Honk



by Edward S. Lowenstern

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As written by Edward S. Lowenstern
Chicago, Illinois

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Chapter 1. Introduction

What will follow are a series of very personal recollections, reminiscences, "war stories," and opinions. I suppose that you should know a little about me before you begin to read them so that I can be put into some sort of context. I'm Edward S. Lowenstern. I was born, grew up and still live in Chicago. Until about 1988, most of my life was spent in Hyde Park, which is a neighborhood of Chicago. I went to a grade school named after a rich Chicago Jewish merchant, Charles Kozminski. I went to Hyde Park High School and to the University of Chicago -- all of them within walking distance of 5224 Ingleside Avenue where I lived virtually all my young life.

It wasn't until 1949 that my parents moved from Ingleside Avenue to an address on east Hyde Park Boulevard and then, a few years later -- in 1954 -- to the Promontory Apartments at 5530 South Shore Drive.

I was born on June 13, 1926, a Sunday that was filled with thunderstorms. I entered the world in what was then called Lying-In Hospital which was at 51st Street and Grand Boulevard. At the time, it was loosely affiliated with the University of Chicago Hospital -- then called Billings Hospital. My parents, Johanna and Milton, brought me home to 5234 Ingleside, an address from which they moved in 1927 to another similar building a few doors north on the street.

Our city block was one of the few that had no alleys. Our back yard was barren sand -- there was no grass and no one even tried to plant flowers. And it was really too narrow to play baseball or any other athletic sport. We found alternatives. We could dig in the rocky sand to play marbles and we could play in basement stairwells and create trenches for war games. But to get any real exercise, we had to go to Jackson Park and that required a long trek. Until I was much older, I had to rely on my parents to take me to anywhere there might be grass.

On September 16, 1931, my mother gave birth to her second child, a boy whom my folks named Bernard. The "B" in his name was derived from Baer's first name. I enjoyed having a baby brother and, in fact, the first time anything was published under my name was a poem I wrote about my brother being "my little shadow." But Bernard was not a healthy child and, in January of 1933, he contracted pneumonia and died. It was a day that affected my relationship with my parents, particularly mother, for the rest of her life.

My maternal grandparents lived a half block away at 5145 Ingleside Avenue. Their apartment was on the third floor and had a different layout than the one I lived in. In their place, there was a front bedroom. The master bedroom was down a long hallway and the dining room and kitchen were at the rear of the apartment. When I stayed over at their place, I had the luxury of sleeping "alone." My grandfather Steinthal (which, incidentally, is my full

middle name) doted on me. Except for the brief period when my brother was alive, I was his only grandchild and he enjoyed being a grandpa.

My paternal grandfather, Baer had been born with the name Baruch. He changed his first name when he arrived in the U.S. A widower, he lived with his oldest daughter and her husband, Minnie and Herman Samuels. They also lived a half block from my parents at the corner of 53rd and Ingleside. Baer was reputedly a very learned man, but he was old and ill when I could finally get to know him and our contact was very limited. I can remember him and his cronies playing the German card game called "Skat" which is played with a lot of shouting and swearing. You could tell the level of their enjoyment of the game by the decibel level coming from the dining room of the Samuel's apartment.

The recollections that I have written recount the time I spent during the 1930's and early '40's as a grade and high school student. My experiences at the University, particularly as an undergraduate in the "college" were strongly influenced by World War II.

At the end of each undergraduate year, a six hour "comprehensive" examination tested students on their knowledge of what were called survey classes. My first such exam took place in Ida Noyes Gym, across the street from Rockefeller Chapel. It was on June 6, 1944 -- "D Day." The chapel carillon was chiming regularly that day to celebrate the invasion on Europe. I was trying to remember nine months of study in the biological sciences. Fortunately, the exam was graded on a curve so I passed in about the middle of the curve. Everyone else was equally distracted by the noise and the excitement of the chiming. It was only a week later, on June 13, that I registered for the draft.

Manpower was in short supply and I fully expected to be drafted into the army. It didn't happen. A combination of my allergies and the army's reluctance to take a chance on my sneezing while on a patrol in enemy territory caused them to classify me as 4-F. That kept me out of the service but didn't affect my willingness to help in the war effort. I involved myself every way I could while, at the same time, taking multiple courses at the University.

In fact, I completed five academic year's classes in three calendar years by taking extra courses every quarter and by going to school during the summers I was there -- 1943-44-45 and 46 until I graduated with a Master's Degree in Business Administration in August of 1946. I was just past my 20th birthday. One advantage of my graduation that early was that I was able to get a jump on millions of returning veterans who came back into the job market at the same time as I did. Many attended school and didn't complete their degree studies until two or three years after I finished classes. That gave me a slight advantage.

One disadvantage of getting finished by the age of 20 was that I was too young for consideration for many of the jobs that were available. I first got a job through the Jewish Vocational Service who sent me to a firm called

Mercury Records. Jerry Fisher and Irwin Steinberg ran the new company having themselves just gotten out of service. I was given the job of comptroller of their local distribution company at 839 South Wabash Avenue. Because of the intensity of my study, I had finished courses in municipal and governmental accounting and in corporate consolidation only a few weeks before starting on the new job. Unfortunately, I had pretty much forgotten basic bookkeeping. The "comptroller's" job consisted of keeping the company books -- longhand with no computers, no bookkeeping machinery and, maybe, an adding machine to help with the process. I quickly had to relearn basics.

Mercury Records was in tight financial straits. They had two recording stars on their roster -- one was a cowboy singer named Rex Allen. The other, a crooner named Tony Martin. Their other record releases were less than stellar and they needed money. They turned to National Acceptance Company, a commercial finance company and a subsidiary of a larger factoring company, Walter E. Heller and Company, as a source of funds. NAC would regularly send Herman Fowler to audit the books of Mercury to be sure that appropriate invoices were paid directly to NAC. I worked with Fowler and we got along well.

Within a few weeks after meeting me, Fowler asked me if I wanted to change jobs and work for the finance company. The decision was easy since he offered me a $10 weekly raise. $10 a week seems like very little, but my initial salary was $65/week and $10 more was a significant percentage. I left Mercury on good terms and learned how to be an auditor for the finance company. It was my first encounter with the money business. It also was a better use of my formal education.

That's how I became an adult -- though there were a lot of experiences and events that shaped my personality. The stories that follow are some of them. They'll help you know who and what I am -- and how I got that way.

Chapter 2. Prologue

Family Background

In Jewish tradition, parents are instructed not to name children after living relatives. Yet, I was named after my Grandfather, Edward Steinthal. It wasn't until many years after he had died that I learned that his name at birth was Joseph Edward Steinthal. My mother had not violated Jewish tradition, though I don't think she ever considered it when it came to giving me a name. Ed Steinthal came to America in 1885. He was going on15 and trying to avoid the call to service from the Kaiser. Military life was not pleasant in those years, especially for Jewish youngsters of post-Bar Mitzvah age. Having gone through the ceremony and, when his brothers in New York finally sent for him, his parents were quick to send him from their home town of Mogendorf in Hesse-Darmstadt to Bremen and to a boat headed for New York.

In New York, three of his brothers, Albert, Rafael and Hermann were waiting for him. He had already learned something about cutting meat in Germany since his father was a "broker," buying meat from farmers and delivering it to stores in town for resale. Ed moved on to Chicago and married in about 1890. His wife died 1895 -- something that was one of the secrets buried in the family closet. He remarried a year later to Nanni Gerst who had come to Chicago from southern Germany -- probably Munich -- and in 1899, my mother was born.

Nanni was one of six sisters living in Chicago. There was Sophie (Pauly.) Hanscha (Hirsch,) Yetta (Strauss,) Lena (Lorsch,) and Minna (Strauss.) The girls established themselves as seamstresses. In those years when a society family was planning a wedding, they would hire a team of seamstresses to come into their house and prepare the trousseau, The sewers made all new clothes and then embroidered the bride-to-be's new monogram on everything -- from towels to pantaloons. They designed and sewed the wedding dress. They monogrammed table cloths and napkins. In later years, my grandmother still enjoyed sewing and was able to alter clothing without a problem. She had an ancient treadle operated Singer sewing machine which was always ready to start sewing.

The Gerst sisters were much in demand and their skills became known throughout society's upper crust. Eventually, they began to lose interest in sewing and started to get married. Each of them, in turn married a butcher. Toward the last years of her life, Nanni suffered a stroke. It impaired her speech and it left the left side of her mouth sagging. She was very conscious of these things and retreated inside her apartment and went out only when it was absolutely necessary. Her attitude was not bitter but she didn't want to be the object of derision and certainly didn't want to answer questions about her facial condition.

Baer Lowenstern is very much a mystery to me. I have a few recollections of him and some anecdotal stories I heard, principally from Margaret Rosenbaum, his youngest daughter. Baer was born in 1856 and arrived in America with a family of three children in about 1886 or 1887. Subsequently, his wife, Amelia, had two more children -- my father, Milton and Aunt Margaret. The three who arrived with him were Minnie, Julius and Gustave. Gus died during the 1918 flu epidemic but I knew all the others.

Of that entire group, only my father and Julius had any children and I had one first cousin, Nanette, now deceased. At birth, Baer was born and given the name of Baruch. That name was changed on arrival at Ellis Island. His wife, Amelia, had the same name as his mother whose maiden name was Weinberg. His wife was also a Weinberg, though a second cousin of his mother's. Korbach, where the family originated, was a very small town. Baer's mother also arrived in America. Her passport shows that she had been born in 1829. My knowledge of family history goes back no further than that, though I don't know when the spelling of the family name was changed and an umlauted "ë" was dropped to change the spelling from Loëwenstern to Lowenstern. The origins of the name are unknown, though I suspect that in the late 1700's when surnames were mandated, the family used Jewish symbolism of the Lion of Judah and the Star of David, joined them and created the name which translates as Lion Star.

A couple of years after Margaret was born, Amelia Lowenstern died. Baer remarried a widow named Gundlefinger and continued in an unhappy marriage until she also died. She brought three sons to the marriage and my father had to compete with the sons of his stepmother for any attention. Following the death of their mother, the boys were moved in with other members of their mother's family. Minnie, who was in her late teens when her mother died, took on the chore of raising and caring for the younger children.

Julius married Irene Weil and lived his life out in Hyde Park. I know he always wanted to have a son, but Irene was convinced that one child was enough. I benefited as a result of this attitude because Jul always invited me to the Father/Son events at his Temple. Jul and my father had gone into business together after the First World War. They became "jobbers" of children's clothing. Irene expected better things of her husband and Jul sold his interest in Lowenstern Brothers to my father in about 1923, the year my parents got married. Irene and Johanna were both strong-willed women who never got along well. After Irene's death, Nanette came to Chicago with the primary objective of learning who her family was. She told me that she wanted to confirm or refute her mother's account of the family and found that her mother had accentuated the negative aspects of the Lowenstern family and distorted the nature of the members of it. She felt she had been cheated out of good, solid family relationships because of her mother's attitudes.

Margaret married Art Rosenbaum and they had no children. They lived for a time in Detroit and then moved back to Chicago where Art went to

work in a supervisory job at the massive Link Belt factory on the south side. Margaret became active in the Temple sisterhood and eventually became its president. In their later years, they moved to the Drexel Home, a retirement home operated by the Jewish Federation.

Minnie married Hyman (known as Herman) Samuels. Minnie was a huge woman weighing 350 or 400 pounds in her heyday. Herman was a slight, short man who weighed perhaps 125 pounds. Minnie attended to her father's needs during his later years as Herman made a living as a traveling salesman working for my father. Herman was a standing joke in that he serviced the smallest of stores in the most remote rural areas of the Midwest. His orders, mailed in from the road, were frequently for quantities of less than a dozen of a given item. Herman's old Ford automobiles would be driven hundreds of thousands of miles before they finally expired. I can remember on one occasion, Herman was in South Bend Indiana when he had a heart attack. It was necessary to transport him to Chicago by ambulance and it fell on me to pick up his car and drive it back to Chicago. I went to South Bend by train, found the car and, with great difficulty, drove the junker back to Chicago. After his death, we learned that Herman had been abusive toward Minnie.

Baer was not an outgoing person. He had begun life in America as a dairyman but soon found work at the stockyards, working for Swift and Company. According to Margaret, he was a highly cultured man, reciting Goethe in German, reading the philosophers and the poets of Europe and engaging in intellectual conversation with his cronies. I can recall visiting him at Minnie's apartment where he lived. On a Sunday afternoon when he would take time from his game of Skat -- a German originated card game he would spend some time with me. When he returned to the game, the players would resume shouting at each other and it sounded to my ears as though they were planning some sort of mayhem. It was all part of the game.

Baer enjoyed going to the corner of 55th Street and Cottage Grove at the entrance to Washington Park and sunning himself on a favorite park bench. My mother instructed Minnie Harder, my nursemaid, to take me to visit my Grandfather. While there, under no particular supervision, I ran toward my Grandfather and hit my head on the corner of the seat of the wooden park bench. A half dozen stitches later at home, I recovered from the accident but still carry a one inch scar over my right eye.

Baer was able to write and read English well and, after his death, the family discovered a lovely note he had left them in lieu of a will. He asked that any assets he might have be distributed equally among his children. He thanked them for the attention and support they had given him during his several illnesses.

One reason that I had so little contact with him was the fact that Baer was not well. In 1935, the year he died, I was nine and saw him only infrequently. I can remember him suffering from some sort of ear infection and having his left ear swathed in bandages. He was 79 years old when he passed

away and I have always regretted that I didn't know him better. I can remember visiting a funeral home at 47th and Ingleside when he died and know he is buried in a cemetery on Chicago's west side. It is operated by a charitable organization to which he belonged, called the Free Sons of Israel. Lying next to him are the two Amelias. He is being well cared for.

Families are fragile things. Memories of them are often shrouded in the mist of time. There were certainly family arguments. Irene didn't get along with Johanna or Margaret and only tolerated Minnie. Lena Lorsch considered herself better than her sisters and had little to do with them socially because of Simon's business successes. But the cousins always seemed to get on well. Roy and Charlie Hirsch were always close to my mother. So was Sophie Hasenbusch, Yetta's daughter who lived in St. Joseph Missouri and whose husband was in the furniture business there. Mike and Harold Steinthal lived in New York city and operated a company called the West Side Beef Company. They visited Chicago frequently along with another New York cousin, Stella, and spent time at our house.

A frequent visitor to Chicago was Milton Steinthal, a great nephew of my Grandfather. He was a salesman for the Washington Infant Knitwear Company and did business with my father. I can remember him always staying at the Palmer House in the loop. Milton's only son, Morton, was killed during the D-Day invasion of Europe.

As to the Lowenstern family that remained in Europe, all died in the Holocaust. Those included the parents of my two surviving cousins, Lore in Israel and Ilse in Skokie, Illinois. Their mother was a Lowenstern and the sister of one of the refugees who made it to America in the 1930's -- Martha Hagen. On my mother's side, all that I had any knowledge of survived the war. My Grandfather Steinthal's sister was Lena Gottschalk. She had been a successful designer and boutique milliner in Paris before the war and lived out her days there as an old woman. After the war, we had a visit from her granddaughter, Lore who was a Parisienne. She spent a couple of days in Chicago and then disappeared. I never heard from her again, though I recall receiving a death notice announcing the passing of Lena Gottschalk. Lena's son, Arthur also escaped to Chicago before the war with his wife. Hansie and their two children, Helmut and Erica. Arthur was a wine merchant and had a tough time making a living selling wines in a depression wracked Chicago.

There were other more distant relatives and families. The Helys, the Whiteblooms, the Solomons, the Pfaelzers, and the New York branches including the Latz family. I knew them but was never close to those elements of the family.

Remembering Ed Steinthal and the 1927 Cadillac

Sunday didn't begin until the doorbell rang at about 9:00. Up the stairs to our second floor apartment would climb Ed Steinthal, usually dressed in a

greatcoat and a homburg hat. For a three or four year old, he was an impressive figure. He would graciously take a cup of coffee and maybe a piece of toast. Invariably, he would present the small boy a $10 dollar bill, or on some special occasion, a $10 gold coin. His accent was very German and his manners were European bred. But, in many ways, he was a rough hewn tradesman. At times, his temper was short, but he did know how to convey love by actions and deeds.

But the fun would begin a little later when the boy was dressed for outdoors and the two would descend the stairs and walk to the Cadillac, Ed Steinthal's car. It was huge. Maroon in color with a black tonneau top and a small visor over the windshield to protect from direct sunlight. The little boy would climb into the front seat next to the driver and the car would start with what seemed a mighty roar.

The route was fixed. Take Stony Island to 79th Street, then southeasterly to Jeffrey and into a parking lot at Siegel's a restaurant that boasted a small zoo in its backyard. Today, we would call it a petting zoo though there was no direct contact with the small animals that were unhappily penned up in the zoo. But they were special. A small bear, perhaps a donkey and a couple of pigs. There were some rabbits, a weasel (not too close to the rabbits) and maybe a beaver. But it wasn't the kind of thing that the 4 year old encountered on the streets of the city and it was a treat to spend some time learning about wild life.

Then, back into the car and north on Jeffrey to the park. There, we would detour for a run around the vestigial statue from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The gilt statue, called "Columbia," shone in the bright sunlight. Ed Steinthal had been at the fair and remembered parts of it. Then came the last leg of those Sunday excursions. We would drive to the Shoreland Hotel which sported a small bakery on the first floor at the south side of the building. Steinthal would order French rolls. "For the "kalte aufschnit" he would explain to the German clerk. That meant that later in the day, after his Sunday poker game, the family would gather to eat cold cuts -- pickled beef tongue, salami, corned beef (pickled in his secret brine) and cheeses he had selected from the butcher store which was still prospering in the Woodlawn neighborhood at 63rd Street and Drexel Avenue.

Those were only a few of the rituals Ed Steinthal followed. Not a deeply religious man, he nevertheless felt it was his responsibility to give something back to the Jewish community. He had earned a lot of money as a purveyor of meats to both the retail public and to restaurants. When his congregation (KAM) decided to move their center of operations to the "new" Jewish neighborhood of Kenwood and Hyde Park, he bought the right to have four seats in the synagogue with his name on a plaque on the back of them. Those were the family seats - in about the 10th row in the center of the auditorium.

In many ways, I grew up in an extended family. My grandparents were frequently at our table for dinner. We often ate with them though they lived a half block away. One of Ed Steinthal's family responsibilities was the chore of collecting Milton Lowenstern at the depot when he returned from a business trip to New York. Milton rode the Pennsylvania railroad as a matter of practice. The trains would arrive in Chicago early in the morning to enable business travelers to spend a full day in the city. The reverse trip to New York also arrived in the morning. The trip took about 16 hours in either direction. Trains left at about 4:00 P.M. and arrived at about 9:00 AM in New York and about 7:00 A.M. in Chicago considering the change in time zones.

Being on time -- to meet the train -- was one of Ed Steinthal's lessons. If the train was due at 7:00 AM, we would arrive at the station no later than 6:15 -- ""in case the train was early" he would explain. The station most convenient to us and to our apartment was called Englewood. It had been built for the crowds expected to arrive for the 1893 Fair and was located west of State Street on 63rd Street. The entrance to the depot was through a narrow, one car tunnel. Over the tunnel, engraved into the granite capital of the archway were the words "Carriage Entrance." Driving up the narrow ramp, you always hoped that no car was coming the other way. At the top, there was a small parking space holding 15 or 20 cars. On the north side was a depot building that had ticket booths, a blackboard telling passengers whether the trains were running on time and a few hard wooden benches.

We could walk out on to the tracks to look for the train. When we would see or hear it in the distance, we would retreat behind a line painted on the wooden block walkway. Porters moved carts to collect baggage and packages that were consigned to that station. The gigantic steam locomotives would rumble and puff into the station and grind to a halt, releasing huge plumes of steam. Down the platform, porters were putting out portable steps to permit passengers to disembark. On a good day, the engineers would wave back at the kids who looked at the behemoths with awe, a little wonder and a large amount of fright.

Eventually, my father or his baggage would appear and I would run down the platform to greet him. I know that when he opened his luggage there would be something special for me. I could hardly wait for a new toy or a book that came from the mysterious place called New York. Ed Steinthal waited patiently for the greetings and then led the way back to the car for the ride home.

The butcher shop continued to survive through the first years of the depression and existed until about 1935. I recall the blue eagle of the New Deal program called N.R.A. -- the National Recovery Act which was an effort to counteract the devastation of the depression. I can close my eyes and remember how the store was configured. It was a narrow building with the butcher counters on the east side. Then, there was a sawdust covered floor and on the west side a small cashier booth, usually ""manned" by my grandmother.

The procedure was simple. Butchers would take customer orders and fill them. After the meat was weighed, the customers would receive a slip indicating how much they owed. The slip was brought to the cashier, paid and stamped. It would then be the receipt permitting the butcher to give the customer his package. Behind the butchers were huge cutting blocks. Meats in those years were delivered to the store as carcasses and they were cut up in the store.

Over the back of the butcher blocks were strung smoked hams and slabs of bacon. They served as decorations as well as storage of meat that didn't need refrigeration. But in the rear of the store was a walk in cooler. In those pre-freon years, refrigeration used ammonia as a coolant. The smell of the ammonia was in the air in the back room. At the very rear of the store, meat was ground into hamburger and some was mixed with spices and made into sausages. These were the cheapest cuts of meats and usually contained a high percentage of fats. But they were fresh and customers bought them by the ton.

Ed Steinthal's success as a butcher was also his downfall. Because he was one of the prosperous men in the business community, he was invited to become a banker. In those years, people who invested in banks assumed double their investment in terms of liability and when the banks failed in 1932, as the Washington Park National Bank failed, the authorities called on Ed Steinthal to ante up an amount equal to his initial investment., He didn't have the money. His success had taken him from immigrant to butcher shop owner, to banker to butcher shop owner to bankrupt in the community.

Customers couldn't pay their bills and he would retrieve merchandise from stores that owed him money as partial payment for debts he was owed. One memory was going into a drug store which served sandwiches. It was at the corner of 60th Street and Stony Island Avenue. The owner, in as dire financial straits as Ed Steinthal, offered him any of the merchandise in the store. There was very little he could use, but he took what was useful and left. Its value was deducted from the bill for cold meats that the store had sold.

Ed Steinthal provided a model of perseverance. After the failure of the Woodlawn store, he opened another store on 79th Street and Essex Avenue. That lasted only a few months. He was forced into retirement until the wartime shortage of journeymen butchers caused one of his former employees to call and ask whether he would come into their store and cut meat. He would be reduced to being a simple butcher. He took the job.

After the war, in the late summer of 1948, he scheduled a trip to Miami with his cousins, Al and Lillian Hely. At the last minute, Al called to complain that he had a cold and wouldn't be able to drive the miles to Florida as they had planned. But, Ed Steinthal wasn't about to be put off by a simple cold. He was determined to make the drive alone in his 1947 Dodge. He had reservations at the deteriorating art deco Palm Court Hotel, a block from the action on Collins Avenue at about 16th Street. Johanna wouldn't hear of his driving alone, so I was called into active duty -- from a sound sleep -- and informed I was to make the drive. By 10:00 AM, we were on our way. The first

night we stopped in Evansville Indiana, the second found us in Columbus Georgia -- not bad for driving on two lane highways all the way. And then, we headed south along Florida's west coast.

Florida laws were still determined by ante Civil War practices which didn't include automobiles. There were open range laws that permitted farmers to let their livestock roam freely and held anyone damaging the stock responsible for the damage. This did not work well with 60 mile per hour automobiles and we ran head on into a cow which had the temerity to wander into the highway. Good butcher that he was, Ed took one look at the cow with its severed jugular and advised me to drive on to the nearest Dodge dealer to have the broken headlight repaired. That done, we continued across the Tamiami trail until we reached Miami Beach where we settled in. A few days later, the Helys arrived by train. Eventually, I was shuttled back to Chicago -- but this time by air, my first flight on a four engine Delta plane that made Chicago's Municipal airport with only two stops en route -- in Atlanta and Cincinnati. The DC 4 -- a rare bird -- finally got me back home and I went on about my business. The cow never made it that far.

For years, he was a heavy cigar smoker. He inhaled these pungent smokes -- sometimes as many as 20 a day -- and everything around him reeked of cigar smoke. The habit finally took its toll and he was diagnosed with lung cancer. His great grandson, Ken was already riding a tricycle when he died. In his final year -- he died in early 1954 at age 83 -- I helped him with simple cores. I became his barber, his dresser and, when I was home, helped him to eat the little amounts of food he could consume. It was the least I could do for a man who had served as the best man at my wedding in California, who always was available to spend time with me on Sunday morning, and who was never late for a New York train.

Old Time Religion

The way in which our family practiced its form of Judaism varied with time. In my first recollection of family religious practice, I recall a photograph of my Grandmother Nanni Steinthal, her sisters and their husbands seated formally, in late 19th Century style, around Levi and Sarah Gerst, their father and mother. Sarah was my great-grandmother - and appeared in the photograph wearing a sheitle. That's the wig traditionally word by orthodox women to make them less attractive to men other than their husbands and, presumably, less likely to create conflict and jealousy.

Johanna told the story surrounding her mother's joining K.A.M. Temple in about 1905 -- the time Johanna would have been due to start Sunday School. Nanni said that as long as she was in a new country with new, modern ideas, she was going to rethink the old religion and bring it up to date. It was for that reason, after visiting a number of Orthodox and Conservative

congregations that she settled on KAM. In fact, Johanna belonged to KAM for over 80 years and was buried by its Rabbi.

There was probably another, unspoken reason for the membership in this Reform congregation. The Steinthals lived at 512 South Halsted -- not too far from the Maxwell Street Jewish community. That area, only five or six city blocks from their home over the butcher shop, was distinctly eastern European, very Orthodox in its practices and, in the Steinthal view, beneath them. These "greenhorns" had not been as integrated into American society as the German Jews who had gotten to America as early as the 1840's. In fact, KAM was the first congregation organized in Chicago and dates its history to 1847. My Grandfather identified with his "Landsmann" and stayed a part of that segment of Jewish life as long as he lived. He certainly had contact with the immigrant community and numbered, among his customers, Jane Addams, director of Hull House only three blocks from his shop.

Consideration of the money and the influence of the German community was a pattern they followed. My Grandfather was contemptuous of the Russian and Polish Jews who settled on the West side of Chicago. He prided himself on being a south side resident. But when it came to religious practice, both my Grandfather and my father deferred to the women in their lives and let them set the tone of observance.

When KAM moved from the Grand Boulevard neighborhood into the Hyde Park Kenwood community, my Grandfather considered himself to be one of the leaders of the congregation. It was only natural that, when the fund-raising requests relating to the new Temple went out, my Grandfather was ready with his checkbook. In those years, it was customary for the Temple to "sell" seats. The seats they were assigned for the High Holiday Services every year were marked with a name plaque. Ed Steinthal bought four of them -- two for the Steinthals and two for my parents.

When it came my turn to be consecrated at age six or seven, I was taken to KAM and the service was conducted by its then-Rabbi, Solomon Freehof. He, in turn, was overseen by Tobias Schoenfarber the Rabbi who performed my parent's wedding and had officiated at my mother's confirmation which probably took place in about 1913. I remember that, during my confirmation reception in 1940, Tobey Schoenfarber, then a very old man, paid a call on us. He told my mother that the only receptions he would be attending that day were for children whose parents he had confirmed.

Freehof gained fame in his later years when he acted as the writer of Responsa literature representing the Reform Jewish viewpoint. Shortly after the 1932 consecration, Freehof left for a Pittsburgh congregation and was replaced by Joshua Loth Liebman. Liebman was a distant figure. I never was able to know him. Ultimately, in 1939, Liebman moved to a congregation in Boston and had written a book called "Peace of Mind." This book exploded and was a best seller across the country. With war clouds gathering, it

apparently struck a responsive chord across all segments of the American population.

I was sent to Sunday School. Actually, because of the large number of students at KAM, I went to religious school on Saturday morning until I was in fourth grade when I "graduated" to the Sunday School. I remember almost nothing about that period of my education. It was something I had to do and while I didn't resent it, I found it uninteresting. I didn't relate to the material, though I recall learning about the new settlements in Palestine called Kibbutz, about the Balfour Declaration and about anti-Semitism in Germany during the early days of Nazi power. I was also given rudimentary classes in Hebrew, none of which I practiced or remembered. Those classes were taught by a man named Schlomo Marinoff. Finally, I was taught the principles of Tzedakah -- charity -- which was one of the Jewish essentials. Every week, my mother would give me a dime to put in the Tzedakah box at Sunday School and every week, I dutifully deposited it. In the upper grades, I became the editor of the Sunday School newspaper and remember a photo of me that appeared in that paper. I was very proud of those efforts.

Attending services with my Grandmother Steinthal was a must. I would take a note to school requesting that I be excused from classes on the first days of Succoth, Shavuoth and Passover and I went to Temple with her and sat, quietly. On those Sabbaths when I had no religious school, I was expected to attend services with her. But on those occasions, I was assigned to seating in the Balcony. I can remember one time when, with a friend in the balcony, we went into paroxysms of laughter. We giggled so loud that the Rabbi interrupted his sermon and asked us to be quiet or to leave. I think we quieted down.

At home, I don't recall ever witnessing a Seder. My mother once arranged for the two of us to attend a congregational Seder at the Temple, but that was the only one I was ever involved in. Her comment at the time was that she wanted me to "experience that old fashioned sort of service." I regularly lit the Chanukkah candles on an old tin menorah. In those years, gifts were not an integral part of Chanukkah but I had an ulterior motive - I collected the unburned wax for use on toy soldiers in my room. I made new candles from the old wax.

In the ninth grade of Sunday School, the entire class was transformed into "The Confirmation Class." In an effort to unite the class and create internal spirit, we were taken on field trips. I can remember one to the Jewish People's Institute -- the JPI which was located on the west side of the city. JPI was one of the finest community centers in the city and we regretted not having it closer. Rabbis at that time received complimentary membership in Chicago's Standard Club -- the outpost of German Jewish life in downtown Chicago. The class was taken to "the club" for swimming and for lunch.

The big day arrived when the confirmation speeches were distributed. I was assigned the job of starting the service -- of being the first reader. The

Rabbi -- by that time Jacob Weinstein -- knew me well because of our interaction in the Temple's office. He impressed on me the importance of getting the ceremony off on a positive note. I had to do well. To a processional march played by Max Janowski on the organ, the entire class marched down the two aisles in the center of the Temple and was seated on the bimah. When everyone had settled in their chairs, a hush fell over the crowd of excited parents, grandparents, assorted relatives and friends. I knew that memorizing my speech was crucial. I can still remember the first lines of that speech "This ceremony of Confirmation enlarges and enriches Jewish life..." Because the entire class was seated on the Bimah, when I finished and sat down, each of my classmates, in turn, had to go through the same traumatic experience.

The reception that my mother mounted that afternoon was impressive and relatives appeared from all over. Most brought gifts -- some of which I'm still using. The day was a big success -- I had done well.

Following Confirmation, I got involved in the Temple's youth group, called, ingeniously enough, The KAM Youth Council. The group met on Sunday nights in the Temple community hall. We danced, ate light food and generally enjoyed each other's company. Many of us were in the same classes in High School, but this was a place to relax. From time to time, the Rabbi would bring friends of his to speak to the group. On one occasion, we were addressed by his friend, poet Langston Hughes. I regret I didn't appreciate that occasion with the respect it deserved. Other Sundays, there were movies and always, a phonograph with dancing. It was a pleasant time.

At one point, the group was asked to join a newly formed national organization called NFTY -- the National Federation of Temple Youth. Though proof is probably lost in some musty file cabinet, and for reasons that I can't remember, I was somehow elected NFTY's first National Treasurer. I never did anything in conjunction with that job, but it seemed like a nice title to have at the time.

When my own family began to grow in the early 1950's, I rejoined the Temple. I had gone to High Holiday services sporadically over the late High School and my college years. Cynicism had set in with respect to all organized religion. But when it came time to pass the traditions down to my own children -- off to Sunday School they went. The Temple had organized some sort of Adult Programming for those parents who had dropped their children off for classes but who lived too far from the Temple to make a second round trip to pick them up. I attended on those Sundays when I couldn't arrange a car pool to have a friend make the trip to Temple.

My first serious adult involvement with religion came with my marriage to Lois. She had converted to Judaism as a matter of conscience without regard to our marital status. But when we got married she told me "If I'm going to be Jewish, so are you!" We had joined Sinai, but Dotty's membership at Sinai caused us to leave and rejoin KAM. Eventually, Dotty lost interest in Sinai and we rejoined Sinai. I was encouraged to become

involved in adult education programming at Sinai. I wrote reviews of Jewish oriented books for the Temple's Bulletin.

My activities eventually led to my involvement in the Sinai Genesis program which was a massive adult education program involving hundreds of people divided into small discussion groups for the study of the book of Genesis. On occasion, all the participants would convene in the Temple for rabbinical input. During that same period, I was involved in reading a vast number of books on Jewish history and on ritual practice. I organized and delivered lectures on these subjects for Sunday morning classes. We organized an oral history project involving older, more famous members of the city's Jewish community and I conducted the interviews, tapes of which are now held by Chicago's Jewish Historical Society. Lois and I also acted as adult advisors to the Sinai Youth Group.

For two years, I served as the person who read the weekly services for the Temple until a new Rabbi could be found. Unfortunately, the new Rabbi and I did not get along at all and ultimately I was felt obliged to resign from the Temple Board where I had served as a Vice-president, and eventually from the Temple itself. It was a painful experience. While I did not lose my firm belief in the principals of Judaism, I felt mistreated at the Temple to which I had devoted so much time and effort.

Eventually, we joined Temple Sholom on the north side of the city. Our involvement there is limited to occasional attendance at services and membership in a small group of "empty nesters" senior adults whose children have married and left home and who find common ground in discussions and congenial activities. Confronting my religiosity in this post-Sinai period has been difficult. I have never lost faith in the principals of the religion, but have developed some serious questions about the way in which organized religion applies them on a practical basis. In time, I may regain some respect for the organizations of the religion and while I certainly appreciate their need in a complex society, have developed some serious questions about the quality of their leadership. In time, I may rethink this skepticism but as of this writing, I want to remain on the periphera of the organizations.

Newspapering

Throughout all these slice of life articles, there have been references to various writing that I have done. From my first published poem -- at about age six -- what I wrote reflected how I felt. That first piece was a parody on a Eugene O'Neill poem called "The Shadow." That parody referred to my brother who was much a part of my life for a very short time.

I spent time working on school newspapers -- in grade school, in high school, in College and at the Temple. In college, I wrote a column for the Chicago Maroon titled "But I Digress...." My friend, Joe Solovy had earned straight "A" grades as an undergraduate and had applied for admission to

medical school and the pre-med program at Chicago. For reasons that weren't initially obvious, he was rejected. I went into the problem because I felt he had been unfairly treated. After a lot of questioning, I discovered that he was rejected because of an unpublished and relatively secret Jewish quota. The school simply did not admit more than a specific number of Jewish students to any medical school class. Because of this quota system, Joe had been rejected. After documenting the school's prejudicial policy, I published a column exposing the practice. The uproar that ensued caused the University to publicly admit to its quota system and change its policy. Joe was admitted to Medical School. I was fired from the paper's staff.

I edited a paper at the Filter Center of the Ground Observer Corp. And there were probably other efforts I don't even remember. I enjoyed the work while always realizing that it wasn't a practical occupation. I had been raised to think that the only way to make a decent living was as a businessman and that's the direction I went. Even the book that I wrote and which was published was not written to make any money -- it was purely an ego trip requiring the transcription and editing of some lecture notes.

I worked as a newspaperman for a brief period after finishing college, but like so many jobs you enjoy, this one didn't pay enough money to raise a family. I wasn't really trained to write, but more importantly, jobs were scarce and low paying. Instead, I spent the majority of my life working in the financial services industry with a nine year sojourn into the garment trades.

During my career as a businessman, there was a lot of writing that was needed for reports and for presentations to clients. This work seemed to be easy. My "style" if it can be called that, was conversational. I still "talk" to the keyboard and write what would come out of my mouth if I were to be speaking., That way, the sentences seem to flow in a logical pattern and the language doesn't get too complicated. I learned the style of "conversational writing" while I was working in my father's office. That was the time I learned to type using a hunt and peck method.

My Dad's bookkeeper, Frank Chalupa had been schooled in an obsolete style of letter writing. It was the only one he knew and he would conclude letters with "I am, sir, your most obedient servant and am very respectfully yours." That style didn't fit me and I found simpler and more direct ways to complete letters. In writing the letters that were sent out, there was a direct, conversational and relatively informal style which seemed to me to be more friendly than Frank's.

My real joy in writing for a newspaper began about ten years ago when my grandson, Rob was visiting. The two of us enjoyed cooking, and he ultimately took that career direction as his life work. I had written something he read and he suggested that I should get a "job" as a newspaper columnist. I didn't think it was a practical idea but promised to make some inquiries at local community papers. I checked the "free" papers that were distributed to the building where we live and found the one I considered the best. The publisher

had won a Pulitzer Prize and the paper appeared regularly on a semi-monthly basis.

Calling the office, the editor suggested I bring in some samples of the material I was writing and a couple of unpublished columns. Editors are notoriously skeptical when it comes to adding new writers to their staff. They are continually barraged by recent journalism school graduates who appear with stars in their eyes. I remember one interview that he conducted with an applicant who said, frankly, that she wanted nothing less than to be hired as an investigative reporter. Normally, that's a job, if there's room for one on the paper, which would go to the most experienced member of the staff. This applicant had no experience whatever, so the editor asked her what she might like to investigate. There was no answer for a minute and then she tentatively said -- "whatever it is you might want investigated." That's simply not the way it works. Most investigative journalism doesn't begin with an investigation -- it begins with a story that seems, somehow to not go away. One discovery of fact leads to another and possibly into another direction. Finally, there's a new story that is opened by the inquiries and a newsworthy revelation is the result.

The editor agreed to let me write the column I had suggested and now, for the past ten years, through a couple of papers, I've continued to write commentary. Occasionally, someone who reads it thinks enough of it to respond in writing to the paper. Some of the comments agree with the position I've taken -- other violently disagree. But those letters are comforting in that they tell me someone is reading what I'm writing. I analogize this to the tree falling in the forest and, if that happens and no one is there, it's asked, does it make any noise?

In addition to the column, there are frequent interviews, some with noteworthy people. I've found that the more famous the person, the easier they are to interview. The celebrities I've talked to -- people like Catherine Malfitano and the artist Ed Paschke are easy to approach. They expect the sort of questions that will be asked and are ready with answers. The most difficult people to interview are those so full of their own egos that they feel the interviewer isn't a part of the process and they are being questioned to boost their personal egos. The style of questions I use vary, but the interview is always a conversation based on prepared questions. I know the direction I want the interview to take so that it will be of interest to readers. I prepare questions to fill in those needs.

Usually, I tape the conversations, whether they're done in person or by a speaker phone. In that way, I can get the gist of the interviewee's comments and clean up the language. I'm always amazed at how fuzzy and ungrammatical responses have to be cleaned up for printed publication. I have discovered that this clean-up process is used all the time. I've never received a complaint about the fact that the material between quotation marks is not exactly the words that were used over the phone. It's context that's important

and experienced interviewees know that when talking casually, they often misspeak, use poor grammar, run-on sentences and misused words. Correcting those errors is the job of the interviewer.

Infrequently, something will be brought to my attention which has not been covered by the large daily papers. A couple of examples include the imminent closure of Meigs Field, the city's small downtown airport. The story I wrote revolved around the Mayor's intention to shut the airport down. None of the major papers had printed anything about it, but within a couple of weeks after the original story appeared under my by-line, the major papers had discovered the facts and were running page one headlines about it. Another incident happened last summer when a group of businessmen complained that someone was abusing the terms of the Americans With Disabilities Act and bringing frivolous lawsuits which, though technically valid, were misuses of a city system for dealing with those problems. The article brought a huge response from other merchants who had been cited, a meeting with the local alderman and a concerted effort to stop the practice and change the City's system of dealing with them. Weeks later, a citywide paper decided that this was something they could use and ran a similar story as their page one feature. The feeling that comes with being the first to uncover some sort of wrong doing is intense and very satisfying.

Travel writing is another aspect of what I've done and with Lois as an integral part of our team, we have gotten the benefit of reduced price or free travel to many places throughout the world. This has also provided insights into places with travel professionals from the local communities we have visited. Those people have a considerable amount of knowledge of their area and give it freely. We see and learn a lot more than we might have been able to grasp otherwise. We have often felt that a two or three week trip to a European destination that is assisted by local professionals would have taken months without their help. The quid pro quo for receiving this professional help is having the articles published. It's a form of payment for the benefits we get from national tour offices and local convention and visitors bureaus. Getting this material published since 9/11 has been increasingly difficult, but I continue to try to find outlets for it. Our travel schedule has been reduced, but not eliminated.

Because writing is sedentary, it's an easy way to continue a vital involvement in the world around me without excessive physical strain. I see no reason to slow down these activities and I hope that the work I do keeps improving and broadening. I'm having fun.

Remembering When

I'm old enough to remember**:**

- Ice Delivery and the signs hung in the window telling the iceman how many pounds to bring upstairs

- Bakelite, Celluloid and cellophane being the only plastics we knew about
- Shopping at the five and ten cent stores like Kress, Woolworth and Kresge and actually finding things for five or ten cents.
- Sales tax tokens worth "mills" or tenths of a penny.
- Running boards
- gas pumps in stations that had to be pumped up by hand and then drained into the car by gravity.
- Emily Post
- Walter Winchell
- Bank night or china night at the movies
- Jokes about Maine and Vermont
- Tuesday night radio with Fibber McGee and Molly sponsored by Johnson's Wax and Bob Hope sponsored by Pepsodent.
- Monday night Lux Radio Theater introduced by Cecil B. DeMille
- Colonel Robert R. McCormick expounding on his World War I war experiences on Saturday night on WGN with music by Henry Weber and songs by Marion Claire
- Jack Armstrong's sponsor, Wheaties and Little Orphan Annie's sponsor, Ovaltine.
- Renfrew of the Mounties
- Balsa wood models of War planes from the first world war.
- Standing for a moment of silence on Armistice Day, November 11.
- Lemonade stands
- Men's straw hats called skimmers
- Manual Training Classes
- Hedy Lamar in "Ecstasy" at the Studio Theater on Van Buren near Michigan Avenue
- Newsreel theaters
- Dreading being called to the Principal's Office
- Fireside chats
- Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People."
- Bare breasted "native" women in National Geographic
- Adventures of Richard Halliburton
- Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys and Ellery Queen
- "Boy's Life" magazine
- Free samples of "Absorbine Jr."
- Lagging pennies on the sidewalk
- White margarine with the yellow "coloring capsule" in the box
- Pepsi's radio jingle: "Pepsi Cola hits the spot/ Twelve full ounces, that's a lot/ Twice as much for a nickel, too/ Pepsi Cola is the drink for you."
- Veloz and Yolanda at the Empire Room of the Palmer House
- Ralph Ginsberg and his "ensemble" playing at noon in the Empire Room and being broadcast.
- Remote broadcasts from "ballrooms" around the country with the big bands of the time
- The Big Five cigarette brands and the cheaper ones like Spuds, Twenty Grand and Raleighs.

- Lottery Books bought by high school teams and sold to earn enough to buy team jerseys.
- The excitement when the jerseys finally were delivered by the Fair Store.
- Burma Shave signs
- Motor "Courts" before the era of motels
- Back Yard peddlers hawking fruits and vegetables in an era before supermarkets
- The first supermarket at South Chicago Avenue and 78th Street -- called Dawson's Trading Post. It was in an old abandoned warehouse building.
- Greek ice cream parlors
- The Sherman Hotel's Panther Room and College Inn. Even underage kids could get in and buy very sophisticated "pink ladies."
- Melvin Purvis and the exploits of his G-Men
- Comics with "Smilin' Jack, Don Winslow of the Navy, Terry and the Pirates.
- WENR radio -- the Blue Network; WCFL, The Voice of Labor in Chicago
- Air Flow Desoto automobiles
- The 1933-34 World's Fair with the Skyride, the hall of science and its safety glass demonstration, long narrow busses, The whispers about Sally Rand
- Kids' games like "Piggy Move-up," "May I," "Kick the Can," Red Rover," none of which required and special equipment except maybe an old tin can.
- Roller Skate Hockey with manhole covers as the goals.
- Mom and Pop candy and school supply stores
- formalwear that was called "soup and fish."
- close dancing
- dance cards with tassels
- The Chicago Cardinals football team, arch rivals of the Bears
- When YMCA's required boys to swim nude
- Joe Louis fights
- two week summer vacations at YMCA or Boy Scout camps.
- nametag identification labels moms had to sew into every garment when kids went to camp.
- Maid's night out on Thursday for the rich kids -- everyone went to Chinatown.
- Fire Drills
- Red and Blue ration stamps
- A, B, and C Gasoline ration coupons
- Civil defense armbands

Chapter 3. 1930 to 1939

Price Check

It's tough to relate to the depression era pricing structure. When we're used to paying an average of $25,000 or more for a car, the ability to buy a new one from a dealer -- after a bit of haggling -- for somewhere around $650 seems surreal. But in those same years -- roughly 1932-1939, everything was surreal. An industrial worker in 1932 could earn about $17.00 per day -- if there was work. A secretary in a busy office was paid about $20 per week. A housemaid earned $8 per week plus room and board.

I have written about Saturday jobs as a stock clerk where I was paid $2.50 a day. I also increased my income to $3.00 when I became a salesperson on the floor of a Loop department store. It's true that there were very few deductions from a paycheck. Social Security deductions didn't kick in until 1937 and then were only one percent for the first $3,000 of annual income. So, out of my $3.00 pay envelope, three cents was deducted. Income tax deductions didn't begin until the onset of the second World War.

There were no paychecks in those years. People were paid in cash for several reasons. It reduced the bookkeeping expense of the company and the majority of workers didn't have checking accounts. One reason for this lack of checking account presence was the fact that people paid their bills, if they had any, in cash. There were no credit cards, no debit cards and only a very few charge accounts. People also lacked faith in banks in general following the huge number of bank failures beginning in 1932 and continuing until FDR declared a "bank holiday" shortly after he was inaugurated in March of 1933.

Income taxes were equally low in those years. There were deductions for children, but only a few others were a part of the then-simple code. Rates 1933 increased to 4% on the first $4,000 of income and 8% on amounts over $4,000. Prior to that, they had been 1 ½% on the first $4,000 and 3% for higher amounts.

When you picked up your new sedan, there was no sales tax on it and when you drove into the gas station to fill it up for the first time, you paid between 11 and 15 cents a gallon for full service. At the station, you could expect an attendant to clean your windshields, check the water in your radiator, check your oil level and tire pressure and, of course, pump your gas. During the depression, premiums were given to people who bought more than 8 gallons of gas -- dishes and glassware were common. Some stations rewarded their customers with towels and other housewares. You had a choice between regular gas and ethyl which contained lead and was supposed to increase car performance.

Parking meters were rarely seen in those years though some showed up on the main business streets of small towns. In the city, they simply hadn't installed them. To raise money, some states instituted a sales tax. The first

taxes were paid in "mills" and states issued coins and cardboard squares showing a value of 1/10 of a cent -- one mill for the tax. Some of those tokens are still around as collector's items. So, your cost for an item might be nineteen cents plus 2 mills in sales tax. Illinois issued aluminum tokens and I remember Missouri tokens were squares of chipboard in the shape of the state. Some kids actually had collections of these tokens from different states.

En route to the food store, you might want to stop at the post office for some stamps. Local postage was 2 cents; intercity postage was 3 cents and, in the rare occasions where you wanted to use it, airmail was 6 cents. Local delivery was twice a day -- morning and afternoon postal deliveries were common in the city. At that same time, phone calls were a nickel. Long distance rates were terribly high and people used telegrams to quickly transmit news. Telegrams were hand delivered by messengers on bikes and usually contained bad news except those sent on congratulatory occasions. Receiving a telegram was a major household event. There were two competing telegraph companies, Western Union and Postal Telegraph. Both had offices throughout the city, but you were able to phone a telegram to one of the companies and have the charges billed to your telephone.

Entertainment and dining was also very reasonable by today's standards. A movie cost 25 cents for an adult and a dime for kids. Downtown shows, including stage shows with top name performers were a little more expensive -- perhaps fifty cents. Four loop theaters offered stage shows -- the Chicago, The State Lake, The Oriental and the Palace.

News was delivered in one of five daily newspapers, The Tribune, The Daily News, The Times, The Herald and The Examiner. The Chicago Sun didn't begin publication until December 4, 1941 -- only a few days before the war began. It merged with the Times in the years after the war. Newspapers cost 2 cents for the weekday editions and 5 cents on Sundays. The Sunday papers included color comics and a rotogravure section -- photographs printed on glossy paper with higher resolution printing than the normal half-tone prints that appeared in the daily papers. Color advertising didn't exist.

In the theaters, for your quarter, you would also get newsreels showing a magazine of current events. There were also news features like "The March of Time" which was a longer feature on a specific topic. These dealt with matters in greater depth than the newsreels. Newsreel photographers were considered daredevils, putting themselves in the thick of action in order to send the best pictures back to their headquarters. Beginning in about 1935, there were newsreel theaters which featured nothing but newsreels from various sources. Fox, Paramount and other Hollywood studios produced and distributed the newsreels.

Dinners in a restaurant could cost as little as $2.95 for a full five or six course dinner including a soup, salad (though salads were not a part of normal diets in those years) entree, vegetable and potato, desert and coffee. Entree choices ranged from steaks and fried chicken to pork roasts, lamb, roast beef

and other solid choices. Gourmet and ethnic foods were limited to a few restaurants out of the mainstream. There were certainly Italian restaurants, but they were considered "spaghetti joints." Pizza hadn't been discovered in America. Chinese restaurants abounded and there were occasional German restaurants in areas where the population was primarily of Germanic origin.

Food prices obviously varied, but according to some Internet information that's available, a few staple items can give you an idea of how much it cost to feed a family. Coffee was 17 cents a pound, Wheaties were 11 cents a box, a 24 ounce jar of peanut butter was 25 cents. Grapefruit were a nickel, prunes were 2 pounds for 19 cents, and Jell-O was a nickel a box. Peaches were 3 cans for fifty cents, Bisquick was 33 cents a box. Sirloin steak was 37 cents a pound, hamburger was 22 cents a pound and iceberg lettuce was a dime a head. Campbell's beans were a nickel a can and 20 ounce cans of white creamed corn were marked 3/.19.

Those were prices from May of 1932 before the depths of the depression began to be felt. In 1942 at the beginning of the war, onions sold 3 pounds for .19, Philadelphia cream cheese sold their 3 ounce packages at 2/.17. Strawberries were .15 a pint, butter was .43 a pound, pineapples fresh from Hawaii were 2/.29 and Kellogg's corn flakes were 2 boxes for .19.

These prices were in standard outlets. There were street peddlers offering fresh produce from the backs of their trucks. These men would go to the produce market, pick up a load of fresh produce in the morning and offer it from their tailgates at much lower prices. I can remember buying sweet corn at 10 cents a dozen ears. And because I delivered the corn to my mother, the peddler threw in a couple of extra ears. Strawberries, in season, sold at 4 quarts for a quarter. A case of 12 quarts went for fifty cents. At the end of the day, the peddler had to get rid of anything he hadn't sold and offered the goods at substantial discounts. Depending on the available storage space and the size of the family, a family of four could be fed for $5.00 a week including meat and fresh vegetables.

There were almost no prepared foods and nothing was offered as frozen food. Clarence Birdseye, who invented the fresh frozen process hadn't penetrated the markets yet. Any prepared foods were sold in cans and you could buy things like corned beef hash -- which was loaded with potatoes, baked beans, canned soups and vegetables. Canned fruits were also available. But fresh fruits and vegetables were always preferable and, if you could afford them at all, very reasonable. Florida juice oranges were 9/.25, but you had to squeeze your own juice since neither frozen or packaged orange juice was available. The amount of refrigerator space available in grocery stores was very limited and supermarkets were an idea that was just beginning to develop. There were chain stores, but the individual units were small -- not the vast stores we're accustomed to now. National Tea, A & P, Piggley Wiggley were three chains offering groceries at savings for the family primarily because of their vast national buying power.

Clothing was also cheap. In 1934, a man's shirt sold for .45, girl's wash dresses sold for .46 and you could buy three rooms of furniture for $235 with easy payment terms. By 1942. a man's broadcloth shirt was $1. So was a wool sweater. A heavy overcoat cost as much as $15. A woman's bathrobe was $1, a handbag was as much as $2.25. I sold kid's clothes at wholesale in the late 1940's so I knew the retail prices that were being asked. Blue jeans were retailing for .98, pajamas were $1.29. shorts were .79 and corduroy pants might sell for as much as $1.98.

In the late 1930's and early years after the war when they again became available, a portable electric sewing machine sold for $25.00, an electric washing machine was $33.50 but a table lamp was $1.00.

How about rents? It all depended, then as now, on location. But in Hyde Park where we lived, my folks' apartment rent was $75/month for a six room apartment. My grandparents had an apartment on University Avenue. It was two bedrooms with an Murphy bed that folded into a closet when it wasn't being used. That apartment cost them $42.50 per month. Usually, apartments were rented on a one year lease with moving days on May 1 and October 1. All too often in those years, you would walk along the street and spot a houseful of furniture on the curb after the owners had been evicted for non-payment of rent. Naturally, the landlords had taxes and heating bills to pay, but they were always considered the villains in evicting poor families down on their luck and unable to find work.

Prices were low for everything, but times were really tough. It's hard to imagine, now after so many years of prosperity, how difficult it was to be ready, willing and able to work, with job skills and no work to be found. Factories had signs on their front doors -- "Not Hiring," or "No Help Wanted." Workers would congregate in front of the doors hoping someone would get sick or die just to have a job opening. And factory workers were not all that well off, either. The labor union movement which, until the depression had been pretty much confined to craft unions, became the province of Industrial Unions like the Auto Workers and Steel Workers who organized against the giant companies. Sit-down strikes became a popular tool to keep the industries from hiring readily available scab (non-union) workers off the streets. Riots and occasional deaths were common.

The government organized the WPA (The Works Projects Administration) one of dozens of Federal agencies designed to alleviate the poverty. WPA workers were paid $15/week and did public work projects. One, in the city, was the development of the 55th Street Promontory Point. Most streets until that time, had very square corners. WPA workers rounded the corners making it easier for automobiles to turn.

Times were tough on the farms, too, as farmers couldn't sell their production. Milk was being poured into ditches, fruit was allowed to rot on the trees and in the fields. Farmers couldn't afford to pay labor to pick them and, by the time produce would get to market, the farmer couldn't recover his costs.

It was cheaper for him to destroy the produce than to bring it to market. The dust storms of 1934 and 1935 drove many off their farms. These flights are documented by Steinbeck in "Grapes of Wrath," and by the songs of Woody Guthrie. But there was always a thread of hope during that period -- things would get better. But it took a wartime economy to make it better after 1942.

Traumas

There were a few times in my life when I was traumatized either by an accident or a family event. Those traumas are easy to remember. In fact, they stand out even going back to a time when I was a three year old.

That circumstance had a nursemaid, Minnie Harder, taking me to the park to play. She had been instructed to go to the corner of 55th and Cottage Grove which was where my grandfather, Baer, liked to find a corner bench, meet with cronies and generally hang out. I was to pay him a visit. I knew my grandfather Steinthal much better, but Baer is still a rather hazy figure in my memory. He was stocky with a mustache and seemed to always wear a three piece suit. I was told in later years that he was a real scholar, that he enjoyed reading Goethe in the original German and that he had done a lot of study on his own. Not formally educated nevertheless made him into a rather distant figure.

On the day in question, which must have been in October of 1929, Minnie Harder took me to the park for the visit. Baer was there but I don't recall that he paid any particular attention to me. After all, while I was the only male Lowenstern then alive who could carry on the family name, he still had hope for his daughter, Margaret or either of his two sons, Milton or Julius producing additional male children to carry on the name.

As 3 ¼¼ year old are prone to do, I ran around the bench on which he was sitting and tried to play by myself. I was looking for attention which wasn't forthcoming/ There were no other kids in that part of the park which was on the edge of the large city park. Suddenly, I stumbled and ran into the corner of the bench my grandfather was sitting on. Splitting my head over my right eye, the flow of blood was frightening to everyone. Minnie Harder quickly held a handkerchief over the wound and took me home. Within what seemed to be a short time after we got home, Dr. Julius Jampolis, my pediatrician (though they didn't assume that title until many years later -- he was the family doctor then) arrived, took one look at the wound and then carefully stitched up the cut. It only took three stitches to staunch the flow of blood, but everyone was concerned and I was the center of attention. The bleeding stopped. I was on the road to recovery. The "operation" had taken place on a two seat green plush love seat that was in the family living room, not far from the apartment's front door. I have no recollection of Baer being there at the time the doctor was working on me.

Nothing else serious happened to me until I was about 6 ½ when I was taken to the hospital -- Michael Reese -- to have my tonsils and adenoids removed. It was the fashion of the time to remove these glands regardless of need. I hadn't been sick -- no special sore throats or coughing -- and showed no signs of problems that might have been caused by them. But conventional wisdom of the time said "take out the tonsils and adenoids" and they were removed. I can remember being fed a lot of ice cream after the surgery which helped alleviate the very sore throat I suffered after the operation. Once again, Dr. Jampolis performed the successful surgery. It's my recollection that this surgery happened before my brother died.

A deep emotional response and a lot of nightmares were the result of another incident. My grandmother and her sister Sophie Pauly had taken me to see a movie at the Piccadilly Theater on 51st and Blackstone. On the way home, at the intersection of 52nd Street and University Avenue -- it was the southeast corner -- that a delivery truck belonging to a local IGA store and a heavy sedan collided. The driver of the sedan was thrown out of the car and landed, literally, at my feet. I was convinced that he was dead. The car continued on to the lawn of the apartment building at that corner and ran over a small three year old boy, killing him. We stood, transfixed at the intersection as ambulances and police converged on the scene and began to clear up the carnage. The event, in addition to causing me nightmares for years after the incident were also brought to mind whenever I heard the Bing Crosby recording of "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day." I am not sure, but I suspect that the song was a part of the movie I saw that day. An Internet search of the song title tells me that it was popular in 1932 and was written by Bing Crosby. It was sung in several movies in 1932 and 1933 and became Crosby's theme song on his radio broadcasts..

Perhaps my most serious trauma happened on April 12, 1939. It was cool and I was wearing a Melton hip-length coat. A bunch of local friends, mostly eighth graders as I was, were playing in the back yard behind our apartment building and the one adjacent to the south. There was no alley and the "yards" were simply packed sand and fill. Nothing was able to grow in them -- not even weeds.

It was at a time when I was first becoming interested in girls. The group in the apartment had been dancing, something encouraged by the school, I was in the first floor apartment of one of those friends. Rozelle Lezak and, somehow, everyone in the group decided to run outside into the yard through the Lezak kitchen and their back door. For reasons I'll never understand, I decided to beat the group to the outside and went out through an open window in their back porch On the way down, I caught my arm on a hook that had been placed in the wooden siding of the porch to hold a clothes line and the hook split my left arm from the elbow up to a midway point to my shoulder. I wasn't aware of the deep cut on my arm since my jacket didn't rip open and, for at least a while, there was very little blood coming from the

wound. However, I was caught on the hook and it took several of the group to pick me up off the hook and get me back on the ground. They sent me home.

When I went home, my mother saw the extent and depth of the cut and called a taxi -- a rare experience for me -- and shuttled my to the hospital for repair. Dr.. Samuel Taub who was an allergist giving me hay fever shots was called to make sure that my treatment was consistent with my allergies. The wound was stitched up in several phases and with a total of about 39 stitches. I was given a tetanus shot because of the rusty hook on which I caught myself and, after a few hours, I was sent home bandaged and with my arm in a sling. The next day I was consigned to my bed.

The whole incident had taken place on a Friday afternoon and, by Sunday morning, my body was covered from head to toes with hives which burned and itched. The doctor was called and appeared in a hurry. I was having a "reaction" to the tetanus shot which at that time was not an anti-toxin but a serum derived from horses. I hadn't known that I was allergic to horse dander, but found out the hard way. It took most of the day for the adrenalin shots I was given to take effect and for the hives to begin to disappear. It was not a happy day.

For the weeks immediately after this accident, I found that my joints froze and were extremely painful if I stood in one place for any length of time. However, it was necessary to keep moving when standing and then there was little pain. Sitting and lying in bed were not painful, but the whole experience was not one I ever want to repeat.

There were several other emotional traumas that I have written about which were extremely stressful -- my brother's death in 1933 when I can vividly recall the Sunday morning at about 6:30 when my parents returned from the hospital. I didn't understand why they were crying -- I had never seen them cry before. And I didn't quite understand the concept of death. The visits of friends and families after the funeral (which I did not attend,) made the whole event seem somehow like an ongoing party and, while there were no celebrations, many brought cakes and candy which, in my 6 ½ year old view, added to the festivities. The gravity and sadness of the situation were never explained to me -- I was being protected from reality.

Later traumas are still vivid in my mind. The death of Baer in 1935 was not something I fully understood and since we were never close, it was an event that passed without much significance to me. He had been sick and then, suddenly, he died. That was it. But my Grandmother's passing in 1948 was a much different story., She had experienced a sudden heart attack. Earlier, she had been crippled by a stroke which affected her facial muscles and disfigured her. But her death and, on its heels, the decamping of Paula were a serious emotional trauma that took a few years to be absorbed and accepted. That January day is described in another of these essays.

Other events had their impact on my life -- some good, others bad. But those few are the ones which seem most to have affected my feelings and responses to unusual and deeply impacting events in my life.

Personal Services

We got our first electric refrigerator when I was about eight years old. It was a wonder. It had a compartment that actually froze two trays of real ice cubes and, though it had to be defrosted frequently especially in the summer months, it was a great improvement from our old ice box. There was no need to drain the runoff water, no messy straw or dirt that had come into the box with the chunks of ice that were delivered and no need to be at home to await the arrival of the ice man.

Ice was bought from the Consumer's Ice and Coal Company. My mother had a large sign -- about 15 inches square -- on which were the numbers 25, 50, 75 and 100 on each of the four sides. The word "ICE" was printed in large letters in the center of the square. Placing the sign in our dining room window notified the ice man how much ice we would need on a given day. The ice man was a burly guy who wore a thick leather apron and another slab of thick leather over his shoulder. With uncanny accuracy, he would use his ice pick, chip off a chunk of ice from blocks that had been loaded in his horse-drawn wagon and carry it up to the back door of our apartment. He'd knock on the door and when it was answered, he would insert the ice in the ice box, drain the excess meltoff water and go on to his next customer. We'd get a monthly bill for the ice we had bought and we were able to preserve the food we had in the box.

When the electric box arrived, I was assigned one mechanical job. The box had a foot pedal which, when depressed with a toe, would open the door of the box. The linkage to this device would frequently break and I had figured out how to repair it, however temporarily so that it could be used. It was "my job" and one of which I was very proud. No one else in the family was able to decipher the mystery of the pedal.

We also had milk deliveries from Wanzer's Dairy. Typically, a dairy company would service a whole building. The milkman would leave his horse and wagon on the street and take a wire basket filled with an assortment of dairy products up the stairs. A sign, hung on the back door would tell him what sort of milk, cream, butter and cottage cheese to leave on a particular day. He would pick up the empty bottles and replace them with fresh supplies from his basket. In that way he had to make only one trip up to the third floor of those buildings each day to complete his rounds. The sign on the back door was the basis for the monthly bill which he delivered on the first or second of the following month. Most people paid promptly. Milk was not homogenized and cream rose to the top. Since my father insisted on having cream in his coffee, my mother would carefully drain off the cream from the quarts of milk and

save it in a special container for my dad. I got the remaining milk, which, though skimmed, was nevertheless wholesome. When we got to know the milkman, we were able to climb into his wagon and snitch a small sliver of ice to suck on during the heat of the summer. It was one of life's simple pleasures.

Newspapers were delivered every morning before we woke up. In fact, we rarely saw the delivery boy except at Christmas time when he would deliver the papers later than usual, ring the doorbell and offer us a calendar for the next year as a Christmas gift. Naturally, he was rewarded with a dollar for being so steadily on the job and for giving us the calendar. At that time, the daily Tribune cost two cents and the Sunday paper was a dime. Papers that were delivered regularly by subscription were bought at a discount from these low newsstand prices. The whole cost of newspapers was perhaps $1.50 a month and, clearly, the delivery boy was not going to earn a great deal of money. He would get up at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, pick up his papers at an assigned drop-off point and go about finishing his route before he had to go home, eat breakfast and go on to school. We didn't see him often, but because of his work, we were able to keep abreast of what was going in a world before reliable radio news broadcasts and television.

Another regular visitor was the telephone collector. We had a phone which required dropping a nickel into a slot before we could complete a call. Some people used slugs which simulated the nickels but my mother insisted on the pay-as-you-go method. The phone collector would come into the apartment and open the box into which the coins had been placed. Then. breaking a seal to be sure it hadn't been tampered with, he would extract all the nickels and put them on the table. I watched with fascination as he counted the coins and placed them in rolls worth $2. The speed with which he handled the money was amazing. He might have stayed to collect any long distance or telegraph bills that were attached to our phone, something which happened infrequently. When he had finished counting, he replaced the coin box, sealed it for the next month and went on his way.

One of the great thrills of my young life came when I found a roll of phone company nickels on the sidewalk in front of our apartment building. Even though I realized it was wrong to keep the money, after finding it, I always felt that my life was $2 ahead of everyone else - it created a life position. In those years of operator assisted calls, our number, Dorchester 1023, stood as a recognizable symbol to the phone company. Operators would actually carry on a conversation when waiting for a long distance connection. Once, in my late teen years, I actually made a date with a phone operator. She was a very pleasant girl -- about 10 years older than I was. As a teen ager, I was able to psyche out the system of calling the operator and convincing her that I had already deposited a nickel for a phone call. When I finished one call, instead of hanging up the candle style phone, I would flick the cradle that held the receiver until the operator came on the line. Then, I would nonchalantly give her another number to call. The signals on her switchboard indicated that

a coin had already been deposited and my next call went through without question. I understand that it was a way to cheat the phone company, but after all, a nickel was a lot more significant then than it is now when a call costs ten times that amount and the electronic controls are a lot more sophisticated.

One other person entered our life-style patterns. His name was Remi Nicolette and he was the building's janitor. He was a Belgian and had left his homeland after the German army had decimated its population during the First World War. He spoke English haltingly, but Remi was important to us. First of all, he was a handyman and could repair leaky faucets and burned out fuses. Secondly, he was responsible for the building's furnace and kept us warm in the coldest of winters. He shoveled the snow off our sidewalks and made it possible to get to the family cars that were parked on the streets. Finally, one element of his job was the stoking of the hot water heater to maintain enough hot water for dish washing, showers, baths and laundry. Remi was invaluable. And I liked him.

He would, when I caught up with him, give me an extra shovel and permit me to toss lumps of coal into the roaring furnace. The owner of the building hadn't bothered to invest in a stoker, a device that automatically fed coal into a furnace from a large supply. at the front of the basement in a coal bin. Coal was delivered at the street and the delivery men would load it into wheel barrows and walk it to the opening in the front of the building. Then, Remi would necessarily be inside the basement, shoveling it back toward the furnace so that an entire truckload could be delivered. There were usually only two or three deliveries in the entire winter period, though usage depended in large measure on the weather. On those occasions when I was allowed to help, I took a great deal of personal pleasure in being able to throw a shovel full of coal into the depths of the roaring fire, knowing that by doing that, I was helping to keep the family warm. .

Another group of occasional visitors to our home were the back yard peddlers. During the warm weather months, some men who owned trucks would go to the city's produce markets, buy an assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables -- perhaps a day older than those going into the regular grocery outlets, and take them to neighborhoods they selected. Then they would park their trucks at one end of an alley and walk through the alley shouting their wares. "Fresh Strawberries, Four quarts for a quarter." or "Sweet Corn, ten cents a dozen." The prices were always lower than were available in the major stores and usually the produce was as good as could be bought in the A & P, the Piggley Wiggley, or the other chain stores. In addition, there were two other advantages of dealing with these truckers. First, you had a chance to see what you were getting before you actually gave the trucker any money. Second, there was always the opportunity, almost universally used, to haggle over the price. This was particularly true as the day drew to a close and the trucker had no place to keep his merchandise fresh for the next day. He wanted

to empty his truck and was willing to bargain his over prices to enable him to do that.

I remember my mother's purchase of several cases of strawberries, each containing 12 quarts. I think she paid fifty cents a case and then proceeded to hurry into a jelly making mode. Some berries were reserved and used for a strawberry short cake, but the majority of them ended up in jelly jars to be used over the next winter. The same was true of concord grapes which, after being cooked and mashed in the pot, were put into cheesecloth sacks and allowed to strain into a large pot which was then cooked down to make grape jelly. I often acted as the go-between my mother who would dicker over the price from our back porch, and the peddler who was at ground level. I would take the money to the peddler and return with the produce. Occasionally, there would be an extra orange or apple from the peddler which sweetened the job.

We were not alone in those years. The concept of "courteous and efficient self-service" had not been invented. In addition, there was a bustle of activity around our house, much of which circled around the various elements that made life bearable. It was a small window to the world and a lasting lesson on how to relate to people from all walks of life. .

Merry Kreisch Nix

Christmas at our house was celebrated as a major family holiday. All businesses were closed and my mother planned for a huge dinner to which the entire extended family was invited. Among those who were expected were my father's two sisters, Minnie and Margaret and their husbands, Herman and Art. Also on the guest list were my mother's north side relatives, Hanscha and Ed Hirsch and their two grown sons, Roy and Charlie, both of whom were single. Also on the guest list were my Grandfather's nephew, Paul Steinthal and his wife, Ruth.

