

### Chapter 5. My Early Life

*Even though we were always in the lower middle class - and we were a somewhat dysfunctional family - and the Great Depression cost my father his job - and World War II made everything scarce, I think of my preteen years as a relatively happy time for me. My dad and mother met sometime around 1925. I think that they may have met at Shepherd College which was about 35 miles from Berkeley Springs where my mother was born and about 50 miles from Capon Springs, WV, where my dad was born. Capon Springs is about 35 miles from Berkeley Springs. Dad was listed in the 1920 Capon District of Hampshire County, WV census as a 20-year-old carpenter in a "car factory". He registered for the draft at the age of 42 and listed his height as 5' 7" and weight as 145#; Many of his antecedents have been much larger.*

On April 14, 1900, in the last year of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, my father, Russell Ervin Brill was born in the Capon District of Hampshire County, West Virginia. The Capon District includes Capon Springs, where he was probably born, as well as Capon Bridge, Yellow Spring, and Lehew where my grandfather was born. His family might have lived in Lehew before they moved into the "Captain David Pugh House". There Dad lived much of his young life and my grandfather lived the rest of his life.



My mother, Mary Edna Shackelford was born on March 16, 1905, just a few minutes before her sister, Martha Ernestine Shackelford. Their mother, Nannie Kathryn Henry Shackelford was widowed seven months earlier. They lived in the Town of Bath, a part of the town of Berkeley Springs, West Virginia.

In early April 1917, with the toll in sunken U.S. merchant ships and civilian casualties rising, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for "a war to end all wars" that would "make the world safe for democracy."

On March 11, 1918, the first reported cases of the deadly flu pandemic appeared in the US. Worldwide there were 20 – 40 million deaths (and possibly 100 million) attributed to the "Spanish Flu". Over the next 2 years, 4 waves of infection spread to about 1/3 of the global population.

On November 11, 1918, Germany surrendered to the allied forces that included Britain, France, Italy, and Russia, ending WWI. The treaty of Versailles was formally signed on June 28, 1919. This treaty forced Germany to give up territory including all colonies around the world, to pay billions in war reparations, and to accept 100% of the blame for a war that started as a feud between Austria-Hungary and Serbia over the assassination of the Archduke of Austria Hungary.

Some have said that the severity on Germany of the treaty led directly to WWII within the next 20 years.

In May 1925, John T. Scopes was arrested in Dayton, Tennessee for teaching the Theory of Evolution. He was later convicted and fined \$100, equal to about \$1800 today. By the way, this works out to an inflation rate of about 3% over the last 100 years.

Cecilia Payne, a graduate student at Harvard, in 1925, proposed in her doctoral thesis "Stellar Atmospheres" that stars, including our sun, were almost exclusively Hydrogen and Helium and that the energy from the sun was produced by the nuclear fusion of Hydrogen to create Helium. This was a radical theory at the time and took several years to be accepted. She used methods to obtain her results that had never been used before and her PhD thesis has been called "the most brilliant ever written in astronomy". It helped to define the beginning of celestial evolution.

On October 22, 1925, my mother and father were married in Berkeley Springs WV. Since she wasn't 21, her mother had to sign for a permit to be issued. On November 9, 1926, my brother, Russell, Jr. was born in Berkeley Springs. Two days later, the American Association of Highway Officials came out with a plan for standardized numbering and designations for local, state, and national highways. Until that time all such "marking" was left to local and state entities. This would explain why Hook's Mill, where my father resided, would seem to be on the other side of the moon from Berkeley Springs, the home of my mother. The first cross-country road trip by automobile from San Francisco to New York in 1903, took 63-1/2 days. In April 1926, the designation of "Route 66" from Chicago to Los Angeles was first assigned in response to the highway act passed by congress in 1925. In 1926, Henry Ford instituted the 8-hour workday and the 5 day week at his automobile factories. He is quoted as saying "It is high time to rid ourselves of the notion that leisure time for workmen is either "lost time" or a class privilege."

Remember, it was in 1927 that Charles Lindbergh made the first solo non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean. In September 1928, a Scottish medical researcher, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, the first effective antibiotic.

Nancy Jeanne Brill, my older sister was born on May 28, 1929, in Berkeley Springs WV and was named for my maternal grandmother, Nannie Kathryn (Henry, Shackelford) Hunter. The Great Depression began on Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929, five months after Nancy was born. On that day, the stock market lost 1/3 of its value; over 1300 banks closed in the first year of the depression and the unemployment rate climbed to over 30%. This followed the 1920s boom which had caused the stock market to be overpriced. Within the first four years of the depression almost half the banks in America failed and more than 100,000 businesses failed. The effects of this worldwide disaster were felt for twelve years until the USA entered WWII. Part of the effect on my family was that my father was "furloughed" from his job with the railroad. My recollection is that he worked other jobs, such as door-to-door Fuller Brush salesman.

By 1930, the four of them had moved about 130 miles to West Newton, PA where my dad worked on the railroad. Their rent at that time was \$30.00 in a neighborhood where the homes were valued at \$1000 to \$7000. Sometime before 1935 they moved another 100 miles to Youngstown, Ohio. I assume this was to find work, although there might be some connection to my mother's sister Martha who was living there in Youngstown in 1935 with her husband Alston Price and son Billy who was the same age as my brother Buddy. I make this connection because in 1930 the Prices were living in Cumberland MD and the Brills in West Newton PA.

Elvis Presley was born January 8, 1935, in Tupelo MS; he died August 16, 1977. On April 14, 1935, a massive black cloud of dust rolled across several states, including Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. The wall of blowing sand and dirt coated everything, turning day into night, and reducing visibility to near zero. The storm was the worst single storm of the "Dust Bowl" era and resulted from years of drought and poor land management practices. The storm, known as the Black Sunday storm, resulted in the loss of crops and livestock, and led to human fatalities from "dust pneumonia." The 1930s Dust Bowl came on the heels of the Great Depression, bringing misery to already suffering Americans. It was triggered by nearly a decade of over-cultivation in the Great Plains. The native grasses that previously held the topsoil in place were eliminated, leaving the topsoil exposed and vulnerable to winds.



In May 1935 President Roosevelt, who was first elected in 1932, created the WPA (Works Progress Administration), part of his "Second New Deal" which at its peak provided work for more than 3.3 million Americans (almost all men). FDR also signed the executive order that created the Rural Electrification Administration on May 11, 1935. This act was responsible for providing the means for a rapid growth of electric power industries in rural America. The Tennessee Valley Authority was part of the expansion that saw approximately 3% of farm homes with electricity in the early 1930s grow to about 90% by 1959.

On July 19, 1935, Rubin Stacy, a 37-year-old black man in Fort Lauderdale, FL was lynched by a mob, incensed by the uncorroborated statement by a white woman who he approached for a glass of water. After being hanged by a sheriff's deputy, he was shot 17 times by the attending crowd at the urging of that deputy. He was one of at least 5000 black individuals who were lynched during the years of "Jim Crow" up to 1968.

I was born at 7:47 AM, Saturday, August 3, 1935, in St. Elizabeth Hospital at 1044 Belmont Ave. in Youngstown, OH.

This was almost exactly in the middle of the Great Depression. As far as I know, at that time my mother had never worked outside the home. My father had a family with 3 children – soon to be 4. I have no idea how they managed to get through all of this, but I can't say that we were deprived, starved or otherwise poverty-stricken, so they found a way to make it.



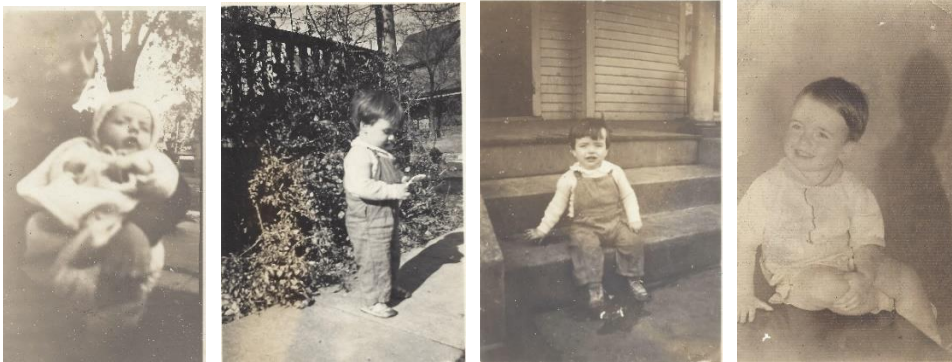
St. Elizabeth Hospital (c)1940



**The Social Security Act of August 14, 1935 [H. R. 7260]** was “An act to provide for the general welfare by establishing a system of Federal old-age benefits, and by enabling the several States to make more adequate provision for aged persons, blind persons, dependent and crippled children, maternal and child welfare, public health, and the administration of their unemployment compensation laws; to establish a Social Security Board; to raise revenue; and for other purposes.” Social Security ID numbers were not introduced until 1936. Although most children are registered upon birth today, I don't think that I got my number until high school at the earliest which is why my number was issued in Pennsylvania and not Ohio or West Virginia.

On October 1, 1935, movie star Julie Andrews was born. In November, the game Monopoly was first produced. It was possibly the board game that our family played the most over the years (either that or Parcheesi). Woody Allen was born November 30, 1935.

At the time I was born we lived at 546 Elm Street in a second-floor apartment. I have pictures taken there of me as a toddler and I can remember seeing another one that had me in a harness attached to a clothesline in the back yard or driveway. Here are some other pictures taken there (the first with my mother).



I have always wondered at the spelling for my given name – my middle name was obvious as it is the same middle name as my grandfather, Smith Reid Brill, which came from his mother, Elizabeth whose maiden name was Reid. Recently I have concluded that my given name was shortened from my dad's grandfather, Jonathan Henry Brill or maybe it was a combination of Jonathan with John, for my mother's father John Perkins Shackelford.

On May 27, 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge was opened. This was one of the few happy stories among the awful and terrible stories of the “Dust Bowl”, the Mississippi River floods that destroyed homes of millions in Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois; as well as the explosion of the German dirigible “Hindenburg” in Lakehurst, New Jersey on May 6, 1937.

My sister, Mary Bess was born on October 7, 1937, 2 years, 2 months, 4 days, and 5 hours after my birth, also in St. Elizabeth Hospital (I calculated those numbers when I was very young). She was named for my mother, Mary and my paternal grandmother, Bessie Ouada Brill.

I have a picture that indicates that we made a trip to Berkeley Springs, WV in June 1938 so that my mother's parents could see the new (8 months) baby Mary Bess (it might also have been the first time that they saw me). On this trip my dad took me to see his parents. This was one of less than a half-dozen occasions that I can recall or know of where I saw either of my father's parents. The next time was probably when Grandmother Brill died in 1942. They lived in a large farmhouse in Hooks Mill, WV. This land was one of several connections that my family's history had with George Washington.

*“On April 6, 1750, George Washington surveyed the property that was to become the mill for a plat for Richard Arnold, Jr. On February 22, 1848, Margaret Dunlap sold the property to Robert Hook for the sum of \$5,600. The deed of sale stated that a mill and other improvements on the property conveyed to Hook.*

*In the 1820s, a one-room schoolhouse was built near the mill, George Nicholas Spaid serving as the teacher. In 1884 the River Dale school, as it was known, served the additional purpose as the site of legal proceedings.* <sup>(Wikipedia)</sup>

By the late 19th and early 20th century Hooks Mill was an established community, with an inn serving the patrons of the mill, a blacksmith shed and house, the mill residence, and the Captain David Pugh House. Grandfather Brill purchased the Pugh house and farm in the early 1900s; he was a farmer, teacher, and postmaster of the local community. He lived to the age of 95 – spending the last 15 years after Grandmother Brill died mostly by himself. The last few years, my Uncle Walton brought in a male companion who lived there with him.



Hook's Mill 1903

George Nicholas Spaid (Spaht) was my great-great-great-grandfather on my Grandmother Brill's family side. (This is the same *George Nicholas Spaid mentioned above as serving as the teacher in the River Dale school*) He was also a Hessian mercenary in the Revolutionary War who was **captured by George Washington** at Trenton, N.J. in a surprise attack on Christmas Eve in 1776 according to family history. He was born and raised in Cassell, Germany. One day, around April of 1776, while he was on his way to school, George was kidnapped by two soldiers of the Grand Duke Frederick II and sold to King George III of England to serve against the rebellious colonies of America. He was 17 years old at the time he was captured, along with around 22,000 other young boys. The parents of these boys couldn't fight against the Grand Duke. If the mother protested, she would be thrown into prison and the father would be flogged.

A third connection to Washington was my mother's family hometown of Berkeley Springs, WV.

