1907
FAMILY

My maternal grandparents were Nancy Eleanor Callis Scott and John Marshall Scott. Mama and Auntie, Vivia Jane and Iris Scott, were twins, born January 31, 1878, less than a year after their older brother, Uncle Brown Scott. I was told that Grandma was teased about having three babies in the carriage at the same time. Once when she spoke critically about how fast Brown Ray's babies were coming, a year or so apart, I reminded her of the teasing she had received. She replied, "That was different," but she never told me how. Then came Uncle Virgil, Aunt Kate (Catherine), Uncle Jim (James Washington, after Great Uncle Wash Callis), and Aunt Sally, who died young. Grandpa died before the kids were grown, and Grandma married Robert Charles Alexander Bunch, a dashing younger man, and somewhat later Uncle Ray (Callis) Bunch came along. I never knew anything at all about grandpa Scott's kin.

Uncle Ray was the one, as a boy, who contributed my middle name of Malchus, from the hero of a G. A. Henty adventure book entitled, The Carthaginian. I once lost a bet with my sister Virginia that my middle name was a Bible name. She found it in the Bible and showed it to me: he was the poor, one-eared devil that Simon Peter whacked an ear off of, possible foreshadowing my present-day hearing difficulty. That makes good talk, except that Ruby and my two brothers, Ed and Brown, all had more hearing loss than I have, approaching seventy. Maybe names don't cut much ice anyway; I have certainly evidenced few of the heroic qualities of the Carthaginian nobleman and warrior who led the elephants across the Alps, at least part way.

Papa was some seven or eight years older than Mama, born the fourth or fifth child of James McWhorter and Sarah Wren Ray, two miles out of Scottsville on the Durham Springs Road. Papa's oldest sister, Alva married a Kincheloe and had a son named Jim. I don't know the order of the Ray children, but it was something like Alva, Willie, Carrie (Caroline) Papa (Joe Ed), Maggie (Margaret), Molly (Mary), and Lura. By the time I can remember, the parents and all the children were gone except Carrie, Maggie, and Molly; Aunt Maggie Smith outlived them all, in Glasgow.

I remember being told that Uncle Willie once went to the Kincheloe's and found his sister working with the men in the fields, and he brought her home and she never went back; the Kincheloes were "low down." Papa adopted Jim and he was known all his life as Jim Ray. He was an inept man in many ways; talked about the ladies, but never got close to one. He lived as long as Aunt Mollie did with her and Uncle John Thaxton. He used to walk the 25-odd miles to and from Bowling Green to see us, too reserved to ask for rides. He once had me called out of class at the Bowling Green Business University to see him, and I was hateful to him, to my lasting shame. He wasn't too smart. He finished out his days in the Masonic Home in Lexington, Ky. When I went to see him, he told me there was nothing I could get for him; later Jettie suggested a napkin ring, and she got me a real nice inexpensive one for him, and I mailed it to him. When I went back to see him a year or so later, his napkin ring was not at his place at the dining table, and I asked him where it was. He told me it was in his trunk; it was too nice to use every day.

Aunt Molly was the one I liked best. She and Uncle John were real sweet people. She would take me on her lap and hug me. Auntie was too strait-laced a maiden lady to shower that kind of affection on a big strapping boy of nine or ten. I stayed with them one summer with Eleanor and two more alone. I suffered mightily from homesickness when I was there. The old Ray place and the Thaxton farm further up the road provided the imaginary locale for every old English story I ever read, from Robin Hood and Ivanhoe to Tom Jones and Beltane the Smith.

Aunt Maggie married a Smith and lived in Glasgow, but I never visited there. Aunt Carrie never married, lived many years in Nashville, and lived out her years with Uncle John and Aunt Mollie at the old Ray place.

Uncle Willie married Jane Pitchford. He had three children, Thee (Theodore, born and named well before Teddy Roosevelt had been heard from), Sally, and Willie, a daughter born posthumously as I was, since our fathers both died in the month of August, 1907. Uncle Willie spent several months in Louisville in medical school and was a doctor.

Once at Aunt Molly's I dug up a mole that was still tunneling by chopping with the hoe right where he was. Another time I saw a bumble bee coming at me from way off. He made a "bee-line" for me and hit me in the forehead a helluva stinging blow -- nearly knocked me down, and the point of impact swelled up in a terrible lump.

Thee Ray died in the early seventies; before he died, because of some highway construction project, he moved the bones of grandma and grandpa into the Scottsville Cemetery. He told me that there was hardly a trace of their bones left in the old graves, but he moved what would have been their bodies. I visited in December 1974 in the home of Sally, Willie, and Glades, Thee's widow, in Scottsville; they were all holding up very well. Aunt Janie lived until well up in her nineties. When some one visited them, she would have to ask Thee how old she was, and he would say, "93, Mama," or whatever year it was. Thee and Glades had no children and Willie never married; Sally married a Calvert and had one son Jess Calvert, who still lives in Allen County. Papa's children are the only ones to carry on the Ray name and strain.

In Mama's side of the family, Uncle Brown had two daughters, but they moved to Louisville before I could remember, and I never knew them. Mama had Ruby, Virginia (Scott), Will Brown, Virgil Raymond (who died an infant), Amy Eleanor, Edward Marshall, and me. Auntie married Dave Howell late in life, and had no issue. Uncle Virgil married Mamie Heminger and had Marie (married several times, one son, Bobbie Michie, who died of legionnaire disease in Arizona in 1970, leaving three children). Mildred, who married Cheesie Myers and had no children, twin sons who died in infancy, and Julian, who had a son and daughter. Marie and Mildred (Mimi) live in Florida; Julian died three or four years ago (1977). Aunt Kate married W. F. (Wid) Thomas, and had John, Rena, and Roy older than me, and Jeff, Louise Elizabeth, and Mary Catherine younger. Mary died while still young. John married a Dodson girl (Ruby Dodson); had several kids. Roy married Ruby Fitzpatrick and had one daughter; Rena, Louise, Jeff and Elizabeth had no issue. Uncle Jim married Hettie Fisher and they had Lucille, a few months older than me and now living in Bowling Green. Uncle Ray Bunch married Aunt Russell (Elvza) from out in Lover's Lane and had three daughters, Marcelle and Martine, a few years younger than me, and Betty Bunch, eight or ten years later, who became a television personality in Nashville. Marcelle married Rodgers Glenn and lives in Nashville; Martine married a McKee and lives in Atlanta.

1907-1915
THE EARLY YEARS

Two little items from before my time: Papa taught Brown, when he was little and was asked who he was, to say, "Will Brown Ray, Little Man." Once when he was a tyke a visiting man chewing tobacco and spitting in the fire place, set him a bad example, and he tried it from too far back and got into trouble. When Virginia was small, some one asked her if Papa ever spanked her, and when she said yes, she was asked, "Does it hurt?" Her answer was, "I reckon it does; I just can't hardly live and stand it." Once papa, never a man of substance, in talking about personal means, said he was worth three million dollars; he had three children, each worth a million. Since his wife had an identical twin sister, someone once asked him how he could tell them apart. He responded, "It's easy; when I see one of them, I grab her and kiss her: if it's Iris, she slaps me, and if its Vivia she kisses me back."

By the time I can remember, it was not very difficult to tell them apart. Auntie wore fancy hats and corsets and pretty dresses; Mama wore house dresses, and outside she wore home-made poke bonnets and by that time had taken a substantial beating; but they still looked a lot alike. Auntie when she was small was quick to tell anyone listening, "I'm five minutes older." Auntie's young sweetheart was David Howell, but they split up and he married a Warden girl After his wife died, he and Auntie married, when I was thirteen or fourteen. Uncle Dave had two sons, Homer and Boadley, whom I in my big city (Louisville) arrogance dubbed "Skunk" and "Shrimp." I went sometimes with them to Mt. Victor school. I once felt called on to correct the teacher in a spelling match, when she pronounced "discuss" and "discus" the same way: I guess I was pretty much of a snot; Jettie I am sure thinks I still am. I was once at Uncle Dave's at hog-killing time, with farmers from all around and seven hogs killed, with the women cooking up a storm to feed the hard working men, with some deputized to keep the kids out of the way. When the meat was all trimmed and ready for dividing, they came up that time with thirteen shoulders and fifteen hams, and no one could tell which ham was a shoulder cut like a ham.

The house where I was born and lived until I moved to Louisville to live with Ruby as a high school junior was 1232 Kenton Street in Bowling Green. The house had three rooms, no hall: the front room into which the front door led from the front porch, the bedroom-living room where the fire place was, and the kitchen, with a small pantry (I once fell asleep in the pantry and caused quite a stir when they couldn't find me, but I don't remember that), and the back door leading to a small back porch. From my early recollection we had no electricity and indoor plumbing, and no heat but the fire place and the kitchen stove. We used kerosene (coal oil) lamps that had to be filled regularly, the lamp chimneys cleaned of soot and the wicks trimmed with scissors. For water, the hydrant was six feet off the back porch, and the privy (two-holer) and the barn were further back on the lot.

Auntie always kept a cow: I suspect Mama did, too, but I don't remember that; the cow was my responsibility to water and take to chain and graze in the fields a few blocks away. Long before I was big enough to restrain a headstrong cow, I learned to snub her by quickly wrapping the chain around a handy post or tree. There was a hydrant in the back cow lot with a trough for her water; once I kept some tadpoles in the trough, and they had progressed toward bullfrogdom so far as to shed their tails when I let the cow's water get too low and she drank them up, damn her. The barn was for keeping the cow; and occasionally we had a couple of pigs. We once had a little boar shoat that was something of a pet; I could rub him on the side of his belly with a corncob while he lay in the sun, and would grunt contentedly and his little tallywhacker would screw itself out and take on some real dimension. Brown came back from the Hilltop (WKSTC) one day and made a bar out of the little boar, with much excitement, terrified pig-squealing, blood, and creosote. I don't remember anything else about the pigs. Once Brown put a cage of king snakes in the barn; he had caught them in the junkpile at the County Barn; but they managed to escape from the home-made cage. No one ever saw the little snakes again, but the womenfolk and girls avoided the barn like the plague for awhile. Could be that female herpephobia (there's got to be such a word) was just a pose for somebody because there was a tremendous anti-snake talk, and nobody could figure out how those little soft-nosed snakes could have broken a hole in the screen wire of the cage.

We never ate scrumptiously at Kenton Street, and a fellow had to look out for himself. We always had oatmeal for breakfast. I remember once I hit upon an oatmeal windfall when I described at breakfast a dead cat I had seen lying in the middle of the street down on Twelfth near the hospital; Ruby and Virginia decided they didn't want their oatmeal after all, and I (quite innocently but gleefully) fell heir to additional bowls. Eleanor and I always campaigned for Toy Oats, which were just as good and had a small whistle or doll or other prize in each box, but Virginia favored Quaker Oats because obviously, she insisted, you had to be paying something for the prize. She won and we thereafter forewent the toys, and each morning at breakfast she bragged on the quality of Quaker oats. But one morning Auntie found enough Toy oats left in the box to do for breakfast, and Virginia commented as usual on the fine quality of the oatmeal; Auntie, who was utterly undevious, guileless and unspiteful, but painfully honest, had to set her straight with the facts. It was a tremendous triumph for the junior element. One April Fool's morning, Eleanor and I filled Virginia's bowl with paper and a thin layer of oatmeal on top.

I know without recalling specifics that Aunt Kate and Grandma lugged food in to us from the country so we didn't lack staples. Many was the trip I made up to Dobbins's (later Kister's) grocery at the corner of Kenton and Broadway to buy a nickel loaf of unsliced bread or a nickel gallon of coal oil, with the can spout plugged with a small potato to avoid spilling. Once when someone had a cold I was sent to Dobbins's to buy a nickel’s worth of asafoetida, to be sewn in a small bag and worn as a necklace on a string around the neck of the ailing one, stinking up the whole neighborhood; the groceryman was so hilariously amused at the way I was pronouncing the word that he kept calling people to listen to my efforts. I went home blubbering and crying without the asafoetida. There just were not any men in my life as a small child except Uncle Alex (Grandpa), who was always gentle and loving with me, and at the slightest hint of criticism or ridicule in a male voice, I would tune up and wail.

We ate better in Auntie's day after Uncle Jim, Aunt Hettie and Lucille came to live on Kenton Street. I don't remember how long they lived there, but it might have been as long as two years. Uncle Jim at first had a meat market at the corner of Thirteenth and College that later was expanded into a grocery store. But before that I remember Ruby and Virginia clerking at Woolworth's down on the square and Brown jerking sodas at Callis's (Cousin Tom and Cousin Jim's Drugstore) at Tenth and State streets. Uncle Jim's family lived for some years in Oklahoma, and were back home. Lucille was a few months older than me; she took "elocution" lessons, and she could recite real well; some of her pieces I still think were real good; one involved whispering communications from a general down through the colonel, captain, lieutenant, sergeant to the private near the front in France. After all the whispering back and forth in channels, the general thought to ask how far it was to the front lines, and word went back, "Seven miles." Then when the word got, the general roared, "Then what in the hell are we whispering for? and when that was dutifully roared through channels down to the private, he whispered, "I've got a bad cold."

Lucille thought I was quite a card, and I most surely was. I could flap my arms and say, "Caw, caw, I'm a turkey buzzard!" And I could feign astonishment by saying, "Well I'm a suck-egg mule!" One night the womenfolk (although it would have been out of character for Auntie, who couldn't have brought herself to dissemble sufficiently) dressed me up in female clothes, painted and powdered, for some horseplay with Uncle Jim at the front door, when they all let him answer my knock. It was a hugely successful ploy. Uncle Jim was an enormously happy man and could enjoy a joke with the best. I remember once hearing him tell Aunt Hettie and Auntie as crude and vulgar an old joke as I ever heard about a hospitalized Irishman who became sexually aroused while using a urinal and couldn't get his swollen organ out of it. I thought

Auntie was going to strangle on her own juices, she laughed so hard; I have since concluded that she would have been shocked to the core if anybody but her little brother Jim Washie had told the story.

In those days we had a new-fangled gadget in the house: a telephone. A girl several houses down the street kept me busy calling her to the telephone to talk with her boy friend, but the calls slackened off after April Fool's Day when we tied the receiver down and summoned her to a fake call and, after her repeated efforts to raise a response from the phone we all chimed out, "April Fool." Aunt Hettie was a shrewish woman, always on Uncle Jim's back, but usually to little purpose. Once after a biting comment from his wife, I said to Uncle Jim, "Uncle Jim, she sure did get you told." And he responded, "Yes, son, but when it comes my turn to spell, I always move to the head of the line."

Lucille could memorize well. Once when she brought home an assignment to memorize the poem "Abou Ben Ahdem" I memorized it as she did, and I still can recite it, all but a line or two.

I have only fleeting recollections of Mama. I remember once when we were standing in front of the house by the buggy that Auntie had come in, I asked Auntie for a penny, and Mama said I shouldn't have, but Auntie dug out a penny from her purse for me anyway. Once Auntie gave Mama and me each a stick of chewing gum; shortly after Auntie left I was devastated to realize I had swallowed mine, and I cried; Mama took hers out of her mouth and gave it to me to cure my grief. I remember clearly once Mama leaning her head down on her arm on the little three-legged table in the kitchen where the waterbucket sat, as if she were sick, but I don't place the vignette in any context. The fourth leg of the table had been broken off by Aunt Kate and Uncle Virgil when they were scuffling as children and never replaced.

Mama contracted typhoid fever from sulfur water obtained as a health-giving potion from a well out close to the Smallhouse Pike. Mama went to the hospital down on Twelfth Street between Chestnut and State, about five blocks from home. She was not ill long. Brown would go down to the hospital each morning to see how Mama was. One morning I waited for him at the front door as he came home. As he came up the walk, his face contorted and he sobbed that Mama had died. I was much impressed by the grief shown by my elders, but I don't recall any grief on my own part. A little seven-year old boy can ill afford deep grief when he had only grievers to cling to. Ruby, who was then 19, took me on her lap sitting in the windowsill and told me she would take care of me; and she did. All her life she thought first of me. When I moved to Amarillo to the presidency of Amarillo College, she was uneasy lest I had moved clean outside the civilized world, and she bugged husband Jack MacDonald until they visited Amarillo in our first year there. Once in El Paso she was seated beside me at a banquet at which I was to be the principal speaker; she leaned over to me and said, "This is a long way from Kenton Street, isn't it?"

I recall another time when I was small having a nightmare, with huge balls in the far corner of the room getting larger and threatening to take everything over; Ruby awakened me and tried to reassure me, but the hobgoblins didn't go away for a moment, even after I was awake. I was a sickly child; I seem to recall being told I had impetigo as an infant, but I came through fairly tough over all.

The health people checked the sulfur well where Mama got her health-giving water and found it teeming with typhoid germs. They sealed the well up: I knew its location as a boy, but when I tried once in later years to find trace of it, I could not do so.

My bother Ed while I was a small child was out at Grandma's He doubtless lived better than we did at home, but he bore psychic scars all his life from being separated from the rest of us. Even at that he was more man in most ways than either of his brothers.

Mama on her death bead, I was told, exacted a promise from Auntie that she would care for us children. Shortly after Mama died, Brown went to live with Miss Jeffries up near Western Kentucky State Teachers College (or it still could have borne the name of Western Kentucky Normal), where she taught geography. He kept her furnace and lived in the basement of the large rooming house she kept, it seems to me largely for Ray kids and her Mason and Boyd kin. She was a truly wonderful woman. All of us but Virginia and me lived with her at one time or another; we two didn't attend WKSTC.

Ruby and Virginia moved out to take jobs away from Bowling Green, and only Eleanor and I were left at home with Auntie. Ruby and Virginia would send us money home, I remember one period from Van Lear, Kentucky, where Ruby taught school and Virginia was a secretary. Virginia was a real good secretary; for a time she was secretary to Dr. Dickie, the President of Bowling Green Business University. Once when their money was slow in coming, Auntie with no other source of funds was in great distress. I remember her sitting in the front porch swing combing her long hair (with an aluminum comb to keep the gray hair from showing) and wailing that she was losing her mind with worry. Poor half-educated maiden lady with a houseful of sister's kids and no money.

At one time my big boy feet were the same size as Ruby's and Virginia's but much tougher, of course, and they dragooned me to wear their new shoes that lace halfway up the calf, to help break them in, with the owner of the particular pair I was wearing dancing in close attendance on me to make sure I did no skin them up.

Once Ruby had a date with the Methodist preacher, a young and I thought handsome bachelor, and she was not ready when he came. I can still see the smirk on Virginia's pretty face as she stood in the front door and told the preacher that Ruby was not ready yet, that she had gone out back to the privy. There was much later wrangling about that indiscretion; but I never heard my sister Virginia nor my brother Brown express regret over words uttered.

Brown worked late night hours at Callis Brothers Drug Store. Once in the winter, with a fire burning in the fireplace and Brown catching up on his sleep in the nearby bed, Eleanor stood too close to the fire and the hem of nightgown caught fire. Brown from a dead sleep bounded out of bed, grabbed a quilt and rolled Eleanor up tight in it before she suffered any burn at all.

Once Brown borrowed a twenty-two pistol from somewhere to shoot a stray dog we thought was mad. After the dog was dispatched and he had snapped the pistol on all the cartridges, he started snapping it teasingly at me, until Auntie made him stop. Thereafter, to prove himself right, he snapped the little pistol all around at the big oak tree in the front yard, and that round two of the shells went off.

When Ed finished eighth grade at Bridgeport School at the top of the bluff beyond Sweeney's Mill bridge over Drake's Creek, he moved in with Brown in Miss Jeffries's basement, and took his high school and college work at Western. They used to row all the time; whenever it became rough, Ed would always lose, since he was still a stripling, but that didn't keep violence from erupting. Once when they were both out on Kenton Street, when I was about 12, Ed 16 and Brown 20, Brown swaggered in and told me to bring in some stovewood. Stovewood was my responsibility, and I kept the kitchen supplied without orders from big brothers, so I rebelled. Brown proceeded to flail me on the back side with a stick of stovewood. Ed told him to leave me alone, and a violent scuffle ensued that ended with Ed on the ground and Brown holding him down and exacting pledges of non-interferences. I can still hear Ed, as he dusted off his clothes, saying, "That doesn't mean you were right."

Once in Miss Jeffries's basement, Ed had as a pet the prettiest little red squirrel I ever saw. I wouldn't handle it for fear of its sharp teeth. He kept it for quite a while, carrying it around even to school in his jacket pocket. It slept with him, and one night he rolled over on it beneath the bedclothes and killed it.

There is a photograph of my five brothers and sisters, without me, taken at Christmas in front of Miss Jeffries house, possibly 1919 or 1920. My refusal to get into the picture stemmed from Ed's putting a lighted two-inch firecracker in my coat pocket, which had exploded in my had as I was trying to remove it. I suffered no lasting injury to the hand, but I was so furious at Ed that I wouldn't even look at him, much less pose for a picture with him.

1917
RANGER BIKE

Once when I was about ten years old, I was with my cousins and brothers out on the banks of Drake's Creek swimming. My oldest cousin, John Thomas, had a brand-new Ranger bicycle which had between the double crossbar a tin tool chest. Regardless of the clatter that the pliers and wrenches made, John carried his tools in that tool chest. One Sunday morning we had been swimming in creek and had come to the bottom of the hill, climbing up the Scottsville Pike back toward the farmhouse. As we approached the bottom of the hill we saw coming down the hill a young man with two young ladies, driving a fine-looking horse and a brand-new buggy. The young ladies were sitting on either side and the young man driver was sitting on the middle edge of the seat. In my guess, he was driving his sister and his sweetheart to church.

At all events, as they approached the bottom of the hill coming down, so did we coming up. We stopped for a moment and then proceeded. John, as a favor to a small cousin, had permitted me to push his bicycle. We stopped for a moment, and then resumed, just as the buggy came down the hill. The clatter of the tools in John's bicycle tool chest frightened the horse and it shied sharply to the right, jumped a ditch with such a violent jerk that is broke the standards of the buggy seat, with the result that the young man and the two young ladies sat on the buggy seat from well up in the air to the bottom of the ditch, and the horse with the buggy minus its seat took out across the cornfield and the bottom land toward the creek bed. All the big boys in the crowd save John ran after the horse and finally caught him, after severe damage to the corn crop, what with the buggy tearing through it many different ways. John did not follow in the horse-catching parade, but rather ran to me and urged me to push the bicycle on up the hill and hide it in the barn as quickly as I could. I watched the whole proceedings from the hilltop, while they brought the horse back and put the young man and the young ladies on the floor of the buggy to go on home, with apparently no damage beyond bruises and a ruined buggy. Many a time, in later years, I have taken members of the family to the site and told the story, although fifty years of drainage down the hill has filled the deep ditch almost to road level.

1916
BROTHER ED

Little brothers have a hard time. I certainly was no exception. Indeed, I possibly was the one for whom the philosophical pattern was set. Many has been the time when my four years of handicap in age has redounded to my brother Ed's high glee and to my own discomfiture.

Lessons learned as a little brother seem never to be quite fully learned, because constant association dulls the perception to the point that the little brother has once again got the business before he knew it was coming.

Since I was a posthumous child and my mother had been left with five children and with me due in two months, she had to be freed for other things; the result was that her smallest child next to me, my brother Ed, was taken by our grandmother and Uncle Alex (Grandpa) and was raised by them until he went to college. Thus nearly everything that happened on the farm in one way or another involved Ed.

I remember one cold winter day when my brother Ed decided that the thing we should do would be to have a corncob fight around the corners of our grandparents' barn. Corncobs around a fairly filthy barnyard become somehow, strangely but quite effectively, water-logged. I use the word "water" advisedly. The corncobs were thus quite substantial missiles, little less than chunks of ice. The corncob fight proceeded apace until I got hit on the head with one, and, amidst blubbering from injury, grievance, and reassurance and promises of living a better life on the part of brother Ed, we quieted the matter down. We told the old folks later that I had bumped my head.

