





I grow up

Elder Dan Lewis

My Witness: God Provides

Individuality is a man's privilege ...

My Senior Yearbook

Copyright © 2016 by the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#) version 3.0 or later.

Forward

This book had its beginning December 24, 2013. Paul and Marianne Lindsey (my niece and nephew) plus their children stopped by my apartment for a short visit on their way to South Carolina. While here they suggested that they would like to have me write my experiences so that others would know who I am. (This idea came from Paul's grandmother's writing of her experiences. I agreed, so this project began.)

Yet, it really had its beginning my senior year in English Fundamentals. My teacher gave us this assignment to be completed during that class: write your own obituary. In other words describe what you think your life will be like. Well, I had "writer's block" for the entire class period. I had no idea of what to expect in the future!

The request I got from the Lindsey's was an opportunity to complete this assignment. I have to admit that even I had no idea of what would be the results of this assignment. It turned out that life for me has been much better than I thought in the beginning.

My Witness: God provides is a very simple title for a series of books, but oh how complex my life has been. As a baby, my life consisted of the events of my life to that point. But as I grew, and my brain developed more, it became a combination of the events and the interpretations my brain gave to these events. As I continued to grow mentally and physically, the interpretations became my reality which bear little resemblance of the underlying events.

I had no idea of how many volumes this series would contain when I began this project. Neither did I understand how long it would take. But it has been both enjoyable and educational.

My nephew, Paul Lindsey, told me one time that what we believe is based upon the assumptions that we make. I think that he is quite right in this. So, when two people disagree, they are likely to do so because they have different assumptions.

But which assumption is the correct one? How do we know that our assumptions are correct? How do we know that the assumptions of others are correct? How well can we step back from our own thinking and beliefs to critically examine **our** assumptions? It seems easy to judge others, but can we truly judge ourselves properly? For that matter how well can we judge our parents or relatives? They provide us with what we need in our early lives. We learn what their values are whether they say one word or not, just by observations.

But where do we search for what we need to learn? We have the Bible, the actions and traditions of our fathers, and what others do and say including write. But how accurate are these sources? What pitfalls do they present?

My life is a result of the things that I have experienced. How I interpreted them at any given time was based upon my beliefs and the underlying assumptions at the time. Sometimes my experiences have pointed out the errors of some of my beliefs: my assumptions did not agree with what I had learned from experience. When this happened, the beliefs had to go being replaced with beliefs that came closer to matching my experiences.

Most people will ignore anything that does not agree with their beliefs. My advanced college math courses with their emphasis upon proving statements has instilled in my core beliefs the need to verify what I think. The emphasis is on this question: "What is the truth?" So, it is not sufficient for me to believe something. There must also be a reason for doing so. Assumptions must be verified.

Because of the attentions given to me by God from late March 1956 on, my view on life took a religious significance. What does God expect of me? What does He expect of His children? This begins with the following two verses.

"¶Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: 5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deu 6:3-5

The most important responsibility for us is to love God with our whole being. This means learning what is required of us and making what we have learned into a habit.

Following the verses quoted above are additional important verses that affect our lives:

"6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deu 6:6-7

The point being that the parents and their children should be exposed to the things God requires of us. And if we know what we should be doing, we should also be doing it. What our children see us doing is much more telling than what they hear us say.

Part of every child's education should include explanations of why the parents do and say what they do. When children know why, they have a much better foundation upon which to build their lives.

Some children do not get this education. Instead they are told what to do and that is it. The parents are the boss, and

the children are the workers. The latter are expected to do what they are told. And of course children can learn a lesson from this: as long as I am in my parents' home, I have to do what they say.

What happens when this lesson is learned well? I have known of people who left home as soon as they could. Some have run away from home even before they were really ready for the life that awaited them. This is a sad situation.

Sometimes this lesson rears its ugly head many years later. The parents become elderly and need some help from their children. By now the children have begun to live like their parents had earlier: they are now the rulers of their home. So, when they begin to help their parents, they insist that everything be done their way instead of the parents' way. Their roles have been reversed. Conflicts then appear between the generations.

All of us live on the earth for a period of time. During this time we experience both good and bad. But how do we react to each one of these experiences? Why do some describe them as good and others as bad? The obvious answer is our beliefs.

"The vale of sin and sorrow" is where many people believe they spend their lives. They only seem to have hope in eternity and not in this life. To them, suffering is a major part of life; eternity is when we will enjoy what we do not have not enjoyed in this present life.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor 15:19

Yes, I believe that hope in Christ in this life without eternity with Him is a very unpleasant thought. I also believe that only having hope in Christ in eternity is not a pleasant thought either. It is like being on death row waiting

to be executed. There is nothing to look forward to in this life other than death which will end our misery.

When God guided Israel from Egyptian slavery, the people were always complaining about the conditions they were suffering every day. To them, life was hard. When the 12 spies returned to Kaddesh-Barnea to report on what they had seen in Canaan, ten of them could only talk about the terrible difficulties that they were going to face if they entered that land. Two of them talked about the things that God would do with them in conquering this land. The ten spies were believed and the entire army revolted with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

The ten spies died by God's hand there at Kaddesh-Barnea, and the rest of the army died in the wilderness during the 38 plus years that followed. Many of them suffered tragic deaths. They learned first hand what this vale of sin and sorrow was all about. God watched over them providing them with food and water. However, they never knew the blessings of Canaan.

Joshua and Caleb would later cross the Jordan River and set foot back in the land of Canaan. During the 38 years, Joshua continued as the servant of Moses experiencing God through what Moses did. Caleb kept within his heart the promise that God had made to him at Kaddesh-Barnea: his inheritance would be the land around the city of Hebron.

After seven years of war in Canaan, Caleb was given the land God had promised him, and Joshua was given some land in the tribe of Ephraim to which he belonged. Both of them experienced what God had promised: their land flowed with milk and honey. They both saw this and greatly enjoyed it.

The kingdom of Heaven is here for us to live within and to enjoy all the spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus that God has

made for us. I prefer to seek out all of the blessings of the kingdom which God permits me to enjoy.

I believe that God has permitted me to live in this kingdom. It has been a joy to do so. And this is why I have chosen the title of this book, **My Witness: God provides.**

My parents

My parents were a product of what their parents taught them by words and actions. They were products of what they learned from others as well. They had the Bible to use as a basis for their actions. But it must be remembered that even the Bible is usually interpreted according to the way their parents taught them.

First a little information about Dad's parents. Neither had very much education with Grandma perhaps having more than Grandpa. One of them had completed sixth grade and the other fourth grade. When this was mentioned while I was a teenager, my parents told me that at this level they were now considered to be functionally illiterate. (Somehow, they did not seem to fit this description to me. Yet they were somewhat limited in the things they could do because of their lack of education.)

Grandma lost her mother at a early age. Being the oldest girl perhaps even the oldest child, her dad left her in charge of keeping her siblings fed while he went off to get a wife. She was only four at the time (1894). But considering her dad even left her this way suggests that she could have been fixing the meals for the family already.

She may have mentioned how long her dad was gone, but it was a period of time. Then she needed to get adjusted to having a new step mother.

Dad

Dad's parents were married April 20, 1906. (He was 18 and she was 16.) Uncle Arthur was born first and Aunt Marie was born next. So by the time Dad was born July 4, 1911, they had three children. Aunt Ida was born last, but I don't remember when.

He was born in Lawrenceville, IL as probably true for his older siblings. By the time he was about five, they had moved to Xenia, IL, about 70 miles west.

At least 40 years later Grandpa sold an 80 acre plot of land in that area. So, this is probably where they lived while in the Xenia area.

While there Grandma went to church. In 1916, she joined the Salem Primitive Baptist Church and was baptized. This may have caused some problems for her husband. Soon after this, he moved his family. (Dad said that his father then began running from the church.) In any case, the family moved many times before returning to Lawrenceville in the late 1920's. They settle in widely spaced areas including Billings, Montana, and Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.

This period of time was rather rough on Dad. With so many moves and thus so many different schools he attended, he was put back a couple of years. This makes it difficult to learn everything required of a student. Always having to make new friends is not easy for a young child. It had a very lasting effect on Dad's attitude.

Billings was a place where Dad had some favorite memories. Seems he was old enough to have a paper route there. But it was the beauty of the "rimrocks" at the top of the hills around the town. They were flat on the top for what seemed miles. Also the sides of the hills were vertical for what seemed many feet down from the top. Then they would begin to angle outward down to the valley below. (This is what I remember from our trip through this area in 1955.)

Somewhere during this period of time, Dad had taken Grandpa to a meat packing plant to find work. They hired Grandpa and asked Dad if he was looking for work. When he said yes, they hired him also.

The plant had gotten a shipment of carcasses of diseased animals (probably pigs). Meat inspectors came to take care of the problem. By the time they had finished their work, most of the meat was thrown out (because of trichinosis). It was something Dad would long remember.

Likely St. Paul was one of the last places the family lived before returning to Lawrenceville. It was now 1926 and 20 years after my grandparents married. Three of the children were 15 or older.

In fact, by this time Uncle Arthur decided to become a Lutheran minister. It was here that he left the family to pursue the education required to become one. It would be the last time that the family was together until the Golden Anniversary in August, 1956. (This was postponed from April so the whole family could be there.)

Dad finished high school after the family returned to Lawrenceville, IL, in the early 1930's. Afterward, among other things, he drove a truck from Chicago, IL, to Columbus, OH. Were there a variety of jobs he held from graduation until the mid 1930's? I really do not know.

I think he may have enjoyed the truck driving some. It sounded like he made a regular run between these two cities. One of the things that was regular while in Columbus was where he ate: a particular diner. It was also near where Mom worked at the time. She also ate at this diner regularly. Were they every eating there at the same time? Had they seen each other there but did not make an impression on the other? A few years later, Mom would think back to this time wondering about these same questions.

By 1934, Dad and his parents were living in the Columbus area. He was working at the airport, and they were running a diner also at the airport. (I think Dad was working on planes, but I can not be positive.)

Mom

Her family lived at 165 Whitethorn ave. in Columbus, OH for as long as I can remember. (Well, the house was sold within a couple of years after her Dad died the summer of 1966.)

Grandpa Mathew was born January 1, 1879 in the Columbus area. He was raised in a Regular Predestinarian Baptist church, and would be ordained a deacon in the Clinton Church as an adult. He worked as a carpenter until his retirement.

Grandma Mathew also grew up in Columbus, but her background was quite different. She was raised Mennonite probably in the eastern part of the city. Mom has mentioned that in tracing her lineage through her mother, the entire family tree went back to Pennsylvania and the Dutch community in that state. (The German name for the German language is Deutch or country is Deutchland. This is pronounced the same as Dutch.) In fact, Mom had furniture from her mother that came from Germany several generations back. I have a German-English New Testament that I think was Grandma Mathew's grandparent.

Grandpa and Grandma married and had three children: two girls four years apart and a son Dad's age. They lost him, and no one mentioned why nor exactly when. This may explain why Grandma treated Dad so well when my parents were courting.

Mom arrived August 16, 1913 at the Whitethorn address. (I would arrive at the same house 28 years later.) Her mother was no-nonsense, so Mom learned how to behave from the very beginning. It would show up in her school work as she grew up.

As an example of Mom's mother, Mom's dad voted for giving women the right to vote. He got a tongue lashing for

doing that. Let me see ... she could rule the family but was not capable of determining who would run the government?? Both required the same ability to think and act.

An exceptionally smart student, she was advanced a grade (or was it two) in grade school. In high school, she got straight A's. But this was done with some help... from her dad.

Carpenter work uses a lot of geometry and trigonometry. There are other mathematical principles which are used in this occupation as well. The "carpenter's square" is used to apply all of these principles to buildings.

Well, Mom had some problems periodically with math problems. Her dad would sit down with his "square" and determine what the answer should be. Mom would then work backward from the answer to the problem.

Her dad had another influence in Mom's life. They live not very far from the railroad station. So Primitive Baptist ministers traveling by train to appoints would stop by their home. So, as she grew up she got to know a wide variety of ministers. I don't know how many Biblical conversations she heard during this time...

Mom and another female student were in competition for the highest grade point average in high school. At the end of their senior year, both had straight A's. But because Mom had taken an extra course, she was made the valedictorian of the class. (Large class: approximately 340, and this was 1929.)

After graduation, Mom went out looking for work to do. There was only one problem: because she had skipped a grade or two, she would not be 16 for a couple more months! So she had to get a work permit before she could get a job. This she did, and continued in this job until her marriage.

During Mom's senior year (1928), the economy faltered. Was it really a mild recession? Perhaps not, but it was something Mom and other students took notice of that fall. They were even talking about the downturn that year. They would learn what a bad downturn really meant several months after their graduation.

Because of her training by her mother, she did quite well in the work she had. Even when the stock market crashed in 1929, she managed to keep her job. The end of each week, she would go to the bank to deposit the money she did not for that week. Others were not so lucky. While she was depositing money, they were having to withdraw money in order to live.

Mom went to church at Clinton with her parents. For many years they had taken the trolley to the end of its line. Then they would walk a mile to the church. At some point, they got a car. (Perhaps after Mom started work?) I think while attending church there she heard a rather pointed sermon about the need to be a part of the church. For some reason, it did not occur to her that the minister was talking directly to her! But sometime later, she joined and was baptized.

The family was like most of that time (1929-1934): doing with whatever they had to get by wondering when the economy was going to get better. It had only gotten worse during the most of that time. A new president had been elected in 1932, but things were still very bad.

As the summer of 1934 approached, things were about to change for my Mom and Dad. Their lives would forever be different.

Mom and Dad: courtship

The first part of July, a phone call came to Mom's family home. It was Dad's mother. Somehow she had gotten this

number as someone to contact for church. She was looking for a ride to Clinton Church. She and Mom's mother talked for a while, and arrangements were made for that weekend.

Whatever the women talked about, no one has ever said. Mom was suppose to drive to the airport, pickup Dad and his mother, take them to church on Saturday morning, and return. This is all that anyone has known. (The women never talked about it.)

Everything went according to plan until Mom got to the airport. Dad's mother suddenly could not go. There was this to do and that. Mom considered all of these things to be excuses. She even thought the two mothers had set their children up.

So now she was going to be in a car with a young man that she did not know. What about Dad? He was in a very similar situation. Mom's mother would expect her daughter to do what had been promised. Dad's mother would insist he go to church as well. They really did not have a choice...

There were young people at the church that Mom knew from previous visits. So Mom and Dad joined in the group as Mom usually did. But this time she was also responsible to see that Dad was not left to himself.

But whatever thoughts they each had to deal with, they managed to get past them. It turned out that they seemed to enjoy each others company at least some. She got Dad home safe and sound. She also got home no worse for wear. Then they were back at this church the next morning together. Was Dad's mother with them then? I don't know.

Then an arrangement was made for her to take him to church the following weekend at a different Primitive Baptist church. Being in each others company was beginning to become much more comfortable. They also probably received some teasing about being seen together two weekends in a row.

Whether some of the comments opened their eyes some or not, it took them all of six weeks to decided to marry. One thing is for sure: this was a very enjoyable time for them. One time Mom set us children down to discuss the things that happened during these six weeks. It only took her 3 hours to tell it! (No, I was not bored listening; I really was amazed and thoroughly enjoyed the time. I only wish I had been able to tape record it.)

There is something very special in these six weeks. They span from July 4, to August 16, 1934 (from Dad's 23rd to Mom's 21st birthdays. And this fact only made the time that more precious! (Mom made this point very clear when she told us about this.)

I don't know when Mom began working on her hope chest containing some of the things needed in a marriage. Was it before she met Dad or after this six weeks of blossoming bliss? How much influence did Mom's mother have on her? One thing for sure, there were instructions at to its contents. (Strict moms made sure their daughters are prepared sufficiently.)

Still, the economy was still in terrible shape. Wedding gifts were scarce if nonexistent. People were barely getting by financial. Future couples had to provide everything by themselves.

Both of them were working and saving money. Plans had to be made on what they would buy when.

By 1937, Dad had quit working at the airport. (Or, was he laid off?) Anyway, he had gotten a job as a farm hand for Elder Hanover north east of Columbus, probably 20-30 miles away. There he had a house (unfurnished) to live in that would become my parents first home. This was a start.

There was a lot of work to be done to change it from just being a house Dad lived in to being a home. Drapes had to

be made and hung. Specific furniture had to be decided upon. Where would it be placed?

When it was warm enough, a garden was dug and planted. So this need attention on a regular basis. Vegetables had to be picked and canned. In fact, Mom canned some vegetables during the week before their wedding. By summer, everything was coming together, and they decided to marry Saturday, July 17, 1937.

During the midst of their courtship, Dad and his dad were baptized into Clinton Church. Dad did this in January which is rather cold in Ohio. It was done in a pond that people skated on. Dad said that he had himself skated on this pond the week before his baptism.

The early years

They settled down in their new home and closer relationship. Etta did not arrive until, Tuesday, March 14, 1939. This was another new adjustment. Keeping the house warm enough for a baby in the winter as well as bundled up when going out anywhere.

Yet, Mom was faced with a much more serious problem at night: Etta would stop breathing. Fortunately, Mom was able to get her breathing again. This went on for months, but I don't know how many. It was a fearful time not knowing whether she would wake up in time to preventing Etta from dying or not.

So she kept Etta's crib next to her side of the bed. Even so, Etta would not make any noise when this happened. Sometimes when Mom awoke and checked on her new daughter, Etta would be flaying her arms but not breathing.

To add to this, Mom became pregnant again only three months after Etta was born. So, she had to deal with both of these issues at the same time. Webb was born Monday, March 17, 1940.

Life in Columbus

Sometime in the next 18 months Mom and Dad left the farm. I am not sure why, but there could be a few reasons. They moved into her parents home, and Dad began working with his father-in-law learning the carpenter business. Possibly at the same time Dad also became involved with Civil Defense which probably meant additional income for his family. (WWII had raged in Europe since 1939.)

He made a reputation with how he handled himself at CD training exercises. He learned carpentry quite well as well. And it was these two skills that resulted in us moving to Illinois in 1943.

I wonder if Dad's experience playing football affected how he approached the CD drills. Probably so. The men would be divided into two groups. One was suppose to try to takeover a given location. The other was to defend it.

Many of the men did not take their role seriously, but Dad did. When he was in the attack team, defenders would use their nightsticks to poke at him. He would just take it away from them. I'm thinking that he heard those people say, "But it is only a drill..."

Someone provided him with some leather for his nightstick. The man looped the four leather strands through the hole in the end of the nightstick. Then six inches from the hole, he began making a very tight square braid for another six inches. Finally, he cut the end of the strands six inches from the end of the braid making the total length of leather 18 inches. When he completed all of this, he gave it to my Dad.

With this, Dad could take hold of the other end of the nightstick using the leather as a whip. With his long arms, he could literally draw blood on any body part that was within 5 feet of him. He quickly got the reputation that he would do exactly this when defending an objective. He

would first warn the person to stand back from him. If they didn't do it, they suffered the consequences! Needless to say, he heard complaints about his actions from the attacker, but that did not make any difference to him. He was acting as if this was a real attack.

Commentary

The theme of this book is *God provides*. There many examples within this story that points to this.

I see God guiding a four year old girl when her dad left her alone with younger children for a while so he could bring home a wife to take care of his family. I see God guidance of him so that he could do this. I see God in my mother getting and keeping employment just before and during the Great Depression.

God also had a hand in her and Dad meeting when they did. It might look like the mothers decided to play matchmaker, but this leaves God out of the picture. (Not a very good idea at all!)

Finally, why was it that every time Etta stopped breathing for any period of time that Mom woke up? God did it. Well, I could mention more times, but I will leave the reader to do this.

God does provide whether we notice it or not in everyday events. If we do not, we miss the feeling of God's presence when He provides for us. Neither will we be able to enjoy the memories until we do take notice at a later time in our lives.

Things became much more real 9 days before I was born. Sometime after 2 PM EST, Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese. War was a reality! Just one more thing that my Mom had to worry about.

My early childhood

Late evening on Monday December 15, Mom became very uncomfortable: labor contractions had begun. So, the doctor was called. He arrived sometime later,... drunk. I was delivered in spite of this handicap. And my grandfather, ever the person to keep his pocket watch accurate, said that I arrived at 2:15 AM December 16. I was rather fussy in the beginning. What could be wrong? Turns out that I was hungry! So, after nursing for a while, I quieted down. Mother and baby were both comfortable (as much a a new mother can be) enough to get some sleep.

Mom's regular doctor did not deliver babies, so he had recommended another doctor to do this. When Mom confronted her doctor about what happened, she learned that the recommended doctor had a drinking problem having delivered other babies while under the influence.

My birth certificate states I weighed 9 pounds at birth. I wonder if the doctor was even sober enough to really know how much I weighed.

To say that Mom was angry is putting it mildly. I could hear the anger in her voice when she said that she found another doctor to provide the medical needs of the family!

As I grew more, I was placed on a blanket on the floor (probably several months later). Meanwhile, my older siblings were now 2 and 3 years old. So they were rather active which you would expect children that age to be. At least one time they were running through the house. Not looking where they were going they stumbled over me,

rolling me over. What did I do? Mom said that I woke up laughing! (I was a happy baby!)

Mom was already under stress because of her mother's health. As a result, she was not producing enough milk to keep me satisfied. It was her mother that suggested that I needed to be put on a formula which she did.

By summer time, I was sitting up quite well. And like many babies my age, I was also applying the "taste test" to new things that I came in contact with. In this picture, I was outside on a blanket. I probably was not hungry, but the grass certainly was inviting...



In the next few months I went through the normal teething problems. I don't know what caused the diarrhea, but the thought at that time was the teething. (Medical people question this diagnosis in later times.) Anyway, as a result, my bottom turned red. The cure for this at the time? Milk of Magnesia. I hated the taste of it! (I have not changed that much since then.)

Well, I was putting up a fuss about taking it, so much so that I clamped my mouth shut! Try as Mom would she could not get my mouth open. Her sick mother said, "Let me have

him." She was going to give it to me. Well she thought she was.

I don't know how long she tried, but she managed to get my mouth open. For the most part, all she got for her trouble was a rather white face. I had blown the Milk of Magnesia all over her! Well, I might have swallowed "some" of it.

Yet, she was not to be defeated. If I hated Milk of Magnesia that much, would I take something else instead? So she asked Mom about castor oil which was another laxative in use at the time. Mom's reply? "He licks it off the spoon."

Yes, "Duh" moments are nothing new. People have been having them probably for a very long time. Anyway, I got to lick the spoon again.

As the weather turned cold, the house had to be heated. The house had floor furnaces with metal grates above them allowing the hot air to rise and heat the house. This made the grates very hot, not something that anyone should sit down on...

I was crawling going I don't know where. Then I decided to sit down for a while. I just happened to be on one of the metal grates. For some reason, I don't think I was a happy baby then. My diaper protected part of my bottom and legs but not everything. So, for a while I had the marks of the grating on my posterior. (I probably did not do this again.)

Then came the walking lessons, but I did not want to cooperate with this either. Just about everything was tried including letting me hold on to something as I walked. Regardless of how gently they let go of the object, I would immediately sit down. I had no problems walking as long as I was holding something that someone else held, but I was very stubborn about walking on my own.

By this time, both of Mom's parents were bed ridden (in different bedrooms). Her mother was dying from stomach cancer; her father had ulcers. Life was not easy...

With all that was going on, she noticed something new: I was not crawling around this time: I was "walking" on my own. She described it as running. Anyway, she put aside whatever she was doing. Then she coax me to run into the two bedrooms so her parents could see me take some of my first steps. Apparently, I obliged by not even sitting back down until I had "run" through both bedrooms.

So, it is likely that I had walked on my own quite a few times before anyone noticed. How could I gone through two bedrooms without losing my balance if this were the first time I was walking on my own?

Around this time, the US had been at war for about a year. Because of Dad's reputation in his CD work, he was asked to move to Illinois to head the carpenter shop at the Granite City Army Depot which was just being built. I'm not sure when he agreed and left for Illinois. It was either the latter part of 1942 for early 1943. In either case, he was there for the funeral of Mom's mother early in 1943.

I have a memory of a very cold day. The family was somewhere getting ready to go outside. Etta, Webb, and I were bundled up against the weather. Whether it was at my grandmother's funeral I do not know. It could have been. As I understand it, it was held on a very cold day...

After the funeral, Mom remained in Columbus for a while. Dad headed to work in Illinois. But then came spring. Mom put everything in the car, and we headed to Dad's parents home on the eastern side of Illinois: Mom, Etta, Webb, and I. This was about 250 miles of driving in one day! The highways were not in the best of conditions, and every city had the highways go through the downtown area. I was not 18 months old yet; Etta and Webb were almost 4 and 3. This

had to be hard on Mom with all the responsibilities she had that day. But, she was to see her husband again! She definitely had something to look forward to.

Dad was 150 miles away. He had to work all day before he could leave for his parent's home. This meant that he had to drive this mostly in the dark. It was not easy on him either. But, like his wife, he also longed to see his wife and his children.

When he arrived, Grandma Lewis and Mom had a short conversation about what they were going to do. Grandma said that she was going to get the first kiss. Mom's reply: "I'm going to get the best kiss." (With the love my parents had for themselves, Mom was right: she got the best kiss. Of course, she got a lot more kisses as well.)

Then Dad turned his attention on his children. Etta and Webb went to their Dad very quickly. They were old enough to remember him. I was much younger, so I sort of hung back. Mom quickly noticed this as did Dad. It especially got to him. The very thought that his youngest child did not know him...

Without thinking, he had left his carpenter pencil in his shirt pocket. It was something that he used all of the time. But I noticed it! There had been times when we had played together using one of these pencils. I may not have known my Dad, but I recognized the pencil he had in his pocket. I rushed to him probably wanting to enjoy the playing I had remember from earlier times. So, Dad was now as happy as I was.



Thanks to my younger brother (Tom) and his wife (Elaine), I have this picture of the carpenter pencil that meant so much to me. That night.

I seem to remember that in later years that Dad's carpenter pencils were red in color. In any case, these pencils show what got me all excited about my Dad when I did not recognize him in any other way.

Moving around

Sometime after this first meeting, the rest of our family moved to the western side of the state. Probably one of the first places we stayed was in a house in the flood plane on the eastern edge of the Mississippi River valley. There was plenty of rain that had fallen not only in our area but also in the area north of us. The river began to rise; we were flooded out of our first residence.

From there we moved to a motel where we stayed for six weeks. Mom's rough times continued. As she told me years later, living in a motel for this length of time with three young children with all that we required was very hard.

At some point a place was found in Edwardsville where we could rent and live. Considering that Dad was working 7 days a week 12 hours a day, how was this place found? But it was. (I see God answering prayers.)

Meanwhile, I decided to become an exhibitionist. (At less than two years old, I was a little young for this don't you think?) Mom had undressed me to give me a bath. She turned to do something drawing her attention away from me. I very quickly got outside and sat down in the dirt. As soon as she noticed I was missing she went looking for me. I may have been pleased with myself sitting outside nude, but she was not.

Permanent home

How many times we moved after that, I don't know (possibly four more times). But by winter we had moved into a two story house with another family. They even decided to sell the house to us. So, on my second birthday, the mortgage papers were signed. This would be the home I would grow up in.

But I was more concerned about something else than who owned the house. I seemed to understand that the other family was moving to another house. And this bothered me. You see, they had a dog who with a litter of puppies. I had become attached to one of the puppies...

So, this almost two year old asked his Dad about this puppy. I can still remember what he told me. "The family and their dog was moving around the corner, but the puppy is staying with us." Yes, I truly believe that I was excited over this! We had Dewey as a family pet until after I went to college. She died of natural causes in the early 1960's.

Her name was given to her probably by my father who always was a staunch Republican. Thomas E. Dewey was a prominent Republican on the national stage at the time, so our new puppy was named after him.

A bad boy at times

Seemingly, not much was happening other than the every day things for the rest of the war. We three children were grow like we were suppose to. Dad was working 12 hours a day seven days a week during this time, so we barely saw him. Mom had us mostly to herself. Besides there was rationing on so many things, there was limits as to what was possible.

But children will be children... We can get into things that we should not. We sort of played follow the leader. Etta being the oldest would get into something mischievous, and Webb and I having seen what she did would join her. Since she had already been doing it for a while, she would get bored and leave. But before us boys got bored, Mom would catch us. Ouch, Ouch, Ouch! For some reason, we did not learn our lesson (as most children don't).

Another time was when my Dad's parents were visiting us for a while. Mom had something that she needed to do, so Grandma watched me until she returned. (With Dad working 12 hours or more a day seven days a week, Mom had to take care of all of the family business. It had to be a nice thing to do these things without three young children tagging along once in a while.

My curiosity got to me again as I looked at a kitchen table (sort of). It was painted orange, had a white metal top, and in one side there was a door to hold items inside. There were also a drawer for silverware and a bin in that side in for holding sugar or flour. Well, I opened the bin, which contained sugar. Then I began to have some fun playing in it. For some reason, Grandma did not like that at all! So, I was quickly sat down of a chair (or was it stool?) and was told not to get down from there. Her tone told me that she meant every word. I did not budge for a while...

But then my Mom walked into the house. Thinking that she would let me get down, I said, "Grandma made me sit

down." "What did you do?", she asked me. "I was playing in the sugar," was my answer. "Then you will have to sit there until Grandma says you can get up," was her reply. (So much for wishful thinking...)

Back to the war: Dad had registered for the draft in Columbus, Ohio while we lived there as required. Then a telegram was delivered to our home telling Dad to come to Columbus to be drafted the next day. This had to be bad news for Mom when she read it. With him working very hard all day, she did not contact him. So, he did not know about it until he got home which was late at night.

What could he do? The last train that had left for the Columbus area was hours before. So, he could not have gotten there in time if he wanted to do so. Secondly, he was already completely involved in the war effort at the Army Depot.

The next morning, Dad went into the Depot Commander with the telegram because he did not know what else he could do. He handed the telegram to the commander and was told not to worry about. The Army would clear up this problem for him. It did because Dad did not hear back from the draft board after that for a while.

When the next telegram did arrive with the same message, he took it to the depot as well. He also took this to the Depot Commander. Seemly the draft board finally got the message loud and clear. I feel certain that the communications to the draft board make very clear to it why my Dad was not nor would ever be available for the draft.

Dad actually wanted to enlist in the CB's (construction battalion) which was part of the Navy. How hard he tried, I don't know. But someone suggested that had he succeeded and someone in the service discovered what job he was going to leave to join, he might have been accepted and

then assigned back to the very job he had. (This may have wound up being his thinking instead of someone else's.)

Since the Depot was responsible for crating all of the equipment that was shipped overseas, it was a target for espionage. One time there was a suspicious fire there. Along with many other people my Dad was interrogated about it. During this, he learned that he was being followed. They knew everywhere he went, what he did, and what he said. (his job was that important to the war effort.)

Well, he did have the highest security level that existed on the Depot. He could go where he needed and see anything. There were a couple of men who had a lower security level who were where they should not be, looking at something they should not (a "black box"). They went to prison for doing this. (It was a serious time.)

I think it was during that time that someone working with Dad made a butcher's knife out of a band saw blade. It took months of work to make a sharp blade for the knife. It remained very sharp for a very long time!

In fact, more than a decade later, Mom accidentally laid the sharp blade down on the electrical cord to a skillet that had been plugged in. Sparks flew as the blade cut into the cord. Now that is a very sharp blade even after all the wear and tear it had taken. This includes slicing hams going all the way down to the bone many, many times!

Because of what my Dad did, I got to learn of secret things long after the fact. As the Allied Forces began moving through the heartland of Germany, things began to change at the Depot. Earlier, there were a lot of shipments going to Europe including Russia. But the amounts of these things began to diminish. At the same time, more and more shipments were going to the Pacific area. This was in preparation for the invasion of Japan. (One of my cousins

was to be part of that invasion force.) Fortunately for all, the invasion was not necessary.

So, the Depot was still a very busy place shipping things overseas until Japan surrendered. With this, they could relax some. They even had a party to celebrate the end of the war.

Oh, my aching head!

The people brought a lot of beer, much of it home brewed. After working so hard for so long, every let themselves go. They did not always pay attention to what they were doing. This include giving some beer to someone who should not have had any: me! I don't know what Etta and Webb did that night, but I got drunk. I would go around to everyone begging for a sip. As a result, I got a big bunch of sips... Actually, I don't remember how I felt that next day, but this heading might not be very far off.

Problems at the Army Depot and afterward

As the United States began the transition from war to peace, tensions began to rise there. Who would keep their job, and who would be laid off? So, relationships between workers began to go sour. Each person was doing whatever he could think of to keep his own job. It was more than Dad could take so he quit.

He began working for himself which was not easy because he had a family to take care of. This was also around the time of Tom's birth (before or after April 14, 1946). He would continue to work for himself until the fall of 1956. At that point he was hired to work for a man who was building houses north of Edwardsville.

What happened in this decade (1946-1956) was because of Dad's experience when he was a child. Because he hated

the constant moving and the changing of schools, he said that he was not going to move his family like his dad had done. So with the good and the bad, we remained in the same house during my growing up years. Mom and Dad lived there for probably 40 or more year before they bought the house next door, fixed it up to their liking, and moved in.

Tom arrived on my grandparent's 40th anniversary. Mom was in the hospital (the first child she had in one) so we were not going anywhere until Mom could travel. Besides finances were probably low with the extra costs.

There were a couple of things this year that I learned from the pictures I got after Mom died. The first one was a suit given to me by my great uncle, Adam. (I was named after him and a great uncle on my Mom's side of the family. He was Grandma Lewis' brother.) The second was taken of Tom and me a couple of months after his birth.



It may have been this summer (1946) that Mom took us to the local library during the summer to listen to someone read from a book. This became a regular ritual every summer until after I was in first grade. Sometime during this time, I got a library card of mine own. Mostly I got books with lots of pictures. But then again, the library had a several volume, Wizard of Oz. I brought one or more of them home with me. It seemed to have more words and less pictures, so I did not understand very much...

One of the things that my parents did every evening was to read their Bibles. Dad would sit in one chair reading his Bible, and she would sit in a chair close to him doing the same thing. I have often wondered why they did not read aloud to us as did the woman at the library. (It would have been good for their children.)

While we did not get to hear them read, there was some good that could come from this (and probably did). Right before us was an example of reading the Bible on a regular basis. How many of us children paid any attention? I really do not know. I know that I finally got started reading the Bible on a regular basis in the early 1980's. As a result I have read it through more than 40 times. I still find lessons that I don't remember being there any of the other times I had read it.

On the other hand, we did not have a good example next door to the east of us. The first one I remember was reported to swear like a sailor. (I'm glad I did not hear any of this let alone remember it.) Then again, they did not always have an easy life either. The second one had an abusive alcoholic husband.

A daughter in the first family came down with rheumatic fever which affects the heart. Things were touch and go for a while, but I think she recovered before they moved. Mom helped out with her care which was a good example of helping those in need regardless of who they are.

When that family left and the second couple moved in, the situation got worse. On a regular basis, the husband would get drunk during the first part of the weekend. She would get tired of being beat up by Saturday evening. So, she called the police who would take him to the jail. But by Sunday morning, she would miss him and go crying to the police station crying to have them let him out. They moved out sometime in the early 1950's. Whether anyone else moved in and then later out, we finally had a godly family move in during the mid '50's.

The next several of stories cover the time of 1946-1949 perhaps.

Mom's poor nose!

No, my nose was not hurting from anything, but I can not say the same for Mom! We were upstairs and heading downstairs. At my young age, I had my own way of going down the steps. Most children turn around and go down the steps one at a time backwards. Instead, I would sit on a step facing down the steps, place my feet on the next step down, go down to that step, and repeat this until I got to the bottom. For some reason, Mom decided to carry me down the steps piggy back. To do this, she took me into the bathroom and put me on the toilet seat. Then she got in front me and tried to get me to climb on her back. This I did partially, but when she started to rise up, I started to lean backwards. She began to lean farther forward as I leaned farther backward. As a result she lost her balance and fell forward. Unfortunately, she had left the bathroom door open. Yes, it stopped her fall as her nose met the door. Then she decided to go down the steps another way. She wound up going to the doctor. Diagnosis: a broken nose... She had some bruising around her nose for a couple of weeks.

Consistent "home" floods

Our property had one bad problem from the beginning: our land was lower than what was on both sides of us by several inches. So every time we had a heavy rain, our house was sitting in a pond so to speak. At the time, our basement consisted of one room where the laundry was done. After quitting at the Army Depot, Dad decided to dig out under all of the rooms of the house to get the amount of ground needed to bring the level of our ground to that on both sides. This was hard work for both Dad and mom, and I do mean hard work. (Dad had to use a pick to break up the hard clay. At my young age I pretended to help with the digging. (Etta and Webb was doing the same thing.) The ground was solid clay, and I never did dig enough for anyone to notice (maybe a quarter teaspoon at a time). The dirt was moved through a window on the north side of the

house at 417 E. Schwarz Street. There it was moved to its final designation using a wheelbarrow.

Gradually, the level of our lawn came closer to that of the property on both sides of us. Even the garden area was as well. Finally, the top of our ground was level with that of the other properties. Now when it rained, no one got flooded.

I don't remember how long this took, possibly years? It may well seem this long before it was completed. There was still an area of the basement that needed to be dug out when our ground had become level with the others. So, Dad decided to raise the lawn in the front of the house.

There was a sidewalk that ran across the front of the property and another that ran from the house to the other sidewalk. So the front lawn was divided into three parts. Dad left the part between the sidewalk and the street alone. It was the lawn between the sidewalk and the house that got an increase in height and that in two parts.