*"During colonial times in 1748, George Washington, then just 16 years old, was part of the team that surveyed the Eastern Panhandle region for Thomas Fairfax, 6th Lord Fairfax of Cameron. Washington returned several times over the next several years with his half-brother, Lawrence, who was ill, in hopes that the warm springs might improve his health. The springs, and their rumored medicinal benefits, attracted numerous Native Americans as well as Europeans to the area."*<sup>(Wikipedia)</sup>



George Washington's "Bath Tub" in Berkeley Springs State Park

This is what the Berkeley Springs Website says about being the first American Spa:

*Located in the mountains of West Virginia and once frequented by the Founding Fathers, Berkeley Springs is America's oldest spa, established in 1776. Thomas Jefferson was the first to mark the warm mineral waters on a map in 1747, labeling it Medicine Springs, and it became a favorite getaway of George Washington after he first visited in 1748. Native Americans had long taken advantage of the region's healing waters before Europeans arrived. The spa's mineral waters are heated to a constant 74 degrees Fahrenheit and fill ancient stone pools which visitors can wade in. You can even fill up your water jug for free at the public tap, according to state law.*

My memories only include a few things besides the old house that Grandfather lived in. Many of those recollections had to do with the dining habits that I saw. Granddad, many mornings, had what he called a coffee-soak; he would put the dried out leftover bread from the previous day into his morning coffee. He also dunked his breakfast bread into a fried egg yolk the way my dad did, and I do. At the end of the meal, whatever was left over and was not quickly spoilable would stay on the table and be covered with a cloth so that it could be part of the next meal. The only refrigeration was a cold mountain brook that ran behind the house about 20 yards away. They built a small structure around this and could put vessels with milk and other perishable items into the narrow, shallow stream. I remember that there were crawfish (also called crayfish) in there. Granddad's oldest son Uncle Walton inherited the farm in 1957 which he had basically run after it became too much for Grandfather. The balance of the estate was divided with Aunt Bama and Dad.

On the night of November 9–10, 1938, German Nazis attacked Jewish persons and property. The name *Kristallnacht* (referring to all the broken glass windows littering the streets) has been applied to this violence. Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, after conferring with Hitler, harangued a gathering of storm troopers, urging violent reprisals staged to appear as "spontaneous demonstrations." Telephone orders from Munich triggered pogroms throughout Germany. In two days and nights, more than 1,000 synagogues were burned or otherwise damaged. Rioters ransacked and looted about 7,500 Jewish businesses, killed at least 91 Jews, and vandalized Jewish hospitals, homes, schools, and cemeteries.

The first live broadcasts on TV were carried via the NBC network, which had begun regular programming after the 1939 World's Fair debut. Mass-produced televisions did not enter the market until seven years later, in 1946, when RCA introduced its black and white 10-inch screen for the equivalent of \$4,500 in today's economy. By the end of its first year, around 10,000 units had been sold. By the early 1950s half of all Americans owned a television set and the price was much lower. We did not have a television then and I do not remember watching television at home until I was married in 1955 and maybe not until 1958-59 because it was a luxury we probably couldn't afford. Most likely, I bought our first TV after I started to work at Graybar in 1956, since I could then buy it at a wholesale price.

On December 15, 1939, the moving picture "Gone With The Wind" opened in Atlanta, GA. That opening was later remembered by President Jimmy Carter as the biggest celebration to happen in the South during his lifetime. That day was declared a state holiday and people were asked to dress in period costume. There were 3 days of parades, receptions, and a costume ball. All the stars of the movie were at the opening except the African American co-stars, Hattie McDaniel, who won an Oscar for her performance, and Butterfly McQueen, who were not allowed by the state of Georgia to sit next to white people in the audience.



Me and my sister Mary Bess (Betsy) probably about 1939 or 1940

At my earliest recollection, about the age of 4 or 5, we lived at 522 Yale Ave. We had moved about 3 blocks from our Elm Street apartment. I recall snatches of my life there. Our apartment was on the second floor of a quadruplex, for which the rent was about \$30.00 per month, which was a little below average; my father's salary was listed as \$1700 a year. It seems that our quarters were 4 or 5 rooms with some type of attic. I have a memory of being bitten by a spider in that attic. I believe Mom and Dad slept in what would have been the living room.



The 1940 census indicates that 2 families shared each apartment in our building (remember this was still in the middle of the Great Depression). At times throughout our years there, I think my Aunt Martha Price and cousin Billy (and possibly her soon to be estranged husband, Alston Price), lived in the other part of this apartment, although the 1940 census indicates that the other family at that time was a woman named Della Clemens. She was listed as coming from England and being unmarried with two daughters. It's possible that they sub-leased from us but the woman's earnings were listed as only \$50 (?) a year. Our downstairs neighbor was Mrs. Edith Best, who I can remember only as an older woman (she was in her 40s) who liked to play the "numbers", an illegal lottery of that time. She had two older sons and was widowed.

In 1940 Ernest O. Lawrence invented the Cyclotron which would allow scientists to find radioactive isotopes of some elements as well as creating new elements. In 1941, life expectancy at birth in the United States was 64.8 years (in 2021, 77.8 years), only 6.8 % of the population was over 65 (2021, 16%), penicillin was coming into use through a process able to provide a purified compound, but the Salk polio vaccine was a dozen years distant, and most hospitals spent more on clean linen than medical technologies. Sixty-three percent of households did not have telephones, less than half the U.S. population age 25 and older had a high school diploma (today it's 90 percent).

My best friend at the time was named Eddie (probably Eddie Lewis), he was about a year younger, and lived next door. This information, like a few other items herein that I got from the 1940 census data is subject to my interpretation.



Me (left), Eddie and two other friends.

Several times during these depression years, my father had been furloughed by the railroad. He probably had other "odd" jobs at various times. It is possible that frustration in providing for a family in those years contributed to the behavior that ultimately led to the separation of his family. Though he made attempts from time to time, he was never able to defeat his alcoholism. The odd thing about it is that in June 1935, the year that I was born, Alcoholics Anonymous was formed and by 1939 had 6000 members. As far as I know, he never joined that or any other self-help group. He did join, when I was a teenager, the Moose Lodge which he seemed to think would care for his children if they became orphans.

I recall that, as a small child in Youngstown, I spent a lot of time in bars and restaurants, probably with my parents and their friends. It seems to me that my favorite beverage at that time was Squirt, a lemon-lime soda which went great with a nickel package of peanuts. My mother, father and siblings were all above average in intelligence and voracious readers but mostly used this for entertainment. Discussions were interesting; games were competitive; and humor was always in evidence. My sister Nancy taught me to read at 4 years of age and I soon was able to say the alphabet forwards and backwards. My first

book for Christmas before I started school (“The Yearling” – I think) from my Aunt Bama. I still have “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” that Aunt Bama gave me for Christmas in 1948. In later life my mother’s favorite reading seemed to be true crime magazines. Although I never read any crime magazines or novels after I became a teenager, I now enjoy mystery and crime television programs. My favorite reading material as a teenager was science fiction and I joined a hard-cover book club that periodically sold me small science fiction novels. Board games were of course a normal diversion at that time, and we played Parchesi, Monopoly, Checkers and Chinese Checkers.

My brother, who was 9 years older than me, liked nothing better than to get into an argument with me and then switch sides, which of course would confuse me. One time (I was told), I asked him “but Buddy, what am I ‘apposed to say?” I was told that my brother’s nickname came from me because, at the time, I couldn’t pronounce “brother”; although I have found pictures of him as a toddler where Mom noted on the back that it was “Buddie”. A riddle my brother taught me in those times was: “If a chicken and a half could lay an egg and a half in a day and a half, how long would it take a monkey with a wooden leg to kick all the seeds out of a dill pickle?”

Among the ditties and amphiories that I learned in my early years were:

Early one morning, late at night,  
Two dead boys went out for a fight.  
Back-to-back they faced each other,  
Drew their swords and shot each other.  
A deaf policeman heard their noise,  
And came and shot the two dead boys.  
If you don’t believe this lie is true,  
Go ask the blind man, he saw it, too.

and

Pease porridge hot, Pease porridge cold.  
Pease porridge in the pot, Nine days old.  
Some like it hot, Some like it cold.  
Some like it in the pot, Nine days old.

A popular recorded song had the verse: “Hut-Sut Rawlson on the Rillerah, add a brawla sooit”.

My sister Nancy, who was 6 years older than me, was most likely my constant care giver at that time as I remember more about her than anyone else. The part of Youngstown where we lived was right in the middle of the city, only a few blocks from the downtown area, was completely covered with housing and the nearest parkland was about 6 blocks away – too far for someone of my age. I remember a lot of kids – maybe a dozen or more at a time - playing in the street in front of our apartment house in all kinds of weather. There was a large family, the O’Connors, up the street. Marie O’Connor was Nancy’s best friend. I remember several of the games that we played. 8 or 10 of us would sit on the front stoop of our apartment house. The person on one end would whisper something to the next and each would pass along what they heard. The last person would tell us what message made it through. Another one for smaller mixed groups was each person stating “I sit down to” followed by a letter of the alphabet in order. The one who arrived at the letter “P” got laughs, particularly if it was a boy.

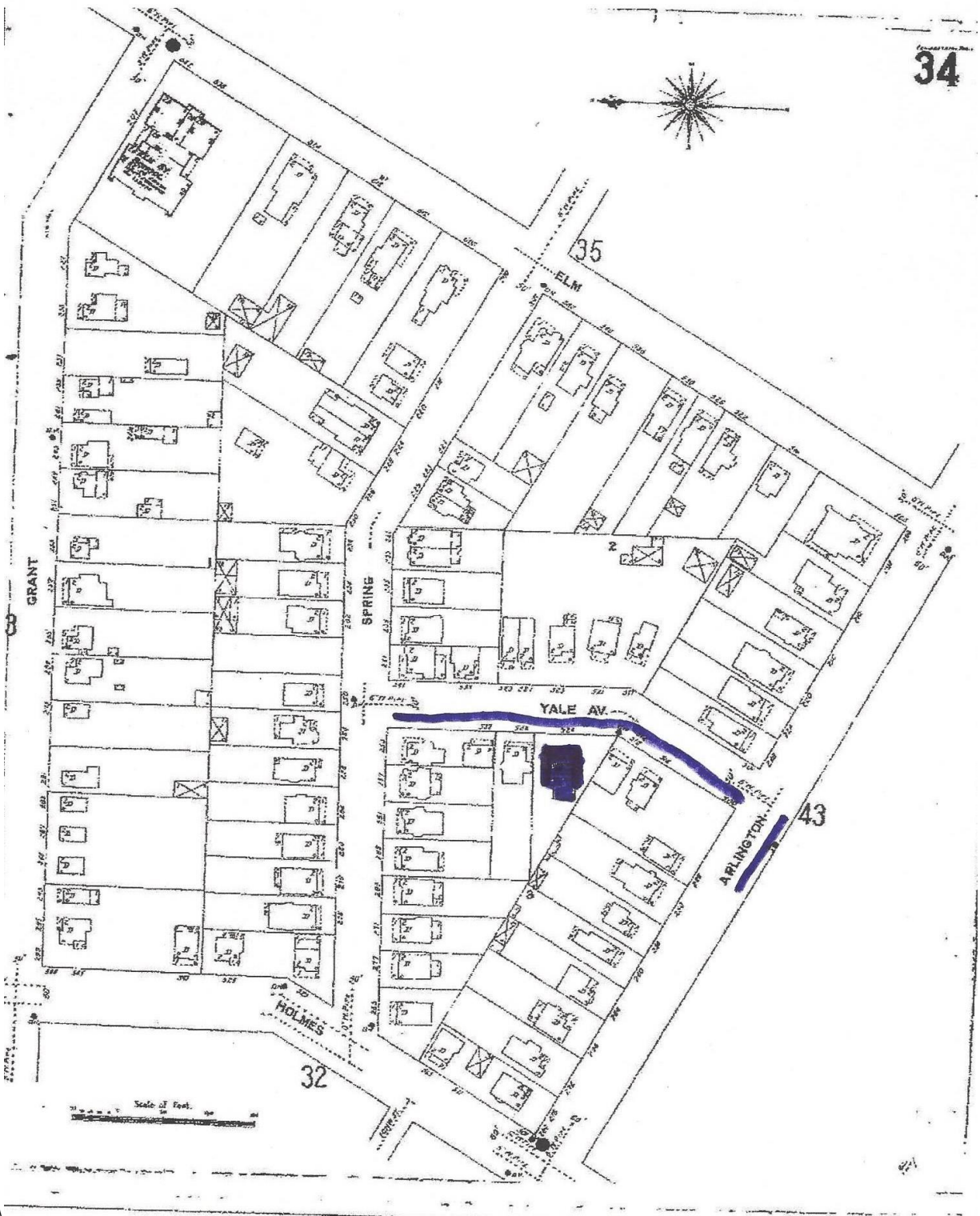
Fortunately, Yale Avenue was only one block long and not a thoroughfare. Our street ran between Spring St. on the north and Arlington St. on the South. That area is now in the center of the campus of Youngstown State University. We could walk downtown so we went to the movies on West Federal Street often and I remember once that I must have been taken to a scary mummy movie which bothered me (before parental guidance). We did not have a car, so we took the bus when we went to Idora Park, the local amusement park and nearby Mill Creek Park for picnics. It was on the other side of Youngstown. My Aunt Martha's husband worked at Idora Park, so we probably went there often.

We enjoyed the Arcade, Fun House, Merry-go-Round, playing Skee-Ball and eating French Fries with malt vinegar (helped cut the oil left from frying).

