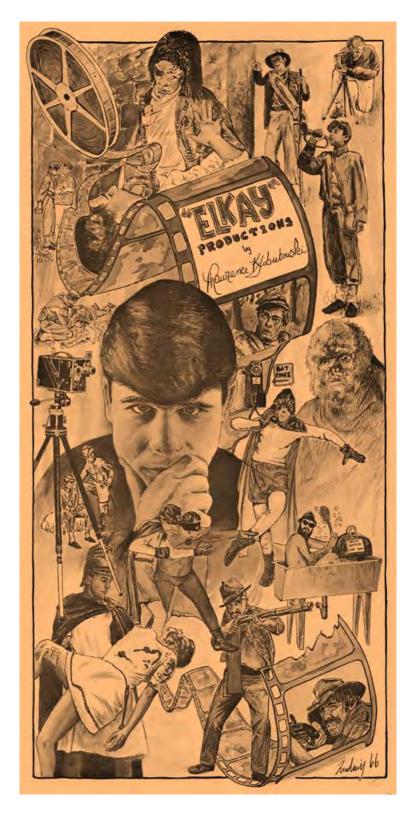
# MOVIE MAKER

Memoir and History of the "Elkay" Productions

Part 1: The American Story



# Lawrence Klobukowski

### Dedication

To the Reluctant but Always Cooperative Actor

My Brother

Stephen Joseph Klobukowski

25 December 1951 - 30 November 2012

#### A Special Thank You to

Paul Chmielewski, who encouraged me to write this

Margaret M. Pearson, Proofreader

Michael Flynn, Proofreader

John Hankwitz

Paul Bentzen

David Jurgella

John Primm

Dan Perkins

Jack Roper

Catherine Sosnowski

Marcin Nowakowski, Discovered Family History, Translator

Mike Brzezinski, Family Photographs and History

Mike Gifford

Mrs. Dolores Klobukowski, my Mother, for saving all of my letters

#### Introduction: Movie Maker or Movie Taker?

Ikes! The projector's coming out and we're gonna hafta sit through some amateur home movies! That's how it was in my day. Set up a movie projector. Set up a screen. Darken the room. Nowadays "projector" would become TV with the insertion of a USB, a Memory card, or source the DVD, Blu-Ray or 4G player. Home movies no longer amaze anybody. Further, in this day they've become redundant; the equipment I once used is now a mere display in a museum. In case you didn't know it, there is a big difference between home movies and amateur films. The home movie maker just takes shots at random, while the amateur creates, but let's not sprint ahead of ourselves.

Bruce Springsteen boasts in his hit song, "I was 'Born in the U.S.A'." So too was I. Just look at me sitting proudly in that chair, gripping its arm like I owned it! Pictured right at 6 months, I was born to be a movie director. I may have been found sleeping underneath a cabbage leaf or the stork may have dropped off me over a chimney, but I arrived on April 30, 1945, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A. My birth just happened to coincide with *the* day it is recorded that Adolph Hitler shot and killed himself in his Berlin bunker, though contrary stories of conspiracy theories exist; it was seven days before World War II in the European theatre ended.

Mahnawaukee-Seepe, as Milwaukee was originally called, is a Potawatomi word for "gathering of the rivers." Three streams, later known as the Milwaukee River, Menominee River, and

Kinnickinnic Creek, emptied into a small bay that had a narrow outlet to Lake Michigan. Among the explorers, traders, hunters and early visitors who encountered the local Native Americans and were baffled by the language, tongue-tied corruptions of the area's name proliferated, one of the more amusing appearing in 1818 as Milwacky. Interesting, there's no  $\underline{L}$  in the Algonquin alphabet, so how Mahna changed into Mil is an idiomatic mystery. Ah, Milwaukee, where the streetcar bends the corner 'round, and every corner boasts a bubbler. What? On the drain of the water fountains installed on every corner was stamped F. W. Bubler & Co. Hence, bubblers! How Milwaukee, or in that early corruption of Milwacky, is that idiom!

My parents were Leonard and Dolores (nee Pociecha) Klobukowski. When I arrived about two weeks ahead of schedule, my father was serving overseas in the U.S. Army on Okinawa as a radio technician. My mother said that... oh, hang on; I'll tell you more of that story and what I've learned of my family history in another chapter.

I guess I've always been something of a show-off, an attention-seeker wanting to be noticed. I could organize the neighborhood kids and coordinate play like twilight hide-and-go-seek, coerce them into putting on a show be it a make-it-up-on-the-spot play, a circus, or a game of four-square set up in the middle of the street - as long as I was the "star". Yes, I had a big ego interpreted by others as arrogance, especially my teachers. Yes, sometimes I was obnoxious, but was overall, I hope, rather endearing, charismatic and likeable. I was confident, sometimes overly so, but a creative soul nonetheless. And I made movies!

Over the years I have been asked how I got into movie making. In fact, ever since I shot my first picture, whenever that initial film was screened for an audience, it was always the first question asked. The number of my films increased. Subsequently, my having gained experience, quality improved. I started collecting major awards in local, then national and, eventually, international film festivals; on stage personally or for a newspaper or magazine article when I couldn't be physically present to accept the award, the first question asked remained a constant, "How did you get into making movies?" It's a longer and more interesting story now filled with quite a few smaller stories and several "what ifs." The forest will now be seen for the trees.

I was an amateur movie maker. Yeah, there we go, that word... amateur! It has a most unfortunate connotation. It suggests that anyone with that handle doesn't know what he or she is doing, that it's just bumbling through and hoping for the best. Amateur movie maker often connotes home movies, the ones a movie taker shoots at Christmas of family opening prettily-wrapped presents in front of the gaily decorated tree, at Easter during egg hunts, of baby's first steps, on vacation, swimming at the beach, at the family picnic with everyone's favorite, funny, fat Uncle Who-zat trying to do a handstand after his umpteenth trip to the beer keg. Sure, I made those little historical and hysterical, often cringe-worthy films too. But only rarely! Today, however, I kind of wish I did take more home movies. What I never realized then was that now, so many years later, those home movies are looked upon as documented history.

In the day, there were amateurs shooting their home movies, often attaching titles to them, frequently adding music to them, and then foisting their inapt footage upon audiences of like minds, all the while calling their reels motion pictures. Grandparents enamored with the cuteness of their grandchildren ran film through their Japanese-manufactured cameras, trimmed out the bad bits, and reassembled the footage into a hackneyed sequence of action which, at least, made sense. Not that the film was a story film, it was just a movie with a grandchild and a contrived storyline superimposed on the action to thusly remove the tag of "unconstructed home movie."

The most popular genre for the amateur point-and-shoot was to approach with comfort and confidence the so-called and classily-named travelogue. Anyone, the thinking goes, can make one. It's easy and an excuse for shooting off some film while on vacation. Subject matter is already there and it doesn't have to do anything. Research before visiting might help. Find out what's there beforehand. Plan ahead. But does the run-of-the-mill movie point and shoot do anything like that ahead of time? Rarely, but mostly no. It's simply show up, "Oh, lookee here", and pointing the camera without thought at the subject and shooting off a couple feet of film. Long shot. Medium shot. Close-up. Making sure they're pin-sharp images with correct exposure. Use a tripod, if you've heard of one and can be bothered carrying one. More often than not, the tripod's a burden, left home in the closet, and footage is hand-held.

These faux travelogues often had alliterative titles like Wisconsin's Wonderful Wilderness, Marvelous Morocco, or a generic catch-all like Our Happy Holiday. Their 'home movie' footage was cut and dressed up with beginning and end titles, and had music and narration recorded onto reel-to-reel tape to accompany each screening. Spoken words frequently told viewers what they were already seeing in the picture. For example, let's say there's a spectacular shot of a Dutch windmill surrounded by tulips of many colors, the narrator would invariably state, "Here we see a Dutch windmill surrounded by a spectacular display of colorful tulips." It's called stating the obvious. If an amateur managed to avoid that pitfall, then narration probably came across as if it was read, as if it had been lifted word for word from a book of statistics or an entry in the encyclopedia. Background music, always used, if it wasn't culture specific like bouzoukis playing under scenes shot in Greece, was often as insipid and interesting as elevator muzak. How about the wholly misguided and culturally inappropriate music selection? Imagine hearing the Israeli folk song "Halvah Nagilah" and sung in the Hebrew language underpinning colorful shots of Balinese dancers. True! I was witness to this film's screening in a festival of award winners.

Sequences were constructed by following one of the old cardinal rules, the traditional use of already named Long Shot first, then a Medium Shot, and followed by a Close Up. These were frequently preceded with a picture of a sign to tell you what you were about to see. And then the narrator would tell you what you were seeing immediately after you'd already read the sign, twice. That was another cardinal rule for amateur filmmakers to follow. Any credit title or information sign must be able to be read no less than twice. Films made in this manner were the accepted norm and every one flowed with a monotonous tempo and rhythm. So-called 'good' amateur films were shot with the camera always mounted on a tripod, a three-legged stand which kept the picture as steady as the rock of Gibraltar.

If films weren't made to the established pattern, it was probably inexperience. Novice camerawork was always, if not frequently, hand-held and they painted the screen; that is, panned the camera up and down, or from side to side. Other times such screen painting resulted from a long-time film shooter never grasping the rules or totally ignoring them. Shot without using a tripod, nothing more than a series of still pictures, the only movement on screen came from moving the camera in a Pan or Tilt, or Zooming the lens in or out (sometimes both in the same shot) to or from the subject. Catch a glimpse of a bird flying into frame, a person or more walking or running into shot, a blurring vehicle passing through the static image. The movement of the camera was too fast; audiences' eyes unfocussed as the blurred image produced a headache as nauseating as an ice cream brain freeze. The reason for panning fast was to save film and still show every inch of a building's height or every expansive foot of a 'home on the range' landscape.

They were called travelogues, occasionally documentaries. Instead of labeling them for the time wasters they were, I learned to politely call them glorified home movies.

Admittedly, it's a challenge to produce a movie about a building, a coastline, a natural or manmade wonder, and the "ideal" holiday spot where the subject doesn't move of its own volition. And, believe you me; I've had the good fortune to have seen such amateur productions. Something of a challenge was met and accomplished in the filmmaker's approach to the subject. The best travel films I've seen haven't had a narrator's voice-over. The pictures were allowed to tell the story. The pictures were cut to the rhythm of the carefully selected musical soundtrack. And they were short. They made their impression and got off the screen, thereby leaving a lasting impression on me, the viewer.

But mostly during screenings of these so-named travelogues and documentaries, I just sat in the darkened room, the auditorium, the theater and cringed. I got ants in my pants. I found an excuse to go to the bathroom. My eyes glazed over and I examined the insides of my eyelids. I really didn't enjoy watching amateur travelogues because - let's call them what they really are - little more than embellished home movies. As if stuck in Purgatory with eyes forced open and held with matchsticks to watch the screen like Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* (1970), I stared vacuously at the travelogue, a misnomer if ever there was one, which just seemed to go on and on and on.... as if the person on vacation wanted us to experience every moment of the entire two weeks' vacation exactly, precisely, and with every minute detail as had the cad with a camera. Yikes!

Story films are what I like to watch and to make. Sure, I've produced some awful story films over the years, sometimes just plain awful films, and I intend to tell you about those too. Once in a brilliant while, I've produced a little gem: For He Shall Conquer in 1963, Jamie in 1965, The Fishermen in 1976, and a double banger in 1982 - Souvenir and Dust. Audiences have responded to my films, sometimes liking them, other times hating what they've seen on screen because my subject matter may have touched a raw nerve. And I felt something special happening when I made those films. Things just came together, pieces fitting perfectly like precisely-linking shapes of a jigsaw puzzle: story idea, written script, actors' performances, juxtaposition of shots, music score, and happy film sets. Chemistry – call it magic – happened between director (myself), cameraman (not always myself), and actors. Before, in-between, and after these multi-award winning films, I have made some adequate, some good, and some memorable movies. How did all that happen?

I make no claim to matching my talent with that of Griffith, Ince, Hitchcock, Lucas, Spielberg, Peckinpah, Penn, Altman, Eisenstein, Tarkovsky, Clair, Godard, Wajda, Polanski, Bergman, Hallström, et al, but I learned from watching their films. I never went to film school, never took a course in making or appreciating films. I've had a lot of theater acting and directing experience in high school, university, and teaching in high school classrooms. I have acted in and directed TV commercials, acted in television shows, educational films, commercial motion pictures and TV mini-series. What I didn't learn in a school, I self-taught. I watched a lot of television, a myriad of movies, and I read newspapers, fan magazines, movie making publications, and movie history books, especially biographies of directors, actors, and behind-the-scenes artists.

How should I write about directing story films without making it all sound like an instruction manual? The answer is you don't. So I won't! However, to offer some insight into how I made movies, I'll share a few general ideas which I found practical.

I started making movies by imitating others' movies. Someone once said that imitation was the sincerest form of flattery. According to the adage, copying someone or something is an implicit way of paying them a compliment. Surely, then, I flattered Columbia's short subjects, The Three Stooges; flattered, that is, if anyone perched behind a studio desk ever heard my name or glimpsed my pictures. I've no hesitation in saying that never happened!

Unbeknownst to any Hollywood studio, I would further flatter Warner Bros by imitating their pirate and war movies starring some little known Tasmanian... Errol Flynn, whose Hollywood film debut was as a corpse in 1935's *The Case of the Curious Bride*. But it was Flynn's casting in *Captain Blood* (1935), *The Sea Hawk* (1940) and *Edge of Darkness* (1943) – that is what I imitated.

I flattered Walt Disney's first installment of *Davy Crockett: Indian Fighter* aired on "Disneyland!" The excitement of every boy wearing a coonskin hat had worn off by the time I got my hands on a movie camera, but the thrill of my imitating that coonskin-wearing pioneer was alive and well.

Flattery or applause went to John Huston after I saw his black & white Civil War movie based on Stephen Crane's novel. MGM truncated *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951) from Huston's two hour epic to the 69 minute version released to theaters after it had terrible preview response. I'd have been only 6 years old when those previews were staged; I saw the movie at 11 and knew then I'd someday want to make a movie about the Civil War.

Once in a while I looked into my own life for inspiration, for subject matter. After all, who knew me better than me? Not that my films were autobiographical. They weren't. Real life is drama, though not always dramatic. Sometimes real life drama needs to be contrived for dramatic effect, but it mustn't *appear* to be contrived. It needs to look and feel real. Audiences can pick a rotten apple when they see one.

I choose a story when I decided what effect I wanted to elicit from my audience. What effect did I want to affect my audience? Without an audience and its effect upon it, a film is nothing. Maybe that's why MGM's previews for *The Red Badge of Courage* went sour?

I liked working with a script. When shooting a motion picture the script is often called the screenplay. My script or screenplay, even if only mere notes scribbled on paper, was always better than winging it.

As I wrote a script or notes as instruction, I talked aloud my words. If I couldn't make my words flow, I knew that my movie wouldn't flow. When I wrote dialogue, I played every role to hear what sounded most natural, what sounded like real people genuinely talking to one another. When writing a script no scriptwriter behaves like belonging in a looney-bin just because one's caught conversing with oneself. What's happening is that for each character's role I'd hear how each

character sounded. I could pull back on words or enhance dialogue. I gained an understanding of every character in the conversation; important and needed information that's handed to actors before one frame of film is exposed. It becomes even more important when the actor is relatively inexperienced in front of a camera.

I found that when actors came to know their character, they became that character when the camera was running. Sometimes actors remain in character while the next shot is being set up. When actors know their character and convey to the director their knowledge of who they are by their performance, that's when the electricity, the chemistry, and the magic happened.

I always told my actors what was included within the frameline, so they'd know their limitations of movement. Hollywood uses the phrase, "hitting the mark" for an actor being in the right place at the right time for the camera to see and film all. Even when doing a Close up, an actor becomes the character from the tips of their toes to the hair-ends of their head. A character's anger registered in the actor's furrowed brow won't be as convincing on screen if the actor's legs are not involved in the emotion. An actor cannot pretend an emotion, cannot lie to the camera, that cold, unfeeling and see-all, reveal-all eye of the lens. An acting instructor once taught me, "To be seen to be acting is fatal."

In the role of the director my actors needed to know what I wanted from them. Actors should be allowed to interpret, to create, but they also need direction. "Do what comes naturally," is too nebulous and can result in too much unnecessary rehearsal, frustration, or wasted film. When the actor had difficulty with a scene, all in context I gave actors something to do. Whenever necessary, I even acted out the scene so it could be imitated.

If I spoke a line without a flub when writing the script and my actor had difficulty speaking that same line as written, I let the actor change the words to a more comfortable utterance, as long as meaning was retained. Heck, I once listened to an interview with Robert Downey Jr. when he said that he looks over the script and then says, within reason, whatever he wants. But then he's a professional working with another professional and making it up as you go along can sometimes work wonders. In an amateur film, you have amateur actors unused to riffing in theater games like it was second nature.

I needed to be sensitive to tiredness, my actors' weariness and my own. After all, most actors immersed in their character become physically tired, mentally tired as well. When the actor "hits the wall", maybe it's not such a good idea to keep pushing for performance. You can't, as the old saying goes, squeeze blood from a turnip.

I'm not bluffing that this happened a lot: should an actor fluff a line or if the cameraman failed to capture the moment, I didn't let it upset and fester into an ulcer. We'd try it again; again, and again if necessary. It was always hard work. It was better to shoot and re-shoot to get a scene right than to settle for a second-rate performance, accept mediocrity, and end up overall with a Z-grade film. Actors' egos need stoking and stroking. I assured the actor everything was OK, even when a line's been dropped. I assured the camera operator too, if that camera person wasn't me. I praised the actor when scenes worked well, encouraged actors after a scene had turned into a solid take, and used encouragement to boost an actor's confidence when things didn't always work out the way we wanted. Another old adage applied, "If at first you don't succeed," ...well, you know the rest.

Every amateur actor was just that, an amateur who gave of their own time and who worked for me without pay. In place of pay, I'd buy lunch, provide snacks and drinks. I made sure they saw the finished product. However, I don't always recommend amateur actors see the rushes. With there being a lack of confidence in their own ability, they might see in rushes only their mistakes in what would later become out-takes. Surely they won't envision the picture as a whole as did I, the director. Seeing embarrassing mistakes might only reinforce an actor's lack of confidence. As an example of what not to do, I showed my lead actor a reel of film fresh from the processing lab. He was terribly embarrassed as he watched the same scene run six times through the projector; six times because it had to be shot six times before he got the action

and dialogue right. He saw the shot six times without the following shot in sequence. Six times without the accompanying score. My actor wanted to drop out of the film. He had to be convinced he was doing a good job. Remember that all actors are fragile and amateur actors, especially, must be handled with kid gloves so they don't simply give up and walk away.

I recommend casting people who have some innate talent for performance, who can act and who, with solid direction, perform at the press of a button, in this instance, the camera's start button. Sometimes the actor I chose had theater experience. The challenge was to teach them to wind down action, gesture, and voice for the intimacy of the camera. Acting on the stage for the audience in the back row is so very different from acting for the camera. I expect I'll get into that further in this book. More often than not, I did type-casting, that is, I chose people who looked or behaved in real life like the character I wanted them to play. This method usually resulted in an actor having to do less for the camera because it was always inside or on show for all to see in the first place.

A reason many amateur movie makers avoid making story films, I was thinking, was because they couldn't find friends or relatives with a modicum of acting ability. Less than convincing amateur acting or over-the-top ham acting are the greatest contributors to amateur films being frowned upon as everything less than professional.

The real definition of amateur is one who does something out of love for doing it, and that doesn't preclude turning out a product of professional quality. Being an amateur movie maker mostly meant earning no money from my films. Money is probably the biggest difference between being an amateur and being a professional. Professional film makers usually derive at least two-thirds of their income from making movies. My earliest filmmaking efforts would easily be categorized as amateurish. With experience, confidence, and learning I made movies which reflected professionalism in approach, technical achievement, and quality production values. I made good movies which told good stories and, in the process, made a little history as well.

I've been told that I tell good stories. Within these pages now, here is my story. Oh, wait a minute... this is only part of my story, the part which deals with my life and making movies in the United States of America. In a second book, well, there's more to come...

## Chapter 1: Television Informed My Movie Making

eeing something moving on and within any screen shape and it subsequently making a sound that synchronized was fascinating. Sitting up or lying on my back, I was fixated. A little family talk around me or a direct comment to me rarely distracted. I may have been all of two, maybe three years old. The black and white television set in the living room, my earliest memory of the small round screen and its blue glow, was the first set owned by my Dziadzia. These were the early findyour-balance baby-steps days of commercial home TV, 1947 or '48, when the seven-inch screen was made larger by a thick glass bubble in front of it. Though not the most wholesome of children's fare, I can remember seeing a blonde-coiffed Gorgeous George wrestling the untrustworthy, villainous Gypsy Joe. My father and his fraternal twin, my Uncle Cecil, always reserved Friday nights to watch the fights, boxing, that is. I was 8 in 1952 when I was encouraged to join in, pictured right, watch the boxing and share the bowl of popcorn, not the bottles of Fox Head beer. In the cheering and taunts I'd hear my Dad shout, "Hit 'em in the kiszki!" Dziadzia seldom joined in.



Weekly I sat with my Dad from October 1952 to April 1953 and watched most of the 26 episodes of "Victory at Sea" on NBC. Each telecast was a 30 minute documentary chronicling naval warfare in World War II from the Atlantic to the Pacific and all the seas in-between. The series was composed of footage of actual battles, the commanders of the operations, and the men who fought so valiantly to bring peace to the world. The footage did not spare us from the grim realities of war, but accurately portrayed its horrors and the incredible courage of sailors who faced long odds. I watched planes, Japanese and American, shot out of the sky and plunge burning and trailing smoke as they crashed into the sea. I saw ships torpedoed and blown into fiery conflagration. Dead sailors floated in the water. American sailors surviving their sinking ship paddled in burning oil and rescue, if it happened, was rarely shown. The narrator reported, "All lives were lost." Following every sea battle, every island landing, every Japanese air attack on any Pacific island base, dead and wounded casualties were shown. This was footage of real war and my Dad had been in it. We didn't watch for the gore. We watched for the information.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Children's word, diminutive for Polish <u>Dziadek</u>, meaning Grandfather or Grandpa, and it's pronounced <u>Ja</u>-Ja with a hard <u>J</u> and not as a soft  $\underline{Y}$ .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Yiddish word, informal, for intestines, or guts, used in Poland cities like Warsaw and surrounds, or any of the regions of the middle of Poland west to east, not north to south. Should the word end in "a" instead of the "i", it is a type of blood sausage of coarse ground pig offal, barley and blood called <u>kishka</u>; in correct Polish it's <u>kaszanka</u>.

I think now it was a catharsis for my Dad and his accessible means of conveying to me a smidgeon of what had happened when he'd been shipped overseas.

In an episode picturing troops boarding ships and departing the shores of the United States, my Dad would add personal asides to the narration by Leonard Graves and, for his stoic delivery, Graves was named appropriately. "See that rope all the soldiers climb down from the ship?" my Dad stated. "That's called a Jacob's ladder. You didn't look down. You just climbed down." I asked if he got scared. "There was no time to get scared," Dad answered, "You just obeyed orders and got on with the job." Ships were shown pitching in the waves of a storm. Seeing the rise and fall of the prow to the bow was enough to make my stomach tighten. "That could just as easily have been my ship," Dad said. "Oh, boy, we guys got sick. Couldn't look at food till the storm passed." I always thought I'd see Dad in the movies and I'd ask when a bunch of men were shown relaxing on deck, "Are you there? Is that you?" I guess my Dad felt a need to satisfy my curiosity and, maybe, prove he was really there. A shot of a man lying on his stomach sunbaking on deck with bare feet was shown. The soldier's face was turned away from camera. "There you are," Dad said holding back as best he could the wry smile breaking on his face, "There I am." The shot was on and off the screen before it could be studied and eight year old me just accepted what my Dad said. "See the radio he's using? My job was to fix 'em up when they didn't work." When dead Japanese soldiers were shown, "We saw plenty of dead Japs too. Snipers mostly." These were my Dad's personal recollections and he wanted me to understand, without frightening me, something of what he had experienced.

Watching "Victory at Sea" I was conscious of the black and white film being silent. Except for the narrator, voices weren't heard, unless it was a direct recording of picture and sound like President Roosevelt's declaration of war on Japan after the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Additional sound was added like claxons, alarms, the didda-dit of Morse code for effect. The sound of planes and the sound of guns firing were rarely used. Music was played almost throughout to underscore the action. I was consciously aware of the music and how it was used to inform us of who were the Japanese, the Germans, the Italians, the British, the French, and the Americans. In the rapid cutting and sometimes partially-focused images flashing on screen, I didn't know one plane from another, one ship from another, and most in the general viewing public would have been just as ignorant. The music helped us to identify whose ship was whose, plane from plane, army from army, soldier from soldier. Composed by Richard Rogers, the score for "Victory at Sea" has become one of the benchmarks of American classical music. Some melodies were turned into popular tunes.

"The Howdy Doody Show" was made for children and, mostly in the early1950s, I was an avid viewer. It was the first show produced for children, first shown on NBC to air five days a week, and first to air over 1000 shows. It chalked up 2,343 consecutive episodes between 1947 and 1960. Howdy Doody was a marionette, pictured right in a public domain photo. Although telecast in black and white, I learned the puppet was red-haired and that Doody had 48 freckles, one for each state, one for each star on the American flag. There were only 48 states and representative stars on the flag when the show started.



Buffalo Bob Smith, dressed in cowboy gear, his shirt displaying a leather fringe, was the human host of the show. Every show started with Buffalo Bob asking the children in the live audience, "Hey, kids, what time is it?" The children, around 5 years old, answered, "It's Howdy Doody time!" Then they'd all sing the theme song set to the vaudeville tune "Ta Ra Ra Boom Dee-Ay."

It's Howdy Doody time. It's Howdy Doody rime. Etc.

It was a show with active participation from its audience, children just like us kids watching from home, sitting in bunting-decorated bleachers. It was called the Peanut Gallery, a term "The

Howdy Doody Show" adapted from vaudeville, a nickname for the least expensive and most rambunctious seats in the theater. In the 1880s the Peanut Gallery was a synonym for the Negro Gallery, the upper balcony where African-Americans sat, as in segregated theaters. They were the cheapest seats with the cheapest eats, peanuts. An audience in the vaudevillian Peanut Gallery would toss peanuts at performers whose acts they didn't like. The term Peanut Gallery re-entered the 1940s-1950s as popular lexicon. "Let's hear it from the Peanut Gallery" for a cheer of support, or parents wanting to shush their children with, "I don' wanna hear nuthin' from the Peanut Gallery." Peanut Gallery may have been the source of the name for Charles Schultz's comic strip, *Peanuts*. The "Howdy Doody" radio show adopted the name Peanut Gallery for its live audience of children in 1943 and carried on with the name in its transition on camera to television.

Children's shows always required a requisite villain for the audience to boo, so this role was filled by a marionette with half a volleyball for its stomach named Mr. Phineas T. Bluster, the grumpy 80 year old mayor of Doodyville. The show was set in the imaginary Doodyville founded by Chief Bungathud, grandfather of Chief Thunderthud, the dynastic chief of the Ooragnak tribe of American Indians. Ooragnak is kangaroo spelled backwards. He was a human performer who allied himself with Mr. Bluster and who yelled "Cowabunga" in surprise or in anger. Cowabunga began as Cowagoopna, an imaginative, made-up American native greeting to replace the somewhat demeaning raising of a right hand and saying, "How" or "Ugh." Cowabunga eventually entered popular lexicon when used by California surfers when a big wave hit and was later shouted by Michelangelo of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Princess Summerfall Winterspring, the daughter of Chief Featherman of the Tinka-Tonka tribe, was another human character in Doodyville until she, Judy Tyler, was killed in a car accident on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1956.

Among the stringed puppet characters was Dilly Dally, a boy with a baseball cap that could wiggle his prominent ears. He wore glasses with black round rims, striped bib overalls, and a baggy turtle-necked sweater. Inspector John J. Fadoozle was always looking through his big magnifying glass. His specialty was finding two kinds of people, those that were missing and those that have to be found. In his earliest incarnation, Inspector Fadoozle may have been created from a Howdy Doody-like puppet with freckles removed, adding a French moustache and changing the shirt from plaid with flowers to stripes. However, I remember Fadoozle wearing a Sherlock Holmes deerstalker on his head, and he dressed in a suit, grey coat with cape, and winged tipped shoes. The Doodyville detective was "America's Number One – Bo-iingg – Puh-rivate Eye!"



A floppy dog-like creature called Flub-a-Dub, pictured left in a public domain photo, was supposedly brought from the Caribbean and was an animal made up of 7 different animals – a duck's head, cat's whiskers, giraffe's neck (encircled with rings), cocker spaniel's ears, a seal's flippers, pig's tail, and a dachshund's body. It could be 8 animals when you consider it also had the memory of an elephant. Its favorite food was the flowers on its flower pot hat, from which also dangled a

raccoon's tail, until parents complained that their children were eating flowers in their gardens. Then Flub-a-Dub's favorite

became spaghetti and meatballs and a theme song was written called "Spaghetti and Meatballs."

Buffalo Bob's sidekick was Clarabell, pictured right in a public domain photo with Buffalo Bob and puppet Howdy Doody, a mute clown born in Clown Town, whose role was to keep the Peanut Gallery, the



rowdy audience of small, ankle-biting hyper-active children, quiet so everyone could hear the host. Attached to a long strap and suspended down to his waist was a box which hung around Clarabell's neck. Either side of the box was a squeeze-bulb horn to communicate, one for "yes" and the other for "no". Inside the box Clarabell carried a seltzer bottle. He was handy chasing Buffalo Bob around the set and squirting him with seltzer water. Flub-a-Dub was Clarabell's pet.

Buffalo Bob Smith and the Kids of the Peanut Gallery sang a song about Clarabell. The words were set to the tune of "Mademoiselle from Armentières."

Who's the funniest clown we know? Clarabell!

Bob Keeshan played Clarabell until 1952 when a contract dispute over pay caused him to be fired, or he quit, depending on whose story you want to believe. Keeshan was given his own children's show. He became CBS's Captain Kangaroo. Keeshan was succeeded by Robert "Nick" Nicholson who also played J. Cornelius Cobb on the show. Lew Anderson was the third Clarabell. When the show went off air on September 24, 1960, Clarabell's horn honking told Buffalo Bob that he really could speak. The camera moved in on Clarabell's face and he said, "Goodbye kids." Then the screen went black.

The part of the show I looked forward to most was the airing of a short movie, a feature known as the Old Time Movie Segment. Clips from silent movies were shown on a machine with an 8x8 inch square screen accompanied by an organist playing appropriate music and Buffalo Bob's running commentary. Sometimes he diverted attention from the movie by asking kids where they'd come from. The camera didn't show the interviewed kids during the movie. I could have done without his made-up-on-the-spot narration. I thought Buffalo Bob, friendly as always, telling me what was happening and what I should expect to happen next was annoying. His voice-over was a distraction rather than enhancement of the silent images. Even though I was just a kid, I was smart enough to recognize that silent pictures spoke for themselves. That's what silent movies had to do.

I remember enjoying Charlie Chaplin's knockabout antics and cross-eyed Ben Turpin from their Keystone period with Mack Sennett. Buster Keaton performed incredible stunts, somersaulting where it looked like he fell on his head in some Fatty Arbuckle pictures, although I don't recall Buffalo Bob ever showing Fatty. Three fatties, on the other hand, were featured in "Tons of Fun," a little known and mostly forgotten two-reeler comedy series made by Joe Rock from 1925-27. The shorts were based around a single joke – "We're fat and we break things." One of their sight gags was to walk on the sidewalk three abreast and knock all other pedestrians to either side. The slapstick films starred Fatty Alexander, Fat Carr, and Kewpie Ross who had all played heavies for other comics. Fatty Alexander, for example, worked at Keystone with Larry Semon.

Silent films starring kids were popular and I especially remember the ones featuring Mickey McGuire, a rival series to Hal Roach's Our Gang, later known as The Little Rascals. Adapted from the Toonerville Trolley comic strip, Mickey wore his pants rolled up to his knees and was a tough, streetwise lower class kid of Irish descent with greasy black hair. Mickey McGuire starred juvenile Mickey Rooney. Many years later I learned that Mickey's mother had rubbed coal into her son's blonde hair because they couldn't afford to buy a dye.

One of those rare interactive audience participation shows in the President Eisenhower era was "Winky Dink", that is to say, the TV audience was at home and not 'live' in the studio. It may have been the most bizarre children's show ever because it had a gimmick. We had a special cellophane film to wipe across the TV screen. It adhered like Glad Wrap. You could follow the host's finger as he drew in the air lines, arcs, shapes, and picture parts. We children at home were encouraged to draw onto the screen with our magic crayons, follow the finger, which would show up 3D-like against the cartoon being broadcast and finish the pictures. The host was Jack Barry, overly enthusiastic when announcing, "It's time to get down to the business of playing Winky Dink." Enter Winky Dink, a little cartoon boy in a harlequin suit with buck

teeth, boxed ears like cauliflowers, and speaking in a sexy female Bronx accent. One of the more unusual shows, it may have deliberately or inadvertently contained an adult in-joke which, at my tender age, would have gone right over my head. Jack Barry set up a tea party which began with tea spurting from a laughably large phallic tea-spout. We were supposed to draw a companion teapot. Imagine what kids across the United States drew and what mothers' reactions may have been! Our artistry done onto the cellophane, we were then treated to a pair of lips on each teapot singing "Tea for Two." It wasn't too far removed from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and, because it involved a TV screen, it's more definitive title *Through the Looking Glass*.

One of the most exciting participation games of "Winky Dink" I recall was Jack Barry exhorting us mournfully to send 50¢ for a cellophane so special it would transform the television's black & white image to color. Fifty cents was a lot of money and I'm sure Jack Barry got a hefty share of the take. The color I'd seen in the movies is what I anticipated the cellophane would deliver on our black & white TV set. When the cellophane arrived on a baking paper roll and was applied to the TV screen, I was disappointed the only resulting color was the amber of the cellophane.

Sunday evenings on ABC, beginning in 1954, Walt Disney hosted "Disneyland". We, as viewers, saw a fairy-tale castle showered in pixie dust by Tinkerbell as she flew over it to reveal the show's name, and to promote the under construction theme-park in Anaheim, California. Of the four themes to the TV series - Tomorrowland, Adventureland, Fantasyland, and Frontierland - the latter was my favorite. I was a huge fan of the three films on the life of Davy Crockett. "Davy Crockett Indian Fighter", "Davy Crockett Goes to Congress", and "Davy Crockett at the Alamo" made a star of Fess Parker. "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" became a hit song and the sale of coonskin hats was no less than 10 million. Just two months after Davy Crockett's TV death at the Alamo, the three episodes were edited into a feature, *Davy Crockett King of the Wild Frontier*. Having seen it all on TV, I have the feeling I eventually saw it all again in the cinema where, not surprisingly, it was a box office hit. A second feature followed, *Davy Crockett and the River Pirates*, but that story never captured my imagination in the same way as *King of the Wild Frontier* which later, guess what, eventually became my influence for making a movie.

The daily dose of Disney came in an hour-long format in 1955 with "The Mickey Mouse Club". It was pitted against the frenetic, long-running audience-shows "Howdy Doody" and "The Pinky Lee Show". What to watch? What to watch! Annette Funicello won out over the silent, horn-tooting Clarabelle the Clown. The Mouseketeers easily grabbed my attention over the Peanut Gallery. Capturing the imagination of boys all over the world with its spin-off merchandise was Disney's 1957 TV show "Zorro". Ah, yes, the mark of the  $\underline{Z}$  delivered with a swift swish of the sword by Guy Williams. We made swish sounds with our mouths. All we ever Zeee-d was blank air with an imaginary sword or a stick!

I enjoyed the harmless western-themed "Hopalong Cassidy" with William Boyd and his white horse Topper and "Wild Bill Hickock" featuring Guy Madison. A contemporary western had a jeep as well as horses. It was "The Roy Rogers Show" starring its namesake whose real name happened to be Leonard Sly, with his real life wife Dale Evans, gravelly-voiced Andy Devine, and Trigger the Wonder Horse. "The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin" was adventurous fun. The danger posed by the western-setting of a fort and the devotion between dog and cavalry boy Rusty played by Lee Acker was, for me, more exciting, more nail biting than the farm-set adventures of "Lassie" with Tommy Rettig, although one memorable episode featured a frightening edge-of-the-seat snake tornado. I liked the show mainly because Gramps was such a patient, gentle-mannered grandpa, a genuine contrast to my Dziadzia. Forget about "Lassie and Timmy". "Woof. Woof." "What's that Lassie? Timmy's fallen down a well?" Jon Provost's whiney kid, in my eyes, was just a little sop. Then there was the real Indian actor Jay Silverheels, born the son of a Mohawk chief on an Indian reservation in Ontario, Canada. As Tonto in "The Lone Ranger", he always addressed him as "Quimo Sabe" meaning "faithful friend." Throughout episodes, he was always subservient as the "faithful Indian companion." I

never did understand that relationship, since both faced equal dangers and Tonto did come across as the more educated and experienced in natural lore than the white man in the mask. Afternoons, "The Cisco Kid" aired. Predictable, or perhaps intended as a running gag, Pancho always said to Cisco at every sign of danger or after capturing the bad guys, "C'mon, Cisco. Lez went!" The dialogue entered my everyday speech. "Lez went." Let's not forget the tag for each episode, "Oh, Pancho.... Oh, Cisco...." delivered almost in sing-song and finishing with an ice cream topping laugh.

I didn't believe a thing about "The Adventures of Superman" but I watched it and enjoyed the hokum. Proof is that I didn't break an arm or a leg leaping off the garage roof. The neighborhood kids and I didn't try imitating the superhero. I sat back and didn't dismiss the show after Superman dived into a lake and strutted out of the water onto shore with his hair combed and dry and his cape as dry as if it'd come from the linen press. After all, I was watching Superman and he was able to do everything I couldn't!

Scheduled Saturday mornings, "Fury" was my favorite TV show, the story of a wild black stallion which, according to its captors, needed taming. For too many inexplicable reasons this show about a boy and a horse made an indelible impression on me. How well its first episode still sticks in my mind. 12 year-old Joey played by Bobby Diamond, always listed in the credits as Robert Diamond, had been fighting in the street with another boy who appeared to be about the same age. A bottle had been thrown through a window; Joey was nabbed by the storekeeper and blamed. The other boy, the real perpetrator ran away. Joey's hauled before a judge whose intention is to send him to reform school. Funny thing, that. Seems in the fifties kids were always threatened with reform school in order to get them to behave, be it from teacher, priest, or parent. Jim Newton, played by Peter Graves, eye-witnessed the entire incident and assisted in Joey's defense in court. Jim Newton's greeted by the judge with a pumping handshake and a verbal how-do-you-do normally reserved for only the closest of friends. Having asked permission from the judge to speak with Joey, Newton makes reference to the fight, polishes the boy's ego by saying he admires a good left hook, and all we ever need to know for the rest of the series is set up with the following dialogue:

Joey: What's your angle, mister? You another one of those welfare guys? Like the one that put me in the orphanage?

Newton: Well now, maybe I could sort of use a handyboy, (Beat) to help round up the horses and milk the cows, feed the chickens, things like that. And after a while you'd have your own cow pony and saddle and go with us after the wild mustangs. Would you like that?

Joey: Gee! Are you on the level, mister?

Newton: Well, Joey, let's start out with the idea that.... (Beat) what you and I say to each other is always on the level. Wouldn't you like that too?

Joey: Yeah, I'd like that fine.

Newton: Good. As a matter of fact, so would I. That's the way it's gotta be if we're gonna get along. Now, let's talk to the judge.<sup>3</sup>

It was a different era. This was 1955. Cast bought it. Audiences bought it holus bolus. Single man. Ranch. Horse. Orphan. Everything and everyone was on-the-level. So we were told, and reminded of it.

But for more wholesomeness and audience acceptance, something was missing. When the boy needed medical attention, the old doctor who made the house call recommended... a woman. Top hand, Pete, who claimed he cut his teeth on a branding iron, suggested Newton "get that young woman that took over the old Cranford place." "You mean the new school teacher, Miss Watkin?" Jim queried. "We hardly know her." When Pete said she "looked like a right friendly lady" and he'd ride over and ask her, the be-spectacled doc shouted, "Yes," and with gusto, "Good!" Jim looked absolutely flabbergasted, like he wouldn't even know how to talk to a

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Fair Use partial transcript of dialogue from "Fury", Episode 1, "Joey Finds a Friend", October 15, 1955

woman. Of course, no questions asked, Miss Watkin showed up, made soup, gave Jim sage advice on raising kids, and – bingo - there's a made-in-heaven man-sized family.

Before Miss Watkin arrived, I wondered who did all that laundry, the endless ironing of shirts and jeans. Not that I ever saw Miss Watkin washing or ironing, if memory serves. All the hands working on 'The Broken Wheel' ranch wore wrinkle-free shirts with perfectly starched collars, new shiny leather belts and perfectly creased denims. There was never a worn seat from a saddle, a frayed or torn knee from branding cattle. After busting a bronco, lassoing and bulldogging a steer, even after jumping from a galloping horse to knock over an opponent and engage in fisticuffs and rolling in the dirt, everyone still wore a clean, pressed, buttoned shirt and grime-free denims. Hair always had a Revlon shine. Even if it looked to be mussed in a fight, by the time the fisticuffs finished, hair was back in its place glistening. Joey's shirt and jeans were always clean, even after galloping Fury through dust. There may have been a hint of how cleanliness was achieved. When Joey arrived at the ranch and was introduced to Pete, instructions weren't to show the boy to his room. Pete itemized for the boy what "cook" had prepared for dinner, but the first place Joey needed to be taken was the bathhouse! However it was managed, it was perfect. And maybe that was its subtext. Cleanliness is perfection. Everything's on the level!

Everything had to be on the level in family situation comedies which happened to package a moral lesson in each half hour episode. I didn't always go for the "happily ever after" or the "lesson learned, mistake never repeated" conclusions, mainly because I didn't believe these television families were real. I watched "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet", "Leave it to Beaver", "Make Room for Daddy" and "Father Knows Best" and enjoyed them, but I disagreed with what I saw. Mothers always seemed to be couture dressed and in make-up whether they were going out for dinner, to a show, or doing plain housekeeping chores - vacuuming, dusting, cooking, washing or wiping dishes or rearranging knickknacks on the shelf. My Mama worked hard during the day and she may have put on a bit of make-up when Daddy came home from work, but she didn't dress to the nines like TV mothers. Sure, my Dad was dressed in a suit and hat when he came home. Unlike TV Dads who wore their suits when they ate dinner and sat cross-legged in the easy chair reading the evening paper, my Dad changed his clothes into something more comfortable and homey. He ate dinner in an open collar shirt and he read *The Milwaukee Journal* in his socks. Unlike TV Dads, my Dad's work and my Dad's home had two very different sets of clothing.

As to Father knowing best, hah! I had trouble accepting that some kid's moral dilemma and behavior modification could be accomplished in such short time, the running time of the program, and I thought all TV fathers' advice to their children, especially sons, simplistically preachy; the sons' acceptance of said advice and change "for the better" rapid and unbelievable. Those TV kids complied way too quickly. They didn't talk back. They didn't say, "No." They didn't throw tantrums. Their behavior certainly wasn't mine. The stretch between the plausibility of the TV family's interaction and my own family dynamic was too much for my young self. I hadn't yet learned about a theatrical term called "the willing suspension of disbelief."

Everyone dressed well in "I Love Lucy." I could overlook that. I also overlooked the fact that a married couple slept in the same bedroom in separate single beds. I wondered about my own parents sharing a double bed when everyone on TV or in the movies had twin beds in their rooms. In the old days of censorship by the Hays Office, Hollywood movies and television shows were tightly restricted on what could be seen on the big and small screens. Hays Office censorship maintained rigid boundaries between couples and coupling. But, what the heck, then I was too young to know about the birds and the bees anyway! I enjoyed "I Love Lucy" because it made me laugh. Watching Lucy scheme to outwit husband Desi made me aware of timing; that is, arriving at just the right moment at just the right time to elicit a laugh. Amazing that something so complicated a young kid like me chose to learn from watching television.

How much an influence from Hayes Office censorship I'm unsure, maybe only because I was brought up Roman Catholic and Catholic morals logically dominated my own films. I recall watching a most unusual evangelist, unusual because he was a Catholic bishop and probably one of the most unlikely personalities to win an Emmy Award, twice. "Life is Worth Living" (1951-1957) featured the unpaid Bishop Fulton J. Sheen simply speaking in front of a live audience without a script or cue cards, occasionally using a chalkboard. The show was televised Tuesday nights at 8:00 o'clock, a so-called graveyard slot because it was up against ratings giants Frank Sinatra and Milton Berle.

If Bishop Fulton J. Sheen was the first "televangelist", Milton Berle was "Mr. Television." His "Texaco Star Theater" evolved from a radio show. A series of acts, stand-up comedy, songs and dances, juggling and acrobats, the show was old-fashioned stage vaudeville brought to the small screen. It was variety television and Berle was the gregarious fast-talking, quick-quipping host. Every show was introduced by the merry Texaco men singing a jingle about the service they provided for viewer's cars when they filled up with Firechief and Skychief gasoline. Then the curtains parted, often revealing Berle dressed in outrageous drag. A man dressed up as a woman always brought howls of laughter from the live audience. "Lady," he'd say, "please don't laugh. Now you know what you look like." I remember one time his dressing as a bride – he looked really frumpy and unattractive – and I laughed seeing him on the TV screen. Milton Berle always drew laughter from me with his broad slapstick, face pulling, and witty quips.

On the other hand, Mr. Television was a turn-off whenever my Dad saw him in a dress which showed off his knobby knees. Berle, looking funny and ridiculous dressed as a woman, elicited gales of laughter. My father invariably grimaced and said, "Ah, fuh cryin' out loud, he's wearing a dress again! Can't he ever be funny without wearing women's clothes?" Dad would rise from his easy chair and manually change the channel to something less offensive and more wholesome to his senses... yup... Bishop Sheen.

As long as Dad saw "Uncle Miltie", a name the host gave to himself, wearing a suit when the show started, and we made it to the finish of the "Texaco Star Theater", every show ended with Texaco's merry men singing the praises of Texaco oil and its service stations – yes, these were the days when men actually washed the windshield, checked the oil, and put air in the tires – and how they looked forward to serving their loyal customers.

Berle was affectionately called Uncle Miltie and, as luck would have it, Bishop Sheen once quipped, "Maybe people should refer to him as "Uncle Fultie." I can still hear my Dad's combined audible sigh and groan because, in any form or reference, he wasn't a Milton Berle fan. As a presenter Bishop Sheen made the Latin Mass more accessible, wiped away some of the mystery of the priest, mostly with his back to the audience, praying in a foreign "dead" language. His stories and examples from real life were told in a language people related to and understood. He frequently used gentle humor for illustration, as when he accepted his Emmy with the acknowledgement, "I feel it is time I pay tribute to my four writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John."

One of Bishop Sheen's best remembered presentations came in February 1953, when he denounced the regime of the Soviet Union's dictator Joseph Stalin. Sheen gave a dramatic reading of the burial scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. In place of the names of Caesar, Cassius, Mark Antony and Brutus he used those of prominent Soviet leaders Stalin, Beria, Malenkov and Vyshinsky. Sheen concluded by saying, "Stalin must one day meet his judgment." The monstrous Stalin suffered a stroke a few days later and died within a week.

First amongst the host of all hosts for the variety show of all variety shows was Ed Sullivan. "We have fuh yew, a ree-eely big shew." Originally called "Toast of the Town", his show is mostly remembered under its second title, "The Ed Sullivan Show". He introduced variety acts live on stage

just as had been done in pre-movies late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century: an acrobatic act, a couple of comics, a recording star, an aria by an operatic performer, the best of Broadway, not to mention ballet and folk tunes from other nations. It was little different to old-time vaudeville but presented on a modern medium.

No one without as much showmanship as Sullivan could come close to misintroducing the Three Stooges as the three Ritz Brothers, present "Swan Lake" as danced by the Russian Bolshoi Ballet, goggle his eyes over a Ringling Bros Circus Trapeze Act, call Buddy Holly and the Crickets "Buddy Hollet" and the Crickets, introduce comedians Wayne and Shuster, and "fer all the chilren out there" my favorite Senor Wences in the one and the same Sunday night show and comfortably get away with it. Asked what Ed Sullivan actually does, according to *Time* magazine in 1955, Sullivan resembled "a cigar store Indian, the Cardiff Giant and a stone-faced monument just off the boat from Easter Island. He moves like a sleepwalker, his smile is that of a man sucking a lemon, his speech is frequently lost in a thicket of syntax, his eyes pop from their sockets or sink so deep in their bags that they seem to be peering up at the camera from the bottom of twin wells. Yet, instead of frightening children, Ed Sullivan charms the whole family."

Sullivan was a respected starmaker. He recognized talent and paid well to feature them on his show. Some made their television debut on "The Ed Sullivan Show", celebrities like Victor Borge, John Wayne, Fred Astaire, Walt Disney, Bob Hope, Irving Berlin, Frank Sinatra, and even humanitarian Albert Schweitzer. Sullivan was first to feature African-American talent including Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, the Platters, the Supremes, and the Jackson Five. If they weren't already well-known, many became household names after a single appearance.

One male talent Sullivan couldn't ignore was Elvis Presley, but he wasn't keen to have him on his show because of his bad boy image. Eventually he gave in to demand and Presley was introduced as a fine and decent boy. That Sunday night, September 9, 1956, is especially memorable for me. Our family was visiting the Karczewski's and Aunt Eleanor had baked a big-dish noodle casserole for dinner. Sitting in easy chairs in the living room, Uncle Paul and Dad occasionally tossed back a shot of Coronet VSQ and chased it down sucking on the lip of a Milwaukee longneck, Miller, the Champagne of Bottled Beers. The television was on as Aunt Eleanor and Mom on the sofa talked about whatever 1950s mothers discussed, be it their sisters and their spouses, a recipe for something or other, something new they'd sewn, or what their children were achieving in school. Cousins Paul and Ruthie, my sister Mary and I were at the dining table in an adjoining room playing cards like we'd seen our parents play, but the game wasn't their complicated Sheepshead. It was Old Maid. Our picking off the pile, changing and exchanging cards in our hands was interrupted when our parents called loudly, "Hurry up. Come in here. He's on. He's on." We'd heard a lot about Elvis Presley, mostly stuff not very complimentary. Elvis the Pelvis was considered a danger to our Catholic morals according to the nuns who taught us. He moved his hips suggestively when he sang and that, in the thinking of the priests and nuns at St. Vincent de Paul, was provocative and sinful. So, like moths to a flame, we were drawn to what might burn our fingers or singe our sense of sight. We saw Presley only from the waist up. The camera never showed his hips wiggle or shimmy and Ed Sullivan may have inadvertently saved us from the licking flames of Hell. "Big deal," I remember saying, "He'll never amount to anything."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Fair Use "Big As All Outdoors", *Time*, October 17, 1955

# Chapter 2: Movies Were an Obvious Influence

he concept of pictures moving and providing entertainment was set fairly early in my existence. I made my movie debut in the summer of 1948. It was a 16mm black and white silent home movie with the barest of information titled *Visit to Milwaukee*. Members of the Broniszewski and Brzezinski families from Sobieski visited with my grandparents, Simon and Lottie Klobukowski, my parents, Leonard and Dolores, and Stanley and Marie Wruk, my Dad's aunt and uncle. The camera captured images of me sitting on a wooden bench and trying to keep up with a slightly older cousin, Danny, first-born of the Sigmund Broniszewski children; Sigmund being my Dad's uncle. There's a shot of twin cousins, pretty much the same age as me, Marlene and Christine Broniszewski, Sigmund's daughters. My father held onto my little diaper-clad sister's hand because she could barely stand on her own. I stumble into the shot like I'm going to give my sister Mary a hand to stand. Just think, that historic reel of home movie film still exists.

The movie bug bit me in 1953 or '54, whenever the new release of Disney's animated *Peter Pan* opened at the Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee. My Granny and I rode the streetcar downtown to see it. We didn't make it into the session Granny intended because the ticketing line went around the corner and, by the time we almost reached the box office, the session had sold out. Granny took a raincheck to get back into line later and we walked off for lunch and an ice cream cone. When we returned for the next screening, the uniformed usher accepted Granny's raincheck and we stood close to the head of the line. Once inside, it was a revelation seeing the velvet curtains, gazing at the naked statues of Greek or Roman gods and thinking I was committing mortal sin, of the single beam of light striking those heavy curtains and parting them like magic; then watching children fly, pirates sword-fighting, hearing the "tick-tock" of a hungry crocodile, and enjoying the magic idea of never having to grow up; and all in brilliant color on a gigantic movie screen. It was a cartoon, drawn and painted pictures which somehow moved, but it was all real to me.

Up until I finished Grade 5 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Elementary School, I can remember the special three, five and ten cent movie events. 16mm prints of mostly religious-themed films were rented and screened in the school cafeteria. Memorable was a luminous Jennifer Jones in *The Song of Bernadette* (1943), without doubt the most popular of Catholic films that priests, nuns and other clergy wanted youngsters to see. Here was an ordinary everyday girl with whom we could identify. Bernadette claimed she saw and spoke with the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, 18 times in the backwater French town of Lourdes. After the story got out, people thought she was crazy. Thinking it was a little girl's lie, she was disbelieved by her own family and most persons in authority. The movie showed Bernadette's courage in the face of her critics and her refusal to deny her experience, despite everyone's doubts.

We marveled at a black and white print of three courageous children who face the ire of government bureaucrats in 1952's *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima*. A blind woman sees. A teenage boy holds up his crutches... and walks. Over 50 years would pass before I saw the film again and learned it had been made in miraculous Technicolor.

Loretta Young starred in *The Bishop's Wife* (1947), a harmless story about a debonair angel (Cary Grant) sent to earth to aid a bishop (David Niven) in his quest for a new church. Deemed OK as a picture for the whole family, it was the kind of picture Hollywood hardly makes anymore. Again Loretta Young, this time cast with Celeste Holm and starring in *Come to the* 

Stable, a 1949 film about French nuns living in New England who seek aid from local characters to build a children's dispensary. It was a warm and sentimental comedy and, if I remember accurately, 'nuns' Sister Margaret and Sister Scholastica got around in an ex-Army jeep. There's one scene which has never left my mind. Loretta Young as Sister Margaret speeds along in a jeep on a snow-dusted country road. A tire blows and the jeep skids into a sideways halt. "It's providence," says Sister Margaret, because there at the scene of the blow-out is a building for sale which she sees as the future hospital of St. Jude.

Even Four Jills in a Jeep (1944) was screened and I've no recollection of what it had to do with religion. It was filled with music and song and dance and was supposedly a true story about the real experiences of four of the many performers who entertained America's men in uniform in the theaters of war and the military camps at home. The four were Kaye Francis, Carole Landis, Mitzi Mayfair, and the singer/actor and comedienne with the trademark big mouth Martha Raye. Guest stars included leggy Betty Grable, Alice Faye, and Carmen Miranda. Perhaps our nuns may have had a vested interest in hiring certain titles and charging us a nickel to share in their secret dreamlands.

My parents took me to the Alhambra in downtown Milwaukee, or maybe it was The Avalon Theater, in 1953 or '54 to see the first film released in Cinemascope, *The Robe*. Screened prior to the feature was a documentary, an introduction to how Cinemascope worked. I remember my amusement at the squeezed spaghetti-like images of people, and having my breath taken away by the immensity of the un-squeezed widescreen images. Having a chariot team of four white horses galloping full speed into my face was overwhelming, an image to take my breath away that never happened as I watched TV!

Going on 11, my parents allowed me to take the streetcar on my own to downtown Milwaukee. Eleven is a nice age: you're able to think and function like a young adult while retaining the optimism of childhood. I went to the Public Museum Theatre which held early Saturday morning screenings of movies for children. They weren't up to date or current releases, but that didn't matter. Some titles being twenty or more years old, they were all new to me. A few were forgettable, like eating pabulum. Others have, for one reason or another, stuck in my memory. I can still picture the images in a film about a rogue puma called *The Big Cat* (1950). I have never forgotten a 1949 black and white movie about a dog, one quarter wolf and three quarters husky, called Kazan. The movie was based upon a terrific novel by James Oliver Curwood. Although Kazan was played by a white German shepherd, I thought when he bared his teeth and snarled he was a pretty convincing wolf. The set piece was supposed to be a fight between Kazan and a fighting dog, a frightening half Great Dane and half mastiff. In a pit, the animals refuse to fight. The film's bad guy falls into the pit and is attacked by Kazan. The good guy leaps into the pit and saves the bad guy from being torn to bits. Then he tames Kazan. Everyone cheers and Kazan has found his right master. Maybe it sounds rather corny, but for an 11 year-old, it was heady stuff.

I was captivated by 1952's Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, the highly entertaining adaptation of Daniel Defoe's classic story of a resourceful shipwreck castaway which starred the Oscarnominated Dan O'Herlihy. I felt as dumbstruck as Crusoe when he found that lone footprint in the sand and looked over his shoulder. I even looked over my own shoulder in the theater. I admired his befriending the man he called Friday who'd saved himself from becoming cannibal lunch. I laughed when Crusoe slept with one eye open because he thought he'd become Friday's midnight snack. I applauded their cleverness when, together, they fought off man-eating cannibals. The film gave me bad dreams about being eaten alive! Directed by Luis Bunuel, then I had no idea what impact his other films would eventually have on me.

1939 is remembered as a bountiful year for Hollywood movies. It was the year *Gone with the Wind* won eight Oscars including Best Picture, Best Actress Vivian Leigh, and one gold statue for Actress in a Supporting Role, Hattie McDaniel as the feisty Mammy, the first African-American honored by the Academy. *The Wizard of Oz* won two statues, an Oscar for Best Scoring:

Original Music, and another for Best Song, "Over the Rainbow" which MGM executives and head Louis B. Mayer considered cutting from the picture. John Ford made John Wayne a star when he cast him as the Ringo Kid in *Stagecoach*, and Thomas Mitchell took home the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor as the alcoholic doctor. Other notable films were *Good-bye Mr. Chips* wherein Robert Donat took home the Oscar for Best Actor, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Dark Victory*, *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, *Ninotchka*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Beau Geste*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Destry Rides Again* and amongst others, one which the Academy nominated in two categories and ignored, but which the Museum's screening program didn't overlook, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Starring Charles Laughton as the misshapen, facially distorted Quasimodo, the deaf hunchbacked bell ringer of Cathedral Notre Dame, the film not only unlocked an emotional response, it gave me an additional understanding of the difference between tolerance and dogmatic intolerance, and a concept of what is just and what isn't. People with their own concept of perfection poke fun at Quasimodo because he looks vastly different from them. The gypsy girl is frightened of him because of his appearance, but later recognizes his humanity and accepts him for who he is. Quasimodo's protector is a nobleman, a believer in a flat earth who sees anything progressive, like the printing press, as dangerous because it can give knowledge to ordinary people; he perceives that as a threat to his own power over them. An old judge is deaf and, regardless of information put before him of an accused, he passes judgment in the negative because that's what he's always done and what he's expected to do. I clearly remember how my body would tense upon observing perceived wrongdoing in the words said or the actions shown of and by the nobleman and the judge. I was also made aware of the power of a technical achievement, the use of silence in a sound film. Without posing a spoiler, let's just say that prior to a rescue, there is no sound. When the unexpected rescue happens, the soundtrack swells with heroic music and the cry from Quasimodo of, "Sanctuary!" It is enough to bring tears of joy to the eyes, and it has in subsequent viewings. Laughton played Quasimodo as a frightening, if pitiful character. The makeup on his face stayed in my mind and, many years later, I attempted to replicate that face on a character in one of my own movies.

For me, the most memorable of the Museum's screenings was John Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951). Characters spoke as people would have talked in 1865, and not as Hollywood screenwriters reinterpreted language for contemporary audiences. I remember leaning forward in my seat, as if reaching into the screen, during the battle scenes because they looked so realistic. I didn't know then its 60 minute running time was the truncated result of a studio battle with the director. What I did know was that, someday, I wanted to make a movie about the American Civil War.

After seeing the main title and confirming that, yes, that was the film we'd all come to see, most kids in the audience fidgeted and whispered quietly over the opening credits. I felt compelled to read the credits, all of them, and found the listed jobs and the names of who did what fascinating. Sometimes the names themselves of supporting actors grabbed my attention for their being so unusual. Royal Dano was the Tattered Soldier in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Sterling Holloway became the quirkily identifiable voice of many Walt Disney animated films. Jane Darwell played kindly, motherly types or brassy old dames. Franklin Pangborn portrayed the sort of snobby men American audiences found suspicious and all the funnier when they got their comeuppance on screen. Donald Meek was forever typecast as mousy, timorous, or a browbeaten Caspar Milquetoast. There was Regis Toomey, Finlay Currie, Zasu Pitts, Maria Ouspenskaya, and Minor Watson, a jovial grandfatherly actor who specialized in playing warmhearted, affable, concerned characters. Who would name their baby Minor?

Among the Special Effects technicians whose names became familiar were Ray Harryhausen, George Pal, and Willis O'Brien. They worked solely and sometimes collaboratively animating mythical creatures, monsters, and oversized animals, the kinds of movie magic I loved escaping into, but which. for a lack of patience I suppose, I'd never emulate. They made film history with, amongst others, pictures including George Pal's *Puppetoons*, *King Kong* (1933), *Mighty* 

Joe Young (1949), It Came from Beneath the Sea (1956), Earth vs the Flying Saucers (1956). An interesting and trivial sidelight was George Pal's trademark. Somewhere in all of the films he either produced, directed, or both is an appearance of Walter Lantz's Woody Woodpecker.

After each movie experience, I'd wander the Museum's aisles into dimly-lit alcoves and crannies and, like osmosis, soak in the exhibits of Jivaro shrunken heads, weird masks worn by South Sea island cannibals (and think about *Robinson Crusoe*), unwrapped Egyptian mummified remains, and dioramas depicting Aztec human sacrifice, the massacre of Custer at the Little Big Horn, and hairy Neanderthals huddling around a fire cooking something they'd clobbered with a stick. In the souvenir shop, if I had the coin, I'd buy a toy plastic dinosaur. I remember they even sold replica shrunken heads, the price tag always beyond my pocket money.

About this time I started learning the clarinet and my sister Mary was learning to scrape a bow across the strings of a violin. Late afternoon or early evening lessons were conducted by my father's cousin, Roman Lewandowski, often referred to as Cousin Romie. I walked from our house on 20th Street to a near-the-corner music store on Greenfield and 16th, always passing The Alamo on 16<sup>th</sup> and Washington. It was a corner movie house which occupied the entire building and featured second and late-run, year-old, sometimes older release films. I always stopped in the glow of the neon, the blue-tiled facade, to look at the posters and lobby cards. The Alamo's entrance faced 16th Street and its emergency exits faced Washington and an alley back of the theatre. Science Fiction and Horror movies were standard fare in this one screen neighborhood theatre until it was closed forever sometime late in 1954. I was excited seeing posters for the alien invasion science fiction This Island Earth (1954) and the Atomic bomb fear-inspired It Came from Beneath the Sea (1955). Topmost memory was the poster credit above both titles for Faith Domergue who appeared in a trio of 1955 sci-fi/horror flicks, two just mentioned plus Cult of the Cobra. I pronounced her name "Doh-merge" while others butchered it as "Doh-mer-goo." She corrected interviewers' mispronunciations and insisted it be pronounced "Dah-mure". My heart leapt ogling the poster of atomic radiation-affected giant ants in *Them* (1954). Boy, oh, boy, I wanted to see that one! Even lobby cards for the topical McCarthy-era programmer I Was a Communist for the FBI (1951) for its title alone intrigued. We had two things to fear in the '50s: Atomic bombs dropping on our heads and communists hiding under our beds! I'd plead with my parents to let me go to The Alamo after my clarinet lesson to see The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) and Invaders from Mars (1953). The answer was always a firm, "No." These were evening screenings and, rightly so, my parents thought it unwise for a 10 or 11 year year-old to be traipsing the streets after dark, much less sit on my own in a darkened room with a shebang of suspicious strangers.

My parents gave in just once. Dad handed me just enough coins to take a neighborhood girl to The Alamo for a Saturday matinee. Her name was Connie and she also lived on 20<sup>th</sup> Street, on the opposite side of Greenfield Avenue. The movie I desperately wanted to see was War of the Worlds (1953). We walked to The Alamo in sunshine for a 2 o'clock screening. The movie was terrifying. Saucers with snake-like necks and metal heads spit a ray which evaporated people, military tanks and guns. The ray was accompanied by a one note, fingernails-on-a-blackboard, otherworldly screeching sound, enough to make the down on your back go rigid with fear. In one horrifying maneuver, Gene Barry chopped off the metal head of an alien probe. The skinny red and blue fingers of an alien hand creepily pulsed in a death throe. It was both terrifying and exhilarating. By the time the picture finished, outside was twilight, rapidly turning into night. Every dark space between 16th and 20th Streets harbored an alien. Connie and I held hands, not because we were "in love", but for mutual courage. We were frightened. We ran all the way to her house. A white street light hung over the intersection on Greenfield Avenue as I crossed in the red and green of the glowing traffic signals, the same colors as the snake-like probe's Martian-red eye and its spray of green ray I ran from the Avenue to home. I said Connie and I had a good time. For fear of never being allowed to go to the Alamo again, I never shared how scary the experience had been, but in me an indelible impression had been made.

Some Hollywood movies were Special Occasion releases. They always involved advanced booking and reserved seating. Once in a great while, a field trip was organized for a class or all the older year levels. Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, released in 1956, was one such school excursion I remember attending with other 11 year-olds in my class. After we paid for the group discount ticket, it was left to parents to get us on time for the matinee screening at the Modjeska Mitchell Street, in the 1920s referred to as the "South Side's Broadway" because of its six theatres, including the Modjeska on 7<sup>th</sup> and Mitchell, the second largest in the state. The parting of the Red Sea was impressive, as was the Burning Bush, the Pillar of Fire, and the finger of God etching His ten commandments into tablets of stone. Having no knowledge of how special effects were made, I felt, even then, that those images, however spectacular, still looked somewhat cartoon-ish.

In the long list of credits following Cecil B. DeMille's personal introduction to his masterpiece, I recognized a name I'd seen before and would see in many more movies in the future: Farciot Edouart, A.S.C. He was an Academy Award-winning motion picture special effects artist and innovator, a recognized specialist in the area of Process Photography, also known as rear projection, an in-camera technique for combining foreground performances with pre-filmed backgrounds. Actors on a sound stage performed before a movie screen onto which the background of the scene was projected. Most of Edouart's optical work in over 350 films appeared amazingly real on screen and was hard to pick as trick photography.

Movies of my childhood were inspirational Whether or not I actually got into the theater to see them, depending upon whatever plans for the day made by my parents, Sunday mornings after Mass I'd dive into the *Milwaukee Journal* to see what was playing at nearby, walk-to cinemas. The next plunge was into the local Catholic newspaper to check the titles in CLOD, the Catholic Legion of Decency, an organization dedicated to identifying and combating objectionable content in motion pictures, from the point of view of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. It operated with the co-operation of the Motion Picture Department of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, and a male Board of Consultors. The Catholic Legion of Decency wielded great power in the American motion picture industry. Films were rated according to the following schema:

- A: Morally unobjectionable
- B: Morally objectionable in part
- C: Condemned by the Legion of Decency

The A rating was subsequently divided:

- A-I: Suitable for all audiences
- A-II: Suitable for adults and adolescents
- A-III: Suitable for adults only
- A-IV: For adults with reservations

The B rating meant a film was morally objectionable in part, included an explanation for the objection and the recommendation was that children shouldn't attend such a movie.

The C rating gave an explanation for a film designated Condemned and, obviously, the recommendation following was that no decent Catholic should front up and buy a ticket.

There was an S.C. – A Separate Classification given to certain films which, while not morally objectionable in themselves, require some analysis and explanation as a protection to the uninformed against wrong interpretations and conclusions.

In May 1959 in a letter marking the tenth anniversary of the Association of Catholic Motion Picture Theater Operators of Italy, His Holiness Pope John XXIII expressed the hope "that continued motion picture production be encouraged to offer to the public, especially to youth desirous of diversion, a fitting entertainment which not only may delight the mind but form it and strengthen it further in the love of honesty, rectitude and decorum as becomes saints."

Ah, these were better days when parents cared what their kids saw and did. It was like looking behind the green door, the name of a popular song of the day, to peek at the list of the prohibited and read the annotations for their having a ban. Easy enough to check out the A-1 rated movies, but I couldn't resist delving into the list of the Morally Objectionable. There were reasons listed like Suggestive Language. Before my time, but still on the Morally Objectionable list for Language was Gone with the Wind for Clark Gable's, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn." Censors operating under Hollywood's Hays Code, the Production Code Administration (PCA), which came to be known as the Breen Office, after Joseph Breen, the tough and likeable young Catholic newspaperman who ran the PCA for several years, wanted to change the line to, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a darn," due to the more conservative Legion of Decency standards. Producer David O. Selznick toyed with the idea of, "Frankly, my dear, I don't care." Director Victor Fleming successfully argued that the impact just wasn't the same and overall themes in the movie (love, lust, violence, war, death, redemption) were such that audiences wouldn't be fazed or offended at this word use.

The Moon Is Blue (1953) created controversy for its Legion's classification for use of the word 'virgin'. I guess it wasn't all right to reference a virgin in a movie unless she was the Mother of Jesus, 'the Virgin Mary', or Queen Elizabeth I, 'the Virgin Queen'. You need to see an episode of television's "M\*A\*S\*H" where medical personnel go crazy with desire to see the Otto Preminger film, and then are completely disappointed with how tame the movie really is.

Other objections were Suggestive Costuming, Suggestive Situations, and Suggestive Dialogue. Rita Hayworth habitually transgressed these areas as in Pal Joey (1959) wherein CLOD's objections led to the B rating, and the B was predicated upon a revised version of the film. In other words, after a first viewing there'd been some objection. Hollywood made its attempt to comply, and still ended up with a CLOD's rating of B. The so-called area of the Suggestive was a can of worms which included any behavior the Legion found objectionable.

A few Biblical epics copped the Suggestive Dance Sequence slap on the wrist subsequently bearing CLOD's rating of B. Salome (1953) was one I remember seeing in the list and, yes, it was another Rita Hayworth vehicle. Not only was it mentioned for its Suggestive Costuming and Dancing, there included an "Observation: The story told in this film is based on an incident in the New Testament. However, it differs from the scriptural account."<sup>2</sup>

The most heinous film offenders of morals were listed as Condemned. I remember on that "You're going to hell for sure if you see it" list Karamoja (1954). Promoted with the tagline, "They wore only the wind and lived on blood and beer", Karamoja was an exploitation film for Caucasian audiences with a bent for looking through the peephole. Penny Arcades housing Edison Biograph used to call them What the Butler Saw and Karamoja was only a documentary about a tribe in northern Uganda which practiced its cultural beliefs. Undue cruelty and nudity contributed to the film's entry onto the Condemned list. CLOD's Objection stated "This picture contains material morally unacceptable for entertainment motion picture theaters, and in its treatment constitutes a serious danger to Christian and traditional standards of morality and decency."<sup>3</sup> OK, so they slaughtered animals and hadn't been introduced to clothing sales in Goldman's Bargain Basement.

The Vatican's condemnation of And God Created Woman (1956) helped the box office, and an American distributor came up with a great tagline for the poster, "....But the devil invented Brigitte Bardot." It broke records everywhere and ran for a year. It became the first real 'art

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Motion Pictures Classified by National Legion of Decency, February, 1936- October, 1959

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid

 $<sup>^3</sup>$  Ibid

film', code for scandalous European films that are full of sex. CLOD's Objection was that "The theme and treatment of this film, developed in an atmosphere of sensuality, dwell without relief upon suggestiveness in costuming, dialogue and situations. In the field of motion picture entertainment the extent and intensity of the objectionability of this picture constitute an open violation of Christian and traditional morality."

As a youngster, I never saw the film, but I was caught unawares one Saturday in downtown Milwaukee. Walking from the streetcar stop to the Museum Theatre, I was confronted with a poster of Brigitte Bardot as tall as a building. The poster did, in fact, occupy the entire edge and height of the building, from its first floor to rooftop. Bardot's breasts practically tumbled out of her blouse and I put my hands across my eyes, opening the fingers to peek and, just as quickly, looking down to the ground. Back and forth went my gaze. Man, oh, man, I wanted to see that film! During the week in the scheduled confessional time, I confessed to Father Studer what I believed to be my mortal sin of having taken pleasure in the sight of a naked woman. For penance, I expected to be told to burn out my eyes with a hot poker. In addition to the usual five Hail Mary's and five Our Fathers, the priest recommended – though not mandatory for absolution – I take up basketball!

About the S.C. rating, films of that category were out of my reach because they played at theaters where I'd have to ask Dad for a ride or if I wanted to ride the streetcar, there'd be too many questions asked about where I was going and what was wrong with the walk-to theater. Cinemas like the Oriental screened the so-called art films often in languages other than English. From my childhood perusal of the Legion of Decency on a Sunday after church I can remember seeing one picture saddled with S.C. It was a Mexican movie called *Adam and Eve* (1958), surely with material appealing to the everyday Catholic moviegoer. No, the CLOD's Observation was that "This film based on the biblical account of the origin of man in the Book of Genesis is reverently and religiously presented in order to teach and inspire. However, the sensational exploitation in advertising tends to negate the spiritual motivation of the film maker and restricts the viewing to a special audience." Make of that what you will.

December 8<sup>th</sup> each year, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, I recall at Mass the administration of the *Pledge of the Legion of Decency*:

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. I condemn all indecent and immoral motion pictures, and those which glorify crime or criminals. I promise to do all that I can to strengthen public opinion against the production of indecent and immoral films, and to unite with all who protest against them. I acknowledge my obligation to form a right conscience about pictures that are dangerous to my moral life. I pledge myself to remain away from them. I promise, further, to stay away altogether from places of amusement which show them as a matter of policy.

The sentence structure of the pledge and the use of big words were confusing to a young mind. All I understood was that if I ever chose to go to a 'bad movie', I'd probably be handed a one-way ticket to Hell.

The Pearl Theatre was an easy amble to the corner of 19<sup>th</sup> and Mitchell. The family-friendly venue never screened films like Elia Kazan's 1956 *Baby Doll*, an adaptation of a sizzling Tennessee Williams play and condemned by the Legion of Decency. Weekend matinees catered for kids. There was a serial, sometimes a newsreel, several cartoons, maybe a Three Stooges, followed by two, sometimes three B features. There may have been an intermission; I'm not sure, because all I remember is lots and lots of movies shown one after the other. We showed up at noon and didn't leave until suppertime. Admission may have been all of 5 cents for double feature Saturday matinees, 12 cents children's Sunday matinees. Dad gave me a quarter so I

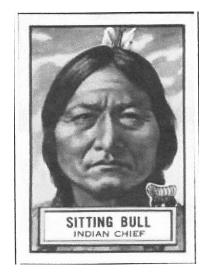
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Motion Pictures Classified by National Legion of Decency, February, 1936- October, 1959

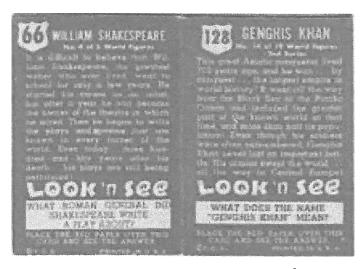
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid

could feed my face with popcorn, a drink, maybe an ice cream paddle pop. It was a pretty cheap way to be entertained for the next six hours. An audience of kids was always bustling and noisy. We sat in the aisles, sometimes jumped around and over the seats, even ran up and down the aisles dodging or tripping over kids sprawled for comfort or sitting cross-legged. We'd yell and scream in pleasure at seeing a Merrie Melodies or Walt Disney cartoon logo.

I can recall Kirk Douglas in *The Big Trees* (1952), about a timberman from Wisconsin who wanted to cut down the giant Sequoias in California. It's the Wisconsin connection that made the film stick in my mind. Abbott and Costello comedies were always popular, and I loved the Ma and Pa Kettle series of comedies, especially when Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride made their first appearance in The Egg and I (1947) starring Fred MacMurray and Claudette Colbert. No, the kiddie matinees never showed first-run pictures. Francis the Talking Mule with Donald O'Conner was always good for a laugh too. A series of Warner Bros cartoons also seem to have made a home in my head. They were The Little Lion Hunter (1941), Inki and the Lion (1939), and Inki and the Mynah Bird (1943). Each was a bunch of absurd situations set in an African jungle with a strong black bird, a lion, and an African boy hunting with a spear. The music which accompanied the large black bird's rhythmic gait of walk and hop, a movement imitated by whoever followed, be it the little hunter or the lion, made the cartoon laughably memorable. It didn't matter that these were made before I was born. Sunday cartoons at the Pearl seemed timeless. The Three Stooges always brought out the most outrageous behavior in us, but I don't remember anyone ever getting hurt. Amazingly, when a picture captured our interest, you could hear the proverbial pin drop. Any romantic, kissing, or long talking scenes, however, and we'd get "ants in the pants" and revert to self-entertaining chatter, hoots and noise.

I remember little about most of the actual titles of feature films I saw at The Pearl. But, one called Sitting Bull (1954) stands out for all the wrong reasons. Indians were played by Caucasian actors. The title character was played by J. Carrol Naish, for crying out loud. I'd seen a color portrait of Sitting Bull in a series of bubblegum trading cards, #58, called Look 'n' See Famous People.





Look n' See Card Famous People #58 Sitting Bull<sup>6</sup>

Look n' See Card Reverse colored in red and blue 7

Artwork was used instead of photographs and they stimulated the imagination. These were unusual in that the reverse of the card was printed in red and blue and information was revealed by placing a square of red cellophane over the card. J. Carrol Naish hadn't the slightest resemblance to the famous Lakota Sioux chief. His accent suggested he belonged in an English manor house. Costumers dressed Naish like he was going to a costume ball and, as time passed,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Used with permission: Look n' See Chuckman's Non-Sports Trading Cards

looking like a member of the Village People. Again, after seeing this rather dull anachronistic travesty, in my mind I vowed that, someday, I'd make a movie with real Indians, like John Ford's casting of Monument Valley Navajos as Geronimo and his renegade band of Apaches in 1939's *Stagecoach*.

My boyhood hero was Errol Flynn. I only ever saw his swashbuckling adventure movies on a black & white television set. I never did see my favorite movie star at the Pearl or on any big screen in any theatre. He made his best movies before I was born. His studio vehicles in the 1950s no longer had box office clout. On TV, I could never get enough of Flynn in *The Sea Hawk* (1940) and *The Adventure of Robin Hood* (1938), the latter I never knew had been made in glorious Technicolor because I'd only ever seen it televised in black and white, even after owning a color TV in 1969. How I enjoyed his romantic adventures on the high seas, in the boxing ring as Jim Corbett in *Gentleman Jim* (1942), and when he put on a cowboy hat and sixguns in any number of Westerns. What impressed was his masculinity and athleticism, goodlooks, charm and, after his clean-shaven Hollywood debut in *Captain Blood* (1935), his pencilthin moustache.

Perhaps after seeing Gentleman Jim - yep, Minor Watson was in this one - I took notice of the name credited with Makeup, Perc Westmore, mainly because the surname had cropped up in more films I could count on fingers and toes. I used the Public Library's Dewey Decimal System's card catalogue to find out more. George was the Westmore patriarch who founded the first Hollywood film makeup department in 1917 and one of his clients was Mary Pickford. He had six sons. Montague (Monty) was Rudolph Valentino's sole makeup artist and he worked himself to death in 1939 on Gone with the Wind for Selznick International. Percival (Perc, pronounced Purse) established a blazing career at First National-Warner Bros. Perc's twin brother Ernest (Ern) worked at RKO and then found the right look for the stars of the 1930s at 20th Century Fox. Hamilton (Bud) led Universal's makeup department. Wally headed Paramount makeup. Frank apprenticed with his brother Wally with Paramount Pictures and had a long association with the studio. Both were credited along with Frank McCoy for Makeup on The Ten Commandments (1956) with Nellie Manley credited as Hair Stylist. I thought they must have worked very hard, given the film's "cast of thousands." Unlike lengthy end credits today which prompts audiences to walk out in droves, then more than 70 other artists and stylists on the hair and makeup staff were uncredited. Movie credits back then didn't list everybody and their brother and sister and driver and sandwich maker and backscratcher as they do nowadays when, it seems, anyone who has walked through the studio gets a credit for switching on the lights in the morning and remembering to turn them off at the end of the work day. Even the cereal manufacturer of Cheerios can be mentioned in contemporary pictures' end credits.

Sometime toward the end of my 5<sup>th</sup> grade school year, my parents bought a house and we moved from 20<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield Avenue on the south side of Milwaukee to 96<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield in West Allis. I remember having to ride the city bus with my sister Mary for a brief period to complete our school year in June 1956. Gone was the hubbub of city life and easy walk-to access movie houses, the corner-located Pearl on 19th, the palace-like Modjeska on Mitchell Street, the mostly B feature-screening Alamo, and Abby, both on Greenfield Avenue. I'd always note on the marquee what was playing at the Paradise Theatre in West Allis, a commercial property at the intersection of three streets: Greenfield and National Avenues and 60<sup>th</sup> Street, at 6229 West Greenfield, as we'd ride that bus to and from St. Vincent's.

# Chapter 3: Just Being a Kid Influenced My Movie Making

ilwaukee southsiders and relatives would remark, "You live in the sticks," after driving so far out to visit on 96<sup>th</sup> Street. There were no sidewalks. The neighborhood was a mix of very old and brand new homes. Ours was one of the older houses set on a hill on a huge unfenced lot. Mowing the front lawn with the manual push-me pull-me grass cutter was always hard work. It meant having to struggle up the hill on either side of the concrete stairway. Mowing lengthwise didn't make it any easier when the weight of the mower tracked downward. There were empty spaces in-between homes, sometimes large, tidily-kept lots. Flowers or bushes might show lot demarcation rather than fences. Undeveloped land, which may have once been part of a farm field, was overgrown. We'd often spend time down the road at "the creek" catching garter snakes, tadpoles, bugs. We'd use our imaginations and be Robin Hood and his merry men fighting with long stripped tree branches, as straight as we could find them, on a log fallen across the creek, skill observed in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1939). In our own back yard, summer evenings we'd catch fireflies and put them into a jar hoping it would shine like a lantern, or we'd rub them in our hands, on our arms, over our faces and admire the temporary glowing traces left behind by the squashed bugs.

I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Aloysius on 92<sup>nd</sup> and Greenfield. The walk to and from school wasn't that far. For the first time in my education, my teacher wasn't a nun. She was a lay teacher, Mrs. Martha A. Block. Her small thick-set stature and dress sense suggested she was the stereotype image of a Jewish mama; in manner she was uncompromising, demanding, and terse. As ideal examples of what her students could accomplish, she wanted our current essays displayed on the cork bulletin board for Parent/Teacher night. If our paper wasn't already her picture of perfection, those erroneous among us were intimidated into writing our papers over and over, again and again. We used fountain pens, Mrs. Block badgering us into faultlessly imitating the cursive writing displayed on poster paper panels above the blackboard. Whether amazed, pleased, or frustrated, her favorite saying was, "O Lordy, Lordy." If one line of one cursive script letter crossed over into or over-touched the margin line, her order was blunt, "O Lordy, Lordy! Do it again." It was a pointless exercise. No parent was going to scrutinize papers looking for any slight incursion of ink onto a blue margin line. Yet Mrs. Block insisted on perfection, as if our meeting her impossible demand was proof she was a good teacher because we all knew how to follow instructions to her letter. Her paranoia may have been that our parents may not see her perceived success as our teacher.

She once asked for volunteers to come to the convent Saturday morning to help sort donated jewellery. Why people donated valuable jewellery and for what Catholic cause has escaped my memory. I put up my hand. There were cardboard shoeboxes and cartons arranged on tables. Some contained jumbles of real gold mixed with everyday costume jewellery. Others were empty boxes labeled and awaiting sorting into necklaces, pendants, rings, brooches, and bracelets. Earrings were divided into pierced and clip-on. There was a pair of gaudy grasshopper brooches, so ugly I found them attractive. I didn't behave like the Artful Dodger. I asked if I might have them. "O Lordy, Lordy, no," Mrs. Block cooed, 'that would be like stealing treasure from the Lord." Once in a while something very valuable might surface. Mrs. Block would caress the ornament like Fagin and we'd overhear a prayer-like intonation, her inimitable "O Lordy, Lordy."

In Mrs. Block's classroom, most marks I earned were in the 80s and 90s. I was never any good at arithmetic, barely coped with its basics, and got marks in the 70s. To this day I wonder how Mrs. Block managed to consistently mark 98 out of 100 for Spelling, one semester even giving me the full hundred points after I'd won the Spelling Bee, and she factored an average 96 for the year. For Geography she never marked me higher than 92, yet my average for Geography was a 94. Go figure? Mrs. Block's mastery of fractions and percentages was as off-target, as mischievously muddled as mine.

Home from school, we were allowed to turn on the black & white TV and watch The Little Rascals, originally the silent film Our Gang, then in the talkies Hal Roach's Rascals. These were ordinary kids growing up in an everyday neighborhood. The shorts captured the innocence and spontaneity of 'just plain kids.' They were poor, but the films never centered on poverty. The stories were kids' stories about being kids, pitting scruffy, mischievous have-not kids against pretentious rich kids, sissy kids, and an adult world of rules that stood between them and the only thing they wanted to do – have fun. I was always impressed with their inventiveness. The kids had wit, common sense, and mettle. They had a clubhouse where, from junk found and collected on the curb, they made elaborate vehicles: hook n' ladder fire engines, soap box cars to race and ride. They rode mules, had dogs pull wagons. They had adventures when camping out, catching fish, sneaking under the circus tent, boxing, swimming, boating, and playing games like football and baseball. I especially enjoyed the get-up-and-go when they put on a show, and it didn't matter from which side of the tracks you came. Born black, yellow, white or red, everyone was welcome. Everyone played together. Alfalfa always sang, crooned to Our Gang's sweetheart Darla Hood. There was Jackie Cooper, Dickie Moore, Scotty Beckett, pouty-faced Jackie Condon, Stymie, and Buckwheat. In the talkies Spanky was the stage manager, the ringmaster, the director. I identified with him. It all happened without adults present to supervise. The silent and talkie films were made at the Hal Roach Studios from 1922 into the late 1930s and, as Spanky and the regulars started outgrowing their roles, there were new cast members at MGM from 1938 to '44. A decade and a bit after the last Our Gang was filmed, it was me, but without film, playing, inventing, and putting on shows with neighborhood kids in roles similar to the Hollywood youngsters, although none of my friends contributed to the rainbow of skin color. I did that myself!

I organized a backyard Circus in the summer, in August 1957. It wasn't exactly well-thought out or planned. More spur-of-the-moment so that I could show off, it was an ambitious out-and-

I was 12. My cousin out failure. Phillip Brochhausen agreed to be a Strong Man... and that was about it! Phillip had no more strength than what was promised in TV's Geritol ads. No one I knew had a Circus talent. I didn't have a friend who knew how to juggle, walk a tightrope, swallow a sword, or who owned an elephant. My younger brother Steve may have been the ticket seller and my sister Mary just might have been the 'keeper'. A keeper of what! Me. Influenced by a Little Rascals short, The Wild Man of Borneo, I became that circus freak.



Pictured right: 12 years old in August 1957, I am the Wild Man of Borneo.

I used burnt cork to blacken my face and body. Today, it would all be too politically incorrect blackface, freak show. In 1957, no one gave two hoots. Costume was a headdress, anklets and skirt made from straw. A heavy tugboat rope was tied to my left ankle, the loose end looped and fastened to a hook on the garage wall, or held in Mary's hands. Neighborhood kids paid a penny to enter the darkened garage where the Wild Man was penned. My act was amazingly convincing. Phillip abandoned lifting fake weights marked 1000 lbs and helped Mary hold the rope. I danced. I grunted. I growled. I roared and made attempts to break free of my 'keeper' to eat my audience. Kids squealed, screamed in terror, ran from the garage down the driveway into the street. And that was the end of the Circus.

In the 1950s I remember the rare, once-a-year, weekend car trip to Chicago to visit with my Dad's Aunt Bernice, maiden name Broniszewski. She was a sister to my Dad's mother, Lottie. Aunt Bernice married the eminent neuro-psychiatrist, Dr. John Radzinski. I'd been taught also to address them as Aunt Bernice and Uncle John. Their son John, Jr. was my second cousin and about the same age as me. Aunt Joan was also an aunt to my Dad. The youngest of the Bronieszewski children, she lived in the Radzinski Oak Park mansion, in her private room just off the kitchen. Long time in the planning, expensive phone calls were made when people talked into the receiver loudly because it was long distance. The Saturday drive to Chicago in Dad's '52 Plymouth was an extended "are we there yet?" adventure and always included an overnight. It was exciting to realize we crossed state borders, almost like going to a foreign country. There were small towns in Illinois called Rome and Paris. I'd suggest we stop, buy a postcard to send, just to see if the postmark fooled anyone into thinking we'd been to Italy or France. Dad invariably passed judgment on Illinois throughway names like Touhy Avenue<sup>1</sup>. "They're all named for gangsters," he'd say contemptuously. Leaving from Milwaukee early in the morning, we'd arrive in Oak Park in time for lunch.

A massive carved oak dining table was covered with a beautiful linen tablecloth, more times than not embroidered or decorated at its edges with lace. The finest china and the best silver cutlery were set. Napkins, always stiff and white, never colored or patterned, came attractively folded or rolled in ivory napkin rings. Those rings weren't plastic, that's for sure. Polish cuisine was the norm. One dish which impressed as remarkable was a salad of cold sauerkraut mountainously mounded in a large bowl and garnished with fresh dill, caraway seeds and ice cubes

Lunch and dinner looked and felt like formal affairs. These were days when children were expected to be seen and not heard. Dining etiquette was strictly upheld; a strong rebuke followed elbows on the table, talking out of turn, chewing without closing the mouth, or slurping. Ironically, that latter 'no-no' didn't seem to apply to Uncle John. Usual first course was soup, in Polish <u>zupa</u>. Uncle John slurped. Imagine if you will your favorite cartoon character, maybe Sylvester the Cat and a bowl of milk. He'd pick it up in both hands, go all society raising his pinkie fingers, tilt the bowl into his puckered lips and accompanying sound effect was a watery, sloshing sip. Think about Curly and a bowl of clam chowder, maybe even Moe, Shemp and Larry at any upper class dinner party; it was a plotline for several of their shorts. Soup served, they'd dip the spoon, lift it to their lips and slurp, sometimes to create laugh upon a laugh ending in what sounded like percussive music. With our Uncle John, the clearness of the soup was relative to the loudness of the slurp.

It's very possible that Uncle John was deliberately teasing us kids, having us on with his unique sense of humor. He may have just wanted to see what our reaction would be. And when he saw

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Roger Touhy was an Irish-American gambling boss, a mobster and prohibition-era bootlegger from Chicago, Illinois, but the road wasn't named for him as my father thought. The road had been named for Patrick L. Touhy, an Irish-American real estate subdivider/developer who was also the son-in-law of Phillip Rogers, an early settler who helped develop Rogers Park, a community area on the far north side of the city.

in our eyes what he was seemingly allowed to do – and we weren't - he'd make a comment in Polish and he and my Dad would knowingly laugh. In Polish we might have heard, "Co jest dowolone, aby Pan burmistrz nie jest dowobne dla Ciebe, ty mały gnojek!" In English, Uncle John had said, "What is permitted for the lord mayor is not permitted for you, you little stinker! My cousin John remembers his father's saying it in Latin to him and it came out, "Quod licet lovi, non licet bovi." The translation was supposed to mean, "What is permitted for Jove, the king of the gods, is not permitted for you, you little bull!" Well, the Latin phrase sounds pleasantly like a rhyming couplet, but its translation falls well short of its intended meaning. Literally, the couplet means, "And to sell love, not it is allowed ox." Still retaining its rhyming couplet form, the saying could better read, "Quod licit lovis, rex deorum, not licet tibi paulo taurum."

Children didn't participate in conversation. We spoke only if we needed the salt and pepper, butter, relish, sauce or gravy boat passed. Nothing moved unless the magic word was used, it being, "Please." Condiment in hand, the adult grasp wouldn't release until, "Thank you," was clearly heard. We spoke only when asked a specific question, or when invited to tell a story about school, a hobby, an interest. Permission had to be sought and approved to be excused from the table for any reason. Otherwise we sat up straight in our chairs and kept our mouths buttoned.

Saturday evening dinner finished, crockery and cutlery washed, towel-dried, and was put away in glass-door dressers. In his spacious living room Uncle John set up a silent Keystone 16mm projector and, some 12 to 15 feet away, a movie screen on a stand. The metal-housed machine was set on the table's edge to accommodate its swing-down arm which held the take-up reel beneath the table apron. The projector came to life when the 'On' switch was flipped. The motor hummed. A second nudge of the switch sent a swathe of light onto the glass-beaded screen. Uncle John aligned the ray and tightened the focus. Turning off the lamp, silent film was manually threaded to match sprockets with perforations, loops formed atop and below the film gate to ride flat and without stutter. Loose white film leader was fitted into a slit to catch on the metal take-up reel. The process fascinated me and I studied and memorized every move. A single beam of light danced onto the screen and dazzled as we read the Letraset title: POLAND HOLIDAY 1939. Uncle John shot his home movie, ordinary street scenes with happy people shopping, streetcars moving in the background in Warsaw in July, busy street scenes in the Jewish quarter in Krakow only weeks before Hitler invaded on September 1. Intended only as a home movie, now it was documented history. Who knows how many of those smiling people at the streetcar stop, moving outside the train station, bustling in the open market, and standing outside a cathedral continued smiling after the Nazi blitzkrieg? Compared with watching television, this was different, almost a sacred experience. Except for the clackety-clack of claw engaging film perforations at 16 frames per second, there was no sound. The film was silent and so was its audience. Occasionally Uncle John commented on who or what we were seeing. Aunt Bernice might interject a personal memory about people on the screen who may have been relatives. Personal information shared among the adults was sometimes spoken in Polish, as if to prevent us from knowing some unpleasant fact, perhaps just to keep us in the dark about less fortunate members on the family tree. Many people in the black & white movie, possible relatives included, would be dead now through natural causes, or killed during the occupation.

Uncle John enjoyed showing movies for the kids. These often began with the home collector's best known logo, Castle Films. It didn't faze that Abbott and Costello talked and their voices were heard on television and in the cinema, but on the Castle Films home screen were mute. The physical action in 9 minute souvenirs of *Abbott and Costello Meet the Keystone Cops* and *Abbott and Costello in Hollywood*, the excerpt called *Knights of the Bath*, made up for the absence of familiar voices and sounds. It was odd, however, knowing that Costello would call out, "He-e-e-ey, Abbot," and all we'd see was his open mouth with not a word heard, the comedy team surfing out of the bathroom in a tub from a plumbing job gone wrong. Voice was even unimportant when Woody Woodpecker appeared in black & white and chattered his iconic laugh. A title card, white lettering against a black background, told watchers what his laugh said

and suggested how it might have sounded. These souvenir movies taught me that sound didn't always matter, that the picture had to tell the story, and that it was all right, occasionally, to insert a title card to convey important dialogue or information.

# Chapter 4: Rites of Passage

e it with family or away from it, I believe most children go through some rite of passage. Movies have dealt with such stories about pre-pubescent and adolescent boys and girls having to grow up before their time when a treasured adult moves on or passes away. Some of their stories might be about sexual curiosity and experimentation, choices and having to make crucial decisions which may or may not involve life or death, while other rites of passage may be simpler; a girl learning from grandma or mother to embroider, crochet, quilt, or cook a traditional family dish, and boys growing up by helping to build a doghouse, raise a church, or as a boy rear a lamb in a time of hunger and then having to cope with and accept when the pet has to become a stack of chops. During my upbringing in the Catholic Church those milestones equating to rituals of growing up and accepting responsibility included First Confession at 7, First Holy Communion at 9, sunrise Easter procession at 9, and Confirmation upon turning 13.









First Communion May 16, 1954 3:30 a.m. Easter procession 1954

Confirmation 1959

For each sacramental event, new clothes had to be bought. Even though my mother sewed, and most professionally too, real new clothes came from the store. Mother would take me to the department stores on Mitchell Street in Milwaukee, also known as the "Polish Grand Avenue" between 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets. It saved having to take the streetcar all the way downtown. A lot of the shops, however, were not Polish; they were actually Jewish.

Schuster's, on the corner of South 11<sup>th</sup> and Mitchell, is where Poles shopped if they wanted good quality merchandise for a price. Mom always shopped there to buy nylons and underwear. Schuster's had its beauty and hairdressing department set up just inside its entrance. Walking into the store, my sister Mary remembered that she turned up her nose because it always smelled like ammonia, that solution used in beauty shops for giving grandmas and aunties their blue rinse permanents, a Schuster's specialty. Yes, instead of looking grey, women's hair was turned a pale shade of blue.

Goldmann's, on the other hand, for a lot of the Poles was their favorite place for shopping. Prices were lower, even moreso in the basement level. My sister Mary remembered that Goldmann's had a food counter and that was the first thing anyone smelled walking into the store, its distinctive aroma of beef cooking, in all likelihood brisket.

In Ye Olde Candy Shoppe the store sold raisin candy which weren't raisins at all. They were more like brown gumdrops shaped like raisins.

Upstairs was fabrics and the stairway was sometimes referred to as the Polish elevator. Mary and my Mom always climbed those stairs to the second floor. They loved poking around bolts of cloth for remnants and bargains priced at \$1 or less per yard.

My own memory of Goldmann's was buying a new cream suit in the basement, all the rage in 1959, for Confirmation. The cream-colored suit was a great look on my skinny friends and I wasn't going to admit to myself that I wasn't exactly skinny. Mother and I were looking over the suits on the rack. A clerk with a beer barrel belly and wearing suspenders and a bow tie approached and asked if we needed help. He measured my waist and said, "Missus, you need to look at the suits in the chubby section." Boy, oh, boy, as a self-conscious 13 year old, I knew I was chunky, but I didn't think I was fat. The Chubby section... Hah! One day soon it would be renamed the Husky section, but today is was for the Chubs! No matter what euphemism was used, it meant only one thing. It was clothing for fat boys. I was made to feel ashamed of my body, shamed by the insult.

When the time of my familial rite of passage came, it was as Polish as Polish could be. <u>Grzyby</u> (pron. <u>gzhee</u>-bee, in English, mushrooms)! However, I'd been introduced to mushroom picking well before I was of age; under strict supervision by my godmother, Aunt Adeline Slauson, I was never allowed to pick anything fungal on my own. Around 6 years old, my parents let me spend an occasional weekend with Aunt Adeline and Uncle Dud on the northeast side of

Milwaukee. There we'd roam and explore the wilderness along the Milwaukee River and pick wild mushrooms, mycologist being one of my uncle Dud's avocations. My memory of the mushroom variety most sought was the unsightly morel, public domain picture at right. Who'd have thought a fungus so unattractive could taste so delicious. Aunt Adeline handed me back to my Mom and Dad with a bunch of morels to cook. Mom fried them up in butter, but she wouldn't eat them herself. She was teased about that, the fact she didn't trust the mushrooms, but served them without hesitation to my Dad, my little sister, and me. Of course the mushrooms were always safe and esculent.



My cousin Paul Karczewski was 12, same age as me, and we looked forward to our initiation and being recognized as all grown up on a weekend in the fall of 1957. Paul's father, my Uncle Paul, my Dad and his brother Cecil took us to Sobieski on their annual harvest of mushrooms. Dad's relatives, cousins mostly, lived in the small unincorporated farming community. It was a



-

Census-designated place on County Highway S. Unincorporated meant it didn't have any formally organized municipal government, but rather was within the political jurisdiction of another municipality, in Sobieski's case, the town of Little Suamico, Oconto County, Wisconsin. Sobieski was one of several places founded and settled by immigrants from Poland during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and named for King Jan III Sobieski, public domain picture left. Few remember or even know that Jan Sobieski was responsible for the defeat of the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Vienna, 12 September 1683, a turning point in history, after which "the Ottoman Turks ceased to be a menace to the Christian world."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Leitsch, Walter (July 1983) "1683: The Siege of Vienna" History Today. Walter Leitsch is Professor of East European History and Director of the Institute of East and Southeast European Research at the University of Vienna.

The battle is noted for including the largest known cavalry charge in history, accomplished by the Hussars, the winged cavalrymen of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. (Readers will learn more of the Hussars in Chapter 7.)

Sobieski Corners and the immediate area became known as Wisconsin's Little Poland. Pulaski was a village located 9 miles west as the crow flies. Nearby were the sleepy hamlets of Krakow and tiny Hofa Park. Drawing a straight line 14 miles to the south was the large city of Green Bay, home of the Packers national football team. In 1955, Dad's cousin Ritchie Warshall ran the tavern. There was a pickle factory, no more than an unpainted, dilapidated shed with a conveyor belt for sorting freshly harvested cucumbers into crates by pickling sizes. I remember when the older workers, teenagers really, second cousins I think, would hand us rejects, cucumbers too large or too crippled for turning into kosher dills. We'd eat them with a sprinkle of salt. Further down the road was a cheese factory which always effused the redolence of sweet butter and the pinched close-your-nostrils reek of soured milk. Together they were, surprisingly, a pleasant and enticing aroma. Sometimes the white-coated, white-capped cheese makers would scrape curds from the vats and give us a bagful to munch. Curds weren't strong in flavor having just a hint of cheesiness. They were fun to eat for their soft rubbery texture and the fact they squeaked when chewed. A short walk on the gravel road up a hill from Uncle Leo's backyard farmlet was St. John Cantius Catholic Church. The Little Suamico River flowed just south of the parish cemetery. Uncle Leo Brzezinski owned the general store with his son Junior (Leo Theophil) and wife Florence, whom everyone called Pat, running the day to day operation. Pictured below is the General Store with Leo and Florence Brzezinski (circa 1930s or 1940s) and how it still looked when I was a kid in the 1950s.



I clearly remember the wooden railroad trestle bridge which crossed the river at the edge of Sobieski. On more than one occasion we'd laid a tree limb, not much thicker than a fat broomstick, across the parallel rails, just to see what would happen. We were clever enough to realize a branch wouldn't derail a monstrous locomotive. The following day we'd search and possibly find some smashed and damp chunky bark chips and slivers where we were sure we'd placed the branch. One orange summer's evening Paul and I placed pennies on a rail of the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad to see how much they'd be flattened beneath the diesel engine's wheels and carriages, most filled with lumber and timber products. In the morning we

looked and found unevenly squashed metal discs. An expression of approval in its day, we thought it was 'really neat'.

The river beneath the trestle was a home for crayfish, brown and lobster-like in appearance, but smaller. They were also called crawdads, crawfish and, incorrectly, crabs. All of Dad's Sobieski relatives gathered on a Saturday afternoon for a crayfish hunt. Armed with handled fish nets and buckets, we caught the crustaceans by fiddling the water with an index finger in front of the animal and forcing it to retreat naturally backwards into our traps. With a dozen or more participants fishing over an hour, they had four, maybe half a dozen overflowing buckets. A large copper vat was placed atop chopped wood and filled with water. A fire was ignited and nursed into a blaze of heat and light. Just dug, cleaned potatoes and onions from Uncle Leo's garden were dumped into the boiling water, and then the crayfish poured in for a few minutes cooking. Cray were cooked when they turned bright red. We'd crack the soft-shelled crayfish tail and pincers, slide out the meat and dip it into real butter melted in a separate enamel pot. Potatoes and onions were given a butter bath too. In the evening lit only by the full of the moon and the flaring orange and blue fire, cooking aromas of found food created hunter-gatherer's heaven, a northern Wisconsin version of a southern Louisiana crayfish boil.

Another ordinary summer's day when cicadas' buzzing split eardrums and dragonflies alit from river reed to cattail and half-sunken log, Paul and I walked idly opposite each other balancing on the trestle rails. Drowned by the rustic sounds of nature's insect creatures, we didn't hear the slow moving approach of the lumber train. When the engineer's cord was pulled and a whistle screeched, we turned and couldn't believe our perilous situation. "Oh, shit, oh shit," is all I can remember our calling out as we made slippery footfalls dashing clumsily toward the end of the trestle to slip sidelong onto solid ground safety. (Years later the movie Stand By Me [1986], directed by Rob Reiner and based upon the Stephen King novella *The Body*, depicted a scene all too familiar to our experience. I genuinely identified with the scene.) The diesel engine pulled faster than our feet padded. We had one choice and leapt from the trestle plunging into the river like two bags of grist. Of course when we'd fished or crayed, except for where we'd immediately walked, we hadn't measured the river's depth, nor had we calculated the distance between train trestle and water. It wasn't breakneck high. Caught in this curious adventure we found the water sufficiently cold and deep to sting our asses on impact and cushion our fall before settling us soundly on the sandy, pebbled bed. We were too embarrassed; too scared to tell our Dads for fear we'd never again be allowed out of their sights. We kept the whole incident to ourselves, never even bothered to concoct an alibi for being drenched. Coming back to Warshall's Tavern soaking wet never even raised a question. We'd been to the river. We were boys. We were expected to get wet.

The drive to Sobieski in Dad's 1952 Plymouth took the better part of three to four hours from Milwaukee. The night's sleep ahead of the trip was easily broken by anticipation. I'd wake, check the clock, and silently sigh as the hands pointed to a 10, later 12 midnight, then maybe a 2. Dad would shake me awake at 3:30 a.m. and say it was time to get outta the fart sack and hit the road. Uncle Paul and my cousin Paul drove from 60th and Greenfield to our house on 96th Street. A type of aged, dried Polish sausage I've only known as hunter's sausage, the Germans called it landjaeger, sustained us on the long journey, sometimes with a buttered roll. Because we had an adventure ahead, the highway miles seemed to take forever. We'd arrive in Sobieski at daybreak and park outside the tavern where we'd be warmly greeted with coffee for the men, warm milk for us boys. Sobieski kin piled into a truck; we back into Dad's car for a drive to the mycelium fertile cow fields. Everyone in the hunting party carried a metal bucket and a knife. When the first clump of edible field mushrooms was found, we were shown how to identify them. Basically, it was brown on top with pink gills under the cap. Anything else, we were to leave it there. It might be poisonous. Neither Paul nor I realized this day was our rite of passage. Dad and Uncle Paul sent us off into the misty field with an encouraging laugh. And then everyone burst into laughter. Uncle Cecil took no more than three steps and made a sound conveying embarrassment, frustration, and impatience all in one. He'd stepped in a wet mushy

cowpat. "Aw, my shoe," he whined, "I just stepped in cow s\*\*t." "Yah, yah, leave it to d' city folk," chimed Junior, "if dere's just one cow pie in d' field, d' city-slicker's gonna step in it."

Eyes alert and walking stealthily as if stalking prey which had the ability to jump up, run and escape, knife outstretched like a divining rod, we'd find single large mushrooms, sometimes a tightly-packed clump or a fairy ring. We'd slice and pick. It was imperative to slice the mushrooms and leave the mycelium, or root, intact. We were told not to pull mushrooms out of the ground because they wouldn't grow again the following year. We'd been instructed to pick only the best mushrooms, leave the wormy and overgrown, the collapsing wet ones in the ground. The good ones were poured from buckets into wooden bushels and kept in the dark for the long drive home Sunday afternoon. If mushrooms became too damp, later we'd find them crawling with worms. Too old, the fungi gills would turn black and deliver an unpalatable strong flavor.

Each having filled our first bucket, Paul and I showed our harvests to our fathers. Dad and Uncle Paul both stooped to pick out and examine each fungus. They'd look at the mushroom, then to each other, and there seemed to be a teasing twinkle in their eyes. They found no toadstools, no blackened gills, nothing to hint of worms, nothing poisonous. I remember big smiles stretching across their faces. There wasn't any "well done", no pat on the back, and no verbal praise. Our Dads simply pointed with their upturned knife blades to the open field and silently sent us off to harvest more.

The reward for the long drive home was buying several comic books from the Brzezinski general store. They kept Paul and I occupied and quiet. My favorite comics then, as now, were the Walt Disney adventures with Donald Duck, his nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie, Uncle Scrooge and the Beagle Boys. I never was a fan of the Phantom, Superman, Batman, or Dick Tracy comics. Too serious for my liking, I preferred comics that made me smile and, I'm almost embarrassed to admit, they included Little Lulu and Sluggo. We usually left Sobieski after lunch on Sunday. After three or more hours on the road, the mushroom picking weekend wasn't finished. It turned into a late night of sorting, picking out and discarding mushrooms that had deteriorated and gone wormy, then cooking and packing the good ones into dozens of air-tight pickling Mason jars. Mother always came up with an "Oi-yoi-yoi" when she saw the quantity of mushrooms we'd brought home and carried into the basement. She knew she'd have a night of work ahead but, tired as we were from the weekend, she always had enthusiastic help from my Dad and me and my sister Mary.

Helping Dad make kielbasa for Easter when I was a kid would have also qualified as a rite of passage, just as his Dad would have made kielbasa with my Dad's and twin brother Cecil's participation when they were boys. It was a special skill passed on from generation to generation. Dziadzia's sausage-making machine was a black cast iron model, the 1865 date embossed in the cast, and it was passed on to my father who, for reasons I'll explain much later, passed it down to my brother Steve. We called the manually-operated machine by what it did, a sausage stuffer. Dad used boneless pork butt. Instead of entrusting Uncle Zig with grinding the meat or, later, trusting a supermarket butcher, Dad preferred to make the coarse grind himself. A hand-operated meat grinder was screwed to the table. Chunks of sliced pork butt were slipped into the open mouth at the top, the handle manually turned, and pork was ground by the rotating screw and blade. Coarse mince oozed out the holes into a bowl. At first my job was to feed the pork chunks into the grinder. After developing some muscle, I was allowed to feed the machine and turn the grinder handle on my own.

To flavor kielbasa, Dad gave me the job of rubbing and crumbling in my hands the leaves off home-grown dried marjoram. Next step was discarding whole stems and picking out any broken ones. Before adding the marjoram to the meat, Dad carefully examined my work, sometimes picking out small stem bits I'd have missed saying, "You don't want to let those sticks in because you can't chew them. They'll get stuck in your teeth and hurt." Dad chopped garlic cloves and added them to the mix with salt, sugar, coarse black pepper, and ice water. Measurement was always approximate. A bit of this. Some more of that. Dad gave me the job of mixing the meat and seasonings. What kid doesn't enjoy the tactile slippery, squishy, somewhat sticky and stinky wet

meat squelching in-between his fingers, and then beaming after hearing your Father's praise, "OK, that's good." To make sure the flavor was right, Dad fried a meat patty which we shared. Adjustments, if required, were made. Dad's wry smile, a twinkle in his eye, and a nod of his head meant all was good and we could stuff the meat into casings.

Small pigs' intestines were used for the sausage casing. With care so as to not puncture or tear the slippery wet casing, Dad threaded it onto the sausage stuffer's nozzle. The stuffer was filled with sausage mixture and my job was pushing down slowly on the handle to force the meat into the casing. If the casing had a weak spot or if I pushed too enthusiastically on the handle, the casing split and meat gushed out the hole. Dad would loudly bring a halt to the process with, "Oi, oi, hey, stop, stop, stop, stop! Ah, Jesu Kohany!" Making kielbasa ate up a couple of hours or more. Each sausage link measuring two foot plus was hung in the cool basement on a rod about the same length as a broomstick for air drying before being individually coiled, wrapped, and packed in the refrigerator. We made more kielbasa than was ever needed for our family's Easter breakfast. Dad liked to give away fresh links to family and friends.

Next door on 96<sup>th</sup> Street lived the Jadins; kids Bobby, Karen and Juanita all bigger and older than me. They worked weekdays and sometimes on weekends during the summer planting vegetables on a truck farm<sup>2</sup>. They brought home \$8.00, sometimes more a week. Good money! Pay was 10 cents an hour with bonuses. Impressed, my parents encouraged Bobby to take me along so I could earn pocket money. We waited on Greenfield Avenue to be picked up by a depression-era truck and herded into the tray at 8 o'clock in the morning. The truck farm was Tesch Gardens it could have been plucked right out of a Charles Dickens novel. Child labor laws ignored, hours worked were merely a scribble on a scrap of paper. Our real names were never asked, never used. We were given nicknames. I was called Chubby. I hated it. I crawled on hands and knees straddling rows of rich black dirt planting onion seedlings. By 8-hours end I looked as black as a Stephen Foster minstrel ready to sing "Swanee River". Every muscle in my back and legs and arms ached. I planted another day, and another, with another three to go. By week's end came payday. Nicknames were called. "Chubby?" Dollars and cents were announced. A 'critique' was given of each worker's performance. I was deemed slow and sloppy and had money deducted for the crookedness of my rows. My fat knees got in the way. Crooked? All my seedlings were down the middle of designated rows, just that there may have been an inch or so left or right of the dead centre for some. That just had to be a mean quibble. Some of the experienced stayers laughed. My week's pay was a stingy dollar and fifty cents. I was hugely disappointed with the pay, more with the insulting comments. Right there and then I said I no longer wanted to be made fun of and wouldn't be coming back. No one seemed to care. No one had feeling for anyone else. We were just bodies with pretend names ordered around, not unlike slaves with given names replaced with biblical references like Gabriel, Tiberius, or Euphrates, and with the same sort of humiliation but without beatings.

It may have been the following summer; Uncle Paul took the Karczewski family on its annual holiday to Lake Tomahawk in Oneida County. I was invited along for the week. My cousin Paul and I were good friends. A long drive to the middle of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest we just called the northwoods, the town of Lake Tomahawk was named for the shape of the adjacent freshwater lake. Nowadays people think camping in a tent is "roughing it." Heck, back then our cabin was roughing it like early American pioneers. The resort cabin had been plunked down near the shore and left as is. It had a dirt floor, an ice box, and no indoor plumbing. Furniture had all seen better days. Beds had creaky springs. Kitchen table and chairs hadn't seen paint or varnish in decades. There was an outhouse where you held your breath for as long as you could before gulping for air, and then you gagged. Water for cooking and washing was carried inside by bucket from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> There's a notion that a 'truck farm' is a farm close enough to urban centers that its produce may be transported by truck to the city. There is no connection whatever between truck farms and motor transportation. As far back as 1785 the word 'truck' was used to mean any commodities for sale and, later, garden vegetables or produce intended for sale in the markets. The root is 'troque', Old French for 'barter', and not the Greek root word 'trochos' meaning 'wheel'. In Britain, it would be called a market garden.

pump and warmed on a gas hotplate to wash dishes, for cleaning our hands and faces in the kitchen sink. Somehow nothing seemed inconvenient. It was an adventure.

We were kids always on the go. Uncle Paul, especially Uncle Paul, relaxed. If there was no reason to lift his finger, he didn't. When Aunt Eleanor wasn't forever sweeping or cooking and reminding us to tread carefully on the floor so as not to raise dust, she relaxed in a rocking chair outside in the shade.



Uncle Paul preferred a wooden kitchen chair with a bottle of beer in one hand. Here was a place for waving away flies, slapping the odd mosquito, and plain old lazing in the summer sun. Using fishing rods with a bobber attached to the line, we watched for the bob when a fish bit. A rowboat and a canoe came with the cabin. The old wooden boat was clunky and we used it just for lazy fishing. Pictured left, I wasn't the most attentive fisherman, having dozed off in the boat. You can see from the reflection on the water, there wasn't a breeze this sultry day.

Paul and I preferred the swift moving canoe and spent hours paddling around the lake. Ahead of this vacation, neither of us had before been in a canoe. Fast learners, we managed balance and synchronized paddles, one up front on the right, the other in back on the left. A little experience and we could dart ahead, turn, drift, and stop, pretty much like a fish in water. We discovered an island inhabited by frogs, big bullfrogs. We'd heard them croaking long, loud belches of air during the night. They sang a wild yet pleasantly repetitious lullaby. Now we saw them in their hundreds. We told Uncle Paul what we'd found. He told his son to take the BB gun<sup>3</sup> next time we went to the island and bring home dinner.

The following day was like every other that summer, sunny and hot. Shirtless, Paul and I enthusiastically paddled to the island. There we found shade made by bushes and tree branches



overhanging water. We felt confident maneuvering the canoe. I pointed to a bulge-eyed bullfrog staring dumbly at me. "There's a big one." Paul took the BB gun in his hands, pumped it, aimed, and fired. There was no loud bang or boom or crack, just a whoosh. The frog sunk down head first into the humus and we had our first for dinner. "Your turn next," said Paul. It was a new experience firing that BB gun and I handled it just as I'd seen "The Rifleman" on TV. I got the bullfrog with my first shot. We stalked our prey from the canoe the better part of a couple of hours before returning with our catch, pictured left with Paul's sister Ruth and I.

Uncle Paul instructed us to cut off the legs and peel away the skin. The top parts of the frogs could be used for bait, if ants didn't overrun them overnight. Aunt Eleanor washed the legs, dried them, and dipped each set first in egg, then breadcrumbs. She fried them gently in butter with chopped garlic. This was the sole time I ate such exotic French cuisine as frogs' legs. How did they taste? According to the catch-all description for just about any form of feral food, "Tasted like chicken."

Luck was with us catching fish, nice sized perch, for dinner. Scaling and gutting fish, two were full of yellow fish eggs. Had we known sooner, we'd have put them back in the lake, but it was too late for that now. Uncle Paul told us not to feel bad. We'd eat the eggs. The fry pan was put on a burner and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A type of air gun that fires small round steel bullets or pellets called BBs.

butter melted. Aunt Eleanor put all the roe into the sizzling butter and it popped like corn, some jumping from the pan up into the air. Catching warm yellow eye spawn, we laughed and shoved them into our mouths. They were delicate and didn't taste at all fishy. In fact, the taste wasn't unlike buttered corn. "Now," Uncle Paul proclaimed, "We can eat fried caviar just like all the rich people."

Near the cabin one warm morning Paul and I spotted a snake poking its head above the height of the grass and looking around. Paul called to his Dad. Uncle Paul, grinning, told us to catch the snake for another meal of wild food. He assured us it wasn't poisonous. What Uncle Paul didn't say was that we had to be Olympic sprinters to catch it. The snake was an eastern racer, a black racer. Aptly named, racers are very fast and flee from predators. Paul and I were the predators. The racer didn't hang around and vibrate its tail as a warning, so we missed hearing it sound convincingly like a rattlesnake. The curious snake had one quick squizz at us and took off. We chased with no hope of keeping pace. We gave up when it streaked out of sight. Puffing, we bent forward, hands upon knees, gasping for breath. It was better for us we didn't catch the snake. Cornered racers put up a vigorous fight, biting hard and often. Handled, it would have writhed, crapped all over us, and released a foul-smelling musk. None of that would have encouraged us to want it cooked for supper!

Aunt Eleanor handed Ruthie a metal bucket and told us three to look in the woods for berries. We foraged like we knew what we were doing. We had no idea what we'd find. Blueberries? Raspberries? Blackberries? Strawberries? So we looked eye level and low and found bushes loaded with blackberries. We stuck together to drop berries into the bucket. We didn't know we weren't alone. Suddenly a black furry head poked out from the bushes and grunted. It was a black bear. "Run! Run!" we all called in a panic. No one grabbed the bucket. We turned and ran. Dumb idea! I was just that little bit slower than Ruthy and Paul. Bears are fast but this was a youngster bounding clumsily and following me, as if it was a game of follow-the-leader. I did the next best dumb thing! I climbed a slender birch tree, its girth no larger than my thigh. I was never any good climbing a rope in gym class, but I shimmied up that trunk lickety-split and clung to it just out of bear cub range. It hadn't dawned on me that bears climb trees. Lucky for me, this one was a learner cub, likely booted out from the mother after 15 months or so to roam alone and seek out its own new territory. Startled by us, running as we did, for all I remember it may have wanted to play. If a bear is surprised at close range, what we were supposed to do was back away slowly; make ourselves look larger by holding our hands over our heads and waving them, maybe even yelling. Bears normally leave a space once they know a human's around.

This black bear made no attempt to climb up the birch tree. It just looked up at my feet, panted, sort of whined, and shook its head as if thinking, "Well, if you don't want to play, I'm not sticking around." The bear turned and lumbered from whence it came. I made sure the bear was out of my sight from up that birch before sliding down, skinning my knee on the white bark.

"So," Aunt Eleanor asked, arms akimbo on her hips, "Where's the berries?" Yeah, sure, bear and berries! When we hadn't produced the bucket, Aunt Eleanor ordered us back to retrieve it. Barely confident we retraced our steps, this time making lots of noise so the bear knew we were coming and it would go away. The young bruin hadn't checked our bucket and the blackberries were a treat.

When I was 12, perhaps just turned 13, I had a *Milwaukee Journal* paper route and pounded the pavement into my fifteenth year. Having discovered food, I was reverting to my baby fat and becoming a pre-pubescent roly-poly. Having spectacularly failed the truck farm employment, I was encouraged to get a paper route, a means by which to lose some weight, get fit, learn about business, earn money and develop responsibility. It wasn't as easy as I thought. A boy had to outgrow the job, give it up, or be fired before a route, any route, became available. My name was placed onto a waiting list. Eventually I was called. A kid I knew at school and didn't like was selling his paper route. It just happened to be the largest with 120 customers from 92<sup>nd</sup> and Schlinger Avenue to Highway 100 and Schlinger, and the furthest from distribution. *Journal* distribution took place at 87<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield in a small, makeshift wooden building we called 'the shack'. Some afternoons after school, we'd have to wait for papers to arrive on 'the truck.' Idleness always led to mischief. Newbies were given a pink belly with the shovel as initiation. The shovel was small for lifting coal

from the scuttle to put into the cast iron round oak on cold days. I guess I was just lucky. Most of the guys were older, rougher, had a bit of swagger, but they never pink-bellied me. As insurance, I never lent encouragement with my participation, never helped to lift a shirt, wield the shovel or hold down a hapless victim. But, to protect myself, I always chanted with the others, "Pink belly... pink belly... pink belly."

The 'manager' never got involved, often turned a blind eye to go out back 'the shack' and smoke. He was a short, stunted crab of a man who always needed a shave, wore a Clark Gable singlet summer and winter, had hairy shoulders, and whose stale breath reeked of pungent unfiltered Camels. With arrival of 'the truck' all foolishness ceased. Work began in earnest. The driver accepted no goofing off and seemed to hold seniority over the 'manager.' He was just bigger, uglier, tubbier, and gruffer. As he barked orders, no one disagreed or asked questions. All the paperboys stood one behind the other at the back of 'the truck.' Bundles of papers were tossed, caught by us, and stacked inside 'the shack'. The 'manager' cut the wire binding and allocated the number of papers we ordered on the day. Except for the small Monday and Saturday issues, on other weekdays we had to 'sub' our papers. There was always a second section. Wednesdays and Thursdays often had third and fourth sections. These additional sections came separate from the main. Each had to be inserted into the main body. Subbing was done without chat. From the left, one insert or more was laid out in a straight line on the tabletop. The insert on the right was opened to accept the insert from the left. My left hand grabbed an insert from the left and I slid it into the opened insert or next section on my right. Depending on how many inserts on the day, when the main section was reached, it was opened with the right hand and the insert was 'subbed' with the left. The entire paper was then shifted right and stacked. 'Subbing' was repetitive and monotonous. Like Charlie Chaplin on the assembly line in 1935's *Modern Times*, we worked like programmed machines.

While others had bikes, most days I dragged a red wagon to haul my heavy load. I had no choice. It was a subject of teasing, even bullying, but never led to the dreaded pink belly. During that first year of the route my sister helped me deliver newspapers. I'd never let Mary come directly to 'the shack'. That would have been asking for it, tantamount to begging for the pink belly. She was my sister, a girl, and girls just weren't allowed. At least that's what I told Mary, moreso to protect her and not because she really wasn't supposed to enter 'the shack.' A boys' only domain, 'the shack' reeked of testosterone. I made Mary wait a block or two away while I collected my order, subbed, and then loaded the papers onto the wagon. It was wise practice. With Mary's help, it didn't take too long to unload 120 *Milwaukee Journals*. Come winter, I copped even more taunts from the guys. I slogged my route wearing galoshes, a scarf, and a stocking hat. Cool guys never wore caps or galoshes. It was more acceptable to have ears reddened by bitter cold and prickly wind than to keep them covered and warm and looking stupid in a stocking hat, especially if it was one with a yarn pom-pom on top. Papers were stacked into a big box my father had built and attached onto the sled.

My income was supposed to be as high as \$22 a week, but numbers invariably came up short. People weren't home Friday, collection day, while others, I'm sure, deliberately chose to avoid answering my door knock. Some always had an excuse for me to, "come back tomorrow," and when tomorrow came, they didn't answer the door. There were days when chronic non-payers made collection day a daily knock on the door. Good customers always paid on time and often gave tips. I tried keeping my collection booklet accurate and up-to-date. Some winter Fridays I wouldn't get home until 9:00 p.m. Starting at 4, I'd have to check who'd paid, who hadn't; in the process peeling off knit mittens with my teeth, use a pencil, and pull on the mitts again. Delivery, collection, book marking, all was hindered when snow fell heavily and wind blew it into drifts. I can remember some Fridays having to crawl over snowbanks and clomping unshovelled walks to deliver, placing the paper behind an unlocked outer door to prevent it getting wet or blowing away. I made it home, tired and hungry; I counted monies collected, checked against my marks in the booklet, and often had money owing, resulting in no income. Saturday mornings I had to ante up at 'the shack' with 'the manager' for papers ordered over the

week. My father was always on my back about it. He fretted about my being a careless businessman.

Dad, however, gave of himself and his own sleep-in time every Sunday. He set the alarm clock and woke me at 3:30 a.m., four at the latest, summer and winter, to help with delivery of the always-large and heavy Sunday edition. I know my morning manner was teenage surly, that I'd moan and groan about having to roll out of the sack in the dark, and even though I never let my father know, I was very grateful. In a wee hour before Dad's alarm, twelve bundles were quietly dumped in the driveway by 'the truck.' Dad used wire cutters to snip loose each bundle of ten and we'd pack and stack the trunk and back seat and floor of the Plymouth. Sunday's Milwaukee Journal was as thick as a dictionary and as heavy as a journalist's typewriter. Dad drove the entire route while I moved as quickly as possible from one house delivery to the next. Regular practice was to open a screen or outer door and toss the paper in. Locked doors meant having to put the paper under a mat, if there was one. Some customers left a brick or other weight on the stoop for my delivery. Sometimes I'd have to find a rock and place it on the paper so wind didn't whip it away. Once in a while, the thick paper was shoved between fence palings, but it was nigh impossible to fold the fat Sunday edition.

A school bully lived in a corner house on Schlinger Avenue. I never looked forward to delivering the paper because of him. This skinny, wiry, unattractive boy with freckles and curly hair, a wide Joe E. Brown mouth, targeted me at school. We were both 9th graders at John Dewey Jr. High. I was the butt of his jibes, taunts and threats. He had once been part of the gang of paperboys at 'the shack.' He'd been fired. My guess is that as paperboy, and a pudgy one too, was enough of a trigger, his excuse, his reason for picking on me. On the other hand, maybe he was just an out and out sociopath. He never had a parent in the house when I brought the paper. More often than not, he had a couple of his toadies hanging around. Even though I'd try to dump the paper inside the outer door as quickly and quietly as possible, so as not to attract his attention, it sometimes felt like he'd been lying in wait. He'd whip open the door and yell, threaten to blacken my eyes or break my fingers. His verbal attack always sought approval from the bootlickers. The scrawny tyrant would look back at them asking, "Should I give 'im a bloody nose?" Of course they encouraged any form of bloodletting. He'd feign a punch, make a quick wave with the back of his hand just to see the fear on my face, and laugh. He'd look back at his stooges for support. "Ain't youse guys laughin'?" They'd laugh their forced, ordered laugh. It made the bully-boy feel powerful. He gloated. I'd wheel around and shoot down the walk in haste, the creep's insults making me feel angry and shamed. He'd always let me go without delivering the expected hiding.

One cold winter's twilight, snowbanks piled either side the sidewalk; I walked the paper to the bully's front door. It swung open and he stood there, arms folded like Mussolini. "Kinda cold out, eh. Wanna come in an' warm up?" I said no. He insisted. "C'mon. I ain't gonna do nuthin". I'm bein' a good neighbor." He grabbed my arm which was holding the paper and hauled me inside. I saw his flunkies sitting in the living room. This time the jerk wasn't just teasing. Still holding onto my arm, he was sinister. My peripheral vision picked his other hand coming up to clock me. I moved my seized arm so rapidly; he lost his grip and his balance. I gave him a shove, turned and darted out the door. I felt his presence behind and he pounced awkwardly onto my back. I grabbed his arm and shoulder and flung him over my head into the snow. Before he could comprehend what had happened, with a lion's roar I leapt atop him, pummeled his head and filled his shirt with snow. As he tried to raise himself, barely getting to his knees, I pulled him down and rubbed his face with snow. He coughed and spluttered. I throttled his back with a couple of solid whacks, spun him over and hammer-punched his chest twice more. I stood up straddling his puny self, and stood over him. His face was red. There were no tears. He made no sound, but he registered shock. With menace in my tone I stated, "Don't you ever try that again." I walked to my sled, my back to my antagonist. When I turned to look at the chaos I'd finished, his two lickspittles stood in the doorway, stunned. They made no attempt to help that hapless snot in the snow.

As a postscript, a lesson must have been learned. The bully changed his ways. Well, maybe not, but toward me, anyway. He'd been challenged - just as do alpha males amongst bison, lion, pronghorn antelope and some species of birds - and lost. If he picked on anyone else, I wasn't aware. In my Year 10 yearbook, this ratty boy wrote an unexpected tribute:

Larry, a real nice guy who bought my paper route 4 years ago - is in my Hist class - and now works where I do - Buddy you ain't no stranger!

Friends always, and good luck!

And he signed his name.

"Now works where I do" was a reference to the Black Steer Restaurant. It was, in its day, an up market steak house. I worked with Mike Theoharris and the former thorn in my side as a bus boy, but that story has more relevance later.

## Chapter 5: Formative Lessons

sister Miriam Clare had somehow ended up being in charge of 51 students. As a kid, what would I know about school and class arrangements? My 5<sup>th</sup> grade had been merged with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class. A rather stern disciplinarian with a heart of gold, her heart rejected smelting. Sister Miriam Clare - we could omit the Mary every nun included in her name, but were required always for courtesy, respect, and politeness to address her by both names, the use of one name never sufficient. The same rule of address was applied to Sister Phillip Neri who approached the combined class every now and again like she was a lion tamer, a whip in one hand for command and a chair in the other for protection.



Combined Grades 5 and 6 School Picture: Sister Miriam Clare is standing left of all her students. The priest standing on the right is Fr. Al Swendrowski. I am wearing a checked shirt in Row 3 second boy from right.

A stickler for honesty, Sister Miriam Clare verbally throttled our ears to emphasize the importance of always telling the truth. A lie, even a little white one, meant having to confess a venial sin and she didn't want us wasting a priest's valuable time with something so avoidable. Along with truth she placed importance on apology. "If you do something wrong, anything wrong, and you know it offends, you must own up to your offence and humbly apologize." I may not have the quoted accurately word for word, but that was the gist of it.

One of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade boys, a genuine show-off and smartass as I remember, obviously had it in him to test Sister Miriam Clare's principles of behavior as well as her patience. During a silent reading session – we had more than our usual share given the complex nature of her teaching a double graded class – Jim, that was his name I recall, raised his hand catching Sister Miriam Clare's attention. "Yes, Jim?" she asked. Jim stood, a deadpan face to out-Keaton Buster Keaton, and announced, "Excuse me, Sister Miriam Clare. I must humbly apologize. I farted."

Fart jokes are free candy for any prepubescent kid. Jim struggled to hide his smirk. We stifled immediate-reaction giggles, in the process sounding, perhaps, like snotty-snouted air-sucking piglets. Sister Miriam Clare upheld the picture of military composure. Retaining total dignity she replied ever so soberly, "Thank you, Jim. Your apology is accepted. You may lower your hand now and sit down." And that was that!

Sister Fatima's Geography lessons were always interesting. Maybe she'd actually been to some of the exotic lands? We learned mostly about European countries, but the most exciting for me wasn't in Europe. It was Australia. As a 12 or 13 year old I thought then to myself, "Now there's a place I want to go."

In the Character Development sections of my report card, however, Sister Fatima was harshest. I got the big  $\underline{X}$  marking the spots for Begins and Completes Work on Time, Practices the Common Courtesies, Participates in Wholesome Activities, and Works and Plays Well with Others. And I'd always thought 'Works and plays well with others' was just a catalyst for punchlines in jokes about the imaginary Sister Mary Elephant!

I believe I know how I earned the X in those report card squares. I wasn't alone in making snide comment in the classroom. There was Paul piping up just as annoyingly. We performed like a failed comedy team because neither wanted to play second banana. Short vitriolic outbursts, our mots targeted one another. We were, in others' ears, acting downright nasty. One sunny recess, verbal turned to physical. We exploded on the playground. As attention seekers, we had a ready-made audience willing to cheer, but secretly wishing we'd pummel each others' mouths shut. It was over as quickly as it had ignited. Sure, I'd like to think I bettered Paul. He probably thought he outpointed me. Truth was we were both losers that day. The punch-up gained no respect from classmates for either of us. I photographically remember looking up and seeing the nuns watching from the windows. I thought, "Oh, boy. We're in for it now." I was sure we'd be called into the principal's office, chastised, sermonized, and served a hand-written a letter to take home to parents where, surely, doom awaited. The nuns who ogled never acknowledged the playground fracas. Maybe they'd taken a lesson from Sister Mary 'Ingrid Bergman' in The Bells of St. Mary's (1945). She'd watched a fistfight amongst two boys from her classroom window and never administered punishment. She did teach one of the boys how to box! Not so at St. Aloysius. Nothing, get this, absolutely nothing ever happened. Neither of us was taught to box! For all I know, maybe the nuns just thought we deserved each other, and that was punishment enough.

Obviously that playground action hadn't been sufficient for conclusion. I was reminded of another instance where, after school, outside a beer depot near the school, we squared off again. Two old geezers placed odds on who'd best whom.

An  $\underline{X}$  marked against "Works and Plays Well with Others" really grated. Having the  $\underline{X}$  placed against "Practices the Common Courtesies", well, at least that one made sense. I'd been made to feel humbled, long-time embarrassed, but was never wholly silenced. Another  $\underline{X}$  in the square for "Participates in Wholesome Activities" was an insult. Who knows what went on in the minds of the School Sisters of Notre Dame? I had a *Mad* magazine secretly arranged inside a book so that Sister St. Mary Kowal (Polish word meaning "blacksmith"), or whatever her name was, saw only the tome's large format hard cover. The magazine always had a fold-in back cover wherein something, usually precociously suggestive or rude, was revealed from a perfectly innocuous drawing. I may not have appeared as oblivious as planned while folding the page. "Jesu Kohany<sup>1</sup>," the stiff-faced nun blurted in frustration from her pious moosh before demanding I come to the front of the class with my magazine. Sister looked at it, looked at me, and folded the back cover. Her eyes turned into eggs sunny side up. "You may pick up this filth at the end of the day," Sister said as she placed my *Mad* in her top left-hand desk drawer. All the others in the class looked at me, their eyes questioning, "So what the heck was that all about?" By school day's end, some classmates asked what happened.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Common Polish phrase usually expressed in frustration or anger and meaning "Dear Jesus."

When I told them it was all about *Mad* magazine, they just laughed. Sister sealed my magazine inside a brown envelope and instructed I take it home to my parents. I dutifully did. I wasn't clever enough to open it up beforehand. My parents weren't in the least offended by the *Mad* magazine, but they dithered and hoo-ed over the also-enclosed withered paperbound book illustrated with stick figures and which happened to be all about sex education. My Dad sort of sheepishly handed it to me saying, "Here. You better read it. And return it when you're finished." I was surprised I didn't hear, "... and if you have any questions..."

My desire in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades was to own a reel-to-reel tape recorder so I could read and record the stories I'd adapted from Disney's exotic adventures from Uncle Scrooge comics, some would say plagiarized, and hammered out one finger at a time on a cheap Remington typewriter. I had a good gift for the gab. However, when unharnessed, misdirected, I made inappropriately-timed quips which no one really cared to hear. In class, from as far back as 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I can remember, "Ah-pshh, ah-pshh" frequently directed at me. Sister Miriam Clare displayed the patience of Job with my vocal interjections. "Ah-pshh, ah-pshh!" I'd talk out of turn and, frankly, was a nuisance. Sister disciplined, sometimes to chide a naughty child with, of all things, a question, and I'd pipe up with some unnecessary, unwanted comment to aggravate the situation. "Ah-pshh, ah-pshh!" I thought I was being witty. I thought others laughed because they thought my comments were funny. They laughed, as uncomfortable wigglers in seats, because I was being a jerk. I think Sister Mary Fatima in Grade 7 used to just hold her upturned index finger against her pursed lips to shush my class clown behavior. Grade 8's Sister Mary Phillip Neri used a more pointed and slicing, "Quiet!"

As a pre-teen and just-become teen, I developed the expected interest in popular be-bop-shoobop, be-bop-a-loo-bah music, the bane of every parent. During the day my mother's preference was listening to 'wonderful' WRIT, Radio Milwaukee's 1340 on the dial. It was an easy listening music station with 'gentle' teenage pop music interspersed, and a favored announcer, Jack Raymond, who possessed a deep bass, mellifluous voice. He sounded like Paul Robeson even though he never sang Showboat's "Ol' Man River". Evenings and night-time air waves were given over to what the teenage audience wanted to hear. Without bothering to ask, I'd switch the kitchen radio atop the fridge to loud 'bumpety-bump' on my favorite radio station, WOKY. I imagined shuffling the wax platters, pattering about the artists, and being a diskjockey. In 1958, shortly before summer vacation, WRIT had a "Wish of the Week" contest. My mother encouraged me to enter. Winners were selected on the basis of sincerity, originality, and general appeal. I was one of the lucky entrants. I wrote a short composition on why I'd like to be a disk-jockey for a night with Pat Shanahan and mailed it. June 13<sup>th</sup> I received a letter. I'd won the "Wish of the Week"! I got to spend an evening on air at WRIT with Pat Shanahan. My parents took me to the radio station half an hour before broadcast time. They met station personnel, including my mother's favorite broadcaster, Jack Raymond, and drove home to hear me on radio. Pat Shanahan was affable and encouraging. My chatter had direction. I loved knowing people were listening, people I didn't even know. I had an audience. It was fun. I learned that radio stations received many recordings from studios and promoters. Pat Shanahan invited me to pick through a box, half the size of a refrigerator carton, full of 45s and take home as many as I wanted. I wasn't greedy, found a handful of current hits, including Ricky Nelson's "Travelling Man". My parents collected me when program time finished at 10:00 p.m. Mom and Dad made favorable comments about my radio experience. My mother also said she learned that the voice didn't always match the person imagined. She'd always pictured Jack Raymond as a Clark Gable, Tyrone Power, maybe even Rock Hudson. No, he looked more like an Ernest Borgnine, Burl Ives, or Sydney Greenstreet. He was a sack of potatoes in a suit.

When I was twelve, maybe just turning 13, I was put onto the train to Chicago to spend the occasional weekend with my cousin. John Radzinski and I both loved the movies and walked to the local cinema a few blocks away. It had a towering identifying neon "Lake" sign. Art deco, a slightly sloping floor, comfortable seating, it had one big-ish screen. Admission was 50 cents. Of films John and I would have seen, three features stand out in my mind. One was 1957's black & white *Abandon Ship!* Tyrone Power starred as an officer suddenly in command of a

lifeboat holding survivors from a sunken luxury liner. Title credits were shown over the action of the ship going down, with passengers clamoring into or clinging onto the lifeboat. The survivors faced an exciting time saving their lives while being exposed to the savage seas and each other. I was impressed with how the sinking of the ship happened immediately the film started. We were left tense and just as adrift as those people in the small boat. Hard decisions had to be made. Who could stay in the boat? Who had to wrinkle and shiver in the water while hanging on to the drifting boat? Who had to be dumped overboard because of injury? Who would become shark fodder?

Another black & white movie stuck in my memory starred Mickey Rooney as *The Atomic Kid* (1954). It wasn't a great movie, nor was it a very funny comedy. I remember it because it taught me I didn't have to be afraid of the atomic bomb. The bomb! Ah, it was *THE* big scary thing in its day. Everyone feared the Russians would drop it any time coming. In grade school I remember rehearsing "Duck and Cover" after we were shown the short cartoon movie and, more or less, learned to sing the "Duck and Cover" song. This was the Civil Defense exercise drilled into us, as a song and a general drill, mind, just in case the United States was invaded by those dirty Commies. To be protected from the blast and the eventual radiation, as kids, we totally believed our government's propaganda. Hiding under a desk, and using our arms to cover our eyes and neck, would save us from being cooked alive. The U.S. government's 16mm films screened in classrooms ignored the reality of what happened over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. *The Atomic Kid*'s Mickey Rooney is a prospector who survives an atomic bomb test because he'd eaten a peanut butter sandwich. This film was reassuring and alleviated fears. I loved peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!

The third feature was memorable for, some might ascertain, reasons associated with puberty. In glorious Technicolor was *Boy on a Dolphin* (1957) starring Alan Ladd, Clifton Webb and, making her debut in an American film, Sophia Loren. It was a rather pedestrian sunken-treasure film set in the Greek isles. Sophia Loren is a skin diver who assists Alan Ladd. She was everything for which I remember the film. Don't recall what the sunken treasure was supposed to be and didn't even care. All I saw on that screen was a wet T-shirt with, dare I mention it, given my tender age then, nipples! Aw, what the heck! I guess this was my time for the abundant and out-of-control development of a tweeny-bopper's male hormones. I reacted to what my body was telling me was good. I think the Catholic Legion of Decency took a sharp punch in the A-II from my pre-pubescent interest and, funnily enough, I didn't feel any shame or a need to hurry to confess my pleasure in caressing a female body with my wide-opened, sinfully ogling eyes. Man, oh, man, did I ever have something to brag about to my friends at school!

Sometime after "The Three Stooges" debuted on television in August 1958, my desire to own a tape recorder changed. One afternoon after school, I was watching the Three Stooges on TV. Moe hit Curly with a metal plumbing pipe. As Moe lifted the pipe from Curly's noggin, it had bent into the shape of Curly's head. Well, how did they do that? Paying closer attention to the slapstick violence, I became aware of Moe clobbering Curly or Larry in a picture whereby all three characters could be seen. It was replaced by another picture showing only the two characters closer up as the instrument was lifted from a head. I didn't know it then, but what I had noted was a Long Shot which changed to a Medium Close Up. I had observed Cutting from one shot to another. The term, I would later learn, was called Editing. I remember saying to myself, "I can do that...

## ... and someday I will."

The most special Road Show Release film to come to downtown Milwaukee in 1959 was a biblical epic and it made the biggest impression on me. Today it is still one of my all-time favorite-ever movies. It was *Ben Hur* and, as the chiseled from solid rock main title lettering suggested, it was monumental. Just as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) did it for Steven Spielberg, *Ben-Hur* was my formative film. St. Aloysius School organized the field trip to a downtown Milwaukee cinema. In the lobby, I parted with a dollar, a lot of money in 1959, for the souvenir booklet. I still have and

treasure it. Eventually I bought the Miklos Rosza Academy Award-winning soundtrack album on vinyl. What wasn't there to thrill to during sea battle drill, the drumming cadence to mark oar stroke, and hearing the command "Ramming speed" to the slave rowers; of seeing during the sea battle a man's hand chopped off and, in profile, a lance piercing a man's bare chest; Frank Thring's haughty Pontius Pilate daintily dropping his handkerchief to start the chariot race, the excitement of galloping horses and ensuing overturning chariots' accidents, Charlton Heston's leap over a broken chariot, Pilate's "I crown their god", followed by Stephen Boyd's long agonized aspiration of breath as he died; the miracle of leprosy cured amid flashing lightning and crashing thunder, and a vision of the crucified Jesus reflected in a raindrop-pitted pool of blood and water My viewing and enjoyment of Ben Hur wasn't only inspirational, it encouraged me to sit up and watch, for the first time in my life, the 1959 televised Academy Awards presentation. I cheered the film's record-setting 11 Oscars win, including for Best Picture. Ever since that big screen excitement I experienced as a young impressionable teen, to this day, no matter where I've been, I haven't missed a telecast of the Academy Awards ceremony. And yes, in my 13 year old mind, one day I too wanted to make an epic about ancient Rome.

## And someday I would.

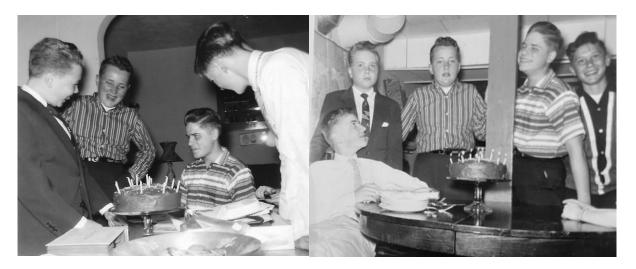
Boys with whom I made friends in 6th grade at St. Aloysius remained my friends in 1960. We played Boston Bulldog on the school grounds at recess and lunchtimes. Back then danger wasn't considered or associated with the bodily contact game, but it certainly does now and is, for the most, banned at playtime. Weekends we'd go bike riding, exploring, playing down at the creek catching frogs and snakes, ride the long-chained swings on the playground to see how high we could go without throwing up or killing ourselves by launching and flying out of the strap seat. I had friends at St. Al's in a day when playing with the boys meant nothing more than they were your pals. Friends expanded my knowledge of ancestry. Just about every child's surname ended in "ski" at St. Vincent's. Some of the St. Al's guys had surnames ending with "ski", Lewandowski, Chmielewski, but others were called Buckett, Byers, Weber, Layman, Fransen, Harter, Zirbel, Weiskopf, Wunrow, Vanden Plas, and Kojis, and Theoharris. Interestingly enough, those were the names used for familiarity. It used to be that we called friends' given names when going to their house. We never bothered ringing a doorbell and a door wasn't knocked. We'd stand outside a closed door and call out in singsong, "O-o-oh, Mike." "O-o-oh, Tom." "O-o-oh, Bill-eeee." As we started to 'grow up', we eventually abandoned the childlike call for the more genteel door knock or doorbell push. If a parent answered, we'd ask for Tom, Dick, or Barry. Once we were together, to acknowledge our 'growth', things changed again. The surname became the main name. We'd go out with Harter, or Zirbel, even Lewandowski. In typically teenage slanguage we'd elide consonants and mumble, "Yeah, me an' Theoharris're goin' too."

In addition to hanging on to school friends, I made lots of new ones through the C.Y.O., the Catholic Youth Organization. The organization was introduced by Bishop Bernard J. Shiel of Chicago in 1930. Its purpose was to guide young Catholics to live a Christian life from a young age, developing trust between peers, and living a happy life in a positive manner. St. Aloysius' C.Y.O. met after Sunday Mass in the spacious basement meeting room. There we'd engage in prayer, singing, organize charity work which included bake sales and an annual chocolate sale. Some sports teams were organized and C.Y.O. might have stood for "Crush Your Opponents". I was a pitcher on a C.Y.O. softball team which played early evenings in the summer. I practiced my slow underarm pitching to deliver a softball with a high-arching lob and smirked upon hearing the umpire call, "Strike." It wasn't always easy for a batter to follow the lob and detect the ball had entered his strike zone by crossing his shoulder and dropping down his chest.

St. Al's youth group was large and divided into two sections. I started out in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and Junior High-aged side. The "big kids" went to high school and were elected office bearers; one year counting my cousin Peter Brochhausen as its president. When meetings were held, ladies worked in the well-appointed commercial kitchen to prepare, cook, load trays with food, and serve breakfast. A menu for teenagers was selected and offered for its convenience, involving the least amount of preparation and clean-up, I'm, sure. Our favorite was warm,

white, soft buttered rolls filled with sliced warm ham. Seconds, thirds, and fourths weren't frowned upon. Plates weren't needed. Only napkins for drips. The collection plate was passed around after breakfast. I'll wager money was lost every time. We were tightwads with our money, often tossing in no more than a dime, an extra nickel if we felt flush. Once in a great while, and this would be due to pleading from the treasurer and our spiritual advisor, whom we liked, we'd donate the whole of the 50 cents Dads had given us for breakfast.

My 13th birthday, April 30, 1959.



Duggie Byers, Barry Farnworth, Me, Tom Layman.

Tom Layman, Duggie Byers, Barry Farnworth, Me, Tony Kojis

The C.Y.O. organized wholesome entertainment for us budding teenagers. We liked going to the junior sock hops, as they were sometimes called. They were the Friday night dances for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The big kids from high school weren't allowed to barge in on us. It was the one OK night when boys didn't have to feel totally dumbstruck and awkward about asking a girl to dance. Try talking to any of those girls in regular school time and it was like holding back pee when you're bursting at the seams. C.Y.O. sock hops just seemed to ease the whole embarrassing thing of having to talk with a girl, especially when she happened to be one you really, really liked, though always from a distance, often in secret, and you couldn't admit you did. Oh, gosh, everyone just couldn't wait for the school day to end so that we could rush home, take a bath, gulp down Mom's supper of macaroni and cheese, and put on some of our finest duds to dash back to the basement school hall and strut our stuff. Of course the girls played coy. Of course the boys still felt wobbly-kneed with butterflies swarming in stomachs about asking a girl to dance. But these Friday nights put everyone on a level peg and everything about the music and the dancing was all right. Even when adult chaperones, sometimes wearing the habits of our more athletic nuns, slid hands in-between couples to make sure there was a space between slow-dance bodies, or cautioned about hip swiveling to livelier twangy guitar and sax numbers, it was still all right.

Though I thought little of Elvis Presley, I admired a gold satin jacket he wore when he performed on television. I asked Mom if she'd sew me a shiny gold jacket. Mom was pragmatic and sewed me a reversible sports coat, just in case I grew tired of the satin, or friends ragged me about wearing it. For dressy occasions away from teenage frivolity, the gold satin reversed into subtle mustardy corduroy. The jacket was a definite one-off. No one else would have one, that's for sure. Talk about professional-looking, my Mom's handiwork could have commanded a three figure price in the Hollywood celebrity market, if she had one. Liberace, extremely popular at the time with the bluerinse set, and whose parents lived near the Fairgrounds in West Allis, would have had a contract drawn up for my mother to fulfill his taste for specially tailored shiny sequined fur-lined jackets.



I couldn't miss being seen, even in the dim light of the junior dance hall. Of all the girls in my class, I had the hugest crush on Susie Simon. I couldn't ever talk with her. My mouth would just flub words that attempted to spill from my lips. It's one of those never-forget memories of a situation which almost made me pee my pants at the time! I remember hemming and having, shifting my weight from left foot to right foot. "G'wan, ask her," my best friends egged. "Don't be chicken." I screwed up my courage, took a huge gulp of air, broke the ice and asked Susie Simon to dance. We are pictured left. A shame we can't see Susie's pretty face.

When the fast music of the Everly Brothers stopped, coincidentally being "Wake Up Little Susie," and a slow number started, likely Paul

Anka's "Puppy Love", we kind of clumsily clasped hands and I wrapped my right hand around her slender waist. Then I said the dumbest thing ever mumbled, "Oh, I can't believe this would ever happen." She looked at me like, "Wha-a-a-at?" I'd overplayed my hand. Susie didn't know I ever existed at school, much less at the dance, and she surely had no idea I had feelings for her. Of course I blew it. That was the only time I ever danced with Susie. What a great little story this would have made had I ever decided to make a movie about growing up. Of course, at the time, it was just plain embarrassing and so, so, hurtful. It didn't help, either, that my best friends, naive boys that we all were, went "nyah-nyah" adding salt to an already opened wound. So much for that fledgling

effort at romance. So much for letting a good movie idea evaporate forever!

Right: Snapshot with cousins on Christmas Day 1959 at Uncle Ralph and Aunt Evelyn Behrs' home. From top left, I am wearing the gold satin sport coat. My brother Steve. David Pociecha, his brother Michael is beside my left leg. Ruth Karczewski stands beside my sister Mary. Brian Behrs is holding the rail. Leaning is Paul Karczewski. Seated left to right: Phillip Brochhausen, Kathy Behrs holding youngest Behrs brother Chris, Peter Brochhausen, Paul Behrs, and seated front Tom Unable to identify the kids wearing the Brochhausen. cowboy hats.

From St. Aloysius Catholic School I went to public school, the art deco three storied John Dewey Jr. High at 7815 West Lapham Street. From home on 96th and Greenfield it was a much longer walk to and from school. I walked in sunshine, in rain, in fog, and in snow. If one of those standard yellow school buses ran a route in up in our neighborhood, I was never aware of one.

Throughout 9<sup>th</sup> grade I was at that age when I thought I knew it all. I was no scholar and seldom dedicated the time required to actually learn anything. That was supported by the grades earned: mostly Cs and Ds. Surprising myself, but not impressing my father, was the consistency of the C over four terms in Algebra taught by Miss Nellie Stowe. I ask you, unless you're heading for a career in Science and Mathematics, who in real life would ever use or have a need for Algebra?

My English teacher was Miss Eleanor Schoewe (pron. Show-wee). I could be just an absolute shyster in her class especially when it came to book reports. A Christmas present from my parents in my 8<sup>th</sup> school year was *Moby Dick*, a thick book by American novelist Herman Melville. I guess their expectancy was my reading it to fulfill book reporting requirements, or perhaps to become edified in classic literature. That Melville wrote the novel about a great white whale in 1851 probably accounted for my never really "getting into" it. I barely got past the first line, "Call me Ishmael." What parent names a baby Ishmael? OK, I was just too young, too inexperienced to comprehend 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, including the line in the first paragraph, "With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship." I'd no idea what a philosophical flourish was or who in the heck was Cato. I just didn't 'get it'.

So here I was, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader who, a year later still hadn't read *Moby Dick*, nevertheless submitted my written report of *Moby Dick* on time. The marking received from Miss Schoewe was a most commendable assessment.

Every month I duly presented my book report and every month I received a mark ranging from <u>C-</u> to <u>B</u>. I think my mother was suspicious because she never saw me curled up on the couch with a book, never saw me head off to bed with a book in my hand, nor did she ever catch sight of me wandering into the euphemistically-named reading room, our bathroom, to meditate on the throne as my father managed daily with the <u>Milwaukee Journal</u>. And yet she never questioned when or where I accomplished my reading. School library? In-class reading time, perhaps?

My secrets to successful book reporting are pictured right. Thank you to "Classics Illustrated" created by Albert Kanter, a series of comic books beginning publication in 1941 and completing its first run in 1969. 169 issues were produced. Invariably, over the nine months of book reporting required, I wasn't going to run short. I had "Classics Illustrated" stacked in a box behind the furnace in the basement and that's where I enjoyed reading them. They were easy to understand and, although adaptations, always carried the crux, the importance of a novel's plotline, author's ideas and intention.

Some of the boys in Miss Schoewe's class, myself included, paid little attention to lessons; instead taking liberties with heckling her at every opportunity. She made herself an easy target. Often we'd make dreadful sounds with our mouths - pretend farting or frog croaking which muzzled an obscenity – while she faced the blackboard, her back to us. She was a teacher with no eves in the back of her head and could never pick the culprit. In retaliation her favorite, inventive, and all-inclusive word was, "Gangism," sometimes extended to, "You're all gangism!" If we persisted, and we often did, Miss Schoewe would rush to the closed window, even in winter, thrust it upwards and scream, "Yee-zus Christ and little fishes! Oxygen! I need oxygen." Instead of shutting our gobs and sitting bolt upright in fear, her comical repercussion only goaded us into further negative performance. A last resort assigning us to after school detention. If it was run by one of the hardnosed, bald-headed men, we'd behave; else we see no redemption. As luck or bad luck would have it, should Miss Schoewe be in charge of detention, we'd engage in subterfuge, a personal, mostly soothing subdued giggle-fest. She often dressed in gaudy colors and patterns which, to us misfit 9<sup>th</sup> grade boys, begged for baiting. However, we learned quickly that to compliment her dresses, we'd elicit her girlish giggle and bobble-headed "Thank you." Satisfied we got one up on our teacher, we settled for the remainder of the class or detention and made like we were learning or studying.

For some exceptional reason, and probably because I grew up on Milwaukee's south side, I assumed the city's population was mostly immigrant Poles. Miss Schoewe asked which immigrant force dominated Milwaukee's population. I raised my hand and answered "Polish." Miss Schoewe stared me down with her adamant, "No! It's German. There are more German people in this city than others." Pig-headed, I refused to accept her educated knowledge. Mea

culpa, and again I ended up in detention and, yes, I deserved it. It took until my first year in university to eat humble pie and learn how historically accurate Miss Schoewe had been.

On the other hand, there was one moment, just the one, when I was solely in the right and Miss Schoewe was wholly wrong. My third term report card had been divvied out somehow by Principal Sheridan Ellsworth. Oh, boy, an A from Mr. Fitas in Science, another A from Mr. Frangesch in P.E. (Physical Education or Gym class), back up to a C after a 2<sup>nd</sup> term D from Mr. Horace McMahon in Social Studies, even a C from Miss Gertrude Howard, up from my expected D in Latin. But there it was, a never-before-seen D- in English from Miss Schoewe. I was livid. Sure, I'd been ill-behaved and knew it, but I hadn't performed to the level of "just short of failure." I was sure of getting a crack across the back of my head by my father more than anything else, but I stood up for my 3<sup>rd</sup> term class performance. Miss Schoewe oversaw a Study Hall. I was in that Study Hall. I approached Miss Schoewe at her lectern. Plopping my report card over the book she read, I pointed to her D- and asked for her justification. Miss Schoewe hemmed and hawed. Next I dumped my folder covering her book and my report card and thumbed through all my tests, all my graded written work; nothing ranked below a C. I looked at her showy (isn't that ironic?) dress. "Oh, my God," I exclaimed, though in a whisper, "Where did you buy that beautiful dress?" That girlishness inside her rose, "Oh, I made it myself." "Wow!" I proclaimed, "My mother sews her clothes all the time too." Miss Schoewe did something I had hoped for, but didn't genuinely expect to happen. She licked her thumb, rubbed out the D- and beamed a broad smile I'd not seen over three terms. She re-wrote my grade to C.

Why didn't I take a course in Spanish or French, the "in" foreign languages of the day? With my father's encouragement to seek a career in pharmacy, or because my altar boy days spouting Latin might make it easier to comprehend, I signed up for Latin with Miss Gertrude Howard. She was extremely patient with all students, always kind and gentle, and I never played the goose in her classroom. After a full year fruitlessly pursuing the dead language, all I managed to retain was from our first lesson. It was "Britannia insula est" (Britain is an island) and two coined words since they didn't exist in the original Latin: "picus nicus" for picnic and "Cocam Colum" for Coca Cola. "Vomitorium" was one Latin word also permanently lodged in my brain's library. It's a passage in an amphitheatre or stadium through which large crowds can exit rapidly after a performance or games' ends. It can also be a pathway for actors to enter or exit a stage. It derives from the Latin vomō, vomere, "to spew forth." Therein lies my reason for word retention, although there's no truth to Ancient Romans providing designated spaces for the purpose of literally throwing up. I stick to my excuse of being lax in Latin usage because I never found an Ancient Roman with whom I could converse. Contrarily, the year doing Latin taught me more about the English language, especially Latin root words from which English words derived. When confronted by a confusing big word, once I picked out the Latin root, more often than not I'd figure out the word's meaning. As well, entire Latin phrases adapted into the English language became an easy-peasy decipher.

From 8<sup>th</sup> grade and into 9<sup>th</sup>, one best friend throughout this time was Douglas Byers, better known by his diminutive Duggie. He and I would be seen on the playground school days and we went together to the movies weekends. I developed a huge crush on a girl in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and decided one Sunday to leave Duggie in the dust. After much personal agonizing, I worked up the courage to ask her to a movie at the Paradise. Ah, the Paradise. Couldn't have been named more appropriately! I'd known I'd get a teasing from Mom and Dad about a girlfriend. It was one of their favorite topics as I clumsily lurched into puberty. Their sermons always ended with, "Solder your zipper shut". Preferring to avoid an embarrassing interrogation of "Who's the girl?" and "Where are you going? ...and why?.. ...blah, blah blah...," I lied instead of being truthful. When the predictable questions started, I quickly blurted out, "Duggie Byers." My parents knew Duggie and any more questions needn't be asked.

Connie - yes, it was the movies again and another Connie - and I walked to the Paradise. I don't remember what we talked about. I don't remember what movie we saw, if it was a single or a double feature, or even if I bought her popcorn. Indelible in my brain is what happened on our

walk home. Driving toward us on Greenfield Avenue, I recognized my Dad's Oldsmobile. "Uh, oh," I thought. Dad could have kept on driving, saved any talking to or talking about till later. But no...and sure enough, Dad pulled to the side of the road. There was a sudden grip in my throat, that awful feeling of a ghoul's cold, bony fingers squeezing inward my Adam's apple. My stomach collapsed to my knees and I clenched my teeth so I wouldn't wet my pants. The whole family was in the car. Mom rolled down her window and asked, "You want a ride?" There was an odd, almost mocking tone in her voice. The offer didn't sound genuine. It may have been delivered as a rhetorical question because she knew the answer was going to be, "No." Where was the hole when I needed one to crawl into? I was humiliated. Then my little brother Steve threw in the monkey wrench delivering the coup de grâce. "That doesn't look like Duggie Byers!" As Dad pulled from the curb Connie asked, "What was that about?" In typical teenage response, though somewhat shame-faced, I said, "Nuthin."

Right: Family snapshot Christmas 1960. I am wearing the gold satin sport coat Mom sewed for me.

Christmas 1960, I was 15 years old and barely able to call myself a bottom-of-the-year-level 10<sup>th</sup> grader, much less the more formally named sophomore at West Allis Central High School. Money in my pocket withdrawn from a savings account built from the paper route, Dad drove the two of us to the West Allis Camera Shop. Just about every day for months as I walked home from school, I'd look in the window of the West Allis Camera Shop and check out one



movie camera. "What ever happened to the tape recorder you wanted," I can still hear my mother saying. I wasn't interested in the single lens camera. I had my eye set on the Kodak Brownie Turret model.

So, how was it that my tunnel vision zeroed in on the Kodak Brownie Turret? Weekly our family enjoyed the Wednesday night TV show "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet", a wholesome and funny family show sponsored by the Eastman Kodak Company. Episodes frequently started with a voice over, "Eastman Kodak Company is happy to bring you America's favorite family – the Nelsons – Ozzie, Harriet, David and Ricky. They like to go places, enjoy happy times together and, like most of us, they enjoy these moments over again in pictures." The narrator encouraged viewers, "Next time you send a letter, send a picture" and "Why not take some pictures this weekend?" The disembodied voice touted Kodak film with, "Look for the familiar yellow box." During a 1958 telecast one commercial showed Ozzie walking into shot holding a Kodak Brownie Turret as the announcer said, "Earlier in the show we mentioned price reductions on Brownie movie cameras. That covers the Brownie Turret cameras too." Ozzie then demonstrated the ease with which he shot three scenes, a Wide Angle Shot, a Medium Shot, and a Close Up, of his sons batting a tennis ball over a net stretched across the front lawn and driveway; "And I didn't have to move a step. See? What could be easier?" I was convinced that was the camera I wanted.

It had three lenses: Regular, Widescreen and Telephoto. It took 50 foot reels of Standard 8mm double perforated film; it was known as double-run 8mm film; when a roll of film was run through the camera, half the width of film was exposed, the spool was then reversed and the other half exposed. For processing the film was split and spliced together which resulted in double the amount for projection. In other words, after loading and exposing 25 feet of film, you opened the camera, took the exposed reel from the bottom, turned it around, and re-loaded it from the top to expose the remaining 25 feet. One roll of Standard 8mm film, sometimes referred to as Regular 8mm, had a running time of about 4 minutes, approximately 2 minutes per 25 feet.

The store's manager expounded on the advantages of using the turret model camera; how I could stand in one place and change the view from Long Shot to Medium Shot to Close-up simply by rotating the turret in-between shots, just as Ozzie Nelson had demonstrated on TV. The camera's motor operated on a spring wound system. The only real instruction I can recall the manager saying was something about making sure I changed my position or changed the lens in-between each shot. It was good, practical advice and, bearing the Three Stooges in mind, I understood what he meant. A tripod was never mentioned. For home movies, that is the unplanned footage of family activities like picnics, outings, Christmas and around the home,

hand-held was the norm and, obviously, the manager assumed I'd be shooting home movies. I am pictured right holding in my hands the Kodak turret model movie camera.

A hand-held movie light, on the other hand, was brought up. For indoor shooting, an almost eye-blinding Sylvania 'Sun Gun' was not only recommended, but necessary. "You're sure this is what you want," my father said, "because I don't want to come back here in two weeks to return it 'cause you got bored with it." Sister Fatima's Character Development critique must have been burnt into Dad's brain. Grades I earned in Mathematics, Algebra, Geometry, Science made me a C and D student. These were subjects in which my father had excelled. My 9<sup>th</sup> grade report card wasn't a point of pride, and Year 10's wasn't showing improvement. I was allowed to spend \$59.95 for the camera, \$14.95 for the Sun Gun, and \$6.00 for two spools of movie film. I was handed a dime and two nickels change.



## Chapter 6: Something about My Family Background

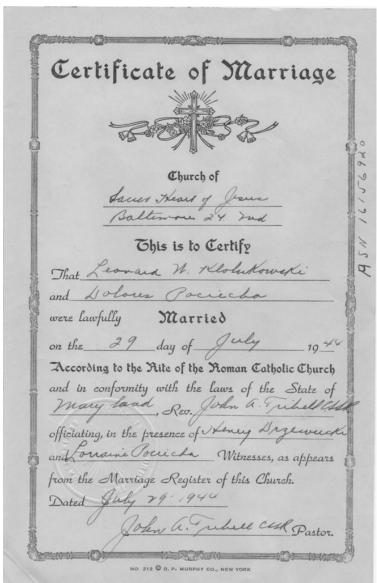
Leonard to discover each other; both had been students at South Division High School and both were in the same 1935 graduating class. After Dolores joined the Sienkiewicz Club she became its secretary. She met Leonard, as a matter of course, with all the members attending basketball games, wrestling matches, and dances. Eventually passing glances turned to taking notice of one another and they developed enough curiosity and interest in each other to start dating.

In these years of the Great Depression, jobs were scarce. Dolores babysat, cleaned houses, and worked in a bakery to earn some money. From about 1940 she sold war bonds, attended USOs, had an office job and, after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, worked in a wartime supercharger factory making small parts for airplanes and earning more than \$15 a week. Leonard entered active military service on June 11, 1943 and attended E Signal Corps School in Fort Mammoth, New Jersey for 32 weeks where he trained as a radio repairman. Dolores went to New Jersey on a steam train to visit Leonard in February 1944. Leonard presented Dolores with a diamond ring and they became engaged.

There was strong opposition to the engagement from the Klobukowski side of the family. Leonard had nothing saved in the bank, owned nothing, and Dolores had nothing. How could a secure marriage result from no assets, no money, no house, no planned and safe future, and with a gigantic conflict being fought in Europe and the Pacific? Twenty-seven years old and Leonard was still behaving like a little boy, the dutiful son listening to and obeying the concerned, yet petty demands of his all-in-charge father. Further, the Klobukowski family thought little of the woman who left home to stay in a hotel in a strange town to visit her boyfriend! Proper engagements just weren't done like that! They considered Dolores' action rather impetuous and impertinent, if not downright misguided and wrong. It was all, of course, innocence plus.

Dolores had sensed Leonard's dithering indecision. She further sensed that if she was forced into waiting until Leonard's overseas tour of duty finished, she might never get to marry the man she loved and wanted as her husband and the father of their children.

In July 1944 Dolores travelled by steam train to Baltimore, Maryland. Black smoke billowed from the engine and she arrived covered in black soot. Dolores and Leonard were lawfully married according to the Rite of the Roman Catholic Church and in conformity with the laws of the State of Maryland in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on July 29, 1944 in Maryland. Officiating for the ceremony was the Rev John A Tribell, C.S.S.R, Pastor. Best man was Leonard's Army buddy Henry Drzewucki. Maid of Honor was Dolores' youngest sister Lorraine Pociecha. Leonard wore his military uniform. There was no time for a fancy wedding dress for Dolores. A photo of the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Klobukowski casually posing for the camera after their



wedding ceremony on the steps of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is below right. Their Certificate of Marriage is pictured left.



I was conceived during their brief but busy honeymoon at Niagara Falls. How did I ever learn this intimate tidbit? On a visit to Niagara Falls in 1995 we watched the ever rushing wall of water tumble over the precipice; my mother unashamedly blurted out, "Oh, such memories! Lawrence, this is where you were conceived." Caught off guard I blushed, "Ma,

you make me feel like a salmon." My mother said she felt that she wanted something of my father should the unthinkable happen while he served overseas.



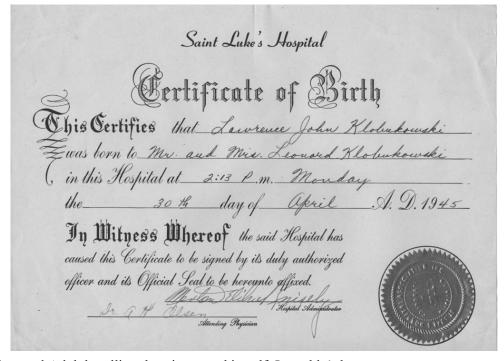
My father, Leonard Walter Klobukowski, pictured left in 1943, was American born; a 28 year old radio repairman 648 in the 54<sup>th</sup> Signal Repair Company of the United States Army, he was somewhere in the Pacific theater of war when I was born. mother, Dolores (nee Pociecha) Klobukowski, pictured right in 1943, was also American born, a 27 year old housewife living at 26<sup>th</sup> 1100 South Street, Milwaukee. When the early signs



of the birth process were becoming evident, mother called her doctor who instructed she should immediately get to the hospital, St. Luke's on 2<sup>nd</sup> and Greenfield Avenue. Leaving her mother, whom she lived with at the time, at home to come to the hospital later, she boarded a taxicab; the driver

looking petrified and thinking, perhaps, he'd have to make the delivery. Mother told the cabby to "keep cool" and she arrived at the hospital shortly after 9:00 a.m. There she was, all by herself. Nurses probed and my mother thought that, maybe, they weren't very nice and friendly. There were no classes on how to have babies then as there are now. When I left the security of the womb into a sometimes lousy world, my mother had no idea where my father was. All she knew, because of security reasons, was that he was "out there."

My certificate birth pictured right. Dr. A. H. Olsen delivered me and I was born Monday, April 30, 1945 at 2:13 p.m. in St. Luke's Hospital, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It just happened that I arrived on the day Adolph Hitler shot himself in his Berlin bunker. Whether my debut coincided



with Germany's time and Adolph pulling the trigger on himself, I wouldn't know.

Hitler's timely and welcome demise hastened the end to the European theatre of war. The Germans signed a formal document surrendering on May 7<sup>th</sup>, ending the long conflict as from midnight May 8<sup>th</sup>. Mother blamed me for her not joining in and celebrating the War's end when everyone else danced and sang, hugged and kissed in the streets. After giving birth back then women weren't given a choice and were kept in the hospital a lot longer than today. Mother was still recuperating from my having popped out and she was learning how to take care of her precious, dependent little pink bundle. In the Pacific the war still had to be won.



My father's only sister, Adeline (nee Klobukowski) Slauson, pictured left, holding me on the day of my christening, was my godmother. Walter Pociecha Jr., my mother's only brother, pictured right with me in January 1946, was my godfather. His military number was 36228410, the 3 indicating he was a draftee and he was trained at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. The War had him serving overseas in England when I was born. Recorded in the baby book my mother started, Uncle Herman Brochhausen, married to my Mother's sister Adeline, stood in as proxy for Uncle Wally. I was baptized Lawrence John in St. Matthew's



Catholic Church. Michael David could have been my name but, according to my mother, too many boys were being named Michael or David and she wanted me to be different. I was encumbered with Lawrence after the church mother attended, the John because it was a simple monosyllabic middle name in-between a two-syllable given name and a four-syllable surname... then again, possibly for great-great-grandfather Jan (John) Pociecha, or perhaps for grandfather, Simon Jan (John) Klobukowski, maybe again my grandfather's father, great-great grandfather Jan (John) Kłobukowski.

Although I don't subscribe to any of the occult sciences like astrology or numerology and don't believe a thing written in newspapers or magazines about them, for the edification of those who do place credence in pseudo sciences as slippery as eels in warm Vaseline, numerologically my Life is an 8 indicating authority, power, wealth, personal magnetism, executive ability, organizational ability, leadership, self-reliance, the will and ability to succeed, generosity, philanthropy, strength of character and perseverance.

My numerological Soul number is a 5. According to its pie-in-the-sky gibberish, and as reliable as a three dollar note worth no more than a buck four-eighty, the Soul number represents one's most personal, most sacred, most hidden desires. My soul is, thusly, cached with ambition, variety, individuality, curiosity, freedom, ability to grow, experience, audacity, boldness, versatility, dislike of anything "plodding" or slow, opportunism, elasticity of character, and personal magnetism.

It all sounds terrifically impressive, but in a no-nonsense retort from the mouth of M\*A\*S\*H's Colonel Sherman Potter, "Horse hockey."

Astrology, now that's another thaumaturgy Colonel Potter might sum up descriptively as, "Road Apples!" I am of the second sign of the Zodiac, a Taurus, the Bull. And according to some, full of it! It is an earth sign ruled by Venus, named for the ancient goddess of love and beauty. According to astrologers, they who claim to know so much about the future but who are incapable of picking the winning lotto numbers from one draw to the next, I am loyal, patient, practical, and trustworthy. I appreciate beauty, comfort, and the countryside. I can move slowly and can be lazy, but am determined to finish any task I begin. Theoretically, I have a down-to-earth personality and rely upon my common sense.

Taureans, though not talkative – most debatable in my case – are affectionate, friendly, and warm-hearted. They are even-tempered but can become fierce when angered. They are stubborn and tend to keep grudges. My father best described me as having a one-track mind. "Once you get an idea in your head, nothing can change it," he'd say. Dad meant it, I'm sure, as criticism for pig-headedness, probably because Dad never knew I was a numerological 8 and, like Colonel Potter, paid no subscription to my Taurean birth date on the Zodiac map.

Mother and father wrote many, many letters and, according to one my mother gave to me many years afterward, so did I. By way of my mother's hand, I "wrote" my father on May 8, 1945, at 4:20 p.m., a Sunday, while she hoped my Dad would come home someday from the war so that we could be a family.

Hello Daddy,

Here I am in my birthday suit. There it is, pictured right. Yes, I even surprised myself by coming to live with you and Mommie before my time. I knew too that those last weeks were awfully tough on Mommie so I decided I'd like to see what the outside world looked like. I have a good pair of lungs and can cry lustily when I'm hungry or uncomfortable.





Granny Pociecha takes good care of me, pictured left, while Mommie is still in bed. Mommie will have a lot to learn in taking care of me. My goodness, but she is clumsy now in handling my little body. She's very careful tho.

Today I am only eight days old, but already I know what a wonderful Daddy I have because Mommie tells me all about you all the time. What she says the most is, "Oh if only Daddy could see his fine little son." I hope to meet you soon Daddy. Take care of yourself and come home to Mommie and me.

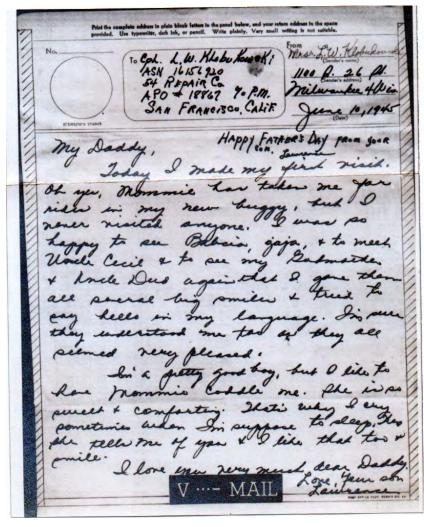
I love you Daddy.

Love, Lawrence

My first letter had been addressed to Cpl. L. W. Klobukowski 16156920 of the 54 Signal Repair Co. at an A.P.O. box number in San Francisco. A three cent purple "Win the War" stamp was stuck in the upper right hand corner of the envelope. Neatly scribed in mother's handwriting, diagonally, was a special greeting which read, "Hello Father."

Through the V-Mail Service of the War & Navy Departments my mother received photographed and reduced in size letters of congratulations from my Uncle Wally at an A.P.O. Box number in New York. He was stationed in England with a Fighter Group.

The military encouraged Americans to use V-mail, actual size example pictured right. Letters were addressed and written on a special one-sided form, sent to Washington where they were opened and read by army censors, then photographed onto a reel of 16mm microfilm. The reels each containing some 18,000 letters – were then flown overseas to receiving stations. There, each letter was printed onto a sheet of 4-inch bv 5-inch photographic paper, slipped into an envelope and bagged for delivery to the front. A single mail-sack could hold 150,000 one-page letters that would otherwise have required 37 sacks 2,575 pounds. weighed Between June 15, 1942 and the end of the war, more than 556 million pieces of V-mail were delivered to servicemen overseas - who sent some 510 million pieces



in return. Letters to and from home were a lifeline for servicemen fighting in World War II. Few things mattered more to those serving abroad than getting letters from home. Mail was indispensable.

It motivated soldiers. They couldn't have won the war without it. The mail, whenever it arrived, also helped reassure the worried families of servicemen back home.





Referenced in V-Mail previous page: (Pictured above left) July 1945: Adeline and Dudley Slauson with daughter Charlotte. Godmother Aunt Adeline is holding me. (Pictured above right) May 1945: Granny Pociecha, <u>Babcia</u><sup>1</sup> Klobukowski, Mother, Aunt Adeline Slauson and her son Jerry.

If the Free Post wasn't used, air mail postage was six cents. My father wrote me in November 1945:

Hello Son,

How are you little fellow? I received all your letters that Mommie wrote for you, and I'm very glad to get them. I enjoy the letters very much. Have Mommie (write) more of those letters to Daddy for you, yes? Oh sure, daddy promises to write to you often.

I have a number of pictures of you, but I wish I could see you in person. Do you want your Daddy to come home soon? Mommie says that she wants me home too. Well, Daddy will come home as soon as the Army lets him go. Daddy is anxiously waiting for the day when he can be with you and Mommie, pictured right May 8, 1945, a photo Mother sent to my Father when I was eight days old, and one day after she was discharged from the hospital.

Today, Daddy was to church early this morning, and prayed that you and Mommie are healthy and well. Daddy always remembers you and Mommie in his prayers. Mommie writes that you are a fine boy

and you say your prayers every evening before you go to bed. It's very nice of Mommie to teach you even though you are very young. Daddy wants you to be a very good, outstanding and brilliant boy so that Mommie and Daddy can be proud of you. After church Daddy did his laundry and then read a magazine and listened to the Army-Notre Dame game. When you grow up, Daddy will send you to college and maybe you can play football also for Marquette. That's the school Daddy went to.

When Daddy will be home you and Daddy will be great pals. Gee, we will have fun together. Daddy will try to give you all the things little boys want, but of course, you will have to be a good boy. Then when you grow older, Daddy

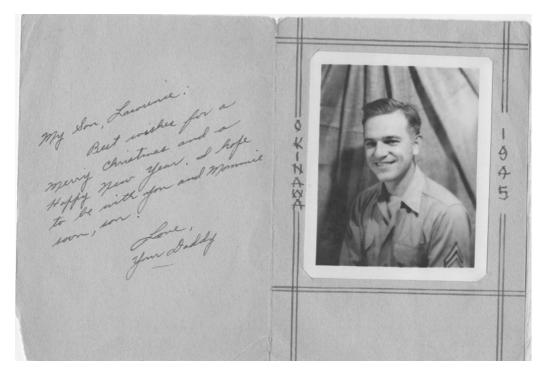
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Named in the V-Mail, <u>Babcia</u> (pron. <u>Bob</u>-cha) is Polish for Grandmother or Grandma.

will help you make a lot of things with tools and electricity. Yes, son, Daddy wants you be a well-trained and educated man.

Son, you and I will also do everything we can to make Mommie comfortable and happy. She is the best Mommie in the world, and she'll be one of us. We need Mommie to enjoy our life together. While Daddy is here on Okinawa, son, you must keep Mommie happy and smiling for Daddy. I know that you can do it, son.

So long for now, son. Daddy will write again sometime. Be a good boy always, and don't give Mommie too much trouble. Give Mommie a big hug and a kiss for Daddy.

All my love, Daddy



My Daddy remembered me for Christmas 1945 when I would have been 8 months old.

The war caused shortages of all sorts of commodities on the homefront. Various types of food in short supply affected just about everyone every day. There were reasons for food shortages. Processed and canned foods were reserved for shipping overseas to our military and our Allies. Remember that an Army travelled on its stomach. Transportation of fresh foods was limited due to gasoline and tire rationing and the priority of transporting soldiers and war supplies instead of food. Imported foods like coffee and sugar was limited.

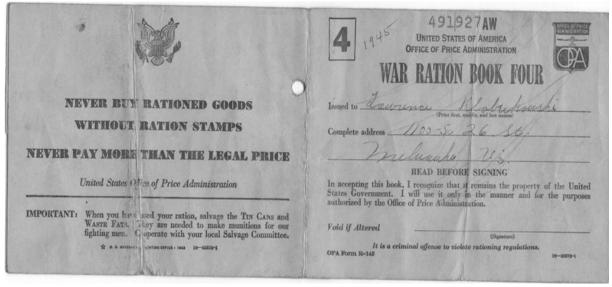
My father told me about tins of beef which arrived on Okinawa from Australia. Called bully beef, it was corned and it was tough. It was strongly flavored and Americans thought it too unpleasant to eat on its own, so it was broken up with a knife or a fork and creamed, that is, a faux white sauce made from flour, powdered milk and water. Served on toast, Dad and the squad members called the dish "shit on a shingle."

In 1942 the United States initiated a rationing system to guarantee minimum amounts of necessities to everyone, especially the poor, and to prevent inflation. Tires were first to be rationed because supplies of natural rubber were interrupted after Malaysia and the Dutch East Indies, producers of the bulk of the world's natural rubber, were seized by the Japanese after Pearl Harbor. Gasoline rationing assisted a longer use of scarce rubber. By 1943, the

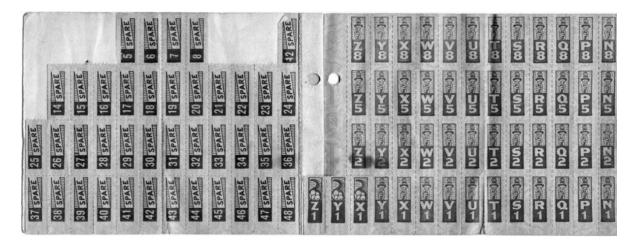
government issued ration coupons to purchase coffee, meat, cheese, butter, lard, margarine, canned goods, dried fruits, jam, gasoline, bicycles, fuel oil and kerosene, silk or nylon stockings, shoes, typewriters, stoves, and many other items.

To obtain a classification and a book of rationing stamps, Mother had to appear before a local rationing board. Each person in a household received a ration book, including babies and children. The ration books contained removable stamps good for certain rationed items like sugar, meat, cooking oil and canned goods.

To purchase a rationed item, Mother had to present the right ration stamp and then pay for the item. The price of rationed items was regulated to prevent profiteering. Should my mother have miscalculated for the month and used up ration stamps for a particular food item, she wasn't allowed to buy any more of that type of food until the following month. She planned meals carefully and used her creativity to ensure food wasn't wasted.



Above, Food Ration Stamps book issued in my name and, below, food ration stamps in the book.



Animal innards like liver, kidneys, tongue, brains, tripe, and lungs were not included in the Government's wartime meat rationing. Offal was unpopular and, as long as it was available, people could get as much as they wanted cheaply from their butcher without using ration stamps.

No doubt it's out of food rationing where the Clean the Plate Club and subsequent saying, "Clean your plate; the people of Europe are starving" originated. Post-war I learned to belong to the Clean the Plate Club and heard the adage repeatedly if I'd leave an uneaten morsel.

"Grow Your Own" became a popular slogan. To reduce pressure on the public food supply, food rationing was supplemented by the Federal Government encouraging its citizens to plant and tend a Victory Garden. People in private residences would grow their own vegetables in gardens, if they had one. If they had no garden plot, people made gardens on apartment-building rooftops and in pots on balconies. Public parks were plowed. Some businesses allowed employees to turn company property into a squash patch. A vacant lot might be "commandeered for the war effort!" and used as a cornfield. It was a morale booster in that gardeners felt empowered by their contribution of labor and rewarded by produce grown. Victory gardens were a part of daily life on the homefront. Canning fresh food for winter use was also advocated.

My mother said of my father, "God, and the Army, sent him home in one piece." I was nine months old on January 29, 1946 when my father arrived at the Milwaukee train depot in his US Army uniform which bore the stripes of a TEC4 (Technical Sergeant). Happy and friendly a child as I was, I went willingly to the man. As long as my mother was so happy to see this handsome man, I had to think that he was all right for me too. After all the letter writing I'd been doing through my mother's and father's hands and thoughts, I guess I already knew him, even though it was a first meeting.

My father was born on 28<sup>th</sup> November, a Tuesday, in 1916, two years after Silvester who died of the summer complaint<sup>2</sup> at six months, and three years after the eldest child, Adeline, born September 8, 1913 and pictured right, to Simon and Władysława (nee Broniszewski) Klobukowski.

Władysława (pron. Vwa-di-<u>swa</u>-va) is the feminine form of Władysław and means "Rules with Glory." All such names ending with "-slaw" are very old given names of Slavic origin and nowadays the meaning is not so directly understood as it was in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. She was named after her father Władysław (pron. <u>Vwa</u>-di-swaw and, in English, Walter), the name translating to Charlotte, then its diminutive Lottie. Away from the all Polish-speaking communities, she was called Lottie because pronunciation of her Polish name was too difficult for the American tongue to curl around comfortably.



A fraternal twin, Leonard arrived as a home delivery an hour and a half ahead of his brother, Cecil. Adeline was told that the doctor brought babies in his black satchel and, since it was such a tight squeeze, baby number two, Cecil, had a badly bruised head, actually due to forceps delivery. The doctor baptized Cecil under the kitchen faucet.

A long distance phone call was made to Walter and Anna Broniszewski, Władysława's parents, in Sobieski, a small unincorporated town about 150 miles north of Milwaukee and near Green Bay. Announcement of the birth of twins was a day of great joy and lots of noise. They had to shout over the phone for long distance in those days as folks along the trunk-line picked up their phones to nosey in on other peoples' news.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Also called summer diarrhea, cholera infantum, and cholera morbus, the term is of archaic American origin (1840-50). Confined to the North America continent, it occurs in large cities during the hot season. It is a common non-contagious acute condition of diarrhea, occurring during the hot summer months chiefly in infants and children, caused by bacterial contamination of food, e.g. spoiled milk, and associated with poor hygiene. Its subjects are infants between the ages of four and twenty months, occurring most frequently about the time of cutting the first teeth. It is one of the most fatal diseases of infants.



Left: In their Milwaukee backyard, Simon holds up Cecil and Lottie holds up Leonard, both about 8 months old. (Snapshot circa 1917)

Right: Gilbert Eckhardt formal portrait circa 1918 of Cecil and Leonard.



Right: Gilbert Eckhardt formal family portrait circa 1918: Adeline, Lottie, Simon, Cecil, Leonard.

Lottie had a maid to help with the care of the twins. Leonard and Cecil were kept imprisoned in a playpen most times to keep them out of harm. Both walked, finally, at 18 months. My father was the more active, always getting into little boy trouble and always admonished in Polish, the only language spoken at home. The South 18<sup>th</sup> street School beckoned for kindergarten when the twins were five. Both boys jabbered in English within six weeks.

They attended grade school at St. Adalbert's bilingual school run by the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, a religious order founded in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, July 1, 1901 as the Polish Sisters of St. Joseph by a division which arose within the School Sisters of St. Francis between the German and Polish members of that congregation. The Polish Sisters withdrew and formed their new congregation, building St. Joseph motherhouse the following year. In



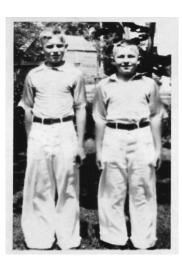
1945 their names from past years changed to the current Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis.

According to Adeline Slauson, what wonderful parties her mother Lottie planned. There was always lots of good Polish food, copious amount of adult and child-friendly beverages, and much merrymaking with music. Dancing prevailed. Polka, waltz, make-it-up-on-the-spot, the family and guests wore out three rugs and two sets of living room furniture. Music was provided by a hand-wound phonograph and a pump piano. Adeline played the violin for years, eventually playing with the All-City High School Orchestra. Cecil learned to play the concertina, was good at it too, and provided the music for Adeline's marriage to Dudley Slauson. Leonard, my Dad, never inherited his mother's love of music and must have been tone deaf. He didn't play any musical instrument and he couldn't sing a note in tune, but he could dance. My father's feet were as adept with the waltz as they were with a quick-stepping, high heel hopping polka. For parties, my father's musical contribution was to wind up the Victrola or pump the piano pedals.



Left: Cecil (my Uncle), center: Mother Lottie (my <u>Babcia</u> or Grandmother). right: Leonard (my Father)

Pictured right: Fraternal twins Leonard and Cecil



My father attended South Division High School in Milwaukee.

Evidently the pneumonia he suffered at age 7 didn't adversely affect his lung power. He participated on the swimming team. He successfully completed high school vocational training and graduated in 1935, then attended the University of Wisconsin Junior College part-time doing co-op college work in electrical engineering. When Leonard and Cecil turned 21 on their November 1937 birthday, their father drove them to Milwaukee City Hall to register as voters.

War erupted in Europe when Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Leonard and his twin Cecil volunteered for U.S. Army service. It was the natural and expected thing to do, in time of war, to come to the aid and defense of one's country, and no one was prouder of his sons than their father, Simon. Having been naturalized in 1912, he was a fiercely loyal American citizen. Cecil's military number was 16 006 263. The 1 indicated he enlisted, actual date September 9, 1940. The 3 at the number's end indicated the Sixt Corp Area which included Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. Cecil entered the Regular Army as a Private in the Medical Department. His enlistment was for the Philippines Department. Leonard failed the physical. Disappointed he wouldn't serve with his brother, Leonard was rejected by the Medical Officer because of his eyesight; he depended

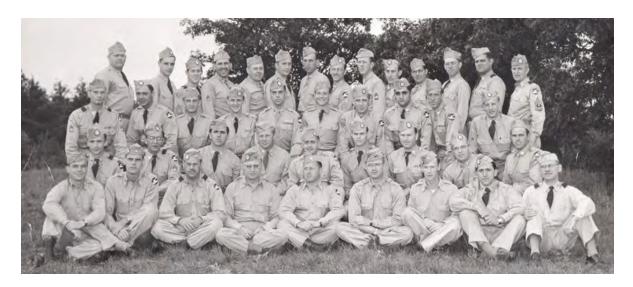


upon thick-lensed glasses. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, "a day which will live in infamy," according to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress declared war on Japan.

Pictured left, August 1942: Mother Lottie Klobukowski with her three children, Cecil (left) in uniform, Adeline, and Leonard

The war lasted longer than anyone expected, so despite weak eyesight and flat feet, again Leonard

volunteered his services to the Army and was accepted. He enlisted December 11, 1942. He was in the Reserves, Army Serial Number 16 156 920. A student at Marquette University, Leonard studied differential and integral calculus, descriptive and spherical geometry, theory, DC and AC currents, electronics, advanced radio theory and telephone. His education positioned him as subject to consideration to come out of Army training as Officer material. Upon graduation from Marquette in May, 1943, having earned a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering, Leonard was called within days and sent to Illinois for basic training, then to New Jersey Officers Training School. When ready to graduate, he was disappointingly dropped because his birth certificate recorded that his father was Russian. In his sister's Adeline's words, "Stupid doctor!" The reason for Adeline's dismissive remark will become clear later in this chapter, page 68 to be exact. Leonard came out of Officers Training School not as an officer, but as a PFC, Private First Class.



Leonard entered active service on June 11, 1943. His squad is pictured above and Leonard is in Row 2 second from right. When duty called the squad overseas, a troop train took them from Louisiana through the Rockies to the state of Washington where they boarded the Admiral Capp manned by the Coast Guard. Five thousand troops crammed the ship in five-high canvas bunks with total possessions of each soldier in a duffle bag hanging from each bunk. There was insufficient head room to sit upright in a bunk.

The second day out at sea an enemy submarine chased the Admiral Capp pushing the ship to its limits, shaking its metal as its engines labored. A few days later a fierce storm battered the ship and just about everyone was seasick. Having had little time to gain sea legs, not much food was served for two days.

First stop was Hawaii for refueling with troops remaining aboard. At the next stop, Eniwetok, a circular atoll in the Ralik Chain of the Marshall Islands, the men had a few hours ashore for swimming. Next was Ulithi where a few days ashore gave the men a taste of their land legs as they played basketball, more than likely on the island of Mogmog, one of the four largest islands and set up for recreation. Ulithi was a typical volcanic atoll of some three dozen little islands with coral, white sand and palm trees in the Caroline Islands of the western Pacific Ocean, about 191 miles east of Yap. Its existence kept secret throughout the war, the US naval base at Ulithi was for at least seven months the world's largest naval facility. An air raid scare came one night and the Admiral Capp sailed for Okinawa with destroyer escort, until then the trip having been made without escort.

It was during this 58 day journey, location unknown, my father received the news of my birth.

The majority of citizen-soldiers who volunteered or were drafted for military duty had no idea how to conduct themselves to prevent inadvertent disclosure of important information to the enemy. To remedy this, the government established rules of conduct and issued a document to each soldier which read, "THINK! Where does the enemy get his information – information that can put you, and has put your comrades, adrift on an open sea: information that has lost battles and can lose more, unless you personally, vigilantly, perform your duty in SAFEGUARDING MILITARY INFORMATION?"

For military personnel writing home, ten subjects were prohibited. Don't write military information of Army units – their location, strength, material, or equipment. Don't write of military installations. Don't write of transportation facilities. Don't write of convoys, their routes, ports (including ports of embarkation and disembarkation), time en route, naval protection, or war incidents occurring en route. Don't disclose movements of ships, naval or merchant, troops, or aircraft. Don't mention plans and forecasts or orders for future operations, whether known or just your guess. Don't write about the effect of enemy operations. Don't tell

of any casualty until released by proper authority (The Adjutant General) and then only by using the full name of the casualty. Don't attempt to formulate or use a code system, cipher, or shorthand, or any other means to conceal the true meaning of your letter. Violations of this regulation will result in severe punishment. Don't give your location in any way except as authorized by proper authority. Be sure nothing you write about discloses a more specific location than the one authorized.

"Loose Lips Sink Ships" was a World War II slogan on posters plastered on buildings' walls, on fences, trees, and displayed in shop front windows in U.S.-held overseas ports and in the homeland. What the slogan meant was don't talk in public about sensitive information that would benefit the enemy. There was a notion that German, Italian, and Japanese spies were everywhere, especially places like ports, where gossip in a bar, such as a ship's sailing date and time, could be overheard and transmitted to submarines.

It was common for a soldier to write, "I can't say much or the censors will cut it out." Often people back home didn't know if they were in the Pacific or the Atlantic. When a soldier's letter let slip where he was serving, it was cut out – and how many people were with him in a building, in a camp, in a ditch, that was cut out too. People did simple things to get around the censor like writing on the inside flap but they were usually unsuccessful. Most World War II letters often included just Mom and Pop stuff.

My father's letters were censored by an officer in his unit. It was considered an unimportant job and the chaplain was often saddled with it. If a letter contained a large section of sensitive information, the letter would be confiscated and it wouldn't be returned to the writer. Often the writer wasn't even told the letter was withheld. If the information was small, censors cut out the words with scissors or obliterated them with ink. People back home received letters with holes or with ink blots. Soldiers never knew what would or what wouldn't get through. When censored, sometimes a soldier was talked to, but no one was severely punished for what they wrote. It wasn't considered an act of sabotage; it was considered careless. Obviously, when my father wrote to me in November 1945, letter reprinted on pages 52-53, the war with Japan had officially ended and he was free to disclose that he was on Okinawa.



Prior to Japan's official surrender on September 5, 1945 aboard the S.S. Missouri, my father's letters to my mother would not have disclosed where he was, although in one letter my father had written, "OK, now, ah, the next thing... etc." My mother didn't get it, never figured it out. It was quite some time later that she learned my father had been on his way to and was on Okinawa.

Pictured left, Okinawa, December 8, 1945, unable to identify everyone, my father is standing in the

center of the picture, third from left. He was in Joe Becker's Radio Repair Squad. Becker, standing far left, was his platoon leader for three squads, two in radio repair and one in teletype. In the Signal Corp as a radio repairman on Okinawa, my Dad was affectionately and respectfully known as "the Putzer" by his squad. By definition, putzer is a German word meaning "cleaner." The squad is pictured right posing in front of Tent 15 on December 8, 1945. This time my father "the Putzer" is seated second from right. Squatting to his right is Leonard's friend Manuel. Joe Becker is standing second from left. I am unable to identify others in the picture.



Platoon leader Joe Becker said of Private Klobukowski that he was seldom idle, exceptionally neat, and always involved in gainful pursuits. He won the admiration of his fellow soldiers and was easily considered family-oriented, never manifesting the macho image as so many others had been affected. He was a quiet, loyal, dedicated individual of unquestioned integrity who left his mark on anyone whose life he touched. Becker said my father was an excellent soldier, an excellent technician and, most of all, a beautiful human being. Additionally, according to Becker, my father had the neatest area both in the tent and in the repair truck. When Becker wanted something accomplished correctly and promptly, "the Putzer" was the man he went to, and my father never failed.

The title which went along with Leonard's promotion to Corporal was Powerman. Quoting a Separation Qualification Record document of the Army of the United States, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. I. Echt

described Leonard's abilities and his job on Okinawa. As a Radio Repairman he "installed, spliced, tested and repaired radio transmitting and receiving instruments and related equipment. He improvised and made substitutes for defective parts when replacements were not available." Leonard "has knowledge of theory of operation of radio transmitter, receiver and related equipment."



Pictured right, my father's friend Manuel stands alongside an airplane on Okinawa, September 1945.

The Radio Repair Squad was located in an Okinawa cemetery next to an abandoned sugar mill possibly in the Bisha River area and, according to some local civilians who gave up without a fight, on the wrong side of a hill for the typhoon season. A typhoon with 130 mile per hour winds slammed into the area on



October 10, 1945. Pictured



right, the squad's damaged tent, the day after the typhoon. My father is right of Manuel showing the rip in the tent. On the reverse of the October 1945 snapshot, left, my father wrote, "A 'duck' which visited the Company area before the storm. They are used to unload ships.

Pictured below near to actual size, military currency used by my father on Okinawa.



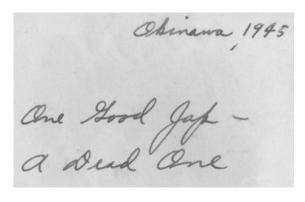






Pictured above left, my father poses on a captured damaged Japanese tank. Pictured above right, my father and Joe Becker sit proudly on a captured damaged Japanese anti-aircraft gun.

While Leonard was trained in how to use his weapon, M-1 rifle marksman, he claimed he never shot anyone. Japanese snipers shot at him. Lucky for Leonard, none were deadly accurate. Crack-shot infantrymen took out the snipers. On the reverse of one of my father's snapshots of a deceased sniper was handwritten, "One Good Jap. A Dead One." Dad's handwritten notation is pictured right. Considered politically incorrect today, perhaps even banned, I won't include Dad's snapshot. The notation should be taken in context of the time.

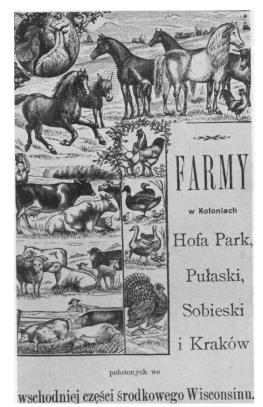


Although Joe Becker cannot recall the exact moment my father received the news of my arrival into this chaotic world, he did remember celebrating the American holidays, sometimes just the two of them, and special events like the first times fresh eggs and fresh meat arrived from Australia, and the first time fresh grapefruit, annexed from a See Bee storage yard, made it into their eager hands. These were, in Becker's words, "world shaking events."

\* \* \* \* \* \*

The world has always been a-shaking, always been in turmoil somewhere and its people have been forced to find safer places to improve their lives. There was a time, and not too long ago, when the poor were truly poor and none moreso than the immigrants who arrived penniless on American shores seeking a better life than they had known in Europe. Somehow they managed not only to survive but to work their way from nothing to relative prosperity.

A Norwegian, John J. Hof (real name Hofhaug and shortened after migrating to the United States), came to Milwaukee about 1875 and began his career as a land agent for the General Land Office of Milwaukee. When he tried to settle Norwegian immigrants, Hof went by the name of Johnson in 1881. He first sold land in and around Seymour, in Outagamie County of north-eastern Wisconsin from 1875-77. He did not enjoy great success with his own countrymen. Failing to settle Norwegians on lands north of Green Bay, Hof turned to the immigrants from Poland. He was hired by the Agrarian Company of Milwaukee to settle the land between Brown County and Oconto County. He wrote pamphlets in the Polish language which advertised land sales and sent them to Poland. He advertised to immigrants in the Polish weekly and daily newspapers of



Milwaukee, Chicago, and cities of Pennsylvania and New York. Hof wrote of his extensive travels throughout the United States, his purpose being to search out suitable farm land upon which to settle the Polish immigrants, or so he claimed. Complete with pictures, illustrated left, the pamphlets outlined all the advantages of life in northeastern Wisconsin – and then some.

Since 95% of Polish immigrants were practicing Catholics, Hof, a Lutheran, catered to their strong attachment to their Catholic faith. He printed architectural sketches of churches on his early land maps to show that Catholic temples of worship were located in central positions of these rising settlements. When he started promotions in Poland, he put in rivers and railroads where there weren't any. In an 1892 pamphlet, he described a Lake Sobieski, actually barely a pond, more an overflow from an artesian well. He also told of great plans for a man-made river from Hofa Park to Green Bay when no such plans existed. Hof was not above literary license.

Not only were the early Polish settlers disappointed with the lack of churches when they first arrived in the

Hofa Park, Pulaski, Sobieski, Kościusko, and Kraków areas, many were disillusioned by the condition of the land Hof sold them. Uncleared land was densely forested; there were deep swamps, and low or sandy soil. Claims and promises were overstated by Hof and the glorious picture he painted in his circulars appeared quite different after a personal viewing. Pulaski was Hof's shining star in colonizing Polish settlements because it had a highway, but had to wait until 1907 to get its railroad. Hofa Park, however, was a bit of a flop. Hof never convinced any government to construct a state or federal highway through there, nor could he get a railroad to Hofa Park. Eventually most people moved to other places.

Disappointment may have been heart-rending and immigrants' lives very primitive and rugged at the outset, but they never lacked the will to work hard and make sacrifices despite a life of almost abject poverty. Love of the land and a sense of ownership conquered all difficulties. They dug in to clear the land and began farming on a modest scale. Absent churches were built by the settlers themselves generally about five years after their arrival in each settlement.

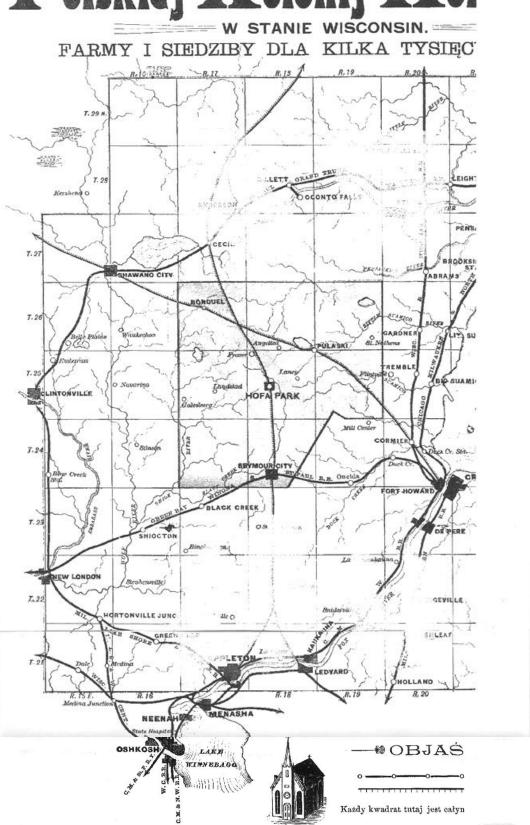
Hof was generous to the settlers of his "Polish colonies," as he liked to call them. In each case, Hof donated land, timber and money toward building their churches. Land priced at \$10 to \$15 per acre, he'd wait beyond terms of payment of the principal, often cancelling the interest.

Pulaski, Kraków, Kościusko, and Sobieski are completely Polish names. Hofa Park is not. It is composed of non-Polish words, but bears the influence of the Polish language. The name of the place should have read Hof or Hof's Park. However, when Poles spoke and used the name, it came out as Hofa Park, "Hofa" being the Polish equivalent of "Hof's", or the Polish possessive case of Hof formed by adding <u>a</u> to the English word. By constant reference to this area as Hofa Park by the Poles, this polonaise form won over Hof and he used it on his maps, circulars, stationary and other advertising, example pictured next page.

1885.

## MAPA

## Polskiej Kolonij Hof



Born on June 8, 1863, 28 years old Władysław Broniszewski came to the United States from Russian-dominated Poland in 1891. He went to work in the Pennsylvania coal mines, his first year in the pits marked by mine explosions and miners' deaths. In January 1891 alone, 118 miners were killed. Men working with Władysław had difficulty saying his Polish name, so he started using the American equivalent of Walter. Working long, dangerous and hard hours for poor pay, he still managed to save money and send for his 22 year old wife, Anna (Tarnovska), born June 24, 1869 in Chronstonice, Russian Partition of Poland, and infant daughter, Helena (Helen) who was born July 29, 1890, most likely in Kalisz in the Russian Partition of Poland. Walter pawned his wedding ring to help pay their passage in 1892.



Great-Great Grandparents on my Father's Mother's family side: Władysław (Walter) Broniszewski and Anna Tarnovska

A miller by trade, Walter found mining unrewarding. He moved his small family to Cudahy, Wisconsin, where he worked for 75¢ a day in the Cudahy Packing Company which specialized in barreled pork and cured meats.<sup>3</sup> The company advertised for workers in foreign language newspapers and attracted hundreds of migrants from Poland, Germany, Ireland, Austria-Hungary, as well as Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks. Grover Cleveland was president for a second term (1893-97). The period was characterized by disaster and conflict. The nation was experiencing a startling economic depression called the Panic of 1893. Too many people attempted to redeem silver notes for gold and the statutory limit for minimum amount of gold was reached. The Treasury was nearly bankrupt and U.S. notes could no longer be successfully redeemed for gold. There was railroad overbuilding; shaky financing and railroads went bankrupt. Thousands of businesses went under and riots broke out. However, the government did little to help because it was not seen as constitutionally allowed. Cleveland was unable to solve the problems of the depression. With unemployment running as high as 10%, an immigrant holding a job was considered lucky.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I cannot resist adding a personal anecdote from Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia. August 2014 in my volunteer work showing old-fashioned movies once a month for Lakes Community Health's Sunset group, I screened Laurel & Hardy's *Tit for Tat* (1935). In the film's general store, displayed as a prop on a table, was a large sealed 10 gallon can of animal shortening clearly labeled Cudahy Packing Company. Stunned and excited at seeing that container, I announced to my audience that my great-great grandfather had once worked at the company which made the shortening. Check out *Tit for Tat* on U-Tube.



When land buyers stepped off the train; the first thing they saw was Hof's office.

The office and agents, pictured right, are (1 to r.) Stanley Liberski, J.J. Hof (seated), Alex Piotrowski (on stairs), next man unidentified, Edward Koldrowicz (arm resting on chair), and Andrew Dominiczak.



Hof opened a branch land office of the John J. Hof Land Company in Sobieski in 1894, the same year the new village took the name of Sobieski. Hof conveniently set up shop to spur land sales in the Sobieski, Kościusko and Kraków areas. Hof acquired land from the Anston Eldred Lumber Company which had been logging since the 1850s. It was a whole new operation for Hof. He built his office building beside the railroad depot, pictured left.



Pictured left in the late 1890s and photographed by W. L. Stein, 456 Mitchell Street, Milwaukee, is the Anna and Walter Broniszewski family with their daughters: American-born Mary (Marianna [Marie], born at 8:00 a.m. Sunday, January 20, 1895 in Cudahy), Lottie (Władysław, born in Milwaukee on the evening of June 19, 1893), Frances (Franciszka, born at 5:00 a.m. Friday, October 9, 1896 in Cudahy), and Polish-born Helen (Helena, born July 29, 1890).

Walter Broniszewski seized the opportunity soon after the birth of another daughter Józefa (Josephine), born April 1, 1898 in Cudahy) and bought a small farm of 29, maybe 30 acres from Hof and settled his family in Sobieski. He built a two-room log cabin on the Little Suamico River and moved in the family. There was a small barn, so one would think he had some animals, more than likely milking cows, perhaps a horse. However, Walter returned to Cudahy to earn more money.

A sixth daughter, (Bronislawa) Bernice was born in Sobieski at 4:00 a.m. Thursday, July 12, 1900; in 1902, Walter built a large 2-storey house in Sobieski village. On the farm he built a large barn. The log cabin and small barn were abandoned. The family was increased when a son, Zygmunt Bolesław (Sigmund) – birth record is Zigmund –was born at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, December 20, 1904 in Sobieski village.

A transcript from the Broniszewski family Bible appears below. The transcription was done by Michael Brzezinski, great grandson of Władisław (Walter) Broniszewski.

## Broniszewski Family bible recording their children's births

Helen

Helina urodził 29 lipiec

Born July 29, 1890 Helena

Polish form of Russian Galina, meaning "calm, tranquil."

Lottie

Władysława urodzila się 19 czerwiec go 9 wieczór Roku 1893

Władysław was born on 19 June at 9 Evening of the Year 1893 Feminine form of Polish Władysław meaning "rules with glory."

Marie

Marianna urodziloa się 20 styczeń go 8 rano niedziela Roku 1895 Marianna was born to January 20 at 8 am Sunday of the Year 1895 Feminine form of Marian which is from the Latin Marianus

Frances

Franciszka urodzil się 9 Pażdziernik o godzinie 5 rano piątek Roku 96

Franciszka born October 9 at 5 am Friday the Year 96 Feminine form of Polish Franciszek meaning "French."

Josephine Józefa urodzila się roku 1898 miesiąc 1 kwietniu

Józefa was born in 1898 in the month of 1 April

Feminine form of Polish Józef meaning "(God) shall add (another son)."

Bernice

Bronisława urodzila się 12 lipiec roku 1900 o godzinie 4 rano we czwartek

Bronisława was born on the 12 July 1900 at 4am on Thursday Feminine form of Polish Bronisław meaning "glorious protector."

Zig

Zygmunt Bolesław urodził się 20 grudnia roku 1904 o godzinie 9 rano w wtorek

Zygmunt Bolesław Born on 20 December of the year 1904 at 9 am on Tuesday Polish form of old German Sigmund meaning "victory-protection."



Sobieski Village Business District circa 1900

In 1905 Walter purchased three lots on Block 5 in Sobieski. On lot 2 he built a small store and meat market, pictured right and sited on the immediate right of the photograph. Frank Peplinski's general store and saloon are seen immediately left of the Broniszewski general store. Walter wanted to be in direct competition with Frank Peplinski, a son of Valentine Peplinski, one of four families who sold their homes in Milwaukee to Hof in exchange for land in the Hofa Park area in 1877. Walter started a slaughterhouse on the farm and delivered meat to neighboring farmers in an ice box on wheels.





Poland as we know it today did not exist back in 1902. It had been partitioned into three sections, the Russian partition (annexed and ruled by Russia), the Prussian partition, also known as Silesia, (annexed and ruled by Germany), and the Galician partition (annexed and ruled by Austria). The Kingdom of Poland, aka Tsardom of Poland, informally known as Congress Poland or Russian Poland was created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna, map pictured left, and made a part of the Russian Empire in 1867. The Kingdom of Poland (Tsar of Russia was also King of Poland) lost its

autonomy as a result of lost January Uprising and incorporated into Russia as the Vistula Land. In name an autonomous government, Poland was effectively little more than a puppet state of the Russian Empire.

I wanted to learn from where in Poland my Dziadek (Grandfather) Klobukowski Simon had come. The document giving me the name of a city or town was on а Registration Card. pictured right, which he was obliged to fill in for the U.S. Department of Selective Service in 1942. I don't know why in 1942 any of the Armed Services would be interested in a man 57 years old. There it

SERIAI NUMBER	1. NAME (Print)	4			ORDER NUMBER
v 1159	Simon	John	KLob	· Kowski	
	(First)	( Middle	)	(Last)	-
7605 W.A	Print) hell S	+-	Milwa	uKet	Wes
(Number and		(Town, township, village, of IVEN ON THE LIN		(County) DETERMINE LO	(State)
	DICTION; LINE 2	OF REGISTRATION	CERTIFICATE	WILL BE IDENTI	CAL
3. MAILING ADDRESS					
Jame					
	(Mailing address if	other than place indicated	on line 2. If some i		-0-
4. TELEPHONE		5. AGE IN YEARS		6. PLACE OF BIR	14 1
		57		Lock	1-10han
Orch.	1740	Oct DATE OF	BIRTH 1884	Euro	or county)
(Exchange)	(Number)	(Mo.) (Day		(State	of country)
VLadySLaw	a KLODUK	WSKI 160	5 W. Mit	tcheLLSt	Melenguke
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME A	ND ADDRESS		38-3	A	STORE THE ST
lavern	BUSINE	55 107	SeLt		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYME	NT OR BUSINESS	A	"		
2605	W. Mite	hell St.	(Town)	ILWar Ke	C Wrs
		VE ANSWERS AND THA			(State)
I AFFIRM THAT I I	IAVE VERIFIED ABOV	E ANSWERS AND THA		0//	1 n n
			Dinto	20 1600	unbush
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42)	(over)	16-21630-2	about A. S. S. S.	(Registrant's signature	)
,	,,		(	/	

was at space 6. Place of Birth. Plock - Poland - Europe.

A document providing little clue was his Certificate of Naturalization, pictured below. It stated he was a subject of Russia which governed a partition of Poland. Not much help, really.



Here now is the reason for my father not coming out of military training as an officer. My paternal grandfather, Szymon (Simon) Klobukowski, was Polish, but technically, he was born in Russia (Russian partition). Hence, my father's birth certificate recorded that his father was born in Russia and the United States Government not trusting Russia determined that my father should not complete Officers Training School as a commissioned Officer, instead finishing as a Private First Class.

Finding more was challenging. To access information on website ancestry.com everything has to be spelled dead accurate, in full, and include the various dots, accent marks, and slashes used in Cyrillic, Greek and Coptic, Latin Extended, and the Slavic languages including Polish. Ancestry.com provided nothing because the original Klobukowski surname once included the l with a slash through it, as in l, making it appear to be a  $\underline{t}$  sometimes when handwritten. Not only does the l change pronunciation, it changes spelling.

My grandfather's birth certificate, pictured on the following page, is written in Old Russian and used the old Julian calendar. Poland was the first country to have adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582. Russia used the Julian calendar until 1918 and that's why all documents in the Russian partition contain double dates.

Too 1911 Ni anna 33  Troughan Mountales  Trough Lundobersiis	(Для воинской повиности или книгъ народонаселенія).
House Becase	
Метрическое стидътел	льство о рожденіи.
Tano by Tone, 4TO Muniores.	Умобений
сынъ, дочь Слемовной варемовной родил  урожденной варемовной родил  Октивория м-ца 16 дня, ть  гарилофранов 884 года.	
Окливория м-на 16 дня, ть сервало зребыло 884 года.	исяча <i>воестьеонно воесть де-</i>
Bewe Mas	м-ца <u>48 д</u> ня 1 <i>911</i> года.
Чиновник граждан	скаго состоянія Пр. Bossa A. R. Carpsuus

By pure luck I met two fishermen from Lithuania who attempted to translate the birth certificate. They deduced Szymon Kłobukowski was born in the province of Zareuskoi in the Russian village of Vali on 16 October 1884 according to the old calendar. The men said the places named in the document no longer existed in Poland today. They were unable to offer any further assistance.

Having gleaned the barest information I went to Poland in 2015 to find answers to my family history/heritage. Aboard an Emirates flight from Dubai to Warsaw, I met and made a new friend in Marcin (Martin) Nowakowski, an English-speaking Pole who then worked for an Australian company (a Polish one at the time, but selling to Australia through the Brisbane branch of the partner company Columbia Machines, Inc., nowadays owner of the Techmatik company) which built plants, mills, and factories. Marcin lived with his family in Radom, Poland. Meeting Marcin by such chance was providence. Genealogy for Marcin was something of a hobby and he took it upon himself to research my family ancestry. Among the 9 languages Marcin spoke and read were Latin and Old Russian. He accepted the challenge to translate my grandfather's birth certificate. He discovered Szymon Kłobukowski's Polish place of birth; by the new calendar born on 28 October 1884 in the province of Lipno in the village of Wielgie to Jan and Sophia (nee Zarembska, Zarębska, Zaremba, or the Russian spelling of Zaremskoy) Kłobukowski. Szymon was the third of three brothers and three sisters.

So what is the reason for great-great grandmother Sophia having up to four and more different spellings for her maiden name? In the Polish language "em" and "e" sound similar but the letter "e" is unknown in Russian, so under Russian rule both were written an "em". In the death certificate for her son Tomasz (more on that later), Sophia's maiden name is Zareba. At that time

people were often illiterate and those who could write and read didn't care about grammar. No one attached importance to the surname. It was more to distinguish people of the same name.

In addition to the several Polish and Russian spellings, the following anecdote may provide a clue. In 2017 I was in Wielgie with Marcin. Records of births, deaths, marriages, baptisms, etc. are kept in church books. The church in Wielgie is St. Lawrence. Pure coincidence, perhaps, that this church could be another source for my given name? The parish priest had record books, none including information about the family Kłobukowski. Official church document books had been confiscated by the Nazis and destroyed. Another explanation for missing documents is that, if the Nazis didn't get them, the communists, occupying Poland as a puppet-state from 1945-1989, confiscated them and put them into archives, and few know where the documents are archived. The parish priest had several unofficial record books written by the church organist whom he explained may have been dyslexic. The book we looked at was hand-dated 1865-1868. The priest said there was a father who had the births of his three sons recorded in the book by the organist. Due to the organist's personal interpretation of how to spell, each of his three sons ended up having a different surname!

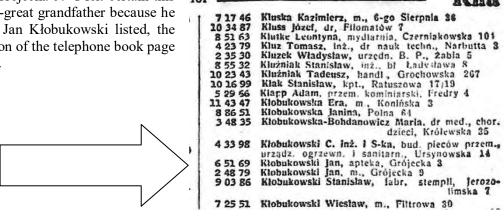
Marcin said it took him awhile to adjust to the cursive flourish of the penmanship. Each entry, Marcin explained, was like reading a short story. Included was anecdotal description without essential facts like time and who may have been the witnessing bridesmaid and groomsman. Example: Married today, date recorded, were Mr. and Miss So-and-So. Attending the wedding were Mr. and Mrs. This-'n-That who came in a horse-drawn wagon from their farm at such-and-such place. She wore a dress of blah, blah, blah and carried a posy of lily-of-the-valley. He wore a black suit with a white carnation in the lapel. They owned a large home with several bedrooms on 10 acres, had two sons (named) and three daughters (named), and 10 pigs, two cows, two horses, and 20 chickens. The entry would continue with another colorful description of a different family or couple in attendance.

No families or individuals named Kłobukowski lived in Wielgie in 1884, although there were many with the surname Zaremba and Zarembski. Even today there isn't a Kłobukowski in Wielgie. How then did Szymon Kłobukowski come to be born in Wielgie?

In Poland in 2017 and Marcin asked if I'd brought any documents he hadn't yet seen which might shed light on my grandfather's birth or great-grandfather's place of residence. I showed Marcin a page I'd found in the U.S. Library of Congress, a 1939 Warsaw telephone book, surviving and preserved from pre-Nazi invasion of Poland September 1, 1939. Several Kłobukowski names were listed and I'd fixated on Jan Kłobukowski, apteka (chemist or druggist), telephone 6 51 69 at

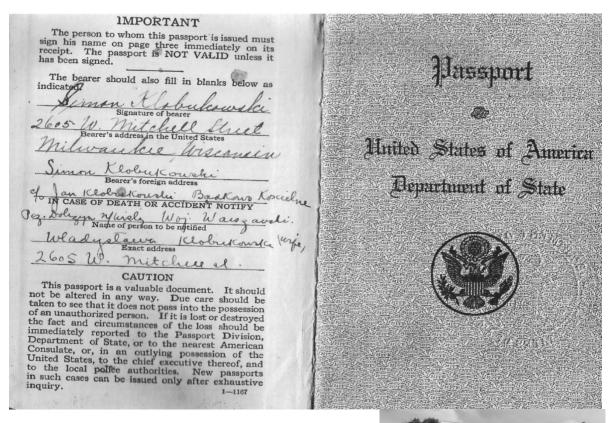
161

Gröjecka 3, telephone 2 48 79 his residence at Gröjecka 9. I felt certain this was my great-great grandfather because he was the sole Jan Kłobukowski listed, the relevant portion of the telephone book page pictured right.



Marcin Nowakowski assured me the telephone listing wasn't much of a clue, wasn't important, and that my great-great grandfather as an apteka was unlikely. Had I brought anything else? Marcin

discovered the most important clue in a photocopy of my grandfather's passport issued to Simon Klobukowski in 1931 and pictured below.



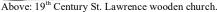
I had misinterpreted in my Dziadzia's passport that the Polish spelling of "Warsaw" listed was the place where his father resided and where he needed to be notified in case of accident or death.

Within the line IN CASE OF DEATH OR ACCIDENT NOTIFY, our Dziadzia had written in pencil, c/o Jan Klobukowski Badkowo Koscielne. Simon Klobukowski named his father who lived in the village of Bądkowo Kościelne (pron. Bondkov-o Kosht-schi-eineh). The meaning of Bądkowo has been lost in time, but Kościelne means "belonging to the Church." In other words, the Church owned the village of Bądkowo and was responsible for taking care of it. Pictured right in 2017, I am standing at the town sign for Bądkowo Kościelne. The Warsaw (Warszawski) I'd seen in the passport was, after Marcin explained, the old province or County Voivodeship in which Bądkowo Kościelne was located.



Jan and Sophia must have decided to leave their village for Wielgie for the birth of their son. One reason may have been that Sophia had relatives there and it was then customary births took place in the home, so it was probably a good idea to be with her family. Another likely scenario was that the church in Bądkowo Kościelne had burned down, so there was no place to baptize their son into the Roman Catholic faith. Wielgie had St. Lawrence, a church constructed of wood and, perhaps then, called by the old-fashioned Polish name, Święty Wawrzyniec (pron. Vav-zhin-yits). The wooden church stood there since the 1500s, but was rebuilt several times after fires burned it. The current wooden church is from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and stands today on Wroclawska Street in Wielgie beside its newer counterpart, the 20<sup>th</sup> century St. Lawrence church. When my grandfather Szymon Jan Kłobukowski entered this world in 1884, the wooden church of St. Lawrence was without a priest.







Right: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century St. Lawrence Church with wooden St. Lawrence church sited to its right in the photograph I snapped in 2017.

Near to Wielgie at Czarne is another 19<sup>th</sup> century wooden church, St. Michael Archangel. Some work still remains to be completed, but the church constructed of wood has been restored. I introduce this church because it was suggested that, depending on the location of the Zarembski/Zaremba home where baby Kłobukowski was born, and no one really knows, there was the possibility Szymon Kłobukowski may have been baptized here. The church is a short horse and carriage ride from the village centre of Wielgie. Or the priest at St. Michael Archangel in Czarne may have driven his horse and wagon to Wielgie to perform the baptism.



Pictured left is St.
Michael Archangel
wooden church in
Czarne. Standing
at the entrance with
me are the Deputy
Director and the
Director of the
Publiczne
Gimnazjum w
Wielgie, and the
parish priest.

Pictured right is the interior of the 19<sup>th</sup> century St. Michael Archangel wooden church at Czarne. A painting of St. Michael the Archangel dominates the wall behind the altar. The ceiling above is decorated with frescos.



Searching for Kłobukowski in the Old Russian place names in Poland, I found Kłobukowski listed for Proboszczowice (proboszcz meaning "parson"), Płock-Russia 1820-1870. Surname Kłobukowski also showed up for Kurowo – Russia, Mochowo – Russia, and Mochowo, Płock – Russia. Whether Kłobukowski might be somewhere in the church records of the extant Polish villages of Kurow, near Lublin, and/or the Polish village of Mochowo, near to Tłuchowo, Wielgie, Kłobukowo, and Kamien Kotowy, will be revealed further in this chapter.

Płock (pron. Pwotsk) on the 1902 map, pictured right, is a town about 69 miles northeast from Warsaw. As well as a town, Płock is also a Catholic Diocese, one of the oldest in the country, established in 1075. It is interesting to note that, prior to 1902, Szymon Kłobukowski and Walter Bronieszewski may have lived a short horse and wagon ride from one another, about 26 miles as flies the Polish crow, but they never met. Walter first named his birthplace at Kutno, clearly seen on the map not too far south of Płock. Walter was more likely born in Krośniewice, a city with a large rail yard supporting rail, railcar and engine repair facility, and located between Kutno called Dombrowice (today Dabrowice).



Krasniewice supported the uprising against Russian occupation in 1870. As punishment, the city was stripped of its status but not erased from maps; it got its status back in 1926. During WWII, Nazis used the Krośniewice rail yard to transport Jews from the Jewish Ghetto to the death camps.



I was in Kutno for two days in 2015. That Walter Bronieszewski named his birthplace as Kutno, like Simon

Klobukowski named Plock, may have meant both named the Catholic Diocese rather than a town or village.

Generously assisted by people in the Kutno Museum, walked to the Archiwum (Archive) with museum employee Piotr who spoke some English, Archive the right. pictured Researchers



tapped information into computers and old tomes were brought from storage. A woman who worked at the Archiwum handled an 1826 ledger with soft black kid gloves, pictured left with Piotr. Piotr loosely translated the

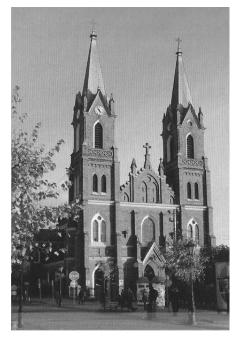
document and said it was about one Jan Broniszewski whom I shall assume may be a three or four times great grandfather. This document and subsequent Broniszewski documents dealt

with handing over land; not selling it, but giving it, a strong suggestion that the Broniszewski family were landowners and likely nobility. Wearing white gloves, I held handwritten manuscripts in books, Broniszewski documents from 1826, pictured right, others dating from 1828 to 1895. For fear of damage to the original documents, photocoping wasn't allowed, but I was permitted to take photos without using flash. Piotr held open the book and made the crease as level as possible without breaking the binding to keep all the written words in focus for my lens.



Searching the 1863 church record book in a dimly lit room at St. Lawrence Catholic Church – there's my name again – in Kutno, Piotr and I found no 1863 entry for Władysław Broniszewski's birth. It was suggested his birth record would be found 10 kilometers away in the parish church at Dąbrowice. Unfortunately I didn't grab a taxi to Dąbrowice to verify.

Pictured left in a photo I snapped in 2015 is the church of St. Lawrence in Kutno.



That there was a high population of Jews and also some Germans in the Płock area might account for the Yiddish and German words I discovered years later that had been slipped into Dziadzia's and my father's speaking Polish. For instance, they said sülze (pronounced ziltz), a German word for jellied pigs' feet or any pork hock meat in aspic; the proper Polish word is galareta. Chapter 1 mentioned kiszki and kiszka for guts and sausage. The Polish-Yiddish word, it turns out, for stomach or guts is kishka. The phrase Oy-yoy-yoy or Oi-yoi-yoi is a lamentation of grief which worked side by side with the Polish Jesu Kohany. They said nudnik, a regional word, when saying someone was a pain in the neck. The correct Polish word for the insult is <u>nudny</u> meaning boring. Sorrel, a sour leaf herb, was made into a soup called scharv from the Polish szczaw. The men used three Yiddish words in their Polish when speaking contemptuously of another, the words being putz (originally meaning "idiot"), schwantz

(German for "tail"), and schmuck (German word for "jewellery"). They are vulgarisms for penis or genitals. "Ah, yah drive like Molly Putz," my Dad would say of a slowpoke driver ahead of him on the road, and he could have intended the original meaning or the vulgar euphemism. Of Japanese-manufactured articles after the War my Dad often said they were schlock (German for "scrap, junk"), shoddy, cheaply made items. There were other Yiddish words they used, but these are the ones I remember best, mainly because I learned to use the words too. Like grandfather, like father, like son, I guess.

Szymon was fluent in Polish in spite of the fact that the Polish language and culture was forbidden in the schools in his area when he was growing up. The Russians insisted that the Poles in their annexed lands become Russians. As you might imagine, that didn't set well with the Poles. In the minds of the Poles, it was Poland which remained the reality, whilst Rossiya (Russia) appeared as an alien imposition. For patriots, Poland was Polish. Russian Poland was a contradiction in terms. If they needed a label, they talked of Zabor rosyjski (the Russian partition). You can change a political boundary, but you can't change a people's ethnic identity with lines on a map.

There was a great deal of tension between the Russians and the Poles living in the Russian partition. It's no secret that the Russians were restrictive of the lives of the Poles, dictating not only their language, but their way of life as well. They controlled the press, closed many churches, severely limited which goods could be bought and sold, levied taxes, and conscripted them into the Russian army. It's not hard to imagine that at least some of the Poles in the Russian partition would want to leave the country for a better opportunity somewhere else. According to written histories I've read, many Poles emigrated for economic opportunity and some returned, perhaps after five or so years later, to Poland with small fortunes, monies to buy land and live better than previously.

With the help of his youngest uncle, Andrzej (Andrew) Zaremba, Szymon Kłobukowski secretly left his family in the Diocese of Płock and immigrated to the United States in 1902 at the age of 18 to avoid conscription into the Russian Army. Call him a draft dodger, if you will. Russia exposed its conscripts to the traditional dangers and discomforts of military service, but it also treated them harshly. Superiors subjected conscripts to their own whims and mercies and often tormented underlings. Szymon's parents may have dreaded the idea that after four years of being brutalized by the fist of Vanya's army, Szymon would return home coarsened,

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A regional nickname of the time for Ivan and used by Poles as a general term for all Russians.

Russianized, and with his spark of human feeling anaesthetized. 1902 was the same year of the Częstochowa anti-Semitic pogrom, in Chenstokhov, the Russian Empire (modern Częstchowa, Poland), after an altercation between a Jewish shopkeeper and a Catholic woman. The Russian army put it down and lives were lost. In 1902 Marie and Pierre Curie successfully isolated radioactive radium salts. In 1904-05 the Russian army was decimated by Japan in the Russo-Japanese War. (Let us contemplate this sidelight thought: Had Dziadzia been conscripted into the Russian Army... had he fought against the Japanese Army... had he been tallied in the number killed... no American Klobukowskis from the Szymon (Simon) lineage would exist. Our family tree would have been severed, ended!)

Passport regulations governing overseas immigration were restrictive since the government had due regard for its subjects as taxpayers and army recruits. Officially, authorities tolerated migration overseas via Baltic ports. Unofficially, however, the border guards presented lesser obstacles. Those who couldn't be bribed were deceived. Before World War I there was an underground movement of immigration conducted for a fee by professional smugglers. Once across the border, German authorities imposed no barriers, provided that the immigrant possessed a Shiffskarte on a German ship, or was prepared to place a deposit on such a ticket. My grandfather had the motivation and had the ways and means to sneak out and escape the heavy yolk placed on the Poles in the Russian partition.

How it all happened, I was never told and haven't been able to find out. I don't even know where he arrived in the United States, but he made it. Immigration authorities somehow removed the slash in the  $\underline{l}$  in Kłobukowski. (In Polish  $\underline{L}$  is pronounced the same as in English while  $\underline{L}$  is pronounced like  $\underline{W}$  in the word "Wonder".) Phonetically Kłobukowski in Polish is pronounced Quo-boo-kov-ski. Now the surname took on the phonetically Anglicized pronunciation Klo-ba-cus-key.

Speaking only in Polish and Russian, Simon worked as a coal miner in Ohio. I am guessing that Szymon was turned into Simon for American spelling and pronunciation convenience. At the turn of the century the main source of fuel for heating homes, running factories, and operating trains was coal. It was, at this time, efficient and in high demand, and a high demand for coal meant a high demand for miners. A coal miner's life wasn't glamorous. Miners worked long days of very physical labor in dark, damp and dangerous conditions for little pay and job security. There was always some form of gas in the mines. Always a danger, the miner's oil wick lamps – open flames hooked onto their hats – could ignite the gas, whatever its source, causing a massive explosion which, in turn, could ignite the coal dust and spread the fire throughout the mine. Such a conflagration happened in the Fraterville Mine in Tennessee on May 23, 1902 and was reported in the *Pettysburg Journal Ohio*. 214 men and boys lost their lives and no one lived to tell what happened inside the mine.

Miners had complaints, but mine owners often took no notice and didn't listen to their demands. 1902 was the summer of the Anthracite Coal Strike. Miners wanted a wage increase and held out for over 160 days. The bargaining agent was the United Mine Workers for Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania. A shortage of coal, especially in winter, would have sent the nation into a state of panic. President Theodore Roosevelt tried to intervene to bring together the parties refusing to speak with one another by threatening to call in the army. The strike was resolved and miners were granted their increase in pay.

Coalmining didn't satisfy Simon and he made his way to Milwaukee where he found work in a foundry. He learned to speak German and English. At some time he must have headed north where he worked as a lumberjack in north central Wisconsin.

Walter Broniszewski bought a hotel/saloon from Green Bay's Rahr Brewing Company in 1908. Walter had been recommended to the company by the former saloon keeper, Valentine Behre, sometimes called Mr. Dudy and possibly a nickname, while he lay on his deathbed. Prior to Broniszewski's purchase of the hotel/saloon, some seem to think the building had been moved from



Petersville, about 3/4 of a mile away, to Sobieski. Pictured left in a 1909 snapshot is the hotel/saloon. The house behind the hotel and sited right of the hotel. is the Broniszewski home. No doubt some of the people standing on the porch are members of the Broniszewski family, but none can be clearly identified. At the left of the picture is business neighbor John Hernet seen standing in the doorway of his blacksmith shop.

At the same time of Broniszewski's purchase, many husky Polish immigrants worked as lumberjacks in

places like Iron Mountain, Michigan, and Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. They would come to Sobieski in the spring, as passengers on the CMStP&P Railroad (Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, often referred to as the Milwaukee Road), their belongings in a bag slung over their shoulders. Some made the short trek from nearby logging camps at Petersville and Gardner. These rough men would liven up Sobieski by spending their earnings on drinks, staying in nearby hotels or in the homes of farmers. Some small part of their hard-earned money always managed to be saved and sent back to Poland, and more and more immigrants arrived to buy land from the John J. Hof Land Company Branch Office. After seeing Hof's office beside the depot, they could choose to stay in one of Sobieski's two hotels, Broniszewski's Sobieski Hotel or, in direct competition with Frank Peplinski, the Sobieski House.

With the birth of another daughter, Joanna (Joan) – the Broniszewski family bible record, transcript pictured below, is Dymizya Joanna, undoubtedly misspelled since Dymizya doesn't exist as a Polish name and it's possible it should have been spelled Domizia - at 5:00 a.m. Saturday, March 20, 1909, Walter Broniszewski's family again grew in number. Her birth name recorded in Oconto Country is Joan.

Joan Dymizya Joanna urodzona jest 20 go Marca 1909 o godzinie 5 tej w sobote

Dymizya Joanna was born it is 20 March 1909 at 5 this Saturday I was not able to find Dymizya as a Polish, Russian or Slavic name. It is possible it was spelled wrong here. Domizia would have been the closest girls name. Her birth name recorded in Oconto County was Joan.

Walter built a grist mill and, at long last, had the opportunity to engage in the trade for which he had been carefully trained in Kiev in the Ukraine (Kyiv in Ukrainian) and for which he had been granted his master's papers by Czar Alexander III. The mill produced feed for animals and stoneground flour from rye raised by farmers.

With two of his interpreters and agents, Edward Koldrowicz and Stanley B. Liberski, Hof built an artificial lake, Bass Lake, where the townspeople enjoyed swimming, fishing and boating. They may not have done the actual hard slog of digging the lake. More than likely they headed up the project. The water for the lake came from Walter Broniszewski's flow well. Artesian water ran through an iron pipe to the lake across the street from Broniszewski's grist mill.

House is the Chicken Coop Broniszewski Store Grist Mill Unknown House Otto Krause House. He was depot agent.



Man-made Bass Lake

In winter, the lake supplied an excellent source of ice which could be stored for use in the summer months by saloons and other businesses needing refrigeration. It took many years before the well stopped flowing and the lake dried up. My second cousin, Mike Brzezinski, remembers that, as a youngster, he went to the lake to play. Come to think of it, I remember that place too from when I was a kid. Because it still had a small amount of water in it, we used to call it the Pond. It was a great place to explore, catch tadpoles and frogs, and pick drying late-summer cattails to burn as torches and dispel the night, or if they just smoked, use them like oversized punks, mosquito chasers.

It's interesting that Hof's real estate agents played a somewhat removed role in the family. Looking at how it worked, it's sort of like having to step sideways. Ed Koldrowicz married Victoria Slupecki of Milwaukee in 1898. The youngest child of Emily (nee Brzezinski) and Joseph Slupecki who immigrated to Milwaukee in 1868, they were amongst some of Milwaukee's earliest Polish settlers. Victoria was Leon (Leo) Antoni Brzezinski's cousin. Leo is the father of the man I knew as Junior (Leo Theophil) Brzezinski. Cousin Mike Brzezinski's father is Leo T and his grandfather is Leo A. I remember Leo A as Uncle Leo. Back then it was a title of respect a kid used to address any man, whether related or not. He would have been, in actuality, my great uncle, my Dad's real uncle because he had married Dad's mother's sister Frances. Stanley Liberski migrated directly from Poland to Sobieski with his parents in 1893. He married Cecelia Brzezinski in 1900. She was Leo Antoni Brzezinski's sister.

Before 1894, the nearest railroad stop for Sobieski settlers was four miles east at Little Suamico, Wisconsin. Polish settlers from various parts of the United States were able to come directly through Chicago and Milwaukee to Sobieski after a depot was built at Sobieski, pictured right.

These were pioneer times and, although J. J. Hof expounded upon the virtues of "Little Poland" and its artificial lakes and rivers, Hof neglected to mention the greatest drawcard for unmarried men. Single

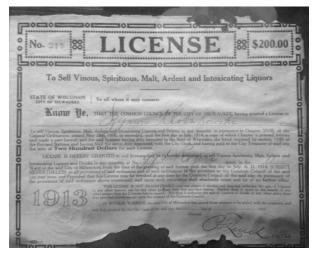


women! Simon Klobukowski had gone to Sobieski to check out the eligible young women for a wife. Fortunately for my grandfather Simon, Walter Broniszewski had fathered many daughters. He would likely have travelled on the train direct to Sobieski after J. J. Hof persuaded the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad to transfer its scheduled logging train stop from Gardner to Sobieski, a distance of one and a half miles to the north.

Władisława (Lottie) Broniszewski was the second eldest of eight sisters and one brother, and had been baptized in St. Hyacinth's Church in Milwaukee June 24, 1893 by the Reverend H. Gulski. Most of her formal education finished with 4<sup>th</sup> Grade in a country school. She could read and write and cipher bilingually. Education continued in the home with her father conducting lessons in Polish. As a young woman Lottie helped her father in the day to day operation of his inn and tavern for Sobieski's visiting and local sawmill-employed lumberjacks. While her father Walter made ice in the winter months to sell to town customers, Simon courted Lottie.



The Broniszewski Family portrait made on Lottie's Wedding Day, January 23, 1912
Seated, mother Anna holds the youngest of the eight children, Joan, and father Walter holds his only son Sigmund.
Standing from left to right: Bernice, Josephine, Frances, Mary, Helen and Lottie



Simon and Lottie married January 23, 1912 in St. John Cantius Catholic Church in Sobieski. Lottie was younger than her sister Helen and yet she married first. According to the custom of the time, this was unacceptable, for the eldest should have married first, then each daughter in descending order according to birth. After a century, in the family picture, you can still see the unhappiness registered in Helen's face.

Immediately following the wedding, Simon and Lottie moved to Milwaukee and, one year later, Simon obtained a Schlitz Brewery franchise and, together, they operated a

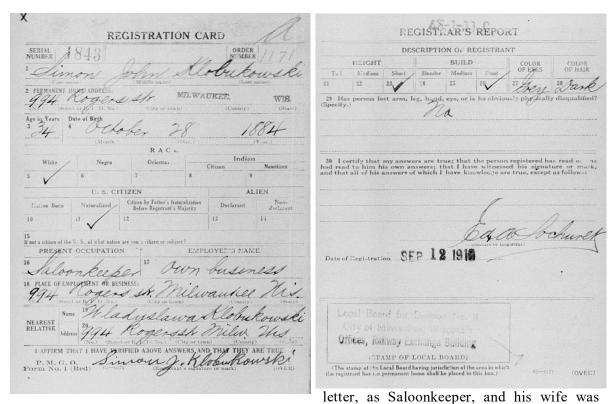
tavern. Pictured left is Simon's first license for selling alcohol in the state of Wisconsin. It was opportunity and one way for a young couple to get their first home. Twenty months after marrying, Simon and Lottie welcomed their first child, a daughter Adelina (Adeline) on September 8, 1913.



In 1913 Walter Broniszewski built on lot 1 the third and largest general store and meat market in Sobieski, pictured left, and turned it over to his daughters, Helen and Frances seen outside the doorway, to manage. At some point he purchased lot 4 on Block 5 and owned half the block. Lots 3 and 4 never had any buildings on them. Walter would have been seen as a big shot in Sobieski. He bought and sold cattle and real estate, farmed, ran the inn and general store, ran and owned the flour and feed mill.

November 28, 1916, Simon and Lottie gave their only daughter Adelina (Adeline) fraternal twin brothers, Cecil and Leonard.

During World War I Simon John Klobukowski was required to register with his local Draft Board. Age 34, he did so on September 12, 1918. His physical description included being short and stout with grey eyes and dark hair. More descriptive details weren't recorded on the form. Residence was listed as 994 Rogers Street. His occupation was recorded, with a capital



named Władisława Klobukowski.

Simon Klobukowski's completed 1918 Draft Board registration card

As a barman, Simon enjoyed playing cards, fishing, mushroom picking in the fall, and cooking. His politics included being an active Democrat and an active member of the ZNPA (Związek Narodowy Polaków w Ameryce), a patriotic Polish organization. As a churchgoer, he was a charter member of St. Adalbert's Catholic Church, Milwaukee. His tavern being located on Milwaukee's south side, he was an active member of the Mitchell Street Business Commission.

With her husband, Lottie was also an active church member, and a member of the St. Julia Society and ZPA No. 103 (Związek Polek w Ameryce (Polish Women's Alliance of America), a union or confederation of Polish women in America. She was an avid reader. Being social-minded, Lottie had lots of friends, loved music, loved people, and loved her children. She liked



playing cards including Rummy, Five Hundred, and Canasta, and she loved to laugh.

Pictured left: Simon and Lottie on vacation on the Little Suamico River which flowed through the Broniszewski farm, circa early 1920s. Broniszewskis are seated right of the tree in the background.



Pictured right: Simon and Lottie at home in their back yard, circa early 1920s



Pictured right: Some of the married Broniszewski sisters (the Ciotkas<sup>5</sup>) with their mother: (I to r) Bernice Radzinski, Mary Wruk, Frances Brzezinski, mother Anna, Lottie Klobukowski, and Helen Warshall

As more of the Broniszewski sisters married and started

families, an annual summer vacation to Sobieski for a family reunion was an expected, anticipated and normal big long drive. The children, especially, always ate well. It was good, solid home-cooked Polish food and cakes and breads cooked and baked by Babcia and all the Ciotkas.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ciotka (pron. <u>Chot</u>-kah) is the Polish word for Aunt. A milder version of the word c<u>iotka</u> is <u>ciocia</u> (pron. <u>Cho</u> cha) and commonly used by children when they turn to as parent's female friend. The same concerns the word <u>Wujek</u> (uncle, pron. <u>Woo</u> check). If you hear a child calling someone <u>ciocia</u> or <u>wujek</u> it doesn't always mean the woman or man is the child's relative.

Adults caught up with relatives and their children discovered cousins to play with, and they engaged in games, swam, fished and picnicked along the Little Suamico River and man-made Bass Lake. Sometimes when the waters were calm, using drop lines, they'd catch perch from a boat towed into deep waters off Geano Beach.



Above and below: The Klobukowski family visiting in Sobieski circa 1922. The family automobile is a 1920-22 Lincoln, possibly the 1922 Lincoln Sport Phaeton or the Lincoln-L series, identified by fender, bumper, and logo on radiator. Henry Leland with his son Wilfred formed the Lincoln Motor Company in August 1917 and named the new company after Abraham Lincoln, his hero and for who m Henry cast a vote in 1864. Good chance Simon bought the car new at a bargain price because the company was in financial trouble, forced into bankruptcy, and sold for US\$8,000,000 to the Ford Motor Company on February 4, 1922. The purchase of Lincoln was a personal triumph for Henry Ford, who had been forced out of his second company by a group of investors led by Henry Leland.







Pictured above is Leo Brzezinski in the driver's seat of Sobieski's mail wagon.

Pictured left: Circa 1922: Unable to identify everyone. Frances (Broniszewski) Brzezinski is standing on the far left of the snapshot. Klobukowski family is on the far right of the snapshot. Simon is looking at son Cecil who is sitting to the left of his twin Leonard. Both boys are wearing hats. Adeline stands on the step. Lottie stands to the right of Simon. Blonde boy seated beside Leonard might be Ritchie Warshall.

Lottie's father Walter sold the Sobieski general store to his daughter Frances, who can be seen standing far left in the extended family vacation picture. The general store also became Sobieski's Post Office. Two pictures below show mail piled into a winter sledge in front of the store, while the second picture shows mail piled on the store's step.







About the same time Walter sold the store, Simon went from tavern keeping to butchery. The establishment included several out-buildings where poultry was killed and dressed; calves and pigs were slaughtered and cut up. It was hard work cutting the meat, making kiszka and kielbasa, then displaying all and selling. The children were too young to be any help, so Simon hired one teenage helper in 18 year old Zygmunt (Sigmund) Broniszewski, pictured left, age 14 in 1919, the only son of his father-in-law. After a year's worth of early rising to kill and cut meat, grind and mix and stuff sausage casings, Simon felt it was too much work and sold the butchery back to its former owner, a man who couldn't bear retirement and had returned to Milwaukee from California, for the same price he'd paid for it. Sometime later Zygmunt bought back the butcher shop from the California man. His cousin Frank Bronieszewski either lived and worked there or was in partnership.

Three days before my 6<sup>th</sup> birthday, April 27, 1951, I remember hearing

my Dad saying we were going to see Uncle Sig and buy some of his home-made <u>kiszka</u>, the blood sausage also sold under the name <u>kaszanka</u> (pron. ka-<u>shun</u>-kah). A crowd gathered on the street as we stood in Uncle Sig's butcher shop. A motorcade of flashy cars drove by and everyone clapped and cheered. There was an old man dressed in a military uniform and wearing sunglasses seated in the rear of a black Cadillac and I asked who it was. Dad said it was General Douglas MacArthur and, from inside the butcher shop, my father stood to attention and saluted as the string of cars passed. I learned that I had witnessed MacArthur's homecoming and his Milwaukee Farewell parade. Milwaukee had been General MacArthur's legal home for many years. He lived at the Plankinton House and went to West Division High School. Now 71 years old, the General motored more than 40 miles in Milwaukee County. Sixty years after Dziadzia sold the butcher shop, my father and his sister Adeline went to see if the butcher shop was still there. It was and still reminded of its days of once being a butcher shop. It was an ethnic sausage shop.

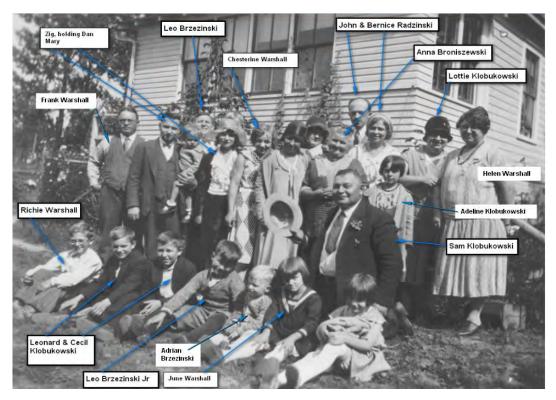


Left: Unable to identify everyone in Bass Lake. Standing is Anna Broniszewski. Third from left is Leonard. To his right is Frances Broniszewski holding a child. Leonard's twin brother Cecil is on the far right. Circa 1924.



Right: On vacation, Sobieski fishermen Cecil and Leonard with the family dog, circa 1925.

Below: Circa 1925: Having attended Sunday Mass at St. John Cantius Church up the road from the General Store, everyone's dressed up.





Sobieski, circa 1925: Am able to identify my father Leonard standing with his hand raised. His brother Cecil is standing, as you look at the picture, immediately to the right of his father's bamboo fishing pole. In between is Cousin Ritchie Warshall. Lottie has her hand on Leo Brzezinski. He is Leo Junior, aka Leo T. To Lottie's left is her daughter Adeline. Stanley Wruk married Marie Broniszewski and his arm is around the shoulder of Helen (Broniszewski) Warshall. She has her arm draped across her husband's, Frank's shoulder. As you look at the photo, June Warsall is kneeling on the right. Others I can't identify could be more members of the Warshall family.

Right: Circa 1925: Cecil and Leonard at home in their yard behind the tavern with the family dog. They might be dressed for going to Sunday Mass.

It would have to have been a risky decision to go back into tavern keeping, a corner bar at 2605 West Mitchell Street, after giving up on butchering, but that's just what Simon and Lottie did. However, due to the politics of the day, it wasn't called a tavern. It had to be renamed a soda fountain. Prohibition had been in full swing since passage of the Volstead Act on July 19, 1919. Historically, temperance in Wisconsin had become symbolic of battles between Yankees and Germans, urban and rural residents, and teetotal Protestants and more broad-minded Catholics. All of these forces grew in intensity, particularly during World War I when anti-German sentiment was especially strong. With its German connotations, beer was singled out for being especially unpatriotic. It was called "Kaiser brew," another contribution to the passage of the Volstead Act. Nearly all of Milwaukee's saloons were closed down.



During Prohibition, large breweries turned to making flavored sodas like root beer and cola, making cheese, candy bars, malt syrup, and even snow plows to stay in business, but their main contribution to keeping the saloon in business was cereal beverage or near beer. 0.5% alcohol by volume is beer with low alcohol content or non-alcoholic according to the Volstead Act. Intoxicating liquor was illegal, but the ingredients to make it were not, hence the availability of malt syrup, yeast, and hops. Beer and wine was allowed to be made in the home for home consumption only, and it wasn't allowed to be commercially sold. There would have been Dziadzia's experimental attempts to brew beer and Babcia's gallant efforts to hide the results from the prying eyes of investigating Prohibition agents.

Walter Broniszewski solved any problem he may have had with Prohibition in 1926 when he sold the saloon to his daughter Helen and her husband, Frank Warshall. Sadly, after a short but severe illness Walter died on January 18, 1927, age 63.

Prohibition's illegal bathtub gin, now Dziadzia wasn't above making his own. The common metal bathtub in use at the time was ideal as would have been a ceramic bathtub, hence the name, 'bathtub gin'. Have a look at the 1939 film The Roaring Twenties where James Cagney's Eddie Bartlett mixes a large can of grain alcohol with water in a bathtub to produce bootleg gin during the prohibition era. Why gin? Unlike whiskey, gin didn't need to age for long and it could be ready for drinking very quickly. Dziadzia wasn't a bootlegger as such and wouldn't have taken the risk of building and operating a still. He would have somehow obtained some real booze, possibly having come over the iced lake border from Canada, perhaps from some moonshiner's still down south, and by means of some underground deal with a petty Milwaukee gangster. Bathtub gin refers to any style of homemade spirit made in amateur conditions and was developed in response to the poorquality of alcohol available at the time. It would have been made by watering down the real stuff, or mixing grain alcohol with water and possibly mixing it with flavorings and other agents, such as juniper berries and glycerin. Dziadzia may have used the simple and easy to make prohibition recipe of two parts alcohol, three parts water, one teaspoon juniper juice, and one teaspoon glycerin to give it some element of smoothness. Juniper juice was available at most drugstores or supplied as a gift with the alcohol by one's bootlegger. The gin would have cost Dziadzia about 2¢ an ounce and was ready for drinking upon mixing. It's likely he sold it "under the counter" for home consumption. One wit once joked that Prohibition succeeded in replacing good beer with bad gin. How Dziadzia managed to get away with making and selling it in his tavern, I don't know. Family has managed to keep it secret and no one has ever told me.

Historically, the corner bar was more than just a place to grab a quick beer. It was a social

club, a place to commune with neighbors, and to unwind after a hard day's work. They were places where workers, political and labor groups met and socialized. Real beer and liquor was again able to be served after the repeal of the Volstead Act and the passage of the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment in 1933. Behind the bar, Dziadzia was the poor man's psychiatrist and his customers called him by the Americanized name Sam.

Pictured right, Dziadzia and Babcia are behind the bar of their saloon on Mitchell Street, circa 1949. Awaiting service is Uncle Leo Brzezinski.



Maybe being a saloonkeeper was their ticket to success, but I'm unaware how Simon and Lottie rode out the years of the Great Depression. In 1931 Simon travelled to Poland to visit his parents, Jan and Zophia (Sophia Zaremba) Kłobukowski. Simon's U.S. passport photo is pictured right. The visa to enter Poland was granted 24 June 1931. He must have travelled by ship. His passport included a visa from the Consulate of France in Chicago for transit through Cherbourg. A third visa had been issued by the Consulate of Germany in Chicago.



After Simon's visit, Lottie kept in touch with Jan and Sophia and Simon's siblings by letter writing. Letters were still being exchanged some years after I was born, although I never learned who wrote the letters or what was in them. All I can recall is that when any such letter arrived from Poland, discussion of its content was conducted in Polish, and the only English I ever heard was something to the effect of, "Don't bother answering. All they ever ask for is money."

During the 1939-45 Nazi occupation of Poland, confiscation and destruction of church records was one attempt to bury and erase Polish culture. In retaliation for and in absolute anger at the Poles staging the 1944 uprising in Warsaw against his regime Hitler ordered the destruction of Warszawa (Warsaw) so that no brick stood upon brick. With many documents of the Russian partition having been written in the no longer used Old Russian and communists taking church records and secretly archiving them, and with the loss or possible non-keeping of records, I was only able to surmise via meager word of mouth, and over time all those words have been long silenced with the too soon passing of grandparents, parents and relatives, that Simon's and my ancestors originally came from a Polish village.

Given how some Polish names are constructed, "owski" means "coming from" (e.g. Zamość – Zamojski, Szydłowiec – Szydłowiecki). Generally surnames in Poland coming from names of cities/villages were related to the nobility and appears it was a rule until 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century only. Until that time peasants had no surnames at all, given names only. The <u>szlachta</u> (pron. <u>schlock-tah</u>, exonym: Nobility) beginning about the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a legally privileged noble class in the Kingdom of Poland. Any agreement for the Kłobukowski surname to be adopted by peasants was unlikely.

One place I was drawn to in research was a mountain called Kłobuk (pron. Qwo-<u>bootsk</u>); so-named because its shape looks like a hat and Kłobuk is a word for hat. In Poland today, three kilometers from Batorow, Donoslakie, is, pictured right, Kłobuk Mountain which stands 2,645 feet (806 meters) high and is located in the Lower Silesia Voivodeship<sup>6</sup>.

The town is spelled Kłobuck and is located in the Silesian Voivodeship, about 15 km





northwest of Częstochowa. See map above. It is the capital of Kłobuck County. The town lies among the hills of Lesser Poland Upland. The local St. Martin and Margaret Church was originally built as a wooden structure in 1144, its interior photographed in by me in 2015 and pictured left. Kłobuck was a major local trade center well before receiving its official status as a town. Located along a busy merchant road from Lesser Poland to Greater Poland, it was granted town rights in

86

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> In use since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it is the highest level administrative subdivision of Poland, compared with a province in many other countries.

1339, during the reign of Casimir III the Great. For centuries before 1793, the town belonged to Lelów County of Kraków Voivodeship. Annexed by the Kingdom of Prussia, it briefly was part of New Silesia. In 1807 Kłobuck was incorporated into the Duchy of Warsaw, sharing its fate in the Russian Empire. From 1870 to 1917 Kłobuck was a village, upon order of Tsarist authorities. In the Second Polish Republic, Kłobuck belonged to Częstochowa County of Kielce Voivodeship. In May 1939, National Defense Battalion "Kłobuck" was formed here.

On September 1, 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland, the Battle of Mokra took place 5 kilometers north of Kłobuck. During World War II, the town was incorporated into the Third Reich, as part of the County of Blachownia (in German: Landkweis Blachstädt), Upper Silesia Province. The village of Zagórz was located close to Kłobuck. There, surrounded by fences, the Germans established a "free willing" work camp. In the Kłobuck Ghetto people were frightened. Rebellious Jews, who didn't want to leave Kłobuck, were in constant fear of death. That is why Zagórz camp was seen as a lifeboat. The liquidation of the Kłobuck Ghetto occurred June 21, 1942. Many were packed inside rail wagons and deported by train to Oswiecim (Auschwitz). Most of Kłobuck's 2,000 Jews were murdered. After Kłobuck was declared "Judenrein" (without Jews), the Germans established in the former ghetto a "Service Unit" of workshops for tailors, shoemakers, dentist, and other "useful Jews" who remained employed in the open camp, that is, unfenced by walls or barbed wire. The open camp in Kłobuck was headquarters for all camps in the surrounding area.

Immediately post-war, Kłobuck returned to Kielce Voivodeship, but in 1950, together with Częstochowa, it was moved to Katowice Voivodeship. In 1952, Kłobuck County was created and several heavy industry enterprises were opened. Iron ore deposits were found during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1975-1999, the town belonged to Częstochowa Voivodeship.



In the past the name of the town was spelled in many different ways – Kłobucko, Kłobuczko, Kłobuczek. The current name has been used since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it likely comes from the ancient Polish word <u>kłobuk</u>, which is a type of headgear.

Another explanation is that kłobuk means "top" or "summit", and at the time of its location, the town was on the top of Lesser Poland as its most extreme north-western urban center. Map showing Kłobuck, its flag and coat of arms is pictured right. The shield and dark grey areas of the flag are blue.

Pictured left in 2015 is a marker for the town of Kłobuck and, right, a photo of me with the town's identifying sign.

And yet, with so much history found, maybe it's our family, maybe not, most satisfying is the knowledge that Kłobuck has a beer named for it, pictured left. Unfortunately, in 2015 the taxi





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> "Free willing" meant that the people asked to be accepted to work in the camp, to serve the German economy and surrounding areas by breaking stones, taking apart houses or building new buildings. This resulted from the Jewish Council (Judenrat) having accepted the German rules. The rules compelled large numbers of Jews to "volunteer" to travel and work in the German camps.

driver and I, having poked our heads into several Alkohole stores, were unable to find, much less purchase the beer.

There is also Kłobukowice, shown in the map at right, a village in the administrative district of Gmina Mstów, within Częstochowa County, Silesian Voivodeship, in southern Poland, and once owned by the Kłobukowski family. It is 43 miles (69 km) north of the regional



capital Katowice (renamed Stalingrad after Communist Russia ruled in 1956), 9 miles (14km) from Częstochowa, and 18 miles (32.9 km) through Częstochowa to Kłobuck, a



drive of about 36 minutes. I took the photo at left when I visited Kłobukowice in 2015. With the exception of an active strip club just behind the town's identifying sign, there were no other businesses or services. The church and seminary had been abandoned. More history, but maybe or maybe not, a part of our family history.

The Klobukowski surname comes from one or both almost neighboring populated places in north-central Poland. One is Kłobukowo-Patrze (pronounced Quo-boo-kov-oh Patt-sheh), Patrze a form of

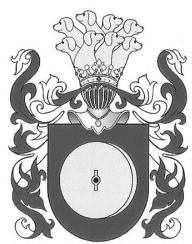


the Polish word for "look" or "looking" It is a village in the administrative district of Gmina Brudzeń Duży, within Płock County, Masovian Voivodeship, in north-central Poland, map shown left. Some cartographers might preference it as east-central Poland. It lies approximately 14 miles (22 km) northwest of Płock and 72 miles (116km) north-west of Warsaw. Nearby is the other populated place named Kłobukowo, map at right.



Kłobukowo is in the administrative district of Gmina Tłuchowo, within Lipno County, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, north-central Poland. It is 3 miles (5 km) south-east of Tłuchowo. According to my godmother, Adeline Slauson, Kłobukowo was most likely the place from which our family name originated and, possibly, the village from which my ancestors may have come. How right she was, and without ever knowing for certain!

Not only has the surname Kłobukowski come from Kłobukowo, the



Herb Kuczaba rodu Kłobukowskich, linia z ziemi dobrzyńskiej

village itself was founded by and owned since the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the Kłobukowski family. It is confirmed the Kłobukowski family owned the village in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pictured right are Joann and me in 2017 beneath the village's identifying sign.

The family coat of arms Kuczaba, pictured left, dates to the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, the time of the first Polish dynasty, the

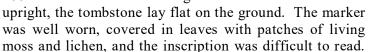
Jagiełłonian (1385-1572). The dark grey areas are red, the eight dogs or puppies grey, and the crown from which the dogs emerge is gold. The millstone on the shield is grey. It is also known as the coat of arms of Kuczaba alias Paprzyca,

earliest 14<sup>th</sup> century. In some instances, Kłobukowski family included, the same coat of arms was used by several families. Coats of arms were not given to anybody.

At Tłuchowo (pron. Twoo-<u>hov</u>-oh), three kilometers from the village of Kłobukowo, and in the church grounds of Assumption



Blessed Mary Virgin Catholic Church, pictured right, we found the gravestone of Jan Kłobukowski, *our* relative from long ago, possibly a four times great grandfather who died at the age of 74 in April 1882. Instead of standing



Joann and I are pictured left at the gravesite and tombstone of Jan Kłobukowski.

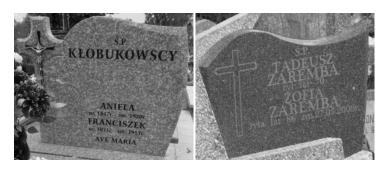
Marcin made out the Polish word above the name, <u>Właściciel</u> (pron. Vosh-<u>chi</u>-cho) meaning Owner. This Jan Kłobukowski owned six regional villages. Of those he owned we know of Kłobukowo, Kłobukowo-Patrze, and Kamien Kotowy (pronounced <u>Kah</u>-mean Ko-<u>toe</u>wee), Kamien meaning Stone and Kotowy an oldfashioned version of the plural genitive form of the word <u>kot</u> (cat), so the meaning could be "the Cat's Stone," located 3 kilometers or 2 miles from Tłuchowo. Marcin stated the fact that this Jan Kłobukowski buried in the church grounds, and not in the church cemetery, was sufficient proof of his having been a wealthy landowner and of the nobility.

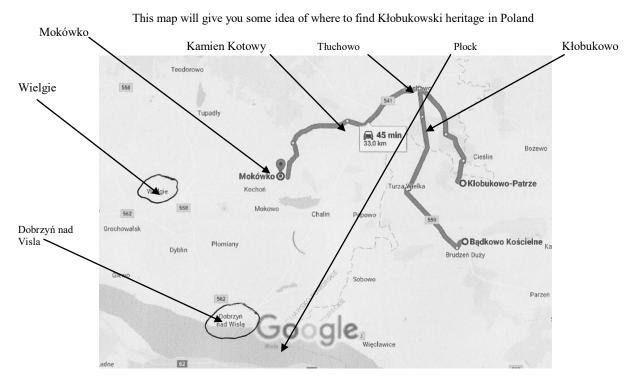


Well-aged, most engraved words were unclear. Others chiseled in, but only able to be translated out of context, were 'pony', 'child', and 'request for the vendor and..." Also buried in the tomb was his wife Antonina who died at age 76 and his brother Grzegorz (Gregory) died age 76. The inscription read that he was <u>obywatel ziemski</u>, in a modern meaning "a citizen of the Earth." However, the Polish word <u>Ziemia</u> means "Earth" only when written with a capital letter. Otherwise it also means "land" and "soil," so the original meaning was just "landlord" or "landowner." It's unlikely a 19<sup>th</sup> century somebody could call someone or himself "citizen of the 'Earth'."

The Tłuchowo cemetery was neat, well-kept. We found several Kłobukowski and Zaremba gravestones, two examples pictured right.

Right: Scy ending is same as ski but plural form and meaning "from"; beside is a Zaremba tombstone.





In 2017 in the village of Kłobukowo people were about, especially around the castle. We met a young woman who spoke English. She expressed concern and wanted to know why we were taking snapshots of the building. I introduced Joann and myself and emphasized our surname Kłobukowski. I said our ancestors founded this village a long time ago, that we were taking pictures of the family castle, and that we had no intention of claiming the castle. As far as we were concerned, everyone who lived there could go on living there in peace. A big smile broke across her face and she explained to others – several rambunctious boys, a couple of girls, old ladies, and some men with missing teeth – who we were, why we'd come, and that we weren't here to claim the castle. Now everyone relaxed and wanted to meet us and say, "Dzień dobray" (pron. Gen/Gene-daw-bray, meaning "Good day") and the toothless men offered me a sip from their bottles of beer.

This decorative cornice indicates Polish castle. Below are two views of the Kłobukowski family castle, more like a manor house.

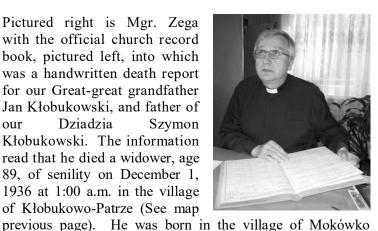




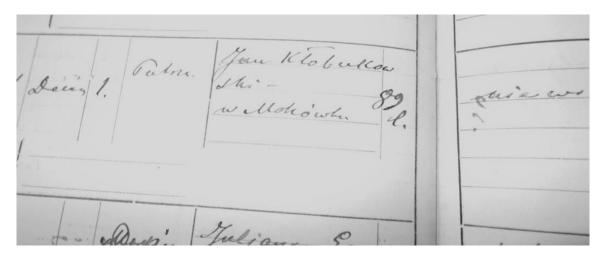
In Bądkowo Kościelne, (see map above) where Simon Klobukowski visited his father and mother in 1931, at the church rectory of St. Szczepan (St. Stephen) Monsignor (Mgr) Zega welcomed us into his office, offered chairs, and from a wooden cabinet produced an official church record book dated 1928 to 1946. Mgr Jan Zega spoke only in Polish. Marcin translated.



Pictured right is Mgr. Zega with the official church record book, pictured left, into which was a handwritten death report for our Great-great grandfather Jan Kłobukowski, and father of Dziadzia Szymon Kłobukowski. The information read that he died a widower, age 89, of senility on December 1, 1936 at 1:00 a.m. in the village of Kłobukowo-Patrze (See map



(pron. Mo-chuv-ko. See map previous page). It was very disappointing to see Unknown in the space for naming his parents. At the time this death was reported, it may have been that no one knew his parents' names, or it was preferred to keep it quiet. Marcin assured it was still possible to discover this information, perhaps in the Basilica Museum in Płock, or another town or church Archiwum (Archive) still preserving original records not burned by the Nazis or purloined by the communists. The death was reported by a neighbor, Antoni Piotrowski, and Mieczysław (an old Slavic name deriving from miecz [sword] and slawa [fame, glory], ergo "famous of his sword") Kłobukowski, grandson of Jan Kłobukowski.



Handwritten report (partial) of death of Great-great Grandfather Jan Kłobukowski in official St. Szczepana Church record book.

That wasn't the end of the discovery. A year later Marcin wrote he had re-examined the entire page of the original record and couldn't believe that he'd missed seeing the entry directly above Jan Kłobukowski's entry. The page includes Marcin's translations of the Latin headings and the entries in Polish handwriting. The newly discovered entry was for Tomasz Kłobukowski, son of Jan and Zophia Zareba, and youngest brother of our Dziadzia Szymon Kłobukowski. Tomasz Kłobukowski died at 11:00 a.m. on November 20, 1936, in the village of Kłobukowo-Patrze, just ten days before his father Jan passed. Tomasz was single, was born in Zakrzewko in 1885, a year after Dziadzia Szymon Kłobukowski, and died of cancer aged 51, although registered at death as 52. Tomasz would have been his father's carer as that was the custom of the time; the single, unmarried child looked after elderly parent(s).

The death was reported by a neighbor, Antoni Piotrowski, aged 44, and Mieczysław (Michael) Kłobukowski, aged 30, grandson of Jan Kłobukowski and nephew of Tomasz. Mieczysław Kłobukowski was the oldest grandson and that explains why he was to submit deaths of his uncle and grandfather, his grandfather unable to report Tomasz' death due to his senility; or dementia as we'd call it today.

Reproduced here in its entirety is the full set of entries over two pages in the official 1928-1946 church record book.

tesimo	FILIUM (AM) PARENTUM QUI SUPERVICE CORIUM MORBUS As here a memore nomen at cagnomen common at cagnomen et cagnomen	Superiolist of the such any lawing the Mount of the Mount	Jouri Fortie Longie (Course) Concertrain grants. Jerrytic. Jan & Zoffe Zargha " Single (Course) Concertrain grantsed.  Penchu W. Lascia.	unknown [nieznani] Widower Peneka Maris Company of Starofol admitted	Melione wireson was page.	Therebough & Blacky.
PAROCHIA BUCKUND DIOECESIS PLOCENSIS	ACTUM EST COMPARUERUNT ET DECLARAVERUNT: MORTEUM (AM) ESSE FILLIUM INSTRUM (AM) ESSE FILLIUM INSTRUMENTED IN THE SQUEENING AND INSTRUMENT CONTINUED IN THE SQUEENING IN THE SQUE		1 3	Faur Ho.  1. C. L. Been, I. Cater.  1. C. House M. C. Lan.  1. C. Longer M. C. L. C	Desiry July ansa Em.	Renstouty Bare. 8 28. 6 28. factory of armed the that of the of the street of armed the street of the street of armed the street of a stre
	ACTUM EST It's got registere	77 7 624 8	11 [0'cloud	29 2 Sr. M. 2	40. 4 grea 8.	11. 4 Saw. 18

Marcin Nowakowski and I returned in 2019 to the church rectory of St. Szczepan (St. Stephen) in Bądkowo Kościelne, again met by Mgr Zega, to more closely peruse the official church record book dated 1928 to 1946. Marcin suspected there'd be a death notice for Zophia, Jan Kłobukowski's wife. Her death might well confirm why Szymon (Simon), my Dziadzia, visited his mother in 1931 as she may not have been in the best of health.