Mom and Dad both worked hard at this. Dad had another project as he needed to have food to feed the family. One year or perhaps more, Dad rented or got permission to use the back part of church property behind us for a very large garden. Still all of the clay had to be turned into fertile soil in the garden on our property. It took some time to do this: lots of fallen leaves and manure. I remember seeing Dad handling manure in the garden area of 417 at least one time and him annually digging the leaves into the soil during the fall. Gradually, the quality improved so much that we had a bumper crop of okra the summer after a Black family moved next door and we got the seeds from them. We almost had okra coming out of our ears! And even later, the soil had the consistency of black loam! In fact, Dad had the Agricultural Extension Service test the soil. Results: excellent in all categories!

When all of the dirt was removed, there were four rooms that we could use. One of them was the wash room which was expanded in the digging. Another had the furnace which was original coal, so we had a coal bin in it. There was a conveyor belt that took the coal from the bin to the furnace. A third room did not have a specific purpose. The fourth room was used to hold the jars of canned goods along one wall of the room.

All of the rooms had a wall, but I do not remember if these were made of concrete block. Probably they were.

I'm positive that the wall holding the canned goods was made of these blocks. In fact, shelves were made on the top of the blocks for the jars. One of the reason for this is that basements are always cooler than the air above the ground. So, canned food will last longer.

For a while we had a chicken house and yard. So, we had a source of meat (once in a while) and eggs. The chicken manure certainly made the clay in that area of our property much more fertile. It also made some of the first vegetables rather hot, like onions and radishes... After the chickens were gone, we went into raising rabbits. This produced more meat for the family. I don't remember if Dad used the rabbit droppings for the garden, it is likely that he did.

The water tower

In the late 40's, Dad got the opportunity to bid on re-roofing the water tower on north Main Street at the fire station. When he started to place the bid, he was told that the mayor expected a kick-back from the person who got the bid. So, Dad added a percentage to his bid. He got the bid.

He got enough money from this to buy a used panel truck for his carpenter and contracting business. He had his name and phone number painted on both sides of it. He had one of the lowest phone number in the city: it was #10. This was

way before the days of dial phones which Edwardsville did not get until the spring of 1961. (More about the phone system later.) So, all through school, I had the smallest phone number of any other student!

When we moved into 417 E. Schwarz, we got a two party phone line. We shared this line with a family two houses west of us. Their number was 10-R and ours was 10-W. Then they moved, and we got a call from the phone company... They told us that we could now have a private line if we wanted it. Since Dad was now working for himself, he jumped at the chance. The phone company was happy because they were making more money. Dad was happy because our phone was available for his customers all of the time. They would not get a busy signal unless we were talking with someone.

Old Cars

During my early years, Grandpa Lewis had some old cars. I think that at least one of them needed to be cranked by hand (no starter for that one!). With my vivid imagination, I would sit in the driver's seat pretending that I was driving very fast, going I don't know where. Somehow I thought that the faster that I turned the wheel back and forth the faster I was going. Anyway there were two controls on the steering wheel (spark and choke) that had to be adjusted so that the spark plugs got electricity at the right time and the engine got the right quantity of an air/fuel mixture. Then after the car started, these controls had to be re-adjusted. Oh how much easier it is today when we only have to put the key into the ignition and turn the key...

The veterinarian upstairs

Because of the financial situation in the early years, he rented the second floor of 417 and the garage to a new Vet. He also remodeled the garage as an office. Entrance to the office was cut into the right side of the sliding doors. The

cages for the animals was on the left side. He even painted the name of the vet's business on the front of the garage.

The Vet had a fiancé and I think they married after he left our house. It's just that I do not remember ever having met her.

He was Jewish, so we learned some things about Jewish beliefs. They were interesting to say the least.

In the spring, they have Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread which last a week. Before these days, all leavening has to be removed from the home. Only unleavened bread may be eaten.

Not knowing our beliefs, he offered my Mom some unleavened bread. He thought that we had never had any. Well, she tried it and did not see anything different from what our churches use in their communion services. There is not leavening used to made the bread for our communion. Since the Jews used unleavened bread during their Passover, we also use it for communion which first occurred during the Passover supper just prior to Jesus' crucifixion.

One fall, he became quite concerned with his financial situation. The Jewish New Years Day (Rosh Hashanah) was approaching, and he owed someone some money. He was doing everything he could to get the money to pay off this debt before this day arrived.

You see this was a special year that was coming soon: the year of release. At sundown when the Jewish New Year began, any money one Jew owes to another has to be forgiven: the debt no longer exists. Tradition makes it shameful to owe anyone anything just before the Jewish New Year marking the beginning of a year of release. (These happen every seven years.)

After a couple of years, he moved somewhere else. So, we again had all of the house. The garage was reorganized

with its left side for the truck and the right side for our car (a 1949 Chevy). Its just that I do not remember when we first got this car. Seem like we traveled around in the truck all of the time for a while.

The backyard swing

We had a soft maple tree in the backyard, and under it Dad built a swing with two seats that were hung down using rope. The top of the swing must have been at least 8 feet high. This allowed us to swing quite high. I often swung high enough to see the cross bar holding the ropes directly in front of me.

Using a swing this way seems a little strange since I have always been afraid of heights. Yet as long as I was holding on to the rope, I was fine. Letting go of the rope was another matter through...

One summer afternoon, a neighbor boy was taunting me for some reason while I was swinging. I did not like it, but I took it for a while. But he finally made me so mad that I let go of the swing as I reached the highest point of my swing. I landed on my feet a short distance from where he stood. This was a shock to him not having expected me to do this. What he thought I might do after I landed on the ground I don't know. He left rather quickly, and I don't remember having any more problems from him again.

Sleeping outside in the summer

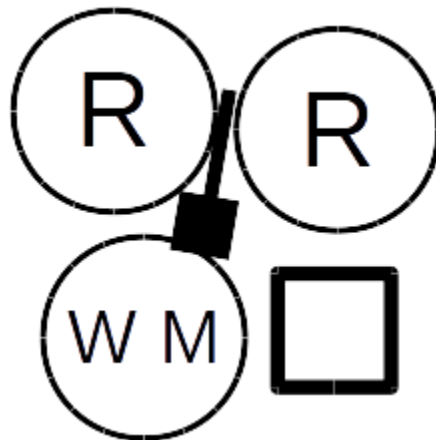
This is an example of something my parents did for us that I did not understand at the time. Summers in Edwardsville can be quite hot, even at night. They had us sleep outside when the weather was very hot. I thought that this was a game we were playing, or something like that. (It was something special that we were doing.) Air conditioning was not something that people had in their homes, not people in our financial bracket and probably not for most

people. So this is how we survived the hottest parts of the summer.

We had some fans that were put in the window, but temperatures can be hot enough that they do not help any. Most of them did not move enough air...

As I would learn 20 years later, many southern homes have attic fans that move a lot of air. This did not help that much when the temperature was very hot, but it did when it was just a few degrees cooler.

Laundry



The original laundry room was under the kitchen. (The entrance to it was off the back porch before the it was closed in. It was during the digging of the basement that an inside entrance to the basement was built.) Mom used a wash board to wash the clothes. Later when finances improved, we got a wash machine with a wringer. There were two #3 wash tubs that held the rinse water with some bluing. There was also a small stand. The wringer could be rotated around in a circle and then be fastened in a needed position. The rollers could be moved either forward or backwards as well. (This way we could run clothes through the wringer in either direction. It was sometimes necessary to do so.)

We kept the wash board for sometime after getting the washing machine. I remember using it to wash a sweatshirt during my high school years.

Some items had to be pre-soaked, and a smaller wash pan was used for this. When it was time to put them into the washing machine, the pan was placed on the stand. These clothes were put through the wringer and the excess water ran back into the small wash pan.

The rest of the clothes were put directly into the washing machine. After they had been washed for a while, the wringer was used to move the clothes to the first rinse while removing most of the soapy water from them. This water ran back into the washing machine. Then more clothes were placed into the washer. If necessary, more soap was added. Then clothes in the first rinse was moved up and down to remove more of the soap from the clothes. Then the wringer was used to move the clothes to the second rinse. As this occurred, the wringer removed most of the water from the clothes which ran back into the first rinse water. Then the clothes were moved up and down in the second rinse water to remove more of the soap. The empty clothes basket was placed on the stand, and the clothes were put through the wringer and into it with the water falling back into the second rinse water.

The next step was to hang the clothes outside on the clothes lines. The only problem to doing this was air pollution although we did not know what that was at the time. We only knew that the clothes would have a dark line where the clothes contacted the line if the line was not cleaned first. So, we took a damp rag outside with the first load of clothes. With the rag, we wiped the lines. Then we would use the clothes pins to hold the clothes to the line.

Since the children consisted of three boys and only one girl, Mom was determined that all four of us were going to

do our share of the house work including the laundry. This proved to be a help for me because I did not have to depend upon someone else for anything. Later when I married, I was able to teach Susan some things that she had not learned at home. I also was able to help her in any of these areas when I was needed. This was even more so when she got to the place that she could no longer do for herself let alone for our family.

Anyway, Dad's carpenter overalls were the last thing to be washed. They were soaked for quite some time to get out as much dirt and grease as possible.

When I was older, I was pairing the socks as I hung them. That is when I noticed that I had two socks that did not have a mate. For some reason, I looked down at my shoes. There was the two sock mates to the ones in the clothes basket! Clearly, how clothes are cleaned have come a very long way.

The pear tree next door

I'm not sure when or how we were first given permission to pick pears from this tree. Possibly it was because the family who owned it could not use all of the pears it produced. Each fall we would can pears from it. They certainly were good when eaten in the winter and on into the spring and summer. Other fruit were also canned throughout the summer. When we could get them, we would also freeze peaches. I think we froze vegetables as well. Vegetables were also canned. This included cut up tomatoes, green beans, and tomato juice. We grew our own dill and used this to make dill pickles. Clearly we also grew our own pickles because I remember Mom making a variety of pickles. But Dad's mother made the absolute best dill pickles!

Underneath the pear tree was a shack that the owner's children played in. I played there as well. One time I jumped

off its roof and hit something that made me lose my breath. That was a very frightening experience! But I somehow began breathing again.

Another time Etta was baby sitting the owner's children. While we were in the shack, the son suggested that we all take off our clothes. The people in the shack playing were at least one girl and some boys. There may have been more than one girl. When this was discovered, Etta got into a bunch of trouble. Sometimes I wonder what their son was thinking when he suggested this.

The heart attack

Later, the father was in his 40's when this happened. It turns out that the diet people were eating was responsible for this becoming a very common occurrence. The 40's became known as the hurricane years for men. He was in the hospital for months. Dad did what he could to help by providing him with a pair of pajamas. Most likely there were more things that he did, but I never learned what.

At some point, this family needed their roof repaired which Dad did. What a mess! He had to remove everything down to and including the tar paper. Then he put on new tar paper and then the shingles.

Weeds

While Dad took care of the garden, we were responsible for pulling weeds. Most of the time this involved being on our knees for long periods of time. While it would have been nice if Dad had taken the time to teach us the fine points of gardening, I think I had been allowed to plant some kind of flower (jack-in-the-box). I really needed to be more involved in doing each part of gardening. As a result, I really do not have a green thumb.

Well this was true during my married life. The garden I had in Roanoke AL from 1992 through 2007 were not all that

good which included five years after Susan's death. After that I lived in an apartment without access to a garden plot. Things would only improve in 2015 and later.

Glasses

Webb was having vision problems and was taken to an ophthalmologist on a regular basis. One of these visits was when I was 3 years old. I was playing with some toys when he came into the waiting room. He noticed how I was looking at the toy and said that I too needed glasses. So, I got them. I would also have regular appointments to see the doctor until after the winter of '52-53. After this I did not wear glasses again until around 1970.

The one thing I really hated were the eye drops he used to dialate my pupils. It was usually in the summer when the sun was the brightest. Even though I got a pair of sunglasses, they did not really help all that much. Perhaps my eyes were extra sensitive. It was sheer agony being outside in the sunshine!

My imagination

Because of the situation of my family, we did not have a lot of things because there was not enough money. We made a few trips to see Dad's parents every year. We even may have a trip to Columbus to see my other grandfather. (We made a few trips by the time I graduated from high schools.) We did have a radio to which we listened. (TV's were not something everyone had in those days. Besides my parents never owned a TV in their lives.)

So, I began developing my imagination to replace the stimulation that was not available to me otherwise. My toys were hand made and included several 18 wheelers. They were rather small being less than an inch tall. But it did not

matter. I would still imagine driving them around as I moved them with my hand.

I had a much bigger farm truck (also hand made). It was about a foot wide, 18" long, and 5-6" high. The bed of the truck would hold quite a bit of dirt or what every I might want to put in it. I played with this quite a bit as well.

I would also play cowboys and Indians with some neighborhood children. We would run around a lot pretending to be riding horses. There were also gun fights. Sometimes we would play other things including jumping rope. There was a game requiring the drawing on the sidewalk. (I can see it but not really describe it.)

At some point I got a gun and holster set (2 guns). I even practiced drawing my guns really quick. (I just don't know how fast I was though.) So, I really thought I was something special with this fancy set. I might have even got some chaps as well...

The development of the imagination is very important for the child's development. Most young children have it, but lose it because of the influence of others especially parents. But I did not. I retained my imagination, and if anything it became more vivid as time went on.

There was a companion to my imagination: curiosity. I have never lost this either. Between the two, I have accomplished things that others fail to do. They have led me in directions others think are wrong. (That is their problem.) I am searching for the truth which is not necessarily the same thing as what traditions says the truth is.

I have learned that how strong a memory is depend upon upon the strength of the emotions that are associated with the memory. PTSD, which people in battle are likely to suffer for quite some time is an excellent example. The emotions in this case are extremely high, and such memories last for a very, very long time.

My memory about the puppy when I was 2 years old was also emotionally charged. Other memories have not been as emotionally charged though. Yet, there were enough emotions associated with them for me to remember them for a long time.

Apparently, I am a rather emotional person. As I began to write this book, I could only outline my life into time sections (which seem to make sense to me). But as I began to write about a particular part of my life, other memories of that period would suddenly appear. Each of these things seem real as if I am reliving them.

I understand what happened. When I concentrated upon a particular time of my life, my brain went to the part of my brain which stored these memories which included paths through many neurons. But these same neurons are part other paths. It is when my brain started following these other paths that I became aware of the events contained in these other paths. (It is nice to have studied how the brain works: I can understand what is going on as I write.)

Being curious, I wonder if others have had similar experiences too. Some have said that they have not. But have they taken the time to write as I have? Or did they develop their imagination and curiosity as much as I have?

I have recently (2016) discovered an answer to this, and the answer is a definitely yes! One of the residents living in the same apartment building as me had some experiences and memories of experiences of previous generations. Her daughters wanted her to write these things down before these get permanently lost. Well, she has started, but her daughters don't know it yet.

In describing her experiences writing to me, she said the same things that I had experienced. As she wrote down one thing, other memories associate with it suddenly reveal

themselves. This makes the writing disorganized going from one thought to another.

Strangely, I did have bad influences upon my attitude. As a result there has been a warfare between these influences, my imagination, and my curiosity. These began in my early years and have lasted up to the present that I have to fight.

For example, when we visited Dad's parents, one of our cousins, Bradley, would often come over to be with us. (He was close to Etta and Webb's age.) The three of them would often go off to play by themselves leaving me to myself. Meanwhile, the parents were off to themselves as well catching up on the things that had happened in their lives. What I learned: I did not matter. Other events that began in my early school years would continue reinforcing this thought.

But it really does not matter that much any more. I'm the one who can enjoy the blessings of God as I recount all these memories. I know what it is like to have God enfold me in His arms, to feel His presence so very near me. What God thinks of me means so very much more than what any person may.

Columbus School

The schools in Edwardsville were in three locations. LeClare had grades kindergarten through fifth. Columbus was really a complex of three buildings. The high school for the entire school district was on the west side of town.

Columbus school was in the middle of the complex. West of it was the playground and the kindergarten (2 classrooms). East of it was the Junior high building. Columbus was a two or three story building which housed the elementary classes (first through third.. The junior high seems to be three story and a basement. The fourth through sixth classes were on the first floor, and the rest of the building was for the junior high students.

Kindergarten

I began in September 1947 when I was five years old. (A child had to be 5 by the beginning of December to begin kindergarten. I missed the cut off date by 15 days. So, I was one of the older students in the class.)

Etta and Webb were in 3rd and 2nd grade respectively when I began going to kindergarten. I remember the room it was in and that it was half a day but that is about it. Oh, I had to lay on a mat and take a nap each morning.

At supper, my parents had us talk about what happened in school each day. The pattern was for Etta to speak first, Webb second, and I came third. I'm wondering if the patterned continued four years later when Tom began first grade. Was he always the fourth to speak?

Always having others coming first can play havoc with what a person thinks of himself. Mom said that many times I would begin in the middle of what I wanted to say.

Then again, I had some problems speaking clearly and had a teacher work with me for the first three years of school. Possibly a combination of both of these had an effect on me. Now I wonder why I had a speech problem. My hearing was very acute as far as I know. Did I not hear a lot of words so that I would know how to pronounce them? (It is a possibility...)

(Ah, my memories are coming back to me again!) We did finger painting among other things, but none of the academics that are taught today. Also for a long time I had a cast of one of my hands that was made that year. (I can still see the blue cast, probably clay, and the seemingly deep impressions of my hand and fingers. I may have also used some crayons then too. (This is a little hazy since I used them during several elementary years as well.

First Grade 1948-1949

I remember very little about first grade. Mom has told me that my teacher did such a poor job that my second grade teacher had to basically teach us both first and second grade material. What I do remember was the readers we had: Dick and Jane. I especially remember all the repetitions of words. This was definitely different from the books I had checked out of the public library.

One of the things that caught my attention was the irony that here I was learning how to read more than a year after I had my own library card! Well, I could use the additional instructions so that I could read better.

The fall or winter of 1948, I had a bad case of tonsillitis. So to the hospital (20 miles away) I went to correct the problem. At the time Edwardsville had an inter-urban "train" that we took to Granite City for the operation.

When we got there I was put to bed. Then I waited, and waited, and ... Why was I in bed all day? But they finally

came to get me. I was put on the operating table, and they prepared me for surgery. My final instructions was they was going to put a mask over my nose and mouth, and I was suppose to breathe deeply.

I still remember the mask that they used to give me the ether. (What a smell!) The next thing I remember was I had a very sore throat. Then back to my room I was wheeled.

Yes, I got my dish of ice cream as that was a tradition. I really did not like swallowing it though. (It hurt!) After a short while, I was dressed, and then we headed back home on the inter-urban after dark.

What I was told later was that my tonsils and adenoids were rotten and came out in pieces. Later doctors examining my throat noticed that some of these had grown back some. Or, maybe they did not really completely get all of these lymph nodes.

Second Grade 1949-1950

I continued the speech therapy for another year. Some sounds were hard to pronounce as I should especially diphthongs. But apparently I was making some progress.

The event of importance in second grade came on my eighth birthday. The Boy Scouts had just lowered the entrance age from 9 to 8. So I became one at a Cub Scout Pack meeting on December 16, 1949. (Yes, the pack meeting was held on my birthday that year.)

This makes me one of the youngest ever to become a Cub. I continued active in scouts until I went to college. Here is a picture of me in my uniform taken sometime later during my first year as a Cub. I noticed the uniform has a wolf insignia and a silver arrow below it, it had to be in 1950, several months into the year.



Below is another picture taken late 1949 to early 1950.



Obviously, I was growing some from these pictures compared to when I got my first suit about 3 years earlier.

Third Grade 1950-1951

I have almost no memories specifically of third grade, not even of the teacher. However, the following events and photos probably occurred prior to fourth grade so they are included here.

The apple

I took an apple to school for morning recess one day. Whether I did this all of the time or not, I do not know (probably did). However, on this day I failed to eat my apple at recess. So, instead of coming home for lunch as usual, I stayed and had it for my lunch. Other students brought their lunch, and there was a room for them to eat with a teacher to monitor their behavior. After finishing my "lunch" I raised my hand, and was given permission to go outside just as the other students bringing their lunch did.

Why didn't I go home with the apple? I do not know. Possibly some twisted logic that I was given the apple to eat at school, and I should not come home until I did.

Surprising to me now is the fact that Mom did not even get worried when I did not come home for lunch. As far as she was concerned, I was doing something at school, and she would find out when I got home from school in the afternoon.

The accident

Sometime later, I was walking home for lunch when my father drove up in his truck to offered me a ride. I had about half a block on South Fillmore and slightly less than this on East Schwarz to walk. I got in, but I could not close the door securely. As a result, my door opened as my father made the left turn onto Schwarz. (Since Fillmore did not have to stop, he only had to slow down to make the turn.) I was thrown out and suffered a concussion. Dad became really worried, and Mom was concerned as well. I could have been run over by the right rear tire. Anyway, they insisted that I stay home that afternoon. No harm seemed to come from this.

The passenger side door was always hard to close which really made it a hazard as this incident proves. Besides this was a decade before seat belts. It was one of these things that was not taken seriously.

From the humorous side of things comes this question: Did I have some sense knocked into me or knocked out of me?

A girl visits me

At some point during this time, I had a female visitor. I was upstairs at the time changing out of my school clothes into play ones. While she waited for me to come back downstairs, she played Mom's piano. Instead of coming down, I listened to her playing through the register system. I seem to remember that she played very well. I on the other hand was too shy. This is something that would haunt me until Susan changed me. But for me to know what I should

be doing around a lady even now is something that seems to elude me at times. I am as likely to do the wrong thing as the right thing. Well, I do make sure I "behave" myself.

My Tricycle

I do not remember what Christmas ('46 - '48 range) that I received my tricycle, but I do remember really enjoying riding it. I used my imagination pretending I was going places on it. I don't know, I might have thought I was in a racer and racing someone. The picture does not have a date on it (just my name), but I am fairly certain that my missing front teeth will date the photo just as well. The coat I am wearing is called a P coat. (It was the name of a navy coat.



Dental Visit!

I also have a very bad memory I would prefer to forget: a dental visit. I had two or three cavities to be filled. Two problems: the dentist used a slow speed drill (high speed drills did not exist yet) and he did not believe in using Novocaine (some dentists were just beginning to use it). After enduring the pain of the drilling, I became so disoriented that I could not find my way out of the room! So, if anyone wants to complain about not wanting to go to a dentist today, I really have very little sympathy for them. Today has so much better dental care compared to then! Needless to say, but I very seldom went to a dentist until I entered service in 1965. The 13 cavities that I had by that time proves it. The fact that I have not had a new cavity since then proves that my belief about visiting a dentist changed with time.

I doubt seriously if my parents knew how to brush teeth properly, or perhaps methods have changed radically since I grew up. Until I entered service, I think I was brushing only the tops and outside of my teeth. Gee, guess where the cavities were... Or, did the dentist not talk with my parents as to how I should be taken care of my teeth? Also, it was my senior year in high school before I heard about flossing teeth. It might have been in the 1970's before I learned how to floss when I went with Susan to a dental hygienist for lessons on this topic. (She sort of forgot what she was taught before she got home.) And it would not be until 2009 that I learned that the flossing should be done at night.

Academically, I was doing fairly well this year as far as I remember. This was the year that I finished speech therapy that I began in first grade. I finally learned how to pronounce diphthongs even though spelling this term is not so easy.

One of the things we had done during these three years was throw a bean bag at a wheel which contains various combinations of vowels and consonants. Wherever the bag

landed, I was suppose to pronounce what was there. Sometimes it was easy; some times it was hard.

Piano lessons

Mom was determined that Etta needed to learn how to play the piano. It seems that she had access to one when she was growing up. But we did not have one. So, we got one.

First thing that was needed for the piano? It was way out of tune! I remember watching with awe as the man tuned it. He would play a note or so, and then he used a special socket wrench to adjust the tension on the strings. Seemed like forever before he was satisfied. He did a wonderful job!

So, Etta began taking lessons and did rather well. She was even in a recital in St. Louis. How well did she do? I do not remember. However, I do remember that it took a couple of extra hours getting home from the recital because we got lost in the downtown area.

But she did not exactly take to her lessons, seemingly not putting in her best effort. First Webb was enlisted in the project, and he took a few lessons. This was suppose to encourage Etta to do better. But this was obviously not going to work out: his practicing was far worse than hers! Well, I was the next oldest and so next in the line of people taking piano lessons. So, I began my lessons which may have lasted as long as a year. I think it happened during this year of my life. What I am sure of is that the "Tennessee Waltz" sung by Patty Page came out during this year. For one of my lessons, I was given the sheet music to learn to play.

I learned to play well enough that I am well acquainted with the keys and what octave they are in. I can sort of play two keys at the same time in my right hand but not my left. Playing with both hands is something that still eludes me. I can also sight read music both on the piano or vocally.

My lessons were important for my future even if Mom did not see it at the time and only wanted someone to make Etta jealous enough to continue to put more effort into practice. It was important to Etta as well. In sixth grade, I joined the chorus, and I continued in chorus through eighth grade. In high school, I was in Freshman Boy's Chorus and then the A Capella Choir beginning my sophomore year. Etta was in A Capella beginning with her junior year. She was probably in the Girl's Chorus her first two years of high school. (I do not know for sure.)

Playing the piano is what led both of us into vocal music that we would not have done otherwise. Since we grew up, Etta has returned to playing the piano. I on the other hand have only played at it once in a while. (Vol 2 of this series has an episode involving a piano in Etta's home in 1975.)

Fourth Grade 1951-1952

My teacher this year was the motherly (or grandmotherly?) type. Every afternoon, she would read from a story about a jungle boy in South America. I do not remember how many volumes there were, but there were quite a few. Within a couple of years, I went to see a movie about him. The only real reason for going was because she had read this story which made me curious about the movie. His name? The only thing I remember was it started with a B.

The teacher made learning very interesting, and I took to learning as a result as did the rest of the class. In arithmetic, we completed the entire text book before the end of the year. The book ended with multiplying 3 digits by 2 digits, but we continued on. By the end of the year we were multiplying 3 digit by 3 digit. As a result, we (I) got the idea that we could even learn things that was suppose to beyond our abilities!

The radio station

I had been a cub scout for almost 2 years when I began 4th grade. And as I think I may have done in the previous year, I wore my cub scout uniform to school at times. (I don't remember now whether it was for a den meeting or pack meeting.) And as I had been taught, for the pledge of allegiance I used the cub scout salute (two finger). She did not like me doing that. All that she seemed to know is placing your hand over your heart and insisted on doing that way. Well, boss is boss (or is it "I'm right and you are wrong") so to speak, so I did as she said even though I did not like that either.

This fall I went with the cub scouts to KMOX radio in St. Louis. A couple of boys got on the radio, but the rest of us just got a tour of the station. A child was very ill (perhaps cancer) in the hospital, and this radio program was done for him. Our den had been chosen to be a part of this program.

I think about this time I had gotten a crystal radio kit that someone in the family helped me put together. Once in a while, I could listen to KMOX. Once I accidentally received another station, but I did not know why at the time.

During the tour, the man mentioned that they had the equipment for broadcasting TV at the station, but they were not quite ready to do this yet. I don't remember when KMOX-TV went on the air, but it was most likely before the end of this school year.

My vivid imagination

This is another time that my teacher "fussed" at me. She had given us an assignment to write a short story of a few lines. Mine went something like this: "We took a rocket ship to Pluto where we bought groceries. Then on the way home we stopped at the moon to buy something that we had forgotten." Remember that this was written seven years

before Sputnik went into orbit. It was "far out", but perhaps not to my imagination it wasn't.

This may explain what my imagination did when the sleeping arrangements had to be changed the following year.

It must be remembered that this was the time of Buck Rogers and others traveling through space sometime in the future (science fiction). Some of the series shown with movies had this theme. So, I wrote a story about science fiction...

Walking Terry to school

I'm not sure how this happened, but one of the girls in my class walked home in the same direction as I did. (Nor am I sure of when this ritual began.) For whatever reason, I began walking her home in the afternoon and leaving home soon enough to walk to school with her in the morning. So began the friendship with Terry Hopkins. These were nice times, and I guess in many ways she was the sister that paid attention to me that I had not gotten from my family. This continued until perhaps 7th or 8th grade when her family moved.

Tom started walk with me. (He began kindergarten that year.) Terry had a younger sister, and perhaps at some point the four of us walked to school together. There was at least one time that I could not walk to school, so Tom went without me. When he got to the Hopkins' home, he asked if Terry was ready to go to school. (He did not ask for the younger sister.) Another story I heard was that either Etta or Webb walked Tom to school one day. He had an arms around two girls (one on each side) taking up the entire sidewalk. I don't know if Tom remembers this. I may have to check with Etta or Webb to see if they remember it since I do not know which of the two followed the younger children.

Swimming

For years we had been going to a creek an hour's drive or so north of home where we would camp for the weekend and fish. Dad knew the owner of the property where we camped. Then one summer, the family was wading and swimming together before heading back home Sunday afternoon. I was wading and nothing more because I was afraid of the water. But this time, as I waded, I got in over my head literally. I could have drown! The only sensation was that of serene peace. Then someone pulled me out of the water and back to reality.

So, Mom and Dad decided that I needed to learn how to swim. We went to a swimming pool (Granite City). This had a wading pool that was up to 3 feet deep. While in it, I used my imagination to swim underwater like a frog. I think I had seen a movie with people swimming underwater. (The South American jungle boy from the stories of fourth grade perhaps?)

Later Mom called me to the main pool to begin the swimming lesson. Before she could do this, I went underwater again and swam on my own. Did she actually teach me anything about swimming that day? I don't remember that she did.

In the following years, I learned how to swim. For the most part I continued to swim a lot under water. Somehow I also learned how to swim on top of the water as well. I really was not very good at it though.

I took a junior lifesaver course from the Red Cross some time later. This required that I learn several new types of strokes needed when rescuing someone who is drowning. So, I began to swim fairly well.

Also included was several different different body carries for bringing the victim to where they could be gotten out of the water. One was to approach from the back, take a hold

of the hair, and swim with the person back to the edge of the water. Another was place my arm across the victims chest and swim with them. There was also the tired swimmer's rescue. In this, I approached the victim from the front having them to place their arm on my shoulders and lay back in the water. I would use the breast stroke to swim the two of us to where we needed to go.

For my final test, my victim was a teenage girl. I was suppose to rescue her using the cross body method. I really did not want to place my arm across her body because of her anatomy... So, I grabbed her hair instead. She screamed! I was reminded by my sister (the instructor teaching the class) that I was using the wrong method. Well, somehow I managed to get my arm across her body without contacting either of her breasts. (What a relief!) Anyway, I passed the course and received my certificate.

After this, I taught basic swimming while in high school the summers of 57 and 58 under the guide of someone having a water safety instructor certificate. (More about this during my high school years.)

Fifth Grade 1952-1953

How much can change from June to September? This year, it turns out that the answer was just about everything! I ended one school year with a grandmotherly teacher and began the next with a very strict disciplinarian. I ended feeling trusted and began with the teacher not trusting anyone.

When we entered the room, we saw our desks pointed toward the blackboard in the front of the room. The teacher's desk was in the back left corner. This seemed strange to me and possibly to others as well. Then she laid down the law and explained why the room was arranged this way. While she was at her desk, she could see our

backs. So, if she saw anything other than the backs of our heads, we must be doing something wrong. To me, she did not trust us at all. She was the boss, and we had to do what we were told.

Spelling lesson results: worse not better

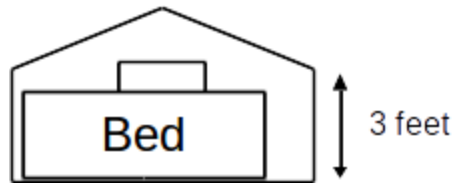
My teacher had a very peculiar method for teaching spelling. If we misspelled a word early in the year, we had to write every misspelled word a certain number of times. As the year progressed, the number of times for each misspelled word increased. As she explained it, misspelling a word is like getting a ticket for speeding: the more you do it, the higher the fine. In other words, writing the misspelled words was a punishment rather than a means of helping us to learn the words. This is one way to make even an average person's spelling ability worse. I know it did mine.

So, I wonder why the emphasis was upon punishment. Why not find a way to teach a child how to spell words and remember them for later use? Suggestion: show the child ways that the words can be used in their lives.

At home

By this time, Etta was 14 and needing a room of her own. She had a very small room that was next to the bathroom upstairs. But she really needed more room than what she had. It barely had enough room for a bed let alone anything else.(It became Mom's sewing room later.)

Dad decided to make another room on the second floor of 417 E. Schwarz in what had been part of the attic. He had to tear down a chimney that we no longer were using to make a door for the room. Webb and I got the new room. But we had to go through Etta's door to get to ours.



This is where I slept at the time. The bed was a roll a way bed that was about 18" high. The closets were in the right side wall. The slanted ceiling was close enough that I could easily bumped my head getting up if I was not careful (Webb too). There was a window at the other end of the bed. Mom and Dad had a window fan (perhaps 1 foot diameter blades that was very noisy, but did not move the air very well. So even with the fan running, the room was still very warm.

The sleeping area was created from a gable in the roof. In front of it was an area about 6' x 6' x 7' where I could stand up. That area had a chest of drawers and a mirror on the wall which were on the left when looking toward the bed. The doors to the closets were in the right wall. One was across from the chest of drawers, and the other were across from the bed.

I had seen some sci-fi movies at the cheap movie (7 cents) and Batman serial shorts. With this in my memory, my imagination went wild. Part of the room was tall enough to stand up in, but where the bed was located was maybe 3 feet high. Our closet was rather short too. I began to imagine that the room was my space ship sometimes and my cave at other times (the paint color was gray). Doing this was fun at times. If this happened during this year rather than another year, it may well explain how I got through the school year... I could escape fantasizing about being in "my cave."

For what ever reason, I kept my ability to use my imagination. I'm finding that it has become very useful in

many ways. Or, perhaps I am finding ways to use it in better ways.

What the mind of man can conceive and believe, he can achieve. — Napoleon Hill

In December, I became a boy scout on my birthday. Cub Scouts went from age 8 through 10. When I became 11, I joined a troop. The thing I remember about scouting is that every February (the 8th perhaps) in the evening we were to repeat the scout oath and law.

Who needs glasses?

I was still wearing glasses when I began this grade. The teacher had placed me about halfway from front to back. At that distance I could see her writing on the board well. However, if I looked with my glasses off, this was another matter. The chalk on the board was rather blurry making reading it difficult.

During the winter I went with the boy scouts to Granite City to a YMCA pool perhaps more than once. This time, as I went in the door, I put my glasses among the items that others had also brought with them. I spend much of the hour or so swimming underwater. At times this was along the bottom of the deep end (8-10 feet deep?). When I left, I picked up my glasses from the box where they had been placed...

There was something drastically wrong with the glasses. I was sure that they were not mine. I even insisted this, but Dad told me these were the only glasses that were placed in the box. When I put them on, everything became very blurry! When I took them off, I could see much better.

The next morning when I went to school, I discovered something *very* strange. I don't know if I was wearing my glasses when I went to school, but I had them on when I

looked at the board. Everything was very blurry making it impossible to read what had been written. But when I took them off, I could see clearly. I took my glasses off and left them off for the rest of the day. I had the same experience at home also. I could see much better without them. So, I stopped wearing glasses.

Years later an Optometrist told me that the chlorine in the water had caused my eyes to swell, and this led to the drastic change in the shape of my eye balls and thus my vision. Perhaps swimming that deep had an affect also because of the pressure the water placed upon my eyes. I did not use glasses again until Kevin scratched the inside of my eye lid when he was young. (I probably should have worn them because of the astigmatism that I have.)

Opinions about the teacher

The last day of the year she gave the students an opportunity to say what they thought of the school year. Well she had been bossing us for 9 months, so did she really expect us to tell her how we felt? Terry was fairly quiet spoken. But on the way home that day, she was as angry as I was. I really did not want to go through that experience again. As far as what we did not like about the year, her comment to me on the way home was that she did not like the teacher. Obviously, I did not.

Specifically about spelling: As the year progressed, I began misspelling more words on the spelling lists. So, I wound up using more paper writing each misspelled word many more times. What had been accomplished? I certainly did not learn how to spell words very well. It also had a negative effect on my self-esteem.

But from a different perspective, I had made a wonder friend in Terry. I was talking to a member of the opposite sex which was a beginning place in my growing up.

Sixth Grade 1953-1954

What would school be like this year? Fourth grade was great, but fifth grade was the pits. What about this year?

The first thing I noticed that there were new students in the class and some students I had known earlier were not there. Earlier I mentioned that LeClare had grades 1 - 5. So this year, the ones who passed fifth grade were joined with our class. This required splitting all the sixth graders into two classes.

Three years earlier, Etta had been in the room that I occupied this year. So, she had some advice about this teacher. She was known for being rather stingy with high grades the first of the school year. Her theory seemed to be that high grades early could lead the students to take it easy the rest of the year thinking more of themselves than they should. They would be rewarded for the progress they made during the year. Grades were *M* (master?), *S* (satisfactory), and *U* (unsatisfactory). Plus or minus were used with *S*: S^+ was more than satisfactory, and S^- was borderline failing.

Something about the environment that changed my attitude from the previous spring, and I responded. Learning was a joy once more. Perhaps I was going back to my behavior in fourth grade when I did quite well also.

When Etta had her earlier, she had gotten several S^+ for the first six weeks. I received 2 *M*'s! To receive one of these was almost unheard of, but to receive 2? I had accomplished the neigh impossible!

One of the things we did each day was to have a contest to see who could solve a math problem the quickest. One row at a time went to the blackboard and was given a problem. The quickest of each row would then be given a new problem. The quickest of these had their name written

on the blackboard for the rest of the week. On Friday, the daily winners would compete for who was the fastest of the week. A place in the blackboard had the names of the weekly winners. Then at the end of the sixth week, there was a six week winner. There was also a semester winner.

To win, a person has to know what they are doing and fast doing it. I was not as fast as others. However, one day I had won for my row. The problem for that day for the row winners was rather difficult, and everyone else though much faster failed to solve the problem. So my name was on the board for that day. But come Friday others were faster than I, so I was never a weekly winner.