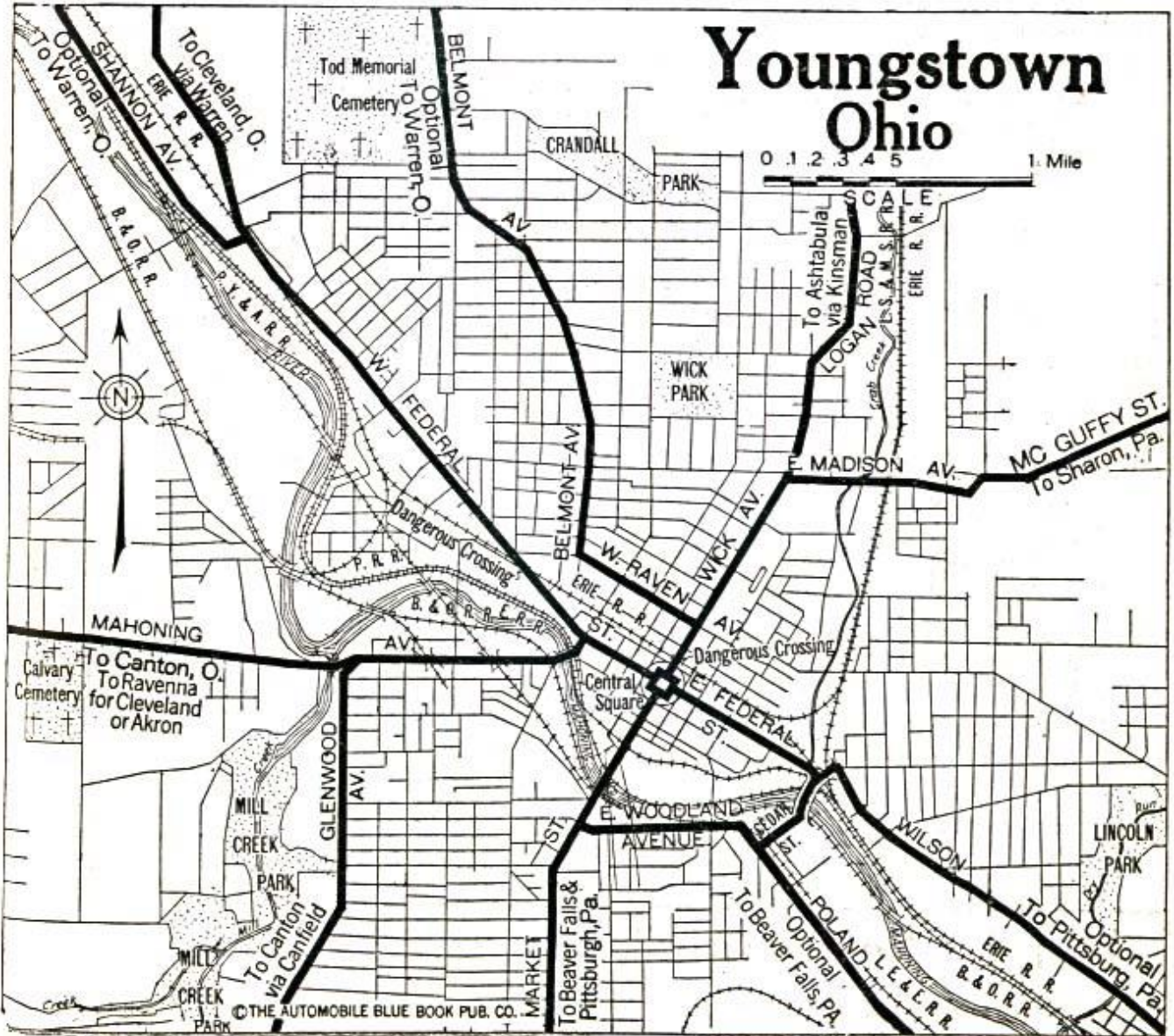


Swimming pool at Idora Park

Idora Park was in business from 1899 until a major fire in 1984 destroyed 2 major rides, 11 concession stands and the park office.



This is the vicinity around Yale Ave. Our apartment was at the bend of this one block street.



Yale Ave. is likely above the W in W. Rayen Ave. (Raven) on the map.

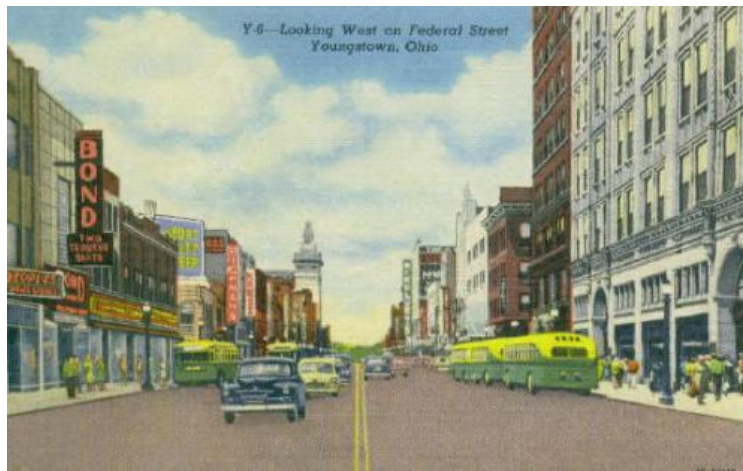
To google Youngstown maps:

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When I was 5 years old, I was hit by a car. I listed this occurrence in the chapter "Counting My Blessings" as one of the miracles in my life. Our apartment on Yale Ave. was at the top of the grade. I was sledding down this hill with my cousin Billy who was about 9 years older. After he was done, I wanted to take one more slide, I went alone. At the bottom of the hill on the cross street, Arlington St., I ran into a car which resulted in a broken collar bone. My parents were told that the car ran over the front of my sled and threw me up on the hood. My parents later noticed that I was not using my right arm and hand. The "green stick" break of my collar bone was treated with a metal brace that covered my back and pulled my shoulders back.

Although one of the first outdoor movie theaters that also included parked cars was started in 1915 and the first patented "drive-in" opened in 1933, it wasn't until 1940 when car speakers were invented that drive-in movies really took off, and by 1958 there were over 4000 drive-ins which everybody loved to go to (except us; we didn't have a car).

In October 1940, the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed by Congress. It established the 40-hour work week and a minimum wage of 25 cents an hour (therefore a minimum annual wage of \$500), as well as many protections for workers. In November 1940, the minimum draft age was lowered from 21 to 18 but the legal age for voting wasn't lowered until 1956. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to an unprecedented 3<sup>rd</sup> term in office and followed that with a 4<sup>th</sup> term in 1944.



West Federal Street, Youngstown in the 1940's. Note the buses, later they were electrified.

#### What Things Cost in 1940:

**Car: \$800 Gasoline: 18 cents/gal House: \$6,550 Bread: 8 cents/loaf Milk: 34 cents/gal  
Postage Stamp: 3 cents Stock Market: 131 Average Annual Salary: \$1,900  
Television \$600 in 1939 (\$7,000+ today) reduced to \$395 in 1940 (\$4,500+ today)**

I was 5 years old when my parents separated and divorced (they remarried over 20 years later). The four children were sent for several months in the winter of 1940-41 to board with another family while my parents tried to get their lives settled, which might have meant my mother getting married again. My only remembrance of that time is that one thing we were fed for breakfast that I had nowhere else was buckwheat pancakes (I don't think that I liked them). My brother Bud ran away to stay with a friend's family. He later quit after three years of high school. He was working for Hathaway Bakery when he registered for the draft in 1944. He listed his height as 5' 8" and weight as 140#. He met and married Alice Davis while they worked at Hathaway Bakery. He enlisted in the army in 1946 and was stationed in Hawaii. Just to indicate how desperate the nation was for recruits they accepted him even though he had amblyopia and was severely near-sighted. Bud and Alice had 3 children, Nancy Kathleen (1948), James Creswell (1950) and David Paul (1952).

In 1941, while we were moving to Berkeley Springs, WV, Carol JoAnn Puffenbarger was about 180 miles away near Weston WV, living with her mother Edith Della Donahoe (Donahue) while she was employed by Frank Lee Exline to help raise his 3 children – Gerald Frank, Mary Emaleen, and Joseph David. His wife, Dona Mae (Donie) had died in 1937. JoAnn's mother and her father, James Vincent Puffenbarger had separated shortly after JoAnn's birth and the two had moved into the Exline household in 1938 or 1939. JoAnn only recalls seeing her birth father on two occasions when he came with his new wife to see his daughter. That wife brought a new dress which she had made for JoAnn.



Frank and Edith Exline

The family lived in homes at places called Rock Run and Bealls Mills before moving into the house that Frank inherited on Old Field Fork. The farm included thirty-some acres, mostly on the side of a hill that was hundreds of yards to the top fields. Over the years they suffered many setbacks such as fires and floods. Edith and Frank married in 1943 and had a son who died in childbirth in 1958. Frank was basically a farmer who did odd jobs for others in the vicinity and worked on natural gas wells that were located nearby. Life on the farm was mostly hard work with little return. They subsisted mostly on what the farm produced and what they could preserve from the crops. For high school, it meant hiking several miles over the hill to where the school bus picked them up – sometimes in the dark and mostly in the cold.

All the children were expected to help with the farm labor as well as household chores. A movie or other trip into town was eagerly looked forward to because they happened infrequently and were so much out of the normal routine. JoAnn recalls a time when she and Emaleen walked the several miles to the local store for some groceries. On the way back they realized that there were some oranges in one of the bags and knew that they were not on the list and certainly couldn't be afforded. They stepped off the dirt road and sat down and ate the oranges. Looking back on this she realizes that maybe the grocer just put them in for goodwill.

This life, however, was a step up for Edith Exline, whose mother died, and father was placed in an institution when she was 8 years old. She was fostered with a family who worked her quite hard from an early age. She was separated from her sister and 3 brothers for many years. Each of the children was fostered by a different family. They were not all reunited until 33 years later after one of her brothers had already died.

Meanwhile, World War II began for Americans on December 7, 1941, with the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor, also Guam, Wake Island, Clark Field in the Philippines, also Malaya, and Hong Kong. From then on, nothing would be the same. It could be said that this brought us out of the Great Depression. The government began to borrow billions of dollars by selling "War Bonds" with special terms for redemption and war industries put millions of people to work, including women who were new to the workforce. We all learned to live on less - "Waste not, want not" - and recycle critical materials for the war effort.

We were not aware at the time how close we came to losing the war to the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan). The first close call had come in late May and early June of 1940, when Britain, over several days of shipboard ferrying that included thousands of small personally owned craft, was able to withdraw almost all their 338,000 defeated allied troops from Dunkirk, France. If that had not been successful – which was largely due to German miscalculations – it is likely that Britain and all of Europe would have been under Nazi domination. A second stroke of luck came to our side when, on June 4, 1942, after just six months of war with Japan, a squadron of American bombers – which had strayed off course for their mission - accidentally came across a Japanese fleet of aircraft carriers that was in the middle of a refueling operation just before invading and probably controlling Midway Island for a base to launch a full-scale invasion of Hawaii. This surprise attack allowed the squadron to deliver a blow to the Japanese war effort from which they were never able to recover. This turned the tables from our disastrous losses at Pearl Harbor. In the summer of 1942 Germany dropped off 8 saboteurs along the coast of Long Island NY and Jacksonville FL. Their mission was to sabotage railway lines and Penn Station in Newark, NJ, factories and plants that were vital to our war effort. Fortunately, two of the eight saboteurs, who had all lived in the USA previously, decided to turn themselves in to the FBI. Without that turn of events who knows what damage could have been done to our infrastructure.



My mother had met Antonio Pateras, a first mate on Greek commercial ships and they very soon were married. He was mostly at sea and not involved with our lives. We moved to Berkeley Springs, West Virginia with Mom and my two sisters, Nancy, and Mary Bess. We lived on the upper floor of the home of a pair of middle-aged sisters, Misses Cupp. Several times my mother took trips (one of them, I believe was to California) to see her new husband, Tony Pateras at his port of call. My sisters and I would stay with my Grandmother Hunter for prolonged periods.

In 1941, I began my school life (I don't remember kindergarten or anything previous). While we lived at the Cupps, school was just a few blocks away. There was a girl, Elizabeth Edmiston, nicknamed Tibby in my class who lived two houses from us. She was my first heart throb. I walked to school and back. No one went with me coming or going. I was so shy that I could not bring myself to ask permission to the rest room; several times this resulted in wet pants, especially when I had to stay after school if no one was home when school left out. While I was attending Berkeley Springs South Elementary School, JoAnn was going to a one room school near her home. I think that the old school was still sitting in a field near her home after we were married.

Several memorable things that happened to us while we were living with the Cupps. I can recall having a bad case of the flu and wishing I were dead. The only relief that I could get was to lay with the cold tile of the bathroom floor against my face. Since I have rarely contracted the flu in my adult life, I wonder if maybe this inoculated me somehow. I also remember some people bringing a baby suffering from a fungal infection of the throat called "thrush". It was believed that by having someone like my mother, whose father died before she was born, blow in the baby's throat, there would be a cure. (see <http://anewdayanewexperience.blogspot.com/2008/04/old-wives-tale.html> )

The house next door was the Episcopal parsonage, a property that extended back to a creek that we spent a lot of time playing around. One winter morning after an overnight snowfall, we were preparing to go to church (probably for Easter or Christmas). I was dressed and ready, so I went outside. There was a tree at the back of the parsonage property that we used to hang from by a branch and slide down a slight incline. For some reason I decided to take a slide; and, when I lost my grip on the tree branch, ended up in the creek.

In school, I was always near the top of my class. I can recall winning blackboard math contests in the sixth grade. Another student offered to give me some souvenir Japanese currency if I would let him win an arithmetic contest at the blackboard. I think that he and I both changed our minds on this agreement but cannot really say for sure. I think my method for winning was that I could solve the problem while I was writing it on the blackboard from the teacher's instruction. In 1942, The Scholastic Aptitude Test (now known as SAT) was adopted by the education community.