Again, in the summertime, when my sole garment on the farm was a pair of overalls, Ed talked me into climbing a sapling right behind him. It was a hickory sapling of some substantial size, possibly six inches through at the base, and quite tall. He urged me most earnestly to stay close behind him to make sure that any injury threatening us could be fended against by his superior strength and sagacity.

As we neared the top of the sapling, it swayed over, with Ed of course at the top, and we then rode the sapling all the way to the ground. When his toes touched the ground, he turned the sapling loose. Being a self-respecting sapling, and fully resolved as all proper saplings are, to remain upright, and being no longer burdened by the greater weight but only the lesser, the sapling straightened itself with some vigor, swaying first to one side and then the other. I am still astonished that I was able to hold on; if I had not had both arms and legs around the tree, I am confident my overalls would have been flung off. Once again I learned a lesson that was all too soon forgotten.

Ed once talked me into whipping out a yellow jacket's nest with switches. We gathered ourselves two handfuls of big switches, possibly two feet long, with leaves on them, and moved in on the yellow jacket's nest, swinging left and right. I do not remember how many times I was stung by the yellow jackets, but it is obvious that a youngster less quick, vigorous, and strong and who could not run so fast when the whipping was over, would fare worse that his larger brother. The upshot of it was that I was inept, unhonored, and stung.

Another of my ordeals with Ed involved putting up the pony, Oscar, after a buggy trip off some place when we came in late at night. Uncle Alex told Ed and me to unhook the pony, leave the buggy near the house, and take the pony to his stall in the barn, but he gave explicit orders that we were not to ride. As the old folks went on into the house, we unhooked the pony. Ed led him up to a section of tree near the front door of the house designed as steps for the ladies to use to get into the buggy without putting on an undue leg show for any menfolk who might be around, and he urged me to get on the pony behind him. He assured me that he could protect me and that we would not fall off in the dark. I mounted the horse behind Ed, with a soul completely full of confidence, and he began to trot the horse toward the barn. With no saddle and no light, the bounding horse finally became too much of me, and as I went off; holding desperately onto Ed, I pulled him off on top of me. His whole weight landed on my thigh, and I suffered what at the time seemed to a small boy to be a most grievous injury. It did hurt mightily, and it hurt for several days. We could not tell the old folks about what had happened, because we had specifically violated orders. There was no choice, therefore, except to live bravely with my bruise, which later took on massive and beautiful coloring, telling everyone that I got hurt but I really did not know just how.

This was selfless devotion, because Ed, who lived regularly on the farm, would get a licking for disobeying orders, whereas I, the small boy from town, received much more patient and considerate treatment. I had seen Ed get some real substantial tannings, but Uncle Alex never laid a punitive hand on “Little Cricket,” as he called me. Ed, I think from something he read in the Katzenjammer Kids in the funnypaper concerning a character named Julius, called me “Choolus” all through our boyhood, and not infrequently after we had become old men.

Ed and I, neither having a brother at home, had a picnic at bedtime. We would giggle and squeal and scuffle until one would be summoned to come and sit up with the folks, in the most tedious boredom a human can suffer, until the other had gone to sleep.

1913-1920
KENTON STREET

1913
C00RDINATION

My two big sisters, Ruby and Virginia, and my older brother, Brown, made all the money we had in the family for a long time**.** My brother Brown, in addition to going to school of course, worked at a drug store until possibly 11 or 11:30, skeeting sodas to make some money for the family. He would then come home on his bicycle and leave it out front. Whenever he could, he slept late of course, and that made a field day for me and his bicycle.

At the time of which I am reminded, I could not have been more than five and he eight years older at thirteen. There was a post near the corner of our front yard, I presume a vestigial fence post, and I would push Brown's bicycle over to the post and prop it up, and then climb on the seat. My legs were much too short even to reach the pedals when I was on the seat, but I could kick off from the post and ride the bicycle down the hill until it stopped, and then get off it as best I could--all of this, of course, without my brother's knowledge.

One time as I approached the bottom of the hill going hell-for- leather, I got my eye glued on a big tree beside the unpaved sidewalk. My hands steering the bicycle coordinated immediately with my eyes, and without any conscious willing of it on my part, I went head-on into the big tree. blowing out the front tire of the bicycle and taking a nasty spill. I do not remember my brother's reaction, but as I recall it, I never again was allowed to ride his bicycle, whether he was present or not.

1913
HIGH FALL

When I was about six, my older brother Brown, then about fourteen, got an old pulley somewhere and proceeded to have some fun with it. He put it on the lowest branch of the big oak tree in our back yard, the one where our swing hung, got some bailing wire which he wired together, ran the wire through the pulley to an improvised seat, and gave all the smaller children a ride up to the limb. Some of the youngsters were unwilling to take a ride, but I, with full confidence in my big brother, took it several times. Brown was experimenting to see how well the job could be done, and on the final trip he pulled me up so high that my head banged the tree limb that the pulley was on, whereupon the wire broke and I sat down from about twelve feet up. I have always felt that this was the injury that resulted in my ruptured spinal disc. At any rate, I had a bad back from early years.

1914
ROTTEN EGG

When I was in the first grade, my Mama made me a pretty little black cap, with a bill on it about one inch long. I was inordinately proud of it. I never wore it except to school and I put it up immediately when I got home. My cousin, Julian Scott, who was a few months younger than I but much larger, was an unconscionable bully. On the way home from school one day, we somehow got possession of a rotten egg. We could shake the egg and hear it rattle. It was high fun for Julian and me to play catch with this rotten egg. All of a sudden, however, Julian began to run toward me gesturing as though he were going to throw it as hard as he could. I finally ducked, with my little new cap exposed, and Julian hit the cap with the rotten egg. That was the end of the cap.

1914
COW

When I was a little boy on Kenton Street, we kept a cow, and Auntie made it my duty to take the cow out on a long chain and tie her out to graze during the time I was at school. We had a big back lot for the cow in which she could roam around a bit and in that lot was a large watering trough. I once captured half a dozen tadpoles, very small ones, possibly the size of one's small fingernail, and put them in the cow trough to watch them grow. I had a great time with my tadpoles. When they were great big fellows, having grown legs and were about ready to shed their tails and become full-blown bullfrogs, I let the trough water get too low once, and the cow drank them up. It was a real sad time. I felt some trepidation for the cow's welfare, since half-grown bullfrogs were almost certainly not included in the diet the Lord had prescribed for her, but she never showed any ill effects.

1915
TRICYCLE

Once when I was in the third grade, I made the prettiest little slingshot out of heavy wire that I think I have ever seen. A long piece of wire was bent in the middle and left in a little loop about a half-inch through, then twisted for maybe two inches one strand around the other, then curved out to make the fork of the slingshot, then looped over with small loops to tie the string to. I must have got some help from my big brother, Brown, although I do not recall it. At any rate, the slingshot was a little beauty. I took it to school with me, surreptitiously of course, and there Elmer Winkenhofer, who was in my grade, was so taken with it that he traded me a little pearlhandled pocketknife for it. When I got home that day, playing with Wellington Hines (who later became a Navy Admiral), he so admired the pearlhandled knife that he was willing to trade me his old tricycle for it. I was a little bit too big for a tricycle, but I had never had one and I wanted it worse than I did the knife, and we traded. Since it was an ordinary boy's tricycle, and for one somewhat younger than me, I reversed the juncture of fork and used it for an underslung type of a racer.

The next day after all the trading the parents of both boys sent them to me to try to trade back. The pocketknife was worth something, certainly more than the slingshot, and the tricycle likewise was worth more than the pocketknife. I was unable to make the trade back with Elmer because I no longer had the pocketknife, and I was so reluctant to trade the tricycle back for the knife that I think Mr. Hines relented. There must have been some feeling in his mind that any orphaned youngster my age who wanted a tricycle that much ought to have it and that this was the only way I would ever have one. At any rate, I kept it. Wellington had outgrown the tricycle, anyway.

1916
JESSE LEE

When I was eight or nine, living on Kenton Street, Jesse Lee Goble who was my age, and his older brother, used to come down our street. Jesse Lee was a scrawny little fellow, very small for his age, but he would fight and could whip anyone close to his age. He was also pretty good at throwing rocks whenever the boys along our street ventured to engage him and his brother in a rock fight. Once when my big brother Brown had come back to Kenton Street; I confessed to the fact that I was afraid of Jesse Lee, whom we had seen coming down the street. Brown, in the presence of all the other boys, started big talk to the effect that Joe wasn't afraid of anybody his size, and in this fashion filled me so full of sawdust courage that I lit into Jesse Lee, whipped him, and knocked him over into the ditch off of a walk. I am still astonished at the prowess I displayed.

1916
A DOLLAR A WEEK

My first job was when I must have been about nine or ten years old. A man named Fields lived across the street from us on Kenton Street. Mr. Fields drove a laundry truck route, and my Auntie, I think primarily to get me beyond her scope of worry and in a constructive activity, made a deal with Mr. Fields that I would work with him all day long in the summertime from eight to six, and on Saturday from eight to twelve midnight for one dollar for the whole week. I worked for Mr. Fields the whole summer. I saved him many a step, and I was probably worth more than he was to the company, except for the driving of the truck. He, however, was a hard-working, poorly-paid family man and needed the thirty dollars he made every week on his truck. I have always resented the low pay I got, but I am sure it was worth it to my Auntie, a maiden lady who worried too much about everything as it was, and Mr. Fields possibly could not have afforded to make the deal if it had been more costly to him.

1917
HEALER

As a posthumous child, I had first-hand contact with an old wives' nostrum in Bowling Green, and possibly elsewhere in the country, to the effect that a baby which had the "thrash," whatever that is, some kind of soreness of the mouth, could be cured if a posthumous child would blow in its mouth three times once a week for three weeks. Many a time, as a little boy, I was called in from my play to blow in some baby's mouth. Then a week later they would seek me out to come again and repeat the treatment. I almost certainly sat in on some first-line medication, because at the end of three weeks the baby would either have succumbed or would have got well. Auntie upbraided me for participating in such activities, but it would have taken far more conviction than I could muster to reject the pleas of worried mothers seeking the use of my unearned powers as a healer.

1917
AUNTIE

After Auntie had come to live with us (Eleanor and me) on Kenton Street, which means after Mama had died, the only money we had was what my older brothers and sisters earned. Later on, our principal income was from the salaries of Ruby and Virginia, my older sisters' who were then at Van Lear, up in the Eastern Kentucky mountains, Ruby teaching and Virginia doing stenographic work. When the money was slow in coming, my Auntie's anxieties became more than she could bear. I can remember her sitting in the swing on the front porch of a late afternoon and evening, combing her hair, which had been let down and was long, with an aluminum comb and crying softly to herself, saying that she was about to lose her mind. (An aluminum comb was one of the surest ways to avoid gray hair.) Auntie had promised our mother, her twin sister, on our mother's deathbed to take care of us children. I remember Mama vaguely, since she died when I was only seven, but I do remember that while she and Auntie looked a great deal alike, our mother was always worn and tired, whereas Auntie, at least before she came to live with us, was a beautiful woman, well-corseted, wearing big hats and always with a penny for me.

1917
CASTOR OIL AND SUCKING EGGS

In my inglorious affectations as a small boy, I did two things that are hard for most people to believe. One was that just to show off I pretended to like castor oil. I really could take it with a quite straight face and complete composure. It is a very small chore thereafter for one to smack his lips and pretend to like it.

Another such affectation was the ability to suck eggs. I could knock a chip out of the top of an egg big enough to accommodate the yolk, and then toss it down. Again, this is not much more of a chore than eating an oyster, so long as you do not leave it long in your mouth. It is somewhat after the fashion of Joe Evans's okra and the backyard dog: it goes down so fast you don't even know you have it that the other dog didn’t unfairly take it away from you.

I learned well before I was grown that the castor oil affectation was hardly worth the price. As for the eggs, I could do that right on into young manhood, but I was cured when I was a fraternity novitiate. The boys in charge of the hazing had a little trick of forcing people to suck a raw egg. Someone told them that this was no particular chore for me, whereupon one of them found an egg that made a noise when shaken. Thereafter, it proved fairly difficult for me to accomplish the feat, and I have never done it since.

1917

PREACHER OR HOBO

When I was a small boy, my Auntie, who called me her "little young'un," quite frequently would introduce me by that endearing appellation and then tell the person concerned, "He is going to be a Methodist preacher." My response always was, "No, I am not, Auntie, I am going to be a hobo." There was nothing prophetic in my comment; it was rather that I had to dispel the notion of my becoming a preacher, because this I knew I would never do.

1918
STRAWBERRIES

I used to leave school during May in the strawberry season, the season usually being over before school was out, and I would go back later to take my examinations. I made quite a few dollars in those days. This was real hard and concentrated labor, scooting along on the ground, pushing the strawberry crate and filling the six-quart cartons with strawberries from the vine. My big brother, Brown, picked forty gallons of strawberries in one day. We knew one man who picked eighty gallons of strawberries in one day. My biggest total was twenty-seven gallons. This was when I was a great big boy, possibly ready to get out of grade school.

Auntie used the first six dollars I ever earned picking strawberries to buy a nice little cot for me. Auntie kept the cot and, when she died, my sister Virginia got it and gave it to me. I still have it in my UTEP office.

All of my strawberry picking was for a jointly-owned farm called Claggett and Covington. Covington was a wealthy landowner in the edge of Bowling Green, and Mr. Claggett was a competent farmer who ran the Covington Farm as manager. They had big barracks for migratory strawberry pickers to live in during the short season. I of course lived at home and walked to the farm every morning.

When the season was over, the Claggett and Covington Farm had no objection to the people coming in and picking the few remaining strawberries. Little boys would be permitted to go to the farm with their own containers, lard cans, gallon buckets or what not, to pick the few remaining strawberries, so long as they did not trample the vines. It was a real high privilege to get to do that, after school was out, but Auntie would not extend the privilege except on a sworn promise that there would be no swimming. The forbidden fruit proved irresistible, and we boys, went swimming whenever we got the chance.

I nearly drowned in each of the two ponds. Once I slipped off into the deep water in the pond we called the Blue Hole, and an Arnold boy pulled me out. We went swimming in the other hole, too, long before I could swim. I once slipped off the rail I was paddling around on and lost contact with it. I went under several times, I do not remember how many, strangling, coughing, and floundering, until my flailing hand encountered the rail again and I pulled myself up on it. No one in the crowd of boys had ever noticed my distress. During the height of my distress, I can remember seeing beautiful visions of my home and the members of my family.

In one of the summer excursions, I picked strawberries with two boys named Franz. Once, when we took time off to go swimming, one of the boys went back to the crating shed where we had left our strawberries and, when we returned, their strawberries were in place but mine were gone. I did not then reach the conclusion which later came to me fully that the Franz boys had taken my strawberries and lied to me. I got a resounding thrashing when I got home for spending the whole day, getting sunburned, obviously while swimming, and having no strawberries. Bad cess to the Franz boys wherever they are, if they are still around.

1918
HAIRCUTS

When I was a small boy, youngest of our whole crew, we had little money for haircuts, and I believe every one of my brothers and sisters, with the possible exception of Eleanor, cut my hair at one time or another. The only one that had any real competence at the chore was my brother Ed. He became a first-class barber, after having bought some hand clippers by mail order. Sometimes, however, it would get too long between visits to Grandmother's, where Ed lived, so that someone else would have to do the job.

Brown once concluded that I needed a haircut at a time when Ed was not around, but he botched it so miserably that, before I knew what he was doing, he ran the clippers from my forehead straight over the top of my head to the back of my neck. He was delighted with the result, of course, but no choice remained except to clip it all. To hide my shaved head at school I wore a little skull cap with a variety of colors in pie-shaped panels, and my junior high school teacher permitted me to wear it during school because of the great distress I felt.

1918
WIRE FROM FRANCE

Once in 1917 or 1918, I heard some loud whooping and yelling on the street farther out toward the edge of town from us, and I ran over there to discover that the lady in question had received a death message from her Army son in France. I can still hear that yelling.

1918
RAGS

When I was a small boy, I had a little dog that must have been part Schnauzer, named Rags, and he accompanied me everywhere, even to school, for two or three years. I think my ranging up and down the Bowling Green hills made a town dog out of him, with the result that he began to stray from home. His welcome at our house, to which he returned at ever wider intervals, terminated when Auntie caught him with an egg in his mouth; an egg-sucking dog was something that could not be tolerated among people who kept chickens, and Rags was never allowed back.

I remember once discovering that in the basement under Kister's grocery store, a block from our house, was a pool of water covered over by dust and sawdust. The pool was quite deep, having been dug apparently to get fill for another part of the structure. I once led Rags up to the door of the basement of the grocery store, opened the door, threw a stone to the far side beyond the pit of water, and told Rag, to go get it. He moved with great alacrity and found himself in the water. I consider that one of the dirtiest tricks I ever pulled.

1914
BAREFOOT BOY

Until I grew too large for it, I used to go barefoot until October or November when the folks forced me to start wearing shoes. I received many a hurt to my feet, what with such hazards as broken glass and nails. I remember one particularly nasty nail in the ball of my foot, picked up in the alley two doors over from our house. I went home limping, carrying the nail to show it to Auntie. She forced me to tie a piece of fat meat around the injured place and wear it two or three days "to draw out the poison." It must have worked, because the fat meat got an ugly amount of stain on it from the rust off the nail, and I am here to tell the tale. This is not particularly remarkable because all boys did the same thing; they liked going barefoot and it saved our shoes.

Once late in the fall when I was in the fifth grade, a heavy snow came during the day. I had worn my shoes to school that morning, but it had been warm in the fore part of the day, and I had pulled them off to go barefooted. Since it was unconscionable to put socks back on over dirty feet and there was no place at school for footwashing, I walked home in the snow barefooted, carrying my shoes in my hand. I recall no ill effects. My feet were cold, but possibly not much colder than they would have been with shoes and socks.

Around Bowling Green there were many chestnut trees in those days. Some blight in later years killed them off so that there are now very few chestnut trees anywhere in the country, that is, so far as I know. In my middle boyhood, my feet would become so tough with going barefoot all summer that I could kick a chestnut burr open with my bare foot to get out the chestnuts. It hurt a good bit, of course, but a boy will take a little beating just to prove a point.

1918
FILTHY WEED

When I was possibly ten or eleven, I came by a quarter, I have long since forgotten how, and in looking over the wares of the various local emporiums, I came upon a can of Prince Albert smoking tobacco and a pretty little pipe that were on sale for the precise amount of my fortune. I bought the tobacco and pipe and that night after supper I went out behind the barn to smoke. I had just finished a pipeful and was feeling real smug when Uncle Jim and Aunt Hettie came by to take Auntie and me out to Grandma's in his brand-new Willys-Knight touring car. I was jumped up so summarily that I did not have time to secrete the pipe and tobacco, so I had them in my pockets. As I sat in the dark back seat on the way out to the country, I became deathly ill from the pipeful of tobacco I had smoked. I knew that pretty soon I would disgrace myself, and I could not possibly be caught with the pipe and tobacco on my person. I proceeded to flip first the pipe and then the can of tobacco out the gap in the curtains of the touring car as we drove along. Soon thereafter I had to get Uncle Jim to stop so that I could lose my supper. Nobody but me ever knew what made me sick.

1918
DEAD MULES

Late one Sunday night, when I was possibly ten or twelve years old, I was coming back from Grandma’s farm, walking in the dark toward town, when I heard a wagon come onto the road somewhat ahead of me. We may have been a mile out from town. I ran until my heart was about to burst, caught the wagon, and sat on the tailgate to ride the rest of the way into town. As we came into the edge of town, the wagon stopped abruptly and my head bumped the tailgate. I sat there for a minute, wondering how the wagon could have stopped so suddenly, when I heard some loud talking and wailing. I ran around to the front of the wagon to see what had happened! An underslung Ford, in those days called a "skeeter," had run under both of the mules, and broken the wagon tongue. One mule was lying on top of the two men in the skeeter, and the other was lying on top of the hood, the hood real hot, and the mule burning almost like a barbecue. The mule on top of the driver and his companion was doing them serious injury. The driver of the skeeter was groaning and whimpering that the wagon had no lights. I never did hear how they came out. I stayed around there long enough to realize that the mule on top of the driver was dead, and that the other one was badly hurt. It was a County wagon, and I went over to the County barn the next morning to find that the second mule had died. I never found out how the passengers of the skeeter fared. No one ever knew that I had been on the wagon.

1918
ARMISTICE DAY

Armistice Day in 1918 fell less than one month after my eleventh birthday. I had two or three dollars saved toward a five-dollar War Savings Bond, and then a bunch of the other youngsters and I, with people out on the streets, factory whistles blowing and general celebration, set up a lemonade stand in the yard of a neighbor, and made two or three dollars apiece more. Armed thus with about five dollars of cash money, I celebrated to the full extent of my resources, buying candy, soft drinks, going to the movies, and such. Auntie, to whom money was understandably always important, was deeply chagrined when she discovered that the money I had saved and the money I had made on the lemonade was all gone. I gave her a full accounting of where the money went and, when she asked me why I spent the money so profligately, I explained in childish logic that since the war was over and the money had been designated for nothing except War Savings Stamps, it was clearly and completely expendable. I remember that she gave me a wan and pained look but did not deal with me severely.

1919
TIGHT BRITCHES

Once when I was about twelve or thirteen, I went walking in Covington's Woods with my sister Eleanor and a little girl whose name I can no longer remember but to whom I was at that time attracted. I had on a pair of khaki knee-britches which fitted me very snugly, for in those days the term “Sanforized" had not come along I wanted to display my prowess as a tree-climber for the benefit of the little girl. I climbed a great tree with much gusto, but when I started climbing back down, I discovered that my trousers were so tight that I could not step to the limb I needed to reach. The only solution to my dilemma was for the girls to go on through the woods, let me pull off my pants, sitting on the high tree limb as I was, throw them to the ground and then climb down. Once I had the tight pants off, the chore was quite simple.

1920
SECOND BASEMAN

When I was a kid of ten to twelve, before I was big enough to work, the neighborhood youngsters used to play baseball endlessly on Saturdays. We would start early in the morning and play all day. I was a second baseman of no great talent but with great enthusiasm. For a long time we had no catcher because we had no catcher's mask, and a Negro boy named Houston Ray caught for us. I had a catcher's mitt, but I never had nerve to get behind the plate. Houston would catch without a mask. Many times I have seen a foul ball bounce high off his head. He would shake his head and come back for more.

1915-1922
GRANDMA’S

1915
THE YEARLING RAM

When I was a very small tyke, my Auntie and Grandmother, trailing a herd of sheep into town in the buggy, noticed a newborn lamb lying in the gutter just behind the herd of sheep. They rescued it, took it home, and raised it. In the fall, when I was at the farm, the lamb was the pet of all, and it was my proud duty and responsibility to feed him.

Some months later, when I came back to the farm, I asked where the lamb was and was informed that he was out in the orchard. I immediately went out to see if I could find the lamb. I discovered, to my wary alarm, that he was no longer a little baby lamb but practically a full-grown sheep. My alarm turned to consternation when he proceeded to head toward me threateningly, and backed me up to a wire fence. He then proceeded to butt me in the middle time after time, with me screaming bloody murder, until they came to get me. I never had very much use for the lamb thereafter.

1915
BUSTED TOCUS

When I was a small lad, there were still many rail fences in the part of the country around Bowling Green that I knew best. I never saw any rail fences being built; indeed, I never saw any rails split from logs, but they were made by stacking one split rail on top of another, criss-crossing them to make a zigzag fence. I once learned in most painful fashion that one should never stand on the top of a rail fence. I was standing that way once when the top rail rolled with me, and I fell longways across the top of the fence, receiving a truly vicious whack.

1916 (written 6/21/67)
OSCAR

From my earliest recollections, Uncle Alex and Grandmother had a buggy horse called "Oscar." He was a sorrel Texas pony, with a brand on his hip, long since gelded, tame, and a general pet of everybody who knew him. He would let one come up to him and climb up on his back out in the middle of the pasture and then pat him on the neck for directions. On numerous occasions, when my brother Ed and I had run upon him out in the orchard, Ed would climb on Oscar's back, pull me up, and we would ride back to the house. I once found him out in the orchard when Ed was gone to school. I led him up to a stump, so that I could climb on his back by myself, and proceeded to direct him toward the house. He promptly ran under an apple tree and knocked me off. ”I don’t get no respect.”