First experience in a cafeteria

I do not remember when I began taking my lunch to school. I think the reason was there was no longer time to walk home, eat lunch, and walk back. Construction began the previous year for a cafeteria and a bigger, better band room for the junior high. The cafeteria was not ready at the beginning of the school year, so I had some adjustments to make when it did open. It all seemed so strange. I think it cost 35 cents per day.

Earthquake!

We were all sitting quietly in our school desks when we heard a rattling noise at the other end of the school building. Then it kept getting louder and closer. What was it? This was getting scarier as the noise came closer. Finally, it entered the room from my back and to my right traversing the floor to my front and left. For a few seconds there was "a whole lot of shaking going on"! I don't know if there was any real learning going on for the rest of the day or not. Was anything mentioned about it being an earthquake? I really don't remember.

Mom was outside when it happened across from what was then the high school. (West on Schwarz to its end, left

at the traffic light, and up the hill on the left.) She described the earth as moving up and down as well as toward her. She wanted to run, but didn't or couldn't. It was a discussion at supper!

I have been in earthquakes after that, but none seemed quite as strong as that one. The noise of the building being moved around and the windows shaking was very loud.

Sixth Grade chorus

Why did I become part of this? I'm not sure now. Very likely, I was doing the same thing that Etta had done before me. (Follow the leader sort of thing.) Or, did the time I had spent playing the piano have something to do with this? I now thing a little bit of both.

I definitely enjoy it. The only concert was in December. We had worked hard on Silent Night (four part harmony). But, we all had a bad case of stage fright. We all sang, but we forgot our parts. We wound up all singing the melody. Most likely, we were part of a concert with only the one song to sing.

Integration

This might have happened in seventh grade, but I am not sure which. It was 1954 that the US Supreme Court declared segregation unconstitutional. Around the same time, West Schwarz Street was widened from South Main Street all the way to the High School. This area was one of the places where the colored (Negroid) people lived, so some of them lost their properties meaning they had to move.

Then we learned that the house next to us (421) had been sold to a Black family from Detroit. This was a shock to many of our neighbors. Why? I do not know. Behind our property was a Black AME church with a parsonage. Dad had done some work before at this church more than once. A deacon for this church lived three doors east of us.

At the turn of the century (1900) what would become the block where I lived consisted of the church, parsonage, and the deacon's home. There was also a pond. Then as the town grew, more white (Caucasian) people moved into the area filling the block up with houses. But the colored people were already there with no problems. But another colored person moving in was a different matter..

The thing that happened was far different from what might be expect from a family from Detroit. He had retired from there, but he grew up in one of the Carolinas. What he did before he even moved into the house was to take the pastor from the church behind us to visit with all of his new neighbors. He did not want trouble from anyone nor did he want to cause trouble for anyone else.

The family included a older couple and their grandson, Bernard Williams, whom they were raising. He was Tom's age (10). I enjoyed getting acquainted with them and I am fairly certain we played with their grandson some. I know that I had interesting conversations with the grandfather.

If you have heard of "white flight", that is what was happening on our block. People were selling their homes and moving to other parts of the city. One of our good friends living on the opposite side of the block was one of the people to move. I did not understand this either.

We started getting cards and letters from the local real estate people telling us that they had a house in another part of town in case we were interested. I very seldom saw Mom as mad as she was when we got quite a few of these. What the realtors were doing was trying to make as much money as possible at the expense of others.

A few Black families moved in as a result. I think they were some of the people who had been moved to widen West Schwarz Street. The quality of these people were not up to the standards that Mr. Williams had demonstrated. In

fact, he and I were sitting on his front porch talking. He pointed to one of the families who had moved in. He commented that one of the women had children but no husband. He was absolutely discussed!

The pastor had a son about the same age as Tom. Both of them were in our home once in a while. One time they were there when a black young teenager girl walked down the street. The windows were open and my Dad let out one of his patented wolf whistles.

That is when this son spoke up in a very polite way with a question. In essence, what would my Dad think if he had whistled at a white girl? He made his point in a very quiet, polite way. To my knowledge, something like this never happened again. As a result, I had great respect for him. (Should my Dad have let out a wold whistle at a white girl either?)

A young family at 425 moved after the Williams family moved in. The following summer is when the mother of that family committed suicide. She left a very young baby, a girl (8), and a boy younger. The family was split up by this as the father did not think he could keep the rest of the family together. A decision to move may have created this terrible event. How very sad events like this are. There were rumors that the family was having financial problems because of their move.

My view about race relations has been based upon those experiences. In my senior year of college, I lived in a private home in which one of the students was a graduate student. He was from Jamaica, I think.

Experiences in this area certainly made others wonder a little about me. As I will mention later, I was in Arkansas for a singing school the summer after President Eisenhower sent federal troops to force the Little Rock Central High School to integrate. Their ideas were not the same as mine.

Shortly before I graduated from the University of Illinois, some of the church people in Champaign were making some comments that included black people. My thoughts did not exactly match theirs either.

There was good that came from this as well. During the early part of the growing season, Mr. Williams gave us some okra seeds with some instructions on how and when to plant them. (He planted by the phases of the moon.) Dad has a lot of experience growing things so he planted them when he thought it was best based on the weather. While Mr. Williams was sure that we had planted at the wrong time, our plants were tall and producing much better than his were. In fact, our okra pods were growing seemingly several inches each day. And they were so soft and delicious! A pod 2-3" one day would be 6" or more the next. (His garden was not as fertile as ours because of all the things Dad had been doing in it for a decade or so. Previous owners had not taken care of it either.)

He also told us how to fry them. Yum! We certainly used a lot of cornmeal that summer.

Grandparent's tornado

We were planning to visit my grandparents, and Dad called them to let them know that we were coming.

How he did this was far different from how is it done today. When he picked up the phone the operator said, "Number please?" He told her he wanted to make a long distance call to Lawrenceville, IL. She called an operator in a second city who called an operator who was in a third city who called an operator who called an operator in a fourth city who called an operator in Lawrenceville. That is right: it took five operators in five cities to complete this call. The last operator told us that there was a problem on the line, so she could not connect us. At the time Uncle Carlos was the sheriff of Lawrence County, so Dad called him instead. That

is when he learned of the tornado. We headed to my grandparents.

They lived north of Lawrenceville about 5 miles in a small settlement of Pinkstaff. In the past year or so, they had moved from one house to another one in that settlement.

The tornado had come through early in the morning. The people who bought their other house were in bed at the time. Glass from a window was blown onto their bed. Seconds later, Grandpa felt his house begin to lift off one side of the foundation and then settle back down. Now this would have scared me, Grandpa did not seem to be bothered by it. Perhaps he had settled down a bit before we got there, or I just did not notice the emotions in his voice.

At the time, Mom and Dad were both First Aid Instructors. So, we had a bumper sticker to the effect that the people in the car were capable of administering emergency first aide. It was this sticker that permitted us to enter the damage area. Webb and I walked through the downtown area during the day viewing the distruction.

The school building was almost a comical picture. It looked like someone had pulled the roof off. Then the first wall was pushed in. The second wall was then pushed in on top of the first wall, etc. So what I saw was the four walls laying inside where the building had been with the four walls stacked on top of each other. Finally, the roof was laying on the top wall of that stack.

Mom or Dad took a picture of this school. I saw the photo years later and said something to Webb about it. It looked more of a mess than I remembered. But then Webb mentioned that it looked like what I had remembered: the four walls were stacked on each other with the roof on the top. Someone may well have this photo, but I would not know who.

Another building has lost its roof. Its rafters were metal. What seemed strange to me was that they were laying upside down inside the building. There was a lot of destruction in the entire area as well.

Uncle Adam

When I was named, I was given a name from two of my great uncles: one from each parent. Uncle Adam lived near Lawrenceville in a flood prone area. Uncle Edgar lived in Ohio whom I very seldom saw. In those days, 400 miles one way was a long distance to travel. Cars did not travel as fast as they do today, and you had to drive through the downtown area of every city on the way regardless of how big or small it was.

I remember one flood in which Uncle Adam's house was sitting in the midst of it. I also remember staying with them one week during another year. When they washed clothes, they had to heat the water. (Seems like they did not have a hot water heater.) They got their water from their well using the windmill on top of it. When Uncle Adam wanted to use it, he connected the pump handle to the windmill and let the wind do the pumping. When finished, he disconnected it. Anyway, the water was gotten using the windmill and then heated. They did not had a washing machine either. At the end of the week, I went with them to a store before going to my grandparents. I bought some Double Mint gum (5 packs of gum [5 sticks each] for 20 cents.)

One Wednesday (the day before Thanksgiving Day) we got a call from Lawrenceville telling us that Uncle Adam had just died. He had been very sick, and so this was not unexpected. We knew that he was very sick and might not see him alive again. Still, Hearing the phone ring like this was unnerving. The funeral was the following Sunday.

His widow, Aunt Essie had problems probably from the period of his last illness on. He had always handled the

finances, so she had no idea of what to do with what. (This is not a good idea especially when the couple are much older.) She was also rather sickly from asthma.

Killing hogs

Over the years Dad had closed in the back porch. Going in to the house there was a hallway with a door on the right to a room. One winter, he made arrangement with a farmer to buy a hog for our meat. On a cold day, our family went out to his farm. We were getting to watch the butchering of some hogs. Dad began the process using a rifle to kill the three hogs. Then each one was hung by their hind legs and gutted.

As they cut up the meat, areas of fat were put into a pot and heated high enough to liquify the lard. Any solids that remained were removed. These were known as cracklings and also used as a snack. Then lard was allowed to solidify. The whole process took up most of the day. Then we came home with the lard and our share of the meat.

Then Dad got some liquid smoke and applied it to the pork. The pieces of meat were laid out on the orange table in the room on the back porch while the liquid smoke soaked into them. I remember the smell as I walked by the door to that room. I also remember that the temperature made it feel like I was in a walk-in freezer because we were having a long lasting cold spell. So, we did not have to worry about the meat spoiling with the temperatures below freezing all of the time.

Grandpa Mathew

We did not get to see him very often because of the distance and finances. After we left him in the spring of 1943 for Illinois, he re-married. Then his second wife died after only 18 months of marriage. Then he found a third wife. They had a little over 15 years of marriage before he

died the summer of 1965. He was born January 1, 1879, so he was no spring chicken.

When he did come to see us, he took a daily walk, and it was not a short one either. From 417, he walked to the north end of North Main Street to the train station. It was *only* one and a half miles.

He continued to walk for the rest of his life. In fact, about a year before he died, he was known to complain that he got out of breath when he walked a mile to a grocery store. He just could not understand why. (He was only 85.)

When we visited him one time, I remember watching him fix his breakfast: a mixture of three grains: Cheerios, Wheaties, and Puff Rice. I suppose I may be following in his footsteps somewhat. For my hot cereal, I use rolled oats, oat bran, and wheat germ. Not quite the variety that he had, however I make up for this at lunch. Then I have one of four grains (quinoa, millet, barley, or cracked buckwheat). I rotate them on a daily basis while using brown rice once in a while instead. Since succotash is a combination of vegetable and grain, I eat this at times as well.

Uncle Author's family visit

This was in June of 1954. He had brought his family of four children and a wife with him. I think they remained at our house for a week before going to Lawrenceville to see his parents and Aunt Ida, his sister (she is the youngest of the four children).

Mom was concerned about what we could serve them to drink in the evening. Dad's answer was beer. They were Lutheran, and that is what Lutherans supposedly drank. I really do not remember what was served to them. But it was rather strange to see my cousins that I had never seen before.

Aunt June was a very jolly person, laughing all of the time at about anything. I know that we children certainly teased her almost relentlessly about her name. (She reminds me of Sister Norma Clapp.)

This being late June, one of the most numerous bugs at the time was the june bug. They were so plentiful that they would be crawling all over our screen doors. Every time we saw one crawling on the screens, we would tease our aunt.

Elder Hite and a family visit

(I think this happened in July, but I am not so sure of the year.) The Hite's were on vacation on their way to California when they stopped by. Mom fixed a supper for them as well as for others that she invited for the evening. After supper we had a church service with Elder Hite preaching for us. After the service, everyone else went home. Between the Hite's and my family, there were 18 people that Mom housed that night. In the morning, the Hite's went on their way. I do not think that Virgil was with them, but the rest of the family seems to have been.

Miscellaneous comments

My life was gradually developing. Pieces of who I would become fell into place. Some of them were good, and others were not. Some of them would play a very important part in my life in ways I could not have imagined, nor could others.

Being required to learn how to play the piano is on example. It led me to become a part of the sixth grade chorus. Being in a singing group continued through my junior year. We would begin attending church regularly which led to singing in church as well. (Our denomination uses congregational singing with no instruments.) In college, the teenagers in the church in Champaign sang after we had dinner on the grounds. And when the Air Force moved me to Mississippi, I led a lot of singing in various churches I attended over the years.

God gave me the ability to sing, and I really enjoy using it. The music lessons made a good foundation for all of this.

The fact that I have always kept my curiosity regardless of the attacks such actions have evoked is another example. Being able to use my imagination along with my curiosity has brought me joys and pleasure that no one can take from me.

Family became more active religiously

In August , we attended the Little Wabash Association (Primitive Baptist). We had done this many times before. I suppose that made us "association Baptist." But there was something different about this meeting. One of the ministers attending it was Elder Gene Ford from the St. Louis area. Somehow he learned that we were also living in the St. Louis area.

So he talked with my parents about attending church in the northwest part of St. Louis County. He was very encouraging.

It turns out that Dad knew about this church and its location since the mid 40's if not earlier. He had two problems with this church: we had to drive through downtown St. Louis to get there taking over 90 minutes, and the church was in turmoil over something. (I knew nothing of this until I heard him say it.)

Elder Ford knew the roads in the area well enough that he could give directions that would cut our driving time in half. Besides, he informed Dad that the church problems had been dealt with: the church was now in peace.

I did remember that we had also gone to church a few times in Greenville, IL during the mid to late 40's. It was also about 90 minutes away. There was something about the church that made the services cold. So, we very seldom

went. So, this is why we became association Baptists until this summer. Things were about to change.

Junior High School

Church activities

As school had begun in the fall of 1954, we began to attend Sharon Church following the directions Elder Ford had given to us. We almost got lost once, but managed to get there without any more problems. There were three services the first weekend: Saturday evening; Sunday morning and afternoon. (Lunch was served on Sunday between services. I think there were two services on the third weekend: Sunday morning and afternoon. (Lunch between services))

The people were very friendly which was very nice. And they worked well together on various projects needed for the upkeep of the church building. This was right down Dad's alley! He rather quickly got involved as well. The people also appreciated his expertise in the things that had to be done. As a result, we started attending all of the services held there which included extra ones when a minister visiting the area was available.

As March began to come closer, the church members decided they wanted to have a fifth Sunday meeting. It would begin on Friday night, have three services on Saturday, and two service on Sunday. Several ministers came since their churches did not meet every weekend. We preached them all.

Here is the strange thing about this meeting. March had a fifth Sunday during 1952 and 1953 but not 1954 nor 1955. However, April 1 was on Sunday in 1956. So, when did we first see Elder Ford, and when did we begin going to Sharon Church on a regular basis? Seems like I really do not know.

The church activities of our parents may explain the following. It was during the summer of 1955 after we

returned from Washington that I decided to do some bible reading.

Mom was rather strict when it came to personal possessions. As mentioned, I had seen her regularly read from her Bible every night. But it was her Bible. So, I sneaked into the living room and picked it up to read the Book of Daniel. I was curious as to what was contained in the book with my name on it. While I was doing this Mom happened to walk into the room. When I heard her speak, it really scared me. I thought I was about to get a whipping for picking it up. It did not happen, but I nearly had a heart attack that it might.

I don't think she had a clue of how I felt nor why. She was likely pleased that I picked it up to read...

Our family was run by some very strict rules. So, when it came to things like reading Mom or Dad's bibles, I had no guidance as to what was appropriate and what was not. It was one of the gray areas that no one had really thought about. Or, my parents may have thought we would know it was alright to read this very special book...

Seventh Grade 1954-1955

The first day of school was a big surprise. Instead of two classes as in sixth grade, there were 10 sections in seventh grade. Instead of having one teacher all day, we had one for each subject. Different sections ate at different times in the cafeteria. We moved from classroom to classroom. My sixth grade classmates had been scattered among all the sections. There was a lot to get use to.

Our school district covered 177 square miles. In various parts of the districts, there were schools with grades kindergarten through sixth. Every one in the district had to come Edwardsville for schooling from seventh through senior in high school.

Most of my memories of this school year involved specific classes. At the end of this, the family went on the first real vacation we had had. Finances were not all that good yet, but we went anyway. It was probably as educational as school if not much more so!

English Class

One day, in English class I was reading a story in our literature textbook before class began. It was about a bear in a park. I became so engrossed in the story that I did not notice that the class had started. I just continued to read not noticing nor hearing anything going on around me. So for that class period, I shut out everything completely. When I came out of my trance, the bell rang and the period was over. I had to ask to get the assignment for the following day from one of my classmates!

This was embarrassing. How could I tell anyone that I did not hear the assignment? After all, I was in the classroom with everyone else.

Why didn't the teacher notice what I was doing? Was he more concerned with what he was teaching so he did notice my actions? (I had a male teacher.)

The story described the many kinds of situations that this bear got itself into and how it got out of each one. Sadly, the last thing it had gotten into was very serious. Its behavior could no longer be overlooked. Peoples' lives were now at stake. The bear had to be destroyed. With this, I felt like crying (just as the bell rang...).

Social Studies

It was in this class that I taught myself to carefully read my textbook. When I finished reading, I knew what was contained in the lesson. Other students did not learn it as well. As a result, when something was said in class that differ from what the lesson taught, I would raise my hand to

disagree. When given an opportunity, I would explain why I thought differently.

Did others disapprove of my constant additions? I do not know, but they may not have liked how often I spoke up. I did not stop to consider how I spoke nor what effect this had on others.

Chorus

I continued in chorus in Junior High both years. Why? I did not really know at the time. Instead, I was doing it because that was what was done by Etta.

What was it that I really wanted? That is the question that I did not answer in far too many situations. After all, Mom and Dad's rules were what we had to follow: we really did not have any real choices. Or, perhaps I was not old enough to begin thinking about what I wanted... When should a child begin to make some choices for themselves? What kind of guidance should the parents give them in helping them to learn to make choices?

You see, this was not something that concerned me at the time, but it does now. So, I sit back and wonder about the past. Of course, doing this does not create any answers for my questions...

Well, I did enjoy singing as I have ever since that time so why not?

My voice was high at the time for a boy. Possibly I was a first soprano in seventh grade. If not, I was a second soprano as I would be in eighth grade.

We only sang at our school during seventh grade. But at the end of eighth grade, choruses from several schools met together for a program. During the day we practiced together, and that evening we performed.

Some of the songs were for everyone, and some were for sopranos and altos. But even though I was a second soprano, I was a boy. The "soprano and alto" songs were really for only girls. Was I the only boy with a high voice in the entire area? Well, this left me wondering why I was not let sing the songs I had learned...

I thought we had been told to bring extra clothes to wear for the evening's performance. So, I did. But then when I was suppose to change clothes, we were given a classroom to do whatever we were going to do. Apparently everyone else was going to wear the same pants while I had brought another pair. Changing in from of others with windows on one wall was rather unnerving to say the least.

Things would become a little clearer the next September when I joined the High School Boy's Chorus...

St. Louis Symphony

Several if not all of the classes went on a field trip to Kiel Auditorium where this group played. We were met by its conductor and the symphony. He taught us many things that afternoon. He also burst a few of my balloons. I had already developed some hard held beliefs about the music for two radio shows: The Green Hornet, and Lone Ranger. I was sure the music for both had been created just for them. In fact, I was absolutely positive!

Well, he insisted that the Green Hornet music was taken from "The Flight of the Bumblebee." The Lone Ranger music was taken from "The William Tell Overture." It would take several decades and my re-exposure to classical music to finally agree with him, but I have.

Math

Math class was not a fun time for me, but it had nothing to do with math. There was something about my health that my teacher thought should be improved and bugged me

during class rather than doing it privately. All I remember is that he was making me feel less like a person. As a result, I withdrew within myself. No changes got made on my part. It did not help my relationship with my classmates either!

He knew the shop teacher, and there were times when he was at the shop teacher's home when we visited. So, I knew him a little more so than I did most of my teachers. A few years later, he died in his mid 30's from an undiagnosed kidney disease. This had caused him a great amount of pain throughout his life although he did not realize it.

Shop

My parents had been friends of the Robinsons for a while before this school year. As a result I knew both of them. Dale taught shop, and Emma taught music in the grade schools scattered throughout our school district. As an example of the friendship between the two families, We made a trip to the Seattle, WA, area the summer following this school year.

So this was a new experience for me: having a teacher that I had already known as a friend. But in class, he was the teacher, and I was the student. I got no special treatment from him.

I was very slow, and the quality of my work was rather poor. I do remember making a "stamp" out of tile that was better than the other things I did. I used a tool for cutting the letters into the tile. When inked and pressed on paper, the ink appears on the paper everywhere but where the letters had been cut out. I think this is called a negative image.

This class turns out to be a lesson in how people can misbehave. Some of the students on a regular basis would hide some of the tools they had been using instead of putting them back where they belong. The teacher would keep us until the tools were found. This made us late for our

next class. Later, one of the people doing this bragged about it. I sort of lost some of my respect for this person. He later did some other things for which I respected him even less.

Other

I do not remember in what class the following happened, perhaps in home room. I was part of a skit and needed to have a costume. For some reason, I did not bring it to school. That did not go over very well either. I forgot to bring it from home.

Was this forgetfulness or the results of low self-esteem? Most likely the latter. I could not get myself to do what I knew I needed to do.

One of the things that disturbed me that goes back to sixth grade during the math contests. Others were so very fast when working the problems, and I was not. What was holding me back?

This question was raised in my mind again when I was part of a quiz panel. Why could others come up with the answers when I could not? Why did my mind suddenly go blank? I was able to do quite well in Social Studies.

From other experiences, it seems to be a lack of self-esteem. This will also explain my over zealousness in Social Studies. Despise the extra things that I did in 4th grade and the 2 M's I received in the first six weeks in sixth grade. I did not appreciate what I was capable of doing.

It is important that a person develops a sense of their worth, and I had not. Does this go back to those suppers when I first started school? What was I capable of doing? I'm not sure that I knew.

Trip to Washington (Summer 1955)

This is the first time we had gone anywhere on a vacation together for an extended period of time. I and Webb had been to Camp Sunnon at Potosi, MO, for a week a few times. I think Etta had been to the Girl Scout Camp across the lake for a week for more than one summer as well.

Dad had said that no one had gone out to see Uncle Author, and it was time for someone to do this. The latter had made a few trips from Port Orchard, Washington to see at least part of the family. So, the decision was made and off we went after school ended the first week of June.

Mom and Dad were members of AAA, and they got a lot of information from it. We had regional maps of the country, state maps, trip-tiks, and books listing places of interest by state. Considering the number of states we went through, there were dozens of books! So, the trip was well planned.

During the spring, the whole family got a change to read through some of the literature just to see what was in them. (I really did not know what to think of it all! It was all so new to me.) Mom and Dad made the final plan to make sure we had everything we needed.

The trip-tiks were little booklets in which the map was divided into small parts on each page. I think each page's map was about 50 miles long with our desired travel path marked with magic marker. This way we did not need to get out one of the big maps to see where we should be going. (These big maps also had our route marked with magic marker.)

Seating arrangements were also made ahead of time. Etta had gotten her learner's permit three months earlier. So, she, Mom, and Dad did all of the driving. When Etta was driving, either Mom or Dad had to sit next to her. (This was the law about people driving with a learner's permit.) We would ride for two hours, and then everyone would move to a different seat. The three drivers also took turns behind the

wheel. We did this for the entire trip. It really help to move around this much and to see things from a different perspective. Where Mom and Dad got this idea of moving around, I do not know.

By the time we got into the mountains, Etta noticed that I did not exactly trust her driving, and she told me so. It did bother her, and I can understand why. She was right. Others would sleep or rest with her driving, but I would not.

One time she was driving, I was sitting in the front seat next to the passenger door. That is when I imagined that she could not control the wheel and I had to reached over to help her. Why would I do this? I really did not know anything about driving. She did. Oh well, the conceit of a young teenaged boy.

Traveling companions

Dale and Emma Robinson had some people in Washington that they were going to visit that summer, so the two families went on this trip together.

Since we had all of the maps, we took the lead and the Robinsons followed. Well, Emma did not really want to pass **any** Dairy Queen establishment that she saw. So any time we came upon one, someone would look at their car to see if they wanted to stop or not. It gave us another break to get out of the car as well as a bathroom break. (Cell phones did not exist yet then.)

First week

We left Edwardsville after school was out heading toward Port Orchard, WA, by way of Portland, OR. They were in a late 1940's Ford, and we were in a 1949 Chevrolet. The Robinsons had their car gone over by a mechanic before the trip, but...

Car trouble

We had traveled all of 90 miles when they had car trouble. The valves had to be worked on before we could travel any farther. So, we spent most of the first day waiting around until the car was fixed. By late afternoon we were on our way. I think we managed to travel 120 miles before the day was out. We camped for the night..

They did not have any more car trouble for the rest of the trip. This was a relief to them. After all Dale had done everything he could to make sure the car was ready for the trip.

(A few years later, we had had similar work done on our car by a member of Sharon Church. He did a fine job.)

Entertainment

Among other things we had songs that we would sing. Such was the case the first day. (One person sang a line, then everyone else sang that line, the same person would sing the second line, then everyone else sang it, etc. We made up the following verse:

Oh you can't get to Heaven
In a Ford V8
Cause the darn old thing
Won't percolate

Chorus: (everyone sings this together)

Oh you can't get to Heaven in a Ford V8
Cause the darn old thing won't percolate
I ain't gonna meet my Lord no more
I ain't gonna meet my Lord no more
I ain't gonna meet my Lord no more
I ain't gonna meet my Lord no more.

There were other songs that we sang as well. There were also games that we played in which we sought to identify certain objects as we traveled. *Bojo* was one of the words when we saw specific objects. Another one was *Zip*. These

games improved our attention and help to pass the time away as well.

Also there was a radio in the car. At least one time I got very nervous because I thought that I was not going to hear an episode of *The Lone Ranger*. I'm not sure about *Sargent Preston of the Royal Mounted Police*. Once in a while a program was played.

We needed some entertainment on the second day: we were driving through Kansas. This is the beginning of the grasslands of the true Midwest. We drove through rolling hills with much fewer trees. This made the car rather warm.

I think it was my Grandpa Lewis that talked about his experience driving through this state much earlier in the century. He spoke of seeing a single tree in the distance. As they approached, there was a bird, perhaps a buzzard (?). The tree was dead. It was some time before they saw another tree...

First sight of the mountains

At the end of the third day we reached Boulder, CO. As we neared there, the hills got taller and taller. But I did not see any mountains, neither did I know what to expect. Then as we came to the top of yet another steeper hill, I saw the mountains for the first time. All of them were snow capped which was a spectacular site! It is one thing to see a picture of snow capped mountains; seeing them for the first time is far different!

Distance is deceiving out there. It was several hours after my first sighting before we reached Boulder. During that time we were going up and down more and more. (Our car was like a boat in a storm on the ocean.)

But we finally got there. We headed toward some friends of the Robinsons where we were to stay until we could go farther.

Perhaps our host suggested that the cars' air/fuel mixture be modified for the higher altitude before we went any farther. We were getting into thinner air, so this needed to be done to make the motors run smoother. Anyway, this was done while we waited for the snow plows to do their jobs...

Wait at Boulder, CO

Then came a surprise, at least to me. The roads that were suppose to take us across the mountains were closed. The snow plows had not yet been able to clear the snow off of the road (US 40) at the pass through the mountains. We were going to have to stay in Boulder until they were able to open the road.



This is one of the mountains in the Boulder area. Another mountain was known as Iron Mountain which rose above the city. I think it was a mile or so higher than the city which was nearly a mile above sea level itself. Mom or Dad took this during the time we spent in Boulder.

One evening, our host took up to the base of Iron Mountain. There we got to see some of the sights of Boulder. He also talked a little about Denver, the mile high city. Boulder is about the same height as well. In fact, he said there was a marker on a building downtown that was one mile above sea level.

Our host had a dog that they had taught a "trick." They would give it some beer to drink. Then they would shine a flashlight around it in circles, and it would chase the light. A dog half drunk moving around like that can cause the dog to get sick. I know that they did this for their own entertainment, but it sure seemed cruel to me then and still does.

Heading to Portland Oregon

After what seemed a very long time, we got word that the pass over the mountains had finally been cleared. So, westward we headed as well as up.

The road (US 40) had switchback after switchback as we climbed up the side of the mountains. We would be going along the side of the mountain for a while. Then we would have a curve up and into the mountain as we headed farther up the mountain. The grade was steep enough that we traveled in second gear as needed. Sometimes we had to do this going up, and other times we did it when going down. Using the car's gears helped conserve the brakes. (You certainly do not want to have the brakes fail while on the side of a mountain!)

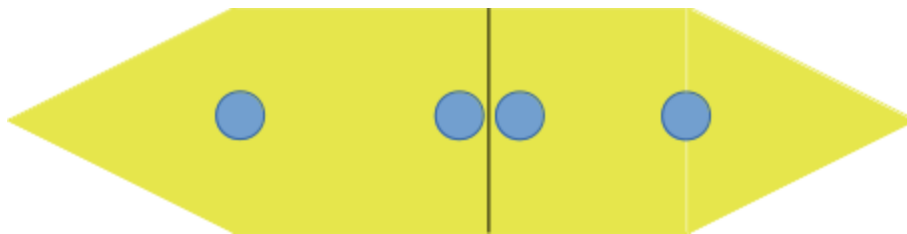
Snow banks in June

By the time we reached the pass over the mountain we had climbed from 5,000 plus to 12,000 feet. Then I learned why the pass had been closed earlier. There was snow 5' high on both sides of the road. We may have stopped for a little while there but I am not sure.

Continuing on, we came to the city of Estes Park and then drove through Rocky Mountain National Park. Somewhere in the mountains we made camp. Now I'm thinking that it was kind of cold...

Sleeping arrangements

We took two pup tents for sleeping. We had used tents like these while camping in scouting so this was not a new experience. Each one had an open end and a buttoned triangle area at the other end. When we put the tents up, we put the open ends against each other. (The open end of the pup tents had metal buttons one side and button holes on the other.) Using these, we could button the open parts of the tents together.



Since there were six of us, four slept next to the sides of the tent and two slept between the poles (the blue circles in the graphic). Since the shortest sleeping area was between the poles, Tom and I slept there (we were the shortest). When we were not in someone's home, this was how we slept. There was one night that the weather was bad enough that we slept in a motel though.

As we were approaching Junction City, CO, there were some things that we needed to buy. When Dad consulted the Trip-tik, it looked like this city was large enough to have supermarket that sold these items. Unfortunately, looks can be deceiving. It was not much more than a junction between roads! So we had to wait a while longer before we came to a town where we could get what we needed. Lunch was a little later that day...

Breakfast usually consisted of a box of cereal that opened up into a bowl (Post or Kellogg's multi-packs). We had milk which we pored into the "bowl". Lunch was usually luncheon meat in a sandwich and something else. We had a Coleman stove that we used to cook supper and heat the water to wash the dishes. We also had a Coleman lantern that was used for light. I am fairly certain that it did not go inside the tents because of the fire danger. A pup tent can burn completely in less than a minute. (I once witnessed a pup tent burn.)

During most days, we would stop at a grocery store to get some needed items: mostly ice and/or food. Such was the case when my parents thought that Junction City would be a good place to stop.

Continental divide



Mom knew about Continental divides since there is one in Ohio. South of it, rain falling runs south into the Ohio River. North of it the rain runs north toward the Great Lakes. But there was no high elevation like this in Ohio! There you could walk up to it. Not so in Colorado!

Where is the continental divide in this picture? Draw a line in your imagination across the highest parts of the mountains in the background. If you walked along this line, you would see that the only way to go is down. That is what the water does: goes down hill. On one side of the line, the water heads toward the Yellowstone River (west) and on the other side it heads toward the Mississippi River (east).

Dinosaur National Monument

I think we reached here after traveling three days from Boulder. This consists of a large area located on the Colorado/Utah border. It had taken most of the day to reach here. We entered on the west side having crossed into Utah. Then we followed the paved roads to one of the camping areas.

But by the time we got to our camping area, Mom thought we were back in Colorado. She is probably right. (More about this 21 years later when my family spent a night here.)

Upon arrival, we began setting up camp again. Then a ranger appeared to tell us about some of the things in this campground. He probably also mentioned the nightly campfire program. Pointing to what looked like a stream to me, he warned us not to swim in it. The last people to die trying to swim in the swift running water were people who were water safety instructors. (They were qualified to teach American Red Cross Lifesaving courses.)

We spent the next day seeing the exhibits of bones in the rocks. It was very educational as I listened to what the rangers had to say. We also got some exercise as we walked from site to site. This was more than a textbook that mentioned dinosaurs. We were looking at their bones embedded in the rocks! It seems that Dad had doubted the existence of dinosaurs, but the bones in the rocks sort of convinced him.

I doubt that we went to the campfire the night we arrived. I'm not even sure if we did the second night. We might have. (I do remember the campfire 21 years later though.)

Temple Square

This took a day from the national monument to a camping area near Salt Lake City. Then we spent the next day visiting the square.

We had a guide that took us through Temple Square explaining as he went. The first stop was the tabernacle which is a very large and impressive auditorium.

This being mid June, it was the time for the graduation ceremony for Brigham Young University which going on in the tabernacle this day. So, we could not go inside. However, we could get close to the doors which were open at the time.

Being curious, I looked inside. I saw that it seemed to be filled to capacity with someone speaking from the rostrum. What I heard was amazing! I could clearly see that he was not wearing nor speaking into a microphone. What I heard did not seem to be amplified either. Yet I could hear every word plainly perhaps 100 feet away. If I were not there I might not believe that this was possible.

Because we could not go inside that morning, our guide explained what he would usually do with a tour group when they went inside. They would drop a pin on the pulpit and let people hear how far away someone could be and still hear the pin drop. (Considering what I had heard at the door, I believed him.)

Then we were shown pictures of how they continued to maintain this building since it was first constructed by the original settlers. It was made strictly of wood. Even the "nails" were wedges of wood. They also used leather to hold the beams together. They would place wet raw leather around the joint and fasten it with a wood nail. Because of the very low humidity, the leather would shrink and become as hard as steel. This is how they continue maintaining the buildings.

As expected there was a statue to the sea gulls from the Great Salt Lake. As Mormon history records, there was a huge grasshopper invasion in their grain fields. That is when the sea gulls appeared eating every every insect they could. They would even fly back to the lake vomiting up what they had eaten only to return to the grain field to eat more insects.

The temple was off limits to everyone except Mormons, so I learned very little about it. The guide said very little about it also.

Severe storm near our camp

As we neared Portland, OR, we were going through forests of tall pines that the area is know for. One night we settled down for the night not knowing how bad the weather was nor how far away. (We did not use our radio to check for weather reports.) It was quiet where we were, but not about a mile away that night. We had been driving on a four lane divided highway. After we got up, we learned that a storm, most likely a tornado had hit. Curiosity perhaps, but we drove back to where this storm had crossed the highway. A swath of trees had been blown down across the highway. Some of the trees down were tall enough that they had blocked all four lanes. Now that is some really tall trees! By the time we arrived, they had cut a section out of the trunks so that they could get two lanes opened. This was somewhat of a concern for our parents and the Robinsons as well. This storm could have hit where we were camped instead of where it did.

This trip was an education that was much more vivid than what can be contained in any textbook. I saw everything first hand. This weather was part of the education

Sometime during this trip, Dad spoke of seeing a storm during his youth when his family was traveling so much. This storm may have moved through the area not long

before they arrived. A man was rocking in a chair on the porch of his house. Well sort off: there was no house to be seen! The porch was the only thing left. Some chickens were running around in the yard. The man seemed dazed at the time.

Bonneville Dam



A day or so after the storm we were driving along the mighty Columbia River, and we stopped near this dam for the night. The next day we visited it. Again we had a guide to explain things to us.

This was along the south shoreline of the Columbia. The fish that found the opening would swim up the ladder to the water level of the dam. Then they would exit into the lake formed behind the dam. The child was me, and the adult was Mr. Robinson who was taking his own pictures.

It was either at the top or bottom of the fish ladder that the fish had to swim over an area lighted from below. (This is used to keep a count of the fish using the fish ladder.) It was fascinating to see a fish swim through this area. A fairly large fish (perhaps 3' long) did this as I watched, but I had to wait a while to see it. There were not many fish going down nor up stream then.

As part of the guided tour, they told us that sturgeons live in the Columbia River. The size of these fish is amazing. I only wish that I could have seen one of them. Adults are over 5' long and weigh over 200 pounds. I really can not comprehend this size nor weight.

We spent several hours going through the inside of the dam. The dynamos which produce electricity (this is a hydroelectric dam) were extremely large. There were so very many of them. And the noise that they made! It was the loudest hum I had heard for a very long time.

I would visit an coal generated electrical plant as a boy scout later. It reminded me very much of the inside of the dam (all these huge dynamos).

See Uncle Arthur

Likely, it was the evening after visiting the dam that Uncle Arthur was called in Portland. He had been at a ministerial meeting this week. He knew that we were coming, so he had made arrangements to leave when we got there which was probably on Thursday or Friday. The next morning we left for his home. The Robinsons left us for a while to visit with their friends.

Port Orchard WA

Seattle is on the east side of Puget Sound, Uncle Arthur's home in Port Orchard was on the west side in an inlet. Across from it in this inlet was the Brimmerton Naval Base which we did not get to see. There were several inhabited islands in the midst of the sound as well.