In February 1943, the American forces in the Pacific finally went on the offensive against the Japanese and won the Battle of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands which had begun in the previous August. A Japanese general called this loss "the graveyard of the Japanese army."

My half-sister, Antoinette, was born February 26, 1944 (my mother was 39). We managed to get by in those war years and the time following, but never had more than just enough. Two examples of this are still strong in my memory. In the first, I needed to have a gift for a school Christmas gift exchange. I ended up giving a white handkerchief (maybe new – maybe not) and pinned to it a die-cast metal sheriff's badge. I also remember that another classmate, the son of the jewelry store owner gave someone his gift of a toy bow and arrow set.

The second memory is of a winter coat with a hood that mother gave me one year and shortly thereafter I lost it while playing. The weather was warm, and I took it off and threw it down somewhere. Even in my young psyche, I felt the disappointment that this carelessness caused my mother. Christmas for us was not a time of ostentation. Everything on our Christmas tree was saved from last year's tree. This included the silver foil "icicles" that were removed when taking down the tree and saved for reuse. In your Christmas stocking (if you had one) you might have received an orange which cost more than a gallon of milk or a pound of coffee and twice as much as a movie theater ticket.

On June 6, 1944, Operation Neptune, now always referred to as D-Day, began the push to free mainland Europe of Nazi German control. On that day alone at least 4414 Allied soldiers died in one of the bloodiest single days in the history of the American military.

On June 22, 1944, President Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act which became known as the "G. I. Bill of Rights". This was so important for that "Greatest Generation" of men and women who served in the military during WWII. In addition to helping with education, it provided low interest loans for home and business purchase. In 1947, 49% of students applying to colleges were veterans. Enrollment in higher education of recent high school graduates went from 15% of those 18 – 20 years old in 1937 to over 60% of recent graduates in 2020. This act provided many with the ability to have families and pass on wealth to them through the benefit of home and business ownership.

In August 1944, public service announcements debuted with "Smokey Bear" (not "Smokey the Bear" which is the Mandela effect) as the spokesman for fire prevention and has since become the longest-running PSA campaign in United States history. Its name was inspired by "Smokey" Joe Martin, a New York City Fire Department hero. During World War II, with so many experienced firefighters and able-bodied men overseas, the U.S. Forest Service decided it needed a campaign to convince ordinary citizens to play a role in fire safety. In 1950 the advertising image took the form of a real bear after fire crews in New Mexico rescued a singed black bear cub who had survived a wildfire.

On December 16, 1944, the "Battle of the Bulge" in Europe began. This last gasp offensive of the Nazi army lasted over a month and the American troops had about 90,000 deaths, casualties and missing. It was, however, the beginning of the end of the war.

After Antoinette was born, we lived in 5 room, two-story house on the main street in Berkeley Springs, N. Washington St. The only central heating was a coal/wood stove in the living room, and of course no air conditioning. Even though the Frigidaire Company began manufacturing refrigerators in 1919, we did not have one in this house. There was an ice chest for which a 50# block of ice was delivered weekly or biweekly (strangely, bi-weekly can mean either twice a week or every other week). I think we got ice twice a week. The main problem with this house was that it teemed with rats, mice, and roaches. At this time, Betsy and I went to the North Berkeley Grade School, and I later attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Annex in south Berkeley. My mother's bedroom opened onto a flat roof that had no railings. One day, after Antoinette had learned to walk, she somehow got the door unlocked and went out onto the roof. We were downstairs and heard her crying. She had fallen off the roof and was lying on the ground, having just missed a stone wall and some large stones and glass. She was otherwise unhurt for her 10-foot fall.

My Grandmother Hunter lived in what to me was a large, beautiful home at 210 Laurel Avenue, a short distance from downtown. My most normal childhood experiences were the times we spent there. It seemed that most of these interludes that were spent with my grandmother were in the summer, so there was also lots of time to play. There were five 30 to 40-foot cherry trees fronting her large yard. We climbed and played in every one of these. Life for children in those days was mostly outdoors in good weather. I did do a lot of reading but that was usually in the evening whenever there was nothing on the radio. Most evenings there were one or two half hour programs that we wanted to listen to; among them were the cowboy shows, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and Hopalong Cassidy; comedy shows, Bob Hope and Jack Benny; and some scary shows like Inner Sanctum Mystery and The Shadow. There was a weekly program "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy" who championed against evil, and the program was sponsored by Wheaties, "the breakfast of Champions". It opened with men singing "Have you tried Wheaties? They're whole wheat with all of the bran. Won't you try Wheaties? For wheat is the best food of man."



Jon Reid Brill – 1944

There were apple trees and a vegetable garden in the back of Grandmother's house and a grape arbor off the back porch. Also, in the back yard was about a hundred feet of clothesline where Grandmother Hunter hung the days' laundry after washing and wringing it on the back porch (she did have an electric washing machine).



All through these years the polio epidemic was more frightening to us than the war. I even remember that there were a lot of false stories about the cause of polio – flies, mosquitos, cats, Italian immigrants, car exhausts, even grape seeds, sugar, and smallpox vaccinations. The first polio vaccine wasn't available until 1952, when they first started inoculating with the Salk vaccine. The Sabin vaccine came in 1957. Immunization was so effective that cases went from 60,000 in the USA in 1952 to 223 in the world 60 years later.

A cousin, Harry Robert Hansroth, Jr., son of my Aunt Virginia Waugh and her first husband, lived with our grandmother pretty much full time. We did have chores and responsibilities that we were expected to do. I don't remember that there was much discussion or disagreement about these chores. We mowed the lawn and kept the yard trimmed and orderly. There was a substantial garden that had to be taken care of. We were expected to keep our rooms neat and tidy. In the winter, we shoveled snow. The yard of this house was on a slant so we could slide on a flattened cardboard box from the middle of the yard about 100 feet to the bottom. Of course, you had no control, and you might run into a tree. I also remember getting head lice while staying with Grandmother Hunter. It was thought that it happened when I got my first barber's hair cut (for 10 cents in his home); but I might have picked it up at school as it was quite prevalent at the time.

Grandmother Hunter (you did not call her “grandma” or anything other) was always pleasant and firm and you never saw her flustered or in any way not completely in charge and usually with good humor. When she unbraided her hair (which she mostly kept in a “bun” on the back of her head), it reached at least to her waist. The only thing that I know of that she collected was hair pins. She had to manage a household that revolved around an invalid husband and some number of active grandchildren. It was only during this time with our grandmother that weekly church was introduced into our lives. We had Sunday school and church service and my cousin Robert, and I would go to the First Methodist Church on Sunday evenings and play recorded religious music over the speaker in the belfry of the church. Robert was a musical prodigy who could play the piano without sheet music and improvise music. On these Sunday evenings, he would practice the piano and organ while the records played. Robert was two years older than me, but quite a bit bigger. He was able to lift Grandfather Hunter out of bed, so he was a big help to Grandmother.



Grandmother Hunter in her nineties

One year, Robert and I got the idea that we would like to take a bicycle trip around the country. We wrote to the tourism bureaus of the various states and asked for maps and information. We spent a lot of time planning what we would do. When summer came, we must have changed our minds because that was the end of that adventure. We did, however, often bicycle out to the CCC Camp (Civilian Conservation Corps built in 1930's) which is now Capon Resort State Park about 12 miles south of town. There we mostly swam in the lake. There were also 2 swimming pools in the state park in the middle of downtown Berkeley. The water in these pools came from the mountain springs. The pool farthest from the entrance always seemed to be about 10 degrees colder. Maybe that was because most people swam in the pool closest to the entrance but maybe it was because the water came into that pool first and from there into the front pool. By the time that I was 10 or 11, I could swim the length of the shorter back pool under water.

My mother had an older brother John Theodore Shackelford (Ted) who was born in 1903 and died in 1974. Three of Grandmother's other children by Grandfather Hunter lived in Berkeley Springs at that time – Charles Hunter (1909-1967), (Nora) Virginia Waugh (1914-1998) and William Hunter (1916-1997). Uncle Charles was a supervisor at the sand mines. Aunt Virginia was married for the second time to a contractor and had nine children. Uncle Bill had been in the Navy and later worked at the Post Office. He went on to become a funeral director and was mayor of Berkeley Springs for a time. His wife Jesse Widmeyer Hunter died in 2013 at the age of 99: they had one son. We (JoAnn and I) visited with her several times including in her last years that were spent in assisted living at the local hospital.

As I grew up, I had an unrestricted run of the town. Everything in town was so handy – the swimming pool, the library, and the movie theater were all within a few blocks from home. One of the places that kids my age spent a lot of time was the Fairfax Restaurant in the middle of downtown. The big draw for me there was Pepsi Cola, peanuts and two pinball machines. The boys who had a few nickels to play the machines entertained the rest of us. The Fairfax was in the corner building in the picture below.



Part of downtown Berkeley Springs

The movie theater was just down the block from the Fairfax Restaurant. Admission was 15 cents; popcorn was 10 cents a box and most candy items were the normal 5 cent bars. I remember taking some friends to a movie for one of my birthday parties. At that time theaters almost always ran a cartoon comedy with the current picture as well as a newsreel of current happenings. In 1948, those newsreels became the first news programs on television.



Berkeley Springs at night (recent picture)

For a walking tour of Berkeley Springs go to <http://berkeleysprings.com/walkingtour/>

The main industry of Berkeley Springs was the sand mines of the Pennsylvania Glass and Sand Co. (originally Berkeley Glass Sand Co. <http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/2117>) which were a couple of miles north of town. Silica was dug from these mines mostly to produce glass. When I was 10 years old, I went on my bicycle (a hand-me-down girl's bike from my sister, Nancy) with a group of my buddies to the sand mines where we investigated the abandoned caves. Coming out of the entrance to the mine, I drove directly into traffic on route 522 and was hit by a car driven by a schoolteacher. If she was not going to the speed limit, (which was a federally mandated 35 MPH to conserve rubber needed for the war), she must have been close to it, as the police reported that I was thrown 200 feet and had lost both of my shoes. I received a concussion, broken ribs, and torn ligaments in my legs. It was my only hospital stay for the next 45 years.



Route 522



Sand storage bin near sand mines

I must assume that my father contributed to our living expenses in addition to whatever money that my mother received from her husband, Tony Pateras. My father visited us in Berkeley Springs on several occasions over six years (probably at least annually), and unfortunately was not able to control his alcohol addiction on at least one and possibly more of these trips. I also recall that mom's husband, Tony Pateras came to Berkeley Springs one time. He had a one-thousand-dollar bill which he told all of us to stand on "for luck"; this was probably about the time that the last large-dollar-value currency was printed by the U. S. Mint in 1945. On October 24, 1945, the United Nations formally came into existence. My sister Nancy quit school in 1946 and married Sterling Webster a local man, seven years older who was recently discharged from the Army. He was a carpenter and built a house for them close to his own family home. They lived in Berkeley Springs for several years and he reenlisted in 1949 and he was sent to Charleston, WV as a recruiter. They were relocated in West Virginia several times before he retired in 1972.

As I mentioned above, in most of these war years many food products were rationed. Official rationing began in January 1940. Sugar was one of the first to require coupons in 1942 and was rationed until 1947. This was followed by gasoline in May 1942, when 3 gallons a week was the allotment for non-essential vehicles. Then, the average MPG was about 17. The reason for gasoline rationing was not actually a shortage of gasoline as America quickly ramped up production so that by 1944, we produced over 25% of the world's oil and gasoline. The shortage was rubber for tires, most of which was produced in countries that were now controlled by Japan.

Tire rationing which began in December 1941 lasted until January 1946.

Coffee (1 pound every 5 weeks per person), meat, lard, shortening and food oils, cheese, butter, margarine, processed foods (canned, bottled, and frozen), dried fruits, canned milk, firewood and coal, jams, jellies, fruit butter and sliced bread (rescinded after 3 months) were all rationed by November 1943. The rationing of store purchases of meat amounted to about 2 pounds a week. Restaurant dining was not rationed. An interesting fact about oleomargarine is that when it first was sold it was not allowed to be yellow – you had to crush a red dye pellet packed in with the white margarine and knead the plastic package until the yellow color went through the product. This was the dairy farmers' solution to the competition to butter and was the law until 1966 in Wisconsin. You could get two boxes of Kraft macaroni and cheese with one ration coupon and about 50¢; the average wage then was about \$150 a month.

Additionally, you needed ration coupons for cigarettes, shoes, anything made of silk or nylon, and even refrigerators, stoves, and radios. No new automobiles were produced for over 3 years. Coffee rationing ended in July 1943 and sugar rationing was finally lifted in June 1947. Shoe rationing limited each person to 3 pairs of shoes a year and required a stamp from a rationing book. Shoes were made in only 4 basic colors.

Great Britain started rationing in January 1940. At the beginning, the rations per person, per week, were as follows: 4 ounces of butter; 12 ounces of sugar; 4 ounces of raw bacon or ham; 3.5 ounces of cooked bacon or ham; and 2 eggs.

Thinking back, I have to say that in my recollection, my mother did a remarkable job of feeding her family with what she had available. I do remember that a fancy meal for us would be "Swiss steak" made with a tough cut of beef that was tenderized by pounding. Since almost all Catholics ate fish on Friday and it was more readily available then; that was also our day for eating fish, which I recall that quite often was pollack which was cheaper than cod or haddock. I remember having for dinner meatless spaghetti; tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwich; or whatever was available (beef, veal, or lamb) for stew. Our breakfast 5 or 6 days a week was probably CheerioOats (later changed to Cheerios in 1945), Wheaties or Kix. In the winter, our cereals were Oatmeal or Shredded Wheat soaked slightly in hot water. It has been stated that Charles Schulz the cartoonist who produced "Peanuts" related that, during those depression and war years, his family often had pancakes for supper – I expect we did too.