I greeted the day with great excitement. While I had lit Chanukkah candles and said the appropriate prayers, Chanukkah was celebrated as a religious holiday -- there was no exchange of gifts, no special foods and little was made of the occasion. Whatever I might have known about Chanukkah was learned in Sunday School and I put little significance on it as an occasion. I remember enjoying the process of lighting the candles and remember the very simple menorah we used. It was made from a thin brass or tin metal, stamped and soldered together to form the necessary eight cups and a slot at the very top for the shamos. Candles burned down quickly and during the latter part of the eight nights, the shamos would melt down and dribble wax on the base of the menorah. At the end of the holiday, it was my job to scrape the wax off the menorah so it could be stored for the next year.

Christmas was a different occasion. It would begin with my great anticipation for the gifts I knew would be coming. The first one to show up was my mother's father. Grandpa Steinthal would ring the bell and, while

climbing the stairs would shout "Merry Kreisch Nix." Literally, the German meant "don't shriek." Whether this expression was an attempt to make a pun out of the Christmas greeting or whether it meant "don't shout about it." I never clearly understood, but it was Grandpa's standing joke for the holiday which everyone accepted.

By four or five in the afternoon, everyone had arrived. My gift from the Hirsch brothers -- one a real estate salesman, the other the family lawyer, was an addition to my Lionel electric train set. The trains first arrived when I was about six. Uncle Art and my father decided to install the track of the wide gauge train on two four by eight pieces of chipboard. The board was strengthened by placing lumber around the sides of it. Uncle Art was a mechanic and a fair carpenter. My father barely knew which end of the screwdriver worked.

The basic train -- those elements I received first -- consisted of an engine and a coal tender, two passenger cars, one of which had an observation deck, and the transformer which supplied power to the train's third rail. When turned on, lights went on in the cars and on the front of the locomotive and the train could be moved ahead or backward at varying speeds. Over the years, the Hirsch gifts included a set of automatic switch tracks which would permit the train to move over a different parallel set of tracks. They also brought additional cars -- a cattle car in which simulated cows moved up a ramp, through the car and down the other side when the car was stopped on the right track. They also brought a crossing signal, additional freight cars and lots more track. In fact, when it was finally finished, the entire set required moving my bed against the wall and the 4x16 feet of track were the major installation in my bedroom. The train set was something that my friends enjoyed, but there had to be limits. The trains were set up from the Thanksgiving holiday until a week after New Year at which point everything was disassembled and stored in my closet waiting for next year and the additions that would surely come with the Hirsch brothers. I'm not sure whether they brought the trains in order to be part of the installation of the new equipment or whether they thought I would enjoy having an expanding train set. I was the envy of the neighborhood kids.

I felt it incumbent on me to buy presents -- I don't think they were called Christmas presents and the event had absolutely no religious significance -- for the members of my family. My shopping took me to Woolworth's Five and Dime store with a budgeted amount to spend for all the people who were nearest and dearest. My mother usually got some gadget for the kitchen, my Grandmother something to add to her sewing basket. My aunt Margaret and Uncle Art had a small wire-haired terrier named "Bing." I usually got something for the dog. Minnie and Herman usually got something to eat because they always reminded me of Jack Spratt and his wife. Herman was a short, thin wiry man who worked for my father as a traveling salesman, and Minnie was a huge woman, short and tipping the scales at something over

300 pounds. My father's gift was usually something he could use in his car during his travels throughout the Midwest.

Incidentally, the story of "Bing" was another tale in my parents' attempt to compensate for the death of my brother. After Bernard died in January of 1933, my folks decided that a dog would provide some companionship for me. They bought a small wire-haired terrier who was named "Bing." and for whom I was expected to take the responsibility. I had to walk the animal during the cold of winter and at least twice a day. I hadn't a clue about how to care for a dog and neither did my parents. It was clear from the mess that the dog had created around the house that we weren't a "pet"" family and one day the dog disappeared. I think I was relieved in that I no longer had to walk it. I certainly didn't miss the chore. I also didn't miss the dog. Some time after the dog disappeared, my mother took me for a visit to my Aunt Margaret. I was completely naive about the fact that Margaret and Art had suddenly acquired a small wire-haired terrier whose name happened to be "Bing." I played with the dog during the visit and never thought it might have been the same animal that was once my responsibility.

My grandfather represented a real gift problem. He had been a butcher his entire life and owned a successful butcher shop. In addition to normal retail trade, he also supplied meats to restaurants throughout the neighborhood in which the store was located. I can clearly recall that I had a real dilemma as to what might be of interest and use to him as I made my trek to the Woolworth store. Finally deciding on a fountain pen, I spent 29 precious cents to get him a really solid pen that I felt he would be able to use when signing checks. What I didn't know until much later in my life was that my Grandfather had learned to write only his name. He read the daily newspapers avidly and my mother assured me he had once read a whole book -- Uncle Tom's Cabin -- but that he could only write his name. Nevertheless, I gave him the pen, innocently enough, and he accepted it with appropriate grace.

During those years -- roughly between 1933 and 1938 -- the economy and the depression deepened and there was little extra in pockets to celebrate holidays. Our family celebration of a day off from the daily grind was an event I looked forward to with joy and great anticipation. I was never disappointed.

Touching History

In the early 1930's, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition was still a vivid memory to many of the folks who lived on the South Side of Chicago. I was brought into those memories by my grandparents who had attended the fair and by my folks who still enjoyed some of the remnants of the Fair that remained for years after it was closed. Some of those remnants are still much a part of Chicago. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

As a small boy, my parents often took me to Jackson Park and I played around what was called "Iowa House." This was an open pavilion that

survived the Fair. Each state built a structure from which they could display their products, both agricultural and manufactured. Iowa, being a farm state, produced mostly corn and livestock and decided that an open building would best display its wares. The Iowa house was located on the corner of 56th Street and the Outer Drive. There's still a shelter at that location that was constructed on the foundations of the original house.

When driving through the park with my Grandfather on our regular Sunday outing, he made sure that we drove by the "Golden Lady," a monumental statue of freedom that had been constructed as part of the Fair's theme. Located in Jackson Park, this shiny reminder of a gilded age still stands in the park.

I can recall going to White City, an amusement park that was constructed at 63rd and Grand Boulevard (now King Drive.) It was named after the Fair's nickname and it rivaled anything at Coney Island or Riverview. By the time I was old enough to go there with my father, it was becoming run down. In fact, it was demolished during the 1930's having been condemned as being a hazard. On one visit, we were on the Ferris Wheel -- something that I believe was transported from the fair itself. The mechanism broke when my father and I were in the basket at the very top of the wheel and it took more than an hour, some panic on my part, and a lot of yelling for the wheel to be fixed and for us to descend from the heights. I was never a fan of Ferris wheels after that experience.

The Midway, fronting the University of Chicago campus, was so named because of its use during the Fair. It was the center of the entertainment area of the Fair and housed such daring acts as Little Egypt whose dance scandalized the more conservative members of Chicago society and delighted most males under the age of 60. Later, the Midway was used as the site of an ice rink and during the winter months, the fire department would spray the grass with water, allowing it to freeze until it was thick enough to provide a skating surface. The City provided a warming house and a place to leave extra shoes and kids from all over the south side would be able to learn to skate on the Midway.

One of the constructions left over from the Fair was an art colony -- a group of stores at 57th Street and Lake Park Avenue. The low rents there attracted artists and artisans until the frame buildings were finally demolished in the 1970's to the dismay of preservationists. They were the last "temporary" structures remaining from the Fair.

Another remnant of the Fair was a replica of Columbus' ship, the Nina. During the Fair, the Spanish government had sent a fleet representing the three original ships that had discovered America. The Fair, after all, commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery and the Spanish-American War was several years in the future. The full-sized ships had been constructed from original plans. They were incredibly small and one of them that survived into

the 1930's was mired in the mud of Jackson Park Harbor near the La Rabida sanitarium.

The City had assigned a watchman to "guard" the vessel which had no real value by the time I got to see it. But, it was an interesting relic and we wanted to explore the interior of it. We convinced the watchman to allow us to go on board over a rickety gangplank and we walked through the crews' quarters and saw the brig. The lowest portions of the ship were awash in the mud and slime of years of neglect. The ship couldn't float and only because of the mud was it held upright at all. Atop the vessel, we could see the rigging that had once held sails. Exploring the ship was an experience for any of us who were able to either convince the watchman that we were working on a school project, or sneak past him and into the hold of the ship.

The final portion of the glory of the 1893 World's Fair is now called the Museum of Science and Industry. During the early 1920's, the building sat abandoned and empty. After the issuance of bonds and a significant matching contribution by philanthropist, Julius Rosenwald, plans were made for the rehabilitation of the building and for designing the construction of the museum's interior. It's original exhibits opened at the same time as the 1933-34 fair. Later, many of the exhibits were salvaged from the science buildings at the Fair and the Museum was expanded. Only the center section of the museum building with the rotunda was originally involved. The grand building was gradually improved and more exhibits were solicited -- along with corporate sponsorship of them. Among the early exhibits that were opened was the popular coal mine and the farm. The remnants of the Century of Progress Fair provided fun and educational advantages for years after it was a mere memory to many Chicagoans.

1937 was a major anniversary year for a number of significant historical events. All of them were noted by my sixth grade teacher, Miss Sheridan. First, it was the 150th anniversary of the Northwest Ordinance. In the few years before the U.S. Constitution was adopted, the Continental Congress decided that the Northwest Area of the country as it was then constituted, should be defined and . Many of the freedoms that are associated with the 1791 Bill of Rights were assigned to people who lived in what are now the States of Ohio, Indiana,. Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. These were, in fact, the northwest corner of what were the earliest United States.

Today, research on the Ordinance would be easy and kids who have access to the Internet are only a click away from more information than they might ever want to have. But being assigned an essay project on the Ordinance in 1937 required a lot of trekking to the public library, to the central library downtown and to a variety of school books. I was competing with my classmates, not only for a high grade, but for Miss Sheridan's approval. She was a favorite and could bring out the best in students. Her charm worked on me.

But 1937 also represented another100th anniversary milestone. It was in 1837 that the City of Chicago was incorporated as a City. It had grown out of its township status, and the century of its existence was something to be noted. Our assignment from Miss Sheridan was to find someone whose experiences in Chicago history could add to the classes' knowledge of our city. That was tough.

I talked it over with my mother who said she had an idea that might help. A member of the Temple, Henrietta Loeb, was a long time Chicagoan. She was described as a very old lady -- probably in her 80's and lived on 52nd Street near Drexel. My mother agreed to contact her to see whether she could help. She was not only willing, but actually eager to describe her experiences when., as a young teen aged girl during the Chicago fire of 1871, she and her family escaped to the lake to protect themselves and save their lives. Their house and possessions were all burned in the fire.

I met Mrs. Loeb at her apartment. She was a tiny woman whose memory extended back to the end of the Civil War. She barely weighed 100 pounds and was, perhaps 5 feet tall. She was excited about being interviewed and I was delighted to have a bit of living history at my disposal. We talked for more than an hour -- she offered tea which I declined. She offered cocoa which I accepted. She described how her dolls had melted in the fire and how the family had discovered that their fine European China had melted together from the heat of the blaze. She almost wept as she talked about how sad she felt for her parents who had lost everything. But they recovered from the fire, continued their business and survived the calamity.

When Mrs. Loeb finished with what she wanted to tell me she almost shouted: "Hooray for Chicago!"

The other kids in the class had taken a less direct road to their essay -- I was the only one who had actually experienced a piece of living history and Miss Sheridan was very pleased and graded me accordingly. This teacher became friendly with my mother and, at a later date, invited us all to her church wedding. She was one of my favorites. The conversation with Henrietta Loeb was my first experience with oral history. It's too bad that it happened before the invention of tape recorders. It would have been a treasure.

Nursemaids and Housemaids

In the 1920's, it was considered a status symbol to have household help. Having grown up in rather affluent surroundings, my mother wanted to continue her mother’s tradition of having a "girl" to do the dishes, housework and generally do the more strenuous work of housekeeping. My grandmother was impressed into service acting as the cashier in the butcher shop and despite the fact that in her younger years, they lived over the butcher shop, they traveled to Europe in a grand style and lived well in the years between 1910 and 1929. My grandmother needed help to maintain her household after

they moved from the butcher shop on South Halsted Street to more affluent surroundings on what was then called Grand Boulevard -- now Martin Luther King Drive.

Over the years they moved from the 3100 block to the 4600 block and eventually to the 5600 block of Grand Boulevard before moving to Hyde Park in the early1920's. Their moves followed the basic movement of the German Jewish community and its institutions. For example, they belonged to K.A.M. Temple which opened its new synagogue at 50th and Drexel in Hyde Park in 1924. My Grandfather was a pillar of the Temple and bought seats which had the advantage of having a plaque with his name affixed to the back of the seat. He bought four seats. Following them on all these moves was my Grandmother's maid, Katie, who set the model for the sort of help my mother wanted.

As the depression set in, at least as long as it was feasible, having "help" continued to be a practice. Only during the 1930's it was such a bargain that, as long as the family had reasonable income, it was a necessity. Our six room, two bathroom apartment on Ingleside Avenue had two rear bedrooms and a third off the kitchen which was referred to as "the maid's room." This room also had a small bathroom adjacent to it as well as a door directly into the kitchen. The building had been built in the early 1920's when the need for accommodations for the "maid" were already well established.

As an infant, and until I was about three, my mother employed a woman named Minnie Harder. Minnie was the caregiver responsible for me at the time I split my forehead on a park bench. She rushed me home and my mother called our family doctor -- his name was Jampolis -- who came over immediately and stitched my head back together. I don't know if my mother every forgave Minnie for this lapse, but I was an active three year old and couldn't be kept under constant control. Minnie had a German background and, while I remember very little of her personally, I do recall that at one point I suffered from a series of painful boils. The doctors treated the boils but didn't know where they came from. My mother blamed Minnie for the boils as well as the injury I had suffered and fired her. The probability is that they were not transmitted by the maid but caused by some extraneous source altogether.

Following Minnie, my mother hired Rosie Gruber. Rose was a German immigrant with a heart as big as outdoors. She was the nursemaid in attendance when my brother was born and still was in the house when he died. Rose eventually got married, moved to the north side of the city and raised a family of her own including a set of twin boys. At Johanna's funeral, Rose approached me and reintroduced herself. She hadn't seen me in many years, but having seen the death notice in the newspapers, made an effort to come to the funeral and pay her respects to my mother and see me as an adult. In the years after she married, my mother occasionally took me on the "el" train and we went up to the north side of the city in an afternoon visit to see Rose and her family. Her husband was a flat janitor.

Following Johanna's funeral, we met Rose for lunch near her apartment. She was a widow and the building was hers having been left by her frugal husband. She told us stories that surrounded the period of my brother's death and my folk's reaction to it. While we had some papers left by my mother that showed the extent of her devastation at the loss of her second child, we began to understand the tone of the time in which that happened. We also learned that my brother had suffered from a birth defect -- a defective heart which contributed to his death from pneumonia. Rose was a part of the tragedy and never forgot it.

Following Rose, my mother hired Mary Krznarich. Mary had come from South Chicago. Her brother, Joe, was a steel worker. In those Depression years, our apartment rent was $75 per month. Mary was paid $8 a week plus room and board. She was to receive Sundays and Thursday nights off. Occasionally, by special dispensation, she would also have Saturday night free. Mary was a great fan of "The National Barn Dance" a radio program that originated in Chicago.

In the years preceding the second World War, Chicago was the seat of the country's agricultural strength. So, it was quite natural that the program that was designed to entertain farmers and small town Midwesterners would originate in Chicago. All radio broadcasts during those years were originated live in a studio. The Barn Dance, similar in context to "Grand Ol' Opry" was broadcast from the Eighth Street Theater at Eighth Street and Wabash Avenue. Tickets were offered free to the event and crowds lined up on the street in the early afternoon waiting to get into the show.

The show was hosted by an announcer named Joe Kelly. Among the entertainers, hay radiating from their bib overalls on stage, were "Lulubelle and Scotty" and "The Hoosier Hotshots." These were specialty acts. Today, the music would be called "Country and Western." sand the humor strictly "cornball." The entire show went on for at least two hours and I recall that even after it went off the air, some acts continued to entertain the live audience until midnight.

Mary loved the show and when my mother didn't have plans to go out on a Saturday night or to have company in the house, Mary would excuse herself in the late afternoon and head for the Eighth Street Theater and wait in line to get into the show. I think that she also arranged for a friend to stand in line earlier than she could have gotten there to be sure that they had tickets for the event. I can remember listening to the show on WLS radio to see if I could hear "my Mary"" shouting or applauding in the audience. I felt very close to the show because of her interest in it.

On a Thursday or Sunday night, when Mary was in South Chicago visiting her family, we would frequently go out for dinner. My Grandfather was adamant on the choices of restaurants he was willing to go to. He finally settled on two favorites. One, which we visited infrequently, was a steak house owned by one of his old friends and customers, Barney Kessel. It was called

"Barney's" Barney stood by the door and greeted every male that entered with a rousing shout of "Yes, Sir, Senator." Grandpa loved that attention. In addition, he knew that he was getting unadulterated beef when he was at Barney's.

But the favorite restaurant, by far, was Won Kow in China Town. For reasons I never clearly understood, my grandfather had developed an affinity to Chinese people. His neighbor at the 63rd Street butcher shop was a Chinese laundryman. The two exchanged Christmas presents. My grandfather would deliver a load of meat to the laundry owner who, in turn, would give my grandfather boxes of lychee nuts and other Chinese goodies. They got along well.

At Won Kow, my grandfather felt confident in ordering things like Vegetable Chop Suey and Vegetable Egg Foo Young. These items, he thought would be pork free and he could eat them. The restaurant was on the second floor of the building in China Town. I believe it's still open for business. At the top of the steep flight of stairs leading to it was a huge aquarium containing very large gold fish. Seated in the restaurant we would order. My father would order beef chop suey or chow mein with noodles instead of steamed rice.. The five members of the family would drink the tea that was part of the service and my mother would always insist on getting a large coffee cup for her tea instead of the more dainty and smaller capacity tea cups that the restaurant usually offered its customers. In addition to the regular orders which we shared, there would always be a special order of soft rolls and butter. In those years, the check might come to $4 for the five of us. It was not gourmet dining and, it certainly wasn't expensive.

Eventually, in about 1939, jobs had become more readily available and Mary left us to get a factory job nearer her family, We lost touch with her during the war, but she remained an important part of my upbringing. There were certainly times when I acted like a brat, but she was even-tempered and, if I got too far out of line, she would report me to my mother who handled the discipline. But with Mary, I could get away with a lot of things my mother would never have tolerated. She was certainly more than a housemaid, and I loved her deeply.

There was one final household helper that my mother would rely on. Elizabeth Dvorak was the twice monthly washerwoman. She would arrive on alternate Wednesdays and take the clothes to the basement of the building where there were stationery tubs, a gas plate for boiling clothes and a wringer to extract water from the washed clothes.

When Elizabeth came up from the basement, it was usually lunch time. Following lunch in the kitchen with me, Mary and my mother, Elizabeth would take the clothes into the dining room near the window and set up an ironing board where she would proceed to iron my father's shirts, the bed linens and other items that required ironing. In those years, the concept of wash and wear hadn't been invented.

Elizabeth spoke very little, though she was always pleasant. She was a heavy set woman with hair that always seemed to be flying in all directions. She usually starched the shirts, finished the handkerchiefs and linens, finished up the job and was paid. Because she was a "day worker" in addition to her salary -- usually $2.50 or $3 a day, she received carfare.

With all these people in my life, many caring directly for me, bathing and dressing me, I suppose that I learned more about being cared for than I needed. I know that Mary would keep the door to her room closed after she had finished her chores for the night including washing and storing the dinner dishes and putting the leftovers in the refrigerator. We had little one-on-one contact in the evenings -- we didn't socialize. I tended to keep my room door closed, too. It gave me a chance to be alone, to listen to radio programs, to read and certainly to do homework. It was a time to grow independently.

Punctuality

I don't know whether it's a blessing or a curse. I happen to have an internal clock that drives me to being early for appointments. I have rationalized that part of my life by saying that it's a matter of respecting the value of someone else's time. I've considered the fact that it's easier to be on time than to make excuses for being late. But in any circumstance, my clock always seems to be a few minutes ahead of everyone else's. And, on those rare occasions when I'm late, I feel terrible guilt and even remorse. There's a reason for this part of my character.

As a youngster, my father spent a lot of time on the road. He was, in a classic, Willie Lohman sense, a traveling salesman. He carried huge sample cases filled with children's clothing in all size ranges. He had delicately styled infant dresses that were hand embroidered in the Philippines, he had bibs and diapers. He had night clothes. He had slacks and dresses for pre-school children. The whole sample line was contained in these cases which were kept in the trunk of his car. During the rare times when he was home for weekends, he would store the cases in a locked room in a public garage, only to reload them when he went out on the road on Monday morning.

Because he owned the business that "jobbed" this merchandise, it was also his responsibility to go to New York, the center of the garment manufacturing business, at regular intervals, to buy new merchandise. Some of it was seasonal, other things he bought were designed to stimulate his customers' interest. These New York trips -- six or eight week long excursions during the course of a normal year -- were occasion for special planning. Usually, my father traveled with only a "grip" or satchel filled with personal needs and a change of clothing. He always bought his train ticket on the Pennsylvania Railroad and he always stayed at a New York Hotel known as the Governor Clinton at 7th Avenue and 31st Street. His habits were well established.

As I grew older, I would write letters to him at the hotel and the mail service at that time was so efficient that he would frequently answer the letters. But it was always his homecoming that required special planning. I knew the Pennsylvania train schedules by heart. The 16 ½ hour trip between New York and Chicago was a feature of both the New York Central and the Pennsylvania railroads who competed intensely for the passenger traffic. I'm not sure why my Dad rode the Pennsy (as it was called) but it was his choice. He would leave Chicago at 4:30 for New York and arrive there the next morning at 9:00, check into his hotel and be ready for a day of business.

The return trip was a little trickier. There were two trains arriving in Chicago from New York. One would get into the downtown station at 8:00 AM, the other arrived an hour later. The schedule was also confused by the weather. In winter, heavy snowstorms in the mountains of Pennsylvania frequently threw the schedules up for grabs.

On his return trip, my Dad always got off the train at the Englewood Station, a small station located at 63rd and State Street. It was an antique even in those days and the automobile entry to the station was through a single lane tunnel. On the street side, the granite lintel over the entryway read "Carriage Entrance,"" a testament to its pre-automobile origins. At the top of the ramp were parking spaces for perhaps 20 cars and those were rarely filled. Since Englewood was considered a "town" on the trains' schedules, there was even a slight fare differential between a ticket to Englewood and one to Chicago. More importantly, it was closer to where we lived.

It was the responsibility of my Grandfather and me to be at the station to pick up my father when he arrived on a Saturday or Sunday morning from his exhausting New York trip. But which train he would be on, and whether the giant steam locomotives were able to get through the snowy mountains was always a question. The small waiting room usually had a board posting the arrivals, but these proved to be inadequate. Communication between railroad stations was in a primitive, telegraphic state and the reliability of overnight estimates of the times of arrival of passenger traffic was sometimes tempered by the needs of prompt freight delivery.

But, at whatever time we expected the train to arrive at Englewood Station, my Grandfather was waiting for me to be ready no less that 90 minutes before the expected arrival. He, for his part felt that the train might have been early and that, should it arrive early and he not be waiting for it, there would be some reflection on his devotion as a father-in-law. So we waited at Englewood for an hour or two or three until the train rumbled into the station. Since the tracks were at the platform level, those behemoth engines would hiss and steam into the station with a rumble that was frightening to a small boy. I knew that if I waved to the engineer, he would wave back at me. Then, after the train rumbled to a full stop, we watched down the platform as porters opened doors to the coaches and put step stools out on the brick walkway as passengers started to detrain.

My father always sent his valise out first and when I saw it, I could begin running to the car from which I knew he would soon alight. I was happy that he was home and he was always glad to see me. Because he spent time in the department store area of New York, I always expected him to bring me some sort of souvenir of his trip to the big city. He never disappointed me and it was with great anticipation that he loaded me into my grandfather's car and we drove home to our apartment in Hyde Park. As soon as we arrived, the gift for me, and frequently one for my mother, was unpacked from the valise or from a separate box that occasionally came off the train with him, and we had a great time unwrapping the latest in toys from Macy's or, in my mother's case, a new leather handbag. My Grandfather and Grandmother always received a box of Barracini's chocolate Candies.

There was one additional bonus that accrued to me from my father's traveling. Every year in mid-December, he would bring a roll of cardboard which contained the annual calendar of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The calendar immediately occupied a place of honor on the wall of my bedroom. The scene depicted on the glossy paper was from one of the scenic routes passed by the line. And in the engine in front of this mighty train stood the vigilant engineer who had just waved at me on the platform at Englewood.

Collections

I've never been an avid hobbyist. But Lois and I have a couple of collections that we value highly and which could be considered part of a hobby. For example, there's our interest in our collection of Judaica. We have a number of pieces that have been appraised as being of museum quality. We enjoy displaying and using them in our home. My particular favorite is a spice box in our dining area. It’s English silver and is hallmarked 1823. We found it in London and bought it from a dealer there in 1969.

Dealers in Judaica are often reluctant to sell their merchandise to just anyone. I almost had to prove my sincere interest in Jewish lore and tradition before we ever got around to talking about the price of the piece. Their reasoning is simple: There is so little authentic Judaica left following the Holocaust that anything available should be in the hands of people who sincerely appreciate it for its artisanship and for its religious and historic significance. But we brought the spice box home and it was really the start of our collection.

Lois purchased a lovely, contemporary Israeli Kiddush cup in the early 1960's which is also displayed on the wall near the spice box. But the centerpiece of the wall is a Torah breast plate which was purchased in New York in 1971. In another of these writings, I described the hard bargaining involved in buying this breast plate. The original was crafted in the 1848 in Vienna. It was brought to America in the 1880's and donated to a synagogue then. On the rear, another silver sheet was affixed and the names of some of

the contributors to that synagogue are engraved on the plaque. The names on that plate are those who made significant pledges to the Shul. But a few who made pledges reneged on their promises and those names were erased. The area was smoothed over. It's a treasure of Jewish history because it reflects the humanity of the members of a congregation and how they related to their institutions before the turn of the 20th century.

One major piece of our collection is hanging from the ceiling of our entry hall. It's brass and it is part of a story. Lois and I had become friendly with an assistant rabbi at Sinai, Tom Liebschutz. We had been guests in his apartment and I noticed a brass lamp that was hung in his foyer. He told me that it had been a common item in Jewish households before they were electrified. Oil was placed into a container at the base and the several wicks were saturated with the oil. It was lit before the beginning of the Sabbath and would burn until after sundown on Saturday when it could be refilled. It was called a "Shabbos Lamp." I was fascinated by it and, on my next visit to my mother's apartment, I mentioned seeing it.

"I have one of those." she said, "It's up on the shelf in the closet." I proceeded to climb a stepladder and took it down. It was tangled in old fashioned electric wires. Johanna told me that it was something that her father had taken from his mother's house in Germany during a visit to "the old country" in 1912. "I think there's another part of the thing in the back of the closet." she said. I climbed up again and found a long, flat object wrapped in newspaper.

When my grandfather had brought the lamp back to Chicago from the family home, he had proceeded to have it electrified. The old fashioned fixtures and bulbs were still a part of the lamp which was dusty but in good condition. Carefully, I unwrapped the other flat object. The newspaper, when it was opened, was in German and was dated 1912. In fact, on the front page of the paper was an old fashioned etching showing a visit to the Kaiser and his wife by their cousins, George V and Queen Mary of England. Both the Kaiser and the King were grandsons of Queen Victoria. The piece in the newspaper wrapping was a handmade ratchet which would allow the lamp to be raised or lowered.

Removing the electrification was simple and I did that almost immediately. Included in the package were the slides on which the wicks would rise from the oil supply to the arms of the lamp. There were enough for the arms, though one of them was missing a hanger. I was later able to duplicate the hanger to complete the set. Having the drip slides was, we later learned, a unique advantage since few of the surviving lamps were complete with them. Lois washed the lamp and we hung it in our foyer. It's been a fixture in our apartment since that time in the early 1970's when it was unearthed. At some later point, we were required to have it appraised by a dealer in Judaica who dated its manufacture to the 1700"s. It is, by far, the oldest item of our family history in our possession.

On a trip to Holland, we continued our search for Judaica and met a dealer who sold us a silver and ivory "yad." Our receipt for this Torah pointer indicated that it was more than 100 years old and would qualify as an antique under American customs law. On our return to Chicago, via Detroit, I declared the item and produced a bill showing it was a true antique. It had been made from a carved ivory umbrella handle with English markings which had been recycled into the Jewish piece. The customs agent at the Detroit airport wanted to confiscate the piece - not because it wasn't 100 years old but because the importation of ivory was illegal.

I can remember standing in the airport's custom reception hall with that agent, toe to toe, shouting back and forth about the fact that, when the piece was made, ivory wasn't embargoed. I also mentioned that it was a religious article. ""Are you going to use it in your mass?" he asked me. "Of course," I lied, "and the elephant that produced the ivory has been long dead before the customs service ever learned how to spell "embargo." I asked to speak to his supervisor. It was a Sunday and the supervisor wasn't there. I suggested that there was someone in charge of the customs service in Detroit that he could get on the phone. He finally backed off and allowed me to take the item through the customs line. It now rests under the Torah breast plate in the dining area.

Another item of Judaica comes from Margaret Rosenbaum. I'm not sure how she came to have it though I suspect it had been a part of the Lowenstern family's possessions. She was the youngest daughter. It was the responsibility of the mother of the family to teach her daughters how to prepare for the Sabbath, lighting the candles for the occasion. This miniature brass set has a tiny wine bottle and a Kiddush cup, a tray for the bread and a small candelabra with tiny candles for the ceremony. The entire tray is probably three inches in diameter with the other pieces proportionally tiny.

There are other pieces included in our collection -- a couple of figurines of an old man and woman, and a pewter bowl and cover that belonged to Martha Hagen that was used for the salt water used in the Seder, brass salt shaker that was once used as a primitive spice box. There are a couple of Chanukkah menorahs, a Jewish merchant's seal for use with sealing wax and a stamp used by a butcher to indicate that meat was kosher. There are some mezuzahs and some contemporary items -- a Seder plate, a matzo cover among them that will, in time, become collector’s items as well as the ones I described.

Another collection consists of beer mugs. There are three elements to this collection. One portion comes from my grandfather Steinthal. On their trips to Germany before the first world war -- in 1907 and 1912, they purchased souvenir mugs at several of their stops. There's one from Heidelberg. Several of his mugs represent scenes from medieval German hunting lodges and show the lifestyle of a period long past in German life. All

of them extol the virtue of Germania. Another group of the mugs were acquired by him in Chicago. One, for example, is about beer in Milwaukee.

There's one mug, a true antique, that I got from the wife of my grandfather's nephew, Paul Steinthal. Paul came to Chicago in the mid 1920's after having served in the German army during the first war. At one time, he was a hunt master to the Rothschild family and he was a robust man -- heavy and jocular. He wound up being yet another German butcher working for my Grandfather. His mug is a rare example of German militarism and displays the Westfalian Dragoon regiment to which he belonged in full dress uniform. In the years before the first war, Germany could not really be considered a unified nation. Before 1870, it had been a loose confederation of principalities and dukedoms bound to each other only by their use of German as a common language. They were united under the Prussian banner of Bismarck, but real national union was a slow process and, in very much the same manner as our U.S. Civil War regiments fought under state banners (for example the 24th Massachusetts Infantry) the Germans were first a product of their home territory and only then were they Germans. They showed pride in the area of the country where they had been born and the place where they had enlisted or been drafted into the army. The Westfalian Dragoons were one such element and fought for the Kaiser only because he controlled their home territory.

The final element of the beer mug collection is represented by those beautiful mugs that were made following the second world war. Several that I treasure were gifts and fit in well with the older ones. In a sense, they help show the evolution of the beer mug as an art form.

There's yet another collection in our house -- watches, some with interesting pedigrees. One, for example, is a silver watch which is also a cigarette lighter. A Swiss made novelty, it features a tiny watch set in a silver case that is, in its entirety, a lighter. The entire object was manufactured by Dunhill and carries English, Canadian and American patents. The style is Art Deco and was probably made in the 1920's. It's meant to be carried as a part of a watch fob in a vest pocket.

Another watch is one given to my father by Johanna as an engagement present. It's either silver or platinum, made by Elgin and has an engraving on the inside of the date on which she gave it to him. The watch still keeps time and it's attached to a delicate chain which was also meant to be carried in a vest pocket.

Two other watches were purchased by Johanna and Milton on their trip to Europe in 1955. Both are identical -- one was meant for my father's use and the other for me. Both are self-winding Omega watches bought in Switzerland.

Another watch dates to 1951 and was a gift from Albert Cohen to me when Dotty and I became engaged. It's a slim gold Elgin wrist watch and now has a leather band. A few years ago, I took the watch to a repair shop to have the timing adjusted and the watchmaker, who apparently dealt in antique

watches made me a wild offer for the watch which is in excellent condition. There's apparently a huge demand for watches of that vintage and condition and his offers kept going up. I wasn't selling and the watch is still in the bedroom. I wear it on those occasions when Lois and I are going to formal events.

Then, there's my Grandfather Steinthal's Hamilton watch. Time was very important to him. He opened his store by the clock, picked up my father at the railroad station by the clock and instilled in me the importance of punctuality. His gold timepiece was regulated to railroad specifications and when I was a small boy, I can remember him taking the watch to Leboldt's Jewelry store across from his butcher shop to have the timing adjusted. The watch we have is attached to a gold chain to be worn on a vest. At the other end of the chain from the watch is a small gold bull, symbol of the butcher's trade.

All these collections stem from my first real collecting effort. That's the collection of antique buttons on my beanie hat. That beanie is small - like a yarmulke, but it's made of a coated fabric and has several buttons that are collectibles. One is a button that was given to listeners by radio station WENR. By sending in your name and address, a kid could become a member of the "Air Juniors," a club that helped attract an audience when radio was still very much a novelty. There's an addition to the beanie that came from a period several years after the "Air Junior" pin -- that's a decoder pin that was acquired by sending in a foil shield from a package of Ovaltine to the Little Orphan Annie program. My mother wouldn't buy Ovaltine for me -- it was too fattening and she told me that I got enough nutrients from the other food she fed me. But I found out that my Aunt Margaret used Ovaltine and asked her for the foil seal. After I received the pin, I was able to decipher the messages that were sent to "members" of the club. Those pins are still available on the Internet -- at huge prices.

There are also some election campaign buttons encouraging votes for Herbert Hoover (in 1932) and for Alf Landon (in 1936.) There are some that urge people to vote for Roosevelt, others for them to join labor unions. The buttons are all affixed to the hat and the hat is carefully stored in a suitcase in our basement.

No, I'm not a hobbyist. Some collections we have amassed are the product of serious searching. Others are the result of interests that were pursued for periods of time when they seemed the thing to do. They are all a part of my history and they are treasures to have and enjoy. They are a link to my memories.

Century of Progress

Planning for the 1933-34 Century of Progress exhibition in Chicago began in the roaring "20's. The success of the 1893 World's Fair was such that Chicago business and civic leaders felt it would be worth following that event

up with another that stressed the growth of Chicago from the time it was incorporated as a town in 1833 until it was America's second largest city in 1933. These business and governmental leaders sought and received commitments from governmental authorities all over the world and from businesses and industries throughout the U.S.

And then came the Depression. The commitments were ironclad and, though some of the exhibitors scaled back their plans for the Fair, most of them decided that appearing at the Fair would be good for business. In fact they hoped that new products they could introduce would stimulate business. As a result, they spared no expense in creating memorable exhibits and a lasting impression on Chicago.

I was going on seven years old when the Fair opened in the spring of 1933. It was, basically, a summer event and was planned to close in fall of the year. I have memories of several of the things that the Fair featured and have had the advantage of a number of souvenir books relating the glories of the Fair which are in our library.

The Fair stretched along the Lakefront from 39th Street on the south to the south end of Soldier Field at about 16th Street on the North. A landfilled island, called ""The Northerly Island" was constructed in the lake to permit additional installations of Fair related exhibits and attractions. This island later became Meigs Field. Because of the distance that was needed to travel along the main street of the Fair, Greyhound buses were brought in. They were low, long vehicles attached to a motorized truck by something akin to a semi trailer hitch. This allowed for more maneuverability of the buses. The bus rides were free and visitors could move from either end of the Fair and their parking spaces (or their public transit lines) to whatever exhibit they might want to see.

Fair officials designated special "days" during the course of the Fair, so there would be "Polish" days or "Veteran's" days, or other special events honoring cities, States and countries were scattered throughout the regular schedule. Reduced admission tickets were available on those days and special events were planned to feature the particular group for whom the "days" had special meaning. Admission to the Fair was fifty cents and books of tickets were available at discounted rates to encourage multiple admissions.

I can remember several exhibits that were particularly impressive to a seven year old. One was the newly developed concept of safety glass for automobiles. In order to demonstrate the fact that the glass didn't shatter, General Motors set up a baseball pitching exhibit and visitors were permitted to throw regular hard baseballs at a framed piece of the new glass. Those who hit and broke the glass were given ""medals" attesting to their pitching skill.

In another exhibit, the American Can Company had set up an entire production facility. After waiting in line, a visitor could push a button and a small tin can would roll down a slot after going through the machine and, with a glass enclosed operation, the visitor could see sheet metal being formed into the can. They could watch as it was painted in several colors and then heat

dried. The can was actually a small bank with a slot on the top and an opening on the bottom to allow access to coins that had been saved.

Yet another exhibit I can remember was one in which Firestone tires were actually made on site. The noise, heat and aroma of rubber being vulcanized before one's eyes was a very vivid reminder of the tires on which most cars rode. Attached to the Firestone exhibit was a Ford motor company assembly plant which showed how the cars were actually made. A few new cars rolled off this miniaturized assembly plant every day.

There were entertainment facilities and restaurants galore at the Fair. Otto Eitel, who owned and operated the downtown Bismarck Hotel also ran a "Black Forest"" restaurant at the Fair. This installation had the appeal of a rural German town. In those years -- before Hitler and after the peace that ended the first World War, there was no stigma attached to anything German. My Grandfather enjoyed having a beer in the "beerstube" in the Black Forest Village. Beer was also available in the Miller Brewing pavilion and from Schlitz which, we were told, was the beer that made Milwaukee famous.

At the northerly end of the Fairgrounds was the major attraction of the Fair, the Skyride.

There were two towers, one on the west was anchored in what is now the McCormick Place parking lot. The easterly tower was located on the Northerly Island. The towers stood 620 feet tall -- approximately 62 stories of a modern office building. The cables that stretched across the lagoon were 1850 feet long -- about the length of the George Washington Bridge in Manhattan and the cable cars rode at a height of 218 feet above the water. The vista of the entire Fair and of downtown Chicago from these cars as they moved slowly across the lagoon was spectacular.

Naming the cars provided some whimsical opportunities to the developers of the Skyride. In those years, Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden were names known to only a few. But the characters these two white men created made them the most popular radio personalities of their time. They were Amos and Andy who stereotyped every negative characteristic of the negro that could have been imagined. The characters were lazy, dishonest, sly, scheming and in some cases stupid. Those stereotypes fit into the white American's psychological profile of the black man. The radio program that they evolved was a huge success -- it was number one on everyone’s list of programs to listen to. And it was about as politically incorrect as anything could get.

The characters from the Amos and Andy radio program, which originated in a studio in Chicago, lent their names to the cars on the Skyride and people vied to see how many of the different cars they could ride on in their trips across the lagoon to and from the Northerly Island. Also, traversing the lagoon was a foot bridge that had been constructed and was maintained by Swift and Company, the meat packer. My father stumbled on a loose board on the bridge, fell, and tore a ligament in his leg which generated a personal injury

lawsuit against Swift. A few years later, I can recall the suit was settled, though his leg never quite went back to normal, he was compensated for his pain and suffering.

Among the souvenirs available at the Fair was one created by a cousin of my father's, Milton Weinman. Milt, with his brother Art, were in the business of manufacturing waste baskets from pressed metal. It was natural that Milt should seize on the opportunity of buying a machine that would take a penny coin and roll it into a raised replica of the Skyride at the Fair. He would use his own penny and, for a quarter, would hand crank it through the machine that was situated along the Fair's main thoroughfare providing the visitor with a lasting souvenir of the visit. Milt made enough money at the Fair to survive the depression, though the work schedule was brutal, he never complained. He had found a way to literally make money.

Chicago had begun with the construction, in 1803, of a defensive installation called Fort Dearborn. The local Indian tribes were drawn to the fort for trading of both animal skins and other produce and, in return, they received manufactured goods. In 1812, Fort Dearborn was order to evacuate their positions and move the population and the small garrison to Detroit. The reason for the evacuation was the pressures of the War of 1812 and attacks by British forces against American outposts in the western United States. In fact, the Fort Dearborn massacre that ensued was actually a battle in the Napoleonic Wars since the U.S. had allied itself with France.

Following their orders, the settlers and the small garrison got only about a mile and a half from the old Fort before they were attacked by a band of Indians, sympathetic to the British, at 18th Street and the lake. Only a handful of the 100 settlers escaped the massacre. Among this group were John Kinzie who returned and opened a trading post on the Chicago River as it emptied into Lake Michigan. That trading post became the origin of the village and later the City of Chicago.

At the 1933-34 World's Fair, a replica of Fort Dearborn was constructed and drew thousands of visitors. Nostalgia was certainly a strong element of the Fair's exhibits. Architecture was essentially an expression of the Art Deco style, but inside the buildings were reproductions of an antique store (in the Sears Roebuck pavilion,) of a the painting "The Doctor," (in the Walgreen Drug Store exhibit) There were modern marvels as well. A transparent figure of the human body displayed the location of vital organs. The use of liquid oxygen was demonstrated regularly when a flexible rubber ball was dipped into a tank of the extremely cold liquid and, after a few seconds froze to the extent that, when it was dropped to the floor, it shattered like delicate glass.

Entertainment was also a part of the Fair's offerings. Probably the most famous was Sally Rand, an exotic dancer whose costume was advertised as being only her skin, but, who, in fact, wore a flesh colored body suit as she danced behind her large fans. Publicity for her act indicated that the Chicago

Police morals squad (there was such a thing!) had an officer at every performance ready to close down the show and arrest Sally if any part of her anatomy was displayed that could be considered obscene. Sally was the Fair's answer to Little Egypt's success at the Columbian Exhibition 40 years earlier. Clyde Beatty displayed his skills as a lion tamer in another exhibition, and troops of midgets entertained kids in yet another show. There were tours of the actual ship that Admiral Byrd had used when he discovered the South Pole a few years earlier.

Other countries honored the Fair. The Italian dictator, Mussolini, sent a flight of sea planes to Chicago when the Fair opened. Chicago's 7th Street was renamed Balbo Drive in honor of the flight's leader. In addition, Italy presented Chicago with a column from the Roman forum, a memento that still stands south of the Field Museum.

The Fair was such a success that it was renewed for 1934 and again, exceeded all expectations for attendance and revenues. Chicago was fighting the depression in the only way it knew -- with bluster and with a mammoth display of bravado -- that worked very well.

Butcher Shop

840 East 63rd Street was on the northeast corner of the intersection. Located under the tracks of the Jackson Park spur of the "el" train, it was a dark street. To the north of the store along Drexel Avenue was a Chinese Laundry. To the east of the store were some shops -- a shoe store, a jewelry store, a candy store and, after the end of Prohibition, a saloon. Only when they reopened in 1933, the saloons had to refer to themselves as taverns. Across 63rd Street was the Maryland Theater.

To the west at the intersection with Cottage Grove, 63rd Street took on an entirely different aura. The Balaban and Katz Tivoli Theater was on the east side just to the south of the corner. The Tivoli was a prime theater with live vaudeville performing and a full band led by the relatively famous Frankie Masters. Headliners from second tier vaudeville circuits who appeared at the other B and K theaters played the Tivoli regularly.

Across the street from the theater was the Washington Park State Bank and it was here that my Grandfather Steinthal met his downfall. He was an important part of the community. He knew everybody in the neighborhood and was a respected merchant. Because of his respectability, he was asked to join the Board of Directors of the Bank. Pride made him accept the invitation, though good judgment should have told him to keep away from it. He didn't understand banking and was overly trusting of people with whom he did business. In those years, banking laws permitted anyone buying bank stock -- a requirement of all directors -- to pay only half the par value of the stock. It encouraged buyers to purchase more stock than they might have bought had

they been required to pay for it in full. The only time the other half of their stock investment would be required was if the bank was in a failing condition.

Then came 1929 and the two years that followed created a banking crisis. Finally, in 1932, the bank failed. Government regulators contacted my Grandfather and ordered him to ante up the other half of the money for his stock. He didn't have enough to pay their demands. He was ruined but he gamely fought his way back in the only way he knew. He continued to cut meat in the Butcher Shop.

The shop was a long, narrow store with sawdust on the floor. In its heyday, there were six or eight butchers who were kept constantly busy. On the working side, cases of meats were on display. Hanging above the butchers' heads were sausages, whole hams and rashers of bacon, waiting for someone to buy them. Behind the case were the butcher blocks, massively heavy wooden installations which were scrubbed regularly with a heavy wire brush to clean them of the blood and scraps of meat that remained from their regular use. If my Grandfather planned to cut some meat to take home for family consumption, he would personally scrub the block until he was satisfied that there were no traces of pork remaining on the wood.

The smells in the store were easy to identify. There was the fresh sawdust which kept the hardwood floor clear of drippings from the raw meat and from the customers" boots. There was the aroma of the fresh meats and, of course, there was the scent of the smokehouse that had cured the bacon and ham. You could hear the sound of meat cleavers as the butchers chopped through bones and the sound of the meat saws as they cut through bone and sinew. The butchers were kept busy preparing orders for restaurants, institutions and hotels as well as for the retail customers who came to the shop. In those years, a butcher shop owner bought meat in the stockyards market by buying quarter or half cows, sheep, pigs and lambs. Then they would have them delivered to the stores and butchers would complete the process of preparing the meats for retail use.

Today, the process is very different with factories mass producing the cuts of meat and preparing them for retail sale in their final form. In supermarkets today, butchers aren’t required to know how to cut meats or how to economically prepare half a cow for retail sale.

My Grandfather took great pride in training his butchers. They were able to squeeze the last ounce of meat from a forequarter or hindquarter of beef. In this way, they could maximize the profit from the meat and at the same time give their customers the greatest possible value. Based on the wholesale price of the meat, my Grandfather could establish the retail price of everything from steaks and rib roasts to hamburger. From this pricing, he would make a profit and, at the same time, provide his customers with reasonable value.

Among the butchers I got to know were the brothers, Max and Bert Hahn who went on to establish exclusive shops of their own in the north suburbs. Later, during the war years, they owned a shop on 53rd Street and

called my Grandfather asking him to come and cut meat in their store. Grandpa was in his early '70's, but he would dutifully go to the store and spend the day cutting large pieces of meat. It was in this way that he provided meat to our family during the war with absolutely no reference to ration stamp requirements.

Another butcher was named Ernie. Ernie was a favorite of mine and most of the kids in the area because he was always willing to cut a chunk of sausage from the rack and give us a snack. In the rear of the store, Fred worked. Fred was slightly retarded and, though he was harmless, he was kept in the back room and charged with the responsibility of grinding the hamburger which was always brought to the front of the store on white trays and was always freshly ground.

Between the front counters and the rear of the store was the huge walk-in cooler. In those years before efficient air conditioning, these coolers used ammonia as a refrigerant. It was dangerous stuff and on one occasion, one of the butchers was in the cooler when an ammonia leak opened. He was overcome by the fumes and died en route to the hospital. The cooler was usually off limits for me, though I would be able to go into it with my Grandfather. When meats were delivered from the stockyards, they would be stored in the cooler and aged. Eventually, my Grandfather would inspect them, decide they were ready for sale and bring them out for further butchering.

On the wall opposite the counter was a glass enclosed cashier booth. During the glory days of the 1920's, my Grandfather employed Minne Strauss, a distant relative of my Grandmother's. She would act as a cashier. As was common in those years, after a customer had made his selection and had seen the meat packaged, he was given a slip of paper with the total amount on it. He would then take the slip to the cashier, pay for the meat and have his ticket stamped. Then, he would return to the butcher for his package of meat. In this way, there was control over the money and each butcher kept the stamped receipts to establish the extent to which they had worked with the customers.

When the depression set in, Minne was released and my Grandmother took over the cashiering job. The little cashier cage was small with an electric heater. On the counter was an old fashioned adding machine. It was here that I learned from my grandmother how to make change by beginning with the total price and then beginning with coins and finally with currency, counting the difference between the price and the amount of money that had been tendered by the customer.

In addition to Fred, who lived in the back room and acted as the night watchman, my Grandfather had several cats. Mice and rats were not encouraged. The cats kept their population down to a minimum. As I remember, they seemed to be very well fed cats and whether their diet came from scraps tossed to them by the butchers or their steady diet of mice, I'll never know. Probably, they ate a combination of the two and, though not very discriminating, they had a good life.

Elmer, the butcher, taught me how to play with the cats. By taking a small bow-tie shaped piece of heavy butcher paper and tying it to a long string, I could drag it along the sawdust on the floor to attract the cats' attention. When they became interested, I could watch as they stalked the paper mouse. When they were ready to pounce on it, I would quickly pull it away. They would begin their pursuit of the paper again. That way, they got exercise and I had something to amuse myself while I was at the store.

In the early years of the Roosevelt administration, every merchant displayed the emblem of the National Recovery Act -- the Blue Eagle marked "We Do Our Part." whatever that might have been for a retail butcher. There were constant jokes about the meaning of "N.R.A." not a few of them obscene.

On one occasion, shortly after the end of Prohibition, my Grandfather took me down the street to the Tavern. Though he was not a heavy drinker, he was a German who enjoyed his beer. Beer was mostly on tap, and the bartender was already drawing a stein when he saw Grandpa coming into the store. When he was introduced to me, he insisted on drawing another glass for me. My grandfather asked him to make it a root beer which the bartender could do, and I recall sitting on a bar stool, barely reaching the bar with my chin and sipping my stein of "beer' along with Grandpa.

The financial setbacks from the bank fiasco coupled with losses from non-payment of bills by the wholesale trade which was conducted on a credit basis eventually forced my Grandfather out of business. I can't forget 840 East 63rd Street. It was a part of my growing experience and certainly something I recall with fondness and a lot of nostalgia.

Family Vacations

The term "recreational travel" didn't exist in depression years. If there was any traveling to be done, it was short term and often had a business related purpose. My father traveled all the time selling his children's wear line and going to New York to replace stocks and prepare for a new season of selling. My mother had been to Europe twice as a child -- in 1907 and 1912 -- and had been to New York to visit relatives in the 1920's. But traveling as a family was infrequent and, to me, very exciting.

My first recollection of travel was a trip to visit a friend of my Grandfather Steinthal. As a butcher in more primitive times, he would buy cattle and then leave them on a farm to be fattened and until he was ready to slaughter them and prepare them for his retail customers. One such farm was owned by a man named Keller. Keller's Farm was located in the town (and it's still on the map) of Hamlet, Indiana, located about 80 miles southeast of Chicago. Keller's farm was primitive by today's standards. There was neither electricity nor running water. There was also no indoor plumbing and, at the age of six or seven, I was not happy with the idea of an outhouse where I might fall into the relatively large hole. My mother assured me that I would be safe,

but I used it with a lot of trepidation. Neither the size of the outhouse's hole nor its summertime aroma were very reassuring.

Going to Keller's farm, Grandpa Steinthal would check on his cattle and, because we all went along, we would make a holiday of the trip bringing a picnic lunch and enjoying Keller's hospitality. My Grandfather pickled his own corned beef and beef tongues and sandwiches were plentiful. I can remember going into Keller's hen house with my mother. There was a real sense of power as I chased the chickens from their nests to collect eggs -- real eggs that were still warm from having just been laid. The chickens protested noisily which added to the excitement. I was also able to see the cows, horses and the pigs at close range. On one occasion, Keller was digging a new well. The process started with a hole perhaps 48 inches in diameter and six feet deep. I was examining this hole in the barnyard when I slipped into it. I panicked.

By yelling loudly in my fear of being left behind, Keller's son, who was probably in his early 20's, heard me and climbed into the hole with a ladder, picked me up and brought me back to the surface. After that experience, I was always wary of holes.

On another visit to Keller's farm, a friend of my Grandfather, who I remember being referred to as "The Butter and Egg Man" went along with us in the old Cadillac. He was a friendly guy -- short and rotund and good company. During lunch, for which Mrs. Keller had prepared special pies and a heavy meal, the Butter and Egg Man excused himself and went outside to use the outhouse. After a while, when he didn't return, Keller went outside to see whether there was a problem. He rushed back into the dining room and there were hurried conversations. The Butter and Egg Man had suffered a fatal heart attack while using the outhouse and was dead. While much of this information was kept from me, I knew there was a traumatic event taking place. I don't recall any further trips to visit the Kellers.

My Dad had a business account called The Dubuque Mercantile Company. The buyer of children's clothing was a man named Ed Graff. During the summer of 1934 my mother, father and I drove to Dubuque, Iowa to visit the Graff family and to have a few days out of town. This was the summer of the dust bowl and one of the hottest on record.

The Okies were fleeing Oklahoma and the Arkies were driving out of Arkansas. The topsoil from their farms was blackening the skies as far north as Iowa and Illinois. Temperatures topped 100 degrees for days at a time and, in an era without air conditioning, the world slowed down to accommodate this weather pattern. Newspapers were filled with accounts of eggs being fried on the sidewalks of major cities.

We drove to Dubuque in the old faithful Nash automobile and it was the first time I crossed the Mississippi River. Our accommodations were on the second floor of a commercial building on one of Dubuque's main streets. It

was a hotel room, but there was only a small window and an electric fan to relieve the heat.

When my father was out taking care of his business my mother kept me inside because of the intense heat, To keep me amused, she bought a group of books with picture stories called "Big Little Books." She laid on the bed with a cool wet cloth over her forehead to relieve her from the heat. The books were the sort of adventure stories that appealed to small boys and were, in fact, the precursor of comic books that were developed a few years later. During that visit, early one evening after the temperature had cooled to a more tolerable degree, Mr. Graff took us to a vista where three states could be seen at the same time. Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa were all to be viewed from this single point. I remember being unimpressed. The landscape all looked the same dark green to me in the dimming light and it was bisected by a brown muddy strip of water. This was not the Mississippi River of legend. Tom Sawyer never floated his raft on this river. Instead it was simply another unimpressive stream.

One of the family's favorite vacation destinations was West Baden, Indiana. West Baden was a spa and "watering place" in the European tradition and my grandparents loved it. We visited it regularly and some recollections, beginning when I was as young as three, are still with me. West Baden was about a mile from another watering place, French Lick. Though the water was the same in both hotels, the two resorts were vastly different. My first recollection comes from a time before the depression began. I have vague memories of having been in French Lick in October of 1929 at the time of the stock market collapse. There was a live orchestra and a dance floor. My parents were dancing and I walked around the floor as couples tripped over me. I wasn't being a brat deliberately, but no one would have been able to know my intent.

The property was one of those old fashioned places with a broad verandah running across the front of the building. Service was designed for the wealthy. The place was elegant. Even in the later 1930's, after the effects of the depression had trickled through all segments of society, French Lick tried to maintain its standards of elegance and, though they were tarnished, the standards still were in place. French Lick was the upscale and more expensive version of West Baden and the high point of every trip to West Baden was dinner at the French Lick Springs hotel.

There were several trips to southern Indiana to spend a few days "taking the waters." It was a long, dusty automobile ride through the Indiana countryside. In 1937, the family all piled into the car for another trip to West Baden, Indiana. The family had settled on its destination based on the economics of the trip. Simply put, West Baden was much less expensive than French Lick and, though it was only a mile away, it represented an affordable alternative to the luxury of the higher priced hotel. In addition, West Baden was as well known for its mineral water as French Lick and, in fact, a

nationally distributed product known as ""Pluto Water" was one of my Grandfather's favorites for its laxative effects. The water was bottled in West Baden. The hotel in which we stayed had a constantly flowing fountain in the lobby which spewed forth the foul smelling water that had the aroma of rotten eggs. I was amazed that people went to the fountain, took a cup and actually drank the stuff.

As a side trip to that 1937 excursion, we drove to Louisville. In the spring of that year, the Ohio River had overflowed its banks and the city had been flooded. I can still remember the high water marks on the downtown buildings which reached above my head. It was that flood that initiated a number of flood control public works on the Ohio and Mississippi that prevented any future disasters. Back at West Baden, there was little for me to do. I remember meeting a traveling salesman who sold cigarettes for the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company. He was introducing two new, cheaper brands than the Raleighs and Kools that were the company's mainstay products. He gave me several packages (for my father) of Spuds and Twenty Grand cigarettes which, though they never attained the market acceptance of the better known labels, were found on shelves in Chicago for years to come. Those off-brands retailed for twenty cents a pack instead of the twenty-five cents that the better known brands commanded. A nickel a pack in those years was a significant difference.

Yet another travel experience involved a trip with my Aunt Margaret and Uncle Art. In 1937 or 1938, we five drove to Oconomowoc, Wisconsin and stayed in what today would be called a Bed and Breakfast. We were lodged in a private house. There was a mud bottom lake for swimming and a porch on the house for lounging. I was bored until, one afternoon, I was exploring the house and opened a closet. To my great surprise, I discovered a shotgun in the closet. I took it out and brought it to my mother who panicked. She had no knowledge of guns and didn't know what to do with it. She brought it to my father who was a little more knowledgeable. He checked to see it wasn't loaded and carefully put it back in the closet. I was soundly spanked, though I never understood what I had done that was so terribly wrong. Perhaps, their fear was translated into punishment for me.

So, we traveled as a family. There were some fiascoes like the time, at about age 5, we were returning home from one of the frequent trips to West Baden when I complained about a ""headache in my stomach." There was barely enough time to stop the car before the meals of the past several days came back. Travel taught me that there was a world beyond Hyde Park in Chicago. In fact, there were new things at every turn. I'm still learning what some of those turns hold.

Meeting Mafiosi

Almost everyone in Chicago has had some exposure to the mob. The Mafia has infiltrated almost every aspect of Chicago's society. Whether you are concerned with hotel linens, restaurants, wine sales, garbage removal or simply read the daily paper and take note of crime statistics, there is some reference to the syndicate, the Mafia, la Cosa Nostra, the outfit or the mob. One or another synonym is a part of daily life in the city.

My first experience with the outfit took place when I was 4 or 5 years old. My grandfather Steinthal fancied himself quite a dandy. Because, as a butcher, he had wholesale customers, he dealt with restaurant and bar owners as a part of his day to day business. Many of those customers were connected with the syndicate and its head, Al Capone. One of my grandfather's great pleasures was taking me to ""his" barber shop on a Sunday morning. The full effects of the depression hadn't begun to be felt and he still had plenty of business and the income from his butcher shop made him a relatively wealthy man.

Valentine's was located on 22nd Street (it wouldn't be renamed Cermak Road until after the Mayor had been assassinated during the 1932 presidential campaign.) Valentine's was located only a half block from the Hotel Metropole, the headquarters of the infamous Al Capone. It was rumored that Capone personally availed himself of the services of the shop. It was a huge barber shop -- perhaps 8 chairs with extra barbers, manicurists, porters and shoe shine "boys" in attendance. Whether or not Capone ever set foot in the shop, there's no doubt that many of his underlings used it regularly.

I can still recall my grandfather, covered in a barber sheet, his face swathed in steaming hot towels, as he luxuriated under the careful ministrations of one of Valentine's barbers. He usually had a manicure. I would sit on the row of chairs facing the barber chairs, taking in the scene with awe -- not because of the mob connection which I wasn't aware of, but because of the attention that was being lavished on my grandfather. There was always a lollipop from the barber when we were ready to leave. On one occasion, I climbed into the chair and the barber, feigning seriousness, daubed some shaving cream on my face and, using his forefinger in lieu of the straight razor he normally used, scraped it from my face, wiped me with a warm towel and told me I had been shaved. I was very impressed.

Many years later, toward the end of 1946, I was working as an auditor for National Acceptance Company, a commercial finance company. In one of my assignments, I was told to go to the new night club, called the Copacabana, which was preparing to open at the corner of State and Lake Streets in Chicago's loop. The owner was a man named Sam Rinella. My company had been approached to loan Rinella enough money to open, and the loan was to be secured by the equipment and fixtures that were being installed. I made an appointment and went to the Copa where I met Rinella. Workmen were

struggling to finish the installation and get the place ready to be opened by New Year's Eve, about two months down the road. That event would mark the beginning of 1947.

Rinella showed me into his tiny office and gave me a huge pile of loose papers. Rinella was a short, heavy man with a large lump in the middle of his forehead. It looked as though he had been shot and the bullet hadn't penetrated his skull but rather had lodged between his bone and the skin. This distinguishing mark, whatever it really was, is still fixed in my memory. The papers he gave me were an assortment of bills, receipts and purchase orders. They were totally disorganized. These, Rinella told me, were his records. I had the job of making sense of them and of determining how much money had been paid for equipment, how much more was owed and how much was needed to finish the job. It was a daunting assignment, but I worked for two or three days and finally was able to sort through these papers and arrive at some conclusion.

Rinella apparently took a liking to me and the way I handled business. "How much money are you making now?" he asked in a thick Italian accent. "$75 a week." I told him. "If you come and work for me and keep my books, I give you $200 a week." I have to admit I was sorely tempted. I talked it over with my father who strongly advised me against taking the job. His own business had brought him into contact with the mob and he wisely steered clear of anything to do with them or with their business. I took his advice. When I told Rinella of my decision, he told me he understood. "Because I like a nice Jewish boy to be my bookkeeper, and maybe you'll change your mind, I want you to be my guest with a friend at the opening of the club." I accepted his invitation without hesitation and, with a date -- I think she was Marilyn Holtzman -- went to the Copa on New Year's Eve and saw the show that was presented by Rudy Vallee.

Months later, I saw an item in the Daily News announcing that Vallee was suing Rinella -- he had never been paid for his performance. A few weeks after that, the paper reported a gangland slaying. A hoodlum named Sam Rinella had been gunned down as he exited his house in Chicago's South Shore neighborhood. I'm still glad I didn't take the job.

Later, in 1957, I was working for Winter and Hirsch, an auto finance company. During those years, the government had passed new legislation allowing the Treasury Department to seize automobiles that were used in trafficking in narcotics As a result of one of these narcotics seizures, my friend, Seymour Persky, who was the attorney for the finance company worked very hard to regain possession of a current model black Oldsmobile two door hardtop -- the top of the line. When he was successful, he arranged to buy the car for its balance, something considerably under the car's wholesale value.

I was planning on being at a wedding one weekend. My own car was in the shop for repairs. I asked Seymour if I could borrow his car for the

purpose of driving to the wedding. He agreed and I drove home with it. When I stopped in front of our house, I noticed that several capsules had been jarred loose and had rolled out from under the front seat. Suspecting strongly that these were drugs, I was terribly frightened. I collected the capsules and took them inside. We went to the wedding and came home with the car. On Monday morning, I nervously phoned the Treasury Department, wanting to go on record as having found the drugs, not as having dealt in them. The agent looked up the file on the car and then calmly told me to flush the capsules down the toilet.

During the course of my work with Winter and Hirsch, I met an attorney, Harvey Powers who represented mob people in criminal cases. Harvey and his partner Arvey Wolke, had a substantial practice and were well known in the city. Harvey suggested that he could bring business to the company which would help his clients pay their legal fees. It seemed like a reasonable arrangement as long as the loans were well collateralized. Several loans were secured by the homes of the parents of the offender. On one occasion, Harvey called me and told me he was sending a client, named Rocco Infelice, to my office for a loan. It was to be secured by a first mortgage on Infelice's house in one of the western suburbs.

In due time, Infelice appeared in my office with his wife, an attractive woman who was very quiet. Infelice was a rough hewn sort of man -- a caricature of a mobster. But the house title was in their name and was worth considerably more than the loan amount and we closed the loan. When the first payment was due, our collection man called to my attention the fact that Infelice's wife told him she knew nothing of the loan. After two or three more calls, we learned that the woman who had signed the papers was only posing as Infelice's wife.

I phoned Harvey Powers office and told him about our information. He was as surprised as I had been and asked me to wait for a day or two before taking any action. Powers must have phoned someone very high in the syndicate operation because the next morning, Infelice sheepishly appeared in my office and paid off the entire loan, including all the unearned interest in cash. Since that incident, Infelice’s name has been in the papers frequently, though he is now in prison for violating the RICO statutes involving criminal conspiracy and organized crime. At least he's not borrowing against the penitentiary property -- or not that the government would notice.

Learning about Music

Music wasn't integral to our family life. My grandparents had an upright player piano in their living room and they had a wind-up phonograph in their foyer with a large group of ancient single sided recordings of Caruso, Schumann-Heink, and Galli-Curci singing operatic arias that were popular at the turn of the 20th century. In our apartment, none of these things were

duplicated. When I visited my grandparents, only a block away from where we lived, I would play the phonograph constantly until I knew the music. I never understood the operatic context of those arias, but I could hum them. In addition to the operatic records, my grandparents had acquired some recordings of dialect comedy performances that had been popular before the first World War. I played them, too. "Cohen at the Picnic" was one on which I wore out the grooves. Finally, they had a few of the popular tunes of the early 1920's. I rather suspected that these recordings had been bought by my mother before she and my father got married. Nothing ever got thrown out.

At some point along the line, I discovered how to use the player piano. Since there were a few 1920's vintage piano rolls of popular music and player pianos had long since lost their appeal because of the advent of radio, I played these rolls only a few times. I was able to make the piano keys depress in keeping with the punched holes in the rolls. While I kept pumping away at the pedals, I could hear the tinkley piano play those old, unfamiliar songs and watch the way a real pianist would have had to use the keys. .

My first experience with musical training happened when, sometime in 1935, my mother announced that I was going to learn how to play a banjo. I wasn't given a choice either of instrument or interest. I'm not sure how the instrument came into her possession, but I went with her to the old Lyon & Healy Building at State and Jackson and took lessons -- three to be exact -- on a four string banjo. I remember learning how to tune it with the phrase "My dog has fleas."" I also learned one song with two chords. With one foot raised on a chair or stool to prop up the instrument, I would sing, endlessly, "(Strum) It ain't-a gonna rain no more, no more, (strum) It ain't-a gonna rain no more. (Change chords and strum) So, how in the heck can I wash my neck (strum) if it ain't-a gonna rain no more (strum.)"

Mercifully, I took only three lessons. I would practice by getting up early in the morning, take the instrument into the front sun parlor of the apartment and begin strumming at it. Over a few weeks, my mother's enthusiasm for my musical education noticeably waned. Unfortunately, that period also coincided with her need for surgery. Though she told everyone she had some sort of undefined "tumor,"" as an adult, I learned that he had undergone a hysterectomy.

Each of the sixth, seventh and eighth grade teachers assumed responsibility for one after-school activity. Gertrude Hirsch led the Civic Club, Mrs. Sheffield ran the Kozminski Ace, the school's monthly newspaper. I think I acted as the advertising manager for the paper, going through the neighborhood soliciting ads from local merchants. I also occasionally wrote an article that appeared in the paper.

A couple of years after the banjo lessons and while I was in sixth grade, I was introduced to a harmonica. It was the result of the efforts of my teacher, Helen Miranda. One of her lesson plans called for her to teach music to her class of sixth grade students. She did her best. We learned the notes on a

staff that had been painted on a blackboard, we learned treble and bass clefs and we learned time signatures and what sharps and flats meant. We never learned the first thing about reading music.

Playing any instrument also posed a lot of problems., The school had no inventory of musical instruments and they were generally too expensive for either the school or the individual students to buy. Some of the kids in my class had taken piano lessons. Dick Peck could even play a clarinet. But for the most part, none of us could express ourselves musically. Helen Miranda decided that she would encourage us to invest fifty cents in the purchase of a Hohner brand Marine Band harmonica tuned to the key of "C."

The harmonicas began to show up during the music hour of our class day and with them, the instruction booklet that came with the instruments. I soon realized that to play a tune it was necessary to use my tongue to block up holes in the harmonica to avoid playing several notes at the same time. When I was able to do that, I could play a single tone. By blowing out or sucking air into the harmonica, I could actually make music. Again, I took to the sun parlor and spent hours practicing the tonguing technique. No one, not even Helen Miranda, had mastered this method of making music, but I was determined and, eventually, I learned how to play simple melodies one clearly defined note at a time. I took my harmonica to school and proudly performed for Mrs. Miranda. She was delighted. If I could do it, she reasoned, so could everyone else in the class. Gradually my classmates learned how to play the instrument. But, because I had a head start on most of them, I learned more complicated songs and was designated the Harmonica Band's soloist. I finally got to the point where, if I could hum the song, I could play it on the instrument. Provided, that is, that it didn't have sharps and flats in the melody. Everything was played by ear, and apparently, I had a good ear for the music

My mother had worked through the hierarchy of the school's PTA beginning as a room mother and eventually, when I was in seventh grade, was elected its President. The organization was one of the few social outlets available to women in the neighborhood. Annual dues were fifty cents and the teachers all cooperated by sending home membership solicitations until they could show that the entire student body had responded with their mother's half dollar.

The PTA programming was interesting. After a brief business session, a guest speaker would present a view on some "feminine issue" of the day. The meeting would adjourn to one of the larger rooms and the women would enjoy coffee and cake. Once or twice a year, there was an evening meeting, a "parent's night" at which the fathers were expected and the program was designed to interest them. It was under this cloud of parental importance that I finished my years in grade school. I had to shine through my mother's importance. My ability to play the harmonica distinguished me and permitted me to overcome the cloud my mother's position cast over my independence. I

didn't want to be known as the son of the PTA President. I wanted a separate identity..

We performed at school assemblies, at PTA meetings endlessly. The only person whose abilities on the instrument were equal to mine was Wally Schwartz. Wally was much shorter and a lot thinner than I was and the two of us made an almost comic team. We realized this and decided to play to our differences in size. We developed specialty songs which we played as duets. One, "The Donkey Serenade" was often a request number. Although neither of us had the vaguest idea of how to harmonize the instruments, we did play alternative segments of the piece and created an arrangement that seemed to be appreciated.