At some point earlier, Freddy (Uncle Arthur's oldest) and I had been pen pals. During this time, he had mentioned that it rains all of the time in their area. Yet, when our families were visiting places in the area, I noticed all of the lawn sprinklers running every day. The grass looked like it needed the extra water. How could it rain every day and the people still need to water their lawns to keep them green? It did not make any sense.

A weather man from Birmingham, AL, explained the situation. What I had missed was the amount of rain that was falling each day. Water naturally evaporates from the ground at a certain rate depending upon the temperature and humidity. Well, they only got very light rains. As a result, there was as much water evaporating from the ground as was falling! So, a rain did not really make the ground any wetter. It took sprinklers to do this.

Sunday school

On Sunday we attended Uncle Arthur's church to hear him preach. Of course Sunday School was also included. I don't remember where the others went at this time, but I was in the same class as Fred (then known as Freddy).

As far as the Bible was concerned, I was completely illiterate. I had never opened one to read other than to look at the Book of Daniel. So, when Sunday School started, I was completely lost. The verse was Ephesians 6:12 along with the following verses. (What was said: Ephesians six and 12.) Freddy had to show me where this verse was located. I

had never seen these verses before, so I really did not get anything from the lesson.

Pacific Ocean

While we were there we headed south to Mt. Hood which is south of Seattle. Then we headed west to the ocean. Although I had never seen an ocean before, it was not very impressive. Mostly this was because it was an overcast day, and the tide was out. The wind was blowing as well so there were some waves on the water as it washed ashore.

I remember Mr. Robinson being on this trip. In WWII, he was stationed in the Pacific theatre of the war. He went through many strong storms while on a ship and consider the Northern Pacific Ocean as very stormy.

Port Orchard to Glacier National Park

The time had come to head back home. We still had some stops and lessons to learn before we got back. We and the Robinsons were forming a two car caravan once again. When we arrived, we had come from the south. Now we were heading east which means across the sound.

Ferry to Seattle

So we drove down to the shore line where we boarded a ferry to Seattle. This was a very large boat that could hold hundreds of cars and trucks on three levels (I think). We climbed to the top on the observation deck where we could look out over the water.

If I remember correctly, we stopped at the naval base letting off people there and picking up others. Then we headed toward Seattle. Soon, we got to a place on the water where we could no longer see the land in any direction. Then we arrived at an inhabited island and boarded and off boarded more people and vehicles. We may have done this a few more time. Finally we arrived in downtown Seattle. After getting through the city, we were finally were in the

country one more time. Designation: Idaho and Montana for starters.

The irrigation canal (Oregon)

Traveling through Washington took us through some very dry areas. Sage brush seems to like to grow in this area for sure. It was everywhere! I'm not sure that Idaho was much better either.

While this may have been in eastern Washington, I'm thinking it was in Idaho. Wherever, we stopped along an irrigation canal for the night. We used water from it for cooking and washing dishes. The thing that caught my attention was the size and depth of it. (Maybe up to 30 feet wide and 10 feet deep.)

This was one of the times that we would camp off the side of the road. We would do this several times during this trip. Camping sights were not as common as now. Nor did we have the money to pay for a motel every night.

Sagebrush and the softball

This particular day, Tom and I were playing catch with a softball we had brought along. We had been called for supper, and we decided to leave the ball under a sage brush thinking that it would be very easy to find the sage brush, and there would be the softball. He and I searched until dusk, but we never did find that sage brush nor the softball. Later it occurred to us that the area was covered with sage brush! So much for playing catch any more on this trip.

The headache

It was likely along this part of the trip that I did not wear my sunglasses enough. So, I developed a blinding headache, so much so that I could not eat supper. So, I retired to the pup tents and slept through the night. In the morning, I was refreshed and ready to go again as if nothing had happened. Was this a migraine that I had? Don't know.

(I would have a similar splitting headache my junior year in college as well.)

Glacier National Park

This was a new and very different experience for me. Because of how far north we were, the weather was colder than it had been earlier in this trip even if it was getting further into summer.

The water was very cold. In fact, it was the result of snow and ice melting. I was near a stream one time when a breeze was blowing across a creek. For the latter part of June, that breeze was colder than most air conditioners can produce. Anything perishable put into a sealed container and place into this water would not spoil. The water was colder than an refrigerator.

Come to think of it, it was cold at night. One morning, Dad and Mr. Robinson had planned to go fishing. The night before, Mr. Robinson washed a pair of pants that he was going to wear and hung them up to dry. In the morning, he went out to get them. They were frozen stiff! He held them by the pant leg cuffs and carried them upright into their tent to his wife. (His pants were "freezed dried.") We all had a good laugh out of that. (The tent shown below on the left is the Robinson tent.

They waited a while longer to let the air temperature rise before going out. When they returned, they had caught several fish. They were met by a ranger who gutted their fish for them. This is done because rangers were required to do so. They were checking the health of the fish that were caught.

My bear



This was a rather large bear that periodically came to this garbage area for food. It was looking for the grease that anyone would cook with. It looks like what it has on its nose is a plastic container with grease in it.

One day, I was down by where this shot was taken. The bear was busy getting grease out of what may have been a half pound container of margarine originally. Someone had poured grease into it. While it was so busy I walked up very close to it (as in a couple of feet). This was very dangerous, but I did not realize it. Ah, the stupidity of youth at times. I could have been killed if the bear had noticed me this close. But I left the area safe and sound before it did.

That bear certainly was very noisy as it licked up the grease from its container. What I heard was a series of grunts. (I wonder if there was a warning in these grunts.)

After a few days of looking around, we headed south to our next designation.

Yellowstone National Park

We spent several days here before leaving. There are several places to camp within this park, and we spent some time at a few of them. At the end, we and the Robinsons parted ways because they had different plans than we did. We would later see them back in Edwardsville.

More bears

Like Glacier, there were plenty of bears here. We were warned as we entered the park not to feed them. Specifically, do not have food in your hand while trying to feed them. People had suffered severe bites from doing this. Needless to say, but too many people did not listen: they thought they knew better. Bears were somewhat of a pest, but it was the people's fault. Bears were also known to take a swipe at a window wiper once in a while sending it flying. This usually happened because something had disturbed it.

Because of people, bears are known to walk along the road ways making driving a problem. You would almost have to stop because of them. We were behind another car when this happened. For some reason one of the bears became agitated and off went the left window wiper! Somehow the cars in front of us drove on, and that was that.

Moose and bears do not get along especially if it is a female moose that has a calf in the area. Well, one morning we saw a female moose standing in a pond near our camping area. She was eating plants growing in the water for her breakfast. Then a bear (about half the size of "my bear" came wandering along, but not for long. When the moose saw the bear, she started chasing it out of the area. There was not room for the moose and the bear in the same place. When the bear had gotten far enough away, the moose went back to feeding leisurely as if nothing had

happened. We never got to see her offspring. That would have been nice. (Dad was able to get a picture of the moose while she dined.)

No matter how hard we try to follow the rules, we slip up once in a while. Such was the case with Mom. She had gotten something, out of the car trunk and left it open. That is when a bear came along. When she saw the bear at the trunk, she yelled. It got the bear moving on, but not before it took a swipe at a loaf of bread. It tore the loaf into two parts. One was left in the trunk, and the slices of bread of the other went flying into the air. (I got to witness this happening.) After that, I think she made sure the trunk was shut after she had gotten anything out of it. before she left the car.

In all the camps, there were garbage containers with lids. Why? I really do not know. When a bear came along, it would rip the lid off the top of the container and help itself to whatever was in it. Because of this, they used very soft bolts to hold the lid on. They replaced the broken bolts with new soft ones when a bear had broken them.

Outline of boy scout tents

This is an example of how cold the ground was. (It was still frozen, and this was the end of June.) A boy scout troop had been camping in one of the camp sites and left a couple of days before we arrived. Because of the cold, they had been sleeping in pup tents at night.

I got somewhat of a surprise when we arrived: there was dew on the ground the shape of the pup tents. Where they had been, the ground had warmed up some. So the dew formed where the pup tents had been (quite a site).

Old Faithful

This is as magnificent as advertised. It erupts approximately every hour. The time varies from eruption to

eruption. If one occurs less than 60 minutes since the last one, the next interval will be longer. (The intervals alternate between shorter and longer.)

A tour of the area would begin on the completion of an eruption taking about an hour to complete. So, when it ended, off we went with the other who were present. We would return shortly after the next eruption.

I learned that the whole park is sitting upon an area of very hot volcanic rock. The evidence was in some very strange things. So, it was very difficult to understand what was going on.

The "mud pots" was the first thing. I saw thick mud boiling! It looked like boiling thick oatmeal or thick boiling cornmeal, only it was mud instead. There was enough hot water being supplied to the dirt to keep it very wet. At the same time the heat from below was constantly turning part of the water into steam. then the steam would come up through the mud bursting open spewing very hot mud and steam in all directions. (Obviously, they would not let us get close enough to the mud pots to get burned.)

Another very strange sight was in the pools of very hot water, and there were many of them. Plants were growing in them at different depths. Well, plants do not often grow in hot water that I knew of. But even stranger was that these plants were growing at various depths! Even more so, the color of the plants varied by their depth in the pool.

They were heat sensitive in that a given plant could only live in water within a given temperature range. So, what we were looking at were living thermometers! Each plant was a different color. They were quite beautiful to see with the large number of colors in the pools.

We were almost back to Old Faithful when it erupted again. What we learned when this happened is that this geyser had a natural drainage system to it. We got see the

water from this eruption drain back into the underground system. It is one thing to tell someone about the drainage system, it is another thing for a teenager (me) to see the hot water running through a trough and into a hole in the earth.

One day we visited this falls which was well worth the time. While there a ranger gave us some information about it. He emphasized that it is taller than the Niagara Falls (465 feet high but just not as wide). Personally, both have their selling points. I enjoyed what I saw this day!



This river had its beginning in Yellowstone. From here it flows south and west.

After the lesson by the ranger we headed from the top of the falls to the bottom. When we got down there we crossed

the bridge which you see in the background. Some if not all of us moved farther away from the falls to get a picture of it.

After falling so far, the water breaks into more of a spray than a stream. While crossing the bridge we encountered some of the spray. Refreshing, yes. Cold, definitely. In any case, it was truly amazing for me to be up close to this wonder. (Sort of takes your breath away.) It sure was a long hike down and then up again. This will take your breath away as well especially considering the thinness of the air... This is part of God's creation.

Homeward bound

The Robinsons headed toward wherever they had planned, and we headed northeast to Billings, Montana, and then to the Black Hills and Mt. Rushmore. Our final stop was the Corn Palace, or was it Mark Twain's home? (I will include it here because I really don't remember.)

My memory seems to be playing tricks on me. Somewhere in the back of it, I thought that Uncle Arthur's family left for Port Orchard from Yellowstone Park. But I have no memories of them being anywhere with us from the time we left their home until our leaving this park. Memories can do strange things.

Billings, Montana

Dad had lived in this city, approximately 30 years earlier, and he wanted to see it again since we were in the area. This area had changed drastically between the 1920's and the 1950's. It really bothered him to see the changes, and he could not get out of the area soon enough.

The area has some beauty to it. There was the rim rocks which looked like table tops on the hills with vertical designs on the top edge of the hills. Rather than being rounded like the hills I knew at home, these rocks were flat like a table. From here we headed north toward the

Canadian border which we never reached. (It was not our designation anyway.) For some reason, I would have liked to have crossed the border only long enough to say that I had been in Canada.

I have since heard of the problems of crossing into Canada and then back without a passport. Some people almost were not allowed to cross back over. I was not old enough to have a driver's license yet, so I had no means of identification...

Black Hills

I think this area was also known as the bad lands where outlaws were known once to thrive for a while. It is also where the Little Big Horn flowed. It was a place where Custer wished he had never seen.

The ranger station was on the hill side where the battle occurred that resulted in the deaths of Custer and all of his men. That is where we got our information about what had happened. While the lesson was very informative, it was rather difficult to follow what he said. That was because the entire event was spread over many, many miles in all directions (days on horseback between locations). I heard words, but they have not really meant very much.

But Mt. Rushmore was a different matter. The approach was fascinating to watch. We would cross a bridge, go through a tunnel, cross another bridge, and go through another tunnel. Seems like we did this several times. When would we get there?

We went this way because we were in a car. There were signs telling people with larger vehicles that they had to take a different route. (Tom and Elaine would visit here much later on a bus tour. So, they got to go the different route.) I wonder if the route we took still exists.

Like the things I had seen in the past, this also took my breath away. The four presidents' busts were very large, more so than what I could have imagined. Normally, mountains have cracks in their sides. But I did not see any cracks in these busts at all. It seemed so smooth. How could it be this smooth???

After viewing the statues for a while, we went into the studio to get some information about what we saw. First we learned that the original project of creating these busts was run from this studio.

Its ceiling was quite tall and wide in all directions. It had to be since it housed the scale model of the four presidents. It seemed to be 25-30 feet tall. So, in this very large room we listened as we were told about how this monument came to be. Fascinating? Yes, but not enough to remember many of the things that was said.

North Dakota

From Mt. Rushmore we headed toward the Corn Palace in southeast South Dakota. Along the way we were driving along the south side of the river separating North and South Dakota. I wanted to cross it so that I could say that I had been in North Dakota, but there was no bridge across it. Made me sad.

The Corn Palace

This was an huge surprise, but then I had no idea what to expect. It was a very large building decorated with all kinds of beautiful colors. Then I discovered that all the colors were made from ears of corn inside and out. It takes a huge amount of corn to do this.

Our guide was a young lady. In fact, I think they were all young ladies. Why? Shortly after beginning the tour, we came to a very large picture on the wall that shows a young girl at the entrance of the corn palace when it had opened

many years earlier. Our guide claimed to be the daughter of the girl in the picture. (My parents thought that all of the guides told this story.) We did see another tour group as we went through the building. Their guide? another young lady...

Then there was the inside joke that she told. Corn that came from North Dakota and Iowa were used to decorate the inside of the building while corn from South Dakota was used to decorate the outside. This was suppose to lead to the question why? The answer, the corn from South Dakota was to big to fit through the doors. (Oh well!)

One thing is for sure. When the Corn Palace closes for the winter (or is it fall?), all the corn is taken down. It is put outside somewhere, and the birds of the area get a huge treat!

Western Iowa: last sight of mountains

It was now early July, and we had driven into Iowa. As I was looking out a window, I seemed to be missing something that I could not quite put my finger on. What was I not seeing? Then it occurred to me: I couldn't see any more mountains with snow caps. The weather was hotter and we were back in the northern plains. We were nearing home.

Flag half-mask

Why this is part of my memories? I do not know. I remember going through a town that had all of its flags at half mask. My Dad really wanted to know badly. So he stopped and asked someone. Their postmaster had recently died. (With all of the things I had witnessed on this very long trip, this stands out.)

Hannibal, MO

This included the home of Samuel Clemens (better known as Mark Twain) and some of the houses nearby of his childhood. Other things there included the wooden fence

which Tom Sawyer was suppose to white wash. Also, the tree near his second story window that he would climb down in one of the stories.

Why we did not head southeast from Hannibal through western Illinois, I do not know. We would travel these roads in later years.

Travel though St. Louis

We were almost home when we came into the outskirts of St. Louis. Mom was driving, but no one was really paying enough attention as to where we were going. Without help, Mom make an incorrect turn. As a result we were heading directly toward downtown which was not a pleasant thought. (The Interstate System was not yet even on the drawing boards.)

This was very disturbing to Dad when he first noticed it. But then some major streets we recognized helped us to get our bearings. The correct turns were made, and we avoided the downtown area. We finished our trip, arriving in Edwardsville safely.

There were a few lessons that I learned during this trip that I have used for the most part of my trips. Break the trip each day into 2 hour periods of driving. The rest stops and moving around helps greatly. (The stops at a Dairy Queen or other fast food place once in a while enforced this idea.) Sharing the driving is a very good idea as well if there are multiple drivers available.

Perhaps the most important lesson is to have a second person to help make sure we were traveling in the right direction. This is especially true in large cities.

Eighth grade 1955-1956

Eight grade does not stand out very much in my mind. Only my working in the school cafeteria has recently come

to mind. It might have been during seventh grade instead of eighth. The only thing I can be sure of is that it happened in junior high.

How I got to do this, I am not sure. It was once a week on Thursdays. Students had a window where they would deposit their trays, dishes, flatware, etc. These were separated with washables placed on one area and trash in trash bins. Washables were further separated into type of dishes or trays. Then they were placed into the dishwasher where they were cleaned. They were rather warm when they came out of the dishwasher, that is for sure!

The cooking was done in very large pans which also had to be washed. There was a very large double sink in which to do this. (They were too large for the dishwasher they had.) One day, I got this duty which was not all that much fun. There was a lot of dried food that had to be removed. And considering how big the pans were, it was tedious work making sure that **all** the food was removed from the pan!

Some days were easier than others because some meals were messier. Days on which chili was on the menu was really bad. First of all, many people would not eat all of their chili. This means more garbage had to be put in the trash bins. This took more time to do. But we could not handle as many trays at a time. So the students no longer had the space to place their tray inside the window. They began to stack one tray on top of another. And a vicious cycle began. As a result, these were the days we dreaded. We even felt sorry for the people working in the cafeteria that day.

April Baptisms

Sometime in 1955, Elder Ford had preached a very pointed sermon on a Sunday afternoon. It might have been late summer. Anyway, many of the members told him in no uncertain terms that he should not have preached what he did. But the sermon was not for them: it was for my parents.

During the following months, what he had preached really got to them. By late 1955, they wrote for their letters to the church in Ohio where their membership was . This was granted by early 1956, and my parents joined Sharon Church by letter.

Meanwhile, I was thinking about joining that church, but I did not do anything about it. I somehow did not want to be the first one to do so. I did not understand why at the time, nor do I yet.

A minister had preached at a special service on a week night. possibly March 14th. Tom had become emotional after the service. Mom and Dad talked to him, and he joined the church the following Sunday. He was to be baptized the last day of the special weekend services.

My experience with the Lord came around March 28 or 29 of 1956. I was in bed in the small room that had been made from part of the attic. This was off of Etta's room. God made his presence know, and His presence forced me to get out of bed and on to my knees. And yes at that point I felt very much like a sinner. I very definitely knew who was in control!

During the first service on Friday, I also got very emotionally involved in the sermon. Yet, again, I did nothing about it. But by the time I got home, I knew I not done the right things. So, at the end of the Saturday afternoon service, I joined. Now, there were two candidates for baptism: Tom and I. He had picked Elder Ford to baptize him, and I chose Elder Adair.

Sunday afternoon (April 1), we met at a local lake for the baptisms. The four of us walked into the lake together. The water was rather cool, that is for sure. But afterward, it was not so bad.

So, after that, it seemed obvious to me as to who needed to hear that pointed sermon and why. It was the right sermon at the right time for the right people. But then this is how God operates. Chances are that the people who had complained about that sermon 9 months earlier never did realize why this sermon had to be preached. But that was their problem.

Received New Testament

I think it was on the third weekend of April that the church clerk, Pansy Potts, had Tom and I sign the Church Covenant for Sharon Church. At that time she gave both of us a New Testament which included the Book of Psalms. This was the first time in my life that I had a Testament of the Bible that I could read without getting into any trouble. After all, this was *my* book. I did begin to read it some. I also took it to church with me to read along with the preacher. Well, it was kind of difficult to do this as I did not know where each book of the New Testament was. I may have used the index. It was still slow going. Neither did I have any help doing this.

When it came to things like this, Mom and Dad left us on our own. The thinking was that they should not try to influence us in any way. We had to make up our own minds by ourselves. This seems to be the thinking of many people.

One time a minister came through the area and we had a special church service to hear him. He arrived in a late model Cadillac. He was a stock broker at Atlanta, GA. His name was Elder Small. During the song service, he had taught us a song that we did not know.

he certainly took a little getting use to. He sang much faster than we were use to. But we got the hang of it and sang this song near the speed that he taught us. For other songs, we reverted to our usual slower speed. (Later there would be another minister by the name of Elder Roland Green that affected me.)

One of the members at Sharon was rather old, but everyone thought much of him (Bro. Dixon). The children even had a nickname for him. We had been at church one weekend, and he died three days later. This was of great concern to the people at church because he died from meningitis. He might have been contagious at church. But no one was affected which was a great relief for the parents in the church.

Another member was a blind man whose name was Raymond Parsons. I remember listening to him introduce services reading from his Braille Bible. I'm not sure what his profession was, but at one point he was transferred to central Nebraska so there was a time in which he could not attend church anywhere.

Wanting a closer church

There was a woman in Edwardsville that was Primitive Baptist also. We began having services in our home with her. Then we learned of people in Alton that were Primitive Baptists from Southern Illinois. They had come to Alton to work in the Mental Hospital and then retired there. One of them was a minister.

Contact was made, and we began having services in our homes. We would take turns hosting them. But then the families from Alton thought that they should also fix a meal to eat before the service. It seems like each family would try to outdo the last person's meal. As a result, interest became less and less until the point that the services stopped. It was not until Bro. James Ridding married one of Elder Orville Pryor's daughters (Marjorie) that services began and continued. Little Flock Church was the results.

The boxing match

Since digging out the basement, Dad had poured concrete for the floors in all four rooms. He had also put up concrete block walls. In the back room, he built a place for

canned goods (including wood shelves) which got used all the time. It was our version of a "root cellar".

For one Christmas, he got a pair of boxing gloves and a punching bag which he hung in a front room of the basement. I know that Tom and I used to give the punching bag a good workout fairly often.

Boxing was a big sport, and I heard many a fight being broadcast over the radio. It seemed like the thing to do. Dad even spoke of boxing in positive terms. So, Tom and I had on the gloves to fight. Like the boxers on the radio, I began hitting rather hard. That is when he said, "That hurts!" Suddenly, I realized that boxing can hurt someone. I have never put on boxing gloves again to box with anyone, and I stopped boxing with Tom right after he said this.

Unknown timing

There are some things that I remember, but I do not remember what year the following things happened. I only know they happened before the end of my eighth grade. There is no chronological order to these events.

Cleaning out the school bus

In order to be able to provide for his family, Dad also drove a school bus (he was known as Hot Rod Freddy). The one I remember held 64 students. He would sandwich his carpentry work between the morning and afternoon bus routes.

I think I got paid for cleaning the floors on a regular basis. (I don't remember how much [probably 25 cents], but it was likely less than 50 cents.) I did not use a broom but a brush because cleaning the floor thoroughly required being on my hands and knees. (Dad required this.) One of these times, something had happened that involved Webb. For whatever reason, I feared that he and some boys he was playing with was going to come into the bus and attack me. It never

happened, but I was very fearful until I got the floor swept. This is the first time I have ever told this to anyone that I know of. (Ah, the dangers caused by one's imagination.)

Dad would also drive the school bus to take our team to another school for a game. Also during basketball tournament time, he might use the bus to take students wanting to see the games we played.

Snow

Snow was not very common during my early years. In fact we went several years without enough snow to make it worth while to have sleds. But finally the time came, and they were bought for the childrens' use. They still were not used all that much over the years.

Perhaps the only time that they were well used was after an ice storm with very cold temperatures following the storm. Not all that far from us was essentially a pond at LeClaire School. It had several inches of ice, so Dad got out his ice skates and used them. Etta spent some time skating on the ice with Dad as well. Perhaps Mom had ice skated earlier in her life and still had a pair or skates. Otherwise, where did these skates come from?

In that kind of weather no one was going anywhere for a while. There was enough ice on the driveway to use the sleds without injuring the runners on the stones of the driveway. The street had more than an inch of ice on it.

Drifts from 18" of snow

Onother Monday morning during the winter, we got a big surprise: snow, snow, and more snow! The back steps had been made 36" high, and the snow drifted up to that level. The central sidewalk went from the front door to the sidewalk that ran across the front of our property. When Dad dug out the basement, he placed the extra soil on both sides of the central sidewalk. The snow drifted over the

sidewalk from the front porch making that area look as high as the elevated lawn. It would be Thursday or Friday before we went back to school. No one was going anywhere for a few days after this storm hit.



This is a drawing looking at the front of 417. The elevation of the green area shows the elevated parts of the yard. The gray above it shows approximately what the drifting was like. (The gray shading represents the snow that had fallen.)

Come a day stay a week

One summer month, a cousin with his family came from Chicago going somewhere. As I look back, I'm not sure that he even had a job to go to. They certainly put a strain on our family for more than a week. They claimed that they had just stopped by for a short visit.

The children were poorly behaved. For example, they would take more food on their plates and not eat it. We often threw out more food than what we could afford. In another case, they knocked down a corn plant that had grown up in the front yard. Probably a bird had left the seed in its droppings.

Some years earlier, the power company came through trimming the trees around the power lines. Dad told them that if they were going to trim the tree in our front yard, they had to trim it all the way to the ground. So they did. In

the diagram above, the tree was in the middle of the left elevated lawn.

During those years, the tree roots had rotted. Then the seeds in the bird dropping landed on the rotten tree root. When the conditions were right, the seed germinated. Before the plant got knocked down, a single ear begin to fill in. I was able to see that the kernels were a variety of colors. It looked like Indian corn from the colors. Then again, it seemed to be a form of popcorn, though I can not be really sure.

The basketball game

This is another incident involving my imagination, and it got Tom into trouble. We were home alone after supper, and we were responsible for washing and drying the dishes.

My imagination was working again as I viewed the doorway between the kitchen of 417 and the door to the cellar. I pictured a basketball goal hung on the top of the doorway. Then I proceeded to dunk the ball in the goal. (My "ball" was the towel the dished had been dried with. It was rolled up.) Tom joined me doing this.

Unfortunately, the kitchen wall at the time was made of cellotex, and it did not take the pounding that we were giving it. After a while some of it came down (a couple of 3 foot strips 6" wide). Needless to say, someone got into trouble for this. The only thing was that it was Tom rather than me. When he complained, Mom replied, "That's alright. You have done things before for which Dan was blamed." She was thinking that this undeserved punishment made up for the punishments he deserved some times in the past. (It really did not.)

Yes the imagination can get a person into trouble when used wrong. There are many great things that can result from using the imagination as well. We have to first make

sure that our imagination is used for good rather than for harm in some way.

Renters

A family had moved to the St. Louis area and began attending Sharon Church. They seem to be having some financial problems. Anyway, my parents decided to extend them a helping hand by offering our upstairs as a place to live for a while. Things did not go very well, and they did not remain in our home for any extended period of time. Where they moved from our home I do not know. Seems like they may have gone to another part of the country. Since we never kept contact with them, I don't know.

My solar oven

I had read an article in Boy's Life (Scout Magazine) about this. It even had directions for creating one out of cardboard, aluminum foil, and masking tape (to hold it all together). It took some time for me to do it. I was rather disappointed in the results, but I shouldn't have been. By holding an oven thermometer out in front of the middle of it, I got it to register 135 degrees on an oven thermometer. It may not be warm enough to cook with (this is what I think I wanted), but it could burn someone. Mathematically, the interior shape was in the form of a parabola that had been rotated a full 360 degrees.

Yet, I was rather proud of myself that I had built it. I was even showing it off including the wife that was part of the renting family that year. I touched her arm with it not really understanding how hot 135 degrees is. Obviously, it hurt, and my Dad scolded me rather severely for doing so. (What was I thinking?)

The ping pong set

I don't know when we got this set. It contained either 2 or 4 paddles, a net, and some balls. Periodically, we would

have to buy some more balls because these plastic balls became brittle as they aged and would break easily when hit. Originally, we played on the kitchen table with the fold down leaves up. This was fairly wide, but the table was not really long enough.

We also used a table with a white metal top and the rest of it was wood that had been painted orange many years before. It was longer but not as wide. The metal top had a raised edge around the entire table. With that table, we were constantly trying to hit the ball toward that edge. When this happened, the ball would bounce in wildly different directions. This made things very interesting for everyone who played on this table, and this was the one that was used the most. It sure was fun to watch the ping pong ball bounce in all sorts of different directions.

We had had this table for a long time. It was the very table that contained the sugar in its bin which I played in. I remember seeing this same table in the basement decades after this. Mom was still using it for various purposes. It was still good, so there was no reason for throwing it out.

Grandparent's 50th wedding anniversary 1906 - 1956

They were married on April 14, 1906, and Tom was born 40 years later on their anniversary. The celebration was scheduled for August instead of April: I think this was because Uncle Arthur could not come earlier, but Aunt Marie living in Michigan might have had an affect on the date as well.

I must admit that I was very bored with the whole thing. (Being timid and amidst far too many strangers caused this.) Crystal was used to serve the punch and seem far too formal. The punch did not taste very good either. But something that did catch my attention (at least for a short

time) was the letter they received from President Eisenhower because of this anniversary.

Etta had finished her Junior year in June, and Aunt Marie wanted her to attend college in Michigan. So there were some financial offerings as well such as paying part or all of her costs. This did not set very well with Mom and Dad.

Then again, Dad and Aunt Marie were not close at all. At some time in the past, she had promised to put Dad through a Veterinarian school if he would go. (He didn't.)

Her husband's relatives lived in California, and they would visit fairly often. At the time, US 66 (know as Route 66) ran from Chicago through Edwardsville to perhaps Los Angeles. (A TV program would later be produced about this highway.)

Each of their trips were planned carefully with motel or hotels being booked in advanced. Usually, this would bring them through our town around 11:00 - 11:30 AM. So, they would stop for a rather short time. But by the time Dad got off work for lunch, it was time to leave so they could make their scheduled lodging place for the night. Dad would get home shortly after they left. We children in school would have the same fate: too late.

As I said, they planned their trips carefully. They just were not carefully enough to include some time to visit with her brother, sister-in-law, and their children... So, why should my parents consider any offers for college when Aunt Marie had so little time of us up to that point?

The next time that I saw Aunt Marie was when I was in college. This time she actually stayed about a week before going to Lawrenceville to be with her mother. (I think this was one of the times when Grandma Lewis was having medical problems.) The one thing that I learned that week: how to knit.

Grandmother's heart attack

She did not really eat properly, and all of the pressures of this anniversary got to her soon after it was over. She was in the hospital for some time around the same time that President Eisenhower had his heart attack. There would be many times over a period of 20 plus years that she would spend weeks to months in the hospital because of ill health of one type or another.

She grew up using lard, and that was a big part of the problem. In fact, I think Aunt Marie's visit while I was in college had something to do with this. She had been a nurse, and she came down to see what she could do to correct any problems. Grandma said that Aunt Marie insisted that all the lard be thrown out and only certain shortenings be used which were suppose to be better than lard. Well like most adults, Grandma did not take this laying down. After Aunt Marie left, she went back to using lard. Any time Aunt Marie came, the lard was hidden and the appropriate shortening appeared in its place before her arrival. How do I know? She bragged about it.

But now we know that the shortening Aunt Marie wanted her mother to use is just as dangerous as lard. It was partially hydrogenated oil. So, Grandma was not really any better off with it. At best, the problem could only be solved by reducing the amount of fat used.

During one hospital stay, she was suffering from a gall bladder attack. While Dad was over there, his father baked her a squash pie with the pie crust made with lard (the squash had lard in it as well). Dad had to put his foot down this time. The pie never left the house. My grandfather did not understand what effect lard would have on the gall bladder when it is inflamed.

She would later have her gall bladder removed. It was filled with gall stones! (Overfilled would be a better description. Perhaps a pint of them?)

The lesson here is that there are times when we do not really understand what is the best thing to do. At these times we need to listen to others who do know. Proper nutrition and exercise are very important as people age. Without them, the body is no longer able handle the stresses of life as well. There are many medical problems that are much more common among the poorly nourished.

Senior High School

Dad did not work steadily for long periods of time since he left the Army Depot until the last year or so. Route 66 was a very busy highway and getting busier all of the time. Worse: it was going through the downtown areas of many smaller towns including Edwardsville. So, plans had been made to move this very important highway outside of all of these towns. It would become a divided four lane highway instead of the two lane it had been. Also interchanges were designed to provide access to the cities and towns along its route.

Dad had gotten a job on this project to build the forms for the concrete structures near our town. (This included bridges and culverts for drainage. So as fall approached, he had been working regularly for a while. But the completion of the project was nearing. (The date for opening was sometime in September.)

Shortly after he was no longer needed on the highway work, he was hired by a man building houses about 50 miles northwest of our home. (This was probably through the carpenter's union hall.) The man had plans to build several houses over the next several years and wanted Dad to work for him in these projects. Dad did. In addition to the planned work, people would approach the man to build a house as well. One was a much larger than normal sized house.

While Dad built some houses during the 20 years he worked for himself, much of his jobs were repair work, "odd jobs". So, he was working here for a short while and then there. Getting indoor work during the winter months was more difficult than during the spring to fall months. So, finances were somewhat of a problem. We survived, but prospering was another matter until now.

Getting ready for high school

As the school year approached, some registration was necessary. This included providing more information about myself. There were certain specific courses required. There were also a variety of classes available. Was I planning to go to college? Did I want vocational training? Did I know what type of career I wanted after graduation? So much information...

I declared that I wanted to be a math teacher. (Why I chose this, I do not know. It just seemed right.) This meant that I needed a college degree. Hence I should choose the college preparatory program. This meant four years of English (English Essentials and Composition required), four years of science, two years of a foreign language, American History (required for all students), and four years of mathematics.

Four school years later, I had taken and passed four years of English, four years of math, five years of science, two years of Spanish, American History, Boy's Chorus, 2 years of A Capella Choir, Driver's Education (in summer school), and typing (in night school). The latter was non credit. There was also two years of health and four years of PE. (Being out for a recognized sport fulfilled this requirement which was the case my sophomore through senior years.)

So, what I would be doing in school was determined. What about the rest of my life during the school year? This was also determined to great extent. First of all, I had two paper routes that I delivered Monday through Saturday. This required me getting up at 5 AM, eating cereal for breakfast, off to deliver the papers by 5:30, and return home by 6:30 to 7:00. Then I ate again before heading to school for the day. School lasted from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM. Then it was home, supper, study time, and bed by 9 PM.

Church services were on the first and third weekend. Sometimes we might attend church on the fifth weekend but seldom on the second and fourth. Camping, when it was done, was on these weekends.

As school began I moved from a scout troop to my Dad's explorer troop. (This was for high school students.) With the number of events that involve this, I have chosen to place all of them in [one place](#).

Freshman 1956-1957

The first day of school was for freshmen orientation only. All 300 of us met in the gym for general information before assigned to our individual home rooms. As probably has been said in previous years, our class was the largest freshman class ever. So, the school population was also the largest. But there was a record in this as well. This had hit 1,000 students in four grades for the first time. It was almost causing a problem. There was hardly enough room for everyone! (This was first evident the first time all four classes were assembled in the gym at once.) How many students were in the freshman class this year? 300.

After the assembly was over, I headed to Room 221 (I think) which was the Art room. Miss Hoffman (well her name began with an H) had become my home room teacher for the next four years. She was rather young (not more than a couple of years out of college if that much). She was also very nice.

She had to get some information from us as well as hand out our individual class schedules. So this took some time. We also got locker assignments and keys to them. (At least some of these were next to others in our home room.) Mine happened to be just outside the gym which made it easier to find. Then when the bell rang, it was time to go to the first class of the day.

For two years, I had been going from home room to the first class with my class as a group. Not so today. In fact, I was the only one in my home room going to this class. Everyone else was going to a bunch of different classes. Strange! (I would get use to it.)

Things from this point went rather smoothly. The building was much larger than the Junior High building. So this took some getting use to. Meanwhile, some upper class people had volunteered to help us lowly freshmen find our way around. This was very helpful. (I only needed help one time.)

By the end of the day, I could make my way around to where I needed to be fairly well. I also had a stack of textbooks. How many of them would I take home to do the assignments in them? How many could I leave at school to do their homework during study hall? It was now time to head home. So, I started walking...

How do I get to school and back? Well, the school was at the other end of Schwarz Street from my home, about a mile away. This was a little farther than I had been walking to school in the past. We were expected to get too and from school on our own, rain or shine. This left me two choices each morning: walk or ride my bicycle. The school had bicycle racks for this.

Audio Visual Aids Club

Twice a month, time was made for clubs to meet. Some of them were service in nature as this one was. Others were academic as in the Spanish club. I joined both of these as they met on two different Wednesdays.

I remained in the Spanish club until I completed taking my Spanish classes. Then I probably joined another club to replace this one. I just don't remember what.

The Audio Visual Aids Club was a different matter. I remained a member throughout high school. I really enjoyed

this club.

We volunteered to show films for any of the classes who needed to see them. Teachers would schedule when they wanted to show a film with the club sponsor. Then she would assign a member who had a study hall period at this time to show it. She also sent us a note which we could use to get out of study hall for this.

Here are some thoughts I have had about my experiences in this club:

Webb had joined two clubs when he began high school: this one and the one that ran the sound system. I was following his lead in also joining this one but not the sound system club. So, I was partially playing "follow the leader." I did not have any idea of what I should do and got no guidance either. (Did I even ask for it?)

However, it turned out to be well worth the time I spent doing it. In a sense, I gained some self-worth: I was doing something for others that they could not do for themselves. I was learning how to be responsible. I also learned some things as I watched the movies. (When you cream butter, you don't try to mix butter and milk together: you beat the butter using a mixer. What a mess! Well it pays to warm the butter up enough to soften it.)

Academics

This year my classes were English I, Spanish I, General Science, Algebra, health/PE, and boy's chorus. (PE was three days a week, and health was twice a week during the same period. This would be true for my Sophomore year as well.) I also had a study hall period during the fifth period.

Algebra was sixth period (the last one of the day). This meant the room was fairly warm and windows were opened to cool the air down in the room. Then we had a lot of noise to contend with from the traffic.