I suppose we were fortunate that the government provided products that were surplus, such as milk and cheese, for schools to use for their lunch programs. The Department of Agriculture had regulations regarding the serving of nutritious lunches. Decades later under the Reagan administration in 1980 there was a small scandal when the USDA proposed allowing ketchup and relish to be considered vegetables.

My mother did not have a job outside the home for most of our stay in Berkeley Springs, but she did get a job as a cook in a restaurant/bar near the end of that time. When I was about 11, I got a job at the local newspaper. Once a week, I would go in when they were printing the newspaper. Most of my job consisted of catching the individual pages as they came out of the printing press to keep them from getting crumpled. My sister, Nancy, got a job as switchboard operator in the town's central telephone office. All local and long-distance calls had to go through that switchboard. I do not recall seeing my brother for the 6 years that we lived in Berkeley Springs.

On April 12, 1945, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32<sup>nd</sup> president died in Warm Springs, GA. He was succeeded by Harry S Truman (no period after S because that is not an abbreviation). When Truman asked the former First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, if there was anything he could do for her, she replied "Is there anything we can do for you? For you are the one in trouble now." Truman very shortly into his presidency had to make the most consequential decision any president has ever made. It was estimated at the time, that an invasion of Japan, to end World War II, would cost millions of lives on both sides. It was proposed that newly developed atomic bombs be dropped to convince Japan to surrender. This would certainly cost hundreds of thousands of Japanese lives.

On July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was exploded in a test near Alamogordo, NM. On August 6 and 9, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, and World War II was over. I remember that the celebration of VJ Day (Victory over Japan), on September 2, went on late into the night. Hundreds of people were gathered in the town square. People were throwing things like tire rims into the street and a young woman kept trying to clear the street; she might have been with the sheriff's department.

When I was eleven or twelve, Dad took Mary Bess and I on a train trip to see Niagara Falls. I had a new camera and was taking pictures of everything. When we arrived in Buffalo where we stayed in a hotel downtown, I dropped back to take a picture of Dad and Betsy outside what I thought was our hotel. By the time I adjusted the camera and looked up, they were nowhere to be seen. I ran into the hotel and looked all around for them. It wasn't our hotel. I was found quickly, and we proceeded on. I don't know what happened to the pictures that I took on that trip.

I mentioned before how several strokes of luck kept the Axis powers from completely dominating the Allied powers at the very beginning of World War II. It's also amazing how fate played a role in deciding the outcome of WWII. Enrico Fermi led our country's Manhattan Project to produce a nuclear reaction and prove that an "atomic bomb" was possible. While he still lived in his native Italy eight years earlier, Fermi had experimented with the same outcome in mind. One reason that he failed might have been that he used the wrong material to wrap his sample of fissionable material. If he had accomplished in Italy what he had set out to do, that process might have been used by the axis powers of Mussolini and Hitler to build atomic weapons and win the war. What probably saved the world of Nazi rule was Hitler's purging of Jewish scientists in Germany and Italy. In December 1945, Congress officially recognized the Pledge of Allegiance, and we began saying it every day in schools across the country.

In 1946, an engineer, working on magnetrons that generate microwaves for the radar systems that were being produced by Raytheon stepped in front of an active radar set and found that a chocolate candy in his pocket had melted. This led to the invention of the microwave range (originally called the "Radar Range").

On April 1, 1946, an 8.6-magnitude earthquake off the Aleutian Islands triggered a tsunami that [raced at 500 mph across the Pacific](#) and roared ashore in Hawaii, killing 159 people. It was the [largest wave to hit Hawaii](#) in modern history.

In the sixth grade, it was finally noticed that I could not read the blackboard from my seat in class. I got my first glasses for my 20/200 astigmatism and myopia when I was 12 years old and wore them almost all my waken hours for the next sixty years. For my seventh-grade year, my sister Mary Bess, and I went to live with my dad in Pittsburgh and my mother moved to Youngstown, Ohio. I suspect that this may have been about the time of Mother's breakup with Tony Pateras. She and Antoinette moved in with my Aunt Martha who was living with her boyfriend Tony Rey in his hotel on Front Street.

A pilot on a business trip in June 1947 was the first person to report seeing a UFO in the modern era. He described seeing a string of nine shiny metallic objects flying north of Mt. Shasta in Washington state. On September 9, 1947, a computer programmer working on the Mark II Computer at Harvard University found an actual "bug" (a moth) in the 25-ton piece of hardware. This behemoth was one of the first electronic computers and was programmed from a punched tape to do mathematical, logarithmic, exponential, and trigonometric calculations, some of which would take up to 12 seconds.

Later that year, on September 29, the first World Series game broadcast on television was played. On October 14, U. S, Air Force Captain Chuck Yeager became the first test pilot to break the sound barrier (Mach 1 is about 767 MPH).

I was in Youngstown in December 1947 when a blizzard that blanketed the northeastern states came on Christmas day. I was not able to return to McKees Rocks for more than a week. For reasons never explained to us, Mary Bess and I had been moved to Pittsburgh to live with my dad. That is the way my teenage years began.



*Chapter 6: MY TEENAGE ANGST*

*The best parts of these 7 years are the friendships that were formed in high school. I was not a jock or a member of the "in crowd", but none of my classmates caused me any problems. I think that I was generally liked and that my academic record was respected. The worst parts were shame and loneliness. I did not feel that I could invite anyone to our home because I did not know what Dad's condition would be at any time and our two-room apartment was sparse and often unkempt. (Refer to Chapter 3. The Brill DNA)*

In 1947, the construction of Levittown on Long Island, New York was begun. It basically provided homes for as little as \$8000 to returning G.I.s and was a model for planned communities across the country.



My sister Mary Bess and I were sent from Berkeley Springs to Pittsburgh to live with my dad when I was twelve. My mother and sister Antoinette moved to Youngstown to live with my Aunt Martha. I assume this was because of her separation and divorce from Tony Pateras and therefore less money to live on. Betsy and I boarded with a family (in my mind, I think their name was Rehnquist, Mary Bess doesn't remember) and my dad lived elsewhere. This was at 524 Fairywood Street in Ingram, a borough in what are the northwest suburbs of Pittsburgh. Mary Bess went to Fairywood Elementary School a few blocks away from where we lived on Broadhead Fording Road. The high school that I went to in the seventh grade, Langley High School, in Sheraden borough, another suburb of Pittsburgh, was named for Samuel P. Langley, a pioneer in aviation. The school was built in 1923-27 and had grades 7 through 12 and was originally built to accommodate 1500 students. It was the first school in Pittsburgh that had a new science department, a public address system, and a modernized home economics kitchen. Our Physical Education included swimming in the school swimming pool; it was my first incidence of being seen naked by non-family members.

For the time that I attended Langley from Ingram borough, I used public transportation by bus with the cost paid for by the school district. That was much more common and a cheaper alternative in those days. My dad moved in with us some months later and we lived with that family for much of that school year. Mrs. Rehnquist, a widow, had two grown daughters and a son several years older than me. The son had accidentally shot himself in the face some years earlier. The bullet was still in his head. The daughters were called "Sis" and "Doll". The son, whose name I do not recall, was a trapper. He set snares for small animals along several creeks that ran nearby including Chartiers Creek. He skinned and sold the pelts of his catches.



Langley High School

Mrs. Rehnquist was not much of a cook and her meals were very plain. We regularly had toasted cheese sandwiches and cream of tomato soup made with water. Her spaghetti was made with a plain tomato sauce which may have been condensed tomato soup. They drank a lot of buttermilk which I hated. We were asked to leave that house when Dad came home drunk one day. Dad and I moved to an apartment on Frontenac St. in Sheraden for a short period of time. I believe that Mary Bess continued to live with the Rehnquists for the rest of that year.

Dad and I moved to an upstairs apartment on Frontenac St. in Sheraden near Langley High School. Once, while we lived in Sheraden, I returned from Youngstown late at night and found that I did not have the quarter that I needed to ride the streetcar home. I ended up walking approximately 3-4 miles from the railroad station to our apartment, arriving after midnight. I remember trying to do a science experiment in that apartment and catching the curtains on fire.

In 1947, "Anne Frank, the Diary of a Young Girl" was first published in the Netherlands. It was from a daily journal kept by a young German Jew, born 6/12/1929 who was forced to hide in a secret attic space in a business in Amsterdam. She got the diary for her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1942 and shortly thereafter learned that the Nazis would transfer them to a prison camp. Her family went into hiding for over two years during which she wrote an account of her life and the treatment that Jews received under Nazi domination. They were found out in 1944 and sent to camps where all but one of her family died. Three quarters of Jews in Holland were murdered by the Nazi regime. Her father survived and had her diary published.

At Langley High School, I made a friend, Bob Doak, who was like a brother during all my high school years. Bob lived at 2129 Mazette Place, a few blocks from Fairywood Street where we first lived in Pittsburgh. We lived in the same community and went to the same school in the seventh grade, but we continued to be friends after I moved away. From then on, I saw Bob mostly on weekends during the school year. Quite often, I would stay at their house on Saturday and Sunday. I do not ever recall having an argument with Bob on any subject. Musically, I trusted his judgment and his tastes seemed to coincide with mine. On other subjects, I can't remember a time when we differed in our point of view.

Bob studied music composition and played piano and French horn. I played French horn in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, began playing the baritone horn in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and trombone in the marching band and baritone horn in the concert band in senior high. I was a good instrumentalist, but Bob was a musician. We were mostly connected through music. We went together to the Pittsburgh Symphony and to the Civic Light Opera to see Broadway musicals. Just after WWII, the government subsidized a lot of these activities to provide work for the musicians and actors. This was in the "Big Band Era". We went to dances (just to stand up front and listen to the band). We played in a chamber music group at a local church and together we played in a small dance band for a short period. That band had only one paying gig which was at a Marine Corps anniversary celebration and dance.

Our favorite dance band at that time was Stan Kenton, but we also went to hear many other similar jazz and swing bands. Among these were Ray Anthony, Buddy Rich, Les Brown, Les Elgart, Billy May, and Sauter-Finnegan. One of my favorite popular composers was Leroy Anderson; among his popular compositions were “Sleighride” and “Blue Tango”. He also arranged music of other composers, often for the Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler.



Stan Kenton Orchestra

Not long after that we moved to McKees Rocks; Betsy was taken to Berkeley Springs to stay with Grandmother Hunter for her 6<sup>th</sup> school year before moving to live with Mom in Youngstown where she attended Hayes Junior High School. I have learned that there is a gap in my memory about the address of where I lived in 1948 and 1949. It might have been the apartment that I later refer to that we were living in in 1950.

One weekend in May 1948, in what appeared to be the start of another war. Russia had just closed off all land routes to West Berlin. Berlin is in what was then known as East Germany that was controlled by the Soviet Union. Berlin was divided and West Berlin was controlled by the U.S, and several allies. Without food being shipped into West Berlin by the western allies, the people there would soon starve. Within the next six weeks the West had begun an airlift to West Berlin – code-named “Operation Vittles”. Over the next 15 months, over 275,000 flights were made through serious harassment from the Russians. They finally ended their land embargo in September 1949. During those perilous months more than 1.5 million tons of coal, food, and medical and other supplies; and more than 60,000 passengers were flown over those dangerous routes. At some times during the blockade, the goal of “Operation Vittles” was 1440 landings per day (one every minute).

In July 1948, President Harry Truman issued an executive order ending segregation in the U. S. armed forces. During WWII there were over 125,000 black troops overseas. They were all in segregated units that were commanded by white officers. Most often they were relegated to menial duties and were not allowed to mingle in places where other troops were present. There were several highly distinguished units of black servicemen, such as the Tuskegee Airmen and the 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion. Many British communities did not accede to instructions separating the races.

In November 1948, Ray Bradbury had a story published that he called “Touch and Go”. He later republished it in 1953 as “The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl”. I read this story in a book that I purchased as part of a monthly collection of science fiction books some years later. It was one of the stories by Bradbury and other authors that I read in my early life that amazed me by how well-written they were. I tried many times from when I was 12 years old to write something that could compare with stories that I had read. I found myself to be a rather pedestrian writer. I just didn’t have the imagination to put the words together in a way that many authors who stirred my imagination did. Ray Bradbury remains one of the several writers, including O. Henry, that I admire as master craftsmen. Other favorite science fiction authors were Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, and Isaac Asimov.

I attended 8<sup>th</sup> grade at McKees Rocks Middle School. It was there that my English Composition teacher told me that she wished she could adopt me. She was complimenting my writing ability. I no longer played the French horn, since they did not use that instrument in the band or orchestra at McKees Rocks High School. I started playing the Baritone Horn and later the Trombone in the marching band. One day in band practice a boy backed into my instrument while I was playing. That chipped about a third off my left front tooth. I hid that tooth with a mostly closed mouth or partially closed smile. I did not get that fixed until 35 years later.