All the music we performed had to be played in a major key. There were no chromatic notes on the Marine Band harmonicas we had. But later, as we became better, we wanted and were able to get our parents to buy, more sophisticated instruments which had several octaves of notes and played the full chromatic scale. The most elaborate of them was the Hohner "Chromatic 64" which played four full octaves in all their chromatic glory. With that instrument, purchased for about $10 from a downtown wholesaler, N. Shure and Company, there was nothing I couldn't play.

The band was equipped with capes made from navy blue crepe paper. We were invited to give a performance at the University of Chicago's Mandle Hall, a large venue on the campus. I was to play two solos and Wally and I were to play "The Donkey Serenade." I decided to use a new instrument, a tiny, one inch long harmonica that played one octave in a very high register. Conquering a lot of stage freight, I played "In a Country Garden" by Percy Granger. The audience was amused and very responsive to this piece. The band and I were both roaring successes.

Sometime after this experience, Wally and I were invited to perform in front of the neighborhood theater, The Frolic. Borah Minevitch and his Harmonica Rascals were a coming attraction in a Sonia Heinie movie. We were instructed to play our instruments into a microphone set up on the street to create interest in the coming attraction. As a reward for our playing, we each got several passes to the Frolic. We had turned professional. The fame that followed the harmonica band receded as we went into high school, though there were still some who remembered. I think that I performed at one assembly in high school, but the school had a full marching band and the harmonica didn’t fit into the band's instrumentation, so we eventually were frozen out by more traditional instruments and arrangements.

The simple Marine Band harmonica was a gateway into the world of music. I have never been a performer, know almost nothing about the technical aspects of making or understanding music. But I have always had a high regard for the world's music. My life is more meaningful because I have learned to listen and appreciate more than the single scale I learned on that first instrument.

Summer Camp

It was in the spring of 1935 that my folks asked whether I'd like to go to summer camp. It seemed that they had received a mailing from the Hyde Park YMCA offering to enroll me in their camping program. Camp Hyde Park was located in Lake Villa, Illinois. Lake Villa is now considered a suburb of Chicago, connected by train and it's home to people who want the suburban life. In 1935, it was beyond the exurban reaches of the city. There were corn fields, a few lakes and an occasional summer cottage.

I was sent there for a four week stint. Camp periods lasted two weeks, so I was enrolled for two periods. It was an unmitigated disaster. I expected to learn how to swim, how to function in the primitive environment of the outdoorsmen's life and how to get along with my peer group in rustic surroundings. Reading I had done about the wild west all came to mind when I thought about going away to camp. Instead of becoming an outdoorsman, after a few days I developed a raging case of highly contagious impetigo. This skin rash covered my arms and legs. When my counselor, whose name was Oscar Hohnadel saw why I was continually itching, he sent me to the camp nurse. She dressed the rash with a lotion and instructed me not to go anywhere near the water. When kids asked me what was wrong with me, I explained that what I had was "water on the knee except that it was on my arms and legs."

The mud-bottomed lake the camp used along with three other YMCA Camps from other parts of Chicago was filled with small flakes of snail shells. Those shells clung to the oozing sores of the impetigo. I ignored the directions of the nurse, went to the lake for the regular swimming sessions and promptly collected hundreds of bits of the shells. The nurse had to pick them off my arms and legs with a tweezers. I was confined to my cabin.

Finally, after two weeks had elapsed, my folks were phoned and instructed to come and pick me up -- my camping days were finished for that year. When I got home, the doctor prescribed a more effective remedy and, over the rest of the summer, the rash eventually cleared up before school began in September. My only companion during the balance of the summer was a caterpillar I captured and placed in a glass bottle with drops of water and leaves for it to eat. It promptly died. I had named the insect Oscar Hohnadel.

Two years later, I was sent to Camp Kawaga in Minocqua, Wisconsin. This was a "private" camp -- not one operated by a public institution. The owners of the camp were B.C. Ehrenreich, a Rabbi/doctor and his son Lou. "Doc.E", as he was called, was a jovial older man. Lou was a product of the Roaring Twenties. He had been a fraternity man at the University of Illinois, was in his early to mid thirties at the time and equated every activity to some sort of college event. The cabins were named after Big Ten or Ivy League schools and camp teams had names like "Illini," "Maroons" or "Wildcats." At songfests, we would sing the marching songs of the various universities.

My eight week summer at Kawaga were both the best and the worst I had ever spent. It was at Kawaga that I learned to swim. The process was simple. There was a "T" shaped pier on the waterfront. As a beginner, by swimming around the "T" without touching the bottom of the lake, you advanced to an intermediate swim group. Then, the next step was to swim to a float anchored perhaps fifty feet out in the lake. When a camper had completed the intermediate stage, he was permitted to use the camp's row boats after an instruction period.

Finally, a camper was required to swim across the bay on which the camp was located. The distance was about a quarter mile, though it seemed like the width of the English Channel at the time. A counselor in a rowboat always accompanied the swimmer trying to "swim the bay." When that feat was accomplished, the camper was allowed to take instruction on canoeing and sailing in the tiny 12 foot sailboats the camp owned. It was also a ticket to go on canoe trips away from the camp.

Besides the waterfront activities, there were all sorts of intramural sporting events, and on a couple of occasions, intermodal competitions with other similar camps in the Minocqua area. Each weekend, "Doc. E" would conduct a service over a campfire. The ceremony was built around so-called Indian themes and certain elite campers were allowed to dress in Indian clothes, wear head dresses and make sounds which were directly taken from some Hollywood western movies. The fire was started mysteriously by pulling some kitchen matches over sandpaper by the use of a relatively invisible string operated by another camper in the circle around the campfire. For an 11 year old, it was a very impressive ceremony.

"Doc. E" had a practice of walking past each cabin at night after ""taps" and in a booming voice asking "Everybody In?" to which the campers would answer "Yes, sir." Then, he'd ask "Everybody all right?" and we'd respond "Yes Sir." and then finally, "Good night, boys." and we'd say "Good Night, Doc. E." It was a reassuring event after a hard day's activities. All the scheduled events at the camp were announced by bugle call. Whether it was to get up in the morning, attend the daily flag raising ceremony, eat meals, swim, lower the flag, bring the boats back to the camp in the evening or go to sleep, we had to learn the appropriate bugle call. I still remember them.

At the end of the fourth week, my parents had driven the 350 miles to the camp for a visit. They stayed in Minocqua and I was allowed to go into town, a real treat, with them. The town had one ice cream establishment, Bosacki's, that I can still remember for its rich milk shakes. I was sorry to see my folks leave for Chicago after they had been there for a long weekend.

That was the good part of the summer. But I had a different set of problems. Before camp started, parents were given a list of clothing that was required. Among the items was a sweat shirt on which an insignia of the camp was to be sewn. The insignia was a diamond shaped , six inch long machine embroidered emblem of the camp’s logo. The logo was a pine tree with three

branches. On top of each branch were the letters that spelled the camp name, K A W A G A. The embroideries were $10 at Marshall Field's camping department. My mother decided that she would save the $10 and embroider it herself. She did a creditable job, but it didn't compare with the professionally done version. When I got to camp and put the sweatshirt on, I was the object of ridicule. I didn't conform, and other kids made fun of the insignia. I was crushed.

The camp also had an initiation ceremony for first year campers. It had been designed by Lou Ehrenreich and simulated the hell night usually conducted by college fraternities. It had a reputation that far exceeded its reality, but it scared the devil out of me. Anticipating it, especially in the light of the treatment I got from wearing the sweatshirt, was terribly frightening to me at my age. I finally panicked on the day of the initiation campfire and literally took off for the woods. There was no way I was willing to subject myself to the torture and humiliation of the ceremony. I was thoroughly traumatized by the fear I felt anticipating the initiation ritual. Running away was the only option I could imagine.

My absence was noted and search parties took off into the relatively dense pine woods that surrounded the camp. Eventually I was found or allowed myself to be found. I realized that somehow I had to face the music and go through with the initiation. Besides, I had nowhere to go. That night at the campfire, news of my decamping had spread through the camp. I'm sure that the other campers wanted me to be subjected to the most humiliating rituals. Actually, being blindfolded and told that I had to eat worms (which were actually cold spaghetti) was bad enough. But when I finally successfully worked my way through those tortures, I was made a part of the larger camping community. My ostracism didn't last long, but it's stayed in my memory for all these years. This initiation ceremony took place during the seventh week of the camp session. Returning home from camp after the full summer, I had a certain amount of pride in my accomplishments, especially in having learned how to swim and canoe. But the sting of the ostracism that resulted from my flight into the woods never left me.

I took my skills to the "Y" where I was able to swim, use the gym and even use the "Y's" rifle range. Skill at marksmanship was important in those days and I learned that using a .22 caliber rifle was not all that difficult. During the fall, I was able to win a couple of marksmanship medals. I even became a Junior Life Guard under an American Red Cross program. Wearing the patch on my swim suit was a matter of pride, though at the "Y,"" no one was allowed to wear a swim suit into their pool. But those events were the basic follow-up to summer camp and there were more summers yet to come.

Yo Ho Ho

Over the years, our preferred modes of transportation have been by air, rail or automobile. But there have been a few occasions when we have traveled on the water. In the 1930's, air conditioning was rare. In fact, in order to get away from the oppressive heat of the city, a company offered full day cruises on the cooler waters of Lake Michigan. Two ships were tied up at Navy Pier. One, the SS City of Milwaukee, took passengers to the city by the breweries. The second was the SS City of Benton Harbor which moved passengers across the bottom of the lake to Michigan's fruit growing country.

The daily fare on these ships was $1.50, though it later increased to $1.75. Kids under six were free and those between six and twelve traveled for 75 cents. Our family would make an annual outing on these boats and spend a few days before the excursion preparing a vast variety of picnic fare to take along. There was a dining room on the ship, but we never ate there. My mother, grandmother and aunt Margaret would all pack quantities of sandwiches, cole slaw, potato salad along with cookies and cakes. Typically there was more food than the group could consume.

The boats were old, even in the 1930's, but they were sea worthy. Safety regulations had been strictly enforced since hundreds of Western Electric employees died on an excursion ship, the Eastland, when it capsized in the Chicago River at the turn of the century. Most of the deck space was lined with lounge chairs and, if it were to rain, there was a large indoor area with tables, vending machines, drinking water and toilets.

There wasn't much for a kid to do on the ship, but watching the shore disappear over the horizon and watching the wake of the ship as it steamed northward toward Milwaukee was something I could do without any problem from my watchful parents. The adults played cards. In those years, there was also other entertainment for the adults. The Great Lakes, being navigable waterways, were governed by a three mile limit on State authority. This meant that once the ship was more than three miles out into the lake, State gambling laws were no longer in effect. Once the ship had passed that point, the crew busied itself with bringing out a room full of slot machines that had been stored in the ship's hold.

The machines were the old fashioned kind that operated mechanically. There were no flashing lights, no bells and whistles and no electronic button that turned the wheels. In order to operate these machines, you inserted a penny, nickel or a dime into a slot at the top of the machine and pulled the crank to turn the wheels. Otherwise, the principal of the machines was the same as the one that's used today. The penny and nickel machines were the most popular. An occasional jackpot winner would help advertise the fact that the machines were a way of getting rich quickly, and, during the depression, getting rich was a common goal.

At an early age, I learned about the machines and I was fascinated by them. I was told that the machines had been adjusted to give a substantial edge to the ship, but even then, I watched as some people seemed to win. Kids were able to operate the slots assuming they had the money to do it. But a better alternative was to become the "good luck charm" for a player who used his own money. When a kid pulled the handle and the machine paid off, the kid was rewarded with some coins from the winning. It was a win-win situation. No investment was required and, if money was lost, it had belonged to the player, not the kid pulling the crank. But if there was a payoff, kids profited nicely.

Another way of literally picking up loose change from the gambling room was simply to watch as players sometimes carelessly let coins fall to the floor. Kids would scavenge the coins and simply pocket them, or return some to the player and keep the rest of whatever fell on the floor as a tip for his willingness to scrounge on the dirty floor.

Lunch and dinner were always family affairs. Thermos bottles filled with iced lemonade or hot coffee were always available. In fact, one of my birthday presents when I was 8 was a Thermos bottle that was given me by my Grandfather, Baer Lowenstern. It came along on the boat. We never got off the boat when it landed in Milwaukee and it stayed only a short time before tooting its loud steam horn and heading back to Chicago. It usually returned at about 9:30. The day passengers debarked and another midnight cruise was offered to the more romantically inclined. Passengers enjoyed dancing "under the stars," and, of course, an opportunity to get rich once the ship passed the three mile limit.

An interesting sidelight to these cruises was the fact that the two ships were taken over by the U.S. Navy during the second World War and were converted into aircraft carriers. Fledgling pilots from the Glenview Naval Air Station would practice carrier landings on those ships which had been renamed the U.S.S. Wolverine and the U.S.S. Sable. Among the pilots who had training on these ships was George H.W. Bush.

Another nautical adventure took place in 1965. Lois had decided to learn how to play bridge and had taken a class at the downtown YMCA. We became friendly with one of her classmates and her husband. Their name was Schaeffer. Bud Schaeffer owned a large sailboat, the Mystic which was moored in Belmont Harbor in Chicago. We were invited to the Belmont Harbor Yacht Club for lunch on a Saturday afternoon and thought that seeing his moored boat might be fun. But it was a day on which there was to be a race in the lake and Bud had entered the boat without having an experienced crew.

My experience on a sailboat had been limited to a few trips on a 12 foot boat while at summer camp. Bud's boat was a 47 foot ship which had been used for the annual race to Mackinac Island. It was way beyond my class and my competence and when he asked me to join his crew for the race, I reluctantly agreed explaining that I was really a novice when it came to sailing.

He assured me that all I had to do was follow orders and that everything would be OK.

The lake was rough when we got to the starting line -- rougher than it looked from shore. In fact, it was beginning to work itself into a fury. The race got underway and went smoothly. Bud was a good sailor. But, as the lake got more and more rough, other members of the crew -- much more experienced sailors than I was began to get seasick. Popular wisdom at the time was that if your stomach was queasy, it would be good to drink a strong shot of whiskey. One by one, the crew headed for the cabin and had a couple of shots of 100 proof bourbon. I held out as long as I could and finally went below deck to have my turn at the bottle. It felt good and warm going down -- and it stayed down. When I had finished, I climbed the stairs to the deck. The wind was rushing through the sails and the noise was so deafening that I didn't hear Bud shout "Coming About."

In sailing parlance, this means that the boat is being turned and that the boom holding the sail will move from one side of the vessel to the other. The speed of the movement of this huge hunk of wood is frightening. And, just as my head emerged from the cabin, the boom passed overhead, missing me by less than an inch. If I had been hit, I would have either been knocked overboard or I would have suffered a skull fracture. As it happened, I was only frightened.

On deck, it had begun to rain -- lightly at first and then gradually, the rain turned into a full blown storm. I was not dressed for foul weather and slowly, I became soaked through to the skin. In fact, when we finally came back to where Lois and Bud’s wife were waiting comfortably for us in the Yacht Club lounge, the currency in my pocket was soaking wet and had to be set out to dry over the next couple of days. I had enough of sailing and, by the way, we didn't win the race.

There was a final experience on Lake Michigan that took place in July of 1968. Michael was about a month from making his presence known and we had been invited by Hal Anderson to go out on his power boat. First, we had stopped for a good dinner and, en route to the boat, had picked up a couple of bottles of champagne. The boat was moored in Burnham Harbor, near McCormick Place. Hal piloted the boat out beyond Navy Pier and into the protected area near Oak Street's breakwater. At that point, the motor stopped. He wasn't able to restart it and, since he shared ownership of the boat with a friend, didn't know who was responsible for maintenance. It was late -- about 2:00 A.M. and we were stuck. Hal opened some lounge chairs and we helped a very pregnant Lois out of the boat and on to the breakwater which was, at least, not bobbing around. We waited. "Why not call the Coast Guard on the radio," I asked. "The radio is out for repairs and I wasn't planning to go very far into the lake so I figured it wouldn't be a problem." Hal answered, a little sheepishly.

In time, another boat came near enough for us to hail it and explain our problem. The other boater radioed the Coast Guard and in due course, they came to our rescue. We jettisoned our champagne bottles -- we thought it might be illegal to drink while boating -- and tied a rope to Hal's boat while we were towed through the locks and into the Chicago River. A Coastguardsman came on board and within a couple of minutes, had the motor running. We thanked him and headed back toward McCormick Place and the dock.

Getting to the dock was easy, but as we tried to get Lois out of the rocking boat, her stomach finally decided that she had too much food, too much champagne and certainly too much boating. Everything she had consumed for the past couple of days was returned to Lake Michigan. We didn't get home until about 5:00 in the morning and had to get up to work for the next day.

Being on the water seems to create memorable situations. I hope there are other opportunities for sailing calmly to more stable adventures. But given a choice between crewman on a sturdy ship in a roiling storm and the comforts of the yacht club, I'll opt for staying ashore and drinking to the sailors.

Exploring 53rd Street in the 1930's and '40's

Fifty-third Street in Chicago was central to my life experience when I was young. It was the street where I first came into contact with the rest of the world -- both the good, the bad and the exciting. From my earliest years, I recall that this was the place where everyone gravitated for shopping, for social activities and, in later years, for recreation and dating.

My mother used the street as a destination when I was still being pushed along in a stroller, or whatever passed for wheels in the late 1920's. She would meet friends and, standing on the sidewalk, carry on conversations, discuss upcoming parties and compare notes on everything from the latest neighborhood gossip to recipes and shopping hints.

Later, as school days became a part of my life, I had to cross the street every day -- four times because we went home for lunch -- and had a chance to look around. My world was expanding. Before I actually entered the school property, I had to pass by a Chinese Laundry. It was the only retail store between our apartment building at 5224 Ingleside and the school which was located between 53rd and 54th and Ingleside. Across from the school to the west was George Williams College. It was a training school for men who would eventually work for the YMCA. The college emphasized athletics and there were usually teams practicing on the large field to the south of the school building.

Kozminski School had been built in two phases. The original building, with its separate boy and girl entrances on 54th Street, had been constructed at the turn of the 20th century. The then 35 year old structure had been amended

by an addition in the late 1920's. This new addition included an auditorium and a gym, amenities completely lacking in the first building. It was a sign that primary education was taking note of some of the advances in child development being initiated at places like the nearby University of Chicago. Children needed a place to experience performances and they needed an indoor spot for exercise. The addition provided those facilities.

The outdoor area of the school included a concrete space that was occasionally used for a softball game. Across the street, the all-dirt parkway outside the College's athletic field provided a place to play with marbles. The street was blocked off by wooden horses so that kids could roller skate, bike and play skate hockey on the smooth asphalt. What more could we have asked for.

In later years, of course, the gym was used for dance lessons (25 cents for the two hour session every Friday afternoon to learn the latest in dance steps) and to be introduced to the social graces and not a few girls. It was the social center of the school -- a place where party invitations were delivered and where alliances were made. I met my first true love there. Her name was Adele Isaacson. She was a little overweight, but she smiled and she didn't resist an invitation I might send at a party to come into a bedroom to play "post office." She was also eager to enter into a game of spin-the-bottle. Both were naughty kissing games, I loved them.

On 53rd Street, just west of the alley that defined the rear of the grade school was "Ma's" Ma Eisenberg, and her husband, logically called "Pa," were proprietors of the school store that every kid used to get his supplies. Notebook paper and binders, pencils and crayons were her stock in trade. She also sold staples like milk and bread. Those items and her large candy counter were the attractions that kids appreciated. The store was busy before the school buzzer at 8:45 and 12:45 and after school. Being enterprising merchants, they also offered homemade sandwiches to kids who couldn't go home for lunch either because they lived too far from the school or, more likely, because both parents were working and trying to earn enough to pay next month's depression era rent. During summer school, Ma hired a few kids she felt she could trust to hawk hot dogs from heavy heat-retaining containers to the kids in the school yards. The hot dogs and hamburgers she sold cost a dime. The dealer was able to retain a penny for each one that was sold. One summer, I was hired for the job and could earn as much as a quarter or thirty five cents a day for only an hour's work -- it was a bonanza in those years to have a quarter of disposable income.

But Fifty-Third Street was a lot more than that. A block east of Ingleside was Ellis. On one corner stood the Chicago Osteopathic Hospital. In those years, Osteopaths were then considered little more than quack practitioners. But behind the hospital, on an alley a half block from our apartment, was their "morgue." It was actually a gross anatomy lab used by students to gain knowledge of the human body. On warm days before the

advent of air conditioning, we would sneak into the alley and watch through open doors as the students actually cut up the cadavers on their tables. With movie theaters showing a variety of Frankenstein and Dracula movies, it wasn't much of a stretch of our imaginations to see something evil in what those white coated students were doing in their "morgue.""

On the other side of Ellis Avenue was a small commercial strip. On the south side of the street was the neighborhood pharmacy. Mr. Tobin was the druggist who dispensed wonderful sodas from his marble fountain. He sold a few cosmetics (they weren't widely used except perhaps for powder and a bit of rouge -- in those years, lipstick was considered somewhat naughty) toothpastes and shaving creams and, toward the rear, he would dispense prescription drugs. In the thirties, most drugs were not ready made. Salves, ointments and powders were constructed with chemicals every druggist knew how to use. They were carefully measured according to the doctor's prescription and ground up in a mortar and pestle. Then, they were placed in paper folders according to the prescribed dosage. In later years, Tobin retired and sold his business to a man named. Wasserman who was less tolerant of the kids who loved to hang out at the fountain and dawdle over a five cent phosphate -- soda water with flavoring.

Further down the street was Solomon's, the neighborhood delicatessen. Solomon sold kosher cold cuts, pickles, herring and lox. When the door opened, the garlicky aroma was irresistible. He even might have had bagels available, though he wasn't a baker. But, in my world, those things were related to Eastern European Jews and could not be integrated into the German Jewish tradition I was brought up with. We didn't often patronize Solomon because my grandfather pickled his own corned beef and beef tongues, made his own sausages and eschewed anything that was from "hinter Berlin" (behind Berlin) the expression for eastern European culture.

Further down the street was a barber shop where I would go for a haircut. The barber was careful not to permit kids to pick up copies of the Police Gazette, the early version of a girlie magazine. He was not as careful about the activities that were going on in the rear of the shop and occasionally, there was a token police raid on his bookie joint. After all, gambling was totally illegal and, while police certainly received a piece of the action, there was a showing of community resistance to that form of vice with a raid, a fine and on the following day, a return to business as usual.

Across the street was the area's only grocery store. It was neither a chain operation nor a supermarket. But it was a place where you could buy corn flakes, laundry soap (detergents weren't a part of the market yet,) cleaning supplies and canned vegetables and fruits. There was also some fresh produce available in season.

Going east on 53rd Street, there was nothing but residential property until you reached Woodlawn Avenue. West of Woodlawn were a few stores and, at one time, a Russian restaurant. It was unique for its time. There was a

doorman who wore a genuine Cossack uniform - not an appropriate costume for a Jewish area where Cossacks were equated with an oppressive Czarist regime many residents' parents had fled.

Across Woodlawn, there was a Walgreen's Drug Store, one of the few in existence. Next to it was Ascot's the neighborhood bakery where you could buy freshly made bread and coffee cakes. The aroma from that bakery would make your mouth water from a half block away. And next to Askow's was Hahn's. Fred Hahn was a butcher who had worked for my Grandfather during his glory days in the 1920"s. Fred, and his brother Ernie had opened the butcher shop and grocery in the heart of the depression and, somehow had prospered there. They sold top quality meats and, eventually opened another store (that one operated by Ernie) in the very rich suburb of Lake Forest. Never one to forget his origins, when the war reduced the number of qualified available butchers, Fred called my grandfather and asked whether he would be willing to come into the store several days a week to cut meat for Fred's customers. My grandfather jumped at the opportunity. It would provide him with some sorely needed income, a chance to do what he knew best and an opportunity to get all the meat his family might need without regard to ration stamps and governmental controls.

Dining along 53rd Street was also an experience. Everyone knew about the Tropical Hut, a barbecue joint that attracted most of the high school crowd after a movie date. But there was also Ruby's which sold great hamburgers with French fries (for about 65 cents) and was a favorite with the group who went to Kenwood grade school, Kozminski's closest competitor. Finally, there was the Huddle, a prototypical pancake house which also attracted an après-movie crowd. It was a bit cheaper, but very popular with the teens of the time. All three places had juke boxes playing the latest Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey big band recordings. Still further east was the neighborhood's only gas station, a busy place servicing cars from all over the Hyde Park community.

Moving east along that wonderful 53rd Street corridor was the Hyde Park YMCA. There, a swimming pool, ping pong and pool tables, a wood working shop with real tools, a rifle range and a photo lab were all available to the neighborhood kids. It was the center for everyone and, in addition, it sponsored Camp Martin Johnson. This was an overnight camp located about 300 miles north of Chicago in northern Michigan near Manistee and Ludington in a small town called Irons. Camp periods were divided into two week segments. Depending on how much a parent could afford, the kids were bussed there for two, four or eight weeks during the summers. Beginning in 1939, I was there for several summer sessions -- first for a couple of weeks and, eventually, for the full summer. Here, I learned to canoe and sail, but most of all, how to get along with my peers. At one point, I was appointed the camp bugler, a position of some responsibility and a lot of respect. I was given an alarm clock, set to the time when the camp was to waken and, after it had gone

off, I rose and sounded first call -- the same bugle call as is heard at a horse race bringing the horses to the starting gate. I learned all the rest of the army manual of bugle calls and, though I didn't play well, I was responsible enough to get the timing of the calls right so that I won an award at the end of the camp season for my dedication to the job.

At the corner of 53rd and Blackstone was another drug store -- Thomas' -- which also featured a soda fountain. It was here that I discovered the Tin Roof - a Sundae topped with syrup and peanuts. As a reward for myself, after an evening class session, I would gorge myself on a Tin Roof -- it was my secret pleasure. Finally, at Harper was the Harper theater, a movie house that played third run features. It was run down when I first experienced it, but it presented an alternative to the more elaborate Piccadilly Theater on Hyde Park Boulevard to the north or the Frolic on 55th Street and Ellis Avenue. Besides, in later years, the Harper had a balcony where kids could sneak a cigarette or even neck in the dark confines of the theater. It was a great place to go with a willing date.

East of Harper was Lake Park Avenue. Near the corner was the local police station which also had a lockup. The station had been built in the 1880's when Hyde Park was still an independent township, and not a part of Chicago. It usually held a few local alcoholics, maybe a purse snatcher and a petty criminal. More serious offenders were transported to Police Headquarters in the Loop. Also, before the Illinois Central commuter station was a record shop where I first became acquainted with LP records in the years after the end of the War and where I was a regular Saturday afternoon customer trying to find the latest classical release on Columbia records.

Rarely did our group venture east of the IC tracks except when the White Sox were in town and there was a rainy day and no school or ball game. Then, we knew that the visiting team would be in the lobby of their hotel, the Del Prado, at 53rd and Hyde Park Boulevard. We could actually meet famous ball players who were entirely willing to talk to the neighborhood kids. We were especially proud when the Detroit Tigers were in town and all the other stars lined up properly because then, we might be able to actually talk to Hank Greenberg, the world's most famous Jewish athlete -- the one who refused to play in a World Series Game because it was Yom Kippur.

All along 53rd Street, during those immediate pre-war years, there was a steady stream of German refugees from Hitler persecution. They would identify themselves to someone who might have looked vaguely familiar with the expression "Sin Sie Nicht Von ...." and then the name of their home city. In fact, 53rd Street became known to the old timers as "Cinsunit" Avenue. Yet there was acceptance, help and tolerance for these people at a time when nobody knew the extent of the disaster that was taking place in what became known as the Holocaust.

I suppose that everyone has a place that was the womb in which they grew up to meet the world. 53rd Street was mine -- a place of excitement, of

learning, of contact with a larger world that would be a challenge and a delight in later years. It doesn't exist any longer, but there is probably someplace else where the same things are happening to kids today who are five or ten or fifteen or twenty years old. I wouldn't trade the 53rd Street experience for anything. Whatever I am now was partly because of what it was then.

Fifty Third Street Merchants

The retail business area closest to our apartment was on east 53rd Street. There were only a few stores west of Woodlawn Avenue, but those were the ones we used whenever possible. I can remember them well. First, and closest, was the school supply store we called "Ma's" because Mrs. Eisenberg was always behind the counter and "pa" rarely appeared. They sold the usual assortment of notebook paper and covers, glues, reinforcers for paper and they also sold all manner of penny candy. Located on the same city block as the school, it was a natural attraction for neighborhood kids. It was a Mecca for me. I came to know them well.

During the summer, Kozminski was selected as the site for eight weeks of summer school. In those years, the school year was divided into two semesters -- "A"" and "B." A few students entered school in January and were considered "off term" students. The majority entered in September and graduated in June. That was preferable because of high school and college scheduling. The summer sessions served two purposes. First, kids who hadn't passed their grade the year before got a second chance to keep pace with their classmates by making up the failing grade. The second group of summer school attendees were those kids who wanted to get a half grade ahead in order to have a June graduation and enter high school with the majority of the students in his age and grade level. I went to summer school for one summer for that purpose. I think it was in fifth or sixth grade. Because of the mixed group attending - the underachievers and the overachievers in the same classes, teaching was rather spotty. Class sessions were conducted from 8:00 until 1:00 P.M.. School was dismissed after 1:00 because of the heat of summer and the lack of air conditioning.

There was a break in summer school classes at about 11:00 for lunch. As did many of the kids, I brown bagged my lunch. The school sold milk -- a penny for a half pint of white milk, two cents for chocolate milk. For those who had brought nothing to eat, ""Ma" found a group of kids willing to sell hot dogs from insulated cases that were strapped over their shoulders like vendors at the ball park. Those kids selling the hot dogs would get a penny commission for every 10 cent hot dog they sold. Unsold dogs were recycled into the next day's cases and reheated. Health concerns were not at the top of "ma's" list of priorities.

The summer following my summer school experience, I talked "ma" into letting me sell hot dogs during the 11:00 lunch break. The case was bulky

and heavy, but I managed to handle it. I was a "big" kid and this was a test of my personal strength. I sold hot dogs all summer with some success. That fall, I talked to her and asked whether she needed a sales clerk for the candy store during the half hour before school started and the fifteen minutes before the end of the noon lunch hour. I was hired and paid off in an assortment of candy as well as an occasional quarter. I was the envy of all the rest of the kids who actually had to buy their candy.

Further east on 53rd Street, past Ellis Avenue were a group of stores. I knew them well because my Aunt Minnie and Uncle Herman lived above them, though the entry to their apartment was around the corner in a court building. At the corner was the drug store. Owned by Harry Tobin, it was a model of everything a drug store should be. There was a soda fountain and there was Mr. Tobin., Anyone who had an ailment went to Mr. Tobin first. Usually, he had a remedy. But if he didn't know how to cure you, he would recommend that you go to the doctor of your choice. In addition, Mr. Tobin was the most liberal soda jerk I ever encountered. He would put more ice cream into a soda or sundae than anyone else and the fountain seats were always full, For a nickel, you could get a chocolate phosphate or a cherry flavored coke. Or you could simply buy a ten cent dish of ice cream with your choice of flavors -- vanilla, strawberry or chocolate. Adding syrup cost another nickel and you had a sundae to die for. Walking into Tobin's, the combined aroma of patent medicine and chocolate syrup was overpowering.

Mr. Tobin died and the estate sold the store to a man named Wasserman who was much less accommodating than Harry had been. Wasserman was willing to dispense patent medicines on request, but the portions from the soda fountain diminished and the friendly atmosphere disappeared. Kids were ejected from the store when they read comic books from the magazine rack while spending inordinate amounts of time sipping a nickel phosphate. Wasserman would tell them that they could buy the magazines, but not use them for nothing. I remember being angry with Wasserman because he refused to return the deposit on some soda bottles that he claimed weren't purchased in his store. He was probably right, though his refusal wasn't the best business practice. After a while, I would walk further to go to a Walgreen Store at 53rd and Woodlawn.

Next to the drug store was Solomon's delicatessen. Aside from the usual deli fare, Solomon sold some canned goods, but his stock in trade consisted of homemade kishke, kreplach, matzo balls, gefilte fish, various types of smoked fish and other very Jewish delicacies. I think that Mr. Solomon observed the rules of Kashruth -- the rules concerning the handling of kosher foods. I don't remember whether he sold cream cheese, but if he did, it was kept in a refrigerator case with the fish -- never with the meats he also sold. Solomon also was the only neighborhood source for really wonderful rye bread. It was only for the rye bread and an occasional loaf of chale that brought my mother into the store. The aromas that emanated from the store were

divine. My mother ignored the Jewish foods -- they were too ethnic to appeal to her, though she couldn't resist the smells. Johanna never used garlic in her cooking and rarely, if ever, used onions. German cooking as she defined it consisted of meat and potatoes. Flavoring was second to mass. Jewish cooking was something she knew nothing about except for occasional Passover dishes. One of her Passover favorites were "krimsels and a wine sauce." which involved matzo, apples, cinnamon and sugar, with some eggs that were deep fried until they were crisp. She made a white wine sauce with a meringue topping which was put on top of the thick pancakes. None of the ingredients would have come from Solomon's.

When someone was friendly with Solomon's daughter, Alice, they would be welcomed into the store's back room where there was always a slab of kosher salami available. Though I never appreciated the smoked fish or even the lox that Solomon sold, they could be eaten in the rear of the deli if you wanted any. Alice was very popular among her school mates.

Next to the Deli was Cunag's. Cunag was one of those original Greek immigrants who came to America with a recipe for ice cream. Other members of his family (many of whom used variations on the spelling of the name) opened candy or ice cream stores throughout the south side of the city. Their products were the richest, most flavorful and simply the best. Cunag's sold ice cream that was made in the store, handmade candies and bon bons. It was a destination of choice on a hot night when we went for a walk. Rarely did we bring a pint or quart of ice cream home probably because our refrigerator would have caused it to melt quickly. Rather, the family would stroll into the store, buy a cone or Dixie cup filled with Cunag's flavor of their choice and walk home licking the delight.

Next to Cunag's was a dry cleaning store owned by the Eisenstein family. Shirley Eisenstein was in my school grade and I knew her well. Later, when she was in high school, she developed a reputation as being "loose." Mike Mencken had been a high school football star and was popular in school. He married Shirley while he was still in school and would bring her to fraternity functions. Since I was the only other person Shirley knew at these parties, we "hung out." Ultimately, Mike opened a bar and jazz joint at the corner of 55th and Lake Park. It was a rough operation. Shirley's marriage to Mike ended in divorce. Shirley eventually married a hoodlum associated with the developmental stages of Las Vegas. He eventually was gunned down in one of the gangland turf wars in Vegas and I lost any contact with Shirley.

Finally, on 53rd Street -- just west of the alley dividing the businesses from the residential apartment buildings to the east, was Isaacson's, a fresh fish market. Without air conditioning in the summer time, Isaacson left his door open. The aroma of fish from the store was almost as overpowering as the scents from Solomon’s deli. But Isaacson sold the fish that was available and apparently did well. Since my Grandfather also occasionally sold fish, we rarely bought fish from Isaacson.

On the north side of 53rd Street was a neighborhood greengrocer, Max Stein. Max's store was one where the clerk would add up your purchases on the side of a brown paper bag. The store had some canned goods and some fresh produce, fruits and vegetables in season were always reasonably prices. That store eventually became the neighborhood's first chain grocery store when Max sold his store to National Foods and a "supermarket" opened in place of Max's. Cash registers replaced the brown paper sack method of adding up purchases.

Finally, around the corner of what would have been considered an alley but was an officially dedicated street called Berkley Avenue, my friend, Louis Guthman's father owned the Berkley Garage. It was a public garage where my grandfather, who used his car only occasionally after the war would keep it to protect it from thieves and from the elements. Most of the buildings in the area were built before automobile ownership was common. There were only a few alleys and almost no private garages behind buildings. Neighborhood areas commonly had public garages where spaces were rented on a monthly basis. Hikers would deliver the car when called for. In addition, they were heated and attended spaces -- cars were safe. One of my reasons for renting space was to have a secure place to leave sample cases over the weekend. When I was traveling the Midwest selling children's wear, I also garaged my car with Mr. Guthman on weekends. Guthman also provided services such as oil changes, minor repairs and other products needed to keep cars running smoothly. My father had similar arrangements with Louis Fine at the Washington Park Garage on Cottage Grove Avenue.

Thus it was that a part of my small world revolved around a few businesses that supplied almost all of my needs except for clothing which, of course, my father managed to arrange to buy at wholesale prices. My world was small, but at the same time, seemed to me to be very complete.

High Top Boots

Any red-blooded ten year old wanted high top boots to be worn with the traditional corduroy knickers. They were much like the sort of boots worn by big-game hunters and the men who ventured into mysterious places. They reeked of excitement and they laced up to the knee. Kids wanted not just any pair, but the ones with the pocket in the side of the right boot. And that pocket had to include a jackknife for playing mumbly-peg. For those who don't know the game, it was a knife throwing event where a circle was drawn on the ground and the knife thrown at a point in the center of the circle. Every participant took his turn throwing the knife and the one closest to the center mark won that round. Obviously, the knife had to stick, blade down, in the ground.

Herzog’s Department Store was where my mother would take me for shoes. Herzog’s was one of those up-to-date establishments that fitted shoes

scientifically -- by using an x-ray machine. Later, it was determined that the amount of x-ray emitted by that sort of machinery was actually dangerous. But we didn't know any better then and it was fun to look through one of the viewing slots and see my bony feet inside a new pair of shoes. I could wiggle my toes, slide my foot from side to side and generally get a glimpse of how the shoe fitted.

But my mother resisted my imprecations and never bought me the high top boots. "They're too hot on your feet and you'll be uncomfortable." she would tell me. What she didn't tell me was that she couldn't afford them. Every other kid in the neighborhood seemed to survive feet that were too hot, but those lace up boots never entered my closet. I did get a pocket knife from my grandfather and was able to be a part of the in group that played mumbly peg even without the coveted boots.

Springtime was the season for marbles. There were three games of choice. Two were played on dirt. In one game, a large circle -- maybe a yard in diameter, was drawn. Everyone lagged one marble into the circle and then, in turn everyone took a shot at the marbles. If you could knock one of them out of the circle, the marble was yours, if you didn't, you lost your turn to the next person. You were able to retain your "shooter," the marble that you used to aim at the ones in the circle. Shooters -- especially good, accurate ones, were premium possessions. The marbles were made of glass and bags of them could be purchased for a dime, but the idea of winning someone else's marbles was tantamount to a win at gambling.

The second marble game involved the same circle, but with a depression in the center. That hole, usually dug with the heel of one of those self-same high top boots, was then the target of the shooter. It was the aim of the shooter that guided someone else's marble into the hole. At that point the marble was the property of the shooter who could continue shooting. It would be fair to compare this game with one of pocket pool -- but with only one pocket in the table. And in this game, though they couldn't get your shooter into the hole, the opposition could carom their shots off of it.

Finally, there was a game involving rolling marbles on the sidewalk. Using two squares of smooth sidewalk, one player would sit on the sidewalk with legs spread as widely as possible. In the crease in the sidewalk, he would place one marble. Other players would stand or kneel two squares away and roll marbles at the target. Any marbles that missed became the property of the player sitting on the sidewalk. But if the target marble was hit, it belonged to the shooter who then was able to place his own target on the sidewalk and reap the flurry of marbles that were rolled in his direction..

In addition to these games and normal sports like baseball and football, we also conducted war games. In those days, World War I was still an event that everyone commemorated with great sadness and zeal. On November 11, Armistice Day it was called in those years, at 11:00 in the morning, factory whistles and church bells all over the city would begin to

blow and peal. Everyone was expected to turn east toward France and stand in silence for a minute to commemorate the soldiers who had fallen in the trenches of France during the War to End All Wars. Besides, it was a school holiday.

We kids had our own form of trench warfare. Most of us who lived in six flat apartment buildings had a basement stairwell. By going down those five steps you could imagine yourself in a trench waiting to go 'over the top." Weaponry was a little more complex. Those were the days of tires with inner tubes. Kids would go through the neighborhood and solicit otherwise useless, unreparable inner tubes from the gas stations who were only too happy to give this trash away. The tubes were then brought back to the neighborhood and 3/4 inch strips were cut from the tube. A good tube would yield several dozen of the strips.

The next step was to find a two foot length of 2x4 lumber. The length didn't have to be exact, but two feet was average for a "rifle" Next, it was necessary to raid the clothespin box and get at least two pins. One was held as a spare or for a second weapon. The most desirable variety had springs, but even the simple ones could be made to work. The pin was attached to the lumber by three or four of the inner tube strips. One or two large nails were affixed to the underside of the "gun," and you were ready to shoot. By attaching one of the strips to the end of the "gun" and the other held in place by the clothespin, using the clothespin to grip the end of the strip and squeezing it to release the strip. The nail was the other end of the trigger grip. In time, kids developed remarkable accuracy with these makeshift rifles

The battles that ensued used up countless hours and accounted for incredible victories for the good guys. I developed expertise at gun making, having found a good source for scrap lumber and heavy nails, so I was definitely part of the in group. Even though I never got the high top boots I always wanted, I was always well supplied with corduroy knickers

The Greens

The northwest segment of the Hyde Park neighborhood was, in one sense, off the map. We had no organization that attended to after school activities. We were too rich for settlement house workers to pay attention to us. And we were too poor to warrant special interest from the more affluent sections of the community that were closer to the Lake. As a result, we had to fend for ourselves. Our athletic program was arranged by us. The advantage was that we could organize anything we wanted without adult interference. The disadvantage was that we had little adult input. Today, the group I was a part of would probably be characterized as a street gang, though we had no criminal intent, created no serious problems for the police and acted responsibly. However, without adult involvement, we acted on our own.

Across from the grammar school I attended, George Williams College had a large athletic field. The field was located at the rear of the college building and a gate led from the street to the field. The college trained instructors and athletic directors who went on to work for the YMCA. Because the gate was never locked, the field was open to our use as long as that didn't conflict with the needs of the school and it provided a good venue for sports of all kinds. Favorites were baseball and football. Hockey was played on the street with roller skates, hockey sticks and the manhole covers at intervals along the streets served as goal markers.

But our feeling was that our special community needed something more than intramural athletics. We needed a team to represent the best of that segment of west Hyde Park. So it was that we decided to field a team of football players. Deciding on a name was difficult. Finally, after a vote, and with the majority of the members of the team living on Greenwood Avenue, the team assumed the name, "The Greens.""

The next issue was acquiring appropriate uniforms which we realized would solidify the team. Raising the money for the team was my responsibility and I suggested that we hold a lottery with the net proceeds going for the purchase of a uniform jersey -- color green -- that would hold the numbers selected by the respective players.

Lotteries were common among our fellow students who attended Catholic Church. They were forever offering us chances to buy tickets to win sums of money. But the supplies to conduct a lottery and, for that matter, a source for the jerseys was something of a mystery. I finally looked closely at one of the lottery books that was offered to me and discovered that The Fair Store at State and Adams Streets in the Loop was the source for the books. Department stores in those years had certain ethnic characteristics. Goldblatt's was a typically Jewish store; Marshall Field’s catered to a White Anglo-Saxon upper income clientele and the Fair Store was merchandised to the needs of Chicago's large Roman Catholic community. Walking through the store, a customer was certain to have to dodge around nuns in various habits who were shopping for their own needs.

I went to the Fair Store to inquire about the "chance books" that they had and found, to my pleasant surprise that, were there to be a purchase from the store, the books were free. I talked to the people at the store, told them our purpose for selling chances in our lottery, and they agreed to give me enough books to make it possible. We had a team meeting and distributed the books after deciding that the winner of the lottery would receive $25, the second winner, $10, and the third winner another $5. That meant that everything we sold over the sum of $40 was profit aimed at buying the jerseys we all wanted . Chances were priced at ten cents, twelve for a dollar.

The team went out and accosted every parent, grandparent, teacher, merchant, bystander,, pedestrian and deliveryman on the streets of the neighborhood. After a couple of weeks we assembled and discovered that we

didn't have enough money to buy the jerseys, (which would have cost us $3 each) though we had more than covered the prizes for the lottery. We agreed to spend another two weeks redoubling our sales efforts after which we would have to make up the difference between the money we had raised and the cost of the knit jerseys we wanted.

The two weeks passed and the circle of sales efforts expanded. Someone even approached the nuns who taught in the Catholic School figuring, I guess, that reciprocity was a good Christian principal. At any rate, it worked and when we got together again, we were able to conduct the drawing which determined the winners and had enough left over to buy the uniforms we all wanted. Everyone agreed on his number -- mine was 13 because it coincided with my birthday -- and I took a list along with the money to the man at the Fair store who carefully and dutifully recorded our order which was to be ready in about a month. The time delay would allow the manufacturer to appliqué the numbers of the backs of the shirts.

We counted the hours until the shirts arrived, picked them up at the Fair Store and went home to distribute them. Everyone was delighted. In what might be considered proof that we were a precursor of street gangs, we proudly walked along 53rd Street, the business street of the neighborhood, showing off our new acquisitions and appearing to be a cohesive unit.

When my father saw the jerseys -- he had advised me of the business requirements of proper receipts and records along the way -- he knew that to play football, some sort of protective gear was necessary. His business at 210 South Franklin Street was only a block from one of the largest wholesale catalog companies in the country, N. Shure and Company. Their catalog offered everything but clothing to retailers everywhere. My father, being a "fellow" merchant, had arranged to buy single items at Shure's. I know my first professional harmonica came from there, but when we went into Shure's after receiving the jerseys, I needed shoulder pads and a helmet. My father bought those items in return for my promise to help him send out his annual Christmas letters to his customers. It was in his office that I went over every page of his ledger and typed an envelope and the heading of a letter which was sent in lieu of a Christmas Card. It was there that I learned to type with two fingers.

Coming home with the pads and helmet, I was ready to join the team. We needed opponents and decided to venture into Washington Park to the west of the neighborhood to see if there were any equally inclined seventh or eighth graders there to play. Washington Park was a physical dividing line between the white neighborhoods of Hyde Park and the African-American neighborhood of what was called Grand Boulevard. Black teams were readily available and welcomed the opportunity of competing with us. We were, they thought, very soft and could be easily beaten. They were not altogether wrong, but we were quick to learn their techniques and apply them in our play.

Along with Marv Hyman, Cameron Wren and Gene Goldman, I was big enough to play a position in the line. I played right guard. Because we were

better fed than our rivals, we outweighed them and would occasionally win a game with shear brute strength. In those years, there were no offensive and defensive teams. Everyone played the full length of the game. The linemen were responsible for pushing the opponents back when our team had the ball and for breaking through to tackle the ball carrier when the opponents were on the offensive.

We competed with the black teams and found that they played by the same rules we used. They were tough but there were no incidents of fighting among the teams. We had no one there who could referee the game and we agreed on special rules which precluded the need for officials. It worked well and we all went home, dirty and tired, but satisfied that we had played our best and whether we won or lost, we had a good time. I can recall one game played on November 11, a school holiday commemorating the end of the first World War. At exactly 11:00 A.M., the time the armistice went into effect, factory whistles and church bells blew and rang. Both teams stopped play and stood at attention, facing east toward France, and observed a minute of silence before resuming play.

The Greens continued their team effort into the baseball season and went to the same area of the park to find opponents to compete with. Some of the same black kids who had played football were there to play baseball. We usually were better equipped with bats and balls and brought our equipment for use by everyone. Again, there were no problems and it was probably one of the best lessons we ever learned about race relations.

Eventually, members of the team graduated and went on to High School. Recruiting new members required them to buy the jerseys independently and that was difficult because we had been given a quantity discount with our initial order. The team disbanded, but I retained the shoulder pads and helmet until they were outgrown and given to some charity where another aspiring player could use them for his own protection.

Life Liberty and Newspapers

In our dangerous world, children are warned against talking to strange men who lurk in dark colored cars parked near schools. It wasn't always that way. In a simpler time, those men represented an opportunity to earn fabulous awards -- premiums beyond belief as well as a small amount of money. They were distributors of the popular magazines of their time.

In those years, magazines were sold in three ways. Obviously, they all had subscribers who received their weekly or monthly editions through the mails. Then, as they are now, magazines were available on racks in drug stores. Finally, there were door-to-door sales, a process which has since gone by the boards. Those door-to-door sales usually involved grade school students and worked very simply.

The most important magazines that were sold in those years included Liberty which sold for a nickel a week, and Life which cost a dime. A distributor would wait in his car across the street from the main entrance to the school and be approached by kids who wanted to sell the magazines. They were given a canvas bag which was slung over one shoulder and which contained 25 copies of the latest edition. The bag carried the logo of the magazine that was being distributed.

Kids were paid a penny for sales of Liberty and two cents for the sale of Life. The distributor was at the same location every week to pick up the coins from the prior week's sales and to receive the unsold returns. He also then gave out the latest edition of the magazine. In this way, a regular distribution business was established.

Kids sold the magazines door-to-door starting with their home building. Many buyers of the 'zines were relatives and friends of the families who bought as much out of a sense of charity as they did out of any need to read the latest edition. It didn't take too long for the saleskid to wear out his welcome from even the closest friend of the family or relative. But Life and Liberty were a way of keeping up with the world and were well worth the minimal price that was charged.

The biggest advantage to kids were the fabulous premiums that these distributors offered. Points were awarded for each magazine that was sold and the distributor would carefully note weekly sales on his ledger. Awards varied and the salesman (read kid) would be able to stop the process at any time and cash in his points for a laddered series of awards.

The sort of things that were available varied from cheap Yo-Yo's to real coaster bikes. The number of magazine sales needed for a bike must have numbered in the tens of thousands based on the cost of the bikes and the sales price of the magazines. But as kids, we tried our hardest to accumulate points and gain the awards. Many of these premiums were visible in the back seat or the trunk of the distributor's car. Others were in a catalog which he would happily display to anyone who asked.

I took my magazines for several weeks and made a serious effort to cover the entire block in which I lived. Unfortunately, there were several other kids living in the same block who were also engaged in magazine sales which made it much more difficult to sell the 25 weekly editions of Liberty. To put it into perspective, I had trouble selling $1.25 worth of magazines in seven days and that included hawking them at bus stops and near a commuter train station.

When you eliminated the parents of competing saleskids and the people who spent their days at work and away from the neighborhood, there were very few sales opportunities left. It was tough work involving a lot of stair climbing to the second and third floor apartments to show the brightly printed covers of the current edition only to be turned down because "I get it from my nephew," or ""It comes in the mail," or "I don't read magazines." I

don't think anyone ever refused a magazine because they couldn't read, though that was certainly another reason for turning down the offer to buy it.

As to premiums, I accumulated a lot of points and eventually asked what sort of premium I could have earned. Carefully checking his ledger, the distributor smiled and offered me a Yo-Yo. I already had several since they were much in vogue as toys of the day, and I declined. "What else could I get?" "If you sell another fifty magazines, I could offer you a pocket knife." I took the Yo-Yo reasoning that a spare might come in handy. That ended my days as a magazine saleskid. I was, however, able to keep the canvas bag which became invaluable as a book bag in high school.

But there was another opportunity -- delivering newspapers. In those years, the city supported as many as five different papers. There were the Tribune and the Daily News. But there were also editions of the tabloid Times, and the Hearst papers, the Herald and the Examiner, morning and evening papers, respectively. Rivalry was intense between the papers and distribution was through newsstands and by home delivery. Home delivery involved rolling the papers into a self contained bundle and tossing them on to the rear porches of the subscribers.

Tossing papers accurately and keeping them rolled so that they didn't fly apart was a talent that came with practice. I found someone who was willing to take me along as an apprentice newspaper delivery boy. He was much older -- probably a junior or senior in high school and I was in 7th or 8th grade at the time. I had to work in the late afternoon and the very early morning depending on which edition I was delivering. I met my "employer" at a designated drop-off point and we set out with a four wheeled wagon holding the papers we were expected to deliver. The primary delivery boy also had the route sheets telling him who was to receive which paper among the two or three that we carried in the wagon and where their porch was located. It was a complex schedule and the route took anywhere from two to three hours to complete. There were frequent complaints to the papers about missed or late deliveries. Those complaints had to be resolved before we went home for the night.

He taught me the trick of rolling the papers into themselves and how to accurately toss them to a first or second floor porch. But the heavier weekend editions of the papers and the third floor porches were an incredible obstacle and that was where I came in. As his assistant, I was assigned the job of walking the papers to third floor subscribers' rear porches and simply dropping the papers on the porch. Needless to say, that entailed a lot of stair climbing and when I finished an evening's work, I was exhausted and received only a small amount of money for the effort. I didn't stay on that job very long to the disappointment of my mentor.

As I aged and became wiser, I learned that distributing magazines and newspapers was not a career I wanted to pursue and since I was already writing articles for the grade school monthly newspaper, I felt that I could better serve

the public by writing than I could by wearing myself out climbing stairs and hawking publications which I had no part in creating.

School Dance

Lorraine Sheridan and Ethel Franks were good friends. They were also, respectively, my sixth and seventh grade teachers. They befriended my mother who, as president of the PTA was in a position of some authority. Besides, they liked her cookies. Ms. Sheridan announced her engagement and my mother mounted a bridal shower on her behalf. It was to be held in the school with the cooperation and assistance of Mary Mulroy, the school principal. The whole faculty and the hierarchy of the PTA were all invited to the event that was held in the Industrial Arts room in the school basement. Although I really wanted to go, I was not included. Yet, I always felt that I was a part of the "in" group -- something that made me feel very good. Ms. Sheridan was at our house for dinner on occasions and once brought her fiancée along. I was awed by the fact that we were actually eating with my teacher.

But when it came time for the wedding, the whole family was included in the invitation. I was told that I could come to the event which was scheduled to be held in a Catholic Church at 69th and Dorchester Avenues. The prospect of going to a church was frightening to me. I was always somewhat awed and afraid of nuns. The habits nuns wore, the reputation as strict disciplinarians in the neighborhood Catholic School, and the fear of the unknown all factored into my anxiety. Going to church seemed, somehow, to be an acknowledgment of Judaism's fallibility and that scared me. But I went to the wedding, was instructed not to kneel when everyone else did and otherwise to behave myself. I seem to have survived the experience.

Ms. Sheridan (and she continued to use her maiden name even after the wedding) urged me to go to the dance lessons that were held on Friday afternoon in the school gym. The dance teacher assessed a charge of 25 cents per student who attended though I think that the charge was waived if the student couldn't afford the quarter. Times were tough and everyone understood the problems brought on by the depression. A "dance instructor" was there, with her pianist, to teach the gangling 7th and 8th grade students the finer points of ballroom dancing. It was a social grace that should be learned since boy-girl parties were becoming more popular each year. I had been invited to some of them and didn't understand that dancing was a part of the protocol.

The physical room in which the dance lessons were held was a large square room with climbing bars along one wall. There was a small office at the end. At that time, there were no lockers, no showers and no way to change from street clothes to gym clothes. The only rule for the use of the gym was

that it was necessary to wear gym shoes. That rule was eased when it came to dance lessons.

I remember learning the basics of what the teacher called the "box waltz." which was a square step to whatever song the pianist chose to play. The idea of dancing with a (gulp) girl was scary, but the idea of actually touching her and guiding her with my hands was positively horrifying. I soon grew to like the idea. Our dancing was about as stiff as it can get, but we soon learned to dance to the music. I can't recall learning other dances like polkas -- they would have been considered too ethnic to have been included in the instructions.

On a monthly basis, the dance class had a "ball." During that session, we learned about the grand march and other features, long since forgotten, of having a formal event. Dancers would line up on either side of the gym -- boys on one side, girls on the other. They would then march toward the middle of the gym at one edge of it and pair off. Unfortunately, too many girls meant that some of them had female partners. These twosomes would then become fours, then eights until there was one group consisting of all the members of the class. This was formal ball training.

At one time, my mother got an invitation to send me to private dance lessons being conducted by a woman at the Shoreland Hotel. She needed males to conduct her class -- I was big, I was bright, and I was available, so she called and invited me to join her class at no charge. I went to one session, felt completely used and never wanted to go back. I explained to my mother that I didn't want to be considered a gigolo. When the dance teacher called my mother, she backed me up telling the teacher that it was my decision not to go back to the dance classes. I never returned.

Later, the teacher in the school gym classes introduced several line dances and square dances. One of the line dances that was popular in those years was "The Lambeth Walk," a dance that had been imported from England in the early years of the second World War. Square dancing was fun and when we understood how it was done, we were all anxious to go to a barn dance party which included a hayride in suburban Palos Park. This affair was held under the auspices of the three Temple Youth Groups in the area, Sinai, KAM and Isaiah, and these events were called SKI dances. The idea of getting all the Jewish affiliated youth groups together also brought several grade schools into contact with students from others in the area. It was a broadening experience and we looked forward to meeting kids from Kenwood, Scott, Shakespeare, Ray and other schools in the broader community.

Hayrides always started with kids sitting on a hay rack and being pulled around the area by a team of horses -- to which I was allergic. Then, everyone gathered in a barn for instructions in square dancing. The dances always had live music and a caller, so we could learn and correct our errors. Despite the fact that I was constantly sneezing from the hay dust and the horse

dander, I learned the basics of the square dance and enjoyed the process. I always looked forward to events of that sort.

Another way in which we could practice the dancing we learned in the school gym was at house parties. This was always to records. Unfortunately, the dance teacher didn't try to teach the kids the basics of jitterbugging which was the "in" dance of the era. That was something that some of my classmates learned from older brothers and sisters and proceeded to teach to the rest of us. Our lessons were imperfect and the results would never have won dance contests. We enjoyed the athletic excesses of that sort of dancing nevertheless.

House parties were almost always chaperoned by parents who wisely staying in the back of the apartment and tended to the food. This was in an era before pizza had been discovered and the food that was served usually consisted of hot dogs, corned beef sandwiches, occasional hamburgers with cole slaw and potato chips. Deserts always involved a cake that was usually home made. In those years, the idea of going to a bakery and buying a cake was something that happened only for a wedding or other singular event -- never for a kids' house party.

Besides dancing, there were the kissing games. This period of social development occurred before kids started pairing off. Later, when that happened in high school, necking and occasional petting which was a more intimate form of contact became the popular pre-sexual activity. This period was an age of innocence. Sex wasn't discussed nor was it a conscious part of relationships. I'm certain the biological urges weren't different than they are today, but the attitudes toward sexuality were totally different. For example, I can't recall a single case of a teen age pregnancy though I'm sure there were some. It was obviously not something that was talked about though I feel certain that, had it happened within our group, we would have known about it. Couples met, bonded and eventually broke up. The latest gossip covered all the mating rituals of the time.

The Civic Club

Learning about the democratic process isn't too high on the priorities of public education in our contemporary time of special needs. No longer do schools put heavy emphasis on American History, geography and the democratic process. Schools are too busy trying to teach kids to read, write and do some basic arithmetic. During my formative years, things were different.

We were required to take History courses and, in fact, couldn't graduate from grade school without having undergone a full year's study of the history of the United States. We recited the pledge of allegiance daily. The school sponsored a Civic Club. The club itself emulated the process of government at the grass roots level. It was like having a civic administration within the school. This was special because it entailed conducting campaigns

for various offices, elections which had to be rigidly supervised and very important meetings were attended, usually, by the principal of the school. Participation by all students from 4th grade on was encouraged. Everybody voted.

If someone was elected president of the Civic Club, that person had the right to appoint certain "cabinet" level officials. During the years of the Roosevelt administration, the Democratic Party chairman and Presidential Campaign Manager was always appointed the Postmaster General. During the Roosevelt administration, that job went to Jim Farley. The reason, I learned later, was that in the years before the Civil Service reforms of the late 19th century, the patronage jobs available through the post office were so numerous that the person who controlled them also controlled a large number of votes. This was especially true in the growing urban populations of the country.

For some reason, the Civic Club President, by tradition, appointed his campaign manager as the Fire Commissioner of the student body. And this is how that job came to be mine.

Standing on a corner as a patrol boy was often damp, unpleasant work. The corner to which I was assigned actually had two patrol boys. The other one was a friend who lives around the corner. His name, Joe Solovy. Joe had a lot of unique talents, not the least of which was his friendly nature and his ability to withstand the pressures of Civic Club politics.

Joe was a half year behind me in grade school but when the time came to campaign for the Presidency of the Civic Club, Joe was a natural candidate. And his mother was also cooperative. In mounting the campaign, it was necessary to publicize his candidacy. Today, politicians call the process "gaining name recognition." In regular adult elections, candidates used buttons, signs and banners. For Civic Club offices, we decided to use construction paper.

Joe's mother bought what seemed to us to be a ream of black construction paper and a quart of white ink. We were given the task of cutting the paper into small shield-shaped emblems, punching a hole in the top, affixing a small loop of string which could then be used to attach the shield to a button or button hole and then to write, using the white ink "Vote for Solovy" or "Joe Solovy for President."

We attended a fairly large grade school -- probably with a population of 600 kids all but the youngest of whom represented potential voters. That process may be one of the reasons that older voters today -- senior citizens -- turn out in greater percentages at the polls for Federal elections than their younger compatriots.

Preparing the shields was a monumental job -- I don't recall ever having had a worse case of writers' cramp. But we persevered and finally finished preparing the shields. The next step was to distribute them. This represented a logistical problem because we were both required to tend our corner as patrol boys. That kept us away from the school until after the

majority of the school's population (read this as potential voters) were already in class.

We finally decided to organize what today would be called a campaign committee. With our recruits firmly sold on Joe's candidacy, we had members of the committee standing at all the school doors distributing the black shields with the white writing. They had become treasured possessions of some of the younger kids who considered themselves to be part of a sacred process simply by tying one of them on his button hole,

Election day came and Joe was elected against an opposition candidate who never seemed to have gotten his campaign into gear. When it came time for the new administration to announce its choices for various Civic Club departments, I was selected as the Fire Commissioner. The function of the fire commissioner was to oversee fire drills at the school and to report on the time necessary to evacuate the school. Board of Education regulations required that the school hold these fire drills.

The responsibility of the Fire Commissioner's job made it necessary for him to have a schedule of times for the drills which was provided by the school principal herself. It was a very important role and one which wasn't to be taken lightly. It also permitted the person filling it to leave his class before the drill actually started. It also made it possible for him to have contact with the principal, not an insignificant advantage in the event of a personal problem.

To prove the value of the presidency of the Civic Club, one has to follow Joe's career. He completed medical school and entered practice in a city in downstate Illinois where he continued until his retirement. While in college, I introduced him to Ellen whom he married. That was not part of the job description of the Fire Commissioner, but it's a nice post script to this recollection.

The Two Marilyns

In my last couple of years in grade school, house parties were an important element in my social life. Almost always given by girls, an invitation to one was a sign of acceptance. And acceptance is important to someone 12 or 13 years old. So, as word of a party plan got around the school everyone waited anxiously for an invitation. The invitations were singular -- not as couples though dating had already begun in those years.

I suppose that I got my share of invitations. The parties were an outlet away from the influence of the school, or the Temple and allowed an element of freedom that was lacking in institutionalized surroundings. The latest records were usually played. We listened to Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glen Miller and the Dorseys. Most records cost 35 cents. They included labels like Bluebird, Decca, Columbia, and Brunswick. Most of the girls had the latest equipment which included automatic changers so that a record would

play only once. Jitterbugging had just come on to the scene and I suspect that more boys felt comfortable with a "box waltz" than with anything more strenuous. I know I did. Obviously there were favorite songs and they would be played over and over until the grooves in the shellac discs were worn out.

Two special parties still stand out in my memory. One was given by Marilyn Loeb. Her family lived at the corner of 51st Street and Drexel Boulevard. They had a huge apartment. Marilyn's father was the brother of the Richard Loeb of the infamous Loeb/Leopold trial. Clarence Darrow's defense of Marilyn's uncle and his friend had filled the newspapers fifteen years earlier. The family name still caused raised eyebrows. But the Loeb family was well connected. A close relative of Julius Rosenwald who owned Sears Roebuck, they clearly had a lot of money and a significant position in the City's social hierarchy. In addition, Marilyn's father owned the grocery chain, Hillman's and the specialty food store in the loop known as Stop and Shop. It was in this store -- located on Washington Street just west of State Street -- that the Brahman ladies from the Gold Coast of the city would order their groceries. Stop and Shop sold only the best quality and at the highest prices. And they delivered phone orders so that these gilt princesses didn't have to lower themselves to actually shopping for food. The store was often filled with maids doing their lady's bidding.

Stop and Shop also had a catering division -- Gaper's. The was a company that made sure that any party supplied every culinary need of the rich and famous of the city. If one of the Grande Dames planned a soiree, she had only to call Gaper's and tell them how many people she planned to invite, what sort of menu she wanted and when and where the party was to be held. The rest was left in the capable hands of the Gaper's catering staff. They never let a customer down and their reputation for preparing the finest in food, drink and ambiance was known throughout the city.

When Marilyn Loeb had a party, it was catered by Gaper's. Liveried maids and butlers passed foods we weren't able to identify but which tasted wonderful. The dining room table was laden with goodies all evening and a tray wouldn't be half empty before it was replaced with one that was full. Specially prepared petite fours with Marilyn's name on them in appropriately colored spun sugar appeared on the table. It was awesomely impressive to someone whose mother was known for her Daffodil Cake.

Dancing in their living room was always great because of the room's size. While so-called "parlor games" were not on the agenda, occasionally, someone would suggest a game of "spin-the-bottle," a kissing game played in a circle. With appropriately modest giggles, the girls would permit themselves to be kissed lightly on the lips before spinning the bottle to select a male who would then kiss them again before he took his turn with the bottle on the carpet.

Parties rarely lasted past 11:00 P.M. or midnight after which everyone walked home. The events of the party and especially the variety of food served

was the talk of the school for days after the party. In those years, the concept of a hostess gift was unknown. I had been carefully instructed to thank the hostess' mother for inviting me. Parents always stayed around the festivities to act as chaperones until everyone went home. Little escaped their eyes. Instead of the gift, there was a tacit understanding that the hostess would receive invitations to the movies or to a hamburger joint from the males who attended. The girls were expected to have parties of their own and the group perpetuated itself though these social events.

Marilyn Feldman's parents, Dave and Libby were friends of my folks. They lived at 53rd and Greenwood. Dave Feldman had made a good deal of money when he discovered that he could bring petroleum products into the Chicago market by barge and store them in huge tanks adjacent to the Sanitary and Ship Canal that linked the Chicago River with the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. The costs of transporting the gasoline was less than sending the equivalent amount via Interstate pipelines. After he had built and filled the tanks, he was a wholesaler of petroleum products. He decided to go into the retail end of the business and opened a chain of gas stations. Those were equally successful because, with lower costs, Feldman was able to undersell the major oil producers like Sinclair and Standard Oil. The money kept flowing in.

Marilyn was an only child. She was thin, dark haired and today would probably be called lanky. But when she planned a party in the late spring or early summer, everyone waited anxiously for an invitation. Dave Feldman had bought a large cabin cruiser which was anchored in Burnham Harbor. An invitation from Marilyn meant we would be getting an outing on the boat in Lake Michigan. As I recall it, the boat was a good size with cabins below deck. It was probably over 40 feet long with powerful, noisy and smelly inboard diesel engines. But a chance to have an outing on the boat and possibly even an opportunity to steer the craft was something that every male coveted.

While the food served at those parties was limited to what could be brought on board the boat, no one was interested in eating -- especially when the Lake was rough. There was dancing to a wind-up phonograph located on the small rear deck, but the attraction came when Mr. Feldman allowed each of us males the opportunity of steering the boat, changing the speed and direction of it -- as long as we didn't run into the Chicago lighthouse.

It may seem that the affluence of the parents governed the success of the party. While that may have entered into the kids' evaluation of the social event, it certainly wasn't a conscious consideration. Something unique, like a scavenger hunt or some sort of outdoor competition between different elements of the group were equally sure to make for a great social event. So were special, well thought out games inside the apartments. As kids, we were curious and wanted to expand our field of experience.

There were certainly less memorable parties given by girls like Adele Isaacson and Blossom Friedman but the crowd who attended them all was

usually much the same with a few other people who drifted in and out of the social circle. It was a way for newcomers to become part of the social group. This applied to the youngsters who were Hitler refugees and who were then arriving in America and settling in Chicago. It was also true of kids who had been moved into the neighborhood because their parents had found new job opportunities in the big city. The relationships and the social graces that developed during those years were the precursor of more serious dating that took place when the entire crew entered high school. But that's another story.

The German Congregation

Located at 54th and Ingleside Avenue in Chicago, Kozminski School was built in about 1912. At that time, streetcar transportation had been completed along Cottage Grove Avenues and along 55th Street and it was possible to get from the previously undeveloped western fringes of the Hyde Park neighborhood into the center of the city. East Hyde Park was completed earlier because of the 1893 World's Fair and the Illinois Central Commuter rail line. West Hyde Park had to wait until the Chicago Surface Lines streetcars arrived. Then, in about 1924, an addition was built to the original school. This usurped the school's playground but added a gym and an assembly hall.

In the older portion of the three story building, a large Industrial Arts room had been included in the original design. This was a part of the school's curriculum in the early years of the century and provided manual training for kids who would probably never go on to high school. They were taught the rudiments of carpentry and plumbing so that they would be able to get jobs at age 14 or 15.

By the time I was in school, there were no Industrial Arts classes, and the large room remained untouched. In the late 1930's, the room found new uses. It was used for the school's Americanization classes. As waves of refugees from Nazi Germany arrived in Chicago, a large percentage of them settled in this part of Hyde Park. The Board of Education, spurred by various charitable organizations, organized a series of semi-weekly programs to teach these newcomers the basic lessons of life in America. Such things as handling their money, opening bank accounts, using public transportation, the American system of weights and measures were only the beginning of their training. They also learned the language, how to write and read it as well as speaking in a language with which many were totally unfamiliar. In short, they were acculturated -- all in the Industrial Arts classroom. The sort of training they got is well portrayed in the wonderful book titled "The Education of Hyman Kaplan."