Handwritten report (partial) of death of Great-great Grandmother Zophia Kłobukowska in official St. Szczepana Church record book

Zophia (Sophia) Kłobukowska died aged 76 in Kłobukowo-Patrze of natural causes on 29 December 1931 at 11:00 a.m. Her death was registered on 29 December at 1:00 p.m. Once again the name of Tomasz Kłobukowski, 52, of Patrze is recorded as one who reported the death. Having been the youngest son, tradition would have dictated he lived with his parents and looked after them. Following his name is <u>stel</u> most probably <u>stelmach</u> which translates to "wheelwright," a person who makes or repairs wooden wheels. The second witness recorded reporting the death is Władisław K., 35, the remainder of his name being unreadable. The <u>grz</u> is certainly an abbreviation for <u>gospodarz</u> meaning "yeoman," a man holding and cultivating a small landed estate, a freeholder.

New information in the death notice were Zophia's parents' names, Szymon and Maryanna Zaręby, another spelling for Zaręba, Zaremba. Nothing, at this stage, is known of her parents, my great-great grandparents.

Pictured right is a Klobukowski family tombstone in Bądkowo Kościelne. Mieczysław, named bottom left of the grave marker, was born before 15 November 1907 and is the grandson and nephew previously mentioned. There was a thought that Konstanty; born in 1862/1863 may have been the eldest of the six Kłobukowski siblings. However, it was discovered his father's name wasn't Jan and so it's unlikely he was my grandfather's eldest brother. He died six years before Tomasz and Jan. Just guessing: the men I met in 2017, Josef and Zenon Kłobukowski (pictures and brief stories will follow). may possibly be the grandsons of Konstanty.



Back to 2017, Mgr Zega spoke in Polish. Marcin translated and all our hearts jumped. "There's a Josef Kłobukowski lives here." I believe that in the ensuing conversation in Polish Mgr Zega said he was going to ring Josef Kłobukowski to expect guests. Mgr Zega gave directions which went something like this: Go left down the main road and turn left onto the first road you come to. Then follow it a kilometer or so until you come to a cross. Then turn right and follow that road past a house and then you'll find it.

A full-size cross stuck out of the ground at a crossroad and we found the modest home of Josef Kłobukowski. Laundered work clothes and sweaters were draped around the porch to dry. A woman answered the door and invited us into the kitchen. She was Helena, Josef's wife. Josef

sat at the kitchen table. 82 years old, he spoke only Polish, and established that we were related, that he was the son of Mieczysław Kłobukowski, thus making us cousins.

With Marcin translating, Josef asked if I'd met any Kłobukowski last time I was in Płock. I said I'd met Mirosław Kłobukowski; back then we didn't think we were related. In Polish Josef explained that Mirosław was his brother's son and so, yes, we were related after all. How easy it must be to make a mistake in ancestry without professional assistance. Pictured left is Mirosław and me, a snap from 2015 taken in Mirosław's office in Płock.

Josef and Helena appreciated we'd come so far to find them. Both changed into clean shirt and blouse for pictures. They said they wanted to look their best. Pictured right: Rodziny (Family) Kłobukowski: Me, Joann, Helena, and Josef. We'd found living relatives! Ah, Polish hospitality. We were offered coffee or sweet biscuits including Masovian gingerbreads, delicate white bread rolls, homemade smoked ham kielbasa and dill pickles. Josef called to Helena who brought in a bottle of homemade cherry vodka. Josef filled the shot glasses and we toasted rodzina (family) four times.



In Płock, a day after meeting Josef and Helena Kłobukowski, shortly after 6:00 p.m. the former mayor of Dobrzyń, Ryszard Dobieszewski, led a small party huddled beneath umbrellas into the courtyard of Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a church which has been in this spot since 1099; the courtyard dominated by the statue of St. Pope John Paul II. I was told the five people were my cousins.



The man with the cane and wearing the cap is Zenon Kłobukowski, brother of Josef Kłobukowski, and father of Mirosław who is standing second from left holding an umbrella, and his wife stands at the end of line. The other man with an umbrella is Dariusz Janusz Klobukowski, former head or principal of the high school in Dobrzyń nad Visla. Holding the camera is the former mayor of Dobrzyn Ryszard Dobieszewski who married into the Kłobukowski family, so we are somehow related, and whose father-in-law was another Jan Kłobukowski. Wearing sunglasses is Sabina (Kłobukowska) Skalek, married to professional singer Longin Skalek, and whose father was Felix Kłobukowski who owned his mill on the family property in Dobrzyń nad Visla.

Kłobukowski isn't as common a surname in Poland as Adamski, Chmielewski, Lewandowski, or Kowalski, and definitely not as widespread as Smith, Jones and Brown in the United States. It is, more or less, confined to Mazovia. Dziadzia always claimed that there was no one with our family name in the United States, but in the 1950s a family with the surname Klobukowski from New York stopped in Milwaukee. After conferring and comparing, my Dziadzia and that family decided they were not related. Neither realized at the time that they were, in fact, cousins and his name was Pawel (Paul). How do I know that?

Mirosław's father Zenon carried a booklet with handwritten pages of what he knew of the history of the Kłobukowski family and said that the only Kłobukowski he knew that went to the United States was Pawel Kłobukowski who had lived in Kłobukowo-Patrze, same village where Great-great grandfather and grandmother Jan and Zophia Kłobukowski had died. Everyone in the family Kłobukowski in Poland at the time knew about Pawel immigrating to New York in the United States. That no one here was aware of my grandfather's emigration suggested that Szymon Kłobukowski had to leave secretly. When I explained that he left to avoid conscription into the Russian Army, heads nodded in agreement. They understood the desperation and secrecy. So, yes, that's probably why Zenon had no such record in his family history booklet!

In 2015 Mirosław Kłobukowski, born in 1957, economic and social activist in Płock, had given me a gift, a book *Gmina Mochowo (Mochowo Municipality*). Written and published by Jan Boleslaw Nycek in 2014 in Polish in Płock, Mirosław bookmarked the chapter containing the known Kłobukowski history. Mirosław shared historical material and memories of his father Zenon, born in 1930, landowner from the family village of Kłobukowski-Patrze.

The history of this branch of the kinship of Kłobukowski has been recreated quite accurately over the last 200 years. Memories of Zenon Kłobukowski are an interesting and authentic record of everyday life in a North Mazovian village which is Mochowo land in the second half of the  $20^{th}$  century.

Zenon Kłobukowski was a landowner of 17 hectares of not the best ground of IV and V class. In the years between the two World Wars he raised small amounts of wheat and barley for the purpose of grits and flour for his own needs, raised cattle, and grew potatoes, and swedes (rutabagas). On average there were two or three horses, about ten cows and calves, a dozen pigs including one or two sows, and fair-sized flocks of chickens and ducks. The house was made of wood with two chimneys. It had three rooms and a kitchen, and a room for staff. The house had three entrances: one from the north and two from the south. A big, wooden barn consisted of two threshing floors and two neighboring rooms for animals. A cowshed was made of clay. There were stalls for cows and horses and a sty for pigs. The buildings were supplemented by a woodshed made up of three parts: a room for wood and peat, a summer catwalk for pigs, and a shed.

It's an uncommon situation in Poland that the surname survived in a small village for about seven centuries, since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This testifies well to Kłobukowscy, primeval Polish kinship, its attachment to the land, traditions and religion. Among the researchers of the history of the Mazovian Płock nobility there stands out a Benedictine work by Jerzy Łempicki (1923-2005). During World War II, as a worker at the Solvay factory in Krakow, he met Karol Wojtyła (who in 1978 became Pope – later St. John Paul II), who worked in this factory. Łempicki was a professor at universities of technology in Szczecin, Gdańsk, and Łódź. He was a specialist in building statistics and strength of building materials. He was twice chairman of The Main Board of the Polish Association of Construction Engineers and Technicians in the years 1962-1964 and 1981-1983. History was his passion, especially the history of kinships, and he published four tomes.

The Kłobukowski family name is older than Poland itself. Poland has existed as a country since at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Kłobukowski can be paper-traced to at least the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century. There were two families having the name Kłobukowski: Kłobukowski (coat of arms Oksza) and Kłobukowski (coat of arms Kuszaba/Kuczaba/Paprzyca). Both Oksza and Kuszaba belong to the oldest families in Poland. As one of the oldest, our Kłobukowski family is the latter and the older with Mochowo nobility settlements and farms in Kłobukowo, Kłobukowo Molendy (Gift of God, although derived from the Latin word molendium meaning "mill") and Kłobukowo Patrze (Look). Yet in the year 1885 Bronislaw Chlebowski noted that there were 10 homesteads

and 71 apartments (houses) of fine nobility. The etymology of the name of the villages, according to researchers as Zygmunt Gloger, Bronislaw Chlebowski, Stanislaus Bollt or Hurlstone, derived from the word *kłobuk*, which means hat. Jan Dlugosz claimed that *kłobuk* came from the Turkish-Tatar language (Turkish word <u>kalpak</u>) and it means helm or helmet, perhaps even hubcap). However, it is also probable that the beginnings of the *Kłobuk* name may be older than Poland itself, dating back to the time before Christianity.

Dobrzyń land

The oldest preserved historical mention about Kłobukowski comes from the land of Dobrzyń, map showing Dobrzyń land

within Poland right, and concerns Jarosław z Kłobukowa, Archdeacon, 1334, in the second year



of the reign of King Kazimierz III (Casimir III) the Great (1333-1370), the only ruler of Poland to use that title; the salt carving of King Kazimierz (Casimir) III the Great in the Wieliczka Salt Mine is my own photograph. He died aged 60. Under his rule Poland became a strong and unified state. Poland expanded east into Russia. He reformed the law and administration and founded in 1364 the first university in Krakow, The University of Krakow, sometimes called the Jagiełłonian University, is the second oldest university in central Europe after the Charles University in Prague. King

Kazimierz III also protected and supported the Jews. The era from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup> century was one of greatness for Poland. Nevertheless the power of the king gradually weakened. The Polish nobility became more and more powerful gaining considerable institutional privileges.

Kłobukowski (coat of arms Oksza) had its lands in the region of the city of Łodz. Our Kłobukowski family (coat of arms Kuszaba/Kuczaba/Paprzyca) had its lands in the region of the city of Płock. At this point I should mention my great-great grandfather Jan's wife Zophia (Sophia) nee Zaremba, an occupational name for a woodcutter, prefix Zaremb meaning "to hack to pieces" or "butcher", and in the Dictionary of the Polish Language, Lwów 1854-1860, vol. VI, p. 869, it was also a knight's call to attack the opponent. Zarabać in Polish means "to hack somebody to death." It is likely she may have also come from the szlachta. It is believed that the Zaremba coat of arms, pictured right, was introduced from Germany or Bohemia, but it already existed in Poland in the earliest times. The first home of the same was probably in the Voivodeship Płock during the Piast monarchy in the reign of Boleslaw Wrymouth (1102-1138). On a gold background there is a half



lion, grey-black in color, with its tongue hanging out, the forepaws visible so that the left is slightly above the right, and the tail upturned; the lion is leaping to its right from the top of a red wall with four battlements. Set into this wall are three stones garnished in gold, two alongside each other, and one below. Upon a gold crowned silver helmet is a similarly styled lion. Behind the face-protector of the helmet is colored red. The chain and pendant on the neck of the helmet is gold. The outside of the flared pennons are gold and the undersides are black.

To comprehend the Klobukowski family's role in Poland, it is imperative to have a general understanding of Polish szlachta which constituted a greater proportion of the population than in other countries, up to 10%. They were all equal and politically empowered, but some had no property and were not allowed to hold offices or participate in sejms or sejmiks (Polish Parliaments and/or the legislative bodies). Of the "landed" nobility, some possessed land that they tended themselves, while the magnates owned dukedom-like networks of estates with several hundred towns and villages and many thousands of subjects. Mixed marriages gave some peasants one of the few possible paths to nobility. 16<sup>th</sup> century Poland was officially a "republic of nobles", and the "middle class" of the nobility (individuals at a lower social level than "magnates") formed the leading component during the later Jagiełłonian period and afterwards. Members of the magnate families held the highest state and church offices.

Our Kłobukowski nobility wasn't a magnate family. It was considered average gentry or "middle class": it was forbidden to attain the highest offices in the country and couldn't participate in the legislative bodies, but a few members of the Kłobukowski family played significant roles in Polish history.

Archbishop Antoni Julian Nowowiejski in his grand work *Plock, Historical Monograph*, *Edition II* having appeared in 1930, given the sensational information about Jan de Kłobuk, stated/mentioned in Kropacz, a Polish coat of arms and Czech coat of arms used by several knight and <u>szlachta</u> families in the times of the Kingdom of Poland, Kingdom of Bohemia and

Duchies of Silesia, and pictured left. The dominant background color is

light blue. The maces are white.

Jan de Kłobuk dictus (having been

dictus (having been declared, affirmed)
Kropacz was matriculated in 1398 and was on

the Faculty of Law at Wittenberg University in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, which underlined his entry in Natio Polonorum (being born Polish), equivalent to a fraternity in an American university. This same Jan de Kłobuk, without doubt a Kłobukowski, about the year 1400 in Prague, bought a valuable print Coelestium Revaloratiorum (Celestial Revelation), or Brygitte Beate Liber Revaloratiorum Coelestium Beate Brygitte (Free Paper Marian Apparitions of Heavenly Holy Bridget), pictured right. This unique folio is sized 40 by 30 centimeters, containing 193 paper cards, four parchments, 16 initiatives (the power or opportunity to act or take charge before others do), and three Bound in oak boards and miniatures.

Kropacz



sheathed with a cut brown leather skin, it is preserved in the Diocesan Museum of Płock. The identifying card translates as "Book of the Apparitions of the Heavenly Holy Bridget, the Gift of Jan de Kłobuka." Unknown is how that copy got to the People who should not be excluded from the gift. Jan of Kłobuka attached his surname on the cover. The wonderful historian Wojciech Kętrzyński wrote about this precious manuscript in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar information has been recorded in the much older *Diplomatic Code of Mazovia*.

Janusz Kłobukowo, named in the family of Kuczabo, leader with the coat of arms Kuczaba family, signed on behalf of the citizens of the land of Dobrzyń, a promise of loyalty for Władysław Jagiełłonian, then called Warnenczykiem, the Polish King Władysław II (1386-1434). Signing meant that they chose him, approved of him, as king of Poland. The signing happened exactly on January 25, 1434. On the "Act of Union with the dignitaries and landowners of the earth in Dobrzyń" he appears as Janussius de Clobocowo. The loyalty promise resulted from Władisław having joined the Catholic Church, and his people followed.

On pilgrimage in 2019 I explored the cathedral inside Wawel Castle. The cathedral is formally titled Royal Archcathedral Basilica of Saints Stanislaus and Wenceslaus and is nearly 1000 years old. A national sanctuary, it served as the coronation site of Polish monarchs. It also served as the main burial site for Polish monarchs since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Never did I expect I'd find connections to family in the cathedral, but I did and will reference same in exploration of the Klobukowski lineage.

In 1453 Jakub (James or Jacob, in this instance more than likely Jacob) of Kłobukowo served in the office of writer at the Court of Prince Władisław I of Płock (1406-1455), a Polish prince member of the House of Piast from the Masovian branch. He was also known as The Elbow High. Jacob as a court writer may have kept the official accounts or officially recorded what happened in the court, perhaps both. Władisław I the Elbow High was Duke of Płock, Rawa Mazowiecka, Gostynin, Sochaczew, Belz, Płońsk, Zawkrze and Wizna during 1426-1434 jointly with his brothers, after the division of the paternal inheritance between him and his brothers in 1434, sole ruler over Płock, Płońsk, Zawkrze and Wizna; with the deaths of his brothers Siemowit V and Casimir II in a short period of time in 1442 he reunited all their paternal domains, except for Gostynin which remained in the control of Siemowit V's widow Margaret of Racibórz. He was the fifth son of Siemowit IV, Duke of Masovia and Alexandra of Lithuania, and died of tuberculosis December 11, 1455 in his palace at Niedźwiedza near Sochaczew. He was buried in Płock Cathedral. I saw his crypt in the Płock Cathedral in 2015 and again in 2017.

Jakub (James or Jacob, in this instance more than likely James) of Kłobukowo served in the same office from 1456-1461 under the reign of Siemowit VI and his brother Władisław II. At the time of their father's death his sons were minors and the regency was taken by their mother Anna and Pawel Giżycki, Bishop of Płock. When Siemowit VI attained his majority he was able to annex the district of Gostynin after the death of his aunt Margaret of Racibórz. His only independent move was to make a peace treaty with the Teutonic Order<sup>8</sup>, thus following his father's policy of not engaging in conflict with the order, despite the Polish King, Casimir IV, being at war with them. Siemowit VI died at the age of 18 on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1461 and was buried in Płock Cathedral.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Since 1198 a military order, they were German knights under the protection of Pope Innocent III. Its main principles included caring for the sick and protecting pilgrims against the so-called infidels. They failed to play any significant role in the Holy Land and made efforts to move the Order to Europe to christen and subdue pagan Prussia. They initiated a series of wars which lasted until 1561.



Inside Płock Cathedral I saw Siemowit VI's burial place, pictured left, in 2015 and again in 2017, although the standout crypt has interred Władisław Herman I.

It is not known why Jakub (James) of Kłobukowo ceased service as court writer in 1461, but the following may offer a suggestion. At the death of Siemowit VI, the teenaged Władisław II became the sole ruler of their paternal domains; however, because he was still a minor, the regency was taken again by the Dowager Duchess

Anna and Bishop Pawel Giżycki of Płock. Unfortunately, less than a month later Władisław II also died and is buried in Wawel Cathedral. I did see in 2019 where he was entombed. The sudden death of both princes caused many rumors of poisoning. The charges of murder were directed at the Castellan of Sochaczew, Gotard of Rybna, who allegedly was offended because the princes deprived him of a country state. The sensational accusations, however, are generally rejected by Jan Długosz who was considered Poland's first historian. The real reason of the death of both brothers in such short space of time was likely tuberculosis. The death of Władisław II ended the line of the Masovian Piasts and King Casimir IV of Poland legitimately



wanted to incorporate all his lands to the crown, but this was vigorously opposed by the majority of the Masovian nobility, still deeply attached to the Piast dynasty.

Pictured left is Wawel Cathedral in between Sigismund's Chapel (named for King Sigismund I the Old) on the right with its round dome and Vasa Dynasty chapel to its left.

In the second half of the fifteenth century we can also read about Jan Kłobukowski (1476) and his son Mikołaj (1490) in acts of Brześć. In the sixteenth century we know also about

Maciej, son of Mikołaj Przybek from Kłobukowo, who, in 1538, sold part of a windmill in Grodnia (or Grodno) to Elżbieta, daughter of Łukasz. She gave part of Kłobukowo, where she had plots of land, to someone called Bożewski who was part of some other important kinship in this part of Poland. In 1542 Jakub Kłobukowski, called as Molenda<sup>9</sup>, sued with Bożewski, probably about the sold part of Kłobukowo. We know also that in 1539 Piotr Kłobukowski lived in Płock. In 1542 two men with the surname Kłobukowski appear in historical sources: Jakub, husband of Zofia from Włoczewo, daughter of Mikołaj; and Marcin whose wife was Małgorzata from Wziamborz.

Polish nobles became increasingly powerful and the monarchy grew weaker late in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1505 the king agreed that no political changes would be made without the consent of the nobles. The *Nihil novi* act transferred most of the legislative power from the monarch to the Sejm. This event marked the beginning of the period known as "Golden Liberty", when the state was ruled in principle by the "free and equal" Polish nobility. Conditions for the peasant serfs who worked for the nobility suffered abusive conditions. Political monopoly of the nobles stifled development of cities and limited rights of townspeople.

The reigns of King Sigismund I the Old (1506-1548) and King Sigismund II Augustus (1548-1572 witnessed an intense cultivation of culture and science, a Golden Age of the Renaissance

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Surname Molenda derives from Latin <u>molendinatior</u> meaning "miller".

in Poland, of which the astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1584) is the best known representative. Copernicus published *De Revolutionibus* wherein he proposed that the Earth rotated on an axis and revolved around the sun once a year. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was still widely accepted that the Earth was the center of the universe. The heliocentric theory was later proved by Galileo Galilei, and the Catholic Church still managed to excommunicate him for his science truth.

Following the death of King Sigismund II Augustus, each king of Poland was elected by the szlachta in the Sejm. As a result, the kings had little formal power. Poland's neighbors often influenced the Sejm.

In 1564 we can read about Piotr and Jan Łyszcz Kłobukowski – lairds of Turza Wielka, Piotr Łysowicz and Stanisław Kłobukowski – lairds of Kłobukowo-Patrze. In Kłobukowo Molendy lairds were: Andrzej, Jakub with his nephew Walenty, Jan called Błyszcz, Jam and Feliks Kłobukowskey. In fifteenth and sixteenth century sources it is recorded that about 14 people with the surname Kłobukowski lived on Dobrzyn land. Apart from these who were mentioned before, some Kłobukowskis were called as: Chwiszcz, Liszcz, Długi, Karaś, Łyszczowiec, Molenda, Patrz and Patrzyk. That is why some parts of Kłobukowo are named as for example: Kłobukowo Wielkie, Kłobukowo Małe, Kłobukowo Liszcze, Kłobukowo Karasie, Kłobukowo Molendy, and Kłobukowo Patrze. In mortgage files there appear some other names of places where the Kłobukowskis lived: Czajki, Czeski, Rozlawy, Siedliska, Pieczyska, Łążki, and Kownatki.

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and 16<sup>th</sup> century the Polish army was raised mainly through the nobility and only when urgently required. In the event of a major invasion, large numbers of additional gentry and town and peasant militia could be called out. The crack cavalry were Western-style knights in full plate armor, on armored horses and equipped with heavy medieval lance, supported by lighter lancers in mail and half-armor, and mounted crossbow and sword-and-shield men in half-armor. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century a small standing army was created, its weapons and equipment provided by the state.



Most source references are retained about Kłobukowo-Patrze Marcin (Martin Kłobukowskim-See), who had four sons: Jan, Andrzej, Mikołaj, and Mateusz (John, Andrew, Nicholas, and Matthew). The list of conscripts from the years 1564-1565, in the reign of King Sigismund II Augustus, all sons of Martin's Sight went into the army as Kłobukowscy, the fine nobility of Kłobukowo. This information is provided by the 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Adolf Pawinski. It is not known in what capacity they served. However, we may surmise they were cavalry as 75 percent of the army was cavalry, a public domain picture of a winged Hussar is seen left. The fully plate-armored lancers survived up to the

1580s, and beside them grew up a new type, the famous Hussars who were to be the elite of Poland's cavalry until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Polish Hussars (in Polish: Husaria), or Winged Hussars, were one of the main types of the cavalry in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the true Winged Hussar arrived in the 1570s with the reforms of the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The most extraordinary feature of the Hussars was the wing worn by some units.

Made from a curved batten carrying eagle, ostrich, swan, goose, or vulture feathers, this could be attached to the rear of the saddle, or cross-belts to the shoulders, making its wearers some of the most spectacular soldiers ever seen. They are said to have made a rushing, clattering tornado-like noise in a charge. The ungodly noise made it seem like the cavalry was larger than in reality and it frightened the enemy's horses. Another possibility included the wings were made to defend the men's backs against swords and lassos.



Interesting that I chose to grow and wear my mustache in the Husaria style after seeing a picture of a royal Polish knight in a woodcut sporting a long, large, curled mustache more than 20 years before knowing there were royal Polish knights in the family lineage. However, for the mustache to curl as does mine, pictured left in 2017, perhaps they ate goose or duck and wiped the fat onto the moustache to shape it. Only guessing!

After the death of Jan III Sobieski of Poland in 1696, Elector of Saxony Augustus II the Strong became one of the candidates for the Polish

throne. To enhance his chances he converted to Catholicism. His Lutheran wife kept her religious belief and left him. With backing from Austria and Russia, Augustus II Sasa (Polish for Saxony) became king of Poland in 1697. He acquired his title "the Strong" not for his prowess on the battlefield, but for his great physical strength. He broke horseshoes with his bare hands, fought bears and bulls, and he was famous for his amorous adventures and many mistresses. Legend has it that he sired around 300 illegitimate children. He had no lack of noblewomen throwing themselves into his bed while visiting foreign courts.

Late in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Act of Great Northern War under King Augustus II Sasa has the signatures of Jan (John), Grzegorz (Gregory), Piotr (Peter), Michał (Michael) and Łukasz (Lucas or Luke) Kłobukowski from the lands of Dobrzyń. The signatories were showing support for the king and his aggressive stance toward Sweden. The Great Northern War distributed the coastline of the Baltic among the neighboring nations in a manner which has lasted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sweden, under the energy and military genius of its young king, Charles XII, eighteen years old in 1700 and already three years into his reign, was in the dominant position. The concerted attack on Swedish territory during 1700 happened in three regions. Augustus II moved north to besiege the port of Riga. The Danish king, Frederick IV, marched south into Swedish possession in Schleswig-Holstein. The Russian tsar, Peter the Great, brought an army west to attack the port of Narva. Peter the Great suffered a wounding in battle and retired from fighting in 1700. In his recuperation period until 1704 he founded the city of St. Petersburg.

Over the next six years Charles XII's victories over Augustus the Strong were devastating. He ended the siege in Riga in 170l, reached and entered Warsaw in May 1702. He defeated Augustus in two months in a battle further south at Kliszow. In 1704 Charles persuaded the Poles to depose Augustus and to elect in his place a Polish noble as Stanislaw I. The humiliation of Augustus was completed by the Swedish king by marching into Saxony and imposing a treaty signed at Altranstädt. Poland, Denmark and Saxony were knocked out of the war by 1707. Peter the Great re-entered battle in 1704 re-capturing Narva.

After Charles' defeat by Russia at Poltava in 1709, Stanislaw I fled to France and Augustus the Strong was restored. He was also called 'the Saxon Hercules" and "Iron Hand" and lived up to his name by breaking horseshoes with his bare hands and for fathering a very large number of children. His wife produced one son and retired to the country. Rumored to have fathered 382 illegitimate children, the actual figure was more like 60, but he admitted only to the ones with wealthy, attractive and aristocratic mothers. Augustus tried to make the Polish crown hereditary in his family, but failed. A weakened Polish-Lithuania Commonwealth meant it came to be regarded as a protectorate of Russia. Augustus the Strong, aka Augustus II, was more or less dependent on Peter the Great and Russia to maintain his throne. He died in

Warsaw in 1733. His heart was buried in Dresden Cathedral, his body interred in Wawel Cathedral and, again, I viewed the burial site in 2019. His son succeeded to the Polish throne as Augustus III of Poland, but he had to be installed by the Russian Army in the War of the Polish Succession.

Sweden shared an anti-Russian alliance with the Turks and the Turks defeated Peter the Great in 1711 at the Prut River. Peter the Great negotiated with the Turks who wanted Azov returned to them and he agreed to return Azov. No concessions were given to Sweden. Charles XII is killed by a musket shot in 1718 in an invasion of Norway. Peace negotiations continued for three years after the death of Charles XII and were a disaster for Sweden as most of its possessions on the southern coast of the Baltic had to be ceded. Russia's Peter the Great, by the treaty of Nystad in 1721, obtained the east Baltic coast from Vyborg to Riga, a stretch of land which included St. Petersburg. Russia replaced Sweden as the leading power in the Baltic.

Several Kłobukowscy (Kłobukowski) took prominent places in the largest and most competent Polish publishing house, dedicated to our uncommon compatriots, *Polish Biographic Dictionary* (a veritable Polish Who's Who). Today only the surname has survived, which appears on many documents and studies. In each cemetery of the Mochowo community and in neighboring ones we can see graves, markers and tombstones of descendants of the Kłobukowski family, examples pictured below.







Found in another official deaths record book in Bądkowo Kościelne in 2019 was Zosia Kłobukowska, only 4 years old when she died in 1946, her grave marker pictured above left. Finding her marker in the cemetery at Bądkowo Kościelne was unsettling for my sister Joann and me in 2017. Her death was recorded as kidney disease instead of the starvation she would have suffered. Kidney disease results from starvation. Many children, regardless of nationality, starved to death

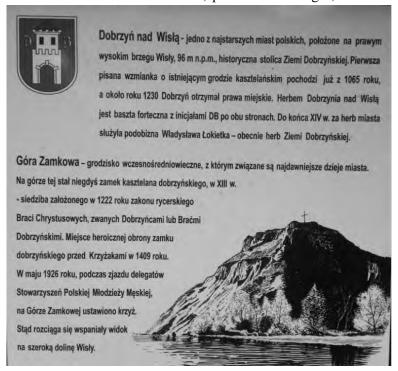
after the war ended.

In 2019 in Dobrzyń nad Wislą cousin Sabina (Kłobukowska) Skalek invited Marcin and me to her home to see the mill on the property built by her father Felix in 1947. Pictured right, Sabina and I stand before her father's mill with its original sign above the entrance. Sabina pointed to her father's name above the door. I felt privileged to see this artifact in its original position in the year it first appeared. I am unsure the accuracy of the Bing Translator when it said the sign read "The Slope". Below the business name is F. Kłobukowski, Sabina's father Felix. Inside was a collection of tools, hardware and woodenware which seemed to have been kept as an untouched museum collection.

She said I was definitely a Kłobukowski because I had her father's nose. If you will, compare with the picture at right of Felix and his wife on their wedding day hanging inside the house on the dining room wall. It was difficult to photograph due to reflection from outside the windows.

Along the bank of the Vistula and near to a hill where a castle once overlooked the river stood an information sign in Polish, pictured right. I used the Bing Translator to come up with: Dobrzyn nad Wisla – one of the oldest Polish cities; placed on the right, written mention





of the existing Castellan castle from the year 1065, and about the year 1230 Dobrzyn received The crest of city rights. Dobrzyn on the Vistula is the fortress tower with the initials of D and B on either side. To the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the coat of arms of the city, is the likeness of Wladyslawa Lokietka – now the coat of arms of Dobrzyn Land. (The present day coat of arms of Dobrzyń nad Wisla is pictured right. shield is red. The castle is white, its roof and windows black, with D and B in gold.)

And the second part of the sign:
Gora



Zamkowa – An early medieval settlement, which is associated with the oldest history of the city. On top of this steel was a former castle of Castellan Dobrzynski, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the headquarters of the Knights of Christ, called Dobrzyn or Bracmi Brothers, in 1222. Before the cross was the place

of a heroic defense of the Dobrzynski Castle in 1409. In May 1926, during the Congress of the Delegates of the Association of Polish Mlodziezy Meska, the cross was set on top of the castle. "Flocks" or "Herds" have a magnificent view of the wide valley of the Wisly.

Pictured left is the flag of Dobrzyń nad Wislą. The top stripe is blue, the middle stripe yellow, and the bottom stripe is green.

Today most of Poland's Kłobukowskis live in and around Dobrzyń nad Wislą. Its current population is a few hundred greater than 2000.

During World War II Simon served as a Civil Defense Block Warden. Not unlike England scanning its skies to protect its citizens from Hitler's buzz bombs during the war, it was an organization for all civilians in the United States unnerved by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Simon was a leader in his

community to check on the population and to see that they obeyed the orders of the night-time blackout and to ensure that they were aware of evacuation routes in the event of an enemy attack. Signs were erected which pointed out the EVACUATION ROUTE.

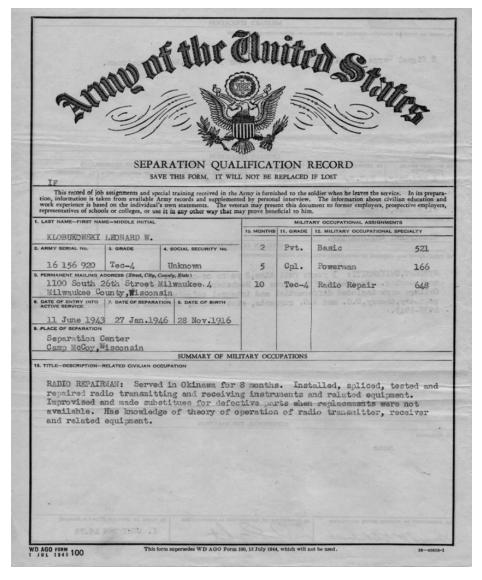


Dr. John Radzinski, pictured left and standing back row right beside Dziadzia, and who also married into the Broniszewski family by taking Bernice, who stands in front of him, as his wife, commented in a humorous medical remark, "Oh, so they have to tell you where to go potty?" It would seem for members within our family tree that the childish word for urination transcended generations.

Anna (Tarnovska) Broniszewski, front and center in the photo, who never learned to read or write, passed away after an extended

illness in August 1944, aged 76. Funeral services were held at St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, Sobieski; she was buried beside Walter in St. John Cantius parish cemetery.

After my father returned from his tour of duty on Okinawa, he was decorated with a Good Conduct Medal and cited with the American Theater Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Theater Service Medal with One Bronze Star, One Overseas Service Bar, and a Lapel Button was issued. He was officially separated from the Army of the United States January 26, 1946.



		MILITAR	EDUCATION		
14. NAME OR TYPE OF SCHOOL	L-COURSE OR CURRICUL	UM-DURATION-DES	CRIPTION		
P 01 2 C					
r signal corp	s School, Ft.Ms	ammoth, New J	ersey 32 weeks, Ra	dio Repairman.	
		CIVILIAN	EDUCATION		
15. HIGHEST GRADE 16.	DEGREES OR DIPLOMAS	17. YEAR LEFT SCHOOL	OTHER 1	TRAINING OR SCHOOL	LING
4 yrs.Univ.	R.E.P.	1943	20. COURSE-NAME AND AD	DRESS OF SCHOOL-DATE	21. DURATION
		1740	none		33
IR NAME AND ADDRESS OF L			the state of the land of the land		de Seon sinc
Marquette Uni			A THE PARTY OF THE PARTY OF		data managarakan
19. MAJOR COURSES OF STUD	COURTH	HINE BELLEVIOLE BALL	to one organization in the ter-		les la creatamenten.
A MACK SOUTH					C THREE-GRANT TRAJE
Electrical Eng	gineering.				Contestino va
C0.3	A Transfe	CIVILIAN	OCCUPATIONS		
22. TITLE-NAME AND ADDRES	S OF EMPLOYER-INCLUS	SIVE DATES-DESCRIP	TION		
			2 ye rs co-op col Bachelor of Flec		
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and currents,	integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i	Included differ	rential and currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and C. currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and C. currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and C. currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	rential and C. currents,	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	trical engineers, descriptive stanced radio the	electrical
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	ADDITIONA	bachelor of flectintegral calculus electronics, adv	trical Engineer; s, descriptive a	alectricel ing. and spherical bory, telephone
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	included differ	ADDITIONA	packetor of flect integral calculus electronics, adv	ze name of officer (T.	alectricel ing. and spherical bory, telephone
College work i geometry, theor 1938-1943.	uncluded differ y,D.C. and A.C.	ADDITIONA	bachelor of flectintegral calculus electronics, adv	trical Engineer; s, descriptive a	alectricel ing. and spherical bory, telephone

Separation from the Army meant that he was free to go about a civilian life, get a job, and raise his family, but also put himself "on call." Although his highest military grade was Tec-4, he was still Corporal Leonard Klobukowski and he re-enlisted in the Reserve Army of the United States the day after his separation on January 27, 1946. The Separation Certificate is shown. Side 1 previous page and Side 2 pictured above.

Simon Klobukowski loved small children, especially toddlers and indulged them, but he had no patience with children as they grew older and mischievous. His tolerance for children's questions or noise was short, and he insisted on impeccable appearance. When my sister Mary and I were at Dziadzia's measure of mischievousness, we'd observe how much he enjoyed bouncing a diapered tousled-haired infant grandchild on his knee, but woe to us if he observed uncombed hair on either Mary or me. "Wad's dat," he'd say, "You no comb da hair? You got hay on da head. Looks like explosion in silo!" To me in particular if my hair stood up at the back of my head – it was a cowlick – Dziadzia's favorite jibe was, "You got kukuryku on you head." I always thought it meant "rooster tail", but kukuryku literally means "cock-a-doodledoo", the rooster's sound.

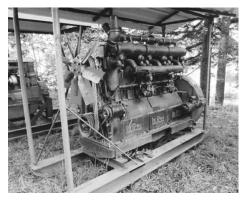
Of my time as a little Cherub when I'd still have been indulged by Dziadzia, and he ran the tavern on 26<sup>th</sup> and Mitchell, I have faint memories of toddling around the saloon. I looked up at the high bar stools, some occupied by lard-assed factory workers, and I'd see Dziadzia's broad grin as he'd wipe the bar with a damp rag, fill glasses with beer from a tap, and pour from bottles filled with brown or clear liquid into small glasses. Sometimes I'd see small bowls set on the bar with roasted peanuts still in the shell or Dziadzia's homemade polskie ogórki (dill pickles). These were the days when not every bar snack came in a bag for a price, but when they were often gratis, courtesy of the barkeep. I can still smell it crawling up into my nostrils, the unappealing aroma of spilled and stale beer, the reek of squashed out, lingering old ash and spent butts from cigarettes and cigars, and the all-pervasive, leftover sweat smells of hard men who'd toiled in the late afternoon sun.

Pictured right, Cherubic me in 1946 at age 1. Dziadzia and Babcia lived in an apartment above the tavern. My memory is of a long staircase near the tavern entrance to the living quarters. I'd call up to Babcia and, on hands and knees, crawl up, carefully negotiating each step one at a time. There was always a strong and pleasant fragrance of Polish cooking — sauerkraut and pigs' knuckles (golonko or galonka) boiled with bay leaves, onion, and caraway seed, gołąbki (stuffed cabbage), kiełbasa (pork sausage flavored with marjoram, garlic, salt and pepper), or the sweet redolence of Babcia's poppy seed coffee cake, rye bread baking, and everyone's favorite paczki (deep-fried yeast doughnuts often filled with thick strawberry or prune fruit jam). Babcia stood at the top of the stairs, wiping her damp hands slowly in a dish towel, a big smile on her



chubby face, and she'd laugh heartily while saying, "<u>Dzień dobry</u>, dzień dobry," the all-purpose greeting in the morning, daytime and early evening, and invariably adding, "<u>Daj mi buzi</u>." ("Give me a kiss.") After feeding me her Polish treats with a glass of full cream milk, Babcia asked if I had to use the <u>nocnik</u> (the potty).

Lacking substantial savings in his bank account to buy a home, our family lived in an apartment at the back of the tavern. Leonard got a job with the Le Roi Company, Le Roi – the pioneer manufacturer of engines for heavy-duty service – at 1706 South 68<sup>th</sup> Street. It had started out as Milwaukee Machine Tool in 1913. Legend has it that the company name was changed to "Le Roi" (French for "The King") after a big order came in from France circa World War I.



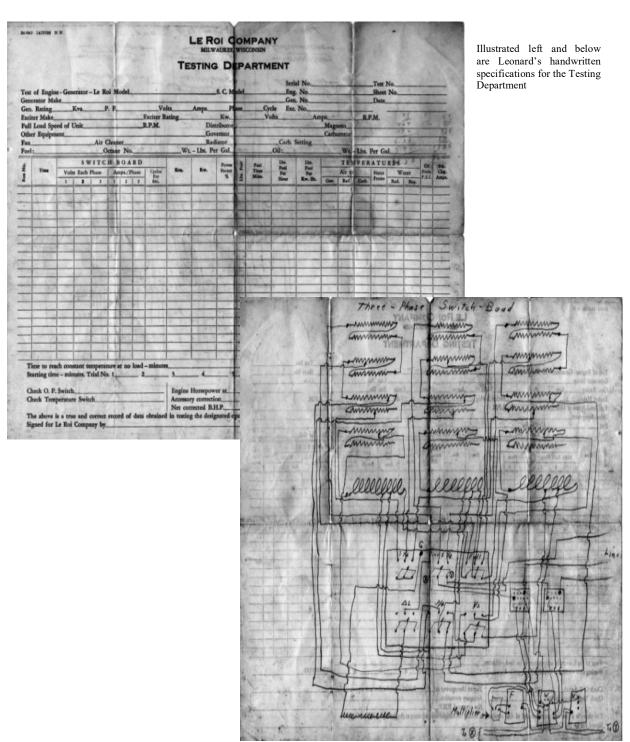
Leonard didn't perform manual labor in a factory. He made use of his Engineering degree and worked as a technical writer preparing clear, concisely written documentation that communicated technical information to a target audience. Pictured left is a stationary engine used to power generators, pumps, and even small saw mills. The engine was bolted to skids and hauled to where it needed to be used. At that point the machine to be powered was connected by a belt to a flywheel or pulley on the back of the engine. This engine was manufactured in Milwaukee and is missing a radiator and perhaps its housing. A very diverse field, a

technical writer was required to be knowledgeable about the purview in which he worked. Leonard wrote instruction and service manuals for engines of all kinds.

Le Roi manufactured 200 horsepower V-8s for trucks and smaller engines for tractors, particularly the Centaur Model KV or "Klear View," pictured right. It was so-named because the driver could see exactly what he was doing all



the time. The seat was positioned over an open space behind the transmission, allowing visibility of the ground being plowed, the row being cultivated, plus a clear view ahead at all times. A four-cylinder Le Roi 22-hp engine with an Eisemann magneto ignition powered the Model KV 22. The tractor was popular in France, particularly for vineyard cultivating since the wheel width was narrow. By the late 1940s, the Centaur Tractor Corporation was so far in debt to its engine supplier Le Roi, the Le Roi Corporation took over Centaur. Le Roi developed the Centaur Tractair 125, a 35-hp wheel tractor with a 105-cfm compressor. The four-cylinder engine also had two cylinders that powered the compressor, all cast in the same bloc. There were two air storage tanks mounted on each side between the wheels. Many of these mobile air compressors were sold to the U. S. and Canadian military. Leonard's job was writing the specifications about how the engines worked and how to maintain and service them.





Illustrated above is a pocket-sized Le Roi Company reference booklet

From that same time, though unconnected to my father starting work with the Le Roi Company, my memory has retained a certain set of images. As an adult I asked my mother how I got the scar on the back of my head. My mother told me that when I was 18 months old I had fallen out of my highchair backwards and had banged my head on an upright radiator. My memory was that of a room with walls painted a very pale green and my sitting on a padded table covered with a white sheet. A man with slanted eyes and wearing a white lab coat fiddled with my head. I saw a door with a round window, like a porthole. My mother looked through that round window, her hands resting against her temples and sort of cupped either side of her eyes to reduce glare. She smiled encouragingly and waved to me. So many years later, astonished my mother remarked, "You can remember all that?" and she confirmed that the image of my earliest-ever memory was accurate. She had to take me to a hospital because I bled quite a bit from tipping back and out of the highchair. A Chinese-American doctor put stitches in my head to close the wound. Mother had to stand outside



the hygienic room where the doctor worked. She registered her concern for me and, although I didn't feel frightened, mother gave me the assurance she thought I needed with her smile and her wave... through that porthole window.

I also have clear childhood memories of blizzards, of winter's biggest snows leading up to and including New Year's Day 1947. Ringing in the New Year away from the family home, according to what my parents told me years later, was curbed due to another one of winter's many snowstorms. I am pictured left on January 2, 1947.

A second blizzard blanketed Milwaukee over two days, January 28-29. One snapshot on the following page shows Dad and me; another is a picture of Dad shoveling as I stand with Mama, my head just making it over the snowbank. Both pictures were taken on January 29. That's my mother's handwriting showing the



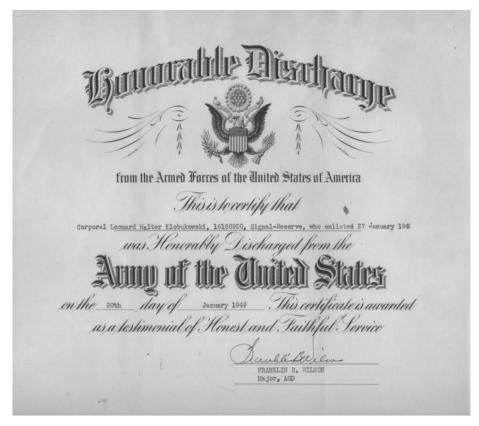
date, exactly two days before my sister Mary was born a plump, healthy, though somewhat bluish baby on February 2.

I have an image of nighttime, of watching my father assist my mother as they walked out the back door of our apartment, my mother stepping high in the deep snow. With each step her leg sunk into the two-foothigh snow, and then she'd wobble struggling to retract it. It had been snowing, carpeting the ground heavily all day, and my Dad and

Uncle Cecil had been trying to dig the car out of the snowdrift. They were not successful and my mother felt pains and couldn't wait. She had to walk to the hospital in all that deep snow. Although uninformed by what I observed as an infant, surely the exercise of stepping high through snow might have been good for her labor. Dad and Mom made it to the hospital in time. Otherwise, who knows, instead of Mary maybe I'd have had a sister named Frosty!

Pictured below, the Honorable Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States of America certificate. Corporal Leonard Walter Klobukowski, 16156920, Signal-Reserve, who enlisted 27 January 1946, was Honorably Discharged from the Army of the United States in January 1949. He was awarded the certificate as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service.

Pictured below and next page is Leonard's Enlisted Record and Report of Separation, Honorable Discharge.



	ARBY SERIAL NO.	3. QRADE	A. ARR ON SERVICE	
KLOBUKOWSKI LEONARD W	16 156 920	TEC-4	SIG C	ATION CENIES
54TH SIG REPAIR CO	27 JAN 46	1	CAMP I	MC COY WIS
	28 1	10V 16	MILW WI	S
IZ. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT	BLUE	BROW	N 5-54	147 2
11 00 SO 25TH ST MILW 4 WIS  LE ADDRESS FORD WHICH EMPLOYERS WILL BE SOUGHT  SEE 9  18. MARTAL STATUS  18. MARTAL STATUS  18. MARTAL STATUS  TES  M. ILIT  AN ANTE OF INSULTION B. B. BATE OF ERLISTBERT 24. DATE OF CAR	NO STUD	ENT. UN	VERSITY X	-02
MILIT	ARY HISTORY	PLACE OF ENTRY	SHTG SERVICE	
- 11 DEC 42 11 JU	N 43 M	ILW WIS	AT TIME OF ENTRY INT	
SELECTIVE B. ROSTTERS ST. LOCAL S. ROSES NO. SR. COURTY AND STATE SERVICE WITH STATE STATE STATE SERVICE WITH STATE SERVICE WITH STATE SERVICE WITH	31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION A			
	M-I RIFLE			
RADIO REPAIRMAN 040				
RYUKYUS				
23. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS				
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL				
NONE	36.	SERVICE OUTSI	DE CONTINENTAL U.S.	AND PETERS
SMALLPOX TYPHOID TETANUS CHOLERA NO	V 45 DATE OF DEPAR		CPTO	3 JUL 45
AUG 44 AUG 45 SEP 44 TYPHUS NO 37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE CONTINENTAL SERVICE PORTION SERVICE 38. HIGHEST GRADE	W 45 7 MAY	46	USA	20 JAN 46
ORTINEWAL SERVICE TOBERON SERVICE TEARS WOOTHS DAYS TEARS NOTHS DAYS TEARS NOTHS DAYS TEARS NOTHS DAYS DAYS DAYS DAYS DAYS DAYS DAYS DAY				
39. PRIOR SERVICE				
NONE				
CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVT. RR1-1 (E	EMOBILIZATI	ON) AR	615-365, 1	BEUCATION (YOURS)
NONE			8	nature 4 fictions Course
Fig. 1 March 201 No. Sciences   Ad   Minterior 097:425   45.50LBI	PAY DATA	A7. TOTAL		
3 1 DAYS TOTA 300 S 100 NONE	surance Notice	230.8		ENBURG MAJ
IMPORTANT TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLE	E DAYS THEREAFTER, INS ETIONS SUBERIVISION, VE Not S1. Date of New French (One month after	CHARLE WILL L	APSE MAKE CHECKS STRATION, WASHINGTO MINUS DUE \$3. II	N 25, D. C. WYENTION OF VETERAL TO
Not. Serv. U.S. Gevt. Nobe Allotment Direct to W.A. 31 JAN 46	28 FEB 1	16 .	6.90 X	
S4. SE. REMARKS (This space for comple-	tion of above items or e	sniry of other i	tems specified in W.	D. Directives)
AMERICAN THEATER	HEATER SERV	ICE MED	AL WITH ON	
ACIATIC PACIFIC T	SERVICE BAR			
ASIATIC-PACIFIC TONE (1) OVERSEAS		DEC 42	TO 10 JUN	43
ASIATIC-PACIFIC TONE (1) OVERSEAS	(ERC) FR 11			
ASIATIC-PACIFIC TO ONE (1) OVERSEAS LAPEL BUTTON ISSU INACTIVE SERVICE ASR SCORE (2 SEP	(ERC) FR 11 45) 50	e, grade and o	rganization - signatus	D IT AC
ASIATIC-PACIFIC TO ONE (1) OVERSEAS LAPEL BUTTON ISSU INACTIVE SERVICE ASR SCORE (2 SEP	(ERC) FR 11 45) 50 und ornica (Type name & Butter	CARL L	BUTLER 2N	ID LT AC

Below: Babcia's pedal piano in the apartment above the saloon in 1949, Mary at left is 2 and I on the right am 4.

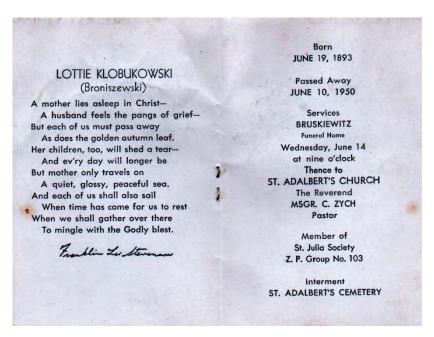




Simon was a tavern keeper until the death of his wife Lottie, age 57, on June 10, 1950, and his subsequent retirement, also in 1950. Lottie's funeral service on Wednesday, June 14, was overseen

by the Bruskiewitz Funeral Home. Requiem Mass was said by The Reverend Monsignor C. Zych, pastor of St. Adalbert's Catholic Church. Interment was the St. Adalbert's Cemetery

Pictured below is the reverse of the holy cards for the funeral of Lottie Klobukowski.



In the aftermath of World War II, Korea had been taken from Japan north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and occupied by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. The Soviets set up a Communist dictatorship intent on reuniting the country by force. Americans occupied Korea south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and tried with limited success to foster democracy. In the summer of 1949, the U.S. had withdrawn its troops, thus giving the North Koreans the chance they'd waited for. On June 25, 1950, the North Korean Army, and suspiciously thought to have been backed by the Soviets, crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and invaded South Korea. The capital of Seoul fell on June 27 to the invaders. President Harry S. Truman ordered American air and naval forces in the area to join in resisting the Communists. Three days later, the North Koreans menaced the port of Pusan. Truman sent U.S. ground troops stationed in Japan into the Korean battle. The U.S.S.R. and the North Koreans seriously misjudged the mood of the United States. Americans saw Eastern Europe and China fall to the Communists in the postwar years. Now it was time to draw the line and the cold war turned to a shooting war.

Having only recently been Honorably Discharged from the Army, my father worried the Army might call him back into service and send him overseas to Korea. I remember sensing the pressure he was under as he talked to our mother about being called up again. He worried about finances, how to keep his family fed, clothed, housed and comfortable in the event he should have to go to Korea.

Dad made inquiries and was told his services were needed, but be wouldn't be called. My father had three dependents: his wife, his son and his daughter. We were reason enough for the Army to tell Corporal Klobukowski he should remain a civilian and take good care of his family.

Sometime after Babcia's passing, our family moved into an upper flat, above Dziadzia and Uncle Cecil, at 1301 South 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Greenfield Avenue. Mary and I are pictured right in February 1951. Renting the apartment above the saloon was a married couple getting on in age and who we only ever knew as "the Jedynaks". I've no idea what first names they had. Although unrelated to the Klobukowskis, I remember our family



making regular visits to Mr. and Mrs. Jedynak. Never using their given names and as if in imitation of us kids, to show respect my parents only ever addressed them Mr. and Mrs. Unlike Dziadzia's and Babcia's being upstairs, the aroma of warm food simmering was never there when we climbed the enclosed rear staircase. All I recall was the smell of mothballs on Mr. Jedynak's cardigan and the overall odor of old people's ointments. Entering the apartment, we walked in gingerly so as not to bump a table or tiered stand. Mrs. Jedynak loved her knickknacks and displayed her Wedgewood and dime store trinkets like museum exhibits. Even before anyone sat down, Mr. Jedynak was offering Dad a beer, mixing a Tom Collins for Mom, and pouring half-filled glasses of sweet soda pop for us. We were still at the stage of holding drinking glasses with both hands and frequently left soft drink or milk moustaches on upper lips. Mrs. Jedynak sat poised in her kitchen chair, toes touching the floor, ready to launch her Polish body to the kitchen sink for a dishrag should artless children happen to dribble or spill. The drinking glasses had been collectable jelly or jam glasses sealed with vacuum pop-top lids, the glass decorated with colorful pictures of Disney's brand name characters. They were designed to appeal to children, no doubt so children would pester Mom to buy them when she shopped. Holiday visits always held the promise of small bowls filled with boiled hard candies and filled chocolates. Around the Jedynaks, as with any and all of Dad's aunts and uncles, we children were expected to be on our best behavior. We sat uncomfortably silent, bored, and salivating as we eyed the candy awaiting adult permission to pounce on the bowls like kittens onto saucers of milk.

Visiting the Wruks, Dad's Uncle Stanley and Aunt Marie (Dad's Mother's sister), we were obliged to address them as Aunt Marie and Uncle Stan. After Dad pulled to the curb to park, he would turn facing the back seat and instruct, "Remember. When you're inside, you sit quietly and don't touch anything." Being obediently quiet always turned into something of a challenge. Aunt Marie was fastidious about retaining the newly-bought appearance of her furniture. She had the couch, the easy chairs, and the upholstered dining chairs, everything that could be sat upon, protected with heavy plastic covers. In summer, wearing shorts, bare thighs stuck to the plastic. Any movement resulted in stuttered squawks, like rubbing a flat hand on the surface of a balloon. Come winter, the cold of those plastic covers got through snow pants and, like riding a toboggan, we'd slide off without even trying. We never touched any of Aunt Marie's carefully positioned, daintily displayed porcelain and china birds, animals, and people figurines. No doubt she'd spent inordinate time cleaning and polishing every item "because company was coming." That was the great catch-all reason for spick-and-span cleaning... "because company was coming." Same as visiting the Jedynaks, especially during holiday season, my sister and I would surreptitiously stare in the general direction of a bowl of candy. Aunt Marie would eventually get around to asking the rhetorical question if we'd like something for the sweet tooth. Sitting on our hands, we quelled our eagerness and answered ever so politely, "Yes, please." Aunt Marie held the bowl in front of our noses. Eyes just about crossed, we were allowed to choose one, just one piece of candy. The bowl was returned from whence it had been set and stayed there until our visit finished.

December 25, 1951 was a very special Christmas for our family. My mother gave birth to her third child, a son, our brother. In the hospital, Mom and Dad said they were unsure what to name the child. He was born a blue baby. Most babies are born looking purpled-blue. It's called 'cyanosis' and at the moment of birth is a natural feature due to the baby coming from an environment of sharing oxygen with their mother. After the doctor delivers a smack on the bottom, the baby takes a few breaths and the head and chest turn pink, the lips changing to ruby red. Within minutes arms and legs will become completely pink, then the hands and feet. The blue of Mom's newest arrival was because the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck. If the bluish complexion was from a lack of oxygen due to a congenital heart condition, I don't know. Their baby seemed so tiny, so frail. "Maybe we should call him Timmy," my Dad suggested. "Are you kidding," my Mother said, "He'll get teased all the time as he grows up. We're not naming him for the kid with Lassie!" Being Christmas Day, although seemingly appropriate, both came to the same decision that they couldn't name him Jesus (pron. in Spanish Hey-Zeus.) "What about... no... Christopher is just too long a handle to go with Klobukowski," my Dad mulled. So they looked at

the calendar hanging in the maternity room. The day after Christmas, December 26, was the feast of St. Stephen. "Now that's a good, strong, boy's name," Dad said and our new baby brother was named Stephen Joseph. The only Joseph in our family is one of Granny's brothers, but I'm sure the name was given for Stephen's Christmas Day arrival because Joseph was the carpenter father of Jesus.



Mary and I welcome our new baby brother Stephen. Three Kings Day, January 6, 1952

As a means to supplementing the breadwinner's income, it was accepted practice to rent a spare room to a boarder. The so-named spare room in the upper flat was located off the kitchen, its doorway adjacent the back porch balcony. An ad was placed in the newspaper and the room was rented to a woman. I don't remember the boarder's name, can't remember what she looked like, and barely recall exchanging words other than "Hello" and "Good-bye." Shaking her finger at us with an emphasis she was sure we'd understand, Mother's instructions strictly forbade us children from entering the woman's room without an invitation nor were we to pester her with questions. We always knew when the boarder was in because she smoked a lot and no one else in our family smoked. Mom disapproved of the stink of the smoke. Another complaint was about the time of night the boarder came home and waking to hear her high heels clomp, clomp, clomp up the stairs and across the dining room's varnished wood floor.



Formal Portrait: the Klobukowski Family on June 12, 1952



Left: Mary and me with our baby brother Stephen, August 1952. Our clothing and the pose makes us look like members of Hal Roach's Our Gang (The Little Rascals).

The upper flat had no refrigerator. We used an ice box. It was cooled by large blocks of ice delivered weekly by the iceman. I remember his arrival with the two note song call, "Ice... man," and up the stairs he'd carry an ice block clamped by large cast iron/steel tongs which had two pointed tips stabbed into the block and holding it between the two arms of the black metal tongs. The ice man lifted the fifty pound block of ice onto a leather pad that was strapped to his shoulder. The man delivering ice wasn't, as you might expect, a burly individual. I remember him as rather scrawny. Seeing him lift such weight effortlessly and carrying the ice block up the stairs without gasping, then deftly dropping it into the ice chest was nothing short of admirable. I was impressed. It was our job as kids to empty the drip pan when the ice melted. On warm days Mary and I might follow the ice wagon, along with other

neighborhood kids, and beg for small pieces of ice that broke off from the blocks when he'd chip at them to deliver half or quarter sizes. We'd cool ourselves, rubbing small ice chunks on faces and necks, and suck on them, sort of like an unflavored Popsicle.



October 12, 1952: Mary, Stephen, Mom, and me at the dinner table in the upstairs quarters of the duplex at 1301 South 20th Street.

Summer, especially, was a time for traders' songs and calls. Fresh fish or fresh vegetable wagons, more often than not horse drawn, came down the street. The traders alerted us to their presence by honking a squeeze-bulb horn or hand-ringing a bell and they'd call out or sing their pitch. "We gotta frrre-eee-sh fish!" "Getchure carrots 'ere." "Nice-a tomatoes today!"

Dealers in no-longer-needed goods regularly plied their trade in the alley, a laneway between 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Streets. I remember the ragman and the junkman sitting on the bench of their squeaky old-fashioned, creaking-wheeled buckboards pulled by tired old nags walking slowly down the alley. The work horses knew the route. The driver's reins were often slack. These tradesmen, yesteryear's re-cyclers, solicited business calling out the obvious, be it "Rags!" or "Junkman!" Neither ever looked clean, seldom were clean-shaven, and they dressed in Goodwill's worn, faded suits. Hats were bent-out-of-shape and sweat-stained. Clinging loosely between sun-dried lips was an unfiltered Lucky Strike, Chesterfield, or well-chomped cigar stub. Smoke puffed infrequently from the tobacco. Most stubs were spent. Mother didn't trust these unkempt men and made us stay back while she collected a few pennies for a bag of sewing scraps. The ragman's open wagon, piled high with old clothes, yellowed sheets, and worn, scrapped curtains and drapes smelled musty. Flies hovered above the wagon's piles. The pesky insects buzzed the horses' heads and dive-bombed

their ears. Being kids, we wanted to pet the horsey. If we inched our way toward the horse, invariably the wagon driver yelled out, "Geddaway from da horze. Maybe he's bite you." Mother shook her finger in our faces and told us off for not staying back. Oblivious to us, the horse jangled its head in its halter and huffed air from its nose to dislodge annoying flies. The junkman collected mostly metal stuff, copper innards from electrical goods and small motors, and bigger things like discarded whole motors, wringer washers, and stoves.

The horses always left presents in the alley. They dropped their brown "apples". I thought they smelled pretty good because they made the alley smell like a barn. Mom herded us away from the left-behind piles. She didn't want to clean our shoes if we'd carelessly squished feet into a fresh pile. When Dad came home from work, Mom said the ragman or the junkman had been and, if Uncle Cecil hadn't already beat my Dad to the alley's cornucopia, Dad went out with a bucket and shovel and scooped the gift from the horse for the garden tomatoes.

You'd think the Ice Cream truck, its familiar "Greensleeves" melody played on musical chimes or jingling out another tune on bells, would drive down the street announcing its summertime treats. Occasionally it did. But the alley had less traffic and it was a safer thoroughfare for kids to gather around the truck. The chances of being struck by a moving vehicle were measurably lessened. Automobiles, few and far between, always moved slowly.

An unlikely summer playground was the alley. Either side of the alley were tenants' garages in all



shapes, sizes and designs, open or gated backyard entrances, as well as garbage cans, ash cans and concrete or wooden ash boxes. Our ash box had hollyhocks thriving around it. They were our mother's favorite flower and the hollyhocks came to be known as "Mom's flowers." We were encouraged to play in the alley instead of on the backyard lawn, pictured left in 1951 on our tricycles, because the noise we made with neighborhood children would have been more than our Dziadzia could bear. Stepping out of the kitchen onto the back porch balcony, our Mom could always check on where we were and what we did. From her vantage point she could see over the whole neighborhood, into the alley and into everyone's yard. Two doors down, Russell Champagne was a buddy of mine. There were the next door Nagys, new to the neighborhood after the Russians invaded Hungary in 1956. They were referred to as DPs, displaced persons, a term carried over from World War II for the refugees who fled war-torn Europe. Mr. Nagy would organize neighborhood kids with his baskets to gather dandelion flowers so he could make wine.

The alley was a pretty safe place for chasing and playing tag, games of running and hiding, games with balls and sticks, and shooting marbles with our boulders, cat's eyes, and peeries (small clear glass marbles). We played "guns", an active variation on cowboys and Indians or war. A toy gun might be used, but most of the time we just used sticks. Suppose you no longer liked a neighbor kid for a friend, or grievances over the made up "rules" of a game escalated, you got angry, picked up a dried horse apple and threw it. If you got really sore, you picked a horse poo about the size of a baseball and made sure it was still damp inside. That one left a stain which then had to be explained to Mom. Getting "killed" didn't always mean falling down. The concrete alley's floor wasn't conducive to dying in comfort. Skinning an elbow, a knee, Mom applied mercurochrome that stung more than the abrasion. We'd look for beer cans, place them on the concrete and stomp them, making sure the cans creased in the arches of our shoe. Now, a couple of inches taller than before, we played tag or made up something on the spot which sprang from our imaginations. With every step we made a tinny clank, clank, clank, clank.

Set weekdays turned into hives of activity in the alley. Stinky trucks with smelly men came down the alley weekly to collect garbage from the cans, shovel coal ashes, and hand-pick broken throwouts from the ash boxes. "Good stuff" was thrown out by neighbors. I remember walking the alleyway with my Dad, Uncle Paul and my cousin Paul. We'd poke our heads into ash boxes hoping we'd find table and floor lamps, framed paintings and pictures, knickknacks, toys and small

appliances which looked close to new and repairable. We often laughed at some of the junk people tossed out, Uncle Paul's laugh more often from his throat making a giggle that gurgled. Sometimes we struck it lucky and picked out a treasure.

Other summer days Mary, our brother Steve and I cooled ourselves in our backyard swimming pools. Pictured right, June 7, 1954, Mom's metal washtubs turned into our individual pools. The depth of water in the tubs certainly necessitated Mary's wearing a bathing cap!



Sometime in fall, 1953, Mary and I polish Dad's 1952 Plymouth in the alley.



A coal furnace heated the duplex. Coal was delivered to the house via the back alley, although the dump truck couldn't reverse past the garages and into our back yard to the bin in the duplex's basement. Deliverymen loaded wheelbarrows and pushed the filled barrows through our back yard to a window over the bin. Much noise and dust accompanied the lumps of black coal tumbling into the concrete-walled bin via an open-air slide similar to one used by a cement truck.

When the temperature dropped, Dad walked down three flights of stairs to stoke the metal beast. He opened the usually too-hot-to-the-touch door grate with the lip of the shovel before scooping coal out of the coal bin, one shovelful at a time, and dumping it into the mouth of the furnace. Like an oven, it warmed the basement and we kids played there in the winter. Sometimes we cranked Dziadzia's wind-up Victrola and played his enormous vinyl platters of Paderewski and Chopin. The furnace, more or less situated in its private room alongside the coal bin, was a monster straight out of a child's nightmare. Daring to bravely peek around a wall, the furnace grate grinned back uncannily through black clenched teeth. Glowing coals, sometimes with a lick of blue flame briefly spiraling upward, conjured an image of a dragon's jaws, or the frightening hellfire and brimstone St. Vincent's

priests promised we'd burn in for all eternity if we disobeyed our parents or didn't come to church on Sundays. As the furnace spent its embers, its riveted walls gave out with the ache and sudden creak and jolt of an old locomotive or, as we imagined, the gnashing of iron teeth grindingly ready to grab a child's head and gnaw it off for a snack. Scary stuff, indeed, especially when Mom sent us down to the dark basement alone to fetch a jar of preserved tomatoes to cook dinner.

The cellar was four or five rooms including the furnace and coal bin, laundry, playroom, workshop, and general storage. There was something of a pantry under the stairs. Ball and Mason jars filled and vacuum-sealed with home-canned preserves of wild mushrooms, home-grown tomatoes, sauerkraut, and dill pickles were stored. Once in a great while, often without telling anyone, Dziadzia bought a live bird or animal. Furthest area in back of the basement was boxed off keeping penned whatever livestock Dziadzia brought from Uncle Sig's butcher shop. I can remember creeping down the darkened staircase late one afternoon to stack some of Mom's sewing snip-offs for the ragman's collection. Even before reaching the burlap sack I was startled by hissing, angry honks, and the snap-crack sound similarly produced by shaking out a wet sheet before hanging it on a line to dry. Unable to see the noisy source, I screamed. Dziadzia later showed me an agitated, surly goose he intended butchering for Christmas dinner. Sometimes I think Dziadzia stashed a live animal in the basement secretly just to terrify us kids, just so he could enjoy hearing our reaction after meeting the squawking, squealing unexpected.

Upstairs and downstairs had their own radiators, but I remember there being a metal grid in the floor about the size of an 8x10 sheet of paper aside each radiator. It was a vent through which sound and smell was easily carried. Living downstairs, it wasn't uncommon for Dziadzia to bang a broomstick on the ceiling if we kids walked too heavy-footed for his liking. Mom constantly reminded us not to run around. "Take off your shoes and walk on your tiptoes. Try not to upset Dziadzia," our Mom would say. I was always afraid of Dziadzia. He was grumpy. I think Mom, too, was afraid of his next inevitable move if we hadn't complied quick smart. Sounding like an old bull, he'd bellow for quiet from the bottom of the back door staircase, his voice carrying up as if booming through a megaphone. Then later, sometimes a day or more



later and unrelated to anything else, he'd remind Mom of her kids making noise and tell her off for raising such naughty kids. We "naughty kids", pictured left, are wearing cowboy and cowgirl outfits in May 1953. Pictured right, posed for the Kodak Brownie are "naughty kids" Mary, Stephen and me with Dziadzia on his front lawn Memorial Day, May 30, 1954. Dziadzia was passionate American citizen. He'd have chastened Stephen for letting his flag touch the ground. Note how neat and well-combed our hair is.



Dziadzia would have ensured no cowlick stood, no hair was out of place, possibly even telling Mom to pat down an errant hair with a bit of saliva on her fingers. Yes, mothers used to do that back then to smooth hair and to clean children's cheeks. Almost every day through that heating grate, I associated Dziadzia with the smell of coal tar solution, a cream salve called Mazon which he bought in large jars with blue labels and applied liberally to his psoriasis-affected legs. The upstairs wallpaper must have become permeated with the smell of Mazon.

Meanwhile, another olfactory association was with Dziadzia's intrinsic ability to cook. Dziadzia prepared delicious food from scratch and nothing ever went to waste. The carcass of a roasted chicken and vegetable peelings, for example, was simmered to make stock and turned into his aromatic golden broth. Pleasant redolence rising up the back staircase or through the grates, we always knew what Dziadzia and Uncle Cecil ate for supper. Years later I remember asking my mother from whom in my family I might have inherited my cooking ability. Without hesitation Mom said, "Probably Dziadzia. He always cooked good without a recipe."

In September 1954, the Westinghouse Air Brake Company (WABCO) purchased the Le Roi Company and production was moved to Clinton, Iowa, to the Climax Engine Co. where the engines were called Le Roi Roiline. Although requested to continue with the takeover enterprise, Leonard considered relocation to Iowa too far away. My father preferred to stay close to family in Milwaukee and so his employment with Le Roi ceased.

As the titular breadwinner my father applied for a new job as a technical writer with Vilter, a manufacturer of industrial refrigeration and cooling equipment, and was hired. The company began in 1897 for general jobbing and the manufacture of slide-valve steam engines. Vilter furnished the equipment for one of the first air conditioning instalments in Milwaukee and even installed the first unit cooler in a small Milwaukee butcher shop. It became an industry leader in providing cooling equipment to ice plants, breweries, and packing houses. Some of the original equipment built during that early era is still in operation today – a testament to Vilter's quality workmanship and engineering. During World War II, the Federal Government contracted with Vilter to produce 105-millimeter howitzers for the American Army.

Leonard's job was writing instruction manuals for operating and servicing Vilter refrigeration and cooling equipment. I recall him telling me that he sometimes took phone calls from overseas. Thick accents and mispronunciation of English words made telephone communication difficult if not interesting. People using Vilter cooling equipment occasionally needed clarification of a specific instruction, especially after Leonard's writing in English had been translated into Japanese, French or German. Literal translation, though appearing correct, wasn't always accurate in meaning.

Dad's working at Vilter has a direct connection to my amateur filmmaking; it's worth telling the following anecdote. The son of one of Dad's colleague's visited the company in 1962. The man went from desk to desk in the large office introducing his son to each employee. To my Dad he said, "Leonard, I'd like you to meet my son, Jeffrey, the Hollywood actor." He was Jeffrey Hunter who'd just starred as Jesus in a religious epic titled *King of Kings* (1961). An aside is that producers were concerned they risked offending the public by showing Jesus with hair in his armpits and so they ordered Jeffrey Hunter's armpits shaved. My father said he looked up at the handsome long-haired, tow-headed, blue-eyed young man, took his hand in a friendly shake

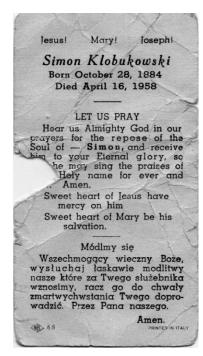
and said, "Oh, yeah, my son's in the movies too," and left it at that.

Dziadzia Simon Klobukowski died April 16, 1958, age 73, and is buried beside his beloved Lottie in St. Adalbert's Cemetery, Milwaukee.



The tombstone for grandparents Klobukowski is pictured right.

Pictured left is the reverse of the holy card for Simon Klobukowski



My mother Dolores was American born on May 26, 1917, to Walter and Antonia (nee Szymanski) Pociecha. Her birth was fortunate for her father as it prevented him from entering military service to fight the Kaiser in World War I. Age 34, Walter had to register with his Local Board Division 4 on September 12, 1918. Home address was recorded as 955 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Milwaukee. Gray eyes. Brown hair. Employment was written as assembler at the Beaver Motor Company on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Oklahoma. Founded by Samuel W. Watkins, the company was also known as The Beaver Manufacturing Company and it had produced engines for the (now rare) Earl Roadster which morphed into the Petrel, both manufactured in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The Beaver Motor Company made gasoline engines for several branded automobiles and for boats manufactured interstate. Advertising asked, "If you are getting new motors to put into your customer's cars, or if you are thinking of putting up a car of your own, write us now. We have the most complete line of motors in the country, and can

save you money." Advertising invariably requested potential manufacturers to, "Write us about it." One of its catchphrases was "Beaver: A Brute of an Engine." Another was "A Beaver at Work is an interesting sight. A Beaver Motor at Work is an inspiration."

Walter's birth date is listed as June 2, 1884. He was the second child of three boys, Raymond and Clarence or Clemence, and two girls, Estelle (Stella) and Ecelia (Sally). His parents were named as Franc (Frank) Pociecha and Barbara Michna. Frank was born in Poland, then known as Prussia, in 1864. Barbara was also Polish/Prussian born in 1862. They immigrated to Wisconsin in 1878 and married on August 21, 1883 in Milwaukee. Franc (Frank) was an insurance man and businessman working for the Fons Realty Company.



Great-great Grandparents on my Mother's Father's side of the family: Franc Pociecha and Barbara (Michna) Pociecha

Frank Pociecha's parents were Jan Pociecha and Maria Jagodzinska. Barbara Michna's parents were Matias Michna and Maria Grucza or Grusczka, both apparently from Prussia (Poland).

Antonia was born on June 15, 1885 in the Prussian partition of Poland annexed and ruled by Germany, to Franciszek (Frank) Szymanski and Mary (Waszak (sic)?) Szymanski. Ah, but the surname of Waszak does not exist in Polish or in Poland. Orally the surname had been passed down as family history, but incorrectly, to possibly three generations! There never was a Mary Waszak! The correct spelling, if she existed, would be "Wasiak". Filing a request with the Milwaukee Register of Deeds for a birth certificate for the youngest Szymanski child Frank Jr., born February 23, 1898, the mother's name previous to marriage was listed as Mary Szczeszak, in Polish the more accurate spelling would be "Szczerska". A variation in surname spelling is recorded as Szczesiak on the Registration of Birth for John Szymanski, born January 18, 1894.

Franciszek Szymanski's parents were Joseph Szymanski and Mary Lewandowski. The surname Szymanski is derived from Szymon, the name Simon. The surname Lewandowski derives from the town of Lewandów which comes from 'lavender tree'. Franciszek was born in 1860 in the village Blawoty (again on the certificate a misspelling as the only place in Poland of a name similar to it is a small village of 150 inhabitants called Bławaty, near Posen (Poznań), Poland, then the Grand Duchy of Posen. The Province of Posen (German: Provinz Posen, Polish: Prowincja Poznańska) was a province of Prussia from 1848 and as such part of the unified German Empire following the Franco-Prussian War from 1871 until 1918. In 1871 Otto von Bismarck formed the German Empire with himself as Chancellor, while retaining control of Prussia. Bureaucracies attempted to Germanize the state's national minorities, including the Poles in the East. Bismarck pursued a policy of hostility in particular toward the Poles, which was an expedient rooted in Prussian history. He wouldn't have a Pole among his peasants working the Bismarckian estates, and he disliked intensely the educated Polish Bourgeoise and revolutionaries. Bismarck's antagonism is revealed in an 1861 letter to his sister: "Hammer the Poles until they despair of living." He also wrote, "...if we want to exist we have no choice but to wipe them out." Bismarck tried to implement far-reaching anti-socialist laws in early 1890 which could have resulted in a bloody campaign. The new emperor, Wilhelm II, deplored most of Bismarck's initiatives and Bismarck resigned at Wilhelm II's insistence on March 18, 1890, aged 75. Franciszek Szymanski migrated with his family to the United States about 1890. We don't know his reasons for emigrating, but what Bismarck thought and what he implemented during his rule as the "Iron Chancellor", especially against the Poles, may have played some part. Commonly listed as a laborer on documents, Franciszek worked as a plasterer and a factory worker.

Stanislawa (Stella, aka Stasia) was their first-born on April 16, 1883. She must have left home by the time the 1905 Wisconsin State Census was recorded. According to the ages of children listed, 18 year old Antonia (aka Tony, Tonny, and Toni) was their second-born child. The other four children include Waweznic (aka Loarance, 16, both his names misspelled), Joseph (aka Joe, 14), John, 9, and twin boys, of whom only one survived at birth, Frank Jr., 7.

Wawrzyniec, an old Polish name for Lawrence (pron. Vav-zhyn-yetz). For non-speakers of Polish, that is a very hard name to pronounce, especially people with no knowledge of languages other than English. His name therefore ended up as a corruption on a document. It happened often because American immigration officials were unable to get their tongues around foreign handles. They were later known as gangplank names. Waweznic is Antonia's brother whom my mother knew as Uncle Wigo (pron. Vee-go).

Age 41 or 43, Antonia's mother died in childbirth, on or about 10:00 p.m. February 23, 1898, when one twin, Frank Jr., survived and the other was stillborn. Nothing is known about the stillborn twin as no official birth is recorded for a stillborn.

Frank remarried on October 7, 1907 to Magdalena Soczynska and their home was at 1054 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Milwaukee. Her parents were Wawrzyniec Nowak and Mary Spicla (sic) or Spiola (sic), again misunderstanding and misspelling as in Polish it's correctly Szpinda. The union produced one child, a daughter, Josephine. The Registration of Birth is amended, "The corrections entered in red ink on the adjoining birth record were made this 1<sup>st</sup> day of Mar. 1966 by me and are based on

Supplemental Report. (signed by) Clyde Haberman, Register of Deeds." In other words, there are crossings out and revisions. Full Name of Child has, crossed out, Josefa Szymanski, and revised to read Josephine Mary Szymanski. Her Date of Birth is recorded as March 17, 1909. Mother's Full Maiden Name has, crossed out, Maggie, revised is to Magdalene Nowak.

In 2016 the Wisconsin Historical Society on Old World Third Street, Milwaukee, discovered an Application for Marriage License, No. 22173, dated August 17, 1906 for Wladyslaw Pociecha, Residence 1001 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and Tonie Szymanski, Residence 1179 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Wisconsin Marriages records that Antonia (Tonie) married Walter (Wladyslaw) in Milwaukee on September 3, 1906. He is named as Władysław Pociecha and she as Tonie Szymanska. Father and mother are named as Frank Pociecha and Barbara Michna. Spouse's parents are named

Frank Szymanska and Mary Szczerska. (Another clerical error as  $\underline{a}$  ending a Polish surname indicates female. The male surname ends with  $\underline{i}$ .)

Pictured left, wedding day of Antonia and Walter Pociecha, September 3, 1906. Flower girl is Jean Weinheimer, daughter of Walter's sister Sally and her husband.

Antonia enjoyed only a few years of formal schooling, for in those days, a woman's place was in the home, to be a good wife to her husband, and a dependable mother to her children. She was an excellent seamstress and cook who didn't use or need a cookbook. She kept her family, especially the children, well-dressed and well-fed and always on a small, tight budget. Hers was a hard life, all that laundry with so many children, as well as other daily chores without our time-saving conveniences.





On the reverse of the original photograph, my mother had written "Raymond Pociecha marriage to Katie. My grandparents Frank Pociecha and Barbara Michna." Family portrait taken on the day (not identified) and Katie's maiden name also not identified. Seated are Franc (Frank) Pociecha and Barbara (Michna) Pociecha. The man standing wearing a Roman collar is Frank's brother John. He was a priest and, I assume, performed the rite of marriage. Unsure about the identity of the others standing; likely the young man beside Fr. John should be Raymond and the other would be his best man. Standing beside the maid of honor, Katie is in the wedding dress.

In the Walter Pociecha family, Lucille (Lucy) was their first-born on December 2, 1908. The second child, a son, Theodore, was born in 1909 and died of brain fever <sup>10</sup> at 11 months. Antonia, distressed with the loss of her baby, wanted to adopt a baby, but Walter said, "No. I'll make you lots of babies." His promise kept, along came Eleanor February 21, 1911, Adeline September 9, 1912, Evelyn September 30, 1914, Dolores May 26, 1917, Walter Jr. April 6, 1919, and Lorraine October 11, 1921. Antonia had more children than she ever bargained for.

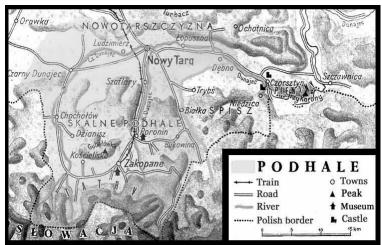


The Pociecha Family circa 1930

l to r seated front row: Lorraine, Antonia (mother), Walter (father), Walter Jr. l to r standing back row: Dolores (my mother), Evelyn, Adeline, Eleanor, Lucy

The surname Pociecha has several meanings: (a) comfort, consolation (anything that provides a little luxury, or makes one feel happier, or better able to bear misfortune), (b) joy, as in a source of happiness or cheerfulness, (c) (endearing) child. It is from the Proto-Slavic potěxa. It has been suggested that the Pociechas come from the Podhale in Poland's southernmost

region, sometimes referred to as the "Highlands." Podhale, map pictured right, literally means "under the mountain meadows" as it is located in the foothills of the Tatra range of the Carpathian Mountains. It is Poland's southernmost region. The people in this region are particularly famous for their oscypek, a cheese made from a mix of cow's and sheep's milk.

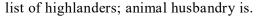


1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Usually called cerebrospinal meningitis, it is an inflammation of the membranes on the surface of the brain, involving high fever, severe headache, and stiff muscles in neck or back. It can be caused by bacteria, viral, or fungal infections.









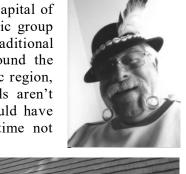
In 2019 I went with Marcin Nowakowski's family to the Podhale. Pictured left is the Tatra range of the Carpathian Mountains. A Polish beer bears the name of the Tatra Mountains, label

shown right of the mountains picture. Podhale was a new family connection, I learned, on my mother's side of the family. At least one out of every 10 people in the Podhale has the surname Pociecha. Our Pociecha ancestors, therefore, highlanders, possibly people who herded sheep, pictured left. This is the only region in Poland where sheep meat is readily available. Agriculture isn't on the "to do"



Zakopane is often referred to as "the winter capital of Poland.' It is the cultural centre of the ethnic group known as the Gorals (Highlanders). Traditional kłobuk/kapelusz (hat) is pictured left. Around the crown are seashells, originally from the Baltic region, and they were items of trade since seashells aren't

found in the Tatra Mountains. How interesting, then, that I should have bought such a hat in 2017 in Krakow, pictured right, at the time not knowing it held significance to more of my family history.



In Zakopane in the middle of Krupówki Street was Restaurant Owczarnia, meaning Sheepfold, a secure walled enclosure in which sheep are penned when not pastured in the shepherd's care. A sheepfold can also be a permanent barn-like structure like the restaurant, pictured right. Traditional food served here was, to my amazement, linked to the Pociechas. Along with the varieties of sheep meats included on the unique menu were many salads. **Immediately** 

catching my attention was the



dressed grated carrot and raisin salad with a coleslaw-like dressing, pictured left. My mother often made this salad, so the conclusion I drew, whether on or off the mark, was that the carrot salad must have been a Pociecha thing. This was the only place in Poland I'd ever seen it.

Another unique food made and

served in the Podhale, and dating back to the 14th century, is wędzony ser owczy (smoked sheep cheese), some which is served smażony (fried), pictured right. The cheese is soft, chewy and delicious.



My mother's childhood provides some interesting oral stories. One has to do with her Uncle Wigo, correct Polish name Wawrzyniec (Lawrence), a long-lost relative or a skeleton-in-the-closet, who only managed to appear out of the blue once a year. No one seemed to know to where Wigo would disappear, what he did for a living, or even where he lived. When Uncle Wigo made his unexpected visit, he would be immaculately attired in the finest and most fashionable clothes of the day. His suits looked expensive, and were. Uncle Wigo always had a billfold filled with money and he made a present of money for my mother and her sisters and brother. As unexpected as was Wigo's arrival, so would be his departure until his next mysterious appearance. Not to implicate, but these were the days of Prohibition, yet no one, ever, was able to provide the answer to the well-dressed, well-groomed, financially-plush Uncle Wigo Szymanski.

Another story my mother told has to do with a common childhood illness. All of my mother's sisters and brother came into contact with the contagious time of the mumps. Bed-ridden, but not too ill to still be active, the children romped and played. My mother never contracted mumps. The same happened with my father. He, too, had been exposed to the mumps, but never succumbed to its cheek swelling discomfort. Perhaps some natural immunity was passed genetically because, although I have been in contact with mumps in its contagious stage throughout childhood, in my teenage years, and as an adult, I have never knuckled under the pain and temporary disfigurement of the puffy cheeks.

The third story is fascinating because of its relevance to my own interests, hobby, and career. The Pociecha children were given either a penny or a nickel and sent to the movies on dish night. Patrons were given a piece of a dinner set with the purchase of each ticket. One week might be dinner plates, while another would be cups, followed a week later by saucers. With so large a family, one could never have enough unchipped crockery, especially when guests came for dinner. One movie my mother clearly remembered seeing was a 1926 silent picture starring Mary Pickford called *Sparrows*. Taking place in a swamp full of quicksand, it was a full blown melodrama about an intrepid girl who struggles to protect a band of younger orphans from their wicked captor. They escape, and my mother remembered seeing Mary and the children crawling across a log which slips inch by inch under their weight closer to alligator-infested waters. How they and everyone in the audience screamed and clung to one another as hungry alligators leapt out of the black swamp water and snapped their jaws at them.

Pictured right, circa 1919 or 1920, bottom to top, Dolores, Adeline, Eleanor, and Evelyn.

Eldest sister Lucy was like a second mother. worked at Holeproof Hosiery from the age of 16. Good at dancing, she won a Charleston contest at the Pearl Theater. Artistic and deft using giant wooden needles in her hands, Lucy could knit a sweater in one night. During her early years of marriage to Anton (Tony) Kroll, her family occupied a house in the woods on 84th Street, then well on the outskirts of town. It was still in a stage of construction and had a hand-operated outdoor pump and a two-hole outhouse. Neighbors supplied building wood, but Tony never paid for it. Eventually the unreciprocated neighbors grew impatient and took possession of the house. Lucy raised rabbits, used the flesh for food, tanned the hides, and made winter clothing for daughter Doris Jean. Before my mother and father married, as members of the Sienkiewicz Club, they'd hike the long way to Lucy's woodland home. Lucy died suddenly and unexpectedly from peritonitis February 12, 1940.



Eleanor's strongest memory of childhood was visiting her Dziadzia (Frank) and Boosha <sup>11</sup> (Barbara) in their house on Pearl Street to go grocery shopping for them. Boosha always gave her a slice of fresh warm bread with home-rendered lard from leaf lard sprinkled with salt and pepper. It was delicious, especially if it was the <u>kromka</u>, the loaf's end piece. Dziadzia Frank played the piano and tried to teach Eleanor to play, but came to the conclusion she was no genius.

Adeline remembered trips to St. Adalbert's Cemetery on Memorial Day. The sisters rode the streetcar to the end of the line and then walked about half a mile to the cemetery. They took a picnic lunch, trimmed the graves, and waved to engineers on passing trains before counting all the cars. Before the walk to the streetcar stop for the return trip, they all picked dandelions, just the blossoms, no stems, for their father Walter's homemade dandelion wine. When willing boys picked dandelion blossoms, Walter generously paid 5¢ for each bagful.

My mother said she lived all of her childhood at 1517 South 20<sup>th</sup> Street. Dolores, her sisters and neighborhood children played summertime games like night tag and hide-and-go-seek while neighbors, sitting on porches, looked on casually. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Alexander Mitchell School, she learned to sew and never quit. 12 years old Dolores spent time on the porch sewing doll clothes. She babysat neighbors' babies and cleaned house for a pregnant neighbor. She and her sisters were all assigned home housecleaning chores. While Adeline and Dolores did the dishes, they sang popular songs of the day and practiced harmonized singing. After morning Mass every third Sunday was Dolores' turn to cook dinner. Sunday afternoons were for baking and playing cards.

Every Easter Sunday the Pociecha family attended 5:00 a.m. Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church. They dressed in new spring clothes. Mother Antonia shopped at Goldmann's and bought straw hats and trimming. Each year Antonia would recycle them. Even on a limited budget, Antonia took genuine pride in making sure her children looked their best. For Wally, Antonia made a suit with short pants, better known as knickerbockers. Some Sundays when Easter arrived early, it was chilly walking to church before sunrise. Evelyn remembered, "It was a spiritual phenomenon to see the sunrise through the stained glass window and flood the angel atop the tomb with glowing colors."

After the spiritual feast at Mass, the family shared a symbolic breakfast of food which had been taken to church in a basket on Saturday afternoon and blessed by the priest. Called the <u>Święconka</u> (pron. Schfwin-sone-kah), colored hard-cooked eggs were broken and shared with an exchange of good wishes. These were followed by home-baked rye bread and butter molded in the figure of a lamb which usually held the Polish flag. There was kiełbasa (Polish sausage), baked ham, horseradish, salt and pepper, cakes and pastries.

Unlike the "heat and eat, water added" hams of today, hams then were cured with salt and smoked. They had to be soaked in water to leech the excess salt, then boiled in the copper Ma Pociecha used to do the laundry. Alternatively, they took the ham to the corner bakery, wrapped it in bread dough, and baked it in the oven. Tradition was to eat ham at Easter.

An annual Mother-Daughter banquet was held at Forest Home Avenue School. Antonia would sew new dresses or make over hand-me-downs, a lot of preparation. Mother and her daughters required stamina for the long walk from their 20<sup>th</sup> and Orchard home to 15<sup>th</sup> and Forest Home Avenue. With six girls attending, the Pociechas usually took first place for best dressed.

Purchased in 1918, the family home was at 515 15<sup>th</sup> Street (15<sup>th</sup> and Muskego Avenue), and was changed later to 1517 South 20<sup>th</sup> Street (20<sup>th</sup> and Orchard Street), same house with a city- altered address. It was a 2-bedroom, parlor and dining room cottage with a kitchen in the basement. One

.

Babcia is true Polish for Grandmother. Boosha or Busia (pronounced BOO-sha) is a caressing diminutive used by children. It is also considered as an Americanized or "Chicago" Polish word for Grandma and is easily understood in the United States. A Polish adult might not get it whereas children get it immediately!

bedroom had two big beds for the children. The other was the parents' bedroom, usually with a baby crib in it. In the parlor was a convertible davenport. During the early years of home ownership, an attic room was rented out to a boarder. Later it became the older girls' bedroom.

Right: Walter and Antonia in the backyard of their home in 1931

Cooking was done on a black cast iron, wood-fired stove. There was no bathroom, only a toilet with an overhead flush tank and pull chain. Baths were taken in washtubs just once a week on Saturdays, the cleanest child in first. Bathwater was heated on a



two-burner gas plate. That plate also heated water for doing the laundry. A brown bar lye soap branded Fels Naptha was shaved for bleaching whites in a copper boiler.

After some years a new kitchen and bathroom was remodeled onto the main floor. The floor was unvarnished hard wood which the girls scrubbed on their hands and knees. Replacing the cast iron wood-fired stove was a gas stove with a wood and garbage burner on the side. In the winter the wood burner always held a large soup pot into which meat bones, celery tops, onion skins and carrots constantly simmered and turning into a rich, delicious broth.

The Pociecha dinner table wasn't familiar with steak and pork chops. They ate the cheaper, more affordable meats, offal like liver, kidney, tongue, brains, lungs, and oxtail stew with garden-grown vegetables. A boiled dinner with cabbage, potatoes, and fried onions, sometimes with spare ribs or neck-bones, was called <a href="mailto:parzybroda">parzybroda</a> (pron. pah-zhee-bro-dah), literally "burn-chin". The dish owes its name to the fact it is so delicious, nobody waits until it cools, and when you eat it hot you can easily burn your chin. Pigs' tails and knuckles (<a href="mailto:golonka">golonka</a>, pron. guh-longt-kah) were cooked with sauerkraut and potatoes. There was very little waste when using animals or fowl for food. Nose to tail, skin to bone marrow to blood, all was made edible.

Using animal blood in cooking isn't to be scoffed at. It has nothing to do with being descendants of vampires or practisers of Satanist rituals <sup>12</sup>. Kiszka, aka kaszanka, is a sausage made from ground pig snouts and ears, pig tongues, pig skin, and bound with buckwheat groats or barley. Flavoring includes marjoram, onion, black pepper, and allspice. The meats are cooked, then cooled before grinding. Groats or barley is covered with boiling water and cooked until soft and double in bulk, then cooled before mixing the cereal and meats, seasonings and blood. The blood turns the mixture black, thus Polish black pudding. The mix is stuffed into beef bungs or beef middles (beef intestines). Sliced and fried, it is delicious for breakfast or lunch.

Duck blood was added to <u>czernina</u> (pron. char-<u>nee</u>-nah), a sweet and sour duck soup with dried prunes, raisins, cherries, and <u>kluski</u> (pron. <u>kloos</u>-key, they are potato dumplings).

Although consuming blood in dishes may sound revolting, without scientific confirmation, the use of these foods helped keep the Pociecha children healthy in the days before refrigeration and high speed transportation supplying families with the wonderful variety of foods available today.

Favorites were meatloaf or ring bologna fried with onions. Ma Pociecha always made mashed potatoes, sometimes with buttermilk. Noodles were homemade.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> As an aside, when I made <u>kiszka</u> (<u>kaszanka</u>) in the 1990s, before the butcher would give me a jar of pig's blood, I was required to sign a legal document which said I didn't intend using the product for Satanist rituals. No kidding!

Butter was expensive and its measure was extended by mixing with white oleo which came with a gelatin coloring. Yellow margarine was outlawed in Wisconsin. They are home-baked bread generously smeared with homemade jam, or lard seasoned with salt and pepper.

During the Great Depression Walter had a difficult time making ends meet. However, his children never went hungry. The Pociecha family was genuinely poor, but the children never knew it. In the back yard were cherry trees and currant bushes. Carrots, onions, beets, tomatoes, cabbage and weeds grew in a large garden. It was the children's job eradicating the weeds. Broccoli, zucchini, and Brussels sprouts hadn't yet been introduced from Europe. Vegetables and fruits were eaten fresh in the summer and the surplus was canned and preserved for winters. Carrots and beets were stored in bushel baskets covered with garden soil and kept cool in a root cellar under the kitchen. Barszcz (pron. barschtsch or, in Russian, borscht) was beet soup. Sauerkraut soup made with mushrooms or with pig's feet was, like barszcz, a winter staple.

There was also a chicken coop until city law outlawed farm animals. The family was supplied with fresh eggs, and an occasional chicken dinner and soup from the hen past her prime. A few ducks were resident in this fowl domain. Use of the homophone foul was appropriate for when the children cleaned the coop or when fowl were slaughtered for the table. Most enjoyable was hatching and then watching the fuzzy, yellow, cheeping babies thrive.

Each fall relatives gathered to make sauerkraut. A huge amount of cabbage was delivered to the basement. Everyone pitched in cutting the heads in half and shredding them on a two-person slicer. It was made of wood with adjustable blades, my old-fashioned cabbage slicer on its side pictured right. The cabbage was placed inside the box and one person held the slicer over a barrel while the other moved the box with

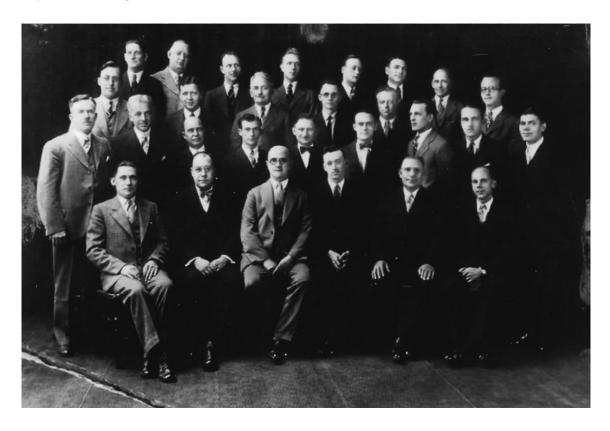


the cabbage back and forth over the blades. As the cut cabbage fell into the barrel, it was salted in layers. All it took to ferment cabbage into sauerkraut was salt, no other ingredients. The youngsters tamped down the cabbage with a wooden mallet or <u>dukacz</u> (pron. <u>doo</u>-cutch, and a word of regional dialect) until the barrel was full and juice came to the top. Then a weight was placed on top, usually a china or wooden plate held in place with a brick or large stone. Barrels were stored in a dark, cool part of the basement for about three weeks to ferment. The crisp sauerkraut was stored in stone crocks or canning jars throughout winter. Unknown at the time, sauerkraut was rich in Vitamin C which helped keep healthy the Pociecha children during the winter shortage of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Walter had only a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade education. He had spelling difficulties throughout his life and used the dictionary a lot. As a 9 year old youngster Walter stopped in a barber shop near 16<sup>th</sup> and National Avenue and got a job sweeping hair clippings from the floor. Walter thought cutting hair was interesting and, self-taught, some years later became a journeyman barber. The work week was six days, about 10 hours a day, even longer on Saturdays. Saturday was haircut day for most working men. His children took turns carrying a hot lunch wrapped in newspapers for insulation in a basket to keep him going throughout the long day. There was a "plus" for the children. On his way home, Walter stopped at Jahr's Market and bought fruit and chocolate drops to fill the now empty lunch basket. The girls and Wally had a treat to look forward to on Sunday morning after Mass.

Self-educated and with concern for the labor force, Walter took an interest in unions, became an active member and organizer, and, at one time was elected president of the Barber's Union, Local #50. Walter worked his way up the barbering pole, became a master barber, and eventually had his own barber shop on 20<sup>th</sup> Street next door to Kassulke's Tavern. None of Walter's children had to be 21 then to take a bucket into the tavern and have it filled with tap beer for their Dad and his friends doing their union "homework" or just play cards. In the flapper era, when women started to "bob" their hair, Walter took notice and decided he'd expand his business to include women's hairdressing.

He allowed women into his male tonsorial sanctuary, only after having first practiced all the new hairstyles on his daughters.



Walter Pociecha attends a Barbers' Convention in 1932. He is seated in the front row second from the right.

Socially conscious, particularly during the years of the Great Depression, along with other barbers, Walter went to St. Joseph's Orphanage every three weeks and volunteered his services to trim hair. Circa 1935, Walter Pociecha, pictured right, is seen in the center, fourth man from the left and the only barber wearing glasses.

Walter cut hair at 25¢, shave 10¢. He drew out his meager life savings



meager life savings, cashed in life insurance policies and withdrew house investments. While neighbors from the "old country" re-mortgaged their homes, Walter's pride kept him from

doing the same. After living in his home for nineteen years, when my mother was 21 years old, Walter and Antonia lost their home to the time and struggle of the Great Depression.

Politically active, Walter stood for Milwaukee Alderman of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ward in 1942. Back then there were no political treasuries to pay for a campaign. At a minimal expense printing flyers and posters, Walter's children then canvassed the neighborhood extolling their Dad's qualifications. He was defeated by a few votes by the well-established incumbent Matt Mueller. Walter remained active in politics, always working to better the standard of living for the working class.

Antonia's father Frank died August 10, 1944, age 83, and was buried in St. Adalbert's Cemetery, Milwaukee, Burial ID 9285, Section 2, Block 22, Row 1, Site 3, record of same pictured below. With the help of a gentleman looking into a very old handwritten log book, my sister Mary visited the grave on Saturday, September 26, 2015. It is an area that hasn't been put into the computer system. Cemetery curators know Frank Szymanski is buried there in an unmarked grave, but have no idea if there ever was a tombstone. I was unable to obtain a death certificate.

## **Burial Report**

Date Printed: 09/25/2015

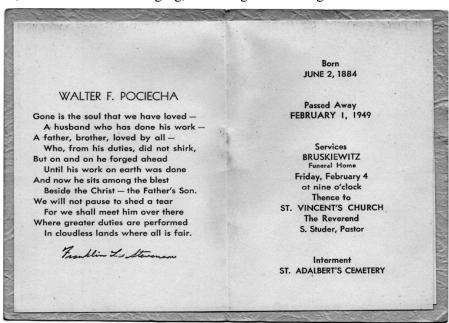
## SAINT ADALBERT CEMETERY AND MAUSOLEUM

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	SECT/CRYPT1	BLOCK/TIER73	ROW/LS/RS18	LOT/INSD	GRAVE/OUTS	DEATHDATE	BURIAL ID
SZYMANSKI	FRANK	17	3		33	4	05/11/1958	20105
SZYMANSKI	FRANK	Q	3		3	4	10/22/1962	24190
SZYMANSKI	FRANK	2	22	1		3	08/10/1944	9285
SZYMANSKI	FRANK J.	6	5 t	24		10	01/27/1953	15570
SZYMANSKI	FRANK JOSEPH	4	60	5		14	05/30/1953	15870 .
SZYMANSKI SZYMANSKI	FRANK FRANK J.	Q 2 6 4	58	_	3		08/10/1944 01/27/1953	9

Total: 5

Antonia's husband Walter Pociecha, my grandpa, passed away on February 1, 1949. I was all of four and have an unusual memory of his passing. Grandpa was sick and had spent a lot of time in bed. When he died, there was a loud banging, knocking and rattling on all the window

panes of the house, as if they who'd already passed clamored to get inside and spirit his soul of out the bedroom. Services were conducted by the Bruskiewitz Funeral Home on Friday, February 4. Requiem Mass was at 9:00 a.m. and celebrated by The Reverend S. Studer, Pastor of St. Vincent's Catholic Church. His interment was in St. Adalbert's Cemetery. The funeral holy card is pictured right.





Pictured left outside 1321 South 20<sup>th</sup> Street on a Sunday morning after Mass in 1951 is my father, my sister Mary, 4½, and 6 year hugging old me Grandma Antonia Pociecha, She affectionately called Granny by all her grandchildren. The family car, a 1937 Nash Lafayette, had once been owned by Dziadzia, but now belonged to my Dad.

As well memories of going to the Wisconsin State Fair in 1951, pictured right, and a July 4<sup>th</sup>

parade, Granny was responsible for lighting the fire I developed and still nurture for the movies when, at the age of 9 in 1952, she took me

downtown on the streetcar to see Walt Disney's *Peter Pan*. It was the first film I can remember seeing in a theater.

Pictured right: Granny (standing center) and her grandchildren in 1953: I am the attention-seeking clown seated on the left end of the front row. Next are Brian Behrs, my sister Mary, and Bernadette (Bunny) Behrs. Kneeling in Row 2 are Paul Karczewski, Peter Brochhausen, Phillip Brochhausen, and Ruthie Karczewski, Standing is Tom Brochhausen, Mary Behrs, and Granny holding my brother Stephen, Marietta Karczewski, and Kathy Behrs.

I clearly remember going into Granny's bedroom when she was very ill. Granny had bowel cancer and used a colostomy bag. Flowers couldn't mask the sour smell. As unusual as it may sound, Granny's last bit of advice to me was, "Lawrence, when you can't fart, it's time to die."





## ANTONIA POCIECHA nee Szymanski

No husband left with us to mourn,
Tho children know the grief;
As mother leaves her work on earth,
As the tree and falling leaf.
She opens up the Golden Door,
To that eternal life;
Where peace is everlasting,
And there is no tear or strife.
So we will dry our tear-stained eyes,
And look to God above,
Whose kindliness in time of need,
Will replace our loss with love.

-Thomas Dexter Linn

FEBRUARY 11, 1954

Services
BRUSKIEWITZ
Funeral Home
Monday, February 15
at 8:45 o'clock
Thence to
ST. VINCENT'S CHURCH
at nine o'clock
MSGR. S. J. STUDER
Pastor
Member of
St. Cecilia, St. Veronica and

JUNE 15, 1885

Passed Away

St. Ann's Societies
Alter Society
St. Bonaventure & St. Francis
Hospital Guild

Interment
ST. ADALBERT'S CEMETERY

Antonia (Szymanska) Pociecha. our beloved Granny, passed away February 11, 1954. funeral holy card is pictured Families and friends gathered at Bruskiewitz Funeral Home for services at 8:45 a.m. and I didn't cry, nor did any tears run down my cheeks during the 9 o'clock Requiem Mass celebrated at St. Vincent's Catholic Church Monsignor S. J. Studer until the very end; the organ

played and a woman in the choir loft sang Shubert's "Ave Maria." Then I blubbered. Sitting in the back seat of the family car, I looked out the back window as we turned a corner and counted cars in the funeral procession. Automobiles were still coming around the corner after I'd reached more than 60. Mom said afterward there was double that number of cars in the procession to St. Adalbert's Cemetery for interment. "Granny belonged to a lot of clubs and she made a lot of friends. Now they're all here to say good-bye," my mother said. Antonia Pociecha was active in St. Cecilia, St.

Veronica, and St. Ann's Societies, the Altar Society, and St. Bonaventure & St. Francis Hospital Guild.

Pictured right, my sister Mary kneels at the Pociecha grave marker in St. Adalbert's Cemetery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Memorial Day 2022. I remember that geraniums, indestructible flowers, always blossomed at the grave.

Twins Luann and Joann were born 10 years after Stephen on October 16, 1961. Mother was 44. Aware of complications which can result from pregnancy at that age, she prayed to St. Gerard. He was Gérard Majella, born at Muro, Italy, in 1726, an Italian lay brother with the Congregation of the Redeemer, better known as the Redemptorists. He is the patron saint of expectant mothers and his intercession is sought for children, unborn children, women in childbirth, mothers, expectant mothers, motherhood, falsely accused people, good confessions, lay brothers, and Muro Lucano, Italy.



One miracle in particular explains why Gérard Majella became known as the special patron of mothers. A few months before his death at 29 from tuberculosis, he visited the Pirofalo family and accidently dropped his handkerchief. After he left, one of the Pirofalo girls ran after Gérard to return it to him. "Keep it," he said to her. "You may need it someday."

Years later when that girl was a married woman on the verge of losing her life in childbirth, she remembered the handkerchief and asked that it be brought to her. Almost immediately the pain disappeared and she gave birth to a healthy child. This was no small feat in an era when only one out of three births resulted in a live birth. Word of the miracle spread quickly. Because of the miracles God worked through Gérard's prayers with mothers, the mothers of Italy took him to their hearts and made him their patron. On his beatification one witness testified that he was known as "il santo dei delice parti" – the saint of happy childbirth. Devotion to St. Gerard became very popular in the United States.

Mother had a happy childbirth and we welcomed twin girls into our family on October 16, 1961, the same day anniversary of St. Gerard's death in 1755. Subsequently, October 16 has become St. Gerard's feast day. A happy coincidence? Or was it the reward for Mother having asked for St. Gerard's intercession?

Ahead of the birth, Dad had asked us to pick names for the babies. I guess we were all expecting boys because we chose Matthew and Andrew. Dad woke us early the day the babies were born. We were told in a whisper they were named Luann and Joann.



Luann and Joann 11 months old



Joann and Luann 3 months old



Luann and Joann 3 months old



11 months old twins with Mary, Stephen, and Lawrence



Family snapshot with the twins circa Easter 1963

## Chapter 7: First Reels: The Three Stooges Phase

Pots n' Slops

y goal was to create something on film to equal the impact of the professional product, with ingenuity to make up for the lack of equipment. I had a movie camera. I had a movie light. I had ample enthusiasm. I had friends who were willing to play along with my half-baked ideas.

Not wishing to make this read like an operator's manual, or a technical 'how to' in a magazine for filmmakers, I'll attempt to keep such description to a minimum. I can just about imagine readers' hands thrown up in the air in exasperation. "Oh, no, we're gonna get a classroom lecture." I guarantee you won't, although there's a smidge of a chance you'll learn something in the process. This is not meant to be an instruction book. If you want technical information, read one of the excellent books on moviemaking that are currently on the market or on the shelf of an Opportunity Shop. The problems of an amateur moviemaker are rarely of a purely technical nature. The difficulty is one of achieving results with limited means.

A movie camera is a machine to record motion. However, it should be noted that the "motion" in "motion picture camera" doesn't mean moving the camera up and down and side to side like a paintbrush to create movement. Movement should be restricted to the object, to persons or moving items being photographed. "Movement" is built up by suitably alternating the three basic shots used in making movies. They are the Long Shot, the Medium Shot, and the Close-up. Using the human body as a model, all of the body is clearly seen in the Long Shot. From the waist up could be considered the Medium Shot. The head, or the head and shoulders, would comprise the Close-Up. Simple. Eh?

The Kodak Brownie Turret model movie camera was made in the 1950s. Isn't that an easy name to remember? Kodak. Brownie. Turret. No acronym like KBT followed by a Roman numeral I, or Mach II, or a bunch of additional letters or numbers which only lead to confusion, rather than definition. Same as its name, the camera was simple. It was point and shoot. All three lenses were fixed-focus. As far as I was concerned, picture taking was going to be easy; I'd never need to rotate any ring to focus either of three lenses before making a picture. What I didn't understand, even after hastily reading instructions, was that I would still need to calculate distance from lens to subject to keep a subject in sharp focus. Ah, my father was right. Mathematics did come into just about everything you needed to do in life. There may have been an idiot-proof instruction of using the normal lens and coming no closer than three feet to ensure sharp focus of subject. Completely misunderstood was that close-up lens. I thought it was to be used when shooting any subject close-up, and not comprehending that it really meant bringing a subject closer that was physically far away. In other words, if there were thirty steps between camera operator and subject, the close-up lens could be turreted into position without having to make those thirty steps forward. Imagine trying that if the subject is a mountain, and its summit covered in snow is a mile or more away! Initially I was under that impression; that I'd need to take those thirty steps forward to use that lens to make a Close-up. The wide angle lens was just as it sounded. It took in a wider view of the subject. It was probably the safest of all the lenses to use in terms of what was seen and what would end up in clear focus.

Looking through the viewfinder, I found I wasn't looking directly through the lens. The viewfinders were on top of the camera, above the three lenses, as two pop-up screens. I wasn't seeing my subject exactly as the lens saw it.



Public Domain Image: The Kodak Brownie Turret f/1.9 8mm Movie Camera, circa 1950s

The term given to this kind of viewfinder is Parallax View. The first finder, the one closest to the eye, had a 4:3 aspect ratio 1 hole to squint through with one eye closed. The second was sited at the front of the camera. It was 4:3 shaped clear plastic with three colored borders. For the Wide Angle lens, everything within the 4:3 green border line would be included in the picture. Within that green border was a smaller 4:3 red line border. The red border indicated what the Normal lens should include. Smallest 4:3 within the red was shaped with a yellow line. This was the margin limit for a subject included in a Close-up. I neglected to understand the necessity to configure the small distance between viewfinder and lens and what this would do to the image I'd end up with in the film frame. I'd not considered it, possibly because I simply didn't comprehend that information in the instruction booklet. On the other hand, it may have been due to my cement-headedness toward mathematics, my lack of understanding of the Arabic numerals, or the lack of interest in wanting to know how they worked and how to use them.

Although the camera came with three fixed focus lenses, it didn't come equipped with automatic light setting. The aperture was manual. On the left and behind the turret was the aperture dial. It started at an opening of f/1.9, the largest, and progressed through f/2.8, f/4.0, f/5.6, f/8, f/11 and f/16, the latter the smallest and letting in the least amount of light. The booklet said this was a good setting for a bright, sunny outdoor scene on a sandy beach. It didn't say that f/1.9 was the universal be-all and end-all light setting. Clouded or shaded areas would come out when using anything from f/2.8 to f/5.6, depending on how dark the subject was. The go-to aperture for most outdoor shooting was f/8 with, as recommended, sunshine over the camera user's shoulder. In other words, bright sunshine is in the eyes of the subjects. No wonder everyone squints on screen and viewers are left wondering what eyesight affliction subjects suffered. If there were instructions in the Sun-Gun's box, or printed on it, for which aperture to use under bright lights, I didn't read them. The aperture setting when I took the camera out of its box was f/1.9, so my male brain said that had to be the best one to use.

The trigger of the camera was located beneath the turret. It wasn't a press-in button. Shaped more like a toothed saw blade, it had to be depressed downward with the index finger. It helped

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Academy Ratio or Aspect Ratio 4:3 (1:33.1) is the proportional relationship between a screen's width and its height. It is the same aspect ratio for Standard TV, making it convenient for airing Hollywood movies. The dimensions were based upon the ratio of 35mm original silent film and made universal in movies in 1932 until 1953 by the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences. 4:3 is pronounced as "four by three", "four to three", and sometimes "square screen", even though measurement forms are a rectangle instead of a square. Others may simply refer to 4:3 as Academy Format.

to have a fingernail to lodge upon one of the teeth. Full press of the trigger engaged it in continuous run, a bonus if the camera's mounted on a tripod and the camera operator wants to get in to the action. As I'd be handholding, that continuous run feature could be a nuisance exposing unwanted frames and wasting footage when the trigger's fully depressed with the fingertip and stuck in locked run mode.

You'd think that the first roll of film run through a brand new camera would be experimental, something to get used to the camera's weight, how the trigger worked, and how to frame each shot. You'd think shots of family mugging at the camera, waving to the camera and going about the ordinary happenings and humdrum of everyday life would constitute an initial four minutes of film. Well, no, I didn't want to shoot "home movies". I saw myself as a film director. To get used to handling the camera, I did all of those things without ever running a foot of film through the gate. I wanted to make a real movie.

My best friend then was Mike Theoharris. We stuck together at St. Al's and, when it came time for Mike to go to Pius XI Catholic High School and me going to John Dewey Jr. High, we naively thought we'd never see each other again. We forgot we'd still have Friday nights and Saturdays for fooling around, and the C.Y.O. saw to keeping us together Sundays. Call it envy if you will; Mike had curly blonde hair, and I'd always wanted curly blonde hair. We did everything together. He was creative, but sensible and practical. My creativity bordered on the outrageous and teenage hormones often overpowered the sensible and the practical. I'm sure Mike and I would have bounced ideas off each other for a movie. Both fans of the Three Stooges, we couldn't think of a third person we wanted to make up our own trio. A third person might just get in the way and we were a selfish pair. We'd be Abbott and Costello without the verbal wit. We'd be just two of the Three Stooges without the sound effects and without the dangerous pokes-in-the-eyes. We'd be silent comics without Keaton's pratfalls, without Chaplin's balletic agility, and without Laurel and Hardy's impeccable timing. We'd just be inept. It wouldn't be much of a stretch.

The idea for a story needed a setting away from our homes. Last thing we wanted was parents interfering, maybe even telling us what to do. After all, we were getting into that age when we already knew all the answers, right? Recollections of stunts and gags seen on TV in the Three Stooges shorts inspired. We'd delve into our collective memories to consider a comedy about plumbing and discard the idea. We didn't know anyone willing to let their house get soaking wet. Being close to Christmas and all, it was too cold and snowing to shoot a film outdoors. That killed off any story about gardening and digging holes. It also seemed like too much work. Chaplin made a film in the snow called *The Gold Rush* (1925), but I didn't think we wanted to freeze our fingers and noses with a story set in the Arctic. Mittens and a camera trigger didn't mix. We couldn't do anything like a romantic comedy because we didn't know any girls who'd be willing to let themselves look foolish or who'd want to kiss us. The single idea of mistakenly sprinkling chili pepper on a fried egg stimulated our thinking into doing a slapstick comedy about two guys running a restaurant or cafe.

We knew where our restaurant could be set. The commercial kitchen in St. Al's basement hall had several stainless steel work benches, stoves and ovens, kitchen sinks, cupboards, cutlery and crockery. The hall itself had ample trestle tables and folding chairs. I talked with the C.Y.O.'s spiritual leader, Fr. Leonard Meyer. He was all for the idea and agreed to unlock the doors and let us in to use the hall during the Christmas holidays. We arranged to shoot our movie in one whole day between Christmas and New Year's.

I hadn't read any books about the actual process of making a movie, didn't even know if such a book existed. I didn't know movies were shot out of sequence and according to convenience, later cut apart and the strips of film reattached. For some reason I was under the impression films were shot in sequence, just as things happened to us chronologically, as in real life. That in mind, I knew the first thing I'd have to shoot would be the company logo. MGM has its roaring lion. Paramount has its mountain, a semi-circle of stars crowning the Fuji summit.

Columbia has its lady wearing a Roman lady's dress and holding up a torch in her left hand, somewhat reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty. Universal has its revolving planet earth, an early version having an airplane circling the globe. From <u>Dziadzia</u>'s tavern, a print of a reclining lion which hung on the wall behind the bar had been saved. That picture conveyed the strength of royalty serene and I chose to use it as my opening logo.

What to call the company, my home movie studio? Well, not so much company or studio, more like an opening logo. Having mentally wrestled with several ill-chosen names, I stumbled upon spelling my initials, L and K, and coming up with Elkay. I added quote marks to give the invented word class. It was followed by Productions, a dictionary-approved word. There, my film company was named "Elkay" Productions.

I had a deft hand for lettering, but didn't think I should write or paint directly onto the lion picture. Removable letters should be placed onto the picture and be easily removed. That meant no glue, no paste, nothing with an adhesive back. Having looked into the window display of that West Allis camera shop many more times walking home from school, I saw a titling kit. It was inexpensive and met my requirements. A cardboard title card was covered in green felt. Upper case only letters were made of cardboard with a face layer of bright yellow and a backing of felt. They'd stick to the felt title card and stay in place when the card was raised vertical. The letters didn't stick to the picture of the lion, so it couldn't be raised vertical to photograph. The picture was on the floor, letters artistically balanced spelling out my studio logo. With camera in hand, I straddled the lion picture to photograph my opening credit logo... "Elkay" Productions presents. However, I didn't, but should have, stand directly over the picture. I more or less stood at the base of the picture and aimed the lens at it, filling the red border of the viewfinder. With my brother's help holding the Sun Gun, care was taken to avoid including the shadow of my leg falling onto the proud lion.

The film needed to be called something. Comedies I'd seen often used alliteration, rhyme, or a pun in the title. The Three Stooges shorts used alliteration like *Grips, Grunts & Groans, Cash and Carry*, and *Movie Maniacs*. Rhyme showed up as *An Ache in Every Stake* and *From Nurse to Worse*. Puns were prolific in titles including *Three Little Sew and Sews, Ants in the Pantry*, and *For Crimin' Out Loud*. I decided upon a near rhyme and settled for the Stooge-like cafe/restaurant sounding *Pots n' Slops*.

Casting was easy. Mike Theoharris and I would be the comedy team of Mickey & Larry. My sister Mary became the waitress. My 9 year-old brother Steve was a customer. Other cafe customers included school friends Tom Layman, Bill Franson, brothers Bob and Ron Zirbel, and Dick Harter. Our pet, Muttsy the wonder dog, participated too.

Costuming wasn't especially important. Everyone wore their own clothes. The only concession for comedy was Mike wearing a motor cycler's cap and my donning a bowler hat for the opening shot. Bill Franson wore that same derby as a customer. Mary wore a waitress-like tiara and an apron. No doubt the most elaborate wardrobe went to Dick Harter. He had the ability to make big lips with his tongue rolled up over his top lip, and folding his lower lip down to the top of his chin. He played a woman wearing a white sweatshirt for a top, a colorful skirt, and a clean, white mop for a wig. His character may have resulted from a June 1960 style show at John Dewey junior high school. Several of us boys modeled girls' fashions and entertained parents and teachers at a farewell party for 285 ninth grade pupils who would start high school studies next school year at West Allis Central High School.

Father Leonard Meyer was the wardrobe master for Harter's female role. Dick had used some tissues for breasts. Fr. Leonard thought they weren't big enough to make the audience laugh. He brought two volleyballs from a gym equipment locker and filled, literally, Harter's sweatshirt embossed with a Notre Dame logo. Notre Dame? More like Notable Dame! 'Miss' Harter wouldn't have made it into the centerfold of *Playboy* magazine, especially in this outfit. This was one instance when we all conceded that an adult was smarter than us. His sense of the

comic was overblown, exaggerated and of the ridiculous. He opened our minds as to how human a priest could be.



Inspiration for Dick Harter's "Miss" was our dressing in women's clothes for a 9<sup>th</sup> grade Style Show: 1 to r: Steve Weber, Me in the white mop 'wig', Ron Zirbel, Tom Layman, Ron Young, Dick Harter.<sup>2</sup>

Credits at the beginning of films released in the early 1930s influenced the sequence I wanted to make. They sometimes showed the actor in character with his or her name over the picture; sometimes including "as" and their film character's name. I had no idea then what superimposition meant, let alone how to accomplish the technique. This being my first film, I felt it important that my audience knew everyone in the cast. Letters in the set were felted to the green card to spell out each of our names. We posed holding the title card for individual credit shots. Given we'd decided it was going to be a Mickey and Larry comedy, I still wonder why Mike and I didn't pose together with our names on the Letraset card. I think, perhaps, it's because there weren't enough letters in the set to spell out both given and surnames. There may not have been four Ks to spell Klobukowski and Mike. Even Muttsy got his own credit. Dick Harter missed out on being included in the title sequence. He may have shown up late on set.

I wish I knew who came up with the idea for Bill Franson's tie rising and crawling up his shirt. He wore the tie with a large gap between the Windsor knot and the collar. As he goofily stands holding his title card, the tie slides up filling the gap. It was accomplished by tying a cord to the part of the tie lying under the collar and, out of camera view, someone pulling slowly on the cord. Most viewers never notice the upwardly mobile tie. The visual gag is subtle, but effective.

When I wasn't in shot, I handled the camera; acting, others took turns holding the camera, framing the shot, and depressing the trigger. It was fun and an experiment for everyone involved. My instruction to whoever operated the camera was always, "Make sure we're inside the green frame." Just as happened in the silent film days, the director shouted out what to do at the actors. If I was acting, the cameraman directed me, us. The direction most often given was something to the effect of, "Move a bit to your right so you're in frame." We rarely rehearsed the action of a scene beforehand running film through the camera. There would be a short discussion of what was supposed to happen, and then the action happened.

Forget the Hollywood calls of "Lights... Camera... Action!" I'd often just say, "Turn on the light." We'd know when the light was on. It dazzled our eyes whether we were being filmed,

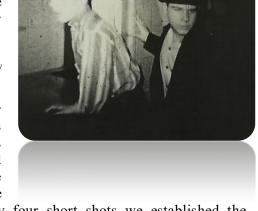
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Milwaukee Journal Wednesday, July 8, 1960. Photo credited only to –Journal Staff.

standing behind the cameraman, or just hanging around out of shot. "Camera!" just meant there'd be a pause before any action began. Shooting in chronological order, the call for "Action" and the actual action didn't always result in perfect timing. We eventually agreed it was better if actors "sort of" started acting, did something which looked like it belonged. In acting, it's called 'business.' It might be a body movement; perhaps a bit of a lean from the waist, a simple step forward, a hand or an arm or both gesturing. It was always appropriate and led into the required action. Once the light had been flicked on, "Action" was our only necessary call. When the director felt enough action for the shot had been captured on film, the command was "Cut!" Sometimes before action began, actors were reminded to keep doing something their character would normally do until they heard, "Cut!" Actors could then stop acting and would, invariably, burst into laughter. Sometimes after hearing "Cut!" there'd be questions and answers. "Did you keep me in the frame?" "Could you see me when I turned left?" "Did you see what I did?" "Was that what you wanted?" We sought approval and encouragement from each other.

The first sequence of our story had Mike and me entering the shot from the left side of frame through a doorway. We move stealthily, as if unsure of where we were headed. Our first steps into movie making were, to say the least, tentative.

Pictured right: My 8mm frame enlargement of Scene 1: Mickey & Larry tentatively enter café.

Next shot was of a lease for the Indigestion Cafe, owner I. M. Cheap. Well, why not? The Three Stooges movies always had improbable names for business establishments and business people. Third shot included Bob Zirbel, supposedly I. M. Cheap the landlord, and the three of us in frame excitedly shake hands. Next, a title card read THEIR WORK BEGINS. Opening with only



card read THEIR WORK BEGINS. Opening with only four short shots we established the characters, the setting, and set the plot rolling.

My brother was the first customer. What Steve did was a set up for the film's final gag. Confronted with the bill, Steve empties onto the table the usual trinkets and toys found in a 9 year-old boy's pockets. There is undue haste in Steve's dumping an empty wallet and a large empty sock before throwing his arms out in exasperation. From behind the camera, I'd have probably instructed, "Hurry up. You're using up too much film." Steve's title card says I AIN'T GOT NO MONEY. Mickey grabs Steve by his red sweatshirt collar and frogmarches him to the kitchen sink already piled high with dirty dishes. Mickey's emphatic gestures tell Steve in no uncertain terms what he must do to pay his bill. Steve gives an expression of disgust and reluctance. Given no choice Steve accepts his sentence of washing dishes to pay for his meal.

Tom Layman was our only friend who smoked; his choice one of the most popular brands of the day, unfiltered Lucky Strike. His talent with tobacco automatically gave him the unique role of the customer in the joke which first set us onto this movie choice, chili pepper. In the scene Tom raises his hand to attract the attention of the waitress. Mary enters the shot. Watching her edge further into frame, it's obvious she was being told what to do from behind the camera. Tom indicates the number two with his fingers. The title card reads TWO FRIED EGGS. Next shot has me at the stove cracking eggs over a frying pan. The eggs and the shells plop into the pan. My lips are moving for no apparent reason. I am probably giving the cameraman directions, or maybe I'm just asking if he has me correctly in frame. For a person who enjoyed being center stage, surprisingly, as both director and actor, I look rather uncomfortable on screen. A slight soft-focus close-up of cans with hand-written labels is shown. One is labeled Salt, another Pepper, and the third Chili-Pepper. Salt is poured, not shaken onto the eggs in the pan. My facial expression comments on my faux pas. By rights, I should have let the audience

take it in and made no expression at all. My hand darts to the Pepper, pauses, and moves deliberately to the can of Chili-Pepper. It cascades onto the eggs. The expression of disgust on my face is too prominent to let the abundance of seasoning pass as a simple mistake.

Larry, the character, hands the plate of highly seasoned eggs and shells to the waitress. Mary turns to the camera, pauses, shifts her weight on her feet, and smiles nervously, as if asking, "Is this what I'm supposed to do?" In the following shot she places the plate before Tom. He reacts, jumping back in his seat even before looking to see what's on the plate. It's followed by something of an "Oh, no" gesture of his hand across his forehead. Tom uses knife and fork to lift a morsel of egg to his mouth. His reaction is one of disgust even before the forkful of egg is shoved into his mouth. Here's where my earlier observation of "editing" in a Three Stooges comedy came into play. Using the telephoto lens to cut to a close-up, the audience sees Tom cough from the chili's heat. Real smoke belches from his mouth. In the next wide shot, more smoke filters out of Tom's hand-clasped mouth. He briefly stares at the camera before rising from his chair and running to the door and out of the cafe. Waitress Mary picks up the plate with her right hand and pinches her nose shut with her left hand thumb and finger as she walks into the kitchen. In the following shot she hands the plate of rejected breakfast to Steve the dishwasher. He squidges his mouth and looks at the camera while making several self-conscious faces of deliberate contortion.

About this time, more likely earlier, it would have been necessary to change around the roll of film. Two minutes of film would have been exposed over a time of, perhaps, one or two hours. The running time of the roll of film never equated to the actual time required to set up scenes and expose the film. The counter on the camera started at 25 feet and counted down to 0. As soon as zero approached, it wasn't wise to shoot an important or lengthy shot. It could be cut off and lost. Sometimes it was better just to run out the remaining inches of film on anything or anyone, maybe even covering the lens with a hand and filming black. Great care had to be taken to open the camera in a darkened space to prevent the film becoming light-struck. Next step was to remove the full reel from the take-up position and remove the empty reel from the feed position to place it onto the take-up cog. The full reel had to be turned around and placed into the feed position, film threaded through the gate and its end stuck into the slot of the empty take-up reel. A little bit of footage was run through to ensure the sound it made was a guarantee of correct movement. As two full 50 foot reels of film were used, there would have been a second new reel to thread, and a second change and thread sometime during the shoot.

Muttsy trots into the kitchen. Larry raises a meat cleaver and follows the dog that's pad-padded to waitress Mary. Here comes an unusual movement from Larry's chef. Instead of moving on his feet normally to chase after Muttsy, Larry hobbles from left foot to right foot, as if in slow motion, but with no resultant comedic effect. Was this a crazy attempt to suggest an age older than that of a teenager? Why ever I chose to use that waddle is an utter mystery. On film it just looks odd.

The scene cuts to Bill Franson sitting at the same table where Steve and Tom had been customers. Mary approaches with her order pad and pencil. As Bill looks up at Mary and raises his hand to order, his tie slides upward, just as it had in his individual title shot. Again, even with quicker movement of the tie, it was ever so subtle. A terrific gag, but it's only as good as its recognition by the audience. Bill's title card reads HOT DOG! Now Muttsy bounds out of the kitchen to the exit door. Larry's pursuit is that silly-looking slow motion left foot, right foot waddle, gleaming meat cleaver in hand. Customer Bill stands up from his chair to watch the chef chase the dog. The cord which had been used to pull his blue tie up dangles down Bill's back and is clearly visible. Talk about giving away the secret of as magician's trick! He looks at the camera and his lips can be read before the title card announces FORGET IT! In disgust, Bill stomps like an old man toward the exit door.

ONE MONTH LATER the title reads. Mickey and Larry are working at the kitchen's counter. It looks like Larry's painting a menu board, but he isn't using a brush. I guess no one thought to

bring a paintbrush, or the scene had been made up on the spot. It was, however, a gag learned and borrowed from a Stooges' movie. In place of a brush, Larry dips his finger into a coffee cup. He smears the lettering of an item listed on the board. Hershey's chocolate syrup was substituted for paint. Landlord Bob arrives and slams his fist down on the counter demanding in a title card I WANT MY RENT MONEY! Mickey explains a predicament using natural gestures before a title card says NO MONEY YET – HOW ABOUT A COFFEE? The landlord sits and opens a newspaper. Mickey brings a cup of coffee and places on the counter to appease the landlord. Larry immediately stops finger painting, looks at the cup and exclaims without the use of a title card, "Oh! Coffee!" Lips are readable. Imagine hearing Curly's voice in the delivery of the line. Larry helps himself to the cup of coffee and replaces it with the cup of paint. He walks out of shot. Sure enough, in the next shot the landlord takes a hardy swig from the cup, doesn't bother to make a face, and spits out paint. The title card states the obvious. THIS STUFF IS PAINT! Mickey, in long shot, picks up the cup and tastes the liquid. He immediately spits a long spray onto the countertop. Mickey beckons Larry into frame and takes the cup of coffee from his hand and slides it onto the counter. He picks up the identical cup, the one of paint, and pours the brown goop over Larry's tongue. Lapping with his tongue to taste the paint, Larry tightly closes his eyes and slowly raises his arms to show the unpleasantness in the joke's payoff.

Next is the scene everyone in the cast had been waiting to see. Miss Volleyballs arrives. Dick turns on the charm with a hippy-dippy saunter, a shoulder sway left to right and back again which emphasizes the enormity of her chest. He doesn't look anything like a girl. The exaggeration is pure farce and we have to stifle laughter so we don't crack up our actor. Dick really is in charge of his character. She's carrying what looks like a white shirt box in her hand. She sits and flirts unashamedly with the waiter played by Mike. As Mickey he makes wide googoo eyes and a close-up shot is made. Dick bats his eyelashes. She orders SANDWICH AND COFFEE. Plate and cup placed on the table, a large breast gets in the way of an easy lift of the coffee cup. She spills red liquid from the cup into the platter bearing the sandwich. We felt red would look better than the brown, as used in the previous coffee scene, against the white bread of the sandwich. Not dropping a beat, Dick handles half a sandwich and wrings it like a dishcloth, immediately lifting the wet mush to his lips. A cutaway shows Mickey and Larry scratching their heads and making the kind of faces which stupidly ask, "Do we understand?" Just before Dick as the endowed woman rises from her seat, she taps the white box to make the audience notice, and departs. As she exits, Mickey and Larry call after her. We can't see their faces, so the title card ensures we know what they've said. LADY! YOU FORGOT A PACKAGE!

With the lady gone, volleyball breasts and all, Mickey and Larry lacking couth don't hesitate to open the box to see what's inside. It's filled with money. A hand-printed title card is lifted from the dollar bills and is shown to camera. KEEP THIS MONEY! No reason is given for the donation. Both characters acknowledge the gift by rubbing their fingers through the dollar bills, in turn looking directly into the camera and saying it with a smile, "Look at what we got to solve all our financial problems."

The monetary windfall should, by rights, have lead to a fast conclusion. Instead, another customer is waited upon by Mickey and Larry so more tomfoolery can be trotted out. Ron Zirbel hadn't placed an order, but he has a problem with a drink bottle. 'MY SODA WON'T OPEN,' the title card declares. Having had the experience of a warm carbonated soft drink whoosh out of the bottle as soon as the cap's been popped, this was supposed to be an easy stunt. Ron was willing to get a rush of soft drink sprayed in his moosh. The warm bottle had been shaken vigorously and the top was popped. Ronnie anticipated the soda splooshing into his face. He reacted before it happened. He jerked back from the bottle held in Larry's hands. No spray. Nothing happened. Whoever had the camera in hand disengaged the trigger, but I called, "No, keep it going." Without any knowledge of how to physically cut film, everything we shot had to be in chronological order and every scene had to work. With the trigger again depressed, Larry moves the unresponsive bottle of soda to Ronnie's face and pours the liquid over him. The gag

was, to the best of our ability, salvaged. It looked like Larry's balance was awkward to cause the accident or, without using any stretch of the imagination, just a big dumb mistake. Nothing could be done to re-do the gag because I didn't yet know about scissors and cement.

As if to cover for a limp laugh, or the total lack of one, the next shot has Ronnie in the background still wiping his wet face as landlord Bob rushes into shot, once again banging his fist on the counter to demand rent money. 'WHERE'S MY MONEY?' the title practically shouts. Mickey and Larry run into shot with the shirt box full of money. They toss green bills into the air to the delight of an overwhelmed landlord. A title declares WE QUIT.

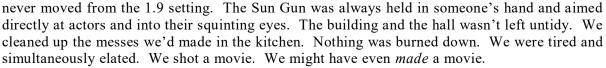
Mickey & Larry go to the kitchen sink. Remember, according to an earlier title, one month has passed. Steve is wearing the same red sweatshirt he wore when stuck without money to pay his bill. And he's still washing dishes! God can only guess what his meal must have cost! The sink

is piled high with soapsuds. Mickey and Larry are exuberant, happy and smiling, gesturing with explanation of what's happened with a box of money. Steve isn't at all impressed. He lets fly with a handful of suds at Mickey and Larry. More water than soap flew out of the sink.

Pictured right: Penultimate Scene: My 8mm frame enlargement shows Steve sweeping suds, mostly water, at Mickey & Larry.

In classic Stooges cutting from cause to effect, the comedy pairs' faces are covered in thick soapsuds. Both wipe tightly-knit bubbles from eyes and there's a cut to a THE END title card.

The whole film was shot in one day, all filmed in sequence and in chronological order. The F stop was



### Chapter 8: Shooting Never Meant a Finished Film

Purchasing a roll of Kodak 8mm movie film, processing was included in the price. A yellow mailing envelope with red lettering was included in the box with the wrapped and sealed reel of film. It was pre-addressed to Kodak Processing in New York. All I needed do was fill in the lines of the return address with my name and my address, lick a stamp, and stick it onto the designated space. Processing normally took about four to five working days. It was agony waiting for the developed movie film to be returned in the mail. This was the occasion for which that overused expression, "I just can't wait," was perfectly intended. Anticipation of what would actually turn out on the film was palpable. The mailman's truck was stalked until the unique yellow envelopes arrived. More agony was felt when two envelopes had been mailed together and were delivered as singles on consecutive delivery days. It was even greater agony if a weekend fell in between delivery of single reels.

As soon as the mailman delivered the two yellow envelopes, excitement built as the projector was set up. I used a piece of white paper taped to a cardboard panel of a box for my preview screen. Carefully undoing the metal clips which sealed the envelope, the gray 50 foot reel of film would slip out. The processed film had been precisely split into two 25 foot lengths, was cement spliced together, and had at least two feet of white Kodak labeled leader film spliced onto the head. The leader was the convenient means to manually thread film through the gears and gate of the projector, and to latch film onto the take-up reel. There was a knob on the front of the projector which, when turned, moved film through the gears and gate frame by frame. This was standard practice after threading to ensure each sprocket hole was engaged with each tooth of each gear and claw in the gate. Forget to do this simple check and film could be forever damaged, sprocket holes torn, film jamming, picture burning if the lamp had been turned on.



Public Domain Image: Bell & Howell Model 253 R 8mm Movie Projector, Circa 1950s

This great machine had a metal plate that says: 115V, AC 60 Cycle Only, 500 W Max, 5 amps, Chicago 45, Model 253 R Bell & Howell. It had the Framer lever and one switch for Lamp, Motor, and Off. A metal take-up reel came with the projector. The unit was compact and easy to lift and carry, despite its weight. It had a brown metal lid or cover with a push-button that opened

the cover when depressed. There was a switch for film movement: Forward, Still and Reverse. Its electrical cord had a brown Bakelite handle. The projector stood approximately 12 inches high by 8.5 inches wide and 8.5 inches deep. It was a heavy, well-built, and considered a workhorse of the 8mm projectors of the late 1950s and 1960s. The projector was silent, meaning it had no facility for replaying sound. It did, however, make plenty of noise as film clackety-clacked through the gate.

As clearly as can I remember buying the Kodak Brownie Turret camera, I have no recollection of purchasing the projector. It would have been silly to buy a movie camera and forget about the projector. The two machines work independently of one another, but one without the other is like bread without butter or a bat without a ball. However, or whenever it happened, likelihood was Dad and I in the West Allis Camera Shop picking out the camera. A Bell & Howell 8mm movie projector would have to have been purchased. Knowing nothing about special features, I'm sure we would have settled on the least expensive machine. I have an inkling the projector's cost was in the region of just under \$90. It would be one which showed movies onto a white wall, a sheet of white paper, and, eventually, a glass-beaded movie screen.

Watching those scenes of *Pots n' Slops* unreel for the first time was genuinely exciting and, at the same time, disappointing. I learned lessons from having made mistakes. Some shots made with the camera close to the subject were overexposed due to my never moving the F stop from 1.9. This was terribly evident on all of the title shots. They were still readable, but the yellow letters appeared glaringly white. Another problem not seen when shooting, but obvious on the screen, was the misalignment of each title card. The top of the card filled the top of the frame with green and that was all right. Lettering should have been aligned screen center, but it was located slightly higher in the frame than I wanted. At the bottom of the frame should have been the bottom of the green title card. What I'd unintentionally photographed was two to three inches worth of floor. I'd neglected to remember and consider that small distance between viewfinder and lens and how I was supposed to tilt the camera upward ever so slightly to compensate for the parallax view.

Close Up shots made by misunderstanding the use of the telephoto lens were just a bit out of focus. The term for what I had on screen, I was later to learn, was called soft focus. Hollywood sometimes filmed an actress in soft focus deliberately, the technique used for enhancing glamour. Soft focus hid blemishes, freckles, even some wrinkles. It was a solution to preservation of a youthful appearance much favored by aging actresses. It was nothing more than a camera magician's jiggery pokery. Although I had no aging actress on set, my shot on the screen was still acceptable to look at as soft focus.

Most of the shots in *Pots n' Slops* were perfectly acceptable. With the Sun Gun's bright light dispersed, all Wide Angle shots looked correctly exposed. Two or three shots, however, were so overexposed as to be near white. Images were able to be discerned, but were unacceptable. At the expense of the whole, any bad shot drew attention and ruined the overall impact. Whenever the overexposed shot hit the screen, it was as if the film's laugh-a-minute mood was broken. The audience's train of thought was interrupted. They saw something that looked out of place and it acted as a stopper. The Three Stooges had made me aware of completely changing the position of the camera in-between setting each shot. That's why I filmed in chronological order. However, Curly, Moe and Larry hadn't informed me on how to get rid of unwanted shots. I never saw bad shots in their films. Surely they must also have made some. How did they get rid of them? I had to learn how to get rid of those bad shots.

Taking my problem to the West Allis Camera Shop, I was enlightened. I was shown a viewer/editor, a machine onto which film can be threaded and viewed and cuts made upon seeing the exact bad frame. It was, however, priced beyond my range. I settled for a simple metal splicer and a bottle of splicing cement. Both were inexpensive. My eyesight was sharp and I could hold a strip of film up to the light and choose a frame where I'd cut out the bad part, and put the good pieces back together again.

Oddly enough, I didn't cut any of the bad shots out of *Pots n' Slops*. For a long time, I left the film just as it had been shot and just as it had been returned from processing. The only cutting I did was to take off the white leader of the second 50 foot reel and join it to the end of the first 50 foot reel and mount it onto a larger reel. After all, my audience was my cast; they were the least critical viewers. The last thing my friends would want, after having worked so long and so hard, was not being able to see themselves acting on screen, even if a shot hadn't come out perfect.

Showing my movie and watching it, I was aware my silent film was accompanied only by the hum of the projector's fan and motor, and the clackety-clack of the claw engaging each sprocket hole to move the film forward at 16 frames per second. I'd watched a lot of movies and knew something was missing. Sound was missing. And I don't mean the noise made by the projector.

It is debatable whether there ever existed a purely silent movie. The early "silents" were so called because they didn't have synchronized music, dialogue, or commentary. Commentary or narration and dialogue had to be provided via titles. I was doing that. Sometimes live commentary was provided by someone standing at the side of the screen, as did Windsor McKay with *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1909). And there was always the occasional outburst of smartmouthed and foolish comment about what was seen on screen. During the era of silent pictures, the "silents" were never silent. There was always music to accompany a movie and it may have been played by a pianist, an organist, an orchestra, or by gramophone record.

I had no equipment for recording sound, much less even thought about keeping sound synchronized with the picture. That was, unless you were made of money, well beyond the means of the ordinary home movie maker. I had to stick to making silent movies. However, my initial desire to use a tape recorder wasn't so far-fetched after all. It would be practical, a means to drown out the sound of the projector, and I knew I could be much more creative than that.



Public Domain Image: Sony Tapecorder 102

Using banked money from the paper route, again I spent, this time buying a Sony102 Tapecorder, marketed from the late 1950s until 1962 when it was superseded by the Model 103. It was a portable unit with dimensions of approximately 13 inches x 7inches x 10 inches. Manufactured by Sony in Japan and distributed in the United States out of Los Angeles by Superscope, it was similar to, but of somewhat better quality, than the Wollensak tape recorders used in schools. The Wollensak was a workhorse, able to withstand knocks and bangs and the less than gentle handling by children. The Sony Model 102 was a small, compact reel to reel tape recorder which approached the size of later cassette recorders. It came with a cover case, a microphone, a plug-in cord. It had a volume and tone control, a footage counter, a volume meter for indicating loudness and quietness during recording, a control switch for forward and rewind, and a separate swivel knob which, when engaged simultaneously with forward or rewind control, produced

fast forward or fast rewind. It also had a separate knob for engaging tape speed: the economical tape saving 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches per second (ips) or higher quality 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ips. The 102 came with a reel of magnetic tape and an empty plastic take-up reel.

If I remember accurately, this machine cost upwards of \$60. I needed to buy an optional cord for connecting the tape recorder to another sound reproducing device, like a record player, for direct sound recording. This method of recording ensured that only wanted sound from another source was captured on tape. Ambient sound like the clatter of the projector, people talking, the rustling of clothing, doorbells or telephones ringing was unwanted and, using the direct recording cord, live sounds of surroundings couldn't intrude upon making a clean recording.

Riding my bike Saturday mornings, I was a frequent visitor to the Public Library in West Allis. I regularly used my library card to borrow vinyl record albums of classical music. There were some recordings around the house, mostly very large, old black wax 78rpm recordings of music which I didn't find complementary enough to accompany movies. I was pretty well inured to the fact big symphonic or full orchestral music was the right kind to use. Max Steiner's soaring music in *The Sea Hawk* saw to that, as did Erich Wolfgang Korngold's classical sounding score I heard many times watching *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. I became an avid listener of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Schumann, Smetana, Holst, Mozart, von Suppe, and so many other composers. I dabbled in listening to cultural music of Tahiti, Papua and New Guinea, France, Italy, even drumming and chanting by Native American Indians. There was a place in the library where a record could be played and listened to by wearing large, uncomfortable headphones. When I'd hear something I thought could work well with a piece of film, or all of a film, I'd borrow the album.

Classical, symphonic, and full orchestral music, I discovered, was much too big for my small film. Nothing by Beethoven and most other classical composers seemed to fit with slapstick comedy. Nothing played on a spinet conjured an image of a pie tossed in the face. Such classical music hadn't been written, or I was listening to all the wrong pieces. As well, so much classical music I was discovering started sounding much too familiar. I felt audiences would only hear and hum along with the identifiable music, thus losing track of what was in my film. Unexpectedly, the radio provided my solution. I heard and fell in love with a jaunty little instrumental, "Wheels" by The String-a-Longs.

Perhaps twenty or so blocks away, on a side street which ran parallel to Greenfield Avenue, was a music shop dedicated to selling new and second-hand ex-juke box, ex radio station play and overly-promoted records in large disc small hole 78 rpm, and large hole small disc 45 rpm pressings. Most of the records in plain paper slipcovers were priced from 5 to 10 cents, with some titles and music styles deemed not-so-popular clearing out for as little as 2 cents each. Over time, I sometimes took a chance on those clearance cheapies, hoping I'd unearth some great piece of music which might sound as if it had been recorded especially for my film. Amongst the ex-jukebox 45s I got lucky and found a lone 10 cent copy of "Wheels".

When played with *Pots n' Slops* "Wheels" was excellent, but it also proved inadequate. The instrumental was too short for the running time of the film. Using the Sony 102, the problem was easily solved. The record was played and recorded three times in succession, thus accompanying all 6 and a half minutes of the film's running time.

No tape recorder keeps perfect synchronization with a movie projector unless they are specifically linked with a governor to perform that duty. As there was no such governor available to me, I made use of the variable speed control on the projector to try to keep picture and music as much in synch as possible. Playing the tape and watching the film, I was familiar with music accents which appeared to perfectly complement specific actions. Rarely planned ahead of time, such coincidence was a delight when it happened. It may not have been noticed by an audience, but I would always know whether film or tape was ahead, or behind, or right on time. For the most, using only music, the drift between film and tape wasn't all that critical.

### Chapter 9: It's Called Being a Director

School resumed following less than two weeks of Christmas and New Year's vacation. I tried out for a play, *The Ghosts Go West*, and won the lead role of Caleb Jones. We must have had close to seven or eight weeks for rehearsals. Our director was Mr. Carl Plehn of the English staff. 50 cents was the ticket price and the play was performed once, on a Wednesday night, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 p.m. in Central's school auditorium. The play's plot took place in the late spring. Curtains parted on a town near Tombstone in a boot hill graveyard. I made an unusual entrance. Instead of the expected walk onto stage, Caleb Jones began his wander down the aisle from a door behind the audience. As the old geezer I talked and mumbled to myself, shouted at imaginary things in the air, and carried a lighted lantern. I used that same awkward left foot right foot waddle when I'd chased Muttsy in *Pots n' Slops*. For this old-timer, my odd gait worked. Caleb Jones had a secret. Suspense built and the mysterious secret came out. It was a twentieth century play with a mixture of the Old West. The play's prologue had a large cast which included some of my friends: Tom Layman, Bob and Ron Zirbel, and Dick Harter.

Miss Constance Case was an English teacher who specialized in Drama, was the faculty advisor for the Thespians, and had a knowledge of backstage work including lighting, set building, costuming and make-up. She taught me how to use greasepaint, how to pull and shape crepe hair and how to apply spirit gum to make fake facial hair look convincing. Miss Case was a dynamo, one of those unforgettable teachers, who loved to impart her knowledge of the theatre. She even taught me how to use the fingernail on the pinkie of my right hand to apply the finest line beneath an eye for a stage lighting highlight.

Some cast members were required to wear character beards or moustaches. As the prospector Caleb Jones a hairy face was a necessity to make me look older than my baby-cheeked 15 years. So that a new beard and moustache didn't have to be spirit-gum applied every evening of rehearsal, Miss Case taught me how to make a crepe hair beard and moustache combination out of a pliable coat hanger. Authenticity tossed into the faces of the Greek Muses, the coat hanger beard looked a fake, was uncomfortable, but was an ever-so-convenient put-me-on and take-me-off make-up prop. The fake beard, I might add, wasn't used the night of performance. Then it was crepe hair and spirit gum which looked real.

I made new friends with boys and girls willing to put their egos on the line, make fools of themselves in front of peers, and who genuinely enjoyed being on a stage and hearing audience adulation. Clean-shaven Bert Folger, played by Ron Kiphart, and my Caleb Jones became fast friends during rehearsals. When we weren't on stage, we'd escape to the balcony. We were supposed to be running lines, memorizing and rehearsing. Voices had to be kept down. We'd do a few lines, and talked ever so quietly exchanging ideas about films I'd like to make or chatted about mysterious things we both liked because they scared us. Once in a while we stifled a laugh, got a giggle fit, or made an unintended noise. Mr. Plehn had the keen ears of a Sahara fennec fox and sometimes shouted up at us, "You! Up there in the peanut gallery! Keep it down!" The boom of behavior change fell and we'd sneak out of the balcony, creep down the darkened stairs into a hallway. Familiar in the light of day, at night these long dark passages were corridors of fear. It just seemed too much trouble and responsibility to click on a light, flooding the area with overwhelming fluorescence, and having to remember to switch it off

again. Skulking along those student thoroughfares in what seemed less than twilight to get to the boy's lavatory was an emotional, almost downy-necked hair-raising experience. It was a necessity for us to use the room; not always essential practice to turn on, and then have to remember to turn out the light. It just seemed all that easier to do what had to be done in the dark. It was fear of what retribution we'd face the next day for leaving on a light all night, for possibly being where we shouldn't have been without expressed permission. It was never good practice to be out of earshot of rehearsal in the auditorium.

My Two Snapshots of The Ghosts Go West



My first stage lead as Caleb Jones



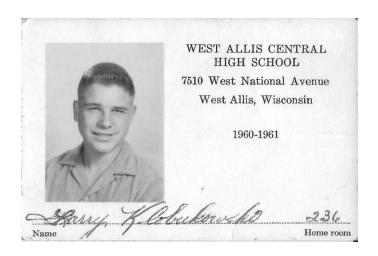
Ron Zirbel, Ron Kiphart and me posed on set



Camera Clui

Rehearsing for their February 8 debut in "The Ghosts Go West" are front row, left to right, Leann Stiefel, Pat Boyle, Sharon Janke, Larry Klobukowski, Jackie Zimmerman, Paul Fix and Karen Milos. In the back row, left to right, are Ron Kiphart, Darlene Felske, Fred Werner, and Helen Gronowski.

The item above was published in the school newspaper January 23, 1961. The photo was taken by a member of the Camera Club.



My High School ID. Note the deviation from cursive writing as I used flourishes to be more creative

I was doing Geometry with Mr. George Strom and memorizing lines in class for The Ghosts Go West. I held the script booklet inside the thick bulk of the Geometry text. Interesting how Hollywood movies try to elicit a laugh from an audience with such a set-up, except that the concealed booklet in the text might be a Playboy magazine or comic book. Mr. Strom was an old man verging on retirement and, like an old marker pounded into the ground, was firmly stuck in very old-fashioned methods of instruction. Write on the board, talk endlessly and point, more often than not to himself without consideration for developing minds in desks. Perhaps he'd taken to heart something newly announced or discussed in a teachers meeting. Once in a great while he'd surprise us with a saunter from his lectern to amicably strut up and down the aisles of his traditional arrangement of desks in straight lines. Aware of unusual movement from the front of the room, I'd quickly let drop the script closed onto the desk and hold my text. I pretended to contemplate the mysteries of mathematics in front of me, frowning as if in deep thought. I doubt Mr. Strom ever bought my ruse, but he didn't pester or question me, always walked past my desk as if it had never been occupied. He carried in his hand a yardstick-long pointer, occasionally tapping a shoulder with it as intimidation, a reminder of who was in charge. Mr. Strom's officious patrol lost all its dictatorial strength when we observed the cuff of his right trouser leg tucked into his dark blue argyle sock. It was distracting, particularly after he'd returned to the chalkboard to explain the workings of a theorem: A quantity is congruent to itself. a = a. If a = b, then b = a. If a = b and b = c, then a = c. They and subsequent general theorems made sense. Each theorem was numbered and tagged. Mr. Strom's bright idea about teaching Geometry was to call out a number. We were expected to have memorized the theorem, then pluck that number out of our brain, recite the theorem verbatim from the text, and present an example of how that theorem worked.

My left brain and right brain was in constant battle in any lesson that involved learning numbers. The left brain's style of thinking being logical, focused and analytical seemed to switch off. My right brain dominated and I was intuitive, holistic and creative. My thinking wasn't left brain linear. It was right brain non-linear. Trying to memorize and decipher theorems about angles, I quickly became confused. Supplements of the same angle, or congruent angles, are congruent. Complements of the same angle, or congruent angles, are congruent. The measure of an exterior angle of a triangle is equal to the sum of the measure of the two non-adjacent interior angles. The measure of an exterior angle of a triangle is greater than either non-adjacent interior angle. What? Really? Didn't understand this from that and this or that all over again.

My father's mind was left brain operative. He couldn't understand why I couldn't comprehend the simplest, in his mind, of theorems. He became exasperated at my inability to memorize and understand the theorems. "How can you remember all those lines in a play and not remember a simple theorem?" Dad's reasoning was that the play's lines were short-term useless, while a theorem was long-term, throughout-life useful. Maybe if I wanted to become a technical writer engineer like

my Dad, but such a career wasn't on my horizon. Sometime in my sophomore year, after another D in Geometry on my report card, with the single word "Gift" in the Remarks column, my father met Mr. Strom during an evening parent-teacher conference. Students were always encouraged to attend with parents. Mr. Strom stared over the top rim of his spectacles. "Mr. Klobukowski," he clearly enunciated addressing my father in the owlish tone of a senior bureaucrat, "Your son has done about as much Maths as he is ever possible of doing."

Far afield from geometry, in theater parlance I learned that any notice is termed a call, the notice board being the Call Board. Thus, rehearsals are "called" and not "ordered", "scheduled", or "held". *The Ghosts Go West* rehearsals were usually called at 6:30 p.m. and often finished around half past 9, sometimes going as late as 10:00 p.m. One or both of the Zirbels, occasionally Harter, Kiphart and I would go to the nearby Fleming's A&W after play rehearsal for a 15 cent burger, 5 cents French fries and a 5 cent root beer. It didn't come in the traditional frosty mug; rather a paper cup. Dating back to 1919 our A&W was on 77<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield Avenue, a safe hangout for the never satisfied, always hungry teenager with a big stomach, bigger eyes that appetite, and ever hollow legs.

Much as we enjoyed each other's company during school hours, in play rehearsal, and the rare playtime on a Sunday afternoon, Ron never acted in any of my films. His activities and mine didn't come together. Weekends when I'd liked to have him cast, he'd be playing saxophone in the school marching band, the pep band, school orchestra, or on a court playing tennis for school.

From Mr. Plehn's professional control, his temperament, and from knowing Ron Kiphart and the foolishness we enjoyed on and off stage during rehearsals and live performance, I subconsciously learned a lesson; manipulating people to your own means and deriving some pleasure in the process actually has a legitimate title. It was called being a Director.

#### Chapter 10: The Outer Space Western

Western Surprise

Stopping to browse in the West Allis Camera Shop after school or on Saturdays when I'd head for the Library became routine. There was a four-sided revolving rack which displayed boxed 16mm and Standard 8mm silent home movies. These were not 'home movies' in the sense of footage about family events. They were souvenirs, heavily cut-down versions of Hollywood theatrical releases. Some may even have referred to them as collector's items. The changing stock always fascinated me because it meant there were people out there with projectors who bought these heavily edited studio movies. I turned the rack manually admiring the titles, especially the science-fiction ones I'd remembered seeing in posters at the Alamo. Most 200 footers were priced beyond my means, but the 4 minute 50 footers were affordable. One had possibilities for me to devise a second Mickey & Larry comedy. It was called *It Came from Outer Space* (1953) and its cost was just about the same as a fresh roll of film for the camera. Also working as inspiration for a new comedy was Miss Case's imparted knowledge of beard and moustache making. A costume and make-up shop was located near the camera shop.

I decided to follow in the footsteps of Hollywood's biggest and dumbest decision folly; that of combining two genres which don't genuinely gel; they never have and probably never will. I'm talking about a blending of Westerns with Science-Fiction. Cowboys on horses and aliens in spaceships just aren't a comfortable fit. Of course, being a teenager, what did I know from better? Hollywood made the mistake of mixing those genres, so why shouldn't I! I had no means to create credible, convincing outer space special effects, so I bought *It Came from Outer Space*. It had, after viewing it several times, usable shots of an alien and shots of a spaceship crash-landing on earth and, later, the rocket flying away. I didn't need to try to make my own spaceship and get it to crash or fly. I could snip out the shots I wanted and insert them where I wanted into my own film. There were titles of ready-made dialogue I thought could also be timesavers. If a law existed then to dissuade amateurs from stealing and using professionally made movies in their own movies, I wasn't aware of it. What's the old axiom? Ignorance of the law is no excuse. What I neglected to consider was that the souvenir film was printed on black & white stock and the Kodak film I used was color stock.

Flushed with success or pacified with the mere gratification at having finished *Pots n' Slops*, I chose to make my next film. The second "Elkay" Production was slapstick with a spaceship. I called it *Western Surprise*, and the title was possibly the best thing about the film. Set in the old west it had the unexpected appearance of outer space aliens. Having enjoyed themselves making the first Mickey & Larry comedy, the same cast of friends wanted to do it all again. If we're lucky, we never outgrow our need for make believe. Making believe we were Hollywood was a huge drawcard.

The new film would include a bigger cast. More friends wanted to become involved and "play" too. Once again Father Leonard allowed us to use the school hall. Our entire set was a one saloon interior. We made use of the general floor area to set a few card tables and chairs. We also used the stage. It had a painted backdrop of a snow scene which, oddly enough, I thought appropriate. We should have had dancing girls in frilly frocks with some overweight tickler of the ivories playing the honky-tonk piano. We didn't. Just goes to show I hadn't taken enough notice of

what should have been stock stereotypical in an old west's barroom. Maybe I couldn't get frilly dresses, or maybe I couldn't convince any girls to put aside their shyness or self-consciousness in front of a camera. One girl was willing... not, however, for high-kicking the can can; Helen Gronowski had some stage acting experience. She was a junior who'd been in the prologue of *The Ghosts Go West* and Helen was keen to play Annie Oakley. Freshman Dave Wunrow played a card shark. He looked a Hollywood cowboy extra wearing his black hat, boots, denim jacket and jeans; and he smoked cigarettes. Mightily-girthed Joe Burbach and little shaver Jerry Leslie were C.Y.O. friends who went to Pius High School. They were Mike's school friends.

I'd learned a valuable lesson from not having made corrective alignment in the parallax viewfinder of the Kodak Brownie Turret camera on my first picture. This time I took more care to make that adjustment. I also used a smaller aperture setting for accurate lighting. As before, I shot this new film in chronological order. I expected everyone in the cast to show up at the same designated starting time.

Some cast members arrived dressed in what would pass as cowboy gear. Others wore everyday knock-around clothes which happened to be checked shirts and blue or black jeans which passed for believable old west gear, my friend from high school Mike Weiskopf, for example. His cowboy hat, nevertheless, looked more like a sombrero with a frayed brim, something more appropriately placed on the head of a cornfield scarecrow.

Dick Harter and Ron Zirbel would have also picked up some experience with crepe hair from Miss Case and would have remembered how to fluff it and apply it with spirit gum. They helped to apply facial hair, but I had to make the sideburns, or mutton chops on the sides of Dick's beard line.

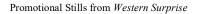
Bill Franson's nickname was Farmer. He was saddled with that moniker for, well, remember Lumpy, Wally's friend in "Leave It to Beaver"? Bill moved with a lumpish gait. Being ungainly, Bill sometimes came across as rather slow and unaware. He wasn't, of course. I know his grades were better than mine. Bill was a year behind me. After 8<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Al's, he came to West Allis Central High. Bill just grew faster than the time needed for his body to adjust. "He has feet," my father would describe, "like gunboats." Bill had prominent upper teeth, hair as red as Raggedy Ann's, and he wore glasses with lenses as thick as the bottoms of Coke bottles. His apparent awkwardness didn't stop Bill from playing on B Team basketball. As a cowboy, the crepe hair was used to play on Bill's easy-going personality. I made him a large red moustache with twirled ends. He wore the kind of cowboy hat only found on cowpoke sidekicks like Gabby Hayes.

With a monster required, and no one specifically cast, I chose the tallest actor, Bob Zirbel. He'd shown up in a dark blue and white checked shirt and black Levis, no doubt expecting he'd be cast as a cowboy, and we had no choice except to let him wear what he had. No one, least of all the person in charge - me - had planned a costume for a monster! This was an aspect of movie making I learned by making mistakes, those things which are later chalked up as experience. I applied a thick coat of black crepe hair all over Bob's face. He looked like a black-haired Yosemite Sam instead of a werewolf. It's worth mentioning here that using spirit gum is akin to working with toxic chemicals. It smells strongly of paint thinner and nail polish. Miss Case had always advised its application should never be onto freshly shaved skin. It could burn, irritate, cause a rash, itch, maybe even require medical treatment. If none of those side effects presented themselves, it was a surety it would, at least, sting. All any of us hoped was that no one had an allergic reaction. Poor Bob had the spirit gum painted onto his forehead and cheeks. As spirit gum dries, it contracts the skin. Teased crepe hair is stuck on and manipulated into place. Loose hairs have to be trimmed with scissors. Loose ends tickle and annoy. Spirit gum dried and holding crepe hair in place, the actor is aware of warmth generated from closed pores. And... it... itches. Constantly. To complete the monster's face, Bob had large black wraparound sunglasses. I suggested he wear them. He looked like the monstrous mutant fly from, what else, *The Fly* (1958).

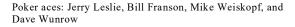
The monster needed a keeper. A title I wanted to use from the souvenir film started with the word "We". Tom Layman became the keeper. He didn't show up wearing anything that looked cowboy-ish, just his normal cords and a white T-shirt. I gave him a stupid-looking hat to wear which may have been a dime store Davy Crockett hat of fake fur and vinyl with the coonskin tail cut off. He wore my play acting prop of wire-rimmed spectacles, same as I wore as Caleb Jones, and a cape of maroon velvet. He didn't really look much like an alien. He looked like he'd been grubbing around the bottoms of boxes at Goodwill.

I actually shot a title which introduced Mickey and Larry as the key performers. We were stage performers: acrobats, jugglers, magicians, something a freak show would reject. Jerry Leslie brought us onto stage with the title: I PRESENT THE GREAT-FRUITS. GREAT-FRUITS? Oh... Sheesh! The title was supposed to have read I PRESENT THE GRAPEFRUITS, but there weren't enough Ps in the letter set to go around. I didn't have a P that day. Why didn't I think to change the title to: HERE ARE THE GRAPEFRUITS? I could have called the performers something else, but Franson used a grapefruit to throw at the inept pair. It seemed most appropriate, as if a foreshadowing device for the finished film! We deserved Franson's toss of the grapefruit! I somersault onto stage. Mike trips over me and falls. I'm carefully covering my neck. What a giveaway to lousy acting. We never practiced tossing plastic bowling pins ahead of filming. Had we, I'm sure we'd have presented a somewhat credible act. As is, it was all fiasco without finesse.

A cream pie in the face was a standard slapstick gag. We used one, but it was later discarded. The cream pie was just spray-can whipped cream in a use-once aluminum pie pan. It had no weight, so it didn't fly through the air. A shot made with Muttsy licking cream out of my ear was also discarded because, on its own, it made no sense in the picture. This was another lesson in editing learned, whether it's done in camera or with a pair of scissors after processing. A shot only works in a film when it's in context. A shot has meaning, and makes sense, when it depends on what comes before and after it. No matter how impressive, how perfectly-exposed, and perfectly-composed the individual shot, on its own and without context, it'll make no sense.









Mickey & Larry captured by Bob Zirbel, the Fly Monster.

The scene does not appear in the film.

The most successful sequence was Annie Oakley's trick shooting. Dave Wunrow's parents disapproved of his smoking, but he figured they'd never see my film anyway. (In the long run he figured wrong!) Dave clenched the cigarette end between his lips for Annie to shoot from his mouth. The bullet lights the cigarette and Dave shows how well by sucking a couple of good drags off the butt. Annie's next shot shocked audiences. In fact, it shocked me when I saw how well it worked. Annie has something in her eye and aims at a wrong target. She's supposed to shoot another cigarette from the mouth of a very nervous derby-wearing, mutton-chopped Harter. Time and again

Jerry the stage barker realigns Annie's rifle onto her subject. Bang goes the rifle, smoke billowing. Slowly Dick rotates to show the audience the bullet hole and flowing blood on the side of his head. It was too gruesome for comedy. I didn't cut the scene.

Thereafter, the whole film evolves into, more or less, a chase. Old-time silent comedies, especially Mack Sennett's, were like that! Actors tired quickly and, instead of sticking to the story I'd planned, I improvised to save time and let everyone go home. The aliens chased us. We chased the aliens. At one point, I chase after the monster with a plastic baseball bat. Going through a doorway, I somehow managed to poke myself in the eye with the end of the bat. It took a while for the sting to abate so I could open my eye without it slamming shut and watering. The result of poke in the eye clearly shows in the next shot. I'm in the doorway breathing heavily from running and the title card reads, I CHASED HIM AWAY. My eye is visibly squenched and reddened.

The monster is back! How he managed to get the baseball bat is only one of my continuity glitches. Zirbel's fly monster thumps Franson on the noggin. That's the last we see of Bob Zirbel. He had to leave the set and go to his job. In our hurry to get things over and done with, I never noticed Tom Layman was taking a cigarette break while I filmed a resolution sequence where monster and keeper find each other after they were separated. There's Tom, puffing away in shot, looking into camera, giving it all away that he's human and not an alien from outer space. The monster embraces his keeper. What's that? Red hair? How did the tablecloth-checked shirt become a dark maroon shirt? After Bob Zirbel left to keep his job, Bill Franson took on the role of the monster. Harter fixed his face with the black crepe hair. Had I known what Bill could do as the fly monster, he'd have had red crepe hair from the start and been the fly monster. Bill used simple effective stage business with his body, his hands, and his eyes. His was a funny monster and Bill was fun to watch.

There's an unusual prop in one of the final shots. On stage is a chair. With aliens in pursuit, I run into shot, sit on the chair, and jump up. Something on the seat has pinched my backside. I pick it up, examine it, place an index finger into its jaws and squeeze. I quickly extricate my finger. The red-haired fly monster advances on me from one side, his keeper from the other. I use the pincer action of the object to snap the noses of monster and keeper. For no reason I draw the audience into the picture by rushing at the camera opening and closing the object's scissoring action. The object was a curiosity, a hand-carved wooden nut cracker shaped like an old man's head, the two handles opening and closing the jaws. I think it had belonged to Dziadzia. I've no idea why it was on set, but it came in handy to almost conclude the film.

Nose pinching completed, the aliens are frightened by a creature new to them. It's Muttsy the wonder dog. Franson's monster enticed him with a dog treat to get him to trot in their direction. The dog was tired too, I guess, or it didn't have any reason to chase Franson and Layman. Muttsy should have barked at the aliens. He was too engrossed in chewing his treat. The YIPES! intertitle actually looks out of place. No one on screen looks terrified, or concerned. In fact, Muttsy's on his back and Franson grabs the dog by the tail taking control. It should have been the other way around. Other cowboy characters back and bump into each other on stage. I think the group included Bill Franson's brother, there because Bill was supposed to go home for supper. I needed to finish my film, so I put his little brother into the picture. Franson is shot in the backside. He jumps. He and his keeper run off stage. The aliens blast off, courtesy of *It Came from Outer Space*, back into space; the professional title clipped from the souvenir movie reading, "Well, they're gone." Nothing profound, that's for sure. Mickey and Larry, with my brother Steve in the same red sweatshirt he wore in *Pots n' Slops*, and Franson's brother cheer. In celebration the rifle should have been shot into the air. No reason for it, but I fire into the audience, as la the final scene in Edison and Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903).

With my new film all shot in chronological order, editing was easy. Holding footage to the light, I was able to see where the cream pie sequence didn't work and snipped it out. Other shots should have also been cut, but I still hadn't learned from *Pots n' Slops* to do re-takes.

Nothing better was on hand to replace the bad. The black & white *It Came from Outer Space* footage was easy to look at when holding up to the light. Small as is the Standard 8 frame, my eyes even picked out words in dialogue titles. A giant eye moving toward the camera, a space ship crashing to earth and forming a crater, camera movement toward the porthole of the ship, the ship later blasting off; all was cut into my own footage seamlessly. Or so I thought...

Upon projection of the newly sequenced film, I learned that film thickness in the gate influenced picture focus. Black & white film is not as thick as color stock. Every time I focused for the movie's opening credits, I had to rapidly adjust the lens and refocus for the short, abrupt shot of an alien eye, refocus for more color titles, and again refocus when the picture changed to the spaceship crashing to earth. It was challenging to remember in which direction to rotate the lens to get quick, accurate focus, so audience wasn't aware it was being done manually. Get the rotation wrong and the whole alien eye effect was lost in a blur. As much as I thought insertion of professionally made footage would enhance my own picture, I was wrong. It was too obvious I'd stolen someone else's hard work. The black & white film inserted in my color film was more alien than my aliens. The difference between Hollywood's shots and what I shot was greater than the proverbial chalk and cheese.

We had a built-in audience for screening my movies in the Sunday C.Y.O. breakfast meetings. No one was overly critical of mistakes made. People watching knew everyone on the movie screen, but saw them in a different light. They were *actors* in a movie. And not just a home movie, either. My movies looked professional because they had titles. They told a story. They made us laugh. Everyone clapped when the title card for THE END appeared. It was a novelty.

Ever have a friend you couldn't stand but couldn't do without? Mine lived just down the street. A member of the C.Y.O. and a student at Pius, he was my harshest critic. His comments about my films were meant to be constructive except that I took every negative comment he made as a personal attack on me and my fledgling ability as a filmmaker. I judged his comments as mere jealous envy. Maybe that's why I didn't much like him. Our egos clashed. My ego, and the fact I was born Taurean, often steered my thought process like a railroad engine driving straight through a tunnel constructed of cement. I saw things one way, my way; others' opinions didn't jump onto my train. His suggestions entering my thought tunnel were as welcome as cold, coagulated grease ready to gum my wheels. Mine was an ulterior motive which led to a professional relationship more than a buddy-buddy friendship. I'm willing to bet his motivation was ulterior as well. We were parasitical in that we existed off one other because we realized there were more benefits working together than despising one another from afar. What's the old adage? Ah, keep your friends close and your enemies closer. It took me a long time to realize Lawrence Vanden Plas was genuine. Although on the surface it appeared he was against everything I did, deep down he was my staunchest supporter.

Lawrence wanted to be involved in making movies, but he didn't have the equipment. I did. He had a talent which I hadn't. We both knew how to take pictures, but he had the skills to develop and print stills. He asked to take pictures of us acting in *Western Surprise*. He gave me copies of his excellent, professional quality photographs as long as I'd allow him to be on set. Surprisingly, he didn't ask to act in the movie. His photos provided the kind of free publicity that massaged my ego, even if the Hollywood I created was all stuck in my own Never Neverland. Lawrence sweet-talked his way into handling my movie camera, getting to know its technical advantages and drawbacks, and eventually suggested he'd like to be my cameraman. He would take care of shooting the scene while I could concentrate on directing and acting. His argument made sense. There was no handshake agreement, just an arm's length understanding.

### Chapter 11: Making Like Errol Flynn

The Robbery

Notification Card inviting me to become a member of The National Thespian Society, Devoted to the Advancement of Dramatic Arts in the Secondary Schools, College Hill Station, Cincinnati 24, Ohio. Hand printed on the Name of Student line was Larry Klubokowski (sic). The card stated, "I am happy to notify you that in recognition of the meritorious work you have done in dramatic arts you are now eligible for membership in Troupe 838 of the National Thespian Society. Membership will be conferred upon students who are now eligible at a ceremony scheduled at 6:30 p.m. o'clock on May 20, 1961 in McCarty Pavillion (sic). Please call at my desk for further instructions. Bring this card with you. Constance Case, Troupe Sponsor. National Life Time Fee: \$1.50"

My first big role at 15 performing on a stage before an appreciative audience resulted in public recognition. It came later, after the fact, and I liked that. I had just turned 16. It appeared that what I had done hadn't just been fleeting or of the moment. Although there was no physical record of performance other than a program and a school newspaper article with photographs, the performance had lived on in memory. For my achievement, and before a group of my peers, a certificate was conferred upon me. Larry Klubokowski (sic) was a certified member of Troupe No. 838 of the National Thespian Society.

Flushed with success as an actor, I had an overwhelming urge to do more. When bitten by the bug of creativity, something... anything has to be done to alleviate that itch. It didn't take too much convincing to talk my family into making a quick movie one evening. Dad had been suggesting all along that our family should be in home movies. Well, I once had no choice and had to watch someone's home movies. People stood around looking awkward until someone off camera suggested they wave to the camera. Whoever used the camera moved it too fast to the right or too fast to the left on what should have been a picture perfect landscape, or they'd zip up and down a building, a tower, maybe even a tall basketball-sized person. The picture was blurry and made my stomach queasy. That was the kind of movie I didn't want to make. If a family home movie was going to come out of my Kodak Brownie Turret, it would have to be a family movie which was acted out and told a story.

A make-it-up-on-the-spot plot was built around the fact Mom was baking a cake for Sunday evening's dessert. I talked my Dad and sister Mary into taking turns either handling the camera and photographing the action or holding the Sun Gun. I intended acting on screen as well as directing. I would call for "Action" and, when the scene was finished, say "Cut." Mom, of course, had the starring role as a cake maker. Two thieves would break into the kitchen and steal the cake. It was simplicity itself. As one of the thieves, my brother Steve was made up with a gray crepe hair moustache. He wore my vest; the same one Mike Theoharris wore in both Mickey & Larry comedies, and a hat with a punched-out crown. Steve looked like a miniature version of Walter Brennan in one of his many western-themed Oscar turns. I wore my Dad's lightweight gray overcoat and his best homburg. Hats worn on men's heads had been around for decades and were still de rigueur in the early '60s. I played the boss thief; in my mind, a dashing debonair dandy with a striking sense of humor. I'd seen Errol Flynn portray such a character, a combination of menace and fun, in several of his more serious Warner Bros. films

including *Gentleman Jim*. Completing my emulation, I used Mom's eyebrow pencil to paint a pencil-thin moustache on my upper lip.





Steve is a miniature Walter Brennan and I am the incarnation of Errol Flynn

Shot in chronological order over a couple of hours, as on my two previous efforts, I titled it *The Robbery*. The whole movie could have been nothing more than Steve and me breaking into the kitchen, scaring off Mom, and stealing her cake. Little did I know it at the time, and was told many years later, that scaring Mom then probably wasn't a good idea. She was pregnant! Maybe she'd told Dad, but she didn't let on to us kids. So, of course, Steve and I did scare Mom. To extend the film's running time, more business was added. Steve spies a door and, wondering what's to be found behind, opens it. There is a wiggling bag of bones, a skeleton. Steve's Walter Brennan begs my Errol Flynn for comfort and aid, but I dismiss his every fear. My overacted charade indicates he's crazy. Announcing I'd check it out myself, "Ahhh-Illl goooo there," can be lip-read from my exaggerated silent screen speech.

Talk about hamming it up! If there was any more ham on this bone, a delicatessen could have opened to supply a picnic basket of sandwiches. Checking behind the door, nothing's to be found. On his own, again Steve looks behind the closed door. Yes, there are hip bones connected to ankle bones, and a head bone connected to the neck bone. Then the cake is seen. Mom is frightened out of shot. Walter Brennan and Errol Flynn each grab an edge of the cake plate causing a tug-o-war. To-ing and fro-ing, neither robber gains advantage. An overexposed green title card simply announces the film's end.

Fun to make, the end result, I decided, wasn't for inclusion in public screenings. I made the same lighting mistakes and title framing errors. Although everything on screen is perfectly watchable, it's that I hadn't yet mastered using the aperture. As much as I thought I'd compensated for the small distance between viewfinder and position of fixed lens, titles still came out misframed. There was always unwanted space at the bottom of the green title card. Wherever the card was set - on a chair, on the floor, against a wall – a bit of the floor or the seat of the chair showed up at the bottom of the frame. Lettering frequently brushed against the top frame line. But it wasn't just technical errors which marred the final product. This was, in my opinion, a family home movie which shouldn't be seen outside the living room. Easier said, and as much as it embarrassed me, *The Robbery* was shown in public. My acting – gosh all frighty – left much to be desired. It was no acting and all ham. So much for being a thespian!

Ham actor can be a term to suggest a poor quality actor with an exaggerated, unnatural style. My exaggeration, I felt, was necessary to convey ideas to my audience. I'd seen silent movies starring Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, Mabel Normand and Lillian Gish. Their acting styles were big. Their whole body was used to get an idea across and take the audience along with them. Now I was making silent movies and was imitating the same thing. What I hadn't

considered was that, in 1961, the intimacy of the camera was well known. Using a Medium Shot and especially a Close Up superseded the silent screen's Long Shot after Long Shot after Long Shot. Anything shot as Medium and Close Up now tends to look out of place, as exaggerated and magnified to the point of being ridiculous. Action in the silent flickers was filmed in Long Shot as if on a stage, and many pictures were on outdoor stages for set interiors because strong artificial lighting for movies hadn't yet been invented. Translating big stage gestures and big stage facial expressions to movie Long Shots was necessary. That paying audience member sitting in the furthest back seat row had to see everything.

So how does it come that an actor is labeled ham? Speculation abounds. A favorite theory is that the term is an abbreviation of hamfatter, an American word dating from 1875, which described seedy, second rate actors who, through lack of money, were forced to use ham fat to clean off their make-up. A variation is that the ham fat was used as a base for burnt cork by touring minstrels who blacked-up their faces. There was also a well-known song from the George Christie Minstrels days called "Ham Fat" which was about an amateurish actor. A troupe led by Hamish McCullough, nicknamed Ham, toured around Illinois around the 1800s giving performances that were less than wonderful. They were known as Ham's Actors. Ham has a derogatory meaning when applied to a third-rate performance of any kind. I personified Ham.

I could make up all the excuses and reasons I wanted as to why *The Robbery* wasn't a good film. Purely and simply, it was my own vanity I feared was at stake. I was going to be too embarrassed when others saw how terrible I was trying to be Errol Flynn. I dreaded negative comments relayed to teachers who might one day hence direct the school play. Most of all, and I know I earned and deserved it; I didn't want merciless ragging from friends.

# Chapter 12: So What If Errol Flynn Played Captain Blood

Rivals of the Treasure

ophomore year completed, over the lazy summer my creativity didn't make time to take a vacation. My skills with tools of any description have always been lacking. My father could repair just about any electrical appliance, solder wires, repair a leaking tap, hang a picture or hang a door. He could dive under the hood of the car and change spark plugs or an air filter, slide under the car and change the oil, or wield a wrench to loosen nuts and change a tire. According to my father, I didn't know a screwdriver from a hammer. I recall one weekend Dad suggesting I build a birdhouse. I came up with a structure. It didn't look like a birdhouse. I wasn't going to be a carpenter. In Art classes at John Dewey and at Central, I had learned basic handling of a manual jigsaw, how to glue wood and sand it and how to use paint and brushes. As soon as summer vacation was official, I busied myself in the basement with Dad's hand jigsaw, some wood, and some paint. This was preproduction for a new "Elkay" Production and I was making props.

Mickey & Larry comedies were relegated to the past and would stay there. Disappointed with our last effort, we convinced ourselves we weren't Stooges. It was time to get serious, time to make high drama, time for adventure, time to make like a real Errol Flynn. His swashbucklers had made a big impression, be he pirate, a knight of the realm, or robbing from the rich to give to the poor as Robin Hood. His adversary was always the accursed Basil Rathbone. The battle of good and evil climaxed in every film with a spectacularly choreographed sword fight. That's what I wanted to do. It didn't matter that I knew no one with fencing skill, nor anyone who might teach us how to handle a sword. In the basement I made swords. I made cutlasses, broadswords, a dagger, and, for myself, a large Moorish blade.

My next "Elkay" Production was going to be a pirate movie. It didn't matter that Milwaukee wasn't anywhere near an ocean. It was on Lake Michigan. It didn't matter because I had no ship on which to sail. My pirate movie would be firmly grounded. Lesson learned from cutting and inserting footage from another source, I wasn't about to make the same mistake again. Any highlights film featuring pirate ships would remain in the shop's display. My pirates would walk on land. I'd let my audience assume they'd already disembarked. My story would deal with how pirates dealt with treasure after it had been purloined. You know how X always marked the spot on a map when Long John Silver buried his treasure, and when Spin and Marty or the Little Rascals searched for buried treasure? There was my story, how that X ever ended up on a map. The simple task of burying treasure was complicated by another bunch of buccaneers wanting to get their greedy hands on it, and usurping the treasure before it ended up underground. There would be ample opportunity for untrained sword play.

Of course I played the pirate leader. The fact I looked nothing like Errol Flynn under the heavy black beard of crepe hair was neither here nor there. Errol Flynn was a man in charge. So was I. In my clan were Tom Layman as my right-hand man, Bill Franson as the muscular pirate, Ron Zirbel as the fat sidekick, Joe Burbach as the husky pirate, and newcomer Randy Reinhardt as

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Popular series of TV shorts that aired as part of ABC's "Mickey Mouse Club" from November 4, 1955 to December 13, 1957. There were 3 serials in all set at the triple R Ranch, a boys' western-style summer camp starring Tim Considine and David Stollery.

the cabin boy. The opposing pirates, wiry Mike Theoharris and newcomer Jim Lewandowski as a blood-thirsty swordsman, were commanded by rival leader Dick Harter. Two groups battling throughout, the film was titled *Rivals of the Treasure*.

A swamp, a lagoon and a dried up waterfall in Greenfield Park was the nearest water. It was a park. People played there all the time. We were playing too, playing at pirates. We walked to the park, a bit of a hike from 96<sup>th</sup> Street to 116<sup>th</sup>, the southern and 'wild' portion as opposed to the golf links near 124<sup>th</sup> Street. I didn't think of it as advertising, but we wore our costumes.

Lunches and drinks, movie props and make-up were carried inside our largest prop, a chest. No one did a double take nor even bothered giving us a first look. We were kids at play. Application of the crepe hair beards, moustaches and sideburns happened after we found our first set. I tried something new by incorporating opening titles into the action of the film. I had painted my company logo and the film's main title onto large oven-sized cardboard box panels. Carrying the treasure chest, the pirate clan walked past each title. This was a method for giving the film a name and to familiarize my audience with the look of the pirates. To ensure identification, a low angle medium close up shot was made of the string of pirates walking past the camera. My 8mm frame enlargement of pirate me from that shot is pictured right.



Lawrence Vanden Plas was my cameraman. It was his idea to do the medium view of each pirate from a low angle. On screen, it would look spectacular. It was a brand new kind of shot added to my moviemaking repertoire. Lawrence had the clues for making good pictures. I resented him for it. Simultaneously, and with dismissive recognition, I welcomed his input. "Yeah, that might work. Go ahead and shoot it if you think so. I can always cut it out if it's no good." Vanden Plas added new dimension to my movies. I never cut a thing he recommended and filmed. I knew he knew what he was talking about. I was too cement-headed to admit it and give credit where credit was due, because it was Vanden Plas. He introduced the pirates' rivals in classic fashion. Crouched out of sight, they parted swamp rushes, looked knowingly at each other, and pointed their swords in the direction of their quarry.

I'd been brought up with the idea of never letting things go to waste. The concept applied to my moviemaking. In making my first three pictures shots were rarely rehearsed. We talked about each set-up beforehand and then we filmed. Sometimes more instructions were given by the cameraman while action was cranking away, at other times called out by someone acting in the shot. Mistakes were made. I didn't get perfection in every shot. Perfection would have led to re-takes and wasted film, and my budget was limited to two rolls of film, three at the most. Time wasn't wasted. We kept active, kept the action of the film moving along.

The waterless waterfall was a photogenic set. Fashioned of rocks which formed an alcove, it was surrounded on all edges with shrubs and wild weedy growth. From the top of the waterfall to the bottom was a drop about the height of an average man. It was as good a set as one wanted for a simple action of moving a treasure chest. Most of us leapt or bounded from the ledge. Husky Joe Burbach completely forgot about being a pirate. Before he crouched to sit on the ledge and lower himself gently to ground level, he grabbed at the creases of his trousers to lift them, a mannerism men used to prevent pants' backsides splitting. Given his size, Joe probably did that maneuver every time he sat down. As a burly pirate, it looked out of place. Ordinary pirates have no vanity and wouldn't care if the parrot on their shoulder had crapped on it. I guess Joe thought he was no ordinary pirate. In the same shot – it was a lengthy one – Bill Franson, who in previous shots was bare-chested, suddenly was caught on camera wearing a blue polo shirt. Worse, he'd forgotten about taking off his glasses. I can still hear myself complaining, "Franson, you got your glasses on." I guess the shirt didn't really matter enough

for reprimand. Embarrassed, and it showed, Bill turned from the camera, deftly removed his glasses, and didn't quite know what to do with them. I remember patting him with my sword saying, "Just pick up the chest and we'll get out of shot." The scene finished when I gave Ron Zirbel an order, the title card reading GUARD THIS CHEST.

At the time of shooting I wasn't aware I was setting up a classic scene of divide and conquer. It was something I may have picked up from watching monster movies as far back as the Pearl or the Paradise. Watch any scary movie from yesterday or today and that's always what happens. Set in a cabin in the woods, in an old dark house, in an underground maze and crypt, the idea is to isolate characters from the group and, one by one, kill them off. That's exactly what happened for the entire running time of my film. A clash of swords and Zirbel is slashed on the head by rival leader Harter, my 8mm frame enlargement pictured below left. Copious amounts of ketchup were squirted to make head and chest wounds, and to decorate the length of Harter's stabbing sword.

The next one slathered in ketchup was muscular Bill Franson. He gave himself a good fighting chance grabbing his attackers around their necks before the dastardly rival leader ran him through with his sword. Actually seeing the sword slide into Bill's chest was a magnificent effect. The shot was set up to show Bill and his head-locked enemies in profile, 8mm frame enlargement pictured below right. Harter thrust the sword into the space formed by Franson's away-from-camera-view armpit.

Frame Enlargements from Rivals of the Treasure







Ron Zirbel and Dick Harter

Bill Franson attacked by rivals Mike Theoharris and Jim Lewandowski, and head-locked

Everyone got their chance to wield sword against sword, except for Randy Reinhardt. A year younger than the rest of us, he was built smaller than any of us. That's why he was called the cabin boy. He was in the same grade as us because he'd skipped a grade in elementary school. There was no specific title card to distinguish one pirate from another. Nothing informative was filmed to show he was a cabin boy, and there was no ship handy with a cabin for him to be its boy. Still, that's how Randy was referred to on set and it was mostly due to his small stature. So much smaller than the rest of us, to have cast Randy as a full blown pirate would have seemed at best ludicrous. To milk audience emotion we used something deliberate in killing off the cabin boy. No one had thought we first needed to set up the cabin boy as a character to care about or pity. Audience is left to accept that the rival leader doesn't want to duel with a boy. To get him out of the way without a face to face engagement, Harter creates an open space between himself and the treasure chest after throwing his dagger and seeing it plunge into Randy's torso. It was impersonal, like swatting a fly. With a dagger coming out of almost nowhere, Randy had the screen time to travel the emotional gamut of death throe from A to Z. With his pirate captain and the right-hand man holding him, as I'd seen in too many B grade features, Randy gives vital information through an agonized grimace and a pain-wracked pointing of his index finger. We pick up and cradle Randy's mortally wounded body. I guess that's what did him in. We must have opened up the stab wound and killed him. Tom Layman and I looked at each other rather stupidly. Should we put him down? We did. Should we bury

him? We didn't. That would have taken up too much film and too much unnecessary running time. Anyway, dead pirate corpses are always left for the birds to pick or the crabs to eat.

No one ever sees the rivals actually get their hands on the treasure chest, but they must have. The chest is nowhere in sight of the pirate captain, his right-hand man, or the lifeless body of the bloodied cabin boy. The rivals must have taken it after Franson was slain, or did they? No matter. More important to us was the action, more sword fighting, not plots details, just like Hollywood B pictures with plot holes big enough to drive trucks through them. The pirate captain and his right-hand man move out of shot.

Layman died disgracefully, but it really wasn't his fault. As the right-hand man he had to be cut down; Tom wanted to deviate from the script and win. It showed. Off camera came a direction, "Let him get you in the head." Tom obeyed and practically posed like a life figure for a painter; his head forward so the rival Lewandowski couldn't miss. Chop! Chop! The only pirate left standing is the captain. Me. A pseudo Errol Flynn.

Just as should happen in adventure films, the good guy and the bad guy face off for a climactic duel. This was our Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone moment, except that our duel had a twist. Neither pirate was a good guy. Me? Well, I'd done nothing in the film to make me a bad guy. But I'd done nothing which endeared me as a good guy to my audience. I was as neutral as the color gray. Dick Harter as the treasure rival, well, at least he'd killed off a few of my pirate cohorts clearly establishing himself as the bad guy. As an emulator of Errol Flynn, best spell his given name replacing the 1 with an r, I never even came close. I was Error Flynn. I didn't look like Errol Flynn. I didn't act like Errol Flynn. And in the climactic duel, I died. *That* wasn't the expected outcome in an Errol Flynn movie.

The rival of the treasure faced his adversary in me, the pirate captain. Lacking any training in swordsmanship, we still managed a sequence of exciting and believable non-stop action. In the beginning of our death duel, Dick slashes my left arm with his cutlass. The action was preplanned, but became a subject of continuous error. "Dead arm! Dead arm," I'd heard Vanden Plas call from behind my camera. He was reminding me to keep my arm limp at my side, whereas my inclination was to use that 'damaged' left arm for balance. I constantly wanted to raise it, and did. Ketchup caused no pain and, other than vocal noise from Vanden Plas, I had no physical reminder of an arm which shouldn't have worked after having its tendons sliced.

Rivals of the Treasure: Frame Enlargements of climactic sword fight between the Pirate Captain and the Rival Leader



"Dead Arm," instruction behind camera.



Inadvertent slip is part of action.



Harter kills me.

A shady spot and deep into the afternoon, the grass was still damp from morning dew. It wasn't in the script. I slipped, lost my balance, and fell backward. Since re-takes weren't done, my unexpected tumble became an integral part of the action. Distracted by his offsiders, the rival leader's attention isn't focused on my creeping out of the damp scrub. When Harter turned to see me, it was too late. I threw a right hand punch which caused another unexpected and

spectacular reaction. The sword flipped from Harter's grip and spun end over end in a high arc and out of shot. Harter delivered a punch dislodging my pirate hat, in actuality, one of Dad's old homburgs worn sideways. Coming back unsteadily at the rival leader, as the pirate captain I lurched into another of Harter's devastating blows. Inadvertently, again I fumbled, this time tumbling over the treasure chest. An overt display of his utter cruelty, the rival leader picks up the pirate captain's own Moorish sword and kills him. Grasping for an actor's Holy Grail, my imaginary Academy Award, I swooned, gasped, and collapsed into a sudden heap with mouth agape, as if shaken and dislodged by a 7.8 on the Richter scale.

You'd think that was the climax of the picture. It should have been, but an even bigger twist followed. The surviving rivals, all three of them, should have been celebrating victory with a sharing of their spoils. Greed rose in each of their black hearts. After a brief 't te-a-t te' with their broadswords, Theoharris rubbed out the blood-thirsty Lewandowski. In pursuit of his leader Theoharris jogged through the thicket to confront the hard-hearted Harter at swamp's edge. They are the only two left. Swordsmanship determined the winner. Actually, the dueling on display between Harter and Theoharris was the film's most theatrically convincing. The rival leader continued his love for bloodletting and the challenger was disposed of in the same way a big dog chomps down a small string of sausages. The treasure is all his, all for the rival leader. As Harter used the nib of his sword to snap open the chest's lock, to the side of the frame are cast members who'd finished filming their roles. They're resting, sitting like animated bumps on a log. The chest's lid flipped open. Inside was nothing. Instead of lifting gold baubles, Harter's hand scoops up only air. Frustrated and angry, Harter snapped the blade of his sword across his knee and runs out of frame, in the unrehearsed action dashing past cast members who'd wrapped for the day. Title card read WHY? WHY WAS THE CHEST EMPTY?

There was no answer of course. Everyone fought everyone else and lost. The winner was also a loser. I showed in this film something opposite to what was expected. This film reflected a term I'd learned in English. It was called irony.

Rivals of the Treasure started a publicity bandwagon. Praise for the film began with an article in St. Al's C.Y.O. Info, our members' mimeographed newsletter. By-lines were seldom included, so I'm unsure who wrote the item. Likelihood is it was Lawrence Vanden Plas, given what's in the article.

Larry Klobukowski, amateur movie producer of our C.Y.O., has come up with another smash hit. I have just seen his latest creation 'Rivals of the Treasure' and I liked what I saw. It is in Eastman color and is one of the best home movies I have ever seen. The color is rich and the acting dramatic. The action moves along swiftly without a dull moment.

This movie will be premiered July 2 in the school hall at 8:00 p.m. Also to be shown will be Larry's first two films, 'Western Surprise' and 'Pots n' Slops'. Admission will be 10¢. Two-thirds of the proceeds will go for the St. Aloysius Gym Fund.

I wonder if it was Vanden Plas who contacted the local newspaper, *The West Allis Star.* I certainly don't remember having been that brazen. Maybe someone on the staff was a parent to one of our C.Y.O. members and had read the item in the newsletter. A reporter contacted me and asked if he could write a story about my films and the Gym fundraising premiere. My first real publicity in a real newspaper was published June 29, 1961. Vanden Plas' photograph of Mickey & Larry in the grip of the Fly Monster in *Western Surprise* called readers' attentions to the article headlined 'W A Youngsters in Movie Production at St. Aloysius.' It stated, as had the C.Y.O. item, that the youths (that had to be us) plan to donate two-thirds of their profits to Father Leonard Meyer's gymnasium fund. Included was information I found delightful about our method of making movies.

The films are produced with an 8mm camera, are colored, and have a sound track, of sorts. Most of the photography is handled by Larry Vanden Plas, Klobukowski said. He explained that all of the actors are also photographers, and often when one finishes a scene, he jumps behind the camera and starts reeling while the former photographer gets in to the set.

Premiere of *Rivals of the Treasure* was an unqualified success. We put a huge smile on Father Leonard's face with our contribution to his Gym Fund. There was no real profit, certainly not enough for my one-third to buy a roll of film, and it didn't matter. I liked the audience reaction.

## Chapter 13: World War II Just Got Bigger

From the Powers of Darkness

It was July. Summer wasn't nearly over and I had more moviemaking to do. Mom sewed and I asked her to make props of a Nazi swastika flag and a few armbands. Vanden Plas had a genuine German infantry helmet his father had souvenired from a dead soldier of the Third Reich. My father had his US military uniform in the attic. Friends also had their fathers' uniforms and souvenirs of WWII, a rifle or two from which firing mechanisms had been removed, a bayonet, a helmet, caps and visored dress hats. I owned a toy rifle which fired a puff of dust when the barrel was filled with flour. Only problem was that it had a Wild West swing action cock handle, a device not used in WWII. As long as the rifle wasn't cocked on screen, maybe no one would notice. In Long Shot, in an amateur silent movie made by teenagers, it could be fired and the puff of dust would be a credible special effect.

No one in the cast was old enough to remember World War II. I had done some reading in order to write a term paper for English. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William L. Shirer was one of my sources and an inspiration for wanting to make a World War II film with Nazis. Although set in the Japanese theatre, cruelty being cruelty, another inspirational book was Lord Russell of Liverpool's *The Knights of Bushido*.

It was a challenge to come up with a good title. Having been forced into buying a paperback thesaurus in dictionary form for English class, I thought I'd research for inspiration. I looked for synonyms for 'evil'. I figured war was evil, Nazis were evil, and evil deeds were going to be done. Looking up 'evil' led to 'demon' which led further to 'hell'. I finally settled upon an outrageously worded main title, proving that not every synonym in a thesaurus can be made to work appropriately. Just because one synonym for 'hell' is 'abyss' doesn't necessarily mean Audie Murphy's autobiographical exploits should be titled *To the Abyss and Back* and actually mean the same as the real Hollywood title of *To Hell and Back* (1955). A thesaurus can be used to impressive advantage, but keeping it simple and correct always works best. Many writers, especially in the hands of an inexperienced 16 year old writer, use a thesaurus for the wrong reasons. In search of exotic, fancy words and expressions with which to embellish can be a dead giveaway to a lack of understanding of how using language best works. Prior to going on set, I filmed the new movie's opening titles. The obligatory company logo was simple yellow lettering arranged onto the green title card, not the picture of the reclined lion, and mounted onto



a weathered wooden door. A direct cut to the next shot and the screen was filled with the Nazi swastika. It is slowly raised out of frame to reveal the picture's main title, an over-the-top *From the Powers of Darkness*.

Early Saturday morning on August 5<sup>th</sup> two cars drove cast and props to a Root River Parkway quarry in Greendale, a suburb adjoining West Allis. My Dad chauffeured some cast and school friend Ted Kinowski drove others. Ted was a big guy, solidly built, and always seemed older than the rest of us. Maybe he was. Ted Kinowski and I are pictured left in 1959. His mother was an immigrant from the old country and his father had walked out on the family after

they'd made it to the States. Ted was the first boy I knew who didn't have a father in the home. Ted was, in every sense of the word, the man of the house. He got his driver's license before any others in my class and he owned his own car, an old dark gray Nash Rambler. It wasn't an attractive car. It was functional. Ted's mother depended upon him for transport to go to her job, go shopping, and for visiting. It always seemed as if Ted was on her permanent call. He'd arrive and immediately announce the time he'd have to go because his mother needed him for some task at home, or to drive her someplace. Ted had to grow up fast and accept adult responsibility. For me as a movie director, even though I knew he was being a good son and a great help to his mother, Ted's participation was sometimes a minor inconvenience.

My new film was a story about war set in the surrounds of a French village. As before, certain details didn't come under scrutiny and just didn't matter. The quarry and its environs had no buildings which could have represented or faked a French village. No French tri-color was flown or shown. No title card would be written in a French turn of phrase. It was only my imagination which said 'French village' and I expected others, audience included, to pick up on the concept.

This story was going to be completely different from anything I'd already made. It would include two girls cast as French peasant girls, their sole purpose to give comfort and aid to American soldiers on the run from the Nazis. The girls would provide shelter, feed them soup, perhaps even give them a kiss. After all, every film I'd watched starring Errol Flynn had some romance in it. My new film was going to include a romantic angle.

All was fine and dandy as costumes, props and moviemaking gear was unpacked. Joan Gronowski and Ginny Meloche arrived in Kinowski's Nash. I can hardly remember what they looked like and here's why. Even though everyone had participated in a pre-shoot discussion of what would happen in the story, once the girls arrived on set, saw the peasant girls' dresses and aprons, they decided they didn't want to be French peasant girls. Joan and Ginny developed cold feet over the idea of having to kiss any one of us soldier boys. Not a foot of film had yet been cranked through the camera. Why the girls came to make such a decision, I'll never know. I can only guess that their vanity got in the way of a good show. Maybe their self-consciousness blocked any idea of their being seen on screen publicly pecking the cheeks and lips of boys. In high school idiom none of us were considered hunks, jocks, or could even be described as cool. Cozying up to any one of us, even if it was just make believe for the sake of telling a story on film, was akin to catching leprosy. It might possibly have lead to teasing by an audience of peers. After all, as happened with all my other films, it was a given my new film would be premiered at a C.Y.O. breakfast meeting.

This was the first of major changes to the story. No more French girls. Instead, they wanted to play boys' roles and dress up as soldiers. A foolish decision, but I agreed, just so we could start filming.

A new friend from the C.Y.O. group was John Schultz. I cast him according to type. His name was Schultz. He had the classic Aryan look, blue eyes and blonde hair. I asked him to play a German officer. However, I suddenly realized I was short one character, or maybe someone who'd been cast hadn't shown up. John was dually cast. His first screen appearance was that of an American officer. Ted Kinowski was cast in the William Bendix role, a big, dumbly affable, but loyal sidekick. Bearded in black crepe hair, Mike Theoharris resembled the new revolutionary leader of Cuba, Fidel Castro. I was Errol Flynn again, the film's hero. Ron Zirbel portrayed a sentry, his rifle trained on nothing more than air.

In the opening sequence, John orders me to deliver a gold satin flag to Company B. Deliver a flag? C'mon. Reconnaissance, maybe. Seek out the position of the enemy, maybe, but deliver a lousy flag? It wasn't Old Glory being delivered. What officer would send valuable manpower on a stupid mission through unknown territory infested with enemy soldiers to deliver a company flag? John Schultz did, that's who. That's what had been decided in the script. Next

stupidity in my script is the question asked on the green title card, CAN YOU HANDLE THE NAZIS? What was I thinking? That's the kind of question asked in a Three Stooges parody, or a Daffy Duck cartoon made during the War to bolster civilian spirit. Ham acting of the first order is displayed. I look into the camera lens and display my MacLeans-white grin while brandishing a bayonet. Mike looks to camera and authoritatively shakes his rifle. His gesture was supposed to convey confidence in shooting his enemy. Ted grits his teeth, his MacLeans-cleaned teeth on display too, and forms a couple of mighty fists as he strikes a classic John L. Sullivan pose. I thought our direct to camera action was Errol Flynn-ish and displayed American power, courage and strength. We bound off screen like kangaroos. We should have moved with stealth. Remember, this was supposed to be occupied France, territory which hadn't been liberated by American soldiers. We may have been caught in a pincer movement which hadn't yet pinched.

From the Powers of Darkness:Two Publicity Photos<sup>1</sup>







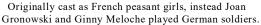


Schultz orders life or death flag delivery. Ron Zirbel rifle-butt's me as I punch John Schultz. Theoharris resembles Castro.

The introductory sequence is played out behind a large rock. It was supposed to be an American military encampment. Just in case my audience might misinterpret that fact, the American flag was firmly fixed to a pole and stuck in the ground behind that rock. With soldiers off leaping like lords in the Twelve Days of Christmas, a German patrol approaches the Americans' rock. One is Ron Zirbel. He had just been seen as an American sentry. German soldiers attack. I may have been the only one at public screenings to be aware of Nazi Zirbel shooting American Zirbel. It was common practice for us to play more than one role in my films because I couldn't always get the cooperation and time from a larger cast working for free. In Long Shot, we could get away with it. Vanden Plas got his chance to act on screen, always in Long Shot, and with most of his facial features hidden in shadow by a German helmet.

From the Powers of Darkness: My 8mm Frame Enlargements







My Hambone Acting!

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Photos by Lawrence Vanden Plas

Among those in the attack were my formerly cast French peasant girls dressed in German uniforms. Except for the brown pedal pushers worn by one, they looked fairly convincing. Until they ran! Then there was something not quite right about their gait. These two moving side by side came across as rather namby-pamby Nazis. They just didn't move like boys! Because they weren't! The German helmet on one girl's head bobbled as she joggled. The other girl ran with her left arm extended, wrist bent, hips moving in a side-to-side sway. Among my vicious Nazis were a couple of sissies. They wouldn't have been amongst American troops. They'd have been classified 4F.

So insistent were the two girls in not playing any kind of female role, they got into the tackle and affray of hand to hand combat. Except that they didn't. One of the girl Nazis shot Kinowski who collapsed backwards conveniently and convincingly. The girls participated in the full-on charge to capture the Americans delivering the gold satin flag. As soon as contact was made, both girls propelled forward to collapse onto their knees, roll over and bow out of the upstairs action. Theoharris and I were overpowered by the enemy. Throttled, knocked out, and captured, we were dragged to a thicket. This was the enemy outpost. The American flagpole was now a German flagpole. Again, just in case my audience hadn't picked up on clues, the swastika flag was the giveaway for this being the German outpost.

Adolph Hitler himself, played by John Schultz with a painted on squared-patch black moustache, arrives in full rant to question the macaroni out of the Yankee Doodles. Severe interrogation doesn't open the mouths of the captive Americans. I'd learned from John Wayne war movies that silence was akin to courage and bravery. Theoharris is punched senseless. As the other prisoner, I retaliate and sock Hitler on the jaw. Zirbel, now dressed in the uniform of a German guard, clobbers my forehead with the butt of his rifle. Another Nazi is Jim Lewandowski repeating his turn as a blood-thirsty pirate in *Rivals of the Treasure*. Only now he's a Nazi henchman, dog rabid and sadistic, who charges into shot bearing a pair of pliers. He clamps onto my middle finger nail demanding to know where we were going. Man, oh man, he could have saved himself and my finger a lot of grief. He only had to open his eyes and look around. There may have been another rock with another Stars and Stripes on a pole stuck in the ground to indicate the location of another 'secret' American encampment.

Mike awakes asking, WHERE'S OUR BUDDY? I indicate with an index finger and Vanden Plas' camera pan to the left reveals a grave. The marker is the rifle with its barrel buried in the ground, the dead soldier's helmet placed atop the rifle butt. Boy, those German soldiers had heart, didn't they, to have gone through all that work themselves to give the enemy a decent burial. Damn all consequence, Mike's enraged and attacks all three Nazis. That was my cue for action. With a surge of adrenalin, I join in the fray. Mike and I escape and, on our way and in the same action, blow a kiss and pat the helmet atop the rifle, the grave marker of our dead and buried buddy. I'd seen this heart-warming gesture done in feature-length flag-raisers, American propaganda disguised as entertainment. They bolstered audiences' hearts. The bottom lip quiver, the tight-lipped grimace and holding back of a teardrop, or an empty helmet air kiss always conveyed a softness of heart which lay beneath the surface of war's depersonalization, of a war that is hell, and of every soldier having been trained to be a killing machine.

With no French peasant women to give aid and comfort, as originally planned, and with cast including Kinowski and the girls disappearing to "go for a ride", no opportunity was open to sweet talk them into changing their minds. Improvisation was employed to save the film. We resorted to what we knew worked. The Chase. Separate the individual from the group and kill them off, just as had been done in *Rivals of the Treasure* and to a lesser extent in *Western Surprise*. It's well known amongst those in the Industry that artists borrow ideas from one another, imitation being the greatest form of flattery. Not only was I borrowing ideas from films I'd seen on TV and in the theatre, I was now overusing well-trodden ideas from my own "Elkay" Productions.

It could all have deteriorated into one long pursuit, clash, pursuit, and clash. Mike and I found something in ourselves we didn't know was there. We weren't afraid of the cliffs in the quarry. The only physical limitation faced was firm footing. Soft-packed ground gave way under our feet. Climbing up quarry hills was reckless and exhausting. In one instance, pursued by a couple of Nazis, Mike reached the summit, but I was stuck in his tracks. Earth broke and rolled away from my feet. I couldn't move up without going two steps back. A Nazi infantryman, Shultz in his third or fourth role, was close on my sliding heels. I called to Mike for a hand. I didn't want to waste all this footage because I got caught. I didn't know where to take the story if I'd been captured again. Mike couldn't reach far enough with his hand to take my hand. Clever lad that he was, in classic adventure fashion, Mike turned his rifle around and offered me the butt. Timing was perfect, as if it had been a stunt executed for a cliff-hanging serial. I grabbed Mike's rifle butt and he pulled me to the cliff top. I was just a cat's whisker out of enemy reach. One more second and Schultz would have seized me by the ankle of my combat boot. It was that close.

With film continuing to advance through the camera in this one long shot, Mike ran from the cliff face. I should have followed. Maybe we hadn't worked out what we were supposed to do next and were functioning purely on instinct, a Niagara Falls flow of adrenalin. I picked up my rifle and cocked it, quickly aimed, and fired. Schultz reacted by dying on the spot. Well and good, until Vanden Plas stopped filming and pointed out the anachronism. In the excitement, in the realism of what we were enacting, I did what came naturally. On camera, with the Western toy rifle in my hands, I'd cocked it! We talked over what had just been captured on film. We could do a retake, but could we get the same rush of action or, as I kind of anticipated, would it look as if it had been overly planned and rehearsed. Breathless from spent energy, I made the decision to keep what was in the camera. What was real was on film. Maybe, just maybe, no one would notice my cocking of the rifle, or if they did, maybe the realism of our action was reason enough to overlook it.

I noted what Jim Lewandowski did when I'd shot at him knocking him off the top of a cliff earlier in the chase. Without specific direction, he let himself fall, roll and tumble part of the way down the cliff. He lodged onto a chunk of level ground and didn't get up immediately. I told Vanden Plas to get a Close Shot of my dead prize. He used the Telephoto lens. Lewandowski never knew he was being photographed. Between thumb and forefinger, he was playing with a lump of dirt. He hadn't yet heard the command for "Cut", so he was still playing dead. Well, almost dead. Just wounded, maybe. Probably just tired from falling down.

For the next shot, since I hadn't thought to follow Mike after cocking my rifle and shooting Schultz, for continuity sake my idea was to be charged at by a Nazi. I'd be shot in the head and die a spectacular death worthy of any of Hollywood's best stuntmen. Ron Zirbel said he'd love to shoot me in the head. He'd been the foot soldier following behind Schultz. Vanden Plas set himself and the camera just below the cliff top, in the place where Schultz had been lying dead. Looking up, all of the action from top to bottom would be covered in a pan of the camera to follow movement. A rehearsal of Ron moving into shot was done just to ensure he knew how to move to where he'd be clearly seen. Vanden Plas called for "Action!" Ron moved into shot like it was his first time, raised his pistol and fired. I jerked back my head. The helmet flew off. I dropped my rifle and... grabbed my stomach. Not an action I'd expected to do, but that's what happened. The rest of the scene played magnificently. I tumbled head over heel, aware of myself in mid-air as only parts of my body glanced off the crusted red clods of dirt. It was exhilarating bouncing down the cliff face with my head tucked, shoulders used as pivot points, feet flying because I wasn't worried I'd break a leg or an ankle, or my neck. Collapsed onto my back at the foot of the cliff, Vanden Plas clambered down the cliff and made a Medium Close shot; the camera panning from my combat boots to my face, now dabbed in orange ketchup, and to my left hand resting in a puddle of rainwater. I lift my trembling hand, hold briefly, and then it drops back into the wet with a splash. Having melodramatically milked my screen time I expired with a flourish.

Vanden Plas came up with the idea to photograph Mike from the cliff top when it was Mike's turn to tumble down. My cliff fall, he said, looked really great, but the angle didn't show how high I'd been and how far I actually fell. I asked if I should do it again. I was willing. It was fun falling down and not getting hurt. Lawrence said what he had in the camera was good. The fall was fine. Mike's death should look different from mine on screen. He thought it would show the audience how steep and how high the cliff was; the picture showing depth and perspective.

From the Powers of Darkness, My Own 8mm Frame Enlargements





Ron Zirbel shoots me. Frame shows age cracking of emulsion.

Mike Theoharris' hair-raising fall down a cliff.

Mike is shown jogging along the cliff edge. We are to assume he'd always been moving away while I did my dramatic turn, and his character hadn't even seen me killed off by Zirbel. Oddly, rushing into shot to confront Mike, again it's Ron Zirbel. He surely got around, I guess. Ron was a busy Nazi because the others had already left the set, given up, gone home tired, and he was the only actor left besides Mike and me. Ron tries to wrest the rifle from Mike's hands. In the brief tussle, the rifle discharges into Zirbel's gut. The recoil causes Mike to lose balance, his left foot slipping over the edge of the cliff and sending him toppling. Vanden Plas only managed to capture on film Mike's loss of balance and a fleeting glimpse of horrific surprise on his face as his downward movement dropped him out of frame. Poor Mike! He plunged and none of the stunt made it onto film.

Mike had to climb back up the cliff face and do it all over again. Not only that, a different, fresh section of the cliff had to be found. Mike's unfilmed fall had loosened dirt and made visible creases and gashes. We were all feeling tired. Falling down can knock the wind out, as does having to climb back up again. Mike would fall again. Anything to make a good picture, but he wanted to be sure Vanden Plas was on the edge of the cliff and looking down to follow every bit of his stunt. Patience paid off. Filmed from the top, the height of the cliff clearly shows and the picture has depth. Mike's fall is hair-raising and breathtaking. It can easily cause an audience to gasp in wonderment. It's a wonder he didn't snap his neck.

Ron Zirbel was rewarded for having stuck around after everyone else had gone home. I gave him the film's final word about war's futility. Lying on his shattered stomach, he grimaces and inches forward. He looks over the edge of the cliff. He sees what the audience is left to fill with a vivid imagination, Mike's broken and lifeless body. Zirbel gasps and dies, his head dropping into the dirt.

There was a solitary hill with a lone dead tree. It wasn't worth shot or powder. Vanden Plas recommended that vision be the film's final scene, the last word on war, because when you die, you die alone. "Go ahead and shoot," I said too tired to consider his idea, too preoccupied with my own exhaustion. His was good advice.

Not so good was my thesaurus reference for a title to say the film had come to its end. In the early 1960s it was still expected and common practice to tell the audience when a movie had finished, always with a clearly worded title reading THE END. I put onto screen my ambiguous understanding of synonyms for all to see. I couldn't contain myself to keeping it simple, direct, and exact by showing two unmistakable words THE END; once again I filled the screen with the swastika and raised it out of frame revealing a green title card reading THE CONSUMATION. Isn't that a word used to describe the completion of the act of sexual intercourse? With a coarse slang word in place for the act, I may have inadvertently been saying my film was... Oh heavens, no, there's no need. I can leave it to the imagination.

The film was shot over nine grueling hours. It dawned on me that making movies took a lot more time than I ever expected. Others didn't seem think so. I usually had little trouble getting friends to act in my films; it was keeping them in order once I got them on set. Even though I wrote down ideas, described some of the action, rarely was my script followed. With cast pulling out of roles, getting tired of play acting and leaving the set, I came to the conclusion that I needed to cast more carefully, seek out friends and actors who were willing to commit and cooperate to the end. *From the Powers of Darkness* wasn't the film I'd set out to make. I thought it be a failure. Improvisation, however, saved my picture. Sparking the script toward the end were the falls from the cliffs. The daring change in direction to plunge down 40 foot embankments onto sand and stones made the picture memorable. It was a miracle we weren't busted up and in plaster.

Fifteen days after finishing the shoot, my film was booked for its world premiere on Sunday, August 20<sup>th</sup> in the St. Aloysius School Hall. I contacted *The West Allis Star* for publicity and a small item appeared. Whether due to the item's publication or someone making contact, I was telephoned by a reporter, a Mr. Joe Botsford, from *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, the city's morning newspaper. Mr. Botsford asked to meet with me and do an interview. He came to my home. His intention was to publish a story about my moviemaking and include a photograph to attract readers' attentions, thus giving city-wide publicity to my premiere screening. I gave him Lawrence Vanden Plas' publicity photo, the pose of Zirbel clobbering me in the head as I throw a punch at John Schultz (refer page 167). The story and picture appeared prominently in the newspaper two full days before my premiere screening.

The screening included my four previous "Elkay" Productions. Showtime was 7:30 p.m. with admission a mere 10¢. All of the proceeds went to Fr. Leonard's Gym Fund. The hall was packed. There were many faces in the audience I didn't recognize. More people than St. Al's parishioners attended. I felt exonerated. The audience knew nothing about what happened during the shooting of *From the Powers of Darkness*, just as they wouldn't be aware of any behind the scenes stories when they'd see Hollywood's movies. My audience accepted what they saw on the screen. The cliff falls thrilled them. My new film was a hit.

## Chapter 14: Too Much Publicity Spoils

A Walk in the Woods

Pollowing Mr. Botsford's article in the newspaper, Mr. David F. Behrendt of *The Milwaukee Journal* staff contacted me. He was interested in writing an article about my moviemaking. Was this newspaper rivalry? He cajoled saying that I was fast becoming the Cecil B. De Mille of West Allis. Publicity hound that I was rapidly becoming I acquiesced. Mr. Behrendt came to the house with an official *Journal* photographer. No usage of someone else's snapshot for the *Journal*, no sir-ee Bob. It was even more exciting to be interviewed by Mr. Behrendt than it had been with Mr. Botsford. After all I had been an employee, a *Journal* newsboy for almost four years. I talked candidly with a reporter I considered a colleague.

Each of my films was discussed. Anecdotes and comments I offered were directly quoted. When the interview was finished, the photographer made several shots of me in the stereotypical, old-fashioned, inaccurate cutting pose of my holding up a strip of film with a pair of scissors. An empty metal take-up reel mounted on the arm of my projector was placed prominently into the left foreground of the picture. It can be impressive if no one know how film is cut. This was strictly for the amateur and actually was my cutting method.

Appearing within days of the *Sentinel's* publicity, and without any premiere or ordinary screening planned, the *Milwaukee Journal* article was headlined 'Young Movie Maker Is on His Sixth Film.'

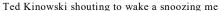
My sixth "Elkay" Production was a return to comedy. Bearing down was my junior year and I rushed to finish a new film before Labor Day, and before studies got in my way. The comedy may not have been my original idea. It possibly came from a comic strip or required reading of short fiction from English class. Called *A Walk in the Woods*, once again I didn't use the picture of the reclining lion with "Elkay" Productions presents. Instead I used a pan up a set of stairs to show the green title card with the name of my film company. The film tells the story of a man who goes walking in the woods, gets lost and is picked up by a couple of scientists who believe they've discovered a monkey man. I cast a bevy of familiar friends with whom I'd previously worked. Vanden Plas was a couple of years ahead of me in school, was preparing to go to college, and wasn't making himself available as cameraman. As had been done from the beginning, we'd all take turns. When we weren't filming, we were acting, and when we weren't acting, we held the camera in our hands. Everyone always got a chance to do some filming.

A Walk in the Woods posed no insurmountable problems. Requiring little make-up or costumes, it was mostly acting. I cast myself in the lead again, this time as the man who goes walking and is mistaken for a monkey man. Costume was a white long-sleeved pullover shirt with broad horizontal stripes. I chose a pair of pants I hated, and for good reason. They were mustard colored corduroys which made my ass look huge. I'd hoped the pants would wear out, get torn, become as dirty as to be beyond laundering. For make-up, all I wanted was a pencil thin moustache to emulate my screen hero. Scientists, played by John Schultz and Mike Theoharris, needed facial hair so they'd look older than their 16 years. John wore a white suit and a pith helmet. Mike chose his maroon jacket and gray school pants and didn't bother wearing a hat. He probably should have because the black moustache and goatee didn't match his curly blonde hair. Ted Kinowski was cast as a friend, no stretch for him then as an actor. He could wear whatever he wanted and his screen time would be limited. Ted's casting was due to his owning

a car. In the short time between my war film and my woods film, Ted traded in the old Nash and bought a '55 Oldsmobile. It was a roomier car and accommodated the film's complete cast. Cast as my other friend was Ron Zirbel.

My 8mm frame enlargements from A Walk in the Woods







Mike Theoharris as a nutty professor

I didn't know better when I decided Ron should play a black American character. Until well after World War II, Hollywood was notorious for depicting black Americans as menials or rolling-eyed, shuffling half-wits. Minstrels were happily shown on screen, many of the performers being white people in black face. Perhaps most famous of the silver screen's minstrel portrayals was Al Jolson singing "Mammy" and "Sonny Boy". Having grown up seeing white actors in black face as Amos and Andy in a briefly popular television show in the 1950s, I molded Ron as the Stepin Fetchit stereotype with the slow and lazy rooster strut for a walk. His face and hands were covered in burnt cork. In its day, it was funny. Watching Ron in the role today is nothing short of cringeworthy, embarrassing. The stereotype is even more demeaning when Ron as Calhoun is mistaken for the elusive monkey man the scientists seek.

The original draft was constructed of 64 scenes with 37 title cards. I must have been desperate to make a talking picture. Having to watch a silent film which incorporated dialogue cards numbering more than twice the number of action shots should have been deadly. It was supposed to be a motion picture, not a reading picture. Title cards were cut from the script. Even more could have come out without harming the story and our audience left to wonder what was happening. The story could have been told without any title cards whatsoever had acting been acting as intended.

I planned the film's punchline to be filmed on the steps of the Milwaukee Public Museum. Our loopy scientists would lead their captured, tied-up monkey man to the doors of the hallowed halls of anthropology. Ted's Mom had booked her son's time for grocery shopping late in the afternoon. As the day eventuated, more time than was available was needed to drive downtown for a couple of shots and drive back home again. As always happened, filming took longer than

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Stepin Fetchit (May 30, 1902-November 19, 1985) was born Lincoln Theodore Perry in Key West, Florida. He claimed the name came from a race horse on which he won \$30. However, he came to Hollywood as a member of a comedy team known as "Step and Fetch It." Although denying he epitomized on the screen the slow-witted, shuffling, head-scratching black, in spooky pictures he'd roll his eyes, his knees would bang together, and he walked, talked, and thought seemingly in slow motion. It could take his character almost a minute to say: "I'se be catchin' ma feets nah, Boss." At the first sign, however, of some nameless terror, he moved very quickly indeed. His legacy is that he was the first black actor to receive top billing in movies, and one of the first millionaire black actors. But he will always be remembered as the lazy, barely literate, self-demeaning, white man's black. Fetchit was the embodiment of the nitwit black man.



expected. We just wanted to finish the picture before our day was finished. The final gag was shot on the steps of the West Allis Public Library, Mike Theoharris and John Schultz pictured left in my 8mm frame enlargement. Any municipal building with a long or wide staircase would have sufficed. Had more thought gone into preparation, instead of the headlong rush to get another picture made, the likelihood is that *A Walk in the Woods* might have remained on the backburner where it belonged! It's a less than stellar addition to the output of the "Elkay" Productions.

#### Chapter 15: Twins and Treading the Boards

arely exceeding 110 lbs, my mother has always been a slightly built woman. Imagine her size ballooning to burst, when each and every step was a chore, where going up and down stairs was considered heavy exercise, and where dressing for a day in or a night out meant changing from a single color muu muu to one with a print. While I was enjoying making movies one after the other during 1961's summer vacation, my mother was struggling to move without feeling like an Olympic weightlifter. Throughout much of 1961 my mother grew to be heavily, and I don't exaggerate, very heavily pregnant. Whenever Ted Kinowski visited, he'd unashamedly ask Mom if she was going to have an elephant. Mom was so huge, we wondered if she was carrying an elephant, one baby giant, or an entire baseball team. Pain exceeding Mom's threshold often, but especially one Saturday, she went into the hospital. Early Sunday morning Dad woke us to confirm that tests had shown Mom was carrying twins. Mary, Steve and I were given the privilege of choosing names for the new family members. We decided the twins were going to be boys. Why? No particular reason. Girls' names never entered our discussion. Little haggling required, we chose apostles Matthew and Andrew. Whenever our new little brothers would be required to research their namesakes in Catholic grade school, as we had, theirs would be prominent and easy to find. Not only that, we just plain liked the names, my sister Mary especially.

"Hail to the President," was an address I learned to appreciate. As is the American tradition following every September Labor Day, the new school year began. I commenced my 11<sup>th</sup> year of secondary education. Having had one role in one play was a feather, an imaginary peacock plumage in my imaginary cap. I'd been invited to join the Thespians in May and in a candlelit ceremony was invested into the drama organization. The initial meeting of the Thespians was held in the first week of the new school year. I'd been an active member barely a month – I doubt the summer vacation was counted – when I was elected president. I'm sure it was my high profile as a moviemaker and not an established reputation as a stage actor, much less experience with administration, which put me into the president's job.

The rapid rise from newly invested to Thespian president may have been due to an editorial headlined 'Refreshing News of Youth' and published September 7, 1961 in *The West Allis Star* in the same week the new school year opened.

We hear so much about juvenile delinquency; of the increasing rate of crimes committed by youth of our land and other disturbing reports concerning the difficulties of young people today.

It is therefore particularly refreshing to learn of the accomplishments of a group of West Allis young people who have developed a constructive outlet for their energies and interests.

The editorial named me, St. Aloysius C.Y.O., and my movie company "Elkay" Productions. Another group of West Allis young people cited were high school boys and girls from Mount Hope Lutheran Church who'd attended the National Luther League convention at Miami Beach.

It is encouraging to see young people display such imagination, initiative, and aggressiveness in entertaining themselves in a constructive way. In addition to the good fun they must have in the process, they gain valuable experience in

planning, organizing and co-operation. They certainly derive satisfaction and a sense of creative accomplishment they would not have gotten from watching television or from other prepared recreation.

Our community can take real pride in all of these youngsters. It is most refreshing to hear of them in a time when the failures of youth capture so much of the headlines of the day.

I'd put my money on manipulation by Miss Case. She'd have seen the article and decided she wanted someone with a positive profile in the office of president of the Thespians. It's only personal speculation that she wanted me as a role model for other students, and someone to give her bragging rights when meeting with faculty advisors of other schools' Thespian chapters.

The office of president was more of a sinecure than one of real or important duties, unless presiding at meetings counted as the important duty. Miss Case prepared announcements in advance of meetings and passed the handwritten paper to the president who, in turn, delivered all of her messages. There was no input from members about plays to perform or anything else I specifically remember. Any questions asked had to be deferred to Miss Case for answering. Just as a director manipulates an actor on stage, as a drama club president I was a mere marionette.

Brother Goose was the first play selected. Try finding that one amongst the pantheon of popular playwriting. Either our school didn't have the budget to afford royalties for a well-known play, or our director preferred keeping to lesser known juvenile farce anticipating junior actors unable to rise to the occasion of performance of Broadway or the classics. Tryouts for the all-school play were held in the last week of September and the first week of October. English teacher and Director Mr. Carl Plehn held evening tryouts. For those unable to make the evening tryouts, lunch time in Room 306 was the appointed venue. There were roles for three boys and eight girls.



Brother Goose Cast Photo

(Row 1) Sharon Oeldermann. (Row 2) Robert Burgermeister, Barbara Stern, Madeline Fagan, Me wearing my gold satin sport coat, Sally Stiles, Gail Cherney. (Row 3) James Hofmeister, Barbara Acker, Donna Schmid, Merikay Goode, Richard Wesell, Ronald Zirbel.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Unknown Student Photographer for the *Wamago*, 1963 Yearbook for West Allis Central High School

The character of Sarah didn't elevate eyebrows in 1961, but it would raise a red flag today. She was described as 'a Negress domestic'. Looked like the accepted Hollywood stereotype of an African American was about to saunter across the stage at W A Central. Not only that, a Caucasian Sharon Oeldermann would be made up in blackface to play the role. Interesting, our school had one black female student who participated in modern dance. Her name was Sidney. With stage experience, why wasn't she asked to tryout? Surely her being cast should have been a shoo-in. And she would have been credible in the role. Unless, that is, she was wise as to how demeaning to her race the role had been written and Sidney wanted nothing to do with upholding a white man's stereotype. Again, this is all speculation, questions which rumble around in the corridors of my mind now, but which never entered as a question in 1961.

With only three male roles, it was inevitable that there was only one for me to play. The Thespians president wouldn't be a truck driver as he had barely half a dozen lines. It was a walk-on. I could possibly have been the seventeen year old girl-crazy boy, but good-looking freshman Robert Burgermeister was favored and the part of Wes was handed to him. Mr. Plehn asked me to try-out for Jeff and, sure enough, I landed the lead. He was Brother Goose, saddled with a flock including younger brother Wes, awkward 15 year old sister Carol and tom-boy 10 year-old Hyacinth. He was also in charge of housekeepers Helen and Sarah, and he falls in love with pretty door-to-door salesgirl Peggy.



Brother Goose rehearsals were called for evenings, but this time there were no hi-jinks in the balcony or hallway. The role of Jeff kept me on stage more. There was no offstage time for fooling around. I had a crush on Barbara Stern. She played Eve, a southern girl, the love interest for girl-crazy Wes and I didn't have scenes with her as I'd wanted. Instead I had to learn how to kiss Peggy played by Sally Stiles. As far as kissing girls goes, I was inexperienced and, frankly, kind of klutzy. Pictured left is my clumsy, klutzy kiss with Sally, Burgermeister can be seen laughing in the background. Sally was a fine smootcher; she taught me how to make lips meet lips and make it look and feel convincing... but she wasn't Barbara Stern. As nice a guy as Robert Burgermeister was, I think I grew to dislike him only because he got to kiss Barbara. Inside I

was envious. Burgermeister sensed it too. He became the proverbial thorn in my side, constantly pricking me with taunts and asides like, "Barb tastes like honey" and "Your presidency will be mine." Frankly, I'd rather have played opposite Barbara Stern, but I doubt she ever carried the flame of interest for me as I for her.

At the same time of rehearsing for *Brother Goose*, I was invited to participate in a Broadway musical with music and lyrics by Frank Loesser. Presented by the First Nighters, a drama organization emanating from St. Aloysius Parish, my cousin Tom Brochhausen got me involved with *Where's Charley?* I was cast in the undemanding role of Brassett the butler with few lines and fleeting appearances on stage. Additionally, I was given a silent walk-on as a Photographer. Carrying a large old-fashioned camera on a tripod onto stage, I used gestures to arrange a group of college students for a formal photograph. As Brassett the butler, my stage appearances amounted to a scene of serving afternoon tea or walking on and delivering notes or sealed letters on silver salvers. Lines were brief and easily memorized. I delivered each with my best interpretation of a British accent. Playing both parts never required lengthy attendance from me at rehearsals in the St. Aloysius hall. I would have been needed no more than three or four

times, plus a dress rehearsal. Most importantly, playing the two minor roles in *Where's Charley* didn't interfere with *Brother Goose* rehearsals. On the program flyer for *Where's Charley* my surname was printed with the misspelled Klubokowski.

Act III of Mom's nine month production was named Luann and Joann and played out October 16, 1961. Dad made the announcement, said Matthew and Andrew were born twin girls, and he and Mom had chosen names for our new sisters. Our family's life had been positively changed forever. Neighbors were curious as to our family's birth. In Miss Russell's Art class at school I made a large cardboard poster from the side of a refrigerator box. I painted a stork with a bundle in its beak. The pink blanket held two babies. Large lettering proclaimed IT'S TWINS!!! Miss Russell even permitted my poster to be evaluated and counted toward my semester mark. Dad mounted the poster on the front porch. The picture and lettering was easily seen and read from the street, even if when passing by in an automobile. I realized that, whether I liked it or not, a new option was opened to me as a moviemaker. Reluctant as I'd been to shoot home movies, now they'd become regular practice.

Where's Charley? was scheduled for performances Thursday through Sunday nights, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>. Brother Goose would be performed late in November. In between the plays I loaded the Kodak and filmed babies' first movies, scenes of Luann and Joann on Mom and Dad's bed being fed with bottles.

Thursday night, November 30<sup>th</sup>, the curtains opened and *Brother Goose* was performed for an appreciative audience. Some 550 seats were occupied, some by theatregoers in training as hecklers. My guess is that they just might have been the ones who were even klutzier than me as a kisser, but who'd never admit to it. The third act kiss between 'Peggy' and me brought cackles and hoots from vocal critics. Was their noisy display out of envy? Or were they genuinely giving me the stick? Whichever, the show went on. I may have acknowledged the interjections with a slight, sly wink of the eye.

A theatre critic for the school's newspaper said that our dialogue was, at times, rather stiff and due to a *slight tendency to pronounce words too perfectly*. Away from night time rehearsal on the stage, Miss Case gave us lessons to improve the enunciation of our words. Although our characters were ordinary people, she felt that our enunciation of words like *gunna* had to come out clearly on stage as *going to*. Louisiana had every syllable accurately enunciated to become – ee- ee- – h. Words ending in d or t were given an emphasis to eliminate the usual teenage practice of eliding, that is, the omission in pronunciation of a vowel or syllable. Instead of 'We wennout,' it was clearly 'We went out.' As speakers of American English, we were suddenly sounding like imitators of casts doing their clipped English vocal gymnastics in early Hollywood talkies of the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was as if we'd been enrolled in a school of elocution where Sir Laurence Olivier was headmaster! Other than overemphasis on pronunciation and enunciation, as characters interacting in frantic screwball situations, we all were commendable. As 'head' of the house I conveyed parental concern well. As a problem solver, Sally Stiles' understanding was well portrayed throughout the play.

But if an award was to be handed out for the best actor, I'd have gladly handed it to freshman Bob Burgermeister. He was thoroughly convincing as the hyperactive girl-crazy teen. Even if on the outside I managed to convey to Burgermeister that I couldn't stand his guts, in reality I genuinely liked him. Just that I couldn't let him know that, given our tacit rivalry for adulation as actors. I still had to learn how to be generous toward stage rivals, perceived or not.

#### Chapter 16: Learning to Work and Play Well with Others

Pollowing my performance as Brassett at St. Aloysius and shortly before treading the boards as Jeff in Central's auditorium, I took a phone call from Mr. Elmer Klug, president of the Milwaukee Movie Makers. He invited me to show my movies to club members. I said I'd have to ask my father for a ride to the War Memorial Center on the lakefront of downtown Milwaukee. I had no choice and needed to rely on others with driver's licenses to be carted around. Although I'd completed Driver Education, I still hadn't tried for the license.

Mr. Harlan Small had taught me Driver Education during my 10<sup>th</sup> grade semesters 3 and 4. He taught others in the class more than he taught me. The theory work was all classroom-based. We learned about a manual transmission and how to change gears, all about how an automatic transmission worked, what a crankshaft did, how to do basic maintenance like changing oil and spark plugs, and plenty of other tasks usually handled by a garage grease monkey. None of this interested me and I was a dipstick.

The one class session which did hold my interest made a lifelong impression. To be in attendance for the screening of the 16mm film, we needed to bring a signed parental permission form. We were shown Signal 30 (1959). Made by the Highway Safety Foundation in the vicinity of Mansfield, Ohio, the movie's title was the Ohio State Highway Patrol's code for a fatal traffic accident. On screen for almost half an hour was documented footage of the aftermath of accidents. There were numerous graphic shots of bleeding and bloodied drivers and passengers. We looked at the dead bodies of teenagers trapped in the twisted metal of their cars. Some had died at the wheel with their eyes still open, while others' eyes were mercifully closed. Faces were caked with blood; the skin turned a bluish-grey. We were shown in grisly Close Up a driver who'd been skewered by a steel rod because the load in the back of his truck hadn't been fastened. These drivers were dead and couldn't make a noise. Pictures with sound of accident victims still alive, drivers or passengers, were difficult to watch because they were real. No one in the film was a paid actor. These people paid with their lives. "Mommy. Mommy. Where's my mommy?" was heard in between sobs of an unseen child as the camera lingered on the mother lying twisted on the road. "My leg... I can't see my leg," was another disturbing and plaintive cry in the soundtrack.

The effect of the film on our audience of hyperactive teenagers was palpable. Not before or after have I sat in an audience where the sound of the proverbial pin dropping could be heard.

Our final exam was the written test one must take and pass to earn a Learner's permit. Well, gee whiz, I wish someone had made me aware of that! I was successful, but only just. I squeaked by. Had I known better, my lousy  $\underline{D}$  on the report card could have been commendable. I did a behind-the-wheel course during the previous summer. The dual control automobile was almost new and had an automatic transmission. "That was for lazy drivers," my father said. "You can never have complete control with automatic." Learners were taught defensive driving, that is, to always be alert for someone else to do something stupid and able to react to avoid a mishap. In addition to the usual reversing, parallel parking, three point turns, checking the blind spot, and other basics, we were taught safe and courteous highway driving. A safety procedure was practiced where, at the signed speed of 65mph, we were instructed to steer onto the roadside gravel and learn how to return to the pavement without jerking the wheel, or making any other sudden movement which could lead into a slide. Purpose of the exercise was to gain confidence

in vehicle handling, to ensure panic never stepped in for control. Again, I passed behind-thewheel training. I should have booked a road test and earned a driver's license.

Prior to my summertime behind-the-wheel lessons my father owned a 1952 Plymouth with a stick shift. Although I never really drove it, Dad allowed me to move the car out of the garage, along the driveway, and back into the garage. It gave me meager experience with having to shift into reverse or into first gear. One Saturday Dad reversed down the driveway – I say down because it was a hill – and the Plymouth's brakes failed. As a matter of course, Dad reversed down the driveway every day onto 96<sup>th</sup> Street, ordinarily so bereft of traffic that we used to play games like four squares and stickball on the road. The one instance when the brakes pumped nothing but air, Dad backed into and collided with not one, but two new cars. Travelling in opposite directions, both cars happened to pass our driveway at the exact moment Dad zipped down and onto the road. He smacked into the space age tailfin of a just-off-the-showroom floor Cadillac and the front fender of a brand spanking new Lincoln Continental. The collision made a bang! The sound must have carried over several blocks. The accident was the neighborhood's backyard over-the-fence talk topic for a week.

Dad's Plymouth was a write-off. He was fortunate to have had insurance to cover the damage to the automobiles struck. Very little time passed before Dad, Mary, Steve and I walked a couple of blocks to browse two used car lots on Greenfield Avenue. Dad had to buy another car so he could get to work. We somehow talked him into a salmon and white '56 Oldsmobile. The test drive further convinced it should be the new family car. The ride was smoother and quieter than it had ever been in the now demolished Plymouth. My parents discussed the car after he drove us all home for Mom's examination and opinion. What did Mom know about a car? She never drove, never had a license. Dad's concern was its size and what mileage he'd get on a gallon of gas, but his biggest worry was its automatic transmission. As easy to use and reliable as it was, Dad didn't trust it. For all of his driving time Dad had used a floor-mounted or column-mounted manual shift. The salesman was good. He gave Dad a good deal even without a trade-in, more or less convinced Dad the automatic transmission was the way of the future and, most importantly, the Oldsmobile did fit inside our wooden garage.

Using my learner's permit, I took advantage of Dad's offer to drive the Olds. He never failed to remind me that after I earned my driver's license, his insurance premium would rise steeply. It was already up several notches because insurance had paid out in big checks after Dad's at-fault brakes-failure accident. The Oldsmobile was a great set of wheels to handle. There was no power steering, but it had a no-brains-required automatic transmission. Just aim and go. For Dad, having to feel the gears change on their own was a brand new experience. He was always afraid the car might just take off and get away on him. Power responded with the slightest touch to the accelerator and this turned into an unnecessary bone of contention. My father's acceleration method, mainly due to his novice understanding of automatic transmission, was to pull away from a red light turned green with the speed of molasses on a chilly morning. My modus operandi had a little more get up and get on with it. That was due to my having driven over the summer in a near new car fitted with automatic. Not that I pulled away to cause Gforce face disfiguration; no, I accelerated and moved off somewhat faster than Dad, that's all. "Take it easy. Not so reckless. Just ease off," was constantly banged into my ears. It mattered little I could parallel park, do a perfect three-point turn, and apply the brakes gently to stop without throwing anyone into the windscreen, or front bench seat passengers even jerking forward. It was always, "Stop with the flooring it, already." I wasn't flooring it. No one's neck was ever thrown out of joint. No tires ever squealed, no smoke poured out the back and we never welcomed the aroma of burning rubber. Put simply, I didn't accelerate exactly the same as Dad, but that's what he wanted. Nay, demanded. I was irritated by Dad's nagging me over nothing, really. Heedless of longer term consequence, out of frustration and in the heat of disagreement while parked in the driveway, with Dad sitting in the front passenger seat as witness, I tore up my learner's permit. It was spiteful, I know, as if I was saying, "Go ahead and save your damn insurance money then."

The Milwaukee Movie Makers had been around for a long time. It held its first meeting at the Milwaukee Public Library on January 12, 1938, with 23 members signing the constitution. Club membership never fell below 35 and had risen to a high of 100. When I was invited to present my films, current membership was about 60. Mrs. Erma Niedermeyer, a charter member, recalled that, initially, the club's primary purpose was to show films made by members to shutins. As an example, Mrs. Edward Mortag directed the activity of a three member committee that in 1948 showed films 65 times in homes and hospitals. By 1963 films were only shown at the Home for Aged Lutherans in Wauwatosa twice a month by a high school girl who wasn't even a member of the club. "After shut-ins got television sets, they would ask us not to show films when their favorite shows were on," Mrs. Mortag recalled. Mrs. Niedermeyer added that the club also provided a meeting place and center of technical information for filmmakers. Every amateur needed help to make better movies. Mr. Elmer Klug remembered that the club had 12 meeting places including the library, the city hall, three hotels, a bakery plus various clubrooms – including an unsuitable room located under a saloon.

The Milwaukee Movie makers met twice a month. Mr. Klug's invitation to show my movies was for the second meeting in November, on Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the night before Thanksgiving. I packed my projector, films, soundtrack reels and tape recorder onto the rear seat of Dad's Olds. The club met in the War Memorial on Lincoln Memorial Drive overlooking Lake Michigan. It was a picture postcard sight at night with its outdoor colored floodlighting. Often windy beside the lake, this night was clear, starry and unusually calm. Lights from buildings on shore, boats moored in the water, and the shining moon glistened in rippled patterns upon the waters of Lake Michigan. The War Memorial building also functioned as an art gallery. Paintings, mostly by contemporary artists, were hanging on the sound-proofed walls of passages throughout, an added church-like hush resulting from thick carpeting on the floor. Anyone who entered and walked through the building would have felt like they'd been promoted to a level of societal sophistication, at the very least of being made to feel just plain special.

The established atmosphere and a welcome warmth from club members made me feel like a VIP. I was assisted in setting up my equipment. Used to putting my projector on a table, here in Room 409 I got to use a strong metal projector stand. Its use suggested an air of professionalism. At first I felt somewhat nervous in front of club members who looked old enough to be my parents and grandparents. Most of my previous audiences had mostly been made up of people I'd known, teenage friends and adults in St. Al's parish. This audience was very different. This was a roomful of people experienced in making movies. What could I tell them that they didn't already know? I found that the age difference and having a new public to face wasn't a barrier. I opened up easily and comfortably sharing my stories about making my movies. Screening each of my "Elkay" Productions spoke volumes. Coming out the loudest was my youth.

A Milwaukee Movie Makers newsletter item printed shortly after my presentation stated:

Larry is a writer, producer, and actor who has boundless enthusiasm, unlimited imagination and who thoroughly enjoys making movies. He and his friends have a whale of a lot of fun doing just that — making movies. His films have plots — only a boy could think them up; have people — good ones, bad ones, pirates, robbers; have action — lots of it. It has taken a sixteen year old boy to tell us and show us that making movies can be fun.

The club's annual film competition was scheduled for late January 1962 and I was encouraged to consider submitting an entry. Firstly, however, I would need to join, become a club member. My father wouldn't want to be inconvenienced every other Wednesday night driving me downtown. A ride with a club member to the War Memorial building and home again was offered and guaranteed, and I was keen to be a regular attendee of meetings. I paid fees and became the youngest fully-fledged member of the Milwaukee Movie Makers (MMM).

# Chapter 17: Little Soar in Flight

The Evil Slayer

iss Eloise Heise was my English teacher. She always presented as warm and welcoming, never coming across as standoffish like most other teachers. She had the qualities of a caring human being. I developed a student crush on her, even asked her at one point in the year if she'd like to be my date for the prom. My own feelings and foolish teenage boy forwardness for an attractive English teacher were the story ingredients for a coming-of-age movie, but little did I realize that at the time. My idea for a good movie was still action, adventure, and the spilling of blood. Miss Heise's approach to teaching novels, short stories and poetry made all literature forms appealing. In fact, I actually read assigned material instead of resorting to my comprehensive stack of *Classics Illustrated* comics to fulfill book report requirements. We read a short story by John Steinbeck. My interest was titillated and my imagination captured. I felt inspired to turn it into a movie. *Flight* would be my first adaptation of someone else's material.

Set in Mexico, Steinbeck's story is about a young man, Pépé, who is sent into town by his mother. She doesn't think he is yet a man. While he is away Pépé gets into a fight and kills a man. He returns home and flees on horseback. He is hunted down on a mountain where he is shot and killed.

There was snow on the mountain where Pépé died. That was clue enough for me to shoot a film over Christmas vacation, in between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Snow was already on the ground and a blizzard was in the forecast. Our basement had two large rooms. One included laundry basins, the furnace and a pot-bellied stove for burning trash. The other was a recreation room with a bar. It was a great place to get together with my friends and it had been used for parties. Behind the bar were shelves displaying Dad's beer can collection. The basement was warm, a comfortable place to set indoor scenes for the movie. One set was the interior of Pépé's mother's home. The other made use of the bar and became the town saloon or cantina.

Costumes included denim jeans and jackets, the odd blanket standing in for a serape, and a couple of fairground sombreros made of woven straw. More crepe hair was teased out and spirit-gummed to boys' facial beard lines. I used the eyebrow pencil to draw an Errol Flynn-like moustache onto my upper lip. I wore a yellow shirt which had a guitar player embroidered above the space where the left-hand pocket should have been.

Cast included Mike Theoharris and John Schultz as saloon patrons. Jim Lewandowski played a one-armed bartender. He slipped his right arm out of his sleeve and draped a serape over his shoulder. My sister Mary took the role of my mother. As her eldest son, mother Mary had two younger children, my brother Steve and a cousin Jeanne Kroll. The posse which hunts down Pépé included dual-cast Mike and Jim, plus Ron Zirbel and Barry Farnworth.

I didn't want to call my film by the same name as John Steinbeck's story, main reason being the word "Flight" conveyed to me an image of the Wright brothers and an old biplane. Although I had no mountain or a horse for the pursuit, and the sets described were more elaborate than anything I could access, I still intended to credit Steinbeck's story as my source. There's a line in the story where Pépé speaks in Spanish saying proudly to his mother, "Soy hombre." (I am a man.) Initially I thought that simple line of dialogue would translate into the movie's title.

Then I realized no one I knew spoke Spanish and I'd be pestered with, "What's that supposed to mean?" I could have elected to use the English translation as the title, but it didn't contain a hook, a hook being that one thing which grabs the audience's attention. I wanted my audience to know what they'd be in for when they sat down to look at the screen. The title needed to convey that Pépé the innocent would turn into Pépé the guilty. 'Killer' made me think of a gangster, a homicidal maniac, or a shark. 'Slayer' sounded very gory, so the title emerged as *The Evil Slayer*.

At meetings of the Milwaukee Movie Makers questions I asked were answered. I learned how to do a double exposure. It was made clear that to show titles over a sequence of live action, I first needed to shoot the title letters against a black background. Black doesn't photograph. Well, actually it does, but a brighter image replaces the black, the absence of light. All of my credit titles were filmed using hand-painted white lettering on black paper. For a special effect, each actor's name was covered with a strip of black paper and the strip pulled away to reveal the name. My camera did not have a built-in film rewind key. With the whole title sequence filmed, I went to a darkened corner to open the camera. Absolute darkness was always best and it would take a while to learn this rewinding process purely by feel. As long as there was no direct light falling upon the opened camera, there was no chance of damaging the film by exposing it to light. I unthreaded the film from the camera's works and, by hand, rewound the exposed film from the take-up reel back onto the load reel, and then reloaded the film into the camera for a second pass through the gate.

Indoor establishing shots showed Mary folding clothes from a laundry basket with rambunctious children Steve and Jeanne running around; they were the action behind the double exposed opening titles. My expectation was that the lettering would show up clearly over the live action. The set was very simple. Translucent curtaining was hung to cover the wall made of concrete blocks. A cradle, a rocking chair and a laundry basket decorated the set. Mary wore a black dress. I used a small aperture setting so the scene would look dark and dingy and, I hoped, not wash out the white lettering of the double exposure.

On the same day, Act 1 opening scenes of the story were filmed in the basement. Mother Mary sends her son Pépé into town. Title cards used the same dialogue from Steinbeck's text. Unfortunately, our amateur acting makes the dialogue look unintentionally humorous. In the short story, Steinbeck may have intended some gentle humor in the exchange. In my hands, yes,



it's still funny, but for all the wrong reasons. Pépé dresses in warm clothing and announces I WILL GO TO THE CANTINA. Mother chides her son ALONE? Pépé answers SI, MAMA. I AM A MAN. Pictured left, Mother wags her finger and pokes fun saying YOU ARE A PEANUT. Pépé takes what every decent young man packs for a trip away from home, a carving knife. Sure, the knife was taken to set up future action, but it's where the knife is placed which looks awkward. Pépé has no sheath and places the knife loose against his ribs, in between his coat and his shirt. Being armed is clearly established, but it raises the question of how he manages to move without stabbing himself.

Dumb ideas number 2, 3, 4, etc: As soon as Pépé arrives in the cantina, he sits at an empty table and plops the carving knife onto the bare tabletop. Angrily he pounds the table with a fist demanding service.

One-armed Lewandowski and denim attired Theoharris laugh. Schultz is a drunk, clearly established with his table loaded with empty bottles and cans. He sips from his bottle of booze and a large, thick cloud of smoke drifts from his mouth. What was I thinking? Reused for the

screen was the *Pots n' Slops* gag, but this story was supposed to be serious. Lewandowski waits table and serves Pépé a schupe¹ of red liquid. It may have been strong tea like Schultz was drinking from his bottle, or it may have been cherry Kool Aid. It had no foam so it wasn't beer. Then, none of us knew or even cared what beer tasted like. Taunts and laughter from the barkeep and customer, Pépé retaliates with a threat and brandishes the knife. No title card was necessary. If you can read lips, it's clear Pépé says, "I'm not going to take much more of this." A fight breaks out and Pépé defeats everyone. Schultz is stabbed in a frenzy. A scarecrow was substituted for Schultz's chest into which a balloon filled with red colored water was tied. The balloon was stabbed maniacally and blood flowed, a red puddle forming beside the body. For good measure, and to demonstrate how evil Pépé has become, he shockingly saws off Schultz's hand with his carving knife. Everything was now set for the pursuit, but without Steinbeck's horses. It was all accomplished on foot over two days of shooting.

The cliff falls in From the Powers of Darkness had raised the biggest reaction from an audience. The forecast blizzard happened. Now we had hills covered in deep snow. What worked once successfully could be done all over again. Framed from below, I climbed up steep slopes with the inevitable result of sliding back before reaching the summit. This time, however, I had no one to lend a hand and had to scramble up clumsy and alone. The angle choice captured the steepness of the hills. Jumping down the other side with great space between feet and snow made for more breathtaking stunt work. Hand to hand fighting wasn't choreographed; it just happened. After a blizzard, as often takes effect, the temperature plummeted below zero. It was too cold to bother with rehearsal. We swung arms and kicked with feet and hoped it would all look convincing. It was too cold to persist with filming. Whoever manipulated the camera had to take off gloves or mittens. Biting wind turned fingers red and numb. A cold camera against the face was uncomfortable. Cold air thickened the camera's oils and the motor ran slower. Some action unintentionally has the swiftness of deliberate undercranking as had been used in Ken Maynard westerns and Tarzan adventures in the 1930s. In some shots there is sunshine. These were filmed before and after the blizzard. In other scenes, the light is a dull gray because we filmed during the blizzard. Filming was accomplished as fast as possible. Lenses were wiped dry from melted snowflakes. It's interesting that falling snow doesn't show up on screen as falling snow. It makes no impression. As happened in Steinbeck's short story, Pépé is hunted down, shot and killed. I did my best tumbling down a snowy hill for a death scene.

Mike Theoharris and Barry Farnworth have the unpleasant duty of dragging my deadweight body out of a ditch and down the snow-covered road before the scene is straight cut to a black title card of THE END highlighted with a carving knife, the blade covered in glistening coagulated blood.

Days later the familiar yellow packets returned in the mail from Kodak processing. The double exposed titles worked, but the aperture setting was open one f stop too much. The black paper showed on screen. The effect of slowly revealing each cast member's name was impressive, but marred by too much light falling onto the black paper. I cut the whole double exposure sequence and used only the company logo and main title. The difference between outdoor scenes filmed in sunshine and scenes filmed during the blizzard didn't intercut without drawing attention to light imbalance. Most of the sunshine day's shooting was removed from the final cut. Some had to stay in the film. The shoot to kill sequence was completed in late afternoon low sunshine. The drag-the-body sequence had been filmed during the blizzard. The visual effect is one of warmish orangey blue to cold blue gray and it's jarring on the eyes.

The Evil Slayer was another dud, as unremarkable as was A Walk in the Woods. I felt no pride in having made either film. The actual achievement fell short of what I'd envisioned seeing up on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Originally Middle English, it was used by Chaucer to mean *shape*. Perhaps 50 years ago, then in popular usage in Detroit, Michigan, the word, possibly a corruption of German and Yiddish, described a large goblet or fishbowl-shaped beer glass holding up to 20-24 oz. and was sometimes called schuper. In Polish slang it's called a <u>boomba</u> or <u>bumba</u>, a term for a fat lady like the shape and size of the glass.

the screen. Making both films was a lot of fun for everyone involved, but with so much energy spent only some individual scenes were praiseworthy. Imagination was plentiful. Technical expertise lacked. I needed more experience to achieve good lighting. What showed most in my two latest films was a lack of preparation.

However harsh and critical I may appear to be toward my own finished films, let's understand what other amateur filmmakers were making at the time. Most films made by older people pointed and shot what they saw on vacation throughout the United States or to exotic locales abroad. I know my films were not perfect and I know I am too critical of my own work. What director isn't ever completely happy with the finished product? That the films I was making *told a story* is what made them so different and set them apart. Compared with what the "old timers" made, my movies were fresh and adventurous and bursting with a teenager's youthful nod to expressing his joie de vivre. Mine had many scenes of pure energy and action making them unique from what others were shooting and showing. That's why my films were welcomed and became so popular.

#### Chapter 18: New Tricks and Trophies

A Hectic Morning
The Cleaning Lady

Ith the Milwaukee Movie Makers (MMM) holding its members annual competition late in January, I was encouraged to enter my war epic From the Powers of Darkness. Of course I acquiesced. There was no way I'd submit either of my newest efforts in any competition. Members handed in films for the competition at the first meeting in January. That evening's program had a film with a camera trick which impressed me. Mr. Bill Bannister made a comedy wherein his wife cleaned with an 'educated dustcloth'. Everyone knows that dusting involves holding a cloth in the hand and physically moving it to scoop up dust and grit. Not in Mr. Bannister's movie. The dustcloth had a mind of its own. Clenched in hand, it swirled through the air and, like a snake, slithered across a tabletop and along the arms of chairs. It seemed to lead the woman by her dusting hand and arm. The effect was oddly convincing and very, very funny. After seeing it on the screen, not only did I hold my sides laughing out loud, I begged Mr. Bannister to know how made the trick.

Though I felt as if I was breaking a great rule of hocus pocus hush-hush in asking the magician to reveal his secrets of legerdemain, Mr. Bannister explained how film came off the reel and into the projector upside down to be shown on screen right side up. To achieve the trick, the camera had to be held upside down to film the action. The actor flicked the cloth in the air before dragging it over furniture which needed dusting. After processing, that scene or sequence would be upside down when projected onto a screen because it came off the reel and into the projector right side up. Scissors was used to snip out the upside down strip of film. Then the strip was turned around and flipped so that sprocket holes matched. The piece of film was then inserted into the main body of the film using splicing tape to hold it in its place. When projected now, the scene enters the projector gate correctly upside down and be right side up on screen. What has also happened, notwithstanding, is that the emulsion side of the film now faces back instead of to the front. Just as the black and white film intercut into my color film Western Surprise required refocusing when projected, so too does this camera trick. It can be a nuisance, as previously explained, but the reaction from an audience makes the frustration of focus, refocus, and refocus again all worth the effort. So the audience is unaware refocus occurs, it's important to be familiar with refocusing quickly - should the refocus knob be turned slightly toward yourself or slightly toward the screen.

One Sunday evening in January I launched into a movie wherein I could make use of the camera tricks learned. Having been unsuccessful with titles superimposed over live action, I decided to try again for *A Hectic Morning*. I shot main titles against black paper first and rewound the film in darkness. The idea was kept simple so we could shoot it in a couple of hours. Mom and Dad played a married couple with twin babies. No stretch for acting there. Dad oversleeps and is late. Mom minds the babies as well as gets her husband off to work. It was the perfect opportunity for me to shoot the kind of story film I liked making, and also shoot a home movie of our baby sisters growing up, doing the things babies do, and satisfying my parents' wishes for film documentation of the twins.

Opening scenes behind superimposed titles are of Dad tossing restlessly in bed. The alarm sounds and Dad throws a shoe to knock it off the dresser. Eventually Mom shows up with a baby in her arms. She uses her foot to rouse Dad. He's late for work and quickly clamors out of bed to dress. Mom brews coffee. Dad ties his tie. With his hat on his head and bobbing up and

down to show he's frantic, he sips coffee and takes off. The action has immediacy. Dad bobs around like a plastic yellow duck in a fast flowing creek and Mom moves awkwardly instead of naturally. The babies were incorporated into the film with a bottle feeding after Dad left for work. Mary helped with the babies. Her hand can be seen holding a bottle, but Mary wasn't an intentional part of the storytelling. Mom uses an 'educated dustcloth' and adds a hip swinging hula to the action. She collapses onto the couch and, in Close up, crosses her eyes and laughs for the film's end.

A Hectic Morning was a playful home movie. Both Mom and Dad displayed a delightful and appealing self-consciousness in front of the camera. None of their camera shyness could have ever been planned beforehand. My only lighting was Steve holding the Sun Gun, so I had unwanted dark shadows looming on the walls. Shadows of this dynamic don't contribute to comedy. The double exposure at the start of the movie again didn't turn out as successful as I'd hoped. It worked and a double exposure was achieved, but the black paper still showed. I was struggling to guess what the aperture setting should be to achieve black paper disappearing and replaced with just the action behind titles. If I wanted to eliminate the harsh shadows in my films, instead of using only the eye-blinding Sun Gun, I needed to buy more lights. To extend the running time of the film, I cut in scenes of Luann and Joann I'd filmed a month earlier. They were similar to scenes of the babies filmed specifically for this movie. I figured they'd be seen more often when included in one of my productions, rather than left alone on a reel and without context. What I hadn't considered was how different Luann and Joann looked after just one month, plus both little girls had large vaccination marks in the new scenes and no such scars in the previous footage. Oh well, at least those orphan shots now had a permanent home in an official "Elkay" Production.

Judging of the ten films submitted for the MMM competition took place on a Saturday night, about the same weekend I made A Hectic Morning. Judges were invited from outside club membership and included Edith Quade, Curator of Education of the Milwaukee Public Museum, Gene Picard, Columbia Studios, Cedarberg, and Art G. Schultz, advertising artist and motion picture producer. Screenings went late into the night at the home of MMM members Wendell and Ann Murphy. If so choosing, members with competition films were allowed to attend the judging session, bring their own projector and tape recorder, and screen their own entry for the judges. If that seems unusual, it was, but for very good reason. Amateur filmmakers can be a very tetchy lot. Ordinarily, the competitor would mark film and tape with clear start points and include written instructions for how to keep picture and sound in synchronization for the club's nominated projectionist. With start points of film and reel to reel tape clearly marked with indelible pen or paper-hole punch, the amateur competitor hoped for the best. Having said that, allowing competitors in attendance was a means to preventing assessment of blame, creating controversy, and avoiding possible long-held ill-feeling amongst members. arrangement, the maker of a competition film took full responsibility for how their picture and sound was seen, heard, and synchronized. If there was a noticeable drift between picture and sound, only the filmmaker doing the actual projection of their own film was blameworthy.

If that still seems unusual, consider this. Regardless of medium, today we are used to seeing picture and hearing its sound in perfect synchronization. It will happen accurately time after time because picture and sound is recorded in synchronization onto the one source. For the amateur in 1961, that wasn't always possible. Silent 16mm home movie projectors were widely used. However, serious 16mm amateur filmmakers used projectors which ran at set speeds of either 18 fps or 24 fps. They were capable of replaying optical sound, while some were dual sound models equipped with magnetic sound. Advantage was that silent single perforated 16mm film could have a magnetic track striped onto the non-perforated edge of the film for the recording and playback of a soundtrack. Owning a 16mm dual sound projector meant that picture and sound being on the same source always replayed time after time in perfect synchronization. 8mm, on the other hand, had its quirks and disadvantages with sound. Amateur filmmakers working in the smaller gauge of Standard 8 had no means available to them for striping a magnetic track onto the film. Main reason was that no 8mm projector had as yet

been invented and manufactured for sound recording or sound reproduction. The only choice for using sound with 8mm had to be a separate source and was often reel to reel tape. Sound on tape wasn't governed to run at exactly the same speed time after time with a projector. A governor to link the two machines could be made or purchased, but was cost prohibitive. 8mm projectors equipped with a variable speed control could run a film with every screening having a slight variation in running time. The time difference between picture and sound might be only a second, but over the full running time of the film, that time would expand, further separating picture and sound. What was intended to be seen with what was intended to be heard would often be incompatible. A tranquil scene of a windmill with tulips could, for example, be inadvertently accompanied with the narration which belonged to a previous sequence of a busy street market.

On the night of film judging, I opted not to attend and trusted the projectionist with my start marks on film and tape. After all, the sound for my film was music only, not sound effects or narration, and my film was all action. The stirring music I recorded worked throughout the projection of the film. Nothing was critically synchronized. By the conclusion of the night's screenings, only the competition chairman collating the judges' decisions and subsequently arranging the engraving of trophies knew who won; that person keeping the secret result until winners were announced at the formal annual awards dinner February 24.

Ordinarily, after the regularly scheduled formal bi-monthly meeting, some MMM people participated in a second informal club meeting, more of an after-meeting meeting, a social soiree of sorts conducted at a nearby bar and grill. Toasted sandwiches, BLTs, a hamburger, tuna salad sandwich, French fries, cocktails, and coffee were the orders of the night. Annual competition chitchat and other in-club or national contests were discussed and mulled over with speculation concluding who should win what. In between bites of a toasted sandwich, I asked questions about lighting, aperture use, camera handling and editing. These were answered without hesitation. There wasn't any professional secrecy, none of that, "If I tell you, I'll have to kill you" attitude. This off-shoot group of amateur movie makers was willing to share its knowledge, the tricks of the trade, and the basics of movie making I hadn't considered because, honestly, I hadn't known. The social meeting which followed the scheduled meeting was always the more informative, the greater teacher for my inquisitiveness. Being a high school student with no job, a club member treated and picked up my tab of the bill. I was grateful. "Home, James, and don't spare the horses," often meant I didn't get home until 11:00 p.m., sometimes later. A school day always followed club meeting nights. I always had something to talk about in homeroom and recess. Even though we were well past the age of a scheduled 'show and tell', with Mr. Huenink's encouragement I'd sometimes set up my projector and show a movie to the members of Homeroom 236.

After Wendell Murphy had performed his competition night tasks, trophies for The Milwaukee Movie Makers' 1962 Film Contest winners were engraved and presented at the Annual Awards Dinner on February 24 by Contest Chairman Mr. Bill Bannister. Films had participated in separate



sections for 16mm and 8mm. Since all of my films were shot on 8mm, I had little interest in whose films were entered in the 16mm section, even less interest in who won those prizes. With Mom and Dad also attending, we sat in expectation and nervous excitement. A whoop of approving joy erupted when my name was announced as the 1<sup>st</sup> Place winner of the 8mm category for *From the Powers of Darkness*. It was an honor to accept the gigantic trophy. Additionally, and I was as surprised as anyone, I was presented with the club's inaugural Novice Award. Pictured left, I hold both trophies.

Keen to use the new backwards action camera trick again, I asked Mom and Dad to invite Aunt Eleanor and Uncle Paul

Karczewski to visit one Sunday. Aunt Eleanor was Mom's eldest sister and my favorite aunt. Everyone would act in a film. Mom would be the homemaker who hires the help. Aunt Eleanor would be the hired cleaner. My Dad would play a doctor and Uncle Paul would be a nosy neighbor.

In Mrs. Russell's Art class I did pre-production hand-painting a main title card. Mike Theoharris was my lighting technician. I didn't know then that Hollywood's job name for Mike was best boy. He certainly was. Not only would Mike hold the Sun Gun, he'd move the two floodlights on stands which had been loaned to me by an MMM club member. Milwaukee Movie Makers had recommended using more lights, 500 watt floods which wouldn't be as harsh on the eyes as my single 1000 watt Sun Gun, and strategically placed on set to lessen the casting of actors' shadows. "Movies shouldn't be hand-held if you want them to look professional," I'd been instructed. A generous loan was a tripod. The three-legged stand was essential equipment for another special effect sight gag called stop motion-freeze action. I wanted to experiment and try it for the first time. Some members of the MMM were not only willing to share their ideas, they were just as helpful loaning their expensive gear. Shot in one afternoon and evening, my new movie was titled *The Cleaning Lady*.

On the chosen Sunday for shooting, Uncle Paul wasn't enthusiastic about acting, so I accommodated him by leaving the nosy neighbor out of my script. He preferred to drink Dad's Fox Head beer and kibitz<sup>1</sup> from the side.

The concept was simple. Mom needs a housekeeper. She rings an agency and hires a cleaning lady. Aunt Eleanor as the cleaning lady arrives and immediately presents as a sloven. Hair is mostly hidden underneath a wrap around and tied, front-knotted mammy-style scarf, and she wipes her nose with the back of her hand. If an added fart sound could have been used for effect, it would have been appropriate. There are two good reasons why the latter couldn't be used. The practical reason was that I had no means to perfectly synchronize picture with sound. The other, and more important reason, was that the social mores of the day meant fart jokes weren't used, were never even given consideration. Audiences were shocked in 1960 by the shower murder in *Psycho*, not only for the grisly, but cleverly filmed and edited murder, but with British director Alfred Hitchcock breaking through a taboo by actually showing a toilet! A toilet didn't exist in movies until *Psycho*. and then Hitchcock flushes 'In God We Trust' American dollar bills down the toilet in glorious black and white with gurgling sound.

Mom gives orders to the hired help and the cleaning lady gets busy. First duty was using the 'educated dustcloth' for the film's first gag. My idea was that if I was going to get my audience laughing, I wanted to do it sooner rather than later. I wanted a gasp of amazement and then a big laugh, a la Buster Keaton.

No more cleaning is rostered and it's time for a coffee break. She has a shot and a beer! The shot doesn't satisfy enough and the cleaning lady pulls the cork of the bottle and takes a big swig. In its day, a woman swigging from a whiskey bottle was always funny! Next, a banana is eaten bite by bite. Again I employed the use of the upside down camera for a gag with backwards action. Instead of the banana getting shorter bite by bite, when reversed the banana would grow. Roses in a vase look more than attractive. A source of vitamin C, the cleaning lady eats them, but not before using the stop motion/freeze action trick which accentuates her reaction to imbibed alcohol and thinking the vase of roses disappears and reappears.

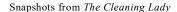
This special effect is as old as moviemaking itself and was first used by magician and pioneer filmmaker George Mèliés in France from 1902 in *Le Voyage dans le Lune* which translates to *A Trip to the Moon*. As the director calls "Freeze," the actor holds in position, frozen if you will, and the camera's trigger is simultaneously stopped. Film doesn't move through the camera

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A Yiddish word, it's related to the Hebrew kibbutz or collective. But it can also mean verbal joking which, after all, is a collective activity. It has come to mean to look on and offer unwanted, usually meddlesome advice or commentary to others about someone else's game – but that wasn't its original meaning. This newer definition is an American innovation.

while an object is removed from the scene or added to the scene. With the scene set up, the director calls, "Action." The actor resumes movement and, at the same time, the camera's trigger is pressed to resume movement of film through the camera gate for exposure. If it's all timed well, the actor not moving out of position from the freeze, upon projection the audience shouldn't notice that there'd been a stop in the action and all action on screen flows smoothly. In my film, the vase of flowers vanishes into thin air and then reappears before the cleaning lady's and viewers' eyes. She seizes the vase and picks a rose for a snack.

Beer, bourbon, banana and bad flowers cause a tummy ache for the cleaning lady. She clasps her stomach and rolls her eyes in mock pain. She clearly needs help and it has to be more than pink Pepto Bismol. The lady of the house frantically dials the phone calls a doctor. Dad arrives wearing a surgical coat, a stethoscope, and a hat on his head. His diagnosis isn't made clear but he announces via title card I'LL HAVE TO OPERATE. In addition to moving lights where needed, Mike took care of arranging the letters and setting up the title cards.

Dr. Dad uses a baseball bat to administer anesthetic. It's a gag I learned from having watched the Three Stooges, probably in their only Academy Award-nominated short *Men in Black* (1934). More stop action is used during the operation to remove and to lose items, including my Dad's hat. Mike's off-camera responsibility was to take named items out of shot, then replace them when required. The actors can't move items in or out of shot. Remember, they are frozen in position, sort of like playing the children's game called Statues. Even the body of Aunt Eleanor disappears and reappears during the pantomimed operation. Dr. Dad gives up. We decided to use no title card because lip readers, all viewers in fact, can pick up on his dialogue line, "Aw, the hell with it." Mom as the householder rouses the cleaning lady from the dining table, which stood in for the operating table, and with a hitch-hiker's movement of her thumb, fires her. As the cleaning lady exits, a title in large lettering and clearly worded THE END is pinned to her bottom.









I direct Aunt Eleanor while Mike Theoharris holds the Sun Gun.

Mike did a great job arranging the lighting. It was the most noticeable improvement when we looked at the processed film. With this simple and important achievement, I felt membership in the Milwaukee Movie Makers was already worth my time and joining fee. Thanks to members' instructions, the educated dust loth and backwards banana-eating were successful gags. The stop motion added a new comedic element. Recommended lighting worked. Aunt Eleanor was a natural clown. She didn't have to overact to be funny. Mom and Dad's contributions as character actors also helped to make this my most popular film to date.

My first experience using a tripod taught me several things. First was that a steady image on screen was easier to watch than a hand-held image, especially for viewing static title cards and

Close-up shots which included some or no action. Secondly, it took longer to set up each shot with the camera on the tripod to achieve balance and composition within the frame. If camera movement to follow action was required, such a shot had to be rehearsed before any film moved through the gate. Rehearsal, I learned, was called a dry run. Every actor's movement and every move of the camera was performed without any exposure of film. If it all worked well together, the scene was shot. If there was a problem with having to move the camera or with the actor's performance, changes would be made and the scene went through a second dry run. The third lesson learned was that using the tripod was essential for shooting titles and for performing tricks wherein steadiness meant the difference between success and failure.

The Milwaukee Movie Makers was affiliated with the Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association CACCA). Founded in 1936, the organization catered for the interests of mid-western photographers and cinematographers and involved the fluctuating membership of some 40 to 80 clubs which included Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Iowa and Indiana. My MMM membership entitled me to participate in their various competitions. Winners of each of the competitions went on to further vie for CACCA's top honors, its Ten Best of the Year and the ultimate accolade of Film of the Year. The powers that be in the MMM encouraged me to submit *The Cleaning Lady* to CACCA's Quarterly Competition. This was the first time one of my films would be seen outside of my hometown, outside of my home state. Barely two weeks passed and I received notification at an MMM meeting that *The Cleaning Lady* had been accorded an Honorable Mention.