Our room was on the southeast part of the building placing us about 100 yards from the corner of West Schwarz St and Route 66 (a very busy federal highway). To make matters worse, this intersection was at the bottom of a hill. Semi trucks had to drive up it as they drove by the school.

More than once on a warm afternoon, I hear my teacher tell us that she wished they would finally open the new US 66 bypass so the noise would subside some.

One of these times, I told her that my Dad said it would be open during September (this was in early October). Later I realized that it was already open. The noise we were now hearing was local traffic only. Really quiet warm afternoons was wishful thinking.

But warm temperatures were not always the problem. It can and does get cold for a couple of days in September as well. (It happened every year while I was in high school.) Yet, the school would not heat the building during these days.

The insurance on the building won't let us." This was always the reason given for waiting until the first day of October to begin running the heating plant which provided the hot water (or was that steam?) to heat the building. Was this the real reason, or the school board did not want to pay what it would cost to run the heating plant a couple of days in September. (I believe the latter.) Yet, I also realize that it would cost a lot to do it.

Meanwhile, I had made arrangements for going out for cross country after school. This of course made my arrival at home close to 5 PM and not all that much before supper. Our coach (an assistant) was also a business and driver's education teacher. (Maybe he only did the latter. I'm not sure.)

He certainly put us through our paces as he taught us things we needed to know. One time he had us running from

one place to another. He must have thought we were **not** doing our best. Well, he ran with us, and not all of us arrived at the finish point before him. I guess some were not. (I did manage to reach there before he did, but not by much...)

One of the things he taught us was the importance of discipline. Well, I had gone out for touch football in junior high (didn't play in any games) as well. Discipline was stressed here as well. Then I wonder how much of this I have really used. Sometimes, it seems not very much.

However: During my out-patient therapy after my stroke, I was always pushing myself like we did in track and cross country. The therapy required discipline on my part which I applied to my recovery. I always did more than what was required of me. So, very possibly what I had done so long ago was very important now.

This ended around the last of October. It had been interesting to say the least. Results: I began getting home before 4 PM instead of an hour later.

Boys Chorus (1st tenor)

The first day in this class was a shocker! For the past two years, I had been singing soprano parts. During the summer I had not noticed any change in my vocal range either. Why am I being put in with tenors and basses?

Well, I had changed and not even noticed it. During this first class we began work on our first song. The music teacher was playing the notes we were to sing in the bass cleft. Lower notes that I would not have been able to reach a couple of months ago were easy to sing. I could still reach notes that are higher than normal for a man, so I had not lost that ability. But now I could reach much lower notes as well. My vocal range had widened.

I have always enjoyed singing, and being in this chorus was very enjoyable as well. As a result, I was picked to

become a part of the A Capella Choir for the next year by the present music teacher. I assume this happened at the end of this school year.

General science

Flashback

It was a little over six years earlier that I had walked into this room for the first time. I was a cub scout at the time. Mr. Gibson was showing something about photography and how film is developed. (I only remember part of the things he did that evening.) Part of the things were done in total darkness, and other parts were done with a small red light on.

What I do remember is the effects of the red light on my uniform. Under normal lighting, it was a combination of yellows and navy blue. But under the red light, the yellow no longer appeared yellow. For that matter, the blue was not blue. He explained that depending upon the color of the light, a given colored cloth would appear to be a different color than it should be. So, walking into this room again brought back this memory.

The room was just like it was before. His desk was there, but there were no student chairs in the room. Instead there were several laboratory tables with four chair to each table.

So, I sat down at my assigned table. He got some information from us and gave us our textbook. He also told us that we would have to get a spiral notebook for this class emphasizing that all assignments must be put in it. There was no exception to this rule.

After Labor Day I was doing an assignment in class, writing in my new notebook. That is when I happened to glance at the girl across the table from me. More accurately, I was starrng at her handwriting in her notebook. I had never seen any so fancy, and I do mean fancy!

My handwriting? Most doctors write far better than I was. So, I became very ashamed of mine. So much so that I determined to do something about it. But, what can I do? Thinking back to second or third grade when I began learning how to write cursively, I remember doing something like drawing circles. Well, I decided to just begin drawing each letter being as careful as I could.

As days passed, my handwriting began to be come more legible. And by the end of the year, it was quite good. It never did reach the fancy style of this girl, but it is far better than most people. (It still is now.) So, here is another thing that I was able to make better because I worked at it.

Not everyone in the family knew what I had done. Possibly no one did, especially Etta. Well at the end of the year we were in a heated discussion about something, and she made a nasty remark about my handwriting. (She should not have done that.)

My General Science notebook happened to be near me at this point. That was when I did not like what she had said, and I was not to stand for it either. So, I reached over to the notebook and tossed it to her. As I did so, I said in an angry voice or my own, "Look at this and say that!"

While I did not get the apology she owed me, she did say, "Well, it use to be bad" (or words to that effect). What she saw when she looked through the notebook was the complete opposite of what she was expecting!

English class

Again I bring you back to the first of the year as I look at the two memories I had from this class taught by Mrs. Helm. We spent the first semester studying literature and the second semester learning grammar.

St. Louis Poet Society

During the fall, we studied short stories and their structure. poetry and novels were included as well.

It was while studying poetry she gave us a in class assignment: write a poem. So we all did. It was what she did with the poems that surprised me. Well, she graded the poems to begin with, of course.

She belonged to this society and attended its meetings. (One seems to have been shortly after we wrote our poems.) She took what she considered to be the best poems with her. Then she read them in the meeting!

We did not know this until she told us she wanted to read the best ones to the class. That is when she also mentioned that she had shared these poems at the society meeting. So, she read three poems. That was when I was shocked: she read mine! ("Was mine really that good?" I wondered.)

Book reports instead of homework

Literature was interesting, but nothing quite this surprising had happened for the rest of the semester.

Then the second semester had begun; grammar was the subject at hand. Yet, literature was still on her mind somewhat. She felt that it did not get as much attention as it should. If we were going on to college, we were also going to face some difficult course or courses in literature. We needed a better background in this area. (She was right!)

She intended to do something about this with us. (We were on a 9 week grading system with 18 weeks per semester.) For the third nine weeks, we would all study grammar. Then the people getting the best grades would get a choice to make for the final nine weeks. They could do book reports of novels in place of the normal assignments if they chose. Of course, anyone doing this must continue to keep their grades up in the tests she would give the class. She really wanted the best students to take this choice.

Then came the end of the third nine weeks and our grades for it. Three people had qualified to make this choice: two girls and one boy. I was he!

Who took this choice. Well, no one knew until the next class assignment became due. (I think she had us grade each others papers with her help.) When reporting our grades to her, both girls decided to do the grammar assignments. When it came to me, I mentioned that I had decided to do the book reports.

When I did this, I was very nervous! What would everyone think? Would they think that I was trying to get out of some work? For that matter, I don't know what the teacher thought. Was she happy with my decision? Was she disappointed with what the girls had done?

So for the rest of the nine weeks, I completed two book reports: David Copperfield, and Treasure Island. She was satisfied with my efforts.

I also kept up with what everyone was suppose to learn about grammar. So, at the end of the semester, I earned another A⁻ average. As a result, I earned the highest grades in English compared to all other years.

During the second semester I was learning the English lessons just like all the other members of the class, but I was learning how to apply them on my own. Similarly, I learned I could do something that I was originally afraid to do in PE.

PE and health

We had PE three days a week and health twice. I suppose this should be considered rather boring. In fact, most of the time it was.

At some time during the year, they had hung large ropes (2-3" diameter) from the metal rafters. For a period of days we would climb them.

Now, I was as still afraid of heights. So, it was hard to climb up very far. (I might fall down!) But our teacher taught us how to hold the rope with our feet and legs. With the amount of exercise my legs got each day, they were quite strong. So, once I got above the floor, I learned that I could rely upon my legs to keep me from falling at all. From there I felt safe enough to learn how to climb using both hands and legs. I could now climb all the way to the rafters without fear of falling any more. No, I did not like to be that high above the floor, but I was confident that I could get down safely anytime I wanted to do so.

Fifth Sunday meeting

It was during the fifth Sunday of March, 1957 that something "strange" happened. It was Easter Sunday and very cold.

I had heard my Dad say many times, "If It rains on Easter Sunday, it will rain on Sunday for the next seven Sundays." During the service either Sunday morning or afternoon, my mind began to wonder. I happened to look outside only to see snowflakes falling outside! My thoughts? Well, if rain on Easter Sunday will bring rain for the next seven Sundays, does this mean that snow on Easter Sunday will bring snow for the same period of time? (Nope, it didn't. Imagination strikes again!)

Spring time

This happened in Algebra class. Behind me sat a boy who was also in my homeroom and may have sat close to me there as well. Anyway, he did something that bothered me, so I turned around and grabbed his hair. (The teacher would have to see it.) Uh oh!

She had a table in the front of the room for some reason, and I got put in a chair seated at it for my behavior. But when she began teaching, she did so in front of the table

which put me to her back. The students could see what I was doing, but she could not.

Now, I had learned how to place a piece of gum I had been chewing in my cheek above either eye tooth. Without looking carefully, no one would notice the slight bulge.

That was where I had some gum this afternoon. (Chewing gum in class was a no-no.) So, once she began to teach, I pulled the gum back down and chewed away. This got a reaction from the other students who saw me. But the teacher never did discover what I was doing. Besides I was watching her very carefully. Had she even started to turn around, the gum would have quickly disappeared into my hiding place.

The other happening of the spring was track practice. Like cross country in the fall, I remained at school after the last class to do so. The big difference was that those of us doing this were left to ourselves for the most part.

I tried the pole vault but did not know how to do it. (I was not really fast enough to use the pole to vault even over 3'!) Then I tried the high jump with the same results. And then there was the hurdles, low and high. In the end, like Webb, I settled on the long distance events: mile and half mile.

Junior-Senior Prom

I don't remember if Etta went to this even during both of her last two years of school or not. But this is more about four of her classmates who did something they should not have done.

There were a variety of event which included the dance, a movie (early morning), and breakfast at 5 AM. At some point these two couples left the dance and drove around. During this time they drove across a railroad crossing. They arrived about the same time that a train did. None survived... Everyone was in shock when they heard what

happened. There were so many questions, but there were no answers. Four people who had so much to look forward to were gone forever.

Graduation

This was Etta's class. She had worked so hard for four years, and now she was getting the benefits of it: she was in the top 10% of her class. She had done several other things as well: president of the science club as a senior, and top student in the committee putting the yearbook together.

Was anything done special for this? I don't remember of any. But then again, it was not my graduation. She is bound to have memories of the time that I do not.

Summer 1957

By April, Mom was gaining weight. I was ignorant of the facts of life, so I did not notice. Etta was a different matter. She was now a young woman, so she was wondering if her mother was about to have another baby. She was right.

Mom's late pregnancy

In the 1950's, things like this were not discussed. But the time had come when my parents could no longer put off this discussion. We had to be told.

The first of June they finally told us that she was expecting, and she began wearing larger clothes. All of this happened just before the first weekend of June which was a church weekend. There would be questions that Mom would get from the church members. This proved as interesting to me as her...

Conversation with nurse

Sister Sally Baker was a nurse, and she was curious about what she was seeing that weekend. For some reason, she decided to ask me to verify that Mom was expecting. I almost wish that I had a recording of that conversation. For

the next perhaps 5 minutes, I made positive statements about Mom being pregnant followed by statement that began with "on the other hand"... and were negative. This was followed by another positive statement. This cycle of positive and negative statements continued. She got so confused with me going around robin hood's barn that she finally gave up and went directly to Mom. (Yes, I was really enjoying myself as I did this!)

Mark's death: spontaneous abortion

However, health wise things began going downhill after that weekend. Mom was not feeling well at all. At one point she sent me to our doctor with a urine sample. (I was given specific explicit directions on what I was to do.) Her voice told me that something was wrong, and that bothered me.

So I headed downtown with the urine. Then I climbed up the steps to his office with a weird filling in the pit of my stomach. (Perhaps I was remembering all of the shots and other doctor's visits I had had before.) Going into the office, I handed the urine to him. Then he allowed me to follow him into the lab where he performed some test on it. Results: nothing was wrong with it.

In a few days, Mom started having contractions, and this really bothered Mom. This was her seventh month, and she had heard that this could mean trouble for both the baby and mother. She got hold of Dad as a result.

So, off to the hospital in Granite City they went. (The hospital in Maryville had not been even planned then.) We, the children were at home alone waiting for any information. (We did not know what to expect.) Then came the word that the baby did not survive, but Mom was OK.

Mom did tell us some of the things that happened at the hospital. They had put her in the Labor room. At some time, the doctor came in and was working with her. He was talking about moving her to the delivery room when she

interrupted him. She told him that the baby was already coming, and it was. So Mark was born in the Labor room. While others attended to her needs, the doctor was working on the baby. This was going on too long for her: she knew instinctively that there was something wrong with it. Sure enough, the doctor never could get it to take even the first breath.

Etta was hit rather hard when the news came. There has been some speculation that had the baby been a girl, she would have suffered a great deal more. Meanwhile, Tom and I were having our own problems. We spend quite some time in the backyard swings talking about the baby and what would happen to it. Was it going to Heaven? Several questions along this line. The only thing was that I did not have any answer to them. Tom being four years younger did not either.

Prior to the funeral, we four children were given the choice of the name for the baby. Dad was the one that asked all four children for our choice for the baby. (This may have been because Mom and Dad discussed this between themselves.) Our choice was Mark without a middle name.

The funeral was held at Webbers' as would Dad's and then Mom's later. Elder Ford preached the funeral, and his wife Betty sang at least one hymn (Safe in the Arms of Jesus). For some reason, I don't remember very many people being there (were there any?).

Then Mom came home from the hospital after the funeral. At least she was home and safe. I had no idea what to expect of her after her pregnancy ended. I would find out.

But first one more piece of information that I got from her about the death of Mark: she used the term spontaneous abortion for the ending of her pregnancy. Her thoughts were that her body sensed that something was wrong and

expelled it. So, for a change, I got an answer that I asked for.

Changes required in family behavior

Finances were still limited, so we were doing what we could to limit expenses. One of them was flushing the toilet only after several people had used it. But this practice had to stop. After having a baby she could get a nasty infection from sitting on a toilet that had not been flushed since the last time it was used. I also noticed that she was having trouble getting down the steps as she used a chair at the top of the steps to help her. She had to lean on it while placing her foot on the next step down.

What I did not learn is how many of her problems were normal after a pregnancy, and how many were because of her age. I am inclined to think there was a little bit of both. There is very little that I learned about a pregnancy at this time.

Some time after the funeral, Etta left for the camp across from Camp Sunnon as a counselor. She would return in August shortly before heading to college. Webb was very likely at Camp Sunnon as a counselor as he had in the past. And this left Tom and me at home. Well, we managed to make it through the summer.

Sophomore 1957-1958

There were changes between my freshman and sophomore years. Etta had graduated, and Webb was beginning his senior year. (He had some ups and downs this year.)

Etta heads to Greeley, Co

I did not keep up with Etta's dating habits or even if she was seeing anyone regularly. But obviously she had been either seeing one young man or writing to his regularly.

This year, he was attending a college in Greeley. So, Etta decided to follow him there. How was she going to get there? The obvious answer was that the two of them could drive there together and share the expenses. So, when the time came, off they went. (Well we knew his family very well, so everything seemed OK.)

But it wasn't. As Etta later put it, "He wanted to have his cake and eat it too." She was not willing to provide him with the benefits he wanted without strings attached to them. That is when their friendship went out the window permanently.

She remained in college through her first or second quarter. At that time she left for Denver to work. Finances might have played a very important part. (I don't know how much money she had put aside for college nor what the out of state tuition was.) But she did get some help in finding a place to stay and work.

My school year

This year I would be taking English II, Plane Geometry, Spanish II, Biology, and A Capella Choir. There were also PE and Health again. (English II draws a blank. It obviously was not as interesting as English I had been.)

A Capella Choir (1st tenor)

The music teacher who had been at Edwardsville for many years retired at the end of my freshman year. Before he left, he picked the people who would be in the Girl's Chorus and A Capella Choir for the next year. I was one of the boys chosen for the latter. I suppose I took my choice as a sophomore as a given. This was not because I considered myself that good. It was only later that I learned sophomores do not get chosen that often. I was actually that good.

Biology class

Originally, I was scheduled to have Biology during the last period, and a study hall second period. So, after class the first day I asked Miss Hunter if I could switch these two classes. The class was for the brighter students, and past grades had to be good to get into this class. If I qualified and she agreed I would have a study hall the last period so that I could go out for cross country during the last period. The same thing was true for track next spring.

So, she took me down to the office while she checked out my grades. They were, and she agreed with the schedule change.

For years, Miss Hunter insisted that all of her biology students create an insect collection. Etta and Webb had taken this class their sophomore years. And during August they had begun their collections. As I was following them, I began mine in August as well. So, as school began just before Labor Day, I already had several specimens. Of course, she gave us more ideas of what we could do. As a result, our collections got larger. Labeling all of these insects took some study! What insect was it? And there were other questions as well to be answered about each insect.

Some of the things that we did in this class were very interesting, some were not. Specifically, memorizing the classifications of plants and animals were **not!**

Lab work

Ah my imagination! (I think this fits the following.) During the fall, we were dissecting worms to see their organs and where they were placed (anatomy, anyone?) Anyway, this particular day we were having spaghetti for lunch. Dissecting worms second period and eating spaghetti for lunch. (Do you see the connection?)

One of my favorite part of this course was using the microscope. More so, when we made our own slides. There was so much to see, so much to learn. The following are just

some of them. The first thing was to learn how to use the microscope...

Our microscopes had three lenses: low, medium, and high. (I'm not sure of the magnification.) She stressed that the proper sequence was to use them in the order listed. Even skipping a step would probably not let us see what we want. The key was to focus what we want to see with the low magnification lens. Then make sure what we want to look at is in the center of what we see. Time to switch to the medium lens and repeat the process. Finally, switch to the highest lens and do this all over again.

And yet, there was one more warning. When using the highest magnification, very slowly adjust the focus. This is because this lens is very close to the slide and easily crack the slide cover if one is not careful. (I followed directions, and so I never had a problem.)

Standards slides were used for many of the things taught in the textbook. So, it made more sense to have these rather than make a set of new slides of the same things every year. We would be looking at specific things on the slide. Besides, some slides would be too time consuming to repeatedly make.

In other cases such as those below, it did make sense. There were a variety of things to look at in some circumstances that might be different from one time to the next such as the slide containing our mouth swabs. (No two of these were likely to be alike even in a single class.)

Each slide consisted of a rectangular piece of glass and a thin glass rectangle. The specimen would be centered on the slide, a small drop of water added in some cases, and the cover gently placed on top. Sometimes a liquid was to be added. If so, medicine dropper was used, and it was applied at the edge of the cover.

At some point, we were given some pond water and told to make a slide of it. When I viewed it, I saw all kinds of small animals. It was unbelievable that so much could live in such a small space! Some of them were moving, and others were not. And then I saw it, a lowly amoeba. And just as the textbook described it, it was "flowing" from one place to another. I could also see the granular cytoplasm and the nucleus clearly.

Emphasis was made of the difference between multi-celled plants and animals: the plant cell walls were made of cellulose. Animal cells only have a cell membrane. But when I saw a slide depicting this, it became quite clear. I could see why plants can stand up without a skeleton of any type. Yes, I could read this in the textbook, but seeing it makes it more real.

This is one case where a new slide has to be made every time. This was to answer the question of what is the effects of salt upon a plant. It is harmful we know, but why? So we prepared a slide with a small slice of a plant.

Then we brought the slide into focus so we could see the individual cells. Finally, we added a small amount of salt water to the edge of the slide cover. Immediately, the salt moved through the water already under the slide cover making all the water salty.

Very quickly, the salt water penetrated the cell causing it to swivel up completely! Then cell walls broke apart. The salt had destroyed the cells.

Later we were studying photosynthesis and how leaves did this. We already learned how water and other nutrients were brought from the roots to the leaves. Now we were going to see how the carbon dioxide from the air got into the leaf so that photosynthesis could occur. So, back to the slides. Low and behold, there were little holes in the leaves that could open or close depending upon the circumstances.

Air flowed into these "holes" bringing the carbon dioxide into the plant. They are called stoma. (Gee, I remember after several decades!)

And sometime during the year, Miss Hunter instructed us to take a swab of the lining of our cheek. Then we made a slide of it. This was perhaps the yuckiest slides I made that year.

This reminded me of the pond water slide we made earlier in the year. Very informative, yes! But i was also ashamed of what I saw. Then again, I did not really know what a swab from a "clean" mouth should look like either.

Plane Geometry

Miss Helm began the first class with an explanation of the importance of this subject: how it could be compared with a fine painting, famous works of art, etc. There may have been some that understood what she was saying, others like me did not. I did not even appreciate famous paintings or works of arts.

With time I came to understand the importance of the part of mathematics. Even more so, I have come to understand the important effects the structure of plane geometry has had on other parts of mathematics and the use of logic. In essence, one begins with what is considered to be the truth and then uses logic to determine what else can be proven to be true.

Anyone having taken this course knows that day after day the students have to prove things at the board. It becomes a matter of studying proofs in the textbook and then later repeating them at the board. Students seldom get past this stage while in this class. Many will not do this unless they have to do so.

Kenneth Hyten and I were the ones in our class who were ready most of the time to go to the board to prove

theorems. In fact, Miss Helm fussed at the rest of the class for not being better prepared.

To get more than a C⁺ grade, a person had to solve extra problems which she would give out each day. I could have easily done enough of these get straight A's, but I did not. What was holding me back? I didn't know. Perhaps, I saw them as just things to do without knowing what I would learn when I solved them.

The extras presented problems in a new light, something different from the written proofs in the book. I would be learning how to apply logic to new situations which required me to use what I knew in order to find the solutions.

Case in point: the smartest sophomore girl, Mary Ann, asked me a question about one of the extra problems that had been assign that day. This seemed a little strange to me. Why would she ask me? Yet it was also a challenge, so I looked very carefully at the problem and discovered how to solve it. But I did not take the time to write down the solution and turn it in for extra credit. I told her the next morning that I had solved the problem, and she told me thanks but she had figured it out overnight.

She was one of the eight students in my graduating class to be named as a National Merit Scholarship finalist. To become only a semifinalist, she had to score in top 1% in every area of the exam. And to think, she would then score among the top of the 1%-ers on a follow up exam! Well, I have heard that when she entered Washington University as a freshman the fall of 1960, she took and passed Advanced Placement exams that gave her credits for all of her freshman classes. She began college as a sophomore!

Sputnik

Sometime in the fall, we got the alarming news that the Russians had put a satellite into orbit. It was a fairly small

object with a radio in it. Anyone who tuned to its frequency when it was overhead hear, "beep beep beep..." That is not very much!

This was a novelty for us, but for our government, the attitude was much different. It was the usual knee jerk mentality that has often dictated what gets done. The McCarthy era was another situation. 911 (September 11) is another example. This usually means a reaction that goes way beyond what is required.

Along with the Russian success and the first several failures we had, the country developed a bad attitude. The thing is that we did not know how many failures the Russians had had before the first success. We still don't that I know of. More about this from my viewpoint in my Junior year.

Spanish project

I was taking my second year of Spanish this year, and this required a project from each student. I do not know how I picked mine, but I wrote (in Spanish) to what I thought was the national headquarters for the Boy Scouts in Mexico.

I had gotten the address from someone in boy scouts locally. Of course, this was in English. The bottom of the address was Mexico City, Mexico. But I decided to write this in Spanish which I thought would be Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico. It was sort of close. Mexico City is like Washington which lies with the District of Columbia (Washington DC). What should it have been? Mexico DF, Mexico.

After waiting for some time, I finally received a reply. Someone with in the Boy Scout organization there replied in Spanish and sent me some other information as well. The letter suggested was for me to become a pen pal of a boy scout in Mexico if I was interested. This could be arranged though the office which answered my letter. In the end, I

chickened out and just translated the Spanish letter sent to me into English.

What I had not counted on was the Spanish magazine that came with it. In one class, I had the magazine out looking at something, and a girl asked to see it. Well, I did. Then I heard a small scream come out of her mouth. When I got the magazine back (rather quickly, I might add), I discovered why she did this. On one of the inside pages was a picture of a painting: an topless woman. I had not noticed this before, and I did not spend any time in that part of the magazine again! I don't even remember if there was any more art of this type elsewhere in the magazine. I may have been too afraid to even look!

Cross Country

Back in August, football practice had started. But cross country did not start until shortly after the school year did. Anyone wanting to go out for this had to come to the high school one night for a physical. If we passed this, we were on the team. But we had to work hard to make the varsity which was limited to the top seven students. Webb made it; I was kept the junior varsity.

Cross Country was a fairly new sport in our area. From the beginning, we were a power house in this sport. It was added mostly for the basketball players. This way they could get in shape for basketball without having to play football which might lead to injuries. Then after November 1, they could officially begin basketball practice. We had several good runners, and none of them played basketball.

By October cross country was winding down. But there was one last meet that was very important: the regional meet which was mid to late October. It included schools from several of the surrounding counties. The winners could then look forward to the state meet in Champaign, IL. There

they would be competing with the best teams from every part of the state.

The top two teams would advanced to the state meet. Individual runners could qualify for the state meet as well. But they had to finish in the top 50 runners finishing the race.

Before the race some of the runners, who knew each other from the meets held during the year, gathered together before the race began to talk. As the time grew near, one runner (6'3" or taller) told the rest of them to look at him now. Once the race began, all they would see of him would be the back of his head. (He was this good.)

The gun sounded, and off they all went. Sure enough, the boy was not joking in what he had said: he was at the front of the pack and gradually pulling away.

In fact, he was the only runner seen as he neared the finish line some hundreds of yards away. Then a second runner appeared behind him. The race to the finish was now between Mutt and Jeff as the second runner was 5' 6" or so. How could the shorter runner over take the taller one? Doesn't seem possible. But he did. Mike Blazer won this race; not the runner from Collinsville.

We placed either first or second, but I am not sure which. That meant our team of 7 boys were going to Champaign. Webb was one of them.

He went with the team while and Tom and I went with Dad. Strange how some things are remembered: it was a football weekend at U of I, and there was a special speed limit for traffic heading to Champaign that day (55 MPH instead of the normal 65 MPH). This made us arrive later than Dad had anticipated. But we were not late.

Other families from our school had made the trip also to cheer our team on. So, we talked with them for a while

before the race began.

The meet was held on the university golf course and was rather demanding according to what I saw. There was a hill (perhaps 50' high) waiting for the runners to climb about 200 yards from the start of the race!

Well, these runners were the best of the best in the state, so no one seemed to be phased by it very much. What more did they face in difficulties? It is impossible to tell: they were already out of sight. So, there is nothing we could do but walk over to where the race was to finish.

First a few runners came in and then more and more of them. It was not difficult to assign where a runner had finished at first. But soon they had to herd the runners into a line according to where they finished. This is not all that easy when the runners were exhausted, breathing hard, and not exactly stable on their feet. The judges managed to do a good job of it though.

Our boys had done very well, or so some of the parents said. They believed from what they had seen that our team had finished at least fifth place. Well we would have to wait a while for the judges to separate out the individual runners and top five from each team. (Had any of these parents been to a state meet before?) Finally, the officials came out with the results. By then our team had showered and joined us.

They began with the 5th place team (not us), then the 4th (no), and then the 3rd. Still not us. Then quite a bit of concern began to rise. Did we really do that poor to be farther back than 5th? But when they announced 2nd place, it was Edwardsville! Those that had come to the meet were really relieved and over joyed! Our score for our top 5 runners was just under 100. So, their average finish was 20th which is excellent.

Giving Webb his due: he was one of our top five runners this day. Way to go!

Webb went back with the team; Dad, Tom, and I went to get something to eat. From there we went to Elder Clapp's home where we would spend the night. (Should I mention that he had a daughter named Nancy a year or so younger than I?) Sunday morning, we all went to New Liberty for church. After lunch served at the church, we headed back home.

Dad's comments about Mom

Mom was delighted that Webb was going to the state cross country meet. She would have loved to have gone to see him run, but she could not. Instead, she had earlier made a commitment that required her to be out of town that weekend. However, she was quite adamant that the rest of the family should go. So we went.

Somehow, I got wind of this disagreement. So, I asked him why we did not stay home. It seems that life would not have been very pleasant for him if he had not done Mom's bidding. This is something that I did not understand. (I think I now do after a 35+ year marriage.)

Thanksgiving weekend trip

School was out at noon on Wednesday as usual. Webb remained at home this weekend. Why? I don't know.

The rest of us left home early Thursday morning heading to Crossville, Illinois. The first thing I noticed when we arrived was the name on the church. It had been organized during the early 1800's, so it a Predestinarian Baptist church. (It would be decades later before the name Primitive Baptist would be used for this denomination. And this church never saw the need to change that part of its name.)

Other than that, there were no differences. In fact, they had invited Elders Clapp and Dodds to preach during its

series of meetings this weekend.

As was the case in many of our country churches, the congregation was made up of mostly older people. So, Nancy Clapp and I were the only teenagers present. We naturally began talking together probably even sitting together during church. But both of us were somewhat nervous as we did. Well, we got more comfortable by the end of the afternoon service that day. We even went further in that we agreed to begin writing. Who wrote first? I don't know.

The letters were closer to newsletters. I would write her about the things I was doing, and she write about her experiences. It was a nice experience to have. Did things every get serious? Seemingly, yes, but that would not be for a year and a half. And then it was I that was beginning to think in that direction; she did not...

The morning service was what I expected, but the afternoon was not. Elder Dodds was a school teacher, and the afternoon service was a history lesson that he conducted. As a result, I was totally board. Mom and Dad thought it was very appropriate. I may not have said very much, but they did not convince me at all. Why? I was stubborn. I was expecting to hear a preacher read a text from the Bible and expound upon it.

With the services over, it was time to say our goodby's. We headed to Dad's parents for the night. Then on Thursday morning, we headed to Cincinnati, OH, and a motel there.

When I said "we" I mean that his parents came with us. So, this Friday night I was in a single motel room with two beds and probably a rollaway bed. Tom and I probably slept in it; the two couples slept in the two beds. I was having some problems with this. I guess this was because I was now older because Grandma's presence in the room made me a little nervous. I survived anyway.

The next morning we headed north to Old Harmony Church in Alexandria, OH. Exactly when we arrived, I don't remember. We did spend the night with Elder Hanover though. Also spending the night was Elder Bibbler.

So, naturally there was a Biblical discussion between the Elders and probably some of the brethren including Dad. That is when Elder Bibbler decided to include me in it as well. He was asking me a question that I really did not understand at all. "Is the kingdom of God in the shape of a triangle or a square?" Well, he explained why he had asked it, but I was more concerned with *why* he had asked me. He may not have had any alternative reason for doing so, but I could not help thinking so.

Another thing happened that night which was the real reason why we had come this far. During the late 1930's and early 1940's, Dad had worked for Elder Hanover. Bad feelings had developed between the two of them for some reason, and this had festered for 20 years. This had been far too long!

This evening was when they finally sat down together and talked things out. With all the accusations in the past finally put to rest, they both felt so much better.

After church, we headed west to Illinois. After driving 250 miles or so, we arrived at my grandparents. Did we travel the other 150 miles to our home that day? We might have. In any case, I was tired of traveling. In fact, I was not even thinking about Nancy at all.

The bomb

During the holidays in December, an advanced chemistry student decided to put his knowledge to work. But it was dangerous to do this, and he did not take the proper precautions. As a result, his device exploded in or near one of his hands. While he could have killed himself, he only lost his hand.

This is another case of a teenager taking chances in a dangerous situation. The attitude seems to be: I know what I am doing. Nothing is going to happen to me. Such is the case so many times. Other times, things can go horribly wrong.

Our cafeteria chats

I don't know what year this happened. But another boy and I struck up some conversations at the end of the lunch period. We were both standing in the hall waiting for the bell to ring for the next class. Our discussion turned to our religious experiences. This is because he had recently experienced a religious awakening. Mine had begun at least a year earlier. As a result, our knowledge of God and godliness were very limited.

Our discussions were rather emotional but not confrontational. Each was enjoying the feelings that God had placed within us. I personally enjoyed our times together and missed when he did not show up.

Substituting for Webb

This also occurred during the winter and just happened with no rhyme or reason.

For a while, Webb had worked Saturday nights putting the Sunday editions of the St. Louis Globe Democrat together. Comics, society pages, and similar pages were printed up early. Then the news and late items were printed last. It was his job to put these together before the Sunday paper boys would pick them up for delivery.

He needed someone to take his place that night, and I volunteered. So off I went about 10 PM. Everything was going fine even if it was raining some. This only meant that the paper had to be put into plastic. But then white specks started to appear in the rain around midnight. As time went on, the amount of snow falling increased and the rain

decreased. By 5 AM, there was several inches of snow on the ground.

Many of the paper boys did not come to get their papers. So, the owner and I did quite a bit of the delivery work in his vehicle. There was a lot of slushing through the snow hour after hour.

It would be 2 PM before I got home. By that time the temperature was perhaps back into the 70's. This only partially melted the snow. So, now I had this mess finding its way into my shoes! What a horrible feeling. I thought my feet were frozen!!!

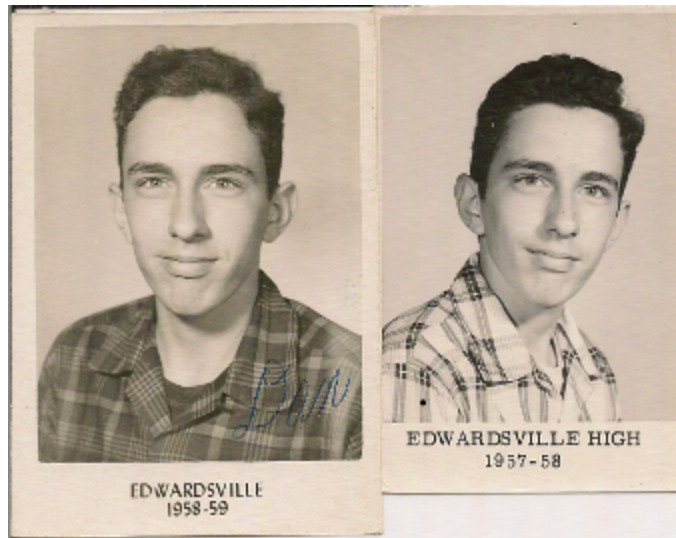
The lesson: When something needs to be done, and you are one of the few that can do it, you do your best and keep at it until you are finished.

I had a similar situation when Edwardsville had an ice storm. School was already in session before I got back from delivering the morning paper. They needed to be delivered, so I did it. But when I got to school which may have been close to 10 AM, this did not matter to the office: I was given detention for being late to school. I was being punished for being responsible.

School pictures

This was the second time I had my picture taken in school. (Only high school students got them.) So, it was no longer a novelty. Below left to right are my junior and sophomore pictures. My senior year, I had to have a professional photographer take several proofs. Then I got choose which one I wanted and how many of what size.

I may brag a little bit here. Seems like I may have a certain amount of good looks here. You can see there is a vast amount of difference between then and now. Well, now is more than 55 years later... At least I had a head of hair then!



Track and school grades

Webb and Etta had different ideas about studying and home work. She took both of these things seriously; Webb did not. For three and a half years teachers were giving Webb the grades they thought he could have gotten. These were not outstanding but were above merely passing.

However the teachers decided to lower the boom on him during the third nine week period. They gave him what he was actually earning! Thus, his report card this time had only D's and F's. Because that, he could not participate in track until the final county track meet. But this was only possible if he brought his grades back up.

This really got to him since he had already lettered in track for the previous three years. He really wanted that fourth letter! So, he did the things that he had to do to get it. For the first time in a long time, he actually really studied his textbooks the rest of the year.

He also knew that to get this letter he would have to place in his event at the county meet. So, he made sure he was in the best shape he could be. I don't know if any of the coaches helped him any during this time or not.

Then came the meet and his event... He really had to put all out as he was being challenged by others as good or nearly as good as he was. He could have easily placed or not placed when the race ended. He managed to stay in front of enough runners to place. So, he got his fourth letter.

Joint Performance

One of the girls in A Capella choir also played in the string section of the Philharmonic Orchestra in St. Louis. Arrangement was made for them to join us for this evening's performance.

I heard about the violin that she played from a discussion between a few girls in the choir. The speaker was in awe of it. It was a Stradivarius. Since I was not yet knowledgeable about the violins made by this man, I really did not understand what all of the fuss was about. Not being a part of a wealthy family had a lot to do with this. But since then, I do understand! This is one of the best violins ever made. And the value of one of them is a lot more than I can comprehend.

We had our daily rehearsals of the music we would sing, and the string section had weekly rehearsals. Even so, our music teacher was concerned about the songs we would be singing with them. We had no problems using a piano to accompany of singing A Capella. But singing with stringed instruments was another matter all together. So, he came up with a suggestion: as many members of the choir should attend a rehearsal in St. Louis with the strings. The only problem for me and perhaps other was doing this was not really a real possibility.

He really knew what he was talking about in the end. The string section opened the performance and played for the first half of the program. Then our choir joined it for the song we would do together. The strings began playing, but we did not come in as soon as we should.

I know that I was astonished at what I was hearing, and it took me some time to do what I should be doing: sing. I had never heard music so wonderful: I was not prepared for this! But it was not all that long before we all joined in and sang as we should. (The conductor, from the look on his face, definitely thought it was much, much longer than he had wanted!

Spring play

Now I finally get toward the end of the school year. The A Capella Choir put on an annual play, and this year was no different. The new music teacher really wanted to put on the play "Hit the Deck", but it was rather expensive being a Broadway play. Instead, I think it was something written locally (a student even?). Whoever did it did a very good job.

The theme was a guided cross country bus trip from the east coast to California. So, of course the bus would stop at a variety of places along the route. And among the people on the bus was a young man and woman. He is rather sad because he has never really had a girlfriend...

