still the setting of frequent dreams. I revisit the school as an adult in those dreams and remember the hall and room configurations quite well.

Each year Skokie put on a class play and talent show, ours having to do with the life cycle from birth to death. I was cast as a tap-dancing skeleton – one of eight. We presented an eerie sight dressed in black suits with phosphorescent bones. I can still tap out the steps to our act, though the leg-over-leg jump in the third phrase is now a challenge.

Skokie's real paradise was its woodworking shop. It boasted circular saws, band saws, planers, lathes, and all the special smells that go with a well stocked wood rack, glue, and sawdust from a thousand projects. I designed and built quite an ambitious desk-top storage rack for Walter. It had cubby holes, drawers, and small compartments with hinged doors. In the same shop I built a set of free-standing pine shelves for Mother for use in her sewing business. The shelves were four feet long and twenty inches deep, dadoed into the side of the case. A piece of plate glass, recessed into the top shelf later displayed a varied collection of photos, addresses, and school art. But for the overly bright red stain I'd picked, it was not a bad piece of furniture. Those shelves, mother's sewing machine, and the clothes hanging from every conceivable support point, made one forget that my parents' room was really for sleeping. Dresses to be shortened, suits half made, and the sounds of sewing late into the night, gave life to the ad in each week's issue of the Winnetka Talk: "Dressmaking and Alterations - In my home or yours." Mother made clothes for herself too. I remember her sporting a beautifully tailored wool suit that looked somehow familiar. It had been one of Dad's suits.

One of Mother's best customers was Mrs. Moser, mother of Al Moser who was in my school class. I had befriended Al and been to his house in Hubbard Woods many times. It was made of stone, surrounded by an immaculately kept lawn, and furnished like a palace. In the living room was an automatic record changer.... the first I'd ever seen. The Mosers took quite an interest in our family, I suppose because Al and I were such close friends. In addition to bringing Mother sewing business and encouraging their friends to do the same, the Mosers often invited me to go to the Ravinia Music Festival, summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with them. I was overwhelmed and still recall the setting when I hear the horn part in Strauss's Till Eulenspiegel. Some years later when Al and I were old enough to take the train from Winnetka to Chicago, Mr. Moser, a lawyer, took us to an exclusive downtown club for lunch. He smoked cigars and I deemed him to be an awfully important man.

Mother's sewing machine did a lot to support us in those days. I recall her standing in front of a table with a tissue paper dress pattern pinned to some very expensive fabric...her first effort to make a dress. She was crying, afraid to cut wrong and ruin the result. Her

first treadle-driven “Singer” sewing machine was soon replaced by a motor-driven version. Through mother’s sewing work my father got connected to and then worked as a salesman for the Singer store in nearby Evanston. His success evidently earned him the opportunity to open his own Singer Sewing Machine store on Chestnut Court in Winnetka...a perfect location near the village hall, and a variety of clothing shops. The store’s new green canopy, the silver and green Singer emblem in the window, and the real business cards brought the family its first taste of status in a very status-conscious community. We all rejoiced on the good days when reports of machines sold came home and shared the anxiety that went with the lapses in sales. Major maintenance work was sent to Evanston, minor repairs and maintenance done at our store. Dad was often out selling while Mother tended the store and did her sewing. She also gave the sewing lessons, thrown in with purchase of a new machine. Mother was very good at it, as with most things she undertook.

It supported us for a year or so but for me it seemed too good to last...as it was. In the early summer of 1942, the Singer Co. devoted itself entirely to war production and closed the Winnetka store. Dad was very discouraged. Years later when he and my mother moved to Arkansas, he would cover Arkansas and Missouri as a traveling salesman for the Boye Needle Co.

The snow of one’s youth is deeper and hills steeper than when revisited as an adult. Spruce Street had no hills, but the shortcut to Hubbard Woods school, which I still attended the first year we were on Spruce Street, cut through the back yard of a large Tudor house whose lawn sloped back from their stone patio to a small pond. The slope was exciting enough by sled, but I couldn’t imagine how wonderful it would have been on skis. The family in this home had a large collection of skis, usually left outside where I could admire them. My envy must have been evident at home.

Early one December, while I was playing in the vacant lot across the street, a Wiebolt's Department Store truck stop in front of our house long enough to unload a pair of long wooden skis. “Were they really mine?” I wondered. Christmas morning proved they were and the photo, taken the same afternoon in the lot from which I'd seen them delivered and long displayed on our stairway to the first floor at our Lake George house, attests to the joy they brought. That joy waned a little with the first attempt to emulate my Tudor house heroes on their small hill. With the single-strap leather binding and normal walking shoes it was physically impossible to turn the skis. Walter, who was with Dad when he bought the skis, notes that the money available to dad would buy the skis but not the better bindings.

My next encounter with skis (and bindings only slightly more sophisticated) was to be twelve years later, on my honeymoon with Jeanne at the Limberlost Lodge in Muskoka, Ontario. How much longer that twelve years was then than now. It was a doubling of my

life span. It brought high school, a war with all its cruelty at sea, world travel, love, and heartbreak.

I suppose it was an attempt to emulate some comic book character that prompted me to start sleeping out on the front porch of our Spruce Street house one winter. I remember accessing my outdoor cot via a living room window just beside it ...an approach that avoided exposure of my bare feet to the ice-cold path from the front door to the cot's safety. Its sheets were frigid. But to an imaginative mind that could turn me into a bear, an Eskimo, a trapper, or a Norwegian troll, the warming cycle seemed short. On snowy nights the wind sometimes added a quilt of snow on top of the normal bed covers, leaving just a blow hole as evidence of life within that cocoon.

It was while on Spruce Street that Walter and I began a newspaper delivery career that would last half-way through high school. To accommodate two 80-paper routes each we arose at four each morning. Walter awoke first to break up my quilt hibernation, after which we rode our bikes with extra big front baskets to Winnetka's "North Shore Line" freight house to which bundles of Chicago Tribunes had been delivered. Mr. Bailey, a grumbly, profane, stooped, but essentially kind man, presided. He "broke" the bundles of 100 papers and stacked the right number for each delivery boy. We then "rolled" the papers - a lost art now. To roll a paper, one makes a four-inch fold at the edge where page-edges are exposed, folds that section in half again, and then rolls the resulting core to the end. The "roll" is then tucked into the edge fold, twisted to tightness, and tamped on a hard surface to produce an even tighter cylindrical missile. A practiced paper boy can roll eighty papers of normal thickness and stuff them into his canvas paper bag in twenty minutes. In the more populous parts of town, delivery amounted to riding down the center of the road, tossing the paper from one's bicycle to either side onto the lawn...on one occasion through a window. Misplaced papers, broken shrubs, late or forgotten deliveries, were called in by customers, written up, and distributed with appropriate grumbles from Mr. Baily as "kicks."

I remember visiting Winnetka years later during my Merchant Marine days, walking down Elm Street (my former route) and seeing a paper still lodged on a porch roof where an over-zealous toss had placed it.

Sunday papers were thicker and had to be rolled lengthwise; then tied with rubber bands or string. It was tempting to pile more papers on the bicycle's oversized basket than was prudent, thus reducing the number of trips back to the station. One spring morning after a heavy rainfall I had my basket piled to the point where my own weight was needed to restrain the bike from tipping forward. En route to the start of my route I rode through a puddle straddling most of Indian Hill Road. Concealed under the water's surface was a stick which my bike hit, causing it to pitch forward throwing me and my cargo into the puddle.

Christmas was a special time for paper boys; a day when two routes for Walter and two for me meant a double prize for both. We slept later that morning since to start deliveries before eight o'clock was to risk missing a tip. What every other day of the year were houses, porches, and lawns, now became real people. We knocked on doors and handed folks their paper with a timid "Merry Christmas!" ...which (translated) meant, "If you've a Christmas tip for me, now's the time!" Most responded. In the Winnetka of the thirties most came up with a dollar. Walter and I returned home about noon; pockets stuffed with tips. Envelopes were ripped open and cards tossed aside with no attention to their cheery greetings...then the cash counted - usually with the family watching. The take was usually well over a hundred dollars, quite a fortune considering that the monthly pay was about eight dollars per month per route.

Not all "customers" were on Mr. Baily's route list. Many paper boys took a few extra papers for their "blind aunts," i.e. nonpaying friends. My gratuitous recipients were the bakers on the first shift at Winnetka Bakery. Two papers gave me unlimited access to an incredible assortment of freshly baked doughnuts, sweet rolls, and pastries all arrayed in high, mobile racks. This "aunt" died when my mother got suspicious of my continuing lack of appetite for breakfast.

One of my routes included a small, poorly kept house on Ash Street, the front yard of which had been converted into a garden. Set behind a wire fence with a gate supported by two posts, it was one of the few houses that showed lights during my pre-dawn ride-by. One morning I noticed a plate with a piece of apple pie, still warm from the oven, perched atop one of the fence posts. The curtains, usually closed, were held aside enough to reveal a wrinkled face, nodding to affirm that the pie was for me. The ritual was repeated the next day and eventually extended to an occasional chat across the old fence. I came to understand what an important part of a lonely day those encounters were for that elderly customer.

Newspaper earnings went for many things. Walter's income and mine built a rather respectable collection of classical records. A few remain in long un-opened boxes that await an eventual trip to the trash bin. I also bought a lot of rare stamps. In those days a vendor would send an envelope full of stamps "on approval" ...meaning that you were trusted to send money in for those you purchased and mail back the rest by a prescribed date. I still have that album - the size of the NY telephone book and covered with a special canvas cover I'd asked mother to make...complete with a holder on the spline that supports the tongs used to handle the stamps.

Mother was the beneficiary of some of my earnings. A semicircular electric clock, bought for her one Christmas, stayed with her until her last years at the Good Samaritan Center in Boulder. At one point in my paper-delivery career I decided mother should have

proper silverware to replace the mongrelized collection we used day-to-day. I discussed the possibilities with Mr. Kuss, the elderly Swiss proprietor of "Kuss's Jewelry Store" on Elm Street in Winnetka. He came up with a complete service for 12, silver-plated flatware in a shiny wooden case and let me take it home for Christmas after I made a modest down payment and promised to pay the rest from future monthly newspaper earnings. I eventually honored my promise and paid off the debt. I can't imagine that happening in today's world.

We loved our mother dearly and would do anything for her. Generosity and selflessness were her hallmarks. I recall that on one unusually hot day in Winnetka, when workmen were installing a gas line on Spruce Street in front of our house, she sent me out with a pitcher of cold lemonade for them.

My bank book for a savings account at the Winnetka Trust and Savings Bank (which I still have) is an interesting logbook, starting with the first savings from paper route earnings. The first deposit of \$14, following my first route by some months, was December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1938. I was 12 years old. There were other small deposits followed by a withdrawal of \$2 in February of 1939 dropping the balance to \$23. The balance hovered between zero and \$100 until April of 1944 by which time I was at sea. It climbed to \$4,200 in October of 1946 after which withdrawals carried it down gradually until the account was closed, doubtless to satisfy tuition at Northwestern, in May of 1947.

Listening to my Father sit for hours accompanying his rich bass voice on our piano prompted me to apply some of my newspaper earnings towards piano lessons. My teacher, a woman, about forty, lived alone in a house several miles from us in Wilmette....a reasonable bicycle ride. I got to the point where I'd mastered the slow movement to Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata and a few more complex pieces. I must have been about eleven when she greeted me for my lesson while dressed only in her bathrobe, stood close behind me as I played, then leaned over me so closely I was embarrassed to go back the following week.

Our dog "Sparkie," on Spruce Street wasn't really ours but spent all his wakeful time with us. A purebred Irish setter, he loved children who, constantly in motion, knew how to invent games for him when he was bored. His owner was understanding enough to feed and house him for our benefit.

Summers at Spruce Street saw Stanley playing, listening to, and in general celebrating his love for baseball. While he settled for barely passing grades in math, he could calculate batting averages to two significant figures in his head. He invented a game, using the concrete walk that led from our front steps to the town sidewalk. The rules were known only to him, to his Chicago Cubs, to his imaginary teammates and to the thousands of fans that cheered when things went well. He, the pitcher, threw a hard rubber ball at the

steps whose complex surfaces reflected it in random directions. If he caught it on the fly, the batter was out. Beyond that the rules were not so simple. Stanley played the game by the hour, remembering the count, the score, and probably the batting average of each of his opponents.

Winnetka's Maple Street Beach ("Winnetka Beach,") with its antiseptic smelling bathhouse, concrete pier and high diving board was the most popular summer venue for us in those days. We, as others our age, lived our summer life at the lake, spending hours inventing new ways to jump off the diving board. In retrospect it seemed at least twenty feet above the water but, was probably closer to eight. Stalls for changing clothes were on the second floor of the bathhouse - girls on one side and boys on the other. The wooden wall separating the two areas had a few small holes in it...doubtless drilled from the boy's side. Peak arrival and departure periods were also peak peek periods. I stood in line for my turn to look.

I don't remember being taught to swim. Perhaps we taught one another. Each Fourth of July brought swimming races, one of which provoked a quote often cited in the Bartholds' "old days" talk. Charlie Sheppard, my friend from the age of six or so, was racing Stanley in one of the long-distance races from the Winnetka Beach pier to the next one down the lake (perhaps half a mile). Sheppard was ahead until towards the end when Stanley caught up with him, at which point he suggested: "Let's quit and call it a tie!"

The lake provided some less conventional (and more dangerous) entertainment too. One summer I built a diving helmet from a ten gallon can, one face of which was cut to accommodate a window, a piece of glass tarred into place against the outside surface. The bottom was cut out and the sides shaped to fit over the shoulders. A strap under each arm prevented its floating off. Feeding the helmet from the underside was an old garden hose into which we somehow pumped air with a tire pump. Considering the system's leaks and the condition of the pump, the shore man had to pump furiously to supply air enough to supply the diver. The diver's escape plan was simply to let go of the rock he carried to keep him from floating. Buoyancy would do the rest. I remember the design and the trip to the lake before the beach was officially open in the morning. We didn't get much use of the device before it leaked too much to hold air.

Tower Road beach, a little further from our house, was less congested. The pier there was part of a reservoir for water purification. It was a favorite spot for fishing since swimming was allowed only in the beach area. That beach was once the launch site for a super kayak, built by me and some now forgotten friends. The kayak frame was built from wall lathe expropriated from the recently demolished Horace Mann Elementary School. It was covered with canvas from discarded awnings and sealed with tar from Winnetka's roads. Built only for speed, it would hold two or three boys and was stable only while in motion...thus had to be given a starting push by others. As we were getting

pushed off from the beach on its maiden voyage in calm water, we saw a large yacht coming in reasonably close to the beach and chose that as our "show-off" objective. All went well until the kayak hit the yacht's wake – unable handle both the weight it carried, and the flexure imposed by the waves. The bow pierced the wake, buckled the boat double and sent its crew, including me, swimming to shore.

Tower Road beach was also the site of my first understanding of a fundamental fact of physics, i.e., that water's incompressibility makes it an excellent transmitter of sound. The experiment was quite simple. Having saved a few large firecrackers called "cherry bombs" from the fourth of July, we tied them to small rocks, ignited them, and threw them off the Tower Road pier. As expected, they exploded under water. Not expected was the number of bewildered swimmers that bobbed up at Maple Street Beach, several hundred yards distant.

At some point in my youth, probably while on Spruce Street, I remember going down to the beach with a friend in the early spring when the ice was breaking up, most chunks big enough to support one's weight. We delighted in going out and jumping from one ice flow to another. At one point the piece we were standing on separated from those around it for long enough to discourage further pursuit of that sport.

The sand beach at Tower Road was about two hundred feet wide, eventually merging with the base of a steep bluff separating the beach from a row of mansions that lined the lake side of Sheridan Road. The bluff was densely wooded and well suited to secret doings. It occurred to me once what fun it would be to dig a cave into the side of the bluff to make a secret hide-out. I had befriended a boy, Art Watson, whose family lived in one of those mansions and convinced him, sworn to secrecy, that his property would be a perfect site for such a cave. We cut into the hillside to make our cave, the mouth of which we covered with timbers, dirt and transplanted bushes. The only exposed surface was a small, well-disguised door. Inside we built a crude fireplace with a stovepipe that poked up through the dirt for a chimney. It was the smoke from that chimney that gave us away, ended our adventure and, at his parent's insistence, our friendship. A year or so later Art's father committed suicide, convincing me that living in a lake-side mansion was not, in itself, a guarantee of happiness.

Two medical events from those days come to mind - one pleasant, the other not. A Notice came home from the school saying that I was squinting at the blackboard due to near-sightedness. I recall riding my bicycle to an optician in central Evanston for an examination, returning some weeks later for my first pair of glasses. Emerging from that shop I couldn't stop from grinning, overwhelmed at how clear things were. I must have needed them for quite a while.

Those were the days when tonsils were blamed for colds and every related malady. Most children had them removed. Dad saw a newspaper ad offering free tonsil removal at the Evanston Hospital. I was talked into going and, fearing the worst, was not disappointed. The doctor sat me in a dentist-like chair; then opened my mouth to inject anesthesia deep into my throat with a long needle. He then had me hold a semicircular tray under my chin while his assistant, a medical student, prepared for his first attempt at the tonsil removal. A block of some kind was put into my mouth to prevent its closure. The student then inserted into my mouth a scissors-like device made up of a wire loop that extended from the end of a stick. I was terrified. He had hardly begun when the doctor shouted in anger, "No, No, you're going at it all wrong." I tried to shout but couldn't with a numb throat and a plug in my mouth. The student tried repeatedly to get the cutting loop into position, getting it right only on the third attempt. Pain can be imagined as easily as it can be felt. I shudder as I recall sitting there holding that bloody tray, vowing never to go to a doctor again.

One summer I was invited to go the "Druce Lake" camp, as I recall about two hour's drive west of Winnetka...my first time away from home. Life at Druce Lake was, as with most summer camps, ball games, swimming, canoeing, campfires, none of which I remember very well. What I do remember is (1) the camp song and (2) its coed nature. The song's chorus was not very imaginative...

"Druce Lake, Druce Lake,  
Druce Lake our camp,  
We will be loyal to you."

It was a stirring melody and inspired no end of loyalty, the intended manifestation of which I never bothered to think through.

There was a girl at Druce Lake, at least as tall as I was, and very buxom. She found no end of reasons to seek me out among all the other children. I recall that her presence embarrassed me no end.... but that she was pleasant to contemplate once she was gone. I survived Druce Lake, remained loyal, but never returned.

Speaking of songs reminds me that Walter and I enjoyed making them up and singing them with appropriate accents. In the former category was a plaintive cowboy song, composed by us and sung to the tune of the hymn, "Lead on oh King Eternal."

Oh, I'm a western cowboy  
I'm far away from home  
I loved my home so dearly  
And still I longed to roam

But now I've had my medicine  
And now I'm going home

To be a western cowboy  
And never more to roam.

Dad had a red book entitled "Heart Songs" with one that particularly caught our fancy. Despite our limited ability to read music, we learned the melody and sang:

There was a little man and he had a little can  
And he used to rush the growler  
He went into the saloon on a Sunday afternoon  
And you should have heard the bar tender holler:

No more booze, no more booze  
No more booze on Sunday  
No more booze, no more booze  
You gotta get your can filed Monday

Chorus:

She's the only girl I love  
With a face like a horse and buggy  
Leaning up against the lake  
Oh! Fireman save my child.

Verse 2:

The chambermaid came to my door  
"Get up! You lazy sinner!"  
We need them sheets for table clothes  
And it's almost time for dinner

Among our periodic adventures were ten-mile bike trips west to "Sky Harbor," (now the Glenview airport). We spent hours watching planes land and take-off. Since \$3.00 would get you a ride, I worked extra at what jobs I could find, and tried it...long before parental consent was an issue. It was fantastic...something my parents shouldn't miss. I saved up \$6.00 more. Mother was, as always, enthusiastic. I accompanied her on her first flight, but Dad would have none of it. His reaction: "If God meant people to fly, he'd have put wings on them,"

The same airport hosted air races once a year ...admission free to those who simply biked up to the chain-link fence surrounding the field. It was hard to know who was ahead as they made their tight turns around the pylons, but the excitement and the noise were memorable. Among the racing planes was the "G-B Racer," a squat plane that seemed to be just an engine with wings.

I enjoyed building model planes in those days too. The simple ones were made from balsa wood blocks according to more-or-less clear plans. The more complex began with light balsa wood frames onto which a paper skin was glued. The propeller's shaft was tied, by rubber band, to a fixed point at the rear of the plane so that, if tightly wound, the plane would get airborne and fly for a half-minute or so. Once the excitement of such a model had worn off it was normally discarded. But one saw a more exciting end, an end inspired by a "Horrors of War" scene from the card that came with each 2" x 2" bubble gum pack...this one showing a plan crashing in flames. We took the model to a second-floor window of our house, wound the propeller up as tightly as possible, set the plane on fire, then launched it to a spectacular burning crash.

It was scarcely a ten-minute bike ride from our Spruce Street house to the Skokie Golf Course where you could stand around in the caddy area, sometimes for the best part of a day, waiting for a job. A caddy's pay, two or three dollars plus a tip, made it worth the wait but barely worth the risk of angry words from a client who expected a caddy to know one club from another or to remember to wash the balls when he had extra time. The awesome chasm I felt between myself and the well-dressed country club set soured me against golf for the rest of my life.

It was during our days on Spruce Street that "Hi-Li" paddles got popular. It was simply a small rubber ball, tied to a hand paddle by a long rubber band...the object being to hit the ball repeatedly, bringing it back to the paddle after each whack. Walter got very good at it and entered a contest at the Community House to see who could keep it up longest. To our amazement Walter made the finals and ultimately took first prize...a brand-new red Schwinn bicycle.

Dad continued to be active in music in those days. He was the principle bass at Kenilworth's Church of the Holy Comforter. Walter and I were in the choir, directed by Mr. Yingling, a German who'd anglicized his name and who also taught chorus at the Jr. High School. He was strict and exacting... an exceptional musician. I remember sitting through Sunday services on hard wooden choir benches, thinking of everything but the sermon. Religion was a mystery to me, made more so by the formalism of the Episcopal service. The church had a very large and ornate enclosed alter. I assumed that something very magic, perhaps God himself, must be inside that box. I gave it a wide berth



Mother (Josephine) and Dad (Walter) about 1940

Those were hard times financially for my parents. Dad's fortunes ebbed. Mother's income from sewing was what sometimes all that held things together. Dad worked for a while at a Naval Base North of Winnetka. In early 1941 he met an elderly man, Mr. Pierce, who offered to rent us a house he owned on Hawthorn Lane, much closer to New Trier High school, already attended by my older brother Walter.

1092 Spruce Street still stands, but much refined from those days. The front porch where I slept is closed in. The forest between our house and Skokie Jr. High school, which I recall as vast, seems to have shrunk with the years and is now a modest-sized park. Skokie School is now a private.

## **5. 533 Hawthorn Lane**

I was 15 when we moved to Hawthorn Lane, a large house in a nice neighborhood several blocks from New Trier High School where Walter and I were both enrolled. World War II was expanding, and the map of Europe was a swastika. Norway was occupied and we knew nothing of Dad's family. France was defeated and the "Battle of Britain" was underway. The U.S. was still neutral, but the draft had already started. On December 7th, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declared war both on Japan and Germany

However, our excitement over the move to Hawthorn Lane eclipsed any concern we had over the state of Europe. It was hard to imagine that, for the first time, each of us would have his own bedroom. The house was old and sagging just noticeably on one side. It needed painting and yard work. The owner, Mr. Pierce, built much of it himself ...with more ambition than talent as a carpenter. But as a carpenter he left a small workshop in one of the dank recesses of the basement and left some basic tools there. One, a mechanical drill with a collection of bits in its wooden handle, was later to follow me around the world in my Merchant Marine career, wind up in the shop at Lake George, and finally in my tool cabinet on Oak Valley Way.

Mr. Pierce had, as an afterthought, added a two floor, ten-by-ten-foot extension to the side of the house, accessible through a separate outside door. The first floor of that extension was just storage space but also gave access to a stairway to a small second floor porch which, in turn, connected to one of the upstairs bedrooms – the one assigned to Walter. I was awarded the porch extension including the first-floor storage space which became my “stuff” warehouse. The roof over my porch leaked and the room had no heat other than what Walter saw fit to share with me through his open door.

Walter's room opened into a short hall at the top of the stairs leading up from the first floor. The second-floor bathroom was accessed from that hall, as was another bedroom which I was Sylvia's. Louise had to walk through Sylvia's to get to hers. Downstairs was a living room, a dining room, a kitchen a second bath, a bedroom which Mother and Dad used, a second bedroom for Stanley, and a small enclosed porch separating the front door from a short path across a scrubby lawn to the sidewalk. The basement housed an ancient coal-burning furnace. Our coal, delivered in bags, was poured into a cellar coalbin through a chute.

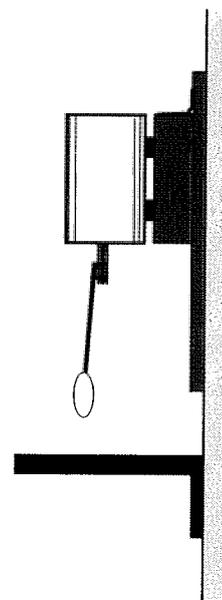
Driven by envy of the luxurious homes of some of my friends and enabled by income from my two paper routes and other jobs, I immediately set out to upgrade my new quarters. Mother worried when I climbed onto the flat roof over my room with an old extension ladder, armed with rolled roofing and a bucket of asphalt paint to repair the leaks. With a new roof on top of the old one, I then lived in dry, if not warm, comfort.

I also replaced several broken windows panes and repainted the interior wood. To add some class, I bought the cheapest rug I could find in Sears' catalogue... really an

oversized straw mat. I recall buying a new green and red blanket with an Indian design that had no warmth but served well as a bedspread. I also bought and installed curtain rods on which mother hung some aqua-colored drapes she'd made for me. Walter complained of the noise my projects made but welcomed rights to use a cabinet I'd built and attached to the stair well by L brackets. It housed a used record changer I'd found. My stock on Walter's books went up when, instead of construction racket, my record-player filled both his and my quarters with music from the collection of classical records he and I had bought from our newspaper earnings over the years. I took pride in keeping that room very neat and was not above hiring siblings to help me clean it. Louise, as I recall, had a contract to make my bed for 10 cents a day.

Still anxious that Mother should enjoy the things that mothers of my friends did...and armed with an old sewing machine motor from my ongoing garbage salvage operations, I set out to build her a mix-master. But rather than copy the complex, interleaved beater design common to store-bought mixers, I determined to emulate Mother's motion as she sent a spoon through the contents of a bowl couched in her other arm. My design was the essence of simplicity.

Once I'd filed half-flat the shaft of a rather husky 1/3 horsepower motor, I bolted a large spoon to it, then bent the spoon's shaft to induce a circular motion of the spoon when the motor started – thus, in theory at least, duplicating the motion of my Mother's arm with a bowl held close to her. The motor base was mounted to a board which was hinged to a second board screwed to the wall. This way the motor-spoon system could be lifted, then dropped into the batter. The entire device mounted on the vertical wooden siding comprising the kitchen wall was ready for commissioning on Mother's Day. Mother put the ingredients for enough pancake batter to feed the whole family into a bowl for the great test. If she had doubts over the invention, the loss of her favorite stirring spoon, or the screw holes in the kitchen wall, she was too kind to let it show through her delight at my inventiveness. The whole family gathered for the commissioning.



A horse is a very powerful animal. The mixer immediately dedicated its full 1/3 of that power towards distributing the batter, enough for seven of us, over the kitchen walls and ceiling. The spoon, or more accurately the lower part of it, just missed Sylvia on its trajectory toward the kitchen window...which it almost broke. Cleaning the batter off the

walls and ceiling got harder as the day wore on and it dried. The motor lived on to drive still other experiments.