### Chapter 19: A Head Rolls

Sanguinary Mortem

large room at school was assigned as a Study Hall. Sometimes daily, other times two to three times a week, schedule depending, a mass of students from all year levels was assigned one period of Study Hall, its intention to confine students to a supervised space when not everyone could be assigned to an academic class. The reason for this unbearable set up may have been due to insufficient teacher numbers in specific areas of study. It may have been due to scheduling Physical Education classes two or three times a week and something had to be in place for rotation. I really don't know the actual reason for scheduling professional babysitting. Some teachers in charge of Study Hall were petty tyrants. Their rule of conduct was draconian to demonstrate their firm control. Inflexibility was enhanced with their carrying a yardstick while strutting up and down the aisles and occasionally snapping the yardstick upon their open flat palm. Having completed a term paper for English on the operation of the Nazi death camps, it wasn't much of a stretch for me to compare these martinets to concentration camp kapos. I always thought teachers despised this assignment because they'd much rather have the time to themselves talking up the Green Bay Packers over cups of coffee in the teacher's private room. Their frustration aimed generally at the administration, I believe they took it out on us kids.

On the other hand, others in charge were more tolerant. They'd read or correct papers, occasionally look up from the desk on the dais every now and again to remind students we were continually watched. But they kept quiet, kept to themselves. Study Hall was conducted as silent time, same as in the Library, and everyone was expected to do homework, assigned reading, write a theme, or read for pleasure. Thumbing through comic books wasn't encouraged. Falling asleep wasn't on the agenda, but it was excusable as long as there was no snoring. If I didn't nod off or if I didn't have a required assignment to complete, I'd use my time to research historical periods and costumes and think about what I'd like to do for my next picture.

We had assigned seats in Study Hall. Teachers were required to mark attendance. With students numbering over a hundred, no teacher was expected to know everyone's name. I remember one teacher's attendance method. He announced on the first day, "If you are here, I will see a body in a seat and I will mark you present. If you are not here, the seat will be empty and I will mark you absent. If you don't want to be marked absent, arrange for someone to sit in your seat." Assigned in a desk/seat arrangement near me was Mike Gifford, a sophomore and a year level behind me. We sometimes talked before our kapo shouted us into silence to begin personal study. This Study Hall was the class before lunch. Our lockers happened to be located in the same hallway along opposite walls, so when the bell sounded for class change, we'd collect our bag lunches and walk together to an alternate Study Hall. This room, as opposed to the cafeteria, was assigned to those bringing a lunch from home. Mike and I often sat together with our brown paper bags from home. Sometimes we swapped sandwiches. One cold winter day's lunchtime I asked if he'd like to help me chop off someone's head.

Titled "A Man Condemned", it was a short story I'd composed for Miss Heise's English class. My expectation was that I'd turn it into a scenario for a short movie. It was a character study dealing with execution by electric chair with a twist in the ending. How I expected I'd ever make it into a movie was the mere fancy of a high school boy. I had no hope of setting foot in a prison to shoot an amateur movie, much less access to an electric chair since Wisconsin didn't have the death penalty. My decision was to make it as easy as possible and change everything in my story to make a one-reeler. Out went my character study, the contemporary setting of a

prison with its cells and bars, the electric chair, guards as programmed automatons, and the Hitchcockian twist in the ending. The only element of the story retained was its main theme of execution. The severe hardliners of Study Hall and my reading about medieval torture and execution contributed to my short story being almost wholly discarded and revised into a whole new idea for a short film. My motivation was entering a contest in CACCA. A One Reel Film competition was scheduled for the near future. One Reel was limited to the running time of approximately 3 minutes or the equivalent of one roll of film. What subject matter might appeal to judges, well, I had no idea.

Instrumental in my story writing was Margaret Pearson, a member of the Milwaukee Movie Makers and Editor of the Club's Newsletter. Movie making was just one of her many interests. As a member of a geological society, she wrote formal articles for its magazine. Hoping for a little praise perhaps, I asked Marge to proofread "A Man Condemned". Her overall comment was that I had talent and ability to write and to tell a good story, but I frequently used unnecessary words. Marge's contribution to my writing was teaching me to edit. "Cross out every third word in your paper. Read what's left. If it makes sense, it's good writing. If it doesn't make sense, put the crossed-out word back in." It was an unusual approach and it doesn't always work. More times than not, however, it does.

You'd think my overusing the thesaurus to devise main and end titles for my World War II film would have taught me a lesson. I failed to see, or I chose to ignore, that I already had a great title right there in front of me. A Man Condemned, or of lesser artistry A Condemned Man, would have sufficed. Instead, I wanted some fancy-dancy words in place of the simplicity of Bloody Death. I looked up those two words individually in the thesaurus and come up with Sanguinary Mortem, Latin for Bloody Death.

My film was devoid of plot, but it had structure. It was a vignette. A prisoner is condemned to death and executed. That's it. Other than the credits, no title cards for dialogue or narration were needed. The entire story is told visually. Costuming conveyed the period of the picture, as did the method of execution. Beheading. I played two roles. I am the wild-eyed judge who condemns the unseen prisoner in the film's opening shot. The prisoner is led to his place of execution and audience may or may not realize that I am the executioner. Showing off my barechest and arms, I wear a black vest, black leggings, and a black satin hood to hide my identity.

I know why I was initially attracted to Mike Gifford, pictured right. He was a doppelganger for Mike Theoharris. Same size, same features, both Mikes standing side by side could have been passed off for twins. Although I had the Classics Illustrated title in my collection, it's unlucky I didn't have a million dollar angel to make my interpretation of Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. I cast Mike Theoharris as the prisoner and Mike Gifford as his warder.

Theoharris' costume suggested he may have been a captured pirate. He wore a loose-fitting yellow shirt and white three-quarter length pants. For boys they were marketed as beachcombers. Girls called the same styled pants pedal-pushers. Gifford wore a Christmas elf's costume, a green



cotton smock trimmed with red velvet. On his head was a grey beret. Whether audience picked up on the similarity in looks of the two was up to them. If they did, they might also interpret that the two characters might be one in the same person. The prisoner was being led by his own self to his own death. It was a fascinating concept, no doubt an influence from my enjoyment of Rod Serling's mind baffling TV series *The Twilight Zone*. At the least it was one of my too-subtle-for-words ideas, something picked up in English class when the teacher asked, "Now what do you suppose the author meant by that?"

What did I suppose I meant when using the make-up pencil to draw a pencil thin Errol Flynn moustache on Gifford's upper lip yet keeping Theoharris' upper lip bare? Well, now, that's a stretch and a foolish attempt to delve into character psychoanalysis.

I thought the purpose of my film was obvious. I wanted to shock the audience. Imperative was my ability to create a convincing special effect which showed Mike's head detached from his body after the axe fell. I sweet-talked a clothing store manager into loaning me a male manikin's head. I promised to return the prop undamaged. Using ketchup for blood was cheap. Inside the bottle and after splotching it out, ketchup looked red. On film, however, ketchup's color leaned more toward orange. From Miss Russell's Art class I took home a bottle of red tempera. It was a paint which quickly dried to chalkiness. Time couldn't be wasted when tempera was substituted for blood.

"ELKAY" PRODUCTIONS in yellow letters placed below the paws of my picture of the reclining lion introduced the film. For something different I used stop action. PRESENTS appeared, popped onto screen as if by magic. On the following title cards tempera red was painted as a splash of blood, a space in the center of each for hand-painted ghoulish lettering in black for credits. The titles screamed at the audience of what was next. If gore's horror offended, now was the time to close your eyes and forever hold your peace!

The prisoner is handled roughly by his warder. Upon first sight of the executioner, the prisoner winces and the warder smirks. The prisoner is forced to kneel and place his head on the chopping block. The executioner displays a playful side to his nature. On the other hand, he may be inflicting further torment when he gently pats the side of the prisoner's head. Again the prisoner winces. The act of severance is filled with suspense. Time passes interminably as the executioner measures the stroke, adjusts the prisoner's collar, moves the warder aside, and checks the sharpness of his blade. To accomplish the separation of head from neck, Theoharris pulled his yellow shirt up and over his head. The manikin head was positioned at Mike's shirt collar. The executioner delivers the axe blow into the space between the manikin head and the collar. The axe is raised and the executioner's foot knocks the head off the block. It probably wouldn't have happened like that in real life, but it made a shocking movie image. In real life the head would have dropped into a basket. In my film, Gifford picks up the head and drops it into a bushel basket. I gave my audience another shock showing Theoharris' severed bloodied head in the basket. The executioner and the warder deliberately nod their heads to silently acknowledge that each other's job was done well. In a Close-up finale, the executioner cleans his blade with a white cloth. The cloth is soiled red emphasizing the gore. Sanguinary Mortem was a short film shot over a short time but I knew it would leave a long and lasting impression.

# Chapter 20: Always Check the Depth before Diving

The Emperor's New Clothes

y sister Mary sewed costumes and changed ordinary hats and caps into medieval headwear after I'd decided to pursue that era a bit further in filmmaking. Construction paper was used to form cone hats with veils added. Gold satin, burgundy velvet and colorful cottons were transformed into medieval attire. My Easter vacation project was to transform a beloved Hans Christian Anderson tale into my newest "Elkay" Production *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Father Leonard again lent his assistance giving permission to use the hall. The stage wasn't fitted with scenery as before. I thought the bare stage, its gold backdrop curtain and the main burgundy velvet curtain would be sufficient background. Fancy period furniture in storage for play productions could be dragged out for my film if it was required. I hadn't anticipated that curtain backgrounds would look insufficient and unconvincing on film. What I really needed was interior sets of castle rooms, period appropriate props and furniture. Everything I had was genuinely makeshift. I could be as creative as I wanted with the camera and lights. Anything 20<sup>th</sup> century we altered wasn't going to pass for medieval days. The explanatory cliché was that I had bitten off way more than I was able to chew.

It was a large cast in an empty hall which felt like a confined space. An assistant director and a continuity person on the set would have been helpful aides at the time if I had known what an assistant director and a continuity person was and what they did. With each new shot it was my self-inflicted burden to remember where each actor stood, what they wore, what their action was, how the make-up looked, and what prop may or may not have been handled. Attempting to be a one-man band was my own fault. Since I felt I knew more about the moviemaking process than anyone else, I didn't delegate specific jobs and thought I could control everything. I was the wunderkind movie producer starring, directing, instructing the cameraman, telling actors who should dress in what and then checking to make sure it looked all right, setting the lights, checking the meager scribbling I called a script and making up what we had to do as we went along, as well as act as a sergeant-at-arms toward cast not immediately involved with a scene. It was a bigger job than ever anticipated. More time was spent setting up a shot than shooting it. The monotonous process of hurry up and wait meant a young cast sat around getting bored and playing up. Chatter and asides grew louder while into the mix came the ants-in-the-pants calisthenics and stretching movement to relieve tedium. I felt my Taurean temper rise and struggle to keep it all under control. As the person in charge, to quell off-set nonsense I didn't want to come down hard as a brick. I was afraid that if I offended my cast, they'd throw a minor tantrum, quit, and I'd be stuck with an empty set.

Ron Zirbel had the physicality of the naive Emperor and the least qualm about walking around in his boxer shorts. I was one for type casting. I liked putting someone into a role when they looked and behaved pretty much the same as the character they played. As Emperor, Ron's fancy clothes consisted mostly of one-color sheets and drapes and a fleur-de-lis patterned shirt worn backwards. To give him a touch of age, I drew a pencil-thin moustache onto his upper lip. He wore a crown cut from shiny silver construction paper and stapled to fit his head. A gold satin flap of material suggested the neck protector worn on caps of members of the French Foreign Legion. Jim Lewandowski's role was that of Minister, though Minister of what was never specified. He certainly wasn't a minister of the cloth. The flap of a flimsy flowered scarf hanging from under his hat ensured his face was never seen. Even when he faced the camera, that cloth shrouded his visage. Dick Harter landed the part of the Sorcerer, a role which didn't require him to 'source.' Not one magic trick, spell

cast, search into the future or a fast vanish into a puff of smoke was performed. His outfit resembled a pair of red hillbilly long johns which, in fact, was a one-piece red Santa Claus shirt and pants. He wore a dark blue cape. Harter's headwear was a handmade dark blue pointed cone hat with crescent moon features. Crepe hair fashioned onto a frame forming a moustache and beard was worn hooked over the ears like a pair of spectacles. It looked perfectly phony. Barry Farnworth wore a red shawl over his head which, like Lewandowski's, masked his face. All features of identity were buried under thick white fur. He had been unidentifiable as a member of the posse in *The Evil Slayer* and he participated unrecognizable again in the role of the Old King. If meaning the Old King was the Emperor's father, I provided no explanation. Methinks he was listed in the credits as such due solely to his wearing a Santa Claus beard and moustache. Barry looked more like a shepherd statue kneeling at the manger of a Nativity set beneath the Christmas tree. My sister Mary accompanied the Old King as his Queen. Her attire was a loose-fit Korean dress which had been a gift from Kwang Hi Koo, my pen pal in South Korea. Mary's headwear was a convincing homemade cone hat with flowing veil. My brother Steve was a peasant dressed in burlap shirt and pants. His role was a rapid walk-on as the Innocent Boy announcing that the king is naked.

Audiences would be forgiven if they thought my new film was a return to the Mickey & Larry comedies, my starting adventure in moviemaking. Mike Theoharris and I were reunited as a team. Mike had looked so handsomely mature in the Castro beard in my award-winning war epic, I gave him another. I tried out the same beard style on myself and liked what it did for my face. More fraternal than identical, maybe we could still have passed as twin brothers in the roles of the Dishonest Weavers. Our costumes may have been the most elaborate and resonant of the era. We wore pullover smocks for shirts, mine having been sewn from gold satin. It was leftover material from my mother's earlier sewing the gold satin sport coat. We had long red coats over our smocks. My sister bought several pairs of colored tights. All boys in the cast wore tights.

Ron Mistele was a freshman with no previous acting experience. I just liked his looks and asked if he'd be in my movie. He jumped at the chance to play a Courtier to the Emperor. Mike Gifford already had a film in the can with me and took the role of the other Courtier. In the same box as the Santa Claus outfit from which I'd borrowed the beard and moustache for Barry was the elf costume which Mike had worn as a warder in *Sanguinary Mortem*. Wearing a green smock gathered at the waist and trimmed in red velvet over a pair of red tights, and with a black



beret on the back of his head, Mike looked attractive, as if he'd stepped off the page of a book of medieval lithographs. Ron Mistele, unfortunate for him, looked like a girl. wasn't his fault that all I'd found for him to wear was a sleeveless dress with straps and bib and with a scallop cut at the hemline. I don't know why I thought it would pass as medieval male garb. I am still amazed that Ron put it on and wore it over his black sweatshirt and very red tights. His beret was grey and he wore it atop his head like a French school boy. The cast teased Ron for his girlish costume and yet no one heard him say, "I ain't wearing a girl's dress." Pictured left in an 8mm enlargement are Mike Gifford and Ron Mistele as courtiers. Ron Zirbel is the Emperor trying on new clothes.

The now recognizable reclining lion associated with "Elkay" Productions opened the film. White lettering hand-painted onto black construction paper was double-exposed and the credit titles appeared over action of the Emperor trying on new clothes with the Courtiers doing a lot of bowing and scraping. Mike the Courtier bowed to Ron the Emperor. Ron the Emperor bowed to

Mike. Ron the Courtier bowed to Ron the Emperor and so on and so forth. After credits, nodding of heads and bowing from the neck or from the waist was abundantly overdone. Did we think we were in Japan? The Courtiers further drape the Emperor in cloth which he refers to as new clothes in subsequent dialogue title cards. An Emperor in real life doesn't need to bow, yet Ron bowed every time to acknowledge someone bowing to him, frequently bowing deeper than his subordinate. This was turning into a Japanese tale of polite behavior! The Minister bowed. The Emperor bowed. The Dishonest Weavers bowed. The Emperor bowed. The Sorcerer bowed. The Old King fell to his knees and bowed so low it was a kowtow. Nothing else happens in the film except for a lot of bowing. His Queen bowed and curtsied.

My 8mm frame enlargements from The Emperor's New Clothes





Mike Gifford breaking character during a take with Ron Mistele

Emperor Ron Zirbel meets the crooked tailors: that's me and Mike Theoharris behind the crepe hair beards

Half of the film is a parade of characters who bow. Nothing is ever explained as to why all these other people in the court show up and bow. In between bowing, but always when the camera was being set for the next shot, hyperactive off screen hijinks included the Courtiers tickling Ron. Once my camera was set, I rejected rehearsal for a whole new and fresh approach. I saw that my serious telling of the story was turning into farce. At last I saw action breaking the monotonous bowing! Ron and Mike cracked each other up over lines delivered incorrectly, even when everyone knew voices couldn't be recorded and wouldn't be heard. The boys started performing a scene as the script required. After they'd make a blooper they'd add further shenanigans. The cameraman, Jim Lewandowski for the most, kept the film running. Dick Harter's Sorcerer sequence makes no sense because everyone involved with the scene kept splitting one's sides with another. Harter attempted to get seriousness back into the sequence. In character he deftly dobbed the laughing Courtiers with his wand. The Courtiers laugh more; even mete out a limp-wristed punch to the Sorcerer's shoulder.

In the second half of the film no one bothers to bow, but there is another parade. After the Dishonest Weavers strike their bargain with the Emperor for silk, gold thread and money, they disappear. We should have seen them perform their mysterious art with the loom. I guess no one thought to bring a loom. All we are shown are the two fraudsters with a bagful of loot laughing at the Emperor's expense and then whoosh; the weavers jump up and down like they need to go to the bathroom and are gone.





The crooked tailors jump with glee holding their loot

The "naked" Emperor parades in his "new clothes"



Left: the adoring crowd: Mike Gifford on left in another costume, my brother Steve, behind Steve is my sister Mary and two of her friends whose names I don't recall. Behind the girl on the right is Ron Mistele in another costume.

The Emperor, we are led to believe, has had a new set of clothes delivered to him following the Dishonest Weavers unseen loom work. The Emperor wears flesh-colored tights and boxer shorts. The Courtiers carry an imaginary train. Neither of the two in tights wore shoes and Ron Mistele slipped down the stairs. The scene was filmed, but it was left out of the final cut. Ron sits disheartened at the bottom of the steps and

flips his beret into the air. The Minister carries a bound folder of papers. It was probably the script standing in for a proclamation shouted to the adoring populace. Mary and Steve, along with Gifford and Mistele tightly holding head scarves to mask their faces make up the throng lining the parade route. A couple of Mary's friends showed up in makeshift costumes and stood in as crowd extras. It's rushed and ridiculous. With solid reaction from the mass of four to the Emperor wearing only his underwear, Steve bursts into Long Shot and excitedly points out the obvious. Ron reacts wide-eyed to the accusation of nakedness in Close Up and the film abruptly ends in black without an END title.

Many creative angles were used to frame shots. What didn't work was what ended up showing in the frame. The actors looked fine filmed from below, but above their heads was the track for drawing the drapes. Or there'd be a window off to the side and behind the drapery. There was always a gap showing between white ceiling and track with loose cords and heavy burgundy curtain. Emperor Ron went for an unwanted action to get an unnecessary laugh when he made like he couldn't find the gap in the curtain to exit his scene. We shot the whole film on a theater stage and it never looked like a palace room.

A mechanical problem detracted from the film's images, but I was unawares until the mailman delivered the little yellow envelopes from processing. The final scenes of the parade were shot with a newly threaded roll of film. Having aligned the film into the gate, I made the top or bottom loop too tight or too small resulting in film stutter. Upon projection, the picture had a permanent jitter, meaning it jiggled up and down. I couldn't get all the cast together to re-do the shots and, studying the stutter on screen, threw my hands into the air in exasperation.

The West Allis Star contacted me and publicized The Emperor's New Clothes before a foot of film was cranked through the camera. It may have been a slow news week. All I could give them was their headline, 'Boy Movie Producer Films Latest, 'Emperor's Clothes'. The article was obviously written with a crystal ball because it stated that I had recently put my cast and production team through the filming of my latest presentation. Associate Mike Theoharris was doing the tape recording sound track. Maybe I had considered making a talkie? I recall thinking when I read the article, "That's not in the program."

It was another life lesson. Advice given when you're swinging off a rope into a river or diving off a pier: Check the depth before you dive. I learned I shouldn't give out information about a project until it's in the can, the film is actually good, and is worth talking and writing about. I know everyone involved with *The Emperor's New Clothes* had a ball making it; alas, my new production was an absolute dud.

#### Chapter 21: Kicked Off the Bus

ate in May my junior school year drew to a close. As happens in some high schools, the end of the year sees a booklet published containing the finest written work by students in years 10 through 12. I had the honor of one of my short stories selected to appear in Composition Carnival 1962 and published by the Department of English, Central High School, West Allis, Wisconsin, Spring 1962. Students volunteering from all four year levels made up the editorial board. Teachers may or may not have had input and final decisions were made by the student editorial board. It was positive recognition that the short story printed in the book was my embellished movie scenario "A Man Condemned".

Another milestone was the final meeting of our school's chapter of the Thespians held on May 12, 1962. A dinner celebrated the Troupe's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding by Miss Case. Following speeches and performing arts I was presented with the National Thespian Society's Certificate of Recognition awarded for meritorious work in the Dramatic Arts in the field of production of amateur movies. It was signed by National Secretary Leon Miller.

There was a hectic political campaign in the final weeks of the 1962 school year. Student Council for the following year needed to be selected by 887 voting students. Voters heard every candidate's promises, qualifications, and views on the important issues in the school. They had also heard the various jobs defined and discussed. Posters went up onto walls in corridors and classrooms. I had zero interest in the politics of influencing school administration via Student Council, but it had been suggested that holding an office in Student Council looked good on a student résumé for getting a job or going to university. Participation in leadership and working as part of a team were considered positive attributes. With only the idea of massaging my already inflated ego and my dubbed status as a Cecil B. DeMille within the ranks of the school's hoi polloi, I tossed my hat into the ring to run for the office of sergeant-at-arms. I wanted nothing to do with the work-required offices of president, vice-president, treasurer or secretary. A sergeant-at-arms performed only during scheduled school time, often lunchtime meetings. No outside preparation or homework was required. I saw it as an easy job with little responsibility and plenty of opportunity to throw my weight around, if so required. I had no athletic profile, no image of the high school jock that seemed to attract girls like flies to dog poo. Making friends with any athletes for second-hand female attention, a possible rubbing-off effect, didn't work for me either. As a sergeant-at-arms I thought I might possibly be viewed by girls as a strong male, a Charles Atlas without the bumps and bulges in all the right places.

Same as me, James Rosenthal was a Junior, except that he was a jock, a high profile varsity football player. From Miss Case's homeroom, he announced his candidacy for sergeant-at-arms without a single challenger. I guess I looked at it this way; here we go again, another superman readying to get all the attention and glory. It was for this reason more than anything else that I wanted the job of sergeant-at-arms, if only to prove that one didn't need biceps bursting through one's shirt to do the job.

Most posters taped to the corridor and stairwell walls were simple wording like Vote for (Insert name here) for (Insert Office Here). My campaign strategy was to outdo James' publicity by making posters which grabbed more attention than his. I drew characters which looked like they'd come from the creatively deranged minds of the artists employed by *Mad* magazine, except that my cartoons were of my own design. I devised a clever tag line or dialogue balloon

appropriate for the character and its pose on each poster. My strategy was to tape up new ones every day in the lead up to the election. I wanted to keep my constituents interested and entice them to search for the latest giggle. My plan was highly successful. After votes were tallied, I had solidly trounced my opposition. Many students confessed after the election that they'd voted for me for one reason only. They liked my posters. My placards had attracted their attention; they had looked for new ones and I'd made them laugh not at me or behind my back, but at my good humor.

Rosenthal held no grudge and accepted his defeat with all the good graces expected of a gentleman. He wrote in my school yearbook:

Hí Sarge, To a really sweet guy. Glad to see you won the battle. Best of Luck,

Jimmy Rosenthal

Many high school students got summer jobs. Anything in retail, hospitality, even some of the trades took on 15 year olds and older and usually paid minimum wage. Providing good service often meant good tips from customers, an embellishment to low paying jobs. They'd work flipping burgers, maybe prepare, bake, or deliver pizzas. Some might bang the keys of a cash register in the supermarket, pack groceries into paper bags and carry them to the customer's car. Others set tables and waited or bussed in cafes and restaurants. Some worked as ushers in the movie houses, sold tickets in the box office or manned the concessions popping, buttering and selling popcorn; selling overpriced bags or boxed candies like Milk Duds and M&Ms. Boys not minding dirt under their chewed fingernails became part-time grease monkeys obtaining jobs pumping gas, cleaning windshields, checking the oil and water, and changing flat tires in service stations. This was still an era of customer service and teenagers could easily find gainful employment. I didn't even think about it. I was 'too old and too grown up' to do the paper route anymore and had sold it before starting 11th grade. If there had been encouragement from my parents to work during the summer of 1962, I don't specifically remember their telling me I should. However, encouraged by Mike Theoharris who'd just started as a busboy at the Black Steer Steak Restaurant on Highway 100, I also applied for a busboy position and was hired. Salary was \$1.10 per hour.

My school tormentor worked as a busboy, sometimes on the same shift and Mike and I. As unpleasant as I thought he was, even after rubbing his face in snow, on the job he showed manners and his best behavior amongst our patronage. He was even nice toward me, never attempted to intimidate or embarrass.

Most shifts were wedding receptions. We didn't work the regular dinner time venue. The job involved serving plates of food, clearing tables, washing dishes, bringing trays of food from the walk-in fridge to the preparation counters for the chefs and cooks. On clearing tables and in the kitchen, out of sight of guests, leftover food was scraped into garbage bins. I sought permission to fill a bucket with any leftover prime rib to take home for Muttsy. Chef said, "Help yourself." I especially saved cuts of meat which hadn't been touched. Yes, it surprised me that people left whole, untouched prime ribs on plates. The dog didn't benefit from such scrapings. I packed them separate from "dog food" into what I considered a family "doggy bag". Prime rib wasn't in our family mealtime budget, so family at home sometimes got a rich man's treat!

Shifts were long and tiring. Starting time was often 3:30 or 4:00 p.m. Our first task was washing all the dishes and cutlery left over from lunchtime. Why it was our job and not the lunchtime staff's was beyond me! Next we did salad trays, mostly crudités; it was our job to assemble them according to how chef wanted them done. Here's when I observed my high school bully at his changed best. He deftly plucked sliced radish flowers from bowls of ice

water, gently placing them artistically onto the platters, and then stood back ever so briefly to admire his handiwork before chef might bellow, "C'mon! Get on with it."

Dinner usually commenced anytime between 6 and 7 p.m., often finishing about three hours later. Biggest challenge within those three hours was to clear plates and silverware as quietly as possible while wedding speeches were delivered. On our feet most of the time and overheating as we deftly moved within crowded conditions, a break to cool down was grabbed by sitting in the refrigerated larder. When we finished dishwashing with the machine, air-dried and put them in correct order on the shelves, time had often crept past 1:00 a.m. We used a time card to punch in and again to punch out. Mike and I trod home in the dark, the occasional passing automobile no interruption to our tiredness and plodding in silence.

I lasted only a few weeks on the job. My downfall came one early Sunday morning during a breakfast following an 8:00 a.m. Mass to celebrate an elderly couple's renewal of their wedding vows. Our boss lady had the personality of an overseer in a wartime prison camp. As a priest made some opening comments, Mike and I stood attentively to the edge of the food table. The boss lady wheeled out a trolley. On it was crockery fresh out of the hot-air dryer. In hushed tone she ordered us to stack dishes onto the end of one smorgasbord table. I guess she didn't think it important to tell us to handle the dishes with towels because they were hot, hot, hot! I heard the priest completing the invocation. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the......" "....Holy shit!!!"

Yes, what should have been from the lips of the priest, "Holy Ghost" was instead me. Well ahead of Mike I'd grabbed hold of a stack of dishes as ordered, lifted them, and in the space between trolley and table my tender hands were burning. I blurted out and dropped the entire stack. Expletive! Crash! Splatter! Noise shattering Grace!

In the absolute silence which followed, akin to drifting alone in a capsule lost in outer space, all guests' heads had turned. Glaring eyes surveyed and scorned my humiliating intrusion of their raising of praise to the Lord. The eyes of the priest seared into me. The boss lady didn't even bother to ask what had happened, nor did she ask me to clean up the mess of broken stoneware. Just audible enough for my ears she hissed through clenched teeth, "You're finished. Clock off and get out!"

Sure, I felt hard done by. I'd only followed instructions to immediately perform a task. I left the Black Steer like a chastened puppy with its ears pinned back and his tail between his legs.

### Chapter 22: Channeling Crockett

#### Tomahawk Terror

Instead of finding another job and earning money I prepared to shoot a new film over what was left of summertime vacation. Mike worked in the Black Steer's kitchen, served and bussed in the restaurant proper thus making him unavailable for another adventure in film.

I wrote a short story, "Tomahawk Terror", a 19<sup>th</sup> Century American wilderness tale influenced by my admiration for Disney's interpretation of the legend of Davy Crockett first aired on "Disneyland" December 15, 1954 as "Davy Crockett Indian Fighter". I especially remembered the sequence where Crockett faced off against Red Stick in a hand-to-hand fight to the death. With that in mind as my centerpiece, the bulk of the story, a rescue mission, came from my own fertile imagination. It would become my most ambitious "Elkay" Production to date.

June pre-production included my writing a prologue about three boys who went swimming and were attacked by Indians. Abduction rather than killing was the motive. Two of the boys managed to escape. One was captured. The story proper occurs 21 years later. A chance encounter - well, a darn good set-up, really - brings together the two survivors of the Indian raid, Mike Steele and Andy Farrout (pronounced Fair ōh'). Steele says he's been searching for their captured childhood friend Joel. Farrout suggests that Joel has been raised as an Indian as is probably happy where he is, his memory of the trauma erased. Steele insists they should attempt a rescue and a new adventure unfolds.

Mom sewed a pseudo deer hide outfit for me, an old faded brown shirt and a pair of brown pants trimmed in fringe. Part of an old fur coat was turned into a coonskin cap with dangling raccoon tail. I resembled a buckskinned Davy Crockett. Just as Crockett had faced Indians of the Woodlands, so too would be my adversaries. Most identifiable to movie viewers' eyes are the Plains Indians like Lakota Sioux, Comanche, Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Crow and Shoshone. My Wisconsin-based movie Indians had to be Woodland and representative of the tribes of Menomonie, Potawatomi, Ojibwa and Winnebago. I borrowed library books to learn about the Woodland tribes, see what they wore and learn how they lived. Several breechclouts were cut and decorated. Armbands, anklets, headbands and their patterns were sketched and duplicated. Large duck, goose and white swan feathers were hunted for in the public parks and gathered. Wooden tomahawks were fashioned, tied with leather and adorned with beads and feathers. Friends provided hunting knives and one old collectable rifle of the era. There'd be no accidents. The firing mechanisms had been soldered. My cousin Phillip Brochhausen had been a boy scout and his troop studied Indian lore. They'd sometimes dress up as Indians, camp out and learn dances. He loaned his two black pigtailed wigs saying they'd hold their shape after getting wet and later drying out.

More care should have been taken in choosing a hat for Mike Steele. It wasn't the brightest idea to name a guy Steele and stick a bright red kiddie's cowboy hat on his head. It didn't set well on Mike's head and made him look ridiculously childish. The only concession made was to tuck the drawstring into the hat's pressed felt crown. British soldiers wore bright red jackets in the forests of the Americas; oddly I thought I'd get away with this red hat choice. I ignored American history. Pioneers wore clothing which blended with the forests' browns and greens and were camouflaged. I should have exerted myself and searched for a more appropriate hat for Mike, but I didn't.

Before any action was shot, a roll of film was exposed for dialogue and narration titles. I now owned a splicer and film cement. No longer would I be filming in sequence or stopping to set up title cards as we went. Without limits of daylight or having to worry about rushing to finish before encroachment of the setting sun, titling letters would be set straight and balanced on the card. I could do re-takes when action was badly performed or mistakes were made. Credit titles would be filmed last of all, after every sequence of action was completed, thus ensuring everyone who participated was listed. Previously I'd not always listed the cast. Because I shot in sequence and credits came first, I wasn't always sure about who would show up and who'd be unable to make it on the day. For the first time I'd adapt the amateur filmmaker's favorite for titling, alliteration, and name my new picture with the same title as my short story *Tomahawk Terror*. There's two words put together, I thought, other amateurs wouldn't soon be using.

I cast myself in the lead of Andy Farrout. Mike Gifford gladly accepted the role of Mike Steele. Disney's Red Stick became Strong Arm in my movie and was played by Dick Harter. His younger brother Jerry grabbed at my invitation to play a brave. I didn't know any real American Indians. Other Caucasian friends who dressed up as Indians were Jim Lewandowski and 14 year old 96<sup>th</sup> Street neighbor and high school freshman Eddie Gaehler. In a prologue my brother Steve played my younger self, the boy Andy Farrout. His friend David Schalk was the boyhood Mike Steele while another of his friends, Randy Kassa, played the young Joel. Stolen as Joel and raised as an Indian they called Black Smoke was Ron Mistele. My cast of extras could possibly swell after I read in the newspaper that a Nation of Midwestern Indians was scheduled to gather in Hartford, Wisconsin while I'd be in production.

Jim Lewandowski or Phillip Brochhausen manipulated the camera when I was acting. Otherwise I preferred myself behind the camera. Since I still hadn't bothered to get a driver's license, Phil drove required cast to locations. Filming of action sequences began June 25<sup>th</sup> in the woods of Greenfield Park.

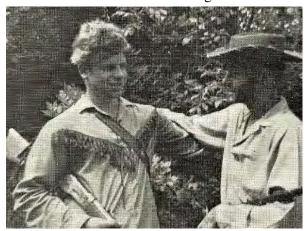
Andy Farrout (My character's name in the film and any time from this point I mention Andy, I am really writing about myself.) is introduced carrying his rifle at the ready through the forest. Human sounds alert Andy and he crouches out of sight in the brush. A white man is running. With an emphatic hand gesture Andy encourages the runner to join him and take cover. Two Indians waving tomahawks above their heads dogtrotted in pursuit. Andy raises his rifle. The shot was made with the camera set behind Andy's shoulder. It's an impressive view seeing the Indians approach as Andy takes aim. The rifle discharges a large puff of smoke. Eddie Gaehler perfectly timed his reaction. Stopped dead in his tracks, he flung his head back and fell backwards. The second Indian was Jim Lewandowski whose forward charge was met with



Andy's football blocker's tackle. They grapple, Andy thumping with fists and the Indian swinging his tomahawk. They break apart. Andy falls backwards and onto the forest floor. The Indian runs at Andy who cocks his legs and unwinds with a mighty kick to the Indian's chest. Lewandowski's warrior reels back and falls. The kick's inertia flings Andy onto his feet. In a Close-up Andy's hunting knife is drawn from its sheath.... Dropping to one knee, Andy straddles his fallen foe and plunges the knife deep into his chest, pictured left. In a separate shot the knife is extracted for a gratuitous display of bloodied blade and chest gore.

The action sequence established Andy as hero and protector. He dusts himself down, dons his coonskin and introduces himself to the cowboy in the red hat. The title card reads in faux drawl MAH

NAME'S FARROUT. ANDY FARROUT. The ears of the other recognize the name, his eyes register subdued delight, and the card insert announces I'M MIKE STEELE. REMEMBER ME? Cordiality is interrupted with the approach of more redskins, a chief and his lily-white, porcelain-skinned offsider. The title card following Steele's identification of the offsider is more than appropriate:



THE ONE WITH THE LIGHT SKIN IS JOEL. Ron Mistele's torso belies his summer years in the sun raised as a shirtless Indian. Lying low and away from the Indians' sight, Andy and Mike observe the wary pair as they retrieve the body of the brave with a bullet in his neck. Indians out of sight, the mission to rescue Joel is set. Whether it was my Catholic upbringing or the sentimentality of hard-nosed characters with hearts of gold I'd observed in boys' own movies, a title card reads SEE YOU IN HEAVEN IF WE DON'T MAKE IT, that line of dialogue pictured left.

A second sequence shot on the day had Mike Steele captured by Indians. Instead of continuing to film inside the forest, its edge was selected for the new set. Mike's character is a man of the wilderness. The name itself suggests a man of strength, a man of steel. Toting his rifle and walking a rough-paved path to the forest's edge and onto mowed lawn bathed in sunshine, his saunter is suggestive of a smitten high schooler on his way to the Saturday night sock hop.

Eddie Gaehler and white china doll-skinned Ron Mistele played Indian boys. Intent on counting coup, played was the operative word. Coup is intimidating the enemy, striking without causing harm. Rather than injure, it's intended to insult. Their action should have been direct; bopped Mike on the skull, tied his hands with a leather thong and frog-marched away. The skinny boys tackle Mike. More ribs can be counted than found on a xylophone. Mike swings a haymaker and knocks over Mistele. All three topple off balance when, simultaneously, Eddie strikes at the red cowboy hat with his tomahawk. As if in slow motion, gravity lowers them to the ground in one gentle movement. It looks natural and realistic. It was not what the boys had expected to happen. Mike lay still playing unconscious. Ron and Eddie take separate turns to look directly into the camera and broadly smile their embarrassment. The implication of a question accompanies each of their smiles. Without lips moving, it's obvious they're asking for direction. The capture of Mike Steele wasn't pulled off as instructed and they're stuck for what to do.

Making a silent movie way back when, it was standard practice for the director to shout directions from behind the camera. I yelled at Ron and Eddie to get serious, stand up and grab Mike by the arms and drag him away. I should have done a second take, make it savage, but I liked their boyish spontaneity. Although the script's time frame suggested Joel was supposed to be in his late twenties, Ron and Eddie looked like teenage boys who, if stretching your imagination, hadn't undergone a ritual ceremony to achieve the status of manhood. They hadn't become braves. They may have been out hunting rabbits and just happened to stumble upon a white man instead. Clumsily, the Indian boys still succeeded in capturing a prize.

To show passage of time, that Andy and Mike had set off in opposite directions to in their search for Joel, a rainy afternoon was picked for filming a short sequence of me tramping through a swamp. Greenfield Park was a wonderful place for filmmaking because it contained so many different worlds, sets which included paths, walkways, trails, gardens, scrub, forest, picturesque lagoon dredged from a bog in the 1920s, an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century boat pavilion, and wetlands edged with reeds and cattails. Whenever Hollywood needed a rainy scene it created rain artificially with a sprinkler system. For some reason real rain rarely shows up on screen unless its news footage of a hurricane's torrential downpour.

We needed the swamp set to ensure that rain was seen. Raindrops plopping onto water always showed up clearly on film. Unlike the lagoon, the swamp had no indicators of human habitation. Composed of only two shots, it's an exciting sequence of a fast run and slow tramp through mud, a contrast to the terrain covered by Mike. In Crockett clothes and carrying the musket, I positioned myself on the solid edge of the swamp behind a thick clump of reeds. The cameraman couldn't see me. On hearing "Action" I emerged on the trot moving toward the camera, unaware I'd chosen a very soggy trail. The wetland was miry and my attempted speed to save on exposing too much film became a slowdown slog. Each footstep sank deeper. I was up to my knees in stinky black slushy mud. Lifting each foot made a squelching sound and water filled my boots. I was afraid my boots would stick submerged and my foot would come out soaked, my peeling sock coated in gluey wet black mud. It wasn't pre-planned for me to lose my balance lifting one leg as the other sank deeper and I careered sideways. I hustled away from the camera for the second Long shot. Instead of seeing ankle high boots, the black mud covered my legs and gave them the look of knee-high boots. Experience from making the first shot taught me to hasten close to the reeds where the quagmire wasn't as soft or moist. Each of the two shots was enhanced with visible rings formed on the still water by the dropping of steady raindrops.

Another hot summer day's sunshine filtered through the canopy of trees making spots of light on actors and bushes. Filming in a forest can be cooler than standing in the open sun, but is a lighting technician's nightmare. When no exterior lights can be switched on and used to fill shadow to moderate and balance light, choosing an f stop is tricky. In shade the f stop recommendation was any opening from 2.8 to 5.6 depending upon the denseness of shadow or lack of light. Having to work on a natural outdoor set with bright patches of sunlight and dark areas of leafy shadow made for guesswork.

With the camera set low on a tripod, a powerful Indian chief enters the frame. His nose is a glistening bright sunshiny yellow while his painted face is wholly hidden in shadow. I wasn't aware, hadn't learned yet, that using a white card to bounce reflected sunlight onto my actor's face would have spread and balanced the light, thus eliminating shadow. Dick Harter wears a magnificent headdress. I'd made it for him in pre-production from one of Dad's old hats from which the brim had been cut away. The crown was overlaid with overlapping feathers. The back of the headdress was a spread of large wing feathers arranged like a peacock's unfurled tail display. At the temples are long strands of red and yellow velvet with an ornament attached to each dangling end. Harter stands menacingly over the camera. His arms are adorned with red plaited yarn armbands. He strikes his right bicep mightily with his left hand and announces via the title card I AM STRONG ARM. (From this point, when I refer just to Strong Arm or the Indian chief, I am writing about Dick Harter's character of Strong Arm, the Indian chief.) The chief interrogates Mike who's resting comfortably on his haunches on the ground. WHY ARE YOU HERE? HOW MANY OTHERS HAVE COME? Directing Mike to say whatever came to mind, I said he needed to show he was tough. A title card wasn't required. Even if lip readers aren't sitting in the audience, Mike clearly replies, "Kiss my ass." Strong Arm unlooses a backhander to Mike's jawbone. Momentarily stunned, Mike reacts with a swiftly delivered hocker<sup>1</sup> to the chief's left eye. Strong Arm wipes spittle from his cheek. He won't be degraded standing before his warriors.

Our Indian encampment boasted only one other tribesman, a warrior played by Dick's 13 year old brother Jerry. Gerald, as he'd be addressed by his teachers, would join us in the fall as a freshman at Central High. Given no script-specific screen name, he followed his chief's commands enthusiastically. I know Dick didn't have much of an acting stretch when, as the big brother intimidating his little brother, telling him what to do. The young brave wore feathers arranged Mohawk-style in a straight line across his head. Armlets were animal hide with jingle bells often worn by scouts and real Indians when dancing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sometimes called a spit wad, it is American teenage slang for a thick wad of saliva coughed up from the back of the throat.



Gerry's breechclout,<sup>2</sup> pictured left, was worn over black pants and looked like plain softened sunbleached deer hide. Ordered to tie Mike to a tree, Jerry duly roughhouses Mike from the ground and secures his prisoner's wrists to a tree limb with plastic laundry cord. I forgot to bring thongs of leather or real rope. All I had handy was the plastic cord used for tying props together to carry from set to set. Jerry tears the shirt from Mike's body. The feat was accomplished in one swift movement. Prior to the shot being made, Mike had taken off his shirt. It was then draped over his shoulders, the sleeves lay over his arms and it looked like Mike was wearing his shirt buttoned and cuffed.

Strong Arm draws his knife, sneers, and draws the broad blade across Mike's bare back, same picture above left. On screen just long enough to leave an impression, a red streak of blood appears as the blade is passed angularly from Mike's shoulder blade to his waist. It was an easy and effective special effect. Harter held a stick of red greasepaint hidden behind his blade with his index finger. The paint smeared and the audience is left to believe skin is split. A shot of Mike's face captures all of his pain in Close-up. The scene returns to Mike's back showing blood trickling from the open slash wound. To celebrate an imminent skinning alive, Strong Arm vigorously starts on the upbeat of drumming and encourages his warriors to dance a blood-thirsty reverie. Jerry, the only other Indian in the tribe, light-footedly danced and waved his tomahawk menacingly in the air.

The Indian chief stops dancing, stops torturing Mike and screams via the title card THE WHITE MAN WILL DIE. He sheaths his knife and thrusts his tomahawk down targeting Mike's skull. The chief's blow to Mike's head is abruptly stifled by a shout. On the title card to be inserted later and in big letters is that shout spelling STOP! The afternoon of the same day and before losing the light, I was filming out of sequence, the shots to be intercut later. Strong Arm freezes, slowly turning his head and looking over his shoulder. Final shot for the day, and again not in sequence, was the chief's defiant reaction to Andy's challenge of a fight to the death. I CHALLENGE YOU FOR THIS MAN'S LIFE reads the title card for Andy's line of dialogue, to which Strong Arm replies LET IT BE SO. ONE TOMAHAWK EACH!

Days after the torture of Mike and in the backyard of our 96<sup>th</sup> Street home Andy observes the savages. These were cutaway shots filmed out of sequence and later inserted into the torture sequence just described. Our backyard was a giant garden of vegetables, fruits and flowers. The first instance the audience realizes Andy is in the vicinity of the Indian village is when he parts



raspberry bushes to reveal his face, pictured left. In another Close-up with a mass of yellow back-eyed Susans and large leaves in the foreground Andy observes and reacts to the Indian chief's slicing of Mike's back. A third Close shot has Andy mouthing his disgust and, without the aid of a title card, lip readers can clearly observe, "I can't take much more of this." It's an important shot as it sets up the sequence of Strong Arm freezing his action before he can slam his tomahawk into Mike's skull, then slowly turning to see, in a cutaway Long Shot, an

<sup>2</sup> A form of loincloth consisting of a strip of material - usually a narrow rectangle - passed between the thighs and held in front and behind by a belt or string. Often, the flaps hang down in front and back. Sometimes the breechclout was much shorter and decorated apron panel was attached in front and back.

205

angry Andy poised, tensed, on the thinnest edge of springing into action. The camera was stopped. I walked to the camera. My walk, unfortunately, wasn't filmed. Then my Close-up was filmed. The camera's position wasn't changed from Long shot to the Close-up of Andy's face and his mouthing the dialogue to challenge Strong Arm. On screen it comes across as an error and its name is jump cut.<sup>3</sup> It is an abrupt change from one shot to the next as if frames inbetween are missing. First seen in Long Shot, Andy's face then 'pops' onto screen. To avoid that jump in screen action Andy should have been shown walking toward the camera for his Close-up, or the camera angle should have been changed, or there could have been a cutaway to Strong Arm in between Andy's Long Shot and Close-Up.

The local newspaper's item about the Hay-Lush-Ka powwow in Hartford suggested people wouldn't be billeted in hotels and motels with tribes gathering for board meetings in conference rooms, nor would it be a single stage performance using artificial lighting. The Nations powwow was a weekend outdoors, a traditional camp-out and all of the activities were open to the public without a monetary fee or admission charge. The article stated that many participants dressed in their native costumes and camp was set up in native lodgings. I saw this gathering as my opportunity to film and include real Native Americans in my film. I pleaded with my father to drive Dick Harter, Mike Gifford and me to Hartford.

We travelled early on a cloudy Saturday morning July 24<sup>th</sup>. I hadn't attempted to contact organizers of the powwow or make prior arrangements with them. I was just hoping to get lucky. We arrived in Hartford wearing our movie costumes. My trimmed in fringe fake buckskin garb along with the coonskin on my head drew the required attention, as did Gifford's red cowboy hat and Harter's boy scout Indian garb. As I mounted my camera on a tripod I was approached by a dark-skinned man wearing real buckskins. Upon his head he wore a full Plains Indian headdress. He enquired as to which tribe we belonged; even though I was sure he knew we had no Indian blood in our veins. I explained that I'd read about the Hay-Lush-Ka in the newspaper, that I was a filmmaker, and asked if I would be allowed to shoot some scenes for my movie. I sensed I wouldn't be allowed to shoot anything I'd scripted after showing what I had on paper. If the real chief I spoke with felt insulted by the Indian stereotypes in my picture, he was a gentleman and didn't show it. He may have brushed it off as foolish white man's naivety. The invitation to appear in a movie must have appealed because he called together other chiefs and elders and signaled to young bucks elaborately decorated in feathers, beads and buckskins.

Pictured right, I stand with chiefs of the Hay-Lush-Ka Council at Nation camp-out in Hartford, Wisconsin, July 24, 1962.

I had the feeling that before any film could be whirred through my camera, these chiefs and braves wanted me to learn from them, absorb something of their culture and understand that they were human beings and not the Hollywood savages in my script. A chief wearing bison horns on his head informed and instructed us with a brief lesson about Hay-Lush-Ka.

Founded in 1959, they were called Hay-Lush-Ka, a word of Winnebago origin to identify braves and princesses of great courage, accomplishment, and value to the welfare of



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The jump cut was first used in Jean-Luc Goddard's *Breathless* (1960). It was and is a violation of classical continuity editing, which wants to give the appearance of continuous time and space. A jump cut, on the other hand, can sometimes be used for creative purposes and more than one jump cut can be used in a single sequence.

their tribe, their Federation. Hay-Lush-Ka braves and princesses were held in honor by their fellow braves and princesses, and all strove to be called Hay-Lush-Ka, meaning Brotherhood of the Algonquin nation. To become Hay-Lush-Ka boys and girls with a parent must complete 11 tasks. Progress may be marked with tokens of bear claws, feathers, and mostly beads. Eight tasks are earned with the tribe. Three are earned with the tribe and demonstrated before the Hay-Lush-Ka Council at a Nation camp-out or powwow, Algonquin word for party. There needed to be the ability to perform Indian Dance Steps and be able to sign the Indian Princess Aims using Indian Sign Language.

Hay-Lush-Ka has a Thunderbird symbol, a sign of great power, good fortune, and often considered a good luck omen. Of the Algonquin Longhouse it has 8 wing feathers and 3 tail feathers and is mounted on an arrowhead background. Thinking as a white man, tasks and progress wasn't unlike achievement in living clean, having a good moral compass and earning merit badges in Lord Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement.



Pictured left, I stand humbly with a handsome brave at the Hay-Lush-Ka powwow in Hartford, Wisconsin July 24, 1962.

We engaged in brief discussion of what I was attempting in my film and everyone agreed to participate and have fun. Some danced individually for my camera. I was given permission to photograph whatever I wanted while they performed solo or in great numbers to demonstrate achievement for the Council.

One chief handed his impressive feathered headdress to Harter to wear. Interesting what Harter found inside the headdress when he tipped it forward to flip onto his head. There was an intriguing tag which read 'Made in Hong Kong'.

He nudged my shoulder and nodded silently with his head showing me the tag. We smiled sharing the in-joke. After the chief showed him how to step, Harter danced for the movie camera.

Having done pre-production research, I was disappointed seeing Indians decorated in fluffy purple and magenta feathers, as if these too had been imported from Hong Kong. The kind of tepees set up in the village I thought belonged on the plains and not alongside a lagoon in forested Hartford. Genuine red-blooded Midwestern Indians danced for my camera in front of tepees constructed of tall poles and walls of bleached hide. I randomly filmed Close-Ups of feet, of dazzling costumes and high-spirited movement as groups and solo dancers performed for the Council. I figured in the editing process these would be useful as cutaways or inserts. My challenge was to frame tightly and eliminate white visitors and Indian spectators not dressed Contemporary trappings of eyeglasses, sunglasses, metal belt buckles, 20<sup>th</sup> traditionally. Century clothing and accessories were as much as possible avoided being seen in backgrounds and on sidelines. Not always successful, I tried to the best of my ability to get around filming action on manicured lawns.

It was an exciting day out. We travelled a distance of about 30 miles from West Allis to Hartford and ended up near the Kettle Moraine<sup>4</sup> in a strange, new, enchanting world and,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Covering more than 22.000 acres of forested glacial hills, kettle lakes and prairies is the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. The kettles are caused by buried glacial ice, the process leaving depressions from small ponds to large lakes and subsequently melted.

somehow, I managed to shoot a lot of spontaneous footage and some arranged shots of Harter, Gifford, and Harter handling the camera for a shot or two of me.

Final day of filming was August 8<sup>th</sup> in Grant Park, a beach in South Milwaukee off South Lake Drive on Hawthorne Avenue. A stone staircase gave access to the beach on Lake Michigan. It was a beach that was never crowded. Even if the parking lot were full, there was more than enough room for everyone. Dick's and Phillip's cars were the only ones parked in the lot! The beach was empty when we arrived and, surprisingly for a summer's day, no one showed up to use the beach throughout our filming. That made it easy for framing an empty, wild-looking beach in any direction. Nobody pestered with questions or ruined a shot by accidently walking or running into our backgrounds. No audience hung around to be accidently caught in the background of a crucial shot. We could concentrate on our script and shoot scenes as I'd envisioned. Well, almost. The prologue of the film and the penultimate sequence of the fight to the death were both filmed in one day.

Steve, Randy and David stripped to their swimming trunks worn under regular clothes. I don't remember there being a bathhouse at the beach for changing. Boys swimming in 1875 was probably done wearing ill-fitting underwear or possibly in the nude. A strict rule at Grant Park Beach was: Wear appropriate bathing attire. In reality this was 1962 and, deserted as the beach was, one never knew if someone would arrive to swim, walk, or sunbake. It was a public park and we couldn't risk having the boys swimming stark naked. Out of modesty, the boys wouldn't have done it anyway and we didn't need a visit from the beach police or the county sheriff to caution us or, worse, arrest us for indecency.

The three boys dash into the lake. No one plunges into the water. It would have been too startling a wake-up call. Lake Michigan is always cold and it wasn't yet 9 o'clock this glorious morning. They splash each other. From the scrub two Indians peer, then emerge unarmed and trot across the white sand toward the boys. They are prey. One of the boys turns to see the Indians' approach, points, and freezes in fear. All three boys are swept up in the arms of the Indians, but only two are flung onto shoulders like sacks of flour. The third boy eludes capture and runs away. One of boys hanging upside down over a shoulder is clever enough to sink his teeth into the Indian's lower back. The Indian reels in sharp pain and drops his prisoner onto the sand. To his feet quicker than the Indian can react, the boy dashes off. Resigned to having captured one boy, the Indians cart off their trophy. I completed filming the prologue after an hour and a half and still no one else used the beach.

Just prior to the fight scene, via editing, after Strong Arm says that each combatant must fight using tomahawks, Black Smoke is now on the beach and brought back into the story. Mistele still hadn't suntanned after his earlier scenes were filmed and most of the summer had already passed. He must have worn his shirt all the time he was outdoors. Red headband and feather on his head, Ron's hairstyle was coiffed for 1962 rather than 1817. At the least, his hair should have been mussed, not bunched into a popular teenager's pompadour. Andy says via the title card JOEL. REMEMBER ME? Without missing a beat Joel replies I AM BLACK SMOKE. I DO NOT WANT TO REMEMBER. Out the window went the plan to rescue Joel. No more reason, in fact, to fight to the death. Honor, however, must be upheld. After all, Strong Arm tried skinning Mike Steel alive!

Now Phillip operated the camera for the film's centerpiece. Andy and Strong Arm eye off and circle each other. We choreographed and rehearsed the fight ahead of any film being exposed. Our combat had to be visceral and look natural. We needed convince any audience and believe our actions were driven by fighting skill. Strong Arm lurches at Andy, catches him in a half headlock, knocks him off balance and into a head first crouch onto sand. Straddling his adversary like a rider on a horse, Strong Arm is about to conk Andy's cranium when Andy bucks. The chief is knocked off balance. Andy rolls onto his back cocking his legs. The Indian recovers and charges again. A forward thrust catches the chief in the chest and, balanced on Andy's feet, he is lifted and somersaulted over Andy's body. Andy rolls onto his feet, stands,

and leaps at the downed Indian. Strong Arm twists and eludes the assault. Andy falls forward, turns quickly, and is back standing on his feet.

Tomahawks in hands, the grapplers face off at water's edge. His tomahawk raised, Andy lunges at Strong Arm. The Indian chief crouches, lowers his shoulder, catches Andy, and momentum catapults Andy into the air and over Strong Arm's shoulder. Andy lands on his back on wet sand. The canny warrior grabs Andy by the throat. Both collapse and roll over one another. Each attempts balance to seize the upper hand. They stand apart. Andy had been fighting fair, Indian style. Now he winds up his right arm and delivers a haymaker to the Indian chief's jaw. Strong Arm staggers and falls face down into the water. As the Indian rights himself, Andy pounces at him. Instead of catching the chief, Andy plunges into the water. Strong Arm has briefly avoided Andy's attack.

Strong Arm cannot dodge before Andy's up on his feet and delivers a clenched two-hander to the back of the Indian's head. Andy unwinds his intertwined fingers, grasps the chief by the neck and chokes him. Strong Arm thrashes for air. Andy weighs down mightily holding his enemy's head under water. Bubbles rise. Andy's fight to the death is won. Strong Arms has drowned.

Wading from the water, Andy walks over the sand, his soaked Crockett costume clinging to his wet frame. Some of the fringe trimming the back of the shirt has torn off leaving just enough to resemble an animal scut. The walk raises an inadvertent giggle from me, surely from the audience as well. My backside shimmies rhythmically side to side with each step, the caudal appendage wriggling from side to side as each left/right footfall slides in the sand. For a man of the wilderness who's just put on a massively masculine display of testosterone-fuelled energy and power, it isn't a very good look; in fact, it's all a very feminine sashay on the catwalk.

Completing the storytelling, scenes filmed earlier were intercut with scenes filmed much later. When doing the sequence of Mike's torture, we also shot the scene to immediately follow the fight and Andy's inadvertent waddle off the beach. Andy cuts the rope which held fast Mike's wrists to the tree. Indians are no longer present. The slash across Mike's back is clearly visible. In a deft move Andy throws down his knife sticking it in the ground and, catching Mike, cradles his boyhood friend in his arms. Mike is a dead weight and Andy catches his balance. With his left arm underneath Mike's shoulders, his right arm beneath Mike's crooked knees, Andy has rescued Mike and set up the classic Hollywood movie carry; it is an image of a father carrying his sleeping son to bed. The pose is somewhat reminiscent of a mother carrying her fatally wounded son on the Steps of Odessa sequence in Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925). A better example happened after I made Tomahawk Terror in Shenandoah (1965) wherein Eugene Jackson, Jr. as Union soldier Gabriel performs the classic carry of his wounded Confederate friend Boy, Phillip Alford, off a field of skirmish. Andy bears the mortally wounded Mike to safety alongside a lagoon. He sets Mike down to rest against a tree trunk, goes to the water's edge, leans forward and scoops water into his hands. Mike slumps to the ground. Andy carries water in his cupped hands and sees Mike lying on the ground. He pauses, hands part, and water spills. Andy moves to Mike, bends to one knee, and placing a hand on Mike's bare shoulder, realizes his friend couldn't survive the ruthless torture. As Andy shades his brow with his hand the title repeats, if incomplete, a line of dialogue spoken earlier with a smile: SEE YOU IN HEAVEN IF WE...

A dead weight is always a challenge to lift, but I did it. Nothing looks uncoordinated. I lift Mike's lifeless body with ease and, in a stereotypical Hollywood movie ending, but without a soaring chorus, carry him in silhouette into the sunset.

All of my credits, including the main title, I filmed in sequence, the yellow letters arranged on black paper. I wanted to make a double exposure, letters superimposed over a live action background. It was another experiment using light, or the absence of it. For the first time I filmed at night without artificial illumination. The light source was a fire set in the dirt at the bottom of the hill of our front yard. I expected it would look like a campfire. A few twigs were

used as tinder. Newspaper rolled into a ball produced the brightest and most contained light without 'burning out' the yellow lettering. The credits sequence lasted longer than the full winding of my camera. Before the spring wound out and produced a white frame at the stopping of the motor, I ceased filming. Then I re-wound the spring motor and refueled the fire. I started running the camera after the new flame looked about the same brightness and size when I'd stopped. On projection of the processed reel, the title sequence filmed over the background fire was a success.

My memory was always cluttered with too much trivia when filming out of sequence over six days and time passing in-between shoots. I could have benefitted from a Continuity Person keeping notes about costumes. Errors in costuming continuity usually happened when pick-up



shots were made to emphasize a detailed action or to assist the editor cutting a scene for flow of action. There are scenes of me wearing the shirt with the fringe. These are intercut with my wearing a plain brown shirt, as seen in the picture at left. climactic fight ends with the fringed shirt soaking wet. In the rescue sequence immediately following, Andy severs the cord holding Mike to the tree limb. The costume shirt is plain brown... and dry. Not only is the shirt dry, so is my hair. It was combed forward to simulate dampness. The plain brown shirt is still on my back as I carry Mike away from the Indian camp, but approaching the lagoon, the shirt magically transforms into the one with fringe. I really have no idea how that happened. Had I started shooting before Mom finished sewing the

Davy Crockett costume? Within this same rescue sequence Gifford goes through inattentive, unintended wardrobe changes too. He wears black shoes in shots intercut with shots where he has white canvas sneakers on his feet. White canvas sneakers?

Breechclouts on the same Indian change from shot to shot. Joel's white breechclout hangs from his waist, goes missing in the next shot, and shows up white again in another short sequence. I know how that happened. Thinking about a Greenfield Park sequence of Joel and his chief, I'd decided in Grant Park that I needed a Close-Up shot of Joel bending forward to help his chief drag a body because the chief had blocked Joel from view. Looking on from the bushes were Andy and Mike and the audience sees the action from their point of view. That it was Joel required emphasis because the audience hadn't yet seen Joel all grown up. With the passage of 22 years, the audience needed to know who Joel was in the cast and what he looked like. My mistake was shooting the pick-up shot, a not-so-close Close-up, on the beach at Grant Park instead of returning to Greenfield Park for set consistency.

We just finished filming the sequence prior to battle between Strong Arm and Andy and it's Joel handing a tomahawk to me. Joel declares he's happy living with the Indians. "OK, that's it for the day," is what I may have said. That's the kind of statement to actors that suggests they can remove costumes. The whole idea for doing the cutaway Close-up now in Grant Park was an afterthought. Ron was finished with his scene. In haste, I neglected to check that Mistele still wore his breechclout, but no; he'd removed it and wore only his pants in the cutaway. It's probably even more noticeable as a continuity error because the lighting between shots varies greatly, the darker woodland shots of Greenfield Park is a huge contrast to the bright sand and bare bush on the beach.

In the editing process I was stuck with two title cards, one following the other and making little sense together. I needed a cutaway of Mike, Andy, or both. Having already used all the good live action footage of Andy or Mike I desperately needed something to separate two title cards. With no shot handy, I resorted to using an off-cut, a length of film unusable because Mike and

Andy were just standing around looking awkward. It had been shot at the end of a roll to use up the last foot or so. It was common practice to shoot anything, often of actors mugging and goofing off, to finish the roll and prevent losing a good shot if the film ran out before the action finished. I hadn't then figured out that doing a static shot of something relevant to the story might later be more useful. In a shot followed by a title, Mike's seen on the right of the screen with Andy standing on the left in bright sunshine with thick green leaves as background. After the title, the off-cut's characters have switched positions and the background is a darkly lit lagoon with two solid tree trunks balancing both sides of the frame. At least the sunny shots weren't intercut with this shaded off-cut. It conveniently, though awkwardly, filled the space between two green title cards. Most viewers, I hoped, were not so observant or critical of the variation in light quality and placement of characters.

The quality of the light varies between Indian camp scenes filmed in sunshine and shade in Greenfield Park and the Hartford Indian camp and dancing filmed beneath a cloudy sky. Moreover, the Greenfield Park scenes have only two 'Indians' whilst the Hartford scenes have great numbers of them. Cutting from Strong Arm dancing to Jerry dancing and then to a mass of Indians dancing can easily evoke an audible audience reaction. It's akin to "Whoa! Where'd they all come from?" Once the initial shock eases, seeing so much incredible movement from so many bodies all on the screen at the same time is mesmerizing.

A special effect for transition was brought to my attention at an MMM meeting. A new product on the market was Craig Fotofade, economical and easy to use to give amateur movies a smooth-change of scenes at a cost of just a few cents. It was a black dye which could be used to create fades and wipes, transition techniques used extensively in movies of the 1930s and serials of the '30s and '40s. Through a simple dipping process the special dye compound made safe, permanent fades and wipes. The contents of a Fotofade bottle were dissolved in 8 oz of water (distilled water preferable) using a tall glass to allow for dipping film into the solution.

To make a Fade the film was moistened in clear water for 30 seconds. The length of film was then slowly dipped into the solution, frame by frame, until the desired length of the Fade was achieved. The longer the length of film remained in contact with Fotofade, the blacker the film. As soon as the full dip was completed, the length of film was withdrawn, thus securing a gradual Fade with maximum density in the film end first entering the solution. After the film was removed from the solution, it was rinsed in clear water, sponged and dried. Drying was best accomplished by clothes-pegging the film to a hanging line; the clip type of clothes peg working best. Another drying method placed the film lying on its edge onto absorbent paper toweling. When the Fade In is cut into the film, upon projection black is gradually replaced with picture. The opposite occurs with a Fade Out.

I used Fotofade effectively to make a Fade Out and Fade In between my reclining lion logo and the movie's main title. The credit sequence faded out and the scene of the boys on the beach faded in. Fades were used as gentle transitions between some time transition/narrative titles.



Illustration of Foto-fade used to make a Fade, Center Wipe, Side Wipe, and Cross Wipe

Another effective transition using Fotofade was the wipe. I was able to make center, side and cross wipes. Water-proof tape, like masking tape, was used. It was placed diagonally over portions of the emulsion side of the film not to be blackened. The tape had to be firmly in place so that dye didn't leak under the tape. The film was moistened in clear water for 30 seconds and then dipped into the Fotofade solution for 2 minutes. The film was then rinsed well in clear water, sponged, and dried by means of one of the methods described earlier. Thoroughly dried, the tape was carefully peeled away from the film revealing the black pattern of the wipe.

Only one wipe transitioned separate locales of the main characters searching for Joel. It was a center wipe used between a shot of Andy tramping away from the camera along the edge of the swamp and a shot of Mike standing warily and alert in the forest.

Tomahawk Terror has its flaws yet none make sufficient inroads to ruin our enjoyment of its having been made, afterwards in audiences' eyes, and even viewings during competition with judges. Brazen or foolhardy, that I showed up in Hartford dressed like Davy Crockett, I can hardly believe, but my white man naivety paid off. The Indians were welcoming, willing to share their lore, and they performed for my camera without a request for monetary recompense. The film has its slightly corny bits in the script, fortunately overlooked by most viewers, but the acting overall is more convincing than had been seen in my other developmental efforts as a moviemaker. For a half-baked teenager *Tomahawk Terror* is a grand, almost epic achievement.

Now as a headstrong 17 year old I thought I knew it all. Isn't that typical of being a teen! Well, I didn't. I certainly didn't 'get' the big brother, little brother thing. After *Tomahawk Terror*, Steve wanted to join my high school friends and me in the basement, walk with us down the street, go and explore the creek whenever we did. Acting with the big boys in my movies gave my little brother the idea he had license to join in whenever he wanted. My friends and I didn't do anything that I thought in the remotest sense interested him. Anyway, who wants a pesky little 10 year old hanging around? As far as I was concerned, he was a little nuisance, an embarrassment, nothing more than an itch to be scratched. So I did what first stupid thing popped into my head to get rid of my tag-a-long brother. I am so ashamed of what happened next.

Harter and I lumbered down the hill at the front of our 96<sup>th</sup> Street home when I heard, "He-e-e-y, wait for me." How often has that plaintive cry come up in stories about siblings? "Go away," I shouted back. Without even turning to look at Steve, "Don't follow us," I ordered. "I wanna come too," I heard him call. No thought went into my picking up a stone the size of a golf ball. I threw it at him. The stone struck Steve just above the eye. Steve didn't cry. He grasped at his face and collapsed to the ground. I hadn't expected that. I was never so accurate pitching in baseball. Not only had it been Warren Spahn pitch perfect, blood freely flowed and my parents had to rush him to hospital.

Oh boy, did I catch it, especially from my mother. She didn't yell and she didn't clobber me with a wooden spoon. In a very quiet and calculated way, she made me feel guilty. "Don't you realize that every little brother looks up to his big brother? Didn't you ever think that what you are is what he wants to be? Your little brother looks up to you. He admires you and, whether you want it or not, you are everything he wants to be. And what do you do? (Beat) Nearly knock his eye out with a stone! He'll be lucky if he doesn't go blind because of you."

I was too damned thick and arrogant to understand that my little brother Steve simply wanted to be with us, to emulate our admired behavior, to learn how to become just like the big boys he liked.

I woke up to myself after that scarifying incident. My God, I was stupid in never considering consequences. My mother's reasoned words sank in to my sealant thick skull. I determined to be the best big brother Steve could ever have. I was his only brother, so whatever different choice could I make? I took him to the museum, to the zoo, lots of places kids his age enjoyed, and when it was absolutely possible, Steve joined in with my friends.

Many years later, when my brother and I had grown into adults and had become the best of friends, a friend of mine asked Steve, "So what was Larry like as a big brother when you were growing up?" Steve's answer not only floored me, it made me feel very, very small. "He was a bully." I hadn't thought of it like that, but I fully deserved it. "But he grew up," Steve followed through. "You think I'd be here with him now if he was still a bully? Larry turned into a really good brother."

### Chapter 23: Irons in the Fire

Test Allis Days was celebrated late in summer. It was something the Chamber of Commerce dreamed up to justify its existence and to encourage the local economy; it was to coincide with the staging of the Wisconsin State Fair held in the fairgrounds on 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Greenfield Avenue in West Allis. Stores held special sales and national celebrities participated along with local radio and TV personalities in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open West Allis Days. The celebrities usually were booked to perform inside the State Fair fairgrounds. 1962's West Allis Days featured Cliff Arquette who made himself famous after creating an endearing country bumpkin called Charlie Weaver, his main contribution to bucolic humor his Letters to Mama. Charlie Weaver was much loved because he came across as the grandpa everyone wanted as their own. I was a genuine fan.

I made a home movie of Cliff Arquette as police, yes, the police, handed him autograph books to sign. Charlie Weaver emerged from his limousine and mugged "oh, my goodness" surprise for my camera as if he'd never seen one before or hadn't expected to be photographed. He played along for the local TV news cameras. My Kodak moment captured Cliff's attention sufficiently and when I made my request, he graciously autographed my record album cover of Charlie Weaver talk-singing his letters to mama.

Singer Anita Bryant, looking every much a clone of first lady Jackie Kennedy in her bouffant hairstyle and salmon red ensemble, climbed onto stage with the assistance of local disc jockey Fritz the Plumber from radio station WOKY. The character of Fritz was a dolt, a fish out of water and, on this occasion, wore an outfit of a red jacket trimmed in yellow braid with a pillbox hat on his head, the headpiece closely associated with that of an organ grinder's monkey, or the bellboy kid in a cigarette advertisement who sang out, "Call for Phillip More-ay-us." Anita Bryant didn't sing. She performed a jacket removal stunt with Fritz. When the red jacket was removed, it floated into the sky suspended from a collection of helium-filled balloons. I was hastily rewinding my Kodak as Fritz slipped out of his red jacket. By the time the spring motor was re-set, all I managed to shoot was the jacket and balloons rapidly rising into the sky.

The short piece of film was nothing more than a home movie, never titled, and rarely seen outside of my living room, but it made for a rare souvenir. I don't recall seeing anyone else using a movie camera.

Class of 1963 at West Allis Central High School commenced in September 1962. This was my Senior Year. I always found it oddly funny how an American school year started with almost four full months of the previous year and still was called by and identified for the year which followed. The first four or five weeks of a new school year were always busy. Teachers' announcements dominated every homeroom's morning meeting. Requests for student participation in extra-curricular activities like plays, yearbook, school newspaper, sports, and special interest clubs for foreign languages, teachers-to-be, science, camera, debate, bowling, homecoming, prom, projection crew and hall monitors numbered amongst others. There was a rush to recruit because teachers were guaranteed extra pay in their checks for doing things outside the immediate classroom, that is to say providing that an extra-curricular activity enlisted sufficient numbers. Most announcements came from the office and were delivered over the public address system. We sat at assigned desks in our assigned homerooms and listened to the daily news crackling from a wall-mounted box. I delighted in the eventual offer to work in

tandem with another selected Thespian to deliver such morning announcements and news via the office PA. It was a learning experience to speak into a microphone without spitting air and making annoying plosive sounds when enunciating letters like B, P, T and D. Speaking through an amplifying system and holding the microphone too close to your mouth makes a "Puh" sound. You wince and it hurts your ears. You know what I'm talking about.

Announcements deemed very, very important weren't delivered via the boxes hanging in homerooms. These were read aloud by homeroom teachers. Eye to eye contact was reasonably guaranteed. Room 236 continued to be my homeroom from Year 11 and ruler of the roost was still Mathematics teacher Mr. Harris Huenink. Amongst the usual welcome back from summer vacation and the rear end-numbing housekeeping was the announcement of try-outs for a new school play. It seemed that Mr. Huenink's emphasis for play audition attendance was aimed directly at me. There was no mistake in his eyes meeting mine as he spoke.

Mr. Plehn was holding try-outs for his next budget-busting directorial effort, this time an obscure murder mystery by Robert St. Clair entitled *Tiger House*. The inevitable all-white cast included one ethnic character, just as had *Brother Goose*, and with no brown face in the school to play the role. According to Miss Case and director Plehn, only one of Central's Thespians could play the role of a sub-continent Indian. My complexion wasn't swarthy. I thought I was incapable of transforming myself into a chocolate-skinned character. I wasn't an impersonator like the inimitable Peter Sellers; a comedic mimic who always wanted to be anyone except himself, including an Indian with a dedicated Delhi accent. Unlike the confidence exhibited by Mr. Plehn and Miss Case, I must have underestimated my own ability to create and convince as such a character. I was cast as the mysterious multi-deity worshipping Hindu high priest of the Tiger Cult, a swami called Yami.

Oh boy, current secretary of the Thespians Barbara Stern again tried out and she was definitely in the cast, this time playing a young woman called Peggy Van Ess. Oh no, Robert Burgermeister showed up for try-outs and landed the role of Thompson. I'd never have peace with him on stage and poking fun from the wings. He wasn't an officer in the Thespians. Still he delighted in baiting me saying his eye was fixed on the presidency which, currently, I didn't even hold! Attractive Nancy Skok with the beautiful black bouffant hairstyle had been elected to that high office. I had no choice except to work with Burgermeister because there was dialogue and interaction between Thompson and Yami. Unbelievably, on a surface level I acted like I was unable to tolerate Burgermeister, but in my heart I still massaged a soft spot for this brash but talented Sophomore. On stage and in character, I learned how to be generous. At least it felt like generosity toward a fellow actor. Dialogue exchanged between our characters must have been riveting stuff because my memory of Burgermeister's Thompson is empty.

The story involved an inherited mansion, Mystery Manor. Erma (Marikaye Goode) had been willed the house by Aunt Sophia (Janet Lucht), whose body was found viciously mauled "as if by a tiger" in front of the fireplace. Erma renames the mansion Tiger House. A fabulous diamond necklace hidden somewhere in the mansion, various suspicious relatives and friends, and a mysterious Indian complicate the plot. Yami is a strange character who has a curious, intriguing crystal ball with a strange red light which could only be seen when the lights were off. The play had both spine-tingling suspense and humor, with most of the laughs provided by the Thespians' current vice president Dick Wesell via his unsettled, jittery character of Oswald Kerlins. "See the all-school play, *Tiger House*, October 11" posters were placed in various parts of the school. It was scheduled for a one night performance.



(Row 1) Barbara Stern, Frances Zovi. (Row 2) James Adams, Penny Feustel, Gary Sprenkle, Janet Lucht, Merikay Goode. (Row 3) director Mr. Carl Plehn, Robert Burgermeister, Richard Wesell, Diana Dombrowski, Me, Sharon Oeldermann, Jack Granatella.

Amongst my academic subjects was Chorus taught by Mr. Charles Reichl. I enjoyed singing and was a tenor in the A Capella choir, meaning we sang without instrumental accompaniment. We learned and rehearsed in scheduled classroom sessions. Music was selected from various styles, countries and eras. There was a Negro spiritual, a French chanson, a Russian folk song, an anthem, musical theatre, and popular songs. We practiced eight songs including the Academy Award-winning "Moon River" from Breakfast at Tiffany's and selections from the long-running Broadway hit My Fair Lady. Mr. Reichel taught us how to breathe diaphragmatically, that is, to breathe from the diaphragm, the muscle partitioned between thorax and abdomen. conventional or everyday normal breathing, diaphragmatic breathing allowed for inhalation of more air to sustain note length. When done correctly, upon inhaling the stomach area inflates. Done incorrectly, only partial inflation of lungs happens; only the top of the lungs inflate and the shoulders rise. We were taught to sing with mouths opened wide to emphatically enunciate syllables and words' endings, especially those which finished with t, as in want, d as in wan-ted, g as in wan-ting and so forth. An opened mouth was essential for the consonants, according to Mr. Reichl. Singing from the diaphragm and using breath control, the consonant sounds of aaaah, eeee, iiii, ooooh, and uuuu seemed elongated. For example: the word "once." The "wŭ" in "once" received more attention than the n because the n closed off the mouth, whereas the "wu" allowed the singing of a powerful note with greater projection without a microphone. And no, we never used microphones performing on stage.

Mr. Reichl's earliest goal was to sing for the school's Thanksgiving assembly November 21. In addition to the choir, there was the Girls' Chorus and a 16-member all-girls group called The Notables. Further music included unusual combinations of singers called the Triple Trio composed only of girls' voices, and a Double Quartet of only boys. I was selected by Mr. Reichl to contribute my tenor voice to the Double Quartet. What fun we had.

For all I know, Mr. Reichl may have been a work-a-holic or he was pretty good at taking advantage of the money offered for doing things above and beyond the call of the ordinary classroom. In

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Unknown Student Photographer for the Wamago, published in 1963 Yearbook for West Allis Central High School

addition to all the other singing groups, a brand new group was formed, The Madrigals which, amongst other things, specialized in medieval songs and rounds. Images of knights in body armor mounted on white chargers and fair damsels with clasped hands waiting in distress for rescue flitted in my adventurous mind after I was asked to sing tenor alongside Dan Christianson. Best about The Madrigals was being able to be in the same room with Connie Niebauer. If Barbara Stern wasn't interested in me when I rehearsed and performed with her on stage for the plays, maybe I'd capture the attention of Connie in the music room. From what I'd seen in movies, girls swooned when a man sang. At least that was the impression given.





(Back row, left to right) Dan Christiansen, Dave Ellington, Me, Dale Anderson, Dick Mahieu, Don Haugdahl. (Seated, left to right) Mary Ann Schnell, Jane Harrington, Judy Owsianny, Jackie McPeek, Connie Niebauer, D'Anna Lewis, Cathy Conrad, Kathy Gusley.

Let me make this clear. Connie was never a second choice. Oh, good heavens, no. I had been taught there are many fish in the sea and Central High's sea of seniors did have many interesting fish. As much as I liked Connie, even building up enough courage to ask her out a few times to movies and dances, I always knew deep down that I wasn't amongst her box office greats or highly listed in her Top Ten hits. I'd walked Connie home after school every available chance I had. Too often three of her friends accompanied us. The three giggling, simpering girls in Connie's entourage made me feel like the proverbial fifth wheel. Instead of behaving like schoolgirls when I was around, their attitudes were akin to Spanish duennas, middle-aged chaperones. I foolishly offered to carry Connie's books, just as I'd seen the sweater-wearing letter boys do in Hollywood's interpretation of ideal high school life in those saccharine Andy Hardy fillers. Connie occasionally accepted my swagger so her hands could be freed for dramatic gesticulation with her companions. I was treated as a tagalong, tolerated like a drooling fawning lapdog and, more often than not, just plain ignored. She and the escorts deliberately or inadvertently inferred I didn't count by prattling on about their gorgeous singer pin-ups Frankie Avalon and Fabian. Unwarranted, of course, but I hated those guys!

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Unknown Student Photographer for the *Wamago*, unpublished in the 1963 Yearbook for West Allis Central High School

With *Tiger House* rehearsing afternoons and evenings, several lunchtime meetings of the Student Council occupied my time. I was, for the most, an effective Sergeant-at-Arms alert to unwanted intrusion. In-between biting into and chewing on my cold meatloaf and ketchup sandwich, I told irritating ants-in-the-pants onlookers, "Quiet!" I used my index finger to emphasize the object of my castigation, all the while avoiding disgrace to my office by using conscientious mouth control to prevent spraying bits of chewed sandwich onto constituents.

On top of academic classes, play rehearsals, Student Council, and singing groups, Miss Case convinced me I'd be a superb interpreter, performer and contestant for Forensics. What? Checking out dead bodies blown with fly maggots and beetle larva to find out when the deceased had checked out? Forensics is the act of fastidiously inspecting crime scenes and trying to deduce what happened through scientific examination. Forensics is also a more technical term for debate. The term forensics comes from ancient Greek, where the term was applied to speeches made to convince a group of people about a certain issue, who would then make a judgment based upon the arguments and evidence presented in the speech. Forensic competitions are divided into two separate events: individual competitions and team debate competitions. Individual competitions have several different sections where the debate competition is limited to three or four contests.

Miss Case charmingly coerced me into participating and I was glad to have said yes. As well, others with performing arts talents were sweet-talked into preparing speeches or readings. Mr. Joe Zenk, teacher of American History and English, coached the teams for participation in the category of Debate. Debate frightened me because it had no script. I felt I'd be more comfortable with a script in my hands and such categories existed for performance. Prose Interpretation, Poetry Interpretation, Read Speech, Literary Reading, and Oral Interpretation/Verse were events consisting of interpretation of another author's work.

Competitors read the material from a small binder or book used in performance. The binder was traditionally black with a height of about 10 inches. While books are not required to fit this description, competitors who utilized a different style of book were often marked down for using it. Miss Case was a stickler for adhering to the rules. She didn't want anyone to fall short on points due to rules ignorance. Competitors interpreted their selection of literature via facial expression and eye contact. Memorization was generally helpful, but not a requirement. Miss Case preferred we familiarized ourselves with our material as much possible, as close to memorization as we could for our own personal comfort in presentation. However, points could be deducted if an interpretive reading was "too memorized" and the competitor didn't look at his or her binder sufficiently.

Time limits for interpretive events ranged from four to ten minutes. Although the first local competition and elimination was still five months away, Miss Case was ensuring her extracurricular pay, I'm sure, and simultaneously giving special incentive to each of her hand-picked performers; we had something challenging to look forward to in our competitive future. We were encouraged to search through books in the school and public libraries for material that personally interested and which fulfilled the requirements of our chosen section. Miss Case steered me into seeking poems for Oral Interpretation of Poetry.

My English teacher was Miss Helen Pischke. Amongst literature studied was Shakespeare's Scottish play. If sufficient of my "hamminess" wasn't already in preparation for unleashing on the public or extemporaneously on current display, I happily volunteered to play one of the three witches for a classroom sketch of "Double, double, toil and trouble. Fire burn and cauldron bubble." Costumes were made, wigs were worn, make-up with warts applied, and I guarantee we didn't look like the fairytale witches trick or treating on Halloween. We even managed to beg some dry ice gratis from a local merchant to add atmospheric floor fog and cauldron cloud. Not only did we entertain our teacher and classmates, we demonstrated an understanding of the text and gave it an interpretation which scored us highly in this study.

We studied James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. I was intrigued with the 19<sup>th</sup> Century style of writing. Since people didn't travel as easily as we do nowadays, Cooper described wilderness scenes and individual things within the scenes in great detail, transporting his readers to the place and creating an accurate picture in their minds of something they might never have the opportunity to see in their lifetimes. It wasn't unusual then for Cooper to pen a whole page of minute detail to describe late afternoon light falling upon and penetrating an autumnal maple leaf shimmering above slow drifting waters of a small creek just deep and wide enough for the passage of a lone canoe and its bearded buckskinned oarsman.

My latest film *Tomahawk Terror* couldn't bear comparison with the romantic writings of James Fenimore Cooper nor be any measurable challenge to the classical author's reputation, but Miss Pischke thought my film's content would be quite relevant to our study. So I was invited to screen my 8mm filmed epic to the class.

For *Tiger House* the evening of October 11 Miss Pischke sat in the audience with my friends, my parents and members of the Milwaukee Movie Makers. "...and with all my mind, me'm Sahib," I said as the mysterious, imposing, turban-wearing swami Yami, pictured right.<sup>3</sup> Audience paid 50¢ for a seat and heard me speak, on more than one occasion, that character defining line of dialogue. According to critics, the night's performance was "a very jolly experience. The play was well done and, if there were any 'flubs', it was not apparent to the audience. Larry Klobukowski played the part of a 'Hindu high priest' and as per usual did a good job. The whole cast was terrific."

That's not how I remembered the night. Thereafter that performance gave me nightmares. Whether it was trying to keep on top of doing too many things, being overly confident and trusting in the good luck of the night or just arrogant laziness, the thing is, I hadn't thoroughly learned my Act 3



lines. I was somewhat familiar with them, but I hadn't learned the cue lines delivered by others on stage and wasn't fully aware of which order my lines needed be said. Unprepared and uneasy, I had stepped onto the stage for Act 3 as if it had been strewn with shards of glass and I was barefoot. I moved as if to avoid cutting the soles of my feet. My body language was emphatically crouched with a lean toward the wings either stage left or stage right as I anticipated and waited for a prompt. "Ahhhhhhh-h-h-h," I would talk-sing in a high note to a lower note until my prompter whispered my next line. Non-verbals, those sounds one 'umms' and hums when thinking aloud to cover the silence of unpreparedness, those utterances which aren't real dictionary words, took up the waiting space until I heard my line from the prompt. I had talked seriously and secretly with the prompter ahead of performance, never told Mr. Plehn or anyone else in the cast that I hadn't solidly memorized my lines. Act 3 dress rehearsal had been at best spotty and I'd assured my director that everything would be hunky dory on the night. I was fooling them, I thought, but I knew I wasn't fooling myself.

Most actors on stage and the audience hadn't even been aware of my self-imposed predicament. If they had, they may have put it down to my unexpectedly experiencing nervous tension, getting the yips, suffering stage fright or the so-called drawing a blank. I'd managed to wing it. Call it extemporaneous theatre games or sheer bold "pulling it out of my ass" talent, by incorporating my own discomforting vagueness into the mysteriousness of my character, I got away with it. I believe Sharon Oeldermann prompted me. She could have exposed my vulnerability, but didn't. She bailed me out. Sharon obviously wanted the play to succeed. The reviews said it all.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Unknown Student Photographer for the *Wamago*, published in 1963 Yearbook for West Allis Central High School

I learned a valuable lesson in the hardest way that night and I have paid for my own negligence ever since. To this day I have a recurring bad dream of being on stage and not knowing what next to say. More often than not that dream has me confidently setting out for someplace else, frequently from the stage or a classroom with a smile on my face. "I'll be back in a moment," is what I address to no one in particular. On my way to some unspecified destination I meet a loosely-scattered crowd and am jostled by strangers who resemble shoppers at an outdoor bazaar or marketplace. Moving against my headway people brush past and bump against me. Heads held high with eyes staring ahead, no one acknowledges collision. I lose, misplace or have items of clothing drop away, peel off or fall into shreds. As if negotiating an experimental scientist's maze, I am like a rat running up passages and aisles and coming to grief against barriers. I look for a robe or a towel to cover my incumbent nakedness. No one offers help. No one pays any real attention. I get nowhere fast. I feel immodest, bruised and confused. It's a dreadful feeling every time I wake.

Five days after the play's one and only performance the Milwaukee Movie Makers presented a program of members' films to moviemaking neighbors south of the Wisconsin border, the Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association. Inviting our club's films for a one-off screening, entries were simultaneously accepted for CACCA's One-Reel Competition. I handed over *Sanguinary Mortem*, the picture I'd specifically shot for entry in Chicago. October 16, the evening program screened to CACCA members included my *Tomahawk Terror*, the first time it was screened away from home and it hadn't even had the chance to participate in a competition. The fact it was selected for an interstate program suggested to me I'd made a film of significance. As I hadn't gone to Chicago for the program, I wasn't aware of audience reaction.

But I have vivid first hand memories of a special screening of *Tomahawk Terror* and other films shortly before Thanksgiving. A meeting of the Milwaukee Movie Makers was an entertainment night of national prize winning films from the Photographic Society of America-Motion Picture Division. Visitors from India with an interest in amateur film production attended the meeting. Pratap Krishna

training session conducted by the Harnischfeger Corporation. Ralph Zautke, from West Allis and a new and active member of the MMM, and I were prompted into giving a little more extensive show a day or so after the meeting in my family's basement recreation room. Others attending the occasion were Fr Leonard Meyer, friends Mike Theoharris, Mike Gifford and Bill Geipel, Al Huennekens of the Milwaukee Movie Makers, Ralph's wife Carol, all pictured right in a staff member photo of The West Allis Star. Not in the photo, my parents were there too.



The evening's entertainment included five movies in color accompanied by recorded mood music on tape. Munching popcorn, potato chips, pretzels and sipping sodas, our guests viewed the first reel, *Sanguinary Mortem*. Of all of my pictures to choose, whatever possessed me to open the program with a beheading? I thought I had a good reason. The gruesome film had been returned in the mail that morning from CACCA's One-Reel Competition, but without any announcement of result. I had no bragging rights, but I was proud of what we'd achieved. The second film I threaded should have opened the program. *The Cleaning Lady* had, November 8<sup>th</sup>, been awarded an Honorable Mention in the Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association contest. Spontaneous laughter rocked the room as Aunt Eleanor's cleaning lady performed her implausible tasks.

The atmosphere changed as Zautke projected his *Experiments in Horror*, five short horrible, plotless vignettes spliced onto one reel. Horror movies are staple production fare for teenage movie makers. Most tend to outgrow the genre and move on. As a thirty-something adult, Zautke relished making spurious blood and gore pictures. Under an umbrella title, his film was a series of unrelated episodes. "The Unexpected" had a mad doctor forcing his victim's hand into a container of deadly acid. The doctor proceeded to relieve the pain by beating the hand with a crowbar. "The Clean Cut" lasted a minute on screen but was very effective. In this stomach churner, Zautke sliced off his own arm with a butcher knife. The gasp from our Audience in the dark was audible. One Indian visitor exhaled a heaving sigh, slid from his chair and slumped onto the floor. No referee counting to ten, the poor man



had fainted. He was out! To Zautke the movie maker with a specialty in making horror, it was the ultimate compliment. For the rest of the audience it was an embarrassment. When the cold of the air hit him and he was revived, his stomach churned and he brought up samples of every edible intended as a treat. Fully conscious, cleaned up, and once again convivial, his understatement was that the 'films were too realistic' and had made him 'feel a little sick.' The remaining 'post mortems' were not shown.

Pictured Left in a photo by a member of staff of the West Allis Star: Ralph Zautke, Pratap Krisna Uppal, K.A. George, and me.

At the time I couldn't help thinking how appropriately named Ralph Zautke had been when considering the movie genre he chose to exploit. To 'ralph' was slanguage for 'throwing up'. Bill's tension reliever was *Little Girl Lost*, about his daughter, Susan, getting lost at the Wisconsin State Fair. Children's Day was spent at the Fair filming the story. It had won First Place in the 8mm class in the same CACCA contest I'd entered *The Cleaning Lady*. Final film for the night was *Tomahawk Terror*. Our foreign guests found my interpretation of 'Indians' highly amusing.

So much was happening at the same time and, just as Mr. Reichl had planned, The Madrigals debuted at the School's Thanksgiving assembly concert. "All Ye Who Music Love" by Baldassare Donato opened our program. No Thanksgiving themed songs or ditties about a turkey were sung, although "Alan A Dale" may have been an appropriate selection. The song begins, "When Alan a' Dale went a' hunting, his bow was stout and strong." The Double Quartet sang another hunting song which started, "There were three jolly Welshman, as I have heard them say and they would go a' hunting upon St. David's Day. All the day they hunted and nothing could they find..." They were English folk songs about hunters in England, so I have great doubts about their ability to track turkeys in the Cotswolds. Inappropriate for the holiday, but nonetheless wonderful, a Negro spiritual was sung by the choir. It was about dying and wanting to meet one's Maker by William Dawson called "Soon Ah-Will Be Done". On the other hand, "Lord, For Thy Tender Mercies' Sake" by Richard Farrent sounded like and came across as a Thanksgiving orison at table.

The fading echoes of the Thanksgiving holiday concert were barely absorbed into the stage curtains when Mr. Reichl announced that the Music and Dance departments were combining talent to stage Central's first musical, *Down River*, in February 1963. The play about life in old Wisconsin had a performance tour throughout the previous summer at twelve county fairs. Book, music and lyrics were written by David Peterson, choir director at Monona Grove High School, Monona Grove, Wisconsin. The original story of the musical, set in 1855, was recorded in *Wisconsin Is My Doorstep*, the yarnbag of Professor Robert E. Gard, director of the Wisconsin Idea Theatre.

Our thespians were encouraged to try out, as long as they had voices with ability to soar in song. Christmas not far away, casting try-outs were announced and conducted. I eagerly participated. Lucky again, perhaps, I landed the lead role of Jim Dawson, a loud and brash, mean and thieving

riverboat man. A scoundrel was always more fun to play than the white-hatted good guy. Dancers were invited, chorus members turned into a viable list, and musicians for a pit orchestra tentatively selected.

I made a vow to myself about *Down River* that I wouldn't repeat the neglect in learning my lines ahead of the *Tiger House* performance. That was foolishness. Not only was I learning my lines forward and backward, I'd learn everyone else's with whom I had stage dialogue!

# Chapter 24: There's a Monster in My Basement

Dr. Emile's Mind

hristmas vacation always meant presents, bubble lights on the double-needled spruce tree, snow, freezing temperatures, and now the learning of lines and songs. Ever since buying the Kodak, making a new movie over Christmas was also on my holiday roster. Was I biting into a sandwich loaded higher than the gape of my maw, or was I a bolt of lightning, just a bundle of creative energy primed to explode? I had been very impressed with the audience reaction to Ralph Zautke's horror movies. Sometime following our debacle with the Indian engineers from India, I did see the remaining shorts on the reel *Experiments in Horror*. Zautke sawing off his arm was almost tame compared with the torture and pain of whippings, amputations, slashing, gashing and prolific bloodletting gratuitously depicted in the shorts which followed. A short film lobbed itself into the lap of the audience like a slow, highly arched softball pitch, without preparation of character or plot, made one profound an impression, so much so that an audience member reacted with a gushing barf, a ralph, if you must. Why, I could make a film with intense shock value too, but splash my screen within a good story and create characters with which an audience identified.

Zautke's movies were the impetus, but more than influential was James Whale's *Frankenstein*. A mad doctor brings a corpse of many parts to life with the servile aid of an oddball assistant. Granted, in the 1931 Universal production, there isn't a skerrick of blood, a wisp of depiction of a defoliating acid, or a sidelong glimpse at a juicy internal organ overtly presented. All of the horrible images are suggested and left to the imagination of the audience to fill in the blanks. I just liked the idea of a scientist creating life from the dead and that's about all I took from seeing the old, creaky, black and white movie, still the best and definitive version, on television.

Precepts of story writing are applicable to movie making. Sometimes they are tacit more so than hard-line. One of these is that the easiest way to anger and frustrate your reading or viewing audience is to end a good story with, "It was all a dream." Develop characters an audience can identify with and care for, tell their story which grips and fascinates, and give the audience satisfaction in the dénouement. The climax can tease. It can be left open for interpretation. It can legitimately pose questions. It shouldn't, however, conclude with anything resembling, "but I woke up and it was all a dream." It's the easiest way to earn zero in a film competition, the quickest way to squeeze a D double minus out of the English teacher. My film's finale would make my audience satisfactorily think, "What the hell...!"

Mike Theoharris was always going to be my first choice for the lead role, but there was a slow and painful drift in our friendship. Someone was interfering, playing wedge politics with us, and most assuredly trying to break us apart. Still, I somehow convinced Mike he was needed and I wanted him in my next movie, as if the film wouldn't or couldn't be made without his participation. It was a means to an end, of my showing him how much I wanted him as a friend and that I didn't want him disappearing from my life. I don't know if Mike accepted an unnamed supporting role as a mad doctor because he genuinely wanted to be in the movie, if he still genuinely liked me, or if he took it as a courtesy and acknowledgement of our past bond of friendship.

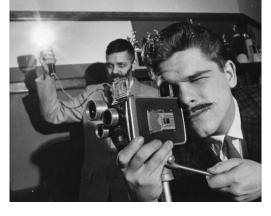
My new film was called *Dr. Emile's Mind*. Bill Geipel accepted my offer to play the lead of Dr. Emile. I knew he had talent. Not only had I spent time with Bill in the organization at school known as the Future Teachers of America, he was also an active member of the Modern Dancers. His character alone would be named in the title and in silent movie title cards. I gave names to the other

characters, but never used any in title cards or in the credits. Mike's doctor character, for example, was eventually referred to as Professor Coot. In the same organizations as Geipel, as well as being an active Thespian, was Dick Wesell. Instead of asking Dick to play a mad hunched-back Igor-like character, I asked him to take a substantial supporting role as Emile's assistant, the respected and imaginatively named Dr. Grimur. Unlike *Frankenstein*'s mad scientist and crazy deformed aide, my creators of life from dead bits and pieces were going to be sane qualified doctors; their desire to create life out of the dead plain looniness. I chose Dick Harter to play the creature brought to life from deceased, stitched-together body parts. He welcomed the offer, even after I told him about the hours of make-up application required and that he'd be terribly uncomfortable. Having worn crepe hair and familiar with the sweating and itching which can result, Dick was willing to undergo the discomfort of long hours wearing smothering nose putty on his face. Dick's character was the movie's monster creation and we'd refer to him by another high-faluting word I found in Roget's Thesaurus, the vagary<sup>1</sup>.

My plan was playing Professor Coot in case Mike changed his mind and didn't show up. I grossly underestimated Mike's dedication. Along with the other members of the cast, he arrived on set on time. We used a classroom at St. Aloysius School. It was a convincing stand-in for a scientist's laboratory. Beneath my nose was a bristling crepe hair spirit gum moustache. I wore a white shirt and tie, sport coat and dress pants. My explanation to Mike was a lie, that I thought I might play his assistant, be his offsider given Dr. Emile had an aide, but I'd changed my mind. I said that Mike's scenes should be all for himself. If I was to be in the shot, I might possibly detract from and upstage his performance. I even asked Mike to wear his black-rimmed glasses so that he'd look different from any previous role he'd played in any of my earlier films. This was my servile attempt to put Mike on a pedestal, to demonstrate how much his friendship meant to me and show him how much I cared. My toadying may have bought the day.

Snapshots in St. Aloysius School classroom, a laboratory set for Dr. Emile's Mind





I apply greasepaint to Mike turning him into Prof. Coot.

Wesell holds the Sun Gun while I shoot a scene with the 8mm Kodak.

Experience gained shooting *Tomahawk Terror* meant that a story composed with several sets had to be shot over several days. This was my practice again in filming *Dr. Emile's Mind*. Outdoor scenes were completed in one morning. Use of the eerie set of the laboratory for the creation sequence was managed in one long day's shoot. Titles were filmed last.

Opening credits are hand-written in colored greasepaint onto parts of Dick Wesell's body: his arm, a thigh, a leg with a wiggling toe, his stomach, chest and back. Given that pieces of dead bodies are used by the scientists to create the whole, it made creative sense to use Wesell's body parts to introduce the whole of my film. An in-joke title, BODY BY WESELL, parodied a popular automobile commercial of the day, General Motor's Body by Fisher.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A figment of the imagination. An extravagant or erratic notion or action. A freak. A whim. An impulse. A quirk. A fancy.

Shooting the story started with me behind the Kodak and holding the Sun Gun. I was cinematographer, camera operator, electrician, and lighting technician, pictured right in a mock-up because no such scene is in the film: Dick Wessell as Grimur and Bill Geipel as Emile.

Mike's Professor Coot declares to Bill's Dr. Emile that he has created life. What form that life has and what it looks like isn't disclosed, but



it's likely it's contained in the small white casket clutched in the professor's nervous hands. Insults and taunts are batted like a badminton birdie between the scientific minds. Professor Coot engages Dr. Emile in a bet that it's impossible for the doctor to imitate or better his achievement, that he's incapable of creating life. "I can. I can create," Emile emphatically asserts banging his fist into the palm of his empty hand. The wager made, and no handshake to seal the bargain, Dr. Emile dismisses Coot's intimidation.

On another day of filming, Dr. Emile retreats to his under-lit study, a decorated set in my basement. In his hands is a thick ancient tome from which he has blown a cloud of dust. He thumbs dog-eared pages, briefly peruses a leaf, and slowly opens his jaw to exercise a giant gaping yawn. A Craig Fotofade wipe transitions the shot to a green title card reading SLEEP EMILE, SLEEP and further transits outdoors to a shot of a car, a Chevrolet owned by Bill's father, pulling to a stop outside a cemetery carpeted with snow. A crisp, below zero Saturday morning, clouds of warm air puff from the automobile's exhaust. In this shot, as the driver and his passenger exit the vehicle with singular purpose, viewers are introduced to Dr. Emile's learned assistant, the heavily gray-bearded Dr. Grimur played by Dick Wesell.



As a make-up time saver, Miss Case had taught me how to construct a crepe hair beard on a thin-wire, easily bendable preformed coat hanger. Such a device had been made for me to wear during rehearsals of *The Ghosts Go West*. As seen in the picture at left and in pictures on the following two pages, the pre-fabricated beard hung over the ears like a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles. The moustache and chin whiskers were separated by a gap in the wire, same as if naturally separated by a person's mouth. Loose hairs always tickled, always got into the mouth when speaking. These beard irritants frequently caused me in rehearsal, and now Dick in the film, to spit air to loosen the intruding hair from sticking to the tongue or moist lips. The coat hanger moustache and beard looked good head on, but in profile always looked like it was hung from the ears. The sideburn section never bent sufficiently to follow the

natural beard line along the jawbone. Oddly, Wesell wearing that coat hanger beard in person looked fine as an old man. It was after seeing the processed film that the rigid nonmatching beard line of the coat hanger beard became evident. I didn't have the time or the energy to consider re-doing scenes. Neither did anyone in the cast. Again I settled for second best.

Like treasure hunters searching for the secret spot marked with an X, Professor Grimur unfolds a map, checks his data, and assures Dr. Emile to proceed in the direction he indicates. Both carry or drag excavation tools past tombstones as they traipse over unblemished snow. This was a time when it

wasn't necessary to obtain a permit to film in public places. It didn't cross our minds to film gravestones without visible family names of the deceased. Only three shots were filmed in the rural cemetery. It's obvious we weren't going to be digging up a grave. In fact, even to pretend to unearth a coffin would have been utterly disrespectful.

I'd studied a map of Wisconsin and had chosen an Indian burial mound for our film set dig. Something illogical in my thinking suggested we could get away with digging into a burial mound because it was old and unmarked. Talk about being disrespectful to Wisconsin's indigenous peoples! The map had simply indicated *Indian burial mound* and wasn't named as a state park, as sacred, or a place where trespassing was a violation. We found it on an open, unfenced field a hundred feet or so from the highway. There was nothing identifying the series of slightly piled hills as burial mounds. They looked like small naturally-formed hills to our untrained eyes. Expecting we'd be able to sink a shovel into the mound was further illogicality on my part. It was winter. The ground was frozen. Seventeen years' experience of snow blizzards and ice storms and bitter winds and I hadn't given a thought to frozen ground as hard as granite. It was as if I'd never learned the basics of Jack Frost's season.

To link the cemetery shot with this new mound location, I focused my lens onto shovels dragged behind by Dr. Emile and his aide. With determination ascending the mound and assessing it, Emile raises a pick-axe attempting to sink it into the permafrost, pictured right. The jarring of metal slamming onto ground as solid as rock transferred into Geipel's hands and arms. His surprise at the discomfort is briefly displayed on Geipel's face ahead of his somewhat hesitant second attempt to puncture the mound. When it was all but obvious no headway would be made, I decided to shoot Medium Close-ups of Dr. Emile and Professor Grimur wielding their digging tools. It wouldn't matter whether the sharp edge of pick-axe or spade penetrated earth or not. Digging motion was



conveyed and that was all that mattered. Real time was compressed and a Long Shot shows the two lifting a blanket with a dead weight. I hadn't thought ahead to make a dummy for an uprooted body. Bill and Dick filled the blanket with a solid broken tree limb; dead wood the size of a grown man's body and just about as heavy. It was a burdensome load happily dumped when I called, "Cut." For a Medium Shot of the body placed into the car trunk, wrapped in the blanket were the tools of the dig. Viewers who look for mistakes will spot the previously bulging blanket as now drained of any bulk, the wooden handles of shovel and pick peeking from beneath the blanket.



A Close-Up of Dr. Emile at the wheel covers for a passage of time driving on the highway. We'd spotted a farmhouse with its outbuildings and guessed it was unoccupied. A For Sale sign was wired to the fence. There were no vehicles in the driveway, no car or tractor tire marks in the snow, no animals around the barn, nothing to suggest human activity for a long time. Excited by the isolation of the decaying farmhouse and its apparent lack of upkeep, Bill did a U-turn. By now the weather had turned. Snow flurries were whipped in the crisp bite of sharp wind gusts. Wessel's Grimur and I deep-footed snow in the field, pictured left, and I set the camera up on its tripod to film the Chevy turning off

the highway and into the driveway. The snowy scene added a chilling atmosphere. In a Medium Long Shot, the body is lifted from the trunk and carried toward the dilapidated house. As would be

expected the front door was locked. That didn't stop my shooting a scene of Emile and Grimur carrying their ill-gotten gravesite prize onto the porch and, acting like it was as familiar to them as having done it a million times before, heading for the door. The confidence of the two was shown by neither having to reach into a pocket for keys. The impression given is that they enter the haunted house unimpeded.

A Craig Fotofade center wipe ensured the two made it inside the eerie old house and into Dr. Emile's spooky basement laboratory. For a place which would naturally be thought of as hideously clean, disinfected spic and span to within an inch of itself, my set decoration included trappings of mustiness and decay from disuse. Draping frayed rope like it was sticky fairy floss; I'd carefully untangled and teased out straw-like threads attaching it to nails on upper beams for giant spider webs. Not shown because it wasn't necessary to show – we can assume an audience is intelligent enough to join the dots – the unearthed body has thawed and is deposited upon an operating table in the laboratory. The Sun Gun was often placed lower than actor's eye level to create shadows, to make character's eyes look hollow. Although lighted sufficiently for an audience to discern detail, the whole set appeared, for effect, under lit. The two fanatics go through the various stages of bringing to life a rotted corpse.



It is suggested they transplant a heart, a brain, and other necessary bits and pieces to create an animated being. I had previously arranged with a butcher for offal and had been donated a beef heart, beef liver, and chicken livers for use as gory props. It was intentional to decorate the set with medical posters of human skeletal and muscle structures, pictures garnered from a children's educational do-it-yourself anatomy set, pictured left. It was unintended Dr. Emile and Professor Grimur should actually refer to the charts to perform surgery. It was as if both were listening to the song about the head bone connected to the neck bone, the neck bone connected to the "next" bone, and so forth. Both actors delighted using scalpels stabbing into and shaving slices from the heart. Geipel wasn't all that keen to handle the large slippery liver in a glass bowl. Wide-eyed to the point of

looking mad, he submerged himself into his character and convinced that, as Dr. Emile, he enjoyed the stomach-turning action. Their work is complete. As did a guilty Pontius Pilate, Dr. Emile and Professor Grimur wash the blood from their hands.

In the 1931 version of *Frankenstein* the reveal of the monster is slow and deliberate. The monster ascends from the cellar up stairs backwards and appears in the doorway with his back to the audience. Slowly, ever so slowly, the monster turns to camera revealing the horror of Dr. Henry Frankenstein's having played God creating life from the dead. I chose to imitate the slow reveal.

While there is no blood dripping from the operating table, my audience's imagination may see it, the power of suggestion having been so firmly established during the gory operation sequence. The scenes had been filmed deliberately to tease audiences into covering their eyes and turning away from the screen, thus creating images which taunt the squeamish and fascinate the fans of "Don't Look Now, but..." Emile and Grimur do not see the figure rise... they're washing hands... now the vagary of Emile's mind. Pictured right, Dick Harter is a completely hideous creature swaddled in stained, faded from white to yellow bandages, and draped in a holey blue thread-worn bathrobe. He has long black hair and a hook for a hand. Half of his face is missing. The vagary glares menacingly with one eye.



Influence for my monster make-up to distort Dick's face was 1939's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Charles Laughton starred as the hunchbacked Quasimodo. Half of Quasimodo's face was blanked away with putty, called nose putty in theatre parlance, the eye socket sealed skin with the useless eye attached to the baseline of the putty. It all blended to look naturally unnatural. I didn't bother with an off-kilter eye for my monster. With half his face covered Dick Harter was unsightly and frightening, as naturally unnatural as the Hollywood expertise I'd observed administered to Laughton's Hunchback.

Grimur is the first to see the monster approaching as they busy themselves washing hands. He draws Emile's attention to the monster's approach. The monster attacks and kills Grimur with one swiftly delivered downward blow of his hooked hand. Had I mentioned that? Dr. Emile must have been short of body parts to give his creation of life a hook hand.

Dr. Emile is grabbed by his creation, whirled from the washing basin and body-slammed upon the slab. The vagary claws at Emile madly and, with his hooked hand, tears away flesh from Emile's cheek, pictured right. The special effect was especially gruesome. In addition to red greasepaint for a bloody wound, chicken liver was hung off Harter's hook and appeared to wrench off a chunk of Geipel's cheek.

A searing pain in his cheek awakens Dr. Emile from his deep slumber. Lifting his head, Emile finds his right cheek is truly torn. Was it all a dream?

Was it a dream, he wonders. Dr. Emile, now awakened, touches his cheek wound and, with fear registering on his face, studies his sticky, bloodied hands. Emile gasps as the vagary walks out the door... into the world!



My latest celluloid opus was completed late in January 1963. It was filmed with excellent sets, camera angles, lighting and acting. In my opinion *Dr. Emile's Mind* was as good as, if not a rival to, the talented acting of Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing in the professionally-made, inexpensively-realized horrorifical slosh flooding into the world's theatres out of England's monster house of horror films, Hammer Studios. In the art's for money's sake of financial profit, Hammer raked in the big bucks, pesos, lira, and yen at box offices o'er the globe. I wouldn't be privy to a savings account built out of massive box office takings, but I was confident I had a multi-award winning movie in the can.<sup>2</sup>

Pictured right might be a dry run<sup>3</sup> of *Dr. Emile's Mind* wherein I acted out Dr. Emile, or maybe I was experimenting with another movie that was never made. My sister Mary found this picture with more questions than answers.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the can is the Hollywood term for a completed film.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A rehearsal or simulation that is used as a test or practice. The term stems from 19<sup>th</sup> century American firefighting training and competitions that didn't involve the use of water.

### Chapter 25: Sage Advice Is a Real Eye Opener

he Milwaukee Movie Makers held its annual competition January 19, 1963. Assured by my top drawer success the previous year, I entered *Tomahawk Terror*. I chose not to attend, confident in the knowledge my written instructions for the projectionist with indelible ink X marking film start and tape start would be observed. Within days of MMM's weekend competition, news about *Sanguinary Mortem* arrived in the mail from the Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association. The film had just won a First Place Blue Ribbon in the Association's 1962 One-Reel Contest. There had been 24 entries. It was further selected for consideration for one of the Ten Best of the Midwest for 1962-63. That result wouldn't be made known until June. This positive result in Chicago inflated my ego and buoyed an unshakeable opinion of my Indian epic's worthiness as it participated in our home-grown contest.

Saturday, February 16, and barely one week ahead of *Down River*'s opening night, the Milwaukee Movie Makers Annual Awards dinner meeting was held at the Black Steer. I had hoped that maybe, just maybe, Mike Theoharris would have been scheduled for bussing duty. My hope was, just as happened with Dr. Emile, a vagary. As in the previous year, I wasn't at all interested in who'd win the 16mm trophies. The club's top prize went to a fantasy filmed in Wisconsin's north woods called *A Fisherman's Tale* by a young married couple who'd last year won 2<sup>nd</sup> Place. 1963's Second Placing was awarded to a travelogue; a glorified home movie shot with wife and daughters on a motor trip to Mexico and aptly, perhaps boringly titled *Mexican Sojourn*. Ralph Zautke's *Little Girl Lost*, which had been shot in one day, took out First Place in the 8mm section. *Tomahawk Terror* nudged into Second Place. I felt disappointed. But I also realized that a cute little 5 year-old girl called Suzie was a greater attraction to judges and audience than a bunch of teenagers dressing up and pretending to be Davy Crockett and a tribe of Indians.

Master of ceremonies for the awards dinner evening was Rolf Schüenzel. He may have been in his early 30s and was a casual attendee at MMM meetings. Speaking with a Germanic accent, Rolf approached after handing out the trophies and asked to speak with me. I was congratulated on my 2<sup>nd</sup> placing and Rolf added that he'd seen most of my other films, including last year's 1<sup>st</sup> place winner *From the Powers of Darkness*. He appreciated my energy and storytelling ability, adding that he always felt entertained by my films. However entertaining, Rolf said that my films were not believable. I didn't bristle, but his observation sliced like a first-timer using a brand new razorblade and felt as if he peeled a layer off my smooth as a baby's bottom chin skin.

Having previously spent club time discussing screened films with Rolf, I held tremendous respect for his opinion. He spoke carefully, so as not to puncture my inflated yet fragile ego. Rolf pointed out that the main problem with my films was that we were always playing someone an age we weren't. My friends and I were too young to be soldiers or scientists or Indian chiefs. I listened and believed I was handed sage advice.

Rolf said that if I wanted to make successful films, we should stop trying to be someone so much older than ourselves. Put playing Errol Flynn aside; just admire what he accomplished as an adult actor in adult roles. I should be realistic and tell stories about teenagers, tell stories about ourselves. My actors needed to act our own age.

You'd think I'd have known Rolf stated the obvious, but such a thought hadn't before entered my mind. This was a revelation. Rolf's advice was like lightning ionizing the sword of Excalibur. It

charged me with even greater enthusiasm for my hobby. Whenever I'd get around to shooting my next picture, I intended implementing Rolf's recommendation.

Every year following the annual competition of the Milwaukee Movie Makers, a screening of the award-winning films was presented to the public. Quality award winners from outside the club were invited to participate to fill out a program. Films were shown without charge in the Shorewood auditorium on Saturday, March 16, at 8:00 p.m. Second Place for *Tomahawk Terror* ensured an audience would see my film. I remember nothing about audience reaction to films projected onto the screen that night, including my Indian opus. However, my own reaction to seeing my film on screen was that, sure, it was fun and we had a lot of fun making it. But sure enough; no one looked old enough to be the characters we portrayed. No one in the audience would have seen Davy Crockett or Sitting Bull. We were bogus baby- faced Davy Crock-o-crap and Sitting Bulldust!

### Chapter 26: A Musical and Musical Poetry

Preserve in the cast had a copy of the script since Christmas and I accomplished line learning for *Down River* with ease. Little effort was required and dialogue memorization came quickly. I recalled the days of geometric theorems and now I understood why I hadn't been able to understand and memorize them. They meant nothing, had no relevance, whereas I genuinely liked this play. I especially related to and enjoyed playing the obnoxious loud-mouthed riverboat bully. Most actors agree that playing the bad guy is more fun than the goody two shoes. I was determined to lock Jim Dawson's words into my brain, as well as the words of all the other characters with whom he interacted: Coleman Dewitt, Lucy Gibbs, and the *dramatis personae* of other eccentrics like Swede, Shorty, Mr. Dunbar and the Widder Boughton. It was for my own peace of mind I didn't duplicate my charade with line deficiency in *Tiger House*.

Jim Dawson's words became my own, as well as dialogue of others, especially those of Dick Mayhew who played Marshall Coleman Dewitt, a man mouse of magnificent contrasts. Hidden somewhere inside ourselves we found our characters. Director Reichl coached each new individually found character out onto stage and helped us to develop each personality through our line delivery, song and dance. Learning lyrics and melodies was enjoyable; if not often mirth inducing when blurting out wrong words and hitting clanger notes. Mr. Reichl was patient with our imperfection, always encouraging us to reach further and strive for excellence.

Photos from Down River<sup>1</sup>





Photo on Left: Carole Ciokajlo as Widder Boughton prepares to do away with the Rivermen Richard Clark (Shorty), Gerald Priegel (Frank), Dale Anderson (Swede), and Me (Jim Dawson).

Photo on Right: The cuddly couple is Judy Laughton as my love interest Lucy Gibbs and Me as River man Jim Dawson.

All tickets for *Down River*'s sole performance Thursday night, February 21, were sold on a reserved seat basis, the best seats going for  $75 \, \text{¢}$  and  $50 \, \text{¢}$  for the mediocre ones. The most striking aspect of the performance was its timing. Lights dimmed precisely at 7:30 p.m. Director Reichl raised his baton and the pit orchestra struck up the musical's Overture.

.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Unknown Student Photographer for the Wamago, published in 1963 Yearbook for West Allis Central High School



(Left to right): Jane Harrington (Henrietta Boughton), Carole Ciokajlo (Widder Boughton), Richard Clark (Shorty), Dale Anderson (Swede), Gerald Priegel (Frank), Me (Jim Dawson), Judy Laudon (Lucy Gibbs), Richard Mayhew (Sheriff Coleman Dewitt), Dan Christianson (Parson Richardson), David Ellington (Storekeeper Mr. Dunbar), Don Hugdahl (Saloonkeeper Mr. Martin), and Betty Honeyager (Betsy Boughton)

The audience wasn't let down once the show started promptly at 7:30 p.m. Lines were perfectly timed, impeccably delivered, and made our audience believe our characters really existed. I spoke the first lines in the play along with fellow raftsmen Swede. Shorty and Frank sang the first song, "That Time of the Year", in pleasant, acceptable tenor voices. Our stage presence was loaded with energy. We spoke with the patois of uneducated backwoods hicks, my drawled reference to Lucy, the play's love interest, coming out as, "Mighty pretty little filly she was too." Often shouted or squealed as punctuated exclamations of our he-man braggadocio was a loud "Ya-hoo". Dick Clark was type-cast as Shorty for in real life he was just that, small and short. As the river boys' sidekick he had all the good punch lines eliciting guffaws from the audience.

Marshall Coleman Dewitt is a reticent personality of the town of Prescott, full of bombast and confidence before Jim Dawson arrives, but he shakes in his boots when he hears Dawson and his river rats have landed like an angry waterspout. Dewitt wants to marry Lucy and he boasts to her that there, "Ain't no wildcat like I am." Lucy is unimpressed. She tells Dewitt she wants a 'real man'. Marshall DeWitt's only advantage over roughneck Dawson, according to the townspeople whose businesses are vandalized by the cyclonic behavior of the raftsmen, is his brain power. He'd taken a precautionary measure prior to the arrival of the unruly bunch by purchasing a mail order pair of handcuffs. Dick Mayhew included a local in-joke in his line, "They've come all the way from West Allis." The audience appreciating the local reference laughed.

The play moved along with unusual smoothness, even with brief 'interruption' of scene change. At the rear of the stage the set of Prescott's main street remained static. In front of it, the middle curtain was drawn for scenes set on the banks of the Mississippi or the front of Lucy's house. This stage arrangement allowed rapidity of scene change that kept the audience waiting mere seconds. The effect was heightened by orchestral scene links and the use of dancers in period costume between acts.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Unknown Student Photographer for the *Wamago*, published in 1963 Yearbook for West Allis Central High School



Dawson's wild behavior is tamed whenever he sees Lucy. A rival to Dewitt, Dawson wants to marry Lucy too. He invites her to leave Prescott and go away with him. I bait her with melody; sing solo the play's title song "Down River" in a strong tenor voice. Lucy responds in song "It Sounds Kinda Nice".

The townsfolk sing "Trouble's A Brewin" and inform how the grocery store's stock has been thrown out into the street and the Saloon sign has been nailed over the door of the Presbyterian Church. They insist the marshal do something about the rivermen's thuggery. As if having to lean into the spinning wind of a tornado, Coleman Dewitt confronts Dawson. They engage in a verbal duel of one-upmanship over whose muscles and arms are bigger and stronger. Illustrated in the photo at left from local newspaper *The West Allis Star*, Dawson proudly thrusts his hands forward and demands Dewitt examine his wrists strengthened from physical manipulation of riverboat oars and poles. Coleman

Dewitt takes immediate advantage of Dawson's outstretched arms, outsmarts him, and slaps the handcuffs onto Dawson's wrists. With a triumphant DeWitt frog-marching his adversary to jail, Act 1 ends in a triumph of order over chaos.

Act 2 opens with Jim Dawson demanding his release from jail. Without formal charges laid and against the wishes of the townsfolk, Marshal Dewitt has to unlock the cell door and set Dawson free. Dawson issues a challenge to fight Dewitt. If Dewitt wins, Dawson leaves Prescott never to return. But if Dawson wins, he gets to be marshal and Dewitt has to leave town forever. The deal is struck and the townsfolk debate the pros and cons in a song "Let Him Fight".

Lucy suggests in "I'd Be Excited", sung with sisters Henrietta and Betsy, that she'll marry the winner of the fight. In fact, she has even said so face to face, but separately, with Coleman and Jim. Both men expect to win Lucy's hand. After Lucy had kissed Jim on the cheek for luck, they sing a reprise of "It Sounds Kinda Nice". It was unfortunate that Judy Laudon had a cold and her fine voice was affected. When we came to the song's final notes, she and I both struggled with the harmony. I struck the clanger of the night. My final note totally mismatched her in-tune note. I knew I'd sung off key. I clearly heard it and forced myself not to wince. I stayed in character. We felt a brief non-reaction from audience. They were uncertain how to respond. Their hush was momentary broken with uncomfortable and gentle gasps... followed with a gentle applause described only as polite.

Before the fight commences, Dawson has to be disarmed of his hunting knife. "You can't carry it today," Dewitt announces. So confident was everyone with their lines, we occasionally ad-libbed to milk audience reaction. When the knife's removed from Dawson's sheath I ad-libbed in comic faux embarrassment, "I feel naked." The audience laughter encouraged us. Dewitt is secretively offered a pair of brass knuckles. He refuses and Hugdahl's saloonkeeper says, "He'll become marshal and run you outta town." Mayhew's ad-libbed response was, "Oh, fudge!" Again the audience reacted with large laughter.

Well-choreographed and rehearsed, accompanied and punctuated by snare and bass drum beats, our fight included bits of spontaneous ham as we played to the audience. Dewitt uses his head, literally, to defeat Dawson. He lowers his head and charges like a bull to a red rag into Dawson's stomach. Doubling over with a massive exhalation of air, Dawson tumbles backwards and falls to the ground noisily like a burlap sack of potatoes. Townsfolk cheer, but Lucy isn't praising Dewitt's achievement. She accuses Dewitt of cheating and refuses to marry him. She can't marry Dawson because he's lost the fight. In an ironic twist, Lucy is alone as Dawson invites Dewitt to join him on the riverboat for adventures and a reprise of the play's title song "Down River". The company joins in and the play's

finale is the rivermen's song "That Time of the Year". The noise of audience applause was rewarding and it increased fourfold when Dick Mayhew, Judy Laudon and I took our bow.

Down River rocked the school and the Music Department scored a big success. Everyone's characterizations were good. I couldn't have given Jim Dawson an ounce more cockiness. Cowardly Coleman 'Dewittless' was portrayed with just the right amount of humor by Dick Mayhew. We played off each other as comfortably as Abbott and Costello. The comment most made by the audience after performance was that it was a shame so much work was finished after only one night. It was my regret too. Jim Dawson could have strut the boards over several evening performances and I'd have loved it. Who knows! The others among the cast, dancers, orchestra and crew may have had felt the same.

The vernal equinox heralded the beginning of the Forensics season. Having been introduced to exciting blank verse in English class, my choice of category in Forensics was the "Interpretive Reading of Poetry". I stumbled across a poetry anthology in the school library and found the storytelling verse, of American poet Carl Sandburg. Descriptive, image-creating, and emotionally moving was *The Man with the Broken Fingers*. It told the gut-wrenching story of a downed WWII pilot captured and interrogated by the Nazi Gestapo. Seldom read, seldom heard and mostly forgotten are the pictures of horror in verses like:

"Then again the demand for names and he gave them the same silence. And the little finger of the right hand felt itself twisted, Back and back twisted till it hung loose from a bleeding socket. Then three more fingers crashed and splintered one by one And the right thumb back and back into shattered bone.

The poem's length was about two or three minutes short of the time requirement for Forensics competition. My own timing in reading the selection could ensure I could stretch the reading to meet the time limit. Miss Case advised that, although she felt I'd be an effective reader, nervousness, the so-called stage fright at the time of competition, I'd probably do better for myself by finding a poem which ran closer to the allotted 10 minutes. Its blank verse more prose-like than poetic, and as involving as the poem is, I believe Miss Case was steering me toward finding a poem which presented a great challenge to my vocal and interpretive skills.

"There are strange things done in the midnight sun by the men who moil for gold;

The Arctic trails have their secret tales that would make your blood run cold;

The Northern Lights have seen queer sights.

But the queerest they ever did see

Was that night on the marge<sup>3</sup> of Lake Labarge

I cremated Sam McGee."

Robert W. Service wrote *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. It was published in 1907 in *Songs of a Sourdough*, in this instance a sourdough being a resident of the Yukon. He based his poem on an experience of his roommate, Dr. Sugden, who found a corpse in the cabin of the steamer *Olive May*, and what he saw in the Yukon. Again, it was a poem I liked. I even flirted with the idea of making a film from it, until I reminded myself of Rolf Schuenzel's words to play people our own age. Dire as the subject matter sounds, it's a humorous, tongue-in-cheek story with a laugh out loud punchline for its ending. I knew I could read it and give it interpretation without getting hooked on the sing-song nature of the rhyme, thus turning it into the repetitive and possibly annoying sound of a staccato struggler with a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade primer. Miss Case thought the poem was great, but not the right one for competition. She said that it had been chosen too often by contestants and, therefore, wouldn't nail the attention of a seasoned judge. She recommended we save it for something else.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Shore line. Water's edge.

That something else did present itself and I was invited to read *The Cremation of Sam McGee* while Nancy Skok and Karen Hupe did an interpretive dance. It was unusual as, instead of taped music, only my voice doing the interpretive reading provided the rhythm and tempo. The show was Central's Modern Dance group presenting its annual program *Deadline* on April 25 and depict various stories or regular sections found in a newspaper. Tickets sold for 50¢. My best memory of the whole experience was seeing the girls' beautiful lithe bodies moving in tight black leotards as they gracefully writhed, twisted and bent to visually interpret my reading of the poem's story. Lunchtime and after school rehearsals accomplished what I perceived as nigh impossible, cleanly melded girls' dance movements with my perfect, as if having been prerecorded, and live oral delivery.

I discovered American Depression-era poet Nicholas Vachal Lindsay; the Nicholas dropped forever and he has only been known as Vachal. His poems stood out from others because of their unique musical rhythms and tempos. It was even advised that poetry readings be accompanied by a drum, tambourine, trumpets, even hand clapping to keep and hear the beat. Such theatricals weren't permitted in competition. The music of Lindsay's poetry would come from my experience in singing. I was attracted to Lindsay's word choices in *General William Booth Enters Heaven* for the vivid images he created:

"Booth led boldly with his big bass drum (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath, Unwashed legions with ways of Death – (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)"

It was recommended the poem be sung to the tune of "The Blood of the Lamb". As much as I enjoyed biting into Lindsay's words, no one was able to tell me the tune of the hymn. It wasn't in the Catholic Psalter repertoire. No one could teach me because no one knew how it sounded, not even my coach Miss Case. However, with my enthusiastic approach to the subject matter, my scenery-chewing enunciation conveying its strong visual imagery, Miss Case said I should experiment with it in the February in-school elimination. My selection was so different, so energetic from anyone else's choice of poem, I may have earned the "A" even before reaching the final stanzas.

There was Lindsay's *The Congo: A Study of the Negro Race*, its verses including:

"Fat black bucks in a wine barrel room, Boomlay, Boomlay, Boomlay, boom."

Ah, the subject matter and rhythm appealed. It was well-known; perhaps the most famous of Vachal Lindsay's works after his poem about General William Booth entering heaven. To gain experience Miss Case gave her permission for me to try it out in our local schools elimination competition Thursday, March 21, at Wauwatosa High School. Compared with what others came prepared to read and interpret, my choice was vibrant, a real attention grabber, and considered pretty much off-thewall. My interpretive reading again earned the judge's highest marking of "A". I passed the local schools test, probably could have mauled the opposition while reading with a head and chest cold, and afterward searched for lesser known Lindsay poems in preparation for District competition.

By the time District arrived Saturday, April 6, one week before Easter, at Brookfield Central High School, I'd found and become completely familiar with the tuneful greatness of *The Ghosts of the Buffaloes*. For as long as I can remember after learning about the animals of North America, I was infatuated with the American bison or buffalo. It is and probably always will be my favorite animal. The first line of the poem reads, "Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry," and the last line ends with a cricket gently caroling, Good night, good night, good night, good night."

In the poem red Indians ride their wild mounts:

"Then...
Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high
Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.
The lords of the prairie came galloping by.
And I cried in my heart 'A-la-la, a-la-la.
A red-god show
A red-god show.
A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la.'
Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,
A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west."

There were great rises and falls in the volume and speed of my speaking the words, the words Lindsay had written to be chanted and sung. "A-la-la," can be pretty dull when read just for the sake of reading it. Given notes, it can be as exciting and pulse-racing a sound as the recognizable opening notes of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony. I sang the three a-la-lahs just before "Buffaloes" with increasing strength and loudness until the final "la" rose in pitch and melded with the B of buffaloes. Diaphragmatic breathing was used without giving it thought, Mr. Reichl's lessons having kicked in automatically. When I'd reached the caroling cricket at the poem's conclusion, the musicality and timing of the five calls of "good night" mesmerized my audience. I could clearly see the spellbound expression on the judge's face, the emergence of a tear of absolute joy from an eye.

For competitive readings participants were expected to dress as in a professional, formal business environment, my accepted attire being white shirt, tie, sport coat, dress slacks and laced dress shoes. Loafers were considered too casual. That latter inclusion never bothered me. I couldn't wear loafers because I had inherited my Dad's flat feet. Competition was a full day's affair and the section I participated in lasted the better part of a morning's three hours. The good thing was that competitors didn't have to wait until the finish of the full day's sessions to hear their results. When all the readings had been delivered, the judge addressed each contestant, offered comments and suggestions, and announced the earned letter grade. Any reading not achieving an "A" didn't advance to the next level of competition. As did most others, I would have felt an initial confidence after my reading, but self-confidence didn't always equate with what a judge deemed successful. On this occasion, my confidence and the judge's opinion did equate. I received the "A" which promoted me to the next level of competition, State.

Published as a 14 page pamphlet in 1908 was Lindsay's *The Last Song of Lucifer*, undoubtedly one of his most beautiful and complex works. Fourteen pages exceeded the category's time requirement. Fortunately, contestants were permitted to cut verses, as long as eliminating lines didn't subtract from the author's intention or meaning of the poem. I met the time limit with judicial editing, eliminating from fourteen to five pages in my hands. The final verse of the poem worked just as effectively as a beginning, so I moved it from last to first. When I'd finished chopping out verses, it read as smoothly as an Olympic figure skater on perfect ice. A recommendation was that the poem be read like a meditation.

Oh, Lucifer, great Lucifer,
Oh, fallen, ancient Lucifer,
Master lost, of the angel choir —
Silent, suffering Lucifer;
Once your alchemies of Hell
Wrought your chains to a magic lyre
All strung with threads of purple fire,
Till the hell-hounds moaned from your bitter spell —
The sweetest song since the demons fell —
Haunting song of the heart's desire.

In Vachal Lindsay's meditative poem Lucifer is not Satan, the King of Evil, who in the beginning led the rebels from Heaven and established the underworld. Here Lucifer is taken as a character appearing much later. Lucifer is the first singing creature weary with the established ways in music and consumed with the lust of wandering. Open roads between the stars far too lonely, he wanders to the Kingdom of Satan and sings a song that so moves demons and angels that he is, at the cantata's climax, the underworld's momentary emperor. For the established order of things this wanderer shall be cursed with eternal silence and death. But since Lucifer's mellifluous, mesmerizing song there has been music in every temptation, in every demon voice.

Here was the poem I hadn't realized Miss Case wanted me to discover. Its depth most challenged my vocal acrobatics, my ability to interpret and convey the full gamut of its mood, atmosphere, and emotion.

Word of my polished readings of Vachal Lindsay somehow got around, probably via Speech and Drama teachers who'd either acted as judges in previous competitions or who'd shared their experience sitting in on my performances. It must have daunted my competitors. April 27, three days before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was in Madison, Wisconsin's capitol city, among 1,405 representatives from 360 high schools participating in the annual State Spring Speech contest conducted by the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association at the University of Wisconsin. Interpretative readers from other state schools approached me in the corridors of a building and sheepishly asked, "Are you the guy who does Lindsay?" "Are you the reader who sings in your poems?" There was a hint of reverential fear in their voices, as if they'd been invisibly intimidated. I'd done nothing personally to psych out my competition. I guess my reputation preceded me.

With my reading of *The Last Song of Lucifer* I soared to my greatest height in the Interpretive Reading of Poetry. My judge commented that she'd never been so moved, nor had she ever fully understood the story in *The Last Song of Lucifer* until hearing my presentation. She'd always understood the poem to be about the fallen angel we know as Satan.

Gold medals in the annual State Spring Speech contest were awarded to more than 600 high school pupils, including 91 from 22 Milwaukee area high schools, 9 from local high schools. Two sole surviving Central High gold medal winners in their categories were Nancy Skok and me. Nancy earned her gold in Interpretive Reading of Prose.

A week later on Saturday, May 4, I was back in Madison representing my school in the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Wisconsin State Solo-Ensemble Music Festival. Over 2,500 student musicians from 37 district tournaments competed. Ron Kiphart and I sat together and goofed around on the bus ride. None of our monkeyshines detracted from our abilities to win First Place in our respective categories. Well, why should it? Ron won with three others for sax quartet. With some of the same boys in *Down River* I'd performed with, I was awarded a First as a member of Mr. Reichl's Boys' Double Quartet.

If I'd submitted anything for publication in the school's end-of-year literary anthology, it wasn't accepted. So why should I even bother giving it a mention? As a student in Miss Alice Russell's Art classes since my sophomore year, I'd put my hard-learned skills and artistry into practice by drawing and painting title cards for my movies. I'd demonstrated cartooning and caricature drawing skills on political posters when running for Student Council office. I earned a final 'A' my senior year in Miss Russell's Fine Arts class. Two students were given credit for all of the illustrations in the literary booklet. I had been asked to draw a cartoon for a story-specific illustration. Seems that neither of the credited illustrators was able to draw a funny-looking Martian. I could and I did. No one thought to print an acknowledgement of my cartoon illustration appearing in the booklet. I wasn't given a credit due. Am I petty? For sure. But this little alien goofball is all mine, my unique daydream designed during one of my more boring mornings in study hall and cleverly adjusted to complement a student's short story. The versatile creature sprang from my fertile imagination with its distinctive spiky moustache and whirligig eyes, hairy elbows and knees, and long uncombed head of hair way before the style was ever 'in'. I created, developed and used a variation of this oddball character for several



years afterward. Here it is, pictured left, and as published in the school's *Composition Carnival 1963*. Hooray!

The highest of honors that can be awarded by the National Thespian Society were bestowed upon members of West Allis Central's Troupe 838, one of 3000 high school troupes, on Saturday evening, May 11, at its 16<sup>th</sup> annual installation of members at McCarty Park Fieldhouse. Stagehand Joseph Schaub and I received National Best Thespian awards.

Troupe president Nancy Skok, having won her gold for Interpretive Reading of Prose, didn't read tonight. She introduced me and I demonstrated my gold Interpretive Reading of Poetry with *The Last Song of Lucifer*. I participated in the Madrigals singing several numbers, including two whose words were written especially for Thespians by Miss Case: "In the Glow of the Candles" and "This Pledge Keep".

There's an old adage which states, "If it feels good, do it." Central High's faculty stretched the adage to, "If it feels good, do it again." Commencement week opened May 24 with the Senior Awards Assembly. Miss Case again presented the National Best Thespian awards to Joe Schaub and me. Although Nancy Skok and I already possessed our precious gold medals, we handed them back and Miss Case re-presented those too. Choir director Mr. Reichl presented chorus awards and I, amongst many others, received one.

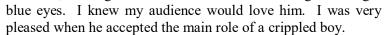
## Chapter 27: Getting Real

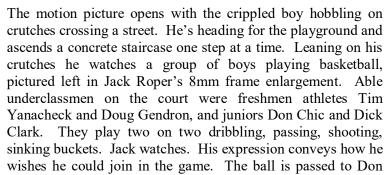
#### For He Shall Conquer

wer three May weekends I concentrated on implementing Rolf Schuenzel's advice and made my first serious attempt to film my friends portraying characters their own real ages. The last film I'd make as a high school student would be called *For He Shall Conquer*. The title came from the Beatitudes, the blessings due to followers of Christianity listed by Jesus at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew (5:3-12) and Luke (23:42). As a child I'd learned "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." My addition to the Sermon on the Mount might have read, "Blessed is the paraplegic, for he shall conquer." It tells the story of a crippled boy who turns to God in his quest for strength and courage. How I came to make such a picture on the back of a blood and guts monster movie is as mysterious as the Beatitudes. The main influence might have been my seeing *Gigot* in 1962 starring Jackie Gleason as the title character. Gigot was a mute who turns to church for a cure. For me the most emotionally charged scene was Gigot attempting to talk with a child. Frustrated at his inability to be understood, he forms a fist and punches himself in the mouth. It was a powerful image.

Any director who claims to give no consideration to manipulation of audience emotion is pulling your leg. I made conscious decisions to manipulate content in my films to audience senses in the hope of making them laugh, feel tension, get excited, gasp in horror, even make them feel sick in the stomach. Maybe I wanted to add making my audience cry. I believe a key to evoking such reaction is to cast the lead with an actor whose physical appearance is genuinely appealing. I was still making silent movies and physicality still took precedence.

To play the lead of the crippled boy, none of my long-time friends met the physical requirement. Now that teenagers were going to play teenagers, typecasting came to the fore. Not only did a friend need to act, they'd also need to look like the character they'd play. Casting around, I looked at underclassmen. I felt I needed someone who looked younger than his actual age in order to play for the audience and earn their emotional attachment. I liked an underclassman, Jack Roper, brother of Anna, a senior I knew from the Modern Dance show. Jack fit my picture of a kid who could be pushed around, crippled or not. He was a junior who looked like he could have been plucked from 9<sup>th</sup> grade on his first day at school. What I didn't know at the time was that Jack was Anna's twin. For some scholastic non-achievement school kept him back a year. For his 16 years his physical stature was compact and slight. Most boys his age had hit the growth spurt, displayed the overt changes of puberty, and they towered over him. He had black curly-wavy hair, feint freckling, smooth skin with barely detectable peach fuzz, and a gentle manner which shone through his bright







and he accidently bumps the crippled boy. Looking disdainfully at Jack as if thinking to himself, "You're in my way, bub," he then notices the crutches. He offers the basketball to Jack and nods to the backboard indicating, "Go ahead. Take a free throw." Jack sheepishly smiles and lobs the ball. It arcs high and wide of the basket. Chic breaks into a grin and then a mocking laugh. His cronies gather 'round, pointing fingers of ridicule. Jack is humiliated, turns away and hastily retreats. A crutch catches beneath his own foot; he loses his balance, and falls down the playground steps. I used a POV (Point of View) shot. Jack's toppling down the steps is shown as a moving, blurred image, as if seen through the eyes of the falling boy. The hand-held shot often draws a gasp in audiences. At the foot of the stairs, crutches away from his grasp, Jack makes fists and punches at his legs. Not hard to guess from where I borrowed that image.

The basketball players turn and witness the aftermath of Jack's tumble. They run to him out of curiosity moreso than out of conscience to offer aid. There is guilt and it's conveyed subtly by Don's wiping his nose with his hand. Tim crouches to one knee, picks up a crutch and offers it to the boy. Doug lends assistance and, with Tim bearing the weight, together they help the boy to his feet. Shamefaced, they make sure the boy has his crutches gripped before he hobbles away.

Depressed, in a state of despair, perhaps he's just feeling sorry for himself, the crippled boy pauses before a church. He turns his head to look up the steps to the doors, briefly turns away, takes a step forward, and immediately turns to face the long flight of stairs. Without hesitation he climbs each level, crutches first and then raising his legs. The shot was made in the afternoon when the sun made a long casting of shadows. The letters spelling out *St. Aloysius Church* were stuck into the wall above the doorways. They weren't flush with the wall and protruded several inches. I thought with the shadow I'd have an exaggerated 3D effect. Instead, I ended up with letters and shadows in conflict rendering almost illegible the name of the church. Jack balances on one crutch and, with the other crutch in his left hand, clumsily opens the door and enters.

Traditionally, Roman Catholic churches have the altar set at the far end of the building from its entrance. The priest celebrated Mass with his back to the congregation through most of the service. Not at St. Al's. As far back as September 1956, when I was a 6<sup>th</sup> grader, St. Aloysius' interior was, by Catholic standards of the day, considered either outlandish by traditionalists or a mindboggling gamble on the future. The altar was set in the center of the church. A large non-traditional crucifix was suspended from chains above the altar. Statues of plain polished wood, not painted and decorated plaster casts in the style of the Renaissance masters, were strategically placed. There were glass paneled walls and glass door entrances at either end of the church. Above each doorway was a balcony for congregational seating. To one side of the altar was the sacristy. Opposite and above a side altar was the choir balcony and organ.

I had been an altar boy with Mike Theoharris in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and the language of the Mass was Latin. Before we performed as acolytes at Mass we had to memorize all the prayers in Latin. The priest would pray, "Dominus vobiscum" ("The Lord be with you") and we'd reply, "Et cum spiritu tuo" ("And with your spirit"). Claiming to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, Pope John XXIII called the second Vatican Council in 1962 and the Catholic Church was forever changed. Most of the adopted changes, including the use of the vernacular instead of Latin for saying Mass, didn't come into being until Pope Paul the VI reconvened with Vatican Council II late in 1963. St. Aloysius had been a purpose-built church and its interior, well ahead of its time, already complied with Vatican Council II's directive to turn the altar around so the priest faced his congregation. Because a priest couldn't simultaneously be on both sides of the altar, depending on where worshippers sat, some saw the priest's face while others still eyed his back.

As far as I remember, Jack had been brought up Catholic, but wasn't a regular churchgoer. To familiarize him with the church's layout, we did a two bit tour. I regaled Jack with anecdotes and tales about my grin-and-bear-it experiences as an altar boy in St Al's. Even though we'd do no filming in the sacristy, the room where the priest puts on his garments for celebrating Mass and acolytes don the black cassock and white surplice, I showed him the silver salver with the cruets on the counter. I opened the cupboard where the wine was stored and said that whenever Mike

Theoharris and I had been instructed to fill cruets, one with water and one with wine, we'd both sip the white Riesling from the bottle. It was an eye opener when we'd serve Mass at 6:30 a.m.

There'd be no filming around the confessional either. Still, I showed it to Jack so that I could tell him about the time an emergency phone call had come for the priest hearing confessions, Father Furtman. I was instructed to knock on the confessional door after I'd seen a penitent leave. I was very nervous about having to interrupt the priest. I knocked on the door. It opened. The young priest frowned at my intrusion. There was a somewhat unpleasant yet quizzical look on the priest's face and I stammered, "Fa, Fa, Father Fa, Fa, Fartman... there's a fo, fo, phone call for you."

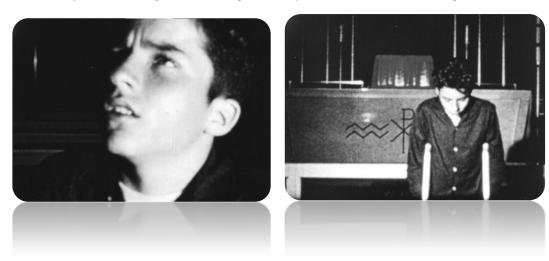
Indicating the long benches opposite the confessional, I explained how those pews always held a double meaning for us grade schoolers. I told Jack about how we'd attend Mass before lunch. It was in the school schedule. By then breakfast would be making itself known in the lower intestinal tract. Boys have a great propensity to release gas and enjoy the accompanying sound and fragrance of their funny little friend. However secure it may be to fart in church - rarely a finger pointed if there's no sound – everyone in the vicinity of the gas vapor will know about it as the odor dispels. Even if a worshipper is deep in silent prayer, nostrils will twitch when there's a sulphurous stench of scrambled eggs wafting about. The interrupted venerator might be persuaded to mechanically wag the head side to side and mumble under the breath, "Holy Moses..."

In the company of buddies Ted Kinowski, Mike Theoharris, Ron Zirbel and Dick Harter we'd play "Pull my finger", perhaps the best-known catchphrase in the world of wind-breakers. A friend extends a forefinger and invites you to give it a yank. After you've tugged, you receive a fart for your effort. We'd liked to have thought that God is telling Adam, "Pull my finger," in Michelangelo's Creation of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Well, at school Mass we'd occasionally proffer the forefinger as a warning and not with the intention of having the trigger tugged. The secret to flatulence in church is to ensure it's an SBD (Silent, But Deadly). One of this flatus (yes, that's the Latin word) was deliberately squeezed by someone in our guilty party, the lingering effect and the wake that followed stinkily whispered "I accuse." If the finger hadn't been offered, no one would own up, but we'd clench our lips, tighten our throats and stifle a smile. Not easy when a gurgled giggle escaped, sometimes accompanied by a slender string of snot from a nostril. God forbid we should break into a laugh. The nuns would have us scourged. We'd lose control and snotty giggling overpowered self-control. I won't sully a name, but one of us was expert at delivering the SBD slider. Sister Mary Aubergine, not her real name of course, automatically reacted to juvenile misbehavior moving swiftly from her pew, perhaps having caught a whiff of the pee-u, and stood at pew's end like a jackboot prison guard. Sister's arms folded, tapping her foot, turning red in the face, and frowning ever so frightfully, we thought she'd explode. We slammed our mouths shut for fear of being sent to Monsignor for a snappy taste of the strap.

Childish was our church behavior, but as far as breaking wind went, we weren't alone. As I showed Jack the altar and where I'd eventually want him to stand to look up at the hanging crucifix, I recalled for his entertainment a winter morning's 6:30 Mass. It still looked like night outside as Mike and I each donned the black cassock and white surplice. During the most sacred part of the Latin Mass, the consecration of the bread and wine, it was customary for acolytes to kneel on the same altar level where the priest stood. Otherwise it was our place to kneel three steps down. The purpose of moving to the altar level was for the servers to take hold of the chasuble by its bottom hem and raise it as the priest elevated his arms to hold high the consecrated host and then the chalice of consecrated wine. This action was a medieval hangover when garments of the religious were made of much heavier materials. The lifting of the chasuble may have been a necessary assist for the priest to fully raise and extend his arms. One of us, usually the acolyte kneeling to the right of the priest, rang bells as the host was raised, then the chalice. The old priest raised the host, Mike and I raised the green chasuble and, as the bells rang, the priest chose that moment to relieve himself of last night's cabbage. The bell ringing covered up the sound of the singing one-note one-tone, "phooo-ooot". What the heck! We kids didn't see priests as human! Mike and I heard it, looked at each other amazed, smiled and tightly pursed our lips to stifle our laughter. And hold our breaths!

Tour and tales aside, we changed silliness to seriousness and set up for filming. My brother Steve held the Sun Gun. With so much space to fill with light in the church, I asked Steve to keep as close to Jack as possible without washing out his features. On my instruction to walk around the altar and stop to look quizzically at each statue, Jack didn't need to act. He looks puzzled as he stares up at the life-sized statue with the unremarkably plain pupil-less eyes of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jack's expression was curiously questioning when he looked up at St. Joseph. His eyes blinked as if he was holding back some buried emotion. In reality, he didn't like the blinding brightness of the Sun Gun's 1000 watt lamp. He was a seeker as he gave his unblinking attention to the larger than life crucifix. As the crippled boy, he should have felt affected by the nails in the feet. Did he feel personal pain? Did the boy say a prayer? Throughout these interior church shots, Jack's eyes conveyed a myriad of sacred and secular emotion. In between takes, my brother squeezed a droplet or three of baby oil beneath Jack's eyes. As the lame boy turns from the crucifix and balances on his crutches, he gently wipes a tear, smeared oil glistening and reflecting the light. The boy has found the solace and courage to continue.

My 8mm frame enlargements of Jack Roper in St. Aloysius church from For He Shall Conquer



Ahead of this day's shoot, at home in the basement and on a separate roll of film, I made a shot of Dick Harter's left hand holding a nail the size of a railroad spike against a black background. The right hand enters the frame with a heavy metal mallet in its grasp. The nail is hammered three or four times. I got this idea from the final credit title of the TV show starring Jack ("Just the facts, ma'm") Webb as Sgt. Joe Friday in *Dragnet*. There's a blank metal plate. A dirty, sweaty left hand of a blacksmith grasping what looks like a rubber stamp enters the frame and places the stamp upon the plate. The right hand enters the frame holding the handle of a large-headed metal mallet and smashes the handle of the rubber stamp twice. Big metal forgery clangs are heard in the soundtrack. The rubberstamp is pulled up from the plate revealing MARK IV with smoke escaping from the grooves of the impression. I intended to double expose this section of film over Jack's feet and show it after a Close-Up of the feet of Jesus nailed to the cross. The nail hammered into Jack's foot would make a comparison with the nailed feet of Jesus hammered to the cross and a visual means further emphasizing Jack's paralysis.

As mentioned earlier, my camera didn't have a built-in film key. After shooting the hammering scene, I retreated to a dark corner behind the furnace, opened the camera and carefully removed the feed and take-up reels. I manually rewound the exposed film off the take-up reel and back onto the feed reel, held down the loose film end with a rubber band and placed the reel back into its opened box for later exposure. I wrote on the yellow box in magic-marker DE (Double Exposure), a reminder under pressure of filming that I shouldn't use this film for anything other than my planned special effect.

Now was that time to make the special effect. In a darkened nook I carefully removed the exposed film from the camera and just as meticulously inserted the roll with the shot of the hammer pounding the nail. Jack stood still and I filmed a Medium shot of his legs and the crutches. Since I couldn't see what I'd previously filmed, I could only guess and be hopeful the nail and hammer was aligned onto Jack's foot.

Interior filming finished, I packed up the camera and tripod, Steve the Sun Gun, and we walked well ahead of Jack to the church exit. Head bowed, Jack followed dragging the crutches. Just then several nuns filed into the church for afternoon prayers. I guess they didn't see Steve or me or notice my camera equipment. The nuns must have seen only Jack walking down the aisle ever so slowly dragging the crutches. I only know of the next observation because Jack had solely faced the nuns. Afterward he said that one's jaw dropped and he observed rapid signings of the cross and the beginning of several rapidly whispered "Hail Mary's". A miracle perhaps?



Outside the church's sanctuary, the boy slowly descends the stairs and is confronted by teenage hoodlums convincingly played by Lewandowski, Mike Gifford, and Dick Harter. None in real life was a bully, but all had the physical presence to convince as thugs. Hanging around in their unruly pompadour and ducktail hairstyles, wearing their jackets unzipped with the collars upturned, and smoking their ciggies, a church holds nothing sacred for them nor states off-limits in the hoodlum's book of misbehavior. Gutless bullies, all showing off within their gang, are complete chicken shits on their own. tough-looking leather-jacketed hood. Jim Lewandowski, blows smoke into the boy's face. Laughing heartily after unleashing his stupid abuse, he further intimidates the twice shy boy, pictured left with Dick Harter looming, and

thoughtlessly kicks away a crutch causing him to fall. Some in the audience might think the hoods' actions are somewhat over the top. I didn't. Bullies act as they do because consequence of action is never considered. importantly, it was a necessity to get my main character down on the ground. Angered and tired of his tormenting handicap, the boy musters strength, grabs onto the thug's black stovepipe-pant leg for leverage, and awkwardly rises to his feet. Has he been healed by some unknown force? Pictured right in Jack Roper's 8mm frame enlargement, he forms fists to defend himself. The bullies are stunned and stare at him, at one another. Realizing he's standing unaided, the boy lowers his defense, turns and walks away. With the use of Fotofade, the film fades out with the hoods holding the boy's abandoned crutches.



Thanks to Rolf Schuenzel, For He Shall Conquer was truly realistic in its presentation. Filming the sequence with the hoodlums on the less travelled 93<sup>rd</sup> Street side of the church, I never saw or heard a car pull to the curb on adjoining busy Greenfield Avenue. A snatch at my shoulder from behind jolted me. I was spun around and my shirtfront grabbed. Rashly confronted by a very angry motorist, "Whoa, whoa," I pleaded. Tightening his grip on my knotted shirt he screamed in my face, "What y'cha doin'?" I genuinely feared a punch on the nose. "What's goin' on?" My brother shouted back, "Hey, HEY! Take it easy!" Holding tight to my shirt, he scowled, "Why youse picking

on the crippled kid?" The guy's loaded fist firmed on his cocked arm. "We're making a movie," I said, "He's not really crippled." Hunched over the camera, my body had blotted its view from the motorist. Driving past, all he'd caught a glimpse of were thugs taunting a kid with crutches. My camera on its tripod now in full view, he suspiciously eyed the set up. Jack got up from the ground and my juvenile delinquent actors introduced themselves. The Good Samaritan motorist looked dumbfounded, threw his hands up in the air and apologized profusely. He must have felt dreadfully embarrassed because he said he was sorry enough times to absolve a continent of its perceived guilt. Sometime later my brother told me the guy had slammed on the brakes and jumped out of the driver's seat before the car had fully stopped. His fists were clenched as he charged toward me. It all happened in a flash. Steve thought I was going to get the crap pounded out of me.



Left: Jack Roper's 8mm frame enlargements from opening credits of For He Shall Conquer.

Last to film were the credit titles. Remaining on the shelf was my yellow all uppercase lettering set. A member of the Milwaukee Movie Makers loaned me an expensive set of 3D white plaster letters in both upper and lower case. Placed on a mounting card of blue felt with the light set at an angle, the letters cast a

slight shadow. Words appeared to be raised from the flat background. I'd retired the picture of the reclining lion. Effectively used, the new set of letters spelled out "ELKAY" PRODUCTIONS in uppercase. Below my company name was the word presents in lower case. Actors' names appeared using both upper and lower case.

Some days after completing the shoot, processed reels were returned in the mail. You've no idea how thrilled and excited I was upon seeing the hit-or-miss double exposure shot. Guesstimating where things lie within the frame paid off. The hammering of the nail into Jack's foot was perfectly placed. Edited into context – Jack's face looking up at the crucifix, the nailed feet of Jesus, the superimposed shot of the nail hammered into Jack's foot – Wow! Seeing it, the sequence was electric, one which might raise the peach fluff on the nape of viewers' necks.

The entire shoot on *For He Shall Conquer* was hard work, but it also felt so easy. I was satisfied when we wrapped. Everything came together as imagined. My cast seemed to treat the subject matter with reverence. Sure, we had our laughs and playing up, but come the call for "Action" and actors became their characters. They wanted to look good on screen and for the film to be a success. I used more tripod set-ups than ever before for professional-looking, steady images. Included were High Angle Long Shots for overviews of a scene, Low Angles with a Tilt Up to give a character dominance within the frame, and more Low Angle shots without tilting. The camera was set low and kept stationary. Characters or props were placed in front of the camera and kept in focus while the main action happened in the background, also kept in focus. This made for depth of perception, close enough to a 3D effect. The only time the camera was hand-held was the POV. I randomly waved the camera around to simulate what Jack might have seen as he fell down the concrete playground stairs.

Editing completed, I chose Miklos Rosza's score from *Ben-Hur* to accompany the film. The music was way over-the-top, much too big for my little film. I used it anyway. Playing the gentle lilting chorus of the nativity as Jack moved around the altar at St. Al's worked as if the music had been written for my film. I used the full choir, full orchestra *Alleluia Chorus* which accompanied the death of Jesus on the cross and the cure from leprosy of Judah Ben-Hur's sister and mother under my sequence of Jack leaving his crutches on the ground, standing to face the bullies, and walking away unaided. The music sounded even bigger than *Ben-Hur* running alongside my small picture. I hoped audiences would be moved hearing it while seeing my crippled boy miraculously healed.

I felt the reward of type-casting Jack in the lead role. Audiences did react to his physical appearance and did empathize with him, or it may have been sympathy. After screenings girls would hold their hands over their mouths. They'd giggle and remark through clenched fingers, "Oh, he's so cute."

Rolf Schuenzel surely knew what he was talking about when he freely gave me his wise advice. And I had been smart enough to open my ears and listen!

### Chapter 28: Summer of '63

The Man with the Broken Fingers Deaf and Dumb Little Brother

t the June 7 Senior Class Honors Assembly I walked onto the stage, but I wasn't presented with a scholarship or department study recognition, trophy, or medal. Just as happens year after year at the Academy Awards, no one gets on with the show to simply present awards so proceedings can finish early and everyone can go away to party. Tedious might be the word to describe the interminable lauding of the chosen elite, their parading across the stage with outstretched hands to accept one, two, three prizes with or without an acceptance speech. Entertainment, it seems, must always be included in the program. I heartily enjoyed singing "Three Jolly Welshmen" with seven others in our award-winning Boys' Double Quartet. We could only hope our interlude was a positive intermission from ennui or a boredom buffer.

Our Class of 1963 Commencement Program was June 13. The Senior Class numbering just under 300, we processed into the auditorium in a slow march to the royal and martial sound of Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" or we'd intimate in the hushed tones of our puerile brains trust, "Pimp and Circumcise". I stood on stage to sing "When Allen-A-Dale Went A-Hunting" as a proud member of the Madrigals. Each of the names of our graduation class was announced by Principal Dr. Leonard Szudy and each individual diploma was presented by Mr. John Geist, President of the Board of Education. Most of us didn't pull a face, do a foolish two-step, or raise our gowns to reveal frilly red underpants or alfresco derriere presented as commonplace hijinks in National Lampoon comedies. We'd been thoroughly rehearsed and coerced. We were at an age when given instructions were

obeyed under pain of exclusion. Upon taking in our left hand the diploma, our right hand was free for the handshake. Then we walked a couple of steps, stood and moved the mortarboard tassel from right to left to signify our completion of high school. Graduates from West Allis Central High pictured right are from left: Ann Roper, Dick Harter, Bob Hayes and yours truly. At left



is my graduation photo as it appeared in the 1963 school annual *The Wamago*. The accompanying caption read: He is the pride of the Thespians. He contributed to his school by letting other people enjoy his talent.



The shock and disgrace of having been fired from the busboy job at the Black Steer played in the back of my mind. I felt discouraged from begging someone, anyone, for a summer job. In my stupid thinking, earning a wage wasn't a priority. My Dad strongly recommended I look for a job, but I didn't overtax myself. I may have been too self-absorbed in my own importance. What are the words I'm looking for here? Ah, yes, lazy narcissist. The summer of '63 was a giant chasm, a gap in time

and space which had to be filled, like a patient diagnosed with a terminal illness fills every minute of a bucket list with only good, interesting, exciting and important things before having to face the inevitable. My long term inevitable was that I'd been accepted into Stevens Point State College. I looked forward to leaving home for college, 150 miles away. I thought graduating from high school gave me the license, entitlement and freedom to do whatever I wanted. I didn't give practical thought to where the money would come from to support my creative ventures. I foolishly counted on the money enclosed with cards of congratulations to tide me over the next three months. That's almost like taking optimism over Niagara Falls in a barrel instead of protecting yourself by wearing an inflated rubber wetsuit.

Dad had been going through a pretty rough patch. Earlier in the year, he'd been sitting at his desk at Vilter Manufacturing, his engineering drawings and operating instructions in front of him, and his eyes would close. "Hey, Len, you falling asleep there," someone in the office would call. Startled into the real world Dad replied, "Huh? Oh, no, no," and go back to doing what he should have been doing all along. Eventually Dad was fired for falling asleep at his desk. Dad had Type 1 Diabetes and didn't know it. His nodding off turned into a diabetic coma. It took a long time for a diagnosis and to resolve the firing with his employer. Eventually he got some paltry severance pay, but before any of that happened, Dad had to find work to support his family. He took an advertised job as a janitor and maintenance man at a high school my sister preferred to attend. Mary chose not to go to West Allis Central because her brother, me, was already a big cheese there. She wanted be known for herself and not just as Larry's sister. Even before Dad took on the janitorial duties at Mercy High School, he drove Mary to school every morning when he went looking for, applying for, and interviewing for a job. Dressed daily in his suit and tie, Dad looked for work in engineering, but it got to a point where he'd take anything just for a pay check

Dad was adamant I should earn my own money. I think he may have sweet-talked one of his janitor colleagues at Mercy into taking me on as an assistant cleaner and maintenance man. It was a girl's only Catholic school. "Oh, boy," I first thought. Then it dawned on me. It was summer vacation. There'd be no girls in school. Aw, nuts! And what was this skill I was supposed to have about maintenance? According to my mother, I didn't know a screwdriver from a hammer. The work was half a day, mornings only, with a starting time of 7:00 a.m. I'd finish around noon. Since I showed little motivation of my own to look for a fulltime job, for Dad's peace of mind anyway, half a day was better than nothing. Dad could check up on me too just by asking his friend how I was going. Maybe Dad thought there was always the chance I'd pick up some practical skills.

Mercy High was located on 27<sup>th</sup> Street and Layton Avenue. I pedaled my bike a long way from 96<sup>th</sup> Street to Milwaukee's south side. It was always an exciting ride because it felt like I was speeding down a hill, even when I wasn't. I pedaled fast and rode like lightning. It was exhilarating and, by the time I reached Mercy, I overflowed with oxygen and moxie. Mercy's main building was made of old hewn stone or reddish-brick. Its exterior didn't so much resemble a school as a 19<sup>th</sup> century asylum ensconced on the pages of a Charles Dickens novel. Rather than cheerfully inviting, even as I cycled in on a sunny summer's morning, the buildings always looked foreboding. My sister loved the place, probably because I didn't go to school there.

Mercy's expansive, undulant grounds were surrounded, imprisoned by a fence of black iron bars, each metal picket topped by a sharp arrow pointed skyward. Shade trees were large elms and smaller maples. Decorative oval-shaped gardens, most beds with bursting red flowers we called firecrackers, dotted grassy green hills sloping down to the fence.

Older than my Dad, my boss spoke with a pronounced Polish accent. First day on the job, the man didn't teach me how to use the power mower. He told me, "You don' do nuthin'. You hang on an' folla. Start here. Squeeze here. Off you go." He turned, barely staying around long enough to see if I knew what I was doing, and ambled away. The industrial mower had its own drive, meaning I didn't have to push it. I'd gently squeeze a lever with my fingers and, with a mind of its own, it would lurch forward instantly. I feared the mechanism, was always afraid it was going to get away on me. Or worse, jump into reverse of its own volition and chew me up in its speedball whirling blades.

That grass cutter never had a speed labeled slow. It had one speed. Fast. I never felt in control of this rip-roaring machine. I literally leaned forward, hands gripping the handle, and trotted on two left feet after that noisy lawn lopper. I slipped and slid on clumps of damp grass shavings always thinking I'd lose a toe. All five of 'em. Maybe the whole foot!

Every morning my boss found a fresh note in handwritten nun's script pierced onto a nail in the wall of the servants' anteroom. On the paper was a list of our day's chores. I dreaded the mornings the old man showed me "Cut the grass." I didn't mind "Pull weeds in gardens." Most of the time we worked together and cleaned. I was taught how to swab a floor using a mop with one of those soft rope heads, the kind that always has to be wrung out in a squeegee roller-bucket before use. Do it wrong and the floor looked streaked. Do it right and the floor shone mirror clean. I washed windows, washed desks, washed chalk boards and ledges. Sometimes by hand we used coarse, then fine sandpaper to clean desktops. Then we'd apply varnish. Classroom desks had a lid which opened, an inkwell in the lid, and were held up by patterned wrought iron legs. Bench seats weren't connected to the desks. The school had 'modern' wooden chairs. We cleaned, sometimes sandpapered and varnished those too.

The old man always encouraged me, seemed to enjoy teaching me, showing me how to do these simple, repetitive, time-consuming tasks. We didn't talk much. He liked to play music, said it made the time go by quickly. Instead of a radio, he played vinyl records of piano or violin concertos, mazurkas and symphonies. He liked Chopin. His appreciation of the nocturnes was my introduction to the Polish composer. I thought it much like listening to movie music and it motivated me to do good work. Sometimes the old man said I worked too fast. Not that my work was shoddy, oh no, it was that my enthusiasm made me complete chores too quickly for his comfort. I'll never forget his advice delivered in his Polish accent, the Rs rolled, W sounding like V, and with finger wagging at my nose, "Never work fast. Always work steady." I looked puzzled. "Well," he said, "You get job done fast, doze nuns day find you 'nother job to do. An' maybe it be dirty an' not so good."

The saying is that as we grow older we gain wisdom. To this day I have never forgotten my Polish boss and the words of wisdom he imparted.

I learned to look forward to 10:30 morning break. My old boss would rub his hands together and muse, "What leftovers doze nuns gonna leave today?" Just at morning break, maybe we'd catch a glimpse of a young novice as she 'secretly' delivered a large tray of food to the anteroom. Once in a great while we'd observe the old Mother Superior carry the tray down a flight of stairs and she never concealed her presence. Occasionally she spoke is a low, rasping voice to chide for God knows what. My boss gently shook his head suggesting we ignore whatever she said. Most mornings we saw no one. The tray of higgledy-piggledy stacked breakfast leftovers appeared like manna from heaven. Toast, maybe pancakes or waffles, bacon, sausages or Canadian ham with fried eggs, poached eggs, or soft boiled eggs which had gone hard. Every morning was something different and it was always warm. Our favorite was baked eggs. Whichever nun or novice delivered the tray brought a pot of hot coffee and a pitcher of juice. Down those steep stairs, it must have been a great balancing act! Toast was there almost always with a pot of jam and a stick of butter. If there were pancakes or waffles, there'd be a cruet of maple syrup. Except for Mother Superior's mumblings we never heard the nuns speak, but what they provided for morning break always spoke loud and clear, "You worked hard. You earned it." Good food loosened our tongues and we talked. "How 'bout dem Braves, hey?" "Where's movie makin' gonna get yuh?" "You catch fights Friday night?" conversation was a lot about anything amounting to nothing.

The pay wasn't much, but the leftover food was always good. I got plenty of exercise riding the bike at sunrise and in lunchtime traffic coming home. As for the chance to pick up useful skills, well, now I definitely know the difference between sandpaper and toilet paper. I know how to use a screwdriver, a pair of pliers, and a hammer. I learned to never work fast. Always steady. I'd learned a lot from the old Polish guy.

Early in July I went to Chicago with MMM members. I was buoyed for creative endeavor after attending a Saturday night CACCA banquet. Sanguinary Mortem achieved a double whammy. Held

back from January's 1963 One-Reel Competition, I was presented the Silver Medal for Best Motion Picture. Additionally there was a Certificate for a Ten Best of the Year 1963.

All of my films had been shot on Kodak color stock and I was keen to shoot in old-fashioned black & white. Most professional film released for the home collector on the Standard 8mm gauge was printed on black and white stock. I picked up a half-price 50 foot souvenir film of aerial dogfights in the First and Second World Wars thinking it was just the sort of stock footage I wanted, should I ever get around to making an interpretation of Carl Sandburg's poem The Man with the Broken Fingers. I had a desire to make my first black and white motion picture a war film. Many films of that genre I'd seen on television and in the cinema had been shot in black and white. Although it's not how our eyes see things in reality, war footage in black and white always looked more real than war scenes shot on color film stock. I guess it's because we were used to seeing news and documentaries, and any subject matter that was the real McCoy in black & white. Therefore when an amateur chose to shoot a film on black and white stock it meant the subject had to be real, that it had to be serious, and that the filmmaker meant business.

Black and white film stock was freely available on shelves alongside rapidly replenished color stock. Color was the film of choice for most home movie makers. Why? It was different from what was usually seen in the living room. Most American families in 1963 had television sets telecasting only in black and white. Color TV for the home was hugely expensive, still somewhat experimental, and caused no end of inconvenience. My recollection was the color picture being quite blue. In my memory of watching Burt Lancaster in Apache (1954) in the Brochhausen's living room, green hardly registered on screen. To prevent color scrambling and picture interference turning the screen a blotched red or blue, especially after vacuuming, Aunt Adeline Brochhausen had to regularly degauss 1 the TV.

Early that summer I shot The Man with the Broken Fingers over one unplanned Saturday and a spurof-the-moment strike-it-while-the-iron's-hot haphazardly organized Sunday. Late of a Saturday afternoon Jack Roper unexpectedly showed up soon after a family friend older than ourselves visited. It was suddenly advantageous. I morphed into selling mode and pitched my idea - that's real Hollywood terminology. On the spot the visitor agreed to play the role of a veteran fighter pilot. I was aware when I started making The Man with the Broken Fingers that I might not end up with a prize winning effort. Using professional footage in an amateur film often disqualified its participation in contests. It didn't matter. I was experimenting shooting in black and white. I'd seen Swish Pan movement - I'll explain that when it applies - and I wanted to attempt to use new, to me anyway, camera movement technique for its effect. Little planning went into the picture. Always a mistake! I had a general idea of what I wanted to show and more or less made it up as we went along. Some silent film directors in the pioneer moviemaking days of the 1900s worked the same way. They didn't use written scripts, depending instead upon a few jotted notes or relying on an idea or two garaged in their heads.

It was sufficient introduction to see the two characters, one young and one much older, sitting comfortably on the wooden porch steps. The veteran's arms are folded, his hands hidden. Jack inconspicuously espies the man's fingers and innocently asks via title card, HOW'D YOUR FINGERS GET CRIPPLED? The veteran isn't taken aback at the boy's bluntness. However, instead of giving a direct answer, the veteran raises his head and looks to the sky. The Pan Up to the gray sky was movie language, a sign that said we are making a transition and, in this particular story, to the veteran's past. Audiences are smart enough to deduce that they will now go into the character's memory.

Later, in the editing process, I spliced in shots of WWII fighter planes shooting and hitting their pursued targets, oft seen in documentaries or as Hollywood war movies' stock footage. There's a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> First used in 1940, it is to reduce or neutralize magnetic fields in cathode ray tube monitors of color TVs. For

example, color TV monitors used a metal plate near the front of the tube to guide the electron beams from the back. The plate, also known as a shadow mask, can pick up strong external fields and from that point produce discoloration on the display by imparting an undesired deflection to the electron beam. The device is called a degausser.

famous shot of a plane spiraling out of the sky trailing a cloud of black burning oil smoke. It was made from the cockpit of the fighter plane which shot it down. I used a shot of a plane crashing nose first into the ground. It may or may not have been an inappropriate vintage WWI biplane, but it looked effective.

Sunday afternoon underclassmen friends met in a park's woodland area for shooting scenes representing what the veteran remembered. Doug Gendron played the youthful veteran. Fourteen or fifteen, he looked much too young to be a fighter pilot. He wore his own shirt and denim jeans and I gave Doug a black beret. After seeing the plane crash and seeing Doug in his garb, maybe I'd get the audience thinking Doug wasn't the pilot, that he was a messenger, a runner, a child member of the French Resistance. Your guess is as good as mine. Odd costuming, sure, because the pilot and the Resistance in the poem are supposed to be sons of Norway. Nationality wasn't clearly established in my film and I didn't think it mattered. Since the Sandburg poem wouldn't ever be read before showing the movie, I didn't expect my audience would recognize the difference. Doug moves stealthily among fallen trees and rocks. Of course the plane crash would bring about immediate investigation. In my story it's three Nazi soldiers played by Jim Lewandowski, Dick Wesell and Eddie Gaehler. Like meerkats checking surrounds, they pop up from behind big rocks and thick tree trunks. Costumes worn in From the Powers of Darkness were recycled. Lewandowski wore the gray great coat and military dress hat. Gaehler wore a gray great coat and borrowed Nazi helmet. Wessel also wore a gray great coat, but his head was bare because I didn't have any more hats or helmets. All wore handmade armbands with the twisted cross.

Shots of the boy moving slyly in the forest are intercut with Long Shots of Nazi soldiers moving from behind one tree to behind another. The chase down and capture of the boy runner is shown in one Long Shot. Looking several times over his shoulder, Gendron runs toward the camera with the three soldiers behind. The runner is body tackled like a defensive player taking down the offense in football. The officer delivers a foot stomp to the boy's head and he's quickly hauled back onto his feet. Wesell and Gaehler hold Gendron's shoulders against a tree trunk.



As if rechanneling his thug in For He Shall Conquer, Lewandowski spits on the ground, struts toward his prisoner, draws his knife and lays the sharp edge against Gendron's throat and pictured left. Eddie Gaehler holding fast to Gendron, Lewandowski's Nazi officer sneeringly questions WHO ARE THE UNDERGROUND? The interrogation never extends past the initial question. The Nazi barely waits for a response before slapping the boy's face. Without hesitation he delivers a right cross. I stopped the camera before his fist ceased movement past the runner's nose. Off screen, greasepaint blood was copiously smeared beneath Gendron's nose. In a Close-Up of Gendron's face as Lewandowski retracted his punch, I again started the camera running. On screen, with the use of different camera angles, there's a seamless flow showing Lewandowski's punch to the nose.

Showing title cards of interrogating questions isn't necessary as the officer continues to harangue the captured boy. We clearly see what happening. Under strain, Gendron's face shows signs of fainting. The tirade stops and the order is delivered to BREAK HIS FINGERS. In Close Up Wesell seizes Gendron's hand, grabs onto the fingers, and smashes the hand above the boy's head against the tree bark. Officer Lewandowski in Long Shot measures the distance of his knife to the boy's palm, as if planning Ready and Set before Go. The next shot started with a Close Up of the knife in Lewandowski's grasp. As he thrusts the knife, my camera swiftly followed the movement. This rapid

horizontal camera movement can be labeled a Swish Pan<sup>2</sup>. I stopped the shot before the knife reached its target. No one wanted to risk the blade actually penetrating Doug's hand. Without any film moving through the camera, the knife was plunged into the tree trunk. Doug then slipped separated fingers up to encase the blade. Using a second Close Up and swift movement of the camera, another Swish Pan to Gendron's hand, the knife in profile appears to be imbedded in his hand. Also in shot is Doug's face and he is screaming in pain. The combination of the knife thrust in Close Up and the separate camera movement to the stabbed hand in Close Up created a shocking sequence, as if it had all been accomplished in one continuous shot. The audience can be startled into feeling the same pain the boy experiences. The camera then pans from the stabbed hand to the gray sky. Here is another sign to tell the audience that we are returning from the veteran's memories of his past to the present.

The camera pans down from gray sky to reveal, once again, the curious boy and the veteran seated on the porch steps. Again, without any fear of embarrassment or the possibility of irritating the veteran, the boy questions, WELL, HOW'D YOUR FINGERS GET CRIPPLED? The veteran casually replies, OH, I CAUGHT THEM IN A DOOR. Roper improvised his response. His lips can be read. "Yeah, I'll bet," he knowingly mouths, convinced he's been told a fib. This and the earlier porch shot were finished in about twenty minutes.

It may take 8 to 10 minutes to do an interpretive reading of Sandburg's poem. My film told its condensed interpretation in just under three exciting minutes. Unfortunately, I hadn't implemented advice from Rolf. Again my actors played characters an age they hadn't yet reached. So, as exciting as is the film, it's wholly unbelievable.

Summer moviemaking had only just begun. The elderly Mr. And Mrs. Jaeger lived in an old house across the street from ours. Mr. Arthur Jaeger became aware I was a stamp collector and sometimes invited me over to pick through shoeboxes he had filled over decades with stamps torn from envelopes. One day it struck me that Mr. Jaeger's face and personality would be ideal for a film character. He always had a jovial twinkle in his eye and his eyebrows were uplifted and shaggy. Whether indoors or out in his garden, he always wore what I called an old man's cap, usually a wool cap with a short visor. He could play a grandpa without even trying.

There was an 8 year old kid with strawberry red hair in the neighborhood named Tommy Plumb. I found his name, more than anything else, very appealing. It sounded like it had come right out of a Mother Goose rhyme or a Hans Christian Anderson tale. Wouldn't Tommy Plumb look good on a credit title! Children can be natural actors. It's after we all grow older that we become self-conscious and obsessed with body-shape. Sticking with Rolf Schuenzel's tenet to "Keep it real" I now devised a story, moreso a lengthy anecdote, about a boy who couldn't hear or speak. Without sound in a film, it would be a challenge to convey the unseen disabilities of deafness and dumbness. It was like figuring out which puzzle pieces fit together to see the whole picture before arriving at how to convey silence in a silent film. I couldn't just waste film having the boy stare off into space while action happened around him.

I found a role for the priest who'd been so influential and helpful when making my initial film efforts. Father Leonard Meyer was overseeing the construction of his new gym, the project I'd happily contributed a share of the proceeds to from film shows presented over two years. He came up with the solution to visually convey the boy's inability to talk or hear. He suggested the boy observe big machines at work on the construction site and, coming too close to the action, Fr. Leonard would call to him to back off. After Fr. Leonard shouted to the kid a couple times there would be no response. Thinking his call was ignored deliberately; the priest would tap the boy's shoulder and physically turn the boy to face him. He'd address the boy and tell him to move for his own safety. The boy would look up at the priest, hold out his hands for emphasis, open his mouth and clamp it shut several times

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The swish pan is an extremely rapidly-executed panning movement of the camera which causes the picture to blur. The swish pan usually begins and ends with the camera at rest and often functions as a transition without a cut.

before the priest (and the audience) understood the boy's inability to speak or hear. The priest watched the embarrassed, frustrated boy run off from the dangerous site.

That scene in itself was insufficient to tell a complete story. It only established the boy's handicap. A story needs to show character, conflict, change and have a resolution of sorts. Since I felt I'd been successful making a story about a miracle in *For He Shall Conquer*, I did what Hollywood does with its successful films; do it again. Having established a boy was crippled in my previously successful film and creating the situation by which he learned to walk, I made the same film but with alterations. Called *Deaf and Dumb*, the obvious miracle and change would be the boy gaining the ability to speak and hear.

The film opened with a lengthy shot of Tommy Plumb staring off into space while action happened around him. I intended to record a voiceover stating, "This is Tommy. He's just like every other kid in the neighborhood. He likes to ride his bike, run around and play. Just that he mostly does those things alone. The other kids don't like playing with Tommy. They don't understand him. You see, Tommy can't speak or hear. Until one very special day..." The title *Deaf and Dumb* shows up on screen. Maybe I wasn't willing to trust audience intelligence after all?

The sequence following credits showed Tommy kicking tires in a used car lot. A car dealer in real life, Chet Lyon, sees a no sale nuisance and calls to the kid to get out, go away. Of course Tommy faces away from the salesman and the film demonstrates an instance of the handicap getting the boy into trouble. The salesman is irritated at having to physically leave the comfort of his office, move to Tommy and wave his hand dismissively to shoo him off the lot. When Tommy sees the angry dealer approach, he just turns and runs.

The next sequence was filmed exactly as Fr. Leonard had described. Making a movie in 1963 it was easy to identify a Catholic priest by his wearing of the Roman collar and long black cassock. A cautionary danger sign is shown tacked to the cyclone fence surrounding the building site. The only machine slowly, sluggishly chugging around was an old bulldozer smoothing dirt, an elderly man at the controls. As far as I was concerned, danger wasn't impending. Additional footage of machines operating on a larger building site were shot weeks later and spliced into the opening sequence. I felt big crane-like machinery, men in hardhats on the move, and a partly-made concrete structure might convey a greater sense of danger. This extra footage wasn't used as padding: that is footage which merely extends a film's running time, adds nothing to the story, but which doesn't detract from telling the core story.

In the third and crucially revealing sequence, Mr. Jaeger and Tommy walk on Washington Street. There was no sidewalk, just a glaring white road of recently-poured concrete. They amble along the right-hand curb of the road with the traffic instead of against it on the safer left. Having the pair walk with risk made it convenient to facilitate the boy's dramatic change via divine intervention. Several camera angles and shots were made before they faced my camera moving toward me. A 1959 Chevy turns into Washington Street and is in the background. The driver is William McBain, father of Billy, a 9<sup>th</sup> grade kid with whom I became friends at school. Sometimes I was asked why I hadn't cast my Dad in the role of the car driver. Because I'd shown my Dad in A Hectic Morning and The Cleaning Lady, I had some foolish idea about overexposure and typecasting. I was concerned my Dad would be associated only with comedy and that he wouldn't convince my ongoing audience that he could play a serious role. Stupidity, of course, but in my mind I was playing at being Cecil B. DeMille.

The pedestrians are next seen through the windshield of the moving car. Grandpa unexpectedly lurches left into the path of the vehicle. McBain's hands spin the wheel. The car veers. Tommy shouts, "Gramps!" The one syllable name and title was borrowed from Tommy Rettig's addressing his grandfather in the 1950's TV series "Lassie". To startle my audience into acceptance of a miracle cure, I'd include Tommy's shout of, "Gramps!" in the soundtrack. The near accident all happens in a series of rapid cuts. With the miraculous cure, I didn't give Grandpa or the motorist any footage to show their incredulity. I should have. The boy has an amazing reaction. In a Medium Close-up, he

holds one hand to his ear and, slowly raising the other hand to his mouth, Tommy indicates that change has happened and the scene, by means of Fotofade, Fades Out.

Each sequence was creatively filmed with a variety of shots and angles. No one was camera conscious and the acting was natural. It's possible *Deaf and Dumb* may have satisfied audiences and it may have been successful in competition. With a running time close to the 6 minutes of *For He Shall Conquer* and a similar story of intervention by an unexplainable curative force, the film should have worked. I recorded a music track onto tape. Tommy's shout of "Gramps!" was inserted, but every time I ran the film and tape together, "Gramps!" never matched Tommy opening his mouth. Trying to synchronize a wild soundtrack with film would forever be hit or miss. And I knew it would be mostly miss. "Gramps!" blurting from the soundtrack without seeing Tommy's mouth open at the same time was like watching one of those Italian sword and sandal spectacles starring Steve Reeves as Hercules, or a spaghetti western with Clint Eastwood. Both actors worked with supporting casts of Roman actors who delivered their lines in Italian. English-dubbed dialogue never matched the movement of actors' lips. Serious dramatic matter was rendered inadvertently laughable. Last thing I wanted was the humiliation of hearing an audience laughing due to a technical glitch instead of being wowed with the power wielded by the hand of God.

I suppose I could have saved the film by inserting a title card of GRAMPS when Tommy shouted, but that would have defeated my intention to emphasize the important change in my character. I wanted my audience to hear the first time Tommy broke his long silence. What I'd experienced was an obstacle in making a silent film, in the day a title card the only option available to me. I required sound and was unable to jump that hurdle. I set the film aside for another day.

Mid- August I wanted to do more than simply say "thanks" to those who had performed in my films. I'd hold an awards night. Little did I realize that handing out trophies to friends wasn't necessary. Through the grapevine I learned they said that the reward was just being asked. Some said they'd hoped I'd call upon them, that they yearned to be in one of my movies. More often than not, that invitation never came. Years later I'd found out it was considered an honor just to have been asked and become part of a movie cast. Of course I hadn't seen it that way. I guess I hadn't thought that they really were having as much fun as I was, and that the publicity and audience adulation which followed was mostly welcomed.

I pushed ahead with an Oscarette Evening. Trophies modeled after Hollywood's Oscar would be awarded to two winners in the acting categories. I chose five nominees for Best Actor and four for Best Supporting Actor. Certificates would be awarded to groups of actors (based on audience reaction) for the Best Fight Scene, the Best Emotional Impact Scene and the Most Stomach Turning Scene. I invited Drama teacher Miss Constance Case, the president of the Milwaukee Movie Makers, and for the opinion of youth Billy McBain to participate in a panel of judges. Prior to the July 14 show and awards presentations, all the nominated actors' films were screened in my basement to the judges.

Nominees for Best Actor were Jack Roper as the crippled boy in *For He Shall Conquer*, Bill Geipel as Dr. Emile in *Dr. Emile's Mind*, Dick Harter as the Indian Chief in *Tomahawk Terror*, Doug Gendron as the Norwegian freedom fighter in *The Man with the Broken Fingers*, and Mike Theoharris as an American soldier in *From the Powers of Darkness*.

Nominated for Best Supporting Actor were Jim Lewandowski as the Nazi Officer in *The Man with the Broken Fingers*, Dick Wesell as Dr. Grimur in *Dr. Emile's Mind*, Mike Gifford as Mike Steele in *Tomahawk Terror*, and Dick Harter again, this time for the amply endowed woman in *Pots n' Slops*.

Different from the real Oscar night which showed short clips of a nominated performance, I screened the nominated actors' complete films. In addition to the already named films, I included *Sanguinary* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Another day never arrived. Even at this writing, the film does not have the marriage of picture and sound for "Gramps!"

Mortem, The Cleaning Lady, and The Evil Slayer so the audience would have more to consider when choosing Best Fight Scene, Emotional Impact Scene and Most Stomach Turning Scene. MTV wasn't on any executive's design board in 1963. Another twenty years or more would pass before such a channel ever debuted on television with an awards show giving out popcorn trophies to popularly-picked categories like Best Kiss, Best Fight, Most Romantic, etc. I was way ahead of everyone else's time with the Oscarettes and Audience Appreciation Certificates.

I donated every penny of the 25¢ admissions to the St. Aloysius Gym Fund. Fr. Leonard Meyer again graciously allowed me use of the school hall to screen my amateur movies for the paying public. It was the most exciting and best attended film evening. The hall filled. Everyone was dressed up – it was the social norm then - all of my actors, their parents, my parents, parish people, movie club members, and those who saw announcements in the St. Aloysius Church Bulletin, who read Mary Margaret Byrne's article in *The Herald-Citizen* and Joe Botsford's report in *The Milwaukee Sentinel*. Without searchlights painting the night sky, no tuxedoes or formal floor-length couture, not even an organza-highlighted prom dress in sight, the whole night felt like glitzy Hollywood. I can recall girls in the audience flashing smiles as they goggle-eyed me and fawned melting doe-eyes at Jack and the two Mikes. Were any of my nominated friends being undressed by those girls' eyes? I'd bet a dollar on it.

My judges wouldn't tell me beforehand whose names they had chosen for the awards. In fact, one panel member secretly arranged trophy engraving and didn't hand them to me until the night. Masking tape covered the winners' names.

Peeling off the tape worked on the audience with the Best Supporting Actor Oscarette presented to Mike Gifford (in the center of picture left) and Jack Roper accepting his Oscarette for Best Actor (standing on the left of the picture). I'm holding an Oscarette (on the right of the picture) in a fair use *Sentinel* photograph published July 15, 1963 in *The Milwaukee Sentinel*.

The Oscarette evening led to a surprise invitation by telephone to appear on WISN-TV August 17. I thought only famous people got on TV. This was a whole new medium. The show was *The Other 98*, a late afternoon talk and variety show featuring



children, teenagers, and young adult achievers. Its target audience was the same as the ages of its guests. Mrs. Gertrude Pulicher was the show's inquisitive host. For local color in the black and white telecast Dick Harter dressed as *Tomahawk Terror*'s Indian chief. Bill Geipel applied spirit gum, the crepe hair goatee, and wore a surgeon's gown for the interview in costume as Dr. Emile. I dressed as the movie mogul in maroon sports coat.



Left: Host Mrs. Gertrude Pulicher with me on the set of *The Other 98*.

Before summer vacation finished, I went on an overnight campout somewhere in the wild Kettle Moraine with Dick Harter, Billy McBain and a couple of other guys. My vested interest was Billy McBain. Had he any ability as an actor? Typecasting, he looked like the kid I wanted for one more summer shoot, a film about swimming, not

that we'd intended doing much swimming in the woods. I knew this kid having cheered for him on the school's wrestling team. I felt I needed to see how he interacted with boys who were three years

his senior. Heck, I should have known he probably got on well with the giants on his wrestling team even if he did look like its mascot. I could have cast my own brother, but Steve admitted he acted in my films only because I asked him to, not because he actually enjoyed the experience. I never realized Steve felt camera shy.

I wasn't an experienced camper. I depended upon others' scouting knowledge to pick a site, pitch a tent and organize a campfire. They'd chosen a cozy site in a hollow and we all helped set up the tent. Our lips and lungs manually inflated air mattresses. Sleeping bags were lumped on top, mine borrowed from Harter. The evening was warm and still. Hot dogs pierced on sticks sizzled over open flames and we ate them with ketchup in soft buns. Late at night we awoke to the sound of large raindrops plopping on the canvas tent. Lightning flashed. Thunder boomed and rumbled. We suddenly realized we were floating on the air mattresses and our sleeping bags were wet. Rainwater coursed through the tent. We escaped through the fly and dragged sodden sleeping bags in rushing knee-deep water. The guys had selected a dry creek bed for our campsite. And when the thunderstorm broke, we were caught unawares in a flash flood! If these guys were Eagle Scouts, they hadn't earned their feathers!

Despite initial shock, in the pitch dark of the thunderstorm we behaved calmly and methodically. The owners of the tent looked after saving their asset. I gathered up wet clothes and looked after a shivering half-pint Billy. So there we all were, rudely awakened by cold muddy water, stooped in the pouring rain, soaking wet in our soaked and clinging Fruit of the Looms and squeezing water unsuccessfully from weighty, saturated sleeping bags. Haplessly peeling on wet clothes, we dumped dripping camp gear into the trunk, and drove home grumbling and moaning in the dark. Throughout our experience, Billy was pretty much ignored by the others. They kept him on the sidelines, just as I imagined his character might be treated in a movie.

That movie only came about by taking advantage of something new in the neighborhood. A short ways down 96<sup>th</sup> Street from my family's home a swimming pool was installed. We thought the neighbor must have been rich, given the short season use of summertime's sizzle. Southern Wisconsin has cold weather from late October through to May. What felt like winter extended meant snow blizzards, snowploughs, snowbanks, and snow shovels, not outdoor swimming and sunbaking. I didn't personally know the neighbor and his young family, but Eddie Gaehler did and he lived next door to the pool. I asked him to approach his neighbor and ask to use the pool for a movie set. Without hesitation, the neighbor said yes. Not only did I get to complete a movie, my friends and I enjoyed an 80°day fooling around in wet sunshine.

Amongst the cast, he wasn't a little brother to anyone in particular. Billy McBain was an aptly named generically titled character called *Little Brother*. There are three or four older boys, including me, horsing around the pool. We cannonball off the diving board, splash water, and play a disorganized game of water polo.

Billy could look simultaneously sad and picture poster-appealing with his large brown puppy dog eyes. You cast a cute kid, you get an audience's empathy. Billy wants to join in the action. The older boys dismiss the smaller kid. They bully, taunt and tease saying he's afraid of getting wet, afraid of the water, fearful of ever being ducked. Moving around the edge of the pool, they deliberately bump against him. When the older boys break from play, Billy is ignored. He stands at the deep end of the pool, musters courage and jumps in. Hearing the splash, the other boys take little notice. When they do look around the pool, they don't see Billy. Eyes peeled, they spot the boy at the bottom of the pool. Two boys dive in, take Billy under his armpits and raise him to the surface. He is laid on his back and I administer mouth to mouth resuscitation. We'd been taught the relatively new kiss of life in Pool class in high school. It was my main reason for telling this story on film. Billy responds and coughs up water. Most interesting was the cold water turning his lips an appropriate deep shade of blue. Make-up to suggest drowning wasn't needed. Relieved at Billy's having come back from apparent drowning, the big boys encourage him back into the water and swimming lessons begin.

Although it came across like something dreamt up by Aesop, the strength of the film lay in its positive conclusion. I never intended my film to be a fable with a moral.

Other than Billy McBain and myself in the cast, I don't clearly remember who else participated, but likely Dick Harter and Jim Lewandowski participated. Though I placed the film in competition, no snapshots were taken during its making, and the picture was never publicized in any media. The reason I blather about who was in the cast is that unfortunately, today, *Little Brother* is a lost film.

## Chapter 29: Inventing Joe College

Because I opened my big mouth in a *Herald-Citizen* newspaper article, I placed inordinate emphasis on bending the truth, "Movie production will definitely remain a hobby. In fact, I am going to shy away from practically all 'extras' that first year."

Hah! A bigger horse apple dropped by Chateaugay¹ wouldn't be found plopped and soggy lying on a stable's straw floor. To please or tease my parents into thinking I was going to bury my nose in my studies, all my films and film making equipment was left at home. I didn't have a radio or a record player or my tape recorder. No comic books. No story books. No magazines. Nothing to entertain myself. Just a typewriter for doing assignments. Like the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, I'd change from fun film maker into an academic bookworm

I commenced my freshman year in September 1963 at Central State College, also known as Stevens Point State College. No mystery in knowing it was in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, a town where a law was still on the books stating it was illegal to drop your ice cream on the sidewalk. As a Wisconsin resident there was no charge for tuition, although fees totaled \$106.50. Included in the total was an Incidental Fee of \$75. To this day I've no idea what benefit I gained from paying that prize sum. Also included were Textbook Rental of \$7.50, Student Activity fees of \$15.00, and a College Union fee of \$9.00. The Student Activity Fee supported athletic, forensic, and student entertainment activities, plus *The Pointer* (the college newspaper), the *Iris* (the college annual), hospitalization payments, and class dues. College Union fee supported construction of a new building to be completed in 1964. The College Union was a "family room" which provided food service facilities including a snack bar. It had a roomy comfortable lounge, meeting rooms, a music listening room, two dark rooms for developing photographs, and several offices including those for *The Pointer* and *Iris*. The "Kennel" was a game center and general store operated by the College Union.

My home for the next two semesters was Pray-Sims, one of several campus residence halls; this one having been completed in 1962 and filled to capacity, student residents numbering 400. Built in the shape of the letter L, the vertical part of the L was Pray, the horizontal part of the L facing Reserve Street was Sims. I was assigned to Room 318 on third floor Sims, the room looking out onto a grassy back courtyard instead of the street. Each room housed two students. Room fee was \$137.00 per student per semester and this included linens, towels, and their laundering, heating, lighting, and all electricity use. My roommate was also a freshman, Bill Gelwicks who eventually earned his place and notoriety on the swimming team. Each room was a twin share. Draw a line down the center and each side of the room was identical to the other. There was a desk and a chair, a bed, above the bed a bulletin board, a chest of drawers with a mirror above, and a walk-in clothes closet. In between the closets was the room's entrance or exit door to the corridor. The wall opposite the door had a window with pull-cord drapes and beneath the sill a heating unit. Down the corridor my high school movie actor friends Bill Geipel and Dick Wesell were roommates. Further down the corridor to cater for 60 young men was the communal bathroom housing several bathroom sinks with large mirrors set above each, toilets encased in stalls with lockable doors, and a tiled dressing/undressing room with wooden benches built into walls with towel-hanger hooks, and opening into a communal shower with a dozen shower heads and taps.

For some, it would take some getting used to putting one's modesty on display. I remember one guy who sounded like a Puritan preacher when he emphatically stated to the director he just couldn't get naked around other men. He solved his phobia of exaggerated shyness by not showering. He

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Winner of the 1963 Kentucky Derby

smelled. His room smelled. We could smell him and his room out in the corridor. Even four blocks away... in the corridor of the Main Building, his stench stuck in our olfactory nerves. Downtown outside the Fox Theatre, his body malodor followed any one of us overwhelming the aroma of fresh popcorn! His assigned roommate gave up after two weeks and demanded from the director something be done. Mr. 'I Don't Shower or Wear Deodorant' was ordered to get wet. Risking suspension, he complied and thereafter took speedy showers late, really late at night ... in his underpants. He was caught out by guys who'd been out drinking and who didn't return to the dorm until the same wee hours as the bashful boy thought it safe to sneak into the shower without ever being seen.

Wesell, Geipel and I wouldn't be feeling any discomfort in the nakedness of others. We'd had plenty of experience in Pool classes at Central High. There was a communal shower we had to use after all Pool and Physical Education classes, no ifs, ands or buts about it. Even more testing about Pool rules were the swimming trunks worn by all the fellas. None! That's right; we wore only our birthday suits. Choice wasn't an option. Whether we swam bare-assed because it was a money-saver or because our teachers were ex- army or marines, we never knew. It was swim in the altogether or fail the course.

Mr. Richard Milton was strict. An ex-Marine sergeant, he ran his classes like a boot camp drill sergeant. After undressing and folding and placing our school clothes in a locker, we walked, never ran, into the pool room. No one was allowed to jump in until ordered. We lined up alphabetically on one side of the pool. No one dared use hands to hide privates. Mr. Milton, as sour-faced as our school's bulldog mascot, stood across the water, clipboard in hand and barked, "Ten hut!" His deep voice bounced off tiled walls. Like virgin recruits, we'd snap to attention with arms at our sides, our chests out, chins tucked, stomachs sucked in and bare heels clicked together. One of our members, his name shall remain anonymous, stood more to attention than required.

At Sergeant Milton's shout of last name only, in turn we'd shout back, "Yo, SIR!" Never, "Here," or "Yes," or "Aye," and emphasis was always on "sir." Then Mr. Milton marched himself to our side of the pool and strode behind us, then in front making a cursory examination of our bodies for cuts, bruises, bandages, anything which might cause ourselves or others a health problem in the water. If anyone vexed Mr. Milton, he'd hit you on the bare bottom with his large ring of keys. Classmate Billy Buckett remembered another of Mr. Milton's methods of handling student irritation. He made you play harpoon. You swam back and forth in front of the diving board with him standing on the board's end with his long bamboo pole complete with a rubber ball attached to its end. You swam back and forth until he finally hit, harpooned you. The man needed glasses!

Mr. Milton called for excuses, those who'd not be swimming, with a one word exclamation, "Notes!" He approved or negated the note's validity and made the decision if a boy's case of sniffles was serious enough to bench him. Then we were ordered, "At ease" and instructed to get into the pool. No pre-testing of water temperature was permitted. It was "Jump in or else." Our classmate still at attention always dived in head first. No one, not even Mr. Milton, ever poked fun at that boy.

Ever seen *Porky's* (1981) where boys behaving like the priapic satyrs of ancient Greece peep through holes in a wall to ogle girls undressing and showering after their Gym class? Had director Bob Clark ever had the chance to watch our Pool class boys, we just might have been a template for his lusty striplings. Our Central Pool class girls wore dreadfully saggy, baggy, loose, ill-fitting blue one-piece swimsuits. It was as if they'd been mass produced in a generous one pattern package so that "one size fits all." To ensure no embarrassing walk in from any boy during the girls' classes, the double swinging doors to the pool on the boys' side were padlocked from inside the pool. However, there was a crack in-between the two doors just wide enough to peek without our being seen. I wondered if Miss Muth ever saw a vertical row of single left or right eyeballs in that crack. We fellas invented the cheerleader squad's tightly-formed pyramid with our dexterity to fill one eye with fine female flesh! Unlike the lucky lad in *Porky's* all we ever saw was bobbling, bustling, bouncy ugly swimsuits.

The college had a day at the beginning of each year whereby the newly enrolled stood in long lines to sign up for classes. Most of the time you did get the subjects you wanted to study. In addition to the

meager pickings of courses available to the frosh<sup>2</sup> toward your chosen major, there were required courses. A certain number of credits had to be earned in general subjects of Science, Mathematics, English, and Physical Education. I believe its purpose was to turn out students with a well-rounded education. I remember moving slowly forward in a line to sign up for an easy semester of gym class. Its description was similar to what I'd done in high school. By the time I stood in front of the Phy Ed<sup>3</sup> instructor, I was told all gym classes were filled. Closed! Every new student enrollee, I'm sure, dreaded hearing that word.

Without his asking me a question, my name was scrawled down for a class having lots of empty spaces, a mid-morning class in Intermediate Swimming. Intermediate? Heck, at Central I swallowed more than my share of chlorinated water attempting lengths of the pool doing a poorly executed backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly. Never did master any of those strokes. Even doing the common Australian crawl, I'd turn my head to catch a breath and, instead, sucked in the wake from the better swimmer in the adjoining lane.

A day in the pool making *Little Brother* hadn't prepared me for this. Filled with trepidation, I reported for Intermediate Swimming, a course designed for Swim Team training. Special fees were charged for swimming courses and I doled out a dollar for a lock deposit, another dollar for towel purchase, a buck and a quarter for laundering the towel, and another buck and a quarter for swim suit rental and laundry. Four and a half valuable dollars for a required activity at which I'd have preferred to close my eyes and not pretend to be Johnny Weissmuller! Roll called, the instructor ordered us into lines at the head of each lane and bellowed, "Six laps of the pool to warm up and then we'll teach you something." As did all the others in turn, I dived in and swam. Terribly. Like a fisherman's bobber. Two laps later, my arms moved like a combination threshing machine and furious dog paddle just to stay afloat. "Clo-bew-skee! Get your sorry ass over here." He wanted to know what audacious notion had prompted me to sign up for "his" class. I certainly wasn't Swim Team material. Unforeseen circumstances explained, I was bumped into Beginners Swimming.

Ah! I was now more in my depth, so to speak. Three days a week, it was a first thing in the morning class, 7:45. The instructor seemed to have a heart, some empathy for us less fortunate anchors. I was made to feel welcome, given a confidence boost when he announced to everyone, "You probably will never make the Swim Team, but at least you'll learn how to keep your head above water and not drown." The first session was blowing bubbles. Standing, we bent forward and stuck our heads under the water and exhaled. Then we turned our heads to the side, gasped for breath, and repeated the exercise. There were one or two so frightened of the water, they couldn't even stick their heads under lest they forgot and inhaled and drowned. Our teacher was very, very patient, sort of a psychiatrist to help scared little boys overcome their phobias. Even his name, Mr. Counsell, gave us comfort. We heard repeatedly his encouraging and cheery-sounding, "Good. Good. Well done."

Throughout the semester, little by little we were taught the skills of the Australian crawl, how to sidestroke without swallowing half the pool, and to remain calm in deep water. If ever we were in a boat and it overturned, we were taught how to keep our heads, avoid panic, to conserve energy by treading water and dog paddling. We learned how to dive head first in the water from the side of the pool, eventually from a springboard.

One of our final tests was to step off the 10 meter platform and plunge into the deep water end of the pool. Ascend that height and freeze, you failed. Leap off and not drown, you passed. Just being up so high made me lightheaded. I have never been comfortable with heights, not even on ladders. We weren't required to go in head first, thank God, or even perform some fancy-dancy Olympic-quality dive. We just had to spring from that high platform into mid-air and plunge into the deep end to demonstrate self-confidence. I took several bold steps, closed my eyes, and jumped. Smacking the water ass first, it stung. I passed. For the course, I earned an  $\underline{A}$ .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Shortening and alteration of freshman (perhaps influenced by German frosch, frog, grammar-school pupil)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> American abbreviation for Physical Education, The American Heritage ® Abbreviations Dictionary, Third edition, © by Houghton Mifflin Company

If early morning wasn't scheduled for class, my ritual between 9 and 9:30 was to watch for delivery of the morning mail. It was brought to dorm reception in a tied-at-the top gray postal sack, examined by whoever was the day desk manager, sorted and slid into appropriate boxes. 318B. C'mon. C'mon! Let's hear from somebody. Anybody! Whoops, there's one... oh, good. Two. Something to do. Something to temporarily alleviate my homesickness.

Those first few weeks I was homesick, so much so, I wrote a poem about how I felt, and all due to my English teacher's encouragement to express our feelings writing in blank verse. My poem's title was in French, "Mal du Pays", which loosely meant "homesickness". It came about after days of finding Box 318B empty. My English teacher, Mrs. Corneli, read my verse, took a copy for safekeeping and said she wanted to see it published. It got there too. Took seven months, but it found its way onto the printed page. My poem appeared in the soft cover prose, poetry and art anthology *Prism* published in April 1964 by Phi Beta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta.

#### Mal du Pays

Be it as it may,
A cold and clammy morning,
It rains from the gray
And I sit in deep, depressing loneliness.
Surrounded by books of knowledge,
None for which I care
For my thoughts are wandering home.
And the streets are filled with familiar greetings.
I contemplate,
Desiring the voice of an intimate companion
Now so distant.
My head bows into folded arms
And swims with a sickness for home.

Our lives could be compared to a game of Chutes and Ladders. At the commencement of each new cycle in life, as in starting out in grade school, we begin at the bottom rung of the ladder. We do whatever we can to learn, make ourselves known, establish ourselves, and with each minor and major achievement climb a rung of life's ladder. By the time we complete grade school, we've reached the top rung. Now we slide down the chute back to the ladder's bottom rung and start high school as a freshman. When we graduate high school, we've reached the ladder's top rung. Down the chute we slide. I attended college, was a freshman all over again and firmly ensconced on the bottom rung of the ladder of life. I clambered clumsily to climb each rung. The first three months in college was adjustment and adaptation as I re-invented myself for a whole new audience.

It had something to do with fulfilling requirements for an assignment in Miss Peet's Speech class that I found my way into both Catholic high schools in town. The all boys' school was Pacelli and the all girls' school was Maria. I lined up programs of my films for their Speech classes. Sister Francis Xavier expressed interest in my proposal. She had read about me and *Tomahawk Terror* in *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, but probably never thought she would actually meet me, let alone have me make an appointment, show up in person, and make a request to screen my films and speak to her class about moviemaking. Interestingly, my meeting with Sister Francis Xavier didn't happen out of class time. Our meeting was during her Speech class. All the girls seemed to be on the edges of their seats after I walked in. Sister and I struck the deal.

According to a whisper from Sister Francis Xavier, her Speech class girls demonstrated an antsy impatience with time having to pass before I returned. Was it me or my films or both? Pacelli accepted my offer for their speech class some five weeks after the Maria presentation. Uh-oh! Some arrangement had to be made via a long distance phone call home, and then some further buttering up via letters. To fulfil my Speech class requirement, I needed my movie gear.

Away from home for the first time and for any length of time, I took baby steps to develop my own sense of independence. Non-monumental decisions I learned to make for myself without having to seek approval from Mom or Dad. Well, they were paying for my education, my room and board. I wasn't working or earning any money. I relied upon pocket money in a letter, the so-called child's weekly allowance. I was still utterly beholden to my parents as evidenced in what I wrote in letters. "This is your son from Stevens Point State College reporting. I am going to buy a college sweatshirt. How does black sound?" Or this little ingratiating gem asking for 'some stuff I needed.' "Now, I hope you don't get the impression that we're not doing anything up here. True, we are studying very hard. But sometimes we have time for goofing off, like on Saturdays. Nobody studies on Saturdays. So, I'd like to edit some films for the contests that are coming up soon. And we're getting tired of listening to the same old trash on the radio. That's why I want the record player."

OK, so no one, with the exception of some overseas students, studied on Saturdays. That was the reason I gave my parents for wanting my movie stuff. Not having my films was like not eating meat on Fridays, not snacking in-between meals during Lent. It was penance I didn't need or want or have to do. I really wanted to do some movie editing. *Little Brother* still hadn't been cut. A competition date in Chicago was nearing. Maybe I'd like to show movies to the guys. Then I added that I needed my stuff for a Speech course requirement.

Truth is hardly anyone studied Friday nights and Saturdays, especially we frosh who'd much rather fool around with our newly found freedom from parental finger wagging. Sports teams competed Friday or Saturday nights. Football. Basketball. Swimming meets. Saturday daytime was great for hiring a bicycle and exploring Jordan Park and the wilderness just up the road from the dorms. Something usually happened in walk-to Goerke Park or Iverson Park. The school union provided afternoon and evening programs and entertainment. Live chamber music concerts and recitals. Popular singers and bands. Foreign movies with subtitles. Lectures and discussions on specialty subjects. And endless hootenannies, probably because they cost nothing to stage. Dusting off an old dictionary, hootenanny is defined as a social gathering featuring folk singing and sometimes dancing. They were very popular in the 1930s and enjoyed resurgence with guitar-strummed songs like "Michael (Row the Boat Ashore)" by The Highwaymen, Peter, Paul and Mary's "Lemon Tree", "Puff (The Magic Dragon)" and "Blowin' in the Wind." Vying for chart-topping places and radio ratings, can anyone forget The Kingston Trio's "Tom Dooley" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Interesting that Bob Dylan's songs were popular, like "Blowin' in the Wind", and made it into the Top Ten, so long as it wasn't Dylan singing and were instead sung by people who could actually carry a melody.

Ay yi, yi, the hootenannies. Heck, the student union must have worked well beyond their call of duty to spend money and bring us The Journeymen. Who? And what did they ever sing? Of all the groups from the early 1960s, this is the clean-cut guy trio with broad Colgate smiles that should really have made it big time. They had voices and instrumental virtuosity. They were ahead of the curve in that they had the talent to write the songs. There was the calypso informed "River, She Come Down", "Fenario" aka "Pretty Peggy-O", "Dunya", "Cumberland Mountain Deer Chase", and "Chase the Rising Sun" amongst others. The Journeymen wouldn't confine their talent to covering other peoples' music or singing just traditional rounds. They put their own musical spin on them. They were signed to Capitol Records, yet somehow, despite hard work, performances like they did for us in Stevens Point, and good television exposure, they never succeeded. They remain as famous today as the Kathak Dancers, a celebrated North Indian company and another troupe of, yeah, well, really obscure musical performers the Student Union booked to come to our college.

I met several girls and sang along at one of those happy hand clapping, geetar-strumming, banjo picking, harmonica wailing, brain collapsing hootenannies. Bill Geipel, Bill Gelwicks and I were "Kum-Ba Yah"-ed out and walking back to the dorm when the girls pulled up in a car and insisted we "Come by Here" to the park for more singing. I was carrying a mushroom at the time and it provided me with a temporary nickname. Mushroom. Thereafter whenever the girls drove by and saw me, they'd call out, "Hey, Mushroom."

There was a guy on our floor, Harvey, who was supposed to go on a date to a campus movie show. He asked if I wanted to go too – providing I had a girl. I asked Maureen, a Maria High School senior who'd sung at the hootenanny. Harvey was stood up! Maureen fixed his being played for the fool by calling her girlfriend Sue to go with him. Harvey later claimed to me that he got rooked on the deal. I didn't. Maureen was a pretty nice girl. A pretty good Catholic one too! We saw *The Reluctant Saint*, the story of St. Joseph Cupertino, and a Norwegian film about the Laplanders called *Make Way for Lyla*. Real date material that! I wonder how impressed Harvey had been with the movies.

My Dad came through because I needed to fulfil an academic requirement. The movie projector, tape recorder, splicer, record player, and my films were in my room first week in October. I worked on editing *Little Brother* and even managed to record an appropriate soundtrack of music onto tape. I showed them my newest movie. No longer did I have to tell the guys on the floor that I made movies. Now I showed them. Geipel and Wesell enjoyed short-lived popularity and minor celebrity status after the guys saw *Dr. Emile's Mind*. It was their favorite of my films and they spoke of me in the same breath as William Castle, Roger Corman, even Alfred Hitchcock. Most of the guys on the floor had seen *Psycho* in 1960, as had I. We all carried our special memories of this ground-breaking film. I happened to see *Psycho* with Marge Pearson and another member of the Milwaukee Movie Makers. Someone in the darkened audience screamed. It wasn't anyone in our party, just some woman in the audience who felt the need to scream. To relieve the tension, perhaps? There wasn't even a horrific scene on screen at the time! She scared the crap out of everyone in the audience when, out of the blue, she just let loose with a high-pitched screech!

Miss Pauline Isaacson taught Theater class where Dick Wesell and I teamed to dream up a plot, characters, and events for a stage or radio play. We chose radio play and devised a story about a boy who wants to go over the Berlin Wall, in the day a current news topic. We set the problem that the boy isn't sure if he should go ahead with such a risky adventure. Moments ago his best friend is killed attempting to scale the Wall. Helfred Jeder doubts whether freedom must charge so heavy a price. Immediately our ideas blossomed, I typed the script. We read aloud and played the roles. I thought what a good movie it would make once snow started falling. I even had an eye on a freshman who looked like he could be our lead character. Another boy, I think it may have been Bill Wegener, expressed interest in acting in the film. My History professor, Dr. Clifford Morrison, helped me write narration to ensure authenticity. I wrote postcards to three film companies, including one in West Berlin, asking for 8mm film of the Wall.

One sunny Sunday afternoon Dan Sheirer and I rented bicycles and toured Stevens Point. I was motivated to look for filming locations, searching for anything that could stand in for East Berlin. We found ourselves in a ramshackle sector of town outside of Morey's Bar. We were thirsty and the bar had a reputation of never carding customers for I.D. We sipped only one Point beer. It tasted of chilled yeast-water and one was more than enough. We cycled out to Iverson Park and this ride had nothing to do with film location scouting. We caught seven frogs, brought them back to the dorm and, checking we were in no one's obvious sight, turned them loose in Wesell's room. Playing practical jokes was a harmless and accepted practice that we'd pull boyish pranks on one another other, as long as no one was hurt. As we expected, Wesell squealed like a 3 year old girl hopping around in the same manner as the frogs, all the while trying to catch the darn things. We tried to keep our faces as expressionless as Buster Keaton's. Wesell never did round up all the frogs. Of course we hadn't told him how many we'd liberated. We never told him anything. He was serenaded that night, as were others on the floor, by a melodious peeping croak.

Following research, scouting locations and finding nothing in the area remotely resembling East Berlin, and receiving no reply to my requests for real Berlin Wall footage, I gave up. As much as liked the story, I didn't want to do a half-vast job<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Half-vast was my Dad's polite way of saying half-assed. Given a job to do around the house or yard, like raking leaves or pulling weeds in the garden, if my work hadn't met Dad's expectations, if it looked like I hadn't finished completely, he'd affectionately assess my effort, "Well, looks like you've done only a half-vast job."

Work on the radio play continued, but no longer as a collaboration between myself and Wesell. Sick and tired of being the target of my practical jokes, he'd reached the end of his tether. Frogs in his bedroom wasn't the only stunt I'd pulled and these possible fairytale princes may have been the final outrage. I sprayed shaving cream under his door and, another time, poured water from a bottle onto a tilted dustpan again under his door. I even put a small harmless garter snake in his bed. Bill Geipel thought my pranks were funny, but I knew I'd reached Wessell's enough was enough. Wesell had had it with me. He didn't want to work with me anymore. Our playwriting partnership was dissolved and I don't blame him one bit. It was a temporary rift, only an interruption to creative endeavor. Grudges over joking around were never long held.

Jeff Rodman's partner, whoever he was, wanted to work with Wesell. Rodman completed writing the Berlin Wall escape drama with me. We called it *Go, Regardless* and devised some good, believable dialogue. A determined Karl says to his girlfriend Greta, "The only reason we're bound together is that the rottenness of this city gives us nothing else to hold on to." Greta replies, "No, Karl, it makes us all the stronger." To which Karl practically spits, "It makes it more pitiful."

The play was successfully recorded using my Sony 102. Our set was a basement corridor with bare concrete floor and walls, the college building which housed the school's radio station. Being a cold, unforgiving, and rather frightening place, hollow sound reverberated off the walls providing realistic sound effects of machineguns. We rapidly banged plastic Allen Center dinner trays against stairs, the results loud, unnerving and bone-chilling. Jeff Rodman played the lead, Karl Jeder. Bill Davis played his best friend Helfred Schultz. Cindy Parkovich was Greta, Karl's girlfriend. I narrated the play and added mood music. Talented actors all, Jeff and Cindy would later make significant contributions to my moviemaking.

Go, Regardless earned us an A. Something about the play impressed Miss Isaacson because I was invited to accompany her to Auburndale to view a district forensics contest of one-act plays. She was the judge. On the road I was asked questions about my theater and acting experience. She was especially interested in my ability to write dialogue which she said sounded as people would naturally speak. Miss Isaacson emphasized that my characters' words were real, never coming across as theatrical. I believe Miss Isaacson's introduction of one-act plays to me had an ulterior motive for something she had in mind for the future.

My ego had already been stroked by her invitation to attend the Auburndale forensics. I slanted a beret on my head, the same black one Mike Gifford had worn in my films, and primped my beard. Yes, like every other college boy just out of high school and first time away from home, I tried growing follicular face fuzz. Mostly soft, some was black, some a fluffy peach blonde. I used mascara to join the dots, fill in the blanks, those sections of staggered growth which still looked like it belonged on a baby's bottom. Instead of perching on the ladder's bottom rung, for a few hours anyway I was the older student all set to make my big impression on the high school kids. After each play Miss Isaacson asked what I thought. I offered my opinion. Miss Isaacson then asked me to share my thoughts with the contestants. They didn't know I was myself barely out of high school and just a lowly, insignificant freshman. Some high schoolers in the plays were bigger and taller than me, but each looked up to me as a knowledgeable theater critic. I had become Joe College.

Over the week of October 21-26 and leading to October's Halloween Dance on October 26, the College Union Board Social Committee organized a competition to find the Ugly Man on Campus (UMOC). Fraternities, social and academic organizations with male members dressed up their candidate and took his picture. Voting for Ugly Man wasn't by written ballot, but by coins dropped into canisters displayed beneath 8x10 photos. Each penny counted for one vote and proceeds went to the United Fund which then donated to city charities including the Red Cross, Mental Health, the Heart Fund, and welfare organizations. The winning Mr. UMOC would receive an engraved plaque on the evening of the Halloween dance and be crowned with the queen he selected.

Searching my mind's rolodex I grinned upon my recall of Dick Harter's monster make-up in *Dr. Emile's Mind.* Volunteering to make one of our dorm residents ugly, Pray-Sims would have its own

monster in the Ugly Man on Campus. We figured with up to 300 males in residence, we'd have a win in the bag. Bob Grabitske needed no persuading to raise his hand and wear theatrical make-up after seeing the monster in my movie. He was impressed with Harter's monster and claimed he'd be easy to make ugly because he didn't think he was good-looking anyway. Miss Isaacson directed me to the college theater's make-up room where I found nose putty, greasepaint, crepe hair and spirit gum.

We had a professional and original-looking ugly man, fair use pictured right and published in *The Pointer* on page 1 of its Thursday, October 24, 1963 edition. We advertised in the dorm's reception for residents to support the Pray-Sims candidate. What I never realized was the contest had little if anything to do with making people ugly and looking like nightmare ogres. It



had everything to do with making popular organizations even more popular. One photo was of a member of Siasefi who looked like he just got up from sleeping all night on the barroom floor after a rough night chug-a-lugging too many warm dollar-abottle Thunderbird wines. For all anyone knew, maybe he had because Siasefi for his drinking ability, though members for Siasefi were attracted to membership for maintaining high grade point averages. Siasefi, fortunately or unfortunately, was



Pray-Sims

well known on campus for its barroom carousing. The TKE (Tau Kappa Epsilon) fraternity was victorious and judging by their winner; ugly is Sherlock Holmes, fair use pictured left, also published page 1 of *The Pointer* October 24, 1963. The canister beneath Perry Wagner's 8x10, unlike ours, overflowed with coins and greenbacks.

In that same harvest month of October I reaped rewards in film competition. Little Brother won an 8mm Silent Class First Award in CACCA's October 1963 contest. I always thought it odd how the category was called Silent even when an accompanying tape provided a music track.

The Eastman Kodak Teen-age Movie Contest in New York was for 8mm and 16mm films made by young people. There were two age groups: from 12 to 15 and from 16 through 19. For each group, first prize was \$150, second prize \$75 and third prize \$25. Movies would be judged on originality, story content and camera technique. No entry fee was required. I entered For He Shall Conquer. A letter from the Contest Editor of Kodak Movie News, Mr. Ray Shady, informed that my film had passed preliminary judging and was entered into the final round of judging. He had a request. One of the judges wanted to screen my film at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Institute of Amateur Cinematographers' convention in Rochester, New York, on November 8 as an example of a teen-age produced film. Mr. Shady wanted my approval before releasing my film. Participation in the convention screening would have no effect one way or the other on the final judging of my film in the Kodak contest.

Mr. Shady wrote again to congratulate me on having won an Honorable Mention in the Senior Category. Of 164 entries, 40 winners were chosen from both junior and senior categories. My prize was a certificate of achievement and two rolls of Kodachrome II film with processing mailers. There were additional congratulations. For He Shall Conquer had been picked to be submitted at the end of March 1964 to the Council on International Non-Theatrical Events (CINE) in its newly-established youth section for possible CINE selection as one of the films to represent the United States at overseas film festivals. Such selection by CINE would be an honor comparable in the sports field to being named to the American Olympic team. CINE would contact me directly in due course regarding this unexpected follow up. My picture would be returned as soon as Kodak made a duplicate of it.

Following on the heels of Mr. Shady's letter, Mr. Keith Pfohl of The Kodak Camera Club in Rochester wrote and requested a duplicate for their use in a course for serious moviemakers. They wanted to incorporate my film into their teaching sessions.

Duplicates? All of my films were original film footage. Really, someone thought enough of my work to include it in teaching how to make good movies and another wanted to preserve it as a library print. And a good thing too! Over time the film original of *For He Shall Conquer* was lost. On a whim in the late 1980s, I wrote to Mr. Ray Shady and asked if the Kodak Company still retained a copy. In Kodak's archives was the duplicate print Kodak made. It was airmailed to me. Without Kodak having made a duplicate of *For He Shall Conquer*, it would have been forever lost!

IAC Convention Chairman, Mr. Roland Beach, wrote to tell me about *For He Shall Conquer* in its annual showing called Movies on a Shoestring. He said that the selection of my film was somewhat random and fortuitous. From the 20 films their IAC judge viewed in the Kodak preliminaries, he proposed mine as representative of what the more capable and serious young filmer could do. The IAC committee approved his recommendation. My film was well received by the Convention group of about 250 people. Some thought the physical violence and antagonism toward the crippled boy was not true to life, or at best, greatly exaggerated. Mr. Beach wrote that he personally believed young people can be more effectively mean to other individuals through attitudes, reactions and remarks. My representation of the entire situation by a physical example was a neat and satisfactory method of setting this theme simply and quickly. He found the "miracle" very real and believable. He encouraged me in continued efforts at moviemaking.

As the person of lower status kow-towing to one's superior, I picked my teachers' brains and used their creative assistance to my own ends. It's called brown-nosing. Mrs. Corneli, impressed with my writing skill, freely offered to help me write a script. Her idea was for a short film about a student writing an English theme. She suggested someone in the English department might purchase it. I knew nothing about why she thought such a script would be bought by another English teacher. I nixed that idea and said I preferred to turn that script into a film myself. Having talked about shooting a new picture and getting nothing off the ground, her script suggestion may have been an ulterior motive to stimulate my creative juices and get me making movies.

I earmarked the Kodachrome II prize for a new picture which almost wasn't made, but more on that later. Shortly after noon on November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated as he rode in a motorcade through Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, Texas. At 12:30 p.m. as President Kennedy was passing the Texas School Book Depository, gunfire suddenly rang out in the plaza. Bullets struck the president's neck and head and he slumped over toward Mrs. Kennedy. It was lunchtime in Stevens Point. I was sitting at my desk, looking through a book, and listening to the radio. Music was interrupted as the local DJ threw to breaking news. The president had been shot. Reacting instinctively like a journalist or a historian, I switched on my tape recorder and pressed the record button. What I was hearing and recording live was unbelievable. Although I had no TV set in my room, I understand that CBS Television interrupted its regular programming for the first time with a Special News Bulletin. Cameras weren't ready for Walter Cronkite as he announced that President Kennedy had been shot. President Kennedy was pronounced dead at 1:00 p.m. Shortly thereafter my tape ran out. (I still have that tape today.) On TV Walter Cronkite announced, "President Kennedy died at 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time." Then he removed his glasses and overcome, appeared lost for words. Walter Cronkite went silent for a lengthy air time. This was the first time a major tragedy had been broadcast live on television. It was television history and I missed seeing it. My ear remained glued to the radio, by 1:30 p.m., police had arrested Lee Harvey Oswald. Everyone in the world was shocked, but I especially remember, regardless of Republican or Democrat loyalty, the bewilderment, the jolt we felt on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Sims.

Camelot ended with a murderous bang. The death of our president was felt by everyone. However dumbstruck with sadness, we felt we wouldn't honor President Kennedy by sitting around and moping. He initiated and supported physical development programs for American youth, encouraged young Americans to develop ourselves. As the youngest elected president, he was our beacon of youthful achievement. We had the words of his inaugural speech ingrained in our minds, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." It seemed only logical that to do nothing achieved nothing. To get busy on something achieved something.

### Chapter 30: Big Efforts, Lost Films

You Just Can't Win Black Lady Futility

y new picture wouldn't require special sets or costumes. Everything about it was accessible. Making it now would ease minds of our collective grief at having lost President Kennedy to an assassin. Conspiracy theories would ensue for the next umpteen years, but my story isn't about conspiracy.

English Literature professor Mrs. Helen Corneli gave me the nub of the story and taught me how to write a motion picture screenplay, what I called 'the script.' Funny thing was... I already knew the story Mrs. Corneli peddled. It was straight out of my own college experience. And it was what Rolf Schuenzel had called realistic. I'd been the studious hardworking bookworm only to, sometimes, end up with a grade below expectation. My roommate and others on the floor goofed off, rushed at the last minute to complete work, and somehow managed to fool their professors into giving them an A or a B. I'd call my new filmic effort *You Just Can't Win*.

I invited Jeff Rodman to play a lazy, boozy, procrastinating freshman. I wasn't type-casting when I asked Jeff. A serious student of Drama, this guy could act. I chose inexperienced Bill Wegener to be Jeff's opposite, the studious bookworm. Bill was a fine representative of me as I expected my parents pictured me as a first year college student. The entire film is set in my dorm room. Bill is seen first at his desk thumbing through pages of large books without pictures. He's researching. Even though it's broad daylight, his roommate is fast asleep. Intercutting back and forth between the two boys, we see their contrasting personalities and behavior. Bill is bookishly sweat and toil. Self-absorbed with his hangover and not giving two hoots, Jeff is the epitome of scratch my ass and call me Charlie. Bill reads. Jeff yawns. Bill jots notes. Jeff farts. Bill cross-references. Jeff lies back on his pillow contemplating the ceiling. Bill types. Jeff stumbles into his chair, stares at a blank paper on the desk, takes pencil in hand, and falls asleep, his head clunking onto the desktop. Bill slides the paper out of his typewriter and adds the page to several others. As he paper clips his research paper, the picture Fades Out.

Fade In and we see a changed Jeff. He's bubbly, energetic, groomed to within an inch of spic and span. The expression on Bill's face resembles that of Charlie Chaplin's hungry, empty-pocketed tramp staring forlorn into a bakery window. Jeff's asks via enthusiastic pantomime what grade Bill earned. Bill displays the typed title page with a large handwritten red  $\underline{F}$ . Jeff is amused, grins like a Cheshire Cat and proudly shows his paper marked with a big blue  $\underline{A}$ . Bill frowns and mouths, "You just can't win." The picture ends.

The picture was shot over two days with a week in between. Sometime during the week Bill had his hair cut. I'd never thought to tell him not to cut his hair as I'd been instructed whenever I was in a play. Under lights too much scalp shows. On film it can cause problems with continuity. Sure enough, under my lights Bill's trimmed hair looked like a military short, back and sides. Shooting a few scenes to allow for smooth intercutting, I knew Bill's hair trim would stand out... and it did. I couldn't wait a month or more for his hair to grow back. I shot and used the scenes anyway and hoped nobody would notice.

I edited the film at home over Christmas vacation and sent it to Chicago for CACCA's One Reel Competition, the same contest where *Sanguinary Mortem* had won a First. I wondered if that win was

a first-time-at-bat lucky fluke. Or was I really good enough with my camera to hit a second home run? I needn't have worried. *You Just Can't Win* did just the opposite of what its title stated. It won! I picked up a consecutive First in January 1964's One Reel Competition. Today, unfortunately, *You Just Can't Win* is a lost film.

On Saturday night, February 15, the Milwaukee Movie Makers conducted its annual competition. Filled with confidence I entered *For He Shall Conquer*.

It's time I said something about judging sheets. Movie clubs include categories which bind one up like constipation. There's no room for movement. The MMM rated entries in four major categories: Cinematography, Technical Achievement, Sound and Titles, and Achievement. Each category was further broken into sub-categories. Cinematography, for example, included (a) Exposure & Lighting, (b) Focus, Camera Steadiness & Movement, (c) Composition & Camera Angles, and (d) Close-Ups & Special Effects (such as Dissolves, Fades, Wipes, etc.) Each sub-category had five boxes listed Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, and Excellent. Each box had a number value from lowest of 0 to highest in doubled increments to 8; as in 0, 2,4,6,8. Camera Steadiness & Movement was always going to be questionable. Suppose a filmmaker chose to break one of the cardinal rules for effect. One of the cardinal rules was that every shot should be rock steady. In other words, the camera should always be mounted on a tripod. Remember, I did a Point of View shot when Jack fell down the stairs. The camera was hand-held and deliberately waved around resulting in a shot of blurred movement. Putting Achievement aside and taking the shot out of context, at least one judge would mark low because Camera Steadiness & Movement amounted to a blur.

In the Sound and Titles category, there was a sub-category called Narration: Voice, Delivery, Informative, and Synchronization. I didn't make stories requiring narration. Imagine receiving a mark of Good, 4, for something which didn't exist, or Poor, a big fat zero, because none was used. Oh, yes, although making no sense and having nothing to back its use, it happened. Imagine losing a competition minus those important 4 points because my film hadn't used narration!

One category did have the potential for impartiality. It was Achievement. Sub-categories included (a) Achievement of Purpose (Story, Exposition, Documentary, and Travelog), (b) Originality of Idea, and (c) Overall Impression. The number of each box was reduced. Poor was still a zero. Fair earned 1 and Excellent was a 4. Some judges could completely miss the point and interpret it all to mean, "Did you like the film?" If they answered "No", there'd be a resultant cascade of zeroes and ones scored in the sub-categories' boxes.

I stayed in Stevens Point the Saturday night of the MMM contest. I organized the guys on the floor and we made a movie in one night. Anyone who wanted to participate could, playing either principal actors or onlookers. The film was *Black Lady*. Just about everyone on the floor knew the game of Hearts and we played for pocket money. The card game is designed for four, but five or six can also play. The object of the game is to follow suit with the high card of that suit taking the trick. Players try avoiding taking hearts, each worth one point each. If a player can't follow suit, they can dump a heart on a trick or sluff off another suit of high value like an ace, king, or queen. The Queen of Spades is also known as the Black Lady and she's worth 13 big bad points. Hearts cannot be led until they've been broken, that is, thrown into a previous trick by a player unable to follow suit. When a player takes all of the hearts and the Queen of Spades, it's called Running or Shooting the Moon and all opponents get a whopping 26 points each. Breaking or equaling 100 points ends the game. The player with the lowest score wins. Since we played for money, 1 point equaling 1¢, losers paid the difference between their score and the winner's score. When I was hard up for some cash, and remember a dollar went a long way in 1964, I'd get into a Hearts game, Shoot the Moon four times and collect my winnings.

No doubt influenced by the television series of unrelated weekly stories *The Twilight Zone*, the story in *Black Lady* was simple. Four guys play Hearts. Others look on. One overly confident player loses heavily after collecting the Black Lady over several hands. He gets revenge. He uses an axe and chops the winner to death. Then he's seen in his bed suddenly waking and sitting up. He checks the

recreation room where Hearts had been played. It's empty. In his room as he puts on his red checked flannel shirt, an axe falls out of the closet. He picks it up. The axe head is covered in sticky blood. How the heck did that get there? And the film ends.

The film wasn't the provocatively unsatisfying "It was all a dream." The axe slaying following a card game in a college dormitory is portrayed as real or imagined. The viewer is left to decide whether the loser actually killed the winner or dreamt that he did.

Other than Dan Sheier in his big black beard looking every bit a frightening card player taking time out from lumberjacking, Nigerian Umen Bassi Jacob Umen - just plain Jacob to us - as a timid player, and David Ludwig who had exceptional talent for drawing and artwork, I don't remember who else was in the cast. Mr. Paul Tarabek of the Music department devised and played weird original music to accompany the film. It was fun for everyone involved, especially setting up a shot of the butchered card player lying across the card table covered in stage blood, wearing torn clothes and posing like he'd been hacked to death. But it wasn't so much fun swabbing the floor and tidying the room to look as spotless as when we started. *Black Lady* today is, unfortunately, another of my lost films, but Mr. Tarabeck's original soundtrack is still extant separated from the film on magnetic reel to reel tape.

The 1964 Milwaukee Movie Makers club winners were announced at its annual awards banquet on March 14. Again Ralph Zautke won First Place in the 8mm section. His film was *The Last Man*. Effectively shot in black & white, it told the familiar science-fiction story of a plague having devastated the world with only one man left alive. Only guessing, but it is possible Ralph Zautke had gone to the movies, saw Vincent Price in *The Last Man on Earth*, and, presto, his new idea for a film. Zautke shot street scenes of downtown Milwaukee just at sunrise and before traffic filled streets and pedestrians the sidewalks. I was again relegated into Second Place, this time with *For He Shall Conquer*. Different thematic films made last year, but with the same disappointing outcome.

Venue for the Milwaukee Movie Makers 21<sup>st</sup> Film Festival was changed from the free Shorewood Auditorium to the costly theatrette in the War Memorial Center. For the first time in the club's existence, an admission price of \$1.00 was charged. The first half of the program was screening 8mm films while the second half was all 16mm. For He Shall Conquer opened the festival and my film was received well. After intermission Frank Kreznar's award winner opened the second half of the show. Frank and his family travelled. He may never have seen anything on his trips except what he focused upon through his camera's viewfinder. Kreznar only ever shot travel movies. In amateur movie parlance, that always translated to glorified home movie for me. You needed to be a solver of cryptic crosswords to figure out the meaning of his film's title, TM ABC, and even then clues were vague. I asked Frank what his film title meant. He answered with a tone of voice which suggested, "What? Are you thick or something?" TM ABC = To Mexico Air Bus Car. Yeah, like it was supposed to be as plain as the nose on mine and everyone else's face!

After a passage of silence and time, Dick Wesell and I were back on speaking terms, got together and bantered ideas for a film to make over Easter vacation. Quietly and to myself, I promised, cross my heart and hope to die with a double, double, toil and trouble pinkie swear, yeah, it got that serious – never, never ever to play another practical joke on Wesell. Several months ago, my Christmas present was William Shirer's thick tome *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. According to my mother, it's the only book she actually saw me read from cover to cover, and it's over 1000 pages. Reading this history of Hitler's Germany encouraged me to consider re-making *The Man with the Broken Fingers*.

With Jack Roper again in the lead, I'd ask members of the Milwaukee Movie Makers to play Nazis. I'd call the picture *Ghetto Boy*. We'd shoot it over the Easter break. Wesell introduced me to his history teacher, Mr. Kurt Schmeller. He was an authority on German history and we felt he could help us with the film's authenticity. Mr. Schmeller's best recommendation was to dress all of the characters in ordinary clothes. Ordinary-looking people doing inordinate things would work effectively on an audience. As we discussed the story, Mr. Schmeller showed a genuine interest in my hobby and asked lots of questions. I observed him taking notes when I told him about my award-winning films. He asked if I'd be willing to show two of my best films to school bigwigs including

the president, the director of the Student Union, and heads of the Drama, Speech, and History departments. This was a first for Mr. Schmeller, meeting a student who made movies. He said it was so rare the college got a student that did something interesting; when that rare one comes along, he felt it should be commended.

Our meeting led to the screening for the bigwigs on Wednesday, March 4, 1964 and it was received well. My eight film program was presented by the Union Board Cultural Committee Tuesday night, April 14. There was no admission fee and everyone was invited. I was well on the road to establishing myself in the college community and securely climbing the ladder of notoriety.

By the time Easter rolled around, *Ghetto Boy* as a subject for a new motion picture was dead and buried. Settings, mainly, were as difficult to mount on film as when I considered filming *Go, Regardless*. Story elements of *Ghetto Boy* were similarly inaccessible and insurmountable.

News about a war in Vietnam was getting some airplay on radio and television. United States advisors were militarily involved in assisting the South Vietnamese regime in strategies to combat insurgency from the communist North. There were speeches and debates in college about the rights and wrongs of this war and wars in general. If I found an idea in current news I could experiment and comment upon something political.

There was a One-Reel competition in Chicago, but it was different from all other One-Reel contests. The challenge presented was unique. The whole film had to be shot in sequence. The first thing shot was the opening titles and the last thing shot had to be an End title. All of the editing of action in between the opening and closing titles had to be accomplished in the camera. Timing was essential. Any mistakes made stayed in the film, open for everyone in an audience to see. Using scissors wasn't permitted to physically cut a film and re-attach segments with splicing cement or tape. The only splice allowed in Standard 8mm film was the join of the two split 25 foot halves. The running time of the competition film was the running time of one roll of film, approximately 3 minutes.

I'd recently seen and been impressed with clay animation from New Zealand and three-dimensional objects animated in films originating in Czechoslovakia. It seemed to me that animation was a safe method for controlling everything that ended up on film. There'd be no live actors to goof up action. Although my camera had no facility for filming one frame at a time, I thought I'd still make an attempt at animating objects. I could simply flick the trigger. One, maybe two frames at most would be exposed and move through the gate. The method wasn't as precise or reliable as dedicated single frame, but I was assured shooting at least two frames per movement of inanimate object would ensure action looked smooth upon projection. As my film would be projected at 18 frames per second, for every one second of film, 18 frames of "action" had to be filmed. That meant that the basic number of object movement and trigger flicks amounted to not less than nine for one second of screen time. For smoothest action, movement of an object rarely exceeded half to one inch. Animators using 24 fps had to expose 24 frames to get one second of action.

My comment on current events was a film loaded with symbolism called *Futility* and it dealt with themes of conformity, individualism, reconciliation and the futility of war. I made the film in the basement of our family home during the end of March Easter vacation. My Kodak camera was mounted on a tripod, pointed downward, and made immovable. 500 watt floodlights on stands were set either side of the camera and also aimed downward. On the floor beneath the camera I placed a large square of felt material. Objects cut from colored felt included triangles and circles and represented opposing sides. Disagreement, fighting, destruction, truce, was followed by more disagreement, more fighting, more destruction and so forth. It was a regimen of standing up and flicking the camera trigger. Bend at the knees and move one, two or more objects half an inch. Stand up and flick the trigger. Sweat under the lights and wipe a forehead. Bend down to move an object or two half an inch and so on, and on, and on....

Time disappears while your brain and patience is tested. Knees and the lower back become strained. Animation is a tedious process. It took me two full days of eye-numbing, knee-cracking

concentration to shoot. I remember sitting cross-legged on the floor after filming the End title, tongue pressed against the back of my bottom row of teeth, exhaling a great puff of air through slightly parted lips, and quietly saying, "Thank Christ that's over. I hate it."

After so much uncomfortable toil, and subsequent reference to calling it "my intellectual film", I've nothing to show of *Futility*. Like the other two titles in this chapter *Futility* is a lost film.

Back to the reality of being a college freshman, Modern European History included whatever happened after King John of England signed the Magna Charta in 1215. It struck me as unusual that events happening over 600 years ago were considered modern. The class always met at 1:00 p.m. just after I'd eaten lunch. Any day, any time the hands of any clock tick-tocked near to 2:00 p.m. my body clock wound down. Our professor, his framed Ph.D and displayed in class, lectured from his handwritten notes and never deviated from his text. His reading style sounded like a Scottish bagpipe's monotonous drone. Rarely raising his head from his text to make eye contact with the class, inflection absent; his voice hummed on and on. He never paused to ask a question, never checked if we were tuned in or tuned out. He expected us to scrupulously take notes, study those notes, master the material, and pass his tests. We hadn't been assigned a book to supplement his class time droning, only ever a recommendation to use the school's library.

Of what I comprehended I scrawled notes, except, that is, when I nodded off. Busy mornings and soothing lunches invariably led to siesta. I must have been the picture of insult with my head caressed against my shoulder or hanging back off my neck, mouth agape, and making a sound of aspirated air escaping a gas pipe. Although I passed every test imposed by my professor and passed the final exam, all marked with low  $\underline{C}$ s and  $\underline{D}$ s, my grade final was an  $\underline{F}$ . Even with my meager understanding of mathematics, I know that adding together  $\underline{C}$ s and  $\underline{D}$ s doesn't average to an  $\underline{F}$ . Now I felt insulted.

I went to the dean to explain and complain. I didn't hedge on truthfully telling him I had fallen asleep numerous times, BUT that I passed all tests and the final exam. The dean was amused. Then he lost his quirky smile, glared at me, and asked one question, "What year level are you?" After informing the dean I was a freshman, he dismissed me with a wave of the back of his hand, and what passed for his decision, "Then he can do with you what he wants."

I tell that story because it was the one and only time in my life I failed an academic subject. I would have accepted the  $\underline{F}$  without complaint had I failed the lettered professor's tests or failed the final exam. The only reason I was marked an  $\underline{F}$  was because our prof was personally miffed by my falling asleep as he painfully blathered, nay, read his notes, what came across no further than for his amusement only, and never to genuinely teach the class. I'm sure he never comprehended as he stood before us and lectured in his white noise-toned voice that he was nothing short of boring. When my natural physical reaction overtly trumped what we would normally call good manners, he couldn't handle my demonstration of ennui and punished me. My Modern History dull-beyond-belief feudal lord allowed no appeal

The 17<sup>th</sup> annual Central High Thespian Society's installation of members was staged mid-May at McCarty Park. Dick Wesell and I were invited as alumni guests. It wasn't so much a surprise as a delight being welcomed by Troop 838's president. "Hey, Joe College," he called, his hand outstretched in friendship. It was Robert Burgermeister. Son-of-a-gun, he coveted that office and he made it. Anyone in high school with whom I'd acted or sung with me hadn't kept in touch. Still, faces and names were familiar. There was Junior Miss West Allis Ginny Meloche. Seeing how pretty she was, it puzzled me further why she had preferred to play a male Nazi soldier instead of a French maid when we'd made *From the Powers of Darkness*. Entertaining us with melody was a quartet consisting of Dick Mayhew, Dave Ellington, Don Hugdahl, and... Bob Burgermeister. How about that? He'd followed in my footsteps and joined the singers, those wonderful cast members from our glorious one-nighter *Down River*. I was very pleased when, as had I, Bob was presented with a Best Thespian Award.

# Chapter 31: Camp Richards

ppermost in Dad's mind for summer vacation was my getting a job. He asked what I might be interested in doing and, in the same breath, recommended I make an appointment to see the father of one of my high school classmates. Mr. Kojis worked in employment for the City of West Allis. He had access to any number of short term jobs which existed only over summer vacation. I expected to meet a man in a suit. I was stunned to meet a physically fit man wearing gym shorts, T-shirt and, dangling from his neck, a referee's whistle on a cord. During the interview it was pointed out first by Mr. Kojis that I should have been looking for summer work last spring as most of the really good positions had already been filled. A few jobs were unfilled, most requiring skills I didn't possess. Scanning my résumé he noted my high school membership in the Future Teachers of America. Mr. Kojis looked up from my papers and asked, "You still interested in becoming a teacher?" I said I was. Training its students to become good teachers was just one of the attractions for my having chosen Stevens Point State College. "Then I think I have the perfect job for you in East Troy. You ever been to summer camp?" Mr. Kojis said it was for boys and run by the Catholic Society of the Divine Word. Most of its staff were gleaned from seminaries and padded out with laypeople. "They'll determine what you'll actually do in the camp. The fact you like kids, want to teach them, and are Catholic is qualification enough." Mr. Kojis' job at the West Allis Recreational Center was similar to that of a casting agent. He chose who he felt was right for the role and sent that candidate to a director who, in turn, conducted an interview and figured out where the person best fit.

Camp Richards was on Seminary Road in East Troy, 30 miles southeast of Milwaukee, on Lake Beulah. Buildings converted in 1937 for use as a minor high school for seminarians were used by the Society as residences for the summer camp which helped raise money for the support of the school. Constructed specifically for the camp was a large assembly hall, fair use old postcard pictured above, providing both storage and recreational space, and a large lakeshore boathouse. There were other camps for boys and girls set up all around Lake Beulah. A large marsh along the channel linking the upper and lower lakes provided important breeding areas for fish and waterfowl, a great area for children to explore.

Dad drove me to East Troy to meet and be interviewed by the camp's director, Rev. Bill Shea, S.V.D. Bespectacled and permanently wearing a frown, he was a large, intimidating presence in a tight-fitting cassock with open gaps between fastened buttons. His ample seat overflowed in a squeaky wood and metal swivel chair set behind an imposing worse-for-wear wooden desk. Firing questions like a popgun in a fairgrounds shooting gallery, he went straight to the point. "Can you fire a rifle?" "Can you shoot a bow and arrow?" "Do you swim?" "Do you ride a horse?" "Can you paddle a canoe?" My honest replies consisted of "No", "Sort of", and "I've never had the chance." Reverend Shea looked at me rather flummoxed and probably thought to himself, "Why in the hell did Kojis send this joker to me?" If that was in his mind, his next question confirmed it. "So, then, what *do* you do?"

All I had to offer was that I studied Drama in high school and college. I liked kids and I hoped to be a teacher. He didn't look impressed. "So you're an actor?" "OK." "Can you play piano?" "Guitar?" "Ukulele?" "No?" Questions poured out of his mouth like milk from a tipped pitcher. I was barely given an n<sup>th</sup> of a second to answer. "Well then, how about singing?" "Can you organize and play games?" "Do you know how to thread beads?" "Can you paint."

Now we were getting into territory I knew and understood. I told him about the plays, choir, forensics, art classes, and my movie making. "OK," Rev. Shea said, "You're the entertainment man.

I'm putting you in charge of organizing playgroups and, especially on rainy days, you're all it. If you aren't actually leading a play session, you can help out in Arts and Crafts until you learn how to use a rifle, bow and arrow, and get yourself galloping on a horse. And believe me, I want you to be able to do those things if you're going to last around here." I was hired... on a temporary basis. If I worked out all right in the first two weeks, I'd be a member of staff for the summer.

Dad shook my hand, wished me luck, wagged a commanding index finger, and drove home. Rev. Shea ushered me into a vast, dimly-lit, high-ceilinged dormitory where he assigned me a bed and a storage drawer. I spent the afternoon alone exploring the auditorium's playgroup storage room. There didn't appear to be much storage, more like things thrown in and forgotten about since summer 1963. Bedroom-sized, it was as chock-full and disorganized as a hoarder's paradise. I found unsealed boxes of board games, sporting gear, outdoor activity witches' hats, hurdles, and oddments which could be adapted for indoor rainy day use. There were tied and tangled bits and pieces of blue, red, green, yellow and plain ropes, strings, chains. Plain colored cotton and shiny satin costume tops, bottoms and accessories were intermixed with oddball props and knickety-knackety whatnot. What was I ever going to do with all this junk? Would it take the first couple of weeks just to sort through the pile?

I felt uneasy and lacked confidence my first night at Camp Richards. Rev. Shea, whom I wasn't allowed to call by his first name Bill, was always addressed as Reverend Shea. In the staff refectory he brought me a plate of warmed food and a glass of milk. I ate alone, each scrape of my fork against the plate resounding off bare walls and the empty wooden chairs and tables. I had sole use of the communal toilets, urinals, and showers. With rows of empty beds, mathematically arranged and measurably set across the dormitory's vast unpolished wooden floor, that first night in one single bed I was that great space's lone occupant. Hearing the night wind lightly whistle through cracks in that spooky chamber, I felt like I was the forsaken soul starring in a twisted Edgar Allen Poe ghost story or a lonesome extra in an el-cheapo William Castle horror movie.

The rest of the staff arrived mid-morning as passengers on a yellow school bus or in their own cars. They'd mostly been recruited from seminaries all over the United States and as far away as Ireland. Many were already acquainted with one another through seminary training or having previously worked at the camp. In 1964 the camp ran four sessions of two weeks each over the summer months from late June through August. We faced introduction to life at Camp Richards, its rules of do this and don't do that, and how we were expected to conduct ourselves around the boys. We were indoctrinated to set ourselves up as good Christian examples for boys to emulate. We were expected to adhere to specified religious practices. Whether morning, afternoon or evening, we needed to be visible in chapel for Mass or services including Benediction, recitation of the Rosary or Evensong. Overt participation in the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion was strongly encouraged. Finally, assignments to essential duties were announced. Experts in their fields were put in charge of boats, horses, rifles, archery, camping, craft, and the waterfront which included boats, canoes and swimming. I was introduced as head of entertainment. Most looked at me in bemused wonder, as if it was a position they'd not heard of last season. What the heck, they may have mulled, did my job entail? Twenty capable young men were named group counselors for campers ranging in age from 9 to 16. Six more were assigned groups of Teenie Weenies, youngsters 6 to 8 years old. Another six were scheduled as jumpers. Some rather grim faces formed. They were substitutes who took over a group when the counselor was allocated his day off. Still others were involved in administration, overseeing religious duties, or working with the only two female staff employed as cooks in the kitchen. Groups were rotated to work the mess. They'd set long refectory tables. Breakfast, lunch and dinner shifts they'd deliver serving bowls and platters of food. After each meal tables were cleared of leftovers, dirty dishes, bowls, platters and cutlery. Even the Teenie Weenies got their chance to be busboys.

Boys came to Camp Richards from all over the United States, some from big cities, others from small never-heard-of-it places in the Midwest. Many well-off families sent their boys, Illinois possibly providing the highest enrolment. Mater and Pater gallivanted off to the capitols of Europe, the north

of Africa, to Japan or Hawaii and dumped their charges into summer camp, sometimes for the duration of the season. It was inevitable there'd be boys who felt abandoned, resentful, even angry. The staff was made aware and prepared for the unavoidable; we'd have to deal with possible unsociable, destructive and violent behavior. We'd have the odd mild sociopath, the selfishly jealous, the sissy, the cry-baby, the parasite, the clinger, the bed-wetter, you name it. Camp Richards could be a zoo, a freak show, the whole circus and a picking ground for the followers of Dr. Freud's research all at the same time.

Most boys, on second thought, arrived happy and filled with enthusiasm. They were glad to be in summer camp away from home and parents and in the company of other normal, adventurous, knockabout fun-loving boys. They came from homes where parents must have worked hard and set money aside in the sugar bowl for their son's two week vacation. "Send us a boy and we'll give you back a cowboy." In more than one American coming-of-age movie, it was the motto displayed in wood-burnt letters on the summer camp's arched gateway. If such written or unwritten motto existed at Camp Richards we weren't aware of one.

The camp schedule was organized just like a school curriculum. Every group had an assigned number from 1 to 20. No group was named for an American Indian tribe, or a wild animal, or after famous places or people. Then again, dormitories and off-shoot sleeping rooms were named for Wisconsin Indian tribes like Fox, Potawatomi and Sauk. Salt tablets were administered at breakfast to prevent dehydration and cramps in the hot sun. Groups attended activities for an hour and then moved on. For example, Group 1 might start with archery, then ride a horse, next play a baseball game against Group 4, do some quiet time craft, and finish with a bracing swim in beautiful Lake Beulah. At least the weekly schedule didn't have the same activity at the same time Sunday through to Saturday. It was intended that every day felt fresh. Next day Group 1 might do rifles followed by a long hike collecting flora, then paddling a canoe or oaring a rowboat, and playing games organized by me. Half an hour siesta was scheduled every day about 2:30 p.m. Nap time. I'm sure it was designed mainly for counselors to catch their collective breaths. Most boys wrote letters home during siesta. Some actually dozed off.

Rainy days I'd set up indoor games. Any other time I might occasionally be invited to organize games outdoors. It might be tug-o-war, hence the ropes of different colors. A bunch of costumes and props would be presented to groups and they'd avidly become involved in making up their own funny and adventurous skits, maybe re-enact well-known stories about the Three Bears, Jack and the Beanstalk, or George Washington crossing the Delaware. Obstacle courses were always popular, challenging and fun. I always enjoyed being creative setting up obstacles in a course. Pitting one group against another always fired up the boys' combatant skills and got the testosterone flowing. Occasionally one group challenged another and, to keep it simple, I conducted picnic games like egg and spoon races, three-legged races, and sack racing. The director highly approved of the games and activities which didn't result in black eyes, bruising or broken arms. I encouraged cooperation and teamwork, having to work and play well with others in playtime and contests to enhance skills. Administration re-christened me on the schedule with a new name which suggested I was going to be seen as A-OK in the kids' eyes. My happy demeanor earned me the nickname Laughing Larry.

Although I enjoyed being known as the entertainment man, it had one disadvantage. Rarely did I get to know any of the kids. I was just the guy who was expected to be lots of fun, who showed up every now and again to do something under the watchful eye of the group's faithful counselor. Group counselors were treated by their charges like big brothers, like men who could tease and be teased, like learned men who had all the answers to everything; in other words, counselors were heroes like Superman, Batman and a teddy bear all rolled into one. Having once acted inanely toward my brother and taking the right steps to mend my ways, counselor was the summer camp position to which I aspired.

Groups spent at least one night away from the dorms in sleeping bags under the stars. Occasionally the entertainment man was invited to attend. I'd be driven by car to the campsite. Once in a while I

took along a sleeping bag and stayed: other times I wasn't always required to overnight. The car would return later to take me back to camp and the bug-free comfort of my own dormitory cot. If I went in a horse drawn hay cart, I would stay overnight and organize a hayride sing-a-long. I'd join in the rough and tumble games of tag, push and grab or "Capture the Flag" when some rules actually applied. Activities were scheduled to include running, jumping and climbing, anything to tire the boys and make them sleepy and quiet. Following a meal cooked over flame and embers, I'd become the avuncular storyteller as everyone settled around the campfire.

I was invited by Ed Andres to tell a story to his group of Teenie Weenies. They asked for a really, really scary ghost story. The youngsters were especially attentive, impressionable, and receptive. I never read from a book. I looked at each and every kid and invented a different voice for each character. The story was one of those hoary, old, well-trotted out campfire tales about revenge. Some pirate's hand is cut off and the one responsible for slashing it is chased by the severed hand. It must have been really, really scary for 7 year old Mikey. He had been sitting cross-legged beside me and, as my story grew darker and scarier, like a fiddler crab the kid sidled closer. Without missing a beat of the tale, the boy gently inched his way until his whole body was cozied in my lap. Fully engaged in my own dramatic storytelling, he'd moved so unobtrusively I was practically unawares of his presence. The climax of the story reached fever pitch as fingers of the pirate's hand moved spider-like toward its prey. "And then it grabbed him around the neck!" Mike had buried his face in my chest and he clung to my neck in a big hug. My vocal gymnastics had transfixed each and every kid. Wide-eyed, they gasped. Some squealed in delight. I felt a warm rush of pleasure. And then I just felt wet. In fear, in awe, or maybe just because he was a known bed-wetter, little Mikey had let loose and peed himself... in my lap.

You'd think that Mike's embarrassment and my reaction of "Sheesh! Why me?" would have been the end. It was just the beginning of several years of post-camp contact, as if wetting himself in my lap had been like a doggy spraying urine to mark its territory. He liked coming to me and talking about whatever was on his mind. I must have been his good listener. Sometimes, just for a joke, he'd ask to sit in my lap promising not to pee. We'd laugh, but he didn't sit in my lap. After Mike finished the camp's first two week session, we never saw each other again. He went home to his parents and older brother in Iowa, but he didn't forget me. He wrote letters addressed to Laughing Larry to camp and later to my college mailbox. He told me about his Mom and Dad intending to separate and then not going through with it. He claimed it was because I had said I would pray for him and his parents. He wrote about school, about plans to move to Chicago, and then moving house only a few blocks away. Mike sent school pictures so I'd see how much he'd changed. From the shrimp of a kid I knew at camp, he grew taller than 6 feet, played basketball, and kept in touch for the next decade or so. It's amazing the impression made when you think you've done next to nothing except to be there. And therein may have been the reason, the answer. When Mike needed me, I was there.

Camping skills which Rev. Shea required of me didn't fall the way of neglect. I intended staying on at Camp Richards the whole summer. I was least keen on shooting the rifles. I was afraid of putting a bullet in my foot. Hairy-chested and with pheromones only a moose could find alluring, the camp's expert rifleman was nicknamed "Homer." Most of us ended up with nicknames. "Homer" talked down to me and treated me like a scaredy cat. With the Second Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing every American's right to bear arms, I guess my lack of gun loving put me into his "Oh, for crying out loud – what's wrong with you" basket. Just enough time was spent in the cartridge loading company of oafish "Homer" in the red checked flannel shirt. I learned to safely handle, load and fire a .22 and, somewhere along the line, was lucky to hit a paper target. I acquired minimum skill, sufficient to passably demonstrate I could do the activity only if and when and absolutely required.

Archery instructor Dave "Robin Hood" Schmidt and I jelled. He was willing to teach me how to fire a fletched shaft and simultaneously enjoy a laugh at my expense. My propensity was to handle the stiffly stringed instrument with two left hands. Dave displayed patience with my lack of dexterity, giggling more to himself than at me when the arrow slipped from the string or drooped down like a

flaccid noodle when I thought I had its notched nub firmly gripped between my fingers. Even after his cautioning my awkward grip and stance, unintended red bowstring marks showed up on my inner left forearm and stung like the touch of jellyfish tentacles. With a little more practice and a little less incompetence I'd stop hurting myself every time I released an arrow. I could never rival my boyhood hero's prowess with the bow and arrow in *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1939), but I'd appear capable fronting a group of boys.

I became fast friends with the Horse Apple Gang. We just clicked. Nicknames may have evolved from their chosen headwear. "Jersey" Jim Dillamon wore a battered black cowboy hat. John "Johnny Reb" Duffy wore a gray Confederate army cap. Mike "Alfarabi" Conrad earned the Arabian handle for his wearing a striped towel and elastic headband. Possibly designed to clear their heads of administrative iron-handedness, it was their own free choice to go horse riding just some evenings following dinner and chapel. They invited me to join their sunset canters.

Having been one half of an equine costume on stage for some skit or other, I was aware of which was the front end of a horse from its back end. Facing the real animal was something else again. For one, the horse's legs made it stand much higher than I'd ever expected. Given young campers would ride horses, most hay-munchers in the stable were deemed gentle. Jim and John handed me a docile bit-reining pinto, a horse which responded to the reins being pulled left to go left and right to go right. Other horses respond to neck reining, meaning a lean of the rein against the right side of the horse's neck makes it go left and so forth.

The Horse Apple Gang taught me how to talk to and approach the animal from the front, how to put on its blanket and saddle, how to make the horse "suck it in" so the saddle's cinch could be tightened, and how to put the ball of my foot into the stirrup, grasp the saddle horn, swing my right leg up and across the spine of the beast and mount. He reared his head. His tail swished. Astride its back, I learned to steer, how to use my heels to find the horse's clutch and accelerate, and how to slow and stop by pulling back on the reins. I was encouraged to sit back in the western saddle and enjoy the horse's walk.

Walking horses, that's when we talked; we complained about other staff and administrators, and shared funny stories about the kids. My insistence on a fast pace the first evening was rebuked with a plodding gait. I heard the monotonous clip-clop of shod hooves on pummeled clay. I experienced the trot and bounced up and down in the saddle like a Mexican jumping bean. I was unceremoniously launched upward. Up-ended I careered awkwardly out of the saddle and fell ass over teakettle into a tussock. My experienced saddle tramps couldn't control their laughter as they encouraged a bruised ego - me - to remount and trot again... but... they taught me to bend my knees and lean forward so I wasn't sitting like a dead weight on the oat bagger's back. I didn't flop out of the saddle again.

Ever notice in Western movies how a cowpoke's legs often appear shaped like a wish-bone and he waddles like a duck when he walks? The bow shape can be accentuated by the cowboy's wearing of chaps, especially those shaggy sheep wool leggings favored by cowboy stars' sidekicks. Doctors might suggest sitting in the saddle astride the horse's girth over long periods of time turn cowboys' legs bow-legged. A more likely diagnosis is something called saddle sores. The cheeks of the cowboy's rump rub and chafe and red sores form. For the novice rider, saddle sores, or "saddle cherries" as Dillamon, Duffy and Conrad called them, are a painful reality. Not only will they look like bloodshot eyes either side the crack of your ass, overdoing it in the saddle they'll actually bleed. Saddle sore abrasions dry and tighten and form scabs as they heal. Generous application of antiseptic cream is inevitable and a wish-boned walk is unavoidable. Funny thing, isn't it, how everyone knows you're learning to ride a horse when your legs look like L'Arc de Triomphe and you shuffle like an old codger with damaged arthritic knees and sciatica. Through time and saddle weary experience a cowboy eventually develops a leather ass. I enjoyed growing into mine. There was plenty of time too.

Rev. Shea congratulated me as he approved of my skills development, all those physical activities I'd answered "No" to in the job interview. I was now guaranteed a place in Camp Richards for the duration of the summer.

I was re-assigned for the second and third sessions as a jumper. On the surface it seemed a simple enough job. Take over a group when their beloved counselor was lucky enough to get a day off. Most camp staff despised jumper work. It was survival without substantial reward. It taxed temper and patience. Everyone knew that standing in for someone else meant only that – standing in. You are used and you are just as quickly discarded. The job had little, if any, power. If there is any clout, it can be as temporary as the blink of light from the rear end of a firefly. Some in every group saw the substitute as unnecessary, an unwanted blow-in to be used as their personal physical and verbal punching bag. Oh, yeah, there were seemingly harmless, innocent-looking boys who suddenly lashed out without provocation. If there was anything rotten in a child's character, it was dredged up and surfaced for the substitute. Kids quickly complained, developed selective hearing or refused to participate because they knew they could get away with it. The jumper's someone easily disobeyed without lasting negative consequence. At the end of the day the jumper can be rinsed away and forgotten like dirt from their soiled hands.

Administration looked upon most misbehavior as just boys being boys. The only times consequence had teeth was when boys openly flaunted camp rules forbidding drinking, smoking, theft, serious property damage, and assault causing actual bodily harm. I can recall only one instance of three older boys caught and cautioned for drinking and smoking in the ground's hidden, off-limits-to-campers grotto. It was a place used by some staff as a once-in-a-great-while retreat for a sneaky smoke or to sip a borrowed bottle of Budweiser. No one ever prayed there. Night, thinking they were out of sight and earshot and when staff was known to be occupied recreationally, the naughty boys forgot that smoke travels and alcohol loosens tongues. Wafting tobacco and loud voices caught them out. Repeatedly warned and failing to amend their behavior, they continued invading the grotto to break the rules. They were picked out as bad apples at the bottom of the Camp Richards barrel and shipped home.

Boys being boys, particularly teenagers seemingly perplexed and overwhelmed with the physical changes brought on by puberty, were more than apt to engage in secret activity which surely suggested they'd all be going blind. Priests and brothers of the Society of the Divine Word, almost needless to say, strongly disapproved. We staff had been firmly directed to turn in those "dirty, DIRTY" boys if we suspected what they were getting up to, or when we actually caught them in the act. The SVDs would give them a "talk", get them briskly bouncing a basketball for hours, and make them take cold showers so their souls would be saved from the flames of eternal damnation. I think only some SVDs genuinely believed boys discovering their own bodies actually committed mortal sin. I was aware once of a crying kid dragged into the director's office and overhearing some of the so-called "talk". Talk? Crap. It was loss of control yelling. The volume needle reached into distort as the boy's ears were vocally boxed off. Everything I shouldn't have overheard sounded negative, like struggling with puberty on its own wasn't enough of a challenge. They seemed to expect every boy to ignore what was happening to them. Last thing any kid needed was to be caught out and yammered at because his body was changing and he was figuring out how all his new bits worked. Leave it to men of the cloth to make a dung hill out of one horse apple.

Still, try putting a cookie on a plate and tell the kid not to eat it. It will taste so much better when the kid wasn't caught with the cookie in his hand. The greatest reward and feeling of accomplishment can result from taking the risk when told not to and getting away with it. In those darkly ample lusty spaces of the shared dormitories, teenage hormones raced. Male pheromones were mixed with sulphurous farts. Boys assuredly thinking everyone around them had fallen asleep took the risk beneath their sheets more often than you'd ever imagine. Going against the SVD's directive, I chose to ignore their nocturnal activity. Except for one or two of the really gung-ho, go get 'em seminarians, other staff were reasonable and refused to put any of the boys through the religious wringer of guilt. Boys were, after all, just naturally being boys.

Dinner was often followed by chapel evensong. Some boys inevitably needed to seek permission to leave chapel services and go to the bathroom. They didn't ask their counselor. They had to ask a cassocked SVD in the last pew of the chapel who then determined whether or not the request appeared genuine. Teenie Weenies holding onto themselves were invariably genuine. Big boys shuffling from foot to foot also looked pretty genuine. The SVD used a pocket stopwatch to time the boys. Anyone overstaying Number Ones or Number Twos was suspected of impure activity.

I happened to be kneeling alongside the SVD one evening when he told me to check on an overdue 15 year old. Approaching the lavatory, I heard what I shouldn't have to hear and didn't need to guess what was going on. I paused and made a nose blowing noise to alert him. Then I walked in and, unfortunately, still caught him in a compromising position. He froze. He looked so vulnerable, so full of dread. I didn't make eye contact and walked straight to the porcelain urinal, as if that had always been my only reason to be there. Words filled with fear slowly stuttered out of his mouth. "You gonna..... rat.... and turn me in?" "No," I said quietly. "Forget about it. All boys do it. Just go back to chapel like nothing's happened." He did. I followed

Upon my return to the last pew, the SVD asked me what the boy had been doing. I flunked Modern European History, but I remembered everything Professor Morrison lectured about the Inquisition. Catchphrases would be uttered less than a year later by Sergeant Schultz in TV's *Hogan's Heroes*, "I know nothing. I hear nothing, I see nothing." Just as Sergeant Schultz would eventually hedge at stepping up, no matter how sticky the situation, I too felt it was never in the interest of the SVD or mine to intervene. I looked straight into the eyes of the SVD and silently thought, "It really is none of your beeswax." But to satisfy his curiosity, barely whispering out of the corner of my mouth, he heard, "Number Twos."

(Jumping ahead - Thereafter this boy I didn't rat on perceived me as trustworthy, understanding, a confidante. When he learned I wasn't in the seminary, that I came from the ranks of regular human beings, he sought my company for talk. His delicate incident was never a discussion topic. Long after his stint at Camp Richards the boy kept in touch. Until he graduated high school he wrote me letters and enclosed school pictures.)

Becoming a jumper was a step up from being the more-or-less faceless entertainment man. Maybe as Laughing Larry the jumper I might get to know some of these wonderful kids. Perhaps I was just lucky. Every group I jumped into was happy to see me and cooperated with whatever I asked. Another of the jumpers was Tom Tamasi. I don't remember if he had a nickname, but kids loved him. I think they just called him by his last name. It had three good syllables to ply into different pronunciations by varying the accent. Favorite with the kids was Ta MA si, or if they wanted his attention to look at what they'd done it was Ta ma SEE. That one was especially audible at the waterfront when boys showed off doing a bomb or jack-knife off the jetty. We put our groups together when we were able. We'd shuffle our scheduled activities for the day where possible, trade off activities with other groups when we could, maybe organize a baseball game or something else in tandem. We didn't approach jumping like it was an unhealthy chore which had to be done regardless. Somehow we actually had fun and each day went by much too fast. Tamasi and I were good with the kids. They knew we weren't having them on and that we genuinely liked them. We did get to know the kids, mostly the 11 to 14 year olds, and they got to know us.

Maybe because he made the biggest impression on me, first and foremost was Lewy. I have no idea how or when we actually met. I think I gravitated to him because he was twelve, seventeen days younger than my brother Steve. Other than age and size there was little similarity, but it wouldn't have been unusual that I'd think of him as another little brother. He was smart, had a winning personality and came across as a cultured adult stuck inside a boy's skin. He wore braces. He wore glasses. He didn't need a nickname. Lewy was unique enough, but he sometimes wanted us to call him Ferndock. I've no idea why.

Giving the impression of being built like a bottle washer was mop-topped afro curly-headed Gabe. Eleven, he also had a stand-out name, so there wasn't any reason to call him anything else, although once in a while, just to get his goat, we called him Angel. Think about it.

10 year olds with griz haircuts and more energy than a moon-bound rocket were Mark and Randy. Another kid stuck wearing glistening braces was Dennis. Jim "I can't get my mind off girls" was 14. Never the typical teenage flick of his head to set a tumbled lock of hair, instead he spent more time than most combing his topknot Elvis curl into place all day every day. There was 15 year old Jim, who sported an overgrown griz, and shiny braces on his teeth. We called him Silver. Tamasi and I showed little imagination saddling him with that run-of-the-mill nickname. I don't know what it was about kids with metal mouths. Just a personal thing, I guess, but I happened to like kids with clunky braces and shiny smiles. They always impressed me as being brave. And yet, in all of my movies, as an anomaly or oversight, I never cast anyone who wore braces.

Personal hygiene was an important part of the summer package. Every morning before breakfast boys were required to wash hands and faces, brush their teeth and comb their hair. They were supposed to put on clean underwear daily, but there didn't seem to be a restriction on wearing the same T-shirt and shorts. Sliding into second base, climbing a tree, playing tug-o-war, blowing faeries off cattails, and gathering fallen tree limbs for campfires made for layers of dirt on boys' faces, hands and knees. All some kids did was to step outside and become a magnet for soil. Dirt just automatically glommed onto them. Sensibly, though not necessarily daily, taking showers was only ever scheduled after dinner and before bedtime. At home battles between parents and kids always seem to happen when it was time for a bath before bedtime. I don't know what got into the Camp Richards kids, but they seemed to look forward to fooling around in the showers. Jumpers and counselors were placed on a rota as shower inspectors. We oversaw safety; made sure the boys didn't run in the wet, play grab ass or flick each other with towels. A cursory check saw that each kid was clean. We sent them back under a shower head if there were potatoes growing out of their ears. Some boys hadn't learned how to use a towel to dry their backs or hair. Our job was to pat each kid on the head and sometimes run a hand down their shiny back. If wet, back they went to properly dry off, get help from a pal if they couldn't reach behind to dry themselves It turned into a game. Some would present for inspection and go back and forth five or six times, giggling at first and then laughing more with each rejection. The Teenie Weenies, however, often needed help toweling down and that made us feel like instant parents.

Feature-length movies preceded by a cartoon were shown weekly in the auditorium. Chairs were never set up. Everyone sat or lay on the floor or on a blanket. Isn't it odd that I never gave a thought to bringing my own 8mm projector and movies to show in camp? It would have fit in nicely with the entertainment man tag. However, most staff had become aware through conversation that I made movies. The visiting projectionist extended his invitation for me to climb the ladder rungs into his cage-like projection booth and learn how the equipment worked. Impressive! There were two, even by the day's standards, ancient 1930s 35mm projectors which required hand threading of the film through sprockets and gate. Used to doing manual threading of my 8mm projector, I quickly learned the slightly more complicated 35mm threading of film loops and engaging sprockets and cuing the start frame in the gate. The challenge for a good picture was keeping the carbon arcs burning just close enough together to make the light extremely bright, and yet not parted too far causing picture to slowly dim and lack contrast on screen. There were knobs on the projector to move the burning arcs closer together or move them apart. It was fascinating staring at that welder's fire through the clouded glass of the projector's swing-out, side-panel door. A chimney built onto the top of the projector allowed smoke from the carbon arc flame to escape. The projection room congested with blue smoke and an extractor fan mounted in the ceiling had to be switched on. That meant turning up the sound monitor to drown out the sound of the whirling, air-sucking fan.

35mm films were wound onto large metal reels of up to 2000 feet or approximately 22 minutes running time at 24 frames per second. Two hands were needed to lift a reel and mount it onto the projector spindle. Because a single film reel doesn't contain enough film to show an entire feature,

the film is distributed on multiple chronologically numbered reels. So there's no interruption to the show when one reel ends and another is mounted, two projectors are used in what's known as a "changeover system". I was given brief, but expert instructions on how the two machines worked and what I was required to do. I was too young to feel apprehensive or intimidated. I was at the age when I believed I could accomplish anything.