1916
AMELIA HARDCASTLE

I remember once when I was about ten years old, being led around the farm of our grandparents by my brother Ed, coming upon as neat a little frame as I have ever seen between two strands of barbed wire bordering between the Bunch Farm and the Hardcastle Farm.

Someone had built a nice little wooden frame that held the strands of barbed wire apart so that a small person could get through. When I asked my brother Ed about this, he explained to me that he had made this little opening in the barbed wire fence for Amelia Hardcastle, a little girl about his age, to use when she followed the path through the pastures and woods going to Bridgeport School. I remember the deep bewilderment I felt that my brother Ed would go to so much trouble for a little girl like Amelia, pretty though she was.

1919
LITTLE BUTCHER

Uncle Alex, crippled as he was, could not make a good living in many ways. Over a period of several years, however, he slaughtered beef, goats, and hogs and peddled them to town in a little wagon, pulled by a mule, with a screen wire around it to keep away the flies. The meat was slaughtered one afternoon and peddled the next day in Bowling Green. He would drive the little cart around through town, ringing a bell, get down from his wagon whenever someone showed an interest, weigh the meat and sell it. I never went with him on such a trip.

A corner of the barn was used for slaughtering. He would lead the animal up, knock it in the head with a sledgehammer, truss it up by the hind feet with a high pulley, and then cut its throat over a drainage pit. Actually this was the procedure for cattle only; goats are so horny the middle of the forehead that the only way to slaughter them, as Uncle Alex conceived it, was to string them up by the hind legs, bleating and cut their throats, in full health; hogs were shot between the eyes and then strung up so their throats could be cut. I have vivid recollections of the meaning of the words "poled steer” because I have seen them poled many times. (Hah!) Polled means dehorned.

Once Uncle Alex asked me if I wanted to kill a three-month-old bull calf that was ready for slaughter. I was among men and had to be a little man. I took an eight-pound sledgehammer and hit the calf between the eyes. After the calf had fallen, with a little bit of help, I hitched his hind legs together and the men helped me string him up, and I cut his throat. I did not like it, but this was grown men's work that had to be done and I was honored to be able to participate.

1919
CHURNING

When I was a small lad, visiting on the farm, it became my chore to churn the milk. In my earliest recollection, when we had a plain old dasher crock churn, this was the most tedious exercise in which a lad could indulge. It seemed eons before butter would accumulate on the dasher handle hole. Later on, Uncle Alex bought a patented churn which could be turned by a wheel on top with two hands being used if necessary. My brother Ed and I, when he was there, would each take a handle and turn as rapidly as we could. This was a great improvement over the old dasher churn. Perhaps the thing that really made the whole effort worthwhile was the brand fresh buttermilk of which the churner could take his fill, after the butter had come.

1921
WATERMELONS

I was not a witness to the story I am about to tell, but I heard it told so many times and told with such gusto that I remember it well. A bunch of the bigger boys from Bridgeport School got into somebody's watermelon patch and were caught with the goods. They were forced by their teacher to go back to the man whose patch they had raided and apologize to him. Ed, Mack Dodson, and my cousin John Thomas were in the group. Henry Spivey, then a grown man, witnessed the apology: he told how some other boy in the group had stood out in the middle of the road in front of the farmer's place and phrased the apology for all of them, while Ed stood barefooted in the middle of the road and tried with his bare toe to dig out a huge rock that was buried in the waterbound macadam highway.

For Ed, this was clearly a matter of being led astray by the other boys, since he always had a watermelon patch of his own on the farm. As he became a big boy, he would plant for himself a whole acre of tobacco, which was a good money crop.

The Thomas boys, Todd, Roy, and Jeff, Ed and I and Julian Scott at one period cut across the Thomas farm late at night to Antony Warden’s watermelon patch beside Drake’s Creek far from the road; stole the biggest ones we could carry, submerged them in the spring beside the creek for later feast. Many a time, on Saturday nights or a Sunday afternoon feast on cold watermelon. Before the raid we would all go up stairs to the boy’s bedroom and sneak down and cut later. That bedroom smelled of bedwetting as long as I ever knew it. No problem among the Ray’s on that score. In sneaking down stairs, we each had to step over the seventh stairstep from the bottom, which squeaked badly.

1920
SPELLING

The one-teacher country school at Bridgeport where Ed got all of his early schooling started in June, since country youngsters needed to work on the crops in the spring and the late fall, and their school usually ran for a limited period of four months or so. Thus the country school was going on when mine was out, and occasionally I would go with Ed. I once got in a spelling match at Bridgeport and "turned down" the whole school. Ed was still in the school; it ran only to the eighth grade, and he was four years ahead of me, so I must have been a fourth or fifth grader at the most. This was quite a feat. and my grandparents bragged on "little Malchus" about it. It would be no great accomplishment to turn down my brother Ed in spelling even today, but there were some good spellers in Bridgeport School, among them my cousin Rena Thomas. Incidentally, the second best speller in my sophomore high school class in Bowling Green was Emma Blewett, who was my secret sweetheart. She was not a pretty girl, but real attractive and intelligent. My affinity for her terminated abruptly, however, when she insisted on looking at my paper on a quiz. This was straying so far from my code that I just could not continue my respect for her.

1920
THE ASBURYS

The only grandfather I ever knew was Robert Charles Alexander Bunch, who married my grandmother after she had been widowed, long before my birth, by the loss of her first husband, my grandfather, John Marshall Scott, who had died of pneumonia. Mr. Bunch was somewhat younger than my grandmother, and he did not like being called "Grandfather," when the grandchildren came along. The tradition was started in the family, therefore, for all of the children to call him Alex and for all of the grandchildren to call him "Uncle Alex."

Uncle Alex was a mean and hateful man in business matters and could not keep a tenant farmer on his farm for more than a year or two. He himself had lost a leg when a horse fell on him early in his married life and, what with a peg leg, he could not do much farm work himself.

One two-year period, when I was a small boy spending my summers on the farm, he had the Asbury family living in the little two-room shack which he maintained for his tenants. Mr. Asbury had been married previously and had five children. Mrs. Asbury had been married previously, although she was much younger than Mr. Asbury, and she had four children. Since they had been married, and before they came to our farm, they had had a child of their own. Thus, these two separate families of ten children and the parents lived in the two-room tenant shack. The oldest Asbury boy, whose name I cannot now recall, fell in love with the oldest daughter of Mrs. Asbury, a boy of twenty-four and a girl of seventeen, and I witnessed a good part of their courtship as a little boy. Obviously, there was no place for them to court except on the farm, and what with the little brothers and sisters hanging around, there was no particular reason to exclude from the small gathering witnessing the courtship the grandson of the owner of the farm.

I have many times reflected, when someone says the lowly, poverty-stricken type of person does not want anything better than he has, on the tenor of this boy's courting. They had no money at all, and the sale price of the tobacco and corn crops which they would harvest on my grandfather's farm was family money and would all be charged off to my grandfather for groceries and other things long before they ever saw it. Thus, they would never have any money. Nevertheless, the Asbury boy gave his girl some of the sweetest talk I ever heard. He was, going to take her to Owensboro and they would ride on big river boats; he was going to buy her a big brass bed, and all such things. When the boy and girl finally got ready to get married, they hooked up my grandfather’s mule to the buggy and drove to Bowling Green some seven miles away, got married, and came back and had their honeymoon in the two-room shack with the ten other people.

I think the first interest I ever felt in the opposite sex was in Zonie Asbury. She was about a year younger than me, a kind of pretty child as I recall it, but nevertheless one of the "dirty Asburys." Indeed, once when my Uncle Ray Bunch came home and found the Asburys milking the cows, he would drink none of the milk because he said you could see that their hands had not been washed in recent weeks. Zonie's full name was Arizona Asbury, so named because she was born in Arizona.

The boy my age was named Vernon. Once Vernon left a gate open and let my grandfather's Percheron mare in the sorghum patch and she ate sorghum all night. Great things were stirring the next morning when the mare was found greatly distended from an over-dose of sorghum. My grandfather, a stern man who believed in placing the blame where it belonged, decreed that Vernon would have to ride the mare until she got over the danger of foundering. Vernon was therefore placed on the mare bareback and told to run her up and down the lane of about a half a mile, to keep her moving steadily at a trot and not to get off. I can remember the Asburys as they gathered fearfully en masse on the side of the lane, watching anxiously as Vernon bounced around on the broad back of the mare.

His older brother and his father volunteered to take his place on the mare, but Uncle Alex would not relent. Finally, with so much unwilling horseback riding, and a youngster, namely me, so anxious to get to ride, he finally did relent and let me take Vernon's place on the mare.

I trotted the mare steadily for two or three hours, during the last hour of which she spewed surplus undigested sorghum in a most amazing fashion. My emotions were a mixture of delight at getting my fill of horseback riding (which was frowned upon by frugal farm folk as frivolous use of livestock) and gratification at such abundant evidence of a mission accomplished.

1915-1920
ALLEN COUNTY

1915
THAXTONS

Each summer for two or three years when I was eight to ten years old, my Auntie, in order to shuck off the responsibility of keeping track of me when school was out, would send me off to visit Aunt Mollie and Uncle John Thaxton, up in Allen County. Aunt Mollie was my father's sister. They were poor farm folk, living for awhile at the old Ray place two miles out of Scottsville on the Durham Springs road. The only way we could go was by hack, a huge four-horse wagon that could carry eight or ten people. The thirty mile trip took all day.

My summers there were the source of many of my fondest boyhood recollections. My sister Eleanor, six years older than I, went with me the first time I went to spend the summer. Two experiences with her are etched in my recollection.

The first was that every night when we went upstairs to bed in the old log cabin Ray place, I had at El's urging to go and look under the bed to make sure no man was there. It was something of a mystery to me that a man could possibly be there, since the only entrance to the loft bedroom was through the living room where we had been all evening. It never made sense either that an investigator of my tender years could do such a job better than she.

I was once much taken by a litter of pigs that a farmer on a neighboring farm was able to show small visitors. They were truly beautiful pigs. Somewhat later in that day, I got a bad case of hiccups and could not stop. Eleanor started in on a big charade to the effect that the neighboring farmer was coming over to "get" me because I had said his little pigs were not cute and pretty. I was outraged and incensed because not only had I not said such a thing, but also I did not even believe it. After the charade had gone on for some time, Eleanor laughingly told me there was no truth in the things she had been saying, she was just frightening the hiccups out of me, which indeed she had done.

The first summer I was alone at Aunt Mollie's and Uncle John’s, I became so terribly homesick that I became rebellious and Aunt Mollie on one occasion gave me such a thrashing that I came very close to running away. I went and hid down by the spring for some hours before I finally came home. The only reason I did not leave was fear of the unknown.

My oldest cousin, Jim Ray, lived with Aunt Mollie and Uncle John. He once gave me a lecture out in the fields, where I had taken him a drink of cool water, about being "saved.” I never did quite understand the whole business, but I was challenged by a quotation he made from the Bible to the effect that “fornicators and adulterers God will judge." It was much later that I came to a full realization of Jim's limitations. He was the son of my father's sister; his original surname was Kinchloe, but when his mother (my aunt) separated from his father, my father adopted him; he was thus actually my foster brother.

Uncle John Thaxton was my favorite. After working in the hot sun, his hand shook so he could hardly hold a dipper of water without sloshing it all out. He made sorghum, and brooms, and cider for sale. He could also make shoes. He told me once that he did not like anything but sweet potato pie. When I reminded him that he liked cornbread and buttermilk, he said "That's sweet potato pie to me." He could catch flies by resting his hand on the table and picking them up by the leg very slowly, but he would always turn them loose because, he said, "They are my little friends."

1915
SCOTTSVILLE

I have many vivid recollections of things that happened in Allen County when I was a boy. I stayed most of the time with my Aunt Molly and Uncle John Thaxton, who lived at the old Ray place two miles out of Scottsville on the Durham Springs Road. They moved later to the Thaxton farm farther up in the country away from Scottsville, generally in a southerly direction. I would go sometimes for short visits to the farm of the widow and children of my uncle, Willie Ray. It was on the Maysville Road. My cousins were Sally, who was a real pretty full-grown woman at my first memory of her, just married; a cousin my age, like me a posthumous child, since our fathers died within two weeks of one another (Willie was some five or six months younger than I, she was born in 1908 and I was born in 1907); and my cousin Thee, for Theodore. The "Th" was pronounced with a soft "th" rather than a hard "th" so that rather than sounding like the Biblical "Thee" it sounded like the beginning of “Theodore."

The women I knew in my childhood liked to dip snuff. They would put the snuff between their front teeth and their lower lip and, when the occasion called for it, spit quite generously. They would brush their teeth with a little twig that had come somehow to get blunted and splayed-out at the brushing end. They liked to dip snuff, but at our station in our life, they did not want anyone to know they "dipped." I remember most being deeply disgusted when my cousin Willie used snuff, I think just to pretend with me that she was a grown woman. Once a bunch of women came to call, and they got to scandalizing, with me the only male creature there, about the fact that Mrs. So-and-So dipped snuff. I contributed most brightly the startling information that "Willie dips snuff!" I considered myself most grievously wronged when all three of the Ray womenfolk jumped on me with both feet, denying vociferously that Willie ever did such a thing and horrified that I would give forth with such calumny.

Thee was a full-grown man, the oldest person in our generation. I remember once when a farmer came by ready to complain with Thee because the rain and the wind had damaged his corn crop so badly. Thee responded that there had been three real bad winds; the first wind had blown his growing corn over to the south; the next wind came along and blew his corn over to the north; and the third storm blew it back straight up, and it was just doing fine. Also, once when some men had stopped at the farm to talk with Thee, they asked him who the strange little boy was standing by him, and Thee said, "This is my Pappy's brother's little boy, Joe. He is a real smart little boy, and he is going to amount to something.” This made a great impression on me, and I shall never forget the surge of determination and ambition that took me for the moment.

One of the experiences that I remember most vividly was that a community several miles from the home of the Willie Ray family on one Saturday had what was called an "association" of the many Baptists in that area. Baptists came from all around. As I recall, it was not much of a church gathering as such, but a tremendous social occasion for all involved. I remember some of the planning for the establishment of a stand not too far from the church which was the center of the gathering from which Thee would sell soda pop. Obviously a man running a soda pop stand needs a pair of young legs to help. Thee made a deal with me to the effect that I could drink all the soda pop I wanted if I would work for him from daylight to dark on that Saturday. I did so, and I remember having a wonderful time. Over the sixteen-hour spread during which the stand was in operation, I drank seventeen soft drinks, by Thee's count.

During the day, I went down to the ford in the river to watch the baptizing. It was moving to see the preacher grab the converts with left hand behind their back, right. hand over nose and mouth, and saying loudly for all to hear, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." A diversion occurred of the most unnerving sort. I was standing down the bank of the fill the vehicles used to get down to ford water. There were people standing on the road above me, one a man with a bicycle. Suddenly he let out a yell and came down the bank near me, bicycle and all, and lay there, frothing at the mouth. It was the only epileptic fit I ever saw. Some knowing person found a stick to put between his teeth so he would not chew his tongue badly. The "baptizing" soon proceeded.

1915-1923

SCHOOL, Bowling Green High School

Miss Ella Jeffries, whose niece was brother Ed's wife Joanna and who was brother Brown's lifelong benefactress, taught me in the seventh grade. After that she left off grade school teaching (since I was the last Ray) and taught Geography in Western Kentucky State College.

1916

BLACK BEAUTY

Once when I was in the second grade, Miss Jeffries obtained a book for me to read, the old children's story, Black Beauty. I brought it back to her so promptly she wondered whether I had read it and asked me to tell her about it. She told me many years later that she regretted asking me to talk about it because I wasted about twenty minutes for her, telling her the whole story in detail.

1915

IT SHOULDN'T HAPPEN TO A LITTLE BOY

I attended grade school at the Demonstration School, then called a Training School, at Western Kentucky State College. When I was in the third grade, I was once the victim of the arrangement wherein college student practice teachers came to observe. I needed to go to the restroom, but our teacher was quite conscious of the college students who were present observing, and would pay no attention to my raised hand. After my distress had become fairly acute, the teacher, who could not get one of the students to work out a problem to her satisfaction and being confident that I could provide the answer, got me up in front of the room to recite. I did so dutifully, and met the instructional situation satisfactorily. Before I was through reciting, the college bell rang, and the practice teaching students left. When they were out the door, I could maintain control no longer. The entire room noticed the growing puddle at my feet. My cousin Julian, my nemesis in many ways, cackled out in high glee. He regretted it promptly, however, when the teacher sent him for a mop, and proceeded to make him mop the floor. This was a most distressing occurrence, of course, but I managed to forget it throughout my remaining school days.

Once when I went back to Bowling Green at the age of twenty or twenty-one, I ran across an old schoolmate of mine, Elizabeth Vaughn, who lived at the corner of Thirteenth and Park in a big, fine house. As grown people, I felt I could mention the matter and I asked Elizabeth if she remembered that time in the third grade. Without any further specification than that, she responded, "Who could forget it?"

1915
SISSY RIBBON

When I was in the third grade, our money was fairly scarce, and my Aunt Iris Scott had to be chary with it. She bought me some real fine underwear except for the fact that the underwear had no crotch in it in strategic places, and the front part of the opening was hemmed with the prettiest little blue ribbon one ever saw, woven in and out of the lace fabric. Auntie bought this for me, knowing that it would be quite a problem to get me to wear it, but she had purchased it at such a bargain that she could not pass it up.

This created a problem at school because, when I wanted to go to the restroom, for some purpose that required the lowering of my trousers, the other little boys could see the lace on my underwear. My third grade teacher noted that, after recess, I would come on back to the schoolroom and then, after the bell had rung and the other children were in place, ask to be permitted to go to the restroom. She finally took me into the little boys' room, because I refused to go, and there she discovered the reason for my reluctance.

1918
MORTON TAYLOR

When I was in the sixth or seventh grade in the Training School of Western Kentucky State Teachers College, I had a real good friend in my grade at school named Morton Taylor. Morton moved to Louisville some time within a year from the time we knew one another best, and I have never heard from him or of him since. I do recall once when he and I pooled our resources, wheels, and other materials to build an automobile, steering wheel and all, with a banana crate for an imitation front hood. The thing worked beautifully, and we were inordinately proud of it. I remember another experience in connection with Morton Taylor in that, when our grade took some kind of tests, Morton and I were singled out, in some fashion that was mysterious both to him and to me, as youngsters who did well on the test. I never did know anything about how well we did.

1920
MONEY MAKER

When I was in the higher grades in the Western Kentucky State Teacher College Training School, Miss Ella Jeffries, the benefactor of all of us and especially of my brother Brown, used to give me money for getting high grades. Grades in that school then were "P" for poor, 'F' for fair, "G" for good, and "E" for excellent. We got grades in everything from deportment to reading, I believe eleven grades in all. I got a nickel from Miss Jeffries for each E, and many a time I got fifty-five cents for all of my E's. I always had a sneaking feeling that I was taking money away from Miss Jeffries unfairly, but I always did my best.

1921
BIG FOOT

When I was a student in the Training School of Western Kentucky State College, with my big brothers and sisters going to the College, I was much impressed by the ROTC uniforms, shoes issued, and all such things, that went to my big brothers who were in the College. I once heard, just because I was standing around close when the comment was made, the Supply Sergeant for the ROTC telling some of the other people about a boy named Ed Ray who was running him crazy on shoes, since he could not get a pair of shoes that would suit him. In some fashion, possibly through my brother Ed's fast shuffling of shoes in and out, I came by a pair of ROTC shoes that belonged to one of them and tried them on. They were much too big for me, but I took them home, crammed newspapers in the toes, and wore the shoes for quite a long while. I became quite notorious as a big-footed little boy.

1921

'ITTLE GOGGY

My teacher in the eighth grade was Miss Nance. I have long since forgotten her first name. Herman Arnold, a lad upon whom I, in latter day reflection, lavished no particular affection, sat behind me. He and I had a quite good time in the eighth grade. I learned quite a bit in that grade, but I think Herman learned very little and was bent upon keeping me from learning much. We misbehaved so chronically and continually that one day Miss Nance asked us to stay after school. She disappeared for the first few minutes after school was out, and I think that if Herman and I had waited for her, we might very well have had no further trouble, save a lecture from her explaining to us that we were not behaving properly. When she was not on hand right at the end of school, however, Herman and I immediately decamped for home. The next day, when Miss Nance asked us why we had not stayed, we very innocently responded that we stayed, but that she had gone. All three of us knew that we were so clearly at fault that there was little left to debate.

As soon as a break came in the class proceeding, in the eighth grade, Miss Nance took Herman and me into the cloak room one at a time and gave each of us a quite substantial thrashing with switches. We all three then went back to the classroom with the two of us somewhat chastened, but still uncowed**.** Shortly thereafter, we began reading aloud a story that involved a very small boy who had just struck up a friendship with a dog, which he in his baby talk called "'ittle goggy." We went on then to another passage in the story, and, as we did so, Herman leaned over the back of my desk and said, "‘ittle goggy.” I immediately snickered aloud. Without any unnecessary motion at all, Miss Nance came, took me by the arm back to the cloakroom, and gave me such a thrashing with switches that I have never got before or since. Of the four or five switchings I got in grammar school, I believe those two were the most undoubtedly well-deserved.

1921

FLOWER THIEF

Once when I was in the seventh or eighth grade, when four of us boys were walking back to school from lunch, Julian suggested that we take home flowers to the teacher from someone's garden at the corner of Thirteenth and State Streets. Earl Walker and I got over in the garden to get the flowers. Julian Scott and Raymond McFarland, as soon as we were in the garden picking the flowers, ran up to the door of the lady of the house and began to knock and yell, so that she came to the door and saw us in her flower garden. Then Julian and Raymond broke and ran for school, arriving some minutes ahead of Earl and me. Earl and I scooted over the garden wall and worked our way toward school mostly through alleys with our flowers for the teacher. By the time we got there, Julian had tattled that Joe and Earl had stolen some flowers. After she had got the whole story, our teacher, Miss Jarman, gave all four of us a good stiff flogging with switches.

1918
SWIMMING

Most of my boyhood recollections of swimming involved happenings and events south and east of Bowling Green, Kentucky, around the middle road to Scottsville and on the Scottsville pike that went by Greenwood.

There were two ponds on Uncle Alex's farm: one a large one in a plugged-up sinkhole a half-mile from the house, and another one they had made by dredging up a bank beside the barn. I am still appalled at the number of hours I spent in the little pond beside the barn. It was perhaps forty feet long and twenty feet wide and was filled by drainage from the barn roof and the barn lot. One can readily imagine the consistency of the water, not to mention the bacteria content, but I had many a pleasant hour in it. The big pond in the sinkhole was well over toward the Hardcastle farm.

The country around Bowling Green, Kentucky, is known as the limestone region. Frequently hundreds of acres will drain into one flat, and that flat has at its center what is called a sinkhole. Thus the land is drained into underground streams, and not on the surface to a watershed. This was the area of my grandfather’s farm. Some three or four miles away in two different directions was Drake's Creek, tributary in turn to the Barren, the Green, and the Ohio Rivers.

My best swimming was in the stopped-up sinkhole. Instead of draining water, this hole collected it. The pond was perhaps a hundred yards across most of the time. Rainfall in southern Kentucky is always plentiful, and the pond was rarely lacking for water. The topsoil which had washed down into the sinkhole and plugged it up made an oozy mud at the bottom sometimes two feet thick. Thus, when one walked to the middle of the pond, he would find himself waist-deep in water, but about knee-deep in mud. Some time before my day, my brother Ed had scooped the mud down to hard earth out of an area about fifteen feet across right in the middle of the pond. One walking through the oozy mud would suddenly find himself in a hole maybe neck deep, with no mud at all. I discovered this hole by accident one summer day while my brother Ed had gone to school and before my school in town had yet started, and, as a culmination of years of paddling around in water without knowing how to swim, quite naturally I fell into the swimming posture and swam all the way across the hole, the first swimming I had ever done.