Along 53rd Street, these refugees congregated, shopped and strolled. It became known as ""Cinsunit" Avenue. This was an anglicized corruption of the German question, "sin Su Nicht," "Aren't you?" And to that question was added "von Frankfurt," "von Muenchen," "von Hamburg, "von Berlin". These

questions brought a sense of community to an otherwise very diverse group of people. One thing that was needed was a rationale for their being uprooted and moved to a foreign and not always friendly culture. That was some sort of religious organization around which they could be centered.

Into this situation stepped Rabbi Weinberg from Hamburg. He was a gentle man who brought with him an excellent reputation both as a pastor and as an organizer. Under the auspices of Jacob Weinstein, KAM's Rabbi, a small congregation was begun. It met on Friday nights and Sabbath morning in the KAM sanctuary. KAM still followed the Classical Reform tradition of Sunday morning services so there was no conflict. The German congregation held its own services, conducted its own fundraising activities and operated independently. Later the congregation bought some property at 53rd and University Avenues and began the construction of their own sanctuary. The building process was difficult. First, because of the shortage of wartime building materials and second because of a serious shortage of funds, the building was completed only through the basement level. The congregation met in the basement for years but ultimately found another site for their building and moved to the South Shore neighborhood where they stayed until after Rabbi Weinberg had passed away.

One necessity was a prayer book that all the members of the German congregation could use and appreciate. One day, while I was working in the Temple Office -- it must have been in 1938, I was introduced to Rabbi Weinberg by the Temple office manager, Letty Blau.

"Rabbi Weinberg has a job for you, if you're interested." she told me. "The congregation needs its own prayer book and the Rabbi has prepared one which you would mimeograph and assemble." The Rabbi, whose halting English was hard to understand, then produced a large cardboard carton. In it were several dozen mimeograph master sheets. These were blue, waxed masters which, when attached to the machine and inked, would reproduce anything that had been etched on the sheets.

On Rabbi Weinberg's sheets were lines of carefully drawn Hebrew script. Under the Hebrew were a transliteration of the Hebrew, and under that, German words. Finally, on the last of the four lines was an English version of what had been written above. He had between 35 and 40 of these mimeo masters -- and it was clearly a monumental job to have completed these. There was a correction fluid which could be used to change errors in the master, but putting the whole thing together and having it religiously correct was a labor that had required intensive work.

He asked whether I could use these masters and print fifty copies of the "Siddur" for his congregational use. He also wanted to know if I could save the masters in the event that the congregation grew to the point where additional copies would be needed. I agreed to take on the job and went to work. The actual mimeographing was easy, but carefully preserving the plates was a more difficult job. Since the pages were printed only on one side, I

decided to run five extra copies of each sheet. If there were additional copies of the book, that would be good. On the other hand if a page were to be spoiled or smudged, I would have extras to use.

The job of mimeographing these pages took a couple of afternoons. Then came the process of collating all the sheets, punching notebook-like holes in them and binding them in a hard paper cover which had also been punched with the three holes for notebook use. Using the supplies available in the office, I spread the 35 sheets out on a large table in the workroom and began the process of collating the books.

The workroom office I used was immediately off the pulpit. Today, it might be called a ""green room," but then it was used by the Rabbis as a space to wait before going out on the bimah to begin the services. Clearly, I could not use the room during services -- the noise would have been disrupting. Across the pulpit was another room of about the same size. It held the congregation's organ. Occasionally, while I was busy addressing the Temple Bulletin or mimeographing notices or mailers, the organ would crank up and Max Janowski would begin to practice Bach or some other Baroque composer on the instrument. Watching the organ being played was quite an experience and one I enjoyed. Max was not an easy person to get to know. He was also a Hitler refugee who had arrived in Chicago via Shanghai after fleeing Germany and making his way across Asia. Chicago was a refuge for him and the organ was a way in which he expressed his connection with things European that he had left behind in his exodus.

My room was small and stuffed with machinery and filing cabinets. When it came time to collate the German Congregation's Siddur, I had to reorganize the room to make room for the 35 sheets of paper, the paper punch and the covers for the books. I managed to do that, though it took a lot of extra time. Finally, I completed the project and Letty called Rabbi Weinberg to tell him that the books were ready to be inspected.

The Rabbi came to the office immediately and began to check the books out. As he read through them, tears came to his eyes. His group now had a significant addition to its ritual practice and one that all of them could read. By the time he had gone through one of the books, he was sitting down and crying openly. In the office, all of us were touched by his display of emotion.

Finally, he asked how much time I had spent in preparing the books. I had roughly calculated that I had spent about 10 hours on the project and told him that. He took some money out of his pocket and offered me a twenty dollar bill. I looked at the money and at him and made a decision. I refused the money. He didn't understand - I didn't owe him any of my valuable time, he told me. I said that after what he and the members of his group had endured in Germany, the least I could do was to contribute some of my time to his congregation and hope that they succeeded in reuniting the community that had been so abruptly disbursed.

All of this happened before there was any hint of the Holocaust that followed. Rabbi Weinberg protested but finally thanked me for my consideration. I was happy to have been able to help the people who, but for the Grace of God, I might have been a part of. In fact, the Rabbi called my mother and told her that he had never experienced such an act of kindness and consideration in his life and thanked her for having raised me with the best of Jewish principals. That praise would have been compensation enough, but word got to Rabbi Weinstein as well and he phoned me to compliment me on my action. I felt very good about what I had done.

In later years, I met Rabbi Weinberg's son who is a friend of my cousins Ilse and Hank Herzberg. When we met at one of Ilse's anniversary parties, he recounted the incident and told me how many times his father referred to that event as he was growing up. I didn't know it, but I had been selected as a role model. I learned then that a sincere act of kindness or consideration spreads out like ripples on a stream. There are no limits to how far it might go.

The Frolic

Saturday afternoons belonged to Ben Cohen and the Frolic Theater. Located about four blocks from our apartment, the Frolic was a unique neighborhood institution. In the first place, it was the only "backward" movie house in the United States. As you walked in to the theater and up the aisle, the screen was behind you. That never bothered my generation of kids -- we never realized the uniqueness of the place.

Ben was a promoter, a real showman. A rotund man with a gravy spattered vest, he was a caricature of a Jewish Barnum. But he also served as the box office attendant, candy salesman, film booker, and on occasion when the union projectionist was suffering the after effects of a heavy night of carousing, he also ran the projection equipment. During those depression years, he also MC'd the various promotional nights offered by the theater to get adults into the house. There was a "Bank Night"" with cash awards of $5 or $10. There was a weekly Bingo night for cash prizes. There were china nights when pieces of a similar china pattern were given away with the purchase of an adult ticket. Each week, another piece was available so regular attendees would be able, over a year or more, to collect an entire set of plates, cups and saucers.

As to what the kids did, they began to assemble at 1:30 PM on a Saturday afternoon. Virtually the whole school showed up because mom, for the price of a slim dime, could have a whole afternoon to herself, courtesy of Ben. At precisely two o'clock, the house lights went down and to the uncontrolled screams of the audience, the first movie previews flashed on the screen. These were followed by obligatory cartoons -- Mickey Mouse, or

Loony Toons. This in turn was succeeded by a newsreel presenting the "eyes and ears of the world."

Then came one of the two features. Usually there was an "A" movie with noted Hollywood stars. Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Bette Davis, Tyrone Power, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and the entire panoply of the Hollywood star system flashed on the screen of the Frolic. This first feature was then followed by what many kids considered the main event. It was the next edition of the serial. These serials were real "cliff hangers" where each episode ended with the hero in an impossible, life-threatening situation. At the beginning of the following week's episode, the hero miraculously survived that terror only to find himself in another, even more perilous dilemma. There were serials detailing the adventures of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon -- fantastic tales of other worlds and interplanetary travel with evil villains like Ming, the Magnificent and heroes, played by the likes of Buster Crabbe and Johnny Weissmuller who, though they were put to a severe test on a weekly basis, eventually, by the time the 15th episode was screened, conquered all evil and brought peace to the world.

After the serial, there was a second "B" class movie. These were often so-called oaters -- cowboy movies where villains subtly wore black hats and the heroes like Ken Maynard and Gene Autrey wore white hats and sang songs to their horses rather than to the girls who took a back seat in these highly predictable dramas. By the time the second feature had finished, it was somewhere around 5:00 or 5:15 and everyone went home. Often, because of the primitive quality of the Frolic's equipment, with a splitting headache. I knew that, when I got home, my mother would have made a great dinner, usually breaded veal chops and my grandmother would have topped it off with an apple "charlotte"-- a deep dish apple pie with a crust that was made with rendered beef fat and then baked in a cast iron skillet. The apple juice would caramelize and to this day, my mouth waters at the thought of the desert.

The Frolic and Ben Cohen also provided me with performance opportunities. During those years, many of the Hollywood musicals included performances by Borah Minevitch and His Harmonica Rascals including the midget, Johnny Puleo. I was a member of the grade school harmonica band and because I was one of its two solo performers, I was asked to perform in front of the Frolic to promote musical movies. Ben Cohen would set up a primitive microphone and amplifier on the sidewalk and crank the volume as high as the machinery would permit. Then, we would be instructed to play some popular song of the day. After we were finished -- and we had drawn a crowd to the sidewalk, Ben would announce the movie, its stars and the play dates on which it could be seen at the Frolic. We played more music, and Ben repeated the announcement. We were handsomely compensated for these performances -- we got two or three free passes to the Frolic.

Another fixture on 55th Street was the University State Bank, one of the few that survived the pressures of the depression. There, I maintained my

savings account and would, periodically, go into the bank and have interest hand-posted to my passbook.

Finnegan's Drug Store was a place where everyone went when they wanted a soda fountain drink. Finnigan's still survives because someone had the foresight to salvage it from the urban renewal of the 1950's and reinstall it in the heart of the Museum of Science and Industry. Finnegan's wasn't the only Drug Store. At the corner of the block that held the Frolic was Spector's Drug Store and I was friendly with one of the owner's two sons. My friend, Levi Spector played the harmonica with me in the harmonica band. His brother was a more serious musician and went on to perform in the First Violin section of the Chicago Symphony for over fifty years.

55th Street was a Mecca and a crossroads. The University was the major presence to the south and the German Jewish community of Hyde Park lived, mostly to the north of the street. It was on that street that the two social elements interacted. The Greengrocers would add up purchases penciled on the sides of paper sacks. It was a place where school supplies could be bought. At one time, the Piggly Wiggly chain opened a rudimentary supermarket on 55th street and all the housewives shopped there. Eventually, the chain was sold to the National Tea Company and stores expanded in size and in the variety of canned goods and products they offered to housewives. To some extent, the lessons these chain stores learned on 55th Street evolved into today's mega stores .

Learning about s e x

Sex education was non-existent during my formative years and, if it had existed at all, it would have been hush-hush. It was nothing the school system wanted to touch and, as far as I knew, my parents didn't have a clue about the whole topic of human sexuality. It didn't even occur to me that they had participated in sex until I was well past puberty and realized that I didn't fall from heaven in a little blue-wrapped bundle, fully developed.

In those years, I learned about sex the only way possible ... by receiving misinformation from close friends who didn't have any better idea than I did about the source of life or the joys of sex. My friend, Jerry Goldsmith, was considered the expert in the matter primarily because he had an older brother who, supposedly, knew about "such things." Jerry, for example, informed us about female menstrual cycles, though he didn't know what they were supposed to be. From his telling, this was a messy, unhappy time in women's lives that they would have preferred not happen. He was probably closer to the truth than he knew, but, again, for all the wrong reasons.

We picked up tidbits of facts and had limited experience in learning firsthand about sex. I recall the time when, at about the age of 15, three of us decided to go to the Loop and lie our way into a burlesque show with real strip tease dancers. The theater was a really raunchy place called the "Gayety" and

it was located on south State Street a few blocks south of its more famous counterpart, the Rialto. At the Rialto, stellar performers like Gypsy Rose Lee would divest themselves of all but a couple of pasties over their nipples and a "G" string before walking off stage in dim blue lighting. In her ears she could revel in the thunderous applause of the sailors from Great Lakes Naval Training Station who had wandered down to Chicago on a one day pass.

The ""Gayety" on the other end of the street was strictly a low rent version. No-name strippers plied their trade between runs of totally unknown movies. Between the movie and the stage show, a hawker would travel up and down the aisles offering what he presented as salacious material to the audience. The explicit content of what he was selling was so vague as to be meaningless -- or it was simply a con to get fifty cents for a book that would retail at the corner druggist for a dime,

One of the city requirements was that no one under the age of 18 was allowed in to see the show and when the three of us decided to venture to the Gayety, we lowered our voices to the extent possible -- not an easy job since most of us still occasionally squeaked -- and approached the box office with great trepidation. The ticket seller asked the obligatory question, "How old are you?" The most mature among us answered, lowering his voice as far as possible, "18." With a very skeptical look, she issued the overpriced tickets, told us to sit in the balcony and keep a low profile. We obviously hadn't fooled her but she knew that we wouldn't make any trouble, so she took our money. We all scampered into the darkened interior, found seats in the balcony, and proceeded to watch the movie which was one of the worst ever made.

The stage show was typical. A comic -- burlesque style in baggy pants -- came on stage with his second banana and told a few jokes. If they were in the least off color, it was only by innuendo and none of us understood the nuances of what he was talking about. Then came the dancing girls, a disorganized chorus line of scantily clad beauties followed, finally, by the stripper. Since I had no basis for comparing her dance with any others, I was convinced that this was the sexiest thing I had ever witnessed. City ordinances prohibited nudity, so each stripper wore a body suit and pasties over their nipples. In addition, a sequined "G: string was required. The amount of actual flesh that was showing at the end of the dance was probably less than would have been seen on a middle aged matron at a church social.

Photographs were another way of learning about female anatomy and the best venue for those pictures was, surprisingly, the National Geographic. Now, as an aging adult, I'm cynical enough to realize that the regular monthly photographs of topless native women from darkest Africa was no accident. But in those years, we studied those pictures with drooling avidity. Our mothers, no doubt, appreciated our intense interest in the material because, after all, the National Geographic was a magazine of unimpeachable educational value.

In addition to the regular features in the Geographic, there was always Esquire Magazine, a gentleman's periodical which emphasized the latest in style. Also included were the drawings of George Petty and Vargas. Now considered high camp, in their time, they were representations of impossibly leggy females in scanty costumes which left little to the imagination of young teen age boys. Another, more obscure magazine, Coronet, was also published by Esquire and contained "art"" photos one of which was usually a nude study of an artistically lighted female form. They were really exciting.

But these were only a form of vicarious sexual experience. The real thing came at house parties with classmates. At about the seventh grade level, someone introduced the idea of playing "kissing games." In various formats, one male would have the opportunity of kissing one willing female in the privacy of one of the apartment's bedrooms. Two games were particularly popular. One called "spin the bottle" required the participants to sit on the floor in a ring alternating males and females. A large old-fashioned milk bottle was placed in the center of the ring and the hostess then spun the bottle. The male nearest to the mouth of the bottle when it stopped spinning, got the opportunity of kissing the hostess. He then spun the bottle again and, with luck, it pointed to another female who then kissed him again. The catcalls from onlookers bespoke an embarrassment that only a naive teen can appreciate.

The second game was called "post office." It was more personal since the hostess acted as the postmistress sending a letter to the male she wanted to meet in the darkness of a closet or bedroom. The male then had the opportunity of sending a letter, via the postmistress, to another female who entered the room, was kissed and then called for another male. One of the keys to the party, and the one that evoked the biggest giggles was the sort of "postage" that was affixed to the request. There were "special delivery" stamps, "airmail" stamps and "postal card" stamps. The cost of those stamps in real life signaled the intensity of the desire of the person in the room for the party being summoned by the postmaster/postmistress.

There’s no doubt of the effectiveness of this rather obtuse training. Most of the people went on in life to get married and have children of their own. Perhaps because of the Kinsey Report issued in 1947 regarding human sexuality and later, by the publication of Playboy and Penthouse, sex, in a sense, came out of the closet and was recognized as a legitimate function of human existence. But in the 1930"s and 1940's, it stayed in hiding to be discovered covertly and with a great deal of misinformation.

Making Money

I was reading, the other day, about the vast amount of disposable income available to today’s teen agers. They have become an important element in the economy and analysts try to determine what they are spending their mega-bucks on. For the most part, the money is spent on clothes and

electronics including CD's, DVD"s and video games, with a percentage going to support the junk food industry.

The numbers staggered me as I remembered myself at the same age trying to fight the effects of the depression by working to pick up a few dollars. For the most part, in the late 1930's, teens were limited to part time jobs. Saturday work in some downtown department store was one option but those jobs were much in demand and hard to get.

I was able to find work at the synagogue that my folks and I attended. The job was working as what was then called an "office boy." Now, I suppose that the same work is done by an administrative assistant at least or maybe even an assistant, associate junior vice-president. In my years as an office boy, title wasn't nearly as important as the fact that you could count on some money. The job paid a dime an hour.

To put those wages into context, it cost ten cents to get into a movie and another nickel for a bag of popcorn. Bus rides were a nickel (with a student ID) and most museums were free to students. Bowling cost 25 cents a game and a good hamburger and fries cost about 65 cents at one of the better teen hangouts in the neighborhood I lived in.

My job as office boy was simple. The office staff had to churn out a weekly bulletin for mailing to the approximately 650 members of the congregation. There were agendas for countless meeting, brochures for the various affiliate organizations and other work that had to be done on an antiquated mimeograph machine which required hand cranking. The bulletin was printed in the print shop of one of the members and delivered, properly folded, to the temple office on Tuesday for mailing that day and delivery on Wednesday to the congregants.

My assigned task was to address those bulletins and have them ready for delivery to the post office by about 5:30 on Tuesday. To do that, I had to master the antiquated addressograph machine. That machinery had metal plates, each containing the name and address of a member. As it ran through the noisy machine, I had to insert a copy of the bulletin in the proper place and an arm descended on the plate causing the metal to print the address on the paper through an ink filled ribbon. Anyone familiar with an old fashioned hand operated printing press will understand that hand-eye coordination were essential to the proper placement of the paper and the saving of fingers. Although the machine was equipped with a safety device to protect the operator, I doubt that OSHA would have approved my use of this machinery.

At first, coming into the office as I did after school, I struggled to complete the job on time. The dime an hour I was being paid would earn me as much as a quarter when I finished. But, as time went on, I got faster and completing the work by 4:30 was not unusual. In fact, I sometimes got done in an hour. The office staff was amazed that my hands could handle the load as quickly as I did and compliments were frequent and sincere. There was one problem. The faster I did got, the less money I made. Where I once would walk

home with a quarter, now, the most I could earn from the same job was a dime. It didn't take too much time to realize the inequity of this situation.

I tried to work out an approach to explain my dilemma to the office manager, a lady by the name of Leticia Blau. Letty was sympathetic, but after dishing out some mumbo-jumbo about budgets and office overhead, declined my request for a raise. I considered the problem for a while and finally decided that I would follow the pattern set by the United Auto Workers, the United Steel Workers, the United Packinghouse Workers and the other huge industrial unions and go on strike.

I announced my intention. The office staff laughed. I was not supposed to be a unionist. After all, my father was in business for himself and Jewish people for the most part, if they belonged to unions at all, were members of the cigar makers, or the garment workers. Industrial Unions were much too blue collar for Jewish teenagers. But I decided to go on strike anyway.

My labor protest lasted about five weeks. During that time, Letty tried her hand at operating the addressograph machine. Her results were some very ink-stained fingers which ruined her manicure forever, she thought, and a delay in the bulletin's delivery by three days. Members had become accustomed to getting the bulletin on Wednesday. Now they were getting it on Saturday -- a totally unsatisfactory timing since the bulletin announced events that were held on Friday, the day before.

Letty tried to hire another teenager to take my job -- something I feared because I wasn't too self confident of my abilities to beat out competition on the machinery. The first replacement hire broke the mimeograph machine causing the office staff to have an expensive service call. The second replacement finished the addressing of the bulletin on Wednesday afternoon, causing further delays in the mailing.

As a last resort, Letty went to the Rabbi and explained the situation. The then Rabbi -- Joshua Loth Liebman who went on to fame by writing a popular psychology best seller called "Peace of Mind"-- called my mother to try to convince her to send me back to the same working conditions I had left. My mother stood up for me and told the Rabbi that I'd be happy to come back -- but at a wage of twenty-five cents an hour.

A few days of silence ensued. I think that there was a special meeting of the synagogue's board of directors on the matter, though I was never able to confirm that event. One of my incidental jobs was the mimeographing of the Board Minutes. I never saw anything about a discussion of office wages, but those kinds of deliberations were conducted in executive session and never would have appeared in the minutes.

In any event, I finally had a phone call from Letty agreeing to pay me the 25 cents an hour I had demanded, and asking me to come back to work the following day -- a Tuesday when the bulletin would be ready for addressing . When I walked into the office, I was greeted as a prodigal returning -- and

handed the bundle containing the bulletins for the next week. There were no further complaints and I happily kept the job I really wanted in the first place. After all, how many 13 year olds had a chance to read the minutes of the board of directors.

More Summer Camp

Now that I was a seasoned camper by reason of my experiences, both positive and negative, we heard about a YMCA Camp that the Hyde Park "Y" had acquired in Irons Michigan. This was a town not too far from Ludington and Manistee. It was in the same sort of pine woods area as Kawaga had been and was a lot less expensive. Reports about Camp Martin Johnson were very positive and I was sent there for the eight weeks of summer.

Arriving by bus at the age of 13, I felt that I knew my way around. I was assigned a cabin and discovered that I knew a couple of my cabin mates from my winter experiences at the "Y.". I set about passing all the required tests to be placed in the advance swimmer and canoeist groups and was permitted to sign up for any canoe trips I might want to take during the summer. There were also overnight hikes that everyone had to endure. Usually, the food that was provided for the hikes were canned sardines and oranges. To this day I don't like sardines because my memory of having had to eat them for breakfast on those hiking trips is still as strong as the aroma exuded by the fish once the cans had been opened.

I was assigned the job of teaching the less experienced campers how to roll their blankets and clothing inside a poncho to keep it dry in the event of rain. Using large ""blanket pins" I taught the rudiments of outdoor life to less experienced and sometimes younger kids. Inevitably, it rained during those hikes which simply involved having a group of us trucked a few miles away from the camp, being dropped in a wooded area and setting out for the return to the camp two or three days later. It wasn't hard, but it required walking through corn fields and along narrow roads while singing camp songs. It was a hot, sweaty hike.

More exciting were the canoe trips. Usually, the canoeists would paddle on the Little Manistee River. The entry point was established in order to make a two night-three day trip to the city of Manistee a reasonable destination. Paddling through the narrow river there were occasional exciting rapids to be navigated. Most of the people who went on these trip knew how to handle the canoes and keep them upright. Occasionally, someone would be sent on the trip who didn't understand the dynamics of the tippy boats. That person would ride in the middle of the boat making the paddlers do more of the work. On some occasions in the river, the water was so shallow that because of the extra weight in the boat, it would scrape the bottom of the river. On those occasions, the dead weight person would have to get out of the boat and hike through the water until the river deepened. Getting out of the boat was another

hazard and more than once, the dead weight would tip the canoe and all its contents into the water. It was considered desirable not to have to contend with this sort of happening and the experienced canoeists drew straws with the loser having to carry the extra person. I was unlucky a couple of times and as a result, slept on wet blankets.

On one canoe trip, the weather was oppressively hot. Coupled with the low branches that hung over the river and the exertion of paddling, our clothes became uncomfortable and, gradually, we began stripping down to jock straps. Swim suits in those years didn't have internal support. We continued paddling and occasionally dousing ourselves with the much cooler river water. Rounding a bend in the river, we realized that we were coming up to a bridge that crossed it with a road. To our dismay, standing on the bridge, apparently enjoying the pristine scenery were a large group of nuns. Maintaining our dignity and continuing to paddle under the bridge without turning the canoes over required a skill that I don't think I'd have available today. I don't remember whether the nuns crossed the road to watch us jock strap clad canoeists as we retreated down the river.

The river wound its way down to Lake Manistee. It was a long, narrow waterway. At the end closest to the river mouth was a logging mill and we had to navigate around the heavy logs that were stored in the water. Then, further down the lake, we passed a large Morton Salt plant. After completing one trip, we were permitted to tour the plant which manufactured salt licks for cattle, deer, rabbits and other animals. Our final destination took us through the channel that had been cut between the lake and Lake Michigan. At the foot of the channel was a Coast Guard Station and we had received permission to camp inside the Station. After the exhausting paddle, nothing felt better than sleeping indoors, albeit on a concrete floor, in the station. The Coast Guardsmen also had a juke box installed in this facility and it was my first experience with one of them.

On the morning after our arrival, a truck would come from the camp to pick up our canoes and we would ride triumphantly back to camp. Those canoe trips were the high point of the summer. At one time, the camp director asked for volunteers. It seemed that the camp bugler had returned home and there was no known replacement. Because I knew the bugle calls from my previous experience, I volunteered even though I had never played a bugle before. I took the instrument into the woods and to the dismay of the wildlife there practiced until I could actually create the necessary sounds. After achieving this, I was given an alarm clock and told to wake the camp at 6:00 AM.

One of the annual camp events was a "backwards day" in which everything was reversed. Meals were served with desserts first. The counselors bussed the dishes, the bugle calls were reversed and totally confused with the events they announced; campers acted as instructors and counselors did what they were told. No doubt the counselors told the campers

that the next day everything would be returning to normal and that their activities on the backward day would certainly be remembered.

My counselor that year was a man named Bill Matson. Bill was a gymnast. He had set up rings and a pommel horse near the cabin so he could train during the summer. I was always amazed at his ability and strength. I had no inclination to learn how to perform on the parallel bars or any of the other equipment he used with such ease.

I continued going to Camp Martin Johnson for another two years. In 1941, my last summer there, I was a junior counselor which gave me certain perquisites that campers didn't have. One was an occasional night in Irons. There was an outdoor movie theater in the town. A sheet served as the screen and the customers of the movie sat on the ground in a field watching the movie after dark. We hiked back to camp after the movie

During the summer of 1942, I went back to Kawaga as a junior counselor. This title meant that I got paid $50 for the summer's work and I received food and lodging. I was assigned to a cabin of 8 year olds and actually enjoyed training these younger boys. They responded positively and it was a pleasant summer. One boy, Bobby Bogoff had suffered terrible burns as an infant and was somewhat limited in his physical abilities. I took particular interest in him and helped him to be involved in the activities with his cabin mates. In the middle of the year, his parents came to the camp to visit him and were delighted at his development and the fact that he was a part of the camping activities. Apparently, he told his folks about my interest in him and his father, a well known and apparently wealthy jeweler, approached me and offered me a $50 tip. For reasons I never understood, I turned it down telling him that what I had done was a part of my job and that the tip wasn't necessary. When Bogoff related this story to Lou Ehrenreich, the camps' director and owner, management of the camp was more than pleased with my efforts.

My final summer camp experience was in the summer of 1943. Because of successes I had in leading the Temple's Cub Scout Pack in winning singing competitions, I was approached by Harry Branowitz who owned a camp in Eagle River, Wisconsin called "Glen Eden." I was hired as a counselor whose role was to lead the singing at dinner and during camp fires. The job description allowed counselors two evenings off each week and was to provide transportation to and from town. Arguing that gas rationing prohibited him from providing the transport, Branowitz reneged on this portion of his written contract with the counselors. There were other elements of the contract that he would not honor including an incident where he refused to drive the head counselor into town to see a doctor after he had been hit in the groin with a batted baseball. .

One clause in the contract permitted counselors who wanted to leave the camp to get transportation back to Chicago. I quit the job shortly before the fourth of July and asked for my ticket home. Reluctantly, Branowitz provided the ticket and I was able to get to the Eagle River train station and get back

home. The train, during those wartime years, was ancient. Wicker seats in the cars and gas mantle lamps that lit the train made me joke that this was the train that had carried Lincoln's body to Springfield in 1865. The ride was as bumpy as it was long. By the time I got home, I was exhausted. It was the fourth of July and my parents had planned a visit with some friends who had a summer beach house in southwestern Michigan. I went along, but unfortunately fell asleep on the beach on a sunny July day. It took several weeks to recover from the serious sunburn I got that day. But I was home.

During the winter that followed, a news article in the Chicago Daily News related the arrest of Harry Branowitz for his sexual advances to a minor boy. That story confirmed that I had made the right decision in leaving Glen Eden.

What to do with the rest of the summer was an easy decision. I had already been accepted by the University of Chicago and, though the summer quarter had already begun, I was able to enroll in the courses I would need for my first year there. The summer was not wasted and my college days had begun.

Face to Face

Over the years I have known many people for relatively short spans of time. It has been the quality of those contacts that have stayed with me rather than their duration. This is a story about some of them.

Fred Blatt suddenly became a part of my Sunday School class. He had moved to Chicago from Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. We got along well and, even though we went to different grade schools, we found common ground. Freddy was a ham radio operator. In fact, his bedroom at the Mayfair Hotel at 55th and Hyde Park Boulevard was a virtual nest of wires, dials, telegraph keys, microphones and operating manuals. Fred had received his official U.S. Government issued license to operate a radio station. With his equipment, he was able to contact people all over the country who had similar equipment. In those years, while there was some voice communication, almost all amateur radio was conducted using Morse Code.

I decided that I wanted nothing more than to become a ham radio operator as well. The first step, I learned from Fred, was to be proficient in the use of Morse Code. Federal regulations required proficiency in sending and receiving information at a certain number of words per minute. I set out to learn how to send code and to understand it when it was sent to me. I bought a telegraph sending key and a buzzer through which I was able to hear the dots and dashes that I was sending.

Unfortunately, I never learned how to understand the messages that Fred sent to me on a similar piece of equipment. As much time as I could spend in the rarefied atmosphere of his bedroom studio didn't give me the ability to understand the messages he sent. I couldn't transfer the message to

letters and words on a piece of paper. That ruined my chances of taking, much less passing the government's exam and ultimately, I gave up my ambition. Freddy's father was in a corporate position that required his move from city to city at frequent intervals. Fred's interest in radio was caused by the fact that he would be able to keep in touch with the friends he had made all over the country. When he moved, less than a year after we had become friendly, there was no further contact with him.

Morry Daum was an enigma. In the summer of 1945, veterans of the European phase of the war were returning to the States. Some were being discharged, others were being primed to go into the Pacific Theater of war and help defeat Japan. Morry had been the pilot of a B-17 Bomber and had flown more than fifty missions over Europe. With this record, he was able to secure his discharge from the Army Air Corps. He enrolled at the University of Chicago and joined the fraternity. At that time, he was probably the oldest active member of the group. Sy Wygodny (who later changed his name to Sy Wynn) and I adopted Morry and volunteered to show him the ropes on campus. I was the youngest of the three of us and I was also the smallest. Morry stood about 6 feet, 5 inches and Sy was about 6'3". At 6' I was practically a midget. Walking across the campus, we made an imposing trio. Sy, who had been seriously wounded in action in the infantry, was also a veteran.

Morry was quiet about both his background and his wartime experiences. We didn't press him on either although he intimated that he came from a family that controlled the International Silver Company. Morry apparently was fairly well off and had a beautiful bright yellow 1938 Plymouth convertible. The three of us delighted in riding around the campus in that car with me in the rumble seat and the two behemoths in front.

During that summer, the dropping of the atomic bomb and the quick end of the war in the Pacific were the major news events. My parents were on a vacation on a dude ranch in Colorado. I got a letter from my mother demanding an explanation of what the bomb was all about. I guess she figured that, because I went to the U of C and it had been instrumental in creating the bomb, that I was privy to the classified information as to how it worked and what made it tick. I knew absolutely nothing about it and I wrote her what little I understood about the power of the atom that I had learned from an elementary class in physics. That was enough to satisfy her and justify my college education.

Morry dropped out of sight after that one quarter at the University and I never heard anything about him after that. Nor did I ever see the yellow Plymouth. I missed Morry and the car with equal intensity, but life went on.

And then there was Al Cohen. Al's father was an architect specializing in the remodeling of storefronts throughout the city. In 1948, Al lived in a large old house in Kenwood -- at about 50th Street and Dorchester. Al's passion was photography and he had constructed a darkroom in one of the

cubbyholes in the house's basement. He had an enlarger in the room, running water and enough space to hang film and prints until they dried. Al also owned a Speed Graphic camera. His was a smaller version of the camera traditionally associated with news photographers in the years after the second World War. But his 2 1/4 x 3 1/4 camera was good enough for our purposes. He was able to load relatively inexpensive sheet film into holders and could carry enough flash bulbs to photograph anything.

I used an ancient 35 mm camera that my father had once found in a hotel room in Milwaukee. That camera was pre-war and required the use of a light meter to set the lens aperture and speed. It had a built-in focusing mechanism which helped. Al taught me how to buy and load bulk 35 millimeter film into the cartridges that came with film bought from photo supply houses. The bulk film was the same quality but much less expensive than the cartridge film on the market. With our equipment, on one occasion in about 1949, Al and I set off to Starved Rock State Park for a photo safari. We discovered that we could make some great pictures of the poison ivy that was rampant inside the park. When we returned to his darkroom, I processed my 35mm film in a special developing unit while Al worked on his sheet film in trays and with the running water. We made dozens of prints of poison ivy which eventually were trashed.

At the same time, Al agreed to act as the official photographer of Dusty Rhodes, the stripper that Sy Friedman and I had befriended. She had agreed to be photographed -- in her costumes -- and in her apartment. One Saturday, Sy, Al and I dragged what seemed to be a ton of equipment to her small one room apartment in what's now called Bucktown. We photographed her from every conceivable angle, urging her to strip completely for some nude photos -- something she steadfastly refused to do -- and gave her copies of the prints to use for publicity purposes. Some appeared in the front panels of the 606 Club on south Wabash Avenue. Others were distributed to news media though I don't remember any ever being published.

Earl Schultz took me under his wing in 1946 when I first went to work for National Acceptance. He recognized me for what I was -- a green kid who was trained in accounting (Earl was an accountant from the old school) and who knew nothing about commercial finance. Earl would help me prepare the audits I was required to do for the firm. This process entailed checking the invoices that had been sold to the finance company to make sure that the goods involved had actually been ordered, had been shipped and that valid shipping documents indicated the goods had arrived at their destination. Earl taught me the tricks of the trade and I was able to do the work required of me. Later, Earl went to work for Mercantile Financial after I had gone into business in 1963. He had pretty much the same job in 1963 as he had held in 1946, but saw that I was moving forward in my own career and did everything he could to help me as I began doing business with his boss, Michael Kohn. I don’t know what

happened to Earl though I remember him being ill and suffering from a heart condition while he was at Mercantile.

Willard Wolf was the operating manager of the Joyce Sportswear factory in Chesterton, Indiana. We had a lot in common and soon discovered the areas where we could cooperate and make our jobs and lives a little easier. In 1949, Joyce manufactured a mid-priced line of women's' dresses, slacks and shorts. At Tiny Togs" factory, we made kids' pajamas, overalls and jeans. The machinery used in both factories for these product's production was virtually the same and Willard and I would exchange hard-to-find machine parts and, sometimes, advice, on how to keep a factory running forty miles away from any trained technician.

In addition, Willard and I tried to find recreational opportunities away from the prying eyes of the machine operators who worked for us and who were prone, as small town people tend to be, to gossip about everything. So Willard and I would take off for Michigan City and its restaurants including Mickey Joseph's gourmet back-room dining establishment located in the rear of a seedy bar. We also discovered semi-professional boxing matches that were being offered there. After my father sold the factory in Chesterton, I lost track of Willard though I knew that the firm went on to achieve national distribution. I never visited its Chicago factory in the old garment district and lost track of Willard

There were other people who touched me tangentially and about whom I'll write in another of these memoirs. It was from people like these that I had an opportunity to view the world outside the narrow confines in which I had grown up. I learned about possibilities and challenges. They held different points of view and they gave me a chance to learn about their perspectives. I slowly discovered my strengths and, in some case, my weaknesses. And I totally enjoyed riding in the rumble seat of that yellow convertible.

Show Biz

I suppose that the events surrounding my playing the harmonica in front of the Frolic movie theater and receiving free tickets was my entree into show business. The success I felt and the recognition that came with it made me a "performer."" Unfortunately, there was no place to take whatever talent I might have had and extend it beyond the narrow province of the grade school and the immediate neighborhood I lived in. Agents didn't line up to sign me to fabulous contracts.

Imagine my delight, then, when I walked into Marshall Field's State Street Store en route to exploring the toy department on the fourth floor. To my amazement, Field's was conducting a demonstration of some new-fangled technology called television. In one room, RCA had set up a simulated studio. It consisted of a raised platform swathed in a series of very bright spotlights. In

front of the platform was a huge device that I later learned was a television camera.

In 1939, no one owned a TV and there were no broadcasts available. The technology had been around for at least fifteen years, but it was only then becoming economically feasible. The wartime needs interrupted its commercial development and it burst on the scene in the late 1940's, after the war and became the popular entertainment medium it is today. Except for the room adjacent to the "studio" where RCA had set up a battery of receivers which, through what would now be called a closed circuit feed, were broadcasting the images that were being sent by the camera in the next room. The purpose of the demonstration was to introduce Chicago to the newest form of entertainment and the latest in electronic marvels. A similar display was being shown at the New York World's Fair, but in Marshall Field's store, it was a wonder to be seen.

I watched in amazement. A line of people queued up to stand on the platform and be ""televised." I stood in the line. Eventually, I was on the platform and was being talked to by none other than a well known radio announcer by the name of Dick Stark. As we talked, I mentioned the fact that I played the harmonica. "Do you want to come back and perform on TV?" Stark asked me. I jumped at the opportunity and came back the next day with my harmonica.

Stark had forgotten all about me, but I patiently stood in line until it was again my turn to climb on the stand. I brought out the harmonica and reminded Stark of his offer. He was in no position to turn me down because, after all, here was free entertainment whether it was good or bad. It would go over well with the people watching in the next room. I played several of my best pieces to the applause of the onlookers. Stark seemed impressed, and though I left my name and phone number, I never heard anything from him or RCA after I left. However, before I went home, I received a certificate indicating that I was among the first thousand people ever to appear on TV in Chicago. I think the certificate is still among my treasured possessions.

But in 1939, TV wasn't the only attempt I made at getting recognition and, I hoped, untold riches. "Quiz Kids" was an extremely popular nationally broadcast radio program. A panel of four or five very bright school kids were selected to be asked questions. A new contestant was selected every week to replace the one from the previous week's panel who had received the lowest score. And every week, the sponsor held auditions for replacements. The auditions were held in the NBC studios in the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. They were conducted by a panel of judges and the questions were asked by the emcee of the program, a jovial man named Joe Kelly. Kelly was, in addition to the "quizmaster" of the quiz kids, the announcer of the National Barn Dance. He was certainly more at home with the rural atmosphere that the Barn Dance generated than he was with the academic aura that surrounded the Quiz Kids. Kelly was probably selected for the job because of his penchant to

mispronounce some of the more complex words that were deliberately inserted into the questions. His job was to be a buffoon playing against the super-intelligent kids.

In the audition, the several auditionees were seated at a table, each with a microphone. A question was asked and those who knew (or thought they knew) the answer would raise their hand. Kelly would select one whose hand had been raised and address them by name. Names were on cards in front of each of the proposed contestants. The questions seemed relatively easy to me and I had my hand raised to answer most of them. I was selected for several of the answers which seemed to Kelly to be correct. However, for no reason I was ever able to determine, I was not selected to appear on the program. While Kelly tended to be a clown and appeared less intelligent than the young contestants, it was part of the mystique of the show. I never became a quiz kid -- I was crushed because I thought I had done well enough in the audition to qualify for the broadcast and the fame it would bring me.

The final entry wasn't so much a part of show business as a peripheral brush with the fame that show business entailed. My first wife Paula had worked in California for the Music Corporation of America as a secretary. She knew the founders of the company including Lew Wasserman. When we got married and she moved to Chicago, she decided to look for a job. She contacted the MCA office in Chicago, introduced herself and told them she was ready to go to work.

Within a few weeks, she was called into their office and offered an opportunity to become a script assistant to a California based writer by the name of Hal Fimberg. Fimberg wrote radio programs and would be coming to Chicago to work on a show that was to originate from the city. The show, she later learned featured the very popular Spike Jones and his orchestra who were billed as "The City Slickers."" Jones and the band were to broadcast their show live from Chicago's Eighth Street Theater on Friday nights and were giving run-out concerts all over the Midwest during the rest of the week.

Paula's job was to help Fimberg by reproducing last minute script changes. She didn't have any responsibility for writing the scripts -- in fact she was what would now be called a "gofer."

She asked me if I wanted to come to the theater in the afternoon when the show was in rehearsal and spend the evening there until after the show had aired at 8:00 P.M. on NBC"s national network. I was happy to be there. The first rehearsal I attended I learned that the sponsor of the show was Coca Cola and that the company had provided a large ice-filled cooler filled with Cokes. The next week, I stopped on the way to the theater and bought a pound of salted peanuts which I planned to share with the various members of the band and the featured players.

These performers included "Doodles" Weaver who was well known for his recording, with Jones' band of the novelty number "Feedelbaum." Incidentally, Weaver's brother, Fritz became well known as a movie actor and

appeared in dozens of character roles over the years. Another featured player was Dorothy Collins, better known as "The Park Avenue Hillbilly."" One of her hit recordings was titled "I'm my own Grandpaw."

Jones, along with everyone in the cast, occasionally dipped into the peanuts.

As I sat in the audience with my own stash of nuts, I was joined by the show's announcer, a Jewish fellow who had been brought in from Detroit to announce the show. Because the primary purpose of the rehearsal was to present the band in the best possible light, he spent most of his time sitting in the audience with me. He worked only on the final rehearsal when the entire broadcast was checked to be sure it fit into the allotted time. This rehearsal was held before the studio audience was allowed into the theater. Then, it was his function to "warm up" the audience before the show actually went on the air. He would introduce the celebrities in the cast, joke with Jones and try to make the audience feel they were part of the program which was supposed to encourage more spontaneous applause when it was called for.

We got to know each other fairly well. He had been a student at the University of Michigan and wanted very badly to be a broadcaster. He expressed interest in what I was doing as an auditor for a finance company. We communicated very well. The name he used when broadcasting in those years was Myron. Today, we know him better as Mike Wallace.

Show Business never gobbled me up -- I had only touched it on the edges, but it had my respect and I've never deprecated a performer. Being willing to open one’s soul to an audience is an act of bravery which I can appreciate and admire. For someone to appear before an audience and try to "break a leg"" requires nerves of steel and a confidence in one's ability and talents.

Music Appreciation

When I was very small -- six or seven years old, I would visit my grandparent's apartment several times a week. I never needed urging to walk the half block from our home to theirs. One of the attractions was an old, wind-up Victrola. It was a self-contained unit with storage for records toward the bottom and a crank on one side to keep the machine going at a constant speed.

My grandparents had an eclectic collection of recordings, many going back to the period before the first World War. There were primitive recordings by such artists as Alma Glueck, Galli-Curcci, John McCormick and, of course, Enrico Caruso. Music included familiar arias like "My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice," "Somewhere a Voice Is Calling," and the "Bell Song" from Lakme. But there were also comedy recordings that had been so popular at a time when people were proud of their immigrant status and not quite as politically correct as we are now. These were presented in dialect, usually Yiddish but often

Italian or Greek. One, my personal favorite, was titled "Cohen at the Picnic."" There were also some popular recordings that dated back to the 1920's and early 1930's. These included one of college marching songs, another of Al Jolson and one, the source of which has always been a mystery, of then-crooner Dick Powell, singing songs from a movie musical that dated to about 1935. The movie took place at Annapolis and dealt with the training of a naval officer. It included such forgettable songs as "Don't Give Up The Ship" and "Flirtation Walk."

I would play those recordings until the needle wore out. Some were pressed on one side only, a practice that ended in about 1912. They were thick but I handled them with care (I can't remember the warning I must have gotten about how to handle the records) and none were broken. The Steinthals also had a player piano and some old piano rolls. The music on them was not classical, but popular from a past time. It would be a little like having someone listen to 1920's jazz music when their interest was in Hip-Hop. I was, however, fascinated by the fact that, by sliding a lever on the piano, the keys would depress in concert with the music that was coming from the piano rolls. I spent hours trying to understand how to play the piano from this process with absolutely no success.

In grade school I also received some musical background from my experiences with a harmonica. While most of the music I played (all of it by ear) was either popular music of the time or folk music, there were instances of using classical music for performance. In one instance I can still remember, I performed on the stage at Mandel Hall at the University of Chicago. In a solo piece, I played Percy Granger's "In A Country Garden" on a one inch ling, single octave harmonica. It was a novelty to the audience and I guess was appreciated by them.

Later, when I was in high school, my only contact with classical music was through a music class conducted by a henna-haired spinster music teacher named Grady. She tried to instill her love for music into a bunch of reluctant students who continued to make fun of her both in class and out of it. Her idea of teaching music appreciation was to play recordings from her own collection and hope that everyone would listen. I can't recall her ever talking about either the artist, the composer or the performing group after finishing the record. Her primary purpose was to expose her class to the sound which she did on her own wind-up Victrola which was kept locked in her classroom on the first floor of the school.

In college, things began to change. I spent time with my friend Joe Solovy, who had been force-fed piano lessons from the time he was young. I enjoyed hearing him play some of the results of those lessons, particularly, Clare de Lune which he played well. Joe also had a collection of classical 78 RPM recordings (the only kind available then) and albums of symphonic music. I believe that this was the first time I hears the Rachmaninoff second piano concerto. He also owned an album of Gershwin performing the

Rhapsody in Blue with the Paul Whiteman orchestra -- the same arrangement that had been performed at the premier of the piece in 1924. I believe that the album was recorded in 1928.

Access to classical music was limited during the second World War. I can, however, remember frequent visits to friends of my Grandparents who lived at 52nd and University in a three floor elevator building., The Adlers were an odd group -- two bachelor brothers, a spinster sister and another widowed sister lived together in a very comfortable apartment. The widowed sister, Minnie Strauss had worked for my grandfather as a cashier in his butcher store at one time and the brothers were very successful dealers in animal hides. The attraction of their apartment, aside from the elevator, was the fact that they had a very special radio which played FM music. There was only one FM station in the entire United States and it was located in Chicago and operated by Zenith Radio Corporation. The call letters were WXFM and they were attempting to see whether the market would support FM broadcasting after the war. The only commercials advertised Zenith products and plans for post-war production. I can't even remember any mention of TV in their commercials. The station broadcast nothing but classical music and I was always welcome in the apartment to spend some time studying and listening to WXFM.

After the war ended, Columbia records introduced Long Playing records. The year was 1948. Their format for these records was 33 1/3 RPM's. RCA, in competition, introduced their version of LP records which played at 45 RPM.s The records were available in 7, 10 and 12 inch sizes. Obviously, you were able to get more music on the larger disks. A record store at 53rd and Lake Park sold both versions and it was the buyers' option to decide which of the two formats would survive. Fortunately, I chose the 33 1/3 version and bought a turntable, amplifier and speaker (there was nothing like stereo sound) to use for the records that I bought. This was in the era when vacuum tubes were the way amplifiers worked. Transistors were still to be invented. The unit I bought at Allied Radio on Sangamon and Jackson cost under $20 including the speaker. I converted an old family radio cabinet which at one time had held an Atwater Kent radio into my own record player and set it up in my bedroom. Each Saturday I would walk to the record store and check out the newest releases. The store had listening booths -- common in that time -- and you could audition the recordings to see which ones you wanted to buy. In time, I accumulated a broad range of recordings which formed the basis of my own collection. I kept many of those old recordings -- most of them recorded before the war -- for decades and finally, copied them to a CD format in 2004. Those CD's are still in our record collection.

In those early years, I was exposed to classical music in a couple of other ways. WMAQ radio had a morning drive-time broadcast sponsored by the Northwestern Railroad and hosted by Normal Ross, senior. He would play music from about 7:00 to 9:00 AM and I could listen to it in my car as I drove to work or went out on my traveling salesman routes through the Midwest.

Finally, Jay Andres hosted a program on WBBM radio from midnight until about 6:00 called "Music 'Til Dawn." and he played soft classical music all night long.

Through this process I developed and later honed my own taste in classical music.

What started out with Strauss, Tchaikovsky and Brahms later expanded to Beethoven and, finally to Mozart with stopovers for Schubert, Schumann, Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel and Debussy. I have much broader tastes now than I had in the beginning, but exposure to music is something I always welcome. There's so much more to learn and as an amateur listener, I'm open to new ideas and new music.

Music Appreciation

I pride myself in having a fairly broad knowledge of classical music literature. Like most people who enjoy the classics, I have tastes -- things I like and those I don't want to hear too often. To say that I "know" music would be an exaggeration, but I have come to enjoy it. How did I get that way?

My earliest recollection of classical music was in the foyer of my grandparent's apartment on Ingleside Avenue. They had a floor model, wind-up Victorola. Inside were a treasure trove of recordings, most dating to the period before the first world war. Many were single sided, they were very thick shellac records. And almost all of them were operatic vocalists. In the early years of the recording industry, vocal recordings had much higher fidelity than instrumental music. However, there were a few instrumental pieces recorded by orchestras long since forgotten. It was the practice in those days of assembling a studio orchestra naming it "The Columbia Symphony Orchestra," and recording whatever the company thought might be salable. Thanks haven't changed that much over the years.

Another source of music was on the player piano in their living room. No one in the family played piano, but having a player piano and the rolls that made it work was something every affluent and self-respecting family had to have. Before the advent of radio in the 1920's. it was the preferred form of home entertainment. As a result, this out-of-tune upright piano stood against the east wall of their living room. At about the age of 8 or 9, I learned how to insert the rolls and pump the pedals to make the piano play. A while later, I learned how to have the keys depress during the course of the roll, simulating the actual fingering of the instrument.

There was other classical music during that period that came more subliminally. For example, many of the cartoons on the Saturday matinee bills at the movie theater were made using classics. Hungarian dances, Rossini overtures, Liszt, Brahms, Offenbach, Wagner and other romantics were all a part of the music that was introduced into those early sound cartoons to create

mood. While I never learned the names or the composers of that music, it stayed with me.

Beyond that, my Grandfather Steinthal had a love affair with one particular radio program, "The Lone Ranger." He would sit glued to the radio on the night it was aired and told anyone near him to "Shhhhhhhh" He wanted to hear the adventure and for reasons I've never understood, identified strongly with the hero. The program began with the William Tell Overture and in the course of the show, Les Preludes by Liszt, La Valse by Ravel, some Wagner and other snippets of classics were used to enhance the mood of the program.

There were infrequent occasions when our grade school classes went to hear the Chicago Symphony youth concerts. We would climb into the gallery at the very top of Orchestra Hall and watch Frederick Stock lead the orchestra in a program which was nether too heavy nor too memorable in its musical content. But seeing a live orchestra was always a treat. Another chance to see live musicians playing the classics at no cost were the times we could get into the Chicago Tribune's Theater on the Air. These live broadcasts featured light classics, the singing of Colonel Robert R. McCormick's then-mistress, Marion Claire, and the orchestra led by her husband, Henry Weber. Jobs like that were hard to get during the Depression years.

When illness made it necessary to stay home as a child, I would be able to listen to the music of Ralph Ginsberg who had s string ensemble that performed in the Empire Room of the Palmer House. Those programs were broadcast at noontime over WGN radio between reports of the current market price of corn and oats. The music was classical, though not too deep, and I enjoyed hearing it. Finally, there were occasions when we would be able to go to the Grant Park Bandshell and hear a full symphonic program with some "big name" star performing. I can remember hearing soprano Lilly Pons and tenor Benjamino Gigli. Richard Tucker and Nelson Eddy also performed classics. The quality of the performance was much less important than the fact that I had exposure to the music.

My friend, Joe Solovy had spent a lot of time studying classical piano and played quite well. I would urge him to play the piano on the occasions when I was at his apartment on Drexel to do homework. Joe also had a substantial collection of classical albums -- something few people had in those years. There were symphonies, concerti --especially Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, and some chamber music.

During those formative years, there was another source of classical music. The popular band leader, Freddie Martin made a cottage industry out of adapting classics into pop tunes, recording them and have them become popular for dancing. Tchaikovsky’s piano concerto was one, Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto was another, Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet overture and sixth symphony also provided tunes that were in the public domain. Martin took advantage of many of them, had lyrics written to them, changed the tempo and sold millions of records.

In high school, one year's course in music was a requirement for graduation. Mrs. Grady was the music teacher. An older woman with henna colored hair, she tried to teach music from her own collection of recordings. No one wanted to listen and she was unable to control the class. In one case, she threatened to give a failing grade to one of my classmates. Dramatically, he climbed on the window sill and threatened to jump out of the window unless she raised his grade. The window ledge was no more than a foot above the roof of the service building below it, but in the excitement of the minute, Mrs. Grady raised the grade and the student climbed down from the ledge. It provided everyone with a good laugh -- after class was dismissed. She conducted a male chorus -- I was designated a member of the baritone section.

In college, we took music a little more seriously. Our survey classes in the humanities included some study of musical forms. We listened to toccatas and fugues; to plain songs and hymns. We learned the rudimentary differences between baroque and classical forms and we came to understand romantic music. Modern music was never brought into those classes -- it was deemed unworthy of study and composers like Stravinsky and Shostakovich were never heard. Britten, Thompson, Copeland, Gershwin, were never seriously studied. We did spend some time hearing light classics -- music of Gilbert and Sullivan and the Strauss family and, of course, we heard a lot about the American composer, Stephen Collins Foster.

Discussion leaders explained the subtleties of these different styles and forms and we learned something about music without really learning music. I found that I enjoyed listening and was delighted to be invited to the home of some old family friends. In those years, WXFM was Zenith's experimental broadcasting station using the new technology of Frequency Modulation radio. FM was the wave of the future but, because there was only one station in the Chicago area broadcasting it and only a few radios that received it, it was all non-commercial. WXFM's format was all classical music because it was cheaper and required less maintenance than pop music. The recordings were much longer and, I suspect, the royalties were less expensive, assuming that any were paid.

Hannah, Joe and Sig Adler, along with their sister Minnie Strauss were a group of single adults who were in the leather tanning business. Joe had been in France during the first World War and he had a number of fascinating books with pictures depicting the horrors of combat, the massive equipment and the nature of the trenches that were used to protect the soldiers. I was always welcome at their house and, when I learned about their FM radio, I was there often with books to be studied or papers to be written. I heard a lot of music during those hours spent in their living room.

After the war, the new technology of LP records entered the market. I took a bus to Allied Radio, a wholesale/retail outlet for electronic systems west of the Loop. There I bought a two tube amplifier and a Webster record changer which played LP"s as well as the standard 78 RPM records.

At 53rd and Lake Park Avenues, near the Illinois Central commuter station was a record store. Each week, I would allocate $3 from my budget and go to the store to select from the three or four new releases they offered for sale. Columbia was the original producer of these recordings and they were simply re-releases of pre-war recordings that had been available on 78 RPM records.

As time went on, a dilemma developed. RCA, in an effort to compete, began selling 45 RPM recordings of the classics. These were 12 inch discs with a wide selection of music. In addition to the 12 inch variety, 10 inch and even some seven inch classical recordings were on the market. The dilemma revolved around the determination as to which format would survive. I luckily selected the 33 1/3 records as my choice. Eventually, RCA began to market 33 1/3 discs and the fight was over. Now it was a matter of choice as to which recordings were the highest quality vinyl. One problem with the recordings was the fact that, in playing them, there were frequent "pops" in the sound. Technology eventually muted that surface noise.

There was a final source for musical experience. During the morning drive time, the Northwestern Railroad sponsored Norman Ross who had been an Olympic distance swimmer in his earlier years. His son, Norman Junior, continued his father's patterns after the senior Ross retired. Ross played classical music on WMAQ, an AM station available on the car radio. His selection of music eventually influenced the newly formed WFMT in the early 1950's.

As I'm writing this, WFMT is playing in the background. The music is by Beethoven and the sound is familiar and welcome.

Teachers' Pets - Pet Teachers

Each of us have had a few favorite teachers. Those are the people who, with love and understanding, have shaped our learning experiences and made us better students. I can recall several of them who had a profound effect on my growth. One of them was Gertrude Hirsch. She taught the eighth grade class at Kozminski. Her specialty was history and the curriculum required that students have at least a full years' study in US History. Ms. Hirsch was one of the few Jewish teachers in a school whose faculty was heavily Irish, but that didn't bother her.

In her class, she emphasized the events that shaped the nation. Memorizing dates in history was secondary, in her view, to understanding the underlying currents of events. While she carefully avoided the excesses of American politics and covered only the surface of events like the American invasion of Mexico in the 1840's, students who finished her courses were well equipped to go on to high school history classes with a depth of understanding that many of their peers from other schools never had.

Another grade school teacher about whom I've written was Helen Miranda. In depression years, teaching kids an appreciation of music meant either teaching them to sing -- they all had a voice whether it could be used on key or not was another problem -- or teaching them to play an instrument and really "making music."" Helen opted for the more difficult road and began a harmonica band in the school. Each volunteer for the band was required to invest in a fifty cent Hohner Marine Band harmonica. The instrument came with an instruction book. I don't believe that Helen could play the instrument but her motivations were strong enough to send kids home to practice until they could do something their teacher wasn't capable of doing.

By the time I got to high school, students didn't spend a lot of time in their home room. For some unexplainable reason, the home room teacher I was assigned to specialized in what were then called "home economics." She taught sewing and cooking. I was not attracted to her classes which, in fact, consisted totally of females. I had to look elsewhere for academic inspiration. I found it in a history teacher named Lenore Leins. She was a very tall, gangly spinster lady, prone to wearing dark, floor length dresses. But she loved me. In one series of classes on European history, our assignment was to trace the changes in European boundaries after several of the cataclysmic wars that rocked Europe over the centuries. I was able to learn how to plan my maps using graph paper and grids which could accurately reproduce the outlines of the continent. Then, following the maps that were in the text books, I could complete them and insert the correct boundaries. Ms. Leins was delighted with my maps and hung them on the walls as a reward.

Except for a semester studying Latin American History, every year I found a way to register for Ms. Leins classes. When I graduated, she presented me with a graduation present -- a book by Webb Miller, a famous foreign correspondent who had traveled throughout the world and who represented, at least in her mind, a career choice I should consider. A year or two after I graduated from High School, I had a call from Ms. Leins inviting me to her apartment near the University campus, to have a conversation and some tea. She met me and introduced me to her long-time companion and roommate. Gay relationships during those years were not on peoples' radar. I accepted their relationship as being one of long term friendship and companionship -- and nothing more.

Another teacher having a profound effect on my development was Helen Gallagher. She taught English and was the faculty advisor for the school's weekly newspaper. She also conducted a journalism class and I enrolled in it. I was given some general reporting jobs to do in connection with the class and the paper and learned the basics of writing news stories. The "who, what, when, where and why" that are a traditional part of newspaper writing were part of Helen's curriculum. I was also assigned the job of soliciting advertising to supplement the minuscule amount of money provided by the Board of Education for the publication of the paper.

I knew nothing about writing ad copy. But, it was an assignment and I took it seriously. One advertiser who could always be depended on to provide a regular weekly ad for the paper was the school lunchroom. Their ads would encourage kids to buy lunch at the cafeteria rather than brown-bag their lunches from home. Most kids hated the idea of eating school lunches. In those times, there weren't the variety of specialty foods that are available now. Usually, nondescript overcooked meat and soggy mashed potatoes was the lunch du jour. Deserts consisted of cardboardy crusted pies with little fruit filling. Not much of what was being sold was very appetizing. Kids would buy some sort of soft drink to go with their lunches. The very health conscious bought milk.

I worked with the cafeteria manager to set up a series of "specials." Once a year, in spring, a small variety of herring would run in Lake Michigan. Called "smelt," these little fish would be caught by the ton. They would be delivered to the school cafeterias in buckets of lake water. How to prepare them was one problem. How to market them was another. I encouraged the cafeteria manager to have an "all-you-can-eat" smelt meal on a Friday. She batter dipped the fish and served them, heads and all, to the students who, for a nickel, would gorge themselves on the fish, eliminating the bones and the heads as best they could. The fish required no preparation and the kids literally ate them up. After this program proved a huge success and all the smelt had been sold, my relationship with the cafeteria manager solidified. I was able to secure a commitment from her to place an ad in every week's paper on the condition that I write the ads in a way to encourage kids to eat in the cafeteria. I wrote a couple of dozen ads, submitted them to the manager, had them approved and turned them in to the paper. In fact, in today's language, I created a campaign for the lunchroom. Ms. Gallagher was pleased. I was assigned more material to write for the paper. I suppose that was the real beginning of my news writing "career."

Another favorite High School teacher was Isolina Flores who, in a year and a half, taught me the rudiments of Spanish. I never learned enough of the language to be able to conduct a conversation, but I did get an idea of the sound of the language which, in conjunction with the three years of Latin I studied, gave me enough to pick up other elements of Spanish. Ms. Flores was particularly concerned with having pronunciation of the language authentically mimicked. On one occasion, the school was visited by members of the Board of Education who were interested in the progress of the Spanish students

Mrs. Flores called on me to answer a couple of basic questions which she asked in the language and which I was supposed to respond to -- also in Spanish. I had seen enough movies about Mexican banditos to know how they slurred English words and how they accented their movie lines. With those actors as my inspiration, the Spanish I spewed back at Mrs. Flores and the Board representative was replete with Mexican bandito inflections and

accents. The Board rep, who may have had a background as a bandito himself, was mightily impressed with me and I was complimented for my use of the language.

In college were a couple of teachers who I will always remember and who affected me greatly. I've written about Sam Nerlove who taught economics and the concepts of risk in the graduate school of business. Sam hired me to help him with a new executive program organized by the University. As a graduate student, I was given the job of auditing classes and grading papers prepared by senior officers of major local corporations like Walgreen's, Carson Pirie and Marshall Fields. These executive students had achieved major positions within their companies and were returning to school to fill in blank spaces in their education. I also had an opportunity to baby-sit for Nerlove's son who now teaches at Harvard.

My graduate school advisor was an accounting professor named William J. Vatter. Bill Vatter devoted a lot of time to me including helping me prepare a version of my Master's thesis for publication in the University's Journal of Business. The publication of this article was a feather in my cap and enhanced his teaching status. Bill had other involvements I came to know only after I had graduated. He was, in addition to the full load he was teaching, the comptroller for the Manhattan project. This was the code name for the work that entailed the development of the atomic bomb which eventually brought the war to an end. In that capacity, he oversaw all the expenses incurred in Chicago, in Los Alamos, New Mexico and in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and was responsible for accounting for huge amounts of governmental funds, the use of which had to be maintained in the utmost secrecy. The fact that he was able to accomplish this feat while still advising me and other grad students testifies to his ability. He later wrote or edited a number of textbooks on cost accounting based on his government experiences.

During my years in Sunday School, one teacher -- Jack Korshak -- stands out in my memory. Jack was a dynamo -- he organized plays based on Purim and Chanukah, he edited the student newspaper and he was a role model. Jack had finished law school at Northwestern when he was drafted in 1940. The military in those early years before America’s entrance in the war, was a very primitive organization. Few of the cadre of professional soldiers had any contact with the civilian world. Jack, having come from an academic background, went into the army reluctantly. He was stationed in the deep south.

Jack came back on leave one time with a story that displayed the US's lack of readiness for the global war that would be thrust on them only months after the experience he described. It seemed that the company laundry bills had become totally fouled up. No one knew how much any given soldier owed to the town laundry which, naturally, wanted its money. Soldiers in those times received a base salary of $21 per month and a few dollars worth of laundry loomed as a major expense. The company sergeant asked for volunteers, from

among the draftees in his unit, who could straighten out the mess. Jack, and another Jewish private from Chicago, volunteered. Jack told the sergeant that he was an attorney and would handle the legal problems of the laundry bill. His sidekick was a CPA who would be able to straighten out the accounts. The sergeant wrote three day passes for the two of them and assured them if they needed more time, it would be made available.

Jack and friend went into the town and met with the owner of the laundry. Within a half hour, the whole problem was straightened out to everyone's satisfaction. The laundry owner was pleased and Jack and friend had a three day pass after which they returned to their base. The sergeant, an old line army person, was also delighted that these two raw recruits had been able to resolve the mess. But he was puzzled. He told them, "I know what a lawyer is, but would you guys tell me what's a CPA?"

The influences of these teachers made a difference to me. They represented authority but at the same time, they were encouraging and gave me positive input that helped me grow and learn. They are an important part of my development. I even know what a CPA is.

Chapter 4. 1940 to 1949

Trips to New York

Travel has always held an attraction to me. My Dad did a lot of it. When he went to New York regularly and wrote me from his hotel, I felt in touch with the rest of the world. Finally, in about 1941, he arranged for me to go with him. It was a thrilling offer.

My mother had a lot of relatives there on her father's side of the family. Most of the Steinthals had settled in New York and while some of them occasionally visited Chicago, some of the names I had heard all my life were mysterious people about whom I knew little.

For example, I knew about Mike (his real name was Myron) and Harold Steinthal, but their mother Carrie, my Grandfather's sister-in-law was a disembodied name. So, too was the mysterious Hattie Latz. "Aunt Hattie" was married originally to my Grandfather's brother, Rafael and, after his death, she remarried a man named Latz. Her son by that second marriage was Murray -- a name that occurred, as far as I could tell, only in New York. Hattie was supposed to be very rich. Almost all of them lived on the upper West Side of Manhattan -- on Riverside Drive in the 90's.

On board the train to New York, I was treated to a meal in the dining car. The spit and polish of the car, and the elegance of the dining car porter's service were very impressive. But nothing impressed me more than arriving at Penn Station and taking a cab to my father's usual hotel -- the Governor Clinton at 7th Avenue and 31st Street. I had seen etched pictures of the hotel on stationery, but to be there in person was all the more exciting. On the trip east, I could hardly wait for the morning when the train would navigate "horseshoe curve," a scenic spot that was depicted on the annual Pennsylvania calendar that hung on my bedroom wall at home.

One of Dad's favorite sources for merchandise was a company called "The Sales Company of America." Today, they would be called manufacturer’s representatives. Then, they sold a variety of lines of various manufacturers. The owner’s names were Sidney Blank and Hy Wasserman. They had a large showroom in the garment district and, that first morning, we settled in there. The owners took special pains to welcome me. My Dad was a good customer and they all got along well. New York's garment district was bigger and more bustling in those years than it is now. More merchandise was being manufactured in the area while, today, much of that manufacturing has moved off shore. Then, garment racks were being pushed on streets and sidewalks. Traffic seemed to be always at a standstill. Horns and shouts from stalled trick drivers filled the air. The area around 7th Avenue between 40th Street and 25th Street was a microcosm of business at its liveliest. Being THERE was great.

Somehow, during the day, my father managed to call the Aunts to tell them we had arrived. I think my mother had written them and they were primed for our visit. Carrie invited us for dinner and my dad accepted. Mike and Harold and their wives, Blanche and Lillian would be there too. It was a big event. I dressed in my suit, wore a tie and was ready in plenty of time for us to catch a subway train to go north to their apartment.

Carrie had two maids, one of whom served. The evening was a big success. I liked the brothers who were part of my mother's generation, though a bit younger than she was. Neither had any children, though much later, Mike had a son, named Albert after his father. Albert was the only surviving Steinthal. Dad apologized for our need for an early departure since the excitement, exhaustion of an overnight train trip and the need for him to be ready for the next day's business were all factors in our leaving around 9:00.

The next day, Hattie tried to outdo her sister-in-law. We were invited to an elegant luncheon at a fine midtown restaurant. My experiences with a restaurant were limited in Chicago to occasional visits to Chinatown. Hattie made menu recommendations and I had my first experience with Lobster Thermador. It was delicious and the cheesy flavor was something I loved. Then, she ordered a rich desert to follow up that entree. I gobbled it down with relish.

That night, we were back at Carrie's and Stella Steinthal was the other guest. Stella had been in Chicago when I was an infant and had never married. She was my mother's age. I ate my way through the appetizer and part of a beef entree, but in the middle of that course, I tried to excuse myself. I didn't make it to the bathroom and upchucked the Lobster Thermador and anything else I might have eaten all over the living room carpet. I must have looked green because they wanted to call a doctor. But my Dad wisely thought I needed a rest from overly rich foods, and I stopped eating. The mess was cleaned up by a couple of unhappy maids and I was embarrassed beyond words. I had, I thought, forever worn out my welcome with the New York relatives.

During these trips, I had the opportunity of exploring New York. On one of them, shortly after it caught fire at its dock and burned. I saw the French liner, Normandy. On another, I took a ferry to the Statue of Liberty. Ellis Island was not opened to the public during those years. I saw the lower east side and, though I don't think my Dad ever wandered into Little Italy or Chinatown, we certainly got a taste of Delancy Street and the lower East Side of town. I spent an afternoon in the Cloisters and visited Grant's tomb. I saw New York. The trips weren't romantic -- all of them had a business overtone --- but there was an opportunity to see the city and Dad could still take care of business and treat me to dinners and breakfasts around town. Lunches were always at delis in the garment district -- but there were some outstanding corned beef sandwiches to be had there.

There were several other trips to New York. As I grew older, in College, I wanted to visit Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. Washington

was a city overcrowded and in the grips of its wartime economy in 1944. I found a place to sleep by imposing on the son of my parents' friends., Hy and Dinah Blanksten. George was working in Washington and had a sofa. That was where I spent a couple of nights. In Philadelphia, I was seriously considering leaving Chicago and attending Wharton School. I spent a couple of days exploring the University of Pennsylvania campus and meeting my fraternity brothers there. One of my oldest friends, Bernie Kaplan was in an army program learning to translate Japanese documents. Being there over a weekend, I attended a dance and the fraternity brothers were able to arrange a date with me. Bernie and I went to Bookbinder's for seafood before the house party. I enjoyed being there but later decided that the curriculum was so similar to Chicago's that I might as well stay where I was known and where I didn't have to spend the money for room and board and, incidentally, transportation.

I continued from Philadelphia to New York. The Business School courses I had taken made me curious about the workings of the New York Stock Exchange. I didn't have to spend the day with my father while he took care of his business and I was pretty much on my own. I went to the Exchange on Wall Street and asked at its office whether there were any tours available. Security considerations, I was told, prevented them from having public tours. After all, they told me, there's a war on. This expression was an American excuse for incivility during those years and it was a cause of a lot of arguments from people who expected decent service, quality merchandise for their money no matter the shortages brought on by the war.. .