If Mother didn't have any grey hairs when we moved to Hawthorn Lane, she certainly did when she left. Once, while playing on a small roof by the kitchen window, I thought it would be funny to jump, touch a low-slung telephone feeder line, and fall limply to the ground...all for her benefit as she watched from inside. She emerged screaming as I tried to assure her it was a joke... that I was not electrocuted after all.

The neighbors probably remember us better than we remember them. Our house was on a corner. Diagonally across from us was a frame house, surrounded by a hedge and beautiful gardens. In 1989, some 40 year after we lived on Hawthorn Lane, my oldest son, Skip and I were touring Winnetka. Passing that house, we noticed a very old lady on her hands and knees, losing a battle with the weeds that were overtaking the garden bordering the public sidewalk in front of her house. She remembered that a big family lived in our house but did not remember our name. She had lived in the same house since she was first married, in the 1930's.

Across Hawthorn Lane was another big house with several children, including a girl a year or two my senior and alleged to be "naughty." That reputation was verified during a baseball game on the street corner one Saturday. She was catcher and I was pitching. Catchers with skirts should wear underpants, keep their knees together and limit their signals to those associated with baseball. In retrospect my shyness probably kept me out of a lot of trouble.

The subject of sex would not be complete without noting that the stairway from the second-floor bathroom to the attic on Hawthorn Lane had a ceiling only part way up beyond which the roof rafters were exposed. It offered a great place to hide magazines. I can't help wondering if, in demolishing that house to build the new one that's there now, work crews may have found some issues of 1940's version of dirty magazines ...about as dirty as the New York Times is today.

Most of us worked at one paying job or another while at Hawthorn Lane. Walter and I continued the two paper routes we'd started while on Spruce Street. Stanley too had a route but his was for the "Downtown Shopping News," a free paper supported solely by advertisements. Delivery boys were paid by the number of copies each removed from the distribution center. The distribution company's laxity in following up on where Stanley's papers *went* just about cost us our house...a near-disaster in two parts:

One of the chores rotated among the three of us boys was the job of shaking down the grates in the coal furnace, removing the ashes and spreading them on the driveway connecting a separate garage to the street nearby. It was Stanley's turn early one spring when the devil on his shoulder suggested that outdoor ash delivery trip could be finessed if he simply opened a basement window and dumped the ashes through it onto the ground just beyond the window; a dark area under the floor of my bedroom extension.

That same dark area was also accessible from the yard by a small door which, with the same or related devils on his shoulder, struck Stanley as an interesting place to deposit some of his papers...certainly a faster way to get rid of them than door-to-door deliveries. Stanley's two sins, while not necessarily harmful separately, didn't combine well. Coals, still smoldering from the furnace shakedown set the afternoon papers alight, the smoke from which was noticed by our next-door neighbor. I was somewhere nearby on my bicycle and, seeing fire engines go by, determined to follow them...only to realize they stopped in front of our home. The damage to the house was minimal; to Stanley probably more serious. I always wondered whether rejection of that devil wasn't a partial cause for his choice of the ministry as a career.

During our first summer on Hawthorn Lane, I worked for A. Sidolf Nilsen, a Swedish landscape gardener whose truck picked me up every morning and dropped me off at night. I cut grass, raked, spaded gardens and helped with tree work. I recall once standing on the ground, told to help lower a large limb which might otherwise dig up the lawn when it landed - my first such assignment. The defective limb was tied to one end of a rope which passed over a larger limb above it, the other end being in my hand while I stood under the tree. Recognizing the limb was large, I heard a call come down from above, "It's heavy...you better take a turn around something." Assuming he meant my wrist, I wrapped it tightly around my right wrist. He had in mind, as an anchor, the bumper of the truck parked near me...not my wrist. As the limb fell, I rose. While I dangled, terrified, in mid-air, still holding the rope, he called another workman to rig a second rope to provide me a safe decent.

Our landscaping crew was caught by a lightning storm one day while working in Lake Forest, north of Winnetka - a storm bad enough to force us to leave the job early. Driving home along a dirt section road bordering a large farm, a particularly violent stroke hit that farm's barn which immediately burst into flames. In response, Nilsen sped to the intersection of another dirt road that led to the farm. By the time we got there the entire barn was aflame and the neighs of horses, still trapped in their stalls, could be heard from inside. It was too late to try rescue them. The barn was almost completely destroyed and adjacent buildings already burning when the fire trucks arrived. It took a long time to forget the cry of those helpless animals.

Some of the gardening customers we served were easier to get along with than others. One lady, extraordinarily fussy about her flower and vegetable gardens, was constantly complaining of damage done by rabbits, often reminding us to look for their nests to destroy them. Nilsen did find a rabbit's nest, but at another of the houses we took care of. We carefully transported the entire family to the fussy lady's shrubs.

During the school months of my freshman year I worked at an auto supply store in Wilmette. Knowing nothing of cars, I was usually assigned the charging or replacing of batteries. Mother was dismayed at the holes the acid ate in my clothes. I later worked in the glove department at Carson Pirie & Scott in Chicago. The pay was good, especially at Christmas time. Dad, again out of work, followed my lead and got a job there himself for three or four years commuting every day on the North Shore Line and the "L."

I had three close friends in High School. Alan Moser remained a life-long friend who followed the same path through Winnetka schools that I did. In high school, Al got me interested in amateur radio and a club focused on that technology. Through that connection I met Phil Bengston and Jim Hagen who remained close friends and eventual shipmates some years later.

I enjoyed some classes at New Trier High School and hated others - grades reflecting my level of interest. Mathematics was easy for me, as it was for both Jim Hagan and Phil Bengston. Jim Hagan, though brilliant and funny, was even less social than I, had the face and mannerisms of an old man even as a teenager, and was careless in the way he dressed. The Hagans lived in a large and expensive Spanish-style house in the best section of Kenilworth. He had two sisters; Sally, who never married and still lives there and another whose name escapes me. The latter married a man that drove an ice cream delivery truck and froze to death when he accidentally locked himself inside it! Jim Hagan's father, Cornelius J. Hagan, owned the Indiana Limestone Company and had a fancy office in Chicago. He drank a lot and snored louder than anyone I ever knew. Mrs. Hagan was very nice to me. Except for Jim, they were all very Catholic. Jim's genius sometimes got him into trouble, including at least one trip to the principal's office. Our homework involved an algebra question with two variables  $x$  and  $y$ , both of which we were to find. Jim's answer was that  $x$  and  $y$  were equal and could be any number at all. The teacher called him forward to explain that to the class. He went through a derivation he'd found in a book of sophisticated mathematical anomalies proving that  $x = y$ ...obviously with a flaw but not seen as funny to the teacher couldn't find it.

Phil Bengston too was very smart. He lived in Glenview, west of us, had one sister and parents that spent lots of time playing golf and drinking. Phil, Jim, and I were best friends through high school, through our common merchant marine careers, and for years thereafter. Neither of them married. Phil died in the 1970's, not yet 50 years old. Jim died about 1990.

Chemistry was impossible for me. I failed the course, unable or unwilling to memorize what seemed to be an arbitrary series of facts with no basis in reason. Physics was easy and fun. Though I excelled, I also got sent to the principal for a demonstration which embarrassed the teacher. In my landscaping work I was taught the easy way to get up a tree without a ladder. One just throws one end of a rope over a lower branch, then takes the end that comes back to ground and ties a loop in it. Sitting in the loop, it is easy to hoist oneself up into the tree. During a lecture on pulleys and mechanical advantage by Mr. Christiansen, our physics teacher, we learned that a single pulley gave no mechanical advantage. I raised my hand and asked, "If that's true, how come a man can pull himself up a tree where there's not even a pulley...just a branch with lots of friction?" The answer, supported by a detailed explanation, was that you could not! The next day I brought a short piece of rope to school and while kids were arriving for physics class, tossed it over a beam in the hall outside the classroom and hoisted myself

to the ceiling. Christiansen caught me, took offense and sent me to the principal for my insolence.<sup>1</sup>

Among the few classes I remember well was "Music Integration," taught by Mrs. Kidd - It was a marvelous analysis of classical music feeding a love I'd already cultivated. Those were the days when Sammy Kaye was a popular big dance band with the motto: "Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye." Despite my love for the course I talked of it as "Swing and Skid with Mrs. Kidd."

Study halls were hard to control at New Trier. One monitor was particularly strict, pacing the rows with a frown on his face. Jack Tyner, a fellow radio-club member who lived on a farm west of town responded to a dare we put before him, pulling off a stunt which can have no parallel, in the annals of study hall distractions. As a farm boy, Jack knew that a chicken, placed in an opaque bag, will remain quiet. He smuggled a bagged chicken into the study hall and released it when the monitor was at the opposite end of the room. The chicken, excited to be released and frightened by the clamber of the class, ran and flew around the room for twenty minutes, marking his route with droppings, before someone caught it. Tyner was identified as the culprit, but his punishment was mild, as I recall. The principal must have had a sense of humor.

Walter tells of having a particularly quiet class to which he took a noisy pocket watch, periodically winding it to break the silence. I recall learning of a trick which I practiced once with great success. I put a spool of thread inside my shirt, the end sticking out between the buttons. Without saying anything, I noticed the thread during class and pulled a yard of it out and broke it off. Still curious, I then pulled three or four yards out and broke it. The kids around me were hysterical as I kept pulling the thread until the spool was emptied.

Languages were easy for me. Having finished all the German courses offered, I recall taking a course in French. The German courses, as many of the New Trier's programs, were colored by anticipation that the United States would not escape the growing war in Europe. The normal German texts were replaced by excerpts from Nazi military journals. It seemed curious and sickening to read of the German occupation of Norway from the German's point of view. "Stroverschteckte Norweger" were made fun of as stupid and inept.

The same war anticipation mood showed up in Physical Education programs. Outdoor sports were replaced by obstacle courses...wall climbing, crawling under barriers, etc. Swimming classes in the New Trier pool now required that boys swim 30 minutes holding a mock wooden gun aloft and dry. We were also taught to emerge from under water in such a way as to disperse imaginary burning oil on the surface.

I'd been a day dreamer since grade school; my mind often somewhere else. A grade schoolteacher once took me aside to explain carefully to that "Day dreaming isn't bad, as

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<sup>1</sup> *As you raise yourself one foot by that system, you pass two feet of rope, thus having a mechanical advantage of two*

long as it's constructive." I neither understood what she said, nor changed my habits. An example will suffice.

I walked home from New Trier for lunch every day since it took just ten minutes and it saved money. One day a piece of mail was waiting for me (probably a radio license) that made me forget I had a 1:00 swimming class...a required course at New Trier. Boys swam on Monday and Wednesday, Girls on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The boys swam nude, the girls with suits. Being late, I wasn't surprised to find the boy's locker room empty. Mr. Jackson, the swimming coach always started promptly. I quickly stripped, showered, burst through the door to the pool, took two strides toward the class before seeing to my horror it was all girls. I'd mistaken the day. The pool access door, set to lock from the outside, had all but swung shut when I caught it and escaped the howls emanating from the pool.

Mr. Jackson was a fitness buff. In his sixties then, he could still do horizontal handstands from the rails that lined one side of the gym. Mother always told the story of a parent's day meeting during which the public-address system announced that Mr. Jackson was forced to cancel his home room meeting because he was "tied up in the pool." A Houdini-like image immediately came to her creative mind.

Even before our first year at Hawthorn Lane, Al Moser infected me with his interest in radio. Our first venture being assembly of mail-order crystal sets consisting of a small crystal into which a "whisker" had to be poked and adjusted for best reception. They needed no power source, just an antenna (a metal clothesline worked fine) and an old pair of Bakelite headphones. With that beginning I began to gather electrical parts from any source I could find. Some rescued from garbage deposits in Winnetka's alleys, a few removed from appliances deposited in the Crow Island dump just across Willow Road in Winnetka...probably prime real estate today. Soon the first-floor workshop of my Hawthorn Lane "wing" was full of electrical jewels. As my inventory grew, so did my boldness in trying things. I remember having a large power line (power factor correction) capacitor weighing about fifteen pounds which I charged to the highest voltage I could generate... anticipating the spark I'd get discharging it with a screwdriver. The discharge was violent, shortened the screwdriver by a quarter inch and gave me an immense respect for stored energy.

During our freshman year at New Trier, Moser convinced me to join the New Trier Amateur Radio Club, a group of about twelve radiophiles including Jim Hagan, Phil Bengston, Bob Tyner, and Wally Behnke. Jim and Phil were later to share my adventures in the Merchant Marine. Tyner later became an associate editor of Power Engineering Magazine. Wally Behnke eventually became CEO and Board Chairman of Commonwealth Edison, the utility serving the greater Chicago area.

The club's aim was to have us all get amateur radio licenses that allowed you to have your own transmitting station and talk to like-minded amateurs the world over – either by Morse code or by voice. License requirements included an examination on theory and a

test to read International Code at 13 words a minute.<sup>2</sup> Tests were given at FCC offices in Chicago's the Old Court House building. Tall arched windows in the top floor examination room looked out on a city quite indifferent to the crisis we were going through within.<sup>3</sup>

It was several weeks after such exams that one received either the license or notification of failure. Mother shared my anxiety and always celebrated with me when a license came. She knew they came in large envelopes; failure notices in business envelopes and made a big event of their arrival, tucking them under my lunch plate to surprise me at noon. My amateur license arrived two weeks after the examination and I was officially W9PBC, call letters that had a wonderful ring in code and which, in later voice contacts while at Northwestern, called W Nine Poor Boy and College.

By then I had a short-wave receiver, but nothing to transmit with. I had also strung an antenna outdoors, cut to ARRL specifications for the 40-meter amateur radio frequency band. One end of the antenna was suspended from as high as I could climb in an elm tree near our garage, the other from a mast nailed to the eaves of the house's third floor. The antenna feeder tape came into my sanctuary by way of two oversized porcelain bushings, cut into the wall. I had somehow purchased a used receiver but having nothing with which to transmit code signals, had to build a transmitter. It was normal in those days, particularly among neophytes, to solder together the pieces in the open on a "breadboard" to be sure it worked before mounting it in a proper chassis and cabinet. Being impatient and without a proper tabletop, I assembled the three "stages" of my prototype radio transmitter up the side of the draperies Mother had made for my windows, leaving more than one soldering iron burn but not setting anything on fire. The transmitter worked, and I was soon on the air talking to folks in other states and to several like-minded amateurs in Mexico. It was a short-lived excitement however since Pearl Harbor soon forced the shut-down of all amateur radio stations.

Mr. Smith, our New Trier mentor in radio matters, made known that there were commercial as well as amateur radio licenses ...Radiotelegraph for code (largely maritime) and Radiotelephone for voice (mainly commercial AM radio stations). Al Moser and I were among the first of our group to show up with both a third-class commercial radiotelephone license and the corresponding third-class license for radiotelegraph work. Unlike the less impressive 4" x 6" amateur license, they were imposing 8" x 10" documents, elaborately engraved with all the filigree and pomp of a stock certificate.

Meanwhile, I learned of another certificate useful in maritime work...one giving evidence of competence in first aid. Its test was based on book with relatively bland illustrations and focusing on war injuries. I bought the book, studied it, and successfully

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<sup>2</sup> *Morse Code* and *International Code* are often confused. Morse code, invented by Samuel F. B. Morse, consists of a series of clicks, the only sound the apparatus of his day could make. International code was an adaptation of his code to bursts of audible tones varying in length, i.e. dots and dashes.

<sup>3</sup> *Later, as a shipboard operator I was regularly sending and receiving at 40 words a minute.*

passed the examination, earning yet another credential and presumably qualifying me, without ever seeing blood, to remove appendices or amputate limbs.

Not content with the third-class citation, Al Moser, Phil Bengston and I studied for and took examinations for second class licenses in the same category, took further tests, and both earned that distinction...as much for the status as for practical value. The next goal was obviously a *first-class license*. However, that required that one have commercial operating experience. Putting that dilemma before Mr. Smith, he noted that, jobs might be available (if you knew the right people) at area radio broadcast stations and, further, that the danger bonuses now being paid to attract operators to ocean-going ships where maritime losses were very high, had created a shortage of operators on Great Lakes ships.

Through connections his father had, Al Moser got a summer job as a junior engineer at WGN, Chicago's largest radio station. Phil Bengston and I applied for radio operator jobs with the Chicago, Duluth, and Georgian Bay Line, a company that operated two cruise ships, based in Chicago and making one-week trips through the Great Lakes. We were delighted to both get jobs for the summer following our sophomore year. I went to work on the SS North American; Phil on the SS South American. Jim Hagan got a radio operator's job on one of the Great Lake's iron ore carriers. Thus, some three months after turning 16, I showed up for work at Navy Pier in Chicago and was ushered on board to meet the chief radio operator. On most passenger ships there were three operators, giving the ship twenty-four-hour radio coverage. Each operator worked two four-hour shifts, each followed by eight hours off. There being no ship-to-shore radiotelephone system in those days, all weather information, commercial messages, and incoming and outgoing radio-telegrams to or from passengers were sent and received by telegraph key.

The radio operator on merchant ships is considered an officer. As such I was issued a uniform, supposed to be worn on board only. I couldn't resist wearing it home a few times for the several hours' leave we got between trips. In later (college) years when I needed a tuxedo, I found my old uniform and had mother convert it to one.

The North American was built in 1915 and its radio receiver used the first commercial triodes ever made 01A's. Transmitter stages were mounted on canvas straps to absorb shocks. The ship's antenna stretched from one mast to the other, a span of some 200 feet, and enough to accumulate a sizeable static electrical charge during storms. The down-lead from that antenna came through the ceiling of the radio shack to a very large ceiling-mounted knife switch capable of connecting the antenna either to the transmitter or, in very bad weather, to an electrical ground. We learned that if it was left open during lightning activity the antenna would build up charge, the air would crackle, and then ZAAAP – a fierce arc would jump across the switch to the ground connection. We scared a few passengers with that antic when they visited the radio shack during storms.



There was often a bit of drama at departure time for these seven-day cruises. As passengers embarked, they were greeted with cocktails and music at a reception on the main deck. Then, with a blast on the ship's horn, lines to shore were cast off and we got under way, very shortly passing through the breakwater onto Lake Michigan's swells. Jubilation rapidly changed to nausea for many and the rail was soon lined with sick passengers - many of them "day passengers," i.e. on board for only for the three hours it took us to get from Chicago to Mackinac Island. That meant relatively few public toilet facilities per passenger, exacerbating the sickness problem. With all the smugness that comes with getting sea legs early, I admit to looking forward to that scene with amusement each week. Those were exciting times for me. I felt important and very adult.

After two summers on the North American increased my code speed, our middle-aged chief operator, who had a code speed medal, convinced me to enter a contest in Chicago and helped me prepare for the test which required that one accurately transcribe ten or twelve radiograms, sent end-to-end, at whatever test speed you chose. Easy but for the fact that there was no gap between messages so that after one message was complete and the the next one started, one had to take a completed radiogram out of the typewriter,

remove the carbon, insert it between fresh forms, put them into the typewriter, and then catch up with the code. I recall taking a fourth prize at about 40 words a minute.

It seems odd that, as vivid as my memories are of my work time on the Great Lakes, I remember very little of what I did during off-hours. I do remember wishing I had the nerve to approach some of the college girls that came aboard in groups each week. I recall once putting a note, including a photo of myself inside a coca cola bottle, sealing it, and throwing it over the rail into Lake Michigan. To my amazement it was found and responded to by two girls from Cincinnati, but not until after I'd left home for a job on the North Atlantic.

Neither Jim Hagan, Phil Bengston, Al Moser nor I ever dated in high school - for lack of courage not for want of interest. All of us served on New Trier's Public Address (PA) crew...the folks who understood microphones, amplifiers, impedance matching, and related (then rather exotic) technology. We were called on to connect the school's equipment for meetings, plays, and dances. I remember being given responsibility for the sound equipment at our Junior Prom....then sitting alone in the balcony of the gymnasium looking down on couples my age, dancing cheek to cheek to "Serenade in Blue" played by a big band hired from Chicago. I felt very keenly like an outsider.

After leaving for my second summer on the Great Lakes, Walter joined the army, becoming an infantry radio operator. Coming home before going overseas, he had lost weight, taken up smoking, and was very much an adult. Shipped to France after D-Day, he took part in the campaign through Europe, including "the battle of the bulge," until Germany's ultimate defeat. He later received France's Croix du Guerre for his service.

Returning for my senior year at high school matured, bored, and anxious to get started on what I was determined would be my permanent career, a radio operator on ocean-going ships. It was a perfect choice...good pay, travel, no living costs, and the prospect of retiring with a substantial bankroll of savings by age 40.



The fall semester of my senior year I took a course in world history and hated it; first because it was required, not optional, second because I wanted to be involved in the war... making history rather than reading about it. I tore each page out of the book after reading it, then quit school and bought a train ticket to New York on the New York Central "Pacemaker" for February 27th.<sup>4</sup> Later that year Sylvia joined the

<sup>4</sup> I developed a close friendship with my English teacher at New Trier, Mrs. Wilson. After quitting school, she wrote me, suggesting that if I wrote her a paper every month for six months... and did a good job at it, she'd try to get me listed as a graduate of the class of 1944. I fulfilled my end of the deal and was surprised to later learn that she'd also fulfilled hers. Thus, I am listed as a graduate without having graduated!

Women's' Army Corps (the WACS) and went to Newfoundland as a junior nurse. Stanley went off to a Bible College in Wheaton, Ill, and Louise to Grinnell College in Iowa. Mother and Father eventually gave up the house, as much out of financial pressure as anything else, and moved to a small apartment in Lake Forest.

Our childhood days were over.

## Chapter 6. At Sea

The duffle bag I carried out of New York's Grand Central Station February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1944 held a simple array of clothes, a typewriter Walter had loaned me, an alligator-skin five-year diary, a few books, a dozen 78 rpm phonograph records, a phonograph to play them on, some carving tools, and an electronic project or two...My intent; to make a career as a maritime radio operator. It was a great game plan. High pay, no living cost, and the prospect of retiring at age 40 with a fat savings account. With no better option, I took a room at the Sloan House YMCA on 34<sup>th</sup> street in New York. Once the largest YMCA in the world, it was to be my New York home between voyages for five years ...later sold in 1993 for conversion to high-rise apartments. My first day in New York taught me that ocean-going radio operator jobs, unlike those on the Great Lakes, were controlled by unions. I still have my membership book in "The Radio Officer's Union, (A.F. of L),

Two days after arriving and joining the union, I took a mandatory course in convoy protocols and emergency signals. But before recalling those years whose memory is so precious to me now... years that were intended to be a life-time career, a review of that work environment will be in order.

### 1. What is the "Merchant Marine"

The "Merchant Marine" is essentially the commercial ocean shipping industry – the part that's afloat and moving cargo or people. It is not a military service but, being so critical to execution of WWII, was a draft-exempt occupation. It was not a safe one. Casualties were more the double the average for military services.

Service	Number serving	War Dead	Percent	Ratio
<b>Merchant Marine</b>	<b>243,000*</b>	<b>9,521**</b>	<b>3.90%</b>	<b>1 in 26</b>
Marines	669,108	19,733	2.94%	1 in 34
Army	11,268,000	234,874	2.08%	1 in 48
Navy	4,183,466	36,958	0.88%	1 in 114
Coast Guard	242,093	574	0.24%	1 in 421
Total	16,576,667	295,790	1.78%	1 in 56

Uniforms were issued to ships officers at Kings Point, the Merchant Marine Officers Training Academy. Having never been there, I didn't get one until a year or so later and even then, seldom wore it, nor did other ship's officer. A typical merchant ship of those days had 10 officers: A captain, three deck mates, a Chief engineer, three assistant watch engineers, a purser, and a radio officer.

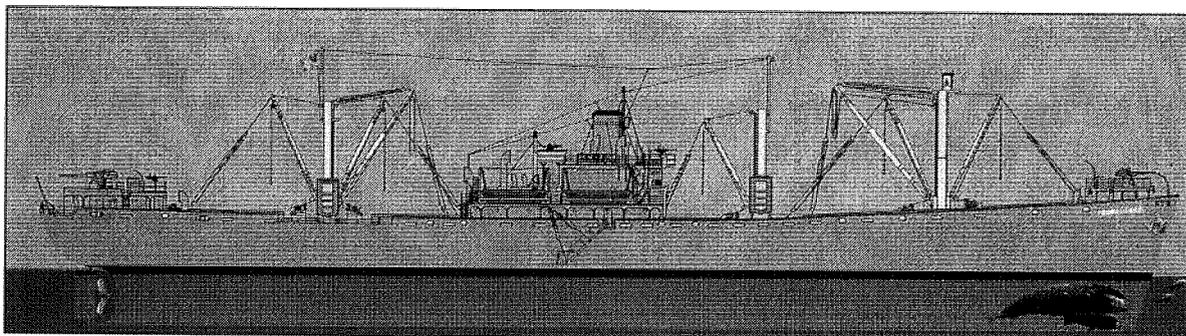
Employment procedure were relatively simple. One went to the union hall in any major port and entered your name on the assignment-seeking list. When your name came up you could take the posted assignment or decline, waiting for the next one. After the third declination, your name went to the bottom of the list. Choosing or declining an assignment wasn't easy. You were given the name and type of ship as well as the company that owned it. Destination and cargo were secret. Once you showed up aboard and "signed on" you were committed for the voyage, be it three weeks or eight months. But after returning to any U.S. Port you

could either “sign off” and repeat the procedure to find another assignment or stay aboard and sign up for another voyage. The only way to get more than a few days off in a U.S. port, was to sign off one ship and show up later at the union hall to get another. “Pay-off” at the end of each voyage was in cash...thus it was wise to make the first trip ashore in groups. You could not stay in a US port very long and still maintain draft-exempt status. Pay scales included a bonus for service in “Red Zones,” those where submarine and air-raid risks were high, primarily the North Atlantic, Mediterranean and the Pacific war areas.

My game-plan was to make a career in the merchant marine, save my money, and retire early enough to enjoy a second career.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Merchant ships of the 1940s

The profile of a liberty ship, mass produced in incredible numbers during WWII is shown below. The "midship's house," centered on its profile, stands three decks higher than the principal deck above the cargo holds. On the lowest deck of the midship's house is the galley, mess rooms, and small cabins housing some of the crew. The middle deck houses most of the ship's officers and the lifeboats. The uppermost deck houses the “Bridge” from which the ship is steered and controlled as well as Captains stateroom, the radio room, and quarters for the radio operators. Radio operators are on that deck to give convenient access to the radio gear in emergencies and to assure radio contact from a sinking ship as long as possible.



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<sup>1</sup> *In retrospect, it was a bad idea for at least three reasons:*

- 1. The technology changed about 1950, obsoleting code communication and turning the former radio officer's job into an electronics technician to support solid state equipment in which I had no background whatsoever.*
- 2. Even for the short term it would have been safer and to my financial advantage to join the army and go through college getting a more advanced degree paid for by the GI bill.*
- 3. It would have spared me spending two miserable years of my life in the army during the Korean war.*

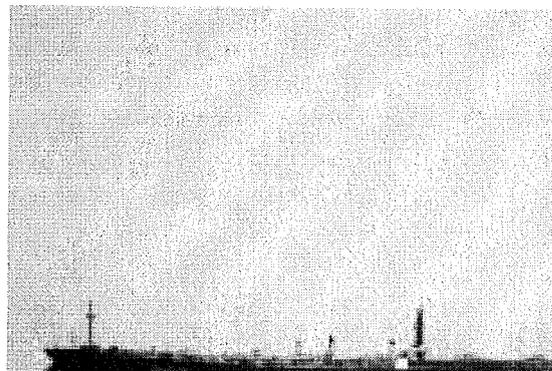
Aft of the midship's house are hatches accessing two cargo holds. At the ship's stern the profile rises by one deck to house more of the crew and sometimes another galley. There are two cargo holds forward of the midship's house and at the bow, anchor windlasses and the Fo'csle (Forecastle...derived from the structure of old sailing ships) housing the carpenter shop, large spares, docking lines, etc.