As the projectionist's assistant I started reel 1 on projector 1. While this reel was shown, I threaded the second reel on projector 2. As the end of reel 1 approached, eight seconds before the reel's end a round white ring or solid white dot flashed in the upper right hand corner of the frame. It was my first cue to stand by for changeover. Under instruction I started the motor of the second projector with the mounted second fully-loaded reel. After another seven seconds I'd see the flash of the second round spot and I'd throw the changeover handle. I had one second to make the changeover. If I missed my second dot cue, the white translucent tail leader of reel 1 coming to its end would be projected on the screen. I didn't miss the first time or all reels thereafter. With each changeover, ignition fired the carbon arcs and put the cranking mechanism into motion. A new scene from the new reel hit the screen and the feature film continued without a break. A douser extinguished the first projector's lamp and the film tail trailed through the sprockets and onto the take-up reel. The now empty feed reel and full take-up reel with tail out was removed from the projector and loaded onto a pair of tablemounted hand-cranked rewind arms. Reel 3 was then loaded onto the idle projector and the film cued in the gate for the next changeover. Reel 1 was rewound and, head out, ready for shipping or another session's screening. The opportunity to play around again with a professional 35mm projector didn't come for another four decades and, by then, carbon arcs had been relegated to nostalgic memory and curious museum exhibition.

Released in 1958 the black and white motion picture I helped project this particular night was *Cry Terror*. I wondered how in the crazy hell it ever ended up as entertainment in a summer camp. Images were totally inappropriate for little boys. There was violence, vengeful gun shooting, men behaving misogynistically, and a lurid sequence of a woman pursued through a dark subway. Its Legion of Decency appellation surely wasn't A-I. It was an A-III. Why this picture snuck past the stiff-necked, straight-laced, we're all going to hell SVDs and into the CR auditorium for all those little half-baked boys to see is a mystery. Subject matter obviously targeted for a mature adult audience, most boys got bored, lost interest and fell sound asleep. The movie finished and most in the audience stumbled drowsily to bed. Try waking those who'd trundled off resolutely into dreamland. The heavyweights, sure, we'd give them a few toe tweaks to wake them to amble unassisted to bed With others it was just easier to sweep up into your arms a light as air deadweight and cart him off like an inanimate rag doll to his dorm bed.

Campers found movies especially popular following a shower night. Freshly scrubbed and polished boys wore their pajamas or summer sleeping shorts in the auditorium. Some brought bed pillows, others blankets. If the boys had had a big day in the sun, whether the movie was or wasn't that interesting, many simply curled up and fell sound asleep. It wasn't unusual to hear a rhythmic nasal flutter or rattling snore in the silent spaces of movie dialogue. Those awake around them giggled or went into exaggerated imitation. In the darkness of the flickering images boys might feel and show their homesickness. A thumbsucker might be spotted. He was best overlooked and left to his own means of solace. Another kid might put his head on a counselor's shoulder and mumble something about him smelling just like his Dad. With just that single beam of light hitting the screen and the floor bathed in shadow, boys unashamedly showed they liked one another. Some shared a pillow with their best new buddy. They'd tap their foot against the other's foot like they had restless leg syndrome. Some even wrapped themselves together in a blanket. Others used their prone counselor's shoulder, chest, or belly for a pillow or wriggled under a counselor's arm to snuggle into him. Others might ask to have their backs lightly scratched. Simple human contact is all some of those kids wanted, it seemed. Touch acted like a gentle, meaningful soothing unguent.

Staff recreational time after lights out was marked with sandwiches, bowls of popcorn and pretzels and rationed bottles of Blatz, Miller, Pabst, and Schlitz, the beers that made Milwaukee famous.

Everyone's sessional allowance was limited to two beers. To ensure accountability, someone in charge of the fridge had a list of names and put a checkmark next to ours when we took a beer. There was no television or radio in the staff room. We made our own entertainment with conversation, the odd card game, a little bit of afterhours overtime to set up something fun for the kids and work in conjunction with another counselor or jumper.

I especially enjoyed conversing with the seminarians who came to Camp Richards from Ireland. Whatever prompted them to come here? I foolishly thought, perhaps, there wasn't any work for them in Ireland. I never stopped to consider they wanted to broaden their own horizons. Regardless, spending time speaking with the Irish, my acting ear picked up on their accent. Away from them, without having to consciously conjure anything in my vocal inflection, I sounded like I, too, had emigrated from Ireland. As a sidelight, no kidding, in conversation with people, I'd so clearly picked up on the Irish accent, it was guessed that I surely carried the shamrock in my vocal chords.

Members of staff were allowed to leave the campgrounds on their weekly day off. It must have worked out that horses were given the day off because I spent one memorable Saturday in Milwaukee with the Horse Apple Gang. We had lunch of bratwurst and sauerkraut and toured the Miller Brewery on Plank Road. After being shown the various stages of copper kettle yeasting, fermenting, worting, extra-hopping, lagering, bottling and packaging, we were guided into a cool room cellar. Whitewashed walls with warm incandescent lighting, wooden tables and chairs, a short bar with several taps, it was a cave-like barroom. Told we had half an hour to indulge ourselves and sample the brewery's suds before the next tour group arrived, we drank free beer. We weren't fussed about which Miller style was delivered in pitchers to our table. These were the days when no one considered the effects of drink on driving or even how beer affected an individual. Pitcher followed pitcher to the table. Typical bar munchies included free peanuts and potato chips. The quantity we imbibed in a short time increased my gregariousness, gave me vision which doubled my viewing pleasure, and a gait whereby I was and jauntily wasn't always in total control. Walking wobbly and window shopping downtown Milwaukee, feeling the cooling summer breeze off Lake Michigan blowing over the Fox River Bridge and down Wisconsin Avenue, we lost our beer goggles and made a spur-of-the-moment decision to see a movie. We saw a youthful Michael Caine in his first serious role in Zulu (1964). I still remember the excitement in my gut generated by Zulus chanting and thumping spears against shields as a show of strength prior to attacking the British fort in Rorke's Drift. I think it was the first time I'd heard such powerful, exotic and thrilling African music.

Another day off will never be erased from my memory. The Horse Apple Gang wanted me to join in their day off horse out. Horse out was a term used around camp for a ride lasting longer than a scheduled one hour session and it often included a cold lunch. I suppose the easiest way to think about it was a horseback ride with a picnic. The plan was for a cross country ride, avoid the roads as much as possible, and pretend we were saddle tramps like our movie and TV heroes John Wayne, Chuck Connors, Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. I'd grown past the stage of saddle cherries by this time. The kitchen ladies made us ham sandwiches and packed them into paper bags with peanut butter cookies, an apple and juice for lunches. If we didn't eat the apple, the ladies knew we'd treat our horses. After sharing breakfast time with the kids, we saddled horses in the stable, walked them into the corral, and climbed into saddles. Alfarabi opened the corral gate and three of us walked our horses out. The gate was closed and tethered and Alfarabi mounted. Groups scheduled for outdoor activities heard us give a whoop and a yippy-ki-yay and saw us kick our heels into horses' sides to release their clutches and gallop off like a posse after desperados. It was nothing more than showing off. Jersey Jim even went so far as to take off his black hat and wave it above his head. Away from envious eyes, we broke from the gallop to a short trot and then into a casual walk. We rode across fields of long and short grass dotted with white daisies and yellow buttercups, cut paths through woodland, trod in the sand brushing against cattails along the lakeshore, gestured with a gentlemanly tip of hat brims ma'm-like to the lovely counselors when skirting the boundary of the nearby girls' camp, crossed asphalt and dirt roads and waved back at passengers in cars who waved to us. We ate our lunches in the shade of a tree-lined creek and drank the cool clean flowing water.

Ahead was a long stretch of open field and the guys, but not me, were familiar with its layout. They'd previously brought groups of older boys this far from camp. They kept to themselves what was going to happen next. Back in the saddle we reined our mounts to face the great open space. Before giving his golden horse a solid kick Alfarabi said, "We're gonna gallop. No matter what, you keep up." After so many horse rides, I was sure he wasn't trying to make me feel like a tag-along. Off we galloped up a rise, like the tympani section of Copland's The Red Pony, no one riding abreast. It was pretty much a staggered single file. My horse didn't run as fast as theirs, but I experienced the same thrill I'm sure they did. Down the hill and onto the flat wind rushed past my face and whistled a roar in my ears. My hat flew back, its chin string stopping it from blowing away. The wind tousled my hair. Riding full belt, snot huffed from the gelding's nostrils. Nothing so free spirited had ever pumped so much adrenalin through me. The four of us hooted and hollered as we raced into the wind hell bent for leather. It all happened pretty fast. Ahead I saw Alfarabi's horse leap and land. Then I watched Jersey Jim and Johnny Reb jump their horses. Uh, oh! I'd never jumped a horse. As a show of confidence, though I felt I wanted to wet myself, I whooped and leaned forward in the saddle. My weight went onto the balls of my feet in the stirrups. Hazy the bouncing image, I glimpsed sticking up from the ground a large fallen dead tree log, a sunken furrow behind it. I didn't know if my horse knew how to jump. I gave him his rein. He leapt. We flew. You've no idea what it felt like, that brief glide in mid-air with no hoof clomp, no bounce, only the moment of silent spiritual rapture. The horse landed. Sound resumed. Front feet cannoned onto soft meadow like a clumsy cyclone. Inertia didn't catapult me over the horse's head. I stayed in the saddle and the horse settled into a light trot. The Horse Apple Gang looked at me amazed, then with approval, and next all three guys applauded. They'd set me a test and I'd passed.

Whether developed skills as a camper, my reliability as a staff member, or my pestering of Rev. Shea, for the final two weeks I was appointed counselor to Group 5's ten boys, 10 and 11 year olds. An ordinary classroom during the school year, our dormitory was named Comanche. A dormitory when the letters are rearranged, I might add, spells dirty room. We heard the shouted command from Rev. Shea, "Inspection in five minutes."

Dust. I remember how those kids tried so hard to clean out all the dust for dorm inspection. Ten year old Randy - was he ever a leader - always kept the other nine going with a broom or dust mop. If no one else crawled under the beds to get the dust bunnies, at the risk of losing a point for wearing a dirty T-shirt, Randy did it himself. He was a one-boy cheerleading team when it came to clapping his hands and boosting spirits for the group to play well, work well, and get along well. Rather than getting on anyone's nerves for being so confident, or a suck up, he earned others' respect.

Horseman Jersey Jim slept in our dorm too and the kids made his bed every morning. We had two Toms. A Dave had failed to front up, so one Tom got the diminutive and we called our add-in Tom-Tom. Just like Norby - fat Norby - who looked like John Lennon in a time of plenty, Tom-Tom's favorite activities were breakfast, lunch and dinner. We also had Larry One, Larry Two, and Larry me. Red-headed Larry One was almost as tall as me and not yet 11. Gerry with the permanent sun squint was the most cooperative kid. You wanted him to do something, he just did it. Mike was my scout, but you'd never guess it with his defiant facial grimace much of the time. Leo was a great kid when he didn't desert the group to explore on his own. He always climbed trees and that's where we'd find him... out on a limb.

Then there was Hugh, my mama's baby. He slept across from me on my right. What a character! He'd never been fishing before, so what did he do? Caught the biggest fish and won a brand new rod and reel. Hugh used to play with a dam-dam doll or troll, whatever it was he called it, and caressed that ugly thing because he was homesick, but not as homesick as the boy in the bed next to him, Tommy.

The boys were encouraged to write home during siesta. 5 cent stamps bearing George Washington's head, a stub of a pencil, envelopes, and specially headed half page stationary was provided: "Paradise for Boys. Camp Richards. East Troy Wis. Divine Word Seminary Boys Camp." In case a potential

problem showed up, letters were read by counselors before sealing into envelopes, stamped and mailed. I showed Tommy's letters to the Rev. Shea and they weren't sent. He thought they'd cause stress and made the decision I should hold back. Tommy wrote repeatedly, "I hate it here. Please come and get me. I cry so much I though (sic) up again. I cry so much everybody makes fun of me. I love you please bring me home." Like a vinyl record with dirt in a groove, it was over and over again and again. Tommy was reticent to join in the group. He sulked. He complained. He cried. The other boys did make fun of him.

Tommy led me by the hand into the hall one afternoon during siesta. So sadly he looked up at me, I asked in utter compassion, "What's on your mind, Tommy?" He said he didn't want to be seen by anyone else in our group. We walked further down the corridor and he followed me into a small room adjoining the chapel; it was the sacristy. Tommy scanned the room. It looked private and he felt safe. Then the dam burst. Tears welled in Tommy's eyes and he hugged me. "I'm so homesick," he cried, "I want to go home." From the desperation I'd read in his letters, this wasn't news. I held Tommy and let him cry himself out on my shoulder. Then I tried to help him figure out his problem. I'd have never guessed what it was. I was surprised when he didn't beat around any bushes. He just blurted out one big hurtful word. "Good-bye." The day he was dropped off at camp his mother stood at the foot of the stairs and said, "Good-bye." He didn't understand the meaning of "Good-bye." He had mistakenly thought it had meant it was going to be forever, like his Mom was never coming back for him. "Why, Tommy, good-bye means I'll be back. I'll see you soon." He quirked his head like a puppy trying to comprehend the meaning of the words. And slowly, ever so slowly, the shape of his pouting lips changed into a small quivering smile. After that, Tommy lost all desire to go home and his participation within the group was unstoppable.

The camp's newspaper was the *CR Fun Times*. Larry the redhead had the nose for news. He wrote and submitted items and loved to brag about our group's achievements. Group 5 could play baseball. Even after Dave "Robin Hood" Schmidt's Group 15 claimed they'd dump us into deep wells, my group clobbered them 15 to 4. Behind the scenes, counselors bet bottles of beer on the outcome of group games. The kids in our groups knew about it and supported us. It was duly reported after a win on the diamond that "Larry (meaning me) won a bottle of beer from Dave." Larry the Red challenged all others in the paper. "Group 5 will continue to beat anyone in baseball." Against other groups scores were 10-0 and 9-7. Throughout those two weeks, my kids never dropped a game. Somehow when our groups met on the archery field, the neophyte bested his master. I managed to count higher points against Robin Hood, my teacher that first week in camp. It was written, "He (meaning me) also got a bottle of beer for this." You'd think with my kids' successes, I'd have been off my tree.

Season's end climax was a talent show. It was a gigantic undertaking. Individual boys with special skills put up their hands to perform. Everyone in every group took part in one way or another. I made a suggestion about a group dance in synchronization with an electronic outer space kind of music. I'd found a black light. The boys would wear white bed sheets and be ghosts. As the sheets came off each of their beds, holes couldn't be cut for them to see. They'd have to wear opaque sheets and trust a stage director's voice to move without tripping over one another. Randy, as expected, stepped up as leader. I helped the boys work out elaborate steps and movement. Music was played on a reel to reel tape recorder. They didn't wear sheets to learn and memorize the routine. Once they felt comfortable, a sheet was draped over each boy's head and body. They weren't completely blind in daylight, but beneath their sheets in darkness under the black light, they could have qualified for selling pencils. Using numbers for cues, Randy quietly called the steps and moves. The boys followed every cue of Randy's direction.

Then Randy decided he should concentrate on playing his saxophone without music on a stand for his own act. He'd still dance with the group, but asked for someone else to call the numbers. The kid who cried and threw up, who had others make fun of him, who only wanted to go home; he was Tommy and he didn't hesitate to step forward and volunteer. I felt I had accomplished something.

That night Group 5's performance was different from everything and anything on stage. The music sounded weird. Under the ultraviolet light, all that could be seen moving eerily on stage were glowing sheets. No feet. No shoes. Just spooky dancing ghosts. It was unusual and not the sort of act quickly associated with boisterous boys. Occasionally we'd hear a number called out as if sung in rhythm with the spaced-out music. It was an imaginative touch Tommy just decided he'd add. The boys were machine-like precision. They showed tremendous cooperation and skill. Our audience applauded their approval. The boys performed faultlessly.

From the array of talent, judges selected winners. Older boys in Group 18 won First Place for their very funny, impromptu skit called *Retarded Camp Counselors*. I think every one of us recognized ourselves somewhere in the bodies and voices of the boys on stage. Teenie Weenies, Groups T3 and T4 won Second Place for their cute "Do-Re-Me" singing from *The Sound of Music*. Our Randy justified his bow from leadership to concentrate on his music. His saxophone solo won for him Third Place. Fourth prize didn't exist, but one more award was presented. Judges had determined a special Most Original Award be given to Group 5 for *Silent Planet*. I felt so proud.

There was more. Apart from the talent, achievement awards were presented to campers. There were ribbons and certificates for Crafts, Archery, Rifles, whatever was deemed worthy of recognition. The Horse Apple Gang mounted the stage and handed out red ribbons and certificates to those reaching the highest stage of horsemanship called Advanced Horseman. Imagine my surprise when, after several campers' names were called, Jersey Jim announced Laughing Larry. I looked behind me like Laughing Larry should have been standing there, as if I'd forgotten about that silly nickname. I was nudged forward by Ron "Buddha" Fallatico. He got the nickname because of his pronounced beer gut. He looked pregnant, like he was ready to give birth at any time! A red ribbon and accompanying certificate was thrust in my hand. Now Group 5 could feel proud of me.

#### CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED ACHIEVEMENT IN HORSEMANSHIP

LARRY KLOBWKOWSKI (sic) is qualified as an advanced horseman having maintained the proper skills in saddling, grooming, and riding horses in the horse activity at Camp Richards – East Troy, Wis. on this day Aug. 21, 1964

It was signed using their real names – Michael Conrad, Jim Dillamon, John Duffy - by the guys in the Horse Apple Gang: Alfarabi, Jersey Jim and Johnny Reb.

Overall, then, what kind of a counselor was I at Camp Richards? It's easy enough to rate myself and say that I was good, that I was liked by the kids, and that we accomplished a lot without causing myself or anyone else any grief. However, a little bit from a couple of letters written by the mother of one of my Group Fivers to the director might suggest something. Addressing me as "Sir," of her son she wrote:

He does well in most things but is good at goofing off when he is unsure of himself or feel he does not measure up. If he can be made to realize it is no tradegy (sic) to fail, but is a big one not to try harder next time, he will be helped a lot. He is happy when he is kept busy, other than grass cutting.

Thank you and good luck. Hope your group rates high on all counts.

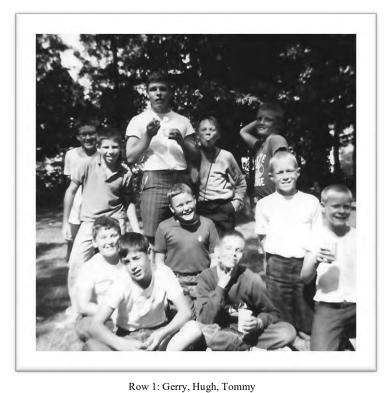
As the camp's last session concluded, that same mother wrote to the director:

Dear Father,

We would be remiss if we did not say how fine a camp you have. We are pleased especially with the counselor Larry Kloubukowski (sic). He has a fine

way with boys and seemed to have a desire and deep interest in them. This we feel is "the giving a little more of ourselves" which is so necessary for all of us, and a fine example for the boys.

Camp Richards, East Troy, Wisconsin, Group 5



Row 1: Gerry, Hugh, Forming
Row 2: Norby, Tom-Tom, Randy
Row 3: Larry Two, Leo, Counselor Laughing Larry, Mike, Larry Two the Redhead

I had my Kodak Brownie movie camera and tripod with me throughout the summer at Camp Richards. I shot a couple rolls of film mostly of Group 5 activities during the final week. There was never any intention to turn the footage into something with a beginning and end title which I could enter into a competition. It was a home movie of the first order and purely for personal enjoyment.

Almost as quickly as staff members had showed up out of the ether on orientation day, once all the campers had been collected by parents and departed for home... poof! Just like that... as if a sorcerer had tossed his hand into the air and released some explosive magic powder, everyone disappeared. I had packed and departed without double checking that everything had been stuffed into my bag. I hadn't remembered to empty a drawer. Maybe they'd been tucked so far back into the corner I just didn't see them.... the cartridges of movie film. I'd used one of those Kodak Instamatics to take lots of pictures over the camping season. The cartridges of snapshots? Gone too! All gone in the magic disappearing powder. Buddha Fallatico wrote to me several weeks into my second year of college and enclosed the one and only snapshot, pictured above, I have of anyone at Camp Richards.

# Chapter 32: Like Dogs with Threadworms Riding Their Rear Ends

Zip-Tang

Jim Dillamon invited me home all the way to Missouri, a long way from Wisconsin. I'd only been out of the state to Illinois and was keen to discover places I wouldn't have even known existed. I packed my small bag of camp wear, movie camera and tripod. I telephoned Mom and Dad, told them where I was headed, and suggested I'd see them within a week. Money wasn't a problem. We'd all been paid and left with pockets full. Tom Tamasi begged a ride home to Des Moines, Iowa and John Duffy came along for the ride. We four fit comfortably in Jim's yellow Nash Rambler. Camp was finished and we still faced some summer vacation with its warm days for play.

We skirted the southern Wisconsin/northern Illinois border on Highway 11 through Janesville to Dubuque. Thereafter we playfully referred to the Iowa city across the Mississippi River as "Doo-BOO-key" Next heading was somewhat south on Highway 151 to Cedar Rapids and then onto interstate 80 to Des Moines. My lasting impression of Iowa was that it was a state full of cornfields. Following Tamasi's instructions, he was dropped off at his parents' modest home. We weren't invited in for a coffee or a beer or a sandwich, not even to stop and stretch our legs. Having spent the past eight weeks together, it felt awkward. The motor idling, all we did was stop outside the house long enough for Tamasi to drag his suitcase out of Jim's trunk, bid us an indifferent and hasty goodbye, and that was it. Tom turned away, walked up the concrete path with suitcase in hand, didn't look or wave back, and I never saw him or heard from him again.

Interstate 80 took us toward Omaha, Nebraska. Most 19 year olds wouldn't get excited about passing through Pottawattamie County, an Indian reservation, and the nearby county seat of Council Bluffs. I did. Although we didn't stop, I knew Council Bluffs was the birthplace of silent screen comedian Harry Langdon. Who, you might ask? Most people have forgotten about him. In the 1920s he was right up there with Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd. He was born Harold Philmore Langdon on June 15, 1884 in Council Bluffs and started his career as an entertainer at 12 when he ran away from home to join the circus. That's interesting, practically a harbinger because his best known film was called *The Strong Man* (1926), circus set and directed by Frank Capra. Langdon's career in entertainment included vaudeville, silent and talkie films. Even lesser known is that Council Bluffs was the birthplace of Hollywood's Ernest B. Schoedsack, co-producer with Merian C. Cooper of a 1931 film featuring Hollywood's then biggest star and whose name was the film's title, *King Kong*. Schoedsack was a motion picture cinematographer, producer, and director. Council Bluff's not-so-famous Lee de Forest was an inventor and pioneer in the development of sound-on-film recording used for motion pictures.

Boys Town, Nebraska, is a suburb of Omaha. Founded as a boys' orphanage by Father Edward J. Flanagan in December 1917, it had formerly been known as Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, also as Father Flanagan's Girls and Boys Home. The "City of Men" pioneered development of new juvenile methods in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America. Emphasis was placed on social preparation as a model for public boys' homes worldwide. For as long as I could remember, especially after starting a stamp collection

at the age of 10, I had always been aware of Boys Town through its Christmas seals. The stamps, fair use pictured right actual size, were in color and people pasted them onto Christmas card envelopes after having paid by donation to keep Boys Town functioning financially. While at camp Jim teed up an interview with the Boys Town's personnel officer. I gathered Jim, a seminarian, wanted to continue working with





boys more than just the fleeting weeks of a summertime camp and, in this instance, with boys less privileged and more prone to juvenile delinquency. I had no doubt Jim believed in Father Flanagan's motto: There's no such thing as a bad boy. Frequently depicted on its Christmas seals, I was aware of another of its mottos engraved on the plinth of its famous bronze statue. "He ain't heavy, Father... he's my brother."

I was thrilled, even felt a lump form in my throat as I looked at the real "He ain't heavy, Father... he's my brother" statue in Boys Town. I had seen that same statue, again the real thing, in the Hollywood biopic *Boys Town* starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney. The 98 minute feature was filmed in 1938 on the actual grounds of Boys Town.

We were welcomed into the reception center which also housed a museum. Before Jim was led off to a private office for his interview, the priest invited John and me to examine and enjoy the glass-encased displays. If seeing the statue of the older boy carrying the younger boy wasn't enough to make me tear up with excitement, the sight of a real Oscar statue was more than sufficient. After Milwaukee-born Tracy won his second consecutive Best Actor Academy Award, his previous year's Best Actor win for *Captains Courageous* (1937) with Freddie Bartholomew and Mickey Rooney, for playing Father Flanagan in *Boys Town*, he refused to donate his prize to the real Father Flanagan and Boys Town. The Academy sent the organization a commemorative duplicate. At least it hadn't been engraved "Dick Tracy" as had Tracy's first Oscar statue for his turn as fisherman Manuel in *Captains Courageous*. Called sentimental by the critics, *Boys Town* also won an Academy Award for Eleanore Griffin and Dore Schary for Writing: Original Story. It had nominations for Best Picture, Norman Taurog for Direction, and Writing: Screenplay.

No one was the wiser following Jim's job interview, not even Jim. He said he had mentioned in his interview with personnel that I'd also be a good one with boys if employed next summer in Boys Town. I hadn't given that idea a serious thought, had only bandied it around with the guys on the road for something to pass the time. However, since Jim said the priest in charge expressed vague interest, I decided I'd probably apply next spring. It would mean a lot more money than what I'd earned for the summer in Camp Richards. Asking Jim why he wanted to work at Boys Town, he said that he wanted to work with boys, but wasn't sure if he wanted to continue his education toward becoming a member of some religious order, including the priesthood. At Boys Town he could work with boys and not necessarily have to worry about a title like Father or Brother. Just being a Catholic was a good enough qualification from which to start.

Leaving Boys Town, then Omaha, we headed south. Aware once again of a Hollywood connection, I asked if anyone wanted to do a sidetrack off Interstate 25 to the tiny hamlet of Burchard and see the birthplace of silent screen comedian Harold Lloyd. Jim and John looked at me; nothing registered after I'd mentioned Harold Lloyd's name. His identifying trademark was a pair of glasses. He made thrill pictures climbing up buildings and dangling high above the ground from the hands of a clock. Still nothing registered. We didn't see Burchard.

We passed through St. Joseph where Jim and John said they went to school at nearby Conception, another one of those unincorporated places like Sobieski. Sometime within the next two or three days, they'd return for registration. Jim left the Interstate and steered onto smaller county highways and roads through little towns called Gower, Grayson, Trimble and Smithville before a sunset arrival at his parents' rural property on the edge of Liberty. I'm guessing we weren't expected since Jim hadn't bothered to phone to say when we'd arrive. His mother wasn't in the least flustered as we piled through the swinging, creaking kitchen screen door. It was an old-fashioned kitchen with a well-trodden floor of worn wood covered in the most travelled areas with hand-cut, pattern-scrubbed and scuffed pieces of linoleum. There was an old black iron wood-burning stove for cooking and heating, but the dominant odor was kerosene from a dormant heater. Jim's Mom turned on the country hospitality. "Y'all take a chair, hear? Get y'self comfy 'round the table." It was an accent new to my ear, not quite Deep South, but a drawl nonetheless. She found whatever was stored in the fridge and threw together a salmagundi, an olla podrida, or it may have been an omnium gatherum. Take your pick for the best word to gourmandize and glamorize reheated leftovers.

It was a stinker of a morning, probably close to 100°F. We woke with sweat beading on our necks and foreheads. My armpits felt slippery. Jim recommended not showering until evening. We'd be wasting good water because the day was going to be hot, humid and sweaty. We pulled clean T-shirts over our heads which would probably stick to us within minutes, and tugged on long jeans. The plan for the day was to hunt and kill slithery critters which had been harassing the Dillamon's chickens. Jim handed Duffy and me .22 rifles. Well, son-of-a-gun, were the words "Homer" had used to harden me up in Camp Richards teaching me to handle a rifle about to pay off! We were going to skirr for water moccasins. Also called cottonmouths, they were bulky, black, aggressive snakes with large sharp fangs to inject deadly poison. Its aspirated hiss can be unexpected and jolt you out of complacency. It's a frightening sound which can startle and freeze hunters Medusa-like into statues. Cottonmouths strike like rattlers but without a telltale warning. We hoped we'd not inadvertently trod on one tramping through long marsh grasses.

As much as I'd like to exaggerate and tell a really, really scary campfire story, I can't. We walked through long grass, poked rifle barrels into grass thickets, searched for sunning reptiles on logs and rocks along the creek, overturned a rotten log or two and, after a couple hours wandering the property in the burning sun, found nothing. Not even a shed skin! To relieve tension or just for something exciting to do, we discharged our bullets into makeshift targets propped onto decaying logs.

That evening, after we'd temporarily cooled off under the shower, Jim's Mom asked me to set the table. I bent my knees and lowered myself to the bottom cupboard and opened the door. Inside I saw an enormous bug. It was brown with long feelers and six spindly serrated legs. "What the heck is this thing," I asked. Jim's Mom bent down to look. She suddenly became flustered and poked at the creature, trying to catch it in her fingers. As big as a tank, it made a clackety-clack sound as its feet scuttled to escape across plates. Red-faced, Jim's mother said casually, "It's just a cockroach." She wanted to sluff it off like it was no big deal. It was a big deal for me. I'd never before seen a cockroach, let alone such a whopper.

Cupboard wildlife aside, Jim said we were in for a treat. Atop the stove his Mom cooked critter for dinner. A fan set on high kept the kitchen as comfortable as possible this muggy evening. It was my first occasion to eat squirrel braised in juices with vegetables. I have always been adventurous with food. My mother recalls how I'd buy small cans of chocolate covered ants and deep-fried grasshoppers packed in cottonseed oil and heartily devour them. My penchant was to share the insect goodies whenever guests visited; just to see what their reaction might be. If my offer was refused, I'd eat a morsel, make all sorts of yummy sounds, and observe their facial reaction of yuck. Of my plate of mashed potatoes, carrots, onions and braised Missouri squirrel I had no qualms about digging in. Head, paws and tail removed, carcass meat was dark, stringy, sort of dry-ish, and a bit chewy. Eating critter was similar to picking at a chicken neck, but not as tender as chicken or rabbit. Cooking juices made into gravy softened flesh and masked a wild taste. Dinner conversation centered on a comedy movie we thought about shooting.

The next morning was much the same as yesterday's except that we showered first. Jim and John wanted to look fresh and smell good for the picture. At a club meeting in Milwaukee, just as summer vacation had started, I'd seen a short film about two guys racing on motorcycles, except there weren't any motorcycles in the film. The actors were positioned as if on motorcycles, but moved unaided on their feet. It was animation of already animate objects. Animating human beings was then called pixilation, a time-consuming process almost like making a cartoon, or similar to the single-frame shooting I did when making *Futility*. Jim and John were keen on the concept and I said that in the finished film they'd look like dogs with threadworms riding their rear ends.

There was no such thing as starting early before the day got too hot. It was already hot and bothersome by 8 o'clock. We kept the story simple. Artists sometimes imitate someone else's work or they recycle ideas they've already done. To begin the new movie, *Zip-Tang*, I used the same story set up which I used to open *Dr. Emile's Mind*. Two men make a bet. On a bench in a park, Jim is reading the paper and flicking ash from his cigarette. John enters the scene with a cigarette dangling from his lips and he carries a newspaper. He sits on the park bench. Both turn pages of their



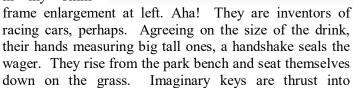
respective papers, acknowledge one another, shake hands, smoke their cigarettes, and engage in idle conversation, my 8mm frame enlargement pictured left. There has been nothing to indicate they know one another. Suddenly the lightness of tone changes to seriousness when Jim asks via title insert: HOW ARE YOUR INVENTIONS? Banter turns to challenge when Jim announces WELL, MY INVENTION IS A LOT FASTER THAN YOUR INVENTION! Dialogue has made audience aware that they do know one another and they are rival inventors. Braggadocio from either is

dismissed with hand waves. Jim removes his

glasses, pictured right in my 8mm frame enlargement, and stares down John before slapping his cheek with an invisible glove. A DRINK SAYS THAT MY INVENTION



IS FASTER THAN YOUR INVENTION. John Duffy's reaction is a spitting image of Stan Laurel in my 8mm



ignitions, turned, and feet

depress accelerators to rev the invisible motorized inventions, pictured right in my 8mm frame enlargement. Firing of all cylinders is shown by the drivers bobbling up and down and from side to side in their unseen driver's seats.

All of this action was done with the boys performing in normal movement. The pixilation effect was achieved by my continuous flicking of the camera's trigger. With each trigger flick, one or two frames were exposed. Since not all of the normal movement of the actors was captured, actions can't appear to flow or look fluid. During projection, they will move jerkily on screen. The action



looks speeded up and comedic as in an old-time silent movie cranked out circa 1913. It's somewhat similar to the non-stop jerky action of the silent comedies pumped out like sausages from Mack Sennett's fun factory, the Keystone Studios.

Now the filming process had to be controlled. Animating Jim and John riding on their invisible inventions was just the same as animating inanimate objects. To show them driving forward, the boys had to physically move their backsides and legs ahead about 12 inches and then resume the 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock hand positions on their imaginary steering wheels. I'd click off the camera's trigger. The boys' movement forward was repeated. Again I'd flick the camera's trigger. Move. Click.

Move. Click. To add variety, the boys leaned when they turned sharply. They drove past Jim's yellow Nash Rambler parked in the background, spun around a bush, and safely sped past a tree.

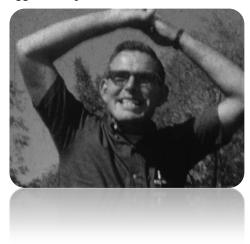


They faced the camera and idled briefly to engage in fisticuffs, pictured left in my 8mm frame enlargement, Jim bettering John who's bowled over after being struck with a lucky left cross. Jim shifts into gear and speeds forward while John rights himself. With the camera focused on the park bench, both drive toward it, the bench the finish line. Jim scoots ahead on his rear end and stands up as John strains forward, and all accomplished with the move, click, move, click animated shooting process. Pixilation is tiring and monotonous, even moreso under a hot sun and with humidity rising to match the climbing temperature.

Again the boys could move naturally and I just clicked off the camera's trigger to expose one to two frames at a

click. In a Medium Close Up Jim raises his arms above his head and clasps his hands and shakes them in victory, my 8mm frame enlargement pictured right. He clearly mouths, "I won. I won. Ha, ha! Ha, ha!" In Close- Up John squints and sticks out his bulbous tongue. He resembles Stan Laurel! The final shot is Jim savoring his prize, a cool drink with ice cubes.

Jim and John said they really had a lot of fun in the filmmaking experience. It was something they'd never before had a chance to do. I thought they were camera naturals. I was confident we'd made a very funny film, but I'd have to wait until I returned to West Allis to shoot titles and have the reel processed.



The Almighty smiled upon the two jovial seminarians and me as we shot *Zip-Tang*. Once the film wrapped, the weather slowly turned. It was still hot, still humid, but the sun faded and disappeared altogether behind gathering cloud. We packed our bags, said our thanks, and made our hugging goodbyes to Jim's family for the drive to St. Joseph, actually a few miles northeast to the unincorporated habitation of Conception and home of Conception Abbey, a Roman Catholic monastery of the Swiss-American Congregation of the Benedictine Confederation. It was founded in 1873 in northwest Missouri, was raised to a conventual priory in 1876, and elevated to an abbey in 1881. Monks staffed and administered Conception Seminary College, the Printery House, and the Abbey Guest Center. Monks also served as parish priests and hospital chaplains in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, as well as other dioceses. Jim and John wanted to arrive before registration closed.

Jim focused his eyes on the road as he drove the secondary county highways. John in front and I in the back seat craned our necks to look out the windows, our eyes glued to the changing sky. As light faded, clouds formed into giant roly-poly cotton balls. Like bruised cheeks they were black and blue and ghostly gray. The air itself seemed to gradually turn a pale greenish-yellow. We stopped for a cool drink at a nondescript grocery store and tavern. Its gas station was curbside, on the borderline of the street smack in front of the wood building, a single glass-topped gasoline pump standing tall as a sentry. It was a 1920s vintage 'visible gas' pump with a clear glass cylinder on top so you could see what you were getting. There was a manual pump you'd pull back and forth to pump gas out of the underground tank into the cylinder. From there the gas flowed by gravity down into the hose and into the car's gas tank. I'd have enjoyed seeing how it worked, but Jim had already filled his gas tank back in Liberty.

Inside, the store smelled musty, beer-ish, and of kerosene. Even with several incandescent lightbulbs shining from dangling cords, it was dark as a dungeon cell. The light outside was dim and did nothing to light the inside of the small drinks bar. The proprietor's radio crackled when its signal was interrupted by lightning we couldn't see. Country-western music was interrupted when an announcer delivered a message alerting listeners to a tornado watch. Conditions were electric for a tornado finger to spin down out of lumpy clouds. We finished our sodas, bid a cheery farewell, and moved to Jim's Rambler. The barkeep looked concerned as he called after us. "Y'all take care now. Keep yer eyes open. Could be a twister your way any minute now."

We stood briefly at Jim's car, surveyed the sky, and questioned whether we should go or wait. The air was still, grayish black, and with an overall tinge of filthy yellow. It was as silent as being stuck on the moon. Any sound of scrunching gravel our shoes made seemed inordinately amplified. We boarded the Rambler. Jim started the motor and we pulled away from the tavern store and onto the highway. There was no other traffic. We could dimly see all around the flatland of fenced fields, but we didn't see any grazing stock. The pea soup yellow atmosphere changed to the deepest shade of indigo, almost black as pitch. Suddenly rain started to fall. Raindrops grew larger and were mixed with marble-sized hailstones. Inundation of water and hail made for blurry vision. Jim's wipers kept the windshield clear just long enough to momentarily glimpse the road.



Ahead... we saw it. A giant... dirty... whirling... funnel! A public domain photo at left isn't the exact tornado we saw, but it gives an idea of what natural disaster we experienced. Small bits of debris crashed into the car. We heard the bang-bang of grit and stones striking the doors and windows. The roar of the tornado crossing a field was louder than a fleet of freight trains rushing over the iron tracks. It was a scene out of the nightmares which wake you in a cold sweat. No one in the car said anything. We just gripped onto anything for dear life. We felt the car moving unnaturally on the road. The wind forced Jim to tighten his grip on the wheel. He accelerated toward the tornado and we heard his voice shout over the deafening roar. "If I stop, we'll be tipped over." In the distance we saw the tornado cross the road from right to left. As it moved onto the adjoining field, we felt ourselves hurled to the left. As quickly as we felt that jarring thrust, the car stopped. The twister moved

further to our left and disappeared as rapidly as it had arrived. Loud sound abated.

Seatbelts weren't installed for safety back then and, bundled into a ball, I repositioned myself from the floor of the car and wriggled uneasily onto the back seat. The car was stopped in a ditch roadside and we all leaned slightly left. The tornado was gone. Rain no longer belted down. It rained gently and steadily like an ordinary summer shower. Within seconds of the tornado passing, the sun tried to peek out from the bulging black clouds. One word came out of my mouth like a prayer uttered in reverential awe. "Sh-\*-\*-\*t," I drawled.

The motor of Jim's Rambler revved as he engaged first gear. Wheels skidded slightly on wet grass and mud, but we weren't bogged down. Jim eased slowly out of the ditch and onto the wet road. There were tree branches to avoid on the back roads to Conception. The sun was shining. Rainwater puddles and wet leaves reflected the late afternoon sunlight when we reached the abbey. Jim and John registered for their new school year. As to how I made it home from Conception to West Allis, Jim and John drove me to St. Joseph where we goofed around and ate a decent meal in a forgettable café. Ahead of returning to the parental home near Liberty, the guys dropped me at the bus station. I made a needed arrangement for a Greyhound bus at some ungodly time of the wee hours to sleep overnight, doze most of the day, and arrive in Milwaukee after three transfers some 15 hours later. About the only plus of the knockdown drag-out travel was that it was cheap and made little inroad to my fun-time earnings at Camp Richards.

### Chapter 33: Tarcisius

**Tarcisius** 

eparture for Camp Richards in June was from our 96<sup>th</sup> Street home; I returned after the summer camp's sessions and my visit to Missouri at August end to a different house on 119<sup>th</sup> Street. Back in May my parents had been looking at a newly-constructed house with four bedrooms even further out in the sticks. In a letter from college, not having seen the place, I encouraged them to buy it. During my absence for summer employment, they did. I came home to a "home" I didn't know, but then thinking about it, home is really any place where there's family.

One of the first things I asked wasn't, "Which one's my bedroom?" No, I asked if anything had come in the mail from Camp Richards. I had hoped someone had found my rolls of photo and movie film in the drawer and sent them in the mail. Nothing. I asked Dad if we could drive to Camp Richards and see if my films had been stashed somewhere. It turned into a pleasant Sunday drive, the whole family keen to see where I'd worked and me anxious and hopeful. As if time hadn't bothered moving forward, there was Reverend Bill Shea still stuffed into his swivel chair behind his desk. He was surprised and simultaneously pleased to see me, but his news crushed my optimism. Everything that had made the place into Camp Richards had been cleaned, cleared and transformed back into classrooms and residents' rooms. No one had reported finding films. No one had handed films into the office. No one brought to the office of Rev. Shea anything considered worth saving. The Divine Word Seminary had a Lost and Found. Camp Richards obviously didn't. I'm sure it was a policy which made sense to Seminary administration, but to me it was just plain heartless. Anything and everything left behind at camp was expendable and thrown in the trash.

Rev. Shea granted permission for me to take my family on a grand tour of the grounds. Notice I didn't call it a grand tour of Camp Richards. The camp as I had known it no longer existed. It was true. It was the kids who really made up Camp Richards. There had been kids running around, bumping into me, and making the most joyful noise. The halls had a hollow sound now. We could hear our footsteps; hear the clunking of shoe heels on bare floor. My family peered into a classroom. All desks in rows. "That was the Fox dorm," I said. "The Teenie Weenies used to sleep here. Me too, for two weeks when I was a jumper." It was necessary to explain each of the terms I'd used; they were jargon, as if I'd been speaking a foreign tongue. I wondered if they'd set up my dorm for school. Comanche. Empty. Just some dust in the corner. "Randy wouldn't have stood for that," I commented before calling out, "Inspection in five minutes." My voice echoed in the cavernous space. I hadn't heard my voice ever before echo when the kids were here. All that remained identifiable as the camp I enjoyed were the permanent fixtures of the auditorium and the boathouse on the waterfront. Mom and Dad, Steve, Luann and Joann would have appreciated the beauty of the place, but they wouldn't have formed a fathom of an impression of what my experience here had been for eight glorious weeks.

This wasn't the memory I wanted to take with me. It was hollow, sterile, and cruel. I felt as if I'd lost something forever. Of the good times I had no snapshots. No movies. My only tangible souvenirs of the entire summer in East Troy were the comment sheets the kids in Comanche wrote about me, some copies of the *CR Times*, and the red ribbon I'd been awarded by the Horse Apple Gang for Advanced Horseman. These elements and the heartrending experience of returning to the vacated camp formed my writing of a memoir, *A Counselor Returns*.

I had maybe nine days of summer vacation remaining and I wasn't about to waste them. Weather was favorable. Time to make another quick movie. Something as simple as *Zip-Tang* shot in a couple of hours should have entered my thinking. Instead, I thought about a story heard a long time ago in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Vincent's. It was the true story of a boy who became a saint. In addition to the oral telling, I was also influenced by pictures in a book on our home shelf called *Lives of the Saints*.

Tarcisius was a 12 year old acolyte during one of the fierce Roman persecutions of the Christians. From a meeting place in the catacombs, the underground cellars and burial places connected by tunnels where Christians gathered in secret beneath the city of Rome, deacons were sent to the prisons to carry the Eucharist to Christians condemned to death, some for public entertainment in the Coliseum. When no deacon was available, the altar boy Tarcisius was sent. On his way, he was stopped by boys his own age. They weren't Christians and knew Tarcisius was, but chose to ignore it. He was their playmate and they knew he liked to join in their games. They asked Tarcisius to play ball, but this time he refused and the boys noticed he tried to hide what he carried. The small bag fascinated. They suspected what was in it and were anxious to view the Christian "Mysteries". Tarcisius refused to surrender the bag. The boys bullied Tarcisius and turned on him with fury. They beat and kicked him almost senseless and would have killed him on the spot had they not been interrupted. A fellow Christian drove off the boys and rescued Tarcisius. Some who tell the story believe the rescuer was a Roman centurion, a Christian soldier who kept his faith a secret. The Roman Christian or the Christian soldier carried the mangled body of the boy to the catacombs, but Tarcisius died on the way from internal injuries.

Tarcisius is one of the patron saints of altar boys. I was once an altar boy and I had just spent eight weeks in a camp with priests, brothers and seminarians. His was a simple enough tale, so why not make it into a movie? There's a delivery boy. He's sidetracked by friends who disagree with his beliefs, so they beat the crap out of him. An adult breaks up the fracas; the kid is carried away and he dies. The end! What could be so hard about that? All I needed were sets and costumes to suggest ancient Rome. Here then was my homage to *Ben-Hur*, my Roman epic with a very simple story.

119<sup>th</sup> Street didn't go anywhere. Cars, the U.S. Mail truck with its right hand steering wheel, and other delivery vehicles came into it because they wanted to, had to, or were lost. Paved with asphalt, it was a dead end street with no sidewalks, no gutters, no curbs. A park would someday occupy the wild space at the end of the street. Now it was an abandoned rock quarry filled with water and surrounded by naturally overgrown weeds, reeds, bushes, saplings and trees. Some would have considered it dangerous. For young people, especially my 12 year old brother, it was the place for adventures, just like "the creek" had been for me as a youngster on 96<sup>th</sup> Street. There were bulldozed trees and stumps exposing cracked and shredded roots, rocks big enough for climbing, hills made of pebbles, gravel and dirt with crags which could be carved into small caves and hiding places. There was wildlife. Frogs. Snakes, none poisonous. Steve brought home his share of slippery, slithery creatures to make Mom and the twins jump or cower. Hawks that hovered. Ducks. Waterbirds without webbed feet. Water rats, muskrats and rabbits. Bubbles, ripples and splashes told us something lived in the quarry. Whatever fish may have swum in there remained a mystery. We never laid eyes on any and no one bothered to dangle a line. The bubbles may have been from painted tortoises or snapping turtles. Sometimes we'd see one paddling in the cloudy water or basking on a log or rock. It was this setting I felt would work as the rural environs of ancient Rome and I'd shoot all of my required outdoor scenes here. It was a convenient location and the shortest of walks from home. For once we wouldn't need to lug all our required props, costumes, jars and sticks of make-up, lunches and drinks to last us through a day's filming.

I planned shooting out of chronological order, for convenience of camera set ups and to save on time. Later I'd use an editing machine and link all the shots into sequences which made sense.

I broke the story into three days of shooting. The beginning, the end, and an introductory scene with Emperor Diocletian could be shot indoors and under lights on one day. A second day I'd film the sequence of the priest talking Tarcisius into delivering the Communion to the prisons, as well as Tarcisius' journey on foot and raft so as to include and make good use of the flooded quarry. The

third day of shooting would be the boys playing ball, inviting Tarcisius to join in, and then turning on him when he refuses. The centurion would interrupt the beating and rescue Tarcisius. If weather was uncooperative or if I couldn't get cast together, I could always complete shooting on a fourth day.

Instead of rushing into it, I should have really given more thought to the project and postponed it to a time when I could do justice to sets. I didn't think it necessary to scout public buildings in West Allis and Milwaukee. Had I thought it through, I could have used Roman pillars and columns. Many in the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian styles were used in and outside municipal buildings. My greatest regret was not doing required research to find a place to stand in for the catacombs since they had played a major role in the story of Tarcisius. Any cave or rustic underground passage could have stood in for the catacombs. Not having a driver's license stifled my thinking and possibly looking beyond the quarry and woodland.

Casting wasn't as easy as I'd hoped. Most friends were otherwise busy or still working summer jobs. My first and only choice to play Tarcisius was Jack Roper. He may have been 17, but he could still pass for 12. Lucky for me Jack said he wasn't busy. Jim Lewandowski had been type-cast ever since *Rivals of the Treasure*. He always played a bully, a thug, the bad guy in my films and this, his last, wouldn't be any different. Both Jack and Jim would be starting their high school senior year.

When I couldn't get who I wanted to play a priest, the man who sends Tarcisius on his dangerous mission, Jim suggested his brother Richard. I knew he'd been at high school and that he was about to begin his junior year, but I didn't know him. He didn't look old enough to play a priest, but a false beard might boost his age. Giving Richard such an important role was like picking the proverbial pig in a poke.

Doug Gendron had experience in two of my films and jumped at the chance to participate again. Tom King, in the same year level as Doug, hadn't previously acted, but I asked him because he was as tall as Doug, had classic Roman facial features, and he was available. Tom was a pleasant kid, but I felt he had an inner punk to bring to my movie. Doug and Tom would be sophomores in the new school year.

My cousin Phillip Brochhausen would be leaving soon for his junior year at college. Phillip had helped behind the camera on previous "Elkay" Productions and he was flattered that I'd finally asked him to take a role in front of the camera. I cast him as the centurion. I didn't know it at the time I asked Phillip that he had a Roman helmet in his collection of Boy Scout things used when his troop put on skits.

To play Emperor Diocletian, I invited Mr. Bill Banister, one of the elders in the Milwaukee Movie Makers. No one else I'd liked to have cast was available. It would have been nice to include a few extras, people to populate scenes, to walk through or be in the backgrounds of shots, but I was throwing snake eyes as a casting director. I'd do a cameo, a Hitchcock, so to speak, as one of those secret Christians who assists Tarcisius in his mission.

This was going to be a serious effort, hence the choice to buy several rolls of black and white film. I had practical reasons too for using black and white. On color stock the garments' colors might draw too much attention. Black and white stock muted those colors into many shades of gray. Audience should remember the story and its characters and not be distracted by the bazaar-like, sometimes color clash of their costumes. Tarcisius would be covered in blood following his beating. I didn't want bright red blood and chicken liver gore for deliberate shock value as I'd used in *Dr. Emile's Mind*. That just made audiences wince and close their eyes. I wanted them to watch and learn, maybe even feel Tarcisius' pain.

Mom and my sister Mary sewed frantically to make Roman costumes. In the film I gave them a separate costuming credit. We couldn't have Hollywood's recognizable names like Edith Head, Jean

Louis, Gile Steele, Walter Plunkett or Orry-Kelly<sup>1</sup>. We had 'MARYANDMOMS'. Plain white or off-white was the usual color for a Roman tunic (Latin word for this garment was a <u>tunica</u>) made from wool or linen. 'MARYANDMOMS' sewed various materials. White satin tunics with gold trim were made for a couple of the boys' outfits. Red velvet scrap material was turned into a centurion's cape. Single cloth cloaks (Latin word <u>lacerna</u>) didn't need sewing and was worn over the tunic. Clothing would be swapped around since not all of the characters appeared together in one scene. A change of clothes, the addition of a beard, or clever setting of camera angle covered for an actor having to play more than one role when required.

To keep alive the joy of Camp Richards, I rang Randy Steele, the sharpest kid in my summertime group. He lived in the neighborhood suburb of Brookfield. I asked if he'd like to spend a day with me and act in my movie alongside my brother. Given how he performed on stage at camp, I had confidence he could act on film. Randy's parents had met me at camp, didn't think it unusual I'd call, and agreed to drive him over.

Randy and Steve appear with me at the beginning and again at the end of the film. In between is the story of Tarcisius. The technique is called bookending. In the first bookend I walk into frame to a bookcase and draw out a book, not surprisingly the aforementioned *Lives of the Saints*. The three of us sit on a sofa, Randy on my right, Steve seated to my left. I open the book and, giving separate attention to each of the boys, read the story. My words cause Randy to raise his head and look up. The slight action suggests Randy is allowing his imagination to take over and he visualizes what I read. The camera is focused on the book and the camera movement is a dive into the page. It is visual movie language used to transition to somewhere else, in this instance going from the present to the distant past.

The opening sequence finished, we immediately filmed the other side of the bookend, the film's ending. Randy still looks upward when I finish reading the story. He lowers his head and looks at the opened *Lives of the Saints* in my hands. With this bookend I have taken my audience out of the past and brought them back into the present. I look individually at each of the boys, just as a teacher might look to see if there's a reaction or a question. It appears they have been satisfied and I and close the book. Cue title card THE END.

Bill Banister came to the house the afternoon of the same day I shot the film's bookends.. The single shot of Mr. Banister as the Emperor Diocletian was made in the living room. He paces in front of a drawn drape. At the time of filming, I never saw the repeated pattern of oriental foliage against a white background. The drape should have been plain. The rise of Christianity is a worry to the Emperor. He bemoans the fact that some of his own soldiers have secretly turned to the new monotheistic belief. Mr. Banister was convincing as an addled, paranoid Emperor. Scratching his head and counting on his fingers the number of his soldiers he suspects have converted to Christianity, he looks absolutely befuddled and simultaneously cruel.

On the second day we set up a rural picnic-like scene in the wild space standing in for the outskirts of ancient Rome. That's the visual I wanted my audience to accept. As I had barely learned anything about the Latin language in a 10<sup>th</sup> grade class, I do recall that the English word "picnic" didn't exist in ancient Rome. For our classroom convenience, we'd been taught to call it a <u>picus-nicus</u>, an event whereby we could sip a <u>Cocam-Colam</u> (Coca-Cola, another word nonexistent in Latin). There are three people leisurely partaking in the <u>picus-nicus</u>.

One standing, a servant, is holding a tray with a terra cotta ewer. No <u>Cocam-Colam</u> in that jug, he serves cups of water to the two seated, a priest and his acolyte. Water was the drink of preference in the era of the Roman Empire. The cups were coffee mugs with a rustic look and contemporary handles. I don't think ancient Romans used drinking cups with handles. I'd asked my actors to hold

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> All were multi-nominated for the Academy Award for Costumes in Black & White or in Color. All won the Academy Award several times over the late 1940s and 1950s.

the cups with the handles turned toward them. Maybe the handles wouldn't look so obviously out of place.

Wind blows as the priest requests Tarcisius to carry Communion to the prisons. Of course Tarcisius accepts. Richard, wearing a crepe hair beard, looked like a young priest, not a high school kid. I would imagine in the early days of Christianity, there would have been young men as priests. Young people have traditionally been open to new ideas while members of older generations prefer the comfort of more traditional, conservative beliefs. How does the adage go? You can train a puppy, but you can't teach an old dog new tricks? Richard brought dignity to the character in his reading of the role. Richard the priest hands a small bag



containing the Communion to Tarcisius, pictured right in Jack Roper's 8mm frame enlargement; he blesses the boy with the sign of the cross.

The servant is Jim Lewandowski in a secondary "fill-in" role. He is unrecognizable under a cloth headpiece, beard and moustache. It was his sole claim to playing as an extra and, at long last, a character who wasn't a baddie.

That same day I filmed Tarcisius' journey, scenes which help to create atmosphere, scenes that work as a bridge between two major sequences, but which don't really advance the story. It's just filler material. To take advantage of our wild setting, Jack is seen walking through long grass. On his appointed mission to the prisons, Jack's steps are not graceful. He looks rather clumsy stepping over and around thick clumps of grass toward the camera set at a Low Angle. Holding the camera, I remember sitting cross-legged and bending forward as low to



the ground as possible. Using the Wide Angle lens, long blades of grass stay in focus and dominate the foreground. As Jack steps over me and the camera, I move in an arc, a tilt and pan, to follow Jack's movement. The entire shot is turned upside down. It's a technique I must have seen in a foreign language film, never in an American-made picture or one shot by an amateur. It was daring camerawork for an amateur in its day and was bound to upset traditionalists who insisted every shot be made with a camera mounted on a tripod.

Since we had that photogenic deep water quarry handy, it substituted in the movie for a river. I am seen in toga posed on a rock beside the water. Jack comes into the Wide Angle shot. Glances are exchanged and my Roman character lends a hand to help Tarcisius aboard a raft, pictured left in Jack Roper's 8mm frame enlargement. I hand him a pole, nothing more than a solid tree limb, nod my approval of what he's doing, look around to ensure no one's spying for the Emperor, and move out of shot. That was all I did. One shot in one take.



Jack uses the pole to move the raft, pictured right in Jack Roper's 8mm frame enlargement. As soon as he drifts away from the bank, Jack found the tree limb wasn't long enough to reach the bottom. He couldn't control the movement of the raft. The only other hunk of wood we found of sufficient length was a two by four plank. It doesn't look at all like the tree limb, but it made solid contact with the quarry bottom and Jack was able to punt. Wind was blowing. The raft bobbled like a cork. Water slapped over the floor and Jack said the wood was slippery. The plank went as deep into the water as its length, right up to Jack's grasping hands, and he bent low to push off. The raft drifted fast in the wind. He worked hard and it shows. The sequence was

exciting to film. Every move, every shot in the river crossing wasn't planned. What happened is what happened. It looks dangerous. It was dangerous! Reaching the safety of the quarry's opposite bank, Tarcisius leaps off the raft. Back on solid ground, Jack's face registers his relief.

To open the next major sequence, I lay on the ground for a Low Wide Angle shot. Again all seen in sharp focus, are the blades of grass in the foreground as the boys play a ball game in the background. The game isn't specific, but there's a quirky resemblance to soccer. The boys move the ball with their feet, kick it like a football. A suggestion of American football they hand off the round ball like a quarterback, and serve it between players as in volleyball. It is an even more dramatic shot when Jim Lewandowski drops down to squash the grass and occupy the frame's foreground space. He spots his friend Tarcisius and calls to him. Tarcisius stops. The other two boys come around to apply a little peer pressure. They want him to join in their game. There's the slightest hint of Tarcisius giving in, but then he adamantly says no. He can't play. He's on a mission to the prisons. As expected Tom King's strong thug emerged showing astonishment at hearing Tarcisius say prisons. It's an overreaction and Jim's character expression shows an attempt to dismiss King's aggression. Tarcisius is, after all, their friend. They call him Tarce and just want him to join in the game.

Tarcisius makes the mistake of tightly clutching the little bag close to his chest. The action gives too big a clue to King whose eyebrows furl as he puts two and two together. His dialogue title reads PRISONS. PRISONS? ONLY CHRISTIANS GO TO PRISONS. The boys had known their friend was a Christian and hadn't given it a second thought... until now. After all, he was Tarce, a friend who enjoyed playing football with them.

They suddenly react as good citizens of the Roman Empire and turn on Tarcisius. King reaches down and picks up a knotted branch the size of a baseball bat, pictured right.<sup>2</sup> With hand-held camera I followed King's movement of the tree branch. He took it in both hands and moved it behind his head grasping it like a cocked baseball bat. The camera quickly dollies in to Jack's face. In his eyes is fear. He sees the strike coming. Next I focused on the tree branch as King struck it down at the camera. Tarcisius falls, his temple bathed in blood from the blow.

I used cinema-verité, or hand-held camera, to film the violent sequence. It is a news cameraman's technique of filming the event as it happens. It lends a documentary feel to the picture. With movement of the camera, the audience may feel they've become part of the action. The audience feels and sees things as they happen and not as they have been planned or rehearsed to happen.

Although it may sound like a contradiction, in between each hand-held camera shot, I'd suggest what I wanted to see happen, choreographed the fisticuffs, and then there'd be a brief "dry run" or a rehearsal without any film run through the camera. After all, the punching and gouging and striking with the stick had to look brutal, but also be safe for the actors. I didn't want my actor with a real head gash bleeding profusely. Once everyone knew which blow went where, we'd do the action all over again, this time exposing the film. It can look like an unexpected blur of frantic action and that's how an all-in punch up might occur to the naked eye in real life. Anyone becomes a target. Pictured right is a publicity shot of the boys beating Tarcisius to an inch of his death.<sup>3</sup>

In his kneeling position holding onto Tarcisius, Doug's



-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Photo by Phillip Brochhausen

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Photo by Phillip Brochhausen

character is inadvertently clobbered by King's wild strikes with the limb-like bat. He cries as he holds a hand to his bleeding ear and falls toward the camera. His mouth opens and blood drips from his nose.

Intercut with the fury of the attack are short tracking shots of a helmet, a brandished sword, and the swift movement of sandaled feet. In Westerns the bugle call is heard to signal the arrival of the cavalry just in the nick of time. Mine are visual clues for the audience to expect arrival of a Roman soldier... and just in the nick of time. But for those who don't already know the acolyte's story, the centurion might be coming along to help kill a Christian, make it easier for the boys by sticking his sharp blade into the boy's ribs! The boys read it differently. King drops the bloodied tree branch. He and Jim Lewandowski help Doug to his feet. Still dazed by King's wallop, he can barely stand or move without their assistance. Dragging Doug away, all three escape responsibility for their actions.

The centurion cradles Tarcisius. The boy recognizes the soldier and tells him he was going to the prisons. No dialogue title is necessary. After Tarcisius finishes stumbling over words, he dies a Hollywood death. He closes his eyes and his head droops to the side. The soldier pauses, perhaps saying a silent prayer, and then he lifts the boy and carries him away from camera.





Publicity Shots from Tarcisius<sup>4</sup> are similar to the pictures in the book Lives of the Saints

Most people think moviemakers use ketchup for blood. Well, yes, making *From the Powers of Darkness* I did. Problem is that ketchup on film doesn't look like blood. It photographs more orange than red. It looks like ketchup. For color film, raspberry jam looks more convincing as gore, but it doesn't drip or flow like blood. A little water-based red paint added in works well. Buying stage blood from a shop which supplies theatrical make-up looks real, works best, but can be costly.

Using black and white film, however, makes a different demand to convince a substitute is blood worthy of belief. Red doesn't photograph a deep enough shade of black to look like blood. I learned the substitute for blood trick from Alfred Hitchcock and *Psycho* (1960). After the theatrical release and the passage of time to allow peoples' nerves to settle and get back into the shower, stories of how the film was made were published in magazines and newspapers. It may have been Forrest J. Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* or it may have been *Life* or *Look* or the *Milwaukee Journal*. I read how the master of suspense used cans of Hershey's chocolate syrup for blood in his black and white feature. Making the story of Tarcisius, I used Hershey's too. Not only does it look convincing as blood, it tastes good for the actor. Just like real blood, as it dries it becomes sticky.

There was a fourth day of shooting, but it only involved a titling set. I shot my company logo against a set designer's painting of the Circus Maximus for *Ben-Hur*. I shot THE END against that same

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Photos by Phillip Brochhausen

painting published in the movie souvenir booklet I'd bought in 1959 for a dollar. Dialogue and narration titles were white letters against a black background. Having made titles naming the fourth century and Emperor Diocletian, it would be many years later before I'd learn my mistake in naming Diocletian. He ruled Rome in the fourth century when Pope St. Damasus wrote about the "boy martyr of the Eucharist". Tarcisius lived during the grim Roman persecutions in the third century, probably during the reign of Emperor Valerian. No one's ever questioned my mistaken take on the history.

With everyone having pitched in their best effort, it's a picture which came together nicely. After the film was processed, post-production took several more days of sole concentration. During editing I used Craig Fotofade to Fade In and Fade Out between major sequences. The music I chose was from Miklos Rosza's Academy Award winning score for *Ben-Hur*. It was right for *Ben-Hur* and was always going to be way too big for my little production. The music practically overwhelmed what we saw on the screen. I stuck with it anyway. The actors played for the seriousness of the subject matter and the film has its exciting moments. I learned how to effectively shoot with a new moviemaking technique when filming the sequences of Tarcisius on his journey and of the boys beating Tarcisius senseless. I learned that by showing only bits and pieces of a whole action, that cutting together short pieces of film produces frantic, brutal and horrific action. Thank you for the shower sequence in *Psycho* Alfred Hitchcock! The final running time of *Tarcisius* - what else could the film be called - is 18 minutes.



On the set of *Tarcisius*: Jack Roper as Tarcisius, his assailant Tom King, and director me

## Chapter 34: Breaking the Ol' College Leg

entral State College, aka Wisconsin State College-Stevens Point, became Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point on July 1, 1964. This was later to be Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point, to emphasize the fact that the school is one in the State University system. It was often abbreviated as WSU-SP. By September then, I was no longer the lowly frosh, no longer the ordinary college student. I was the more prestigious sounding second-year sophomore... in university! Looking one year older and maybe feeling a little bit smarter, new buildings going up here, there and everywhere, my immediate environs since 1963 were unchanged. The main building, Old Main as she was called, still stood showcased amid beautiful manicured grounds on Main Street. The Campus School stayed tucked behind Old Main, its door unchanged from the Reserve Street entrance. Pray-Sims Hall was still the L-shaped building divided into two dormitories of Pray and Sims. An earthquake hadn't moved it from the short walk to the Allen Center, the bane of residents' existence with its catering, a word I use loosely, by Ace Foods.

We ate to survive and that would have been our only reason for heading to the Bessie May Allen Food Center three times a day. It was the expected norm to moan about the menus, the aromas, and the appearance of what was passed off as breakfast, lunch and dinner. Tell me, how did a scrambled egg manage to slither off a slice of coarsely-textured toast? That is, if it really was an egg. What appeared to be surplus World War II powdered egg rations swam scrambled in a wallow of water in the bain-marie, ladies eventually ladling slop onto plates. Sprigs of parsley one, a handful, or the whole damned bunch - couldn't visually transform such a breakfast into a pièce de résistance, especially after students, maybe even the kitchen ladies, spent a night on the suds. Since when did Jell-O cubes puddle instead of wiggle? Whose brilliant idea was it to stuff pig casings with pale ground fish and minimal seasoning and call them Friday night hot dogs?

There were, of course, alternatives available for main course. In fact, French gourmands would have said we were more than embarras de choix. Others would have called it a dilemma. You pointed a rigid finger, likely the middle one, to choose with utter trepidation stewed chicken pieces with falling-apart vegetables swimming among globules of fat melted from pimpled dermis of barnyard neck. A ladle or two of this freely floating flotsam on pasty water was then heaped atop a molehill of runny instant mashed potatoes; or you paused before inordinately indicating the unevenly-sliced, moisture-deprived roast beef bathing in thick brown onion sludge, the conglomeration appearing unsuitable for human consumption, its suitability only for resoling footwear. Ah, the meal of soft greasy schnitzel folding beneath the press of the fork and never separating into mouth-sized morsel, or the selection of purple-gray sauerbraten confiscated from the commandant's kitchen of an internment camp liberated in April 1945. Let me never forget a Friday option of macaroni glugged in melted Velveeta cheese, or breaded fish sticks full of cereal and as dry as a Salada cracker or appositely as saturated as a coffeedunked doughnut from sweating under lights in a tray over a heat bath to keep them warm. Gagaluscious it was, every last morsel, but it kept us alive and kicking.

The university newspaper, *The Pointer*, published weekly menus. Amongst ladled, tonged and spatula-laden choices, gobbets were given palatable names, blue plate specials we frequently believed we'd be feasting upon. More often than not our imagination and reality failed to meld. Chance being confronted with one Tuesday's menu: Veal Choppie (no idea?) or Vegetable Beef Cobbler (cobbler

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> French for spoiled for choice.

wasn't a dessert after all?), Parsley Buttered Potatoes, Cut Wax Beans (dumped out of an enormous can and warmed). Get excited about Wednesday's Shrimp Tidbits (something chopped, mixed with breadcrumbs and deep fried) or Glorified Frankfurters (whatever the hell they were!), Potato Puffs (something man-made which might have actually contained a smidge of pomme de terre), and Stewed Tomatoes (a step ahead of a full puree). Thursday's burnt offering could have been French Fried Haddock or Roulades of Beef, Whipped Potatoes (meaning they came dried and instant out of a box and had hot water added!), Glazed Parsnips (really?). Sundays should have been the great feast, but what appeared was Assorted Cold Meats, Assorted Salads, Assorted Breads, Assorted Dessert, Assorted Milk. Assorted, My Ass! It was the catering service's way of saying that staff was home with family enjoying a delicious roast dinner and the fridge was opened in the Allen Center to see what was left festering from the week's lunches. What we got out of it was sustenance without pleasure, nourishment without nurturing, and the occasional case of the runs.

The biggest icky on an evening supper menu listed late in the week, Saturday's most preferable, was "Manager's Choice". That meant only one thing. The week's leftovers had been coarsely chopped into suspiciously lumpy bits and dumped into water to make a one-off thickish blah soup. Or it had been hastily and carelessly diced into bigger lumps, possibly with snagged fingernail or fingertip, and scraped into roasting pans with rice-a-roni or macaroni in a highly-seasoned white, red or brown liquid coagulation. Ace concocted a sauced or gravy casserole of go ahead and guess what. It's no wonder that when I wrote to Mom and Dad and said I'd be home for the weekend, I emphasized with a double underline, "Please, no noodles."

My readers, I know what you're thinking, "Surely you jest." Surely it's all exaggeration to provoke a smile or evoke disgust. By way of defense, a letter to the Editor of *The New Pointer* at this time exclaimed, "How about blasting something which directly involves the students on this campus. The problem I have in mind is the food service. Recently students have been subjected to a deluge of raw eggs, poor coffee (sometimes tasting like fruit juice), rubbery toast and watery jelly. Lunch doesn't seem to get any better. There seems to be an overabundance of noodles in tasteless casseroles - and just plain noodles. The big blow was last Saturday when we had "Manager's Selection" which meant for some students spaghetti sauce over boiled rice! I guess that's one way of cleaning out the freezer though.

"Much of the time we're not served what's on the menu. Ice cream turned into blueberry stroodle (sic) which lasted for three or four meals after that. Turkey or veal choppies were turned into liver, ham and turkey. Wierd (sic) tasting mashed potatoes were added to the delightful menu Saturday night.

"I hope the students who read this letter won't just sit in the cafeteria and say, 'Gee this meal is bad news' anymore. Ace Foods claim they have never recieved (sic) any complaints before. I know there are complaints but the students are not willing to voice them to the proper people. Fellow students, when something gripes you about a meal don't just sit on your hands and grumble but get up and go complain to Ace Foods." The letter carried the writer's name Fred Henize. Was that a pseudonym because he couldn't spell Heinz for the 57 varieties of garbage dumped onto our plates?

There was an enlightening, if not alarming response from editorial staff of *The New Pointer* with a headline proclaiming "The 7-Day Meal Ticket." Associate Dean of Students Mr. Orland E. Radke summed up food service policy as "a basic philosophy of education." A nebulous reply? Let's see. "This university must prepare the whole person for the active, social life of the professional man or woman. According to Mr. Radke, in order for the professional person to fulfill this role, he must be at ease in conversing with his fellows at the table and also eat with the facility that his position would prescribe for him in his community – yes, he must have good table manners. It is generally felt that the indiscriminate eating, usually alone or in the company of 'buddies' is not likely to elevate one's eating habits nor to encourage intelligent and enlightening conversation. Not only is the Department of Student Affairs concerned with what social decorum is acquired here at the U., but there is also concern about student identification with the school. A commuting student or a 'five-day' student

who goes home each weekend is less likely to feel that he 'belongs' here, that this is his home. (If you sneer at this concept, then it is at you whom the 7-day plan is directed.) If you don't feel an affinity for the U., you possibly are not participating in school activities enough; the meals are an important part of school activity. It is the hope of those responsible for the 7-day meal plan that, that plan will alleviate, somewhat, any incoherence within the student body.

"In the not too distant future, meals on Saturdays will be served buffet style, other weekend meals will be attended by hosts and hostesses and often foreign dishes will be served." (Ah ha, so that accounts for spaghetti sauce on boiled rice!) "Already the food service has put into effect the continental breakfast which is served in the dorms on Sunday mornings and consists of coffee, sweet rolls," (read doughnuts copiously sprinkled and coated with sugar) "and juice. This and Sunday supper at no added expense to the student should attest to his school's genuine interest in his complete education and welfare.

"If there is anything that you wish to inquire about concerning you and your school, send your queries to this column. Let's hear from you soon. Like maybe right now. How come? Because your questions are important to the whole campus."

Yeah, by Jiminy, that sure gave the definitive answer to quality of food and why we were served such fanciful, inventive and, as readers may have discerned, disgusting food.



If complaints, as Ace Foods claimed, were "never heard," it's amazing how aware local food establishments became. In the world of advertising it was usually advised not to run down the opposition as it could make your own product look petty rather than upfront. The Whiting Hotel, home to the Hot Fish Shop restaurant and a delightful Coffee Shop certainly didn't run over its perceived opposition with a steam roller in a genuine advertisement prominently run November 19, 1964 in *The New Pointer* and fair use picture left.

Even though the cafeteria raised any number of questions about its food quality, it was a great place for people-watching, meeting other students to share a gripe or discuss a class, and occasionally make a new friend. A freshman introduced himself saying he'd heard I made films and that he, too, liked making movies. I accepted his greeting with a touch of friendly rivalry, and I didn't even know his name. Yes, it was flattering that he had heard of me, but it pricked my ego that there was someone else with skills similar to or better than my own. It must have been my human frailty to perceive a hand of friendship as a possible threat to my position in our life game of Chutes and Ladders. Fortunate for me I didn't dismiss his gesture outright. I always felt there'd be a niggling bit of one-upmanship over known or perceived movie camera skills, but I welcomed the gift of getting to know another young man with the same hobby and interests. He was John Primm from Villa Park, Illinois and he roomed with a guy on the ground floor of Sims.

I'm sure John had learned about me and my moviemaking from his best friend Dave Ludwig who'd acted in my killer card playing movie *Black Lady*. It's a smaller world than we sometimes care to accept but, hey, go ahead and connect the dots! John and I getting acquainted and becoming friends must have been one of those life matters engineered by the gods. In Greek theater it was the <u>deus ex machina.</u><sup>2</sup> People of faith might call it Providence whereas society in general might refer to it as plain ordinary fate, good luck, and, undoubtedly, one of those things in life that was just meant to be!

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Latin, it is "god from the machine". In a performance of a Greek Tragedy, a god intervening in the course of human life was shown by suspending an actor in costume over the stage or being lowered onto the stage floor by a machine of hand-cranked ropes and pulleys similar in looks to a building site crane.

Correspondence, classes and making new friends dominated the beginning of my sophomore year. My box in Sims Hall was loaded almost every day with letters from Mom and Dad, friends from home, and organizations where my films competed for recognition. CACCA sent a certificate dated June 1964. *Futility* had been selected as one of the Ten Best Films of the Year. I especially enjoyed finding mail from Camp Richards' campers and counselors. Their letters made me feel I'd made a good impression and had done something worthwhile. Most consistent letter writer amongst the campers was Lewy. He wrote religiously every seven to twelve days. For a boy three months shy of becoming a teenager, his command of the written word was amazingly literate. His were followed with occasional short letters, notes and hasty scribbling from Jim, Randy, Mike, Gabriel, Mark and brothers Terry and Jimmy. Setting aside times each day to reply to letters, ready films for competitions and program screenings, attend classes, study, and complete assignments was necessary, else one or the others be neglected.

Camp Richards letter writers all stated they hoped to see me again next summer. Camp was foremost in my thinking when I chose to do a Physical Education class in Recreational Games. I felt it would come in handy for next summer's work. Unlike any other Phy Ed or Swimming class I'd done, this one was happily co-educational. Mr. Hagerman, the instructor, asked on the first day our reason for taking this class. My answer about wanting to learn for next summer's job at camp prompted him to say he'd teach me whatever he could to boost my expertise. We learned and played games that children liked and played. While Mr. Hagerman organized and taught the games in his playbook, our ongoing assignment was to devise new games, write them up, bring our papers to class and instruct the class in how to play. Success of the written project became evident when the class understood the instructions and actually enjoyed playing the game.

Professor Miss Mary Elizabeth Thompson taught Speech 10, a class in Voice and Diction. A PhD, in her introduction she said her former students had included Patricia Neal and Marlon Brando. OK, that's a claim to fame to open our eyes and drop our jaws. She must have taught them elsewhere, New York maybe, because there was no record of either Academy Award winner ever having taken a class in little old Stevens Point. Marlon Brando was considered the actor of his generation, but of his speech, he mumbled. I'd watched Brando agonize on screen in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *The Wild One* (1954) and *On the Waterfront* (1954) and always struggled to understand what he said. Had Miss Thompson any responsibility for Brando's inarticulate speech? I wondered what Miss Thompson might genuinely teach me.

For individual experience in mispronunciation and fumbled articulation, everyone in class took a turn with a microphone mounted on a podium to read one or more vocal exercises of a radio broadcaster's test. The room was padded with material which absorbed sound, therefore no echo effect. The oral test included an introduction for a dramatic play, two commercials, a comedy show introduction, classical music titles and pronunciation of composers' names, and a brief story with tongue-twisting words. It wasn't unexpected or unusual to hear some students bungle Chopin as Chop'pin', Tchaikovsky as Tit-chee-kee-ov'-ski, and Beethoven as Beet-ho-vin'. I stifled a laugh when hearing French composer Delibes pronounced De-libber-dees. After I'd finished reading the initially requested item, Miss Thompson asked me to complete reading all seven pages. From the smile which grew broader on her face with each pronunciation of foreign name and music term, she must have enjoyed it. Not only had I demonstrated command of clearly articulated vowels and consonants matched with accurate pronunciation, my delivery was confident and amiable. Miss Thompson asked if I had ever been on radio. Thinking back to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Pat Shanahan, and winning my Wish of the Week, I answered convincingly, "Yes."

I did something on the spur of the moment and then wished I hadn't. I tried out for a part in Sidney Kingsley's *Detective Story*. Somehow I landed the substantial role of Lt. Monoghan, a Brooklyn detective played on Broadway by Horace McMahon of TV's "Naked City" fame and who reprised the role in a Paramount feature film directed by William Wyler. I had to attempt a Bronx accent. Jeff Rodman was cast as Detective Brody. Dick Wesell got a part as Mr. Gallant, a schmutz who's robbed of his wallet when all of his pockets are razor cut leaving holes in his suit coat and pants. Three more

names should be mentioned for the significance they played later in my filmmaking. Cindy Parkovich played an overly polite shoplifter. Paul Bentzen was Charlie, a four-time loser of a burglar. Sue Siebert worked behind the scenes as a makeup mistress. Weekday evenings, mornings and afternoons of weekends were taken up with play rehearsal. Our director was William Dawson, a hard taskmaster, whose expectation for perfection in acting classes bordered on the severe. Students rarely achieved the heights he demanded and dubbed him D minus Dawson. He taught Stanislavski, more commonly called "method acting", a concept of acting wherein an actor doesn't just act, but inhabits, becomes the character. Emotions are deemed true and believable. The actor lives and breathes the character and usually creates a back-story for the character not normally included in the playwright's notes. The character comes from within, from the soul, not from outward movement or gestures or vocal gymnastics. The actor feels everything the character feels, literally gets inside the character's skin and transforms into a new person. Emotions can be raw when they surface, but are always kept under control. Hard work.

Sue Siebert transformed my appearance from a 19 year old boy to a man in his 50s. She applied facial wrinkles and grayed my hair. Interesting that many years later when I saw the film *Detective Story*, Horace McMahon's hairstyle was a slicked-back jet black; dyed, perhaps, to cover any gray! The make-up helped me get into the role, as did the brown suit with its suspenders to hold up the larger than comfortable-sized trousers. The first dress rehearsal I heard "Break a leg." I thought someone had it in for me and wanted me to fall over. I learned that telling a fellow actor to "Break a leg" before stepping onto stage really meant "Good luck." This being my first college play, the experienced cast complimented and encouraged. When it came to one afternoon's performance, all the buttering up in the world was wasted.

Five performances of the play were scheduled October 7 to 10 with two Saturday shows. Flawlessly treading the boards over three nights, I faced a final Saturday night performance. That day's matinee most seats were occupied by high school students who treated their theatre experience like they'd rather have been at the stadium watching a football game. There weren't any catcalls directed at the stage, just a constant wiggling, mumbling, and yammering of unease and disinterest. It was a huge distraction. As much as we'd liked to have broken character and turned toward the noisy plebs and shouted at them, "Will you shut the hell up," we stayed in character and contained ourselves. Why weren't their teachers doing something to quieten them down? Maybe they wanted to watch football as well. We'd been instilled with the adage that, no matter what, "The show must go on." These were the days when actors weren't wired with microphones. We had to rely upon our own lungs and diaphragmatic breathing and strong voices to project to the back of the auditorium and be heard. Unlike high school, we had no behind the wings prompters. We were expected to know our lines, know our character and come through unscathed. On this afternoon, with this waffling antsy-pants audience, the task was an even greater challenge.

In a crucial scene set in Lt. Monoghan's office, audience malarkey bounced against my brain and polluted my train of thought. I went blank. I stared at the other actor who may have been Jeff Rodman. He saw in my eyes that I wasn't there, but didn't panic. The show went on. He repeated a few of his lines and ad-libbed with thoughtful pauses. I was like an author with writer's block facing a blank sheet of paper in his Remington. Like a précis, the most important lines of the scene were repeated ever so slowly to jog my memory, yet not let on to the audience that I was in trouble. Then I heard and recognized my cue and, as if I'd been deliberately pondering the subject all along, changed position in my swivel chair and quietly responded, "What was his name?" I saw Rodman, or whomever it was, register a small smile to acknowledge "well done". We were back on track. Thank goodness for a more experienced stage actor opposite me who didn't freeze or get flustered. For all the unwelcome sound coming from the immaturity of our audience, my line could have been whispered as a prompt. Few, if any wriggling in their seats, would ever have heard. After the performance, Director Dawson had a quiet word with me. I'd stayed in character, I sure put Rodman through his paces, blanks happen and I'd be fine tonight. And I was.

Accepted by they who tread the boards, I showed my movies at a house party to actors and backstage technicians known around campus as the College Theatre. Theater. Theatre? Ending in r e instead of e r? How pretentious was that? No one offered a logical explanation for using the British spelling other than it made the group stand out from others on campus. Well, whoopee ding! It was after screening You Just Can't Win with Jeff Rodman that Paul Bentzen made himself known. He was a sophomore and a Stevens Point local. Paul didn't wait in the wings for my invitation. So many others had and then regretted never getting an opportunity to be in one of my movies. Paul approached and said without hesitation, "I want to be in your movies." It was another instance of deus ex machina. Working on *Detective Story*, I saw Paul play a convincing character. He was as talented and seriously intellectual as he was funny, his sense of humor often bordering on and crossing over into the ridiculous. Adjectives like strange and odd were also Paul's and, no matter what, the dominant impression he made was funny and strange and odd. Never the leading man, he would always be a character and a character actor. In fact, for playing Charlie in *Detective Story* the College Theatre awarded Paul an award for Best Actor. Some guys liked having a girl clinging to their arm like she was a trophy wherever they'd go. Paul always looked like he courted his banjo. Wherever Paul went, his banjo was slung over his shoulder and he fiddled with its strings and frets like a smoker fingers a cigarette and flicks its ash. It was an unconscious and symbiotic association. Invite Paul, you knew you'd also get the banjo. They were as inseparable as the Gemini.

About the same time as rehearsals, performance of *Detective Story* and shortly after it wrapped, members of the Milwaukee Movie Makers were on the road visiting and entertaining regional movie clubs. My films were included. The Metro Movie Club in Chicago saw *For He Shall Conquer*, *Futility*, and *Little Brother*. The Kenosha Movie and Slide Club viewed *You Just Can't Win*, *Futility*, and *Little Brother*. The club in Racine re-imagined its city's name to create the Ra-Cine Movie and Slide Club. They watched the mix of *For He Shall Conquer*, *You Just Can't Win*, and *Futility*.

Every school year has a schedule of successful events repeated annually. Only the participants change. Stevens Point's included the football season and Homecoming, school plays, foreign language movies or old-time silent movies Saturday nights, Winter Carnival with its Ugly Man on Campus, and faculty specific programs and shows. Speech 10's Miss Thompson was just one of several Forensics and Debate coaches in the Speech Department. I enjoyed Forensics and didn't need coercing. Our training and rehearsal included public performances called Reading Hours. The First Reading Hour was a Monday night on October 26 in the Union Lounge. Close to a hundred people filled the seats. One of the selected readings by Jerry Kautza was, for me, a very familiar poem, Vachal Lindsay's *The Congo*. Now I preferred to participate in Interpretive Reading of Prose and I felt privileged to read my original work *Silence Rules a Counselor's Return*, the piece I wrote after a Sunday drive to Divine Word Seminary, finding Camp Richards erased from the grounds and learning my snapshots and movie film had been thrown out. I eventually shortened the title to *A Counselor Returns* and my reading allowed me to relive something of the camp I so much enjoyed. One girl in the audience cried. We all heard her snuffling as I read my original selection.

If I wasn't performing on a weekend, I was watching and learning. The Union Board's culturally-named Arts and Lecture Series sponsored all kinds of programs which brought in performers, musicians, symphony orchestras, big names in popular and classical music. A mutual interest in film and filmmaking techniques made John Primm and me regular attendees in the Library Theatre Cinema Arts series of foreign-language films. In a world outside the incubator of university, it wasn't always easy to see films in foreign languages. TV didn't air them and local movie houses didn't screen them. Art-house cinemas showed films in languages other than English, but their location was often only in big cities, and far away from Stevens Point. We'd paid for Union activities in annual school fees and they covered attendance, so going to the Library Theater every Friday evening felt like a free night out.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had been handing out Special Awards for Best Foreign Film since Italy's *Shoe Shine* in 1946. Later it was called an Honorary Oscar. Foreign Language Film eventually got its own category of nominees in 1956. Until now those films were only

titles badly recited by presenters. Subject matter and language became irrelevant. It was exciting and revealing to see other countries' stories. We learned to speed read subtitles so as not to miss seeing any of the action in the picture. We discovered that translation didn't always match how long an actor spoke. A long-winded "Blah, blah, blah, blah," in Italian might end up in the simply worded subtitle, "No, thanks." We also realized that we didn't have to read every word of every subtitle. We seemed to become familiar enough with languages to get a basic interpretation of actors' lines without even having to thoroughly read subtitles. Action and reaction often revealed more than the sometimes poorly translated words. It was as if a whole new world had opened up to us.

Over the next two to three years, we sat through many black and white movies set in the Second World War. There was a Polish film, *Kanal*, made in 1956 by Andrzej Wajda about the final days of the September, 1944, Warsaw uprising in Nazi-occupied Poland. People sought safety in the sewers while the Nazis demolished Warsaw, according to Hitler's barbaric instruction, brick by brick. A particularly memorable scene showed a wounded man with fever and a woman staggering in sewage up to their necks. Via subtitles the man says, "We are wading through a dark and fragrant wood." The woman replies, "We are wading in shit!" "Daisy," replies the man, "you are always the realist." After such realism, experiencing the film rather than just watching it, we needed to use the shower.

I remember Russian films *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957), *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959), and especially *My Name is Ivan* aka *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), a taut and poignant story of a boy whose family is slaughtered and his plight when he becomes a spy in Nazi-occupied Russian territory. Most affecting was an interrogation sequence of the captured 12 year old boy, wire binding of hands, a meat hook, and a guillotine.

The German film *The Bridge* (1960) was an unrelenting account of teenage boys drafted into the German Army in 1945, in the final days of the war, as a last-ditch effort to stem the Allied liberation. What made the indelible impression wasn't just the senseless slaughter of the boys defending an unimportant bridge; it was the ability of the filmmaker to make the viewer feel that the Nazi boys were the good guys and American soldiers advancing in their tanks were the enemy. Completely misplaced was feeling like cheering for one of the boy soldiers when he shot down a Yank GI.

I was enamored with films from any of the Scandinavian countries. Maybe it was the use of light or the actual subject matter which nailed me wide-eyed into my seat. I know I rarely understood what I saw of Ingmar Bergman's symbolism in *The Seventh Seal* (1957), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), *Sawdust and Tinsel* (1953) or *The Virgin Spring* (1959), but I appreciated what images washed over me from the screen, log-jammed against my eyeballs, and embedded forever images which can't be rinsed from my thinking stuff..

François Truffaut, the influential director of the French New Wave, made films which always filled the Library Theatre. His *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960) showed Hollywood's influence of low budget melodramas on his cinematic style. *Jules and Jim* (1961) was his film of three people in love, a film of rare beauty and charm which, I'm certain, I was too inexperienced to fully appreciate. Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959) I understood and I locked his long one-take scenes of motion into my memory library. He used the Freeze Frame, the projected image of one frame held in time, to tell his audience just what it needed to know so it filled in the blanks.

Another French film ended with the haunting voice of a little girl in a train station frantically, yet plaintively calling for her friend. It broke my heart. It was called *Jeux Interdits* (1951), translated *Forbidden Games*, and won a Best Foreign Film Oscar. Directed by Jean Renoir, it was about two children on a farm in Nazi-occupied France who witnessed family, friends and neighbors killed and who make a cemetery for animals which have died.

I also recall being flummoxed by a French language movie set in a garden maze called *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961). One of the main characters in some kind of relationship claimed they'd had an affair, "Last year at Frederiksbad, or perhaps at Marienbad." Murky, difficult, and odd, it constantly

repeated scenes as if stuck in a time warp or a very bad dream. Whatever the art-house film had to say was beyond our comprehension. John and I both felt we been screwed by a waste of our time and some valuable celluloid. The fact I still remember this awfully frustrating film, good or bad, well, that says something. In fact, seeing *The Maze* (1953) on television suggested to me that its making may have been influenced by *Last Year at Marienbad*. Both pictures left me unsatisfied.

Together in the Library Theater we were introduced to the great director Akira Kurosawa, his favorite starring actor Toshiro Mifune, and *Rashomon*, Honorary Oscar for Best Foreign Film 1951. More of Kurosawa's deft hand with script, actors and camera jumped off the silver screen into my eyes and made an unforgettable mark in my brain. Running for over three hours, characters in 1954's *The Seven Samurai* were fully developed whilst precision sword action in teeming rain mesmerized in Kurosawa's far-east Western. How was I to have known that when I saw *The Magnificent Seven* in widescreen in 1960 that it had borrowed its basic premise from Kurosawa's masterpiece?

I was familiar with some of Shakespeare's plays, particularly the Scottish play having played a scene of the three witches in my high school English class. Now Kurosawa's interpretation of *Macbeth* filled the Library Theater's screen. He called it *Throne of Blood* (1957). Knowing well the story, John and I didn't even need to read the subtitles. The visuals of the violence committed by and toward Toshiro Mifune as Taketoki Washizu, the Japanese Macbeth, were graphic. After the forest had advanced on the castle and attacked, Mifune's wide eyes showed his terror as arrows are shot at him. Some bounce off rock walls while others stick into his samurai clothes. No trick effect, the arrows were actually fired at Mifune, hence the real fear shown in his ever widening eyes and gaping mouth.

Other films by Japanese directors I appreciated had war themes and told stories from the Japanese point of view: *Gate of Hell* (1953), *The Burmese Harp* (1956), and *Fires on the Plain* (1959). The latter had one pathetic, heart-rending, and simultaneously gut-testing scene. A starving Japanese soldier is so crazed with hunger; he defecates... into his hand and... skip this if you have a weak stomach... lifts it to his mouth. Bite by methodical bite, chew by methodical chew, he eats his own excrement. And to think that before, all I had known of Japanese movies was *Godzilla* (1956), incapable of ever nudging an Oscar nomination, shown in Stevens Point's mainstream fare Fox Theater, but with Raymond Burr in it, all the dialogue dubbed into English, I assumed it was a cheap American B picture.

A different movie experience sourced by the Union's Arts and Lectures series was the Nickelodeon<sup>3</sup>. Hosted by John Schelkopf, pictured left at the piano in the University Auditorium, admission was only  $5\phi$  for a delightful Saturday evening of old-fashioned entertainment. John owned all of the



٠

16mm prints of silent films in his collection. Titles bridged the range of the silent pictures from the earliest hand-cranked flickers to the refined black and white dramas and comedies which ran at what contemporary audiences would call normal speed. Schelkopf was a deft hand at the piano and organ and provided live accompaniment of music and sound effects. The often capacity audience was transported back to a time when motion pictures were a novelty in vaudeville houses and music halls, or entire programs in store fronts or store shows (small stores serving as motion picture theaters with the addition of folding chairs) or 5¢ shows because one could see the entire program of short films for a nickel. The first was founded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1905 and proliferated from there into what eventually became the Hollywood movie distribution and exhibition industry. With the masses, nickelodeons were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The word is a combination of nickel, a five-cent coin (the cost to view) and odeon, from the Greek oideion, the word for theater or building for musical performance, as in Melodeon (1840) meaning music hall

cheap and popular entertainment venues. Audiences would have reacted vocally and physically to what they saw on screen, sometimes a crudely nailed up bed sheet. Our contemporary audience was encouraged to do the same. We booed the villain and cheered the hero in films from Mack Sennett's Keystone Studios, nicknamed the Laugh Factory or Fun Factory. One-reel short subjects included *Barney Oldfield's Race for a Life* (1912), one of the archetypes for melodramatic comedy mayhem. The moustache-twirling villain ties the beautiful heroine to the railroad tracks. The train approaches and is raced by real race car driver Barney Oldfield to untie the heroine and safely rescue her just in the nick of time.

Over many months we laughed ourselves silly, held our aching sides from guffawing and wiped our watering eyes with hankies or the backs of our hands from prolonged chuckling. For the really old flickering images of Lumière's 1895 L'Arrivée du Train en Gare (The Arrival of a Train at a Station), Edison's 1896's The Kiss and George Mèliés' frame-by-frame hand-colored Le Voyage dans la Lune (A Trip to the Moon) (1902) and Edwin S. Porter's The Great Train Robbery (first-ever Western made in 1903) and the fantastically magical Dream of a Rarebit Fiend (1906), John Schelkopf tinkled the keys of a honky-tonk piano. We saw Charlie Chaplin's first film Making a Living made in 1913. The film wherein Chaplin dressed as the Little Tramp but didn't behave as his Little Tramp was Kid Auto Races at Venice (1913). We were treated to Chaplin's first feature with Sennett, 1913's Tillie's Punctured Romance with Mabel Normand and Marie Dressler.

Schelkopf sometimes chose to tickle the ivories of a well-tuned upright when we watched The Keystone Kops, cross-eyed Ben Turpin, walrus-mustachioed Chester Conklin, and Sennett's Bathing Beauties which included Gloria Swanson who graduated from wacky comedies to later become one of the silver screen's most alluringly beautiful faces. He added that extra zing with his scene-for-scene music inventiveness for Buster Keaton's *The General* (1925), *Son of the Sheik* (1926) starring myopic Rudolph Valentino and Vilma Banky, and some Hal Roach Our Gang shorts with Mickey Daniels, Mary Kornman, Joe Cobb, Farina, Stymie, Jackie Condon and "Pete," the dog with the black circle drawn around his left eye.

Also from the Hal Roach Studios, we were introduced to Harold Lloyd and his thrill pictures. The whole feature *Safety Last* (1923) wasn't screened. We saw just an excerpt, the most famous bit of Lloyd making like a human fly and climbing a tall department store building. Through one mishap after another he hangs off the hands of a clock thirteen stories above the street.

Stan Laurel & Oliver Hardy cranked up our funny bones with one Lloyd-esque thrill outing called *Liberty* (1929). How we screamed in fear, awe and mirth over the team's and Lloyd's breathtaking, lean-back-as-far-as-you-can without falling stunts. Never popular with the critics, Laurel & Hardy always entertained their audiences. Schelkopf screened their first film as a comedy team in *Putting Pants on Phillip* (1927), an escape from prison flick *The Second Hundred Years* (1927), and the side-splitting *Two Tars* (1928) where all the cars stuck in a road construction traffic jam are destroyed. The parade past the camera of each limping carcass of a car punches up the laughter scale from a smile to a "tee hee" to a "ha ha" and into holding-your-sides belly laughter.

When dramatic pictures were played, Schelkopf played an organ equipped with sound effects for gun shots, train whistles and boat horns, church bells, simulated traffic and weather effects like thunderstorms and wind. It was a long sit for the unreeling of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), the film often credited with raising film from a novelty to an art form. We saw Lillian Gish, Donald Crisp, and Richard Barthelmess made up as the Chinese Yellow Man in Griffiths tender yet ugly melodramatic *Broken Blossoms* (1919). Lon Chaney, the Man of a Thousand Faces, was Quasimodo the bell ringer in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923). He scared the livin' crap out of us when suddenly unmasked to reveal the frighteningly disfigured skull-like face of Eric in 1925's *The Phantom of the Opera*. Schelkopf's print included the experimental and "ooh-ah" two-color Opera House Bal Masque sequence. The Phantom wore the mask of a naked skull and was dressed in a flowing red robe.



John Primm and I, influenced by having seen the make-up of Lon Chaney in the Nickelodeon series, worked unsuccessfully to create a Pray-Sims entrant for the Ugly Man on Campus. We attempted to make a plaster of Paris death mask and had planned to work on it so our resident volunteer didn't have to suffer hours of discomfort under application of complex make up, pictured left. It didn't work. The fine powder mixed with water set too hard and cracked on removal. It had generated heat and turned our subject's face a sunburned red. John and I realized we needed a melting material which set pliable like a liquid rubber, but getting our hands on it would have cost too much time and too many dollars. There had been insufficient coin donation from residents in last year's Pray-Sims UMOC. Loyalties were too divided amongst fraternities and other interest groups and so we gave up on the dormitory's Ugly Man.

We turned instead to the College Theatre. A small organization, we knew we'd never win. We also knew we'd probably come up with the most original talked-about entrant and, simultaneously, recognize College Theatre as a talking point. Gregarious Paul Bentzen put up his hand suggesting, "Maybe I don't have to, but if you want me to put on make-up I will." It was a typical remark from a character actor. John and I watched Paul create our Ugly Man candidate in the tiny make-up room back of the stage in the Old Main building's east wing. He used a simple concoction of green homemade modeling clay made out of cornstarch, salt and food coloring to model features. On top of that went gobs of cold cream and wads of brown crepe hair. The costume was further simplicity; Paul draped himself in a burlap bag like a poor monk's cloak and formed a cowl. Poking out a makeshift sleeve was Paul's new hand, a chicken foot we'd asked for and received with compliments from, you guessed it, the master of culinary tweak, Ace Foods.

Proud of our work, we sent an 8x10 copy of a photograph of Paul to Forrest J. Ackerman, editor of Famous Monsters of Filmland, a monthly magazine of Hollywood monsters, ghouls, vampires,

mummies, hideous creatures from outer space, and dripping with pictures of movie blood and gore. The magazine made my mouth water in anticipation of one day seeing on television Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's monster, Bela Lugosi as Dracula, and the monstrous housecat and giant spider in The Incredible Shrinking Man (1957). schoolers David Ludwig and John Primm had met Mr. Ackerman in Illinois, so John figured the picture would be published. Several months later, it was, with film trailer-like words FUTURE FRIGHT FILMS they're coming! turn page... But without credit where credit is due! We looked everywhere for our names in the table of contents, in footnotes, amongst the advertising, and in the most obvious place, the picture credits. Nothing! Not a skerrick of recognition.

Right: My photograph of Paul as the Monster representing the College Theatre in UMOC, *Famous Monster of Filmland* 034 August 1965, page 7



# Chapter 35: My Brush with Hollywood

etters with exciting news arrived. Chicago's CACCA awarded a First Place in its Quarterly Competition 8mm Section to For He Shall Conquer. Bigger accolades followed. A letter "in due course" arrived after seven months. Delivered to my parents' address was a request from Mr. Ray Shady, Editor of the Kodak Movie News. He jumped the gun, so to speak, to announce that I was going to receive an official invitation to the CINE Awards Presentation in Washington D.C. Mr. Shady invited my parents and me to be their guests at the banquet. My mother forwarded his letter to me in Stevens Point. On it she'd written in pencil, "I have postcard which was enclosed in this letter. I'll send this weekend saying whether we will attend. Train fare for 3 is \$122.45. What do you think about going? The banquet is on the house. Dad is thinking favorably. Can you get off the weekend? Plus Mon. Tues. Wed. (Nov. 8-9-10-11)? Mom." The awards banquet was November 10.

The Council on International Non-Theatrical Events press release stated that CINE is a non-profit organization which coordinates selection of U.S. films that properly portray America and its audiovisual techniques worthy for presentation in future foreign film festivals and other international events. Although it has recognized professionally made nontheatrical films previously, the establishment of the CINE Eagle Award this year was the first noting of amateur achievement. All 40 prize winners in the Kodak Teenage Movie Contest had been given consideration. Only nine films were recognized and the fact they were made by teenagers was in keeping with the awakening worldwide interest in youth-made films. According to CINE President Willie H. Pratt Jr., CINE had a board of 23 directors and 183 regional jurors. With the cooperation of producers, sponsors and distributors, more than 350 American films were submitted and 119 judged worthy of representing the United States abroad.

I thought I'd have to go all the way to the top, to the university president James H. Albertson, to get permission to take time off classes. Some of my behavior managed to slip back into high school practice. President Albertson was in the Philippines and his receptionist told me to make whatever arrangement I required directly with my instructors. Washington D.C.? Teachers, some who didn't even have me in their classes, were in favor; it was forgetting about everything school and just going.

It was a pre-Nixon era when politicians were somewhat revered and regarded with esteem, more for the office itself than for the personality inhabiting it. Still, solving all the political problems in the world at family picnics and holiday gatherings, I remember my Dad saying to uncles over a shot and a beer, "Politicians, aahhhrrrgh, they're all crooks!" So imagine how lost for words my father was taking a call from Congressman Clement Zablocki. "What's he want now," may have first gone through Dad's mind. Mr. Zablocki said he was proud to extend his congratulations to parents of a son who'd achieved such high recognition for amateur filmmaking.

The congressman offered his assistance for tour and sightseeing passes in our nation's capitol and gave his personal Washington office telephone number. Dad would have snapped to attention with the phone receiver in his hand, same as he'd been trained in the Army as a radio operator, and answered, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir." Mr. Zablocki hoped we'd like to see the White House, changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Capitol Building, and more. He wanted my family to experience Washington D.C. as his guests, not as ordinary tourists.

Clement Zablocki served as Congressman for the 4<sup>th</sup> district from 1948 until his death in 1983. He was elected 18 consecutive times, sometimes with a majority of 80% of the vote. A devoutly

religious and honest man, he graduated from St. Vincent de Paul High School and was the organist there. My parents knew Mr. Zablocki from church. I even met him once on the playground during lunchtime and shook his hand when I was a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at St. Vincent's. He was popular, active, a rare and genuinely honest politician.

We took a train out of Milwaukee and connected in Chicago with an eastbound overnight train to Washington D.C. We made our way around the city in taxis on streets which seemed to go in big circles. Drivers had to know where they were going or they'd get stuck in a circular pattern forever. At a distance sightseeing included passing Grant's Tomb, the Washington Monument, and the Jefferson Memorial. The hotel was near the Iwo Jima statue. We could walk around the World War II monument and observe the detail of facial expression, veins in hands, and creases in uniforms as the four soldiers raised the American flag. An oversized cloth flag flapped in the breeze from the statue's flagpole.

The changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery was a solemn ceremony. We walked among rows of white crosses and came upon the grave of President John F. Kennedy, my snapshot at right. The memorial with its perpetual flame was unfinished. We paid our respects twelve days ahead of the nation's remembrance of the actual date of assassination.

Ascending the long staircase of the Lincoln Memorial was like climbing the stairs of a cathedral. The seated



Abraham Lincoln statue was much larger than expected. We could have been in the presence of Jove in the Pantheon of ancient Rome; such was the enormity and reverential awe. There was a crowd of admirers, but no one spoke and everyone moved quietly. We felt as if we were supposed to genuflect and make the sign of the cross before departing.

We toured the Treasury with its printing machines churning out sheets of one dollar bills. Its museum displayed old and new bills and coins including one uncirculated US Gold Certificate Specimen \$100,000 bill which pictured Woodrow Wilson, US president from 1913 to 1921. Congressman Zablocki arranged passes for a tour of the White House, Houses of Congress and the Senate, and his office in the domed Capitol Building.

The Smithsonian Institute is comprised of several buildings. Our time was limited to one building of its many and I remember seeing the entire collection of dresses worn by the first ladies on the day of their husband's presidential inauguration. It boggled my mind that the materials of the dress worn by Martha Washington on the day George Washington became the Nation's first president on April 30, 1789 was still intact and beautiful. Displayed in another section of the building were historic aircraft, some stationary on the ground, others suspended by wires from the lofty ceiling. I couldn't believe my eyes. There was the first plane ever to fly! The Wright Flyer had a 12 horsepower engine, propellers which moved in opposite directions, skids like ski runners, and a wingspan of just over 40 feet. Others had been in the air ever so briefly, but Wilbur and Orville Wright, bicycle repairmen, made their first sustained flight in this very plane December 17, 1903 on the sands of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. My jaw dropped as I admired the Spirit of St. Louis, the very plane which Charles Lindberg flew nonstop New York to Paris in 1927. On display amongst these old-timers and looking almost anachronistic, and probably there to show how much had been learned about flight and how successful it had become, and that it was even more commonplace today, there for all to see was an American space capsule. American taxpayers had already paid for everything on display, so admission to the Smithsonian was free.



Mom, Dad, and I went to the awards banquet as guests of Kodak. It was exciting to meet people in person who, previously, had merely been a scribbled signature on a letter.

Pictured left, I met Ray C. Shady (standing to my left), editor of *Kodak Movie News* and John Flory (standing on my right in the snap), one of the judges of the Teenage Movie Contest and with the Eastman Kodak corporation.

Tuesday, November 10, at the National Education Association, Crabtree Auditorium, the Council on International Nontheatrical Events presented an afternoon exhibition of films of merit, Golden Eagle films and CINE Eagle films by young people. For He Shall Conquer was included and introduced by

CINE Vice President J. Edward Oglesby. There were other films in the matinee which made an impression on me. I have never forgotten what a grunion was after seeing Fish, Moon and Tides – The Grunion Story. The grunion, as I learned, is a small fish which breeds on land. How about that! Hailstones and Halibut Bones left a lasting memory for all the wrong reasons. It was a lot of animated drawings, patterns and colors illustrating a poem of the same name read by Celeste Holm. Something in the combination of the narrator's voice and the abundance of sketches overloaded my senses and I couldn't wait for those 6 minutes to pass. Having to watch the film was like waiting for an aspirin to dissolve and take away a headache. A 27 minute excerpt was screened from a black and white documentary called The Fun Factory. It was all about Mack Sennett's rise from movie extra to "king of comedy". Slapstick mayhem included Charlie Chaplin, cross-eyed Ben Turpin, Ford Sterling, Carole Lombard, Marie Dressler, and many more comedians and clowns of the silent era's Keystone Studios. Years later I bought the complete short feature on Super 8 sound film. Of the screening of selected CINE Eagle films made by teenagers, my memory is hazy.

The evening's 7:30 program included presentation of Golden Eagles, international prizes and an exhibition of films of merit. A capacity audience attended. Teenage award winners sat in the front row of the auditorium. Pictured right is a snapshot Dad took. I am seated to the right of 15 year old

Luther Guy Wright from Lynchburg, Virginia, same town that distils Jack Daniels. His CINE Eagle winner and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place getter in the Kodak Teenage Movie Contest was *Battle for the Sky*, an animated film showing man's conquest of space. It enacted the building of a space station. We saw Luther's amazing film screened in the evening exhibition. Seated to my right is 12 year old Jamien Moorhouse from Lexington, Massachusetts. Her CINE Eagle film *The Lion* had won 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in the Junior Category of the Kodak Teenage Movie Contest. I don't recall the names of the other winners seated in the first row.

As our names were announced, in turn we walked proudly onto stage to accept our CINE Eagle from President Willie Pratt and have an official press release photo taken. This



was big time! As well as the teenage award winners, there were many professionals, some whose names were well known, following in our footsteps onto a stage to accept the Golden Eagle, shake hands with Mr. Pratt and be snapped. Presentation of so many awards lasted a long time and became repetitive.



Left: CINE President Willie Pratt presents me with my CINE Eagle: Photograph by Joseph Di Dio, National Education Association.

After so many recipients traipsed across the stage and wore out Willie Pratt's hand, at long last some films were screened. One of the more unusual was *Help! My Snowman's Burning Down*. A man sits in a bathtub and types under water. The tub, along with a bathroom filled with other plumbing, stands on the end of a pier. This is his world. Through a door he has occasional contact

with the outside world - he finds it trying and, ultimately, quite final. It had been nominated earlier in the year for an Academy Award in Short Subjects: Live Action.

I was struck by a film with a religious theme. Made by Lewis Teague at the New York University Department of TV, Motion Pictures and Radio, it was called *It's about This Carpenter*. Blending irony and humor, it's a modern day parable about a young Greenwich Village carpenter's hectic journey to an uptown church where he delivers a commissioned wooden cross. I also remember *Still Waters*, an unusual fish story because it was told from the fish's point of view. Most of the cinematography is under water and depicts the lives and challenges for a pair of fish. The lure of man's effort ends in the death of one fish and the escape of the other. Without narration or dialogue, only sound effects and electronic music, it came across as horror. These films told memorable stories.

A reception honoring the winning filmmakers was held at the Gramercy Inn. Here I met Golden Eagle recipient Mel London of Wilding Inc. Producer of *To Live Again*, he had garnered a 1963 Academy Award nomination in Documentary: Short Subject. His film told of the work of the St. Barnabas Hospital in New York, in the treatment and cure of the chronically ill, the hospital's history and its aims. Patients suffering from Parkinson's disease are shown before, and then after an operation developed at this hospital. Speaking in a British accent, Mr. London said he'd seen my film earlier in the day and thought very highly of it. He gave me his card and suggested that if sometime in the future I wanted to pursue a career in documentary filmmaking, I should feel comfortable about contacting him in his New York office. I was flattered, but making documentaries? Anything I'd watched at a Milwaukee Movie Makers meeting labeled documentary never looked better than a glorified home movie. The MMM members' docus forced me to examine the inside of my eyelids.

Another Academy Award nominated producer engaged my parents and me in conversation. Unlike others holding onto a pilsner of beer or scotch on the rocks, he drank black coffee from a mug. He was David L. Wolper. His Golden Eagle film was *The Yanks Are Coming* which told the story of America's involvement in World War I. It became a 1964 Oscar nominee in the category of Documentary: Features. In the chase for an Oscar over several years, he was always the bridesmaid and never the bride. With this year's CINE, he had several more documentaries submitted which were considered meritorious, but which were bridesmaids to his one Golden Eagle. Mr. Wolper may not have reaped statues, certificates, ribbons or medals, but his track record for producing films which sold to television and screened in cinemas spoke volumes of their quality and of subject matter audiences wanted to watch. He would eventually turn Alex Hailey's family saga into the multi-Emmy winning mini-series "Roots" (1977).

David Wolper had attended the young people's matinee screening. Of course I had been unaware of who had been in the audience. I didn't know what any behind-the-scenes people looked like. Mr. Wolper said he appreciated seeing *For He Shall Conquer* and especially admired my skill in editing. On the spot, he offered me a job in Hollywood. Butter my bread; that was a break I never expected. Dad spoke. He said to Mr. Wolper the job offer was genuinely appreciated. Then he turned to me and said, "You need to finish college. With that piece of parchment in your hand, the whole world will be your oyster."

Nowadays just about any parent would probably jump at the opportunity. It was handed to me on a platter to go to Hollywood and the job was guaranteed. In Dad's day, young people took on jobs with long term security and an expectation of devoting the rest of their lives to it. I understood then my Dad's train of thought, his concern, and the value he placed on the safety valve of a college education and earning a degree. I grew up in an era shaped by my parents' experiences in the Depression and a World War. They knew hard times, unemployment, no money and want. My Dad was emphatic I be cushioned with a college diploma so I wouldn't be caught out empty-handed, untrained, facing a void as had others in the 1930s and during the War years. Niggling, however, were the now famous Hollywood personalities I'd read about who'd faced a situation similar to mine. As a nobody a oncein-a-lifetime opportunity would drop out of the blue and fall into their lap. They took a chance, picked it up and became somebody. Not only was the world their oyster, it contained a pearl! On reflection, given that it was a real job in a real place with a real income, Dad's advice may have been overly cautious and protective. It may have been his own fear of the unknown and a lack of long term security which made Dad dismiss David Wolper's offer. And then "the whole world will be your oyster"? It was the biggest truckload of bullshit dropped in my lap. Ah, well, now it's just become one of my "what if" stories!

Had Ray Shady known the result of the 1964 Kodak Teenage Movie Contest when we met in Washington D.C.? Had he kept it secret so as not to detract from the significance of my 1963 Kodak winning For He Shall Conquer awarded the CINE Eagle? As if no time had passed after returning to Wisconsin from Washington, a letter was delivered wherein Mr. Shady extended congratulations. The judges had a difficult task in selecting the winning films from the many good ones that were entered. He was delighted I was again one of Kodak's winners. A certificate of achievement and two rolls of Kodachrome II with pre-paid processing mailers would be sent under separate cover. For the second year in a row I had won an Honorable Mention in the Senior Category, this time with Black Lady. His formal letter concluded with a handwritten note. "Best wishes for a Merry Christmas + a Happy Holiday Season. I hope all is going well at school."

All was well as lights dimmed in the Christmas bedecked auditorium December 16 for an unequalled treat at WSU as students, faculty and Stevens Point residents were offered a Nickelodeon Christmas program. Imagination and variety was the order of the evening. Glittering Christmas trees magically revolved and were combined with actual gaslight lamps comparable to those used in the 1920s to enhance the atmosphere of yesteryear. It was the invention of the Nickelodeon's John Schelkopf. Hand-tinted slides flashed on screen offering suggestions for comfort and safety of the viewers including "Ladies, Please Remove Your Hats", "Madam, Please Take Out Your Crying Baby" (even though none were heard blubbering), and "Gentlemen, Please Refrain from Smoking or Spitting." Though not this evening, John used on other occasions a slide with more formal usage in its direction, "Gentlemen are requested not to expectorate." Screening Thomas Edison's 1906 movie *The Night before Christmas*, there was a twist in its tail. Instead of Santa stuffing children's stockings, children filled Santa's stockings.

A music combo marched down the aisle playing carols. Local barbershoppers sang. *Christopher Mouse*, a delightful slide sequence viewed Christmas from a different angle. Live entertainment accompanied the slide show and I felt honored to have been asked by John to narrate the story from the stage about Christopher, a child mouse unhappy with his lowly circumstance in life who was reminded by his grandfather of a Child long ago who did not complain about his straw bed.

Rounding out the night was Buster Keaton in a great chase film *Cops* (1922) plus Laurel and Hardy's *Big Business* (1929) wherein the boys attempt to sell Christmas trees in California. They dress for the "Jingle Bells" and "Sleighbells Ring" occasion in heavy overcoats and gloves as if they were in snow-blanketed Wisconsin instead of always sunny southern California. At every door they knock they are knocked back. No one wants to buy a freshly harvested spruce tree. Confronted by irascible Jimmy Finlayson, Hal Roach's bald, slightly-built, mustachioed Scot with the "you're fooling me, aren't you" look, they systematically dismantle and destroy his house while he, tit for tat, ruins their clothes, their Christmas trees, take apart their Model T piece by piece and, in a final act of uncontrolled anger, detonate the only thing left, the solid skeletal frame of their flivver<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Entering the American lexicon in 1914, *flivver* was a jocular or disparaging slang word for a cheap, old car, mainly Henry Ford's Model T. *Tin Lizzie* was another popular slang term for the Model T, lizzie being slang for a horse not always named Elizabeth and, of course, the Model T was a horseless carriage. *Jalopy* was also a useful slang synonym having entered the lexicon in 1924. Mack Sennett used Model Ts in his movies and the word fondly in title cards for his Keystone slapstick comedies, sometimes featuring his Bathing Beauties including Gloria Swanson, or his frantic, inept flivver drivers, the Keystone Cops. Hal Roach's Model Ts were almost as famous in silent movie chase scenes as the stars themselves including Harold Lloyd, Laurel & Hardy, Charlie Chase, et al.

#### Chapter 36: A Little More Boom, Boom

ew Year's Eve fireworks heralded a brand new curly-haired year with its traditional image of a baby wearing its first clean diaper and all beautifully safety-pinned. Aerial firecrackers zoomed up into a winter's night sky to explode into colorful chrysanthemums, disperse into waterfalls, and briefly dazzle like giant sparklers. Each display was followed by pops, bangs, and thunderous booms. I was unaware of how significant, how important, how busy and how exciting 1965 was going to be.

As soon as everyone returned for second semester studies, my schedule filled and I hardly knew which way to turn or run. Good news included a CACCA Silver Medal and First Place for *Zip Tang*. Tryouts were announced for Moss Hart's *Light Up the Sky*. A proposal to shoot a movie for the university was tossed at me like a fresh bone to a dog. I had an "Elkay" Production or two rumbling around in my thinking stuff. Forensics competitions loomed. Movies had to be entered into contests. I was offered a choir of 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys to teach. I helped form and became a member of a music group and that is what prompted me to do what every college guy wants to do - test one of the secondary effects of testosterone. Yes sir! I grew a beard.

This was one white hell of a Stevens Point winter. Mid-January temperatures plummeted to Fahrenheit minuses only penguins, fur-bearing seals and polar bears tolerated. We spent as brief a time as possible huffing and puffing in the crisp morning air humping a textbook to 7:45 a.m. class. Mine was in Old Main, Psychology of the Adolescent, with Professor Albert Harris. His lecture style left much to be desired. "Well, umph, today we, umph, won't, umph, discus sexual, umph, development. You, umph, can read it, umph, in, umph, your own, umph, time. Chapters, umph, Four to, umph, Seven." The Psychology of the Adolescent: ergo pre-teens and teenagers with rampaging hormones and confusing bodily changes. Our professor had no problem umphing through teenage life in the 1950s for that's what our textbook reflected: independence, freedom, taking life seriously, gaining a skill and seeking a career, aiming to be a good mother, friction with parents, the generation gap, and the media playing on these emotions and portraying teenagers as juvenile delinquents. But he blushed and stumbled for words as he avoided talking about all the things that change in teenagers' bodies! The Psychology of the Adolescent: Hah! We were left on our own to read about puberty: boys and testosterone, nocturnal emissions, involuntary erections, and tender breasts; girls and tender breast development and bras, menstruation, period pain; and for both genders, growing hair in places other than the head. We knew with Professor Harris that no question linking bodily changes with adolescent behavior would ever show up in one of his exams.

One freezing morning I hardly thought it necessary to crawl out of bed and trudge from Pray-Sims three blocks to Old Main. Temperature outside was -42°F. Whether a stand-alone temperature or with the wind chill factor included, our room window was frozen solid. There was an inch of frozen snow inside the frame! I pulled on three layers of clothing. Stocking cap pulled down over my ears, the hood of my insulated jacket pulled up and over my head, a scarf drawn across my face to protect my neck, nose and cheeks, I walked briskly in the bitter sharp air. So cold, the icy air stung as I inhaled through the scarf. Thigh and calf muscles stiffened step after step. My eyes blinked continuously and I felt the frigid cold seeping into my bones. It was too numbing to be outside and I simpered. Bursting through Old Main's door, the heavy wooden kind with a metal handle that collapses onto the door when leaned upon, I sucked in warm air and breathed out fast to inhale more warmth. I undid the knot and tried to remove my scarf. It had frozen to my moustache! Breathing in and out and making steam through my nose, the scarf came away wet from my dampened cookie

duster. I drew my coat sleeve across the moustache, same as when wiping runny snot dripping from the nose, but this was just melted ice. I walked up the few steps from the entrance to the ground floor and turned left into a shabby half-lit classroom. As I tromped in, three or four sad-looking others huddled at desks turned heads and looked at me. No one said anything, as if lips had been stuck together like the boy who'd been dared to lick the frozen metal flagpole.

Coming from the corridor we heard the approach of hard-soled shoes determinedly clip-clopping along the wooden floor. A woman carrying a clipboard and wearing a fuzzy-wuzzy sweater entered our classroom. "Ahhhhh," she paused before getting to the point. "There's no lecture this morning. Mr. Harris called and said it was a bit too chilly to hold class." Out she went clippity-clop back to her office. We looked vacuously at each other. No words were needed to express how we felt. Winter overclothes rebundled over slightly warmed joints, we braced for the tortuous walk back from whence we had come. Nearing Sims Hall, again I cried. Again my moustache iced to the scarf. My feet felt cold and stiff. In my dorm room I peeled away layers of clothing, wrapped a towel around my waist, and trudged down the corridor to thaw under a warm shower. Your imagination or your knowledge may picture which nether parts had retreated up into the body.

I didn't have cold feet in a Drama course taught by the director of a forthcoming play *Light Up the Sky*. All were invited to try out. Invitation often meant mandatory audition if you wanted to pass the course. I had good reason to show reluctance after he put the hard word on me. I had a conflict with performance dates. The play was scheduled for March 3-6. I was expected to attend the annual awards banquet of the Milwaukee Movie Makers on Saturday, March 6 and I'd have to arrange a ride home with someone, anyone Friday, March 5.

I tried out for a small laughter-inducing support role of a boastful Shriner, originally listed as Barney Goldbottom and changed on the program to William H. Gallagher. I don't know why the name change was made. The character appeared once in the third act. The conflict with dates was resolved. I was cast for the Wednesday and Thursday nights. Dennis Waid took the role for the Friday and Saturday shows. I was told to grow my beard more for the Shriner role, pictured right. Again in this cast were friends Paul Bentzen as Carlton Fitzgerald, Jeff Rodman as Sidney Black, and Cindy Parkovich in the role of Irene Livingston.



As to getting myself to Milwaukee, well, I still hadn't bothered doing the behind the wheel test to obtain a driver's license. I depended upon the travel plans and schedules of others who had. Rides to West Allis and back to Stevens Point didn't come free. Beggars were expected to pay for the privilege. Dick Wesell had been smart enough to get his license and buy a Volkswagen. If he was heading home for a weekend, I just had to ask and pay him \$3 for the round trip. If, however, we somehow ended up not speaking to one another, usually due to my own bone-headedness and not his over some usually trivial matter; not speaking happened inconveniently and I'd feel Dick was unapproachable for a ride. Then I'd have to scab around and find a ride with a stranger. Drivers heading home for a weekend advertised on bulletin boards in dorms' receptions, in the Allen Center and the Student Union. The usual practice was heading their advertisement with the destination. Green Bay. Prairie du Chien. Sheboygan. Some drivers cleaned up charging upwards of \$3 for the round trip. If they got four passengers, or five really squeezy with luggage, it meant weekend pocket money after filling up at about 30¢ a gallon. They might even do better because there were gasoline wars all the time. Gas might then sell for 21¢. A one way trip often took three hours. Leaving about 3:00 p.m. got you home in time for supper with family.

Some guys packed a suitcase and stuck a sign of their destination on it, or held the sign in one hand while the extending the other hand to show the thumb and hitchhike. I tried it once. Only once. There was constant uncertainty, the anxiety of ever getting picked up. All the time apprehensive, I'd stick out my thumb and hope for a ride that would get me all the way to West Allis. After a car pulled over to the shoulder. I'd jump in with an awkward smile, make with general pleasantries and grab sideways glances of the driver. Regardless of appearance, I was uncomfortably wary. Rides I caught were short and I ended up in jerk towns I never heard of or ever expected to see in my lifetime. Standing like a spare rhubarb stalk outside a tavern or a gas station, I'd put down my over-packed suitcase with its Milwaukee sign stuck to it, wiggle my hand for luck and shove my thumb out and into view of passing traffic. Dark clouds massed and the sun disappeared. After five rides daylight was fast fading and I was 40 miles short of home. I'd been taught to always carry a dime in my pocket in case I ever needed to make a phone call. I was legal drinking age, but still felt out of place dragging my suitcase into a bar, holding up my dime and asking to use the phone. I was directed to a public phone box I hadn't noticed outside. I used that dime and called for Dad or my sister Mary to come rescue me. To get back to Point, I had to beg a ride from Dad or Mary or worse, grow up, get over it, call Wesell and beg him for a ride back to Point.

Our Drama class instructor was Mr. William "Boom Boom" Kramer. He hadn't chosen his nickname. Students gave it to him behind his back. We were inexperienced actors taking classes wherein we expected to be told how things were supposed to be done. That's what happened when we were taught about Stanislavski and his "method acting". Do this. Do that. And this is what will happen. I guess we didn't realize that was our groundwork and now we were expected to capitalize on that training ourselves. That was a professional approach on behalf of our director, but we were never really being trained to work beyond our classroom. If anything, we'd be pretty good in community theater groups. At best we'd be turned out as Drama teachers for grade school or high school classrooms. Everything we were taught was theory. Nothing genuinely practical was taught about how to get onto a Broadway stage or pound on doors of Hollywood agents or producers. A job in such hallowed places was never brought up, never discussed. Faculty thinking didn't reach beyond their classroom fiefdoms. After all, c'mon, who in Stevens Point was ever going to end up with a real job on Broadway or in Hollywood? Dreamers, not realists, that's who. (OK, OK, you say... what about Peter Weller? Although the film and stage actor was born in Stevens Point in 1947, he never attended a Stevens Point school. Weller went to high school in Texas, earned a Bachelor of Arts in Drama at Texas State University, and attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.)

It was almost ironic, then, that Mr. Kramer should direct us like we were seasoned professionals. His words in and beyond the classroom were obviously delivered to make us think, dig deep within ourselves, and figure things out. His delivery left us mostly flummoxed. Well before stepping onto stage, playbooks in hand, we blocked scenes in the classroom. If our character felt motivated to move from one place to another, we weren't told directly to go left or right with or without haste. Whatever repositioning we showed was questioned. We wouldn't hear the clearly worded, "Why did your character feel motivated just then to move from the chair to the table?" Kramer's direction might sound something like, "Ahhhhh, let's try that again with a little more boom, boom." His unusually worded request was sweet and coquettish. A myriad of gesture accompanied. He'd spin hands one over the other like a rotating paddlewheel or raise his arms like a stick-up victim and frantically wiggle his hands and fingers. He might tap index fingers at his temples or combine of all three adding facial contortion to confuse and to boot. Boom, boom, boom. Yeah, that made a lot of sense. And we'd go through our stage movement all over again with some boom, boom, boom. If we still hadn't met with Kramer's imagined outcome, there'd be an audible dove-cooed, "Ahhhh -Additional non-verbal included, "Mmmmmm," hummed with a tonal rise and then immediately followed by a down toned, "Mmm." There'd be ever so brief a pause. To make suggestion and simultaneously show his frustration, Paul Bentzen best recalls the Kramer follow through, "More boom, boom, sweetie pie bitch."

The overload of non-directive "Boom, boom, boom" irritated and insulted. One particular rehearsal I felt metaphorically backed into a corner, pushed too far, and I exploded, "That's it! I've had it! Waid

can play all four shows." I know I threw in some four lettered invective too. Mr. Kramer didn't fire back to inflame my rage. Typically Kramer-ish, he sweet-talked and cajoled. I felt the slight smirk on his lips was an affront. I shot back, "I've had it with your stupid games! Just tell me what the hell you want!" Mr. Kramer spoke with hypnotic dulcet tone and blamed my outburst on pressure. I was soothed into compliance. Character development and stage movement continued as if stumbling down the dark corridor of a strange house and hoping the room you find really *IS* the bathroom. We all bore Boom Boom's multiple non-directive sounds of drumming. I swore up and down I'd never work on stage under Kramer again. The play was performed over the agreed two nights with me in the Shriner role. Eliciting laughter was fun and rewarding. Audience reaction to my comedic turn was favorable.

Why, I wondered, had the Milwaukee Movie Makers insisted I attend their awards banquet? Only three films had been entered in the 8mm category and two were mine, *Black Lady* and *Tarcisius*. The contest chairman held little expectation of success for the third entrant's picture against my two and suggested I'd probably clean up the awards. He was right. *Black Lady* took out first. *Tarcisius* was placed second. Sometime after awards were presented suitably scribbled sheets of the judges were handed to competitors. I was getting used to seeing judges' opinions poles apart. In the subjective Achievement category and Overall Impression sub-category, for *Black Lady* one judge marked 1 out of 4 and wrote, "I cannot see any purpose." Reading between the lines, the quote translates to "I didn't like your movie." In the objective technical categories, this same judge gave the film its highest possible marks. Though it didn't happen in this instance due to so few films in the category, that personal opinion low mark could have made the difference between collecting a trophy and going home empty-handed.

When a film wins a top award, expectation is that the film be included in a public screening. The public wants to see why judges placed it first. See if they agree or disagree. Screening horror movies to Indian engineers with one losing his cookies should have taught me a lesson about some people in every audience who need to be forewarned or, at the least, protected from a visual assault of blood and guts. Although I felt I had a multi-award winning film in *Dr. Emile's Mind* a couple of years ago, I was way off the mark. It won zilch. I'm only guessing here: a film winning a top award equated with the film being given a public screening, yes? There's a strong possibility a gory film winning would... oops! No club wanted negative publicity should some delicate unawares audience member blame a gory movie for their throwing up or passing out or having heart palpitations. Self censorship, it would seem, had to be considered when organizing a public screening. No doubt MMM's festival organizer weighed up the pros and cons of including *Black Lady* in its film festival. Its axe murder may have relegated my film to the reverse axiom of "touch but don't look." Discretion, one would expect, led to the decision. It did, but it didn't. My first place getter wouldn't be included in the public screening. Second placed *Tarcisius* was also rejected. The title character gets bashed to death. Too much realism with its blood, even when seen in black and white!

The kerfuffle which followed was about much more than my movies. It was the beginning of a coup. Current office holders were a clique placing program emphasis on watching movies at meetings instead of making movies. Club membership was falling flat. People active with their cameras weren't turning up. Everyone in the club knew the film festival officer may have disagreed with the judges' decision and adamantly didn't like my "pointless bloody film."

I disagreed with the exclusion of my films. But then, what did I know? I was a kid up against people three times my age and with lifetimes of experience. Their expertise had taught them the realities of screen subject matter and audience expectations. My developing brain functioned in Paranoia Park or Disney's Fantasyland. Juvenile thought didn't consider the balding and blue rinse set which peopled most of the club's public screenings. I had no concept of older viewers' confidence in everything being non-confrontationally nice and pretty up there on the public screen. They didn't want to be challenged into thinking or be forced to look at distressing ugly images. They only wanted a pleasant night out. Period! Heck, I just wanted my films shown. What film director doesn't?

Whether members' brains had also switched off or it was a means of showing dissatisfaction with club leadership, the vocal protests, phone calls, and open squawking eventually twisted the festival organizer's arm. Suspenders loosened, a step back was taken, and *Black Lady* was included. A warning about blood and violence similar to a PG rating for a Hollywood release was emphasized in the program notes. Great publicity, I thought, because it drew inordinate attention to my film. As has been said, any publicity is good publicity.

I never thought *Tarcisius* was controversial. Despite its wholesome story placing second, I guess members felt one victory was sufficient. Clamor to include *Tarcisius* in the public screening may have been numbly pushing my luck... and theirs to boot.

## Chapter 37: We Laugh, We Sing, and Laugh Some More

Invitation to Dinner
The Sick Trilogy
John Primm's How to Eat a Chicken

he publicity chairman of the university's Winter Carnival was aware of my awards for filmmaking when he asked how much it would cost to shoot a 15 minute film about Winter Carnival. Like a red carpet laid out for me, it was an attractive proposition. The chairman was interested in a 16mm color and sound film for airing on local television. The Carnival included competitions which lent themselves to telling good stories on film.

There was ice carving. Set on the snow-covered lawn of Old Main, students turned large frozen ice blocks into frozen ephemera, statues of grace and, though unchanging in position, fluid movement. Snowmen were built and decorated with imaginative fancy. Thick tow ropes separated teams to test strength in a tug-o'-war. Indoor contests included pipe smoking – how long would a small measure of tobacco burn and be puffed upon before it extinguished? Always good for a laugh was the traditional beard growing contest. Many tried, some with the result of more vacant space on their faces than hirsute braggadocio. Eating stacks of pancakes within a set limit almost always led to people turning green in the gills and vomiting their gain into pain. The hairy legs competition included an offbeat catwalk. Inventive competitors enticed an audience to concentrate on their knees, thus leading to eye strain and frowning pain. No one need forget the popular Ugly Man on Campus, although a static display of still photos would never make for a moving picture. Perhaps a quick pan across ugly mugs might work? How about some shots of make-up being applied, possibly some Siasefi simply gurning Phowever, on film the ensuing dance and entertainment would look very animated.

The Winter Carnival chairman and its committee wasn't offering pay. They wanted me to do the work gratis, for the pure love of being at this university and at the expense of my classes, my studies, my *Light Up the Sky* rehearsals, and my own time-consuming activities. I wasn't overly exuberant and said my talent didn't come free. I had to be paid for my services. I quoted in writing an hourly wage of \$1.50 or a flat fee of \$125 for the completed project. I was flattered they thought I was good enough to participate in such a business enterprise. However, their desire for altruism and my realistic expectation of pay for work failed to gel. For now the proposition fell into the not-thought-through, too expensive basket.

Although I looked upon the Carnival project as a burden, I would have welcomed much-needed money. Fortunately for my creative spirit I already had two free rolls of film in my hot hands from the Kodak Teenage Contest. My trigger finger itched to run it through the camera. On TV I'd seen Cary Grant in Frank Capra's *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944). It made me laugh. Until having it presented in a Drama class, I hadn't been aware the Capra film was based on a 1939 dark comedy by American playwright Joseph Kesselring. I guess I never picked up on that credit in the titles. As exercises in our class, we performed selected scenes from the play, sometimes memorizing the lines and blocking it out, other days with book in hand as an interpretive reading. The story concerned two

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> According to the English Dialect Dictionary, to 'gurn' means to pull a grotesque face, 'to snarl as a dog; to look savage; to distort the countenance. The winner is obviously the person who can pull the ugliest face.

seemingly harmless old ladies who poison lonely gentlemen callers. I adapted the concept with variation to make *Invitation to Dinner*.

The play and the film have several victims succumbing to the unholy wiles of the charming spinsters. In those roles I cast Cindy Parkovich and Sue Siebert. For brevity my film would have just one victim. Paul Bentzen played the gentleman caller. First day of shooting was Saturday, February 6. For an establishing shot I filmed Paul checking the address on his invitation outside an old mansion on Main Street. It was an imposing, gabled, enigmatically wonderful rambling structure with a pillared, roofed porch set on a corner block. Sometimes nicknamed "the haunted mansion", it was really the Theta Delta Phi men's frat house which they affectionately called "home, sweet home." From its exterior, it was just the sort of place which could harbor insidious secrets. Although filmed on a dull gray day, the film wasn't set up as a standalone horror picture. The jauntiness of Paul's step and the expression of artless joy in his eyes told the audience immediately it was in for a dark comedy. After Paul clanked the doorknocker and the door is opened, a visual hint suggested the ladies' unhealthy activity wasn't their first and only time. Inside the entrance was a coat and hat rack displaying an array of men's caps and hats of varied styles on its wooden hooks. As a naive Paul is welcomed with sophisticated exuberance into the ladies' home, his hat is casually added to the colorful collection.

Even if Paul wasn't the last of the handsome men in town, the two women don't spare their blushing coquetry. They compliment Paul on his gentlemanly appearance, fawn over him like 12 year old girls on Valentine's Day and ply him with stemmed glasses overflowing with sweet sherry. The ladies flutter their fake eyelashes as they caress Paul's cheeks and tease his libido with lips barely meeting lips. They butter him up... and it isn't just figuratively. As pre-dinner drinks graduate from a humble sherry to Marie Antoinette glasses of vintage champagne the audience sees either Cindy or Sue continue their exaggerated wheedling gestures and facial expressions, shown only from over Paul's left or right shoulder. Dinner is served. A silver cloche is lifted. Paul's cooked head, his startled eyes opened wide and his open mouth stuffed with a piglet's roast apple, is displayed. It's just a quick glimpse, sufficient to shock and trigger an "Oh, my God" impact without giving time to work out how the trick was done. As funny and startling as it was, today *Invitation to Dinner* is a lost film.

Lost in time's fog as well is how I ever got involved with teaching a choir of 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys at St. Stephen's, but I did. I regularly attended 8:30 a.m. Mass Sundays. It was still a time of transition from the traditional and mysterious Latin Mass to the Second Vatican Council's people participation Mass in the vernacular. This was, without doubt, the greatest accomplishment of Pope John XXIII who, incidentally, had been elected pope as a 78 year old because the Sacred College of Cardinals only wanted an interim pope, a fill-in, so to speak, until a strong candidate emerged. The two top candidates were deadlocked after several rounds of voting. The Sacred College of Cardinals thought Angelo Roncalli was a simple man who would do little or no harm to rock the Vatican boat! The Sacred College of Cardinals figured the election of Roncalli would allow time for a breathing spell. , The Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II, was a watershed in the history of the Church.

Thanks to Vatican II new ways of singing in English were gradually introduced into the celebration of the Mass. In compulsory chapel Mass attendance at Camp Richards I was first introduced to Gelineau psalmody. It was a method of singing the Psalms developed in France by Jesuit priest Joseph Gelineau around 1953. English translations appeared some ten years later. Each psalm had a responsorial structure, with the congregation singing a repeating antiphon between the psalm verses which were sung by a choir or a cantor. Perhaps it was after a Sunday Mass when I'd been engaged in light conversation and let slip that I'd worked at Camp Richards and had there learned Gelineau. I knew how to sing the psalmody and St. Stephen's was welcoming the changes of Vatican Council II. The church organist, Mr. Bob Krembs, was especially keen to try the new music.

However it came about, I was convinced to give some of my late afternoon and after supper time to teach Gelineau to 14 energetic boys. Hand-picked by Sister Mary Paul Vincent, the friendly nun was my supervisor and, without interference, frequently sat in to observe. I remember two goof-offs who

thought that singing was sissy stuff. They played up overtly and deliberately sabotaged singing. They disrupted songs with raucous off key notes and sang inappropriately chosen words. They interrupted my teaching by clamping their moist hands together, sweaty palms squeezed making farting noises, always when Sister stepped out to take a phone call or attend to a chore, and sometimes they let go with a real squeaky prattling hummer. I was guilty of similar behavior in church all those years ago, so I appreciated a good fart when I heard one. Now in the position of the teacher, however, I had to use a new tack and try to settle a nearly wetting-their-pants-with-giggling group of just turned teenage boys. Not easy! The two class clowns made it obvious they didn't want to be there. I made a decision and did what they most likely wanted all along. I kicked them out. Sister Mary Paul Vincent wasn't present when I dismissed them, but she later indicated I was justified in my action. Better to pare down the group's number, rid it of the uncooperative, and end up with boys who genuinely wanted to become a choir. I used my Sony 102 and taped our rehearsals. The boys were fascinated hearing their voices played back in song. The tapes helped us all hear our mistakes; it was fairly easy to put rhythm and tune back together.

In addition to my teaching the Gelineau, Mr. Krembs then introduced me to the Father Rivers Mass, heralded as the start of a revolution in American Catholic liturgical music and used in parishes across the country. It was inspiring. Clarence Rufus J. Rivers was the first African-American priest ordained in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. He was passionate about the drama of public worship, as well as the music that was the "soul" of worship. He published a book, *Soulfull Worship*, and deliberately misspelled the title to call attention to the meaning of "soulful". His liturgical music brought him fame in 1963 during the Second Vatican Council with the recording of "An American Mass Program". It was this vinyl recording Mr. Krembs played for my ears. The work combined Roman Catholic worship with traditional African-American music. Father Rivers combined Gregorian Chant with the melodic patterns and rhythms of traditional Negro Spirituals. His most beloved hymn was "God Is Love". The boys loved it.

I took liberty with the rhythm of the Father Rivers Litany and rejigged it to make it livelier. Paul Bentzen wasn't a practicing Catholic but he appreciated the music and asked to come along with his banjo. His string plucking helped to keep time as we learned more of the Fathers Rivers Mass. Even John Primm, a Lutheran, got excited hearing the Rivers music, and asked to join in with his guitar. I snapped my fingers to keep the rhythm and timing. Nuns sat in on rehearsal, smiled broadly and started to clap their hands. It felt like a scene snipped right out of *Lilies of the Field* (1963) with Sidney Poitier and a bunch of German nuns.

Not all of the boys in the choir had the needed stick-to-it-ivity and dropped out. I knew for a fact some were being forced to quit, told by their parents they shouldn't be singing that "n---- music." Just goes to show that kids aren't prejudiced. They are taught to be prejudiced. If only the Sunday congregation wasn't small-minded and was as quick to embrace the music and join in as had the St. Stephen's nuns and most of my boys. Six choir boys remained steadfast. We sang Rivers' hymns in my rearrangements and the Gelineau, particularly enjoying "The Lord Is King". Sister scheduled my choirboys to sing Sundays' 10:15 and 11:15 Masses. I was so proud and nervous; it was more like an adrenalin flow directing them in the choir loft as I sang with them or as cantor. We were kept on our toes for what came when throughout the Mass. The boys rose to the challenge with the most angelic harmonies. Heraldic voices I especially remember belonged to Mike Zimmerman and Jim Corcoran.

Imagine if you will Paul's banjo, John's guitar, the boys' and all our singing voices melded with Bob Krembs organ producing a magnificent and joyous sound reverberating throughout the church from the choir loft. A guitar, much less a banjo, was considered as radical in church in 1965 as cocking a snoot at authority three centuries earlier. As expected, because there always are set-in-their-ways people uncomfortable with any change, a minority in the congregation grumbled disapprovingly. Our stringed instruments certainly weren't the Renaissance-depicted harps, but we produced a musically poetic and glorious sound of contemporary Cherubim, Seraphim and Herald.

With mutual interest and respect for each others' talents, enjoyment in singing modern hymns, it was inevitable Paul Bentzen on banjo, John Primm on guitar and I would form a music group. We called ourselves the Bush Mission Trio. The tape recorder became a work horse. We made recordings at rehearsals and performances. Some were made in church, others in a gym's change room shower to take advantage of its reverberation chamber to enhance our unique sound. Select original musical efforts became soundtracks for some of Primm's and my movies.

Remember that once upon a time I played clarinet? For the Bush Mission Trio I wanted to play an instrument, but I'd long given up on the licorice stick. Sometimes I clacked spoons and once, just once, tried a Jews harp. I gave up on that ancient instrument quicker than Jack jumping over the candlestick because the prong kept banging against my top teeth.



Pictured left in a Dann Perkins photo, not a musician, I hold a guitar only for the publicity shot. John also mastered playing gut bucket, a bass instrument made from an upside down metal washtub, rope and broomstick. I mastered no specific instrument, other than my tenor voice.

Pictured below performing in the Allen Center, I wear real fur hat and cow pattern top, both sewn by my mother. I made do with a kazoo.

Over the two weeks of shooting *Invitation to Dinner* and for a couple of weekends thereafter, I shot three off-the-cuff comedy snippets. Main purpose was to finish rolls of film with "something" so I could send them off for

purpose was to finish rolls of film with "something" so I could send them off for processing. Each "something" ran a minute or less and delivered a darkly comedic punchline similar to comic strips found in the newspaper funnies and *Mad* magazine. The trio of gags was presented as episodes under the umbrella title *The Sick Trilogy*.

One "something" had Paul reclining into an easy chair and opening a newspaper. We see his face contort into a quizzical frown as if an itch has made him feel uncomfortable. Contortion leads to distortion and Paul gives his impression of a man with a thousand faces. His body squirms. He bobs up and down like a cork on a fishing line. The itch, if that's what it is, has become intensely irritating. Paul leaps off the easy chair as if he's suddenly been given the doctor's rubber-gloved exam for prostate or just been probed in his rear end by the proverbial alien. We used to call it being "goosed" back then. Imagine! Basing an entire film on a goose! It was puerile and it made us laugh. The clip was called *The Enemy Below*, my title which parodied that of a Hollywood feature film about a submarine, and my take on a short film by John Primm called *Somebody Down There Likes Me*.

A second "something" was entitled *The Innocent Target*. According to a review in the *WSU Pointer*, it had a *Mad* magazine "things-we'd-like-to-see" ending, but I don't recall who appeared in it or what the skit involved.

Due to simultaneous activities with the boys' choir and my coaching grade school forensics, I had immediate contact with 12 and 13 year old children. That's how 8<sup>th</sup> graders from the Campus School or St. Stephen's Catholic Elementary participated in a third one of the short fun films of visual gags. However, I don't remember what it was about or what it was called because *The Sick Trilogy* is, unfortunately, another of my lost films.

Not lost is my first collaborative effort with John Primm on a film starring a raggedy bearded me. When we weren't writing an essay, reading a textbook or studying scribbled lecture notes for tests, Friday or Saturday nights turned into especially memorable sessions of mad creativity. When Paul visited there'd be belching contests. We'd order from Bill's Pizza large Cokes or 7-Up, Italian sausage sandwiches making sure they'd overstuff the bun with slices of kosher dill pickles, and we'd have them delivered. Try as we may, carbonated drinks for assistance, Primm and I could never out belch Paul's mega-substantial efforts. He controlled the escape of air and spoke entire sentences. But the ones which made us laugh were Paul's individually vocalized, reverberating, big-noised words and non-verbals. Imagine hearing the bassoon-like guttural utterance from the pit of Paul's stomach with, "Four score and seven years ago..." Pause to inhale. "Our fathers brought forth on this continent..." A smelly fog of chewed meat, Italian sauce, and sweet soft drink hovered in our room until Sunday morning. We were much too easily entertained by the puerile!



John dreamed up a new film he called How to Eat a Chicken, pictured left. The theme centered on our taking delight in the gastric system and the gross pleasures we derived from its intake and exit of noises, bodily fluids and solids. A simple concept set in the dorm's basement kitchenette; I wasn't required to call upon my knowledge of method acting. I was instead invited by John to physically overact in the style of a 1913 Mack Sennett Keystone comedy. I played to the camera like an exaggerated ham. I ate a whole chicken and farcically overdid every bite, chew, savor and swallow. My tongue was a shovel. I crossed my eyes. I used a sleeve to wipe my lips. Learned table

manners ceased to exist as John directed my reversion to everyman's image of a Neanderthal in modern day dress. The film's conclusion was a salute to our being far too easily entertained with the controlled or inadvertent slip of air from the abyss of one's stomach, up the windpipe, and eructation from le bouche. In other words, the punchline to John's *How to Eat a Chicken* was a rip-roaring "belch" exiting from the bottom of the intestine.

We avoided any display of our childish appreciation of bodily function humor around the dame-like Miss Mary Elizabeth Thompson. She taught Forensics Activities. One course's requirement was coaching 12 and 13 year old elementary students at the Campus School. For a March forensics competition I was assigned three eighth grade boys and two seventh grade girls for Play Reading. Writing an original introduction, I then adapted a sequence of dialogue from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into a play reading of the scene of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. It was devised especially to make an audience laugh. I met the cast for one hour rehearsals three, sometimes four times a week. I remember Craig Marple played the sleepy Dormouse. His facial expressions as he woke and rolled his eyes back into sleep were very funny. Craig was the 13 year old son of University Music Department Ph. D. Hugo Marple. My Play Reading group did exceptionally well and won First Place in the Local Forensics competition. As a follow up where they competed in the Regional and scored a top mark, I never understood why the children were required to pay for the bus while I rode free to Merrill, Wisconsin.

For my own first effort in competitive university forensics, I put aside high school achievements in poetry and tried my hand at Interpretive Reading of Prose. Having enjoyed my original *A Counselor Returns* Miss Thompson was a fan and asked if I could read something else original. Thinking about another movie set in World War II I'd like to make, I'd written *Song of the Younger One*. Where in Stevens Point existed a site to stand in for a bombed Italian town, only God knew. Having failed twice already to make World War II-themed movies due to lack of any appropriate set, I guess I hadn't devoted sufficient forethought to this one's either.

Song of the Younger One's narrative was first person point of view, told through the eyes of an Italian street waif. I'm sure my simple tale was influenced by my having seen a stinker of a film at the Union's Saturday Film Night. The film was Dondi (1961) which featured the most annoying, embarrassingly untalented child performer ever, David Kory. Star of this hapless picture was David Janssen. After exchanging witless baby talk with his talentless offsider, it's no wonder he went off to become "The Fugitive" (1963-1967). To wit, Dondi's immortal dialogue with Janssen as G.I. Dealey eating dinner: "Goshers! Chow! Is sure smelling good, Mr. Dealy-Buddy! Is tasting good too?" Kory delivered every badly written line in a nasal voice which made him sound as though he had a bad cold. The audience wanted to blow its collective nose. It wasn't saliva sliding down our throats that made us choke. We crunched open-mouthed on dry popcorn to noisily override the kid's awful voice and worse dialogue. His puffy cheeks, large guilty eyes, and sickening murder of the English language forced us to no longer care why no one bothered looking after the five year old orphan. I wrote Song of the Younger One in answer to the "P. U.!" and "Ugh!" the audience burbled unenthusiastically after hearing too many, "Oh, goshers!" I was on shaky ground as far as turning my story into a motion picture, but in my opinion anyway, my handwritten story was better than this Hollywood cack.

We first competed at Stout University in Menominee Falls, Wisconsin. Dick Wessel participated in Debate and was partnered with Dann Perkins. "Boom Boom" Kramer came along as an adjudicator. I hoped he wouldn't ask me to read my piece so that I'd have to hear from him that my voice maybe needed a little more boom, boom, boom. The Interpretive Reading of Prose judge thought I did an excellent job but critiqued that my selected reading was more suitable for a grade schooler. I laughed inside because I knew he was right. It was difficult to picture me as the child telling his story and the selection was deemed beneath my college sophomore ability. It was recommended next time I read something more appropriate to a man my age. The judge didn't know I'd authored my reading. As interesting as I'd made the story and main character, I wasn't a Hemingway or a Faulkner or a ne'er do well on Dickens. Of 54 competitors from five state universities, all 10 Stevens Point students, myself and Paul Bentzen included, won awards. I placed a credible 4<sup>th</sup> in my category and our school was placed overall first.

We didn't know what to expect before our initiation into interstate forensics. Any time afterward we knew we'd be in for a treat. Depending upon participant numbers, we'd travel to the host venue by car or bus. Miss Thompson always secured substantial funding for however many in the group. She reasoned readers, speakers and debaters needed to be rewarded and her priority method was to host a restaurant feast. I'm sure what she meant was that *she* loved eating out on someone else's checkbook and we were allowed to join her at the supper table. Venues selected weren't the franchised Howard Johnson's or McDonald's, Marc's Big Boy or Perkins Pancake Houses. Miss Thompson was a gourmet who did her homework. She invariably booked the best restaurant in town. One restaurant's name I don't recall, but I remember its theme was medieval England. With decorator walls of bluestone, entering the dining area was akin to entering a castle's banquet hall. Only difference, it seemed, was no vaulted chamber. The ceiling was contemporary low. Lighted candles created atmosphere with incandescent lighting providing soft illumination. The bar was olde English with its traditional gravity pump taps. On display were pint glasses and yards of ale with round bottoms mounted and clamped in wooden holders.

Upon Miss Thompson's urging we'd order a before dinner cocktail, favorites being Tom Collins, Black Russian, Vodka Gimlet or Screwdrivers. Imported beer often included Heineken, Lowenbrau or

something with a weird name like Speckled Hen from England. We were encouraged to try something new from the list of appetizers and then choose the most expensive dishes on the menu for entrée (main course). We were, after all, down at mouth, Pavlov-dog trained students to scoff whatever was the Allen Center's imagined esculent du jour slopped onto plates and brown trays.

Dr. Mary Elizabeth happened to love lobster in any shape or form with or sans richly creamed sauces. I swear the grumbling we heard coming from her paunch was two cats snarling over which saucer to choose from the bill of fare. Whole lobster with a warmed bowl of drawn butter and served with a nutcracker-like device and long thin-tined shell picking fork. Lobster ala Newburg. Lobster Thermidor. Broiled Lobster Tail and Beef Eye Filet presented side by side as the glorious appellation Surf N' Turf. Wisconsin boasted neither surf nor bluegrass racecourse. At \$4.50 to \$5.50 each, they were expensive choices. The average upmarket price of a meal was \$2.00 to \$2.50. On my first forensics outing I felt somewhat awkward because eating such high-faluting, high-priced food was so foreign to me. I overcame my reticence, but for assurance sat beside Miss Thompson as she ordered the most wallet-shredding dish on the menu and I, some 15 years before her famous line after Meg Ryan faked her orgasm in Katz's Delicatessen in *When Harry Met Sally* ... (1989), would paraphrase the older woman customer with, "I'll have what she's having."

We feasted on the road prior to competition. Following a successful forensics meet Miss Thompson infrequently arranged a thank you dinner at the best restaurant in downtown Stevens Point, the Hot Fish Shop within the Whiting Hotel. It had a large oval bar with 10 beer taps and seating for 28. Its bar lounge seated 56. There was a large banquet room with its alcove bar, but the lounge was a cozier preference. The Hot Fish Shop - such an unappealing name for an upmarket eatery - was the venue of choice for celebration, business lunch or dinner, and where businessmen, their clubs, boards, and organizations met and supped.

<u>D</u> minus Dawson, er... Mr. Dawson, my director on *Detective Story*, was a member of the Stevens Point Optimists Club. He recommended me to Mr. Jim Neal, the Optimists' program chairman. I was invited to Mr. Neal's home for supper and to show my films. I didn't realize at the time that it was an audition. For no reason other than appearing magnanimous, I asked permission for John Primm to come along too. Jim Neal received my films with enthusiasm. Wednesday, February 17, I was at the Hot Fish Shop, John Primm as well, presenting a program of my films to the Stevens Point Optimists Club. I asked for no fee nor was the hat passed for donation. I was given leads for other local business organizations which might appreciate my film program and, being impoverished college Joes, Primm and I certainly ate like princes, not paupers.

### Chapter 38: Crucifixion

Crucifixion

eorge Wallace, Governor-elect of Alabama, in his inaugural address on January 14, 1963 emphasized "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." On March 7, 1965, thereafter called Bloody Sunday, some 200 Alabama State Troopers clashed with 525 civil rights demonstrators in Selma, Alabama. Two days later on March 9 a second attempt was made to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This is the man who on August 28, 1963 had delivered from his heart his now famously passionate "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before 250,000 marchers advanced on Washington for jobs and freedom. Dr. King stopped at the scene of Bloody Sunday, conducted a prayer service, turned around and returned to Selma in obedience to a court restraining order. White surpremacists beat up white Unitarian Universalist minister James J. Reeb later that day in Selma and he died in a hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, March 11.

SELMA! FREEDOM. EQUALITY FOR ALL. SELMA MUST LISTEN. LET THE NEGROES VOTE. Many read the signs and banners borne by 175 WSU students, faculty members, townspeople, and children Thursday night, March 11, 1965, in an orderly march from the University Center to the Stevens Point County Court House in sympathy with the civil rights action in Selma, Alabama. The march happened the day after *Light Up the Sky* closed. Escorted by police, the group began its procession at 7:00 p.m. and arrived at the Court House approximately half an hour later. Dr. George Dixon of the WSU Sociology Department spoke as a concerned American citizen on the steps of the Court House. He urged people to follow their consciences and write letters to their Congressmen expressing their dissatisfaction with disenfranchisement directed toward Alabama's Negro population.

On March 15 President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his "We Shall Overcome" speech. The following day police clashed with 600 SNCC (Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee) marchers in Montgomery, Alabama. March 17 in Montgomery, 1,600 civil rights marchers demonstrated at the Courthouse. In response to the events of March 7 and 9 in Selma, Alabama, President Johnson sent a bill to Congress that formed the basis for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. March 21 Dr. King led 3,200 civil rights activists in the third march from Selma to Montgomery. On March 25 Dr. King and 25,000 civil right activists successfully ended the 4-day march from Selma to the capitol in Montgomery. Funeral services were held on March 30 for Detroit homemaker Viola Liuzzo, who was shot dead by four Klansmen as she drove marchers back to Selma at night after the civil rights march. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed by the Senate on May 26, the House July 10, and signed into law by President Johnson August 6.

The unsettling and horrific events in Selma made me feel like I had to release a scream from deep inside my soul, even if I didn't have or know the words to say. Inside me, however, was more than just a loud, primal howl. Never more appropriate than now was Expressionist painter Edvard Munch's *The Scream* more validated in my mind. What I was shown on the nightly news and read in the papers wasn't what I had been taught America was supposed to be about. Where were those streets paved in gold supposedly available to everyone who wanted them? Ripping those streets from under the feet of its Negroes, I knew the state of Alabama was wrong and I had to say something. Driven by my Catholic upbringing, I'd been taught what was right and what was wrong. Coincidentally then, as if in support of my pent up feeling, an item in *The Stevens Point Daily Journal* reported what Pope Paul VI declared in his Passion Sunday sermon: The drama of the Cross – "that

absurd fact of failing to recognize Christ and killing him" – is being prolonged and repeated in our own times."

Surely it wasn't a fluke that the Pope should speak of intolerance and not be thinking of Selma. The article reported: The Pope celebrated Mass in the square in front of Our Lady of Guadalupe church. In his homily on the gospel, Pope Paul VI said the passage was a "grave and sad page narrating the clash between Jews and the Jewish people – the people predestined to await the Messiah but who, just at the right moment, did not recognize Him and finally killed Him." This drama is "prolonged and repeated in our days when such a large part of mankind so proudly acts contrary to God, and when there are some who believe they are superior to others only because they attack Christianity and its message of peace and brotherhood."

The article continued: Christ did not curse His crucifiers, the Pope pointed out, but asked the Father to "Forgive them for they know not what they do."

The secular newspaper quoted further from the Pope's homily: "To be contrary to God in our day also is more than anything else a manifestation of ignorance, a lack of knowledge of Christ and His teaching. It is therefore necessary to know the Lord better, to have honest and precise information in what the message of Christ consists of. It is necessary to remove ignorance and blindness for ourselves and our souls," he said.

There were the words in Pope Paul VI's sermon to motivate me to scream out and passionately make a statement on film. The drama of the Cross – "that absurd fact of failing to recognize Christ and killing him" – is being repeated in our own times." I omitted including "prolonged and" from the quote. I felt the message was powerful enough without them at the beginning of my film. A serious undertaking, black and white film was always going to be my only choice.

We had access to a large actors' rehearsal room, its walls draped in a heavy black velvet-like material which didn't reflect light. Given permission to shoot my film in the room on Saturdays, March 13 and 20, I carpeted the floor in black material as well. Borne out of the chaos of hatred in Selma, Alabama, I cared not to confine my picture to a specific event, date, year, or specific age. Prejudice, hate, and fear of one another, especially when there's difference in skin color, have been with mankind forever. The themes were universal and I wanted my film to look timeless, appropriate for viewing anytime current and long into the future. That's why I preferred the absence of an identifiable set in my film.

Nigerian student Jacob Umen had already acted in *Black Lady*, so I went through the motions to sell him my story and then confidently asked, "How'd you feel about being nailed to a cross?" Jacob broadly smiled and answered trustingly in his Nigerian accent, "As long as I can still use a spoon to eat my dinner, you can put all the nails you want in my hands." In my cast were four good-looking 8<sup>th</sup> grade Caucasian boys. I picked Jim Corcoran and Tom Daniels from my St. Stephen's choir, Craig Marple and John Eagon from my Campus School forensics. The latter two had at least some acting experience in Play-Reading. Paul Bentzen, John Palmisano, and Jack Hamilton and I played opinionated young white men. John Primm was the fifth Caucasian in a role not unlike the Good Samaritan or of a non-cross carrying Simon of Cyrene. Primm referred to his role as that of Goodie Two Shoes.

Clothing needed to be as fashionably non-specific as possible. 20<sup>th</sup> Century clothes were fine, but no decade specific chic like tan shoes and pink shoelaces, pink shirt and charcoal grey pants, saddle shoes, blue jeans, etc. The boys dressed in plain white T-shirts and black gym shorts. Shoes and socks weren't worn. The boys were barefoot, a symbolic choice to show they hadn't filled the shoes of adulthood. Paul and I wore black long-sleeved turtle-necked shirts and black pants. Against the black background, only our heads and hands would show, as if disembodied entities. Jack and both Johns wore white dress shirts and black pants. Distinguishing John Primm from the others was his black tie. The other two wore their shirts open-necked. Yes, all of the adults wore shoes. Jacob's

costume was contrastingly archaic. It was a dark shroud barely showing up against the black background and it covered his head, his face, and most of his body. On his feet Jacob wore sandals.

I don't know why I dispensed with the customary introductory title "Elkay" Productions presents. The title card, letters showing just one word for emphasis, CRUCIFIXION, appears first against a black background. It's followed with the newspaper quote from Pope Paul VI. A black screen is seen long enough to blink an eye. Craig rises out of the darkness into frame. Paul rises into picture from behind

the boy and hands ropes to Craig.

Right: Ropes are handed to Craig Marple by Paul Bentzen in my 8mm frame enlargement.

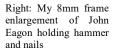
Jim is seen as Jack taps him on the shoulder. Jim flings his body into a stance of intimidation, as if he has an instrument of harm in his right fist. Paul places his hand on Tom's shoulder and Tom's hands rise into frame to reveal a whip. With eyes crazed, I hand John Eagon a hammer and nails, the nails as big as railroad spikes. A



single 500 watt lamp lit each shot. The light was placed at an angle which caused a reflected white speck in each of the characters' eyes. Each boy was given a slightly possessed look, as if their eyes were infected with evil.



Left: My 8mm frame enlargement of Tom Daniels holding whip.





After each child has been armed, a tableau is formed. Jack, John and Paul stand with their arms outstretched and raised slightly to form three Ys behind the boys. Two of the boys stand upright with their arms at their sides. The boy in the center, Craig, stands with his arms outstretched and slightly lowered. He reaches down and raises a cross into frame.

With a change in camera angle a character hooded in a shroud is ushered into frame and the cross is forced upon his shoulder. John Palmisano raises the American flag. A variety of shots and angles show the procession. Mob anger and hatred is demonstrated by furrowed brows, calling out of epithets, their raising and shaking of fists, and all of their actions seemingly justified because they're performed in front of the American flag. Some even place hands upon hearts.

Lightning flashes. The symbolic presentation meant I wasn't required to use real lightning. I didn't have the time available to wait for a real thunderstorm and hope my trigger finger would be fast enough to attempt to capture the real thing on film. Thank goodness, too, because shutter speed of the movie camera was wholly inadequate to film a real strike of lightning. I made lightning after

processing on exposed black film by scratching the emulsion with a pin. When projected, the audience saw white streaks which represented lightning. Flashing continued over live action filmed against the black background. One person moved a sheet of cardboard erratically in front of the floodlight. As lightning flashes all of the white characters show fear and guilt. They cover their eyes or their ears, or bury their faces in their hands. Palmisano screams and hides behind the flag. Only John Primm's character is unafraid. His face conveys pity, but he doesn't do anything to put a stop to

the others' vile behavior.



Left: John Primm, a symbolic Simon of Cyrene, in my 8mm frame enlargement.

In the flashes of light the white palm of a black hand can be mistaken for a white hand. The black-skinned hand is dragged into place on the cross and the smallest boy, John Eagon, hammers in the spike.

Right: John Eagon in my 8mm frame enlargement hammers a nail into a hand on the cross.

There follow a series of rapid dolly-in shots of each character, boy and adult, with arms outstretched in crucifixion pose.



Tom Daniels crucifixion mode in my 8mm frame enlargement.



Angled shots of the crucified individual are intercut rapidly before a fixed, tripod mounted medium shot is shown, lightning flashing, of Jacob nailed to the cross. He wears a loose-fitting crown of thorns. Above his head is a sign which reads: JACOB - CRIME, BORN BLACK.

Right: Umen Bassi Jacob Umen is the crucified black Christ-figure in my 8mm frame enlargement.

Although no voice was recorded and no voice is heard in the soundtrack, Jacob's lips can be clearly read, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." immediately cuts to the title -end-. It was a deliberate choice to use lower case letters.

If only it was technically possible to press a little button here and hear the haunting tub thump, chanting, crashes of thunder and cracks of the whip created by the Bush Mission

Trio in a gymnasium's echo chamber shower room for the film's original score.



Making *Crucifixion* was an exciting and wonderful undertaking. Everyone believed in the message. Everyone cooperated. Everyone concentrated and focused on the job. After any demanding take, "Was I good enough," was most often heard from actors. No one complained. No one goofed off. Very little footage ended up in the off-cuts bin or the gag reel. It was first take, right take almost every time.

Monday night, April 5, I presented 8½ films in the Library Theater. No admission was charged. No seating was reserved. I premiered *Invitation to Dinner* and filled time with *For He Shall Conquer*, Black Lady, Futility, Tarcisius, Zip-Tang, The Sick Trilogy, and Little Brother. The half film screened worked as a preview of an incomplete Crucifixion. Given its controversial themes and provocative nature, I needed to know how an audience might react. This was the first film I'd made with such strong personal opinion. I was sure the film would be judged negatively by some for its disturbing images depicting cruelty inflicted by children. It was standing room only, some managing to sit on the floor, as a capacity crowd overflowed the theater. Numbers attending surprised because there'd been so little publicity - an article in the Stevens Point Daily Journal, an announcement in the school weekly calendar, and some awful-looking posters. A few townspeople showed up, mostly parents of kids who participated in one of the films, two teachers, and familiar faces amongst 8<sup>th</sup> graders from St. Stephen's and the Campus School turned out in force. More university students attended this screening than last year's. The crowd's response was mostly positive. After showing Crucifixion, I was gratified knowing my audience was supportive. I would eventually complete Crucifixion on the editing bench. I felt comfortable accepting the \$25 donation from the University Center Board Cultural Committee.

My history teacher said some complimentary things about my program. His favorite was *Futility* for the amount of work that went into it and for the message it presented. *For He Shall Conquer* wasn't a hit with the university students who thought it corny and melodramatic. Some girls wiped tears from their eyes during the screening of *Tarcisius*. Probably because it was made locally and starred people just about everyone knew, *Invitation to Dinner* drew the biggest laughs and was the hit of my show.

After walking home to the dorm with a bag of films in one hand and my projector in the other, John Primm carting the tape recorder, I found a message slipped under my door. Lewy had called long distance from Belmond, Iowa with plans for me to visit him over Easter. His parents had arranged a round trip ride for me in a car with a female teacher from Milwaukee departing April 15, Holy Thursday, and returning on the 19<sup>th</sup>. I was asked to return the call, no matter what time it was. Even though I was a few days short of turning 20 years old, I was still obligated to clear any and all plans with my parents.

In letters I'd asked, "What do you think?" and then attempted to justify the invitation with, "It won't cost a thing, except for a little pocket change, so that *Readers Digest* article 'We Can't Afford It' won't apply. Sacrifices bring rewards? Maybe it's a good thing I didn't go to Belmond over Christmas. That would have cost money – this doesn't."

Money in our family was skint. Dad's Type 1 Diabetes wasn't under control. He was dependent upon insulin injections. He had been in and out of the VFW hospital for interminable testing and there was no steady income. Although Dad's illness wasn't specifically used as an excuse to say no to my trip, being together as family for Easter was. Aunt Adeline Slauson, Dad's only sister and my godmother, had again invited us over for Easter Sunday dinner. It was like it had become an Easter tradition. Year after year, every Easter we were expected to turn up for midday dinner at Aunt Adeline's. Any other Sunday our family was invited to the Slausons for dinner, Mom always complained to Dad, "Do we have to stay to eat at Slausons? Adeline always puts that horrible stinky cheese in the salad." The cheese was crumbled Roquefort. To Mom's whispered gripe I always cheerfully chimed in, "But I like that cheese," because I really did. Roquefort aside, this Easter I didn't want to do the same old thing and so tradition be damned.

I figured because she had so many times before, Aunt Adeline would invite us for Easter again. As expected, she did and, in another letter, I tried to put my case. "I'd like to go to Belmond and visit Lewy as long as I have this opportunity. You wouldn't really mind, would you? I suppose it's hard for you to understand why I want to go because he is just a young boy like Steve, but I can't explain it either. He's such a nice kid and must think something of me to call long distance and try to make arrangements for a visit. Lewy was so excited when he talked to me and the call I made didn't get to him until almost 11:00 p.m. He was waiting with his parents for my call. His Mom had a pleasant voice. Going to Belmond would give me the chance to see Tom Tamasi too. Lewy will invite him to his home when (if) I get there and we would drive to Britt to visit Mike, the little 9 year old who writes those cute letters. I'm thinking about going, but not making definite plans because something might come up and I'd be too disappointed. However, it would be an exciting and memorable trip and I'm hoping for the best. When I get home I'll try to find out where this lady teaches and call her." Interestingly, I also wrote after this lengthy plea, "Will we make Polish sausage again this year? If we do, and if I go to Belmond, I'll have to take along a link for Easter."

When I arrived home for Easter vacation, I carried two letters from Lewy, one which included the phone number of the Milwaukee teacher offering the ride. Against my parents' better wishes, I called the teacher and made the arrangement for her to pick me up. Even as I packed clothes into a small suitcase, Mom and Dad said, "No. You're not going. We need to be a family for Easter." I felt I was being treated like a little boy. I disobeyed. When the teacher arrived, I heard from Mom and Dad, "Tell her you're not going." I didn't. It was time to make my own decisions. With barely two dollars in change in my pocket, I climbed into her car and didn't wave good-bye because no one stood at the door to see me off. This just may have been the one day my parents didn't want to face, the day they knew when they'd lose control over their first-born child and had to accept that I was capable of decision-making and consequent actions. This, in a most non-histrionic occasion, was the day I cut the apron strings.

In Belmond, slushy snow was still on the ground. People wore winter coats, knit beanies with pom poms, scarves, and galoshes. Lewy greeted me with his broad silver smile. His family was warm and welcoming. Lewy took me to his school like I was an object for "Show and Tell". He was proud to show me off to his friends and teachers. It was wonderful reminiscing about last summer's fun at Camp Richards. Tom Tamasi didn't come to Belmond. We didn't drive to Britt to visit Mike. It didn't really matter because everything we did in Belmond was new.

When it was time to return home, the Milwaukee teacher had changed her plans. I had to get home on my own. Without asking for money, Lewy's Mom booked and paid for a seat for me on a train out of Des Moines. I never let on that I had no more than two dollars in my pocket. Still, I offered to pay for my ticket. Thank goodness my offer was vehemently rejected. Tom Tamasi was in Des Moines and we saw him before my train departed. I loaned him *Zip-Tang* so he could see what Jersey Jim, Johnny Reb and Laughing Larry got up to in Missouri. The train was a night arrival in Milwaukee and I clearly remember the late afternoon sun glaring off the Mississippi River as we crossed over it on the railroad bridge.

Time crept past 11:00 p.m. as the train lurched into the Milwaukee station. I caught a couple of buses to West Allis. Small pocket change, not at all surprisingly all that I carried, covered bus cost. I used a paper transfer to the second bus on 70<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield. I walked from Greenfield Avenue in the glow of streetlights down 119<sup>th</sup> Street. The house was dark. The door was locked. I knocked. Mom answered. She stared at me, said nothing for what seemed like ages, and finally whispered, "So you finally decided to come home, eh." No questions were asked about who I'd seen, where I'd been, or how I got home. Not even the following day, or the day after.

## Chapter 39: The Telling Roll of Black & White

Jamie on 8mm

udos again from Chicago, this time via phone on April 21 from Mrs. Margaret Conneely, current Chairman of the Photographic Society of America's Motion Picture Division, competition chairman of the Metro Movie Club and subsequent mid-west interstate organization CACCA. In the world of amateur filmdom she was easily a leading cheerleader on my squad of supporters. There was no doubt she highly approved of a young person's enthusiasm for making movies and she genuinely appreciated the subject matter I churned out. Mrs. Conneely cheerfully and excitedly informed that *Tarcisius* had won First Place in the CACCA Spring Competition and that accolade automatically made it eligible for Film of the Year 1964-65.

At her request I handed the receiver to John Primm. He'd recently become a member of Chicago's Metro Movie Club and entered his film *The Fluff from Outer Space*. Mrs. Conneely told John he took out the club's First Place trophy. Mrs. Conneely had then entered *The Fluff from Outer Space* into CACCA's Spring Competition. It won First in the Sound category. John was agog to learn that he, too, was now eligible for CACCA's Film of the Year. *Zip-Tang*, having won a First earlier in the year, was also eligible. I'd left *Zip-Tang* with Tom Tamasi in Des Moines over Easter and called him long distance, always a time-consuming and expensive process then as such calls went through an operator instead of direct dialing, and asked him to pay the postage for Special Delivery to Mrs. Conneely in the Windy City. John and I looked forward to the CACCA banquet the second weekend in June. One or the other's movie might nab Film of the Year.

We thought about accepting our awards in person at the banquet. Attendance, mine in particular, would depend upon where I was and what I was doing for summer work. The advice Mr. Kojis offered last year had stuck. It was spring and I was shopping for a job. To Mr. Kojis in the West Allis Recreation Department I sent a letter asking for a summer job, any job. Guys I'd worked with at Camp Richards wrote and asked if I'd be returning. Seems they were making other summer plans. Of the boys who still kept in touch only 13 year old Lewy confirmed his intention to return as a camper. As much as I enjoyed working there, I crossed Camp Richards off my list for the sole reason the pay wasn't big enough. Figuratively, it seemed as if the VFW hospital installed a revolving door to treat Dad's Diabetes. He didn't have the kind of dollars coming in to comfortably shell out for my university fees. I needed to secure a job with a solid income and contribute significantly to my college education.

Following my success in two Kodak Teenage Movie Contests and CINE, I had been offered a job as a news cameraman with Milwaukee's WISN-TV, the operative word being tentative. It was left to my initiative to contact the man who'd made the offer, Mr. Don Heilemann. His passion was taking pictures of what made news and he was a member of several professional organizations including the Wisconsin News Photographers Association and the National Press Photographers Arm. Occasionally he used a bulky broadcast video camera to shoot Milwaukee news for WISN. It was this camera he wanted to interest me in handling. I called him at his home and his wife said he was in bed with the flu, so I picked up a pen and wrote Mr. Heilemann a letter. Awaiting a reply which never arrived, I didn't sit idle and twiddle my thumbs.

I put out feelers for other jobs. Jim Dillamon wrote and said he wanted me to work alongside him at Boys Town. He was in no position to hire, but with his encouragement I sent him my résumé and asked for a good word with personnel director Fr. Wagner. I had my doubts about qualifications,

would I even be wanted, but my Mother especially taught me it never hurt to indicate interest. The job paid better than \$300 a month.

If worse came to worst, I would always have a job ready and waiting in the service of our dear ol' Uncle Sam. I could have overlooked letters from the Selective Service about deferment and, presto, like magic have become a soldier. It was always unnerving when Selective Service correspondence arrived. Cold sweat ran down the spine. A first letter included a form to fill in for consideration for deferment from the United States Armed Services. Enrolled in university, President Johnson wasn't interested in my body. Study usually meant deferment. If the paper requesting deferment wasn't filled in and submitted on time, a second letter arrived with instructions to report to such-and-such place for a physical examination. According to my father who'd volunteered for the Army and served on Okinawa in World War II, you'd get the GI examination: someone looked down your throat while another looked up your ass. If they didn't see each other, mister, you passed. The simplicity of the exam led to being drafted and sworn into the U. S. Army. I'd rather tread the boards than trek with a monotonous drill song on my lips and a rifle slung over my shoulder. I preferred to act on stage like a soldier than dive in without Stanislavski and become a soldier for real. I filled in the Selective Service papers and ran to submit them in the designated office of Old Main!

I fed upon pats on the back and the ensuing publicity of achievement in making movies. Having enjoyed uncredited success earlier with a Campus Ugly Man picture published in Famous Monsters of Filmland, I submitted pictures and written screeds about my films to other national magazines. I couldn't afford to buy the magazines on any regular basis, but I checked them monthly in the newsstands at the drugstore, the grocery store, or the dedicated City News store. Reading magazines as if browsing in a library was discouraged; store managers frequently told off non-spending customers, "Buy it. Don't browse it." No one wants to buy an already read, second-hand magazine. I would thumb through the magazines which appealed and, whoa, what's that? Just as magazine issues happen nowadays, the May/June 1965 issue of Better Home Movie Making was released in April. "Meet the Winn-Uhs!" was a one-page article about the second nationwide movie making competition for teenagers sponsored by the Eastman Kodak Company in cooperation with the University Film Producers Association and the Council on International Nontheatrical Events. I found my name listed at the top of the Senior Category Honorable Mention winners. Though puffed up at the sight of my name in print, I was disappointed my film Black Lady hadn't been named.

A bigger surprise in that same issue was a picture article headlined "On Location: Milwaukee". There I was pointing my finger in a field with my camera on a tripod and standing with Dick Wesell as bearded Professor Grimur. Below was Dick Harter's vagary tearing apart the cheek of Bill Geipel's Dr. Emile. Whoo-hoo! It took nearly a year to show up in print. I'd sent the magazine editor the information and snapshots when I was a still a freshman and little time had passed since completing Dr. Emile's Mind. What matter the staleness of the item! I wasn't Hollywood working to feature release dates and, unlike Hollywood's films staying in cinemas for a time and then disappearing like last year's clothing fashions, my films seemed to have a long screening life. The passage of time from when I'd made my film and when a national magazine publicized it wasn't worth a worry.

Sometimes surprise gifts, as good as unexpected published items, come in other physical form.



Someone in the Milwaukee Movie Makers who shot exclusively in 16mm had been handed a roll of 8mm B&W film as a freebie in a camera store. As a birthday gift for turning 20, or my birthday just used as an excuse to get rid of something useless to them but useful to me, the 8mm B & W roll was handed to me. Ah, but there was more! The 16mm user knew someone who knew someone who wanted to unload an 8mm Bolex Palliard movie camera cheaply, fair use picture left. As long as I was being given the 8mm film, how would I like to borrow the camera, use it, and decide whether or not I wanted to buy it. Well, this was a step up from my Kodak stalwart. It was like putting down the keys to a Nash Rambler and taking up the keys of a Cadillac Seville. I

had no doubt that my films would result in a sharper look. After all, the outer case of the Swissmanufactured Bolex was a highly polished duraluminum body covered in genuine black Morocco leather. Its metal parts were chrome-plated. Its viewfinder had parallax correction. In other words, what I saw through the viewfinder is mostly what I would get on film. I wouldn't have to guess for centering a subject as I did with the Kodak's parallax viewfinder. In addition to a finger-tip release button on the front of the camera, there was a cable release socket which allowed for single frame exposure for animation, titles, and more. I welcomed the variable speed mechanism. Film could be exposed at 12, 16, 18, 24, 32, 48 and 64 frames per second. It had two standard D mount lenses which were interchangeable with other D mount lenses. It had a detachable pistol grip handle with a wrist strap which could be threaded into the 3/8 inch tripod socket, handy for making steady handheld shots and, I might add, making the camera look even more impressive.

With the Bolex and the one 4 minute reel I intended to shoot a quick mood picture about the Civil War. The storyline as such would be about a boy's tenderness and kindness toward a man who was his enemy in war. Initially there'd be only three characters – a wounded Confederate soldier, a Union boy bugler, and a Union officer.

Paul Bentzen introduced me to David Jurgella, a freshman and Stevens Point resident, who enjoyed constructing theatre sets and working backstage with costumes, especially period dress. Dave was a Civil War buff, collected clothing, uniforms and props of the era and, when he was able, participated in mock battles down south. He agreed to supply three costumes. Canny Jurgella's catch was that he got to play the Union officer. Although Dave didn't have flags in his collection, I wanted Bentzen to carry the Confederate flag. Dave and Paul sweet-talked Paul's mother Louella into sewing one. I just wanted a Confederate flag and never knew more than one design was used during the Civil War. Instead of the rectangular Stars and Bars, also known as the Confederate States of America's First National, Dave asked Mrs. Bentzen to sew the square Confederate States of America Battle Flag. A symbol of the Army of Northern Virginia, soldiers painted their battle record on this St. Andrew's cross Battle Flag. Based upon his performance as the Dormouse, I figured my top notch forensics competitor, 13 year old Craig Marple, had the talent to be the bugle boy. Paul Bentzen was my only choice to play the wounded Confederate. He had established himself as a good ham in *Invitation to Dinner*. Now I wanted to give him a chance to be dramatic, even after he'd shown bigger-than-big talent in College Theatre stage plays and our classroom exercises.

Paul and I were often teamed by  $\underline{D}$  minus Dawson in acting classes and, when our instructor didn't, we chose to work together anyway. We were two cured hams dripping in salt and water! Extemporaneous acting, similar to theater sports where all the dialogue and action is made up on the spot, featured heavily in our development. Our minds had to be trained to react quickly so that action always moved and never dragged in a mire of hesitation. When speaking wasn't required, exercises wherein action alone conveyed the atmosphere and tension, hero and antagonist engaged in movement, action, pantomime, symbolic or interpretive dance. In one instance I recall Paul and I having to portray animals which overtly reflected the characters we played. Paul was a badger and I was a wolverine loping around the stage and fighting over some imaginary rotting raw meat carcass.

Mr. Dawson stressed that we never reply to a question with, "No." No was a stopper. It couldn't allow action to progress. For instance, one of us might say, "Have you been biting your fingernails again?" If the other answered, "No," where can the dialogue go? "Why not," would come across as kind of stupid and "Oh" made for a long pause. Even if the off-the-cuff question seemed probing or uncomfortable, as an actor, remember that it's all a part of the imagination and not necessarily true. Sometimes we'd deliberately try to embarrass the other by initiating a scene with, "Do you play with yourself first thing in the morning?" Fruit being slang for homosexual, someone would ask "Are you a fruit?" Everyone who sat watching the spontaneous skit in class chuckled. Even Mr. Dawson smirked to see how such belittling questions would be handled. The answer, if you wanted to pass the exercise, was definitely not going to be a profound and attacking, "No!" It had to be answered in the positive to keep the scene moving.

One which always cracked up the class was use of the word "snorfer". It certainly was puerile and may have been little used in general parlance; a coined word idiomatic to our class and campus perhaps, the definition of snorfer was "one deriving pleasure from smelling girls' bicycle seats." So imagine an acting exercise with everyone in the room in stitches of laughter as the exchange unfolded. "So you're a snorfer?" "Oh, heck, yeah, been doing it on the sly for years." "Ever been caught" "Sure. Guess I'm not careful enough. Maybe I drew attention to myself?" "Of course you do. The noise you make inhaling through your nose sounds like a buzz saw." And so forth. We'd play for the audience reaction, each attempting to be top banana in a comedy duo. Even if we were supposed to be serious in our approach, like maybe a psychiatrist and client, the snorfer routine could be played as dead seriously as could be, and only encouraging the audience to hold its sides in laughing jags and trying not to wet themselves.

Some acting lessons involved selected scenes from plays. Mr. Dawson assigned scenes and we were expected to memorize the lines and present the rehearsed scene for evaluation in class. Some assignments were overnighters, but most were assigned for acting in class three days to a week later. Paul and I had a scene from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, considered as one of the greatest American plays. Paul was Willy Loman and I was his son Biff. Whatever it was that got in the way of learning lines and taking the time to block and work the scene, I don't remember. What I do remember is that on stage we thought we'd get away with winging it. Boy, did we underestimate director, teacher, method-acting instructor, playwright and theatre history-informed Dr. D minus William Dawson. As if we knew more than he did! Sheesh! What a mistake! At one point of the scene's dramatic exchange I said to Paul, "So, Pa, what do you intend to do?" When Paul failed to respond, I thought he'd dropped a line and tried to jog his memory with, "So what ya gonna do Pa?" Paul turned to me and shouted, "Dupa? Dupa? What d'ya mean by calling me an ass?" In Polish, dupa is someone's rear end! Mr. Dawson was livid. Almost hysterically he screamed at us to get the hell off stage! We were to sully its boards no longer, not waste his valuable time and assaulted with further derogatory epithets until we decided to get serious about acting.

Here then were the minds, the so-called precocious brainiacs, chugging away over the Civil War mood piece. Serious drama is what we absolutely intended when using my one-reel of black and white movie film. Filmmakers in the 1960s were experimenting with forms, new ways to present subject matter and mood pieces had become a popular means by which to convey ideas and personal feelings. What was seen on screen wasn't always meant to be taken literally. Subjects were presented symbolically and audiences were challenged into paying attention and interpreting what they saw. Not everyone seeing the final product arrived at the same conclusion. That was an intention of the filmmaker, that audience members brought themselves, their thoughts, into the film and took away from it what they wanted.



By Sunday, May 9, the story included two more cast members, John Primm and I as Confederate soldiers. Of course Jurgella acquiesced and came up with a couple more uniforms. We spent the overcast afternoon on the Searl farm in Custer, about eight miles east of Stevens Point. Cathy Searl, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at St. Stephen's, owned a couple of horses and offered them for the film. Her family even drove our entire cast to use the Pictured left, I am mounted on a golden horse appropriately named Goldie. Garbed in a Confederate uniform, all over again I reveled in my glory as a Camp Richards Advanced Horseman. Jurgella owned the magnificent long grey coat, kepi, boots, and saddle blanket. The feather in the cap was something native, possibly organic; likely a wing feather from a wild duck or a pheasant we picked from the ground and shoved into the cap's leather band.

Goldie liked to gallop and was responsive to a rider. Good thing too because Craig and Dave had never before been near a horse. Neither knew a thing about riding. I gave them easy-to-follow instructions. Lessons meant nothing to Jurgella. He was just plain scared of the horse and Goldie

knew it. Dave sat stiff in the saddle, the reins held tight in his hands. Fearing being bucked off, thrown off or falling out of the saddle, he barely moved his feet in the stirrups. He wouldn't whack his heels into the horse or shout "Giddiyup." Goldie stood like a statue refusing to move. When Dave got up enough nerve and teased the horse's accelerator, it immediately took off into a trot, a difficult gait for an inexperienced rider. The up and down bouncing was not only uncomfortable, it made a greenhorn jiggle like a bobble head and Dave felt he'd topple out of the saddle. Jurgella called out for me to stop his mount. What was I supposed to do standing 30 feet away? I shouted, "Pull back on the reins," and Dave hollered back, "What if he bucks?" Dave knew his costumes, but he couldn't get the hang of a good horse.

Following my instructions, Craig, pictured right, approached Goldie with Just as he'd caught on how to play the Dormouse, instantly Craig started walking, trotting and galloping whenever he reined to encourage the horse. Goldie responded splendidly to Craig's vocal and heel instructions.







Dave's equine fear and horsey incompetence gave me no choice; I made a character change. Jurgella was bounced out of the cavalry into infantry, pictured left with foot soldier Jamie. Feet firmly on the ground, Dave struck a commanding figure, even after claiming his costume was militarily incorrect. It was a reproduction Second Wisconsin infantry uniform, repro hat with insignia and repro boots, but his main concern was wearing the original cavalry belt and saber. It was cavalry, horse soldier, not infantry. History aside, to me it looked fine and impressive. Other genuine items from the Civil War included the brass insignias on the hats and caps, buttons on the coats and jackets, the canteen, but not the strap or the bugle. It had a dent in it which made us wonder how it got there. If only it was possible for an inanimate object to expose its history.

Jurgella provided Paul's Confederate soldier with a genuine M1842 smoothbore percussion infantry musket, dated from the assembly plate date on the lock plate and breech tang as an original 1851 Harper's Ferry musket. It was a functional weapon. Paul is

pictured left with the musket. The same musket was used by our characters of the Southern Confederacy when they appeared separately on camera. If John, Paul and I appeared in the same shot, Paul held the musket and John, pictured right, gripped a plastic non-firing M1860 Colt prop, and me, the third character, stood unarmed or was mounted on the horse unarmed.



Dave took responsibility for the musket, ensuring that it was safe to handle during any take. We didn't want anyone accidentally shot. He hadn't primed and made the

musket ready to fire unless a scene required it to discharge. Then Dave loaded the antique weapon with black powder and wadding and set a firing cap. No mini ball was jammed down the barrel with the ramrod.

I remember what it was like firing the musket. There was a slight kickback, more like a nudge from the stock against my shoulder. Discharge was a red flash of fire at the hammer and out the barrel followed immediately by an impressive billow of grey and white smoke. The smell of burned powder suggested Hell's brimstone and irritated our throats.

We spent time riding the horses, except for Dave, and enjoyed ourselves in the saddle more than concentrating on shooting film. I was in my Camp Richards element enjoying every minute. Paul wasn't keen to climb onto a horse's back, especially after he saw the attitude of Cathy's black gelding. It was a spirited mount, moreso than Goldie, and its name was Diablo, meaning devil. I was able to control the horse and loved how it leapt into its fast gallop. When it wasn't on the move, just standing, it must have been impatient. Diablo turned its head, one side or the other, to bite at the rider's foot in the stirrup. I was uncomfortable for Craig after he mounted the black and its head turned a couple of times to bite. Diablo didn't demonstrate aggressive behavior with Cathy in the saddle, nor with me. It just didn't care much for novice riders. I wasn't confident young Craig in the saddle could control Diablo while standing around awaiting the next camera setup. In my mind flashed an image of the horse biting Craig's foot, the boy panicking and letting loose the reins, the horse rearing and throwing him, or taking off into a frenzied gallop as if a firecracker had been shoved up its rectum. Responsible for returning Craig home in one piece, I told Cathy we'd better stick with Goldie and shoot my picture using one gentle, cooperative horse.

The Civil War film didn't have a title. We just called it the Civil War film. What could the film be called? Discussion with the cast came up with nothing better than the Civil War film. Now that was an audience grabber if ever we heard one! We tried the soppy-sounding A Boy's Tenderness and A Boy's Kindness, extending it to A Boy's Kindness in War. We even thought about The Bugler Boy, but I winced at that one because the boy never blew his bugle in the picture.

Hollywood's titles had taught me that whenever there seemed a problem with a finding a catchy title, give the picture the prominence of the name of the main character. Amongst Hollywood's titles using names the track record was *Cat Ballou* (1965), *Becket*, *Mary Poppins*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Father Goose* and *Zorba the Greek* (all 1964), *Cleopatra*, *Tom Jones* and *Hud* (all 1963). I couldn't forget about *Spartacus* (1960), *Ben-Hur* (1959), or 1955's *Marty*.

And so I suggested naming the film for the bugle boy, even if the film was silent and there'd be no specific reference to a Christian name. But what name? What sounded Civil War-ish? No one knew. My recollection of seeing *The Red Badge of Courage* gave me no clues other than biblical names like Abraham, Isaac, Thomas, Matthew, John, and James which, for our character, came across as too formal, or sounded too Biblical. I'm unsure how it happened after we pronounced each name in full - James, John, Abraham - and then each in its diminutive form. We stumbled upon the very pleasant sounding and youthfully appropriate James into Jamie.

The film was incomplete, hadn't been processed, and wasn't anywhere close to being edited. You'd think I'd have learned a lesson from *The Emperor's New Clothes* and the fiasco of publicizing a film before it was finished. Just goes to show that passage of time blurs embarrassing events. Having buried it deep in the recess of memory I too eagerly welcomed the publicity bandwagon. I couldn't do anything in film without people hearing about it. In other words, I no longer needed to blow my own horn. I was a big fish in a small pond. Whenever I started to make a new movie, people knew. The local rag, *The Stevens Point Daily Journal* and the university paper, *The Pointer*, both said that when I made a movie, it was news. My new film was news. Both newspapers printed a story about the Civil War film being filmed in Portage County. You'd think it was Hollywood's *Variety* with the headline 'Klobukowski Announces Latest Film' in the university's glossy *Pointer*. The daily newspaper treated the story more provincially with

#### Film Makers At Work In Portage County

The Civil War is being fought over again in Portage County. "Elkay" Productions is filming 'Jamie,' a fictional story of a boy bugler's kindness toward his enemy in war. The eight-millimeter movie is in black & white. It will run about six minutes. Klobukowski said the film will be available for programs in the fall.

Below is a publicity photo for *Jamie*, same as pictured in the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* and *The Pointer*, here mocked up as an 8mm frame enlargement. From left: Paul Bentzen, Craig Marple, David Jurgella holding the pistol. John Primm snapped the photograph.



Available for programs in the fall? Well, hardly! Who's kidding whom? The movie grew bigger than the initial one-reel, 4 minute running time. One roll grew into two. I shelled out a few dollars at Tucker's Camera Shop and bought a "just in case" roll. Horse riding shots proved unpredictable and used more footage than expected. It is nigh impossible to direct an animal and expect a good take on first take. Some of our acted scenes required multiple takes. When the two reels of the Civil War film came back from the processors, aaaargh, it was first viewing terrible. Having shot the picture under a clouded sky, the picture lacked a three-dimensional look. It was flat, as grey as a wall of concrete... and just as exciting.

The acting was unconvincing. The goofiness Paul and I had displayed in  $\underline{D}$  minus Dawson's class had somehow transferred onto this film. Unprepared and preoccupied, we both acted like two overbaked Easter hams in a Mack Sennett comedy. Primm was the only character who came out of this fiasco as acceptably credible. Jurgella was barely B movie passable. Craig, unfortunately, just

couldn't act. He was great as the Dormouse on stage. On camera he a good-looking boy, but he was stiff, as if he'd spent an overnight in a bed of plaster of paris. Together Dave and Craig held up the mirror to a pair of wooden planks. The camera just didn't love Craig. Regardless the emotion required, be it caring, surprise, fear, anger, or disbelief, on display for everyone to see, Craig looked as flat as the day was grey. Nothing registered on Craig's face, his visage that of an inanimate doll, a

nondescript blank. I had a hard time reconciling how such a talented boy could show up on film so lifeless.

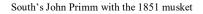
Additionally, the story was wafer thin. There was too much horse riding and insufficient development of character and motivation. A courier on horseback delivers a message. There's some shooting. Paul's Confederate is wounded and tries to crawl on his belly to safety, pictured right. The bugler stumbles upon him and tries to help. The Union officer shows up and shoots the wounded soldier. Craig's bugler looks up like a stone-faced Buster Keaton and essentially asks, "Why'd you do that?"



Everyone in the film seemed lost and came across with question overload, "What am I doing here?" and "Where in hell am I going?" Worse, and essential for appeal to an audience to move them and sweep them along on a gamut of emotion, not one character came across as interesting or even likeable.

I must have thought the grandeur of the military uniforms, the action of soldiers in beards and moustaches, trotting and galloping horses, the firing of a100 year old weapon and seeing real smoke pour out the muzzle was sufficient to whiz the audience into another world. I overlooked regard for a story with developed characters in conflict, a story with defined acts, a story with a good beginning, middle, and satisfying end. We looked good in costume and that's as far as things went!







Union officer David Jurgella uneasy around Goldie



Craig Marple, Union bugle boy

I don't recall if I ever did a final edit, although I did bother cutting shots together into chronological order. Excised were irrelevant shots of simply fooling around at the end a roll of film when there wasn't quite enough footage left to chance shooting a usable scene. One such end of roll shows Paul grabbing his crotch instead of his musket, and his goof-off was a parody of a well-known U.S. Marine's boot camp chant, "This is my weapon; this is my gun. One is for killing; one is for fun."

As it stood, the six minutes of *Jamie* was an enormous disappointment. It couldn't and wouldn't be shown in programs in the fall... or ever. Running it through the projector should be confined only to the eyes of the immediate cast. The 8mm *Jamie* would be a reminder of what results from going off

half-cocked, half-baked, and featherheaded. Today, and so much to my disappointment, the 8mm version of *Jamie* is another lost film.



8mm cast of *Jamie* waiting outside Sims Hall for the Searl family to drive us to their farm in Custer for filming.

Left to Right: Dave Jurgella, Me, Craig Marple, Paul Bentzen, John Primm



On set in Custer is the 8mm Cast of Jamie: Paul Bentzen, John Primm, Me, Craig Marple, and David Jurgella on Goldie.

# Chapter 40: Making Money Making Movies

#### Project Headstart

Pollowing rich publicity for a poorly realized film, all wasn't, as I'd thought, lost. I had jobs offered. My conclusion was that it mattered little what was actually accomplished, as long as you got yourself out there with positive publicity. Mr. Kojis had a position for me as a supervisor of activities on a West Allis playground. Camp Richards wanted me to return for its summer sessions. Boys Town called. However, the most enticing offer was with a government sponsored project headed by the University's Home Economics Department. Miss Agnes Jones and Miss Bonnie McDonald had made a successful application for federal funds. Their experimental project had President Johnson's signature and was called Project Headstart. Its purpose was to prepare underprivileged and poverty-stricken five year old children for school and would take place in Washington Grade School. My role would be similar to that of a counselor and entertainment man. I'd be responsible for organizing games, singing, dancing, and acting; all activities I was familiar with and had successfully employed at Camp Richards. Additionally, and more importantly, my skills with film were needed. I was to document the children's progress with photos and a 16mm movie. I didn't own equipment for shooting quality stills nor own a16mm camera. Don't worry, I was told, professional cameras would be provided.

Genuinely interested at first, I was hesitant about accepting the job offer. Although it was local, involved the least amount of upheaval, and paid more than \$600, I knew I'd have to spend some of that pay on room and board. As a lever I used the job offer of playground supervisor because, living at home, I wouldn't be up for additional living costs. On top of the salary I asked for room and board. Desperate for a photographer and moviemaker with previous experience working with children, the women accepted my terms. Given that all monies for this program came out of Washington D.C., I was asked about my family's financial situation. I said Dad was unwell and unemployed. Misses Jones and McDonald handed me a blank application form and suggested Dad complete it providing information on family income and resources. Dad's situation being what it was, I qualified for the government's Work-Study financial assistance program. Project Headstart would pay for my junior year's university fees. The federal government job started officially June 14.

The positive tone of the newspaper publicity on the Civil War film made the university's Office of Public Relations aware of a talent they didn't know they had in Dave Jurgella. He was asked if he had uniforms to dress a Civil War color guard for Steven Point's Memorial Day Parade Sunday, May 30.

It was an honor being asked to be in a color guard steeped in American history. Approaching the task with sobriety and solemnity, we practiced drill. Memorial Day, using crepe hair and spirit gum, we formed magnificent Civil War era beards and moustaches on faces. What happened during the parade, however, was most unexpected. Adults who should have known better spit at John, Paul and Jim as they marched in their Confederate uniforms. Worse, they encouraged their children to spit too. The children ran from the curb right up to any of our three Johnny Rebs and unashamedly sprayed their saliva from puckered lips onto the grey uniforms. Rednecks and their spawn were on hideous display! Amazing was the military conduct from our three soldiers representing the South. They marched on, left, right, left, right, eyes straight ahead, never missing the beat. Head straight, never looking tormenters in the eye, Bentzen became vocal. He told those brats and their ignorant parents, "Grow up. Knock it off." Amongst parade watchers were people who used the brains God gave

them. They heckled the spitters. "Show respect for history." "The Civil War ended a hundred years ago!" They shamed them into ceasing their unhealthy, despicable gesture.







Union Me, Craig Marple & Dave Jurgella both hidden behind Confederate flag, Confederates John Primm, Paul Bentzen, & Jim Franczyk.

Classes wound up shortly after the parade and exams were sat, but not before I received Motion Picture of the Year results from the Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association. Unable to attend CACCA's banquet program at the Furniture Club of America in Chicago. Ronald Doerring was awarded Motion Picture of the Year for his 16mm Color and Sound *Wizard of Wazoo*. I'd not had the chance to see the picture and cannot comment. Amongst the Ten Best of Midwest films of the year was Milwaukee Movie Makers' Ralph Zautke with his incredible *The Last Man*. My *For He Shall Conquer* was placed Second. I also placed Fifth in the Ten Best with *Zip-Tang*. My third competition film, *Tarcisius*, just missed out having been placed 11<sup>th</sup>. John Primm placed 7<sup>th</sup> on the list with *The Fluff from Outer Space*. It's worth mentioning that MMM's Frank Kreznar also made it into the Ten Best of the Midwest with his cryptic titled "home movie", er, travelogue *TM-ABC*.

The dorms emptied and students disappeared home. In the same room I'd occupied throughout my sophomore year, I was now the sole resident on 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Sims. Here then was the room provided by Project Headstart. Board was hit or miss at the Allen Center, mostly miss because evening meals weren't catered. I didn't mind not having to share with a roommate, but it was awfully quiet sometimes. Bentzen and Jurgella sometimes visited. Without my knowing, both had also been hired for a summer job in Project Headstart.

A week into the program Miss McDonald conferred with me about what she'd written in her staff report. I had established a good rapport with the children. Well, heck, I just thought they were a lot

of fun, far more sharp and intelligent than I'd ever expected from 5 year olds. The children called the women "Teacher". Maybe because I was younger than the directors, I was addressed by my first name. I wondered why they didn't call me "Mister". I guess to a 5 year old I was already an old fogey! Title made no difference to their show of

respect and acceptance of who was in charge. Even after I put on simple make-up and a wig, pictured right, to tell a scary story, kids responded and always showed respect.



Most afternoons I was assigned to ride the yellow school bus with the children to take home the ones who lived out of town. One 5 year old blond boy, pictured left, always grabbed the front seat and patted it indicating he

wanted me to sit with him. Sometimes I would, sometimes not because I didn't want to be seen playing favorites. "Not today," I'd tell the boy, "It's so-and-so's turn." When I did accept the little guy's invitation, he invariably curled up, lay his head on my thigh and immediately fell fast asleep.

We did a good job in the classrooms keeping the children busy and burning energy. Quite a few on the bus nodded off. If they sat, instead of lying down on the seat, every bump in the road turned them into dashboard bobble heads. As each boy and girl was dropped off, some looking unhappy, I observed the run down, peeling, in-need-of-a-coat-of-paint homes, properties cluttered with outdated rusting farm machinery, discarded wire bed frames, and dilapidated unregistered falling apart car bodies.



A 35mm camera and rolls of film were handed to me the first day, but without written or oral instructions on what I was expected to shoot. When I asked, the women's response was, "You're supposed to be the creative one. You figure it out." I shot pictures on black & white stock of children playing games, riding the bus, eating snack time fruit and lunches, and of doctors and nurses doing medical examinations. Noses and ears had an instrument with a light inserted. The doctor's face was so close; surely

the child was giddied by the unmistakable male fragrance of Old Spice. Sure as heck, the aftershave overwhelmed me and I didn't have the doctor's nose stuck in my ear! I snapped pictures of everything. Most revealing were children's facial expressions when reacting to



inoculations. Some screamed. Some cried. Most made awful faces to tempt the blowing winds of change. Some watched calmly and curiously as the needle slid into their arm.







Two weeks into the program I was finally handed a 16mm movie camera. Again, there was no script, no instructions, just a repetition of a dismissive and superior directive, "You're the prize-winning filmmaker. You figure it out." I was filled with questions about why I was hired when I was spoken to with such haughtiness. Was I being set up to be brought down a peg or two? It was the paranoia every creative person feels at one time or another. I was supposed to make a documentary about Project Headstart, yet no one thought it important enough to inform me what the program intended to achieve, what was its purpose, and what all the activities the kids participated in was intended to lead to. Being left to my own designs was like handing me a loaded shotgun with the safety off and expect that I'll guess how it worked. In other words, I'd more than likely shoot myself in the foot. It's one thing to make a movie for myself and fail utterly, as I just did with my 8mm Civil War film. It's another thing to make a movie with someone else's money, the overbearing expectation that I was supposed to read my bosses' minds.

The motion picture camera was a 16mm Cine-Kodak Special, pictured right with me behind the viewfinder, manufactured in the United States as long ago as 1933 and intended for advanced amateur and semi-professional filmmakers. It had a fully adjustable shutter, allowing fades, and a back wind which could be used to overlap scenes. This precision 16mm camera was Kodak's attempt to provide 35mm technique with 16mm running costs. The camera had a clockwork drive with a speed range of 8



to 64 frames per second. With its double claws and double sprockets, it accepted double perforated film only in unmodified form. In simplest terms, it was a silent camera. Only double perf silent film could be put through it. Same as my Kodak Brownie turret model, it had a parallax viewfinder, or as Kodak called it, the "open frame type." This old piece had been idly sitting on a back room shelf at Tucker's Camera Shop for God knows how long! Dropped off for maintenance and, after Mr. Tucker's completing necessary work, the camera was never collected by its owner.

Since 1963, when I first joined the Milwaukee Movie Makers, I had been shown, and had held in my hands, a 16mm Bolex turret model. Considered by the amateur moviemaker as the crème de la crème, I was spoiled for how great a camera should look. This old, shabby-looking camera, the Cine Special, looked like it belonged in a museum display or tossed out on a scrapheap. As the old saw goes, never judge a book by its cover. It had been built to last and, as I was to learn, the camera was an ever reliable work horse.

Using my nous I filmed kids eating lunches, playing games, drawing pictures, getting on and riding the bus, stepping off the bus at field trip venues, medical examinations of eyes and ears, singing, and following Paul Bentzen as he played the banjo and lead the children around the grounds as if he was the Pied Piper. Good shots were made on an excursion to a farm of wide-eyed delighted children cuddling guinea pigs, hamsters and pink-eyed bunnies. I had to laugh filming boys feeding fawns with milky deer formula from large bottles with nipples. To steady bottles as fawns nursed energetically, they placed the bottle between their legs so they wouldn't drop it, one such example is pictured immediately right along with a picture of a boy cuddling a guinea pig.



My brother had a pet fox snake, a harmless reptile found everywhere in Wisconsin. About a foot and a half long, Steve caught his in the wild area at the end of 119th Street. People often killed the fox snake because it resembles a venomous copperhead snake due to its head color of dark copper, rust or orange. Copperheads don't live in or near Wisconsin. Fox snakes are also often mistaken for rattlesnakes. When disturbed they rapidly vibrate or "rattle" their tails in dry leaves, grasses or against objects. Their pointed tail distinguishes them, and all other Wisconsin snakes with pointed tails, as a non-venomous species. Handled gently, a fox snake can be quite docile. Although it gave my mother the creeps to watch that snake slither on and around the twins' arms, necks and chests, she didn't object. I took snapshots of Luann and Joann playing with the fox snake. The girls enjoyed the experience and so I figured Project Headstart kids would as well. I borrowed Steve's snake because it was something different to put on film.

Steve's snake escaped from its container, so the kids never got to see it. However, Paul brought another snake to show the kids. It was a female bull snake, just as tame as was the escapee, and more than three feet long. In more ways than one, with the camera pointed at it, it made for impressive footage. Paul learned it was female after it laid seven eggs just before he brought it along to Headstart. Paul offered to replace Steve's fox snake with this big bull snake, but we had no way of getting it to him. Anyone driving to Milwaukee was afraid to take the thing fearing it might escape its container. I even felt a bit iffy around it. Anyway, caged or not, I was positive Mom wouldn't have allowed such a big snake around the house.

Even if I didn't own the 16mm camera, the fact I used one opened doors. Paul spent his spare time with summer stock actors in WSU's Summer Theater program. "Boom Boom" Kramer was one of the directors and allowed Paul, not a member of the troupe, to sit in on rehearsals. When Mr. Kramer saw the possibility of including a filmed sequence in Sam and Bella Spewack's Boy Meets Girl, he sent Paul to seek my interest. No money exchanged hands, but the Summer Theater paid for the color film. I was handed a script. That was more than the women running Project Headstart did! I spent an afternoon directing and shooting a 4-minute trailer for the satiric play about Hollywood's heyday. A frustrated intellectual producer tries to save the waning career of a singing cowboy star, a Gene Autry/Roy Rogers/Ken Maynard/Tom Mix clone called Larry Toms. Although not in the play and not a member of Summer Theater, Paul played an Indian in the trailer opposite a glamorous cowboy played by Otts Laupus. We had a fun shoot.

Advance publicity in the *Stevens Point (Wisconsin) Daily Journal* on July 6, 1965 for *Boy Meets Girl* printed, "The evening's program will include an example of one of the 'Hollywood epics' filmed in Stevens Point by Larry Klobukowski especially for this production." This time I was comfortable with pre-publicity. I had a script and knew what I had to do. I'd worked on the film, edited it, and completed it successfully. I was very pleased with the trailer's result. It turned out funny.

The trailer was shown as Scene 1 Act II. The headline of the *Wausau Record-Herald* Society Features section published on July 8, 1965 read, "Summer Theater Comedy Misses." My film work, on the other hand, was singled out favorably. "The funniest moments of the evening came from a scene without words – a brief silent film sequence. The cast appeared in some hilarious slapstick scenes on footage creditably shot by Larry Klobukowski."

Comment on my stills, slides and motion picture footage from the Project Headstart bosses wasn't as positive. Anything they said about my work was never, emphasis on never, favorable. I didn't know what would please and wondered if they even knew what they wanted. As people in charge of a government-financed program, they performed like fish flopping around the floor after having leapt out of their comfortable bowl.

We were visited mid-July by Mrs. Warren Knowles, wife of the Governor of Wisconsin, and two bureaucrats from the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington D. C. It was an official examination. Our bosses fawned over them, practically bowing and curtseying as if the Queen of England had arrived. All the kids were present, busily engaged in activity with staff. The bosses apologized profusely for the poor quality pictures our visitors would see. They complained about the staff, essentially saying that none of us was capable of working up to par. Really! And in front of all of us! Like we were all hard of hearing? Or deaf! We never knew what their par was. I was never told what they wanted and they replied with nothing every time I asked.

It became obvious that the bureaucrats and Governor's wife saw through the smokescreen blown by our bosses. They looked at my black & white photographs, and screenings of the color 35mm slides and all the movie footage so far shot. After the showing, Mrs. Knowles complimented my work and said I had captured the essence of the program's goals. The bureaucrats also said good things about the quality of my subject matter. The bureaucrats said how impressed they were with staff interaction with the children. Right after the Governor's wife and the pencil pushers from Washington left, the bosses fired Dave Jurgella saying he hadn't worked up to par. And we still wondered what was par according to our bosses! It was laughable, not for Jurgella, but the action itself. Hadn't those women in charge listened to one word from Governor Knowles' wife and the bureaucrats from Washington?

In spite of the sourness directed at any one of us by the bosses, because of my colleagues and the kids, I enjoyed my job. We were disappointed three times when no checks showed up. Everyone was broke and trying to make the best of it. As to the agreement for my board, that seemed to have disappeared down the rabbit hole. Bureaucracy and a government paymaster can be thought of as a brick rolling down hill. My meal of the day was a kiddie-sized lunch at Washington School with the children. I was too proud to panhandle in the street or borrow food money. I wouldn't have been able to pay it back. I pretty much fended for myself and turned to stealing food from my employer's larder. A slice of cantaloupe here, some bread ends and a slice of cheese there, or lunchtime leftovers for supper alone in the dorm. I asked Jurgella once to tide me over with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Hungry enough to gnaw off my own leg, I stooped to accept an invitation from Bentzen or Jurgella for supper. I never made it a regular thing, thought it too much an imposition. Letters home begged for a dollar so I could eat. What kind of job did I have when no one was paid?

Sometimes I got lucky. If I was to be contacted, people found me at work. Mr. Krembs came to the school with an invitation to sing with my choirboys for weddings. Bentzen sometimes joined in with Jim Kruziki, Mike Zimmermann, and Jim Corcoran. We earned a few dollars and occasionally were invited to the after ceremony breakfast, only rarely a supper reception.

As if a gift from the Almighty, certainly not a reward for pilfering the Headstart refrigerator, Jim Neal of Business Management Services, and a member of the Rotary Club and the Optimists Club, invited me to join with him and his wife for a shrimp dinner at the Hot Fish Shop. It was absolute luxury in my time of enforced abstinence! Mr. Neal could have simply asked if I would put on a program for the Rotarians. Of course I would. Even if no pay was involved, there was always the chance a hat would be passed. But he took me out for dinner! I figured a good show meant good word of mouth and would, therefore, lead to presenting shows for other business organizations.

The Rotarian program led to something really exciting. Ralph Shuda, Rotary member and president of the Skydiver's Club, invited me to bring my camera for my first ever airplane ride. I used the 8mm Bolex. If it fell out of my hands, I'd lose someone else's valuable property but, what the heck; I fully intended to buy it anyway. Unlikely I'd drop the camera. I used the pistol grip and threaded my hand through the loop of the strap, then wound the strap around my wrist. Around lunchtime on a Friday, a skydiver was scheduled to land on a painted circle in a football field for some summer festival. The plane was a little four-seater prop job. Strapped in by a waist-only seatbelt, up front was pilot Ralph. I was belted into the seat to his right. A roly-poly man wearing a parachute sack on his back sat stuffed into the back seat. Woo-hoo, taxiing, building speed and lifting off; all exciting. Better than an eagle soaring on a thermal, I looked down onto a different world where everything resembled toys on a model railroad set.

Had I mentioned there were no doors on the plane? The parachutist hollered above the roar of the engine that it was time for him to go. He pushed against my seat squooshing me forward and yelled "Your camera ready?" I gave a thunderous, "Yah." He shouted "Geronimo" and dove headfirst out the plane. I trained my camera on the plunging skydiver. Suddenly his parachute opened and filled most of my viewfinder. I continued filming his downward dive. Ralph screamed over the engine's spluttering noise, "You got enough footage?" I shouted back, "Yah!" "Good," came his nervous cry," 'cause we're in a nose dive and I GOTTA PULL UP!" Holy mackerel! We were headed straight for the ground. Ralph pulled on the joystick; that sudden climb to a safe height my stomach queezed. I wasn't frightened and I didn't throw up. It was a terrifying, yet exhilarating experience. The footage I caught never fully captured the thrill of the adventure.

That welcome dinner, Rotarian show, Civil War movie newspaper article, especially the *Boy Meets Girl* trailer continued to pay dividends. Mr. Peters of AlChroma Paints came to Washington School and said he wanted to give me a break. He hired me to make his television commercials. Paul was invited to act in the ads. We'd liked to have made a full time job of it, leave Project Headstart altogether, but Mr. Peters said that the commercials we made now would be our launching pad to full time work. Each ad which appealed to Mr. Peters, whether or not it ended up on TV, would earn me \$50 to \$75. It was big paycheck in 1965. My job was to come up with a bright idea, write a script, and then shoot the ad on 16mm film or, if preferred by the TV station, videotape. Mr. Peters would get me a video camera from a TV station. He wanted us to shoot footage locally and, being forward-looking, in color, even though most homes were still watching TV in black & white. Other times he said he'd drive us to Green Bay to use the videotape machines at the TV station. Personnel would teach us to cut the film to a precise 40-second run. The ads would air on Channel 7 (Wausau) during *Monday Night at the Movies* between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m.

The first TV commercial I made for AlChroma was on 16mm color film for Hoffer Paint. Paul assisted and acted in one shot as a passerby who does a double-take. Mr. Peters already had a script to promote his new odorless paint. His friend owned a pet skunk which had its stink sac removed. Mrs. Christine Boettcher was the ad's main talent. Her husband Cliff ran Business Management Services with Jim Neal and Geoff Toser. She was an attractive woman, but the script recommended I concentrate on the skunk, not the woman's face, as she walked the animal on a leash. Good thing she

had a nice pair of gams. The commercial's final shot had the skunk posed nicely with the gallon can of odorless paint. There was a voiceover which extolled the paint's absence of odor, but it was the TV station's responsibility to add narration with background music. This \$60 paycheck was easy money. I gave Paul \$10. It took barely an hour to shoot.

Since 1963 I had a summertime one-Sunday-only job filming the Bostrom Corporation's annual picnic. This year's fell on August 8. These were the days when employees were valued by employers and, to show their appreciation, companies staged family picnics and outings and paid for everything. I had a Bolex H-16 REX in my hands for the day, pictured right. Weighing in at 5½ lbs, to most amateur movie makers, this was another Cadillac. It featured automatic threading of 100 foot reels. Its spring motor could not be overwound. It had a reflex viewfinder meaning what you saw is what you got on film. The viewfinder was adjustable to the filmmaker's eyesight. It had variable speed of 12, 16, 18, 24,



32 and 64 frames per second. It had single frame advance for time lapse and animation. The camera had a manual rewind. A clutch disengaged the spring motor and permitted forward movement and backwind without running down the spring. The feature allowed for impressive Dissolves and Superimposition.

Throughout the day and in between fevered sessions of filming scenes of families eating, relaxing in social groups, or playing organized games, I ate barbecue, roast ears of corn, garden and potato salads, and drank soft drinks and alcoholic Manhattans gratis. I socialized with everyone. As I was unfamiliar with who was whom among employees, my instructions were to shoot mainly Medium and Long Shots. That way I was sure to include someone on the company payroll. There was a second person manning another Bolex H-16 REX who worked for the company and knew all the employees firsthand. He took care of shooting all Close-Ups thus ensuring no employee was overlooked.

Mingling among people with the Bolex I was befriended by the son of an employee. He wanted to know everything about my using the camera, and was clearly fascinated with me and wanted to get to know me. In fact, Jim Champa, 15 years old, handed me a slip of paper with his name, address, and phone number. He said, "I want you keep in touch with me." I genuinely liked this kid. I earned \$25 for my services and wasn't burdened with any of the editing, music, or voiceover work, all considered as post-production.



Committee members of the Bostrom family picnic wearing Roaring 20s outfits provided by the company. I am second from left.

In the week following the picnic shoot I started a training film for the Consoweld Company in Wisconsin Rapids. Its purpose was to demonstrate the company's new interior Wall and Corner Paneling System; the employer intention was to instruct via the film its Consoweld and distributor

sales personnel. A rough organizational outline of a shooting sequence and script of voiceover was given to me, a carbon copy on yellow airmail onionskin paper. Paul's role was salesman and demonstrator of the System. Special effects were required. I had to figure out how to make a business card "float" out of the salesman's hand to fill the screen. It took a lot of patient work and several takes with the card stuck onto stiff invisible fishing line to make the stunt work. Most difficult was to film the fishing line without it giving off a glint from the sunlight. Simple as it was to construct, then film, it worked.

Several large sample chips showing a range of colors, designs and woodgrains were written as an "animated flow." I solved the problem easily with one take by revolving the pieces on a lazy susan.

Most complicated was a Stop-Action sequence of a leather case opening on its own and the pieces which make up the Wall and Corner Paneling System come "dancing" out of the case and assemble themselves. I remember tired eyes, an aching neck, an aching back, and stiff legs. The simple procedure took hours to film. Paul moved the pieces and I clicked off two frames of each move. No guesswork advantage was that the Kodak Cine-Special had a special trigger for shooting one frame at a time.

Geoff Toser screened the processed unedited film to Consoweld's Advertising Manager, Mr. Herb Graife. Paul and I weren't present. We were working at Project Headstart. Geoff told us Mr. Graife just whimpered, "Ohhhh, noooo," quietly as he viewed the animated assembly of the System. I'd followed the script's assembly to the letter, but the sequence writer had put the System together incorrectly. That meant only one thing. Do it all over again, and correctly, following new instructions Mr. Graife penciled.

Burdened by the re-take, Paul and I felt like the deceitful Sisyphus condemned to rolling his immense rock up a hill only to watch it roll down again, and having to repeat rolling it upwards all over again. We approached the time-consuming task more with the attitude of Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum. Stop action photography was mastered and we had a lot of fun singing silly songs, telling jokes, talking foolishly, anything to relieve the monotony.

The film ended on a "Rah, rah, rah" with a stop motion shot of Paul dressed as the salesman grabbing his leather bag, jumping on his Honda, and zooming away. Sales and distribution personnel were encouraged in the voiceover, "That's our story, gentlemen... now go out and sell, sell, SELL! Consoweld's Exclusive Wall and Corner System is a GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY!"

To finish the film Mr. Boettcher drove Paul and me to the Geisel Studios in Wausau where sound was added. Paul and I were in charge of selecting music, sound effects, and where each was placed in the picture. We didn't have to do the physical recording for the film to be considered our creative work. I think Bob Geisel and one of his employees felt intimidated by the quality of the film. Geisel remarked on how smooth my animation looked. Geisel's sidekick brazenly recommended Mr. Boettcher dismiss me from my job with Business Management Services because, "It might ruin his amateur status."

Titled *The Case of the Brown Leather Case*, three duplicates were planned to be struck. I hoped to have one in my collection and use it as a calling card for more film work. The training film entertained, educated and motivated. Consoweld was pleased and impressed with my work. Business Management Services handed me a paycheck for \$200. I paid Paul \$50.

Good dollars rolled in from sources other than the main summer job. As August petered out, a percentage was paid of my owed \$600 salary due from Project Headstart. Payday made for high spirits, no matter the one small check arriving. Presented to me like doggie doo on a shovel, Miss Jones gruffly snarled, "Yuh got two more checks still coming." Well, hey, if this was an example of how government financing worked, I doubted I'd ever want to work again for any government institution. I knew one day I'd end up eating those words.

Employees of experimental projects to survive, this Project Headstart being just one, needed more than a verbal I.O.U. issuing weekly from their bosses put in charge by government institutions. I ploughed on with my indispensible post-production work. It was still left in my hands to edit what to show, what to cut. My sole instruction from the bosses was a film running time of 20 to 25 minutes.

The bosses scheduled show-and-tell programs for the fall to screen my slides and my movie, er, their government Project Headstart slides and government Project Headstart movie. Whether they liked my work or not, I knew those women would show everything... and they would brag, talk up accomplishments in order to make them appear much better than others. My film, my slides would speak for themselves. In the words of Judith Martin, columnist pen name Miss Manners, "It is far more impressive when others discover your good qualities without your help."

## Chapter 41: Shooting *Jamie*

## Jamie on 16mm

ow I actually met and shook hands with Anthony (Tony) Brafa has been lost in synapses misfiring in my brain's cataloguing system. Vivid, however, is his long-term contribution to storytelling in my "Elkay" Productions. The image of Brafa was a larger than life, gregarious actor from Baltimore who came to Stevens Point to participate in Professor "Boom Boom" Bill Kramer's new Summer Theater program. Bentzen had the good fortune to wangle his way into convincing Bill to let him sit in on rehearsals. Paul hoped he'd learn more about acting by osmosis, the feeding process of a sponge. He was impressed with Brafa's interpretation of Marcus in Lillian Telling me about rehearsal, Benson pantomimed and Hellman's Another Part of the Forest. practically recreated Brafa's innovation. But it was Tony's stretch in the role of C. F. Friday, the frustrated intellectual show biz producer in Boy Meets Girl, which Paul most appreciated. To emphasize his character's frustration, Tony pulled at his hair and exclaimed at one point in the play, "Midgets! In my office!!!" He delivered the flatly-written lines with more spice and gusto than spaghetti Arrabbiata. That was enough evidence for Paul to conclude that Tony might just own the brain we needed to tap for ideas for the Civil War film. It's more than likely then that Paul brought me together with Tony while I shot the 4-minute trailer for the play, even if he didn't appear in that piece of film. His mind was sharp, his sense of humor sardonic, and he gave forth with a belly laugh oft associated with Shakespeare's Falstaff. More important to us, Tony was open to our probing his thought machinations for my moviemaking.

We showed Tony my 8mm version of the Civil War film. He said he didn't want to sound cruel, but suggested the best place for the film was somewhere at the back of a shelf gathering dust, never again to see the light of the projector. What Tony saw and made him wince also piqued his interest and ideas flowed from his creative self. Working on stage with actors who delivered audible lines, now Tony was challenged with having to tell a story on film without hearing the spoken word. We sat around a kitchen table and jabbered. Except for Paul as the Confederate soldier, others in the cast weren't discussed. I wrote notes in a longhand which resembled chicken scratching, a penmanship only I could later decode. Every idea proposed was jotted down. Nothing was discarded. A little bit of food and a little bit of beer opened the gates to greater creative thinking. We ordered Italian sausage sandwiches from Bill's Pizza. They were 50¢ apiece and another 50¢ for delivery of the whole order. That seemed to have been my unwritten modus operandi for coercing ideas and performances from others. Don't pay them. Feed them. Oh, boy, those oval-shaped buns filled with fennel-flavored Italian sweet sausage, special tomato sauce, and slices of kosher dills were incredibly delicious. Sauce dripping down chins worked as if a match had been struck to light up our latent caverns of creative conversation. After several hours, I had the jots and dots and squiggly lines to write a legible, workable script.

Tony helped me think about character motivation, something I should have been aware of since Stanislavsky had been part of my university training as an actor. I guess what I had neglected to think about was the interchange of skills between stage and motion picture. Style of acting will vary, but motivation remained a constant. We had discussed what a battle-inexperienced bugle boy would do when confronted with his first dead body. How would the bugler approach a wounded, bleeding enemy soldier? What must the enemy soldier show the boy to prove he's not a threat? Actions had to convey to an audience what was happening because I had no means for recording lip synch dialogue. The actions had to be real; none of that wide-eyed, florid gesture-making as we'd viewed in the Nickelodeon series.

Tony's other major contribution was to encourage me to shoot the film in 16mm and use it as a calling card, a stepping stone to a career. My funds at this time were piecemeal. I was barely able to afford 8mm film and now Tony wanted me to shoot with a film stock twice the size and three times the cost to which I was accustomed. With a good script in hand, the monetary problem was hurdled. Jim Neal, past president of the Stevens Point Optimists Club, arranged for me to screen a few of my successful films at a meeting and then make my pitch for financial assistance. He talked the organization into supporting my venture. Like betting on a horse, there were a lot of "ifs". If the film is completed successfully. If it wins awards. If it can be sold. If it can be distributed for exhibition. If a profit is realized, then the Optimists Club will get 10%. The men of Stevens Point gambled on me and chucked in \$150 to show their good faith. I kept this whole deal to myself, didn't brag about it to anyone in the Milwaukee Movie Makers because some amateur contests didn't allow participation of sponsored films. As well, because I'd been a consistent local winner, there were jealousies and the last thing I needed was a reason from any of the green with envy to stretch the club's own rules and exclude my competing.

What Mr. Tucker charged Project Headstart for the loan of the old Cine Kodak Special, I don't know, but he agreed to let me use it for free to shoot my new Civil War film.

Casting the 16mm *Jamie*, I released Craig from the lead role and he didn't seem too disappointed. He just asked if I'd like to coach him again for Forensics in the fall. I looked back at the boys in *Crucifixion*. One boy's eyes drew my attention and I noted his very natural, not identifiable-as-acting facial expressions and body movements. One of my choir boys, I asked 15 year old Jimmy Corcoran to play the title role. On film his eyes were piercing and simultaneously romantic and I think I knew why. Jim was near-sighted and wore glasses. When he took them off, his eyes had the same dreamy myopic look which made Rudolph Valentino a popular silent screen movie idol in the 1920s. I kept the title *Jamie*. It seemed most appropriate. You'd think, then, that he'd be addressed on set as Jamie. No, I never called him James, Jim or even Jimmy. I opted for a nickname carved out of his surname, Corcoran. I affectionately called him Corky, pictured left, in his Union uniform as the character Jamie. Before I had known Dave Jurgella, he had been an assistant Little League coach for



the Lions team in 1964, about the same time Corky had been in my choir. Corky had been on the team and Jurgella knew what a great kid he was. Jurgella thought I'd written the role for Corky. In with costume, his mannerisms and behavior, Corky was Jamie. Just as in the 8mm Civil War film, Bentzen, pictured right, was always going to be my first and only choice for unnamed Confederate soldier.



I'd learned a valuable lesson filming You Just Can't Win. Whenever making a picture over an extended period; no actors have their hair cut. College students? No problem. College kids could look like hippies, grow hair down to their ankles if they wanted and the school wouldn't care. Paul's hair length would never pose a problem. My Pacelli Catholic High School student was another story. Even though hairstyles worn by the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were popular with teenagers,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Photo by Dann Perkins

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid

growing long locks was against a school rule. I asked Corky's parents to allow him to keep his hair and they didn't have a problem with it. Corky came from a big Irish Catholic family and, amongst the Dad duties Mr. Corcoran took on, home barbering was one. Corky sought permission from his school principal. Possibly because I was so well known in town with my filmmaking, the principal agreed to my no hair cut request.

Money and leading actors confirmed, it's imperative to point out that my Civil War films, the 8mm fiasco and the greenlighted 16mm one, couldn't have been made without dedicated enthusiasm and input from local Civil War enthusiast Dave Jurgella. He went beyond expectations to supply actors and extras with costumes, uniforms, props, weapons, and military regalia. Some were originals while most were exact replicas. Before fitting Corky, Dave believed the Union bugler private's uniform he owned would be too big. He borrowed a cavalry musician sergeant's shell jacket from his Civil War enthusiast friend, Duke Glodowski. Shoulders sagged, sleeves covered hands, and it hung practically to Corky's knees. On went Jurgella's own reproduction uniform. The trousers and jacket fit Corky as if tailor made and, as luck would have it, so did the cap. Paul's Confederate jacket was an old suit coat dyed brown and torn up for ageing and so it didn't look obvious as a suit jacket. The cap or kepi Paul wore was a floppy-topped reproduction. Uniforms for supporting cast were begged, borrowed or made up from closet remnants. Not a cent was spent on rental. Sources for Civil War clothing in 1965, Jurgella reminded me, were limited, especially in footwear. For Paul's feet Jurgella came up with a pair of Cree Indian moccasins. Currently popular black Beatle boots substituted for Civil War shoes, as did modern Hush Puppy desert boots. Here, then, is an interesting link to the past. As two words Hush Puppy is a shoe. One word and it's food, a fried cornbread ball which Civil War soldiers are claimed to have tossed to quell the barks of Confederate dogs. Jurgella owned one pair of reproduction Civil War boots. An addition to Jamie's footwear, Jurgella used white WWII Navy gaiters as they looked like what Wisconsin troops wore. Dave always said it was a lucky thing I chose to shoot in black & white. Clothing of incorrect hue, even those of garish colors could be substituted for grey or blue uniform trousers, shirts, jackets, even hats. I recall one of our Confederate soldiers wearing red woolen long johns for trousers. On set, we laughed because he looked like he escaped from the cast of Al Capp's Dogpatch set and the comic strip Li'l Abner. On film, the red was just another acceptable shade of grey.

Dave didn't know anyone in Stevens Point who collected Civil War arms, so none were available to borrow. Jurgella owned two muskets, one the original 1851 Harper's Ferry 69 caliber original smoothbore we'd used in the 8mm version and which Paul carried in the Memorial Day parade. The other was a later model reproduction 58 caliber Zouave. It was a really good firearm that was probably not used in the Civil War, but it looked correct enough for Jurgella's use in competition and for my film. We also used the plastic pistol which couldn't be discharged.

The weekend after I filmed the Bostrom family picnic was Saturday, August 15, and the first day of shooting Jamie. The script for the day read: Battle Scene. Brafa, Bentzen and I didn't know what to expect when we threw around ideas for the story. I had no idea either when I wrote the script, so Battle Scene was as open-ended as que sera sera. I was in West Bend dressed in mid-19th Century clothing similar to what Matthew Brady, photographer of the Civil War, would have worn. The North-South Skirmish Association sponsored for its members The Badger Skirmish, timed team live fire target competition for cannons and muskets. Among the organization's functions was the preservation of the military aspects of the American Civil War. None of the Stevens Point cast participated except for Dave Jurgella who arranged my attendance. He had joined the organization in 1964 and competed in musket shooting as a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin Voluntary Infantry – Company K. Dave used a reproduction 58 caliber Zouave musket in competition. With permission and without prior planning, I made random shots during competition when skirmishers used real ammunition. I learned that a Civil War musket doesn't go bang. Some Hollywood movies set in the Civil War accidently or ill-advisedly dubbed in the sound of post-1865 firearms, cowboys' rifles and six-shooters which go bang with a ricochet ping for the firing of muskets. A musket discharges with a whoosh-crack. It's as if the mini-ball being propelled through the barrel is heard before the sharp crack of its exit.





Unexpectedly I ran into Dick Harter, my "Elkay" Productions stalwart throughout high school. He was dressed in a Union uniform as a member of the 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement, and became an unexpected, uncredited extra in the long firing line of musketeers in the battle sequence, my 16mm frame enlargement also pictured below left. Live ammunition was being sunk into targets. I stood parallel to the line of fire or walked making a travelling shot behind the line to safely capture scenes of soldiers discharging their weapons. The same set-up applied to artillerymen firing at targets. My greatest challenge was to avoid showing anything on the person or in the background which said 20<sup>th</sup> Century. I was suddenly overwhelmed with a cast of 300! It was big, images almost too vast for what I considered was my small Civil War story.

Word got around amongst competitors, or Jurgella intentionally spread the word, that I was filming battle scenes for an amateur movie. The ham in some must have got the better of them during the lunch break. Two groups volunteered to stage hand-to-hand combat for me. All I had to do, with their military advice on procedure, was choreograph and direct the Confederate soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas Infantry Regiment and the northerners of the Chicago Light Artillery – Battery 'A'. I directed soldier against soldier in Medium and Close-up action shots to use as cutaways of thrusting and parrying, bayoneting and musket butt cudgels.

A Yankee cannon was rolled into an open field not used for the formal competition. We discussed what would happen in the Cover Shot, a cover being one Long Shot aka Wide Angle Shot where the complete action, everyone's action is seen. The camera was stationary behind the cannon and all action moved toward the camera. The viewfinder would begin seeing Long Shot and fill to Medium Close-Up. Soldiers targeted as mini-ball victims learned their "mark," the place where they'd fall so they'd be in camera view. Crossed sticks or clumps of torn grass made for marks actors could see, but



the camera eye didn't. Those who survived the charge learned which enemy soldier they'd engage. Nothing was done by chance. That would have been foolhardy and dangerous. Confederates formed a line of charge from the cover of a small thicket. Pictured left<sup>3</sup> are members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas Infantry Regiment. David Jurgella with the head bandage can be seen second from left.

First was a dry run without explosions so that everyone knew their action and, without making it on-screen clumsy obvious, as in eyes down, searching for, and stepping here or there, how to hit their marks. Muskets and cannon were charged only with wadding and powder. No lead mini-balls

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 16mm frame enlargement by John Primm

was rammed down barrels. When everyone felt comfortable with where they were going, I went for the take.



On my call for "Action," Confederates charged from the thicket whooping and hollering their Rebel yells. Geez, their sound was alarming. Adrenalin flowed. Union artillerymen aimed their cannon, lit the fuse and the gunner fired into the onslaught, pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement. Smoke briefly blocked out all action, except for the soldiers crouched behind the cannon. Then, like spirits rising, Confederates emerged from the cloud with bayonets fixed and ready for stabbing.

The Yankee gunnery captain, pictured right in my 16mm frame enlargement, reached for his pistol, drew it from its holster, and fired blindly into the fierce attack. Chaos and organized mayhem! It looked and felt real! As cameraman it wasn't always easy to concentrate on keeping the trigger depressed and focus on the action without becoming part of the excitement. Undistracted I kept a clear head and filmed spectacular action.



At the conclusion of the Cover shot and clearing of the thick belch of smoke, dead men sat up rising like Lazarus. There was laughter as they dusted off and picked up dropped weapons, the kind of laugh you hear which relieves tension after surviving danger. "Hey, how was that?" "We look good?" "You get what you wanted?" Then, "Oh, shit, I've been shot...." Out of the stumbling, recovering mass moved a sturdily-built son of the South with blood dripping from his hand. The man was a bleeder and I suddenly felt a sickness in my stomach, not for the sight of blood, but from a sense of responsibility, like it was my fault it had happened. "Oh, sorry, sorry," said the gunnery captain, his pistol still drawn. In the heat of battle, he instinctively did what any well-trained soldier would have done to defend himself. He drew and fired. Unfortunately, the old adage applied. "I honest to God forgot the gun was loaded." During the set up with blank charges, he had genuinely forgotten about his holstered sidearm. With the excitement of combat, well, we had a casualty. No one blamed me. Not even the soldier who inflicted the wound was blamed. It was just one of those things and, for the re-enactor's good fortune, the bullet had only grazed wrist skin, as simple as a paper cut, but, oh, good God, the blood freely flowed.

I grabbed a Saturday night after the West Bend shoot to make opening credit titles. In hindsight, I should have waited to shoot the titles after most of the picture had been filmed. All who contributed could have been credited, including Bentzen, Jurgella, Primm and a flautist for original music. What I had on paper were names of the main talent and that was going to be enough. Whether it was or wasn't a pressing issue, I felt as if I was working against the seasonal clock; summer was rapidly turning into fall and winter weather would pounce before it was due or welcome. There was constant haste to get everything done. I had always pictured titles appearing over my opening sequence, so I shot white lettering against a velvet black background. The roll was then backwound using the rewind handle on the camera. I placed it into its canister and labeled it "Titles" for its second passage through the camera when shooting the introductory scenes.

Corky started his freshman year at Pacelli High right after Labor Day. I hadn't shot a foot of film with him when Monday evening, September 6, he came to the dorm and showed me his wrist. It was wrapped and bandaged. At his afterschool football practice Corky was tackled by his coach and "crack". The wrist broke. As if the wrist in West Bend wasn't enough, now I faced a close-to-home wrist problem. I examined Corky's wrist with kid gloves, asked questions about pain and mobility. I didn't bother asking and didn't care to know how his coach felt after busting Corky's wrist! Corky wanted me to find someone else to play Jamie, maybe give Craig a second chance at stardom. No. Corky was the right person to play Jamie and I wanted him in my picture. The break was hairline, didn't require a plaster cast and I said we'd work around it; maybe have him wear white gloves as an acceptable embellishment to his Union bugler's uniform.

Dann Perkins' Publicity Photos from the Confederate camp set of 'Jamie'



Left: First view in film of Paul Bentzen.



Right: Picket post: Dave Kopperud, Dick Konopacky, Paul Bentzen

Late Friday afternoon, September 10, was sunny and cool when we shot scenes of a Confederate picket post in a wooded area adjacent to a field I intended using as well. It was just down the road from the dorm and, set away from the road, somewhat secluded. Except for Dann Perkins' car parked alongside the field, we could film without passersby even knowing we were there. We wouldn't have an audience gathering to gawk. Dann Perkins, recently discharged from the U.S. Navy where he had spent four years learning photography and cinematography, brought technical knowledge to the project. Training in basic shooting style and an understanding of cinematic continuity allowed Dann to suggest a different angle here, a type of transition there, where to use a tripod and where to try something else. His second contribution to the film was in the area of what Dann referred to loosely as acting. As a soldier in the picket post, Dann lazed. Paul reclined against a fallen tree log and played a harmonica. Dave Kopperud nervously jabbed his Bowie knife into the dirt. The tranquil mood was abruptly interrupted with the arrival of a footsoldier, a messenger played by Dick Konopacky. He delivers the order for the men to take up arms. A surprise attack on a Union encampment is imminent.

16mm Frame Enlargements made by John Primm

Dann Perkins





Dave Konopacky





I filmed skirmish shots of the soldiers charging out of the bushes, individually firing a musket or pistol, being shot, and falling down into a fatally wounded heap. Dann Perkins was adept at dying on screen. Pictured left in a John Primm 16mm frame enlargement as a Conferedeate, I even asked Dann to fall face down into a mud puddle – for effect! Adding insult to his ego, I never used the shot.

Also pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement, Dann changed uniforms into a Union soldier and gets bayonetted against a tree by Confederate John Primm. Needing to establish Paul with the Confederate flag I made an exciting shot of him charging with a musket in one hand, the Confederate Battle Flag tied to a makeshift staff, a tree limb, in the other; Paul is pictured right in a Dann Perkins photo.



Paul's Confederate is shot in the skirmish. For the wounding, Paul

jerks his head right, a reaction to sudden impact from a bullet. His kepi flies off and he collapses face down into leaves. The audience may assume he's been killed. For convenience sake, this same morning I filmed the sequence of Paul's coming to after the battle. He is dazed, unsure of where he is, but realizes he's been shot. He collects his kepi and gingerly puts it onto his head, now fully aware his injury is a head wound. Pictured right in a Dann Perkins photo, he uses the tree limb flagstaff to painfully raise himself to his knees. His musket on the ground, he picks it up, stands, and step by stumbling step emerges from the edge of the woodland into the field.



Paul, Corky and I sang at a wedding Saturday morning, September

11. Not only did each of us have our palms greased with \$5 bills, we were invited to the after ceremony breakfast. A plate of food before Corky, in frustration he asked for help. His bandage interfered with normal bending of joints and he was unable to manipulate utensils. I cut Corky's ham and buttered his rolls. He didn't act at all embarrassed. Right-handed, right wrist busted, Corky was practically helpless and seemed to enjoy my special attention.

Weather cooperated offering up warm, sunny conditions that Saturday afternoon. Cliff had scouted for a good set and knew someone who knew someone else in the Optimists Club who owned a log cabin on a semi-remote rural property. In other words, it was off a county highway, down a dirt road and invisible to everyday passing traffic. Had we been filming with sound, the location would have been atmospherically ideal. Only natural sounds of bird song and calls, flying buzz and rhythmic rapid wing-rubbing of mate-seeking insects were tuned into our earshot. Likely coincidental and with older characters, the leaving home sequence was similar to Andy Devine collecting George Peppard from home in John Ford's Civil War-directed sequence in the Cinerama release *How the West Was Won* (1962).

I shot the opening scene of the film. Jamie leaves home with a mix of emotions, of boyish excitement, of wary anticipation of the unknown, and of being away from home for the first time. Jamie wears his smart new Union soldier's uniform and carries his shiny bugle. He's accompanied by a war-weary sergeant played by Cliff Boettcher. Cliff was one of my three bosses at Business Management Services. His uniform was a mixed reproduction of Glodowski's cavalry musician



sergeant's jacket and a pair of light blue pants. The outfit couldn't have been more appropriate, the sergeant a musician, identifiable by the bugle within his sergeant's stripes, collecting from his home Jamie, his young, green protégé, pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement outside Jamie's home, Jamie's mother in the doorway. The bugle chevrons were originals issued in 1883 and not during the years of the Civil War. Against all his

principles as stickler military authenticity, Jurgella threw up his arms

for

ceded, "Ah, who's gonna know." It was advantageous the musician sergeant's jacket had been too big for Corky; otherwise the boy Jamie would have outranked the adult Cliff. Jamie's mother was played by Cliff's wife, Carla, pictured right<sup>4</sup>. Her costume was Jurgella's mother's centennial dress. Neither Cliff nor Carla had any acting experience, but I was confident they'd come through under

my direction.



There was a magic moment. Corky's reaction as he turned to look at his mother was unexpected, pictured left.<sup>5</sup> He smiles for his mother before shyly kissing her good-bye, pictured right in my 16mm frame I don't enlargement. know how many people seeing Jamie have picked up on that



smile. I find it heartwarming and I'm so glad I caught it on film.



<sup>4</sup> 16mm frame enlargement by John Primm

Having next waved good-bye to his mother in one shot, in the following shot came a second moment of magic. Corky turns and pauses to look at a hand-made cross of sticks and twine firmly planted in a cairn of stones, the suggestion being it's Jamie's father's final resting place; my 16mm frame enlargement is pictured left. In hindsight it was a lovely touch because, not only did it foretell the film's ending, it was divination of Jimmy Corcoran's own future.

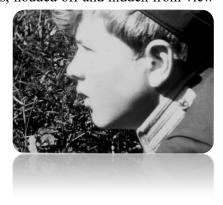
Rehearsing the action was imperative. Remember, titles were already exposed onto the emulsion and so character action and reaction, all movement had to be right. Any mistake, anything forgetful would render the title sequence useless. We'd lose a day of shooting and I'd have to make the title sequence all over again. The white gloves didn't fit over Corky's bandaged wrist. He held his bugle in his right hand at an angle to cover the bandage. We carefully rehearsed each scene so attention didn't fall on his wrist. Without moving or turning awkwardly, Corky worked out ways to move within frame without drawing heed to his injury and, my observing through the viewfinder what he did, positioned the camera accordingly for each shot. Corky's bandaged wrist was never seen.

Tripod-set shots completed, I opted for a travelling shot wherein Jamie and the sergeant walk away from the cabin and down the dirt track. I was in front of them with the camera in my hands walking backwards. Jurgella, having checked and tidied costumes, now gripped the back of the waistline of my trousers with his left hand and walked forward guiding my backward steps, all the while giving me directions about a slight pothole or tuft of grass so I wouldn't stumble. Again, there was that element of error which could have ruined the already-shot title sequence if I'd tripped back and fallen over, a 16mm frame enlargement of main title pictured right. A fluke, perhaps, or all due to good planning, everything worked well.



After singing for 8:30 a.m. Mass Sunday, September 12, Dann Perkins drove Paul, Corky and me to the field down the road from the dorm. The fall day felt more like summer. Shooting out of sequence, today I scheduled the first meeting of Jamie and the wounded Confederate. Initial footage had Jamie sitting knees up with his head bowed into crossed arms, nodded off and hidden from view

by scrub. Paul uses the tree limb flagstaff in one hand like a crutch. His musket's weight is more than he can bear. He drags the firearm by its muzzle, staggers for a couple more steps, pauses, lets the musket drop, winces in pain and, his weight bearing down on the flagstaff, crumbles face down into a sorry heap, simultaneously waking a covertly napping Jamie. Will this enemy soldier harm him? The boy studies the soldier carefully and assesses the situation, pictured right in my 16mm frame enlargement, before rising and approaching the wounded soldier with due caution. When Jamie senses no danger, he offers comfort in misery. The scene was more difficult to stage than imagined.





First, it was a practical matter of framing. I had to position the camera so the road with odd passing vehicle wouldn't be seen. Although the road was lower than the fenced field, when a car or motorcycle drove past, the top of the vehicle showed. Concentrating through the viewfinder on Corky and Paul, I was unaware if a car drove through the background while shooting. Sometimes Perkins would tell me to hold off because he saw a car approaching. Other times he was too engrossed in what was happening between the characters, he neglected to keep an ear and eye out for traffic. Dann

Perkins publicity photo above is the only picture I have of me at work on *Jamie*.

Secondly, Corky's broken, bandaged wrist was a handicap in more ways than one. It couldn't be worked around as easily as the previous day. Action I'd scripted required seeing both of Jamie's hands. Being right-handed, that preference determined Corky's natural comfort for handling props. I wasn't about to teach him left handed skills and gestures just so we wouldn't see a bandaged wrist. I was positive everything he'd do then would direct his attention to correctly using his left hand and distract from his character. He'd look self-consciously clumsy and that wonderful character of Jamie would be a shell of a boy in a cavalry musician's jacket. Corky was an actor who inhabited his character and I hated to see all of that artistry lost for the sake of not showing a bandage and forcing him to use only his left hand. First thought was, why not make the bandage part of his battle aftermath experience? Where'd Jamie get the bandage, such a nice new, clean one too, when he'd been in a battle where there was smoke and grime and blood and mud? And how'd he manage to wrap it and pin it without assistance? What'd he do? Bump into a nurse on the battlefield? Logic told us Jamie's wrist couldn't have a bandage. The idea was scrapped. For scenes where both hands weren't seen, it was up to Corky to keep his right wrist out of view. If in the viewfinder I saw the bandaged wrist, OK then, I could do a re-take.

Corky suddenly volunteered that his Mom said he could take the bandage off if he really needed to, as long as he didn't do anything silly. No punching or hitting or wrestling or anything to bump the hairline break. Shooting out of sequence made lots of sense and I got on film what was in the script. All of the shots where we needed to see Jamie's right hand were filmed with his bandage carefully unwrapped and removed. Corky's skin showed pinkish crease marks from the muslin, but I didn't see them in the viewfinder. Once Jamie's scenes showing two hands were in the can, to use Hollywood parlance, I re-wrapped Corky's wrist and pinned the bandage's end.

Thirdly, the two characters from war's opposing sides had to get together without it looking staged or hardly credible. These two were soldiers on opposite sides, historically mortal enemies, but my story was about an act of kindness. Tony Brafa's recommendations for making this meeting work looked good on paper. I called upon all my skills as an actor/director to coach credible performances out of Corky and Paul.



In the 16mm frame enlargement left, Jamie approaches the Confederate hesitantly<sup>6</sup>, a slow, wary and deliberate inching step of one foot and follow through with the other, his eyes never leaving those of his enemy. He holds his bugle more like

a weapon than the brass instrument it is. If this man in the grey makes one wrong move, Jamie's prepared to bash him with his bugle. He's wounded, but he's dangerous. He is the enemy. The soldier looks pitiful,



Paul Bentzen pictured right<sup>7</sup> in a John Primm frame enlargement. Jamie looks at him warily. The soldier has no musket, no knife, only his bare hands, and one arm is outstretched, tremblingly as if begging. Jamie sees blood on

his enemy's hand, and dried in a stream from his temple. The Confederate appears to pose little threat. Jamie drops to his knees in front of the soldier.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> 6mm frame enlargement by John Primm

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

The enemy's hand desperately reaches out for the boy's canteen and it's much too fast for Jamie's liking. He holds the canteen back ready to use as a bludgeon. Weakened, the enemy soldier lowers his head. Now Jamie determines this wounded man is vulnerable. He offers his canteen and the parched Confederate drinks greedily.



James Corcoran holds canteen with broken wrist as Jamie ministers to the wounded Confederate soldier, Paul Bentzen. 8

Jamie follows the dried blood stream with his eyes, wins the soldier's confidence that he can help, gives him the canteen, lifts himself to his feet, nods assuredly, turns, and gets a move on for help. The script read something like: 'Jamie runs.' In the past I'd always divided this kind of action into several cleverly composed shots. This time I wanted something really different. I remembered the final shot of François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959). A teenage boy pretty much the same age as Corky runs and runs and runs in one long tracking shot<sup>9</sup> along a beach. As a viewer I was swept along with the boy's run, felt like I was running alongside him. I was filled with questions about where he was going. It wasn't clear. There was no clue to where he was running because the left edge of the frame wouldn't let me see where he was headed. That one long length of celluloid, one continuous take of movement without a cutaway created excitement and mystery.

I asked Dann to drive his car while I sat on the hood and Corky ran alongside on the grassy edge of the road. The trick was to stay level with Corky. Get ahead of him and the shot would look like it had been made from a moving vehicle. Getting behind would lead to the same conclusion. I didn't want to pan the camera left or right to keep Corky in frame. Dann had to judge his driving speed so that I would always be parallel to Corky as he ran. We did a short dry run just to see if it would work. I sat comfortably cross-legged on the middle of the hood. Corky ran and I noted he looked down a lot. As soon as Dann braked, I slid sideways off the hood and awkwardly unwound my legs to catch my balance before being dumped on the road. I was more concerned about the camera than myself. Corky said he couldn't always look straight ahead when he ran. There were footfall traps in the long grass including felled limbs, ruts, rocks, whole and broken bottles. The camera wouldn't see any roadside snags or Corky's feet. We took the time and walked the length of road for the shot clearing away every visible hazard. Heck, I didn't want Corky falling over and risking more injury to his wrist. We did a take. This time I sat with my legs draped over the fender. It felt safer than sitting like a hood ornament of Sitting Bull during the dry run. Corky moved into a trot, looked forward, tripped once in a hole we'd not filled, and ran the best he could. The slight trip up was a natural thing.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Dann Perkins Publicity Photo of open field set of *Jamie* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Tracking shot/travelling shot/dollying shot – all terms used for a shot when the camera is being moved forward or backward/left to right/right to left by means of wheels: on a dolly, in a car, on a train, even on foot. Movement is usually quite fluid. The way a person is filmed and shown in that kind of shot usually has a specific meaning.

It looked spectacularly natural and not like a mistake through the viewfinder, although it was necessary to move the camera slightly to keep Corky in frame. I shot nearly half of one reel for the single take ensuring I'd have as long or as short a continuous length of film as required for editing.

Whether playing tricks on my mind or not, time seemed to work against finishing *Jamie*. Shooting could only be done on weekends and only as long as cast required for the shoot had time free. Time at such a premium, every session was treated as seriously as an IRS tax audit or going to church. Sometimes we were in church on Saturday mornings and filming couldn't happen. Corky, Paul and I were up in the choir loft singing Nuptial Masses and earning donations in dollars. My donations were sunk into buying more film for *Jamie*. We called ourselves the Trio Seminarian and felt especially honored when Mr. Krembs asked us to sing for his daughter's wedding. Any day, whether or not in church, we prayed for good weather. Every scripted scene, except one inside a field hospital, took place outdoors. Filming *Jamie* was at the mercy of the elements and more or less squeezed in without interference to school-related and extramural activities.

Monday, September 13, Bentzen and I commenced our WSU-SP junior year while Jurgella and Primm started theirs as sophomores. Weekdays were as busy as weekend filming. My courses included Psychology of the Adolescent, a Drama class in Tragedy, English Literature, and Modern Dance. I had nothing academic scheduled Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and that afforded me the luxury of editing the Project Headstart documentary, doing post-production on TV commercials, shooting new advertisements for television, and setting up viable projects for Business Management Services' clients. In the week prior to another weekend shooting *Jamie*, Paul and I worked under lights and shot three new TV commercials.

The product was AlChroma's brand spanking new Mighty Maggy, a set of two magnets inserted into the bottom of a tissue box so it magically stuck to an automobile's dashboard console. It was a convenience product used while driving so that you never had to take your eyes off the road and look for a tissue when you needed one. Not only was it convenient to use, for a pair of Maggies in sealed plastic wrap, it was a steal at 99¢. Using Dick Toser's car parked in his garage, Paul in the driver's seat, we attempted to get a box of tissues to stick to the bottom passenger side of the dashboard console. Sometimes as we filmed the box slid slowly down and dropped off. The footage was unusable. Other times, before any film was shot, the box refused to stick and immediately fell off. The magnets, it seemed, weren't designed with strength and couldn't hold a full 200 count box of tissues. Maybe Dick Toser hadn't been made aware that the product was for tissue boxes of 100 count or less. The product wrapper, on the other hand, pictured a large tissue box. All Toser made available was the large box for our shoot. Well, talk about us doing fake advertising! Only when half to three-quarters of the tissues were pulled out did the Mighty Maggy hold fast the large box to the bottom of the dashboard. Then and only then did those magnets do the job as Paul yanked out a tissue and sneezed for the camera. Deceptive footage it certainly was when all three 30 second spots went to air and I had happily and unashamedly accepted \$30 for each upon delivery.

Despite laughing all the way to the bank at how un-mighty was the Mighty Maggy, I felt under pressure to finish my picture. *Jamie*'s story takes place in the fall and leaves were already unhinging from the trees. Shooting out of sequence, I had to consider editing. I needed to complete filming before trees were bare so that when shots were intercut, they'd match. The realism of a sequence can be interrupted with mismatched backgrounds. Imagine a shot of Jamie in the forest, trees loaded with leaves. Cut to a Medium shot and tree limbs behind Jamie are as bare as winter wood. To the audience, no matter how well the boy acted or how much tension or emotion was built, all they'd notice was leaves and then no leaves. I remember my attention being distracted watching *El Cid* (1961) by what showed up in the background as two warriors wielding two-handed swords faced off. The sky behind one warrior was clear blue. Behind the other was a sky of a black, ominous, rolling thundercloud. Cutting back and forth between the two, I never saw what one did to the other with sword. My attention was distracted by the back and forth cutting of drastic changes in the sky.

My family visited the weekend of September 18-19. It was fall and Dad hoped to pick mushrooms. Stevens Point's weather wouldn't cooperate for Saturday sightseeing or mushroom harvesting. Rain

teemed on and off all weekend. A cool breeze added a wind chill factor. After hearing Paul, Corky and I sing Sunday morning Mass at St. Stephen's, my family drove home. Following a few phone calls, the cast for the Union camp scenes met at Dave Jurgella's home. I may have perturbed my actors by insisting we were behind schedule and should go out and film in-between rain showers. Cool, wet weather dominated and we dithered about whether or not we should take the chance and film. Everyone, even Corky who was supposed to keep his bandage clean and dry, agreed without complaint. Their dedication to getting the project finished was as committed as mine.

A white military tent was pitched with a rickety wooden table and chair at its entry. I walked in the woods with Primm to drag some logs and rocks for props. We were both wet and muddy and I hadn't dressed warmly enough for the dreary afternoon. The overall look of the Union camp was established. Now we'd put the opposing sides together for some hand-to-hand fighting, to intercut with the already filmed battle scenes in West Bend and the already completed scenes of Confederate pickets attacking, firing, and dropping dead.

Setting up the tent before anything else gave us shelter from occasional rain. A thunderstorm rumbled in and interrupted filming. It was a cloudburst which, we learned later, flooded the streets. We were only aware of our feet squishing and squooshing as we walked over the soft forest floor. Had Dad not earlier driven the family home, he could have joined us and picked bushelsful of mushrooms to his heart's content. The damp encouraged a fungal carpet, some grown to the size of a dinner plate. On this wet set is where we laughed heartily at Dann Perkins in his makeshift Confederate trousers, really a pair of red woolen long johns. He claimed they kept him warm, if not dry. The scene was tranquil. Misty rain, raindrops we saw and felt, didn't photograph. That's a funny thing about film running through the camera at 24 frames per second. Real rain rarely, if ever, photographs well on motion picture film, even when teeming. If rain is required, Hollywood uses a sprinkler system. For some odd reason, controlled rain shows up on film, possibly because water drops are bigger and not falling as fast and naturally out of the clouds.

Sergeant Cliff Boettcher, pictured right, 10 sits on a rock beside a



barely smoking campfire and quietly talks with Jamie who's nervously fiddling with his bugle. Raindrops are visible on the brims of caps. There is casual movement of soldiers who salute, enter or exit the tent. Peace is ruptured suddenly. A Confederate, Kopperud, fires his weapon, pictured left<sup>11</sup>. Cliff is flung forward, his head turning slightly revealing a bleeding wound. Jamie doesn't jump up. He doesn't scream out. Pictured right in my 16mm frame enlargement, Jamie sits in shock and watches his slowly sergeant tumble. Dave Jurgella as a Union



officer holding a saber orders his men to attack, pictured left. 12

<sup>10 16</sup>mm frame enlargement by John Primm

<sup>11 16</sup>mm frame enlargement by John Primm

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Paul bursts into Long Shot and aims his musket at the boy,



pictured right, 13 sees unarmed and doesn't fire; John Primm as a Confederate leaps behind Paul. Jamie registers an expression of incredulity, pictured left.<sup>14</sup> It was a means to an end. I wanted somehow to get the two main characters together, by chance,



before they actually interacted with one another.

Brought together so briefly in one exciting skirmish scene, the Confederate and Jamie are separated, later to be reunited in the story. Misty rain a continuing annoyance and my clothes uncomfortably sodden, I concentrated on bringing to life the script's inanimate words about a greenhorn's reaction to blood and guts, Jamie's reaction to what he sees after his first experience in battle, his first time seeing someone he knows dead. Jamie had been shown in a brief Medium Close Shot in the skirmish retreating beneath the white canvas of a tent. Had Jamie been injured or had he been hiding? No one knows for sure when he raises himself from the damp ground, wipes his brow, brushes his leggings, looks around, picks up his bugle and cap, and slaps the cap on his head. Dazed, a ringing in his ears from deafening cannonfire, Confederates whooping and screaming their Rebel yell, muzzleloading firearms discharging as close to him as the cap on his head, Jamie searches and hopes someone's alive as he steps over and around bullet-holed arms, legs, torsos, and stumbles upon shattered bodies. All scenes of battle aftermath many dead bodies were created using only three people. Each person changed position for each new shot. The effect is that many soldiers, Union and Confederate, have fallen. An unplanned move, Corky caught his foot against a body, tripped and fell to the ground. Corky asked if I wanted to do the shot again. "No way," said the person playing the body. "He caught my balls with his foot!" It may have been Dann Perkins, for all I remember, whom I'd earlier put through plenty of dirty discomfort by asking him to fall dead more times than God would ask. I thought Corky's trip looked natural. Why wouldn't he trip and fall over a body? As Jamie then, he



rebalances, glances down and is confronted by death in grisly form, a bloodied face with one eye opened wide staring back at him. Jamie covers his mouth and turns tail.

In this shot Union Dave Jurgella and Confederate John Primm are the corpses. Oddly enough, from lying flat on his back in his dead guy position, Jurgella suddenly noticed he'd sewed the crossed sabers onto Jamie's cap upside down. "Oh, no," he muttered, "You're gonna have to start all over." After he explained his mistake, I asked, "Who's to know?" "I will," said Jurgella. "Forget it," I said, "Even you've said it before... who's gonna know." Pictured left<sup>15</sup>, the upside down sabers can be clearly seen on Jamie's cap. Jurgella's additional recollection of the scene was the cold sensation of canned Hershey's chocolate sauce poured in generous streams onto his forehead and over a closed eye. It

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Publicity photo by Dann Perkins

dribbled down his cheek, into his hair, into his ear, slowly trickled and tickled. In the breezy chill, the chocolate stiffened on his face like a homemade paste of flour and water.

Final shot for the day required a stunt with precision timing. Rain or no rain, the action had to be choreographed and rehearsed before a foot of film clacked through the camera. Jurgella was cautious, overly so we thought, about loading the 69 caliber musket with a 58 caliber black powder charge, the mini-ball removed. With the rain and the grey of the overall look of the set, Dave thought one normal charge might be insufficient to show up on screen. He loaded the musket with a maximum charge of 100 grams of powder. Counting grains tumbling into the muzzle through trembling fingers, Jurgella conceded he was new to black powder safety. Whether accurate or not, Dave bravely said it was a triple charge. Light rain falling, we watched and waited as Dave took forever counting, measuring powder grains and pouring it down the barrel, then some paper wadding and ramrodding, tamping it down.

This scene would be edited in immediately following the shot of Paul facing Jamie with his musket and not firing. Everyone's adrenalin was pumped, mine especially as I knelt behind the camera and



called, "Action!" Soldiers in grey charge into frame. Jamie is seen holding his hands up as if saying, "Don't shoot," and unseating himself from the campfire log. Distracted by a Union soldier, Dave Kopperud, having stepped out of his Confederate picket post clothes and role and into the boots of a Union officer, emerges from the tent, pistol in hand. Paul turns and discharges his triple-charged musket from his hip, my 16mm frame enlargement pictured left. A massive white cloud of smoke is ejected. Fatally wounded, Kopperud's stunt is a dramatic jump and leap backwards throwing him against the tent which collapses. Soldiers moving out of frame continued until I called, "Cut!" It was the kind of scene which can result in an audience's startled jolt in their seats; even as a standalone scene; it can still elicit a physical reaction.

"Holy crap!" Those who charged through the shot returned. "Did you see all the smoke?" Others rolled over, sat up, and picked themselves off the wet ground. And then we heard what no one wanted to hear. It came as a desperate cry from Dave Kopperud, "I can't see. I can't see." He sat where he'd fallen holding his hands to his face. Dann Perkins ministered to Kopperud, "Move your hands, Dave. Let's see your eyes." Kopperud's face was heavily dusted with black powder residue. "Open your eyes. Look at me," said Dann. His eyes were bloodshot, redder than if he'd burned the midnight oil studying for an exam. "What do you see?" Kopperud said he saw everything blurry and with spots. Man, we all felt awful. Jurgella handed Dann a canteen and Kopperud gently bathed his eyes. To ease the tension, make himself feel better, Kopperud said, "I guess I shoulda come outta the tent with my eyes closed." Perkins drove Kopperud to see Doc Rifleman, the campus doctor. Consultation was covered by Student Union fees.

Here Dave Jurgella and I probably had our biggest Director vs Re-enactor/Military Advisor disagreement over authenticity. We'd had words before, had come to discord over wardrobe, dialogue (even though it wouldn't be heard), military conduct and procedure. "It wouldn't happen like that," Dave protested. "No officer would just barge out of the tent knowing he was under attack!" I shot back, "I'm making a movie - not a documentary!" Often re-enactors don't understand what does and doesn't read on camera. They forget it doesn't have to be militarily or historically accurate for dramatic effect. Whether out of ignorance or for the sake of dramatic effect, Hollywood does it all the time.

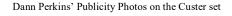
We packed up, waited, and hoped. Fear was our friend forever being blind. Doc Rifleman's examination and assessment was typically fast and Kopperud returned to set with Perkins. "He'll be fine in three days. Doc says take it easy." We were lucky Kopperud wasn't hurt further. The fault of firing 100 grams of powder was not in the load, but that the musket discharged directly at Kopperud wasn't a safe distance away of 30 yards! I don't know about anyone else, but I felt dreadfully uncomfortable.

Too soon, we all felt more unwelcome discomfort. "Damn," announced Paul, "I got a tick crawling on me." We did cursory inspection of our own exposed and covered extremities, then others. Ticks are more than a nuisance. They're dangerous and can cause Lyme disease. The whole cast dragged our tired selves to the dorm, marched into the community shower room, and stripped. We took our time closely examining one another's bare bodies for ticks in the scalp, behind ears, up the nose, under an arm, in the ass cheeks and crotch. We may have looked like a social cartload of grooming chimpanzees, but our situation wasn't laughable. It was serious business. For every outdoor shoot thereafter, no one ever felt embarrassed or coy in the naked presence of another. Examination was taken in stride, like putting on and taking off shoes, and became a necessary ritual after filming in and around the forest.

During the week the Hoffer Paint commercial with the skunk as visual code to the product's odorless quality aired regularly on Wausau's Channel 7. Too busy to watch television, I missed seeing it. Teachers who saw my commercial said it looked very professional.

Friday ahead of another weekend filming *Jamie*, Primm and I participated in the Pointer Jubilee, its purpose being to acquaint old students and freshmen with people and activities of campus organizations like religious groups, fraternities and sororities, and other social clubs. Large crowds were drawn to the College Theatre booth where John and I set up projectors, tape recorders and a screen and showed our films, mainly those featuring College Theatre actors in pictures like my *Invitation to Dinner*, *The Sick Trilogy* et al, and Primm's anti-smoking comedy made when the price of cigarettes went up. His title was the new pack price,  $35\phi$ .

For Saturday's filming session September 25, Confederate soldiers Jim Sprouse, Tony Majewski, and John Primm changed into ragtag uniforms. Jurgella fastidiously checked everything and made adjustments. It's interesting to note that CSA soldiers were at their most ragged in 1862 and Dave accurately costumed our guys. Paul Bentzen applied make-up to faces and a drizzle of dried blood, courtesy Hershey's chocolate syrup, to Primm's bandaged temple.









Paul Bentzen applies eyeliner to James Sprouse.

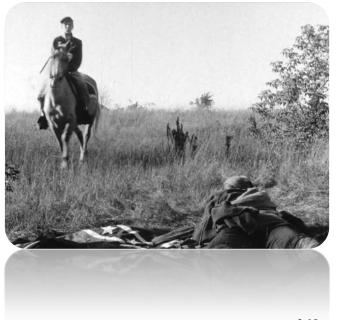
The Corcoran's doctor said the wrist was healing and gave his permission for Corky to ride a horse. If he fell off and re-broke his wrist, well, Mrs. Corcoran said she wasn't overly concerned. That's just one of those things about growing up that happens to boys. We were in Custer and reacquainted

ourselves with Goldie, not that Jurgella showed any joy at seeing the horse again. Coming out of nowhere Corky said to me, "I've never been near a horse." Jurgella laughed. I don't know why and I didn't say anything. "I don't know how to ride," said Corky.

I used Jurgella's costuming and make-up time teaching Corky to mount and sit in the saddle like a soldier and ride like he'd been doing it forever. All I can say is that Corky was a fast learner and managed Goldie like a seasoned cavalryman. We couldn't have ordered a better fall day for filming. Leaves were beautiful in yellows, oranges, and deep reds. Another good reason for shooting in black and white. Fallen leaves were as crunchy under foot as the sound made when chomping into a thick peppermint stick. Sun shone and the temperature was warm, a better than average 60°F.

The only camera mounted tripod shot showed Corky mounting Goldie. To convey urgency, I used hand-held camera shots of Jamie riding Goldie. I chose a track onto which I moved on foot and stayed in front of the horse. No potholes or roots growing out of the path, I didn't need Jurgella or Primm to hold onto the waistband of my crème-colored Levis. Doing a walk through, I looked through the viewfinder to ensure the lens saw a canopy of leaves above Jamie and his mount. Little sense of movement is felt by an audience if there's nothing but clear sky behind the subject. Corky could have been sitting on a sawhorse and merely bouncing his body up and down if all that was seen behind him was clear sky. I learned that from having read about Howard Hughes making Hell's Angels (1930). The WWI bi-planes engaged in dogfights never looked like they were moving, as if suspended in air, or as if the pilots were filmed in cockpits while on the ground and the camera framed from below. The sky was clear. Then the cinematographer stumbled upon filming a plane with clouds in the sky. With something in the background, it became obvious to viewers that the planes were real, were flying in a real sky, and weren't models hanging by fishwire. I set my shot for wide angle and, for my own safety, didn't look through the viewfinder, just aimed the camera at Corky on the horse, hoped for the best, and called for action. I concentrated on where I moved and sort of looked back making sure I still had the camera aimed at Corky and Goldie. When the horse's head was almost onto mine, I panned and followed the action with the camera. I did several variations of this shot. It's difficult to tell what's actually going to be on the emulsion when filming is chanced without looking through the viewfinder. With options in the editing process, surely something would be salvageable.

For variety, I wanted a shot seen from above of Jamie riding past the camera. Hollywood calls it a Crane Shot. Mine would simply be done from a tree, but no way would I shoot it; I'm afraid of heights. Dann Perkins volunteered to climb a tree and hang from a limb. He'd move his body with camera in hand in time with the horse's gait to show horse and rider, crane through a limb in the foreground, and not lose sight of the horseback rider. Making the shot challenged Dann's nerve.



As he'd promised the miserable Confederate soldier after leaving his canteen, Jamie returns, pictured left in my 16mm enlargement. Jamie comes back alone, without help. I chose an open area for Paul to lie in, a place where trees were far enough away to match the view of the other field. Because I wanted Jamie trotting the horse into shot, dismounting, and moving on foot toward Paul, with Goldie handy that shot was filmed now.

Horse riding scenes finished, I filmed the three Confederates who'd track Jamie and fire at him. Dragging their feet and not looking particularly attentive, the ragtag group is startled into action when they hear the dull clompety-clomp of approaching hooves. They take cover behind a toppled, weathered, lichen-encrusted log and espy a Union rider trot past. They do not see a boy, just another Northern enemy's blue uniform. Assuming he might be a courier, they don't shoot. A captured courier is more valuable than one with a musket ball in his back. Understanding glances are silently communicated and they pursue the rider on foot.

Pictured right, from left to right John Primm, Jim Sprouse, and Tony Majewski as ragtag Confederate soldiers.





By the time Jamie has

long dismounted and ministered to the Confederate soldier with dressings pilfered, along with his mount from a field hospital, the three Southern soldiers still see only a blue uniform. The script simply read that one of the soldiers takes aim and shoots Jamie. I hadn't decided which one of the three would make the fatal decision to pull the trigger without first getting his visual facts right. In costume, all three looked unsavory, but unshaven Jim Sprouse was confronting, the figure of a hungry, ratty soldier thirsting for blood. Sprouse wore a thick bedroll and heavy boots and conveyed that fascinating mix of old boy ignorance and hatred. Certain the audience would read him as a cuss, I chose Sprouse to shoot Jamie, pictured left.<sup>17</sup>

To the audience it is clear what the boy in the Union uniform is doing for the Confederate soldier. The view for the three Confederates is blocked. All they see is Jamie's Yankee back and a fleeting glimpse of a grey uniform on the ground. They determine the Yank isn't a courier, isn't there for anything good, and is probably ransacking his enemy's body.

We rehearsed. Firing without a mini-ball, there is safety, but no audible crack. The black powder doesn't even whoosh when ignited. Off screen, standing beside me as I crouched behind tripod and mounted camera, Jurgella yelled, "Now," when the musket discharged. Corky hearing the audible cue threw himself forward. The musket discharge and Jamie plugged with the imaginary lead ball had to be perfectly timed. Cue was right. Timing was right. Rehearsal worked.