Square dancing

One of the stops is in the country where this dance is very popular. So, the passengers get to see some country culture up close and personal.

So this meant that eight couples from the choir were needed for the dance. But who should they be? The music teacher did not know who had any of square dancing experience. Instead of asking, he chose one of the students to select the eight girls and four boys who would be doing this part of the play. As a result, popularity was more important than knowledge.

Were they really the most popular? I honestly do not know. I was just disappointed that I was not chosen. After

all, I had several years of experience at the time. And I have to admit that Susan Richardson, one of the chosen eight girls, knew how to square dance, and quite well.

My Homeroom teacher got involved with this play as she would again the following spring. The part I remember was when she was helping the eight couples perform the square dance moves. A particular sticking point was with the square dance call, "swing your partner." She was trying to explain how the boys were to do this without much success.

I happened to be in the area, and perhaps she asked me if I knew anything about this. I made it clear that I did. So she asked me to assist her which I did. It sure seem strange to be dancing with a teacher, but I did swing my partner quite well!

During the play, the young man finally awakens some loving feelings in the young lady as she reciprocated his feeling for her. So, after she has to leave him to do something else, the choir sang "Blue Moon." (For some reason, singing this stirred emotions in me.)

Webb's last day at school

Seniors are given about a week off before the end of school. What they are suppose to do during this time I do not know. Then they returned the last day to get their final report cards. Finally, they would attend their graduation exercises that night.

He and some other boys wanted to have some fun during the last day of school. So they had planned to pull a prank. (Another case of some teenagers not thinking clearly nor acting responsibly.)

During the fourth period, I was in my Spanish class on the third floor when I heard a fire extinguisher going off and then a locker door being slammed. Turned out that Webb had done it.

He also got caught. He was suppose to be across the hall in Advanced Chemistry class, but he could not get into the classroom for some reason. Now, there are three doors he could have used to do this. But apparently he could not open any of them. This is why my family believed that there were three more boys in on this prank, and they kept him from using any of these three doors.

What about the other boys? Who were they? Only they and Webb know for sure because Webb never told. Well, it is possible that they might have bragged about it later...

Clearly, the principal was not amused at all. He was very angry and almost refused to allow him to graduate that evening for this prank. He also insisted that Webb pay for refilling the fire extinguisher: \$25.

Was this Webb rebelling at all the rules, trying things his own way, doing what he wanted for a change, following the lead of others? Chances are that it was a combination of all of these.

Summer 1958

Teach swimming lessons

Mom and Dad had property in North West Wisconsin, and they took a vacation early this summer. Meanwhile, I had turned 16 the previous December, and was scheduled to take driver's education during this summer school.

I was hoping to have Dad teach me as he had Etta and Webb. But the faithful 1949 Chevrolet required a new clutch. We already had a station wagon for going places.

The Chevy would be an extra car with an extra insurance expense. Conclusion: replacing the clutch was not worth the expense. So, someone else would have to do the teaching: someone at the school. And this would have to be done in school. Besides, while it would cost more to add me to the

car insurance, it would not cost as much if I passed Driver's Ed. (You think this might have influenced my parents' decision?)

So, I was at home by myself. (Webb was a counselor at Camp Sunnon and Tom was with my parents.) So, I was responsible for everything until my parent and Tom returned. This meant delivering two paper routes every morning Monday through Saturday, attend Driver's Ed from 8 to noon five days a week for eight days, and teaching swimming several hours at the YMCA in Alton for a couple of weeks (it may have been much longer). Once I completed the 8 days of Driver's Ed, I taught swimming at an outdoor pool in the morning during the week days.

Oh, I forgot to mention all the housework: cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, laundry, etc. I could not really be very lazy with all of this to do.

I passed the written portion of the driver license test on the next to last day of the class. Sometime later, I received my learner's permit. So, I could not begin the driving portion of the class. There would be ten 30 minute lessons.

But first some comments about the tone set by the instructors of the class. I took what they said seriously, others would not. A car is not a play thing; it must be treated with respect. The movies we saw pointed out the same thing. People can be killed by them. This had happened in 1957 in our area when teenagers were killed by a train.

The car we use for driving lessons was something else. It was a station wagon with a manual transmission. This would not be so bad, but it had a "high clutch". So, I had to lift the clutch pedal almost all the way up. (It seemed that my left knee was almost up to the steering wheel before the clutch would engage and the station would begin to move.)

The first lesson (by myself) took place in the school parking lot. That is when I learned who my driving instructor would be: the coach I had when I went out for cross country my freshman year. This may have helped because I was already use to him telling me what he wanted to be done and having me do it. He certainly was patient!

He had me doing all of the "simple things". It is one thing to use these words; it was something else for me to get use to doing them until I felt comfortable doing them. But slowly but surely, I got to this point.

The first obstacle was putting it into first gear and then engaging the clutch. First we were on the flat part of the parking lot. Later we moved to where the car was on a slight upward incline. I seemed to have killed the engine several times before I mastered this.

Then he determined that I could begin driving on the city streets. For this, two students shared an hour. This would be true for the rest of my lessons. As so, each of the lessons was practice, practice, practice. Then it was time for the other student to do the same. (Did I learn anything from the correct driving or mistakes of the other student? I should have.)

There was one time that I made a real boo-boo! This was one time that the car needed to have an extra pair of clutch and brake pedals. (It did.) At one point, the instructor slammed on the brakes, disengaged the clutch, and forcefully turned the steering wheel in the direction he wanted it to go. Then he told me why and what I should have done. Then we continued the lesson with him remaining calm. (His attitude certainly helped me in the end.)

I liked the approach taken by the teachers: driving properly was a responsibility not to be taken lightly. It has

been in the back of my mind since that time. Well..., I still managed to do some things that I should not have done.

I was fortunate to have the vehicle I used for my driving lessons. It was the same kind of car the family also used even to the point of the manual transmission. So, I have almost no adjustments to make when I began driving the family car.

In August, I took my driving test and got my driver's license. Since that time, I have not got a ticket for a moving violation. This does not say that I have not earned one, because I have.

Etta's problem

She had been working in Denver and everything went well until now. From her teenage years, she had sunbathed during the summer months to get a good tan. So, she thought nothing about laying out in the sun wearing a pair of white shorts and top. But the family gardener had different ideas. He followed her into the house and then into her room. She managed to get out of the room and escape him. This certainly scared her.

What happened as a result? Was the gardener fired? Did she move somewhere else? Is this when she moved to Ft. Collins, CO? I really do not have an answer to any of these.

Etta told my parents at some point, and then Webb and I were told. Mom used this as an opportunity to teach the two of us about responsible behavior.

I would listen, but again Webb would not. The only problem was that I did not really understand what I was suppose to do or not do. (Was it stay out of compromising situations?) Webb's actions some years later seem to point to him not exactly understanding what was suppose to have been taught to us.

Nancy

The Little Wabash Association was held at New Liberty Primitive Baptist Church in Champaign this year. Services were scheduled morning, afternoon, and evening on Friday and Saturday. They concluded with Sunday morning.

Somehow, I came earlier than the rest of the family. (Did I take the train?) Anyway, I stayed with the Clapps throughout the time.

Sister Nora Clapp was a very jolly person making jokes about anything that happened that should not have. One time she was ironing some pants. This was when pants pockets were first being made from synthetic material which required a cooler iron than cotton pants... Well, as she applied the iron, the pocket began to melt. She laughed about it. Another time the chicken she was frying became stuck to the skillet... As she said then, we had gravy with some solids in it.

I dearly loved this lady. The lesson from this: you can always find something funny to laugh at when things go wrong. I have to admit that this is much better than getting mad.

It must have been Thursday night that Nancy and some other girls were doing their hair for the meeting. Now, if you look back on my school pictures, you should notice my curly hair. Nancy, who likes to have fun also, decided that I needed to have my hair curled as well... Seems like the other girls agreed with her! So, I became surrounded with laughing girls and a head full of curls. Come to think of it, I was enjoying all of the attention as well.

This next one happened either Friday or Saturday night. Nancy, Judy Pyle (Nancy's cousin), and I were outside, and a radio was playing popular music. (Why we were not in church at the time, I do not know.) Anyway, Nancy wound up sitting in my lap for a while. Meanwhile Judy was dancing

with someone. So, I had a lap full while watching Judy sway to the music. Yes, I was enjoying myself! This was definitely a new experience to me.

Junior 1958-1959

There were now two members of our family in college, I think. I'm not sure when Etta began attending Colorado State University at Ft. Collins, CO, but I think it was this fall.

College

In September Webb headed to the main SIU campus in Carbondale, IL. It was his turn to have problems in college. His was seeming to be lost. He had no foundation upon which to build his life, to make decisions. Basically, he was like a fish out of water. By Thanksgiving he was failing all his classes except ROTC. So, he quit coming home for this holiday and not returning.

He would get his act together later after joining the Marine Corps where he did quite well until his history caught up with him. This led him to go back to college. Courses of importance included philosophy. Finally, he was getting something that he could use as a foundation for his life.

High school to myself

This year my classes included Speech, Chemistry, Advanced Algebra, American History, and A Capella choir. Of course, I again had study hall during the last period so I would go out for cross country and track.

Year of the scholastic exams

I really do not remember taking so many difficult test as in this year. In fact, I don't remember taking any of them. Why, all of a sudden, was I doing this seemingly every time I turned around? More importantly, why were they lasting four hours?

At the time, I blamed it upon Sputnik being launched the previous year. From this point on, I heard how we had to do this and had to do that because of it. Every change that was made used this a reason why.

But was I right? What about previous years? How many test like these had Etta and Webb taken during their junior year? I did not know. They might have had as many of these tests as I did.

One of the test was taken by all juniors throughout the state. This might have been a test taken by my older siblings. Then there was the National Merit Scholarship Exam. (This one may have been called the Westinghouse Scholarship Exam in the past.) I know for a fact that Webb took it as a junior. In fact four of his classmates were semi-finalist that year.

So, did I have any reason to complain about so many tests? Well considering the number of test taken annually in the 21st century, I can just hear today's students say, **"Oh, Poor thing!"**

Speech Class

This teacher reminded me of my 5th grade teacher. (Her desk was in the back of the room also.) Now I realize that this was the logical place for it. The stage was at the front of the room. Where else should she put it? So, this was my problem. While she was as strict, she was also different and a much better teacher.

Our studies began with anatomy: the two sets of costal muscles. One set was on the outside of the ribs and were used in inhaling. The other set was between the ribs and were used in exhaling. (OK, I'm bragging about something I was taught so long ago.) But to be an effective speaker, one must breathe correctly.

Another important part to speaking is standing correctly. So much so that she had each one of us get on the stage and "strike a pose" correctly. Well, I did quite well thank you. My pose felt about as perfect as it could be, and I said so. The other students reacted somewhat negatively as one might expect. (Perhaps I should not have been so brash?) In any case, the teacher agreed that my pose was the correct one!

One example of the difference came before homecoming weekend. Each year a speech class would put on a skit for the homecoming assembly, and it was my class' turn to do it. Our teacher told us this and asked for suggestions for what we could do. (That year we were playing the Collinsville Indians.)

So, I suggested we do a cowboy and Indian skit. There were other suggestions as well. In the end, the rest of the class went along with my idea and so did the teacher. Even so, she wondered out loud as to what kind of effect this would have.

It was the usual theme of Indians attacking a wagon train and then cowboys showing up to drive them off. This was fine except it did not take long enough. In fact, it was far too short! How long can a gun fight between a group of Indians and bunch of cowboys last?

And then there was the time we were to do a 60 second commercial. Mine probably went closer to 120 seconds. Why? A few days before I was listening to a basketball game of our school. Then during a time out, I heard a commercial for a local savings and loan. So, this is what I used. But what I had not done was to time the commercial... Later, listing to another basketball game, I did time the commercial. Sure enough, it was much longer than 60 seconds.

Another student did it all right. It was as close to 60 seconds, as close as someone could get. (I timed him at

59.5 sec.)

The teacher used a stop watch, and I used the second hand on my wristwatch. Obviously, he noticed that I had timed him, so he asked me how he did. So, I told him. He was relieved, and the teacher's comments were good as well.

Advanced Algebra

I was a little bit surprised when I walked into the room having seen a familiar face. I was having Mrs. Helms for this class. She had my Freshman English teacher. This seemed a little strange at first! But it did not take very long for me to discover that she could teach Advanced Algebra as well as Freshman English.

This was a much harder class than Algebra had been. Some of the topics included quadratic equations, dividing polynomial expressions by polynomial expressions, factoring polynomials, and completion of the square. And then there were the usual solving hard word problems. (Now, if your eyes are glazing over by just reading these topics, you probably do not have a background in math. That's alright.)

A Capella Choir

Our music teacher continued to teach us more about singing and put these things into practice. One time, he did it in an unexpected way.

We had been working on breathing correctly in class. So, during the concert, he took a little time to talk about this to the audience. That was not so bad, but he insisted that we do these exercises right then! "Oh, no! Not that!" was what many were probably thinking. (I was.) But we did anyway. Somehow we managed to survive it.

Present at this concert was a lady who had a daughter in my class. She also taught singing. So, she was absolutely thrilled to hear him say what he did. As a result, she clapped

her hands very loud and said so loud enough for anyone in the gym to hear her!

Madrigal group

Some of this group were no longer in the choir, so they needed to be replaced (graduation, etc.). I was one of the people selected which pleased me very much. Etta had been a member of it, so I continued in her footsteps. I was also proving to sing as well as she.

We had a group of songs which we sang at every concert as well as a couple of concerts of our own. One was an annual event at the TB Sanatorium at the southern edge of town, and the other was in the spring.

Of all the songs we sang, "The Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's' Messiah was my favorite. It was the only song that I remember singing while holding the sheet music in front of me (It was really part of a book). (It was too long to memorize was my thought at the time.) Yet, this has stayed with me ever since. I still get chill bumps when I hear it! Oh, I do remember quite a few words and the notes sung by the various parts. I have also been known to hum along with my part.

I had heard this song sung perhaps four times before I was privileged to sing it myself. It was a staple during the December and spring concerts.

The concert at the TB Sanatorium was either in November or December. (It was cold that night!) Since we had to provide our own transportation, I got permission to drive the family car. I also picked up another member of the group as he needed a ride.

He also needed to more serious about traveling in a car! From what he said to me, he wanted me to break about every driving rule there was. But, I refused to listen to him, and I basically told him so. I had been raised to follow the

rules, and I did it regardless of what he said. Well, at least we got to and from the concert in one piece. Neither did I get a ticket for a traffic citation.

Come to think about it. If I had broken a law and gotten a ticket, it would not have gone on his driver's license (if he even had one). Neither would he had to faced my parents nor suffered through the punishment inflicted upon me. So, I think I did the right thing. What he wanted was not as important as my parents had a right to expect of me. (It was their car not his.)

Christmas Vacation in Ft. Collins, CO

Etta had found her "dream boat" at this university, and we headed to Colorado to meet his family during the Christmas break. She provided bedding by making arrangements for us to stay in the private home where she lived. (Several other female students rented in the same house, and we slept in their beds using their sheets.)

To get there, we had to travel through a nasty snow storm with strong winds. Dad did all of the driving because they were blowing the car around, and he was the most experience in this kind of weather. I certainly was not!

How safe were we in this kind of weather? Not very! We were being blown around with cross winds from one side to the other. Fortunately, Dad was only driving in the mid 30 MPH range so, he could correct the steering every time the wind changed in speed or direction.

I noticed there were fences in places along the road. They were there to prevent the snow from drifting too much. Either they did their job well, or it was not snowing hard enough for the snow to drift. I certainly would not have wanted to get stuck in a drift in the weather we were experience, that is for sure.

Meanwhile, Tom had been having problems with a boil which broke open while we were at the motel for the night. It had bothered him for some time, but it chose to erupt this night. All is well that ends well though. He had no more problems with it. He had to be glad of that!

I don't think I have seen the head of a boil quite that big nor deep ever. The puss looked the diameter of a pencil (yes the pencil, not the lead in it)! It probably wasn't though. When I first saw it, my eyes likely got very big as well.

Dick's family

We made it into Ft. Collins probably the evening of the second day. Then we located where Etta was staying and unpacked everything. So, we probably did not meet Dick until the next morning.

But before any of us settled down for the first night, Etta had some things to tell us. Her landlord spoke and prayed in tongues. The latter, he did loud enough for everyone in the house to hear. (I have to admit this was a new experience for me.)

The second thing was really for Mom and Dad rather than for us all. The girls living in this house paid rent by the month. So, There was no reason to reimburse the landlord for the days we stayed. Besides, they had given Etta permission to use their beds while they were gone.

But this has left me with questions with no answers to them. Did Dad leave money with Etta to be given to the young ladies whose beds we slept in? Who cleaned the sheets that we slept in? These things now seem to be the courteous things to do for the kindness they had shown us.

Once we met Dick and became a little better acquainted, he took us on a tour of the city and campus. Since we were in a station wagon, we all rode in it as he guided us. (He drove a small car as in a VW Beetle.)

One of the things he pointed out was how they made left turns. This was rather strange to my parents, and caused a discussion about it. Me? This was far different from what I had learned in my 18 months earlier. Actually, their way makes more sense than what I had learned in Driver's. Ed.

Colorado's way: Left turns were made before reaching the center of the intersection. This allowed people traveling in opposite directions to both turn left at the same time without getting in each other's way.

Illinois' way: Left turns were made after reaching the center of the intersection. This meant that if cars from opposite directions wanted to make a left turn, they would have to pass the other car before making the turn. Now, if both cars were followed closely by other cars, neither car could turn. Results? a traffic jam!

Dick's dad

What do you expect when you meet a doctor? There were many questions that we did not have answers for. But we were to learn rather soon. As we approached the front door, Dick's dad was seen by someone shuffling his feet across the floor. As we walked into their home, he place one of his fingers close to Tom's ear. Zap! Static electricity. So, this helped to calm our thinking: these people liked to have fun. They were definitely not "stuff shirts!!!"

In fact they were down to earth people as well. Even the supper which we had in their home was a really nice.

Bowling

This was one of the things we did while we were there. I had a good time most of the time. As you know, shoes with special soles and heels are required for this sport. Well, the floors were carpeted except in the bowling lanes. The humidity was also very low especially during the winter. And because of these things, I built up a lot of static electricity

on my body every time I walked anywhere. So, guess what happened when I went for a drink of water? Yes, the water fountain was made of metal... Needless to say, sparks flew every time I got thirsty.

New Years Day (Thursday) came, and we headed home which took two days. This time the weather was much better, so Dad, Mom, Webb and I shared the driving. As with the trip out west 3 and a half years earlier, we each drove for a two hour stretches. We all saw patches of snow along the road as we drove, but none of them were on it.

This coming weekend, Elder Adair would be preaching at Sharon Church in St. Louis. Since he and his wife lived perhaps 10 miles off the highway we were traveling on, I wanted to stop there, spend the night, and then all of travel on Saturday morning.

To try to get my way, I drove longer than I should. I stopped at a filling station for gas at the intersection with the road that went to Elder Adair's home. Well, no one else wanted to do this. So, we continued on toward home. Oh, well.

We had a fairly easy time getting home that afternoon. The next afternoon we went to church as we usually did. When my parents got a chance to talk to Elder Adair, they found out that his trip that morning had not been all that easy. So, in the end, they wondered if I might have been right after all. Again: Oh, well.

I choked!

Each nine weeks in A Capella Choir, we had to sing a song as part of our grade. It had four parts, and so four of us would sing it together. Usually, I did this quite well, but not this time. Basically, I lost my place even though I had the sheet music in front of me.

My mind was filled with questions without any answers! What note was I suppose to sing first? So, I did not start when I should. Where could I begin singing later in the song? What note would I need to be singing then? I could not do anything right. So, I was silent throughout the song. Fortunately, I was given a second chance, and this time I did it right.

By this time in the school year, I was getting the big head when it came to singing. I was a part of the A Capella Choir! I was better than others. From this you would think that I had an attitude problem. Well, I did and did not know it. (Might the mess I made during the singing exam be the result of my bad attitude?)

Scholastic Exam Results

These were taken earlier in the year, but the results came back in the spring. They were rather good for me even though I did not realize then.

In the National Merit, eight students were semi-finalists. Gee, we had a lot of very smart people in my class! This was twice as many as Webb had had in his junior year.

Actually, these eight already knew how well they did. They had to take another exam which determined who the finalists would be. They did quite well on this one as well. All eight were finalist. They were among the brightest of the brightest!

I did fairly well on this test myself. It was not something that I noticed immediately though. English was my low score, and Math was higher. However, Social Studies was a different matter: 99 %-tile! Unfortunate I don't remember what my ranking was among those taking this exam.

Not all students took this exam throughout the nation. But, the the test results did include a national rating (92 %-tile) This is impressive now though it was not then.

The test for all Illinois juniors was taken later in the year than the National Merit. So, I had the results of the latter test before I got the former's results. Not so good! Only 66 %-tile among all juniors in the state. I guess I wanted to sooth my ego because this was worse than the National Merit. Was there a national ranking on this test as well? Yes there was, and it was the same as for the National Merit. (I began to feel better...)

Why did these test results have so little effect on me? Simply put, I did not have faith in my own ability. Nor did I use this information to increase my faith.

There are benefits for those who do well of these tests. Some colleges will come looking for you. This means many of them were after our eight National Merit finalists. Few come looking for people of my abilities. But come they will.

The school's guidance counselor called me in with some of the brighter students to give us information about a private university in Indiana. Their presentation was very impressive!

But there was a very big problem for me: the \$2300 a year tuition. Obviously, this did not include books, food, nor lodging. There was **no way** I could afford this! The talk of scholarships did not get through to me either. With what little money I had, any scholarship would have to cover all costs period. I just did not think this would be possible. So, I declined the invitation to attend this school.

Off Key!!!

This was a religious concert by the choir at St. John's Methodist Church in the spring. But something went very wrong. We were all singing slightly off key. It might have not been so bad, but we continued to do so song after song!

As I looked out on the audience that day, I saw some very strange looks. Come to think of it, the music teacher did as

well! I just did not know why.

Our teacher used this snafu for our good. There were singing techniques that we needed to know which would have prevented this from happening. I remember two of them.

We began learning about pitch. To begin with, the piano keys are half steps apart. But when we sang that day we were less than that from the notes we were suppose to be singing.

So, he began teaching us how to deliberately sing notes that are quarter steps apart. To do so, he played a note and had us hum it. Then he played the next note lower which we again hummed. He went back to the higher note, and we hummed. This time we were to imagine what the note was between the two notes and hum this.

At first we did this over and over again until he was satisfied. Then he would take us through a practice requiring us to hum down a scale of three or more notes one quarter step between them. He had us repeat this over and over. It certainly took patience and concentration on our part.

This actually got to be fun! So much so that I did this at home sitting at our piano. (I really wonder what any one hearing me there thought about what I was doing!)

Another lesson taught us how to listen more carefully to the people singing around us. Because our mouths are closer to our own ears, we hear ourselves better than we do others. He decided it was time to change this.

Again he used the humming technique. This time he had one person hum a note he had played on the piano. Then while he or she was humming, he had someone close match that hum. The goal was to get the two voices to sound exactly as one.

We all got our chance to be the hummer and the one to match the hum. Now this is where the first technique was very important. It required carefully listening while matching a note we were hearing.

Likely he expanded this last technique to listening to other parts when we sang. So, in time I was able to sing my part while listening to all of the other parts at the same time. This does take a lot of patience and concentration to learn. But, oh what joy it is to be able to hear all of the parts with the harmonies they produced.

It was also important in singing a song that was fairly new that year. It was not harmonious to say the least! Each part clashed with all of the other parts. It sounded horrible to say the least. But we finally got even this song right.

Play about Robert Burns

This is the play that we would present this year. While I did not have any acting experience other than speech class, I decided to audition when the try outs were announced.

I read through the play and recognized a part that I thought I could play. It was an angry man. Well, I got angry about things at times, so this seemed like a natural part for me.

When it was my turn to try out, I became this angry man. So much so, that I could feel the anger well up in me as I spoke the lines. No one would mistake how I was feeling as they listened to me.

Others waiting their turns to try out recognized this as well. They spoke highly of my efforts which made me feel real good. The people who were holding auditions noticed as well. So, I was picked as one of the actors.

The only problem was they gave the part I wanted to someone else. Instead, I was given the part of the Scottish Post Master with one line! I was not prepared for this. To

make matters worse, I did not have the slightest idea what my part was suppose to do. How did he say this one line? What was he feeling? No one could tell me the answer to what I wanted to know. Or, they tried and could not explain it in a way I would understand. My acting was a big fat flop as a result!

And then there was a matter of the costumes for the boys: kilts! It was here that the girls in the choir were asked to come to our aide: they provided some skirts that matched our waist measurements. (So, I became a "cross dresser" for one play.)

Practices for the play were held in the gym, and we would sometimes sit in the bleachers wearing these skirts. I must admit that a skirt is cooler than a pair of shorts. This became very apparent as the school year ended and the temperature was rising. But there was also a matter of modesty as well. (After this I understood why the girls crossed their legs when they sat in the bleachers.) Now, this was a problem! I survived anyway.

My repercussions

As far as I was concerned, my acting in the spring play had be a total disaster. From what happened next, several others agreed with my assessment! But it had more to do with something I said to another student than my acting.

We were in the boy's locker room talking, and somehow the discussion got around to grades. That is when I said something I should not. I compared his grades to my acting ability! This did not go down well at all, and I do not blame him.

Apparently the word got around about what I had said, and people did not like it. So, I got a lot of attention of the bad variety. Some of them I knew, and others I will never know. But they were all out for revenge.

One day I sat down in Advanced Algebra as I always had done. For some reason, all the students were looking at me as if they had expected something to happen. Well it had not. It turned out that someone had placed a thumb tack in my seat. When I sat down, it was suppose to stick me. But I always had a fairly thick handkerchief in my right rear pocket and a billfold in my left rear. The tack had stuck into my right pocket but not gone completely through the hanky. It did not take me very long to discover the tack though.

Another day a few days before school was, my speech textbook disappeared while in that class. I was wondering how I was going to pay for the book. However, for a reason I do not understand, I latter looked under the windows of that class. There was the book with my name on it. Having found it, I felt much better.

The third incident was during the beginning of track practice. It had rained recently, and there were puddles in the track. One of the was on the inside part of the track. It was just past the curve that went around the end of the football field.

We were suppose to be doing warm up laps, and I was. But some of the other runners were deliberately running slow while not allowing me to pass them. We had just finished coming around the curve, so I quickly ran along the inside of the puddle to get around them. They also sped up and ran me into the chain link fence which ran along the very inside edge of the track. As a result I landed in the puddle and got my sweatsuit wet. So, the coach told me to go inside and get dressed.

My left shoulder had born the brunt of the attack, and it continued to bother me. So, my parents decided that I needed to see the doctor. (School insurance would pay for it.) His comment was that it was only an abrasion. All it needed was to be exposed to the air. He sent me home.

Then a couple of months later, I got a call from the doctor stating that I needed to come to their office to pay for this office visit. When I mentioned the school insurance, she said they had not received it. I even waited on the phone while she looked for it but didn't. (Had she really looked carefully?)

So, off to the school office I went (probably on my bike) to ask them about it. It only took the office personnel a couple of minutes to find a copy of the check that the doctor's office had cash. So, I asked her to call the doctor's office to inform it about what she had. She did, and when she mentioned that she had a copy of the cashed check, the paperwork in the doctor's office was very quickly found. (It pays to ask the right person about situations like this.) What was the cost of this office visit? The huge sum of \$5.00!

What may have been the last repercussion occurred in August. I walked out to the back of our garage to get my bike to deliver papers that morning. It had been stolen! Strange thing: there were newer bikes next to mine, but none of them were taken. They knew what they were doing. So, that day I bought another bike. Fortunately, they left this one alone.

Webb's bad driving

Webb was still having problems behaving himself during the last month of school. Whatever he did caused my parents to revoke his driving privileges.

What did this have to do with me? The Sunday before graduation was the Baccalaureate service for graduating seniors. Since the A Capella Choir sang at it, I needed a way to get there. I wanted to drive our car to this event. Mom came very close to refusing me this privilege. In the end, she relented. But she said I had to drive directly to the school and back. I was not to go anywhere else.

Why? Because of Webb's behavior. What did this have to do with me? I was always responsible when I drove. If he did something wrong, let him suffer the consequences. Let him also see what was the results of his behavior vs what it could have been for proper behavior. I would be that example. But when I was being punished for someone else's behavior over which I had no control, I saw no purpose in what she did.

This was another time that I did something that Etta had not done. (She would have if the rules had been changed while she was still in school.)

I had earned enough points to get an A Capella Choir pin (equivalent to a letter in sports). This was because I had been in the choir for two years among other things. Since Primitive Baptist churches have a capella singing in each service, I got points for this. The new music teacher had changed the rules to make it a little easier to get this pin as well.

Summer 1959

Webb's Arrest

Things got worse. Specifically, his behavior was getting worse. One of the people working at the paper office where I got my papers told me that Webb had been drunk and wanted to fight him the night before. As time went on, I heard similar events as well. It's just that I did not believe him. I had gotten reports that he had gotten drunk during this period of time, perhaps several times.

This is when his bad behavior came to the head. One morning, a policeman we personally knew appeared at the door. He had an arrest warrant for Webb.

The previous night, he had been out drinking with some people his age. As they began losing their inhibitions, they began planning to have some "fun." (Sound like the episode

with the fire extinguisher a year earlier?) But this time, they decided to break into a home and take some things. This boils down to two felonies, but in their state of mind it did not matter at all. Well, they were only charged with breaking and entering.

This time they were all identified, perhaps also caught. If the latter, Webb was allowed to come home anyway.

The next morning we got quite a shock when a policeman came to the door with a warrant for Webb's arrest. So, we watched dumbfounded as he was led to the police car and taken to jail. By the end of the day, he was returned to us. Neither Mom nor Dad told us how this was possible.

So, Webb got his picture taken, and his fingerprints were sent to FBI in Washington, DC, with the charge; breaking and entering. He now had a felony record.

Apparently the home owner did not want to press charges for this felony. So, he got it reduced to a misdemeanor. Unfortunately for Webb, no one updated this change in Washington. He still had a felony record according to FBI records.

Webb's repercussions

Webb had always worked hard at things he wanted to do. So, he had no problem earning all of the merit badges required to be an eagle scout. But the Boy Scouts require people to live by the moral code contained in the scout oath and laws.

Dad and other adults associated with our Explorer troop had to make a decision about Webb. What should they do for his disregard for the principles that the scouts stood for? They came down fairly hard on him, but they allowed him to keep his eagle scout status. They did let him know and the other members of the troop that they had considered

stripping him of this status. (Had he not stopped the bad behavior, he would have later been stripped of it.

The ministry

The NEA (National Education Association) met in St. Louis over the fourth weekend of June. The Green twins (Bro. Logan Green from northwest AR, and Elder Roland Green from Birmingham, AL) attended it. When the church learned they were coming, Elder Green was asked to preach for us. We had the pleasure of having them overnight on Sunday. Monday, they were back to the meetings in St. Louis.

While they were in our home, Bro. Logan suggested that I come to Arkansas for a two week singing school. Mom and Dad were not sure at first.

They discussed for what seemed weeks before deciding that it would be alright. By this time, it was only a few days before the singing school was to begin. So, Dad telegraphed Bro. Logan requesting he call us. (Dad did not have his phone number.)

The phone rang, and it was Bro. Logan. Arrangements were made, and I headed toward Boonville, AR, on a bus. This was my first trip on my own.

I was to take a bus to Little Rock and then transfer to another bus heading northwest to Boonville. Then by the weekend I and Bro. Logan's family headed to Donaldson, AR.

I was not sure about his driving though. Between Boonville and Donaldson is an area of the Ozark Mountains. In order to save money on gas, he would put the gear into neutral to coast down the hills. Then he would put it back into high gear to go up the next one. I really did not think this to be a safe practice at the time.

Singing school was in the evening. But I thought there were some classes during the day for the school aged

children. I still think there were. I remember getting acquainted with other teenagers while I was there.

On a few mornings when there was not a class, Bro. Logan tried to teach me some music theory, and I was a rather poor student. I did not understand what he was talking about nor how I could apply this information to my singing. Was he disappointed when he had to give up? Most likely he was, and I don't blame him. I just wish that I could have understood the importance of the information he was giving me.

Near the end of the singing school, I had another visit from my God. It was more a sense of His presence than anything else. What did he have for me to do? "You are going to preach," was the message I got. This was a very exciting time for me.

Yet, how could I tell anyone? Even if I did tell, to whom could I confide in? In fact, I feared to tell anyone. I would wait until August of 1960 to do this. Even then, I found it very difficult to put it into words.

The sunflower plants



Later in the summer, Webb saw an article on the front page of the Edwardsville Intelligencer with a picture. It described a sunflower plant that was 16' 10" tall. He thought we had some sunflowers in the garden that were taller than that.

Webb got my help as he measured the height of our sunflower plants. Then he took this picture of them. I am standing next to them to give a perspective. At the time, I was a little over 5' tall. These plants were more than three times my height. Unfortunately, ours were about 4-5"

shorter than the one in the paper. But, it was worth the trouble to measure them and take the picture.

Wedding present???

I am not sure of which summer this happened, but here it is. Dale Robinson and my father knew a man who was getting married. The man was known for his practical jokes, so the decision was made to go to the wedding with a practical joke for a present. (Clearly Dad and Dale were jokers as well.)

Sometime earlier, Dad had replaced one of our toilets with a new one. Why he kept the old one, I do not know. It had been around for a few years or so. Well, I got the job of making it sparkle which I did. They wrapped it up and took it to the wedding... I think a real wedding present was taken as well. (It was.)

The man's reaction? He had already warned his future bride about the possibility of some very weird gifts. He actually expected Mr. Robinson and my Dad to bring something more outlandish than what they did. So, all was well at the wedding.

Of course, they could not let this "wedding gift" go unused either. In the end, they removed the seat, the top of the tank, and perhaps other items. Then they filled it with dirt and planted flowers in it. It seemed to work for them...

Rejection

Nancy Clapp and I had been corresponding for much of my high school years. Then in August, she decided that things needed to stop, and she ended whatever our relationship had become. This was a real downer. For whatever reason, it was for the best. I still did not know what I was doing when it came to being around girls. It was something that I wanted, but I was clueless as to how to

develop a relationship. Seven years later God would take care of this problem for me.

Senior 1959-1960

This was basically the year of the stinker. I did not know why it was happening, but I was going to school smelling horribly! It did not occur to me that I needed to take a bath after my paper routes. Would this have helped? I don't know. Remember, I had to travel a mile to school.

When I mentioned this many years later, someone mentioned that the sweat glands in my arm pits might have been maturing. This might have caused the stench (yes stench!). If this were true, was a deodorant all that I needed?

Why didn't I say something to my parents? As the following paragraphs indicate, I had very little interaction with them during the entire year. So, it never occurred to me to say anything. The only thing I knew to do was to continue doing whatever I had been doing. (It did not solve the problem.)

Living Arrangements

Mom and Dad were sleeping downstairs as was Tom in 417. Webb and I were upstairs. After school and sports, I would head home and put my books on the stairs. Then after supper, I would head upstairs to study taking my books with me. There I would remain until 5 AM when I came down to eat breakfast before going on my paper routes. By 6:30 AM, I was back for my next breakfast before heading to school.

This was a rather lonely year for me. There was Nancy no longer wanting to correspond with me and the knowledge that I was going to have to preach. I still did not know very much about the Bible. I did not even have a full Bible. I did not really want to tell anyone what God had said. My

parents really had very little to say to me during the entire year.

Buying Bible

As usual, God got involved in this matter. I felt a very strong sense that I had to buy a Bible which I did... after a while. I put it on the steps going upstairs under my books in a plain brown bag. The only person who knew that I had a Bible was Webb because he had seen me reading from it often. Clearly, he did not tell anyone what he saw. But then again, Mom and Dad were not paying much attention to him either this year.

Why didn't I want anyone to know that I had a Bible now? Who knows? What was I afraid of? I just was.

How did I study my Bible? I saw my Dad read some verses for a short while, check a reference found in the middle of the page, got to it, read some more, follow another reference, etc. Sermons usually skip around to various verses as well. So, I would read some verses one day in one place and in another place another day. (This is **not** how it should be done.

Scheduling conflict

This year, my classes included, English Essentials and Composition, Trigonometry and Solid Geometry, Advanced Chemistry, and Physics. These were on my schedule the first day of school.

I quickly noticed that one class was missing (A Capella choir). Advanced Chemistry was always taught during the fourth period which included the lunch periods. This was because it lasted longer than other classes. We had a full class period, a 30 minute lunch period, and then another 30 minutes of class work.

A Capella Choir met at the same time as Advanced Chemistry. So, I could not take both of them. I had a choice I

had to make and quickly. But did I seek advice from anyone about this? I don't know.

Here is what I decided (with or without input of others). Chemistry was going to help me in college more than choir, So, I continued with the chemistry class. Was it worth it? I received an A in each of my freshman college chemistry classes without having to work hard at it (8 semester hours of A). For a minor in chemistry, I only needed 12 more semester hours which I would get. So, the answer was yes!

There was some other things that I noticed. Three of my teachers (for mathematics and two science classes) were ones that I had had before. Also many of the same students were taking them at the same time. Well the math and chemistry classes were only taught during one period.

Night typing class at high school

Apparently, Mom and Dad had done some planning about my life that included several activities. (Or, was it just Mom? I don't think so.) It began with this activity in the fall with Mom insisting in her own way that I get some training in typing.

She had a typing book that I was learning from already. (I was using her portable typewriter.) Perhaps she wanted me to learn two things: how to type much better and how to take care of a typewriter. (I wonder why I would need to learn the latter?)