Before my 10<sup>th</sup> grade year, Dad, Mary Bess, and I lived in an apartment on the second floor of a family house at 121 Cutler Street in McKees Rocks, PA. We rented it from James and Helen Kasko. The middle school in The McKees Rocks was just off Chartiers Ave which was not too long of a walk. We lived upstairs from the young couple. The wife was a professional dancer at night and worked in sales; her husband worked in a railroad repair shop. For some reason, Aunt Martha came and stayed with us for a short time. Betsy left before the next school year.



Betsy in 1950

We later moved to Bradley Street in McKees Rocks, a few blocks away, where we lived until I graduated. The apartment building was at 441 Island Ave. and our entrance was on Bradley.

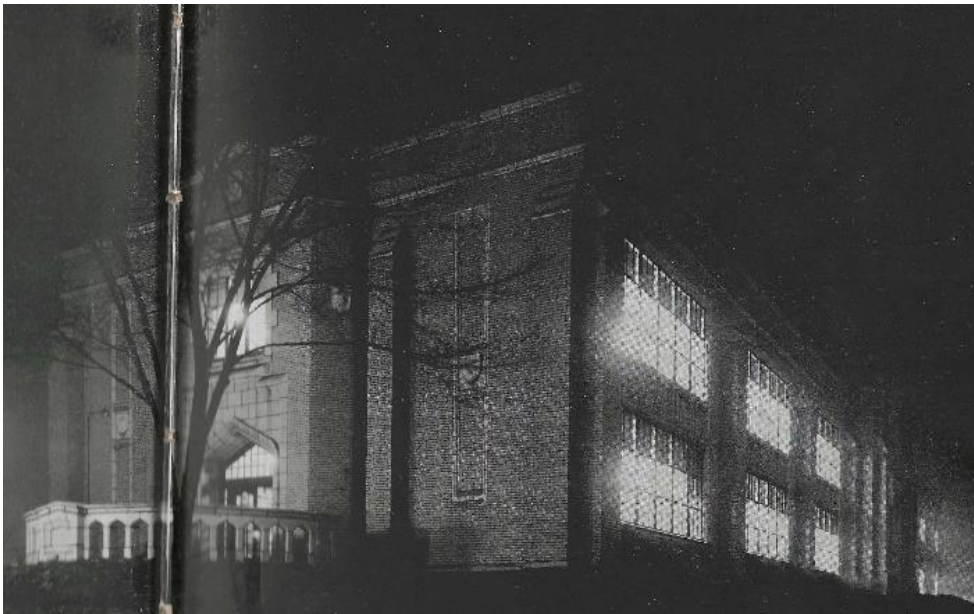
Since Dad worked for the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, I had a pass and could ride back and forth to Youngstown any time I wanted. During summer vacations, I spent a lot of time in Youngstown, often staying with my brother Buddy and his family. His daughter Nancy, and sons James (Rusty) and David were pre-school age. Several times, he took me to work with him on his Hathaway Bakery delivery truck. What wasn't obvious to me at the time was that he was cutting corners with his record keeping assisting his own finances, as his wife Alice was a stay-at-home Mom and no longer worked for Hathaway Bakery where they had met. Since he ultimately had to pay for all the merchandise that he was given to sell, he was only delaying the inevitable.

While I lived with my dad in McKees Rocks for those six years, his work on the railroad would take him away for a day or so several times each week. He did not have a regular run but could be called out at any time of the day or night to work on a freight train, usually between McKees Rocks and some destination between there and Youngstown. Once he arrived at his destination, he would have to wait to be called for the return trip, sometimes overnight. Since we did not have a telephone most of the time, the railroad would send someone to call him to work. One time he sneaked me aboard the caboose to go along on a trip with him to Coraopolis, PA.



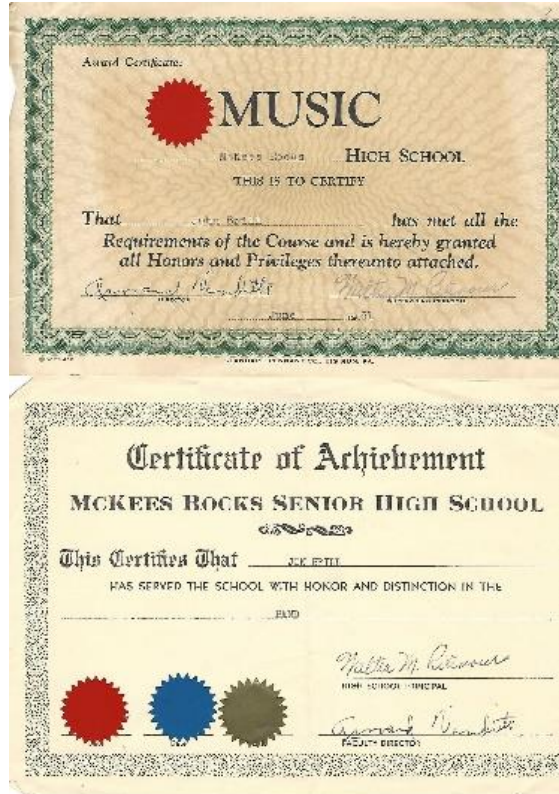
Dad always considered himself to be a great cook, and so, quite often he would try to make something that was out of the ordinary. Usually, that was some type of organ meat; his specialties were liver, heart, tongue, and brains. He also liked to use vegetables such as parsnips and turnips which I didn't much like at that time. Most of the time, however, it was up to me to make my own meals which were standard fare. My breakfast was usually a mixture of Wheaties and Cheerios. My lunches were invariably something like canned Spam and cheese sandwiches on wheat bread with sandwich spread. My favorite vegetables were lima beans and kidney beans. Dinner quite often was condensed tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwich or canned spaghetti (probably Chef Boyardee).

The apartment that we lived in the longest was two rooms on the ground floor of a building just off Island Avenue which was one of the main streets in McKees Rocks. Dad did not have a car until he bought the 1930's Chevrolet that my Uncle Jim Creswell had when he died. This was in the early 1950's so, most of the time during my teenage years my mode of transportation was a streetcar, bus or train and I pretty much traveled where I wanted to and when I wanted to.



McKees Rocks High School 1953 at night

Speaking of music, in January of 1949 the 7" 45 RPM vinyl singles record was introduced. Up until then recordings were done mostly on 78 RPM, 10" or 12" shellac records that held 3 to 5 minutes of recording on each side. This had been the standard for over 50 years. The "45" was preceded in 1948 by the 33-1/3 RPM 12" LP vinyl recordings which could hold the recording of a complete symphony that required a dozen 78 RPM records. Recordings at the time, of course, were all monaural but the vinyl records were much higher fidelity.

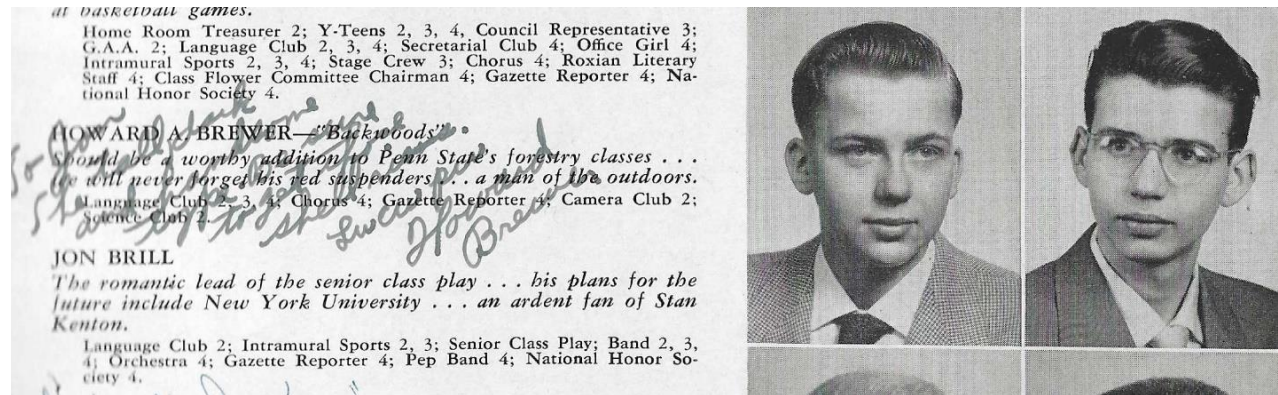


I tried out for the junior varsity basketball team in middle school and ended up a third string player. I was too embarrassed to ask Dad to buy an athletic supporter and, since I couldn't wear my glasses to play, I could barely see what was going on. I quit after sitting on the bench for two or three away games.

I was "fixed up" with a date by someone in my eighth-grade class. We took in a movie where I inconveniently forgot that I no longer could get in on a child's ticket and that was it for the two of us. There were no more dates until my junior year. There was a girl in the marching band that was dating a boy from another school, so she needed someone to accompany her to our school functions. She took pity on me and allowed me to call her my girlfriend. This was as close as I came to having a girlfriend until I met JoAnn a couple of years later. While I wasn't among the most popular set, in school, I was always treated fairly and had several good friends and generally enjoyed High School. I went so far as to audition for the school play in my senior year. I was cast in the role of the boyfriend of one of the lead characters in "My Sister Eileen".

My weekends were often spent at the home of the Doak family who treated me like a second son. I would take a bus to their home in Ingram on Friday night and come home on Sunday evening. Their spare room became my bedroom. To help, I volunteered to cook a meal for them which I did many weekends that I stayed with them. I cooked the same thing every time which we called Chili but more likely should have been called hamburger soup. The Doak family was different from many but suffered the same problems as most. Bob's dad was a WWII veteran who was a musician (he played saxophone and clarinet). He had to work in sales at Kaufmann's Department Store to make a living. Bob's mother was a former professional dancer who taught ballet and other dance to local children. Later, they separated and divorced because of an alleged infidelity.

I had another good friend at McKees Rocks High School. Howard Brewer was an outdoor type, and he gave himself a nickname – Backwoods Brewer. I think I was mostly his friend to help him pass our Latin classes in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. He went on to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania (without my help) and spent years in the Navy.



I have always paid significant attention to my appearance, but since I had to wash and iron my own clothes most of the time, I wore the same shirts and jeans numerous times before washing them. I had a light tan jacket that I wore in milder weather, but it got dull and soiled over the years, so I decided to dye it blue. Shortly after that, I was walking to school, and it started to rain. Big surprise – the blue faded onto my shirt, and I had to wear that wet jacket all day. Even at that age I paid attention to my grooming. I never wore baseball type caps, but I did have what would probably be called a brown pork pie hat to wear when I wanted to “dress up”. I have always used Brylcreem on my hair. It was popular at that time and much advertised on the radio.

Brylcreem - a little dab'll do ya.

Brylcreem- you'll look so debonair.

Brylcreem- the gals will pursue ya.

They'll love to run their fingers thru your hair. (Simply dab a little on your hair)

The 1950's were said to be an era of conservative but materialistic values. We were finished with WWII, but many after-effects lingered. There were still some shortages and rationing (meat until 1954). Compliance and conformity were holdovers of the depression and war years. Some popular icons first appeared – Elvis Presley, who made his first commercial recording on 7/5/1954, and Marilyn Monroe, who was in over 20 movies in the 1950s and died in 1962. The 1950s also saw a change in Hollywood movies with 1952 – 1954 being the “golden era” of 3D filmmaking. Unfortunately, the costs in the making of 3D films quickly caught up with the reality and in order to be shown as much as possible some were released as 2D. They haven't really been as popular since those days.

On June 5, 1950, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated railroad dining cars were unconstitutional. The Civil Rights era really began with Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and the landmark Brown v Board of Education ruling (1954) that segregated schools were not constitutional.

On October 2, 1950, “Peanuts” the comic strip by Charles M. Schulz was first published. By the time that Schulz died in 2000, the strip had over 355 million viewers in 75 countries. Reruns of “Peanuts Classics” are still in newspapers today. Unfortunately, readership of newspapers is down from over 50 million in 1950 when the U.S. population was just over 150 million to today when newspaper readership is about 25 million with a population of over 330 million.

The “Cold War” heated up when Russia tested their first atomic bomb in August 1949. In June 1950, the U. S. sent troops into the Korean War and (lucky for me) it was over by the time that I graduated and enrolled in college. In November 1951, the first “customer-dialed” long distance telephone calls began. Prior to that long distance calls required being routed through at least 2 operator assisted switchboards.

Henrietta Lacks, born in 1920 in Roanoke, VA, was a poor black tobacco farmer who died at age 31 from cervical cancer, but whose cells continue to be used in medical research. While she underwent treatment at the then-segregated Johns Hopkins University in 1950, a sample of her cancer cells was sent to the lab of a prominent cancer researcher named George Gey. Unlike other patients' cells, which quickly died,

those from Lacks not only stayed alive but doubled every 20 to 24 hours. They were the only human cells known to grow outside the body. Gey had never seen such a thing. In the decades that followed, the so-called HeLa cells (named for the first two letters of Lacks' first and last names) were used by pharmaceutical companies, cosmetics companies, and the military. They were vital in development of the polio and HPV vaccines, in vitro fertilization, and cancer treatments.

In May 1952, the first commercial Jet airliner flew from BOAC in London to Johannesburg, South Africa. I always liked science and science-related pursuits, so I think that those were usually my best subjects in high school. On May 7, 1952, Geoffrey Dummer in England presented the first concept of the integrated circuit which led to the microchip, which led to the computer, which led to the internet. Much of my working life would revolve around the emerging digital revolution – either in selling, using, or eventually designing and servicing electronic and data processing products. My sister Nancy was in Youngstown in 1952 and her daughter Susan Jeanine Webster was born there on 10/15/1952. Susan had internal problems and needed operations to correct them while she was still a baby.