Years before, I had many amusing experiences with the water. My big, brothers were both excellent swimmers and divers, and my oldest brother, Brown, showed me off as a very small boy on one Sunday in Drake’s Creek by standing in the shallow water of the creek waiting to pull me out when I ran down the bank on the far side and dived across the deep water. On more than one occasion, he would let me flounder in the deep water, trying to force me to learn to swim.

Drake's Creek had many fine swimming places in it. It customarily flowed quite a bit of water, and the best swimming places were the ones where deep holes had been formed by sandbars washed up during flood times. At one or two of the deepest holes, the big boys had climbed to the top of the tallest overhanging trees and tied ropes or wires extending almost to the water's level, and then put a stick handle on the bottom end for a huge swing, sometimes with a rope or wire as long as forty or fifty feet. We could then climb up the bank of the creek to some convenient rock or tree limb and swing down to the water and out over it. This was the highest form of entertainment, but hardly available to the smallest boys, since, when the swing had made its arc, one either had to dive or hang on and drop off when the "cat died" over the deep water. Those who wanted to swing but could not swim had to be caught by the big boys when they swung back after one or two swings out over the water.

All of this swimming, of course, was done in the nude. We did not know what bathing suits were. Many a time, when we were swimming in sight of one of the bridges crossing the creek, we would have to scramble wildly to get out of sight when we heard a car heading down the hill toward the bridge. We were once caught with four of us sitting on the limb of a big sycamore tree, a limb which hung out over the creek, and my cousin Roy Thomas astride a jutting limb. When a car rattled the floor boards of the bridge, we all piled off into the water and swam to the weeds on the far side of the creek from the road. Roy was moaning and groaning from injuries received in disentangling himself too precipitately from the limb he had straddled. There was much sniggering mingled with sympathy as we hid in the weeds. I am pleased to note that a later happy family life for Roy attests to the temporary nature of the damage he suffered.

Brown, who was not averse to demonstrating his prowess in one direction or another, had one day to prove that he was not afraid to dive from the middle bridge, about forty feet, into a shallow pool at the creek's edge. He lost some skin but suffered no grievous injuries.

Years later, when I was a high school boy, and the neighborhood had become so thickly populated that we could not find good enough swimming holes out of sight, most of the swimming in Drake's Creek was done at the swimming holes near the bridges and wearing bathing suits. I remember one such Sunday when a young man whom I knew well in those days named Tigert, who was nicknamed “Pink,” turned in one of the most amusing performances I ever saw. He was not confident of his swimming ability, but he saw some of us swimming down a rapids at one side of the creek and proceeded to swim down to follow us. We were all standing on the roots of a large tree which was in practical effect turning the stream, and here came Pink. He was swimming most confidently until he got to the place where we were standing, and his plan was to climb up on the tree roots with us. He had his hands on the tree roots when he let his feet down, and he discovered that the water was over his head. At that point he panicked, and instead of holding onto the tree roots or turning two or three feet to the left or right, he started swimming back up the rapids with all his might, yelling as if bloody murder were in progress, an exceedingly difficult chore for a poor swimmer. He could have negotiated half a mile of smooth water as easily as he did that twenty feet up the rapids. This story reverberated around the Drake's Creek neighborhood for many years.

I swam a good bit in Barren River, at a swimming place along-side the bridge across the river on the highway heading out toward Louisville, at Beach Bend, at the boat landing and at the Davenport Farm. I was quite a diver in my time, diving as much as forty or fifty feet, when the water was deep enough. I was never much of a shallow diver. I remember once diving off the top of a steamboat at the boat landing into the deep water there.

After I was grown and out of Business School, I once went canoeing with two other boys in Frankfort on the Kentucky River. When we came to the old mill dam down below Frankfort, Ted Robinson and Paul Easley, my fellow workers in the Kentucky State Highway Department, undertook to carry our Old Town canoe around the cam while I walked along the base of the old mill and decided to dive into the pool below the dam. One could see that the pool had quite a bit of water in it. Instead of investigating, as any sensible person would, I decided to go ahead and dive off the building beside the mill damn, a height of maybe fifteen feet. I feared that there would be a rock ledge further out, but there almost certainly would be none next to the dam. I crumpled up and dived, rather than spreading out to dive, and came too close to the mill foundation. My high forehead hit it and bounced off. While I was still in the deep water, I put all eight of my fingertips in the hole that had been knocked in my skin, down to the bone. I came out of course bleeding copiously, the trip down the river was called off, and we went back to Frankfort to have me sewed up . A good part of the wound was in my hairline. A part of my hair had to be shaved in order for the surgeon to remedy the damage. I must report, somewhat regretfully at this advanced year, that the scar in question is now perhaps an inch below my hairline (1967).

1923-1925
UNCLE DAVE’S

1923
SPREAD NATTER

Once on Uncle Dave's farm, as I was walking along a path through a weed patch, I saw a spread natter coiled in the middle of the path ready to strike. It scared me out of some of my growth. I kept my distance and made loud noises, and it gave up the possible battle and slithered away. I did not know until I was nearly grown that there was no such thing as a spread natter. Actually, it was a spreading adder, so called because it spreads a hood, after the fashion of the cobra, to frighten its enemies.

1923
YOICKS

I had as all youngsters read stories about jumping horses, in fox hunts and otherwise. The only horses I ever had any contact with were Percherons. My Uncle Dave Howell, who married my Auntie when I was about twelve or thirteen, and Uncle Alex had Percheron mares. I had read about jumping horses, and I saw no reason why I could not jump Uncle Dave's bay Percheron mare over a rail fence. A woodland trail on Uncle Dave's farm had a rail fence blocking it. I galloped the mare up to it, riding bareback with only a bridle. She approached the fence at full gallop, stopped dead still as she got to the rail fence, then jumped the fence flat footed. When she stopped, I found myself around her ears. Then when she jumped, she went clean out from under me and I wound up hanging over her rump holding on to the bridle reins, which made her dead still again and I could scramble back on her.

That was all the jumping I ever did. It seems terribly foolish to me now, since if she had gone ahead and jumped the fence at full gallop, with me riding bareback, I would have taken a terrible tumble.

Uncle Alex had two of the prettiest dapple grey Percheron mares I have ever seen. They were named Maud and Maudess. Maudess was fractious, and I stayed clear of her, but Maud was my favorite. I have ridden her many a time at a full gallop with the sound of her washtub hooves pounding on the hard farm road dirt in a fashion that could be heard for miles.

The closest house to my grandparent's farm house belonged to a couple named Howell; her first name was Cora, his Ewing. He had one of the meanest, biggest jackasses I ever saw; the animal was so mean and cantankerous that they had to keep him up in a stall, and all day long you could hear him kicking the stable wall. wham! wham! wham! Uncle Alex bred his Percheron mares to this jack and raised a mule colt from each mare every year.

Uncle Alex did not like mules. Once when he was mowing weeds with the big two-horse mower and had left the two-month-old mule colts of the mares in their stables, one colt somehow got out, came up behind him as he drove the mares to the mower, jumped the blade trying to get at his mother's milk, and got his right hind foot cut off before Uncle Alex knew he was there. It was a real big time on the farm, what with the skinning of the mule colt (the skin brought four dollars) and hitching one of the other horses to a singletree and dragging off the dead body of the colt to the sinkhole for a buzzard food

1924
HELL'S FIRE

When I was in high school in Louisville, I went for the summers back to Bowling Green and stayed with Auntie and Uncle Dave and worked on the farm. In those days I went on Sundays to the little Baptist Church called Burton Memorial, located in a beautiful setting high on the bank across the creek from Uncle Dave's farm. The preacher there was a deep water Baptist named Brother Bruce.

One summer Mr. Nichols, who lived over in Lover's Lane, bled to death when a band saw he was using broke and a piece cut his leg off and no one present knew anything about making a tourniquet. I knew Mr. Nichols's daughter, who was a real pretty little girl about my age; I was a little bit sweet on her, but I had not of course overtly let her know it. I was much moved by the ordeal for her over her father’s death.

Mr. Nichols had been a profane man, but an enterpriser, and his family seemed to live well. The next Sunday after his funeral, Brother Bruce preached his sermon with the usual fire and brimstone, telling us all that Mr. Nichols had been taken in sin, that he had never confessed his sins, that he was now in Hell, and that we his survivors would suffer the same fate if we did not get right with God, and this was with Mrs. Nichols, the other children, and the daughter in the congregation. After that, I could never muster up much enthusiasm for organized religion.

1924
RISING GORGE

In the summers, when I was of the ages of fifteen to seventeen and attending the Louisville Male High School, I would come back to Bowling Green for the summer and work on the farm for a dollar a day and my board. I worked mostly for Mr. John Gilbert, whose farm adjoined that of my Uncle Dave Howell.

On one occasion, Mr. Gilbert traded labor during haying season with a tenant farmer on the other side of Uncle Dave's farm. One hot day, as we were approaching noon, the tin-roofed barn in which we were storing the hay from two-horse wagons after we had brought it from the hay fields had become so nearly full that no one save me was small enough to get up in under the apex of the roof and shove the hay back. The temperature was clean out of sight in the top of the barn, and I must have suffered heat stroke. We then went to the farmhouse for dinner, and the tenant farmer's wife, doing the best she could, had fried two or three chickens in bacon grease.

I was feeling somewhat queasy, but I ate the chicken anyway, left the table to lose it, and heaved and vomited all afternoon. From that time to this, the smell of chicken just makes my gorge rise. As one might imagine, one following the banquet circuit as I must not infrequently has to ask for a variation of the set menu. No allergy or digestive problem is involved. The problem is quite simple: the smell of chicken turns my stomach. Once Jettie had made a batch of delicious tuna fish salad, and I was going after it hammer and tongs when she said to me wryly, “That is not tuna fish, it is chicken salad.” As soon as she spoke I smelled the chicken and spat out what I had just in time. That which had already passed my nose made no difference.

1925
LOIS

One of my first sweethearts who knew about my affection for her was Lois Martin, the daughter of a farmer who lived on the farm next to Uncle Dave's. She and I used to sit in the back seat of her brother Jim's groaning old T-Model Ford while he courted Rena Thomas. Once when she and I had agreed to go to Burton Memorial Church on Sunday night, all of our transportation fell through. I scrounged around and made all of my arrangements: I borrowed Uncle Dave's old bay mare, rode her over to the Martin's, where I borrowed Mr. Martin's harness and buggy and Lois and I went to church about a mile-and-a-half from her house. Another time, I got to church one Sunday night and Lois did, too, but it was a real chore to find someone who would take us back home together. Finally, I found someone to take us, possibly it was, brother Jim and Rena, and, in dashing back to find Lois before her folks loaded up to take her home, in the dark I stepped in a deep hole and fell sprawling, with my straw boater taking off like a flying saucer. The fall provided a big, laugh for the twenty people who saw it. I ventured once to put my arm around her back but as I did so, a pin of some sort stuck me sharply. It took a great amount of self-analysis and double-talking to persuade myself that it was an accident and not a trick set for young swains like me who indulged in undue familiarity.

1921
BICYCLE

I came by my bicycle much later than most boys do. I must have been twelve or thirteen, perhaps even fourteen, and I had walked my paper route several years before I finally caught Ed Glasscock, who had one of the best wheels in town, at a time when he wanted money more than he wanted his bicycle. I paid him twelve dollars for it. I then delivered my papers by bicycle and was quite in style. This was my own money, and no one knew I had it; I had made it on my paper route.

To get our papers, we had to go to the railroad station, the depot as we called it, which was well through most of the town from where we lived, and meet a train at about five o'clock in the morning.

One morning after I had climbed the hill from Kenton Street and had started coasting down Broadway between High Street and Chestnut Street, enroute to the depot, I was riding with my feet propped up on the handlebars and my hands free, when my left foot slipped, and I fell all over the street, bicycle and all. I remember having a great mass of bruises as a consequence of that fall.

Another fall I took on my bicycle, which was I believe one of the roughest experiences a human can have without receiving lasting injury, was once when my grandparents had come to town in the buggy. Grandma had stopped at the house to stay with Auntie and Eleanor and me, and Uncle Alex had gone on to town in the horse and buggy to listen at a drugstore on the square to the telegraphic report on the Dempsey-Carpentier heavyweight prizefight. This will date this occurrence quite explicitly, although I do not now quite recall what the date was (1920s?). Dempsey knocked out Carpentier early in the fight and Uncle Alex became so agitated that he went back to his buggy and came on out after Grandma, completely forgetting the excuse he had used to come to town, namely, to buy an iron singletree for use on a doubleshovel plow. He was a very conscientious man who would not come to town without an excuse, but he simply had to come to learn about the fight. He had listened to the returns at the telegraph office--this was in the days before radio. He did not have the conscience to go back to the farm without his formal excuse for the trip to town.

The result was that the old folks instructed me to go get the singletree at the hardware store and bring it back on my bicycle. This I did. The singletree was a piece of heavy metal about two feet long with a hook on each end for the trace chains and a big loop in the middle to tie back into the plow. I hooked my finger in the center loop of the single tree and pumped my bicycle uphill back toward home to High Street and then coasted down the two long blocks on Broadway to Kenton Street. Broadway was paved, but Kenton Street was a gravel street. I was quite an accomplished cyclist and had no qualms about making the righthand turns at high speed, especially since there was a bank built up by buggies and wagons turning the corner. I leaned into the bank, carrying the singletree with my left hand on the handlebar. The bicycle did not have fenders or "mudguards" as we called them then, and the singletree turned a little in my hand and came between the front wheel of the bicycle and the frame. As I straightened up, the bicycle of course was stopped dead. The boy and the bicycle went "ass over teacup," to use the old phrase, or perhaps we should better say "boy over bicycle," for the nastiest fall a man ever had. I remember for days picking gravel out of my elbows, knees, shoulders, and head. No one at home seemed to bother much about me, since, when boys get skinned up, they healed up.

Two most interesting events occurred on one night. The YMCA, later changed into a hotel, was the site of the basketball games played by the Bowling Green Business University team. Arnold Winkenhofer, Courtney Brown, and John Willie Rice played on the B. U. team; they were real good players. Since I had no money for a ticket, I climbed up to the second floor gymnasium window, which was guarded by a heavy steel mesh, to watch the game. I had left my bicycle beside the front of the YMCA. Two of my classmates, Charley Harman and John Hill, noting that I was on the windowledge, went up to the third floor and poured a big two-gallon bucket of water on me. A lad with two gallons of water being poured on him has no choice except to jump from the window to the ground. In my fury at being so shabbily treated, I reached around for a fair-sized stone and threw it at the third floor window. Charley and John saw it coming and pulled the window down and ducked back, and the windowpane went. I went back to get on my bicycle, dripping wet, and found that someone had stolen it. I never saw it again, and I never had another bicycle. Charley Harman and I talked about this many years later. He told me that he and John had never told anyone about who broke the window. It was a great mystery at the Y why anyone would go to the trouble of breaking a third floor window with a stone and then be scurvy enough not to confess to it. What with a drenching and a lost bicycle, I had had enough, and I was not going to take any more punishment because of a broken window. And I never did.

1921

MORNINGS AT THE DEPOT

When I delivered the Louisville Herald of an early morning, we had to go to the railroad station or, as we called it, the depot to pick up our newspapers. If the train was late, as it frequently was, we had time to kill. I remember several things vividly from such times. One was that one morning when the papers came and the bundles hit the platform, the first thing I saw was a four-inch headline, HARDING IS DEAD.

Once when the train was late the other newsboys and I were chasing one another in a passenger car on a siding. At the time I had on both of my paper satchels, one across each shoulder. They were canvas bags, with the front end open, so that the newspapers could be slid in and tied across the open end with a string. As I chased one of the other boys, my left-hand paper satchel flared open and caught on the arm of a passenger seat. My momentum slammed me down and cracked my head on the seat behind the one where the satchel was caught. I can still hear the birdies singing.

Another time when the train was late a young man of twenty was brought into the depot from some place close by. He had been hoboing on a freight car and had taken a bad fall getting off. His leg had suffered a compound fracture; the bone was sticking out of his leg. I had not noticed a fellow bum of his who had stopped right behind me to look at the boy lying on a railway express truck. The well bum, doubtless cold from exposure and with his stomach empty, could not take it. As he fell he scraped his hands from my shoulders all the way down to my heels. I came near to joining him on the floor.

1926
SLEDDING

In Bowling Green, in the dead of winter, it sometimes stays cold long enough for good sledding on the two hills, College Hill, where Western Kentucky State University is located, and Reservoir Hill, where the city reservoir is maintained. Downtown Bowling Green is at the bottom of the hills, and the bobsleds go downtown toward the city.

If a freeze was clearly imminent or if it had already come and bid fair to stay, the college boys would form a brigade with buckets of water taken from the faucets in the houses and at the college and pour them down the track on College Street hill, with the result that a fine ice track would be formed. Out would come the bobsleds and every other kind of sled and for two or maybe three evenings sledding would consume the young folk. I used to snitch a ride down on a bobsled and help pull the sled back up the hill, but in general the trip down the hill was reserved by the sled owners for a coterie of friends.

Little boys had individual sleds, but these were also hard to come by. When I was a fairly large youngster, I found an old frame and put a wooden bed on it. The fact that it had no guiding bar was not too important, because one could belly-flop on it and steer it by dragging a toe on the side to which he cared to turn. We used to go through one of the yards on the righthand side of College Street and jump a terrace about ten feet high, landing in the mush below with a resounding thud to the viscera before scooting on back out to the street ice track.

My most extensive experiences with bobsledding took place the winter I was in Bowling Green Business University, 1925-1926. On one trip I was a free-loading bobsled rider behind a girl I didn't know, and when the sled violently dumped its passengers halfway down the hill, I formed a warm friendship with her, one might say, from sustained and violent contact, with the result that we courted during the rest of my two months at Bowling Green. Her name was Virginia Ratliff, and she was a Business University student from Mississippi. I was then nineteen years old, and quite man enough to handle a bobsled myself. Virginia and I would cadge bobsled rides or the use of a bobsled wherever we could. Once, when I was guiding a bobsled down Reservoir Hill, wearing my best clothes, since the bobsledding was a first-line social occasion, it came my time to steer the bobsled down the hill. The bobsled steerer had a little platform at the back end of the sled to sit on, and from which he braces himself on footrests and two ropes going to the front of the sled to the guiding bar. In this instance, I negotiated some rough ice halfway down the hill and was jarred off my perch, so that I had to go on down the hill steering the sled and sitting on the ice. The ropes were wrapped around my hands, and I could not have turned loose if I had wanted to. I tore the seat out of my best pants, and Virginia had to walk with me to Kenton Street and wait outside while I put on my second-best trousers.

Julian Scott once showed up in his father's car while we were sledding, and he offered to pull a loaded bobsled around on the streets of Bowling Green. Always full of hateful devilment, Julian turned the corner too fast at Twelfth and State Streets, with the result that the sled turned over and we were dragged on the rough street, with Virginia sitting on my left ankle for some half-block. This wore all the flesh off of my ankle, and it got infected. I had to quit wearing black socks because they would stick to the wound. Before the wound healed, I went to my first job at Frankfort wearing a white sock and a black sock, the white sock to protect the wounded ankle. I created quite a stir, and many months later, people asked me why I had worn a white sock when I first came. Invariably, when I told them why, they inquired, "Well, why did you not wear two white socks?" This answer never had occurred to me.

1927
FIREARMS

Firearms have played minuscule part in my life, not because of aversion or principle, but from predilection. I have at various times in my life toyed with a rifle or a shotgun; I do not recall ever having shot a pistol, although I may have. Certainly I never have owned a firearm of any sort. I went rabbit hunting twice in my youth with a borrowed shotgun.

My first rabbit hunt was highly organized. I seem to recall it at Hartford, Kentucky, with maybe twenty men and boys walking across open fields some twenty or thirty feet apart, each person with a shotgun ready to let a bunny rabbit have it as he was flushed out. There was some hazard to the hunters, especially if the rabbit were flushed sideways; everyone was properly warned to be careful of his next door neighbor on either side. As I recall, there were many rabbits shot, but I in each instance, recognizing my limitations as a marksman, left the bunny-execution to my neighbors. Soon, however, as I walked along scanning the ground, saw a rabbit crouched in a clump of grass about ten feel off to my left, and I took a bead on him and blew his head off. Everybody concerned felt my action had been unsporting and was a bit pained that I had been permitted to participate in the hunt, although I still to this day don’t conceive of my action as less of sporting than the accepted method of bunny-slaughter in that company; at least, it was infinitely less dangerous to my neighbors, what with my erratic marksmanship, and the carcass, come rabbit cooking and eating time, would provide much less chance of a broken tooth on a buckshot.

One other time in my young manhood I went rabbit hunting with two or three friends; we walked all over hell's half acre for hours and did not see a single rabbit. As we came back to the farm house, each of us with his unused shotgun, we approached the barn from an angle and all of us saw a buzzard sitting on a fence post by the barn, with an open field behind him. I took careful aim at the buzzard, considering a carrion-eater fair game, even though sitting, and missed him by a wide margin. I insisted to my companions that I saw the buckshot go by him six feet to the left, but they pooh-poohed the idea that I could have seen the shot in any terms.

When we lived at 2224 Houston Place in Denton, the first house we owned, I tried to raise a garden in the back yard, but the briar patch next door was home for innumerable rabbits that invaded my garden. My friend, Wayne Adams, loaned me his shotgun, and I kept it loaded and handy for rabbit-slaughter. There is no telling how many rabbits I blasted out of my garden. It is quite possible that the buckshot did more harm to my garden than the rabbits did, but I had a good time at it. My neighbors uphill to the rear actually became concerned because of my continued blasting in their direction. I skinned one or two of the rabbits, ground the meat, and fed it to the wire-haired terriers we had then, but they were full of dogfood and wouldn't eat a bit of it.

Incidentally, in the backyard, I once tired of chopping down a bullnettle which kept coming back, and I decided to get to the root of the matter. I dug a hole around the root; the hole kept going down and getting bigger. I finally reached the bullnettle bulb as I stood in a hole shoulder deep. Thereafter, I was content just to chop them down.

Soon after I came to El Paso as president of Texas Western College, the rifle team staged a competition in the old quonset hut west of Memorial Gymnasium north of Kidd Field and invited Dean Anton Berkman and me to come over to do some shooting. We lay on our stomachs on old wrestling mats and shot at the standard distance for 22 rifles. I had approached the chore with some misgivings, conscious of my limitations in such exercise and with vivid recollection from many years before of the sight (real or impinged) of the buckshot going six feet to the left of the sitting buzzard, but I felt I had to participate to avoid being considered a killjoy. To my amazement, my first shot hit the bullseye right in the center; I was so pleased I chose to let well enough alone, preening my feathers over my established prowess and refusing to shoot further because I had no direction to go but down.

David was the only one of our children who ever cared for firearms. I sometimes thought during his childhood that he wanted nothing unless it was lethal. Once I bought him a twenty-two rifle for Christmas. He was so much taken with it that I had to set limitations on its use. A neighbor boy in College Park had grabbed an air rifle from a smaller boy and shot a contentious little girl in the behind, and that produced a neighborhood phobia against guns of all kinds. My two rules were that David would shoot his rifle only in the woods, away from people, and that he never let other children take his rifle away from his presence.

The rifle disappeared under mysterious circumstances. I finally wormed out of David that Dr. Hutchinson, a university sociologist then working for the army in the Pentagon, had thrown it away. I went to Hutch with the story, never having been able to get the straight of it from David; it developed that David's reluctance to tell a straight story came form his violation of my strictures on the use of the gun. Hutch had a strong phobia against guns, and when he found David's rifle in the possession of one of his boys somewhat older than David, he had taken the gun down to Paint Branch a mile from home and thrown it off the bridge into the creek. At first he didn't even want to talk about the matter, but when I came close to threatening a combination of physical violence and legal action, he got in the car with me and showed me the part of the creek where he had thrown the rifle. The creek (really what at the estuary at Bladensburg becomes the Anacostia River) was flowing substantial water, but I took my two boys back in our bathing suits and we made a big adventure of searching for and finding the rifle, not much the worse for exposure to the elements.