By this time, I had applied to attend the University of Illinois the next year. I had not received notification of my acceptance yet though. So, I obviously could not use my mother's typewriter for my class work as I went there. But, I had not thought about this.

The class began at the level that I had already learned, but it quickly got into more detailed work. It was interesting work for the most part. It's just that I got a little tired of

seemingly erasing error after error. But such is the learning process.

But I gradually got better at typing while in college and then later. And then came the computer age and the keyboard... There is so much typing that needs to be done. So, this one night course has provided an excellent foundation that I needed for the amount of typing I do. (This book and those to follow are all typed.)

Math Classes

The first semester was trigonometry which had a basis in both Plane Geometry and Advanced Algebra. These were divided into two semesters: trigonometry in the first and solid geometry in the second.

Miss Helm taught these classes as she had plane geometry two years before. So, I had an idea of what to expect from her. No, there were not extra problems required for getting A's and B's. Instead she gave us an excellent basis for college mathematics courses that I needed.

Trigonometric functions can be very interesting to use. We began with the basic ones and then built more complex expressions. We also had word problems in which we used them. Some of these required many, many steps to solve.

She also taught us why it is important to know how to solve problems by applying the functions correctly. Why? Because it is possible to make multiple mistakes and still come up with the correct answer!

To do this, she gave us a problem and then showed the steps one student had used to solve it. In all, the student made 13 different errors. (Obviously, this problem required many more steps than 13).

When I began teaching math ten years later, I applied this lesson to my grading of math papers as I would for the next

six years. Getting the correct answer was not enough. Each step they make had to be correct as well.

This was the *year of the slide rule*. Some of the students came from wealthy families, and they came to school with fairly elaborate ones (they were not cheap). But there were much less expensive ones as well, so I decided to get one; it only cost \$2.00. With them we could multiply, divide, and use logarithms. (Electronic calculators would not be available until the early 1970's.)

Miss Helm introduced us to an excellent resource book that was also related to two of my other classes this year (chemistry, and physics). Every other year ago, another edition of the *Handbook of Physics and Chemistry* was published. It also contained a large number of tables which included trigonometry function values, logarithms, and natural logarithms. There were also graphics of well known mathematical equations.

My favorite was the table listing the values of π to 20 decimal places. This is because many answers to trig functions were multiples of π . I loved the accuracy it gave me. But this presented a problem. Slide rule results only had an accuracy of 2 decimal places. So, there was a considerable difference between the two.

The entire handbook was really more for someone who specializes in chemistry and physics. The publisher also produced the math section of the handbook. Now this was something that I could use! Many of the students ordered one, and that included me.

So, during advanced chemistry, a student asked about the handbook, and Mr. Powell got out his latest edition. So, we got a second opinion about the usefulness of it. (Since math was first period and advanced chemistry was fourth, this question likely arose the same day as when Miss Helm mentioned it.

How important was this book to me? Very. I used it during my first three math courses at the University of Illinois.

Spelling: English Essentials vs Advanced Chemistry

My senior year of English was the only course I had to pass in order to graduate. (Requirement was 16 units, and I had 15.25 units when I began the year.) The first semester covered the essentials of English; the second was learning to write compositions.

Spelling is one part of English which is essential to improve our vocabulary and our writing. So, every day the teacher would give us 10 words for a spelling test the next day.

While this was a good idea, I missed the point. I did not understand the point of these spelling tests. Nor, did I learn the importance of my selecting words from my school work to learn. I just saw it as an exercise in regularly adding words to my vocabulary as part of my grade for this class. I really did not see how I would be using these words.

At the end of the first quarter in advanced chemistry, we were given a one question exam. We were to open our textbook to the table of contents. Then we were to describe everything we remember that we had covered during the previous 9 weeks. (It was chapter 7.)

At this point, my mind went back to all of those daily spelling tests. I needed words to write in this exam. But none of the words I had learned in English class were about chemistry. What good is creating a larger vocabulary when the words did not seem to have any application to the things that I am involved in?

I was completely unprepared to answer the question. I did not know how to even begin so my mind drew a complete blank. It would be much later that I learned the

importance of an outline and how to use it. Why didn't someone teach this?

Years later, I applied this lesson to the fourth grade class I was teaching. The students were divided into three reading groups. What I did was throw out the spelling book. Instead, the spelling tests of 20 words a week consisted of 10 words from their various textbooks, and 10 words from the reader each was using. So, there were 3 separate lists of the later 10 words. Did this work? They were given exams in the fall and spring as required by the state of Mississippi. Their spelling improved 1.5 years in that period of time! So, I think this works much better than the traditional spelling program. I had actually learned a lesson from this fiasco, but why did it have to be learned this way?

English Essentials

This was another time when things went all wrong. It was the fall of the year when a senior was in a building at home (garage perhaps) with a pistol in his hand. He began pointing the gun at the doorway repeatedly pulling the trigger as he did so. Unfortunately, the trigger hit a live shell as his best friend walked into the middle of the doorway... The boy was taken to a hospital in St. Louis, but died during the night.

The assignment for the day was to write our own obituary during class. Even so, the teacher apologized for the assignment while insisting that we do it anyway. It was then that I learned of the event of the previous night. (I knew both boys very well.)

Then I ran into a very big problem: How to you write what you are going to accomplish during your life when you don't know? After all, a person must have faith in themselves first. I was sorely lacking this. So, as a result, I turned in my paper containing my name and perhaps the title.

They say that hindsight is 20-20. Well this book should prove it. Later, I plan to also publish my college and married life (about 40 years). It will contain over 100,000 words. I may not have any idea of what was coming in my life, but I certainly enjoyed so much of it when it did!

You suppose I could hand in this book for the assignment she made so many years ago? It is far more fun writing about the joys of life than it is writing about what might come in the future.

Since my senior year, I have learned how to use an outline properly. When asked to write some things about my life, I began dividing my life into periods of time. This became my general outline. Then I further divided them into shorter periods of time. Then I added some specific events during them. The more things I added, the more memories popped up seemingly from nowhere!

Christmas

Senior picture



For three years, I had my picture taken for the school year book in the fall of the year. I also got a group of small pictures to give to other students that wanted them.

This was something new to me: getting dressed up in a suit and tie before going to a professional local photographer for this picture. First, I had to make an appointment which I did during this vacation. (Mom was the one who told me who to contact and what I needed to say.)

Later in the vacation, I was notified to pick up the proof. With them, I had to pick out the proof that I wanted to use for my senior picture. But how many pictures of what size should I order? I was a little bit bewildered by it all. So, Mom sat down with me making suggestions. Yet, she made it plain that the final decisions were mine. And I turned in my order and the payment for it during the latter part of the vacation.

This year book is special for the seniors graduating this year. Unfortunately, it might not be for those who did not earn enough credits to graduate though.

We could always look back at how we looked all dressed up. Then each of us had a list of the extra curricular activities we had been in. For some, this was a short list. For others, the list can be quite long. (Mine was not short.) Finally, someone or someones were responsible for a saying that would be placed under each of our names. Where they got some of these, I don't know. This applies especially to mine. (I did not know that I was an individualist.) But I decided to place what I found next to my name in the year book just inside of the cover page of this book.

The school staff for the yearbook were slow getting things together so it was not completely ready by the end of the school year. Everyone else got the abridged version. I was able to get mine in early September when I got back from western Nebraska.

The Bible

This would be my last Christmas before I went off to college. As a result, Mom and Dad bought me a Bible. This presented an awkward moment for everyone but Tom and perhaps Webb. I acted rather strangely because I already had one. I now wonder if Mom and Dad thought that I did not want a Bible. Only Webb and I knew the truth. (I don't think I ever told them why I acted like I did. Well, it does not

matter now.) Tom may have just wondered what was going on...

Second Semester

I suppose boys will be boys. Such was the case during first period (math class) one day. Miss Helm was not there that day, and our class was left to behave itself without supervision. Well, one of the boys set off the fire alarm. So, all the students had their classwork interrupted by an impromptu fire drill. (The boy bragged about it when we got back inside. I guess this was a *look what I have done* moment.)

English Composition

What I had learned about the Primitive Baptists was rather limited. Like other denominations, they claimed their beliefs were based upon the Bible. There were things that I would like to know.

As we began the second semester of English, we were told (again) that we were to write a 2,000 word research theme by the end of the school year. Along the way, we would learn how to find information from books, magazines, encyclopedias, etc. 3x5 index cards were to be used to take notes from these references. We were also taught how to list the source of the information on these cards. Of course, any references used in the theme needed to be footnoted.

So, I decided to use this research theme to learn more about my denomination. It would require me to read the parts of the Bible that proved the doctrinal points advocated by the Primitive Baptist. It seemed like a good idea. (And it in fact was.)

I suppose that my choice of writing my senior composition about the Bible was a good thing. I learned quite a bit about what I researched. There were groups of people with similar beliefs down through the ages from the

first century. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox were not the only ones in existence during this period of time. The Protestants were not the first people who disagreed with Catholic beliefs.

Research can be a two-edge sword though. Studying the Bible, can teach you many good things. But sometimes you find lessons that contradict the traditions held by churches. Which is more important? The way we have always done things or the way the Bible says it should be done? Does what people say a verse or multiple verses mean always match up with the meaning of the words contained in the verses? (Not always)

I did not finish my composition by the last day of class. The teacher was nice enough to allow me to bring it to her home, so I did. She gave me an A⁻ with a note that I had done a good job. But when I read it in later years, I did not have as good of an opinion as she did. But it was a good job for the first time I did it. As I have learned, I have improved how to research and write.

Wedding in Aunt Ida's family (Carla)

We went to one of our churches before the wedding scheduled that afternoon. Because of the wedding, we were dressed up more than usual. I think I was given my graduation suit early for this occasion.

This Sunday was perhaps the most important day in the Christian calendar. Everyone dressed up in their best clothes to attend church services this day. It might be the only Sunday that they did so in a year.

Primitive Baptists in Illinois sort of frowned upon all the fancy dressing in other churches on this day. So, it was quite possible that they in their minds condemned us for being in our finest clothes. Ah yes, judge according to appearances

when Jesus had told us not to do this. There are lessons about how to judge people properly.

The flower girl

I think there was dinner on the grounds that day. So, we ate before heading to the wedding. Upon our arrival, we were escorted to our seats. Not that long afterward the wedding began.

It was rather elaborate including a flower girl, a maid of honor and perhaps some other maids as well. One of Carla's young nieces (perhaps 3 or 4) was suppose to spread flowers as she slowly walked down the aisle. She began doing exactly what she had been told. But it appears that it was taking too long for her... So, she ceremoniously dumped all of the remaining flowers on the floor, turned back to where Carla was, and said, "Come on Aunt Carla, come on!" And I think she may have waved in the process. (I could not see clearly, but I certainly heard her.) Yes, the rest of the marriage went off without a hitch.

The Marines

Webb still did not have the foundation that he needed for his life. You could say that he too did not have very much faith in himself. So, he decided to do something about it: he saw the local marine recruiter about enlisting. And he did. The timing was such that he finished basic training late May or early June. He would spend the next 4 years at Camp Pendleton at San Diego.

He has always been observant of his surroundings, and such was the case when he was in basic training. He saw through some of the tactics of the drill instructor (DI), and mentioned what he noticed to other recruits. Needless to say, this was not taken lightly by the DI.

One thing used was the smoking lamp. If the sargent announced that it was lit, the recruits could smoke. When it

was put out, the smoking had to stop. Webb noticed that the how often the smoking lamp was lit had nothing to do with how well the recruits were doing. When the drill instructor heard him say this, he was disciplined. Did this get to Webb? Not in the least. He continued to do his best and not let the games played by the DI get to him.

He later told me that the hardest part of basic training was not the physical part: it was the mental.

He advanced in rank at a rapid rate while a marine, well at least for the first three years. Then the trouble he had gotten into when breaking into a home with a bunch of boys created a problem in his desire to advance as far as he could. (Someone forgot to correct the charges that had been sent to the FBI.)

They were going to send him to college and then make an officer out of him. But this required a secret security clearance. One of the things checked was what records the FBI had on him. Because he had not reported the break in when he enlisted, the whole detail fell through. The highest he could advance was to the sargent ranks. This would be very slow since time to go from corporal to the first sargent rank was about 8 years. So, he left the marines four years after enlisting.

Etta needs help

She called our parents during the later part of the winter quarter needing some money for the spring quarter. After some discussion, Mom and Dad sent it to her so she could continue her education. Little did they know that she could have managed without it.

Within the next two months, she called again to tell us that she was going to get married in early June. This was alright in the beginning with Mom. She began thinking about the wedding being in Edwardsville... Well, Etta had different

ideas: it would be in Ft. Collins! In fact she was planing the wedding herself which she was also paying for.

Mom was livid! To her, Etta should get married where she grew up. Her friends during her childhood would then get to be at the wedding. She did not really need the money she had requested earlier in the year for education. She had hidden the real reason for needing the money: her coming wedding. Mom almost did not attend the wedding. Only because some had convinced her did she go.

Etta was looking at the situation in a different way. She had been living in Colorado for almost four years. Her home was now there. The friends that she held dear were also. So, these were the ones she wanted to be at her wedding. In other words, she had permanently left home, and Mom did not understand this.

Unfortunately, my parent's method of raising their children such as it was had now come back to haunt Mom if not Dad also. (I never heard him say anything either way.) They were boss in their own home. They would discipline their children for any infractions, physically if they thought necessary.

It appears that Etta felt that she now had a home of her own. This meant that she was the boss of her own home. (Like parents, like children.) So, Etta got her way whether Mom liked it or not.

Racism

Every spring, tryouts were held for the cheerleaders for the first year. This was done in the gym with each student given a ballot with the girls' names on it. We passed our ballots down to the end of the row after the last girl tried out.

The varsity squad was chosen from the top vote getters. The junior varsity squad was chosen from the top vote

getters from the remaining girls. But there was one exception to this. Juniors trying out in the spring could not be a junior varsity cheerleader her senior year. In other words, unless she was one of the top vote getter, she could not be a cheerleader for the following year.

Until this point, all of our varsity cheerleaders were Caucasian. For the last few years, a Negro girl had been on the junior varsity. Well, this spring she was a junior meaning she had to be chosen as a varsity cheerleader or she could not be one.

As I viewed how well the girls did, I marked my ballot according to which ones I thought did the best routine. Then I passed the ballot to the right end of my row passing also the ones that came from my left.

The next day, we had a track meet at another school. So, I checked the roster as to who would be participating in what events. Now, up to this time, I had never seen my name listed. But surprise, surprise, surprise! My name was listed for the 440 yard run. A lot of new names also appeared on this list.

The entire Negro student body had staged a walk out because of the tryouts. The voting had been rigged. Ballots with the Negro's girls name marked were found in the bleachers when we had voted. Some had been marked up in various ways. It was a deliberate attempt to keep her from winning a place on the varsity team. So, these students had every reason to be angry. Well, I was angry as well when I heard about it.

One Caucasian boy, was very blunt and perhaps proud in what he had done. He was concerned about his reputation being damaged by a Negro cheerleader being on the varsity squad. (Yes, this is the same boy who had hid tools in Mr. Robinson's shop class.) Hopefully, he has grown up since then. (Or is this wishful thinking?)

For the record, I thought that her performance was better than all of the rest. So, of course, I marked her name on my ballot. So, mine could have been disposed of by someone who did not want her to win.

Graduation

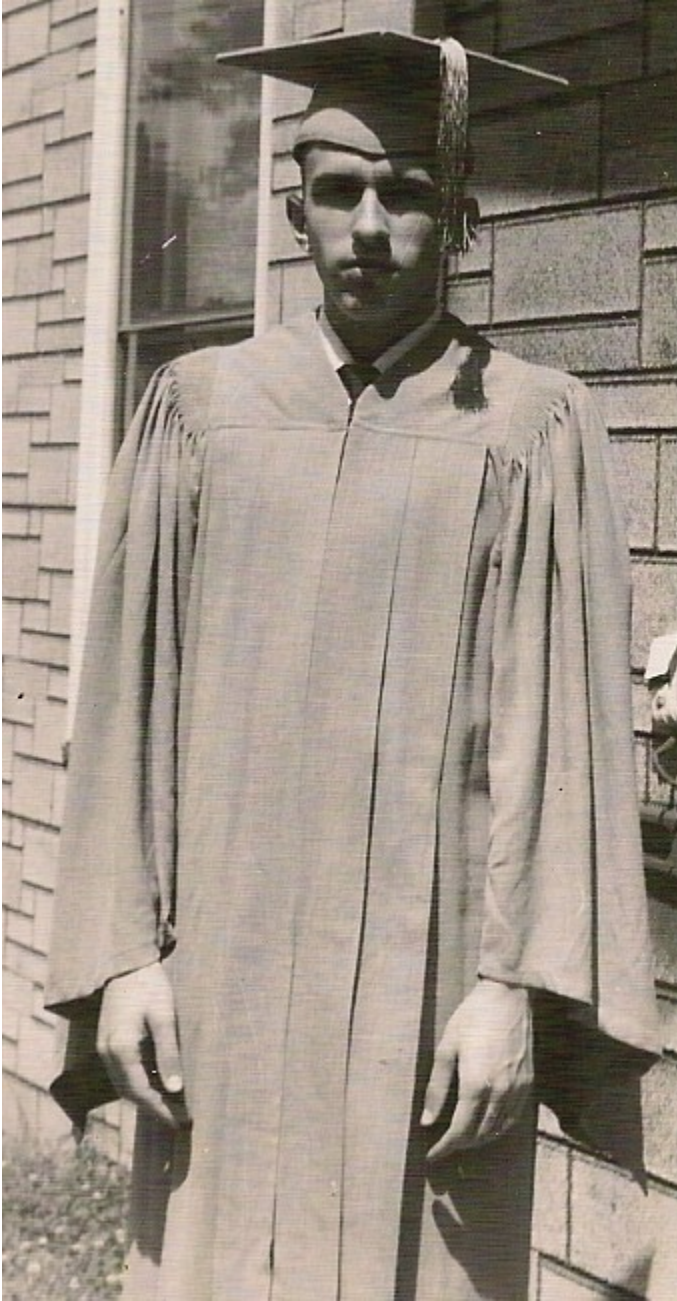
Meanwhile, I was nearing my high school graduation which was scheduled for June 1, 1960. I do not remember being all that excited. I'm not sure that I knew how I should feel. It was another thing that I was doing that Etta and Webb had done before me. And it was another thing that had to be done.

There was one thing that made me sad during the baccalaureate service and graduation: I was no longer a member of the A Capella Choir. Oh how I wanted to be! But this did not stop me from humming the songs I knew as choir sang.

A Catholic priest conducted the baccalaureate service, and he was rather blunt in his remarks about the heritage of each graduating senior. There are a lot of things that we do not have any control over. This included where we were born, who our parents are, who we were, and similar remarks. To me this means that when we are looking at others, they did not any choice as to many of their characteristics either.

As mentioned, I had received a suit for graduation early because my first cousin was getting married. There was another surprise for me after graduation: I got a portable typewriter.

I don't remember Etta or Webb getting anything when they graduated. (It was not important enough for me to remember.) Now I wonder if I got the typewriter because I had taken the typewriting night course or, Mom had insisted on the night course because a typewriter was to be in my future. But, does it really matter?



This is my graduation gown after it was freshly pressed (by me of course). This is what Mom had insisted to each of us: when we brought the gown home, we had to press it.

Flying Saucers

Science Fiction had been something that I had dabbled in throughout high school. This had its basis in my imagination

as well as some of the serials I had seen at the movies that would play before the main attraction.

There were also some books in the non-fiction section of the public library that discussed flying saucer sightings. Given where these books were located, I thought they contained the truth. Clearly their contents were not true. One of the books mentioned that certain events were about to happen. We would all know the truth about these flying objects by the mid 1960's. There were people that had arrived in these machines living among us. Clearly, what had been classified as non-fiction was a work of fiction even if it was the truth in their mind!!!! I still don't know what was suppose to be revealed to the American public. Now more than 50 years later, nothing has been revealed.

I also read some religious writings (books in the public library) including from other denominations. One was talking about the persecutions suffered by "Christians" in the 1910's. Apparently it was during the formation of a new denomination, and the things said about them because they were different.

There was one quotation from the Bible that I remember clearly that is still used by many today: "Choose ye this day whom you will serve." One of the people in the book was having problems with what he heard other say. But when he read these few words, he took courage. He continued on with renewed effort.

The "real" Midwest (Nebraska)

The reason for this heading reading like it does is because of something that Bro. George Pyle said to me. Illinois is considered by many to be part of the Midwest. But as he put it, it is not in the middle of the west. Now, Nebraska **is** in the west and basically in the middle of it. Actually, it is known as part of the great plains.

Visit in Kimble, NE

There was not much time to think about my situation after graduation because we had a wedding to attend. Mom and Dad had laid plans for this trip giving Tom and I little information as to what they were. So, we quickly packed for the trip and left on June 2nd. But before we did, I notified the owner of the paper distributing company that I would be out of town for a while.

On the way to Ft. Collins, CO, we went by Kimble, NE to visit with the George Pyle family while attending church out there.

Several years before, their daughter, Doris, had throat cancer and was sent to Barnes Hospital in St. Louis for treatment. They had been given a choice of Barnes or the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. Since there was a Primitive Baptist Church in the St. Louis area, he chose here.

So, I was thinking that we were just going to visit some church friends. It was also a way to attend church services while on this trip. We even took time to visit with the local co-pastor of the church shortly after our arrival in Kimble.

It later appeared that my parents had another agenda that included me without me knowing it. (So, Etta was not the only one with a hidden agenda this year.) Dad had a talk to Bro. George Pyle about me while we were there. He wanted to arrange a job for me on Bro. George's farm for the summer.

Elder Greathouse

It was on Friday that we headed north to Scott's Bluff to see him. We had never met him, so why the visit? Well, during the previous four years, we had visited in ministers' homes at times. As a result, it was not something unusual. I thought nothing of it. Anyway, we got to see some of his farm, meet his family, and visit some.

After lunch, he introduced us to a tradition his family had started 5 years before. They took the time to read one chapter from the Bible. Afterward, he admitted that the chapters in the Bible vary widely in length. What they did about this, I do not remember. But they had read through the Bible three times. (A chapter a day for 5 years equals approximately 1,800 chapters.)

Dad found fault with this. Why? I don't know. I do know that his comments stopped me from beginning to read the Bible from cover to cover. Then again this may explain his attitude. He was use to reading the Bible using the references in the middle of the page. So, during a given reading period, he would read some, notice a reference, and read that. It would have more references, and he would go to them. So, he did not likely read even a single chapter at any given time. (Gee, I wonder who I should have emulated? A minister or my Dad? Who should know the most about the Bible and how to study it? Dad seemed to win.)

Shiloh Church held services on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning (perhaps Saturday evening). Elder Ira Frye came up from Colorado Springs for the weekend. So we got to hear a couple of new ministers preach.

Etta's wedding in Ft. Collins

On Monday, we headed for Ft. Collins which was about a four hour drive or perhaps less. Webb came in from California by train meeting us there (when exactly?). Where did we stay while there? Good question, but I don't know. After we all got there though, this photo was taken.

Anyway, we got together at Dick's parents' home for this photo. Etta and Dick are between my parents on the back row. Myself, Tom, and Webb are kneeling in the front (left to right). Behind us was probably our 1953 Ford station wagon

which was on its last leg as I would find out at the end of the summer.



Etta had arranged to have the wedding in the chapel on the college campus. (It was built with funds from the Danford Foundation as were chapels on other college campuses.) She had done a good job of planning as everything went well. (Well, Mom was still seething inside.)

For some unknown reason, Dad was rather nervous as he walked his only daughter down the aisle. At least that is what he said later. Did this mean that he thought about his daughter no longer being that but another man's wife? Perhaps. (I never have had that opportunity.)

Weddings are know for making a mess out of the newly weds' car, so Dick and Etta planned for this. They knew a retired sargent that they trusted. And they had their VW Beetle hid at his home. With the reception over, the car was delivered to Etta and Dick. They left on their honeymoon without a scratch on their car. (People at the wedding did not exactly like this!)

Farm hand

After the wedding, we headed back to Kimble, NE. I presumed that we were on our way home. Even when we headed to Cozad for church with George and his wife going

with us, I had no clue of what this summer would be like. (I was still thinking about getting back to my paper routes the middle of the week.)

But before going to Cozad, we spend a night or so in George Pyle's home. At times that I had not noticed, they had done some serious talking about me. This may have started a week before or it may have all happened during this part of the trip.

I did not learn about their conversations until we were in Cozad. It may not have been until Sunday after church that Dad told me. I would be staying in Nebraska to work for George for the summer. This was a shock to me to say the least. I had no idea what to expect!

Then on Sunday after church the rest of the family headed back to IL, and I got on a train with the Pyles heading back to Kimble for the summer.

The next day, he and I went into town. There he made sure that I had the clothing I needed to work on the farm. (The cost of these items were deducted from my pay.) Then we headed back to the farm.

He also sat me down to explain what I would be doing and what my pay would be: \$4 per day plus room and board. At this rate I was earning as much in 2.5 days as I would at home in a week on my paper routes. It was enough to pay my first semester's expenses.

I was use to drinking milk at meals at home, but I had a different experience here. I was use to homogenized milk. Well, they had their own cows that produced their milk. Yes, cream came to the top, and there seemed to be more fats in the milk as well. Well, they had a separator which would separate the milk from the cream. This did not taste very well either. So, I probably went back to the whole milk and made due.

I suppose this summer could be described as "a whole lot of painting going on. Well, this was what I was doing until the last two weeks of July when the wheat harvest occurred. Otherwise, I was painting unless someone in the family needed my services.

This part of Nebraska is mostly large tracks of farmland with a small population. George's mailbox was one mile away from his home. (You certainly don't just decide to walk to the mailbox several times a day to see if any mail has come!)

There were two homes there together less than 50' apart. One of his son-in-laws lived in it. Another son-in-law lived a mile south of us.

Another example of the lack of population is where the church was located. The settlement containing it had about 90 people in it. Also there was the county school which had dorms for all of the students. They got on the bus on Monday morning and returned home on Friday afternoon. Why was the school here? It was the largest settlement in the entire county.

Church



This is Shiloh Church, north of Kimble that I attended that summer on first and third weekends. Elder Frye came up from Colorado Springs to preach both days on the first weekend. Elder Greathouse preached the third Sunday morning.

I enjoyed the church services and my interactions with Elder Greathouse who would show up periodically in various places where I was as he visited the flock.

I got the sense that he was the shepherd of the local flock (church) as he did this visiting. Why? It was a feeling that came over me when in his presence at these times.

Painting buildings

This was my first job. I was up on a ladder all day six days a week. I was even farmed out to other relatives to paint buildings on other farms. Was I worth the money I was being paid? Probably not because I did not work as fast as I likely should have. I do wish if someone had made some suggestions to this effect or even suggested some ways to do a quicker job. Yes, I was back to my speed in junior high shop (double low). Well, people thought so but said nothing.

Most of the time I used enamel paint for the outside of buildings. But then the trim needed a paint designed specifically for it. That is where the problems began. It dries quickly in the low humidity air that exists there. So, a scum can quickly form on top of the paint. As a result I was having to stir the paint with the brush about every third or fourth time I was filling the brush up with paint. This slows things down!

While I was able to keep the scum in check, someone else did not. Sometime later in the summer, one of George's son-in-laws borrowed me for some trim painting he wanted done. So, he picked me up.

As I finished the painting for him, he got ready to take me back. I was going to do what I had always done when finished for the day. This included cleaning the brush and making sure the paint can was closed tight. As I started to do this, he told me to leave them; he would take care of everything when he got back.

Well, when he got back perhaps 30 minutes later, he had a mess on his hands! The lid was not on the paint can, and the scum that formed was at least an inch thick according to his estimation. (I did warn him.)

I had been there for almost three weeks when the church's annual meeting began. Their visiting minister? Elder Eugene Ford from Sharon Church in St. Louis. How did this happen? Was it a coincidence? The only good explanation was God had it planned this way. Too many things had to happen when they did for it all to fit together as they did.

Elder Ford and his wife Betty arrived a couple of days before the meeting. And they spent a day with us. (I got the day off.) It certainly was nice to have this chance to visit.

This must have been the day when the male calves were castrated and branded. They also had a tag placed in an ear

with registration information. It was interesting and educational to watch what they did. But, I don't think that the calves were very happy with what was happening though.

Bro. George's herd consisted of registered cattle. Such was the case for almost all of them. Unfortunately, a heifer had gotten out at night and mated. Since he did not know with which bull she had mated, her calf could not be registered.

Then came Saturday and the beginning of the meeting. Elder Frye had driven up from Colorado Springs as usual. But this time he was in a new car. Well, he had had it for about a month, and it had 26,000 miles on it. (No, I did not put too many 0's in the number of miles.) He was a traveling salesman who drove over 100,000 miles each year.

Then two weeks later we gathered together on Sunday for church again. The most common comments as everyone parted from the church: "see you in a couple of weeks." They would be the busy part of the summer: the wheat harvest! For the next few weeks, there was nothing going on other than this. Long hours six days a week.

The wheat harvest begins farther south in June and moves northward as the wheat ripened. Crews with large combines made the annual trek following the ripening wheat. The farmers along the way would hire them to help them with the harvest.

This year was no different. There seemed to be combines everywhere as the middle of July approached. Then came that Monday, everyone went to work in earnest.

While there were round silos where wheat was stored, it was also put in rectangular buildings that were divided into rooms. And here is where I worked at times. Someone would auger the wheat into the room where I was, and I would use a shovel to move it around to get as much grain into the

room as possible. Every nook and cranny needed to be filled with grain.

It was hot dusty work. One night my nose was so stuffed up that I do not think I slept any. I guess I may have since I kept getting the feeling that I could not breathe. Was I dreaming this? Perhaps I was, but it was real as well as a dream.

During this two week period I spend part of the time at Jr. Morrison's farm as well as at Bro. George's doing this work. There was certainly a lot of sweating done by everyone.

I have learned since then that this can be dangerous work. People have died in these rooms where grain was being pumped in. As I moved the grain around, my feet would sink almost up to my knees. This was not a very solid foundation to stand on!

During this time, I also ran into a "problem" because my Mom had not told me the whys that comes with taking a bath. (What I knew was: take a bath once a week whether I needed it or not. I was reprimanded for not taking a bath at night after getting very dusty that day. This made a big mess in the bedding. A person should take a bath because they are dirty. Only taking a bath once a week whether one needs it or not does not get it during a wheat harvest in NE! One needs a bath every day, before they go to bed. Getting all of the dust out of my hair was especially important. Otherwise, the pillow case would be caked with the dust, and I do mean caked

Probably I should have known better, but I was so use to being told what to do and not why... And it never occurred to me that this was the principle of taking a shower after being working out for cross country or track everyday before leaving for home. Nor did it occur to me that a bath between delivering papers and going to school is something that I should have done. It did not seem to occur to Mom

either. As a result, I could get rather smelly during the day at school.

Various events of the summer

On the tractor

Some time before the wheat harvest, Junior Morrison (a son-in-law) needed someone to drive a tractor to cultivate some of his fields. So, off I went to do this. Most of the time I did this as well as the others on tractors. After all, the tractor went just as fast with me driving as for anyone else.

One of the things I had to do was to keep the right end of the cultivator on the same line as the left end the cultivator had been on the last run. The other was to keep track of the conditions of the teeth of it. When one of them hit something hard, it would break something (a cotter key) that held tension on the tooth. Then it would pop up. That is when I had to stop, and repair it. There a few times that I did not catch this happening. Junior was not very happy when this happened. While I could sense some anger in his voice, he was very patient with me which I really appreciate.

The purpose of doing this is to keep the amount of moisture coming out of the ground to a bare minimum. By keeping the ground broken into very small pieces for the top 2", this is accomplished.

Another thing I learned that summer. Half of the land is planted, and half is cultivated any given year. Then next year, they swap the two.(Planted before becomes cultivated; cultivated becomes planted.)

One particular day, we were cultivating 80 acres. It was getting close to sundown. He was somewhat concerned about me. But I somehow convinced him that I would be alright. We needed to get this done before quitting for the day. We did, I was tired, but it was well worth it.

Late summer, he had developed some sores on his lips that could be serious. (They could become cancerous.) Anyway they had me back to do some tractor work. This time I would be pulling a weed eater and on my own. (It was nice to know that they trusted me to get the work done.)

During the wheat harvest there was no time for cultivating, so some weeds can grow in the cultivated fields. These can drain moisture out of the ground that the wheat could use during the next growing season.

As a result, I had been back to help with this in Junior's fields. So, I was acquainted with what to do. I even learned how to make some repairs on it as I had with the cultivators.

One day while at Jr.'s farm, I experienced an encounter with a dust devil.

A young man and I was cultivating a field on a rather hot day. Nebraska is known for its winds, and this day was not any different. So, the wind had kicked up quite a bit of dust.

I was concentrating on keeping the cultivator I was pulling right where it belong. Then suddenly, all I could see was dust all around me. Visibility was literally down to zero. I could not see anything! But it only lasted for a very short time as the dust devil continued on its merry way.

A swirling wind (similar to a tornado but fairly light winds) had formed a funnel of dust and blind sided me. Weird experience!

What was the young man doing during that time? Nearly laughing his head off. He had seen it form and head in my direction. While I was wondering why he had not warned me, there really was no way he could have done so.

Lightning

It was about 6 AM one morning that we had a thunderstorm. While I have been around such storms, I was not ready for what happened next. Suddenly, there was a

very bright light that lit up everything in the room. At the exact same moment, we heard a very loud clap of thunder! Yes, we were at ground zero of that lightning strike. Well, the son-in-law was. How close it was is hard to tell, but it knocked the phone box off the outside wall of his house.

Phew!

And then there was the morning that was a real stinker! This was about the same time of the morning as the lightning when we heard a shotgun being fired. Then came the smell! A skunk had been drinking out of a water trough. It died on the spot at the hands of the son-in-law. We needed to hold our noses closed as we ate breakfast.

Building George's shop

Brother George was building a shop with various types of tools to go in it when finished. The outside walls and roof had already been completed. Now it needed a floor and insulation put into the walls. Well, it also needed a concrete step outside of the building.

During the later part of the summer, he had a concrete truck come out to pour the floor. It was only later that he and I built the frame for the step.

Then with his help, I learned how to mix the concrete for the step. Well, I got the right amounts of solids for it; I overdid the amount of water that I mixed in. But I managed to get the watery concrete mixture into the frame. Surprising, the step turned out alright.

He did not really know very much about installing insulation, and I did not either. So, we sort of messed things up for a little while. That is when I happened to look at the bats of insulation and noticed something looked a little strange. Then I realized that these strange things were really important in installing the bats. Things went quicker

once I started to do it right. Job accomplished, and well I might add.

Driving home

There is one problem with laying down rules for children to follow without every teaching them why. The children do not have to think for themselves. Nor, do they learn how to do this very well. They expect to be told what to do.

Such was the case with me this summer from the very beginning. How was I going to pay for my college education? Well, I was told that I would be working on a farm that summer. How was I going to get back to Illinois when the summer ended? When would I return? No one told me this. And I did not ask about this either.

By early August, I got a letter from Etta and Dick telling me that they could pick me up and take me home since they were going to Illinois for a visit early in fall. At least that answered one question. But I wonder why they decided to do this. Did my parents have something to do with this? (I will never know unless Etta were to tell me.)

On my own, I wrote Elder Adair about stopping there on the way, and he and his wife graciously said yes. (Where did I get the gumption to do this??) Anyway, I also mention my experience with the LORD the previous summer. It was the first time that I had mentioned it to anyone. (My life was forever changed after this.)

I also wrote Etta back. During the continuing correspondence, she set the date they would be coming by: the second week of September. It was really later than I would have liked. You see, there were fewer and fewer things left to be done. I was beginning to feel guilty of taking their money. But in the end I continued working such as it was until I left.

So, at the appointed time, they drove up from Colorado. Then after spending the night, we left in a VW Beetle. There were three of us driving, but that day was a long 700 miles. (I really did not think about the distance when I wrote to Elder Adair earlier.)

I was use to the manual transmission lever to be mounted on the steering wheel with three gears forward. But the Beetle had four forward gears on the floor. Also, I was use to driving in third gear all of the time once I got up to speed. With four gears, I needed to use third gear when in the 25-40 MPH range. It took a while, but with a couple of hundred miles of driving that day, I learned how to do it without any problems.

While in Elder Adair's home, I was asked to pray. It was the first time I had done this. Thereafter, when I was at home, I was expected to do this as well. Once again, no training at all. It is one thing to hear others pray, it is another thing to talk to God out loud in front of others.

I think I have solved that problem. In fact, one pastor's wife later complemented me on my prayer, how nice it was. The only thing that I can think of was that when I had prayed that day, I had shut out every thing and everybody as I talked directly to God. So, this is what I have done since then.

We were up the next morning, saying our good-by, and heading east. Once home, I had a few days before I had to head to Champaign for college. At the same time, I have to say I felt very strange. The schools in the area were already in session, and here I was sitting at home. Very strange!

One of the things I noticed shortly after I got home: They had a different car. Mom's explanation? The 1953 Ford station wagon was on its last legs, so they traded for a newer model.

Responsible for my own actions

This summer had begun me thinking about myself, and I did not exactly like what came to mind. Who am I? What am I? What am I suppose to be doing? In other words, I felt like I had no foundation upon which to build my life. Well, soon I would have no one to tell me what I needed to do. I would have to make those decisions myself, and I was not sure enough about myself to think I could even do this. So, many of my decisions were the wrong ones.

Susan told me something about Mom that applies to this as well. This came up in a conversation that they had: there were things about raising a family that Mom did not understand. Why would this be? Could it be that Mom's mother did not understand what is required as well?

It was the middle of September when I got on the train heading to Champaign.