The hatches accessing both forward and after cargo hold are separated by masts at the foot of which are the masthead lockers. Booms for cargo loading are secured in a horizontal position at sea. To access the holds, one first removes heavy protective tarpaulins covering them, then the heavy wooden hatch covers. With them removed one can look down into a cavernous cargo holds, their two ends, fore and aft, comprised of bulkheads (walls) with watertight doors, normally sealed to prevent the ship from sinking if one hold is breached. Cargo is lifted by a winch...steam driven by ships of those years, electric on newer ones. In loading, a large boom is swung out over the dock to pick up cargo, then swung in over the hold for loading aboard. The hold is in separated into two levels separated by hatch boards. When the lower hold is full, hatch boards are hoisted into place over its opening, then cargo stacked into the upper ("t'ween deck) hold. Unloading cargo is done in the reverse order. With the ship alongside a dock, the whining of winches raising and lowering cargo goes on day and night.

The illustration above shows gun turrets fore and aft. Guns on merchant ship were an afterthought, installed on Liberty ships as an early stage of the war. When in place, they were usually manned by (partially) trained merchant seamen... less often by a "gun crew" assigned by the navy. Merchant seaman were not always good at gunnery, cases being noted where their fire at hostile aircraft swept the bridge of their own ship.

Liberty ship were equipped with simple, oil-fired reciprocating engines whose ceaseless throbbing seemed to make the ship a living creature that, engines that once in port and shut down, suggested the ship had died.

Oil tankers often have their primary deck structure at the stern and need neither masts nor cargo booms. The holds are sealed tanks accessible only by cylindrical inspection ports on deck and by a network of piping that comprises most of the landscape visible above. Because a full cargo takes the main deck quite close to the water line it is often awash in bad weather. An elevated "catwalk" runs fore and aft along the center line of the ship to give access to points on the deck.



### 3. The Radio Operator's Job

A typical merchant ship's crew consisted of roughly twenty-five men, ten of them officers. Four "Deck" officers, the captain and three "mates," manage navigation and

steering, each working two four-hour shifts. The Engine crew is managed by a chief engineer supported by three assistants each of whom also worked two four hours shifts. The ships purser is charged with management of all the ship's records. In support of that crew, a ship's steward manages meals and supervises cooks and a cleaning crew. Both deck and engine officers are supported by a group of seamen...able bodied and ordinary seamen for deck jobs, "oilers" and "wipers" doing support work in the engine room. Merchant ships have no medical staff on board...just a tool-box-sized medical kit that's assigned to any one of the officers who's certified for first aid. There is normally just one radio officer but some ships, in wartime, had three to provide 24-hour coverage on dangerous routes.

The radio officer was obliged to work eight hours, broken into shifts acceptable to the captain. He also had to be accessible at any time of day or night. Radiotelegraphy was the only communication link with the outside world. There was no ship-to-shore radio system in the 1940s. The radio officer was also responsible for maintenance of related equipment such as radio direction finders and (if installed) radar. Since radio transmissions were prohibited except for emergencies, contacts between close-by ships was by blinker light...a spotlight mounted on the flying bridge with which dots and dashes were made by opening and closing shutters.



Ships normally travelled in convoys of up to forty ships, the periphery being protected by navy escort ships equipped with submarine detection gear. Submarines often trailed convoys and sank ships forced to fall out of the convoy due to engine trouble.

Just prior to leaving a US port, the Captain, deck officers and radio operators went ashore for a convoy conference. At each such conference I was given a code book allowing me to decode radio messages addressed to our convoy. The book was in a leaded bag to be thrown overboard if a ship is hit or boarded.

My "Bug" went with me as a permanent part of my baggage during those years. A bug, as opposed a "Straight Key" makes continuous dots when you hold the key to one side, hand-made dashes when directed to the other, thus allowing an operator to send faster and more uniform letters. That bug still rests on a shelf over my desk. International Code is very much like a language. A proficient operator doesn't hear dots or dashes any more than laymen hear letters or individual words when you talk. A person in a crowded room with a dozen other conversations within earshot, can single out the conversation with just one of those voices. Similarly, a radio operator, hearing a jumble of code messages piled on top of one another, can distinguish the one he selects. All ships have "call letters" just as a radio station does. If, while taking a nap while off duty with the receiver turned on in the radio room and

lots of (code) chatter going on down the hall, your own ship's call letters are added to the jumble, you're apt to wake up just as you would if someone calls your name. Radio operators have accents too...a special style to the way they formulate letters and words. I went to sea with a Great Lakes accent. In England, secret Service code monitors could tell when a German radio operator moved from one city to another by his accent. When hearing fragment of code in a movie I can still understand what's being said just as my father could understand Norwegian decades after the last time he'd spoken it.

During WWII radio silence limited the actual use of a telegraph key, but a radio operator was responsible for getting weather information and, more importantly, coded messages for either his ship or the convoy he was in. Because very few of the ship's crew had shortwave radios, I voluntarily wrote up a one or two-page newspaper for posting on the ship's bulletin boards each morning. When news was scarce, I took delight in making stories up as though they were real...a train wreck in Utah, a speech by a well know politician... even a military victory in the Pacific... knowing full well there would be no audit.

The ship's radio transmitter and receiver were powered by lead-acid batteries, charged by a generator running off the ship's supply. That allowed radio contact with the ship's power interrupted or destroyed. Maintenance of that system was also the radio operator's job.

#### **4. Voyages**

*When "signing on" or "signing off" a ship, entries are made on one's radio operator's license. Unfortunately, that license seems to be lost as I write this. Nevertheless, dates are probably quite accurate since they mesh with dates in a diary I kept for a while. While war-time voyages were pretty much back-to-back, after starting college they were intermittent, growing fewer as I decided to abandon the idea of making the merchant marine my career. The remainder of this chapter is based on and limited to each ship-board assignment, leaving college life between assignments to another chapter.*

#### **The SS Durango 2/12/44 – 4/15/44**

There was no waiting list when I arrived at the union hall the day after arriving in New York. I got an urgent post on the SS DURANGO, an oil tanker anchored off Bayonne, New Jersey and ready to sail. When a special launch pulled alongside at about 10:00 the next morning, with me as the only passenger, I was aghast. The Durango was built about for German owners in 1910, captured by the allies during WWI, moth-balled, then hurriedly (and imperfectly) refurbished and put back into service for World War II's duration. It was a "rust bucket." Even so, the trip from the sea-tossed launch up the rope ladder to the ship's deck and my first ocean-going assignment was as exciting as it gets. Captain Anderson welcomed me, had me sign onto the ship's payroll, and asked straight off if I had my first aid certificate. Still proud of all my licenses and certificates, I affirmed that I did. Without hesitating he pushed a large toolbox with a red cross on it into my hand and said, "Good, you've got the job!"

That box safely tucked behind some gear in the radio shack, I then set out to familiarize myself with the radio equipment. Despite the ship's age, the equipment was newer and easier to operate than its ancient forebears I'd dealt with on the Great Lakes. My cabin was just down a dingy, poorly lit hall from the radio room. It was dirty and poorly furnished. The next week I spent every off-watch hour scrubbing it, hoping that the ship's cockroach population would find it less appealing than when I first turned on the lights. I recall spending some of the hours of my radio watch walking the corridor behind the radio shack, shoe in hand, hunting cockroaches.

Early the following morning we weighed anchor, bound for Curacao in the Dutch West Indies to load crude oil. We had no sooner cleared the Red Hook Light and headed out to sea when, through the port hole, I saw a seaman walking towards the midship's house on the catwalk leading from the after deck, his unshaven, face showed considerable distress, his left hand wrapped in a greasy red handkerchief. After stopping briefly in the mate's cabin, he turned and walked into the radio shack. "You de Doctor?" he asked. I assured him I wasn't but admitted I had the first aid kit and asked what was wrong. "I hurt my finger," was his reply...a gross understatement. After I asked to see it, he reached into his shirt pocket with his good hand and removed the finger he had severed in the gears of a large air vent, trying to use the gears themselves to turn it instead of the crank. All I could think of was the first aid book's predisposition for recommending an enema for virtually all ailments. Sulfanilamide powder seemed more appropriate. I recall his rejecting the idea of a tourniquet around the arm, so while he squeezed the finger stub, I washed it, applied sulpha powder, clumsily stitched the skin closed around the stub, and wrapped it in a bandage. He remained silent during the whole affair. The fix supplemented by periodic redressing and dousings of sulfa powder must have done the trick. He survived the three-week trip without missing a watch. That was the only occasion I ever opened the medical kit .... or admitted, while signing on other ships, to having passed a first aid exam.

Everything aboard the Durango was old and rusty. The shower nozzles-controlled temperature by mixing cold water with live steam. At one extreme you'd freeze, at the other be scalded. Fresh water was made by a ship-board evaporator. When it was in short supply, bathing was done with a bucket and a rope long enough to lower over the side.

We left New Jersey alone and without the benefit of guns or convoy protection. But as all ships, blackout rules were rigorously observed. Porthole glass was painted black, heavy double drapes separated interior companionways from exterior doors. A more somber reminder came the third day out of New York when radio silence was broken by another tanker, some hundred miles to the South, off the Carolinas, announcing that it was struck by a torpedo and on fire. A Navy vessel responded so we did not change course. The Germans were still operating successfully off America's southeastern coast and into the Caribbean.

The smell of oil and sight of land came almost simultaneously as we approached Curacao in the Dutch West Indies. Still recovering from cruel sunburn that taught me the power of tropical sun, I went ashore in Willemstad - my first foreign port. It was a colorful town, though dirtier and poorer than the romantic picture I'd painted in my mind. When I went

ashore a crowd was gathered in the town's center to wave to Queen Wilhelmina of Holland who'd arrived the same day, but doubtless in better style than we had. In my endless walking around the town I recall a plump black woman coming toward me on a bridge, a huge basket balanced on her head and a five or six-year-old by her side. Seeing what was obviously an American, the boy said, "Hi you Goddam sumbitch!" The mother grinned proudly at her son's prowess in English. A half- dozen prostitutes, tempting as pastries in a bakery window, worked the road from town to the oil docks. Whether it was my shyness that saved me or the memories of the graphic pictures of VD symptoms in my first aid training book, I don't know. The second night I went ashore with the second mate to see the town...largely from inside bars. I couldn't match his capacity to drink but felt very manly as I walked on somewhat uncertain legs, back to the ship. Another seaman, coming the opposite way on the narrow sidewalk seemed to challenge me for the right-of-way. He faced me down, muttered something in Dutch, and pushed me. We fought. I lost and boarded the ship bruised, absent a lens from my glasses, and clearly aware that street fighting was not one of my talents.

Captain Anderson had a different problem. He was the worst example I've ever seen of a shore alcoholic. Something in that disease apparently allows seamen to stay drunk while ashore, then dry out while at sea. It was getting close to departure time when the mates went out to look for Anderson...apparently an exercise they went through regularly. They found him in one of his favorite haunts, loaded him into a taxi and carried him back aboard...absent his false teeth. That too was apparently common as he kept a spare set aboard. I remember little else of Anderson except that he was reputed to be the best navigator afloat.

The only other crewman who I remember vividly was the third assistant engineer. He was dark haired, Latvian, and didn't get out of the same set of oily clothes the entire trip.

We stopped briefly at Guantanamo, Cuba before arriving back in Bayonne about April 1<sup>st</sup> to discharge most of our cargo of crude oil. I signed on for another trip but during our five-day stay there, returned to the Sloane House on Manhattan...this time determined to go to one of their dances sponsored by the United Service Organization (USO). But first I had to learn to dance! The NY Times advertised five or six dance studios, most of which said the first lesson was free. I left the Arthur Murray studios with the basic two-step down well, and all the literature and forms I needed to arrange my first paid lesson. I practiced what I'd learned in the confines of my room, just sneaking a look at the real action on the Y's dance floor. The next day I went to my "free first lesson" at another dance studio where an unusually buxom teacher in her 30's, explained how to lead. I left comatose, but generally understanding the idea.

The Durango steamed off again after five days in New York - again without convoy protection - this time for Curacao, a companion island to Aruba. I was more at ease with my radio duties the second trip and blessed with no further first aid emergencies. There were more submarine victims, but we were not threatened and returned with another cargo about the first of May.

Two trips on the Durango were enough. I had seen a small corner of the world and a somewhat bigger share of the sea's moods. I had watched porpoises racing us playfully, waterspouts rise from an otherwise tranquil sea, and had learned from periodic SOS calls of just how real and how near the war was. I was ready for adventures on the North Atlantic and signed off on our return to spend a few more days at the Sloan House. My mail included a letter from Mrs. Wheeler, my high school English teacher. She suggested that if I sent her a monthly writing of my adventure, she'd accept them as English credits and argue for my being given a diploma. I did so and to my surprise was later listed among New Trier High School's class of 1944 despite never having graduated.

### **SS Walter E. Ranger 5/18/44 – 8/17/44**

After a few days ashore, I committed to a berth aboard a liberty ship, the Walter E. Ranger, then loading cargo in Newport News, near Norfolk, Va. It was the first of six liberty ships I would sail on and was equipped with 20 mm anti-aircraft guns, a large 3" gun on the stern, both complimented by some US Navy gunners assigned to the ship to man them.

I took an immediate dislike to Captain Hume, a serious and aloof egotist. The ship itself, though primitive by today's standards, was much better equipped and more comfortable than the Durango. One of the ordinary seamen was from Chicago and had sailed the Great Lakes on the SS North American the same time I did.

We left port with a cargo of machinery and food on May 21<sup>st</sup>...this time in convoy with naval escorts. Also, aboard for transport to Europe, were 50 US Army engineers, one of whom was a former amateur radio operator. He spent hours practicing his code skills in the radio shack.

I recall we had several air raids on this trip and lost one of about forty ships in the convoy.

On June 8<sup>th</sup> we sighted Spanish Morocco and shortly after that, Gibraltar. Our route took us past Oran, Algiers, Bizerte, and then north to Sicily where we put in to Augusta.<sup>2</sup> Mt. Aetna was visible from the harbor. The last of the German occupying force had been driven out of Sicily and on the mainland the Allies were battling their way into Rome. I recall very little of Sicily other than the bands of children that encircled any seaman who ventured from the waterfront into town. Those poor kids appeared to inherit the worst of Mafia culture, a fascist upbringing, and desperate hunger due to Italy's paralyzed economy. They traveled in packs of twenty or so. We were told to make the trip to town in



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<sup>2</sup> Augusta is now better known as Syracuse, Sicily. It is on the South East tip of the island.

groups of at least five or six and to do so with our belts swinging...buckles out. I could make no more than one trip to town and spent a good deal of the remaining time swimming in the crystal blue waters of the harbor.

We left Augusta on June 16<sup>th</sup> and sailed through the Straights of Messina where Mt. Stromboli was visible. A submarine warning disturbed an otherwise peaceful trip to Naples on Italy's western coast. After a day's anchorage at Bei Bay, we docked in Naples on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The poverty and despair in Naples were even worse than on Sicily. During the process of unloading cargo I met a young stevedore supervisor, Caronte Genarro who had an advanced degree in mathematics and shared a great collection of math puzzles with me. He wrote me once, but I regret having lost touch with him.

The San Carlo opera got back into operation very shortly after Naples' liberation. A ticket cost the equivalent of thirty-five cents. I first went to see La Boehme; an opera Walter and I had seen in Chicago. The performance was excellent and the ambiance itself unforgettable. The opera house was basically a cylindrical building with at least six balconies...all of them full. The audience left no question about their approval or disapproval of performers. The stomping of feet sometimes literally shook the building. I returned to see at least a dozen other operas, both on that and the next trip to Naples, enjoying all except the "Girl of the Golden West" in which the lead soprano, who must have weighed 250 pounds, was dressed up as a cow-girl and somehow squeezed into a pair of blue jeans that could have fit a hippo. Her efforts at a Texas drawl in Italian was more than I could take. One night Jasha Heifitz gave a recital at the same venue ...also for \$.35

The port of Naples was then the lifeline of the Allies' struggle northward in Italy. Recognizing its importance, air raids were still a way of life and the harbor a favorite venue of German saboteurs. Under cover of night, swimmers would often attach small explosive charges to ships' propellers. The charges didn't have to be very large to damage the bearing or bend the shaft, thus rendering the ship inoperable until a lengthy dry-dock repair could be arranged. The allies' response was to drop depth charges in the harbor at irregular intervals during the night. That stopped the damage but cost a drunken sailor from the ship tied up next to us his life. He fell off the dock before re-boarding his ship and couldn't be rescued in time to avoid the next charge.

During WWII the military were very cordial in treatment of merchant seamen. It was relatively easy, for example, for us to hitch-hike rides on military vehicles in Italy. I did this once to see Pisa and it's leaning tower. Part of that ride was on a huge army vehicle which resembled a gantry crane. Its wheels were set at least 8 feet apart. The driver (to impress me, I supposed) took delight in straddling small Fiat's when pulling up to a stop sign...then gunning his engine to fly over him once it turned green. I also thumbed rides to Florence. More than one seaman hitched rides to see action at the battle front, only to be a casualty in the action.

We returned to Augusta from Naples but stayed only a day before going south to Oran where we arrived July 3<sup>rd</sup>, greeted on arrival by a raid by the German Luftwaffe.

I walked into town a few times but was astonished at the high prices and found nothing worth buying. One of their cottage industries appeared to be the manufacture of German medals, made to look old, for selling to merchant and naval personnel. Were a statistical study made, I am sure it would have shown at least one “captured” Iron Cross per German soldier in the Africa campaign.

My diary notes another air raid on July 9<sup>th</sup>. I remember it as being more serious than the first. It also notes that I broke my glasses and made a trip to the US Army hospital where I got a new pair...gratis.

Our departure from Oran on July 20<sup>th</sup> was preceded by a series of convoy conferences at which new rules and new code books were introduced. On the short trip to Algiers we were subject to another raid. Our stay there was long enough for yet another convoy conference aboard a French destroyer...followed by an evening at anchor which I recall quite well. Algiers is a large city separated from the harbor by an expansive park, famous as a “lovers’ lane” for both military and civilian couples. Late in the afternoon we noticed that every navy vessel in the harbor had crews pointing its big guns at the park. It didn’t take long to realize that sailors left aboard the ships were using the telescopic sights to follow the romantic action there. A hundred guns would focus on one point in the park. Then one would shift, followed by several more, and ultimately the fleet’s total fire power. Should all of them have fired at once, no target in WWII would have seen more accurate hits nor destruction.

The convoy leaving Algiers, consisting of just two ships and one naval escort, saw no action notwithstanding several alerts. We tied up at Ajaccio, Corsica on July 26<sup>th</sup>...a remarkably pretty country that suffered far less from the war than Italy. I remember renting a bicycle there and riding several miles to a beach. Though there were very few people around, I took great pains to cover myself while putting on my suit. No sooner had I done so that two young girls rode up on bicycles with the same purpose. They simply undressed and donned their suits in open sunshine, amused at my astonishment.

We returned to Algiers for just one day before heading back to the US on August 1<sup>st</sup>. My diary notes that I did a lot of reading, studying and card playing.

In those days I also took great pains to keep my cabin and the radio shack spotless. The mess boy cleaned rooms knew enough to skip mine. My diary notes that I painted both my room and the radio room on the trip back to the US even though I did not intend to stay aboard for another voyage. I signed off when we arrived back at Newport News, Virginia on August 17<sup>th</sup> of 1944 and took a train back to Cincinnati where, my diary says, I phoned “Marty” and “Jeannette” (my coke-bottle girlfriends) but got no answer. On my first Great Lakes trip in 1942, I had written a note, sealed it in a bottle, and tossed it into Lake Erie. I later got a letter from two girls from Cincinnati who had been vacationing on Lake Erie. I had never met them but had kept their phone numbers.

Arriving home, all my friends were all gone. Phil Bengston was working as radio operator on a Great Lakes ore carrier, Al Moser was in training for the Army Air Force in Texas, and

Jim Hagan had enrolled at M.I.T. There was a letter waiting for me from the stevedore foreman I'd met in Naples. More than anything on that short visit, I appreciated how richly green Winnetka was. My diary notes that Sylvia, Louise, Mother and I walked through Winnetka's tree-canopied streets to a movie theatre but that I enjoyed the walk more than the movie.

### **SS Edwin W. Moore 9/6/44 – 7/2/45**

I left for Baltimore the last week in August of 1944, once again passing through Cincinnati and once again in calling my "bottle" girlfriends without success. After re-boarding the SS Walter E. Ranger, I learned that, because it was to carry troops, a Navy radio operator was to take over. Traveling to Norfolk, I got a berth aboard the SS Beaver Dam but once again got off before it sailed since the former operator turned up at the last minute. With a day's pay in hand I boarded a train for Baltimore, signed on the SS. Edwin W. Moore, another Liberty ship – this time to stay. It was loading coal. On September 8<sup>th</sup> John Dolan came aboard to serve as second radio operator...the first time I'd been anyone's boss. John was from Chicago, ten years older than me, very easy to get along with, and great company. We shared a cabin. John was trying earnestly to learn Spanish from a phonograph record. A slow learner, he played the record endlessly. At one point I could recite both sides with a perfect Spanish accent but with no idea what I was saying. I can still recite portions of that record.

The ship stopped briefly in Norfolk where the convoy was to be formed. In Norfolk we loaded "deck cargo," in this case fierce-looking tank destroyers chained to the top of the hatch tops, their tracks crosswise to the axis of the ship.

Return to our anchorage from that conference was a 45-minute launch ride. The seas were fierce, and it was pouring rain. The launch had an enclosed cabin – dry but stuffy and full of cigarette smoke. The trip became a game of chicken. Who could stay inside, remain dry, and not get sick? I gave up after thirty minutes and went outside in the rain and fresh air. John Dolan stayed inside. His victory was costly. When we boarded the ship, my clothes were soaked with rain, his with vomit.

The storm got worse as we worked our way into the Atlantic...hurricane warnings just to the south of us. The third or fourth day the deck crew was alarmed to note that the chains tying one of the tank destroyers to the hatch top, crosswise to the ship, had come loose. With each roll of the ship, the vehicle was advancing or retreating on its tracks. The Bos'n<sup>3</sup> and deck crew were just getting extra chain to secure the offending vehicle when one of its chains broke. With the next pitch the other broke. Then the immense agglomeration of steel, engines and firepower rolled off the hatch cover, ripping open the deck's bulwark on its way overboard into the North Atlantic. Its transit left a nasty gap at the edge of the deck where the bulwark had been ripped open, allowing one to see directly into the upper hold. I suppose some German tank crew is still alive as a result.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Bos'n (Boatswain) on modern ships oversees the deck crew.*

My diary notes that I spent a great deal of time working on a model of a sailing ship from the 1700's. That kit included complete instructions, a square block of wood from which the hull was to be carved, and hundreds of brass pieces including miniature canon. I took great pains with that model, carving individual planks on the side, fashioning a rudder that turned on its pinions, and fashioning a wafer-thin rail along the decks. It eventually got put aside until I had more time. The model still rests in its orange box in our basement, waiting to be completed.

I continued to read a great deal and to study German, algebra and calculus, My diary also notes from time to time that I "did my laundry." Many liberty ships had their own washing machine, but not the store-bought kind we're used to. It was common to build a platform that could secure the base of an empty 55-gallon oil drum to the deck, where it could be filled with hot water and later drained into the ship's bilge. Suspended into the tub was a wafer about two feet in diameter, resembling an inverted mushroom... made of wood weighted with steel straps. The rope holding the "plunger" went up to a moving arm of the main steam engine, the result being an up and down motion of the plunger. Unless properly tuned, machines of that kind could pound one's clothes to pieces in short order.

Unrelated to its job as a laundry driver, the Edwin W. Moore's engine gave us problems midway across the Atlantic. We fell out of the convoy and lost our escort, thus becoming easy U-Boat prey. The captain realized that this was a good time for gunnery practice.... fun for all of us. The engineers got the engine repaired after two days of work and we caught up with the convoy in about a week.

On September 30<sup>th</sup> the convoy passed Gibraltar en route to Augusta, Sicily and then Naples. Though the allies had already landed in Southern France, a distress call from a ship sinking off the French coast near Marseilles reminded us that the U-Boats were still a menace. By October 5<sup>th</sup> we were anchored in Augusta and by the 7<sup>th</sup> back in Naples and reconnected with mail from home. We docked quite near the Walter E. Ranger, so I wasted no time in getting over and saying hello to my former shipmates.

I saw an opera or instrumental recital at least every other day and must have walked through every street in Naples. It was a fascinating city and I could make myself understood in crude Italian by then. My purchases included a pot-bellied mandolin which got reasonably good at playing and kept for several years, as well as antique set of mechanical drawing instruments, including an ingenious pen for drawing dotted lines of differing patterns depending on which of several cogs were inserted in its drive. I've long since lost most of the pieces but still have and still use a pair of scale-reducing dividers. I've never seen a set like them.

The Edwin W. Moore stopped in Oran, in Algeria, late in November. We went ashore forewarned to go in groups of five or six. The markets were crowded, dirty, and offered little of interest to foreigners. December 5<sup>th</sup> saw us on our way back to Baltimore where we arrived on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The diary for that crossing cites a lot of studying calculus and working on my ship model.

If there were two pictures etched in my mind as a permanent memory of those days, the first would be the evening hours I spent on deck, outdoors, the ship totally blacked out, leaning against the bulwarks and watching the phosphorescence of the water rushing by, accompanied by the throb of the ship's engines. The second would be meals in the officers' mess in bad storms where a framework atop the table kept things from sliding away as the ship pitched back and forth, vibrating wildly when the bow dipped deeply into a wave, the stern lifting high enough to get the propeller out of the water causing it to spin wildly causing the ship to tremble.

Food was generally good, if rather plain. Bread was baked daily...sometimes laced with caraway seeds to frustrate fussy eaters who would otherwise hold a slice up to the light to search for weevils.

I signed off the Edwin W. Moore on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and wasted no time getting to the train station. Being two days before Christmas, it was bedlam. Thousands of service men were trying to get home. I was barely able to squeeze onto a coach before it pulled out, standing for three or four hours before finding a seat. Arriving in Chicago, I boarded the North Shore Line for the trip to Winnetka, arriving the afternoon of December 24<sup>th</sup>. I had not called ahead and recall walking into the house and seeing Stanley and Sylvia trimming the Christmas tree – mother being in the kitchen. Stanley, ever with his sense of humor, decorated me with lights, added a few ornaments, then plugged me in while calling mother. Totally surprised, she wept with joy, having assumed I would spend Christmas at sea.

My Christmas visit was short. I signed back on SS Edwin W. Moore on December 30<sup>th</sup> of 1944, in Norfolk, as it neared completion of its coal-loading. We again stopped in Oran before proceeding to Livorno, Italy, for partial unloading, the Germans having long since been driven further north. Livorno is just south of Pisa and close to Florence. The Navy was still trying to detonate the mines that surrounded the harbor. Two went off as we lay at anchor. The town itself was devastated by the war. I hitch-hiked a ride to Pisa and saw the famous tower, then to the base of the army air-force base where I met a pilot from Winnetka. I also made a trip to Florence... relatively untouched by the war.