McKees Rocks, in those days, was a manufacturing town that included steel mills. It was a dirty and gritty place where everything seemed to be grimy and smoggy. In the winter of 1952, the city of London, England suffered one of the worst cases of smog pollution in its history. It was estimated that up to 12,000 people died from its conditions. It did result in the UK passing of clean air laws in 1956; the U. S. did not follow suit until 1963. Also, that winter, Grace Hopper, a woman acknowledged to be one of the persons who helped invent the modern computer, collaborated in creating COBOL, the first computer language that used ordinary words instead of numbers to program computers.

I was always a good student, but lazy and unfocused. I missed a lot of school simply because I didn't feel like going. I was absent over 60 days total during my sophomore and junior years; in my senior year, I managed to reduce the absences to 12 (and only two in final semester). Since I didn't have to work hard to get good grades, I never learned good study habits; and since I always got decent grades, my parents had no interest in pushing me to do better. In junior and senior high school (in Sheraden and McKees Rocks) I was generally above a B average (approx. 3.5 for final 3 years). After the ninth grade, I thought that I wanted to take business courses but was talked out of it by the guidance counselor after one semester of typing, business math, etc. She counseled that I needed to concentrate on my academic courses to get into college.

Meanwhile, JoAnn had spent a couple of years walking over the mountain to get to the school bus that took her into Weston High School. In her junior year she found someone with whom she could stay in Weston. A family named Bush had a restaurant and JoAnn worked for them after school and at weekends to earn her board and keep. She did this for the final two years of high school. Her room was a large closet, and the bath was in the basement. She was able to earn money to buy clothes that her family couldn't afford. The restaurant she was working at after school was across the street from The Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum. (Yes, at that time they still used that name). Patients would come to the fence to place orders for the restaurant.

In my senior year at McKees Rocks High School, I did buckle down and was able to get a straight A in my final grades (including an A+ in trigonometry) and was in the High School National Honor Society at graduation. I graduated in the top 10% of my senior class of 115.



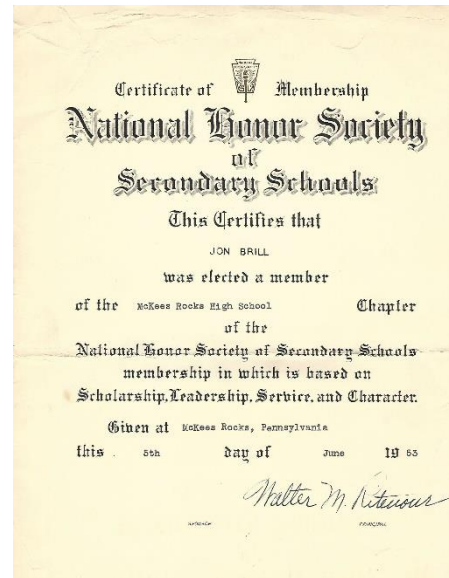
FORM SCH						
PUPIL'S NAME <i>Brill, Jon</i>						
CITIZENSHIP						
PERIOD	1	2	3	4	5	6
EFFORT	5	5	5	5	5	5
TRUSTWORTHINESS	5	5	5	5	5	5
CO-OPERATION	5	5	5	5	5	5
INITIATIVE	5	5	5	5	5	5
SPORTSMANSHIP	5	5	5	5	5	5
COURTESY	5	5	5	5	5	5
HEALTH HABITS	5	5	5	5	5	5
DAYS ABSENT	0	6	4	0	1	1
TIMES TARDY	1	1	1	0	0	0

Parents:  
The following school report is composed of two parts. The first deals with the character traits and attitudes which affect the pupil's work and social relations; the second is an estimate of the attainment of the pupil in the subjects studied.

Meaning of Marks  
Citizenship: S-satisfactory; U-unsatisfactory; I-means the pupil does not rank high but is improving.

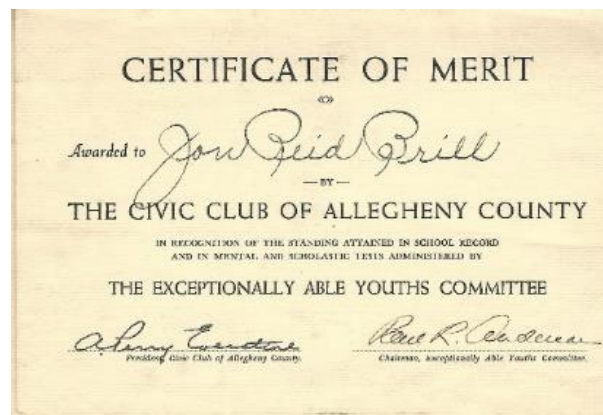
SCHOLARSHIP								
PERIOD	1	2	3	1st SEM	4	5	6	2nd SEM
ENGLISH 7-8	A	B	B	B	B	A	B+	A
SOCIAL STUDIES	B-	B-	B	B+	B+	B	A	A
MATHEMATICS 7 <sup>th</sup>	A	A-	B+	A-	A	B+	A+	A+
SCIENCE <i>Physics</i>	A	B	A	A-	B	A	A	A
LATIN								
MOD. LANGUAGE								
TYPEWRITING								
SHORTHAND								
BOOKKEEPING								
BUS. TRAINING								
OFF. PRACTICE								
TRANSCRIPTION								
SELLING								
COMMERCIAL LAW								
COM. ARITHMETIC								
SHOP								
DOM. SCIENCE								
SPEECH								
MECH. DRAWING								
<i>Band</i>				A				A
MUSIC <i>Drum Major</i>				A				A
PHYS. EDUCATION	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
HEALTH								

Scholarship: A, 94 - 100; B, 86 - 93; C, 78 - 85; D, 70 - 77; E, failure; W, grade withheld.

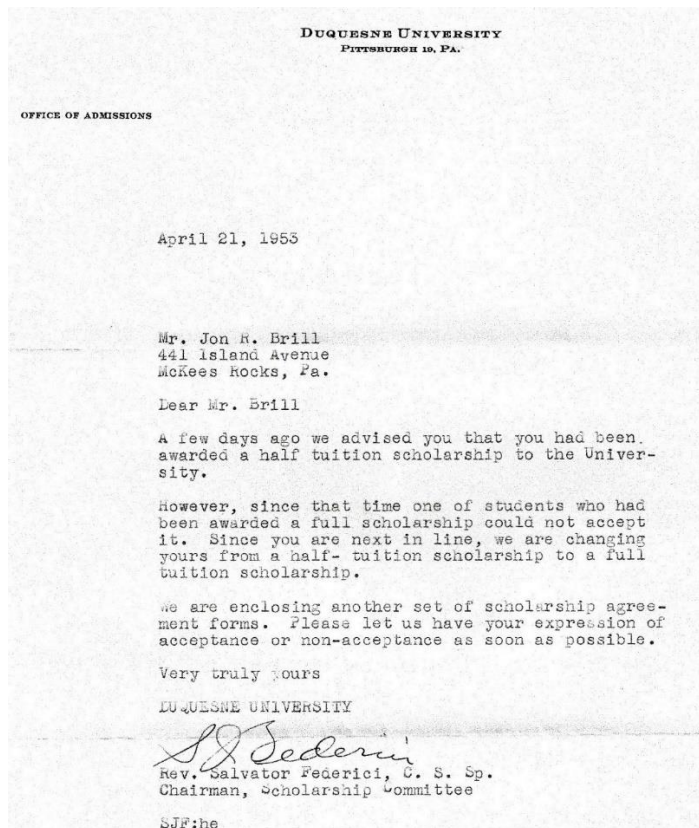


My Final Report Card

During that year, I was entered as one of our schools' four representatives to the Civic Club of Allegheny County Exceptionally Able Youth competition. Since I was not one of the top 3 McKees Rocks High School senior class students academically at the time, I was chosen as the student with the highest IQ score in my class. I came in second on this EAY test among all the students in Pittsburgh and the surrounding county. The prize was basically an interview with a local businessman. This program began in 1916 and continued until the Civic Club dissolved in 1974. Students from Allegheny County were chosen to take the EAY tests based on their class rank and combined SAT and Potential Leader Qualifications scores. The goal of the EAY Program was to encourage students with great potential to further their education after graduating high school. Although no scholarships were given directly, awardees were presented with a certificate during a small ceremony and could request letters of recommendation from the Civic Club for college application.



I had an excellent science teacher, Ross Nicely, in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who convinced me that it might be possible for me to go to college on a scholarship. He spent a lot of time working with the senior class to prepare for scholarship exams. I took two of the tests and received a small scholarship at Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, PA and a four year, full-tuition scholarship to Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. I was first notified that I came in 11<sup>th</sup> on the test and would receive a half tuition scholarship. Two weeks later, I was notified that a student who was ahead of me decided to decline the scholarship and I was awarded full tuition.



In February 1953 – the year that I graduated high school – the team of James Watson and Francis Crick of the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge University discovered the helical structure of the DNA molecule. The work to isolate, study and finally decode this building block of everything biological began in 1869 when it was first discovered and continues throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the coronation of Elizabeth II was held in Westminster Abbey. She reigned as queen for 70 years. Our graduation ceremonies were held at War Memorial Field. I know that Dad was there, and I am pretty sure that Mom was also. In July 1953 an Armistice was signed at Panmunjom, Korea ending the Korean war and taking a load off the minds of over a million 1953 high school graduates.



Duquesne University

At the time I attended Duquesne University, Pittsburgh had started a renovation of the downtown area. From McKees Rocks, I took a streetcar to the "Point" area downtown (where the Allegheny River and the Monongahela River joined to create the Ohio River). At the time, that section of the city looked like a war zone with all the buildings in much of the area being torn down. From there I walked about 1-1/2 miles to Duquesne. Dad found another apartment at 1813 Locust Street that was within walking distance of Duquesne.

Duquesne is a Catholic University, and they had a highly ranked basketball team at that time. In 1955, the Duquesne basketball team won the NIT Tournament in New York. In those days, an NIT invitation was considered more important than the NCAA tournament.

First Semester Grades

My studies included Epistemology (Logic), English Composition, Freshman Algebra (which everyone had to take), Chemistry, and ROTC. I did fairly well in my grades (3.4 GPA) but was disappointed in the C that I got in chemistry although I really didn't have a good work ethic and got by on my ability to remember facts and successfully take tests. I enjoyed becoming an announcer on the university radio station WDUQ, although my best memory of my on-the-airtime was an embarrassing off-the-cuff statement about the year of the movie "Gone With The Wind" that I got wrong and was called out for.

Unfortunately, after starting well, I slowly fell back on my old ways as evidenced by the C that I received in chemistry. Several of my high school friends went to the engineering school at the University of Pittsburgh but Duquesne did not have an engineering school. I convinced myself that my physics major with mathematics minor would only lead to my being a schoolteacher and I didn't think I wanted to do that. I say that I was convinced that I needed to change direction, but the most likely reason I did not continue at Duquesne was laziness. I reverted to my old ways and much of my non-class time was spent at the student union where we played cards – often gambling for cash. I did well with what little cash I had, and I remember that I bragged about financing myself while dad took a train trip to the west coast. He told me that he stopped in Reno, NV and gambled. He said that he won \$1000 (??) and immediately left town. That would be like winning \$10,000 today.

In February 1954, the first vaccinations for polio started with the Salk vaccine in Pittsburgh. After the full release of the vaccine in 1955, new cases went down from 10,000 a year to less than 100. Families were no longer afraid to let children swim in public pools. After 1961 the Sabin oral vaccine supplanted the injection. There were only 22 reported cases in the world in 2017.

The first "TV Dinner" was sold by Swanson in early 1954. It contained frozen turkey, cornbread dressing and gravy, peas, and sweet potato. Frozen meals had been served to the military and on airplanes since 1945 and frozen meals were sold at supermarkets in the Pittsburgh area since 1949. Swanson came up with the idea of synchronized freezing and marketed 10 million turkey dinners the first year. This was good for Swanson because they had been stuck with 260 tons of frozen turkeys after the 1953 holiday season. In March, RCA announced that they were beginning to produce color TV sets.

On May 17, 1954, in the case of *Brown v Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that segregation was unconstitutional. I had, over my high school years been in classes with very few black (then most often referred to as colored) students. Several of the colored basketball stars at Duquesne were in class with me for ROTC. Dave Ricketts went on to play baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals; his brother Dick was the first-round pick of the basketball Atlanta Hawks and Si Green was a first-round pick of the Sacramento Kings.

In the summer after my second semester at Duquesne, I went to Youngstown and lived with my mother at 121 E. Rayen Ave. I had decided that I wasn't going back to Duquesne. I told myself I would get a job and earn enough to be able to afford to go to PITT or I would get a job at a radio station. Of course, neither of these things happened. My brother was the manager of an Isaly's Dairy Store in Niles, Ohio which was an hour's bus ride from mother's apartment. I started working for him and slept at his house quite often after he moved his family to Niles. Bud was never satisfied with simply running the store the way the company meant but spent a lot of time and effort in trying his own ideas about getting more business and profit. This was always his main problem, cutting corners and making questionable decisions. I think I learned a lot from this experience.

On 9/14/1954, Mary Bess eloped with James (Jimmy) Stubbs, the son of one of our mother's good friends who came from Wilmington, NC. They later moved there to live.