Explorer scouting

There several short stories that do not relate to each other. Instead, they are events that happened during my four years of high school, and I have no idea of when they occurred. Some involve multiple years such as Camp Sunnon.

Became an Explorer Scout

Cub Scouts were for ages 8 through 10, Boy Scouts were from 11 on up. For high school boys, there were the Explorers. Dad had been involved in Boy Scouts until Webb began high school in 1954. Then he became the leader for Webb's Explorer troop. I joined them this year and would remain until I graduated. I suppose I was still doing what Etta and Webb had done before me. I really did not have any idea what I should be doing. I was just drifting along with no direction. My high school classes were dictated to me. My behavior was dictated by my parents' rules at home and school discipline at school.

And yet there were things that I learned. For example, our troop used Robert's Rules of Order to run our weekly meetings. As a result, I actually read the book. (Yes, my eyes' glazed over from time so to speak.) Yet, there were times when I had use of information that was contained in this book.

Scout Camp

There was a place outside Litchfield, IL, that a farmer allowed our troop to use for camping purposes. It had a pond (or lake?) with a dam at the deep end. It also had a cabin with a wood stove and a heater.

One weekend a boy went fishing, and a snapping turtle took the hook. Somehow he managed with Dad's help to reel it in. Someone else had caught some frogs. This was on

a Saturday. For Sunday lunch we had deep fried turtle and some frog legs as well. They were certainly delicious!

Speaking of food: This was a sore spot for me on these camping trip. I may be able to help with fixing family meals, but this did not mean that I knew what I was doing. Probably every time I came home from camping, I also brought home at least half of the food I took. During these years, Mom made some comments about this. But I did not know what I should be doing; Mom did not know how to correct the problem.

I was shy and not sure of myself at all. So, I seldom did the things that others would do. There were a lot of things that I did because of my shyness.

One very cold winter weekend we spent the weekend there. Someone wanted to get out of the ice, so Dad began to cut a hole in the ice. When he got down 6", he stopped. We were told us it was safe to be on the ice. Later a few of us were at the shallow end when we saw a large fish perhaps 18" long swimming very slowly under the ice. Someone chopped the ice above it and lifted it out of the water. Probably someone had the *privilege* of cooking the fish outside in freezing weather. (Dad could not stand the smell of fish frying!)

Camp containing boys and girls

One fall, Mom's girl scout troop went with Dad's Explorer troop to this camp. The girls stayed in the cabin, and the boys slept outside. That is when I learned just how comfortable sleeping on leaves can be if done properly. It can be quite nasty to the bed roll though: all of the leaf particles on it. Other than this, it was uneventful. I am not sure what year this was.

I was instructed on how to make my leaf "mattress". Limbs were used as a frame to contain the leaves. They were several inches high on each side. Then leaves were

gathered and place inside of this boundary. Lots of leaves had to be used because they will crumble when weight is place upon them. Then I placed my blankets on top of the leaves and crawled into them. I had gathered enough leaves to give me several inches of leaves below me, but I was still lower than the limbs that I had used to make the outside of this bed. I had a restful night. Interesting experience: climbing out of this "mattress".

This and the next event seemed a little odd to me now. Girls should be camping with girls etc. They have different kinds of bodies. There is also the chance of "bad behavior." Well, they were chaperoned. (OK, I'm a prude.)

Hike at Cairo, IL (girls and boys)

Probably in my sophomore year, some girl scouts and the explorers traveled down to Cairo, IL, to walk a scout trail on the levees protecting the city. Here I was playing follow the leader with Webb. He ran most of the 18-20 miles I think. He finished a little more than 3 hours, and I did it in about 4 hours and 20 minutes (plus or minus). Everyone else came in after us. I must say that running in hiking boots is not the most enjoyable think I have ever done.

Periodically, there were roads which went through the concrete levees. In flood time, they connected the levees together. Furthermore, there were ladders on them on both sides of the road. So, we would be hiking along until we got to these spots. Then we would have to climb down to the ground, cross the road, climb up to the top of the levee, and hike to the next one...

On the way home, I was riding next to a senior girl who was having her hair pulled by some of the boys behind us. That is when I put my arm around her shoulders and got her hair under my arm. This made it difficult for them to pull it any more. It felt nice to be protective of another person. And yes, she thanked me for being sensitive to her plight.

Kentucky Lincoln Trail

Again I do not remember when this was, but one November, our explorer troop traveled to Kentucky for the Kentucky Lincoln Trail. It was very late before we arrived on a Friday night (like midnight?). It was also very cold (near 20 degrees). But somehow we got some sleep and were not *too* stiff.

Then it was off for a 24 mile hike for the day. The scenery was beautiful, and it warmed up nicely during the day. There were some rather high hills that day, with cows below looking very small. They looked like small toys. We ended the day where Abraham Lincoln was born. The log cabin was still there then. (I don't know about now.)

That night, the temperature dropped a couple of more degrees. Most of us slept in pup tents, but some slept under the skies. One of the adults in the group had bought some baled hay which we used as mattresses under our sleeping bags. In the morning, those sleeping under the skies were covered in frost. (After all, the morning temperature was only 17 degrees.) Somehow we got up and got going even though I thought my feet were frozen. Then we headed out for the second day of the hike (10-12 miles I think).

As we began our hike I saw a wonder that I will never forget. Along the road, the frost formed all kinds of solid shapes. Some of them looked like vases. How the holes in the middle of these were created, I don't know. Perhaps a light wind helped in these formations. I just enjoyed looking at them as I walked along.

But the end of the hike was a challenge: some steps. There was one step for each year of Lincoln's life (53). After doing that much walking over two days, it was a chore to walk up them. They led to a building that had something to do with Lincoln. What you ask? At this point, I did not care!

Movie: *The 10 Commandments*

This movie came to a theatre in St. Louis, and our explorer troop went to see it. It was released in 1956. One of the things that surprised me was the cost: ~ \$1.50 which was much more than what I was paying in Edwardsville (never more than a quarter and that was only for a very special movie). It was a wonderful movie that stirred my spirit from within. Sometime after that, I remember Elder Ford saying that the director of this film was known for the accuracy in his films. As a result, this movie had an impression on me. I would again see the movie in a Drive-In in Nebraska the summer of 1960.

Reading Genesis through Deuteronomy

This movie was based upon the Torah which is Genesis through Deuteronomy. So, I was curious about what was in these five books. I wanted to read the passages that had been used to create the screen play. So, now that I knew that I was allowed to read Mom or Dad's Bible, I saw down with one of theirs to begin reading at Genesis 1:1 and continuing to Deuteronomy 33:29. I do not remember whether I was successful or not. Possibly not since that is a large amount of reading to do. I do remember reading, reading, and reading... Yet, I did not seem to be getting any closer to reading all of it.

Since 1982, I have had a Bible reading schedule that takes me through the Bible in 11 months and 1 day. Even so, it takes 65 days to read these 5 books of the Bible. But you see, I did know how long it would take when I began.

This was my first attempt to become acquainted with the Bible. I continued to read from my New Testament and Psalms though. The second time would come the beginning of my senior year.

Corn starch

One of the outings was a visit to see a manufacturing plant which produced corn starch from dried kernels of corn.

This was very interesting for me.

So I decided to use this as the basis for my science project for chemistry. I was going to do the same thing and then prove my method worked using a chemical to dye the starch.

Why was I doing a science project? One of the requirements for passing a science class is to have an entry to the annual science fair.

While the whole family was gone somewhere on a Saturday, I began my experiment. I had some dried kernels of corn (good start). Then I put them into a pot covered with water and brought them to a boil. This did not seem to work after boiling them for some time. Then I tried adding some salt to raise the boiling temperature some. Still did not work. (Salt does not help soften dried corn! I should have known better from the slide I had made in Biology the year before.) Try as I might, I could not soften the corn.

What I forgot was that they cooked the corn under high pressure for 24 hours (or was it more?). We had a pressure cooker, but I had not tried to use it. Besides, that probably would not have worked either. I would be only using 15 psi while they obviously used much higher pressures.

What did I learn from this? Nothing. It would only be later that I would learn that research needs to be done first. What do you want to do? What do you need to do to accomplish it? How will you do each part? And then plans are made according to what is learned.

Mushrooms and trip to Menard Prison

On this weekend trip, we visited where the mushrooms were grown and then the state prison. Maybe they had a similar theme to them: the mushrooms were grown in a huge cave, and the prison was just as dreary to the inmates.

The first thing that amazed me was the immense size of the cave they had created. They had stacks and stacks of beds on rollers in which mushrooms were growing. There were different types of mushrooms growing in different beds. It seems like there were millions and millions of them growing.

The environment was strictly controlled to get the maximum growth in the mushrooms. So, the cave was sealed. Even so, the cave provided the most control because its normal conditions were so close to what the mushrooms needed: moisture and a cool temperature. The main thing that had to be added was the amount of lighting. Otherwise, only a small amount of adjustment to the temperature and moisture were required.

Having got our eyes adjusted to the brighter sun outside, we headed to the prison to see what this was like. It might have been an hour drive or so. I really did not have any idea of what I was about to see.

We were given some background information about the operation of it including the part the guards play. Specifically, it seemed much like in movies with guard posts along the top of the wall which allowed them to see every part of the prison. If a prisoner attempted to escape over the wall, they were to stop it, killing the inmate if necessary.

There must be some stress in this position knowing that they held another man's life in his hands. Yet, it was also a position to be prized. As long as they did what they were suppose to do, they would remain stationed in the guard towers. If they failed, they would find themselves reassigned to being among the general prison population. Oh yes, they also had to maintain a high score when requalifying of their shooting ability.

Concerning this, we had to walk through the exercise area when going from one place to another. It seemed so

quiet and safe even with the prisoners not all that far from us... But then someone reminded me that they knew they dared not make a move in our direction less they die. Yes, appearances can be quite deceiving!

This prison was one of them in the state that had a death row section. At the time, electrocution was used, and we visited the room where this was done. The chair seemed like an ordinary wood chair with a high back. Well, it likely had the things that were shown in movies when killing people this way.

And to get a little gruesome: The prisoner was administered an electric shock of 10,000 volts which knocks him (or her) unconscious. Then the current is increased to 250 amps which caused the blood to boil. (This was interesting from a science point of view. But thinking about someone losing his (or her) life this way or in any way is an entirely different matter.

Surprising enough, most groups visiting this room have one or more people who want to sit in this chair. I really did not want to do so nor understand why.

We also got to visit one or more cell blocks, but this area did not really impress me very much.

We also got to see an edition of the prison newspaper. It was a sports article that caught my attention. This time of the year they had basketball games among the inmates. Some of them were good, and others were not.

Well one of the really good players was being let out of prison. It was either on parole or they had completed their sentence. It was written very much like a player in the NBA being traded or retiring.

Dow Chemical Plant

This visit had to be after I saw the movie, 20,000 Leagues under the Sea. In it, the crew of the Nautilus mined the

ocean for the things they needed.

Dow Chemical was and is involved in manufacturing many different things. The plant we visited was where they produced magnesium items. (They got the magnesium from the sea. I wished that I remember how they got the magnesium from the magnesium salts found in sea water.)

In one part of the plant, they were making magnesium rods. They began with a block of the metal and placed it in a die which had a hole in it the size that the rod should be. Then pressure was applied to the block forcing the metal out through the hole in the form of a rod. Fascinating!

The other item of interest involved how light weight this metal is. Our guide when talking about this walked over to what looked like a 4 foot long railroad track... Then he picked it using all of his might to do so. It must have been very heavy! Then he handed it to one of scouts still seemingly having to use all of his muscles to do so.

The boy prepared himself for what he thought would be a very heavy load... Then as the guide let go, the rail went over the boy's head! (Yes, he still had a hold of it.) It really weighed much less than the guide had pretended it did.

Trip to St. Louis Police Academy and jail

Hmmm.. first a prison with an electric chair and now a jail. I suppose it could have been worse if it had been the other way around. It was rather interesting though.

The jail part of the tour was not really all that interesting. The same was true for the prison as well. But then, my Uncle Carlos had been the sheriff of Lawrence County where Dad's parents lived. This office had a two term limits. So, He would run for two terms in a row, sit out for one term, and then run for two terms again. Anyway, our family had visited him in his office, so I had been in around the jail cells probably more than once.

But one of the cells had a special attraction. It had been used to house people picked up drunk. They slept it off in cells like this one.

Then one morning after the men had been released, someone walked back into this one cell. What he saw was far different from what he had expected. There on the wall was a drawing of Jesus on the cross as He appears in many paintings. Everything was there but the right hand.

How was he able to do this? He was basically doing this in the dark. He had no pencil or pen to draw with. The only thing he could have used was the sole or heel of his shoe. It had to be done from either memory or imagination. Even so, the drawing was detailed. If I had not seen this, I would have thought it to be an impossibility. It's too detailed, too life like.

They tried to find the person who had done it without any success. What they wanted to do was have the person claiming to be the painter draw the missing right hand. None could successfully. With that, they put a glass over the drawing and then allowed visitors to see and admire it.

Then there is the exercise room. Recruits for the police department have to be physically fit, and here they prove they are while in training. It is also where they go to periodically prove they remain fit.

It has a track which is probably one eighth of a mile around, a mat for wrestling, judo, etc. So, they had plenty of things to do to get or keep their bodies in good shape.

It seems that there is a simple test as to whether a person is doing what they should or not. If their bodies are wet, they are. If they are not, they are goofing off. Yes, there are severe penalties for getting caught: a long run and specific amounts of other exercises under supervision. Needless to say, when they finish the punishment, they are sweating! They also make sure that their bodies are wet

after that. (The guide said that they might put water on their bodies to appear to be sweating...)

Qualification with a gun is another part of the training. Of course, one would want a policeman to be able to shoot what he is aiming. The gun probably ought to be cleaned and have the bullets replaced once in a while also.

Well, the academy sometimes refreshes the training for some of the other police departments in the general St. Louis area. It was time for one such policeman to show what he could do on the firing range. Seems that he happened to brag that he had not fired his weapon in 23 years. Yes, this was the weapon he had brought with him for the refresher course. He was not allow to use his revolver at all! When we were told this, the guide also mentioned that it was quite possible that pulling the trigger could have caused the gun to explode!

There was one place we could have visited but did not: the morgue. Seems that the visitors who do visit it have a tendency to developing a queasy stomach when they see a dead naked body...

Camp Sunnon

This more or less became an annual event of spending a week in southeastern Missouri. Webb became a camp counselor for a few years, but that is not what I wanted to do.

We spend the week out of a 7x9 wall tents (2 in each one). So far, so good. But one of the regular speeches at the beginning of each week of camp was the importance of looking out for copperheads snakes. They were very common in that part of the Ozark Mountains.

They liked something warm, so they might curl up around someone shoes. So, if we were going to make a trip to the latrine at night, we had better use a flashlight to make sure

one had not curled around our shoes. We also need to make sure that there were not any of them on the trail to the latrine either.

There were a few rattlesnakes native to the area, so be on the look out for these also. In fact, one was caught one year that Webb had been counselor, and he brought it home. (I seem to remember that either it was dead when he arrived home or he killed it shortly thereafter.) Anyway, it was skinned, and Mom tried to cook the rattlesnake meat. The only problem was that the snake had not eaten in a couple of months; there was not enough meat on the snake's bones to even have a taste of it.

One year, our group of campers were chosen to walk around the lake where Camp Sunnon was located. They were so nice: they gave us a snack to eat while on this trip. They gave us an apple and a slice of cheese. Now, up to this point I would always core an apple and cut it in to pieces before eating it (or eat it down to the core). On this trip, we were told to cut the apple into slices and then to place cheese between slices. Strange! But it did taste good. (Was this because we were hungry from all that walking?)

Other groups had traveled around the lake in canoes spending the night somewhere before returning to camp. Webb was on one of them as counselor when trouble came up. By late afternoon, they had found a good camping spot. So, they got out and began to set up their camping gear. Then a copperhead was discovered and killed. Then another, and another, and another... Not all that long, the count had reached 23 copperheads killed. For some reason, the group spend the night in their canoes on the lake.

There was a roped off area for swimming for three types of swimmers: beginners (or non swimmers), intermediate, and experts. I was usually in the middle until I earned my junior lifesaving badge.

There were strict rules as to when we could swim and how long. When we were told to get out, we were to get out then! To make sure that we did this as quick as possible, the last three people getting out of the water would have to sing a song at supper.

Well, one day I was a little slow in getting out so... Actually I was swimming as fast as I could (underwater). Could that have slowed me down? Anyway, I thought it was a little unfair that I should have to sing. After all, I was swimming toward the shore. I was not dillydallying along while doing so. But my protesting did not get me anywhere as you might imagine. Do you think any of the other people having to sing felt the same way?

The camp had several aluminum canoes, and we were first taught how to use them. It was surprising how stable and light they were. Counselors had to very hard to even come close to tipping one of them over. Then it was time to spend an hour or so out on the lake in the vicinity of the camp.

Canoe Trip

While I was in junior high, Dad and Dale Robinson had taken some of the explorer troop on a a canoe trip on the Kaskaskia River. Then I got to go on one while I was in high school.

This river had some trees that had fallen across it. So, one the first trip, everyone had to get out of their canoes and carry everything past this blockage (portage) just as the Indians and pioneers did centuries before. It seems that there were more than one place where this had to be done.

But it had been raining upstream from where we would be canoeing so the water level was up. So we had enough water under the canoes to go over the top of these blockages. We almost did not make one of them. But by

scraping the bottom of the canoes and pulling and tugging, we manage to get past it as well.

And then there is my tall tale for the trip. Close to the edge of the water, there was a tree about two feet across. Well we got up some speed and headed directly toward this tree! Sure enough, we managed to ram the point of the canoe completely through that tree. (True story, well sort of)

This particular tree was rotten for the most part. Two feet apart were two parts of the trunk that were very much alive. In between and connecting them was about a couple of inches of rotten wood. This is what we rammed and why we were able to put a hole in it.

This was the first time that I had a chance to do any canoeing for very long at a time. Some of it was going upstream or down. And there sure is a difference in where you want to canoe to be when canoeing. Being in the current certainly will give you the most speed going downstream. Learning how to be on the other side of the river makes going upstream much easier.

Coal burning power plant

Much of this was similar to the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River in 1955. The generators were the same size; there were so many of them! But there were differences also.

The coal was brought using a whole train of coal cars at a time. While the cars had an opening in their bottoms from which coal could be emptied, the plant also had a machine that could turn the car upside down to remove all of the coal. (It seems that the railroad company did not like this being done: the machine handles the car rather roughly as in shake it.)

First coal had to be ground to a fine dust, and I do mean fine. The guide showed us a screen through which the coal

particles had to go through. The holes in it were too small for water to go through. (5 ten thousands of an inch). Now it was ready to be blown into the boilers. At this size, the coal burns instantaneously producing a huge amount of heat. This in turns brings the temperature of the water to very high.

Sticking with the coal for a while, the resulting gases head toward the smokestacks. But first, some of the heat is used to preheat the water returning to the boiler. (More later) It also goes through the scrubbers which removes a lot of materials which are not good for us. This is the coal ash that we hear about.

Now back to the water. By the time it leaves the boiler, its temperature is 3000 degrees or more (I think) but I don't remember just how much pressure it is under. It is high enough to turn the huge turbines. As it does so, it loses quite a bit of its temperature (only in the 100's) and pressure. And then it begins its return to the boiler. This temperature is way below the operating temperature of the boiler, so the water needs to be warmed some. So, as mentioned, it gets preheated using the heat from the gases leaving the boiler.

The turbines turned the huge generators just as the water driven turbines did in the dam. Surely, with the high speeds of these machines, a special oil would have to be used to keep things lubricated. With the temperature of steam, surely the oil used for lubrication would have to be able to stand up to much more.

Globe Democrat Offices

There were two daily and Sunday newspapers in the St. Louis area: the Globe Democrat and The Post. These came out in the morning and evening respectively. The Globe ran into financial difficulties and merged their news and editorial

staffs for a while. Sometime after I left for college, the Globe stopped publishing altogether.

There were three things that interested me: the presses, the huge rolls of newsprint, and the linotype machines.

The presses were running while we were there. The speed of the paper was truly amazing; the pictures and print were a complete blur as the newsprint moved through a maze of rollers. (There is bound to be a story of what was happening, but I could not tell you what.)

Now I realize that they were printing sections of the papers I would be delivering the next day. That is because much of the paper is "put to bed" much earlier than the important sections. Comics could be printed first. Things like the latest news and sports information would be printed last. Only then would the entire paper be put together section by section.

What can I say about the rolls of newsprint? Not much except their diameter seemed to be 6 feet or so. Besides looks can be deceiving. The paper seemed to be so flimsy, yet one person visiting a newspaper plant had absent mindlessly ran his palm along each roll as he walked. The result? His blood was streaked on the rolls of paper, and his palm had multiple abrasive cuts on it.

Various departments (news, sports, society, etc.) had already create everything that the paper would have on sheets of paper. All of this was sent to the linotype machines which would create the type needed to print the paper. Several men were responsible for typing everything they had been sent into these machines.

This was hot work, because the type was made of lead (perhaps an alloy of lead and another soft metal). During the formation of the type, heat was applied to the lead. Then when the impressions were made in the lead, it must have been cooled back down.

I wish that I could explain what happened inside the machine, but this happened more than 50 years ago. Besides, with computers being used in so many different ways, these huge machines have been replaced with other ones. (Ah yes, as years past, we can look back at so many things are no longer done in the same way.)

Cold Mississippi River

We were along the eastern shore of this river after the weather had been very cold both up and down stream. So cold that it sort of froze over as in perhaps ten feet of ice floating on top of the water.

Of course, with the force of the moving water beneath it, the ice was somewhat broken into huge pieces. They were also stacking themselves on each other as well which made a loud noise! For those who know, areas like this are known as ice jams.

Obviously, it was not safe to be on the river at this time. And there were other dangers from the ice flow. Any bridges along the way would have these huge chunks of ice continually banging up against them with tremendous force. (The bridge supports can be destroyed this way.

First paper route

Somewhere around my tenth or eleventh birthday, I got a bicycle. Webb had gotten a morning paper route earlier, and I tagged along getting one as well.

The only problem was that I was not responsible enough to handle the situation. My biggest problem? To start with, I was not counting how many papers I was given. Nor did I make sure that I only delivered a paper to those who were suppose to get it. As a result I was seemingly being short one paper every morning. And to make matters worse, I chose the same person as the one who would not get a paper. (How do you say, "You're fired?")

This particular route was along the west side of Troy Road going out to the 1400 or 1500 block. Strangely enough, I can still see some of the streets of the route as if I am riding a bicycle on them.

Second try

Several years earlier, we had a milk man who delivered milk to our house. (Yes this was *many* years ago!) And over the years my parents and he had become good friends. Sometime after my first fiasco with a paper route, he bought the rights to distribute the Globe Democrat and St. Louis Post papers in Edwardsville.

So I did not have any problem getting a paper route during junior high school. This time I got two of them. (I don't remember if I only got one to begin with and then added a second route later. I may have.)

Part of the first route went up north Main Street (both sides including a couple of blocks to the west of it. This formed the first loop of the route. The second loop went on west Randle Street which began at St. John's Methodist Church. The loop also includes St. Louis Street as well. The

Second route was also a loop that ended a block from our home.

Yet I had some things that I still needed to learn. In this case, it was all about recent rain and trying to ride across clay soil...

I was heading south along the top of a valley. The next two cross streets had people to whom I delivered papers to my right and down in the valley. Earlier when the weather was dry, I had been cutting across some yards between the two cross streets. This way I would not have to deliver the papers on the first street, ride up the hill and then down the next street.

The only problem was that the weather was not dry. In fact, I was wearing my poncho (a type of raincoat), and the papers had been wrapped in plastic. But I began to cross these yards just as I had before...

Well the wheels soon got stuck in the mud. I finally had to get off of my bike and carry it (papers and all) across the rest of the way to the other street. This was time consuming to say the least. (What a mess!) It took me far more time slopping through the wet clay than to ride back up the hill and down the hill on the second side street. This is not to mention the amount of energy I expended.

Over the years, I got better at delivering the papers. The two routes together were about 10 miles when measured by car. In the beginning, this was taking perhaps up to 90 minutes total for both routes. By my senior year, I was down to 30 minutes for each route.

Christmas bonuses

\$5 a week for delivering a paper route six days a week is rather low pay to say the least. (Well, I did not have to visit my customers each week to collect what they owed.) But

these made up for it a very little bit. I think I got somewhere \$50-60 each December which I thought was nice.

Teachers as customers

It was during seventh grade that a Mr. and Mrs. Coleman were added to my second route. Both were teachers and had recently married. I think he was my social studies teacher.

Now why did I get nervous when I rode by their home each morning. I think that somehow I thought one of them might be outside. Anyway, I kept getting a queasy stomach every day.

Sunrises

These were enjoyable to see from early spring to late fall. (Well, not on cloudy or raining mornings.) The rest of the mornings were just plain dark. But they still had their own moments as well.

Each morning I got to see God's creation being revealed as the dark turned to light. There were birds singing which were beautiful to listen to. It was a great time to be alive.

I still get up around 6 AM each morning, and open my blinds which face the eastern sky. So, I continue to see the sun peek over the horizon, the sky changing colors, any clouds changing from dark gray to yellows and reds to light yellows and rose. It is great time to be outside.

Strangely enough, even this early on winter mornings gives me a wonderful feeling from within. Others may complain of how cold it is, but as I step out to feel the brisk cold against my skin, I seem to mentally go back to the cold mornings on my paper routes. It is a great feeling! Why? There is something that happened during those mornings that makes me feel alive!

Snow or cold days

My parents had set two rules that still make sense. If the snow was over a certain depth or the temperature below 15 degrees, one of them would take us on our route. Well, Etta drove the car at least one time her senior year.

In the case of snow though, I preferred Dad to do the driving. This is because I did not have to throw all of the papers from my side of the car. He would throw the papers that were on his side for me. Mom could not, and Etta would not (even if she could).

So on cold mornings, I would check the thermometer before leaving the house. Too cold or snowy? I got a ride. 16 degrees or higher? I had to bundle up a little bit more.

For cold mornings I usually wore two pairs of gloves, the inside pair were brown work gloves. At some point, I thought that gloves made of goat leather would be warm. They were not! I found this out very quickly one morning. But there after a pair of brown gloves inside of the goat leather kept my hands warm enough regardless of the temperature.

I also ran into a little problem with my coat as well. Oh, it kept me warm enough for me to sweat from the exercise. But... the sweat would then trickle down my back cooling off as it went. By the time it got down to my waist, it felt like ice water! (It wasn't.)

At one point, I ran across of recipe for an energy snack. I decided that I wanted to make a batch. So I did. It contained a wide variety of dried fruits including apricots, raisins, dates, etc. These had to be ground up together. (I used our meat grinder, hand powered.) Then I spread this mixture out and cut into rectangles. Finally, I wrapped the pieces up in waxed paper. I would later eat one while delivering the papers.

I now wonder what effect eating this snack day after day for a while had on my teeth. It was very sticky meaning something containing large quantities of sugar was being

stuck to my teeth. It was as bad as drinking soda is today. (No, it does not make any difference whether the soda is diet or regular. Both are harmful!

Thanksgiving Day was different from the other days. Because all of the local stores would close for this holiday and then open on Friday morning (at regular times), the paper this day was filled with all of the holiday specials. Needless to say, the paper was as big as the Sunday edition! And it was not fun throwing such a heavy weight over and over again. Besides it would not go as far.

One time I accidentally threw this paper across a car where it hit the radio antenna. The latter was laid out flat because of the weight! Sad situation.

Chased

On this occasion, I was riding my bike up a hill back to north Main Street when a man started chasing me. (Was he homeless?) What did he want with me? Why was he yelling, "Come back here?" I really had no idea. I do know that I tried to ride my bike that much faster. Well, I was in better shape than he was, so I won the race. Fortunately, I never saw the man again, nor did I want to.

Ready to kiss someone

Well, the first time I was. It was during the early part of winter when I found a persimmon plant along the street. At the time, I really did not know whether it was ripe or not, but I tried eating it anyway. It was definitely **not** ripe. So, my mouth puckered as would be expected. (Green persimmons are known to do this.)

It may have been a year or two later that I saw a yellow persimmon along the street. (It may have been in the same location.) Immediately, I knew that this one was ripe. The taste was so mellow and sweet. Yum! Yum!

My God and I

These will be in addition to what I have already mentioned. Some of them have no known dates of occurrence. Other memories did not come back to me until I started thinking more about this area.

Meeting in Kentucky

One weekend, some families made a trip into the hills of this state with Elder Ford leading us. He seemed to know the area well, so I am thinking that he was from this area. (His wife Betty was from north east Missouri.)

Along the way, he was expecting a ferry to take us across a river, but it was no longer in service. Somehow, we managed to find our way around this problem.

As far as the people we met or the services held there, I have little memory. Why? Because this was the first time that I had been south of the Ohio River. It was another adventure for me.

I do seem to remember singing hymns in the home where we spent the night. Well, a couple of young ladies (or more) were very good at singing as I recall...

Yes, I was aware of them being females, but from the time we began attending church on a regular basis, I also enjoyed singing hymns. Which was more important to me at the time? Honestly, I do not know.

Association in Tennessee

Three Barber brothers years earlier had moved from western Tennessee to St. Louis to work at a paint manufacturing plant. During an October in the late 1950's, we were invited to join them at the Greenfield Association that year. So, off we headed further south.

Now this was not all that long since the Supreme Court had declared segregation to be unconstitutional and had to be stopped. A lot of people did not like that idea in the south.

So this was something on my parents' minds as we arrived with the only vehicle with Illinois license plates (as in from a northern state). Well, the Barbers had Missouri licenses on their cars. But, they were well known in the area. We were strangers.

In reality, I did not notice any animosity toward any of us. It might as well be much ado about nothing. After all we were there to worship the LORD God. Furthermore, we spent the nights in relatives of the Barbers. We were their church friends, so this would eliminate some feelings that they otherwise might have had.

Visiting with the Fords and James

Sometime after my baptism, Elder Ford invited his next door neighbor to go to church with them. Well, they accepted. Then the next meeting day, they came back to church. This might have been something, but there was something else going on as well. Elder Ford had an appointment to preach elsewhere. They had come on their own! (They wanted to do so.) They soon joined Sharon Church and were baptized.

Sometime after that, we visited the Ford's one night and then went next door to visit with the James'. Yes, that was somewhat awkward. But so would be us visiting with Linda and Jim without dropping by the Ford's.

These were more than just visits. Bro. Jim was a serious Bible student, and this was the basis of many a discussion in their home until the middle of the night.

It seems strange that neither Mom nor Dad would discuss the Bible to their children. Yet he was doing the very same

thing in front of us in another home. Anyway, I managed to hear things about the Bible that I would never have had otherwise. The same thing was true for Tom as well. (By this time, Etta was in Colorado, and Webb did not go with us.)

Unfortunately, the awkwardness spilled over into their church lives. Things were said about Jim and Linda that were not true and should not have been said. They were excluded later because of these stories.

Gene and Betty Ford did not fare much better. For some reason, they divorced and then moved back in together. This led to their exclusion as well. He later left her and the church for good. She repented and was reinstated as a church member.

Salem Association (Illinois)

This was held at Bentley, IL every year at the end of July. Sometime in the mid to late 1950's, we began attending it on a fairly regular basis. That meant we had a 200 mile trip one way to the west central part of the state.

Bentley was a small village of about 80 people. Near it was Carthage, a nice sized city. Anyway, getting there was a bit of a problem because I don't think Bentley was even on the state map. Neither were all the local roads shown. Well, we managed to get there with only a slight error.

There was one Primitive Baptist church building in town. But there were two churches meeting in it. One of them met once a month, and I think the other met either twice or all of the remaining Sundays. Also, there were night services every Sunday.

Elder Orville Prior lived across the street from the church, and Elder Raymond Webb lived close by as well. As a result, one of them was always at home to hold the night service.

Many of the people living in this village or in farms nearby attending one or both of these two churches on a

regular base. As a result, there was not enough members of any other given denomination to support a church in Bentley. Yes, they were accused of running all the other denominations out of town. (Somehow, I think this was done in a teasing way.)

I got to know both Elders and many other people as well. Sometimes people from the church in Champaign would attend this association especially Elder Clapp and the Allens. (I would see a lot of them in the early 1960's when I went to college there.

Not know to me at the time, Bro. Jack Allen became smitten with the a young lady, Joyce (Elder Prior's youngest daughter). Turns out that she became just as smitten with him!

The Allens had fairly regularly attended this annual meeting, so they knew many of the people there. But in 1958, Jack's behavior changed radically. He could not stop talking about a girl. His mother, Bernice, after constantly trying to find out who this girl was, finally got an answer. It was Joyce. This was a surprise to her because both families knew each other very well. She never expected this!

It certainly was love at first sight. It did not matter how well they had known each other. This was different. Now she was almost 16 at the time and he was probably 15.

Her father had a strict rule: no dating before age 16. So she did not date anyone other than Jack during her entire life. (She had no interest in any.) I presume the only dating she did before she came to Champaign to attend college was at church meetings that both attended. (To be continued in a later book.)

Thanksgiving Day

A church about 90 miles north of us was having services on this day which we attended. This being a country church,

the temperature was not thermostatically controlled. They probably burned wood in pot belly stoves, and so the air could get rather warm.

During the service, it got hot enough that I fell asleep. (Remember that I had gotten up early that morning to deliver very heavy papers.) Or, was it that the sermon was a little boring? Anyway, I woke up with a start at the end of the service. Since we always stand up to sing the closing song, I did too.

Well, I stood up too soon, and my blood pressure dropped too far: I fainted. My parents came to my aide as I awoke from it. That is when I wanted to get to somewhere much cooler, so Dad helped me to the back door. This was not exactly a good idea either since the outside temperature was at or below freezing! Anyway Mom quickly told Dad to bring me back inside. Then she probably made me sit down and put a wet handkerchief on my forehead. To whom did this belong? Bernice Allen, the mother of Jack Allen. (I would have a lot of interaction with that family during the four and a half year of college.)

Association meetings in Missouri

Elder Adair lived in the northeast of this state, probably serving one or more churches there as well as preaching at Sharon Church on the first Sundays. So, it was a natural thing for us to attend association meetings once we began attending church again.

At least one time, we spend the nights in his and Viola's home during the meeting. So, after having services morning, afternoon, and evening, we sat up usually until around midnight. (Elder Adair would gently remind everyone that breakfast would be served at 6 AM as a way to head people to bed. (Yes, we were also expected to be up and ready to eat breakfast at 6 AM!))

All the association meetings had one thing in common: many ministers attended them, and they were all preached if at all possible. The meeting began Friday with three services followed by Saturday with three services, and Sunday with only morning services. So, this means we had 7 services during the weekend. If, for example, there were 21 ministers present, there would be 3 sermons at each service. If there were more, some services could have 4 sermons or more. Also note, most ministers were use to preaching 45 minutes to an hour (or more) and did so at these meetings.

I remember one association meeting in which 27 sermons were preached during the three services on Saturday. Yes, 9 preachers each preached during the morning, afternoon, and evening services. They did insist no sermon was to last more than 15 minutes. (Some preachers had to be "gently reminded that their time was up.)

Another thing about these meetings concerned the temperature. The Sanduskey association was held in late June with the others from late July to late August. So, the temperature was hot for the most part. The churches where they were held did not have air conditioning being mostly country churches. The large crowds only made the situation less bearable. But we survived.

Sanduskey (Ohio)

We attended the association held at Rocky Fork a couple of times. The first time was probably 1958. During the time Mom lived in Ohio, she attended these meetings whenever possible. So, she was acquainted with the people there. She had even dated the pastor Elder Daily Hite, of this church once or twice as a young lady.

Both times, we stayed with the pastor during the meeting. So, did quite a few others. This is when I found out about how people housed so many people without having a

large number of beds: straw tics. These made of cloth like mattress covers and then filled with straw. To say that these were uncomfortable is putting it mildly. I really did not sleep very well at all.

However, Elder Clapp was there with his family. So, Nancy was also there. It was very nice to have her there as well.

The next time we were there was in 1962 which was during my college years.

Epilogue

When I began college, I had a rather low opinion of myself. It was as if I had never done anything, never enjoyed anything... But once I sat down to write about my life, my attitude had to change about these years. There were too many things that I had accomplished, too many places that I had been, too many times that I had enjoyed, etc.

My first draft was finished (I thought) the first of October, 2014. There were more instances of my low opinion of me vs I can do this.

But October 24 of that year, God intervened with the appearance of Donna Mynatt. Our relationship had waxed hot and then cold for about 8 years. This time she wanted to become closer to me once again, and she was rather serious about it. She started off by admitting that she knew she had made some mistakes in the past. She even wanted to know if I could enlighten her on what some of them were.

So I offered to send her the part that I had written about her. (Some of this was not "flattering" at all.) And it was at this point that I realized that I needed to change what I had written about her. An attitude adjustment on my part was necessary.

So I began the second draft. As I did so, I quickly noticed that other parts of the first draft needed to be rewritten for the same reason (my bad attitude toward someone each time). And with a rewrite of the first draft caused many more memories to appear and then included in the second draft.

During this time, I corresponded with Donna about the project. And during this time she made some changes in the text that concerned her. Meanwhile, I was wondering about

the size that the latest draft had become. Between the two of us, the decision was to divide it into three parts.

By December 12, 2014, volume 1 of the second draft was complete. So, I emailed Marianne a copy in PDF format. Then for the next six months, I worked on Volume 2 of my series.

Since that time, I have begun on the third draft which has many more memories added to the second one. By this time, it has become abundantly clear to me that God has greatly blessed me.

Writing this has brought a great deal of joy as I relive some of the experiences that God has blessed me with. My life is worthwhile. My greatest joys all include the feeling of being alive! Yes, there have been hard times that I would rather not have had. But the good times far outweigh them!