Jurgella loaded the muzzle with a normal charge of powder without the mini-ball. In Close-Up Sprouse raises his musket, pictured left. 18 In Long Shot, Confederate musket in frame, Jamie the sighted target, Sprouse fires and Corky flings his body forward. Timing was perfect! In one take!

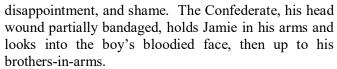
Sprouse and his cohorts lethargically amble to the downed soldier in grey and the body in blue. As far as they're concerned, Sprouse just added another easy notch onto his musket's stock. In Medium Close-up the wounded Confederate turns Jamie over. The mini-ball has punctured the boy's lungs and blood bubbles from his nose and mouth. Sprouse is proud of getting his man until he sees his target is only a child, an unarmed Now his face registers bugle boy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Photo by Dann Perkins

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> 16mm frame enlargement by John Primm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Photo by Dann Perkins





Pictured left<sup>19</sup>Tony Majewski and Jim Sprouse see their victim, a dead boy, their faces conveying, "What have we done?" Eyes saddened rather than angry, pleading for explanation, Paul's Confederate asks, "Why? Why?" Also pictured below left is my 16mm frame enlargement of the shot.

Now my story had said everything. The camera had a built-in fading device and I used it. The Fade ended the film's final shot even though filming wasn't near finished.



Weather changed. Sunday morning was unseasonably It had snowed overnight. What? September 26? From 60 degrees one day to below freezing just like that? We had been to Mass and sang, me leading the congregation from the front of the church with Paul and Corky, and God was having His joke with us, making me think once again I'd never finish my movie. Maybe out west in Wyoming and Montana it snowed in September, but central Wisconsin? The sun was having trouble poking rays through the late morning overcast. We went to fields at the edge of the forest to film. Unbelievable! 10:30 a.m. and the field nearest the dorm was still blanketed in snow. Every time we exhaled warm breath, steam billowed from of our mouths. Dann, Corky and I stamped out snow while Paul slapped at it with his Confederate blanket.

Having previewed raw footage, I saw an out of order sequence where I might end up with unwanted jump cuts in the action. A Jump Cut can be a legitimate editing decision when it's used to convey hectic, erratic behavior, but it was unwanted, frowned upon by competition judges comfortable only with standard moviemaking techniques ever since they were invented by D. W. Griffith from 1906 to 1916. Anything experimental effectively breaking the so-called cardinal rules got the quick thumbs down from judges and killed off winning a prize. What I needed to shoot were Pick-up scenes. In the editing process, the insertion of Pick-ups or Cutaways can help action flow smoothly. Some re-takes were also needed. Paul's head injury in our first session was painted-on greasepaint and, when the film came back from the processor, the wound looked exactly like painted-on greasepaint. It was too hard to Pick up on every shot with the greasepaint wound and some had to be used in the final cut. Paul's bloodied head graze was made convincing in the Pick-ups by drizzling Hershey's chocolate syrup. Being overcast, Dann Perkins recommended using a reflector, a large white card to bounce light up onto faces. Even without sunshine, the reflector forced light onto faces shadowed by cap brims and the subjects achieved a mock 3D effect required in black and white so the picture doesn't look flat.

Filming began with Jamie's physical reaction to his having seen dead bodies. Warm breath steaming out of his mouth after exhaling enhanced the stomach-churning mood. Influenced by post-war neo-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> 16mm frame enlargement by John Primm

realism of Italian language films, I had Jamie lose his cookies. Corky had brought a Tupperware container from home filled with runny oatmeal, filled his mouth and, given my cue to take a few steps, turned his head slightly toward camera, half-covered his mouth, and threw up believably. I made the shot hand-held.

We were working in a small area of the formally named Schmeeckle Reserve, but we only ever referred to it as the boondocks. Not easily seen alongside the road, down its embankment was a

stream. Dann Perkins happened upon it when he went to his car for his still camera. It was a decent place for Corky to clean up after his puking scene. No more than two to three feet wide, it flowed, a real freshwater creek, the kind where you can catch crayfish and trout, and not an open sewer or a rain runoff. Although it hadn't been written into the script, I took advantage of Dann's discovery and shot several off-the-cuff scenes of Jamie filling his canteen, pictured right<sup>20</sup>, after washing his face and sipping water from a cupped hand and then the canteen, water flowing onto his thigh through his blue pants Always the possibility this filler would be useful in editing, my thought was



that it could work as a quiet break, allow for audience tension to ease somewhat after the fierce, chaotic, and eardrum shattering bombardment of pitched battle.

It made cinematic sense for Jamie to vomit, find a creek and wash his mouth and face. It made additional sense to get Jamie from A to B, from the creek to a place where he could recover in safety from his trauma. I hand-held the camera and walked backward as Jamie walked toward the lens. He took off his cap, held it by its brim and dusted it against his pant leg, slapped it unceremoniously onto his head, wiped his mouth, spit, and pushed his way through head-high bushes. I was unawares when filming that as I pushed through those bushes ahead of Jamie; branches I bent with my back swiftly unbent and swished into frame. I never noticed that unnatural branch movement until some twenty or more years later when someone in an audience pointed it out to me!

For rehearsal, Paul lay on the cold ground and Corky knelt handing him the canteen, pictured right. Both complained of the cold seeping from the ground into their bodies. For the camera, Corky and Paul repeated action from two weeks earlier with my added direction they hold their breath. If they exhaled, the passage of time, the difference in day would be given away. A shiver or a chatter of teeth, on the other hand, was acceptable. The audience not knowing how cold the ground was, or even that snow was just out of frame, might just interpret the tremble or chatter as fear and apprehension.



Cold weather doesn't stop blood-hungry ticks

from dropping off leaves or crawling off the ground and finding a spot to embed on a warm body. Following filming we went through our ritual of stripping in the shower room, shaking out costumes and examining nooks and crannies of each others' bodies. This time someone found a tick on Paul, not yet embedded, in a place where the sun, though not present on the day, refused to shine!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Photo by Dann Perkins

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Photo by Dann Perkins

After cleaning up, Corky and Paul walked to their homes and had supper with their families. Dann returned to his off-campus residence. Primm and I lobbed over to the Allen Center where we ate something slopped together in a kitchen smelling of bleach. We pretended the paranormal plate of victuals was supper. Corky frequently met up afterward with Primm, Bentzen, Perkins and me in the Old Main auditorium. We'd part with a nickel and laugh ourselves silly over the silent screen antics of Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd, Langdon, and Laurel and Hardy at the Nickelodeon. Laughing together was our favorite relaxation after a day of concentration acting before and working behind the camera.

One evening only Corky and I watched Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan in *The Kid* (1921), Chaplin's first feature-length film. We both had tears welling in our eyes and streaming down our cheeks when authorities forcibly separated Charlie from the kid, the young Jackie Coogan visibly crying on screen.

Amongst other weekday activities with TV commercials, film editing, and studying for classes, would you believe I extended myself more after Mr. Kramer sweet-talked me into acting in his latest play? I don't know what it was about "Boom Boom" and him always wanting me on his stage. Even though his saccharine entreaties felt more like an application of thumbscrews, he got his way and cast me in a small role in Tennessee Williams' *Summer and Smoke*. Instead of scheduled weekend rehearsals, thank goodness "Boom Boom" Kramer stuck to weekday evenings for treading the boards.

Saturday filming, October 2, was mostly indoors, so weather mattered little. It was our final day's shoot, the field hospital sequence. Further down the road from the field set, we spotted an unused shed, nothing more than four walls and a roof. The shed had no electricity. It had window frames without window glass, open to the elements and was fine for filming inside without having to set up photofloods... useless, by the way, without electricity. Pressed fake-brick cladding covered the outside walls. It was building adornment which didn't exist in the Civil War era. Some shots would invariably include the fake brickwork exterior. I hoped no one would notice. (Some viewers have commented, but no big deal of the anachronism has ever been made.)



Fred Schneck, pictured left,<sup>22</sup> Paul's musician friend, was cast as a Union soldier undergoing a leg amputation. Dann Perkins

stepped into his fourth or umpteenth role, this as a surgeon. time Dave Jurgella another multi-character role assisted the crude operation by firmly holding down Fred, pictured right<sup>23</sup>. John Primm filled out the scene as a shellshocked soldier,



onlooker in wire-rimmed spectacles who stares into space, wanders aimlessly, his head bandaged, and his arm in a sling.

Purpose of this scene was for Jamie to find aid for the wounded Confederate, but with surgery in progress, Jamie takes matters into his own hands. He helps himself to dressings, eyes a horse tied outside and rustles the saddled horse as well.

The field hospital scene was cut immediately after the lengthy one-take of Jamie running. Anesthetic, any form of numbing pain other than whiskey, incidentally, wasn't readily available in Civil War field hospitals. Against his better wishes, the surge on performs a shrapnel amputation and the camera

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> 16mm frame enlargement by John Primm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid

pans down a shattered pant leg to an even more shattered bloodied kneecap. Here was another use for the can of Hershey's chocolate syrup.

Jamie arrives, stands in the doorway, and accepts the horrific sound and fury of severing off a leg from the knee in the same way he observed the death of his sergeant, with stoicism, and driven only by his good intention to help the wounded soldier he left in the field. The bright light of the morning sun shines in the doorway behind Jamie. When editing I felt I had to cut the scene short because, then, shooting into the sun made the scene look overexposed, and such a shot was looked upon as far too experimental for ancient-ruled judges. A cardinal rule of filmmaking emphasized that overexposed and underexposed shots should be cut out. In hindsight, I wish I'd left that shot longer on the screen. The bright backlight gives Jamie an almost otherworldly, angelic appearance. Without knowledge of the future at the time, it could have been another opportunity for presage.



In the commotion of a leg being sawed, Jamie figures his presence won't be noticed as he helps himself to surgical dressings lying on the floor. John Primm, pictured left in my 16 mm frame enlargement, now a Union soldier and possibly the only shot where he is completely recognizable as John Primm, observes Jamie's theft, but isn't sufficiently compos mentis to do or say anything. In fact, he distracts himself by turning his head and staring out the window. Jamie moves to and stands in the hospital doorway stuffing the dressings inside his jacket. He smiles, the smile a result of his spotting the horse, Goldie, tied to a tree by the reins in a scene shot days earlier. Primm steps into the doorway from which Jamie has just exited and impassively observes the boy.

The field hospital sequence went off without a hitch. Re-takes weren't required and we packed up after an hour. One final shower room examination of our bodies for ticks and the film was a wrap.<sup>24</sup>



Pictured right, Corky, Me and Paul on one of our field sets of *Jamie*.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> In the early days of the cinema, the cameraman would say after filming, "Wind, Reel And Print", abbreviated as WRAP.

## Chapter 42: The Quiet Perseverance of Post-Production

i can't understand

uiet perseverance? Everything but... I was doing post-production, final edits late in September on the summer's Project Headstart documentary, not that Misses Aggie and Bonnie ever knew what they wanted nor competently advised on what to keep in and what to throw out. A lot of water had come down the Wisconsin River over the DuBay Dam flowing passed Pfiffner-Pioneer Park and still the bosses hadn't indicated how they wanted the film organized. Without a choice I had to second-guess them. They were always too busy and, more or less, simply deferred to me; despite their incessant whining over everything I'd filmed being inferior to whatever was their imagined expectation. Decision making on content and in what order it should be presented was left entirely up to me. I asked if they had a track of music in mind to accompany the film, asked what they intended saying in narration. They looked at me like I was stupid or something. Music would drown out their voices. Their intention was narrating a personal dual commentary over the silent film as it clacked through a Bell & Howell. That meant nothing committed to paper, no written script, and making up what they needed to say each and every time they screened the documentary. If anyone other than they wanted to show the film, silent and without an accompanying scripted narration, the documentary was practically useless. I don't recall ever being given a title of the film to shoot and stick onto the beginning! All the Misses concerned themselves with was having a film, complete and in their hands for societal presentations by mid-October.

I seriously considered holding their film hostage, the ransom set being my pay in full for my summer's work. Two payments had arrived, were banked and yet, here it was, almost October and I still waited impatiently for my third and final paycheck. It showed up eventually and I was glad to be rid of Project Headstart, its bosses, and their 800 foot silent film.

Editing Jamie took a long time and October was pretty much a write-off for cutting film. I was too heavily pressed with other curricular and extra-curricular activities. I am reminded of going to the local Fox Theater and seeing The Agony and the Ecstasy (1965). There's a repetitious exchange of dialogue, a word leitmotif between Charlton Heston as Michelangelo and Rex Harrison as Pope Julius II. Impatient with the time it was taking Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Pope Julius repeatedly asked, even silent mouthing the words in one instance during Mass recessional, "When will it be done?" To which Michelangelo always iterated, "When it's finished." My actors and their parents, my own parents, reminded me of Pope Julius whenever they bombarded me with pestering to see what we'd made and wanting to know, "When will it be done?"

I set up the projector and glass-beaded screen and showed footage just as it had been returned from processing. Film was viewed in short bursts of about 3 minutes per reel. Bear in mind, since making *Tomahawk Terror*, I'd taken to shooting out of sequence. Questions about continuity were constantly raised. Everything unreeling up on the screen made no chronological sense. I went through the Q and A process with Corky and his family. "How does he get there on a horse when we didn't see him get on a horse?" "Who's that?" "Why's he walking now when he'd just been lying down? When did he get up?" There had to have been some satisfaction on my part in screening raw footage to put up with so many questions... and I didn't always have an answer. I covered suggesting that each reel should be treated like it was a coming attraction. Trailers or previews, the so-called teaser shown in theaters before the feature didn't always need to make sense. I didn't give in to getting the editing done in a hurry simply to please curiosity. There wasn't a deadline with a burning fuse, so I didn't rush in and

do, as my father would have described, a half-vast job. Editing Jamie was temporarily on the backburner.

Once again the Union Board approached Dave Jurgella. The cast of *Jamie* was invited to march as the University's color guard and lead the Homecoming parade Saturday, October 8. Previous experience of spitting and jeers still fresh in our memories, none of our movie bit players volunteered to be available. We talked John Palmisano, a junior transferred from Chicago and our new best friend, into marching and carrying the Stars and Stripes. Civil rights continued to be a hot potato. Especially in my Confederate garb, believe me, I had qualms. Even though Corky was dressed in his Northern Army blues, I worried for his for safety and how he might be affected should the rednecks slither off the curbs again and target us with their spittle.

Come parade day. Confederate Paul bearing the Harper's Ferry musket, Confederate Primm the standard bearer of the square Battle Flag, and a crepe hair bearded Confederate me marched through unscathed. No one spat on us. No one cursed us.



1965 Homecoming Parade Color Guard<sup>1</sup>

Posed in front of Old Main before the Homecoming Parade from left to right, Union soldiers Dave Jurgella, Jim Corcoran, John Palmisano. Confederate soldiers are John Primm, Paul Bentzen, and a false-bearded saber-toting me.

On *Summer and Smoke*, Mr. Kramer conducted intense rehearsals. He usually did, mouthing more boom boom booms to fill a rehearsal room than a drum and bugle corps, in this instance however, devoting most scene time to his dialogue-laden leads, Linda Oberman and Jerry Colbert. How Paul and I memorized lines, learned blocking, walked through scenes, rehearsed and polished our work in the play, God only knows. We were patently pre-occupied. Paul and I were busily engaged making another movie after weekends on *Jamie*, hired through Business Management Services and earning dollars on a *This is Your Life* film about Alois Bryzinski, a vice-president of the Citizens National Bank who was about to retire from work.

We had a script written for us and were instructed to spoof the man's life, make it hilarious like a Charlie Chaplin or a Three Stooges comedy. This job was right up my alley and Paul had innate abilities to be a funnyman. We shot in 8mm. The Alois Bryzinski story began with his birth. It showed Mr. Bryzinski's life as a teenager, a young adult, his marriage, building his house, and in

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Photo by Keith Zuengler

various roles he performed within his bank employment. The script was well written, the film was easy to shoot, and we enjoyed many laughs in the process.

There was ample time for editing. Completion deadline was November 1, Mr. Bryzinski's retirement party. Paul and I were invited to attend and entertain with singing, then provide our live narration for the film. We earned \$60 each while having more fun than ever having to consider the film making was actual work. Paul and I gained a hint as to what it may have been like had we been around in the Keystone Studios.

Hoffer's Antiquing Kit earned me another \$60. The TV 60 second TV ad was so easy to film, taking

about 90 minutes, I almost felt guilty accepting the check. The spot consisted of a worn kitchen chair, one which could have been painted over in a solid color or hauled to the dump for disposal. Dick Toser's wife featured; the thought behind her casting of the day being that if a woman can use the product, anyone can; such



existed the sexist thinking back then. The product was theoretically so clean and so easy to use, Mrs. Toser didn't need to wear a head kerchief or



an apron. In fact we had her dressed in a nice blouse and a pair of snappy dungarees, pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement. She wore bracelets on her wrists and rings on her fingers. Bells on her toes? No. Husband Dick, I'm not exaggerating, wanted her in high heels! Easy sandpapering by hand, wiping down with a soft, clean cloth, application of a primer with another cloth, then one brushed coat of the varnish-like finish and... Hey, Presto! A brand new

"antique"! Everything needed by the home hobbyist was included in the kit. At least this product worked as intended, but the process, involved more of a mess to clean-up than our commercial allowed. We didn't include clean-up in the advertisement.

If this paid activity didn't already have me walking on air, a new AlChroma commercial literally did. The company's new product was a non-gloss, silver-colored, waterproof roof protector paint. Never comfortable with heights, I mustered courage and climbed in-built metal ladder rungs and tall ladders, camera in hand, to film befores and afters — near-collapsing shabby roofs and already paint-protected rooftops. Like we were expected to believe a collapsed roof looked as fresh as a newborn roof after a coat of paint! Four rooftops had been painted and I struggled to make them look attractive. These were ugly subjects, even after application of AlChroma's new coat. Getting the light just right without glare or reflection into the lens, turning, moving and angling the camera to capture interesting images of the same thing turned these static contours into masterpieces of abstract art. Nothing moved, of course, the commercial could just as well have been done via slide show, but my sharp editing made those roofs dance in the sunlit shimmer of an Indian summer.

As for Bill Boom Boom Kramer's stage production of *Summer and Smoke*, honestly, I never liked the play and I don't remember even being in his play. Performed over four nights from October 13 to 16, the Tennessee Williams play from the "turn of the century to1916" was set in Glorious, Mississippi and was first performed in 1948. It was released by Paramount as a Hal Wallis Technicolor motion picture in 1961. The story was fraught with repressed, deeply felt emotion and dealt with a gifted young doctor who pits himself against a lovely preacher's daughter in a contest between the spiritual and the sexual aspects of life.



Front: Carol Lind, Linda Oberman, Jerry Colbert. Middle: Edyth Eastman, Paul Bentzen, Standing behind Paul: Me

Alma Winemiller is the prim daughter of a minister fascinated and repelled by her handsome, amoral neighbor Dr. John Buchanan Jr. She sets about to give him a higher moral standard, while he takes it upon himself to teach her the realities of life and sex. Both are all too soon successful. John becomes high-minded and spiritual, while Alma, whose name in Spanish means soul, dwindles into the town prostitute. It was supposed to be heart-wrenching and emotional with 13 scenes presented over 3 hours.

The message may not have bought into our Stevens Point audiences due to the play's melodramatic, almost stereotypical characters. Paul Bentzen remembered having a major role in *Summer and Smoke* as the Baptist preacher; he was Reverend Winemiller, a tired senior authority who sighed a lot, a man constantly burdened by his wife's kleptomania and deteriorating mental state, and he worried about his son's fixation on satisfying male physical needs.

Freshman James Sprouse, who portrayed the Confederate murderer of Jamie, was a forensics whizz-kid in interpretive reading, and landed the role of Gonzales, owner of the notorious Moon Lake Casino; it was his one and only College Theater role.

The New Pointer published October 7, 1965, stated that on alternate evenings John Primm and I played Dr. John Buchanan Sr., the compassionate father of the gifted but immoral young doctor played by Jerry Colbert. With shoulders hunched, a hobbled walk aided by use of a cane, we must have been the embodiment of an elderly gentleman. Whether "Boom Boom" Kramer had his cast adapt to speaking with a Southern drawl, I don't recall.

Riveting, touching, memorable theater? Highly unlikely! I don't remember anything about being on stage for *Summer and Smoke* and, after asking John Primm about it many, many years later, neither did he. In a letter I wrote to my parents I stated that I didn't make any mistakes in all my performances and that John taped the play on Friday night. Alternate night performance in the role of the doctor would have allowed for taping. *The New Pointer* theater critic lauded the leads - and everyone else by name on the backstage crew from carpenter to make-up and the person providing 87

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Photo Dr. T. K. Chang. Paul Bentzen collection

music cues. Bentzen, Primm, Sprouse, at least 8 or 9 more players were mentioned... but in the eye of the critic I must not have left an impression on stage. I didn't exist.

Considered amongst the three foremost playwrights of 20<sup>th</sup> century American Drama, I harbor a personal opinion only. Agree or disagree, but the two time Pulitzer Prize winner for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), the four times Tony Award nominee for Best Play suffered from depression and feared going mad. He was an alcoholic and was addicted to prescription drugs. These elements dominated the themes, the characters of his plays. Asked once why he wrote, Williams response was "Because I found life unsatisfactory." *A Streetcar Named Desire* is ranked as one of the finest American plays of the 20<sup>th</sup> century alongside Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. I can handle the latter, but the others... especially Williams... no... I just can't feel a sense of being entertained whether performing in the plays, seeing the movie adaptations, or, heaven forbid, sitting to read the plays.

In contrast, Wednesday night, October 27, was a memorable theater experience at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Its Artistic Director that year was Sir Tyrone Guthrie. Sponsored by the Speech Department, the bus trip included several of our instructors in the capacity of curiosity-seekers rather than chaperones. Taking five hours one way, we departed at 2:45 p.m. and returned in the wee hours after seeing Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. The play was epic, from the German *episch*, meaning narrative rather than broad scale, and directed by Edward Payson Call. It was a parable about a peasant girl who rescues a baby and becomes a better mother than its wealthy parents.

The Tyrone Guthrie Theatre's innovation was vanguard, the play performed as theatre in the round. Tiered seating was arranged around a central stage, a seven-sided asymmetrical platform about 32 x 35 feet, raised three steps above floor level. Actors used the ramped aisles to enter and exit the stage, sometimes standing in the aisle to exchange dialogue. My ticketed seat was on the aisle, inches from Australian actress Zoe Caldwell, Victorian-born in Melbourne suburb Hawthorn. I believe I also saw Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy.

Roar of the greasepaint and smell of the crowd? I caught the pungent stench of axillary fossa, the underarm site of hair growth and an abundance of sweat glands, its perspiration permeating Russian costumes, no doubt accumulated wet layer upon dried layer, from hours of strenuous rehearsals and performances. For the infrequent theater attendee, a waft from the armpit would have been unpleasant, as aggressive an assault on the olfactories as a basket of a teenage athlete's fermenting laundry and washed-up-on-the-beach rotting fish. To a seasoned stage actor, it was ambrosial ambergris. The  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours were so absorbing we almost resented the interruption of the one intermission. For Paul, it was this and additional excursions to professional live theater that persuaded him the acting profession might be, for him, a viable career option. And get this – round trip bus fare and ticket to see the play cost \$10!

Good thing most movie competitions I participated in cost nothing to enter. I was in the running again for CACCA Film of the Year (1965-66) and if that dual number seems strange, I should clarify. It's because the competition year was as divided as a school year. Film entered in September 1965, if a winner in any category, became eligible for Film of the Year in June 1966. My luck this time came with a First Award for my color & sound *Black Lady*.

To enter an international film festival, I spent a whole dollar. Following an exchange of letters with Mr. George W. Cushman, chairman of the Photographic Society of America's Motion Picture Division's 36<sup>th</sup> Annual International "Ten Best" Cinema Competition, my eyes were opened to what actually happened in film competition judging. Mr. Cushman had generously invited my participation, writing "I've heard a lot about your films. I hope you'll enter a couple of them in our contest this year. I'll be watching for any you can send." I entered *Crucifixion*. Atop each judging sheet mailed to participants after the contest has finished is a succinct instruction: "In judging an amateur film, let's not base our decision on how much we liked or disliked the film, but rather on how

well the maker employed the principles and techniques of good motion picture making to achieve his objective."

The only reason I know what judges wrote is because the original sheets were mailed to competitors. The enlightenment on judging was never made clearer than after I'd complained about perceived bias. Judges got rather subjective at times penning comments on *Crucifixion* including, "Why make a movie on such a theme?" and "Why not a fun film? We have enough of this theme in real life. Leave films to happier themes." "Why the fake beating? Why not hit him?" "Some question use of the flag and its handling." Opinionated and subjective, judges marked down films thus eliminating them from awards consideration. This wasn't the first time I objected to comments and pressed for selecting judges with an objective view.

Mr. Cushman wrote that the more experience he had with competitions, the more convinced he was that there was no such thing as an objective judge. If a judge looked only at the methods and approach rather than the theme, he agreed they sure weren't fair. However, he added that the judges were well aware of the subject matter and that I should take that as a compliment. Too many films, he said, were criticized solely for basic camerawork because theme was too weak or nonexistent. As to my film having been entered in the Story category after I'd written and explained that it was an allegory, Mr. Cushman commented, "When judges hear the story, and then see the film, they can then understand the filmer's efforts and give him an award. Yet when the film is shown to an audience WITHOUT benefit of the typewritten synopsis, the audience says what was the matter with the judges? In our view, your film was a story, not a documentary. The viewer does not know it is an allegory until the very end. You have not established it as an allegory. The action tends to lead the audience to thinking it is a story film of some kind, and they tend to stay on this assumption until you prove to them it is something else. Until you do, the symbolism you have intended does not impress the audience as a symbol." He recommended in future, "When some filmers want to get a message across to the judges or the audience, they treat it as a forward at the start of the film. You might want to consider whether your comments about the film are worth some sort of scroll title at the beginning. This the judges accept, for the audience will have the same advantage."

There were plenty more comments and suggestions in his three page letter. He asked me to excuse his verbosity adding, "I am real pleased to see you still have a sport-like attitude towards this, the oldest motion picture contest in the world (started in 1930), and that you hope to enter again next year. If you do, whether you win, lose, or draw, I certainly hope you receive better treatment 'all around' than you did this year." My readers: Keep that last comment in mind.

An active student in the course of Forensics Activities with Miss Thompson, we earned brownie points coaching the Campus School kids. I was invited to judge the junior high Interpretive Reading of Prose on December 4. I felt doubly honored when Craig Marple kept his word and requested I coach him in Interpretive Reading of Prose for the same forensics meet and another competition in second semester. To prevent a conflict of interest, Miss Lulu Kellogg of the Campus School wrote a good recommendation to the Speech Department head, Miss Pauline Isaacson. Following Miss Isaacson's discussion with Miss Thompson, my appointment as Craig's coach was approved and Craig competed in a section judged by someone other than myself. Since I had an earlier success coaching Craig's Play Reading group and wasn't judging Play Reading, I also ended up coaching a group of five boys and one girl reading a Christmas play called *This Strange Night*. Simultaneously I learned from Dick Wesell that my teacher in high school who'd taught me so much about Interpretive Reading had died. Miss Constance Case was gone, but her legacy would live on in me. I'd strive for more than just being able to read well aloud. She had always encouraged me to search for and find the most challenging writing to orally interpret and thus bring out my absolute best.

It had taken months to find one great piece of prose, not for Craig, for me. I discovered it shortly before an invitation to present an interpretive reading October 30 at Maria High School. I was part of an entertaining drama program for a convention of... yikes... 200 nuns! What had I allowed myself to get into?

My memory was transported back to 12 years old all over again and serving 5 a.m. Mass in St. Aloysius' convent chapel. There were an abundance of scary Notre Dame Nuns; some having been, currently were, or might possibly become my teachers. How's that for feeling under scrutiny?

These were days of fast when food and drink wasn't allowed if you intended receiving Holy Communion. Up and out of bed by 4:15 a.m., walk to St. Al's in the dark and wait, stomach gurgling and nerves tensing, outside the convent door until the priest arrived. Filling the cruets, one with wine, the other with water, I'd stew over remembering the acolyte's Latin responses, especially the tongue-twisting prayer at the end of the Offertory, the Suscipiat<sup>3</sup>.

Garbed in black cassock and white lacey surplice, I heard the priest's, "<u>Dominus vobiscum</u>," and responded mechanically, "<u>Et cum spiritu tuo</u>." So far so good! Kneeling at the altar, my stomach didn't groan out of hunger, it tightened. My head grew light, my mouth dried, my tongue seized, and I never lasted as far as the <u>Suscipiat</u>. I got up from my knees, stood, turned, and weaved down the aisle and out the door... I threw up. Not until the Mass ended did anyone bother to come outside and see if I was all right. Christ Almighty, one! Altar boy, zero!

And now, so many years later, here I was with 200 pairs of nuns' eyes, unless one or two wore an eye patch, upon me! Whoa boy! I accepted that I wouldn't be praying in Latin, wouldn't be reciting from memory, and I had the security of a text in my hands. Out of the mouths of their faces surrounded by white headpieces, necks wrapped in starched white collars, heads draped with long black veils, frames hidden beneath floor-length black gowns, my reading elicited women's laughter.

In Jean Shepherd's humorously autobiographical *In God We Trust: All Others Pay Cash*, the captivating chapter was entitled *Grover Dill and the Tasmanian Devil*. The irresistible piece of Americana was just another book in the university's library when I found it. In 1983 that book and Shepherd's *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories and Other Disasters* would be turned into a holiday film called *A Christmas Story* and become an enduring family classic. A sequel brought other chapters to the screen, including the Grover Dill episode, and was titled *My Summer Story*. The chapter I fell in love with told of the unleashed and unnerving savagery of a boy's duel with an odious bully. For all intents and purposes, it could have been my own story, my own ferocious encounter with the bane of my paper route existence. It was my own experience which allowed me to wholly identify with Ralphie and Grover Dill and the fist fight to end all fist fights.

The chapter was too long on its own to read in competition. I kept my introduction minimal, edited and rearranged the chapter to suit my means. After many hours work to make the item fit into the required time limit, *then* I thought to ask Miss Thompson if such jiggery-pokery with the author's words was allowed. Thank the Lord and all His little fishes, it was. The story more than engaged an audience. It was appropriate for a reader my age, as if I comfortably and sometimes uncomfortably reflected upon a transforming incident in my own past. And I did! Reading *Grover Dill and the Tasmanian Devil* for 200 nuns October 30, reliving the Dill experience or the following night's Halloween Trick or Treat, whichever was scariest I'm not sure.

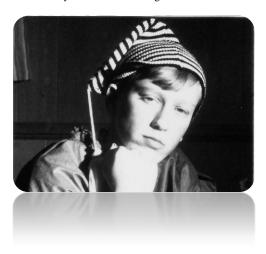
When Business Management Services had a job to be done, whether weekday or weekend, Dick Toser enjoyed coming to the dorm with good news and always stuck around long enough to share a few jokes and enjoy a few laughs. This time the local Citizens National Bank was the client and Dick wanted to bandy ideas for a "cute" 60 second spot about Christmas bank loans. It had to be something out of the ordinary to keep viewers watching. It needed to entertain as well as sell the notion of setting up a special Christmas savings account and not get caught out skint when it came Christmas shopping time. Paul happened to be in the room when Toser bounced in enthusiastically as always and Paul was always good for spur of the moment ideas.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium de manibus tuis ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui, ad utilitatem quoque nostram, totiusque Ecclesiae Suae Sanctae. (May the Lord receive the Sacrifice from your hands to the praise and glory of His Name, for our good, and that of all His holy Church.)

The cleverest scenario suggested made use of the old Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared." What if Santa ran short of money just before Christmas and couldn't get toys made? What about showing the sadness and a what if? What if Santa had had the forethought to set up his own Christmas Savings account? Oh, joy to the world! Costuming? Could we find and wangle a convincing, professional-looking Santa Claus outfit from a department store or costume rental place? Dick said that wouldn't be a problem. Leave it to him as he was BMS's gopher. In Hollywood parlance, a gopher is a person who goes for things, even if it is as menial as a cup of coffee for the director.

Dick used the phone in the third floor corridor and sought his wife's advice about purchasing green and brown material so she could sew costumes for Santa's brownies. The idea was viable and a rough script was jotted onto lined paper then and there in the dorm room. Santa's in something of a tizzy. His toy workshop brownies are idle and sad. The piggy bank is empty, toys aren't being made, and Christmas is nigh. What to do? Shown as a flashback, Santa goes to the Citizens National Bank and sets up a Christmas Savings account. Everyone's happy. Everyone's busy again. Santa won't be caught out unprepared and the message was, neither should anyone else watching the commercial!

My 16mm Frame Enlargements from the Citizens National Bank 60 Second Christmas Television Commercial



Phil Jensen: "We don't have any money, Santa."



John Primm

We shot the whole commercial in the Bentzen family home November 11. Paul's Mom and Dad, Herb and Lou Bentzen, cooperated by setting up their Christmas tree a little early. Santa, a rather lean Paul, ponders his money shortage in a rocking chair in the living room. His brownies mope. Bentzen's Santa stands against the North Pole, a hard cardboard carpet roll decorated with candy cane



stripes, a bow, and a sign atop reading North Pole, pictured left. Struck with a brilliant idea, Santa's eyes open like saucers and he holds up an index finger as if pointing to the imaginary cartoon light bulb of an idea floating above his head. He's drawn like iron filings to a magnet to the Citizens National Bank where he sets up his special Christmas savings account. Now happy, energetic activity is seen in the toy workshop, an elaborate set in the Toser's home attic. Dick dressed the set with toys for children of all ages. He suggested the brownies handle the toys carefully because they had to be returned as new, still in their boxes. What distinguished this spot from others I'd made for BMS was the use of lip-synched dialogue. Freshman Phil Jensen looked a cherub, not his 18 years, and I cast him as one of Santa's toyshop brownies. I gave him the commercial's one line of dialogue, "We don't have any money, Santa." John Primm, also cast as a brownie, took charge of

recording Jensen's dialogue. John had some experience making a movie with wild dialogue<sup>4</sup> and suggested we try doing lip-synch in the bank commercial.

John had shot *The Marble* on Standard 8mm film recording a wild track on a portable reel to reel tape recorder during the same summer I filmed the documentary for Project Headstart. John's movie was ambitious. He wanted to show he was able to do what Hollywood did. Somehow John managed to transfer the recorded dialogue onto a magnetic stripe on the film. When his characters spoke, the dialogue matched the movement of the lips. I remember that John was very modest when he asked if I wanted to see the new film he'd made over summer. Wow! John had achieved what most amateur moviemakers only dreamt of doing. Even if his matching sound with picture was a little clunky at times, bearing in mind that the sound on 8mm film is 48 frames ahead of the picture, and that the dialogue wasn't recorded with a governed timing link to his silent camera, it was pretty damned impressive.

I didn't have equipment for synchronizing picture with dialogue and was not required to do that task. Business Management Services employed post-production facilities at Wausau's Channel 7. I cut the Citizens National Bank commercial by December 1 and Toser drove the edited film and the magnetic tape reel of Jensen's line of dialogue to Wausau. There a technician synchronized the spoken words with the movement of Jensen's lips, added the Citizens National Bank logo at the end of the spot, recorded and added a narrative voice over, and dubbed in jingling bells, not "Jingle Bells" the carol as it was copyright music.

That's when I was made well and truly aware of copyright free music. To avoid paying a fee for using copyright music, I knew I needed to use original music on the soundtrack of *Jamie*. It was a pragmatic reason for testing our creativity. I deferred to Jurgella's Civil War knowledge for music selection so that anything we came up with fit the era. Even before editing *Jamie*, I had a general idea where music was needed. *Jamie* being essentially a silent movie, music had to accompany the opening title sequence. On screen in the Confederate picket post Paul played a harmonica. What he played wasn't anything in particular, just musical notes because, at the time, it mattered little. What came out of the instrument in post-production should be a traditional American melody, a song of the Civil War, as it could be used without having to incur copyright costs. Hearing music played and sung in the Cinerama road show release *How the West Was Won* (1962), I liked the traditional melody "Shenandoah" and decided that's what Paul plays on the harmonica. "Shenandoah" became what we later called "The Wounded Confederate's Theme" or for simplicity, "Paul's Theme". The melody would be reprised when Paul recovered after the battle.

Jurgella highly recommended using "When Johnny Comes Marching Home". A good place for that recognizable melody was after the battle sequence when Jamie stumbled upon the creek. Paul was keen to come up with something he could call his own in the film, an original theme to represent Jamie. I doubt he ever wrote it down on paper, probably just plinkety-plunked his banjo strings until he liked what he heard. When he picked his strings and revealed his tune, immediate response from everyone was positive. Thereafter Paul's original tune was always referred to as "Jamie's Theme".

The Sony 102, its microphone and a tape were constant companions in a music rehearsal room as we experimented with original runs, cadences, and melodies played on snare drums, tympani, banjo, harmonica and flute. On a run through of "Jamie's Theme", Paul played banjo, Dave Jurgella played snare, and John Primm, a guitar strummer who wasn't a drummer and who always hankered to beat the skins, played kettledrums. On recording the theme, my recollection is we got it right on the first take. We could hardly believe ourselves and how professional the music sounded on playback. It encouraged a bit of playing around, experimentation with drum riffs which might accompany other scenes. Paul played "Shenandoah" on his harmonica.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Also called a wild track, it's an audio recording to be synchronized with film, but recorded separately.



Dr. Robert Cantrick, Ph D, Dean of the School of Fine Arts, an accomplished flautist, approached me and said that flute or fife was played in the Civil War and asked if I'd like him to play "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" for my film. Dr. Cantrick, pictured left in a photo possibly by Ron Sindric of *The Iris*, did just that. Not only did he play the tune straight, ensuring audiences recognized it, he then digressed, sort of jazzed it up with his own flourishes and extemporaneous interpretation of the traditional song.

A newsletter arrived from Chicago announcing CACCA's January 1966 One-Reel Competition. Editing *Jamie* was further deferred as I directed my creative juices into something new. Think. Come up with good idea. Think! The day the newsletter arrived I read the November 16, 1965 *Milwaukee Journal* headline, one which screamed out for attention: *Highest Losses of War Reported in Bitter Fighting*, the words

referencing the War in Vietnam. In that headline was the kernel for a new film. One reel. Can be edited. This was too easy. I wrote a script.

Some film enthusiasts and critics insist that the script makes the film, the adage being that a good script makes a good film. Consequentially, a lousy script equals a lousy film. Well, yes, a good story has to be told, no ifs, ands or buts. Others say a story with a real beginning, middle and end isn't as important as getting a lot of action going and filling each frame with special effects to dazzle the senses. Personally, I consider that approach as dessert, the main course skipped entirely. It's too much like ignoring your essential food groups and concentrating only on those esculents which satisfy a sugar craving.

Others identify cinematography as most important. Make the picture look good and it can't fail. Pretty pictures, I've observed, don't always a film make. Well-filmed, individual glorious Close-ups of scenery, e.g. vacuous still shots of flowers which don't move, save the annoying breeze - hell's bells; it might as well be a slide show! There are, however, competition judges out there who're totally enamored with strung together, stuck together pretty pictures even when accompanied by an insipid narration telling you what you're already looking at! Slide shows disguised as movies, these little time wasters are, more often than not, submitted for competition as Documentaries and sometimes subcategorized Wildlife, Environment, or Natural History... any combination of high faluting words which manage to avoid what it really is: nothing more than a glorified point-and-shoot home movie.

Genuinely challenging to moviemakers, judges and audiences alike, a new legitimate category was added to competitions. The new genre was often called Experimental or, Lord forgive them, Unclassified, as if they didn't know what to do with the film. They were the unusual films which didn't fit into the traditional categories of Story or Fiction, Documentary, Animation or Travelogue. People stuck with ideas of chronological timelines and traditional ways of telling stories on film, those unable to accept anything new – motion picture luddites, if you will - well, it just goes to say that, for them, such oddball films had no business even being made, never mind sneaking it into competition and assaulting their eyes with one.

Almost as old as film itself, the current label, Experimental Film, was once-upon-a-time identified as avant-garde, montage, lyricism, or self-aware cinema. Perhaps one of the most extraordinary and finest examples of such filmmaking was 1929's *Man with a Movie Camera* by Dzirga Vertov. An exuberant montage of urban Russia, it represents the people of the city at work, at play, and the machines people use to keep the city going. A variety of pioneering cinematic techniques to document the spectrum of Soviet life – dissolves, split screen, slow motion and freeze frames – resulted in a radical experiment. Vertov didn't simply break filmmaking convention, he invented new ones and improved on the ones already in practice. The trendy amateur film shooter of my day wouldn't have heard of Vertov, much less ever seen a foot of his films. After all, Americans paranoid

of the Red Threat, he would have certainly been one of those nasty communists you looked for under your bed, not on your movie screen.

The uninformed amateur, even those claiming they were Experimental or Underground filmmakers, didn't always know or understand the conventions of filmmaking when breaking all the rules. Exposing film haphazardly to make some half-baked obscure statement without actually having to state it forced viewers into trying to figure out what the spliced-together shots were supposed to mean. Those rule breakers may have, at one time or another, ended up with reel upon reel of randomly shot, unmatched subject matter and, guess what? Due to the innovative reclassification of unclassifiable films in festivals, they could now slap together image-unrelated garbage and call it an Experimental film. Calling it Unclassified was by far the more notional. Strings of out-of-focus shots, hand-held painting-the-screen shots, thematically unmatched shots, upside-down shots, and what-the-hell shots were accompanied by a soundtrack of narration of strung out gibberish, lyrics backed by sitar and tabla, or backed by on-its-own electronic gunk some ill-informed composer seriously construed as music.

Ah, the Experimental film, where anything is everything and nothing needs to make sense, was loosely rebadged abstract art. The whole canvas painted one color, the canvas or wood with brushstrokes of unintelligible lines and squiggles, the angry splashing of whole buckets and cans of paint onto canvas and protective drop cloths are comfortably accepted as abstract construction of the artist's mindset. The same conglomeration of nonsense seen within moving images errantly slapped together came into its own and was recognized as a masterpiece of the avant-garde modernist.

Instead of throwing out the so-called bathwater with the baby, I clung tightly to all the cardinal rules of moviemaking when making my first Experimental film for CACCA, an essay or mood poem called *i can't understand*. Yes, in lower case, that's the accurate title. With free verse especially, it was trendy to write poetry which broke all the rules and that included using lower case lettering whenever the creative spirit moved the writer. Consider Archy and Mehitabel, literary characters I was introduced to in an English class. Styled as *archy and mehitabel*, it was the title of a series of newspaper columns which started in 1916 and written by Don Marquis (pronounced Mar-kwees in the author's own words, and not Mar-key or Mar-qway as most speakers of French may think).

Archy was a fictional cockroach whose name was always written in lower case in the newspaper column, but was upper case when Marquis would write about him in narrative form. The cockroach had been a free verse poet in a previous life. He wrote stories and poems on an old typewriter at the newspaper office after everyone left the building. Archy climbed the typewriter and threw himself at the keys. Because he was a cockroach, Archy was unable to operate the shift key on the typewriter. He jumped on each key to type. Since using shift required two keys pressed simultaneously, Archy physically couldn't use capitals. All of his verse was written without capitalization or punctuation. Archy's best friend was Mehitabel, an alley cat. The two of them shared a series of day-to-day adventures that made satiric commentary of daily life in the city during the 1910s and 1920s.

Another lower case titling influence was American poet E. E. Cummings who abandoned traditional techniques and structures to create a new means of poetic expression. Edward Estlin Cummings wrote most of his verse in lower case, as in this brief example of his poem title, [i carry your heart with me (i carry it in]. Some critics and reviewers writing about E. E. Cumming and his poetry even started to write the poet's name in lower case as e. e. cummings.

The U. S. Selective Service was grabbing boys from all walks of life, including university, to be drafted into Uncle Sam's Army, sent to boot camp for training, and shipped into war's meat grinder fighting against Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong, black pajama-wearing Commies freely maneuvering in the tunnels and rice paddies of South Vietnam. It was a normal occurrence to receive a letter from the local draft board and find the classification I-A, available for military service, prime cannon fodder for stopping the Red advance in the East, the so-called Domino Theory as it was then named. As soon as one of those classification letters arrived, it was the

individual's onus to obtain a deferment from I-A, get reclassified as II-S, or 2S, registrant deferred because of activity in study, with an official confirmation from the University's head office in Old Main. Those who neglected to do so were called up for a physical and invariably drafted into the U.S. military service.

The war in Vietnam was never officially declared. Legally, the President used his constitutional discretion – supplemented by supportive resolutions in Congress – to conduct what was then said to be a "police action." With the signing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution August 7, 1964, the military engagement, then called the Vietnam Conflict, largely a U S designation, was authorized by Congress. It acknowledged that the United States never formally declared war on North Vietnam. Whatever semantics are used, the police action, conflict, or war, Vietnam was unpopular.

Although my intention wasn't to make a protest film, some would read into it just that. My film tied in with Vietnam although the country's name is never mentioned. My Experimental mood picture was intended as a comment on loss, on soldiers left behind. With movie money raked into my savings account accumulating like autumn leaves piled into a heap, I felt the same wonderment of a little boy discovering woodland sprites in the garden when I held in my hands my second-hand, newly-purchased Bolex 8mm movie camera, that very same camera I used on my first airplane flight with the skydiver.



I elected to carefully superimpose titles over live action. George Cushman's advice about *Crucifixion* wasn't lost on me. Instead of opening with "Elkay" Productions presents, I opted to tell my audience what kind of film they were going to see and opened with: an essay by "elkay", pictured leftt in my 8mm frame enlargement. After fading it out, I faded in: *i can't understand*.

One actor was required. I asked a freshman from Iola, Eddie Rochette, if he'd be interested. He hadn't done any acting

before and didn't know me from a bar of soap. I chose Eddie because he

had the physical appearance I imagined my character. He was a freckled redhead with a Kirk Douglas dimple in his chin, pictured right in my 8mm frame enlargement; his athletic, tightly-wired body a template of prime candidacy for the Selective Service's I-A. Showing him my written script, I assured Eddie he wouldn't be required to do anything as complex as jumping through the hoops of A to Z, the lows and highs of emotional bathos. The script's brevity convinced him we'd spend no more than a couple of hours filming.



To make sure the already filmed white lettering showed up clearly, Eddie was dressed in a slim-fit black T-shirt and black Levis. The whole film was shot in Close-up and Medium Close-up. As there was scant action in the script, the motion in motion picture was slow camera movement of pan, tilt, and crane, as if the subject was being delicately caressed by a paint brush, all slowly revealed to the audience.

Behind the titles we see Eddie's near-silhouette face in profile against a background of a white sheet with folds. He turns his head slightly and the camera pans down to fill the screen with the black of his T-shirt. In a new shot, the camera is closer to the black shirt and pans along his arm. In his hand is an unaddressed, unstamped, no postmarked airmail envelope. The camera begins another shot, even closer, on the black shirt and pans up for an Extreme Close-up of Eddie's face. His head turns and he moves out of frame. The camera moves horizontally from Eddie's black-socked ankles to

reveal his head in his hands. In a front face Close-Up, anguish is revealed. The camera pans down to show the blank envelope. Eddie's hand enters the frame seizing the envelope. In a Close-up from a new angle, the envelope is crushed. As the hand squeezes the paper wad, the camera follows its upward movement as Eddie raises himself from a prone position to his knees. The camera shows only the fist with crushed paper held before Eddie's concerned face. A shot of the *Milwaukee Journal* headline is shown from Eddie's point of view. Then the hand-held camera rotates and the headline is turned upside down as the camera cranes upward from Eddie's knees to a Close-up of his sorrowful face. Again the newspaper is shown as drops of blood fall onto the headline, *Highest Losses of War Reported in Bitter Fighting*. The camera repeats showing the crushed envelope in Eddie's fist, then pans to reveal blood dripping from Eddie's nose. He brings his left arm into frame and smears the blood from his nose. In a new Close-up angle of his face, the camera follows Eddie as he lies down.

When Eddie's movement ceases, the camera stops and studies his serene face. He stares into the eye of the camera, pictured right in my 8mm frame enlargement. Another change of angle and Eddie draws a white sheet across his body to his neck. A Close-up of Eddie's face shows him resting his head on his arm. Wearied by the envelope, the newspaper headline, and drained of his own life's blood, Eddie opens and closes his eyes as if seeking and then grasping his escape into sleep. However, his eyes flash open, again to stare unblinkingly into the camera, as he pulls the white sheet over his head, a gesture which suggests covering a recently deceased. The picture fades and from the black emerges a played-down, small case concluding title which reads... -end-.



I hadn't underestimated easy when planning, writing, shooting, and then editing and adding sound to the film. John Primm played an extemporized melody on his guitar. When the newspaper headline was seen on screen, on the soundtrack we heard the distant sound of mortar fire and exploding bombs.

Cutting my Civil War epic had been on hold until I made it home for Thanksgiving. Cutting 1500 feet of film of what would become *Jamie* wasn't daunting, but required similar precision to carving a turkey, finding the right spot and making the decisive cut. After leftover turkey and stuffing, marshmallow sweet potatoes, peas with pearl onions, pears in raspberry Jell-O, and pumpkin pie were removed from the dining room table, I was allowed to turn the dining table into an editing desk. Spreading the bare table with editing gear, I found the whole job was too big to be completed in one holiday weekend. I didn't own an editor-viewer and, therefore, couldn't see any of the film on a small screen. Choosing the frame on which to cut was always guesstimation. The only mechanical device I had was a pair of 16mm rewind arms borrowed from a Milwaukee Movie Makers member. My old-fashioned self-taught method of examining film for editing was holding up to the light lengths of film, squinting at the frames, and guessing on which frameline to make the crucial cut.

I'd learned from previous experience that touching the emulsion left a greasy fingerprint which showed up as a dirty blotch on screen when projected. I handled this larger 16mm film with ease by its edges or manipulated film with a soft cloth. I hadn't yet been introduced to soft cotton white editing gloves. I used this purely amateur, yet successful method of cutting on all of my TV commercials and other professional 16mm jobs.

I couldn't afford the cost; the luxury of Hollywood's editing method, that is, striking a costly workprint from the negative and cutting it with producers' and director's input. Second, third and fourth cuts are made, chopping, changing and rearranging until creative decisions became final. Then, as long as there is agreement among all parties involved, a final cut is done on the original negative. In contrast, all of my cuts were made on the original positive film. Decisions made with Mom's shears in hand were, immediately the snip was made, pretty much final. If I didn't concentrate and screwed up, made a hasty ill-judged cut, I could be forever stuck with an unnecessary,

unwanted jump in action, similarly seen in today's safety film prints of old silent nitrate films which have lost frames through degradation over time. I did concentrate, didn't waste any good takes, but had I been required to emend such a mistake, I'd have to re-splice lopped footage back into a shot and, in that sloppy process, lose two or three frames. Making a splice where it shouldn't be would always show up on screen as an interruption to a smooth flow of action, as a stuttered image, a jarring hiccup.

A first cutting was a straightforward process of snipping out unwanted scenes, those shots which were under or over exposed, ones with acting not up to scratch, and finish-it-off reel ends of goofing off or cutaway fillers. Shots I considered not good enough ended up on the so-called cutting room floor, except that I used a clean wastebasket in case I changed my mind or just wanted to save the shot on a souvenir reel of watchable off-cuts. My father didn't understand the wastage. I remember him picking up a length of film from the basket and holding it up to the light as he'd obviously observed me doing. "What's wrong with this one," he stated, rather than asking. If I said the action wasn't right, Dad replied, "Looks all right to me." Explaining that I discarded the shot because someone laughed, or a canteen wasn't held high enough above a head, or a horse moved in a direction I didn't want, Dad still insisted that it looked all right to him. I never worked out if Dad, a technical writer, was simply getting my goat, or if he genuinely didn't understand the technical choices I made in editing. In the short Thanksgiving holiday period, Thursday through Sunday and with editing only accomplished over a few hours on Friday and Saturday, a brief inroad was made to the chronological order of shots of *Jamie*.

If Grant Had Been Drunk at Appomattox, written by James Thurber and read by College Theatre member John Butterbrodt, opened the Speech Department's Second Reading Hour in the Frank Lloyd Wright Room on Monday, November 29. I was Master of Ceremonies for this entertainment of Oral Readings. Paul Bentzen read a selection from Hamlet by William Shakespeare, or as Paul preferred to call the bard, Willy Quiverlance, much to Miss Mary-Elizabeth Thompson's and everyone else's delight. I closed the program with a polished reading of Grover Dill and the Tasmanian Devil.

John Primm received some big news Wednesday, December 1. He had entered two films in the Kodak Teenage Movie Contest and took out an Honorable Mention with his anti-smoking comedy 35¢. Far better, *The Marble* won First Place in the Senior Category. His prize was a check for \$150. *The Marble* was a religious film depicting a miracle that lead a young boy to finding faith and the forgiveness of a friend whose death he caused through selfishness. The 22 minute 8mm color magnetic sound-on-film was shot in John's home and church. Not counting script preparation time, he spent 59 hours on the film over a four week summertime schedule. Highly rated by all judges for content and technique, particularly for its original subject matter and proficient use of camera and color, it also scored high in the use of sound, especially in the achievement of lip synchronization of dialogue. And to think that John did not have equipment to govern the speed of camera and portable reel-to-reel tape recorder! It was wild recording, a hit or miss operation transferring the dialogue to a magnetic stripe on the film. It was a superb accomplishment and he had to have been at the forefront of amateur moviemaker technical achievement. John had successfully made a "talkie", something most amateur filmmakers only dreamt about in 1965. I like John's film and admit I was envious.

The Kodak projector with a magnetic head for reproducing sound was new technology for the amateur enthusiast. Magnetic stripe on film was also new technology so that amateurs could have control over synchronizing sound with picture on their home movies. There were different methods available for putting a magnetic stripe along the edge of films. John had used the services of a commercial striper. At the beginning of the Christmas holidays, Milwaukee Movie Makers Mr. Bill Banister told me he had a machine for adding a liquid magnetic stripe to 8mm film. Playing mood music with any of my silent films always created some personal anxiety as I wondered if the tape recorder and projector would play together in near-enough, will-have-to-be-good-enough synchronization. Bill offered to stripe For He Shall Conquer so that when I sent it to participate in competitions, sound and picture would always be in synch. As I remember, application of the liquid stripe was a messy process. There was no guarantee the liquid flowed onto the film evenly at all times. We watched how the

brown liquid passed over every splice leaving behind a glob. Uneven distribution continued leaving a thin trailing flow, before it evened out; that is until the next splice when the whole globule, thin trail effect would be repeated.

I was then still using the epic music of *Ben-Hur* for the soundtrack. As the tape played during its transfer to the on-film liquid magnetic stripe, sound through the speakers boomed beautifully and synchronization was perfect. On playback through Mr. Banister's magnetic sound projector, the synchronization was perfect, but the sound wowed and fluttered, a loud distortion occurring at every splice and dropping out on every thinly applied drizzle. Sound quality was inconsistent throughout due to unevenly distributed stripe. The layer of liquid magnetic stripe was comparable to a newly-tarred road where all the uneven bumps were felt because the steamroller hadn't made it level. A perfectly level application of the liquid magnetic stripe was out of Mr. Banister's ability. Once laid, the track adhered tight and couldn't be scraped off and redone.

John's Kodak triumph spurred me on and I thought about adding dialogue to the soundtrack of *Jamie*. First and foremost I had to complete editing and tinker with fine tuning. It appeared my best window of opportunity was our longer semester break, better known within families as the holiday season of Christmas and New Year's.

Some say a film is made or broken in the editing. Agree or disagree, I have always believed that the world's best script, best actors, splashiest visuals and loudest noises, best cinematography, and best directors, can all be rendered junk unless the best decisions are made in editing process. Match action scene for scene. Don't cross lines. Screen left to right should match the following scene screen left to right. As well, movement screen left to right needs to match the next scene's movement left to right. It avoids confusing the audience. Pace scenes. Show the audience what it needs to see and cut to something else. As soon as the audience grasps the scene, change it – keep the film moving. In a nutshell, without going in to a hoity-toity technical dissertation, choosing what to show, how to show it, how long or how short to show it; in the process create a tempo and a rhythm, and that's what I believe can make or break a film.

Running the film on a projector showed me the film's tempo and pace. Making notes of where a film seemed to drag, where a frame or two needed to be hacked out, where a cutaway was needed to make a piece of action come across smoothly, everything necessary to create the rhythm, and ensure the theme of the story was evident, that was my editing process. The hardest part was taking out a favorite piece of film when it didn't enhance the story. As beautiful or as haunting as a face may be, as tender or as savage as may be an action or expression, if that favorite piece is there only because you like it and it simply takes up time without advancing the story, it has to be chopped out. Sometimes it hurt, hence the reason for the wastebasket and saving a reel of off-cuts and outtakes. I pared down 1500 feet of exposed film to 630 feet.

Frank Kreznar of the Milwaukee Movie Makers offered to record sound onto my film via a commercially laid magnetic track. The company which striped his precious travel films laid a stripe onto *Jamie*. Being the holiday season, Mr. Kreznar insured the job was completed by his favored company as urgent.

As the old calendar was unceremoniously taken down, 1966's calendar was hung up. I had the music for *Jamie* and a few lines of dialogue recorded onto several reels of tape. On one recorder Mr. Kreznar ran one of my tapes on playback, on another a blank tape for recording the soundtrack master. Using a mixer, he controlled where a piece of music cut abruptly or faded out, where new music was started immediately or faded in. I selected the piece of music and we ran it with a film sequence. Sometimes the music fit appropriately, other times not so well. After it was determined which piece of music worked and where it had to be cut or faded, a recording was made. It was primitive, simple, and not unlike patchwork, but it worked.

Once selected music was recorded onto the master tape, we did a run with the film and dubbed in prerecorded lines of dialogue; Paul's voice heard briefly, and maybe one or two others. A loud scream which came out of Fred Schneck's bullet-biting mouth in the field hospital was used as a shock sound cut after the lengthy shot of Jamie running, over which the audience heard a snare drum cadence played by Dave Jurgella. The whole purpose of that shock cut was to snap the audience out of becoming hypnotized by the lengthy shot of Jamie's running accompanied by the monotonous drumming cadence. After the scream, the rest of that wild recording was hospital staff saying things like, "Hold him down," "Hand me the knife," and other non-verbals. The only line that required critical synchronization with the mouth was Bentzen's, "Why? Why?" thus ending the story.

Dave had a vinyl 2 record set of battle sounds and narration made by re-enactors for the Civil War Centennial. The re-enactment of Picket's Charge included exciting, authentic sounds of Rebel yells, cannon fire, and discharging muskets. Played back with my battle sequence, it was uncanny how the sounds synchronized with the action, as if they'd been recorded live on my West Bend set as battle happened. Original and traditional copyright-free music, snippets of dialogue, and battle sounds recorded onto the master tape and it was completed. We did a dry run, meaning we ran the film and just played back the master tape. Film and tape stayed in synchronization. We repeated the process with the projector's record button engaged. The master tape transferred in synch onto the film's magnetic stripe. It worked! Post-production completed, a motion picture with a running time of 17 minutes, I declared *Jamie* was in the can.

## Chapter 43: Grinding My Way through College

Batman: Navel Engagement John Primm's Beans Mary's Smatter of Mind

ONK! ZAP! POW! KA-BOOM! SPLAT! The villain was always defeated in a major brawl where the action was punctuated by superimposed words, as in comic book fight scenes. Brad Niemcek of the Sentinel Fox Valley Bureau wrote in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* Wednesday, March 2, 1966 edition on page 3:

The fabled "dynamic duo", which reportedly wages a relentless war against the insidious forces of evil and destruction, would be received rather nonchalantly here (Stevens Point), apparently.

At least when a local variety of the television heroes (you know the ones) roared through town recently, hardly a head was turned.

Has this city become indifferent to the efforts of comic strip characters to thwart the threat of organized crime?

Hardly.

"They merely regard Bentzen as the village idiot," commented someone who should know. After all, he (meaning me) put Bentzen up to it.

The Joker, the Penguin, the Riddler, Catwoman, Mr. Freeze, and the Mad Hatter, all appeared and were regular Bat-Villains in the "Batman" television series, deliberately villain-driven as well as action-comedy heavy. With recurrent eye-popping "Starting Soon" promos and teasers, we were hooked even before the first episode aired. "Batman" started on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) January 15, 1966. Starring Adam West as Batman and Burt Ward as Robin, the Boy Wonder – two crime-fighting DC comic book heroes who defend Gotham City - the pop art camp comedy was aired twice weekly.

For the guys on 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Sims, it was the most popular, must-watch, never-to-be-missed show on TV. All study ceased for the duration of every 25 minute episode. Up to thirty fans piled into Harvey-the-aspiring-mortician's shared room. Harvey was the only guy on the floor with a personal TV. Good thing he liked "Batman" because we never pestered him to watch anything else. There was, after all, a communal TV in the downstairs recreation hall, but watching it down there would have defeated what we considered our floor's special time together. Harvey's roommate, however, was a stick-in-the-mud. He thought we were just plain nuts for neglecting our studies and so he'd disappear into the common room, clump into a chair like curdled milk, and bury himself in some dull tome for the "Batman" half hour. Not everyone, as we thought, was a fan.

We scrunched together and loosely interlocked elbow to elbow, knee to knee like meccano toys and squinted at the portable TV's 12 inch black & white screen. Several brought food to munch – pretzels, peanuts, freshly-popped corn, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, the odd piece of fruit – and bottles of soft drink or a cup of coffee. Burping was permitted, but anyone farting was subject to being thrown out and banned for the next episode. Needless to say! On the rare occasion someone stayed overtime in the shower and, water-beaded and garbed in a terry towel wound around his waist, waltzed in late. He'd be ragged. "Attsamatta? Ya Bat-alarm didn't go off?" Such was the religiosity of our viewing habit. Harvey's only stipulation was that we take our garbage and leave his room clean when the show finished.

Our watching the phenomenal "Batman" series turned into ritual every Wednesday and Thursday from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. "Batman" was chiseled into our mental schedule. Scholastic pursuit waned for half an hour. We didn't just watch the show. Just like olde tyme audiences in music halls, vaudeville shows, and storefront theaters showing the latest Griffith "mellerdramer" or Sennett slapstick "fillum", ours was active participation, both physical and vocal. We parroted lines with our own inventive voices and made up new comic dialogue. We warned Batman to duck when the dedicated villain with his henchmen hid in the shadows ready for ambush. "Look behind you! Don't go there!" We took turns, grabbed the floor like the proverbial class clown and, wanting to get a rise out of the group, made dumbass comments. "Don't stop to scratch your ass, Batman. Get on with it!" A slap on the ear or a quickly delivered "Shush" told the interrupter when it was inappropriate. A groundswell laugh meant the interjection was acceptable, for instance a cleverly delivered variation on Robin's catchphrase of "Holy something-or-other". During commercial breaks, we discussed what had happened and what might happen as avidly as seasoned newsreaders or sports commentators. There may have been more in-depth discussion happening in Harvey's room during "Batman" than may have ever occurred in our professors' academic classes.

Away from the twice weekly camaraderie in Harvey's betokened Batcave, conversation about "Batman" or discussion of his heroics was rarely entertained, until someone brought up the idea at the end of January, "Let's talk Klobukowski and Primm into doing our own Batman movie." It took little convincing for me to be putty to the suggestion. Besides looking for something to do in our spare time, the group wanted to register their admiration for the creative skill which went into the network television series. Keen to pay homage and simultaneously send up the already over-the-top entertainment, I expressed interest in directing while Primm was willing to handle lighting and post-production recording of wild dialogue. All that was required was 100% cooperation from the guys on the floor. We'd need a whole weekend, every available hour of a Saturday and Sunday, to shoot all the acting and action sequences. We'd also find it necessary to hunt out a few bits and pieces like costumes, stately Wayne Manor, a Batmobile, a Batphone, and a batty story idea.

We were so familiar with the television program, it became our blueprint. The typical TV story began with a villain committing a crime. This was followed by a scene inside Commissioner Gordon's office, where he and Chief O'Hara deduced which villain was responsible. The show had multiple established villains from which to choose. The Commissioner pressed a button on the Batphone and the scene would cut to stately Wayne Manor where Alfred the butler would answer the Batphone. Bruce Wayne and his ward, Dick Grayson would be engaged in idle prattle with Dick's aunt, Harriet Cooper, who must have been thick as a brick to be unaware of Bruce's and Dick's secret identities. Alfred would discreetly interrupt so Bruce Wayne could make excuse to go to the Batphone. Upon learning which criminal they'd face, Wayne exclaimed, "To the Batpoles!" They'd slide down to the Batcave, activating an unseen mechanism that dressed them as their alter egos, Batman and Robin. At this point the title sequence began. The plot had the dynamic duo discussing the crime with the Commissioner and usually led to Batman and Robin conducting their investigation alone. The caped crusaders would engage in a fistfight with the villain's henchmen while the villain escaped. The heroes would face the henchmen again and usually be captured placing them in a deathtrap leading to a cliffhanger ending, often resolved in the first few minutes of the next episode.

The second part of the episode recapped the previous one and the cliffhanger was resolved. The same pattern of plot was repeated until the villain was defeated in a major brawl where the action was punctuated by superimposed words like POW, BAM and CRUNCH.

Finding locations in Stevens Point which remotely resembled the TV show's elaborate sets was impossible. Building our own sets was financially out of the question. We cut corners. No Batpoles. No Batcave. Very little of the show's template remained after the title sequence. Our ready-made sets included the corridor of third floor Sims, the common room, the basement recreation and meetings hall, the lavatory, the communal shower, the laundry, a couple exterior shots of Theta Delta Phi men's frat house (same old mansion I used making *Invitation for Dinner*), and the Sentry Insurance Building in the central business district of Stevens Point. There was no written script, no

written dialogue, but we eliminated Aunt Harriet from our parody. We made up the story as we went along, just like playing theater games. Changes were made to the TV show format without doing injustice to the pop art concept. When our Commissioner used his office Batphone, for instance, upon Alfred answering the Wayne Manor Batphone, the dynamic duo was never shown in their Bruce Wayne/Dick Grayson personas. Our first glimpse of the caped crusader was seeing him in costume sitting in a chair in the shower room, one legging of his long john's rolled up, and shaving his lathered leg. His first line with Alfred the butler was, "Oh, hello ducks."

None of the third floor guys objected to non-resident Paul Bentzen, pictured right, being cast in the lead. Eager to send up Batman, Paul's costume was a white pair of one-piece long johns. Pants were bright red gym shorts. He wore a wide black belt with a large brass buckle loosely around his waist. It was merely decoration since it didn't hold up his pants. "It's Batman's utility belt," Paul whined, in an attempt to convince himself and everyone else that it served some useful and heroic in-the-nick-of-time purpose, even though he knew he'd never get to use it to get himself out of a hair-raising situation. Black leather gloves covered his hands. Footwear was a pair of black boots. Holes were cut for Paul's eyes in a hood of shiny black material. The cape was maroon velvet and fastened with a large safety pin to drape over Paul's shoulders.





Robin, the Boy Wonder, was rendered persona non grata after John "the Beast" De Lorme, pictured left, a 21 year old sophomore from Green Bay, insisted he play the role. Gentle giant that he was, who were we to argue? Silver-toothed De Lorme weighed over 200 pounds and was several inches taller than Bentzen. He was renamed Battub - Boy Blubber. The mirrored half of the dynamic duo, he also wore a white pair of one-piece long johns. Pants were tight-fitting black Speedo swim trunks. John sported a belt with a buckle too, but it disappeared into the folds of his ample paunch. When he remembered to put them on, he wore brown leather gloves. He also sported black leather boots. Battub's mask resembled the same worn by the thieving Beagle Boys in Disney's Uncle Scrooge comics. Fastened at his neck by a W.S.U. Winter Carnival Sno-A-Go-Go button, a brown bedspread was his cape.

Our villain was Navel Gouger, a nasty piece of work who attacked his victims when they were at their most vulnerable, pants around their ankles in a toilet cubicle or towel around their waist in a shower room, to steal bellybutton lint so he could knit a sweater. John Palmisano chomped at the bit to play the villain. Because he was perceived by others on the floor as 'such a nice guy', John aspired to play against type. Growing a bushy beard for Winter Carnival contributed to a villainous appearance. He wore dark sunglasses, a black fedora, black dress slacks, black socks and black shoes. John's white shirt wasn't ironed and the collar was unbuttoned. His badly knotted wide tie was deliberately allowed to hang outside the buttoned sport coat, the striped barbershopper given to me as a souvenir following the Bostrom picnic. As Navel Gouger, pictured right, Palmisano delivered a suave, debonair not-too-brilliant Mafioso wise guy.



Filmed in living color, we thought our local production might possibly give a layman some insight into the cost of producing a complex television show. No kidding! We spent \$30. That was about \$3

a minute. A tribute to a favorite TV show, this film was made just for fun and it was always intended to be a parody.

Sumptuous set decoration lacking, the picture fades in on a real bat which Paul had experimentally and expertly stuffed, over which is superimposed a Fade In title with each word popping onto screen individually: Budget... Pictures... presents. Additional company names fade in and out over the bat. First was An "Elkay" Production. Next was A Primm Production. Thirdly, the audience saw A Palmisano Production.

Sticking with the prototype, our villain commits a crime. One of the Sims boys approaches a toilet, scratches his rear end, pushes open the swinging door, enters the cubicle, and closes the door. Before



the door can be latched, his polo shirt and undershirt fly over the door. The shifty Navel Gouger emerges from the adjoining cubicle. How did he manage to remove two shirts from his victim from an adjoining cubicle? A hole in the script? The film provides no answer. The Gouger forces the door into the occupied cubicle and attacks his victim to steal his bellybutton lint, pictured left. What the scoundrel is up to is emphasized with a Close Up of his satchel clearly labeled "Bellybutton Lint Bag."

The mode of invasion was borrowed, believe it or not, from Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Considered the safest room in the house, the bathroom is a place for comfort and privacy. Bad things shouldn't happen to people in this hygienic sanctuary. Hitchcock made everyone who watched his movie thereafter wary and uncomfortable when, in the first quarter of the film, he murdered his lead character in the shower.

The dynamic duo, their arms bent at the elbows in front of their chests and with fists formed, right fist clenched against left fist, charge toward the camera and down the long corridor of 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Sims. Paul Bentzen's Batman is pictured right in full charge, full flight mode. The bat is shown again and the main title BATMAN is superimposed.

1930s serials and movies often introduced cast via a shot of that member in character with actor's name and character played in a superimposed title, or announced by an off-screen narrator. Since the TV series had some basis in serials, we chose to show each actor costumed in character and announce in voiceover who played whom, "Starring Paul Bentzen as Batman, John 'the Beast' Delorme as Battub, Boy Blubber, John Primm as the Commissioner, and John Palmisano as Navel Gouger." The next title should have been the title of our episode, *Navel Engagement*, but because we never wrote a script, we forgot to



include it. Instead titles continued with cast. The title sequence would have been too time consuming, we felt, to list every one of the guys who filled in as extras, so we went with "the Batboys of Third Floor Sims."

John Primm recorded Craig Hanson directing the Batboys, now renamed the Batchoir, singing the main "Batman Theme". Where musical instruments were originally heard, male voices chanted the tune and sang in unison, "Batman, Batman, Batman." If John actually recorded any of the dialogue our characters spoke as we filmed, I don't remember. To avoid hearing the whirr of the camera motor in the soundtrack, I believe what we did was ask each character assigned dialogue to over-enunciate so lips could be read and the words added or dubbed in later.

After the title sequence finished, the audience is shown the Commissioner in his office with his deputies. Since we couldn't get our hands on a policeman's uniform, there was no Chief O'Hara. Everyone looks professional dressed in a sport coat, white shirt and tie, although none appear to be the dux of his class. One wears a beret and a vacant expression behind his Coke bottle-bottomed glasses while smoking a pipe. Another paces anxiously as if needing to empty his bladder. A third detective combs his hair into Moe's of the Three Stooges, except that it's glittery and garishly colored. He reaches into his coat's inner breast pocket, pulls out a light bulb and exclaims, "I have an idea." "No," replies Primm's Commissioner. He immediately fiddles with knobs and buttons on a guitar amplifier substituting as the sole communication to Bat Manors. Here then was our technically challenged and imagined art deco Batphone. The Commissioner snatches up a microphone and calls, "Batman, I wan' Batman."

What the hay, it must have worked because the next thing we see is Batman's Batphone going off like a one-armed bandit with a win. It was the floor's payphone and we flicked the half-booth's light on and off as a visual means of showing its ringing. To make sure the audience knew what it was, a sign which said Bat Phone was stuck above the telephone.

Alfred the butler was played by 6 foot 7 inch Mike Hackbarth. Dressed to the nines in a white shirt, a bowtie, and a handkerchief flopping out the breast pocket of my maroon sport coat, it was too small for this giant. His long arms exposed past the wrist, a similar image to 1931's Frankenstein monster

wearing a too-small coat, Alfred answers the Batphone. He doesn't say hello, instead, "You wan' Batman?" Lacking facial expression, Alfred notifies Batman he's needed. Here is when we first see the comic book hero, in the shower room shaving his leg. "Sir," Alfred announces, "The Batphone."

As Batman takes the Commissioner's call, pictured right, he listens intently, misses placing the receiver back onto its hook, and looks directly into the camera to exclaim in typical college guy slanguage, "Holy shit!" Television would have never allowed it, but movies were just beginning to test audience limits of colorful word acceptance, e.g. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966) adapted from the Edward Albee play.

We thought on our feet. Battub is in the lavatory washing his hands when Batman enters and announces, "The Commissioner called." "Oh," replies Battub, "to the Batcave?" Batman turns to the camera and says smugly, "Are you kidding? This is a Budget Picture."



In the title sequence Randy Anderson was credited with providing the Batmobile, a grey 1939 Plymouth which may not have seen a coat of polish since its day of manufacture. It may not have been too far off from the original!

The first Batmobile was a red convertible based on the 1936 Cord in DC #48, February 1941. The TV show's Batmobile was a one-off 1955 Lincoln Futura concept car created by the Ford Motor Company. It was outlandishly long at 20 feet, a bubble-windowed coupe handbuilt in Italy. It had fashioned wings that start from the middle of the doors and rise over the beltline and coming to a sharp rake at the rear.

Anderson's car, our Batmobile, is first seen parked outside Bat Manners - yes, that's what we called stately Wayne Manor. The camera Pans down from gabled towers revealing Batman and Battub exiting the porch in their bent arms, fists together charge. Sidewalks have been shoveled clean and dirty snow is piled where the summer's lawn grows. The camera briefly follows the duo and pans ahead to show the Batmobile while the narrator states, "Outside stately Bat Manners, the Batmobile

waits for servicing... ahhh... service." When the Batmobile's engine was started and steam poured out the exhaust, unseen extras in the rear seat poked broomsticks out the back windows. These were our Batmobile's wings. Attached white pillowcases flapped as the broomsticks were pumped into a bird's flying wing motion.

The Sentry Insurance building, very classical with its Roman columns and in-built stone frescos, stood in for Police Headquarters housing the Commissioner's office. The Batmobile parked outside, Batman and Battub charge into the building's doorway.

Inside the Commissioner's office, a photo of a victim is shown and a very serious Commissioner is given short shrift by a disinterested Batman. He's reading a Playboy magazine. To the Commissioner's hard facts about attacked bellybuttons, Battub interjects his trademark catchphases like, "Holy peach fuzz" and "Holy umbilical!" Eventually the Commissioner plays his card of frustration and demands of Batman, "But what about the clues?" Two takes of Batman's response had to be rejected and re-shot. Replying off the top of his head, Paul's first answer as he placed his thumb on the tip of his nose and wiggled his fingers was, "F... the clues." Uh, we couldn't use that. It was enunciated so perfectly, people would read his lips and probably take it as a personal affront. On the next take, Paul said, "Screw the clues." OK, we might go with that, but then again, maybe not. There was always the chance we might offend someone's aunty. The take we kept was Paul mouthing, "To hell with the clues." It was naughty enough without being scandalous. Batman and Battub assure the Commissioner, standing either side of him and pinching his dimpled cheeks, they can solve the case without clues.

As the dynamic duo exit the building they're stopped in their tracks. The parked Batmobile is discombobulated, its hood and trunk up, windows down, doors ajar, and broomstick pillowcase wings awry. Two Sims Batboys extras were passersby who gawk at the apparently damaged vehicle and move on, all the while pointing fingers and animatedly shaking their heads in utter disbelief. The narrator informs that the Batmobile has been sabotaged, to which Battub astutely affirms, "Holy sabotage!"

Same as happened every Wednesday in the TV show, we ended Part 1 on a cliffhanger. But unlike the TV series, in our film no one had to wait overnight to see the second part. An announcer states, "We interrupt this program to bring you a message from our sponsor." A psychedelic pattern of black and white wavy lines fills the screen. It's hard on the eyes. The word – COMMERCIAL– is set in the center of the wavy lines. Immediately the announcer finishes saying, "sponsor", Paul's voice booms out with, "Aunt Nelly's Pineapple-Orange Drink. Contents... water..." A bit of a giggle starts up. As Paul emphatically names each constituent ingredient, the laughter in the background grows until it and Paul's voice vie for loudspeaker dominance. On the naming of ascorbic acid the laugh is a shrill squeal, the pinnacle of a gut-aching laughing jag. It's a gag which has to be heard. Words cannot do it justice. There really isn't anything funny in the string of contents words, "concentrated orange juice, orange oil, gum Arabic, and vitamin C." Like a good joke, it defies analysis, save to say it's all in the delivery. The commercial wasn't performed specifically for the film. It was recorded during one of our mad evenings of gorging ourselves on Bill's Italian sausage sandwiches. What makes the exercise in spontaneous high spirits more fascinating is that the increasing insanity of our laughter was fuelled without alcoholic spirits.

Part 2 begins with an obvious title: Part 2. I walk into frame in the communal shower wearing only a towel wrapped around my waist. Before reaching the tap, I am attacked from behind by Navel Gouger. He spins me around to face the camera and makes it clear to viewers that he's after my bellybutton lint. My eyes are crossed as he deftly plucks a wad from my navel and stuffs it into his bellybutton lint bag.

Gotham City superheroes Batman and Battub charge side by side down a busy street. Businessmen wearing hats and wrapped in overcoats go about their business completely ignoring the duo, like it was an everyday sight. That was interesting, the fact no one reacted to our costumed characters. The

duo turns into a doorway where Navel Gouger and his henchmen happen to have another victim. Batman and Battub open the door, leap in, and assume an attack pose. They attack and a big fight ensues. Superimposed over the hand-held shots of the melee are colorful comic book words PUNCH, WHUMP, and a thrice shown SQUASH. On the final SQUASH, everyone, including the heroes, collapses into a giant heap, like children reaching the final verse of the playground game *London Bridge is Falling Down*. Only the dastardly Navel Gouger is left standing. He goes about with a sticky roller collecting lint from his henchmen and, as if cocking an insulting snoot at his adversaries, rolls the lint remover over the bellies of Batman and Boy Blubber.

The duo rises from the pile of henchmen and charge out the door pursuing the lead villain, Navel Gouger, to avert a "linternational" crisis. They run across the road. Again, no businessmen in the street take notice.

A straight cut shows the Navel Gouger in his colorful sport coat plying knitting needles with clumps of fuzz. The bellybutton lint is deftly formed into a cardigan and the Gouger speaks directly to the audience in a pronounced German accent, "Now zat I hev finished, I must vash before vearing it."

The Gouger waltzes into the basement laundry. All that's seen against in the background against a concrete block wall is a stationary tub. A fully clothed Gouger dances behind a pillar and emerges wearing only his boxer shorts, all in one fluid motion. I used the same stop-start effect I first learned when making *The Cleaning Lady*. This time, however, no one needed to freeze in position in front of the camera. As Palmisano disappeared behind the pillar, I stopped the camera. After he'd undressed and was in position, I started the camera and, as he reveals himself in his underwear, he collects his own clump of bellybutton lint. This farce being a cleanskin tribute, without dropping his drawers the Gouger climbs into the stationary tub, turns on the tap, and scrubs his back with a long-handled brush.

As I looked through the viewfinder, I realized John's face showed clearly. In the transition behind the pillar from fully-clothed to boxer shorts, he'd also removed the sunglasses and hat, trademark items for his villainous character. That was a lot of exposed footage going to waste. I'd have to do a long and complex re-take. "No, wait," John Primm interjected. "Why not use a props boy to bring in his hat and glasses?" Why not, indeed! Characters had addressed the camera previously, why not let a behind-the-scenes person also mug for the camera?

We got one of the Sims guys to interrupt the Gouger's bath time. He enters nonchalantly and, oddly, speaks in stereotypical comic Chinese pronunciation. "Hey, you! I'm the plop man. Yo fawgot... yo hat... an'... yo grasses." He places the hat on the Gouger's head, the glasses over his eyes, and turns to face the camera. He smiles and, waving his hand, says, "Harrow Mom!" Palmisano's Gouger just shrugs his hairy shoulders and resumes scrubbing his back.

A special ability of the Batmobile in the TV series was the now classic emergency execution of a 180 degree Bat-turn, thanks to two rear-mounted ten foot Deist parachutes that actually worked when activated with a Bat-turn lever on the dashboard. We were again frustrated with our inability to imitate such an elaborate concept. I opted for the easy method and, simultaneously, created a visual gag sometimes seen in a Mack Sennett slapstick car chase. On a rural back road I filmed the Batmobile speeding Screen Right to Screen Left. After Randy made a U- turn off camera, I shot him driving the Batmobile Screen Left to Screen Right. In the finished film, no one is seen driving the Batmobile. Sure, it's Batman who drives in the TV series, but even though Paul had a license since his high school sophomore year, he didn't know how to drive a stick shift. So much for our Batman's prowess behind the wheel! We should have used it as a gag, Batman having to be chauffeured everywhere, but I guess the humor of the situation never entered our minds, until now.

In a Close-Up of Batman in the passenger seat, he orders Battub to do a Bat-turn. When editing, I made a straight cut between the Screen Right to Screen Left shot and the Screen Left to Screen Right shot. In the TV series after the parachutes are deployed, the Batmobile is seen making that 180°spin around. Our Bat-turn is an immediate no frills Keystone Cops turnaround.

Navel Gouger is shown scrubbing his back when Batman and Battub shove open the laundry door and pose, their raised arms bent at the elbows, fists facing one another. The Gouger is stunned, open-



mouthed, apprehenders take turns pointing their fingers at Pictured left in a dramatic three-shot, the Gouger sitting in the stationary tub the foreground, his captors behind him. Battub exclaims, "Yes, Navel Gouger, we finally caught you with your pants down!" To which Batman "Yep, adds, Navel Gouger, you're all washed up!" All three freeze in position.

It was on that freeze that I'd intended making a Fade Out. However, the

lever was small and my finger was clumsy. Good thing we weren't recording live sound. As my actors stood frozen in place, I said, "I can't get this stupid thing to move." They all stayed in character, but added some business as I fiddled. Smugly and proudly, Battub crossed his arms and moved his head slightly side to side. Bentzen's Batman turned his hand, his pointing index finger folded and, at the same time, his middle finger extended. Before the full effect of the bird could be seen, I'd managed to move the lever and the picture did Fade Out.

Of course we all laughed when I finally called out, "Cut!" I mentioned Bentzen flicking the bird as the picture faded adding, "I don't think it all showed. You think we should do it again?" "Nah," said Paul, "even if it shows, it says something about the whole picture."

The dynamic duo spent nine silent minutes battling the infamous Navel Gouger. Almost 20 years would pass before I added a soundtrack to our *Batman* movie. The reel-to-reel recording of the Batchoir chanting the main theme song was lost. None of the actor's voices were ever recorded doing the lines, but that's another story. Like Mack Sennett's Keystone Cops, Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp, or Buster Keaton's incredible stunts, what's funny will always be funny and today, our Batman film's timeworn comedy still holds up well.

Huffling and puffling in the cold daytime air filming our *Batman* parody was more than enough to force us indoors. Tedium and dreariness set in at 4:00 p.m. when yellow streetlights hauntingly split darkness and snow flurries fluttered in the biting breeze like ghostly tumbling moths. Accentuating winter ennui and inactivity under artificial light was a Saturday Allen Center supper called Manager's Special. It never satisfied. Generously portioned, most of the tray's gray and brown slop we sadly scraped into the scraps bin. God only knows what went into that runny slurry we were expected to accept as a dining experience. We felt hungry enough to re-enact what made us laugh in the Nickelodeon when Charlie Chaplin ate his boot in 1925's *The Gold Rush*.

Wisconsin winter in January can lead to what my mother called cabin fever. If it wasn't a determination to stay in bed as long as possible on wintery grey mornings, in Room 322 Sims as



I am, pictured left, nestled under the <u>pierzyna</u><sup>1</sup> (pron peezhee-nah), it was an opposite feeling of urgency to get outside and play, a mindset to escape to somewhere, anywhere.

While we continued laughing ourselves silly watching TV's "Batman", a certificate arrived in the mail from Chicago. CACCA awarded an Honorable Mention to my one-reel 2½ minute opus *i can't understand*. John Primm also picked up an Honorable Mention ribbon and certificate in the same January competition for his 8mm *The Great Escape*.

Assignments already completed or on hold until no choice, must-hand-it-in deadline, to alleviate boredom

John Primm came up with a brilliant idea to make a movie about a fart. Luckily we had a couple of cans of pork n' beans in the room, stored in the known event of Manager's Special.

His little shot-in-sequence masterpiece was started and finished in one evening. In the bowels of the dorm was a seldom-used, nicely-appointed kitchenette. Permission wasn't required for its use, but John commandeered it for his movie set by scotch taping an "In Use" sign on the outside of the door.

I was cast in the sole role of Jack because John needed me to grow a beanstalk. My imagination stretched to using an alias in the credits. In Hollywood it was almost standard practice to change the names of its contract players to Anglicize, simplify, and in some instances, eliminate the possibility of ethnic prejudice. What was I to do with a handle like Klobukowski? Dino Crochetti became Dean Martin. Margarita Carmen Cansino became Rita Hayworth. Bernard Schwartz turned into Tony

Curtis, while the real Tony Curtis became Italy's best-loved comedian Toto. The most usual reasons for actors and actresses changing their names are because names they were born with are too long, too difficult to pronounce, or simply unglamorous. It is not hard to understand why Derek Julius Gaspard Ulrich Niven van den Bogaerde thought he'd go further with a name like Dirk Bogarde. Doris Kappelhoff was free to become Doris Day, as was Cyd Charisse not having to answer to Tula Finklea. Frances Gumm became Judy Garland. Archibald Leech became Cary Grant. Walter Matuschanskayasky's handle became a more household pronounceable Walter Matthau. I latched onto diminutive forms of my given names and my chosen Confirmation name to briefly be credited Lawrie Jon-Patrick, pictured right.



In a small terra cotta pot, I stab a bean with my finger into the dirt, add a dab of manure from a paper bag, smell my fingers, react appropriately, stand up and order the bean, "Grow!" Impatience is shown by my tapping a foot. The bean grows into a scraggly stalk. Rather than a green string bean, instead it sprouts a can of baked beans. I pulled faces and mugged my way through the script like Jerry Lewis or all of the Three Stooges. John and I even managed to work in one of our other favorite bodily expulsions with a belch when I paused from rapidly and repeatedly shoveling spoonful after spoonful of baked beans into my gawping mouth. What beans are known to cause leads to a comically visible shiver up the spine and I march proudly to a single toilet stall opposite the kitchenette. With one grand gesture I shove the door open, bow gracefully and enter the stall. In the space between the stall wall and the floor, my feet are seen, pants falling over them. From the soundtrack comes a rumbling, rambunctious ripper of expelled rear end air.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Polish word I grew up with for a down comforter or feather-filled blanket

Whether John ever intended *Beans* for a general audience or competition I wouldn't have known when I mailed and entered *Crucifixion, i can't understand* and *Jamie* to the Milwaukee Movie Makers annual club competition, always a tough-fought battle amongst celluloid entries, and not without its intrigues and behind-the-scenes lobbying and backstabbing from some individuals. Every club and social organization has its fair share of members jockeying for position and exercising one-upmanship. The flurry of publicity I was receiving in the press from having made *Jamie* and *i can't understand* and *Batman* may have touched raw nerves, ruffled a few feathers or teased out the green eyes of envy amongst one or more MMM committee members.

At the same time members' films were accepted for the club's annual competition, a two page article magically appeared the following day, February 27, in *The Milwaukee Journal*. It was headlined *Milwaukee Is a Movie Set*, sub-headlined *Movie Makers Here Put City to Use in Amateur Films They Produce*. Instead of telling about club members making a movie, the article led with our club president making his own ambitious 1964-filmed travelogue. An entire column told how he and his wife stopped at White Sands monument in southern New Mexico. The powdery gypsum sand was irresistible, so while she ran through it he followed her with the camera. Then she took the camera and photographed him running after her. It occurred to MMM's president in the motel afterward that a filmed "chase" might be an entertaining way to show some beautiful western scenery. They continued to film the comic chase through Arizona's cactus studded Saguaro national monument and on their way to California, where their son, an Apollo project physicist, filmed the final sequence of husband finally overtaking wife and, in glorious color, walking together hand-in-hand toward an ocean sunset.

Following rambling information and a potted history about the Milwaukee Movie Makers, the remainder of the article concentrated on color pictures and copy about MMM's president's attempt to film and direct a club production called *Mikey* about a 4 year old boy who goes missing after being frightened by floppy-eared Springer spaniels. The president's wife, introduced in the western scenery "chase" played the boy's mother. After a frantic search, chase scenes reminiscent of what happened interminably against backgrounds of interesting scenery in his travelogue, the boy is found sleeping under a tree, protected by the same dogs that frightened him away from his mother.

Well and good, I was given a passing mention in the article for being one of the younger club members and for the fact that I was the only member of the club so far to attempt making experimental films. "Members are free to make any kind of film they want," the president of the club was quoted. The article concluded with the benign statement that more than a dozen films produced by members working individually or in teams were submitted in the club's annual contest Saturday. Something about the timing of publishing the article smelled of rotting fish. I am surprised the article hadn't appeared the day before the contest judging.

Gene Arneson from the Kenosha Movie and Slide Club was the club's, read MMM's President's personal choice and sole judge of the Milwaukee Movie Makers annual competition. 1966 was the first year when 8mm and 16mm divisions were dispensed with in favor of all films competing inclusively for the newly inaugural three top awards. It was a controversial decision, more than likely made by the president and bumped through with executive decision. Myself included, 8mm filmers always felt disadvantaged when pitted against 16mm films. The larger film format, it seemed, always out-performed the smaller format in clarity, brightness, and ability to be projected dazzlingly in meeting halls.

I shouldn't have been overly concerned. *Crucifixion* won the First Place trophy. Margaret Pearson won Second Place with her 16mm *The Perfect Host*, a light comedy mixing one host, one bewildered wife, and one Temperance lady. I also picked up Third Place with *i can't understand*. All my hopes for winning the top prize, however, had been on *Jamie*. It ended up an unplaced 4<sup>th</sup>, trophyless.

The current president of MMM always entered one of his glorified home movie travelogues in the annual club competition and invariably walked away with some kind of award. His entry this year,

whatever its title, had been passed over. Marge Pearson recalled that his film started out with a Christmas scene where he was the only member of his family to receive a gift. It was either a projector or a movie camera and then, as would be expected, his film moved into a travelogue of a trip through Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, etc. Yes, it was the film publicized in the paper the day after judging. Marge further remembered that our president didn't take the outcome of the judging very well. If intention had been to change the competition rule to advantage his 16mm film over 8mm entries, it had backfired big time.

Judging sheets were handed to competitors following the February 26<sup>th</sup> session. On *Crucifixion* Gene Arenson wrote, "In my estimation this is by far the better of his two entries. This is not only imaginative, but an excellent commentary on today's world. All of the racial disturbance, discontent, and concern with world problems are represented here and a good parallel is drawn by symbolism between the happenings of today and that other crucifixion which took place 1900 years ago. There was excellent use of close-ups and I think the black and white film helped to create the proper mood. The sound augmented the action very nicely and I especially liked the steady pounding of hammers throughout. Very well done."



John Primm, Paul Bentzen, and I clowning with the First Place Trophy for *Crucifixion* in the 1966 Milwaukee Movie Makers annual competition. Paul's tie happens to be the CACCA Honorable Mention ribbon won by *i can't understand*.

Two entries? Mysterious when I clearly had three films entered and Arneson's judging sheets were headed, in his own handwriting, "(Film title) by Lawrence Klobukowski." Only a guess, but he may have counted my two entries made in 8mm, even though no section was set for the 8mm gauge from the 16mm gauge.

On *i can't understand* was written, "I am sorry to say that I did not entirely appreciate this effort. To me the connection between the unnecessary bloodletting in Vietnam and this boy with a bloody nose were incongruous. I will have to admit that the pictures were well taken but as far as I was concerned the message was very obscure and a movie without communication is nil."

Arneson saved his pot shots for my Civil War film. "This is a rather pretentious and I would say ambitious undertaking for an amateur photographer. The battle scenes are realistic and some of the special effects very well done. A tremendous amount of work and effort went into this film but something about it doesn't ring true. Maybe I am not satisfied with all the horrors of war being summed up by the question – Why? The black and white film is effective, the photography good but I felt his other film was much more convincing."

Arneson's writing "pretentious" was an insult. "An ambitious undertaking for an amateur photographer" came across as derogatory, a real put down. As an amateur I wasn't entitled to challenge myself? One of the youngest members of the Milwaukee Movie Makers, I guess I was

expected to stick to simple, easy to film, everyday subject matter? Ah, well, you win some, you lose some... and it really doesn't matter.

A Certificate of Participation was presented to each film entered in the annual club competition. The MMM president must have felt especially miffed over placing nowhere because he never bothered to sign his name in the blank line above Club President on mine or anyone else's certificates.

It was almost a given that the First and Second place winners in the annual club competition were included in the Milwaukee Movie Makers Film Festival. This year it was a surety. At the Annual General Meeting, December 1965, I was nominated for the job of 1966 Festival Chairman and I gladly accepted. Perhaps members saw me as a good choice due to my having participated in CINE and having made personal contact with interstate award winning filmmakers. Others may have just wanted to see me fall flat on my face after having, in their perception, too much success in competitions.

I wrote a letter to George W. Cushman requesting an address for a previous PSA winner. I also requested entry forms for the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual PSA-MPD International Film Festival. I told him of my joy at having won the MMM annual competition and my disappointment that I didn't win with what I thought was a much better entry. Mr. Cushman's March 12 reply said that four entry forms were included and that one was for Frank Kreznar as he had said he would enter at least one film. Again, he expanded on the subject of competition and typed some wise advice:

"Do not feel bad that the film festival at Wisconsin did not 'go' for your film. And, yet, that is hardly the correct phrase to use. Remember that in our competition last year there were 120 films - and with ten 'Ten Best' and ten Honorable Mentions, it means that 100 films received nothing. There were a lot of good films in that 100 too —lots of prize winners from local club contests. "In our contest, and I am sure at Wisconsin too, you are really in with some mighty stiff competition, and it is no reason for sorrow when you do not come up among the top 20. A local club is one thing, an international competetion is something else! Good luck this year."

While making movies and entering them into competition, writing letters to secure films for the festival, I competed in narrative reading at the WSU-Eau Claire Intercollegiate Speech Meet held February 17-19. Some 24 colleges and universities participated in the event. As before, Miss Thompson coached our contestants and this time I chose to read my audience grabbing *Grover Dill and the Tasmania Devil*. The first place award in interpretive reading was won by the University of South Dakota and third place went to Eau Claire. My Grover Dill effort was awarded second place.

WSU-Stevens Point speech students under Miss Thompson's direction presented the third Reading Hour of the year at 8:00 p.m. Monday, March 21, in the Frank Lloyd Wright Lounge of the University Center. I was master of ceremonies for the individual readings and for presentations in Chamber Theatre, that is, abridged acting with no scenery. Characters could stand or sit with or without scripts in hand, sort of like a cast's polished read-through of a play or TV show, and bring to life their characters via vocal gymnastics, facial expression and limited stage movement; characters were allowed to walk on, around and off the staging area.

I had directed a Chamber Theatre performance of what was originally a radio play, *The Czarnina Kid* by Mad Man Michaels, a Milwaukee DJ who first broadcast it in 1954 and which was made available later on vinyl recording, 78s and 45s. Milwaukee's ethnic makeup then was mainly German, Italian and Polish. *The Czarnina Kid* was a Polish version of "Dragnet". The narrator, Koshuba Michaels, was based upon the stentorian delivery of TV's Detective Joe Friday played by Jack Webb. As an example of how Polish was dropped into the script, Koshuba Michaels says, "There I was at Kuzmatka's browsing through the latest issue of *Nolvenie Polski* when in came Stanley Kolichkowski and Casmir Jengilefski. As they approached they shouted 'Dzien dobry' (Polish for 'Good morning'

and pronounced Gene Dobray). I looked and said, '<u>Dziękuję'</u> (Polish for "Thank you" and pronounced Gene Kooya). And they answered, 'Gene Autry!' (He was a real singing cowboy star popular for his movies and TV show in the 1930s-50s.). There we were, three Polish cowboys."

I chose this obscure piece because I knew it would go over with a Stevens Point audience. The town was, historically, part of the first settlement of Polish immigrants and I felt comfortable they'd understand and laugh at the Polish jokes. <u>Czarnina</u> (pron char-nee-nah), you may want to know, was a soup made of duck's blood, fruit and potato noodles or in Polish <u>kluski</u>, (pron <u>kloo</u>-ski) and the soup had everything to do with the play including its title. As Koshuba Michaels says, "It was Friday, Septober 13<sup>th</sup>. I was following up a complaint from a store that someone was sabotaging his business. The same old story. Some con man trying the protection racket on Mrs. Oligowska's <u>czarnina</u>."

I transcribed the 45rpm record and adapted it to Chamber Theatre starring Paul Bentzen, Jeff Rodman, Mike Seeger, Mary Jane Bergemann, Mike Worman, Ara O'Connel, and Cora Acor. No kidding. Her given name was a letter rearrangement of her surname. Note that none of the actors' surnames ring true as Polish heritage.

In turn, I performed with Bentzen and Worman in the Jeff Rodman directed *The Man with His Heart in the Highlands* by William Saroyan. Seven individual readings included *A Member of the Wedding, A Talk to Young Men, Beer Soup, Candida, Media, John Primm doing Leo Tolstoy's How Much Land Does a Man Need?*, and I read my original *Song of the Younger One*. If memory serves, among audience members who remembered seeing *Dondi* on TV, my story went over like a lead balloon.

The forthcoming Milwaukee Movie Makers 23<sup>rd</sup> Film Festival was publicized in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* with an article headlined *From Meatball to Crucifixion*. Instead of using an existing promotional picture from one of the films, the *Sentinel* photographer preferred to take a photo of my sister Mary, 19, shooting her first film for an evening class project at the Layton School of Art. Mary's assignment was to make effective use of camera shots and angles, camera movement, unusual lighting and subject matter to create a short motion picture of artistic merit. The one-reel concept was called *Smatter of Mind*. About an alien in his spacecraft sending a telepathic message to some outer base or mother ship, he advises that invasion of earth was unnecessary because earth people were already effectively destroying themselves using atomic bombs.



My 14 year old brother Steve, always the reluctant actor but who, regardless, never refused any role asked of him, played the alien. Mary used a stick of theatrical greasepaint to turn Steve's face, neck, arms and hands silver while a can of hairspray had the same effect on his hair. Although the *Sentinel* snap, fare use picture left, shows Steve in the foreground, Mary holding the Sungun and me behind the camera, in actuality Mary manipulated the camera and I held the Sungun. For most shots, the camera wasn't mounted on a tripod. Mary held the camera in her hands and used it like a paintbrush, slowly panning up or down or horizontally or turning it upside down before pausing to admire glimmering, silvery skin while telling the story of a possible invasion of Earth from outer space. Steve's costume was the same Roman tunic Jack Roper wore when he played Tarcisius two years earlier.

On screen the set appeared to suggest a spaceship's control console. All Mary used was a TV dinner table turned upside down, its shiny metal legs sticking up like so many antennae. A

globe of the earth, like a 3D map, served as the alien's reference. An everyday indoor TV antenna with its futuristic disc shape was used as a communication device. Lighting was from below or side-

on making the background dim and dark. No special backdrop was required to block out ordinary living room walls and furniture.

Smatter of Mind started with a title sequence influenced by Saul Bass, the celebrated commercial artist with the contemporary title of graphic designer, who established his reputation with the now iconic poster and title sequence for Otto Preminger's The Man with the Golden Arm (1954) starring Frank Sinatra, with cut-out pieces of black shapes resembling a dismembered body for the poster and titles for Preminger's Anatomy of a Murder (19590 starring Jimmy Stewart, and the splitting, jittery lettering of the titles for Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960). For Smatter of Mind a bare hand rips black paper to reveal a silver-grey background with futuristic lettering. The concept was borrowed from Bass' tearing strips of black paper by hand to reveal names in the title sequence for the Otto Preminger-directed Bunny Lake Is Missing (1966). The Saul Bass influence is also used for the end title; the same tearing of black paper and the alien, for emphasis, underlines END with his silver finger. Indicating it is the end of the picture, might it also precociously suggest the impending end of all mankind?

The alien is revealed via an out of focus Close-up. Mary pulls or tracks back slowly to show an Extreme Close Up of an unblinking eye lodged in the socket of a silver-skinned face. It cuts to a Low Angle of the alien's face and the camera tracks to study the entire head. The camera suddenly spins screen left and moves somewhat chaotically while the light is moved in a circular pattern which distorts shadow changing their length, breadth, shape. The alien holds his hands over his ears. Massive explosions are heard in the soundtrack. Once sound subsides, the alien recovers composure and takes the speaker into his hand. He opens his mouth and a voice over states that no battleship is required. Invasion of Earth can be cancelled because man's use of combat artillery and atomic bombs is already doing the job of eliminating mankind.

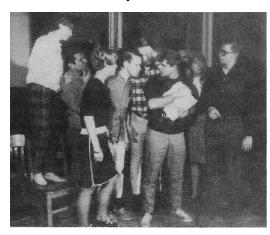
From Meatball to Crucifixion announced that for the April 16 festival I had secured four national prize-winners and one film from Canada. John Primm was delighted when I asked him for *The Marble*. Luther Guy Wright, a teenager whom I'd met in Washington D.C., sent his impressively animated Battle for the Sky, the story of the building of a space station. Reel Meal came from Alvin J. Wolff in New York. Also animated, it was about the life of a meatball and was set to the tune of "On Top of Old Smokey." From Maxine Plowman in Long Beach, California was Under Sheltering Skies, a 1964 PSA Ten Best film showing how poachers and civilization reduced numbers of African animals. Canadian John P. Fitzgerald sent The Day of the Beginning, a legend of the creation of the world according to the Haida Indians. My MMM first-placed Crucifixion finished the program's first half whilst Marge Pearson's 2<sup>nd</sup> placed comedy The Perfect Host concluded the show. \$1.00 for a ticket, introductions by Rolf Schüenzel, the audience went home with a smile on its collective face.

In the week following the film festival several of us travelled with Miss Thompson to Wisconsin State University at Superior for competition in Oral and Dramatic Interpretation. Paul Bentzen surprised everyone when he took out First Place in Dramatic Interpretation with a scene from *Hamlet*. Miss Thompson had said to Paul, "You can't lose with Shakespeare," so Paul gave it a try and bingo! Few would have then put together Bentzen and Shakespeare and come up with a complementary pair. The always entertaining, some might say annoyingly unserious and comedian Paul got stuck into what he knew would work and which Miss Thompson knew worked in his favor. He chose the gravedigger's scene wherein he addresses a skull, "Alas, poor Yorrick. I knew him Horatio," Paul portrayed both the first gravedigger and Hamlet and he played the scene to elicit a smile, a bit of a giggle, and in doing so found a successful and happy marriage between his interpretation and Shakespeare's verse. His prize for winning was a book of plays by George Bernard Shaw. We in the Oral Interpretation Division found little favor amongst our adjudicators. John Primm was awarded a fourth place, Cindy Parkovich a fifth, and I was unplaced further down with a paltry sixth.

Why I persisted with reading and interpreting my own writing of juvenile-speak in *Song of the Younger One*, I don't know. It may have been due to a firm belief that I had something of literary merit in my hands, but in reality may have been a simple case of too much ego and no one game

enough, even our teacher and coach Miss Thompson, willing to bruise my ego and tell me in all honesty the piece was beneath my ability. On the other hand, perhaps Miss Thompson genuinely thought I could pull it off, take on the full character of a six year-old and, in turn, charm the pants off the judges. It hadn't worked before. Why did Miss Thompson of I think it could happen in Superior? This was university, after all, and not some recitation by a wide-eyed kiddie on "Romper Room". My visual image wouldn't have helped in the convincing stakes because required dress for male participants was a suit! Whoever saw a six-year old waif wearing a suit?

According to an item in *The New Pointer* April 21<sup>st</sup> Joyce Wolter, John Butterbrodt, John Primm and I won lead roles in a controversial Italian drama, Luigi Pirandello's *Right You Are! If You Think You Are!* Drama professor William D minus Dawson directed and scheduled the play for performance May 4-7. Unlike the vacuous directorial style of Boom Boom Kramer, I found Dawson's direction intimidating. He knew what he wanted and he bluntly demanded it of his performers. When Mr. Dawson set a date for knowing one's lines, it was imperative to show up for rehearsal with those lines ingrained. Dare carry the script on stage and all hell was released in the form of belittling castigation and his stridently-delivered huff and puff humiliation. A lapse of memory was quickly followed by a sharply delivered prompt. Dawson had acted like a caring mentor toward me in my sophomore year, but now as a junior, he was a martinet. Dawson had his expectations and, as a member of his cast and an established member of College Theatre, I was required to fulfill his expectations without question or excuse. Currently under Mr. Dawson's classroom tutelage, the course conveniently concentrating



on Theatre of the Absurd, any thought of quitting was never an option. Mr. Dawson's direct, no-fooling-around, quasi-military approach always brought out the best from each actor, myself included, and in order to find what our best was, we needed to dig deep inside ourselves.

Pictured left, in a publicity photo shot for *The New Pointer* by Dann Perkins, are the cast members, left to right, of *Right You Are!* If You Think You Are!: in back Linda Oberman, John Butterbrodt, in front Carol Sadowski, Doug Wisby, Steve Reese, Me holding script or possibly the notes I make during the play to unravel a mystery, John Primm, Dora Gorski, and Paul Bentzen.

Pirandello was considered to be a forerunner of the Theater of the Absurd, absurd meaning out of harmony with reason. Theater of the Absurd was written by a number of primarily European playwrights in the late 1950s. The term Theater of the Absurd was coined by critic Martin Esslin when he made it the title of his book on the subject in 1961. Esslin saw these playwrights as giving artistic meaning to Albert Camus's philosophy that life is inherently without meaning. It was a theater of anxiety and despair. The absurdist shows a tyranny of matter over spirit, a degradation of traditional values, a confusion of ends and means.

I remember having to read absurdist authors Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, and their contemporary Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosophical spokesman for Existentialism in Paris. Many of the Absurdists had a complicated relationship with him mainly due his support for Communism. I had a non-existent relationship with all of them. Their philosophies of life were too far removed from what I was experiencing in life. Maybe it was my youth, my naïveté, my inexperience in life which made me see things far more optimistically. I was happy, had my whole life to look forward to and hadn't experienced things which turned my head toward pessimism, skepticism, a feeling like I was living a life without meaning, and I certainly was no promoter of Communism. I disagreed with almost everything these authors espoused. Their philosophies of life were full of so much unhappy hooey that I rejected the grumpy, disconsolate Existentialist and Absurdists "poor me" wallow in the muddiness of self-pity.

Drama class assignments meant I read some of the plays, performed in some selected scenes to demonstrate my understanding of the style, even watched whole play performances. I did, however, appreciate the works of some of the Absurdists. Edward Albee, for example, wrote *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* I studied it by listening to a 1963 boxed recording of four LPs, a Broadway performance with Uta Hagen and Arthur Hill in the leads of Martha and George. It was riveting stuff, the dialogue electric, shocking with its blue words infrequently heard on stage, and especially not on television. The play with such adult themes had never been recorded for the general public before and it was never re-released in other formats.

Seeing the 1966 Elizabeth Taylor/Richard Burton/Sandy Denis/George Peppard film version left a huge impression on me. I also recall enjoyment and laughter with Albee's one-act plays *The Sandbox*, also turned into a film starring Barbra Streisand, and *The Zoo Story*. I got a kick out of performing scenes in class from Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* and *The Chairs*, Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, and Jean Genet's *The Maids*. Something about those plays made me think of Charlie Chaplin and how, with his character of the Little Tramp, he, like the Absurdists, effectively melded tragedy with comedy.

Jeff Rodman starred in a College Theatre production of Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author and Ionesco's Rhinoceros. But I baulked at appreciation for Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot. Not only did the play and the characters test my patience, I was just plain bored. Waiting for Godot epitomized Beckett's statement, "The boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being." I think Beckett's intention was to afflict his play's characters with his own boredom with life and his own suffering of being, rather than onto me sitting in his audience yawning, fidgeting, checking my wristwatch, and impatient to vacate the auditorium. I did, in fact, practice some manners and waited until the intermission to walk out. I found out from those who stayed behind that, frustratingly and a spoiler alert, Godot never showed up!

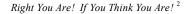
In *Right You Are!* If You Think You Are! Pirandello sees in man's spasmodic behavior an attempt to understand and find meaning in life as he gropes blindly for the truth. The major difference between the absurdist playwrights and Pirandello is that Pirandello does have hope for man; he has not despaired as have the Absurdists. The passionate characters of a Sicilian village are used by the Nobel prize-winning playwright to examine what is real and what is illusion in life. The husband claims his present wife to be his second wife. He maintains his first wife is dead. His mother-in-law proclaims that her daughter is his first wife and is very much alive! What is truth, after all?

Joyce Wolter portrayed the mother-in-law who insisted that her daughter, played by Lani Wallin, was alive and was the wife of her son-in-law, played by John Butterbrodt, in Pirandello's contest between illusion and reality. My role was that of Mayor Agazzi who tried to unravel the mystery. John Primm was Lamberto Laudisi, a spokesman for the playwright. Paul Bentzen was in a supporting role as the village's Commissioner Centuri for which he won his second College Theatre's Best Supporting Actor award. Dave Jurgella worked backstage as an assistant carpenter building the set and, more prominently, was in charge of costumes.

Right You Are! If You Think You Are! must have been a long play because there were two 10 minute intermissions, but unlike Albee, Ionesco and Pinter, Pirandello made no impression and the time I spent working on the play educes a giant blank. I believe my brain was too undeveloped to appreciate, much less comprehend such work. Bentzen and Primm remembered one night when there was a big revelation and John spoke the play's final line, "Right sure if you think you are." As dramatic punctuation, the whole cast froze in position. Keeping the audience aghast, the curtains were supposed to slowly close. The curtain puller was Etim Ukpo from Nigeria, a friend of Jacob Umen from Crucifixion and Black Lady. Etim had never learned how to cuss properly in English. He said things like, "Shit you man" or "You are a damn shit man." Anyway, when the cast hit the freeze all that was heard from the curtain was a "ching, ching" sound. The curtains had jammed. There followed in Nigerian a tirade of obscenities from Etim, all fully audible on stage. He may have even

thrown in one of his broken English cuss phrases for good measure. Everyone cracked up. John kind of threw up his arms in a "What the hell" gesture and everyone simply walked off stage.

Paul recollected that Dr. T. K. Chang in the Geography Department did all the College Theatre production shots. His daughter Jane was in College Theatre. When Dr. Chang set up a shot he would always say, "Focus." However, with his accent the pronunciation sounded like a two word expletive concerning a self-inflicted action not conveniently nor collectively achievable. Always good for a laugh, we'd fight back the urge and keep a straight face for the picture.





John Primm, Steve Reese, Carol Sadowski, Lani Wallen, Dora Gorski, Barbara Nolan, Linda Oberman, Doug Wisby, Me, John Butterbrodt

Following my unremarkable time spent on the play, I have a strong memory of all the film and classroom acting activities I engaged in during May, especially the second commercial Paul and I shot for the Citizens National Bank. The Christmas ad had struck a good chord with the public; it brought the bank some business as TV watchers set up savings accounts for Christmas 1967. BMS was requested to come up with another entertaining commercial to promote opening a savings account.

Given the old-fashioned idea that people didn't trust banks and saved their money in a mattress, we came up with a skit wherein Paul opened his first savings account by delivering his dusty, moneystuffed mattress to the bank teller. The incentive was supposed to be the interest paid. Shooting on a fine spring day on Main Street, few heads turned, some fingers were pointed, and no jaws dropped as Paul provided unexpected entertainment running ungainly along the sidewalk, dodging pedestrians and weaving around parking meters while carrying a mattress on his back. To the public of Stevens Point, it was just Paul Bentzen again being the village idiot. Makes me wonder if anyone eyeing Paul's shenanigans ever looked to see if I was there with the camera? Paul wore a Sherlock Holmes deerstalker and held a meerschaum pipe between his teeth. Dashing into the bank, he dumps the mattress onto the counter raising a big cloud of dust. We used talcum powder on the counter and shook some onto the mattress before making the shot. Excitedly, Paul gestures to the female teller that he wants to open a safe savings account. The ad concluded with a delighted Paul in Close-up smiling broadly and opening to admire his new account booklet.

The Citizens National Bank must have dickered over price with Dick Toser, possibly had him over a barrel for whatever reason I wasn't aware because, instead of the previously agreed \$75, we were paid \$50. Look, it was still big money and we didn't complain. Stevens Point, Wisconsin, wasn't, after all, a hub for TV commercial or box office film production. I banked \$30 for myself and paid Paul \$20 for his exercise.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Photo by Dr. T. K. Chang

I had just turned 20 and without celebration the day before the formally rededicated \$725,000 addition of the University Center. There was an Art Display in the Frank Lloyd Wright Lounge. The Faculty Jazz Band played in the La Follette Lounge. Paul Bentzen participated in a jug band in the Gridiron Snack Bar. At the invitation of the University Center Board, during Open House I presented a program of my best films over two afternoon sessions in the Wisconsin Room. The timetable allowed my sharing the facility with Chamber Theatre and the Rededication Ceremony. My show received excellent comments.

Kept busy in May with my own interests, John Primm was shooting an 8mm Civil War story in the Stevens Point area with members of The Players. At the time I thought he was just trying to copy what I'd accomplished with *Jamie*, especially since I hadn't been invited to take part. It would have been David Jurgella who encouraged John to shoot a picture set in the Civil War so that he could gain costume and military advisory experience, as well as take a whack at acting in a meaty role as an



unhinged Union soldier who rapes a terrified woman when chattels are coopted for the good of the war. John worked with lip synchronization to produce his second talking picture after *The Marble*. Fred Schneck, who in *Jamie* was the soldier in the field hospital having his leg amputated, composed a song for the film. Called *And Blossoms Fell*, it became the title for John's film.

Pictured Left: On the set of John Primm's *And Blossoms Fell*<sup>3</sup>, Cast from left to right: Dave Jurgella, Gary Coutrue, Steve Reese Paul Bentzen, John Butterbrodt

May  $11^{th}$ , amongst the throes of deadlines for semester assignments, several Speech students and I drove to Channel 9 in Wausau to tape a Chamber Theatre production I directed of "A Mad Tea Party" from *Alice in Wonderland*. One take was a successful taping and, just for the heck of it, I put in a plug for *Jamie* to go to air. "A Mad Tea Party" was aired the following morning. You'd think I'd have used my television-directed Chamber Theatre for Miss Thompson's final exam. As successful as it was, I chose instead to direct a cutting and adaptation from the satiric World War II novel *Catch 22*. Yosarian reigned the day in the sketch about his being naked while others are dressed for inspection. I earned an  $\underline{A}$ . Miss Thompson beamed her infectious smile and informed me my final grade for the entire semester was also an  $\underline{A}$ .

I finished Creative Writing with an <u>A</u> as well. My final story idea was suggested by Father Finucan at St. Joseph's. Jim, an altar boy, is caught in a conflict between his parents and the parish priest, Father Lawrence. The priest welcomes a Negro family into the congregation and the white, right pious people don't like it, loudly complain, walk out of church, and take up arms against their priest. The story was based on events that really happened in Alabama. Titled in Latin <u>Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei</u> after the first prayer spoken by the priest in the Tridentine Mass at the foot of the altar, it translates to "I will go unto (in to) the Altar of God." Buoyed by the high mark, I thought about adapting my story into a 16mm black & white silent film in the fall.

John and I put on a program of our best films one late May evening for the nuns at St. Stephen's. They treated us to cake and Coca Cola after we turned down their offer of beer. Sister Paul Vincent turned our entertainment into my recruitment. She offered me a job in the fall teaching music to 7<sup>th</sup> grade boys. I told her I didn't read music that well, but she came back saying I'd use a pitch pipe. Her reason for wanting me on staff part time, and paying me, was that I'd already demonstrated to her

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> John Primm Photograph

that I knew how to handle reckless, disinterested boys and motivate them into performing like a chorus of dirty-faced, knee-bandaged angels. I guess the summer at Camp Richards paid a dividend. I had experience managing boys and I knew how to sing, teach and lead contemporary church music.

The following afternoon I had no class, no final exam scheduled. I trotted my projector to Maria High School. The Drama Club, called the Footlight Christophers, individuals known as Genisians, had enjoyed *Invitation for Dinner* and *For He Shall Conquer* for entertainment at their last meeting of the school year. Now, as the school year wound down, nuns invited me to teach about visual symbolism and so I screened *Futility, Crucifixion*, and *i can't understand*. I devised a lesson sheet with questions. For example, on *Crucifixion* I asked: What do the adults dressed in black represent? Who was the adult wearing the white shirt and tie and what does he represent? Nice thing about working with symbolism, not everything is set in stone, nothing has to be an absolute; it all has to do with looking at something in context. Although I enjoyed being with so many girls in the classroom, I think the whole idea of my presenting a lesson was a means for Sister Mary Smarty-pants to take an hour off and relax as the clock ticked closer to summer vacation.

A conflict of events meant schmoozing ahead of May 27<sup>th</sup> with Mr. Kramer so that Paul and I could go to Wausau and tape a television program. Bentzen and I had our final exam in Directing scheduled the same Friday Channel 9 wanted us. Theatre in his blood, Mr. Kramer knew what good publicity might do for a budding career. He allowed us to take our Directing final during his Speech 5 class and use his students as an audience. For televising on Memorial Day, Paul and I were interviewed in a half hour show about making *Jamie* and then the film was shown. I really wanted Corky to appear on the show with us, talk about his experience in the lead role, but he was unable to sweet-talk the brothers at Pacelli into giving him the day off.

The school year ended with a crescendo. In the fragile spaces squeezed in-between TV ad-making, television appearances, programs, last minute dives at completing assignments to meet deadlines, and class final exams, on my father's recommendation and on my own bat, I'd walked into not one, but two summer jobs. Activities during the 1966 school year with a paycheck on the end, I really learned how much I enjoyed earning money. A full-time job already guaranteed with the city of West Allis starting the first week in June, I telephoned my summer employment lifeline in the Recreation Department, Mr. Kojis, and secured a part-time evening job assisting a playground supervisor. Lane Elementary School and playground was a 15 minute bike ride from the family home. I headed home for the summer wondering what to expect from two jobs, one at the playground and the second 8 hours a day, five days a week job which would transform me into the strongest and fittest I'd probably ever be in my life.

## Chapter 44: It Was the Best of Summers. It Was the Worst...

Slipping my newly numbered employee's card into the time clock, the machine went ka-chunk ping and punched in my time, 6:57 a.m. Actual starting time was in three minutes. A foreman, possibly in his late 30s, clipboard in his meaty hand and standing alongside a white pick-up truck, ordered me to truck 58. "You must remember your truck number. It's your truck. After punching your card, report to your truck every morning. Your truck driver is Clarence. He is your boss. Do what Clarence tells you to do. When you finish, punch your time card and put it in a slot on the right-hand side. Now get going." The foreman liked to over-emphasize the word "truck", perhaps assuming we workers were undereducated, maybe a sandwich short of a picnic. Finish time was around 3:00 p.m.

Two other guys, one about my age, another in his mid-20s, were the experienced crew. We nudged together on the passenger side of the bench seat of truck 58, its motor in idle a regular chufa chuga chufa chuga. "Climb on up," the guy my age said. I did and squashed myself in the small space between the door and his skinny body. "I'm Terry," he almost inaudibly mumbled, "and this is John." No reaction from the sullen, unshaven, half-awake man in a blue sleeveless tank top. "And that's Clarence." Again, no reaction, not even a glance in my direction. Wearing thick-lensed glasses, adhesive-tape on the left end piece covering the screw and hinge to the black rims, Clarence might have been in his late 50s. Shifting into gear with a mechanical creak and hiss, he lifted his foot from the clutch and, accelerating slowly, asked, "You got gloves?" "Yeah," I said, showing the spanking clean new gloves. "What's in the bag?" "My lunch," I answered. Clarence's lips moved into a hideously tight know-it-all grin. "Just make sure you got gloves every day," Clarence said. "You're getting paid \$2.80 an hour and all you can eat!"

Still grey, with a hint of the orange summer sun leaking through the layer of cloud, here I was bouncing on a squeaky seat in time with the bumps and undulations of Greenfield Avenue's muchtravelled pavement and riding to a collection route with a crew of done-it-all-before garbage-industry personnel. I, too, was now officially a cog in the City of West Allis' wave of gentrification and pseudo-professionalism that swept over most of occupational America by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The long-used term "garbage man" had a rough-and-ready utility that had stood in good stead, but now "sanitation engineer" became its overeducated and prospective replacement, a more acceptable euphemism which has, surprisingly, shown more staying power in the face of ridicule than anyone might have expected. Sanitation engineers, incidentally, were just as happy with being called "can tossers".

The route started at West Allis Memorial Hospital. Large open-lidded bins overflowed with clear plastic bags filled with discarded gauzes, bandages, uneaten meals, soiled paper products, and used syringes. The bins could be unhinged at the front and a door swung open, some packed contents spilling out. "Pick them bags carefully," Clarence ordered. "Don't stick yourself." We grabbed a bag by its knot, one in each gloved hand and held it away from our bodies, walked them carefully to the truck and tossed them individually into the hopper. The procedure was repeated many times. The refuse had the typical hospital smell, unless it was a bag of slicings and dicings from the kitchen or the operating theater. Any question I may have ever had about what happened to the bits cut off or out of someone was now answered. The odor was similar to that of an animal run over on the road and left lying in the sun too long. Needles poked through plastic and some reddish or yellowed liquid dripped out. It wasn't quite a retch reaction, but I know I went silent and swallowed my own saliva

several times. In fact, except for Clarence's instruction about needles, no one said anything. Clarence then pressed a button on his dashboard. An electrical lift raised the hopper. A hydraulic paddle or blade crushed the medical waste compacting and pushing it into the back holding area of the truck. It was a sweep and slide to clear and compact waste in anticipation of our next load.

Unlike today, people weren't required to put their garbage cans out onto the verge. We garbage men walked into peoples' yards to collect cans, most a regular size silver-colored metal with covers. Standard practice was for one garbage man to take off the cover, pick up the can, carry it to the truck, and dump the contents into the hopper. Weight determined whether a can needed a two-handed carry or a hoist onto a shoulder. Some people used 45 gallon drums in addition to their garbage cans. These were often filled with oil cans, rusted pieces of metal, inner tubes, organic matter like lawn clippings, shrubbery trimmings, fallen apples, pears, or plums. Two, sometimes all three of us worked together to lift and empty a drum. Heaving fallen fruit was always back-breaking. Clarence would call out from behind the wheel, "Bend your knees. Bend your knees when you lift."

The way people filled their cans could often tell you a lot about the owners. A row of three tidily-arranged cans on a raised wooden tier, covers pressed tightly down, said the people gave a care about health. Contents were always bagged in plastic, tops knotted securely. Aromas were minimal. There was one apartment block where garbage cans were always neat and clean. As I approached the row of cans, Terry cautioned while pointing to the left, "Don't touch the two on the end. Clarence collects those." Sure enough, a wheeze from the truck's brakes and Clarence monkey-barred down from the cab, lifted one lid at a time and out of one can grabbed a small bundle of magazines carefully tied with material which looked like a ribbon. Clarence looked at me and said, "Mine. Got it? Find any more and you give 'em to me, hear?" They were girly magazines. Terry added for my knowledge, "A bachelor lives there." I had been made aware that, from now on, Clarence made this collection his and that, after he'd picked what he felt he was entitled to, we still had to lift the cans and dump them into the hopper.

Lots of buzzing flies around the cans was a sure sign of nothing having been placed into bags, or paper bags had soaked through and were broken. Covers askew and we knew there'd be maggots. It was smelly and disgusting. "Aw, Gawd, lookit this," I said the first time I moved a cover aside to reveal crawling contents and an overpowering odor of decomposing peelings, forgotten-about mush and leftovers from the back of the fridge, all turning into a greenish- brown fluid. "Don't let it get to you," Terry advised, "just think of it as galloping rice." It got to a point where discovering maggots was turned into a game. "Galloping rice incoming," we'd call out when hoisting a can into the hopper.

First day when lunchtime rolled around, Clarence parked in the shade near a corner store where he and John bought a couple of sandwiches, sweet rolls, and sodas. Like me, Terry was a brown bagger and we lowered our rear ends onto the grass at the curb. I sat cross-legged, motionless, holding my bag in my hands. Terry hungrily unwrapped wax paper using it like a napkin; he chomped into his thickly-layered Wonder bread baloney and ketchup sandwich. His mouth full, he looked at me and burbled, "You gonna eat or not." I looked up at our truck, saw the flies buzzing around the hopper, observed the burnt umber juice dripping down its sides, caught a waft of dead meat and quietly answered, "I don't think so." I stood up, tossed my bag into the hopper, and walked to the store to buy a root beer I hoped would stay in my stomach.

Afternoons were hot and sweaty in the alleys. Often made of concrete with a drain down the middle, the sun reflected summer warmth, the only shade was cast by garages either side of the alleyway. I remember seeing in one garage, its wooden doors swung open, people with arms raised and swaying about, or lying on the dirt floor rocking side to side chanting gibberish. "G'way, son," one of the ecstatic wide-eyed revelers said, "We're praying." And so, I thought, these must be the Holy Rollers Uncle Paul kidded about when fuelled by shots and beers. Set alongside, yet outside backyard entrances were the ash boxes, four concrete walls and a concrete floor in the shape of a square. They'd have a heavy metal or vulcanized rubber lid on top and a metal or wooden swing away double

door at the bottom of the wall just left or right of the entrance. People heating a home with a coal furnace in their basement shoveled out spent fuel into wheelbarrows or buckets and toted them to their ash boxes where it was dumped unceremoniously. Our job was to grab flat-edged coal shovels off the truck and clean the box. One or two of us would do a box on the left-hand side of the alley; the third shoveled the box on the right. Clarence shifted into idle in exactly the right spot to allow each of our shovels full of ash and cans and hard junk to make it into the hopper without spillage. Once in a while someone else's ash box trash became our little piece of treasure, like the day John found a dragonfly brooch with shiny stones and pocketed it. Never did find out if it was worth something or just dime store junk jewellery.

Mom established a pattern for when I arrived home after work. She told me how much I smelled, made a gagging sound while holding her nose, and made me undress to my Fruit of the Looms inside the side door entrance. Then she made me carry my stinky clothes into the basement where I'd dump them into the washing machine. Mom would follow me down the stairs, still holding her nose with fingers poised like a clothes peg, pour in the detergent and order me to get myself into the shower NOW. She said I had to smell like a rose, not like rancid milk and whiffy feet, before I could sit at the table for supper. I think that first day collecting garbage had not only put me off my lunch, by the time I'd taken a warm shower, I felt too tired to eat chop suey and boiled rice. All I saw on my plate was steaming garbage and galloping rice.

As I was only 20, I recovered quickly from humping garbage cans all day. Energy returned like a new Eveready had been shoved into me. I rode my bike to the playground and met Carolyn, about the same age as me and in charge of the evening activities. She wasn't at all overbearing, didn't throw her weight around to show me who was the boss. Carolyn was absolutely charming and glad her underling was a young man who could handle some of the more rambunctious kids. She said one of my duties was to organize a softball team and coach it for inter-playground competition. Children filled with energy after supper kept us busy with requests for balls and racquets and disputes over who just won what until late sunset and 9:00 p.m. closing time.

Every weekday morning I'd roll out of bed by 6:15, dress in freshly-laundered jeans and T-shirt and catch a ride with Terry to the garbage depot. I'd punch my time card, jump into the cab of truck 58 after John and Terry and say, "Morning, Clarence." My greeting was more often than not met with a noncommittal, "Hmmphh..." Every day was a set area of the route. Every day was the same can carrying and dumping, two-man carry of 45 gallon drums full of rotting apples with fruit flies annoying every facial orifice. Every day was another game of, "Galloping rice incoming." Some of the really awful cans were set at well-kept, fenced homes. Surprises inside included loose, unbagged dog turds the size of Polish sausages and stinking like the cur had been fed on a mess of boiled eggs, pork n' beans, and straight-out-the-jar sauerkraut. Tossing down a lid, I grabbed the side of the can and my hand slid against the inside wall. "Aw, geeezus balls," I complained, "the can's fulla dog crap and my glove's fullovit." Clarence looked down from the window of the cab and smiled, "You don' hafta take it. Here." He handed me a pencil and a sheet of paper. "Write 'em a note saying we don't collect poop unless it's bagged. Leave it in the lid handle." Then he added, "Use their hose to wash your glove. You ain't gettin' up here smellin' like dog shit." Until this experience, I hadn't realized we had a right of refusal.

By the second day, so well had I adjusted to the assault on my senses, eyesight and especially smell had become immunized. Maggots were part of the garbage that happened to move. Bluebottle flies became our constant hovering and dive-bombing nose and ear pets and, sucking air through our mouths, we tried to avoid inhaling one. The slime of feculence seemed to become as pleasant as the fragrance of freshly mown lawn or sweetly spiced sugar babies. So, unconcerned with the putrescence when it was lunchtime, I ate my meatloaf sandwich at the back of the truck perched on the edge of the hopper. I bought a Paddle Pop at the corner store. Rapidly melting into goop in the midday sun, I leaned against the hopper and lapped the chocolate and ice cream from the stick like a cat in overly zealous grooming mode.

I organized two softball teams at Lane playground, one of under 12 boys and girls we called Teenie Weenies, and 12 to 15 year old boys and girls called Badgers after the Wisconsin state animal. That I coached the teams in the evening didn't always coincide with scheduled games. An afternoon game was coached by someone else on the playground payroll because I was out collecting garbage. It was one of those jobs where I was known by the children, but whom I never really got to know. I was just Mr. Larry who showed up at 6 and handed out equipment. To the ones 15 or so, I was Larry and occasionally played four square or badminton with them.

Useful was my university Phy. Ed. course called Recreational Games; I taught the pre-teen and teens a game of skill called Elephant Race. On grass, two "elephants" crawled side by side on their hands and knees. With one foot on the back of each "elephant" stood a "mahout" and pictured right, participants unidentified. The skill was for the rider to stand astride the crawling elephants while traversing a set racecourse. Speed didn't count in the rules. Just making it to the finish line whilst

looking grand in one's poise without falling off was challenge enough. Reward was the rider feeling good about keeping balance throughout the course, and the elephants taking pride in not losing their mahout.

Sometimes I organized the younger kids into games of duck duck goose, hot potato, and musical chairs. I considered elephant racing too dangerous for the little ones. If anything, the most memorable experience was leading Lane's youngsters in the West Allis 4<sup>th</sup> of July morning parade celebrating America's Independence. Playground groups didn't have to do anything special like dress up in patriotic costumes or decorate wagons or bikes in red, white and blue crepe paper. They walked in a somewhat orderly fashion behind one kid bearing the American flag.



Pictured left: Slow shutter on the Lane Playground Group with me leading them in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade



July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> I had a recurring dream. It was unsettling and made no sense. As if watching a movie, I saw myself standing with my back to the imaginary camera. In the distance I saw Jimmy Corcoran. He smiled, waved to me, turned and walked away. Instantly he was consumed in an explosive fire. Though I tried to get to him, I was held back. By whom, I don't know, but their grasp on my shoulders and arms was tight and I couldn't move. I'd wake and wonder what the heck that was all about; what just happened.

Monday afternoon, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I took a long distance call from Mr. Ray Corcoran, Jim's

Dad. Thinking he was only calling to wish me a happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I excitedly asked what Corky was doing for the holiday. Mr. Corcoran precluded any supposition and got straight to the point. He told me in a most grave manner that Jim had been killed that morning working on a farm in Plainfield. He said Jim was driving a tractor pulling irrigation equipment when a boom touched a 7,200 volt electrical line. He kept to a brief script, told the barest fact, and spoke in monotone, as if he'd been delivering the bad news too many times already. Mr. Corcoran concluded saying he hoped I would come to Stevens Point Thursday for the 10:00 o'clock funeral.

My dream suddenly made sense. And it wouldn't go away.

Corky was electrocuted as he attempted to unbolt a trailer which was attached to a tractor he was driving. The accident occurred in a cornfield of the Star Farms, a produce farm corporation located two and a half miles northwest of Plainfield. Corky was driving a tractor which was pulling a trailer on which boom pipe irrigation equipment was mounted. A pipe fell off the boom rack on the trailer and Steve Bartsch, 14, of Plainfield, who was riding on the trailer with the boom equipment jumped off to pick up the pipe. About the same time, the jutting boom struck an electrical power line, and Corky, who noticed sparks flying from the power line, yelled at Bartsch to stay away, and Corky jumped off the tractor. The tires on the tractor burst into flames and started burning. The tractor was new and Corky had been instructed to take good care of it. Corky went back and attempted to disconnect the trailer from the tractor. As he reached to unbolt the two, he was electrocuted by 7,200 volts of electricity shooting from the boom still touching the power line.

Daniel Thompson, 15, of Stevens Point, who was driving another tractor in front of Corky's, ran back in an effort to free Corky, but was stopped short by ground jolts of electricity he felt going through his legs. He was barefoot at the time. Steve and Daniel went for help and officials from the electric company serving the area were called to disconnect the power lines before sheriff's authorities were able to reach Corky. Several homes on Akron Avenue, about a mile west of Highway 51, were without power for a time, when the boom touching the power line blew a transformer.

My hand trembled as I inserted a finger into hole after hole in the dial for John Primm's home number in Villa Park, Illinois. He was shocked. We made an arrangement whereby he'd drive to West Allis Wednesday, stay the night and we'd leave very early to get to Stevens Point. Sister Paul Vincent from St. Stephen's was in Milwaukee. I called and told her the sad news, adding that John and I would pick her up early Thursday morning.

We arrived at the Crosby Funeral Home in Stevens Point about an hour before the service. Corky's younger brother John handed me a holy card, pictured right. In the dull light I saw the closed coffin mounted on a wheeled bier. On it was a framed 8x10 of Corky's 9<sup>th</sup> grade school picture, same as on the holy card. Also mounted in a frame and on display was an 8x10 of Corky as my bugle boy in *Jamie*.

Having no understanding of electrocution and probably sounding a bit too curious, I asked Father

Finucan why we couldn't see Corky lie in state. The priest said that when those 7,200 volts went through Jim, he was dead before his body hit the ground. Because it took so long before the power was turned off, the body was cooked black, like overdone bacon. Administering last rites, Father Finucan said just one part of Jim's body was still recognizable as flesh, the skin over his heart.

The funeral for Jim, for my friend Corky, was big. More than a sad occasion, for his family, all his relatives and friends, it was wrenching. Here was a talented boy I genuinely loved, who would have been a sophomore at Pacelli High School in the fall. He was a member of the glee club, wrestling team, debate team, and on the freshman football squad and track team. He was a homeroom representative in his freshman year and was appointed to represent Pacelli High School on the Stevens Point Youth Center Council for the coming year. He had just returned three days before from a three week debate and dramatics course at Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire. To me, however, Corky was the best actor I'd ever directed in one of my films. He sang in a beautiful tenor voice with me at Masses and weddings. Most Sundays after 9 o'clock Mass, following our singing from the choir loft, I was invited to join with the Corcoran family for



JAMES P. CORCORAN Born February 1, 1951 Died July 4, 1966

O gentlest heart of Jesus, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls, have mercy on the soul of Thy departed servant. Be not severe in Thy judgment but let some drops of Thy Precious blood fall upon the devouring flames, and do Thou O Merciful Saviour, send Thy Angels to conduct Thy departed servant to a place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

LLOYD CROSBY, FUNERAL DIRECTOR

.

B E/ 6078 PRINTED IN ITALY I.

Sunday breakfast or, if after 11:00 a.m. Mass, midday Sunday roast dinner. Together we enjoyed laughing and crying at the silent movies in the Nickelodeon series. In and away from school he never seemed to attract trouble, never caused his parents or his five sisters and two brothers any grief. He was a responsible and caring boy who didn't seem to have any enemies. So young. 15. Jimmy Corcoran hadn't had time to do any grievous wrong before he died. That's why Father Finucan said he was sure I had an angel in heaven to look over me.

I cried during the Mass. I cried at open grave in St. Stephen's Cemetery. Dave Jurgella, who told me later he never even cried at his father's funeral, now couldn't hold back the tears from running down his cheeks. When Father Finucan asked mourners to drop rose petals and a handful of dirt into the grave, my legs grew weak. I was overcome with grief. Knees buckled, unable to stand without assistance, John and Sister Paul Vincent held me up. It was the most painful good-bye.

Pictured right: Grave marker for James Patrick Corcoran, son of Raymond Corcoran (died 1982) and Margaret Monica *Jakusz* Corcoran (died 1981), St. Stephen Cemetery, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

I felt a profound loss. At the same time, Corky having died and the manner in which he was suddenly killed, I learned something about death, how quickly it comes, how painless it can be, how it makes no distinction between having lived a long or a short time, how it doesn't seem to care whether

someone is old or young. More than 55 years after Corky died, I still think of him. Often.

I recently watched a Danish film, the 2011 Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Language Film, *In a Better World*, its Danish title *Hævnen* meaning *Revenge*, by Susanne Bier. Anton is a doctor whose wife has died of cancer. His son, Christian, hasn't stopped grieving over losing his mother. The father speaks with his son and, upon hearing Anton's words, I immediately thought about Jimmy Corcoran. "Sometimes it's like there's a veil between you and death. That veil is pulled away when you lose someone near and dear to



you. And then you see death ever so clearly for a brief instant. And then the veil drops back into place. And then you move on, and things get better."

I did move on, and things did get better. My summer work at the playground and collecting garbage continued. Lifting shovels, cans and drums built up my muscles. The fast pace between pick-ups built stamina. Clarence never required us to run after his truck to keep up, but he never wanted us to dawdle either. Just as the Polish man at Mercy High School taught me to never work fast, Clarence, too, only wanted us to work steady. Sometimes steady put us ahead of schedule and Clarence would allow us to take a break, sit under a tree in the shade and sip a Coke or a root beer. Clarence knowing his schedule and with a sharp acumen to uncannily predict when the foreman would show up to check on us, with urgency in the sound of his voice, he'd shout, "Get up! Get up! Look busy!" The foreman would arrive in his white pick-up, brake abruptly at the end of the alley or on the intersection corner, stick his head out the window and peer in our direction. As long as he saw dedicated movement, he'd grab his clipboard and make a checkmark, apparently, to confirm everything was running to schedule. Never bothering to shout an instruction or exchange a pleasantry, the foreman drove off. Appreciating the chance to rest awhile and catch our breath, we never let Clarence down. On the job, we worked steadily and we kept busy. And when we really needed to, we could look really busy.

Busy, too, was a little known baseball club which applied for a National League franchise in Milwaukee August 12, 1966. Milwaukeeans were going to lose their beloved baseball team, the Milwaukee Braves, and people lamented the fact. The team we knew and loved was busier still with

relocating, and 1966 was their last full season playing in Milwaukee County Stadium. They were moving to Atlanta, Georgia, because new owners sought a larger TV market. As a youngster I'd seen the game's legends play – regarded as the greatest 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman to have played the game, handsome Eddie Matthews, home-run champion Henry (Hank) Aaron, ace pitcher Warren Spahn, catcher Del Crandall, first baseman Joe Adcock, and no hit pitcher Lou Burdette. I wished I had the time to take off one weekday of can tossing for one last visit to the stadium, watch our heroic Milwaukee Braves play, and be able to see the team off with, perhaps, singing the national anthem with the final line ending, "o'er the land of the free, and the home of the Braves." Oh, and that little known team which applied for the franchise? It was successful and quickly won over the loyalties of Milwaukee folk under the new team name of the Milwaukee Brewers.

August 17, the end of a sunny, sweaty, suffocating Wednesday, I punched my timecard and rode home with Terry. All set to comply with the side door pattern mother had set, I removed my shoes. Peeling off my damp, dirty socks, Mom handed me a sealed envelope. "This came in the mail today from PSA. You want to read it now." I looked at the Photographic Society of America return address, turned the envelope over, and stuck a finger in the gap between the flap and the envelope and ripped toward myself. Standing on my suffocatingly smelly bare feet, I took out the one page and, unfolding it, read silently.

Whether some kind of reaction registered on my face, I don't know, but Mom said, "Well, you gonna tell us or not?" So I went back to the beginning and read aloud, "August 15<sup>th</sup>, Nineteen sixty-six." I paused not so much for effect, but to tantalize. "Mr. Lawrence Klobukowski." I paused again. "Seven thirty-one South Hundred and Nineteenth Street." Again I stopped ever so briefly to draw a breath. "Ah, fah cryin' out loud," Mom blurted out, "get on with it." It must have sounded like something interesting was going on because Steve, Luann and Joann meandered from wherever they were and into the kitchen. They didn't say anything and took up space to hear every word.

"It is my very happy privilege to extend the congratulations of the MPD Festival Committee, as well as that of the entire membership of the Motion Picture Division, on the results of our 37<sup>th</sup> annual International Film Festival."

Maybe I shouldn't have pushed my luck with one glaring halt too many because Mom did a rapid overhand delivery of her dish towel, its flicking end grazing me on the shoulder. "C'mon," she said.

I continued reading in an officious voice, "Your film, *Jamie*, has been named in the Ten Best films for this year's Festival."

"Oh, so you won a prize," Mom exclaimed approvingly.

"Not just a prize," I said, and continued reading enthusiastically, "Further honors have been awarded your film as follows... One. The MPD Gold Medal, the highest award." Given it was an international film festival and that my experience had been limited to entering competitions only happening in the United States, I drew a typically American conclusion. "Mom, I won the highest award *in the world*." I hadn't as yet been made aware that winning a film festival's highest award in France, or any other foreign country for that matter, really meant the highest award in that film festival held in France, or another foreign country. I had won the highest American award made available in an American film festival. Four pairs of ears absorbed every syllable. Four sets of eyes fixed on my smiling face, twins' jaws relaxing and forming open mouths, or maybe they simply stopped chewing on noodles, their favorite snack.

"I've also won the MPD Golden Scissors for Best Editing and the MPD Best Scenario Award." As if I was back at Camp Richards telling a story and setting up a punch line, I said, "Listen to what's in the next sentence... 'In view of the record breaking one hundred and eighty-six entries in this year's Festival you may well take pride in the honors accorded your film.' You hear that," I said with a

slight inflection to ensure no one in the kitchen was deaf. "Out of one hundred eighty-six films, mine was the best!"

The letter was written by Mr. Ed Kentera, APSA (Associate, Photographic Society of America), Chairman of the Motion Picture Division, and it also informed that *Jamie* would be screened at its Festival October 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> during the Photographic Society of America's convention. Presentation of awards for many films in the festival would be made during the Motion Picture Division's annual banquet, October 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Sheraton-Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. If I couldn't attend the awards dinner, the awards would be mailed to me after the close of the convention. He concluded by writing, "Again Mr. Klobukowski, congratulations. Seeing your film will be a pleasant experience for me."

I was brought back down to earth when Mom ordered me to strip off my stinky clothes. As I trudged down the stairs to the basement to dump them into the washing machine, all I could think of was Corky. *Jamie* won the biggest prize and I couldn't call him up and tell him.

## Chapter 45: "... a Sincerity Seldom Seen in an Amateur Movie"

we were two

ood editing in battle sequence. Believable - good acting by Jamie - beautifully photographed. Fine camera angles. A cry of protest against all war done with a sincerity seldom seen in an amateur movie. My congratulations to the filmer. A tightly edited, well-directed film."

"What a film! It has everything that makes a film entertaining. Excellent editing. The minor flaws were practically unnoticed."

"An excellent film has impact, story, well-integrated, very good camera handling and technique, finer piece of editing and music. All in all, in my opinion, the best film of them all. Keep up the good work."

"A very fine film. You have a great feel for film – good smooth camera work – your tracking shots were great. Good work. Keep it up. Costumes reality was there."

"Photography very good. Editing very good. Follow bits excellent. Music appropriate. Costumes good. Good effects. Good mood. Acting good. Editing Award."

"An historical picture. A touching story. Good continuity. Exposures good. Soundtrack good and in keeping with the times. Well edited. Had a good beginning and a climax."

"An excellent film. Thoroughly professional. No allowances need be made."

"A Mammoth undertaking for an amateur – Despite a few flaws the filmer pulls it off, the horror and dread of war. The battle scenes were tops and convincing – the mood of desolation was retained throughout. Sound great."

What any expert judge said about my film(s) was always amusingly contentious. After winning the 'highest award' in the festival, all I wanted to read were laudatory words and I didn't expect negative comment. My youth was yet to learn that comments I perceived as detractors were actually meant to say that nothing is ever perfect and that judges definitely see the very same film differently. One judge wrote, "The chief flaw might have been in the boy's acting," while another scribbled the contradictory, "Good acting by Jamie." One wrote, "a few non-synchs on sound" and another heard, "Sound worked in nicely." A nit-picker wrote, "Superimposed titles washed out in places. Not good. Too close to people." I agreed. One title card, white letters against a black velvet background, was shot during a lapse in concentration at aperture1.9 when it should have been made at 5.6. As well, moving parallel to Sergeant Boucher and Jamie, white lettering was occasionally 'lost' against the white-gray sky. Lagging behind-the-times, a conservative old-timer staid with yesterday's cardinal rules of making movies took a swipe at what had become an accepted 1960s convention when he wrote, "the filmer gets carried away by the 'film verite' camera hand held." Opposite opinion was twice penciled: "Follow bits excellent" and "Your tracking shots were great."

Criticism I took to heart was when negativity was turned into a viable positive. "I might suggest removing voice from the film – there is little of it and it is not necessary – may distract. The final 'why' is carried impressively by the visual. Sound not needed." I had been in two minds about the effectiveness of Paul's audible "Why" and now I'd found a judge who pointed me in the direction I

needed to go. I removed all human words and non-verbals, except for Fred Schneck's biting-the-bullet scream in the field hospital. To wake up the audience, a loud, prolonged scream of pain dominates the soundtrack and is accompanied with a Close-up of Fred's wide-eyed pained face as he's biting down on a mini-ball. I learned this technique of sound cutting, the Shock Cut, to keep an audience on its toes after having seen John Frankenheimer's *The Train* (1963). The technique creates high-powered excitement. Hearing the sound of the human voice matched with a face wracked with pain worked. It was an effective visual and sound cut with shock.

Publicity on my achievement started almost immediately with my Dad's work newsletter *VMC*, *Vilter Manufacturing Chatter*. In it was written, "Leonard can take just pride in the honors awarded his son, this potential Cecil B. DeMille." I got the biggest kick out of seeing this article which mentioned the Golden Scissors for Best Editing. I couldn't help but feel my chest expand like a bower bird or a pigeon puffing up its breast to impress a mate. Remember how Dad had questioned my cutting lengths of film and dumping them into a basket? He picked up a piece, said that it looked all right to him, so why was I spending so much time and then throwing this good hunk out? All the time I spent rough cutting and then removing just a frame here or two frames there, having to explain what editing was all about and justifying what I was doing, and my Dad still not getting it, well, it was all worth it and I felt vindicated.

That the 37<sup>th</sup> PSA-MPD Film Festival was international, I drew a typical, misguided conclusion of American insular vision. My experience, limited to entering competitions only happening in the United States and, perusing the results, confirmed my belief that *Jamie* had been adjudicated the highest award *in the world*. Amongst the Ten Best Films, after all, were pictures from Australia, Canada, France, Holland, and West Germany.

The Honorable Mentions included some from the same five countries, plus England and New Zealand. There were a bunch of American films including John Primm's emotionally touching *The Marble*. I thought it would have been next to fantastic if we both had been included in the Ten Best!

Unmentioned among the winners, the Honorable Mentions, or special citations was my other entry *i can't understand*. There was no list including titles which had been entered but which had been placed nowhere. No changes had been made to the film after CACCA's Honorable Mention and I had no difficulty agreeing with judges who wrote, "Good Close-ups and good camera angles but I can't understand it either," and "Obscure! Titled correctly." I wasn't at all surprised.

Winning awards, however, wasn't all about me. My twin sisters grabbed some attention in the winner's arena in a contest I'd never qualify to enter. Mom and Dad entered five years old Luann and Joann into the twins contest in the annual Wisconsin State Fair. Pictured right, Luann and Joann are the shorter duo standing nearest the announcer.

Our family walked to one of the park admission gates close to the corner of 84<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield Avenue after having parked for free in Aunt Adeline Brochhausen's driveway on 87<sup>th</sup> and Greenfield. Parking any closer could cost one to three dollars, a fortune in those days. Neighborhoods all around the Fairgrounds became instant parking lots, homeowners setting up signs made



from cardboard box panels and scrawled with black or colored magic marker advertising their fee. Many held the signs in their hands and called to motorists announcing how many spaces were left to fill. It looked and sounded like organized chaos as neighbor cooperating with neighbor hand-directed drivers, arranging vehicles into neat patterns in backyards, carports, driveways and across front lawns. Sidewalks had to be kept clear. They were crowded like sardine cans with elbow-nudging pedestrians of all ages eagerly anticipating what they'd find at the fair.

What wasn't there to like about the State Fair? It was an agricultural event with marching band competitions, open stages with endlessly overlapping sounds of oom-pah-pahing polka bands, rock n' roll non-entities and no-star Dixieland combos and cover bands. Included for the price of a ticket were a 200 mile car race, a visiting midway since the one which had been permanent was torn down and bulldozed in 1960, and "big name" entertainment. Free viewing was an exhibition of quality Wisconsin-made products.

Livestock exhibition within pavilions served as temporary quarters for horses, cows, bulls, sheep, pigs, rabbits, turkeys, chickens, ducks and geese. Although I had some background and understanding of rural life from Sobieski summers, fall mushroom picking, and spring sucker¹ runs, many city dwellers coming eye to eye with some 11 year old whippersnapper and his Pa from up north in Merrill had a first time experience with their Clydesdales, cows or swine. Stock owners and 4-H kids dressed in flannelette shirts and bib dungarees often slept overnight, one eye open like guards and protectors, in the stalls with their animals. They'd nonchalantly carry strands of straw on themselves, in their hair, clinging to their clothing, or chewing in their mouths when I'd see them morning or afternoon. Sometimes I'd catch the farm kids or elders catnapping in the daytime. I'd always guessed none slept anywhere near a tail because, as a Fair browser, I clearly saw what came pumping or gushing from the posterior end of the beast; I stepped gingerly to avoid collecting any of their splotchy or clumpy droppings as a shoe bottom souvenir. If I'd chirped an honest "Nice calf" compliment to some kid with his pretty-eyed Daisy on the other end of a lead, the oft-heard response was either "Yah, you betcha" or a simple "Okey-dokey."

My personal favorite was looking at the pigs, especially the little porkers. They made a terribly high pitched squeal when I scratched the setae on their backs and thought, "I'm going to eat you one day but right now you're adorable."

The Exhibition Center was a trade circus of snake oil salesmen pitching their peelers, slicers, choppers, and dicers, kitchen tools which may have appeared in commercials on television as the newest, latest and greatest gizmo; some were amazing products that never quite worked like on TV after you got them home. Enjoying the demonstrations, we rolled our eyes away from the glance of the fast-talking barkers and kept our critical heckling within the family group, all the while waiting for that fleeting opportunity to snatch a morsel of whatever was being sliced or diced and fried for tasting. The only thing we suckered Mom and Dad into buying was some oddly-shaped twister gadget which turned a potato into long ribboned twirls. Mom only deep fried when we made paczki² and once, just once, she may have filled a saucepan with oil, because she didn't own a deep fryer, to make these fancy, what-a-waste-of-time French fries.

Wisconsin dairy product tastings included flavored milk and ice cream from the commercial makers Golden Gurnsey, Sealtest, and Dairy Queen. Rare was the rolled butter hand-made by the Amish up north in Amherst near Stevens Point. You could hardly ever find it up there, but it somehow made its way to the Fair. Of butter in our home, I only remember Mom stocking our fridge with Land O'Lakes sticks from Minnesota, until she discovered margarine brought over the state line illegally from Illinois by Aunt Evelyn or Aunt Lorraine. Yes, members of the family participated in oleo runs, the nefarious practice making them fake-butter law-breaking felons. From 1925 to 1967 margarine was banned from sale in the state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin Statute 98.17 has been in place since 1895 and still stands today, not that cars get searched and contraband confiscated like might happen at an international border. It was highly unlikely anyone "smuggling" margarine over the state line would end up in jail. It was just that margarine wasn't allowed to be sold off the grocery shelves in Wisconsin, the Dairy State. It was illegal for margarine to be served in restaurants, prisons, hospitals, schools, and other state institutions. Governor Warren Perley Knowles (1965-1971) called margarine the "Yellow stick from Satan himself." It came in white sticks wrapped with a packet of liquid yellow

covered in sugar.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Bottom feeding soft-finned, as opposed to spiny-finned, fishes that possess a toothless, protractile mouth with distinctive thick lips. Caught by using a dip net or with a fishing pole baited with a nightcrawler worm on a hook.
<sup>2</sup> Pronounced "ponch-key," they're a round Polish pastry similar to a doughnut, usually filled with fruit or jam and

food dye which could be mixed into the margarine to make it look like butter. About the only good thing about margarine was that it was a dieter's choice and it spread a lot easier than butter. After I'd pared a chunk off the cold butter stick, my Dad always asked if I was spreading cheese onto my slice of rye.

Alice in Dairyland had her own building and a larger-than-life statue of Alice was exhibited on the grounds. 1966's Alice in Dairyland was Jo Ann Cupery who presented Matt Goukas of the Philadelphia 76ers with a basketball made from cheese. Wisconsin identified as the Dairy State and its people were rather affectionately or rudely nicknamed, depending upon context, cheddar heads. Cheesehead came later and was intended as derogatory, but Wisconsinites adapted it as a name of pride. It may have originated from immigrants bringing the words to Wisconsin, the German käsekopf and the Dutch kaaskop World War II German soldiers were known to insult the Dutch calling them "cheeseheads." Cheese for tasting in abundant cubes or in tubs with accompanying wooden sticks for smearing was available in the Wisconsin Products pavilion. There was the exotically named Burnett Dairy Wisconsin "Dated" cheese meaning it was aged or vintage, the sausage-shaped Italian provolone, as well as the fun-to-munch squeaky cheese curds, familiar Colby, Jack, Muenster and Cheddar, the latter selling in blocks or wheels for 39¢ a pound. If you got past the smell of unwashed feet, the south end of a skunk walking north like my Dad always did, there was Widmer brick and limburger. ("Pee-yew," my Mother used to say to my Dad, "Must you eat that stinky brick with onions before going to bed?") Popsicle sticks were used to taste the German Schmierkase, smearing or spreading cheese, and Wisconsin offered Merkt's from Salem, Wisconsin Pride spreadable, and Kaukauna spreadable cheese with wine and spices. Then there was headcheese which wasn't a cheese at all. It was pressed meat usually made from a cooked pig's head or feet, then ground or chopped and seasoned and cooled to form a solid slicing jelly or aspic.

Wisconsin meat for tasting and buying was the ever-popular all beef Wisconsin summer sausage, slices of American and German bratwurst, Polish kielbasa often at  $59 \, \text{¢}$  a pound from Klement's Sausage Co, Usinger's Sheboygan Falls-based Johnsonville Sausage Co and the South Side Sausage Co. Frequently using finger and thumb like a pair of kitchen tongs to snatch free morsels, there was no need to spend Dad's hard-earned on a hot dog, a pronto pup (also called a corn dog, it was a deepfried battered wiener on a stick), toasted cheese sandwich, cheeseburger or, my school lunch favorite, a baloney sandwich. However, coins always found their way out of Dad's pocket for the wonderfully sinfully huge Fairground favorite, the cream puff loaded with Golden Gurnsey cream. And since tastings weren't convenient for the Lions Club roasted ear of corn, Dad paid  $25 \, \text{¢}$  for each ear. Peeled, the husk became a handle. The ear was dipped into a cauldron of real melted butter and handed over with a paper napkin. Eating corn dripping liberally with butter, or eating a gooey cream puff, we took extra care Luann and Joann didn't drip butter or smudge cream onto identical outfits Mom had sewn for their big day in the grandstand.

The twins contest was held just after lunchtime. Notification of the event was heard through loudspeakers whose playback reverberated. Word echoing over word had to be deciphered. There weren't that many pairs of twins in competition and I said to Mom, "I think Luann and Joann look



more alike than any of the other entrants." The examination time didn't include opening mouths and checking teeth like they did with livestock, thank goodness, and, hands down, Luann and Joann were declared the most identical twins.

Their prize was a pair of talking dolls. I remember snapping the twin's picture, their eyes squinting in the midday sun, for the family album. Two different year photos are pictured left and right.



I'm unsure where I was headed, be it the midway, the toilet, or just to get into the shade to escape the cooking sun, but I walked across a patch of lawn and stepped off a curb to cross a single car-width asphalt path. Neglecting to look to my left, brakes screeched suddenly. Rapidly turning my head, I caught my balance with my left hand and braced against a car hood. I must have looked startled. The window at the rear seat wound down and I recognized a familiar face. "You all right there, son?" asked the man with an unmistakable ski nose. "You OK?" he asked again, his head poking slightly out the open window while he gripped the edge of the lowered pane.

It was Bob Hope. You can tell a lot about a celebrity by how he treats regular folk when the spotlight is turned off. "Sorry 'bout that," he apologized, "You sure you're fine?" "I'm fine," I replied, "My fault. Guess I wasn't paying attention. Sorry." Bob Hope nodded and sort of winked, rolled up his window and indicated to the chauffeur with his free hand to drive forward. As the car moved past me, I saw a woman sitting beside Bob Hope and assumed it was his wife Delores. Nuts! I wasn't carrying the camera and I never thought to ask for an autograph!

Away from the enjoyable distraction and hubbub of the Fair, that consecutive three-night dream replaying Jim waving good-bye refused to disappear into the ether of time. The dream haunted me in daytime and I now realized it had been an omen. It persisted in plaguing my thinking like a pesky two year old who constantly asks "Why" after every statement. Obviously the "Why" in my instance was "Why aren't you making me into a film?" Laden with symbolism, the dream lent itself to visual interpretation. And since the dream was mine, I could make a film which came from my heart and, I felt, imbue it with the same kind of sincerity the PSA-MPD judges had observed in *Jamie*.

The main event in the film, a fiery explosion, was nigh impossible for me to achieve on film without spending a lot of money, obtaining a city permit, and finding a fire department willing to stand by in case something went wrong. Perhaps that's why I shied away from making my dream into an avantgarde film. Then I thought, rather than emphasize the dream's horrific imagery, why not concentrate on the mystical elements – the significance of Jim's wave good-bye, the indistinct yet gentle characters holding on and preventing me from following Jim, and a personification of Death.

At Lane, during baseball practice and games, I had been singled out for friendship by two 15 year old boys, Doug Bulgrin and Bill Koepnick. They wanted to manipulate my time at the playground to play games and, away from the grounds, ride bikes, or just spend time talking with them. I asked if they'd like to act in a movie for me and told them what the film was about. I didn't particularly identify Doug as the character who would represent me and Bill representing Corky. Doug looked nothing like me and that's why I thought I could disguise myself in the dream in him. Both thought making a movie would be fun and accepted.

For the character of Death I rang and asked Jim Champa, the 16 year old whom I'd met last summer at the Bostrom family picnic. He attached himself to me then as I wandered around the grounds filming and we kept in touch after I said that, one day when the right picture came along, I'd cast him. With Doug, Bill and Jim in mind, I typed a shot for shot script on onionskin paper and titled it in lower case, a poetic we were two.

The opening of the film couldn't be scripted scene for scene. There were many shots of the activities two boys would participate in: passing and catching a football, riding their bikes, wrestling, running, climbing in trees, and chasing each other through wild land. I used the same untended parkland at the end of 119<sup>th</sup> Street where I'd shot *Tarcisius*.

Over one Saturday free from garbage can flies and playground gnats I shot we were two out of chronological sequence and according to convenience. Because nothing out of the everyday was required for costuming, the boys wore their own everyday clothes. Doug wasn't a dancer, but he certainly moved like one. On his feet he was light and graceful. You'd swear there were springs where there should have been knees. Bill, on the other hand, was leaden-footed. He'd leap from a log to the ground and, even though the film was shot without sound, I clearly heard a clumsy ker-thunk whenever he landed. He didn't let his knees bend gracefully for inertia to give him a clean landing.

Adding to his gawkiness, Bill's arms stayed rigidly out-stretched. A lot of boys their age are gawky. I thought the difference in their movement added a nice contrast and, away from physical appearance, distinguished one from the other. Some of the boys' activity was shot at 18fps whilst others were made at 64fps, slow motion, for dramatic effect. My only regret is that I didn't design more business for the boys. Intercutting the activities later, to me they looked repetitious.

Moving into the story proper, the first shot was an Extreme Close-up of the Eyes of Death. Jim Champa was a handsome boy with curly, wavy blonde hair, thickly matted, almost black eyebrows, and striking blue eyes. His piercing eyes were the physical feature I wanted most to capture on film. Those eyes, I thought, would simultaneously convey mysterious awe and authority and cause some unease in viewers, as if he was able to look directly into souls. The camera zoomed back slowly from the eyes to reveal the Face of Death.

My idea was to show Death as a young person because, when Death appears as young as the victim, maybe the experience isn't so frightening. However, audiences over centuries have been ingrained with a stereotypical image of Death, a naked skull stuck on a skeletal body and dressed in a long black robe, a cowl covering the head, whilst his bony hand carried a scythe. That's what audiences expected of a representation of Death. Of my reinterpretation of Death with Jim Champa? He was too good-looking and much too young as a stand-in for Death. As beautiful and tender the images in we were two, I found out later no one would ever accept Death as a handsome teenager in a maroon sport coat, white shirt and Windsor-knotted black tie, black dress pants and polished black lace-up shoes.

Death's eye meets with Bill's and, shyly, Bill lowers his head. Logically, Doug sees only Bill, as in this world; it isn't time for Doug's character to depart, and Doug has no understanding of Bill's invisible, silent communication. Death summons Bill beckoning with his hand. Bill responds. Doug follows. He calls to Bill who doesn't reply and instead steps aside. The camera moves in on Death who raises both hands in a gesture saying, "You can't come here." Puzzled, Doug stops.



Bill Koepnick faces Death (Jim Champa)



Doug is stopped by Death from following his friend Bill

In casting the boys who run in slow motion I just asked my brother Steve. Of course he said yes, and I asked if he could find three of his friends willing to act as well. "Are you gonna make us wear satin togas," Steve more or less whined now that he was a teen at that age of self-consciousness about appearance. As with Doug and Bill, I said there was no requirement for a costume. The boys could wear their ordinary knockabout clothes. Steve got hold of Nathan Hale High School friends Mike Tesch, Mike LaBarbera and Dave Bielawski. I wanted the boys to be angels, but without a costume or some indication which showed a change from mortal humanity into spiritual beings, my audience would never "get" my intention.

In slow motion four boys charge along a dirt path. Death turns and guides Bill by his shoulder. The running boys surround Doug and take hold of his arms.



Angels Dave Bielawski, Mike Tesch, Mike LaBarbera and Steve Klobukowski prevent Doug from following his friend into death.

Death and Bill ascend a gravel road. As Death disappears down the other side of the hill, Bill turns and waves. Doug acknowledges the wave with a whispered, lip readable, "Good-bye." The angels release their grasp on Doug's arms. Bill turns and follows Death over the crest of the hill. The picture slowly fades into black. A lower case title, end, fades in just long enough to register before fading back into black.



Doug Bulgrin, Me, Bill Koepnick in a script conference



Cast, clockwise from 6 o'clock: Bill Koepnick, Mike Tesch, Steve Klobukowski, Mike LaBarbera, Dave Bielawski, Jim Champa, and Doug Bulgrin

I left behind garbage collecting and playground supervising, but not the new summertime friendships when I returned to Stevens Point for my, hard to imagine, senior and final year of university studies.

It felt no different from my junior year, except that now I shared Room 312 with John Primm. With mutual interests and activities in Drama and movie making skills, it seemed a natural fit.

Sporting newly-gained biceps, triceps, abductor muscles, and added strength, I was fine-tuned for participation in a Jazz Ballet class, not part of the Drama curriculum, but Physical Education. Someone in the Drama Department who'd taught me or directed me in a play had recommended I take the course "because ability to dance always comes in handy on the stage."

Our courses slotted into a schedule... all but one. Primm and I had signed on for a class with Boom Boom Kramer, but he cancelled the course because insufficient numbers showed interest. We needed a class, any Drama class, to fulfill credits toward our chosen major. We pushed for places in an already filled Radio and Television course headed by an unknown quantity, a young instructor new to the Drama Department. Primm and I gave this newcomer a private screening of a couple of our films to demonstrate what creativity we were capable of accomplishing and, sure enough, we were invited into his class.

Big mistake! Most of the students seated in the classroom on Day 1 were clueless green freshmen, as if this teacher lacked magnetism to draw in older, experienced Drama majors. Or maybe the more experienced spotted a dud a mile off and we hadn't? Skipping on the details, I'll jump the gun and sum up the whole experience. John and I dutifully attended his first class. This instructor was a clown full of flamboyance and short on dispensing his knowledge. John looked at me. I looked at John. We both looked at each other like "what the hell?" and never went back into his classroom. Because we needed the credits, we didn't cancel the course. We never bothered doing any of his piddly time-consuming busy-work exercises, not even long-term assignments and, surprisingly, all blank squares following our names in his report book were never counted toward failure. An exaggeration, perhaps, but we knew more about television from our on-air stints in Wausau than this nudnik ever would! On the last day of formal class we showed up and grudgingly sat the final exam. We aced the test, of course and, balanced against his report book's blank spaces, he gave us an acceptable course average and final mark of a C. It's a mystery why this guy's picture wasn't included in the Iris, the school annual. Then again, maybe not. 1966 was the only year he was on the Drama faculty. He was a penny firecracker; he came, he popped, and he vanished, just like that.

Like manna from heaven, the current edition of the *PSA Journal* arrived. The September 1966 issue published George Cushman's "Cinema Clinic" which reviewed the 37<sup>th</sup> Festival and what he wrote is worth quoting as fair use:

A total of 22 judges spent 18 evenings screening 186 motion pictures to select the best of those entered in the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual International Film Competition and festival sponsored by the Motion Picture Division of the Society. Popularly known as the "Ten Best," this contest inaugurated in 1930 by the Amateur Cinema League (which merged with the PSA about 12 years ago) and has been conducted each year since, making it the oldest motion picture competition in the world. Here are a few close-ups on the winning entries:

Jamie, which won the PSA-MPD Gold Medal for the best film in the Festival, the MPD Scenario Film Award, the MPD Golden Scissors Award (for the best film editing) is an 18-minute black-and-white 16mm film with sound on magnetic stripe. It is a Civil War drama of a young Union bugler's act of kindness toward a wounded Confederate and the tragic consequence. Approximately 1500 feet of film were exposed, this being boiled down to the final 630 feet. Klobukowski spent a year on the picture, from its original concept through the writing, scripting, obtaining uniforms, shooting, editing, and finally adding the sound. The latter is all original, the music being especially composed for the film by Paul Bentzen and played by students and staff at Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point.

For many years I have jotted down in this column my comments on some of the PSA-MPD Festival winners. Remember that these are merely one man's opinion, and you may, or may not, agree when you see the film.

I have been told that my comments are mostly praise when I review these top films, and that amateur films can't be as good as I often describe them. In answer, let me state that out of 186 films, which was the total number entered this year, there are a wide range of pictures. Some this year were not worth the judges' time, and they would certainly not be worth words here to comment upon them. But if I did, all I could do would be to find fault with them, for certainly there was nothing good about these films.

Conversely, then, out of 186 films, the top ten must be pretty darn good, competition being what it is. This year we had several films that have won in some of the top Festivals in Europe. These are among the best that amateur filmers are making today. So if you criticize the best, what is your criterion? What films are better than the best? Do you compare them to professional efforts? I know some people do. I don't, because I not only don't think that is fair, but I don't see that it is an equal comparison. I feel that an amateur effort should be compared with other amateur efforts, and it is with this in mind that I make comments each year on the winners.

**Jamie** is certainly no exception. The best film out of 186 has to be pretty good because it has a lot of keen competition. But **Jamie** is worthy of the four top awards which it has won. Any way you look at it, it is a most commendable piece of cinematic endeavor.

Objective criticism would be difficult. I suppose there could be as much subjective criticism as there are people who see it. But as a piece of cinema, it is as good as you have seen for many years on the amateur screen. The editing of the battle scenes is close to perfect. In fact, I wouldn't know how to suggest they be improved.

Lawrence Klobukowski borrowed the 16mm camera he used, since his previous efforts have been in 8mm. He borrowed the money to buy film, he made it in black & white, and he begged or borrowed almost everything else. But he didn't borrow the story – that came from himself. He knew what he wanted to say, and he knows the cinema well enough to know how to say it on film.

The action is believable, the movement and flow is tremendous, empathy is there, just about everything that movies are supposed to have. If this filmer tops this effort, he will have a long ways to do it. And if you think my words are too glowing, let me say that after the judges had seen the film they burst into applause at the final fadeout. I do not recall in my seven years with this Festival that ever before did any roomful of hard boiled judges break into applause after the showing of any film!

The article named the titles and filmmakers of the Ten Best Films, only two of which were made in 8mm, 22 Honorable Mentions including five in 8mm, 5 Special Citations with just one in 8mm, 9 additional awards, and 6 Class C Awards, those Class C films coming from professionals or semi-professionals who earned at least three quarters of their income from making movies.

The PSA sent me extra copies of the magazine and I gave one to Paul Bentzen and another to the Corcoran family. In his critique Mr. Cushman didn't single out Jim for his acting, but beneath the picture of Bentzen, Corky and me in a script conference he had written, "the late James Corcoran, who played the title role, was killed in a farm accident July 4." Refer to that photo on page 374. The article also published a frame blow-up from the opening of the film where Jamie says good-bye to his mother. Refer to that frame enlargement on page 360.

The magazine was only the beginning of a publicity deluge. In quick succession, the ensuing flurry of newspaper reportage was the university's *The Pointer*, followed by the *Wausau Daily Record-Herald*, *The Milwaukee Journal*, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, and the *West Allis Star*. The *Stevens Point (Wisconsin) Daily Journal* must have realized they'd been scooped by everyone and, as all the papers had used the script conference picture, they wanted something fresh.



Stevens Daily Journal Point name I photographer, whose don't remember, around Thursday, came September 29, and shot a new photo, pictured left. Their new story angle had Dann Perkins, Paul Bentzen and I going to the St Louis convention where I'd accept a citation from the Photographic Society of America. We were asked to look very sober for the picture, put on a display of sadness because the star of the movie had died.

Taking the train to St. Louis was contemplated, a time-burning journey involving a bus from Stevens Point to

Milwaukee, a taxi to the train station for an Amtrak rail connection to Chicago, and then another change to a train bound for the Gateway City. We only knew it as St. Louis, the city with the big Arch. I hadn't bothered investigating a time schedule, what it would cost, or how much time it would take. I asked Paul if he wanted to make the long train trip and, notwithstanding the lack of travel times, he was keen as mustard. Before I was able to wander down to the bus station to investigate a schedule, Dann Perkins stepped in and said he'd like to drive us to the city with the odd nickname, First in Booze, First in Shoes, and Last in the American League.

Over the entire weekend ahead of the PSA convention in St. Louis, in celebratory mode we just goofed off. Dave Ludwig, John's best friend from Villa Park, Illinois, had just started the semester in Point and joined us in acting silly. It was Indian Summer, the weather was uncannily warm, and *Ben-Hur*, as indicated in the photo below left, came out to play, as well as Charles Darwin's missing link or "God only knows who or what" in the photo below right.



Paul Bentzen, John Primm, Dave Ludwig, Me, Dave Jurgella



Dave Jurgella, Me, John Primm, Paul Bentzen, Dave Ludwig

Saturday night we forgot all about the mundane cuisine dished out by Ace Foods in the Allen Center and gorged ourselves on pizza and beer at Portesi's Pizza in downtown Stevens Point square. Party!







John Palmisano, Paul Bentzen, John Primm

Dann Perkins and Me

Etim Ukpo, Me, Liz Fish (Dann's girlfriend) look through the *Jamie* scrapbook.

## Chapter 46: "First in Booze... First in Shoes... ...and Last in the American League"

astily agreed, reasons lost in a fast flying comet's fading tail of time, a plan had us departing Stevens Point for St. Louis, Missouri, midnight Tuesday, meaning, of course, it would already be Wednesday, October 5. The PSA Convention was scheduled for October 4-8. Our target was to get there well ahead of the Wednesday evening Motion Picture Division's Awards banquet. Instead of my waiting with ants in my pants at the dorm, I asked Dann to pick me up at Papa Joe's on Highway 51. About 9:30 p.m. I humped my packed suitcase in one hand, my tape recorder in the other, from Reserve Street's Pray-Sims Hall across a wide bare field to Isadore Street. A few steps further, I entered the back door of Papa Joe's Tavern, its main entrance on Highway 51. Stevens Pointers also knew that throughway as Division Street.

Just because a street was named Division didn't mean it had anything to do with separating the immature 18 year old Friday night-Saturday night college drinkers from the local community's clientele. Let's say Papa Joe's never was a first choice hangout for college kids and frat boys. They went instead to Little Joe's in Park Ridge, congregated noisily at the Pour Haus, or put their unruly behavior on display, all the while sculling Point Special, in the many dives in the Square along the river which catered to riff raff. Mature college students could bob into Papa Joe's and be made to feel welcome. Even though I wasn't one to frequently belly up to the bar, I was greeted enthusiastically by the locals. They knew me as their occasional visitor, definitely knew me as their own local person of minor fame. Everyone was aware I was headed to St. Louis to collect a Gold Medal. With that as good a reason as any, I drank by the good graces of Papa Joe's regulars. I dipped my hand into my back pocket to withdraw my wallet to pay, but I was always told to put it away. "Dis one's on da house," the barkeep would say. "Dis one's from Stash over dere." I'd look in the direction of Stash and he'd nod, smile and silently toast me with his beer glass. I'd raise my glass and toast him back, my smile speaking a genuine "Thanks."

I drank my favorite mixer, a Black Russian: two parts vodka, one part Tia Maria, garnished with a monkey nut, actually a hazelnut. I liked the flavor of the nut floating in the delicious dark liquid and, as each fresh Black Russian was ordered up for me, I'd ask for a couple of monkey nuts. I should have used my God-given brains and sipped on beers. Boy, was I ever getting shickered! I have no idea how many Russians I downed. All I knew then was that if I'd refused the treat, someone would feel mighty miffed, and the locals were treating generously!

Typically generous was an asset for the people of Stevens Point. Following Mass most Sundays I would have midday dinner with the Corcorans. After Corky died, Johnny, his next-in-age brother, often met with me for church and, afterward, I'd be invited to stay and eat with the family. It felt different after Corky was gone, and I missed him, but all the Corcoran family continued to make me feel as welcome as ever. Sunday dinner before heading for St. Louis, Mrs. Corcoran gave me a \$10 check for spending money. The Corcoran's neighbor, Jean Krueger, had seen all the publicity about *Jamie* and had come over to give me a check for \$5.00. I didn't think I deserved such kindness, but they wouldn't let me refuse it. Quite a few townsfolk had seen me on television and offered their congratulations. Even the university's president, Mr. James H. Albertson, sent me his personal handwritten note to congratulate me. It was fun being treated as a celebrity, like a small town hero, but I didn't get a swelled head over it. I knew it wouldn't pay to be cocky because then people wouldn't want to associate with me.

Dann and Paul showed up at Papa Joe's shortly before midnight and found me – there are no better words for it – drunk as a skunk. Really, really stinko! I more or less slid off the barstool like a wiry copper Slinky and smiled stupidly. Paul and Dann picked up my suitcase and tape recorder and shoved it in the trunk. I was shoved into the back seat. Dann drove. Paul navigated. I don't remember anything about our night drive, but Dann said I complained about having too many Black Russians. Over the next hour and a half, Dann said I talked and jabbered, elided words, and asked if I was getting any soberer. A little two-note round of "Jestem piyany, Joe" and I flopped across the bench seat dead to the world.

"What the hell! That was close!" It was the peak moment of excitement and adrenalin. A near miss. Paul avoided colliding with another car. The sudden braking, the sharp swerve, the commotion startled me awake. I was suddenly undrunk. No army in hobnail boots marched across my tongue. The overnight drive from Stevens Point to St. Louis was in its 8<sup>th</sup> hour when fatigue had set in and morning traffic was growing. Still, we had made it this far. Paul pulled over and Dann took the wheel, not that he was any more alert, but it was his car. While I'd been drowsed in the back seat, throughout the night Paul and Dann dipped into sandwiches, apples and cookies supplied by Ma Bentzen. As Dann chirped sometime later, "Thanks Ma Bentzen for the food and the hot coffee. Didn't eat it all, but drank most of the coffee. The coffee should be cold by Saturday."

Without too much difficulty, we managed to get ourselves lost. I suppose it didn't help Dann concentrating on the road when I kept saying from the backseat, "Hey, you guys, lookit that Arch. Ain't it neat!" Gleaming in the morning sunlight, the St. Louis Arch was practically brand new. Ever the travel bug scrapbook collector, I asked, "You guys wanna stop and get a picture?" The throat-clearing sound which escaped from Dann's larynx told me to shut up. A memorial to Thomas Jefferson and the historic role St. Louis played as the Gateway to the West, it was designed by Finnish-American Eero Saavinen and construction of the stainless steel Arch was completed in 1965. We were seeing a barely one year old Arch.

What was this city where we had no idea where we were going? It was nicknamed the Gateway to the West when St. Louis was positioned as the launching point for Lewis and Clark to begin their westward explorations in 1804. It can also be referred to as The Gateway City. For a while it had been called Mound City because of the number of Indian mounds scattered throughout the region. What of the odd "First in Booze, first in shoes, and last in the American League?" It was a reference to the city's leadership in brewing and shoe manufacture, particularly a brand called Buster Brown which specialized in tough-wearing school shoes, and its poor performance of the St. Louis Browns baseball team. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than 100 breweries were busy making beer in St. Louis, among them Anheuser-Busch famous or infamous, depending upon your taste, for Budweiser. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition was commemorated with the 1904 World's Fair, formally called the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The Fair was immortalized by the 1944 movie *Meet Me in St. Louis* starring Judy Garland and based upon writer Sally Benson's short story memoirs. The 1904 Fair introduced the ice cream cone and iced tea to the world. Hot dog and hamburgers were popularized at the event. Buster Brown shoes were introduced at the Fair, along with the turnstile.

8:00 a.m., still looking, looking, we searched for the convention venue, the Sheraton-Jefferson Hotel, all the while sweating about whether or not we actually had a room reserved. I'd sent a postcard ahead of the trip, but had received no reservation confirmation by return card. There were an inordinate number of one-way streets, all going in a direction we weren't. Time was wasting away, we thought, as one street after another had a sign No Right Turn or No Left Turn. We ended up driving three times over the same bridge, each "Oh, no, not again" trip costing a 15¢ toll for the privilege.

Suddenly Paul blurted, "There's the street. Turn left." Dann turned left and headed directly into four lanes of oncoming morning rush hour traffic. We were driving the wrong way on one of too many

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A Polish ditty my Dad used to sing when he had one too many. It translates to "I am feeling drunk, Joe."

one-way streets. Before we reached the red zone of our panic meters, we spotted an exit into a parking lot, quickly turned right into it and, just as luckily, found ourselves at the St. Charles Street Garage of the Sheraton-Jefferson.

As a valet took Dann's keys to park his car, Dann looked at us rather expressionless and dryly announced, "Left Ma Bentzen's sandwiches, apples, and cookies in there. Hope they don't rot too much. It's a hot St. Louis day. Heaven help us on the trip back. It's gonna stink!" 9: 30 a.m. We checked in. The reservation I'd requested by postcard had been received and a room had, thankfully, been reserved. It looked a pretty posh place when we'd been standing outside the hotel. Inside, however, wasn't the Grand Hotel of the movies. It was old and rather dingy, as if it had seen its best days. Upon entering our room, I couldn't help quoting Bette Davis in *Beyond the Forest* (1949). "What a dump!" It was tight-squeeze, 15x20 foot square with two beds in a row and a rollaway. The TV didn't work and there was nothing to look at from the window. Sharing the tariff, this dingy cell would cost us \$6 each per night. A porter used the hotel luggage cart, one of those wheeled platforms with the four brass rails bent at the top to form an opened dome and joined by a shiny brass knob. Moved by human propulsion, our three worn suitcases and my tape recorder looked very lonely on it. As the uniformed gent left Dann asked, "Did you tip him?" "Yeah," I said, "I gave him a dollar," to which Dann delivered ironically, "Aw, too bad." We were, after all, on a tight budget.

Dragging along my tape recorder was essential and here's the reason. Loathe to wasting time handwriting a diary of what happened and who we'd meet, I preferred making a living diary. We'd record our impressions first-hand and record some of the voices of those we'd meet. I set up the recorder even before unpacking and we taped our impressions of being unimpressed with our lodgings. Whole sentences considered non-essential, we reported in edited phrases. We conveyed ideas by convenience, rather than in flowing, grammatically correct expression.

Nearing lunchtime, we stood on the mezzanine overlooking the main lobby and reception area. Program sessions had finished. PSA members and guests crowded in the lobby. From our vantage point we recognized some celebrities. The famous sad-faced clown Emmett Kelly was in costume. Unrecognizable away from his make-up and clown clothes, maybe he finished presenting a seminar in character. Among the mingling, we spotted Academy Award winner Sidney Poitier and Academy award nominee Rod Steiger. We'd recently seen Steiger's acclaimed performance, his Best Actor nominated turn, as a Holocaust survivor in *The Pawnbroker*. I had seen his Best Supporting Actor nominated performance in *On the Waterfront*. As a freshman in 1963 I'd enjoyed Poitier's Best Actor winning role as handyman Homer building a church for German immigrant nuns in *Lilies of the Field*. I hadn't seen their names in the program and had no idea why they were attending the convention. Were they members in a division other than the one dedicated to Motion Pictures, or had they been session presenters? Or was it just coincidence they happened to be in St. Louis in the same hotel as the PSA, but for business other than the convention. Our wonderment was left hanging like an unopened cocoon stuck to a twig.

Before hunting for lunch, Paul and Dann each had to shell out \$5.75 for tickets to the evening banquet. I was delighted to learn I didn't have to pay as I was Mr. Ed Kentera's guest. Luncheon, as it transpired, was unexciting. It seemed St. Louis, in the immediate vicinity of the Sheraton-Jefferson anyway, didn't have a place to eat. Traveller's curiosity in us, we wandered the streets turning one corner after the next searching for signs which indicated a cafe, a coffee shop, a restaurant where prices wouldn't be exorbitant, exorbitant meaning bigger than normal, and we were getting hungrier by the minute. We stumbled upon some Spartan knife and forkery down a dead end street and settled for the disappointing fare. Sandwiches. "What d'ya mean?" Dann said. "I'm having Polish sausage. From Stevens Point to St. Louis for Polish sausage, how can we go wrong dere?" The long drive, the excitement of making it to the convention, something to make our bellies full, and an inevitable afternoon nap was on our dance cards. Paul did an uncharitable thing at 10 minutes to four when he turned on the Sony 102 and recorded my rattling inhale snores.

We conked out soundly and were almost late to the awards banquet. Not only was the dining hall spacious, it was romantically lighted and decorated to look as if welcoming Hollywood's A-list. I felt

insignificant in my black trousers, maroon sport coat and black tie. Paul went one better with his mustard-colored sport coat, black trousers, black tie with tie pin and a vest. Dann dressed in a suit and looked more like a businessman with a camera than paparazzi. In the whirl of appetisers and drinks, so many people said hello and shook my hand, I hardly had time to put a morsel into my mouth. Some PSA bigwigs, others long-standing members, I had no idea who most were even after they'd introduced themselves, and nametags weren't necessarily helpful. I felt more comfortable, however, after I recognized Margaret Conneely from CACCA and Ray Shady from Eastman Kodak and exchanged pleasantries. Mrs. Conneely was among the incoming 1966-1968 PSA-MPD's Division Officers in the capacity of Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Kentera, whom I'd known only as a name on a letter, introduced himself and ushered us to chairs at a refectory-style table with his party of PSA-ers.

I know what to expect when dinner is called a banquet. It's fare far more special and elevated than what we were served. I'll grant that the jumbo shrimp cocktail was de rigueur, but the accompanying saltines still sealed in a see-through crackly paper wrapping was as Joe's Beanery as you can get. They're crackers you expect to unwrap noisily and crush into a bowl of chilli con carne. A second hors d'oeuvres was hearts of celery en branche with ripe and green olives. It's a fancy somewhat-Frenchy description of the inner and most tender part of celery stalks garnished with olives. That was like trying to turn a sow's ear into a silk purse. Face it; all we had in front of us were a few celery sticks and some olives. Main course on our menu was baked one half spring chicken maitre d'. I never did figure out if the maitre d' meant hotel butter or if it meant the dish was simply served by our black-suited waiter. Baked it may have been, but with the smothering of the bird in butter to brown it, it looked and tasted like fried chicken. Dann's made an apt description of what he observed on his plate. "Looks like fried embryo." More butter was evident in the accompanying potatoes rissole, a side of parboiled potatoes which have been sautéed in butter, then tossed in more butter with herbs and seasoning. Color was added to the plate with carrots and peas, obviously boiled from snap-frozen Birdseye. Something fancily called Jefferson rolls were just white bread rolls served with country butter, one of those pats kept on ice and always too hard to spread. Dinner concluded with something sounding like it jumped out of a good Jewish cookbook, mousse nesselrode. Named for Count Carl Robert Nesselrode, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian diplomat who loved rich food, the dessert was created from chestnuts by his personal chef Monsieur Mouy. It's basically a classic aerated Bavarian cream.

Our food swimming in so much cream and butter, the banquet could easily have been followed by a shot glass of pink Pepto Bismol! Instead, the rich repast was followed by presentation of the 1966 Ten Best Festival awards. First were certificates for Honorable Mention and the Ten Best. I suppose time could have been saved had the organizers presented me with all four awards after one walk to the stage. No, each of the awards I received was handed to me with a separate announcement and another walk to the stage. The walking would have had a minor effect on burning off dinner's ingested calories. Certificates were presented to those whose films made it into the ten Best. Following were the Special Awards, MPD Special Citations, and the Annual Awards. I was first up and announced as winner of the Northern California Council of Movie Clubs Trophy for Best Scenario Film. The award, a large and impressive travelling trophy, and a shield I could keep, was handed to me by my dinner benefactor, Mr. Ed Kentera.

I returned to my seat and trophies for Sound, Nature, Travel, Club Film, Humorous Film, Student Film, and Documentary Film were presented. Having read in the program that the award for Best Editing was named the Golden Order of the Scissors, Paul, Dann and I had a bit of a chuckle, as if I'd be required to kneel before the Queen, bow my head and be dubbed on the shoulders with a sword. It sounded so hoity-toity, so (roll the Rs as you read) very, very British. In hindsight, we shouldn't have carried on with such levity.

I learned during the presenting speech that special significance is attached to the Golden Order of the Scissors, an actual pair of golden scissors engraved with my name, for it was given this year for only the third time in the entire 37 year history of the international competition. It was an award not presented lightly nor an award given annually; it was presented only when an entry is deemed good

enough for the award to be made and only if judges felt they'd seen a film which deserved the accolade for its brilliant editing.

Suspended from an embroidered gold cord, the Order of the Golden Scissors was sponsored by Charles Carbonaro, FPSA, FACL, and ceremoniously hung around my neck like a necklace by Mr. Stan Masters, the 1962 recipient of the Golden Scissors.





Photographs of presentation of awards at the PSA-MPD 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Ten Best Film Competition were mocked up and taken by Dann Perkins and after the actual presentation. This is clearly indicated in the photo at left by my wearing the Order of the Golden Scissors in the snapshot of Ed Kentera presenting the Best Scenario shield and a Ten Best Certificate while Paul Bentzen stands behind me. In the photo right, Stan Masters presents me with the Order of the Golden Scissors.

Last to be presented during the banquet program was the Gold Medal, a coveted prize which designated *Jamie* as the outstanding film among all of the 186 entries from several countries submitted to the PSA competition. Paul and Dann made the scene accompanying me to the stage. Nestor Barrret, PSA president from San Jose, California, in awarding me this medal emphasized the society's pride in "presenting this medal to a person so young" and expressed his conviction that "someday it will be people of your age who will be taking over the PSA." Much was made of the fact that I was the youngest person ever to have won the Gold Medal. I recall that I thanked Paul and Dann for all their help and accepted it in Jimmy Corcoran's name wishing he could have come with me to the stage. In front of 600 people, I said that our 15 year old star wasn't in attendance because he had been tragically killed in a farming accident on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I choked up, my voice cracked, and I wanted to cry. "It's going to be hard for us to watch *Jamie* tonight because we haven't seen the film since Corky died." For a moment after I'd finished, a hush hung over the banquet hall like a heavy funeral pall. As we began our walk from the stage to our seats, the audience gently applauded.

At 10:00 p.m. a selection from the Ten Best and Honorable Mention films was given a World Premiere Showing from the oldest film competition in the world. It was nothing like a screening of home movies. I was amazed at the size of the hanging screen and how large the films appeared on it, as if we were seated in a grand theater. First up was an Honorable Mention, *Beep Beep*, an amusing little short by Tim and Delores Lawler. I single out the Lawlers because they are from Kenosha, Wisconsin, just about 30 miles south of Milwaukee. Unable to attend the convention, and unknown to me, they had sent a Western Union telegram. Earlier, when their award had been announced, the telegram was read aloud to the banquet audience. The telegram was their congratulations to me and it pointed out that I was the first from the Midwest to win the Gold Medal.

Among the films screened was *The Leucocyte Story* by Jean Charles Meunier of Paris. It was a laugh-a-second type of film; it had to be since it isn't very long in screen time. Not a story about people but a story about leucocytes. "What the heck is a leucocyte?" Me too – I didn't know, but we learned that a leucocyte is a white blood corpuscle able to change its shape. The film was clay animation, a

love story with overtones, if you look hard enough. The animation was flawless and, in addition to a Ten Best, the film won awards for Humorous Film and Sound. I couldn't believe that my film had come higher than this Gallic effort in the judges' poll.

I guess it was nerves, my own uncertainty about how the audience would react to and accept or reject my film that caused me to stand throughout the 18 minute screening of *Jamie*. Or maybe I stood due to the lump in my throat as I watched my deceased friend moving as if alive and well on screen, and I might feel the need to quickly decamp and, maybe, shed a private tear. I didn't stand alone. Paul and Dann stood with me as we watched in silence, our gaze at the screen transfixed by the preservation on film of a young life. It wasn't easy seeing the film. I remember Paul placing his hand on my shoulder, giving a pat, and assuring empathy. When the end title faded out and the houselights faded up, I saw a lot of people wiping tears from their eyes. After that, I don't remember anything.



In a Dann Perkins photograph, Paul Bentzen and I in the Ivory Room of the Sheraton-Jefferson show off the PSA-MPD loot won by Jamie.

Midnight in our room, we turned on the Sony 102 to make a post-awards report. My film had been very well received by the audience, but I needed to ask, "Did they applaud?" Dann replied, "They did. Not cordially. Significantly. Tenderly they applauded." Listing the awards collected, I described the Scenario Travelling Trophy as "a big clumsy dust collector" I'd have to return after a year. "Yeah, big clumsy dust collector," Dann chimed in, "You know what he'll do after he gets home. Look at the size of this trophy they gave me! You big hamburger. We're gonna get all our names inscribed on it." I interjected, "What?" Dann continued, "We're gonna take it down to Benny's Hock Shop, get that baby fixed up with everybody's name on there. All five hundred fifty five names."

Dann got ready for bed. I asked Paul if he wanted to see what was going on before sacking out, maybe take a walk and get a little more adulation from the audience. We strolled along the empty corridor and took the elevator to the first floor bar. It too was empty, save the bartenders washing, wiping and stacking glasses. The reception lounge was a giant void. The Ivory Room was being cleaned and swept by night staff. What the heck! Everyone at the convention was older than us and no one wanted to party. Having run into not even one PSA conventioneer, we dejectedly returned to our room. Dann turned on the recorder and spoke dryly into the microphone, "Comment on report 4 and a half. Adulation of audience. Members returned in twenty minutes. Apparently no adulation."

Thursday morning, October 6, after an exorbitantly priced breakfast of orange juice and coffee, we invited a guest to our sloppy room and turned on the tape recorder. It was an obvious use of technology to preserve audience adulation, in this instance from Canadian Derek Davy, a feature



writer on the British film magazine, *Amateur Cine World*. Paul and I are pictured left in a Dann Perkins photo with Derek Davy. He said he felt the reason *Jamie* was placed higher than *The Leucocyte Story* was because any film which has living people in it is a far better film than a film which has cartoons. He thought the majority of people are interested in other people more than they are in animated objects. An audience, the judges will pump for and care more about true people, real people than they will about a cartoon or clay figure.

On character development, Mr. Davy said that it's important that we should understand not only how a character looks, but how he thinks and how he feels. The placing of the character in *Jamie* was so definite, was done so visually and so quickly that we were immediately involved and we wanted to learn more about the boy. He

was leaving his mother, going into the Army and marching off to war. We wanted to know how he felt. This was portrayed throughout the film and what kept the film moving. His reaction was when he saw death to do what the majority of people would do and that's probably vomit. If you've never seen death in that way before, this would be the reaction and he reacts as you and I would react. Of the Confederate soldier's character, Mr. Davy quipped that Paul was just that, a character, and he meant it as a compliment.

Derek Davy would later write in *Amateur Cine World* that I was a personable young director who was assisted by the equally-talented Paul Bentzen as one of the principal actors and as musical director. He called *Jamie* an anti-war film which showed what happened to a young 15 year old Civil War bugler. There was no need to be an historian to appreciate the story. Its message was as good in the setting of the American Civil War as it would be in any other nationalistic set. The battle scenes were outstanding and as effective as a full-scale Hollywood extravaganza because they made vivid use of the close-up, have action and are accompanied by a competent soundtrack.

During the day we viewed the Honorable Mention films. Of course we were biased watching John Primm's *The Marble*. It was the only film in the program which had merit. All others failed to impress. Most were downright embarrassing. One after the other lacked in technique, lacked in really good stories. It was hard to believe that these films actually won prizes. We couldn't blame Derek Davy for walking out on the screenings because they really were bad films.

Paul and I were dinner guests of Valerie Levine from Beverley Hills and Esther Cooke. Valerie was the wife of Hollywood movie producer Joseph Levine. She believed in UFOs and that lead to a fascinating and offbeat discussion. She had observed during the previous night's screening of *Jamie*, a very clear, but mystical presence in the room. She was truly affected, said that it was weird because she felt Corky was there.

We really hadn't to worry about stretching our tight budget. Again, Paul and I saved money on food and drinks. Sometime after dinner in the bar we were treated to drinks by John Fitzgerald, Tullio Pellegrini, and Derek Davy. Our conversation centered on *Jamie* and filmmaking in general.

Mr. John Fitzgerald from Toronto, Canada, was the producer of the film *The Day of the Beginning* which I obtained for screening in the 1965 Milwaukee Movie Makers Festival. He had a strong feeling for any film about the Civil War and would go out of his way to see films on the subject. He enjoyed my film immensely because it had a worthwhile message. He recognized that a beginner who

can direct a battle scene like I did had a feel for film already. He wanted to know how I'd gained or learned that appreciation. I said that in Civil War films I'd seen there seemed to be thousands upon thousands of soldiers on the battlefield and that, realistically, was completely inaccessible to us. We tried to create the illusion of bigness by staying small, by being in the action. While these people were fighting, I was with them, being bumped by them, moving the camera amongst them, and I think we created the illusion of vast armies by being included, by being a part of the battle.

Talking about a feature film Mr. Fitzgerald had made about Toronto with 50 professional actors, he discussed paying for needle drops of professional music, how if a piece performed by a symphony orchestra is used, everybody in that orchestra has to be paid. The cost of paying the talent prohibited making any profit on selling a print of the film. "Ah," I said, "Just in case we could show my film for profit, that's why we chose to use our own music in *Jamie*." Paul related to our "fans" how we recruited unknowns to play our music and how he improvised traditional Civil War and public domain songs on harmonica and banjo. He told how he simply plucked strings and, through improvised hit and miss, came up with "Jamie's Theme".

In our chat about the effect of music on film, Paul and I shared recollections telling a story of how, even before we started shooting *Jamie*, Paul dressed in his Confederate uniform for John Schelkopf's Nickelodeon screening of D. W. Griffith's 1915 Civil War epic, *The Birth of a Nation*. As a prologue, Paul walked on stage with his banjo to perform a Civil War medley. When the audience first saw Paul in the tattered Rebel uniform, they thought he was putting them on. Paul had built his reputation in comedy. They anticipated a funny show and chuckled. However, once Paul sang and played, all hint of laughter vanished. People were moved by his words and music. Tears welled in their eyes. Quite the unexpected impact was made. When Paul finished his medley, contemporary rather than traditional melodies with one song having been the heart-wrenching "Two Brothers", some gave Paul a standing ovation and clapped for at least a good minute. They wanted an encore, but Paul had already left the stage. He said that was all he had because he hadn't prepared another Civil War song.

Mr. Pellegrini, a former PSA-MPD Gold Medal winner in 1957 for *The Nightingale* and the only member of the judging panel with guts enough to come to the convention, made some astute, invaluable and objective observations on how my film could be improved. However with the loss of our main actor, I didn't think we could add or reshoot anything new to make improvements. Mr. Pellegrini, speaking in a strong Italian accent for the judges, said they'd felt that *Jamie* had been made at the most propitious time, given what was happening in Vietnam, and that we didn't know which direction we would go, whether toward more war or to peace. The judges believed that of the content of all the movies they had in the PSA contest, mine was the one which touched them the most because it was something that could be very real at the present moment due to the situation in Vietnam. He observed that people are put together to fight and they often don't even know what they're fighting for. It's very simple to try to persuade or mesmerize these young kids into going to a war where, actually, they don't even know what the heck they're fighting for. That one way or the other, he emphasized, was conveyed in my film.

Of my Gold Medal, he was very pleased that I, a young man, was this year's winner and that more people like me were needed in the organization. On *Jamie* specifically, he said the directing of the film was stronger than the filming itself. The photography was slightly inferior to the directing because I had concentrated on extracting from all of the actors their best performance, and it worked because all of the actors are amateurs. The acting was professional and the story came out as believable. It was important to believe in the actors in order to believe in the story.

The PSA makes no actual awards for acting in their competitions, but I was told that had such a category been included, three actors would have been nominated: our late James Corcoran who portrayed Jamie, Paul Bentzen as the wounded Confederate, and Mickey Konewko, a young boy from Villa Park, Illinois, who starred in John Primm's *The Marble*.

The PSA-MPD caters mainly to and for the amateur filmer, but it does accept commercial productions for competition with the amateur films. Commercial films often include university student productions which have been made during a filmmaking course. These are deemed commercial because of the filmmaker's use of professional equipment, an access not easily attained by the average amateur filmmaker. Another type of commercial film is one made specifically for commercial distribution and will often contain subject matter of an educational nature. The PSA's award for Best Commercial Film was sponsored by *American Cinematographer* magazine and presented for Excellence of Movie Material. Films entered in the Commercial Film section don't compete only in their section. They are eligible for any of the other awards.

Friday, October 7, Paul and I met up with Mr. Ray Shady, pictured left in a Dann Perkins photo, and attended a just-after-breakfast screening of four commercial films. The audience was a mere handful of enthusiasts. Each film was very interesting. *The Language of the Bee* won Best Commercial Film.



Monarch Butterfly told of the creature's life cycle and had won the MPD Nature Trophy. We thought it would have been a good film for screenings in schools. Androcles and the Lion was animated and shot on 35mm film. watched a 16mm reduction print. fantastically funny. We never knew what to expect and had to stay on our toes to pick up all the subtle visual jokes. I thought it would be worth getting hold of it for the Milwaukee Movie Makers Film Festival. Stillborn won a Ten Best and the Student Film Trophy for Jeff Strickler at New York University where he studied filmmaking. It was well worth our time and we felt it should have been included in the banquet film program. It most likely wasn't

included because some plodding elders in the MPD had termed it smut, scum. *Stillborn*'s actors are naked, but the image is a black and white negative. Nothing prurient is on display. Yet the day before when we sat through the amateurish Honorable Mentions, these same dinosaurs laughed overtly at the crudely comic efforts of adultery, apparently enjoying them, appreciating the lousy exaggerated ham pantomiming of ogling eyes and wiggling of eyebrows from overweight bald men and scantily-clothed unattractive women.

Stillborn was about a twentyish boy daydreaming about the outcome of his actions with his girl and how it will compel him to get married, to settle down, to buy a house and eventually be "buried" by a conforming society. Shot in stark black and white, the film used a soft negative image to convey the boy's more vivid dreams as he and his girl gambol, each naked, through the woods or recline supine at the side of a stream. The artistic film worked effectively by means of the deftness of the director and by the performers' unashamedness.

In his praise of my film *Jamie*, Mr. Ed Kentera may have innocently furnished some insight into why *Stillborn* was considered too scathing and was conscientiously overlooked for a prominent banquet screening. First, he provided a background to the group who selects the films for awards. If it was the Podunk Camera Club which selected *Jamie* as the Best Film of the Year, it wouldn't mean as much. The Photographic Society of America is the largest photographic organization in the world with nearly 12,000 members scattered to every corner of the free world and a few members from behind the Iron Curtain, but not in any great number. One of the PSA's former great filmmakers, now living in the United States, was from Cuba. The PSA is comprised of seven different divisions, the Motion Picture Division being just one. The international film competition each year attracts entries from many foreign lands. The importance, the value of *Jamie* being picked as top film out of 186 films this year was more significant when we think who I won over. The PSA sponsors, through its international film festival, the oldest film competition in the world. Cannes, France, is only about 19

or 20 years old and the PSA has continuously conducted its competition for 37 years. The PSA is second only to the Academy Awards in Hollywood. PSA's amateur films don't reach the stature of Hollywood's because they are made by professionals, people who dedicate their livelihood, who give their entire lives to making movies.

Mr. Kentera said he liked seeing young people like me producing films of the calibre of *Jamie* because as the PSA's old-timers go into retirement, weeding in the garden and other things, hooking rugs – yes, there are some who are actually making hook rugs, the PSA needs to know the pursuit of our mutual hobby is being passed on to younger hands with my dedicated interest. Without a prompt, tellingly so, Mr. Kentera added that he didn't personally subscribe to the many so-called avant-garde<sup>2</sup> or art films and experimental films. He didn't know why the term experimental is given because many of the experiments of filmmaking were started 50 years ago by pioneers of the motion picture industry. Eisenstein. David Wark Griffith. Cecil B. DeMille. They were the experimentalists who found the methods of good cinematography. Now the younger people who never learned the rules break the rules and call it experimental, myself or Paul not included because our film, in his book, certainly wasn't an avant-garde film. He said that *Jamie* was a realist film, a real film, and the actors were honest. "The acting was convincing. This is important. We rarely find in an amateur actor a convincing performance," Mr. Kentera said.

Stillborn was in good competition with *The Leucocyte Story* and my film *Jamie* for the Gold Medal. Mr. George Cushman provided some insight into what happened behind the scenes in the judging sessions. There were two judgings, first being three pre-judging groups working in Los Angeles. One group looked at documentary films, another watched all the story films, and a third panel took all the rest. Each jury saw about 60 films plus. The story film jury selected the best of them to go up to the finals. The final was the second judging. After seeing *Jamie*, one of the pre-judges said, "Well, if the final judges don't pick that for the Gold Medal winner, they're crazy!" On hearing that comment, George Cushman knew *Jamie* had a good chance and wrote a letter asking me to write in my own words what the film was about. "Sometimes," he said, "the jury doesn't quite see the film as the maker intended. In any review, we should have, in black and white, what the picture was trying to do. It's only fair to the maker." He made me wise to the fact that something good might come of *Jamie* in the final judging.

George Cushman took the cream of the films, about one-third of the entries, to San Francisco for the finals where they were scrutinized by seven judges. "I don't know why this is secret, why this isn't all right for me to say, your picture received 4½ votes on the first ballot, *The Leucocyte Story* received 2 votes, and *Stillborn* received a half. So, of course, your picture won on the first ballot without any trouble. The competition was from *The Leucocyte Story* to some degree and *Stillborn* to a small degree. A winner should know whether the win has come easily or whether it was through stiff competition. Congratulations are in order because last year with six judges, six different films were named for the Gold Medal on the first ballot and we had to figure out some way to come to a decision." He iterated from what he wrote in the PSA magazine article that it was the first time in his seven years associated with the PSA competition and with judges, this was the first time that he had ever known judges, who after long sessions looking at movies good and not so good and who are very well tired out by this time, to applaud at the end of any film. After seeing mine, they did. Enthusiastically. Mr. Cushman concluded with, "I can't think of a greater compliment than that."

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the arts, those ideas and practices regarded as in advance of those generally accepted. Mr. Kentera's reference was in regard to breaking the rules of making motion pictures and re-naming such mistakes or lack of understanding of the cardinal rules as cinematography ahead of the accepted norm.

## Chapter 47: I Meet Harold Lloyd

Tisiting with Harold Lloyd in his Sheraton-Jefferson suite was, word for word from the reel-to-reel tape recording, "Even more exciting than winning the Gold Medal." We'd overheard a breakfast conversation and learned that Harold Lloyd was at the convention. Margaret Conneely hearing that we'd like to meet him, made the arrangement. I don't know how she did it, but when the appointment for 1:30 p.m. Friday, October 7 had been agreed, she made me understand that Mr. Lloyd was just as keen to meet me. It was the highlight of the convention.

Dann didn't attend our historic meeting. He had gone to Illinois to visit friends. Paul and I stood at the door with Mrs. Conneely, her little Kodak Brownie in hand. Without a word, she gestured for me to knock. Following my gentlemanly tap, tap, tap, the great man himself answered the door and invited us in. Harold Lloyd offered to shake my hand with his left hand. First time I'd ever done a handshake using a left hand. The reason will become clear later in this chapter.

Most readers will undoubtedly ask, "Well, who in heck is Harold Lloyd?" Harold Lloyd made over 165 short films, 11 silent features, and 7 talkies. A suitable title for Lloyd might have been "the Comedian of the American Dream." Most of his features made in the 1920s were comic examinations of the formula for success, be it commercial, social, or romantic. Lloyd played the All-American Boy; a go-getter, he was eager, hard-working, honest, innocent. His film persona included a boater (straw hat) and trademark horned-rimmed glasses. He was thusly known as "the glass character." But he was once remembered as "The King of Daredevil Comedy" for the hair-raising stunts he performed high in the air on tall buildings. The quintessential Harold Lloyd image is his hanging off the hands of a clock. In 1928 Lloyd was one of the richest men in Hollywood and the number one comic box office drawcard. He made more films than the combined efforts of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. In the whole of the silent era the top five film comedians, in order of audience popularity, were Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, the comedy team of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, and the now mostly forgotten baby-faced Harry Langdon. Although he had directors on his pictures, Lloyd did most of the direction of himself and of his pictures, but he never took a credit for direction. Harold Lloyd was a major figure in the art of silent film comedy.

Harold Lloyd's suite was nothing short of palatial. It made our room look like a closet for storing janitorial equipment. Hidden behind closed ornate doors, no bedroom or bathroom was visible. We were in a spacious reception room, a parlor with a cream leather-upholstered sofa, several matching stuffed chairs, a marble-topped coffee table, and a small dining set for four. Strategically placed wall mirrors gave the impression the room was larger and they contributed to effectively repeating the raised fleur de lis-patterned wallpaper. Mr. Lloyd ushered us to the stuffed chairs inviting us to be seated whilst he sat facing us on the sofa. I put my tape recorder onto the floor beside the coffee table. We talked amiably and comfortably. Even though I knew I was in the company of one of Hollywood's silent era greats, I held my enthusiasm in check and didn't gush like a drooling goggle-eyed fan. Mundane pleasantries exchanged included such probing questions and substantial answers as "How are you?" and "I'm fine" and "What are you doing here at the PSA?" He was a member of the Stereo Division. In other words, he shot 35mm slides in 3D and had won many awards for his stereoscopic photography. They could be projected onto a screen using a special projector or viewed by a hand-held device called a Stereopticon or Stereoscope. For some images 3D red cyan glasses were recommended to view images correctly in 3D.

I asked Mr. Lloyd if I was allowed to set up my tape recorder. "Of course you may," Harold Lloyd said, "and you have my permission to use the recording for whatever you want."



Leaving out the pauses and non-verbals which frequently punctuate a thinking-out-loud process, as well as most repeated words or phrases due to slow-thinking or excitement during delivery, what follows is a transcript of the 14 minute 47 second tape-recorded interview and discussion. All that's missing in print is the inflection, the emotion in each voice. L = Larry Klobukowski. H = Harold Lloyd. P = Paul Bentzen. M = Margaret Conneely.

(Pictured left, seated left to right): 21 year-old me interviewing silent screen comedian Harold Lloyd as Paul Bentzen looks on. Margaret Conneely took the snapshot October 7, 1966 in Harold Lloyd's suite of the Sheraton-Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri.

L: Well, this is report 5 for the day, October 7<sup>th</sup>, and the big moment has finally arrived. This is even more exciting than accepting the Gold Medal, to me anyway. We finally met Harold Lloyd. So, Mr. Lloyd, welcome to our tape recorder.

H: Thank you very much, Larry. (Laughs with a heh, heh!) I was surprised to hear that you had won so many medals here. I didn't have the opportunity to see it unfortunately. Hope I will get the chance. That's the trouble here at the PSA. You have so many programs going on all at once...

- L. (talking over Mr. Lloyd) So many things to do and so little time to do them.
- H. Yes. You go into another category; you kinda favor that as a rule.
- L. Uh huh.
- H. I certainly want to congratulate you. I understand that...what are you, just 21?
- L. That's right, sir.
- H. Well, you certainly and... eh, your cohort here that I understand that you did pretty well by him and he did pretty well by you. Is that right?
- L. Well, Paul's kinda talented as an actor.
- H. Oh, that's great. I hope, as I've said before, to have the opportunity to see you in this... see your picture here... and I hope that you go ahead and make many more. Is it on the comedy side or...?
- L. (Interjects quickly) Heavens no! It's very...
- H. (talking over Larry) ... very much on the dramatic side.
- L. It's a tender story. It's a story of a young Union bugler who displays an act of kindness toward a wounded Confederate.
- H. Oh, isn't that fine.

- L. And the tragic consequences.
- H. Yes. Oh, that's wonderful. I saw a Russian picture with a soldier. I don't recall the name of that either. It's a picture that ran only a couple of years ago. But it was a beautiful one. It was a tender one too. I enjoyed it very much.
- L. Was it, perhaps, Ballad of a Soldier?
- H. I think that's what it was.
- L. We saw that almost two years ago at the university in Stevens Point.
- H. Yes, it was beautifully done. Well, I hope you go on now and put another one together and, with this kind of a record, why it looks like you're going to be whetted to our Industry.
- L. Well, that would be nice. (laughs)
- H. Looks like you're going to be headed for the theatre and if you can accomplish this, why, you should accomplish a great many more and I certainly hope that you go on. As they said to me, and I remember it very well when I was a pup. 12 years old, I did my first big stage play and got my first notice. They said, "Master Harold Lloyd will probably go very far in the histrionic world." And I didn't know what histrionic meant. But it sounded very good when they explained to me. And Larry, I hope that you go tremendous, tremendous long ways in this histrionic world of ours.
- L. Well, thank you very much Mr. Lloyd and... if you don't mind, I'd like to put you on the spot for just a few seconds.
- H. All right. We'll see what it is.
- L. Paul and I have seen some of your films in our Nickelodeon series. This is run by John Schelkopf in which you spend a nickel and you get a whole two to three hours entertainment of the old silent films. And we did see, oh, one or two of your films there and, of course, they were absolutely hilarious. I laughed till I had tears in my eyes.
- H. Where did... where did you see these?
- L. At Wisconsin State University Stevens Point.
- H. Oh, yes.
- L. So now I would like to ask you, or have you tell us rather if... tell us something about one of your experiences possibly while hanging on a clock or walking through one of those girders. (laughs)
- H. Well, now you know the funny part is that I made about... over 300 pictures counting one-reelers and such and... I only made five of the thrill kind, if you're talking about hanging from ledges and clocks, et cetera.
- L. Well, this is one of the films we saw.
- H. The funny part is that these five pictures I guess somehow with the public had an impact and I guess the scene where I hang on the hands of a clock is... I'm probably best known for that scene of probably all the scenes...
- L. Well, it's been printed in many books, you know.

H. We had a hard time every time we would make one of these thrill pictures. We had to kinda live it down afterwards. They wanted to see thrill pictures in every one I made. Well, of course, as I said we only made five of them. And pictures like *The Freshman*, and *Grandma's Boy*, and *Kid Brother*, 'n *Girl Shy...* and all those... they... in my opinion they were equally good as *The Freshman*, but we always had... I mean *Safety Last*. But we always had to battle *Safety Last* for the thrill.

L. You were actually hanging from that clock too, weren't you?

H. Oh, yes.

L. I mean this wasn't a dummy up.

H: No. This was about 9 stories in the air, the clock was...

L and M: Oh, my God!

M: Were you ever scared?

H. What is it?

M: Were you ever scared?

H. Well, I can tell you this, that whenever we started one of those sequences it took me about three days to get adjusted up there. I would hardly do anything.

M: We always were scared for you.

H: Yes... but after about three days you kinda get conditioned, and then you get overly-conditioned because we had platforms built below me with mattresses on them a long ways down, about twice as high as this ceiling which I guess, about eight feet. About 15 feet down we had another platform, but no railings around me, so if you did have occasion to slip or to jump to them, you best land on the platform.

L: Did you ever experience such a thing?

H: Oh, I jumped two or three times. I don't recall of ever falling, but two, three times when I was doing balancing scenes on the ledge, I knew the platform was there and I wanted to go as far as I could and once or twice I went a little farther than I should, (background laughter) so the moment I found it I was really gonna go, well then, I turned and leaped. You leap flat so you can land flat. Mattresses are nice and soft.

L. Um hmm.

H. And you don't roll that way. It isn't very healthy to roll. But, oh, we've had so many sequences that... now like one we had in a picture called *Girl Shy* and we had a very long chase in it. I think it's easily the best chase I ever made. Now you probably never saw that picture a 'tall.<sup>1</sup>

L: Probably not.

H: Did you see a picture we did called World of Comedy?

L: I believe so. It was in Stevens Point.

<sup>1</sup> a 'tall. A conversational Midwestern colloquialism for "at all".

H: We called it *Harold Lloyd's World of Comedy* and it was a feature picture, ran about an hour and forty minutes.

M: (too muffled to understand) ... about a month ago.

H: Yes. The only reason I mention it is because if you've seen it, then you'd know what I was talking about. Because it has a large portion of the chase that I'm talking about in that picture; it was one where I was on streetcars and on fire engines, riding horses right down the middle of Broadway, and so forth. But of course we didn't do... our pictures weren't all just thrills and action like that. We had pictures like Grandma's Boy that had practically none of that. And The Kid Brother practically had none of that. And The Freshman didn't. As I say, a lot of people naturally, because the ones we made they were honestly made. They weren't process or trick photography. So they had a big impact, but I think probably one that I'd been best known for has been The Freshman. It's a college picture, and we're starting to release that now. We're releasing that here in the Middle West first at all the big ten colleges, mostly on the off-campus theaters, but several of them right on campus. We showed it to... about three weeks ago to the National Student Congress in the University of Illinois, in Champagne. And, of course, we were delighted because they reacted; the students reacted to it exactly as to the age group we made it for many years before. Then we, we're going to show it to, as I say, Purdue and Lafayette, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and all these because I have lost a generation. And so we just thought we'd show it around these things here and see if we couldn't get this generation back. (laughs heartily)

L: Well, Paul, do you have any questions to ask?

H: Paul, we kind of cheated you out of this, but I can't put you into this because I haven't had the good fortune to see the picture, so I know that you were probably one of the great boons in helping Larry get these honors. But I still have to see you in it to, more or less, throw some accolades your way.

P: One question I was going to ask you, you partially answered already, and this was, how much theatrical experience you had prior to getting into the films, what you did before this and how you got started. Yeah. You said you started when you were 12 years old.

H: Yes sir, well I'll tell you I'm the only one in our family really that ever went on the stage, but I never had any other ideas. I think the first part that I had was a walk-on part with one line when I was about 8 years old in Macbeth. In fact, my brother was one of the assistant property men and when they needed this boy, this little travelling company that came to our small town, said, "Oh, my brother can do it. My brother can do it." And so... they got me... (background laughter) And all I had to do was walk out with Macbeth on the drop, you know, where they have the footlights and, of course they grabbed my father Macbeth and killed him and I'm supposed to turn and run, "Help!" all the way off the stage. Well, it was no trick at all to yell, "Help!" on the stage in front of the audience, but the moment I got backstage with all the electricians and the grips and things, I got too embarrassed to yell, "Help!" So somebody else had to take it. (background laugh) Pretend to be my voice. (background laughter) Go on away keep yelling, "Help." It went on... (background laughter) but I started then, and then when I was about 11 and 12 I started in, my first series was in Omaha, Nebraska, in the Burwood Stock Company. And I had some wonderful parts there. My largest part was in Tess of the D'Urbervilles. I played little Abram in it. Abraham. I guess it was about forty sides or more. You know what a side is, of course, well, naturally. And I went on to play many more, ones like Nell Gwyn, oh, just scores of them. Then I went to the coast and that was quite a little different idea. That was about 17 when I went to the coast. Of course before then I'd done everything. I'd been usher and candy butcher and a bout even call boy in a burlesque show. I'd done practically everything you can think of in the theater. And there was a stock company in San Diego. I was living in Omaha at the time. And they said they would give me a position out there in the stock company. Small parts, of course, if I'd come. But I had quite a desire to go to New York which was, naturally, the Mecca of the stage. This was pre-pictures. And we flipped a coin... and California won

(breaks into a laugh), so we went to California (laughs). If it had come ... if it had come heads, I don't know what would have happened. I'd have been off on another tangent. But I have a tremendous amount of stage work, practically everything you can think of in that degree and then it wasn't until after that I started getting into pictures, little small parts in pictures. In fact, even though I'd had a lot of stage experience, I had trouble even getting into the studios. In those days a studio just really wasn't a building. It was a fence that ran around a lot. We did all of our scenes outside on big open air stages with these canvases that we commonly called diffusers, maybe tarpons. Universal had about ten companies working and it was very difficult getting into the gate. When I went out there I noticed that anyone coming in and out of the gate, with the old gateman sitting there in his chair, if they had make-up on, he didn't challenge them. So that gave me my cue. Next day I brought some make-up out and put make-up on (loud background laughter almost blots out end of sentence) and had no difficulty going right through. So I worked out there many, many, oh, couple years, I guess round in different things until Hal Roach and I finally teamed up. He had the money and he produced the pictures and, well, we were... we were kind of associates for years and years till finally he kept doing many things himself. I kinda got taking over of my own end of it and very amicably we went each on our own way. It's a long story. I don't think you have enough tape.

L: (laughter) Yes. We are running out of tape. Well, Mr. Lloyd, to put a bit of theatrical finesse into this, it's been a pleasure and an honor to meet you.

H: Larry, you and Paul, I really wish you much luck in the years to come. I surely hope that, if it

looks like you've done right now, that you got theater in your heart and that's what it takes because no matter how good you are you're gonna get many setbacks, many disillusions, but don't let them bother you. If you really feel the theater's what you want, just keep driving ahead and that's why you'll make it.

L: Thank you Mr. Lloyd.

## P. Thank you.

Pictured right is the snapshot Margaret Conneely took after we finished recording our interview with Harold Lloyd, October 7, 1966.

When the recording was finished, Mr. Lloyd told me I had his permission to do with that tape whatever I wanted. It was my property, not his.



In a post-script recording, I reported that most people would think about meeting a celebrity, "Big deal, he's just another human being." It turned out that Harold Lloyd was one of the most human people we'd ever met, a really nice, gentle, easy-going man. Born in Burchard, Nebraska, he was an utterly charming Midwesterner. Conversational and welcoming, he put us at ease. As Paul remarked afterward, "If you didn't know who he was, he was just this man at a table." Harold Lloyd's personality exceeded all expectations. He wasn't at all 'Hollywood,' no airs of importance, of needing to be treated with reverence or awe because he was a movie star. Harold Lloyd was 73, but he certainly didn't look it. He wore his trademark glasses, round-rimmed with brownish-red frames. We were made to feel comfortable. Talking with Mr. Lloyd was almost like sitting on a kindly grandfather's knee, for he was warm and sincere as he told us stories from his past.

Paul said on our recording, "I was really interested to hear how much experience he had before the movies because a lot of people think he was discovered overnight. People look at movie stars and, oh my God, he started at five years old as Fleance in *Macbeth*." "Eight, eight years old," I interjected. "Eight. Yeah. He's done a lot of things. Shakespeare and so many other plays."

We were treated to an oral history of early Hollywood. When the tape was about to run off the reel and my only choice was to switch off the Sony 102, Harold Lloyd continued to share stories. Had I an inkling of how Mr. Lloyd would freely talk about his career in the movies, I could have brought more tapes, let the things go, and recorded so many more stories about his frequent visitors, Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton, to his Beverley Hills estate called "Greenacres". One off-beat thing I learned was that Harold Lloyd said he kept a decorated Christmas tree in his living room year round because it would have been too much work to undecorate it and take it down until the following year, and he believed that everyday should be Christmas. He spoke about how his influence got Laurel and Hardy started and how he encouraged Hal Roach to get baby-faced Harry Langdon going.

During our interview, I may have inadvertently poked a thorn in Harold Lloyd's craw when I innocently mentioned that we'd seen his films in the Nickelodeon series. If you look back into the transcript, you'll see his response was an agitated, "Where did... where did you see these?" I was unaware then that Harold Lloyd owned the distribution and screening rights to most of his films. He was one of the money-smart performers of the silent era who looked after his own financial interests for his own future. That's why, just before the advent of the talking picture, Harold Lloyd had been one of the richest men in Hollywood. In a time when Hollywood studios owned the films they made and owned the network of theaters where they were screened, the silver nitrate prints returned after a theatrical run, sometimes even the original silver nitrate negatives, were burned to retrieve the 50¢ worth of silver content. Despite MGM's motto of "Ars Gratia Artis" (Art for Art's Sake) motion pictures weren't looked upon or even considered as art. Movies were a manufactured commodity quickly consumed by the public and just as quickly disposed of and forgotten about until the next big thing came along. The business of films was just that, a business, and just like a fast food meal it was cooked (filmed), served (screened), chewed up (watched by audiences), and digested or spat out (enjoyed or not by the audience); once eaten (theatrical run) it was finished (thrown out).

Hollywood's movies were made with inbuilt obsolescence. Harold Lloyd's personal insurance to ensure his legacy and to profit from his own pictures was to buy and own the rights to his own films. He saw a future in hanging onto his pictures to show to future generations and make more money than what he earned during initial release. It also gave him complete control over making his pictures. Whenever any of his five thrill pictures, or any of his other pictures for that matter, were screened away from Harold Lloyd's control, as in the Nickelodeon series we enjoyed in Stevens Point, it was a certainty the print shown was a pirated dupe and, without doubt, that's what John Schelkopf was showing when he presented the 400 foot excerpt from *Safety Last*.

Harold Lloyd's World of Comedy, his compilation film mentioned in our interview, debuted at the Cannes Film Festival in 1962. It was followed a year later by a second compilation feature Harold Lloyd's Funny Side of Life. Controlling the rights to his library, Lloyd never sold his films to television.

Now I'll share the reason for Harold Lloyd using his left hand to shake hands with me. August 23, 1919, a photographer from the Witzel Studio arrived and posed Lloyd for publicity photos. One of them was to show Lloyd holding a mock bomb and looking up to heaven. "And I damn near went to heaven," said Mr. Lloyd. He was working on his fifth film, *Haunted Spooks* (1920), for Hal Roach when an accident with a supposedly fake bomb seriously injured him. An eyewitness was actor Roy Seawright. He said there was a prop table full of dishes and a prop bomb, "a round black Bolshevik bomb with a long white wick. He took out a cigarette and lit it and then he took a puff, looked over at the table and picked up that bomb, brought it to his face and put the wick to his cigarette and lit the bomb."

The bomb was held right in his face where it could have blown off his head. Providence made Lloyd lower the bomb to say something to the photographer. Harold Lloyd told Ralph Edwards on "This Is Your Life" in 1955, "Then I realized it wouldn't make a good picture, so the only thing that saved my life was that I was going to say 'It's no good now,' so as I said 'It's' and I lowered it here, the bomb went off." That movement of his hand probably saved Lloyd's life.

A window shattered and a hole larger than a grapefruit was blown in the ceiling. Roy Seawright said Lloyd was, "Still standing in his mark where the bomb went off and he grabbed his wrist. The thumb was gone. The first finger here was dangling, hanging right down the front swinging around, and he looked at it and you could see the look of terror that came over his face." It seemed certain he would be blind for life. His face was torn and powder-burned. Two digits from his right hand were lost and his arm was in a plaster cast. Lloyd was laid up for nine months.

He contemplated a career away from acting. He could write or direct instead. It was fortunate for himself and the world of avid movie-goers, Harold Lloyd's recovery was complete. He commissioned a prosthetic glove, an idea put forth by Hal Roach and Samuel Goldwyn. Prior to Goldwyn heading his own film studio and before he went into partnership with Louis B. Mayer to form Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Polish-Jewish immigrant Sam Goldwyn was a glove salesman. Devised by Goldwyn was a kid glove, a patent leather glove with the index finger sewn to the middle finger. Any time Lloyd moved his middle finger, the index finger would move. The glove was the same shade as Lloyd's face make-up. The thumb and forefinger had an insert in it. The middle, 4<sup>th</sup> and pinky finger were real. The glove was ingenious. In the late 1920s Hollywood make-up artist Wally Westmore designed a prosthetic hand for Lloyd.

Being a human fly on a building requires the use and strength of both hands. Feet may and can slip, but a firm grip of the hands ensure the climber doesn't fall. It would be challenging enough for a person with full use of two hands to climb up the side of a building and hang from the hands of a clock. Harold Lloyd did it with one good left hand and a right hand without two fingers inside a prosthetic glove which looked and moved like a complete hand.

Dann Perkins returned from Illinois about 9:30 p.m. Friday. We were nowhere to be found, probably at some film screening, and Dann had to ask at the desk for a key to our room. He recorded a message onto the tape. "We're not going home for a few days because we have some minor difficulties with the automobile. I'm not sure if they can get the door pushed out or not. I hope you don't mind. It's gonna be a little bit cold, but then I have wired home for money, so don't worry." He returned to the lobby and still didn't find us. He met photographer Manuel Carrillo, one of the top five still photographers in Mexico with, in 1966, seven worldwide showings of his prints. Dann's conversation with Mr. Carrillo was initiated by the Mamiya-flex camera Dann had hanging around his neck. Dann had seen this man's work in salons in Washington D.C. and Japan and had seen his photo credits given in various publications. This "in the flesh" meeting with Manuel Carrillo was to Dann just as important as the movie people Paul and I met during the convention. He returned to the lobby and the bar for a drink and that's where we eventually caught up. We didn't hear Dann's "pulling our leg" automobile story until the three of us sat together in the room after midnight.

In her capacity of incoming PSA officer, Margaret Conneely arranged a special, off-the-official program screening of *Jamie* so that Harold Lloyd could see it. Scheduled for 11:30 p.m. Friday, well past what most conventioneers considered bedtime, word of mouth filled the screening room with more than a hundred eager viewers, people who'd missed the premiere screening and some who'd seen my film already and were keen to watch it again. Giving the screening a personal touch, Dann, Paul and I greeted attendees at the door.

I was surprised to see Harold Lloyd arrive with his wife, Mildred Davis, on his arm. We hadn't met her in his suite. She was his second leading lady after Bebe Daniels left Roach to work for DeMille. Teenage Mildred Davis became Lloyd's wife in 1923 and they stayed married until she passed in 1969. Interestingly, Lloyd insisted she retire from film acting after they were wed, which she reluctantly did.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd were ushered into the best seats in the house. After my film *Jamie* finished, Harold Lloyd came up to me holding a crumpled handkerchief in his hand. He wiped away a tear and, in no more than a whisper, as if making his comment as personal as possible, said, "Larry, it's a fine film."

## Chapter 48: Something about Histrionics and History

Civil War A-Go Go Ginger Ale Stereotype

Tithin days of an uneventful 8 hour drive back to Stevens Point from the dizzying celebrity of the St. Louis convention, a flurry of publicity followed. Articles about *Jamie* heading the PSA Ten Best appeared in college, local, state and national newspapers, magazines *Trumpet* in Texas and *Amateur Cine World*, London. I hadn't realized the reach of my notoriety. Some carrying previous stories about my filmmaking used a fresh approach highlighting our meeting with Harold Lloyd. Just as admirers fawn upon an Olympian's Gold Medal, everyone wanted to see *Jamie*'s Gold Medal. Unlike Olympic Gold, mine was blessed by Father Finucan.

It was fall and, following Father Finucan's blessing the Gold Medal, we discussed adapting my short story, Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei, to film. Like the horse called Goldie, Father Finucan champed at the bit to play the role of the priest murdered by his Caucasian congregation, moreso since *Jamie* had been so highly honored. The title was too long, too difficult to say or even remember. I considered shortening the title to Ad Altare Dei and quickly dismissed the thought. No one would know what it meant unless, of course, you found and talked to an ancient Roman. The priest and I agreed on a shorter English translation, *The Altar of God*.

For the altar boy, I looked at the boys in my church choir and John Jonas caught my type-casting attention. He was a small lad with short-cropped hair and a cherubic face I figured the camera would love. I sensed John wouldn't feel uncomfortable or self-conscious in front of a camera. Whenever Johnny Corcoran, John Jonas and I sang from the altar facing the congregation, Johnny showed nervousness, whereas John just took it in his stride. Facing the congregation standing just to the side of the altar, seeing those people's faces, we were surprised at how many didn't bother joining in song. Young John's eyes looked into the eyes of non-singing parishioners and, what do you know, quite a few picked up hymnals. There was another strong indication that John Jonas would be the right boy for the role. Without having been taught how important eye contact is among actors, how effective actors can be with the prompt of an eye meeting eye, John managed to strongly communicate without words. Doubtful parishioners joined in out of joy. I'm guessing his eyes filled them with guilt.

My story involved a family and that meant casting a mother, a father and children. The realistic casting of a Negro family went over my head like Jack be nimble, Jack be quick. Except for knowing one or two male students from Nigeria studying at WSU-SP, and one young African-American man performing amongst the College Players, I didn't know any others with dark skin and I never thought of asking beyond them. There were no Negro families living in Stevens Point, not even a married African-American professor on the faculty. I had no idea where I'd find a black family for my story.

Setting of *The Altar of God* was summertime in Lynchbury, Alabama. The town of Stevens Point could stand in easily and look like it was down south. No viewer would pick from the film that the northern temperature in Point was sub-par southern. However, it was now a late autumnal Stevens Point when exhaling hot breath produced a cloud with every word slipping from the mouth, where jackets and stocking caps were autumn's morning, noon, and late afternoon norm, just as when we did re-takes for *Jamie* late in fall and I asked my cast to hold their breath making a take. The filming of my short story would have to wait until late May 1967 when wearing overcoats, fur hats, rubber boots, kid gloves or knit mittens, were replaced with short-sleeved shirts, white socks and shorts.

I should have been pragmatic instead of optimistic and keeping it on the backburner for so long. I should have canned the idea of making the film as soon as it was posed. Had I even attempted adapting my story by rewriting characters, particularly Negroes into characters who weren't Negroes; its relevant timeliness would have been lost. *The Altar of God* was a good story, but turning it into film never developed beyond a pipedream. In a white Polish Stevens Point it couldn't become another "Elkay" Production.

In the wake of the Gold Medal, letters of congratulations arrived. One was from Mr. Arnold H. Klentz, the mayor of West Allis. Others might be considered fan mail. Writing from Hollywood was Cal Lewin, a successful Kodak and CINE Eagle teenage amateur moviemaker whose father was a writer for TV and film. Among his Cal's father's credits was TV's "My Favorite Martian" and, later, Bob Hope's *Boy, Did I Get a Wrong Number* (1966). Also from California was correspondence from David Charles Thomas, an amateur filmmaker and professional cinema projectionist who recommended I strike prints of *Jamie* and seek distribution through one of the Hollywood studios.

Making 16mm optical sound prints involved big money. As requests poured in for programs, I saw each as a pathway to earning dollars for prints. Whichever the organization however, a fee might be discussed or it would be waived. I couldn't bank on a print with my first two bookings. "Encounter" was an interfaith coffeehouse run by Presbyterians and an initial encounter took place at the Presbyterian Church. It was my decision no greenbacks be involved. A Wednesday evening, my St. Stephen's choir sang for a religion class of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. John Primm showed *The Marble* and I was asked to screen *Crucifixion*. A question and answer session followed as well as discussion.

A second "Encounter" program evolved from the first, this one for young adults, and again I chose to show my films gratis. In a post-screening discussion I picked the brains of my enthusiastic and creative-thinking audience. We came up with a love story told entirely in dance, the idea prompted by my participation in a Physical Education class in Jazz Ballet. Twins in the audience were also in the class. Sometimes I partnered with my cousin, Marlene Broniszewski, and I thought she'd be ideal as the principle love interest. The twin boys, whom I only remember as Jeff and Greg, would represent two facets of one personality. Other than myself, I don't know who I should ask to choreograph the dance. Maybe John Primm since he was such an avid fan of *West Side Story* and knew all the routines. Adding challenge to the project was filming in the snow. Dancers in black tights against a background of white snow would provide visual contrast. John Primm would be assistant director and ensure perfect balance of lighting black on white.

I intended calling this new film *Triangle. The Milwaukee Journal*'s picture editor, George Lockwood, rang long distance expressing interest in doing a picture story for the *Sunday Picture Journal* magazine section. The *Journal* was proud that someone so young from Milwaukee won the PSA's top award and he was familiar with the PSA and how it operated. He wanted to spend a day outdoors with me on set. When I described my dance picture idea, he couldn't believe that I'd even attempt to choreograph dance in the snow. The offer was accepted, but George Lockwood's picture shoot would be deferred until *Triangle* was scripted, choreographed, and we had high banks of snow.

Committing the dance film to celluloid was a case of self-imposed procrastination. Heavily involved with class projects and extracurricular activities, I often felt I needed the arms of an octopus, to be speedier than the fastest bullet, and require access to the time machine piloted by Rod Taylor. Constantly on a backburner, Triangle's tardy development did, however, lead to a duet with Marlene for our final exam performance. I said earlier that my summer garbage run had set me up for a new school year. Now in the Jazz Ballet final my newly developed strength and physical fitness paid off. I cannot recall what story our dance told, but I will never forget its climactic move. Marlene ran to me and leapt into the air. Class members gasped. I caught her and held her above my head, slowly pirouetted, and lowered her and myself to a classical one knee pose. Everyone applauded. Our teacher heaped praise and we earned a final grade of  $\underline{A}$ .

Long after winter snows melted into spring, I changed tack and planned for a summer shoot on the sandy shores of Lake Michigan. That didn't eventuate either and the unique idea evaporated into the ether of unfulfilled promise.

About this time is a third example of manifest destiny thwarted, an undertaking to better what I'd captured on celluloid in we were two. To help myself understand Jim Corcoran's death, to interpret my foreboding dream, I wrote a new script heavy in metaphor and symbolism. Called Whitey's Valentine, the concept was tailored for two of my choirboys, John Jonas and Whitey. I can't remember the blonde boy's real name. Even though my dream included a fiery conflagration and we were two avoided one, again I steered clear of fire. This script established a clear reason for one boy passing to the hereafter. He'd be killed in a toboggan accident. In this experimental film of visual poetry, the crucial elements were a white lily, the pure white snow and a toboggan. The boys wouldn't have to stretch to create characters. They were my choirboys and the film showed them as choirboys. They both loved tobogganing and the film called for their using the toboggan chute at Goerki Park. Easter wasn't that far off and that meant florists were well-stocked with lilies.

John Jonas had to be the unluckiest kid I ever wanted in a film. A plan to shoot *Whitey's Valentine* Saturday, February 25, 1967, for whatever reason, fell through. Maybe I was still unsatisfied with how I wrote the boy meeting his demise. Maybe the weather worked against my Saturday schedule. Maybe one or both of the boys somehow tied up with another unexpected commitment. Maybe someone fell ill. I don't know the reason, but it was another instance of good intention never achieving fruition. The script is a scrapbook souvenir. *Whitey's Valentine*, as much as I liked my script, was never made.

The WSU Speech Department conducted a High School Institute in Theater – Interpretation on Saturday, October 15. Miss Mary Elizabeth Thompson conducted a session in Declamation Techniques. Boom Boom Kramer was in charge of Rehearsal Techniques, though I'll never understand why since I always felt frustrated by his airy-fairy technique. Professor Neil Peters presented Stage Movement. Speech students Peter Bratz, Paul Bentzen, Linda Oberman Carey, Ara O'Connel and I presented demonstrations from material from Hemingway, *Hamlet*, *Summer and Smoke*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. I was most connected to *Alice in Wonderland* as I'd devised an interpretation of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party for forensics.

As enjoyable as was the experience of putting on live action and filmed programs for free, prints of Jamie wouldn't be realized until programs earned money. Sometimes a set fee came into play. Other times I found that passing the hat, or in my case the plastic lid of the film can, resulted in donations exceeding expectation. Amongst others wanting to see Jamie was the Stevens Point's Public Service Women's Club, the Wisconsin Rapids Kiwanis, and my financial angel - the Stevens Point Optimists' Club who'd staked \$13 to insure the original of Jamie for \$700 for one year. Their continuing financial support meant I wouldn't pass the can amongst its members for any program. After his successful Nickelodeon performance, Paul participated and tailored a pre-show entertainment for Jamie. He set the mood singing his Civil War medley and playing his composition of "Jamie's Theme" ahead of my switching on the projector. Dressed in his Confederate uniform, Paul performed in the illumination of a kerosene lantern. It was atmospheric, the vision of a ghost; Paul was so affective a mystical effect, it was as if a magic spell had been cast. Audiences didn't applaud when Paul finished. After the bright projection light of Jamie faded from the screen, again there was no applause. Men and women wiped their eyes with handkerchiefs or the soft knuckle of a hand. As if a prayer had ended, the hush in the room was like an inaudible "Amen" until the house lights went up. That was the audience's cue and they brought palm against palm to demonstrate their appreciation.

Channel 7 in Wausau called Cliff Boettcher requesting *Jamie* for televising in prime time, but that it couldn't be done until a sponsor willing to pay for the half-hour air time was confirmed. It was envisioned that, in a one-off, a network show be blacked out and *Jamie* replace it. Cliff told me he'd investigate the amount of money required. Business Management Services would seek a sponsor. The privilege of actually seeing my film on television and the ensuing publicity somehow escaped my initial thinking. My mind went mercenary. Rattling around in my head was, "I'm going to see what I

can get out of this too. *Jamie* can't be shown just anywhere without a price." Sometimes, I think, I was a man with short-sighted vision!

Dean of the School of Fine Arts, Dr. Dean Cantrick, summonsed me to his office saying he had business to discuss. I entered his office with a black cloud over my head. I suspected I'd done something wrong. After all, required to report to a Dean's office usually meant only one thing, trouble. I was wrong. The news was unexpected and encouraging. Dr. Cantrick was interested in knowing what my plans were for the future. I suggested that I thought about working in the film industry, hopefully as a motion picture director. He asked if I had ever considered college teaching. Of course I hadn't. Dr. Cantrick informed me of WSU-SP's long range plans, some three to ten years into the future, and he wanted me to be included. Eventually, Stevens Point would have a Film, Radio and Television Department. I was invited to consider a teaching position within that department. Dean Cantrick advised I go on to graduate school and study academic courses in cinematography, earn a Master's Degree, maybe even a PhD, and participate in practical work experience in the professional film industry. He said the school was very fond of me and proud to have me on its campus. It was felt that I could make it in films and that I should keep in mind Stevens Point and seriously consider a job teaching here in the future. Well, that all took me by surprise. Only time would prove what I was capable of doing and if university teaching was where I aimed. It certainly was an honor even to be considered worthy for such an important ground floor operation.

Before I could consider a Masters or a PhD, my priority was to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts. For a major in Drama, if memory serves, one needed to earn something like 30 credits. I had already amassed 50 plus. One Drama course I took this semester was Playwriting taught by Dr. Seldon Faulkner. It was open only to students having completed advanced studies in Drama. The class met the first day of the semester. Dr. Faulkner showed us what a page of script looked like, as if it was an unfamiliar document to us stage actors. It wasn't meant as a slight, an insult to our intelligence. Actors familiar with script format take it for granted. Dr Faulkner ensured we saw it, recognized it, and adapted it. We were briefed on differences in appearance between stage directions and dialogue. A built-in assumption was that we had developed writing skills. If we required assistance in writing, we shouldn't have signed up for the course. Should we need to discuss plot, character and motivation, setting or time, our professor would make himself available by appointment, but we'd better be darned sure we had something urgent and genuinely important to discuss. Dr. Faulkner wasn't one for having his time wasted in banal chitchat. We could write a One Act, a Two Act, or a play of Three Acts on any subject. The finished play was our one and only assignment and served as our final exam. That was it! One class! Dr. Faulkner - he preferred we address him as Mister - sent us out with something of the order of, "Now go forth and create. We'll see you again the last scheduled class day of term with your play in hand."

Jamie's watchable off-cuts, outtakes, and tail-of-reels gags were strung onto a 600 foot reel after I'd finished making the final cut. The footage was too good to dump in a garbage can because it included Jim Corcoran's bloopers and reels' ends camera mugging. Rather than think of this collection as junk, I considered the leftovers a souvenir, the playing-to-camera a keepsake of on-set antics. I got the idea to make a new film using some off-cuts and supporting these with new footage. Borrowing on John Primm's wild sound method with a battery-operated portable cassette recorder he used on making *The Marble*, with John's assistance I was about to embark on an wild-eared experiment with lip-synch sound.

We knocked out the idea without committing ideas to a written script. We relied upon our ingenuity and the acting skill of improvization used extensively in classes, play rehearsals, and theater games called the Tuesday Afternoon Thing introduced just after we returned from St. Louis and performed before an audience. Theater Games stem from childhood play experience, examples being playing House, Nurse or Doctor, or Cowboys and Indians. The idea centers on improvization along a plot line. Transfer these unrehearsed childhood plays to adults and Theater Games are born. One such game involved players given a setting, like a sewer, and four objects to be explained and made use of without naming any. A dead cat, a balloon, a vacuum cleaner and a basketball were used in the sewer episode. Our minds were sharp. We developed our own off-the-cuff acting experience in our dorm

room Friday or Saturday nights. We often turned on the tape recorder and made up everything as we went along. Paul belched sentences, entirely unrehearsed, on tape. We invented goofy situations and improvized skits while eating Bill's Italian sausage sandwiches with whole vinegary dill pickles.

Sunday, October 23, was one of those days with more cloud than sunshine. Some early snow clung to the ground. Dann drove Paul, John and I to the cabin in the woods where we'd shot the opening sequence for *Jamie*. Wearing winter outerwear and carrying musical instruments and camera gear, it was a squeeze fit in the car. My role was the director, behind the camera and, yes, I made several appearances before the camera, the first fiddling with a light meter and speaking to camera to introduce the film. "There have been many films made about the Civil War. This is going to be one of them... My 16mm frame enlargement is pictured right.





Dressed in a suit, John's role was a stand-up commentator and interviewer for a TV or film documentary, pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement. John stands ahead of and just to the left of the musician duo who set up with the cabin in the background. "Hello all you Civil War fans and welcome to all you viewers... on this fall day" (Wind blows leaves into shot. Off screen and with the camera trigger locked on continuous run, it was me off camera tossing leaves to John's face. It was my version of a special effect. A slight breeze ensured no leaves ever made it to John's face.)

Paul used make-up, wire-rimmed glasses, and tattered clothes transforming himself into an old man with a banjo, the last survivor of some obscure Civil War battle. Dann played gut bucket and referred to Paul as the Colonel. My 16mm frame enlargement of that shot is pictured right.

The lip-synchronization component, marrying sound to picture, was kept to a complicated minimum. I had no experience with the technique and no understanding of how the mechanics worked. It would be a post-production job John handled. All of the shots making use of the wild recording of voice were lengthy takes. Most were Long



Shots. When John interviewed Paul as the cantankerous, demented, hard-of-hearing Colonel, I set up a well-composed two shot. The interview with the Civil War veteran appeared to bog down into a



subject-unrelated ramble. With the camera trigger locked on continuous run, as a pretentious and exasperated director I made an on-screen appearance. I walked into shot and pleaded with the characters, "Look, would you guys minding cooperating? The film... the film." My 16mm frame enlargement is pictured right. Sometimes when making up dialogue on the spot, words tumble out not as one expects... as in "minding cooperating". As I retreated behind the camera, Dann dryly queried, "Who was that?" John replied, "Oh, that's just the director. Anyway, Colonel, about the Civil War battle... what're you tay? "Tay?" Paul the Colonel replied. "What do I tay?" "Sorry

about that Colonel," John corrects embarrassingly, "Say... say ... say what you did? Tell us about it. Tell us something..." A cloud of ignorance drifts across the Colonel's eyes and he says, "Who're yew? What're ye want!" Some mumblings later the Colonel's long-term memory flickers back to life. "I can see it all now..." His story is recounted in voice over. The usable Jamie off-cuts were edited in post-production.

Below are 16mm off-cut frame enlargements 1 unused in Jamie, now useful in re-creating the Battle of Dumptruck, Alabama for Civil War







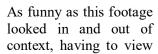
The comedy was inane. We verged on Theater of the Absurd. For the old Colonel's unhistorical, completely inventive battle yarn, I cobbled shots made in West Bend, those Long Shots of lines of soldiers firing muskets and firing cannons which I'd deemed "too big in scope" for the picket line skirmish in Jamie. A sequence of sight gags was homage to Mack Sennett's action-packed slap and tickle. As a Confederate, Paul briefly wears a jockstrap on the outside of his trousers. Yankee Dave

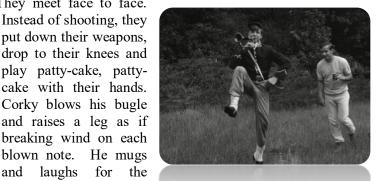
Jurgella stalks Confederate Paul. They meet face to face.



drop to their knees and play patty-cake, pattycake with their hands. Corky blows his bugle and raises a leg as if breaking wind on each blown note. He mugs and laughs for the camera as evidenced in my 16mm frame enlargements, pictured right,

two We did pictured left. silly shots on reel ends to use up the raw film. I never wanted to risk running out of film midscene, especially if it was a good take.









<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> John Primm frame enlargement photos.

453

it over and over and seeing Corky so full of life awoke collected memories of joy and pain.



The scene returns to the interview. Pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargement John and Dann, wiping a tear from his eye, and John tells the Colonel that his story was, "Moving. Truly moving." "Yeah, just like yer bowels," the Colonel grumbles as an aside. Again, it appeared the conversation was bogged and going nowhere. Off-screen I called a direction, "Play the banjo." Annoyed, Paul the Colonel acknowledged my loud intrusion and looking up at camera replied, Eh?" I shouted, "Play the banjo!" One note sounded and John responded, "Colonel. That's moving." The Colonel vigorously plucks the catgut and launches into melody. Dann enthusiastically joins in plucking rhythm on the gutbucket. John stands and dances. Locking the camera trigger a second time, I high-

step into shot and partner John in the dance, and pictured right in my 16mm frame enlargement. When we'd Go-Go danced long enough, I called, "That's enough. Stop the music." All action ceased. I asked, "You know what time it is?" Paul, Dann and John indicated they didn't. "I think this... is the end... of our film!" Dann picked up the washtub of his gutbucket, Paul stood with his banjo, John looked at me and I looked at him, and we all sprinted out of shot. Our improvized dance just before we concluded filming suggested the title and I called it *Civil War A-Go-Go*.



I don't know how or when I found or made time to cut *Civil War A-Go-Go*, but when editing, I had an unusual experience. I believe what transpired was real. I awoke

one night and, standing at the side of my bed, I saw Jim Corcoran. He was not in his physical flesh as I had known him in everyday life. His was a felt presence. Corky stood in a transparent bluish haze, as if his soul had materialized, and as recognizable as I knew him. I wasn't afraid. I felt very happy. I smiled and I asked, "What are you doing here?" Jim's spirit was silent, and he smiled back at me. "No. This isn't real," I said. "I'm dreaming." Jim smiled and gestured No with his head, as if telling me I wasn't dreaming. "If this isn't a dream, then...," I said quietly offering my open right hand, palm up. Jim placed his hand in mine, fingers wrapping around my hand. I felt weight. I felt warmth.

"John. John," I called in my best stage whisper. "I'm awake," John whispered back. "Jim's here," I said. Significant pause followed in our conversation. I hoped what I saw and felt could be substantiated. "I know," John replied. "Did you see?" I asked. "No... But I saw... you..." John measured his words... "I felt... someone... Corky was here."

Even with our central heating radiator set on low, our room was cold. In the air was a delicate fragrance of springtime lily of the valley.

We talked about my supernatural encounter in the cold light of morning. We agreed that something, possibly even spiritual, had transpired. Then I was reminded what Father Finucan had said to me at Corky's funeral; I now had an angel in heaven to look after me.

Except for John, I didn't tell anyone else. I feared derisive laughter instead of collaboration of what may have happened. Someone might concur it was otherworldly, mystical, maybe even wondrous. Others would happily conclude my imagination had been overworked. Most would dismiss it outright because there's no such thing as ghosts.

This very special incident wasn't isolated. There were more times in my life when I felt Jim's presence. November 15, 1966, I was inspired to write a brief, personal, and comforting poem. If its meaning is vague, so be it.

HE

When a tear fell – He came and took my hand.

And it was right.

At the same time as post-production on Civil War A-Go Go, I edited footage my father shot at an annual family picnic of Vilter Manufacturing. He had used my retired Kodak Brownie Turret. A few shots had come out dark and Dad just wanted me to cut them out and splice together the good shots in some order so the film made sense. I was specifically asked to snip short an embarrassing shot of my mother slipping and falling in a game where a grapefruit held under her chin was passed to another player under their chin.

After hospitalization, being long unemployed, having to accept welfare to feed his family, seeking severance pay through the courts, and unsuccessful at finding a job in his area of expertise and experience, my father was re-employed, almost reluctantly, by Vilter not in his favored position as a technical writer, but as a time clock supervisor on reduced pay and ridiculously long hours. Dad had been diagnosed with full blown diabetes requiring daily injections of insulin. On a holiday visit home from university, I remember helping collect our monthly food rations from a government agency somewhere near Cherry Street. I remember how humiliated my father felt, how his pride in being the sole family breadwinner had been pricked. His options had been supplanted and he was uncomfortable having to rely upon handouts. He felt like a beggar. The distribution building was in a rundown neighborhood and ours was the only family of white faces standing in line with families of Negroes. The reception line inching forward, Dad handed his bureaucratic list of allocated foodstuffs to the black attendant. Plain cardboard boxes were packed with plain label government issue jars of peanut butter, canned meats, canned fruit, and cans of shortening, paper bags full of flour, cornmeal, limited sugar, and boxes of dried oats, beans, rice, powdered milk and powdered eggs. All labels were simple black lettering on white. The product was named. Content was identified. Pork. Beef. Flour. Powdered Milk. Period. No colorful pictures. No logos. No catchy slogans. Weight was listed. 1 lb. 4 oz. and so forth.

I understood my Dad's hurt of heart; welfare was never a preference, but our family never wanted or starved. Mother turned food basics into mouth-wateringly remarkable breakfasts, lunches and suppers. She baked bread. She made cakes from scratch. She turned the absolute ordinary into "Mmm Mmm Good!"

I wonder now, in those trying welfare days, how Dad always managed to come up with the money required, and always on time, for my university board, accommodation, semester fees and Student Union fees and charges. I never thought about it then. When money was due to WSU-SP Finances in Old Main, Dad always sent a check. When he wrote me a letter, included was a dollar or two in cash for spending money. I don't know how he did it. Shame on me. I just took it for granted.

I shot titles for my father's picnic film and, given that judges in the PSA-MPD had written they had difficulty understanding *i can't understand* and that George Cushman recommended I include a title providing some explanation or interpretation, I shot new introductory titles for *we were two*. Immediately following the main title was the defining "an essay on life and death." Steve and his friends were listed by name and their roles were categorized as "angels". I think I was trying to salvage a misstep. As handsome as was the cinematography, I had this inner niggle I'd never clear up

the vagueness of one boy dying and the other left behind, or overcome leaving too much interpretation to the imagination.

Keen to get the film processed so I could tack on the new titles to both pictures, I shot off the remaining unexposed two minutes worth and made an inconsequential film featuring John Primm. We had earlier made a tape recording of a song John called "Ginger Ale". He played his own composition with a distinctive beat on electric guitar and, when given the cue, I burped or belched in John's built-in pauses. I shot the movie the same as a cartoon. The soundtrack is made first and the picture is shot to match the track. I ran the tape and when the appropriate bars of music played, I pressed the camera's trigger for just as long as the selected section of sound. After the film was processed, I'd mail it for sound-striping; that is, the addition of a magnetic stripe along the film's edge. The taped sound could then be transferred to the stripe and, forever, picture and sound would be synchronized.

When Ginger Ale the film was projected and "Ginger Ale" the tape was played, the tape never stayed in perfect synch with the picture. Picture and sound consistently drifted apart. John had no governor to join his Kodak sound projector and tape recorder. The two media never matched and this was one film where both had to synchronize. When John's fingers strum guitar strings, the sound from those strings must be heard. A burp had to be heard when I was seen on screen burping. The last shot in the film is me holding a wastebasket and saying, "I think I'm done." Spoken words had to match lip movement. As it was, the sound of a loud burp was often heard as John strummed his guitar and the guitar played when my face was contorted in a belch. John and I never mastered running the Ginger Ale picture and sound in synchronization.

Monday and Tuesday, November 1 and 2, at 7:30 p.m.in the Frank Lloyd Wright Lounge in the University Center, Dr. Selden Faulkner conducted try-outs for the University Theater's production of *The Fantasticks*, an off-Broadway musical comedy in two acts which, in 1966, was in its seventh year of performance in New York. Of its musical numbers, "Try to Remember" and "Soon It's Gonna Rain" were already popular hit songs. The story of *The Fantasticks* dealt with a young man and the girl next door whose fathers build a wall to keep them apart. Tell a child no and, sure enough, they'll do the opposite. The youngsters contrive to meet and they fall in love. Their fathers, meanwhile, congratulate themselves for erecting the wall and for staging a feud in order to achieve, by means of reverse psychology, a marriage between their willfully disobedient children.

To create an irresistible romantic mood, the fathers hire a desperado to abduct the young lady and arrange a flamboyant abduction scene in the moonlight. When the sun comes up, the day brings an end to their dreams. The dashing vagabond who was their guide to romance and illusion becomes their instructor in disillusionment. Only when he has shown the boy the harshness of the world that looks so full of promise, and has let the girl see that love can be false, do the young people come to understand each other.

I really wanted to play one of the fathers. Hucklebee and Bellomy sang a couple of duets, a first act "Never Say No" and a second act patter song, "Plant a Radish". They joined their children in singing "Happy Ending" and "This Plum Is Too Ripe", as well as the company songs. The fathers' roles primarily emphasized acting talent. I thought Paul Bentzen would have been the ideal actor to play the other father. From past stage experience, we both seemed to be good at portraying old men. Mr. Faulkner had other ideas Monday and had me trying out opposite Jeff Rodman. The fathers were the only parts Mr. Faulkner allowed the two of us to try for. With my choir singing experience I stumbled through the songs. Jeff couldn't sing at all. We had Mr. Faulkner in stitches and he practically fell out of his chair at our vaudevillian antics. We both had a Tuesday night call back.

I was cast as Ben Hucklebee, The Boy's Father. I don't know why Bentzen never got a look in. More surprising, despite the call back and consummate ability as a bigger-than-life laugh maker, Jeff Rodman was cast as The Old Actor. Unexpectedly, wiry thinly-framed Doug Wisby landed the role of Bellomy, The Girl's Father. John Primm landed the role of Mortimer, The Man Who Dies. Backstage, John was Stage Manager and Assistant Director. The Boy, Matt, my son, was played by

Dale Becker and The Girl, Luisa Bellamy, was Diane Benzschawel. Joel Weaver was cast as The Mute, a character who, in full view of the audience, moves items on stage during performance to change the set. The play's guiding role, The Narrator, a dashing vagabond and desperado, was called El Gallo and went to African-American actor Earl Smith.

Friday and Saturday, November 4 and 5, I participated in the La Crosse Speech Workshop. On the road, just as we had in previous speech excursions, Miss Thompson ensured we ate superior food at posh restaurants. I usually perused a menu for a dish I'd probably not seen in Stevens Point and definitely not something slumped onto a plate by Ace Foods. This trip I tried a fish I'd not ever heard of, red snapper. It was unfortunate this workshop wasn't a competition. I performed the interpretive reading of Vachal Lindsey's *The Ghosts of the Buffaloes*. Had there been competition, I was told I'd have easily walked away with 1<sup>st</sup> place... again. One judge who had seen me at workshops and competitions over the past three years asked when I was going to graduate. She claimed my participation limited others' chances of ever winning a top prize. Was her intention a backhanded compliment?

Carla and Cliff Boettcher scheduled a *Jamie* champagne victory party and dinner for Sunday, November 6. It was a bring-a-date affair. I wanted to ask Chrismary Durmick, a girl I hardly knew, but she certainly grabbed my attention. She was a freshman and a friend of Carol Corcoran, Johnny's and the late Jim's sister. She and Carol happened to sit next to me when I saw an all girl College Players cast perform *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Chrismary said she remembered me from the film programs I'd presented at Maria High School. Squeamish and uncharacteristically tongue-tied, I couldn't string together one sentence to the next without sounding like I needed speech therapy. I couldn't get up the nerve to ask her then and there to be my date for the party.

My sister called me a chicken because I was too nervous to ask a girl. And she was right. I was chicken. Call me whatever she wanted, I kept putting it off and putting it off because I was afraid her answer would be, "No." After so much success with my filmmaking, the ability to talk comfortably off the cuff, I was afraid of being rejected by a girl. When I finally stirred up some gumption to ask, Chrismary's quick off the mark answer was, "Of course I will. I'd love to." What a waste of sweat and energy! I needn't ever have been so worried. I don't recall the name of John's date, but she was also younger than he. Paul dated a girl named Julie and Dann's date was the editor of the school paper, Liz Fish.

For Sunday night's victory party Carla cooked a chicken dinner. We guys chipped in and brought three bottles of champagne. Cliff served pre-dinner cocktails, everyone's favorite being the Black Russian with a hazelnut, which we called a monkey nut. I assisted Cliff and mixed drinks. John said he was flying high after his second Black Russian. Understandable, too, since neither of us had eaten a decent breakfast or lunch, surviving only on a banana each bought at Red Owl for 11¢ a lb around noon. My liquor tolerance may have been greater than John's because I didn't feel a thing. Well, maybe that's what I kept telling myself as I tried to be on my best behavior with Chrismary whom, I might add, steered clear of the champagne and Russians and chose Coke. She was, in my opinion, a perfect date. We played games perfect for parties I'd learned in Creative Dramatics. They were, in fact, those which eventually came to be called Theater Games. Monday was a school day, for others a workday, and the party played out until 11:30 p.m.

With a nod to Shakespeare and a trifling alteration of the bard's words, Willy Quiverlance wrote for the lips of Lady Macbeth in Act I Scene VI of the Scottish play (and for me), I did "But screw (my) courage to the sticking place and (I) did not fail." After the victory party Chrismary and I became an item. We saw each other when we could, met as often as our class schedules permitted to sip a Coke Dutch-treat in the Student Union's Gridiron. Some Friday nights we found seats together for the Cinema Arts Series in the Library Theater and watched foreign-language films for free. Sometimes we doubled with John Primm and his current sweetheart. Once in a while we all went to the Fox Theater on a Saturday night to catch a new release and, more often than not, our dates were Dutchtreat. I wasn't trying to be a tightwad, as most of Chrismary's girlfriends thought I was. She and I

used to laugh over their foolish talk. Face it, Chrismary was clear-sighted. As a college student herself, she knew how often a college student was penny poor.

John Primm as president of the College Theatre led a meeting to a constitutional amendment wherein the 1936 name was changed to The Players. And then John disappeared... with his mother to Washington D.C. November 18 to accept his CINE Golden Eagle Award for *The Marble*. He'd won First Place in the 1966 Kodak Teenage movie contest and *The Marble* was one of 11 films selected in the CINE Youth Division to receive a Golden Eagle.



The hair beneath the hat is actually a coonskin hat made from a real raccoon fur coat my mother bought in a Goodwill Store. She made Russian fur hats for Paul, John Primm, Dave Jurgella, and me, inverting the fur so the hat looked bigger and bushier. It may even have resembled a Davy Crockett coonskin sans tail. The collection of pictures of all UMOC contestants was published on pages 5 and 6 of *The New Pointer* November 17, 1966. Paul Bentzen's UMOC is pictured right,<sup>2</sup>

Mid-November we turned our attention to "Snow Blast" and again to the Winter Carnival's Ugly Man on Campus, most competitors in fare use pictures at left in the school newspaper *The New Pointer*.

Paul Bentzen submitted his greasepaint and costumed self again, in this instance as The Players UMOC, shown separately from school newspaper pictures because his photo printed as a dark square, upper far left corner. Knowing we again stood no chance of victory against any of the fraternities, Paul applied makeup to transform into a werewolf, or maybe he was a rare vampire. The canine teeth were made from cotton balls twirled into fangs. Wet, they stayed attached to his canines just long enough to fire off one snapshot. Then they'd slide off and bend and need to be re-made for a second



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Photo by John Hankwitz



The UMOC dance, Saturday, November 19, crowned Jeff Pierce, aka Jeffy the Sefi, the Siasefi candidate, fair use picture at left, as Ugly Man on Campus, and another not unexpected win for the Siasefi. He took first place honors with the largest amount of money contributed in his name. Second place went to Wayne Soffa of Pray-Sims Hall. Third place getter was Nelson Hall's Martin Costello, fair use picture at right. Fourth place was The Protestor, unnamed, representing Hansen Hall. Fifth place was Bill Johnson from Neale Hall. Sponsored annually by Alpha Phi Omega a total of \$317.08 was collected for the United Fund. As I have said before in such disheartened words, the quality of make-up apparently didn't matter. All that



really counted was which organization/fraternity/club/resident hall got behind its candidate and actively contributed the most money in its jar to secure its

candidate's win. But what fun UMOC generated... and charity was always the winner.

Rehearsals for *The Fantasticks* swung into much ado. Songs were difficult to learn. As old men Doug Wisby and I were as physical as any slapstick comics employed by Mack Sennett's Fun Factory. Everything and everyone was on track for opening night Wednesday, December 7. We learned our songs. Mr. Faulkner was a wonderful director who encouraged our imagination and creativity. When necessary, he'd take to the stage and show how he wanted us to hit our mark, or he'd demonstrate a useful gesture we hadn't found for ourselves. He knew what worked. We invented all kinds of business to elicit laughter and bring our characters to life. We sang, danced, acted, carried on like hyperactive pork chops, and perspired profusely under the glare of hot lights.

Pictured below is a rehearsal photo<sup>3</sup> of *The Fantasticks* where only partial costuming was worn.



Left to right: Me, Dale Becker, Diane Benzschawel, and Doug Wisby.

Most rehearsal nights my character was plumped up by means of having to wear a padded paunch. More than a pillow, it was a fitted stomach worn like a backwards vest secured with ties at the back. Think of an overly stuffed protective vest worn by the home plate baseball umpire standing behind the catcher and the batter. The abdomen didn't shift doing dance numbers or quick moves. It looked real, but its drawback was that it generated heat and made me sweat. By rehearsal's end and removal of the padded paunch, my T-shirt, the skin of my chest and stomach was sopping wet and I had to towel down.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Photo by Dann Perkins and published in *The New Pointer* December 8, 1966, page 4.



We are in full costume and make-up for final rehearsal. I am Ben Hucklebee and wearing the padded belly, my hand resting on the shoulder of my son Matt (Dale Becker). Luisa (Diane Benzschawel) is the love of my son's life, and her father, Bellomy (Doug Wisby) with his hand gently touching his daughter's shoulder.

Outside it snowed and the temperature plummeted to a discouraging depth. Walking wet in the cold night air from Old Main's stage to Pray-Sims Hall played havoc with my immune system. Weakened by exhaustion and susceptible to winter's woes, disaster crept upon me Sunday afternoon, December 4. I developed not just the common cold but a lollapaloozing bruising whopper of a cold and completely lost my voice by Tuesday. I felt awfully sick. I bought witch hazel, massaged it onto my throat, and wrapped my neck in a towel. I sucked on Fisherman's Friend throat lozenges and, after I chipped in half the price, John bought me a bottle of ginger brandy. Great stuff! I felt better; didn't give a damn jolly in fact, although the brandy's remedial or curative properties were questionable. Rehearsals continued. The show had to go on. We all hoped my voice returned. Until then I whispered lines and was directed not to sing.

My health deteriorated. I developed a fever which seemed to come and go at will. Mr. Faulkner ordered me to see the campus doctor. Dr. Rifleman examined my throat and said it looked like the red hot doorway to Hell. He loaned me a vaporizer, prescribed aspirin, and told me I had to remain mute for two to three days. Thereafter Room 322 was like a Swedish sauna. With luck, my voice would return in time for opening night, but there was no guarantee. Mr. Faulkner put faith in my following doctor's orders and didn't look for an understudy. I may have been his only choice to play Hucklebee.

I convalesced, but I don't remember my sick days or what happened during any dress rehearsal where I went through the motions in a voiceless daze. To this day I don't recollect a single note, dance step, or gesture in any of four performances December 7 through 10. My parents brought my brother Steve along and they attended the Friday night show. I don't recall seeing them any time before or after the show. Tickets were \$1.75. My memory of being Hucklebee in *The Fantasticks* is a complete and utter blank. I have pictures in a scrapbook, my only proof the play was performed and that, yes, I was in it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Publicity Photo by Dr. T.K. Chang





Hucklebee and Bellomy (Doug Wisby)

Hucklebee, El Gallo (Earl Smith), Bellomy (Doug Wisby)

All I have managed to retain are hazy pre-ailment rehearsal images of El Gallo flourishing his gold satin-lined black cape, brandishing an epee during the abduction scene, and dying, pictured right in a Dr. T.K. Chang photo. I remember singing "follow, follow, follow" when El Gallo sang the hauntingly beautiful "Try to Remember." I have a murky memory of John dying elaborately, a lot like Curly of the Three Stooges did when he jerked in spasms and rolled onto his shoulder on the floor and ran around himself before flopping onto his back and raising and lowering his legs quickly, quickly, quickly, and then one slow raise of his legs and one slower lowering of them to the floor into stillness. That's all.



John Primm was listed in the cast and the official program as the Man Who Dies. In the review and in the school annual, *The Iris*, he was called An

Indian Who Dies. The change may have come about after John was seen in his costume. In rehearsals, above the waist he sometimes was a pirate with tied headscarf and eye patch. From the waist down he was a breechclout-wearing Indian. Other times John dressed the full Indian, pictured right in a Dr. T.K. Chang photo. The reviewer wrote, "To die as he did is an art that looks easy but must have taken much practice to reach



such a peak." Ah, yes, John had learned well from the Nickelodeon silents and from our mutual enjoyment of Curly, Moe and Larry in their cruel, yet harmless, silly slap and dash.

I was on stage performing all four nights. Theater critic for *The New Pointer*, Colleen Wrzesinski, wrote, "Perfection in casting marked the performance(s) of the two prankster fathers, Larry Klobukowski and Doug Wisby. "Plant a Radish" logic and their scheming (was) excellent(ly) portrayed (and) held the whole performance together." So I must have done something right!

Always welcome before Christmas was sitting final exams. In the words of Foghorn Leghorn, "That's a joke, son. A joke." I was reminded one morning of Mr. Faulkner's Playwriting course when John asked casually, "What play you turning in to Faulkner tomorrow?" Tomorrow? I hadn't even given Playwriting a thought. In fact, I had forgotten all about the course. With the immediacy of

having to fix a burst pipe in my usual, predictable exclamation of exasperation... also useful for forgetfulness, frustration, amazement, and surprise, I answered, "Oh, s\*\*t!"

My favorite exclamation was blurted at home one summer's day. My mother said firmly, "Lawrence! Careful what you say around the twins. They hear you and they imitate what you say." "Really?" I said. "Yah! Really," Mother shot back. "The girls were playing in the kitchen. Opened the bottom door. Pots and pans fell out. Both said your favorite word!" "Really?" I said again. I didn't think to apologize. Came up instead with an "oops!" Thereafter I exercised caution and stopped stiff before using my colorful expletive around Luann and Joann. But I have to admit, it was funny hearing "Oh, shit" ever so innocently spill from of the mouths of the twins.

John startled me into action. Whatever needed doing during the day was done. After filling a hole with Ace Foods, dark was upon the dorm and I slid a sheet of paper into the carriage of the typewriter. I stared at it ever so briefly and struck the keys. Thank goodness I wasn't saddled with writer's block. I had more ideas than time to write them all. I wrote like I was in the skin of Tennessee Williams. I wrote about sad individuals, people with empty hearts and scarred souls, someone who yearned for love and attention and sex and another who spurned their advances. I pulled an all nighter. So that John could sleep without my interfering tack, tack, ding, zip, rackety-tack, tack, tack, I moved into the lounge and hoped my key banging wouldn't annoy others in their rooms. With some chopping and changing a word or phrase here and there, speaking lines out loud, essentially playing each character, in the morning I had authored a One Act play ready to hand in for Mr. Faulkner's final.

A Party for Michael was a two-hander, two characters called Michael and David. Michael is hanging party decorations in his apartment and a disheveled, homeless guy called David invades carrying a pistol. There was no wasting time getting into the action. Is this a robbery? A hostage-taking situation? Or is something else, something even more sinister afoot? Who Michael and David are is revealed through dialogue. I wrote the play as if it was an onion. What Michael and David say to one another slowly peels away layers of each character. The play ends with an unforeseen act of tragedy.