David later on had a 30.6 deer rifle; I think his interest earlier and even then was not as a hunter or as a collector of firearms, but rather as the owner of a lethal instrument. He wasn't bloodthirsty; he was just intrigued with owning something that could tear the hell out of things. At the time he went to Vietnam in the Sea Bees, he had that rifle and a pistol, which was also a weapon of substantial caliber. But the trauma he suffered from the war-time violence turned him against such weapons, and he never thereafter had any interest in them. During his illness, shortly before Mike was born, he wanted his pistol he had left at our house, but I stalled him, for fear that his despondency over his illness might have prompted his revival of interest in it; but when I finally disabused my misgivings on that point, he took the pistol back and disposed of it in some way.

My biggest gun I shot off at Fort Benning, Georgia, when I was on the Department of Defense Joint Civilian Orientation Conference Number 14. One night they treated the sixty of us to an after-dark firepower demonstration, involving the firing of some really big guns. On invitation, I pulled the lanyard and fired one of the really big ones; and then I shot it a couple more times just for good luck. It shot off into the woods at a high trajectory and with a tremendous wham. Afterwards, I thought to ask the officer in charge how much it costs to shoot off one of the big guns, and he said approximately $35 a throw. I haven’t really felt resentful about paying my taxes since.

1921-1923
BOWLING GREEN HIGH SCHOOL

I went to school for nine years at the Training School at Western Kentucky State Teacher College. In my ninth year they started charging tuition, since it was not a Bowling Green public school, but they let me pay a little at a time from my paper route earnings. I remember little about it except making some of the payments.

My sophomore year was taken at Bowling Green high school. The prim and well-corseted principal was Miss Nina McGinnis: my Uncle Jim was about her age, and he remembered once as a grocery delivery boy bursting in the McGinnis kitchen with some groceries and surprising Nina, a full grown young lady standing in a washtub full of water in the middle of the kitchen taking a bath. She held no terrors for him, but I kept a respectful distance.

One of my teachers was Miss Jamison, a beautiful, willowy, nubile young woman, who taught Latin. In class she was in love with the ablative absolute case. One day when I arrived late (when the train bringing the Louisville Herald was late) Miss Jamison was going around the class trying to find someone to agree with her on why the particular word was in the ablative case: she had that ablative absolute look in her eye and I volunteered the answer. I was her fair-haired lad for sometime. She was married not long thereafter, and I felt slight pangs of jealousy.

“Stacomb” Rudd was our football coach - so called because he greased his hair with Stacomb. My cousin Julian hadn’t got his full growth and didn’t star in football until his junior year. I never played school football.

One day on the playground, in attempting to catch a punted football, I broke my left forefinger when the punted ball landed on it; it was sore for a long time, and even today, although the finger has always worked all right, it’s straight, whereas my right forefinger curves toward the other fingers.

The 1923 Bowling Green High School annual had a little squish; “Last Christmas Joe Ray stood under the mistletoe at the bottom of the front stairs and wondered why everyone went up the back stairs.” I muttered to myself for days about that.

LOUSIVILLE

In high school in Bowling Green I lived at 1232 Kenton Street, and had started running with a bad crowd - running wild, as the saying goes. My sister, Ruby, taught school in Louisville, and she took me to live with her. We lived on St. Catherine Street the first year, with a family, as I recall, named Redmon.

The family had one child, a mentally handicapped boy named Robert. I tried once to teach him his multiplication tables. At one point I became impatient with him and threatened grandiloquently to knock him into "the seventh heaven: He thought I said "seven sevens," and he responded "forty-nine."

I attended Louisville Male High School, a classmate of Julie Giangliano and Tuffy Norman, whom I didn't know very well. I had two good years at Brooke and Breckinridge Streets, although I was something of a loner.

I delivered newspapers and worked for 50 cents a five hour shift skeeting sodas a Frankel's Drug Store at Third and St. Catherine Streets. The store was later a paint store. George Kincheloe, a LMHS classmate and nephew of a Congressman, who got me the Frankel job once gave me my weekly pay envelope, with $5 written on the front of it. He got a big laugh when I opened it and found only $2.50, five shifts at 50 cents a shifts.

I became a Second Class Boy Scout in Louisville but never any higher. Couldn't get interested in learning how to tie knots. It was with the Boy Scouts that I played my only football. We had no equipment or uniforms; only our fullback had football shoes. I played guard; once when I blocked my opponent and lay faced toward our fullback coming at me with the ball and football shoes, he kicked me under the chin, causing me to bite my tongue and chip a tooth. That was the last time I played.

In those days (before Paano Nurmi) there was a Chicago taxi driver named Joey Ray who was the world's best distance runner. Some called me "Joey" and I went out for track once at LMHS but not for long. I had no talent for dashes or distances. In my senior year a bunch of us organized a baseball team and wrangled uniforms from Sutcliff's Sporting Goods. We played twilight league, but our record was undistinguished. I took great satisfaction once in knocking a slow ball pitch over the outfielders head for a homerun. Usually as a batter, I stuck my left foot in the water bucket and grounded out via the shortstop or second baseman.

One Saturday in May I rode the Fourth Street trolley past Churchhill Downs and heard the Kentucky Derby yelling. One of the winners, I seem to remember, was Behave Yourself.

Another story about Robert Redmon involved his taking an intelligence test which contained the question, "What would you do if you approached the trolley stop just as your trolley pulled out!" (He was supposed to say he'd wait for another) He said, "I would stamp my foot and say "Oh dammit."

The second year we lived in an apartment in Oak (500 block) Street with a family named Jenkins. One of the Jenkins girls, a beautiful, full-grown woman, kept me stirred up. Uncle Wid Thomas visited us there, chewing tobacco and spat juice all over the front of the little gas stove.

The next year, when I rode the train from Bowling Green to Louisville and changed trains at Louisville for Frankfort, going to my first job, I telephoned Jacobs School to ask for my sister Ruby, and she answered the school phone. She would not admit who she was until I told her who I was. On that trip I read a little book written in shorthand - a Sherlock Holmes novel, The Size of the Fome, getting better at shorthand for my job at the State Highway Department.

I took ROTC for both years at LMHS and became a sergeant. I was one year the captain of one of the "crack squad" drill teams. We achieved no distinction.

I graduated from Male High in 1925, cum laude. Commencement was held in the Strand Theater in downtown Louisville. Since Ruby and I agreed I was going to college, there was nothing special about finishing high school and she left for Bowling Green before commencement.

One morning on my way to high school I crossed too soon from behind a southbound trolley on Oak St. and Fourth and was scooped up on the bumper of a northbound luxury car and carried about fifty feet before the driver could pull over and stop the car. I was scooped up so gently my ROTC officer's cap remained in place. The lady who was driving the car was so unnerved when she stopped the car I saluted her and walked on up Fourth St. She stopped to ask if at least she could drive me to school, and I declined, saying her car lifted me up gently, and no harm was done.

In my two years in Louisville at the public library I did a world of reading. It was there I discovered Jeffery Farnol's Beltane, The Smith and many others, Sherlock Holmes and who dunnits in general.

I had always lived in the south, and I instinctively knew its ways. The only white man I ever saw hit a black man with his fist was Bossman at the Frankel Drug Store, who hit the Negro delivery man during an altercation. The delivery man, who delivered drugs on a bicycle, was somewhat older than Mr Frankel, kept his distance and was hit only once.

One day two ladies came in and ordered sodas (ice cream sodas). I made the sodas and they sat at the round top table on its swing-out seats. In serving the sodas, I set the tray too close to the edge of the table and it flipped over, depositing a soda in the lap of each lady. Frankel busted out, helped dry them off, promised to pay for cleaning their dresses or buy them new ones if cleaning wouldn't get the job done. I embarrassedly made new sodas and delivered them this time without untoward event. Frankel, I thought, would fire me, but he never said a word to me about the incident, then or later. He must have noted my face.

The night pharmacist, whose name I cannot recall, once said of a flashy lady who waltzed around awhile and then left, "She thinks her shit don't stink."

1915
UNCLE ALEX'S PEG LEG

My step grandfather was Robert Charles Alexander Bunch. My grandfather was John Marshall Scott, who died on his farm of pneumonia, contracted after hard work and exposure in 1887, twenty years before my birth. Word from my early youth tells of Uncle Alex as a gay Lothario from the Culpepper neighborhood, a fine-looking, swarthy man who wooed and won the widow with the fine farm and house full of kids ranging from 13 or 14 on down. To me it was Grandma's farm.

Early in his young manhood he chose to ride a spirited horse which threw him off away from the house and he crawled a mile back to the house with a badly broken lower left leg, which had to be amputated at the knee (late in life he was operated on twice or more and wound up with the leg off at the hip). His Physician son, Ray Callis Bunch, once told me that the surgeon who first removed his leg bungled the job. Uncle Alex lived in pain the rest of his life. He was a vain man, too young, he thought to be called "Papa," as Uncle Ray called him, by Grandma's six strapping kids, and preferred them simply to call him Alex; Roy Thomas used in the barnlot to walk stiff-legged in mimicry of him, calling him peggy and saying. "By God, Nanny (Nancy), by God . . . ") I remember once as a child seeing him writhing and groaning, holding his naked stump in both hands and telling Grandma his foot, long since gone for 20 years, was killing him with pain. He got relief from morphine melted from tablet form in a spoon with a dollop of water held over the chimney of a coal oil (kerosene) lamp; and, of course, over the years he became addicted. Uncle Ray told me after his father's death years later that Uncle Alex had come to a tolerance of morphine in record quantities.

Uncle Ray about 1920 bought Uncle Alex an artificial leg, but he rarely wore it, preferring his home-made peg. I remember once watching him replace the hickory peg. He split a hickory sapling about an inch and a half thick to within about sixteen inches of the end, where he had bored a hole and inserted a small bolt, to prevent the split from going further; polished and dressed the wood, fitted the split halves around the polished leather pouch that held his stump leg and folded-back pants leg; and on the tip of the peg he fastened a strong two inch steel spring to cushion its impact. He was an agile man, and, when he was hurried, he would take two one-legged hops before putting the peg down for a step. He did no field work except running the mowing machine with the team hitched to it, so far as I remember.

I was a posthumous child and had no contact with grown men except Uncle Alex. My two Uncles, Jim and Virgil, were undemonstrative men and I don't remember touching or being touched by either of them. I recall once coming home blabbering from Dobbins's (later Kister's) Grocery store after being spoken to gruffly by a man. I loved Uncle Alex and I think he was foolish about me. He rode the mares around the farm bareback, with his peg sticking sharply out; he would reach down and pull me up behind him and I would hold on firmly as far around his broad back as I could reach. Sometimes we went to the back forty acres (a woodlot) where we would sit quietly with his shotgun until a squirrel showed and he took a shot, and then I would scramble frantically after the squirrel for Grandma to fry for supper.

Uncle John Thaxton, husband of my Aunt Molly Ray was the only other man I knew until I was nearly grown. He was a truly gentle man. He could catch a housefly by the leg by inching up on it. Then he would turn the fly aloose because he said, "Flies are my friends." I once caught him in what I thought was a fib when he told someone he didn't like anything but sweet potato pie. I remonstrated, "Why, Uncle John, you like cornbread crumbled into a glass of buttermilk." And he responded, "That's sweet potato pie to me." When he was chopping corn (chopping out grass and weeds) and I took him a bucket of cold spring water, his hand shook so violently that most of the water was spilled out of the dipper. But no one shared Uncle Alex's place in my life.

When I moved to Louisville from Bowling Green High School for my junior year at Male High and lived with Ruby, we sold 1232 Kenton Street to Grandma and Uncle Alex for $1200.00, all it was worth. I was a junior in high school. Grandma and Uncle Alex lived out their days on Kenton Street.

1923

UNCLE VIRGIL

The closest thing to a character in my family was my Uncle Virgil Scott. He was the fourth child of Nancy Eleanor and John Marshall Scott, my grandparents. Ahead of him were my Uncle Brown and Auntie and Mama, who were twins. Uncle Virgil was a little bit short on principle, sometimes, but a colorful figure nevertheless.

Uncle Ray Bunch, half-brother to Uncle Virgil, once told me that Uncle Virgil in his dry goods store, called Scott and Spillman, on the square at Bowling Green, was a quite fast operator, and they sometimes took Uncle Ray in on weekends to help wait upon the trade. Uncle Ray told me that Uncle Virgil, when women would come in to buy shoes, would place the mirrors, designed for people to stand and get a reflection of their shoes, in such a way as to accomplish what the youngsters nowadays call "squirrel shooting," namely, trying surreptitiously to see up past the hems of the ladies' skirts. The Scott family, Aunt Mame and the three children, Marie, Mildred and Julian, lived with Uncle Virgil on the third floor above the Scott and Spillman store. Uncle Ray said that once Aunt Mame came to the door of their apartment two floors above and just happened to look down and see that the mirror was trained upon the ladies' limbs and came storming and yelling down the stairs and taking over Uncle Virgil's ear.

Uncle Virgil and Aunt Mame were married and divorced three times, one of the divorces coming just as I came aware of the meaning of such things, with pictures of nudes cavorting in adulterous association, at Glen Lilly, below town on the Barren River.

Uncle Virgil, while he managed to earn a great deal of money in his time, never gave me anything that I can remember. Once at the end of a summer, after working on the farm at a dollar a day and my board, I came out with a total saving of $16. I wrote a check to Scott and Spillman to buy a pair of shoes out of that $16 but, in my ignorance and innocence, I gave a check on the wrong bank. Uncle Virgil wrote me a note to say that the check was not good. I told him that I was sorry and that some time I would make it good, He somehow on his own discovered that my money was in the other bank, and so he changed the check himself, and when I came back the next June I had $6 less in my checking account than I thought I had. In his favor it might be said that my older brothers, Brown and Ed, prevailed upon him to endorse their notes for school money and by my time he had rejected any responsibility for helping the progeny of his departed sister.

The firm of Scott and Spillman finally broke up. and the V. R. Scott (Virgil Raymond Scott) was established around the corner from the square on Main Street. Once when I was going back into Bowling Green by train during the Great Depression, I heard two men talking about business conditions. One asked how things were getting along in Bowling Green. The other responded that nobody in Bowling Green was making any money except a merchant named Virgil Scott, who put on a stem-winding sale every few days and managed to make money all the time.

When I got to Bowling Green, I walked down Main Street to go by and see Uncle Virgil. There was a great red, white, and blue canvas sign spread all the way across Main Street above the line of traffic saying, "Prices Crack!" with an arrow pointing to the Scott store. I stood in the store some ten or fifteen minutes while he completed a sale. As usual, he did not recognize me until I told him that I was his sister Vivia's youngest boy Joe.

He was very cordial, a very bland, personable, and persuasive man. While I was waiting for him, a man came in and wanted to look at some shoes. He was about to leave the store when Uncle Virgil gave him some fast talk, "Well, why did you come in the store? Did you come in the store to buy shoes, I did not go out to the street and bring you in here. If you needed some shoes, why don't we just look at some until you find the kind you want?" On one counter, Uncle Virgil had big paper sacks called "grab bags" that he was selling for twenty-five cents. They had old high-top buttoned shoes and all such things in them and some of the country folks could not resist so good a bargain and apparently bought the grab bags.

Uncle Virgil was married perhaps twice after his third divorce from Aunt Mame. When his son Julian and I were at college age, a truck carrying a load of popskull whiskey was apprehended by the officers of the law, stalled on a railroad crossing and wrecked by a train somewhere outside of Bowling Green, and the black truck driver's confession indicated that the truck belonged to Uncle Virgil, that he was being paid by Uncle Virgil, and that; the still which he led them to was the property of Uncle Virgil, and that the man who was manning the still was

Mr. Scott's employee. Uncle Virgil was judged guilty of bootlegging and was sent to jail for one year. I remember being present at the residence of Auntie and Uncle Dave Howell when the news came that Uncle Virgil would have to go to jail. Auntie cried for two or three days.

In the trial, my cousin Julian, who was then a star football player at West Virginia University, testified that this was a terrible thing to happen, that his father's going to jail would jeopardize his social standing at the University, where he was a member of one of the leading fraternities. The judge responded that the participation of his father in this kind of activity should have been undertaken with full realization that his family and all who loved him would suffer if he were apprehended.

In his later years, Uncle Virgil undertook a quite profitable farming venture. The last time I saw him was in the company of my brothers Ed and Brown in the old Mansard Hotel. Uncle Virgil's leg had been gashed by a boar hog at feeding time, and he had come from his farm into Bowling Green to have his wound cared for. His leg was badly swollen and the infection angry-looking, but he was too tough, resourceful, and stubborn to go to a hospital. He had rented himself a room in the Mansard Hotel and took care of himself.

When he died at approximately the age of eighty, he was living on his farm with a woman who attempted to lay claim to some of his quite substantial estate. There was some scandal in the family, with his children long grown and fully expecting to succeed to his wealth, which was not great but substantial. His son and daughters won the lawsuit. His son Julian died in Florida a few years ago. His daughters live in Florida; Marie, in her late 70's, has lost some of her marbles, but is still percolating; and Mildred, (Mimi) a couple of years younger and a fine old gal; lives in Deerfield Beach, Fl. with her husband she courted as a student at WKSTC, Cheesie Myers. Julian had two children, Marie, one and Mimi, none. I have always felt that for some years Uncle Virgil sent a substantial part of his income to the support of his children living in the north and east.

1926
BOWLING GREEN BUSINESS UNIVERSITY

Bowling Green Business University was the school I attended to learn shorthand, typing and penmanship (I really won a Palmer Certificate). I lived with Grandma and Uncle Alex at 1232 Kenton Street and started BGBU in the fall, following the LMHS graduation in May 1925. Tuition was a staggering amount, $90.00, which I borrowed, with brother-in-law, Ray Harmon, signing my note. I paid the note off from Frankfort, after I was earning some $100 a month. I was in business school until March 1926, left before finishing the course, and could take short hand 150 words per minute and type 70 words a minute. Ray Harman's older brother, Louis was V. P. (later president) and heavy stockholder.

I had no money at all, only what Ruby sent me. At lunch time I would hang around Uncle Jim's (Scott) grocery store at 13th and college, and when he caught me snitching an orange for my lunch he discovered my destitute condition, and started me eating at Mrs. Neal's boarding house using up some of the overdue grocery bills Mrs. Neal owed him and intended never to pay. Mrs. Neal went him one better and promptly gave me a job waiting tables, which I held until I left for Frankfort. I ate on the Neal-Scott debt no more than two days, if that long.

I reported to the job obtained for me in the State Highway Department in Frankfort by Mr. Brandon in the BGBU Placement Office on St. Patrick's Day, 1926, and worked through May 1926, when Danny Fowler and I took off to California.

1926-1927
FRANKFORT

1926
HIGHWAY STATISTICIAN

I shall attach to this sheet a pair of photographed pates taken for some records and sent to me by W. O. Snyder of Frankfort, Kentucky.

A former Mayor of El Paso, Tom Rogers, as a boy ran with the night-prowling gang of youngsters of which I was a member in Frankfort and about which I have reported elsewhere. Once when Snyder came to El Paso to visit Tom Rogers, Tom mentioned me as a boy who used to work for the Highway Department. Snyder called me, and we resumed our acquaintance. I was a stenographer in the Highway Department. I worked for the statistician, Mr. Fishback, along with a man named Fleming and Georgianna Tutt, the head stenographer. I became so proficient in the typing of figures, since that is the prime method of expression used by statisticians, that on several occasions I typed big columns of figures until about four o'clock in the afternoon and then took my product to the little touch-system adding machine and added all the figures to discover that, in the entire day, I had made neither an adding machine nor a typing mistake.

During my fifteen-month tenure at the Kentucky State Highway Department, from the 17th of March, 1926, until June, 1927, when Danny Fowler and I started our trek across the nation, Mr. Snyder, "Snitz" as he was called, was married. He was Chief Draftsman, and we were all in the same corner of the Old Capitol Building. I knew all of the draftsmen well, most of them only slightly older than I, and we had a high old time as the Snyder nuptials approached. I would imagine that we mimeographed notices and distributed them all over the building on five or six; occasions. One of them, on 8-1/2 by 11 sheets of paper, passed out generously, said "Beware of August 24," or whatever the date was. There were others, and then finally there was one which said, "It won't be long now." When I talked to Snitz in El Paso in the middle '60's, I reminded him of my part in that business, and he later sent me these two items reprinted from old documents to which he had access.

1926
DANIEL WEBSTER

I got in bad dutch with the State Highway Engineer, a man named Todd; he was a gray man, gentle and friendly, a political hack, but competent in most ways. He once asked me about whether he should hire a boy from the Bowling Green Business University named Daniel Webster. I had known Dan only as an ardent worker in the Baptist Sunday School, but I recommended him to Mr. Todd without reservation. He later came to Frankfort and worked as a stenographer at the State Highway Department garage, some three or four blocks from the Old Capitol Building. Some months later, Mr. Todd summoned me and, when I entered his office, began to berate me severely. I had misled him and I was in real danger of losing my job. My transgression, it developed after some minutes of high alarm on my part, had been to recommend Daniel Webster who, from his convenient spot in the front office of the State Highway garage, had been bootlegging whiskey. You just cannot tell about these Baptists. I never saw or heard of Daniel Webster after that.

1926
FRANKFORT

Paul Easley and I were graduates of the Bowling Green Business University, living in Mrs. Smith's Boarding House and working in the Kentucky State Highway Department in the Old Capitol Building. One day Paul was feeling so badly that he stayed home from work. When we got home Paul had been considering his situation all day and asked for a dictionary. One of us got him the dictionary; he, after looking up the word, held his finger on it: "Pleurisy, That's what I've got," he said, "I've got pleurisy." And indeed he did. He became so desperately ill that he went home to Easton, Tennessee, and our paths never crossed again.

Another boy in Frankfort was Ted Robinson, an Iowa boy who learned drafting by taking a correspondence course and was for several years a draftsman for the Kentucky State Highway Department. Ted and I owned a canoe jointly. He cut a stencil out of cardboard with a half-moon and a star and the letters "Flying Dutchman." This was our canoe, and we were inordinately proud of it, secondhand as it was. In 1975 or 1976, I exchanged letters with Ted from Iowa, where he was still serving as County engineer. He had got word of me from Snitz Snyder.

Once Ted, Griffith Mitchell, and I took a trip in the canoe on Saturday, intending to sleep our over Saturday night and come back Sunday. We got a bad sunburn on Saturday and yet we had to come back in the canoe on Sunday. In the week that followed, our blisters burst. Ted, a young man who had learned frugal habits at this mother's knee, refused to change his shirt, despite the fact that the blisters had burst and stained it badly. He ware the badly stained shirt all week on his job.

On year in Frankfort we had a city basketball league, supported by the automobile dealers -- Chevrolet, Chrysler, Buick, and Willys-Knight. The head people in the YMCA picked four persons, more mature than the other youngsters who wanted to play in the league, to choose up teams. I was younger than the others so chosen and I picked a whole team of high school boys; R. T. (Rat Tail) Johnson, Screechy Wiard, Pat Ireland, Toady Woodyard, and Cow Garrett. Both Pat and toady could have made the high school team had they not been ineligible. I think the most valuable players on our squad were Screechy and I. We provided more competitive spirit than all the rest. We won the city championship, eleven games our of fifteen. In one game we were three points behind near the end of the game, Screechy shot just as the gun went off, he made the goal and was fouled as he shot, and he made them both and we won by one point. We won six of our eleven games by one point. I won one game by a shot from the center of the court in the last seconds of play.