I decided to do something about it. I reentered the building and asked the building guard where the employment office was. I was directed to the office and asked whether there were any job openings. Of course there were plenty. Manpower was in such short supply that anyone who could speak English reasonably well could have his choice of jobs.

I was hired on the spot and told to report the next morning at 9:00 for a training session after which I would be assigned to the floor to act as a runner. I showed up on time and had an exhaustive day of learning the intricacies of the exchange. At the end of the day, I was asked how I liked the work. There was a palpable inhaling of breath after the question was asked.

"I don't think it's the work I was looking for. I'm sorry and want to thank you for your time. They gave me a check to pay for my day’s time and told me that were I to reconsider their offer, I would be more than welcome. It was a very effective way to see the exchange.

During the several trips there -- there were four or five, I was able to see a number of original Broadway productions with my father. We saw Carmen Jones with Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte; we saw Carousel with Bambi Lynn as Julie. There were others -- dramas mostly including the evergreen "Ten Little Indians," by Agatha Christie.

I visited New York infrequently during the 1950's, but after Lois and I married, our first major trip -- three years after we got married, was a long weekend to New York. She had never been there before and my recollections of the city hadn't dimmed. We also saw a number of plays, we ate at the Four Seasons and Mama Leone's, saw the show at the Radio City Music Hall, had desert at Sardi's after a show. We stayed at a hotel, the Americana, at 52nd and 7th Avenue and had a room high enough to have a view of the skyline. It was a romantic interlude and the first of so many travels we have shared. On another trip, we spent 24 hours showing New York to Michael. It was a whirlwind trip -- a Circle Line boat trip, a visit to the United Nations, a walk down 5th Avenue, dinner at Mama Leone's and a walk down Broadway at theater time. It was his first trip there. On another visit, we spent time at the Juilliard School.

Now, of course, there is another family there and we look forward to more visits. I enjoyed my visits to New York. I have come to understand the "logic" of the city and how it worked. I could find my way around -- at least around Manhattan. I was always ready to go back.

Remembering Pearl Harbor

We all recall where we were when important historical events took place. We know what we were doing when we heard about the shooting of John Kennedy; we know our reaction to the first men on the moon. And so it is that I can recall all the events of the date which, according to the President, "will live in infamy." December 7, 1941 was a cool early winter day. I left home at noon to spend the afternoon with my girlfriend, Donna Ludgin. She lived at 46th and Greenwood with her parents. We were very much in love.

We had been "going steady" for several months during our sophomore year in high school. We were inseparable, going to dances, movies and even belonging to the same "fratority," an organization which was purely social in nature and consisted of several couples in much the same state of youthful amorous enthusiasm as we were. Donna and I read from our text books and talked and, probably, spent some time necking in her bedroom. Our passion was unbounded, though it was never fully consummated. But this was a simpler and more naive time. The afternoon of December 7th 1941 was probably my last moment of innocence.

On the way home from Donna's house, at about 5:00 P.M. I walked through the streets of the Kenwood neighborhood in Chicago, past stately mansions. One was owned by Julius Rosenwald, the owner of Sears, Roebuck. Another house had figured prominently in the infamous Loeb-Leopold murder case. Yet another was home to Chicago's Mayor, Ed Kelly. When I finally got to Hyde Park Boulevard -- 51st Street, I saw a friend of my father's, Herb Rose. Herb was obviously distressed, pacing along the street and muttering to himself. Herb was a member of the Temple and of its men's club which is where I got to know him.

Herb told me about the Japanese attack. I was stunned and hurried home to find my family huddled around our old Atwater Kent radio listening for tidbits of news about the attack. As in all crises, the news reports were sketchy and often conflicting. It was clear that our warships had been bombed and that several of them had been sunk. The President had called Congress together the next morning to address them and the nation on this state of affairs. We were at war, albeit at that time only with Japan.

Most Americans didn't consider Japan as a threat to our security before the attack. We knew that they had invaded Manchuria in 1932 and had been involved in an ongoing assault against China. We knew they were a brutal enemy, having read about the infamous "Rape of Nanking." When we went to a Chinese restaurant, we were greeted with a reproduction of a photograph of a very young child, sitting amid rubble of war and crying. America's only confrontation with the Japanese at that time involved the Japanese's 1937 sinking of the U.S. S. Panay, a gunboat maintaining "order" on the Yangtze River in China. These gunboats had been an instrument of U.S. foreign policy since the Boxer Rebellion at the turn of the 20th Century.

But we also knew that the Japanese produced cheap shoddy merchandise which was available at almost any Five and Dime Store. We knew that shipments of scrap iron had been embargoed against Japan and that they had been warned not to undertake any more invasions in the Far East. The attack was a complete surprise. What we didn't immediately think of at the moment of the Japanese attack was the fact that Japan was a part of the "Axis Powers" which consisted of Germany, Italy and Japan.

We had certainly known about Germany and its ambitions in Europe. As Jews, we were particularly aware of Hitler's anti-Semitic activities. In fact, our Hyde Park neighborhood contained hundreds of Hitler refugees including some relatives of ours. Then, there were the short wave radio broadcasts of Hitler's speeches to the German people which my Grandfather listened to carefully. He told me little about their meaning, but he was clearly upset by what he heard. In my early teen years, I was acutely conscious of the world around me. I had read adventure and travel books and I had studied history and geography. The shallowness of my knowledge notwithstanding, I knew the world was not a nice place to live in. When Germany invaded Poland on September 3, 1939, I began a scrapbook of headlines, anticipating that the war would not last long. I gave it up a month later when Germany had crushed Polish resistance and appeared to be settling in for a long war.

Then, there were the newsreels and the more focused "March of Time" we would see in our weekly visit to the movies. News magazines like "Life,"" and daily newspaper accounts of events like the 1938 Austrian Anschlus, the 1938 Munich appeasement after which the British Foreign Minister, Mr. Chamberlain said he had achieved "Peace in Our Time. There was the Russo-German ""non-aggression" Pact in 1939 which was abrogated by the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. There were ancillary events

like the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy and the pleas of the Ethiopian leader, Hailie Salassi to the powerless League of Nations. We read stories of German involvement in the Spanish Civil War and the brutality at Guernica. There was a sure sense that more serious trouble was brewing, but we didn't know how it might affect us.

Our mindset, personal and national, was still fixed on the First World War where we had made the world safe for democracy and had fought the "war to end all wars."" Our toys were models of World War I aircraft and tin soldiers wearing World War I uniforms. We were not attuned to dive bombing Stuka planes and Panzers rolling mercilessly over the countryside . In fact, that mindset didn't change until after the crushing of France in 1940, the British defeat at Dunkerque, and the occupation of Scandinavian and Lowland countries in Europe. By then, it was too late to do anything to stop the onslaught.

We also had letters from relatives in Germany, mostly pleading to get them out of the continent and to the U.S. where they could feel safe. These relatives told of the increasing prejudice under which they lived and had begged their relatives to bring them to America to escape the harsh conditions under which they were living. In some cases, the relatives involved were brothers, sisters and parents of those who had migrated to the U.S. in the 1920's. In other cases, and our family was in this group, the German relatives were cousins and their children. Within my own family, and with the help of a number of more affluent uncles and aunts, my family was involved in bringing no fewer than eight of these cousins to Chicago.

The U.S. Government, particularly the State Department, made saving a German relative horribly difficult. Because of the depression economy, it was necessary for anyone wanting to bring a relative to the U.S. to submit an "Affidavit of Support"" guaranteeing, among other things, that the refugee would not become a burden on the State. Income tax returns, police reports on the character of the guarantor, proof of savings account balances and letters of character reference were among the government's requirements. Their attempts to keep these refugees from fleeing Europe was Draconian in effect.

Still, despite the indignities imposed by the government, many refugees did come to America and were greeted warmly by their relatives, many of whom they had never met. So-called Americanization classes were organized in the public school system where the newcomers were taught how to do basic things in their new surroundings. They learned language skills, they learned how to bank, how to shop, where to buy clothes, how to handle the unfamiliar currency.

My father's cousin, Martha and her husband, Walter were two of these refugees. They had been linen merchants in Europe and brought as many pieces of linens with them as they could load into three large pine cases. It was necessary to wash these new linens to prove to the German authorities that they had been used. New merchandise could not be exported. When they got

here, some of these items were sold to provide basics. Walter and Martha shortened their name from Klimenhagen to Hagen and Walter went to work for my father. He became a stock clerk in my father's jobbing business. Martha eventually opened a personalized stationery business and became well known for her attentiveness to the business. She provided personalized matchbooks, wedding invitations, paper towels, personal cards, Christmas cards, drink coasters, in fact anything that could be personalized was in one of her books of samples which she dutifully carried from customer to customer throughout the neighborhood.

My mother pitched in and did her part in the Americanization process. She took Martha to the grocery store on 55th Street and taught her how to buy American products. On one occasion, my mother recommended Corn Flakes, something foreign to Europeans. Suggesting that they be served with strawberries and milk for breakfast, Martha learned how much Walter enjoyed this American treat. Soon, she had to replace the flakes with another box and ventured into the grocer on her own. When she poured the flakes into a cereal bowl, she was disturbed at the foam they turned up when she added milk. In fact, she had bought soap flakes, a mistake that Walter didn't appreciate. On another occasion, Martha, a stubborn woman, insisted that English pronunciation was wrong. "If s-p-i-n-a-c-h is pronounced "Spin-itch, she reasoned, then stom-ach should be pronounced the same way, not "stom-ick" as my mother correctly pronounced it. No one ever won one of those arguments.

Gloom pervaded the early days of the war. We were in retreat in the Philippines, in the islands of the southwest Pacific. Japan had invaded Malaysia and captured Singapore. We were concerned that Japan would soon invade California. In fact, a single Japanese submarine fired one round of shells into the California coastline, hitting nothing. The aftereffect of that one shock created a sense of impending doom. The country quickly united around the President and the armed forces. Though Germany declared war on the United States and we reciprocated by a declaration of war against both Germany and Italy -- this happened a few days after the declaration of war against Japan -- our attention was focused on the Pacific and on retribution for the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Tin Pan Alley tunesmiths responded with a wave of patriotic tunes reflecting national sentiment. "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer," "Over There," a holdover from World War I, and the various service hymns filled the airwaves. We were suddenly aware of the regular news broadcasts coming by crackly short wave radio from Europe and Edward R. Murrow and William L. Shirer became household names. Americans came to rely on H. V. Kaltenborn for his expert analysis of the daily news events. It was then that modern electronic news reporting began. It was then that, along with most Americans, I was forced to internationalize my view of life.

Making More Money

Getting a Saturday job wasn't easy during the final years of the depression and early days of America's involvement in World War II. In that time, as a teen ager, there weren't too many openings for a job that would provide money for dates and for the extras every kid wanted. My allowance was limited. My dad, when I caught up with him and reminded him of his obligation, would give me a quarter a week to spend. I certainly got money from my mother for bus fare to take me to high school (at a nickel a ride) and for whatever school supplies I needed. There was also the weekly contribution to the charity box at Sunday School which she would give me as I was leaving for the weekly chore of getting a religious education.

But for anything beyond that, my imagination, ambition and certainly a bit of luck figured into any extra cash I could get. Friends were going to Loop department stores in Chicago to get jobs. They told me where I might find one, especially during the summer months. So, it was armed with these clues that I found my way to the personnel department at Maurice L. Rothschild, a long defunct loop clothier located at the corner of Jackson and State Street. It was a start. The hiring boss, a short wiry man named Saunders, would pick out the best dressed and most promising male members of the crew who would show up an hour before the store opened on Saturday.

I was big for my age and always dressed "professionally," so I was one of those selected. My job, it turned out, was as a stock boy in the women's fur coat department. It was August, Chicago was hot and Rothschild's wasn't air conditioned. To make matters worse, the fur department was in the store's basement. But the pay was exciting at the time. I was to receive the munificent sum of $2.50 per day -- with no payroll deductions even though I had taken the precaution of having my as-yet-unused social security card with me.

During those lean years, the market for fur coats wasn't great. The coats that were offered for sale were not expensive. I can remember being impressed by one coat that was available for $99.00 It was made of pure one hundred percent Coney fur. It wasn't until years later that I discovered that Coney was a fancy name for rabbit. But, during those August sale days, I sweated as the saleswomen would trot out dozens of coats for prospective customers to try on -- for size, for fit and mostly for price. The average female secretary or clerk's dream was owning a fur coat, and many showed up at lunchtime to try one on just for the feel of the fur against their skin. To them, the process was exciting. To me it was back breaking hot work.

The Rothschild job didn't last long. Ever on the alert for better work, I crossed the street to the Goldblatt store. Part of a chain of low end merchandising stores, Goldblatt always had sales, I was hired and placed in the boys' clothing department. This was a significant advancement because I not only had a salary of a guaranteed $3.00 per day but also the promise of a one

percent commission on all my sales. On a good day, I could sell as much as $50.00 worth of merchandise which raised my pay to an astronomic $3.50.

Luck smiled on me. One Saturday morning, when I reported for work, there was a need for an extra person to sell on the main floor -- in the cigarette department. Cigarettes in those years were usually a quarter a pack. There were five major brands -- Lucky Strikes, Camels, Old Gold, Philip Morris and Chesterfields. While there were some off price brands selling for twenty cents -- brands like Kools and Raleighs -- most customers preferred the major brands.

I hustled in the cigarette department, volunteering to man a cash register on the other side of the store during a regular employee's lunch break. Boy, did I hustle! On one Saturday, the store ran a promotional special on cigarettes. Two cartons for $2.50. It was an unbelievable bargain and the crowds stood in line to buy as many cartons as their own meager paychecks would allow. I worked the register constantly. Selling the cartons, placing them in bags and delivering them to the customers along with the change they were entitled to.

What I should have mentioned is that the paymaster never caught up with the change in my work location and my hustling was represented pure self-interest because I continued to receive that same one percent commission. But with cigarette sales, I could reasonably rack up several hundred dollars worth of sales which put my check in an entirely different bracket. I would routinely get $7 or $8 dollars for my Saturday's work.

But the week following the sale, my bubble was burst. My pay envelope contained an incredible $13.00.When I got to the department, I was called over to the manager and he put his arm on my shoulder. "Ed," he told me, "I just got a call from the payroll department asking me why you were making more money than I was. Obviously, that can't happen, so we have to strip you of the commission. You'll get paid for last week, but from now on, you're on a straight salary. I don't blame you for what you did and I appreciate the way you hustled on the job, but now I know why."

The following week when I reported for work. Apparently, the company felt that I should do some penance for my bonanza. That must have been the reason that the cigarette department job wasn't available. I was assigned to the basement butcher shop. Large department stores had major food departments in the years before supermarkets captured the food business. At Goldblatt's there was a meat department. And as punishment for my previous good fortune, I was awarded the job of wrapping raw chickens. This was clearly a dead end job.

I returned to the store the following week to pick up my final pay envelope and set out to find other weekend employment. Mandel Brothers, yet another now-defunct department store, needed someone with my talents in selling boys' long pants. It also paid a one percent commission. I took that job

and kept a low profile, becoming expert at selling Hockmeyer Tweederoy trousers for young men. It was infinitely better than wrapping chickens.

Cub Scouts

Cub Scout pack 3529 was sponsored by the Temple Men's' Club. It was actually an adjunct to Boy Scout Troop 529. In 1942, I would occasionally go to a Men's' Club meeting with my father. The meetings featured a speaker, refreshments and following that, the members adjourned to card tables at the rear of the hall and played bridge or poker. At the point where the card playing started, I usually went home. I was happy to be included in a group of grown men and it was identification with them which drove me to accept my dad's invitation to occasionally come along to the meeting.

At one meeting, I was approached by the man who was the Cub Scout leader. His name was Leo Sampson. Leo was a very mild mannered man, middle aged (which at that time meant anyone over 40.) Operating the Cub Pack was something he considered a duty and he did it more out of a sense of obligation than from any conviction in the mission of the Cub Scouts which were a part of the larger Boy Scouts of America. Leo asked me if I would be interested in coming to the Cub Scout meetings to help him run the Pack.

I had never joined the Boy Scouts. Looking back on my reasons for not belonging to this group as many of my friends did, I suspect that the uniforms, merit badges and competitive nature of their activities was something that I found distasteful. At the time I would have qualified for membership -- at age 12 -- I was still smarting from my experiences at Camp Kawaga during the summer when I was 11. I was certainly familiar with some of the elements of the Boy Scout Manual. Among other things this book taught members of the scouting family was that blindness would certainly ensue if the scout were to engage in masturbation. While none of us believed that this dire warning was true, (a few even asked their family doctors) we certainly took the warning seriously albeit with a few grains of salt. By the time Sampson approached me, some of that hurt from Kawaga had dissipated, any apathy I might have felt toward scouting in general had worn off. But I was then too old to start the scouting program. Maybe I was also a bit more sophisticated -- I could still see.

3529 met in the Temple community hall every Thursday night. On one meeting night after he had invited me to help with the group, I went to the Temple to see whether I might be interested in being involved. The Pack met from 7:00 P.M. until about 9:00 P.M. I arrived at about 8:00. Attendance was, at best, about 20 boys ranging in age from 9 to 12. About 12 of them were seated in a semicircle on the floor with Sampson in the middle. The boys were singing a song, "Good Morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip, With your haircut short as mine."

The song was left over from the first World War of which Sampson was a veteran. .

He admitted, later, that he had never worked with boys before and, whereas I had some experience working with and through the YMCA, Sampson was truly winging it all the way.

There were a dozen boys in the "song session," and the remainder were busying themselves with work that would lead to advancement through the ranks of the Cub Scouts and eventually, to become "Webelos," which was the highest rank and signaled a readiness to join the Boy Scouts.

Patriotism was running high in those years because of the morale building requirements of the war effort. Leo's use of songs was somewhat misplaced and when I began to lead the song sessions as a trial for my involvement, I taught the boys the more popular service songs of the day. "The Marine Hymn," The Field Artillery "Caisson" Song," "Anchors Aweigh" and a song extolling the valor of the Air Force going "off into the wild blue yonder."

Most of the boys already knew the lyrics to those songs and joined in enthusiastically. When I saw that there was something positive that I could contribute to the Pack, I agreed to take on the position of Assistant Pack Master. Then, I set to working with the singing more enthusiastically. Membership in the pack began to grow as word of the fun that was being had during the song sessions got out to the Cubs" peer group.

Using an old songbook of lyrics, I taught then the most well known of George M. Cohan and Irving Berlin songs -- "You're a Grand Old Flag," ""Give My Regards to Broadway," "Over There," Oh, How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning," and a whole group of camp songs like "Clementine," and "John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt."" Our increasing repertoire also included some of the college fight songs which, depending on whether there was any alumni relationships to the schools whose songs we knew, would be led (with my supervision) by the boy whose father related to the college in question.

There’s no doubt that the boys took to the program that I was developing with a great deal of enthusiasm. They liked the new songs and, particularly, their variety. I then undertook the project of having them sing some harmony. This was difficult for two reasons. We had no sheet music and, if there had been any, I wouldn’t have been able to read it. In addition, there was no one to accompany us. But that didn't slow us down and many of the songs began to be sung in at least two part harmony. We sounded great.

The Hyde Park Neighborhood Association notified us that they were beginning a group song competition to be held in late May before the school vacation schedule took over. Our Cub Pack was invited to join the competition. While no prizes were being offered, there was competition between 3529 and other Cub Packs sponsored by other community organizations. Our biggest rival was the Pack from Temple Isaiah Israel, a few blocks away. The boys agreed that whatever else we might be able to do, we had to beat that group in order to keep our heads held high.

The boys practiced enthusiastically. They not only came to Pack meetings early, they sometimes came in after their regular school day. They were really primed for the songfest which was to be held in a large empty field called, in the neighborhood, ""Farmer's Green." When the big evening finally came, they all appeared in uniform at the Temple for the walk down to the field, roughly a half mile east of the Temple on 50th Street.

We were scheduled to perform near the end of the program and there was palpable excitement among the boys as they listened to church groups, other boy scout and cub scout troops perform their songs. The church groups sang well-rehearsed hymns, directed by trained choir masters. The other groups were more rag-tag and sang their programs with enthusiasm but with a lot less musicality than our group had shown during their rehearsals.

Finally, it was our turn. We sang three or four different songs -- probably one from each category of song. "John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt" was a crowd pleaser and the applause was such that we sang it a second time. Other pieces had the audience clapping rhymically to keep tempo with our music. The patriotic songs were especially appreciated.

We listened as the groups following us performed. The entire program took about 2 hours and had begun at about 7:30. The audience, sitting on blankets and on folding chairs they had brought with them, was getting restless. At long last, the programs were finished and the judges huddled to determine the winner. The third place winner was one of the church groups. The second place award went to a boy scout troop from an adjacent neighborhood. Finally, though there wasn't a drum roll it seemed like there should have been one, the winner was announced. "Cub Scout Troop," followed by a dramatic pause, "3529."

We had won and the boys went into a wild cheer. The evening broke up and we were told that a plaque would be sent to the Men's' Club in due course acknowledging our victory.

The next day, I received a congratulatory phone call from the Rabbi.

And the following autumn, I was asked to repeat my role as the song leader of the pack. We used many of the same songs during that second season though we added a few newer ones that had been written during the early years of our involvement in the war.

The competition at Farmer's Green during that second season was anticlimactic. Many of the groups who had participated a year earlier did not enter the contest and the program was considerably shorter. But, once again, our group won the plaque. We had gone to the Field for the second time much more confident than we had been the year before. And we deserved to win again -- we were simply the best in the neighborhood. The following summer I had been hired to lead singing at Camp Glen Eden in Eagle River, Wisconsin. Harry Branowitz who owned the camp had heard about my success in leading the Cub Scouts in the song competition. The job was a disaster and I returned to Chicago and enrolled late in my first classes at the University -- there would

be no time to be involved in a third years' competition for the neighborhood song festival. Besides, there was nothing more to prove.

Day Camping

Today, it's commonplace for a mother to place her offspring into a half day or even a full day camp during the summer months. By doing this, she has some free time for shopping, relaxing or enjoying the warm weather without the need for the constant supervision that's normally a part of parenting in a threatening world. It wasn't always that way. When I was in my teens, day camps were few and far between -- and usually expensive.

Phil Lewis, Felix Rosenthal and I decided that we could make a few extra dollars by organizing a day camp. We were all members of the local YMCA and decided that by approaching "Y" management, we could get them to sponsor the Day Camp we envisioned. We thought we would be able to take a group of kids from the "Y" and walk them to the park, about a half mile away. Our deal with the "Y" was simple. We would collect all the receipts from the kids, turn them into the "Y" and then split the proceeds at the end of the summer. Each of us was to receive one-sixth of the money. The "Y" would get the other half.

Then, using "Y" equipment and auspices, we could entertain them, provide them with healthy outdoor activities, and bring them home by 4:00 PM to be picked up by grateful parents. We presented this business plan to the local "Y" director who forwarded it to his superiors downtown. In time, the answer came back with a few conditions. Most importantly, we were conditionally approved. Before the "Y" would permit its name to be associated with this endeavor, the three of us were required to attend a class, conducted by one of their downtown "professional" personnel. The class was supposed to help us understand the problems being faced by pre-pubescent kids -- roughly 7-11 year olds.

We all attended the class one evening a week at the local "Y" and in fact learned a lot about motivational psychology that we wouldn't have known without the help of the instructor. For example, we learned about the motivations that caused the behavior of these kids. I can still recall the sessions we spent on the acronym REAPS. These letters stood for the various causes of action which governed the behavioral patterns we were to be involved with. "R" was recognition and a child's desire for it, "E" represented the new experiences all of them wanted. "A" stood for affection, a very deep personal need. "P" was power, something most of us still don't quite understand as a motivational force. and finally, ""S" which was security - -something we all crave.

When we finished the course, and were appropriately certified, we began to publicize the camp in the "Y" Posters went up throughout the neighborhood and, to our delight, the response was overwhelming. We had

hoped to sign up 25 kids. In fact, double that number applied for camp and we had to search for additional ""counselors" to help with the herding of 50 kids through the city streets to the park. Our charge for the entire day was 50 cents which included a half pint of milk -- chocolate or plain. The kids were to brown bag their lunchtime sandwiches and we arranged for a local dairy to deliver the milk to us in the park at exactly noon during the four days we were to be at our campsite in the park.

Considering the fact that we were to tend the kids for seven hours a day, the fifty cent charge was less than the customary dime an hour that baby-sitters received at that time. It was a bargain.

The fifth day, usually Thursday, was intended to be used for a field trip. We three agreed that we could afford a bus to haul the troop to one of several factories in the city that provided tours, and more importantly from the point of view of the kids, free samples. So we set about calling some of the obvious choices. We were accepted by the Wanzer Dairy, by the Wrigley Chewing Gum factory, by the Curtis Candy Company factory and by several others. We also planned some rainy day activities which included visits to museums that were in walking distance. We also had all the facilities of the "Y" available. They included a gym, a swimming pool and even a rifle range on the top floor which was restricted to use by only the oldest kids in the group and which proved a popular venue at the beginning of the US involvement in World War II.

We submitted our contingency plan to the authorities and they accepted it without question. I think, in retrospect, that they felt that if we could carry it out, the program would be a credit to the "Y" and if it failed, they could cancel it at their option and send the kids away without any consequences to the ""Y."

The plans worked and we kept ourselves busy during the entire summer. Reports from delighted parents came into the "Y" and we were frequently complimented by the management. In fact, we were all awarded free annual membership cards in the "Y" because through our program, several of the kids joined the "Y" anticipating programs of a similar nature once school started in the fall. We were a success to the extent that the "Y"" began similar programs throughout their network in the City.

When summer ended and everyone returned to his normal routine, we waited for the "Y" to cough up the money due us. We did not have the facilities to do adequate bookkeeping and the amount we came to expect varied wildly among the three of us. Finally, we got a note from the director of our "Y" telling us that the checks had arrived. Mine was in the neighborhood of $65.00. I felt as though I had gotten the keys to the bank -- I had never received such a huge amount of cash at one time before and I rushed the check to the bank to be deposited with my savings account until I could decide what to do with it. I'm convinced that it's still in the bank because I can't remember any specific purchase relating to that check.

Federal Inspection

The High School ROTC -- Reserve Officer Training Corps.-- was available to sophomore, junior and senior males. It was a realistic alternative to gym which had become increasingly athletic, filled with calisthenics and difficult running exercises. ROTC was an easy choice, especially during the first couple of years of America's involvement in World War II when patriotism and the expectation of being drafted into the service convinced many high school males that ROTC was an opportunity to get a leg up on military service,.

The uniforms issues by the ROTC had a typically army atmosphere. They came in two sizes -- too small and too large. They were a greenish khaki color with a blue lapel that was supposed to indicate that the wearer was in an infantry unit. The jacket flowed to a peplum in the rear. Pants were buttoned, not zippered and the whole uniform was set off by a white canvas belt which required starching and white shoe polish to keep it in pristine condition. Of course, ROTC officers wore Sam Browne belts, that were holdovers from a World War I army surplus stock.

Training was conducted in a room which was entirely too small for the purpose and consisted mostly of close order drill marching. In addition, there was a drill entailing the use of wooden rifles which were supplied, probably by the army, to learn the various parade uses of the weapon. Cadets learned to present arms, trail arms, shoulder them and to stand at attention with the rifles in the proper position.

Another aspect of the inside training schedule was the need to respect rank. Officers were selected arbitrarily by the regular army sergeant who was a Board of Education certified teacher of what was then called "Military Science and Tactics." His name was Will Brewer and he was regular army, waiting patiently for his 30 year retirement and the pension that would come to him at that time. Meanwhile, Brewer had what might have been considered a sinecure -- an easy job that required little effort to complete.

The officer Corps was headed by a friend of mine, Reid MacGuidwin with whom I shared a locker in our "civilian" lives. Reid was the very picture of an officer -- tall, lean and with a ramrod straight posture. He held the stratospheric rank of Lieutenant Colonel. I had attained the relatively the lowly rank of staff sergeant. I was elevated to this position because I was one of the few people in the class who could type the innumerable reports that had to be sent to the Board of Education and to the Army on behalf of Sgt. Brewer. The typewriter, one of those rare ""noiseless" machines served the unit well and gave me something to do besides marching in the close order drill that was the regular routine of the unit to which I was attached.

Uniforms were worn twice a week. They were inspected and thus had to be immaculate. Brass buttons had to be polished to a gleaming brilliance that required an hour’s work with a rag, a "button board" and a product called

Brasso. The button board was something that each cadet had to make on his own. It consisted of a long, narrow piece of plywood into which a hole had been drilled about the diameter of the uniform buttons. Extending from the hole was a slit so that the button could be slid along and polished without any of the polishing material spoiling the uniform.

The belt was another problem and had to be dealt with regularly in a soapy solution. The bleach used to whiten it and the subsequent ironing and starching made the belt more tedious work than the buttons. Fortunately, if it was used with care, the belt needed washing only two or three times a year.

Wearing the uniforms and practicing close order drill was designed to lead up to a single occasion during the year -- the dread Federal Inspection. Once during the spring, a group of officers of the regular army would descend on the school. The entire cadet Corps would be trotted out to a field near the high school and stood at attention while the officers walked back and forth checking the ranks. Infrequently, they would stop to ask a cadet a question and the continue along the long line.

The entire inspection process concluded with the cadet Corps marching past the officers with appropriate saluting and shouting of commands to the units as they "passed in review." It was an exciting process in those days of heightened patriotism. But the real excitement came later. It was school policy to order these Federal Inspections during the morning hours and the cadets were given the rest of the day off.

In addition to the "Fed" there was one other occasion when the cadet Corps would march, usually along the length of Michigan Avenue for a single day of parading. Bands from different high schools (our band was into more classical music and didn't march) played along the parade route and then, as the various school units finished the march, the entire cadet Corps descended on the loop en masse.

This uniformed group of high schoolers knew what to do with the occasion. During those early years of the war, the city was inundated with troops of other nations. Because the ROTC uniforms were so unique, they were easily confused with those of allied countries. In addition, various army and navy programs inducted young men, only a couple of years older than the ROTC cadets, into units for training as doctors, meteorologists, interpreters and other specialized training programs that provided professional expertise to the armed forces. In fact, two of the programs had centers in the area of the high school. The army operated an ASTP program (this was an acronym for Army Specialized Training Program.) The Navy operated a program identified as "V-12" which inducted personnel to study meteorology. Since the University of Chicago in the neighborhood had a school that specialized in this science, it was the natural site for this Navy program.

But soldiers from Poland, England, France, and various allied European countries were brought to Chicago to study these sciences as well. Their uniforms were not as familiar to Chicagoans as those of regular army

and navy troops and consequently, they were accepted. The ROTC blended well into that and the city offered its hospitality to the troops of allied countries. ROTC cadets took advantage of this hospitality as well. Movie tickets were discounted or free. There were USO units that offered free hot dogs or cokes, there was free bowling and many other advantages to being in uniform. The cadet Corps knew them all.

There was one other advantage to being an ROTC cadet in uniform in those days. Walking down the loop streets in uniform, the cadets would occasionally walk past an officer, whether from the US services or from some foreign army. It was incumbent on the cadets to offer a salute to the officer and a requirement that the officer acknowledge the salute by "returning" it. Having a salute returned was indeed, the high point of the day of the Federal Inspection. We were acknowledged as a part of a much larger war effort -- we were included and recognized.

Public Transportation and the ROTC

Public transportation during the 1930's was not a unified, quasi-public operation. The streetcars, the El trains and the bus lines were all run by different companies competing with each other for riders. The routes were assigned by the City, and the fares were set by some sort of public body, but the level of service was pretty much the purview of the companies. The streetcar lines operated three different types of cars -- On the street rail lines, the two man cars were boarded at the rear and had a conductor who collected fares. His other job was to clang on a bell to let the motorman know that it was safe to start the car and that everyone who wanted a ride was on board. The second type of streetcar was the one man operation. This was a smaller car, usually on the east/west lines, which required that the motorman also serve as fare collector, change maker and direction giver. Finally, there was the trolleybus. This was a rubber-tired bus that had a trolley connection to overhead electric wires. It could pull close to the curb or move in and out of traffic. It was quiet, clean and probably inexpensive to run.

The bus lines were operated by the Chicago Motor Coach Company. The busses were run on boulevard routes only and were considered an upscale version of the streetcar. In fact, while the Chicago Surface Lines (the streetcars) charged a seven cent fare (three cents to students and kids under 12) the Motor Coaches charged a dime, with a reduced five cent fare for students and kids under 12. The bus line operated three types of busses. There was a single deck bus, not unlike those still in use in most cities. Then there was the double deck bus which was closed on the upper level. The stairway to the upper deck was behind the driver and on that level, smoking was permitted.

Finally, there was the open top bus which was the really exciting one. This equipment was operated only during the warmer summer months. Along the route from where I boarded the bus to the Loop, there were two railroad

viaducts. At each of them, the driver was required to stop the bus and, using a scratchy, hardly audible loud speaker system, announce: "Low Bridge. Look out for your head. Remain seated please." The bus would then proceed under the viaduct, clearing it barely by inches. That was exciting. And it was something that happened a couple of times a week during the summer months when I had to go to a doctor's office to receive an allergy shot.

I lived nowhere near the "El" lines. Though I used them on occasion and knew the basic routes they followed, they required that I transfer to a streetcar to complete my trip. Transfers were free but they were not valid between busses and streetcars. It was only in later years that you could change from the El to the streetcar without the payment of an additional fare. And still later, in the years following the second world war that the entire transit system was consolidated into a citywide, publically owned service

On those rare occasions when I used an El train, it was for some special reason. I was a lifelong Chicago Cubs fan. During my formative years, they won the National League Pennant every three years. Beginning in 1932, they won in '35, '38 and then, after a wartime hiatus, again in '45. The White Sox, on the other hand were still mired in the disgrace of the so-called "Black Sox" scandal of 1919 and hadn't won since then. There was another reason for my bias toward the Cubs. It was the first step in my rebellion for personal independence. My dad was a Sox fan, having been born and raised near the old Comiskey Park. He had played semi-professional baseball for one of the Masonic Lodge teams and delighted in retelling the stories of the team's travels to exotic places like St. Joseph Michigan where they competed against the team mounted by the House of David, an obscure religious order which liked to play baseball.

My dad claimed he was approached by a scout from the Pittsburgh Pirates to try out for the team. Since the tryout had to take place in Pittsburgh and since my dad didn't have the money for a railroad ticket to Pittsburgh, he approached his father. Baseball players, in those years had all the social cache of pirates, rum runners and drunks. Besides all that, my grandfather reasoned, "what kind of occupation is that for a Jewish boy -- better he should become a salesman." My grandfather refused to advance the fare and we'll never know if my dad could have been a major league player.

When I used the El trains, it was to get to Wrigley Field. Usually in groups of three or four we would leave home before noon, take the streetcar to the El station and then hop aboard a train. Those were the years before Chicago had a subway and the trains would circle the loop on the overhead tracks. Then, on to the north side -- really a mysteryland to most of us -- and let us off just a half block from Cub's park.

On the west side of the ballpark, a place had been provided for players to park their cars. I can remember the crowds of kids hanging around that parking lot, especially after a game, waiting for players to leave the clubhouse and get in their cars for the trip home. One of my favorite players was a pitcher

by the name of Lon Warnecke. One afternoon, I spotted him, with his wife, getting into his car. As it stopped before entering the street, I was determined to get his autograph and jumped on the running board of his car. His wife screamed, he stopped the car, rolled down the window and began swearing at me for scaring his wife. I didn't get the autograph, but I'll never forget having been sworn at by a major league pitcher. It's a perverse experience I've always treasured.

The high school I attended was at least three or four miles from home. Getting to school required a bus ride. That, in turn, required buying bus tickets which were available in the bus garage for the price of $1.00 for a 20 ride booklet. The bus barn was a couple of blocks from where I lived, and the window where the tickets were sold was on the fourth floor of the elevator-less building. It was a dark, steep climb to get there and some of us were able to establish a business of buying and providing the so-called "bus books" to other students who didn't live as close as we did. The price for our service was paid in coupons. We would get two coupons for each book we delivered. Obviously, they had to be pre-paid and we would accumulate orders to buy and deliver the books so we could make as few trips to the bus barn as possible.

Riding the bus to school was never quite as exciting as the time when, as a member of the ROTC I wore a uniform to school. One occasion was particularly memorable. A friend, Hy Weiner, had access to a World War I army rifle, in pristine condition. His father had brought it home as a souvenir of his service to his country. Those rifles were imposing tools, and they were heavy and very lethal looking. On one occasion, I borrowed the rifle from Hy and took it to school to show to our ROTC group and to impress the academic head of the unit, a retreaded staff sergeant named Will Brewer. Brewer was in the army but was paid by the Board of Education. The army for its part didn't quite know what to do with him. Too young to be retired, too old to be an active soldier, he was assigned the dead end job of training a bunch of high school students the rudiments of what was then called "military science and tactics."

We studied Civil War strategies, close order drill and little more. Because I knew how to type, I rose to the dramatic rank of staff sergeant, sitting in the tiny office and avoiding the rigors of calisthenics and close order drill to type reports which were done in triplicate and sent on to the army and the Board of Education.

But the day I boarded the bus with the 1903 Springfield rifle I created quite a stir. The bus driver was terrified as I slung the rifle over my shoulder, soldier style, and climbed on the bus. Handing the driver the usual bus ticket and sitting down, he kept looking over his shoulder to see if I was going to charge the fare box. The ride itself was uneventful though I remember having several seats around me vacant as the usually crowded bus approached the school.

Entering any school today with such a weapon would evoke memories of Columbine and would be strictly prohibited. Then, I simply walked into the ROTC training room, left the rifle with Sgt. Brewer and went to my usual class schedule. Brewer knew the rifle well. He had served in France during the first World War and this was his kind of gun. The usually dull man sprang to life when he tore the gun down, explained its various parts and then quickly reassembled it for the next class. I received the highest possible grade in ROTC that semester and, though I was offered a ""commission" as an officer, decided that I'd rather type reports than lead callisthenic exercises with wooden replicas of the Springfield rifle. After all, I had handled the real thing.

National Paranoia

1942 was the first full year of World War 2. The U.S. was retreating on all fronts. The Japanese captured the Philippines including our "impenetrable fortress" at Corregidor. They walked all over southeast Asia and the French and British forces that were defending Singapore, Indonesia and Indo-China. They seemed ready to invade Australia. In Europe and North Africa, German armies were marching across Russia with no apparent resistance. They occupied the Balkan countries and Greece. In North Africa, Rommel's Panzer divisions rode all over the British who were trying to keep the Germans out of Egypt.

In America, we were beginning to gear up for a major war effort. Factory production was being converted to wartime uses. Shipyards were beginning to crank out cookie-cutter models of "Victory" ships to carry cargo to distant ports to service the armies there. Submarines were being made in the Great Lakes and on the Mississippi River. Excursion ships that had traveled between Chicago and Milwaukee were converted into training aircraft carriers so that pilots could practice take-offs and landing from the deck of a moving ship. It was relatively easy to convert an automobile plant to the manufacture of tanks and jeeps. It was an entirely different job to convert an isolationist population to one that supported and assisted in the massive war effort.

In the spring of 1942, President Roosevelt decided that the American people needed a boost in their morale. He authorized a raid on Tokyo by a flight of medium bombers led by aviation pioneer, Jimmy Doolittle. The range of these planes, based on an aircraft carrier, was so short that there was no way they could get back to the ships that had carried them across the Pacific, so it was decided to have them fly on to China where, hopefully, the crews could be rescued, returned to American hands for further combat duty and the Chinese could reuse the planes to try to stem the Japanese advance through the Chinese mainland.

It was only late in the year that the American strategy of "island hopping" began to take shape with the initial invasion of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Island group. This invasion began in August of 1942. June saw the

first American victory at the sea Battle of Midway, though the effects of this victory weren't felt until some time later. Army forces were being trained in desert warfare and prepared for an invasion of North Africa in November to help the British there.

In Chicago, the war effort produced a paranoia brought on by fear of German and Japanese infiltration into defense plants and the sabotage they could perform to disrupt the war effort. Enemy diplomats were interned, in accordance with the Geneva Convention, in a large mansion at 50th and Ellis Avenue in Kenwood. I walked by this building often en route to visit my then-girlfriend. Guards walked picket around the perimeter and, occasionally, one of the "enemy" would be seen in a window. They were not allowed to leave the building.

Civil Defense was organized on a block by block basis. Each city block had a Block Captain, an Air Raid Warden, and a Messenger. Each block also received one surplus World War I gas mask which, had they been necessary, wouldn't have worked but they gave a feeling of security in an otherwise insecure time. Posters were distributed which warned people that "Loose Lips Sink Ships," Or "The Story You Tell is The Story They Hear," the latter with a large eared Nazi spy listening to a factory worker. While it was logistically unrealistic to think that German or Japanese planes could bomb inland cities, we still had air raid drills at regular intervals.

Japanese-Americans were summarily relocated from their California homes and businesses to something akin to concentration camps in the Arizona and New Mexico desert simply because they had Japanese ancestry even though there was no indication of any disloyalty. German-Americans, particularly those who had participated in the activities of Fritz Kuhn's German-American Bund were put under close watch to be sure they didn't do anything to abet the enemy. There were incidents where submarines landed saboteurs on desolate beaches along the East Coast of the United States and one incident where a Japanese submarine surfaced long enough to lob a shell in the general direction of Los Angeles. But for the most part, the contiguous 48 States were never under direct attack.

Japanese forces did capture two of the Aleutian Islands, Kiska and Attu and several of the American fueling stations in the southwest Pacific ocean. There was no doubt we were afraid of what they might do next.

Evelyn Joyce was a teacher of Latin American History at my high school. She was a slight woman with bleached bright red hair. She taught us about Simon Bolivar and Jose Martin. We learned about Hidalgo and Juarez. But everything she taught us was colored by the fact that she was enthusiastically Irish. Eire had gained its independence from England only a generation earlier. Feelings of enmity between the Irish and the British were still strong, especially among those Irish who felt that England had mistreated Irish citizens in the course of the conflict.

Whenever Ms. Joyce talked about independence, whether she was referring to Paraguay or County Cork, she always ended with a diatribe against the British. She also expressed the fact that she subscribed to the philosophy that "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." As a result, many of her classroom sessions ended with some sort of praise of Germany -- it's achievements in ridding itself of the effects of the depression, of having suffered at the hands of the British in the Versailles treaty that ended the first world war.

One week, Ms. Joyce did not appear for class and we had a substitute, something that isn't unusual in itself. Then, rumors began to circulate that she had been arrested by the FBI and was being held as a German agent. One day, our class was told that we would be questioned by the FBI in the principal's office. In due course, it was my turn to be called to answer questions about her lectures and the things she said about the Germans. I answered the FBI agent's questions and was told I could return to class. I knew I hadn't done anything that was wrong, and was happy to have the ordeal finished. Ms. Joyce never returned to class. I would have enjoyed hearing her describe the freeing of Cuba during the Spanish American War and how that event impacted German-American relations. It would have been revealing.

Profiteering during the war was frowned on, but it went anyway. In one instance, the Federal Government told the various Boards of Education around the country that it would be beneficial to the war effort to train young men, most of whom would eventually be drafted into the services, in some of the basic crafts. So, we were to be taught woodworking, plumbing, electrical repairs, given an understanding of basic principles of aeronautics and other material of that sort. Obviously there were no textbooks available to address this demand.

The Superintendent of the Chicago Board of Education, a man named Johnson, was someone who seized the opportunity to turn a quick buck. He immediately found a publisher willing to accept an order for a total of what must have been several hundred thousand books. Then, Johnson found writers who had some expertise in the subjects needed for the books. Finally, he struck a deal with those writers to act as the co-author of the books and to share equally in the royalties from them. Not one to shy away from a substantial profit, Johnson controlled the entire chain of distribution from production to final sale.

I used the books, realizing from newspaper accounts that Johnson's ability to write them was limited to his ability to deposit royalty checks from the publisher. When one of the city newspapers got wind of Johnson's omnipresent ability to co-author books on topics in which he had no expertise, Johnson was indicted, required to reimburse the City for the royalties he had collected and to resign his post. He probably never served time in a penitentiary, but he had been so blatant in his profiteering that he was caught before the entire process got out of control.

In Civil Defense, I served as the Block Messenger. The "job" consisted of being available to contact other block organizations in the event of an enemy attack. I also was charged with the maintenance of the Block's communication system. On opposite corners of every block, the government erected a bulletin board. It was mounted on a pole that was sunk into the ground at the corners. Inside the locked, glass enclosed bulletin board were the latest edicts on what to do in the event of an air raid. There were also memos about local men who had entered the service and where they could be reached by mail or what was called V-Mail. Miniature posters encouraged the purchase of war bonds and urged people to support the war effort by observing rationing restrictions, observing curfews when they were imposed and reporting suspicious activities to the FBI.

Later, when food, shoe and tire rationing went into effect, information on the number of stamps that would be required for certain purchases were posted on the board. Finally, there was room for some encouraging propaganda to let people feel confident that, in the end, the United States would prevail against its enemies. I was charged with writing that material and posting it every couple of weeks. Every Civil Defense official was recognizable by virtue of an armband that they were issued. Mine had the winged feet of Mercury -- the messenger of the gods. I wore it with pride.

Whether my efforts contributed to the morale of the people who lived on my city block, I'll never know. It did a great deal toward raising my own morale -- I had become involved in winning the war.

New Years' Eve

As a teen ager, it was absolutely essential that you have a date for New Years' Eve. I've never been sure why the celebration of an arbitrary date on the calendar is an essential part of peoples' social schedule, but that's the way it's celebrated. And whether the celebration is to remember the year past and the fact that the celebrants survived or to anticipate a better year in the future without the pitfalls of the past is another uncertainty.

But it was expected that every red-blooded American male have a date and go out to celebrate New Years' Eve. I strove mightily to fulfill those expectations. That presented a whole series of problems that had to be solved. The question of who to spend the occasion with was easy. I had been going out with Connie for months and there was a tacit understanding that we'd be together on all important occasions.

A bigger question was where we would go to celebrate. Our options were somewhat limited,. We weren't wild enough to go to the Loop and join the throng of celebrants counting down the seconds, ala Times Square, until the magic changing of the calendar. We weren't old enough to go to a "nightclub" at one of the hotels where liquor flowed like ... like liquor and we weren't old enough to order it -- even if we knew what to order.

The remaining option was the one that most of the kids in our circle selected. We went to the Piccadilly theater early in the evening, watched a double feature, the March of Time, several cartoons and a newsreel. Because the Piccadilly had a balcony that allowed smoking, and because it was a place where "necking and petting" were not frowned upon as long as they stayed within reasonable limits, it was clearly the venue of choice. When the show finally was over, we left and the whole crowd walked the few blocks to Ruby's. Ruben Cohen had developed an upscale hamburger joint where you had to pay sixty-five cents for a really huge hamburger with fries and another dime for a coke. It was considered to be a gourmet meal in my circle.

On a New Years' Eve, Ruby's was a jumping place. The management had decorated the place festively with ribbons and banners welcoming the New Year and, as a special business promotion, anyone coming into the place after 10:30 got a party hat and a horn to blow at midnight. Ruby did his part to add to the festivities. He didn't even raise his menu price for the occasion, though I think that waitresses were instructed to push a little harder when it came to selling deserts.

There was one element that represented the final peg in the New Years' Eve celebration. Having enough money to afford this signal occasion was a serious consideration at a time when allowances had increased to a munificent $2.00 a week, a sum which was supposed to pay for lunchtime soft drinks, fifty cents for weekly bus fare and incidentals like an occasional order of French Fries. It took some serious budgeting to live within one's means in those days and there wasn't much left over for luxuries like a Ruby's hamburger.

One year, during the Christmas holiday from school, I realized that if I was to fulfill my commitment to Connie, I would have to generate some quick cash. With Christmas over, the retail stores no longer needed holiday help. The was one available option: become a pin setter at the local bowling alley.

I knew the place well. My father belonged to a league that bowled there on Mondays. I was there occasionally when I had money to burn and practiced my skills at the game. So when the financial need became apparent, I walked to the lanes and talked to the owner, a man named Max Israel, to see if there was a job available.

In those years, the process of setting pins had been semi-automated. There was machinery that, when properly loaded, would put the pins on the alley lane in their proper places. But loading that machine was the job of the pin setter who was expected to service two of these machines at the same time. By climbing over the divider that separated the lanes and by being quick, the pin boy could handle the two lanes. When some bowler actually bowled the ball down the alley, it was essential that the pin boy sit on the divider and keep his legs up high because when an array of pins was hit squarely by the ball, the pins tended to fly in all directions and would frequently fly into the shins of the pin boy.

In addition, the job required constant bending down to put the pins into the pin setting machinery. Experienced pinsetters could handle as many as four pins at a time. A rank amateur like me was lucky to handle two at a time and, when I got the job, the owner insisted on bowling a couple of lines without paying me anything as a test of my abilities. This job was strictly piece work. You earned ten cents a line for pins spotted. A line consisted on one game played by one player, so if there was a foursome bowling, the pin boy could earn forty cents. The game would take less than a half hour and those eighty cents an hour were considered good wages. The problem was that not all the lanes were busy all the time.

I went to work at the bowling alley early in the week preceding New Years' Eve. I learned the craft well, though I incurred the wrath of other pin spotters who held the job and expected that they would be able to feed their families with the proceeds of the work. It was clear to them that I was a dilettante -- and an amateur one at that. Their resentment was clearly obvious -- they wouldn't talk to me and would occasionally threateningly throw a spare pin into my alleys in the general direction of my head. It was not a pleasant work environment, but I needed the money for New Years' Eve. Necking and petting in the Piccadilly balcony was the carrot on the end of my stick, and I wouldn't be intimidated.

One the afternoon of December 31, I reported for work one last time. I had enough money to complete my obligation to Connie, but I wanted a cushion for the evening. I might have had a corsage of gardenias in mind, so I wanted a little more cash. So did the other pinsetters. The competition was fierce for being assigned alleys that would attract the maximum number of bowlers since some of the alleys were better than others. The best ones were not tucked against the side walls of the facility or did not have dented lanes that needed resurfacing.

I didn’t do well that afternoon. Between dodging pins that seemed to have eyes and ducking the pins that were tossed at me by my co-workers, I was bruised and battered when I finally left the alley at 5:00 PM.

Bruised and battered were only a part of the problem. By the time I got home, exhaustion had set in and I decided that, in order to enjoy the evening, I should have a nap. When I woke up at 9:00 the following morning, I realized how badly I blew the night. I don't think that Connie ever talked to me again, and I know, certainly, that I never went into that bowling alley again.

The College Experience

The University of Chicago was an obvious choice for me. The campus was within walking distance of our apartment at 53rd and Ingleside; the school had a special relationship with my High School -- Hyde Park High -- and many of its graduates gravitated toward the U of C. In addition, the University had adopted the "Hutchins Plan" named for its president where college began in

what would now be called 11th Grade and continued for four years. Graduates of conventional High School programs entered in what was considered the third year of college and could receive a Bachelor's Degree after only two years.

The entrance exams didn't seem to be much of a hurdle for me. There were no SAT's, though the entrance exam was detailed and difficult. There were questions on the Humanities that I had never come into contact with. In fact, one question asked us to name five "schools of art." The answer I gave included the Art Institute of Chicago -- obviously not the direction they wanted an answer to go. I have no idea of how I scored on the exams, but I was accepted for admission., During those years beginning in 1943, the student body was decimated by the wartime draft and, though they didn't admit it, the school scrambled for students.

Tuition was really not a problem. Considering the charges made today, they were unbelievably cheap. The school was structured on a quarterly basis -- and tuition for an undergraduate was $100 per quarter. Students who passed their entrance exams at a reasonable level and whose parents had served in the U.,S. military during the first World War (only 25 years earlier) could apply for a Laverne and Ida B Noyes scholarship which provided half tuition. I qualified for this stipend and could go to school for three quarters of the year for $150.00.

The Hutchins plan considered a curriculum based on survey courses. There were several areas available: Humanities, English, Natural Sciences and Biological Sciences. If a student opted for the full curriculum, he would receive a B.A. degree on completion of the courses. If the student wanted to vary this program, he could select from a series of other course offerings. I took this route and received a PhB degree having completed a year of History courses. Each quarter of these courses included a specialty -- Colonial History, American History and Latin American History. In my English courses, there were segments involving creative writing, journalism, and, of course, readings in classic literature.

The core curriculum included references to the then-popular "Great Books" program which was a pet of Robert Maynard Hutchins and his sidekicks, Mortimer J. Adler and Milton Mayer. This triumvirate planned the schedules and organized the curriculum for the Humanities courses which included the great philosophers on ancient Greece as well as those of the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries. Most of these survey courses were taught by the senior faculty members in each of the academic areas. I suppose their idea was simply that, if they could turn students on to the area, their graduate classrooms would be filled and their tenure made more secure. So it was that I came to know such academics as Anton Carlson, Fred Hutchinson, J. Fred Rippey, Bill Vatter and others whose fame at that time transcended the U of C and was national.

At age 18, on June 13, 1944, I registered for the draft. Within a week, I was called up for a physical examination. These were the weeks immediately after D-Day in Europe when casualties were exceedingly high and the army had to rely on a heavy draft of young men to fill their ranks. The army rejected me for several reasons, but there was, I felt, always a chance they might change their minds and the rest of my college career was haunted by the possibility of having it truncated by being called into the service.

I finished my first year of school without that worry -- I was too young. But on D-Day, June 6, 1944, I sat in a gymnasium, immediately across the street from The Rockefeller Chapel taking a "comprehensive" examination in the Biological sciences. The carillon was chiming through the day to announce the landings in Normandy making the concentration on the exam extremely difficult. Fortunately, those exams were graded on a curve and everyone taking the six hour test was under the same pressure that day.

I decided to continue through the summer, lest the draft would catch up with me. I began the summer session by doubling up on courses. I had already decided to enter the graduate school of business and I was admitted to it immediately. I took three undergraduate courses that summer in the College and two graduate courses in the GSB. In that way, I estimated that I could complete my Bachelor and Master's Degrees in three calendar years. The work load I assumed was something my parents didn't comprehend because they expected adequate grades. Though I never received any prompting from them regarding the grades I received, I knew their expectations and my inner drives indicated that I should do well in the courses I took.

In June of 1945, I walked down the aisle in mortar board and gown and received a bachelor's degree -- a PhB. A year from the following August, I received the MBA degree at the same time as the war against Japan was concluded. During the 125 months I worked exclusively on my MBA degree, I became friendly with a number of returning service men. They were, for the most part reluctant to talk about their service experiences but they represented a degree of maturity and a different world outlook than I have been accustomed to while in classes.

The University was the birthplace of controlled atomic reactors and the campus was filled with people who were intimately involved in nuclear physics. The umbrella explanation for the secret installations of the Manhattan project. The standard explanation, which seemed to satisfy the curiosity of students was that the secret work was a part of "The Institute for the Study of Metals," a partial truth since Uranium is essentially a metal. When we asked, we were not hushed, but rather told that the work involved the discovery of a technique for the welding of aluminum, something that would speed aircraft production. We accepted that explanation. I learned later that my faculty advisor, a nationally known expert in cost accounting, doubled as the

comptroller of the Manhattan project and oversaw the expenditure of billions of dollars for the development of the A-Bomb.

As to social outlets, when I first entered school, I was unaware of the structure of fraternities. There were no sororities on the campus. Instead, women who were anointed became members of exclusive women's clubs which had Greek letter names but no national affiliations. Men's fraternities had evolved from the :rah-rah" days of the 1920's. Though Hutchings felt their elitism was contrary to the egalitarian tone of his core curriculum, he tolerated a few fraternities which maintained houses on campus. I was "rushed" by two of them and invited to join one., I pledged Phi Sigma Delta and went through a pledge period which was half hi-jinks and half a testing of compatibility with other members. It was in the fraternity house that I learned to play bridge, learned about living in an all-male surrounding and generally, how to conduct myself in social situations. The fraternity held frequent parties, owned a juke box and generally was a social club. However, they did expect more senior members to mentor the younger ones in the ways and habits of fraternity living.

The fraternity was a social as well as an emotional outlet. Because it was impossible for my parents to understand the pressure of the course load I was taking, there were frequent arguments and misunderstandings. I would use the fraternity house as a refuge from family and, as often as possible, from the pressure of school Most of the girls I dated would be happy to go to the frat parties (Frat was not an acceptable term at the U of C, the word was always spoken in full) and it was my primary social outlet. I did date and took those dates to movies or to University sponsored events. I continued to be a part of the Hyde Park community as well as a part of the University experience. And I developed friendships outside the immediate fraternity circle, some of them through classroom relationships, others even more casual.

For example, one group went to lunch regularly following an accounting class. They consisted of Jim Halverson, whose father was a major real estate broker on the south side of the city, Bob Olsen, Frank (can't remember his last name) who was sent to school by the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City to learn hospital administration. The four of us would lunch at a small drug store - lunch counter at 61st and Ellis before returning to campus for our afternoon programs. I also was involved in regular Sunday night programming at the University's Hillel house. In addition, I was a part of the youth group at KAM, though the time I spent there became more and more limited as I outgrew the group who were the core of that group.

Beginning in the spring of 1946, I began to develop an enzymatic rash on the back of my hands. The cause was certainly the pressure I was experiencing and I was referred to a dermatologist, Julius Ginsburg. The treatment for that time, after he had exhausted the remedies that were available, was X-Ray therapy. So little was known about radiation in those years that it was thought that X-Rays would treat any number of ailments --

including enzymatic rashes. The treatment did little good, but I decided to take matters in my own hands and created a salve for my hands from some of the ingredients that were of marginal help. Apparently the psychological effect of "my" salve was enough and I was able to control the rash. I continued to take allergy shots from Sam Taub and, when I contracted a cold, I would go to the student health service which inevitably dispensed an elixir of Codeine and Turpin Hydrate for virtually every ailment. While it didn't help at all, it was at least a way of getting your money's worth of the $2.00 quarterly fee everyone paid for student health care.

My final graduation was another of those family traumas. My folks were proud of me --- I was the first in the family to have graduated from college -- and with a graduate degree too. But the days leading up to the final ceremony were stuffed full of the tension of final exams, of having my Master's thesis approved and of editing it for publication in a professional journal. There was also the question of what to do next. The job market was saturated with returning veterans. I had neither the interest or the intent to go into my father's business which would have made me a traveling salesman. I needed a rest and some time to take stock of myself. My graduation gift was a round trip ticket to Los Angeles and enough money to spend a few weeks seeing that part of the world. I had friends who had moved out there including a set of Friedman twins whose mother had bought a motel at which I could get a reasonable rate. My girlfriend at that time, Charlotte Block, was also going to see the west coast. She had family in northern California and I was invited to spend some time with them in Sausalito. I wanted to visit San Francisco so the plans all fell into shape.

But immediately before graduation, my father and I had an explosive set-to. I walked out of the house swearing not to bother with the graduation ceremony. I "disappeared." Actually, I went to the fraternity house and left instructions to any and all that if there were phone calls for me, I hadn't been seen in weeks. I called Charlotte who took pity on me and invited me to her folks' apartment for dinner a couple of time. I had no money and most of my clothes were on Ingleside. Obviously, I hadn't thought out my departure and finally, I relented, called them and was welcomed home with open arms. Graduation ceremonies took place on schedule

Fraternity Pledging

"This meek and lowly worm who exists only through the grace of God and the Fraters of MU, begs, from the innermost depths of his cosmological finitude the condescension of these most high and mighty Fraters to allow this vermian platyhelminthes to enter this room."

By facing away from the room and reciting this mantra, a pledge to the Mu chapter of Phi Sigma Delta was allowed to enter the presence of the more senior members of the chapter. Fraternity membership was something that was

a desirable part of higher education. With memories of raccoon coats and the cheering co-eds of the 1920"s, the membership in a fraternity was viewed as a form of social acceptance at the University of Chicago. The fraternities (never to call them "frats" -- that was considered déclassé) that existed on campus during the war years were hollow shadows of their pre-war selves.

With most of the senior members already a part of the military effort, the recruitment of freshmen whose ages precluded them from draft eligibility was an essential for survival. Meals had been forgone since most of the members lived at home. The campus had become something of a "streetcar college" and the fraternity house was used for social events, as a lounge between classes and as a venue for socializing. It was there that I learned how to play bridge, shoot craps and play pool.

It served a number of more useful purposes, not the least of which was the availability of advice from upper classmen on what to expect from examinations. In those years, each so-called survey course was completed by a six hour comprehensive examination in which an entire year's teaching and reading was condensed into multiple choice questions. Comprehensive examinations covered "survey courses"" which in turn explored an entire field of human knowledge in areas such as Biological Science, Social Science, Humanities, etc. Getting input from someone who had already survived the test was more than helpful.

The pledge period was the follow-up on the rush period during which time entering freshmen were invited to the three "Jewish" fraternity houses on the campus. Fraternities did not observe what we now refer to as "politically correct" methods of recruitment. Race and religion were primary factors in considering anyone for membership in the group. It was a given fact of life which no one contested. The rushees were evaluated by the membership who then offered the acceptable ones a chance to pledge the fraternity. Pledging meant, simply, a commitment to go through a probationary period and then, finally, be initiated into the secrets of the group. I was asked to pledge Phi Sig and accepted.

Pledges were reduced to menial status. Reciting the request to enter a room was only a part of this responsibility. A set of sometimes arbitrary rules was established by one of the senior brothers, the pledge master, who would enforce them at regular meetings of the house with a paddle. One paddle was created by a particularly sadistic member of the group. He had taken a 16 inch paddle and sanded it to an aerodynamic edge. Then, he had drilled holes in the paddle to reduce air resistance. The result, on the butt end of an offending pledge was devastating. When he applied his special paddle on me, it cracked, much to the delight of my four pledge brothers.

Other pledge chores involved maintaining the house, cleaning rooms and the basement. The house paid a housekeeper, an African-American woman named Linda. Her job was to occasionally prepare a dinner for the entire chapter, to wash linens and towels that were used by resident members

and generally to keep the house from falling apart. Linda also was the housemother and knew every member's private business better, in some cases than the members themselves.

The pledge period lasted a full academic quarter and on the penultimate day before initiation ceremonies, the pledges were subjected to a "hell night." This was not, despite popular misconception, a riot of hazing. Instead it was an elaborate and difficult scavenger hunt which took the pledges to all parts of the city. A few of the items on the list still stand out in my memory. For example, we were required to retrieve the identification tag from the toe of a cadaver in the Cook County Morgue. We also had to have six transfer coupons time stamped at exactly the same arbitrary time at six different "El" stations. Remember there were only five of us in total. We managed this feat by enlisting a friend to go to the station at Howard Street -- the end of the line -- and stamp the transfer at the appointed moment and then return it to us. Other items on the list were more confusing than difficult. We had to find wrappers from seven or eight different brands of cigarettes, we had to produce containers of three different brands of spermicidal jelly. And the list ran on.

It took several hours before all five of us returned to the fraternity house with our loot. For each unretrieved item, we were to receive paddles so it was incumbent on us all not to have too many items missing. We did our best.

The next night was our initiation ceremony. Necessarily, we had to pay our initiation fees before finally receiving the treasured fraternity pin. The fee was $50.00, a huge sum in those days. By comparison, tuition to the school was $100 per academic quarter for undergraduate school, $110 for grad school. Since I lived at home and had a half tuition scholarship, the cost to my parents was moderate. Because of this, I convinced my father to advance the cost of the initiation fee. I think he was secretly proud that his son in college was a part of a fraternity -- he could vicariously participate in something that he had heard about from the roaring twenties and which had a certain cache to it.

I was in, I got my pin, was sworn to eternal secrecy regarding the ritual and meaning of the fraternity's initiation ceremony and took my place at the table and at meetings as a fully fledged member of the group.

Regular dues were charged and there were occasional special assessments to cover the cost of parties and social events. The fraternity had a primitive juke box in the living room and a limited amount of furniture making it relatively easy to have parties where dancing was the main activity. Adjacent to the large living room was the virtually unused dining room which had additional furniture and some of the food that was served at these social events. Consisting mainly of snack foods and soft drinks, there was, in retrospect, no use of alcohol though occasionally, the house had a "beer bust" which required the purchase of a keg of beer which everyone participated in.

In those years of stringent gasoline rationing, there was not too much travel among the brothers. Some stayed in the house during the week and returned home for weekend visits with their families in the further reaches of the city. A very few lived full time at the house but most attention was devoted to study and the completion of as many courses as was possible before the inevitable draft would catch up with them.

The intensity of study was purely for self-interest. With a substantial part of a college degree already credited, there was the possibility that the draft board would assign the draftee to a continuation of his study in a field that the services felt was necessary for the war effort. In addition, the completion of a substantial portion of the course load also improved the possibility of being assigned to an officer training school and the eventual commission which was viewed as a chance to stay out of front line service. Make no mistake -- no one wanted to be in the front line infantry units that were being decimated in their advances across Europe and the islands of the Pacific.

Interfraternity rivalry expressed itself in competing baseball and football leagues conducted under the auspices of the University's athletic department. It was in this way that members of the different houses got to know each other and discover common interests as well as common differences. Each house was expected to field a team to compete in these tourneys.

One of the big social events of the University year was the annual class reunion and the Interfraternity sing in which all the houses participated. Our chapter went a step further. By tradition, this event, usually held in early June also was the host for an annual Strawberry Festival. Our house would go to the city's produce market and purchase crates of strawberries which would then be washed and presented with whipped cream and a variety of soft cakes to anyone who wanted to visit the house during the reunion week. It was always a favorite stopping place for alumni, many of whom made regular contributions to the chapter's meager treasury.

Membership in a fraternity was supposed to be a lifelong commitment, but after graduation, members began to slip from the ambit of the chapter. In the first few years after graduation, we would go back for an occasional party or special event, but eventually lost track of the members we knew and as new members took over the house, we stopped going altogether. Phi Sigma Delta suffered the fate of many fraternities during the years that followed the war and finally was merged into a larger Jewish oriented fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau. The religious identification of fraternities was a response to the overtly non-sectarian approach of Universities. Some were affiliated with Catholic institutions, others with various Protestant denominations and three on the campus were Jewish. All of these had common ground at the local Hillel House.

It was at Hillel where we met Jewish entertainers who happened to be in town. Zero Mostel performed for a small group there. Jewish writers would

come and read from their works. Services were conducted on the major holidays by the Rabbi who was assigned to Hillel and difficult moral decisions could be discussed with him. It was the shul away from home and many of the students took advantage of it.

While focused intently on the classes that we were taking, some release was necessary. Like many students, I developed allergies and dermatitis conditions that were directly related to the stress we worked under. Had it not been for the release we found in the fraternities and the Hillel chapter, conditions might have been much worse.

The house had some roomers and a number of members qualified as unique characters. Sometimes, one fraternity's social event was another's cause for vengeance. But that's part of another story. The fraternity served its purpose even if I have now forgotten some of the finer points of bridge and poker.

Driver's Ed

During my teen years, learning how to drive a car didn't represent the rite of passage that it seems to have acquired in more modern times. Our family always had access to cars. Even during the depression, my Dad drove his into the ground as a traveling salesman and exchanged them every three years. It was his practice, on one of his frequent trips to Milwaukee, to stop at Kenosha Wisconsin and go the Nash factory to buy his car directly from the main plant of the manufacturer. That way, he speculated that he could have his choice of models and save the cost of transporting the car to a dealer in Chicago. When the war broke out he was in his third year of driving a 1939 Nash. He had planned to buy a new car in the spring of 1942, but by that time, cars were not available to the general public.

My Grandfather, during his affluent years in the late 1920's drove a Cadillac. In fact, his last huge car was one that I came to love. It was a 1927 dark maroon Caddy. He drove it until he could no longer afford the cost of maintenance and then exchanged it for a 1937 Desoto that he drove throughout the war years and until he replaced it with a 1948 Dodge. It was on these two cars -- the Nash and the Desoto -- that I learned to drive.

Having a driver's license was not essential in that time. The State had just begun to issue them and a mere application was all that was needed. There were no tests and no insurance requirements to get a license. But it was essential that I learn how to drive by practicing the process and it was a job that my father undertook. He played golf on Sundays in a foursome that included his friends, Jules Bluth, Hy Blanksten and Dave Offner. Traveling to the golf course offered an outstanding opportunity to practice driving without burning off non-essential gasoline. How the other members of his golf group viewed my driving is something I never learned. I'm delighted they all survived the experience.

During the war years, gasoline was tightly rationed. Car owners who applied to the Ration Board were awarded stickers to place on their windshields. Everyone was entitled to an "A" sticker which awarded them coupons to buy four gallons of gasoline a week. A "B" sticker doubled that amount and went to people whose way of earning a living wasn't essential to the war effort but who nevertheless depended on the use of a car. Finally, the coveted "C" sticker was reserved to people whose need to drive served the national interests. Doctors, newspaper delivery people, government workers, certain defense industry workers whose jobs required a lot of automobile travel received ""C" stickers and access to unlimited gasoline.

My father, because he used his car to service his customers, got a "B" sticker. My grandfather was limited to an "A" sticker and had to make do. The Desoto could probably drive about 30 miles on a gallon of gas and for my grandfather's needs, that was plenty. In fact, he would occasionally give a coupon to my father who tried unsuccessfully throughout the war to get his classification upgraded to a "C" status. However, one of the things my father thought was essential to his well being was to drive his foursome out to the golf course in Lemont, Illinois, about 40 miles southwest of the city. To help with the gas situation, one of the members of the foursome would occasionally contribute a coupon to buy gas for the trip. Getting to the golf course was a cooperative effort.

By the time I got into my second year of college, he invited me to go along on these Sunday outings. I would be able, with his careful supervision, to drive the Nash through city streets and on highways to get there and to hone my driving skills. The early morning trip took about an hour. There was little traffic at that time of day making the driving process easier. There were also no expressways or toll roads - those would come a full decade later. Country roads were two lanes and were built for the automobile traffic of the 1920's.