We stopped again in Naples to discharge the balance of our cargo in route back to the U.S. Being very light in the water, we were scheduled to move to another small port adjacent to Naples to load ballast for the Atlantic crossing. Our engines still shut down, a tugboat pulled alongside, tied itself to our bow and began our move. The wind then picked up to the point where the tug could no longer hold us and, if remained lashed to us, risked getting crushed between our hull and the pier we were being blown onto. The tug captain had the good sense to cast off his lines and get out of the way. A line of fifteen or twenty Italian destroyers were lined up, side-by-side at the pier we were approaching, sterns tied to the pier, bow anchors set out into the bay. I recall standing on deck watching in wonder as our ship, now totally adrift, its deck twice as high as our targets, ran down the row, tearing off bow railings on the first destroyer, anchor stanchions on the next, leaving each with serious damage before we ran aground ourselves, relatively unharmed. Two larger tugs then got us out of the harbor and to our destination.

We returned to New Orleans this time where, as usual, we were subject to a customs inspection. Our steward this trip, a great practical joker, had done time in England as a con man. Ships coming back from Italy at that time often carried paintings or other valuables. One favorite place to hide things was in the flour barrel in the ship's galley. Anticipating that a customs officer in his neat blue uniform would typically grab a large fork off the implement rack and poked it into the flour looking for contraband, the steward had removed a third of the flour, then put an over-inflated inner tube in the barrel before filling it back with the removed flour. The customs man that boarded did just as expected, puncturing the tube, and covering both the galley and himself with flour.

I went home again from New Orleans early in July of 1945, this time for a couple of weeks, helping with lawn work and repairs, returning to New York in the middle of April.

### **John Cropper 4/20/45 – 6/24/45**

I signed on the S.S. John Cropper in New York. It's cargo, we learned once signed on as crew, was ammunition. Ships carrying shells and ammunition commonly carried no other cargo to minimize the danger inherent in have that cargo. As the convoy formed, we flew a yellow flag indicating our status as a floating bomb.

The convoy was orderly until half-way across the Atlantic enroute to La Rochelle, on the east coast of France. Once again, the seas were very heavy. About mid-day the ships alarm went off. Running out from the radio shack into the rain, I could see why. Thick black smoke was swirling up from the hatch immediately aft of the midship's house, a hatch which the captain knew to be loaded



with fuse caps...a particularly easy device to ignite. He wisely refused to abandon ship since it would take us forever to get far enough from the explosion to be safe. Meanwhile the convoy, formerly ordered into a neat matrix of rows and columns, was dispersing like spokes of a wheel with our ship as the center. I recall very clearly being calm, taking comfort from the knowledge that I'd never suffer when it happened. The Bos'n and his crew, with the same attitude I suppose, set out to remove the hatch boards in what seemed like a futile attempt to quench whatever fire had started. They then jumped back and threw up their hands with thumbs up and immense smiles on their faces.

Merchant ships were sometimes equipped with smoke bombs mounted on racks near both starboard and port bulwarks, ready to be deployed during submarine attacks, thus obscuring targets sought by U-boats. One had been poorly mounted and had been lifted from its stand by the seas and smashed into the hatch cover, setting itself off in the process.

We anchored in LaRochelle again for discharging cargo. It was a quaint little city, the entrance to which was close to the pier to which we were tied. Since unloading our cargo would take about a week and since Paris had by then been liberated, and since a radio

operator has no duties while in port, I caught a train for Paris and booked into a hotel near the Louvre, *l'hotel du Louvre* to be exact. It was a very small hotel with a narrow stairway circling up to individual room doors. Rooms had a sink, but toilets were separated and shared by several rooms. I recall finding a light that didn't work and going down to the desk to explain, "Le lumiere - il ne travailler pas." After a puzzled moment the clerk finally understood and corrected me..."Il ne marche pas!" I had stated that the light didn't do manual work as a carpenter or mason might. She responded that one said, in French, that *it didn't march!* Years later I looked for that hotel, learning that it was torn down shortly after the war. Many years later it showed up in a book I read.

I spent hours in the Louvre but many more hours just walking the streets of Paris. Responding to an ad for a horn recital, I joined it in a cavernous medieval basement room that once served as a stable. The echoes transported one back to the days of knights and armor.

As a young man with a smattering of French, I fancied myself part of the city and even bought myself a beret. It must have worked for one day I was approached by an American soldier with a French phrase book in his hand. He asked me in slow and totally mispronounced French, how one found the railroad station. I pretended not to understand and ask him several times, in French, to repeat his question. After the third try, I broke down, admitted being an American, and gave him the answer he sought.

Returning to La Rochelle, I once heard dance music coming from a park not far from the dock. Working up my courage, I disembarked to discover that it was indeed a dance...one sponsored by the communist party of France. Not letting that stand in the way of a good time, I decided to try my luck with what little I'd learned of dancing in New York. I had a good time especially in exercising my limited French.

We left La Rochelle bound back to the US, again in convoy. The trip was uneventful until May 8<sup>th</sup> when a message announced the German surrender but warned that submarines might not yet have that news.

At least one did since I shortly got another message – this one from a submarine, indicating its position.

Shortly after receipt of the second message, our convoy

*from content fleet at 59  
Germany has surrendered unconditionally  
ally x cease fire has been  
ordered from 2201Z eight may  
repeat 2201Z eight may x the day*

RADIOGRAMS MAY BE SENT FROM THIS SHIP "VIA MACKAY RADIO" TO ANY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD	 Mackay Radio <small>Postal Telegraph</small>	FOR INFORMATION ON BIRTHDAY GREETINGS HOLIDAY GREETINGS AND OTHER SPECIAL LOW RATE SERVICES INQUIRE AT RADIO ROOM
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RECEIVED ON BOARD SS JOHN CROPPER MAY 8, 1945

BANG DE WEL X OPERATIONAL PRIORITY FROM COM TENTH FLEET  
OK 59 X GERMANY HAS SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY X CEASE  
FIRE HAS BEEN ORDERED FROM 2201Z EIGHT MAY REPEAT 2201Z  
EIGHT MAY X PENDING FURTHER ORDERS ALL EXISTING INSTRUCTIONS  
REGARDING THE DEFENSE X SECURITY AND CONTROL OF MERCHANT  
SHIPPING ARE TO REMAIN IN FORCE X MERCHANT SHIPS AT SEA  
WHETHER IN CONVOY OR SAILING INDEPENDENTLY ARE TO CONTINUE  
THEIR VOYAGES AS PREVIOUSLY ORDERED X

081331Z/LB

ran into heavy fog off the grand banks in Newfoundland. Icebergs were always a problem in these waters, their position being broadcast, once reported by ships.

Sometime after dark, the ship lurched violently as if it had hit a reef. I was thrown from my chair. It was not clear what happened, but it was serious enough that the bridge blew the abandon ship signal on the foghorn.

I asked the captain whether to send an SOS and was told not to since it appeared that we'd been rammed by another ship in the convoy. As it turned out the lead ship had suddenly seen a large iceberg dead ahead, turned sharply to avoid it and was unable to correct its course before crashing, under full throttle, into our ship. It hit us just aft of the midship's house. When told of the cause, I was terrified that I'd missed a radio message from the ship that rammed us.

The lifeboats were lowered into rather rough seas. They alternately swung well out from the ship's side; then bumped into it. Getting safely into them meant jumping at the right time. Most of the crew made it, two were crushed between the lifeboat and the hull. The boats were then cast off into a dark open sea. The ship that had accidentally rammed us did not suffer enough damage to ship water but had backed off and set its search lights looking for our lifeboats. The hour it took to locate us seemed like a year. After boarding her I wasted no time getting to her radio operator to find out if I'd missed his message. I hadn't. Things happened too fast for that.

We bedded down in empty berths or benches until dawn, standing by to see if the Cropper would sink or not. It was clear in the morning that it hadn't, and that water-tight compartments had limited the flooding of holds.

Maritime law makes clear that any ship that is abandoned at sea is fair game for seizing and claiming ownership. That made it urgent that ours be re-boarded. That afternoon five of us set out to re-board ours, the seas now being calmer. It was an eerie experience. Corridors

RADIOGRAMS MAY BE SENT FROM THIS SHIP "VIA MACKAY RADIO" TO ANY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD	<h1>Mackay Radio</h1>  <p>Postal Telegraph</p>	FOR INFORMATION ON BIRTHDAY GREETING HOLIDAY GREETING AND OTHER SPECIAL LOW RATE SERVICE INQUIRE AT RADIO ROOM
RECEIVED ON BOARD SS. JOHN CROPPER		MAY 11, 1945

OO DE UDX190 X WEIN STADTORT IS NACH SONNENSTECK  
UM 2000 UHR DEUTCHE SOMMERZEIT 42 GRAD 10 MIN NORD  
42 GRAD 37 MIN WEST KURS 305 GRAD FAHRT 8 SEEMEILEN

RCV'D 0420PM/LB



were dark, and doors were swinging open. The damages assessed, the captain authorized re-boarding by the entire crew and asked that I radio St. Johns, Newfoundland to arrange to get a tugboat to haul us there.

We spent one month in a St. Johns hotel while the ship was in dry-dock, her siding and buckled bulkheads being repaired or replaced. I recall doing a lot of reading and taking long walks through the countryside. Once, while walking a road near the coast with a friend from the ship, we encountered two ten or twelve-year old boys who asked where we were from. In fun, and with a thick German accent, I answer, "From Chermany." They stood back and asked how we got here. I told them "Mit a rubber boat!" "From where?" they asked. I said, "from ze U-boat, of course." They ran off and we walked briskly back to town fearing arrest any moment.

The ship back in service, we left for New York, arriving there on June 24<sup>th</sup>. By now the war in Europe was over.

### **SS Charles Brantley Aycock 7/3/45 – 9/12/45**

After signing off the John Cropper, I learned that Jim Hagan was not only taking ocean-going radio operator assignments but was in New York awaiting one. Deciding to sail together, we both signed onto the Charles Brantley Aycock, a freighter bound again for LaRoche in Western France. We were there for only a few days...long enough to buy a paper with oversize headlines "Bomb Atomic a tombez sur Japon." The war in the Pacific was over. We then sailed for Bordeaux, arriving amid great fanfare since they'd just cleared the harbor entrance of sunken ships. We were the first American ship to arrive after liberation. As the tug placed us alongside our dock, we were met by a huge crowd. A brass band broke into the Star-Spangled Banner, our crew standing at attention. The photo from the local newspaper shows Jim rather well, but I am hidden behind the steel column. The mayor then mounted a stand and made a speech; partly in French, partly in poor English.

Ceremonies being complete, the mayor came on board and was given a tour of the ship. He noticed a heavy woolen coat while visiting the radio shack and asked if he could buy it! It not being a favorite of mine, I made a deal and it went ashore with him and left me with some spending money for another trip to Paris.

, which is actually the seventh month of the Jewish year (counting from Nisan in the spring). It is both a time of rejoicing and of serious introspection, a...



In preparation for this trip Jim Hagan had aroused my interested in ways to economize in public phone calls. He had learned that a nickel (then required to get a dial tone) did so because its width forced the coin to trip a lever on the left-hand side of the nickel slot. He had figured out that if a penny was pressed with one's thumb against the left side of the nickel entry pocket while a key was pushed against the coin just above its center line, once key pressure overpowered the thumb's hold, the penny would spin down the slot hugging the left edge of the column, triggering dial tone. Thereafter I used only pennies for local calls. That still left a challenge for reducing the cost of long-distance calls. On a later Atlantic trip I took some jewelers tools, filed a double notch in the top of a quarter which then allowed me to drill a hole *sideways* through a corner of the quarter...the objective: to lower the quarter into the appropriate phone slot, get the deeper "gong" sound acknowledging a twenty-five cent credit, withdraw the quarter, then repeating the process getting any given level of credit plus a return of the quarter. I tried that immediately after arriving back in New York. It did indeed get me the quarter gong, but levers within the phone prevented removal of the quarter. So somewhere in New York, a phone repairman must have smiled at finding my invention. In later years, while at Northwestern, I made the penny trick known to friends in my dormitory. It saved us all a lot of money until the coin collector, finding a box full of pennies but no nickels, changed out the phone to one clever enough to prevent our trick. But they hadn't counted on such

an inventive customer. I investigated the circuitry of the phone and realized there was a wire internal to the handset which, if grounded, gave dial tone. I then drilled a small hole in the handset and inserted a small copper wire, one end of which was soldered to the appropriate terminal in the handset. Thereafter one didn't even need a penny for local calls, and I suppose the collector, thinking us angry at Bell's being dissatisfied with pennies, assumed we were boycotting phone service.

The Brantly Aycock arrived back in New York on September 9<sup>th</sup> after a particularly rough crossing of the North Atlantic. Anyone who's disembarked after a week on rough seas knows that, once ashore, the rolling of the ship seems to be replaced by a rolling of the earth. I returned to Chicago the day after signing off the Aycock in New York and immediately volunteered to help Dad put up storm windows, worried about his putting up the high ones...he not being particularly limber. I took hold of the one belonging in the apex of the third floor, pushed it ahead of me up the extended ladder, and was trying to get the top eyes onto the hooks mounted above the window frame. It was cloudy and windy. Suddenly the house swayed in my direction threatening to push the ladder over backwards. I threw the window over my shoulders and grabbed the ladder tightly anticipating a long fall. Only then did I realize that the house was stationary, the clouds were moving, and I was not standing aboard ship. I still speculate as to how that must have looked to Dad. He was still too glad to see his son home to get angry.

It was on this visit home that I took Walter up on a suggestion he'd made repeatedly, one that led to a major change the course of my life. He was then enrolled at Northwestern University and learned that veterans, with or without a high school diploma, could be admitted if they passed a rather stringent entry examination. I had finally agreed to take the examination, promising that, if admitted, I would stay one full semester but no more. I took the exam, which happily included both some calculus options and "recent books" questions. Having fulfilled my deal with Walter but before any response from Northwestern, I took a train to California with Jim Hagan, determined to continue my career plan and sign onto a ship that would show me something of the Pacific Ocean.

The trip began with a visit to the Coronado hotel in San Diego – guests of Jim Hagan's Aunt who had made a fortune in Los Angeles real estate. I remember little or nothing of that visit other than the opulence of the setting and a feeling that I was out of place there.

After two- or three-day's stay, Jim and I took the train to San Francisco in search for another radio operator assignment...this time separate ones since radio silence was a thing of the past and merchant ships no longer carried two operators.

### **M.S. Reeving Eye 10/5/45 – 11/16/46**

Once the America's production of Liberty Ships outpaced sinkings by the Kriegsmarine and secured the allies supply route to Europe, the US stopped production of liberty ships and turned to a series of several standardized, more sophisticated, more specialized, and more commercially viable series of ships - among them the MV-1, a diesel-powered ship

with refrigeration hatch... smaller than Liberty ships but faster. All were given the names of knots. One of the earliest was the MS Reeving Eve.

The wait in the Radio Officers Union hall was long enough to learn a few practical things from veteran pacific operators, including the wisdom of taking a case of good whiskey for trading purposes. Thus, I boarded the Reeving Eye as radio officer in on October fifth, my last trip ashore being for that case of whiskey.

The trip to Hawaii was uneventful and the Pacific lived up to its name. In a voyage of about eleven months, I don't recall a single violent storm. It seemed strange to be free to use the radio transmitter - radio silence being a thing of the past.

We first anchored at one of the outer islands, Kawai, awaiting the strangest cargo I'd ever carried; beef. Not the sides of beef for which our refrigerated ("reefer") hatches were built, but dozens of live cattle, tied together by tethers and towed to our anchorage by a large motor launch. The launch crew singled out the victims one at a time, put one sling behind its front legs, another ahead of its hind legs, then gave our deck crew the signal to hoist away. There is nothing more ungainly than a cow, bellowing its heart out, as its hoisted high in the air then onto the deck. Once all were boarded that way and hauled to Honolulu, the process was reversed - this time onto a dock. While the cows were delivered to their slaughter, I delivered myself to Waikiki beach where I pounded my chest black and blue trying to learn how to surf on an old-fashioned wooden surfboard.

From Hawaii we went to the Marianas, a cluster of islands in Micronesia, among them Guam, Eniwetok, Truk, Palau, and Kwajaline. Our purpose seemed confusing at first. After discharging military cargo at one port, we loaded a similar cargo at the same port and took it elsewhere. After the third such exercise the rules became apparent. The war being over, the resident army commanders were told they could close their garrison and return to the US only after all their gear was disposed of. Thus, the game was to ship your gear to another base in the hope that it would be all gone before someone favored you with the same generosity. The new breakwater at Guam, for example, was built with tanks, trucks, and radio gear. Our first engineer bought a jeep for a hundred dollars and, absent a shred of paperwork, loaded it onto the deck. Taking a cue from him, I went ashore at Eniwetok and exchanged my case of whiskey for the absolute ultimate in radio receivers, a Hammarlund, dual diversity Super Pro...worth three or four hundred dollars even in those days... if you could find one.

The receiver, proudly displayed my radio shack, lived up to its reputation pulling in stations I'd never dreamed of before. Although my ham license hadn't been renewed, I discovered that one of the commercial marine frequencies was exactly half that of the amateur 40-meter band. The temptation being too great, I jerry-rigged the ship's transmitter to double its frequency and gave



myself the option of operating on a popular (code-only) amateur radio band.<sup>4</sup>

In those days Amateur radio operators sent one another postcards with their call letters on them to acknowledge the contact they'd made and somewhere I still have a dozen or so of these "QSL" cards acknowledging contacts from W9PBC. More of the fate of my Hammarlund Super Pro later.

I can no longer distinguish between these islands in my memory. They all showed war scars and the signs of military occupation. The population seemed poor and anxious to gain a dollar or two anyway they could. Though walking the roads that wandered through native towns was a diversion from ship-board life, it lost its novelty quickly.

The months in the Pacific passed very slowly and are quite blurred to me now. I read every book I could find...and played cribbage almost every evening. I had taken up pipe smoking a year or so previously. I longed for news from home and wrote a lot of letters, being deeply disturbed to learn of the estrangement (which turned out to be temporary) of mother and father. One highlight was a letter from Northwestern University advising that I had been admitted based on my test results. Whether to take this diversion from my "life's plan" was still a question to me.

Less than half our time while in the Pacific was at sea; the rest at anchor or, much less often, alongside a dock. While at anchor we occasionally swam...climbing down the boarding ladder, jumping in, and swimming well away from the scuppers that discharged waste. Occasionally the braver crew angled a boom over the side, swing from a line tied to its end, and made a twenty-foot plunge into the clear blue water.

We invented a lot of other things to occupy ourselves. One of the engineers and one of the mates joined me in the design of a small boat. The frame was built from dunnage lumber - a very low-grade lumber used for packing cargo. The frame itself wasn't intended to be leak-proof until we smeared it with white lead, a putty-like paste used for rustproofing, then covered it with heavy canvas. The result was a heavy but watertight and serviceable 20' boat. We painted it blue and then went to work on the engine and drive. At army bases it was quite easy to pick up small gasoline-driven pumps using a very simple "Wisconsin" engine - easily de-coupled from the pump itself. Considering its meager horsepower rating, we figured one was marginal but two quite sufficient for our skiff.

We mounted the two engines in tandem on a frame of angle iron. In the ship's machine shop, the engineer built a coupler to mechanically join the two engines which, in series, drove a shaft long enough to go through a bushing near the stern and drive a two-blade propeller - both also homemade. It was launched with great ceremony to the envy of those not involved.

That boat, without a name, served us well for at least six months, between ports being hauled aboard and lashed to the deck. I enjoyed taking it to small uninhabited islands near our anchorages. On one occasion, taking it by myself, I beached it at high tide on a small atoll, anticipating a return in the evening when the tide was up again. The islet was joined

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<sup>4</sup> The final stage was connected in a scheme called "push-pull." By reconnecting the stage to "push-push" and tapping the output coil, it was simple to double the frequency.

to another by a small isthmus containing dozens of tidal pools that trapped fish as the tide went out. I remember that trip vividly, not just for the unspoiled beauty of the island but also because of the trip home in the twilight. Halfway back to the ship the aft engine quit, leaving the forward engine with the dual responsibility of running the boat and driving the disabled aft engine, the latter acting as a compressor...a contingency our design had not anticipated. The torque this duty assigned to the forward engine was too much for the coupler, which began to squeal as it slipped. I shut the forward engine down to assess the problem, meanwhile slowly drifting through the channel out to open sea. We kept a box of tools on the boat - by then well rusted. I remember being stooped over, trying to jam a rusty allen wrench into the setscrew in the coupler connecting the two engines. It took forever...and though I'd never had a problem with seasickness, the combination of the skiff's pitching and my upside-down posture almost did it. Before trying to start the forward engine, I reduced the aft engine's burden by removing its spark plug. The coupler now tightened, the front engine started on the second or third spin with starting rope. Not wanting to risk a repeat, I ran the engine just fast enough to gain on the current, arriving alongside the ship at dusk. Though no one had seen my dilemma, I suppose one of the ship's boats would eventually have been launched in search.

About twilight each night, an hour or so after dinner, the galley crew dumped the ship's garbage over the stern. The local shark population learned the schedule well and wasted no time attacking their evening meal. Anticipating that it would be good fun to harpoon one of those sharks from our skiff, we made a fierce-looking barbed harpoon in the machine shop and launched our boat to await the food drop. Approaching the melee under full throttle, we cut the engine to drift into the pack. The bos'n, a burly guy with the physique of a weightlifter threw the harpoon and scored on the first try. The fight was a short one. Our prey was then hoisted aboard with the thought that we'd clean it in the morning. But by morning the smell was bad enough that it got tossed back as fodder for its relatives.

Months later, half-way back to the US, we set our hand-made boat adrift. Anticipating the speculation what would go along with its discovery, we loaded it with bones from the galley in the hope they'd dry out and add to the initial reaction of the discoverer.

With Christmas was approaching I asked the steward what he was planning. He hadn't thought much about it, but my question challenged him to negotiate with navy vessels in the same harbor for fixings...winding up with turkey, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes and fresh apples for apple pie. I drew up a special menu, had all the crew sign it, then ran it off on the ditto machine (a precursor to today's copiers). The officers' mess was decorated with whatever we could find to look like Christmas. I doubt any ship in the Pacific did the holiday more justice. Somewhere I've still a copy of that program.

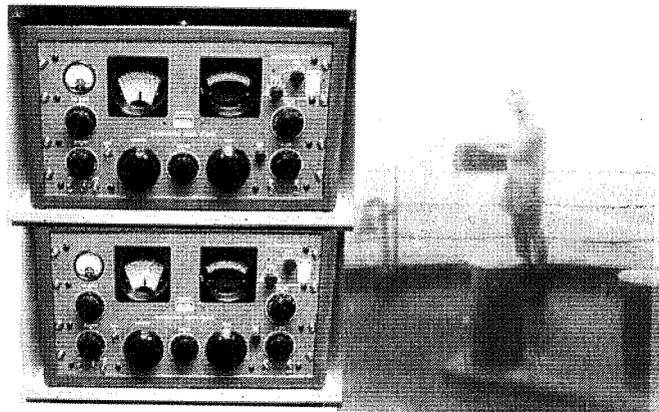
Those islands must have been a fisherman's paradise, yet with one exception, I don't recall anyone fishing. The exception? While at anchor we left a spotlight shining down on the ships ladder so returning boats could see their way to re-board. Seeing that fish were attracted to the light, I once descended the ladder and sat on one of the bottom rungs with my feet propped against the hull to try catching one. The second engineer, a Norwegian, stayed on deck and lowered a line onto which was fastened a barbed hook he'd made in the engine room, baited with a piece of meat. I no sooner dropped the hook into the midst of the fish than I had a strike. We kept up that process, catching enough to feed the crew a seafood dinner...learning, in the process, that the bait was superfluous.

When the weather was pleasant it was common for those not on watch to congregate for a while on deck after dinner. One evening we saw a rat climb out of the mast-head locker and make his way foreward across the top of the boom to the boom support, still further from where we sat. It was a curious enough sight in itself, but even more so when repeated at the same hour the following night...and again the third. We presumed the rat had a lover at one end of the boom or another. After three nights of trysts, we decided he'd had enough. Before dinner we greased a two-foot section in the middle of the boom, placing an open and empty fifty-five-gallon drum under the greased section to complete our trap. On the fourth night the rat appeared as usual and began his trip across the boom. His confidence if not his resolve weakened when he reached the greased section. After he'd made a few very tentative steps, we pounded on the boom with a heavy shackle. He panicked and, as expected, fell into the barrel, becoming fish-food immediately thereafter.

The joy was universal when the MS Reeving Eye at last weighed anchor for San Francisco. The dozen or so movies we had aboard, had already been viewed as many times. So, on the return trip we made a great ceremony of leaving off the take-up reel and feeding the spent film right out the port hole and into the deep.

Merchant ships were not set up to accommodate serious injuries or illnesses and by then I'd learned not to volunteer to take responsibility for first aid. Yet I got close to doing so on our return voyage just by being radio operator. About as far from civilization as we were to get during that long trip, a "wiper" from the engine crew complained of terrible pains in his stomach. He could no longer stand up. I put out a general call for medical assistance which was answered by a destroyer some three days sail east of us. The doctor aboard recognized the symptoms as a ruptured appendix and said we'd have to operate to save the man's life. Fortunately, another crewman had once been an army medic and was willing to give it a try. I took on the task of relaying to the galley, which was to serve as our operating room, step-by-step instructions on where to draw chalk lines to locate the best point of incision. The closest we had to surgical tools were galley knives, carefully sterilized before the operation began. There was no anesthesia aboard. The patient/victim survived... though the doctor who boarded once we reached the destroyer was amazed that he had, considering the clumsiness of the work.

As we passed Hawaii on our return voyage, my concern was how I was to get my Hammerlund Super-Pro through customs. The conventional process was quite simple. In those days the radio installations aboard merchant ships were franchised either by RCA or Mackay Radio. When a ship returned to a US port after a prolonged trip, the licensor's agent came aboard to service the equipment. They were often



cooperative in transporting through customs, on their trucks assorted treasures brought back by the radio operator. Not having ever tried that, I remained in radio contact with another ship whose operator was in the same situation as I, but who was a week closer to the US. He radioed me from a dock in San Diego, alarmed that he was in deep trouble

with customs for being in possession of a far lesser trophy than mine. Sad, but cautions, I threw my prize receiver overboard just one day's travel out of San Francisco. When we docked there the Mackay agent came aboard to service our equipment and asked if I had anything I'd like him to take into the city in his truck.

One of the ship's engineers lived in San Francisco and insisted I come to his apartment for dinner. He was from Norway having been rescued from a Norwegian ship sunk early in the war. He was also married to a girl from San Francisco and, I later learned, to one in Norway as well. Their San Francisco apartment was quite modest, and his wife was delighted to have one of his shipmates visit. After a bottle of beer, we went to the table, confronted by a large bowl of spaghetti. I hated the sight of spaghetti, having never been able to choke it down. Too shy to refuse it, I suffered through her generous serving and complimented her on the taste, after which she insisted on refilling my plate.

It would have been logical to get back to the east coast by signing on a ship heading through the Panama Canal. But such jobs were rare, so I boarded the train for Chicago and another reunion with the family and fulfillment of my pledge to Walter - registry for the winter semester at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, just five miles from Winnetka and my roots.

I look back on that long voyage and my diary entries, recognizing that the above anecdotes, while fond memories, were just a part of that year's story. I spent a lot of time reflecting on life, depressed at times, but overwhelmed by the miracle it represented. It wasn't easy for me to share my feelings. The closest I got to that was in discussions with the ship's carpenter. A middle-aged bachelor, he had a master's degree from a major eastern university, had already published his first book, and had chosen a life at sea to give himself the isolation and time to continue his writing, some of which he shared with me.

### **S.S. Byron D. Benson 6/16/47- 7/12/47**

Best that I address college days separately so will continue my merchant marine log, aided in dates by entries on my license and what I remember. Suffice to say that I'd done my best at the six courses I took in the fall semester of 1946...well enough to encourage me to stay two semesters rather the one I'd agreed with Walter to take. With the spring term of 1947 finished, I got a train to New York and signed on the SS Byron D. Benson, a freighter bound for Le Havre, France... back on my career path but, fresh from a stimulating and successful stint at college, now uncertain about that path. That uncertainty lasted just two voyages.