I earned an  $\underline{A}$  in Playwriting. Mr. Faulkner's most significant comment was that I wrote dialogue that convinced because it was written as people actually speak. It was risky business writing a play at the last minute and submitting it without so much as a cursory rewrite. What the unplanned exercise proved is that when I put my neck to the axe, I produce a high quality end product.

As semester's end drew close, my cassette tape correspondent, David Charles Thomas, said, having seen *Jamie* in a PSA Award Winners Travelling Show, he had been impressed with my film; in other words the PSA-MPD had struck a print of my original before returning it to me. He offered to personally oversee making optical sound prints of *Jamie* at Palmer Productions. David asked me for permission to strike a print for his own collection. He said he'd pay for it and I said all right. I trusted David, still a stranger since we hadn't met, but because he sounded genuine on tape I mailed my original magnetic striped film to him in Santa Cruz, California.

Over Christmas vacation I proudly attended a meeting of the Milwaukee Movie Makers and showed my PSA Gold Medal, the Travelling Trophy, the Golden Scissors, and accompanying certificates. Being 150 miles away, I was unaware of the rift which formed in the club. Without my knowing or intention, I had been a wedge. On one side were the home movie watchers and on the other amateur movie makers. Too often too many showed up for meetings only to be entertained by travelogues and home movies. They came for the social contact, not as gung ho amateur movie makers. Call it envy, call it jealousy, call it the green-eyed monster, there was no warmth in words of greeting or congratulations from certain individuals in high office toward me and my awards. Handshakes from some were like grabbing onto wet fish. As far as they, not all, just some, were concerned, I was a half-baked whippersnapper who just got lucky. For all I knew, maybe now they even regretted ever having invited me into the club. In their small minds, I managed to achieve too much too soon, hadn't paid my dues as had they over time to prove myself, so to speak. Some in the club were charter members, had been attending meetings since day dot, and had still to make a dent in their own personal progress in making a winning movie, much less a make a mark in competition. In the

Milwaukee Movie Makers' own annual competition, the benchmark of achievement in the eyes of the self-favored few, I had to be reminded my *Jamie* was a failed film.

Having only bathed in the positive adulation associated with celebrity, I now experienced its negative side. It was a harsh lesson in the politics of celebrity.

Maybe the sedentary, small-minded office bearers thought they'd be sticking it to me again. Surely this young upstart couldn't pull it off a second time! And so they nominated me their film festival chairman. I jumped at the chance to run the show. I met so many good filmmakers at the PSA convention, I had contacts to boot. The film festival wasn't until April and I had plenty of time to book many excellent award winners.

Marge Pearson edited the *Cinecrat*, the official publication of the Milwaukee Movie Makers. Her editorial comment about the film festival was an attempt to bring together the club's unofficial two factions. She reminded fuddy-duddy members that making movies was a forward-moving activity and not one which stood on past laurels.

There was a time when an amateur film festival was the night the club members pulled together a program of the best home movies they had, sold tickets to their friends and, if they were lucky, the public and entertained comers with a homemade show. It was a good show and the viewing audience was amazed at what anybody could accomplish with a brownie camera and some imagination. Unfortunately time doesn't stand still; man is never satisfied with today's ingenuity and what dazzled today is dull tomorrow. With stiff competition from television, movie houses and advancements in photographic technology, home movies no longer amaze anybody. But motion pictures aren't dead; in fact they are only just beginning to come into their own. In case you didn't know it, there is a big difference between home movies and amateur films. The home movie taker just takes, while the amateur creates. So naturally now a film festival is something new and different. The very titles is intended to signify the best of its kind, not always funny or entertaining, but rather informative, exploratory, and an attempt to achieve that delicate balance of technical perfection. With the type of program we will put on this spring MMM moves into the circle of the modern trend in film festivals. Our survival depends on the success of that show. Now is the time to start advertising it to your friends and associates. It is a good change for us, our community and our movies. After all, one cannot progress by standing still.

Without it blatantly stated, Marge Pearson was saying *Jamie* rose above and surpassed MMMs' home movies; members stuck in the past needed to move forward in their thinking.

Over his Christmas vacation John had synchronized the wild track to *Civil War A-Go-Go*. The separate parts were mailed to David Charles Thomas who took it to Palmer Productions where the taped soundtrack was married to *Civil War A-Go-Go*'s visuals, my film eventually being turned into an optical sound print.

New classes were optioned in January 1967, second semester, and I was closed out of two. Miss Mary Elizabeth Thompson was unwell and wasn't expected to return. She sent a letter from her retreat, not a hospital, which was read to Speech students. Miss Thompson wrote she was enjoying lobster thermidor and that she trusted in God's healing to recover. She was a Christian Scientist and refused medication. Now I understood why she never drank a cocktail before dinner or sipped a cup of coffee or tea after her meal. For this second semester I was down to nine credits. An English class which hadn't even been on my radar, "The Negro in American Literature", was taught by Dr. Abraham Chapman. I signed up because it was available and solely because I needed the credits.

The Arts and Lecture Series brought Bramwell Fletcher, distinguished Broadway and Shakespearian actor, to the campus to perform *The Bernard Shaw Story* on Saturday, January 7, 1967. The dramatic

portrait included Shaw's comments on "sex, religion, music, drama, procreation, education, politics, war, criminal human stupidity, the destiny of man – and even American baseball." Fletcher bore a remarkable likeness to Shaw in his costume. The actor had met Shaw at an art exhibition in London. He was invited to Shaw's home for tea, and this contact led Mr. Fletcher into a study of the playwright's works and his life. The result was the performance seen in the WSU auditorium. After the performance Paul Bentzen, Dave Jurgella, John Primm and I engaged Bramwell Fletcher in conversation. With little persuasion, he accepted our invitation to Dave Jurgella's home where we talked long into the night about theatre and film over port and Italian sausage sandwiches from Bill's Pizza. It's only a personal observation, but I believe Paul benefitted most from our unexpected and completely convivial, serendipitous meeting with Bramwell Fletcher.

January continued busily. Palmer's prints of *Jamie* arrived from California. Preferring light entertainment short subjects, United Artists turned down theatrical distribution of *Jamie* because of its nature and theme. Invitations were extended for *Jamie*'s participation in the Metropolitan Motion Picture Club's Gala Night in New York, John Carroll University's Student Faculty Film Society in Cleveland, Ohio, and the Stevens Point Area Council of Parent-Teacher Associations. Chrismary arranged a program for the Maria High School Alumnae Association. *Jamie* was entered in the 1967 Ten Best Amateur Films Competition, often referred to as the British Ten Best. Entry fee was 2 shillings which converted to \$US1.40. Sending my film by regular international mail cost \$2.50. I arranged a Chase Manhattan Bank international money order in British currency for the entry fee and return postage. Margaret Conneely called long distance to request *Jamie* go into the April 18 CACCA competition and be shown in Metro's Film Festival April 19. And Dad asked me to put on a show at the VFW.

The most exciting invitation came from the Residence Hall Council to organize a film festival for April 21 and 22. This was convenient. I could kill off two rogue bulls with one giant elephant gun since I was already organizing the film festival for the Milwaukee Movie Makers on April 8.

The Residence Hall Council planned a week of activities to make on-campus students aware of what the RHC provided. Residence Halls, the dorms as we called them, would hold open house. There'd be a picnic, dance, sing-a-long, organized fun and games, speech contests, and a Best Comedies Film Festival featuring Charlie Chaplin, the Keystone Cops, Laurel and Hardy, W. C. Fields, and Thomas Edison's *The Great Train Robbery*, recognized as the first western. Admission price was 10¢. The First International Festival of Award-Winning Amateur Motion Pictures initiated activities of the RHC weekend. The large Wisconsin Room with its sizable screen and projection booth was booked for April 21 and 22. Purpose of the festival was to acquaint students and area residents with the finest of amateur movie making. The two hour program was planned for both educational and entertainment value. I saw the RHC initiative as a venal venture. We discussed and agreed upon sharing the gate. So that as many people as possible could see the award-winning films by John Primm and me, *The Marble* and *Jamie* highlighted the festival.

By January's end I had already collected 8 films from throughout the world. Publicity started in February with announcements in newspapers in Stevens Point, Wisconsin Rapids, and Wausau. My plan was to bombard the media with a constant stream of reportage. A smart inclusion stated that the festival chairman reserved the right to make changes in the program. This provided the opportunity for a news item to announce a change and thereby keep the festival fresh in the public mind.

I wrote copy and the RHC mimeographed hundreds of blue-inked sheets. One was a letter of invitation for distribution into every letterbox in every dorm. The second was a handbill stuffed into dorm letterboxes. The difference between home movies and amateur films was emphasized. Titles of some films were included with a description of each to whet the appetite. According to my blurb, it was a program no one could afford to miss. Admission prices were reasonable: Adults - 75¢ College I.D. - 50¢ Under 16 - 25¢. Tickets were available in an advance sale at the University Center information desk or at the door on the evening of the shows.

Early in February 1967 I entered we were two and Civil War A-Go-Go in the Milwaukee Movie Makers annual film competition. It had everything from clams to Volkswagens. Bill Felton entered What Is a Rally? Jean Krause made Oh Deer, a film about how "buck fever" affects the whole family. Harriet Allen used Close-Up photography and the natural movement of fresh water bivalves to create her Clam Race. Marge Pearson's El Huesped used animation and live action. It was an imaginative, suspenseful 16mm black & white story about a woman terrorized by a huge spider. Frank Kreznar had been on another vacation with his family and offered another travel film. This was the first time the MMM competition had as many women filmers participating as men.

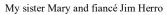
My entries were commended, but lead to no trophies. Rated well by the judges for technical achievement, both films scored low in Achievement of Purpose. Lessons were learned from the comments on we were two. One judge said that the basic idea was excellent, but that so much was left to the imagination that the impact was lost. Valid suggestions were made to assist the audience interpreting what happened. One I had to agree with was that the angels should have been dressed in identical colored sweatshirts or uniforms. Another adjudicator praised my novel idea and said I should be in the business as a new Hitchcock. She added as a however that a reason was needed for the boy passing to the life beyond because he seemed perfectly healthy. Yup! The flaws were found and, funny thing, I always knew they were there even after shooting new introductory titles, knew it whenever I viewed my final cut.

As to judges' viewing *Civil War A-Go-Go*, their comments suggested they just didn't get it. Not enough watchers caught Ernie Kovacs on television. His comedy was so off-the-wall as to be Theater of the Absurd and that's where *Civil War A-Go-Go* found its most comfortable fit.

March 4 was the Milwaukee Movie Makers Awards Banquet. Tickets were \$4 and I asked Chrismary to come to Milwaukee. I would show her a good time and, invariably, show her off. She was a great catch! Maybe Dad and Mom heard the peal of wedding bells complementing that Mendelssohn melody. I believe that church aisle march was meant for my sister and her beau, Jim Herro, significantly another great catch. Chrismary had only seen my amateur films and I thought she should see what others made, pictures I wouldn't invite into the RHC Film Festival under torture because my past experience informed that sitting through such films already was torture.

Milwaukee Movie Makers Awards Banquet, March 4, 1967







Chrismary and Me



Proud parents Leonard and Dolores

No surprises then when First Place was awarded to Frank Kreznar for, need it be repeated, one of his16mm travelogues, this one alliteratively titled *Pacific Portrait*. It was the kind of picture the dominant camp of the club loved. Second Place was awarded to Marge Pearson's *El Huesped*. By right of awards, both films were automatic inclusions in the MMM Film Festival and I had no input, even if I was chairman.

March 23 I put on the show Dad had requested. I wrote and printed flyers which Dad handed out and posted on the VFW bulletin board. Venue was the VFW Memorial Hall, the City of West Allis Post 1912 on 60<sup>th</sup> and National Avenue. The program started at 8:00 p.m. and was free. Screened were *Pots n' Slops, Zip-Tang, Little Brother, For He Shall Conquer, Crucifixion, we were two*, and *Jamie*. The VFW Post supplied a screen and for showing *Jamie* a 16mm projector. The bar adjoined the hall and audience was allowed to carry a drink into the show. A little bit of oiling the funny bone with alcohol made my comedies funnier. Whether beer aided concentration to understand my serious efforts didn't matter. Put it this way, after each film, someone else treated me to a drink. Dad was proud to show off what his son did and the program was hugely successful.

Tickets to the 24<sup>th</sup> Film Festival of the Milwaukee Movie Makers were available from members, at the War Memorial Building office, by phoning selected members' numbers, and at the box office on the night. The Festival was held in the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center on Saturday evening, April 8, 1967 at 8:00 p.m. Rolf Schüenzel introduced the 12 films I secured. Only two were 8mm and both were made by students. John Palmisano, a college friend, made a short slapstick film starring John Primm as a drunk. Titled *Rhyme nor Reason*, it was described as a Thursday night ritual in a college dormitory. 15 year old John Kassner of Walled Lake, Michigan, provided *Yesterday*, a reflective essay of the Beatles.

El Huesped and Pacific Portrait were 16mm. Others participating were David Charles Thomas of Santa Cruz, California, with Big Iron, the Marty Robbins ballad brought to the screen by a cub scout pack dressed as cowboys. It won a 1966 Ten Best of the West. Sweetheart Roland by John M. Raymond, Washington D.C., was a Grimm fairy tale and a 1966 PSA Ten Best. Jericho told of the tumbling walls of Jericho from a dog's point of view. Animated by Frank Kallenberg, it was a 1966 PSA Honorable Mention. The animated Androcles and the Lion was based on the George Bernard Shaw play of the same title and was made by William Peterson of Kansas City, Missouri. It won a PSA 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Class C. This was a category for amateur films made for commercial distribution. When this film was delivered to the dorm, I had to contact the maker because his film was 35mm and we didn't have the projector capable of running it. I had to request a 16mm print and returned the 35mm.

Patterns by Jack Pashkovsky from North Hollywood, California won a 1966 PSA Honorable Mention for an experimental film of abstract shapes and forms reflected in water. Somewhat similar, it used shapes and forms to represent white blood corpuscles, *The Leucocyte Story* by Jean Charles Meunier, Paris, France, won a 1966 PSA Ten Best, Best Comedy, and Best Sound. A CINE Golden Eagle winner was Theater of the Absurd in a coin laundry by Dr. Jerrold A Peil, San Francisco, California, titled *The Washerette*. Ira J. Laird, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, hadn't won a prize, but I asked to include his *Work of Nature – The Micro Aquatic World* to show what an amateur could achieve filming through the eyepiece of a microscope.

An article about the MMM Film Festival published in the *Cinecrat* reported that it "was the finest show the club had put on in years and the large audience it attracted was proof." I was applauded for "an extremely well put together variety of films." Rolf Schüenzel provided "the spice of transitional comment." *Big Iron*, the delightful western



portrayed by cub scouts and set to the Marty Robbins' song "Big Iron", captured everyone's heart. Cub Scout Donny is the Gunslinger in *Big Iron*, pictured right in a publicity still by the filmmaker David Charles Thomas, pictured left. "Other crowd pleasers included *The* 



Leucocyte Story, El Huesped, Androcles and the Lion, and Jericho." Interesting seeing the most popular films, the exception Big Iron, were animated. The article concluded with a rebuke. "It is unfortunate that the only people who objected to the hour and a half show length were a very few MMM members."

In the Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association Spring Quarterly Competition on Tuesday, April 18, 1967, *Jamie* won the 16mm Sound Award. The following night *Jamie* was screened in the Metro Film Festival, Riverpark Fieldhouse in Chicago. Among other award winning pictures, mine was in the company of *The Leucocyte Story*, *Beep Beep* by Kenosha's Tim and Delores Lawler, and *Gift to Mother* by D. Movshin, Moscow, U.S.S.R. which won a Special Prize in the U.S.S.R. National Contest.

Following the Metro Film Festival, Margaret Conneely forwarded my print to the Second City Film Center on Chicago's Wells Street for participation in The Second City International Short Film Festival, open to all amateur and professional filmmakers. I decided to enter because there was no entry fee and forwarding cost me nothing. First Prize was \$500 and screenings at the Playboy Theatre in Chicago and airing on Chicago's Channel 11. Runners-up stood a chance to win cash and prizes. Regular rates would be paid for all public showings in conjunction with the contest. What could I lose?

For RHC week, the First International Festival of Award Winning Motion Pictures was set to go. I found some exciting music called "The Overture to End All Overtures" to introduce the festival. It opens with one Hollywood studio fanfare after another, including sound effects of a lion's roar, a Morse Code didda-dit, a drum roll and trumpets, and culminating in exhilarating strings, brass and drums. John Primm slid into elocutionary mode and voiced over, "Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to..." etc. As its concluding item, I was introduced as the evening's master of ceremonies. A second piece of music was easy listening classical and recorded to last as long as the intermission. About three minutes before the end of the break was John's voice over telling people to return to their seats for the second half of the show. To encourage movement, I used something I called "hurry hurry" music. It was the four minute "Overture to Candide".

I couldn't think of anyone more qualified than John Primm to assist as projectionist for the festival. From the floor microphone set to the side of screen, I had eye connection with John in the booth. I didn't need to wave my arms like I was directing a plane into its bay, or say anything as stupidly interruptive to word flow as "You can start the film now, John" or "Let 'er rip!" Even though I didn't stick to a written script by memorizing it, John could read my words and accompanying gestures to know when to fade the lights and flick on the projector. So much experience putting on shows around town, together we knew how to run a smooth show.

Films I held over from the MMM Festival included *Big Iron*, *Sweetheart Roland*, *The Washerette*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *The Leucocyte Story*, and *El Huesped*. New was *The Day of the Beginning* by John P. Fitzgerald, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. We got the audience laughing in *Smoke*, the 1962 PSA Top Comedy by Joseph Kramer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *The Last Concert* came from West Germany and was a 1959 PSA Ten Best. And there was *The Marble* and *Jamie*. The disclaimer at the bottom of the program paid off too. Until the last minute I still thought I had *Ten Cents* by Antonio Cernuda from Miami Beach, Florida, and filmed in Cuba. It was listed on the program. The 1959 PSA Gold Medal winner arrived in Monday's mail and too late for inclusion.

I'd organized my first, in the words of Ed Sullivan, "ree-eely BIG shew." I wanted to know what my audience thought. Everyone knows that when you ask someone immediately after a show, "So what did you think?" - the invariable answer is always as brief as, "Yeah, good." I wanted more. I designed an opinion poll and a tallied final is reproduced in its entirety on the following page.

The RHC provided stubby pencils so people could fill in their thoughts. Each film in the program was named followed by three spaces: Liked Very Much, Liked Fairly, Did Not Like. Just like voting, all

they had to do was mark an  $\underline{X}$  or make a checkmark. I asked which their favorite film was and which was their least favorite. Probably too much, but I asked for reasons for not liking a film.

I asked a Yes and No question about the show's length. Would they support such a show in the future and asked what kind of pictures they'd want to see. Not everyone filled in the poll.

Total number of polls turned in - 440 Attendance estimate both nights - 730

Numbers on right hand side indicate "no opinion". Space left blank.

Numbers in front of film title indicate choice for "favorite film".

## AN OPINION POLL

Please check one opinion for each film. This is not a judging sheet. TITLE LIKED VERY MUCH LIKED FAIRLY DID NOT LIKE 26 BIG IRON 308 100 1 31 18 THE DAY OF THE BEGINNING 155 230 19 36 31 THE MARBLE 245 135 54 6 14 SWEETHEART ROLAND 235 180 23 2 64 SMOKE 345 61 34 0 O THE WASHERETTE 23 159 245 13 O EL HEUSPED 72 235 116 17 20 THE LAST CONCERT 220 170 28 22 53 (space left blank) 28 THE LEUCOCYTE STORY 337 77 18 8 194 JAMIE 374 40 6 19 2 ANDROCLES AND THE LION 135 198 88 17

- (1) Which film was your favorite?
- (2) If you checked a \*DID NOT LIKE" for a film(s), please tell us your reason(s).
- (3) Did you feel the program was the right length?
- (4) Would you support festivals of amateur films in the future?
- (5) If there are festivals of this nature in the future, what types of films would you like to see?
- (6) Any further suggestions? Comments?

Ron Zirbel (Pots n' Slops, Rivals of the Treasure, From the Powers of Darkness, The Emperor's New Clothes, A Walk in the Woods) drove my brother Steve to Stevens Point for the Saturday night Film Festival. I gave them complimentary tickets and didn't put them to work as ushers.

Ron and Steve dressed in suit and tie because that's how it was done in 1967. You went out in public to a show, to a play, to a concert, to a dance, and to a film festival, you dressed up. Sure, some college students attending didn't wear suit and tie, but they showered, groomed, and dressed



acceptably in slacks and collared shirt, none of that blue jeans, torn T-shirt, stained sweatshirt, picked up off the floor, unpressed clothes look. Pictured left in a John Primm snapshot and dressed to the nines are Ron Zirbel and my brother Steve.

Friday and Saturday over 700 people attended the First International Festival of Award Winning Amateur Motion Pictures. It was a huge success for the RHC, WSU-SP, and for me. I made \$136 clear on the festival and gave John \$30. The rest of the profit I reserved for film insurance and paying off the Palmer bill for 16mm prints.

I managed many firsts in university with my films, their awards, stage roles, interpretive readings, Theater Games, but I never expected I'd make academic history. I was among class members of English 143, Dr. Abraham Chapman's Literature course, "The Negro in American Literature." We were assigned a term paper. Also in class was African-American Earl Smith. Rather than comply with limitations of traditional written research, Earl approached me with his suggestion for a cooperative effort. We'd worked together before, on stage in The Fantasticks. Earl was from Rahway, New Jersey and a transfer student from Hardin-Simmons University in Texas. Multitalented, Earl was only slightly older than me, but he'd served as a Captain in the US Air Force in Abilene, Texas and participated in the troupe of the Abilene Playhouse. After his discharge he attended the American Theater Wing in New York. Earl came to Stevens Point in 1966 on an International Theatre Festival Acting Scholarship to perform in the Summer-Repertory Theater program. Together we came up with an ingenious idea to combine our creativity talents in an unusual Titled Stereotype - The Development of the Negro in Film, Dr. Chapman gave his enthusiastic approval and we began working on WSU-Stevens Point's first term paper, or research paper, shot on celluloid film. In simplest term, instead of the traditional written thesis, we were given the blessing; that is to say approval, to make a movie!

Earl and I wrote our shooting script in the week ahead of my April 30 birthday. Our concept was one of a choreographed dance laden with symbolism. It wasn't esoteric and above interpretation. Produced in 16mm black and white, it was a documentary without commentary told only in its visuals. We wanted our viewers to understand what they were seeing, especially our professor and the other students in class. Our final grade, after all, was determined on its success to clearly communicate.

Our research traced the beginnings of the Negro appearing in motion pictures, and followed the development as it progressed from one stereotype to another. The first Negro to appear in films wasn't a Negro at all, but a white man in blackface made up to look like a Negro. The earliest such depiction may have been in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), D. W. Griffith's groundbreaking and highly controversial epic due to showing the birth of the Ku Klux Klan saving America from ruthless Negroes and Mulattos. We didn't open our film with any such Griffith images because none had, over time, become iconic. We felt no one would identify or connect the source. Instead, recognized as the first talking picture and the one which revolutionized filmmaking was *The Jazz Singer* starring Al Jolson in 1927. It featured a sound sequence wherein Jolson performed in his famous vaudeville blackface minstrel routine. In the film we see Jolson apply the black greasepaint, the wig of tight black curly hair, and slipping his hands into white gloves. Jolson's was the known image, the stereotype of the blackface minstrel we drew upon to open our film.

The original Negro stereotypes in film are established, first as the "happy loyal slave," as portrayed by Oscar-winning Supporting Actress Hattie McDaniel in *Gone With the Wind* (1939), and later in the role of the lazy fool, as typified by Amos and Andy and Stepin Fetchitt. As a result of this portrayal, the white man not only ridicules the Negro, the Negro in turn pokes fun at himself. Once established, this highly successful stereotype becomes nigh impossible for the Negro to break. It is not until a number of outside influences pressure Hollywood – education, economics, and the foreign

influence – that the wall of the stereotype finally begins to crumble. Happily emerging, the Negro is also immediately frustrated to find another stereotype had been cast. He isn't a black man in his own right, but an acceptable image of a black man based upon an acceptable image of a white man. He is the image of Sidney Poitier, also accepted by white folk moviegoers as the Rock Hudson in a black skin.

In 1963 Sidney Poitier was the first African-American to win the Academy Award for Best Actor in *Lilies of the Field*. He was Homer, a handyman who builds a church for immigrant nuns. His peak year was 1967 when he starred in three box office smashes: as a doctor in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), a high school teacher in *To Sir, with Love* (1967), and as a detective in *In the Heat of the Night* (1967).

Only a week passed between scriptwriting and Saturday morning, April 29, commencement of the shoot. We constructed a simple black curtained set in a Drama rehearsal room located within the Classroom Center. As the room was used by others, our set could be quickly assembled and dismantled without much huff and puff. We hardly expected anyone else in the class to steal our project and make a film before ours was completed. Our "term paper" was to be presented as such an unusual medium, we wanted privacy and, above all, secrecy. The long, yet thin glass window of the door was masked with black construction paper. On the door's exterior we taped a sign "Do Not Disturb. Film in Progress". I'm surprised it worked. No passersby interrupted our shooting.

The film opened on a black screen. Earl entered the space, danced, and struck the Al Jolson pose - a big smile with his hands up, palms out.



I take a light meter reading of Earl Smith for the first shot of Stereotype in a publicity photo snapped by John Hankwitz

That night John Primm and I double-dated to celebrate my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday, even though it fell on the following day. I took Chrismary and John dated a girl for dinner and a show. We dined at the Hot Fish Shop and took in *The Night of the Generals*, not the best choice for a date film, the whodunit subject matter concerning several Nazi generals seen leaving a whorehouse and a prostitute found dead in the morning, but that's what played that night at the Fox Theater.

Most of my April 30 birthday was spent under lights. Earl Smith headed the *Stereotype* cast in several roles including the loyal slave, the all-dancing all-singing minstrel, and one half of the Amos and Andy duo, the other half interpreted by Bill Cooper, an African-American student from Chicago with no previous acting experience. Paul Bentzen was a Southern colonel character which typified a plantation boss and slave owner. John Primm was an abstract portrayal of "outside influence." With his face quartered in black and white greasepaint, he looked like four large squares of a checkerboard. In a different make-up, John's face was split into equal halves, one side slathered in white greasepaint,

the other half in black. Kirk Weber featured in the role of Al Jolson. I hadn't previously worked with Kirk. He came highly recommended after Earl, Paul as the Rev. Haggler, and John had worked with him a month earlier in *Dark of the Moon*, a dramatic play penned by William Berney and George Richardson in 1942 and originally written as a dramatization of "The Ballad of Barbara Allen". Set in the Smokey Mountains, I remember John saying it was the worst play he'd ever been in, and that it might end up as the worst play ever to hit the stage in Stevens Point. Chrismary and I had attended the play and Kirk was very good in the role of the henpecked husband Mr. Allen, even if his southern accent came across as pure compone. *Stereotype* wasn't incorporating voice recording and lip synchronization, so importance was placed on his ability to move gracefully. Of that, Kirk was debonair.

Kirk arrives and Earl takes the shape of a hatrack. Kirk rubs the blackness from Earl's face and applies the black to his own face. He takes the cane and straw hat from Earl and slips his hands into white gloves. The transformation into Al Jolson is made and he assumes Jolson's famous "Mammy" pose. Earl then pantomimes the application of blackface to his already black face, moves behind Kirk and also assumes Jolson's "Mammy" pose. They dance a duet of identical steps. Kirk dances out of shot and Earl finishes the dance, again striking the "Mammy" pose. Kirk pantomimes building a wall. Oh, my, Kirk moving with Earl was graceful. They could dance!

Paul, the white master, is shown holding a cream pie in his hand. He taps Earl on the shoulder and Paul tosses the pie into Earl's face. Bill enters. The white master hands him a cream pie, then a sports coat. Bill lets fly with the cream pie into Earl's face. Kirk finishes building the wall and assumes a "wall pose". Paul as the white master also assumes a "wall pose." Bill and Earl crash against Paul's wall. They are trapped. Each picks up a cream pie and lets each other have it in the face. What was the symbolism? In vaudeville, in minstrel shows pre-movies, African-Americans were treated as, or made to be the butts of white peoples' jokes.

John appears with a hammer to break down walls. The hammer is labeled "Education" and is crashed



into the wall of Paul. Again the hammer strikes and this time it is labeled "Foreign Influence". John hands the hammer to Earl. He delivers a blow into the Paul wall and hands the hammer to Bill who also uses it to smash into the wall. Earl changes from the striped clown coat into an all-American coat as outside influences continue hammering into the wall.

Pictured left is a John Hankwitz publicity photo for *Stereotype*. I use a light meter to check which f stop to use on a shot of Earl Smith. The striped clown coat Earl wears is the same one I wore when shooting the Bostrom Corporation annual family picnic

Mounted now on the wall are photographs of Rock Hudson and Sidney Poitier. Earl studies each one; his face registers confusion, and then changes into an understanding acceptance before he tears each photo in half. The picture fragments drop to the ground. Earl removes his coat, looks directly into the camera, and to viewers' amazement makes the palms out gesture and freezes in position as the end credits appear superimposed over Earl's "Mammy" pose.

My description of the film does little or no justice to the strength of the images and the audience's ability to interpret and comprehend what happens. Tuesday, May 9, we did pick-ups and completion

shots and wrapped our shooting schedule. We stuck to our initial concept of all picture, no dialogue, no narration. Edited, the trace of the "history" of the Negro in film was creatively related in seven minutes only in its visuals - without dialogue and without narration.

On Monday night May 22, 1967 Stevens Point's university students made the Wisconsin newspapers for what was later remembered as the Point Beer Riot! A looming increase in the minimum beer drinking age from 18 to 21, plus spring fever, plus the fact that such things are in vogue, resulted in the biggest student demonstration in the history of Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point. Visiting Governor Warren Knowles used a bullhorn and couldn't quell it. Having already passed the Senate, the bill faced an uncertain future in the State Assembly. The Governor was heckled for saying the beer age increase was part of his road safety package.

Whether it was a real riot or not was a matter of interpretation. Whatever it was, 150 law enforcement officers from here and everywhere were on hand to keep it under control. None drew their holstered weapon, but most were armed with billy clubs. Paul, John and I were not active rioters. We were amused spectators standing on the sidewalk. Crowd estimates were unreliable, but it may have involved some 500 students. At Main and Division Streets the noisy, unruly crowd built a bonfire in the usually busy intersection. A scuffle over a fire hose accelerated into violence. The final serious incident was the looting of a beer truck. 100 cases of beer were estimated to have been hijacked. Bottles were smashed, bottles thrown at police officers, and that set off the swinging of heavy wooden clubs. Most missed their targets because, surprisingly, the police didn't aim at heads. They attempted to disperse the crowd and their interest was aimed at us. Loud voices commanded, "Move on." "Go home." And encouraging our dispersal? Billy clubs were swung at the legs of fleeing gawkers. Ever been clipped by a deftly wielded police club? I caught a whack on the calf of my retreating right leg. It stung like a hornet. "I'm leaving... I'm leaving," was all I muttered to the angry blurred uniform, his face indistinguishable in night's darkness.

The following morning's radio blew the demonstration all out of proportion. Most people around the bonfire, including us, were little more than snoops. Morbid curiosity brought out the locals. Excitement may have enticed the high schoolers and, guess what, they were eager participants in the sacking of the beer truck.

Our day wasn't spent analyzing the demonstration, nor did I complain about the bruise on my calf. *Stereotype* ran through the projector silent and I dearly wanted original music on tape to accompany any screening. Original music was composed and played by Paul Bentzen on banjo and John Primm on guitar. I recorded the score Tuesday, May 23.

That evening, curiosity would easily have killed the proverbial cat. Paul and I walked to Main Street. On every corner stood five to ten cops wearing riot helmets and brandishing billy clubs. We walked uptown, kept to ourselves, and made no indication of looking for trouble. Nothing happened, thank goodness, although it was made clear to us by uneasy officers that groups were not allowed to assemble. Paul and I as two males didn't number a "group." After one guy had been arrested, spent the night in jail, and faced disorderly conduct charges for heaving a beer bottle at officers, it seemed all other college students had given up. Despite a high schooler having been lectured and released, the majority of busybodies on the streets were boys from Pius High and P. J. Jacobs High. But not Paul and me simply out for a look-see on Main!

Our "term paper" was premiered during the last class session of English 143 on Wednesday, May 24. Paul and John's jamming eventuated into a soundtrack which did more than accompany. It did a lot more than block the sound of the projector. The music enhanced the stark screen images. *Stereotype* was well received, most enthusiastically by our instructor Dr. Chapman. I remember seeing his gnarly hands coming together to applaud. Given the nonstandard presentation of our term paper, I am proud of the final grade Earl and I earned, an unqualified A.

At the same time I worked on *Stereotype*, John was keen to take advantage of using the Kodak Cine Special while it was still in my hands and make his first picture in 16mm. When he wasn't setting

lights or acting in *Stereotype*, John disappeared into the woods of Schmeeckle Reserve where we'd shot *Jamie* to shoot his own film. *Ooom-Titty-Boom* was experimental - its theme that a man is happier by himself; war often develops and destruction results when man becomes civilized.

Hirsute Jack Kelly starred as a caveman, twice pictured left in my 16mm frame enlargements, who forages wild food and who revels in the sights and sounds of nature, until his simple life is interrupted by a jet airliner and the ensuing chaos of civilization.

In the same session of recording music for *Stereotype*, I joined in the recording of an improvised *Ooom-Titty-Boom* soundtrack. It was a happy and crazy reunion of our Bush Mission Trio. We let our creative juices flow and sang in harmony "Ooom-Titty-Boom, Ooom-Titty-Boom" and changed key before launching into our interpretation of what was heard in the wilderness. Paul imitated a kookaburra which we only knew as the jungle bird call in all Tarzan movies. I made up the sounds of



wild beasts overemphasizing "Grrr-ooow-well", chimpanzee "ooh-ooh-ah-ah", and Tarzan-like calls. We verbalized the exaggerated sounds of gurgling water, injury, jet planes, traffic, and war machines. What we contrived for the 6½ minutes was clever and ostentatious. No doubt John's *Ooom-Titty-Boom* soundtrack would stand out in competition like a spare rhubarb stalk, or be wholly pleasing to both judge and audience ear.



Who was the playwright or whichever the play I somehow managed to throw together onto stage for a final exercise in the Drama course on "Directing" I have no idea; it must have been nothing of great shakes, but my effort earned an A. However, I do remember how honored I felt seeing my One-Act play, A Party for Michael, performed. What I had imagined as I wrote and what I saw on stage were two different things. It was a lesson in interpretation, how the director saw the play and how the actors saw their characters. Doug Wisby had requested use of my play and more than competently directed it. I can't recall both actors he cast, but Joel Weaver was one. In Wisby's hands, my play was handled a lot more tenderly than ever I'd intended. Doug's interpretation wasn't as vicious as I'd conceived and I thoroughly relished watching the thing unfold on stage.

Now this being my fourth and senior year, my expectation was graduation. It couldn't and wouldn't happen. You'd think someone up high would have picked up on my negligence sooner and advised me. I was 8 credits short for a minor in English and the Bachelor of Arts required four credits of a Foreign Language. I changed my BA to a Bachelor of Science and enrolled in the School of Education, Foreign Language not required.

A Performance Award Acting Company was formed for the Summer Theater productions at WSU Stevens Point. Back in spring about twenty-five students auditioned and twelve were chosen to receive awards which included a stipend and the opportunity to perform in theatre productions. In return each of the twelve must appear in all four of the summer theater plays. Work schedule consisted of 6-8 hours of rehearsal a day plus not less than 6 hours a week working on non-acting assignments. Among the twelve who received the acting awards were *Stereotype* cast members Earl Smith and Paul Bentzen.

My 1967 school year concluded with mailing *Stereotype* to Los Angeles for participation in the PSA-MPD 38th Annual Ten Best Film Competition.

## Chapter 49: Yackamahoola Sports a Halo Following the Fair

Denny, Gary & Scott We Were Two on 16mm

Important the spirit and the spirit and the spirit, a dark questioning of America coming of America coming apart at the seams.

After Robert Kennedy was assassinated, Eugene McCarthy harbored a personal sense of guilt because he had been a rather nasty campaigner. Instead of pressing on with his campaign, he drifted away. Some would say that he lost his spirit and simply gave up. Just when anti-war people needed him most, he deserted them. Bobby Kennedy's death changed the nature of the campaign. In McCarthy's absence and as a substitute for the killed Bobby Kennedy, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota declared his candidacy for the presidency to give these people somewhere to go. Candidates had to come to grips with what Kennedy represented. Vice-President Hubert Humphrey could have come out against the Vietnam War, but he didn't want to do that. He didn't want to jeopardize his own nomination because President Johnson held all the levers of power of the Democratic Party. Some may have said that as Vice-President, he had no idea how to think for himself.

David Charles Thomas took it upon himself to enter his personal print of my film *Jamie* in the Foothill College Sixth Annual Independent Film-Makers' Festival in Los Altos Hills, California. He wrote to the organizers, "Please handle this print with care as it is the only one on the west coast. Enclosed is an entry application signed by Mr. Klobukowski. Please find a check from me for \$3.00, \$1.50 of this to cover the return postage and insurance of \$100, the other \$1.50 for a ticket for myself for your Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Film Appreciation Symposium. Please return the film to me. However, any correspondence concerning *Jamie* should be directed to Mr. Klobukowski." There was no entry fee.

Just before starting a summer job, I went with John Primm for a weekend in his Villa Park, Illinois home to attend the June 10 Chicago Area Camera Clubs Association's Awards Banquet. Encouraged by his participation in *Jamie* and with Dave Jurgella the conducer, John had shot his own Civil War film called *And Blossoms Fell*. Dave played a significant role as a Union soldier who rapes a woman of the South. It was his opportunity to rack up another credit in costuming for film. Fred Schneck, the guy who had his leg amputated in *Jamie*, wrote and sang the film's main theme song, also named "And Blossoms Fell." In the 8mm Sound Film category of CACCA's spring competition, John collected two Silver Medal awards, one for his Civil War effort and the other for a comic picture which made social comment. Filmed in black & white and called  $35\phi$ , John was prompted to shoot his anti-smoking film when the price of cigarettes rose to that price for a packet of 20. I remember his most clever shot in the film was made by looking up from the bottom of a grave and the gravedigger, played by his father, dumping a shovelful of dirt. The screen went black with the dirt. Asking how he

managed to make that shot, John showed me how he crouched beneath a large pane of window glass to make that amazing angle shot. Both of John's films were included in the "Ten Best of the Midwest" films of the year.

In the 16mm sound category of CACCA's spring competition, Milwaukee Movie Makers' President Frank Kreznar picked up a Silver Medal with *Pacific Portrait*, but his travelogue wasn't selected as one of "Ten Best of the Midwest." *Jamie* won a Silver Medal, was included in the "Ten Best of the Midwest, and was awarded the organization's highest honor, Film of the Year. Kreznar's burning envy just about raised the banquet room's temperature as he feigned his appreciative smile through gritted teeth and clapped his robotically programmed hands for such events.

Having thoroughly enjoyed heaving 44 gallon drums of rotting fruit into the hopper of a garbage truck, I fully expected to increase the size and power of my biceps and triceps this summer. I thought the garbage collecting job was mine, but the City of West Allis had a different plan. I was assigned a full time position running the summertime activities at Lane Playground, same wonderful, friendly

place I'd worked as a part-timer last summer. How easy was that? No more getting up early to catch a garbage truck. No more begging a ride from anyone. I only needed to ride my bike 10 blocks to 109th Street. Carolyn from summer 1966 had moved on. Doug Bulgrin and Bill Koepnick had "grown out of Kiddie-ville" and moved on too. The children who flocked to the playground daily lived in the immediate neighborhood, looked younger than last summer's lot, and all were brand-spanking new faces. Now I shared organizational duties with Carol Mechenich, same age as me, a university student, and I felt an immediate attraction like iron filings to a magnet. Trying to understand girls was always a guessing game for me, greater than nutting out the answer to the \$64,000 question, but in my mind there seemed to be a mutual attraction. Or maybe we just managed to work well together. And I still got to show off, develop, and use my biceps, as pictured right with two of Lane Playground's teenie-weenies, the name given to children under the age of 7.

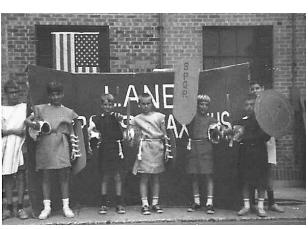


Just as happened the previous summer, the somewhat older boys gravitated to me. This time there were three. Gravelly-voiced Gary Lesperance was 14. Scott Navarette was 12, going on 13. Denny Smith was 12. Together they were more than neighbors. They were friends as true as the Three Musketeers; one for all and all for one. I didn't work weekends, but the boys came around to the back door of the family home, rang the bell and asked my mother, "We're cooking out tonight and so can Larry come eat with us? Dad and Mom said OK ...oh, and Carol's already said she's coming."

A one-off activity planned for early evening, just after dinner so that parents could attend and watch, was the Lane Circus Maximus. I supplied costumes Mom sewed when I'd made *Tarcisius*. Some playground children's mothers cut and sewed more tunics. Art and craft activities prior to the Circus included constructing swords, shields, and signs.

Epic Hollywood movies about Jesus and ancient Jerusalem and ancient Rome were popular cinema fare, so motivation was as easy as cutting butter with a knife, er, sword. Everyone had seen or knew about *Quo Vadis* (1951), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *King of Kings* (1961), *Cleopatra* (1963) *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964). After a short double-bill run in the cinema, Italian sword and sandal films frequently showed up on Saturday or Sunday afternoon TV. Often poorly dubbed into English, they told the mythical Greek and Roman sagas of Hercules, the fall of Troy, founders of Rome Romulus and Remus, and the epic tales of Ulysses and Jason. All were peopled with gladiators, centurions and bare-chested barbarians clashing, wielding clanking, cutting-into-flesh swords; others trapping ankles with nets, throwing spears, and piercing barrel-chests with tridents. With peplum heroes the likes of Kirk Douglas, Charlton Heston, Dan Vadis and Steve Reeves, what

kid wouldn't revel in such dress up and pretend fighting? Well, our girls, that's who. Excepting the tomboys, they weren't keen on participating in blood-letting sport. Contemporary recreational games I'd learned a year earlier in university were adapted for play in ancient Rome and employed to engage the boys, as well as the girls.





The Lane Circus Maximus. In the snapshot above left, second from the left is Scott Navarette. Third from right is Denny Smith. I'm unable to identify the other boys. In the snapshot right, Gary Lesperance as Emperor Yackamahoola wears the cape. I don't recall any names of the other children in the cast or audience. Note the sign reading Cocam Colam. In 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Latin we were taught that that was the best way to write and say Coca Cola in Latin, mainly because soft drink didn't exist in ancient Rome and we needed to invent a 20<sup>th</sup> century equivalent. The favored drink of ancient Romans was water!

A few days after the Fourth of July and after a fun-filled day on the playground, I rode my bike home and Mom handed me a thick envelope from the Photographic Society of America's Motion Picture Division. MPD Chairman Jack Ruddell wrote, "It is my happy privilege to tell you the results of Class A in our annual Film Festival. Your film *Stereotype* has been awarded an Honorable Mention. In addition it has been given a special citation "for presenting a subject of current social significance." *Stereotype* would be shown at the Festival, the first week in August and presentation of awards for the many winners would be made during the Motion Picture Division's annual banquet on Wednesday, August 2 at 6:00 p.m. in the Williamsburg Room of the Olympic Hotel in Seattle, Washington. If I couldn't attend, the award and my film would be mailed to me.

As wonderful as it was to read Honorable Mention and Special Citation, it wasn't another Gold Medal. I decided then and there that Seattle was too far away and the cost to get there too expensive.

The envelope was thick because it contained the comment sheets of nine unnamed, numbered-only judges who'd participated in preliminary judging or final judging sessions.

"A film with good creative imagination and an effective means of conveying a message."

"Photography was good. Pantomime was clear. Message was well put across. Sound very appropriate. Editing fair."

"Story very week (sic). Editing good. Titles poor."

"Well exposed film. Good lighting. Smooth flow."

"Black & white. The story moved too slow (sic). None of the scenes were interesting. Some dragged out. A new approach in presentation. A modern way to meet the time. A few close ups could have improved the picture."

"A story with a good moral. Photographically too 'stereotyped'. Strong backlight on subjects could be helpful on this type of film. Fluid camera movements are almost essential. Cinematography is cinematography."

"Good stage play story but not very cinematic. Excellent moral."

"Statement was well made more by good acting and choreography than by the cinematography. Good choice of soundtrack selection. Film a worthwhile effort."

"The film deserves special credit for its social comment. The ideas were stated clearly and developed well toward the end. From a cinematic point of view the picture was not as successful – not as successful as the ideas themselves were worthwhile. A more dynamic visual presentation perhaps could have heightened interest more sharply."

Everyone sees a film differently. What the filmmaker intends and what a viewer sees can often be at odds, ergo two different films. Everyone's entitled to their opinion and I'm entitled to agree or disagree. Perhaps the most valid comments come from judges who saw my film as not very cinematic. Agreed. It wasn't. My camera didn't move when we shot the film due to space limitation of black curtaining used as the background. Judges wouldn't have known that. How I would have backlit my actors against black curtains, well, the judge got me there.

More films participated in the 38<sup>th</sup> PSA-MPD International Film Festival: 202, compared with 187 when I won the Gold Medal in the previous year's 37<sup>th</sup>. Of the names listed among the Ten Best, the Sponsored Awards, the Honorable Mentions, and Special Citations, none were familiar. None, that is, until 10 years later.

Some little space opus was commercially released in cinemas in 1977 starring Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker, Harrison Ford as Han Solo, Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia Organa, Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Ben Kenobi, and the voice of James Earl Jones as Darth Vader. Ah, yes, it was called *Star Wars* and its director was George Lucas. Wait a minute! I went back into my 1967 scrapbook and looked at the PSA-MPD sheets. Sure enough! Among the Special Citations was Paul Golding and George Lucas, Los Angeles, California, for Unusual Synchronization of Sound to an Abstract Pattern in their film *Herbie*.

Another 10 years passed and, in that time, two sequels to *Star Wars* were released, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. I'd taken too much time to satisfy my curiosity by writing to George Cushman and asking "Is the George Lucas who made *Herbie* and won a Special Citation in 1967, the same year my *Stereotype* won a Special Citation, *the* same George Lucas who made the *Star Wars* movies?" Mr. Cushman's reply couldn't have been more stunning. Yes, it was *the* one and the same George Lucas.

I have seen all six entries in the *Star Wars* franchise overseen by George Lucas and I have seen *Herbie*. A few lines of one paragraph of a George Lucas biography are given to *Herbie* without reference to its 1967 PSA-MPD Special Citation:

Lucas' second film, made with fellow student Paul Golding, was **Herbie**, a series of light reflections on a buffed and polished car that mirrors the headlights approaching then passing it on a busy city street. The title comes from a jazz composition by tenor saxophonist Herbie Hancock. The film's abstract graphics are impressive and made Lucas's star within the department shine even brighter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Pollock, Dale. <u>Skywalking: The Life and Films of George Lucas: Updated Edition.</u> New York: De Capo Press, 1999

The department mentioned was the University of Southern California Film Department and its separate courses included writing, directing, camera, lighting, sound, and editing.

On the heels of recognition, I was sent an invitation to join the ranks of movie makers from all over the world in the Motion Picture Division of the Photographic Society of America. Looking over the application for membership, I thought seriously about becoming an active financial member.

Results arrived from the Foothill College Sixth Annual Independent Film-Makers' Festival. I didn't win \$500. I received a certificate from The Foothill College Public Events Board which only recognized my participation. That's all. Still, recognition was better than being ignored.

I still was ignorant of results of the Second City International Short Film Festival in Chicago, also referred to as a Festival of Experimental Films, aka Aardvark Films. Several impatient enquiries went unanswered until those words, "What could I lose?" came back to bite me. I learned that, so sorry, they'd lost my print of *Jamie*. No offer of reimbursement was made and subsequent requests for same were ignored. Having no proof to make a claim against them, I concluded someone must have liked my film well enough to keep the print in their own personal library. In other words, the five fingered discount!

Buoyed by success and loss, two great motivators, I decided to put my creative juices to work and experiment with filming in color at night under neon lights. I knew it could be done because I'd seen other peoples' films made under such conditions. Could I do it too was the question I needed answered.

The colorful lights of amusement park rides at the Wisconsin State Fair presented the opportunity to film at night. In addition to experimenting with the camera under blindingly bright neon, I had an ulterior motive. I had nagging new thoughts about re-making we were two with better ideas and a different cast. And there they were in front of me every day on the playground. Just who out of Denny, Gary and Scott would be best for the two main roles could be determined by taking them to the State Fair and shooting an unscripted, untitled movie, albeit nothing more than a home movie. Besides, I didn't know if footage would turn out and made no plan for a real "Elkay" Production. The boys had shown they could act in the Lane Circus Maximus and now I'd find out if they could perform for the camera without making it obvious the camera looked back at them. I made the arrangement with their parents and treated for everything from grounds admission, to tickets for rides, to the obligatory fairground favorites of pink cotton candy, icy cold cokes, candy apples, and hot dogs heaped with green sweet pickle relish, squiggled with baby poo-yellow mustard, and bathed in red ketchup.

The camera was a borrowed Bolex H-16 REX, a 16mm turret model. This was one time I left the tripod at home. Crowds and all, a tripod would just get in the way. So much for the moviemaker's axiom: if you can afford to travel, you can afford a tripod. Stimulated by judges' comments which said my cinematography in *Stereotype* wasn't cinematic, I decided to hand-hold the camera and achieve a cinéma vérité effect for a slight shakiness that lends a documentary feel. Cinéma vérité done well can allow an audience to feel like it's participating in the action.

An amusement park is filled with activity and I was eager to capture the action, the boys' boisterous behavior and ensure a feeling of excitement. Having the energy of Mexican jumping beans, mounting the camera on a tripod might not have captured their impulsive youth. What fun we had, the boys on the rides and me following every move panning and tilting the camera. Ghost Ship. Merry-Go-Round. I captured their exuberance reflected in mirrors and as they whirled round on wooden horses. The Tilt-a-Whirl revolved up and so did my camera. The Ferris Wheel rotated down and so did the camera. Moving through the crowd, the boys greedily munched fluffy pink cotton candy. I walked backwards with the camera humming, oblivious to trip-up obstacles and confident in capturing on celluloid their smiling, sugar-sticky faces awash in brightly lit neon ripening and melding from green into yellow, then red, and blue.



Carol Mechenich took this mock-up publicity shot for *Denny, Gary & Scott.* (L to R) Me, Scott Navarette, Denny Smith (I don't remember why he had that bandage on his head), and Gary Lesperance. Note how blond my hair turned from being out in the sun all day all summer.

When the rolls of film were returned from processing, I was amazed at the result. All three boys were photogenic. The camera loved them. Colors were rich and most of the shots were perfectly exposed and focused. Focus under those lights was, in point of fact, the greatest challenge. Working fast, because that's how the action on the rides proved, I guessed at how much to open or close and manually set the aperture for each shot. Had I relied upon automatic setting, I know I'd have ended up with faces over-exposed or under-exposed, washed out and blurred or dark and indiscernible as the Black Hole of Calcutta. The automatic light setting feature will always read the brightest light, not necessarily the subject you intend to photograph.

Given the high quality of my footage, I saw more than a home movie. I would edit the footage and create a montage with rhythm and tempo to convey the joy the boys experienced. For some obtuse reason, all I could bounce around in my brain for a title was the alliterative *Fairground Frolic* or *Fun at the Fair*, trite titles too oft used by moviemakers whose films I despised. I knew I should do better. At a loss for anything else, I named my new experimental picture after the boys and titled it simply *Denny, Gary & Scott*. They are pictured in that order below in my 16mm frame enlargements.







Editing completed, raw footage was turned into an experimental four minute "Elkay" Production showing what three boys do when set free on the midway at the fair. There was no plot; the purpose

was simply to make viewers think the boys' experiences looked like fun. The sound, a circus theme played on an organ and sounding like a melody which accompanied a carousel ride was called "Come to the Fair, and was discovered by David Charles Thomas in Santa Cruz. I sent him the original film and he took care of adding sound and having it made into an optical sound print. Exact matching of picture with sound cues wasn't required, just the right kind of amusement park tune and tempo to complement the film's mood and pace.

As to the boys' abilities to perform, there was no doubt. The main roles in a 16mm version of *We Were Two* could be filled by any of all three. I cast Denny, the youngest, as the boy who meets Death. Scott, just as in real life, would be his best friend. Though the least angelic of the trio, Gary would be a guardian angel and lend visual balance to a trio of angels.

Republican candidates for the presidency in these times included Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller from New York, Ronald Reagan from California and others meeting in Miami Beach, Florida for the Republican Convention. It was, according to ABC News reporter Jimmy Breslin, "The convention of the nice white people. There are no black faces to remind us of what's going on in this country." Violence broke out in Liberty City, the predominantly black neighborhood of Miami. Buildings were set afire and some looting was reported. Some teargas was used on a rock-and-bottle-throwing crowd. In the throes of action and reaction, Richard Millhouse Nixon made one of the great comebacks in American political history becoming the Republican nominee for President of the United States of America. He was able to tap into his own sense of renewal and, foregoing his campaign speech writers, delivered an acceptance speech which was all Richard Nixon. He presented placid calm in a year of chaos.

A tale of youth and death, the story of *We Were Two* tells of two friends leading the active lives that boys do. Death interrupts unexpectedly. One boy sees and welcomes Death. The other can't see Death because it is not his time. He does not understand why Death must intrude. A visual poem of life and death, showing forms of illusion and reality, I reimagined *We Were Two* to give my audience immediate access to the symbolism and metaphor. If my film was to succeed, my audience had to understand what happens.

The character of Death had to be older than the handsome teenager I'd cast first time around. Now only one person came to mind. 150 miles away, I contacted Paul Bentzen and asked if he'd be willing to come to Milwaukee for a weekend. Although it'd be a concentrated effort, I felt confident all of Paul's scenes could be shot in one day. Paul accepted. He said he'd been learning more about using greasepaint while fraternizing with the Stevens Point University Summer Theater troupe and now he could transform himself into a very old man and a convincing representation of Death, minus the traditional scythe, flesh-naked smiling skull face, and black monk's robe with cowl.

Next was to make it clear how one boy dies. The new version of *We Were Two* was still based upon my recurring dream and a fireball was still out of the question. It was too dangerous, too expensive, and I thought such an image would be much too horrific for my audience. A conflagration could overwhelm any images which followed. Studying my first version of *we were two*, it became obvious in the playtime sequence that riding bicycles conveniently lent itself to an accident. Compared with a giant fireball, falling over or crashing with a bicycle is commonplace. An audience would accept accidental death on a bicycle without a shout of startled shock or covering eyes with hands. In fact, to convey the boyish playtime of two friends I'd mostly concentrate on their together activity as riding bicycles. For practical reasons I also decided against showing the actual crash. It may have been a stunt too dangerous for a 12 year old to attempt.

Death showed up unexpectedly while the boys played together in the 8mm film. That's how it can happen in reality. However, in my film when Death just showed up, the young character caused more questions than acceptance. Who was this boy in the maroon sport coat with his hands outstretched, palms up indicating stop. Stop for what? Now as I rethought how Death should be introduced into the bike riding, I decided to show the approaching sandaled feet of Death and intercut these shots with

the boys riding their two wheelers. From the day each and every one of us is born, Death stalks us. Death stalks in real life, sometimes arriving unexpectedly, other times welcomed. The scenario of Death's stalking, arriving unexpectedly, and welcomed needed to be set up clearly in film. Suspense would be created. Who belongs to the sandaled feet and why are we seeing them while the boys ride their bikes? All would come together as the face of Death is revealed and audiences would comprehend that face.

In the first version, the boy who dies ascends a hill, waves his hand, and traverses down the hill and out of view. Perhaps going up and down a hill with a teenager in a maroon sport coat didn't quite get across to the audience that the boy had moved from life to death. A more traditional symbol is a bridge, the bridge from life to death, and I remembered an old wooden bridge in the marsh in Greenfield Park which I'd used for a swordfight between Dick Harter and Mike Theoharris in 1961's *Rivals of the Treasure*. Rustic, worn, and not particularly attractive, it was just the kind of bridge to convey the oft-trod path from life into death.

I wanted my film to look ethereal and decided to shoot most of the footage at 32 to 45 frames per second instead of the standard 24fps. It would mean exposing more raw film, the motion slightly slower than normal giving the picture its celestial, spiritual quality.

Finally, after looking at the original we were two repeatedly and finding its flaws, I saw that color drew attention to itself. It worked as a distraction rather than an enhancement. Instead of seeing what was intended, audiences saw multi-colored T-shirts on boys who looked as much like angels as a group of sandlot stick ball players. Death, the same size in height, weight and as young an age as his quarry, and wearing a maroon sport coat never convinced viewers he was the dreaded character of life's end. Even in the opening sequence which established the boys' friendship, they wore summer clothing with too many colorful solids or patterns. I decided the reimagined We Were Two would costume all actors in blacks and whites and I'd shoot using Kodak black & white film stock.

The Milwaukee Journal held a standing offer to do a story on my next movie. There had been several ideas I intended to film, but none which came to fruition. This time there'd be no backing down and filming was scheduled for the weekend just before the start of a new school year. I contacted the newspaper and arranged with Journal photographer George Koshollek to meet us at the lagoon in Greenfield Park whenever it was convenient for him Saturday or Sunday as I'd be shooting both days.

I'd told everyone involved in *We Were Two* about Jim, how he died, and the story of my prescient dream. The boys approached their acting task with a reverent fervor. Considering the ages of my usually boisterous cast and the long hours of concentration required on set, everyone's cooperation was outstanding. Whatever I asked them to do, they did. They didn't just imitate, they contributed their own ideas and gave their creativity of soul to the camera. In the best sense of the word, the boys were actors and held their own with the experienced award-winning Paul Bentzen.



Paul arrived at my parents' home Friday night. His appearance startled me. He'd grown a beard since I'd last seen him in May. It made Paul look older and I thought, "Yes. The beard will work and make Paul look seasoned in the role of Death, as if he'd been around for a long time in the job of collecting souls." Paul is pictured left as his natural self on Saturday morning at the breakfast table before we walked to the Greenfield Park set.

Starting Saturday morning's shoot at 9 o'clock was like playing a guessing game. Would cloud cover continue or would the sun shine? The sun beamed occasionally but briefly to break the grey.

Not wanting to lose time, I chose to shoot, more or less, in sequence. Just as in the 8mm we were two I filmed the establishment of friendship; two boys seated at a wooden picnic table with arms poised,



hands clasped for an arm wrestle, Denny and Scott pictured above in my 16mm frame enlargements. But instead of one winning and the other losing, their hands unclench, rotate, and embrace into handshake.

Filming among trees I figured what flatness of light resulted from cloud might contribute to an unhappy, perhaps ominous atmosphere. It was possible to create a three-dimensional effect on screen as Scott and Denny ran together, weaved and threaded among the trees in a mock game of "tag", their helping each other to carry a fallen dead limb, riding their bikes between thin and thick tree trunks. The greyness of picture was a contrast to the happy faces of the boys doing what boys do. The



accident was staged without sunshine. Both boys glide parallel downhill toward the camera. Denny pedals faster, overtakes Scott, as shown left in my 16mm frame enlargement; he glides past the camera and out of shot. Scott slowly approaches the camera and his mood changes abruptly. I moved the camera forward with my arms to fill the frame with Scott's face as Scott's eyes open wide and he agonizingly screams Denny's name. Just after I finished the shot, the sun came out. All of the bike sequence was filmed under a cloudy grey light and that meant all of the shots were light consistent.

Shooting with sun and shadow on black & white stock results in an automatic three-dimensional effect, as I'd learned when shooting both versions of Jamie. Now with sunshine casting marbled patterns in the undergrowth, I shot several scenes at foot level and from different positions of Paul's slow-walking sandaled feet. As I was unsure how these cutaway shots could be edited in with the boys playing and pedaling their bikes, I asked Paul to move screen Right to Left, screen Left to Right, toward the camera and away from the camera. It's rather repetitious and didn't exactly challenge Paul's acting chops. Sometimes I set shallow focus<sup>2</sup> shots of Death's walking, or stalking if you prefer; his feet coming into focus or moving out of focus. Other times I did a rack focus<sup>3</sup> ensuring Paul's feet always stayed in focus as he walked.

We moved to the site of the lagoon. Water is a recognized symbol of life, for without water we perish. I was conscious of showing Scott near the water as the sun shining on it made it look alive. Sunlight reflections danced over wavelets and sparkled. When I set the camera to show Death and his retinue, the water looked grey, almost black.

<sup>2</sup> Shallow focus incorporates a small depth of field. One plane of the image is in focus while the rest is out of focus. It is typically used to emphasize one part of an image over another. What is out of focus is referred to as bokeh (pronounced bo-KAY) and the blurring may be pleasant or unpleasant to the eye.

Rack focus or racking focus is the practice of changing the focus of the lens during a shot. In professional cinematography, the person who performs the rack focus is called a focus puller.

As the physical representation of Death, Paul wore a black suit with a black turtle-necked shirt. He greyed his hair and scrappy beard. Greasepaint accented the natural furrows of his forehead and smile



lines. His cheeks appeared to be sunken and he aged his hands and feet by accenting the veins, thus making the skin appear less taut and wrinkled. Sunlight highlighted Paul's make-up and contributed to his aged appearance. A 12 year old boy from Lane whose name I can't remember, and every source in my scrapbook neglects to identify, carried a lighted candle. He was dressed in black contemporary clothing. My 16 year old brother Steve bore a rustic cross made of two tree sticks tied together and draped with a remnant black cloth. Same as the boy with the candle, Steve was dressed in contemporary clothes, all black. Together they were symbolic members of Death's retinue.

Pictured left, boy with candle whose name I don't remember, Paul Bentzen as Death, and my 16 year old brother Steve carrying the cross with death shroud.

Under my direction and as interpreted and portrayed by Paul, Death was not a creature of horror. He was sober, stern, serious, but never intimidating. He performs one task and one task alone and, in the callow Denny, he takes the boy's life with care, with gentleness. At the point where Death makes first tactile contact, his hand touching the boy's chin, a kindly, warm, ever so slight and welcoming smile breaks across Death's lips. Despite the inexperience and innocence of Death's target, Denny shows a maturity beyond his age as he wholly accepts the necessary transition. Denny slowly raises his arms,

his hands encircling and gently cupping Death's hand on his chin. What made this scene especially tender was Denny's look of wonder, his lack of questioning, accented by the natural appearance of his long dark eyelashes and ice-blue eyes beneath his shock of white-blonde hair. Even on black and white film, his eyes pierced through and shown as two small mirrors hauntingly reflecting every inner emotion of his soul, and conveying all without speaking a word. It was the same when the camera was turned onto Paul's face. Every line of possible dialogue was spoken silently through Paul's, nay - Death's experienced eyes penetrating into one's soul. This was a time when two characters melded so coherently, screen magic was created.

Two pictures right: Denny takes the hand of Death to show acceptance while Scott, at a distance sees only Denny, pictured below.

All Scott sees is Denny standing alone, his arms raised and with hands cupped as if in prayer. The bearers of the candle and the cross turn and

walk toward the camera. In a Medium shot they





move past Death and Denny as Death tenderly takes Denny's small smooth hand in his. Death, hand in hand with the boy, moves away. Scott is left behind and, of course, all he physically sees is his friend, solo, walking away from him; all the while Scott's face registering a look of puzzlement. Is what he observes happening in his own confused mind or has he been genuinely set apart from his friend? The dreamlike quality of slow motion contributes to the audience questioning what they see. Is what they are shown on screen real or figments of a wild imagination?

Scott breaks into a trot to follow his friend, but before any catch-up is allowed to happen, in Close-up Death turns his head. In a Long Shot Death raises his staff. Scott stops, his face registers fear and he covers his ears. Death raises his staff a second, then a third time. What these staff raisings signaled would become pickup shots Sunday.



In a procession headed by the candle bearer and the cross carrier, Death leads the boy by his hand and steps onto the log bridge, a bridge often used as a symbol of transition. Before reaching the bridge's end, the boy halts briefly to look back at Scott. An expressionless face and at a loss to comprehend what he thinks he sees, Scott looks back. He sees only Denny. The boy raises his arm halfway and, with hardly a movement, waves a plaintive good-bye, as shown left in my 16mm frame enlargement. His other hand still enveloped by the hand of Death, unseen by Scott, Denny turns from Scott and follows Death without reluctance across the bridge... and disappears behind tall bulrushes.

Paul's scenes were finished and with Denny also "dead" and gone, the air of solemnity continued on set as we packed up props and camera gear. "Sorry, Paul," I said. "Looks like you won't make it into the Sunday paper." No one from *The Milwaukee Journal* fronted up Saturday to shoot pictures.

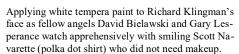
Four boys had been cast as angels in the 8mm we were two. In this version I cast three boys. My brother invited his friend David Bielawski to return to the same role of an angel he'd played in my first filming of we were two. David, Gary Lesperance and another Lane playground boy, 12 year old Richard Klingman, were identified as angels with white faces and white open-necked dress shirts. Even if some in the audience didn't pick up on their being guardian angels, dressing them in white and painting faces white suggested they were good characters, white being a color immediately recognized as a symbol of good.

In theatre, there's an old theory about blocking on stage and forming triangles. When directing three actors you place them on stage to form a triangle. Whenever one member of the triangle moves to a new stage position, one or both actors cross block, aka X block, one another and the triangle continues to be formed. It can be eye-pleasing because no actor is caught unseen behind another. As well, a religious significance can sometimes be attributed to the equilateral triangle.

David had grown since last summer. He was tall, handsome and looked best at the vertex of a triangle of angels. Heightwise, Gary and Richard were shorter than David and lent aesthetic balance to forming the triangle.

That George Koshollek showed up on a glorious sunny Sunday morning when I shot the sequence with the angels must have had something to do with levity pervasive on set. Did the boys suddenly feel self-conscious in the presence of a professional photographer? Put it this way, maybe the spell cast by the seriousness of the subject matter was snapped when Koshollek joked around with the cast to get them to relax and smile for some of his pictures. He wanted readers of the Sunday paper's Weekend Magazine to see that making a movie was lots of fun.







16 year old David Bielawski



I demonstrate to Richard the stylized pose he should take in front of a high fence

We picked up filming with the shots which come immediately after Death had three times raised his staff. Although these shots were made out of sequence, overall I'd chosen to shoot *We Were Two* in sequence, as much as was possible, for two reasons. One was that I guessed these novice actors might "get it" if events unfolded in chronological order. Secondly, and more importantly, I hadn't written a shot for shot script. Since my dream was still strong in my mind, I just made notes from which to work: Friendship. Play. Bicycles. Accident. Death. Bridge. Wave good-bye. Follow. Guardian angels. Bicycles on ground. Acceptance. I also figured that if I shot in sequence, I'd remember to get onto film everything I needed.

Scott wants to follow his friend and cross that bridge with Denny; Death, remember, is unseen by Scott. As Scott jogs forward approaching my camera, I tracked back revealing a cyclone fence. Scott

leaps and bangs into the fence, jams his fingers into the mesh holes and climbs, pictured right.<sup>5</sup> To achieve this shot I had poked the lens through a wire mesh hole, basically a diamond shape. Bolex in hand and my eye looking through the viewfinder, as Scott drew nearer I walked backwards keeping him clearly in frame. The wire was a blur until I'd backed up enough for it to come into focus and was recognized as a fence. The high fence was, in fact, the backstop behind home plate of a baseball diamond. It was just fortunate for me that no amateur game had been scheduled Sunday. No plate was set at home. No white lines went off toward first or third bases nor showed the batter's box. For every shot in the vicinity of the diamond I set my camera so that nothing gave away that we worked on a baseball field. Hanging on the fence, Scott is frustrated, angry, and vulnerable, and he's calling after Denny. Lip readers might discern "Denny", as well as "Come back" enunciated.



Photos by George P. Koshollek, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photos dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46.
 Photo left and photo right were included in the *Weekend Magazine* feature story. Center photo not included in feature.
 Photo by George P. Koshollek, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46 and

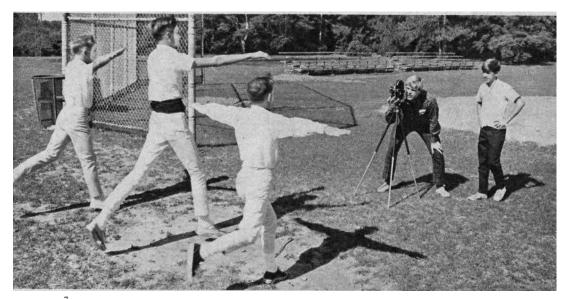
not included in feature.

Now I introduced the guardian angels, three angels move from left to right across the screen, Richard's and Gary's arms outstretched to their sides, David's arms outstretched forward, pictured left. Scott can see the angels and he climbs down from the barrier, the angels' arms lowering in rhythm with Scott's descending the fence. Scott's face registers puzzlement, almost acceptance, rather than fear.

Arranged in a straight line, angels appear to form a triangle and had seemingly come from nowhere. I would have liked to have introduced the angels by mounting the



camera on the tripod and shooting the background on its own, rewinding that section of film, and with the angels in place, double-exposing the background and fading them into the shot. Then they would have seemingly come out of the ether. However, I was aware of a slight breeze moving the leaves on trees. Had I rewound and double-exposed, the background leaves, although looking on screen as one picture but actually two, would have moved awkwardly giving the scene an unwanted comic effect.



Pictured above: <sup>7</sup> I film the arrival of the guardian angels, Gary, David and Richard. You can clearly see that we filmed on a baseball diamond. Bleachers for fans are seen behind me and the camera and Scott, hands akimbo on his hips.

The angels arrive in slow motion cadence. Their measured movement gives an impression that footfalls don't touch the ground. Of course they do, but the boys moved forward as if in a trance, legs moving mostly martially. With their faces as plaster of Paris statues, audiences, fortunately, neglect to look at their feet.

When the angels reach Scott, their purpose is revealed as bringers and givers of consolation, comfort, solace. The angels do not touch Scott. Signals are conveyed via stylized body movement or dance, and what I choreographed for them was dance, possibly in the realm of jazz ballet. That these rough-and-tumble boys hadn't realized their movement was dancing and that they managed to pull it off so

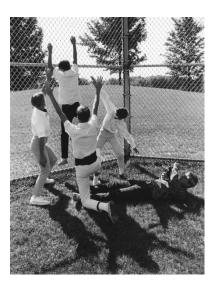
-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Photo by George P. Koshollek, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46 and not included in feature. Scott, not in the shot, watches bemused as I film the angels, Richard, David and Gary, from below. <sup>7</sup> Photo by George P. Koshollek, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46 and included in *Weekend Magazine* feature story.

gracefully and flawlessly was praiseworthy. Maybe if I'd said to the boys, "Now, the angels will dance...," well, I'm afraid I'd have ended up with unusable film of faux ballerinas without pink tutus tippy-toeing and flouncing around. Footage wasn't wasted, for the boys got it right just about every first take.

Pictured right, <sup>8</sup> Lying on my back, I shoot Scott hanging on the fence as angels Gary, David and Richard take stylized dance poses and form a triangle.

Again, the question has to be raised. Is what Scott experiences genuine or imaginary. Is it happening for real or invented in his vivid imagination? To add fuel to viewers' speculation, after Scott climbs down from the fence as directed by his guardian angels, then, arms outstretched left and right, he begins to spin like a top. Accelerating to a dizzying speed, Scott's guardian angels are seen through his eyes, a first person point of view, as passing faster and faster as three merge into a blur.



The subject matter had lent itself to being shot in sequence. Now as we reached the dénouement, I lay prone on the ground with the camera lens aimed at Scott, also on the ground with his face pointed to the sky; his face filled the frame, his eyes closed. His eyes gently flutter open, as if waking from sleep or concussion, and convey that he doesn't understand why he's lying on the ground or how he got there. Had Scott been asleep all the time? Had he fainted? Or had he, like Denny, crashed his bike too? The expression on Scott's face poses the question and I didn't provide a definite answer. My reasoning was that it's something the audience should nut out and, whichever determination individuals in the audience conclude, everyone would be correct. That's one of the wonderful things about a poem. Any conclusion drawn can be justified with support from whatever clues have come before. In the instance of viewing my visual poem, a conclusion comes from clues the viewer has seen ahead of this defining moment. I hoped an audience wouldn't conclude that "it was all just a dream" because that is a movie maker's cop-out by film makers who don't know how to end a story. It's the kind of conclusion which makes a frustrated viewer want to throw a shoe at the screen.

As Scott raised his head, I raised the camera to follow his movement. Scott sits up. Camera focused on Scott, I sat up. Scott stood up and I followed his every action with the camera, all the time keeping



him tightly focused and perfectly within frame. The shot has no atmosphere-breaking jerkiness within its movement. It's quite possible that slow motion compensated for any awkward movement in my standing up, but nothing awkward ever showed on screen. The camera movement was fluid, as if the Bolex had been bolted to a dolly and floated through space, same as the invented motion control photographic process 9 years later and honored with an Academy Award in 1978 called Dykstraflex<sup>9</sup>. I amazed myself with what I had accomplished with the camera in this shot and others in *We Were Two*.

It was the last shot for the shoot. Composing the final shot through the spokes of a spinning bicycle wheel, pictured left, <sup>10</sup> Scott approaches from some distance behind the wheel.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Photo by George P. Koshollek, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46 and not included in feature.

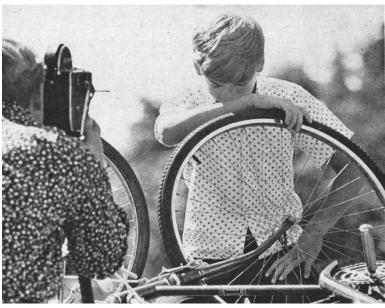
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Named after its primary developer John Dykstra, the camera was developed in 1976 specifically for complex special effects shots in *Star Wars*. The all-digitally controlled system allowed for 7 axes of motion: roll, pan, tilt, swing, boom, traverse, track, lens focus, motor drive, shutter control, and their duplication in multiple takes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Photo by George P. Koshollek, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46. Photo left was not included in feature.

Reaching the wheel, he kneels before it, and contemplates all that has occurred. He places his hand on the wheel and the spinning is stopped. As the realization of Denny's death becomes real, Scott is at his most vulnerable. Aware of loss, he fights back tears. He turns the wheel in the opposite direction to its clockwise spinning, as if trying to slow down time and turn time back.

Then Scott bows his head onto his hand on the bicycle tire, pictured left. There is a brief pause before tears empty him of every pent up emotion. Simultaneously gravity acts over the pressure on the wheel from Scott's hand. The wheel turns counter clockwise and rotates Scott down and out of frame.

We Were Two was a wrap. Hearing me call "Cut", Scott lifted himself slowly from the ground; his face was streaked and stained from real tears. He caught his breath through his nose in small gasps, his stomach convulsing and



tensing each time as if from a hiccup. Scott had immersed himself in his character more than anyone imagined, myself included. He needed to come down from the emotional peak he'd reached, and given a bit of tender loving care to assure that what he'd just done was all right.

All right? Some professional actors would give their right arms to be able to cry on cue, but can't. Nobody on set laughed at Scott or made smartass comments. It was all right for a boy to cry, much less cry real tears when it was only a film and no one on set had really died! I think because I shot in sequence, the whole story had come together in Scott's head in this one screen moment and all our "make believe" had suddenly become very, very real. In Saturday's shoot his best friend "died". Sunday he was made to feel everything he remembered about losing his best friend. Scott must have felt real raw emotion and in this final scene released it and showed it. And this 12 year old had never before acted... and had never heard of Stanislavsky!

George Koshollek witnessed and photographed the entire Sunday shoot. He stayed on set and didn't impose upon anyone to set up a photo. Happily, he snapped away without any of us becoming aware of his presence. In fact, I think the only time we knew George was present was first thing in the morning. He was on top of us then with his camera clicking during angels' make-up. He was a true professional as a photojournalist, taking pictures as action happened and not as how he wanted them set. I have George Koshollek to thank for all the pictures I am able to show of me working on set as director and cinematographer.

Scott regained his composure and spouted some inane comment making himself the butt of his joke. He broke the on-set solemnity which had ruled for the past five or six hours. Now they were exuberant boys again laughing and fooling around. Crowded around a park bubbler the guardian

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Photo by *The Milwaukee Journal*'s George P. Koshollek, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46, was not a mock-up. Koshollek took the picture during actual filming of the scene, and it was included in *Weekend Magazine* feature story.

angels washed white tempera from their faces, pictured right.<sup>12</sup> I called out, my voice bouncing across the baseball diamond, "Hey, Yackamahoola!" Gary looked up from scrubbing, his smile beaming. "Don't forget to dig the potatoes outta your ears!" I whooped. So typically Gary, he responded in his deep gravelly voice, "Huh? You never painted my ears!"

Scott was always keen to assist with taping down film ends and sealing metal cans of exposed film, pictured right.<sup>13</sup> As we packed up the gear, I showed everyone how many reels of 16mm film we'd exposed on the weekend; no one could help themselves asking the inevitable, "So when we gonna see it?"







Pictured left: A personal snapshot: Scott Navarette and Dennis Smith pose with me and the Bolex mounted on the tripod in Greenfield Park, West Allis, August 1967.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Photo by George P. Koshollok, photographer for *The Milwaukee Journal*, finished photo dated 1967 Sep 2 PM 4 46. Photo was included in Weekend Magazine feature story. Gary Lesperance laughs for Koshollok's camera as Richard Klingman and David Bielawski scrub their faces. It was the moment after I'd called out "Yakamahoola!" Ibid. Photo wasn't included in *Weekend Magazine* feature story.

## Chapter 50: Pseudolus

irst thing on return to Stevens Point in September 1967 for my 5<sup>th</sup> year and a second bite at being a senior, head of the Drama Department, Dr. Seldon Faulkner, shoved a script and music score into my hands and said, "I want you to try out for the lead." I grasped the script and score for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and shrugged my shoulders. "I doubt it," I said decisively. "I'm gonna be too busy shooting a film and keeping up with classes." Hah! Like a New Year's resolution, in the beginning of any new school year everything is approached seriously.

I was conditionally accepted into the School of Education, conditional because I required a speech and hearing test and had to write a composition at a set time in a set place, like sitting for an exam, on why I wanted to be a teacher. I signed on for two Education courses, Planning for Teaching and Teaching of Speech. Other courses included Shakespeare, Modern Poetry, and Grammar of American English, the latter about as challenging and fascinating as studying a foreign language. In the vernacular of the era, Modern Poetry under the tutelage of Miss Mary Shumway was "the swingingest class ever."

Ahead of the 1967 school year finishing I had been in discussion with the University's Board of Regents. Yeah, me, invited by the big brass to talk about their idea for making a film. They wanted a documentary without commentary, the school as seen through the eyes of a freshman. The film was intended for screening at high schools' college nights to show seniors what life was like at WSU-Stevens Point; its purpose being recruitment, targeting graduates to sign up and come to Point. The Board asked me to provide a cost estimate. Before any print was struck, I suggested \$2700 for raw 16mm color film and processing, and \$1000 for my time; my services to include planning, shooting, and editing. President of Sentry Insurance and member of the University's Foundation, Mr. Carl N. Jacobs, told the Board mine was an inexpensive proposition, considering the film would take all year to make. He suggested I be allowed to make the film without faculty dictation, meaning I'd be my own boss and have complete charge of the project. Everything we discussed was given consideration over the summer break. The Foundation's purpose was to do things for the University that the state could not, to provide "the margin of difference." A student making a film about the university was certainly different, and it could make a difference in recruitment.

The Board of Regents and the University Foundation accepted my estimate. Rather oddly, I thought, my first assignment seemed unconnected to student recruitment. In fact, for the university to be seen through a student's eyes, I hadn't even had the chance to look around for a student. Using Mr. Carl N. Jacob's Bolex H16 camera, I was required to be at the airport to film Mr. Burdette Eagon, Dean of the School of Education, returning from a study trip to Vietnam.

The 8<sup>th</sup> President of WSU at Stevens Point, 41 year old James H. Albertson, had been killed in a plane crash on a lonely rain-swept mountain north of Saigon on Good Friday, March 24, 1967. He wasn't a combatant. He went to the Far East for the first time in 1964 to the Philippines on a study for the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the U.S. State Department's Agency of International Development (AID). WSU had been looking outward with a sense of worldwide responsibility. President Albertson headed a team for the first critical study ever made of Vietnamese public higher education. Wisconsin State University and the WSU Foundation were determined that President Albertson's work should be completed. So Dr. Burdette Eagon flew to Vietnam to complete

Albertson's study report. Eagon had previously been selected by President Albertson to head another study in elementary and secondary education and had completed both assignments for AID through a WSU Foundation contract.

This first filming assignment was promoting the University and the WSU Foundation. As I still didn't have a driver's license, someone else was designated to transport my exposed film to Wausau's Channel 7 where it would be processed and edited for airing on the evening news. Information about President Albertson would be recycled along with my new footage of Dr. Burdette Eagon as he exited the plane, waved from the doorway, descended the staircase, and was greeted on the tarmac by University bigwigs. It was pretty much standard newsreel stuff. I just needed to be on my toes, quickly set the aperture and focus, frame the shot and shoot. In live action, on-the-spot cinema verite, there'd be no chance to ask for re-takes. This first assignment turned me into a maker of the Newsreel. Footage, whether used by the TV station or not, was to be preserved in the University's historical records.

As the Board had considered my estimate over summer vacation, I was informed by an employee in Information Services that the Board had sought a second opinion. They'd checked into the services of a professional studio. She handed me all the literature received. Cost was set at \$1000 per finished minute of film. Average cost to make a 15 to 20 minute in 16mm was \$22,000. She said the Board was getting too good a deal out of me. In a whisper she said I should ask for more money, given that nothing had yet been put into writing. Hmmmm....

What, in the first instance, had me inside the office of Information Services? I'd filled out an application for a 2-S student deferment. Signed and sealed, I sent it to my local draft board in Milwaukee. Despite stories reported in news services of stability of the democratic South Vietnamese government and the ability of its soldiers to defend against North Vietnamese aggression, President Johnson kept calling up American boys, sending them to Army training camps, and shipping them overseas to the rice paddies and hotbeds of South Vietnam. I didn't want to be drafted, didn't have the courage to follow in my father's footsteps and volunteer. As had my Dad, I didn't care to be sent overseas toting a rifle. A tour of Vietnam wasn't on my itinerary.

Additionally, it was Information Services which wanted special events filmed and which had given me the unexpected assignment as the University's official movie news cameraman, and I applied for its Work-Study Program which paid me \$1.75 per hour. I figured my services were worth something, even if shooting newsreel footage was in itself good experience and gave me the opportunity to meet people in high public office.

This was how I met the University's new President, Dr. Lee Sherman Dreyfus. Not sure if I filmed him arriving in Stevens Point, or perhaps it was after his investiture. Shortly thereafter Mr. Dreyfus summoned me to his office. He said he had been aware of my film work and had the pleasure of having seen *Jamie* in a PSA-MPD Awards Package in Texas. He said he admired my ability, had looked forward to meeting me, and suggested it was serendipitous our first meeting was behind a 16mm camera trained on him wearing his trademark red vest. Mr. Dreyfus said he had been informed of my financial difficulty in paying for this, my unplanned fifth year in university, and that he'd personally arranged a scholarship for me. Paid for were my school fees, accomodation and meals. In addition, I was provided with \$300 from the Financial Aids Office, money I should use to buy personal items including clothes, school supplies, postage stamps, etc. I felt as if Mr. Dreyfus guided me to a treasure chest.

Considering the Board's documentary, even after they'd upped the ante for film and processing from \$2700 to \$3000, still nothing was put into writing. I typed up the terms for making the film and, looking over the brochures Information Services had provided, upped my own ante from \$1000 to \$1500. When I personally presented the contract, the Foundation's Mr. Vickerstaff tried to talk me out of a written contract and suggested we already had one, an "understood" one. I said I'd had too

much heartbreak with unwritten contracts. We agreed to disagree. He kept my written contract, but the Foundation stuck with the one identified as "understood."

About the same time as I had been in discussion with the Board of Regents and the University Foundation, I had considered leaving the dorm and living off-campus. Either I didn't bother to extend myself in the search or I didn't find an advertised place I considered a step up from what I'd had over the past four years. Being gregarious, the few single rooms I looked at in peoples' homes sent a message of isolation, and the number of set in stone don'ts exceeded all the rules I'd easily accepted in Pray-Sims Hall. Thus 3rd Floor Sims and the familiar Room 322 continued to be my domicile.

John Primm, on the other hand, did find an off campus room in an old house on College Avenue, just 200 feet from Old Main and across the street from Paul Bentzen. John occupied one of three bedrooms on the second floor where the house's only bathtub was set. John remembered having to share that tub with two other roomers plus the old couple who owned the house. Community showering in the dorm where everybody saw everyone else may have suddenly appeared more appealing! Because it was a late winter's afternoon when I visited John in his room, I thought it was dark and pokey, a contrast to my daylight bright Room 322 and its four years worth of good times and memories, including the year John and I shared.

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Sims was populated mostly by freshman, a reminder of what it must have been like when I first arrived on campus in 1963. A few upperclassmen with whom I'd made friends in previous years had also returned, like Mike Hackbarth, the 6 footer plus who played Alfred the butler in my Batman send-up, and to whose room we'd repair occasionally of a Sunday night to watch a movie on his personal small screen black and white TV. I recall our watching the first half of *The Great Escape* and how we had to wait impatiently a whole week to see the second part of it.

A freshman whose name I believe was Mark had been assigned to share Room 322. He was completely new to college life; I was a seasoned senior second time over, and neither of us was interested in becoming roommates. Bill Cooper, the Chicago African-American who acted in *Stereotype*, and I had arranged to share the room. Somehow our request had been overlooked when a new Director of Housing and new director of Pray-Sims Hall, Mr. Fred Leafgren, was appointed. When the matter was brought to his attention, Mr. Leafgren made the decision to move out the freshman to another freshman's room and assign Bill Cooper to 322. Being a known entity at university now, occasionally, presented simple perks.

Organized activities at the beginning of every school year included dances and I didn't know how to dance to any of the current music. I suppose what I had been doing was as acceptable as any other guys' tripping over their two left feet, waving their arms above their heads, and considering such

awkward movement dancing. What I'm going to say may come across as politically incorrect, but in 1967 our conversation wasn't frowned upon. I said to Bill, "Everyone knows that black people have rhythm. Will you teach me to dance?" He took what I stated as a compliment, shrugged his shoulders and said, "Yeah, sure." I had a record player and we put on the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction". Bill moved with the music. "See, man? You just gotta move with the beat. Your turn, white boy! Now you do it." I did. We moved together as a couple on the dance floor right there in Room 322. "You're doin' good, man. You're doing real good," Bill praised, "But white boy, you ain't got no ass!"

From a hippie-themed party we attended at this time in the off-campus apartment of my cousin Marlene Bronieszewski is a snapshot I have of Bill Cooper, pictured right. I'm standing



at left in shorts and ridiculous costume. Immediately left of me is John Primm. Bill is in the back,

right, tallest guy in the photo. To Bill's left is Elliot Keener. <sup>1</sup> I don't remember the names of the boy standing left of John Primm nor the girl supported in our arms. The girl standing in the back left is my cousin Marlene.

Dancing, partying, attending one film festival and organizing another added to the busyness of the initial two weeks of the school year. The Wausau Fine Arts Festival presented Experimental Films through the auspices of the Marathon County Historical Society. They'd had some help from me obtaining films. I provided names, addresses, and, in some cases, phone numbers, for contacts. The festival included titles from the RHC's First International Festival of Award Winning Motion Pictures and the 24<sup>th</sup> Film Festival of the Milwaukee Movie Makers: *The Day of the Beginning, El Huesped, Sweetheart Roland, The Washerette*, and *Big Iron*. My entry by invitation was *Jamie*. A film I looked forward to seeing was the latest animation from Kodak's Teenage Awards former winner Cal Lewin called *Witches, The Great Puritan Injustice*. The organizers went so far as to duplicate the format of my film festival opinion poll. The program was scheduled for Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Unfortunately, no one had told me the time of the show. I made the wrongheaded assumption that, like most festivals, films would be screened at night. All films had been shown the Sunday afternoon. When Paul, John and I arrived in Wausau in time for a bite to eat before the show, the festival had already finished two hours earlier. We did, however fortuitously, meet Mr. Edward Schoenberger, the festival chairman, packing up after the screenings; he handed me *Jamie* and David Charles Thomas' *Big Iron* with written instructions for forwarding to another festival in Newton, Massachusetts.

I guess the disappointment of missing out on seeing the films was smoothed over with Mr. Schoenberger telling me *Jamie* had been awarded the First Prize of \$50. That was one heck of a surprise. Another of my assumptions was that this festival, like the one I'd conducted for RHC, was merely a showcase for talent. I hadn't known there were monetary prizes.

Immediately following the success of the First International Festival of Award Winning Amateur Motion Pictures, The Residence Hall Council didn't hesitate to request I organize the Second International Festival of Award Winning Amateur Motion Pictures. The RHC calendared the festival for October 26 and 27. Of course I asked John to do the projection work and again he accepted. On the Monday night after we'd missed out on the Wausau film festival, Bentzen, Jurgella, Primm and I assembled in the DeBot Center to preview some films. We were joined by someone our age, but with a title, Scott Schutte, President of the Residence Hall Council. It was an opportunity to see what John had done to complete *Ooom-Titty-Boom*. We loved and laughed at how he had used our vocal gymnastics in the soundtrack. I showed raw reels of *We Were Two*. Not only was Paul impressed, others watched in silent awe. Scott chimed, "You know, your footage looks like the foreign films the RHC shows Friday nights." I felt highly complimented and said I'd hoped to edit the footage and add a soundtrack in time to include in the festival.

I'd thought long enough about becoming an active financial member of the Motion Picture Division of the Photographic Society of America and mailed my application with a \$15 money order to cover annual membership fee. Now I could look forward to receiving a professionally produced magazine, the monthly issue of the *PSA Journal*.

Having received my notification for club fees to renew membership in the Milwaukee Movie Makers, I returned the bill to President Elmer Klug with the simply worded statement, "I am withdrawing my

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Elliott Keener, birth name Harry Keener, was the son of Frieda Bridgeman, a faculty member of the Theatre Department at WSU-Stevens Point. Elliott was my friend and an active member of the College Players. After graduation with a Bachelor of Arts, he earned a Masters from the University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champagne and the University of New Orleans. Elliott studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and Royal Shakespeare Company in England. He studied juggling and Clown Make-up at Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus. Elliot owned the The Rose Dinner Theatre in Gretna, Louisiana. He was one of the leading actor-directors in the New Orleans theatre community and died, January 14, 1999 of a heart attack at Memorial Medical Center, New Orleans.

membership in the Milwaukee Movie Makers." I'd reached saturation with members' attitudes stuck in the past, their preference for watching glorified home movies at meetings, recognizing the same type of movies in annual competition, carping about innovation in movies, and general lack of interest in wanting to make movies which required the exertion of creative effort. The Milwaukee Movie Makers was fast turning into the Milwaukee Movie *Watchers*.

Of miniscule importance, the flickering romantic spark I thought I had going with Chrismary seemed to have fizzled out over summer vacation. I spent more than an hour with her in the Gridiron, the Student Union cafe. She showed me all the stills of her trip to Expo 67, the 1967 International and Universal Exposition in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, considered later to have been the most successful World's Fair of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She all too proudly showed me pictures of her broadly smiling self with her boyfriend, a local Pius High School boy. Whether enlisted or drafted, he'd gone into the Service of Uncle Sam. There it was - as seen in the movies – the girl who falls for the guy in uniform. I wanted to escape, but decent manners kept me perusing her snapshots and smiling and nodding like I wasn't hurting inside. She made it all too obvious that whatever we had had lapsed. Piping ironically through the Gridiron's sound system was Doris Day singing "Que Sera Sera".

September 19 at 3:45 p.m. the University Theatre's Drama Department presented its Tuesday Afternoon Thing. They were called Things because it could be anything: prose and poetry readings, interpretive monologues, one-act play performances, songs, dance, or solo instrumentalists. This one was a Happening and Coffee Hour staged in the Student Center's Frank Lloyd Wright Room. A Happening was intended as performance art occurring anywhere and of a multi-disciplinary nature, with a nonlinear narrative and the active participation of the audience. Key elements are planned but participants retain room for improvisation. In other words, the definition meant that whatever happened is what happened.

With the hippie culture of the late 1960s, the term Happening, first coined in 1957 by artist Allan Kaprow, was used less specifically to mean any gathering of interest. Each was a one-time experience, unique and completely different from another. A Happening emphasized the organic connection between art and its environment. It was fresh while it lasted and, unlike a written play, could never be reproduced.



An unidentified *Pointer* photographer snapped a picture, left, of me being hugged by an overtly friendly, tempura face-painted boy whose name I can't even recall. My Happening role was projecting a half-hour reel of off-cuts from my films onto a sheet. Slides were projected onto the same sheet from the opposite side creating surreal especially when the sheet was moved deliberately or inadvertently by players' participation. My job wasn't only projection. In practical terms I had to protect the projector from enthusiastic participants, make sure no one tipped over the heavy machine or bounced I was creative when I lifted the against its stand. projector and showed the moving images on people and objects away from the sheet. There were cardboard boxes, some large appliance-sized and others beer casesize, large fragments of yard goods of different materials, tempura paint and make-up to use, hula hoops and other toys, musical instruments including tambourines, bongos, triangles and tin whistles.

Whatever the overall Happening managed to achieve I really didn't understand. Its purpose left me bewildered, but it did prove valuable for one thing. Among the many students who exuberantly, possibly confusedly drifted in and out of the extemporaneous production was a skinny, fresh-faced kid

with a prominent pair of ears. I spotted him playing among the boxes, as if he'd projected himself to

a time when he was an adventurous unafraid three year-old, or perhaps he imagined himself a curious and playful puppy or kitten. approached the whole Happening concept with verve, really seemed to enjoy himself, and gave no indication of shyness. I asked and was told he was a freshman, Terry Quinn. From observation I believed I had found the freshman I wanted for the documentary. Terry is in the picture at right, upper right hand corner



crawling out of a box; the photo snapped by an unknown shutterbug with The New Pointer.

The bustling activity and noise of the Happening proved a damper on approaching the boy to discuss his starring role in the documentary. What I did was get his attention. Projecting my theatre voice over the din I asked his name, where he lived, and said I'd catch up with him soon in the food centre. He nodded hesitantly, yet approvingly, and I read in his inquisitive expression, "What the heck does an upperclassman want with me?"

Over a less than memorable tray of the Allen Center's ingenious ladies', oi vay, invented-outta-leftovers supper slop, I did my best to sell this kid on the documentary. It was quite a job convincing him I was for real, a genuine filmmaker, and that my proposal wasn't an aimless wander down a dead end road. I imagine he thought it highly unusual that I wanted to follow him around campus and film him in various academic and recreational activities. Understandable was his balk at my offer. The boy was a freshman, on campus barely two weeks, so naive he had no idea who I was and what I'd achieved. After a couple of friends supported my notoriety with the movie camera, Terry understood I wasn't bogus, hadn't been kidding, and accepted the lead role in the documentary. I believe it was Bill Cooper at the supper table who, speaking from experience in *Stereotype*, chimed in, "Geez, kid, you don't know how lucky you are to be asked to be in one of Larry's films."

Then I did something I said I wouldn't do. Theatre in my blood, I perused the script Mr. Faulkner had handed me and found it irresistible. Lines of dialogue made me laugh aloud. Now when anyone reads alone and the written word elicits audible laughter, that's a sign something's genuinely funny. In my peripheral vision I saw Bill looking strangely at me. Was his perception of me a not-so-silent reading fool? Sharing some of the verbal gags with Bill, he'd laugh and say, "That is very funny stuff." The songs were straightforward Stephen Sondheim which didn't require vocal acrobatics. There was a slave called Pseudolus and I saw myself in the part.

I tried out for A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. Mr. Faulkner belly-laughed, almost fell off his chair when I delivered the lines of word play and double entendres. Frankly, I don't think he wanted anyone else to play Pseudolus. Try-outs always meant having to wait a day or more for a cast list to be tacked to a bulletin board. Before auditionees left, auditioner Mr. Faulkner quietly said to me, "You got the lead. Learn your lines."

I juggled time in rehearsals, film festival organization, setting up filming with Terry, and keeping pace with classes. News from festivals I'd entered arrived. George Cushman sent one of those letters

which teased - What do you want first – the good news or the bad news? The good news was that *The Applicant* and *The Living* had been dispatched for the RHC Festival. The bad news was that Mr. Cushman mailed *Stereotype* on August 7 to return to me and the Post Office "misplaced" my film somewhere between Seattle and Milwaukee. The fiberboard shipping container had gone missing in the mail and the Post Office could find no trace of it. The film was an original too! The lesson I learned the hard way was to never mail an original, but have a duplicate made – always. I agreed with the words Mr. Cushman wrote in his letter.

It sure is a mystery to me what happens to packages that get lost. I think they must get stolen because how could a film just disappear into thin air? Even if the film should come out of its wrapper, they usually have name and address on the can and reel, so how do these things get lost? We had one air mailed to us last year from Australia. It never arrived. What could have happened to it? I sure don't figure these things out, especially when they are insured.

Although worth maybe \$300, my original one-of-a-kind film was irreplaceable, priceless... and gone forever. Poof! Just like that. As if it had never existed! *Stereotype* had been insured for \$50 and a claim form meant that's what I'd receive.

News of *Jamie* entered in the 1967 Ten Best Amateur Films Competition, the British Ten Best, was double-edged. Arriving soon after results from London was a copy of *Movie Makers*, a magazine published in England, sent by David Charles Thomas. Glowing write-ups of the Ten Best films were followed by a list of Star winners. *Jamie* at Star's head was placed 11, just short on inclusion in the Ten Best. Maxwell Smart said it on "Get Smart", "Missed it by that much."

Filming the WSU documentary with Terry started Saturday, the last day of September. His father had come to Point Friday as Terry had intended going home for the weekend. Maybe Terry forgot to tell his Dad his plans, I don't know. Introduced to Terry's father, I welcomed the chance to do the whole spiel about the documentary and how I chose his son to star in it. Impressed, the father turned around for home as Terry said he didn't want to miss out on his first acting experience. Was this kid excited about being in a film or what?

The first event of the school year was the Pointer Jubilee held in the Frank Lloyd Wright Lounge, and sponsored by the University Center Board (USB). Its purpose was to acquaint students with the activities on campus, just the sort of thing needed to introduce the frosh to campus life, but limited on visual excitement for film. Picture an indoor fair or exhibition with lots of crepe-paper decorated booths and signs and pamphlets promoting fraternities and sororities, here and there a game to play and refreshment to sip. Jubilee sounds a lot more whoop-de-do than was the reality. One of the most popular booths was the Alpha Phi Jail. For five cents, one could send anyone to jail for five minutes. Yeah, that made for riveting footage. The roulette wheel of Alpha Phi Omega was another favorite. At least there something moved. Delta Zeta sponsored a fortune telling booth, no doubt offering false hopes of academic achievement unbeknownst to neophytes. Alpha Kappa Lambda brought a live animal display, consisting of a fox, badger, and a raccoon. The UCB showed slides to illustrate the growth of WSU. In the adjoining Paul Bunyan Room, rocking the place was a band called Birmingham's. The Gridiron was a campground of a friendly tribe. The "Indians" served refreshments to the "pale faces" including Terry.

Creativity with the camera was challenged by the mostly non-moving, non-cinematic and visually-barren displays, but I made the most of it. I knew I was taking a chance when I cast Terry. Other than casual observation in the Happening, I knew nothing about him, not even what he studied. Second sight must have kicked in because I was rewarded. Terry's enthusiasm was contagious. Expressive, inventive and cooperative, he was a film natural and the camera loved him.

Camera in hand on Monday, October 2, I filmed our new President's press conference, footage for the school archive and the television evening news. I thought it was funny how I didn't record sound and

what I was asked to film amounted to talk fests. Well, I thought of myself as working in the silent era, as a Johnny-on-the-spot newsman hand-cranking double-perf through his camera As It Happened. Someone else with equipment I could only dream about had to cut and edit and dub in sound. I shot news footage of politicians, among them Wisconsin Congressman Melvin Laird and Federal dignitaries from Washington D.C. including Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John W. Gardner.

And rehearsals were called for *Forum* every night from 7 to 10 to learn songs, dances, familiarize us with lines, and to walk through scenes.

Theme of the 1967 homecoming was "Memories Reincountered" (sic - easily a misspelled word which should be spelled Reencountered). Somehow someone in the university managed to let it slip through without it being picked up by a proof reader and misspelling ended up in all the publicity. A myriad of activities took place during the week of October 15-21. Games including a wheelbarrow race and a rope pull, a 2½ hour skit and Hootenanny Show represented members' involvement of 18 fraternities, sororities, and other organizations. Terry's direct involvement was precluded by his being a freshman and not yet included in any of the social groups. For the documentary I showed Terry as a spectator, and what better spectator activity than watching the homecoming parade. Its theme, "The Wonderful World of Walt Disney," was incorporated into 20 colorful floats and 7 bands. Fortunate for filming in brilliant color, we had a sunny autumn day in Stevens Point. Terry did play an active role in building the record 56 foot high bonfire sparked by the freshmen class. Of course I shot some footage of the climax of the week – the football game and a Pointers victory over the Stout Blue Devils 41-13. I shot plays on the field at ground level and from up in the bleachers. With cutaways to the cheering crowd and one valuable reaction from young Terry, I had sufficient footage for an exciting segment. I thought afterward, "Boy, how lucky was that, a shot of the scoreboard final with a Stevens Point win." In making a documentary, it's a good rule to film truth and not mock up what you'd prefer seeing by means of editing.

Somehow I still managed to make time to cut *We Were Two*. Superstition and hoping for luck suggested I always made the very first cut using the Golden Scissors. Previewed to small discussion groups, I listened carefully to comments and took on board just about everything said about clarity. Was an idea conveyed through an image or not? With plenty of footage to play with I could make alterations. Titles still needed to be shot and a soundtrack had to be found. Two girls offered to sing funeral music. They ad-libbed a motet which sounded appropriate.

Instead of going with something original, I took the easy way. Finding Holst's *The Planets*, I discovered "Neptune the Mystic" played triple pianissimo. Holst's daughter Imogen described that the ending of "Neptune the Mystic" was "unforgettable, with its hidden chorus of women's voices growing fainter and fainter... until the imagination knew no difference between sound and silence." Raymond Head, a Holst scholar and musical advisor to the Holst Birthplace Museum in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, wrote of "Neptune", "Its oscillating chords of E minor and G sharp major sometimes played together suggested bi-tonality and timelessness. It was a new unfamiliar landscape. "Neptune" signifies the moment when the mortal self seems to fall away and one is face to face with the eternal spirit. We are on our own. This place or state is not without its consolations as the Dorian clarinet solo reminds us but at the end as the choir recedes we – the audience – are on our own to contemplate where this epic journey has led us." The selection provided a dreamlike quality which genuinely accompanied my visuals. As if "Neptune the Mystic" had been destined for use as my film score, never coming to the fore and calling attention to itself, *We Were Two* was now ready to premiere in the RHC's 2<sup>nd</sup> Film Festival.

On the Monday of the week before the festival John and I put on a program of our films for the Education Day banquet attended by five University presidents, the Board of Regents, seven educators from Vietnam, plus high school instructors and WSU faculty members. Given the positive comments and enthusiastic hand-shaking, our program was a success.

Three days before the film festival came a congratulatory letter from the South African International Amateur Film Festival. *Jamie* won a Certificate of Merit against very strong competition. There were 100 entries from 18 countries, many films having been top award winners in other international contests. Judges were divided in their opinions with a greater range of marks than for any other film in the competition. Comments ranged from the trivial, "A bugler boy who never blew his bugle" and "Jamie's clothing far too neat and clean after the fight" to the praise of liking the acting and writing, "A brilliant portrayal of youth at war and the emotional conflicts within youth under stress."

Interest in the RHC Film Festival was built using several ploys of advertising. Posters plastered walls of campus buildings. As I'd done with the 1<sup>st</sup> festival, I devised a clever flyer which was stuffed into every residence hall mailbox. "WHY DO THEY KEEP STUFFING MY MAILBOX WITH GARBAGE? Answer: A) So that I can practice my basketball shots with a waste basket? B) Because someone wants my money? C) So they can tell who never opens up their mailbox? D) It's a communist conspiracy? ALL ARE TRUE! That's why RHC, sponsors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Festival of Award-Winning Motion Pictures October 26 and 27 at 7:30 in the Wisconsin Room will NEVER advertise it in the mailboxes! Isn't that nice of us?"

Movies requested for the film festival arrived and we'd look at them after rehearsals. Some were screened for the journalists of the *Pointer* as they were interested in giving us headlines and stories. The hook in the articles was new films by John Primm and me. Paul Bentzen was pictured and identified as the grandfather-like image of Death in *We Were Two*. Copy was given to my experimental *Denny, Gary & Scott*. Dave Jurgella and Jack Kelly were mentioned as characters in Primm's *Ooom-Titty-Boom*, Kelly's picture as a caveman printed. The film was described as experimental - when man becomes civilized, war usually develops and destruction results.

There were 8 more films: *The Living, The Applicant, Morty*, and *Skaterdater* from the USA, clay-animated *Flight to Venus* from New Zealand, the 1960 British Ten Best's *Out of Harmony* from England, Derek Davy's *Poison* from Canada, and Czechoslovakia's slapstick comedy *Zuzu a Zozo*, emphasis placed on "from Prague behind the Iron Curtain" in *The Pointer* and *The Stevens Point (Wisconsin) Daily Journal*.

Skateboarding originated sometime between the late 1940s and early 1950s when surfers in California wanted something to do when waves went flat. In the mid-1960s, skateboarders were pioneers in creating a history and the sport enjoyed newfound popularity with young people in the Midwest. My festival coup was securing a 16mm print of *Skaterdater* by Marshall Backlar and Noel Black. Having seen their film in Madison, Wisconsin, and loving it, I wrote the makers seeking advice on how I might get *Jamie* distributed. Producer Marshall Backlar replied with his and director Noel's encouragement. They were appreciative that I'd taken the time to express my feelings to them about their film.

Skaterdater was an 18-minute short that used only music and sound effects to advance the plot. It was the first film on skateboarding. The leader of a group of 12 year old boys who are skilful skateboarders experiences first romance. The set piece was a joust on skateboards between the leader and his challenger. The exciting sequence was set on a steep hill. Second Unit Cinematographer was Carroll Ballard who years later worked as Second Unit Cinematographer on Star Wars (1977) and who directed The Black Stallion (1979), Never Cry Wolf (1983), and Fly Away Home (1996). Skaterdater had won a 1966 Cine Gold Eagle, the Palme d'Or for Best Short Film and the Grand Prix Technique at the 1966 Cannes Film Festival, 1st in the Cork Film Festival, a Diploma of Merit in the Edinburgh Film Festival, and Certificate of Participation in the Cracow International Festival of Short Films. Skaterdater was picked up by United Artists and screened in cinemas. In 1966 it was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Subject. The Residence Hall Council (RHC) willingly paid \$25 to rent Skaterdater. Scott Schutte, RHC president, and Ray Martens, RHC cultural chairman assisted by authorizing payment.

AN OPINION POLL

### 2nd INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF AWARD-WINNING AMATEUR MOTION PICTURES

Wisconsin State University - Stevens Point

TITLE	LIKED VERY MUCH	LIKED FAIRLY	DID NOT LIKE	NO OPINION
DENNY, GARY, AND SCOTT	112	460	80	24
THE LIVING	454	184	20	18
ZUZU AND ZOZO	39	297	325	13
THE APPLICANT	643	28	1	ı
OUT OF HARMONY	202	299	173	4
MORTY	267	298	96	11
OOOM_TITTY_BOOM	406	239	21	10
FLIGHT TO VENUS	454	194	14	8
POISON	175	387	97	12
WE WERE TWO	455	168	39	12
SKATERDATER	639	15	3	16
Which ONE 643				

Which ONE film was your favorite?

If you checked a "did not like" please tell us why.

Comments and/or Suggestions?

#### FAVORITE FILM CHOICE

4 - Denny, Gary, and Scott

15 - The Living

0 - Zuzu and Zozo

90 - The Applicant 4 - Out of Harmony

4 - Morty

8 - Ocom-Titty-Boom

17 - Flight to Venus

0 - Poison

54 - We Were Two

393 - Skaterdater

135- No Favorite choice indicated

Audience Attendance both nights - app. 900

A poll's tabulated result is reprinted above; same as we did in the 1<sup>st</sup> festival to get audience feedback, an opinion poll was designed, mimeographed, and handed to each person with the program notes and a stubby pencil. Though three films, *The Living*, *Out of Harmony*, and my *We Were Two* may have been thought provoking, comedies dominated the show. Order of each night was to leave your brain at the door and be entertained.

As expected, *Skaterdater* was the overwhelming favorite. *The Applicant*, the 1967 PSA Gold Medal winner, a rib-tickler about a job seeker, placed a distant second, and I wasn't at all surprised that *We Were Two* scraped into favorite third. It was certain the *The Applicant* scored more "Likes" than *Skaterdater*, but didn't run off with votes for favorite film.

Admission prices for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Festival were the same as for the 1st. An overflow crowd filled the Wisconsin Room both nights, count exceeding 900 people. It was a huge financial success. My 60% of the gate came to \$265.00.

October 29, a day after John and I celebrated our capital gain in the film festival with a dinner at the Hot Fish Shop, I took a phone call from my Mother. Uncle Cecil, my Dad's fraternal twin, died. He worked as a school crossing guard. Weather was wet. Uncle Cecil caught a cold which developed into pneumonia. Only two days in hospital, his lungs filled with water and he literally drowned. He was only 51 years old and was survived by wife Mildred and young sons Mark and Craig.



Not unlike the title of the play I was rehearsing, a funny thing happened on way through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Sims corridor. Mark, the freshman moved out from 322, must have seen something in me. Instead of paying no attention when passing in the corridor, he always smiled and said, "Hi" or "Hello." One time as I was heading to the Allen Center for lunch, he stopped me and introduced himself. "Hello. I'm Mark Maloney... from Green Bay. You're Larry." It started so simply and blossomed into friendship. Mark and I are pictured left in a photo by an unknown source.

Miss Mary Shumway was my inspirational teacher of Modern Poetry. I'd been under the impression that legitimate or real poetry was supposed to rhyme, and yet my humble efforts at writing poetry rarely did. I used to think blank verse was nothing more than prose arranged to look like a poem and I may have even mocked the style in my own hand. Miss Shumway enlightened me. Blank verse had no rhyme, but it did have iambic pentameter, meaning it consisted of lines of five feet, each foot being iambic, meaning two syllables long, one unstressed followed by a stressed symbol. Ah, then what I'd confused it with was something called Free Verse; I wasn't enamored one iota with Alan Ginsberg's *Howl* or any of the other beat poets. Free Verse poetry was written with rhymed or unrhymed verse that had no set meter to it.

Miss Shumway taught how I could compose with tempo, rhythm, and style. I learned from her how to write Free Verse which came from my heart. I also learned how to write the Japanese Haiku and Tanka. I enjoyed the Cinquain, Acrostic, and was especially tickled by the appearance of a Shape Poem; one that describes an object and the poem is shaped the same as the object. Even more interesting, Miss Shumway defined muse and suggested that our artistry could be inspired by a spirit or a source. A character in a movie or a thought about, for example, the origin of life might possibly be a muse. Who knows? I sometimes felt my muse may have been the spirit of Jim Corcoran and my living source of poetic inspiration, it appeared, may just have been that freshman I asked to have moved from Room 322, Mark Maloney.

For assigned class work, after I'd spent some time talking with Mark and sharing ideas, verse meandered from my thinking stuff to my hand, sometimes percolated into my pen and onto paper. Some was utter doggerel, others mediocre, and every now and again I'd come up with an eye-opening gem. It wasn't unusual for me to stay awake in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor lounge writing until 5:00 a.m. Not that I kept anyone awake with my pen scratching, but some guys on the floor nicknamed me The Poem Factory. Mary Shumway insisted I was a gifted writer and said she'd do what she was able to get my poetry published. As happened with *Mal du Pays* in my freshman year, *The New Pointer* published a supplement of art and poetry called *Insert* and included my effort, the first of a collection, the old word being chapbook and still used today, of fifteen theme-related poems which I simply named (1). It appears below. My pen name became my new nickname, Lare, and a shortened form of the diminutive for Larry.

**(1)** 

I search through several thousands Extending the hand to One. Right arms entwine And tip the wine, Thus Alone Is gone.

And then to understand One, To gain the trust required. I confused. I frightened. I left.

Don't ask me why! Just forgive me. And I'll be at ease.

The Meeting of One's eyes With mine, Clasped hands insuring the trust, Turning circles and tripping on words Then say it.

Say it!

One does. And I.

Lare

Titus Maccius Plautus, "Titus Clown Flatfoot," also a poet of sorts some 200 years before the birth of Christ, was a writer of rhyme, music, snappy sayings and farces. He wrote over a hundred of them. Today, just twenty are extant. In May, 1962, a new musical comedy opened on Broadway amid general hilarity. The worst the critics could say was that the title, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, was longer than the plot. It was a brassy-bold farce replete with rhyme, music, and snappy sayings. The original author of the modern theatre smash hit was Titus the Flatfoot, aka Plautus. Condensed for modern audiences, everything of Plautus was all here: the cunning slave, the braggart warrior, the aging fool. Also present were the ridiculous situations, perhaps old when Plautus used them: the recovery of children lost by abduction and shipwreck, mistaken identity, slapstick, chase, and plenty of coarse humor on the subject of S-E-X.



It was no surprise that Mr. Faulkner cast me in the lead as Pseudolus, the cunning slave. The braggart warrior was Miles Gloriosus, slaughterer of thousands, oppressor of the meek and sacker of shrines, and played by Robert Casperson. The aging fool was Senex, Lawrence Krauska, and his aptly-named nagging wife Domina, was Donna Nowak, pictured left in a rather haughty pose. His abducted and shipwrecked children were Hero, Dale Becker, pictured left kneeling beside his mother, and the Cretan virgin Philia, sold for 500 minae to Miles

(pron Mee-less) Gloriosus, and played by Mary Frances Walt. A slave to Senex and Domina was Hysterium, commendably portrayed by good ol' John Primm, pictured left on the right of my reproduced slide. We now had an almost daily opportunity to spend some time together. I was so happy, you've no idea! I really missed John after he moved off campus and had genuinely loved being in his company.

A second aging fool, played by Jerome Weber, was Erronius, befuddled neighbor of Senex in search of his long-lost children seized in infancy by pirates. Harvey Krug was Marcus Lycus, a buyer and seller of courtesans who ran the local house of ill repute. I have no idea why Paul Bentzen hadn't auditioned for the play. He'd have made a great Lycus! His courtesans were Panacea, Tintinabula, Vibrata, Gymnasia, and the Gemini, respectively portrayed by Sherry Nysse, Leanne Smith, Renee Shebesta, Sandra Young, Jeanne Gauthier and Laurel Tonn. John Butterbrodt, Eliott Keener, pictured right with me in my slide reproduction, and Michael Harper were Proteans, an enterprising trio to Miles Gloriesus and inches of all trades who played such other characters as a



Gloriosus and jacks of all trades who played such other characters as were required.

In theatre parlance any notice is termed a call, the notice board being a Call Board. Thus, rehearsals are "called" and not "ordered" or "scheduled." I had a call for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* practically every night. That's the price paid for landing the lead. The play's title being a mouthful of words, when we had a call and maybe needed to tell someone where we were going, we shortened it to Funny Thing or Forum. The Drama Department worked with the Music Department. Early on the call to learn a song might involve a piano player and one or more members of the cast. Calls with blocking, dances and walk-throughs with books, eventually with lines lodged in actors' brains involved a lot of cast and musicians. As we drew closer to performance dates, November 15 through to 18, a Wednesday night to Saturday night, rehearsals involved the whole company and orchestra.

Just as I had in The Ghosts Go West in high school, here I opened the play solo; not just with a



monologue, but with song, as Prologus, pictured left in a personal snapshot taken during rehearsal, and I was joined by the company in "Comedy Tonight," lyric and music by Broadway maestro Stephen Sondheim.

"Something familiar, something peculiar Something for everyone: a comedy tonight Something appealing, something appalling Something for everyone, a comedy tonight

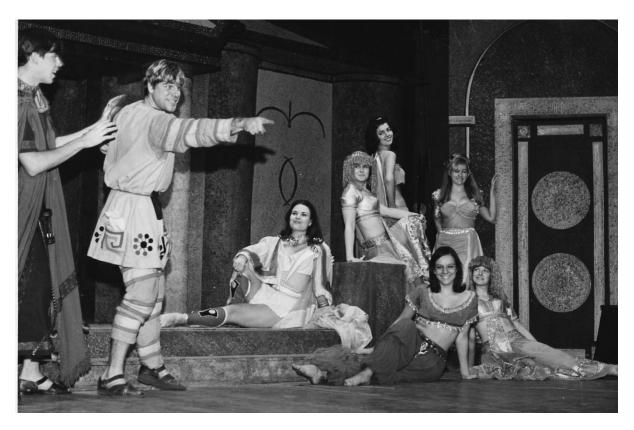
Nothing with kings, nothing with crowns Bring on the lovers, liars and clowns Old situations, new complications Nothing portentous or polite Tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight."

Company members took turns singing a phrase; sometimes the whole company chimed the verse,

"Pantaloons and tunics, courtesans and eunuchs Funerals and chases, baritones and basses Panderers, philanderers, cupidity, timidity Mistakes, fakes, rhymes, crimes Tumblers, grumblers, bumblers, fumblers

No royal curse, no Trojan horse And a happy ending, of course Goodness and badness, manifest madness This time it all works out all right Tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight."

We wore our everyday clothes for the earliest rehearsals. In the normal course of theatrical production everyone was measured for costumes. When these arrived and we tried them on, something of a transformation took place. We turned into our characters. The outfits for the ladies of pleasure caused titters, John especially taking delight, because they were so tiny... eh, the costumes, not the girls. Lycus being the peddler of pulchritude, Mr. Faulkner possessing a devilish streak ensured ample female flesh would brazenly be on display. One of the courtesan's bosoms measure was 38. Trying on her top, a size 28, I recall her consternation. "This can't be mine. It's too small." Mr. Faulkner suppressed his smile and calmly delivered his throwaway instruction, "Oh, wear it anyway. You'll be the prettiest girl on stage." He was setting her up, for sure.



Rehearsal of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum:* Harvey Krug as Lycus, Me as Pseudolus. Seated: Sandra Young as Gymnasia, Sherry Nysse as Panacea, Laurel Tonn as one of the Gemini twins. Standing: Jeanne Gauthier as one of the Gemini, Rene Shebesta as Vibrata, and Leanne Smith as Tintinabula.

There's a scene where Lycus shows off his courtesans to Pseudolus so he can later make his pick for when he gains his freedom. Lycus catwalks the girls individually, without doubt for the audience to know who's who, with each buxom lovely dancing a brief, provocative solo. Their final movement is punctuated by a provocative thrust of her body into Pseudolus' face. Bump, bump, ba-bump... and Gymnasia, a mute who let her sumptuous body do all her talking, in one rehearsal gave me a mighty swing of her hip, the impact making me lose balance, topple backwards off a pedestal and onto my rear end.



Sandra Young as Gymnasia the mute is pictured left doing the final ba-bump in my slide reproduction.

But the bump, bump, ba-bump I'll never forget was the girl with the 38" bust in the 28" bra. She was shaking her God-given maracas erotically and matching her movement to the wild drumbeat for her sexy dance. On the ba-bump music cue she thrust her bosom into my admiring face. The clasp snapped. The bra popped off. It flew at me like the rubber band of a discharged slingshot. She'd busted out all over and, man oh man, I got a faceful! Eyes pop-eyed, feet rooted to the floor, I stood transfixed, unable to utter my line. Mr. Faulkner sitting in the audience seats, nonchalance perfected, said something to the effect of, "Cue line," while holding his poker face. Poor girl ran off the stage, totally embarrassed of course, and why not, and broke into tears.

OK, so Mr. Faulkner may have got his jollies out of his little practical joke, but he worked overtime to reassure her that it was all right, such things can happen, and we were, after all, professional theatre people. He sweet-talked, using syrupy contrivance, and convinced her to wear that all too-small bra top. His assurance being they'd fix it with an iron clasp, weld it if they had to, so that it would never pop off again. Most of all he wheedled and cajoled because he didn't want her to lose perfect timing and the great energy of her busty thrust. All the action, despite coming outrageously unstuck, looked genuinely funny. Of course it couldn't be allowed to happen in performance!



A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum - Song Rehearsal: "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid" - John Primm as Hysterium, Lawrence (Larry) Krauska as Senex, and Me as Pseudolus.

Hysterium, Senex and Lycus sing "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid" in Act I. We form a chorus line and dance a little as we sing. Our tunics were tied at the waist with a cincture of long braided

cord. Mr. Faulkner told us to tie the cord with the knot in front, so that the cord hung down front. "In ancient Rome," Mr. Faulkner informed, "The phallus was considered an object of humor. That waist cord is your phallic symbol and it should be used for fun. Don't be afraid to play with it when you dance." And so we followed his direction, sometimes swinging the cord and swaying or thrusting forward the hips so that the movement couldn't be mistaken for anything other than ludicrously sexual, be it onanism or the clumsiest act of attempted procreation.

In spite of today's political correctness, how little our sense of humor has changed since the performance of farce in ancient Rome. Whether way back then or today, a harmless dirty joke delivered visually, vocally, or both, will always be the lowest form of humor. If it worked then to provoke a belly laugh, it'll work just as well today.

Eliciting a different kind of laughter was a higher form of comedy, verbal wit. Young Hero was courting the girl Philia, purportedly a courtesan in the House of Lycus. Hysterium was supposed to run onto stage and shout at Hero, "No, no, no, no!" Mr. Faulkner told John to say the line as written and then add, "Hero, that's a no-no," a popular idiom of the day. Primm dashed onto stage screaming frantically, "No, no, no, no." He was right in Dale Becker's face when he calmly said, "Hero, that's a no-no." Becker stifled his laugh; essentially bit his lip hearing this first time delivered line, and thereafter upon hearing the added hysterical line from Hysterium.

One of the Gemini was absent from a rehearsal. However, the twins came out on cue to perform their erotic dance for Pseudolus; John Primm decided to fill one of the roles. In John sashayed, arm in arm with his "twin." He swayed his hips, bobbed up and down, and tippy-toed like a *West Side Story* Jets reject. Yeah, John certainly did a Gemini little dancing part. For reasons lost in time, I failed to see John's joke. "Oh, Primm," I said with complete disdain and disgust. John remembers that I may have just as well have said, "You stupid blankety-blank," likely including the colorful F word, but "Oh, Primm" summed it succinctly. I didn't say it aloud. It was said as an aside, sneered under my breath just for John to hear, although it's likely others on stage overheard me too. John evoked laughter from everyone except me; I suppose I was feeling under the gun, the weight of being the lead, and maybe I took rehearsal much too seriously. Over two weeks I'd forced myself to stay awake until two in the morning learning lines and trying to keep up with class assignments.

On the other hand, there were times in rehearsal when seriousness went straight out the window and I cracked up myself and the cast. Miles Gloriosus enters the street with bodyguards, his soldiers; they, the Proteans, sing of him, "Look at those eyes, cunning and keen... look at the size of those thighs like a mighty machine!" John's favorite line of mine came when I sang to Gloriosus, "Those are the mightiest thighs I have ever theen," pictured right in my slide reproduction. The very first time we did a read-through I burst out laughing. Until I got used to hearing the silliness, every time I sang the line I stifled my laugh.



John and I enjoyed one big scene together. Pseudolus impersonates Lycus and when Philia states she won't go with Miles Gloriosus, Pseudolus must convince him that his promised maiden has died. Pseudolus plots with Hysterium. "We need a body, anybody's body." Hysterium asks, "Can we get one from Gusto the Body Snatcher?" "He owes me a favor," Pseudolus replies, "but he died yesterday." "What about his body," Hysterium suggests. "Somebody snatched it," says Pseudolus, "Who do we know that's dead?" Says Hysterium, "I wish I was," whereupon Pseudolus talks him

into pretending to be the dead Philia. Changed into a woman's gown and wearing a ghastly wig, pictured right in a publicity photo by Dr. T.K. Chang, Hysterium doesn't think he looks at all appealing. "You're delicious," coos Pseudolus. "It'll never work," says Hysterium lying on the burial bier, "Look at me, Just look at me." Pseudolus says ever so lovingly, "I can't take my eyes off of you," before launching into song, "You're Lovely." It always evoked the biggest, loudest laughter when Hysterium accepted his buttering up and reprised in his resonant, robust, baritone voice, "I'm... L... L... o... ovely."



Whether it happened during rehearsal or performance, something extraordinary resulted. By then I knew the stage's every nook, cranny, height and depth of set, step and prop. As I sang the juicy "You're Lovely" standing somewhat above John lying on the burial bier, moving forward too quickly I tripped, somersaulted, miraculously landed on the bier straddling John, and continued singing without missing a beat. Onlookers gasped before laughing loudly. Afterward, Mr. Faulkner asked me to keep that move in the show. He said it looked outstanding. "You are kidding," I demanded. "Forget it," I emphasized. "It was a mistake!" I just lucked out and happened to cover my clumsiness. That's all. When I tripped forward, my dance training instinctively kicked into self-preservation mode. Instead of fighting against inertia and falling sideways, backwards, or flat on my face, I pitched into a somersault. A knack told me I'd land upright. John lying on the bier may have been startled by my unplanned new move, but he never caught eye of my acrobatic feat. Since Hysterium was pretending to be dead, a veil covered John's head and his eyes were closed.

John wasn't so lucky. He had walking pneumonia at the time. It may have been at rehearsal or during a performance when John had to run fast across the stage. Someone may not have done their job well building the set. John's arm caught on a nail. When he reached point B from point A, he was clearly bleeding... but as the saying goes, "The show must go on!"



I didn't see it coming, Mr. Faulkner's brilliant idea, that is. "You know what, Larry? I think you'd look funnier if you were fat." Really! "You dance well, but you'd make people laugh if you had a big stomach juggling up front." Well, it wasn't quite the fat man suit Mr. Faulkner had already ordered in, but a dirty, stained, sweat-soiled padded gut. Built like Santa Claus' anatomical paunch and secured with over-the-shoulder straps and waistline tie, the pillow-like potbelly was worn under my tunic like a bullet-proof vest or straitjacket. Pictured left and standing up front in my slide reproduction, I am wearing the fat vest.

Every night was a vigorous rehearsal. We loved this musical and threw every ounce of our energy into performance. We pushed boundaries to please our director, Mr. Faulkner, and our music conductor, Mr. Robert Van Nuys. We stretched limits to lock in lines, perfect the timing of verbal

and visual gags, sing every note in time and on key, and ensure Terpsichorean<sup>2</sup> steps tripped lightly the footfalls, not foot-faults, and rightly danced in previous run-through.

Burning calories and generating energy, I had perspired through my tunic every night for all to see. Armpits clearly showed sopping wet stains. The added padding was my own personal sauna. I didn't just politely perspire. I sweated profusely. When rehearsal finished for the night and I dripped with sweat, I didn't simply take off the belly sponge. I peeled it away. I may not have seen steam escape, but I sure smelled it. Whichever underarm deodorant product's advertising promised 24 hour protection, Suave or Rexona or Nivea inter alia, I learned the hard way it was all bushwa!<sup>3</sup> Body heat rapidly evaporated as soon as the stage lights were extinguished. Rings outlined with white film formed in the armpits of my tunic as it dried. My Levis hung too loose at the waist and I had to tighten another notch on my belt. Tunics were handed to the costumers. Whether they were put onto hangers to "drip dry" overnight, brushed next day, or put through a washer and dryer, I don't know.

Filling quickly at mealtimes was unusual for me. I left food on the plate. I lost weight, all of 13lbs, mostly in the waistline. I was down to 142 lbs of theatre dynamite. I took to afternoon napping and would hit the sack as soon as physically possible following rehearsal. I was tired. The play hadn't even opened and already I was looking forward to its closing forever.

A Saturday afternoon, perhaps ten days before opening night, as sure as eggs is eggs we participated in a demanding rehearsal of five hours. We were almost to the point of doing a run-through, but Mr. Faulkner still directed the play with a modus operandi of start-stop. He'd call "Stop" to fine tune someone's line delivery and assist us in knowing how long to pause after a particularly funny line. The audience needed time to laugh without missing the next bit of dialogue, which might contain another big belly laugh. It was the old comedy formula of topping a gag with a gag. He'd stop the orchestra and recommend a faster or punchier cue, demonstrating what he wanted with audible "Duhdahs." He stopped us mid-step and adjusted a minor stage movement which he indubitably perceived as much funnier after the alteration. We delivered dialogue making it sound as if it was the first time the words came out of our mouths. The orchestra played. We danced and we sang – "Comedy Tonight", ""Pretty Little Picture", "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid", "Lovely" "The Funeral" and the "Finale." For the pleasure of our audience we were taught how to bow, as full cast and individually, and how to make a curtain call if audience applause persisted.

Called together on stage to listen to instructions on which we'd cogitate, I peeled off the damp fake belly and pulled off my sweat-wet tunic. Then it happened. The snapshot right was taken by someone as I listened intently to Mr. Faulkner, just before I collapsed. All I can remember is seeing twinkling lights in my eyes and then everything going black. How long I was out, I don't know, maybe just seconds. When I returned compos mentis, I saw Mr. Faulkner looking strangely at me. His expression was that of a dismayed magician whose audience had figured out the secret to his sawing a victim in half and not quite pulling it off. His voice was somewhere distant, "Uh, Lare, you need to get a good night's rest."

I don't recollect whether I was assured all was fine, if I walked to the dorm alone or if someone walked with me. I've no memory of passing out on the floor in my room. Three guys later told me they

found me lying on the cold floor, picked me up like a sack of potatoes, dumped me in my bed, and wrapped me in my comforter. They weren't too worried, said I mumbled somewhat incoherently, but that it sounded like me, and put it down to sheer exhaustion. The guys told me they'd patted my head and told me to sleep.

<sup>3</sup> Coined in the era of the 1930s/40s, it is a corruption of "Bourgeoise" and is a term for lies or "bulls\*\*t".

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Pertaining to dancing; of or relating to dance. Terpsichore is the Muse of dancing in classical Greek myth.

Of course I recovered. The old cliché reminds that I had temporarily become too pooped to participate. Sound, uninterrupted sleep and hot sticky Quaker Oats for breakfast, I was recharged like an Eveready battery and raring to go. Maybe willing was the more accurate word. Kicking in was adrenalin because nothing stops a show. Mr. Faulkner's stop-start directions transformed into sit back and enjoy the run-throughs and dress rehearsals. Any minor beefs and subtle improvements to stage business were passed to all the cast at the end of every rehearsal.

Before any rehearsal commenced, most actors talked, joked around, discussed what had happened during the day, tried to make out with someone, or bitched about the director or someone behind the scenes. A property person might discuss some new business on stage and how they'd be in the right place at the right time to hand the actor a prop. Putting on a costume in a dank backstage room didn't include privacy. Everyone knew the color of everyone else's underpants and it was common to make snide, silly comments never to be taken seriously.

Prior to performance, some actors never changed their pattern of behavior. On the other hand, my discipline was ritualistic. I didn't exchange pleasantries or make goof-off remarks with any member of the cast, nor would I wish anyone, "Break a leg," theatre parlance for "Good Luck." Commonplace niceties were taken care of earlier. I stood in silence backstage in the spot from which I'd make my stage entrance. I withdrew into my own little world where I'd meditate, concentrate, and mentally become the character. When I received the cue to begin, I was no longer Larry. In this instance I became Pseudolus. Pictured right is my meditative process in a photo someone snapped of me, unless it was the surreptitious Dr. T. K. Chang; I have no recall of its being taken just before stepping onto stage.





Cast and Crew of A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, photograph possibly by Dr. T. K. Chang and taken on the night of final dress rehearsal. Unable to identify everyone. I can identify all the cast, but don't know everyone on the crew. Dressed in suit and tie, Director Seldon Faulkner stands in the back row. Technical Director Alice Peet stands in back row third from right.

All four nights of performance, the play went off without a hitch and our audiences went into paroxysms of laughter, blowing stomach stitches and wiping tears from eyes in their enjoyment. John Primm remembered that after one performance, a fan came backstage to tell us he thought our production was better than what he had seen on Broadway with Zero Mostel in the lead. If anyone needed an ego boost, that was it! A complete contrast to how I felt a couple of weeks ago, now I didn't want the play to end. A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum was, citing the title of a 1942 George Stevens movie, The Talk of the Town (1942).

Our *Forum* was so successful, dare I say my performance as Pseudolus became something of legend. It was talked about for years afterward and Pseudolus was a point of reference for aspiring actors and members of College Theatre. How do I have the audacity to make such claim? In 1981 visiting Dr. Thomas McCaig, my Education instructor and mentor, in Plover south of Stevens Point on Highway 51, over dinner at the Sky Club where "Heavenly food is served by angels," so claimed their slogan, Mr. McCaig told me that my Pseudolus was still talked about by Drama staff in classes. He said that instructors still showed slide pictures and Dr. T.K. Chang's photographs from *Forum* and pointed to me as one of the greatest actors ever to have performed on the Stevens Point University stage.

I found that hard to believe, but admit I enjoyed hearing it. I'd never won anything awarded by the College Theatre, whereas my friends Paul Bentzen and John Primm had been so recognized. Long after I'd graduated, Dr. T. K. Chang's photograph was used to promote WSU-SP's theatre program in flyers, pamphlets, booklets, even its Summer Theatre season brochure, although I never participated in Summer Theatre. The iconic photo is pictured below and shows Gymnasia, Sandra Young, giving me her big ba- bump of the hip knocking me onto my heels. Lycus (Harvey Krug) catches me while young Hero (Dale Becker) looks on in amazement.



On Sunday, November 19, the day after Forum closed, Mr. Leafgren handed me The Milwaukee Journal. "You need to read the Weekend Magazine," he said, the smile on his face as broad as a

ship's beam. There it was, *Putting It on Film in Greenfield Park*, the picture story about making *We Were Two*. (Refer to Chapter 49 for the pictures used in the magazine article.)



That same Sunday night, and pictured left with her arms akimbo in my slide reproduction, I dated one of the beautiful girls from the cast of courtesans in the House of Marcus Lycus. No, I wasn't trying to put together something which equated to one plus one makes three. I knew the difference between actor and the portrayed, character she but I remember she'd formerly held the title of Miss Stevens Point... not that that had anything to do with my asking her out! I took my date to the

Hot Fish Shop for dinner and a forgettable movie at the Fox. I walked her home, our hands never touching. We stood on the stoop with an outside porch light glaring, a target bombarded by moths. I leaned in to kiss her goodnight and she demurely turned her head. She took my hand, shook it, and said ever so diffidently, "Thank you for a lovely evening." That stabbed my heart like the gladius of Miles Gloriosus.

I turned my energy to schoolwork and the University's visual documentary. Before a foot of film whirred through the Bolex, I sought permission from some of Terry's instructors to set up lights in their classrooms while they taught. I didn't think mocking up classroom situations would look convincing. Knowledge of what I was doing had spread and no instructor or professor or doctor rejected my request. Perhaps a latent seeking of fame was alive and well in everyone I approached.

A lecture or lesson was covered with three or four basic shots: Long shot of class, animated instructor, Medium shot of attentive class, a Medium Close Up shot of Terry looking at teacher and taking notes. It's a fairly basic pattern to establish a scene and provide the viewer with sufficient information. A few extra takes were always included to facilitate smooth cutting and avoid redundancy of image order.

No doubt the classrooms which offered the best visuals were workshops and laboratories. Terry's Chemistry lab session lent itself to extraordinary images with colorful chemicals in beakers bubbling away making steam and foam. Too bad the Bolex couldn't capture the accompanying sulphurous stink for the first university documentary in Smell-O-Vision. White lab coats and eye protecting goggles changed Terry and his freshmen classmates into an image of serious scientists seeking answers, or if using the imagination, bug-eyed mad scientists in a B-movie used as Drive-In fodder.

Terry wasn't in a Biology class, but the subject, as I'd remembered from my freshman year, included many visually interesting lessons with Dr. Robert Searles. I asked if he'd be willing to let Terry cut up a frog or an ascaris<sup>4</sup> for the documentary. Mr. Searles was an organic entertainer, his classes always informative and highly memorable. He said he was a class ham and couldn't wait to perform for my camera with Terry and the ascaris. Since any kind of surgery, even on a dead thing, can be challenging to viewers' eyes, a cutaway to white lab rats with red eyes in cages scurrying among curly wood shavings and rapidly running in a treadwheel added a humorous touch.

Although Bill and I were good friends, before the semester ended he decided to move off campus. It was nothing against me, he'd said, although he wasn't into tobacco and didn't much care for my occasional cigarette puff. Yes, then we were allowed to smoke indoors, anywhere, anytime. Mark

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A genus of parasitic intestinal roundworm.

Maloney, hearing of Bill's decision, asked and arranged to move in to Room 322. While we did what we were required to do during the semester, the musical *Hair* opened off-Broadway October 17. Several thousand people advanced on the Pentagon to protest against the Vietnam War in October. Joan Baez, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and Alan Ginsberg were arrested. December 8 The Beatles released an eleven-song album called *Magical Mystery Tour*. Growing one's hair down to and past the shoulders was popular with males. The Summer of Love, not exactly a convention but a gathering of hippies and flower children, was held in San Francisco. A movie version of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* starring Zero Mostel as Pseudolus and Jack Gilford as Hysterium opened at the Fox on Wednesday, December 13. John and I watched it. We concluded we were both funnier

than the professional movie cast. Mostel especially looked as though he was still performing on a stage than for the intimacy of the camera. Exaggeration is fine, but Mostel zeroed in on the people in the balcony!

My contribution to shake up world history is pictured right... as tribute to my boyhood hero, I grew an Errol Flynn mustache.



# Chapter 51: Transitions

Guess Who's Coming to the Film Festival

s 1967 faded into the new year, my second and final semester as an undergraduate was launched in the turmoil and change of what was to become the challenging, tumultuous, turbulent, transformational, and historical Annum Domini 1968, the year that changed America. I lived through it. I studied through it. I performed through it. I was always busy.

The Vietnam War continued and, despite President Lyndon Johnson declaring in his State of the Union address that the enemy had been defeated in battle after battle, people and especially university students, just didn't buy it.

Having completed courses in how to prepare a lesson plan, how to effectively write with chalk on the blackboard without it making that excruciating screech, and how to stand before a classroom full of squirming children and give the impression of being in charge, I was being prepared to enter the catand-mouse world of practice teaching. A Doctor in Education and my main lecturer would become my university, classroom, and lifetime mentor. He was Mr. Thomas E. McCaig, the man who would influence my career, a man with whom I'd keep in close touch until his passing at 82 on May 21, 2012. He was Dr. McCaig, Professor McCaig, Mr. McCaig, and as he eventually insisted, "just address me as Tom." He taught me the tacit tricks of the trade employed by good teachers, among those how a teacher teaches him or herself before teaching anything else.

Just as the bud of my second semester began to blossom, B52 bombers made six raids on January 21 on North Vietnamese positions near the US marine base of Khe Sanh surrounded by 40,000 Communist troops. Officials felt this battle could change the outcome of the war. There was passion behind an anti-war movement. Young men waited to find out if their number was drawn for service, including me, even after my draft board issued me with a deferment for being in college. January 23 North Korean patrol boats captured the USS Pueblo, a US Navy intelligence gathering vessel and its 83 man crew on charges of violating the communist country's twelve-mile territorial limit. This crisis dogged US foreign policy, with the crew of the Pueblo finally gaining freedom 11 months later. As if precognitive, a 1966 film starring Steve McQueen and titled *The Sand Pebbles* told the story of a U.S. gunboat cruising China's Yangtze River in 1926. With pointed notions about American imperialism, it brought forward a few pertinent parallels with Vietnam.

8 days later on February 1 at half-past midnight on Wednesday morning the North Vietnamese launched the Tet offensive at Nha Trang, taking the battle from the jungles into the cities. This caught United States troops off guard because this had always been a time for national festivities in Vietnam. Tet, meaning Vietnamese Lunar New Year, was the most important celebration in Vietnamese culture. Although lasting several weeks, the Tet Offensive was seen as a major turning point for the American attitude toward the war in Vietnam. At 2:45 that morning the US Embassy in Saigon was invaded and held until 9:15 a.m. The following day American photographer Eddie Adams captured on film a South Vietnamese security official, General Nguyễn Ngoc Loan, pulled out a snub-nosed .38 revolver and held it up to the temple of a Viet Cong and shot him. Bang! ... on television for us all to see. Troubling, yet fascinating, we saw all the action of the war in Vietnam our TVs! The Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the heartless execution became a rallying point for anti-war

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The colloquial term Tet is a shortened form of Tet Nguyên Đán, with Sino-Vietnamese origins meaning "Festival of the First Morning of the First Day."

protestors; the immediacy of the shocking image of bullet meeting head called into question everything claimed and assumed about the American allies, the South Vietnamese. It also made Americans feel morally unclean, like they too might be evil.

My personal contribution to the year of challenges may at first seem almost trivial, but eventuated transformational. Beards and mustaches were helping the male set at university learn the old saw that it's impossible to please all of the people all of the time. Whisker growing was being promoted on campus in preparation for the February 10-18 celebration of Winter Carnival. Beards and mustaches sprouted in mid-December following registration for the Winter Carnival contest. Men would have



their whiskers judged February 18 in one of six categories: longest, most original, Van Dyke, goatee, fullest or most naturally scrubby beard. But for others away from the ivy halls, it was being discouraged. Many of the Roman Catholic faith resorted to attending 5:30 a.m. Masses so they wouldn't get so many funny looks. Others chose to stay in Stevens Point instead of going to their hometowns because beards would require too many explanations. When my case to wear my mustache developed I was encouraged by friends and professionals in the media, all well short of being considered anything near radical, that my handlebar needed to be on display, presented neatly, acceptably, almost formally for all to see, pictured left<sup>2</sup>. I was advised, nay given a directive by my principal-to-be, Mr. Ray Kinsinger, to show up clean-shaven on my first day for student teaching in a Stevens Point secondary public school, namely P. J. Jacobs High.

Noteworthy were journalists with the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* (January 1968) and *The West Allis Star* (January 25, 1968) who took to their typewriters to champion my handsome cookie duster, thus turning my case into a cause célèbre. Reportage quoted me as saying, "I've had compliments. Remember, the mustache is in style today for men, according to magazines. Even a 15-year-old student from Virginia, I believe, won a court case so he could continue wearing his mustache to school."

Having become quite "attached" to my "stache," I asked Mr. McCaig what he thought I should do. Sage advice proposed one option, though it was still left up to me to choose. "Well," Mr. McCaig mused as he fought his facial muscles to hold back a laughing jag, "you can shave off your mustache and probably earn 10 credits of A. Or you can keep your mustache and fail Student Teaching." The great doubt was whether or not Mr. Kinsinger would allow my passage through the school's portal wearing my furry upper lip. Even though I thought I looked quite good with my mustache I was willing to follow orders, even after having objected to "my personal freedom being infringed upon."

Before I complied, a record of the event had to be preserved on celluloid. Some unexposed color footage of a 16mm reel for the promotional on the life of a university freshman was in the camera. We used it to shoot a home movie, a document, if you wish, of how I lost my handlebar. Paul, with a goatee, dressed in a ridiculous quasi-religious costume as a high priest of some unknown cult. John Primm dressed as his faux acolyte. They pantomimed some inane impromptu rite with a can of shaving cream and a Gillette razor resting on a pillow held in Paul's hands. The shaving implements were handed to me. Following was one long take with the camera set on a tripod and focused on a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Photograph by Jim Pierson specifically for an article in WSU's newspaper *The New Pointer* 

mirror in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor ablution room. I daubed a dollop of shaving cream onto my hirsute upper lip, drew the razor down and shaved off slowly and reluctantly my handlebar mustache. The footage was never formally titled, never screened publically, is still extant, uncut, and saved on a plastic reel in the familiar and original Kodak yellow box.

Student teaching involved an afternoon 6<sup>th</sup> hour English class of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, in the day designated the term "slow learners." They were teenagers who didn't want to be in school, didn't care about learning and, for all I knew, may have had real learning difficulties. School teachers in the day always dressed formally. Required male teacher "uniform" was white shirt and tie, suit or sport coat, dress slacks, and dress shoes. Given my university schedule, second semester weekdays were evenly divided. Mornings I attended Education classes. For convenience and time-saving I dressed in my student teacher garb. Just after my brief lunch window, snow, rain or shine I walked several blocks to the high school, often taking the Sims Avenue route instead of hiking along busy Main Street.

My first day was January 29. I was met at the office by my Cooperating teacher Mrs. Mary Montgomery. We walked the long corridor and turned left passing by many classrooms. We pushed open a door and descended a staircase into the open air of a dingy space. She guided me to her classroom in its building separate from the main school building, as if it was deemed necessary to keep these "slow learners" away from the general populace of the school, like their learning difficulties were an infectious disease too easily spread among more able, smarter students. After Mrs. Montgomery introduced me to her class and no one openly groaned, I thought, well, everyone here looks as normal as any other kid in the school. I asked my students to write a paper on "What Can You Do?" The following responses indicate students' attitudes and the clientele I had to face.

Having been asked "What Can You Do" Dennis Flisakowski's three infamous word response, "Not a

thing," may have been an omen. In contrast Dennis Borski penciled, "I can do everything. I know everything. I am a jack of all trades and a master of none. Sometimes I don't want to learn and other times you won't catch me near when it comes to English and Speech. I would rather not learn." Janice Jelinski wrote, "In my own opinion, I think you're trying to find out about our personality and what lies ahead in our life." Her brief comment didn't answer the question, but was perceptive. I was both disturbed and reassured by Allen Duda's words; "I can eat, sleep, talk, walk, write, run, jump, shoot a 12, 20, 4.10 gauge shotgun and a 306 and a 2-70 rifle. I can pass a football, drive a snowmobile. Also shoot pool. Most important I can think." Roger Kisting, pictured right looking straight into camera, may have been genuine in examining his own performance or he may have been trying to suck up to his new teacher



with, "English is a subject which isn't too hard. That's if you study. Some guys don't do anything in class and they wonder why they get an  $\underline{F}$ . I know I can do a lot better this next semester. All I have to do is work a little harder. So, I think that I'll get a better grade this 9 weeks because all I have to do is try harder." Coming from Roger, as played out, it was profound and prophetic.

Mornings in Education classes I was lectured on theories of teaching. I never wanted to miss one of his classes because I knew I'd miss out on more than an hour of class. I listened to him in class and thought, "this is never going to happen to me." The "he" to whom I refer is Dr. Thomas E. McCaig. Then in practice teaching, what I never thought would happen, happened. Afternoons invariably, as each one panned out from 1:00 p.m., became practical application of morning theory. For example, Mr. McCaig recommended we learn the sound of our students' voices. Writing on the blackboard with your back to the class likely presented an opportunity for unwilling students to play up and speak up when not spoken to. If the teacher can identify the unruly student's voice, an authoritarian retort can be made to put that student in his or her place without having to turn around to see who it is. Get that to work and students will believe teachers do have eyes in the backs of their heads.

My actor's ear honed in on my students' voices. I was a fast learner picking up on their sound, patterns of speech, and so forth. During that first week I put Mr. McCaig's theory into practice. As I wrote on the blackboard and simultaneously announced which part of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* to read for homework I clearly heard, "Go to hell." My chalk-in-hand paused and without turning to look at the perpetrator I said firmly, "Thank you, Olaf!" Then I slowly turned to eye him. As if my words had bewitched, there was Olaf frozen in time, a mesmerized, jaw-dropped, wide-eyed wonder. The following day I knew good Olaf had done his reading homework because he was first to raise his hand and volunteer to read aloud for the class!

I taught Julius Caesar like it was a murder mystery, even when it was already known whodunit. Mrs. Montgomery sat in the back of the classroom and observed my classroom performance. Her written assessment on January 30 pointed to "good - clarifying terms" and "questions are easy to understand and are pertinent." She indicated that one of the boys didn't have his book opened and that I "have to keep yelling at them about speaking up." Interesting that advice because I didn't raise my voice; she may have been stating what she would normally have done. The assessment included tips on providing background material on Shakespeare and his era and concluded with, "You have a very tactful manner with students – encourages them to speak out – friendly, enthusiastic – kids seem to like you."

Principal Kinsinger disapproved of my manner of professional dress, so Mrs. Montgomery informed me. He frowned upon my ties being too colorful, too loud, and my dress pants must have been too tapered for his liking. Maybe he wanted me to wear my trousers as he wore his, creased but shapeless and belted up above his bellybutton. Mrs. Montgomery said she'd told him to lay off. In her opinion I was one of the most talented student teachers and that if he pounced on me, she was sure the school would lose an excellent instructor. Could a compliment or personal evaluation have come any better?

February 2 was my sister Mary's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Two-time political office loser Richard Nixon, a Republican from California, entered the New Hampshire primary and declared his candidacy for President of the United States. About the same time Senator Eugene McCarthy from Minnesota entered the New Hampshire primary as an anti-war candidate. Young people flocked to his banner. In that week my parents went to the movie house and saw Sidney Poitier as a new teacher facing a class of difficult high school students. I said to Mom and Dad that now they might have a good idea as to what my class was like, or rather what it had been. In a little more than a week I'd changed their attitudes toward me and the subject of English. According to what other faculty members said, these kids actually looked forward to coming to class. I couldn't shut them up, so full of enthusiasm and answers to questions they were. In the process I acquired a new name. Instead of the traditional title and surname, my students addressed me as Mr. Lare, Lare being a further diminutive of the diminutive Larry. In their eagerness to raise hands to ask and answer questions, Klobukowski must have been too much a mouthful.

By February 7 Mrs. Montgomery had been convinced I was the godsend her 6<sup>th</sup> hour English needed and she gave me her class for the rest of the semester. She said she was afraid to face them, afraid she might undo everything positive I'd done with and for them. In fact, what Mrs. Montgomery did was to check my weekly lesson plan, approve it, and then she'd work in the staff room away from 6<sup>th</sup> hour class doing corrections for her other classes, occasionally meeting the student teaching program requirements by observing me in the classroom and writing comments/assessment. It was her way of showing confidence and trust in me and my ability. She also told me that the principal wouldn't openly complain about my modern day choice of professional dress. Odd that he never confronted me as he had earlier about my mustache. He spoke only to Mrs. Montgomery and she'd told him, "Go to hell."

After play acting scenes and discussions, a unit test on *Julius Caesar* was given. Personal amusement led to my saving some of the students' responses to questions. To "What were Caesar's last words?" (Et tu Brute.) I read, "Et tub Brutus" and a few other combinations of English and butchered Latin. "Name three of Caesar's physical weaknesses." (Lacked confidence, deaf in one ear, and epilepsy.)

Some wrote "Big man that was a chicken," "Daff on one ear," "lepidepsy," and "elipisy." Proof of the student misunderstanding the text or having not paid attention in class and concluding incorrectly was the answer to "Who was the wife of Brutus and what happened to her?" (Portia, and she gashed her thigh with a knife after she suspected Brutus didn't trust her to keep secret the plot to kill Caesar.) The answer written was, "She swallowed hot coals and cut off her leg for the love of Brutus." A couple hadn't paid attention to the definition of "soliloquy" (A long, usually serious speech that a character in a play makes to an audience and that reveals the character's thoughts.) when they answered, "It's a mountain or a temple of spirits" and "A ghost." I had to laugh when I read that Shakespeare's theatre, the Globe, was transcribed as, "Gloob", "Glob", and "Steak-on-Avon."





CHUCK LUCAS Neafe Hall







DENNIS HOBIN

DAVID JURGELLA



CHRIS NORTHWOOD





Away from my classroom teaching, preparations pressed ahead for Frost Fest '68, the WSU Winter Carnival. More filming on the documentary with Terry provided an opportunity for students to have fun and relieve tension by participating in competitions for hairdos, painted legs, unusual dress, pipe smoking, chariot racing, ice carving, pancake eating, and outdoor sports. Outside in the snow were sack races, tugs-of-war with a rope, wood chucking, and a take on volleyball using an oversized lightweight gym ball. Unique was the shovel race whereby one student sat on the shovel and

another student pulled that mounted shovel across a field to a finish line. Again Terry could only be an enthusiastic spectator.

Of the indoor events I especially enjoyed shooting 150 feet of pancake eating. At the start of the time limit event contestants shoving pancakes into their gobs, chewing, and swallowing just resembled bad table manners. As the clock ticked on, physical changes in attitude and filling themselves to bursting made for footage worthy of psychological study. Made you wonder why normal people stuffed themselves to regurgitation and then resumed forcing more pancakes down their throats. Yes, I did film some students throwing up, but never used the footage in the documentary. I wanted souvenir footage for myself. I did, on the other hand, show some competitors in the documentary turning a "pale green". After the event I learned that 2000 pancakes had been consumed.

All UMOC participants' fair use pictures were published in *The Pointer* November 9, 1967 and Dave's picture appeared in the far left corner of eleven Ugly Men. Aware once again that we stood no chance against any of the fraternities, Dave Jurgella put up his hand to represent the Players. make-up and expression suggested an evil

leprechaun or troll. Dave preferred naming creation Doc Dworp because he resembled Mr. Hyde. He wore a navy watch cap and pea coat and did the make-up himself.

Organizing and running a third festival of award-winning amateur films for the Residence Hall Council was my idea. Scott Schutte as president of the organization was a junior and had dropped hints for another film festival, but making the offer wasn't within his periphery. We looked at the calendar, saw the RHC Week included my birthday, and set screening dates for April 30, May 1 and 2. Since we'd built an audience which generously gave us their custom over two previous film festivals, I felt confident we'd fill the hall again. There was, however, a challenge in the dates. Two festivals had been run over Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights. This time dates were Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights.

When I asked John Primm to be the projectionist, reluctantly he turned it down. Film festival dates clashed with May 1-3, Wednesday through Friday performances of the play *The Firebugs* aka *A Learning Play without a Lesson* composed by Max Frisch. John had an important role as a Chorus Leader, the head of the arsonists called Firebugs. It was a social and political satire, an intellectual fantasy which posed questions and offered no answers.

In John's place, I offered the job to my roommate, Mark Maloney. I had to teach him to become a projectionist. I may have been too generous when I said I'd give untrained Mark 25% of the gate, the same amount I gave to John, a qualified projectionist. As it turned out, Mark didn't have recognized qualifications for operating the machinery and projectionist booth and was forced to drop out; Scott Schutte had required projectionist qualification and stepped into the role and a generous cut of the gate.

Business Management Services offered me \$210 to write the scripts for four TV spots, three 20 second ads and one 1 minute commercial for the Copp's Company which ran the Southside, Eastside, and Northside Independent Grocers Association (IGA). My TV spots didn't advertise weekly specials. They were general in nature, aimed at attracting university student clientele and dealt with shopping wisely to save money. If I remember correctly, a discount was going to be offered to students who showed their student union membership card. When shooting the scripts, Mark Maloney would appear as the shopper and I'd pay him \$50 for his time. In hindsight I should have played to the stereotypes of the day and cast a girl shopper, or have used a couple, thus appealing to married students living off campus. In this day, what was a young single guy supposed to know about shopping?

Come February 12 Mrs. Montgomery handed me her 7<sup>th</sup> hour Speech class. I was a Speech major with emphasis in Drama, so I felt confidently qualified. Again, and it's probably a question in hindsight, had Mrs. Montgomery really believed I was that good in teaching, or had she conveniently unloaded her next as-difficult class onto me to give herself respite.

With encouragement from my parents, guidance and help from Dr. McCaig, positive comment from Mr. Gach, the director of student teaching, I made an important decision February 20 and filled out an application for a permanent position for the 1969 school year on the P. J. Jacobs faculty. My interview would be with Mr. Kinsinger and I had no qualms. He'd put the moustache and dress clothes controversy behind because I'd proved my ability in the classroom.

I had a 17 year old boy in Speech class with a chip as big as a two-by-four on his shoulder. He'd be nice and warm as mom's apple pie one day and ready to punch out my lights like Rocky Marciano the next. Sometimes he'd wait for me after school. I'd wonder if he'd be nice or want to pick a fight. It was difficult to read him because he rarely smiled. He always looked angry, even when he wasn't. As things happened, he simply wanted someone he could trust, someone with whom he could walk, open up, and talk. He'd been in trouble with the police for theft. He was the kind of kid many would recommend, "Kick 'em out of class and forget about 'em." In other words, pass him and all his problems off for someone else to handle. Of course I discussed Robby (not his real name) and his behavior with Dr. McCaig. As my Educational Psychology teacher, he said that I was, whether wanted or not, a father image, that I represented everything Robby wanted to be. Dr. McCaig said I shouldn't lose this boy because I was having a big effect on his life. Robby had identified with me

and it was my duty to continue living up to the image he had constructed of me. Even though I felt somewhat uncomfortable in this boy's company – he had the reputation of a thug – oddly enough, I somehow liked the kid and tried to do what was right in his perception. I'd been informed by Robby's other teachers that, in the label of the day, he was a failure. In my Speech class, however, his performance was highly unusual and Robby genuinely did  $\underline{A}$  and  $\underline{B}$  work. The majority in the class had little or no imagination when it came to speaking or performing in public. Mrs. Montgomery noted their lack of interest or enthusiasm and reluctance when she wrote while observing my classroom teaching of pantomime, an important means of communication, "This is our 'free' generation?"

In 6<sup>th</sup> hour English I was a "best friend image" to a 16 year old boy named Roger Kisting. I was careful to bear in mind Dr. McCaig's teaching about me as the chum never allowing myself being turned into a chump. In other words, I was conscious of keeping a space, an aesthetic distance between myself and my students, a space which neither student nor teacher was allowed to cross. This boy performed unsatisfactorily in his other classes too, but in English he was earning  $\underline{A}$  and I certainly wasn't playing a favorite. However, there were the occasional too familiar remarks from the boy in class and Mrs. Montgomery suggested "a dirty look would probably suffice." She did comment on paper after classroom observation, "Good – you can keep 'aesthetic distance'. Your reply to Roger was polite but very apt."

February 27 was a Tuesday. I don't recall the reason why Bob Skoronski of the Green Bay Packers was a guest for the day of Principal Kinsinger. Skoronski was an offensive left tackle for 11 seasons and offensive captain on Vince Lombardi's five NFL championship teams. I was introduced to the 6' 3" football player by Mr. Kinsinger as "the finest student teacher we have here." He clarified that by saying I had reached some kids never before reached by other teachers. He added that he was especially pleased with the work I'd been doing with the two aforementioned boys, very problematic as far as the body of the school was concerned. There, with Bob Skoronski as witness, Principal Kinsinger told me my application had been processed and that I should plan on teaching one elective course in TV and Film Appreciation. Holy Moses! I couldn't wait to make my signature on a contract April 1. I hoped I wasn't being set up for some cruel April Fools' Day joke.

The evening of Skoronski's daytime school visit, I remember watching Walter Cronkite report on his recent trip to Vietnam to view the aftermath of the Tet Offensive in his television special "Who, What, When Where, Why?" The report was highly critical of US officials and directly contradicted official statements on the progress of the war. Cronkite called the Tet Offensive and other current military operations "draws." Further, he chastised American leaders for their optimism, and advised negotiation, "...not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could." This TV program came on the heels of the US State department having announced the highest US casualty toll of the Vietnam War, 543 Americans killed in action and 2547 wounded.

Throughout my final semester and among the activities already highlighted, I was never idle. Accepted as a professional, I was invited to attend an evening Faculty-Student basketball game. I sat with the teachers and cheered for the faculty. I was invited to attend a teachers' conference day in Wausau, the majority of the day given to academic publishers and their texts. It was like a giant book sale. Mrs. Montgomery drove me to the conference in her car. She clued me on how to get copies of books for free, like food morsels you sample in the supermarket before buying. At each of too-numerous-to-count bookstalls, all I needed do was thumb through textbooks; pick the ones I liked and thought I could use in the classroom, then sign my name and school and the book(s) I wanted to sample on a sheet of paper. Within a couple of weeks publishers would send the requested texts. I remember signing up for several soft-cover books of contemporary poetry and short stories. For good luck, I selected a book called *Rules for Writers*, useful for teaching English grammar, useful today as I write because I still have that book. I coached a boy and a girl in my Speech class to compete in Declamation in Forensics. I wouldn't judge their section, but I was a judge for Interpretive Reading.

Teaching contemporary church songs to the boys at St. Stephen's took up late Wednesday afternoons after I'd completed a day of student teaching. We'd sing from the side of the altar at 9 o'clock Sunday Mass. New and popular was an African Mass sung in Latin called the "Missa Luba." Vocals were accompanied by percussion instruments. Mr. Krembs occasionally played a tape recording of "Missa Luba" selections over the church's PA system. The boys and I enjoyed hearing the African Mass, but didn't attempt to vocally replicate it in church because culturally it just wouldn't have seemed right.

After student teaching Tuesday, March 6, Mr. Kinsinger invited me into his office. He wanted to talk about my approved teaching contract. He was unsure if P. J. Jacobs would have a position for me, but asked if I had any objections to teaching at the brand-spanking-new Junior High next year. There'd been a great big hole on the other side of town and it seemed to have been taking forever to fill it with bricks and mortar. P. J. Jacobs would lose all its students in 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades to the new structure eventually, and in the new school year as long as it was completed on time. I gave no thought to the differences in age to my current classes and blurted, "Of course not."

The New Hampshire primary election on March 12 brought a surprising result. Democrat Senator Eugene McCarthy, labeled by some a peacenik for his anti-Vietnam War stance, came within 230 votes of defeating sitting president Lyndon B. Johnson. Democrat Senator Robert Kennedy, former Attorney General and brother of former President John F. Kennedy, announced he would enter the 1968 Presidential race. Also on March 12, and with just as much significance as national events, John Primm showed some of his films in a Tuesday Afternoon Thing: The Funny Home Movie. More important than the films he screened was John's announcing that he'd applied to UCLA to work on a Masters of Fine Arts degree in Cinematography. His greatest ambition for the future was to become a member of the American Society of Cinematographers.

Six Percent of WSU Students Have Taken Drug, Marijuana the headline of *The Pointer* boldly announced March 14. Of 200 respondents (3½ percent of the student body) to a questionnaire, 6 per cent admitted to using marijuana, one-half of one percent had taken LSD and 1.5 percent claimed to have taken another drug. Who filled out the form was kept anonymous to avoid possible confrontation with federal, state, and local drug officials. The 6 percent figure corresponded exactly with a nationwide average taken from the November issue of *Reader's Digest* which used a call up poll taken from among college students throughout the United States.

It's nigh impossible to write about 1968 and not mention drugs. I can say in all honesty that I was in the other 94 percent of *The Pointer* questionnaire. I had seen and smelled marijuana. I had seen LSD in the form of a tab on a piece of paper. I wasn't tempted to try either. I preferred to enjoy my life without illegal substances altering what my brain perceived in real life. I stuck to that too.

Disharmony in America was reflected in the motion pictures released. It may not have seemed like it at the time, but one of the most important pictures of the '60s was *The Graduate* (1968). A line in the film asked, "Have you thought about graduate school?" to which Dustin Hoffman's character replies, "No." "Would you mind telling me then what those four years of college were for? What was the point of all that hard work?" Hoffman responds, "You got me." According to Journalist Chris Connelly, "The pervasive sense of alienation, being not at one with the world around you; that is the crucial idea of 1968." *Planet of the Apes* (1968) reflected America's racial disharmony: African Americans identified with the ruling Apes. As far as they were concerned, to hell with Caucasian Charlton Heston. Why would they root for him? In the film's conclusion Heston had to confront the reality of America's broken civilization with a "Goddamn you all to hell" as the camera pans to a rotting Statue of Liberty half-sunk in beach sand. It was visual symbolism of America's cities falling apart.

I happened to see Vice-President Hubert Humphrey when he came to Stevens Point to campaign March 23 and speak in favor of re-electing President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Fourteen days after the New Hampshire primary, I saw Senator McCarthy speak at WSU-SP. Within days of the Democrat

candidates' visit the campus hosted Republican candidate Richard M. Nixon and Mrs. George Romney representing her Republican candidate husband. We didn't, thankfully, need to see hide nor hair of the southern segregationist candidate George Wallace who'd declared himself as an independent presidential candidate. He tapped into the deepest recesses of American rage and reaction toward equality-seeking African Americans, whether peaceful under the encouragement of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or by means of advocated violence through newly devised Black Power spouted from the mouths of Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., H. Rap Brown, and Stokely Carmichael.

Though convenient to see these politicians in action, I was far more excited about seeing the Lovin' Spoonful on Saturday night March 31. They'd produced dozens of pop songs with a unique blend of jug band, blues, and rock & roll, just the sort of music I'd enjoyed listening to when Paul Bentzen played his banjo and jammed with other local musicians. Their billboard songs included "Daydream", "Do You Ever Have to Make up Your Mind", "Do You Believe in Magic", "Summer in the City" and "Nashville Cats" amongst others. Tickets were \$4.00. I asked my parents to put my brother Steve onto a Friday bus. I'd return Steve to Milwaukee on the bus Sunday or Monday afternoon. With 150 miles between Milwaukee and Stevens Point, and depending on road conditions, riding the Greyhound could take up to 6 hours.

The day Steve and I enjoyed the Lovin' Spoonful, President Lyndon Baines Johnson shook up the nation by announcing he wouldn't seek re-election. It wasn't an announcement Democrats wanted to hear, but the United States could be thankful he didn't deliver his decision April 1. I, on the contrary, found immense good fortune by All Fools' Day. I was offered a definite teaching position, not at the high school, but at the brand new, still under construction Benjamin Franklin Jr. High School. I participated in an interview with the principal, Mr. Bob Norton, to discuss salary and curriculum. I was required for a position in freshman English, Grade 9, to help them develop their language and thinking skills they could use for the rest of their natural lives.

Four days later the life of civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. was ended when he was assassinated by James Earl Ray at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Riots erupted and major American cities burned, lasting for several days afterwards. A week later on April 11 President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

Come April 10 was my annual ritual of canceling all social and work-related activities to watch the presentation of the Academy Awards, this year being its 40<sup>th</sup> show. President of the Motion Picture Academy was actor Gregory Peck; after so many years his moving words continue to resound today, "This has been a fateful week in the history of our nation. We join with men of good will everywhere and pay our profound respects to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was his work that bought about the increasing awareness of all men that we must unite in compassion in order to survive."

Films nominated for Best Picture included the inconsequential *Doctor Doolittle*, as placebo a nominee as you could get. The other four nominees were genuinely controversial and influential: *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Graduate*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, and *In the Heat of the Night*, the latter two trying to address racism and race relations. Awarded the Oscar for Best Picture was *In the Heat of the Night* and especially memorable for two scenes. The first was a southern racist sheriff portrayed by Rod Steiger, awarded an Oscar for Best Actor, who mocked, "Virgil! That's a funny name for a nigger boy who comes from Philadelphia. What do they call you up there?" Annoyed, Sidney Poitier's Virgil Tibbs replied, "They call me **Mister** Tibbs." The second import scene surprised and perhaps shocked audiences at the time when Tibbs is slapped by white supremacist Endicott. Tibbs' immediate response is slapping him back across the face. That scene wasn't in the novel or in the script. Poitier had said to Canadian director Norman Jewison, "I'll make this movie for you if you give me your absolute guarantee when he slaps me I slap him right back and you guarantee that it will play in every version of this movie." The action and reaction saw the industry's top black actor

physically strike back against bigotry. Endicott says, "There was a time when I could have had you shot. Sidney Pointier holds his own not just as an actor but as the character Virgil Tibbs.

"Hell, no! We won't go," was the chant of two to three thousand young American men burning their draft cards or returning them to the federal government. Another four to six thousand fled to Canada to avoid the draft. It was their way of saying to adults that your values are not my values. Colleges were the frontline places where much of the demonstrating played out. In Stevens Point strong objection was made about ROTC Officers on campus recruiting young men to fight in Vietnam.

Dated April 17, 1968 a formal letter arrived in my Sims Hall letterbox:

Dear Lawrence,

It is my privilege to inform you that you have been nominated and are being considered for the James H. Albertson Medallion Award. A joint student-faculty committee will select the final recipients.

The Albertson Medallion Awards were instituted last Spring to serve as a Dual recognition: to honor outstanding members of the graduating class, and to pay tribute to a man who exemplified outstanding qualities. Selection is on the basis of the nominees' leadership and participation in academic and co-curricular activities.

University records document your fine academic achievement: however, we have only limited information on your activities outside the classroom. The Albertson Award Selection Committee would appreciate your completion of the attached personal information questionnaire. Please return this form to the Student Affairs Office by Monday, April 29, 1968.

The announcement of the Albertson Medallion Award recipients will be made during the Commencement program on June  $2^{nd}$ .

The letter was signed by William Stielstra, Executive Secretary, Albertson Awards Committee.

For sure, this wasn't expected. To think I'd even be considered for such high honor temporarily sucked the air out of me. I duly completed the attached questionnaire and returned it to the Student Affairs Office. In my own mind I questioned why the Committee stated it had limited information on my outside-the-class activities. Perhaps it was due to activities not easily recognized with a named organization or club which gets a photograph included in the *Iris*, the school's yearbook. There was no club for participation in forensics, for judging forensics competitions, for teaching kids church songs, for making movies, for organizing and running film festivals, for making TV commercials, for active participation in Tuesday Afternoon Happenings or Things, for interpretive reading of prose or poetry. Throughout my time in college, the only "club" I ever belonged to was the College Players and only play-related activities like acting and stage crew were officially recognized under its umbrella.

There may have been seven to eight weeks of classroom work to do; already high school teachers and their students were getting antsy for summer vacation. Having studied John Hershey's novel *Hiroshima*, my English students kept happy and busy creatively writing poetry while Speech students prepared a sales talk. Given the amount of television watched and the bombardment of yakety-yak commercials breaking up programs' trains of thought, I'd have thought the assignment was easy. But like white noise, it must have been in one ear and out the other and with nothing registering inbetween. When it came to public speaking, the kids in Speech showed no inspiration. Getting them to use their imagination and demonstrate some enthusiasm was akin to pulling teeth from a chicken. Still, there was some material in the curriculum which needed to be covered and it would be finished.

To attempt to motivate them I introduced a practical unit in movie making. Instead of using Goerke Park with its gridiron football field and goalposts, we'd take the kids several blocks to Iverson Park incorporating the Plover River and its 'wilderness'. Two students put up their hands to say they had a movie camera and I hoped two groups might be able express themselves through the visual medium of film. It was wholly experimental and, if it worked, my ingenuity would be good ammunition for setting up a future course in film.

Winter snow had melted and given way to spring rain, wind, and the intermittent lucky day of sunshine. I had no new "Elkay" Production to premiere in the RHC's Third International Festival of Award-Winning Motion Pictures. In the past two festival introductions only typical movie music was played as the announcer, John Primm, welcomed the audience. What could I do for the third to surprise the audience? I felt I needed to give them something not previously seen or heard to keep them coming back.

Scott Schutte was rarely addressed as Scott; instead our preference was for the diminutive Scotty because he came in the ample proportion of Oliver Hardy. Scotty put his head together with mine and the idea for *Guess Who's Coming to the Film Festival* emerged, a movie which poked fun at Hollywood premieres. We'd feature faculty, turn them into movie stars, and accompany the action with music of the 1920s. Our inspiration was "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In". Originally aired as a one-off special September 9, 1967, and often simply referred to as "Laugh-In", the American sketch comedy started regular televising January 22, 1968. We were immediately captured and addicted to its off-beat humor with its roots in vaudeville and burlesque, its rapid-fire series of gags and sketches, many of which conveyed sexual innuendo or were politically charged. One of its catchphrases was "Sock it to me!" Judy Carne was often tricked into saying, "Sock it to me," which led to her being doused with water or otherwise assaulted, as in "It may be rice wine to you, but it's still saké to me!"

Since I wasn't filming with sound using Mr. Carl N. Jacob's Bolex H16 camera, we honed in on the



show's unnamed character in a yellow raincoat and hat that rode a tricycle and, furious some peddling, always fell over sideways. The anonymous rider was frequently used as a silent bridge between sketches. The rider was filmed always from behind, often in a Tracking Shot, and a face was never shown. Anyone could be cast in the role. Scott was a man mountain and we decided to show his face and established his character as akin to a

Hell's Angel. Picturing him in a German helmet and sheepskin vest with his ample rear end overflowing on a kid's tricycle seat was the kind of anomaly which begged laughter. So that Scott's tricycle riding wasn't without purpose, the film opened with a film festival poster, pictured left, artwork initialed but unidentified, and published as a full page fold out in *Counterpoint*. The image of the poster cut to the back of Scott as he peruses the sign and clumsily mounts his tricycle. It is established then where the tricycle rider is headed and, just as the anonymous rider's dispatch in "Laugh-In" was to bridge sketches, so Scotty was to bridge visual gags involving game college staff.

2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> an underground newspaper of the "left" printing ideas and opinions which ruffled the feathers of conservative thinkers and which appeared as an alternative to *The Pointer*.

"Game" staff members needed to put aside their highly earned and respected authoritative positions in administration and faculty, and ignore all personal pricks to ego, pride, and vanity so as to become conformed butts of slapstick comedy, the poking of fun at authority figures so ably demonstrated in silents featuring Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd, Laurel & Hardy, et al. Much to Scotty's and my delight, whomever we approached didn't turn us down.

WSU administrators participating in the film and making fools of themselves in singularly commendable demonstrations of "Ars gratia Artis" (Art for art's sake), the Latin motto above MGM's roaring lion trademark, were Dr. Paul Yambert, Professor of Conservation and Dean of School of

Applied Arts and Science, Mr. John J. Gach, Director of Student Teaching, and Dr. Frederick (Fred) Leafgren, Director of Housing.

In fact, Gilbert W. Faust, the Director of Admissions, contacted us and begged to be in the film. He was a stern po-faced administrator we thought in another life could have been Von Goethe's blueprint for his play *Faust* wherein the same-named lead sells his soul to Mephistopheles. Mr. Faust, it turned out, was a camera natural with superb screen presence and a hidden talent for making people laugh, something he must have long kept secret. His antics cracked us up. Pictured right<sup>4</sup>, Registrar Gilbert W. Faust sneers his best Registration Director manner as he holds back the crowd trying to get into the Festival.

Our biggest coup was casting WSU-SP President Lee Sherman Dreyfus in the role of a janitor. Loquacious, outgoing and sometimes

flamboyant, it was in this time

that he adopted the trademark red vest in order to be recognizable and accessible to students on campus. Initials of his name formed the acronym LSD, a notorious mindbending drug permeating the music scene and youth culture. Possession of it was banned federally in the United States in 1968. President Dreyfus jumped at the chance to participate saying, "You know, Larry, I consider this a great honor, being asked to act in your film. Everyone I know would love to be asked to be in one of your films." Pictured left<sup>5</sup>, President Dreyfus takes a short break in his strenuous campaign making sweeping changes in the administration. In speeded up motion, a la under cranked in the camera silent pictures and over cranked in the projector, Dreyfus moved the mop up and down a corridor three times before collapsing into a heap to remove his cap, wipe his brow and collect his breath. Over the typical Wisconsin deer hunter's flannel shirt he wore his trademark red vest which stood out brilliantly.



I chose to do most of the filming of faculty immediately outside the University Center because I knew our activity would naturally attract attention. It was a means to an end, to get gawkers involved for the crowds we needed. Onlookers were encouraged to participate, to mill around in shot, clap their hands, and behave as adoring fans. It wasn't at all difficult to encourage faculty and students who happened to be chatting, eating, or sipping coffee in the Center's new enlarged snack bar to abandon whatever they were doing and join in the fun. A simple, encouraging "come forward" wave of my hand always amassed enough people needed to turn curious spectators into red carpet worshippers.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, and reprinted in WSU-SP's 1969 annual yearbook, *The Iris* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Photo by Jim Pierson and published in *The Pointer* April 25, 1968

When the picture at right<sup>6</sup> was published, the Slippery Rock Film Festival held at Slippery Rock University in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania was referenced as "the Hollywood of the East" with the tag, "Star, Fred Leafgren, arrives at the Film Festival amid the cheers of thousands of fans. Howard Hayward, Burroughs Hall Director, holds open the door." "Thousands", even use of the noun "crowd" was media hyperbole.



Imagine the throng that rapidly assembled when Registrar Gilbert Faust looked away appalled as Dean Paul Yambert tried to crash the Festival not quite fully attired, pictured left<sup>7</sup> and behaving like a bellhop, opening the door to the festival right.<sup>8</sup> Dean Yambert's choice

of attire, or lack of it, was indeed brave!

Guess Who's Coming to the Film Festival was unscripted. Reminders of what sequences we needed were scribbled on slip of paper and I just checked each one off as completed. We worked on

shooting the film in a manner similar to how Mack Sennett shot his slapstick comedies. Have an outline/list on paper. Take advantage of what's available for sets and use them. Go through the comic situation orally and then film it, or make it up as you go along and hope for the best. Scotty on the tricycle was the final shot of the film and its running time was between 6 and 7 minutes.

A funny thing about *Guess Who's Coming to the Film Festival* is that I remember filming all the faculty involvement I

described, but only Chancellor Dreyfus seems to have survived the cut. None of the other skits we filmed show in the final film. Had they not turned out after the film was processed? It's a question to which I have no answer.

To put together a good show I wrote letters to filmmakers requesting a specific title from their repertoire. About the same time I received an invitation to attend the Milwaukee Movie Makers Annual Film Festival. I thought they might have asked for one of my new pictures, but Frank Kreznar was in charge and he obtained a show the easy way. He simply contacted the Photographic Society of America's Motion Picture Division and paid the \$10 rental fee for a travelling program of previous award winners, my *Jamie* definitely not in the package. I made no plan to attend the MMM Festival, but I did write back and requested one of its club productions titled *Point of View*.





<sup>7</sup> Photo by Jim Pierson and published in 1969 WSU-SP annual yearbook *The Iris*.

<sup>8</sup> Photo by Jim Pierson and published in *The Pointer* April 25, 1968. Reprinted in 1969 WSU-SP annual yearbook *The Iris*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Photo by Jim Pierson and published in *The Pointer* April 25,1968

The Milwaukee Movie Makers had the good intention to make at least one club production annually. Sometimes the year passed without one due to lack of cooperation between the club's two factions — those who made movies and those who just wanted to watch movies. *Point of View* was one of the club's successful efforts, a comedy about the unveiling of a new painting and a banana-eating vagrant/gatecrasher. The War Memorial's art gallery served as the set. Permission had been granted to take down one contemporary painting in its collection and hang in its space the MMM's bogus painting. My brother Steve and I had participated with club members and their guests as a part of the hoity-toity crowd of art critics and collectors who give short shrift to the unshaven tagalong who peels and eats one banana after another. The whole film was shot in one meeting night using minimal camera mounted on tripod for classic Long shot, Medium shot, Close-up. Lacking in cinematic technique, the film made up for shortcomings with laughter. The film was genuinely funny, its punchline delivered without being telescoped. The audience is appalled with the painting's subject whereas the banana-eating gatecrasher enthusiastically approved the painted bunch of bananas.

After seeing *The Animated Do-It-Yourself Home Cartoon Kit* on the ABC-TV network after Part 1 of the "Sunday Night Movie" *The Great Escape*, I wrote to Biographic Films in London, England. The short film provoked torrents of laughter when we watched it on TV. My request was approved without a fee and eventually I received the film by air mail. Wound onto a yellow plastic core was a 35mm print. Two sides of a pull-apart reel needed to be attached to the core for mounting on the projector's feed arm. A 35mm print couldn't be screened in the Student Union Theatre as it had no 35mm projector. I returned the print to England with an apology for not specifying 16mm and asked if they might have the film as a 16mm optical sound print. Time was tight and I was afraid I'd have to announce at the beginning of the show that *The Animated Do-It-Yourself Home Cartoon Kit* wouldn't be screened due to "technical difficulties". I'd have hoped they wouldn't know what they were missing. To Scotty's and my great disappointment a 16mm print was available from Biographic Films' American distributor, but no speedy service could deliver the film in time.

Another animated picture came from Frederick O'Neill in Dunedin, New Zealand, who managed one movie per year. That's how long it took to do his 8 minutes worth of clay animation on *Phantasm*, a 1959 British Ten Best winner about man's allotted time on earth. From England came Portrait in Bronze. David Charles Thomas' Big Iron had previously been appreciated by the audience so I asked David if he had a new film set to music. He sent Nancy Till, set to the song of the same title. There were encore films from the 1st Festival. Jean Charles Muenier's The Leucocyte Story was brought back with John M. Raymond's Grimm fairytale Sweetheart Roland and Joseph Kramer's comicdocumentary on the smoking habits of Homo sapiens Smoke. Dr. Wallace Shaw in Jamaica, New York, provided *The Model Anesthesiologist*, a clam-bake of medical humor presented as a Gilbert & Sullivan opera. Language of the Bee by the Moody Institute of Science in Whittier, California, used expert photography to tell about how bees communicate. Beautiful as the images were, it probably belonged in a biology class rather than our festival. It's About This Carpenter came from a Student Producing Group at New York University. In black & white and a PSA Ten Best in 1964, it was a metaphor for a long ago crucifixion walk as a young carpenter from Greenwich Village delivers a commissioned wooden cross to an uptown church. Also in black & white was the controversial film Stillborn by Jeff Strickler, New York University, which had provided stiff competition to my Gold Medal win with Jamie. Controversy stemmed from the one male and one female character appearing nude. However, images were artfully presented as negative film, rather than as a positive print. Now, instead of its status as a PSA winner, Stillborn was advertised as a 1966 CINE Eagle winner. I even managed to snag a 1954 Academy Award winning short subject, A Time Out of War by Denis and Terry Sanders. When he directed the film Denis was a student at UCLA and his brother was a UCLA undergraduate. The film is based on an 1897 short story of the Civil War, Pickets, that was in the public domain. Two union soldiers maintaining a position on a riverbank negotiate a one-hour truce with a Confederate soldier on the opposite bank. In the water the union soldiers find a dead man from their own side. What happens next is what made the film unique.

Almost a month after President Johnson's announcement of not running for president or seeking the nomination of his party, it took weeks for Vice-president Hubert Horatio Humphrey from Minnesota

to declare on April 27 that he'd seek the nomination of the Democratic Party for president. He was regarded as a Johnson surrogate having stated that he'd run on his record of the Johnson-Humphrey administration and not rest on it. Johnson was seen in total control of the party and said he'd do what he could to get Humphrey elected and see to it that Robert Kennedy didn't get the nomination. The people voting in primaries wouldn't control who received the nomination. It would be determined by the people who controlled the levers of power, and that was Lyndon Johnson and his political machine. Humphrey wasn't just a surrogate; he was perceived as a Johnson puppet.

As I readied for the film festival, things were being readied, but in secret, by my English class. Karen L. Erickson mimeographed a letter which she handed to each student:

### Surprise Birthday Party!!!!

You'll never guess who has got a birthday on April 30???? Yes, it's Mr. Lare's birthday and we're going to have a surprise birthday party for Him on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, on a Friday.

So on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, be sure all of you kids bring lots of food. Roger K. You Can bring some of your crackers with Smoky Crisp Peanut Butter on them, and Janice, you can make some of your good fudge. And you other kids bring a lot of other food too!!!! Like we did for that other party we had. Bring some good records if you have some and we can play records on the record player and maybe we might even be able to get Mr. Lare to dance. You'll have to bring a dime for pop and just think of all the fun we'll have!!

Try and get the money to me at the very latest by April 26<sup>th</sup>. So bring the money to me as soon as possible and we can have a lot of fun.

By the way if you have any suggestions on what to buy Mr. Lare on his birthday please tell me what they are.

As scheduled Monday, April 29, I arrived in my 10<sup>th</sup> Grade English class room. Nothing gave way to what each student in that room looked forward on Friday and I remained a clueless innocent. That evening I hosted the opening of the RHC's Third International Festival of Award-Winning Motion Pictures. Tuesday, April 30, I showed up to teach the English class as expected and everything was routine. No one even hinted at wishing me a happy birthday.

The evening of my birthday I stood in front of the festival's full house, posed in front of the movie screen and delivering introductions to films; I apologized for not showing *The Animated Do-It-Yourself Home Cartoon Kit* due to technical difficulties, and told brief background stories as if selling igloos to Inuits.

The day I turned 23 my roommate Mark tried to pull a prank on me. I was myself a bit of a prankster, always playing jokes I knew never made bruises, never broke arms or legs. Heaping harmless humiliation was my usual goal. On one occasion three upperclassmen, stalwarts of 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Sims, joined in to paper the room of an underclassman we considered an unsociable bookworm. We had nothing against his desire to study, but when he walked down the hall and never acknowledged anyone's presence, never wanted to sit with anyone from the floor for dinner, never participated in anything the floor did, then we disapproved. So, yeah, we thought we'd fix his wagon. We gathered all the newspapers we could find, undid every broadsheet, lightly crushed each, and tossed it into this guy's room. In no time crunched newspaper reached the ceiling, the room was full, and entry was blocked. We closed the door and waited for his return from wherever he went to see his reaction. It wasn't what we expected. Like a two year old throwing a tantrum, he huffed and puffed down three flights of stairs to the resident hall director's office where he whined and lay bare our names. Mr. Fred Leafgren's eyes probably rolled; I wouldn't know, I wasn't there. He came up the stairs quickly, the paper-stuffed room victim in tow. A slight smirk of appreciation on his lips belied his role as the

dorm's Dutch uncle and in an oh-so-patiently-quiet voice he said, "Boys. Now I like a good prank as the next. What you've done is, considering the amount of paper you stuffed into his room, quite admirable. However, you are seniors and you're supposed to know better. Now undo all your work so this chap can get into his room." The easiest clean-up involved gathering as much paper as possible and carrying the tightly scrunched ball to the chute, the garbage shaft which went straight down to the furnace. We shoved and we stuffed paper down the chute. Next thing there's smoke belching out of the chute. Mr. Leafgren may have taken two stairs at a time to tell us to stop before we set the dorm on fire! We were ordered, gently mind, to carry all that paper downstairs; yes, four flights to the basement where it would be stacked for the janitor to burn safely.

Mark's prank was putting a toad in my bed. He was nowhere in sight when I happened to find it and let it go outside where it belonged. It must have been midnight, well after the festival finished, when Mark came into the room and I pretended I was asleep. His imagination got the best of him and he jumped out of his bed several times, checked his dresser drawers, looked in the closets, and under the beds. I strained to keep from laughing. In the morning he confessed to his prank and said he was sure the toad was loose in the room. He'd heard it all night and claimed it was hopping around in his bed. Mark said he didn't get to sleep until 5:00 a.m. I played dumb and he started looking for the toad again. I burst out laughing and he finally realized he was the victim of his own prank.

Wednesday, May 1, reeled out the same as any other mundane school day. In the evening was the final night of the film festival. Over three nights the hall filled and I saw some of my students attending with their parents. You'd think something might have dropped during Thursday's class. No giggles. No funny looks. No whispering asides. I wasn't made any the wiser.

My 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday was one I'd never forget. The class presented me with a card with autographs by class members. Inside was written, and I suspected by organizer Karen Erickson:



In this time of Birthday Cheer We have found the time Mr. Lare To sit down and tell you here, Of you, and the start of your, Twenty Third Year.

Left: I arrive in classroom surprised.

Right: Karen Erickson's elaborately decorated home-baked cake. Frosting reads Happy

Birthday Mr. Lare



Left: I am reading the card from the class. Mrs. Montgomery sits at her desk. Her car is parked outside the classroom. Good shot shows party decoration in classroom.



Right: A pose with Supervising Teacher Mrs. Montgomery



Left: My 10<sup>th</sup> Grade English Class. My hands are around Roger Kisting's neck. Karen Erickson stands front immediately right of my left shoulder.

I was surprised on May 3. The world was also surprised, but not by my class holding a surprise birthday party. It happened to be the day the United States and North Vietnamese delegations finally agreed on talking peace in Paris, formal talks to commence May 10.

As had been done in the two previous film festivals, an opinion poll sheet had been handed to each member of the audience. *The Pointer* published the result of favorite films in its May 9 issue. The top four films rated by audience popularity were: 1. *The* 

Leucocyte Story by Jean-Charles Munier, Paris, France. 2. Smoke by Joseph Kramer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 3. A Time Out of War by Denis and Terry Sanders, University of Southern California. 4. Portrait in Bronze by Douglas Jack White, England. Attendance for the three nights was about 600 persons. The article announced that there would be a 4<sup>th</sup> Film Festival in the fall sponsored by the Residence Hall Council and under my direction, although no dates were set in concrete.

With so much to do to ensure passing my own classes successfully and keeping up a strong grade point, I am sometimes amazed at how many other activities demanded my attention and time and were satisfactorily completed. Having made some rather scholarly-looking titles, I wrapped shooting with Terry and the University's recruitment film. Editing segments together would be straightforward since each extra-curricular activity and classroom observation was captured, more-or-less, on an individual 100' reel. There were bridging scenes of Terry outside significant buildings like one of the dorms, offices where one saw a doctor or nurse, the Science Building, Gymnasium, Allen Recreational Center, Old Main. When necessary I'd managed to photograph signs which served as identification or explanation of an event or activity. What the film had to say would be seen and understood without words, without even a musical accompaniment. If the person presenting the film wished to embellish with live narration, it could be done. No deadline had been set to complete editing and I took my good natured time.

There was a formal ceremony Saturday afternoon, May 9, in the Fieldhouse to inaugurate Lee Sherman Dreyfus the ninth president of WSU-Stevens Point. The event turned out to be the final news/archive item I would film for the university. Mr. Dreyfus wore an open flowing black robe to display his trademark red vest, his mortarboard tipped at a rakish angle. Art Department chairman Henry Runke and faculty member of 15 years had spent two months making a new medallion for Dreyfus. Later successors will wear it at formal ceremonies at the University. President Dreyfus and the future were linked by the new medallion. Spring weather was uncooperative and kept student attendance down to a scattering. Family, friends, and the Student Senate filled the chairs set in the Fieldhouse. My filming was kept to a minimum; most were outside shots of entering and departing so that the clacking of the film through the Bolex didn't draw attention from the formality of the investiture which resembled the crowning of royalty. It was an elaborate ceremony with carved ice swans and, in the evening, Skitch Henderson and his Orchestra playing the inaugural ball, not that I filmed any of that. Mr. Dreyfus had already been in office 7 months.

Dormitory life was screeching to a halt because graduation day wasn't far off. I needed to find a place to live. An advertisement in the local newspaper on a May 14 lucky Tuesday turned out to be the one

and only For Rent classified I needed to read. Lucky Tuesday? Ever since Mark Maloney shared Room 322 with me something good always seemed to happen on Tuesdays. Tests were passed. Assignments were completed. Poems were written. A letter with good news arrived. Windfalls of one kind or another always happened to drop into our laps, mine perhaps more than Mark's. Thereafter Mark and I deemed Tuesday as lucky Tuesday. What I found in the classifieds is covered in the next chapter.

The Speech class enjoyed the chances of escaping the confines of the classroom to shoot their film outdoors in Iverson Park. Instead of two groups, they bonded as a single film company and used their two cameras simultaneously from different angles to make *Why Me*. As to my conducting the project, University Supervisor Mr. Warren Lensmire observed in his final critique on May 21, "Your filming of *Why Me* is receiving wholesome recognition. You are getting high level cooperation from your students because you treat them as mature and important. This approach to learning demonstrates ability to modify procedures and content. You are an artistic teachers with an individual style which reflects your unique personality. You seem alert to new possibilities to achieve learning goals. Your manner demonstrates confidence and a professional pride in your work."

I have little memory of the final product. What I do recall is that I managed to stimulate some creativity in that Speech class so that an objective was fulfilled. Once they understood what was needed to realize the end product, they showed enthusiasm, came up with ideas, worked diligently and cooperatively and, by the end of the term, had a finished film. No, it wasn't great, but it was completed and showed that these kids had something they could contribute and they could create. They weren't, as they may have been told too often, "bumps on a log." Robby, I remember, did a fine job as a cameraman and leader/director of the group.

The English class wound up their term writing poetry as rhyming couplets, blank verse, free verse, cinquain, haiku, tanka and limerick. I felt proud of what I'd managed to stimulate in some of the "do nothings" in class. In contrast to the boldly negative statements and actions from some in the beginning of the term, publishable poetry emerged. In fact, I mimeographed a booklet, a souvenir for each member of the class, an anthology of their best work including essays, stories, and poetry.

The boy who said he'd rather not learn when asked what he could do came up with several poems including this gem:

Bears eating heavily

Getting ready to sleep long 
Robbing, stealing food.

As demonstrated by Karen Erickson, some poetry could be very personal:

My parents accept me for what I am.

They distrust me —

And why —

Because they're making me into someone
I am not.

Let me be me.

Roger Kisting's cinquain coined a new word:

Skiing –
Wet, wild,
Falling, swinging, splashing,
Rough, but sometimes smooth
Funfilling.

Loretta Sobish showed humor and insight with:

DEAN MARTIN
When I drink
I cannot think.

I also liked Marie Kozeczkowski's:

LIQUOR
Why do guys snicker
When you mention liquor?

Mr. "Not a thing" penned the haiku:

A beautiful young pine tree

That I found in the woods –

It was small and green.

As to my teaching poetry, Mr. Lensmire's critique observed, "You are drawing interesting thoughts from your English students about poetry. 'What is the author's message to us?' Your analysis of poetry is lively and stimulating. Good humor is mixed with the student-teacher interactions. You read the poem with excellent feeling. Olaf comes up with some interesting reactions. The way each student's opinion is respected encourages participation. Your use of the board set the objectives for your learning exercise, e.g. metaphor, simile, symbols, alliteration, rhyme scheme, and onomatopoeia  $\rightarrow$  to produce meaning. You are summarizing and hitting the high points in an effective, interesting way. Good command of class without being harsh."

Wednesday, May 22, was the last day for student teachers. However, I made a deal with Mrs. Montgomery. I'd continue teaching till the official end of the school year, final exams held on Tuesday, June 4. Mrs. Montgomery took ill as the school year wound down and a substitute was hired to handle her morning classes. The school saved money with the substitute teacher in charge only half the day. In Mrs. Montgomery's absence I wasn't paid a red cent for teaching her afternoon English and Speech classes. I could have always used an extra nickel or dime.

Mr. McCaig exempted my sitting the final exam in his class. He said I had fulfilled in a real classroom situation everything that exam would ask. He also pointed out that I wasn't very good at taking exams. He said that sitting and concentrating on theoretical material never managed to reflect what I actually knew and was able to accomplish. Perhaps this illustrated the crux of Mr. McCaig's philosophy of teaching – that each student is an individual and can most be effectively educated when treated as one. Mr. McCaig took me out to dinner at the Hot Fish Shop and told me I'd earned an A in my Student Teaching. He treated me to a vodka gimlet and a \$12.00 lobster tail with melted butter, baked potato with sour cream, and garden salad. There was a small catch. Because I was exempted from sitting his final exam, Mr. McCaig asked me to hand in a paper on my teaching experience, in his words, "just as a friendly gesture."

## Chapter 52: The Farm

oute 2, Box 266, was a farmhouse for rent for \$60 per month. I found the advertisement in the classifieds of the *Stevens Point Daily Journal*. I was still without a driver's license, so John Hankwitz offered to drive me in his Volkswagen to view the property. In my final weeks of student teaching, we made plans to share a mutually agreeable off-campus accommodation.

John came from a fascinating family. He was the son of a well-known third generation Milwaukee physician, Arthur Walter Hankwitz, MD. A remarkable man, Dr. Hankwitz was the first person in Wisconsin to save a life using CPR. He was an airplane pilot and owned a 1947 Republic SeaBee amphibian aircraft. John's mother Ione was the first female pilot in the world to be amphibian certified. As a ham operator, Dr. Hankwitz had his radio transmitter setup bedside with antennas strung on the ceiling of his home. John's mother's father founded the Milwaukee Steel Mill and the South Shore Yacht Clubs. After the Hankwitz family outgrew the Seabee, Dr. Hankwitz bought powerboats for a hobby and family outings. He was among the first to adapt to new technology and do new things. The Hankwitz family owned the first TV in Bay View and installed it in the basement waiting room where Dr. Hankwitz's father had built his Doctor's office.

I have a memory of visiting the Hankwitz home on South Kinnickinnic Avenue in Bay View in 1968. As John opened the freezer compartment door of his refrigerator and pulled out a couple of frozen solid wieners, he asked if I'd like a hot dog for lunch. I nodded yes. He placed them into a toaster oven-like machine and switched it on. In about a minute the iced sausages were cooked and spitting juice. To witness that rapid lunch preparation was something I'd never before seen, nor even given thought. It was magic. Dr. Hankwitz had bought the first commercial, made for restaurants, microwave oven. It included infrared heating elements that would brown the meat.

I didn't know back in 1964 when I became a member of the Milwaukee Movie Makers (MMM) that Dr. Hankwitz was a founding member of then The Milwaukee Amateur Movie Society in 1938 and that he served as its president for several years; he was president of 20 of some 27 civic organizations. I first met John and his parents when they came to an MMM meeting or competition, in John's words, "to see a hot teenage moviemaker who presented a war film where the main character died at the end." John said he clearly remembered the impact of the "Why" mouthed by Paul Bentzen. The film was, of course, *Jamie*, but I struggle to recall the circumstances of this particular screening. As to teenage... well, I was already 20 when I made *Jamie*. Dr. Hankwitz bought a 16mm Bolex and gave it to John in 1961. I remember John having the Bolex in Stevens Point and envied his owning it.

Original pipedream was for Mark Maloney and I to share some form of off-campus accomodation but as time proved, we both saw it would never pan out. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of his freshman year Mark was on probation because he didn't cut the mustard. 1<sup>st</sup> semester grades didn't scrape in with a minimum C-/D+ grade point average because his extracurricular activities were given precedence over study. Mark went home to Green Bay almost every weekend and, in his own words, "got up to no good." Then he'd worry throughout the week about what he may or may not have done and what consequences may or may never eventuate instead of concentrating on his studies. In addition to my student teaching, I did my best to play teacher and mentor with Mark. Like striking flint I'd occasionally see the spark, but no fire of enthusiasm was ever ignited in Mark. He'd return to the dorm late Sunday night, recover for a couple of days, temporarily light up mid-week, and pine Thursday night and Friday until he thumbed a ride to Green Bay for another lost weekend. Mark's progress toward an acceptable, no probation grade point average was the proverbial walking uphill in

sand - half step forward and two steps back. Before I found the farm it had become glaringly transparent Mark's efforts weren't serious enough to strike his name off the probation list. Mark wouldn't even be allowed to return for his sophomore year.

The property's landlord was a friendly married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Shepanski, with thick Polish accents and two unmanageable children. They cheerfully showed the two-storey house. First was a screened, enclosed front porch with an inside front door opening into a spacious living room. The large kitchen was fitted with a single basin sink, wall-mounted wood and glass cabinets for storing crockery and dry goods, and a propane gas four-burner stove and oven. A door opened onto four cement stairs without a handrail leading into the "yard" with a small orchard of fruit trees: apple, cherry and pear. Off the kitchen was a sizeable "catch-all" room which could be used as a walk-in pantry or a bedroom. The basement was unusable for anything other than maintaining its propane gas furnace and hot water heater. It was no more than a hole in the ground housing two gas appliances. Before heading upstairs we were shown a bathroom with a sink, bathtub, and toilet situated at the foot of the staircase. The bathroom window opened onto the ninth step of the staircase. Upstairs were three bedrooms, two of average dimensions and one large enough to comfortably lodge four or five single beds. One bedroom's door opened onto the porch roof, plans for a balcony never having been realized. There was a tiny bathroom too, a cramped space for no claustrophobic with a toilet which allowed no elbow room for the big-shouldered and a Lilliputian hand basin set so close to the toilet, a game like basketball could be played using spit and hitting the drain hole for points.



The farmhouse with outbuildings was on 10 acres of poor quality flat earth. There was an imposing cream-colored barn with a reddish-brown roof, the wall facing the road painted with a Miller beer advertising sign. In between the barn and the house was a tumbledown shed needing some handiwork to become useful as a chicken coop. A two-hole outhouse was functional and its door had the traditional crescent moon cut into the wood. We could only squint through the dust-clad windows to see inside the garage. It was locked for the landlord's storage of his own furniture extras and collectables. A unique working structure set alongside the driveway was an old-fashioned cast iron water pump fixed above a wooden platform over an artesian well, pictured left<sup>1</sup>

John and I took no quiz show's musical thinking-cap-time to make a decision. We shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Shepanski, who didn't ask for our signatures on a lease, and sealed the deal of renting. The fact the farm was two miles from town and I had no transport did not enter into consideration. It was a farm, a place to breathe, a place to develop independence, a place to live, and a place to call home. Anyway, John had a Volkswagen. I wanted to show off the farm to university acquaintances as often as rides could be coerced. One late Friday afternoon four of us drove

to the farm with sandwiches and bottles of Canadian Club. As John and I hadn't officially taken possession of the farm, propane gas and electricity wasn't switched on, but I had the house key. We carried candles for indoor lighting and, because rooms were bare of any furniture, sat on the floor in our jackets in the cool evening air and celebrated. I vaguely remember returning to Sims Hall late at night, the drive back into town a triple-imaged, blurred hallucination. Crawling on all fours like a toddler up three floors of dorm stairs, after having awkwardly negotiated the lawn and sidewalk with off-kilter steps, physically spinning and falling down, I bumped against corridor walls like the puck in a pinball machine and floundered to the community bathroom, stumbled into a stall, enveloped the toilet bowl with my arms, and brought up all of the night's colorful revelry.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Photo by John Hankwitz



John Hankwitz and I on The Farm strike our pose of a landscape interpretation of the famous portrait American Gothic.<sup>2</sup>

When I told others about renting a place of my own I never expected offers from my students to help make the farm habitable. Robby said he'd ask his Dad to bring his rotor tiller and save me an aching back from having to hand-dig a garden with a shovel. Dennis Haessley asked to come to the farm with his horses so we could ride the range. I think his ulterior motive may have been to give his

horses a free graze on fresh green grass. It was tall, plentiful, and needed mowing. As for John and I, there was nothing staidly adult in our activity. Together we enjoyed the simple pleasure of burning kidlike energy playing in the barn hayloft, jumping from the wall ladders into piles of hay, in the process giving ourselves stiff necks to endure the following day.

I never did experience making a large garden bed by rototilling, that supposedly enjoyable convenience of using a motorized device with its spinning blades perpendicular to the ground and arranged like spokes for tilling the soil; instead I manhandled pick, hoe and shovel, pictured right<sup>3</sup>. Robby's uncle had laid claim to the rototiller to prepare his own backyard plot. Now, instead of partying on the farm, I tried to wheedle and cajole dorm friends into helping turn soil into a vegetable garden. As if climbing a most precarious cliff, the best I could offer as a reward was Stevens Point Special, a locally brewed beer many equated to the urine sprayed by



<sup>2</sup> Photo by John Hankwitz, Camera on self-timer and mounted on a tripod. *American Gothic* is a famous, familiar painting of two rigid Midwestern farm people by artist Grant Wood and painted in 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Photo by John Hankwitz

.

panthers! Third floor Bob Blakesley succumbed to sweet-talk and was coaxed into digging for a couple of hours Saturday morning, May 25. John and I worked all day, first digging, then borrowing a power mower in the afternoon from the Corcorans and cutting about an acre of overgrown grass around the house and barn, in the course giving ourselves aching shoulders and backs. Even our landlord came to the farm as we toiled and installed a new lock on the back door. He said he'd connect the kitchen sink during the week. We used the pump to bring up well water to clean our hands and have a cold drink. I hoped Mr. Shepanski thought we'd be good tenants given the energy he saw expended making the grounds neat and tidy. On the other hand I also wondered what might course though his thoughts after he saw the Red Owl shopping bags filled with empty Point bottles.

We ordered a telephone for the house, one wall-mounted set in the kitchen and an extension for the big upstairs bedroom. Cost was fixed at \$9.50 per month for local calls, extra for long distance. Installation was set for Monday, June 4.

It was a sad and tearful Sunday afternoon when Mark and I said good-bye at the dorm. I knew where I was headed; Mark had no idea where he was going or what he would do. Vietnam, perhaps? He thanked me for being his best friend and promised to write, phone and visit as often as possible. Well, that's what everyone says when they go away and I hoped Mark would keep his word. Our arms wrapped around each other in a tight embrace. Then Mark reached into his pocket and handed me a medallion on a leather string. The obverse embossment looked like two <u>Ys</u> standing side by side, the inner extensions of the letter crossing like two upraised arms. "This is a friendship medallion," said Mark. "It shows you and me." I watched Mark as he disappeared down Reserve Street, a little boy lost and not just a passenger in his father's car.

When the school day finished Wednesday afternoon, May 29, Mr. Kinsinger said I'd done way more than expected, gone above and beyond requirements and, given exam finals Monday, monitoring two study hall days didn't necessitate my participation. He thanked me, shook my hand enthusiastically, and said my work was done, "That is," he said, until the new school year starts." After all of his rigid directives to rid my visage of my neatly-trimmed upper lip hairs, Mr. Kissinger now advised that Wisconsin's rules about teachers' faces being clean-shaven had been changed and that, if I so wanted, I was lawfully permitted to regrow my moustache over the summer. It didn't sink in at the time what my newspaper publicity had triggered. Eventually I realized I'd played some small part in changing stringent rules. The wheels turned so slowly after Dylan sang in 1964, "The Times They Are a Changin'," yet change they did.

That very afternoon I looked over empty Room 322 for the last time and moved onto the farm. John arranged for his bed and other items from Milwaukee to arrive the following day, Memorial Day, May 30, or the day after, and they did. We set his bed in an upstairs bedroom and John drove to Milwaukee for his summer job as a Quality Inspector at the Oster Corporation, a small appliance manufacturer which made the Osterizer, a liquefying blender which used heavy duty construction and motors. Many early-model Osterizers still function today.

My parents towed a rented trailer from West Allis on Saturday, June 1. It was one-way as they could drop off the trailer in the rental's Stevens Point depot. They arrived well before lunch and brought a kitchen setting, living room furniture, beds, some crockery and utensils, plus a few odds and ends that turn a house into a home. It was a busy time. The arrival of the furniture practically collided with my next day graduation. Summer weather had kicked in and the temperature reached into the low 80s. We had the whole day to unload the trailer, but lifting things from the trailer, carting them into the house and arranging them took less time than expected.

## Chapter 53: Graduation

ad and I dug more garden area the day before my graduation. I worked bare-chested and in cut-off shorts. Big mistake! By evening I felt the neglect of sun protection cream and looked it too. Sunburn turned my skin as red as a boiled lobster. I stretched the bounds of my independence insisting that, "no way would I wear a dress shirt and tie, dress pants or suit coat under the academic gown." I was, of course, pulling the legs of my parents, but they thought I was serious. Mom and Dad reasoned with me, insisting I dress accordingly, for this graduation ceremony was a special once-in-a-lifetime event for me and for them. I strung them along a little further before giving in with my Uncle Paul Karczewski's gotcha giggle and assured them I'd dress appropriately and as they would expect.

Graduation Day Mom, Dad and I attended early morning Mass. I didn't sing, but my St. Stephen's boys did. I know it wasn't anything special, but it felt as if the boys were singing in my honor. I was

given that impression because during Mass the boys all managed at one time or another to look over at me and coyly nod or smile. Church was followed by one of my Dad's regular Sunday big breakfasts, his fried eggs and bacon, toast, and sweet rolls from a bakery.

We took snapshots in the orchard. Beneath my academic gown I was dressed as I was expected, in a suit and tie. It was a hot summer's Sunday. I teased about changing into a T-shirt and shorts saying that I'd be more comfortable in the packed gymnasium in the Field House. I remember saying, "Anyway, who'd know the difference under this black gown?" Mom and Dad presented me with a gift of a handsome, expensive wristwatch engraved "L.J.K. 1968", pictured right.

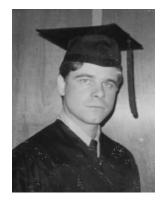


Candidates for graduation and University faculty in their doctorate and academic gowns and caps processed into the Field House at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Reserve Street to a processional march composed by Dean Blair of the WSU music faculty and played by the University Brass Choir and directed by Dr. Robert Van Nuys. During the inevitable spirit-lifting speechmaking I recall lifting my gown to my lap. I wasn't alone. The July issue of *The Pointer* published a photograph of a female graduate beating the heat having transformed her traditional graduation gown into a mini-skirt graduation gown, a sign of the '60s, by hauling it up well above her knees. My unnoticed gesture was to convince myself that, though covered by dress pants, air might cool my sunburned legs. I don't remember there being any air-conditioning and I was beading with perspiration – not from the heat, but from nervous anticipation. The James H. Albertson Award was about to be presented for the first time and I was among the nominees. With a high profile on campus and in the Stevens Point community friends thought I was a lay down misere for the honor.

Nine recipients received heavy bronze medallions onto which their names were engraved. Alas, my name wasn't announced. The honored students had been nominated by faculty members and selected for the award by a committee of three faculty members and three students. I was dumbfounded when I learned that Chrismary Durmick sat on the student body committee. One criterion was an overall

gradepoint above 3.0 during four years on campus. That would have gazumped me from consideration on the first ballot. In this, its first year of presentation, the criteria used for the James H. Albertson Medallion awards were generally the same as selection for the 1968 Senior Who's Who: highest gradepoint average mixed with extra-curricular activities and a positive asset to the college. Gradepoint undid my chances, but I was happy knowing my friend John Primm was one of eight seniors who made it into 1968's Who's Who. Gradepoint and active membership in the Players as an actor and crew pushed him to the fore.

Commencement address was delivered by Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Wilbur J.



Cohen. It was peppered with the traditional platitudes and clichéd "rah rah" for us to face our futures with confidence. Degrees were presented by the deans of the respected colleges. Representing the College of Education Burdette Eagon offered his right hand to mine and placed my Bachelor of Science Degree in Education into my left hand. He didn't say anything; he just smiled. Why I sort of timidly bowed with a sheepish smile is an odd memory. My right hand reached up to the mortarboard tassel and moved it from right to left. As I exited stage right I recall turning my head slightly to glance ever so briefly at the audience. I didn't see anyone, just a mass of black gowns and caps. Klobukowski was somewhere in the middle of the list of 416 graduates' names. I sat patiently in the heat for the next 200 or so graduates to be presented with their papers of achievement and, like

many others in the audience, used the commencement program to fan my face. Chancellor Dreyfus delivered a final charge to the graduates and our University Brass Choir accompanied the recessional.

We mingled outside the Fieldhouse, my consolation prize for having lost the Albertson Medallion the personal adulation from professors and doctors who taught me over five years, as well as from government leaders I knew. Senator Melvin R. Laird, later to serve President Richard M. Nixon as Secretary of Defense, came to me and surprised my parents when he said, "Larry. Congratulations. I want you to meet Wilbur Cohen, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare." My parents' stunned expressions said it all... "Wow! Our son's on a first name basis with a Wisconsin senator." To me Senator Laird had simply become "Uncle Mel" who'd taken me once to the Hot Fish Shop for dinner. I'd come to know him through my filmmaking and had on occasion the privilege to film him for the Channel 7 news and WSU archives. Initially introduced to Senator Laird by President Dreyfus, any future meeting included a friendly personal chat and special address from the senator to single me



from other members of the professional media, e.g. "Gentlemen, I thank you for coming today. Hello Larry. How's your latest film going?" I was made to be as official as those who worked fulltime in the industry. We posed for snapshots which John Primm took using my parents' camera. I think my mother may have felt shy or overwhelmed with Senator Laird's arm around her, but my father literally beamed with pride.

Left: Graduation Day June 2, 1968: Mother, Senator Melvin R. Laird, Federal Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Wilbur Cohen, Yours Truly, Father.

Robert Orben had nothing to do with our graduation ceremony, but his words are worth quoting here. An observational comedian and author of multiple books on comedy, collections of gags and one-liners, he said, "A graduation ceremony

is an event where the commencement speaker tells thousands of students dressed in identical caps and gowns that 'individuality' is the key to success." Now we, the June Class of 1968, embarked on a new and exciting step with the prescribed cookie-cutter advice of "Follow your dream" and "Believe in yourself!" As relevant and just as soul stirring was advice published in a comic book, "Look out for Number 1, but don't step in Number 2." Platitudes meant absolutely nothing now we'd been allowed one baby step into the real world. No speaker at our ceremony used the most quotable of sources – good ol' Anonymous – who said it best with "Find something you love to do and you'll never have to work a day in your life."



With John Primm



Graduate friends outside the Fieldhouse: Me, Curt Synhorst, John Primm. Girl in gown with back to the camera is Chrismary Durmick.



With mentor Dr. Thomas McCaig



Gownless and holding John Primm's 8mm camera I am with Mr. Tom McCaig in his doctor's academic gown.

To the right of Tom's head is Chrismary Durmick

Paul Bentzen didn't graduate with us. He was shy a few credits in Mathematics for graduation and had to deal with that little thing called the Vietnam War. Unknown to most of us Paul had a Conscientious Objector classification. In compliance with his classification in June 1968 Paul moved

to Madison to begin a job at Madison General Hospital. He punched a clock for the next two years working split shifts as a rehab orderly.

My parents didn't stick around for any reception or party. Facing three hours or more on the highway, they wanted to get home for my brother and the twins. A short hiatus followed graduation. Except for use on cheeks and chin, I stashed my safety razor in the mirrored medicine cabinet above the bathroom sink and cultured the growing of a new stache. If I didn't simply laze in the summer sun, I busied my time with garden, house and organizational chores. I didn't watch television because I didn't own one. I listened to the radio.

In this year of unrest on June 4, the night of the California Primary, Robert Kennedy addressed a large crowd of supporters at the Ambassador Hotel in San Francisco. He had won victories in California and South Dakota and was confident that his campaign would go on to unite the many factions stressing the country. He won more primary votes than Eugene McCarthy. An anti-war campaigner was going to make it to the White House. He left the stage at 12:13 a.m., the morning of June 5, his aides wanted Kennedy to rush to a press conference and they took him by way of a shortcut through a kitchen. That's where Sirhan Sirhan was waiting for him.

Two hours ahead of California time and asleep in my bed in the rural Stevens Point farmhouse, a sixth sense, a voice in my brain told me to wake up and turn on the bedside radio. I switched it on and heard Senator Robert Kennedy saying, "My thanks to all of you and now it's on to Chicago and let's win there." The crowd cheered, "RFK! RFK!" The announcer said that Kennedy was leaving the stage. There was a very loud noise like a clap of thunder and someone shouted, "Close the door." People moaned "Oh, no...," and pleaded, "Get a doctor, a doctor. Is there a medical doctor in the house? We need a doctor right here." There was screaming. Kennedy had been shot. I listened in shock to the live broadcast. The night was warm. The screened bedroom window was open. There was no breeze. The moon shone brightly. I sat up. I didn't need to turn on a light. The announcer said that, to avoid crowds, star athletes Rafer Johnson and Rosie (Roosevelt) Grier had accompanied Kennedy out a rear exit of the Ambassador Hotel. A man stepped forward with a rolled up campaign poster hiding his .22 revolver. He was only a foot away when he fired several shots at Kennedy, one bullet lodging in his brain. I heard the announcer say that Grier and Johnson wrestled the gunman to the ground, but not before five bystanders were wounded. "Hold him, someone yelled, "We don't want another Oswald."

My night was restless. I dozed, waking with a start, it seemed, every few minutes. Come sunrise I felt drained, listless, and listened to Rosie Grier describe what happened. He was distraught and blamed himself for allowing Kennedy to be shot. The United States learned the assassin was Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, born in Jerusalem in 1944; he believed Kennedy was instrumental in the oppression of the Palestinians. More news followed. After Kennedy was shot, he'd said to his wife Ethyl, "How bad is it?" To the ambulance attendant he'd said, Please don't... please don't lift me." Those were his last words before going into a coma. In critical condition he underwent neurological surgery. Robert Kennedy died at 1:44 a.m. Pacific time on June 6, 1968. He was 42 years old.

Author Mark Kurlansky said, "It was the death of hope, a loss in the belief of an entire system."

The funeral was held Saturday, June 8, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Subsequently, like Abraham Lincoln long before, Bobby Kennedy's body and 700 guests departed on a special train for the burial in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. The entire country mourned. People turned out all along the Pennsylvania railroad tracks between New York and Washington to pay their respects. Many carried or held chest-high small and large American flags. Many men, but especially the children, boys and girls, stood up straight and saluted as the train passed.

That very day James Earl Ray was arrested for the April assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Chapter 54: Indians!

#### Upward Bound

hether it was my proven ability as a moviemaker or that I was now a qualified, certified and darn good teacher, someone recommended me to someone else and somehow I managed to become involved in the 1968 summer Upward Bound program.

Upward Bound was a program formed as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. It was a pre-college program for secondary students involving a full time summer program and follow-up programs during the regular school year to keep the students college-bound. Upward Bound sought to find and redirect secondary school students with potential but who had been handicapped by educational, cultural, and economic deprivation. Its attempt was to rescue a youngster and motivate that student to apply talents and energies constructively rather than lose them or direct them against society. Upward Bound was a creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), the federal government agency in charge of running the war on poverty. Students meeting criteria, determined mainly on a basis of family income, received room and board, medical care, counseling help, books and supplies, travel costs for field trips, and \$10 per week for spending money. Included in this government program were costs for Upward Bound staff and faculty and the indirect costs to the institution for facilities and space, in the immediate case WSU-SP. All considered, a 12 month program's cost was a modest \$1200 per student.

About 80 high school students regarded as economically and culturally disadvantaged, but with having potential of making the grade in college, were expected to participate in the 1968 summer federally sponsored Upward Bound program June 23 to August 3. Congressman Melvin R. Laird announced that the OEO financed the activities with a \$120,219 grant. Valued at \$23,000 the services of class and housing facilities were provided by the university without charge. Most of the participants were high school sophomores and juniors from Indian reservations in nine northern Wisconsin counties.



Pictured left<sup>1</sup> is Robert Powless, an Oneida, a proud Native American who had an almost life-sized portrait of the Apache chief Geronimo hanging on his office wall at WSU; he was director of Upward Bound's activities. The 35 year old whose home town was Black Creek near Green Bay believed that if "these kids get home this summer and realize that maybe they can make good if they try, then the program will have been a success. We want them to realize there are important roles Indians as Americans can play in our society." Mr. Powless acknowledged that deep-rooted attitudes cannot be changed in six weeks, "but maybe we can make a dent."

It made sense that Powless' Assistant Director was Mrs. Marilyn Hill, wife of Stevens Point's Presbyterian minister. She had for several years been directing a tutoring project, with WSU students as volunteers, for Indian high school students in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Photographer unknown. Free Use Picture published in *The Pointer July* 10, 1968

Menominee County communities of Keshena and Neopit. In the spring she had organized a tutoring program for Indian grade school children at Wisconsin Rapids.

A Menominee Indian on Powless' staff was Miss Ada Deer. Her studies and work with numerous minority groups lead her to conclude that Indians cannot succeed without recapturing their own spirit and thus develop dignity and self worth. "You can still find this, but usually you have to talk with the 80 year old Indian," she said. "The traditional way of life has largely been destroyed for many Indian groups and they now accept poverty because they think that is the Indian way of life. It's true Indians have a lack of motivation, but this is a natural reaction to exploitation, racism and poverty that has touched each of their lives. In addition to money, Indians need the interest and concern of the community." Add this to a shortage of role models (leaders who are Indians) and the problem was multiplied. Ada Deer was more than support staff. She was an outspoken fighter, revolutionary, and active campaigner. She wanted more Indians to be fighters and saw herself as a role leader who didn't think her attitude was one of conceit.

Ahead of graduation I'd made some enquiries about other summer employment, but like a piñata smacked and suddenly breaking open revealing tumbling treats, the Upward Bound job sort of sweetly dropped into my lap. Colleagues included Mrs. Helen Corneli, my English Literature teacher when I was a freshman, and Mrs. Pam Marxer with whom I'd be working in the English Department at Benjamin Franklin Junior High School come September. Both taught English and reading in the program. Mrs. Corneli had been on the advisory committee which planned the summer's Upward Bound program, and so was Mr. Bill Neer whom I'd come to know in his role as Sims residence hall director in my final year as a senior. Mr. Neer was on the teaching staff for mathematics and counseling. As well as teaching English and reading, I was employed to teach speech and film production. Both terms need clarification. Speech was really Drama, not Public Speaking. Film production was Film Appreciation, rather than actually making movies. However, I'd be wielding a 16mm Bolex to shoot a documentary film titled *Upward Bound* after the summer program. I didn't know others on the teaching staff as they'd come from high school faculties in towns where Upward Bound participants lived. Rounding out the staff were eight collegians serving as tutor-counselors who'd worked as volunteers during the past year or two with Indian students.

Before any Indian students arrived, my days were spent in staff meetings, more often than not referred to as program indoctrination. I'd no doubt I needed to learn about Indian students and what made them tick. My only knowledge of Indians was the slanted white man's perspective I'd observed in countless biased cowboys n' Indians movies seen on TV and in the movie houses; I then went ahead and used the same unflattering stereotypes by imitating what I'd seen on screen when I made *Tomahawk Terror*. All the required and needless brainwork made me tired and I hoped it would be worth it. For amusement I'd run my index finger across my upper lip and feel the prickly seta. I'd decided to regrow my cookie duster. The interminable meetings seemed to have set a pattern for my dislike of any and all staff meetings in my future. If required information was imparted with enthusiasm and discussed with a singular goal as seen by a team desiring a championship, then maybe we'd get somewhere. Too often such meetings provided a platform for certain individuals to appreciate the sound of their own voices.

Classes would be held in the mornings on mathematics, English, science and social studies. No grades would be given. Study could help youngsters catch up lessons that may have missed in school earlier because of absences. Maybe they'd be better prepared when returning to school next fall. Afternoons would be filled with classes in dance, art and music. Evenings would be set aside for recreation such as movies, dances, beauty culture demonstrations for the girls, good grooming demonstrations for the boys, gun programs and study discussions. Saturdays would include field trips. Sundays weren't given any mention and perhaps we were to assume it would be observed as the traditional "day of rest".

A lively bunch of Indian kids arrived in yellow school buses around 6:30 p.m. outside Pray-Sims Hall on Sunday, June 23, bearing the surnames Snowball, Wolf, Red Eagle, Lake, Hopinkah, Wewassen,

and Tuckwab. Others' surnames showed a French-Indian influence in Poupart, LaRonge, Gouge, Lemieux, Metoxen, and Houle. Surprise! Two Indians, a brother and sister had a Polish surname, Plucinski. The boys and girls were Chippewa (Ojibwe), Oneida, Menominee, one Potawatomi girl, and several dark-skinned Winnebago (Ho-Chunk). I may have been prejudged as I watched them step off the bus, but I thought I identified those who'd come to learn and others who'd come to goof-off and get the government handout of \$10 a week. Interesting that my judgmental notion wasn't one iota short of the mark. Warmly welcoming everyone Bob Powless then zeroed in on students' reasons for coming; some were here to benefit while others just wanted free money. Wow! I didn't expect to hear that from the director! Everyone would be evaluated and those looking like not gaining from the program, those behaving unacceptably in or out of the classroom would be shamefully sent home, hence cut off from the generous weekly ten dollar bill.

My required time for teaching students was mornings. I didn't have to make myself available afternoons, but frequently chose to show up to shoot film, especially when Bob Powless quietly called me aside and suggested with a knowing smile that something interesting could happen. Whether or not I participated in evening activities was my decision and sometimes I would, bringing along the camera and lights.

As well as shooting some film one evening early in the program in the Allen Center, I learned to square dance. To encourage some boys and girls off chairs was like prizing apart inanimate glued objects. Typically self conscious teenagers, they thought they'd look foolish. Those who did try dancing made mistakes. No one cared and, once they overcame the paranoid thought that everyone was judging them, they had a good time. Even though I'd taken classes in dance, I moved just as awkwardly, but it didn't matter. Making a teacher play the fool has always been part of students' modus operandi. My attempts to follow the caller's directions for movement this way, movement that way, resulted in collision with partners and gales of laughter. I couldn't always understand the caller's auctioneer-like chant, "Al-a-main right and a doh-see-doh." Still, I had a ball! And I captured good footage.

I had a concern which didn't deserve the sober thought I'd given it. Having regrown my moustache, I worried about what effect it might have on my Indian students. A teacher with a moustache or beard was still a novelty and, for the most, considered unacceptable grooming. Being the era of the hippie and flower power, growing of facial and long hair, and relatively open avocation of pot smoking and drug use, none to which I personally ascribed, you'd think I'd have overcome the qualm of a hairy caterpillar resting on my upper lip. It shouldn't have, but it amazed me that none of my students was dazed, dazzled, or even cared. Perhaps my students equated my mustachioed appearance with that of the golden era Hollywood because they soon made reference to me as their "movie star teacher." Just as in that Tinseltown world of prickly fandom and idol worship, Dave Graf, one of the tutor-counselors, informed me after just three days of student contact that 47 of the girls had crushes on their teacher.

I conducted a few classes in Drama before English was introduced. Drama was taught twice weekly. Most of what we did amounted to creative drama including Theatre Sports and games which were intended to build confidence and self-esteem. No matter my enthusiasm, the teenagers appeared hesitant, but at least no one ever complicated procedure by refusing to participate.

In English I taught short stories, poetry and creative writing. I showed *Jamie* and tied it to Drama because all the actors were amateurs and my everyday friends. My film was used as a text, like a short story, and a source for interpretation and discussion, as was the Czechoslovakian animated puppet film by Jiri Trinka called *The Hand*. I thought it astounding the amount of political criticism and poke-in-the-ribs tomfoolery filmmakers in communist-dominated countries were able to slip past the censors without getting themselves purged or re-educated in doctrine, i.e., jailed.

Another evening Doris Tutor, Patty Connors, Doris Mitchell, Linda Hopinkah, Debbie Wolf, and Debbie Lemieux took charge of a kitchen in the basement of Pray-Sims and made frybread. In the

world of the Indian after the white man, frybread was omnipresent. Puffy and slightly sweet, frybread works as a dessert (with cinnamon-sugar), holds a meal (like a sandwich), and can be dipped in sauces (like a tortilla). It is always best when eaten fresh. Frybread has Navajo roots and many other tribes, like those in Wisconsin, have adopted it as their own. It is a symbol of survival and captivity, invented when Native Americans were forced onto reservations in the 1800. The makings of frybread – powdered milk, baking powder, lard, flour, salt and sugar – were among the few foods within reach of the hungry. Tribes used these meager government rations and found a way to put them to good use. When the girls shared their frybread with me, I believe its purpose was to teach me something about their not-so-long-ago history.

Immersed in Upward Bound sometimes seven days a week, I always made time for family. When they were able, my parents looked upon the farm as a weekend retreat, a place to let loose and unwind. Even though Dad often made simple repairs to things and pottered around the garden, he saw it as a place of rest. The farm was a place where stress went someplace else. Possibly my Dad was



reminded of a time long ago when he was a youngster and had spent vacation time with his cousins on the sprawling Broniszewski farm in Sobieski. Dad seemed to especially appreciate the outhouse with its crescent moon door. Mom liked the farm because it usually meant she didn't have to prepare meals. She always thought I was a better cook and Dad took charge of breakfast.

It was Dad's brainstorm to pose for the snapshot pictured left. Mom and Dad did their best interpretation of the classic American Gothic. Whenever my parents came to the farm, there was always light-hearted fun and a lot of laughter. They visited the weekend of June 15-16 and brought along Luann

and Joann. The girls had been pestering to see the farm where their big brother lived. Maybe they expected to see farm animals like they'd seen at the Wisconsin State Fair, but I'd still not acquired livestock of the feathered or four-footed kind. On order from the Noble Hatchery, on the other hand, were ten ducklings at 35¢ each.

Someone gave me a puppy I named Ubu Roi, or just plain Ubu, after a play I'd studied in Drama by Alfred Jarry. The title *Ubu Roi* (*Ubu the King* or *King Ubu*) is sometimes translated as *King Turd*, a more than appropriate name for my dog; however, the word "ubu" is simply a nonsense word. Ubu was a smart crossbreed that ate too much, pooped too much, grew too quickly, and taught me to open the kitchen door when he squealed. It was always a guessing game whether the dog wanted food or needed to go outside and do its duty. Anytime Ubu had been outside his ears needed to be checked for ticks. Pictured right, a boy and his dog, me n' Ubu, a photo snapped by Ann Neer, Bill's wife. The Neers boarded their dog Hazel on my farm and she was good playmate for Ubu.

Another new resident on the farm was, like Ubu, four-legged. I bought a horse with free use of the bridle until I bought my own. The transaction came about after a neighbor boy walked his pinto to my farm and asked if he could stake the horse in the field to eat grass. I agreed and we talked about his painted pony while pounding the metal stake into the ground. I patted the horse. It was gentle, not at all skittish. The more the boy and I talked, the more I liked the 5 year old horse. The boy, whose first name I don't remember, may have been one of the neighboring Zurawski kids, then said some magic words, "Pop wants to get rid of the horse because he has a cataract over his right eye." I had to ask. The boy said I could have the horse for \$25.00. He was called Prince and the kid didn't lead the horse from the farm. I went into the kitchen and pulled 25 dollars worth of greenbacks from my wallet and slapped them into the boy's hand. I bought oats for Prince – a 50 lb bag for \$1.75.

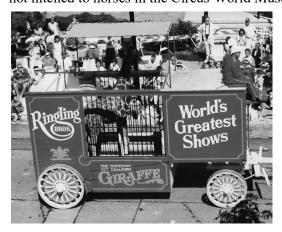
A temporary, yet valuable face on the farm was Curt Synhorst from Wausau, graduate in the class of '68 and a floor mate in Sims Hall. He was biding his time until commencement of post-graduate studies. Sometimes when Curt returned from seeing his parents in Wausau he brought his dog Muffy, a basset hound, to the farm. It looked like a Three Stooges reunion when the trio of huntz mutts<sup>2</sup> frolicked together.

One day I received two items in my rural mailbox; one I shared with Curt. It was junk mail which turned out to be valuable, a flyer from Badger Paint offering on sale a power lawn mower for \$58, a markdown from \$64. It wasn't a huge discount, but it complied with my mother's shopping advice, "If you don't have to pay full price for it, don't." The other item in the mail was my 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin charge card. Put the two items together and with Curt's driving his car to Badger Paint, I bought the power mower. Wielding a borrowed crescent wrench, Curt helped me put the machine together and it worked a real hummer.

John Primm visited the farm Friday, June 21 and asked to stay overnight. He was driving to Minneapolis, Minnesota to attend a wedding. John didn't have a job yet, but one good bit of news he shared was that Uncle Sam didn't want him. He had been called up by his draft board and went through all the steps of the physical. John's hearing wasn't the 100% required by the military and, to his delight, he flunked the physical. Reclassified from 1-A to1-Y, he was still available for military service, but qualified only in case of war or national emergency. The classification had been created in 1962. I was happy for John; at the same time kinda sad because he was much too young for his hearing to be waning.

In the morning John reversed his Volkswagen out the driveway and he was bound for Minneapolis. On his way he dropped me off at the Fine Arts Building. There I shot some 16mm color film of *Luv*, the first of four plays presented by the WSU Summer Theatre Company opening July 10. My footage was edited into 30 second publicity spots and televised on Wausau's Channel 7.

When I chose not to be on the farm Saturday, I may have instead participated in an Upward Bound field trip or excursion. Two such broadening experiences on the yellow school buses come to mind. The first was on June 29 to Baraboo and the Wisconsin Dells. Baraboo was the birthplace of the American Circus. From 1884 to 1917 it was the headquarters of the Ringling Brothers Circus and several others, leading to the nickname "Circus City." The Circus World Museum, a living history museum, was our destination. It has a collection of circus wagons, posters, circus artifacts, and memorabilia, as well as the largest library of circus information in the United States. We wandered agog amongst the colorfully ornate circus wagons and I captured students' expressions of delight on 16mm film. As I have no Upward Bound photos of the excursion, here are a couple of my snapshots of circus wagons in Milwaukee's Great Circus Parade in 1989, the very same wagons we'd have seen not hitched to horses in the Circus World Museum in 1968.







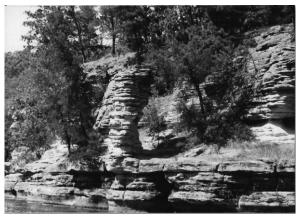
St. George and the Dragon Wago

<sup>2</sup> Huntz mutt is a slang term used in our family to describe a dog of mixed breed, in this instance its usage is plural.



It was a mere 13 miles or 20 minutes down the road from Baraboo to Wisconsin Dells. According to Native American legend it was a great serpent, wriggling down from its northland home near the Big Lake, which formed the bed of the Wisconsin River. When the serpent came to the sandstone ridge where the Dells begins, he thrust his great head into a crevice between the rocks and pushed them aside to form a narrow, winding passage. The true story is just as exciting. When the great Glacial Lake of Wisconsin broke free from its ice dam 19,000 years ago the waters surged in a

catastrophic flood and carved the great rock formations we see today.



Today boat companies operate on the river to give tourists the chance to see the sandstone formations.

My photo of Chimney Rock is pictured left.

At Stand Rock

we watched a dog make a breathtaking leap, a catching net strung beneath the gap, pictured right in my own snapshot. Look carefully and you can see the dog leaping from the right of the photo, the net to catch is needed clearly visible, as is the man in control of the dog.



Dances were first performed by the Ho-Chunk/Winnebago on a beach beneath and adjacent Stand Rock and were visible to passengers passing by slowly on a boat. Eventually the dancing was commercialized due to expression of tourist interest in Indian customs and culture. Seating for tourists was incorporated into a hillside, and dancing was expanded to include invitation for intertribal participation to the Sioux, Kiowa, and south-western Native American tribes. We sat in seats in a natural open air amphitheatre to watch the spectacular and colorfully lit nighttime ceremonial. The dances were sensational and the regalia colorful and intricate, almost alien to eyes of Caucasian tourists. There was the fast paced War Dance of the Winnebago, the Eagle Dance, the Dance of the Sun, Dog Feast Dance of the Sioux, and the Swan Dance, one of the oldest dances known to the Winnebago who believe the swan is a sacred bird created before man, and given wisdom that man has never received.

Unless time has played tricks on my memory, I believe I remember a wrongheaded act included in the ceremonial. Standing on opposite sandstone towers was a red-jacketed Royal Canadian Mountie and an Indian maiden. Having a Royal Canadian Mountie in Wisconsin was already anachronistic! To an accompanying music track pumped though megaphone-shaped speakers, they sang the "Indian Love Call" made famous in the 1936 Nelson Eddy-Jeanette MacDonald vehicle *Rose Marie*. "I'll be calling you oo-oo-oo, oo-oo-oo-oo." It made our tour group drop mouth-gaping glances at one another as if silently saying, "I don't believe what I'm seeing and hearing." I'll bet my Indian students thought it was a gratuitous performance for an audience made up mainly of white folk. And feeling embarrassed for my kids, I wanted to crawl under my chair and hide.



Another Saturday excursion was to the state capitol of Madison July 13. We toured the Wisconsin State Capitol building, my picture left, and built to resemble the Capitol Building in Washington D.C.

Everyone knows that control of the weather is never in the power of the traveler. Madison averaged 11 days per summer when the temperature climbed up into the 90s. We just happened to be in town on one of those stiflingly humid days when it was so hot hens laid hard-boiled eggs. Our Saturday was just too hot for sightseeing.

We met Republican Governor Warren P. Knowles, a man keen to shake hands, talk up his credentials, and praise the importance of getting a good education. After all, in tight white shirt collar and tie and probably thinking he'd rather be somewhere cooler instead of sweating beads in the unusual Madison heat, Governor Knowles faced re-election come November. It was an ideal opportunity to include someone notable in the Upward Bound documentary, and it was obvious from the governor's broad smile that he relished the unexpected publicity. Whether self-conscious from meeting the governor or from melting in the heat, on film our students looked uncomfortable.

After the Capitol Building and catered Ace Foods sandwiches and fresh fruit lunch we visited the University of Wisconsin - Madison campus where educators conducted brief building tours and spoke outside in the shade of one building about graduating from high school and going further to get as much education as possible. The heat being what it was, words surely went in one ear and out the other. Speakers may just as well have been talking to hot stones. What they were selling, the students weren't buying. On their minds was ice cold Coca Cola, A&W root beer, and ice cream. If any of the speakers told them, "Go jump in a lake," the order would have been taken literally!



Upward Bound staff and students on UW-Madison campus Saturday July 13, 1968. I am in the center of photograph, top row, framed in the center of the arched window with Ron Skenedore behind standing me, Randy LeClaire, Dave Graf and Mike Metoxin standing in front of me. We have our left hands on our hips so we'd stand out from others in the picture.

In between the two field trips, life on the farm changed dramatically. Remember Robby? He was the rough, tough boy in Speech class when I did my practice teaching. Robby ran away from home. I

didn't know the circumstances, but he showed up at the farm and asked to live with me. I called his home and made Robby talk with his mother. The civil conversation resulted in his mother telling me it was all right for her son to stay with me on the farm. Just like that I became an unofficial guardian, foster father, big brother, and official best friend. Down the road lived Gerry Hutnik, a Route 2 neighbor, a friend from St. Stephen's Catholic Church, and he was a police detective. Following my phone call to Robby's mother I contacted Gerry and asked if I'd been foolish or was I doing the right thing. Gerry said Robby was known to police for various things, although he hadn't yet been in the kind of trouble which results in arrest or prosecution. Gerry did suggest, however, that should Robby get his nose into trouble just once, he'd been made aware he'd be sent away to a juvenile detention home. In other words, something sometime had gone amiss and I wasn't being told the whole story. Gerry informed me of the legalities with the responsibility I was taking onto my shoulders and added that he thought I'd be a good influence on the boy. Anytime I needed help, day or night, I should feel confident to contact him if I needed any support. Had I anticipated any real trouble, I'd not have said yes to Robby living on the farm.

That night I rang Mr. McCaig, for the so-called second opinion, for assurance I was doing the right thing. Mr. McCaig said I was one of the most outstanding teachers and students he'd ever had, and he felt I'd be an excellent foster father for Robby, adding that I'd always have tremendous influence over youngsters. I had to agree because I could see that happening already in the Upward Bound program. I thought whatever influence I might have would have been due to my upbringing by my parents, for it was they who had, over the previous 23 years, set me in the right direction.

Bob Powless and I picked up Robby's worldly possessions from his parents' home. A teacher with whom I worked in Upward Bound gave me a bed which we set up in the so-called guest room, a bedroom off the kitchen and now designated Robby's room. For a while Robby was a great help on the farm, often doing chores of his own volition. He hoed potatoes, pulled weeds, washed dishes, burned the garbage, made his bed, cleaned house, and mowed the grass. On the surface he appeared to have settled. Robby even managed to fit in with the Upward Bound students. They seemed to have accepted him and he reacted cordially with them. He volunteered to do work for teachers in the program. What I observed in his demeanor is that he did things for others instead of doing things to others. He accepted responsibility for his actions and made tolerable decisions.



Four Oneida boys played a big role befriending Robby; they allowed his acceptance into their community. Pictured left, from left to right are three of the Oneida boys: Mike Metoxen, Tom Oudenhoven, and Ron Skenadore. Not in the picture was the fourth Oneida, Ron's cousin Wayne Skenadore.

Randy, or Ranj as we called him, the boy standing in the photo, had no Indian blood. He was a 16 year old white kid who made it into the program under the qualification of being disadvantaged. At one point in the

program Ranj, as had Robby, did a runner, not from home but to home to escape Upward Bound. Prejudice forced his decision. Because he wasn't an Indian, Indian boys bullied and threatened him. I thought that ironic. I called Ranj long distance and asked him to think about coming back. He showed up on my doorstep out of the blue and asked to stay on the farm for a couple of days before returning to Upward Bound. I immediately rang Bob Powless and let him know Ranj was on my farm. Bob came to the farm, talked with Ranj, and gave his assurance the bullying would be stopped.

Bob Powless gave his permission for Robby to participate in the Saturday, July 20, field trip, a daylong canoe paddle on the Crystal River at Waupaca, a slice of paradise lying between Stevens Point and Appleton: 22 spring-fed lakes all joined together. We couldn't have ordered a better summer's day - clear blue sky and a temperature in the low 80s. If students didn't have swimsuits under their clothes, they slipped into the bathhouse to change.

As if the mind's eye develops glaucoma, it's fascinating how one's vision clouds to haze unpleasantness. Trouble began on the Crystal River. I genuinely thought I'd make a positive contribution to Robby's social and psychological development and, maybe in a very small way, I had in giving my friendship, lending my limited experience in guidance, and by providing a sense of security in my home. If in my youth and inexperience I thought I could have changed Robby's nature, I was badly mistaken. There are places in people heads which just can't be reached. Two Indian boys observed Robby spending too much time with their girls in swimsuits. He was muscling in on their private territory and, whatever his motive, it was seen as no good. Away from Bob Powless and only within their tight earshot words shot back and forth.

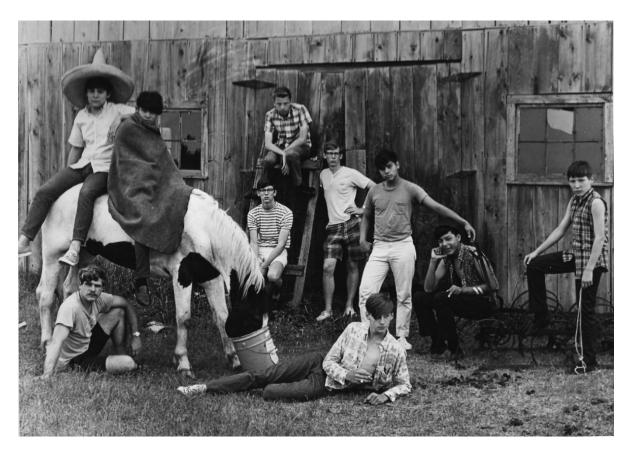
From Ding's Dock we took a 15 minute boat ride on Columbia Lake to the mouth of the Crystal River on Long Lake. There we jumped out of the ancient, lawnmower-smelling boat into the lake where we grabbed fiberglass canoes. For the most, two people used one canoe. Robby didn't share one with me. He boarded a canoe with one of the girls. This wasn't a sit and float kind of trip. It was expected paddlers would tip over into the river after smacking into a rock or tree. Over the next three hours we paddled our way down a crystal clear, shallow river which confounded canoeists with abundant rocks and fallen trees. Whether intentional or accidental, I saw Robby's canoe upended near a rock. Nearby the two Indian boys were in a canoe which hadn't overturned. About an hour in, we had to portage canoes through the time-forgotten town of Rural to the next lake in the chain. An hour later we encountered rapids which spilled some of the Indians out of their canoes, including Mr. Powless who, despite the catcalls, took it all in stride. The rapids being adjacent to a public park, there was an audience watching to cheer and jeer. At the end of the journey was a beach with a big sign telling us we'd finished.

In the days after Crystal River, Robby and the two Indian boys had disagreements, snapped sharp words and ruffled feathers. He made the grave mistake of boasting of his prowess in high school fist fights, as if that was ever going to threaten an Indian. Indians had been taking that kind of guff from the white man ever since their arrival on their turf in the 1400s. White boy baiting and intimidating words exploded into full-blown battle, as if it was Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse overwhelming Custer at the Little Big Horn. Not only did Robby lose the battle, he lost the war. Bloodied, black-eyed, and humiliated, Robby had broken the "no trouble" stipulation and was removed from my care. Gerry Hutnick told me without emotion that Robby was going into juvenile rehabilitation. I felt I'd failed, but Gerry said I shouldn't blame myself. The two Indian boys in the fracas faced Bob Powless. Without discussion or word of warning, they were discredited, dismissed from Upward Bound, and sent home.

While I filled my summer teaching Indians, John Hankwitz continued working as a Quality Inspector at the Oster Corporation. Sometime in July John's boss at Oster said the company was looking for a Quality Engineer to run their Reliability Laboratory, its purpose to ensure all Oster products were designed to high quality standards and last for many years. John accepted the position. Six lab technicians reported to him. He designed a new laboratory and had it up and running in a few months. Backtracking a bit, John hadn't seen Barbara Blakely since the school year ended and she called John around the end of June. Working at the Milwaukee Reparatory Theater, she told John she was burned out and needed to get away from the theater. John took Barbara for dinner and drinks. To say the least, they connected spiritually and mentally and married the first week in September. It was a small wedding in Winnetka, Illinois, in a Bahá'í Temple garden, with reception in the Hankwitz family backyard. Their honeymoon was a weekend trip to Stevens Point where John and Barb took six of John's old girlfriends out for dinner to the Hot Fish Shop. John and Barb didn't visit me on the farm,

but I later learned the plan John and I had to share living on the farm was like a bag of potato chips crushed under a six-pack of Point Special at the bottom of a shopping bag.

The chance was slight, but Dave Graff hinted he might live on the farm for his final year of university. Dave worked in Upward Bound having gained experience as a WSU student volunteer for Indian high school students in the Menominee County community of Neopit. He and I clicked from the first day of staff integration. Dave was cooperative, and unlike me, rather quiet and unassuming. In dealing with Upward Bound students he used a firm hand with a gentle touch. Dave was instrumental in bringing some of the Indian boys to the farm on the free day of the week, Sunday. They'd poke around in the garden, pitch hay in the barn, jump from the loft into a hay pile, and they rode Prince, afterwards brushing and grooming the pinto. Sunday was just one instance where I felt the Indians taught me more than I taught them, like how to roast corn Indian-style. Ears of corn were harvested for lunch and soaked in a bucket of water drawn from my hand-pump well. The boys dug a shallow pit and built a fire to make glowing coals. The soaked ears were placed onto the coals. Husks browned and the ears turned to prevent burning, some black burnt husk leaves floating upward in the hot air above the coals and then wafting back down to the ground. Corn kernels might be allowed to singe slightly. Peeled back, the husk became a handle for holding the corn. Salt and butter wasn't needed as the roasted corn was full of natural flavor.



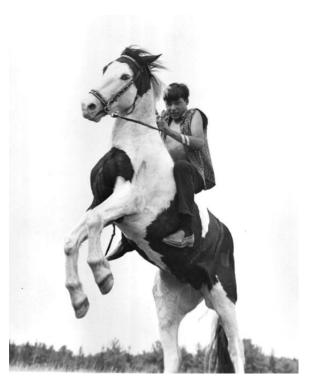
Mounted on Prince without halter or reins are Wayne Skenadore wearing sombrero and Hilary Butler wrapped in blanket. I am seated beside Prince. Tom Oudenhoven reclines on the ground. At the top of the ladder is Joseph Jordan. On the bottom rung of the ladder is Ranj Le Claire. Standing with hand on hip is Tutor-Counselor Dave Graf. Standing to Dave's left is Ron Skenadore. Seated is Marty Soulier. Standing is Dale Wolf.

One Sunday the Indian boys taught me how to mount Prince bareback from behind. Prince was a very gentle horse and let you do just about anything with him without horsey complaint or retaliation. They claimed Indians mounted a horse from behind when they ran from an enemy and needed to get onto a horse fast for escape. I may have, mistakenly or not, thought the mount from behind was a Cossack move. Whomever it belonged to, the maneuver proved easy and my horse cooperative.

Prince never moved forward when hearing the run up to his backside, nor did he flinch when hands were placed onto his rump or dock for the rider's leap upward and onto his back.

Pictured right, Gary Hall, Ho-Chunk/Winnebago, taught me to rear Prince. Generally placid, when Gary found the horse's "clutch" with his heels and simultaneously tugged on the reins, Prince went up on his hind legs resulting in an impressive display of horsemanship, as cab be seen in my snap-shot at right.

I never needed to buy a set of reins for Prince. The Zurawski boy who sold me the horse returned saying his father told him to "throw in the reins with the price." I bought a cheap saddle to ride Prince, a Civil War vintage McClellan, but preferred riding him bareback. I had no difficulty mounting from the left simply by grabbing a fistful of mane, pulling myself up, and swinging my right leg over his body. If I felt energetic, as

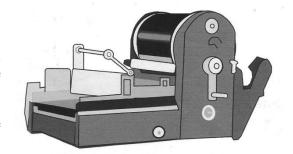


taught me by my Native American students, I mounted Prince from behind, as if escaping fast from some imagined enemy.

Teaching students in the Upward Bound English classroom I attempted to stimulate and motivate creative writing. I'd decided early in the program to make copies of good poems in free verse, as cinquains and as haiku, as well as some prose works. Making a copy was time-consuming, just as it had been in my semester of practice teaching. After I read a piece I considered above average I'd bang the keys of my typewriter with two index fingers and ribbon-type onto paper my souvenir. So that students and others could share the writing achievements, I compiled a booklet for distribution which I titled "Crème D' Croppe": Themes, Poems and Thoughts by Upward Bound People.

Duplicating machines were the predecessors of modern document-reproduction technology. Making copies was accomplished with a stencil duplicator, better known then as a mimeograph machine. It was a low cost duplicating machine that worked by forcing ink through a stencil onto paper. An assemblage of a waxed-paper stencil is placed into a typewriter and the part of the mechanism which lifts the ribbon must be disabled so that the bare, sharp type element strikes the stencil directly. The impact of the type element displaces the coating, making the tissue paper permeable to the oil-based ink. This was called "cutting a stencil." If a typing error was made, and I was pretty good at that

since I'd never learned to type, mistakes could be corrected by brushing them out with a specially formulated correction fluid, and retyping once it dried. The Gestetner Company (and others) devised various methods to make mimeo stencils more durable. Ink on paper was blue. I remember sometimes asking to use, not the mimeo, but the Gestetner. The model was a hand-cranked machine similar to the illustration at right.



Sometimes in their writing boys and girls were playful making readers laugh; other times they vented frustration, resentment and anger, in some pieces exorcizing their own personal demons. They shared Native American philosophies of life when describing culture and traditions.

#### Doris Mitchell wrote Free Verse:

The drums beat slowly but steadily they come Capturing your movements. Your dancing feet overpower you as the beat goes on.

> Brightly colored feathers flash to and fro Bells ring sharply. Singing fills the air about and around while dancers continue in a trance.

### Linda Webber's Haiku:

See into the life -Many pleasant features come Softly in our dreams.

#### Two poems from Kay Wilson:

She's a lightbulb. She shines. She's bright, She sits there saying "watt". Little squished spider Was crawling along the floor. Sorry about that.



Jeff Lake, pictured left, wrote a poem which suggested a life of nonachievement in a white man's world:

A boy sits watching the world watching the people pass going here going there doing everyday things.

To some

work is an everyday grind. They work for money to pay bills. They work hard to build muscles.

Some are cops Some are clerks

Some are smart

Some are dumb.

But a boy sits

waiting his turn at the world waiting to become one of them

What will he be?

Someone different!

Yeah – someone different, someone with thoughts of his own.

But a boy sits watching the people pass.

#### Don Williams had a similar outlook expressed in Haiku:

I walked on a path

But to nowhere did it go.
It had no meaning.



Two from Dale Wolf, pictured left:

Quietly, never saying a word *He walked away*. The dark deep forest engulfing him Never to be seen again. His time had come. This was the way.

Mean Cruel Prejudice Has no feeling White Man's society

There was Gail Lemieux's humor:

#### MY TURTLE

I had a little Turtle who couldn't lay an egg.
So I poured hot water on my little Turtle's leg.
My little Turtle hollered
And my little Turtle begged,
My gosh-darned Turtle laid
A hard-boiled egg!!

### Sharon Ford:

I wish people wouldn't look
So hard at me
When I walk down the street.
I think that just shows how
Dumb they are.
So if I see
Someone look hard at me
(and I don't know them)
I just look the other way.
And if they don't stop,
I stare back.
I am good at staring.



John Quaderer, pictured left, was a very quiet, shy, introverted Ojibwa/Chippewa boy who always chose to write about nature:

Against the rocks it hurled its body
Like roaring of lions.
Still, it can be very calm
Like the movement of a deer.

I wrote haiku about people as I saw them in the Upward Bound program. Of John I penned:

His locked tongue will speak
Only when the gentle winds
Of summer call him.



Calvin Snowball, a Winnebago/Ho-Chunk boy, pictured left, was especially fine at creating images of nature in his poetry, as seen in this fluid haiku:

The big dark gray clouds

Were northward bound to give life

To the waterfalls.

But Calvin often chose contemporary subject matter to write about, as in this cinquain which won an Upward Bound Gold Medal for Writing:

Dark.

Stokely Carmichael. Hating, rioting, demonstrating. Usually found raising hell. Me.

Of Calvin my personal haiku read:

With darkest features

He is the son of the dew
And prince of its night.



Doris Tutor, pictured left, wrote a cinquain about the whole of the Upward Bound program:

Upward Bound
New chance
Fulfilling, exciting, reaching.
Getting to meet people.
Advancement.

For my haiku of Doris I wrote:

Mischievous spirit
Of girlhood is there beneath
The soul of woman.

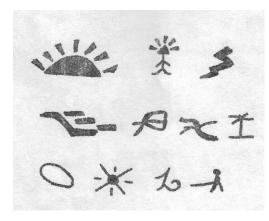
The most fascinating haiku was handed in by Linny Lemieux. It was an Ojibwa pictograph. Since I had no knowledge or understanding of picture writing, Linny kindly provided the translation for this unknowing white man's eyes. It was another instance of one of my Indian students teaching me.

Translation:

Son of man did rise

The life of the world is here

Now our people free.



As well as publishing the booklet, most of it in my own time, and which Bob Powless thought a marvelous gesture, I also assembled 16mm footage as it returned processed from Kodak, and I rehearsed in a "band" to perform in Upward Bound's end-of-eight-weeks talent show.



Pictured left is mocked-up rehearsal time on the farm, except that the band pictured really isn't the "band". Left to right: that's me in the tam o'shanter and holding an Oneida gourd flute which no one in our act ever played, Ron

Skenadore in sombrero, my brother Steve wearing the marching band hat, who happened to be visiting and wasn't in the band, Ranj LeClaire in the beanie, and Tom Oudenhoven decked in the derby, but never a band member. Dave Graf, not in the snapshot, played guitar and strummed with guitarists Ranj LeClaire and Ron Skenadore. They asked me to be their singer. It wasn't a real "band", more like a music group of just three guitarists and a tenor. Dave arranged transportation and brought the boys to the farm where we rehearsed and recorded rehearsals on tape. We played back

our experiments and made changes. The farm was perfect for rehearsal. No neighbors' eardrums were shattered by the clangers we dropped in our endeavor to make music. To this day I still have the reel-to-reel tape with our music, complete with spontaneous comments and critiques.



Drummers are, from left, Patrick Red Eagle, Louis "Bucky" Plucinski, Hilary Butler. Girl standing third from right is Doris Tudor.

The talent show was nothing short of spectacular. In addition to boys and girls singing contemporary and popular songs, several participants were traditional dress and performed cultural songs and dances.



Boys and girls singing a cappella contemporary and popular songs



Performing "La Bamba" in the Upward Bound Talent Show: Dave Graf, Me, Ron Skenadore, Ranj LeClaire



Hilary Butler, Louis "Bucky" Plucinski, Patrick Red Eagle, and me.



Patrick Red Eagle and his shirt of Ojibwe pictograms







Ron Skenadore

Mike Metoxin

Unidentified, called Wolfie

At the conclusion of the Talent Show, Doris Tudor, Doris Mitchell, and Pat "the Skunk" Connors gave me an Ojibwe name, <u>Wayaabishkiiwed ayaa makadewaa gaazhagens</u>. Phonetically, it sounded to me like, Wha hot ma aya gosh gains. Literal translation was, "White man is black cat." Rough translation was, "White man who appears as a black cat" ...in other words, "White man not be trusted." There it was, not to be trusted, all because my skin was white. Like a cat, nice to look at, nice to the touch, but a cat, well, you never know when it's going to go off its head and suddenly scratch and bite you, maybe give you some unbearable disease.

As every filmmaker is aware, the final product is always open to public scrutiny. Upward Bound's scheduled conclusion was Saturday, August 3 and the very rough cut of the program's documentary was screened in the theatre in the Fine Arts Building as close to the last day as possible so that most of the exposed footage had returned from processing. The film's rough cut meant putting together scenes of similar content; e.g., classroom shots with classroom shots, extra-curricular activities with extra-curricular, and bundling together field trips. Really, all I removed were the shots that were too dark, too light, or out of focus. Since the audience was made up of directors, staff and students, I figured everyone should have the chance to see themselves on the big screen, as in a home movie, before I took my Golden Scissors to the footage for fine editing. The film unreeled without any musical accompaniment. All sound was provided by the extemporaneous outburst of delight and chatter from the audience.

When the screening finished, Bob Powless thought it was an honest production of the eight weeks. Ada Deer jumped as if propelled by an ejector seat. She loudly condemned my film both in English and her Menominee tongue. My film was a catastrophe. It was nothing as she would have liked to have seen. In the eight weeks of the program not once had Miss Deer offered a suggestion or made a recommendation for content. In fact, my interaction with Miss Deer was minimal. Discussion was

with my boss, Bob Powless. Deer's loudest and strongest objection was her perception of favoritism I'd shown on film toward the Chippewa. Her outburst shocked everyone, especially when she publically threatened through gritted teeth to withdraw payment for my creative services because she said I was racially biased. Well, duh! Chippewa were more than half the students, the most represented tribe in the Upward Bound program. It was white man with camera ignorance. Unless the kids told me, I didn't know their tribe. What was I supposed to do before every shot? First ask each kid their tribe? I simply shot film of what looked interesting. Mr. Powless diffused the situation and squashed her threat. He assured everyone the film I shot was fine and that it would be used in public relations exercises to secure further finance for future summer Indian education programs. As the audience applauded, I saw Powless lean to Deer and whisper in her ear. Given the hard expression on her face, whether wrongly or rightly, I assumed she'd been summoned to the principal's office for a good "talking to."

Within days of the rough cut screening I completed a final edit and turned over to Bob Powless the 1200 foot Upward Bound film, its running time approximately 22 minutes. Despite Miss Deer's public outburst against my filmic depiction of the program, I was proud of my achievement, and the documentary was given its intended screenings. Bob Powless followed through well past the program's conclusion to tell me how well the film had been received.

### Chapter 55: Santa Cruz

y parents with Luann and Joann agreed to stay on the farm and look after the livestock – Prince and a dozen fluffy little ducklings – while I flew to San Francisco for 10 days. Amateur filmmaker and tape correspondent David Charles Thomas invited me to visit. Having never met David in person, I decided I'd better make a good, clean-cut impression. After all, from photos he'd seen of me when I'd won the PSA-MPD Gold Medal for *Jamie*, David only knew me as having a naked upper lip. I had my hair cut and reluctantly shaved off my moustache.

Saturday morning Dad drove me to our local Stevens Point Municipal Airport. One suitcase in hand I flew August 10 on an early morning flight, North Central Airlines 122 out of Mattson Field, three miles northeast of the central business district, to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport where I added to its exceeding 30 million passengers in 1968. My suitcase was checked through to San Francisco and I boarded United Airlines 125. This was my first big-time, trans-continental commercial flight. No sooner in the air and breakfast was served: fresh fruit cocktail, scrambled eggs with broiled Canadian style bacon, croissant roll, mainliner cheese cake, and coffee. Unfamiliar with airline procedure and what to expect, this was a whole new experience. Others may have become used to complaining about the quality of airline food, but I was perfectly happy. It was too early for me to stomach alcoholic beverages, but mixed drinks, cocktails and straight shots were available for a dollar each.



David drove 73 miles from his home in Santa Cruz to San Francisco International Airport. Meeting me in baggage collection, David apologized if it appeared he seemed somewhat unenthusiastic. He said he wasn't a morning person. I looked at my watch. It was practically noon! He worked as a projectionist at the Skyview Drive-In Theatre, its marquee pictured left with David's beloved 1963 Cadillac Fleetwood, the car he drove to meet me San Francisco.

Talk about being naive, I never realized how out of place I'd look with my smooth baby skin face in San Francisco, iconic center of the Flower Power movement. David's face was also clean-shaven, but every other man in the airport seemed to sport a beard, a moustache, or both, some rivaling Rasputin's in length. Many had grown hair over the ears or cascading past their shoulders. Some women in flowing floral fabric dresses showed, when raising arms to wave or call to others, dark hair under their arms! No sooner I grabbed the handle of my suitcase off the luggage conveyer, I decided I'd shave cheeks and chin, but no longer beneath my nose.

We did a little San Francisco sightseeing. "By the way, don't ever refer to this place as Frisco," David informed. "They hate it. It's always San Francisco." He drove from the airport to Fisherman's Wharf and asked, "Hungry for lunch?" I'd dressed well for the flight – yes, this was a time when my generation had been brought up to dress up when going anywhere – and, according to David, I was presentable for lunching at Tarantino's, founded in 1946 and next door to the oldest restaurant on the Wharf, Alioto's, since 1925. From here I had a perfect view of San Francisco's landmark, its Golden Gate Bridge, and the moment was preserved in snapshots, not one including me and the famous

bridge together. Our upstairs table overlooked the picturesque marina with its moored fishermen's boats. Outside the window was abundant sea life, including seagulls looking plaintively for a handout. That couldn't happen as we were separated by a pane of glass. Our waiter was dressed in a dinner suit. He brought complimentary sourdough bread to our table. I'd never had sourdough and fell in love with its yeasty aroma, chewy texture, and crunchy crust. I had my first bottle of Italian beer, Peroni.

I was accustomed to seeing a complete meal listed on a menu, a serve of meat or fish with vegetables, and ordering it. Here, everything on the menu was individually listed, separately priced. Since I'd never even seen swordfish on a menu in Stevens Point, that's what I ordered. Then the waiter drilled me as if playing Twenty Questions, "Would sir like a starter, perhaps a shrimp cocktail?" "Would sir care for the broccoli? Would sir like the glazed carrots? Will sir have a potato? Boiled, mashed, baked, or French fried? With butter? Sour cream? Ketchup?" David insisted I order the French fries and a bowl of mayonnaise for dipping. He said that was San Francisco's way of eating French fries, dipped in mayonnaise. Meals were brought to our table and I couldn't believe those French fries so big, thick and chunky. Dipped in the mayonnaise? How delicious was that! That every item on the menu was treated individually, the "individually" carried through to the bill. Not so much a generous "Welcome to San Francisco" or "Be my guest", I was quickly brought to my senses by David's Dutch treat.

David said he had to get home to work the Drive-In. Given his invitation to visit, I was surprised and disappointed he hadn't made arrangements for a substitute to take over in the projection booth. He changed nothing in his routine to accommodate a guest. His job started around 6:00 p.m. and he took me along; that meant a routine diet of take-out food from the Drive-In's refreshment bar. Movies



started at dusk, often around 8:00 to 8:30 p.m. Double-features included previews of coming attractions, promotional clips and slides, a cartoon and a short subject. Screenings finished after 1:00 a.m. With film rewinding and general clean up, David didn't clock off until 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. There was nothing for me to do except watch the same movies night after night. For a guy whose travels only went as far as the central Midwest and Missouri, here on the west coast I spent too much valuable nighttime wearing headphones, pictured left, and being lulled to sleep by the soundtracks of 1968 first-runs *Dark of the Sun* and *Guns for San Sebastian*. David's nocturnal duties meant he slept up to twelve hours, until 2:00 or 3:00 p.m.!

Santa Cruz, by the way, is Spanish for Holy Cross and it's on the northern edge of Monterey Bay and home to the University of Southern California. David's home was Space 102 in the Bay Mobile Home Park on 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue, pictured right. I have always been a morning person and was up and out of bed by 7:00 a.m. I had to tiptoe in the trailer and try not to make noise opening cupboards and a drawer for breakfast cereal, a bowl, and spoon. I always closed the refrigerator door gently after



returning the milk carton. If I made toast while David noisily grazzawed in his bed, I always hoped the ping of the finished toast popping up didn't disrupt his deep rem sleep. David made no

recommendations of local "must sees" and left me to my own invention to sightsee and seek adventure. It was August and previous experience had taught me that August was supposed to be summertime. Santa Cruz, however, was cool, gray, and mostly cloudy. I wore a jacket as I ventured straight down 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Steamers Lane alone to see the surfers; to a mid-westerner where no one rode in anything but a boat on Lake Michigan, and whose familiarity with knowledge of the ocean extended only to TV's "Gidget", or Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon in *Beach Blanket Bingo*, this first-hand observation still looked and felt like a moviegoer's fantasy world. It was an exciting eye-opener. Steamer's Lane isn't a beach, but the famous surf break in front of the lighthouse. Being summer, it was hard to see what all the fuss was about because big waves only swell in winter. According to legend, this is where the sport was introduced to the U.S. in 1885 by three Hawaiian



princes. The beach was full of kids enjoying their last days of summer vacation. Only 13 and14 year old boys, none of the big boys of the surf, rode the waves. Explaining that I was from Wisconsin and had never seen a surfboard except in pictures, I asked a boy to pose holding his surfboard above his head and he obliged, pictured left. I never asked his name. He may have thought I was a bit cracked. His attitude silently inferred, "You've never seen a surfboard?" For this California kid, riding a surfboard was as normal as breathing when you wake up, something he did any nice day he wanted, and it was nothing to get excited about until winter's big wave rolled in and curled and he was on it. Surf shops were everywhere and I was fascinated. After all, there were no surf shops in Stevens Point, or Milwaukee for that matter.

So I wouldn't interrupt his guarded schedule of work and sleep, David arranged for his elderly parents to entertain me for a day with a drive to San Jose, about 32 miles or 39 minutes up the road from Santa Cruz. I wish I could remember their names as they were so friendly and enthusiastic. They took me to see Mission San Juan Bautista, pictured right, which had been used by Alfred Hitchcock in making *Vertigo* (1958). The bell tower, a set piece in the film, doesn't exist as a structure of the mission. It was specially constructed for the shoot and removed upon completion. The mission has been there since its founding in 1797, and the San Andreas Fault runs along the base of the hill







When I visited, garlic fields surrounded the mission. Who'd have thought the pungent bulb would impart such a deliciously aromatic fragrance?

In a garden adjacent to the mission was a tasting room for Almadén, a vineyard founded in 1852 and named for a local quicksilver mine. A Mexican-American was my host, pictured left in the Spanish hacienda-decor tasting room. He guided me with great pleasure through his list of white wines. I was attracted to Gewurztraminer with its spicy bouquet and unusual, medium dry flavor. Other wines were Johannisberg Riesling, Grey Riesling, Sylvaner, Dry Semillon Sauterne, Pinot Blanc, Mountain

Rhine, and a budget-priced Mountain White, a blend of Chablis and Sauterne. I especially enjoyed a New Mountain Nectar Vin Rosé. I was encouraged to taste vintage and non-vintage Champagnes.

Another morning and the sun blazed. On my own I ambled down to the northern part of Monterrey Bay and Natural Bridges State Beach to see the naturally occurring mudstone bridges, the arches formed by wave erosion over a million years ago. In 1968 only two of the original three arches stood and I handed my Kodak Instamatic to another sightseer and asked that he snap my photo as I stood framed by the arch, pictured left. (This arch collapsed in 1980.) I grubbed around in the tide pools admiring alien-looking sea anemones, sea urchins, little fish, starfish, mussels and clams. I looked for pretty shells, anything to souvenir to show off when I returned to my farm in saltwater-free Wisconsin.



I had the feeling that David didn't know how to host a guest. However, and it may have been due to my saying how I was limited seeing things only on foot, over two afternoons David used the 3 or 4 hours from waking to working to show me Santa Cruz and some of its nearby attractions. Instead of driving the Cadillac, David liked zipping around locally in his Volkswagen.



David was working on a new film, *Rails in the Redwoods*, and his subject was a steam railroad at Roaring Camp & Big Trees Narrow Gauge Railroad. He took me to "his" movie set in Felton. The train ran up steep grades to the top of Bear Mountain, a distance of 3.25 miles, and travelled through a sky-scraping forest of towering majestic Redwood trees. The engine pulling the train was the Dixiana built in 1912, pictured left with the engineer and myself. Because David had made friends with railroad staff, I rode with the engineer. Tourists crammed the bench seats of the yellow, open air passenger cars. Black smoke belched from the stack. It was a slow climb allowing plenty of time to admire the Redwoods, majestic trees standing up to 378 feet tall and indigenous to the coastal range of California. Huge trees, growing close together, made us feel so small. Before going to the Drive-In David showed me excellent rough footage he shot in Felton.

Pictured in movies and in books, or found growing in the Milwaukee Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (known locally as The Domes), a palm tree is a scarce commodity in the Midwest. My

excitement couldn't be contained when I saw row upon row of palms lining streets as ordinary as elm trees lining streets in Milwaukee. I asked David to park his car and take a picture of me with a palm tree. "Oh, what for? There's so many of the things around here, it'd be wasting film."

David didn't get it! Here I was from the Midwest, just a big kid somewhere as strange and stimulating as being on another planet. Wide-eyed and bushy-tailed, I was almost giddy looking at a wonderful new world so completely different from anything I'd known. Failing to see things from my perspective, David almost grudgingly acquiesced, parked his beige Volksy, and snapped me partway up the trunk of a palm tree, pictured right.



Because I was a college graduate, or maybe because I was heading for my first year teaching, David felt I should see Santa Cruz's two schools of higher education. First was Cabrillo College in Aptos, a two year community college. From Cabrillo we looked at the grounds of the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC). It was just three years old, having been founded in 1965. Surrounded by gorgeous redwoods, the campus overlooked Monterrey Bay and was filled with the sight and sounds of a nature walk. With hilly paths and shortcuts and spread out over 2000 acres, there didn't appear to be a center. There were old buildings from a bygone era including a wagon stable and mining shacks from the gold rush era. With my background in drama I especially enjoyed the Greek amphitheatre constructed from the side of a hill. An actor didn't need to project the voice to be heard. The open-air semi-circular venue was an acoustically vibrant performance space. I tested my voice from the stage. David, in a seating area at the back, said I only needed to speak in my normal voice for him to clearly hear every word. What I had learned in university as theory had now become practical experience.

David asked if I'd like to meet David and Donnie, the stars of *Big Iron*. Following our campus explorations, we called in on the home of the cub scouts. We met their Mom, their sister, their dog, and the two movie stars. Pictured right is Donnie, myself, and David. If you look closely, you'll see early regrowth of my moustache.

Wednesday night at the Drive-In I put up with my 5<sup>th</sup>, and what seemed relentless screenings of *Dark of the Sun* and *Guns for San Sebastian*. I put on the headphones, paid little attention to what action there was on the



screen, and fell sound asleep. David's routine was becoming tedious. I'd rather have been doing something else. David said, before lumbering off to bed for twelve hours, he had Friday and Saturday off and we could do whatever I wanted. That still meant I'd face five more days figuring what to do on my own and 5 more nights of the Drive-In.