Cars did not have automatic transmissions or turn signals. Power brakes and steering weren't even available on luxury cars. Gear shifts were on the steering column of the Nash but on the Desoto, a stick shift rose from the floorboard. Learning how to use the clutch was essential for every driver. Hand signals indicating a driver's intention to turn were expected. The arm was thrust out of the driver's window to permit drivers in following cars to see what he planned to do. When the arm turned down, it indicated a stop. When the arm was stretched perpendicular to the car, it meant an intent to turn left and when the arm was raised, a right turn could be expected. Those turn signals were expected in bitter cold weather as well as in the heat of summer, though heat was no problem since there was no air conditioning in automobiles.

Going to and from the golf course permitted me to learn to drive. I made a habit of walking with the foursome (there was nothing like a golf cart -- you walked) over the first nine holes of the course and then, sitting near the clubhouse, I would study as they completed the final nine holes. When they

were finished, we would go into the clubhouse, have a sandwich and return to the city. Usually, everyone was home by 2:00 P.M.

As my driving improved, I was finally complimented on it by Dave Offner who was a minor politician. He had "clout" and offered to arrange a driver's license for me. No test was required, he told me because he could vouch for my ability to handle a car. In due course, my first driver's license arrived in the mail -- I had completed an application form but didn't even need to have a photograph to finish the process. Over the years since then, while I have had written tests for license renewals and regular eye examinations, the first road test I ever took for a license came in May of 2003

In 1944 and 1945, I was able to convince my grandfather that I should be able to use his car to go to and from classes, to fraternity functions and to the library. There was no public transportation from where I lived to school and I didn't own a bicycle. He agreed to let me use his aging car when I needed it.

During the war years, earning extra money had to be arranged to coincide with class schedules. Most of the work came directly from the school. I was able to get a job proctoring examinations. I would oversee underclassmen as they struggled through the comprehensive examinations and mid-term tests. I also was able to become the assistant to Sam Nerlove as he taught one of the earliest courses of what the Graduate School of Business developed as "The Executive Program." The program was designed to provide formal business education to successful corporate executives who hadn't the advantages of academic training. So my job entailed auditing the downtown courses and taking notes to provide Nerlove, one of my favorite grad school teachers, with an outline of the material he had covered in class. I also graded examinations. In return for liberal interpretation of my hours at the downtown headquarters of the school, I drove Nerlove to and from the downtown campus and provided babysitting services, watching his son who is now a tenured professor at Harvard and a distinguished educator in his own right.

My thrill during this program was the fact that I was meeting and talking to senior management of local companies. I graded papers prepared by the President of Carson Pirie, provided advice on classroom material to the President of Walgreen's and went for coffee with the Comptroller of Abbott Laboratories. It was a heady experience.

Another job opportunity presented itself in the form of a research grant from Libbey Owens Ford Glass Company. They provided funds to the University to prepare a bibliography on the history and development of glass. This was to become a part of their library in Ohio. I was asked to take on the job. I was to be paid $50.00 for the work. But more importantly, I was to get an allowance for virtually unlimited supplies necessary to complete the work and an assigned desk in the University Library stacks. This was something that usually was available only to Ph.D. candidates. I jumped at the opportunity.

The desk in the basement of the library was my home away from home. I could lock the desk and keep my supplies in it. It was a base of operations from which I could explore the millions of books in the library including the Rare Book room. In that room, I discovered 15th and 16th century manuscripts dealing with alchemy and early science where glass was used to make beakers and vials to hold the mystic substances that science concocted in those years. Dutifully, I recorded all these books as well as more modern references in the bibliography. I had no deadline and, because I wanted to keep the desk as long as possible, did a thorough job researching glass. I wouldn't be surprised to find a copy of this work in the library of the company today because the books and material included never went out of style.

In order to get to the library and my sanctuary in the basement, I used my Grandfather's car regularly. It was only a short distance in miles to get there but traveling by car saved my a half hour or more by not having to walk in each direction. I realized I was an experienced driver when, on one early evening, I was driving on Greenwood Avenue between 52nd and 53rd Streets when the linkage between the accelerator pedal and the carburetor broke. The engine raced and the car began to pick up speed. It couldn't be controlled in the normal way and I almost panicked. But I shifted the car into neutral which stopped the rapid acceleration and I stepped on the brakes to slow the car. Finally, I had the sense to turn off the ignition switch and get the car stopped before it careened into the intersection of a through street. I was able to open the hood, discover the damage and repair it. I had averted what might have been a tragic accident. I was really a driver.

I continued driving family cars until, sometime in 1947 when cars were available again after the war, my parents bought me a 1947 Dodge sedan. The price was $1200. I was expected to use this car and become a traveling salesman covering a territory that included northwest Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and eastern Iowa. Driving at least 1000 miles a week, this car soon was no longer a pristine beauty but rapidly became a workhorse. It lasted until 1949 when I replaced it with a Chevy.

By the way, I passed my first road test for the renewal of my driver's license when I took it in May of 2003. At that time, the license was renewed for another four years.

Campus Characters

Every institution of higher education has a cast of characters who give a flavor to the campus. The University of Chicago's cast began at the very top with its Chancellor, Robert Maynard Hutchins. Hailed as a "boy genius" when he was appointed head of the school in 1929, he changed the face of higher education by creating a four year college in which high school juniors and seniors made up the first two years. After passing a series of exhaustive

entrance examinations, graduates from traditional high schools could enter the College as juniors and receive an undergraduate degree after two years. Those completed a rigidly prescribed course of study warded a Bachelor's of Arts degree, those who opted for a couple of elective courses earned a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy.

Graduate degrees required three additional academic years of study so that the results were the same as in more conventional academic programs. A graduate degree required five years. But during those first two years, Hutchins ideas of a broad general education took over. Survey courses were created in Physical, Biological, Social Sciences and The Humanities. Attendance at classes wasn't required, though everyone had to complete and pass a final "comprehensive" examination that lasted fully six hours. In the survey courses, the faculty leaders were required to deliver themselves to lecture sessions on a twice weekly basis. On other days, their material was discussed by instructors and lower faculty who led smaller discussion sessions on the same material.

As a result, undergraduates could hear Nobel Laureates discourse on their topics and have them explained by the instructors who were able to deliver the material at a more grass roots level. Hutchins idea of providing a broad general education to students turned out a group of people who were conversant with virtually every area of human knowledge. Later specialization in Graduate Schools depended on career goals and talents. Thus, MD's were able to talk about Aristotle and Plato, and Philosophers knew something about quantum physics.

Hutchins himself rarely appeared on Campus. Though he lived in the President's House, he was never a part of campus life. In fact, except for occasional monographs published under the seal of the University, and discourses among his personal ""brain trust," consisting of Mortimer Adler, William Benton, Milton Mayer and other members of the Committee on Social Thought, you wouldn't know there was any intellectual leadership.

Hutchins was married to Maude Phelps, an aspiring artist. Maude created a stir one year when the official presidential Christmas Card depicted a nude drawing of the Hutchins daughter who happened to be a University Student. The daughter transferred to another school and rumor had it that Hutchins burned Maude's easel.

In my own circle of acquaintances, there were several equally memorable characters. I can recall meeting the world renowned physiologist, Anton J. Carlson. He was one of the few people in the world ever to be awarded an honorary degree as a Doctor of Medicine. Carlson was a Swedish immigrant who spoke with a heavy accent. I recall meeting him one morning when we were attending a lecture in one of the large halls on campus. He was the featured lecturer and we all went anticipating the wisdom we were sure would drop from his lips. We had no idea of what he looked like, we only

knew his reputation. Audio Visual aids were quite common and movies were produced by the Encyclopedia Britannica which was owned by the University.

Therefore, before the lecture began, it was common for one of the building and grounds crew to set up the projector for the lecture. I saw that the operator was having a problem loading the film and went to help. I had experience with these machines and easily fitted the film through the sprockets and loops. The grounds man thanked me profusely, apologizing for his mechanical ineptitude and general clumsiness -- with a heavy Swedish accent and then went on to the front of the room to deliver a lecture on human physiology.

Yet another teacher was Jay Finley Christ. It didn't take long for students to recognize that he suffered from some sort of Deistic complex because of his name. He taught business law. He didn't really know how to teach and even less, how to prepare an examination on the subject over which he was put in charge. As a result, his exams asked questions that equated with "Which is bigger -- the Brooklyn Bridge or the Holland Tunnel?" The possible answers were "Yes" or "No" It was a tough test to pass. The reasons for JFC's obtuse questioning was his devotion to the writings of Arthur Conan Doyle. Christ was one of the founding members of the "Baker Street Irregulars" a group of men whose study of the works of Doyle and of Sherlock Holmes was so intense that they were able to personify this fictional character's every living moment as well as those of every character in every book Doyle wrote. Christ was the author of at least two books on Holmes -- he never wrote anything on business law.

But faculty weren't the only ones who could be called characters. I can recall Jack Lamb who was a professional student. He seemed to have no interest in completing his education. Rather, he changed courses of study when he came close to completing one. His demeanor usually was presented with a vapid look with Jack deep in thought on some abstract question of philosophy or logic. He happened to room at the fraternity house and, though not a member of the chapter, was always around the house. I never fully understood his field of study -- it might have been philosophy. He always carried a large, messy pile of papers a couple of books and seemed to be deep in thought regardless of the situation. I recall him sitting at a table during one of the fraternity parties reading a tome on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. He didn't like conversation and when drawn into one would pose impossible questions which were impossible to answer.

Jack had established a relationship with the famous educator, John Dewey. Dewey is called the father of modern education, having developed some of the methodology that's still being used today. Multi-age groups, study in social science rather than history or civics or geography, inter-age contact were all parts of his system. He taught at one of the Ivy League colleges, but Jack had his address and wrote long, multi disciplined pages of rambling letters to Dewey. We read and critiqued the letters when Jack had

completed them and added appropriate comments which were often incorporated into one of the several rewrites of these hand-written missives. In due course, we were all amazed that he received an answer from the master, John Dewey. Invariably, those answers covered all the points in the original letter -- and arrived on a one cent postal card signed, simply "Dewey."

Yet another fraternity brother was Cliff Patlak. He was a science major -- we were never quite sure which science he was pursuing. His family were grocers in northwest Indiana, and Cliff lived in the house, going home only rarely. He was a true student, applying himself to the course material with avidity that I could never quite match. Cliff went on to earn a Ph.D. in theoretical biology specializing in fields of blood-brain barrier permeability. If he's not retired, he teaches in the Department of Surgery at SUNY, Stony Brook, New York.

On one occasion, after they had hosted a particularly besotted party, our house was raided by a rival fraternity in the dark of night. When we arrived at the house the following day, it was necessary to retrieve our dining room chairs from the tops of the lampposts in the neighborhood. Fortunately, the trail of chairs led to the doorsteps of the rival and their activities were noted for future retribution. One other element of damage was to the phone in a booth on the first floor of the fraternity house. It was a phone that all of us used regularly to call friends and family. The earpiece of the phone had been severed and the entire phone was rendered useless. We realized the problem, but decided to call Cliff to the phone. He had been asleep and stumbled downstairs from his room, wiping slumber from his eyes. Picking up the phone, he shouted "Hello" into the phone several times before realizing the problem. When it finally dawned on him, instead of hanging it up and going back to sleep, he methodically disassembled the phone, reconnected the wiring and left it in working order. It took the phone company a week before someone was able to come out to the house to replace the severed part -- but meanwhile, we had a phone.

Finally, there was the occasion of the 1944 presidential election. A very liberal sitting Vice President, Henry A. Wallace, was passed over for re-nomination. Instead, a Missouri Senator named Harry Truman was selected to run in his place. Wallace decided to mount a campaign for the presidency on his own and organized a party whose banner he would carry. Liberal in the extreme, Wallace's message appealed to college students throughout the country. Among the issues Wallace addressed were the rights of workers, even in a wartime economy, to have periodic wage and benefit increases. War industry was making money and, though some of it was being drained off by excess profit taxes, none was benefiting workers.

One week, a series of posters appeared on campus announcing a speaking appearance by the presidential candidate, Henry A. Wallace. His topic, it was announced, was to be "Labor Pains." Below the notice was a sign-up sheet for those who wanted to attend this limited seating appearance.

Signatures were easy to obtain. It wasn't until Wallace did not appear that the student body discovered it had been duped by some character in the form of a practical joke. By way of confession, the character who posted the meeting notices was .... me.

A Graduation Trip

My years in College were difficult and rushed. Because of the war, I planned to complete five years of academic work in three calendar years. This would permit me, should I be drafted, to have as much college under my belt as was possible at any given moment during those three years. The final year leading up to August and September of 1946 were filled with excitement and angst. I had received my undergraduate degree in June of 1945 and had to work very hard to complete the requirements for an advanced degree. Finally, by August I had to successfully complete my last four Graduate School courses in order to be qualified for Graduation with an MBA Degree. They were difficult, advanced courses that required a tremendous amount of preparation. One dealt with Municipal and Governmental Accounting, another with Mergers and Consolidations. One of the reasons for my urgency was an awareness that millions of returning veterans were flooding the job market. I wanted to be sure that there was space for me that would permit growth and advancement.

Life at home was hectic. My parents couldn't grasp the tremendous pressure I was under from my own internal need to finish school so they simply added more pressure. They disapproved of a girl I was dating, considering that she was beneath me. I disagreed. They wanted me to consider certain job possibilities including one with the government's Department of Agriculture in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I had no time to think about jobs because my completion of the course work was my first priority and I certainly wasn't interested in Albuquerque.

During the course of the year, I developed a skin rash, primarily on my hands, from the nervous pressure that all this caused. The dermatologist, Julius Ginsberg, treated the rash with X-rays which, though they gave temporary relief, could not be continued without secondary tissue damage. I finally developed an ointment from some of the ingredients that had been partially successful. The medication contained Vioform and Salicylic Acid in a Vaseline base. Ginsberg approved the treatment and I learned how to write my own prescriptions for it. This required a pharmacist to mix the ingredients himself in the old fashioned way. Normally, ointments were prepared in factories and druggists bought them already made. Mine was special. It worked although it was messy. Many of those months I went around wearing white gloves with the fingers cut out to allow me to write.

There was a final argument with my father at which point I took refuge in the Fraternity House for several days. I also spent some time staying with a

girlfriend, Charlotte Block. I avoided my folks and warned them that if they didn't ease off on me, I would forego the graduation ceremony altogether. It was something their pride wanted and they relaxed the pressure on me. I went ahead and received my degree in cap and gown, was photographed with all the relatives and went home to relax.

My graduation present was a round trip ticket to California. I'm not sure whether it was an attempt to get rid of me permanently or just to get me away from the city into a different, more relaxed environment. I jumped at the opportunity for the traveling. I had been to Philadelphia, Washington and New York on my own, but when I got off the train in New York, my father was waiting for me and I was again under family control. This was the first time I would ever be really on my own and I looked forward to it.

In 1946, the first year after the war ended, there was a huge migration from Chicago to California and many of the people I had known had made a permanent move to Los Angeles which was viewed as the land of opportunity. In talking about the planned trip, I learned that Charlotte was also going to the west coast, though she would land in Sausalito in the Bay Area. I was invited to join her and, since she was staying with family and I was on a limited budget, I made arrangements to meet her in San Francisco.

I knew a set of twin brothers named Friedman who had moved to L.A. with their widowed mother and had bought a motel on Laurel Canyon Drive just before it crossed Hollywood Boulevard. I checked a map to see whether this was a location I could enjoy and then wrote and asked what sort of rate I could expect if I stayed a couple of weeks. The answer was "Don't worry, you'll be able to afford it." I asked them to hold a room for me.

I had no particular agenda when I went there. I roamed around. On one occasion, I ran into a high school classmate of mine on Hollywood Boulevard. We went into a Drug Store -- it might have been the fabled Schwab's -- to have a coke. We talked and he told me he had just finished appearing in a picture with Shirley Temple. I was impressed and when we parted I wished him good luck. That was the last time I spoke to Mel Torme.

I also spent time with another high school classmate whom I had also known in college before she moved out to L.A. with her family. In fact, we had dated regularly in Chicago before the move. Her name was Paula Oppenheim and her father was an insurance salesman who had bought a house on a quiet street in Beverly Hills. Her mother had been a concert violinist who was booked in the 1920's under the name "Melvina." Paula also had a younger brother named Freddie and his mother delighted in playing the tune "Freddie and His Fiddle." I had dinner with the family a couple of times and we were able to use her father's car to tour around the area. I also remember catching a Pacific Electric train to go out to Long Beach and to sit in the sand. It was the first time I had seen the Pacific Ocean. Paula and I got along very well and began to fall in love.

I had been encouraged to phone the son of a friend of the family. I knew him well although he was several years older than I was. I had spend a couple of nights crashing in his apartment in Washington D.C. during the war. Rooms in D.C. were impossible to get and I wanted to tour the capitol, so we contacted George Blanksten and he agreed to let me sleep on his couch. Before the war, George had taught Latin American History at Wilson Junior College in Chicago. During the war, he had been recruited by Nelson Rockefeller to work in the Office of Inter-American Affairs in Washington. Following the end of the war and the dismemberment of his office, he won a teaching position at UCLA.

I phoned George and we made a date for dinner. We met at his apartment and went out to eat. He asked me a favor which I quickly agreed to. In California at that time, the State legislature supported the activities of one of its members, a man named Tenney. He had created a committee to investigate so-called Un-American Activities. In Washington, the same sort of committee was headed by the infamous Martin Dies.

George asked me to dress in a shirt and tie and to appear at his 10:00 A.M. political science class. I was to sit in the back of the room and appear to be taking notes. Most students wore "T" shirts and jeans. None wore ties in the heat of September. I was conspicuous. George's lesson plan was a tour of the political spectrum from Anarchy to Absolutism. It was a freshman course and he had gotten to his lectures on Communism when I showed up in the classroom. He didn't acknowledge me to the class and they were obviously uncomfortable with my presence. In fact, they kept peeking over their shoulders at the stranger in the room. Finally, with about ten minutes left in the class hour, George introduced me. His point had been made, The students had expressed a fear for their freedom. The Tenney Committee had put a damper on the free expression of ideas and they felt threatened by my presence, thinking that I was a representative of the committee and one of the underlings of its legal counsel, a young lawyer named Richard Nixon.

I visited the sights of Los Angeles -- the La Brea tar pits, the Farmer's Market, Olivera Street and Westwood Village. I saw Rodeo Drive and Hollywood Boulevard where it intersected with Vine Street -- an intersection that was fabled in movie lore. Los Angeles in those years was a series of suburbs looking for a city to surround. Each element of the city had a separate identity and there was no real core. While that part of L.A. has changed, the fact that, in 1946, there was little public transportation available separated all the surrounding cities. In fact, the most acceptable mode of transportation was via hitch hiking. It was acceptable and rides were readily available. There was no fear of either picking up a hiker or in hiking.

My evenings with Paula were intense. On one occasion, we went to one of Hollywood's three fabled night clubs. We went to Earl Carrol's, The other two, the Brown Derby and the Copacabana had been options, but the current revue at Carrol's was supposed to be the best. The place was very much

like a set from a Fred Astaire movie. Tables were located on raised platforms in a semi-circle above the dance floor. The floor show, when it began, used the dance floor and, because of the height of each tier of tables, it was easy to see and very elaborately costumed. Usually, there were two rows of tables on each tier. Prices were high and it was necessary to try to hold down the expense of drinks and of the food. The menu, as I remember it, was expensive for the time though now it would seem ridiculously cheap.

L.A. was interesting, but it was soon time to leave the Friedman's motel and get on the train to head north to San Francisco. It was an eight hour trip on the Southern Pacific. I slept through most of it.

A Graduation Trip -- Part 2

I had written instruction on how to get from the San Francisco Union Station to Sausalito. It was early evening when I arrived in town and I followed those directions and found Charlotte Block waiting for me at her relative's house. I was welcomed, given dinner and shown to the room where I would stay. Charlotte and I had been close friends in College. She lived at 53rd and Drexel Avenue, not more than a block from where I had grown up. And she was a member of the group of co-eds who were most closely associated with my Fraternity. We dated occasionally but were really close friends. Charlotte was dark haired, a little on the heavy side, though not obese. She was good company and I was sad to hear, a few years later, that she had died. I missed her.

When my father and I had our pre-graduation dispute and I walked out of the apartment with my clothes, I first went to Charlotte's house. Her mother was rather uncomfortable with my staying there. She didn't need a permanent, unemployed male in the small apartment. I quickly moved to the fraternity house where I knew I could find a bed and would be welcome. Throughout those four or five days that I stayed incommunicado, I had no contact with my parents who were looking for me in all the wrong places.

In Sausalito, I was received more cordially. I think that Charlotte's family expected that I was, at least, a serious suitor for their niece's hand. At best, I was her fiancée. In fact, I was neither. I was a good friend who needed a place to sleep. Charlotte and I went into San Francisco to explore the mysteries of the city. We went to the usual tourist places like Seal Rock and Muir Woods. We visited Nob Hill, Telegraph Hill and other heights in town. We stopped and saw Coit Tower and looked across the bay at Alcatraz which at that time was housing Al Capone. We shopped for souvenirs in China Town.

We managed to get to Seal Rock and have lunch one day at its famous restaurant. On another day, we took a cable car to the Mark Hopkins Hotel on the top of Nob Hill. The Top of The Mark was probably the most famous place in San Francisco and one whose reputation had traveled to Chicago. It also was featured in many of the movies of the time, especially those that dealt with the

return of soldiers and marines from the Pacific Theater. It was, in a word, legendary.

Charlotte and I went there in the late afternoon and ordered a drink. As we were sitting by a window, we were approached by a rather rough looking individual who introduced himself as a sailor. He had, he told us, been at sea for most of the war. He worked on a freighter -- a tramp steamer --in the Pacific Theater of operations and had a variety of war stories to tell us. Whether they were true or not wasn't important -- they made for good listening. He told us that he had received all his back pay and wanted a night on the town. He asked us to join him and told us that his ship was due to sail again in a couple of days and that he would be away for an additional length of time on a long voyage. It was a proposal that reeked of romance and we took him up on his offer.

After a couple of more drinks at the Top of the Mark, we went to China Town and ate dinner. He ordered. I don't remember what we had to eat but know it was nothing like the foods we had eaten at Chinese restaurants in Chicago. Then, we stopped at another bar and had more to drink. In retrospect, I'm sure he was trying to get us drunk and then take advantage of the situation, though I don't know which of us was more appealing to him.

Finally, he invited us to see his ship. He was a radioman and could receive short wave broadcasts from all over the world. We took a cab to the dock where his ship was moored and went aboard. There was a skeleton crew on board and he talked to them and told them he was going to his cabin and to the radio room. We tagged along, not quite knowing what to expect and, by this time, getting a little apprehensive about the adventure.

In his cabin, we were offered more drinks but this time, we declined with thanks and asked to see the radio equipment and what it was able to do. He showed us to the radio room and after fiddling with the dials was able to bring in English language broadcasts from Britain, from the south Pacific and from other points around the world. It was fascinating and something we had read about but hadn't experienced. It reeked of adventure.

Finally, the effects of the liquor began to be felt and we were very tired. He offered to let us bed down on the ship. I had visions of being Shanghaied and of waking up to find myself at sea. I'm sure Charlotte had visions of being impressed into white slavery and finding herself in a brothel in Hong Kong. We declined the offer and got a cab that took us back to transportation that would eventually get us to Sausalito. I know I was relieved to get back to the bed I knew. I suspect that Charlotte felt the same way but we agreed that this was an adventure to remember.

Friends of my parents from the Temple had moved to San Francisco and I was under instructions to phone them. He was a doctor and she was a charming hostess. I made a date with them and included Charlotte. Following their instructions, I went to their town house by cable car. We were greeted warmly and graciously, invited into the living room. They offered me "B and

B" as a drink -- Benedictine and Brandy. It was something I had never ever heard of, but to be polite, I accepted. I decided it was not a drink I wanted to continue sipping even though it was ultimately sophisticated.

On another occasion, we went to Muir Woods, across the Golden Gate Bridge from the City of San Francisco. It was necessary to get transportation on to a tour bus to get there. Once there, we were pretty much on our own and could wander through the redwood trees and get our fill of the wonderful scent of the trees. They were impressive, not only because of their size but also because they seemed to be so much a part of the history of the area.

Eventually, it was time to leave San Francisco and return to Los Angeles and to home. Paula was expecting me back and met me at the L.A. station, drove me to her family's house and they put me up for the few days I had before having to go back to Chicago. I knew that, once I returned to Chicago, my principal task was to find a job that was appropriate. Paula understood that eventually, I would be a part of my father's business. The nature and profitability of the business was the basis for later misunderstandings, especially by her parents. But that's another story.

Chesterton

Beginning in November of 1947, I began working for my father. I was the manager of the factory in Chesterton, Indiana, a town of about 3,000 located 20 miles east of Gary Indiana. Paula and I had managed to move into a small one-bedroom furnished apartment at 73rd and Yates. The winter of 1947-48 was snowy and the roads to Chesterton took me through the industrial areas of East Chicago and Whiting Indiana and through the city of Gary. There were no expressways to ease the 40 mile trip and I drove the round trip daily. In good weather it took at least 90 minutes each way.

In January, Nanni Steinthal suffered a fatal heart attack. It was my first adult experience with the death of a close relative. Paula had been visiting her parents in California and happened to have scheduled her return by train on the day of Nanni's funeral. She met me in my parent's apartment which was filled with friends and relatives. In the evening, the Rabbi conducted a memorial service -- a minyan. Immediately after the conclusion of the service, Paula asked me to follow her to a rear bedroom where she unceremoniously told me she was leaving me and was returning to California. Our marriage, after only six months, she said, was over.

The twin shocks of that day have stayed with me for more than 55 years. When I went back to work, being suddenly single, I decided to find some sort of room in Chesterton so I wouldn't have to make the round trip daily over snow and ice. I closed the apartment on Yates and moved the few possessions that were there to my parent's apartment. I found a room in the Dunes area in a motel that was adequately heated. I was able to heat some cocoa for breakfast and to sleep there. It was off season and the rates were very

low. I was the only "guest" in the motel which was actually an individual cabin. After a few weeks of this isolation, I found a room in town in an old 19th century house. It was a large front bedroom and the landlady kept the place immaculately clean. I had room, heat and a soft bed. I wanted little more.

Soon, I became a part of the Chesterton community. The Pine Tap was located across the street from the factory and I would stop for a beer after the plant had been locked down for the night. Next door to the factory was a dairy/ice cream parlor which prepared lunchtime sandwiches. A boarding house in the area offered meals -- there were no restaurants -- and I came to know Louis Mencke, the owner/publisher of Chesterton's weekly newspaper. The food was good and wholesome and the company was stimulating. Mencke had been well educated and we spent time in the evening -- in the boarding house's living room -- debating the issues of the day.

Helen Carlin was the forelady in the factory. She lived in Gary with her husband, a steelworker but decided to enroll her two sons in the Chesterton Public School. She would drive to Chesterton, open the factory and then take her two boys to class. They would return to the factory after school, do their homework and return home to Gary with their mother in the afternoon. The older boy -- Junior -- did not come home one afternoon. We later discovered that he had fallen victim to a pedophile. It was two days later when he wandered back to the factory. Police, who had been involved from the start were able to work with the 10 year old to find out where he had been during those two days. They arrested the man who had held him and found quantities of pornographic material in his room. He was taken to the county jail in Valparaiso and eventually tried, convicted and sentences to a long prison term. Junior was counseled by a psychiatrist and the whole town was chastened by the incident. During the hunt for Junior and following the arrest of the pedophile, I spent a lot of time working with Helen and with the police to try to bring the situation to as happy a conclusion as was possible in the circumstances.

Eventually, another garment factory opened in Chesterton. Joyce Sportswear, a Chicago based company opened its factory a few blocks from our plant. Managing this facility was another Jewish male, Willard Wolf and we soon established common ground. It was convenient to have someone with whom I could exchange machine needles or other specialized supplies. It served both our needs. Willard also moved to town and joined the boarding house dinner group.

One evening he suggested that we go into Michigan City, a larger town about 18 miles further east. There was to be a semi-professional boxing card at the high school gym. There was no movie theater in Chesterton, TV had not come to the town and our only recreational outlet was the radio. I jumped at the chance and we drove into Michigan City. It became a regular practice.

We also learned about Mickey Joseph. Mickey was an organizer for one of the large Industrial Unions -- I think it was the United Petroleum Workers. His office was in East Chicago, Indiana but his passion was in the rear of a small tavern in Michigan City where he could practice his hobby -- gourmet cooking. In the rear of the tavern, Mickey had brought all the refinement of a fine Parisian bistro. His cooking was exquisite. And he was open for guests provided they observed a series of his rules. First, there was one item each night on the menu and if you didn't like it, you didn't come to his place. Second, reservations were on a first come - first served basis with a limit of twelve people per evening. Finally, you were required to help with the cleanup after dinner and pay only a proportional percentage of the cost of the food and supplies. It was a great way to eat superbly prepared food.

Television was new in those years. There were no national broadcasts or networks. WGN, owned then and now by the Chicago Tribune had created a coaxial cable connection to South Bend, Indiana for the purpose of telecasting the Notre Dame University football games. The cable, which at the time was a technologically advanced concept, followed the right-of-way of the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad which went through Michigan City. In order to maximize the use of the cable, WGN decided to televise the fights from the gym.

These were true prize fights -- a prize of perhaps $25 went to the winner of the undercard bouts. The main event, an eight round fight, drew more experienced fighters from Chicago and Gary and carried a prize of maybe $100. It was not big time boxing. But that didn't slow down the WGN publicity department. In Chicago, they advertised these relatively amateur fights as being the fights of the century and, with your TV tuned to WGN, you could see them every Wednesday at no cost.

The audience, including Willard Wolf, and me, usually consisted of maybe 50 people, most of whom were there to ward off the lethargy of a winter in Michigan City. To add excitement, WGN sent one of its announcers, Russ Davis, to Michigan City to announce the fights. His job was to breathe excitement into a fight that usually involved a couple of untrained country boys. These fighters were strong -- they looked as though they could pick up a farm tractor single handedly. But, they were not fighters and didn't have the most rudimentary concept of self-defense. If one of them were to be matched against a trained fighter, they would be pummeled mercilessly and, unfortunately, didn't know when to fall down. In most cases, it was necessary for the referee to stop the fight before the farm kid was seriously maimed.

There was an intermission to allow for the airing of commercials, and the Davis would organize some distraction to give the fight card a showmanlike appearance. On one occasion, he brought two twelve year old boys into the ring and gave each of them a pillow. The referee then was supposed to referee the pillow fight and select a winner. Unfortunately, one of the feather pillows broke its casing and the feathers flew all over the canvas

ring. Cleaning slippery feathers off the canvas was a tedious job lasting a full hour. Meanwhile, it was Davis' job to make small talk to fill the air time. After this incident, he became known as "Feathers" Davis for the rest of his career.

Following the trauma of Paula's departure, I had very little interest in a social life. I did meet a couple named Carmody. He was an ophthalmologist with a practice in Gary. She was the mother of four or five very young children. Dr. Carmody's hobby was growing orchids and he maintained a greenhouse next to the family home. He taught me the process of interbreeding the plants. Because there were so many pre-school children and Mrs. Carmody seemed to always be pregnant, they had hired what today would be called an au pair. Her name was Margaret Frank and we enjoyed being together. Later, Margaret left the Carmody's and moved to Chicago where she took on the same job with the then-music director of the Chicago Symphony, Désiré Defauw. The Defauw family lived in the Old Town Triangle area of the city and I would visit Margaret frequently, go out to a movie on Wells Street or have a sandwich at a local eatery. After she left Chicago, she returned to her home town of Defiance Ohio and on one occasion, I contacted her and we visited when I was in Defiance on business.

When the Chesterton factory was finally sold and I had moved back to Chicago, I moved in with my parents again. Chesterton had been my first experience with independent living

I had learned how to get along with a broad spectrum of people and had successfully managed to make friends and to run a business venture.

Red River Valley

One of my prize memories took place during the "salad" years following college graduation. A job was important, obviously, but the most desirable fields were crowded with returning veterans who had claiming rights to jobs they had left to serve the country during the war. The jobs that remained were hardly, at least in my judgment, worthy of my training.

Among the friends I made during those years were a group of incipient newspaper writers who worked for the Chicago Sun Times and for the various wire services that had major offices in the city. Bob and Belva Hughes were a young married couple who had adopted a very Bohemian lifestyle. Belva came from western Illinois where her father, an auto dealer, ruled the house with a firm hand. Bob on the other hand grew up in Chicago and lived a very loosely structured life. The two were never a match though they married and, with the help of Belva's father and Bob's mother, bought an old, large and virtually derelict 19th century house on the fringe of Hyde Park, in Chicago.

Bob’s mother, who was an invalid, moved into the house and Belva, to her dismay, was required to tend to the invalid's needs. Nevertheless, she made the best of it. When I first met them, Bob was working for the Sun Times as a general assignment reporter and was being compensated barely enough to

meet the obligations of the mortgage and food. Belva and Bob were, superficially, deliriously happy until the time they divorced a few years later.

Another member of this small circle was Sy Friedman who actually was my entry into the group, We had known each other in high school, had lost touch during the war years and accidentally hooked up again after the war when we met at a house party. Sy was working for International News Service as a wire editor, a job that sounded a great deal more important than it actually was.

Justin Fishbein was another member of the group who was in their Sun Times contingent. His primary claim to fame was his father who was the long time Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association and as such was the voice of medical practice. Morris Fishbein was a doctor who had never, since his graduation from medical school, seen or treated a patient. He was the model of the political doctor. In later years, I had occasion to interview Morris Fishbein for an oral history project and he admitted that he did not like the idea of practicing medicine on people. But his name continues to be associated with the group of doctors who opposed the concept of "socialized medicine" that we now call Medicare. Justin was a great guy who was totally in rebellion against his father and his father's ideas. In later years, however, he joined his father in editing numerous books on the practice of medicine and became a voice of conservative politics in Chicago's northern suburbs.

Finally, the group included Charlie Einstein. He was a sport writer who free-lanced but who was mostly associated with the INS. Charlie came from a distinguished family. His father, Harry, was a comedian who used the stage name of "Parkyacarcus." Affecting a Greek accent, he performed regularly as a part of the national radio program featuring Eddie Cantor. At a time when ethnic comedy was popular and characters like Amos and Andy, Mollie Goldberg and Mortimer Snerd were huge successes, Charlie's dad was a big name in comedy. Also in rebellion, Charlie opted for sports where he went on to report on the rise of African American figures in professional sports with the writing of books on Willy Mays, Jackie Robinson and Cassius Clay. He also went on to New York where he was to win a Pulitzer Prize for his writing.

The meeting place for this group of males together with an occasional girl friend was at the Hughes' house. Having immersed herself in 19th century British fiction, Belva determined to conduct a salon in her living room and one week, she invited us all to a soiree. We could bring dates, but the members of the group were all required to perform the song. "Red River Valley" on an instrument of our choice. Friedman had taken piano lessons and the old out-of-tune upright in the Hughes living room served him well. Einstein and Fishbein had spent countless hours learning the rudiments of the violin. Bob Hughes had been limited to learning how to twang on a Jews' Harp and of course, I brought my harmonica.

With this ensemble, we all performed both as soloists and as a group with no concept of harmony and no established key for performing. The result was chaotic -- never has Arnold Schoenberg music sounded any more cacophonous. But we met the requirements and over several raffia-wrapped bottles of cheap Chianti (which at the time was selling for about 69 cents a liter) the music sounded great.

Sy Friedman asked me if I was interested in working overnight at INS editing a wire. I had no idea of what this sort of work entailed but, both for the money and the experience I went to his office and met the Bureau chief, an alcoholic Irishman named Jerry Healy. I was hired to work midnight to eight o'clock. Since I could go to my main job which was with my father's business only a few blocks away, I jumped at the chance. Sleep between 6 and 11 was enough for me, and I could claim to be a newspaperman. The job itself entailed reading news releases that were sent from both coasts and transferring the pertinent ones to wires that led to the opposite coast. The material came through the wires and was translated to endless strips of paper with punched holes in them. The punches could be read by machines which would then transfer the data to the other end of the wires.

This process required a certain amount of judgment -- material that was too local would not have been sent. For example, the school board elections in Ocala Florida had little news interest to the Los Angeles Times and the process of editing required distilling this sort of material and forwarding only the newsworthy items like a gory butcher-like slaying in Naples, Florida to avid readers in San Francisco. It was interesting work but occasionally, on what were called "slow news days," somewhat boring. We also received frequent pep talks from the "chief"" who happened to be sending them from his aerie at San Simeon California. We were, in fact, employees of none other than William Randolph Hearst. Our primary directive was not to interfere with any material sent through by the Hearst columnists including Dorothy Kilgallen and Hedda Hopper, both personal favorites of ""the chief." While we had all seen the movie "Citizen Kane," we knew that Hearst was for real, exerted real power, and was not a person to be trifled with.

There were two things that brought this newsroom/wire transfer service to attention. One was a train wreck. The names of victims, the details of the wreck and the excitement of the rescue operations were all to be reported in exquisite detail. We took advantage of the local reporting skills of the City News Bureau for local event. For material that came from further away, we accepted reports from personnel of local, small town newspapers. The other major news event was the reporting of elections.

And so it was, in November of 1948 that Sy Friedman and I went downtown on election night anticipating a heavy workload. We were relieved when, on the way, we passed a newsstand on a corner where the Tribune's headlines blared "Dewey Defeats Truman." If it was over that soon, our work for the evening was greatly lessened.

By the time we got to the office, however, we discovered that the results were not all that finalized. Jerry Healy, as the head of the office was the only one allowed to interrupt transmissions. He sat in his office, a bottle of cheap bourbon being downed by the glassful. At about 11:00 he left the office and staggered into the newsroom area.

"Flash." he shouted. This was the signal that a breaking news story had occurred, and an exclusive at that, was about to be released to the nation. ""Stevenson defeats Green." This related to the gubernatorial election in Illinois. It would have indeed been the subject of a "Flash" had it not been announced on the radio for the past hour. It was in fact, old news. That didn't deter Healy who must have taken the hour's radio news that long to sink through the alcoholic haze he was encountering. We dutifully, if skeptically forwarded Healy's flash to the rest of the world and waited patiently for the follow-up which in the parlance of those times was preceded by the shouted word "Bulletin."

The Bulletin came in the form of a two sentence story explaining the importance of a Democratic Party win in Illinois as it might affect the national election's ultimate outcome.

The balance of the night was hazy. Election returns were pouring in from all over the country and being passed along to other sections of the nation so that everyone would come to realize that the Tribune's assessment of the election results were, at the very least, premature.

I got to work at my dad's office a little late the next morning. I slept as soon as I sat at my desk and was soundly criticized for doing so. In fact, it was the beginning of the end of my stint of newspapering. I was told to be alert and tend to the business of distributing children's clothing rather than in trying to emulate Hecht/MacArthur characters from "The Front Page." In due time, I had to make the choice and while I loved the excitement of being an oh-so-insignificant part of history, I opted for the security of a solid business.

A California Wedding

After returning from my post-graduation trip to California, I began an intense correspondence with Paula Oppenheim. Letters flew back and forth two or three times a week and, in the course of exchanging our outlook on how life should be for us, we became enamored of each other. Falling in love by long distance wasn't easy, but we managed. When I proposed, sometime in late October, I was a little surprised when Paula phoned to say that she would marry me.

Plans were quickly arranged for her to spend Thanksgiving in Chicago meeting my family. It would also be our first chance since our college dating days for us to get to know each other face to face. During the September trip, there was little opportunity for us to be alone. While we had dated to some extent in high school and again in college, we were never fully committed to

each other. Now that wedding plans were to be made, it was time to get to know each other better.

The plans we made called for a wedding to be held in California in early June of 1948. In fact, it took place on June 1. I was never consulted on any of the arrangements. Her parents apparently considered the wedding to be an opportunity to repay a lot of social debts and to encourage relationships that were more for business than for social purposes. It was going to be a first class, elaborate wedding, held on a grand scale at a major venue. The Bel Aire Hotel was selected as the site of the wedding, and in due course, about 200 invitations were mailed. In all fairness, we were asked to contribute a list of relatives we would have liked to attend the wedding, fully expecting that most of them would not make the trip to the west coast for the event.

Of my family, only my grandparents and my Aunt Margaret and Uncle Art accepted the invitation along with my folks and me, the Chicago contingent numbered seven. I had to select a "best man" for the event and decided to ask my Grandfather whether he would serve in that function. He was delighted.

So it was off to California on the 39 hour trip aboard the City of Los Angeles. For this trip, my folks and grandparents each took a stateroom and I got a "Roomette." In those years, sleeping aboard a train was not a simple process and the roomette. though it allowed a passenger to sleep in a horizontal position, offered very little leg room. Privacy was provided by a door that entered the train's main corridor. It was noisy, shaky and not very comfortable. But that's where I spent two nights before we arrived at the LA Union Station. Train schedules in those years revolved around work schedules and usually left in the evenings and arrived in the mornings. Their timing wasn't much more reliable in those years than it is now, though on our LA trip, we did arrive reasonably close to the scheduled time.

The Oppenheims picked us up at the station in two cars and we first went to the hotel to check in and shower. Then we continued to their house for lunch. They lived in a lovely house in Beverly Hills -- then as now, the most exclusive part of the LA complex of cities. Gerry Oppenheim was an insurance man. He had done well in Chicago, but decided that his future and that of his business would be best served by a move to California. This happened while Paula was at the University of Chicago. She was uprooted and went west with her family finally enrolling at UCLA. Her mother, Melvina had appeared in vaudeville during the 1920's as a violinist. Several years after the marriage ended, I heard that her parents had both been killed in an automobile accident.

During the several days before the wedding, there was a dance on campus. Called the ""Orchid Festival" it was held at the bottom of a large set of steps. At the base of the steps was a fountain and reflecting pool which was decorated with hundreds of tiny orchids. The dance floor was on the sidewalk that fronted the pool. On the steps above sat an orchestra conducted by David Rose whose song, "Holiday for Strings," was a considered to be the

semi-classical/popular tune of the day. Not a dance tune, it was played often on the radio, competing with the music of LeRoy Anderson. It was a lovely event and Paula and I danced. For practical purposes, that was our first physical contact since we had been in Chicago.

On another occasion before the wedding, we borrowed her father's Chevy and drove to a vista on Mulholland Drive overlooking the sparkling lights of the city. It was a spectacular view. We necked, petted and were gradually becoming more physically involved when a flashlight interrupted the reverie. A squad car had seen us and stopped to investigate. The cop was unpleasant. When we told him we were planning a wedding the following Sunday, he told us that we should wait to touch each other until after the wedding and, in the meanwhile, get out of the area. It more than spoiled the mood.

We were interviewed by the Rabbi who was approached to perform the wedding service. When he was convinced we were of reasonably sound mind, he told us what to expect from the wedding service -- which was to be done in the reform tradition meaning that no glass would be broken at the end of the ceremony -- and how we were to behave during the service.

The wedding went off without a hitch. The dinner that followed was traditional with toasts and speeches. I was in a total daze during the entire day. I acted as though by rote. I didn't have a clue as to what I was getting into. I suppose my reasons for getting married at that point were all wrong -- I wanted to get away from my parents, I wanted independence, I wanted a sexual partner, I wanted to be a man. And I didn't have any idea as to how to achieve any of these goals.

We spent our wedding night in the Bel Aire and left the next day for the honeymoon that Gerry had arranged for us. I had absolutely no input on where I might like to go or what I might like to spend on the week we were to be alone. We drove the Oppenheim car to San Diego and checked into the Hotel Coronado. The hotel is an old, 19th century installation which still is in business. It's elegant and the average age of its guests was somewhere around 70. There was nothing for a honeymooning couple to do there -- other than the obvious. It became apparent that being there was a mistake and Paula called her father and told him about our mutual unhappiness with his choice of a honeymoon retreat.

Gerry arranged space for us at a resort on Lake Arrowhead. It was almost a full day drive from San Diego to Lake Arrowhead, but we went there and checked into a room. The place was rustic and offered things like hiking trails and sporting activities. There was a pool and the place was beautifully maintained. We still had five days to enjoy a honeymoon -- and enjoy it we did!

The train ride back to Chicago was uneventful. I can't remember if my folks and grandparents were on the same train as Paula and I, but we didn't see much of them. Getting back to Chicago posed some more real-life problems.

In mid-1947, housing was almost impossible to find. Veterans were pouring back into the civilian society, getting married and demanding housing., Rents were tightly controlled and to get an apartment anywhere required a payoff "under the table"" to a landlord. That assumed that the landlord had any vacant space.

We moved in with my parents and into the room I had occupied as a teen. It was not a happy arrangement. My mother wanted to rule the roost; Paula wanted to set up housekeeping for herself. There was conflict that created intolerable tension. Eventually, this unhappiness became apparent even to my folks and they asked my grandparents to move into their apartment and leave the grandparent's two bedroom apartment for Paula and me. The switch was made and we moved around the block. We continued to look for another place to live which would not inconvenience my grandparents and allow them to get back to living their own lives. Finally, though a friend, we were able to find a one-bedroom furnished apartment in a corridor building at 73rd and Yates.

Meanwhile, Paula, under intense urging from her father, was pushing me to go into my father's business. I was happily pursuing my career in the commercial finance business. The company was happy with me and I was happy working there. Paula and Gerry wanted me to become part of my father's business, mistakenly believing that the children's wear business was the wave of the future and that my economic independence depended on my learning the trade as a salesman and entrepreneur/manufacturer of pajamas and play clothes.

My father finally put me in charge of the factory he had bought in Chesterton, Indiana. I had to be in the factory by 7:00 in the morning which required that I be on the road no later than 5:30. The factory closed at 4:30 and by 5:00 I was en route back to Chicago. The return trip took no less than one and a half hours but because of weather and the rush hour, it frequently took more than two hours. All roads in those year were low roads and the area I drove through was heavily industrialized with a lot of truck traffic. By the time I got home I was exhausted and needed to get to sleep so that I could be on the road early the next morning. It was not a schedule that lent itself to a romantic relationship.

The marriage abruptly came to an end in mid-January 1948 when, after Nanni Steinthal's funeral and her Paula's return from a visit with her parents in California, Paula told me that she was leaving me and moving back to California. During her visit to California, she had been counseled by Gerry and Malvina to quickly terminate the marriage -- she had her whole life ahead of her, they said, and the sooner this mistake was resolved, the better she would be for it.

I haven’t seen Paula since that January day though I heard from her once in the spring of 1983. There was to be a 40th high school reunion and she wrote from Salem, Oregon that she would be attending the event. She phoned

me to see whether I would be at the dance on the Saturday evening of the reunion. I had another commitment for that night -- it was Michael's appearance at Orchestra Hall having won the Youth Symphony concerto competition. I offered to meet her at the brunch that was being held the following morning but her travel plans were such that she couldn't be at the brunch. There was no acrimony in the conversation -- and no regrets on my part that we didn't get together. The book had long since been closed.

The emotion involved in retelling this story is still painful. In a look back over the years since it happened, there's no way to assess blame for the marriage's collapse. Both of us were too young and inexperienced to grasp our own destinies. Both of us were too much under parental influence to be assertive. The post-war period was too unsettled for us to find a path we could agree on and take to a happy relationship. In fact, it probably never occurred to either of us to even look for such a path. We had spent too little time trying to find common ground for a lasting relationship. Our inexperience and most of all, our blind love was an obstruction in making an effort to solve the all-too-obvious problems we confronted. It was never meant to be.

Dusty Goes to College

In 1948, it wasn't easy for a red blooded American male to see a naked lady. Sure, there were the grotesquely cantilevered, imaginatively painted figures by Petty and Vargas that appeared in Esquire Magazine. And there were always the "natives" that National Geographic pictured, topless, in their exotic habitats in Africa and the South Pacific. But the pleasure of seeing actual ladies in the buff would have to wait years for Hugh Hefner's Playboy. There was only one realistic option available.

Strip joints thrived in Chicago, especially along South Wabash Avenue, holdovers from the attractions that separated young, rural servicemen from their paychecks during the war years. They were ersatz sin. Nothing happened of a sinful nature -- unless of course you consider the exorbitant charges for charged water labeled "Champaign." One of these joints was the 606 Club because, named with the originality that pervaded the time, it was located at 606 South Wabash. It's now a distant memory, yet it certainly evokes the era.

The interior was dimly lit with beer signs and there was a small, brightly lit platform stage behind the bar. An old amplified phonograph scratched out the music needed for bumps and grinds. That was the sound system. A series of booths lined the wall facing the bar and a couple of tables sat in back of the room furthest from the street. In front of the place, grainy pictures of the "stars" appearing in the show were attached to a glass enclosed easel. On weekends, a "puller" stood in front enticing passers-by with the promise of erotic entertainment inside. The place was charitably called a strip

joint. It was dirty -- the kind of setting that would have been an ideal location for a film noir scene.

Mainly, it was a hangout for locals intent on sipping a beer and ogling the girls, More important to management, it was a haven for conventioneers in the city looking for a hot time. They watched as tired strippers disrobed to their pasties and g-strings. None of them ever stripped to the buff -- the police would never have permitted it and action like that would have required some serious explaining when the liquor license needed renewing. Even then, the out-of-towners had expense accounts and were intent on spending that money having a good time in the wickedness they thought was Chicago. The city's reputation far outweighed the reality of places like the 606 Club. Besides, the visitors had one thing in common -- no one wanted to go back to the Lions Club or the Elks in Keokuk or Evansville without a couple of hot stories to tell. A matchbook or bar napkin was all they needed to put an imprimatur on any fantasy they cared to concoct about their visit to the big city.

Two of us walked into the 606 one Tuesday night because. We worked the midnight shift at one of the wire services and we arrived a little too early to report for work. This was the year that "Dewey Defeats Truman" memorialized the Chicago Tribune forever. We worked for one of the Trib's competitors. Besides, giving William Randolph Hearst some of our time was contrary to our code of ethics. So, we walked into the joint and ordered a couple of beers -- they were Edelweiss, I think. As we sat talking, we were approached by one of the strippers who was working the front of the bar as a "B" girl. "B" girls were simply strippers selling booze on a commission basis. It was part of their job.

They would sit with the customers, listen to their propositions, laugh at their jokes and drink the colored water that passed for booze or fake Champaign that was served to them at the customer's expense. They'd hold on to the swizzle sticks from the drinks and, later, at the end of their shifts, they would cash in the sticks for their money. Thinking back, it was really funny to see ""Champaign" served with a swizzle stick- but no one seemed to notice in that more innocent time. They got paid a little for their dancing, but the real rent money came from those tattered swizzle sticks. And the manager -- whether it was Rocco or Costas didn't matter -- expected a lot of them to be turned in every night. Jobs in the "entertainment" business were hard to find -- strippers were a dime a dozen.

The ""B" girl/stripper who approached us turned on her most seductive voice. "Would you like to buy me a drink?" She was attractive with a great figure and even if she was a little overweight, a male would certainly notice her sexuality even through the heavy theatrical makeup. Responding, we told her we couldn't afford to buy anything for her -- we were poor working guys, not conventioneers. She glanced around the joint hurriedly and then plopped down into the fake leather banquette with a sigh, "Hell, there ain't no

one here anyway so I guess I'll just buy my own." She nodded at the bartender. Later she told him to put the drink on her tab.

We told her we were newspapermen which was pretty much the truth. She had visions of our craft from 1930's movies and radio shows and we did absolutely nothing to contradict that impression. She told us her professional name -- Dusty Rhodes. Her real name was Sheila Drake and she came from downstate Illinois - from the coal mining region around Carmi. She was born in the kind of place any self-respecting girl would try to find a way out of. If a girl didn't want to raise a brood of kids and send them to work in the Peabody Mines, she found a way out. Dusty had fended off enough amorous passes in high school to know that her body was one way to escape Carmi's grittiness.

She told us what her aspirations were. She wanted to become a famous entertainer. She wanted fortune and the good life. In fact, one of her proudest possessions was a union card issued by AGVA, the American Guild of Variety Artists. This was the union of professional vaudevillians and entertainers, dancers and nightclub performers. But jobs in the mainstream entertainment spots were scarce and she wound up at the "606" without much hope for future career development.

My buddy and I looked at each other. Without any conversation, there was immediate tacit agreement as to our course of action. After her initial expressions of doubt, Dusty accepted the fact that we were, indeed, "reporters." First she questioned it as a line -- she had heard them all -- but we countered by displaying our rather impressive police issued credentials. We talked with her for a while and we liked her. She was ingenuous, fresh and in spite of her choice of occupations, we thought that underneath all that mascara was a heart of gold. We made a date to come back on another midweek evening and we left for work. At worst, we knew we could do an act of kindness -- at best, we could get a piece of Dusty.

The next time we saw Dusty, she was on the ragged runway, stripping at the "606." As soon as she recognized us, her act was directed at us -- especially the grinds and bumps. When she finished, she slipped on a robe, came over to our table and we talked about her career. The conversation focused on getting it off the ground and what we might be able to do to help. One of our friends was a photographer who could take "glamour" shots of her -- not Playboy style, but fully encased in her feathery, hand sewn, costumes.

We made a date for Saturday afternoon with Dusty's very clear warning that ""I ain't gonna take my clothes off for you guys for a private show or nothin' like that..." That Saturday, with a load of clumsy photographic equipment, we arrived at her rooming house in Wicker Park, We used the props that were at hand and took a few dozen photos using her drapes, her bed, her lounge chair and anything else that seemed appropriate. And we were gentlemen all the way. Lugging the old 4x5 Speed Graphic camera equipment, we had all we could do to drag the stuff upstairs to her third floor one-bedroom flat.

Then, we used what little clout we had and arranged for her to be interviewed by John Harrington, then a sort of free spirit on early-morning WBBM radio. The interview came off without a hitch. Dusty came through sounding real, sincere and honest. We were able to get her a mention in a gossip column another friend of ours did research for. We were heroes. Even the bouncer at the "606" greeted us with a newfound respect. But respect or no, we still had to pay our own way. It was, after all, a matter of personal journalistic integrity. And besides, we knew the bouncer would never offer us a free beer.

Nothing much happened after that, even though we kept trying to promote Dusty's career. She got a couple of calls from "theatrical agents" but we touted her away. We checked them out and learned their reputations were derived more from supplying houses along 22nd street in Cicero than they were from clients who appeared on the legitimate stage.

Once, we invited her to a fraternity party on the University of Chicago campus. She accepted with real enthusiasm and arranged to call in sick on the Saturday when the party took place. When we picked her up at her flat, she was dressed in her best, most conservative clothes. She was terribly nervous. How would she be able to get along with the rich, educated fraternity members and their equally high toned dates? We assured her there wouldn't be any problem and that if she needed us, we'd be there to help.

We drove out to Hyde Park. The fraternity house was jumping when we arrived. We went in, were recognized by some of the brothers and mingled with the crowd. Dusty kept very close. The bar was in the basement, we were instructed to help ourselves. Down the narrow staircase, the basement opened into what was a mob scene at the bar. It was incredible. Fraternity members, their guests and dates stood four and five deep waiting to get to the kegs of beer behind the makeshift bar.

"Don't worry." Dusty told us, I'll get us some drinks." With a practiced shoulder, a pleasant smile and the intricate use of other parts of her anatomy, Dusty knifed through the crowd in no time. The fraternity inhaled en masse when they realized the sort of exotic occupation Dusty represented. She was a guest at their house and that was an occasion for some bragging rights on campus.

Dusty brought us the beers, and by the time she got back to us, she felt totally at home. It didn't take long before she was surrounded by young males eager to get to know her better -- any way they could. It didn't take long for the words "six-oh-six" to become some sort of mantra in that basement setting.

We stood aside and sipped our beers slowly. We had become objective observers of a social phenomenon. It boosted our self-esteem to be the reporters we fancied ourselves to be. The surrounding fraternity members took Dusty upstairs into the large living room to show her off to the rest of the group. Actually, they wanted to encourage her to dance. Clearly, the thrust of their encouragement was to have her strip, but Dusty wasn't having any of that

nonsense. This was a class event and she intended to be as classy as she could. The clothes were definitely going to stay on.

Dusty took to the university scene like she was working on the final part of her Ph.D. thesis. Half an hour later, when we wandered back to the upper level of the house from the bar, we immediately sensed that something special was taking place involving Dusty. In the middle of the living room, a large circle of people focused intently on what was happening. We edged closer. The music that had a strong beat. In the center of the circle stood Dusty and next to her, a co-ed who was mesmerized by the lesson she was getting.

Dusty had, though years of practice, developed the musculature to enable her to have one breast revolve clockwise and the other to spin counter clockwise. Although she usually maximized the effect of this talent by working with pasties and a couple of tassels, she could perform this maneuver fully clothed. It was a testament to her strength. And she was trying to teach this unique talent to the suburban-bred young woman standing next to her. Accustomed to the intensity required to learn the finer points of Aristotle and James Joyce, the co-ed was equally intent on learning from Dusty. She was oblivious to the rest of the partygoing group who stared at her in total disbelief.

Dusty, fully dressed, demonstrated her unique talent without any self-consciousness. The co-ed, on the other hand, tried unsuccessfully to do the same thing. Sadly, in time the young woman realized that she was at the center of the group's attention. She blushed the brightest red I'd ever seen and found her date to beat a hasty retreat. The show was over and after a few more beers, we took Dusty home. She told us what a wonderful time she had while she was getting her college education.

We continued seeing Dusty from time to time. Once, at the now familiar "606," Dusty excitedly came to our table. It seems that she had taken an out-of-town visitor to Rush Street and had encouraged him to play at the "26" tables. "26" was a dice game played at a small table in the front of the bars. Police tolerated it as being harmless since the only thing that could be won was a coupon booklet that could be cashed in for drinks at the establishment Needless to say, the odds were on the house's side.

What Dusty promised the hapless visitor, we could only guess. But, Dusty collected his winning coupon books in return for that promise and put them into her purse. When she showed them to us, in $2 and $5 denominations, we saw they were from joints up and down the street. Whatever else he might have gotten from Dusty, it was certain that the conventioneer collected a lot of bar bills.

With the books in hand, Dusty invited us out for a night on the town. The bar books were her way of repaying the kindnesses she felt we had shown her. In her very straight forward manner, she was reciprocating for our efforts. We went out together as planned and had a wonderful time, though I can't say I remember the details of the latter part of the night.

We saw Dusty intermittently after that and eventually lost track of her after the 606 closed. Once, in the mid-1950's I was watching a TV variety show and I thought I saw her dancing in the back row of a production number. I couldn't be sure -- she had changed hair color and style to keep up with the times. I suspect Dusty's experience with the University made a deep impression on her. If she didn't find the career she hoped for, I certainly hope she found the happiness she deserved. And I'm absolutely certain that the University was never the same after her visit.

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Dusty Goes to College -- A Summary

In 1948, Chicago had three skid rows -- including one in what's now known as the south loop. At 606 S. Wabash Avenue, a strip joint served beer, ersatz sex and dreams. One of the practitioners of the art of stripping was Dusty Rhodes, the professional name of a dancer who was born Sheila Drake in Carmi, Illinois. By chance, she met a couple of newspapermen wannabes who decided to exert their best efforts to further her career as an entertainer.

They got her radio interviews and column mentions. But their most ambitious act on her behalf was to take her to a University of Chicago fraternity party. It was Dusty's coming out party. Dusty was enthralled by the chance to "go to college" and meet the upper crust of the city's young student body.

At the party, Dusty's professional attributes soon were known by all the members of the house and their guests. She wouldn't strip -- it was too high toned an event for her to do that -- but she could and did give lessons in exotic dancing to naive and ingenuous young women who were there that night. The evening was a huge success - both for the fraternity and for Dusty who learned she could hold her own in any environment.

A while later, Dusty and her entourage of newsmen toured Rush Street's high life, courtesy of a conventioneer who had allowed himself to be conned into supplying Dusty with free drink coupon books from the "26" tables that were an important part of every night spot in the city. Dusty paid her dues to the newsmen with an unforgettable night on the town. .

From that point on, her history is a little cloudy -- she may have been in a chorus line on TV, but more likely, she wound up married, raising a family and remembering her experiences on a very special night when she went to college.

Hair Brained Schemes

Over the years, I have pursued several successful and profitable business ventures. Some have worked quickly, others have had to expend long periods of time without any assurance of success. My associates call me a mongoose because, once I catch the thread of a good idea, I hold on to it tightly until it comes to be.

But interspersed with these good, profitable and sound ideas have been not a few that are, at least, hare-brained. Let me tell you about a few of them. Be assured, they all sounded like wonderfully practical and ultimately profitable schemes when they were active. In retrospect, they seem less than that -- but it's a judgment you'll have to make.

As a kid, one of the popular toys of the day was a kit with which you could manufacture toy soldiers made from lead. I'm certain that, had the EPA and OSHA been in existence at that time, the kit would have never gotten on the market. It came with an electric pot in which to melt the lead, a set of molds and clamps and some paints to use for coloring the end product. The problem with the kit was that you soon ran out of lead and replacement was expensive.

When I was about 12, my friend, Ralph Rappaport and I both received these kits, though he had a different set of molds than I did. When we talked about the difficulty of buying replacement lead, we came up with a scheme. In those years, cigarettes and chewing gum were wrapped in what was called "tinfoil." which was a metallic backing for paper designed to keep products fresh. Chocolate bars and all manner of other things were wrapped in the foil which was firmly attached to the paper. Aluminum foil and plastics had yet to be developed.

Ralph and I discovered that by stripping the foil off its paper backing, we would be able to melt it in our soldier kit and then, could pour it into molds and make more soldiers. So the two of us went scavenging tinfoil wrappers -- off of cigarettes and candy bars because they were large. We found vast quantities and spent an inordinate amount of time stripping off the foil and melting it down. Eventually, we had a large inventory of soldiers which we didn't need or want. The idea of selling these soldiers to nursemaids who were lined up along the parkway of Drexel Boulevard seemed like a practical way of replacing our overstock of soldiers with cash. Our problem was that nursemaids had very little money available and none to spend on soldiers. The idea failed and Ralph and I had a vast number of tin soldiers, a huge quantity of tinfoil and nothing to do with either.

Later, when I was working at Tiny Togs, I became friendly with Ray Koontz. Ray had a job similar to mine working in a factory that manufactured vinyl shower curtains and table cloths. We both knew how to cut fabrics and how to repair sewing machines. We stumbled on a dealer who had a quantity of industrial sewing machines which, though obsolete were still functional. After intense negotiation, Ray and I bought these old machines. There were probably 25 of them and we bought them all for $50.00 figuring that there was no way we could sell them for anything less than we paid for them. In fact, selling one or two would recover our original investment. We mounted these machines on tables and attached them to motors. Then, we spent our spare time repairing them and getting them into good working condition. Because they were specialized machines, it was necessary to find a manufacturer who

could use them for special operations -- for the sewing of fur, for shoes, for sewing bindings, etc.

After we had spent our time repairing and some additional money for parts to make them work properly, we set out to market the machines. It seems that every business we approached to buy the machines was the same one that had declared the machines obsolete and had given them to our source as junk. No one was willing to buy the machines. We eventually sold them to a scrap metal dealer -- for about $10 and took our loss. Once again, a lack of market proved my downfall.

At one time, when I was managing the Tiny Togs factory in Chicago, I was approached by a group of men who sold home sewing machines. They agreed that they would provide the denim cloth needed to cut into children's overalls. Those cut pieces would be doled out to women who would be paid a small amount per dozen to sew the pants. The proceeds of their labor would then pay the cost of the sewing machine. Tiny Togs was supposed to market these jeans. I remember that they were to be sold for somewhere around $8.00 per dozen for a small size range. The idea seemed sound and we approached quantity users. Walgreen Drug Stores agreed to take our entire production of the jeans and we instructed the sewing machine sales group to go ahead and order the fabric.

What finally was shipped were short ends of denim -- two and three yard segments that represented the ends from factory production. While I was being paid about 25 cents per dozen to cut the jeans, the amount of time needed to spread the cloth was much more than normally was used. I enlisted Ray Koontz to help with the process and paid him part of the proceeds. Having cut and marked the sizes on the jeans, we delivered them to the sewing machine sales organization. Their sales efforts could only be described as fantastic. On a given Monday morning, when women were instructed to bring their finished production to a store, a line would form early in the morning with these women wanting to get credit for what they had sewed and wanting to get more jeans to make during the next few days. In fact, the quantity of jeans that began to pour into Tiny Togs factory was a little like the water carried by Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice in Fantasia. It simply wouldn’t stop.

There was one serious problem with what we were getting. The women hadn't a clue as to how to maintain the quality of the garments. Legs were hemmed so that one was six inches shorter than the other. Seams that were supposed to be one-half inch were often two or three inches. Sizing was entirely fouled up. Waist measures varied widely. There was no way that these jeans cold be sold to a retailer who relied on some sort of manufacturer's quality control. Finally, when the sewing machine group couldn't deliver cut garments because we refused to ship and pay for the "finished' product they delivered to us, the State's Attorney's office entered the picture and put them out of business, alleging that the scheme of selling sewing machines and having them paid for by home work was in fact fraudulent. While we were

never mentioned as having committed any wrong, we were happy to escape from this project with a few hundred dozen of mis-sized jeans and no out-of-pocket loss.

In the late 1960's, as I was looking out of my office window, I noticed that the busiest store on Madison Street was Garrett's Popcorn Shop. Slowly, an idea began to germinate. I already enjoyed popcorn and had written the Lugubrian story. The success of franchising was well known and McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and others were generating huge profits for their originators. Why not, I asked myself, find a way of franchising popcorn stands. The idea required a lot of work, but I had a lot of time to devote to it. The first problem to be solved was to find a way of installing a popcorn operation in a high foot traffic area. It occurred to me that city parking garages and parking lots would be ideal since a stand could convert open space into a site where there was already electricity, sewer and water utilities available. By leasing several parking spaces on the corners of the lots, there was a readymade retail space available.

Second, I had to have a design that was distinctive. I had the Golden Arches of McDonald's as a model and approached our family friend, Shelly Berest, an architect, to design a retail environment that emulated an old fashioned popcorn stand such as was found in circuses and in parks. He drew plans for one which could be constructed in the confined space of a parking garage.

Finally, I had to arrange a distinctive array of flavors to give the popcorn sold from these stands a unique appeal. I approached Kraft Foods which was based in a Chicago suburb and asked them if they could provide a cheese flavored, liquefied spray to be used on the popcorn and which could be delivered through a series of compressed air-operated hoses within the stands. In that way, a customer could order cheddar, or Swiss, or Bleu cheese flavored popcorn and a clerk could spray the flavoring on the base popcorn easily. The cleanup after a day's operations would be relatively easy, and the profits enormous. Kraft set their chemists to work on the idea which, they felt, had a lot of merit.

Having gone this far, I discussed the project with an attorney who specialized in franchise sales and was assured that the entire project could be controlled and sold as a franchise anywhere in the country. Up to this point, this may seem to you like a good, sound and potentially profitable business venture. But there was a catch that made the whole project tumble like a house of cards.

The difficulty in this project was the fact that garage owners wouldn't consider a long term lease on a few corner parking spaces. I spoke to a friend, Lenny Fisher who owned several loop garages and he patiently explained the economics of a parking lot. They could charge several dollars for the first hour and proportionately less for additional hours in which a car was parked in their lot. But they relied on turnover and the income per hour for the single space

mounted to such a level as to be very high. In addition, they could rent out their space and maintain close to 100 percent occupancy for the parking spaces. Having a monthly tenant at anything approaching a market rental based on fee parking would have made the cost of the stand so high as to have absorbed all the profits. The idea was sound, but wouldn't work -- there was nowhere to put the stands where there might be sufficient traffic and economic rental space. The idea died aborning.

Finally, when we were visiting Spain in the mid-1980's, we stayed at a resort that was only about 18 miles from the British Crown Colony of Gibraltar. "Gib" as it was called by several of the British ex-patriots who stayed at the resort, was a source of all manner of English goods at bargain prices and we would visit the Rock often. Because of the success of Prudential Life Insurance Company's advertising campaign, everyone knew about buying "a piece of the rock." The rock in their ads was none other than the Rock of Gibraltar. It occurred to me that by gathering genuine pieces of the rock of Gibraltar, mounting them on a wooden base, providing a plaque to identify them would make a salable novelty. I also realized that these rocks should be warranted as genuine so I asked another British friend, Roy Jennings, to design an appropriate certificate to validate the origin of the rocks I was planning to sell. Finally, I went to a British Barrister on Gibraltar and created the "Gibraltar Geological Society" which was the corporate source of the rocks and who validated the certificate Roy had designed. With all these elements, it was only necessary to drive up the Gibraltar hillside to find a field of smaller stones which could be gathered and genuinely offered as "pieces of the rock."

With our Dutch friend, Chong Choy, we set out on a sunny morning and drove up the road leading to the top of Gibraltar. Along the way, we found a field that had the sort of stones we wanted and filled a large cardboard carton with the stones. Ultimately, we brought them home in a duffle bag and I proceeded to market "pieces of the rock." While I still have one of them on my desk and found that friends appreciated gifts of the rocks, I was unable to find a print medium that I could afford and which would be able to market the rocks. I sold a few, but not enough of them to cover the cost of the advertising. It was another idea that was defeated by market resistance.

And so it was with those hare-brained ideas, along with several others I haven't written about that I have to confess that everything I have touched hasn't turned to gold. But then, maybe, some day that one item will come along that will effectively make me into Midas. I'll let you know when it does.

Supply Problem

I've been accused of having a supply problem. That has manifest itself in demonstrating a need to have a reserve supply of needed goods or commodities. If I don't have three of something that I use regularly, however easy it is to find more of the item, I rush to the store to get more of whatever it

is. It's one of those compulsions that I have lived with for a long time. But in this case, I know how it came to be.

In 1948 I went to work for my father. My first function, in his factory, was to learn how to manage factory production lines. He had bought a small, secondary manufacturing plant in Chesterton, Indiana and the process of supervising that operation was something he couldn't personally handle. In addition, his partner, the "Mr. Inside" of the operation, a man named Joe Greenberg, wanted to retire. I was being taught to manage the Chesterton factory, a job I held for about a year until the plant was sold. It was never a profitable operation, required a substantial investment in new equipment and kept me away from Chicago. I enjoyed the learning experience, though not the commuting or, in the later months, living in a rooming house during the week.