The captain of S.S. Byron D. Benson was a tall, redheaded, gregarious man. Ours was his second or third trip to Le Havre. But this trip was special for him since he took aboard his wife and eight-year-old son...a privilege periodically granted to ship's captains prior to the war and recently re-instated. The boy soon made friends with the whole crew and took pride working with deck crew chipping rusted portions of the deck. I got along well with his father and agreed to make the trip to Paris with him and his family once the ship was tied up and cargo discharge underway. The complication, I learned from the crew, lay in the fact that he was well known by the ladies who plied their trade opposite

waterfront exit in Le Havre and was in danger of being recognized and hailed by one of them.

Once docked, we walked the gauntlet late in the afternoon ...without embarrassment since those ladies-of-the-trade that were there either didn't know the captain or, more likely, had the good taste to ignore him, accompanied as he was by his wife and son.

We stayed at the same hotel in Paris but went our separate ways once in the city...with one exception. He had booked reservations at the Lido, a well-known dinner club that offered an elaborate after dinner show...topless of course. After dinner, as the show started, the eight-year old was intrigued, got up from the table and, before his father could intervene, walked up to a pillar close to the action and watched the show from there with considerable interest. I secretly envied him.

After returning to Le Havre in good time, we departed for Barry Docks in Wales, England. For some reason I declined invitations to go to London and instead spent day after day walking through the beautiful Welsh countryside, occasionally chatting with folks along the way.

Somewhere at the bottom of the North Atlantic, a surprised diver will one day come across an upright piano. Its origins were at Barry Docks, or rather in a pub nearby. I made a trip there one night with some of the crew and, it being the last day before sailing, had my share of ale. While imbibing we wondered why the Pub had two pianos. The bartender explained why, then announced the second one was for sale and suggested we buy it. The price was absurdly low in US dollars. Furthermore, he offered to deliver it to the ship with his lorry. With our minds well fogged by drink, it seemed like a great idea so paid him, helped him load it, and accompanied him down to the dock at what must have been about 1:00 am in the morning the night before we were scheduled to sail. The boom still being rigged, we started the winch and hauled the instrument up onto the deck, postponing a decision of where to put it until the next morning.

The whole undertaking seemed a lot less reasonable the next day as we prepared to leave for the return crossing. There was obviously no place aboard for the piano, it would not fit through the doors to the midship's house and the captain was not very pleased to have it aboard. Thus, we left it on the deck, securely lashed to the mast head locker and protected from the elements by nothing more than a dirty tarpaulin.

It was not a total waste since one of the engineers could play the piano, I had a mandolin, one of the mates played trumpet, and another the accordion. The first evening at sea we had an impromptu recital, attended by most of the crew not then on watch. The piano worked fine but was missing strings for one note. Those evening recitals became a daily ritual until we hit some bad weather and skipped a day or two. The rain wasn't kind to our instrument. There were now four or five non-responding keys and the veneer was peeling off. Its inner workings failed further each day, note by note.

Not excited at the idea of arriving in New York with a Piano lashed to the deck, the captain pronounced its death sentence. The boom that brought it aboard, swung the piano out over the starboard side and with a final dissonant scream as it hit the water, it went down to the bottom.

Arriving in New York, I phoned Phil Bengston. To justify my inclusion of following adventure in this chapter, I can only observe that this anecdote was (a) on water, (b) involved a boat (if only a canoe) and (d) fits the narrative chronologically. Jim Hagan and Phil Bengston were planning a canoe trip into Canada and asked me to join them. I accepted, returned home, and met them for the bus trip to Ely, Minnesota. Canoe Country Outfitters (still in business as of 2018) offered a ten-day plan which included two canoes, tents, fishing gear, charts, and food... the latter accompanied by daily menus. We arrived, equipped principally with summer outdoor clothes and were driven, with our canoe, to the boundary waters entry point. Paddling across the Canadian border into the Ontario wilderness area, we pulled onto a clear stretch of shore suitable for setting up the tent for our first night. The packs were in remarkable order... food for the first night's dinner right on top where it belonged. We were in paradise! The days went by quickly as paddled farther and farther North, not encountering a sole, unless you count deer and an occasional bear. Phil and Jim went fishing late each day to augment our rations. I had no interest in fishing but had with me a war souvenir in the form of a German Luger pistol. While the canoe was gone for the evening's fish catch, I stood in shallow water of the near-by stream, waiting for fish to swim by. I understood parallax very well, so my percent of hits was high. I was usually able to match whatever catch came back from the legitimate fishing effort.

As we got stronger and more efficient at paddling, we covered more miles each day, deciding then to allow six days outward bound leaving just four for returning. Our estimates were remarkably close since we showed up at the pick-up point only an hour before the truck arrived to meet us... tan, exhausted, and at least for my own part, deeply in love with the wilderness.

The three of us made another such trip some time later, equally satisfying and refreshing. I remember very little of it other than that, at the most remote point we'd reached, enjoying the ultimate in isolation and privacy, a float plane landed, and its occupants set up an elaborate camp just across the lake from us.

I know that we planned a third trip but recall I had to cancel out at the last minute. Jim and Phil asked a mutual friend of ours, David Keeling, to take my place. He did, I later set him up for a meeting with Louise, they were married, and he went on to discover global warming, the basis for which is still called "The Keeling Curve."

### **M.S. Faralon 8-27-47 – 9/16/47**

Back in New York I returned to the Sloan House on 34<sup>th</sup> street and spent several days before signing on the MS Faralon, a tanker bound for South America. The first night in

New York I worked up my courage to attend a YMCA dance posted on the bulletin board, taking a chair at one end of gymnasium to work up my nerve to cross the gym to ask a girl to dance. It wasn't five minutes before a slender young lady, seeing me sit there alone, came over and asked me if I wanted to dance. I agreed and, for the first time in my life held a girl (other than a dance instructor), in my arms and danced. She was very pretty and drew me out in conversation. We danced the second dance, talked at length, and spent the entire evening together. Her name was Winnifred Sullivan. She lived in Yonkers and worked at the Institute for International Education in Manhattan. I recall walking her to the subway, hand in hand, and asking if I could see her again. She said she'd like that and gave me her phone number and I walked back to the Y a foot above the sidewalk... in love. We had dinner the night before I boarded the Faralon, this time kissing me goodnight before boarding her train for Yonkers.

I relived those hours every wakeful minute on the voyage from New Jersey, where the Faralon was anchored, to Caripito, Venezuela. An hour after arriving and anchoring for the night, a launch brought a mail delivery... but nothing from Winnie. As we left to travel further up the river, a pilot now aboard, I was convinced my love affair was too good to be true.

The pilot and guided us along the tortuous river path for an hour before we saw a crude dock by the river's bank. The pilot passed it, cut speed, eased the bow directly into the jungle on our port side, put the engines into reverse, and backed out upstream...a maneuver that would be impossible once our cargo of crude oil was loaded. We tied up to a dock big enough to take just one tanker at a time and were promptly connected to pipes that disappeared into the jungle, from which diesel-driven pumps brought us the oil we'd come for.

A dozen enterprising children were waiting for us as the ship tied up, each with a horse or two in tow. I joined some of the crew who went ashore to see what the deal was. It was simple: You paid \$5 to rent a horse to take you to and from a very small town inland from the docking area. I selected a sturdy looking animal and, with the owner on another, set out on a narrow dirt road through the tropical jungle. Some forty-five minutes later, we came to "town" ...consisting of no more than a large thatch-covered bar and dance hall surrounded by a dozen thatched huts. "Town", it seemed, was also action central for a number of hostesses, disbursed around the bar area. Their exact purpose escaped me until my second beer and the realization that some of the crew had disappeared. The Lord's Prayer asks that a man not be led into temptation but says nothing about what he's to do when confronted by it. I succumbed and asked a particularly sweet girl to dance. After the dance she took my hand and led me to a hut. I paid her two or three times what she asked. The ride back seemed very long. She cried and hugged me before I got on the horse to leave. I can remember her face.

The ship fully loaded, we headed downstream to the deep anchorage at the river's mouth where the boat sent out to take the pilot ashore also brought mail...including one from Winnie which I savored for a while before opening. The envelope, from Yonkers, was light blue and surrounding the return address were drawn some inverted W's made to look like

seagulls soaring in flight. The letter was partly a recitation of events of the past week, but also made clear that I was missed and that she longed to see me again. The return trip seemed to take forever.

Arriving in New York, I signed off, returned to the Sloane House and called Winnie. I agreed to pick her up in Yonkers after first meeting her family. The address, 136 Sanford Avenue, still stays in my mind. Winnie answered the door to the apartment, a modest four-room affair on the third floor. Had I heeded the advice I later gave to my sons, it would have been the last visit there. Rule 1: *Meet her mother...that's what you'll have after twenty years.* She was disheveled and rather ugly. Rule 2: *You fall in love with a girl, but you marry her family.* Her father was a maintenance foreman for the New York Subway system which is about where his intellect stopped. Yet love is blind and, having met the parents and her older brother who was no Einstein either, we went out and had a lovely evening and stroll through Central Park. That we were in love became very clear.

I saw Winnie several times again before leaving for Chicago and another term at Northwestern...this time with the intent to graduate, but without enough money to do so.

### **S.S. Steelmaker 9/11/48 – 9/22/48**

The Steelmaker was, as one might expect, owned by US Steel and was scheduled to leave from New York for Montreal on a “dead-head,” i.e. a trip without cargo. Because the trip was along the east coast, the regular captain was replaced by a pilot familiar with the coast, its lighthouses and its shoals. All was well the first few hours as we steamed up the coast, approaching Cuttyhunk Island in Massachusetts. It was at that point, in the dark, that the pilot, an ex-sea captain on his last trip as a pilot, mistook the Cuttyhunk light for another light, turned the wrong way, and ran the unloaded 300-foot Steel Maker right up onto a beach. It was exactly high tide. The ship was undamaged by the sand bottom but was clearly aground and unable to move. The next morning, with the tide out, one could have gone over the side and walked to shore.

It was obviously big news in the town. We waved to the the children, bussed to the beach from School to look, amazed, at the grounded ship. Later the same day, at high tide, two tugboats arrived and successfully pulled the ship back into deep water. Not being sure as to whether the hull was damaged, the captain, having relieved the pilot, took the ship back to New York where the crew signed off.

### **SS. African Pilot 10/4/48 – 12/17/48**

After the ill-fated Steelmaker trip, I signed onto one of the Farrell Line's ship just returned from West Africa. It was quite modern and loaded a mixed cargo in New York before again sailing for Monrovia, Liberia...a city that struck me as something out of Gilbert and Sullivan. Despite the lack of cars on its dingy streets, most corners played host to a traffic

policeman with a navy-blue uniform and bright red spats. Traffic or not, he stepped off his podium and directed each car through the interconnection as it arrived.

We'd no sooner docked than the postmistress of Liberia came aboard to sell stamps. Anxious to write home and send some photos, I bought a dozen, afterwards realizing there was very little glue on their backs. The letters I wrote were never received; their stamps doubtless again steamed off to sell aboard another ship.

A few hours after discharging some cargo and closing the hatches, about twenty black "crew boys" came aboard, each with his own duffle bag. They set up camp on deck and stayed there as we pulled out for the next port down the coast. The African Pilot then anchored off a relatively small town without a dock big enough for a merchant ship. A dozen small boats left shore to meet the ship using paddles with bottoms carved to look like duck feet. It then became clear that the crew-boys we'd taken aboard were there to lower cargo into the canoes for transport to shore. It also became apparent from the fighting, some of which drew blood, that the crews of these boats were paid by the load...thus arguments as to who was next.

Several of the holds on the Farallon had been previously spray-coated in preparation to carry raw latex, the basis for natural rubber. Having off-loaded the crew boys, we entered a small harbor, part of a Firestone plantation, built solely for export of latex. I went ashore with one of the ships officers to meet a representative of the plantation who then aroused a sleeping watchman and ushered us onto a small launch for an hour's trip up the river bordering the plantation while lecturing us on the process of latex production.

A small dirt road led up a hill along the water's edge to a dingy bar - a half hour's walk from the ship and a watering hole popular to crews in the very hot weather. I made the trip one afternoon several hours before we were to leave, downed more beers than I should have, and was shocked into reality by blasts on the ship's foghorn. I ran the half mile during the peak of the day's heat, beer sloshing in my stomach, arriving just in time to board but sick beyond belief.

We stopped at one other port... this time to fill one hold with thirty-foot mahogany logs, each two or three feet in diameter. One or two days at sea on our way back to the US, the weather being fair, the captain ordered routine fumigating the hatches to rid us of any bugs or rodent souvenirs from Africa. A day later the hatches were opened. In one was a dead stow-away. His was the only burial I witnessed at sea. Stitched into a canvas bag and loaded with weights, he was thrown over the side after the captain's brief and awkward prayer.

The mahogany logs had been chained down to prevent their shifting in a heavy sea...chained carelessly, it turns out. The first thump came as we sat at breakfast in a rough sea. It wasn't loud but noises aboard ship are so familiar that the least variation stops conversation. With each toss of the vessel we waited for another noise. It came again several roles later - no louder but clearly not a normal ships noise. It was preceded by a deep rumble. After a puzzled silence the first mate bolted up from his chair, announced "The

timber's loose!" and hurried off to get the bos'n to investigate. Both the thumps and the preceding rumble got louder and could now be felt through the ship's steel hull. The seas were not likely to get better. A check showed the cargo in the forward hatch was secure. The problem was in the number two hold, just forward of the midship's house. The captain waited for several hours, hoping the logs would lock. By now an access door had been opened making the problem quite visible. The mammoth logs, stacked so neatly at the time of departure, now looked like a game of "pick-up-sticks." By noon concern mounted, speed was reduced, and the course altered to minimize the roll. When rolling to starboard, outward pointing dents were visible in the port side plates. The Bos'n had gone partway down the hold's access ladder to assess the problem and rig lights for a possible fix. The risky maneuver started early in the afternoon.

Chains and heavy docking lines were brought from the foc'sle and a few of them fed down into the access hatch. The bos'n, a burly and fearless giant of a man, waited in the dimly lit hold for a pause in the log movement. He found one, dashed to one side of the hold, log hoping like a lumber jack, and secured a line to a cleat on the outer bulkhead. He got back to safety just before the next movement. During another pause he lashed another log and again ran for safety. Flushed with success, he repeated the trick with one log after another, sometimes just tying two of them together. In an hour the hold looked like a spider web. Logs were tied to cleats, to posts, and to one another. Original chains, still secured on one end, were shackled to other chains. Speed and course were resumed, and the remainder of the voyage passed without event. Only when the hatch was opened for unloading in Boston was the extent of the damage evident. A half-dozen rivets that secured the side plates to the deck were missing or popped out of place. It took as long to untangle the web of logs, chain and rope as it did to unload the entire cargo.

I proposed to Winnie Sullivan two days after signing off the African Pilot in New York. It was on a park bench, an hour's train ride North of the city, and followed by the apology, "You'll never be rich!" She said yes and two weeks later the announcement appeared in the "Winnetka Talk," our weekly news magazine at home. I wish I'd kept the picture. I hardly knew her.

### **SS Strathcape 6/23/49 – 8/1/49**

I remember very little of the Strathcape voyage, though it was again to Europe. I do remember what preceded it. On arriving in New York, I met with Winnie who made clear that our engagement was all off...that she was going to live in the city, period. I remember being with another Northwestern student, Wes Franco, at that time and, being completely devastated by the pronouncement, getting blind drunk while out with him, then staggering into a subway station, passing out there, and waking up in a New York hospital. Thus, my condition in signing on to the Strathcape was not the best. If I were to guess, I suspect the Strathcape again went to France. It returned to Newport News, Va., near Norfolk.

By that time ships had short-range ship-to-shore telephony equipment. I recall the incongruity of a sweet voice calling and re-calling a specific ship announcing the termination of each such call with a pause...then "Norfolk Off."

### **M.S. Alexandra 8/7/49 – 9/16/49**

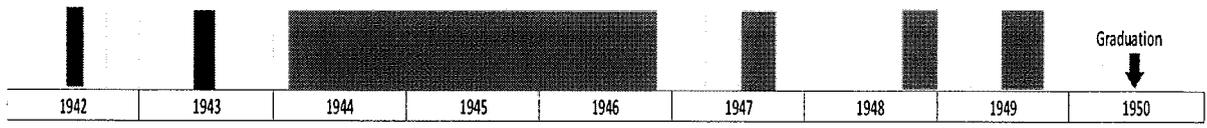
The Moran Towing Company dominated the tugboat scene on the east coast, also having a fleet of sea-going tugs, one of which was the motor-ship Alexandra. I took that assignment, sailing from Philadelphia, partly because it was common knowledge that tugs offered incredibly good food to offset the cramped quarters and the rough ride associated with a very short hull...a disadvantage which I would later verify. The voyage was to be to England; the purpose to retrieve and return to the U.S. a large dry-dock supplied to England as part of WWII's lend-lease program.

The crossing was uncommonly rough. At one point the tug rose on a huge wave, dipped into another to the point where water poured into the bridge and the adjacent radio room. Alarmed at being that close to "Davey Jones Locker" (place where dead seamen go), I set out to clear the saltwater off the floor and to wipe down wet equipment ...most importantly the lead-acid batteries on which the radio depended. Fortunately, they were sealed well enough to withstand their salt-water bath. Fortunate too that we had no further flooding.

We were a very short time in Gosport, England securing a cable onto dry dock for its return trip to the US. A dry dock, being big enough to house an entire ship, is a very large and heavy and awkward assembly...certainly not designed for forward motion. Thus, it presents a very heavy pulling load to the tug and the long and stout pulling cable. That cable is wrapped around a drum aboard the tug, the drum designed to take in and pay out cable rapidly to equalize the tension on the cable ...in much the same fashion as a fisherman would pay out and take in line trying to land a fish very heavy compared to the strength of that line.

It was all a very noisy business, particularly in the high seas we encountered off Newfoundland's Grand Banks. One night the constant whining of the tow winch gave way to a high-pitched squeal, followed by silence. We had lost the dry dock. There being no possible way to retrieve and secure it at sea, we returned the Strathcape to New York, unburdened with anything in tow.

I signed off the Alexandra in mid-September of 1991, walking ashore in the unhappy knowledge that it was the last merchant ship I'd set foot on. The voyages and dates set forth above, plotted graphically below, suggest that my first taste of college was a positive one. I stayed two semesters rather than the one I'd bargained for. That I returned to college again so soon, further suggests that I liked it enough to make my career ashore but help pay for tuition by further assignments.





## 7. College Days

Northwestern's Evanston campus lay principally between Sheridan Road, a major artery leading on to the North Shore's well-healed suburbs of Wilmette, Kenilworth, and Winnetka, and the north shore of Lake Michigan. In 1945 a dozen plain red brick student housing units occupied much of the northern edge of that campus, just beyond Northwestern's engineering school. All but two of those "quads" were fraternity houses. Lindgren House, my home for the duration of Northwestern life, was one of those exceptions...just a dormitory. My brother Walter, already a senior and a resident, helped me get settled in for what was to be a trial stint – an adventure shrouded with serious doubts and an interruption to my "life plan" which up to then would have me in the Merchant Marine until the age of forty or so.

I initially registered for English, math, German and to my recollection, two other courses for the first quarter. Freshmen were required to take English, the latter dwelling on sentence structure, a subject I found extraordinarily boring and pedantic. But since all subsequent English requirements could be waived for students getting an A the first term, I worked hard to earn that mark, got an A-, and went on to Physics and Philosophy the second term. Philosophy, largely focused on ethics and taught by Paul Arthur Schilp, was among the most enjoyable courses I took at Northwestern. Despite a grossly disproportionate effort on it, I got a C as a grade...the lowest of my college career.

I already know some German, both from high school days and from dialogs with German prisoners, housed in camps surrounded by high barbed wire fences adjacent to the docks in LaRoche France. According to those prisoners they were fed just a half-liter of soup per day, so a sandwich or two easily paid for an hour's lesson. I eventually took three German courses at Northwestern, at least two from an elderly professor who, in nice weather, moved his class outdoors to work on poems that matched the setting he found for us.

I had no social life during most of my time at Northwestern, spending what spare time I had either at the Library or visiting my parents in their small third-floor flat in Winnetka, just a thirty-minute bike ride from college.

My roommate at "Lindgren House" during my initial two-quarter trial registration was Bill Lloyd, a pacific veteran who told fascinating tales of Japan's initial occupation. To him and to others in the house, I made a point (with some hidden pride) of being at Northwestern for just a short time just to fulfil a promise to my brother.

Having finished my two-semester obligation, it was refreshing to get back at sea and the ship-board routine, the throb of the engines, and the smell of salt-laden air. But when the mail, delivered while in Venezuela as I recall, brought me a report card with surprisingly high grades, it forced me to re-think my dedication to a life at sea. I returned to Northwestern signed off...this time with the intent to try a longer registration.... the full

1947-48 academic year. Then, to replenish my savings account, I went back to sea, skipped the fall term and returned for the winter and spring semesters of 1948-49. I went back to sea for the last time during the summer of 1949, returning for the remainder of 1949 after which I graduated with the class of 1950.

I made some good friends at Lindgren House. Frank Cormier, who overlapped Walter's stay there and mine, was a journalist and ultimately became the chief white house correspondent for Associated Press. He had a profound influence on my life, as I will recount later in this narrative.

Most of my spare time at Northwestern was spent in the somber quiet of Deering Library which I came to believe held all the knowledge of the universe and where I was able to focus intently on my studies. I was remembered in that setting by one girl who I had twice asked to stop talking. She was the girl I would one day marry.

There were some forays into the social world too. The Lindgren House crew made regular trips to "The Little Club," a beer joint west of Evanston's "dry" boundaries, where the ceiling was covered with beer bottle labels. The trick in getting them there: remove a label off without tearing it and, while the glue is still wet, throw it up to the ceiling on top of your wallet, a mitten, or any other carrier, hitting the ceiling flat enough to cause the label to stick and the carrier to return. A jukebox and small dance floor were important to a later episode in this writing.

I have cited my education in dance during my Merchant Marine career...achieved by multiple "free introductory" lessons from each of a few dance studios in New York. In a moment of high courage, I took the train from Evanston to the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago to re-test my skills. Admission was cheap, the music not too bad - the women clustered on one side of the room, men in another. Summoning my courage, I would ask a girl to dance, the "ask" much easier if I was lucky enough to see the same girl on a second visit. One particularly buxom brunette, whose name I've long forgotten, asked me to her home where she lived with both parents on Chicago's South side. Matrimony could not have been further from my mind, but it became apparent it was central to hers. Her parents were Polish and, judging from abundance of wall-mounted crucifixes, devout Catholics. My date and I were left in a section of the living room separated by a curtain from the rest of the apartment. My intent, somewhat less than honorable, got me nowhere. Her focus was in having me understand which pieces of furniture in the living room were hers and the richness of her hope chest next to the opposite wall. I was sure her parents were listening on the other side of the curtain. That stopped my visit to the Aragon out of fear of being spotted again by her.

There was a girl with a nice Norwegian name (Feltskog) in my German class.... easy to talk to but not to look at. Her teeth were mixed up and she talked with a lisp. I took her out just once. I was later talked into going to a dinner dance in Chicago with a date from one of the sororities and remember very little of that date other than the fact that she was very conceited and out of my class.

The amateur radio license I got while in high school was still valid, with the call letters W9PBC. I'd operated (illegally) with those call letters while working on merchant ships by jury rigging the ship's radio, but never had my own station. So, I set one up a small transmitter at Lindgren House using a primitive antenna strung from our window to the next dormitory, identifying myself as W9 "Poor Boy at College."

Our dormitory windows served more than their intended purpose. Our room was on the third floor, exactly above the house "father," a graduate student delegated to keep us in line. If Evanston was dry, our overseer was completely arid. A born-again Christian, he was always on the prowl for contraband liquor...a mission hard enough with normal students, but harder yet with a house full of veterans. On one occasion we collected a half dozen empty gin and whiskey bottles, filled them with water, recorked them, and while he was absent, lowered each one onto his window sill with a string secured to the neck of the bottle with a loop. The loop was held tight by a pencil tied to another string which, when pulled, freed up both strings for use on the next bottle. Once all were in place, an anonymous call to the campus police set the excitement in motion.

A community bathroom lay at the end of our hall housed a few shower stalls, some urinals, sinks, and three toilets. Because the water in one toilet kept running, that toilet door sported an out-of-order sign. "Out of order," to those in the dorm, meant there was beer cooling in the constantly-running toilet tank.

Lindgren House was out of the loop when it came to organized social involvement or inter-fraternity activities...with one notable exception. Students make quite a fuss at homecoming games including a parade with float competitions and imaginative decoration of buildings. One year some of us determined to do something special as a house decoration. It was in the days when the cartoon, "lil Abner" was popular. One of the personalities in that cartoon was "The Evil Eye," a not-so-savory gentleman who could "zap" an adversary by casting his bloodshot eye on him. We built an oversized mock-up of this character's head and mounted on Lindgren House's exterior wall. A series of lights went from his eye, diagonally down the side of the house to a lil Abner victim, replicated near the ground. The lights flashed in sequence, giving the appearance of a lethal ray emanating from the eye. The scream from the ray's victim was terrifying. We took a first... all from the window I shared with my roommate.

Mathematics courses fascinated me, and I did very well with them until I got to a course in nonlinear differential equations. It was taught by Professor James, a pedantic fossil of a professor who saw mathematics as a world self-sufficient unto itself. I needed to see mathematics in relationship to a physical reality. My physics professor saved me from a disaster grade, but my outspoken criticism of the presentation won me the disdain of that professor. My revenge came later, in my senior year. In mathematics, as in most fields, there is an honorary society for students who excel. In mathematics it's Pi Mu Epsilon. My surprise at opening a letter from that society announcing my election was exceeded only by the surprise of Professor James, then sponsor of the society, when he saw me come forward for my pin.

From the beginning Physics was my first love, the one subject I had excelled in while at high school. Earlier college courses in classical physics led me to a course in nuclear physics, a burgeoning after our success with the atomic bomb and the new prospect of commercial nuclear power. But I had no taste for anything related to the military. A course in "Transmission of Power," caught my eye. It dealt with everything from microwaves to 60 Hz power transmission lines – all with the same basic equation sets and taught by Edward Kimbark, a remarkable man, already in his second or third career. I would come to know him professionally in later years. That course got me interested in electric power as a career. Not only were the physics fascinating, but to a very idealistic young man, it had the appeal of being helpful to mankind. There was no demand for physics majors there...just engineers. The engineering program at Northwestern was a five-year cooperative undertaking, meaning students had to take a one-year assignment in industry before returning for their senior year. Having already run out of money, the alternative was to load up on engineering courses while continuing towards a four-year degree in physics. This called for some heroic action.

Many engineering courses came in two parts, I. and II. Seeing my money running out, I learned that one could apply for an exception, and simply take part two. My theory: one could stay afloat in part two, if one scrambled a bit to pick up what was taught in part one. It worked for an electrical machinery course, so I did the same for several others. I also found I could borrow money from the University to keep me going for the last few quarters. To minimize that debt, I worked in the Lund Hall Cafeteria serving breakfast and lunch. Things got to the point financially where a heavy lunch, coupled with dinner comprised of a can of soup (warmed up under the hot water faucet in the dormitory) would sustain me.

One Friday night in my senior year, Frank Cormier, a close friend of mine who would one day be chief white house correspondent for Associated Press, broke into my room while I was buried in study, took me by the shoulder and said, "Come on...we're going out." Only after we were half way to the "Little Club" did he announce that I had a blind date. That date was to have been Ruth (Windy) Milner, but through a mix-up in introductions, I wound up with Jeanne Fretz who I recognized as the girl I'd repeatedly hushed up in the library.