A player on one of the other teams was a Jewish lad named Marcus, whose family operated a furniture store in Frankfort. I had known his sister in Bowling Green Business University, a beautiful girl, but one whom I never came to know very well. I knew her again, of course, in Frankfort after I went there. Her brother was a clumsy boy, not malicious, but awkward and rough. Once after our game was over and the team on which he was playing was in a contest with another which I hoped would win, I was watching from the balcony. The din was quite intense, but all of a sudden it got pin-dropping quiet just as I yelled, "Kill that dirty Jew." I had nothing against Jews then and I still do not. Indeed, if it is fair to generalize at all, most of the Jews I know are quit a cut above the other people I know. Nevertheless, I had said it, and hundreds of people heard it and identified me. The Marcus boy met me the next day, as I emerged from the Old Capitol, on the sidewalk near the plaque where the Martyred Governor Gobel had fallen twenty-five years before. He was spoiling to fight, but I managed to talk my way around him. A quite formal kangaroo court of our YMCA and city league officials was held to decide what to do in my case. They finally agreed that I should apologize to the Marcus boy, but I had already done that, and the matter finally blew over.

1926
DISTANCE SWIMMER

I once swam two miles down the Kentucky River, from north of the city underneath the cliff on the top of which sits the tomb of Daniel Boone, under the city's bridges and down to the dam. My friends paddled along side in our canoe to pull me our in case my energies gave out.

1927
JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

A gang of about fifteen boys, in my only full spring in Frankfort, began to prowl the streets at night in search of fun. Most of them were the high school members of my basketball team which had developed such high fellowship we were reluctant to surrender it. Our principal activities were roaming the streets nightly in a crowd, singing songs, serenading the houses of girls we knew, taking a little drink of "likker-o" when it could be had, and chewing tobacco. Our favorite brand of chewing tobacco was Caromel.

There used to be a high stone bannister that stuck out in front of the State Capitol Building, and some eight or ten of us would sit along that bannister, chew tobacco, and try to spit a straight dark line out from the base of the bannister. The game was won by the one who could build the straightest line of tobacco juice farthest from the base of our perch. I do not recall ever having won, but I was in the contest with the best of them. I continue to be amazed at the fact that no devilment was ever done at all by this group; we just liked one another and had fun talking, joking, wandering, and singing. I was the only man in the crowd who was not a high school boy and I was in my second year out of high school. The song that we sang most frequently was our gang song; "C-a-r-m-e-l / C-h-e-w-i-n-g / T-o-b-a-c-c-o, / That is all that we know, / Except a big fat cigarro, / And a drink of likker-o." I took my first drink of whiskey in this gang -- popskull out of a gallon jug, with my thumb hooded in the handle and brought up from the side by my elbow.

Danny Fowler, with whom I later hitchhiked across the country, was one of this gang. The gang was aware that Danny and I were going to leave on our trip to California, and that Danny would have to run away from home to do it. They helped us to keep our secret, of course, and on the last night before our departure, we all held hands and took a mighty vow that we would have a reunion in the Capitol Hotel in Frankfort twenty-five years from then on Christmas Day in 1952. I have talked to Sid Clay, Danny Fowler, and others in the gang, but we had all become men of affairs by 1952 and nobody showed up at the Capitol Hotel on Christmas Day in 1952, so far as I know.

1927
CALIFORNIA AND . . . [BUST] I

1927
JUNKET

Many things happened on my hitchhiking trips in the summer of 1927 which I have repeated many times. For these recollections, I have sought not to tell long chains of occurrences, but rather things that happened which I find myself relating to other people from time to time. I shall attempt now to tell such stories from the 1927 hitchhiking trip. Perhaps first I should lay the background.

Danny Fowler was a high school student, and I was over a year out of high school, working as a stenographer in the Kentucky State Highway Department. We were both members of the gang of youngsters who roamed the streets of Frankfort at night, singing songs and having a rowdy good time. We left Frankfort, visited Danny's brother in Louisville, then my folks in Bowling Green, then to Nashville to visit my Uncle Ray Bunch; then to Mulberry, Florida, to visit my sister Virginia and her husband Ray Harman and little Sam Ray at the age of two; thence looping in Florida to Jacksonville and back across through Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans; thence to Houston, with a week's stay in Austin; thence through El Paso to Los Angeles, where we intended to enter college. At that point I got a job as a stenographer, and Danny fooled around until finally he got a job as a seaman on a ship going to Japan. After a few weeks of the ensuing loneliness, I left Los Angeles, going north through San Francisco to Seattle, thence east through Yellowstone, down to the northeastern tip of Colorado; thence through the prairie states to Chicago and back to Bowling Green, Kentucky.

1927
UNCLE RAY

In Nashville Uncle Ray Bunch derided us mightily. After a big breakfast at his house, he drove us out toward the Chattanooga Highway to start us hitchhiking. As we passed the Tennessee State Insane Asylum, he urged us with great unction to scoot way down in our seats, for fear the keepers would see us and recognize us as appropriate inmates for the institution.

1927
RIDE TO TAMPA

Just a few miles out of Nashville, we caught a ride with a man in a new open-air Ford Roadster, who had driven without sleep from Chicago, some seven or eight hundred miles away, and needed someone to drive.; Since Danny did not drive, I drove forty-eight of the next fifty-two hours to Tampa, Florida. That may appear to be a great deal of driving for so little mileage, but in those days the highways were not well marked and through traffic in the direction we were travelling was something of a chore.

1927
MULBERRY

Ray and Virginia Harman lived at Mulberry, Florida, in 1927, and Sam was a baby. He could say only two things. His Daddy would poke him in the stomach and ask, "What is that?" and Sam would reply in his baby voice, "Belly!" Then his Daddy would get his attention and ask him, "What do you like?" and Sam would reply, "Piece of pie."

1927
MUNISIPPLE DOCKS

Our travels were often characterized by impromptu decisions. At many points we decided to depart from our original intention and to do this or that, or at least we considered such alternatives. At Jacksonville, Florida, we saw the possibility of getting jobs as seamen on a ship. We asked an old Negro man where the big ships were. He responded, "Right down there by the mun-i-cip-al docks," with the accent on the "cip."

1927
SLEEPING OUT

Danny and I slept outdoors every night of our travels in 1927 except for the nights we spent at Mulberry, Florida, and in Austin. We slept on park benches or almost anywhere. We slept on park benches in Mobile and were almost eaten up by mosquitoes. Finally, we found an unlocked automobile parked on the street, and we slept each on one of the seats with the windows pulled to, regardless of the heat.

1927
RAILROAD TRESTLE

Going to Mobile we found ourselves needing to cross Mobile Bay, rather than to go around it. It was after dark, and hitching rides was impossible. There was a railroad trestle, and no other way to cross. We decided to cross on the trestle, even though it was after dark. We were big, strong boys and fully confident. About half-way across the trestle, which must have been at least tow or three miles long, we found ourselves there on the single-track trestle, with a train coming. All we could do was to lie down on the tips of the trestle railroad ties and let the train pass. It takes fairly strong determination to hold one's place with a freight train tattling over him and the wheels clacking a foot and a half from his prostrate body.

At Mobile, a street vendor was selling bananas at two dozen for a quarter. We spent one of our quarters for two dozen bananas; I ate a dozen, and so did Danny.

1927
MISSISSIPPI FLOOD

The Mississippi Valley was flooded in June of 1927, the great flood which branded Herbert Hoover even more clearly as the great humanitarian, since he was in charge of flood relief, and helped to make him the political figure he later became. Thus, when we left New Orleans to Westwego, we could not hitchhike. We rode freight trains from New Orleans to

Houston, with the trains going well north of the lower delta toward Baton Rouge and Lake Charles before we finally got to Houston late in the evening.

1927
MORPHEUS AT HIS BEST

The trip to Houston had been quite harrowing, and we were exhausted for want of sleep. We slipped quietly off our train without untoward event and began scouting around for a place to sleep. We found a railroad dock on which were tow or three bales of cotton. Danny took one and I another, and I got the best night's sleep I ever had. We were rousted along about daylight by a yard bull, who had not detected our presence until daylight. He ran us off with great impatience, but I think he was more concerned for himself lest he catch some trouble by virtue of our being found there.

1927
THE AUSTIN NICHOLSES

Dan Fowler had some distant cousins, a man named Nichols, who had worked for many years for the Attorney General's office in Austin, and his family. We stayed with the Nicholses for a week, and that was the point at which I first became acquainted with the City of Austin. Mr. Nichols promised to get me a job if I would come back to Austin to go to school. When I came back in 1928, he never turned a hand. Nevertheless for the week we were there the family showed us many kindnesses, and they were most cordial and hospitable for a year of so after I returned to Austin.

1927
HOTTER THAN A BY-GOD

At Sheffield, when Danny and I were debating how to get on toward California, an old ranch hand told us we had better wait for a ride, because out there in the desert it was "hotter than a by-God!"

1927
JACKASS

We had an unforgettable experience on the highway from Sheffield to Fort Stockton. In those days automobiles were scarce, and any automobile making the run through West Texas was loaded to the gunwales with people, luggage, and water supplies to guard against trouble crossing the desert.

We spent the better part of a day in Sheffield, trying to get a lift. We finally landed a ride to Fort Stockton, but we had to travel under something of a handicap: we were on a truck, a regular old flat-bed, with a cab in front and with short running boards beside the cab. The cab was full with three people, and a huge jackass was staked out on top of the truck bed with his four feet tied to the sides of the truck and with his head tied to the cab. Danny and I sat on either side of the cab on the front edges of the flat truck bed with our feet on the running board of the seventy-five miles more or less from Sheffield to Fort Stockton, with the old jackass -- in a mean temper because of mistreatment, if indeed he was not natural-born mean -- trying to bite us every once in a while. I never make the run from Fort Stockton to Sheffield or vice versa without recalling this harrowing experience.

1927
MY DRINKING UNCLE

The traffic was so light that at Fort Stockton we gave it up and decided to go on to California by freight train. We had planned on this eventuality, and we took to it with full determination and few misgivings. We had recognized that trainmen sometimes demanded financial contributions from the bums on the train, usually two dollars a section. We caught a train on the Kansas City, Mexico, and the Orient, running from Fort Stockton to Marfa. We were waiting between cars at a water stop out in the desert, when the brakeman and the conductor came up to the train on either side and caught us. I had better than a hundred dollars, and Danny had more than that. They demanded money. We tried first to take the pauper's oath, but, soon dislodged from that posture, we admitted we had money but could not use it for such purposes as this, since we were going to California to attend college and would need all the money we could get. This apparently did not soften the heart of the conductor, but the brakeman, somewhat conversationally, asked us where we were from. I responded that we were from Kentucky. "What part of Kentucky?" he inquired. I responded, "Bowling Green, Frankfort, Louisville, anywhere you like." "Who do you know in Bowling Green?" he asked. "I know a whole lot of people," I replied. He mused to his companion, "I used to work the L & N out of Bowling Green." I chirped up, "I have an uncle who used to work the L & N out of Bowling Green on the Memphis run." "What's his name?" the man inquired. I replied, "Jim Scott." He exclaimed, "My God! Old Jim and I used to get drunk together in Memphis every Saturday night." Needless to say, we got to stay on the train and we made no financial contribution. The conductor shrugged his disgruntlement and stalked away, leaving me to expatiate further on the conviviality of my Uncle Jim with his former drinking companion.

1927
JACK RABBIT

On the run from Fort Stockton to Marfa I got my first acquaintance with the jackrabbit. When our train was humping along at its maximum speed, we once scared up a jackrabbit who ran along beside the train, apparently too stupid to turn away. He was making fairly good progress right along side the train, gaining on it a little bit, when, somewhat belatedly, it dawned on him that he could shuck off this trouble and alarm by veering away from the train, which he did.

1927
HAND OUT

In Marfa, Texas, Danny and I stood around looking hungry in front of a restaurant, trying to make up our minds about now to buy some food. A big-hearted cowboy saw us there, came up and forced a dollar bill into my hand. We did not put him wiser, but went on in the restaurant and bought ourselves a good fifty-cent meal apiece.

1927

MONEY BELT

The habit of brakemen in those days of demanding money from bums was little more than gentle graft. I do not think brakemen were taking any real chance with their jobs when they tolerated bums. There were simply too many bums in the late 1920's for the railroads to fight them all off. Furthermore, train crews were fairly easily persuaded that the bums had no money for the purpose. Only a chump would pay for a freight train ride. I remember on one occasion when, to escape the burning heat of the desert on the freight train, we had shinnied down into the ice compartment of a refrigerator car, a trainman joined us there. There must have been half a dozen bums and the railroad man. A Latin American boy in the group, in shinnying down through the ice hole into the ice compartment, had pulled out his shirttail revealing a money belt, and the money belt had been popped open showing some long green. The trainman saw it and got real violent, taking two dollars away from the boy and then forcing him to jump off the train with it moving along through the desert. I am sure we, as a group, could have overpowered the trainman and forced him to be less drastic, but the remarkable thing about hoboes is that there is practically no group loyalty among them except in the groups that were together before they got on the train. If, for example, the trainman had jumped me or Danny, the other would have come to his rescue. Usually, however, bums were loners and there was no esprit de corps in a trainload of them.

1927
FRIJOLES

Between Marfa and El Paso, when we had been on the train many hours, it stopped in a defile somewhere with big hills on either side of the railroad, and we were sitting on the train dangling our feet, watching a Latin American woman cook a pot of beans. We looked for so long and so hungrily that she finally gave Danny and me a serving of the frijoles. They were, I believe, the best beans I ever ate.

1927
EL PASO

In El Paso, once we had got cleaned up, we took a side trip down the tree-laned highway to Ysleta. I remember very little else about it. My recollection of Juarez is entirely vague, except that we young men as we walked the streets were the center of attention of quite a few ladies practicing the world' oldest profession. I am happy to say that neither of us succumbed to their blandishments.

In El Paso we stayed in the Old UMCA, which was razed after I returned to El Paso to live in 1960. In the shower room was a little plaque that read something like this: "The Blue Grass Region of Kentucky [from which Danny and I had just come] is just about perfectly adapted to man's needs; the Sahara Desert is the most inhospitable region in the world; the difference between them is water; in the arid lands in the western United States water is scarce. SAVE WATER."

I never even heard of the College of Mines on my first visit in 1927.

When we left El Paso, in accordance with a tried and foolproof pattern, we walked along on city streets, with the railroad in sight, until we got to a point where we felt certain the train would be well out of reach of the yard and municipal bulls, and there we would catch the train.

This led us up the valley, through the pass, along about where the Cement Plant and the Smelter now are, and on into some tree-shaded residential areas, occupied by Latin American, and in the general area where the Middaghs and the Vowells now reside. I have never seen anything which marks this spot for me except the mountainside along which the Southern Pacific Railroad runs after it crosses the river on the high trestle.

When we had walked, and I remember it to have been a very long walk, from downtown El Paso out to the point in question, we turned left toward the river and toward the mountainside along which the railroad ran. We stopped to ask of various residents the way to the river. We were obviously headed for it, but we could not see it. Once we accosted a huge woman, weighing possibly three hundred pounds and obviously wearing nothing except a cotton dress. She had a towel, and a washrag, and a cake of soap in her hand, and she was being followed by a gang of urchins. We were unable to communicate with her, because she knew only Spanish and we knew none of it. As we were trying to talk with her, however, she walked up on the banks of the canal -- the acequia madre -- laid her towel down and walked into the water. As she did so, the huge cotton dress billowed up and formed a sort of platter -- or what modern-day youngsters would call a "flotation collar" -- around her head. She pulled her arms through the armholes of the dress, with the washrag and soap in her hands, and proceeded to take herself a bath. She was not embarrassed, the kids were jabbering Spanish a mile a minute, and Danny and I, after observing the spectacle for a moment with amusement mingled with respect for one who sought a position next to Godliness with such ingenuity and under such handicaps, then proceeded on toward the river.

When we got to the river, Danny, who could not swim and who was not venturesome in many other ways, was afraid to cross the river. This was the raging Rio Grande about which we had heard and read, although anyone looking at it could see that it had very little water in it. To reassure him, I pulled off my clothes and waded the Rio Grande, which was no more than knee-deep. We were both astonished that a river flowing so little water had made such a big splash in history. After this demonstration, Danny and I proceeded to cross the river, holding our clothes in our hands, re-dressed on the far side, and climbed up to the mountain cut through which the railroad went. I think this experience more than any other locates the place at which we crossed the river.

We sat by the side of the railroad well into the evening hours, long after it was dark, before a freight train came by. The train, when it finally came, had two steam engines on it and was really humping along. It was going so fast that Danny yelled to me above the clatter that he was afraid to catch it. I told him we had to, that he should go ahead and do it, but that I would wait for him to catch the train. He finally got up enough nerve to catch the next to the last car. The train jerked him quite substantially, but I had enough time to catch the next car, and we were on our way.

1927
CAT-WALK PULLMAN

Once on the freight train ride to California, when we found no good place to sleep in the dead of the night, I stretched out on the catwalk or runway which surrounds an oil tanker car, hooked my heels and elbows over the edge, and slept fitfully for some time. I felt no concern, and experienced no difficulties.

1927
CORRUGATED PIPE

Once in the night a brakeman came upon me as I was sitting in the center of a load of corrugated iron pipe. The pipe must have been three feet in diameter, stacked high and chained to a flat car. I was sitting in the center pipe, with several other big ones all around me. The brakeman came up and asked me, "Son, what would happen if this train stopped suddenly and the boom chains broke?" What would have happened would have been that both of my arms, both my legs and my head would have been cut off as the corrugated pipe was rammed into the back of the boxcar ahead. I move promptly.

1927
RHEUMY

On the run from El Paso to Indio, California, there was a fairly large gathering of bums on the train. One group was some kind of construction workers, and one of these was a boy who was badly afflicted with gonorrhea rheumatism. He had let his infection go so long without curing it up that is had settled in his joints. In my guess he could not have lived very long after this ailment had hit him. Our problem with him, when we needed to get off the moving freight train, was to pick a fairly clean place for him to fall, since he had no strength in his knees and would always go down when we got off the moving train. a most elaborate charade was indulged in when it came time for Rheumy to take his fall.

1927
INDIO

At Indio, California, on the way to Los Angeles, we were kicked off the freight train and kept from re-boarding in the only way possible, namely, for a brakeman to chase us so fare up the line that the train would be humping too fast to catch by the time it got to us. We wandered back to Indio to discover that the thermometer was reading 118 degrees in the shade. We passed by a vineyard in which bunches of grapes had been encased in small paper sacks for ripening. We ate all the hot grapes we wanted.

1927
TO L.A. BY TRUCK

We caught a ride from Indio on a truck taking a huge load of cantaloupes into Los Angeles. As hot as it was in the desert in the daytime, it was bitterly cold at night. We were riding high atop the crates, and as the truck rose to go through the mountains toward Los Angeles, we could get no relief except to crawl under the edge of the tarpaulin. Some hours later, we awake amidst a most unearthly din, to discover ourselves in a big central market in Los Angeles, where our benefactor had come to unload his cargo.

1927
CALIFORNIA AND . . . [BUST] II

1927
ECONOMICAL TRAVEL

On arrival in Los Angeles, Danny and I cast up our accounts to discover that we had been twenty-eight days from Frankfort to Los Angeles and had spent only $25, $12.50 apiece. Even when one discounts a meal off his brother in Louisville, a day with my folk in Bowling Green and in Nashville, a week with the Harmans in Mulberry, a week with the Nicholses in Austin, raids on roadside peach orchards in Georgia, orange groves in Florida, and grapevines in California, it must be conceded that transcontinental travel has rarely been accomplished more economically.

1927
TUITION

Our dreams of going to college in California were scheduled for a rude bout with a gang of brutal facts. California was just becoming a Mecca for Okies, and that was the general category into which we fell. Out-of-state tuition at UCLA was so high that we could not hope to pay it, and tuition at USC was even further beyond our means. This is why we sought temporary employment and shortly thereafter moved on in our separate ways.

1927
JAPANESE HOTEL

Danny and I lived in a little Japanese hotel, the address of which I have forgotten but which had exceedingly reasonable rates. It also had in the first room on the right at the front entrance a friendly, fairly well-weathered Japanese woman, whose profession gave Danny and me some substantial puzzlement, until finally we figured it out.

1927
A. RELIAB JEWELER

I purchased a wristwatch, with a written guarantee on it, from a pawnshop in Los Angeles. As I passed later through Idaho, my rides changed beside a truly beautiful little mountain stream. Since I had on boots, I walked out into the middle of the stream, and bent down to put my hands on the stones in the water and drink from the brook. I had drunk my fill before I realized that my wristwatch was under water, and wristwatches in those days were not waterproof. When I had opportunity later after getting my trunk, I looked through my little collection of papers to find the guarantee which the jeweler in the pawnshop had written out as he sold me the watch. I soon recognized that it was a standard type form and had been signed in a scrawl which, with careful study, proved to be "A. Reliab Jeweler." At all events, my watch was never any good after that.

1927
WESTERN DRI-KURE VULCANIZER MANUFACTURING COMPANY

After a couple of days in Los Angeles, I started looking for a job. In those days I had a little mannerism of self-deprecation. I went to the typewriter agency to get help for a job rather than to an employment agency. At one agency I responded to the question whether I was a good stenographer by saying, "Well, I am pretty fair." The interviewer turned to the man next to him and, pointing to me, said, "This boy has the most perfect inferiority complex I ever saw." After being told that he could not recommend for employment anybody who did not think any more of himself than I did, I went to the next typewriter agency, the L. C. Smith Agency, and in response to the very same question, I replied, "You are damn right, I am the best stenographer you ever saw." He recommended me to the Western Kri-Kure Vulcanizer Manufacturing Company, one of the first and most successful automobile tire retreading outfits.

The Company had a policy of cooking up a huge vat of soup, which could be tapped by employees to the full extent of desire, if they would take a half-hour rather than an hour for lunch. I brought a sandwich each day and partook of the soup.

There was a little girl in the office about my age whose name I can no longer recall; she lived in Huntington, California. One day I was showing off to her at lunch, showing her how I could throw a water glass, one of these barrel-type glasses that you sometimes see in restaurants, over my shoulder and catch it in my hand as it come over my head. I had done this many times. On this occasion, however, my shoulder twitched in some ungovernable way as I pitched the glass behind me, and it went over my head about twenty feet through the office and shattered on the telephone which the boss was holding in his hand. There was never any adequate explanation, but it passed as an accident since no nineteen-year-old stenographer could conceivably be expected to throw a heavy water glass at his boss.

1927
PASO ROBLES

I left Los Angeles in a swing north to go back home to Kentucky, after Danny had gone to sea. The only particular that I remember on the trip north to San Francisco was that I was caught outdoors at Paso Robles at nightfall and, in my search for comfort which I never found, I slept under a signboard up above the ocean and nearly froze to death.

1927
FALLEN ARCHES

I had had some iron cleats put on the heels of my shoes, and in all of my San Francisco wanderings to see Golden Gate Park and Golden Gate (this was before the bridge was built), I broke my arches down. This is all I remember that is worth noting in San Francisco. It was a beautiful and unique city then and it still is, but nothing happened that was remarkable during my stay there, except for the fallen arches.

1927
ENCOUNTER ON A TROLLEY

When I left San Francisco, I discovered that I could ride the ferry across the Bay (this was years before the construction of the Bay Bridge) and then ride a trolley from the ferry exit at Oakland on up through Berkely and other towns until I got beyond the place where the city traffic was too thick for me to catch a through ride.

I soon discovered that as we moved from one jurisdiction to another, there would be an extra dime for fare. I determined to leave the trolley when it next come my turn to pay a fare. I had already paid two fares, so the conductor knew that I was acquainted with what was happening. I waited to ride as far as I could, so I stood on the back platform until he got to me to exact another fare. I told him I did not want to go further but wanted to get off now. He cursed me quite bitterly as he stopped the trolley to put me off. As the trolley started again, I availed myself of the opportunity to cast aspersions on his ancestry. He pulled the cord and stopped the trolley again, jumped off, and came down to threaten me with chastisement. I was angry enough to tangle with him, but I realized any kind of altercation would land a bum like me in the clink, and all I could do was take it. As the stalemate lengthened, a big bruiser stepped off the trolley, lifted the conductor half off his feet with one hand under an arm, and said, "Leave the kid alone." The trolley left, and I walked down the street blubbering, so angry that I could not contain myself.