The profits made during the war had been excellent. There was no need to "sell"" anything. Any product they could produce was shipped to grateful customers on an allotment basis. I can recall sitting at our dining room table and working with huge spread sheets to decide how many dozen of a particular pajama or overall would be shipped to a specific customer. My father tried to distribute the production equitably, and the allotment sheets seemed to be the fairest way. He was also able to retain customer good will because everyone knew that there were limits. In the war years, production was limited by the amount of fabric they were able to buy from the large mills. Demand exceeded supply and prices were strictly controlled at all levels.

The Chesterton factory was located on the second floor over a hay, grain and feed store and the dust from grains permeated the air in the factory. The place was heated by space heaters which were fueled by heating oil that had to be carried into the shop in pails and hand loaded into the heaters. That was about as primitive as it could get. There was no elevator and merchandise had to be raised to the second floor on a sliding ramp with the assistance of a pulley system. My father had bought the factory after the war without any evaluation of the machinery in the plant which was terribly obsolete. Many of the sewing machines were built before the turn of the 20th century -- about 50 years earlier and, though they had been maintained, replacement parts were increasingly hard to find.

It was here that I got my training in the repair of sewing machines. I also learned how to create production shortcuts in order to produce merchandise economically. It wasn't easy. Because it was hard to find supplies outside Chicago, the Chesterton factory, which had perhaps 35 machines and about 20 machine operators, was continually running short of staple items like threads, needles, binding and other necessary trimming used in producing the garments. These shortages, coupled with the fact that running out of something caused the factory to shut down, made it necessary to make the frequent 40 mile, hour and a half trip into Chicago to pick up the necessary material.

At that time, I didn't have enough expertise in the operation to know what I would need the next day much less the next week. I learned quickly

after a number of night trips into the city to pick up the items that were needed. Fortunately, the factory had a floor manager/forelady, Helen Carlin, who knew enough to ask for things before supplies were entirely exhausted.

Helen was a second generation member of a Serbian family and lived in Gary with her husband, Anthony (we called him "Ants") who worked in a steel mill. She had two boys and lived with her mother. I became friendly with the family and will always remember one Eastern Orthodox Christmas when I went to their house, drank vast quantities of homemade red wine and home distilled "white lightening" whiskey, ate all sorts of ethnic foods and had a wonderful time. What I wasn't sure of was how I managed to get on a train to go back to the City and get home. I got home but have no recollection of the trip.

Chesterton taught me to prepare and to have a surplus of essentials on hand.

My second lesson in having adequate supplies came when I was given charge of running the factory in Chicago after Chesterton was sold and Jow Greenberg had retired. While I was closer to the source of supplies, there were benefits tin ordering merchandise from more distance sources -- usually in the southern states. Trimming items and buttons would come from suppliers outside the city. Cloth -- piece goods in the parlance of the trade -- was ordered months in advance. Samples of fabrics were ordered and sample designs were sewn. Those samples were test-marketed to select customers and when an item showed promise, thousands of yards of the material -- usually in two or three colors -- were ordered for delivery in time to produce the merchandise. A lot of lead time was needed. For spring and summer merchandise, the line was prepared around Thanksgiving and the piece goods was ordered no later than January for delivery in March. As huge cartons of the material -- about 1000 yards of it to a case -- arrived, it had to be stored on the floor.

Though the designs had already been sold, it was then necessary to "grade the patterns," a process entailing creating the size variants for the range of garments. In each case, there were standards required to change the length of trousers, the width of seats and the diameter of the waist on each of them. Then the patterns could be used to create a "marker" which economically set the patterns on a length of fabric to create the size range and distribution of sizes necessary to fill orders. Patterns were adjusted to provide the most economical use of the width of the fabric.

The fabric would be spread in piles ranging from as few as 24 layers to as many as 144 layers high, depending on the sort of item, the density of the fabric and, of course, the customer response and back orders that were being held in the office.

It was necessary during this whole process to order the necessary trimmings to support the production and to be sure that they were on hand before the fabric was cut. I usually found it desirable to have the needed supplies on hand with enough extra to account for wastage, spoilage and

reorders which might occur. Items like binding and buttons would always be usable on future designs. Cloth which didn't sell was held over until the next year when different styles were built around the patterns. The business made money and my "supply problem" made production a little easier.

Finally, my supply problem overlapped into the purchasing of office supplies for Winter and Hirsch. It was a job that nobody wanted because it took time and planning that no one wanted to bother with. It was a job for an office manager and it became my chore. I found suppliers who could be relied on for things like paper clips and printing needs. There was rarely a shortage of needed items and eventually, I developed a system that handled the problems of supplying an office with 35 or 40 people so that I didn't have to spend a vast amount of time checking inventories of items that were used regularly.

It's true. I stand accused of having a supply problem. I confess -- I'm guilty of buying too many cans of tomato sauce or too many onions or potatoes to hold in the refrigerator. But then, where would our household be if we ran out of them just when they were needed to prepare a favorite recipe?

Chapter 5. 1950 to 1959

Ground Observer Corps

In the years following the end of the second world war, America became increasingly paranoid about the threat of International Communism and the evils of the Soviet Union. When Russia developed the atomic bomb -- certainly assisted by intelligence information secured by spies in the United States, there was a great deal of concern about the safety and security of our country.

In addition, Communism had overtaken our former ally, China and was clearly in force in North Korea, a country that had been arbitrarily created after the Japanese defeat. Our self-protection relied on technology. The Air Force, a newly created branch of the military (during the war, the air force had been a part of the army) had to justify its expense. It was charged with defending American borders from attack.

Viewing a map of the globe, the generals in Washington realized that the American Midwest was more vulnerable than the East or West Coast of the country simply because Soviet planes could fly across the polar ice cap, through sparsely populated Canada and south, down the length of the Great Lakes to attack America's industrial heartland. With this in mind, the Air Force reorganized "The Ground Observer Corps." The original Corp had been structured after the British model and was in place along the eastern seaboard in the months before the U.S. entered the war. There was fear of German sabotage and, though the possibilities were remote, of German aircraft entering U.S. airspace.

The GOC that was structured in the early 1950's was to be a civilian operated, military controlled branch of the Air Force. It was considered an element of the wartime Civil Defense effort. Its job was to fill in the blanks in an as-yet-incomplete radar network that was hastily being built. The radar network was call the DEW line -- standing for Distant Early Warning. It was a series of high-tech radar stations spread in an arc over the northern perimeter of North America from Alaska to Nova Scotia. It was a mammoth undertaking which would require years to compete.

The word went out that volunteers for the Corp would be accepted. The central point in Chicago was located in the East Wing of the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago -- a space that was not being used by the Museum and one which was near to the University of Chicago. It was being used as a facility for meetings and was the home of several high-tech think tanks whose work was considered secret.

A large room was made available to the GOC and several offices surrounding the room were built. In the room, a huge table was set up on which was painted a map of the Midwest states. That map was then divided into a grid system of numbers and letters so that an individual grid could be

identified. Finally, banks of telephones were installed around the board. Anyone who has seen World War II movies of an operations center where aircraft movements were tracked would understand how logical this room was.

When volunteers began to appear to work in what was described cryptically as "The Filter Center," they were given a series of instructions in the classrooms that had been built. First, they were required to learn the new phonetic alphabet. In the early days of NATO, it becomes obvious that the words used to describe letters that had been used during the war were no longer practical in a multi-national, multi-lingual arena. So a new alphabet was created. Those Americans who had been taught Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog now had to relearn the words and get used to hearing Alfa, Bravo, Charlie, Delta.

Volunteers learned that they would be receiving phone calls from "observation posts" scattered all over the area. Posts were located in small, often unheated shacks, on the roofs of hotels and schools. In fact, anywhere a phone could be installed in a place that had an unobstructed view in all directions was acceptable. Volunteers were accepted from all age groups and there were reports of observers as young as 8 and 10 years old. All they had to do was have the ability to use the phone and report accurately to the Filter Center the height, size and general direction of any aircraft flying overhead. Then, they had to complete the forms.

The members of the GOC in those remote posts had been trained to phone in reports of flying aircraft. They were taught to distinguish the sound of single and multi-engined planes and to describe whether they were flying at high, medium or low altitudes. Because it was expected that another observation post would later hear the same plane, the direction of the aircraft was not considered an essential part of the report.

When the Filter Center in the Museum received reports from three different posts, they established a "track" on the large board. Each report was recorded on the board with a symbol indicating the sort of aircraft and the altitude. A single report of no real use, but a series of reports established a track -- a flight that had assumed a particular direction. Tracks were then phoned to the Air Force which tried to locate the flight on its radar. If they could determine that it was a commercial flight, nothing more was done. If they didn't make that determination, they would scramble fighter aircraft to investigate. That happened rarely.

The busiest observation post was one located due south of Midway Airport, then Chicago’s main commercial airport. It was located in the suburb of Chicago Ridge. Most of the takeoffs from Midway passed directly over this position and the observers felt very important because it was within their function to begin the "tracking" process. While commercial aviation was not a major means of transportation in those years in the early 1950's, there was plenty of activity around the Chicago Ridge GOC post to keep the volunteers

busy. In 1954, nobody had ever heard of O'Hare Airport and all commercial flights used Midway, at that time considered the world's busiest airport

Chicago Ridge was an example of how the process should work, but posts in more remote areas of Michigan and Wisconsin would spend time in their headquarters for a four hour shift without hearing any planes. Among the problems the Ground Observer Corp experienced were the innumerable reports of unidentified flying objects -- none of which were ever confirmed. Most of the GOC posts operated only during evening hours. The volunteers had to make a living during the day and also wanted to spend time with their families. It eventually occurred to the Air Force that Soviet bombers would not necessarily observe the hours of the volunteers and, in a few years, especially after the DEW line radar warning system was installed, the program was abandoned.

While it was active, I had volunteered to stand at the board, answer phone calls from observation posts and place the appropriate markers on the large board. This work soon was boring. Most of the time the volunteers at the board spent talking about their jobs, their homes and families. While the people represented a cross section of Chicagoans, the conversations were relatively banal and I grew tired of it. The head of the Filter Center recognized this boredom and suggested that I begin a morale boosting newspaper. As an assistant in the production of the mimeographed paper, I had the services of Rachel Goodstein, a Chicago librarian whose work in a branch on Archer Avenue gave her access to the mimeograph machine.

The government bought the necessary supplies and soon we were cranking out (literally since the mimeo was hand operated) papers that were distributed to the volunteers at the center and across the Midwest. The Air Force liked the idea of morale building and we received an encouraging letter from the Air Force General in charge of the program and were duly praised in person by the Colonel in Chicago who oversaw the Midwest Filter Center.

When the program was finally abandoned in about 1955, all the volunteers received silver wings acknowledging their service to the government. My wings were embossed with the legend "Asst. Chief Observer" the rank I had been assigned as the editor of the house organ of Chicago's Filter Center.

Jimmy, Honk, Hansie, (and a Load of Lugubrians)

"Parenting" is a word that's only recently entered the language. It means the scientific raising of children using the best, sociologically oriented minds and psychologically adept practices available. It requires a lot of heavy reading. In an earlier, simpler time, being a parent had a rather different meaning. The process of raising children involved working hard to provide the best home, the best food and the best possible educational advantages that you could afford.

The outcome of these efforts were affected by a lot of external factors -- social upheaval, economic conditions, marital discord and even social change within an area. A parent used, as his model, the manner in which he was reared and coupled those memories with changes that might be appropriate. If a new parent's experiences hadn't been good, the new parent would try to change those things that were felt to be wrong. If the experiences were positive, the new parent would follow the same route that had been taken,

Thus things like corporal punishment, rewards, religious training, help with schoolwork, even involvement in sports were based on the parent's personal experiences.

I was raised with those guidelines that had been set by my parents and, ultimately by my grandparents. My father spent some time with me but because of his continuous traveling, he had too little time to spend. And when he was home, there were all manner of things he had to do that kept him away from me. There were things like a social life with my mother, there were golf games and card games, there was involvement with the Temple's Men's Club.

My mother, on the other hand, spent more time with me. She was the disciplinarian, occasionally giving me a whack on the seat or the back of the hands. Her weapon of choice was a sturdy 18 inch ruler. She never was involved in sports. On those occasions when I got into fights with neighbor kids, she rarely gave me much comfort. As I learned after her death, she always compared me with a mythological image she had of my baby brother who, after his death, continued to grow up and in her mind represented the perfection I could never have achieved.

Most of the warmth and love I received came from my Grandfather Steinthal and from Grandma, Nanni. He was a presence every Sunday morning, taking me shopping for bread at a small bakery in the Shoreland Hotel, taking me for automobile rides and a visit to what would now be called a petting zoo at a restaurant called Siegels at 83rd and Jeffrey Avenue. Every Sunday, when he appeared early in the morning, he would give my mother a $10 gold piece for my savings account.

Grandma cooked. She prepared cakes, kuchens, and one of my favorites, a lemon meringue pie. Grandma never got the hang of having a meringue stiffen, but she never stopped trying. When I asked for them,. she would prepare breaded veal chops, one of my favorite meals. When I was ill and stayed home from school, she was there reading to me from one of my books. I recall one time when I decided to sketch her with pencil on paper. The likeness was, at best, remote, but she sat immobilized until I said I was done. All of these acts of love are things I remember.

All these memories have affected my attitudes toward being a father. When Kenny was old enough, I was home virtually every evening. Together, we spent time going to Indian Guides, a YMCA program which required sons and fathers to appear together. We were in the park playing baseball together and at bedtime, we developed a character that he could identify with and who

had adventures that would parallel his own. ""Jimmy" became Ken's friend and, to some extent, his companion. Jimmy also went to Indian Guides meeting, played ball, went to Sunday School. Jimmy had more than a few misadventures, got into trouble, but eventually came through his ordeal a little wiser. I found that Jimmy was a good teaching tool and Kenny certainly went to bed on many evenings with visions of Jimmy's adventures becoming part of his dreams. Kenny was included on Saturdays when I went to the factory. He got his "job" of breaking boxes and putting them into a dumpster. He helped in the process of constructing a basement room when he pounded boxes of nails into an empty carton and then, carefully pulled them out again. He was included whenever possible.

When Linda came into my life, I felt it was necessary to have a basis for physical contact. Developing a secret switch which only I could activate seemed to be the answer. Having the switch on made it possible for a series of impossible sounds to emanate from me -- starting with a squeezing of my nose which evoked "HONK."" followed by gales of laughter. The pulling on ear lobes brought out a ding or a dong depending on which ear was involved. And then there was the poke in the chest or the pulling of the chin which guaranteed other sounds and more laughter. It was the basis for relating. Fortunately, when things began to get out of hand, the switch could be turned off and the sounds would stop.

When she was in second grade, Linda missed a few days of school around Halloween. She was disappointed that she missed the party at school. I decided that, if she couldn't observe Halloween, she should have a holiday of her own. This brought on the invention of Lugubrian National Independence Day. Lugubrian Day meant popcorn, the Tchaikovsky 1812 Overture, and a flag, the center of which was a single piece of popped corn. Mrs. Smith, Linda's teacher read the story to the class and everyone celebrated the "holiday." She later sent a note home with Linda asking us whether this was a real holiday. When we stopped laughing, we told her it was a figment of our imagination. The holiday has been celebrated ever since and, though the story has been enhanced and refined, it still has the same climax -- the cannons being fired at the end of the overture.

Hansie was another character that was created to fill a need. Hansie was developed over time to be a part of stories that helped Michael go to sleep. He had a heavy Hungarian accent and sounded like Bela Lugosi. Except that Hansi hungered for body parts. He had a habit of misunderstanding a story. For example, when the father said that he wanted to keep his little boy from harm. Hansie butted into the conversation and said " Arm, I want one." This led to gales of laughter and a good night's sleep.

In the mornings when Lois was preparing to go to work, I would spend breakfast time in the kitchen with Michael. I thought he would enjoy playing a harmonica. The holes on the instrument are numbered and by blowing into or drawing air out of a hole, different notes are played. I developed a notation

system where Michael could play songs by the numbers on the instrument and we developed a repertoire of several songs which we would play enthusiastically each morning. We wrote a songbook containing all the pieces we had learned and added new music to it regularly. Michael displayed his musicality when he joined a University group for a parade in the neighborhood. The group called itself "The Lower Brass Conspiracy." Michael marched with the group proudly playing his harmonica and being drowned out by blasts from a tuba, trombones and trumpets. That his sound was never heard was no deterrent. Wearing his University of Chicago sweatshirt, he continued to play.

Michael went to the local JCC and learned to use clay and make pots. One of his efforts sits on a table near my computer. His piece of chocolate cake is so realistic that people wonder why it never seems to get stale. After a period of throwing pots, he went into the copper enameling phase. This process eventually became so important to him that we bought a kiln and the supplies needed to work in our basement room. He made dozens of sets of ear rings, pins, broaches, money clips and other pieces. Eventually he decided to market them and Michael and I exchanged ideas on cost accounting. The experience was a good learning opportunity. I constructed a ""house" on the back porch and manufactured signs to designate its function on a particular day. Lois painted the house to simulate a brick structure and painted the address over its door. The top sign read "Michael's"" and the bottom sign which was easily changed, read "office,"" "store," "classroom," "library," etc. The building was equipped with a mailbox and a telephone. When the postman received mail addressed to Michael at 123 Back Alley, he dutifully brought it around to the alley and deposited it in Michael's mailbox. His store was the focal point for all the neighborhood kids.

The common denominator of all these activities was the one-on-one contact between parent and child. It wasn't necessary to say "I love you," that was clearly demonstrated. And when a child was frequently told he was loved, he understood that in the context of being in the heart of the parent's life, not on the edge of it looking in. If that's parenting, it's also love and the passing of traditional values and of the warmth that turns a child into an adult.

The Lugubrian Story

Once upon a time there was a small kingdom nestled in the hills of central Europe. It was called Lugubria. The ruler of this kingdom was a very kind and generous man who loved all his people very much. Whenever the king received his rents from the lords of the kingdom, he would take only the money he needed to run his household and to pay his bills for the year to come. Then he would take all the rest of his money and divide it among the poor people of the kingdom so that they, too, could have enough to eat for the coming year.

One year however, there was a drought in this small kingdom. The lords were not able to pay very much money to the king as rent for the land which they used. As he did every year, the king received the lords at court for the payment of annual rent. When he understood how little rent they could pay, he held a meeting with the lords to discuss the problem. They met all afternoon and evening talking about how the king would get enough money to be able to feed the poor people of the kingdom for the next year.

Since the only crop that survived the drought was corn, one of the lords had an idea.

"Why not?" he asked, "Give all the poor people some of the corn so that they would have at least that to eat." The king agreed and it was done. So, the following week, on November 15th to be exact, all the poor people of the kingdom met in the courtyard of the castle to receive their share of the corn from the king.

One of the poor Lugubrians took his share of the corn to his small home. He explained to his wife what had happened and why it was that he brought only corn instead of the money he usually received from the king.

His wife was very unhappy about having nothing but corn to prepare for a whole year and no money to buy other food. She took the sack of corn from her husband and angrily threw it into the corner near the fireplace. She was so upset that she began yelling at her husband, crying that they would have no money to buy the other foods they needed. Everything that they ate would have to be made with the corn and the little milk and butter they were able to get from their old cow.

While the wife was complaining in this way, the bag of corn in the corner began to puff up. There was a new smell in the cottage. The bag, you see, had been thrown too close to the fireplace.

After a little while, there was a small noise -- like a little explosion -- and then another, and then several more. It was at about that time that the poor Lugubrians began to notice this smell -- which was not disagreeable -- and to hear the small explosions. Wondering what the noise was, they looked over into the corner where the bag of corn was resting. The bag had swollen to several times its original size. It was so swollen that it had burst at its seams and what was pouring out through the hole was not the yellow corn that the poor man had seen put into it, but white fluffy snow-like things that puffed out into the room. Grabbing the bag to pull it away from the fire, the poor Lugubrian was afraid that the little corn they had received from the king was spoiled and that they would starve during the winter to come. But his wife, who was just as frightened as her husband at this turn of events, noticed that these puffs carried the same pleasant odor which by now had traveled all through the cottage.

Bravely, she tasted one of the puffs.

"It's very good to eat," she told her husband, "and only a few of them will fill us with enough food for a whole day. Perhaps by heating the corn

near the fire there would be enough of these puffs to keep us filled with food for the year."

While the corn was exploding through the room, several of the puffs of corn had landed in a pot which contained freshly melted butter. The butter was being melted to put into a vat for storage and had been standing near to the fire. The Lugbrians picked these puffs out of the butter and ate them. They discovered that they were even better tasting than the ones he had eaten without the butter.

By now, I'm sure that you have figured out that what these poor Lugubrians had discovered was popcorn. In later years they learned that all the corn planted in their country was of this type. Naturally, as years went by, some of the Lugubrians left their homeland to come and settle in America. Somehow, the name was changed from fluffcorn to popcorn, and we know it by that name today.

Many years after the discovery of popcorn, the king granted independence and complete freedom to the people of Lugubria. The day on which his proclamation was read was naturally the day on which the people assembled in the courtyard for their annual gift of popcorn from the king -- November 15th.

And every year since then, Lugubrians have celebrated November 15th as Lugubrian National Independence Day. Now, I suppose you can guess how Lugubrians celebrate their independence. Not with fireworks like we do, but by preparing and eating a large bowl of their most famous national product -- a HUGE bowl of buttered popcorn.

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Short Stories

Parade

What follows is a series of short, unrelated stories about minor memorable events that helped shape who and what I am. They were enjoyable happenings -- a little out of the ordinary, and usually fun to be a part of. Like the time when I was just starting at Winter and Hirsch and trying to find my place in the corporate pecking order. Seymour Persky was the company's in-house attorney. Seymour's hobby was collecting and restoring antique automobiles and at that time, he had a couple of them garaged in the company building.

It was near the Fourth of July in 1956 and he poked his head into the cubicle that was my office and asked if I had any plans for the holiday. Seymour was single at the time and lived in South Shore. "Nothing particular." I told him. ""There's going to be a parade on South Chicago Avenue that will be fun. I can arrange for us to ride in it with my 1932 Model "B" Ford. Would you like to go with me?"

"Sure," I said, "and I'd like to bring Kenny along -- he's never been in a parade before."

"Of course," Seymour said, "I'll pick you up at 10:30 in the morning."

I had no idea of what a model "B" Ford was all about. I knew that there had been a Model "A" and that millions of them had been produced. I learned later that the "B" was manufactured only in one year -- 1932. Seymour had his lovingly restored to practically new condition. The engine sparkled, the upholstery was brand new and the paint had been redone with original factory specifications. In all respects except its age, it was a new car. And it sported a rumble seat.

Seymour arrived on time and Kenny jumped into the rumble seat waving an American flag. We drove down 87th Street and found the parade's staging area. We joined the group of marchers and bands and drove slowly down the street, waving imperiously at the onlookers. It was fun and about the only time I can remember being a part of a parade.

New Cars

New models were introduced at the beginning of fall in the 1950's. It was time for the 1957 models when Seymour asked me if I wanted to go to the showroom of Charles Baron Ford at the corner of 22nd and Michigan Avenue. "Why not?" I said to myself. But Seymour had a practical joke in mind and when he explained it to me, I thought it would be a funny lunch-hour experience.

Seymour's 1919 Model "T" Ford was waiting on the building's car elevator for us when we were ready to go out to lunch. The building sported an elevator for the purpose of hiding repossessed cars in the building when they were found by the repo men. In addition, an occasional repo would be put inside the building when it was found on the street in front of the office. Its owner would be trying to arrange a refinancing of his debt but the collection man assigned to his account felt that the promises being made couldn't be kept and the car was picked up while discussions continued between the collector and the customer.

Seymour had just completed the process of restoration. There was a new, hand sewn top to keep rain from hitting the driver. There were new Isinglass windows attached to the cloth cover of the car. All these items had been hand-crafted by old-timers who had worked on the original models. They were authentic in every detail. Seymour briefly explained the operation of the Model "T" which required a crank to start the engine. The car had no clutch and had what was called a ""planetary transmission." Driving the car required a different set of rules than were used in the modern cars of the mid-1950's, but Seymour had mastered the technique of driving the "T", and away we went down Michigan Avenue, chugging along comfortably to the stares of anyone passing us on the road.

In addition to being a collection attorney for the company, Seymour was also in charge of the skip tracers who worked there. Their job was to find people who had disappeared with their cars and simply had stopped paying for them. The process of skip tracing involved trying to find where a debtor lived, or where he worked and usually involved subterfuge. As a result, the skip tracers developed talents at using accents and dialects of the borrowers. Most could affect a black accent, a southern drawl, a western twang and regional dialects that were used to talk to relatives of the deadbeats in an effort to find them and/or their cars. Seymour was a master dialectician.

We parked the "T" on Michigan about a block from the showroom entrance. Following his instructions, I turned up the brim of the hat I was wearing, took off my tie and tried to look as rural as possible. When we went into the showroom, Seymour affected a drawl that reeked of hayseed and cow dung. He looked, acted and sounded like a farmer. We opened and slammed a few doors of the new models, we kicked a few tires to see how solid they were and we climbed behind some of the steering wheels to see how we fit.

It didn't take long for one of the salespeople to approach us with his best, toothiest grin of welcome. "How are you guys doing today?" he asked beginning the conversation.

"Fine," Seymour said without looking up from the engine he had started to inspect, ""Jist wanted ta look at th' new models. Ah'v had some purty good luck with the Ford Ah'v had an' Ah wanted to think about tradin' it fer a newer one."

The salesman was delighted. "Happy to hear that you've enjoyed driving your Ford, " He said, "But we've got some new features that make them better than ever."

"Ah seem ta take a fancy ta this Fairlane, " Seymour said pointing to one of the floor models. ""How much could ya offer me fer a trade on ma old car?' He asked, baiting the game.

The salesman rushed to his desk and returned with his Red Book -- a manual of used car values that was used universally in the trade. "Let's have a look at her and I'll give you the best trade in town." the salesman offered, "Where's she parked?"

"Jist up the street a bit," said Seymour. I was having a hard time containing myself. We shuffled out of the showroom with the salesman leading the charge and started down the street. "Jist up the street a bit," Seymour encouraged him.

When the salesman saw the "T" sitting at the curb, he wasn't quite sure whether he was the butt of a joke or whether Seymour was seriously trying to trade the "T" for a new model. "I'll have to talk to my sales manager about the amount I can give you on a trade. It's kind of an older car, and the book doesn't tell me what to offer you for a trade."

Seymour puffed up. "If ya cain't tell me how much ya'll gi'me fer this car, I'll have to go ta another dealer." With that, he set the ignition and cranked

the "T". It roared into action, we both hopped in and left the salesman standing on the street still not knowing whether he had been the butt of a joke or not. It wasn't until several weeks later when we saw him at a restaurant and told him what we had done that he knew for sure. He was not a happy camper but realized that it had all been in fun.

Antiquing

It was a warm summer day in 1970 when Lois, Linda, Michael and Johanna and I piled into our blue four door Chevy and headed for northern Indiana. We decided that we were going to look for antiques. Lois had developed an ability to "see"" an antique shop or barn miles across the countryside, around corners and over hills. We followed her instincts until we arrived at a barn in Hobart Indiana, outside of Gary and then very much in the country. The merchandise we found wasn't to our taste, but the owner asked us if we wanted to look inside her barn where she kept pieces that had not yet been restored.

We looked in the barn and saw a piece that intrigued us. The most prominent feature of this hutch were the glass doors that had a sand blown etched design in them. The piece was in poor shape. The top originally had a zinc plate which was missing. The zinc was set over some pine boards which had been eroded. The entire piece was badly painted but it was obviously oak under the paint. A drawer had no bottom and there were other flaws in the wood that required refinishing. It had been an Indiana Kitchen -- a utilitarian piece of furniture from the turn of the 20th Century that served multiple purposes for storage of flour, sugar and preserves. It had a cutting board and an additional table that nested inside the base. It was a wonder of American ingenuity and we wanted it.

We settled on a price of $60 and proceeded to take it apart to pack into the Chevy. That was a problem. We wanted to be sure that the glass doors were not broken and wrapped them in towels. We put the base into the car's trunk and the top, somehow was squeezed between Lois and Linda. Johanna rode home in the front seat with Michael in his car seat and we finally managed to get on our way. It was not an easy drive but we unloaded the kitchen without any damage.

Then the work began. We stripped the irregular pine boards off the top of the counter and replaced them with some solid oak table extensions we had acquired with an oak kitchen table We removed the doors and extricated their glass inserts which were carefully cleaned and stored. I removed all the hardware making repairs to broken parts as we went along. Then, Lois started to strip the paint from the wood. All these projects took place on heavy cardboard in our kitchen on Hyde Park Boulevard. Eventually, all the wood had been stripped. Where needed, joints had been re-glued. The drawer had a new base installed and the hardware had been stripper-dipped, wire-brushed and lacquered. New screws had been found to replace some that were missing.

We began the process of reassembling the pieces. When it was all together, Lois carefully stained all the stripped wood giving it a consistent color. And finally, Lois protected the finish with flat coats of polyurethane varnish. At last, it was finished.

It's one of our prize possessions for two reasons. First, because it's truly a rare piece of Americana -- one we've seen in countless antique shows where other versions of the Indiana Kitchen were for sale at much higher prices and in condition that was inferior to our piece. And, second, because we had invested so much of our ingenuity and effort into the restoration of this piece that it has truly become a part of us.

Meeting Mafiosi – Part Two

Winter and Hirsch, an automobile finance company, was a Mecca for the low life of the city. Charging unduly high rates of interest, it attracted elements of the society who were willing to pay those high rates in order to have access to money that was denied them from more traditional sources. The word on the street was "If you need money and can't go to a bank, go to Winter and Hirsch."" I had the job of dealing with these people and was charged with the responsibility of making direct loans to those who qualified. Our concern was the value of their collateral and the probability that we would be able to find it in the event that there was a default on the loan.

The hustlers of the city were welcome in the office and I did business with the likes of George Warner who owned several saloons in the city's Bronzeville area. Another personality was Dan Gaines who owned hundreds of juke boxes located in taverns throughout the inner city. At one time, a few years before I met him, Gaines was associated with the "policy racket." Policy at that time was very similar to what is now the entirely legal State Lottery. In those years, it existed in the poorest parts of the city and was considered illegal. Gaines left the business after the untimely deaths of the Jones Brothers whose end resulted from gunshot wounds reputedly administered by members of the crime syndicate who wanted some of the Jones' revenues in return for syndicate protection. Gaines wisely decided to assume the relatively low profile job of operating the juke boxes and other relatively harmless games that entertained tavern patrons. The fact that many of these games offered opportunities for gambling did not escape Gaines.

I also knew C.B. Atkins who was a professional gambler. On one occasion, Atkins came into my office late on a Friday evening and borrowed some money on the title to his car before legalized gambling came to New Jersey. He planned to go to a large crap game in Atlantic City and needed as much cash as he could raise. The following Monday morning, Atkins returned to my office, a huge grin on his face. "You're my man," he said, "You're my good luck charm." He proceeded to tell the story of the weekend during which he had cleaned out the New Jersey gamblers and, not

incidentally, had met and quickly married singer Sarah Vaughn. She was another trophy of the game. "Would you like to meet Sarah?" C.B. asked me. "Of course," I told him. "I've told her all about you and she's waiting in the car to meet you." I put on my coat and went to the street in front of the office where, waiting in his Cadillac was the famous singer. She was very pleasant and the brief meeting apparently was C. B.'s way of thanking me for the loan he had gotten the previous weekend. The loan was repaid in full that Monday morning with winnings from the Jersey crap game.

George Warner owned the lounge known as "The Talk of The Town." at Drexel and Oakwood Boulevard. This was a classic Chicago jazz joint and the famous musicians of the day would consider it a necessity to stop there, get into a jam session and get into the mood of the place. George also owned the Pershing lounge at 64th and Cottage Grove Avenues and there, he operated a more conventional night club complete with headliners like Redd Foxx and Dinah Washington. George also had a chorus line of leggy black beauties. He asked me if there was any way he could attract some of Chicago's white convention trade and I organized a publicity campaign and some advertising and free publicity designed to stimulate traffic from downtown hotels. Cab drivers received extra tips for white fares they delivered and the audience lightened as more and more whites came to the south side to enjoy the entertainment George offered.

So, with this background of dealing with people on the underbelly of the city's community, I sat at my desk talking with Sterling Thomas one morning. Thomas was young -- perhaps 25, lithe, personable and apparently successful at what he did. He was requesting a loan on his current model Cadillac. The title to the car was clear and he wanted to borrow about half its wholesale value. His credit, at least that part of it that showed in the credit bureau, was clear, he had no record with the Narcotics Bureau and the loan seemed to be good. Thomas' only problem was that he was in a hurry to get the money. We were happy to accommodate this need.

A few months after making the loan, I was driving to the office and listening to the radio one morning when there was a news report of the arrest, in Milwaukee, of a minor named Sterling Thomas. Sirens went off. I knew he looked young but that he was no minor. As the news broadcast continued, I learned that his finger prints revealed that he was at least 25 and had served time for burglary. Finally, he was being charged with a burglary -- not just any heist but he had invaded the home of ex-Governor Otto Kerner and had taken a truckload of valuables from the house.

Reaching the office, I was immediately concerned about the location of the Cadillac because, while his loan was up to date, our contract had what was called an "insecurity clause." This meant simply that if we didn't feel comfortable with the loan, we could repossess the collateral. I phoned one of the company’s repo men, Harry Holzer, and offered him a bonus of $100 plus his regular fees if he could find and repo the Cadillac. Holzer jumped at the

opportunity and within a day called to say he had recovered the car. What Holzer didn't tell me was that he had found the car in Tony Accardo's garage and had broken into the garage to take the car. Accardo was the head of the Chicago crime syndicate and not a man to be toyed with. Holzer's agents had been seen and followed back to South Chicago where they had planned to secret the car.

What transpired next was partly second hand information. Holzer's repo lot was on Chicago's southeast side. The car was in the middle of a lot of automobiles which would not move -- their engines were broken, they had no wheels, and generally, the Caddy was protected by a fortress of junk cars. The night following his seizure of the car, Holzer's lot was entered by a group of men who owed their livelihood to Accardo. They pistol whipped Holzer's night watchman, but were unable to get the car. To add insult to injury, the watchman phoned the police who caught up with the muscle men in Hyde Park and tossed them in the Hyde Park police station's lockup overnight.

Early the following morning,, after they had been bailed out of the Hyde Park station, I had an office visit from two very unhappy hoods.

"Where's da car?" they demanded. "What car is that?"" I asked as innocently as possible. "You know what car." they told me. After a few minutes of additional sparring, we agreed that Sterling Thomas' car was the one they were interested in. Accardo had an interest in the car since he had bailed Thomas out of jail and wanted security for his cash advance. Accardo had what might be considered a second mortgage on the car.

I told the hoods I would try to find it for them provided that Thomas' loan was paid off.. They said they'd go out for coffee and would be back in a half hour. I agreed to try to locate the missing Caddy in that time. The phone never left my ear. I arranged for the car to be delivered to an intersection at 39th and Prairie Avenues -- an area no one in his right mind would venture into at night. When the hoods reappeared. I told them I had received a call from my "informant" telling me where the car could be found. The balance due on the car was $1800 plus the cost of the repossession that was due to Holzer. They peeled off $2200 from a wad of bills and I suggested that they go to the Prairie Avenue corner and wait for the car which I knew had already been parked there.

I had instructed a friend who had an auto repair shop at that corner to watch the car and to be sure it wasn't tampered with by anyone. He would, I told him, know when it was OK to let it be moved. After the hoods picked up the car and the incident was closed, I had a call from the repairman, Eddie Weil. Weil said, simply, ""I see what you mean. They got the car."

Management at Winter and Hirsch was involved in a series of frauds against their banks. I knew the circumstances and fortunately was never asked to participate in it. In fact, I had secured copies of documents that clearly established the circumstances of the frauds. My father had invested a substantial sum of money in the company and I felt it was my responsibility to

stay on the job to protect his investment. Because management knew that I was aware of their scam on the banks, my life was, to say the least, made miserable. But I hung on to the job. When I had finished plans to open my own business, the whole matter was brought to a head.

My father's investment was paid off and, as I prepared to leave the company, I had visitors in my office. Knowing that I held incriminating documents in my personal safety deposit box, management decided to rely on a threat to make sure that they remained in hiding.. Into my office came an Italian automobile dealer I knew, Jim Gaudio. With him was a large dark-complexioned man wearing an oversized coat. The man was introduced to me as someone by the name of Nitti, the brother of infamous hoodlum Frank Nitti. I had watched the TV series on "The Untouchables"" and knew the name well. I was told that none of the material I had should ever find its way into the hands of the authorities or else.... None of it ever left my bank vault, but I felt highly justified when, perhaps a year after I left, the president of the company, the comptroller, several partners in the CPA firm which audited the company and a few subordinate clerks and bookkeepers were all indicted by a Federal Grand Jury and subsequently, seven were convicted and sentenced to various jail terms. I felt vindicated and a lot safer.

I was never a crime fighter nor was I interested in becoming one. But I certainly had enough exposure to organized crime to recognize the insidious power it exerted over the community. It isn't easy being straight in a crooked world, but then, it's not fun facing a jail term. Ask Milton Hirsch, Yale Izaks and Jack Lieber -- they knew what jail was like.

Chapter 6. 1960 to 1969

Face to Face –Part Two

I suppose that these are tales from my darker side. The people who are included here are not necessarily nice. A few of them were ultimately charming, but there are serious issues about their morality. A couple of them wound up serving long terms in prison. But when I met them, I found that I could relate to them -- whether I fully understood their motives or not.

For example, there was Dan Gaines. Dan was an old man in his 70's when I first met him in about 1958. He operated a juke box leasing and rental business from an old store at 43rd and Cottage Grove Avenue. Dan's background was spotty. He had been a senior member of the gang that was headed by the three Jones brothers. The Joneses were hoodlums -- they were the Mafia's connection to Chicago's black community. If there was illegal activity -- from gambling -- called "policy" -- to narcotics to prostitution to extortion, the Jones family had a piece of the action. One of their lieutenants was Dan Gaines.

But when the Joneses crossed the syndicate and became too greedy, they were both gunned down in what the newspapers described as a "gangland killing." Dan Gaines decided to lower his profile and, though he always maintained contact with the Cicero Mafiosi, he never crossed their paths. His operations were simple. He would buy juke boxes and install them in taverns. His take from the boxes was fifty percent of the total -- an amount that could reach $100 per week. Dan controlled several hundred juke boxes. In addition, Dan was in the business of lending money. Chicago's liquor licenses were expensive even in the '50"s. A 2:00 A.M. license cost $400 every six months, a 4:00 A.M. license cost $600 twice a year. Tavern keepers were notoriously poor business people and frequently didn't have the cash to pay for their license renewals and the equally expensive dram shop insurance that many landlords required.

These tavern owners would come to Dan's "office" in the backroom of his store and request -- in some cases beg -- for the money needed to keep open. The loans that were made usually required repayment from the owner's share of the juke box proceeds and an informal chattel mortgage on the bar fixtures.

If the owner defaulted -- or if the balance owed at the time of the next license renewal was too high, Dan would simply find another tavern operator and replace the original. Selling the new entrepreneur the fixtures for whatever down payment he could raise, and taking the entire juke box receipts to repay the loan. Anxious saloonkeeper "wannabes" were always available, ready to mortgage anything they might have to get into the business of selling liquor.

There were times when Dan ran low of operating capital and that was where I came in. I worked for Winter and Hirsch and was responsible for

finding people who needed to borrow money. Dan appeared in my office and offered me a proposition -- if I would finance his tavern keepers, he would personally guarantee the loans in the event of a default. In addition, the finance company would retain a lien on the fixtures. Though those fixtures had little residual value, they added to the loan package. I presented the proposal to my boss who jumped at the opportunity of making high interest, relatively secured loans. And so it was that I was initiated into the mysteries of the underbelly of black society. I met the people who wanted to become rich selling liquor, those who wanted to open barbecue restaurants and those who simply wanted to be near the fabled Dan Gaines.

Dan offered me countless business opportunities, a few of which I rejected as being too far away from the mainstream of lending. For example, he told me he wanted me to see an operation in which he had an interest with the possibilities of making a loan on some real estate. We drove in his car -- with a driver at the wheel, out to Aurora, Illinois and wound up in the seediest part of the town. We entered the house which I realized immediately was a whore house. The fact that the Madam was acting as the gracious hostess and the girls were acting as ... well ...waitresses and servers ... didn't make me feel that the risk of an imminent police raid would make the loan a very practical idea. Dan said he understood and we stayed at the house where the girls prepared a steak dinner and offered both of us the run of the place. I declined with thanks -- so did Dan.

Among Dan's lieutenants was Eddie Haskins. Eddie was tall, very thin and very black. For reasons I never quite understood, we hit it off very well. Eddie knew everybody in town who was black and in business. In the evenings, it was frequently necessary for me to visit the taverns in which we had invested to make sure that the places were operating, that the juke boxes were turned on and that our loans were secure. On some occasions, my visit involved demands for delinquent payments. Whether Dan had assigned Eddie to me for my protection, or whether Eddie decided that it was a good idea to run with me to improve his status as being close to a money source, he frequently accompanied me as I made my rounds.

Eddie was a frustrated tennis player. He had won several Chicago Park District citywide tournaments, yet, because of his color, he was never allowed to compete in a national tournament. I don't know how he would have done in that arena, but his ambition was frustrated by the racism of the time, and I would never get to know how really well he played. As my association with Eddie became known throughout the black community, he would introduce himself as my black brother -- with different mothers of course. People weren't sure whether to take him seriously. I found some comfort in knowing that he was covering my back in case some tavern keeper resented my efforts to collect money he didn't have available to pay the bill he had made.

There were several other hangers-on in Dan Gaines retinue. Some, like Cadillac Bob Lee are legendary figures in the evolution of jazz music. Bob owned a couple of lounges in the city where jazz musicians hung out. This was a period when people like Dizzy Gillespie and Sidney Bichet were famous and singers like Sarah Vaughn and Dinah Washington were selling millions of records to both black and white audiences. I met many of them who would come to Bob's Pershing Lounge at 39th Street and Oakwood Boulevard or to his nightclub in the Pershing Hotel at 64th and Cottage Grove Avenue.

There were other enforcers for Dan Gaines -- including Jim Collins, an ex-convict and Thelma Washington, a long-time professional saloon keeper whose reputation included her ability to find talent and sign them to long term contracts and then, to market their skills. Sam Cook was one of her stable of stars until he died. When I left Winter and Hirsch, these contacts all slowly died. But leaving the company had its advantages.

Milton Hirsch was educated at Harvard Law School. He was about three years older than I was but suddenly found himself running the finance company after the death of his uncle Abe Winter in the spring of 1956. Milt had the education necessary to run a company but he was lazy and he was greedy. In order to have an operating head for the company he hired a man who had worked for the public accounting firm that audited the company's books. Yale Izaks had absolutely no moral base. He would lie, cheat and steal at the slightest provocation. Needless to say I didn't like him.

Milt, with Yale's prodding developed a scheme to embezzle money from the company. They would fabricate financial notes signed by anonymous "borrowers,"" have checks drawn to the borrowers, cash them and split the proceeds. When those notes came due, they would simply write off the amounts as business losses. Losses were a common part of the business, but when the auditors began to question the amounts of the losses as they mounted, the auditors were brought into the scheme and included in the profits.

Because one of my incidental jobs at the company was reviewing documents before they were filed in the company vault, I began to see the pattern. In fact, in one case, I recognized the handwriting as being that of one of the company cashiers. I decided that it would be necessary to protect myself and began keeping photocopies of those fraudulent notes and other documents.

Abe Winter's brother was an old friend of my father's and in fact lived in the next apartment building in Hyde Park. Sam Winter was never aware of what was going on between Milt, Yale and the auditors. My father had invested a sum of money in the business' preferred stock and dutifully came to stockholder meetings to hear from Milt how well the company was doing. I felt a responsibility, knowing what was going on, to protect his investment. Eventually Milt and Yale found out that I had evidence detailing their fraudulent activities and I was warned not to say anything about it. I planned to leave the company and open an office of my own with Lois.

Our business plan was complete, forms had been printed and an office had been secured with another former Winter and Hirsch employee, Seymour Persky when I was fired. Before I could leave the office, I was visited by an automobile dealer I knew and a big man in a black overcoat who was introduced as the brother of famous mobster, Frank Nitti. I was told to keep my mouth shut about the documents that I had secreted in a bank vault -- or else. Otherwise I would be let alone. Within less than a year, a series of Federal indictments were handed down and Milt, Yale, several of the auditors and the cashier were all tried and convicted of bank and mail fraud and were sent to Federal penitentiaries for extended terms. Those events took place more than forty years ago -- and they seem like they happened yesterday.

Wood Dale

Before I met Lois, I had never heard of Wood Dale. In fact, my knowledge of Chicago's western suburbs was limited to places where Tiny Togs had accounts. Elmhurst, Elgin and Westmont were places I knew. But Bensenville, Addison, and Itasca had never been on my radar. So, when I had reached the point in our relationship where Lois wanted me to meet her family, I drove, with her as navigator, out to Wood Dale not knowing where I was going or what I was going to find when I got there.

Following her directions to her folk's house, we arrived at a four way stop. The intersection had four large empty lots. The street signs identified the intersection as Commercial and Central Streets. If this was the business heart of the community, I thought, I can imagine the rest of the place. Driving up the driveway at 410 North Oak Avenue, the family was waiting for us. I'm not sure what sort of advance arrangements had been made or how I'd been described, but they were waiting.

Lois" parents, her grandmother and her younger brother were at home that Saturday afternoon. I was on my best, and probably my most gentile behavior. Somehow, I sensed that they knew I was Jewish and that their contact with people of Jewish persuasion had been very limited. I learned later that there was a local family named Allender, who were Jewish, but the Gilbert's contacts with him had never been social. Herb Gilbert also had some contact with Jewish members of his Masonic lodge.

So into the house we went. We made small talk -- about what I did for a living and where I had gone to school. Since they knew I was still married to Dotty, personal questions were taboo. We talked about Wood Dale and how Herb Gilbert had bought several lots during the depression and had planned to move his family out of the city and into the safer suburban countryside. The lots had been paid off on an installment plan at $1 per month per lot over several years until, finally, the deed was transferred. Lois' grandfather and grandmother Groessl had also bought several lots a block from the Gilbert's house. So did her Uncle. The Groessls had built their house and included a 20

by 20 foot garage on the site. When it was completed, it was subdivided and Lois' whole family moved in. There was no indoor plumbing, but they then had a base of operations for the construction of a ""real" house on their own nearby land. That house was almost complete by the time I arrived on the scene. Later, in 1957, a front porch was added. There was indoor plumbing, a large kitchen, a living room and, upstairs, were several bedrooms. The house had been built in stages depending on the wartime availability of building supplies and the money it took to buy them.

We ate a large noontime meal which included mashed potatoes, something I don't like, and some other foods that aren't normally on my regular diet. I was the guest and thoroughly enjoyed everything that was put on the table. Apparently, I made an impression on Grandma Groessl. She later took Lois aside and, as Lois related the story, Grandma told her that she should hold on to me, that "Jewish men are good to their wives." I was a little flattered when I heard about this conversation later simply because I took pride in the comment on behalf of all Jewish men everywhere.

On other occasions, I met her brother, John and his wife, Margot who was eventually to be the mother of a large brood of children -- nine in all. The oldest ones were already in their late teens and were inclined to make fun of me. Frankly, I didn't know how to handle the whispers and giggles that were pointed in my direction. I chose to ignore them though Rose and Jenny made me very uncomfortable. I think that Margot was pregnant with her penultimate child, Jeff, when we first met. Later, Lorelei -- Lori, as she was later known -- was someone I would get to know as she grew up.

John had a small house in Addison, a short drive from Wood Dale and he had a swimming pool installed in his back yard. This pool was the major attraction in the neighborhood and one of the reasons why, after Lois and I married, we went to John's house for occasional Sunday barbecues. Margot, who was a German World War II war bride, was famous for her German Potato Salad and I was urged to eat a lot of it.

Herb Gilbert, Lois' father was the mayor of Wood Dale, then a town of about 3,000 people. He was also the regional distributor of the Chicago papers. Every summer, the newspaper distributors banded together to host a picnic for all their members and their families. Lois and I were included in the event that was held in one of the Forest Preserves. The picnics were fun and held to a number of traditions. One of them consisted of paper boys trying to throw tightly rolled newspapers through a window frame hung by a rope from a branch of a tree. The fact that the frame was a moving target made the effort even more difficult. There were three-legged races, pie eating contests, and other typically American events. And there were gallons of beer available. The newspapers induced their suppliers to contribute prizes and everyone who attended wound up with some sort of door prize. I haven't been to a comparable picnic since those News Distributor events and wish I could find an equivalent event to attend.

As mayor of Wood Dale, the developers were a constant problem to Herb Gilbert. One pair, with names that could have been written into a story about the Mafia, were giving him particular trouble. Griffazzi and Falcone were constructing multiple unit town houses which they called "condomains." The concept was new in those years but essentially involved selling individual units which were a part of a larger common element that required funds to maintain lawns, club houses and other common elements. Today, such a development would be considered normal and appropriate. When these buildings were constructed, no one understood what they were intended to do.

I was in my office one morning when Herb Gilbert called me. It seemed that Griffazzi and Falcone had reneged on their agreement to pay specific sums of money to Wood Dale on the completion of each unit to permit water and sewer hookups for the buildings. They had constructed a sewage treatment plant for the town as a condition of their receiving permits for their project. Then, they were required to pay an amount of money to be allowed to get occupancy permits for each unit as it was completed. They were, according to Herb, way behind in their payments and he didn't know what he could do to protect the town.

"Do you have a police force?" I asked.

"Sure," he said.

"Arrest them, or arrest the foreman on the project," I advised him, ""Then you'll get your money this afternoon."

He followed my advice and the foreman and a couple of his assistants spent the noon hour in the county jail in Wheaton. By three in the afternoon, the developers had delivered a check covering all the past due hook-on fees and a routine was established for the future. Using the police powers, however limited, had allowed Herb to exercise his authority in the town. Later, the town named a street in his honor.

As time went on, Wood Dale became a part of the O'Hare airport legend. Planes landing at what was to become the world's busiest airport frequently followed a landing pattern that took them directly over the Gilbert's front yard. The planes were so low at that point that you could actually see the pilots in the planes. In addition, in the early days of jet aviation, motors were so noisy that it was impossible to talk over the noise. When a plane approached the field and people were sitting in the yard, it was necessary to stop talking until after the plane passed overhead.

In the late 1960's, it was because of this noise and the fact that newspaper delivery fees were being slashed by the papers that Herb and Louise decided to "sell" the agency and sell their house to George who by that time was an adult and married They wanted nothing more than to move somewhere more quiet in their retirement. They searched the Midwest and settled on a forty acre tract of land growing Christmas trees. It was located in the town of Winter, Wisconsin. Without consulting an attorney, Herb placed a considerable down payment on the property. The contract he agreed to had a

specific closing date which could not be changed. If he were unable to pay the balance due by the closing date, he would lose his deposit.

The sale of the Wood Dale house was not progressing well and the applications that George made were not being processed in a timely manner. While Lois was sure that the problems in Winter would disappear because "They didn't do business in Winter like they did on LaSalle Street" I waited, hoping that things would work out. By the time that they realized that there was a clear danger of losing the deposit because the bank and the people in Winter were not to be put off, I was asked to do my best to salvage the deal by expediting the transfer of the house to George and the negotiation of a mortgage on it so that Herb could receive the proceeds and complete the Winter deal. Pushing hard and cutting corners along the way, we finally completed the Wood Dale transfer and the Gilberts were able to buy their home in Winter, called Windy Hill Farm.

We visited Winter many times and spent Thanksgiving holidays there several years. But Wood Dale never seemed to have the same flavor as the town I knew when the Gilberts lived there. On those occasions when we visited John in Addison, some of the ""old" ambiance was also gone. There were weddings, funerals and other family events to which we were invited. But, I'll never forget the significance of the intersection of Central and Commercial.

Oddball Characters

Lois and I have come into contact with a number of unusual people whose actions or antics have been memorable. Here's a tale about three of them. Johnny Janosz worked independently as an automobile repossesser. His jobs were assigned by frustrated collection men at the finance company when they could not elicit payments from debtors and had decided that they would repossess the car and apply the balance received on the sale to the car to what was owned to the company.

Repo men were usually paid about $100 for each car they could recover and they would normally work at night when the cars would be parked near the debtor's house. In one instance, a debtor really gave Janosz a hard time. He was very hard to find and every time Janosz or one of his agents would hear about his whereabouts, the man would move taking the mortgaged car with him.

But one night, in Harvey, Illinois, Johnny found the car. Repo men traveled in teams of two. One would drive a company car, the other would hot-wire the financed car and drive it to a lot or to the finance company. The team would then get together again and renew their search for other missing cars. In Harvey, Johnny spotted the missing vehicle on a side street. When he inspected the car, he was surprised to find a strong steel cable attached to the rear axle of the car. Following the cable, he found that it led across a yard

through a window into the house. Looking through the window, Johnny realized that the cable was attached to the frame of a big brass bed in which the debtor and his wife were asleep.

The car was hot-wired and then, because he had such a tough time finding the debtor, Johnny decided to even the score. He backed the car to the wall of the house, with cable still attached, and then he gunned the engine. The car sped forward - it reached about 30 miles an hour before that cable was tightened. It jerked the bed and its occupants through the wall of the frame building and into the lawn. Janosz then clipped the cable with a bolt cutter and drove the car away from Harvey. It was the ultimate rude awakening and a story that's still told by Repo men.

Clive Burton was a retired school teacher. But his teaching experience was more than the usual one. He taught school to children whose parents were members of the British armed forces. Much of his life had been spent teaching in the remote areas of the British Empire -- Hong Kong, Malaysia, and India. He was a civil servant and, when he retired, he moved to the south of Spain with his wife, Dot. Their apartment on the Costa del Sol was near enough to the British merchandise available in Gibraltar so that he could fill his needs and still, he was able to enjoy the relatively inexpensive lifestyle available in Spain. He was a quintessential expatriot.

Clive was an artist. His paintings were excellent, crafted with great detail and representative of some of his experiences. Several pictured people sitting by a quay watching the sea. They were lonely, but they were exceptionally well done. Clive was also a sculptor. One year -- probably 1987, Lois and I were visiting the same resort in Spain where we had stayed for two or three years and had rented an apartment for the two or three weeks of our stay. During our earlier stays there, we had become friendly with several of the people who owned or rented time share units in the same facility. We were one of two American couples who went there. The rest of the people were from all over Europe -- there were Germans, French, Dutch, Swiss and a large group of English citizens. It was an international gathering place and we loved its ambiance.

Clive decided that he wanted to sculpt. Since the resort's location, about 20 miles from Gibraltar, made it possible to see the "rock" on a clear day, Clive delved into mythology and decided that he wanted to sculpt "the head of Medusa." Medusa was the character in Greek mythology who was told not to turn back and look at her lover lest she be turned into stone. Medusa's hair consisted of snakes. Clive found a large clock of malleable stone -- about four by four by six feet in size. Having arranged to get the stone moved into a position where it would overlook Gibraltar and the visage of her lover as represented by the "pillars of Hercules" from ancient mythology, he began chiseling at the stone. His work began early in summer and by the time we arrived in late September, the sculpture was complete. It was spectacular.

Clive and Dot contributed the sculpture to the resort and planned to have an unveiling ceremony. Since everyone there had seen the piece and had commented on it before it was complete, the unveiling was a thin excuse for a party. The resort agreed to contribute tapas, everyone chipped in and we prepared gallons of sangria, and the date was set.

The ground crew from the resort were also included in the party and had gone into the nearby town to buy the fresh herring that were brought in by the fishing boats that morning. They set up heavy logs which were burned over a fire. The fish were set on spits after having spent the day soaking in the salty sea water. As they roasted, the crew slowly turned them to face the hot fire so that they were fully cooked. Eating them was a memorable experience because the skins fell off leaving the tender, well cooked meat to be stripped from the bones of the eight inch long fish.

The party was to be held on the beachfront. The beaches on that section of the Mediterranean Sea are not broad, nor are they particularly sandy. The invitation to the party stipulated that everyone attending should be dressed in classical costume. For our purposes, we made laurel wreaths to be worn as head dresses and stripped our beds to make togas for the occasion. Virtually everyone appeared in a toga, though a good many were topless. As night fell, the weather turned nasty. The sirocco wind from North Africa began to blow hard and, though there wasn't much sand to blow, the seas began to rise. In addition, no one had checked the schedule for the high tides, a fact that further reduced the amount of beach available for the party.

With wind blowing into the microphone, Clive made a dedication speech in English and then in halting Spanish. The party was under way. A white covered tent had been set up. At the appropriate moment, one of the guests emerged from the tent. He wore nothing but a full body coat of white makeup. He danced around the group who were now huddled next to the bluff at the rear of the beach. Music played over loud speakers and the bacchanal began. Gradually, the sea began to wash over our feet and, in time, we all decided that, rather than be washed into the Mediterranean, we should go up to the beachfront restaurant and sit by the pool to continue with the party in relative comfort. Our videotape of that event is still something we keep among our travel souvenirs.

"Mama Lena's" was a wonderful Italian restaurant on Chicago Avenue just west of State Street. We had heard about it and decided to go there. We phone and got a reservation several weeks later. It was very popular and reservations were hard to get. The owner of the place was an Italian named Salvino. The restaurant had an interesting history. It was owned by Salvino who brought his mother to the place every morning to cook a full meal. The restaurant itself was in a tube-like storefront. There was room for a series of tables set from front to rear and an aisle for the waiter to use for service. At the rear was a small space for a couple of larger tables and for the kitchen.

Mama Lena would prepare one soup, one pasta dish, one entree and one dessert every day. That was what was offered and there were no substitutions. At the beginning of the meal, Salvino would announce the menu for the day. Anyone who didn't want to eat the foods as prepared could leave though it's doubtful if they were ever allowed to return. There were two seatings each night and at the appropriate time, Salvino would lock the front door so that no one else could come in. If customers were late, their tables would be cleared and, if they showed up too late, they would be ignored. Salvino made the dining experience personal. He would sit at each guest's table and learn something about the diners. We were also able to learn tidbits about him including the fact that he possessed a passable Italian tenor voice and was studying operatic singing. Then, at the appropriate moment, he would go to the kitchen and begin serving the meal. Mama had already gone home and it was a one man operation.

It was necessary to understand his rules and the limitations of space in the place. But, once understanding these rules, the food was exquisite. We enjoyed our prie fixe dinner and made reservations for another visit before we left the first time.

There were many meals at Mama Lena's. But one time, we approached the place and found the door locked. We were concerned. Maybe something had happened to the aging Mama. Maybe the place was closed. But in a couple of minutes, Salvino came to the door and, recognizing us, asked us to come in and sit in the darkened restaurant. Eventually, another table was occupied and as others came to the door, they were told there had been a kitchen fire and that the restaurant was closed for the evening. Then Salvino announced to the four of us who were inside that nothing was being cooked that night and that he was taking us to dinner --- in Greek Town. He was celebrating his divorce and didn't want to be bothered with either food preparation, service or the need to act as a host in the traditional way. And then, he promised, he would take us to the Inter-Continental Hotel bar where his vocal instructor was performing and we would finish the evening with drinks there.

The evening went well, though it got too late for a normal working evening. Salvino was the ultimate host and topped the evening with a performance at the Inter-Continental bar of some of the traditional Italian street songs. His voice was good, though not professional quality. But by that time of night, who could care?

Chapter 7. Epilogue

Milton

Milton had gone into business in the years after the first World War. In those years, small town retailers could not afford the expense of going to New York to select merchandise for their stores. In addition, the quantities they could reasonably stock were so small as to have no interest to manufacturers of popularly priced merchandise. As a result, jobbing businesses were built up. The "jobbers" were middlemen who went into the New York market and bought significant quantities of a given style, had them shipped to a distribution point and then broke them down to smaller quantities that would be digestible by smaller merchants. My father had worked for a jobber in the years before he was drafted into the army in 1917 and, after his discharge, went into a jobbing business with his brother Julius. Thus, Lowenstern Brothers was born. Julius left the business in about 1922 and Milton continued through the 1920's and into the depression. The business was located at 210 S. Franklin Street -- at what is now the main entrance to the Sears Tower.

In the depression years of the 1930's, the jobbing business was dying because most retailers now had access to direct purchasing from manufacturers and didn't need a middleman to supply their needs. Manufacturers were hungry for any business they could get and opened showrooms in business centers like Chicago. It was one of the reasons that Chicago's Merchandise Mart was constructed. Tiny Togs was a local manufacturer of low priced merchandise. The company had originally supplied his jobbing business, Lowenstern Brothers, with pajamas during the depression years. At that time, it was owned and operated by Joe Greenberg, an old time garment manufacturer. Joe was an expert in coaxing the last ounce of production out of antiquated machinery and from reluctant workers. Milton didn't understand which end of a needle sewed cloth, but he could sell anything. It was a match made in heaven. To keep Greenberg from bankruptcy, Milton bought the business in about 1935. Greenberg continued to be active in the operation of the factory while Milton and a couple of other salesmen sold the output of the factory. To supplement the line of goods produced by Greenberg, Milton would go to New York and buy complementary merchandise from various wholesale sources.

Tiny Togs prospered during the war. They had allocations of cotton piece goods from mills and could produce merchandise from those goods which was readily salable -- in fact it was gobbled up by their pre-war customers. Milton was very careful to allot goods to his old customers with an eye to the future. While there were tempting offers from many directions to absorb all the goods they could produce, Milton wisely decided to hold on to his customer base and resisted offers from large merchandisers like Spiegels,

J.C. Penney and Jewel Tea which at the time had a large merchandising business.

Shortly after I finished school, I was asked to join the business. There was an inherent promise that it would be turned over to me in the not-too-distant future. I was to learn the trade in the factory that was bought in Chesterton, Indiana and eventually come back to Chicago and become, first, a salesman and then the production manager of the plant. While I wasn't paid too much, I could live on what was offered and I had a chance to learn all the inside details of a business I expected to control within a short period of time.

During the late 1940's, it became apparent that trained workers were increasingly hard to find in the Chicago market. New factory jobs paying much more than Tiny Togs could afford were readily available. There were thoughts of moving the factory downstate to a town called Marshall, Illinois which offered tax incentives if we were to move there. The biggest attraction was a labor force, but we soon discovered that while there were willing workers, there were none with the skills needed to operate the high speed industrial machines that were used, even in those days. As a result, a lot of women who were able to sew at home with slow home machines were overwhelmed by the power and speed of industrial machines. We decided that the money it would cost to train these unskilled workers wasn't worth the move.

There was also conversation about moving production to the rural south. This was in the years before there was an active civil rights movement and the south wasn't a friendly place for Jewish businessmen In addition to that consideration, the work force available in the south was no better trained than it was in southern Illinois. We stuck it out in Chicago. Part of my job was the simplification of the designs used and the production steps needed to complete a style so that a garment could be produced with as little labor as possible. I was also responsible for timing and setting piece work rates to encourage more production from the workers.

Milton sold the Chesterton operation in 1949 and I moved back to Chicago and began a tour of duty as a traveling salesman. I would have to drive about 1000 miles a week and covered western Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, downstate Illinois out of the Chicago area, Wisconsin and some of the Mississippi River towns in Iowa. It was a huge territory and I could get to customers only about twice a year. It was also grueling work. I would leave early on a Monday morning and return to Chicago late on a Friday night. I would give my orders to my father for delivery to the factory and try to get some rest before heading out on Monday. There was no social life whatever.

Ultimately, Joe Greenberg decided he wanted to retire and I was elected to be his successor. I was to run the Chicago factory, design the line, grade patterns, and cut the piece goods for production. It was easily a two man job and, though Greenberg had been able to keep up with the work, the market was changing and demanding more complex and more sophisticated designs

that required more professional production techniques, new machinery and marketing. I didn't know if I was up to the new task, but I dug in and was finally able to do everything that was expected of me.

Still, all these efforts weren't enough to generate sufficient profits to satisfy Milton. Since I was never allowed access to financial statements, I never knew whether the company was in the black or the red. Finally, in 1956, Milton decided to sell Tiny Togs to a man named Wasserman. Wasserman was not an astute businessman and soon became mired down in the production problems of the factory. Though he had experience in the needle trades as they were called, he had never run a business and didn't have a sales force. My father filled that need and continued to sell the goods on a commission basis. In addition, Milton arranged to ""carry" a couple of lines of children's clothes that were produced by New York manufacturers. His income continued uninterrupted.

I was given no say in the sale nor did I receive any consideration for the fact that I had devoted nine years to a business that was sold out from under me. I resented the fact that I wasn't offered any of the proceeds from the sale. In fact, I felt betrayed. I went to work at Winter and Hirsch, a job that my father had encouraged me to take as a result of his relationship with Sam Winter and an investment he had made in the company. I remained at Tiny Togs on a part time basis for about four months in order to guide Wasserman in the intricacies of the company. Finally, I left in July of 1956 and never looked back at the garment industry.

Relieved of the responsibility of running the business, Milton continued to sell children's wear and to act as a consultant to Wasserman as long as he could hold on. Finally, about two years after buying the business, Wasserman gave up and filed for bankruptcy. My father continued to sell his other lines and apparently didn't feel any remorse for having sold a loser to Wasserman. He and my mother traveled -- to Israel, to the Orient, to Europe and enjoyed semi-retirement. He was interested in maintaining the status quo and while I exhibited my resentment toward him, he never understood why I was so bitter about his actions.

During the years between the sale of the business and his death, Milton suffered a couple of heart attacks. He recovered quickly from both of them and decided to take his doctor's advice. He lost some weight and reduced his work load, though he continued a diet which, today, would be considered the opposite of what would be healthy eating. He ate a lot of red meat, few vegetables, no fish and ate chicken only when it was fried. He enjoyed sweets of all kinds.

When Lois and I went into business in 1963, he came out to my house in South Shore Valley and sat with me on the stoop asking me to explain what it was I was doing. I tried to explain it to him but he couldn't see the abstractions of a money business where I was neither a lender nor a borrower but, rather, a broker in the middle of a financial transaction. I tried to explain it

to him in the language of the needle trades -- he had been a jobber and I was trying to be a jobber of money. I think that this analogy was finally strong enough for him to grasp what I was doing.

In the final few years of his life, he never fully retired though he spent more time at home. He still owned a car that would carry him and his sample cases to customers all over the Chicago metropolitan area and customers would still phone him for refill orders or for advice on merchandising. He reveled in his "senior statesman" status.

In March of 1964, I was at home on a Saturday evening at about 6:00 when the phone rang. Milton and Johanna were vacationing with a group of their friends and relatives in Miami. On the other end of the phone was someone who identified himself as Burt Levy. Burt was someone I had known in grade school. Now, he was a doctor practicing in Florida. Burt told me that my father had been at a restaurant, had eaten a huge meal and had walked outside the hotel smoking a large cigar. He had suffered a heart attack on the sidewalk in front of the hotel and had died. Burt said he was trying to comfort my mother who was also surrounded by members of the family and friends who were there. I spoke to her and promised to take the first plane to Miami that evening.

I phoned the airlines and arranged to be on a Delta flight to Miami which left from O'Hare at about 9:00 P.M. I arrived in Miami after midnight and took a cab to their hotel where I found my mother and the family friends who surrounded her. Together, we arranged to have his body returned to Chicago for burial.

He died on March 7, 1964, a few months short of his 74th birthday. In the four decades since that happened, I've spent a lot of time trying to sort out my feelings about him. He was the father who taught me how to handle a baseball and would encourage me to be involved in sports. He taught me how to box. He was also the father who mocked me when I was hurt or when I had a headache. He also demanded performance from me and then never praised me when I achieved the goals he had set. Yet, he was the same father who took me on trips to New York, to Milwaukee and to visit his customers. On those trips, I was assigned the job of repacking his sample cases after he had shown the merchandise to a customer. It was an important function. He was the father who took me to the office and gave me "busy work"" to teach me the business. I learned to type, to fill orders, to pack and ship merchandise.

Yet his income was always kept secret from me and the business' financial statements were never made available. My relationship was lost in a sea of conflicting signals that I have never been able to understand or handle. I did learn many valuable lessons from him including one on how to be a parent. His mistakes were lessons on the wrong things to do and I tried to avoid them with my own family. In some cases, I succeeded -- in others, I didn't. But I certainly tried.

I can only wonder how, were he somehow to come back and see me now, he would view what I have become and how I am in what's really a very different world from the one in which he lived. I think that I have a pretty good understanding of what I am. I feel confident in knowing that I can do a lot of things successfully -- things about which I was uncertain during his lifetime. But most important of all is the fact that I have survived and reached a point in life where, with Lois, I can enjoy the fruits of a lifetime of work.

Johanna

Johanna Steinthal was born at the end of the 19th century on March 4, 1899. Her father was a butcher -- not just an ordinary butcher but a very successful one. His store at 512 S. Halsted Street was busy from early morning to late at night. Ed Steinthal was known for giving honest weight to his customers at a time when butchers regularly adjusted their scales to give themselves an edge in weighing meats. He trimmed the fat from his meat fairly; his meat was fresh. He was living proof that you could be successful and honest at the same time. He lived on the second floor over the butcher shop with Nanni and the baby Johanna. His customers included some of the city's best restaurants and hotels; he also numbered Jane Addams as one of his friends and regularly contributed meat to her settlement house -- Hull House -- which was located only a couple of blocks away. And he doted on his daughter who was to be an only child.

Ed Steinthal married Nanni in 1897 after a period of two years as a widower. Nanni had, with her several sisters, conducted a successful couturier sewing business, preparing trousseaus and layettes for some of Chicago's social elite. In that period, a crew of seamstresses would literally move into the home of someone who needed a full set of clothing for a bride or for a new baby. Living in the best houses in the city was a social step above living on the second floor of a butcher shop. But all of Nanni's sisters had also married butchers and she coped with the change in condition. Besides, she was an astute businesswoman and proceeded to save money. She arranged to buy the building in which the store was located. In fact, the Steinthals owned that building until the 1950's when it was demolished to make way for the Eisenhower Expressway. It would have been in the very middle of the Halsted Street overpass of the Expressway.