We danced. She was so easy to talk to and we seemed to find a lot to say to one another. She had graduated the prior year, was teaching speech courses in a local high school, and lived with Windy Milner at The Oakcrest, an apartment building in Evanston.

She was such good company, I wanted to see her again. I did, and as the weeks turned into months we became inseparable. She had just given walking papers to her long time fiancée, Paul Ditzel, a journalism student who was also a fire-fighting freak. On the way to dates, she was often escorted to the scene of four-alarms to which Paul was alerted by his shortwave radio.

We went to dances together and I went regularly to football games for the first time. She had nice friends. She was also from a very high-class family, her father being

superintendent of Schools in Bradford, a small town in northwest Pennsylvania. I'd never met either of her parents but did get well acquainted with her 1948 Oldsmobile "76," given to her as a graduation present. She called it "Daisy." I had still had no car.

I had borrowed about \$2,000 from the University to see me through graduation. Shortly before that event I was, to my astonishment, admitted to Phi Beta Kappa. I also had to confront the question of what I'd do for a living. Jobs were not plentiful and looking for an engineering job with a Physics degree didn't help me. From several dozen applications, I got two offers. One was as a statistical quality control engineer for Inland Steel Co., in Gary Indiana. I'd taken a course in that and had exaggerated my expertise in my resume. Another was as a trainee for an electric power company...Public Service Company of Indiana, in Indianapolis.

The interview for the latter, requiring a bus trip to Indianapolis, impressed me. All candidates were taken to see the time trials for the Indianapolis 500 race. The company, never having hired trainees, was hiring a dozen. The pay was much lower than my engineering degreed friends were boasting, but it was a job and, having just two options to choose between, I took it.

To get me to Indianapolis and (I supposed) back to see Jeanne, I bought a pre-war Buick for \$75 which was worth just about that much. Its front ball joints were worn to the point that the front wheel leaned in at a ten-degree angle. Seven cylinders fired normally...one reluctantly. I bought oil by the case. It couldn't have consumed more if it were a diesel.

Graduation day came. My whole family was there. Jeanne too. I went through the liberal arts graduation line as proud as a peacock, anticipating the smile of approval my mother would give me when she saw the degree. When my turn came, I got a box and a handshake just like everyone else. There was no diploma in my box. All I could show mother was a note saying that I'd get my diploma once I paid off my debt to the school. I paid that debt with the first money I made in Indiana...but it was the last check I ever wrote to Northwestern.

So, I left Evanston for Indianapolis and a new life. I left the merchant marine behind. I left Jeanne behind too; figuring it was probably a good thing to think over that relationship from a distance.

## **8. Army, Marriage, and a New Career**

The rented room I found in Indianapolis was just twenty minutes' drive from the Traction Terminal Building...long since demolished but then the headquarters of Public Service Company of Indiana. I was allowed a small refrigerator but no cooking. So, breakfasts were easy to fix, as were sandwiches packed for lunch.

My boss, in his late forties, was responsible for ensuring that there was adequate means of generating and distributing power to most of the state of Indiana. I had no idea what to expect when I showed up, slide-rule in hand and dressed in the only suit I owned. He was an easy person to talk to but was a bit dismayed to realize that, while I had a great grasp of physics, I'd never even seen any of the pieces that comprised a power system. A transformer, to me, was half the size of a shoe box and dealt with hundreds of volts. Power transformers were the size of a two-story building and dealt with hundreds of thousands of volts. Switches, in my radio operator days, were less than an inch long and mounted in a panel. Circuit breakers that interrupted transmission lines were as tall as the transformers and opened and closed with a thud you could hear a block away.

His solution to my naivety was ingenious. I was told to report the next day to the Lenore Substation, a major control point for the system and occupying an area equal to a square block. Inside the fenced in enclosure was a maze of overhead wires and equipment, none of which I could identify... all controlling lines emanating to various points in the system. The bus bars suspended overhead were energized at 230,000 volts! I was given a clip board, a pad of paper and asked to draw an electrical diagram of the entire station, however long it took, and to do so by simply walking around and inspecting equipment. Scarcely an hour went by between my trips into the control building with questions. It took a week to construct the diagram but was remarkably effective in teaching me what really comprised a power system, how each component operated, what it looked like and what maintenance it needed.

Having finished my diagram, I reported back to headquarters where my boss was more than pleased. He then explained my next assignment, which involved some driving out to remote stations, one of them the Noblesville Power Station, a new coal-burning power plant just then being constructed. His instruction required that I research that area of the power system and prepare an electrical diagram of it. That took me a week. In those days, drawings were made by hand...ink lines drawn on acetate paper from which "blueprints" could then be made by a special printer. To compare my drawing to the company's drawing, he rolled out the original acetate drawing on my desk. I was smoking a pipe at the time...a habit I'd picked up early in my Merchant Marine career. Just before rolling the drawing up again, an ash fell from my pipe and burned a hole the size of a dime in the middle of the drawing. I expected to be fired on the spot, but he took it good naturedly and sent the drawing back to the drafting room for redoing.

The work was fascinating, convincing me I'd found a career I could enjoy. But I missed Jeanne and looked forward to her letters, finally deciding to propose to her. Not having a

taste for ceremony, I did so by letter and got an acceptance the same way. We agreed not to have children for two or three years to be absolutely sure we'd not leave them with a broken marriage. After informing her parents of our engagement she was frank enough to tell me that her mother, Mildred Fretz, was cool to the idea. They had become good friends with Paul Ditzel, her previous fiancée who "came from a nice family." Several weeks after our commitment, Mildred and Floyd, her father, decided to visit Evanston to meet me and booked a room at the Orrington Hotel, Evanston's best.

I drove to Evanston after work on a Friday and found a parking spot just across the street from the hotel. Mildred was sitting out on a screened porch and saw an old wreck of a car drive up and a young man get out. I later learned that she said to Floyd, "Oh I hope that's not him!"

Our meeting began a life-long (smoldering) dislike. She introduced me to Floyd as "Lionel Bartholomew," a mistake she made often thereafter, intentionally or not I never knew. Floyd, who was superintendent of schools in Bradford, Pa. was quite the opposite... cordial and easy to talk to. Bradford is a small city in the northwest corner of Pennsylvania, just south of Buffalo, NY. It was where oil was first discovered in Pennsylvania and remained the home of "Pennzoil."

I remember very little of that weekend, other than stress, my attempt to show proper table manners at dinner, and to impress the Fretz's as a candidate worthy of their daughter's hand. She was an only child and obviously central to their lives.

Just a few days after returning to Indianapolis that I got a letter from the Chicago area draft board asking that I report for duty in the U.S. Army... not an uncommon invitation early in the Korean War. The notice caused me no concern since Merchant Marine seamen who spent enough time in high danger zones during WWII were given a letter of exemption from further military service. I more than qualified and drove back to Chicago to present my evidence. The draft board was not impressed and insisted I report in two weeks' time. Having neither the courage nor the money to contest their decision, I accepted it and resigned from Public Service Company of Indiana.

After reporting to the recruitment office, I was dispatched to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri for basic training. Having spent WWII as an officer aboard ship and having mixed feelings over justification of our Korean intervention, I was quite depressed. But having already done my share of hiking and camping, didn't mind the physical demands. I recall going out on a weeklong bivouac in the woods during very cold weather, helping recruits from central Chicago cope by piling leaves against their tents. Towards the end of basic training I was interviewed to determine what was next. The officer in charge, reviewing my radio experience and strong academic record in physics, decided that I'd be a good instructor in radar and fire-control. I was thus spared a trip to Korea and sent, instead, to Fort Bliss in Texas, to attend a school on how radar worked and how it was used in directing fire of large cannons.

The course was taught by a lieutenant who began by explaining that electric current, once reaching a reactance, suffered a delay in phase angle...a patently absurd assertion. I raised my hand and explained that current was continuous and that it was voltage drop that shifted ninety-degrees (Physics 101). Correcting a Lieutenant turned out to be a bad idea. I was sent to the staff sergeant and assigned "kitchen police" duty for a week, washing pots and pans after meals and walking the grounds of the base with a garbage can top as a container to pick up trash. While I passed the examination without trouble, my bitterness and hatred of the army grew to unhealthy proportions. At one point I was admitted to the infirmary with depression, poured out my grief to an understanding doctor, and rather than getting punished, was comforted by the reminder that I had just eighteen months of hell left.

As I began my teaching career, now a private first class, Jeanne and I planned a wedding the first chance I'd have for two week's leave. That was March of 1951. In anticipation I rented an apartment reasonably convenient to the base... a two-car garage that had been converted into a three-room suite comprised of a kitchen, living room, and bedroom and one bath. It included a small lawn and garden but turned out to be uncomfortably close to the landlady's house. She was extremely talkative and gave us no peace.

I took a bus to Bradford the second week in March, where I was put up at the home of Harvey and Rosemary Rodebaugh, owner of the town's Oldsmobile dealership. They had a large house which was immaculately kept. They had no children. Both understood my nervousness at the prospect of confronting all of Bradford's establishment and taking, as my bride, the daughter of the school superintendent.

My mother and father arrived by bus, mother having made herself a beautiful dress for the occasion, dad having rented a tuxedo...they were more nervous than me, I'm sure. They stayed at the hotel in Bradford but were picked up by friends for delivery to the wedding and the reception following

The wedding was at Bradford's Presbyterian Church. At Jeanne's request, her father had ordered a very large lilac bouquet for each row in the church. My best man was Frank Cormier, who remained a life-long friend and was ultimately Associated Press' chief white house correspondent. The church was full, and the ceremony went smoothly. The trip to the reception at the Penn Hills Club did not. Snow, having started early that morning, got more intense as the day wore on, over a foot having piled up as attendees made their way from the church to the country club. While making a turn on the drive to the club, the car that Frank Cormier was driving slid off the road and landed on its side in the snow. All those aboard emerged without being hurt after which he, with a troop of six or eight other strong men, righted the car, got back in, and drove to the country club.

I remember very little of the reception other than being introduced to hundreds of people whose names I promptly forgot. My father and mother, who I feared would feel out of place, mixed well and enjoyed themselves to no end. We were to leave by car for our honeymoon south of Bradford immediately afterward the reception but by then the snow was much deeper and even worse further south of us. We decided to go north instead...

to ski, having been told of a resort in Northern Ontario, the "Limberlost Lodge," eight hours' drive from Bradford. After a night's stopover at a nearby motel that night, we started our long drive the next morning. Long it was... and snowing all the way. Stopping to refuel just short of the road into the lodge, we were advised to put chains on the tires, which we did, arriving at our destination just before dinner. It was a delightful lodge. We had our own cottage. The "mountain" wasn't much by later standards but looked formidable enough for me. I rented skis and poles the next morning, figuring a way to tie my army boots to them. Jeanne and I went directly to the top and I, presuming my Norwegian heritage and physical dexterity would suffice to turn and control speed, pushed off for the decent. The result was predictable! After picking myself up and swallowing some pride, I let Jeanne teach me the elements of turning on skis. By the time we left for Bradford again, I had rented proper boots and was able to navigate moderately well

Jeanne's car, our mode of transport in all of this, was a 1948 Oldsmobile, given her by her father as a graduation gift. It was affectionately named "Daisy." Before leaving Bradford after returning from our honeymoon, we drove to Salamanca, N.Y. to visit the Fancher Furniture Company where we both fell in love with a French provincial line made from solid cherry. Over the next few years we invested in both bedroom and dining room pieces many of which still serve us as of this writing. The Fancher factory burned to the ground in 2010.

Our wedding presents packed in Jeanne's car along with two very large suitcases full of her cloths and my own small duffle bag, we began the long trip to El Paso. She was pleased with the apartment, but we had our first argument as we settled in. Her suitcases were covered with protective plastic covers which I'd placed inside them when putting them up on a closet shelf. She insisted they be put away with the covers on them. I yielded.

Once we became settled, Jeanne drove to the El Paso school office, seeking a teaching job and carrying excellent references from her two years of teaching English in the Arlington Heights system, close to Evanston. She was well received but told she lacked one academic course required by law for teaching in Texas; Texas History! Dumbfounded, she enrolled in a local college to expand her readiness for teaching English... armed with that intellectual enrichment. She eventually got a job which included courses in speech...largely how to pronounce English properly with background in Mexican Spanish, our home being just across the river from Juarez, Mexico.

Jeanne had never cooked before but was a willing learner. Early in our new location, we decided to invite the master sergeant to whom I reported to dinner. He arrived, to my dismay, with a quid of tobacco in his cheek. That being the case we sat in the garden before dinner, fearing for the flowers that he hit while discharging his mouth. With the dinner call we were delighted to see the origins of these discharges disappear into the garden as well. Seated at the table, Jeanne went into the kitchen to get a roast out of the oven. Halfway back to the table, the plate slipped out her hands, smashing on the floor, mixing the roast, the potatoes, and the gravy with shards of a serving plate. The sergeant

and I gave her comfort, then sent her to the bedroom while we resurrected what we could of the dinner. She recovered and finally saw humor in the event.

I shared my army teaching assignment with a group of six or eight other enlisted men, most of them also engineers snatched from their careers by the draft board. Jeanne and I became close friends with them and their wives, alternating parties at one another's homes. From them we learned of a ski resort in Ruidoso, New Mexico, about three hours' drive north of El Paso. In winter we often left El Paso early enough to arrive for the opening of the chairlift, stopping for dinner on the way home. We both looked forward eagerly to those trips as an escape from the flat, dusty climate of El Paso. I gradually learned to turn properly and became addicted to skiing, though I did not yet own my own skis.

There were other diversions in El Paso too...a relatively small city. We often drove to the edge of things, rented horses, and rode far into the desert after dinner, finding our way back by both the angle of the setting sun, and the lights of the city. We occasionally climbed a portion of Mt. Franklin, a 7,000 ft. peak one edge of which extends into El Paso itself.

Juarez, Mexico is just across the Rio Grande from El Paso...a convenient and inexpensive venue for dinner. We often bought an inexpensive pre-cooked beef roast on the walk home. As one might expect, being adjacent to a large US army base and without the legal constraints common in the US, Juarez also hosted gambling houses and houses of prostitution. On one occasion the adopted daughter of my uncle John in Ontario Canada, came to visit us for a few days. He was an engineer for the Canadian National Railway, so her rail travel was free. One day, while Jeanne was teaching, I took her across to visit Juarez and, while walking down the main street, saw walking towards us, two soldiers with whom I worked at Fort Bliss. Seeing me approach with a very attractive young lady on my arm, not my wife, they understandingly looked the other way and said nothing as we passed.

We missed the Northeast very much. To gain comfort, we mounted horizontally a four-foot tree branch on a shelf looking over the living room, adorned it with cotton to mimic snow cover, and hung it with miniature skis, caps, mittens and reminders of home.

During that interval, Don Poepsel, a fellow teacher at the base who'd been snatched from his power systems engineering job with Westinghouse, urged me to join him at a local dinner meeting of what was then the AIEE, American Institute of Electrical Engineers. Prior to dinner, I got into an interest discussion with an engineer from General Electric who later asked if I would be interested in a job interview. Correspondence followed, eventually leading to a paid trip to Schenectady, NY, for an interview. Not being timid, I contacted Westinghouse through Poepsel's contacts, to see if they too would be interested in talking to me. They affirmed but because they declined to pay the small incremental travel cost involved, I backed out.

Arriving at the Albany/Schenectady airport terminal, then the size of a four-car garage, I got a taxi and read the driver my instructions to report to the Van Dyke Hotel. "The Van Dyke's a restaurant, not a hotel," he informed me. The telegram being quite explicit, we drove to the restaurant and found that they did, indeed, have three rooms on the second floor, one of which was reserved in my name.

I will never forget the next day. I met engineers whose books I'd used at Northwestern and couldn't believe there was a prospect of a job involving work with them. They explained that entering GE engineers were normally involved in a "Test Program" for two years...a rotation of assignments on the factory floor, closer to manufacturing and testing than engineering. Then came the "but" I was waiting for. They also had a "Rotating Engineering Program," also two years in duration, comprised of engineering assignments in various product manufacturing departments after which the candidate could negotiate with any one of them for a permanent job. We agreed that would be a good start.... if I were given an offer.

Meanwhile, being in Schenectady, I was told about an "Application Engineering" program. It involved three or four years of training in Schenectady, after which one was assigned to a district office as the "answer man" on questions concerning equipment selection, ratings, use, repair, etc. I was also told it was an extremely difficult assignment to get. It struck me as tantamount to heaven on earth.

Back in El Paso. less than a week later, a telegram arrived with a formal offer of employment beginning with an assignment at GE's high voltage test Laboratory in Pittsfield, Ma...all moving and travel expenses to be paid. I was elated and accepted immediately.

My army discharge was in May of 1952. Our furniture and belongings were boxed in wooden crates (the wood of which I would later put to good use!), sent on their way east, and we set out for a two-week tour of Mexico. Somewhere I have a photo, taken in the desert alongside the road several miles south of El Paso, where I put all my army clothes on a pole, soaked them with gasoline, and set them ablaze.

The Mexico Trip was like a return to heaven. We had no reservations – just a general idea of where to go. We drove until quite late the first day, through Chihuahua, had just began worrying about lodging when we came on a beautiful inn, surrounded by flower gardens, whose owners, in the flower export business, were incredibly cordial and insisted we join them for dinner.

I'd inquired about driving from the central highway to Mazatlan on Mexico's West coast but was warned that the road traversed very high elevations and was difficult in storms. So, we continued south through towns with interesting names like "Aguascalientes" until we reached Mexico City...too big and dirty for our taste. Going west from there, we stayed one night at Taxco, famous for its silverware. Whatever we bought has been long lost and forgotten. More durable was Jeanne's reaction when, threading our way through

the narrow concrete-walled drive from the hotel, I put a dent in the rear fender of her otherwise uninjured car.

Our destination was Acapulco on Mexico's west coast. The road was well paved but made extremely dangerous by unfilled cracks big enough to destroy a tire if not a wheel. Acapulco was then famous for the divers who gracefully dove off the El Quebra cliff 115 feet down into the sea, timing their dives and betting their lives on coordination with the incoming waves that provide them enough depth to survive. We were fortunate to find a room overlooking the sea and the resort's best hotel...complete with a hammock which we put to good use.

After three days in Acapulco, we drove east, through Mexico City, to Fortine de les Flores, a resort we'd read about, east of Mexico City, where their large swimming pool was kept awash in beautiful fresh flowers.

Then came the very long trip home – this time leaving Mexico through Nuevo Laredo for the long drive to Pittsfield, Ma., stopping in Bradford on the way. The Fretz three-story home at 28 Jackson Avenue, had a foyer, living room, kitchen, and office for Floyd on the first floor, three bedrooms on the second floor, and another bedroom and bath on the third floor. Jeanne's former bedroom on the second floor faced the street. It may have been on that trip that, after retiring one night, one of the slats supporting the innerspring mattress broke, sending the mattress down through the bed frame to the floor. The commotion that followed was extremely embarrassing, though we'd done nothing that young married couples were not privileged to do.

I recall very little of that visit other than being intensely bothered by a large television set they had in their living room...turned on first thing in the morning and off last thing at night. It remained on through discussions, through the many games of bridge we played, and even through and meals.

Mildred, Jeanne's mother, ran the roost in that house. She cooked, cleaned, and forever wore the same blue house dress. She dominated Floyd, Jeanne's father, and discouraged him from the sports he encouraged Jeanne to undertake. He did enjoy a carefully kept rose garden behind the house, tools for which hung in the one-car garage at the back of their small lot.

On arriving in Pittsfield, we rented a third-floor room off the main street, Route 20, just south of the center of town...close enough to GE to allow me to walk to work. Our furniture remained in its crates, stored for a more permanent home. The day after arrival, I reported to my new supervisor in a large laboratory dedicated to the testing of power transformers and research into insulation issues. Thus, did my seventeen-year career with GE begin.

## 9. Eureka Springs

It must have been about 1947 when Mother and Dad moved from Hawthorn Lane in Winnetka to 69 Park Avenue in Glencoe, just North of Winnetka. Dad, having abandoned his musical pursuits, was then driving a taxi. A few years later they moved to a small 3<sup>rd</sup> floor apartment at 910 Elm Street in Winnetka. I recall riding my bicycle there for visits while going to Northwestern.

In a letter to his brother Leif, Dad refers to their trips to Arkansas in an old car, to their purchase of forty acres of land near Eureka Springs and later, purchase of a small cottage on Elk Street in town. Always the dreamer, he talks of the prospect of “starting a business of some sort.”

They made their permanent move to Arkansas in an old Buick – the first car I’d ever owned which, after replacing, I’d given them. Although it barely ran when I had it, Dad kept it going for another five years. All their possessions were packed into an old box trailer they’d bought for the move. The trip to Eureka Springs went fine until, on a lonely Arkansas road just short of their destination, the coupling between the trailer and the car broke loose, dumping most of their belongings onto the road and down the nearby bank. A farmer, near the accident, saw their distress and helped them get things back together for the last few miles to their new home.

Dad did his best to make their home at 11 White Street comfortable. He painted the house and even built a dresser for their bedroom. They joined the church just down the road from their house and made several lasting friends.

Dad also worked constantly trying to restore the 40-acre abandoned farm they’d bought on Mundell Road west of Eureka Springs. The property, overgrown with grass and brush, had a small cabin on it... long since abandoned and in very bad condition. Sporadic attempts to repair the cabin never got it habitable. It burned down several years later.

Dad got a job representing the Boye Needle Compsny as a traveling salesman - still driving the old Dodge that took them down to Arkansas. On October 27<sup>th</sup> of 1953, while driving through Heber Springs en route home to Eureka Springs, he had a flat tire and, while attempting to change it, had a heart attack and died instantly. He was only 61. The news reached us by phone at our house on Sherwood Lane in Burnt Hills while I was helping Skip and Scott carve pumpkins for Halloween. I took the next plane to Arkansas. Sylvia and I helped mother with arrangements.

My father was buried among clusters of pine trees in the Eureka Springs Lodge 83 I.O.O.F. cemetery, in Eureka Springs (plot S1/2 or S1/2 of Lot 8, Block 31) surrounded by pine trees which he often said reminded him of Norway. Mother was buried nearby some years later.

Dad’s life was not an easy one. He left his home country at 18<sup>th</sup> with little prospect of returning, struggled hard to make a success of his musical talent, yet was not too proud to do whatever it took to keep his family fed, clothed, and housed. He enjoyed his children and watched each of them find their way, on their own, through college.

I wrote mother and dad every Sunday night while they lived in Eureka Springs. One long letter to Dad, expressing my admiration, love, and gratitude for the wonderful upbringing he'd provided, was written two months before he died.

Mother stayed on in the White Street house a short time, but then found a house down the hill at on Elk Street. It was bigger and in much better condition than their first house and a shorter walk to town for groceries. With no income other than social security, we urged her to accept some monthly support from her children. She wouldn't think of it. As an alternative we suggested she sell us all the Mundell Road property accepting monthly payments over a five-year period. As we suspected, she lost track of the pay-down schedule and we kept up payments for the remaining 33 years of her life. The payments were shared among my brothers and sister and I or a few years. I then assigned mother stock in PTI, (the company I had founded) the dividends of which were more than enough to take care of her. We sold the Mundell Road property after her death and recovered substantially more than our support payments - its value having been enhanced by development of the Bull Shoals hydro-electric dam which made a big fraction of the property water-front.

Mother enjoyed life on Elk Street even though the hill down to town was very steep and the walk got harder and harder as she aged. She would have been about 70 years old then. Her memory was already showing lapses. Each time I visited her she made me promise that I'd tell her when she started to get "whifty." As she showed signs of just that, Sylvia, Louise, and I eventually took her to several retirement homes, ultimately settling on the Good Samaritan Center in Boulder Colorado. It was a good choice.

Mother had two adjoining rooms; one used as a bedroom the other as a living room. She settled in quickly but continued to believe the Eureka Springs house was still there for her, long after it had been sold.

She made a lot of friends at Good Samaritan and took pride in introducing me to them, usually apologizing in their presence for not remembering their name. It was with special pride that she once took me to the Home's weekly dance, telling me I was to watch for "Johnny," an immaculately dressed 90-year-old the ladies were crazy about. He showed up handsome as advertised, but with his walker as a dance partner. "It never steps on my toes," he told me.

The last of my periodic visits to Boulder was when she was in critical condition. I was by her side, late at night when she died. She was a truly remarkable woman and mother.

## 10. Starting a Career and a Family

GE had assigned me to a “rotating engineering program” ...one consisting of a sequence of assignments to different product areas until and if, one of them offered the prospect a job. Showing up for work on the first day of what was to be a seventeen-year GE tenure in their Pittsfield high voltage laboratory, I was introduced to engineers whose papers and books I had read in college... convincing me I’d made the right job choice. After a tour and explanation of the lab’s purpose and capabilities I was introduced to “Red” Brussel, a young engineer in charge of testing programs. After a cordial welcome he reviewed GE’s background on Pyranol,” a new insulating oil proposed for use in transformers such as those one sees atop neighborhood distribution poles. Years later that oil became famous for its introduction of PCBs, a carcinogen, the Hudson River clean-up of which was to cost GE hundreds of millions. I was shown a tank the size of a large bathtub, filled with Pyranol and the subject of the test program I was to implement... tests that required periodically dipping my arms into the bath up to the elbows. After one day of this unexciting exercise, I asked for a meeting with Brussel and explained how the tests could be done automatically with a circuit I’d become familiar with in the army. He gave me a purchase order for the equipment I needed and a week’s time to show it would work. Four days later the testing continued automatically, and I was given a new assignment.

Jeanne again got a teaching job. We lived a simple life and got along very well with our landlady, a widow who appreciated having someone live in with her. Kitchen privileges made life simpler (and cheaper) for us.

Two months into that assignment I got a letter from Schenectady. “Would I like to be considered for an *application engineering* job?” “Application engineers” are technical specialists, assigned to various GE sales offices throughout the country to help electric utilities solve technical problems relating to power systems. To me this was an invitation to heaven. To apply, I was required to give a twenty-minute talk, on a subject cited in the letter, to an interview team in Schenectady. I rehearsed my talk night after night for a month, coached by Jeanne who, had taught public speaking, until I could deliver it from memory.

Gene Hunter, one of the unit managers in Schenectady, drove to Pittsfield to pick me up first thing in the morning of my interview and deliver me back that evening. It seemed strange then, but he wanted to get to know me better and looked on the drive as a good way to do so.

The hour’s drive to Schenectady put me somewhat at ease. Hunter was easy to talk to and anxious to help me do well. Yet his reassurances were undone when he listed the people that would be present.... all famous engineers, some of whom had authored texts I’d used in college. But on arrival at GE’s Schenectady plant, the friendly manner of the interview team put me at ease. Banter following introductions even gave me a chance to tell a joke. Their laughter set me totally at ease. The talk went well but was followed by their confession that there was actually no current opening in the “application

engineering” program and a lot of applicants for it...that I would be contacted if and when selected.

My work in Pittsfield continued until February of 1953 when I was told to report to my next rotation...this one with the high voltage switchgear department in Philadelphia. By then Jeanne and I decided we could afford an apartment, but noticed an ad for a small furnished house, offered for temporary rental at a low price. We took it and I began my new work – this assignment focused on the manufacturing of very large high-voltage circuit breakers.

Our move to Philadelphia was a bit like moving home for Jeanne. Her mother was from a large family that grew up in Honeybrook, just west of Philadelphia. Her Uncle Bill lived in suburban Philadelphia, her aunt Peg in Westchester, and another aunt, long since divorced, still in the Honeybrook home with her daughter, Peggy Ann. Her uncle Bill, then a teacher in the Scarsdale NY school system was also an Ivy League football referee. Jeanne’s father, Floyd, had taken his first teaching job and risen to school principal in nearby town. Thus for at least a dozen years that followed, the Honey Brook home was venue for large Thanksgiving and Christmas family gatherings, during each of which a football game was always on TV in the living room.