1927
BRAND NEW STAR

Somewhere north of Sacramento I got a ride with a comparatively young man in a brand-new Star roadster. He was headed for Klamath Falls, Oregon. We had a most congenial ride until, late in the evening, we came to a town called Weed, which was wide open for gambling and almost anything else. My benefactor sought out a gambling hall and proceeded to lose all his money. As his pile went down, I tugged at his sleeve to try to get him to go, but I promptly found myself hustled outside by a bouncer and told to shut my big mouth. When finally he come out of the gambling joint, he had no money at all, but they had given him a pint of whiskey for the road.

He proceeded to drive his new car and to drink whiskey as we went on toward Oregon. I became greatly alarmed when on several occasions he scraped the guard rails on the winding mountain highway. I sought to keep him from drinking more any way I could, and once when he was staring intently at the highway, I slipped his bottle of whiskey under a flap in the upholstering above my head. Pretty soon he wanted another drink and forced me to produce the bottle; and this time he would not settle just for taking a drink himself, but forced me to take one. I drank with him for an hour or two, trying to keep him from drinking it all himself. Up to that time, I had never had anything more than just one drink of whiskey, and I had a secret theory that a person possessing my intellectual power would not be adversely affected by it. I learned different very soon. We came to the point where the highway to Klamath Falls separated from that going on to Portland and Seattle; the driver stopped reluctantly at my urging, backed up and saw the sign, and then thanked me profusely for his having doubted that I meant well by him. He then went on his way, and I found myself at four o'clock in the morning on the highway with no ride and no hopes for one. I walked on down the highway, bemoaning my fortunes, for about two miles until I came to Medford, Oregon. I was fairly well under the influence, and I sat down on a curb to ponder my misfortunes. The next thing I remember it was daylight, I was lying in the gutter, and people were walking along the street. What position am I in, therefore, after this experience, when someone is disparaged for having sunk so low as to have slept in the gutter?

1927

NEAR OREGONIAN

My last ride hitched into Eugine, Oregon, was with a man who was connected with the University of Oregon. When I told him my story about my coming with Danny to California to go to college, and I was now headed home, he offered me a chance for a job if I wanted to attend the University of Oregon. I was by that time so homesick that I had no choice save to go on.

1927

DREARY SEATTLE

I remember Seattle as a dark and dreary place, since it was muggy and rainy when I was there, and I recall vividly the feeling of relief when I crossed the Continental Divide going east, moving from fog into bright sunshine.

1927

A LAST TIME

Driving east across the Rockies from Seattle, I hitched a ride with a Jewish gentleman from New York City. He was mortally terrified of the winding mountain road. Once as we rounded a sharp turn, with guard rails on the right protecting us fully, he crowded his car so far to the left that a car we were meeting had too little space to get by. My benefactor's comment, in response to the other motorist's expostulations, was, "There is such a thing as a last time, you know."

1927

OLD FAITHFUL

The geysers in Yellowstone Park are, of course, one of the park’s attractions, and the chief of these is Old Faithful, which erupts regularly every hour or so. The descent of the streaming water after it has been spouted high in the air is always in the spots, with the results that pits have been washed or else deposits have been built up around the pits to a depth of possibly eighteen inches. The water, of course, was steam when it erupted, and never got cool in the little pits. People, in 1927, had thrown pennies into these little pits, and if you climbed up on a mound built up around the geyser opening, you could see the pennies lying in the water. I determined that I would have one of those pennies, but that I would need to wait until just before the geyser was due to erupt again, so that the water would cool off somewhat. I have been told since that they now have a fence around this geyser, and people cannot come close. In those days, all I had to do was to wait until a few minutes before eruption time and grab my penny. I stuck my hand down in the water and grabbed one of the pennies, but the water was still so hot that I could not hold on to it. Later, the skin on my scalded arm peeled off somewhat after the fashion of sunburn.

1927
BEARS

I have had several encounters with bears in my time, but three or four such encounters stick out most vividly in my recollection.

On the night of my visit to the Yellowstone geysers, I hung around Old Faithful Lodge late in the afternoon to see the Park attendants feed the bears. After dark, when everyone had gone into Old Faithful Lodge, or his cabin or whatever, I unrolled my compact bedroll, which I carried in my hand, found some nice soft pine needles in the woods, and nestled down to sleep.

Some time in the dead of night, I was awakened, I did not know why. I raised my head to look and saw a huge black bear sniffing at my feet. I felt I had no choice but to pull my head into the sleeping bag, and that I did. After awhile, I went to sleep, and the next morning, witness the fact that I am telling the story, the bear was gone.

On the following day, I hooked a ride with a young man, his sister, and his sweetheart. He was a letterman on the Wisconsin football team, a large, fine-looking young man. As we proceeded from Old Faithful Lodge on through Yellowstone Park, we found ourselves highwayed by a mother bear and her twin cubs. They seemed so cute and harmless that we all got out of the car to look at them. Again, although we knew they were wild animals, we were quite taken with their friendliness and their docility. The young man decided that he would look in the knapsack which they had been using in their travels, to find something for the bears. He found a half-used jar of jelly to one of the cubs. As he reached to hand the jelly to the cub, the mother bear darted across, bit his hand viciously, slapped the cub about twenty feet, and took the jelly jar for herself, licking it clean to the bottom with her long tongue.

The young man’s hand was not badly torn, but there were deep tooth marks in it, and blood was quite plentiful. We left those parts fairly quickly.

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After Jettie and Dollee Small started their camp for little girls at Cloudcroft, New Mexico, in the early 1960’s, it became commonplace to be awakened in the middle of the night by bears turning over garbage cans downhill from the dining hall. Everyone who was awake or was awakened by the racket would rush to the upstairs window and peer down at the bear as he consumed whatever morsels he found in the garbage can. It was the chore of the handy boy, each morning after the marauding bears had dumped things, to police the garbage can area and clean up the site.

In mid-July of 1966 my sister Ruby MacDonald and I went to Cloudcroft at the end of Jettie’s camp to bring the busload of paraphernalia back to El Paso. On the night we were there, I went out to see to the locking of Ruby’s car. I heard a slight noise down close to the garbage can area and, thinking that the school bus which Jettie used to haul the little girls to various points was open and that a bear might get into it, I started down to close the bus door. I had got fairly close to the bus, when I heard a fairly sizeable scrambling, and, as I stood by our biggest tree, I heard what appeared to me to be a half dozen squirrels climbing the tree on the opposite side, away from me. As I walked around the tree, I became alarmed and moved a little further from it. Then, outlined against the sky, I saw a bear, about three-fourths grown, clinging to the tree about ten feet up. I began to yell for Jettie, who was in the living room of the cabin talking with Ruby, the three Price youngsters and their mother, Gloria Price, who was the camp program director. My yelling quickly brought witnesses, and as we gathered around the tree, some twenty or thirty feet off, the bear became alarmed and climbed still further up into the tree. When finally Andy Price and Kiko Dominquez, the handy boy, had brought flashlights, we turned them in the highest crotch of the tree and there sat our bear. We kept lights on him, showing him to a variety of people who happened by, and everybody had quite an exciting time.

Soon thereafter the grownups had to leave to call on Professor and Mrs. Clarence Ayres, who spend their summers in Cloudcroft, leaving the young ones at the cabin. They reported later that the bear climbed down after about an hour in the high tree and went his way.

1927

COLD SWEAT

The trip to the Falls was somewhat out of my way out of Yellowstone Park, but I had to see them. The road went along through the woods, but we could tell by the roar when we had passed the first falls. I became somewhat concerned when we passed the roar from the second falls. I asked my benefactor to let me out the cut through the trees and see the falls. I walked through the woods toward the roar and came out upon a beautiful sight. I could see both falls quite clearly, although not head-on. I could look straight down for several hundred feet and see Yellowstone River, the most turbulent torrent I had ever seen. To my left was a promontory which appeared to be straight in front of both falls, and I very much wanted to get a picture of the falls head-on with my small camera. I worked my way down the bank, so that I could go across to the promontory. Soon I came to a small cliff, possibly twelve feet high, from which talus had dropped down the steep slope leading toward the River, with a final drop of possibly fifty or seventy-five feet straight into the torrent. There seemed no reason why I should not hunker down and jump over the little precipice and move along. I did so, but when I landed the entire talus slope began to move down the steep bank in a quite substantial avalanche. Sure destruction faced me. The entire earth was moving under me. I noticed a small evergreen tree of perhaps two inches through, and I walked through the moving earth to catch onto the little tree and held on for dear life. The avalanche moved from under me.

I had never known before, and I have not known since, the true meaning of a cold sweat. I lay there, holding to the little tree, sweating freely and freezing. No one in Yellowstone Park knew my name. I had written my sister Ruby a postal card from Spokane, and no one who gave any thought to me even knew that I was in Yellowstone Park. If I had gone on into the river, my misfortunes doubtless would not have been observed, and I possibly would have been dashed to pieces and my body never found.

Finally, I got up enough nerve to start walking toward the edge of the talus slope to firmer ground, digging my feet into the loose material over the tops of my feet. Finally, in this fashion, I reached the firmer ground, climbed up on the promontory I had hoped to achieve, drank in the scenery, took my picture, and then turned to discover that a paved sidewalk led away from this vantage point. I followed it to debouch on the road that I had been previously travelling, some tow hundred yards below the place where I had started my perilous descent.

1927

CAL

On the road out of Yellowstone Falls, all traffic was forced to one side for a motorcade to go by. This motorcade was conducting President Calvin Coolidge through the Park. I saw him sitting in his big limousine as he drove by me. He was the first President I ever saw.

1927

CHEYENNE TO CHICAGO

The long and tedious trip from Yellowstone to Chicago contained only a few bright spots. I became discouraged with the hitchhiking business at Cheyenne and, with very poor planning, caught a freight train going east. It wound up in Julesburg, Colorado, where I had no need or desire to go. Thereafter, I hitchhiked all the way.

Somewhere in Iowa, I hitched a ride with four Chicago boys headed home in an open touring car. They later picked up another lad and with six of us all of an age we had a high old time.

At one point, we stopped for dinner in a restaurant and were served by a very comely young waitress. She was quite conscious of all of us boys, and there were many sidelong glances and amusing comments. Came dessert time and she came again to take our orders. Someone asked her what kind of pie she had and she named several, including raisin. One of the boys, with a perfectly straight face, looked at the young lady and said, “Mine’s raisin.” This was so amusing that each one of us ordered raisin pie. The young waitress held her composure until she left the table, when paroxysms of mirth overcame her.

We drove into Chicago at two o’clock in the morning, singing songs and having a wonderful time. We were stopped on the street by a police patrol car, with officers who were convinced somehow that we were wrongdoers. I have told many times and was much intrigued when one of the policemen pulled my head back by my back hair and said, “You look like a hophead to me.” I expostulated with all the fervor I could muster that I did not know what he was talking about. The cops soon let us go when they found we could account for ourselves.

1927-1928

COALWOOD

When I got back from the cross-country junket, by way of Seattle, Yellowstone, Cheyenne, and Chicago, Mr. Brandon of the Bowling Green Business University got me a job at Coalwood, West Virginia, with the Consolidation Coal Company, one of his persistent placement clients. My sister Virginia and husband Ray Harman lived and worked there for some years, and brother Ed lived and worked there one summer. It was a totally company town (Consolidation later in the depression gave way to the Carter Coal Company, which sued and brought about the Supreme Court invalidation of the Guffey Coal Act in about 1935 in Carter V. Carter Coal Co.). First an experience of Ed’s, before my time there, which was told and retold in the family for years, much to his discomfiture.

Virginia and Ray lived in a nice little bungalow belonging to the company, one of several in a row. Ed come home from work one afternoon tired and dirty. In the living room he found a little neighborhood girl of four, not unusual, because she was frequently there. He proceeded upstairs and took a both, with the child giving audience, which again was all right, puzzled meanwhile how they had go the washbasin and medicine cabinet on the opposite side of the bathroom wall so neatly since morning. Only when he was through bathing did he realize that he was in a neighbor’s house. He dressed, clean, and went out and on to Ray’s and Virginia’s house next door without encountering any of the adults in either house. The lady neighbor become aware he was in her house and spread the story later. Years later, if Ed was acting too big for his britches, someone would bring up the wrong hours matter.

I have many warm recollections of the fifteen months I lived in Coalwood, mostly stemming from life in the Club House. The Club House first floor had kitchen, dining room, and a very large parlor where everybody who had nowhere else to go congregated after supper, and a great variety of activities took place. On the second floor the women, mostly Coalwood and Caretta school teachers, and one or two married couples lived; and on the third floor the white collar men lived. My roommate, a rough and tumble type, was a polio victim named Brown, with a short leg but strong as a bull and virile as they come. I was such a youngster that he right away started calling me "Son" and I countered immediately by dubbing him "Pop." Everyone else took it up, and he was "Pop" Brown all during our association.

Pop was a big stakes poker player, along with several of the others; they had their games from Saturday afternoon after work through to Sunday afternoon, all night, around the edges and foot of someone's bed. Once, when it came Pop's time to serve as host, they played on our bed. I told Pop not to worry about me; when eleven o'clock came, I stretched out across the head of the bed and slept; at seven the next morning they were still playing poker and I had not lost any sleep.

Among the Club House denizens was a most delightful person named Roy Bartilson. As a play on his name, we called him "Bottles." His favorite expression, no matter what was said to him, was, "Hot Doe mighty-y-y! Once in his meanderings he acquired a bad infestation of body lice (crabs) and for about a week, all of us topfloor friends would gather of a late evening to watch Bottles catch crabs. I think one of the high points of my life was an exclamation he came out with as he searched his private parts for the delectation of a large gathering, "Hot Doe Mighty-y-y! there's one as big as a mudturtle." All of the men snickered for a week over that one.

One of the payroll clerks was a man (Pop Brown was a payroll clerk) named Cornette, another Kentuckian come over to West Virginia. He was a lone wolf, friend of no one, and in many quarters heartily disliked. Once he started courting a pretty little girl, the young sister of the wife of one of the mine foremen who lived in the house that had been occupied earlier by the Ray Harman's. The whole gang on the third floor egged me to start courting the little girl, Bobby Ison, to keep a so-and-so like Cornette from leading her to the altar, and I did so. She was my sweetheart when I left there. We called Cornette "Trumpet" for understandable reasons. My last physical encounter with another man was with Cornette. Once he piqued me in some fashion, I think purposely, and I responded with an epithet, alleging that he had a dread social disease and that his mother had been grievously indiscreet. He took the insult without a tremor, but on the next Sunday morning, as I strolled in front of the Club House, he came quickly up to me and tore my shirt into shreds. I hit him three good ones, but he never even doubled his fists. He won the fight because he got out of it with two sore places on his face and one on the top of his head, whereas I emerged with a sore foreknuckle, a shredded shirt, and embarrassed dishevelment. I cannot remember having engaged in fisticuffs for many years before that and certainly not after.

One of the third floor residents established a liaison with one of the school teachers on the second floor, visiting her during the night hours. Before the school year was over all of the men knew what was going on and which girl was involved. In May, after this girl had decided to go elsewhere next year, she came to me to ask if I had known about the affair, and when I said yes, she asked, "What do you think a girl in my position should do?" I told her she should inquire of the man involved who all knew of the liaison, and then she should go to each one to ask, as a favor to her, to help protect her good name. She responded, "That is precisely what I am doing." I have not to this day mentioned the names of the two of them together.

The only whiskey that people had in the Club House was popskull make up in the hills outside the company monopoly, raw and breathtaking but as effective as any other kind. It was bought in clear glass gallon jugs. Late at night, after all had retired, anyone who had an empty gallon jug to dispose of would roll it down from the top of the third floor stairs. It would bump dutifully on every bare wooden step, loud enough to be heard a half mile in the dead of night, then roll the five or six feet from the bottom of the top flight of stairs to the lower stairs, clatter down that flight and the on out into the Club House living room. This came to be a sport that was amusing to all, since no one would tell, even if he knew, who had rolled the jug. Poor Cornette, however, once when he had come to the Club House for lunch, rolled a demijohn down after everyone else had gone back to work and he was the only person on the third floor. The old lady Club House manager, whom we called "Old Battle-Axe," put him over the ropes in the office of our boss, Mr. Ed Berlin.

Once when the Club House food got terribly bad, and we were served sauerkraut and weiners, sauerkraut, bread and everything else -- into one big platter in the middle of the table, possibly eighteen inches to two feet high, doused it generously with catsup and salted and peppered it, and left the table. I recall no place else in Coalwood where one could get so much as a sandwich, so we went hungry. Old Battle-Axe of course was outraged and the whole bunch of us at that particular table were called into the boss's office within the hour. The boss turned in a jolly performance of mock severity designed to mollify the Battle-Axe and yet let us know we ought to be ashamed.

One person who lingers warmly in my recollection was the company nurse, whom we called Nursie. She preached hygiene endlessly. Once someone brought in a dime sack of jawbreaker candy and gave each one in the Club House parlor a hard candy ball. The Club House parlor was a large room with hardwood floor and no carpet. When Nursie's jawbreaker popped out of her mouth and rolled away, she chased it all the way across the room, pounced on it like a duck on a June bug and popped it back into her mouth. I saw to it that she preached little hygiene thereafter.

The company doctor was a handsome young man named Lambert. The Company had hired him as a physician after he had completed all but one year of medical school, and in most ways he was a competent doctor. He was high society, however, and he and a buddy of his and two of the school teachers were always on the go. They were a little bit superior to evening Club House highjinks, until one night they ran his Cadillac off a mountainside and wrecked it. Thereafter we were treated to their company of an evening until his car was fixed.

Another person that I remember pleasantly was a big old country boy named Clarence Worrell. He was Bottles's roommate; they worked somewhere outdoors, not in the mines or office. Clarence was so big, clumsy, and puppy friendly that everybody loved him. We started a little game once in which one person would hold his breath and another would squeeze his chest from behind, and he would pass out. I have never found out whether this is harmful, but we did it many times with no apparent ill effects. Once when I held Clarence in that fashion, the instant he lapsed into unconsciousness, his great weight took me to the floor on top of him, and the bridge of his nose hit the floor with a terrible whack. Later he sported the worst bruised nose I ever saw, but he insisted he was unconscious when it happened and that it did not hurt later, and thus no great harm was done.

A boxing match developed at the Club House once when a braggadocio deputy sheriff who considered himself quite some man challenged Skeeter the barber to a boxing match. Only one among us (I have forgotten who) knew that Skeeter had been champion of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) some ten years before in World War I. The fight, much ballyhooed and wagered on, with boxing gloves and a makeshift ring, ended ingloriously in less than a minute, when Skeeter repeatedly hit him in the face with sledgehammer blows. We heard later a tale that the deputy once swaggered around some of the tough mountain boys with his gun on his hip, and one of them asked him if his gun had rubber sides on it. He responded, puzzled, "No, why? And the toughy replied, "Well, you'd better get some put on it, because if you hang around here with it much longer, one of us is going to ram it up your rear end."

I was a baby-faced type then (and indeed for many years thereafter), and one of the teachers, a girl named Eppling (once at the barber shop, I asked an Italian miner who his little boy's teacher was; he asked the little boy, "Who's a your teach, Ceece?" and Ceece responded, "Miss Epples." So we called her Miss Epples) who taught second grade and who read to the children from a reader filled with stories about "Baby Ray," started calling me Baby Ray. Throughout the last year of residence in Coalwood, I was Baby Ray to everyone. When I left Coalwood in July of August of 1928 for a hitchhiking trip to Washington, New York, and Boston, and on back to Austin to go to the University, I sent several postcards from points of interest to the Coalwood Club House with the only message, "Hey, Hey, Baby Ray." I never again saw or heard from any of my good Coalwood friends, except for my sweetheart Bobby Ison, who, after I was well into my first freshman semester in the University at Austin, finally gave me up as a lost ball in the high weeds.

1928
JENKINS

Some time in he fall and winter of 1927, after I had worked a few months at Coalwood, an elderly woman secretary (at least one much older than I) who had courted a man in the Consolidation Coal Company's establishment at Jenkins, Kentucky, was surprised by her boy friend's sudden marriage to a much younger woman, and life in Jenkins became intolerable for her. The two brothers Berlin, who were general managers at Coalwood, West Virginia, and Jenkins, Kentucky, looked around to find someone in Coalwood who could exchange positions with the Jenkins secretary long enough for her to be able to move among her old associates without embarrassment. The result was that the bosses arranged to switch her and me,. and I worked in Jenkins for possibly three months.

I have many fine recollections of Jenkins. I lived at the clubhouse, which was quite a long walk from the offices of the company, and life in that clubhouse was almost as sprightly as it was in the clubhouse at Coalwood. I remember once taking a long walk from the office to the clubhouse for lunch and noticing a highway survey man's transit sitting in the yard of the clubhouse some few feet off the sidewalk and pointed across the huge lake, possibly a half-mile wide. On some impulse, I decided to step over to the transit and look through it. The spyglass was trained on a rather hefty colored woman sitting on the far side of the lake fishing, some half-mile away, holding her fishing pole in deep concentration, with her dress pulled clean up in her lap. I went on to the clubhouse, took my seat on the front porch, and watched each person in turn as he came by the transit, step over, look through it, and go away laughing.

Jenkins is close to the Virginia line. The Kentucky-Virginia line is crossed by the highway at Pound Gap. Once while I was there, a Negro suspected of murdering a white family was lynched and his body burned at Pound Gap. I slept through the whole thing but saw the charred corpse the next morning.

1928

RICHARD ARMOUR

My freshman English teacher was a handsome young man, I believe not much older than I, who had just got his Master's degree from Harvard University. His name was Richard Armour. I was always a good student in English and he once complimented me on coming closer to having an individual style than any of the youngsters he had taught. Since that time, of course, Mr. Armour has become quite famous as a writer of humorous books and a producer of little squibs on humor pages of magazines.

In 1960 or 1961, we brought as a Departmental Visitor to the campus of U. T. El Paso an Art Professor from Scripps College named David Scott. I had wondered if the Richard Armour there was the one who had taught me English. Scott checked and wrote back later to say, yes, he was, and that he sent me greetings. I recall some correspondence with him, but nothing of any substance. Out paths have never crossed, again.

1928

CHRISTMAS IN COLEMAN

Two of the guys I came to know and like in the fall of my freshman year were Clyde Brown and Pinky Creswell of Coleman. They both worked downtown as women's shoe salesmen, at the French Boot Shop or something like it. As Christmas approached, I faced the lonely time with some concern. Neither Pinky nor Clyde -- Pinky an irrepressible redhead and Clyde a handsome, slender, good-looking "sheik" type -- had no real homes in Coleman or anywhere else, I suspect, but they knew the Thompsons there, who were well-to-do, and they checked by mail with their friend Melton Thompson and got me invited to the Thompsons for Christmas. Pinky and Clyde were loud, fast-talking, playful and full of fun; their friend Melton was bigger than life in nearly all dimensions, not then in school for some reason, six feet four, and one of the wildest men I ever knew.

There was nothing in Coleman for boys to do except yak at one another, but that was what days were for in that crowd. Once as we were standing on a street corner with some other boys of our age, a lad named B. J. Somethingorother noticed a pert little black girl approaching us on the sidewalk and told us with some assurance to watch the fun he planned to have with her. As we came abreast of us, B. J. leered at her and said, "Four Bits." She responded very brightly, "Just two-bits for you, Mr. B. J." We all yelled and laughed at him and at the come-uppance she had dealt him.

Melton the fall before had contracted gonorrhea, and too soon thereafter had decided to have himself circumcised, without telling the surgeon about the gonorrhea, and after a hot petting session with a girl friend, with no thought of intercourse, the infection came back on him with a vengeance. He had had a real bad time of it and still at that time was not completely cured from his troubles.