I wasn't having much fun. I wanted to go home. Walking along Pacific Avenue alone Thursday morning with my airline ticket tucked in my wallet, I came across what I was looking for, a travel agency. It was 11:00 a.m. I had my ticket rewritten for an August 16, Friday afternoon departure. No charge was made to change my ticket. When David rolled out of the sack near to 2:00 p.m. and asked what I wanted to do tomorrow, I said I wanted to see Haight-Ashbury before flying home at 1:00 p.m. David didn't seem at all surprised and I didn't invent a reason for going home earlier than next week. "Yeah," David said, "I guess you got things to do before starting your new teaching job." To my surprise, David said I should pack my suitcase and we'd go immediately to San Francisco, do some shopping, and stay overnight with his friend Brian Lane. David had several long play copies of the soundtrack to *How the West Was Won* and he gave me one for a present. On the drive to San Francisco we stopped in the picture postcard towns of Carmel and Monterrey.

The intersection of Haight and Ashbury Streets was known simply as Haight-Ashbury, the district of the origin of hippie counterculture ideals, drugs and music. This neighborhood offered a concentrated gathering spot for hippies to create a social experiment that would soon spread throughout the nation. The entire hippie community had easy access to drugs. The neighborhood's fame reached its peak as it became the haven for a number of the top psychedelic rock performers and groups of the time like Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Janis Joplin. When David and I drove through the district in his Cadillac, it was already into decline due to an influx of hard drugs, psychedelic drugs like LSD, and a lack of police presence. Words of Scott MacKenzie's 1967 hit single and generational anthem "San Francisco" were "If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to wear some flowers in your hair. You're gonna meet some gentle people there." Of what I'd seen reported on TV of San Francisco, the most publicized location for hippie fashions, none of this matched the gritty reality of Haight-

Ashbury. I was culture shocked. Flower power was a crowded collage of long-haired people in filthy, faded, worn clothing. No one appeared to be doing anything other than mingling and playing outdoors. In the stale odor of faeces and urine was a permanent cloud of sweet-smelling marijuana. Toddlers and prepubescent children staggered naked in the gutters or stood unsteadily in the street oblivious to traffic; some urinated as nature called with no care for how or where it landed.

David parked his car in a safe place and said we'd go shopping. He encouraged me to buy some clothes, add the hippie fashion to my wardrobe. I wanted the Nehru jacket, a hip-length tailored coat with a mandarin collar, popularized by the Beatles and James Bond villains Dr. No, and Ernst Stavro Blofeld in *You Only Live Twice* (1967). It was apparel worn by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India from 1947 – 1964. I was uncomfortable walking the street and rubbing shoulders with people who smelled like they'd never heard of deodorant. In a dope daze some mumbled incoherently through tears and sniffles. Others slumped asleep in doorways or strummed a guitar while singing gently to themselves and for all passersby to hear. Wiped from my mind that there'd be some gentle people there, I was fearful my camera might be ripped from my hands or shoved up my nostrils by some drug-fuelled freak. I was asked if I wanted some "stuff, man", if I wanted to "buy and get high", but I didn't use drugs, main reason being I might like it and, for many reasons, couldn't afford it. We found a clean clothing shop and I emerged a few dollars lighter with a green Nehru jacket, white bell-bottom pants, and decorative necklaces known as love beads.

What I expected of Haight-Ashbury and what I experienced were poles apart. Justified or not, I jumped to my own conclusions. I was not impressed with the sounds, sights, and especially the smells of the flower people. I left Haight-Ashbury disappointed and angry. I was angry with the hippies who appeared to have neglected their children, who may have encouraged their tykes to disappear into drugs by example or simply through second-hand inhalation. I came away from my brief tour thinking hippies were a con for laziness; they were unemployable drop-outs. Peace and love was a con for, "I'm too shit-scared to serve and maybe get my ass shot off in Vietnam."



marry original film and magnetic film sound into optical sound prints. In the morning, and wearing the clothes I intended flying in, Brian took a photo of David and me using David's Nikkormat. Pictured right, we are admiring one of David's trophies won for *Big Iron* with another soundtrack on which Brian had worked.

We spent the night with David's friend Brian Lane, pictured left on the couch with me in my newly-purchased Nehru jacket, white flares, and love beads. I can't remember the name of the newspaper we're holding. I picked it up in Haight-Ashbury for free. Its front page shows a naked toddler holding an American flag in his hand and mouth, with the headline *Let It All Hang Out* in psychedelic lettering. My moustache is more prominent in this snapshot. Brian had been instrumental in working the soundtrack for *Jamie*. He transferred the reel to reel tape soundtrack onto magnetic sound film so that Palmer Productions could



Friday David drove me down one of the steepest streets in San Francisco. Lombard Street impressed me as the most crooked street I'd ever been on with its one-block section of eight hairpin turns. The street is a hazard to pedestrians used to shallow inclines. The crooked block is one-way and paved with red bricks. A sign's recommended speed was 5 miles hour. I took a photo out the front window of David's Cadillac, but it didn't show the steepness nor curviness of the street. We ended up in the Telegraph Hill neighborhood where feral parrots squawked and flapped making it their haven. We also drove slowly down Filbert Street. At the intersection of Powell and Market Streets David parked and I watched the cable car turnaround. I'd liked to have taken a ride, but the line to buy tickets was too long.

David said he knew of the best record shop in San Francisco, a place which sold brand new, never played, still sealed remainders. He drove to an unremarkable shop where every vinyl long play album was priced at one dollar. I spent the better part of an hour flipping through stacks of categorized albums, thumbing through titles of movie soundtracks, rock music, even classical. I could easily have loaded my suitcase and been charged for going over weight, but I restrained myself and bought albums of music with which I was familiar, including the soundtrack for *Guns for San Sebastian*. One album I knew nothing about, but which couldn't be ignored was oddly titled *Ultimate Spinach*. It was an American psychedelic rock band formed in 1967 and this was their debut album released in January 1968.

Shortly before noon David dropped me off at the airport. He said we didn't need to buy lunch because I'd get lunch on the plane. He didn't stay around to see me off. I made my own way to the ticket counter and the departure gate and by 1:00 p.m. was in the air aboard United Airlines 126 bound for Chicago. We weren't served lunch. It was called luncheon. Princess Salad with Italian dressing, it was made of torn spinach leaves and torn leaf lettuce, toasted sesame seeds, and Parmesan cheese. We had a choice of Broiled Club Steak (bone-in strip steak similar to a T-bone steak, but none of the tenderloin) or Braised Chicken Roll Cordon Bleu (Chicken breast stuffed with ham and Swiss cheese). One side was McCaire potatoes. They are baked potatoes; flesh scooped out and mashed with butter and seasonings, then refrigerated and fried as flattened balls. The other side was buttered mixed vegetables, my guess frozen Bird's Eye. Dessert was something with which I'd become familiar at the PSA Convention, a Nesselrode Mousse Chantilly. In Chicago I made my connection with a North Central Airlines flight 455 to Stevens Point.

I'd have thought my early departure would have been considered a rude or thankless gesture, but David never did. We continued to correspond via reel to reel tape letters, and we exchanged prints of snapshots taken. Unlike the powerfully evocative lyric of Andy Williams' ballad, I did not leave my heart in San Francisco, much less Santa Cruz.

# Chapter 56: Mr. Lare's Farm

A Freshman at WSU-Stevens Point

Dennis

od doesn't give you the people you want, he gives you the people you need. To help you, to hurt you, to leave you, to love you and to make you the person you were meant to be.

-- Anonymous

From San Francisco via Chicago and into Stevens Point, I called the farm. Mom and Dad met me at the Municipal Airport Friday evening, August 16. They said they had a wonderful time taking it easy while I was away and I'd discovered, just as had Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), there's no place like home. My folks headed for home Saturday morning. Santa Cruz vacation ending earlier than planned, I saw ahead an open, uninterrupted weekend, a perfect time to set up the board-mounted16mm rewind arms and splicer on the kitchen table. Catering only for myself, I could clutter the kitchen with lengths of film, cut and assemble the footage which would become the documentary on what it was like being a freshman at Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point.

You'd think the world had enough of a cancerous tumor with the War in Vietnam, but no. A new bruise was formed. 1968's turmoil reared another of its ugly heads August 20-21 as the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia with somewhere between 200,000 and 750,000 Warsaw Pact troops (the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland), 6,500 tanks with 800 planes. It was the biggest operation in Europe since World War II ended. The Soviet Union, under the leadership of the dour Leonid Brezhnev, put an end to the "Prague Spring." Reformist Alexander Dubĉek had made a strong attempt to grant additional rights to citizens including loosening restrictions on the media, speech, and travel. The decentralization of administrative authority was not received well by the Soviets. A spirited non-violent resistance was mounted throughout the country, i.e., turning street signs which caused an entire invasion force from Poland to be routed back out of the country after a day's wandering, while another force marched around in a circle. The Soviet military had predicted that it would take four days to subdue the country. The resistance held out for eight months and was only resolved by diplomatic stratagems. There were sporadic acts of violence, but no military resistance. Czechoslovakia remained under the iron thumb of the Soviet dictatorship and thus began a period of enforced and oppressive "normalization." Brezhnev invaded because it was felt that the spread of liberalization would cause unrest in its other satellite countries, and the oppression of communism prevailed. Americans felt uneasy hearing of open Soviet aggression in Czechoslovakia.

More upheaval began August 22 in Chicago, Illinois after Mayor Richard Daley opened the 1968 Democratic National Convention. While the convention stuttered haltingly toward nominating Hubert H. Humphrey for U.S. President, and Edmund Muskie for Vice-President, the city's police attempted to enforce an 11 o' clock curfew. Anti-war demonstrations were widespread, but generally peaceful. Over the next two days tensions increased and violence eventuated. By most accounts, on Wednesday evening, August 28, under orders from Mayor Daley the Chicago police took action against crowds of demonstrators. Police beat some marchers unconscious and sent at least 100 to emergency rooms while arresting 175. Unprovoked police brutality grabbed the headlines. Walter Cronkite of C BS News commentated, "A democratic convention is about to begin in a police state. There just doesn't be any other way to say it." The following day Mayor Daley held a press conference to explain the police action. As if missing a few buttons off his shirt he famously explained, "The policeman isn't there to create disorder; the policeman is there to preserve disorder."





By Friday, August 23, I completed editing the University's film, mounted it on a 1200' reel, and placed it in a metal can. As luck would have it, or not, Ranj LeClaire and Mike Metoxen, pictured left, drove from Green Bay to visit. I must have made a big impression on the Upward Bound boys. They wanted to keep in touch and a phone

call never was good enough. I wished they'd have called first instead of pulling up out of the blue in my driveway. I had to deliver the film to my boss, Mr. Jim Vickerstaff, and I invited the boys to Old Main. I had an ulterior motive. Ranj had a license and a car and he'd save me the time of using my thumb to hitch a ride into town.

Mr. Vickerstaff didn't object to my bringing guests. In fact, he considered it was darn good luck. "The boys will be looking for a school to attend after they graduate high school," Mr. Vickerstaff said. "They're our target audience." We walked to a room where a 16mm projector and screen had been set up. "Put the film on," he said, "and we'll hear what your boys think." Even if the film had been garbage, Mike and Ranj would still have said it was good! Showing student life on campus through the eyes of a freshman was my intention. I accomplished my purpose. Given what my film showed, the boys said they'd love to go to school here. "The film is so much better than I ever expected," Mr. Vickerstaff praised. Impressed and pleased with my work he commented on particular scenes and shots he thought especially telling. "The freshman boy, you first see him a wide-eyed green kid and he develops into a student who fits in, who appears to really enjoy his school life." We returned to Mr. Vickerstaff's office, the film in its can held tightly in both his hands. He wrote my final check. "It takes a long time to make a good film," said Mr. Vickerstaff as he placed the check in my hand, "and you have achieved everything we wanted, and more."

On Saturday, August 24, again the world shuddered. Americans had become somewhat complacent about atomic bombs and shelters after the 1950s, but now thought again. Maybe building a fallout shelter in the back yard wasn't so far-fetched after all. France detonated its first atmospheric thermonuclear weapon, a hydrogen bomb codenamed Canopus, over Fangataufa atoll in Polynesia. Along with its neighboring atoll, Mururoa, it would become the site of approximately 200 nuclear bomb tests. This test made France the fifth country to test a thermonuclear device after the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China.

The first day of school was Tuesday, August 27. That is, all the other schools in Stevens Point welcomed students except for mine, Benjamin Franklin Jr. High, a brand new building still under construction. So much looked unfinished. Nothing outside resembled a landscaped campus. It was mounds of dirt with some concreted curbs. The school's inside was strewn with workmen's saw horses, tools, plaster boards and broken chunks of plaster, unconnected bundles of wiring, pink fiberglass insulation, tape measures; here and around every corner dust clouds in the air, on the floor were evident. It was organized chaos. An assurance was given that not all but most classrooms would be ready when students arrived Thursday, August 29.

Of 73 members of faculty, no one lived near my farm. First day of school I hitchhiked to 2000 Polk Street. And the next day... and the next. It wasn't unusual to see a hitchhiker in a college town, but this hitchhiker was in dress shoes, dress slacks, white shirt, tie, and sport coat. That was the uniform of the day for male teachers. My thumbing took me down Route 2 to join with Highway 51 and straight on to Polk Street. If I couldn't convince some kind soul to go a bit out of their way to pick me up from the farm, I might have to ride the school bus. No chance of backing out of going to school because I hadn't the convenience of a ride. I'd signed my contract and returned it sometime between April 26 and my April 30 birthday. I was employed as a 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Teacher in the

Junior High School for a term of 9½ months for the sum of \$6000.00. In addition to the contract sum I'd be paid \$50 for coaching and judging Forensics.

Reporting to school, it looked like my media publicity over "infringement of personal rights" and having to shave my moustache almost a year ago paid off. I was welcomed with a firm handshake from the superintendent of schools and he had nothing to say about my moustache. Two other men had fuzzy growths on their faces and nothing was said to them either. Almost simultaneously I met the school principal, Mr. Bob Norton. He had difficulty with my Polish surname, found it a bit of a tongue-twister. I thought that amusing, given the high population of Polish folk in Stevens Point and students' surnames Konopacki, Wnuk, Sikorski, Cisewski, Mrozinski, Kiedrowski, et al. "I understand you went by a shorter nickname at Jacobs," said Mr. Norton, as if in possession of some great knowledge. "Mr. Lare," was it? I nodded. "OK, then, Mr. Lare it is."

My reputation had preceded me. Everyone, it seemed, knew I was the creative filmmaker with the collection of trophies and certificates honoring my ability. One new teacher just out of WSU-SP, Miss Priss (not her real name), even remarked that I looked every bit the celebrity. What qualities does such a person possess? An impressive pair of ears? A mellifluous voice? An ability to burp on cue? I'd no idea what she meant. Others were aware of my success in practice teaching at P. J. Jacobs High. There were some, I thought, who bet all I knew was movies and maybe didn't have the sophistication and nous to teach English. It was odd. With staff only in attendance those two initial days, I was treated like a greenhorn farm boy, his first time in the big city, by experienced members of the English department. Know what I mean? It was as though I'd crept out of the woods after being suckled by wolves, a hairy toddler who didn't know anything and who really didn't belong on their playground without express permission. Offices were shared among three to four teachers.

Assigned to an office still smelling of fresh plaster and paint, the colleague I met first was the affable Miss Virginia, "call me "Ginny," Brockman. She was casual, not much older than me, was pear-shaped, and wore clothing which didn't seem to fit the norm for a teacher. Given it was 1968, her garb suggested San Francisco opportunity shop, rummage sale bargain hunting, or hand-me-down comfort, almost frumpish. Though unmarried, the image presented was an archetypically nurturing and maternal woman full of emotional and spiritual understanding. She came across to me as an earth mother. We became instant friends.

Another with whom I became friends taught History. We struck a mutual chord while sitting in the auditorium during staff indoctrination. Listening to our principal Bob Norton drone on and on about the great challenges we faced in a brand new, as yet unfinished school, we happened to catch each other's knowing glance. In that instant of understanding we both sort of rolled back our eyes and smiled intentionally, as if silently saying, "Cut the crap, Bob, and let's just get on with the job." Coffee and cookies followed and we made a beeline to introduce ourselves. He was Anton Anday who'd emigrated from Hungary to the U.S. with his parents sometime after the 1956 revolution against the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and its Soviet-imposed policies. Some 200,000 Hungarians fled as refugees. The defeat of the Hungarian revolution was one of the darkest moments of the Cold War. Anton was about the same age as me and, like me, a first year teacher but who spoke with a slight east European accent. He loved the United States for its freedom of choice, its opportunity for all, and had no truck with any form of repression.

Mrs. Aggie Know-It-All (not her real name) and Mrs. Tam Mixer (not her real name) made no bones about informing me of their vast experience. It was as though they broke their arms patting themselves on the back. Both women had been teaching for a long, long time and, of course, they had more answers than Funk & Wagnalls, their do's and teaching don'ts generously shoveled into my lap... as if they chose to ignore I'd already learned the up-to-date theory and lesson planning in Education classes. Everything we were expected to do in the classroom, they had done before and, according to them, very, very successfully. No input, no new ideas were needed or wanted from the new kid lest I upset their applecart. Mr. McCaig had warned us neophytes about teachers out there who would claim to have been teaching for 10 years, but it would be the same thing year after year. In

other words, they'd spent 10 years in a classroom, every year using the same lesson plans day after day; all they'd ever taught was the same one year rote over ten years. Not 10 years experience as they'd claimed, but just one! These two chin musicians were such self-proclaimed classroom experts, they ordered me to duties too menial for their self-appointed and highly-ranked rung on the educator's ladder. I was the office rookie and so I did what I was told, a conditioned response learned early in childhood when Dziadzia, or any person in a senior position, said, "Do this. Do that." You just did this and that without question because that's what you did. I unpacked sealed boxes of new textbooks, counted and mounted them onto book shelves I'd earlier been told to dust, you know, with one of those things with feathers that just moved the dust off one place to another.

My schedule was four classes, one study hall, and a free period between each. All four English classes were made up of, in the terminology of the day, slow learners. Stories about my success as a practice teacher in motivating slow learners had been made known. My 1<sup>st</sup> hour class was 28 girls. I was surprised when Mrs. Know-It-All offered to trade with me for her 1<sup>st</sup> hour advanced English class. Smiling through her teeth she said I needed at least one break in my new career and her advanced class was 24 boys and 4 girls. Mrs. Know-It-All said tellingly, "We hear you're very good managing difficult boys. I'm aware of a couple of real cork-offs who'll demand every bit of your attention." She went on to say the class included some of the smartest 9<sup>th</sup> graders in the school, and God help me if I faced angry parents. I didn't know if she was giving me a gift or a curse. I asked, "How are these class lists made up?" Mrs. Know-It-All admitted she didn't know, just said it was all done by a machine outside the school. Pure and simple, it was a large IBM computer taking up the space of an entire room with its reels whirring, rectangular-holed cards shuffling into decks, and the job's done in seconds.

As a human being I was wary stepping into my first class, but I entered advanced 9<sup>th</sup> grade English with an air of confidence; I was a teacher who knew what he was doing and I was welcomed by bubbly, enthusiastic, well-behaved students. I wrote my surname on the blackboard and announced that, to save time, they could call me Mr. Lare. It was a wise decision. As I got to know my students and they got to know me, whenever I asked a question, many students shot up their hands to answer, some simultaneously calling out, "Mr. Lare." The nickname was more convenient and immediate than the mouthful of Mr. Klobukowski.

Some might say it was precociousness, the behavior of a potato half-baked, or being heard as well as being seen. I found that 9<sup>th</sup> grade Jr. High kids were very open and never afraid to express themselves truthfully. I always wanted my classroom to be a place where students could come in and have a good time while learning. I tried to make every lesson enjoyable and entertaining, never a drudge. Some staff and most students sometimes referred to me as a nut. It was a noun of pleasant affection. According to some staff, this is just what was needed in the classroom to keep students interested, motivated and, in the process, become educated.

Teachers were required to present the same lessons at the same time and within a prescribed time period. Theoretically time was saved and tidily arranged. Faculty meetings were easily managed when class progress was discussed because everyone was on the same page. Mrs. "So Much More Experienced than Me" judged all class progress based on the performances of her select elite, so-called 9th grade brains, and that's how teaching topics in the schedule were set. There might be two 35 minute classes devoted to teaching noun clusters, 2½ classes for creative writing emanating out of 1½ class times of a springboard short story writing workshop, followed with 9 classes devoted to public speaking. My advanced class easily kept up with the program. My underachievers couldn't. I had practical reasons for not subscribing to the rigidity of a tightly scheduled dosage of lessons. Concluding with only two classes teaching noun clusters gave my kids as much grasp of the concept as a walker on a tightrope smeared with melted butter. I needed to backtrack and repeat, give my tightrope walkers a net, until things made a modicum of sense. Of course this led to disagreements, the occasional to-ing and fro-ing with my department head often ending in stalemate and finger-pointing. "You must stick to the schedule or you won't give your students what's required." I might

give them what's required in the schedule, but my kids wouldn't learn anything. I made adjustments in the schedule to suit the learning ability of my students.

In study hall I had to be someone very different from my classroom. With just under 30 kids in each English class I could occasionally afford to be a nut, and comfortably revert to the role of disciplinarian when required to control classroom behavior. The study hall had a population of 165 antsy, squirming, pencil-tapping, restless-legged 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Most had the concentration span of a house plant. To keep order and quiet, I rarely smiled. I imagined myself a Gestapo officer posing rigidly behind a desk at the head of the room, or shoulders-back stomach-in strutting up and down aisles in jackboots, but not the amusing image of "Hogan's Heroes" General Burkhalter. My acting experience created an effective persona and I rarely had a problem.

At the very start of the school year there was a blonde, blue-eyed boy in my 10<sup>th</sup> hour 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class. Although standing 5 foot 8 inches, the same height as me, he appeared taller because he was thin. He wasn't on my class list and, after I asked his name, added it and marked him present for two days. Then he disappeared for the next three. I inquired in the Guidance Department as to the boy's whereabouts and Mrs. Alice Krembs (related to the organist Bob Krembs with whom I worked at St. Stephen's Catholic Church – unsure if she was a wife or a sister) said he should never have been in my class, that he had not been promoted and, as an example to others, had been held back in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. His record showed he had cut class too many times and was considered lazy. What the boy had done instead of attending 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes was to make up his own 9<sup>th</sup> grade schedule and then attend the classes he wanted including Anton Anday's History class. He was Dennis Alakson.

Anton cared about his students as much as I did and we talked about Dennis. Together we made an appointment to see our principal and the guidance counselor. We learned Dennis had no father in the home. The impressionable 14 year old had a year older brother, Ray, serving time in Wales<sup>1</sup>. We weren't told why Ray was in the detention center and, as far as we were concerned, the reason didn't matter. Anton had said Dennis showed up in his class, but made no special overture to attract his attention, whereas in my class Dennis made sure he attracted attention with his gestures of "come to my desk and help me." It was thought that Dennis' choosing my class may have been his way of sending a message, that he saw something about me he liked. Mrs. Krembs suggested that whatever my influence was with Dennis might also benefit Ray when he was discharged and re-entered Stevens Point society. With some persuasion and convincing on mine and Anton's part, we managed to reschedule Dennis into 9<sup>th</sup> grade for a nine week probation period, the responsibility of success or failure wholly in Dennis' hands. Mrs. Alakson was called, told what was happening, and Guidance encouraged her to support the decision on offer. She did without hesitation.

The next day Dennis was invited into a meeting with his 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, Anton, the principal, and me. He now clearly saw that nine people were interested in his future. Dennis was "promoted" to my 3<sup>rd</sup> hour English and Anton's 4<sup>th</sup> hour History classes. Told of his probation period and what it meant, Dennis knew if he made the grade, he could stay in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. As the meeting disbanded Mr. Norton told Dennis that it had been me who engineered his move into 9<sup>th</sup> grade. As Dennis left the meeting, a carpenter wouldn't have been able to chisel away his beaming smile nor a sawhorse get in the way of his confident lanky strut down the corridor. Some of his former teachers said this was the best thing that ever happened to Dennis, that someone had at last taken an interest in him. School Guidance encouraged the relationship and Mrs. Krembs called Mrs. Alakson in to see her son and to meet me. She was asked if she'd be willing to accept my position of trust in offering myself as a role model for her son. Mrs. Alakson expressed her gratitude that Dennis had found someone he could look up to with respect. "Lord only knows he needs someone to point him in the right direction."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It was formally known as the Ethan Allen School for Boys, but everyday conversation just called it Wales. It was a reform school in Delafield, Waukesha County, Wisconsin, and a suburb of Milwaukee (although the mailing address was in nearby Wales, Wisconsin) which was operated in a former tuberculosis sanatorium from April 1959 until June 2011 by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

Evidently Dennis wanted to find out something about this teacher who'd expressed an interest in him, and he did. Labeled a troublemaker and a shirker because he hadn't done homework, hadn't done well in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, in this instance Dennis had done his homework to ask me pertinent questions. Friday of school's first week in September Dennis just happened to be in the library and casually bumped into me, so to speak; he hemmed and hawed before asking questions about my living on a farm and owning a horse. And then just like that, Dennis asked if he could come out to the farm and ride my horse. I did my mathematics: Nice kid + good horse = movie. I invited Dennis and he found his way to the farm early Saturday morning, September 7.

A favorite piece of classical American music is the film score and suite for orchestra, *The Red Pony*, by composer Aaron Copeland for the Lewis Milestone film of the same name. Much of the music sounds like authentic folk music, but Copeland has asserted that his melodies were original. The score is deeply evocative. The movements of the suite are "Morning on the Ranch," "The Gift," "Dream March and Circus Music," "Walk to the Bunkhouse," "Grandfather's Story," and "Happy Ending." I listened several times to my soundtrack LP Friday evening and decided to shoot scenes which could be accompanied by excerpts from "The Gift" and "Happy Ending." My intention was to shoot an unscripted, make-it-up-as-we-go-along atmospheric mood picture about a boy and his horse. In other words, I was wanted to make a home movie: nothing more, nothing less! In class before the Saturday shoot I observed Dennis closely, but without making it obvious. Dennis was a good-looking boy; shy and quiet, his nature presenting as that of an innocent. He was head-down reserved in my class, rarely contributing to discussion or raising his hand to ask a question. He'd peek at me from beneath a blonde forelock and smile furtively, his "let's not draw attention" attempt to secretly make contact. When he'd concentrate and write, his tongue lolled from his mouth, sometimes with his mouth slightly agape, at other times with the tongue comfortably nestled between his lips. Occasionally he'd retract his tongue before flicking his head to move the forelock from his eye. I had hoped to capture the real Dennis on film as I saw him without drawing his attention to his involuntary traits.

Children can be natural actors and Dennis just happened to be one I was lucky enough to find in my classroom. Dennis' mother drove him to the farm very early in the morning and she'd return to pick him up for supper. Dennis was oblivious to my idea of making a movie. I showed him the camera and asked that, no matter what happened, he never look into the camera or stop doing whatever he was doing until, that is, he heard me say' "Cut." This was the first instance Dennis knew we were going to shoot a film. He didn't seem at all fazed by it, just took it in stride. My manner wasn't directorial. I gave instructions for what I wanted to see in a gentle, low key voice. I think the only important question I asked of Dennis was, "Can you ride a horse?" He assured me he had. "Good," I thought, not bothering to ask if he even knew how to saddle a horse, and further reasoned, "Should make for good footage when he tries to get on the horse."

Prince was his always gentle cooperative self and Dennis could lead him with or without a halter. The spare storyline of the film shows Dennis waking after sleeping in the hay. Sunrise was accomplished visually by rolling back a door, the morning sun slowly bathing Dennis in light, an enthusiastic Ubu

doing what a dog does to help his master wake. Dennis grabs a rope and swings from the hayloft. With pitchfork he "cleans", then clumsily feeds Prince a few strands of hay. He leads the horse outside the barn and briefly brushes the mane. Toting an empty bucket Dennis runs to the pump and partly fills his bucket with water. He bridles Prince and Ubu does his bit to play with the reins. Through the viewfinder I saw the look in Prince's eyes which suggested a private horsey laugh. Dennis walks behind the horse and, surprisingly, mounted from the rear. Dennis struggled to pull his body up onto its back. Saddle? No, he could ride bareback, just as I did.





All through his actions, Dennis' mouth was agape and, for the most, his tongue lolled, pictured left and right in 16mm frame enlargements. From an awkward walk, then into a iarring trot, Dennis encourages Prince into a gentle canter. By means of setting the camera different positions and angles, I various



Dennis work Prince, but never succeeding to rev him into anything resembling a full gallop.

The final fun scene shows Dennis mounting Prince from the left side. Instead of sitting smartly, his continued move slid his body over the horse and onto the ground. Ubu slobbered his face and Dennis burst into a huge laugh. That was the best shot on which to end the film. Dennis, being himself, never had to work hard to charm. Before the day ended I no longer addressed Dennis by his formal name. I called him by the more affectionate diminutive Denny, my way of showing how pleased I was with him. In the classroom, however, his name was always Dennis. I imagined having captured images showing a very happy boy, and I'll bet some of that happiness resulted from his knowing he was one on one with no one else to steal attention.

In about a week the film was returned from Kodak processing. It wasn't everything I had hoped to see. I'd forgotten to use an 85B orange filter to change the tungsten film for outdoor use. The cool blue cast to the film meant I'd made a mistake, as in misuse or non use of filter. However, I thought it gave the picture an otherworldly, unreal or dreamlike quality. I was disappointed in myself for having forgotten to screw onto the lens the correct filter, but I was delighted at having captured the natural qualities of Dennis as an actor, the bonus being images of Dennis as a person. When he fed Prince, when he bridled the horse, Dennis' tongue relaxed from his mouth, as well as his involuntary flip of the forelock. I was so pleased to have preserved on film those Dennis-befitting traits.

Even though my film begins early in the morning, I cut it to match the cadence of "The Gift," a touching, dreamy evening mood; the orchestration capturing the emotions of a young boy whose wish for a pony has been fulfilled, just as Dennis' wish to ride my horse had been fulfilled. Copland used instrumentation and structure as delicate as the foal's first steps. I had filmed Dennis taking his first tentative steps with my horse. There was no rehearsal or a Take two or Take three. Then the rhythm changed into the dramatic harmonies and faster gallop of "Happy Ending." I chose the visuals of Dennis riding Prince which matched. Oh, how those horns soared to move Dennis and Prince upward and onward, how the flutes, light strings and triangles matched the horse's trot, as if Copland had written his music for my home movie. Of his suite Copland had said he intended the music to come from a child's point of view. My film as I shot it saw everything through my eyes, my camera's viewfinder, but I believe I also captured the essence of seeing things through Dennis' young eyes. For a title, I didn't want to call it A Boy and His Horse, nor did I care to call it by the names of the music pieces in Copland's suite. I couldn't call it *The Red Pony*, not because there already was a Hollywood movie with the title, but because Prince wasn't red. He was piebald and no longer a pony. Stuck for anything catchy, I reverted to calling the picture by the star's name, as with Jamie and Denny, Gary & Scott. I called the picture starring Dennis just that --- Dennis.

My completed film would never come close to winning a prize. Judges would immediately pick the bluish film as an error and deduct points, maybe even give it a zero for visual quality. Despite my forgetting to use the filter, I look at *Dennis* today and find its viewing an emotional experience. The film has magic in it. Everything seen is new, unrehearsed, unplanned, like an evolving news story where you don't know what's going to happen next, and you're guided through the experience by an

innocent who is, himself, experiencing everything for the very first time. Remember, this had been Denny's first day on the Farm!

Around the same time, perhaps the most long-lasting and influential moment in the history of TV's "Laugh-In" was the September 16, 1968 cameo appearance by presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon who appeared for a few seconds with a disbelieving vocal inflection asking, "Sock it to me?" Nixon wasn't doused or assaulted with a cream pie. It was Nixon's revolutionary effort to reach out to younger viewers. His campaign managers had advised against appearing on this wild, counterculture program. Nixon later said that appearing on "Laugh-In" is what got him elected.

An invitation was extended to Nixon's opponent, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, but he declined, later saying that not doing it may have cost him the election. In fact, as he campaigned his speeches were drowned by chants of, "Stop the war." Added insult was, "Dump the Hump."

Shortly after completing *Dennis* mid-September, about the same time the U.S.S.R. launched *Zond 5* (*Probe 5* of the Zond program), the first lunar fly-around with Earth re-entry and probable test flight for a manned moon fly-around, Anton Anday and Bob Munsen moved onto the Farm. Munsen was another first-year teacher of History and he worked hard at manufacturing his image in imitation of the old-timers who'd been his junior and secondary educators. My hitchhiking days were over as both had cars. There wouldn't be a problem with subletting because the Shepanskis never offered a rental contract and I hadn't ever signed any sheet of paper. Our agreement had been the traditional gentlemen's handshake.

My being away from rigidly set weekdays and school schedules meant that all weekends were an escape. I found solace in my farm. My roomies just saw the farm as a place to bunk down before facing another day in the classroom. Shortly after Saturday movie making with Dennis, word passed among other students in our classes. Dennis wasn't the kind of kid who'd have boasted about his weekend experience. I don't know how they knew, unless students who lived in the area spread the news. Some asked if they might come to the farm and ride my horse. Three students, Thom Hering, Steve Thompson, and Paul Zamzow, trickled onto the farm unannounced one Sunday afternoon. Thom's father drove the boys. Anton stuck around and enjoyed himself. Particularly protective of his persona, Bob disappeared. He did not want students to discover chinks in his armor or put a dent into the image of the stern no-nonsense taskmaster he projected in his classroom.

In 1<sup>st</sup> hour English, one of the highly creative boys described by Mrs. Johnson as a cork-off was Thom Hering, his most prominent physical trait a perfectly imitative Beatle hairstyle. Thom was smart and his intellect needed to be challenged, harnessed and directed. I think Mrs. Johnson saw it the other way 'round, that Thom's intelligence and creativity was there only to test her patience. Thom was outside her square, on the other side of her same-all lesson plan. His interests stretched well beyond Mrs. Know-It-All's rusty old classroom rote. Another thorn in Mrs. Know-It-All's side would have been Paul Zamzow, Thom's friend, whip smart highly creative, and an energetic boy.

Another friend of Thom's was a tall, taut but lightly built, brown-haired, blue-eyed, wheatish-skinned, barely 14 year old boy named Steve Thompson. He was an 8th grader in Ginny's English class. I never understood what the two had in common. Thom was outgoing and Steve was introspective. Maybe that was it; opposites attract. Three minutes between classes allowed for short conversation as students shuffled from one class to the next, frequently stopping at lockers to put one book away and grab another. I was sometimes assigned to hall duty, the job equivalent to traffic cop or nightclub bouncer. I was supposed to look disinterested, devoid of expression, and keep the students on the move thus preventing their showing up to class late or, God forbid, intimidating, bullying, hair pulling or starting a fight. It was during one such between classes movement that Thom introduced me to Steve. A furtive wave, a "hi" without breaking into a smile and both boys disappeared into the herd headed in one direction and the other. Little hint did I have in that instant of the role I would play in Steve's life and he in mine.

After the engaging Thom, Paul and Steve made their unexpected yet welcome Sunday visit to my farm, Monday morning advanced English class was busy working as I mingled among desks offering students individual help. Bending from my knees and crouching at Thom's desk, he unclipped a couple sheets of paper from three-ring folder and handed them to me. "You're finished with the already?" I asked. "Oh, no," Thom replied. "These are for Thanks for letting us vou. come to your farm." Thom handed me two cartoons he'd drawn. They made me laugh. His imagination created the Old MacDonald farm animals when the only animals on my farm were a horse and a dog. On the back of one he'd written "To Mr. Larry." Interesting that such a clever kid managed to misspell 'friend.' Even more interesting is the question following mark his misspelling. Just as Mr. Tom

HIS COW
HIS DUCK

HIS PIG

HIS DUCK

HIS BARN
HIS STATE

YOUR FREIND?

THOM

McCaig had predicted in class, here was this Thom reaching out.

Then, completely unrelated to the study of the day, Thom asked if I wanted to go Friday night and look for UFOs. "Autumn , you know," said Thom, "it's almost harvest time. Never know what'll happen." It wasn't weird that I was aware what had prompted his invitation.

Newspapers in Stevens Point, Wisconsin Rapids, and Marshfield, even the local TV and radio news reported unusual day and nighttime sightings of unexplainable phenomena. Most items concluded that most UFO sightings can be explained as something natural or manmade. In the Marshfield area the lights in the night sky are



most likely military aircraft on regular training missions. Yeah, sure, right! Other "news items" concluded it just may have been a vivid imagination on seeing swamp gas or fog or the old saw of a weather balloon. How then to explain, according to one such memorable item, three lights in a triangle burning bright in the sky for about four seconds and then disappearing, or that some had seen a lot of unidentifiable flashing lights in the sky, each object having three colors red, yellow, green. There was no pattern to their travel. Some moved fast and then would stop and the light would dim very low. They moved much too close to be aircraft flying at different heights and speeds. Another

item reported that an object hovered, was orange, and the size of a basketball. In less than five seconds it went from a dead standstill to an abrupt fast forward and then up.

Thom's reference to harvest time was the annual gathering of one of three fruits native only to North America, the cranberry. No more than urban legend, the other two are the blueberry and the Concord grape. One-third of the world's cranberries grow in Wisconsin with harvesting often done by the Menominee tribe. Wisconsin Rapids is home to most of Wisconsin's cranberry bogs and some UFO sightings. 50 miles worth of road are dubbed the Cranberry Highway; they are Hwy 54 out of Plover to Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards to Warrens, and Hwy 173 to Babcock and Nekoosa. Marshfield was appropriately named for it was also known for its cranberry bogs, although it's claimed the bogs had nothing to do with calling the town Marshfield. The Marshfield Clinic was built alongside a large bog and it was an autumn breeding ground for low-lying fog.

Come Friday, a cool night, Thom's father drove a carful of passengers who knew not what to expect, but who were eager with the anticipation of what if. The car stopped alongside a field, a culvert separating it from the edge of the road. Mr. Hering and son Thom climbed out followed by Paul, Steve, and me. We chatted teasingly about aliens from outer space, questioned if they really did exist, would they look like us or be in the shape of a squid, little green men, or phantoms with oblong eyes and no mouth. Our teeth chattered in the crisp night air. A wisp of cloud hovered like a thin length of translucent plastic over the field. Wished for and yet so unexpectedly, it happened.

Hovering low above the field was a red orb about the size of a basketball. We froze and, mouths agape, watched in silence. The ball was aglow, pulsating, and there was no sound. It was as if we were stuck in a silent movie with no way to step outside the frame or turn on sound. The ball moved slowly toward us appearing to enlarge as it approached. Suddenly it rose vertically, like a helicopter, making no arc, no lights blinking, no sound, and no trailing draft. We craned our necks and watched it zoom upward and, just as rapidly without turning, make an immediate ninety degree angle move and shoot off horizontally and disappearing.

We all made noises of fear, garbled half words and swallowed the rest. We were panicked. We bundled ourselves into the car. Mr. Hering made a three point turn and drove back the way we'd come and away from the unnerving vision we'd just witnessed. We tried to talk about what we'd seen; no one admitted it was swamp gas. We'd seen something which didn't resemble anything we'd ever seen. We tried to make jokes about it. Laughing didn't help. This thing had a definite ball shape which didn't alter. We didn't know what it was, but felt its image engraved in our brains.

As we drove back to Stevens Point, the Northern Lights put on an unearthly display. We knew these were real, they really existed, and Mr. Hering stopped the car alongside the road in a clearing so we could see the changing patterns and colors of red, yellow, green and blue. The reflection of light on tiny ice crystals gave the northern lights an animated life of its own. The magical lights scattered unpredictable and silent explosions across the black northern sky. It was as if we were seeing the beginning of the apocalypse and the end of the world. Given what we were certain we'd just experienced in another field, the display of the northern lights, the aurora borealis, was an eerie and unnerving addition.

In my farmhouse kitchen I brewed coffee for Mr. Hering and myself and made hot chocolate for the boys. When it was time for guests to leave Steve didn't want to go home. He asked if he could stay the night. As it was a Friday night, even though I hardly knew the kid, I had no objection to his being an overnighter. Steve asked to use the phone and called his mother. Thom's father spoke with Mrs. Thompson and verified he'd be in safe company and she agreed to Steve's request. Again, I had no idea the impact of his request.

The others left and Steve still hadn't removed his jacket. He said he was cold, the hot chocolate having done nothing to ease the earlier chill in the night. I switched on the television, turned the dimmer switch lowering the living room light, and reclined on the sofa. Steve slipped off his boots,

kept his jacket on, and sat on the edge of the sofa near my stockinged feet. He was trembling, frightened, I believe, from the sights of our close encounter of the second kind.

"It's colder n' a titch's wit," Steve shuttered. Though he didn't know me well, he must have sensed in me security and safety. He stared at the carpet when he asked, "Kin you, uh, kinda hold me?" He didn't look at me. His words lacked depth or humor. They were flat. I sat up. It was a natural instinct to put my arm around his shoulder. "No. Both arms," Steve quietly requested. He closed his eyes and nestled his head into my shoulder. Steve fell asleep within measurable seconds. I held him before I edged off the sofa, covered Steve with a blanket, switched off the TV and the light, and tiptoed upstairs to my bedroom. Steve slept soundly on the sofa throughout that disturbing night.

It was important, Steve's falling asleep with my arms around him. It seemed the once and only time Steve made any demonstration of need toward me. Unlike so many other kids in my life, Steve came across as private, but not secretive. If he was hurting, confused, insecure, on the other hand grateful, Steve tended to be a clam with his feelings and emotions. He was capable of and would sport a warm and winning smile, his way of showing his happiness; whatever bothered Steve had been made better simply by being on the wavelength of a man he just wanted to be there for him. The security he sought and which I instinctively gave was the beginning of a long association with Steve. He became a fixture on the farm some weekdays and most weekends. Without ever asking for it, I seemed to have become the figure for the father he never knew.

Late in September Dennis' brother Ray arrived in one of my English classes. I had expected a rough, hard-nosed boy with a permanent scowl on his face. He was just as shy, quiet, and pleasant in appearance as his brother, though not as tall or as thin. Ray was a couple of inches shorter than me and solidly built. Whereas Dennis had that demeanor of innocence, Ray's eyes showed the glint of a Tasmanian devil. Having presented himself in class and making a good first impression, Sunday afternoon Ray arrived on my farm with Dennis, and he was loaded for bear.<sup>2</sup>

I quickly learned his favorite activity was wrestling and I don't mean that showy physical activity on TV. Ray must have been taught high school wrestling in Wales, the kind I did in high school known as freestyle or catch-as-catch-can and a physical discipline included in the Olympics. I shouldn't have been surprised when Ray challenged me to wrestle. He couldn't do it in the classroom and get away with it and I'm sure he wanted to test me. Ray didn't know I had wrestled in high school and that I'd learned all the regulation moves, holds and legal grips. "You're sure you want this?" I asked Ray. He smirked dismissively and assumed the staggered wrestling stance. In response I mirrored him. Eyeing one another, we took only two or three circling steps. My right leg forward I moved into Ray and effortlessly clinched him, one hand per bicep. I shot my leg as far forward as I could and pulled on Ray's triceps as I placed my knee on the ground. I used Ray's momentum against him, secured my grip on his arm and leg, pulled his arm in tight and sent him over my left side and toward the ground. The move was a fireman's carry. As Ray landed I pressed my shoulder into his body forcing my weight on top of him to prevent a possible escape. It all happened so fast and Ray was pinned. He never imagined, never saw what was coming.

Rendered powerless, shoulder blades forced hard into the lumpy lawn, Ray surrendered, "OK! OK! I give. I give." It didn't matter that Dennis had slammed his hand on the ground indicating my pinning his brother. Ray was accepting of my backbone and I earned his respect. Was it a conditioning he'd learned in Wales, that to be top dog you had to physically defeat or be defeated? From then on Ray never attempted to bait me in the classroom, as he had with other teachers, nor on the farm did he ever refuse my request to start and finish a job.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> An idiom meaning "fully prepared for any eventuality, especially a confrontation or challenge" or "ready to pick a fight." It probably originated during colonial times when muskets, gun powder, horses, and dogs were used to hunt meat

Ray especially targeted Steve Thompson and teased with wrestling challenges. Every time Ray faced off with Steve, Steve foolishly accepted and took on Ray... and lost. Steve was Ray's prime pigeon for fall guy, his sitting duck for besting. Matches never ended in blood. The boys always laughed and, on the farm anyway, became friends.

Pictured right, Ray is on the bottom and with the advantage; Steve is atop and completely disadvantaged in one of many wrestling matches.

In the beginning boys and girls visiting the farm Sunday afternoons was easy and fun. Even Ginny Brockman, who didn't own a car since she didn't have a driver's license, came to the farm in a taxi. She enjoyed our students out of class as much as I did. Ginny and I were teachers who reached beyond books and paperwork and outside the classroom to

become involved with our students. It was a different era. A touch of formality remained unchanged. were addressed by our Sunday visitors the same as if we were in the classroom. It was always "Mr. Lare" this and "Miss Brockman" that. The teenagers who asked to visit brought their own bag lunches. They drew straws for taking turns riding my unsaddled, mild-mannered, partially blind horse. In the barn they shoveled horse poo and changed Prince's straw and hay. Then they played. grabbed a rope and swung out of the hayloft like Tarzan on a vine, the boys often adding a jungle yell. They leapt off straw and hay bales into soft piles of hay. I'm sure they never considered they were playing in Prince's food!

Pictured right, L to R: Bill Reichardt, Bill Finnessey, Jeff Mrozinski, Dennis and Ray Alakson. Mounted on Prince is Steve Thompson with me.



One Sunday Ginny and I all but lost control. Numbers just got out of hand. Kids showed up without first having asked permission. They were uninvited, unwanted, and for some, oddly enough, unfed and thinking I would freely feed cookies and milk, sandwiches and sodas, candies and fruit. If I wasn't offering, they were willing to help themselves without asking. Teenagers can outeat barn rats and I reached the point where I preferred my barn rats. Parents I'd not even met drove their teen sprogs to my farm, dumped them in my driveway and drove off without so much and a "How'd ja do!" Had they thought I was providing a free babysitting service? Having as many children on the farm as in the classroom was a test of courage and patience for both Ginny and me. The classroom had four walls, the farm appeared boundless. We had to vote a brass clamp "No" to so many unwelcome, often unwished-for, and uncontrollable freeloaders taking advantage of our good will, generosity with our time, and my larder. Can you imagine my finding a kid I barely knew looking inside my refrigerator? "What're you doing in my kitchen?" I asked in a firm voice. "Nuthin'," the kid answered, his response colorless. "There's the phone. Call your parents and go home," I ordered. "I'm not your lunch room." Now I understood why Anton sided with Bob to be far, far away from the farm Sunday afternoons, if not the entire weekend. I ordered everyone out. I even told Dennis and

Ray and Steve to call their mothers and go home, but with a surreptitious wink of the eye so it wouldn't look like I was playing favorites. They understood. Then, along the teen grapevine, it was a no go to Mr. Lare's farm without first asking.

Not just on the farm, turmoil ruled throughout the United States. Four term governor of Alabama George Corley Wallace entered the presidential campaign under the banner of the American Independent Party. Opposed to desegregation, Wallace supported the policies of "Jim Crow" during the Civil Right Movement. His stance was "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." God help the United States if he was elected president! As an independent, he would draw votes away from Democrat nominee Hubert Humphrey, specifically from urban, northern white workers, union members, the traditional supporters of the Democratic party. If the election had been held at the end of September, Wallace would have placed ahead of Humphrey.

Humphrey finally broke from President Johnson's policies of the past four years and said in Salt Lake City that he would stop the bombing in the north. Lê Đức Thọ, a general and member of the Hanoi delegation at the Paris Peace Talks said that Mr. Humphrey's speech contained absolutely nothing new. Humphrey's speech did finally establish that he had his own position on North Vietnam. Nixon offered "Peace with Honor", whatever that was supposed to mean.

Crazy and busy and fun as Sunday afternoons were, before September expired I had booked a program of films for the 4<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival. Because of the high quality and popularity of past festivals, the Residence Hall Council (RHC) had asked me to put on another festival program. I was eager to present another festival because it meant more easily earned money in my bank account. All the films I planned to show were new to the festival except *Jamie*. As *Jamie* hadn't been shown on campus for two years, a whole new audience was out there just waiting, I hoped, to come to the Wisconsin Room October 23 and 24. I had seen all of the invited films earlier in festivals or, in the case of one sent by David Charles Thomas, seen as a work in progress.

David Charles Thomas sent his newest untried production he'd been working on before and after my visit with him, *Rails in the Redwood*. I might be the only one in the audience to personally relate to the film because it was about the same narrow gauge railroad I had the chance to ride barely four weeks ago among the magnificent California redwood trees. Seeing as David paid special attention to lighting, I felt his newest effort would appeal for its colorful subject matter.

One of my favorites was *Happy Anniversary* (*Heureux Anniversaire*), a 12 minute 1962 French farce directed by Pierre Étaix which won the Academy Award in 1963 for Best Short Subject. It was about the problems of a husband shopping for gifts for his wife in an overcrowded Paris. A woman, his wife, prepares a romantic dinner for two, for her and her husband to celebrate their wedding anniversary. Stuck in Paris traffic and other problems, the wife has no idea what has happened to her husband. Will it still be a happy anniversary by the time he makes it home? There was something real about what happens and how it happens in this comedy and that's why I have always liked and remembered it.

Another French film was the 17 minute 1962 *The String Bean (Les Haricots)* by Edmond (Edouard) Séchan, cinematographer of the Academy Award winning *The Red Balloon (Le Ballon Rouge)* and *White Mane: The Savage Horse (Crin Blanc: Le Cheval Sauvage)* both directed by Albert Lamorisse, and his own 1959 Academy Award winning *The Golden Fish (Historie d'un Poisson Rouge)*. *The String Bean* won the 1963 Cannes Palme d'Or – Best Short Film. It starred Marie Marc as a fragile old lady who soaks dried beans to cook, but saves one and plants it in a pot. She cultivates the potted plant with a tender devotion akin to love. She plants it in a row of blossoming white shrubs in the Tuileries Garden in Paris and visits it daily. One day the gardeners rip out the string bean as a weed. The wispy old woman picks the string beans from the unearthed plant and plants one single bean in a pot.

American Carson Davidson provided his 1964 Academy Award nominated *Help! My Snowman's Burning Down*. Running 9 minutes, no one seemed to know what the film was about, but it was very funny, very entertaining. There's a beatnik in a suit who lives on a raft with bathroom furnishings. He sits in the tub typing on toilet paper, which he files in the toilet bowl. A woman's hand appears from a drain. He paints one nail red and the hand departs. He opens the medicine cabinet and there's a man shaving on the other side. "Close the door, dammit!" are the only words in the soundtrack. The raft is torpedoed by a toy sub and sinks. I must add that in the 1964 Academy Awards *Help! My Snowman's Burning Down* was a Live Action Short Subject nominee.

From Hungary I obtained You ( $\ddot{O}n$ ), an experimental film about love. I don't remember who made the film, its running time, or where I'd seen it previously.

From Gene Kearney came *Silent Snow, Secret Snow*. Made in 1966 it is a chilling, brilliant, hypnotic, black & white 17 minute journey into the mind of a boy who finds the world too large for him. It was based on a short story by Conrad Aiken and its powerful themes included alienation, angst, and



schizophrenia. The story concerns the degeneration of a 12 year old boy, Paul Haselman, into madness. The "secret snow" is the metaphor for Paul's detachment from reality. It was a true adaptation of the short story; the film is all but forgotten today.

Just about all of the films and all the filmmakers boasted solid curricula vitae. They were multi-award winning and well-recognized adult films that represented all efforts of filmmaking including drama, comedy, and experimental. Therefore the RHC and I decided an opinion poll was unnecessary. We knew the films had already received deferential regard and so it mattered not to us whether our audiences liked or disliked each film.

To test the film with an audience and open the festival I included my latest "Elkay" Production *Dennis*. It was the only film in the festival with its soundtrack on reel-to-reel tape. All the other pictures had an optical or magnetic soundtrack.

Wednesday and Thursday, October 23 and 24, the 4<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival, were school nights and not a deterrent as I originally thought since audiences packed the Wisconsin Room. I rented a tuxedo for Denny and he was as ready as he'd ever be to meet his public and be treated like a movie star. Pictured left, Denny looked sharp. His jacket was satin blue with embroidered flowers. His shirt was decorated

heavily in lace, including the cuffs. The bowtie was a clip-on, thank goodness, because I had no idea how one was tied. His tux included a blue cummerbund. Classmates who attended appeared to be impressed with Denny dressed so fashionably elegant with nothing overlooked. Girls looked like they could melt when they saw him. We didn't have a red carpet, but had there been one Denny could have rubbed shoulders emulating the Nine Worthies.<sup>3</sup>

Although *Dennis* was made as a very personal film, it had universality and was liked by its audiences; after-show comment expressed how much enjoyment I'd shown of the boy and the horse and how well the action worked with Aaron Copland's music. People went up to Denny and shook his hand, some giving him a pat on the shoulder. Being the center of attention was a whole new experience for

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Nine Worthies were characters drawn from the Pagan and Jewish history and from the Bible. This distinguished group consisted of Hector, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabaeus, King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon. These were well-known to mediaeval scholars as the personification of all that was noble and heroic.

him, and it was positive reinforcement for the good kid he was. The original spliced film with its separate reel-to-reel soundtrack screened both nights without a hitch.

Not everything about the festival went to plan. Scott Schutte was our projectionist. He wrote an article published on page 2 of *The Pointer* October 31, 1968. Scott's article gave insight to what happened during the show and is reprinted here.

#### At Film Festival –

By Scott Schutte

# The Life of a Projectionist One of Splice and Blow-Outs

As I dimmed the lights in the Wisconsin Room, all I could do was to utter a small prayer, which for a confirmed Unitarian is a miracle in itself. What kind of pressure could prompt such a response? A film festival. As the audience sits in their seats enjoying the little film presentations, they have no idea what a real hell one man is facing in a hot little booth only a wall away.

I had gone through two festivals before and as Lare Klobukowski and I set up the new festival that was featured last Wednesday and Thursday, I thought that things would be better. All the preparation that Lare and RHC had been working on for over a week was done. Posters were up and all we needed was people to pay their 50¢ and view the films.

At 7:00 p.m. I arrived with two 90 lb projectors, the printed programs and a cash box. Two members of the RHC's Cultural Committee were placing construction paper over the windows to discourage outside light and non-paying customers. After I had set up one projector, I found that the second projector was stuck in an elevated position and that no feverish tinkering could get it down.

Realizing that I would have to abandon one projector, I sighted the image of a film on the screen so that the festival would start in focus. As I was checking it out, the sound went out and no prompting could bring it back. No panic, however, as 20 minutes remained and the trouble had to be in the power pack of the one remaining projector.

With difficulty I transferred the power pack of the stuck projector to the good one. On screen came the film and as I sighed a relief, the sound again went out. I now knew the trouble was that the power in the Wisconsin Room was not enough to support the projector.

I abandoned our two projectors for one of the old Wisconsin Room projectors which luckily happened to be there. Ten minutes remained. I tested the new machine and everything worked well, but threading had taken up time. It was time to test the projection booth electric system.

The evening's disastrous pattern continued as the house lights would not turn out. I had to retrieve a janitor to remedy the problem. Lare had been in the booth aghast at the way things were going but he had no time to scream at me since he could not get the tape recorder, which had the introductory music and the first film's sound track on it, to project on the outside speakers. At last we found the problem in one of the input jacks and it was two minutes past the time that the beginning should have begun.

Away we went! The first film fluttered through the sprockets without a hitch. However, our luck wouldn't hold. On the second flick, a splice split and film flew.

This was nothing new and I wasn't worried except for the fact that Lare would have to go up to the front of the audience, and blab until I had taped the splice and re-threaded the projector.

Lare can handle a situation of this sort by telling his one film joke, about a Cecil B. DeMille spectacular, but he had told the joke during similar disasters in previous festivals. He wisely elected not to tell it again and I was left to fend for myself.

The rest of the first half of the festival went well and it looked like things were settling down until we were midway into the second half and blew a bulb. This is truly the time that the projectionist with one projector ha psychosomatic epilepsy.

The projector lamp is located under stubborn screws and hot metal. It is as entrenched as a professor with tenure and takes ten full minutes before it is cool enough to be touched with the naked anything. As a dedicated soul I tackled it anyway with a borrowed and not too clean handkerchief. Five minutes passed as my half inch thick fingers tried to squeeze into a ½ inch space and clutch a sizzling bulb that even Peter Lupas couldn't turn.

The first night was finally over and one whole night remained. My roommate shoved six Compose tables in my mouth and I slept.

The second night was a dream. Nothing went awry. In fact, it went so well that Lare started playing tricks on me. As I would thread a film he would look for my wave that all was ready as he introduced the next film. Several times he ended his discourse before I was finished and I would have to dim the lights with my knee as my fingers flew.

I have written this for several reasons. I hope that the next time you are engrossed in a film and everything goes dead on the screen, you will have a little bit of charity for the slave in that 90 degree booth. My primary reason for writing this, however, is that next year will be my last year here. McPhee<sup>5</sup> willing and the creek don't rise.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Peter Lupas was an American body builder and actor who followed Steve Reeves into the sword and sandal films of the 1960s, occasionally credited as Rock Stevens. He is best remembered for the role of Willy Armitage, the Force's Muscle Man, in the original "Mission Impossible" television series in the 1960s.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> I was unable to find any reference for McPhee. It may have been Scott's whim to pick a name out of a hat, so to speak, and replace God or Lord in the more familiar "God willing and the creek don't rise" or "Lord willing and the creek don't rise."

### Chapter 57: Jim

bu was missing. I hadn't had the dog long enough to become attached, but I knew something was wrong because he didn't bound up to the back door when I came home from school. I had the feeling he may have been accidently hit by a car or shot by a hunter. Gerry Hutnick had the unfortunate business of telling me what had happened. Timelines seemingly played tricks; the detective's story made little sense, but Ubu was gone.

Robby, I had selfishly hoped, had disappeared from my life forever. But as easy as catching a cold, and just as sneakily, he came back into my life. Gerry Hutnick told me that Robby had been released from juvie, a result of good behavior. He showed up on my farm carrying a loaded shotgun. Not finding me, he shot, killed and buried my dog Ubu! A neighbor had reported to the police that something out of the ordinary was happening on the farm. Police arrived and took into custody a very drunk Robby leaning heavily on a shovel stuck in some freshly dug ground. In my vegetable patch Gerry showed me where Robby had buried Ubu. Questions left me to draw my own conclusions. Was shooting Ubu just mean-spirited? Or had Robby intended his real target to be me?

The incident never made the newspaper, but bad news travels fast and the story, unlike Chinese whispers, didn't change. News wandered loosely via the grapevine and was overheard by Steve Thompson. Convenience, I suppose, and in response to the news, Steve gave me a puppy, another Heinz², part Labrador, part cocker-spaniel, part collie, and God only knows what else. Instead of waiting to hand me the dog on the farm, Steve brought the doglet to school in a cardboard box with a tatter for a blanket. He was black and grey with a little brown. Fur wasn't shorthair like Ubu's and it wasn't long like Lassie's. I faced having to train a new puppy all over again. Kids and teachers wanted turns to baby-sit, or rather puppy-sit. The question on everyone's lips was what I was going to name my doggy. I gave it little thought because a name jumped out at me anytime I looked over the restless kids in classroom desks. I named him for some of my students. I called him Meatball.



Meatball, pictured left, looked like a bat without wings and he was as nutty as his master. From the beginning, whenever I ate the little dog begged for table scraps. Intuitively he knew how to attract my attention. He'd get up onto his hind legs and "dance". It wasn't a trick or behavior I taught. Much to my relief, Meatball never accompanied his dancing with his doggie vocals. He charmed by abiding the golden rule, that silence was golden.

When the boys cleaned the barn Meatball was in the fore eagerly picking up horse apples in his mouth and carting them to an ever-growing mound. (The horse apples I refer to are not hedge apples or Osage oranges

[Maclura pomifera, bois d'arc tree], the inedible, although not poisonous, fruit that horses and other livestock will sometimes eat and which will cause vomiting. Nothing eats them, although they can be used as insecticide. No, the horse apple I'm talking about is a ball or lump of horse feces.) Meatball crazily wallowed in the dried horse dung. It's an innate doggy behavior and afterwards, surprise, surprise; he loved being bathed, the more bubbles the better.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Fact: He won't return to haunt my life ever again having died in his sleep February 3, 2013 in Florida, age 62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Heinz was a brand name promoted as 57 varieties. Dogs of mixed breed were often referred to jokingly as a Heinz.

I drank too much in those early weeks of teaching. Call it pressure to perform daily in the classroom, pressure from the oldsters with their "We're looking closely over your shoulder" attitude, pressure to develop and write lesson plans for approval by the firmly entrenched before implementation, pressure to read, mark, and grade students' papers. I didn't overdo the drinking; that is to say, I didn't throw up and I never showed up at school with a hangover. A theatre adage had been instilled in Drama classes that the "show must go on". As there was no coffee table or small side table in the living room, I'd be comfortable on the couch to read and correct papers and my drink would be in a glass on the carpet. It was an open invitation for Meatball to poke its muzzle into my glass of Canadian Club, or wine, or the rare glass of beer. I wasn't aware he'd lick his nose and enjoy the flavor. His tongue would lap the contents before my concentration was interrupted by the sloshing sound and I could stop my sneaky thief. Shortly, Meatball would be indicating at the back door he wanted out. He'd hustle down the steps and water the apple tree.

On one occasion, and one only, I discouraged Meatball from forever fouling my drinks. I filled Meatball's water dish with beer. He lapped it, his tongue moving faster than his brain, and danced for more. I obliged with a second helping and, just as before, the dog lapped quick-smart. It didn't take more than two minutes. Meatball reclined on his upper thigh; weight distributed more to his right than the left. He burped, struggled to his feet and wobbled, unsure which paw to place ahead of the other to reach the kitchen door. I opened the door. The normally agile Meatball missed the first step and tumbled, ass-end over tea kettle, to the stoop. As the cliché goes, he worked like a dog to stand up and staggered to the apple tree. Meatball raised his hind leg and, lopsided, toppled onto his back. Burping again, the dog staggered to all unsteady fours and again raised the hind leg. His uncoordinated effort led to the same result. Meatball looked like a turned turtle, all fours flailing skyward. A third effort to right himself and raise the hind leg proved Meatball's undoing. The dog settled into a paw upward heap and piddled into the breeze.

I cleaned the dizzy dog in the shade of the old apple tree and carried him into the kitchen where I placed him onto a soft rug sample to sleep, his brain confused with doggy nightmares. My lesson may have been over the top, but in future Meatball refused to come near any glass or bottle reeking of alcohol.

October, magic month of natural change; days of sweetcorn barbecued in the husk Indian-style, baked butternut pumpkin skin-on, juicy red apples, and cinnamon sticks swimming in hot cider. Maple, elm, oak, and sumac: leaves red, yellow, orange, and crispy brown unhinged from trees. Early autumn felt like summer's extension just that little bit cooler most mornings and evenings. The Green Bay boys taught me, "Wo-Zha-Wa," Ho-Chunk for "time of fun."

It wasn't unusual when two or three of the boys arrived from Green Bay on my farm Friday night or Saturday morning. Recall any of those John Ford westerns when someone in a coonskin hat says something to the effect of, "I can't see or hear them Indians, but I know they're out there somewhere watchin' us." Rarely calling first, they just showed up. They genuinely wanted to spend time with me and I guess they didn't realize that a teacher often needed to unwind, needed time away from students to re-energize. It was somewhat trying, their imposition on my time, their assumption I wanted to be them as often as they wanted to see me. I never turned them away, always welcomed them enthusiastically even when my heart wasn't in it. One good thing was they never used my farm as a convenient place away from home for getting drunk. There was a small convenience in their all-too-frequent visits. We'd drive to the Red Owl supermarket to shop for meat and vegetable markdowns. They invariably chipped in, never emptying my fridge or leaving me out of pocket.

When I had no visitors and subsequently no car to go to Red Owl, even before I started teaching at the Jr. High, I rode Prince astride the Civil War vintage McClelland saddle. It would have been convenient to hang bags off the saddle horn, if it had one. My McClelland had leather saddlebacks hanging off either side of the seat and they were often sufficient to carry provender, as long as I didn't go overboard buying. If I needed large, clunky items I'd take along a cloth bag with a drawstring and figure a way to keep it attached. If the weather was sunny and warm, I'd stop at Papa Joe's for a beer.

Outside the tavern was a hitching post, an old-fashioned leftover from the past which Joe thought a curiosity nevermore to be used its intended purpose. Sure, tying Prince's reins to the post was a conversation starter. One joker, however, complained he didn't want some damned horse kicking his car. It wasn't easy convincing this checked flannel-shirted redneck that "A horse is a horse of course, of course" and that Prince was far more gentle and lackadaisical than TV's "Mr. Ed." Beer is the center of everything. Buying someone a beer is better than a handshake. Buying a beer for this north woods yokel spoke louder and clearer than any words spilled from my lips.

Shortly after Meatball arrived I received another gift in the person of a new friend. Bob Baril was the brother of one of my Upward Bound students. He worked at a men's clothing store, the Golden Hanger in Green Bay. I remember the first time Bob arrived on the farm early one Saturday morning. We met and clicked immediately after I introduced him to Prince who liked to lay on the ground and sleep. That's how Bob first eyed my horse, pegged out and flat on his side in the grassy field. "There's my horse, Prince," I proudly said to Bob. Bob didn't approach the horse; he just turned his head with a dumb look, "Prince! Prince? That's no Prince. That's a Goober!" We laughed and from then on the horse lost his royal title and became Goober. Amazing how quickly Prince adapted to being Goober.

Bob as a Golden Hanger employee bought all his clothes at cost. One day I received a package in the mail from Bob, a new outfit for school wear, a powder blue Nehru jacket and a pair of blue-checked flared pants. Retail the Nehru jacket was priced at \$28.00. It cost Bob just a couple of bucks. When Anton and Bob saw my new clothes the envy button was pressed. I called Bob Baril and ordered Nehru jackets and flared pants for them, but in different colors. Bob gave them a great deal. They bought their outfits at cost.

Style of trousers for schoolboys like Denny Alakson and Steve Thompson, not so much for grown up robust men, were stovepipes, slim-fit pants also known as drainpipes, cigarette jeans, slim Jims, skinny legs or skinnies with a nine inch opening at the hemline. The much tapered legs showed any human flaws or simply proved unflattering unless the wearer leaned toward the "lean" side. The look was a close silhouette.

Flared pants were just coming back into style after having been around since the 19<sup>th</sup> century as U.S. standard Navy dress. The pant style included a wide leg and ended in a "bell" shaped cuff at the bottom and remained stuck firmly in the military until the 1960s rolled around. Counterculture youth rejected anything and everything that had to do with convention when it came to fashion and shopped at army surplus stores. Buying and re-styling old military clothing conveyed the strong anti-war sentiment prevalent at the time. Sporting bell bottoms became a distinctive sign of the counterculture lifestyle. Fashion designers noticed and "anti-fashion" turned into a full blown trend.

Significance of this little history lesson in pants is because we intended making a few waves wearing our new outfits to school. No professional people at this stage, particularly teachers, wore Nehru jackets or flared trousers, much less a medallion around the neck as adornment replacing the conventional tie. Among our children and colleagues, we'd create classroom and corridor magic.

Halloween fell on a Thursday, a school night. I'd carved a pumpkin and placed it with a lighted candle on the stoop of the front porch as an invitation for trick or treat. Bob, Anton, and I were prepared to hand out candies. There'd been a rumor floating through the school corridors that some boys were going to sneak out to my farm and spray paint my horse. We countered with a rumor that we were going to load Mr. Munson's shotguns with rock salt and sit waiting on the roof. No one painted my horse. Quite a few children in costume showed up at the front door. We must have really let down our guard. The mother of one of my girls, Ann, drove four girls to my farm where they toilet-papered the bushes in front of the house and tempera-painted the windows. They managed all this tomfoolery before we realized what happened. No one escaped. We captured the girls as they painted a kitchen window. We invited Ann's mother in to the kitchen. Since we caught the girls in

the act of playing a trick, their penalty was our making them wash and dry the supper dishes. Ann's mother laughed as she drank the beer we'd offered.

It was this night Bob and Anton chose to tell me they would move from the farm. My first reaction was they were playing a Halloween trick, but they were serious. They said they preferred living solo, sort of got the idea from me saying they'd sensed I preferred being on the farm without roomies. Not that there'd ever been any harsh words or major disagreements, there weren't. They'd each found apartments closer to school. Both said they needed alone time, especially on weekends, to recharge themselves for the classroom. Bob even said he didn't know how the hell I did it; that is, keep up my energy in the classroom and still have so much energy for the kids when they came to the farm weekends. We remained good friends. Bob and Anton began moving their possessions little by little, ever so little by little, from Friday night.

While others might hit the local bar, watch a movie at the Fox, or go to a fish fry, I went Friday night with Ginny Brockman, Steve Thompson, and two of her former students, Bruce Kolinski and his girlfriend Patti, to Bancroft to look for flying saucers. Bruce drove. As if time repeated itself, we all looked at something we could hardly believe, much less identify, and we hadn't shared any of Wisconsin's north woods sipping hooch! It wasn't an airplane, a weather balloon, or swamp gas. Again we observed a lighted round shape moving erratically and then quickly shooting up, up and up before disappearing into a cloud. Like clock hands had again swung backwards, Mother Nature provided a treat, a second shimmering of ice crystals in the sky; we were mesmerized by another dazzling display of the dancing northern lights. By now Steve had pretty well adopted me and he didn't show any of the signs of fear he'd displayed after his first excursion to find a UFO. In fact, he laughed and made jokes saying all manner of silly things about what we'd seen.

It suddenly hit me that weekend; I had no ride to school Monday morning. Bob and Anton were on their own, and so was I. Come Monday I'd have to stand outside my farmhouse and wave down, prescribed by official guideline, the American "yellow" school bus, the vehicle juvenile riders sometimes called the Big Yellow Box with wheels. It would become a necessary embarrassment to fulfilling my contractual terms of employment. Sometime later I learned it had become a bone of contention among school administration, school board, and car-pooling staff. Since no Junior High staff lived anywhere near my Route 2 farmhouse, I missed attending innumerable after-school departmental and full staff administrative meetings. My riding the school bus in the morning and every afternoon on a student time schedule was never resolved to the satisfaction of anyone but myself.

Escaping the tedium of department heads speaking interminably to show who was in charge and more so to hear the sound of their own voices was an undisguised blessing. I was young, enthusiastic, energetic, naive, and definitely not scholarly. The jargon of education was for me as arduous, incomprehensible, and ineffectual as the classes I struggled through in 9<sup>th</sup> grade Latin. Britannia insula est, anyone? I understood next to nothing when the department head encouraged the use of analysis and strategy of pre-observational and post-observational conference with differentiating inferences from observations including variables and eclectic suggestion of... I don't even know what I'm writing because I never understood what the heck anyone in charge was prattling on about! Anyway, Ginny Brockman kept me informed always on the morning following an after school meeting wherein anything earth-shattering was discussed. Ginny's morning report invariably was, "You didn't miss a thing."

November 5, first Tuesday in November was Election Day. Benjamin Franklin Jr. High was one among several schools selected as a polling place for registered voters to make their opinion count. All staff members could conveniently exercise the right to cast their vote without needing to leave our place of employment. That made it easy for me to cast my vote for president during one of my free periods. Classes usually scheduled for the designated polling room near the entrance doors were conducted elsewhere. Machines had been set up and I remember seeing the three named candidates: Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, George Wallace. Pulling down on the lever to ensure the vote was

counted was akin to playing a poker machine and hoping the odds were in your favor. The direction of the country was really at stake: big issues of war and peace, of race relations. Regardless of a popular vote, the candidate who won the most votes, the archaic Electoral College determined who occupied the Oval Office. It was a long night's counting. Early morning November 6<sup>th</sup> Illinois' 26 Electoral College votes pushed Republican Richard M. Nixon over the line, barely defeating Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey, with 13.5% of the votes cast for the segregationist George Wallace.

On the very same day it was significant that United Artists pulled eleven Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons in its libraries from television due to the depiction of racial stereotypes toward African-Americans. These cartoons became known as the Censored Eleven: Hittin' the Trail for Hallelujah Land (1931), Sunday Go to Meetin' Time (1936), Clean Pastures (1937), Uncle Tom's Bungalow (1937), Jungle Jitters (1938), The Isle of Pingo Pongo (1938), All This and Rabbit Stew (1941), Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs (1943), Tin Pan Alley Cats (1943), Angel Puss (1944), Goldilocks and the Jivin' Bears (1944). What reaction there was from George Wallace on these racist cartoons being yanked from circulation is anyone's guess.

One exceptional morning in the pandemonium of a three minute class change - I just happening to be assigned the role of a corridor sentry - cherubic, spectral, pencil-thin in lemon-bleached turtle-necked shirt and flared blue levies, he appeared. I saw him, crooked silver-decorated smile and lively, beguiling eyes, a shock of shiny dark hair swept to the right. "Hi!" he said enthusiastically. Nothing more. "Hi," I replied blandly concealing the effect of his charm. He was in none of my classes. I hadn't previously seen him. I didn't know his name. Yet there he was. A simple pleasantry exchanged and catching my attention as if he'd set off a cherry bomb.

Who was he? I had to find out and so, next class break, I asked Ginny to stand in the corridor with me. She had a remarkably fascinating personality, a magnet to which students, like iron filings, were drawn. Maybe Ginny knew who he was and we'd spot him in the class-changing flock... and we did. "Yes," Ginny said, "He's in Mrs. Johnson's class. That's Jim O'Leary."

Jim. Another Jim. Suddenly the torturous memories of a Fourth of July two years gone. The unseen yet haunting image of his charred body in a plastic bag. The closed casket funeral service. The final farewell of my best friend, of a handful of graveside earth tossed into the hole to clatter upon the bronze coffin. My knees failing my weight, the tears which blinded and bled my ability to form another friendship for fear of having it suddenly swiped away. Please. No. Not another Jim.

Ginny, with her predilection for detecting secrets, apparently didn't notice my punch-in-the-gut reaction to hearing his name. "He lives down your road," she said. "Haven't you ever seen him on your bus?"

Had you asked me to name one kid on that bus, forget it. I couldn't. I just climbed onto that eponymous Yellow Submarine every morning and ignored everyone, kept to myself, took out some papers to correct or perused the lesson plan for the day. School day's end I repeated the routine. The kid hack was never noisy nor the children rowdy. The driver said one evening when he dropped me off at my farm, "Now it's gonna get rambunctious. At least when you're on the bus, the kids 'r behaved."

This day when school finished and I mounted the steps of the rickety yellow Cheese Wagon, I looked around and, sure enough, there he was. Jim O'Leary had parked himself in the seat directly across the aisle from the one where I always sat. We become defined by our pattern of behavior. As I took my seat he beguiled with his engaging silver shine of a smile. The silver wasn't braces. I saw the gleam of a retainer, a mouthpiece used to straighten oversized upper teeth. We didn't speak along the bumpy ride. As I exited, almost imperceptibly I turned my head to catch a glance. He waved his hand, not slightly or furtively to avoid peer group attention, but irresistibly, challenging anyone to spite his reaching out for my friendship. I didn't return his wave.

So what was the lesson about teachers and students friends? I recalled Mr. McCaig's classroom advice on forming a student-teacher friendship. It's OK as long as there's an invisible wall between student and teacher to prevent chum easily being turned into chump. I was unaware of any such relationship developing when I was myself a junior high student. I certainly hadn't made any overtures to befriend any of my teachers. They were, after all, just old people. My first year as a teacher, I was barely eight, maybe only nine years older than my students. And Peter Pan lurked mischievously beneath my breast.



Unrecognized in that swarm of striplings when Ginny and I had put down the foot and sent everyone scurrying home, Jim, I learned after poking through some snapshots, had been on my farm riding Goober with Jenny Ebal. They are pictured left on Goober. Funny thing, I hadn't remembered eying Jim O'Leary in that teenage throng. How then we became friends I don't clearly recollect, nor do I recall exactly when; to do so would expose it, on the surface anyway, as an unprofitable, dissected fuss, thus removing a precious and altogether personal mystery of my life. I know that friendship happened as fast as zooming down the tallest ski jump and flying long and high without ever needing to touch the ground. We became the closest friends and ours was all the more powerful because we had to hide it. A teacher must never be seen to play favorites!

Somehow, sometime after Ginny and I had enforced the evacuation of farm hangers-on, Jim just showed up on my farm. His quiet, soft-spoken, freckle-faced brother Michael with long, scraggly,

somewhat curly red hair drove him up the road and dropped Jim off after attending the Sunday service of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In the beginning Michael would say what time he'd return to take Jim home. Sometime later Jim told his brother what time to pick him up. In the barn we'd shovel horseshit into mountains and we'd talk about Dickens and movies and telepathy and girls and love and God, the afterlife, infinity, and eternity. We'd ride Goober solo, sometimes together. We played with Meatball. I taught Jim to cook and he made cookies, pancakes, pizzas, hamburgers, Swiss steak, and sloppy Joes, always from scratch and no packet mix. Jim O'Leary is pictured right listening to my instruction for making buckwheat buttermilk pancake batter.



As a probation officer, an individual who knew and understood boys, having no ilk for complete



possession of any one person, and having earned the trust and respect of the school psychologist, mothers of hand-picked boys, in some instances the police, I offered myself as role model and became a big brother to boys who had no father in the home. Steve Thompson and Dennis Alakson, once in a while his brother Ray, stayed overnight from Friday through Sunday; they had plenty of bedrooms and single beds from which to choose. Jim was a daytime Sunday-only visitor. Whatever the weather brought, the boys constructively occupied their time. Barn cleaning turned into games jumping from the hayloft. Left: Steve is on the ladder leading to the loft, ready to swing off on a rope into a hay pile. Outside they bathed, brushed, fed and watered Goober. Weather permitting they worked in the

garden. Come winter they shoveled snow, always managing to engage in horseplay among themselves and with the piebald gelding. Indoors they actively did domestic chores including vacuuming, floor sweeping or mopping, dusting, even bathtub scrubbing and toilet brushing. I imagined the response if their mothers had ordered them to clean the toilet at home! Whereas on the farm, I never heard a "Just a minute," a "Maybe later," or any form of backtalk. They just did as they were asked!

Nighttime temperatures were dropping. First removing the screens and storing them in the garage, then washing glass panes, the boys were steady hands helping put up storm windows. The front porch was permanently screened and we couldn't take them out. Storm windows fit snugly into spaces in front of the screens. Cold air still managed to sneak into the living room. Cracks between windows and sills, the door and the jambs and floor were blocked with colored construction paper and masking tape I commandeered from the school's Art department. It was makeshift, artistically abstract and simultaneously contemporary, and the living room was kept warm.

Saturday, November 9, 1968, was a day I'll never forget! I was initiated into being the kind of teacher who involved himself with his students away from textbooks and the mores of the classroom. It was a day which shook me and woke me up. I called Mr. McCaig for advice and he told me that this wouldn't be the first time something awful would happen with my students. There will be others who do things far more serious and I would probably become involved by lending my helping hand.

Jim Wade, a police officer I'd known for four years, came to my farm. At first I thought it was merely a social call. No! He came to arrest Denny and Ray for burglary. No longer just neighbor Jim, he was now police-uniformed Officer Wade who wouldn't share with me any information about the crime. I told the boys that if they needed me, they should call me. How those boys looked at me when they climbed into the squad car was gut-wrenching. They didn't seem too worried about what was going to happen with them, but their eyes said everything about how they'd hurt the one person who felt something for them.

Three hours later good neighbor and Officer Jim Wade was kind enough to call and tell me that Dennis had admitted to two auto thefts from last April and June, well before he wriggled his way into my life and becoming my student. Ray didn't admit to anything, specifically a robbery committed only one week ago, but two boys who were with Ray coughed up and pointed their fingers at him. In silence I understood why Ray wouldn't admit to robbery. After all, he'd only recently been released from Wales. Should Ray admit guilt he'd likely be sent up the river again or placed in a foster home far away from Stevens Point. I had hoped Ray wouldn't be sent back to the reformatory, and I knew for many reasons I couldn't be his foster parent. I would, however, go to court and speak on his behalf as a character reference.

Two burdensome days passed. Monday, November 12, I was given the opportunity to talk with Judge Levi and Ray's parole officer, my neighbor Gerry Hutnik, out of court. Nothing punitive befell Dennis. He was free. It was felt that Dennis had plenty of support in me and that it had been punishment enough for him to know I witnessed his arrest and that he had, in that afternoon, suffered knowing he looked criminal in my eyes and had greatly disappointed me. He would have to earn back my trust. Ray received no formal sentence, wouldn't be returned to Wales, and wouldn't go into a foster home. He was ordered to pay his share of damages which amounted to about five dollars. Judge Levi asked if Ray could earn the money working on my farm and by trimming some small trees on Hutnik's property. Ray was placed in my custody. I was made an official, albeit unpaid, probation officer for the police force.

I thought that, had I been a trained social worker, I doubt I'd have been able to do as much for the boys as I could as their teacher. Still, I felt I had failed in my responsibility. I had been unsuccessful in keeping Ray out of trouble. Having been made Ray's probation officer, I felt I was being given another chance with Ray. For the next six months I was successful with Ray and in modifying his behavior.

When everything smoothed over, I took my boys with their unkempt hair to Joe the barber, not far from the courthouse. Denny's long hair, which frankly I liked, was transformed like a sheep shearer by Joe. Denny wasn't unhappy about having lost his long wavy blonde locks since he had asked Joe to cut his hair "like Mr. Lare's." I had supper with Mom Alakson and her clean-cut sons. She said she'd bake me two pumpkin pies as a thank you and said she had no doubts about who her boys could turn to whenever, if ever, they needed help.

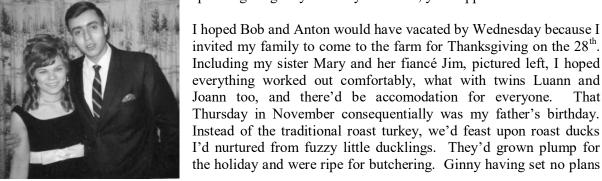
Jim Pierson was a photographer for *The Pointer*. He'd printed some photos for me, even provided the occasional ride for me to visit family in West Allis over a weekend and then bring me back to Stevens Point. I had seen an advertisement at Tucker's Camera Shop for photo Christmas cards and invited Jim to come to the farm to do a photo for my Christmas card. Several poses were done with Steve Thompson and Denny Alakson. Several shots included Dennis, Steve and I dressed like Russians mounted on Goober while Steve held Meatball in his lap. Afterwards, Jim Pierson offered to drive both boys home in his car, this saving mothers having to come and pick them up.

I settled on a photograph showing the three of us mounted on Goober's bare back. The Christmas card is reproduced below actual size.



Though not nearly as dramatic a change as when I took Ray and Denny to Joe the Barber, I dragged Steve Thompson into the barber's on a school night, Monday, November 25. His mother had beforehand invited me to supper. Well, la de da, Ginny just happened to drop in to the Thompsons and was also invited to stay for supper. Twirling spaghetti on my fork, I felt compelled to ask Mrs. Thompson if she had any misgivings about the farm and Steve spending time with me. She replied without hesitation that at first, yes, she did. After all, her son was an 8<sup>th</sup> grader and not in any of my classes. Now, however, she felt that I was doing a world of good for Steve. Her words were clear, "Steve has no father and he needs a man to identify with." There was a beat as she sipped her

sparkling burgundy. "Lucky for Steve, you happen to be that man."



invited my family to come to the farm for Thanksgiving on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Including my sister Mary and her fiancé Jim, pictured left, I hoped everything worked out comfortably, what with twins Luann and Joann too, and there'd be accomodation for everyone. Thursday in November consequentially was my father's birthday. Instead of the traditional roast turkey, we'd feast upon roast ducks I'd nurtured from fuzzy little ducklings. They'd grown plump for the holiday and were ripe for butchering. Ginny having set no plans for the national holiday, I asked her to join us. Just in case I ran out of rooms and beds, Ginny offered beds in her apartment for Mary and Jim. Everyone was expected to arrive Wednesday evening after Dad finished work.

Then, just two days ahead of Thanksgiving, for no reason other than I wanted one and one happened to be on sale, I bought a new Zenith 21 inch screen color television. More than a box, it was a fine piece of furniture. The first film I remember watching on TV in color was *The King and I* (1956). For first time viewing, it wasn't easy on my eyes. So used to seeing the black and white screen, bathed now in rich color, my eyes became heavy. I struggled to stay awake. It would take time to adjust to color and appreciate how my eyes seeing things so normally in real life would now need to adapt to seeing all things ever so more vividly on the TV. Color overwhelmed initially and I limited my time watching the screen.

I remember my Dad's initial response when he saw the freestanding console in the living room corner. He asked if my buying a color TV was a necessity. Of course it wasn't. I'd had a perfectly good black & white working set. Buying of necessity and not pleasure was an indicator of Dad's Depression era upbringing which, as I should have expected, he'd tried impressing upon me. I remember clearly his advice, "Only buy what you need because you never know when the money runs out." Dad was against the use of a credit card or buying things on time payments because they invariably incurred interest, a wasteful expense which bled savings. He'd always recommended I pay cash and, yes, for my new TV I had paid cash. Whether accepted or not by my Dad that my cold, hard cash paid for the color TV, my observance of Dad sitting on the couch, leaning forward and glued to the color screen was pleasurable. I couldn't get him away from it. He was transfixed by my unnecessary acquisition, fully paid for without putting my savings account into jeopardy, and he was especially transfixed with the collection of morning cartoons.

Thanksgiving with roast ducks was extraordinary. Ginny remarked that it was one Thanksgiving she'd never forget. After all, how often does a person of non-Polish heritage get to pull peepchas.<sup>3</sup>

Come the first of the month, a Sunday afternoon and December 1, Ginny and I prepared a special dinner of venison for the boys, Dennis, Steve and Jim. I asked Mr. McCaig to join with us. Additionally I re-heated the <a href="czarnina">czarnina</a> left over from the family Thanksgiving. Bearing in mind that most people baulk at putting anything into their mouths which contains blood, no one at my table was fearful of trying a bowl of <a href="czarnina">czarnina</a>, even after they knew what was in it. Tom McCaig said he liked it very much. Dennis and Steve, never afraid of anything put before them, ate up. Even Irish Jim, far from Polish heritage, tried <a href="czarnina">czarnina</a>; he was cautious and I'm not surprised he let it pass. We dined on chops, stew, pepper soup, and a roast. No stopping teenage boys eating heartily at the dinner table. It all was delicious. If we didn't know it was venison, we'd all have thought it was the finest roast beef. Deer meat can sometimes tend to be slightly drier than beef, hence the full gravy-boat kept easily refilled. Even after so many hungry teens eagerly scoffed venison, I ended up with ample leftovers.

The following night Dave Welnitz drove to the Farm for dinner. Dave became the resident assistant at Sims Hall this year. Typical of people in Stevens Point, no one shows up for dinner without bringing a token of appreciation. He showed up with a lot of still-wrapped "confiscated" toilet paper rolls from the dorm where I lived all five of my school years. Not that Dave was aware, but everything I served was leftovers. Of course some foods always taste better the next day. Flavors just happen to come together.

Nearing Christmastime, Jim Pierson gave me a ride and I was home in West Allis with family. Apollo 8 launched from Cape Kennedy, Florida, on December 21, 1968 and arrived at the Moon on Christmas Eve. To get into a lunar orbit, a first for humans, they had to fire the engine on the far side of the Moon where there's no radio contact with Mission Control. All they had to do was point their vehicle in the right direction, press a button, and hoped it worked perfectly. Captain Jim Lovell

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Polish slang, in our family anyway, for pin feathers. Pin feather in correct Polish is pióro szpilki.

reported that all went well. Bill Anders saw the Earth rising over the edge of the Moon and snapped a picture. Called *Earthrise* it is now a famous, much-admired image of how fragile the Earth is. Commander Frank Borman called it "The Good Earth." For our future it was a hopeful moment.

Following a traditional Polish Christmas Eve, exchange of gifts, midnight Mass, more presents Christmas morning, and visiting with some of the relatives, my brother Steve returned with me to Stevens Point, this return trip both chauffeured by Jim Pierson. Of course we gave him gas money!

Christmas on The Farm came traditionally white... with 27 inches of snow! Pierson dropped us off on the road where the plow had been. We climbed over a three foot ridge of dirty snow left behind by the plow's blade. Plodding deliberately to the kitchen back door of the house, with every step we sank deep to our knees in fluffy snow. We grabbed shovels. Steeled arm and leg muscles cried out as we burnt calories spending energy to clear the driveway. Cutting snow into foot by foot blocks and heaving each block, over the next four hours and into the dark we created walls of monotonous drudge. Snowbanks high either side of the driveway, we mounded snow on the orchard side of a path leading to the back door. I am pictured right in the freezing outdoors. As bravado, or some might say foolish demonstration of our health,



stamina, and courage in the face of frosty elements, my brother and I would strip down to a bare chest. The outdoor snapshot was made from the kitchen door, the orchard in the background. I was keen to enjoy a second Christmas, one with Ginny and my boys.



Amongst Santa's gifts was Ginny's special, thoughtful present for the boys and me, a set of personalized drinking mugs – Jim, Steve, Ray, Dennis, and 'Dad.' Ginny's gift recognized our 'family' on the Farm; it was the first tangible indication that I was seen as a father figure, a position which the boys heartedly endorsed. In actuality, since Jim was fortunate to have both mother and father in the home, he was the outsider. Not really. Ginny insisted he qualified because Jim's father's business as a sales representative meant he was on the road more than he was at home. Our surrogate Farm family, each member holding Ginny's present, a mug bearing the owner's name, is pictured left.

My brother's Christmas Day birthday was always celebrated separate from Christmas, meaning he received gifts that weren't combined Christmas and birthday. Although my family had celebrated Steve's birthday on the 25<sup>th</sup>, we did it all over again on the Farm. Starting with his first birthday a tradition was initiated to take a snapshot of Steve with his birthday cake in front of the Christmas tree. Steve is pictured right for his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday holding his cake in front of the tree on the Farm.





In celebration mode, the boys found cup hooks in the kitchen junk drawer and conspicuously mounted all five mugs beneath the cupboard and above the sink countertop. The 'Dad' mug occupied center space with mugs Dennis and Ray to its left, mugs Jim and Steve on the right. Of the snapshot of Ginny pictured left, the mugs can be seen hanging in the background.

Then something very unusual, unexpected happened. The boys' mugs never moved but, of its own volition,

"Dad' gently swung back and forth on its hook. Halting its movement with a hand was only a temporary restrain. We experimented with a fan, left open the kitchen door, vibrated a cardboard sheet to produce a breeze and hoped to unlock the secret of the centrally positioned swaying cup. This physical manifestation of some unseen force happened any time of the day and night. The boys saw it. My brother saw it. Ginny saw it. Cause of the unexplainable party trick, magic trick, or who knows what kind of trick amazed and amused. Our casual guests looked at any or all of us with skepticism. The phenomenon didn't manifest for just anyone, just for a select few and our immediate "family".

Snow, mud, duck shit and horseshit meant that, like a Japanese household, shoes had to be removed upon entering the kitchen. The boys followed the simple request and lined their shoes in pairs on newspapers placed near the door. Each morning a question was posed and no one could provide the answer. Overnighters Dennis, Ray, and Steve all honestly denied responsibility for nocturnal trickery and none were known sleepwalkers. Their shoes were scattered around the kitchen floor, sometimes tied by the laces in mismatched pairs. Regardless of the outdoor temperature and despite the farmhouse being centrally heated, in the morning the kitchen always felt cold.

I told Mr. McCaig about what was happening and invited him to dinner. He must have been allowed into the select few because, sure enough, he saw the swinging 'Dad' cup happen. He didn't stay overnight to see what happened with the boys' shoes, just accepted my word as gospel. "Know what?" Tom said, "I've had some experience with this when I taught in Chicago and looked after boys too." Then Tom said ever so matter-of-factly, and putting a cold finger of sublime suspicion up my spine at the same time, "I think you might have a poltergeist."

As any parapsychologist will tell you, poltergeist phenomena are usually centered on a child ranging in age from 5 to 16. Which one of the boys, or was it all four, was the center of attention for our poltergeist? A handyman's version might suggest that where 14 and 15 year old boys reside, whether temporarily or permanently, their sleep invaded by troubling dreams, personal security was garnered in a fabricated male-oriented family. The real became the surreal, the familiar offset by the unfamiliar, and everyday life became a questionable reverie of puzzling, sometimes frightful fancy. Although volumes have been written on the subject, poltergeists still remain an unexplainable phenomenon. Poltergeist means 'noisy ghost' and they are not to be taken lightly. These supernatural entitles can sometimes be violent and volatile. Thank goodness our poltergeist was no beast. Rather, ours was playful.

People who have experienced poltergeist phenomena are reluctant to talk about it. Fear of ridicule prevented us from sharing our experiences with anyone not part of the Farm. The lace-tying and shoe scattering tricks couldn't be attributed to any specific actions of any of the boys. Without proof or tangible explanation of where the responsibility lay, we accepted our mysterious presence and kept it quiet from others. As to the cup which moved all on its own, the only explanation offered was that its movement was symbolic of my role in the boys' lives.

Just before New Year's Eve Jim's Dad visited with Jim in tow. It was the first time I met Rawlin O'Leary. He'd come to request a big favor. Rawlin's wife Afton required hospitalization for cancer treatment. That came as a shock. Jim hadn't said anything about his mother being unwell. Rawlin

said with hesitancy in his voice that they hadn't the money to pay for room and board, but knew how much Jim liked me and I him, so would I feel inconvenienced if I was asked to look after Jim on my Farm during Afton's hospitalization? I guessed there was an assumption I'd not say, "No." No sooner I said, "Yes," Rawlin sent Jim to the car to collect his bag of clothes and toiletries. He could choose whichever room he wanted from two spare furnished bedrooms.

We celebrated New Year's Eve with roast goose; way more expensive than chicken and somewhat pricier than duck. I'd read somewhere that it had once-upon-a-time been the traditional bird for



Christmas or New Year's feast. As big as a goose looks, it's mostly carcass, a big bony skeleton with a cavernous cavity. Goose meat isn't particularly plentiful and, roasted, a lot of fat seeps out from the skin into the pan. Good thing there were plenty more side dishes including <u>barscht</u> (Polish-style beet soup), potato dumplings, and vegetables. Pictured left

at the kitchen table laden with food are Steve, Jim, me wearing the chef's hat, Patti and Bruce. She's not in the photo because Ginny took the



snapshot. Dessert was Steve's pumpkin pie; pictured right Steve home-making the pie crust.



Partying overflowed with a long-necked hand-blown bottle of Chianti, a gift from Bruce and Patti; we partook by lying on our backs and allowing Jim to pour dry red wine into open mouths. The carpet was easily stained as the amply flowing wine spilled, overflowed from the corners of our mouths. Jim had no experience at handling the bottle, easily unbalanced, the lip often releasing more vintage than anyone expected. Pictured left, Jim causing an overflow of Chianti into Bruce's mouth and onto the carpet while Patti cradles Bruce's head. We imbibed ample vodka, Canadian Club, and cheap champagne. Jim didn't touch the stuff, adhering strictly to his Mormon upbringing which forbade any experimentation with alcohol. We didn't overlook a

color telecast of Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians playing the traditional "Auld Lang Syne" at midnight. It was snowing; a blizzard might be the more appropriate description. Even though I had plenty of accommodation on the Farm, Bruce, Patty and Ginny insisted on driving home. We were unaware that seven more inches of snow would accumulate overnight.

You'd think people would stay in bed and keep warm or nurse a hangover New Year's Day. Not so this cold winter's morning of a brand new 1969. I awoke to a loud banging on the kitchen door. I rose rather bleary-eyed from the sack, put on some clothes and clomped down the stairs to answer the door. It was Roger Kisting, my student from student teacher days. How nice he hadn't forgotten me, but at seven o'clock in the morning? "Me n'Dad taut youse cud use some more hay in dis snow." OK, he sounded like I hadn't taught him a thing. He was a farm kid and, in theory anyway because I lived on one too, so was I. "We're parked on da road. Can't pull in your driveway 'cause ov da snow." What a heck of a way to start the day! I called Jim and my brother Steve to dress and come

downstairs. We puffed and huffed hauling 27 bales of hay through snowdrifts from the driveway into the barn. That made for seven trips each while Roger's Dad sat smiling and comfy in the warm cabin of his truck.

Snowfall totaled 34 inches. After we shoveled, snowbanks either side of the driveway were 9 feet high! Goober liked getting out of the barn and exercising. Winter didn't seem to bother him at all. High-stepping in the drifts Jim and Steve taxed its courage.





Above left on New Year's Day: Steve rides and Jim leads. Above right, Massive snowbank in front of the farmhouse dwarfs Meatball. Jim is astride Goober as I hold the reins. Pictured below right is Jim cuddling Meatball. Pictured below left, Jim's astride Goober while I've fallen over leading the horse back into the barn.





It seemed cruel that all too soon on January 3, a Friday, Wisconsin's public schools finished Christmas-New Year vacation and classes resumed. Of all days, on a Friday, mind you! Would it have killed anyone if they'd waited until Monday? Bruce drove us to the Municipal Airport Thursday lunchtime. I treated my brother to a flight home on Northwest Airlines. Mom and Dad would have to pick him up at Billy Mitchell Field, but Steve would be home in an hour, not after four or more hours staring out a frosted, fogged window of the Greyhound bus.

That one oddball Friday of school at the end of the week stood out like a spare rhubarb stalk, but would have turned into an extra of a snow day's makeup day at the end of the year had it not gone ahead. Friday morning Jim and I dutifully stood outside my home for the yellow wheelie Banana.

Passengers were antsy, no doubt the return to school for just the one day after holidays and just before a weekend chafed brains and rear ends. Animosity clouded the blood running in students' veins.

On corridor duty during a class change a male student absent from my second period class walked past. He was a whole lot bigger than me. In a normal tone of voice I called his name and asked, "Where were you for class?" He snarled, "None of yer f\*\*\*ing business." Oh, boy! Maybe I shouldn't have, but I took hold of his arm. In his snarl the F-word had emerged and, language aside, I intended taking him to the office for having cut my class. The unruly kid threatened me. If I didn't let go of his arm he'd rip mine off and beat me over the head with it. The overgrown teen turned and raised his fist. Instinctively I released his arm. Mouthing a string of invective, and like a filthy rat, off he scurried. Had I said anything, I was afraid he'd have followed through with his oath. Obviously trembling, I walked to the office and reported the incident to the vice-principal. I was informed later the matter had been resolved and there'd be an apology before he re-entered my class. Who knows what personal problems this kid had and why he decided to take it out on me?

By school day's end, a whole day had been wasted; Jim and I boarded the same bus home and, for the first time ever, exited together at my farm. None of the young passengers batted an eyelid. If any eyelashes had flicked out of curiosity, if tongues had wagged afterward, we weren't aware and, indeed, didn't care.





That first weekend in January was better than a day in Iverson Park skating on the iced lagoon or whizzing down the toboggan slide. Denny and Steve made their way to the farm and we all played in our deep snow. Above left on January 2, Steve Thompson and Meatball pose on a snowbank with the mostly buried highway speed sign and right; Steve is up to his waist in a snowbank. Pictured right, Denny holding Meatball and a shovel in the driveway.

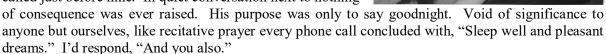
These were winter afternoons when dark descended early. If in daytime the sun hadn't shown, by 4:30 it looked, and the ensuing gloom made it feel, like nighttime had already descended.



Pictured right, after hours of working and playing in cold air and snow, Denny gives Meatball a warm bath. The part-turtle-neck knit Denny wears was called a dickey.

Sooner than ever expected Afton returned from chemotherapy, Jim returned to his family home, and Rawlin resumed criss-crossing the country in his sales job. All was back to "normal." I missed those constant days and nights with Jim always there on the farm.

School nights in the New Year Jim initiated what turned into a rosewater ritual. Like a dependable timepiece he always called just before nine. In quiet conversation next to nothing



The snow settled, froze, and was too hard for play, too dangerous for exercising Goober. More snow mixed with rain would fall overnight and freeze when the temperature was at its lowest just at sunrise. Layer upon layer of pocked-marked ice formed. I could walk on top of the snow sheet without sinking, but a horse's weight would too easily have cracked through. Somehow of a Friday night late in January Goober managed to escape from the comfort of the barn. I don't know, maybe like so

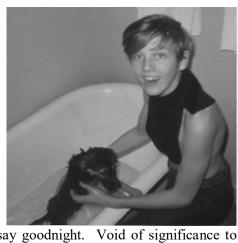
many Wisconsinites in winter, the horse suffered cabin fever and was desperate for a change of scenery. Bad luck for the horse because the ice sliced his right hind leg. I felt lucky that Mrs. Thompson drove Steve and Denny to the farm Saturday morning. Mrs. Thompson needed to be in Milwaukee to participate in a bowling tournament and Steve had asked to stay overnight on the farm. Denny had come along just because he wanted to. Denny's sympathetic temperament translated into his playing doctor. I took a photo, right, of Denny applying hydrogen peroxide to Goober's leg wound. Steve cradled Goober's head and talked soothingly while I swathed the leg in a bandage torn from a spare, unused, clean white sheet. Considering how badly the injury looked, in little time it healed.

Jim made it his routine to roll up to the farm around midday every Sunday after the Mormon Church service attended with his mother and brother. Pictured right is the trinity of Steve, Denny and Jim: this Sunday they worked over two hours cleaning the barn and, using horse dung, plugged



holes in the walls to keep out the wind. In greater comfort, we hoped now that Goober wouldn't feel so inclined to force his way out of the barn.

Pictured left, Jim made pizzas Sunday afternoon. A popular TV commercial for Parmesan cheese featured the Chef Boy-Ar-Dee product. In jest, Jim was our Chef Boy-Ar-Dee-Dee!





Monday evening Jim made the same style pizza for his family's supper. That night before nine in our prayer-like phone call he bragged to me that his parents and brother thought it was excellent. He added he'd told them he made the pizza "according to Mr. Lare's recipe." Nothing special about my pizza method, except that topping was usually hamburger chunks. The weekend held significance for me. To Steve and Denny I was Mr. Lare, friendly teacher. For Jim I happened to have become just Lare, Jim's very dear friend.

## Chapter 58: Argle-Bargles

The Red Jim O'Leary's Who Will Give Us Tomorrow

isdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom:
and with all thy getting
get understanding.

Proverbs IV: 7

If... was a magnificent British movie, a surrealistic study of students in an all boys boarding school directed by Lindsay Anderson and starring, in his motion picture debut, Malcolm McDowell. The boys stage a savage insurrection – or do they? For its controversial subject matter at the time of its release the film received an X rating for its depictions of violence. Released in the United States in March 1969 and my having seen it at the Fox Theater, the Bible text cited was the opening title card for this all-English film and I've chosen it to serve as chapter introduction. Remember my saying we used the Missa Luba in church? In its soundtrack If included the "Sanctus" from the Missa Luba.

As soon as February began I succumbed to a winter illness, no doubt one of the mutations of influenza; something I learned later that had been "going around" and it got me on The Farm. Making a near-incomprehensible fever-induced babbling over the phone, I asked to excuse myself from classroom duty. I experienced some delirium, the maniacal nightmares of ague as I lay on the davenport swaddled in a heavy woolen blanket shivering and sweating. My eyes couldn't focus, so I hadn't switched on the TV. I was as full of pains as an old window. Then, late in the afternoon like the Lady with the Lamp, an almost spectral Ginny was spoon-feeding me homemade chicken broth.



She had taken a taxi to my farm to nurse me immediately the school day finished. It was already dark outside, the winter afternoon having yielded to winter's dungeon. And there too was the feint silver smile. His long, slender, warm fingers stroking my overheated forehead and brushing back my uncombed hair, I barely heard the cheeky soothing voice of a Nightingale Jim. During my several days of ill-health, a genuine bout with the heebie-jeebies of a full blown influenza, I don't know how it came to be that Jim acquired from Ginny the nickname Séamus, the Irish form of James, but in other languages and cultures, Jacob. Pictured left is a snapshot Jim took when I'd almost recovered from the flu. We kidded that I looked like a character straight out of TV's "Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In", Arte Johnson's dirty old man.

Was it possible my illness prompted Jim's new dimension to friendship? He'd attend his Sunday Mormon service and arrive on the farm, courtesy his brother Michael's driving, shortly after midday. Come sunshine, snow flurry, or full blowing blizzard, Jim arrived. Our special time was the evening well after the sun sank and the Sunday Night Movies flickered onto the TV. Color TV was still relatively unique and in my home, utterly new. Choice came from only three channels and little did it matter what movie aired. Sometime during the week we might pre-plan which to watch. Mostly we

just took a chance and hoped something decent might air. We'd stretch out belly down onto a foam pad cushion, a couple of pillows and crossed arms becoming plinths for our heads. If the movie failed to appeal, the TV's fluttering light and low noise was comforting... and we'd talk quietly about anything, everything and nothing, engage in kid-like teasing until some action on the 20 inch screen grabbed and we'd briefly loan it our attention. Pictured right, Jim and I are acrobats on the These were gentle nights only ever foam cushion. interrupted by the inevitable rumble of Michael's automobile in the driveway, always no later than 10. "Nuts," Jim would grumble, 'Gotta go." I'd nod, my face showing mutual disappointment, "Well, maybe we'll see you tomorrow in the corridor." School was school. The farm was the farm.





Sundays belonged to Jim and me, though sometimes eagerly shared with Ginny, Steve, Denny, Bruce and Patti, maybe even Tom McCaig, for exercising Goober, cleaning the barn, playing afternoon games, and eating supper together. The boys took over in the kitchen and prepared main courses and desserts. Pictured left, Steve ices a cake. Again I'd bet at home they'd do nothing unless told to do so by Mom. It was different on the farm. There were constant challenges as to who could make the best cake, the best pizza, the best hamburger, the best Swiss steak, the best meatloaf, the best fried or roasted chicken. It was here that I learned to eat the least favorite part of the chicken, the wings. Preferring the drumstick, I let the boys have first choice and ate whatever was left, invariably wings and the part that went over the fence last.

Some Upward Bound kids arrived on the farm Saturday, February 15. There was no special occasion, just that they felt they needed to keep in touch, make sure I wouldn't forget about them, get together to keep the spark alive. Another friend who fanned that spark of friendship was Mark Maloney. He showed up unannounced from Green Bay the same day. It was a day of reminiscing and laughter with a stack of hot dogs and hamburgers.

Pictured right: I am seated in the rocking chair. In profile is Kay Wilson, then Ranj LeClaire, Wayne Skenadore, Ron Skenadore, and continuing tutor Dave Graf.



From late February and into early March I earned the \$50 allocated in my contract for coaching Forensics. That may have averaged to all of a dollar or less per hour. I worked with 15 students in two play readings and three poetry readings. The play readings were selected by knowledgeable, well-informed 7<sup>th</sup> graders. One group brought me a scene from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the other *The Taming of the Shrew*. Most students rehearsed with me during my non-teaching periods, after-school time not available because I still rode the school bus. Organizing rehearsals was easy. Teachers cooperated and released students from classes. Kids in Forensics invariably participated because they wanted to, not because it was compulsory or someone had forced them into it. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders were smart cookies and did justice to performing Shakespeare's comedies.

Jim was involved in poetry reading. Only rarely did he encroach upon the in-school rehearsal time of others. Jim rehearsed on the morning and after school bus rides and over the phone. March 2 Jim rang early and said they'd not be going to Sunday services. Could I come down and pick him up on Goober so we could rehearse. I'm sure we could just as well have rehearsed in his home, but Jim preferred spending his Sundays on the farm. On a bare-backed Goober I rode two miles down Route 2 to collect Jim. Prince was very stubborn in this seasonal transition. I guess he'd become lazy having had too much time in the barn. However, I did manage to open him up into a full gallop. Jim and I rode together on the bare back of the horse. Soon I dismounted and I walked, my rear end too sore from winter riding neglect. I wrote a poem about the experience.

#### Conquistadors

My fingers intertwined in the mane,
I pulled up swinging my right leg
across the spine of the beast.
He reared his head, his tail swished,
and the clop clop of his bare hooves
composed a primitive symphony upon the asphalt.
He was stubborn, that gelded pinto,
and my insistence on a fast pace
was rebuked with a gait of plodding.
There were some cars going over the speed limit
which honked as they passed my left hand
and children in awe waved at me,
the boy conquistador following the adult machine
and making a distant highway of one's own design.

There wasn't much sunlight in that gray morning as a cool wind parted my hair on a side to which it was unaccustomed.

I made my own sunshine in song and word for when I'm alone
I have a tendency to think aloud.

My spotted horse suddenly revived his spirit and for a quarter of a mile we galloped like the tympani section of The *Red Pony*.

He was huffing snot from his nostrils when I dismounted and a short walk eased the tension in six legs.

Just around the bend was the home of my friend.

Now, if you know anything of me at all,
you would definitely know that it was not my intention
to walk bow-legged and drained to greet him.

I remounted that bare back,
smacked a lilac switch against the horse's haunches,
and galloped like a clumsy cyclone,
hooting and shouting as I've seen Indians do
on the late late show.

It was as I wanted it to be.
I am and need to be a free spirit.
And I was joined with the spring's birth
of the native crocus.

I became we. And new children waved at conquistadors bearing toward a distance indefinite in miles and miles.

I sent some poems, including *Conquistadors*, to Miss Mary Shumway, my former university teacher in a Poetry course, who was now working on her doctorate in Colorado. She had seen my potential in class and had suggested I keep in touch; I did and periodically sent her poems. Miss Shumway recommended where I should attempt to have the worthy ones published. Her slice of the

achievement pie was a personal desire to see my poems in print in more than a school newspaper insert. She envisioned my poetry published in a book.

Time spent with all my contestants paid off. 13 of my 15 made it into the March 8 finals. Two interpretive readers of poetry earned a <u>B</u>, thereby ending all chance of moving ahead.

Attending the Saturday finals, I watched both my play reading groups and felt upbeat after each performance. My students were mature, inventive, creative, and confident in performance. Other groups presented play readings which may have been written by their teachers and were possibly aimed at kindergarten audiences with short attention spans. I didn't see much challenge for the readers in those plays or their content. The judge announced the winner and, sure enough, it was a group that presented a children's play with a theme not far removed from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. She went on to orally critique other play readings. About my two troupes, she glared over the rim of her bifocals and announced ever so officiously, "7<sup>th</sup> graders have no business doing Shakespeare." That was it. Full stop. I was shocked. She dealt out her written comments; our papers were blank, save for her sole pencil mark of C. An opinion and a rectum, well, Lordy, Lordy, doesn't everyone have one!

Jim fared far better emerging from the session with his broad crooked smile and an  $\underline{A}$ . We celebrated Jim's victory that evening with his mother and brother in my farm kitchen, pictured right. Jim pitched in and together we cooked a chicken dinner.

As spring approached, a conversation about a foster home for boys developed. Whether it was my idea

or one suggested I'm not sure, but the brainstorm appealed and was pursued. I know that Jim and I enthusiastically mulled it over. Jim was a recipient of my caring nature and I had grand ideas of fostering homeless boys, boys rejected by parents, boys in need of guidance. We even fantasized on a name for the institution wherein our names combined into Jameslare. Jim saw himself as an employee in the scheme. I looked at a 20 acre farm for sale. Located just out of Plover, its price was \$5000. Made of stone, the house was two storeys with five bedrooms and two bathrooms. Imposing as was the building, inside it seemed pokey and gave no impression of space to swing a cat. The 20 acres were fenced, a long and thin land parcel littered with glacial boulders and rocks. Crops weren't grown. All I saw in my mind was lots of work and too much money.

Jim and I shared our idea with Ginny and she was fully supportive. Ginny arranged for a meeting in my farm kitchen Over a Swiss steak dinner prepared with a town official. mainly by Jim, pictured right, we presented our aims, goals, guidelines for action and ideas necessary to cut through red tape, and the viability of running a group foster home as a bachelor. Discussion was burdened with frustration and money, location, schooling, income, and the blockade: biggest pitfall, I was a single man. The state would never recognize a single parent all-male institution. Single people were looked upon with suspicion, considered unreliable, seen as incapable of parenting. Heck, it was still an era when a baby was taken away from a young single mother who may have been badgered into signing a paper relinquishing



parenthood. The newborn was fostered out or put up for adoption. I would have needed to hire a housemother or a married couple who'd be licensed as the foster parents. A thought flashed that Ginny would be a good housemother. Perhaps my own parents would consider being foster parents.

Ginny suggested a simple cut through the red tape to solve the single-man-in-charge situation. She looked at me with a smirk and said we should get married. I looked back at Ginny, no smirk on my lips, and told her I wasn't one bit keen on the idea of a marriage only for a convenient means to an end. I wasn't going to enter into a contract of marriage simply to satisfy or override a state regulation. I wasn't about to magically fall in love and just couldn't see myself permanently tied with Ginny. I put on hold all notions of housemothers and foster parents. Either or both would have meant I'd only ever be the so-called landlord without first hand input to fostering. I put a damper on any marriage of convenience. Despite everything piling up a negative, my cement headedness kicked in and I thought someday, perhaps, there'd be another way to hitch up a sign for Jameslare.

The meeting with the town official was a little more than a week before St. Patrick's Day. Depositing my tax refund from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) I did a little shopping and bought myself a pair of green flair slacks and a couple of green turtle-necked shirts, one for Jim and one for me. Jim appreciated the shirt, but he wanted a pair of green flairs just like mine. There were no green flairs in Jim's size at the Golden Hangar in Stevens Point. I called Bob Baril in Green Bay's Hangar. Bob had a pair of the green flairs in Jim's size and said he wouldn't accept my money. The slacks were a gift and would arrive in the mail the following day. We'd be dressed in alike green outfits for St. Patrick's Day. Jim was an O'Leary and, I for the day, well, I'd be an O'Lare.

Ginny took photos of Jim and me showing off our identical outfits in a school corridor, the photo at right subsequently enlarged to poster size and proudly displayed in my farm's living room. Dressing as we did was, on my part, a mistake, an error in judgment. We had flaunted our friendship and crossed the invisible line. I had overlooked that the farm was the farm and school was school. Tongues wagged among the senior faculty with whom I already had an unsteady working relationship. By means of the proverbial grapevine I learned I had gone too far and was summoned to the principal's office.

I expected a drubbing from Mr. Norton; instead he opened with an apology. This was a very different era. "I'm sorry, Larry, very sorry. But you can imagine who made a complaint and as principal, of course, I have to satisfy complaints." Our conversation didn't dwell, instead being tidied with a taut reminder



to keep that invisible wall between student and teacher. It was all right being friends with a student, but don't go around putting on a blatant and shamefaced display in school. As to who complained, I figured it out faster than a sneeze through a screen door.

Before I joined the Franklin staff, as a student teacher at P.J. Jacobs I had heard stories about a teacher who was very popular with her students. She had fresh ideas, ability to motivate learning with disliked subject matter, and she welcomed students into her home weekends. Now, however, she was late middle age, mutton dressed as lamb, and fast approaching burn out, as evidenced by the blue bottle of mouthwash kept in her filing cabinet. She drank it! It wasn't mouthwash! Along with the new school year, along came a new teacher with fresher ideas, ability to motivate, and who welcomed students into his home. Whether or not enrolled in his classes, he fast became popular with students. Without intention, I'd usurped her popularity and, in her perception, had to be destroyed to preserve her own little niche in students' hearts. I was the target of her forked tongue.

I never bothered to confront this drab woman. Bob Norton handled the complaint delicately and I just happened to accidentally let slip a notion of mouthwash. He would have a few quiet chosen words with the complainant. Still, I saw the red light that warned to keep things low key.

At school day's end Jim and I walked with Ginny to her apartment for supper. No sooner we'd

finished eating than a solution to keeping things low key was presented as if served on a silver salver. It wasn't good. As if in slow motion Jim went down onto the carpet, put a thumb near to his lips and, breathing laboredly, fell into a deep sleep, pictured right. Ginny rang the O'Leary home and Mike drove into town to collect his brother. Almost effortlessly I picked up Jim's ragdoll weight and cradled him to Mike's car. Jim reclined a dead weight across the back seat. We covered him with a blanket. Mike dropped me off at my farm. Afton rang once Jim was home and safe in his bed. She wanted me to know that Jim's collapse wasn't my fault and I shouldn't worry. Afton said that Jim had an unhappy medical history with bronchitis. It nearly killed him.



Jim was missing in action for a month. He was as sick as the proverbial dog passing peach pits. Our regular evening phone calls disappeared all together. Inability to catch his breath and breathe normally meant Jim was unable to physically move out of his bed and make it to the phone without collapsing into a sorry heap. Given our known ritual, Afton would ring to give me an update on Jim's health or my anxiety prompted my calling for his latest prognosis. Much to Jim's chagrin, I was willing to bet, she told me that Jim was using an old-fashioned bedpan. All the while my friend was bedridden his father was away on business in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Coincidence it may have been, but hearing from and seeing good people from my past in the week immediately following Jim's St. Patrick's Day crumpling to the floor worked like applying a soothing balm to a wound. Letters arrived from Jersey Jim Dillamon and former teenie-weenie Mike Hughes. Both simultaneously at Camp Richards five years ago, one had taught me horseback riding and the other had peed in my lap. Dillamon had long moved on from working at Boys Town and Mike would prepare to graduate from high school. On the weekend my one time college roommate Mark Maloney visited from Green Bay. Steve Thompson, without question, continued as a weekend farm regular tending to Goober.

Once, just the once during his prolonged illness I recall Jim speaking with me. Against his mother's wishes Jim had dragged his wracked body from bed to wall-mounted phone. Afton later told me Jim had crawled on his hands and knees to languish in a chair gasping, coughing and sucking for air. Our one-off conversation amounted mostly to silence on my part as he gulped and wheezed, occasionally mouthing a recognizable word. Hearing Jim was both joyful and heartbreaking.

It was Jim's misfortune to miss out on the staff-student basketball game. Had he been able, he'd have had a good laugh along with classmates and teachers. Although the fence between teachers and students had to be erected and maintained, activities were organized to bring us together to show that, despite teachers being in a position of power, we were still human beings; we had feelings too. In the classroom, particularly study hall, teachers more often than not presented as the cold and unmoved faces of stone carved by the Rapa Nui on Easter Island. Students needed to know that teachers were, like themselves, real people.

I was never much at basketball. In fact, I was a klutz. In 9<sup>th</sup> grader gym class I never managed to coordinate into a smooth rhythm of dribbling and simultaneously running to make a point-scoring lay-up. My only successful method of making a free throw was to deliver the ball as a two-handed underhand lift. So, along with other male basketball fails on our staff, for the evening I dressed as a cheerleader. We had used after-school time to learn cheers and simple acrobatics from female staff who'd been cheerleaders in their high school days. Acrobatics had to be simple. None of us wanted to risk a fractured bone, a torn muscle, a broken neck! For me, it was like rehearsing for a stage performance and, silly as we looked, I wanted us to come across as professional as possible. That's

one thing about comedy... the more serious the approach, the funnier it can be. We were a screaming hit with our students and are picture right. Given the armpit sweat stain I must have burned calories or felt under pressure. Except for a staff win, I don't even remember what else happened in the basketball game.

I received an interesting invitation from Mundelein College in Chicago. The Catholic college was dedicating its new Learning Resource Center and wanted me to present a program of my 16mm "Elkay" Productions. All travel, accommodation and meals would be included for two, plus \$100 for my participating in questions and answers following screenings. Little did I know upon reading the letter, come October, what my own health would be.



As an April Easter approached, too much time had passed without my seeing Jim and I really missed him. He was still confined to his room in his cotton pajamas, still finding natural respiration unnatural. I asked Afton if we should get together for an Easter Sunday dinner, served lunchtime, and I'd prepare and cook the food in the O'Leary kitchen. My heritage prompted the sharing of traditional Polish Easter fare.

Shortly before Good Friday and a day off school, I thought about Chrismary Durmick. I believed the door had never been completely shut. I was still interested in her. I was more interested after the red tape had been laid on the table by the town official in our discussion about a boys' home. I hope I don't come across as a user, as simply taking advantage of a situation to fulfill a dream. As had been the brief but ever unlikely thought with Ginny, Chrismary could be the marriage of convenience. I could see myself waking up and seeing Chrismary resting her head on the pillow beside me every morning for the rest of my life. It wasn't a spur of the moment thought. I'd thought often about a life together with her. It's just that I don't think she did. But I wasn't about to give up. Circumstance spun me into motion to seriously consider the prospect of marriage. I invited Chrismary to the farm to help color Easter eggs, pictured right.



Smalltalk included Jameslare. I sought an opinion from Chrismary which didn't come. Idealistically I thought about somewhat romantically bringing into the conversation our future and home. I looked and listened for just that right moment which, it seemed, deliberately side-stepped me, so I took that step of faith and popped the question, "Chris, would you marry me?"

As she appears in the picture, she just looked at me and smiled. There was a pause which felt endless, a long, elastic, dragged-out pause.

"I'll have to think about it," she said, "OK? Give me a couple of weeks."

A couple of weeks? I think I already knew what the answer would be, but... women and their predilections are never meant to be fully understood by me or any of the general male gender. Only in my mind did I initiate a gesture of raising my arms in surrender and disbelief; my physical face smiled politely and I decided to wait.

Saturday I made potato kluski, solid and cigar-shaped, and carved butter into the shape of a lamb. About noon Easter Sunday Michael collected me from the farm.



Pictured left at the table are Michael, Jim in his pajamas, and Afton O'Leary. In their kitchen I baked a ham rubbed with dry mustard and brown sugar and studded with whole cloves. I fried the kluski in butter. Afton had baked bread and a stollen, a loaf-shaped yeast cake filled with dried fruits and nuts. Usually German Christmas fare, it was our Easter dessert. There remain two indelible memories of that Easter. One was the all-day smile which couldn't be wiped from Jim's face. The other was Afton's infatuation with my symbol of the risen Christ, the carved butter lamb, even if it did look like a poodle.

As spring's sunshine shoved winter's gloom aside, weather improved and Jim's health returned. He sweet-talked his brother into driving him to my farm on school days before 7:00 a.m. to help with the chores – horse feeding, watering, grooming, cleaning – and we'd share a cooked breakfast before standing in the driveway to await the yellow Bumpmobile. Jim eventually discarded his pea coat, pictured below left. He took to wearing my father's wool army jacket to school and around the farm after one afternoon in the barn breaking down an alpine pile of horse poop. I never knew what his reason was for wearing my dad's coat. It was the same one I'd used when making *From the Powers of Darkness*. Had it been anything more than wanting to keep his pea coat clean when shoveling horse poo in the barn, or had he another reason? We did move a mountain of horse manure, dumping shovelfuls into a wheelbarrow and humping it to where we'd plant a spring vegetable garden. As a volatile fertilizer it festered and steamed threatening to ignite or explode. Below: two pictures of Jim and me shoveling steaming barn muffins. Jim's in his pea coat and I'm wearing Dad's army jacket.





This same weekend Jim asked me to teach him how to splice film. Whenever I made a movie I threw away off-cuts with blurred images, over or under exposures, and ones made with terrible camerawork. Retakes and footage not used in a final edit were spliced together and saved on a reel. This was the footage Jim used to learn splicing. The 16mm rewind arms on a solid board was set on the kitchen table with a splicer, a frame by frame viewer, and a bottle of cement. The manual process of sticking one piece of film to another was pretty simple. Which shot to join with another was where creativity happened. "I want to make a movie out of your junk film," Jim said. Well, why not? Experimental Films were still all the go, even if no one watching understood them.

As an example of how an Experimental Film can be constructed, I worked alongside Jim and quickly cut together aerial shots of Steven Point and its surrounds ending the film with the plane's descent. Interspersed with the live action were fragments of film colored red. My crazy idea was the red pieces of film forecast a crash and, though never shown, such an event was strongly suggested in the film's conclusion. Later I shot a title and called the picture *The Red*. Frankly, the whole film having been made from junk footage is just that. Junk! Disguised as an Experimental Film!

Jim threaded through celluloid. Influenced by news footage we'd seen on television of combat and aftermath in Vietnam, he came up with an idea about the end of the world. He'd call his effort *Who Will Give Us Tomorrow?* Something essential but lacking was combat footage. However, I had boxes of outdated and discarded 50 and 100 foot 16mm reels of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and commercials given to me by Channel 7 in Wausau. Sometimes I was able to use exceptional ones in teaching propaganda. Among the PSAs which dealt with conflict, communism and civil defense was footage of atomic bomb mushroom clouds, falling structures, and some actual conflict. I told Jim I knew of an amateur filmmaker who'd made an award-winning black & white film wherein he created explosive special effects for a soldier dodging flak. The film was called *The Attic*. I suggested I'd write him and ask if he had any off-cuts he'd be willing to give away.

Within the week, yes, mail was delivered quickly back then, I received a box and a letter from Don Tennant at the Leo Burnett Company Inc. Advertising:

Enclosed is a short clip of some explosions lifted from an extra workprint of "The Attic" which your son may be able to use. There is is no sound on it, which I hope won't cause him too much trouble.

"...which your son may be able to use." We both got a kick out of Don Tennant's assumption. After all, I hadn't said anything in my letter about our being related. Jim finished cutting his film and we shot the title. The running time was about five minutes.

For the past six months I had felt successful in my role of probation officer for Ray Alakson. Most of our talk about what he was doing and how he was doing happened in class. Ray always smiled and appeared content. His achievement in class showed consistency in earning Bs. Denny still enjoyed spending some time on the farm, while Ray underhandedly found less favorable pursuits on weekends. When spring arrived Ray had reverted to latent habits with old cohorts in crime I never knew. He stole a car and wasn't being given another chance. My offer to appear in court as a character witness was refused. He was sentenced to living on a work farm in foster care far away from Stevens Point. Mrs. Alakson packed up the family belongings and left town. I never saw beautiful Denny again, and it hurt. An attempt to console my feeling of failure came in two words from the police, the school's guidance counselor, and my mentor Mr. McCaig, "You tried."

An interminable two weeks passed and Chrismary came to the farm saying she had some news for me. As if an accelerator had been floored, my thumping heart increased in rate. Its rapid flub-dub may have even been visible through my T-shirt.

"I thought I'd come and tell you in person that I'm engaged."

No beating around a bush there! Just a blurt! I'd been struck over the back of my neck with a dead dodo! She was bubblier than a squirt of seltzer as she thrust her left hand into my face to show off the bitsy-piecey diamond on her finger. She'd become engaged to her old 'before-my-time' high school boyfriend. A feebly uttered, "Oh," was all I could muster. Time melted away like the clocks in Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Vision*. I have no idea how much time actually passed before, high and dry, I said, "Eh, whatever happened to my proposal?"

Bearing a hangdog look Chrismary replied, "You mean you were serious?"

I wanted to say, "Of course not. You know me. Big jokester. Just wanted to pull your leg," but I didn't. I said, "I most certainly was serious. Why didn't you believe me?"

Ever so clear today, as if it had just happened, I can still recall every word of our stilted conversation.

We both stood staring numbly as if cold water had crashed over us. I had been dead-set serious and she had just brushed off my question like dandruff from her shoulder.

"Ooooohhhhh, b-o-o-o-y-y-y-y," she finally, but barely put into sound. "I guess I'll have to really think about it now."

Another long wait with what I considered would be an inevitable answer? No. I quickly blurted, "I have a few questions and maybe you'll give me an honest answer."

Chrismary looked puzzled. And I wasn't exactly playing fair. My questions were resolved in the realm of the rhetorical.

"How would you feel about living on a farm?"

Chrismary responded adamantly, "No!" She said she had to live in town and be near her parents. She didn't like the idea of a farmhouse and said she preferred an apartment.

"How would you feel about living someplace other than Stevens Point?"

Again, Chrismary's responded with a definite negative because it was important, as an only child, she remain near to her mother and father.

"How would you feel if one of my students really needed me and I dropped everything to give the kid my time?"

No way would she allow that to happen. Chrismary said that she would have to be Number One in my life at all times.

I know she was right on that count and I was pushing the envelope. My third question was unreasonable, but I already knew I'd lost asking my first question. As much as we may have liked each other, as a married couple we'd never have been compatible or happy.

I wished her every happiness. It was the last time I was to see Chrismary, and rightfully so. I never even bumped into her in the aisle of the supermarket. She eventually married her high school beau, moved into an apartment near her parents in Stevens Point, and lived, I'd hoped, happily ever after.

There was no immediate solution to realize Jameslare. Not in 1969 in the state of Wisconsin anyway. The idea of a home for boys, however, continued to hover, like a hummingbird, around my thinking stuff.

Just before my April 30<sup>th</sup> birthday Bob Baril asked to move in. He'd been offered a transfer from Green Bay to the Stevens Point Golden Hangar store and jumped at the opportunity. I welcomed the change. Bob was good company and it made sense to split the cost of rent and bills, and Bob had a car. Good-bye to the morning yellow school bus and hello to a ride in an automobile! However, Bob's workday didn't finish until 5:00 p.m., sometimes later if held back with customers, and I'd still take the school bus home if I wasn't required to attend a staff meeting. Oh, yes, now I was encouraged, nay, more or less told I must attend all English staff and general staff meetings.

My connection with WSU-Stevens Point was still tight. The Residence Hall Council (RHC) had requested a 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Film Festival some time ago and, of course, I acquiesced. I liked the extra

money I could earn and appreciated the audience adulation. I had continued making good contacts among amateur filmmakers within the PSA-MPD, as well as other national film clubs and festivals. Gathering films for screening seemed to be easier than previously and, perhaps, that was due to word of mouth. I attempted to secure some of the best award-winning short subjects from around the world, the best in comedy, drama, and experimental.

One was Dream of the Wild Horses, a vivid experimental film which showed horses in slow motion fleeing a fire. Poppycock was an outrageous comedy that dealt with the tricks any man will go through to win back a lost love. It had won awards in the Venice and Edinburgh Film Festivals. The Attic by Illinois' Don Tennant, whose name I already mentioned when seeking combat footage for Jim's movie edit, was mostly shot in his back yard, but seeing it you wouldn't know that. It was about a returned G.I., a trunkful of Army memorabilia, and how the collection in the attic triggered memories of combat. It had been among the PSA-MPD Ten Best. Winning the PSA-MPD Humorous Film Award was The Hungry Kook Goes Bazook by Ed McWatters. Two films by Norman McLaren in Canada utilized animation of living characters, the same technique I'd used way back in 1963 when making Zip-Tang. Perhaps my seeing his films had been a catalyst for my making such a film? A Chairy Tale was a simple ballet between a man and a common kitchen chair that refused to be sat upon. It became a story for mastery, and then, understanding. It had been nominated in 1957 for a Short Subject Academy Award. McLaren's other film was Neighbors, a 1952 Academy Award Nominee in the Short Subject category and Oscar winner in, of all categories, Documentary Short Subject. It is a parable wherein two people living side by side come to blows over the possession of a single flower that grows on their property borderline. Greed transformed to the level of savagery to the point where each destroyed the other. The Moods of Surfing (1968) was a spectacular look at surfing which some felt outdid the commercial release The Endless Summer (1965). Highlight and closing short was the most popular film I'd ever shown, an encore screening of the "coming of age" Live Action Short Subject and 1965 Academy Award nominee Skaterdater.

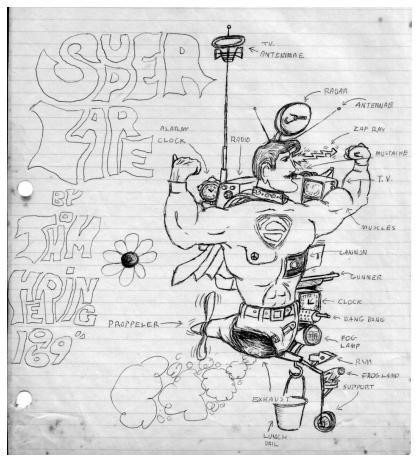
Two things changed since the 1<sup>st</sup> RHC Film Festival. Though Admission remained only 50¢ and starting time was still 8:00 p.m., one change saved me a lot of work, the Favorite Film poll. We figured *Skaterdater* was a shoo-in again and so no poll was held. The other change was major - the venue. Screenings were located in a circus tent erected between the Classroom Center and the Science Building. The festival happened on the nights of April 29 and 30.

Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup> was my birthday. My top notch English class hosted a party. Cindy Piotrowski baked a cake and made me a crown from yellow construction paper. I was king for a day. Pictured right, you can see me in the background wearing the crown and cutting Cindy's chocolate cake. At right and facing the camera is Bob Baril. In front of Bob, is student Thom Hering. Jim O'Leary in striped pants has his back to the camera. Thom turned his off-beat humor into several drawings which he





presented to me on my birthday. I really appreciated his gift because it had come from him, his own creativity. Two of his comic sketches are pictured. One is shown directly left, the other is on the left of the following page.



Having taught Thom for a nearly year in an advanced English class, you'd think he'd have learned to spell 'propeller'!

Bob's moving onto the farm arrangement opportunity. My initial perception was that Bob seemed to get along well with and Steve. Unnecessarily, Bob possessive and attempted to drive a wedge between Jim and myself. He tried to undermine our friendship. sowing seeds of doubt into our heads. Ginny, in the meantime, distanced herself from me and invited Bob to spend his with her. time Doubtful her tug romantic because Bob was a teenager on the cusp of his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

I can't speak for Ginny, but I wonder if she felt miffed over my not wanting to share in her marriage of convenience. Was she uncomfortable observing the affection Jim and I shared? After all, she'd been instrumental in getting us together. Jealousy was fed with morsels of untruths. Bob seemed to enjoy playing Jim off me, as if my response would turn into an outpouring of affection for him. Naive thinking, perhaps, or acting the conspiracy theorist, but I questioned whether Ginny had somehow put Bob up to the task.

The temperature plummeted and a blast of winter returned. A come-out-of-nowhere blizzard in spring isn't rare in Wisconsin. Friday and Saturday before my birthday was a whiteout. Snow accumulated and plows raked banks along the roads. Some ridiculous needling and disagreement took place Sunday evening between Bob and me. Alienated, I left the farmhouse late at night and crunched snow beneath my boots on a country road to no place in particular. Jim caught up and puppy-dogged my footsteps, occasionally piercing the icy air with a pointed question or comment to decipher my uncharacteristic behavior. I was cement-headed, proving impossible to satisfy any answer to his supplication. I wallowed in self-inflicted anger; at what I was angry I was unsure, and I was punishing Jim for what I myself didn't understand. Eventually I turned, Jim in tow, and walked back to the warmth of the farmhouse, further crunching snow beneath boots.

Shivering from the brisk night air, my tongue stilled, a desperate Jim clutched at my coat, his face a comic mask of ferocity and flurry; he demanded to know, "Are you my best friend?" His eyes were now blazing within an inch of my own. I passed my finger gently over Jim's cold nose and said most ludicrously, "Either you're a Bird's Eye pea or a very healthy puppy."

Before I could counter, with a single movement that combined incredible agility and an almost lunatic degree of confidence, Jim flung his arms about my neck and, lifting his slight weight, scissored his legs around my waist. He clung to me in silence, his head nuzzled against my right cheek. "O.K.," I whispered, no more words being necessary. I understood what Jim was saying. Effortlessly he

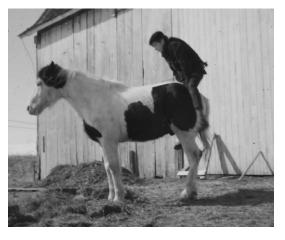
unwound his juvenile embrace. From his jaw line to his ears I affectionately cupped my hands, smiled, and winked an eye. Returning his smile and a wink, Jim wholly understood.

Bob, all the while reclined upon the couch, ignored the drama in the kitchen. I heard him exhale a long sigh as though he'd suddenly become weary of life. He plodded into the kitchen and insisted that popcorn at two in the morning was all that was needed. Drained of energy, popcorn phooey, I retired to my bedroom upstairs. Bob and Jim exploded kernels of corn. How much time passed? I don't know. I was semi-conscious of light and movement. I saw the shadow of Jim as he looked in on me before retiring to his bedroom. I am unable to block out the events of that unusual snowy spring night. Something was gained. Something was lost forever.

You'd think the following day, as if I'd been salmonella poisoned, I'd have brought it all up with Bob; maybe even have threatened to boot him out or physically kicked him out. I didn't. Despite the disquiet, I had an ulterior motive, his giving me a ride to school, and that overrode confrontation. In the morning all I said was, "Bob, you know I like you. A lot. Isn't that enough?" The expression on Bob's face was telling, sheepish, shamed. Resolved in the purity of direct words, that nasty game of green eyed-envy, the playing off of one against another, never again raised its ugliness.

Snow melted almost as quickly as it had accumulated. Water ran down the same road where I'd crunched snow underfoot. That's spring in Wisconsin. Just as fast as the weather had unexpectedly turned to winter, it returned into a tulip and crocus blooming spring. Goober was eager to be out of the barn and burn energy in fresh air. Riding is the art of keeping a horse between you and the ground. The best thing about riding is getting off knowing you both enjoyed it. Pictured right is Jim taking Goober for a spring ride, no saddle because the painted horse was so gentle we could always ride bareback.





Vaulting is most often described as gymnastics and dance on horseback which can be practiced both competitively and non-competitively. Vaulting has a history as an equestrian act at circuses, but its origins stretch back at least two-thousand years to the games of ancient Rome. Others, however, believe that vaulting originated in ancient Crete where bull-leaping was prevalent. The ritual consisted of an acrobat leaping over a bull; when the leaper grasps the bull's horns, the bull will violently jerk his neck upwards giving the leaper the momentum necessary to perform somersaults and other acrobatic tricks. Jim is pictured left vaulting onto patient Goober.

Mounting a horse by running up behind him and vaulting onto his rear end (the croup, the rump of the horse, the top of the hind quarters from the tail to the kidney area) is not recommended; it's considered a bad idea. Even if you've spent time training and desensitizing your horse to your vaulting mount, you still never know if your horse will spook or kick out in trying to defend himself. It's just a risky thing to do. Mounting can be hard on the horse's back. This particular vaulting method causes the rider to land with all of his weight on the horse's back, which can't be comfortable for the horse. So much, then, for Native Americans exercising the vault, and for Gary Hall, the Winnebago boy who taught me the physicality and artistry of the Ho-Chunk vault.

Goober never complained. The snort from his nostrils was his happy sound telling us he enjoyed our play. He never moved forward or to the side or spooked when we performed a vault. Furthermore, Goober was a complacent pinto; he didn't seem to mind any of our acrobatics, as pictured below.







Within two or three days of the interruptive blizzard, spring's temperature shot up to 80°. As if overnight, seasons unseasonably changed for the better; our coats were shed for shirts. Bob came home from work and told me about a customer selling a horse. It's never predictable how strangers engaged in retail develop or even progress a conversation, but it happened in the Golden Hangar. The middle-aged man's marriage had, as Bob quoted, "turned to shit" and, for whatever his reason, he had a mare to sell. Bob wrote down the details. Saturday morning Bob, luckily having the day off work, drove Steve Thompson and me to the man's stables. Steve had conveniently overnighted since Friday's finish of the schoolday.

Called Maudie, she was a red Arab in foal, having been serviced by Peter, an Appaloosa stud; her asking price was a modest \$60. Bob the retail businessman piped up, "Lare, it's like getting two horses for the price of one!" I watched Steve as he encircled the horse's neck with one arm and rubbed her soft nose with his free hand. She wasn't haltered or bridled; she stood calmly absorbing the boy's singular attention. Often I perceived Steve as rather cold and unfeeling, yet sometimes he surprised and demonstrated the same warmth of a comforting marshmallow-roasting campfire. "I'll take care of her, Mr. Lare," Steve said, and so I made Maudie his responsibility. The horse trader must have been keen to transact the cash sale. He offered to deliver Maudie right then and there, lead her into his horse trailer and follow us to the farm.





Maudie's first day on the farm with Meatball and me.

Unlike the docile Goober, Maudie was spirited, a ten year old neck reiner. Maudie knew the halter and she was easy to catch and lead whereever we wanted to go. Meatball adapted to Maudie as if

she'd always belonged. Our gelding and the pregnant mare liked each other from the start, so we didn't have to worry about biting or kicking or needing to keep them apart.

Having two horses now, we needed a corral. There was sufficient wood in the garage and barn to build a corral and attach it to the rear of the barn where a door would allow our beasts inside protection or outside air. Three of us, none with carpentry skills, started building, first by digging holes and pounding thick stakes into a semi-oval. Filling the holes with concrete for stability never crossed our minds. Standing sturdy like stiff-backed sentries, the stakes were linked with hard-nailed flat boards, some parallel one to the other, while more boards were cross-haired for extra strength. "Bangety-bang-bang," echoed across the fields as one hammered the nailhead and another held the board in place. One of us "rested," meaning we took turns supervising. We had most of the corral in place before sunset. The horses bedded in the barn and we'd continue corral-making in the morning. I rang Jim and told him of the latest addition to the farm. As if needing a reminder, Jim said something about the new horse keeping our hopes up for a boys' home, adding he'd see me soon.

Steve was first out of bed Sunday eager to tend Maudie. From the kitchen, he called up the stairs to me, "In the barn. They're both there!" From Bob's room off the kitchen I heard a meagre cheer, "Yea," followed by, "How come I feel so all over sore." Can't say we looked forward to work, but we took the bit between the teeth and headed outside to finish building the corral.

Their Morman church service behind them, Michael brought Jim to the farm armed with a hammer just around noon. "Bangety-bangety-bang-bang," again echoed as two hammers were wielded. Jim, our fourth hand, allowed us to finish the job in under three hours.

Maudie's former owner had told us it was all right to ride her, even if she was pregnant, because a horse needs exercise. I had asked if she'd accept a rider bareback. He kind of smirked and said, "Go for your life." At the time, the throwaway comment conveyed nothing we needed to know. Corral work done, we wanted to find out what kind of ride Maudie gave. I was first to grasp some of her mane, swing up and mount her bare back. "Oi yoi yoi," I chanted. Maudie was so bony across her back that to be astride her without blanket and saddle was comparable to straddling the pickets of a fence. I made a face which showed my discomfort as Maudie walked. "I don't fancy your skinny rear end against her backbone," I said to Jim. "You're gonna feel it." I wasn't wrong. "Ooowww," was Jim's nonverbal following his mount and settling his slight weight onto Maudie's bare back. Steve took his turn mounting Maudie and said, "I suppose I could get used to it, but..." Steve squinted and, without a word, dismounted, went into the barn, and brought out a blanket and one of the McClellan saddles.



Jim poses on Maudie sans saddle.



Steve with blanket and McClellan saddle sits astride Maudie.

Maudie and Steve on the Sunday we finished building the corral.



Proof of our corral's worth would become evident Monday morning. If both horses remained corraled overnight, we'd done our job.

And we had! From the kitchen window I saw both horses warming in the morning sunshine, heads down munching at the green grass inside the corral. Of course that grass wouldn't last a day and I broke up a hay bale for the horses to champ. Water was in a large metal kettle. As there was no tap connected to the barn, it had to be pumped into buckets, carted by hand, and poured in the kettle.

The following Sunday Jim invited me to join with him, his brother and mother and attend their Mormon service. I had no qualms and Michael picked me up at the farm. The service resembled nothing I was used to as when participating in a Catholic Mass. There was singing and lots and lots of talking and testimonials, as I recall. Most ideas dealt with the evils of the stimulants of alcohol and tobacco. After close to an hour's harrange, there was an intermission. Outside in the sunshine Jim whispered to me, "Mom keeps cooking sherry in a kitchen cupboard. Sometimes I sneak a drink and top up the bottle with water." He half-supressed a curl of the lip. Given the break in proceedings, thoughtlessly I lit up a cigarette. I hadn't considered how disrespectful my action was toward their beliefs. Michael looked at me, eyes startled wide, and he shook his head. I got the message quicker than Superman's being faster than a speeding bullet and stubbed out the ciggy under my shoe. How could I have been so stupid? I didn't have to predict the discussion topic after intermission, as if it was all being directed at me. Even though the rant wasn't, at least that's how it felt. Guilt hanging over me like the stale smell of my rotten secondhand smoke, I felt embarrassed and suitably chastized. Sent in God's glory from the service, over lunch the O'Learys treated my error as a joke and worthy of a laugh. In their kitchen, Jim surreptitiously showed me Afton's stash of sherry bottles. Smirking he confided, "I don't think I'll ever make a good Mormon."

As the school year wound down, contracts for the next school year were offered. I signed May 15, 1969 for teaching 9½ months, total pay \$6881.79, and for coaching Forensics 1% at \$66.63.

Nearing May's end most teachers, including myself, had just about finished the required syllabus. That meant we could turn over some class time to fun projects, do things to celebrate the oncoming summer vacation. I took in my 16mm print of Laurel and Hardy's *Two Tars*, a silent comedy with musical accompaniment. Stan and Ollie are sailors caught in a traffic jam. A simple disagreement develops and escalates into tit for tat, eventually involving eveyone caught in the jam with cars being pulled apart and destroyed. My 9<sup>th</sup> graders were well tuned to the old silents having seen them in lunchtime rainy day movie screenings in the auditorium, and after school on television, notably compiled in "Comedy Capers." It may have been the break from study or it may have been the content of the film itself. One gag initiated audience laughter and a gag on top of another gag multiplied into glee. And it went on and on, laugh upon laugh and building to hoots and howls and squeals and tears. Sides ached. Breaths had to be caught. Faces turned red. Their reaction to the comedy was genuine, bigger than I'd ever anticipated.

Questions came later. What had I done to be in charge of such a noisy classroom? My students were quizzed. Kids from other classes wanted to know what they'd missed. What happened in my classroom that day was spontaneous and never happened again in my career.

Most class activity was abandoned for indoor games or outdoor sports in the final days before vacation. I chose to play softball. My memory of one game was playing center field with a kid named Don Pingle in left. A high fly was hit in-between our two fields. I called for the ball, "I got

it!" That's the sign for other players to back off and let the caller make the catch. Not Don Pingle! I heard the bone-crack sound as our heads collided, and I don't remember what happened next. Flat on my back on the ground I opened my eyes and looked up at fuzzy faces. I heard, "You all right?" I'd caught the ball. It was in my glove. "Man, oh, man, you took a bad hit." There with a couple of teachers leaning over me was Pingle, a smirk across his face as if he was glad for my injury. Not a scratch on that schmuck! I felt dazed and unsteady as Don Severson helped me to my feet. The game was over for me. Anton Anday walked me to the school building. As a matter of fact he quietly disgnosed, "I think your nose might be broken." He came from a country with open street fighting, revolution, citizens versus Russian tanks, so I guess he probably knew a broken nose when he saw mine!

The school nurse examined the dirty deed to my nose. I continued breathing normally through my slowly swelling schnozz. She said I wouldn't need to see a doctor, have my nose readjusted or get nostril splints. I held a cold compress against my nose as the nurse recommended I have someone with me because I'd suffered concussion. I said Bob was at the farmhouse to look after me. In the morning, the nurse suggested, I should expect to wake with black eyes.

Next morning I hardly recognized myself. In the mirror I saw a Frankenstein monster. There was some nose and cheekbone swelling and my eyes were black. As the saying goes, "The show must go on." There were just two days left before summer vacation and I reported for duty as expected, but I didn't have to do much other than tidy my office and meet with students who hadn't already decided to start an early vacation. Sure, there were expressions of pity at how I looked. Most reassured that it would heal and I'd look like myself again. Don Pingle, that sliver of white sundried dog turd, continued showing up at school until vacation officially began, biding his time as if he was one of Scrooge's pesky ghosts of Christmas Present. Any time he saw me, he snarled a crooked smile. I'm sure it wasn't meant to intentionally needle me. I believe it was his permanent glued-on expression, something fixed in place after his mother once warned against the wind when he'd made an unpleasant face and it blew permanently fixing that awful expression. Or he wanted all and sundry to wonder what he'd been getting up to, that he'd do something wrong, or he'd already done the dirty.

Just as a happy summer vacation loomed, Rawlin O'Leary lobbed a Molotov cocktail. The O'Learys were moving to Salt Lake City, Utah.

## Chapter 59: Farewell The Farm

Forever Jim
Paul Zamzow's Badlands Meanie Gets Zonked
Now That the Buffalo's Gone

Filliam Shakespeare's play *Richard III* shows Lord Hastings, who has been condemned by King Richard to be beheaded, ordered by Sir Richard Ratcliffe to "Make short shrift" as the king "longs to see your head." "Shrift" is an archaic noun referring to confession or absolution of sins. Nowadays "shrift" is rarely encountered on its own, but it likes to keep frequent company with "short." Shakespeare used this phrase quite literally ("keep your confession short"), but since sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the phrase has been used figuratively to refer to a small or inadequate amount of time or attention given to something.

Jim and I most certainly made short shrift of any discussion about making a movie from a strict plan, a written shot-for-shot storyboarded script. Subject matter, as far as we were concerned, was all too familiar; the main characters to be played out by ourselves and that meant we wouldn't have to be acting. We wanted a film which epitomized our friendship. Making a film about ourselves was, more or less, a spur of the moment thing. We needed to preserve something of ourselves for posterity; whose posterity, however, never really came into question because our film was a wholly vested interest. It would be a movie about us and the feelings we had for one another. Feelings? OK, then, how do we put feelings on the screen without giving any audience an unintentional impression?

The 1969 school year finished at 2000 Polk Street, Stevens Point; black-eyed, dismissed ahead of the normal bell, I celebrated school year's end by choosing to ride home, for old time's sake, on the yellow Road Turd for the last time. I wanted to say, "Thanks" and "Good-bye" to the faithful bus driver . Simultaneously I grieved inside because I knew it would be the final time that Jim and I would share a benchseat for our last bumpity-bump hitch to the Farm.

My baseball injury healed and all traces disappeared before a foot of film was pumped through the camera gate. Michael operated the Bolex, a not-so-first-time observer of Jim and me behaving for the lens in the same way we'd conducted ourselves over the past several months. We enjoyed being together and it showed. Non-scripted and made up as we went along, for convenience and taking up as short a time as possible, everything was shot outdoors in one day. We used the water pump, together carried a bucket of water and tended the horses. Some activities were performed solo: a shot of me leaning on the pump in contemplation, a shot of me staring off into space, shots of me walking alone in a field (with wide angle lens and the camera on a tripod atop the farmhouse roof the field looked vast), Jim leading, saddling or unsaddling a horse, riding, nosing Meatball, fooling around, climbing a tree, forking hay. Together we rode Goober in deep creek water, swam with the horse, and took turns performing tricks with the most docile pinto. Some shots were made using filters of red, yellow, or orange held in front of the lens. Slow motion images were made to create an ethereal dreamlike quality. Double exposures and dissolves also contributed to creating dreams. All special effects were created in the camera. One shot shows me running into the field. In double exposure Jim fades in, his ghostly image dominating the shot, it looks like I'm running into his heart.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Half a century later and retired from my profession, I still feel the need to do some teaching!



Publicity photos from Forever Jim<sup>2</sup>

It was Michael's first and only opportunity to handle a 16mm camera. Looking through the viewfinder he was observant and captured on celluloid our telling facial expressions. Our movement was followed with the precision of a professional cinematographer. I took the camera into my capable hands to film Jim in scenes I felt only I would know how to do. One remarkable shot, completely unplanned, later provided a clue for viewers to decipher a "reason" for the film's existence, just in case they didn't "get it"; that is, our reason for making the film. Jim rides Goober into the creek. There must have been a deep hole. Goober steps into it and sinks. Tossing his head the horse tries to correct its balance. Overwhelmed by the horse's sudden lurch, Jim loses his grip and slides sideways from the horse's back and plunged head and arms into the dark creek water. I stopped filming. That shot ended abruptly with Jim mostly under water. Without looking where, I plunked the camera down onto solid ground and dove into the creek. Jim could swim. He wasn't going to drown. I lifted him somewhat; we looked astonishingly at one another and, sodden, just laughed. As we dripped creek water and walked back to the farm we talked about what happened in the shot; how that unintended action might serve as significant and useful and important to making the film "work" for an audience.

I shot the title cards. Something of author's purpose followed my opening "Elkay" Productions logo: "Forever is a wishful word... a hand-in-encounter with stacked and strewn events of days can weld two beings straight and close. Forever is imprinted on their souls. Larry Klobukowski's film of

.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The pictures of Jim lying atop and standing on Goober are my snapshots. The majority were shot and printed by Jim Pierson, staff photographer for *The Pointer*.

memories..." The next title card read *Forever Jim*, followed by a title card crediting John Primm with Music. Although John wasn't anywhere in the vicinity of the Farm, I asked for his contribution of musical creativity. He devised an ambient melody of sentiment mixing the track of his playing recorder to accompany himself on guitar.

Bob drove me to Tucker's Camera Shop. Inordinate time passed and processed films were returned after the O'Leary's had packed up and disappeared west to Salt Lake City. Alone at the kitchen table with viewfinder, rewind arms, splicer and cement, I relived everything Michael and I had filmed. I remembered all those things Jim and I had experienced which we couldn't capture on film. As with many French films I'd seen in university, in eight minutes *Forever Jim* became the summation of a unique glimpse into a brief, almost shooting star-like episode in life. It was a film about the reality of separation with flashbacks to dreams of building and then living a developed friendship. Symbolism hinted at platonic love. Much like the poetry I'd studied in university and which I currently wrote, *Forever Jim* was visual poetry, an allegory of sorts.

I wrote a poem which I gave to Jim before he left Stevens Point for Salt Lake City.

#### ABOUT FRIENDS

There was a time
when loving was sacred.
A prince of quietude,
he appeared as the winter sun
made its peace in the western sky.
His face, in the night mist,
from Michaelangelo's palet,
a map of curiosity.
His eyes penetrated
burning into the soul his song,
here is my gift, one who will love.

How real are memories,
Fragmentary the fantasies never fulfilled.
The oft remembered ghost;
an undiscovered romantic
of patterned charm all known before.
Silent magnetism
blending quiet aggressiveness,
he radiated kindness, joy.
Defenses discarded,
experiences of the past

no reminder today. Or when.

Toffler's future shock —
mechanically produced
pre-packaged
plastic wrapped
artifically colored and flavored
instant substitutes
force-feeding fruitless

temporarily human/computerised relations.

Doubt be the murderer of dreams; faith the conjuror of love.

The private mind's weathered headstone of secret preservation, intangible relic of congruity – The Bull and the Fish.

About Friends was submitted to publishers, as you saw it on the previous page, and accepted by Young Publications, Appalachia, Virginia, compiled and edited by Jeanne Hollyfield © 1973 by Lincoln B. Young and printed on page 6 of the paperbound MELODY OF THE MUSE Best Contemporary Poetry.

Our naivete in *Forever Jim*, I imagine, for the audience could be baffling or simply captivating, whereas for myself, what shows up there on the screen can feel a touch embarrassing. It is as if I'd given a ticket to a voyeur to visually access a playout of emotions to which that person has no understanding nor vested interest nor privilege. In other words, whenever I screened *Forever Jim* it felt like I was ripping open my chest for all to see what was within. The ordinary viewer may appreciate the pretty slow-motion, multi-imaged, color-filtered technology on display, may even tag it as cinematic, but rarely will that viewer appreciate what was behind the images. On overt display for all and any to misinterpret or mostly not "get" was the explosion of tears, the wrenching of hearts, the reality of events of an exceptional friendship and then the unwanted yet inevitable separation.



A more permanent and irreversible separation had happened back in March; I could have written about it in the previous chapter, but I knew it would fit better here. Steve Thompson's friend Jeff Knudsen, pictured left standing with Steve and a seated Dennis Jacquin, had all the stereotypical physical characteristics of his Scandanavian heritage. Ice-blue eyes struck out from beneath long, dark eyelashes. His hair was blonde tending toward shining white. Muscled, proportioned like an upended isoceles triangle, he was the television image of every girl's soap opera hunk. He spoke with a soft lisp. This, in the cruel parlance of his male peers was guilt by circumstance. He was pereceived as being a homo and consequently was teased, taunted, baited and bullied mainly

by boys active in the school's team sports, especially football. Jeff didn't know how to handle the innuendo, the overt physical and verbal abuse. He didn't feel confident to discuss what happened daily. He may have been too confused to realize that every problem has its own solution.

Jeff got his revenge, his act forever posing unanswerable questions and inflicting unnecessary and permanent pain onto those who most cared about him. For all to see upon immediately arriving at school, Jeff had hanged himself from the center bar of the football goalposts.

Steve was inconsolable. He wouldn't allow a gentle hand to touch a shoulder to comfort and he withdrew further into himself. His feelings hardened and he appeared to have buried his emotions. It was as if Steve kept everyone at an arm's length from his own self to avoid confronting his own personal thoughts about Jeff's untimely demise. I wasn't experienced enough, didn't know what to do to ease his pain. Whatever went on in Steve's head was kept locked inside until he was introduced to Maudie. Then his icy demeanor, no doubt too his frozen soul, started to melt and, all over again in the shadow of a pregnant red Arab mare, we got to know Steve.

He further warmed after I bought a dozen fuzzy ducklings. I cherished memories from when I was a kid of handling farm animals in Sobieski, gathering eggs from the chicken coop, cozying up to a bunny rabbit, holding a dried corncob for ducks to peck. I was carrying on what I believed was family tradition. Never did I realize that Steve Thompson hadn't experienced farm animals as I had. When first facing the energetic peeping of the fluffly yellow waddle, this 15 year old's behavior changed into a boy half his age. I was briefly reminded of Denny Alakson when I saw Steve's tongue relax from his mouth as he sat coralling the ducklings between his legs. Through the viewfinder of my Kodak

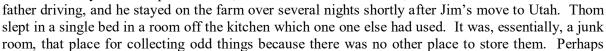




Instamatic, I observed a reenergized and happy Steve Thompson. Snapping the shutter the moment of his very first time with baby ducks was preserved, as pictured here and the previous page.

Thom Hering must have missed his frequent contact with Jim

O'Leary. Perhaps he felt somewhat closer to Jim spending time with me. He usually showed up with Steve, once in a while on his own, his



Thom chose not to stay often because his room was not really his. It had a comfortable bed, sure, but was always referred to as the junk room, never as Thom's room. Steve had his own room. Jim had had his own room. Thom's was only ever called the junk room. With Steve he erected a construction of junk in the wide space between the barn and the house. The boys named it *Dinosaur*. Pictured right, Steve and Thom with their creation, a balancing act of old tires and wheels, neglected boards, empty bottles, and rusted farm implements. Although appreciating his artistic streak, Thom and I never became anything more than student and teacher.



Monday, June 9, Jim's first letter was delivered from Salt Lake City. He hadn't wasted any time writing, but said nothing about his new home; all he wondered was what I was doing. "I sure as hell miss you. Thanks a lot for everything," Jim wrote. "Write and tell me what's going on. Love, Jim."

My 1969 summer money-earning job was again with Project Upward Bound. Robert Powless, director of Programs for Recognizing Individuals through Education (PRIDE) said the Office of Economic Opportunity's Title II division provided a grant of \$122,075 to operate Project Upward Bound. Matching funds were required, so WSU made its contribution by providing free use of its Pray-Sims dormitories and other facilities. From June 16 I dutifully attended meetings in preparation for the June 23 arrival of our Indian students. Nineteen professional educators from the Stevens Point Campus and high schools throughout the state which have large Indian populations served on Powless' staff along with ten tutors. My opinion alone, but it appeared some form of nepotism came into play in the selection of tutors. The children of two prominent government officials were included. Kathy Harris was the daughter of National Democratic Party Chairman Fred Harris, and Bruce Froehlke was the son of Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Froehlke. However, the federal government cut the program from seven to six weeks, meaning my earnings amounted to \$978.00, an almost \$200 loss as compared with my 1968 Upward Boun stint. Unless I could pull some strings to earn more dollars, I'd have to consider setting up another film festival with the RHC.

Pulling a string to put more money in my wallet was going to be impossible after I learned who headed the Upward Bound program, Miss Ada Deer, the woman who hated my film work last summer. Just being facietious, perhaps she preferred the big money professionally-produced Upward Bound film narrated by Henry Fonda called *A Space to Grow*. I never worked with big money. *A Space to Grow* was nominated for a 1968 Academy Award in the category of Documentary Short Subject. I was surprised I ever made the cut to join the Upward Bound staff. Ada Deer was

Menominee and some of the summer's high school participants came from her immediate area in Menominee County. At 33, her level of education and experience ranked among the highest ever achieved by a member of her tribe. She felt a personal debt to many good teachers who motivated her. Evidently my classroom work with Indian youth last summer was motivational and, therefore, indispensible. My job was teaching literature and writing. Again I worked alongside Mrs. Tammy Mixer, but kept her at arm's length, avoided social contact, and only spent required professional developemt time. Among other staff, I knew Bob Bowen, Physical Education teacher at Ben Franklin, and Bob Montgomery, literature and writing, and husband of my Co-operating teacher during Practice Teaching at P. J. Jacobs, Elizabeth Montgomery.

Assistant Director of Upward Bound was Roger Roper, a teacher from Minoqua who believed the program wouldn't make any mathematicians, geographers, or great writers in six weeks, but expected we could break down some of the young Indians' fears of school.

June quickly turned into a summer of hot, humid days broken by ferocious storms. In one day alone we entertained three loud and bone-clattering thunderstorms, two complete with golfball-sized hailstones. The weekend before the Indians arrived Stevens Point had more wild weather. Thunderstorms are common in summertime and another was building Saturday around lunchtime. Weather forecasts on radio turned into tornado watch announcements. In other words, conditions were just right for a tornado to develop. A recommendation was to open all house windows so that if a tornado roared in, the spiraling wind wouldn't create a vacuum and cause the house to explode. I was alone on the farm and opened all the farmhouse's downstairs and upstairs windows. Then came the word for tornado alert. A finger had been spotted spiralling out of a cloud somewhere. There was no movement of air. It was still. It was silent. The atmosphere was tinged with yellow and fading to a dull gray-green. It was so hushed I thought I heard blood coursing through my body. Maudie was in the corral and Goober was tethered to a stake in a field of fresh green grass. I thought the horses would be better off inside the barn until storm conditions eased. No sooner Goober was in the barn, a head-down Maudie came inside of her own volition for his company.

The sky turned black with enormous clouds billowed like overloaded bellies. Rain with button-sized hail started whipping almost horizontally. Unseen wind blew, increasing to forceful gusts. I rolled closed the barn doors. Just as I stepped away from the barn to calmly walk to the house, wind suddenly blasted. Barely taking an upright footstep I was knocked to the ground. Rain immediately pelted. Through squinching eyes I somewhat saw the dirt, gravel, and tree branches blowing through the bare-grassed area between barn and house. Unable to rise, the wind crushing me down, I crawled soldierlike on my belly from the barn to the concrete steps of the house's back door. There I huddled, glued against the concrete by the constant and downward thrust of the wind. In the uncanny darkness and through screwed up eyes I peeped, mouth agape, as a tornado aloft approached. It rotated some thirty or so feet above me. Tornado aloft meant not touching down, but still it made the roaring noise of several locomotives as it sucked up debris from the ground. The rumble was deafening. Whatever material whipped around in the whirlwind made the funnel of the tornado clearly visible. I saw the twister pluck leaves which soared up from the apple tree. I had to shut my eyes so rising dirt wouldn't fill them. My body felt simultaneously pulled upward and weighted downward. I heard loud clunking coming from the kitchen. Almost as rapidly as the tornado aloft developed and passed over, just as suddenly all was quietude. I rubbed my eyes and opened them. The rain stopped. The wind ceased. The sky which had been filled with bulbous black cottonlike cloud now turned into an insipid dank grey.

Within minutes the sun peeked and shone. I was stunned. I hadn't seen nor heard what happened at the barn. I looked and saw a huge gap where the sliding doors had hung. The tornado aloft had sucked the doors off the roller rail and dumped them flat on the ground. Goober stood in the gap and looked out head down, as if seeking my assurance all was right. I walked to Goober, spoke in soothing tone, all the while gently rubbing and patting his neck. I took hold of the halter and walked him back to the rope tied to the stake where I re-secured him. Maudie stood with her head down, ears

back, in the barn looking through the open door to the corral. I guess she wasn't yet ready to trust the outdoors. As I had with Goober, I gently stroked her neck and prattled in dulcet tone.

Pictured right, a post storm image of myself; I had my camera outside, foolish me expecting to snap a picture of the tornado. I balanced Nikkormat on something sturdy, set the timer, and let it snap. Instead of showing me, I should have thought to have taken pictures of the barn doors on the ground.

I walked back to the house, climbed the concrete stairs, and leaned against the door to force it open. The strong wind of the tornado



aloft had moved the kitchen table and chairs against it. Inside the kitchen I looked into the living room. The carpet had been relocated into a bunched crumple from one end of the room to the other, taking with it the sofa and easy chair. Oddly, nothing had fallen off shelves or out of bookcases. The television was still perched on its stand. Upstairs the beds had also moved in the same direction as the tornado aloft. It wasn't strenuous to rearrange furniture into original positions on my own, but it took some muscle dragging the carpet into place.

I rang Bob Baril at Golden Hanger and told him about the big job we faced putting the heavy barn doors back onto the sliding rail. He said I shouldn't worry about it. As long as the horses were safe, we'd do the job tomorrow. He'd arrange for friends to come around and help lift the doors and thread them onto the track. And that's exactly what happened early Sunday morning in bright sunshine and summer's warmth. One helper was Bob's new friend, one of my former Year 9 boys, Milton Huff. There was huff-puffing and ooomphing, and a little bit of language, but the doors were raised, lifted by our several hands, and eventually hung back onto its rails. A Herculean effort, the doors operated as smoothly as pre-storm.

Monday, June 23, two familiar yellow buses rattled up to Pray-Sims Hall and disgorged 79 Indian students, each bearing by hand a suitcase or two, some with smiles, others with the deadpan face Buster Keaton made famous. I recognized some since they'd participated in last summer's Upward Bound, but none came from the coterie of Green Bay friends I'd made last summer. There was, after dormitory rooms assignments, the expected welcome assembly wherein the rules and expectations were set. Having been through all this last summer, I didn't experience the same inner excitement, anticipation or enthusiasm. In fact, this Upward Bound program just felt like a job. Within days, a little of the summer school magic returned when a couple of the girls braided my hair, pictured right.



During the regular school year in a throwaway conversation about unruly students, faculty cohort Don Severson remarked in a rather off-hand and wry manner, "I could gut shoot 'em and feel no remorse." One Saturday afternoon early in July, while the Indian students were on excursion to the Dells, I blasted Steve Thompson in the stomach with a shotgun and felt no remorse. That's exactly what he deserved and what he got for his unruly behavior! I used Severson's aside as my motivation to play a black-hearted villain in an old-time silent comedy-western, *Badlands Meany Gets Zonked*, deeamt up and directed by 9<sup>th</sup> grade student Paul Zamzow. So that the film looked like it had been made in the era of the silents when cameramen handcranked footage without a speed standard having been set for how many frames per second (fps) for shooting and for later projection, I recommended Paul shoot his film at 12 fps. It would be projected at the current 1950-60s 8mm home movie projector standard of 16 fps, some years later adjusted to a standard 18 fps. Shot with less frames per second than the

home movie projection speed, *Badlands Meany Gets Zonked* would screen slightly speeded up and somewhat jerkily, thus resembling a picture which had been cranked out circa 1914.

The Standard 8mm black & white movie was shot using my Bolex Palliard over one afternoon without a written script, Paul having essential action scenes jotted onto paper for reminder. He wanted to rely upon my expertise to make it come together. I told Paul he should direct. I was his actor, not his assistant director. Should my input be used, the film might look like my work instead of a result of Paul's creativity. I'd speak out only if I recognized a continuity or technical error. Paul's exercise was to shoot the whole roll of film by doing all editing in the camera; that meant shooting in sequence. If a mistake in the action happened, it couldn't be cut out with scissors. No splice was allowed, save the normal processing splice at 25 foot. Every piece of action was thoroughly rehearsed before any film passed through the camera's gate. When we felt comfortable moving within the frame, Paul called, "Action." I expected Paul imaginarily crossed his fingers as he made each take. Goober was our unpredictable element, as would be any animal used in any film. The horse, used to our playing around with him, cooperated for every take.



I don't remember his name. It may have been Rick. Maybe it was Kelly. It could have even been Rick Kelly! He worked as a tutor in Upward Bound and is pictured left face-painting one of the Indian girls. Facial hair suited his being cast as a good farmer in Paul's movie. His hair partly covered the tops of his ears and he sported a moustache and mutton chops.

"Can I do something in the film too?" Steve Thompson wanted to be included, so Paul thought up a brief role for Steve as the farmer's son.

Paul's film opened with the main title. Painted onto the wood of a side of the barn was *Badlands Meany Gets Zonked*. It was followed with *By Pall*, an interesting take on his name.

My character is introduced. Dressed in black tuxedo, frilly white shirt, black bow tie, and wearing a derby hat a la Bat Masterson, my 8mm frame enlargement pictured right, I emerge cantankerously from an outdoor toilet with bottle in hand. I drink, rinse my mouth, and spit as if whiskey is mouthwash. There is a black doctor's bag on the ground. I thrust my greedy hand into the bag and haul out a few greenbacks, look pleased, and return the bills to the bag. A farmer carrying a heavy coal or snow shovel shows up from behind the toilet. He belts me across the back of the head and snatches the money bag. I rise to my knees and grab the bottle for a glug. Whiskey slobbers out of my mouth and down my chin as I shake my fist threatening revenge. Paul finished the sequence with a flawless



Fade Out. The Bolex had the machinery to made such a transitional special effect.

The next scene opens with a perfect Fade In as I arrive mounted on a horse. I dismount, grab my shotgun, and walk to the barn door. Paul had started filming me on the horse from below and rose to lead my walk to the barn door. In other words, I walked forward to the camera as Paul the cameraman walked backward. Standing in the barn door frame, I demand to know what the farmer has done with my money. The farmer's response is an "I don't know, don't care" shoulder shrug. In a cutaway Medium Shot Steve is shown in the hay loft. Next shot, the farmer has armed himself with a

<sup>4</sup> Unknown photographer, published in *The Pointer July* 31, 1969

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Refer to page 42, paragraph before the photograph for reminder on how a standard 8mm roll of film is used.



pitchfork. Steve leaps from the loft. From the hip I blast him with the shotgun. A Close-Up of Steve's face, my 8mm frame enlargement pictured left, shows he's a goner. Hershey's chocolate sauce for blood again on black and white film worked a treat. Steve said he enjoyed swallowing it. Shotgun still held at the ready, I back out of the barn. The farmer throws his pitchfork like a spear and misses me. As I grab the saddle horn to mount the horse, the whole saddle and blanket slides off. I hit the ground with the saddle on top. My escape is clumsy. I run, more like hop on foot dragging the horse along by the reins.

The farmer mourns and digs a grave. A whimsical touch, the farmer pauses mid-dig to remove his hat and hold it briefly against his heart while raising his eyes to heaven. Oh, dear! That was right out of one or more of D. W. Griffth's shorts with overly sentimental and unintentionally funny scenes circa to mid-1900s.

I return to the scene of my crime on horseback and laugh at the farmer. There is a straight cut to a Medium Shot of the farmer standing among foliage. He raises his fists and poses John L. Sullivan style. I look smugly at the farmer, deftly remove my derby and coat, and charge with my fists raised toward him. We are suddenly in Wide Angle in the creek, the same down-the-road creek where Jim lost his balance on Goober in *Forever Jim*. The farmer and I duke it out in the water. It's action for action's sake and none of it rehearsed. Confident in ourselves, we just went for it. Ever since the epic battle between Andy Farrout and Strong Arm in *Tomahawk Terror*, I'd had a penchant for fist fighting in water. The villain in film cannot be the hero and so I turn tail and run.

There is a straight cut to me crouched in tall hay grass with a loaded shotgun. The farmer, also armed with a shotgun, walks target ready out of the barn. Brandishing firearms, we run toward each other and discharge our weapons. Ka-lumph! We both crumble to the ground. In one long Close-Up, the farmer's head and shoulders taking up the foreground of the frame, I recover, lift and shake my head, poke my hand into his shirt pocket, take out a crumpled ten dollar Andrew Jackson, smirk, and kiss the farmer's forehead before dropping dead. A straight cut takes viewers to *The End* painted on barn wood.

The film, enjoyable to watch, was silly and plot thin. So too were many early 1900s "flickers" churned out for migrant audiences filling the Nickelodeon shop fronts and theaters. Keep 'em simple, keep 'em short, and keep 'em full o' action. I don't know if any director or studio head really said that in the 1900s; films of that era which survive today might suggest that may have been a production template.

On June 16, three days after Paul Zamzow completed *Badlands Meany Gets Zonked*, Apollo 11 was launched. The lunar module *Eagle* landed on the moon Sunday, July 20. Spacecraft Commander Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface and proclaimed the now famous line, "That's one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind." I watched on live TV as he stepped from a ladder, practically a short jump, onto the surface and walked on the moon. Buzz Aldrin joined Armstrong 20 minutes later and for the next couple of hours TV showed them gathering rocks, planting the American flag, taking photographs, and walking, more like bounding due to the meagre pull of gravity. Viewing extraordinary history, oddly I felt no pride in being American. Too rapt in my own self-pity, I was immobile. I should have known better. It had been foolish of me to walk barefoot in the barn. I stepped on the sharp end of a rusty nail poking through a board. When I leapt off and came down, I pierced my other foot with the same stupid rusting nail. Bob drove me into town to a doctor to get a tetanus shot. Rusty nails can't be ignored. Foot swollen I crawled on all fours, mainly to reach the toilet, much to the amusement of Steve Thompson and, all the while I was on the floor, men were walking on the moon.



I still don't know what Bob's motivation was when he came home from work Monday bearing an unexpected gift for me, a genuine Australian-type bush hat, "the latest in styling, \$4.50" according to an ad published in *The Pointer* some months earlier. Golden Hanger didn't carry the hat. Bob said he made a small trade to get it because he knew a guy who worked at Hunter's Corner. Whether the gift was consolation or generosity or the happenstance of peeking into my future, I can merely hazard a guess.

Ahead of splash down on July 24 another letter arrived from Jim. No history was made in Salt Lake City, "There has been nothing happening, absolutely nothing going on – just eat, work and sleep."

My brother Steve had his driver's license and his own car. I invited him to the farm for a few days. When the weekend rolled around he could participate in the Upward Bound Crystal River trip. Hindsight is such a great teacher. Had I again been asking for trouble? I never saw it coming, never even expected anything untoward. We canoed and portaged the whole trip and then, just as had happened with Robby, one of the Indian boys took it upon himself to teach my brother a lesson he'd not forget. Steve later said he hadn't said or done anything to provoke the Indian kid nor, given my warning, had he ogled the girls. He got punched in the face for no other reason than he was white. Needless to say Ada Deer dismissed the aggressor and sent him in disgrace back to his home in Menominee County. My brother drove home with a black eye.

I had an idea for a mood picture wherein Steve Thompson would be the one and only star, a movie made up as we went along with no scripted storyline per se, but which would make use of captivating visuals and atmosphere to convey a specific idea or theme. I intended using Canadian First Nations singer-songwriter Buffy Saint-Marie's ballad "Now That the Buffalo's Gone" for the soundtrack. In fact, hearing the song on radio was the cue to engage my thinking stuff. The song's title refers to the near-extinction of the American bison and serves as a metaphor for the cultural genocide inflicted by Europeans. Her song was about Native Americans deprived of hunting buffalo by continuous confiscation of Indian lands. It was a classic folk protest song. The lament would underscore Close Up shots of Upward Bound boys and girls, off-cuts and leftovers I'd salvaged and saved on a reel from last year's program film. These would be intercut with shots of Steve standing with, sitting on, and trotting, galloping, and canterting Goober or Maudie while costumed as an Indian.

Even though Bob Powless wasn't directly involved in the day to day operation of Upward Bound, I saw him often enough on a social basis catching up with him in the Old Main office of PRIDE. I remembered him wearing his Oneida chief's ensemble last year at the end of the program's talent show. I spoke with Bob about my idea and would I be out of place if I asked to borrow his tribal dress. "I've seen and admired how you interact with the Indian students," Bob said, "and I trust you'll use my outfit with honor and dignity." Bob offered to bring his Indian outfit to the farm so Steve could try it on for size. It was never a problem hunting up Steve or wondering where he was because he was such a regular on the farm. I felt that he'd adopted my place as his second home, his fun time home where any boy wanted to be in preference to staying in his parent's home.

Bob Powless drove me home one day after I'd finished with my Upward Bound classes. I called to Steve to come meet Bob. Emerging shirtless from the barn, his jeans rolled to the knees, dark brown hair in a cascade over his eyes, he was a boy whose skin browned quickly in the summer sun. "Now if I didn't know better," Bob said, "he could be one of our Ojibwa boys." Steve tried on the costume. It was amazing how the clothes seemed to magically transform him from white boy to Native American. "You know," Bob smiled, "by rights I should tell you to cast one of our own Ojibways, but your boy looks every bit Ojibwa."

Right: Steve wearing Bob Powless' Oneida chief's ensemble in Now That the Buffalo's Gone

When I did shoot *Now That the Buffalo's Gone*, my goal was to further experiment with the 16mm Bolex's technical and mechanical hoo-hah like 48 and 64 fps, dissolves and fades as I'd done when making *Forever Jim*. Special effects included making good use of colored filters over the lens. Entire shots would appear on screen all red, all yellow, etc. Steve was an excellent rider. Approaching the camera at a gallop, he could pull up the horse on a dime without looking clumsy. In Long and Medium Shots he sat bolt upright upon a blanket, no saddle, and looked a paragon of graceful movement. Pictured below, Steve on Goober, middle photo standing with Goober, and right, me with Steve, Goober, the Bolex and tripod.





Steve had seen, had met some of the Upward Bound Indians and, for the film, took on their stoic persona. "Lookit me, Mr. Lare. I'm a real Indian."

Steve dressed in the Indian ensemble and his "Lookit me" comment prompted my writing a poem.

#### WHERE KITES ALWAYS FLY

My boy, you wear the beads of a Chippewa,
But this does not make you an Indian.
You see, a material treasure cannot make you
anything.
You make yourself into what you want to be
from the things you cannot see —
Green things.
Places where kites always fly,
Somewhere where birds will sing,
The back of your heart —
an insular mystery.

I submitted my poem for consideration to publishers. It was accepted by Young Publications, Appalachia, Virginia, in *Yearbook of Modern Poetry* © 1971 and appeared on page 320. Further, it was accepted by Atlantic Press, London, England, for publication in *The Golden Treasury of Poetry* © 1972 and appeared on page 124.

Initially I planned to enter *Now That the Buffalo's Gone* in national and international amateur film festivals. Using copyright music for a soundtrack on amateur film wasn't frowned upon in 1969. Thinking of the day was, "What's the chance an amateur film will be distributed professionally?" Most amateur movies, no matter how good or how bad, don't get further than the owner's living room with a screen on a tripod stand. Plus, 16mm was considered an inferior guage for professional distribution of motion picture and exhibition in cinemas. Hence the likelihood of any copyright holder coming after some unknown amateur to initiate court proceedings was essentially remote.

Because the song I intended using was so well known at the time, I thought I should at least do the kosher thing and ask permission from the publisher to use Buffy Saint-Marie's ballad. That resulted in disappointment, simultaneously a great shock, and a long-lasting learning lesson. I received a letter of several pages which stipulated what copyright meant, how serious it was to breach, and the personal costs incurred for use or misuse. Any public screening, even if in a church hall with no charge for admission, regardless whether professional distribution had been secured, payment for copyright clearance was not only requested, but required. The cost was enormous and, in my instance, unaffordable. My enquiry meant they knew about me and my intention. I wasn't about to breach copyright laws and take a gambler's chance. Copyright breach meant facing court and fines of thousands of dollars, quite beyond my reach, and/or a long jail sentence, incarceration I didn't much care to experience after having seen too many prison movies on late night TV.

After shooting slightly off-center titles, I decided not to reshoot and perfect the film. Given the strict rules for using copyrighted music to accompany a film in any screening, I never polished *Now That the Buffalo's Gone* for entry in any festival. The film exists as a curiosity in my modus operandi. It's lovely to look at, a wonderful piece of memorabilia of good times long past, but *Now That the Buffalo's Gone* was shelved and never participated in any public screening or festival.



Sunday, July 27, the Indian students put on their talent show leading to the close of the Upward Bound Program for another summer.

Pictured left:<sup>5</sup> President Dreyfus, as from Sunday, July 27, was an honoray member of the 'Project Upward Bound' tribe. He joined in a ceremonial dance to show that people of German descent can muster enough spirit with two Indian girls to do more than the "Flying Dutchman."

Pictured right:<sup>6</sup> Indian boys dancing. I am seated in the audience in the upper right of the picture.



I worked all day Friday. It was time for good-bye. In Ojibwa or Chippewa *Giga-waabamin menawaa* (See you again), Menominee  $P\bar{o}s\bar{o}h$  (Good-bye), Oneida  $NA\lambda i$  'wa (Good-bye), Potowatomi bozho (good-bye), Ho-Chunk or Winnebago Žige hanįcakje ną (I will see you again). The Indians boys and girls boarded the yellow school buses and I swear I heard in Ojibwa, "*Gi zah gin*" (I love you). It was Pat "the Skunk" Connors. She had been a junior, soon starting a new high school year as a senior, and she intended studying her freshman year here at WSU-SP. Patty was very attractive and everyone had been hinting she had a huge crush on this English teacher.

<sup>6</sup> Unknown photographer, fair use, published in *The Pointer* September 11, 1969.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Unknown photographer, fair use, published in *The Pointer* July 31, 1969

My landlord, Mr. Shepanski, came to see me by prior arrangement Saturday morning instead of the first of the month to collect his rent. Yeah, he was accompanied by his nosy, bossy wife and two unruly children. The Shepanski sprogs dashed to the barn where they tore apart hay bales to make a loose pile they could jump into. Sure, I should have said something, but they were gone by the time I discovered their damage. To bring it up in some future unplanned ingress just seemed too churlish or petty. Too often in the past they showed up unannounced, marched into the house without knocking and looked around, examined without using a magnifying glass or a white glove testing for dust, but acting as if such an item was in/on the hand; sometimes they used the flimsy excuse of having come to collect some junk they stored in their farm garage or to fix a faucet we hadn't reported as leaking.

That reminds me of one cold spring morning when the gas furnace in the basement wouldn't switch on and all we came by from the hot water tap was cold. I had loped down about half the stairs to the basement and was confronted by the unwanted sight of an underground lake. Spring thaw had leaked or flowed into the basement and turned into a dam. Submerged gas appliances' pilot lights drowned and our house was overnight deprived of heat and hot water. I rang Mr. Shepanski before breakfast and reported the problem. He showed up sometime in the afternoon, his prompt attention and ability to repair not his best attributes, looked at the dirty water flooding the basement and blamed me for letting it happen. "Are you kidding?" I was astonished he wanted to hang the blame on me. "How am I supposed to be responsible for your basement flooding? We never even go in the basement." I'm sure my landlord knew in his heart I hadn't caused the flood. I think he was just looking for a way to save himself a buck or two, hoping I'd cave in to his raised voice and accept it was my fault and so pay for the water to be professionally sucked out. That never happened. My paying for the flood, that is. His house. His mess.

August's day one I paid Shepanski \$60 cash for rent and was handed a receipt and a prepared paper. It was Shepanski's handwritten order to vacate the premises by September 1, 1969. The farm had been sold. We hadn't even known it had been up for sale, never eyed anyone wanting to inspect the house! In hindsight I recalled a brief discussion with my Polish landlord about the value of the 20 acre farm. He said he'd sell it to me for \$120 an acre, plus house appraisal. At the time, such figures were mythic; in other words, way beyond my reach.

It was a good idea to ask my parents to visit with the twins. They chose the weekend of August 16 and 17. This would very well be their last chance on the farm because I had no idea where I'd move into next. Upward Bound behind, Bob still gainfully employed, we made time separately and together to find somewhere else to live. Some evenings Bob and I drove around rural back roads hoping to find a another farm for rent.

Luann and Joann were introduced to my menagerie. Ducklings being cuddly litle things, the twins immediately took to them. I recommended they avoid Maudie due to her condition. Not that anything was wrong, but there was some fallow fussiness in her behavior. Hesitancy, and rightly so,

was what Luann and Joann showed upon first meeting Goober. They had no idea how gentle was this nag. All they knew was that Goober was a lot taller and so much bigger than the two of them standing one atop the other's shoulders. Through demonstration, Mom, Dad, Luann and Joann all learned how easy it was to get along with Goober. He was putty in their hands. Goober just walked

I remember how anxious Mom was as I hoisted Joann, then Luann onto Goober's bare back, pictured left. "Oooohhhh, it's so high up" Joann giggled. "Lawrence. Maybe they shouldn't be on that horse alone. What if he takes off? What if they fall off?" I soothed Mom's worries, told her an ice cube would sooner melt in Alaska before Goober ever "took off".



I told the girls to kick the horse with their heels and say, "Giddyap." They did and Goober moved into a slow motion walk. As the horse and riders headed toward the driveway I called to Joann to pull gently on the right rein. Goober turned right from the driveway and headed toward the barn. "Where you want him to go," I called, "just pull the rein in that direction and he'll go." That's what happened. "See," I said to Mom, 'nothing to worry about." Goober was his predictable gentle self. When they'd had enough and headed back to the water pump I told them to pull back on the reins and say, "Whoa!" After helping each girl from Goober's back it was my parents ttime to ride bareback of Goober, pictured right.



Now it was my time to show off. "Want to see what it looks like rearing a horse like the Lone Ranger?" My Dad used the Kodak Instamatic and snapped pictures as I comfortably reared Goober. "I learned that from an Indian," I said. Luann wanted to be on the horse with me when I next reared. She'd lost her fear! Mom showed maternal concern and I assured her saying Luann would be all right as long as she hung on tight to me. Joann shook her head no. I lowered my arm and Luann held out her hands. I told her to grasp my hand with both hands.

My hand encircled hers and I gracefully lifted



Luann up and behind me onto Goober's back. "Now hug my waist and hang on tight." I whooped and, locating Goober's clutch with my heel, up he went. Dad's snapshot of Luann and me with Goober up on his hind legs pictured left.



picture of me wearing Bob Powelss' headdress at right was taken by Steve Thompson when we made *Now That the Buffalo's Gone*.

Monday, August 18, came a letter filled with questions and personal memories about horses, dogs, ducks, the farm, temporary and permanent residents. It concluded with, "Keep smiling. I love and miss you very much. Write often – even if I don't as much as I should – Love, Jim"

From somebody who knew someone and happened to mention it to somebody else, Bob and I found another farm. Still on Route 2, it was a few miles away because Route 2 was split in two by the Stevens Point township.

Five days later, unannounced. Jim was on my doorstep!

# Chapter 60: Farm the Second

A Song of Steven

Shocked? Yes. Happy? Oh, yes. Concerned? You bet I was. Whatever the means, sharing any information on how he made it from Salt Lake City to Stevens Point, Jim kept that to himself. He'd run away from home. Jim said he loved me too much; having to enroll in a new school and not seeing me standing in the corridor was a thought he couldn't bear. I told Jim that he'd done the wrong thing in running away. On the other hand, I assured him that, at the least, he'd run to the right place. Jim arrived without money, without a change of clothes, with only his emotions bared. He refused to speak with his parents when I phoned them. We agreed that Jim would stay the week and work around the farm to earn airfare back to Salt Lake City and arrive in time to enroll in school.

Bob and I had found an uninhabited farmhouse on a 120 acre potato farm. The landlord, Dennis Jungels, was very easygoing about what we might want to do with the house because his plan was to bulldoze it someday to make more space for growing potatoes. Paint it. Fix it. Punch a hole in the wall, if we wanted. He was happy taking \$65 rent every month instead of letting the place stand idle until making the decision to raze.

Driving past on Route 2 the farmhouse could be seen, but only if you looked for it. Otherwise the view was potato fields, trees obscuring the house. The driveway was shaped like a large teardrop perhaps half a mile long and quite the constitutional from kitchen entrance to the rural mail box. The house was, without exaggeration, enormous. The parlor or living room was large enough to cater a wedding reception. Some months later I learned from a plumber who'd come to unfreeze our water pipes that he'd grown up in the farmhouse and remembered when the place had been used weekends for community dances, the living room doubling as dancehall. It had a thin carpet on the wooden floor which looked like it could have easily been rolled up. Perhaps that accounted for the small wooden porch and set of wooden stairs with bannister used as parlor entrance or exit, and for the cleared area which may have been used for parking cars, horses and wagons. Neighbors coming for Saturday night dancing would have gone straight into the parlor and not up the main steps and porch leading into the kitchen. Off the parlor were two sizable bedrooms without windows and with doors.

There was a middle room, essentially another parlor, though smaller, with a door separating it from the main parlor, and two more large bedrooms. Each had a window and a door. There was a covered rectangular hole in the ceiling which lead to four more second-floor bedrooms. Although spacious and impressive, I doubt they were ever used. It would have meant having to erect an access ladder, a device which folded out and down from the hole. A stepladder might have been too dangerous to negotiate that first step down from the hole. We found a ladder in the barn tall enough to reach up into the hole, but we never used the attic space. My guess was that the upstairs had never been completed and, as a result, a staircase which should have existed along the wall separating the middle room from the kitchen was never built.

The only time I'd ever seen a kitchen as big as this was in the movies, and not necessarily as a kitchen. As with all the rooms, the ceiling was high. Its size and character suggested an old wild west saloon. It had a long counter, much like a bar split in the center with a double basin sink. Above the counter was a pastel crockery pantry with latched, windowed doors. The counter itself had several cupboards and drawers of wood for pots and pans, cooking utensils, knives, forks, spoons, gidgets and gadgets. Against the wall separating kitchen from middle room was a functional gas stove. Off the kitchen was a walk-in pantry or larder with more shelf space than I'd possibly ever use for storing dry

and canned goods and preserves. Also off the kitchen and just to the left of the entrance door was the bathroom with its toilet, sink and vanity, and a deep bathtub on dragon's feet.

Outside was a large propane gas tank which fueled the kitchen stove. Set between the porch, kitchen and potato field it afforded open access for the truck which delivered the gas and filled the tank. Not



far from the tank was a fowl coop, pictured left with me holding two of our ducks. An immediate job was to make the coop fox proof. We'd lost 18 of the original 20 ducks to foxes

on The Farm. driveway separated the coop from the corraled red barn. This one was larger than The Farm's and its domed silo dominated building, pictured This barn had right. stalls, horse advantage for when



Maudie was ready to drop her foal. Another stretch of driveway separated the barn from the granary. Not far from the parlor porch was a windmill with hand-operated water

pump. Unfortunately, the pump no longer worked. The blades of the windmill spun in strong wind making the noise of screeching banshees. Imagine being startled awake the first time by metal shrieks! The porch was a concrete floor and steps to the kitchen door. At one end furthest from the potato field was an old-fashioned wooden trap door which when lifted lead down concrete steps into a root cellar and dirt floor basement. Neighbors' homes couldn't be seen from the farmhouse nor peoples' sounds heard.

Bob, Steve, Jim and I filled the trailer several times with household goods and drove just as many times to Farm the Second. Yes, that's what we called it. Given that Mr. Shepanski and his family had shown up at their whim and seemingly took over without ever asking permission, and because I hadn't been required to pay a bond, I am today still embarrassed at what I allowed, and that all of us contributed to an unclean concoction of bug smear on the kitchen's white ceiling. With open doors for moving our things out, swarms of flies were attracted inside. We took turns manning the swatter and splayed flies againt that white ceiling. Flies lost all gladiatorial combat, had such ever existed. It was as if we had a neverending supply of targets to squash on the ceiling. Last boxes loaded into the trailer, we laughed and we cringed at the not-so-Michaelangelo ceiling, more a Jackson Pollack of red and black fly splatter. Shepanski would likely swear in Polish and he'd face a big clean-up job. We left the key, hence our landlord's instruction, in lock position in the kitchen door's latch.

Goober and Maudie were not transported to Farm the Second. I didn't have a horse trailer nor did I know anyone nearby where I could borrow one. Steve rode Maudie and Jim rode Goober. Riding through town, making use of the side streets as much as possible, it was a few miles of walking taking some three to four hours. Steve didn't want to overwork Maudie in her condition. Meatball didn't accompany them and he didn't ride in the car with Bob and me. Meatball never completed the move. He'd mysteriously disappeared late in July. No one knew what happened.

And then there was Oscar, seen with me in the picture of the barn silo. He was perhaps the most affectionate yet dumbest dog I'd ever known. Part springer spaniel and God only knows what else, he was a black curly-haired still-growing dog. Oscar looked like a cocker spaniel on stilts and he made me think of a clumsy teenager with too-big feet. I believe he may have come with the farm. Had Bob had been given the dog? That I think I'd have remembered. Or maybe Oscar showed up out of nowhere and just hung around! I've no other answer for how that dog ended up ours.

Labeled in black magic marker, contents of boxes for kitchen, living room, bedroom or bathroom were stacked as delivered in our new farmhouse, this old place which hadn't been lived in for quite some time. The lifting, carrying, and shoving of furniture and boxes, the drive of horses made us all tired. Still, fox-proofing the coop had to be done before dark. Otherwise we were sure we'd lose the ducks overnight to a wily, killer vixen. Bent, loose window screens were reattached, the slightly ajar door re-fitted, and any possible access at floor level was barricaded with rock and packed earth. It would suffice for now. I don't remember us setting up the beds, just that we dumped mattresses on the floor and tossed a blanket onto the couch. Our stuff could be unpacked and set into place next day, Sunday, August 24.

Going on 8:00 a.m. the following morning Jim suggested he would hitch a ride into town and visit Jenny Ebal<sup>1</sup>. His plan, Jim said, was to pick apples so we could bake pie for dessert. He said he'd return in a couple of hours. Sure, why not? Bob, Steve, and I attacked some cardboard boxes, removed newspaper wrappings, rolled carpet, scrubbed floors, unrolled carpet, washed walls, washed cloudy window panes, cleaned light fixtures, screwed in light bulbs, and connected the television and antenna; all the home moving chores which make for cricks in the lower back, minor strains in arms and calves, and mental apathy. Jim returned to Farm the Second after 8:30 p.m., in the dark, on foot, minus a bagful of apples.

We all were overtired. I believed the arrangement was for Jim to be working on the farm to earn his airfare back to Salt Lake City? His hand was needed, yet we hadn't seen "boo" of him all day. Weary and choked with anger I growled, "Where in the hell have you been?" I'd never before used a minor profanity when speaking with Jim.

"Picking apples," Jim replied rather snappily.

"So where **are** the f\*\*king apples?"

"I guess I forgot 'em", he said too quirkily for my liking.

Anything further would have stirred the depths of invective and spewed forth a tongue-lashing by the monstrous and unpredictable Taurean bull whose anger has been penned for centuries. Jean Shephard would have described my petulant being as that of the nutty, unpredictably lashing-out, furious Tasmanian devil. This was me behaving unforgiveably. And yet, as much as I had tried to never let emotion rule over common sense, here it was all coming out. With both hands I grabbed Jim's lapels. I shoved him. The volume of my voice rose and I swore. The words I used weren't minor blasphemy; they were words I think bitter Ambrose Bierce even omitted from satirical definition in *The Devil's Dictionary*.

Bob and Steve slinked away. Jim retreated to a darkened bedroom off the main parlour. I pursued him, grabbed his arm and, berating insanely, I slapped Jim's cheek to get his attention. That's the only way to describe my anger as proof I'd lost control; good-bye to everything I'd been taught by Mr. McCabe about a teacher taking control of adversity. Adding no fuel to my unreasonable fire, Jim wisely kept his tongue silent. He crouched in a corner like a trapped animal, lit a cigarette and snarled, "I'll do the work tomorrow."

"Tomorrow! Tomorrow? Why the hell tomorrow? You should been helping today! Hard work's already done! And where were you?"

Had my head been a mercury thermometer, as in a *Looney Tunes* cartoon, my face would rapidly redden and the top end bulb would have strained against bursting. Jim muttered something incomprehensible. I could have punched him, could have knocked him around silly. I could have done and said something I'd later regret; instead I lifted him up and off his feet and let go my grip. Light as a sack of feathers, Jim dropped to the mattress. I turned my back on Jim and, heaving for air, slammed the bedroom door behind me. It didn't slam, instead bumped against a mattress which had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jim married his Junior High School sweetheart in 1972 and eventually became the parents of two sons.

shifted on the floor during the fracas. Ah, who cared if my door slam never got me in with the last word! I deposited my afflicted mind and body onto a middle room couch. I didn't look at Bob or Steve, spoke to neither, and lay on my side stewing in my own rotten juices.

As I slipped into semi-conscious sleep, I became feintly aware of crunching newspaper and the erratic crystalline chimes of wine glasses and tumblers.

Eos, the Maiden of the Dawn, performed the happy task of bringing light and love to humankind. With rosy fingers she drew aside the dark curtain of the night. I found the kitchen had been set, table and chairs faultlessly placed. Finding their way into kitchen cupboards, all crockery, silverware, cooking utensils, and implements had been perfectly arranged and stored. While I'd engaged in disturbed sleep, like Robin Goodfellow Jim had worked through the night.

He was asleep on another couch in the middle room, a throw rug pulled like a blanket across his fetal-positioned body. I gently touched the dark wave of tousseled hair on Jim's forehead. "Want some breakfast?" I asked, pride interferring with any thought of apologizing for last night's misadventure. Jim's glazed eyes rolled hazily and lazily closed, blocking me from his vision.

I was kept at more than arm's length, a silent tolerance, throughout the day. Jim acknowledged my requests for assistance, but wouldn't speak. He vacuumed, swept, washed, and carried empty boxes outside. Bob and Steve worked diligently to make the farmhouse a liveable home. During his hours of servitude, no sound emanated from Jim's lips. Bob and Steve never intervened, never questioned last night.

Alone at dusk, cicadas buzzing, I collapsed into a rocking chair on the front porch. Mosquitoes didn't bother. I closed my eyes, occasionally pushing againt the concrete floor with my bare feet to rock the chair back and forth. All that was missing was the odd predictable creak of a chair runner. The night air was still and close.

Jim pushed open the screen door. It made the *awk eeek* sound you hear in so many movies set in a rustic summertime. In silence Jim stepped on the porch offereing me a cup of coffee. I accepted it with a bland thanks and attempted to breach the subject of my irrational behavior the night before, but was interrupted. Jim gently requested I put the cup of coffee onto the porch floor. He snuggled into my lap, his arms surrounding my shoulders, and he nuzzled his face into my neck.

"I'm sorry about last night," he said in a near-whisper.

"No, no, I'm the one who should be sorry," I said rather mechanically.

"No." A beat and Jim said, "You were right to be mad at me."

"I'd no right to hit you."

"Forget it," Jim said, and without hesitation, "I love you." In one breath. He hugged me. And I him.

A short time passed before I broke the evening's silence. "I love you too." Jim let the moment hang in silence.

"Just forget it, Lare," Jim whispered. "Show me now." So lightweight and thin like a will-o-the wisp I hugged Jim, ever fearful of snapping him in two.

Jim should have walked out on me, found his way back to Salt Lake City by whatever means he'd used to make it to Stevens Point, and forgotten I ever existed. Eos kept everything together as was meant and, according to legend, had done her duty.

A week, maybe nine days passed and I was numbed having to say good-bye again, this time at the airport. There was no place for pleasantries resulting in nervous or silly laughter; instead we tightly held our tears. Jim didn't want to return to Salt Lake City and, truthfully, I didn't want him to go. As

the plane taxied down the runway, a tear trickled down my cheek. I only imagined Jim letting go of his tear too. Inevitable promises to write were made, and kept.

August was a hot dry month and drawing to a close, almost time to start another school year. I needed to return the headdress and Indian ensemble borrowed from Bob Powless, but first, "Whaddya say we make another movie, Steve?" Again we used no written script. Again I made use of technical gadgets on the Bolex for special effects including dissolves, fades, slow motion, and mounting one-color filters over the lens. I made a visual poem titled *A Song of Steven* wherein a modern day farm boy imagines what it may have been like when an early white settler had to fight to take this land from its traditional owners. Steve played all characters: modern farm boy, olden days settler, and Native American.

Publicity Snapshots from A Song of Steven







A Song of Steven opens with a series of dissolves as modern day Steven bounds into shot and heads up the long driveway with an empty bucket, at his heels the enthusiastic, loping Oscar. Steve beckons the red Arab mare and she ignores his call. He digs into his shirt pocket and takes out an imnaginary treat hoping to lure the horse to him. She's too wise to fall for his prank and turns her head away. Steve pours fresh water from the bucket into a heavy cauldron, gathers a bridle, and affixes it, instead of indifferent Maudie, to the docile Goober. He mounts the pinto and walks into a vast field. To

indicate the boy's imagination taking him into the past, the shot dissolves into an Indian chief mounted on the horse. A red filter further shows his imagination as he, Steve, is the Indian chief. By means of yellow and red-filtered shots of Indians, all played by Steve, intercut with his real self pitching hay he imagines he's a frontier settler. He's holds the pitchfork as a weapon. The Indian charges holding a rifle. Steve props the pitchfork against a shed and, from the open door, takes hold of a rifle. A battle in his own thoughtfulness ensues. "Indians" fall from horses. "Settlers" drop to the ground. Atop the shed, as a settler, he's struck by an imaginary bullet, flings the pitchfork over his shoulder and stumbles, tumbles from the roof. That may have been the only scene which caused some consternation. Steve dropped the



pitchfork and it clattered onto the roof with tynes pointing up. I kept the trigger of the camera depressed as Steve grabbed at his chest and headed down to the roof. I gritted my teeth and hoped Steve wouldn't fall onto the pitchfork's sharp points. He didn't.

More shots of a triumphant Indian galloping in slow motion follow, and these happen to be Steven astride Maudie. Returning to the present, Steven is the modern farm boy looking unhappily at his horse and, as if disappointed in the aloof mare, chooses not to water her. He struggles with the heavy cauldron, tips out the fresh water, overbalances, and trips forward. He picks up the empty bucket and

bounds in slow motion back down the long driveway, Oscar in tow, all in several dissolves a la George Stevens<sup>2</sup>

Words do little justice to the scenario. No more than a series of lovely linked images, it may not sound like much, but it worked, made an impression, and left viewers with a feeling of melancholy. Perhaps four years passed with the original silent film resting in its metal can. I put the idea of "some sort of mood music" to John Primm. He accepted saying he'd "score" A Song of Steven. With the film in his hands John played about with his guitar all the while watching the visuals. Eventually he recorded an original guitar solo to accompany my film. As well, he accompanied his guitar on a balance track with harmonica. Kept as simple as the title, his melodic and melancholic "A Song of Steven" mesmerisingly underscored every dreamlike image with delicately entralling picks and strums and hums. John then arranged to have the original silent made into an optical sound print. The subject matter never dated A Song of Steven and it was eventually entered into film festivals in the mid-1970s, five years after its being shot in one exciting day. Steve's clothing, however, does date the film. He wore, what he always called, his shitkickers and baggers (boots and bellbottom jeans).



An exciting day for every

wrong reason after making A

Song of Steven was one we'd all have preferred never happened. It seemed no different from any other sultry summer day when we lazed about in the shade, trotted a bucket of water for the horses, or sat back in a rocking chair occasionally waving away bluebottles and horseflies and listening to the buzz saw symphony of cicadas. Steve and Bob and I looked like lazy men of the sod after a long late milking or cropping; it was just past noon and swiftly turning into the scorch of the afternoon's blazing sun. Oscar bounded from the granary with a muffled "woop" and near to the porch shook his head violently, paused, and shook his head some more. Now Oscar, pictured left and right sitting aside Steve, made something of a whimper whine before shaking his whole body as if he'd emerged sodden from the creek. Then it hit like an aromatic tsunami. The stench overwhelmed olfactories and stung our eyes. We coughed and gasped and pinched shut eyes and noses. Eyes felt like they'd been



snapped with a rubber band. "Oh phew! Has that stupid dog been rolling in the world's worst dog poo?" There were cries of "Aaaarrgh!" and "Ooooh Gawd," mingled with Oscar's high-pitched doggy yowl.

Through squinted eyes we looked to the granary. A



-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> George Stevens was a Hollywood director who used very long dissolves as in *A Place in the Sun*. His dissolves would have all been accomplished by Optical printing. Mine were all done the hard way, in the camera.

skunk retreated under the disused building's floorboards. We must have become tolerant of the stink from Oscar because curiosity about Bambi's friend Flower held more attraction than attention to our odoriferous canine. We walked toward the granary, stopped, looked, and I shook my head. "There's a whole family under there." 'Forget it' was our unanimous decision. No one wanted a spray of Eau de Cologne de Pepe Le Pew. Skunks hibernate when weather turns cold, so we left them alone. "So, what're we gonna do about Oscar?" asked Steve.

I'd read somewhere that to get rid of skunk stink you bathed in tomato juice. Only the dog stank and no one had touched him... yet. We knew Oscar wouldn't wander off anywhere... just as long as he stayed clear of dawdling into the house. Steve closed the kitchen doors and the three of us hopped into Bob's car. Bob drove to Red Owl where we bought a quantity of tomato juice in large cans. The girl at the check-out wanted to know what we intended cooking. Bob casually replied, "Dog," and gave her a purse-lipped smile. We left the supermarket with the checker-outer thinking we were definitely up to no good.

Back on the farm Steve was game to grab Oscar and carry him to the cauldron, but only after he'd taken off his baggers. Steve in his Fruit-of the Looms lowered stiffened doggy back legs first; Oscar didn't complain or kick out. I believe the dog knew we wanted to help him. Steve held Oscar as one by one Bob punctured holes in the cans with an opener and handed each can to me. I was also in my tighty-whities pouring tomato juice over Oscar - glub, glub, glub - first slobbering over his head and ears. Steve and I rubbed the tomato juice into his curly black fur. Our pooch looked every bit the sad sack! More cans were opened and emptied over Oscar. We could lift juice in cupped hands from the bottom of the cauldron to rub and rinse our dog. The tomato juice cure worked. Oscar didn't smell like a rose, but he no longer reeked of live skunk under the granary.

I have called Oscar stupid, but he was smarter than many people I know. He'd poked the so-called bear with a stick and got a shocking result. I know some people who'd poke that stick again and again knowing all along they'd end up with the same result. Not Oscar! He'd learned his lesson. He wanted nothing more to do with the granary and the surprise Flower that lurked underneath.

As August's memories were locked in or turned into ghosts, there was a determined, boisterous, and jarring pounding on the screen door. Roused from sleep, I saw the clock showed 2 a.m. I don't know where Bob was, but he wasn't in his bed. Only bad news comes ad patres tempis, or Bob had forgotten his key. Steve jumped from the couch. Dazed and nervous he asked, "What's happening? What's going on?"

"I don't know," I replied as I pulled jeans over my Fruit of the Looms. Barechested and wearing only his white undershorts Steve grabbed the broom and followed me to the kitchen door. Unlocking it, I opened a crack and the door was forcefully flung against me. I fell back believing I was being attacked. Steve swiftly cocked the broom ready to strike. In burst Ray Alakson. One fell swoop and he caught me in my backwards swoon. Ray threw his arms around me and hugged tighter than an oversized rubber band holding together a thick bunch of rhubarb.

"Thanks," he breathed heavily into my ear and I caught the smell of a bottom shelf Jim Beam. "I just wanted you to know. Thanks."

I don't know who was more astounded, me caught in a clumsy embrace or Steve slowly lowering his chosen weapon of broom. Over Ray's shoulder I saw the tail lights of an old Oldsmobile, its exhaust puffing white smoke, and I heard the low rumble of a ruptured muffler. The car windows were fogged, smoky, and I made out the figures of a couple more boys inside. Ray's glazed, red eyes suggested he'd been smoking something other than tobacco.

Questions staggered from my mouth, "What're you doing here? Where've you come from? Where's Dennis?"

Ray, his arms now linked ungainly around my naked neck and back, his face so close to mine his eyes were crossed, now replied off-handedly, yet laboredly with a long pause between words, "Dunno. Can't say." He first smirked like a naughty elf, then giggled uncomfortably and closed-mouthed. A bit of snot blew from a nostril onto the linoleum. "Stole that car... just so I could... come see you... so I could... y'know... say 'thanks'."

He backed his head from mine just far enough for his eyes to focus without looking cross-eyed. He swiped his nose with a bare wrist. In the next moment Ray smiled. It was concentrated, genuine, tender, and said more than all of his slurred, pause in-between words. Ray released his frail, vernal grip, turned and bolted. He'd left the door of the Olds open and collapsed into the passenger seat. Waving casually toward the windshield, Ray hand indicated a go-ahead. The car jerked and then accelerated rapidly. Rumbling up the driveway to the highway, Ray vanished into the night. His unannounced visit was painfuly intrusive, yet alarmingly welcome.

Ray showed up out of nowhere and disappeared back into nowhere. Nothing of a stolen vehicle was ever reported in any news source. I never heard again from Ray. I never saw him again.

School for the class of '70 started in September. Steve Thompson was in 9th grade at Franklin and school never stopped Steve from staying on Farm the Second every, and I mean every weekend. I never discussed Ray's mysterious visit nor Jim's running away from home with anyone, and neither did Steve. What Ray and Jim did was our business, not others; the farm was the farm and the school was the school, and according to the unwritten law of teacher-student relationships, ne'er the twain should meet. And anyway, what would any of those English staff, general staff, even the lunch or cleaning staff make of either or both. Ray and Jim hadn't ever impacted on any of their paltry lives.

An important letter was forwarded from my out-of- date Box 266 to my new address at Route 2, Box 440. Dated August 23, 1969, I didn't see it until the beginning of September. It was from J. Joseph deCourcelle, Chairman of the Motion Picture Division of the Photographic Society of America. *We Were Two*, the 16mm version, was given an Honorable Mention in the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual International Film Festival. Presentation of awards would be made during the PSA International Convention in Washington D.C. on October 10, 1969 in the Delaware suite of the Sheraton Park Hotel. As I figured I'd not have the money to attend... I never did seem to have enough money... I advised my award be sent to me.

Jim's letters were always simply addressed to Lare, no surname required. Since his return to Utah he told about getting up at 3:30 a.m. to deliver 140 newspapers, getting home around 6:00 a.m. and sleeping two hours before delivering handbills once or twice a week at 8:00 a.m. About 10:00 a.m. he'd go to his cousin's home and help dig away half a hill to put up a retaining wall. By 7:00 p.m. he'd be home, eat, go to bed, and repeat his schedule the next day. In a September 3 letter he told of registering at East High School where his cousin Greg lived.

"I sure as hell was glad to be in Point with you for those two weeks. I can't wait till next summer when I'll get out of this hell-hole! But thanks alot for everything — it means alot to me. It made me surer & thankfull of alot of things - & the power & love of our friendship."

At Ben Franklin Jr. High Mr. Bob Norton had relinquished the reins of his principalship to a former sergeant in the United States Marines, Mr. Gilbert Oelke. He was news to us all. Had the principal's position been up for grabs over the summer vacation, or hadn't I cared enough to have paid attention. I never picked up the local *Stevens Point Daily Journal* nor watched local news on the Wausau TV stations. If anyone on our staff aspired to the position, like "Hogan's Heroes" Sergeant Schultz, "I knew nothing." But there he was, a bear of a man in his blue suit and tie and military haircut, a Number 1 which saved on money and time in the barber's chair. Staff assembled in the auditorium on the first day. Someone introduced our new principal and he strode across the stage to the lecturn shoulders-back, stiff-backed and chin to chest like he'd never been discharged from the military. As though still a drill sergeant, we were addressed not in welcoming sentences, but in sharp, curt phrases.

"Uh oh," I thought, "Unless we meet every requirement of this by-the-book martinet, he'll cut off every staff guy's local draft board deferment and ship us off to Vietnam." We felt his imposing words, as if his face was within an inch of the face of each and every staff member.

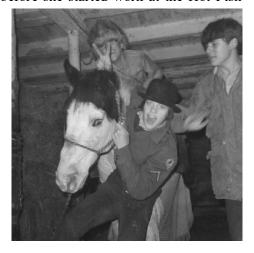
In Mr. McCaig's morning Education class back in 1968, takensimultaneously taken when I did my practice teaching in the afternoon, he had instructed on etiquette regarding classroom interruption by outside forces during lessons. It had been made clear to us that if ever some bureaucrat or higher up on the staff entered your classroom without an invitation, in other words to do business unrelated to your class lesson, the correct procedure was to quietly ask that person, read intruder, to immediately leave without making a fuss and that you would come see them when class had finished or at your earliest opportunity. The reason for this action was so that a classroom teacher's authority was never usurped by anyone from outside the classroom.

Mr. Oelke had the propensity to do what he wanted when he wanted. Mr. McCaig's instruction came into play within not so many days of the new school year. I was teaching a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class timetabled in the 50 minutes before lunchtime. Sometimes hunger got in the way of learning and the kids could be unruly, but this time it was genuine enthusiastic class participation at such a level as to be heard outside into the corridor. We were enjoying ourselves. It was learning noise, easily misinterpreted. Mr. Oelke burst into my room without knocking and assumed a drill sergeant's pose intended to intimidate and give others the impression he stood taller than me. He wasn't! All fun experienced by my students in our lesson leapt out the imaginary window; I say imaginary because this room was constructed in the building's core and it had four solid walls without windows. Oelke snarled something incomprehensible about unnecessary noise. I looked him in the eye and very calmly stated that I wanted him to turn around and quietly leave my classroom. I would see him when my classtime had finished. To my relief and delight, Mr. Oelke backed off, turned, and quietly walked away. My superior vacated the room closing the door behind him. Surprisingly, students applauded. I put my index finger vertically across my lips making a "Shush" sign, lest the bear be further provoked with their stick of approving applause spilling into the corridor. My kids knew who was in charge of their classroom.

When the bell announced class time had finished and the kids charged off for lunch, I ambled to the principal's office. Knocking on his door and beckoned inside, Mr. Oelke wasn't occupied with anything more than a sandwich in his hand. As I tried to explain myself, he waved off any excuse I might have raised and said, "I jumped the gun. I'm sorry." "OK," I said agreeably. Oelke added, "Mrs. Krembs told me how your classrooms work. Sorry. Won't happen again." There was a notable beat before Mr. Oelke humanized with, "Care for a baloney sandwich?" I couldn't have imagined a better outcome; praise to Mr. McCaig for his astuteness in addressing this rare yet probable hoopla.

During the week I watered, fed, brushed, and exercised Goober and Maudie. Bob was never much into farm chores. Steve looked after the horses from Friday after school until it was time to go home Sunday evening. Jean, his mother, drove him to the farm before she started work at the Hot Fish

Shop. She picked him up after work Sunday or, if working late, Jean would ring and Bob drove Steve home. Just as had Jim, Steve took to wearing my clothes, my father's army jacket when he worked in the barn, pictured right with Milton Huff and Denny Jacquin. Steve borrowed my hats and caps and jackets, and a floral-patterned shirt my mother had sewn. I never needed to ask if or when Steve was coming to the farm. Staying over weekends was his regular routine. Though not always overnighters, occasional visitors included Milton, usually with Bob, and Steve's longtime friend from elementary school Denny. Steve's 9<sup>th</sup> grade friend Donny Dietsche was in my English class and with my permission, sometimes showed up.





Donny's pictured left making a mask in Mrs. Catherine LeGault's Art class. Catherine, a colleague on the Jr. High staff, was an Art teacher; we

cooperated to organize a class to coincide with my teaching of the Greek tragedy *Antigone*. Pictured right, Mrs. Catherine LeGault and I in her Art class. We encouraged students to construct masks, cut and sew costumes for performing scenes we studied in English.



Catherine's son Bob, known best by his nickname "Bink," had expressed his interest



in movies and had even shown me a couple of music films he'd made. Called Bink because he was a tiny kid for a 9<sup>th</sup> grader, he often wore oversized hand-me-downs from his brothers, was big on personality, huge in creativity, and always a winner with ingrained good manners. Long-haired Bob "Bink" LeGault was an occasional Saturday visitor, pictured left during a morning barn clean; Bink is centre in the stable with Milton on the left and Steve on the right.

I was afforded the perfect opportunity to shoot a home movie, but never loaded the turret-model Kodak or the 8mm Bolex. Instead I used my Kodak Instamatic to do a few arranged shots of Mary, bridesmaids, Mom and the twins having their hair done and dressing in Mom's home-sewn gowns. As Mary's big brother, I was privvy to what grooms traditionally never see.



Klobukowski Family photo taken in front of the family home on the morning before the church ceremony on the day of my sister Mary's weddding September 27, 1969: Standing in front are flowergirl twins Luann and Joann. Standing behind the twins are Stephen, Father Leonard, Mary, Mother Dolores, and Lawrence. Mom sewed all the dresses.

My sister Mary married James Thomas Herro September 27, 1969. The wedding was held at 11:00 a.m. in Immaculate Heart of Mary (IMH) parish church in West Allis. An after-the-ceremony snapshot of the married bride and groom is pictured right.

There was plenty of time before the late afternoon/evening reception. My parents put on an after-wedding brunch in the family home. A general word-of-mouth invitation was passed around to relatives and in-laws. On Dad's side of the family, cousins like the Brzezinskis

who'd driven from Sobieski attended. From Mom's side of the family came the Behrs, Karczewskis, Brochhausens, Goforths. Tables and chairs were arranged in the connected living and dining rooms. Elbow to elbow, the setting was accepted as how large families celebrate. Among foods served was

kielbasa homemade by Dad and my brother Steve. It was a challenge ensuring everyone was happy with food served from family-size bowls and on platters, glasses topped up with adult beverages and soft drinks, and coffee cups always filled. I'm guessing there may have been up to 50 or more relatives and in-laws packed together enjoying Klobukowski hospitality. Pictured right on the front lawn of the family home, three aunts (Evelyn, Eleanor, Adeline) who worked as table waiters alongside my brother (standing with coffee percolator in hand), Bob Baril (in background emptying dregs of a bottle of wine), and me (knife in hand and leaning on Steve's shoulder).







It was up to guests to fill in the 4 to 5 hours before the reception. Tables and chairs from the brunch cleared, the bride and groom opened gifts. Pictured right are Mary and Jim unwrapping presents and keeping a written record of who



gave what so that accurate Thank You cards would be sent. The reception was held in the IMH church hall. Pictured left is Marge Pearson dancing with Dad.

October always was a magic month. The market in the Stevens Point town square filled with farmers and tables burgeoned with sweet corn, potatoes, squash, onions, beets, carrots, and large orange Halloween pumpkins. October also meant the breeze dragged in cold air from the north to crisp the night air. Blankets proved fruitless against the nighttime cold permeating the old farmhouse. One weekend, and one weekend only, Bob, Steve, and I took to dumping a double bed mattress onto the kitchen floor. We snuggled together under blankets after turning on the gas stove and leaving open the oven door. None of us had considered gas eating up oxygen and leaving us breathing in carbon monoxide. The kitchen was, as mentioned earlier, B-I-G and that accounted for our surviving asphixiation.

The following Monday after I'd finished school, and after Bob had finished work early, we shopped for a gas wall heater and bought one suitable for the middle room. The salesman suggested sufficient heat would be blown into the kitchen, at least to keep us comfortable eating at the table. Within a day or so the wall heater was delivered and a gas man installed it. Pictured right, I am switching on the wall heater manually because a minor problem developed. The



heater warmed the middle room and turned itself off without ever coming on again to maintain an even temperature.



This happened at least every hour, hence the manual restart. The gas man returned, replaced the thermocouple and the problem was solved. The middle room warmed and its temperature was constant, as evidenced by Steve, pictured left, in his jammies on the couch, the same place he'd chosen as his weekend bed. For a pun we named this picture the "Plowboy foldout."

One of Steve's October weekends prompted my writing a poem, one I never submitted for consideration for publication, not because I thought it wasn't any good, but because it was private, a personal poem.

### STEVE

Sunday,

in its October mood, raining in afternoon drowsiness curling toward hibernation.

Steve.

in his baggers and too-tight shitkickers breaking hay bales for a skittish mare; sneezing, allergic to the seed nurturing the spring-due foal; re-routing an October wind, nailing red plastic garbage bags over open windows preventing winter's barn blindness; losing raindrops from his forehead, he takes pride in his planning —
But it is raining, and the barn has no lights.

Steve's nailing red plastic garbage bags to the open windows of the barn was a real and necessary chore. The barn always felt cool in summer and the horses welcomed the retreat from the heat. We imagined how much colder it would be once winter settled in. We could have built wooden shutters, but chose the less time consuming, less expensive heavy plastic bags since we knew the buildings would one day be bulldozed for growing potatoes.

An October letter from Salt Lake City arrived in the large milk can we had on its side at the head of the driveway, our Rural Route Box 440 mailbox:

"Just remember that there's a kid here who thinks one hell of a lot of you all the time – even tho he may seem absent-minded at times. God be with you

But happiness wasn't mine. I felt not quite right. Any food I put into my body came out loose. I thought little of it until I realized I wasn't eating foods which usually worked as natural laxatives on me, like eggplant and spinach, sometimes Iceberg lettuce in sandwiches or salads. As regular as the hour ordinary eating started causing excessive looseness of my bowels. The hourly ritual timed out and trips to the toilet soon became faster than Quick Draw McGraw. I needed to excuse myself from first period to trot once, twice, up to three times a lesson. And still I wasn't taking sufficient notice. I just figured I'd picked up some bug.

It wasn't the most advantageous time to receive a formal invitation to show movies in Chicago, but too good an opportunity to pass. Mundelein College was dedicating its new \$3,500,000 Learning Resource Center. My movie screenings would "program christen" its Galvin Memorial Hall October



30 and November 1. Quite an honor and so I accepted. A flight from Stevens Point to Chicago and back was provided. Overnight accomodation was arranged in the private residence of a Mundelein faculty member, a man who'd previously worked on the faculty at WSU-SP. I'm not certain, but I think it may have been Mr. Warren Lensmire. I requested that one of my actors be allowed to accompany me and Mundelein approved. Not knowing how things would work at Mundelein, I did a just-in-case and trained Steve to operate the 16mm projector, pictured left, first by looking at what he was doing and then only by feel until he could thread and operate all the technical jiggery-poo of the machine with his eyes closed.

We flew North Central Airlines to Chicago Thursday, October 30. It happened to be Steve's first time ever flying and he thoroughly enjoyed the experience, hogging the window seat and ogling all the "toy buildings and fields" below. As long as I didn't eat, I thought, I didn't need to run to the toilet. So much for the complimentary bag of Planters. I gave the peanuts to Steve and made it through the flight with my stomach making a constant rumble. The Learning Resource Center's dedication happened in the Galvin Memorial Hall Thursday from 10:30 a.m. until the conclusion of WSU-SP's President Lee Sherman Dreyfus' 8:00 p.m. address on Mass Communication. Someone not directly involved in the proceedings collected us at O'Hare airport. We couldn't inspect the venue since it was in use for the dedication ceremonies with the Honorable R. Sargent Shriver, former director of the Peace Corps, former director of the United States Office of Economic Opportunity, and current ambassador to France; Gwendolyn Brooks, Pulitizer Prize for Poetry; Ivan Le Lorraine Albright, Chicago painter; and His Eminence John Cardinal Cody. I never glimpsed any of the celebrities.

I remember meeting the catering ladies who made us a cup of tea, later serving us white bread sandwiches filled with roast skinless white chicken meat. Unusually, this didn't seem to upset my digestion. One woman asked if I'd ever had my palm read. This being a very Catholic place, I was taken by surprise with her question. She took my hand in hers, studied my palm and explained the meanings of its lines. She zeroed in on my life line because she said it was very long, but broken in many places by illness or injury. I never took much stock in such sideshow fortune telling, but she did make me think twice after she said, "You are currently undergoing a health crisis, quite serious too, and you need to see a doctor as soon as you get home." As if to assure herself of the conclusion drawn, the woman asked if I knew of anything ununusal going on with my body. Without hesitation I told her of the persistent diahorrea. She nodded her head. "Don't ignore what you're body's telling you," she said gently releasing my hand. "You're going to come through all right, but you must have it treated." I felt neither uneasy nor frightened, but she had me wondering what it was she knew that I didn't.

That evening in our host's home I was offered, in celebration of Halloween, a slice of homemade pumpkin pie with ice cream. I hadn't even finished before I headed for the bathroom... more times than I cared to remember.

My film screenings opened Friday at 9:30 a.m. All of my 16mm efforts were shown including Jamie, Jim O'Leary's Who Will Give Us Tomorrow?, Forever Jim, Now That the Buffalo's Gone, We Were Two, Denny, Gary, and Scott, The Red, and A Song of Steven. Only Jamie and We Were Two were optical sound prints, while the others had soundtracks played via reel to reel tapes. Mundelein provided a projectionist and a tape recorder for film music playback. Steve courageously handled questions from the audience about each of the two films where he acted. I saw a look on Steve's face I'd not before seen. Showing any kind of tender loving care wasn't in Steve's physical vocabulary. Now he seemed very concerned about my state of health and maybe he felt this was one time he really had to come through for me. Steve had never been the most forthcoming of speakers, less so with audiences. I was so proud of him. My breakfast had been toast with strawberry jam and I rushed off to the public convenience during the screening of every film. For all pictures without Steve, I made it back to the auditorium in time to conduct discussion and answer questions.

After screening Forever Jim my audience provided new clues to images I'd not intentionally filmed with symbolism or for in-depth interpretation. Members of the audience deduced, for example, that Jim drowned when he came off the horse in the creek. That, even at the time of filming, was exactly what Jim and I had decided had happened. But then came an audience interpretation that explained for them the grief I'd shown on screen. It was in their interpretations that brother had lost brother, possibly a father had lost his son. That was something I'd not foreseen or intended, nor even expected. I was amazed at what my Mundelein audience here, and later others, have brought to my pictures. Few saw Forever Jim as a scenario about loving friends forced apart. In fact no one, to my knowledge anyway, has ever seen the film as a personal preservation or keepsake of friendship and subsequent loss through separation as was intended by Jim and me. Well, that didn't bother me in the least. The discomfort of exposing my inner soul or myself, so to say, and feeling embarrassed about it, was significantly eased. Thereafter when showing Forever Jim I felt within myself a disarming comfort. Oddly, as several of my films dealt with death in one way or another, some viewers came to the conclusion that I'd led a very unhappy life. One person got it so right when she said, "You lost someone very close to you... and it has affected your life ever since." For all I knew, the person may have tapped into my memory of Jim Corcoran...

The following day at 10:30 a.m. a repeat my program was scheduled, but constant trips to the bathroom with diarrhoea would have made it difficult. I felt unwell and was told I looked unwell. Even Steve, so much like the stone figures of Easter Island, said, "Lare, you got me worried." My mystery illness cancelled the second program. There had been no payment or gratuity, no money exchanged, just Mundelein having paid for plane fares. It was felt best I go home and see a doctor.

I was gaunt, my face pale, and Bob Baril was pretty blunt about saying so when he picked us up at the airport Sunday morning. Constant grumblings plagued my stomach and I felt unusual pains in my gut and in the small of my back, especially after riding in Bob's car over every smidgen of uneven road surface.

Man, oh, man, I didn't know how sick I was. I must have been lucky Monday to see a doctor without having made an appointment. Dr. Rifleman had me lie on a sheeted table in his examination room and prodded the region of my stomach and intestines. I made some jangled noises. All the doctor said was, "Uh huh," and told me I had to go to the hospital. Bob took me to the hospital, but he didn't stay. Paper in hand I was admitted, but not allocated a bed in a room as none was available. Whatever was written in Dr. Rifleman's chicken-scratching was urgent enough for hospital staff to set me up on a gurney with sheets, blanket and a pillow in the ward's corridor outside a regular room.

Word circulated throughout the junior school that Mr. Lare was in the hospital for extensive tests. When the school day finished hospital staff were kept busy with the flow of juvenile visitors to see

their teacher on the gurney, and having to monitor kids' unawares inevitable noise. Kids in my classes cared more than I'd ever imagined.

Steve Thompson knew better than to compete with Franklin's students. He timed his visit to coincide with the hospital's regular-as-clockwork dinner service. Smart boy knew I wouldn't eat my food and he was never a fussy eater! I liked that about Steve. No matter what I served or what he spooned onto his plate he never complained, never pushed anything aside, and always ate everything offered. After chowing down my dinner Steve made himself very comfortable by climbing onto the gurney and nestling himself between myself and the wall. With no TV to watch and little or nothing to talk about, Steve didn't say anything and, amazingly, wrapped his arm around me and fell asleep. Appreciating his close company I made no effort to wake Steve and tell him to go home when visiting hours finished at 8:00 p.m. Around 9:30 p.m. a male nurse realized the gurney was burdened with more than one person. I woke as the nurse poked Steve's arm to rouse him saying, "You need to go home now and leave your brother with us. Don't worry. We'll take good care of him." I remember seeing a knowing tight-lipped smile on Steve's face before he wandered down the corridor to walk home.

In the morning I was offered a liquid strawberry-flavored barium meal. Dr. Rifleman said a fluoroscope would reveal my affliction. The room was dark. Lying on an examination table beneath a camera, I was able to see the picture on a television monitor. Dr. Rifleman switched on the camera at my head to show me how the brain filled my cranium. As the camera was panned or craned, I watched the globs of barium slide down my throat. The camera focused on my heart. Dr. Rifleman came up with another unnerving, "Uh oh."

"What do you mean 'Uh oh'," I queried uncomfortably.

I'd no idea how impressive my heart looked on the monitor as I observed its swelling and compressing. My eyes were fixed on the rhythmic pumping action.

"It's too small for your body," the doctor said as a matter of fact, "but it's nothing to be concerned about. Don't you worry none. It'll keep you going for a long time."

The camera was craned to my stomach which I saw half-filled with white chalky barium. No problem was detected, so Dr. Rifleman asked me to slowly roll onto my back while he continued to focus the camera on my midriff. In slow motion, as if suspended in thick, clear liquid, the stomach rolled with me and, as I turned there was revealed a geyser of barium jetting out from a juncture of stomach and intestine.

"Ah hah," I heard the doctor proclaim in a voice suggestive of Dr. Frankenstein examining his creation after it was brought to life. I consciously heard Dr. Rifleman's non-verbal and yet my eyes remained transfixed on the TV monitor's hallucinogenic vision of eruption. "There's your problem," Dr. Rifleman said, a touch of glee resonating, "You have your own Old Faithful."

I'd no idea what that meant. Later that morning Dr. Rifleman brought diagrams and an explanation of diverticulosis, a disorder which involved the formation of abnormal pouches called diverticula along the outside of the colon, the bowel wall. Diverticulitis is infection or inflamation of these abnormal pouches. Together, these conditions are known as diverticular disease, a serious medical disorder. It's rarely found in people under 30 and Dr. Rifleman noted that it usually didn't afflict until late middle age or into elderly. Supposedly I was born with it as a genetic defect. The disorder resulted when one of the diverticulae broke open and the material which leaked out infected the outer surface of the colon. It could spread and turn into peritonitis, an often fatal illness. Peritonitis was what killed my Mother's eldest sister Lucy. It also killed silent screen heart-throb Rudolph Valentino and famous escape artist Houdini after he'd been punched in the gut by a fan. I was instructed on how to deal with diverticulitis, take the disorder seriously or risk the possibility of death by peritonitis or cancer.

The treatment for diverticulitis in 1969 wasn't medication or surgery, but a diet low in fiber, low in cellulose and connective tissue, and which reduced the amount of residue in the intestinal tract following digestion. It was a low residue diet<sup>3</sup> and it wasn't intended to be bland. That, I found, was gross understatement. Memory suggests a diet lasting over two years in which I consumed such exciting foodstuffs as refined white bread. Melba toast, plain toast, and saltines. I was allowed cream of wheat, cream of rice, and strained, yuk... strained oatmeal that amounted to bowlful of grayish slime with nothing chewable. I ate cottage or cream cheese and only mild American cheese, Velveeta being the utmost of rubberry plastic which melted but refused to burn. All other cheeses, the especially full of flavor stinky ones I really enjoyed, were banned. Fried foods were out, as was pork, any smoked or cured meats like ham, salami, hot dogs, sausages, corned beef, and cold cuts. Crisp bacon was permitted. Skins of potatoes and French fries were out. Bean and pea soups, as well as anything highly seasoned, i.e. all pepper, spices and condiments, relishes, gravy, crunchy peanut butter, pickles, popcorn, chocolate and olives were on the no-no list. I couldn't eat jam or marmalade and had to stick with honey, jelly (strained jam) and hard candy (boiled sweets). Vegetables had to be cooked to within an inch of their lives; in other words, close to disintegrating into mush; and these were limited to asparagus, beets, carrots, green or wax beans, spinach, mashed yellow squash, and strained peas and corn. Gerber's strained baby food was recommended. Raw vegetables and all other cooked vegetables, forget about 'em. As for fruit, all had to be extremely ripe with skins and seeds removed. Recommended were cooked and canned peaches, pears, apricots and apple sauce. Bland? Only seasoning allowed was sugar or salt.

Amongst repetitive bland news on November 22, 1969, Jim wrote:

"Mom says you called last night but asked me not to call because we are low on money. I'm sorry I was not home. I missed very much talking to you again. Mom tells me that you are out of the hospital & are being put on a diet for something like a hole in the stomach or intestine. Take care of yourself & get to feeling better real quick. Will you be killing the remaining ducks? – for Thanksgiving?

- Lots & lots of love forever, Jim."



The following Thursday was Thanksgiving. I'd earlier invited my family to come to Farm the Second for the weekend holiday. Instead of a traditional turkey, we'd roast the ducks I'd raised. Only two of the original twenty survived, pictured left in the arms of Steve and myself. Yes, we both have a cigarette in the mouth. Smoking had been a bone of contention. I remember having told off Steve for sneaking out to suck a butt on The Farm. Of course he resented my words. After I brought up the subject with Steve's mother, she said, "I smoke. You smoke. We're setting the example. No matter what, Steve's gonna wanna smoke too. So let him." Beneath that old leather jacket Steve has on my floral shirt. I'm wearing my father's army jacket.

Dziadzia had taught me how to butcher birds and it would be an instructional experience for Steve, Denny and Milton, all on the farm on the Sunday before November 27. Bob wanted nothing to do with killing and disappeared. Steve was first to volunteer his help. Cruel by today's standards, but back then we sliced the duck's head to catch the blood for making <u>czarnina</u>. This method was what Dziadzia practiced. A duck was cut and Milton held it between his knees during the bleeding. Denny caught the blood in an ice cream container with vinegar to prevent clotting. Blood squirted onto

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Today the diet is high residue; in other words, a reversal on previous thinking. Now it's food with fiber. In the past nuts, popcorn, most seeds, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, etc. were to be avoided because pieces might get lodged in the pouches and lead to infection.

Steve's hand and he pathetically uttered, "Ooooohhhhh... it's hot." His face turned pale. Denny and Milton switched places to butcher the second duck. Steve stepped back... and watched.



Having learned from Scott Schutte he wasn't going home for Thanksgiving, I invited him to join us. Scotty offered to roast the ducks, make plenty of stuffing in a Pyrex dish, and bake rolls. I made the <a href="mailto:czarnina">czarnina</a> after school Wednesday. Steve came to the farm and stayed the entire holiday time. His mother would have liked to have had Steve with her for Thanksgiving, but her holiday work schedule at the Hot Fish Shop meant lots of overtime. Pictured left, Steve is making pumpkin pies. You'd think we'd buy a pie pumpkin from a farmer and make the filling from a fresh local vegetable. But, no, that's canned pumpkin with all the spices included Steve's holding in his hand. At his best Steve was capable of making pie dough from scratch.

It snowed Wednesday before Thanksgiving. In itself, that isn't unusual. "Expect some snow," was in

the forecast, but Wisconsin's fickle weather turned out a fully fledged February blizzard. Visibility was heavily reduced. I called my parents and asked how the weather was in West Allis. Dad answered, "Snowing," and he had his doubts about driving in such weather. Fortunately for everyone, Thanksgiving being the heaviest travel time of the year, the snow stopped. As long as plows kept roads open, the family would make it. Pictured right, I am sitting outside in the new snow. I am wearing a pink, red, and burgundy patterned tamo-shanter crocheted for me by an elderly lady for whom I'd done a favor. I don't remember the lady's name; don't recall what the favor was I'd done, but... I still have and wear the colorful tam-o-shanter.



Driving in blinding snow never happened. Snow whitened the ground and made for a pretty landscape, but roads had been plowed, were clear, and winter safe. My family left West Allis early in the morning arriving at Farm the Second before noon. They didn't have to do a thing. Scotty ruled the roost, our kitchen, and we just followed "yes, chef" orders. Steve peeled potatoes for mashing, leftovers from harvesting that we'd collected from the fields. I peeled sweet potatoes. Pictured right, Bob's kitchenhand contribution was to open the oven and baste the ducks.





Pictured left: Thanksgiving Day: left to right, Bob Baril, Scott Schutte, Mom, Dad, Luann, Joann, Steve. Brow of Steve Thompson's head seen next to my brother. Look at the cup; Steve's name cup received last Christmas.

I was careful with what I ate this Thanksgiving feast. Willpower and warning from the doctor, I adjusted my tastebuds, rarely satisfied them, but stuck with the boring low residue diet. Czarnina was OK. Eat the duck. Don't eat the skin. Eat mashed potatoes. Make sure the potatoes are peeled. Forget Scotty's gravy.

Eat sweet potatoes. Not the skins. Don't eat pumpkin pie. Eat Jell-O set with canned fruit. On the low residue diet I felt healthy. Over time I regained 10 lbs and managed to plateau at 145 lbs for the next few years. The greatest advantage of the diet was not adjusting the holes in my belt. The greatest disadvantage was not being able to enjoy a social drink. Good-bye to the shot and a beer! Bye-bye Black Russian. Cheerio Canadian Club. Adios Alcohol in any form. It just wasn't permitted.

Pictured right: My brother Steve and Steve Thompson and 2 roast ducks.





The day after Thanksgiving, November 28, was my father's birthday. Pictured left is the long-necked bottle of Chianti, cork intact, I gave my Dad. This, and so many other family events, would have been ideal subject matter for home movies, aka historical documents. I was only interested in making story films. I foolishly felt that making a home movie was beneath me, that running film through a camera for a birthday, my little twin sisters first time on a horse, my boys contributing to making dinners with peeling, cutting, chopping, assembling and cooking, yeah, I thought filming all that was a waste of good film.

How wrong was my thinking!

Just imagine the snapshot at right of Steve bathing Oscar. Imagine it having movement had it been made into a movie! How much fun it would have been to see Oscar shake off those suds and the water, Steve trying to keep himself dry! How exciting would any snapshots look when animated rather than posed as tintypes?

Two snapshots taken in October were turned into Christmas cards by Tucker's Camera Shop. The clothes Steve and I wear for the Depression era photo card are not costumes.







Daily, or should I say weekends, that's how we dressed to perform our chores. We wore them for comfort and it never mattered how dirty they became on Farm the Second.



Look at the Christmas picture in the card above and note what Steve Thompson's doing with his middle finger. I never noticed until it... that finger... was pointed out to me by my brother Steve.

This Christmas was going to be special. On a Thursday after school at one of the furniture and appliance stores in Stevens Point color television sets were on sale. I was attracted to a floor model with a 24 inch screen set in a piece of living room furniture. It didn't look like just another TV. The Zenith console was a wooden hallowed monument built as sturdy as the poetic mighty oak. It had been marked down half price, from slightly over \$1000 to \$500. For the price to be knocked down so much, I asked what was wrong with it. "The box is damaged," answered the salesman. Given the money lessons strongly hinted at me by my parents, I offered \$475 cash. The store accepted my offer and I bought a really fancy-dancy color television for a Christmas present. Delivery in its original "damaged" box to my farm was free; the carton damage amounting to nothing more than a crushed corner which had no bearing on the TV fitting inside, or any scuff on the wooden cabinet. Of a late Friday afternoon I asked the delivery boys to leave the box on the porch.

"So, whaddaya say, Bob, care to drive to West Allis to deliver and set up a TV?"

I rang to make sure Mom and Dad would be home Saturday and said that Bob and I were coming down for a short visit. Heavy as that console TV was we exercised arm and leg muscles to huff and puff the carton into the trunk. It couldn't be squeezed into the back seat. Bob secured the trunk lid with strong rope. I tied a red handkerchief as a flag onto the box still sticking out from the trunk.

Bob parked out of easy view on 119<sup>th</sup> Street and I walked up to the family home and rang the doorbell. Mom answered the door. "I have a surprise, but if you see it, there won't be any surprise. Would you and Dad take a drive somewhere for an ice cream or something for about an hour?" Mom and Dad complied.

Bob drove into the driveway and we unloaded the heavy carton, carried it into the living room, and spent too much time undoing the large cardboard box. The twins helped asking, as would be expected, "Can we have the box?"

We had to move the old black & white TV from its corner to access the antenna cord. Unsure just how or where my parents would want the TV, we set it up in the same place even though it looked out of place. After connecting the antenna and the electric plug, tuning in the stations proved as easy as one, two, three.

Mom and Dad returned after the hour. The twins were all giggly, but neither spoiled the surprise. I asked my parents to close their eyes. Bob led my Dad and I led Mom into the living room. "OK," I said, "Open your eyes," and as they did Bob and I shouted, "Merry Christmas." Yes, both had tears in their eyes. I expected their questioning and wasn't let down when they asked, "How could you afford it?" I said it was all paid for in cash and, yes, I got a bargain.

Bob and I returned to Stevens Point. When school finished for Christmas vacation I headed back to West Allis for a Polish Christmas Eve and a typical Christmas feast with my family.

A second celebration of Christmas with a roast turkey was held later on Farm the Second with Steve, Milton, Denny, Donny, Bob, and my brother Steve.

With promises to send snapshots unfulfilled due to 'no camera,' 'camera not working,' and 'camera can't be found,' I sent an under \$20 Kodak Instamatic to Jim in Salt Lake City for a Christmas present. Jim wasn't home to receive and open his gift. Taking nothing, save the clothes on his back, Jim had again run away from home.

## Chapter 61: The Very Unusual Happened

Romeo and Juliet Slideshow

First was the phone call from Salt Lake City; later came the letter. In a voice which tried masking worry and fear Afton bravely asked if Jim had again shown up on my doorstep. No. We hadn't seen nor heard from Jim. I expressed concern, but held back on saying I wasn't all that surprised. Unlike us faux farmhands Jim wasn't anywhere to be found seeing in the New Year with his friends or family. On the farm the temperature sank below zero New Year's Eve. As predictable as teenagers lying when their mouths opened, we stripped off shirts to challenge ourselves in the freezing night air and showed off as strapping males, my brother Steve and Steve Thompson pictured right.



Had Jim been with us in the days leading up to the holidays, he'd have been assigned lookout duty when we claimed our Christmas tree. Every year the Lions or Kiwanis clubs set up a lot in town to sell spruce and long-needle pine trees, but our farm was surrounded by evergreens; if we didn't have to we weren't spending \$10, nor were we going to wait for Christmas Eve to grab a scrawny unpicked leftover for a dollar. As had our pioneers Bob recommended cutting our own tree for free. He hadn't given consideration to the obvious fact that not one pine in our immediate area stood less than twenty to thirty feet tall. "Easy," Bob announced, "I'll climb up and cut off the top." We drove the farm's perimeter in daylight. Neck muscles strained from always looking up through the car windows. We stopped to examine a treetop Bob said he'd be able to saw.

The moon showed bright in the night and we still carried flashlights. Steve and I, acting no different from gangsters' canaries, hung around the base of the pine. You'd think Bob had experience as a lumberjack the way he used a rope and his heels to scale the chosen tree, a handsaw tied by its handle with thin rope to his belt. It was quiet until Bob started to work. The whoosh shish of his sawing carried in the crisp air as if amplified through stereophonic speakers. I wasn't comfortable and afraid Bob might lose his grip and tumble, especially after he said that the damned saw was stuck. The whole pine swayed at the top as he tried to wrench the saw from its grip. "Stop, stop," I called up to Bob. Headlights on high beam and the sound of an engine were in the distance. "A car's coming." Bob stopped moving in the treetop while Steve and I snapped off flashlights and hid behind trees. The car never arrived having turned into a farm driveway. With some swearing Bob managed to release the saw from the clench of the tree and sawed from an opposite point. Next thing we heard a crack and the treetop keeled over. With a little help from Bob's hand it loosened snow from branches below as it toppled down. Bob talk-whispered, "Look out below," and dropped the saw before lowering himself. "Shit, it's cold up there," Bob chattered. "I'm never doing that again." We had our Christmas tree. Instead of tying it to the car's roof, we opened the windows on the right-hand side. Steve and I held onto the tree for the short drive home.

Bob chose a tall healthy pine from which to steal its crown. The treetop was wide. Supple branches folded toward the trunk when we carefully shoved it through doorways into the middle room. The base of the trunk sunk snugly into a water-holding Christmas tree stand. After moving the television

and its stand, the seven foot tree stood in the television corner. Pictured right, standing in front of our magnificent five fingered discount, Steve and I show off taut bellies. On the low residue diverticulosis diet, this may have been the thinnest I'd been in years.

Had Jim been in Stevens Point he might have attended one of the many farm auctions with us. With Christmas around the corner I wanted to buy a present for myself. It's something I have done every year. I have always chosen a present no one would think of buying for me, or pick something I believe would be unaffordable for anyone but me. This Christmas I wanted a wood stove which could be enjoyed by anyone in the farmhouse kitchen. Farm auctions, sometimes deceased estate sales,



were conducted year round, though most likely held when weather was nice. I was lucky to hear about a farm auction held on a winter's Saturday. Bob and Steve and I drove a few miles to find it. There were few bidders and, again with luck, I bought two Round Oak wood stoves for a mere \$10. That's \$10 for both, not \$10 each. Bargain! There was nothing wrong with either unit, but the stoves were old-fashioned, outdated. Most people nowadays chose efficient gas or oil heaters requiring less physical work. The sizes of the stoves meant they couldn't fit into Bob's trunk. Some farmer with a pick-up truck who lived near us, I don't remember who, offered to deliver both.

To prevent a chimney fire the farmer advised we clean the chimneys before installing and lighting the Round Oaks. Sometime in the past this farmhouse had made use of wood stoves. We found an old chimney brush in the barn. As I'd never been comfortable with heights, Steve and Bob climbed onto the roof and took turns shoving the brush up and down the innards of the chimney. I had a big plastic bag held over a hole in the kitchen wall to catch soot as best I could. Coughing and wheezing from brushing and sweeping, we three agreed cleaning was done and we could set up the stoves, one in the kitchen and the other in the large living room. We put pipes together like working jigsaw puzzles and had two assembled stoves before the weekend

Lighting each stove caused some finished. concern. Would the kitchen or living room fill with smoke and gag us? Would the chimneys Disturbing thoughts disappeared catch fire? when each stove performed as manufacturers intended. Gathering wood, cutting wood and keeping a stack on hand was our new chore. With trees felled by wind along the driveway and as windbreaks separating one property from another, we had plenty. Pictured right, Steve and I enjoy the kitchen Round Oak, but I doubt there was fire in its belly since Steve rests his hand on the heater. Stuck to the wall with Blu-Tack you are posters of silent era movie stars. Behind me is Rudolph Valentino and behind Steve is Theda Bara. Posters decorated the farmhouse walls.

Afton's January 5 letter arrived by week's end.



Rawlin and I appreciate your concern. We have had no word from Jim. I'm so concerned. Each day life is more unbearable. I feel terrible that Jim was so unhappy. He was doing well in his classes and Rawlin really regrets

saying he couldn't continue at East High when we moved. He shouldn't have brought it up. The house won't be completed until end of March. A month behind because of waiting for the type of roof he ordered. It would have been too late to have changed schools then.

The police called last week and said the police surveillance in Palo Alto, Calif. area where Jim's friend would be during holidays didn't find him. He evidently didn't go there. Jim became a friend to this boy at East High. The boy, Kyle, was living with a sister who attended U of U. However, he decided to return to his parents who had been transferred from Salt Lake to Palo Alto.

I would appreciate your writing your friend (is the name Primm?) in Calif. & asking him to look for Jim. Maybe he could have the police keep a look out in that area, giving a description. When Jim left he was wearing his new blue corduroy double breasted coat, gold brushed corduroy slacks & a brown hat.

Jim didn't take anything. Not an extra shirt, slacks, underclothes, nor tooth-brush & I'm worried about his health. He didn't have his ankle taped. Surgery was being put off until spring. Tomorrow I'll have to call the orthodontist. Jim is supposed to go monthly and if there is any separation between two front top teeth the retainer has to be worn again.

Jim had told me he liked classes and teachers at East High. Maybe going to school with his cousin helped too. The new family house was being constructed in Sandy. Two roughnecks had hassled Jim when he went to register at Sandy High School. They picked on him for his lion-like mane. Jim's long hair was a bone of contention with his conservative father too. The disagreement with his father over the school transfer may have been the straw which broke Jim.

Concern over Jim's disappearance was expressed in phone calls I made. With my permission Steve Thompson also called the O'Leary home. When speaking with Jim's mother I said that Jim was not with me and that he had not been in immediate contact with me. I didn't know *exactly* where he was, but I *did* know where he was, and somehow managed to ease his mother's worries.

Strange as it sounds, I did know something of Jim's whereabouts, and not due to having rung John Primm and asking him to sort of look over his shoulder. Whether or not he contacted police with a description of Jim I wouldn't know. To use a cliché, it would have been like looking at a treasure map where X never marked the spot, or like looking in a haystack for the proverbial hidden needle. But, yes, I did know something of where Jim was.

It happens after people have grown close, even when they are far apart. There's some kind of extrasensory perception, some special exchange of feelings, some mental communication occurs which really can't be explained without sounding crazy. It may have been my subconscious mind working out a solution, something inventor Thomas Edison employed when he was stuck. He'd sleep on it and let his mind work it out. Then there's this thing called telepathy<sup>2</sup>. Real or not, I experienced 'unusual feelings' and sensory images accompanied by a visual or an olfactory sensation. Over the next several months I saw letters, I smelled sawdust, and later the unmistakable odor of rubber. Although I didn't know exact locations nor own the ability to pinpoint places with names, I felt in many instants that I was in touch with Jim; that I could talk as in communion with him and be assured by him that he was all right. I was not to worry about Jim's welfare and that he'd return home when

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> October 6, 1969 Jim had written he had been to a bone specialist to see about a bad ankle mainly to get out of gym class. X-rayed several times Jim was told the ankle needed to be taped and that in December he was required in the hospital for an operation that would keep him off his feet for six weeks. Jim had no ligament in his ankle.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Historically criticized for lack of controls and repeatability, the vicarious transmission of information from one person to another without using any known human sensory channels or physical interaction is called telepathy. There is no convincing evidence that telepathy exists.

he was ready and not before, that any persuasion or force would have no effect until he had resolved in his own mind that going home was the correct move.

Under clear skies January nights were especially cold. Waking one Saturday morning we turned on the bathroom faucet to wash, switched on the kitchen faucet to percolate coffee, and nothing happened. We had no water. The pipes had frozen. I called a plumber and asked what we should do. Using some heating device he thawed the ice in the pipes. Here was the man who told us his childhood memories of growing up in this farmhouse. When temperatures dipped well below zero he recommended we allow one faucet to drip overnight. Water moving through a pipe, no matter how slight, wouldn't freeze whereas still water froze. Lesson learned; paying attention to weather forecasts we knew when we had to let a faucet drip.

As January folded talk again turned to a home for boys. Farm the Second's farmhouse with its unfinished upstairs bedrooms was given serious consideration. The perennial problem was money. I didn't have \$1000 for a 25% down payment. I had a good credit rating with the bank and I could have discussed the matter with them. Even if the bank was to give me a loan, a major hurdle remained. I wasn't married and, without a wife, the state of Wisconsin wasn't interested in my pipedream. Realistically, I still relied upon Bob's good nature in being my taxi to and from school, going shopping, keeping appointments, etc. As well, much as I thought I'd like to be in charge of a boy's home, I wasn't always so sure I wanted to tie myself down in this area, to this immediate place, or stay in the school where I worked.

Perhaps the quibble about marriage might have eventually found its solution after meeting Ben Franklin's new Phy Ed teacher when I chaperoned the evening Valentine's Day dance. She was Norwegian heritage, blond, 21, five foot two, eyes of blue; could she, could she, could she coo? For a brief time Cassie and I became an item, lingering but never more than temporary. It was always and only a friendly relationship. Then the winter drearies struck.

I caught a dreadful flu which laid me down and kept me away from school the better part of a week; it was a same viral infection that knocked me down last winter. Running a temperature of  $102^{\circ}$  I was consoled with the news that 200 kids were absent from school. That was close to a third of the student body. A second consolation came in Bob's also falling victim to flu. Both at home in our beds, I never harbored guilt associated with having to beg him to roll out of the sickness sack to drive me to school. Steve hitch-hiked out to see us. Contrasting any feelings of guilt I'd set aside, Steve had the guilt's. Everyone in his family, everyone on his block had the flu except him. He thought he was no different from Typhoid Mary, the carrier of the germ who didn't catch the disease! However, whatever else happened in that week of stuffed sinuses and noses dripping faster than faucets preventing freezing, I lost my place aside Cassie. As seen on "Laugh In," just call it by what it was: the fickle finger of fate, and... boom, there in my absence somebody made a move and she was clinging to someone else's arm. Que sera sera!

'Someone else' happened to be athletic and played on the staff team in the annual staff-student basketball game. Ever since high school, in gym class basketball and I never got along. Unable to coordinate dribbling and making the lay-up among my peers, then I was made to feel foolish enough. There was no way I was going to further humiliate myself with my lack of athleticism in front of my students. No, I was better humiliating myself again as a female member of the cheer squad and earning deserved laughter. Pictured right, I can only identify Don Severson as the kneeling hippie and myself in the tight sweater, wig, and tam-o-shanter. I wasn't the only cheerleader with a mustache.

March was time to earn that whopping great 1% of my salary, ergo \$66.63, coaching Forensics. I remember who I coached. There were 9<sup>th</sup> graders Joe Sikora, Brad Paulsen, Mike Zortman, and Andy Shaney. Please don't ask me to wrack my brain to recall in which category each participated. No more trying to second guess or outsmart the judges with excerpts or Play Reading or Interpretive Reading of Shakespeare. Despite objection after previous experience, lesson learned. We competed in Marshfield, home to cranberries, swamp gas, and UFOs. My

students came out on top, the especially talented Brad Paulsen earning an  $\underline{A}$ . It is worth mentioning coaching Forensics for these four fresh faces because they eventually invited themselves to Farm the Second, among them a spitting image, a doppelganger for Jim O'Leary called Andy Shaney.

Steve continued looking after Maudie as strong March winds brought snow and, when the sun shone, melted snow. One Saturday morning I overheard Steve talking quietly to Maudie as he led her round the corral by her bridle, "When you gonna drop your colt, ol' girl?" Steve's

conversation with his horse was next directed to me, "So, Lare, when's she gonna have this colt?" My knowledge of a pregnant mare ran the gamut from A to nowhere, so I called the vet recommended by the man who sold Maudie to me, provided basic information and asked questions. The vet said I shouldn't worry, that she'd give birth without my help and when she was darn good and ready. It could be any day soon as she reached her solid 11 months gestation. I should make sure her stall was clean and laden with plenty of hay or straw. Pictured right on a Saturday morning in March is Steve with a very pregnant Maudie.

Anticipating the birth of the foal, my family came to Farm the Second for the Easter weekend. Mom and Dad brought along Luann and Joann hoping they'd see something wondrous happen in the barn. My brother chose to stay home. Dad brought his Civil War vintage cast iron sausage stuffer, casings, seasonings, and ground pork butt so we could keep Polish tradition making kielbasa.

The picture, right, shows Andy Shaney pressing on the handle of the sausage stuffer as Dad manipulates the casing filling with meat. Joe Sikora looks awestruck as Luann looks at Joe. Steve Thompson and my Mom look straight into the camera.

Prior to my family's visit I'd bought an axe and a bow saw for chopping and cutting wood. I seldom used the tools because the boys voluntarily prepared wood for the Round Oaks. I'll bet any work situation when they were home was never like that! Pictured right, Joe cradles a small stack of wood in his arms. Steve Thompson watches Andy hand saw an old plank into a piece of firewood to fit into the wide mouth of the Round Oak.

Nothing exciting happened in the barn over Easter, but something extraordinary happened in the sky above Farm the Second. I thought about checking in the barn around 11:30 p.m. When I stepped onto the porch I looked up and was dumbstruck by the display of the Aurora Borealis; we called them the Northern Lights. I was under the impression such a display only occurred in the fall, but there it was in its glory and splendor, in a pattern I not before seen. Shaped like the dome of a







basilica, the crown of the lights was directly above the farm, rays of light emanating from the apex, an empty circle, and changing colors in their supernatural shimmer. The natural show was holy, a biblical experience illustrating descriptive words found in the books of Revelation or Apocalypse. I rapidly inhaled, slowly exhaled, caught my breath and went inside to wake Mom and Dad. "Come outside before it's gone. You have to see what's happening in the sky." The night air was cold and my parents bundled up in their bathrobes. They were as stunned as me by the colorful, in constant motion display of radiating outward, retreating shafts of light. "Should I wake the twins to see this?" I asked. Mom said, "No. It would frighten them into thinking it was the end of the world." This was the once in my lifetime I witnessed such a magnificent manifestation of the mysteries of God and Mother Nature… and directly over my farm.

The mare's time was near and we were somewhat anxious anticipating the foal's arrival and wondering exactly what to expect. As Maudie's due date approached, whenever it was, and seeming to drag on and on, we looked for changes in her behavior. About the only difference noted was that she held her ears back. That was it. She was never disrespectful and her behavior wasn't dangerous. We wanted to, hoped to be in the barn when Maudie gave birth, but she had other ideas. Mares tend to foal late at night or early in the morning, the most tranquil time of the day with the least intrusions. That's exactly how Maudie timed it.

Sunday, April 8, I woke shortly after 6:30 a.m. and made the path-worn trek to the barn to check on the horses, feed and water them. I can't remember why this particular weekend Steve wasn't an overnighter. He always managed this morning chore. Well, blessings upon you Maudie. You couldn't have been more cooperative. I found a little foal lying in Maudie's stall, the gelding looking across the barn hall and wooden wall admiringly like a caring Uncle Goober. Geldings can be aggressive toward a foal, but the poor-sighted pinto wasn't in the least perturbed. Maudie made horsey sounds as if saying, "Look, look what I did!" The foal looked at me and got up onto his feet turning to face me on slightly shaky legs. There was water and blood on the floor. The foal's fur was clean, still damp in spots, and the fact it stood without faltering suggested it was born two, maybe three hours before I woke. Maudie would have breathed on and licked to clean her newborn. It had to have nursed before I arrived. I was surprised the foal didn't hide behind his mother after seeing me for its first time. It showed no fear. In fact, he lifted his head to nuzzle my open hand. Protective of her foal, surely, yet Maudie showed no aggression toward me.

I ran inside and woke Bob. He bellyached about it being too early. He'd been out all night again. Leaving Bob to sprawl in his sack I called Steve with the news. I put the percolator on for coffee. Steve and his mother arrived within half an hour. Bob didn't stir and we ignored him. Steve didn't hang around the car to wait for me to come outside. He ran to the barn to see what his mare had done. I met him in the barn. "Oh, my God, he's so small, so pretty," Steve said excitedly. "How do you know he's a he?" I asked. Steve looked at me like I thought he didn't know the difference between a boy and a girl. "Well, lookee here, Lare," Steve said with a touch of pride, "He's a boy. See?" No doubt. The foal was a colt. "I guess I didn't bother to look," I said self-consciously. Steve asked, "Kin we take 'em outside." Of course we could, but I told Steve he had to keep the colt between himself and Maudie, just in case she decided to get snarky. Outside the barn Maudie kept her eye on her foal. As before no aggressive moves were made toward Steve or me. She snorted her nostrils, occasionally whinnied to call the foal and let him know where she was. The whinny was controlled, a calming statement, and never sounded of anxiety. The foal was indulgent of our attention. "Go ahead, Steve," I urged, \

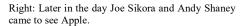
"What d'ya wanna call 'im?" Without hesitation Steve said, "Apple." I was stunned by his choice. "Why Apple?" I asked. "C'mon Lare," Steve said. "It's a horse. A horse makes apples. Horse. Apple. Don' cha geddit?"



Snapped by Steve's mother using my Kodak Instamatic, these are the first pictures of Steve and me with Maudie and her colt Apple on Sunday morning, April 8, 1970, perhaps 4 to 6 hours after his birth.









In school I talked with staff and administration about organizing a Nickelodeon series similar to what John Schelkopf did in university. It could be done for free or a nominal charge could be made. Perhaps we could ask only  $5\phi$ , same admission fee as was charged in the heyday of the Nickelodeons. I also campaigned to introduce Film Appreciation into my English classes. After all, Junior High kids went to the movies at the Fox Theatre and they watched a lot of television at home with family or friends. The language of film incorporated Standard English. Film and television not only made use of the English language, it had created its own filmic jargon within the language. Since our kids spent time with film and television, I wanted them to learn that language and be conversant with it. Typical bureaucracy meant my suggestions were heard but nothing happened with any sense of immediacy. The system was so full of red tape nothing ever happened until paperwork was submitted in triplicate, scrutinized, assessed, debated upon, and given the third degree for potholes, loopholes, and anything else which might interrupt or slow down whatever syllabus had been set in stone by whomever and whenever. Old was good (because it worked). New was bad (because we can't take a chance if it doesn't work). Perhaps if one or more cooperative and open-minded administrators deemed the request educationally sound and gave approval, then something eventually happened. Maudie's 11 month gestation was long; my suggestions too were about to go through an even longer period of gestation.

Something came up which aided my cause. Our 9th graders were studying Shakespeare; for this age group it was the play *Romeo and Juliet*. As preparation all 9th grade English teachers met after school to view a filmstrip<sup>3</sup> which had been used in the curriculum year after year and starting as long ago as the 1950s when I was in grade school. Filmstrips were large and durable and rarely broke. The content of the filmstrip we were shown looked old, sounded dated, and would have bored the shoes off our kids. We were sent to sleep by a very bad filmstrip. Mrs. Johnson surprised everyone by blurting loudly, "I tell you what! We can't use that thing anymore. It's utterly tedious. I remember having to use that thing years ago, and years ago it made me just as bored. Klobukowski! Mr. Lare. You're the movie maker. Can we do something better?"

Holy mackerel! I never expected that, least of all from Margaret 'Mrs. Know-It-All' Johnson. Yet here she was, at last, asking my opinion and pushing the button which stimulated my creativity. First of all I said movies were fun to make, but can be expensive. Shakespeare's about the language and all I had was silent film equipment. I had no means of keeping recorded

sound in synchronization with a silent film. Giving a nod to the filmstrip, I said we could make a slide show. I'd wanted to buy a 35mm Nikkormat camera and now the opportunity was dropped in my lap. "If the school pays for the film I'm willing to make a slide show. We can involve our students. They can be the actors." This was going to be my first serious attempt to make a slide show. I'd approach directing similarly to directing a motion picture. How could they be Someone asked about costumes. that different? coordinate the costuming," Mrs. Johnson said. "We'll get mothers to make costumes." I suggested I might have a makeshift costume or more at home we could use. example, my mother sewed a bathrobe for me for Christmas. Tucked up into a waist-belt it could pass for a just above the knee tunic or Paltock worn in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as illustrated right in a snapshot of Andy Shaney in my kitchen standing beside the Round Oak with his dog at his side.



This was one time when bureaucracy took a back seat to common sense. The recommendation for making an educational slide show was put forward by Mrs. Johnson in required triplicate. Perhaps because she'd been in the system for so long, she knew which strings to pull to have everything approved in a very short time. I had seen the Nikkormat on special at Tucker's Camera Shop and convinced myself to buy it, pictured right. The 35mm slide film was provided. I said that actors made mistakes and that I too would make mistakes with my camera and that we had to make allowances for them. I was made to feel that rolls of films were unlimited, within reason.



\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A filmstrip is a spooled roll of 35mm film with approximately 30 to fifty images arranged in sequential order. Like 16mm film, a filmstrip was inserted vertically down in the front of the projector aperture. The instructor would turn on the filmstrip projector that would show the first frame or image of the filmstrip. Next the instructor turned on a 33 RPM record or cassette tape containing the audio material for the filmstrip which included narration. At the approximate point, a tone would sound, signaling the instructor to turn a knob, advancing to the next frame. The filmstrip is a form of still image instructional multimedia used from the 1940s to the 1980s. It was an easy and inexpensive alternative to 16mm educational films.

When *Romeo* and *Juliet* was introduced in classrooms, we heard every expected groan and watched how the eyes rolled. The mood changed when it was announced that we'd be making our own interpretation of the play. Our script wasn't Shakespeare's text. It was a 50 minute recording of selected dialogue and music from the 1968 Franco Zeffirrelli film. Not only had Margaret Johnson pushed through the request, she obtained money to buy the vinyl recording.

We'd still read the text and it would have so much more meaning for each kid because of their participation in our making an educational slideshow.

24 students were cast. Preferring to stand on the sidelines and watch what happened, some kids didn't want to act or said they couldn't act, while others were happy to help out behind the scenes with props, costuming, make-up, whatever was needed. Greg Thorye was cast as Romeo and Nancy Swanson was picked for Juliet, pictured left in a photograph I cropped due to an unsightly crease in my scrapbook; it had been published in full in the *Stevens Point Daily Journal*. They were about the right ages since Romeo and Juliet were teenagers.

We did many of the scenes in the school and in the school grounds. It wasn't all concrete and basketball courts, football field and baseball diamond. Benjamin Franklin Jr. High had been built in a rural area a stone's throw from Highway 51. The grounds still boasted greenery, trees, and wildlife.

The photograph at right is another from The Stevens Point Daily Journal. posed picture, shows the out and out rivalry between the Houses of Montague and Capulet. It was taken in the school grounds and shows open fighting.

I don't have the slideshow, never owned it. The original was kept on

file for instructional purposes at Ben Franklin; I doubt it is extant today. I did, however, save a few



of the reject slides. One such reject of the feuding Houses of Montague and Capulet is pictured left. In some cases I just told the actors to "Go for it" and have fun in a play fight. However. I found enthusiasm outweighed their sense of stage place. Too often they vigorously moved out of frame or blocked out other actors as they set upon one another.

Such is the nature of this slide. It's a "Go for it" and that's why it was rejected. At least I didn't have the worry of spilled blood. No swordsmen accidently stabbed another. Film waste lessened when actors were posed in a donnybrook, as had the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* photographer.

Principal Oelke practically had a conniption fit when he found out the boys were handling real swords, loaned foils and epees with the fastening knob on the point ("blossom", in French <u>fleuret</u>) removed. I taught the boys how to duel or fence by means of a simple lesson taught to me in one of my Drama classes. Extended swords cross and touch. Once up, once down, and repeat three or four times, then pause, partly circle or stalk, then repeat the cross and touch. It's safe, just as long as one swordsman doesn't get caught up in the moment and lunge or thrust.



In the picture left, Mike Zortman calls out to Tybalt, who accidently stabbed Mercutio after he happened to get in the way of the sword, shouting that he's killed Mercutio. I wish I could remember who played Mercutio. Look closely at the picture and you'll see why it was a reject and had to be re-shot. My teaching name, Mr. Lare, shows all too clearly in the shot. I was never happy with the hat worn by Mike. It was a kid's cowboy hat and, no matter what Mike tried to starch it into the shape of a 15<sup>th</sup> century hat, to me it always looked like a kid's cowboy hat.

This shot and others were taken along the Plover River below the McDill Dam. This was possible because it didn't involve having to transport a large cast. We didn't have Verona and its architecture, so we did the scenes involving Tybalt and his cronies, Mercutio, and Romeo in a pastoral setting.



When Romeo learns that his friend Mercutio has been killed, he shouts Tybalt's name, pictured left, and what you see is the angry second syllable of "TY...BAAAAALT." Until I rehearsed this shot several times with Greg, his braces weren't evident. Looking through the viewfinder I became aware of a glint from his mouth. Funny when Greg was cast no one thought to mention that braces on teeth weren't used in Shakespeare's day. He was the right boy to play Romeo and I guess we were so used to seeing Greg's braces they weren't given a second thought. So much for period piece authenticity!

Left is an exciting shot of a sword fight with Tybalt leaping aggressively at Romeo, an action which would cost Tybalt his life. I staged the fight to lend action to the stillness of the slide. Tybalt is caught in mid-air. Audiences make up in their imaginations the unseen action. Of course, in the next slide I posed the actors to show the audience how Romeo's sword runs through Tybalt. Gruesome it was, yes, and even though we didn't show blood, kids loved that sort of stuff.



The Rev. Francis Prsybylski gave permission to use St. Bronislava's Catholic Church at Plover for church scenes; he even provided vestments. No more than three actors were required and Mrs. Know-It-All chauffeured the cast and me. Nothing to do with Shakespeare, teachers saw Brad Paulsen as



looking like Rasputin, the mad Russian monk, so why not have a mad-looking mysterious friar. A gown with cowl completed the image. Left is Brad Paulsen as Friar Lawrence in full rant, not at all mad or bad, but as the wise advisor to Romeo and Juliet. Preaching from the pulpit, Brad was cast for his stand-out talent, his ability to effectively use his eyes to show calm, seriousness, panic, anger, and for his wild Afro hair. Brad's hair was long and curly and looked like it was trying to escape from his head

Many years later, 1993 to be exact, Brad recalled our production of *Romeo and Juliet* and his participation in the slide show.

"I know this had to be somewhat frustrating for you. Budget and time constraints..... But you had a fervor for it that carried through to us. For myself, I sensed it wouldn't get off the ground, but it was worth diving head first into (it) solely for the sake of trying. It was a great experience. We got a taste of what it takes to pull it off. There's a hell of as lot of details involved in any production, of any kind. I had no exexperience and you not only fostered the interest, but assisted in developing confidence."

For the tomb interior, I recommended my farmhouse basement. I owned movie lights. We could dress the set to look creepy instead of ornate. Mrs. Know-It-All chauffeured two actors to my farm.

Romeo was unaware of the plot devised by Friar Lawrence and Juliet wherein she drinks a potion which will make her appear to be dead. The potion will wear off and Juliet will wake from her death-like slumber. At right is a reject slide of Romeo when he finds Juliet "dead." He can't live without her and drinks a poison potion he bought at an apothecary. Romeo drops dead in the crypt. Juliet wakes and finds Romeo dead. She cannot live without Romeo, the love of her





short life, and fatally stabs herself using Romeo's dagger. The slide at left is Juliet drawing the dagger from Romeo's sheath.

Shooting took nine days. The 50 minute show, perfect timing for a class session screening, used 120 slides. Everyone across 9th grade English classes saw it and, at the end of the school year, it was shown to the entire student body on class day. Accompanied by its emotionally charged soundtrack, I was always pleased to hear audible audience reaction in their

sniffles, gasps, some losing it and actually crying. Thankfully, no one needled or laughed to spoil the magic we'd made for the screen.

I turned 25 on Thursday, April 30. Being a weekday there were no overnighters and Bob, well, Bob just disappeared to who knows where as he often did after supper. I sat in the rocking chair on the porch, a cup of coffee placed on the floor steamed. The sun had set. The air was still. It was the gloaming when a number of atmospheric phenomena and colors can be seen. It was twilight with the sun scattering in the upper atmosphere and illuminating the lower atmosphere. The Earth's surface was neither completely lit nor completely dark. The very unusual happened. I looked across the vast expanse of potato field - and I saw Jim. He was spectral, blue, glistening. Not far from the porch Jim stood in a furrow of the field. He nodded his head once and raised his hand in silent hello. I was paralyzed in the chair. Jim had come to wish me a happy birthday, and to assure me he was all right. When I felt able I rose from the rocking chair, took a step forward, and Jim was gone. I had the unexplained presence of another person. Astral projection? An out of body experience? I sipped the coffee. It was stone cold.