My work in Philadelphia began pretty much as an errand boy...chasing small issues in the manufacturing process, e.g. missing parts, compliance with specifications, etc. I was later moved to an application group where focus was on controls. I remember being assigned design the controls for a small hydro-electric station in the Adirondacks where, when water in a reservoir was high, water was allowed to flow through a turbine and generate electricity. When the water level was low, the generator was to act as a motor, pumping water back into the reservoir. My design passed muster and I suppose is still in use somewhere close to where I write this.

After our temporary house rental ended, we rented a row house in Drexel Hill, another suburb of Philadelphia, providing easy commute to the GE factory. At some point in my Philadelphia assignment, two events .... probably related...warrant comment.

At that time there was a lot of illegal price-fixing within the power equipment supply industry, some of the GE perpetrators being those to whom I reported in Philadelphia. One of my senior supervisors was indirectly involved and had the temerity to write a warning letter to the president of GE outlining what was going on. He kept a copy which was later subpoenaed. The government prosecution of GE and Westinghouse was a watershed event for both companies... as well as a run for cover by those involved. The letter cited above, was introduced as evidence that GE’s top management knew of the collusion. GE lawyers challenged it and put immense pressure on the author to deny he sent it. Of what happened next, I only recall that the letter writer was demoted, assigned a meaningless job in Schenectady, and later committed suicide.

As a result of that lawsuit, the GE switchgear division was ordered to be reorganized. The notice sent to all employees at the Philadelphia plant was a quite novel beginning to

that process. It said, in essence, that *everyone was fired*...that a new organization was to be put in place, and former employees would be encouraged to apply for posts in it ...a harmless process for me, but not for many.

Several months after moving to our small rental house, our rental term expired so Jeanne and I looked for new quarters. Friends recommended a duplex development in Drexel Hill, close to the Aronimink Swim club. The apartment we rented there had a modern kitchen and living room on the first floor, and a large bedroom and bath on the second. It had a lawn in front and another in the back, the latter complete with a vegetable garden. The relocation gave us our first opportunity to uncrate our furniture and put it to use.

The apartment had no air conditioning. I recall, with a smile, my response to that limitation. On a particularly hot day during our first summer there, I bought a large three-bladed fan at a local surplus store...then mounted it onto the shaft of a 1-horsepower motor I'd bought at the same store. The latter was then bolted into a circular opening in the center of a plywood panel sized to fill the lower half of the kitchen window on our first floor. I then screwed the panel into place without first doing the engineering associated with motor speed, blade size, pitch, etc....my theory being: the more wind, the better. With the fan in place Jeanne stood with me, anticipating the joy of a strong wind stream. The motor started immediately... with a roar that alarmed all the neighbors and a wind velocity that blew the tablecloth off the table and into the adjacent room. I dubbed it "The Spirit of St. Louis," took it apart and for all I know it's still in the basement storeroom there.

We developed good friends in Philadelphia and spent a lot of time with Jeanne's uncle Bill, often babysitting their two girls, Betsy and Sally. Bill was a master bridge player, but not too proud to play with novices like us. We also took a membership in the swim club nearby and made occasional trips to "the shore" in New Jersey where one of Jeanne's relatives had a cottage.

Jeanne and I had deliberately delayed the prospect of children until it was clear that our marriage would work. By the time of our move to Philadelphia, we were quite sure of that. Late in 1953, she announced, to my immense delight, that she was pregnant. It was long before the days of ultrasound, so the gender remained a mystery. Our neighbor in the adjacent apartment was also pregnant... for her the third child. I recall tending our tomato garden behind the house one Saturday and saying hello to her as she hung clothes on the line to dry. She responded, saying she was in quite a hurry to get the clothes up since she'd already called a taxi to get her to the hospital in time for the delivery.

As Jeanne's time came and past, the doctor suggesting an induced delivery, we went together to the Philadelphia General Hospital for the big event. Things were very different then. I sat for hours in a waiting room before the doctor came in to announce that we had a healthy baby boy ready to be viewed through a glass window, nice and clean and wrapped in a blue blanket. Seeing him and recognizing both my features and Jeanne's in his small face made me weep with joy and wonder. We had created a new life. During my own life, certain scenes remain indelible within my mind. Seeing our

first-born son through that glass, is one that, given the talent, I could paint in detail. I was later allowed in to see Jeanne and to hold the baby. Life has never given me greater joy.

We'd named him Floyd, after his grandfather but the name lasted only until one of my co-workers visited us and called him "Skipper," after which he was "Skip" to us. Jeanne was a superb mother. We celebrated every development he made and often took him to the Aronamink swimming pool where his delight and excitement at submersion in the water was remarkable. It inspired us to later organize a similar swim club in Schenectady.

Just about the time Skip was due, internal GE mail bought me a letter from their Schenectady headquarter. Recognizing the sender, I took it home before opening it. *I had been accepted for GE's application engineering program* and was to report in March of 1954. It was like a ticket to heaven. As the time approached, we again packed our furniture for shipment ...this time to what just might be a permanent home in Schenectady.

## **ARRIVING IN SCHENECTADY**

During an initial apartment-search trip to Schenectady, we'd found a second-floor furnished apartment for rent in Belleview, just twenty minutes' walk from GE. With that as our destination, we drove north from Philadelphia, ready for a new chapter in our lives...one that would last for fourteen years.

Early in our Schenectady residence it became apparent that our land lady was a witch. She constantly complained about windows being left open, too much water being used, heat too high, etc. Thus, as the months wore on, we became anxious to find more congenial quarters. I had kept very careful account of our income and savings throughout our married life and still have tucked away a "net worth" graph that showed a steady increase over our three years of marriage., reflecting my resolve that we should live on no more than ninety percent of my salary...a salary that had seen two raises by then. We could now afford the down payment on a house, for which, prompted by our landlady's nastiness, we now set out in earnest to find. We had already fallen in love with the area and lived in the hope that whatever course my career took, it would keep me there for many years.

On reporting to building two of GE's Schenectady plant, home of their engineering operations, I was told there was no immediate slot in the application engineering program for which I was hired... that *pending* such an opening, I'd be temporarily assigned to GE's related "Analytical Engineering" section.... the "think tank" in which complex system problems were solved and where research was done on new electric system problems. I was to work on the "Transient Network Analyzer." The "TNA" was really just a large room, bordered by shelves which housed miniature models of the various component that made up a power system – components that in real life were the size of a two-story house. To represent a problem, one simply took appropriate pieces off the shelf and connected them together to comprise a miniature version of the full-size system being studied. Once that problem model was assembled, a rotary motor-driven switch

(representing a house-sized circuit breaker) alternately closed and then opened causing repetitive traces on a screen showing the system response.

It was like being in a toy store. I couldn't wait to get to work each morning. Soon I suggested investigations of my own, the first of which broke some new ground and allowed me to write my first technical paper, co-authored as one might suspect, by my boss. That paper earned a prize! More followed, which earned me the privilege to travel to New York and other major cities for meetings of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers (AIEE) ... Later to become the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE). I vividly remember the first time I got up before an audience of several hundred, doing so to disagree with a senior engineer from Westinghouse. Little could I expect that I would later become president of the power division of IEEE, serving as chairman of that annual week-long meeting in New York.

After eight months "on hold" in analytical heaven, I was told that a slot was now available in the application engineering program that I'd been hired for. I vividly recall meeting with Seldon Cray, manager of the analytical group to which I'd been temporarily assigned, begging that I be allowed to stay and continue the work I was doing. By then I'd co-authored several technical papers and had earned a good reputation. Cray was sympathetic. His bottom-line challenge to me went something like this. "If you're willing to regard everything that's already been published in this field as either incomplete or wrong, we'll take you!" I agreed immediately, and we began our house search in earnest.

## **9 SHERWOOD LANE**

Jeanne and I saw a home advertised in Burnt Hills, a suburb north of Schenectady, recommended to us because of its good schools, its moderate taxes, and its countrified atmosphere. We drove out to see it one Sunday. 9 Sherwood Park Circle was advertised for \$15,250. The circle had beautiful green lawn in its center and a dozen or so houses around the loop, one of which had the for-sale sign on it. The door was answered by Robert Marshall, the owner. A tour of the house left us in love with it despite some ominous water stains on the basement walls. It was just what we'd imagined and, at the suggestion of our friends, mailed the owner a written offer of \$14,500...moderately below the asking price. Days went by before it was sold to another buyer for its asking price.

We were crushed, having already furnished it in our mind's eye. Jeanne wept at the thought of more months of confrontation with our landlady. But we remembered seeing another house close-by, oddly enough with the same address, #9, but on *Sherwood Lane*, the road off which Sherwood Park Circle led. Driving out to Burnt Hills again, it seemed bigger and better built than the other, with a nicer yard...probably out of our price range. We stopped, rang the doorbell, which was answered by a lady who introduced herself as Mrs. Robert Marshall! ...a name identical to the seller of the house we'd tried to buy days before! "Yes," she said, "He's my son." The house was a dream. Well cared for, with a garage connected to the house by a breezeway, a dry basement, a big fireplace in the teal-colored living room where a lush wall-to-wall carpet matched the wall colors. It

had three bedrooms, a dining room with a stunning black and floral rug. All the rooms had beautiful drapes matching the wall colors. A front yard full of fruit trees, and a neatly trimmed hedge bordering the driveway and front lawn. The price: \$15,000. We accepted on the spot without risking another declined offer and planned to move into a real home of our own in June of 1956...a home we'd keep for ten years.

Our cordial relations with the Marshalls ended the moment we moved in. Fruit trees in the front yard had been dug up and removed and a beautiful dining room chandelier was gone. The living room draperies and mirror remained, as agreed, pending our negotiating their purchase. But with the trees and chandelier gone, we made it clear that drapes and mirror would be forfeited only after the chandelier was replaced and a year had passed after all the trees had been transplanted so we could be sure of their survival. The trade was consummated by default.

Jeanne became pregnant again in the spring of 1956, by which time we were prepared with a third bedroom to welcome the new son or daughter in our Burnt Hills home. Scott was born November 26<sup>th</sup> of that year at Bellevue Maternity Hospital, his gender again made apparent only when he emerged into this world. Skip now had a younger brother and that brother had his own room.

Scott was an easy baby to care for but was quite stubborn. He slept in his crib without argument the first year or so until one night when he simply would *not* stop crying and go to sleep. We only got the point of his distress when, while we were in the adjoining living room, we heard a loud thump in his bedroom followed by even louder screams from him. He had climbed the crib's rails and fallen to the floor. Jeanne got the point immediately...he was too old for a crib. After dismantling the upper portion and putting him back to bed, he went to sleep with a smile on his face.

He learned to talk gradually, as had Skip who for months said almost nothing...then blurted out, perfectly enunciated, "I'm in trouble" when his plate full of mashed potatoes fell from his highchair to the floor.

The Fretz's visited us often on Sherwood Lane. By that time the school board had given Floyd a large, finned Cadillac in gratitude for his leadership of their school system. In that career he was first in the US to introduce driver education. Their visits with us were reciprocated by Jeanne's visits to Bradford with our two young boys. I felt the Fretzs were spoiling them, a reaction I suppose all parents have when grandparents try to crowd into one week the love and attention, we could share constantly with our boys.

Our neighbors among Sherwood Lane's small houses, included children the ages of our own. Up to about 2016, I still exchanged Christmas cards with the Thorpes. Most neighbors were young professional families, and most were quite normal...one, the Fawcetts who lived across from us, were not. Howard was a safety engineer for GE. The family's constant yelling at one another with a rich and profane vocabulary was quite audible from our house. Howard cut the lawn with shin guards and a safety helmet. His awkwardness with tools was evidenced by an open breezeway linking the house and

garage... one he'd repaired in such a way as to make the whole roof line twist. Ralph, the oldest boy was very smart and constantly asking me questions about electricity. He eventually got his PhD. and is now a professor. Harry Fawcett, his young brother was wild. He once got a can of black paint and wrote S H I T in six-foot-high letters across the side of his house. He later became an actor and had his own TV show.

The Lopus family, next door to them (and quite normal), owned the pharmacy in Burnt Hills. Their daughter often came to our house play. One day Jeanne couldn't find her watch...a valuable one given her as a high school graduation gift. It was found only a month later while I was cutting the grass and saw it buried in the lawn at the back of our property where the Lopus daughter, having it taken it off our dresser, dropped it.

Some years after we arrived on Sherwood Land, Paul and Marge deMello bought a house at the northern end of our street. Paul was born in Goa, Portuguese East India. His family moved to Brazil while he was a young man shortly after which he earned admission to MIT in Boston. He returned to Brazil on graduation, worked for the Rio Power and Light Company for several years before being hired into GE's system engineering group in Schenectady. Paul would develop into a life-long friend and, ultimately be Vice President of a company, PTI, I would form in 1969.

As Skip and Scott got old enough to play by themselves, we bought a tan cocker spaniel pup and named him Muffet. His greatest joy in life was chasing balls. Even as he grew old and blind, he'd retrieve them by the sound they made. When his end came, we replaced him with another spaniel...this one more aggressive and given to chasing cars. Just as we'd grown fond of him, we heard a car screech to a stop in front of the house and ran out to see our dog trying to get up with a back leg dragging limply. We loaded him into the car and, with both boys crying, went to Dr. Garrison, the local veterinarian. After a short examination Dr. Garrison called me into his office and explained that a fix would be very expensive and might not work...recommending that he be put to sleep. I agreed and told the boys that conclusion as gently as I could. There were tears and a plea "*Isn't there any way they can fix him?*" I caved in, ran back through the door and withdrew the death sentence, asking Dr. Garrison to fix him, whatever it cost. Four days and \$800 later, I picked him up, his bones pinned together and barely able to stand. We nursed him back to health to the point where, a month later, he was able run again...and to chase cars again. He got hit once again, but this time flattened. It was a long time before we got another dog.

I enjoyed doing the maintenance on Sherwood Lane. Jeanne took care of the flower garden that separated a privet hedge surrounding our front lawn and driveway. I kept that hedge trimmed exactly square, using a razor-sharp sickle. With my left hand in my back pocket to avoid its amputation, I swung the sickle to the left, flipped it over, then swung it back to the right, repeating that cycle continuously...I halving the time it would take with an electric cutter.

The house's vertical board and batten siding was stained a dark red. But the boards were made of cheap wood full of knots or knotholes. I went over the entire exterior with a pot

of epoxy glue, sealing each knothole before repainting the house and repairing the flashing.

Our back lawn extended 150 feet back from the house, beyond which was an area where brush was piled. I cut the lawn with an old-fashioned rotary mower for the first four or five years, after which I caved in and bought a motor-driven rotary mower which, on one occasion served a rather lethal purpose. Our lawn had also served as my battle ground with the mole kingdom, my first weapon being a fierce looking device which was plugged into the ground straddling the raised mole tunnel. A trigger plate, pressed against the rise in soil over the top of the tunnel, waited for the mole to raise the ground again as he passed though, whereupon three sharp needles plunged into the ground to impale him (or her). It didn't work.

My barber later told me that moles will crawl into small glass jars, unable to turn around to escape. Following his advice, I buried ten or twenty pairs of back-to-back glass jelly jars. That didn't work either. Then, seeing a careless mole surface onto the lawn while I was cutting the grass, I gave him chase. He went into the mower as a mole but came out in nicely cut horizontal slabs...a bit like an engineering drawing section view.

During our second summer there we detected a very bad smell in our back yard. Talking to our neighbors resolved the puzzle. In some homes the builder had installed a "dry-well" to receive the effluent from the septic tank to save the cost of installing a proper leach field. Once aware of this, I bought a wheelbarrow and began digging trenches to install field extending to the back of our lot, hauling the gravel which I'd had dumped onto our driveway, one wheelbarrow-full at a time.

Our living room picture window looked out over a portion of the lawn, over the hedge-lined driveway, and into a neighbor's back yard. To get more privacy, I planted a row of twenty or thirty three-foot red pine trees along the border of the property. We stayed on Sherwood Lane long enough to see them grow into a very effective screen. But twenty years later, on one of my "memory lane" detours enroute to Lake George, I drove by our Sherwood Lane house, still well painted the same color, the hedge removed, the front garden untended, and the red pines which were such an effective screen are now sixty feet high with branches starting well above the view line from the living room to the neighbors.

When we moved into our Sherwood Lane paradise, the breezeway connecting the house to the one-car garage was unheated. There being no reasonable way to extend the house's hot air ducting into it, I bought a small gas-fired furnace to install inside the garage to which the breezeway fed. That furnace sat there uninstalled for most of a summer. On a Saturday morning in the fall I went out to the garage to plan the job of installing it...first looking down into its interior to be sure I understood where to connect things. As I did so, an explosion blew off my glasses and left my face covered with what I presumed to be blood. It being a gas furnace, I presumed a gas leak had caused it to explode. Then, realizing it wasn't even connected to a gas line, I calmed down long enough to realize what had happened. During the summer I had driven into the garage and while unloading

groceries, temporarily put a bag on top of that furnace. The bag had broken and, unknown to me, a can of frozen orange juice had fallen into the furnace where it had fermented and was just waiting for a probing hand to trigger its explosion. Licking my lips, I confirmed that the “blood” on my face was fermented orange juice.

The summer after the small furnace was installed, Jeanne observed that wasps had built a nest up inside the siding near the ground just outside the breezeway and close to the sand box I’d built for the boys. She showed me where they were flying in and out. Somewhere I had heard that smoke would disburse wasps. With that theory in mind, I set a candle on the cement deck just below the point of wasp ingress and egress, realizing however, that the exodus would deliver some very angry wasps... and that I needed a means of protecting myself from them before lighting the candle. Not having any specific wasp-killer, I figured that a can of spray shellac from my paint shelf would effectively disable them. The candle, once lit, *did* provoke a mass exodus...and the wasps *were* upset...the sprayed shellac *did* disable them, but it also exploded from the candle’s flame leaving me with a sore face and diminished eyebrows.

I recall one evening when the sink in our (only) bathroom stopped draining. I was to catch a plane for the west coast early the next morning. De-clogging solvents didn’t work, nor did probes with an opened-up clothes hanger. Concluding it must be further down the drain path, I went to the basement to access the drainpipe coming down from the bathroom. To rotate it, I first had to remove a 12-foot length of horizontal iron pipe feeding towards the main drain. In the process of rotating my wrench to loosen it, I broke my only pair of glasses. With the pipe disconnected at both ends, I laid it across the basement stationary tub while removing my broken glasses to assess the damage. Pre-occupied with my glasses, I didn’t see the pipe roll towards me across the tub top until it fell off the tubs edge and landed across the instep of my foot. The pipe I’d removed was perfectly clean inside, as was the vertical pipe leading up to the sink. After limping upstairs to the sink to explore further, I realized that the lever which lifts the drain had simply become uncoupled from the stopper. I endured the next day’s trip with a swollen foot and limited eyesight.

## **GE CAR-POOLING**

The laboratory in which I worked with at GE had a photographic darkroom, it then being necessary to photograph traces on instrument screens, then develop them there. I took advantage of that laboratory to develop and print our own photos and to make our first Christmas card in 1954, a tradition that, as of this writing, has continued for almost seventy years, the photo lab having given way to home printers in later years.

I was doing well at GE, having received almost annual pay raises, and kept a graph, still somewhere in my archives, showing our net worth at the end of each year. As Christmas of 1957 approached, it was clearly time to get a second car. We’d already replaced “Daisy,” Jeanne’s high school graduation present, with a later model ...a car I drove to and from GE once a week on a day when it was my turn to pick up a carpool with

neighbors who also worked there. That carpool later became a center of social interchange as well. There were five of us in it...one for each day of the week. Driving home one Friday, someone in the pool suggested we stop for a Friday celebration drink enroute from GE in Schenectady to Burnt Hills. That ritual lasted for a month before the wives, feeling left out, suggested we have the party at one another's homes...which then became a regular Friday ritual. The host family mixed one pitcher of Martinis and another of Manhattans in quantities sufficient to inspire plenty of conversation...and to cause one or two pool members to drive home *very* carefully.

I bought Jeanne a new, bright red VW "beetle" as her Christmas surprise one year. It was parked in a neighbor's garage until Christmas Eve, then secretly driven to the driveway outside our living room window where I wrapped it in an oversize red ribbon with a huge bow. Jeanne screamed for joy Christmas morning when she arose and drew the drapes. She'd always driven car with automatic transmission but learned to drive it in just one lesson. It gave us great service until the engine, whose oil we'd forgotten to change, ran dry on a drive to Vermont and gave up the ghost.

### **THE GLEN HILLS CLUB**

Ray Stratford, an engineer I'd befriended in Philadelphia, moved to Schenectady six months before we did. Jeanne and I remained close friends of Ray and Claire, his wife, both of whom were then building a house of their own design in Glenville. As Skip and Scott grew up, we thought back on our Philadelphia days and the delight they had taken in the Aronamink Club's swimming pool near that house. We now had to drive to Lake George for swimming. Ray warmed to my idea of starting a swim club patterned after the Philadelphia club. We judged that if 150 families each bought a \$150 bond, we'd have enough for both the land and a pool... annual dues covering operating costs. A land search led to an ideal tract on Bruce Drive in the small town of Alplaus, convenient to all the northern suburbs of Schenectady. The western edge of the lot bordered Alplaus creek, a convenient source of water. The owner of the lot, who lived nearby, hadn't anticipated selling it but did...which then set the organizing wheels in motion.

Being in the township of Glenville, we assigned it the name "Glen Hills Club." Although there was indeed one small hill close by, I the name was probably prompted by a parallel to the more grandiose "Penn Hills Club" in Bradford, Pa., Jeanne's hometown. Needing some legal advice, we asked Ken Gibbons, a lawyer whose practice was in Scotia, to join the board. Since task one was solicitation of members, I prepared a prospectus which Ray and I took door-to-door in our spare time. That exercise took me to the home of Bill and Barbara Piper who immediately signed up, anxious that their two beautiful daughters, Beth and Nancy, have a place to swim. Bill, a scientist at GE's research laboratory, then became the fourth member of a board which eventually grew to nine or ten.

With adequate subscriptions in hand, we negotiated a contract with Paddock Pool Builders to go forward. Ray and I designed a bath house and contracted with a builder, (who also joined the board) for its construction. The pool was to be gunnite, then a new system whereby a hole the exact size and shape of the pool is dug, reinforcing mesh laid

close to the hole's surfaces, after which concrete is sprayed against the outer wall to form a solid pool. A ground-breaking ceremony got some press in the Spring of 1958 and when the excavation equipment arrived, the project seemed straight-forward. But I left GE quite early the next day in response to an urgent call from the site. Paddock workers found the ground to be so poorly drained that the sides would not hold up. A backhoe was already stuck in mud at the bottom of the initial excavation. Ray and I asked them to delay digging until they'd cut a deep drainage ditch down to the creek. They rescued the backhoe and began two weeks later. Things went somewhat better but the earthen walls against which the gunnite was to be sprayed, kept collapsing. Workers eventually built plywood backups in areas where soil had been lost, after which spraying began as initial construction on the bath house also started.

After a grand opening in the summer of 1958 operations went relatively smoothly. Swimming classes began, as did competitive events. Both Skip and Scott took to the water like fish and began winning races and setting pool records. Jeanne drove them to the pool early summer mornings for their lessons and workouts. As they grew older, they ran the small food stand at the end of the bath house.

Glen Hills had a small wading pool where the youngest children could play and begin the breathing routines that would get them ready for lessons in the large pool. The whole Glen Hills Club effort was made worthwhile two summers after it opened when a member's child fell, unnoticed from a motorboat on Lake George. The frantic parents turned the boat around to follow their wake back and eventually found him swimming as he had just been taught in the Glen Hills pool.

### **GRADUATE SCHOOL...COURSE G1121**

My career plan in those days was clear. I would continue enjoying my work at GE, retire, then start a teaching career. Since college-level teaching requires a PhD degree, I began taking graduate courses at RPI under GE's tuition reimbursement program. By then I was travelling quite a lot, which gave me time to study but also forced me to miss lectures. It worked for two or three courses, after which I started course G1121 – "Linear Vector Space."

While I was trying to keep up both with graduate courses and my GE responsibilities, Bob McLachlan, a member of our car pool and father of one of Skip's friends, and a sailing enthusiast, proposed that each family in our neighborhood group build a small sail boat for having races on Ballston Lake. Bob moored a bigger sailboat there. The "Optimist Pram" was as simple as a boat can get. Its bottom flat, as are its sides, bow, and stern... simply cut from marine plywood and glued to an easy-to-build wooden frame. The mast is made from 2"x2" lumber; its sails just sections of 4' wide canvas glued to one-another. The gudgeons and pintels holding the rudder to the stern were made from the steel edges of discarded skis. We began building one in our basement to the immense excitement of Skip and Scott. Progress was very slow considering my work, travel, and attempts at graduate school. That graduate work was the only exception I made to a rule

I'd adhered to religiously; that I had only forty hours a week for sale to GE and would never bring work home. I never did.

Midway through RPI course G1121 and well behind in my homework, I gave up, said goodbye to RPI, and named the blue pram G1121. It got finished, joined the fleet, and I then built another one (red) so that each boy had his own. Every Saturday morning Ballston Lake saw about twenty such prams, racing a simple course according to normal racing rules. Those prams later saw service on Lake George before winding up as sandboxes.

Bob McLaughlan, having made his mark in the above cited youth sailing venture, then started building a real airplane in the basement of his house! ...In pieces of course, but only to realize too late that the wings were an inch or so too big to get out of his basement. After minor surgery, they emerged; the damage being repaired in his garage...in vain as it turns out. Once finished the entire airplane was loaded onto a trailer for transport and assembly at the Ballston Spa airport. But while driving up the Northway, one of the wings blew off the trailer and had to be rebuilt.

While work was progressing in his basement, Bob took flying lessons. By the time his plane stood completely assembled at the airport, he was ready for the first of several exercises, i.e. simply taxiing around the field. That went well but his maiden flight did not. He had so many things on his mind while racing down the runway into the wind for takeoff, he chose a path too close to the windsock, hit it with one wing, crash-landed and limped away from the wreckage lest it catch fire. His physical wounds mended well, though his ego did not. He never flew again.

### **A SHORT-LIVED BRIDGE CLUB**

As many young adults then, Jeanne and I enjoyed bridge. We played every other week with six couples, including the Pipers, the Hunts, and the Kagays. But all being very good friends, bridge time began to erode into chat time. Recognizing that, we put the cards away in favor of a new game. Before each get-together, the host and hostess selected a play, collected enough copies from the library to supply each of us, then assign parts. Initially quite timid in reciting parts, we quickly lost of inhibitions and did our parts with feelings and gestures. Delightful evenings were spent that way for several years.

### **SKI VENTURES**

In West Glenville, about twenty minutes' drive from us, was Ski Ventures, a hill steep enough for skiing which, with permission of the owner, was rigged with a rope tow driven by an old automobile engine. Ray Stratford introduced us to it in 1957 after which we taught Skip and Scott to ski there. One summer Ray and I tore down its dilapidated warming shack, replacing it with an A-frame building, complete with windows and doors...all segments of which were rescued from GE's discard yard. Ski Ventures was the venue for a comedy film Scott put together as a school project, "The great Ski Racer," in which end to end splicing of shot separate runs on various parts of the hill made the

slope look ten times its actual length. One scene showed an intent racer, speeding down the slope, stopping at one point to face a tree with his back to the camera, apparently relieving himself, after which he heads down the hill again approaching what is made to look like a large cliff... actually a small rock shelf. The film goes back and forth between the racer and a group of stationary bystanders whose faces first show fear... then horror as the racer approaches the "cliff," then flies over its face. The next film strip slowly pans up the trunk of a tree, repeating itself again and again, giving the impression that the tree is 200 feet tall. As it seems to reach the 100-foot point, the camera reveals the tip of a dangling ski pole...then, panning further up, a skier hanging from the tree's uppermost branches (actually, just four feet above ground.)