The Thompsons felt they had to have something under the Christmas tree for me; they presented me with a carton of Lucky Strike cigarettes. I had never smoked cigarettes before, only pipe and cigars, but I started on Christmas Day of 1928 and used them regularly until 1952, a package or more a day, except for brief intervals of swearing off. I was much like Mark Twain, who was quoted as saying it was easy to swear off smoking, and he ought to know because he had done it a thousand times.

I think I have told somewhere else of my hitchhiking back to Austin after Christmas. Pinky, Clyde and Melton were showing me such a fast-talking good time that I stayed in

Coleman until too late in the day. I was caught at nightfall somewhere near Goldthwaite and was let out from my last ride on a deserted road in pitch dark. It was dead of winter and all I had was a light topcoat; it was not norther cold, but still too cold. I didn't see a car all night; I heard the rattle of a two-horse wagon ahead on the road; I ran and ran with my light suitcase, but I never did catch up with it. I finally pulled myself through a wire fence to a barn that loomed beside the road and collapsed exhausted on some scraps of hay. At daylight, I continued on my journey, still cold and stiff and with a hellacious bad cold, but nothing fatal, since I am still here to tell about it.

Melton Thompson joined us at the University in late January, but he was one of those who did not even try to pass his courses, and he busted out well before the spring semester was over. I was a hard-working student with numerous jobs and I had little time to waste on him; nor did Pinky and Clyde, who put in long hours selling women shoes and trying to peek past their hemlines.

HITCHHIKING STORIES
1928-1932

I have many recollections from the hitchhiking I have done across the country. Once an Arkansas country preacher stopped his car, got out, and faced me, and said, "All right, young man, if you are going to start any rough stuff, do it right now." I, of course, was taken aback; so we proceeded to talk the matter out. He had always felt certain that all hitchhikers were potential robbers and murderers; he had never before stopped for one; I was a nice-appearing lad, and he had stopped on impulse. I insisted most earnestly that I had no evil intent and that I was only trying to get down the highway. He was reassured and agreed to take me. It soon developed, however, that he was a traveling salesman as well as a preacher, dropping by little grocery stores peddling his product, whatever it was. I soon had to explain to him that I could move faster if I left him. I was gone ahead of him within three minutes.

As a southern boy, I knew southern black people well. I was almost completely bewildered once in New York State to get a ride in a new automobile with a black man from Haiti; he talked English with a pronounced French accent -- A curiosity to a person of my background. I remember him as a very cautious man.

I hitchhiked to New York and Boston. In Albany in the late summer of 1928, I saw under construction in front of the State Capitol the platform from which Governor Alfred E. Smith later delivered his acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination.

Further over into the State of New York, I was given a ride by a bumpkin, who was much impressed when I told him I was going to become a college student when I got to Austin, Texas. He told me he had graduated from Syracuse University, which was near by. I asked him what had been his major subject, and he responded "chemistry," although he pronounced it with a "ch" sound, revealing his lie incontrovertibly.

When I went through Cincinnati once, I think it was in 1928, I spent the night at a flophouse, in the interest of economy. Even though I locked my door, I soon discovered that, in the first place the locks were not secure, and in the second place this was no ordinary flophouse; a fairly personable young woman opened my door to inquire if I needed company, for a consideration, of course. I responded that all I wanted was sleep. After that intrusion, I decided to put my wallet under my pillow, with my forty dollars. The next morning I was forty miles down the road into Kentucky before I remembered my wallet under the pillow and had to go back. At the flophouse no beds had been made and doors were wide open; I reclaimed my wallet from the place I had put it.

Once when I was hitchhiking across East Texas, a farmer type stopped and offered me a lift if I would agree to vote for Mrs. Ferguson for governor. I told him that I was a student, that I had never paid a poll tax, and that therefore such a promise from me would have no significance. He consented to let me ride anyway, and as we went along we discussed the impeachment of governor Jim Ferguson. I, as a senior student in government at the University of Texas, knew a great deal about the impeachment, and I related the details of it to him. He brushed off the damaging details airily, declaiming stoutly, "Jim says all that is a lie."

Once in Arkansas or Tennessee, when I was headed to Kentucky from Austin, I was picked up by a woman, a boy, and a girl. They turned out to be the family, or a part of it, of Congressman Luther Johnson of Texas. Quite understandably, they brushed me off at the end of the day, so that they could bed down and continue their journey the next day without the burden of the likes of me. In 1966, at a party in the Hoover House, Elva Josey, wife of Board Member Jack Josey, in some fashion elicited this morsel of information from me, and we had a most delightful time with it. It developed that she was related to the Johnsons. She later told me she had checked with the children, then in their fifties, and they did remember the incident.

Once when I was hitchhiking back to Austin from Kentucky, I had come out of Memphis at nightfall, heading into the low, mosquito country with some trepidation and, since it was hard to get rides at night, willing to take any ride that come along. Pretty soon a flattop truck gave me a lift. He was driving straight through to El Reno, Oklahoma, some several hundred miles away; I recognized that if I went with him I would wind up hundreds of miles closer to Austin by the next morning, even though far out of my way.

It was in this fashion that on that trip I got to Ardmore, Oklahoma. My short ride out of Oklahoma City had terminated, and I went to a filling station for relief. Filling station restrooms in those days were given less care than is done nowadays, and that one was filthy. I thought for a moment of standing on the edges of the seat and hunkering, but I decided to go ahead and sit, despite the filth. As I turned around to face the closed door, I read inscribed on it, "You might as well go ahead and sit down, brother; these Ardmore crabs can jump thirty feet.

JUMPING SWIVEL CHAIR
1929

For some seven years, from my freshman year until well after I become a member of the teaching faculty at The University of Texas, I worked three hours a week as a typist for Dr. Leonidas Warren Payne, Professor of English. The first office I had with him was in the back wing of the Old Main Building, then later in the tower of the Old Main Building, on the ground floor of what was then the Library Building, and finally on the second floor of Waggoner Hall. The two or three occurrences I want to relate in connection with Dr. Payne took place in the old wing back of the Old Main Building.

Once Dr. Payne was sitting in an oak swivel chair, the kind that has no rollers but sits nevertheless solidly on a swivel, when he leaned too far back, and the chair gave a mighty lurch, shot toward the wall, and Dr. Payne fell from possibly two or three feet up flat on his back in the office. He was a man of about sixty, and he took a mighty jolt. I never saw a swivel chair, before or after behave in quite that way.

Once Dr. Payne had me making some stencils which traced the plot of Joseph Conrad's novel, Lord Jim, from the beginning of the book through the denouement to the end. He charted the novel plots and then wrote words along the side to tell about the development of the plot. This one, as I recall it, was LORD JIM. I was deeply involved in this typing job when he came into the office, and I told him I was very much intrigued by it. I never had any advanced coursed in English. He became deeply involved in telling me about the plot, giving me much more than the chart revealed, when suddenly he snapped his fingers and said, "Joe, I have sat here talking to you and missed my class."

We examined the time and found that it was a quarter past the hour. He had become so deeply immersed in out talk, nevertheless, that he resumed it and some hour later, he snapped his fingers again and said, "Joe, I have missed my other class!" This splendid man, so full of enthusiasm for his subject, had sat talking to a student and become so absorbed that he missed both his classes that morning. He made me promise never to tell the story, and I never did until after his death. Years later I ran on to his daughter, Sarah, whom I knew as a student, and told her what had happened. She said she thought it was the cutest story she had ever heard.

One Christmas, when I was caught in Austin with no friends to visit, Dr. Payne, softhearted as always, got Mrs. Payne to call me and invited me to Christmas dinner. It was a very fine occasion, with the Wharey's and some other couple there, white tablecloths and all, and after the dinner, I hooked my cuff on the demi-tasse coffee cup and strung my cup of coffee all the way up the beautiful tablecloth. There was much ooh-ing and ah-ing, but nobody in the crowd was as much chagrined or regretful as I.

LEWIS
1929

In Garrison Hall at the University of Texas when I was a student and government department stenographer between 1929 and 1934, we had a janitor named Lewis, who was an amusing and happy fellow. When asked how he was, his reply would invariably be, "Fine as split silk tore all to pieces."

The head university telephone operator used to go home every evening from the Main Building by walking into the front door of Garrison Hall, descending to the basement, and then on out the back door and down the hill. One year she continued to work long after her pregnancy began to show, until one day Lewis said to me, "I am afraid she is going to domino right here in my hall.

Lewis had a corny old trick he pulled repeatedly, whenever he had an unsuspecting audience. He would unlock an empty office to go in and clean it, and then fuss loudly and talk hatefully to the people in the office, telling them to get on out, they had been there long enough, and it was time for him to clean the office. This would naturally startle anyone hearing his words, and they would come around to see who it was the janitor was talking to so abruptly, only to get a horse laugh from Lewis. Sometimes Lewis went over the help Poole, one of the Main Building janitors, with his work, and Poole thus heard his horseplay there. Lewis told me that Poole once went into the Health Service's offices and started such a line of chatter as he had heard Lewis use, when a woman, who apparently had lain down and gone to sleep, was flushed out of the ladies' lounge by Poole's rough scolding. Lewis related that Poole was so completely discombobulated that he had to quit and go home before the night's work was finished.

HOUSTON
1929

After the spring semester was over in 1929, I bummed a ride to Houston with a boy I knew who had a car. Two occurrence I can remember well from that trip. It was an open car, with no top at all. After we were under way, driving by the Little Campus Dormitory, I attempted to light a cigarette in the wind, holding the paper of matches in my left hand as a striker, and the wind diverted the flame to the pack of matches. They exploded and struck, burning, to the palm of my hand; they burned out before I could knock them off the burn. I learned the hard way to drop the match pack after you struck the one you were using.

We played tag on the way to Houston with another car with two girls and two boys in it -- nothing dangerous; we would pass them and they would pass us from time to time. Once when they were ahead we approached them at full speed; it was obvious they had a flat tire, but we didn't stop. One of the boys in our car put out his hand to wave just as one of the girls at the roadside was waving, and their hands hit together solidly at about sixty miles an hour. I never saw the girl again, but the boy, long after we got to Houston, had a badly beaten hand.

I got to Houston with only six dollars to my name. I went because my roommate, Ivan Edwards, had invited me to come home with him. He knew how nearly broke I was, with no summer income in prospect. He was to be a senior student in engineering next year. His full name was Ivan Reo Edwards; he preferred Ivan, but his folks called him Reo; his younger sister, a few months older than me, was named Iva Rea, and was called Rea. Rea was a real operator; the previous summer she had, through some kind of contact in the Houston fire department, won a contest involving a trip to Paris, which she had taken. She was a real attractive girl; she liked me, but I was so unassuming a budding sophomore that she could not show it.

Rea busied herself and got me a job with the City of Houston Water Department. I reported as directed and found myself digging ditches with a pick and shovel far out on Main Street near a big luxury hotel which I think was named the Shoreham. I had no liking for ditchdigging, but I went back to the Edwards's that night with no complaints. Rea got suspicious and got some man to drive her by and saw me in the ditch. I didn't see her, but she told me later she saw me. The next day my boss gave me a timekeeper's job, up out of the ditch after two days of it.

A few days later I got a telephone call at the Edwards's to report to the Rabon-Thompson Motor Company, near downtown Houston, for a stenographic job. Rea didn't have anything to do with that job; it come through an employment agency I had filed with. Rabon-Thompson handled a Graham-Paige franchise. Mr. Thompson was an old fud, good for nothing but the money he had put up for the agency. Mr. Rabon was a powerhouse; he made the outfit go. He smoked expensive cigars, which he kept in a top drawer of his desk. He was much taken with my expertise as a stenographer. I snitched one of his big cigars once, more or less openly; instead of upbraiding me, he called me in his office and showed me a box of "crooks," cheap molasses soaked crooked cigars, in his bottom drawer, and told me to take one whenever I needed it. I took him up on it, once or twice a day.

One of Mr. Rabon's closest business associates was a Dallas man who had a male confidential/secretary who handled all of his business; Mr. Rabon admired this arrangement very much. Once he invited me to go with him for dinner down at the San Jacinto Inn, near the battleground. It was really a fancy place, the snazziest I had ever seen. On the way home he asked me if I would be willing to forego returning to the university in the fall to become his private secretary after the pattern set by his Dallas friend. I told him no, and we never ate fancy or talked about it again. Very soon thereafter I learned through talk in the office that the Dallas confidential secretary had, through the power of attorney entrusted to him, snagged onto and absconded with quite a bit of his boss's money. I am quite confident that Mr. Rabon must have concluded he was lucky I hadn't taken him up.

I stayed with the Edwardses for the five weeks I lived in Houston; all the room and board they would let me pay was a pro-rata share of the grocery bill; and Mrs. Edwards figured that down to practically nothing. Old Charley Edwards was in the oil tool business (reclaiming oil casings and other materials from old oil wells). Ivan once told me old Charley would have been rich like old man Hughes of Hughes Tool Company (Howard was then a boy our age) if he had not spent all he could make fighting infringements of his patents for salvaging old properties.

One night Ivan got dates for us and drove the tow girls and me down to the beach at Galveston. Naturally he drove Old Charley's car and I had the back seat with my date. We went for walks on the beach in opposite directions. The next morning at the breakfast table Old Charley, with his wife, son, and daughter present, asked in all seriousness which one of us had put the up-side-down footprints on the back of the front seat of the car. I left the table to check, and, sure enough, there weren't any damned footprints on the back of the front seat. Back at the table Old Charley was chortling and shaking his big belly so hard he couldn't digest his breakfast, and Mrs. Edwards, a sweet little lady with a big brass voice, was telling him he ought to be ashamed.

I didn't like Houston. That was in the days before air-conditioning, and Houston in summer was hotter than a by-God. I seriously doubt that it would ever have grown to its present size without air-conditioning. In the five weeks I was there my mental processes slowed down, or so it seemed to me, and I feared they would ultimately collapse altogether. When Melton Thompson tempted me to Iraan with the prospect of much more money than the Rabon-Thompson job, I was not hard to persuade. His letter to me from McCamey was addressed simply "Old Joe Ray, Houston, Texas." and it came to me General Delivery, with indications on its face that it had gone first to the county judge of Harris County, who then was a man named Joe Ray.

IRAAN STORIES
1929

In Houston in July 1929, after I received Melton Thompson's letter telling me he could get me a job driving a truck for his Uncle at Iraan, I telephoned him there to make sure, since I had a job in Houston. He told me about his uncle having the trucking contract and that it would be a cinch; he with his own truck was making twenty-two fifty a day and I driving one of his uncle's would make $5.50 a day seven days a week; I could clear four dollars a day. I told him I had never driven anything bigger than a drycleaners panel truck and the Goody Tea Room pie truck, but he said I could learn it if I could drive a car, and he knew I could do that.

Shortly after I reported for work at Iraan, out on the project they told me to put on a bolster and a frame two-wheel trailer and move some one-inch pipe from one place to another. Others helped me rig it up, and then I drove head on up to the rim where the pipe lay. When the swampers had loaded and boom-chained the thirty-foot pipe on the truck and trailer I had to back out. The vagaries of trailer reactions to reverse gear were a total mystery to me. In saw what was happening, but I didn't know what else to do than I was already doing, and I turned the trailer over on its side with its load of pipe. Iraan got its name from Rancher Yates and wife An

There was nothing to do but call the boss. Old Man Melton got purple in the face and directed the unloading and straightening up of the trailer; then there by the truck he scowled at me and said, "I thought you said you could drive a truck." I responded meekly I could, but this was my first experience with a trailer. He was about to pop: "You little son of a bitch, if you come back here tomorrow morning without knowing how to handle a trailer, I'm going to kick your ass until your nose bleeds." I never was bothered with nosebleeds in Iraan.

My trouble with the trailer caused me to seek out the best professional truck driver on the project, a big, burly redheaded fellow. I have forgotten his name, but it seems to me it was Stan Roberts. My trouble caused much interest in trailer backing among the men on the project. Two or three nights after he gave me trailer-backing instruction, a big argument got going about whether he could back a four-wheel trailer into a narrow garage without slowing down. Four-wheeler backing is really complicated and requires almost a gift for skillful manipulation. They got up some pretty big bets on the operation; they measured the garage and found it four feet wider than the big four-wheeler. I didn't do any of the betting, because it would have been gambling with some school money, and normally I don't gamble on such stuff anyway. He slammed it into the garage moving quickly and would have rammed it right through the back of the garage if the truck had not been equipped with airbrakes. We measured it almost equidistant from the garage walls.

The truck driver became my buddy. We roomed at the same place. One night I stayed home reading while he took his customary stroll up to the pool hall. He came back within a few minutes, and I noticed his face was white; I asked him what was the matter. He told me that about five years before he had been carrying on with a married woman, going to her house while her husband was away. Once they both feel asleep and were awakened by the husband standing over them. He was directed to get up and dress and get out; as he was leaving the husband told him, "If I ever see you again I am going to kill you." That night in the pool hall In the boomtown of Iraan he looked up and caught that cuckolded husband glaring at him. He left real fast; he said a man feeling as guilty as he did could do nothing else.

One man who worked as a swamper on my truck was Old Scotty, a crusty old man of fifty-five or so. He never had much to do with anybody, but he was a pretty good worker. Once somebody brought a camera out on the project; all of us were quite willing to ham it up any way the photographer wanted us to except Scotty, who turned his back or walked away whenever he was asked to pose for a picture. One night when we were drinking beer, I got more than I needed, and I soon found Scotty following me out back to the used beer disposal spot and trying to run his hand down inside my overalls. I had had little contact with homosexuals, but I had heard about them, and I would have nothing to do with them; but I would have been no match for him in a forthright test of strength. Soon I left for home, with him tagging along. The only way I could get rid of him was to flop on my bed on my stomach with my clothes on and go to sleep. I heard him prowling around our quarters before I went to sleep, and the next morning I missed something of modest value, but I never complained.

One day they sent me on an errand to McCamey, an older and bigger town some fifty miles or so from Iraan. There was need for my flatbed truck on the project and I drove a heavy little International dump truck to McCamey. Somebody told me about the two sets of gears the International had, the extra one for heavy pulling, but I brushed off instruction along that line because I was going to be empty and only on the highway and in town. On the way, going down a long steep hill, I put the truck in lower gear to brake it, but the pull on the gear somehow tripped it entirely out of gear, and I went the rest of the way like a bat out of hell. As heavy as it was and at that speed, I knew the brake hands wouldn't last long. I carefully held it on the road, which at times took some doing, and let it run; I was too busy to look at the speedometer. In the flat after it stopped, I was able to get it back into regular gear again.

On that trip I stopped to examine a gila monster that had been killed by a car. It was the only one I ever saw, alive or dead, but I knew what it was from pictures I had seen. The carcass was one of the forbidding sights I ever saw.

By some wild chance while I was in McCamey for a few minutes and the only time I was ever there then or later, my boss, Mr. Melton drove up in his coupe, with his two cute little pet brown and white Boston bull terriers. The terriers was something that challenged them and they piled out the car window and scooted ahead or the stopping car. Old Melton jumped out and stood beside the car and roared after his dogs with a voice that could be heard all over that dusty little town, "Come back here, God damn it! Running down that road like spotted ass apes." And, amazingly, the spotted assed apes promptly came back and got into the car and remained there while Melton went about his McCamey business, whatever it was.

It hurt Old Melton to pay me in cash after forty-five days, nearly $250, but he kicked it in. I never saw much of Melton Thompson in Iraan, because he was a plutocrat and living somewhere in style; and after I left Iraan I never saw or was in touch with him again. My mind was on too much of a single track for us to get together.

TEARS OF FURY
1929

In the summer of 1929 after my freshman year at the University, I got a job through my good friend, Melton Thompson of Coleman, on a big refinery construction project at Iraan in West Texas, where the huge new Yates oil pool had recently been brought in. Melton's uncle, a colorful old reprobate, had the trucking contract. Melton had written me about the job while I was working in Houston in a letter addressed to "Old Joe Ray, Houston, Texas," and, miraculously I received it.

My job was driving a big flatbed Graham-Paige truck, which was used at the beginning and end of the day's work to haul the workers back and forth between Iraan and the construction site several miles out on the mesa from the village. (Incidentally, I understood the name Iraan derived from the names of Ira Yates and his wife Ann who owned the huge ranch which overlay the oil pool.) My day's work was to do with my truck whatever was ordered, with or without a gang of "swampers," mostly odd jobs.

A field crew out on one of the pipelines was bossed by a man named West. The section boss had a piece of machinery strapped to the bed of my truck and told me to take it out to Mr. West. I started out some fifteen miles around the mountain to the place where West's gang was working the day before, forgetting completely they had moved to a new location only a couple of miles in another direction. The narrow mountain road, following a rain the day before, was slippery. When I realized my mistake, I either had to turn around or go on for thirty miles on the single-track road around the mountain.

I had earlier seen a driver turn sharply up the mountainside and then back down headed back the way he had come; there was no other way to turn around. I switched the big truck up-hill and then backed down into the road, but to my great consternation I had slipped off the lower edge of the road. The more I backed and filled with the truck, the further it slipped down the hillside, until I was finally some thirty or forty feet below roadlevel; and the more I tried, the worse it got.

I could see my summer job, which was to finance my start in the University in September, going out the window. The wheels were buried axle-deep in the mud. I became so angry with myself and so frustrated with the mud and the truck that I began to curse and blubber and cry. In angry desperation I began to throw the gears first into low and then into reverse rapidly, rocking the truck, until suddenly it began to climb and finally reached the road, again headed in the wrong direction. I chose to go the long way around, coming to West's party some hour and a half late. Mr. West was quite impatient with me, asking why I had been so slow and why I had come from the wrong direction. I gave him some light comment, brushing his questions off; I was much gratified later to discover that no report had been made and no questions asked.

TOBACCO JUICE
1929

In the summer of 1929, when I worked at Iraan, I picked up the habit of chewing tobacco. I had chewed before, as any Kentucky boy stemming from a rural background would have done, but I had never got into the habit until that summer. The gang trucks that worked on the construction job where I was had four or five swampers, as they were called. Everybody on the construction job got the same pay, fifty cents an hour; but the truck driver worked an extra hour, a half-hour in the morning and in the afternoon hauling the gang to and from work, and made another dollar. The aristocratic truck driver never turned a hand except to drive. To even things up, my truck's four swampers enforced a requirement that the driver had to provide chewing tobacco for the entire crew of the truck. I thus had to purchase each day three 10 cent packages of Beechnut Scrap Tobacco. So long as I had to buy it, I might as well chew my part of it, and thus chewed the whole time I was there.

On the way back to Austin, hitch-hiking to San Angelo, I got a ride on a flat-top truck, not unlike the one I had been driving. The truck sped rapidly across the country. There was no place where I could locate myself, even close behind the center of the cab, where the wind would not whip around me. I had in my pocket a package of Beechnut, and I proceeded to take a chew. When the time came to spit tobacco juice, I figured that the best way would be straight back. I tried it, but the juice blew all over my face. Since I was already befouled, I had nothing to lose and, with the truck humping along, I tried every other possible posture for the exercise, with the same results. I have often thought that I could communicate my findings to my friends the physicists in the interest of pure science: there is no way you can spit tobacco juice in a real high wind except on your own face.

I THOUGHT YOU KNOWED IT
1929

Perhaps everyone has the experience with meaningless phrases repeated endlessly among friends in a variety of situations. "It won't be long now" was a phrase in wide acceptance in Frankfort when I was there. No matter what anyone said to you, you could respond by saying, "It won't be long now." When I was working during the summer at Iraan, Texas, all of the men on the construction project used a little phrase, "I thought you knowed it." The phrase fits nearly every comment anybody might want to make. Back when I was a small boy, on the campus of Western Kentucky State College, now Western Kentucky University, my big brothers and their cohorts had a phrase, "Now you listen here!" This one would be repeated, from one to the other.

One would say, "Now you listen here!" and the other would respond with the same phrase, and on and on, with blazing angry eyes and threatening mien, all to no purpose except high fun.