JoAnn had started working early in her high school years and graduated from Weston High School. Shortly after she graduated, she moved to Niles, Ohio. JoAnn, and several other recent high school graduates ate lunch and otherwise hung out at the dairy store. She had come to Niles because her Aunt Mary and Uncle Ben lived near-by and she had been coming up during high school vacations, staying with them and working. I started spending time with this group after work. JoAnn and I had our first serious date on December 18, 1954, when we attended a Christmas party at an Isaly Dairy store in downtown Niles, not too far from the store where I was working. Although our courtship did not follow a pattern that anyone would normally recognize as such, JoAnn stuck with me over the next year.

My brother and his wife, who had been divorced before moving together to Niles, had a terrible year, and eventually completely separated. They lost a new-born daughter to sudden infant death syndrome. He was fired from his job at Isaly's, and I moved on to work at a couple of other Isaly stores as assistant manager. I lost that job when several times there was a shortage of cash in the till at the end of my shift. Later, I discussed this with a corporate supervisor that I knew, and he indicated that the manager was somehow implicated. After that, I took a job as a short order cook at the Toddle House restaurant on Wick Ave. in Youngstown a few blocks from where we lived when I was born. I think my weekly salary was \$40, which, if so, was only slightly above the Federal Minimum Wage which was raised from \$.75 to \$1.00 an hour in 1956. At that time the median income for men in the U. S. was about \$300 per month. When the first transistor radios came out in 1954, they were not only big (about ½ pound) but expensive (about \$50), so I certainly couldn't afford one.

JoAnn moved to Youngstown and stayed with Bud's wife Alice at her house at 1420 Himrod Ave. on the east side of Youngstown. Alice had started working again and JoAnn watched the 3 young children. The first time that I brought JoAnn to meet Mom and Antoinette, there was a dresser drawer full of apples in the kitchen that Antoinette forgot she wasn't supposed to mention. One of our memorable dates was to a Youngstown University football game that we never got to see. I think my understanding of where the stadium was turned out to be incorrect, so we took the wrong bus.

On May 14, 1955, 8 western European and western Asian countries signed the Warsaw Pact in Poland, creating the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). On August 28, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old negro boy from Chicago was tortured and murdered in Money, MS by the husband and brother-in-law of a white woman that Till supposedly whistled at in a grocery store. Both were acquitted but later admitted they were guilty. Some look on this as the beginning of the civil rights movement.

**On September 15, 1955, I asked JoAnn to be my wife.** It was necessary for my dad to cosign for the loan to buy JoAnn's rings which cost more than \$300 (equal to \$2500-3000 in 2020). Despite all the evidence to the contrary, JoAnn decided to marry me anyway. We went to see Methodist Minister Homer J. R. Elford in downtown Youngstown and set the date for November 8, 1955. JoAnn found an apartment on Market Street that was walking distance to her job downtown and even to my work on Wick Avenue. JoAnn moved into the apartment before we were married and generally made all the arrangements including the next two apartments that we moved to. From that day forward, I put myself in her care – *making the best decision of my life.*

### *Chapter 7: My Regrets*

*While there are many things that I have done or said that I feel remorseful about, there are none that stand out in my mind that are distressing. The regrets that concern me most are those where I had a choice. Many of these are errors in judgment, but some were obviously born from flaws in character that I have come to recognize only through serious reflection.*

My deepest regret has been that I abandoned the closest friend that I have ever had. We had been as similar in temperament and interests as any two school buddies could be. I am sure that we both felt that we would be friends forever. After my second semester at Duquesne University in 1954, I left Pittsburgh and didn't return for another 10 years. I don't remember any contacts with Bob Doak during those years, so I must assume there was little or none. I knew where he was, but he probably did not know where I was most of the time.

When JoAnn and I moved with our two young children to Pittsburgh in 1964, I initiated contact with Bob, who I discussed further in the chapter on my teenage years. We took Carol to meet with Bob's mother; he was still living at home. For some reason he did not seem as anxious to reestablish our friendship as I did, and we only got together a few times in the four years that JoAnn and I lived on Middle Road in the Glenshaw suburb of Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, during a phone call with Bob's mother, she mentioned something about "drugs" and I became spooked. I should have found out what she meant and what exactly was going on, but it was easier for me not to know. I presume now that I just didn't want to deal with the possibility of another person with an addiction being in my life. Bob and I have not communicated since. At first, I rationalized that there must have been something going on or he would have been more anxious to get together. This was a pitiful excuse, allowing me to take the easy way out. Even worse, I played with the thought many times of trying to get in contact. I have made no significant efforts to do this. Bob died a few years ago; I never met his spouse or children or grandchildren.

Another group of people that I regret losing contact with are the children of my brother Bud, Nancy K., Rusty, and David. He and his wife Alice were divorced when JoAnn and I married but there was still some contact up until then. JoAnn was a live-in babysitter for Alice just before we married. Alice remarried and some bad feelings arose which I have forgotten the nature of, but I think there was still some contact until Bud moved to live with Mom and Dad in Brownsville in the early 1970's. We lost all contact then and it wasn't renewed until we moved to Florida. In 2005, while making our drive from St. Louis to Winter Garden, we stopped in Youngstown and visited with Rusty and David. We had some very cordial conversations and stated our intention to keep in touch. It was then that we found out that Nancy K. was living in Florida not too far away from Winter Garden.

We contacted Nancy K. and decided to travel to her home for a visit. She later drove over to Winter Garden to see us. Sometime later she moved to Fort Myers, not too far from my sister Antoinette. We contacted her about getting together the next time we came to Fort Myers. We learned that Alice was going to be visiting at the same time we were there. We were never able to get together with Nancy K. and we assumed that Alice was responsible for that. We have regretted ever since that we did not continue contact with any of them other than to send Christmas cards.

A regret that I have carried with me and nursed for over 60 years is the fact that I did not complete my education. As noted in the chapter "Counting My Blessings", I gave up a full tuition scholarship to Duquesne University after my freshman year. This is not the part that I regret since going back for my sophomore year would, likely, have meant that JoAnn and I might never have become seriously involved. My regret is that I should have found a way to go on with my education after we were married, but always used the shortage of money to excuse my lack of drive to extend my education.

In the chapter on my career with Graybar, I discussed how the lack of a degree probably hampered my career path, but that would only affect the degree of attainment that I might have had rather than the reality of that success. If I had the opportunity of taking a different path with Graybar, there is no guarantee that it would have been as positive. I was approached while I was still an Office Salesman by the District Financial Manager. He wanted me to be a financial trainee. I have seen over the years that the Finance Department was a faster track to management, but, at that time, I was only a couple of years from management in the Operating Department. I have seen the careers of intelligent, capable men take negative turns due to things that were mostly out of their control. After seriously considering what alternatives might have occurred, I can honestly say that I probably reached the extent of my capabilities in the business world.

Another major regret that I have had a hard time coming to grips with is what I now recognize as my diffidence in dealing with our children and their education. I should have recognized myself in their efforts and made sure that they were given guidance and reinforcement to improve their performance and desire for achievement. Now I feel that, in this regard, I did only a little better than my own father in fostering an atmosphere where higher learning and work ethics are seen as important factors.

I have no disappointment in any of my children's character or accomplishments. I have admiration for their being fine, genuine, honest human beings. They have all been devoted to their families, which I hope reflected their own childhood. Just as I wasted many opportunities to further my own education, I missed the chance to light that spark while the prospect of molding the desire to learn was there in my children's early years. None of my sons graduated from high school with the ardent desire for more studying. That they have ultimately furthered their education and become successful middle-class family men has been more a testament to their intelligence and hard work than it is to anything that I did in counseling, financing, or motivation. I have seen that my children have and now hopefully my grandchildren will take a more hands-on role in promoting the desire to seek higher education in their children.

My regret in this regard has mainly to do with the current corporate mindset that a diploma is the main criterion in determining the desirability of hiring or advancing a prospect. If Graybar had used this reasoning, I would never have been hired. As time went by, however, I recognized several situations where my lack of a degree was a determining factor in not being chosen for positions that I was otherwise eminently qualified for. I brought this up several times with some of the officers, but they denied that was a basis for the decision. I could not see any other reason why I was passed over by someone with much less experience and accomplishment. This was particularly true when this happened with a person who had **no** experience to bring to a particular job.

I have stated that most of my regrets are connected to errors in judgment that I made. One of these is an example of an error in judgment that ended up with more pluses than minuses. I do not know whether the positive outcome was because of sheer luck or hard work that I had put in before I committed the error. It is also an example that speaks to the danger in letting frustration guide your focus instead of looking to the future for ways to improve a situation.

During my final year or so as Branch Operating Manager in Buffalo, we were in a downturn in business that I felt had a significant effect on my ability to do my job. My boss, Harry Cody, the Branch Manager, and I thought we were doing our best in preparing our operation for the downturn. We felt that other decisions that our district management made that year were arbitrary and were made without considering input from our monthly operating reports. I became more and more disillusioned during the year and made unsuccessful attempts to be transferred to a different district. In addition to our annual bonus being reduced, I did not receive a pay increase for 3 years but learned that our Branch Financial Manager did get a raise. Near the end of that year, I made the flawed decision to tell my boss that I couldn't continue in my job the way things were going.

He took me up on it, and I was transferred back to Pittsburgh in my previous job as Warehouse Supervisor. This could have been a career-ender for me except that a former boss of mine was now a Regional Vice President and he put in a good word for me with the corporate Vice President of

Operations who was choosing participants in a new program he was initiating. I was sent to a meeting in Rye, NY where the first group of District Supervisors of Training was announced.

The good impression that I made on this former boss was the difference between moving ahead and probably leaving Graybar. Of course, there is also the possibility that if I had kept my mouth shut and stayed in Buffalo, that a completely different path might have taken place. The disappointment that I feel about this episode is not tied to the ultimate result which on balance was positive, or other possibilities that might have been if I had restrained my negative feelings. I recognized quickly that my lack of control in a bad situation had put my family in risk, since I also put in peril a lot of the positive backing that I had built up previously.

Since starting to record this account of my life and times and delving into my ancestry, I have come to regret my serious shortcomings regarding my personal knowledge and recollections of my past. I was never inquisitive about family history; so, much of what I may have heard did not stick with me. It seems that I have a much better memory for facts and figures than for things I heard in passing and for mundane activities that occurred in my world. I lament that I did not have more conversations on this topic with my parents as well as my siblings and other relatives. You don't know what you don't know; so, I can only grieve for the woeful lack of family lore that I could pass on.

Earlier, in this narrative where I discussed the reason for writing at this time, I alluded to my introversion and expressed sorrow that I did little to overcome this. This was not something that went unrecognized until now. I can only state that my current feeling is that there were probably a number of things that I could have done to alter this trait; but instead, I took the easy way out and accepted it as being the way I was. My father-in-law was always mystified that I sat there at the kitchen table and listened to all the conversation but seldom chimed in. This was made clear early on in my marriage and career so there was time for me to adjust; but I never did.

Although, I feel that thrift is a constructive quality to have, I look back with regret that I may have been overly conservative and stingy while my family was growing up. Given that this was the only type of life that either JoAnn or I had known, I don't see that this could have played out any differently. Even though I was making a decent salary after I started work at Graybar, we did not seem to have an excess of disposable income. In fact, during the years 1972 to 1982, I withdrew about \$28,000 from my retirement account after we bought our first house. I did this reluctantly, but it seemed like the right thing at the time.

Please don't get the idea that these regrets that I have enumerated were merely window dressing to somehow profess my humanity. Although I don't beat myself up about these and other self-recognized faults, I do occasionally remind myself that just because you do something that others might admire, there is no reason to feel smug. You do need to be your own toughest critic. It seems that whenever I found myself doing some act of charity or benevolence, it wasn't me volunteering or even, necessarily "putting myself out there". I did collect donations to the United Fund for four or five years, but that was something my boss asked me to do. I did have several leadership positions in churches over the years, but that usually resulted from being asked by the Pastor. I did serve as treasurer of the MMBA in McKinley Heights which mainly collected funds to operate the municipal volunteer fire department. I didn't volunteer to fight fires, but I did manage the fund-raising events that paid the expenses; this too happened because I was asked.

The fact that I am not outgoing in other respects could answer the criticism of not being active in more generous ways. The other answer I come up with is that if I force myself to do something that I am not comfortable with it would only be to make myself feel better. While I admire those people who make the time to be of service to others, I am afraid that I remain among the 75% of Americans (78% American men) who do not volunteer for direct involvement in charitable causes. I am, however, among the 85% of Americans in my age bracket who do donate to worthy causes, and I do intend to increase my giving every year. I have set up automatic donations to over 30 charities that I feel are worthy of my support and many of them have been receiving my donations for more than 20 years.



A few years ago, I wrote a poem that I thought at the time described my introversion.

**But That Is Not Me**

Give thanks that there are many who devote their whole life to improving the existence of the less fortunate;

but that is not me.

Deify those who are driven internally to make significant differences in the destiny of mankind;

but that is not me.

Venerate entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, visionary industrialists, and other vital business leaders;

but that is not me.

Adore actors, athletes, authors, astronomers, and all who add to our appreciation of life;

but that is not me.

Be satisfied with those who live lives rooted in the mundane activity of getting through the days that life has laid out for them without alliteration;

and that is me.

They make sacrifices that go unnoticed; make life and death decisions that are quickly forgotten and harbor dreams and desires that are beyond their ability to produce;

and that is me.

For many the opportunity to be something else is not wired in the psyche that they were given at birth;

and that is me.