### **WALTER BARTHOLD SR. DIES**

We took Halloween seriously. On the first Halloween Skip was old enough to appreciate the ceremony (not quite three), I left the pumpkin-carving work I was sharing with him to answer the phone. It was my mother, informing me that my father had died of a heart attack while changing a flat tire on the same old Dodge I'd bought for almost nothing while in Indianapolis. He was driving through Heber Springs, not far from Eureka Springs, Arkansas where they then lived. Dad was just sixty-one years old. They had moved to Eureka Springs in 1952, having bought their first home – a small bungalow about three blocks (and 200 feet of elevation) from the town center. They were happy there; in the first home they had ever owned.

Dad smoked all his life, was slightly overweight, ate all the wrong foods, and never exercised except when (rarely) doing hard menial work. If graded on the likelihood of a heart attack, he would have scored very high. Yet his death was a terrible blow to me. Like many immigrants, he hoped to see his children do better than he had in life and lived to see all five graduate from college and go on to professional careers. Yet fulfillment of that hope, and I suspect his own sense of failure in life, made him feel somehow removed from us. Very cordial in phone calls, he seldom wrote and never came to visit us. His handwriting was like engraving...Spenserian script. I felt bad about his gradual isolation from us children and once wrote a very long letter, expressing love, appreciation, and admiration for his courage through very difficult years. Mother said he was deeply touched by that letter... received just two weeks before his heart attack.

His funeral was in a small Evangelical church not far from their house. Mother was courageous and took a lot of comfort from having all five of her children with her then. He was buried in the I.O.O.F. cemetery just outside Eureka Springs...Mother later buried next to him. After his death she elected to remain in their small Elk Street house. By then I was traveling a lot and often stopped to see her...fixing this or that and meeting her many friends. We knew she needed money and tried sending her checks, but she was too proud to cash them. Then I hit on an idea whereby Walter, Louise, and I would buy their property outside town, paying for it in monthly checks. The deal was struck and on my next visit, we went to visit her lawyer...an absolutely amazing man, half-way through his 90's. His office was in a dusty storefront – books and papers stacked in every possible corner. When the question of taxes came up, he walked from pile to pile, some with dates

going back to 1910. Then, sitting down to an ancient typewriter, he composed the deed *from memory*, reciting as he typed the history of the property. The monthly checks had paid for the property ten times over by the time we sold it, but mother was used to the checks by then. Oddly enough we sold it at a very large profit since Bull Shoals, a major hydro-electric power plant, was later built in that area, its reservoir diagonally bisecting our property, providing valuable shorefront lots.

## **SKI WEEKS**

In 1957 an advertisement from Mt. Snow in Vermont offered an entire week's skiing, including lodging, meals, and lessons, for quite a remarkably good price. Five couples joined Jeanne and I in signing up; Bill and Barbara Piper, Roy and Jeannette Hunt, Ray and Claire Stratford, and Marge and John Kaygay. Skip and Scott safely deposited with the Fretzs, Jeanne and I had a delightful time. That first trip's precedent was followed every March for six or eight years to come. The second year we all went to the Chalet Cochand, north of Montreal, the next after that, to the Grey Rocks Inn, not far from there.... then to Mt. Tremblant, and eventually to Stowe for several successive seasons. The third of these trips, and all trips thereafter, included children. Both Skip and Scott signed up for the racing program at Grey Rocks... both anxious for the end-of-the-week race. Skip was sick that morning, had no breakfast, but at the last moment got up, dragged himself across the road to the ski lift, and arrived at the starting gate in time to compete. He crossed the finish line, continued down the hill to the lodge and back to bed.

At Stowe we always stayed at the Mt. Meadows lodge on the road between Stowe village and the mountain. It was owned and by Larry and Harriet Heyers, as much unlike one another as people can get. Larry, tall, stooped, and grumpy, worked from before sunrise until after dinner seven days a week doing the laundry, ironing, plowing snow, sweeping, washing dishes, and whatever else was needed. Harriet had one artificial eye that wandered as she talked to you. She was very social, managed the books, and joined guests for cocktail hour with an oft-replenished glass of gin in her hand. We'd see her on the trails at Stowe too, waving her arms as though they were wings of a bird...no poles. Their son, Clifford, about six when we first went there, was very talkative, curious and kept charts of temperature, snow depth, etc. on the living room bulletin board. They had a dozen cats, none of which were allowed in the house, relegated to unheated boxes under the snow by the wood pile.

By the time we were annual visitors to The Ski Inn, I had taken up winter mountaineering and had done many of the Adirondack trails in winter on skis and snowshoes. Mountaineering skis allow one to either release the heels for climbing or to clamp them to the skis for downhill runs. My backpack had slits on either side to carry the skis while the snowshoes were in use. Each year at Stowe, I took off from behind the lodge on those skis, followed the base of a cliff for several miles, and then began the climb to a very high ridge that eventually looked out on Mt. Mansfield. It took the best part of a day to eventually merge with another trail leading down to the warming hut atop the Trapp property... and thence through the woods back to the lodge. At about the half-way mark on one such trip, while atop the ridge in about four feet of heavy snow, the binding on my

left ski came apart, the screws lost in the snow. Walking without skis in that snow depth was impossible. To move on I took the lace out of my boot, lashed the boot to the ski and then, by walking gingerly on one ski and sliding the other, I got back to the lodge just as dinner was being served. The day after we returned home, I had the pieces comprising bindings on each ski welded together.

## **PILOT KNOB, LAKE GEORGE**

Ray Stratford bought a lot on Lake George about 1956. It was atop "Goat Hill," almost as far north, on the East side of the lake, as the road goes...a bargain since the drop to Lake George from the road was very steep, there being no room at lake level for a house. Ray began building a house (himself) just fifteen feet from the road where the slope was slight.<sup>1</sup> A large deck projected from the house's first floor over the slope, supported by tall posts. A stairway, perhaps equivalent to four stories' drop, connected the house with a dock which eventually included a small boathouse. Being close friends of Ray and Claire, we spent a lot of time there...some of it helping Ray with the construction. Eventually the two optimist pram sailboats found their way there and were raced by Skip and Scott from the dock, around Dome Island and back.

Ray bought a used "Thistle" sailboat which we also got our share of time sailing - often joined by the Pipers. One year we joined a traditional end-of-the-season week-end race, Saturday's leg winding up at Black Mountain Point, north of the narrows. One of the larger boats, owned by Chet Sims and carrying a crew of three or four, took pleasure in bringing dozens of balloons to the race, filling them with water, and throwing them at boats bold enough to get within range. Being hit by bursts of water was not pleasant, the race being in late September when it was often cold.

After getting a bad dousing one year, we determined to get even the next...and did. That year we waited for a balloon attack on the first leg of the trip north to Black Mountain Point... but got none. To provoke an attack the next morning, we took a pitcher of water and threatened to empty it towards the Sims boat while maneuvering for the start. They laughed at the threat's futility but, as we hoped, took the bait, altered course to approach us, and threw a water balloon in our direction. At that point we pulled a full-size fire hose from the bilge of our small boat, the end of which sported a large brass nozzle. Holding it firmly, we let go with a stream of water that soaked the decks (and crew) of the Sims boat from a fifty feet away.

The Sims' crew, thoroughly soaked, was astonished... as was the rest of the fleet. Weeks before the race, anticipating an encounter with the Sims, we had mounted a 100- gallon home water tank, on its side, down in the hull where it couldn't be seen... then pressurized it with a scuba tank. The water tank was connected by an oversize globe valve to a nozzle that had been designed and built under Bill Piper's direction, at the GE research laboratory.

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<sup>1</sup> *That house was torn down about 2010*

Anticipating an escalation of hostilities the following year, Ray and I designed a long-distance water balloon mortar using a motorcycle engine one piston of which would receive compressed air while another threw the balloon. A disarmament conference ended the project, so it was never tried.

The Stratford's house had a bulletin board on the wall over a sofa next to the front door. It displayed a score sheet on times taken from sofa – to the top of Buck Mt. – back to the sofa. Adults like ourselves soon gave up when seeing the times our teenage children were logging.

We spent many a weekend at the Stratford camp, several times making the swim from his dock in Andrews Bay to nearby Phelps Island.

### **OXYGEN ENRICHMENT, INC. AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY**

It was while having a breakfast of crepes, Ray Stratford's specialty, that I first heard the story of Dome Island, a nature preserve closed to the public, just a half mile out into the Lake in front of the Stratford's camp. I was impressed with what the Nature Conservancy was about. Through a long chain of events, introduction to the conservancy resulted in my later becoming Chairman of the Adirondack Nature Conservancy ...a story worth the telling.

About 1977 I was once introduced to Dick Blackmer...then in the process of negotiating a separation from GE to commercialize a technology he'd help develop...a membrane through which, if air was forced, favored the passage of oxygen over other elements in ambient air. Oxygen normally 20% of ambient air was 40% of the output through the membrane. Blackmer recognized this as a boon to persons suffering from emphysema... safer than commercially available "pressure-swing absorbers which produced pure oxygen, a fire risk... especially for smokers. GE agreed to license the patents to Dick, and I agreed to be on their board and bought 3,000 shares for something like \$10,000 to help get it started. A building was rented in Schenectady and after some month's work developing a prototype, the process of FDA approval was initiated. Some good clinical test results encouraged the board to register the stock on the NASDAQ over-the-counter exchange. That was in 1980, as attested by a miniature, plastic enclosed replica of the registration filing which still adorns the shelf above my Desk. However even by the time it was offered to the public at \$30 a share, there were signs that things weren't going so well. We saw weaknesses in Dick's ability to manage the business, and, further, FDA approval was not forthcoming as promptly as we hoped.

At someone's suggestion, we'd taken what we then called the "Transpirator" to Saratoga Springs, NY, where a very expensive foal was having problems breathing. Expecting a struggle to get him to breath the enriched air, we fed it to the bottom of a small bucket expecting to force that bucket over his nose and strap it into place. He was smarter than that. Once he understood what that bucket did, he struggled to keep his nose as deep into it as he could. The colt survived, and the transpirator was shown to help full grown horses prevent lung bleeding too, sometimes a painful result of trying too hard to run fast...and

unfortunately a lesson to forgo that attempt. Since this seemed like a good market to start in, and to expand our shrinking capital, we sold the "Equine Transpirator" rights to a company that eventually did very well with it.

The stock I had, worth a great deal of money at the NASDAQ market price, was lettered stock, i.e. stock that couldn't be sold for several years after it's initial public offering. But because I could smell the company's failure in the air, I wanted to get rid of my shares. Not being allowed to sell my shares, I realized that tax laws would give me quite a benefit if I donated them to a charity... but which charity? The Dome Island tale, having impressed me, I instructed my broker to transfer all my stock to the Adirondack Nature Conservancy. In theory the sale restriction that encumbered the stock in my hands, should have been carried forward to the new owner. I waited to see.

A few weeks later, I got a fat parcel by registered mail from a brokerage house in New York and was astonished to see that it contained thousands of shares of AT&T. I phoned the broker the next day to thank him for his generosity. He was overwhelmed with relief; his office having been turned upside trying to find out who'd been sent them in error. He flew to Schenectady the next day to retrieve the shares and deliver the transferred OECO shares, remarkably *without any trading restriction*. A few days after sending them to the Conservancy I got a call from Tim Barnett, the astonished CEO of the Adirondack chapter who, by complete surprise, had been given a major boost in his annual donations. Shortly after that I was asked to join their board on which I served for about ten years...three of them as chairman.

During that tenure, Tim Barnett and I very creatively engineered the equivalent of a merger of the Adirondack Land Conservancy and the Adirondack Land Trust, the former focused on preserving rare habitats and species, the latter on scenic vistas and wilderness. Since the former was a chapter of national organization and the latter a semi-autonomous organization, they could not be legally merged. Instead we simply elected a common board of directors for the two organization, had our board meetings simultaneously, and hired out all operational functions of the land trust to the Conservancy staff. This worked very effectively for over twenty years until the two organizations were forced to separate and have separate staff, thus forfeiting the efficiencies of joint operation... this due principally to interference of the New York State office of the Nature Conservancy

Tim Barnett, President of the Adirondack Nature Conservancy during my tenure as board chair, was given a one-year leave of absence shortly after that tenure. He chose to visit Kazakhstan whose national parks were in disarray after the break-up of the Soviet Union. On a long horseback trip up one of the mountains, riding some minutes behind his companions on the way down, his horse stumbled, causing Tim to fall off and break his back. His companions ultimately turned around, rode back up the trail and found him unconscious. While one stayed with him, the others raced down the mountain to get a helicopter flown in to rescue him. It was hours before a Russian army helicopter got him aboard and started the shaky ride to a Kazak hospital. After a day or two, he was evacuated to Switzerland where it became clear he'd lost the use of his legs but retained limited use of his arms. An incredibly positive person, he began using the earliest voice-

to-writing software, Drag n' Dictate, resumed work as a consultant for the Conservancy and as of this writing, in 2019, is still involved in their work. He was replaced by Mike Carr, at that point the first CEO of the then newly organized Lake George Land Conservancy.

## 10 PARKWOOD DRIVE BURNT HILLS

My progress in in GE and our economies in expenditures eventually accumulated considerable savings. Jeanne's college roommate had married a very talented finance major at Northwestern who was then working in Chicago as a research broker...the "experts" who decide what stocks to buy. On a business trip to Chicago I met with him to get some investment tips. At his recommendation I bought shares in a Mississippi barge company and shares in Aluminum, Ltd., a Canadian manufacturer of Aluminum. Shortly thereafter the barge company lost some its barges in a storm, sending the stock down to half the price I paid. The aluminum stock dropped steadily before I sold it at a 25% loss, whereupon I confined my investments to a GE stock investment plan and two large purchases where I felt I had a special insight, specifically:

1. The accident (trivial) at Pennsylvania Power & Light's nuclear plant caused a major drop in their share price. Knowing it would recover to its normal value, I bought shares and waited. It did.
2. At one stage in PTI's early growth we bought one of the earliest 32-bit computers and, astonished at its power, I made a major share purchase, watched its value rise, and sold at a multiple of my purchase price.

The above notwithstanding, Jeanne and I agreed we could afford a larger house and began a search leading to the last available vacant lot on Parkwood Drive in Burnt Hills, about two miles north of where we then lived. The existing houses were all on beautifully wooded half-acre lots. We loved the lot but not the idea of building in the middle of it, having neighbors so close on either side. I then discovered that all the lots on Parkwood Drive backed into a fifty-acre holding owned by a man who ran a local gas station and auto repair service. I also learned that builder who had originally owned all the lots on Parkwood drive, Kenneth Sack, had wisely retained a narrow lot capable of providing an access road to that fifty-acre holding...anticipating he'd one day buy some or all of it to extend his development. I then undertook two projects in parallel: (1) negation with Sack for building our house and (2) negotiation with the owner of the back land to buy four acres behind our house...a slice wide enough to block the road-access lot owned by Sack. Having succeeded in the second negotiation, I signed a contract for home construction and drove some stakes in the ground to locate the house, atop the slight rise from Parkwood Drive and well behind existing houses on that street. When I met with Sack to show him the location, he pointed out that my location was well behind the lot boundary, whereupon I told him I'd purchased land *behind* the old lot line, leaving out the fact that my holding was wide enough to block his access to the back land over the access strip he held.

GE had a staff of professional designers, among them, Al Marchand, an architect who I'd befriended through some GE projects. Recalling his mentioning interest in authentic New England architecture, we engaged him to design our house. He was a perfectionist. Clapboard siding was mounted to the outer walls, rough side out. The builder was told to remove the upper frame from all the second story windows before mounting them directly against the plank atop the outer walls. There was to be no obvious opening to allow a fan to draw air through the attic. Instead the clapboards were wedged slightly open over the section where air came in and left so that one couldn't notice any opening from the outside. A beam extended out from the house over the garage doors, allowing the lifting of heavy furniture into an attic storeroom over the garage.

Our home on Sherwood lane sold quickly, leaving us homeless while construction began. We found a cottage for rent on Ballston Lake, nearby...adequate but rather primitive and without potable water.

Our house-plan called for a family room between the kitchen and the formal living room. We wanted it to have a beamed ceiling and learned of a state trooper in Galway who had some old chestnut beams for sale. He was a remarkable man and, while showing me through his basement workshop, I noticed a very large and intricately carved sign, leaning against the basement wall saying: "Galway Presbyterian Church." I remarked how fine it looked, and he said he'd abandon it after discovering he'd misspelled Presbyterian. The beams were delivered, but the builder immediately called me to his house to declare them too narrow to support the second floor, warning that dishes would rattle in the kitchen whenever someone walked on the second floor. We argued. He said he'd go ahead only if I signed a release absolving him of any consequences. The design I had in mind used extra-thick 1¼ inch plywood floor planks, supported by beams on three-foot centers. I had previously counselled a friend at GE's General Engineering Laboratory and been give some points on beam theory... specifically that the "stiffness" of a beam was proportional to the *cube* of the thickness. Thus if the 1¼ inch plywood were tightly bonded to the old beams that were about 5" thick, the increase in stiffness would be proportional to  $(5+1.25)^3$  inches, not 5 inches... an improvement of about 2:1. This benefit, I was told, required very close bonding between the beams and the plywood. Nails would have to be very closely spaced.

The following morning, with both arithmetic and sketches in hand, I told the builder to go ahead but to use very large nails, on 2" centers, to bond the plywood to the beams. I signed the release and he proceeded only after warning me that the mistake would be very expensive to fix. When finished you could jump rope on the second floor without even rattling the dishes in the kitchen.

We put a large fireplace in the family room and made sure the builder bought used brick to make it look old. We should also have had the carpenter do the masonry instead of a mason. The mason made it look too perfect. The family room housed a TV set, Jeanne and I both having an almost religious objection to TV in the living room after our visits to her family's home in Bradford where the TV went on first thing in the morning and off just before bedtime.

The living room, dining room, entry foyer, and stairway to the second floor of our new house had hip-raised paneling which I cut with a table saw I'd purchased. The living room, with teal-colored wall-to-wall carpeting, had its own fireplace with a black slate hearth we'd ordered from Pennsylvania. The second floor had a large master bedroom and bath plus two smaller bedrooms, one for Skip and one for Scott, the two of them served by a second bath. A door led to a storage area over the two-car garage.

We'd specified a 12' x 30' deck behind the house, accessed from the family room. When the builder observed that a large beech tree would have to come down to build it, we asked that the deck be built with a hole big enough to leave the tree in place. I recall twice having to enlarge that hole as the tree grew bigger and, a great many years later visiting the house, noticed the tree had outgrown reasonable deck accommodation and had been removed.

Our back lawn sloped slightly away from the house and was bordered by woods on three sides...woods that soon had trails as we hiked or skied to various favorite destination within them, including a pond about a mile north of us, beside which was an abandoned cabin. With our first winter in that house, at the time of the winter Olympic in Grenoble, Switzerland, Skip and Scott built a "Little Grenoble" racecourse on the slight slope from our lawn down to wetter ground fifty yards behind the house

I was dismayed one day by seeing snowmobiles driving through the normally quiet and peaceful woods several hundred feet behind our house. Hating snowmobiles with a passion and, having been told that ordinary clothesline, cut into short sections and strewn over their path would clog the tracks, I deliberately laced the path with that deterrent. The offenders seemed to get the message.

Both boys were then on a ski-team, training at Willard Mountain, southeast of Saratoga Springs.

### **SCHOOL BOARD TENURE**

In the early 1960's our best friend, Bill Piper, and I were both asked to run for Burnt Hills School board posts and were both elected. It was just as the middle school on Lake Hill Road, near where we lived, was being commissioned. The board's first challenge was in finding a principle. I recall our traveling somewhere down-state to interview one of the candidates, Richard O'Roarke, who greatly impressed us, who we eventually hired and whose name that school now bears.

It was an interesting assignment and spanned the period when merit-based teacher compensation system was successfully introduced. I resigned after two terms; the time demands conflicting with my constant travel. Bill served yet another term.

## **SKIP AND SCOTT GROW UP**

Skip and Scott got along very well as brothers, seeing themselves as buddies rather than competitors even though they did have separate friends, Skip tending toward music, Scott towards sports. Skip's music serious interest began when we bought Scott a guitar for Christmas. Scott feigned excitement with it, but soon put it aside, Skip picking it up, never to put it down again. He and his friends organized a band, after which he got a great education in music by putting to paper the most recent hits so that he and his band members could play their parts.

Skip got serious about music, ultimately getting his master's degree and making that a successful life-long profession. Scott got serious about skiing, was soon being transported to ski-team practice, first at Willard Mountain and then at West Mountain in Queensbury...ultimately graduating as an engineer and forming his own company devoted to snowmaking and trail design.

## **INTO GE MANAGEMENT**

My work with GE led to some new discoveries on how to protect power systems from failure during certain switching operations (ferro-resonance) and led to my first published technical paper, presented before the American Institute of Electrical Engineering (AIEE) at their New York meeting in 1956. It was, to my astonishment, awarded a first prize for papers presented that year. Scarcely a year went by after that without my having at least one such paper presented before that society and its eventual successor organization, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, IEEE. My manager at GE took pains to get me involved in industry groups and arranged for me attend my first meeting of the IEEE's international equivalent, Congres International des Grande Reseaux Electricque (CIGRE). I ultimately got involved in several US and international standards-writing groups as well and would one day serve chairman of CIGRE committees as well as president of the Power Engineering Society, a major division of IEEE. As of 2020 I have authored or co-authored roughly 135 papers or articles, the last of which, at this writing, was presented in November of 2019.

The Transient Network Analyzer kept me busy for three or four years, after which I was assigned projects on other analyzers as well...all primitive by today's standards. The AC Network analyzer, for example was a room about 25' x 150' which housed a long bank of similarly constructed electrical equivalents (in miniature) of high voltage electric power lines. A utility would reserve the analyzer for a week or two, have us connected the line segments to model their system (which might straddle several states), then turn on small equivalents of generating plants to see how the power distributed itself, what lines were likely to be overloaded, where the voltage would be low, etc.... all to aid in planning of future facilities. In today's world a system 100 times that size can be more accurately modeled on a computer program, achieving result in seconds that took a week and support of three people on the analog models of the 1950's.

A mechanical differential analyzer was used to solve transient problems in pre-computer days. GE's was housed in a room perhaps 25'x 25', was comprised of a large tray in which various gears and cogs could be arranged to solve differential equations... solvable in seconds on today's computer with any of hundreds of computer programs.

The 1950's saw a rapid increase in attempts to move all system simulation problems to the earliest digital computers. I recall secretaries carrying tray-sized boxes of cards they'd punched to a "Card Program Calculator," one of the earliest versions of digital computation.

## **PROMOTION TO MANAGEMENT**

My GE career took a strange turn about 1962. Berger Johnson, my supervisor in GE's analytical engineering group, was a congenial man with an incredible intuitive understanding of power transmission lines, many papers to his credit, and very little interest and even less talent in managing people. I was called into the office of *his* manager, Seldon Cray, and offered Berger's job as manager... with him then reporting to me. I had never considered being part of management... much less the awkwardness of that reversal in roles. I was given a week to think it over.

Jeanne and her parents thought me crazy to hesitate. But I was absorbed in projects typified by those cited above and had others I was anxious to pursue. Writing papers, being involved in committees, being recognized in the industry, taking part in both US and international working groups...gave me immense fulfillment. I was in love with my work. The prospect of giving up that fun weighed heavily on me, as did the moral responsibility involved in management. By then I had seen the influence a manager has on the lives of people under his direction... whether they are recognized and given opportunities for growth, how well they are paid, and their families supported...even whether they continue in their job that supports their family. Three engineers in our group had been let go some months previously as part of an overall GE staff reduction effort. Was I prepared to implement moves like that?

Nevertheless, after some sleepless nights, I began to think of the management prospect in a different way. To begin with I had many more technical ideas than I could possibly pursue by myself. As a manager I could make them all happen. I recognized opportunities that I couldn't pursue as an individual but could as a manager. I saw organizational problems that I could correct and, in the end, realized that the ability to affect people's lives for the better would be an exciting and fulfilling experience. I accepted and was put in charge of the power transmission engineering section with about fifteen direct reports, including my former manager. I'd successfully argued that his salary should remain unchanged but that he be made to understand he'd not benefit from raises for some time.

That management switch taught me an invaluable lesson. While the announcement to my former boss was initially a shock to him, he came to realize that (1) he didn't enjoy the

management side of his work and (2) he wasn't cut out for it. After overcoming the initial embarrassment, he felt more comfortable. In the many years of management experience to follow, the rare times I had to reprimand, demote or discharge people, usually led to the same result...initial disappointment followed by eventual relief that the time of pretending to do a job that one couldn't do was over, and that some new, more stable equilibrium was going to result.

In moving to my new (now private) office my first step was to talk individually and at length to everyone under my charge. I'd already developed some ideas on how to manage and for starters I made two things clear to everyone.

First, that, while my office was always open to them, they were *never* to bring me a problem without having at least thought it through to the point where they could at least suggest a solution.

Second, that I would recognize and reward excellence and work to promote anyone who was ready for more responsibility either within my group or, if no logical promotion was available, see to it that they found opportunities elsewhere within GE.

My first campaign within management ranks had nothing to do with technology. At least half of the work undertaken by the group I managed, was done in response to questions raised by electric utilities to help planning of their systems. This was done for no charge, the theory being that helping them would generate a disproportionate return in equipment sales. Thus, electric utility planners, at a reasonably low level in their organizational could pose questions or authorize studies with our help. My suggestion: Charge them plenty for our services...extra for our analyzers. My rationale: we had a limited budget for original work, the income would triple that budget. It took me six months to win the argument, but the results were astonishing. The demand for our business jumped. With pricing in place, utility planners who wanted work done, had to get budget approval from a relatively high level and, to do so, had to extoll our excellence as a technical resource. Putting a price on our services made it more valuable in their eyes....to an economist, a beautiful example of negative elasticity.

## **UX CONFERENCES**

In 1952 GE got the idea of holding bi-annual "Utility Executive" (UX) conferences... ostensibly to present new insights into the industry's future, advanced announcements of equipment, etc. They were three days in length, hosted in a luxurious resort setting, and lavishly done. Special music was written for them, professional actors hired for skits that were interspersed with talks by GE specialists. I was a speaker in two of them, charged with touting our advances in high voltage transmission and transmission equipment. It was a big deal...for which I was assigned a speech coach. After reading him a test script, I recall him saying how awful I sounded and sending me home with a voice recorder. He asked me to read it just as I'd done for him and play it back. I did so, and was ashamed at how dull it sounded. He then asked me to read it while exaggerating both pitch and

volume to the point where, to me, it would seem silly. I did so...then played it back. It was perfect. The next rehearsal earned me his compliments. I still have, somewhere, a 78-rpm record of one such conference, including my speech.

While I should have been proud to be part of those UX conferences, I recall being terribly depressed at the second one, once my speech was done. I felt I didn't belong where I was and put my thoughts to paper, that paper going into a folder I thought Jeanne would never find. I recall finding it later, with her scribbled corrections to the English.

Something seemed to be missing in my life and I felt it very seriously. I knew how to do my job and had a good future with GE. Perhaps that's what bothered me. The success in turning GE's engineering services into a profit-making business had whet my appetite for entrepreneurship. How I could have been so bold amazes me now, but shortly after that conference I went to my boss, J.J.W. Brown and his boss, Robert Ames, a GE vice-president, and told them plainly and simply (in writing) that (a) I wanted to manage a for-profit business (b) I hoped that could be within GE but if not, it would be outside, and (c) I wanted to make this change within a year. I had in mind an equipment business at the time. They took my pronouncement as a fair challenge. The drama that ensued is addressed in another chapter.