Johanna was spoiled mercilessly. For example, on one occasion, Christmas was coming and Ed Steinthal didn't realize that the American culture had prompted Johanna to want a group of Christmas presents. The gifts weren't a religious matter but rather a need to exhibit affluence. Ed Steinthal left the store on Christmas eve and scouted the city until he found an open toy store. He then bought all the toys he could pack into his vehicle (I don't know whether he had a car or was still using a horse drawn buggy) and had them waiting for Christmas morning. On another occasion, Johanna was to have her

picture taken. She posed for the picture and showed off the fact that she had rings on all ten of her fingers. That photo of a rotund six or seven year old, dressed to the nines was posed with a broad, satisfied smile.

Later, Johanna went to public High School on 39th and Prairie Avenue. By that time, the family had moved to a community called the "Grand Boulevard Neighborhood."" It was populated by the most affluent members of Chicago's German Jewish community. Following High School, Johanna went to the University of Chicago in about 1918. She stayed for one year. She was actively involved in appropriate activities relating to America's involvement in the first World War. She rolled bandages, she helped at a soldier's canteen, and, of course, she went to her classes.

She had gained a lot of weight and, although her group of friends began to find mates, Johanna was single. Finally, she was introduced to Milton and they became engaged. Nanni planned an elaborate wedding at the brand new Belden Stratford Hotel on the near north side of the City. On December 5, 1923, it became the hotel's first wedding. A couple of hundred people were invited and accepted. It was a major social event.

After a honeymoon to Colorado, Johanna and Milton moved into a two bedroom apartment at 5234 Ingleside in a relatively new building. After three years, with a pregnant Johanna, Milton rented a larger apartment a couple of doors down the street at 5224 Ingleside. It was there I was born and grew up. They finally moved from that address in 1949. I was pampered. There were nannies and housemaids and there was loving care from my mother, father and an assortment of aunts, cousins and friends.

On September 16, 1931, Johanna gave birth to Bernard, her second son. Bernard lived only about 16 months. We learned many years later that he suffered from some form of congenital heart disease and never learned to walk. I can remember playing with him as my mother tried to train him on the potty. Our game, with gales of laughter, involved his pulling a towel off a rack and my putting it back where it had been. While the potty training never worked, the towel game was a huge success. Bernard contracted pneumonia and, in January of 1933, on a Sunday morning, he died in the hospital. I'm certain that, had there been more modern medicines available, he would have survived the illness.

I can still recall the morning he died. It was quite early -- perhaps 6:30. My parents came into the apartment and I was, somehow, awakened. I had never seen my father cry before, but tears streamed down his face. Bernard, who they called "Bunny," had died, they told me. I'm not sure I understood the implications of that. I was 6 1/2 at the time and in kindergarten. But following his death and the attendant tumult of his burial and the visitors who came to express their condolences, my life seemed, somehow, to change.

In 1935, my mother went into the hospital for the "removal of a tumor." I learned only as an adult that her surgery was a hysterectomy. I can remember visiting her in St. Luke's hospital at 16th and Michigan Avenue -- I

can even recall a book she was given called "Fun in Bed" which contained a series of word games, puzzles and the like. That book may have been my first exposure to crossword puzzles.

As I continued through school, Johanna became active in the Temple Sisterhood -- and was the person responsible for recording small memorial contributions to various funds that had been sent as money raising activities. In addition, she also became, first, a room mother and then, gradually, one of the officers of the PTA in the grade school I attended. In my last two years of grade school, she was the PTA president, a position she held with pride and a great deal of dignity. She regularly went to State-wide PTA conventions and once delivered a "speech" to the Statewide body. She was very proud of the fact that she had been asked to participate at that level.

There was no comparable opportunity for her when I was in High School. Though she tried to get involved in the High School PTA, the "in" group of that organization wasn't interested in including her. I suppose that it was because she was Jewish, though there might have been deeper personality conflicts with the power structure. Though she continued her activities at the Temple, I think she was somewhat put down when my father's sister, Margaret, was selected as the President of the Sisterhood at the Temple and my mother was passed over for that job.

When my marriage to Paula disintegrated, Margaret took me aside and warned me that my mother had been meddling in Paula's attitudes. She was trying to run the show to "protect" me. In fact, her presence was everywhere. There was nothing I could do to express an opinion that was opposite of hers. There were frequent arguments.

On one occasion, my Grandfather had arranged to drive to Florida in February of 1949, with his cousin Al Hely. At the last minute, Al's business needed him and he canceled the trip. My grandfather was 79 at the time and stubborn. He decided that he would drive to Florida on his own. At that point -- early in the morning, Johanna woke me and told me I was going to drive him to Florida -- that morning. I had made plans for a business trip -- at the time I was a traveling salesman. I didn't have a choice and drove to Florida. I stayed for a couple of weeks and, while Al Hely eventually came to Miami, I came back leaving the Helys with my grandfather. It was my first experience at flying.

After my father's death, Johanna became more dependent on me. Though she hated the idea of this dependence, she demanded attention every day. I spoke to her daily. I shopped for her groceries when her physical condition deteriorated to the point where she couldn't do it on her own. Eventually, I managed her bank accounts and money. I arranged her investments. When she wanted to go on a trip, I wasn't consulted. But, when she wanted transportation to the cemetery to visit the family plot, there was a demand on me. She was barely civil to Lois because of the circumstances of my divorce from Dotty and marriage to Lois. Although Linda was dutifully

respectful and visited Johanna frequently, Johanna never reciprocated Linda's affection and, in fact, virtually cut her out of her will.

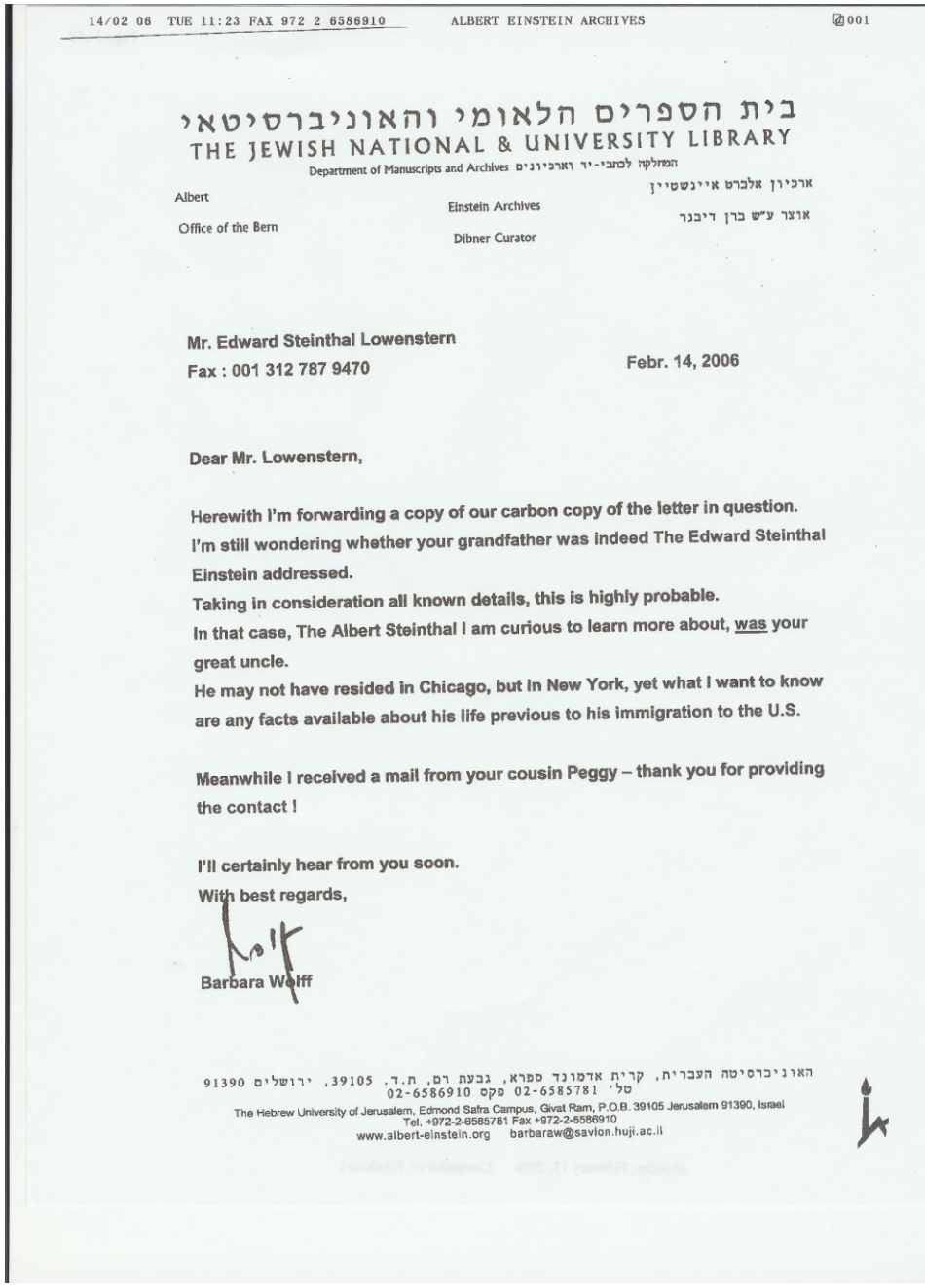
As an example of the sort of things Johanna did in her later years, I can remember an incident relating to a toaster. Hers had broken and couldn't be repaired. I was assigned the job of finding a replacement. I shopped at a K Mart and at other stores and finally found one for about $18. It was the least expensive model I could find after hunting for better deals. When I brought it to her, she was furious that I had spent so much on a simple toasted. I told her that I'd be happy to take it back to the store provided that she go out and find something that was cheaper and better for her purposes. She kept the toaster but never thanked me.

In another incident, after she needed someone to help her with basic needs like bathing and dressing, the woman who I found to work with her told her she needed new underwear. Johanna was indignant. Despite the fact that her underwear was, in fact, in tatters, she refused until the woman told her she would tell me about the situation. Then, reluctantly, she agreed to the need for new clothes. And after getting them, she promptly packed them in her dresser and never wore them.

In the mid 1970's, I was frequently traveling on business. Johanna knew my itinerary and when to expect me to be back in Chicago. Even knowing that, on one occasion, she complained so bitterly to her cousin, Florence Cohen that I was neglecting her that Florence took it upon herself to phone my secretary in Chicago and berate me to the poor girl. The Secretary reached me in Minneapolis and told me about the conversation and I called Florence to try to understand what the problem was. Without hesitation or the facts of the matter, she faulted me for being so evil as to ignore my poor, helpless mother. Nothing could have been further from the truth and, in no uncertain terms, I told Florence to mind her own business and keep out of mine. This was simply another instance of Johanna's demands for attention getting out of hand.

Following her death, we discovered a copy of a Temple Bulletin dated 1945. In her hand writing on the face of the Bulletin she had written, "This would have been Bunny's Confirmation." Obviously, she lived with the impression that Bernard would have been the answer to her idea of a dutiful child and that I had proved to be a failure. Johanna never outgrew the "spoiled child"" syndrome she had experienced at 512 South Halsted. Her demanding attitudes were insatiable. Regardless of the amount of love or respect or affection that could be offered her, it was never enough to satisfy her needs. Consequently, her continual criticism and rejection of offers of love were ultimately frustrating. My life has been colored by her unfulfilable demands. I did everything I could to prove that I was a good son. But obviously, I failed to prove it to her.

The Einstein Letter



14/02 06 TUE 11:23 FAX 972 2 6586910 ALBERT EINSTEIN ARCHIVES 001

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Mr. Edward Steinthal Lowenstern
Fax : 001 312 787 9470

Febr. 14, 2006

Dear Mr. Lowenstern,

Herewith I'm forwarding a copy of our carbon copy of the letter in question.
I'm still wondering whether your grandfather was indeed The Edward Steinthal Einstein addressed.
Taking in consideration all known details, this is highly probable.
In that case, The Albert Steinthal I am curious to learn more about, was your great uncle.
He may not have resided in Chicago, but in New York, yet what I want to know are any facts available about his life previous to his immigration to the U.S.

Meanwhile I received a mail from your cousin Peggy – thank you for providing the contact !

I'll certainly hear from you soon.
With best regards,

Barbara Wolff

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14/02 06 TUE 11:23 FAX 972 2 6586910 ALBERT EINSTEIN ARCHIVES 002

54 657

zur Zeit:Nassau Point,Peconic,Long Island N.Y.
den 16.August 1938

Herrn Edward Steinthal
5302 University Ave.
Chicago,Ill.

Sehr geehrter Herr Steinthal:

Ich bin eifrig bemüht, einem Berliner Arzt,Dr. Richard Wolf, den ich sehr schätze, die Einwanderung in die U.S.A. zu ermöglichen. Ich kann es mir aber nicht erlauben,selbst noch ein weiteres Affidavit auszustellen.

Dr.Wolf soll nun in Chicago zwei Verwandte (Vettern seiner Mutter) haben, Edward und Albert Steinthal,gebürtig in Hessen-Nassau(Rogendorf). Ich möchte mir nun die Anfrage erlauben, ob Sie einer der Gesuchten sind und ob Sie - in diesem Falle - bereit wären, für den vortrefflichen Mann und seine Familie ein Affidavit auszustellen. Ein Risiko würde nicht bestehen, da eine hiesige Quäker-Organisation sich dazu erboten hat,ihm für die erste Zeit Obdach und Beschäftigung zu verschaffen. Mein Freund,Dr.Carl Beck in Chicago interessiert sich ebenfalls für den Fall.

Mit ausgezeichneter Hochachtung

Professor Albert Einstein.

Einstein Letter Translation

At this time at Point Pectonic. Long Island, N.Y.
On the 16th August, 1938

Mr. Edward Steinthal
5302 University Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

Most esteemed Mr. Steinthal:

I have been very eager to make it possible for a physician from Berlin by the name of Dr. Richard Wolf, whom I hold in high esteem, to immigrate to the U.S.A. I really cannot afford an additional affidavit.

It seems that Dr. Wolf has two relatives in Chicago (cousins of his mother), Edward and Albert Steinthal who were born in Hessen-Nassau (Mogendorf). I hope you'll permit me to ask whether you are the person I'm looking for and, if you are, whether you would be willing to provide an affidavit for this man and his family.

There would be no risk involved because a local Quaker organization has offered to provide shelter and employment from the beginning. My friend, Dr. Carl Beck in Chicago is also most interested in this matter

With my greatest respect,

_____
Professor Albert Einstein.
_____

Slightly Different Translation

Very honored Mr. Steinthal:

I am engaged in trying to facilitate the immigration into the U.S. of a Berlin doctor , Richard Wolf, whom I value highly. I cannot, however, permit myself to issue a further affidavit.

Dr. Wolf is supposed to have two relatives in Chicago (cousins of his mother), Edward and Albert Steinthal born in Mogendorf. I would now like to raise the question, whether you are one of those sought, and if in that case you would be prepared to offer an affidavit to Dr. Wolf and his family. There would be no risk involved since a local Quaker organization has offered to provide shelter and occupation at the beginning. My friend, Dr. Carl Beck in Chicago, is also interested in the case.

With the highest regard

Professor Albert Einstein

Subj: **RE: one more question**
Date: 2/16/2006 1:07:29 AM Central Standard Time
From: barbaraw@savion.huji.ac.il
To: Edwlowe1@cs.com
Received from Internet: click here for more information

Dear Ed Lowenstern,

Richard Wolf was a medical doctor who had a passion for mathematics+. After immigration to the US he decided - I imagine that this decision was not taken voluntarily/easily, but resulted from the difficulty European physicians were confronted with in the US - he decided to start mathematical studies.
I may tell you more, yet that's what I remember right now from the letters in our archives.
Best regards,
Barbara Wolff

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Tel. +972 2 65 86768
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http://www.albert-einstein.org
http://www.alberteinstein.info

-----Original Message-----
From: Edwlowe1@cs.com [mailto:Edwlowe1@cs.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 15, 2006 5:00 PM
To: Barbara Wolff
Subject: one more question

Dear Ms. Wolf:

Again thank you for helping clear the mystery of the "Einstein Letter." I have one remaining question which you may be able to answer. What sort of doctor was Richard Wolf? Was he a medical doctor or was his doctorate in one of the physical sciences, something that seems likely because of Einstein's background and interests.

As a writer, I am always interested in "the road not taken." Consequently the background of Richard Wolf is of interest. I know you don't want to make a career out of this one insignificant letter, but my interest has been piqued and I hope you might have the answer.

Thanks for your help.

Ed Lowenstern

Chapter 8. Travel Tidbits

Travel Tidbits -- Part One

Our first overseas trip took place in 1969 when Lois convinced me to visit England. I had, frankly, been afraid of overseas travel and was reluctant to go abroad. But, we found a price-appropriate package which gave us a week in London and another with a car for travel through the countryside. Lois established a pattern for that trip which she continued to follow through dozens of trips to all parts of the world. It's been one that has served us well. Simply put, she precedes the trip with extensive research about the destination and the various features we could expect to see while on the trip. In the case of England, she prepared a notebook full of factoids about English history, personalities, lore and historic sites. With notebook in hand, we boarded a flight and landed in London. As we drove through the country, she would read from her notebook and we would both have a greater appreciation for the sights we were approaching.

Our trip took us through London and the countryside. In one instances, we learned how correct we were in preplanning our travels when the packager had included a "half day" tour of London. We would get to a famous location, get off the bus and, by the time the guide had spend a couple of minutes describing the site, everyone on the tour was ready to pile back on the bus. It was too hurried and not nearly as complete as we wanted. We left the tour at St. Paul's Cathedral, stayed for a concert by the choir, and found our way back to our hotel which was located in Kensington. Rarely, after that experience, did we go on packaged city tours again. We traveled independently and were able to get more out of our experiences than we could possibly have gotten if we were to accept the overview offered by local guides.

That trip included a number of unique experiences that wouldn't have happened had we not been acting on our own. The same sort of unique traveler's incidents have happened to us all over the world. We attribute that to the fact that we have traveled on our own and that we have absorbed a lot of information about the destinations we were to be visiting before we ever left home. On that first English trip in London, we wandered across the Thames and walked into what our map showed us was Lambeth Palace. We were exploring the place when a guard approached us. "This is not a public place." he told us, "It's the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury." We didn't know that, we explained in apology. "But as long as he's not hers," the guard told us, ignoring our apology, "let me show you around the place."" He provided a tour of the exterior of the Palace and, in closing suggested that we visit the graveyard around the corner where we discovered the grave of William Bligh, Captain of the infamous H.M.S. Bounty. Our visit to London consumed that first week of the trip.

I picked up our car on a Saturday afternoon and, early on Sunday morning, we found our way to the motorway and headed south to Canterbury. Driving slowing in the right-hand lane of the road, I tried to get accustomed to the car and to driving on the right. I noticed a sports car following me closely and flashing its lights at me. It wasn't until this driver had passed on my right -- on the shoulder, that I understood that, in England, the right hand lane was the fast lane and I should have been driving in the left, slower lane of the highway. We drove, safer and wiser to the Sunday morning services at Canterbury Cathedral and followed that with a visit to Dover Castle. As we were walking through the castle on a tour, we crossed one parapet. Nearby, another tour group was crossing another parapet and suddenly, I heard a shout ringing through the air of this ancient fortification. "Hyde Park High School" someone shouted, apparently recognizing me from my days at high school. I never discovered who it was who saw me, but will always remember being spotted on the walls of the castle.

One of our stops was at Stonehenge. Our trip had us arriving late in the day. In fact, we arrived just before the installation was being closed for the night and we were alone in the shadow of the monoliths. It was an eerie experience being inside the circle of stones with only the sound of the wind rushing through them as accompaniment, wondering what they were designed to mean and how their astronomical perfection could have been determined so many centuries ago.

Later in the trip, after I had accustomed myself to driving on the left side of the road and had mastered the navigating of the numerous roundabouts that dot English roadways, we were in Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare's home. In one of the cottages, we got into a conversation with the docent who probably knew more about Ann Hathaway that we ever wanted to know. After talking about the possible origin of Shakespeare's plays at the hand of Bacon, he took us aside and told us that the final preview of a new production of "Henry VIII" was being held that night and, if we were to stay over, we might be able to get tickets to attend.

We went to the box office and were able to get standing room tickets for about 60 cents. We went across the street and were able to get a room in the local hotel. We agreed that standing up for the full length of a Shakespearean play might be too strenuous, but when the play started, we were mesmerized by the acting -- in modern English and stood for the entire production. After it was over, we decided that we had earned a drink and stopped in the small bar inside the hotel. No sooner had we gotten our drinks when the entire cast of the play entered the bar and proceeded to conduct a post-mortem critique dealing with individual performances and how they might make future performances better. There was no effort to include us in their conversation and we were fascinated by their overheard comments

Later in the trip, we visited Bowness on Lake Windermere in England's romantic lakes district. The fog was so thick that we had to drive

literally to the edge of the water to be able to see it. We didn't spend a lot of time there and had scheduled our travels to drive across England and visit the city of York. Before leaving the lakes, I stopped for gasoline.

Driving across the Yorkshire Dales was an exercise in driving along single lane roads with high hedgerows along each side of the road. Occasionally, we would have to navigate past a car going in the opposite direction. By the time we got to York, I was exhausted. I soon discovered that I had lost my wallet, my passport and all of my identification papers. We panicked because we were scheduled to go home the next afternoon. I went to the York police station to report my loss. I hadn't been robbed, I told them and explained my dilemma to a police Sergeant Watson. Visions of Sherlock Holmes came to mine as he phoned the police station in Bowness. To my ultimate relief, someone had just turned in the wallet to the police there and was still in the station. It had fallen out of my pocket in the gas station and was found by the attendant. He waited until the station was closed before turning it in to the police.

I asked Watson whether the person who found it had a car and would be willing to drive it across the Dales at night to return it. I indicated that I would reward him with ££20, then about $40. Watson said that my offer was too generous. I disagreed, reminding him that I was asking someone to give up the majority of his evening, use his car and his gas to get to York and to be rewarded for his honesty. Watson considered what I said and agreed that while I was being generous, the £20 wasn't too much. The man who found the wallet agree to bring everything to York. I was to wait near the police station until he got there -- probably three hours later. I asked Watson where Lois and I might be able to find a hotel and something to eat. He recommended a pub nearby which he said was patronized by the police. I asked him to join us and he agreed.

Inside the pub, the entire police unit from York had apparently decided to end its day and most of them quickly knew who I was and why we were there. They wanted me to explain baseball which, apparently, was a big mystery. I did my best. They offered to teach me how to throw darts -- at a pint of beer per game to the winner. I lost several pints, but did pick up the rudiments of dart throwing -- something that I had never seen done in the States. In all, we got along well with the local constabulary and, in due time, the finder of the wallet appeared and returned it. I gave him the £20 and he went home, we went to our hotel room across from the police station and the incident ended. There was, I have to say, more money in the wallet than I remembered having had before Bowness -- certainly none was taken out of the wallet. Since that incident, whenever I travel, there's been a safety tab sewn into my inside jacket pocket that keeps my wallet and passport case from falling out.

The room we had taken for the night was above the pub. We learned from the landlady that it was the same attic room that had been let to Sir Walter

Scott and the place he where he had lived while he was writing the book "Ivanhoe." While we were in England, we had discovered that brass rubbing was a hobby of many English. The monumental brasses that had survived the ravages of Cromwell's rule in the 17th Century were all located in churches. Rubbing them required special supplies and permission from the church verger to rub the brasses. While driving back to London from York, we stopped in Newark-on-Trent where the church held some monumental brasses. We obtained permission from the church's office and proceeded to rub the image of John Boston."

As we were working furiously over the brass, on our hands and knees, we were being watched by someone. The movie "The Collector" had been playing. It was the story of a spooky man who collected, among other things, butterflies and nubile young women whom he held for many of the same reasons as he collected the insects. When we had finished rubbing the brasses and had rolled the papers into a tube we carried, he introduced himself to us. "Would you like to see something special?" he asked us. The conversations continued. It seems that the Town Hall had a meeting room on its top floor which contained a rarely seen ornamental ceiling created by a Wedgewood contemporary named Adam. Adam ceilings were considered high art and an opportunity to see one that wasn't in a very public space appealed to us in spite of our recollection of the "Collector." We climbed the stairs to view the magnificent ceiling and left unharmed, though a little shaken by the experience. We continued to London with this story to tell, our brass rubbings and a desire to go back and see more of England. We had several opportunities.

This was our first overseas trip and set a pattern for so many more. They'll be covered in the following articles on travel tidbits. I'm enjoying remembrances of trips past.

Travel Tidbits -- Part Two

In 1971, it was Linda's turn to travel to Europe. We decided that Italy would be a great destination for its history and its romance. After all, Linda was to start in High School in fall and knowing something about classical art might help. We flew into Milan and rented our car there. After a couple of days in Milan inspecting the Duomo and Michelangelo's famous fresco of the Last Supper we continued to Verona.

Our primary tourism objective was the house that contained the balcony from the love scene of Romeo and Juliet. As with many "historic" places, fact and fiction blend and no one really knows what happened. As was Italy's custom in those years, war veterans and pensioners were assigned to guard the limited parking spaces in front of tourist attractions. There was a nominal charge for parking and the attendant expected a small tip.

At the site of the balcony scene, there was space for, maybe, six cars parked on a diagonal off the roadway. After we had absorbed the romantic atmosphere, we found our car wouldn't start. The attendant, who spoke no English, was very upset. If we had to leave our car there and wait for the rental company to tow it away, he would lose 1/6 of his daily revenue. His agitation was unnerving.

I opened the hood of the car and with Lois behind the wheel, I removed the air filter and stuck a screwdriver into the butterfly mechanism in the carburetor. I then told Lois to turn the ignition key and, wonder of wonders, the car coughed a couple of times and started. I replaced the air filter, closed the hood and got back behind the steering wheel as the attendant approached. I have never seen a more toothless grin as he came up to my window and almost shouted "Bene Mechanico."" We had saved his day but, I'm sure, he was happy to see us go.

We arrived in Venice and went in search of the ancient ghetto. The Italian word, "ghetto" means "foundry," and it was in this section of the city that the Jewish population was segregated during the Middle Ages. In 1971, that same section of the city contained businesses, some houses and what small remnant remained of the city's Jewish population. We were searching for Judaica and when we visited the synagogue, we were directed to a scrap metal yard which was owned by Jews. We found our way there and met a young, blue eyed, blond Italian who spoke good English. After we talked for a while, he acknowledged that he was Jewish but told us that virtually all of Venice's Judaica had either been destroyed during the war and the Nazi occupation, or had been contributed to a museum. None was left to buy. He also told us that most of the city's Jewish population had moved to Israel.

"Why are you still here?" we asked him. "Because I'm a Venetian!." he told us. It was then that we began to realize that the city state of Medieval Italy was still a factor in the politics of the country.

As we continued through Italy, visiting countless art museums, Linda's tolerance for Renaissance art began to wane. In fact, it bored her. By the time we got to Rome, I don't think any of us wanted to see one more painting of The Nativity, the Annunciation, or the Crucifixion. In Italy, on a Sunday night, we discovered that Italian restaurants were mostly closed. One Italian place we discovered was ultimately deluxe. After having Lois' shoes removed and her feet placed on a velvet cushion, and having had menus presented on which only mine had the prices, I realized that the place was entirely outside the range of our budget. We left without ordering and set out again to find somewhere to eat.

We finally stumbled on a Chinese restaurant that had a menu printed in Chinese, Italian and English. Their translation of "Won Ton" soup into English became "Ravioli Soup." We ordered and ate dinner. On another occasion, we went to Alfredo's. Today, of course, everyone is familiar with Alfredo sauce. It originated in that restaurant and when a patron was famous or

was recognized, Alfredo himself would emerge from the kitchen and toss the sauce and the pasta with a golden spoon and fork. Our first visit impressed the head waiter. We thoroughly enjoyed the meal and the novel pasta sauce. We decided to return and when we did on our last night in Rome, the head waited recognized Lois. "La Bella Senora," he said in recognition as he seated us. Soon, the head waiter emerged from the kitchen with great pomp and ceremony and tossed our pasta. We were all impressed.

Our trip south from Rome took us to Pompeii and then, down the Mediterranean Coast to Salerno. Driving back toward Rome, we decided to take the scenic route, known as the Amalfi Drive. This road hugged the coastal mountains and was heavily traveled by big tour buses. In fact, as they drove south, the only warning a northbound driver got was a blast from the bus's horn as it careened around the hairpin turns that dotted the road. It was night before we finally arrived in Amalfi and we looked across the beautiful harbor toward our hotel which we saw in the distance.

We circled around, above the town and arrived at the point where we had seen the hotel. It had disappeared and as much as we tried to find the multi-storied hotel, it was invisible. Finally, I had an idea. I saw a parking lot and a staircase leading into a building. I parked the car and while Lois and Linda waited, went into the building. To my amazement, it was the hotel we had been looking for. The road at the top passed the rooftop parking lot. The hotel descended from the road and went down the steep mountainside to the seashore that was 8 or 10 floors below. After we settled into the hotel, it became necessary to realize that the hotel lobby was always up. The car and the road were also always further "up."" Eventually, it sank in.

Flying home from Italy, we departed from Rome after returning our frequently defective car. We landed in New York and went shopping on the lower East Side for the Judaica we had been unable to find in Italy. On Delancey Street, we discovered a torah breast plate we decided we would like to buy, assuming that we could negotiate a price that would be acceptable to us. It was a Friday and the following Monday was the first day of Rosh Hashanah. When the merchant closed on that Friday afternoon, the store would be closed until the following Wednesday. Clearly, he was as anxious to sell the silver plate as we were to buy it. We negotiated price with the son of the owner. His father sat in the dim light in the background, listening carefully as the negotiations progressed.

Finally, he set a price which I still felt was too high. We were ready to leave when he told us that he would cut the price for us by "chai" -- $18 for each of us because of the impending New Year holiday. I told him that Michael was a part of our family although he was at home in Chicago. The son looked at his father, received a nod of approval, and cut the price by another $18. We brought the breast plate home, along with the story of our buying it and eventually learned more about its history. It's one of our treasures.

Three years later, we again went to England for the second time in the spring of 1974. It was to be a short trip -- only a week and we had two objectives. First, we wanted to do more brass rubbings -- this time in London. Since our first experience, Lois had discovered that there was a British organization called "The Society for the Preservation of Monumental Brasses and Incised Slabs" We were able to find an address (this was well before the Internet made it relatively easy to find obscure groups) and we joined the society.

One store in London specialized in selling all the supplies needed for brass rubbing and it was one of our first stops on this trip. We had also bought a book telling us where the important brasses were to be found by their geographical location. We were familiar with the process of getting permission to rub these brasses, most of which had been carved between the 1200's and the early 1600's.

Four of the most prestigious brass installations were in Westminster Abbey. They were located in the aisle behind the altar. The apse of Westminster is a special tourist attraction and virtually every tour group going through the church walks through this aisle. Among other attractions it contains are the Churchill windows which were replaced after being destroyed by a bombing during the World War II blitz on London. There's also the Henry VII chapel behind the altar.

We went to the office of the church to obtain permission to rub the brasses. At that time, the church verger allowed any applicant to rub one of the four brasses for a morning or an afternoon session during the day upon payment of a fee set by the church. We agreed to the terms and came back with all our necessary supplies and our ""permission" slip the following day We found the brass that had been assigned to us for rubbing. All the four in the aisle are on raised sarcophagi making it much easier to rub them than it would have been had they been embedded in the floor of the church.

Across the aisle another man was rubbing the brass that had apparently been assigned to him for the afternoon. Lois and I set up our material and began rubbing the huge brass plate. We used different colored paper, different colored "heel wax"" the hard crayon that was needed to get the impression of the brass. We took turns in the rubbing, but we soon noticed that, after making one or two rubbings, our neighbor had packed his gear and left. We decided that we would not be questioned if we were to make rubbings of "his" brass as well as the one we had been assigned. So the two of us set out to make as many rubbings as was possible.

As tour guides and their groups walked through the aisle, they seemed to stop and watch as we worked on the brasses. Some were English speaking and asked the guides what we were doing and why we were doing it. The explanation that we enjoyed most was that this was a purely English hobby and that we were busily engaged in creating art for our own enjoyment. So, there we were, a couple of Jewish Chicagoans being described as advocates of

an arcane British hobby. It's a story we brought home with us. Later, we learned that the church had decided that they would no longer permit rubbing of the brasses. They were beginning to show signs of wear. The cardboard tube full of rubbed brasses are still in our possession and, I guess, have taken on a value we never expected when we were rubbing them since they can no longer be copied.

We also discovered a dealer in Judaica. We went to his home by Underground and bought a spice box from his collection. It was British sterling silver and was hallmarked from 1823. It's a treasure in our home and a wonderful example of British craftsmanship.

Our two trips in the early 1970's continued to whet our appetite for more travel. And away we went.

Travel Tidbits -- Part Three

1977 was Michael's first opportunity to see Europe. With the comforting presence of his security blanket and a large jar of peanut butter (because there wasn't going to anything in Europe that he would be willing to eat) we took off for Amsterdam. We had arranged to stay in a canal house owned by a Texan and his Dutch wife. We were all a bit intimidated by the steep staircase leading up to our room.

Our tourism in the Netherlands was as complete as possible. We visited the Anne Frank House only a few blocks away from our hotel. We saw the several Art Museums and had a great deal of trouble prying Michael away from the Van Gogh exhibit. On one occasion, we took the train to the miniature city of Madurodam, located near Den Hagg. Madurodam was built with scale models of every significant building in the country and, as we wandered through the streets, we saw many of the buildings we had visited earlier in the week. There was a model of Schiphol Airport, complete with runways and hangers.

There was a sugar refinery where, for a small coin in the slot, the factory produced a sugar cube for the visitor. We watched as the tiny bridal couple emerged from the church and were greeted by their wedding party and we saw the skiers as they descended from the mountains and went up on the chairlift to begin their ski runs again.

We were all fascinated as Madurodam's tiny street lights began to go on at twilight. Buildings began to take on an eerie glow. But the train schedule was unrelenting and we had to leave to catch the last one to Amsterdam. There were tears as we said goodbye to Gulliver whose bronze likeness acted as a greeter and the symbol of the size of us humans when posed against the tiny villages and buildings.

When we rented our car, we left for the German border. Crossing the border into what was then West Germany was an emotional experience. The war and the holocaust were very much in my mind as we approached the

border crossing. It was necessary to exchange some money for Marks and to get brochures that would lead us to a hotel in Koblenz where we planned to spend that night. In the border crossing tourism building, there was a single attendant on that Sunday morning. She spoke English and, as we talked about hotels and other tourist attractions, I noticed that she was wearing a Mogen David.

I asked her if she was Jewish. She said she was and I asked why she had taken a job like this one -- isolated as it was from city life, alone and exposed to possible anti-Semitic reaction. Her answer to my question is something that has stayed with me since. She told me, "Because I want to show them that we're still here!."

As we drove from that border crossing to our first stop in Cologne, we passed Bonn, then the seat of the government. But we also passed road signs that pointed to places like Kassel, Korbach and Mogendorf, all towns from which my Grandparents had come. For some reason, there was no impetus to visit these places.

In Cologne, I had my first chance to really practice my German. I had learned to understand German from my mother and grandmother. When they wanted to communicate information they didn't want me to know, they spoke German. I learned to understand the language, but, had I spoken it back to them, I would never have been privy to a lot of the information they innocently passed between them. Thus it was that I could understand the language but was always emotionally afraid to speak it. In Cologne, I had to confront that fear.

I approached one of the guards in the Cologne Cathedral. "Wo ist die schatzkammer?"" I was looking for the room that held the Cathedral's treasures. I asked him, expecting him to ask me, in English, "What did you say?"" Instead, without batting an eye, he told me to go to the rear of the church, through the small door and follow the signs. I actually understood what he said and felt very confident that there wouldn't be any further communication problems in Germany.

Our stay in Koblenz was overnight and the next morning, we booked ourselves on a Rhine cruise. We traveled through the wine country and past the Lorelei. As we traversed that stretch of the river, the boat's loud speaker system played the music of the Lorelei and again, I felt uncomfortable -- as though I had been caught in a time warp and was experiencing something very German and ultimately threatening.

Driving back to Amsterdam after our visit to Germany, we stopped at an American Military Cemetery in Holland, not far from the German border. We went into the cemetery and I looked for gravestones that were marked with Mogen Davids. I stood before one of them and recited the Kaddish. Somehow, I felt I had to let that soldier know that we had won and that we, like the girl in the border booth, were still there. I don’t recall any other trips to Europe, including others to Germany, that evoked such an emotional response.

En route back to Amsterdam, we stopped in Antwerp, Belgium and were delighted to find a special retrospective exhibition of the works of Peter Paul Reubens. The security blanket came home with the unopened jar of peanut butter. Chicken croquettes and wiener schnitzel seemed to be acceptable alternatives to regular Chicago fare

Two years later, Lois and I decided that we wanted to visit Spain. We had both been working hard on projects and felt we had earned the trip which was to take us to Madrid and to the Costa del Sol. We planned to have a rental car in southern Spain and to visit Granada, Cordoba and Seville as well as the glittering cities along the coast. Madrid was a dingy city but we spent our time there visiting the Prado Museum's art. We took a train to Toledo and spent a wonderful day wandering through its historic Jewish district and absorbing its history. Then, we flew to Malaga, picked up our car and set out on our adventure through the region of Spain that had been heavily influenced by Islamic culture until, in 1492, the Arabs had been driven out of Europe.

Seeing the glories of the architecture of Granada and the Alhambra, we walked the streets of Cordoba with its Maimonides statue and Jewish quarter. Seeing the multi-colored pillars that were the signature of the church there -- originally built as a mosque -- were all a part of absorbing the ambiance of Spain. In Seville, we spent time looking at the bullring that was the inspiration to Bizet when he wrote the opera, "Carmen." Finally, continuing around southward, we arrived in Algecieras. This was the port of embarkation for a ferry ride across the Straits of Gibraltar to North Africa. We tried to find a hotel and ultimately were forced to take a room in what could only be described as a fleabag hotel on the waterfront. It was not a comfortable evening and we got up early and headed for the dock. Our car was parked in a secure lot and we planned to spend a couple of days in Tangier to get a flavor of North African culture.

Before leaving Chicago, our neighbor who was French, had advised us on the process of bargaining for goods in North Africa. "If the seller thinks you're European, offer him 1/3 of his asking price. If he thinks you're American, offer 1/5 of the price." Little did we know how accurate the advice was. On arrival in Tangier, we checked into a lovely, modern beachfront hotel. Unfortunately, the manufacturer had never taught the hotel staff how to turn on the elevator, so we used the broad staircase to get to our second floor room. Leaving the hotel, we headed to the Souk -- the market place. No sooner had we started walking than we were approached by one of the omnipresent street merchants. He was carrying a huge load of hand woven carpets on his shoulder. He could walk backwards, carrying his load at least as fast as we could walk forward.

Pegging us as English speaking (I learned later that they were able to do this because of the shoes we were wearing) he offered us the rugs for $15.00. We weren't interested in spending the day shopping after saddling ourselves with a heavy rug and shook our heads "no." "O.K., two for $15,"" he

countered our refusal. Our heads continued to decline his offer. ""Final offer," he said, "Six Dollars." We don't want one." we told him. "O.K.. Final offer, $5.00. When we again refused, he left us to find more fruitful customers. We spent the afternoon wandering through the narrow streets of the Souk -- the Casbah. We had visions of Ingrid Bergman and of the French foreign legion. We could sense the presence of Charles Boyer and every other actor who spoke with a French accent. We bought a few trinkets, but waited until the next day to buy more substantial merchandise.

Among the things we did buy -- all of them required patient negotiating -- was a leather jacket and some Berber soapstone carvings. We learned another lesson with the carvings. We had bought them in an out-of-the-way shop near the city's medieval fortification. By the time we returned to the Souk, I realized that I should have bought more of them at $2.50 each -- they were worth much more as hand-crafted works of art. We stopped in a large shop where Lois negotiated for some unique metal crafts. As she was bargaining with a clerk, I was talking to the owner of the shop. He had a basket filled with the soapstone carvings and a price of $5 on them. I offered him $2.50 each for a couple of them. He countered with an offer of $3 which, he told me candidly, was his lowest price. "I bought the identical items on the hill for $2.50." I told him. "Did you buy them from the man or the boy?" he asked. The implication was that if I bought them from a salesclerk -- the boy -- I had taken advantage of him. On the other hand, if I had bought them from the store owner for $2.50, I had been a shrewd bargainer. I assured him that I had bought them from the man and, while he would not lower the price below $3, I still bought a couple of more soapstone pieces which I still have above my desk.

Lois was wearing a pair of tight, hot pink jeans. As we walked through the Souk's Streets, the Burka wearing Moslem women would turn away from her, life their veils and spit three time son to the street. It didn't take too many incidents like that for Lois to realize that she wasn't dressed properly. On future trips to Morocco, Lois wore conservative jeans and long sleeved shirts on future visits.

Finally, when we were preparing to leave a couple of days later, we encountered another rug dealer. Now, we were ready to buy though we were on a tight schedule for the ferry ride back to Spain. "$15." he offered. Lois stopped, put her hands on her hips. "I know I can buy one for $5." she told him, "and if you want to sell me one for that price, I'll buy it without all this nonsense." We brought the rug back to Chicago -- at $5. Our last purchase took place on the dock as the ferry was leaving for Spain. A street vendor was waiting for tourists at the dockside. I had almost no Moroccan money left in my pocket. He offered an amber and silver necklace which Lois though she's like to have. The vendor asked $75 for it. I offered $5 and the bargaining was under way. The other American passengers on the ship were part of my cheering section.

I examined the necklace which was crudely handmade. I raised my offer to $7.50. That was all the Moroccan Dirhan I had in my pocket. The vendor countered with $50. I turned away and he quickly lowered the price to $25.00. I offered him $10-- partly in Dirhan and partly in Spanish Pesetas -- making quick calculations on the relative exchange value of the two currencies. Just as the boat was pulling away from the pier, we agreed that the final price was to be $15 -- paid partly in Dirhan, partly in Pesetas and a few U.S. Dollars. The vendor threw the necklace to me on the boat and I threw the money back to him to the cheers of the Americans who had been following the transaction.

Returning to Spain, Lois and I drove west along the coast until we came to Tormellinos and checked into one of the tourist hotels located there. We decided to go out for a drink to relax from the strenuous efforts at bargaining and settled into the hotel's bar. The bar was modern with a pianist playing jazz. The shock of moving from the 13th Century atmosphere of the Casbah to the 20th Century mood of the bar was something that made us realize how broadening travel really is.

Travel Tidbits -- Part Four

In 1983, we had an opportunity to visit Brazil. When I was in college, I became friendly with Septimus Clark who came from a very wealthy and influential family in Brazil. It was only well after school that I discovered how famous his mother's family had been. His Grandfather had been the president of the country and his face appeared on one denomination of currency. When I first met Seppie, his father was in business in the rural north of the country. Their business was growing carnauba wax, then used for furniture polish and floor wax. They also imported heavy equipment, automobiles and owned an island in the Atlantic called "Isla Caju"" on which were grown cashew nuts.

Seppie and I had exchanged letters and Christmas cards during all the years since we were in school together and I wrote him to tell him about our planned trip. He wrote back to let me know that he would be happy to show us around Rio de Janeiro and, in fact, met us at the hotel shortly after we arrived. Driving through the broad parkways of the city after dark, Seppie would approach a red light at about 20 miles an hour and then, checking cross traffic, speed up. We asked him about the fact that he was ignoring the red lights. Rio, he told us, was a dangerous city and were he to stop at one of the lights, the car might be attacked by roving bands of thieves.

We toured the city and surrounding areas. Seppie, who had always been a bachelor, thought he would be better able to entertain us if he had an English speaking girlfriend available to act as our hostess. Consequently, he sent a Chilean woman friend back to Santiago the week of our arrival and invited a Pan American Airways stewardess from Houston to be his guest

during the time of our visit. Linda spoke fluent Portuguese as well as English and was of great help.

Although he had to work, Seppie loaned us his car and driver for a visit to his family's "summer house" on Cabo Frio -- the cool cape -- about 100 miles east of Rio. When we arrived, we discovered that the "summer house" had a full time staff of five people to maintain it -- there would be more if the family were to stay there. A long, palm lined driveway led to the house. In the house, there was a private pool, a chapel and a lot of amenities that made the place comfortable. At that time, Lois was using a Polaroid Camera for her photos and took pictures of the driver and members of the staff. They had never seen the Polaroid process before and stood staring blankly at the white picture as it came from the camera. As the picture began to emerge and define itself, we watched with interest as their faces began to show signs of recognition and then of excitement when they saw the images.

In Rio, we spent our Sunday shopping at the flea market where we were able to find unusual musical instruments and terra cotta figurines. Lois was also able to buy some of the semi-precious gemstones that are so readily available in Brazil. There are also pieces of jewelry that are still in her collection. On another day trip, Seppie instructed his driver and Linda to take us to the former Brazilian Emperor's palace in Petropolis -- high in the mountains and away from the coastal heat.

Brazil is a land of economic extremes. Each of the several bays that border Rio's Atlantic Ocean waterfront has its own distinguishing stone-inlaid sidewalk pattern. Walking along Ipanema or Copacabana and watching the girls playing volleyball could become a full-time occupation. In the early '80's, they were already wearing thong bikinis and string bras -- not too tightly tied. It was a sight to behold. Bars and nightclubs throbbed with a hedonistic atmosphere. Music of Sambas and American jazz cut through the night in the entertainment district. People with money know how to enjoy it. Nightclubs, bars, and live sex shows fill certain areas of the city.

Because of the eccentricities of Brazilian law, anyone who put a roof over a shelter owns that place. As a result, Rio's mountainsides are dotted with favelas -- shanty towns which have no city services. There is no gas, no water, no sewer lines, no electricity. We were on a bus which had stopped for a traffic light. Under a viaduct, we watched as a woman gave birth to her child. The family then returned to their shanty on the hillside overlooking this large city of contrasts. On business streets, especially after dark, roving gangs of youngsters banded together for their own protection and to attack anyone who might have enough money to get them food for the next day. They slept in doorways. A few years later, a huge international scandal developed when Rio police exterminated groups of these homeless kids to get them off the streets. The problem still hasn't been solved.

Our major expedition away from Rio was to Iguassu Falls, about 600 miles inland from Rio. In Rio, we visited a travel agent and booked tickets on

an airplane for a day trip to the falls. We also arranged for a car and driver to take us into Paraguay to visit the local market and buy handicrafts. The falls are a spectacular group of some 275 individual cascades in two tiers that are spread over a 2 1/2 mile semi circle. The Iguassu River, on which the falls are located, mark the borders of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. Downstream a few miles from the falls is one of the world's largest hydro-electric dams and power stations. But at Iguassu, on the Brazilian side of the falls, in a tighter circle of about a mile, there's a paved walkway that gives a visitor a view of all the cascades. Although it's at least a half mile from the actual falls, the mist from the tumbling water sprays the walkway. Vividly colored tiny butterflies fill the air, alighting on exposed arms and legs of visitors because there's moisture for them to drink.

After we had seen the falls from the promenade, we walked out over one of them on a catwalk constructed over the middle level of the falls and generally absorbed the atmosphere. Following our visit, we went to the office that supposedly housed our driver and his car for the rest of the trip. The manager said he knew nothing of the car and wanted to charge us again for the service. I was upset. I told the manager that I would be happy to call my friend in Rio and ask him to straighten the matter out there. I mentioned Seppie's family name, Castillo Branco -- ""white castle." The manager's face also became "branco," and he shuffled through some papers and suddenly "discovered" the order for our car. We were soon under way to a town in Paraguay -- only a few miles from the falls.

We told the driver that we wanted to go to the Indian Market. And that's where he drove us -- to an area in the town containing shops run by Indians -- those from the sub-continent. They sold Japanese radios and TV's. We realized the mistake and asked to go to a market where we could get native crafts. He turned the car around and soon we were walking past booths and stalls containing all sorts of Paraguayan handicrafts. There was an assortment of leather goods, figurines and some hand crafted jewelry. Our trip back to Rio was uneventful though we already regretted not having arranged to stay an extra day. The sunrise and sunset over the falls would have been sights to see and remember.

Seppie recommended restaurants offering authentic Brazilian fare and I have been able to duplicate one of them -- a black bean stew with spicing that consists of a hot sauce. We've had it often. We also enjoyed eating in Rio's Churrascarias -- barbecue restaurants where waiters continually circulate among the tables with skewers of hot meats and chicken, offering as much as a guest would want to eat. The table is filled with relishes including heart of palm, common in Rio and expensive in Chicago. The price for a full dinner in one of these places was about $5, an indication of the pricing structure in Brazil which was, at the time of our visit, on the verge of one of its frequent monetary crises.

Brazil was an experience in cultural extremes -- it took us to a third world country and also gave us an opportunity to experience wealth and luxury we hadn't known at home.

Travel Tidbits -- Part Five

In earlier articles about our travel experiences, I have "talked the talk." Now I'm prepared to "walk the walk." On several of our trips, we have felt that, in order to sense the history of the places we have visited, it was necessary to get out of the car and walk along a famous path to feel that we were a part of it.

We have, for example, gotten out of the car at an altitude of about 14,000 feet, and finding oxygen in short supply, have walked along the continental divide in Colorado. This area, near Estes Park is well above the tree line. There's no vegetation except for some short grass and there was no snow. Although it was chilly, we were dressed warm enough to keep from being uncomfortable. We hiked over rocks and saw small depressions that contained glacial snow. We rested often when we were out of breath. But we hiked along the continental divide. That's the line which runs the full length of North America that is, at any latitude, the highest point. In the Rocky mountains, water falling on the east side runs to the Mississippi and ultimately to the Gulf of Mexico. On the west side, water flows into the Pacific Ocean. There are continental divides in the Appalachian Mountains as well, but not as spectacular as those in the west.

On a trip to the east coast to deliver a car to Michael after which we drove along the Blue Ridge Mountain Parkway in western Virginia. This road follows the route of the Appalachian Trail from north to south and overlooks the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah Valley. It was springtime when we made the drive and the trees were loaded with fragrant Dogwood blossoms. We had brought audio tapes for our enjoyment on the trip and I have never enjoyed hearing Copeland's ""Appalachian Spring" more thoroughly than on this trip. We wound up our drive in Asheville and at the Vanderbilt Estate there. Our tour of the house and grounds was typically touristic. Then, we continued to the Great Smoky Mountains. One side of those hills are rural and untouched by gaudy touristic influences. The other side is Dolleyville and the glitz and hype that comes with a promotional development. Fortunately, we stayed on the underdeveloped side. Driving through the mountains, we stopped at a wood carver's house and bought a version of "the old man of the mountains." It's one of my treasured souvenirs.

Coming back to Chicago from the Smokys, we stopped at a restored Shaker Village in Kentucky called Pleasant Hill. Walking along those wide, unpaved streets, we learned about the life of the Shakers in the 19th Century and about their customs and practices which were at times beyond understanding. For example, their meeting house had a double set of stairways -- one for men, the other for women. When we got to the large, empty square

meeting house, the seats were arranged along the four walls. The center was entirely bare to allow the "shakers" room to express their religious fervor. But instead of an exhibition of this enthusiasm, a man walked to the center of the room and sang a stirring rendition of "Simple Gifts," a Shaker tune that never seemed more appropriate than when it was sung in that barren room.

On yet another walk -- this time in England -- we were determined to hike along Hadrian's Wall. Hadrian was a Roman Emperor who, among his other accomplishments, ruled over Britain in the 2nd Century A.D. Hadrian was determined to keep the wild Celts and Scots from disturbing his relatively calm rule over the Angles and Saxons in the southern part of the country. So he established a strong garrison to protect the country at its narrowest point in the north of what's now England.

In order to do this, he built a wall, twenty feet tall and wide enough for two chariots to pass each other on their drive across the wall from the Irish Sea to the North Sea. Not only did he want to divide the island but he also had a secondary, and more practical purpose. By keeping his troops busy cutting and hauling heavy stones needed to built the fortified wall, they would have little time or stamina to rebel against his rule.

And so it was that the wall was built. In the centuries since that mammoth construction project was completed, the accurately cut stones that made up the wall have been gradually expropriated by local residents to use in building their own houses, cathedrals and other buildings. It is interesting to note that the wall has been reduced to the height of a wagon's bed. The stones then didn't have to be lifted to the wagon. Instead, they were simply slid over to the wagon and carried to their final destination.

Lois had discovered a bed and breakfast installation that was supposed to be on Hadrian’s Wall. We drove there on a trip from Scotland to the north of England. Finding the B. and B. was not easy and required fording s small stream after the road had ended. We could see our destination across a barren field but getting there required some cross country driving in a rental car. We arrived, made sure we were in the right place and met the owner, Pauline Staff who, we soon learned, was the ultimate authority on anything relating to Hadrian's Wall.

Pauline took us outside to show us some of the stones that had been used in the construction of her own house. A couple had engravings of the names of the Roman soldiers who had actually carved the stones. She explained how the wall was punctuated by watch towers and that small towns had been established so that workers could move along the 74 mile length of the wall without having to spend so much time going to and from the wall on colder nights. She was able to explain in simple terms, the structure of the Roman garrisons that protected the soldier-workers from marauding gangs of Scots who regularly attacked from the north.

In addition, she was able to give us the more modern history of the wall. She described the process by which opening scenes of the Kevin Costner

movie "Robin Hood" had been filmed at a particular tree next to the wall. While the original wall had been breached in many places, in a few spots it was intact and a visitor could climb to the top, walk along its length and sense the magnitude of the Roman engineering project that had built it 1800 years earlier.

Pauline was the quintessential Bed and Breakfast host. During the evening before our hike on the wall, she presented her guests with her breakfast menu. There were no fewer than 300 items available for the heavy English breakfast. If this seems impossible now, it was a challenge then to select enough to eat without at the same time appearing piggish or too tentative in the menu choices. There were, for example, a dozen different kinds of oatmeal. There were several varieties of eggs and a wide assortment of breakfast meats. There were numerous choices of juice and fruits and an uncounted number of breads, rolls and cakes to select from. Pauline guaranteed that anything on the menu was available every morning for her guests and, after we made our choices, waited to see whether she could deliver on her promise. She did!

Getting to the wall required parking the car at one of several car parks and then hiking across stiles and through sheep-pie filled fields to the wall. We navigated through the fields and finally got to the part of the wall where we could scale its heights and walk along its length for perhaps a quarter mile before the wall tailed off into the ground. In that section, obviously, stones had been expropriated and used in building the sturdy houses that were in the area. As we left Pauline's B and B, we felt we had absorbed a sense of English history that's rarely taught in the schools.

One final walk was along a dirt road in Russia. Our cruise boat stopped at what was described as a "green stop." It was a countryside place where there wasn't even a village nearby. We were told that if we were to climb to the road, we might be approached by a local resident and would be invited to their house. The town was Irma. We followed instructions and, on the road, were approached by a very old woman who, through sign language, invited us to follow her. The road was long and, toward the end, there was a turnoff which proved to be the driveway to her small but comfortable house. I had a lot of serious misgivings. Visions of Sleeping Beauty's trance and of the Old Witch ran across my mind as we went to the house. Lois and the old woman stopped to pick raspberries from bushes along her driveway. I was praying she wouldn't prick her finger on a poison thorn.

We went into the house and were asked -- still in sign language -- to sit on her divan while she went to the small kitchen and brought back cake, jam, tea and vodka which she offered us. We accepted and, gradually, we established a sign language pattern that gave us a lot of information about her. She lived in the house and took care of her grandchildren while her daughter had a salaried job in a nearby city. Her acting as a hostess for cruise passengers was an income supplement and she enjoyed meeting people from all over the

world. As we left, we rewarded her with a ""tip" to thank her for her hospitality and came home with a story about how Russian rural people were living. In all, it was a learning experience which gave us a feeling for the lifestyle of the average rural Russian in the days after the demise of the Soviet Union.

Having ""walked the walks" we have learned to develop a feel for a location beyond reading its description in a guidebook. Sensing the smells of the dogwood trees, tasting the traditional Shaker foods, including salsify (look it up) and having sampled the various oatmeals and smelled the "fresh" fields in the English countryside; having tasted the fresh raspberries and the vodka in that Russian village have all been experiences that have broadened our understanding and appreciation of the world and have made us more aware of the world around us.

Travel Tidbits -- Part Six

Lois is a wonderful navigator. As we have driven through different parts of the world, she has always sat in the car with a map on her knees, a guidebook under her feet and written directions under her arms. Yet, on occasion, to paraphrase Robert Frost, we have been "on the road less traveled."

There was a trip we took in France. We have been staying in the town of Annecy which has been described as the Venice of France. The town is interlaced with canals. It’s filled with flower lined streets and is a delight to anyone wanting the flavor of rural France. Driving from Annecy one morning, we headed toward Mont Blanc, France's highest Alp. It's visible for miles and we knew we were going in the right direction. The highway leading to the mountain is also the main thoroughfare between France and Italy through a tunnel under the Alps. There’s a lot of truck traffic until the road divides and goes either toward the tunnel or to Mont Blanc.

Mont Blanc was well worth visiting and we spent a day there. The travel back to Annecy was a different problem., After the merge of the tunnel route and the smaller road from the mountain, traffic slowed, eventually it ground to a halt. As it inched along, we were aware that it was being diverted away from the highway and on to local roads. An accident involving a truck had completely closed the road. No problem, we thought. All we had to do was to follow cars with French license plates and eventually, we would return to the main road.

It didn’t work out that way. We followed the cars from the highway along two lane roads. We were in rural countryside. The further we drove from the main highway, the narrower the road became. Finally, we were following a single French car as it drove on to a narrow country road. We realized that this driver was no more familiar with the highway system (which wasn't marked at all) than we were. I turned into a farmer's driveway and reversed direction. Within a few miles, we came to a crossroads. On the far side of the road, a French farmer was sitting atop his wagon which was hauling a load of hay.

My French is minimal, but I rolled the window down and asked in my halting French where the National Highway might be. Without hesitation, he pointed in a direction perpendicular to the one we had been following. I thanked him and turned the car toward the road he had pointed to. Eventually, we found the highway -- not the expressway we had driven on when we left in the morning but rather one that paralleled it. I drove along this road expecting that there would be an interchange or a cloverleaf that would allow me to get on the expressway. There was none, but in time, the secondary road led us back to Annecy and our hotel.

In the Czech Republic, we visited UNESCO Cultural Heritage Sites in Bohemia and Moravia. The Liechtenstein Family had once been a powerful force in a region of Moravia near the town of Mikolov. They had sided with the Nazis during the Second World War and when the Communists came to power in this region of the former Czechoslovakia, they were evicted and their land holdings were confiscated by the Communist government. The family returned to the ancestral principality of Liechtenstein in the late 1940's.

In Moravia, during the 19th century, they had built two palaces -- one for summer and the other for winter. Between them was a green "landscape" running several miles. Along this green space, they had constructed a series of what are called "follies." These are small buildings designed to give recreational fun to the royal family and their guests. Among these "follies" which serve no practical function, are a medieval castle, a minaret and other whimsical buildings. We wanted to see them. We visited the castle which had been purposely built in the 19th century to look like a ruin of a 12th century fortification. The walls had been constructed to make the installation look like a ruin. It was impressive.

After visiting the castle, we wanted to drive to another "folly." The road to it looked like it was passable -- at least according to our map. We continued past the asphalt roadway on to a dirt road in the direction of the folly. Gradually, the road narrowed. Then, we realized that we were on a berm that had a canal on one side and a river on the other. The road had become a bicycle path and there was no way in which the car could be turned around. We had to go forward. It was harrowing.

Then, on the river side of the bern, we noticed a bridge. Hoping that the road leading to the bridge would intersect the bern, we traveled ahead. We were encouraged because figured that our car would be able to cross the bridge and that we could get back to civilization. Unfortunately, the bridge didn't have a road attached to either end and there was no road from the bern to the bridge. We had to continue for a couple of more miles before we actually crossed a navigable roadway. We recognized the road because, closer to the bridge, a wagon pulled by a team of horses crossed the bridge. There were a group of gypsies camped near the road. By turning on to the road from the berm, we could continue into a town that we could identify on our map. We

were about 25 miles from our intended destination and the drive back to our hotel covered much the same territory as we had covered earlier in the day.

And then there was a trip in Spain with our English friends, Derek and Margaret Wren. Derek was a retired architect and had traveled much of the world in his work. He had even visited our building in Chicago shortly after it was built. The coastal highway in Spain is heavily traveled by trucks carrying merchandise to Seville, Portugal and to the ferries that cross the Straits of Gibraltar to North Africa. But our map showed us another road "less traveled" that paralleled the main road -- called a Carretaria -- and ran behind the coastal mountain range. We decided to sightsee along this road and left one morning looking for a place to turn off the main highway and on to the narrower, less busy by-way.

We found the turnoff and began driving through lovely farmland dotted with orange groves, peasants, work animals and a bucolic atmosphere that could have filled a picture album. We hardly noticed that the road had narrowed and the it was no longer paved. In fact, it became deeply rutted and bumpy. Heavy boulders dotted the roadway and could have gouged out the undercarriage of the car. I drove carefully. We continued onward until we came to an orange grove where the farmer was picking his crop. The road suddenly stopped altogether. In fact, we became caught in a "V" shaped dip in the road -- a ditch -- where we could no longer move the car either forward or backward. Derek and I got out of the car to assess the situation. We could, we figured, get the car out of its position and turn around and retrace our drive back to the main road. Or, according to our map, we could continue a short distance on the "road" and wind up back at the main highway not too far from where we started our trip. We decided, in true British fashion, to "press on."

With the help of the farmer, the three of us pushed the car out of its "V" and continued the relatively short distance to the main road. As we progressed, we realized that the road had widened and, eventually was paved. We knew we were getting back home again.

Finally, there was an unforgettable drive in Utah. We had visited Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks and were headed back to Las Vegas. According to the roadmap we were using, there was a road which would save us as much as 25 miles of driving across a State road to get back to the Interstate which was our ultimate goal. It was May and we did not anticipate any weather related problems along this road. We were wrong. At one point, the map indicated that we were to make a left turn at an intersection. Unfortunately, the intersection was blocked by a fifteen foot snowdrift. Our recourse was either to turn back the way we came or to drive through the countryside to a town which would lead us to the Interstate, about 28 miles away. We learned that following a map isn't always the answer to saving time in a drive

We have encountered detours along several other routes, some marked inadequately. But, we haven't been lost. We did get back home to be able to tell these stories. And that's what counts.

Travel Tidbits -- Part Seven

A cruise ship can be a destination in its own right. It can offer luxury, gourmet dining and entertainment options that aren't available on dry land. Or a cruise ship can be a means of transportation to places that can't be reached by more conventional means of travel. We have tended to be attracted by this latter group.

We've been on a few of them. Some have been one and two week-long adventures, others have been day trips along a romantic river, but all have included destinations we wouldn't have seen had we not boarded the ships that took us there. Perhaps the best example was our cruise on Russian river waterways between Moscow and St. Petersburg. We were able to board the ship when we arrived in Moscow, and to stow our belongings before walking a couple of city blocks to a subway station that took us to the heart of the city. Exploring Red Square and visiting the mystical tomb of Lenin were a part of the trip. We saw the GUM department store; we were impressed with the breadth of the art collection at the Pushkin Museum and with the splendor of the churches.

But when the ship began its journey on the Moscow River, we were not fully prepared for the countryside we were about to see. One of our first stops was in the small city of Uglich. There, after a walk up a gravel road, we came to the town and its signature church. Along this mile long walkway, the poor of the city had assembled -- as much to welcome visitors as to sell their hand-crafted wares. One toothless old woman offered Lois a bouquet of goldenrod which she took. The woman accepted a small tip. Another woman bargained with me for a doll dressed in traditional peasant clothes which is now in our living room, has acquired the name of Natasha, and has become a part of our family.

We docked at a green stop that I described in another article and visited the home of Nina, an old woman who entertained us with cake, cookies, homemade jam and a bottle of unlabeled vodka. We stopped at the island of Kizhi, walked around the island and saw a reconstructed village of historical wooden buildings and churches that had been assembled from all over the country. Finally, the ship docked in St. Petersburg. Once the capital of the country, the city had suffered horribly during the second World War. A thousand day siege by Nazi armies had killed a million people. Supplies were delivered only in the winter when Lake Ladoga was frozen, but the city held on, was never captured and has rebuilt its infrastructure. Its psyche will never fully recover. In St. Petersburg, we were able to visit the Hermitage Art Museum twice. The first time was on our own initiative. We learned the layout

of the museum. The second visit was early the next morning and was with a tour group from the ship.

We entered with the group but immediately separated ourselves from them and went to explore some of the art we hadn't seen the day before. The museum was not crowded on that early morning. We found ourselves in one gallery filled with literally dozens of paintings by Rembrandt -- and no one else there to see them -- we had the thrill of having them to ourselves. We were able to enjoy an exhibition of what was called "Hidden Art," a huge collection that had been captured in the final days of the war in Germany and transported back to Russia. It was being held as a sort of ransom for some similar valuable artifacts that had been stolen by German forces and taken back to Germany. One of these artifacts was a set of amber panels from a palace built by Peter the Great. The possession of these panels has never been acknowledged by the Germans. The Russians would obviously like to retrieve them. There's still a standoff on the issue.

We sailed aboard several river trips over the years. With Michael, we were aboard an excursion boat on the Rhine River between Koblenz and Rudesheim. This ship passed through the German wine country and the image of vineyards sprawling up the steep slopes from the river is one to be remembered. So, too, is the Lorelei, that hunk of rock commanding a bend in the river and remembered in German song as being so much a part of national culture.

We boated up the Danube between Durnstein and Melk in 2001. Melk Abbey is an impressive installation, about 120 feet above the river. To reach it, it's necessary to walk through the town -- always uphill until you reach the entrance. The Abbey and its ancient library are UNESCO Cultural Heritage sites and a treasure trove of illustrated manuscripts.

We have crossed bodies of water throughout the world. Our ferryboat trips have taken us across the Bay of Jutland that separates Sweden from Denmark and was the site of a naval battle during the first World War and landed us and our automobile in Goteburg. We have sailed from Sweden to visit Hamlet's Castle on Denmark's east coast. We have ferried across Chesapeake Bay on the US East Coast and across Lake Michigan. And, we have taken a ferry across the body of water separating Spain from Portugal's Algarve region where Portuguese Men of War abound.

We have toured the harbors of Rotterdam and Sete in France and we have spent a day aboard a small ship on the Canal du Midi which was a waterway built to bisect France and allow shipping from its Mediterranean ports to the Atlantic Coastline near Bordeaux.

Perhaps the most exciting water travel was on a seven day rafting trip through the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Boarding the raft at Lee's Ferry -- a landing point in the Colorado River that was memorialized in the movie "Stagecoach," we were taught the simple rules of hanging on to the raft by the two "swampers" assigned to our group. Swampers are the professional river

guides who controlled all aspects of the trip and who maneuver the raft through some very hazardous waters. Most of them were college students from Brigham Young University and worked for the Salt Lake City based company who owned the rafts. There were twenty passengers on our five tube "J" rigged rubber raft powered by two large outboard engines.

Sitting on the tubes, we were told to hold on to two ropes. One behind us would prevent us from pitching forward when the boat hit rapids. The other was in front of us and helped keep us in balance when the raft pitched backward. We practiced holding on as the boat went through the first, unimpressive rapids.

That first night, we got instructions in setting up tents on a small sandbar in the river. It was hot in the canyon during the day with temperatures approaching 120 degrees. It cooled off at night but not enough, I thought, to sleep in the airless tent. I crawled outside and slept on top of my sleeping bag. I slept well and as the trip progressed, most of the other shipmates decided that they were better off without the tent's confining heat. In the morning, we were instructed to shake our shoes to be sure that they weren't infested with scorpions. At night we were visited by scorpions, rattlesnakes and bobcats looking for food. One rule of the trip was that anything that was brought in to the canyon would be carried out of it -- no garbage, no waste, no food scraps were left behind and we all followed the rules. We left only our footprints.

Further down the river, we arrived at Phantom Ranch where we had our first opportunity in three days to actually use a flush toilet. It was fun seeing the large mules carrying people down to the river from the rim on day trips. The sound of Ferde Grofe's "Grand Canyon Suite" seemed to ring in our ears. The following morning, we got up early -- before sunrise. There was competition between crews of the various rafting companies that carried passengers on these adventures. We left early to beat other rafts to find the best possible mooring place at the point where a small river entered the Colorado.

We arrived, moored the raft and were given our box lunch and instructions to keep our belongings, including our cameras above the water and walk up this smaller stream until we came to a series of waterfalls. The spot was idyllic. The water was warm, the sun peeked through the trees and marbled the water. On one of the waterfalls, some of our shipmates slid down the rocks into a pond. I preferred sitting in the water and allowing a small waterfall to massage my back. We were sorry to have to leave this place.

River rapids are categorized according to their ferocity. They are ranked from one to ten with ten being the most dangerous and fastest rush of water. Three number "tens" were on our schedule in the next couple of days. As we approached each of them, the swampers would look for a vantage point from which they could survey the river. Rapids change from day to day for a number of reasons. The weather, the amount of water flowing through the river from the Glen Canyon hydroelectric dam, the temperature and the whim of the river are all factors how the rapids are navigated on a given day. The

swamper's job was to get us and the raft through safely. Those trips were exciting and the people who rode the fronts of the tubes had the most excitement, comparing their experience to riding a wild bull.

Finally, after six nights and seven days on the river, we reached the end of our journey. Another group would ride the raft for three more days and end up on Lake Mead near Las Vegas. We were brought out of the canyon by helicopter and then by single engine plane we retraced our steps along the river back to Page. They were seven days that are indelibly etched in our memories as being among the most exciting, scenic, and exhilarating we've ever had.

In spite of Lois' inability to swim, we've spent a lot of time on the water and I'm sure that she doesn't regret a minute of it. For my part, I'm pleased we have been able to spend so much time sightseeing from the deck or through the lounge windows of a ship -- and I still have my sea legs on waiting for another opportunity.