I called my brother and told him what had happened, Steve didn't laugh, didn't poke fun. Next time I saw Bob I told him too. Again, there was no laughter, no sign of skepticism. "He's in California somewhere," I recalled, "and he's all right. He'll go home when he's ready."

My birthday fell within the school's "Treat Teachers Tenderly" Week. Theoretically students were supposed to "be nice" to all staff. Included was Mess-Up Day wherein students and teachers were supposed to be equal. No one was required to wear the usual, accepted school clothes and students were encouraged to dress as one of their teachers. Pictured right, Steve is dressed as the farmhand me. The snapshot was taken in the Phy Ed changing room. There I used crepe hair and spirit gum to put a mustache on Steve's upper lip. He didn't want anyone to know how he'd "grown" the mustache.



Steve, Milton, Andy tend the charcoal barbecue.



Seated are Steve, Lare, and Milton. Joe and Andy stand.

My birthday party was Saturday, May 2. Bob organized a barbecue lunch. I made potato salad to go with the hot dogs and bratwurst. Steve baked and frosted the cake.

Party, party, party! The next weekend I hosted a cast party for *Romeo and Juliet* on the farm. Parents drove their kids out and picked them up after the party. We concelebrated birthdays for Mrs. Johnson and Greg Thorye. I didn't know they had birthdays on the same day and Mrs.

Know-It-All made sure we all knew. She'd brought along a chocolate layer cake with white icing she'd made. Cast contributed food and munchies.

Apple grew. About the middle of May we decided it was time to teach the colt to lead. It was supposed to be easy if you know how to do it. Foals are at the age where they will soak up anything you teach them, whether good or bad. Perhaps we waited too long to introduce Apple to the halter. It should have been done within three days to a week of his birth. I didn't know and maybe we'd waited too long. A foal learning to lead can be a frightening experience for the first time. This can cause pulling and fighting from the foal as they work it out. Anyway, the colt was friendly and he trusted Steve and me. Steve walked up to Apple and showed him the halter. He sniffed it, bit it, had a little chew of it. I stood behind Apple with my hands either side of his rump and held him gently so he wouldn't learn he can pull away. Steve quickly slipped on the halter. Once the halter was secure, we let him run around in the corral. After

about five minutes Steve walked up to Apple and I held the colt while Steve quickly removed the halter. We had to do this over several hours. Recommendation was over several days, but Steve wasn't on the farm every day. We allowed Apple to wear the halter longer each time on the weekend, until he let us take it on and off without problems.

Once Apple appeared comfortable with the halter Steve snapped on a lead rope and held it. First time the lead rope was used, Apple baulked, as seen in the picture right. He didn't like it and became stubborn



like his cousin the mule. His first experience with the lead rope wasn't good. Apple pulled back and tossed his head, as if wanting to shake off both halter and lead rope. He even stood firm like he was in a tug o' war. Steve was persistent and held the rope loose while turning his back on Apple. The colt hesitated and then walked to Steve bumping his head into Steve's backside. Steve giggled, turned and walked slowly until the rope was almost taut. Apple just walked along with Steve. He had learned to lead. Steve walked around the corral several times with Apple in tow. To test the colt, he snapped off the lead rope and removed the halter, waited briefly, and then put the halter and lead rope back on. From Apple, not a skerrick of flinch! The picture left shows how pleased Steve was after having taught Apple to lead. There too is Maudie in the background keeping a close eye on her foal.



The lesson must have been tiring for Apple. Pictured right, he wanted lie to down and rest. Steve let him lie down. Apple appeared comfortable wearing the halter and lead rope.



Over the past year Bob had done favors for me supplying clothing from Golden Hanger, driving his car to take me to school, often picking me up, but that's as far as it went. Other people knew only one side of his personality, the big show he put on of what a nice guy he was. At first, I believed it too. But living with Bob, I saw his personality change from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde. Not that he ever became violent, but I use the comparison simply to show that there were two different Bobs. Most of the year I covered his living expenses because he came up short with his share of the rent, gas, electricity, food. He always had a lame excuse and repeatedly assured me he'd get me the money as soon as he could. His debt invariably carried from one month into the next until he'd dug himself a financial hole. I never understood how Bob having a full time job with a decent salary always managed to come up short or empty-handed every month.

What Bob did evenings was his business. Without exception he was never around to help with yard work, clean up the kitchen, wash or wipe the dishes after meals, make his bed or vacuum his room. He never volunteered to vacuum or use a broom in any part of the house. Sundays we rarely saw Bob. At Christmas the boys had given him an engraved stein which read, "To big brother Bob who's only around from 3 to 11," meaning 3:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. When he was "home", whether others were around or not, he'd sleep. His friends were sponges who expected room and board whenever they visited, but they didn't clean up nor contribute food regularly like the kids did. Bob and his friends would entertain themselves and go off somewhere leaving dishes and the clean up for Steve and me. Steve said he didn't like being a cleaner when he hadn't made the mess; Joe even mentioned that I had been getting grouchy.

I'm not proud of my performance when I gave Bob his two-week notice. He was headed for the kitchen door to disappear again into the night. I moved like a football player blocking his exit. Although Bob was taller and built sturdier, my wrestling experience came in handy and I forcewalked him to the kitchen sink. Through clenched teeth I growled, "You're not going anywhere 'til you do the dishes." "I ain't got time for dishes. I'm late now," Bob whined. What happened next was careless. I grabbed a carving knife and held it to Bob's throat. "You're doing the dishes," I sneered. I released my grip. I put the knife down on the counter. "I'm sorry," I said. "I'm giving your two-week notice to move out, and you'd better pay me all the money you owe." Thankfully Bob washed the dishes. He leaned in through the door jamb to the middle room and said, "Don't worry, Lare. I'll pay what I owe," and he walked out the kitchen door.

### Chapter 62: A Time for Change

Bob never crept through the kitchen door in the wee hours of Saturday. I thought he'd walked out and stuck me with his debts. Sunday, May 31, I didn't expect Bob would show up with his friend Rick around lunchtime to collect his things. Instead of parking at the front porch where he'd always parked, today he parked his car with the trunk aimed at the entrance to the large living room. Further from the ordinary, Bob and Rick entered through the large living room. Before I could say anything Bob gave me a great big hug. He next grabbed my wrist and told me to open my hand where he thumped a rolled wad of green bills tightly secured with a rubber band. "That's everything I owe," Bob said jauntily. It was a mystery how the money magically materialized after Bob had said earlier in the week that he hadn't any when bills were due. You know the imagery. Bob shrugged and rolled his arms to show hands with empty palms. Maybe Rick helped him clear his debt. Rick lent a hand carrying Bob's clothes to the car. It was unusual Bob's using the large living room's door, porch and steps as he cleared his belongings. "Don't forget your lava lamp," I said unplugging it. It sat atop the TV and had been my Christmas present to him. I got the feeling Bob must have expected I'd tell him he had to move out because he didn't appear to have taken it too hard. He was smiley-faced, friendly, and chatty.

As days, then weeks passed, Bob kept in touch by phone, sometimes driving out solo or with Rick to catch up on what was happening. The cultured persona of Bob the nice guy was kept up and, darn it, he was. Bob lacked responsibility in meeting financial commitments and I hoped he'd do some growing up in that department with someone else now he'd moved from the farm. Bob shared an apartment near the University Science Building with his college friend Rick. Oddly enough, even with Bob's financial failings, I never felt any ill will toward Bob. We stayed friends; it's just that with and without money we couldn't live under the same roof.

Formerly Bob's bedroom, its vacancy lasted scarcely a week. Scott Schutte graduated the same Sunday Bob moved out. Had word passed faster than Superman beating a speeding bullet? Steve, Joe and I used \$42 of the money Bob paid to buy household things at Tempo – garbage can, garden seeds, kerosene lantern, mops, tools, and bug sprays. Mosquitoes glommed onto everything flesh and there was no turning back from putting up a fight to sit on the porch or simply walk to and from the barn. We bumped into Scott in the parking lot where he mentioned that his graduation meant leaving the campus dorm and having to find a place to live. Would I happen to know of anything? Was this karma? God working in His mysterious ways? Down and out coincidence? Just plain dumb luck? "Scotty, uh, Bob just moved out today. Would you like your own room on the farm?" Then and there we talked about his share of rent and other bills. I'd known Scott a long time, knew he was mature and responsible, and felt very comfortable about his moving in. He had become somewhat familiar with the kids overnighting on the farm after having prepared the Thanksgiving feast. He didn't see their presence as a nuisance and welcomed their company. Scott said he'd move in the following Sunday. And he seemed to be following in my footsteps with summer employment. Just as I had immediately following my graduation, Scott accepted a position teaching English to Native American kids in the third Upward Bound program.

The class of 1970 finished just as June, like a flower bud, opened. Following summer vacation, all the great kids I taught in 9th grade would move on to 10th grade in a different school, P.J. Jacobs where I'd completed practice teaching. I remember a student of mine who hadn't met

English requirements for successfully passing and yet he was moved on to Jacobs. The just-turned 15 year old messed himself up using a hallucinogenic drug, the one Dr. Timothy Leary advocated with his bumper sticker slogan, "Tune in. Turn on. Drop out." I have no idea how he got his hands on that stuff or why he didn't just turn his back on it. And he wasn't alone. Drug use amongst kids had become an endemic problem. Eyes glazed and unfocussed in class on more than one occasion the student appeared to be somewhere else. Probing with a question and encouraging talking about it was unproductive. Students on grass and kids tripping out on drugs were the saddest thing I cared to see. I felt helpless. It really hurt when, left without choice, I wrote  $\underline{F}$  on his report card.

Armed with a report card showing he'd passed all his classes Steve was headed for Jacobs. At 15 he was old enough to do a summer class three days a week in Driver's Education. I was envious. Here was this boy getting training and practical experience while I at 25 still hadn't earned a driver's license. Steve also managed to get himself hired for a summer job in a program familiar to me, Project Headstart for pre-school children. He worked as a teacher's aide, in essence a professional baby sitter for four and five year olds.

I used two full days to clean, prepare and paint the bathroom walls. The can's label carried the fancily named brown sandalwood. Next project was the kitchen. I took to heart that the landlord had said I could do whatever I wanted with the place. Since our immense kitchen always suggested the look of a wild west saloon, that's how I intended it should look. Walls were papered in off-white, leaning to gray, possibly just an aged dirty gray-white with undistinguished soft pastel floral nosegays. Really now, even today I've no clear picture of what intended color those pale flowered clusters were. I had to use buckets of water to soak the wallpaper with a sponge before shaving it off with a scraper (about 3 to 4 inches wide) which looked like a putty knife. It was an ugly job. You'd think soaking required a simple lifting and peeling of paper, but this business was messy, time-consuming, and tedious. Worse, I worked alone; no kids around to coerce like I was Tom Sawyer whitewashing Aunt Polly's fence. Everything was wet and sticky. Other than lay newspapers along the base of the walls, I did little else to protect the worn linoleum and woodwork. I scraped off as much of the glue with the putty knife as I could, then washed the walls with water and a sponge. It took two days. Walls I sanded by hand. I didn't bother with primer. I was doing what I wanted as much on the cheap as possible. After all, the farmhouse was doomed, headed for a someday demolishment.

Weather was hot and muggy, seemingly interrupted every third or fourth day by a thunderstorm. Temperature dropped by 10 degrees when it rained, but relief was temporary. Temperature along with humidity rose rapidly after rain. Mosquitoes swarmed like squadrons of aerial fighters, even in daytime. Although I had a fan on high in the kitchen, it still felt like a Finnish sauna. Four days hard work and the kitchen was finished. It looked like a late 19<sup>th</sup> century saloon with its fire engine red walls and black woodwork. I painted the wooden slats of the ceiling black hoping Thom Hering would paint constellations. Due to summer employment, or loss of interest, that decorative or instructive idea was never realized.

Scott, henceforth to be known as Scotty or Fat Scotty, moved in Sunday, June 7. He brought everything he owned in one trip in his car. Entering the kitchen he looked up and down, his eyes scanning and panning the red walls and black ceiling. "I like it. It has character." I remember his carrying boxes of bottled herbs and spices, whole seeds and dried powders unfamiliar to me. I was used to seeing and smelling cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg. What the heck were turmeric, galangal, cumin, fennel, star anise, and cardamom pods? Scotty maneuvered through the door what looked like a shelved window frame, a spice rack he said he'd mount on the wall behind the stove, with all the jars arranged on it. That was going to be one big display. "Why do you need so many herbs and spices?" I asked. Scotty's reply has stuck with me forever, "When you know your herbs and spices, Lare, you can cook anything."

Scotty's wisdom didn't help in one recipe I shall always remember for all the wrong reasons. A dinner party had been planned for a Saturday night; nothing special, just friends getting together over good food. I invited married colleagues Don and Luann Severson. I followed the cookbook

recipe for vanilla pudding which is easily made with a pack of instant, but I wanted to impress with mine made from scratch. Ingredients included one cup of milk. I looked in the refrigerator and the milk supply was well shy a cup. I thought Steve probably sculled straight from the carton and hadn't bothered to say we needed to buy milk. I could have cut a corner and diluted it with water, thus making skim milk, but instead just dribbled what little there was into the recipe. Back in 1954 we knew about "dry skim milk" that required nothing more than adding water to take liquid form. What the heck then, I had dry skim milk in the pantry, powdered milk for emergency use when we ran out of the real wet stuff. I forgot about the "adding water to take liquid form" and dumped a full cup of the powdered milk into the mixing bowl. The mixture was dense and I figured, "Good. That should help it set in the fridge."

Our roast chicken dinner was so far successful and I looked forward to presenting my made-from-scratch vanilla pudding. Individual serves were ceremoniously retrieved from the fridge and placed before my guests, Scotty, Steve, and me. Smiles all 'round quickly turned to smirks as each spoon tapped, then pounded and at the white dessert like it was a taut-skinned drum. It had set all right, like concrete. A spoon was useless. Everyone laughed loudly. I had nothing for alternative dessert. Inedible it was; the only viable tool that could successfully break into the pudding was a jackhammer! Don teased in the days after with, "How's your brick in a bowl?"

There was another Saturday evening dinner I never intended hosting. A married couple, with whom I was courteous but preferred to avoid, wrangled a date by inviting themselves. I couldn't say no without making it sound like an insulting made-up excuse. I gave Scotty and Steve the heads up about who was coming and how it had unfortunately come about. "Ugh," I said, "I don't like these people, but they've put me into a difficult position. I couldn't make up an excuse like, "Sorry, we're going to the moon." Scotty asked what I'd cook. "Oh, look, I'll do Swiss steak or something. After all, you guys gotta eat," and then I cracked a smirk. "Just play along with me, OK?"

It was all niceties on the evening. Conversation was civil. After all, I have some talent in the acting department. I chose Swiss steak because it left ample slops of red sauce on the plate. As mealtime finished and without interruption to our exchange of pleasantries I called gently to Oscar. The dog always hung around the table anyway hoping for some morsel to drop or be handed to him. I lowered my plate to the floor and Oscar licked it clean. Scotty looked ever so briefly at me and, absolutely straight-faced, leaned over and placed his plate on the floor. Steve was always good at keeping a poker face as he too put down his plate. Oscar must have thought Lent had finished as he moved excitedly from plate to plate and slobbered each clean. Without breaking a sentence I reached down for my plate, lifted it, rose from my chair, and walked to the cupboard where I put my plate atop the stack of dinner plates. Scotty and Steve soberly followed suit. I encouraged my guests, "Put down your plates. Oscar will take care of them." Need I add their retreat was hasty and without thanks? They didn't stay for coffee! My goal achieved, they never again forced an invitation. God knows what they told others, but the gag never came back to bite me.

The first weekend after Scotty moved in we attended a Sunday afternoon farm auction. Scotty bought a cabinet for \$1.50 he intended refinishing and using to store booze. I bid on an antique rocking chair, one way more comfortable than the rocker with its seat of springs already on the porch. It was black with a high back, and on the seat was a thick soft cushion. I won it for \$6.00. There were museum items Scotty and I were interested in, both in working order, and bidding for each started at \$100. One was an Edison cylinder player with several cylinders of recorded music. The other was a 1927 Monarch 35mm movie projector with an original nitrate Charlie Chaplin film. No one bid. That kind of money was beyond our reach.

Scotty handed me expired sales catalogues and newsletters for companies like Blackhawk and Niles and Hollywood Pictures which sold new and used prints of movies. I drooled over the lists and wrote to the companies requesting current catalogues and asked that I be placed on their monthly mailing list. Within days catalogues were delivered and I placed an order for a Charlie Chaplin feature with added optical soundtrack, 1921s *The Kid* with Jackie Coogan. I'd seen *The Kid* in John Schelkopf's

Nickelodeon series and now, owning my own copy, I'd hoped students would react to the film as well as Corky and I had in 1965.

Not long after the Romeo and Juliet post-production party I bought a dozen fuzzy yellow ducklings,



object again was to fatten them for Thanksgiving dinner. Now two new faces from the slideshow production showed up occasionally on the farm, Brad Paulson and Mike Zortman. In fact, Scotty and I made a trip to West Allis for a weekend with my family and I invited Brad and Mike to come along. We attended a Brewers baseball game at County Stadium, and enjoyed the animals in the Milwaukee County Zoo with my twin sisters and brother. Pictured left, I have always liked the photo of Brad posed at a 'too good to be true' sign in the zoo. With his extraordinary curly hair Brad acquired the nickname Pineapple. One day in summertime's heat, Pineapple and I are pictured below in the horse cauldron with ducklings.



Damage was wreaked on the gas wall furnace by another of summer's big thunderstorms. Lightning striking the farmhouse was followed immediately by bone-shattering thunder, a one-off deafening thwack which didn't rumble and tail off. As if a single cannon shot, the heart-thumping report produced a strong tang of ozone and a slight haze formed in the middle room. Examination proved the heater's innards had been cooked. There was a black burn mark rising from the floor level vent. Home insurance meant I sat on the sunny side. I made a claim and eventually a new working thermostat was installed. Come the change of season, we'd be warm.

Friday, June 26, I signed a teacher's contract for the term of 9½ months for the sum of \$3255.53 for the period of August 24, 1970 to December 31, 1970, and the sum of \$4197.60 for the period of January 1, 1971 to June 1, 1971. An added provision was a whopping 1% for Forensics; the amount totaled \$70.13.

With riches rolling my way, I decided it was time to relinquish ride and road dependency. Saturday I hitched a ride into town with Scotty. We crawled past car lots as I window shopped for a car. I hadn't yet earned a driver's license. My reasoning was like putting the cart before the horse: if I bought a car I'd force myself into getting the license. I spotted a good looking station wagon on the used car lot of University Ford. As I examined the car, a kind of cream white Ford, a salesman approached in the usual smarmy manner. The price was just under \$3000. The salesman asked a few pertinent questions and pointed out that, as 'new' as this car looked, the odometer had already clocked over 80,000 miles. He said the previous owner drove the car with his family on a vacation crisscrossing the United States. "You know," he wheedled, "for a few dollars more I can put you into a current model station wagon." He led me to a just delivered 1970 Ford Falcon 4 door 6 cylinder station wagon. I wanted automatic transmission and this wagon had it. Its drive away price was \$3140.50, a fraction less than I'd earn for teaching in the months running out 1970 on my contract. I

asked necessary questions and convinced myself this was my car and signed the papers for a loan. I now owned a car I couldn't drive. Scotty followed in his car as a mechanic at the dealership drove my brand new purchase to the farm. Then Scotty had to turn around and take the mechanic back to University Ford. Pictured



right, I'm standing beside my new blue Ford Falcon station wagon.

Because so much time elapsed since I'd first earned a learner's license, I had to re-take the written test and passed 100%. Scotty had been licensed long enough to take me for driving experience. I don't want to say lessons because I already went through that phase in high school. I needed to brush up behind-the-wheel technique, gain my confidence, and learn about my car the bank owned. Scotty said he never felt uncomfortable as a passenger, said I knew what I was doing after a week, and I should make the appointment and get a license.

Scotty accompanied me the day I did my behind-the-wheel test. I remember parallel parking perfectly. A three point turn was a breeze. I reversed, according to the tester's instruction, without a swerve for an entire block. I drove confidently in Steven Point's busy street traffic and better-know-what-you're-doing intersections. Having returned to the administration building, my tester indicated I'd done almost everything right. I'd chalked up a minor infraction. Approaching an unmarked intersection in a quiet neighborhood I took my foot off the accelerator, looked left and right, and coasted through. What I should have done was poised my foot over the brake, just in case. I believe half a point was deducted for my error. I passed the test and earned my driver's license. I drove us to the farm with the kind of smile permanently glued onto the face of a grade-schooler having a class picture taken the first time.

As I pulled into the driveway I stopped long enough to check the mailbox. There was a letter from Young Publications in Appalachia, Virginia. Two of my poems were selected to appear in their forthcoming anthology titled *Dance of the Muse*. Comment from the publisher was that my poems were of exceptional literary merit and deserved a place in the libraries of the world. Wow! I hoped the publisher was paying an honest compliment and not just blowing smoke up my rear end. The anthology was to be permanently bound in hard, cloth covers, and circulated throughout the United States and Canada from late July 1970.

### MY BIG BROTHER

Papa blessed his shoulders with hearty slaps.

Mama's corsage was brittle, fresh
as she placed a dewdrop upon his cheek.

Our eyes were fixed in astonished glory
upon the loden jacket
and golden buttons.

That big brother of mine
who used to tickle my feet in the morning
or dump me on the floor,
mattress and all,
stood beaming and blushing
like a proud but embarrassed Titan.

We all had seen him moulded.

How we sang the joy of manhood as we put away his teddy bear. He is a warrior in decorations of valour.

Dignity is his theme played on a coronet of mist. Proudly we speak of him, bury him, and, and...

#### **FALL**

Downhill he slides
his skis in splinters somewhere in the stumble.
Boots, mittens, jacket,
himself a twisting tremor of topsy-turvy,
streaking scarlet making snowdots and ribbons.
He will break,
cracking of bone against bone calling up pain.
Tomorrow he may be dead.

No longer having a mail or telephone contact for Miss Shumway, I called Mr. McCaig to share my news. He said he knew I must have a wonderful creative spirit behind me. I asked him what, exactly, that was supposed to mean. He suggested I should call 'em up. Ooooh... kaaay? To learn and understand who or what my creative spirit was, I should concentrate, use meditation, a process similar to silent prayer. "Ask for your creative spirit to manifest itself and, well, who knows what might be revealed," Mr. McCaig said ever so matter-of-factly. I honestly thought I was being set up for a 'gotcha' joke.

With Scotty teaching in Upward Bound and Steve on his stint in Headstart, I had the farm to myself and gave a thought to Mr. McCaig's words. I lay on the couch, my head on a throw pillow, my hands crossed under my head. I meditated. Maybe I prayed silently. When a vision of a blonde, fair-skinned boy about 12 years old seemed to materialize, I was awestruck and simultaneously content. This was no 'gotcha' joke. Dressed in a white shirt and dark blue tie, dark blue short pants and blue blazer, black shoes, white knee-high socks, and a blue cap, his clothing resembled one of many uniforms of an English schoolboy. I didn't speak nor did I hear anything emanate from the apparition, but was unexplainably made to understand his name was David and he was English. He'd died horribly in a motorcar accident many years ago. David worked through me because he hadn't the chance to grow up and show his own creative streak. Call me crazy or highly imaginative, but I know what I experienced. And what is the unperceived relationship between this dead English boy and my own creativity? One simple intervention from my creative spirit was, perhaps, the British English spelling of some words in My Big Brother.

I knew of two things which inspired my writing My Big Brother. One was the inescapable war in Vietnam. Not only dominating print and TV news, so fresh was reportage that we often sat and watched the war televised live as it happened in our living rooms. Needless to mention that food didn't always slide easily down the gullet. The second influence was a little more unusual, the 1948 movie I Remember Mama. Set before the First World War in 1910, there's no mention of war in the story, no one enlists, and no one is killed. What genuinely appealed to me was the usage of Mama and Papa by the children and the parents when addressing themselves. As a child I called my mother Mama, but Papa, no. He was always Daddy. As to the feet tickling and mattress dumping, well, that was once Jim and me, even Steve and me.

Fall came from Steve's misbehavior at home and Mrs. Thompson asking for my help. It was nothing out of the ordinary and, frankly, shouldn't have been any of my business. Steve refused to get his hair cut and back-sassed his mother. If I'd been smart, I would have remained neutral. After all, every kid that summer was growing his hair long. So was I, but being a dumbass sided with his mother. I gave Steve an undeserved chewing out when kinder words from my mouth would have produced the desired result. Little did I realize the bad seed that was planted in this haircut business. Practical application of anything I might have accidently picked up in Professor Albert Harris' class, The Psychology of Adolescents, just didn't happen. By the way, Steve had never skied and I didn't want him identified in the poem, so I disguised my feelings via symbolism and metaphor.

Come July's end and, as promised, copies of *Dance of the Muse* were delivered; *My Big Brother* was on page1, the first poem printed in the anthology. *Fall* appeared on page 244.

July 31 was a Friday, the last day Scotty and Steve could say they were gainfully employed. Scotty said he intended lazing about and enjoying the remainder of summer vacation because he expected to start working on his Master's degree and be employed as a substitute teacher Tuesdays and Thursdays when school reopened. Steve hoped to find something else and earn money before school resumed.

South on Highway 51 near Plover a new man-made lake was being constructed. Brad and I drove to check it out. It was almost ready. Expressed in the time-honored cliche, we couldn't wait. After our drive to satisfy curiosity, I dropped off Brad at his home. A boy stood in the doorway of the house. "Oh, that's Roger," Brad said rather off-handedly, "He's m' brother." I couldn't see him for the screendoor, but Brad said he was a year younger and a student at Ben Franklin. "Maybe you'll have him in your class," Brad laughed. Brad hadn't pointed out his brother in the corridor or at lunchtime, so I wouldn't know if I had or hadn't seen Roger.

Over four consecutive days I drove to the man-made lake with both Paulson boys. Somehow Roger had managed to finagle, negotiate, engineer, or mastermind his way into becoming part of the friendship with Brad and myself. A couple of times we met up at the lake with Mike Zortman. He'd been busy catching trout which he wanted to share with us on the farm. Joe Sikora came to the lake one day with his friend Eugene. For picnic lunch or munch, I packed potato chips or pretzels, cold chicken legs or baloney and lettuce sandwiches, and made iced lemonade. Roger took no credit for himself, so Brad let it be known who'd made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. The first time to the lake, Roger was just another kid along for the ride. Unlike the gregarious Brad, Roger was buttoned up, close-mouthed, reticent, secretive. I expected I'd find out what made this curly-haired boy tick.

A solid construction pontoon or raft was anchored two Olympic pools from the shore. As unsure as I was about keeping my head above deep water, I didn't want to appear chicken. I swam out with the boys. Brad being Pineapple in water seemed ludicrous. Like all other boys with long-ish hair, he too looked like a drowned rat. As we neared the float Roger tied his arms around my neck for a seahorse ride. In my head I panicked, even blurted out, "Hey, whatcha doing," but I didn't sink. Thankfully making it to the raft, Roger released his hold and faced me while treading water. He didn't say anything, just looked directly into my eyes and smiled. His getting-to-know-me gesture culminated in that simple smile; in that moment with his eyes, he had looked into my soul. I climbed aboard the raft and, without saying a word nor calling out, Roger held out his hands as a sign beckoning me to haul him aboard. We dove, we bombed into the water, Roger always making physical contact, then waiting for me to hoist myself onto the raft before he'd repeat holding out his hands for me to lift him. Roger having to use words was unnecessary. His body language told me what made him tick. He won me over and, after the initial day's swim, I liked Roger. No competition, as far as I was concerned, and it seemed Brad was mature enough to accept that I liked both he and his brother without playing favorites.

Sometimes a handwritten letter, my brother Steve and I mostly stayed in contact over the phone. He expressed interest in coming to live with me and going to university in Stevens Point. It made sense because he'd save a lot of money in room and board fees living on the farm. The whole family - Mom, Dad, and the twins, Mary and Jim, Steve in his own car with his worldly possessions - came to the farm on the weekend Steve moved in. There'd been an overnight thunderstorm, a heavy downpour leaving behind puddles like small lakes.







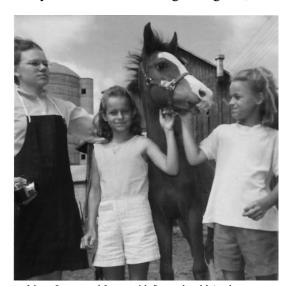
I herd ducks in a storm puddle.

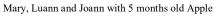
Luann herding ducks

Joann & Luann with duck and Pepper

Because I had the oafish Oscar Mom had asked over the phone if it was all right to bring along their dog Pepper. I said Pepper would be fine since Oscar was gone. Maybe he'd been hit by a car? Someone picked him up? Who knows? Oscar had disappeared.

Mom seemed to have either lost or overcome her fear of Goober. Now she helped the twins mount the gentle horse and comfortably led him around. Goober, however, was canny. He knew a rookie held the reins and he'd put his head down as often as he could to eat fresh grass. As for Apple, he was barely five months old and growing fast, but still too young to ride.







Me with 5 months old Apple, a happy colt

Summer being extraordinarily warm and having many weekend visitors, for the first time I could remember we used all the ground floor bedrooms. My bedroom had two single beds and my brother shared with me. Steve Thompson made sure he was included in the weekend activities and happily continued using his favorite middle room sofa for his sleeping quarters.

About August 16 or 17 I drove down our long driveway and found Brad and Roger sitting in the rocking chairs on the porch. They'd hitchhiked with news they didn't want to tell over the phone. Their Dad had accepted a job in Illinois and they'd be moving before the new school year. I hadn't realized how much I meant to them until now. Both tried holding back tears as they said they didn't

want to leave, Roger especially saying how he'd really miss me. Little time was left to summer before their move to Illinois and we made the best of it.

I read two items about photography competitions; one conducted by *Life* magazine had a \$10,000 prize, while the other was for owners of Nikon cameras with the theme 'America, Its Faces'. Prize for the winning photograph was \$1000 and a top-of-the-line Nikon camera. I photographed Roger for the contest. In the words of a director of photography, the camera loved him. He was a natural, and I wish I'd known sooner and made a motion picture with Roger. The *Stevens Point Daily Journal* made 8x10 prints for me gratis. I submitted some to *Life*, others to Nikon. Some pictures of Roger are pictured below. Although a positive experience for us both, I won nothing.



One evening around August 18 or so, the phone rang. I had kept my brother Steve informed of Jim's running away from home and had told him about my sensory experiences, so when he said, "You better answer that. It'll be Jim. Just say Hello Jim," I was somewhat taken aback. Had Jim's extrasensory communication somehow trickled off into my brother? Answering the phone I said, "Hello Jim." Sure enough, it was Jim. He'd come home!

We talked about how, while he was away, we'd both stayed in touch, that neither he nor I worried, and that we always felt each other's presence, Jim saying he especially felt I was always with him. Jim astounded me when he asked if I'd seen him on my birthday. He confirmed my every olfactory sense in our conversation, and penned everything onto paper as proof that neither of us had just been overly imaginative. Below is the relevant information verbatim in Jim's letter.

I was glad to hear of your experiences for there was many a time when I felt your presence and had told you my feelings & had told you to tell everyone that I was O.K. & that I would return when I was ready.

These things you understood and your presence comforted me telling me everyone & everything was all right.

These things may seem weird but they are very real. This has proved to me beyond a doubt that there is something very dear in our relationship Lare – something that will never be destroyed – for it is too powerful, too strong.

I guess someday I will have to write a book about my adventures! I met a lot of people, worked alot, and traveled alot. I first went to San Francisco and worked for about a week delivering telegrams, packages, and letters. Got tired of that and went to Eureka in northern Calif., worked in a sawmill, cleaning up and other odd jobs. A couple of weeks later I went to Santa Cruz, got a job in a Rubber Goods factory up near San Jose. Stayed there, doing weekend traveling, till about 2 months ago. Went up to Lake Tahoe, Nevada, worked in a linen factory for about 2 weeks and got layed off. Then played around up at the lake for about 4 weeks, and then came home. Altogether I guess I learned alot about life and people. But, it is really good to be home. I thank you & others for trying to understand me. I hope I have not hurt too many people.

Love always, your best friend Jim

# Chapter 63: Keith

hange was the continuum as summer vacation tapered away. My teaching contract kicked in August 24 meaning I reported ahead of students to Ben Franklin for staff orientation,

class assignments, and meetings where whomever was in the chair loved hearing the sound of their own voice. Blah, blah, and blah! I'd let my hair grow over the summer, pictured right, and Joe the barber cut it for school. I allowed just enough hair to cover the tops of my ears. Significant change to my showing up for school was driving my station wagon and parking in the staff lot. Riding on Cloud 9 I imagined heads turning that first day to admire my new car, but it never happened. Others must have felt as let down as I with vacation's end, and may have been wrapped in cellophane like the supermarket's raw hamburger in their own unfinished summertime goals. Driving was convenient, but it mainly meant that now I'd have no excuse to leave school early and avoid interminable meetings. Loose pocket change pretty much kept my car filled with gas.

Oscar having gone missing in action, Steve Thompson rolled up one Saturday morning with a black puppy. Its parentage was a guessing game, but paw size suggested it wouldn't grow into a long-legged loper like Oscar. "Let's give it a Polish name," my brother Steve suggested. Pronouncing several words we settled on the Polish for noodle. The puppy was called Kluski and he's pictured right in Steve's lap and, below, Steve holding him. Kluski was a playful pup never given to indicating he needed to pee. In the midst of play he'd suddenly stop, squat, and loose his bladder. No number of times or loudness of "Hey, hey," put a stop to his flow and we'd follow through with rag-sopping the carpet or wiping dry the linoleum. It took many times rubbing his nose in his own pee and forcefully walking him to the kitchen door to get it into his head that he needed to go outside to do his business.







The same Saturday Steve Thompson came with the puppy he told me he was going to a rock concert in the hills of a nearby farm. It would've been Wisconsin's cut down version of jumping on the Woodstock bandwagon. On our farm, when the breeze came in our direction, we faintly heard electric guitars and drums, even thought we caught a waft of marijuana smoke. I wasn't happy with Steve wandering amongst the flower people, much less overnighting under the stars after he happened to mention wanting to pick up a nickel bag. Wholly against drug use, I may have raised my voice a notch for emphasis of disapproval when my brother stepped in and said he'd go with Steve and look after him and bring him home without the overnight. Whether

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A code word for an amount of marijuana. Originally 5.6 grams of marijuana or one 5<sup>th</sup> of an ounce. Often confused due to the term "dime bag" code for a \$10 bag, the term "nickel bag" was never measured on that same scale. Avid smokers of pot used this term to identify posers and noobs (newbies, hapless unskilled beginners).

serious or just pulling my leg, I never wanted to find out if either Steve bought a nickel or dime bag. The lesser I knew made for fewer waves.

Labor Day arrived September 7. Steve Thompson started 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Jacobs. My brother Steve started college classes and simultaneously took a weekend job pool cleaning, kitchen bussing, and occasional portering for guests at the Holiday Inn. Sooner than not, Steve's work led to his carting home doggie bags frequently laden with steaks, plus an offer too good to overlook of new-for-us second-hand double beds. Holiday Inn was replacing all of its beds and the old models were marked for the garbage dump. Steve first asked Scotty and me if we'd like bigger beds in great condition. No discussion was needed and we managed to transport in three cars three double beds and mattresses to the farm. The existing single beds were shoved into the bedrooms off the dance floor-sized living room. With bedroom changes I wasn't at all surprised when Steve Thompson, a creature of habit on the farm, said he didn't want a bed, preferring still to overnight on the soft and spongy middle room sofa.

Most tangible change came in the weather. Those long, hot and humid days of summer faded away into fall's gray mornings, dew-beaded or overlain white lawns as cooler, sometimes frosty nights turned to shorter daylight hours. Night seemed to arrive with the lowering of a shade. We saw an advantage in losing summer; the sudden appearance of mushrooms, and conditions couldn't have been more ideal. Polish lore kicked in as Steve and I taught Fat Scotty to identify the difference between stemmed cups that were mushrooms for harvest and which were the untouchable toadstools. It was as if we put Scotty through the coming of age ritual we'd both had to pass at age 12. A bushel of field mushrooms was frozen in portion bags after sautéing in butter or simple boiling with bay leaves. Others were pickled and jarred, and I enjoyed the gelatin-like slime which formed from wild-grown mushrooms cooked in one part each of water, sugar, and vinegar with mustard seeds, whole peppercorns, and bay leaves.

Following a September night's frost Mrs. Know-It-All called early Saturday morning to invite me to her home, where I'd not before been. Mushrooms had sprung up in her front lawn like sparks from an anvil. She and her husband lived off Highway 10 on the fringe of Amherst, a small village with a nearby Amish community, people who live a 19<sup>th</sup> century life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century without automobiles, telephones, radio, TV, or electricity from the public grid, although they did have other sources to generate power. Mrs. Know-It-All's request was that I drive slowly in her neighborhood. "You never know when the boys might be out sparking for the girls," meaning Amish boys might be driving on the road showing off the speed of their horse drawn buggy. Knowing my penchant for using a camera, Mrs. Know-It-All said sternly I must never take a picture as their wish was to not be photographed.

Advice turned to reality when I made a right from the highway onto the secondary road. Shortly I came face to face with an Amish boy racing his horse and buggy. His whip was raised and he glanced at me with a smirk as we passed in opposite directions, he obviously moving faster on his course than I on mine.

On my own I harvested half a bushel of fresh mushrooms. Mrs. Know-It-All percolated coffee and recommended I drive up and down the roads of the hills before going home and see how the Amish lived. I'd never known there was such a fascinating neighborhood. Hand-washed laundry of plain clothes and ecru bed linen hung on lines. Barefoot children, girls wearing a head kerchief, helped barefoot mothers in their prayer caps peg the damp clothing. At one site I observed at least twenty men and boys all plainly dressed. Some wore black suits. Others had taken off their coats which showed suspenders holding up button-fly trousers. Some wore black felt hats while others still sported summertime straw hats. I stopped to observe what looked like a barn raising. A team of horses attached to a wooden wall was urged forward by two men with buggy whips; the whips used more as curled prods than stingers. Ropes on the wall moved through an old block and tackle. The wall lifted and was raised. Several of the men and boys looked and nodded at me as I sat behind the wheel on idle. Some offered me a closed-mouth smile as they politely applauded their achievement. I

too nodded and smiled. The Amish, I later learned, looked upon a barn raising as a frolic, a work event that combined socializing with a practical goal.

Mrs. Know-It-All's lawn mushrooms were large; too big for canning, but perfect for another means of preservation. Picture us, two Steves, Fat Scotty and me, standing in the kitchen with sewing needles threading mushrooms by their stems to hang like washing on a line to dry. Preventing mushrooms from turning into soft stinking rot, the heat from the Round Oak helped remove moisture. And, yes, for one reason or another, Scotty rather appreciated the nickname Fat Scotty.

In Salt Lake City Jim readjusted to living at home. According to his letters, he was busy in a new job house painting Monday through Saturday. He'd be up at 7:00 a.m. and at work about 8:00 a.m. He finished between 5:00-5:30 p.m. and then attended night school from 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Saturday morning Jim was up at 6:00 a.m. for a 7:00 a.m. behind-the-wheel course in Driver's Education. The lesson finished about 7:45 a.m. and Jim reported for painting duty by 8:00 a.m. Sunday was reserved for Mormon church service, homework, and other household chores.

As September ended Steve Thompson underwent the scalpel for an operation on his eye. We'd all noticed Steve had been blinking too much and rubbing his eye a lot. On closer examination of his left eye, a growth could be clearly seen. A doctor's examination removed Steve's fears when he told him it was only a chalazion cyst, a firm painless lump usually formed when an oil-producing gland becomes inflamed.

Harvesting had been completed on the farm. Potatoes had been dug, few collected and sorted and bagged for market. Uneven furrows, the odd neglected potato poking from beneath dirt clods, jigsawed across the farm. "Odd" was the landlord's chosen word for his potato crop "being rough". He'd inadvertently misinterpreted instructions for fertilizer and herbicide and used more than recommended dosage. He ended up with a crop of potatoes which looked like food grown by space aliens. Most of his potatoes couldn't be sold in supermarkets because they failed to comply with regulation size or shape. Farm the Second's underground staple developed into one large misshapen vegetable with many knobby offshoots, some resembling giant bear paws. What may have been marketable had to be carefully assessed and sorted. Deformed culls were abandoned in the fields with the landlord's permission to "help yourself to as much as you want 'cause they're no good to us," and with an assurance all the potatoes were edible, "just that they look funny." For our information, I suppose, or to remind himself of his over-fertilizing, the landlord added that he'd taken a big hit in his



wallet for his mistake. Maybe it was a reminder for me to continue paying my rent on time? This year's crop was his financial disaster. We were handed several of his unneeded gunnysacks to gather and store potatoes for ourselves. Eagerly, even greedily, we filled the sacks and a few bushels of our own to the brim. Now when dinnertime neared, instead of asking Steve Thompson to peel potatoes, pictured left, the request was a whimsical, "How about peeling a potato, Steve." Size with offshoot knobblies always meant one potato sufficiently filled the bellies of four hungry mouths, frequently with leftovers for the beggar dog.

The October breeze briefly warmed with the welcome return of Indian summer. More often than one cared to measure, October's bluster was crisp as it cracked bent, brown-fried corn stalks in the fields. Oak, elm, maple and sumac leaves transformed magically into hues of yellow, auburn, orange and blood red. In this tactile seasonal change I didn't find Keith. He was given to me.

Don Severson, an English teacher on the Franklin staff, had in his kindly humor dubbed my farm "a home for wayward boys" and he firmly supported what I did for them, especially after he'd seen the turnaround in Denny. Over a coffee break in the staff room Don called me aside. Knowing I wasn't scheduled for class third period Don suggested I visit his English class. He simply said, "I have a boy in my class I know you'll like." So the boy wouldn't become suspicious or frightened off, Don came

up with the idea that I should show up rather unexpectedly with a folder of papers, the pretext of curricular business, so that I could have a look at the boy. All of his students would be busy writing an in-class composition due by the end of the period.

Third period I knocked on Don's door and entered, approached his desk at the front of the room and officiously spread some papers across the desktop. I leaned down to Don and he whispered directions through clenched teeth like a ventriloquist for my identifying the boy. "His name's Keith. He's the blond one sitting smack dab in front of you."

I turned my head, glanced, and couldn't miss seeing straight white-blond hair. I confess my initial impression made me recall seeing *Village of the Damned* (1960), a sci-fi flick wherein children with white-blond hair turn into mind-controlling demons. I immediately dismissed the filmic image. His head was lowered. He was writing, struggling with words. Before I could avert my gaze he looked up, caught my eyes looking directly into his, and didn't shy away. A chord of understanding was struck between us. He knew. And I knew. Self-consciously he fiddled with an eraser, looked down to his paper, and surreptitiously blotted out some unintentional error. I looked back to Don and gave him a quick wink.

"See?" said Don. "I told you you'd like him."

Like him? In the cliché world of the romantic Hollywood musical, it was love at first sight.

After I'd collected the papers strewn across Don's desk, and before I left the room, Don said in a hush only I could hear that he'd talk with Keith about me. He'd also chat with the school guidance counselor, Mrs. Krembs.

There were times when her guidance counselor protocol seemed to float straight through and out a closed window. "Oh, Larry," she began, "you don't want to take chances going to his home. You wouldn't be safe. God only knows what might happen to you over there."

I had been provided with only edited information, not the whole picture. Keith came from a broken home. His father, no longer living in the home, was a heavy drinker prone to punching up his family. Mother had a current boyfriend and six kids in an overcrowded cottage. According to Mrs. Guidance Counselor, the boyfriend didn't exhibit any known paternal skills. Keith, it was felt, might easily find himself in trouble with the law without a good man's guidance. OK. I understood now why Don wanted to set me up with Keith.

I tried to explain to Mrs. Krembs that I wasn't about to befriend some boy I didn't even know without parental knowledge.

"Maybe I'll call her on the phone," Mrs. Krembs said somewhat panicky. "Tell her about you, your farm, the other boys, you know, save you the trouble of maybe having to beat a hasty retreat."

Mrs. Krembs' conduct didn't come across as a counselor in control; it was as if there was something to genuinely fear, or Mrs. Krembs herself was the one with hyperbolic trepidations trying to pass them off onto me to save her own self from... well... I wondered what? Her posture didn't exactly fill me with confidence or enthusiasm. I couldn't fathom why she employed avoidance tactics on maybe having Keith's mother come to school to meet me.

I insisted meeting Keith's mother face to face was necessary, if fact essential, and if there was no opportunity to meet in school, then I was left no choice except to see her in her home. I emphasized that she had to get to know me and to trust me.

Strange as it may sound, Mrs. Krembs said, "Have it your way then," and she tossed her wrinkled hand in the air as through brushing away flying insects. "But remember, you've been warned." Leaving Mrs. Krembs' office, I thought, "Well, thanks a bunch." What was I getting myself into?

Later in the day Don, having talked with Keith, arranged a meeting and we were introduced formally for the first time. "Keith, I want you to meet a good man, Mr. Lare." Keith didn't extend his hand for a shake, nor did I. He didn't say more than a timid, "Hi" and offered a sheepish grin through tightly-held lips. His one word greeting told me his voice hadn't yet broken. Not wishing to overwhelm the boy I simply and gently suggested he might like to visit the farm some weekend, meet my brother and Fat Scotty, get to know Kluski and the horses. And, if he was willing, I might drive him home one day after school and meet his mother.

Keith was absent from school the next two days. I wondered if I had anything to do with it. Was it me, perhaps, who scared him off and now he was reluctant to show his face? Don offered no reason. He managed a head shake and shoulder shrug. I barely knew the boy. Already I missed him.

Keith returned Friday with a small cut on his upper lip and traipsed out the oldest excuse. He'd bumped into a door. Uh-huh... well, given the benefit of doubt and not jumping to obvious conclusions, perhaps he had.

Mrs. Guidance Counselor's advice ringing in my ears, I extended my invitation to Keith to give him a ride home after school so that I might meet his mother. Hesitation was Keith's initial response. Then, through his clenched-lipped smile, he accepted my offer.

Except for the pockety-pock of the tappets, it was a quiet drive the eight miles to Plover along Highway 51. Looking straight ahead at the road through the windshield, my peripheral vision picked up on Keith turning his head occasionally to check me out. We passed the man-made lake and I asked if he'd ever been swimming there. I'd hoped to hear his voice, but he shook his head a soft no. "I did," I said, "a few times in summer," then adding, "with a couple of boys who've since moved to Illinois." I looked at Keith in his red turtle-necked sweater. "But it'd be too cold for a swim now."

The afternoon sunshine was still bright. As Keith opened the door of his home he called out, "Ma. Someone wants to meet you." His mother was immediately to our right in the entrance, the laundry room ahead of the kitchen, leaning over her washing machine. Keith's mother completely surprised me. She was a small woman, slightly overweight, and she looked somewhat embarrassed sorting laundry. She talked constantly, barely coming up for air, as she derided her uncooperative machine. Dumping damp laundry into a plastic basket she smiled broadly, offered coffee, introduced me to a visiting neighbor lady, and said she knew all about me and my movie making from newspaper articles. I barely got a word in edgewise. She was pleasant, gregarious, and trusting. She said she'd heard all about my farm too, that I was especially good with boys, and that if I wanted Keith I could have him.

If I wanted Keith I could have him. Wow! How about that for pulling the rug out from under my feet! It couldn't have been Mrs. Guidance Counselor who'd provided her with any information. I doubt it would have been Don Severson. Doubtful as well was Keith playing the herald over his two days' absence. If what Keith's mother knew had come by way of gossip in the wind, it must have all been positive. But there and then, Keith hadn't even been asked if he wanted to spend time with me. His mother and I spoke briefly about my immediate and pre-arranged weekend plans and she happily signed a permission slip for her son. She thought what I had planned was outstanding, so beneficial for my students. Heedfully, as if the wind had blown when that tight-lipped smile had first shown on Keith's face, it was now firmly fixed as he gathered a change of clothes for his weekend with me.

That's how it all began. It was that quick, that simple. Little did I know that Friday afternoon that "If I wanted Keith I could have him" genuinely meant "If I wanted Keith I could have him!" I was going to have pretty much a permanent boarder. "He can be a real troublemaker," Keith's mother maintained. "Maybe you can straighten him out before it's too late." Whatever evildoer lived inside Keith, I wasn't made aware or I was genuinely naïve. "Now you have a good time, Keith," his mother ordered, "and you make sure you listen to Mr. Lare." All of fourteen, Keith was quiet, shy, introverted, and he always looked like he was holding back a smile just wanting to burst.

Instead of driving straight home from Plover, we returned to Franklin where I parked my Falcon under cover and collected a school passenger van, sort of a green mini school bus. Keith looked perplexed, but I assured him all was well and he'd be in for a surprise trip in the morning. I handed Keith's signed permission slip to the person in charge of school vehicles. "My kids have gone up from four to five," I said matter-of-factly, and asked that he turn in the form to comply with safety and insurance regulations. Entering the van Keith moved to the rear bench seat and sat. The single driver's seat was raised giving an overview of the road I'd not seen from behind the wheel of my station wagon. I liked it. As I drove, I told Keith about tomorrow's plan. He nodded silent approval. Neither Scotty nor Steve was home. Monday being Columbus Day, both had gone away for the extended weekend.

I have indelible memories of Keith's first afternoon on the farm. The late afternoon sun was sinking; the light turning grey, the air cooling. Even as the light was slowly, ever gently fading, Keith's blond hair was like a sun. Sumac leaves were the same red as his turtle neck sweater. He stood out from nature's palette, colorful in his own right, alone, against the dried, dead drabness of the after-harvest. Perhaps it was intuitive. I bounded up the porch stairs, disappeared into the kitchen and brought out my Nikkormat, not ever thinking to invite Keith inside the farmhouse. I left him outside, standing all alone in the jumble of fall's pageant of color. In my overlooking alleviation of his possible distress at being left by himself in an unfamiliar neck of the woods, I just about stuttered when asking Keith for his permission to take a few pictures of him posed amongst the myriad of autumn's hues. Keith merely shrugged his shoulders, my suggestion no encouragement for his caring one way or another. I snapped a whole roll of Kodak 35mm, twenty revealing pictures of a personality I didn't yet know, but knew. I captured more than a face, more than a physical presence. It was Friday, October 9, fall, 1970.

The original snapshots are in color. Black & White does little to no justice to the brilliance of the reds and yellows of fall's color palette. Neither Color nor Black & White show favor nor impart influence on the personality I captured on film.



first time Keith gave me his beaming smile



September 21 I had submitted in triplicate a Special Trip Authorization form for Saturday, October 10, an excursion to Appleton East High School to attend its October Film Festival of film workshop, festival of short films, and competition screenings of student films conducted under the auspices of the WCTE (Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English). Word of our school's slide production of *Romeo and Juliet* had traveled and I was invited as guest speaker on the topic of Filmmaking as a Classroom Activity. Vehicle request was for a station wagon. The pink sheet of the three was returned to me sans immediate approval, but with a note in heavy black marker with 'Station Wagon' circled, a large arrow pointing to my name, and "See me on this." Advising against a station wagon, Principal Oelke said, "Cram six in a wagon? Too much like a can of sardines." The former Marine sergeant screwed up his nose and nodded announcing, "You want a Greenbrier." Pictured right is a 6 to 9 passenger Chevrolet Greenbrier van, and similar to one given me to drive. No money had to come out of my pocket. The school paid \$12.00 for the vehicle's gasoline, \$12.00 for our meals, and the festival's \$5.00 registration fee.

Saturday's departure time was 6:30 a.m. On any day 5:00 a.m. can be a difficult time to roll out of the sack, even when living on a farm. Keith didn't seem to have any difficulty rising. I guessed he was keen on the whole new experience. We bobbled around the kitchen, warmed our backsides at the Round Oak, and ate breakfast of warm buttered toast and jam. The moon provided scant light. Steam poured from our mouths as we trudged to the barn. Goober, Maudie and Apple were keen for their breakfast of hay, oats, and water. Keith



showed no fear when offering a bucket of oats for each horse to munch. I left the barn door open so the horses, at their leisure, could exercise in the corral.

We climbed into the Greenbrier, I in the driver's seat and Keith again choosing the back bench seat. Picking that spot had to have been deliberate. My rearview mirror filled with a clear reflection of Keith. I turned the key in the ignition and fired up the van. It idled briefly and I

hoped the heater worked. Slipping the gear shift into D for Drive, ah, yes, it was an automatic transmission, the heat felt like it kicked in as soon as we reached the end of our long driveway. I drove in silence to the home of Bink LeGault and his older brother Mike who, as passengers, sat bus-like behind me. In and around Stevens Point I collected another two yawning boys.

In Appleton I presented my talk supported with a selection of slides from Romeo and Juliet. I couldn't run the whole program as that would have eaten into other scheduled activities. I hoped I'd provided some inspiration for teachers, but I had my doubts. The so-called film festival screening was too short and wasn't inspirational. I especially remember Bink looking at me, shaking his head in the negative, and making a gesture of hanging himself. Showing the student films in the competition was a revelation. Kids from state schools were creative with their cameras whether telling stories, showing how something was made, making animation, or in Bink's case, getting ahead of the times producing a film about his brother's rock band. I say ahead of the times because the music video hadn't yet come onto the scene as a commercial enterprise, yet here was Bink's film, a music video in every respect and categorized as an experimental film. This was my first viewing of his film and, frankly, I didn't know what to make of it. Good thing I hadn't been asked to judge. Bink's creative blend of off-the-map imagery and jarring sound impressed and he was awarded First Prize in the Jr. High section. Stunned with his success, he walked away with a brand new Kodak Super 8 movie camera. Now that was a new gauge even I hadn't had the chance to use. Super 8 had a larger frame and smaller sprocket holes when compared with Standard 8mm. It came in a 50 foot cartridge and didn't require the changeover at 25 feet, nor was there a splice after processing. Bink's older brother Mike didn't win his High School category, and my other two Franklin boys missed out on recognition, but the experience couldn't be denied as worthwhile and eye-opening.

My authorization request had stated a departure time of 5:00 p.m. The October Film Festival finished around 4:30 p.m. and we intended spending the school's allocated money for dinner and making sure we celebrated Bink's unexpected film triumph. I blew the budget remainder at Red Lobster, a family-style restaurant where seafood, especially lobster, was the norm, where the boys not keen on lobster could choose other items on the menu like hamburgers, chicken burgers, fish burgers, steak, macaroni and cheese, fried fish, and all eminently affordable on the monetary allowance.

The strongest memory I have of the day was seeing Keith's face reflected in the rearview mirror. Any time I checked for traffic behind, Keith sitting in the far rear seat of the Greenbrier knew I would see him and it became a game. He played to me. Whenever he saw me look in the rearview mirror he'd make his shy, clench-lipped smile. From the radio came a Partridge Family hit single with David Cassidy singing, "I Think I Love You." On each refrain Keith's smile widened. It was, after all, very personal. David Cassidy's character in "The Partridge Family" was named, wouldn't you know, Keith. Without drawing attention from my other passengers staring out the window or who'd nodded off, from opposite ends of the Greenbrier and without ever using words, by means of David Cassidy's 'Keith,' a very real Keith and I communicated.

After this magic Appleton Saturday, "I Think I Love You" became our theme and our silent message. In the weeks that followed, it played frequently on my Falcon wagon's radio and Keith would thump me on the arm each time David Cassidy's refrain flowed on the airwaves. Keith never said a word as the song played; he just smiled. He beamed! As if I was the living personification of Foghorn Leghorn's cartoon quote, "He's about as sharp as a pound of wet leather," teasingly I'd ask, "Are you trying to tell me something?" Whereupon his punch on the next refrain landed ever harder.

## Chapter 64: Little Brother

Keith's Blood Soup

riday evening, September 25, my brother Steve came along with me to the Ben Franklin faculty picnic. There was plenty of free food including bread, cakes, salads; the wood-fired barbecue was laden with ears of corn, hamburgers, hot dogs, and chicken pieces. The barbecues were handmade from 45 gallon drum halves set on stands similar to metal saw horses and with a metal grate across the top. As the picnic wound down, Don Linteurer, Head of the Science Department, invited several people, including us, to his home on an island in the Wisconsin River. We took a small motorboat and putt-putted on the water to his home. He chose to live as if stuck in the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Modern conveniences included electricity and a telephone, but that's as far as he went. There was no indoor plumbing, no running water from faucets and no indoor bathroom. Water came from an outdoor pump. He also had a hand pump mounted on the kitchen sink. He cooked meals and heated water on his wood-fed stove. We carried a kerosene lantern to walk outside and use the outhouse and, when it was time to go home, to find his motorboat moored to the pier.

The picnic served more than one purpose. It was used to recruit members for bowling teams. I signed up to participate and my brother Steve was asked to join too. We had a sponsor who provided maroon bowling shirts with their commercial logo. More than one team was recruited. Qualification for the team Steve and I bowled was an average of 145. Many of the guys owned their own ball. Steve and I used house balls. We always had to search through the ball rack to find a favorite. House balls were numbered, so we routinely turned or rolled balls in the racks to find the same number week after week. Ball weight, finger holes size and spread determined liking a specific ball. When the season commenced, I don't think we ever posed a serious challenge to any of the opposition. In fact, I'll slam-bang it to season's end and say we finished last, but we had lots of fun.

On the rare occasion of Hell freezing over, unless you live in Norway and already know the river in Hell freezes over every winter, our team performed exceptionally under pressure. My strongest memory of team play was my brother's 10<sup>th</sup> frame. Steve was our team's anchor and he faced a clutch play. How many pins he knocked down determined a win or a loss for the night. He needed a mark, not an open frame, for us to win. In other words, Steve had to strike or spare; nothing less would do. Steve addressed the runway, balanced, concentrated, and delivered, using a bit of body English to coax his ball... and produced a next-to-impossible split. Our groans were mightily heard over balls rolling down lanes and cracking against pins. "Aw, shit, man...bed posts." "The dreaded 7 - 10 split." "Yup... fence posts... down the tubes we go again." Negative as our comments were, we supported our team member. Someone called out, "Go for it, Steve!" The automatic pinsetter grabbed the two widely separated pins and wiped the fallen from the back of the alley. Steve's ball came back from the pit in the return and rolled up into the ball rack. He turned the ball holes up, inserted his two middle fingers and thumb, lifted the ball and arched it up to his chin. Steve blew twice onto the ball, something for luck maybe. All noise must have disappeared from his hearing as, once again, Steve concentrated and delivered. Professionals converted the 7-10 to a spare perhaps one out of every 145 times. Steve was several giant steps above bumpers. Every team member used exaggerated body English willing Steve's ball to the left-hand edge of the seven pin. Bang! The seven pin angled and slid textbook-style across to the ten pin taking it down. Conversion! The whooping and screaming from our team caused just about everyone in the bowling alley to stop dead in their tracks to see what happened. Steve was entitled to an extra ball for making his spare, but we didn't care. Whatever Steve knocked over no longer mattered because we'd already won on his impossible mark.

We never used a kitty for payment of misses or for other set fines. Built in to our bowling was incentive. Steve's converting his big split won the game; additionally, each team member handed Steve a dime or  $10\phi$ . Picking up a small split like the 7-9 was worth a nickel or  $5\phi$ ; same amount for a double, two consecutive strikes. A turkey, three consecutive strikes, and the bowler collected  $10\phi$  from each team member. Every additional consecutive strike after a turkey was a called a string and that meant each team player paid another  $10\phi$ . I remember one night when, instead of a handkerchief in my back pocket, I must have been in possession of the luck of the Irish. Using my favorite ball, I snow-plowed seven consecutive strikes.

Named for the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch in baseball, bowling had the 7<sup>th</sup> frame stretch. It was also affectionately called the beer frame. Only the first delivery of the ball counted and the team member with the lowest pinfall, the number of pins toppled, bought a round of drinks for the keglers (aka team members, and called so for a beer keg). The 7<sup>th</sup> frame was forever my downfall. Under pressure, or because I carried too many coins in my pants pocket, I rarely performed without having to dip into said pocket. Having lost one beer frame, often in the first of three games, I was exempt from having to buy further drinks after making the lowest pinfall in either of the other two games.

I always had plenty of nickels and dimes at bowling. If I wasn't rewarding other keglers' achievements, I was handing Keith dimes to play the pinball machines. Don Severson, on another team I need to add, took some credit and let it be known he'd made the arrangement for Keith being under my wing. Too young to be a member of our team, keglers accepted Keith as its mascot. It worked.

Enjoyable most of the time, as far I was concerned, outdoor work on the farm was always just that, work. Come winter I hated it, but I never hesitated to shovel snow, clear the porch, gain access to the car, make a path to the barn, and move the mound left by the city plow at the head of the driveway. It was impossible to drive over or through it. Spring and summer I'd dig the garden, plant seeds and seedlings without complaining. I'd hoe away at weeds in the patch, bend down and gather them up in a pail to dump into a mulch heap or simply scatter them from the plot if I couldn't be bothered. I'd do laundry and peg clothing and bed sheets to the line, even in winter when everything damp froze into stiff plates of ice. Try folding a sheet, even a handkerchief after that happened! I'd fork hay for the horses, but always left cleaning the stalls for the boys. Sometimes I'd brush my beasts, but usually saved that job for Steve Thompson, Keith, or one of the occasional weekenders who welcomed such work as fun. Rarely if ever did I need to chop wood. In fact, I remember chopping wood once... on a weekday... when no one out of the expected had stayed overnight. It was so far below freezing and the woodpile was looking bare. I didn't chop alone. Keith, Fat Scotty, and my brother Steve helped. The air and wind outside was too biting for anyone to work alone.

The boys, on the other hand, and for reasons I genuinely understood and exploited, enjoyed strenuous work. They saw it as a body toning, muscle-building exercise, and a sure opportunity to show off their masculinity, a challenge to see who was fastest, strongest, and who managed to complete or achieve the most among peers. Too many simple opportunities were lost in the vapors of time because I was too cement-headed about running film through my camera to shoot 'ordinary' home movies.



Far left: Roger using every facial muscle chopping wood.

Left: Daryl in the background, Joe in the foreground enthusiastically chopping wood.







Steve puttying windows

One of the boys in the hayloft

Steve washing Goober

Work I had to do, and which only I could do, was all about schoolwork including lesson planning and correcting homework or tests. I'd sit on one of the middle room couches with a stack of papers in my lap and read. I kept my red pen forever busy making spelling corrections, syntax and grammar alterations, all in the hope of teaching something in the process. Frankly, I doubted students took much notice and I was probably wasting my time. Much too often after red penning I found that same student continuing to misuse there, their and they're. However, as an English teacher I felt obligated, not because I was told to, but because I made it my duty. It took several nights' corrections for me to notice that handwriting looked blurred and my eyes



grew tired. Fat Scotty wore glasses and recommended an eye check. I did. The optometrist said I must instruct my students to always use ball point pen and not write in pencil. Pencil writing reflected light causing my eyes to overcompensate and keep everything focused. Eye chart reading of the bottom lines through different lenses resulted in prescriptive reading glasses. I had a new prop to use in my teaching, a nuisance sometimes, but often effective for emphasizing a point. Mr. Owl-Eyes is pictured left.

New reading glasses came in handy reading the letter which arrived shortly after the Appleton High School-East Film Festival. Dorothy Koller of the WCTE thanked me for participating. "It is because of the fine efforts of so many people like you that the festival was a success."

On top of the October 12 thank you letter was an invitation from Deforest High School to attend a WCTE Film/Media Conference. Again I needed to complete a Request for Released Time form, even when no students would attend and the event was on a weekend not requiring me to be away from school duties. Purpose of this workshop was to learn about the newest trends for using film in the classroom and preview motion pictures for classroom use. Mrs. Johnson had ceded her role as English Department head to newcomer Danby Bonerski (not his real name), a fence-sitter, who now had the power to approve or not approve formal requests. My application was approved with a caveat. Bonerski stiffly stated with the kind of regality inherently titled people reserved for lording it over serfs, "No doubt your success will result in your being invited to more workshops, with or without student participation." You only ever read in 19th century stories of such an uppity stare-down-your-nose attitude. Personally, I don't know why he was getting all uptight, snooty and carry-on as if he was in a Jane Austin novel. Overlooking what air of overbearing importance or authority he posited. Bonerski often came across with the heroics of Mr. Peepers, a Caspar Milquetoast, as if Principal Oelke held some invisible leash or chokehold on his neck. He instructed in his ever indecisive voice that I write a justification for participation in teacher-student workshops. His motivation, for all I knew, may have been green-eyed envy, a heaping of undeserved indignity, or he had his own ulterior motive for insulating his backside if and when an invitation I

received involved absence from classroom duties and he'd have to provide justification for "not approved" without it coming across as an ingrained jealous response.

I summoned my risible knowledge of educational jargon and produced said justification, but I won't bore the pants off readers by reproducing in entirety the two page document. However, Part IV's "Student Growth from Participation," Point C is worth sharing because it said it all:

Released time granted without question for band, sports, student council, family vacations, doctor, orthodontist, dentist, optometrist appointments, babysitting, deer hunting and/or fishing trips, and a number of other excuses to be absent from classes. Consider that my students will be teaching, not being absent from the classroom situation at all. Contrast this to the student in the woods at a deer stand whose mind is a million miles from his school.

Yes, Ripley, believe it or not; deer hunting season in Wisconsin meant that all a kid had to do was bring a note from home and class absences were immediately approved.

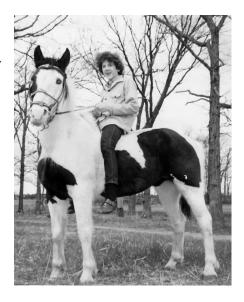
I may have overstepped the margin in Part V's Benjamin Franklin Jr. High School's "Image":

- A. All are interested in making Ben Franklin the best in the state Isn't this an opportunity to do just that?
- B. Local newspaper publicity may influence School Board to look with favor on Audio-Visual budget requests.
- C. Out-of-town newspaper publicity will carry weight with School Board moneywise and prestige-wise.

Writing Point D, I felt I was sticking it to Bonerski for making me perform this useless exercise:

D. Ben Franklin will be one of the recognized "leader" schools, recognized for the talents of its teachers, recognized for the talents of its students. The invitation received from an already well-known "leader" school is proof that other schools think one of our faculty members has talent they want to tap. Let's take advantage of it!

Having suitably satisfied Bonerski's whim for 'educational justification,' I turned my attention to life's more important things. It was the first time in a long time there was stability in the number of farmhouse residents. Same as in the tale of the little Dutch boy's shoving his thumb in the dyke and stopping the water, the flow of children to Farm the Second came to a standstill. There was an unmistakable atmosphere of familial cooperation which went on seven days of the week. Along with Fat Scotty, my brother Steve and myself, Keith became a permanent farm fixture Only the odd unplanned weekend hosted a day visitor in Bink LeGault, or Steve Thompson who now had an after-school and weekend job, and once in a great while Brad and Roger Paulson whose family had moved to LaGrange, Illinois. Their father's chiropractic business in Stevens Point was unfinished and so they grabbed at a road trip for a weekend overnight on Farm the Second. Right: Brad enjoying the bare back of Goober.



Ideas pitched back in April, just after Apple was born and filming started on *Romeo and Juliet*, was an eight month gestation to fruition of a school Film Club, Nickelodeon Nights, and short course in Film Appreciation. The Film Club seemed to have come about organically after Bink's winning a movie camera in Appleton. The Nickelodeon Nights and Film Appreciation course realization followed reams of paperwork justification.

#### WEEK NIGHTS WITH THE CLASSICS

This is a weekly night program of classic feature length silent and sound motion pictures offered to students of the 9th grade Film Appreciation course and their parents. The films shall be shown in the Benjamin Franklin Jr. High School Cafeteria. A dual projection system will be used and the largest tripod screen available shall be obtained.

A letter of inquiry will be sent home with the students in the Film Appreciation course. Addressed to the parents, it shall state the purpose of Week Nights With The Classics, contain a schedule of screenings and have a portion of the paper to be signed and returned. This returned portion will indicate interest in attendance.

It is estimated that of approximately 180 Film Appreciation students, approximately 50 will return the papers indicating a desire to attend the film screenings.

No admission, donation, or contribution shall be charged, requested or required.

This program will be offered for the following reasons:

- It is an opportunity for students and their parents or guardians to participate together in a class related project.
- Parents will have an opportunity to meet their child's teacher and observe him and his teaching techniques. Discussion of films will follow screening.
- Students will have the opportunity to expand their limited knowledge of the cinema.
- 4. Parents and students will be exposed to complete film subjects, material presented only in capsule form in the classroom.

This program is necessary for the following reasons:

- 1. The length of this elective, Film Appreciation, in the 9th grade English Department is just three weeks. This, in actuality, is not enough time to present the basics of motion picture study, nor does this time allotment allow for the proper screening of important contributions to the development of the cinema.
- 2. The length of class periods being approximately 42 minutes allows for the screening of approximately 35 minutes of film. Most feature length films in16mm are mounted on 2 or 3 1600' reels. These reels run approximately 45 minutes apiece, thus stretching the screening time of features in the classroom over a two to four day run.
- 3. The local theatre and local television stations do not offer classic film fare because a. the public does not demand it
  - b. the public won't pay for it
  - c. the public doesn't know enough about it.

If some classic is televised, it is usually on a station most homes do not receive or it is televised at a late night time slot when most youngsters have retired.

4. Films were made to be seen. They benefit no one stored in cans on shelves. I have invested several thousands of dollars in fine 16mm prints of classic features and short subjects (such as FRANKENSTEIN @ \$130.00 & THE CIRCUS @ \$140.00, THE GOLD RUSH @ 100.00 & KING KONG @ \$135.00 plus 50 others). To rent these features and short subjects from a distributor would cost between \$25.00 to \$75.00 for features, \$7.00 to \$20.00 for shorts.

Teachers at Ben Franklin who have expressed an interest in participating in the program in a supervisory capacity are:

Mr. Paul DeChant

Mr. Don Severson

Mrs. Louann Severson

Mr. Robert Lesczynski

Mr. Mike Sanden

Mr. Tom Schroedl

Mr. Don Carpenter

Mrs. Alice Krembs

A parental consent form was sent home with students wanting to participate.

As seen in the schedule, the Nickelodeon started mid-November and ran until mid-December. Well before commencement of the program I trained Keith and Bink to operate the 16mm sound projector. I'd received an invitation from Kaukauna High School and wanted the boys to participate, so they needed to be proficient with such equipment.

The Film Appreciation unit was a short-lived experiment. I was told to devise a separate report. The exercise to justify what I attempted to teach meant more time wasted, as far as I was concerned, because evaluation of each student took more time than necessary, as evidenced in the categories seen on the grade sheet sent home to parents to show their child's progress. Call me bitter, General Yen, but I really felt the whole exercise was to set me up for failure. I was teaching a subject wholly alien to everyone else in the department. Parents, in their narrow thinking, felt their children only watched movies and what's to be learned or gained in that? A book was a text. A movie. Not.

If he wasn't substitute teaching, Fat Scotty stalked the farm's harvested potato fields with bow and arrow hunting deer. Local deer filled their bellies on corn from other farmers' fields. After the potatoes were harvested, deer sometimes meandered onto the fields to take advantage of any spillage, in our case the over-fertilized 'aliens' left to rot. Deer pawed up leftovers. We sometimes caught a glimpse of one or two of the furred thieves.

I can't recall Scotty's friend's name, but one Saturday Fat Scotty dragged a deer carcass into the kitchen and together they flopped it onto the kitchen table. "Holy s\*\*t," my brother uttered. "What's happening now?" "Got really lucky sunrise with the bow n' arrow," Scotty huffed when heaving the beast into a workable position. Having field-dressed (gutted) the animal, Scotty and his friend had sufficient knowledge to skin the deer on the table. Basic anatomy knowledge meant next they quartered it and removed backstraps along either side of the spine, and the tenderloins from inside the deer's rib cage. Relying upon Scotty and his friend, we did what we were asked, which wasn't much really, but the whole experience was quite exciting. "This venison's gonna be tender as porterhouse," Fat Scotty announced, "and sweet as corn-fed beef 'cause it ate corn. We're gonna make roasts and steaks and casseroles and no one's starving in this house this winter."



Left: Scotty's friend, Steve with loaf of bread as if he's about to make a sandwich of venison tartare, and Fat Scotty.



Right: Fat Scotty and me with the buck's head on a

Scotty called a place in town and hired a freezer-locker. Beer coolers filled with meat, he drove into Stevens Point to fill his locker. Over the next three months we saved meat shopping money indulging in venison chops, steaks, stews, casseroles, roasts and Bambi burgers. Very lean, the meat was especially good for keeping my diverticulitis under control.

Although Keith hadn't shot a foot of film, he thought he qualified as a filmmaker because he'd joined the recently formed Junior High Film Club. The weekend I decided to butcher my three ducks – no waiting to celebrate Thanksgiving this year – Bink came to the farm with his new Super 8 camera and showed Keith how to use it so he could shoot his first film and thus be genuinely called filmmaker. The idea was that Keith would shoot a single-concept documentary about butchering ducks. The film would be shot in chronological order, no cuts after processing allowed. That's quite the challenge for

a novice. However, there was too much levity on set and the theme declined into low farce, slapstick and downright cruelty. Although it was cinema verite with a hand-held camera, there was nothing documental about *Blood Soup*.





Today I am averse to screening the film because what's shown is inhumane. In its day it may have passed as entertainment, but times have changed. Subject matter in the way it's handled and presented is no longer acceptable for today's mindset. There is nothing humane in the catching and killing of the ducks.

At left is a frame enlargement showing my three ducks. Kluski was playfully involved because, well, he was a dog and didn't know any better. Now when I look back on the film, I think even then we should have known that our Three Stooges-like antics weren't funny and were nothing short of animal cruelty. What may have worked then doesn't wash today. Left, Fat Scotty and I pursue a duck, axe handle in foreground, in a second frame enlargement from *Blood Soup*.

Keith filmed everything presented under Scotty's and my direction.

He made no objection to what happened as he saw it through the camera's viewfinder. Nothing was out of the ordinary because in 1970 it was the way it was. We got

the job done and we laughed, as evidenced in the snapshot at right. The ducks were killed, their blood saved with vinegar to prevent clotting so we could make <u>czarnina</u>; they were dressed and plunged into hot water for feather plucking and removal by pliers of peepchas (Polish slang for pinfeathers). However, after processing as we sat on the floor to screen the film, that's when Keith said that what looked like fun on the day sort of came out kind of horrible on screen and he didn't think it should ever be watched by anyone else except ourselves.



Before roasting the ducks Fat Scotty taught me how to make a tarragon and oyster stuffing, a whole new taste sensation for us all, especially me. Correct use of herbs and spices was the culinary secret for the difference between just cooking a meal to keep hunger at bay and preparing a dish to delight. It shouldn't have surprised me that serving <u>czarnina</u> didn't cause Keith to balk. It was always pleasing to see that no matter what was placed before him; Keith ate with ne'er a complaint.

Autumn harvest was pickled or preserved. I made green tomato relish and using a Foley mill, our own simplified style of V-8 juice. Fat Scotty found apple trees along a rural secondary highway. We all picked and we learned how to peel and preserve fresh apple slices using aspirin in water to keep them white. When we used preserved apple for crumble or pie or cake, they'd be as crispy as fresh. Elderberries were found. Steve's knowledge turned them into wine and, if something went awry, we had usable fruit vinegar.

Most weekends we dressed in clothing recalling an era of more than 40 years earlier. We could have been recognized as extras in the cast of Twentieth Century Fox's 1940 *The Grapes of Wrath* directed by John Ford, except that we weren't as destitute as the Joad family in John Steinbeck's Pulitzer prize-winning story. Our lives were harmonious. We seldom disagreed and we didn't fight. We took turns cooking, setting the table, washing, wiping, and putting away dishes. Household chores were



shared - sweeping floors and porch, vacuuming rugs, making beds, and putting out the Ours garbage. was an assembled family and we lived in the serenity of our self-made farmhouse heaven. Ahead of the Christmas season we attempted to capture bucolic rapport in a set-piece of the golden days of stiffly-posed tintypes, goal being to use the best one as our Christmas greeting card.



Here is the photograph of our Christmas carol singing we turned into our 1970 Christmas card. Note that Fat Scotty, dressed to the nines in Big Daddy's white suit, didn't bother pulling on socks! His choice was deliberately countrified. I never saved the Christmas card with this picture.









We weren't jumping the gun shooting Christmas pictures so close to Halloween. Snapshot printing often took up to three days and Tucker's Camera Shop usually took from two to three weeks to print photo cards. Ever since screening *The Leucocyte Story* in the RHC International Film Festival April 8, 1967, I continued a correspondence par avion with Pierre Sevestre. The film had been made by Jean Charles Munier who didn't speak or write English. Pierre was a member of the same club as Jean Charles and, able to speak and write English, took on the job of writing and sending me a print of *The Leucocyte Story*. Pierre's reaction at seeing our Christmas card made us laugh. "Where did you find the magnificent movie set and costumes?" I wrote and told Pierre the "movie set" was our everyday kitchen and "costumes", excepting Fat Scotty's white suit, were what we wore weekends.

While making suggestions on how to arrange ourselves during the photography session, Fat Scotty rightfully referred to Steve as my brother, "... and Larry's brother should stand here." Keith looked at me plaintively and asked, "Kin you call me your little brother?" Not an unusual request, it had seemed from that first day in October Keith never saw me as anyone other than a big brother, although it took me time to catch on. From this extraordinary evening of pretend Keith became Little Brother. (For my family in West Allis, for relatives and people who might never fully understand the relationship, I referred to Keith as my foster brother, a term Keith never resented and actually appreciated. However, in our farm home he wanted to be made to feel closer and so he became little brother Keith.) Even though Keith already had a year older brother, my calling Keith Little Brother gave him the security he obviously wanted.





I was prompted to write a poem about Keith using his newly acquired reference, but never submitted it for publication. As with other poems I'd penned, this one was personal.

#### MY LITTLE BROTHER

The young
and grinning
foot-swinging
droodle-drawer –
looks into my eyes
hoping I will smile
because his tongue's sticking out!

He's thinking about
yesterday's basketball
H-O-R-S-E,
toads –
looking into his eyes
I smile
because that's how it should be.

Shortly after calling Jim in the new O'Leary family home in Sandy, Utah, a letter dated November 9 arrived:

Time goes so fast – and my time is pretty well occupied. Work is alright – the hours are strange but I am getting used to them. The first quarter of school is almost over with, I passed everything for my drivers test and the written test for the motorcycle. I now have about 2 more weeks to wait before I can take the driving test for the motorcycle.

I am always with you,
Love always,
Jim

According to what Jim had written previously, he'd been working as a painter. Now he wrote he had a different job with very different hours, but he never said what he did. Hours were from midnight to 8:00 a.m. He went home and slept until 5:00 p.m., attended night school, and was back at work by 12:00 a.m.

Given an invitation to present a workshop at Kaukauna High School December 10-11, the all-important exercise was completing a Request for Released Time form early in November. Of course I was required to seek the approval of my department leader, good ol' Daffy, er, Danby Bonerski. Despite the invitation taking me away from my classroom duties for a couple of weekdays, approval was given. Next step was filling out 4 copies of my application and delivering them to the office secretary. The amount of paperwork reminded me of the efficiency in paperwork practiced by bureaucracies of the Third Reich. Everything typewritten was documented using carbon paper; everything handwritten was in bound tomes.

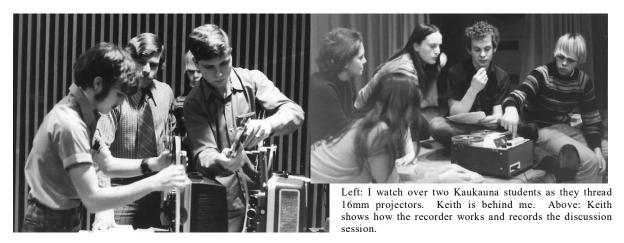
Scheduled over Thursday and Friday, Kaukauna paid all expenses for me and two students. Ah, maybe that's why Bonerski didn't hesitate to approve my request, and neither did Principal Oelke. However, instead of two school days, my superiors asked if we could get our demonstration lessons done in a day, preferably Friday. Using the school office phone and a tweak to the organization it all came together. Workshop purpose was to present film experiences to students in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Keith and Bink accompanied me; hence my ensuring they knew how to run a 16mm projector and tape recorder, and Bink, having had experience with his family camera and now his own Super 8, could comfortably present tuition in camera handling.

We departed early in the morning Friday, December 11, followed Highway 10 and arrived at Kaukauna High School in about an hour and 20 minutes, in time for their 1<sup>st</sup> period class. The workshop included film viewing and discussion, scripting your own film, and handling/using

filmmaking equipment. Three sessions were conducted simultaneously with Keith, Bink and I each leading a group, and with rotation of each group. Quite a few keen Kaukauna students had signed up and participated. From age 13 to about 17, several appeared to be highly artistic and creative types.



Bink and students: among the shorts films used for discussion were The Attic by Don Tenant and my We Were Two.



So successful was the Friday workshop, the carrot of a job was offered by the principal. Between December 11 and early May I'd have to do some serious thinking.

There was a third film workshop in as many months. Conducted for teachers in Madison by the WCTE, I was invited to lecture on student filmmaking, to bring along and screen examples of films made by my students and, if possible, bring students to talk about their experiences.

My initial plan for this Saturday, December 12, was to include Bink and Keith. However, I made the same mistake of repeating something stupid done months before with Steve Thompson after he'd supposedly misbehaved. Something Keith had done, or not done, displeased his mother and, as Keith happened to spend most of his time with me, she told me I should figure out some means of punishment. I never even understood what infringement he was supposed to have committed. To please her I followed through. Whether or not I'd ever devised a penance, Keith's mother would have never been the wiser. After all, Keith had done nothing wrong on the farm and yet I foolishly chose to leave Keith on the farm with Scotty and my brother Steve instead of taking him to Madison. The disappointment Keith showed was evident. More obvious was his registration of jealousy at Bink's going to Madison with me.

Driving on I-39 and past Devil's Lake State Park, Madison was 110 miles from Stevens Point, an hour and just under 50 or so minutes. During the formal part of the program I learned about the University of Madison's film collection. The archive encompassed a wide variety of American and

international cinema; 16mm feature films from Warner Brothers, RKO, and Monogram Pictures, virtually every film released by these studios between 1931 and 1949, 1500 Vitaphone short subjects, 300 Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons from 1928 to 1949, plus movies from the Soviet Union, Taiwan, and independent filmmakers. The satisfying formal program completed, Bink and I were invited to a university professor's home for a soirée including food, drinks, and screenings of films made by university students. Strewn among the many metal and blue plastic film cans I saw one labeled *Skaterdater*, a favorite which I'd been wanting in my collection to show in the classroom. I was very tempted to 'rip it off' until Bink, acting like Pinocchio's Jiminy Cricket, became a vocal conscience and dissuaded my turning into light-fingered Louie. "It ain't gonna fit in your coat pocket or down your pants," Bink whispered in my ear as we sat on the floor along the skirting board, "without being obvious."

Bink's "down your pants" reminds me of the most creative, outstanding and simultaneously flabbergasting film screened. Before light touched the screen I was quietly asked if I thought Bink could handle a film with suggested or suggestive images. Assured actual sex organs were not shown nor was a real sex act performed, I nodded that he could. Bink had been brought up 'in the know' by his parents and, though pixie-sized, was a mature 9<sup>th</sup> grader. The confounding and confronting picture *Love*, short of anything Phineas T. Barnum ever blew out of proportion and put on display, was the greatest hoax I'd ever witnessed. No special effects in this movie, but the clever camera angles and tightly composed frames showed 'safe' body parts which, with little imagination, looked like male and female genitalia. The act of intercourse was only suggested. The soundtrack was only the natural sound of a shower.

As we drove home I asked Bink what he thought of *Love*. He'd viewed the film with the intelligence I expected he would, but admitted the bogus sex organs were a turn on and his imagination saw stuff that was never put onto the screen. That's why he said he was reluctant to stand up after the lights came on. I agreed with Bink. The images were stimulating and all our imagination had to do was fill in the blanks. The film had shown a thumb, an extreme close shot of a portion of a wiggling finger, the crease of an arm bent at the elbow, a hairy leg bent at the knee and focusing on the crease; the filmmaker had achieved ultimate pornography without ever filming anything considered sexual or pornographic.

The evening was more fun than we'd ever expected. We'd overstayed. It was going on 11:00 p.m. as Bink and I made our good-byes and left the professor's home. It was the slowest drive. Thick fog had descended making the highway dangerous. Bink curled up in the back seat and fell asleep. I wished I had his company helping me peer into a practically opaque shroud. The drive normally took under two hours and was now stretching into what seemed twice as long. The speed limit was 65 miles per hour and I could not safely exceed 25. So thick was the fog I could barely make out the white center line. Windshield wipers only made for a temporary view. Few cars approached from the opposite direction. When one did, headlights dazzled. I saw and had to brake for deer wandering along and across the highway. Some would stand immobile in the road and stare hypnotized into my headlights, their eyes glowing in the dark as if belonging to alien beings. I may have counted skittish does and bucks sporting large racks, at least 40 deer in all. I could happily eat Bambi at home, but on the highway I didn't want to run into him.

Fog kept my close company all the way to Stevens Point. I dropped off a bleary-eyed Bink at his home after 3:00 a.m. Moving as a slow tractor to the farm and I finally switched off the motor well past 3:30 a.m. Turning off the headlights, outdoor light was missing, buried in the fog. I walked up the porch stairs, opened the unlocked kitchen door, and had enough light from red embers in the round oak to make my way into the middle room. I expected everyone was asleep. Keith got up from the couch and looked at me without saying anything. I expected his silent treatment and felt like a great big ol' poop. Keith hadn't been asleep. Like an overwrought, angry parent who anticipated an earlier return home, he had been waiting up for me, worried, ready to grill me, and when he opened his mouth he wanted to know what Bink and I did and why I was so late home. I answered every question Keith asked, told him everything

he wanted to know.... and I apologized, asked his forgiveness for my being such a dumbnut. I asked Keith what he'd done to make his Mom angry. Shrugging his shoulders, he shook his head. Whatever it was, something immediate, reactionary, and without a doubt minor, for the punishment I'd dished out, I was wrong. "Oh, it's OK, Lare. I'm still your little brother, ain't I? Nothing kin change that, right?" Keith wound his arm tightly around my neck and shoulder and snarled, "And don't you ever leave me behind again."

Little did he or I know.

### Chapter 65: The Birthday Bombshell

eith's many endearing qualities included his naivety, his innocence, especially when it came to anything about sex. Reminder, this was a different era. Kids often reached puberty later than kids today. There was no such thing as easy on-line access to porn. It hadn't yet been invented. Boys got their jollies reading dog-eared pages of books like The Bramble Bush or Peyton Place, and even then description wasn't overly graphic. Getting your hands on Lady Chatterley's Lover was one literary classic passed around by friends at school, leading to adolescent look-over-your-shoulder hush-hush giggles, thanks to a passage of dialogue that uses a particularly offensive four-letter word rhyming with the surname of the man who developed and hosted "Candid Camera". I don't recall Keith's vocabulary ever including four-letter words as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. Hitting the jackpot was finding a secretly stashed or binned *Playboy* or Penthouse magazine. There was more to ogle than words. These activities hadn't yet wormed into Keith's nature. He would soon turn 15 and still hadn't had the so-called 'man to man'; you know, that animated cartoon stick-people movie stuff I had to endure when I was Keith's age; with all that drylypresented cardboard mechanics of stuff about the euphemistic 'birds and the bees.' Keith's mother had hoped I could casually crack the sensitive subject with Keith. I always felt it was better for the kid to open the subject with his own curiosity. One day as we let the horses out of the barn, sort of spur of the moment I pointed to Keith's groin and asked if he knew what his thing was for.

"Yah, peeing," was Keith's righteous reply.

Nothing followed like, "Why'd you ask?" I let the subject drop. He wasn't ready for any of those physical mechanics, and I was happy for him to hang on to his naivety for as long as he was able.

However, Keith became aware of puberty in a most disturbing and embarrassing way. Waking one morning before I did, he shook me. Emerging from under the covers I saw fear on his face.

"Lare! Larry! I'm coming apart! I'm bleeding!"

His hand trembling, he showed me his wet underpants and the wet spot on the bed sheet. I probably shouldn't have, but I couldn't help myself. Rolling out of bed I laughed, maybe a knowing giggle, and hugged Keith.

"It's OK, Keith," I said. "You're not bleeding. Look," I said pointing to the sheet. "It's not red. Congratulations!"

Keith looked at me puzzled, like I was acting silly over something he knew was really serious.

"It's all right, Keith. You've just had a wet dream. Means you're growing up. Happens to all boys eventually."

Keith looked petrified. Opportunity for the 'man to man' had been broached by nature itself. I used sensible uncomplicated language so as not to cause fear and assured Keith that what had happened at night wouldn't be his last and that he certainly wasn't falling apart at the seams.

Winter showed up ahead of a weekend between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Snow flurries were in the air from Thursday. By Friday afternoon a couple inches accumulated on the ground.

Keith, my brother Steve and I hemmed and hawed about visiting family in West Allis. They expected us. Young and brazen, after school we threw some clean clothes together and, come dusk, jumped into my Falcon wagon. Keith claimed the back seat and my brother rode shotgun. Maybe Keith wanted to revive the rearview mirror communication we enjoyed on the Appleton excursion, but my wagon wasn't a Greenbrier. Light snow fell as I drove through dirty slush on Highway 10.

Coming out of Oshkosh near Lake Winnebago, although looking like out of the middle of nowhere, flurries developed into large flakes, then what looked like falling clumps of white cotton candy. Leaning forward in my seat to see out the windshield, I switched the wipers into regular mode. By now Steve and Keith were catching some zzz's, Steve open-mouthed with his head back, Keith lying on his side stretched across the back seat. Headlights of oncoming traffic temporarily blinded vision and the snowfall added an element of strain. Highway 41 was divided with a median strip, two lanes in either direction, the odd road laid across either side of the highway as a crossover. Approaching one such crossover I looked to the opposite side of the highway at a lighted up service station. What pulled my attention from looking straight through the windscreen I don't know. Taken unawares, a car without its headlights beaming suddenly zoomed across the passing lane to the inside lane... where I was driving. Did this idiot not see me? In my peripheral vision I saw the car zoom out of the dark toward my left front fender. I called out, "Oh, shit!" and immediately swerved the wheel right, never lost speed, and rode the shoulder. Steve and Keith woke simultaneously, Steve asking loudly, "What's going on?" A dirty snowbank formed a wall immediately right of the shoulder. My tires kicked up stones, crud and chunks of snow. My maneuver avoided serious collision. "We nearly got hit," I said to Steve, simultaneously sucking in breath and gently easing the car back onto the road. "See that stupid son-of-a-bitch ahead of me?" Keith folded his arms onto the back of the front bench seat and leaned forward in between Steve and me squinting to see. "No lights. Never looked. Drove right at me," I stated. "Yah," Keith said practically under his breath, "stupid driver like Morty."

Now this was the first I heard of Morty (not his real name). We adjusted from panic mode into a relaxed state of let's-just-enjoy-the-ride. Expecting to hear a story about a drunk neighbor I asked offhandedly, "Who's Morty?" The tone of Keith's voice spoke greater volumes than his words. "Mom's new boyfriend..." Then Keith mockingly stressed the M and o, "More-Dee!" Instead of adding anything Keith muttered, "Ahhh, yuh dun' wanna know," and his voice trailed off.

So I changed the mood and gave a detailed account of the near miss, simultaneously assuring Steve and Keith that I handled the situation without ever accepting we'd end up crunched against the snowbank. I thought my training in defensive driving paid off. Always expect everyone behind the wheel is an idiot and be prepared to take evasive action.

This weekend and thereafter, of all the kids I'd brought around to visit, or all the kids my parents met on Farm the First and Farm the Second, Keith became their favorite because he had manners, because his nature was gentle. And the twins thought he was, "So cute."

Then, almost too quickly, Christmas came... and was celebrated twice. Steve and I spent the calendar holiday with our family. Compared with Thanksgiving travel, this was a safe, boring three hour drive. My father often played Santa Claus for families of his work colleagues. He wore the Santa suit Mom had sewn from red velvet and white fur and looked as convincing as any department store Santa, or the Coca Cola Claus. Dad wouldn't accept money but, a way from children's inquisitive eyes, he never turned down a couple of shots or a thank you bottle of Coronet VSQ. Most Christmas Eves my Dad was pleasantly inebriated. This year he asked if I'd like to don the red suit for a colleague's family. My only concern was my real mustache might be seen beneath Santa's curly white mustache and beard. I needn't have worried. Little kids only see what they want to see. Little believers aren't looking for a possible flaw or giveaway. I enjoyed playing jolly Santa, handing out presents, leading a chorus of "Jingle Bells", Ho-Ho Ho-ing, and accepting afterwards as thanks the bottle of Coronet VSQ.

My brother and I made it back to Stevens Point without incident. A planned second Christmas was a feast in the farm kitchen and, later, optional gift giving. Boys had been invited well in advance of the real December 25 for our Wednesday, December 30 Christmas. Any later and we'd have bumped into families celebrating New Year's. Shopping, I was just lucky. In Red Owl's post-Christmas fresh turkey sale I picked up a 21 lb. 'vulture' at a paltry 25¢ a lb. Soon after buying the gobbler I collected Keith from his home in Plover. He said he missed me and couldn't wait for our Christmas party. There he showed his brilliant smile I loved seeing. Heck, my brother and I had been away only five days. Keith's mother introduced me to her new beau Morty. Shaking his hand felt like touching wilted wet lettuce. Weedy with a walleyed orb, he dressed like a cowboy who'd just been thrown by his horse. His hair was slicked and shiny.



Steve Thompson worked daytime hours, but ahead of our special celebration he came in the evening to help cut, set up, and trim the tree. The middle room smelled of the great Wisconsin north woods with its purloined pine. Just as exciting as the real day, on December 30 the kitchen filled with delicious roasting aromas. Left is a photo of Steve Thompson with me, the ill-gotten pine tree behind us. Purpose of the snapshot was to show how tall Steve had grown; he now stood just over 6 foot.

The table was set for a dozen big eaters: my brother Steve, little brother Keith, Mike Zortman, Milton Huff, Joe Sikora, Steve Thompson, Jim Loggin, Bob Baril and his friend Rick,

a boy named Tommy one called Randy, and me.

Pictured right: Because I can't see him, I think Bob Baril took the snapshot. Pictured in front are Randy, Jim, Me, and Keith in front of me. Seated are Milton, Rick, Mike, Joe, Steve K. and Steve T. Only Tommy's arm can be seen.

Randy, one of my 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, wasn't a weekender on the farm or even an occasional visitor. Randy Jewish and was celebrated Hanukkah instead of Christmas. He and his 7<sup>th</sup> grade brother Tommy were, surprisingly, always the first kids in school to wish me a Merry Christmas. I found that fascinating. As time for the Jewish and Christian observations neared, Randy handed me a card. I thought it was a Christmas card. It was an invitation from his parents to a Hanukkah dinner, to celebrate the Festival of the Lights which occur at any time from late November to late December. I remember being



invited on a weekday in the third week in December. I recall having to find the address, not realizing Randy's parents ran a delicatessen, a shop well-stocked with imported foods from Israel, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and others in eastern and central Europe. In the day a dinner invitation meant dressing well and I did.

I was welcomed like a lost relative and Randy's father asked if I'd ever participated in a Jewish observation. It was all new to me and I welcomed the opportunity. Randy handed me a <u>yarmulke</u>, a Jewish skull cap, to wear. Candles of a candelabrum with nine branches, called a <u>menorah</u> (Hebrew for 'lamp'), were lighted. A candle at the top was used to light other candles, those set on the outer left and right first. There were eight, but I don't think they'd yet made it to the end of their festival, so all eight candles weren't lit. Blessings were chanted by Randy's father and, candles lit, psalms were recited. After candle lighting it was customary to play or spin the <u>dreidel</u>, a four-sided spinning top. I'd heard about the <u>dreidel</u>, but this was the first time I handled the toy along with the boys. Keeping to tradition, they each received a small gift. Randy's father said to me after touching his nose with his upraised index finger, "Your turn is coming. Be patient." The custom was eating foods fried or baked in olive oil to commemorate the miracle of a small flask of oil keeping the Second Temple's Menorah alight for eight days. We had potato pancakes, in Yiddish <u>latkes</u>. Jam-filled doughnuts followed and these I knew. They're <u>paczki</u> in Polish, in Yiddish <u>pontshkes</u>, filled with the traditional strawberry jam.

After the meal, Randy's father beckoned me to follow him into the shop. Fluorescent lights flickered on. Randy's father said, "My boys like you," as he put a loaf of bread and bagels into a brown shopping bag. "Here is cheese you will like. Pastrami? Of course, some pastrami. Kosher dills? And herring... you must take home herring." Then he picked an item saying, "You like the caviar?" I nodded and he showed me the container before dropping it into the bag. It wasn't the usual lumpfish or salmon roe. The lid read Beluga. Giving me Beluga was like handing me Russian gold! "Take. Enjoy," and he repeated, "My boys... they like you."

I had been invited to participate in a Jewish dinner and ceremony and Randy's father was much too generous. To show my gratitude I felt I needed to do something and asked if it was all right for Randy to come to my Christmas feast. It was agreed. December 30 the family drove to the farm and enjoyed my two-bit tour of the house. Inside the barn they hand-fed horses and stroked their noses before leaving Randy with us.

A gift and a card arrived in the mail from Utah. I saved Jim's card. Against a red background it showed a smiling Snoopy sitting atop his doghouse with the caption, "It's Nice to Have Friends." Inside, "Like You. Merry Christmas." In Jim's handwriting, "Though the miles grow greater, the spirit grows stronger. And I will be with you as you journey & enrich your knowledge with new experiences. All my love forever Lare - Your buddy, Jim."

Winter was cruel. Overnight temperatures plummeted to -40°F and more after blizzards buried everything but tall trees in two feet of snow. Cold enough to freeze a brass monkey, they were our three dog nights. The School Board declared snow days and we welcomed being snowbound. In one stretch we holed up in the farmhouse stoking the kitchen Round Oak three long days.

First priority for county snowplows was clearing major highways and thoroughfares. Secondary roads, the rural kind we lived along, came somewhere down the list. Last of all were private driveways. We paid a subscription for the service, but never knew for certain when we'd see the plow. It seemed our three quarter mile long driveway was always the bottom basement of county plowing. When a lone snowplow arrived, from the porch we clapped and cheered it through, and then bundled up in winter gear to hand shovel our cars out of piled, drifted snow. Pictured right, Steve digging our cars out after the plow came through and built a snowbank.



Pictured right, Kluski enjoyed the snow. The plow always left a two to three foot hump of dirty brown snow at the driveway mouth.

I could have become a statistic of hypothermia had Keith not wandered up the driveway to see why I'd been taking so long to move the snowplow's wall. I'd been shoveling ice-hardened, packed snow and grew tired and overheated. I lowered myself onto a snowbank to catch my breath. Keith found me nodded off. He shook me awake. When I became aware, the thought of my foolishness frightened me to the point of never wanting to shovel snow again, ever.

Actual temperature reading combined with wind chill sometimes gave us a forecast more suited to



the North Pole. Numbers tumbled at night into the minuses for a reading of, let's say, -45°F. Blizzards driven by fierce wind and the chill factor bottomed out the temperature for a guesstimated -75°F. Unbelievable that human beings subjected to such an extreme can be around later to talk about it. We managed to keep indoor water flow by letting our kitchen and bathroom taps drip, as well as taking steps earlier to wrap and tape insulation paper around pipes. We'd snuggle through an overnight snowstorm and as the sun heralded the morning, a daytime temperature high might only scrape to -30°F. Ignoring temperatures, with or without wind chill, we had no option but to bundle up, keep warm, and dig out cars from snow piles and shovel clear the driveway access.

Often our shoveling was a communal effort wherein the four, sometimes five of us pitched in: Fat Scotty, my brother Steve, little brother Keith, me, and 'sometimes' Steve Thompson. It was sooooo cooold, I guess the saying is, "You had to be there to shake hands with the brass monkey." Unless you've experienced freezing temperatures and raw sandpapering-your-cheeks air, you can't really comprehend its effect. Against the wind we'd wield a shovel twenty or so minutes, dash into the kitchen to warm faces, fingers and toes, then return to the snowbank and hack away twenty minutes more. When we'd finished the chore we'd strip off our cold, sometimes wet clothes and 'hug' the Round Oak. We'd drape shirts and pants over a clothesline strung across the kitchen. If we felt silly enough, we danced in place before the Round Oak thawing pins and needles. We laughed and we survived.

Not so fortunate was the colt. Daily we high-stepped through knee-deep snow across the corral to the barn door and opened it shoveling or whisking with gloved hand the drift snow at its base. Overnight, those plastic sheets Steve had nailed over window frames hadn't held together. Driving winds shredded the plastic protectors and stormed unimpaired through open air frames. Of course we hadn't noticed it happened. The polar blast caused a wind chill factor below -70°F and little Apple froze to death. Maudie and Goober had more stamina, I guess, and Goober would have certainly lay down in his stall's hay. Hindsight suggests I should have brought Apple into the house, stabled him in the large, unused, closed-off front living room. We could have lit the Round Oak in there and kept the colt warm. We didn't know.

Calling Steve Thompson to tell him news we'd not bargained for was painful. It wasn't easy my getting out the words. Apple was Steve's horse and I really felt I'd let him down.

Steve's mother drove him to the farm. Sadness shown in Steve's eyes as he stared down at Apple's frozen body. Together we lifted the corpse and carried it to my station wagon. He'd died and froze into a somewhat fetal position, but his head was slightly raised, mouth partly opened, and his teeth made a discomforting grimace. The colt fit into the back of my wagon without having to fold down the back seat. I said that, unfortunately, we couldn't bury Apple on the farm. The ground was too hard for pick and shovel. Fat Scotty chose his words with care.

He didn't want his suggestion to come across as dismissive. "We can, uh, take the body to the garbage dump, maybe find some place decent to lay him to rest?"

We five piled into the car, this time Keith choosing the front bench seat beside me, and in the middle with my brother seated on his right. Long-legged Steve and Fat Scotty had plenty of room in the rear seat. As we drove to the dump, I glanced in the rearview mirror and saw Steve looking over his shoulder at his dead colt, as if assuring this was real and not a bad dream.

Garbage wasn't routinely collected from the farm as it was in town. We were familiar with the town dump. Weekly or so we took in our own bags of garbage. We knew the grizzled man who greeted us many times before at the gate. "Hey ya," he said in his typical welcome. "Watchye got?" I told him what we'd brought. His face collapsed into farcical disbelief. Permission to dispose of the colt's body was granted providing it was placed onto the fire at the bottom of the pit. The fire was in a hollow, the plan of the dump not unlike the layout of an amphitheater. The colt's body was lifted from the back of the station wagon and, as if we were undertakers, carried most solemnly to the crest of an iced track leading down to the fire. Lowered head first onto the track, the plan was to see him slide. Steve gave his colt a good push. It skidded a few feet before turning sideways and lodging against frozen dirt clumps. The little horse's mouth gaped in a laugh as though it had just participated in a sick joke with a predictably groan-worthy punchline, and the joke was on us. Nothing up our sleeves, we stood and stared. Without a care Steve lunged headfirst at the carcass. Inertia and slick ice took over and propelled him ever so fast down into the pit of hell while Steve still clung tightly to the rump of his colt. It wasn't how anyone wanted it, but the colt was delivered as directed.

Solemnity was tossed to the four winds. Steve climbed clumsily up from the flames along the edge of the track. He grasped and grabbed at anything to give him a foothold. "That wasn't supposed to happen," Steve said as unemotionally dignified as possible. We laughed till tears ran down our ruddy cheeks.

More snow came down in January. A wall of fallen and plowed snow bordered one side of the driveway. In places it piled high to eleven feet!







Keith and my brother Steve.

As long as roads were plowed and open, an indoor winter indulgence was playing cards. Once a month, usually on a Friday, five, maybe six Ben Franklin staff gathered at one or the others' homes for an evening of beer, junk food, and Sheepshead, a trick-taking card game with skills requiring card counting and tactics. Not surprisingly, the game of Sheepshead isn't well known outside of Wisconsin. Explaining the rules and play can be rather complicated and so I won't go into them.

Five played the game and, if there was sixth, he'd deal and sit out the hand. The five whose names I remember included Gerry, Bob, Don, Dan the Mouth, and Robert who, for reasons forgotten, we'd nicknamed Zelmo. We rotated home venues for card nights. We played for nickels, drank Point beer and Canadian Club whiskey, munched pretzels and crunchy potato chips. Dan the Mouth always asked for sandwiches. Sandwiches became a running joke. I remember once handing him a couple of buttered bread slices filled with pretzels. He ate it. We never gossiped about other staff, the kids we taught, our perceived failings of department heads or administration. Sheepshead was our great escape from the toil and drudge of anything school.

Keith knew how to play Sheepshead, but when the venue was my farm it was men's night. He'd disappear into the middle room and do homework or watch TV. If he thought I wasn't looking he'd sneak a beer. I knew Keith did, but turned a blind eye. As card night wore on, Keith made his goodnights and plodded off to bed ignoring the whoops and hollers accompanying a winning hand, our fun-time noise carrying often until one in the morning.

Also good to alleviate cabin fever was weekly bowling. There was one night I hadn't anticipated. Don Severson was captain of his team playing for the league championship. He was desperate for a substitute. A regular bowler was bedridden, had unfortunately come down with every imaginable body ache found in the flu. Each of Don's team members had the required 165 minimum average. As far as Don was concerned, even with my less-than-spectacular 145 average, I was a bowler and I was available. He asked. I accepted.

Turning up to the bowling alley with Keith in tow, I felt terribly inadequate. Everyone I saw on Don's team owned their ball, wore wrist masters, carried sweat towels, and had custom-fit bowling shoes. There I was going through the racks to find my favorite ball and having to pay to wear Lysol-disinfected house shoes. Sweat towel? I thought that's why a handkerchief was in my back pocket. I didn't wear a team shirt, didn't have one, so I looked like a sub, a sure-enough outsider. There were quick introductions and hand-shakes during warm-up. Then Don told me on the quiet he lied to the league's executive officer and his team members about my average to get me in as a sub. Pressure was on me to perform.

Stress and tension worked as motivation, same as a cowboy's spurs make a horse rise. I didn't choke. I scored like I'd never before bowled. I was charged with adrenalin. My ball was a honey. As others on the team knocked down great numbers of pins, I followed through and achieved. Never on my regular team, different league of course, had anyone called out to me, "Powerhouse" or "Snowplow" after delivering a strong ball that strikes. Also new was hearing I'd made a Spiller, a light-hit strike. It didn't matter how I hit 'em, as long as the pins fell over. Over one game I went all the way finishing with solid strikes. It was a 260-something score, a pinfall I've never again matched or exceeded. This was serious bowling and I rose to the occasion. I came through. Don's team won the championship. In praise, guys slapped my back and bought me beers. Should I mention the guy in bed with flu still received the individual trophy?



Instead of playing pinball games with the dimes I'd handed Keith, he'd been right behind me, encouraging my every delivery, his body language going through the same motions as mine, cheering me on, and collecting a rewarding wink of the eye from Don. If no one else ever did, Don knew Keith and I were right for each other. He knew that our being together meant positive growth, positive result. I will always hold Don's awareness in highest regard.

Keith's birthday fell on Tuesday, February 9. He turned 15. Keith is pictured left holding his fancy store-bought cake.



Pictured left is big brother me and little brother Keith. Both pictures were snapped before we went out to celebrate. As can be seen, I'm wearing a tie, my teacher's uniform, so to speak. We all dressed in our finest threads, as was the custom for going out in those days.

Morty went all out to impress as he treated Keith, his mother, and me to a lavish three-course dinner at the Wisconsin Rapids Inn, a 20 minute drive from Keith's home in Plover. Morty asked me to chauffer. Perhaps he thought we'd look more classy in my station wagon than in his faded-paint pick-up truck, but common sense should have said we'd be more comfortable in a clean car with front and back bench seats.

We-l-l-l-l, Morty looked like he'd soaked the better part of the day in bubble-bath scrubbing with a toilet brush. Brylcream made this cow kicker's hair all slicked back and shiny. Close-shaved, he looked like he still sported Richard Nixon's face carpet. He was the picture of ill-fitting new clothes bought with the intention of growing into them, or for shrinkage in a hot water wash. He was Hollywood's celluloid image of the out-of-place country hick going to the town's Saturday night cotillion in his off-the-rack, red-checked flannel shirt, bolo tie, straight-legged Levi denims, and spit polish cowboy boots.

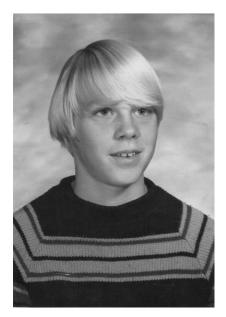
The dinner was all niceties until dessert. As if a fuse had been secretly lit, I felt Morty's motive for a dress-up dinner went beyond honoring Keith's birthday and a bombshell was about to be dropped. Morty announced his intention to marry Keith's mother someday soon. Someday. Soon. You should have seen Keith's face. It was all news to him. Then Morty lifted an empty glass, toasted the air, and declared he was carting the whole family off to Australia. My heart dropped into my stomach. Mouth agape, head moving slowly indicating no, Keith had been blindsided. Morty elaborated, said he intended working as a carpenter in the home building industry, that income would exceed a thousand dollars a week. He'd live in a rent-free company-provided house, drive a company car and have all his gas paid for. "Australia," he claimed, "was the land of opportunity. Streets were paved with gold."

I'd no idea where this guy, a casual bartender, found his information.

Morty looked and pointed the empty glass at me using it like a meaningless prop. "Of course when summer comes," he continued as if on a winning streak, "we could send you a ticket to come visit. Stay the three months from June to August." Then he turned to Keith and stated ever so smart-alecky, "You'd like that, wouldn't you Keith."

# Chapter 66: Separation

ou'd have to have been blind not to see Keith's countenance of loss. His eyes were like a frightened fawn stunned in the headlights of an approaching automobile. As the auto might pass the fawn, so the sparkle in Keith's bright blue eyes gradually melted into shallow pools of gray. What started as smiling and laughing, the happiest celebration of a birthday, turned into his worst ever party, a day he'd not likely lock into his library of devil-may-care thoughts. Morty may as well have physically rammed whole cold boiled tripe down Keith's throat instead of luring him with a juicy prime rib. I had also been made uncomfortable. To the edge of queasiness I stifled the lobster tail in my stomach from going all anti-peristaltic over the Inn's carpet. I felt the color in my cheeks had faded. Morty's ill-timed alacrity wouldn't go unchallenged, nor would I allow myself to step blindly into Morty's trap. I genuinely felt Morty's proclamation was a bucket with a hole. It held no water. I was unconvinced by Morty's blather. It was a ploy to erase Keith from my life. Keith's naivety, on the other hand, may have been sufficient for Morty to thrust inroads of doubt, to meddle in Keith's innocent thinking.



The long silence at the dinner table lingered. Long forgotten was Keith's school picture he'd given to me at his home for his birthday. On the back he'd written, "To my Bestest Buddie to whom I learned to love like a brother, Keith." The new pair of pants I gave Keith for his birthday came in second place to his giving me his school photo, pictured left. Thankfully Keith's mother broke the silence. She mentioned I might want to look into teaching in Australia so I could still be near Keith. Nothing firm had been offered about where on that island continent they planned to settle. Sidney? That was the only Australian city's name I knew.

Seated stiffly upright, Keith hadn't moved, as if he'd been posed preposterously by a painter. "OK," I said calmly and ever so spur of the moment. It appeared the baton had been passed and now it was my turn to make some kind of announcement, anything to downplay Morty's pie-in-the-sky. "I'll look into teaching in Australia."

Whether Morty and Keith's mother had something going way back in October when she'd said to me, "If you want him, you can have him," I wouldn't know, never asked. Now, following the disastrous birthday dinner, Keith spent fewer weekdays and most or all of a weekend at home doing chores for his mother and her cock-eyed boyfriend. When asked to come around to take Keith to the farm, his mother always reported that Keith performed duties without enthusiasm, neglected to complete assigned jobs, especially ones set by Morty. I said she should expect nothing else. Keith's a teenager and it's his wont to avoid doing any work set by a parent. She had other kids perfectly capable of working in and around the house; one was Keith's older brother, so why all of a sudden must Keith do jobs because Morty decides to set them? I kept my opinion to myself. Of course I didn't tell her how well Keith behaved on the farm, how he did whatever I asked whenever I asked, how he never talked back and never said no.

Keith's time away from life on the farm resulted in lesser communication. The angelic teasing smile disappeared. Keith's lips came together tighter than a barnacle to a rock. Although not expressed nor discussed, through Keith's actions or lack of them, I became aware of a greeneyed tug-of-war between Morty and myself for Keith's respect and affection. It didn't cause me sleepless nights. Keith had made it pretty plain and to the point how he felt about me, so it must have more so irked Morty. I'm sure in his home Keith would have interjected with things like, "Lare says..." or "When Lare does..." Never an overt battle, nothing ever coming to words or loaded for bear, it was tacit fomenting undercurrent. In Keith's eyes I was his big brother, as pure and as simple as that. He wanted to be with me, but Keith also needed to preserve harmony in his own home. To keep his mother happy, he had to appease the country-western Morty. Keith was confused about where his loyalties lie. He was being torn between two people who cared about him for altogether different reasons. Whether I made the right decision or not, I trod carefully so I wouldn't upset the proverbial applecart.

In his busy home, when it came to homework, Keith had too many distractions. Homework was neglected or completed without quality. How did I know that? Don Severson had engineered Keith's transfer from his English class into mine. Once in my class I should have told Keith then I had to be a different person and put on my teacher face and attitude.

How a loving relationship turned into silent neglect was a mystery, but it happened. A deep freeze between us had reached Oymyakon<sup>1</sup> proportions and it turned into a too-long-for-comfort period. At times we deliberately didn't acknowledge each other at school. There'd be a surreptitious side-glance, but nothing long enough to allow eyes to meet. We'd become fearful of each other, were afraid of having to stop and talk. We didn't know what to say, anxious over possibly asking ourselves, "Why'd he have to say that?" The hardest thing was seeing Keith in my classroom day after day, and nothing happening, like we'd become invisible to each other. Neither of us was willing, perhaps unable to make a move to find out why we'd become estranged. In hindsight I'd say Morty succeeded in twisting Keith's mind to question 'why should I bother continuing Larry's friendship when we're gonna pack up soon and disappear forever to the other side of the world?'

Adding insult to personal injury, school department heads, and those who imagined they were, only ever listened to my suggestions with a grain of salt. Mostly it was in one ear and out the other; proof there was nothing in-between to oppose bumpage! My opinions and ideas weren't valued. I think the snouts expected the Film/Mass Media unit I proposed to collapse in a heap, like my attempt at Film Appreciation, as if they were setting me up for failure just to teach me a lesson.

Mrs. Know-It-All's stale tried-and-true was invariably steamrolled through with nods of approval from the vacuous Bonerski, the ultra-conservative Miss Priss (not her real name), gin-soaked Miss Pamela (not her real name), and spaced-out Miss Hippie-Go-Lucky (not her real name). Don Severson pursed his lips and shook his head in dismay, but he never challenged Mrs. Know-It-All. Why? Well, I can't get into his head, so I can't speculate. I, on the other hand, did challenge. I stated frankly her proposal wouldn't work and gave reasons why it would fall apart. In one ear and out the other! My third year teaching and I was still regarded as that young punk freshman, greener than green. I was never going to outgrow being the new kid on the block. I was expected to tow the line and, furthermore, march to the drum of our revered matriarch. No one admitted I had ideas. And when Mrs. Know-It-All's plan disintegrated into failure, I enjoyed smarmily saying, "I told you so."

My proposed unit in Film and Mass Media, an off-shoot experiment within the English curriculum, was feebly approved. No budget, no monies were allocated. It was wholly my responsibility to develop the project and make it work. I drove alone to the TV stations in Wausau where, from previous TV commercial engagements, meetings, and as you might remember the odd live performance or film screening, I knew people. Today those studios would look like museum displays. If not live, TV commercials, programs, and movies in 1971 were on 16mm optical sound

.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Oymyakon is the coldest permanently inhabited place on earth. It's in the Arctic Circle's Northern Pole of Cold where, in 1933, it recorded its lowest temperature of minus 153.86°F.

safety film. Broadcast studios were rooms filled with 16mm Bell & Howell projectors. Technical people were kept hopping threading projectors and setting each one's frame for perfect countdown to scheduled air time. Above studio rooms were open shelve storage stocked with film cans, suggesting someone located a specific title and dropped the can into the studio for another technician to catch. For classroom lessons I went begging for superseded commercials and Public Service Announcements (PSAs).

At two stations I was lead to an attic, a room adjacent storage shelves where cardboard boxes were stashed and overflowing with 50' and 100' plastic reels holding advertisements or PSAs. I could help myself gratis to however many I wanted. Luckily, every reel was clearly labeled with the company which made the spot, title, brief content description, running time, and whether in color or black & white. There were innumerable duplicates and I understood why. Projector gates can scratch films. So can tightly winding or cinching a reel. Films with visual scratch damage shouldn't normally be used for transmission. I picked through scads of titles. Based on product name and brief description, I grabbed more than was necessary, including duplicates for luck, and hoped for usable classroom content. The stations were supposed to return the TV spots to the distributors, but boxes were mostly dumped as garbage. Automobile ads included Ford, Chevrolet, Dodge. More. Cigarettes included Camel, Chesterfield, Lucky Strike. More. Products from Palmolive, Revlon, Colgate, Tide. More. In fact, more than I'm able to name.

Picking through reels in dozens of unsorted boxes was wearying, but I had more than I ever needed for free. Choosing commercials wasn't the end. I borrowed a projector from school so I could watch and assess each and every spot. 30 seconds here. 60 seconds there. Add more time for threading and rewinding than watching and evaluating. I got through hundreds. My brother enjoyed looking at the ads with me, even made suggestions as to how I could use some in lessons. If nothing else, I knew that with the passing of time these TV ads and PSAs would become collector's items.

Putting a lesson together meant having to splice commercials together. Think about it. That's mental and physical work all in hope of it coming together for the students for a successful classroom experience. It also involved writing the lesson plans for submission to the powers-that-be before permission was granted to use the material in the classroom. I often felt frustrated with too many things to do and not enough time to finish. Plus there was a lack of administrative support to see my plans through, as if a new film and media course was given to me just to shut me up. Failure wasn't in my playbook. I'd show them a thing or two.

As well as planning classroom curriculum and content, I thought about the kids in film club. My participation in film workshops prompted paperwork in triplicate to organize a Saturday workshop. Local talent would keep costs down. My coup de grace would be securing the services of Harold Lloyd hosting a session wherein he would show one or more of his films or a film compilation and talk about his experiences making his thrill pictures. Expecting he'd remember our 1966 meeting, I wrote to Mr. Lloyd and hoped he'd respond positively without asking an enormous fee.

February wasn't kind to Principal Oelke. Rumor was he might be required to give up the reins at Ben Franklin. As soon as the March lion roared in he was scheduled for open heart surgery. An artery stopped working and was to be replaced with a plastic tube. Our thinking then involved a length of plastic tube, like we might see pumping air in a fish aquarium. Heart surgery was Frankenstein medicine, pretty scary stuff then. The stent we're so familiar with today wouldn't be used until 1986. The story going around was that Oelke's heart worked at barely 50% capacity.

Late in February the weather was strange. School was dismissed early Monday, February 22, for an unexpected blizzard. Ahead of dismissal, Keith hadn't shown up for school. Late in the day my brother and I shoveled out our cars and the dirty driveway wall. Plows must have stayed ahead of snow accumulation and moved fast on the major roads to get to our secondary road so soon. There'd

been no radio announcement of Tuesday school closure. Instead of a blast of Arctic air following on from the blizzard, it turned warm and sunny. Had we known, we could have left shovels idle. Old snow remained but blizzard snow melted. Friday afternoon, accompanied with blinding lightning and nerve-jolting thunder, it rained. I didn't know road conditions from De Forest, Illinois, but from Friday evening I had weekenders in Roger and Brad. They asked why Keith wasn't on the farm. I didn't have an answer for them. What happened overnight transformed the farm into an ice palace wonderland making walking dicey and driving dangerous. The rain froze. Every branch of every bush and tree wore a coat of shiny transparent ice.





My brother Steve and me in icy wonderland

Roger with Kluski, Brad, and Steve in icy winter land

Following the extraordinary botching of Keith's birthday dinner, my parents expressed concern for Keith. I said they shouldn't worry. There was too much uncertainty about when his mother and Morty departed for Australia. Her children wouldn't accompany them. They'd stay with her mother in Michigan, but that Keith would be better off staying in Steven Point. Nothing tinged of definite. But what had Keith's mother meant about Keith being better off staying in Stevens Point? Was I to be included, or not?

In the meantime, I followed through with my counter announcement and investigated teaching in Australia. My initial step was writing an inquiry to the Australian Embassy in New York.

Maybe four or five weeks passed since Keith's birthday and still nothing was forthcoming about Australia. At last, at the end of an ordinary school day Keith deliberately missed his bus. He'd taken the initiative and hung around long enough to ask why I'd been ignoring him. He caught me off guard as I walked from my office to an exit door. Keith asked why I never called. Why didn't I bother asking him to come to the farm? Keith dogged my steps. Was it pride, anger, fear, hurt, heartache or all the aforementioned which kept my lips tight? I hadn't realized my behavior was plain old arrogant ignorance.

Instead of unlocking the driver's door, I unlocked the passenger side, Keith at my heels like a lost puppy, and told him to get inside. "Uh, uh," Keith uttered. He shook his head and refused, said he wanted answers first. In a loud voice he demanded answers.

We attracted attention from passersby, teachers and students. In my well-rehearsed teacher-in-control voice I ordered Keith into the car. "You can have all the answers you want. Now get in." Keith slid into the passenger seat and closed the door. I got in behind the wheel. We turned heads to face each

other and stared, our eyes meeting for the first time since his birthday, and we looked into one another as we before hadn't.

I was agitated but spoke in monotone, "Why do you hate me Keith," the words trickling along the dashboard without bounce.

Keith looked at me with that same paralyzed expression last seen at the birthday table following Morty's proclamation. Keith swallowed nothing in particular. "I don't," Keith replied, and then equally as agitated asked, "How come you hate me?"

There was pause. Both disarmed, we couldn't imagine hearing the hate word tripping off our lips. It was empty-headedness raised atop its ugly neck. Using voice was difficult. Choosing words even more complicated. Following each utterance was unbearable speechlessness.

"Keith, you're my little brother. How could I ever hate you?"

"You're my big brother, Lare, my choice. I can't hate you."

"Don't get out of the car," I said. "I'm taking you home."

You'd think some casual conversation might have happened, but we'd been apart too long. It was as if we didn't know what to say because it might come out all wrong and unintentionally hurtful.

I parked in the driveway. Keith got out and slammed the door shut. Its sound felt like we'd backslid to square one. Keith walked past the house door and strode to the pond at the back of the property. Keith's mother stuck her head out the door and asked if anything was wrong. Following Keith to the pond, I just shrugged.

He squatted at the edge, tossed a stone and gazed at the ever-widening circles. I squatted beside Keith and imitated his game. We watched the circles from our stones bump and mix in chaotic pattern. We tossed pebbles simultaneously, this time Keith adding a breathy giggle. The pebbles plopped into the water and one echo-like series of circles radiated from impact.

"There, Keith, there we are. Keith, those circles moving outward together... That's us. Together."

Studying the circles, Keith stayed silent. I observed some ducks flying overhead. Reeds swayed slightly in a listless breeze.

"So how come you don' wanna talk to me anymore," Keith finally said, his gaze unmoved from the pond circles practically disappeared.

"I don't know," I replied. "Maybe we're just being stupid."

Keith drank in the miserable thought.

"Did we ever have a problem," I asked.

"No," Keith answered emphatically. He looked at me as if trying to read my reaction. Satisfied with whatever he saw in my eyes, he stood, "I wanna go home with you. Right now! O.K.?"

I opened the screen door and, calling to Keith's mother, said I was taking Keith home with me. It was Friday. Keith's mother came to the door wearing a smile, "You know he's been absolutely miserable." I could have blurted out a bunch of stuff and it would have had the odor of wind coming off an onion field. But I kept my opinion to myself. She added I shouldn't worry about any special time to bring him back. She'd tell Morty that Keith was busy for the weekend.

It had to have been another weekend when I wasn't told plans. Fat Scotty and my brother disappeared to visit out-of-town friends. Their cars weren't parked at the porch. No sooner we'd walked into the kitchen Keith asked what I had to drink. An extraordinary request, a question I'd not heard until now. Except for the Sheepshead night when he'd surreptitiously snuck a beer, never before had Keith ever asked for anything alcoholic. Made me wonder from where it came, but I doubted I needed three guesses.

"I've never been drunk, Larry," Keith said like it was news to me. "I want to get drunk!"

"Whatever for," I asked.

Keith looked into me. Heartache was in his words, "Unless I get drunk, I can't tell you anything."

All I had was a magnum of Sake, Japanese rice wine, and a gift from Bob Baril. It sat alone for months on a kitchen shelf. Keith grabbed it, unscrewed the cap, and with wild-eyed enthusiasm filled a water glass. He drained it without coming up for air. He filled the glass again. As he put it to his mouth, I took hold of his wrist.

"You wanna kill yourself drinking so fast?" Keith jerked his arm from my grip, Sake sloshing out his glass onto the linoleum. By rights I should have snatched it away. Curious about alcohol loosening his tongue, what was Keith going to tell me? "Please, Keith. Take it easy. Maybe, uh, try to enjoy the stuff?"

He made the second glassful last longer, sipping occasionally, yet not finishing, but that first drink he'd gulped went quickly to his head. Unused to alcohol, Keith needed less than what he'd already imbibed to become uncoordinated. His speech was slurred.

Normally Keith pressed the TV's on button. This evening he punched it and, moving as on two left feet, tripped backwards and toppled onto the foam cushion we kept in the middle room as floor furniture. He giggled. Forgetting about unbuttoning his flannel shirt, he tore it over his head, turned onto his bare stomach, and told me to rub his back while he sucked at the glass of Sake. Back and shoulder muscles were constricted and the alcohol loosened Keith's locked tongue.

"I hate him, Larry. Absolutely, totally hate him."

The glass of Saki finished, Keith babbled. There wasn't a need to ask questions or coax thoughts. He was prone, his face buried in the foam cover and he cried.

"I hate Morty. I hate 'im, hate 'im. Hate 'im."

Keith rocked back and forth on his stomach and thrashed his arms, fists sparring in the air. I wanted to calm him by sitting on the foam mattress beside him, but I just got in the way. Keith poured out long-held emotions. "I hate Morty in my house." His voice sounded sallow, "He took you away from me."

It wasn't easy following his unconnected train of thought. He shook off from his chest more than Morty. His unsteady finger emphasized, "Whatever you do, don't ever call me Moosehead! Got it? Never... call me... Moosehead!"

We were gripped in faraway pause until ever so quietly I heard, "... big... brother... I... love... you." Non-descript sounds from the television were all that broke the silence. He was asleep. I watched whatever-it-was the television coldly transmitted. Little time passed before Keith burbled without noticeable movement. I became painfully aware he'd thrown up. My first thought was of W. C. Fields choking to death Christmas Eve on his own vomit. I made sure Keith's mouth was clean and his air passage clear. I put a bucket under his chin and helped Keith vomit some more, get it all out.

It was obvious he hadn't eaten. I used a damp washcloth to clean Keith, the mattress, the carpet. I emptied and rinsed the bucket, in the process dry-retching from the stale Sake stench.

Keith's shirt lay crumpled on the floor. It wasn't easy, in fact it was ungainly, but I lifted him, his dead weight perhaps 20 pounds less than mine, and carried him to bed. Fearing he might still burp up and choke, I laid him on his side, almost stomach down on the bed and pulled the cover over his bare shoulder. I placed the bucket on the floor near his head and sat on the edge of the bed with him. All night I listened to his regular deep breathing. I don't think I cat-napped.

Keith woke with the breaking of dawn. He smiled that silly loving grin of his, tossed his blonde hair, and asked almost too enthusiastically, "Did I get drunk last night?" Apparently he remembered nothing past chugging his first glass of Sake.

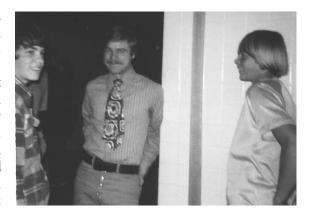
"Did you get drunk last night," I howled. "Kid, you don't know what I've gone through with you last night. Don't you remember anything?"

Keith suffered no hangover, no ill effects from the Sake. His mind was clear, his body strong. "Nope," Keith said from behind his smile, "Only remember saying what I thought of Morty. An' I told you what I thought of you... But did I get drunk last night?"

If Keith remembered what he said, or if he remembered what he'd planned on saying, to this day, I cannot drink Sake. My stomach churns even catching a sideways whiff of it.

Separation had played havoc with Keith's performance in my English class. His work was below standard and not because he didn't understand the material. Throughout the silence, maybe because he wasn't motivated, he'd made minimal effort. Work submitted amounted to chicken scratching on crumpled paper. One day all Keith showed me was an empty hand and his teasing grin. Report cards came out and Keith failed the term of English. Of course it was my fault he'd failed. Hadn't I realized I had to give my little brother a pass? Although stunned, I explained that in my classroom, every child was equal. I couldn't play favorites. Assessing performance, I had to be objective. A student got marked on what they earned. No gifts. No punishments. It probably was my fault that I'd not taken time to explain to Keith how I had to be a different person in the classroom and someone else away from it. Keith made the discovery the hard way; difference was not only possible, but inevitable.

Separation healed, Keith approached second term English with a mature attitude and a determination to prove he could be a passing student. He must also have wanted to prove to himself, and to me, that he knew and understood the two people his best friend had to be. I'm guessing here that he wanted to show he could handle both of my roles, teacher and big brother, with two roles of his own, student and little brother. English electives were offered and Keith chose the unit in Poetry I was scheduled to teach. Pictured right Jim Loggin and Keith with me standing in my classroom doorway. Check out my fashionable wide tie and button fly.



Monday, March 8, eating breakfast before school, we had the Stevens Point radio station tuned to the news, "Harold Lloyd, 78, silent screen star famous for his thrill pictures, died today. The United States has lost an outstanding citizen. Motion pictures have lost a great comedian." We stopped chewing crunchy toast. Whatever came next was lost in the trickling away of the newscaster's matter-of-fact delivery. Harold Lloyd was dead. Not to come across as selfish, but I now understood why there'd been no reply to my letter.

That morning I asked in the English head's office if anyone heard the news about Harold Lloyd. No one had, so I told them what was on the radio. "I'm not going through with the film workshop," I said. "Without Harold Lloyd, there's no workshop."

On Friday, March 12, I signed a new teacher's contract for the term of 9½ months in the sum of \$3628.80 for the period of August 23, 1971 to December 31, 1971, and to the sum of \$4435.20 for the period of January 1, 1972 to May 30, 1972. A new provision stated, "This contract will be superseded by any agreement reached between the Stevens Point Board of Education and the exclusive representatives of the SPAEA" (Stevens Point Area Education Association, a union). Negotiations were still in progress for a pay hike when the contracts were issued.

Looking back to Keith's birthday, I'd said then I'd look into teaching in Australia. Now I wondered if I'd performed like an acrobatic politician who opened mouth and inserted foot. A reply was long in coming from the Australian Embassy. A puny 3x5 envelope arrived. I didn't expect to find details. Instead of answers to questions, I was palmed off to the Australian Consulate in Chicago, as if the Embassy was busy with more important things and was passing the buck to someone else. For all I'd asked the Embassy in New York, I now read in their letter 'more homework in writing the Chicago Consulate.' I set the typewriter on the kitchen table and asked the same question to the Consulate I'd asked of the Embassy. What was available for teachers in Australia?

The following week I received a letter from Jim. He wanted to know how things were around school without Oelke and asked about my new film unit. He wrote,



"I've been keeping busy in my usual way – school and work. I ended up with a couple of  $\underline{B}s$ , a  $\underline{C}$  & an  $\underline{A}$ . Enclosed is a picture of my motorcycle."

The motorcycle is pictured left.

Just as I'd complained earlier about time, Jim wrote,

"It seems like there is just too little time to do everything you want to.

"Take care of yourself - lots of love always, Jim."

How I wanted to see Jim! Phone calls and letters were all we had. Better than nothing, sure, but there was always too much to do and never enough time to get everything done. That had to be remedied and Easter was ahead.

# Chapter 67: The Land of Brigham Young

sister Mary Fatima was my 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at St. Aloysius. Not only had she taken time during a reading period to sketch my portrait, which I still have today, she was a subjects' Jacks-of-all-trade within a syllabus wherein she taught us Geography. We learned about North and South America, most countries in Europe, the ones in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, but the country she made entirely interesting and which intrigued me most was Australia. It was a whole continent on one big island and the people spoke English. Yet today, other than what was just mentioned, I can't recall a single thing she specifically said or showed that made Australia so interesting. As a 12 year old, right then and there, I'd decided that someday I'd go to Australia, and I wasn't afraid to tell my classmates about my dream.

Part dream or fantasy, part teenage foolishness, whenever our family visited some historical site like Abraham Lincoln's birthplace in Salem, Illinois, a state park like Kettle Moraine, someplace where tourists and visitors converged like Wisconsin's Holy Hill, if there happened to be a guest book, I signed my name. In the blank space for 'address' or 'county' I always wrote 'Sydney, Australia.' I'd no reason for doing that, other than to never ignore Australia as some persistent nudge in a deep recess of my brain.

My job at Ben Franklin Jr. High provided many bonuses, especially when teaching English to 9<sup>th</sup> graders. I was always surprised at how most of the kids were cooperative and wanted to learn. I sometimes had the co-called slow learners stuck in my class, but I gave them individual assistance as often as possible; others in the class didn't seem to mind their needed special attention. If I had a kid who learned things faster than others, again I'd give individual ministration and provide work to challenge their ingenuity.

Chock full of the most mediocre achievers, I especially remember teaching period 5 English. Their being so 'average' my writing individual reports for this bunch was always the most challenging. Reports had to be individualized, not repetitively copied word for word where the only distinct difference was a name change. I was bamboozled, kept running out of adjectives to make every report read differently from the next. The class met just before lunchtime. Instead of concentrating on topics like sentence declension, Shakespeare's sonnets, or in-class essay writing, their minds were often fixated on home-bagged sandwiches, Coca Cola, flavored milks, Fritos, or what passed for the hot lunch supplied by the school kitchen. Facing these twitchy teenagers my attention was in demand. I never was sure when they wanted to learn or if their stomachs took precedence. Unusually, if one or two or three minds wandered to scoffing lunch, others wanting to learn somehow quelled classmates' anti-social whims and I managed to slightly enlighten young minds.

Easter Sunday was April 11. My birthday was April 30. Please, don't ask me how those dates tied together for the 5<sup>th</sup> period English class I just described. Kids have their ways finding out things you don't necessarily vocalize. I think it may have had something to do with my mentioning that, while they enjoyed Easter egg hunts, I expected I'd be stuck in a Milwaukee hospital. Nothing serious, mind, it was non-life threatening treatment for an existing health issue. (Hang on to that thought.) One pre-lunchtime class the kids were giggly and inattentive, but it was nothing needing a jumping up and down in anger. Cindy stood beside her desk and said, "Please, Mr. Lare, we have something we want to give you. You have to be in hospital and, uh, we found out you have a birthday soon after Easter, and so we all chipped in to get you this." The smile on every kid's face was gift enough. She

approached my desk with both her hands holding an unwrapped shoe box. "From all of us, Mr. Lare... Happy Easter ...and Happy Birthday too."

Having not picked up murmurs, I'd been taken completely by surprise, most of all due to the kind of class it was. They were, to say the least, oodles of unordinary 9<sup>th</sup> graders thrown together by an IBM



computer. I opened the box. Inside I shuffled the thin paper and looked at a pair of black velvet Beatle boots. Along with the sweeping popularity of the Liverpool lads, their boots were so in style. Every week, although probably exaggeration, it seemed the radio played a new Beatle single and overnight it made it into the charts. Wholly unexpected, the boots were a wonderful gift. This caboodle of kids really endeared themselves to me. (Today I still have those original Beatle boots, pictured left. They've been refurbished and look as new as the day I was presented with them.)

Whatever lesson I'd planned more or less fell by the wayside. The kids had also chipped in with fun food for a party. Yes, stomachs definitely won out this time over cerebral discourse. I remember one boy, Troy, who brought a jar of green olives stuffed with pimentos. Most hungry eaters turned up their noses and pooh-poohed them, but I appreciated Troy's olives. I liked them. We had little sandwiches, potato chips, M&Ms, brownies, cheese and crackers, all kinds of munchies and, of course, Cindy's home-baked chocolate cake, its top frosted with "Mr. Lare."

Working with staff, particularly the previously mentioned English department members, well, I never went overboard to charm them, nor would I have won a prize for cooperation. I was pig-headed. Clash of personalities was open and no secret to anyone. Classrooms and offices were the plotting grounds for undermining other staff, department meetings fields of battle. I knew in my head the time was coming to move on and get out. Morty, unwittingly, had provided impetus, and I was now in correspondence with the Australian Consulate in Chicago.

Twelve years had passed since Sister Fatima's Geography lessons. It wasn't a big thing, my considering changing location for teaching. A ball had started rolling with the offer from Kaukauna. I felt change was due. But Kaukauna was still Wisconsin. Still winter, still snow, and still the same salary. I thought about change, the more drastic the better, and, who knows, maybe I'd fulfil a boyhood dream.

An envelope filled with information arrived from the Chicago Consulate. Inside were pamphlets, brochures, and how to obtain official forms for teacher recruitment for the Australian state of Victoria. Its Education Department was recruiting qualified teachers in Mathematics and Science from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, all English speaking countries. The information wasn't all that encouraging because I wasn't qualified in Mathematics or Science, nor was I keen on the idea of going overseas for anything from 12 to 18 months and then having to return home, whether I wanted to or not. I needed to ask more questions.

As I investigated teaching in Australia, I kept my family in the dark, as well as my brother Steve, and especially Keith. Since enrolling in my Poetry class, Keith had been performing well and I didn't want anything about Australia, my looking into Australia that is, causing distraction.

Easter, 1971, I filled a personal void and turned my diverticulosis into a fringe benefit. The white lie I concocted would have earned me a nomination for Oscar's Best Actor. A few days before Easter vacation I felt aimless. Teaching was burning me out. There was no satisfaction in classroom performance, no positive feedback of 'job well done' from colleagues.

I talked with my brother Steve to see if he was interested in sharing the drive to Salt Lake City to visit Jim. Steve was enthusiastic and jumped at doing a road trip. The Easter break was too short for the miles and time needed. I prepared staff and students for my absence by feigning illness. I excused

myself from the classroom to 'go to the bathroom,' excused myself from meetings for the same reason. I said my diverticulosis was playing up, that it had become inflamed; now I expected I'd be hospitalized and put on a drip over Easter. I wouldn't be in St. Michael's in Stevens Point. Since I was going home for Easter, I'd be in a hospital in Milwaukee. In a phone call home I told my mother what I planned doing. With some cajoling mother agreed to the ruse and said she'd cover for me should anyone from the school make contact by phone. Perhaps the most sensitive discussion was preparing Keith for my absence. I didn't want him to unduly worry about me being genuinely sick, because I wasn't!

"How good can you be keeping a secret?" I asked Keith.

"For you, f' sure," Keith answered, and I told him all about my plan. He looked at me with eyes begging, "Kin I come too, please, please," I said that if he disappeared over Easter as well, I'd never get away with pretending I was in hospital while I was really in Salt Lake City. Too many questions to be asked, too much investigation would follow. "OK, then..." Keith said in a voice suggesting surrender.

I left ahead of the Easter vacation which officially started when school finished Thursday. Steve and I drove to West Allis late Wednesday afternoon to see Mom, Dad, and the twins. We made sandwiches for our journey. This was a time when the interstates weren't lined with the colorful signs and lights of the fast food joints. It'd be easy enough to find a greasy spoon, but they were often away from the main road. We didn't stay long before heading onto Interstate 94 for Chicago to connect with Interstate 80 west, the quickest route to Salt Lake City via Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming into Utah. We faced over 1400 miles and up to 24 hours on the road. Driving through the night we took turns either at the wheel or catching Zs. Crossing the Mississippi River, from the bridge we admired the reflection of the moon surfing across black water. We stopped several times to revive tired eyes, legs, and rear ends. Cool night air always refreshed. It was 6 ½ hours or midnight before we passed through Des Moines, another 2 hours to a mostly darkened Omaha, 9 or so hours into Cheyenne, and perhaps close to lunchtime. Sandwiches held up and in another 6 hours we looked forward to a good hot meal with the O'Leary's.

I remember driving along a road which looked over Salt Lake City lit with its commercial neon and changing traffic lights. It looked like the haunting time between day and night. The high road passed over a school and, given the information Jim had provided over the phone, I mentioned to Steve that I thought that might be where Jim attended classes. I was driving and Steve used a fold-out map for navigation. We never felt lost or apprehensive. In fact, Steve guided us comfortably into the suburb of Sandy and we found the new O'Leary homestead without stress.

It was already dark as we checked our watches. 7:30 p.m. We arrived unannounced to surprise Jim. Certainly Rawlin, Afton and Michael O'Leary were more than surprised. They'd already finished supper and were busy washing dishes when we'd pressed the doorbell. Inside I was especially disappointed to learn that the surprise had really been on us. Jim wasn't home. We'd surprise him later because he was in the city attending a night class. Yes, I had accurately picked the school we'd passed as the one Jim attended. As for our long looked-forward-to hot meal, Afton said they had no leftovers from their casserole and Saturday had to be shopping day because everyone would be closed

Good Friday. She did a quick rummage through the fridge, then behind a closet door where she foraged one large Idaho potato. Afton's impromptu supper was a slice of crispy bacon with mashed potato. Not exactly what we thought we'd enjoy for a hot meal, and though it may not sound like much, it tasted good after so many sandwiches for dinner, breakfast and lunch.

Eager to see Jim, Afton recommended we pick him up at school. "He'd been working during the day, so you'll find him in his work clothes, pictured right. Jim usually takes a bus or sometimes rides with a friend," Afton said. Rawlin gave us road directions on



notepaper. "He finishes at 9. Shouldn't take more than fifteen, twenty minutes," Rawlin said, "as long as you don't get lost." The directions were clear. Steve and I stood in the school courtyard and met Jim as he came out the door. His walk appeared loose and casual until he saw me. Jim stopped dead in his tracks and was speechlessly surprised. As I approached Jim, his mouth agape, he opened his arms and welcomed me with the bear hug I'd so looked forward to feeling. Jim knew my brother and gave him a big hug too. "What're you guys doing here? How'd you get here?"

We mentioned what his mother had unexpectedly cooked for dinner. "Aw, jeez, guys, you gotta still be hungry," Jim whined. "Look, I often catch a burger before heading home. Over here." We walked and talked our way to a hamburger joint of no particular name or description. Homemade hamburgers were cheap and generous. We filled our faces. Jim asked questions in between mouthfuls, too many to keep up with our answers. Asking again about the how and why of our coming all the way to Salt Lake City, I told him how I'd set everyone up for my hospital stay in Milwaukee so Steve and I could come and see him. "That's the whole reason for coming, Jim," I said. "I had to see you." Whether medicine was needed for a real or faked hospital bed, Jim, it should



be understood, was the best healing I needed. We laughed heartily over the harmless curveball I'd delivered the Franklin staff. "What about Keith," Jim asked. "I kept him in the know," I replied, "and he's fine with it. He won't let the cat outta the bag." Jim steered us back to Sandy via his so-called short cut. Afton had put sleeping bags in Jim's room for us.

Pictured left is a most pensive Jim; the snapshot I took in his bedroom shortly before Steve and I climbed into our sleeping bags for a decent night's sleep.

The next three days posed no difficulty for Jim to find ways to entertain us in the Salt Lake City area. Everything was new to Steve and me. The view from the O'Leary home would make any homeowner envious. Immediate scenery included the magnificent Wasatch Mountains, still topped with snow, and where Alta, the skiers' delight, was sited. Steve is pictured left standing in the unfinished front yard of the O'Leary's new home. The suburban town of Sandy was a 13 minute drive from Salt Lake City and situated at the base of the Wasatch Mountains. It was thought Brigham Young named the place for its thirsty soil. The average April temperature was about 65°F.

Most commercial retail was closed Good Friday. Jim recommended we go for a ride on his motorcycle. "No way

am I driving that thing," I said forcefully. Jim said I didn't have to, that I should ride behind him as passenger. "I'm not even sure I want to do that," I replied. Steve stepped up and said he'd go first. Jim mounted his iron steed the same as if it had been Goober but, instead of slipping his foot into a stirrup, jumped down with his left foot onto the starter pedal. The motorcycle roared into life with a puff of white smoke thrust from the exhaust. Chugalug, chugalug, chugalugaluga the monster's motor idled as Steve mounted the shared seat behind Jim. "Comfortable? Now, hang on tight to me, Steve, 'cause this baby goes," instructed Jim. When Jim must have felt Steve's grip around his waist, he zoomed like a jet off a runway and disappeared down the road. I wasn't counting, but they may have been gone some twenty or more minutes.

Dismounting the cycle, Steve burst into laughter. He looked sideways at me and said, "You're in for a treat!" I wasn't sure if he was pulling my leg... or not. Jim wanted me to climb aboard. I was hesitant, but I trusted Jim. I swung my right leg over and adjusted my backside behind Jim. "OK, Lare, now grab around my chest with both arms." I encircled Jim's chest with my arms somewhere

just below his delicate rib cage. Clutching onto his skinny body would normally have given comfort, but on his motorcycle I couldn't feel relaxed. "Stop shaking," Jim said, "and try to relax. It'll be fun! You ready?" I shook my head, "I dunno if I'll ever be ready, but OK. Go!" Jim laughed heartily and took off like a rocket. Not only did I cling to Jim's body for dear life, I remember resting the side of my head against his back, eventually gaining sufficient courage to peek at where we were going. Trees, bushes, and brush rushed past in a blur. The motorcycle leaned left and low when entering a left-hand curve, low and right as we headed into a right-hand bend. The speed at which we moved generated my adrenalin and, for some odd reason, I started to enjoy our ride. From a corner of my eye I saw that the edge of the dirt road dropped dramatically. There was no barrier between us and the chasm. "Oh my God," I called out. "That's what we call this road," Jim shouted as our hightailing rushed wind over us. "Steve said the same thing!"

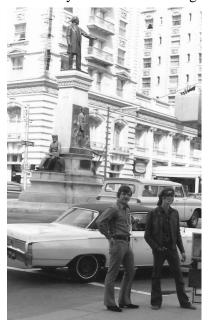
I expected my knees might buckle dismounting Jim's motorcycle. Instead I felt exhilarated and, like my brother, laughed for no apparent reason, except maybe to express how, like a new Ever Ready, I now felt fully charged.

Pictured right, Jim cooked pancakes for Holy Saturday morning breakfast. I did the drive into Salt Lake City so Jim and his brother Michael could give us their fully personalized two-bit tour of its Mormon heritage. We looked at the exterior of the beautiful Mormon Tabernacle in Temple Square. We'd liked to have gone inside to see where the famous Choir sang, but Jim said that because we weren't Mormons, we weren't allowed to see the inside. "What the heck," I said, "Back in Point I was allowed inside your church. Remember?" "Yeah, Michael replied, "but this one's the head tabernacle with its own set of rules. You can't go in." "Ah, don't worry," Jim said, "You're not missing out on anything." Across from the Temple was the Seagull Monument erected as a memorial to the flocks of seagulls which helped to save the crops of pioneers during the cricket invasion of 1848. In



the background was the tabernacle known for its remarkable acoustics and having the largest domed roof in the world.

Also in Temple Square was the Monument to Mormon Pioneers. The Mormon Trail is the 1,300 mile route from Nauvoo, Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah. From Council Bluffs, Iowa to Fort Bridger, Wyoming, the trail follows much the same route as the Oregon Trail and the California Trail, collectively known as the Emigrant Trail. The Mormon pioneer run began in 1846 until 1868. In



1856, the church inaugurated a system of handcart companies to enable poor European emigrants to make the trek faster, easier, and cheaper. Handcarts were pulled by people instead of draft animals. They could carry 500 pounds of trail provisions and a few personal possessions. The Willie and Martin Companies left Iowa City, Iowa, in July 1856, very late to begin the trip across the plains. They met severe winter snowstorms west of present-day Casper, Wyoming and continued to cope with deep snow and storms for the remainder of the journey. Brigham Young organized a rescue effort which brought them in, but 210 of the 980 emigrants died.

"I got something you hafta see," Jim said as he marched us from Temple Square to the intersection of South Temple and Main Streets. A bronze statue of Brigham Young stood on the top of a shaft, pictured left. On one side of the shaft is Jim Bridger, famous scout, and on the other side is Washakie, friendly chief of the Ute Indians. "Brigham Young led the Mormons here," Jim said, then adding a slight chuckle, "Look at 'im standin' there. Just look at 'im!" I looked and said, "OK, his arm is stretched out, so what?" Jim's telling smile was a smirk, like when he was 14 and had to wear his silver retainer, as he pointed out almost contemptuously, "Look where his hand extends." Brigham Young's hand was held out to the bank as if waiting for a hand-out. "Look again," Jim said almost contemptuously, "He's got his rear end to his church." Sure enough, that's how the statue of Brigham Young was set... with his hand to the bank and his cheeks to the church!

As we moved from the statue I noticed men walking past carrying paper bags in their hands, the lip of a bottle, most capped, others not, poking out of bags. Jim saw how Steve and I tried looking surreptitiously without making it obvious. "We call 'em brown baggers," Jim said matter-of-factly. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints advises against the consumption of alcohol for its members. Utah's liquor industry is controlled through state-run liquor store outlets and package agencies. There once was this rule about the Zion Curtain. Restaurants had a waiter prepare alcoholic drinks out of sight of other patrons; he'd do it in the kitchen or behind an opaque surface or translucent frosted glass. Jim led us to an ice cream parlor where buckets of flavored ice creams were displayed behind see-through glass in basin-like freezers. A good ten feet away was another room, unsigned and behind a heavy curtain or drape. Having purchased a bottle of beer out of sight of children and teenagers, a man emerged carrying his tell-tale brown bag. "That's one way it's done here," Jim laughed. "You wanna pick up a bottle or three?" We did in Rome as do the Romans... in the ice cream shop we bought ice cream cones!

Jim's brother Michael was doing a course at the University of Utah, also referred to as the U of U, or simply the U. Since 1902 a large white U has been sited on a hill overlooking the campus. Established three years after Brigham Young arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847; it is the state's oldest institution of higher education. Located just  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Temple Square, Michael wanted Steve and me to see the place.



From the U we drove about 30 miles southwest to the Bingham Canyon Mine. more commonly known among the locals as Kennecott Copper Mine. It was an open-pit mining operation. pictured right with Jim and



Steve. Pictured left, Jim and I sit inside the tire rim of a monstrously-sized mining truck. Note that I'm wearing the Beatle boots my English class gave to me.

From the mine were extracted large porphyry copper deposits in the Oquirrh Mountains. It happened to be the largest man-made excavation in the world and was considered to have produced more copper than any other mine in history. Owned by Rio Tinto Group, a British-Australian multinational corporation, it has been in production since 1906. Covering 3 square miles, the pit is .06 miles deep and 2.5 miles wide. Its color was anything from golden to ruddy-orange to brown.

Latter-day Saint pioneers Sanford and Thomas Bingham first discovered mineral ores in the canyon in 1848. They told Brigham Young who advised they not pursue mining because survival and settlements establishment was of paramount importance at that time. The brothers did not stake a claim, but it still became known as Bingham Canyon. Staking a claim happened in 1873 when George B. Ogilvie and 23 others "located the West Jordan claim."

The famous slogan of the Morton Salt Company was and still is "When it rains, it pours." Its lesser used slogan is "A French fry couldn't have it any better." It was a short drive from the mine to the Morton Salt Grantsville Facility established on the Great Salt Lake as the Morton Salt Company in

1918, and operated for most of its existence at Saltair, east of the Kennecott copper refinery, pictured right with Michael and Steve leaning against my wagon. Bone dry when we looked at the plant, it had serious flooding problems on





the edge of the Great Salt Lake. The plant made industrial grade and table salt from the water of the lake. Pictured left, Steve crouches beneath a sign which warns of its "Danger Blasting Area." In the background is the Grantsville Saltair Plant.

The Great Salt Lake is the largest salt water lake in the Western Hemisphere. In an average year the lake covers approximately 1,700 square miles, but the lake's size fluctuates substantially due to its shallowness. In terms of surface area, it is the largest lake in the United States that isn't part of the Great Lakes region. The lake is the largest remnant of Lake Bonneville, a prehistoric pluvial lake. The three major tributaries to the lake, the Jordan, Weber and Bear rivers together deposit approximately 1.1 million tons of minerals in the lake each year. It has no outlet except evaporation and this makes for its salinity. It is far saltier than sea water and its mineral content increases steadily.

Swimming in the Great Salt Lake is more like floating, but it wasn't warm enough for us to experiment for the experience of a float. We tasted the water, each of us verifying saltiness. Pictured right, Steve and I pose on the edge of the Great Salt Lake.

Although called "America's Dead Sea," the lake provides habitat for millions of native birds, brine shrimp (The commercial name used to sell them as novelty pets is 'sea monkeys'), shorebirds, and waterfowl including Wilson's phalarope, a small migratory

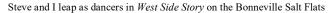


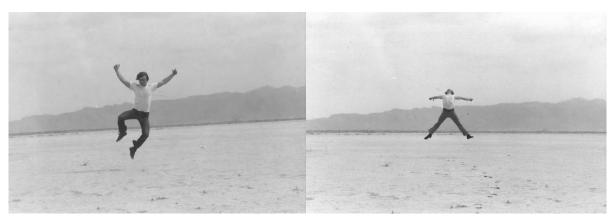
-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A pluvial lake is a body of water that accumulates in a basin because of greater moisture availability resulting from changes in temperature and/or precipitation. A pluvial lake is typically closed. Pluvial lakes that have since evaporated and dried out may also be referred to as paleolakes.

wader which winters in inland salt lakes near the Andes in Argentina. The species is often tame and approachable and we did spot a few phalarope wading in the water, though at the time we had no idea what they were called.

We made a short leap to Interstate 80 and headed in the direction of Wendover, a little over an hour away, for the Bonneville Salt Flats. On the western edge of the Great Salt Lake basin, the Flats are 12 miles long and a 5 miles wide expanse of hard, white salt crust. Near the center of the salt, the crust can be almost 5 feet thick! The Salt Flats are comprised of 90% common table salt and is a remnant of the Pleistocene Lake Bonneville. Each summer, professional and amateur teams and individuals from around the world compete for landspeed records in different vehicle crossings. Not only have the attempts and successful record achievements been filmed there, the Bonneville Salt Flats have served as a set or used as background for Hollywood movies and TV shows.





Easter Sunday was sunny and glorious. Steve and I should have celebrated the Resurrection by going to Mass, or we could have attended the Church of the Latter-day Saints with Jim and his family. However, Jim said the Latter-day Saints service dragged on and he didn't bother so much with the church anymore, while Michael and his parents did attend. Overnight Jim had organized how we'd spend the day. "We're gonna do our own climb to heaven," he said as we piled into my station wagon.

Jim navigated us toward Salt Lake City where we somehow found State Route 224 to Park City in the Wasatch Back, a region in the Rocky Mountains. Its April temperature averages 53°F. The air cooled the closer we came to Park City. Jim wanted us to see an old theatre at 328 Main Street. It was once known as The Egyptian Theatre built on the location of the old Dewey Theatre which collapsed under a snow load in 1916. The Egyptian opened its doors on Christmas Day1926. The contemporary discovery of the tomb of King Tut in Egypt influenced the theatre's design and construction.



Supervised by an Egyptologist, the beautiful theatre was decorated with the most recognizable symbols of Egypt, including lotus leaf, scarabs, hieroglyphics and symbols of life and happiness. The attraction of all this in one building was the whole reason Jim wanted to show us the old theatre. It had been used as a saloon, a cinema house, and for live performances during the Great Depression, World War II, and a period of severe local emigration in the 1950s. In 1963 The Egyptian was renamed the Silver Wheel, just in time for the town to rebound as a ski and resort city.

Our timing was unlucky. The Silver Wheel had been open Friday and Saturday and today was Easter Sunday. The theatre screened movies, but the most consistent fare was old fashioned "meller drammers," as indicated by the marquee in the picture on the previous page, and the poster behind Jim and me at the theatre box office, pictured right. Egyptian design can be seen in the poster's frame, the ceiling, and the box office base. (We weren't to know it in 1971 that in 1978 the Silver Wheel building's integrity was threatened. again would undergo It refurbishment to preserve its distinctive Egyptian features, be re-christened The Egyptian, and become the original home for the Sundance Film Festival.)



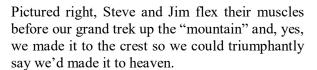
From Park City

Jim navigated over more State Routes until we were just 7 miles from Sandy in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, and near to the scenic drive of Little Cottonwood Canyon which lead up to Alta Ski Resort. Unlike Park City's cool air, now it felt summertime warm. We weren't going snow skiing and had peeled off our shirts. Pictured left, I am sitting on the fender of my wagon somewhere on the road to Little Cottonwood Canyon. My Beatle boots show clearly in the snapshot.

We could call our exercise mountain or rock climbing, but our inexperience with such recognized sport meant merely huff-puffing

up a great big hill, sacrilegiously praying, "Oh, f' Christ's sake" until we made it to the top, raised our arms in triumph, and tried reaching for heaven. Pictured left, Jim and I pose at a Little Cottonwood Canyon sign. Note that Jim and I both hold a cigarette in our hands. Yeah, Jim chose to ignore his parental-inured Latter-day Saint restraints.





Little Cottonwood Canyon is "U" shaped and called a glacial trough carved by an alpine glacier some 15,000 to 25,000 years ago. Near the

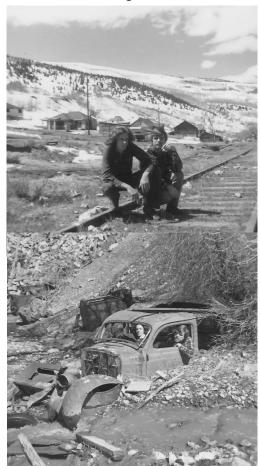


mouth of the canyon Latter-day Saint pioneers quarried quartz and granite blocks to build the Salt Lake Temple. The ground was strewn with boulders and detached masses which had fallen from the walls of Little Cottonwood Canyon

We found our way to Interstate 15 and connected with Highway 6, oddly known as East Main Street as it passed through the tiny towns of Goshen, Elberta, and Eureka in the northeast of the Juab Valley. Jim directed us  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Eureka to a small sign showing the turn off to Silver City, a ghost town, once a bustling mining town with a population of 1,500 people. There are no paved roads, just dirt ones leading to what once was the town.

Known as the Tintic Mining District, the Sunbeam Mine was the first silver mine discovered by Mormon prospectors in 1869. Many mines produced rich silver until 1890 when most mines encountered water. The mines began to close and the town slowly faded. Jesse Knight of Knightsville, Utah, known as the "Mormon Wizard" for his ability to find ore easily, built a railroad into Silver City, pictured left in 1906. In that first decade of the 1900s Knight built a huge Ore Sampling Mill and the Tintic Smelter. Soon the town began to flourish again until 1915 when the Mill and Smelter were closed down. It was more economical to ship ore by train to distant smelters in the Salt Valley basin. Little of the town remains today: a few old foundations, mine tailings, and some old mining equipment.

Young and indestructible, we never sensed the danger. We were blissfully unaware of cyanide residue in large dirt mounds. There were mine shafts and we could have easily plummeted into oblivion. Some had been blocked, but others had opened up due to erosion around the hole. We made no attempt to enter any open mine because they're just dangerous, can contain bad air and dark shafts that cannot be seen. Active mines in the area were private property and signs told us in no uncertain terms "No Trespassing." No one came after us with a shotgun. In fact, we never saw another human being.



Left: Jim and I crouched on the abandoned Eureka Hill rail line.

Right: Steve and I standing before an old mine. Might it have been the Ore Sampling Mill restored? Being fenced, maybe it was a newer private mine?

Left: Playing in the old bogged truck, Jim and I never thought it might be home to a rattlesnake!





We returned to the O'Leary home early in the evening. Rawlin and Afton never harped at Jim for not wanting to attend the Latter-day Saints service. They'd prepared an Easter supper of chicken, mashed potatoes and green beans. Afton reminded me of the Easter dinner I hosted in their home back in Stevens Point when she loved the lamb I'd carved from a stick of butter.



Left: Rawlin serves green beans to Jim, Steve and Michael.

Below: I clown around with the chicken for Michael and Jim.



Whether we wanted to or not, Easter Monday Steve and I had to head back to Wisconsin. The time spent with Jim healed my head, refreshed my ability to get-up-and-go, even genuinely settled my imaginary hospitalization excuse – the very real diverticulosis. I felt healthy, energetic, and alert to resume classroom duties, even had a positive feeling about being more cooperative with the small people with whom I had to work, and cope with their tired whims, shallow thinking, and set, rigid ways.

There were no tears as we made our farewell in the driveway. Other than sincere bear hugs, it was unemotional. Jim and I were secure in the knowledge of our relationship. Michael O'Leary snapped the photo at right as we said our good-bye. Our faces clearly show the joy. We enjoyed three great days!

Steve the navigator had studied the maps and we chose to head east via a different route. He'd found Dinosaur National Monument on the Utah/Colorado border and

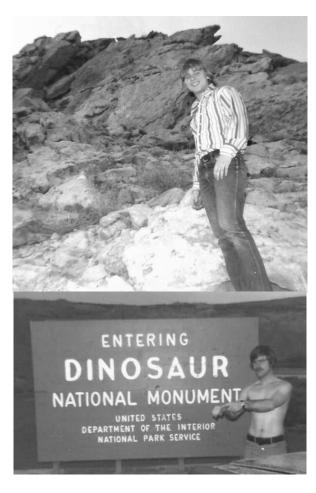
said we should stop and look for fossils. At home Steve had small dinosaur bones he'd bought and displayed on the mantle of his fireplace. "We can fossil hunt," Steve said, "maybe get lucky so I can add something to my collection."

We caught Interstate 215 to connect with Highway 40 which took us to Vernal, then Jensen where we headed onto State Route 149 and into Dinosaur National Monument on the southeast flank of the Uinta Mountains. Dinosaurs from the Jurassic once roamed here! Their fantastic remains are still visible embedded in the rocks. It is a vast area of desert land with canyons and two rivers. Eleven species of dinosaurs remain, including Stegosaurus, Allosaurus, and Diplodocus, pictured right, and carried by the Green and Yampa river systems which entombed



their remains in Utah over 800 paleontological sites. There are no dinosaur fossils to see on the Colorado side.

We were free to walk among the craggy hills. Steve didn't give specifics on what I should look for, except that if I saw something out of the ordinary, maybe it was a fossil. I had no idea what I should hope to find. Eyes focused down onto rocks; suddenly Steve called out, "Whoo hoo." He called me to see what he'd picked up. I expected a bone. This chunk was somewhat rounded. "Lookee here," Steve said excitedly, 'Dinosaur poop." Pictured right, Steve holds the fossil in his right hand. Also pictured lower right, I point to that same fossil of dino scat in my right hand, its proper scientific name being coprolite or coprolith, fossilized feces, and it's a trace fossil as opposed to body fossil, as they give evidence for the animal's behavior, in this case diet rather than morphology. "Holy mackerel," Steve exclaimed. I can't believe I found a real fossil I can put on my fireplace." It's possible there was an understanding, if not a law, which forbids taking home a found fossil from the Monument, but we didn't see any such a sign and Steve was determined to take home his souvenir regardless.



From Dinosaur National Monument we backtracked to Vernal to reconnect with Highway 40. It took us into the Routt National Forest in northwestern Colorado where the Continental Divide splits the

We crossed the Rocky Mountains via forest in half. Rabbit Ears Pass, elevation 9,426 feet. Its summit has two columns of rock formations in the shape of rabbit ears, difficult for us to see because we passed through at night. As there were no oncoming vehicles or traffic following us, we stopped for a snapshot, pictured right, of me showing the layers of wall made by snowplows. Rabbit Ears highway happened to be the most important



transcontin ental road link in the nation.



Lower in elevation than many of the high mountain passes farther to the south in the Colorado Rockies, Rabbit Ears Pass received a great deal of snow in winter.

Leaving Rabbit Ears Pass, we didn't want to pass through Denver on Highway 40. Driving time and the finish of Easter vacation meant heading north on Highway 14 through Hebron, Walden, and Cowdrey on Highway 127, up into Laramie, Wyoming and a stop at the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Monument, pictured left. As contrast to the warmth of the Salt Lake Basin, in the picture of Steve standing at the Rest Area right, Laramie was cold and blanketed in snow. Of Lincoln some say it's a bust, but it's more a giant head with undersized cartoonlike shoulders resting on a 30 foot granite pedestal at the Summit Rest Area and Visitor Center on Interstate 80 east of Laramie, between the cities of Laramie and Cheyenne.

The construction of Lincoln's head began in 1949. The artist said that wild temperature swings in Wyoming wouldn't provide a stable working environment, so he turned to Mexico City. The 4,500 pound bronze bust was constructed in 11 months. It was cast in 30 pieces designed to be bolted together. The first leg of shipping the head to Wyoming was rail travel to Denver, Colorado. Mexican Army guards



rode with Lincoln's bronze because they were afraid someone would steal the more than two tons head! From Denver to Laramie the head was transported by truck. Low wires in Grand Avenue, Laramie, meant moving the head very early in the morning and cutting electric and telephone wires for each block as they went through. The Lincoln Monument was dedicated in 1959.

We made a brief stop in Cheyenne and followed Interstate 80, the quickest route home through Nebraska, Iowa, into Illinois, and then catching Interstate 94 into Wisconsin. We knew we'd make it to Stevens Point the day after school resumed, but my hospital excuse would hold water. After all, nobody required a doctor's certificate and no one bothered back then to ask for proof of illness. Whatever you said was believed and was thus proof enough.

We stopped in West Allis. Mother informed me that Miss Priss, drab young spinster on the English faculty, had called from school to enquire about which hospital I was in so that a book, the English faculty having all chipped in to purchase, could be mailed to me. The U.S. Postal Service performed quickly, even commendably in 1971. Mother told Miss Priss I'd left specific instructions that I was not to be disturbed. Miss Priss swallowed it like a catfish; hook, line and sinker.

When I returned to school all chipper and smiley-faced, the book was presented to me. On principle I could not accept it, nor would I accept it. I recommended the faculty donate their gift to the school library. "I wasn't at death's door," I implored. Never even having looked at the book's title, I hoped its donation was suitable.

## Chapter 68: Uncle Sam Wants Me

ypical spring temperatures in Stevens Point suggested winter one day, sometimes resembling spring the next. In other words, cold and warm was all over the place and certainly not as predictable as weather Steve and I had just experienced in Salt Lake City. Instead of wearing a T-shirt outside, much less peeling it off, it was coats, jackets, or sweatshirts. My 26<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated stoking the kitchen Round Oak. Burning wood generated intense heat and its effect can be seen on my cake in the snapshot pictured right. My day wasn't filled with celebration, but the card Keith gave me warmed more than the wood stove. It was for a dear friend and, by means of the poem inside, thanked me for my friendship. But it was the



words Keith penned, "Larry, this little poem or prose doesn't say it all. Cause you're not only my friend but my big brother, so Happy Birthday," with his sign off, "Little brother Keith."

Another reason for celebration falling flat was greetings received from Uncle Sam. The Milwaukee Selective Service, i.e. Draft Board, sent a letter wherein there was no document to fill in requesting teacher deferment. This time it stated in no uncertain words that I was to report to Milwaukee for a physical. I was being called up. The place was named and an address provided. There was no way of ignoring or avoiding it. Richard Milhous Nixon, although claiming he intended to end the war in Vietnam, followed in the footsteps of his predecessor Lyndon Baines Johnson and signed an amendment to the Military Selective Service Act of 1967 ordering random selection aka the "draft lottery" into the U.S. Army.

As my birthday and the letter from Selective Service both came on Friday, I had to wait until Monday, May 3, to see our school principal, a stand in for Mr. Oelke who was still recuperating from his dice with death, open heart surgery. Left no option, I just stated I had to report for an Army physical. Advice was that I should see my doctor and obtain a letter from him stating his diagnosis of diverticulitis. This I did ahead of reporting for the physical. Handing me his letter in a sealed envelope, Dr. Rifleman assured I'd be returning to my classroom.

Instead of driving to Milwaukee ahead of the set day, I chose to ride a Greyhound bus. My Dad said he'd drive me to the place where I'd undergo the physical, an imposing structure with no distinctive features. It was the picture of a concrete block with necessary holes for windows.

Collecting a pile of prepared papers with my full name and date of birth, everything about one's body which can be examined or touched was. There may have been thirty or more young men in our group. I stood alone for the eye examination and read the charts with letters. Directed to sit, I remember being asked if I wore glasses. I took my glasses from their pocket case and put them on. I was asked why I wore them and answered, "Mainly reading." The eye examination paper was rubberstamped Approved. Hearing? Approved. Lungs? Approved. Reading and Writing? Approved. How disconcerting. Everything was getting approved. All of the doctors looked old enough for retirement. Maybe they were retired and donating their time.

The group was herded into a large room. Outdoors was sunny and somewhat warm. Inside this room it was bleak, colorless, and cold. He may have been a burly sergeant who barked at us to strip, neatly fold clothes, stack them to the left of our feet, and stand to attention. In a circle taking up the

perimeter of the room, we stood stiffly for a good ten minutes. I think that may have been part of the test, its purpose to possibly nut out the rare 4F. We stood at motionless as possible until the drill sergeant returned bellowing for us to bend forward and spread our cheeks for the doctor's rubber glove examination. We could stand tall as each procedure was individually finished. Following the doctor was an assistant who rubberstamped 'Approved' on each and everyone's paper. The sergeant ordered we should turn our head and cough when the doctor checked for hernia placing his gloved fingers against the groin. Everyone passed. Approved. Ordered to, we dressed.

Beside me was a sturdily built teenager with shoulder-length hair and a cocky attitude. Pulling a T-shirt over his tousled mane he snarked, "I dunno why they keep stamping approved when I got a doctor's letter saying I'm allergic to wool." I looked at this hippie-ish kid and said, "Yeah. I have a letter too." The sergeant roared for us to form a single line. We'd individually face the medical lieutenant sitting behind a desk in his office. The long-haired kid entered ahead of me strutting confidently through the door. I observed the brief discussion between a suddenly uncomfortable draftee and the medical lieutenant. Whatever confidence the kid had when he entered immediately withered as his letter was read and returned to his hand. "Allergy to wool isn't a problem here. We can give you tablets. Welcome to the Army of the United States of America," I heard the lieutenant say with a smile on his lips.

"Uh oh," I thought as I watched a crestfallen pale-faced draftee exit the office. He brushed past me, his head bowed and facing the floor. The medical lieutenant looked about the same age, maybe a year or so older than me. He gestured with his hand to come forward. "I suppose you have a letter too," he said more as statement than question. "Yes sir, I have," I replied, my own confidence falling through a crack in the floor. The medical lieutenant tore the edge of the sealed envelope, blew into the opening, and pulled out a single folded page. He perused Dr. Rifleman's letter, placed in on his desk, turned his swivel chair and reached to a shelf where he grasped a thick book about the same size as an elaborately bound bible. He flipped though several pages at a time, found what he wanted, placed it on his desk and turned the book so I could see. "Read here," he said pointing to an item headlined Diverticulitis/Diverticulosis. Beneath those words was one word, Unacceptable. "Sorry, buddy," he said with something resembling a twinkle in his eye. "We can't feed you." "Oh?" I mouthed as a question. "We can handle allergies," the medical lieutenant stated, "but you have a condition we can't do anything about. Your diet's too strict. We can't cater for you. The Army can't take you." "Ohhhh," I said with downcast eyes and disappointment in my voice. Yeah, I called up what I'd learned in acting classes. Smiling, the medical lieutenant extended his hand. I shook his hand and heard, "Sorry if we've disappointed you. Have a great life." He rubberstamped the last paper in my bundle, placed it on top and motioned with his hand to leave his office.

I handed my bundle of papers to a final military deputy. "I can't go in the army," I said humbly. He looked at the top page, told me I could go, and indicated the exit to the outside. I felt great relief. I wouldn't be a grunt or a gun bunny or a mortar maggot. I'd never get to know John Wayne toilet paper (It's rough. It's tough. And it won't take s\*\*t off nobody.) And I wasn't heading off on a Vietnam tour. Dad met me. I told him I flunked the test because the army couldn't feed me. As a World War II combat veteran, and an office bearer at the local VFW, I saw the disappointment in his eyes. But my Dad accepted that I'd been born with an internal physical defect over which I had no control should it ever play up... and it had. Interesting to think that had that problem stayed inert, how different would have been my fate. Dad and I had time to catch some lunch and a movie at one of the downtown theatres before I boarded the Greyhound back to Stevens Point. We saw Dustin Hoffman in *Straw Dogs* (1971).

## Chapter 69: Head West Young Men, Head West!

id-August Steve, Keith and I kissed off summer school and summertime jobs. I packed a few changes of clothes and climbed into my Ford station wagon to drive west, first down the road to collect Keith in Plover. I'd arranged with Steve Thompson to mind the dog Kluski, horses Goober and Maudie. He promised to water them, stake the horses occasionally in the field for a grass munch and feed them fresh hay I'd bought in bales still tinged with green. My brother didn't grab the passenger side of the bench seat nor did he clamber into my car's rear seat. He'd gone off days earlier on a separate vacation with his buddies to the Black Hills in Southwestern South Dakota and they'd meet us up with us for our long trek west.

Keith had saved two hundred dollars worth of dish-washing money and, surprisingly, as Keith leapt into the passenger side Morty handed him an extra \$10 spending money. I looked at my watch as we departed; 4:00 o'clock Sunday afternoon. We didn't stay on Highway 10 as that would have sent us to Minnesota. I headed down toward Madison and hoped Keith wouldn't remind me of my having made him stay home when I took Bink to that film workshop. I wasn't counting on Keith to contribute much for gas because I felt he should spend his money on food, admission fees, and souvenirs. However, I didn't put a stopper into Keith's filling the tank every now and again if he wanted.

Gas was cheap. In fact, throughout our time pounding the pedal on roads, we found many towns and cities engaged in "gas wars." One station lowered prices to undersell its competition and on and on it went. Some places posted outdoor sandwich boards showing regular gas as low as  $10\phi$  a gallon. Whether the tank needed it or not, we took advantage and filled up frequently. At this giveaway price, Keith never balked at shelling out  $50\phi$  should the numbers manage to click over that high.

Paying for a motel room wasn't on our agenda's make-it-up-as-we-go itinerary. When I felt tired we'd pull into a wayside to rest. Some may have toilets and washbasins, and we knew gas stations were equipped with bathroom facilities. Somewhere in Iowa near the border of Nebraska at some unknown still-dark hour of the morning I saw double, then triple images. Blinking my eyes, I tried unsuccessfully bunching likenesses into one. It was as though I looked at 3D red and blue without slipping on the glasses to bring together images. Adding to eye agony, oncoming cars' headlights dazzled. I'd squeeze tight my eyelids and, upon opening them, struggled to see anything at all.

"That's it," I announced to Keith, "I've hit the wall. We hafta find a wayside."

Although it was summer, nighttime under a clear black sky felt cold. Mine was the sole car parked in the isolated wayside. We hoped no serial killer was prowling the area. Keith and I folded down the back of the rear seat, the large space becoming our bed. I didn't think to bring a blanket or two. After all, it was summer! Who needed a blanket? We did! Anyway, we had pillows. Climbing into the back and locking our doors from the inside, we fell sound asleep, apart.

Exactly two hours later, the sun still not showing, we awoke together, tangled arms and legs with noses practically pressing. Opening our eyes about the same time, we were both unable to focus and realized our noses had touched. I don't believe either of us was startled. Cold noses, cold fingers, cold toes, but we'd kept warm by generating our own body heat. Keith and I moved our heads back and focused our eyes. We smiled at how vine-like we'd become and then, without resistance, burst into a laugh, our way of showing how comfortable we were in what might otherwise have been considered somewhat awkward.

At the time I'd turned leaden-eyed behind the wheel, sleep was obviously necessary and urgent. However, in the passage of time, this ordinarily forgettable and fleeting wayside slumber has become an indelible memory in my head of our trip to the west.

With just two hours of quality, undisturbed sleep, which had to have included some solid REM sleep, I was alert for what was left of the drive through Nebraska and into Colorado.

We chose Central City, probably two good days drive from home, so I could spend some time with college friend John Primm. Steve and his buddies said they didn't mind driving down from South Dakota to Central City because it just meant undergoing more things they'd probably not planned on seeing anyway. There can be a sometimes magic in the unplanned unknown.

I hadn't seen John since he'd packed his bags and moved to Hollywood to follow his dream of working professionally in the film industry. So what had Hollywood, California, then, to do with Central City, Colorado? I wish I could say that John was working on location on a new picture for Universal or Paramount, but that would be stretching the truth, more so just inventing a fib. John was unemployed, hadn't yet settled on a permanent position in Hollywood; he was peripatetic, so he and his wife – yeah, John managed to get himself hitched and now, well, she's an ex – spent the 1971 summer in Central City working in his ex's sister's shop of hand-made domestic items. It had all manner of artisan-crafted homespun ware from crochet-decorated towels to hand-stitched or hand-loomed nightcaps, to hand-painted crockery, to homemade fragrant soaps, boutique candles, designer chocolates and candies and bespoke what-not.

With a stable population then around 600, up the count if including tourists, Central City was the "Little Kingdom of Gilpin," named for William Gilpin who'd been appointed the first Colorado territory governor in 1861. At an altitude of 8,515 feet, it was founded in 1859 during a gold rush. Gold and silver was still mined in the surrounding area. One famous mining excavation was the Glory Hole, 1000 feet wide and 500 feet deep. It was blasted out of a mountain side for its cache of auriferous riches and hauled to a mill through a tunnel at the bottom. On Central City's Main Street the shop where John worked was a few steps from the local watering hole, i.e. tavern or bar.

We done must have well following John's instructions via phone and scribbled onto paper because we found the Rain Barrel Souvenir and Gift Shop on Main Street of Central City, pictured right with Keith and bare-chested me wearing one of those oldfashioned nightcaps. Living quarters were at the rear of the shop. Keith and I slept on mats and blankets on the floor.

We had to rely upon place names, phone numbers, house addresses, and directions by means of phone arrangements made before leaving home. These were written on paper and carried in the glove

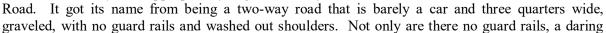


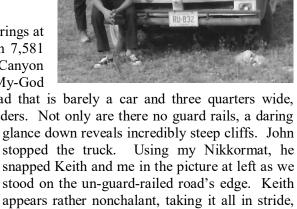
compartment. A dime would get us a local call on a pay phone. We used folded maps picked up free or for about a dime to a quarter at gas to find our way on roads. There was the navigator, Keith, and the driver, me. We had to watch for the markers and signs on roads, highways and freeways to find which direction to drive and where to turn. If unsure or we somehow managed to get ourselves lost, we asked for directions by stopping and asking someone on the sidewalk or standing in a field.

Invariably the town-folk's or farmer's instructions amounted to naming local landmarks for making a left or right turn, and those landmarks included "Chet's barn on the left and you turn right", "Louie's haystacks and keep going straight", and the one and only greasy spoon lit up in neon for "Eat Here" or "Fine Food," and ask there if you're still not sure.

My brother Steve and his buddies wouldn't be too far off. Awaiting their arrival, John showed us the sights of this historic city in the mountains. We dodged tourists up and down hilly streets, but weren't interested in window shopping for stuff we didn't want or need. What do you really want to see in an old ore mining town? Mines and the environs, that's what. John told us to pile into his rickety Chevy pick-up truck, John and Keith pictured right. We were going for a ride. One wild ride!

Linking Central City near Highway 119 to Idaho Springs at Interstate 70 (I-70) is a very scenic trail, elevation 7,581 feet to 9,383 feet, officially named the Virginia Canyon Road, unofficially the appropriately signed Oh-My-God







stopped the truck. Osing my Nikkormat, he snapped Keith and me in the picture at left as we stood on the un-guard-railed road's edge. Keith appears rather nonchalant, taking it all in stride, whereas my discomfort with heights shows my not-so-relaxed body language. The route passes through historic mining country, a dozen or so ruins and closed mines can be seen, and the ghost town of Russell Gulch where the road is steep and rocky.

In its heyday, 1865, the Oh-My-God Road was

In its heyday, 1865, the Oh-My-God Road was critical for many miners bringing supplies to their camp by horse and wagon. Avalanches and landslides can block sections and occur anytime; snowfalls in winter block the road as well. There are many hairpin turns as the road ascends hugging the mountain. There is little room for driver error on this road and the temptation to vomit when negotiating circuitous hairpins due to altitude. Need I mention my stomach moved up into throat for most of John's scenic tour on a road-trail of bumps, rocks, curves, and buttnumbing corrugation.

Given the great isolated location of Central City's environs, John had taken up a new hobby, rocket launching. It made perfect sense after all; back on January 31 NASA's Apollo 14 mission to the Moon was launched. Alan Shepard became the fifth person to walk on the Moon and the first to try golfing on the surface. The Soviet Union launched its first space station, Salyut 1, into low Earth orbit April 9. July 31 Apollo astronauts David Scott and James Irwin drove a Lunar Rover Module on the moon! A lot of history was being made in real space, so why shouldn't John have fun launching an Este's model rocket, Keith and John pictured right. The small rocket is almost lost in the picture having been placed in front of a tall weed. Once the fuse was lit and the countdown counted down, we watched the rocket launch like, well, like a rocket. It streaked up reaching an out of eyesight

height... never to be seen again! John didn't recover his rocket. It fired further into "space" than John ever imagined.

The Steve carful of boys in sweat-stained shirts pulled into Central City from the Black Hills late in the afternoon, a day overdue, but no one complained. Our schedule was pretty much capable de tout (capable of anything) as long as we fulfilled destiny by making it to the west coast. I thought Steve's buddies might hang around for a beer or three, but they just dropped off Steve at the Rain Barrel and continued their



journey to Denver for an overnight, and eventually on to Wisconsin.

Early next morning we packed ourselves into my wagon as John offered a final tip, "Look. None of you have ever seen the Pacific Ocean, so best way to see it first, take the McClure Tunnel on the Santa Monica Freeway. Highway 10 on your map."

Leaving Central City and negotiating second-rate roads I noted the fuel needle indicated we needed a tank fill-erup. Ahead of connecting with Interstate 70 (I-70) and on to Utah we found a house with two gas pumps out front, but it hadn't opened for the day. Not knowing how much farther we'd get on the fumes in the tank, I knocked on the door and asked for service. A frumpy ol' woman who hadn't slipped in her dentures for the day grumbled at having been disturbed, but answered my request for fuel by switching on the pump and ordering me to, "Fillit yerself." The name of the place where it was possible to run out of gas and be stranded was appropriately named. I memorialized the place with a snapshot, right, of Keith with the sign.

Studying our maps to pick what natural sights to see along the way, conversation amounted to posing questions and expressing opinions. My "Anyone wanna see Death Valley?" was met by the twosome's adamant, "No!" Too dangerous, too hot, maybe melt our tires in the scorching sun. And if we happened to get there at



night, there'd be nothing to see. "What about the Grand Canyon?" "Nah," was the undisputed response. "Everyone goes to there. Too crowded and, anyway, it's going too much out of the way." Somewhere near Richfield an "either/or" was suggested. "We could head north on Highway 15 and see Jim in Salt Lake, or we could hit Highway 89 and head for Bryce Canyon." It would have been four to five hours north to visit Jim and so Bryce Canyon won because, well, we figured we'd not heard of that Canyon and concluded, therefore, nobody went there.

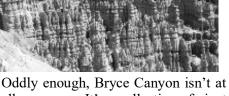
The summer's afternoon was hot and, yes, we were right. No one was in the parking lot. Our misjudged conclusion was given one-off credence; Bryce Canyon received substantially fewer visitors than Zion National Park or the Grand Canyon, largely due to its more remote location. But people going to Bryce experience the otherworldly feel of the region.

Steve and I visiting Utah to see Jim at Easter, we should have guessed there'd be a Mormon connection to Bryce Canyon. It had been settled by Mormon pioneers in the 1850s and was named after Ebenezer Bryce, who homesteaded in the area in 1874.

As recommended, our first stop as visitors to Bryce Canyon was, obviously, the Visitor Center. I can't remember if we paid a national park fee, but I know I bought postcards when our time came to move on. My recall is we parked the car, pictured right with Keith perched atop the Bryce Canyon National Park sign, locked it, and set off on a selfguided walking tour.







Oddly enough, Bryce Canyon isn't at all a canyon. It's a collection of giant natural amphitheaters, pictured above

left and right. Bryce is distinctive for its geological structures called hoodoos, also known as tent rocks, fairy chimneys, or earth pyramids, tall, thin spires of rock that protrude from the bottom on an arid drainage basin or badland. They are formed by frost weathering and stream erosion of the river and lake bed sedimentary rocks. Hoodoos are found mainly in dry, hot desert areas and are often

described as having a "totem-pole-shaped body."

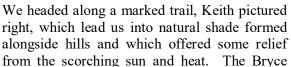
Keith set the hair on the back of my neck bristling when he somehow straddled the steep edge of a walking track to stretch over a three foot gap and onto a dead tree and climb it. then calling for me, "Hey, Lare, take picture." I obliged. Beneath him and the tree was a deep crevice. Α fascinating specimen of hoodoos can be seen to the right of Keith and is pictured right.

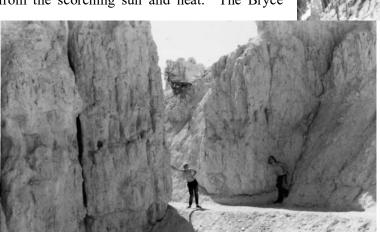


We carried no drinking water. This was a day and age when keeping hydrated wasn't in the forefront of health recommendations. It felt like we had the whole canyon to ourselves. In the two or three hours trail walking, not once did we encounter another hiker. Not only had it felt like we had the whole park to ourselves, we probably did! Along the rim of an amphitheater the blazing sun beat



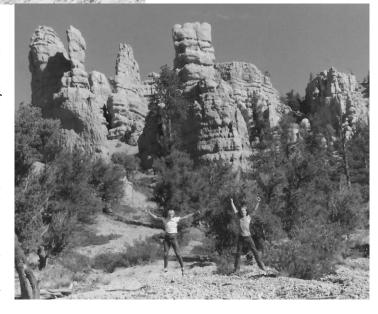
down our youthful resilience. No caps, no water, and Keith nearly fainted in the heat as can be seen in the snapshot left. He looks unenthusiastic and somewhat drained of energy.





Canyon area spans from the last part of the Cretaceous period and the first half of the Cenozoic period, millions of years before human habitation. No kidding, we expected a dinosaur to poke its head around a corner or we'd walk smack dab into the huge leg of one at any time. A wonderful scene in the shade of dinosaur country is pictured left. Keith holds back a huge rock on the left while Steve shelters from the sun in shade.

Within Bryce Canyon the rocks, cliffs, and pinnacles are brilliantly colored in shades of brown, pink, red, yellow and purple, ochre and gray. We looked in awe descending the easy trails often exchanging simple expressions of "Oh", "Wow" and pointing with a "Lookit that." The resplendent shades and tints are so bright that light seems to flow or shine out of the rocks rather than reflect from them. We marveled at nature's design sense and, at every turn, saw sights that left us speechless. Pictured right are colorful hoodoos topped by a piece of harder, less eroded stone that protects the column. Keith and Steve do West Side Story leaps in front of the hoodoos.



It was time to leave the Visitor Centre. Along the road, in another part of Bryce Canyon, we came upon a most impressive monument or geologic formation, the "oh so incredible" Natural Bridge, a huge smooth arch carved out of the limestone plateau by frost and rain. Natural bridges always span stream beds, although the stream may be dry most of the time. Bryce Natural Bridge is actually an



arch because it wasn't originally created by running water in a stream bed. It's a hole worn through a fin of rock by the destructive action of the weather. Bryce Natural Bridge is pictured left.

Highway 12 wound through more spectacular American scenery and at Scenic Byway 12 we encountered Red Canyon within the Dixie Forest, Utah's largest state forest stretching for about 170 miles across southern Utah and including almost two million acres. Red sandstone formations in Red

Canyon rival those of Bryce Canyon National Park, and hoodoos can be seen behind Keith standing atop the Dixie Forest sign, pictured right. Sage, sagebrush, can be seen growing on the ground. Vegetation, except for pine trees, was all new to our Wisconsin eyes. desert-like Sparse, plants like sagebrush lower grew at Aromatic elevations. garden sage and prairie unrelated, sage are although the leaves of



both smell similar to the herbal leaf sage. Mid-elevations was low-growing pinyon pine and juniper, the latter related to cypress. Junipers produce the aromatic purple berries used for making gin, a Polish-style beer, and cooking game meat. The pinyon pine has edible nuts, a staple food for Native Americans. The highest elevations had the aspen and conifer we knew back home as pine, spruce and fir. It also has giant ponderosa pines.

Highway 12 gave us opportunity to drive through rocks which had been drilled through to form the two Red Canyon Tunnels. Perhaps drilling in 1914 was a more conservative method of road-building

than blasting the hell out of the rocks and making a track with walls either side. In the snapshot of one of the two tunnels, I gaze at the camera as Keith checks out the approach of the RV moving in haste toward us.

The route was amazing. There is a nice overlook of the road winding down through hardened lava flows. We came to a narrow hogback that dropped away steeply on both sides. It was probably not our smartest idea to put the car in Park in the middle of the road for a photo stop, but there was no traffic. We had the whole road to ourselves. Pictured



right is a shot of what we called another "Oh-My-God" road. You can clearly see in the background two rolling, winding sections of the road. There were no guard rails and, in some places, the drop was 500 vertical feet.

At a T-junction we turned south from Highway 12 onto Highway 89 for a brief drive. Next major turn was onto the 25 mile long Highway 9, also known as the Zion-Mount



Carmel Highway. We'd traversed nearly 80 miles from Bryce Canyon to reach Zion National Park, pictured left. We passed though the 1.1 mile long Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel, the west portal framed



feet deep. Canyon walls are reddish and tan-colored Navajo Sandstone. Inhabited 8,000 years ago by Anasazi Native Americans, Mormons settled in the 1860s.

by a masonry facade of cut sandstone, pictured below, with Keith standing on the left and Steve on the right. The east portal is a naturalistically formed hole in the rock, entered directly from a bridge, hence my having no snapshot.

The prominent feature of the national park is Zion Canyon, 15 miles long and up to 2,640



We'd been over-stimulated with the magnificent natural colors and structures of Bryce weren't Canyon. We overwhelmed with Zion National Park. It may have been that such breath-taking scenery didn't snatch our breath because daylight was fading. We absorbed what we could as we aimed for Interstate 15 (I-15), for our continuing drive to the west.

I-15 took us through a corner

of Arizona which, except for noting it on the map, we didn't see. Dark descended as fast as a ball bouncing down night's staircase. We weren't even sure when we'd crossed the border into Nevada. Keith was asleep across the rear seat while Steve, eyes closed in the passenger seat, nodded his head. I was wide awake behind the wheel. Night allowed no respite from heat. An open window allowed air in from an oven. Unaware of the source, in the clear night air far, far away, I was sure I saw blinking colored lights. They remained ahead and grew closer and brighter. Waking Steve, Keith also awakened. I asked them to look at our map and see what was ahead making the lights.

Talk about not having paid attention to the map, or blame it on daytime sightseeing blurring what we should have known was ahead, but here we were approaching a city which never sleeps, Las Vegas. Here was the City of Lost Wages we only ever knew from watching movies about gangsters, con men and swindlers, and TV made it into an imaginary place of fantastical dreams. Suddenly the Golden Nugget was real, the iconic neon cowboy waving his hand and beckoning our interest. We didn't stop anywhere in Sin City, didn't have the kind of money needed for gambling and, since nothing happened here, we didn't have to let it stay here. I followed traffic at a slow speed down the main drag, our eyes ogling the dazzling colors and blinking lights, identifying and recognizing from television the opulent casinos of the Gambling Capital of the World.

We changed drivers and Steve followed I-15 as it skirted the Mojave Desert where we struck a dust storm, also known as a sand storm because sand is a more prevalent soil type than dirt or rock. Our visibility was temporarily obscured. Two more pairs of eyes worked overtime for Steve's keeping to the right of the road. My concern was maybe afterward finding paint had been blasted from my car. When we stopped in Barstow to stretch our legs I checked out my wagon's paint job; I saw nothing had been damaged.

We eventually navigated our way off I-15 to Interstate California 10 and a heavily travelled freeway. Again, I was driving so that Steve and Keith could best experience what John Primm had promised was the most spectacular way to first see the Pacific Ocean. We entered the McClure Tunnel and I announced, "OK guys, get ready to see the ocean." The view to the left that suddenly appeared as we moved westward out of the curved tunnel was... the Pacific Ocean, a most sensational experience. "Whoa ho," Steve exclaimed. "Woo-o-o-o-w," I remember hearing Keith coo as he



leaned forward onto the middle back of the front seat. A cinematic sidelight is that this same first view of the ocean is depicted in a brief 1898 Edison Studios film called *Going through the Tunnel*.



I found a place where we could stop and park and record the experience on film, shirtless Steve and Keith pictured above. Beach and ocean are in the background. It was also their first time seeing a palm tree. We wet our feet in the ocean, just to be able to say we did it.

We checked our road map and made our way to Hermosa Beach and the home of my godfather Walter Pociecha. We were warmly greeted by Aunt Joyce. I am pictured left in the front yard with Aunt Joyce and Uncle Wally, and that's the family dog's head at my legs. Bearing in mind the old adage, "Fish and guests stink after three days," the Pociecha

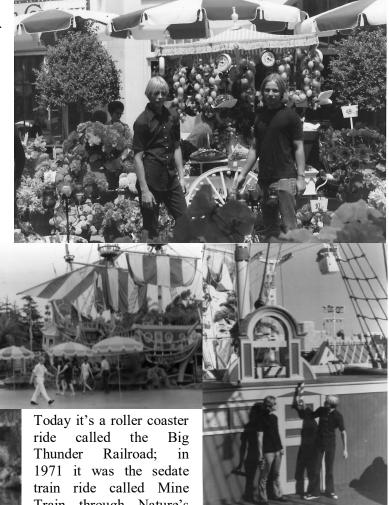
home was our pre-arranged base for the next three days. Our beds were foam mattresses on the floor in one of their sons' rooms. Both our cousins, David and Michael, were working out of town and so we never saw them.

Aunt Joyce drew us a map and the following morning we navigated our way to Anaheim and Disneyland. Compared with how it's developed over decades, Disneyland in 1971 was a very different place. It was still the happiest place on earth, but anyone today wouldn't have recognized it as that same happy place. Sure, it had its iconic Sleeping Beauty Castle, its four magic lands, the Matterhorn bobsled ride, the Adventureland cruise, Haunted Castle, Main Street, and more.

The admission price for a single day pass was \$3.50 for an adult, age 18+, ticket and \$1.00 for a child. This was just to get in the gates – no rides were included. The ticket price of the actual rides was complex, five different prices for rides, each requiring a separate ticket. Rides were designated A, B. C, D and E, starting at 10¢ for an A ride and up to 90¢ for an E ride. Making it even more complicated, ride ticket packages were offered for 7, 9, or 11 rides, each package containing a hodgepodge mixture of A through E tickets, package prices varying from \$3.50 to \$7.00. Invariably, E ticket rides were done first making sure they'd be used within the day. Ticket packages included park admission. All up, ticket book and paying for individual rides, mine and Steve's admission and ride cost may have totaled \$10.25 for the day; Keith's may have come to \$9.25. That's not including food or souvenirs.

What existed in Disneyland then that isn't there now? We had a good look through the Legacy of Walt Disney, a museum showing exhibits on how Walt Disney changed the world. Unbelievably colorful was the Main Street Flower Mart, a large display of plastic flowers: "The world's finest natural flowers not grown by nature," and pictured right.

There was Skull Rock and Pirate's Cove, a dining experience and, though we didn't choose to eat there, we did snap photos in the area, pictured below and right.



Train through Nature's Wonderland. We chose

instead something with a bit more excitement, the Pack

Mules through Nature's Wonderland. We rode real mules trained to walk in a line so we would view

simulated frontierlands and deserts including a mighty waterfall tumbling from Cascade Peak into the

Rivers of America, geysers, cacti, and bubbling pots of mud, with over 200 animated animals including beavers, bobcats, and bears. Although Steve, Keith and I had all gained some horse riding experience with Goober and Maudie, this was our first time mounted on the backs of mules. Pictured left is Steve sitting on his ass for the Pack Mules through Nature's Wonderland.

Surrounded by the Rivers of America was Tom Sawyer Island. We rode one of the Mike Fink Keel Boats, either the Gullywhumper or the Bertha Mae, to get there, on the way glimpsing the Mark Twain Riverboat paddlewheeling in the Rivers. Pictured right are Keith and Steve among the many log structures referencing Mark Twain characters from his novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. These and the caves provided plenty of hands-on climbing and scenic opportunities.



In Adventureland we climbed up and into the Swiss Family Treehouse based upon the film *Swiss Family Robinson* (1960). (Since 1999 it has been re-themed as Tarzan's Treehouse. How about that, a civilized family evicted by a loincloth wearing ape-man!) I remember seeing near the treehouse a big game safari shooting gallery, jungle-themed with images of wild animals as the targets. (That's gone too. Since 1982 preservation of wild animals is the politically correct thing and has been considered far more important than the hunting and killing of big game.)

Near the Treehouse was one of the five oldest Disneyland rides, the Jungle Cruise. Over one summer henceforth John Primm worked as a Jungle Cruise guide. As our boat glided along faux-African waters life-size animatronic wild animals were revealed in simulated real life and humorous displays. It was a sit-and-watch ride where we saw elephants spray water from their trunks, crocodiles attack the boat and our being startled when the guide fired a pistol, a rhinoceros treeing natives, and so much more. There seemed, however, more fake jungle than exhibits which moved on the cruise along with brilliantly colored birds perched in the trees which didn't move either. Most remarkable was that the wait in line to ride here and everywhere was always short.



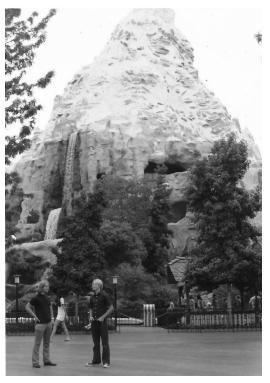
Say hello to any one of the famous Disney cartoon characters? Easy! People inside the costumes moved about freely; sometimes we'd spot them standing and waving arms, hands beckoning as if craving attention from guests. In fact, there were so few people in Disneyland we could shoot pictures and never worry about tourists walking in front of the lens. Pictured left, Keith and I pose in the open mouth of the whale from *Pinocchio* (1940). In addition to so few people, what struck

most about Disneyland was its cleanliness. Never did we see the ground littered with a wooden Popsicle stick, a partly-eaten hot dog, an empty crackerjack box, not even a chewing gum wrapper.

We rode the Skyway, a typical aerial lift ride seen in many parks. Cabins hung from cables and ran constantly back and forth between two lands, from a chalet in Fantasyland, through holes in the Matterhorn, to a station in Tomorrowland. We used another ride ticket experiencing outer space in Flight to the Moon. It was located inside a building under a tall futuristic-looking rocket ship. The audience sat in seats around central viewing screens at the top and bottom of the center of the room so we could see we were heading away from the earth and towards other worlds. We had a mission control pre-show before countdown launch and lift-off, all pretty exciting stuff in '71.

Entertaining, exciting and leading to head-spins was Circle-Vision 360°, a film presentation showing scenes from around the United States. We stood in a circular room and watched *America the Beautiful* projected onto nine large, contiguous screens that surrounded us. We filed into the theatre and stood in row separated by handrails. First impression was to laugh at having handrails running the theater's width, but with the film rolling, the reason for installment became frightfully evident. Some lengthy shots from airplanes or helicopters moved over, across and into scenes. The effect was instant vertigo which demanded grabbing onto the handrails to hang on, keep balance, and stay standing upright. Since we'd just trekked through Bryce Canyon, we were thrilled it was included.

The sit-and-watch ride inspiring our most audible "ooooh-ahhh" reactions was Pirates of the Caribbean. We sat in a boat and cruised slowly being chain-towed along an underwater track. It was a dark ride, meaning it was poorly lit until encountering dioramas of pirates in the West Indies islands in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with the story of their voyages, exploits and troubles. Noteworthy is that this was the last ride personally overseen by Walt Disney, who died three months before it officially opened in 1967. Across from the boarding area within the ride, Laffite's Landing, is the Blue Bayou Restaurant, made to look like the backyard dinner party of a southern plantation. Fireflies glimmer during an evening in a Louisiana bayou. Blackbeard delivered the safety rules and we passed rickety houseboats as we heard the soft strumming of banjo melodies including "Oh! Susanna" mixed with the gentle sounds of nature. A talking skull and crossbones gave words of warning. The boat plunged down a couple of waterfalls into Dead Man's Cove. There was a thunderstorm with a skeleton as ship's pilot. Cannonballs whistled overhead and explosions threw water into the air and spraying onto us. Fun! In another diorama pirates chased women holding trays of food, all movement in a



continuous circle. Prisoners in a cell coaxed a small dog holding the key in its mouth to come closer, their key to escape. Timbers smoldered and cracked overhead as we sailed through a storage room filled with gunpowder, cannonballs, and drunk, singing pirates. A shootout threatened to demolish the village. The boat was pulled up a water hill and we returned to a sleepy bayou.

We enjoyed our greatest thrill on the Matterhorn bobsled, the first tubular steel roller coaster in the world. Two tracks ran roughly parallel to each other for much of the ride, intertwining and eventually deviating from each other at the loading area. The vehicle, a bobsled, held four passengers seated single-file. The safety restraint was a car's seat belt which only clasped across the waist; hand grips were inside and outside the bobsleds. Steve and Keith are pictured left standing in front of Disneyland's Matterhorn. A waterfall can be seen on the mountain's left.

I climbed first into the bobsled and Keith climbed in front of me. Steve jumped in behind me. An attendant adjusted each of our seatbelts. He looked at Keith, then to me, and instructed me to put my arms around Keith's chest. "Hang on to him, so he doesn't fall out." Well, that didn't inspire confidence! Our bobsled entered a cavern and climbed a hill with the shadow of the Abominable Snowman peering onto us. We heard the bobsled disengage from its chain and off we went twisting, turning, leaning from one side to the next. The fast, wild ride was much like a Wild Mouse jerking its way through the dark. Keith grasped my legs as I hung onto him, my arms clasped tight hugging his chest. We passed through a cavern filled with crashed bobsleds and sleighs. Less-than-inspirational confidence-building! The bobsled swirled around the mountain, dipped under tunnels and by waterfalls, and passed another animatronic of the Snowman. Keith screamed a lot more than Steve and I did. Next we plunged into an alpine lake and returned to the boarding station. Had I tried to take a snapshot, my camera would have been whipped out of my hands. Upon disembarking the bobsled, our legs trembled.

"Scared?" I asked Keith.

"Yeah...." his voice trailing off, and then vociferously, "Let's do it again!"

And we did. This time we changed places. I told Steve to sit up front with Keith and, sure enough, the employee instructed Steve to grab hold of Keith around his chest and hang tight onto him.

An astounding stage show featured an audio-animatronic representation of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, Disney's boyhood hero, giving a speech that included excerpts from multiple speeches actually delivered by Lincoln. An "A" through "E" attraction admission ticket wasn't required. We sat together in a theater. The curtains parted and we saw a seated three-dimensional figure of Abraham Lincoln, America's 16<sup>th</sup> president and considered by many historians as perhaps America's greatest president. The mannequin stood and the hair on the nape of my neck was raised like iron filings attracted to a magnet. The animatronic man spoke. It was euphoric. Goosebumps puckered on my skin. Abraham Lincoln stood and spoke to us!



A long and exciting day, we headed back to Main Street, Steve pictured left patting a horse drawing a

turn-of-the-century trolley, and used our last "B" ticket to ride the old-fashioned train which circled the entire park. This way we could see everything we did and, perhaps, make a plan for what we'd do another day. Instead of facing the back end of the engine and having to turn our heads and crane necks to look at passing

scenery, we sat in cars fashioned more like park benches and looked out comfortably into the park. Alighting from the train at practically the same place we boarded, we next perused the last of the souvenir shops at the main entrance, or it's the first souvenir shop upon entering, where we bought souvenirs. I remember slowly flipping through original hand-painted, signed cells of Disney's animated feature films as if they were 33½ LP vinyl record albums in a secondhand shop. I especially liked the cells from *Peter Pan* (1953) and *The Jungle Book* (1967). These had white cardboard frames and stick-on price tags ranging from \$45 to \$65 each. How much I wanted to own one, but

they were too pricey for my wallet. Had I eyes into long-time tomorrows, I might have guessed these same hand-painted cells would sell for anything up to thousands of dollars. I never thought about the cells being an investment for my future. I stuck to buying postcards to supplement my snapshots.

Now, however, if anyone asked, "Have you been to Disneyland," I could answer unequivocally, "Yes, I have."

The next morning Aunt Joyce sketched another map plotting our course on the freeways. She made it clear which exits to take and we always made sure we were in the correct lane to avoid cutting someone or not go miles out of our way. With six to eight lanes heading in either direction, Los Angeles freeway drivers were courteous. Motorists used signals to indicate lane change and traffic always moved smoothly. Leaving common sense and courtesy at home would easily lead to accidents and road chaos. On the way to Universal Studios, it was exciting our seeing the famous Hollywood sign high up on a hill. Once upon a time the iconic sign included more letters and spelled out Hollywoodland.

Keith and I are pictured right sitting at the sign welcoming visitors to Universal Studios. The general admission ticket included the studio tour and everything to see and experience in the park. I don't remember the price we paid, but it couldn't have been more than Disneyland.



The Tour was the signature attraction at the park. We boarded candy-striped Glamor Trams which, with a guide speaking over a PA system, ferried us through four distinct areas giving us a behind-the-scenes view of movie-making. Of historical interest, the current studio was built on a mountainous crop of land, which would eventually become the famed Hollywood Hills, on what had once been the Taylor Ranch, a chicken farm. It's the same site where in 1847 a treaty was signed that made California a part of the United States. Universal City was founded and first opened on my birth date, April 30, way back in 1912. It opened to the public as Universal City on March 15 in 1915 by Carl Laemmle, back then his studio city was nicknamed "Laemmle's Folly" because a year earlier his car got stuck in mud and had to be pulled out by Barnum's Jumbo the Elephant. Laemmle's nickname was Uncle Carl because he had so many relatives on the payroll. Carl Laemmle had been an immigrant from Bavaria, Germany. When he came to America in 1884 he opened a five and dime in Wisconsin.

More history: In 1968 the Screen Actors Guild enacted a rule prohibiting visitors from most soundstages because more productions were being shot here and on location. The Back Lot tram tour couldn't show visitors much in the way of real movie and television production. Exciting experiences for visitors were created in place of viewing actual film/television production. We had no idea what we were in for on this tour among exciting experiences.

Our first stop was the Front Lot, a large area crammed with offices, some ornate, others plain, where all motion picture planning was done. Amongst the many small buildings, rooms, and workstations occupied by directors, producers, and movie stars, the guide encouraged our disembarking the tram to step into Lana Turner's dressing room. Too much before his time, I doubt Keith ever heard of Lana Turner. Whether she still used it as her dressing room was the question, but we were treated to seeing wigs, hats, dresses, plumed feathers, a white make-up table and its mirror surrounded with lightbulbs, perfectly arranged pots and tubes of lipsticks, powders, shadows, liners, and rouges on its tabletop.

Need I mention Keith thought this stop was a waste of time? Ahead of re-boarding the guide indicated Lucille Ball's all-white office used for producing her television show.

There were 32 airplane-hanger-like buildings on the front lot called Sound Stages. Sets are built inside and when the director is ready, cameras roll and his call for "action" starts everything happening. Of course, nothing that happened "on set" was visible to the tram tour. We just saw buildings' exteriors. Some warehouses had open doors and, on passing, we glimpsed period and contemporary furniture stored in the Property Department, clothing and costumes on hangers in the Costuming Department, the latter looking like Goldman's Bargain Basement.

We stopped again outside what appeared to be a small sound stage. Inside was set up like a museum of Universal miniatures that had appeared in movies. A new guide pointed to each of the miniatures,



pictured left, and explained what role each played in a movie. We saw the airplane used for exterior flying shots in Airport (1970), a train from Around the World in Days (1956),riverboat from TV series "Riverboat" (1959-1961), a bridge for *The Bridge on the* River Kwai (1957) which I doubted because the film distributed Columbia, and a helicopter (foreground) used in TV series "San Francisco International Airport" (1970-1971)John

Wayne's oil well firefighter opus *The Hellfighters* (1968). A demonstration from the popular TV series "The Bionic Man" allowed a volunteer from our audience to lift a truck with his bare hands. Used to facilitate the special effect were hydraulics.

Universal's Back Lot happens to be one of the largest in the world. The tram stopped by a Mexican village in Old Mexico. Since 1968 tour guides have shown how rain is made, but the effect couldn't be shut off! Oh m'gosh, there's too much rain. All part of the exhibit's excitement, next a flash flood burst from the top of a hill and violently rushed straight for the tram, but it was channeled to flow left of the tram. A dead tree set right where the tram stopped uprooted itself and toppled toward the tram causing some visitors to blurt out a scream in delight.

We shuttled into Six Points, Texas, a Western town in constant use ever since 1918 when Tom Mix made his first Universal cowboy movie. However, only one building remains from that era, the Livery Stable barn. It was used in 1940 for *My Little Chickadee* starring W.C. Fields and Mae West. John Wayne made several westerns here including *The War Wagon* (1967). Clint Eastwood and Shirley MacLaine worked here on *Two Mules for Sister Sara* 1970). The name of the western town set comes from the fact that six streets come together at a single point. In the days of the silent films, each street could be used by separate companies shooting at the same time because they didn't have to worry about sound carrying from one set to the next. Today it resembled a ghost town. Every building an empty façade, no one entered or exited the saloons, no window-shopping the general store and millinery, or cowboys plodding the dirt streets or slightly raised wooden sidewalks.

Park Lake was the home of a full-size Mississippi Riverboat which actually worked, its miniature viewed earlier. The lake was equipped with a wave-making machine for creating storms from gale to hurricane. Everything was serene the day we visited. The site was used in "McHale's Navy" (1962-1966), "Gilligan's Island" (1964-1967) and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954).

In my film collection were 16mm prints of Frankenstein (1931) and Bride of Frankenstein (1935), as well as Phantom of the Opera (1925), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1923), and Dracula (1931) among the 8mm films. Pictured left is "The Court of Miracles," and possibly named in 1923 for Lon Chaney's The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1923). I bobbed on my seat as I recognized the arch beneath which every Universal monster has appeared, and I was lucky enough to be on the side of the



tram where I took a good snapshot. Unfortunately, that's a teensyweensy white lie about every one of Universal's famous monsters showing up under the arch on this set because a devastating fire destroyed the whole area in 1967. The sets we saw were reconstructed in 1967 as replicas of the originals. This replicated set appeared in Little Europe, also known as the European Street, a maze of streets, town squares and buildings, authentic reproductions of Old

architecture and decoration. Cobblestone streets are permanent and made from pressed cement. Covered with sand or dirt they are transformed into streets and passages of other time periods.



Pictured left was a brand new exciting experience added in 1971 to the tram tour, the "Torpedo and Submarine Attack" on a manmade lake used in numerous movies and TV shows. It was the same lake where Frankenstein's monster met the little girl Maria. Together they tossed flowers into the placid water. When the monster ran out of flowers, he tossed Maria into the water. That part of the action was often cut from prints, the violent act being too graphic for audiences. Diversion aside, in the lake was a sub which firing a torpedo toward the tram. Just as the tram turns on a bend at water's

edge, the prop torpedo "explodes" in a giant spray of water shooting upward and onto squealing visitors.

Colonial Street originated in 1946 and has a long history spanning over 60 years of movies and television. It was designed to represent a typical American residential street. A Colonial Mansion was one of the oldest working sets in Hollywood, dating back to 1926 and the silent era of pictures. The guide named the TV shows and movies for other houses. The Maxim House looked creepy and was the home of "The Munsters" (1964-1966); the Allison Home was used in the James Stewart movie *Harvey* (1950) and in the Don Knotts comedy *The Ghost and Mr. Chicken* (1966). There was the Paramount House built for the movie *Desperate Hours* (1955) starring Humphrey Bogart and produced by Paramount Studios. Sometimes studios exchanged "sets" for making a movie. The Paramount House replaced a house labeled set #21 seen in movies *Here Come the Nelsons* (1951) and *Any Body Seen My Gal* (1955). All of the houses on Colonial Street looked whole, complete, and believable as peoples' homes, but all were façades, meaning buildings were just empty walls. Inside were no rooms. Interiors of the family homes were filmed on a set built inside a sound stage.

Change the landscaping and a house became a "new" residence. Bogart's Paramount house, for instance, was transformed for use by the Cleaver family for "Leave It to Beaver" (1957-1963). A

radical change and the Cleaver home was transformed into the home office of Robert Young's title character in "Marcus Welby M.D" (1969-1976).

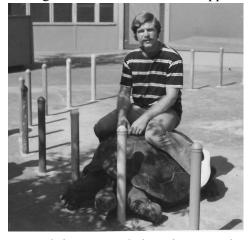
Singapore Lake was a set which could be transformed into any seaport in the world. Above it stood a scary-looking house. Along one shore was a Hong Kong waterfront with a Chinese junk moored adding credibility to the set.

The *Psycho* (1960) house was that scary-looking house standing alone high on hill above Singapore Lake. It was another empty façade with three sides and a roof. The front of the house and distinctive tower was the same as that used in the *Harvey* house on Colonial Street. The fact it was on its own, even now in daytime's sunshine, it looked foreboding and forbidding. Norman Bates' "mother" seen from the upstairs bedroom window, still rocking in her chair, was a creepy "special effect." I'd liked to have snapped a photo but the Tram stopped in a position wherein I'd have photographed more the backs of people's heads than the eerie building.

The Glamor Tram tour finished after an hour or so and we were turned loose for a self-guided walking tour. The biggest and most unpredictable "attraction" of the Studio Tour has always been the prospect of bumping into a movie star, or just happening to see one. Chances of meeting someone really famous were a long shot. As happened in Disneyland, Universal employed "actors" in full costume and make-up. Roaming the grounds, sometimes appearing threatening, Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, the Phantom of the Opera, plus unidentified cowboys and Indians were amenable to posing with or without guest for snapshots. We carried a timetable for "live" shows and timed our exploring to coincide with a show's start.

In the Upper Lot within Ma and Pa Kettle Farm, also called the Ark Park, was the Animal Actor's School Stage, formerly "Lassie's Animal Stage" to celebrate the massive success of the movie dog. Sitting in bleachers we attended Ray Berwick's live show. He'd trained birds for the movies including Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963). The show featured birds flying from and to its trainer on command. Birds rolled over and played dead. Some picked up items and flew them to a place the trainer requested. Included were parrots, hawks, owls, and an eagle.

Amongst movie animals in the Upper Lot were giant Galapagos tortoises named simply Number 1



and Number 2. pictured left astride either 1 or other. elephant ride was 50¢. I paid for Keith to briefly be a mahout and ride as he'd certainly never have such an experience Stevens Point. pictured right.



We took in a second show in an outdoor movie set, a daytime amphitheatre where, again, we sat in bleachers. This time watching cowboy stuntmen present a live action Western demonstration illustrating how they safely exchange punches, fall from heights, and stage fist fights for the camera, and usually without injury. We were told the stuntmen may have performed in the Western movie *The War Wagon* (1967) and sword and sandal epic *Spartacus* (1960). I doubted the claim for *Spartacus* because it was made 11 years earlier and the stuntmen in the show looked too young. There were three old west facades. Coordinated by cowboy actor Arnold Roberts and running from 1970 to 1973, there were thunderous gunfights, whirlwind fistfights, cracking bullwhips, and one bad guy breaking a whiskey bottle over another cowboy's head. I liked that stunt best because I'd already learned the "glass" bottle was made from sugar. It didn't make the sound of breaking glass, but it



Keith and I on "Land of the Giants" Park Bench...

shattered like glass. One cowboy stuntman on the saloon rooftop was "shot" and tumbled forward landing in bales of hay, pictured left. We didn't catch sight of whatever cushioning he used.

A full-size prop dominating the Upper Lot was a medieval tower used in Charlton Heston's *The War Lord* (1965), but I don't remember if we could climb inside or if we just looked and admired it. Just about everything displayed and made available in Prop Plaza was hands-on and ideal for snapshots. As it was in Disneyland, Universal City wasn't overcrowded and our pictures clearly show that.

... and inside "A Man Called Gannon" Jail Cell



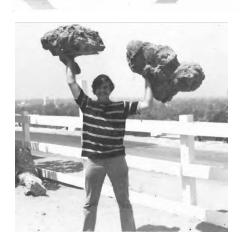




Keith and "King's Pirate" Cannon, every part of them carefully constructed of wood.

Lower left, I lift feather-light Foam Rubber Boulders.

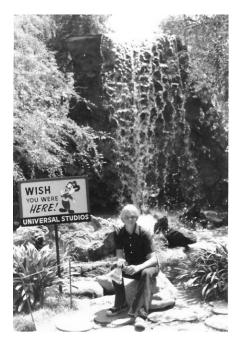
Below right, Keith with John Wayne's war wagon from *The War Wagon* 1967





Trees were manufactured of balsa wood and/or plaster over a wire frame and painted. They looked like real trees, but being lightweight they were easily carried by the props department people now acting as set decorators following instructions from the set designer. Boulders and rocks were foam rubber and, as indicated in the snapshot above, light as feathers. Keith and Steve played "catch" with the boulders. They are given weight in film rockslides, earthquakes, and when tumbling down cliffs or hills by means of undercranking the camera, i.e. any number of frames faster than the standard shooting/running 24fps speed.

We climbed inside John Wayne's metal armored coach used in *The War Wagon* (1967). It was clearly plywood; all of the sheets numbered like it had once been a hobbyist's life-size model. Inside was raw wood, specifications for measurement, sawing and assembly clearly identified in crayon markings and numbers. The wagon's exterior was painted to look exactly like riveted sheets of strong metal.



Pictured left, Keith poses at Falls Lake, a one of a kind set. It was originally built in 1926 for the silent Universal classic *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and has been in constant use ever since. The lake is named for the waterfall that flows down one of its steep cliff made of a plaster called hydracal. The falls itself is controlled by a push-button. The bushes and trees can be arranged and rearranged along the cliff edge. The height of the hydracal cliff can be adjusted from 30 to 60 feet.

Pictured right, Keith stands among Klieg lights, intense carbon arc lamps useful both in stage and early motion pictures, and named after its inventors John Kliegl and his brother Anton. Their company founded in 1896 and grew to be the largest

stage lighting company in the world. The carbon-arc source was so bright it allowed directors to make "day" at night. Arc light is similar to the flash you see when a welder is working. It's intense and produces powerful rays in the UV spectrum that can't be seen but are tough on eyes, often causing noticeable redness and swelling, a condition known medically as actinic conjunctivitis. Continued exposure can lead to more serious eye problems, even blindness. Use of Klieg lights lead to a



notorious era of actors having painful eye problems and referred to as "Klieg eye." According to the book *Inventive Genius*, "Actors forced to work under the bright lamps created a Hollywood trademark as famous as the Kleigl brothers' invention: the perpetual wearing of sunglasses." People in the movie business were afraid of eye soreness or possibly going blind. And that's why movie stars began wearing sunglasses all the time, not necessarily on camera, but whenever they were on the set or nearby. OK, that's the teacher in me coming out again! No one told us that bit of history on our tour of Universal.

We returned to Uncle Wally's Hermosa Beach home on time for a special dinner Aunt Joyce insisted she'd prepare. Uncle Wally had met Aunt Joyce when stationed in London during World War II, so it was fitting she made a very British roast beef with Yorkshire pudding. Prior to sitting at table, Uncle Wally showed us his backyard hydroponic garden and hothouse hydroponics. We only knew sowing seeds in the ground and eventually pulling up matured vegetables covered in earth. We learned that

hydroponics meant no earth was used, only water with some stones to help anchor roots. Aunt Joyce included some homegrown with dinner. Vegetables and salad were delicious.

We were introduced to owls and hawks tethered or caged in Uncle Wally's yard. Michael, the younger of our two cousins, was under contract for Walt Disney films and TV and was training the birds. Pictured right, Keith gets acquainted with an owl.



Next morning was our third day and time

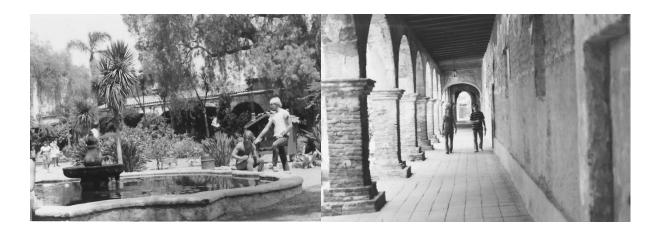
to move on. We said good-bye to Uncle Wally as he left for work in Redondo Beach. Like his father, my grandfather Walter, he'd become a barber. We wanted to head south toward the U.S.-Mexico border. Again Aunt Joyce drew us a simple map to get us onto I-405. Via signage one freeway merged into another and suddenly I-405 became I-5. Our recommendation was to stop en route at Mission San Juan Capistrano, a California landmark established as the 7<sup>th</sup> of 9 missions by Father Junipero Serra on November 1, 1776. Its purpose was to expand the territorial boundaries of Spain and to spread Christianity to the native people of California, the indigenous Acjachemen (pron. Ah-Hawsh-eh-men), object being to transform them into self-sustaining Spanish subjects and members of the colonial order.

Our only interest on the day was to see the place made famous by the popular song "When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano." Familiar with hearing it from musicians such as The Ink Spots, Guy Lombardo, and Pat Boone, the song had been inspired by the American cliff swallow, a migratory bird that spends winters in Argentina, flying there from October 23, but makes the 6000 mile journey north to the American Southwest in springtime every year around March 19. The Mission's location near two rivers made it ideal for nesting swallows because there was abundant food and protection.

Finding Mission San Juan Capistrano was made easy because its location was only three blocks off I-5. We contributed a small fee for a ticket and were free to conduct our own walking tour of the grounds and some open rooms with displaying artifacts and historic collectables. Inside the Mission was its church. Within the church is what's called today Serra Chapel, the Mission heart, or spiritual center, which dates back to the 1780s and where the Eucharist had been celebrated daily. It is the only chapel still standing where Saint Father Junipero Serra actually officiated. It was built by Native



Americans as baptized Catholics re-named "Juaneños." Around 1910 the impressive golden altar in the chapel had been brought from Barcelona, Spain and was made of hand-carved wood with gold leaf. It's estimated its over 330 years old. The chapel had to be expanded upward to accommodate the baroque's altar's size, 18.5 feet wide by 22.5 feet tall, snapshot pictured left.



Steve and Keith reflecting at a fountain

Steve and I walking a long outdoor corridor.

Pictured right, Keith and Steve in a tumbrel, a two-wheeled wagon designed to be hauled by one horse or ox for agricultural work, usually manure. During the French Revolution a tumbrel conveyed prisoners to the guillotine.

We thought we might drive across the border into Mexico and continued driving south on I-5. Freeway signs announced Tijuana ahead. There was a quick exchange of opinion about going on or turning around. On TV news and in the newspapers we'd heard and seen or read too many horror stories of cars being stripped upon the return from Mexico into the United States.



Customs and Immigration officers were white-glove thorough fulfilling requirements for the war on drugs, the term having been coined only two months earlier on June 18. Initiated as early as February 1968 by President Johnson, in June 1971 President Nixon declared drug abuse as "public enemy number one in the United States." As well, Tijuana didn't have the best reputation for safety. Our minds made up, I found a turnaround lane and headed back in the direction of San Diego.

A quick perusal of the map and Steve navigated us into Chula Vista and onto I-8, eventually onto the secondary Highway 98 where we headed toward the U.S. town of Heber near the Mexican transborder agglomeration sister cities of Calexico-Mexicali, about 122 miles east of San Diego. Instead of driving across the border, I parked the car for free in a safe lot on California turf not more than 100 feet from the check-point. There was nothing elaborate about border protection; no gates, a couple of buildings on either side, a simple guardhouse either side where papers could be presented and returned. The American side was heavily shaded by trees, of little comfort in the hot and humid day where rain was uncommon. Crossing by foot into Mexicali was too simple. No passport, no proof of identity was requested or required. All we were asked individually by a friendly Customs and Immigration officer was where we were born in the United States.

Immediately in Mexicali, also known as Chicali, and the capital of Baja California, we noted little physical difference between cultures. On both border sides everything and everyone looked Mexican, even the U.S. border controllers. Mexicali wasn't as street clean as Calexico on the California side. Few people had milled about on the California side when we arrived; the Mexican side appeared to be more bustling, active, noisy, and with people merely sitting around the shops or lying on the sidewalk. Were we nearing siesta time? Conscious of having pockets picked, gangs wielding flick knives, or getting our faces rearranged because we didn't have brown skin; the bravado of youth in our favor, we hoped, we courageously ambled the busy street.

The Customs officer had warned us not to eat the street food or drink the water, and to be careful about food in any of the cafes too. Sidewalk vendors sold cooked chicken pieces open to the air, unprotected from the afternoon sun and pesky flies. A man with his front teeth missing offered cool drink served from a bucket. He'd ladle a lemony-colored liquid into a glass he'd just cleaned by swilling it around in a second bucket of water, no separate rinse.

A Mexican boy about Keith's age approached us with the kind of confidence often displayed by door-to-door encyclopedia salesmen. His command of the English language was pretty good and, as approachable as he appeared, I didn't want to trust him. Calling me "Mee-ster", he persisted in asking 50¢ to be our guide. "I show you everything, Mee-ster. I show you good time." I was wary of what he wanted us to see for a "good time". For all I knew, he was in cahoots with other black-haired teenage thugs. He may have been innocently trying to earn some honest money, but fearing theft, possibly being led away and never being seen again, I politely declined his offer as persistently as he tried to win my favor. Even though I'd deliberately left my Nikon in the car because a camera or a camera bag always screams Tourist, this kid saw Tourist carved onto our foreheads, especially Keith's with his white blond hair. We didn't hire the boy, but his noise raised too much unwanted interest from others mulling about the sidewalk. Nothing turned sour.

Had we the money and inclination, we could have snapped up bargains in leathergoods, jewellery and woven straw products like baskets and hats. Steve had learned Spanish in high school, but like my having done Latin, command of the language was spotty at best. Mexican shopkeepers were more than willing to dicker over prices. Several upon hearing Steve's, "No gracias," followed us past their stalls all the while lowering the price without bartering to make a sale. We hadn't exchanged US dollars for pesos. It wasn't necessary. Mexicans accepted American currency. Keith bought himself a huge sombrero for a pittance, even managed to pay for it with pocket coin, thus having to avoid being handed centavos in change.

Steve and I were looking for a consumable souvenir, an adult beverage preferably made from Mexican agave. In Mexico such inebriants can be found, according to my informed brother, in the <u>la tienda de licores</u> (liquor store) where tequila, mescal and kaluha prices were severely cheaper than in the United States. Keith was allowed into the shop and together we ogled the labels and chose brand names we didn't recognize from any liquor store shelves back home. For our own stomach safety we bought bottles of soft drink, plus Steve and I each shelled out US dollars for a bottle of tequila.

Although spending very little money while walking a commercially-laden Mexicali street, at the least, should anyone be inclined to make such enquiry, we could say with a straight face and without fibbing that, yes, we'd been to Mexico!

Returning to the California side of the border, the same Customs officials we'd seen on the way in to Mexico now had different, almost discomfort-inducing expressions registering on their faces. Looking every bit like the stereotypical Pancho Villa in his bushy mustache, the Customs and Immigration official asked where we were born. Our information confirmed with the positive nod of his head, we were asked what souvenirs we were bringing into the United States. Keith happily showed the sombrero on his head, his face barely showing beneath the floppy oversized brim. I showed the bottle of tequila I'd purchased and he waved it through without a second glance. Steve showed his bottle of tequila and the official's face convulsed into a scrunched frown. "How old are you?" he demanded. His big confident smile on show Steve answered, "Eighteen!" "Drinking age in Mexico is 18," the official stated, "but here in California, you must be 21 to bring in that bottle." Steve's smile deflated as if a cork had been plucked from his ear. "Uh, what about me," I asked. "One quart is all you can bring free," he replied, "and you already got yours."

The Customs officer gave Steve the choice of surrendering his bottle of tequila or walking back across the border on his own to return the bottle to where he purchased it and ask for a refund. I didn't think to ask if I could pay the duty on Steve's bottle and bring it in as my own. I'd never bothered learning the rules and regulations of border crossings, duties or duty free.

Steve went back into Mexicali alone while Keith and I waited anxiously under the shade trees. The Customs and Immigration officer stood with us, eyeing us, suspicion smeared across his face. Our hair was long, well, long-ish, and we were dressed in sweaty T-shirts and dusty jeans. Steve was unshaven, something of an unkempt goatee sprouting from his chin, and his hair was disheveled and hanging down to his shoulders. In the eyes of a Customs officer, we obviously came across as fishy. We watched as people crossed the border. As if finished for the day, their chores cleaning one or more American homes, some Mexican women chatting among themselves carried mops and empty buckets. In our unpleasant situation, Keith and I observed what appeared to be hostile looks directed at people by the border officials heading into Mexicali or returning to Calexico.

Some thirty minutes into waiting, Steve returned empty-handed. Looked upon as a trio in doubt we were asked if we'd bought switchblade knives. No, we hadn't, but we'd seen some displayed in shops. "And you weren't tempted to buy one?" the officer interrogated. Ever so grimly he next asked if we'd brought back any Acapulco gold, any marijuana. No, we hadn't and, no, we hadn't been approached by anyone trying to sell us any. The droopy mustachioed officer wasn't convinced of our complete innocence.

We were herded like sheep into an adobe Customs and Immigration building, a grotty little place which hadn't seen the use of a broom in a long time. A disinterested officer sat behind a counter reading a magazine while our Pancho Villa shunted us into a lock-up with bars, its door opened, and in a gruff voice ordered us to face the wall and spread our legs. From the corner of my eye I saw the officer draw his pistol from its holster. I can't speak for Keith or Steve, but I know I was s\*\*tting myself in fear. This sort of crap only happened on TV or the movies!

The officer was silent as he proceeded to frisk our bodies, his pistol held up near his right ear, his free hand moving up and down the outside and inseam of our pants. Not satisfied with finding something, we heard a dry, harsh order, "Drop your pants."

I turned my head. Before I said, "Are you kidding?" he abrasively gnashed out, "Don't turn around. I said, drop your pants."

We were strip searched, a demeaning experience if ever there was one. No kindness in his voice, he ordered we bend over and spread our cheeks. He suspected we'd shoved Glad wrap packets of drugs up our rear ends to conceal them from inspection. And Pancho was getting to the bottom of it! With trousers and unwashed Fruit of the Looms around our ankles, I guess our innocence was finally proved. He decided were hadn't tried smuggling illegal drugs across the border. Ever since President Nixon had declared a war on drugs; now Pancho had won his own little drugs battle and, in the process, humiliated three genuine tourists. He just told us to pull up our pants and get out. That was it, "Get out!"

This was more than we'd ever bargained for because travel time had been eaten into by an overzealous drug war officer. We simply wanted to be able to say we had been to Mexico. That's all. In silence we climbed into the car, a much better word being shock, as the afternoon sun had already started its rapid descent below the horizon.

Driving this quiet highway with no traffic in either direction showed no promise of finding anything for our sleepy eyes and tired bodies. Not only did it feel we had the road to ourselves, we did. As the sun sank in this desert country, we looked for a wayside to rest. Headlights on, night landed with a thud. Windows up, I switched on the heater. Our body trembles may have been due more to coming down from our fearful border experience than from cold night air. Perspiration beaded on foreheads and glommed under arms. I turned the heater off. Winding down the window gave no cool relief. We'd slipped into hot night desert air.

On a sharp bend and surrounded by rocks was a lone picnic table. Steve happened to glimpse the table in a flash of headlight glare as we'd passed it. Tall rocks on three sides easily obscured the table and the wayside approach was set opposite to the direction we traveled. With no traffic to worry

about, I reversed and made not quite a three point turn to secret the car and ourselves within the wayside.

We may have stumbled upon a warm air pocket whereby the air cooling after sunset took its good-natured time. It was comfortable, not at all sweaty. There was no tap water or toilet facility, just the lone unpainted wooden picnic table. Too warm to sleep in the car, our bed for the night was the picnic table. Sure, we could have lain on the ground, practically as warm as the air, but we feared night-hunting creepy crawlies like rattlesnakes, scorpions and Gila monsters. Last thing we'd want in the morning was a scorpion in a shoe or a snake crawling across a chest. We stretched out onto the seats, one on the tabletop, making offhand comments to play down our disturbing border experience. We slept soundly.

The sun was just starting to climb over the terrain when we woke. It was still warm, very pleasant in fact. Hungry and thirsty, we drove the flatland toward El Centro. The local radio host announced without a glimmer of excitement it was already  $105^{\circ}$ . Such temperature here was commonplace. El Centro, the largest city in the Imperial Valley, was just waking up as the sun bleached it in its rays. I drove down several streets looking for a café or restaurant offering a big breakfast for a cheap price. We found a Perkins Pancake House. Breakfast was a stack of pancakes with a variety of syrups in small jugs, eggs, sausages, toast, jam and unlimited cupfuls of freshly brewed coffee. For \$1.99 we figured we'd filled to our brims for the day.

Outdoors the morning temperature had soared to 110°. Barely out of El Centro all surrounding land was barren desert. We'd never before been in such a high temperature and stopped the car to take pictures. The desert air was dry. The sun bearing down on our tanned yet tender skin seared.





From El Centro we made our way out on Highway 115 to connect with I-8 driving toward Arizona. Being desert, we didn't expect to see anything agricultural, but the Colorado River was the irrigation source for growing fruits, vegetables, cotton and grain. No one was on Highway 115 when we spotted an unfenced, untended orange grove. Steve pulled roadside. Stepping out of the car our noses met aromatic citrus, the skins of fresh oranges hanging on trees. We each hand-picked a couple oranges to munch for lunch.

Just out of Algodones was the California Agricultural Inspection Station. An arm barrier was used to stop traffic. An inspector, not unlike the Pancho we'd encountered yesterday, asked Steve, our driver, if we had any fruit in the car. All three of us said, Yes," and held out our oranges. The inspector, slightly frowning, knew our fruit hadn't been bought in a store, but his job wasn't to accuse us of pilfering. He informed that to prevent fruit fly we couldn't take the oranges into Arizona. We could surrender the fruit dumping it in a receptacle, or pull to the side of the road and eat the oranges before proceeding. The only oranges we knew in Wisconsin came from the supermarket. We weren't going to pass the chance to eat oranges from a tree. Steve parked at the side of the road. We peeled oranges and greedily savored the juice and pulp, the taste everything better than any orange we'd ever peeled

at home. Disposing of the peelings, we thanked the inspector and headed across the border into Arizona.

Steve's map reading prompted his suggestion we drive some of the old, famous Route 66. He said it was now called I-40, but there had to be some of the original Route 66 in the area. For the next 250 miles and 4½ hours via I-8 we crossed the Colorado River, skirted Yuma and jumped onto I-10 toward Phoenix to get onto I-17 bound for Flagstaff. En route we were entranced by the slew of smoke trees. Blue-gray in color, they grow only in desert washes where roots dig sixty to seventy feet into damp earth. They have no leaves but, from a distance, their myriads of spines resemble puffs of smoke. We could be forgiven for occasionally thinking the desert was smoldering.

Flagstaff wasn't our destination, but it took us in the direction of Holbrook, old Route 66, where just off I-40 we could explore a small section of a natural landscape known as the Painted Desert located in the Petrified Forest National Park. Holbrook is within the Painted Desert, a remarkable area of rocky badlands that stretched from the Grand Canyon to the Navajo Nation. A dazzling and lonesome landscape, its layered bands seemed to change color every hour. Holbrook's roadside Americana charm was just a small part of the kitsch of mid-century's Route 66. Whitewashed concrete and steel teepees are part of Wigwam Village constructed back in 1937. It's an overnight accomodation, although booking for the night wasn't on our schedule. Vintage cars parked outside added to the retro appeal. In the town stood the Bucket of Blood Saloon and the Blevins House where we stood on the sidewalk and watched a short play. Local actors recreated a noisy shootout between gangsters and the sheriff.

Millions and millions of years ago an abundance of water created lush forests of conifer trees. Volcanic eruptions toppled the trees sweeping them away and depositing them in marshes. Over



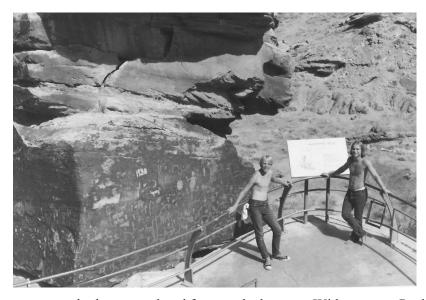
millions of years volcanic ash and mud covered these trees and buried them deep in sediment. process of petrification transformed logs colorful to entombed stone. ocean An eventually covered the area bringing even more sediment. Over 60 million years ago the ocean receded. Flowing rivers slowly moved away the sediment exposing beautiful crystal petrified logs that, today, we call The Petrified Forest. Pictured left, Keith can be seen kneeling down and peeking through the center hollow of a petrified log.



Keith and Steve sit on a the fallen log of a petrified tree.

Other than by means of genre movies including Science Fiction and Fantasy, my head held an impossible impression of how the Petrified Forest was supposed to look. Although beautiful to see, I was initially unimpressed with so many logs lying on the forest floor. What was an entire forest doing on the ground? Call me uninformed, short on science, or just plain fanciful, but I really had expected to see an upstanding forest of turned-to-stone trees!

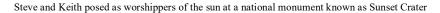
The Painted Desert was a living painting spanning 160 miles. We checked out the Visitor Center where we looked at artifacts and prehistoric specimens from the Late Triassic Period, the "Dawn of the Dinosaurs" some 200 million years ago ahead of the Jurassic Period when dinosaurs ruled the earth. It goes without saying I bought postcards. We drove along the 10-mile paved road inside the park, stopping frequently to snap pictures.



We'd been made aware of Newspaper Rock and took a spur road to see it, Keith and Steve pictured left with one. It is neither a newspaper nor a single rock. The site has over petroglyphs covering several rockfaces in a small area created by ancestral Puebloan people living, farming, and hunting along the Puerco River some 650 to 2000 years ago. Petroglyphs are rock carvings made by pecking directly onto a rock surface. We leaned over the rail to look down the cliff to

spot petroglyphs-covered rockfaces at the bottom. With so many Puebloans carving the rocks over so many years, it is impossible to "read" the rockface as there is no linear story. There are, according to modern Native American groups, family and clan symbols, spiritual carvings, and calendar events. Others marked territory or suggested map routes.

Just as we managed not to rub shoulders with others in Disneyland and Universal Studios, we had this section of the Painted Desert to ourselves. It might have been an advantage to bump into someone so that we three could appear together in a photo, but it never happened.





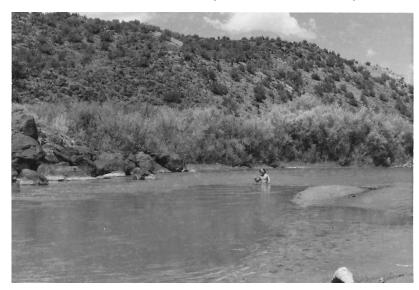
Within the Painted Desert is Sunset Crater, a cinder cone volcano. Made of basalt, it's high in iron and is a dark color. The cinders are all made of gray, black or red basalt. Iron oxidizes, rusts, and that explains the red color. Aged over 900 years Sunset Crater might sound old, but in geological years, it was young, a baby in fact. The eruption was fluid over two years and wasn't violent. When we visited Sunset Crater, it was extinct, but another eruption could happen in the direct vicinity in the future.

The Painted Desert with its buttes, mesas, pinnacles, and valleys formed by ages of wind and rain cutting into shale-like volcanic ash, its pastel colors adding to the beauty, hills and terraces revealing brilliant shades of blues, reds, and yellows genuinely impressed us.

Enjoying the hot, dry weather, we followed I-40 to eventually cross the border into New Mexico. We drove through several Indian reservations, tribal names unfamiliar to us as they'd not been the hell-raisers during the pioneer expansion west. Waysides often had no toilets or a water faucet for washing hands. There might be a picnic table, always a covered can or bin for garbage. Waysides were merely rest stops where drivers took a breather from the hypnotizing road. The fact we slept overnight may not have been intended as wayside use, but with so few travelers about we always felt safe. In these dry regions mosquitoes didn't pester at night.

Early in the morning we avoided Albuquerque by turning left near the Indian Petroglyphs National Monument onto a secondary road running parallel to the Rio Grande, the famous river which, much further south in Texas is the border between the United States and Mexico. Steve said we needed to clean up, get rid of the sweat and dust. In a place isolated from prying eyes we parked alongside the river and stripped down to underwear, a skinny dip on hold just in case someone happened along. Water flowing slowly, in we waded. The river water was shallow, more brown than blue; we stuck

to firmly planted feet for safety bobbing under water scrubbing rubbing hair, our arms, loosening our jockeys' waistbands to wash. My great memory of the Rio Grande wasn't the river's historical significance or the fact a John Wayne movie bore its name for the title. I remember seeing a turd floating downstream while performing ablutions. my "What the hell," I thought until catching sight of my brother's conspicuous smirk. "When ya gotta go, ya gotta go," Steve sang, pictured left waist-deep.



There, then was my finest recollection of the Rio Grande.

We continued northeast and it's a mystery how or why we ended up in Taos. We'd driven the so-called Low Road which followed the Rio Grande through farming lowlands. Along the way local produce farmers had roadside fruit and vegetable stands which, of course at one we stopped for fast freshly-harvested crunchy food. Although there were sights to see, we didn't stop in Taos. With a festival being celebrated, the going was slow. The narrow uphill road was swarmed with people excitedly pushing their way downward. There were more Native Americans and Latinos than whites. I noted several bronze-skinned men and women having wrapped themselves in white blankets bearing green and blue decorative trim. Parking at a premium, we didn't stick around to find out the reason for so many happy people assembling. We just got out of everyone's way, slowly up a mountain, where we'd be able to park and stretch our legs.

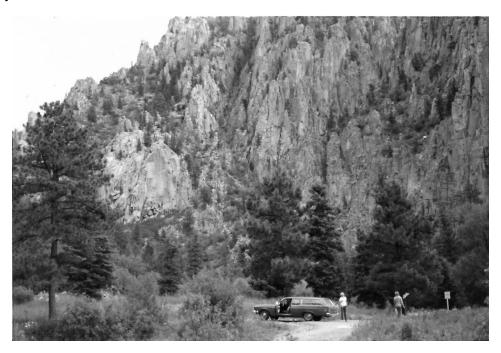
As quickly as we'd met cramped festival goers on the narrow road, we found solace high up a mountain road where we were parallel to clouds. It was a natural phenomenon we'd not before seen. Wet spots appeared like magic on the windshield. It was overcast and there was enough room to safely park the car. Stopped, we saw snowflakes landing and immediately melting on the windshield. Our bodies were shocked stepping into the sudden cold outside air. We hadn't been aware the temperature on ascending had dropped so dramatically. Snow flurries danced in the slight breeze. The road's edge dropped sharply, though it wasn't quite like an earlier "Oh-My-God."



Pictured left, Steve and Keith eye-level with a cloud. It is snowing, but the flakes do photograph. Keith and I wore clean shorts, no shirt, after our Rio Grande "swim." changed into warmer clothing. Steve already had warm clothing on his back, but said that he too felt the chill.

The effect the cold and snow had on us was

enough to say, "OK, that's it. Vacation's over." Having been spoiled by desert sunshine, dry air, and constant warmth, now all interest in sightseeing was lost in our self-constructed avalanche. Of course the temperature warmed after we descended the mountain. Steve studied the map and navigated us forward onto I-25, eventually to connect with I-80, the route Steve and I traveled to and from Salt Lake City last Easter.



There were leg-stretching stops high in the Rocky Mountains, an isolated Colorado wayside pictured above, quick naps and fast food in Nebraska, a long stretch through Iowa, into Wisconsin, and finally home to our Stevens Point farm where everything was familiar and it still felt like summer.

## Chapter 70: Son et Lumière<sup>1</sup>

Essence: A Lecture in Sight and Sound Slideshow

Roughly three months had passed since Morty's shock declaration about packing up and going to Australia... and not a creature had stirred. I overheard no plans, learned nothing of arrangements, saw no scurrying about for passports or obtaining visas. If I mentioned even boo about Australia, Keith's lips clenched tight along with a jerk of his shoulder. It looked like Morty's candle for Australia hadn't even been lit. For me and that faraway continent, work no longer meant straddling a pipedream's fence. Aware that former student, Debbie Cable, had recently left my English class and gone to Australia with her family, I decided I should write her father. I didn't know Bill Cable, a member of the WSU Stevens Point Mathematics Department. Heedless of his whereabouts in Australia, I enquired into the University's Information Service hoping he'd have filed contact details. Mr. Cable kept the university informed and I was handed his foreign address. He'd taken up a position teaching Mathematics in an Australian high school under the auspices of the International Teaching Fellowship program. I typed a letter telling Bill about myself and my idea of wanting to investigate the possibility of teaching in Australia. I addressed the envelope to places I'd never heard of: Morwell, Victoria.

Air mail in 1971 was unbelievably efficient and fast. You got your money's worth of service. I could write a letter, send it on Monday, and if the recipient replied immediately, I'd receive mail within seven to eight days. The response to my enquiry came back as two letters. One was from Mr. Cable wherein he asked me to call him Bill, and he suggested about the school where he taught that I should make it into a movie. Obviously, Bill had shared my letter because the other, a thirteen pager, had come from Mr. David Schapper, headmaster (the curious title he used) of Maryvale High School and founder of its unique education program (spelled programme) and Australia's emulation of England's progressive Summerhill.<sup>2</sup> The United States had its radical Summerhill schools too, opened in the 1960s and based on the dictum "Freedom not Licence."

Mr. Schapper described how Maryvale wasn't like any other high school in Australia because it was considered a research and development in education, in less salubrious term, an experimental school. I was invited to come to Australia and put to good use my talent and knowledge of motion pictures, to set up a film studies program in Maryvale High School in the town of Morwell, the state of Victoria. It sounded too good to be true. Given that, I was equally apprehensive and excited at the offer. According to both Bill and Mr. Schapper, employment at

1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A French phrase meaning Sound and Light, used to mean a sound and light display staged at a historical site to portray the site's history. It has reference to 19<sup>th</sup> century lantern slides; today it's a slide show.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Sutherland Neill in 1921 founded a school which he could run according to his educational principle of giving freedom to the children and staff through democratic experience, his belief being that the school should be made to fit the child, rather than the other way around. Run as a democratic community by means of school meetings, which anyone, staff or pupil, may attend, and at which everyone has an equal vote. These meeting serve as both a legislative and judicial body. Members of the community are free to do as they please, so long as their actions do not cause harm to others, according to Neill's principle "Freedom, not Licence." This extends to the freedom for pupils to choose which lessons, if any, they attend. It is an example of both democratic education and alternative education. More on the philosophy can be found in Neill's "Summerhill: a radical approach to child rearing". New York: Hart Publishing, 1960.

Maryvale couldn't be guaranteed because the Education Department of Victoria didn't work like that. In Wisconsin, you applied for the school where you wanted to work and, more often than not, you got what requested. How it happened in Australia was indeed strange. More letters with both Maryvale people needed to be exchanged. I guess I was looking for that guarantee, something in writing before uprooting myself from Stevens Point across vast oceans to God know where. That aside, my head continued whispering, "Go."

You entered my life in a casual way,
And saw at a glance what I needed;
There were others who passed me or met each day,
But never one of them heeded.

Those four lines form the first half of the first stanza of *To a Friend* by Grace Stricker Dawson. For his portfolio in elective English, a Poetry unit, Keith's chosen topic was "Friendship." Following tension during our brief separation, my guess was that he intended to learn more about that special bond and in the process find some proof for our unique friendship. *To a Friend* was placed second in his portfolio. Of its opening Keith wrote, "The author is talking about a person who is very much wishing for a friend. No one stops to say anything. Then this friend enters his way and the person's life is filled with joy when he says the things that the person always wanted a friend to say to him." I found it amusing Keith's referring to himself in the impersonal third person when writing of himself as "a person" and "the person," but it appeared he clearly remembered how we were first brought together via Don Severson and his engineering my visit into his English class.

Throughout the Poetry unit Keith participated actively and intelligently. As his teacher I was impressed with his ability to discuss composition technique, poet's intention, interpretation, and meaning. Keith made good use of Study Hall time to visit the library and do research for the term's major piece of work. He even managed to find and read poems while I was gallivanting around Utah with Steve and Jim. Topic chosen by the student, each needed to track down poems on that topic, then analyze and interpret each poem, as well as giving a reason for inclusion in their portfolio. Keith typed his project using my typewriter. I never looked over his should to sneak a preview at what he wrote. The introduction to his topic and reasons for including selected poems gave insight into Keith's behavior, his new understanding of the concept of friendship, and a freeing up of the guilt in his conscience over his manner of participation or lack of it in his attraction to me, and I for him. It was as if the portfolio told about a friend lost and a better friend regained. Material of this nature is subjectively evaluated as there is no set right or wrong. I may have been positively swayed by Keith's topic choice, but there was no doubt the learning and comprehension on display. My written comment on his cover sheet included, "Excellent introduction – shows truth and conviction. Poem selections are excellent. Your analysis of each poem shows that you have learned something about this topic. Keith earned an A.

On Keith's cover page I didn't write that he'd achieved heights not previously reached. Maybe I should have. Sitting outside on the porch I told Keith of his having climbed new heights. Keith shot his infectious smile at me before he charged off the porch and did something no one had ever attempted on the farm. Like an agile gibbon Keith shimmied up the rickety windmill! I nearly filled my pants with melted Hershey's as he lit up the creaking struts. "Look at me, Lare," he called, "I reached new heights!" My eyes like saucers, I called up to him, "Keith! You come down here. Right now!" My own fear of heights grew a lump in my throat choking my Adam's apple. "Not until you take my picture," Keith





shouted, and that snapshot is pictured left. It was a reminder of the stunt he'd pulled in Bryce Canyon.

Spring chores included removing storm windows and putting up screens, cleaning the barn, bathing Goober and Maudie, cleaning up doggy poops, digging the garden patch and planting a few seeds, plus the weekly handwashing of bed sheets and pillow cases. I never owned a washing machine, but had an old-fashioned washboard in good condition picked up for about two bits at a farm auction.

Often clothed as if we'd been plucked out from some long-forgotten glass plate negative, so our chores reflected the hard manual labor and elbow grease of our ancestors. In a more relaxed moment Keith and Steve are pictured right in the twin washtubs.

May's weather was up and down like a yo-yo. It challenged our senses for what to wear. Raincoat? Overcoat? T-shirt? Sweatshirt? Time was, however, on my side making arrangements for Australia.

Morty didn't know I'd been making overseas enquiries or that I'd been filling in and completing official Australian forms and papers. I finally got around to discussing what I was up to with Steve and Keith. After all, it was impossible to hide letters bearing air mail stickers and Australian stamps. They, like me, daily checked our mail box. Picking up Keith from Plover one May afternoon, I found Morty putting up screens getting the house ready for summer.

"Morty," I called, the tone of my voice demanding his attention, "Remember at Keith's birthday how you told me about your taking the family to Australia?" His lips shaped into the uncomfortable smile of a half-wit. "Five dollars says I'll be in Australia before you shake a leg!" We shook on the bet.

I discussed my Australia-bound plan with Keith's mother asking what she thought about my having gone ahead with the idea. She smiled knowingly and said she thought all along Morty had been talking out of his ass. He'd done nothing to realize his ambition, still worked on and off bartending, and managed to get her impregnated. Her pregnancy was Morty's excuse for evading an overseas move because baby's arrival incurred unplanned expenses. Morty's further avoidance of responsibility was not marrying Keith's mother as he'd promised, his reason being that he hadn't yet saved up money for that kind of change.

And what about Keith! Well, his mother's suggestion lined up with the very first time we met when she'd flippantly announced, "If you want him, you can have him." As easily as rattling off her shopping list, this time she said, "Why don't you take Keith with you?"

Keith, after talking about what his mother had said, was very keen. However, logistics of taking Keith to Australia, paperwork required considering guardianship, and my being single, yada yada... all of that practical and reasonable thought didn't enter anyone's mind.

In September Keith would enter 10<sup>th</sup> grade at P.J. Jacobs High. If wishes were fishes<sup>3</sup> and Keith wanted to go to Australia with me, we needed to see some of the United States. I was certain of the first question anyone asked in Australia. "Have you been to Disneyland?" I told Keith that if he had an interest in doing a road trip, I wasn't prepared to pay for everything. Even though we'd go west on the cheap, I wanted him to accept personal responsibility for his own expenses as much as possible. "What say you get yourself a job, earn some money for going west in August," I suggested. Keith agreed. He'd never before had a summer job, let alone any job and, after all, he was 15.

I told my brother about the likelihood of another road trip and, without giving a second thought, decided he was going. Steve would share the driving. We planned for an August vacation, sometime before school resumed and to allow sufficient time for Keith and Steve to earn significant spending money.

My plan for the summer was to attend summer school at WSU-SP and work toward earning a Master of Science in Education. I'd been made aware the further a teacher went in education, the better the pay. Summer courses were convenient because they never took up all vacation time. I registered for post graduate work, Education 802, an Educational Psychology subject.

Morty recommended Keith to his boss at the tavern he worked and Keith accepted a part-time job washing dishes. I saw little of Keith outside of school. He worked Friday nights, Saturdays and Sundays. Monday in school he often looked tired. I kept opinions to myself, but sometimes wished he'd quit dishwashing, especially after Keith shared stories about the redneck clientele. I guess I was afraid they'd have a negative effect on him. I worried most when Keith told me how Morty occasionally handed him beer to drink while he washed dishes. Having spent so much time on the farm, I should have known better. I hadn't realized Keith had developed a pretty good moral compass.

I didn't approve of Morty's so-called fathering skills. Bartending, Keith said that Morty shot the breeze with his flannel-shirted buddies, often talking without pausing except to have one on the house just to keep sociable. Rarely did he take time to drive Keith home before midnight. Closing time, usually around 3:00 a.m., long after dishwashing chores finished, Morty might be too much in the bag to drive. If Keith finished before midnight or when Morty became incoherently indisposed, Keith was left to his own devices to hitch home. More often than not Morty coaxed a slurred speech someone into reluctantly driving Keith and, "Jush drop 'em off on yer way home." Occasionally Keith borrowed a dime from Morty. His call knocked me out of bed or off the couch to come pick him up. Keith invented excuses to stay overnight on the farm and away from Morty. He boasted about how much money he'd earned. I simply shook my head when Keith told me that Morty deducted the dime from his pay to make sure he was repaid. Keith showed pride in how much he banked for the trip west. His goal was to make it to two hundred dollars, maybe more. The following Saturday or Sunday lunchtime I'd return Keith to the stale smelling saloon for his next shift.

Keith woke one morning and croaked a groggy, "Mornin'."

"You sound like you have a cold, Keith."

"Nah," he replied.

"Talk to me, Keith. Just say something... anything."

Keith spoke saying nothing in particular and it was obvious he hadn't caught an overnight cold. Another secondary characteristic of puberty had finally arrived.

"You know what's happened, Keith?" I asked.

\_

 $<sup>^{3}</sup>$  An expression suggesting the impossibility to make wishes come true.

True to his ever-charming naivety Keith simply replied, "Nah." But it was "Nah" in his new lower-pitched voice. Overnight, without hint, Keith's voice had changed. No longer the pubic squeakiness, the cherubic soprano, Keith's voice had evolved into a pleasant second tenor. At fifteen, neither beneath his nose nor on his chin, the dramatic signs of five o'clock shadow remained invisible. There was no blonde peach fuzz shadow and, in need of a trim, no changes to his white blonde mane or his fair, fair skin.

During the week, the schooldays, Keith lived on the farm. Away from the classroom that lesson that before a teacher teaches any subject, he teaches himself continued to apply. I was teaching Keith on the farm without ever resorting to its formality. Then all academic activity at the Junior High's classrooms ceased, just like that, the first week in June. It was time, according to a crooning Nat King Cole and in our minds anyway, for the lazy hazy crazy days of summer. Keith and Steve worked as many hours as they could squeeze in, and I attended lectures in Education 802 taught by, lucky me, Dr. Tom McCaig.

The Number One holiday in the United States, I believe, has always been celebrated on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Independence Day this year falling on a Sunday with parades, family picnics, and culminating in a grand fireworks display. I suggested Keith needed a weekend away from the tavern and its dishwashing drudgery and took him to West Allis. My family loved Keith, especially my mother. With his good manners and gentle manner, she always thought he benefitted most from my friendship. Mom never felt that Keith used me for whatever it was I might be able to give him in a material sense. She saw that Keith genuinely cared about me, and I him. My brother, having lived on the farm and getting to know Keith as a person, in actuality being my little brother, was never irked by my referring to Keith as my little brother. Twin sisters Luann and Joann loved Keith from afar. Both had a crush on him.

Right: Keith and Steve kid around with the tandem bicycle before it was decorated for the West Allis parade. The dog is Kluski.



Left: Keith and I on the front lawn of my family's West Allis home. 4<sup>th</sup> of July flags decorate the front lawn.

In the morning we watched the West Allis city parade. At its head was the VFW color guard. My

mother
marches
with the
women.
In the
picture
left she
can be
seen

marching second from left. In the picture right, my father marches in the second row on the right.



Friend Ellie Eberharty is behind my sister Luann with the decorated tandem bicycle

Friend Barb Breitenfelt, left, and my sister Joann, center, baton marching.



Pictured curbside left watching the parade in West Allis are, from left, Steve, brotherin-law Jim Herro, his wife and my sister Mary holding their firstborn Kristin, and Keith.

In the afternoon we found more curbside space in downtown Milwaukee from which we watched the Schlitz Circus Parade. This million dollar enterprise brought original circus wagons by train from Baraboo, birthplace of the Wisconsin circus, and site of the wonderful museum visited on a field trip

in 1968 with my Native American students. I learned this was the last of the circus extravaganzas for some years because insurance premiums outweighed the risk of terrorist bombing threats which were becoming commonplace nuisance with anti-Vietnam sentiment and

protest. It wasn't idle thought. Fact: August 24, a truck bomb was used to shatter Sterling Hall on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus because four radical anti-Vietnam War activists considered the University complicit in military research that enabled aggression.

Our watching the Schlitz Circus Parade this Independence Day was an especially rare experience and I'm so glad Keith was included.



Back on the farm I learned someone from my past, one of my students in Upward Bound, was attending summer school. She always went by the nickname, Newt (not her real nickname). She had a crush on me back then and, for some reason, she wanted to start sparks flying. I didn't mind. She was an attractive girl, was lots of fun, and I liked her. Newt had played it cool, never letting on to others - or me for matter of fact - her genuine feelings. Having participated in both programs, after her second summer finished she wrote letters professing her love. She kept me interested. Now Newt was doing an introductory freshman class and living on campus in one of the women's residence halls.

We saw each other once in a awhile, but I can't say that we ever really dated. I might have taken her out for a burger and a walk in the park, but most times we just sat and talked in my car. Something changed. She called at ungodly hours of the night saying she not only wanted, but had to see me. I drove into town, sat with her in the residence hall lobby talking, sometimes out in my car, so I can't be persuaded to call those oddball hours dates. She made me feel more like a counselor or therapist instead of a mutually agreeable partner.

Strange phone calls came, sometimes from Newt, other times dialed by her roommate. Newt blabbered incoherently, her speech peppered with frequent aspirated pause. She'd burst into tears and I suddenly felt guilty for something about which I knew nothing.

Total confusion overwhelmed my thinking after Newt's roommate called to say I'd better come to the dorm immediately; Newt wasn't at all well and she really needed to see me. Slumped in an overstuffed chair in reception when I arrived, her eyes were red from crying and her body trembled. She was uncoordinated and went limp when I attempted to hold her. Newt wasn't in control and went silent as I held her, but just as suddenly she dissolved into tears when I asked what was wrong. She couldn't or wouldn't speak. I looked up to the receptionist behind the lobby counter, my expression begging for some kind of help. The response was to ignore me, as if what was happening was an everyday "who cares" experience.

To Newt's roommate I said I'd take her to St. Michael's Hospital, at the least contact campus medical services. The roommate said Newt would be all right, that she'd had too much to drink. Out of the blue the receptionist added her two cents, "She don't need no doctor, just needs to sleep it off."

I drove home concerned, confused, feeling helpless. There was, right there before my eyes and in my arms, an emergency, certainly, but no one was willing to help or give up information. Not understanding what had happened, I had to accept that Newt may have drunk too much. One thing wrong with that offhand diagnosis... no smell of alcohol.

In the days following I was unable to speak with Newt. My phone calls were fobbed off. "Sorry. She'd not here." "Sorry. She's out." "Sorry. She's gone home." None the wiser, I was being shut out. I couldn't believe that Newt was out or that she'd done a U-turn to avoid me, not after what she'd penned in her letters. For all I guessed, maybe she wasn't coping with class. Eventually Newt's roommate broke her vow of silence and blurted that Newt screwed up her head using drugs. Of all things, heroin! And she'd left campus to seek medical help to shake the monkey off her back. I asked where she'd gone, but that news was, according to the roommate, "a secret."

"What the heck!" I exclaimed. "Why didn't she just come right out and tell me."

"She couldn't," the roommate said. "She knows your stance on drugs."

Newt didn't want me to know she had a problem. She was afraid she'd lose me. That night though, what did I know about taking drugs, much less the dreadful heroin. I knew nothing.

"Don't be angry with her," said the roommate. "She really does love you. That's why she didn't want you to know."

I wanted some idea why she'd gone without saying anything about where. I don't know; maybe it was better my head stayed in the clouds. I was left holding a sack of unpleasant memories and unresolved mystery.

In my summer school class reading texts was homework. Participating in discussion, question and answer sessions of same happened in class. This activity comprised the bulk of Education 802's assessment. Of topics covered, and replacing the final exam, was one major assignment. Advantage was that a lengthy written paper wasn't the be all and end all. We could submit

whatever we wanted, as long as it demonstrated thorough comprehension of presented concepts. Captivated by our study of essence, the likeness shared by every human being on earth, and comfortable with presenting a project on the subject, I aimed for exercising my creativity.

I thought about making a movie to illustrate my mental grasp of essence. However, time was of another essence. I looked at the calendar for a shoot, sending film away for processing, viewing and reviewing, then editing. Out of my control was the processing time. What if something went awry during transportation or in the laboratory? An excuse for late submission of material equaled failure. Therefore, I opted for written narration recorded onto reel-to-reel tape accompanying a slideshow. I'd write first and next shooting slides to match my words.

Who was a better subject for my film project than little brother Keith! I asked if he was willing to be in my slides. "Yah, sure," he beamed responding in second tenor. From our first day together I had seen how the camera loved Keith. Explaining what the slideshow was about, Keith shrugged his shoulders and, delivering his beguiling smile, said, "I don't get it." A slight beat and his smile changed to confidence, "But you tell me what you want and I'll do it."

All people are different. We want to be individuals – and we are. Though we can identify what makes one person unlike another person, we may not, at first, see that everyone shares a likeness.

Thus began my narration, my Education 802 project on *Essence: A Lecture in Sight and Sound*. Rather than bore the pants off you with the jargon and academic terminology of Educational Psychology, instead I'll share slides and you can interpret them as you wish.







I posed a solvable conundrum in my project when writing, "Here is Keith, fifteen years old, a completely unique person. What does he have in common with the silent screen's great lover Rudolph Valentino, or children in Peru?"







Concise instructions appeared on page one for Mr. McCaig's viewing and to evaluate my project. I didn't own a carousel used on the Kodak Carousel projector, but knew the university had many. Each slide was numbered and they were bundled in chronological order. Mr. McCaig needed to insert every slide into each subsequent slot of the carousel. With all slides in order, he'd set the tape recorder playback for 7½ ips and press play. To indicate slide change during my narration I added a "clink" sound tapping a butter knife against an empty glass. Of course I picked a glass which made a pleasant sound. I had the background music of my narration fade out shortly after the final slide reading THE END.

Submitted July 28, I expected I'd do well, and I did, but I wasn't prepared for Mr. McCaig's comment:

A beautiful experience, Lare. Thank you. A "Son et Luminere (sic) of depth, grace, and sensitivity.

## Chapter 71: Farewell Farm the Second... Forever

acation, August 1971, wound down like a yo-yo flung headlong onto the pavement to walk the dog. A day's temperature could scrape high into the 90s ahead of crackling lightning, booming thunder, a collision of warm and cold air, and then a cloudburst forcing the temperature to plummet into the low 60s, on its heel a winterish shiver.

August rent had been paid ahead of Steve, Keith and I wandering the west and, as luck would have it, my final-ever monthly payment. Like a rogue Apache lying in ambush until our covered wagon returned, now the landlord informed of his planned demolition of the buildings – the granary, chicken coop, barn, and house – bulldozing them into rubble to make room for next spring's potato planting. Everything we knew as home was going to be turned into another field of money-earning potatoes. I knew his announcement was inevitable. He'd said so as much as a year ago. Still, when it came my heart went ker-chunk right down past my socks into the soles of my feet. We could stay through September, and without having to pay September's rent, if I needed to, but the landlord wanted me out as soon as possible. We didn't rush into moving, but an air of immediacy had smacked us square in the face.

Getting our heads around anything having to do with moving house, Keith made an off-the-wall suggestion which had nothing to do with ending our time on the farm. Out of the ether Keith said that since we already celebrated Mother's Day and Father's Day, and Father's Day held no interest for him, how come we don't we have a Big Brothers Day? "What?" I asked, "You mean another special day added to the calendar?" That's what he was thinking, and he was genuine. Keith took to my typewriter and wrote a letter to the President of the United States asking me to sign it along with his signature. The letter was mailed to the White House.

A reply was received in the shortest time at Route 5, Box 334, from a White House staff assistant:

President Nixon has asked me to thank you for your thoughtful letter. Your suggestion is appreciated.

I hope you will understand, however, that a President ordinarily issues proclamations designating periods for special observance only when a Congressional resolution authorizes him to do so. Therefore, I suggest that your next step in furthering the cause of a Big Brothers Day would be to approach your Congressman with the idea.

With the President's best wishes to you and Keith,

The letter's signature was Michael B. Smith, Staff Assistant. The letter, as interesting as it was, suggested more work for Keith and, I'm only guessing, it discouraged him because he never followed through with finding out who was our Congressman and writing another suggestion. As I was Big Brother in Keith's eyes, that was enough recognition as far as I was concerned. I didn't feel it was my place to be asking for a Big Brothers Day.

My brother Steve intended following through with his college education in Stevens Point. Losing free accommodation on the farm was a blow to his wallet. No, I'd never asked my brother to share the rent because he always helped with groceries and contributed to the gas, electricity, and phone bills.

Now Steve took advantage of summertime's end and ahead of college classes starting, and before viable options were swept up; he searched for off-campus accomodation to share with one of his buddies. He didn't strike gold, meaning Steve's experience examining available rooms was all too similar to mine: dark hovels, cramped quarters, and fuss-budget landlords with rules even more strict than if they were invented by your parents! Steve scored a brightly lit dorm space he shared in Room 233, Watson Hall. Of course our father stepped as best he could to help financially with term by term accomodation fees.

While we'd been in the west, I'm sure Steve Thompson did his best tending the horses. However, Goober wasn't his healthiest self. The rope halter hadn't ever been removed from his head. The halter abraded, wore into skin and exposed a raw wound attracting flies. Eggs laid, maggots hatched, and the raw wound was infested, infected. I called a vet. Examining Goober, all the while gently shaking his head, he winced asking how I could have allowed this to happen. The maggoty wound was carefully cleaned, a gooey medication applied, and Goober would be expected to heal quickly as long as I continued carefully cleaning the wound and applying the ointment. The vet was the animal doctor often stereotyped in Hollywood movies; a kind-hearted gray-haired soul so concerned with animal welfare, he didn't charge excessive fees for a house call. Had I plump chickens in the coop, he'd have probably accepted one as payment. His fee barely made a dent in my wallet.

Complicating matters unexpectedly, Newt showed up behind the wheel of her own car. My reaction to her arriving surely came across as an intrusion rather than making her feel welcome. I had been busy packing cardboard boxes with kitchen necessities, preparing for my having to move house. More than anything, though treated as if in passing, I wanted to know where she'd been for the past ten weeks, what she'd been doing, and why she upped and went without so much as a boo. If we were supposed to be a couple with plans for the future, her disappearance never made sense.

All Newt volunteered was that she'd been in a hospital in Texas. Her unwillingness to say more didn't anger me, but I had trouble accepting her lacking in substance explanation. I somehow persuaded Newt to open up, un-clam, and be honest. She bluntly answered she'd been in rehabilitation, drying out from heroin. Her admission came as a shock.

My behavior could only be described as holier than thou. Rather than expressing empathy or sympathy or showing an nth of caring, I held Newt at arms' length by her shoulders.

"It's all over, Newt," I said in a voice void of affection and wholly expressionless. Adding insult to her injury, I drew a conclusion which may or may not have been rational or warranted, "Once a heroin addict, you're not gonna change."

"But I'm all cured now," Newt pleaded.

Cement-headed, unwilling to prolong the conversation or continue the relationship I snapped, "No, Newt. I'm done, and anyway, I'm going to Australia." My cold words canned any and all chances of romance or, as the old-fashioned phrase goes, making whoopee. That was that. Finish. The end.

I bought the *Stevens Point Daily Journal* and searched the House/Home/Apartment rental column. As much as I'd preferred renting another rural property, I knew I'd be wasting time, maybe even money. I was bound for Australia, more than likely in January because the Victorian school year started in February and I planned to be there from the first day. I just needed to find a comfortable place until Christmas vacation. Teaching at Ben Franklin would last just over three months.

Just ahead of school start, and in a shorter time than ever expected, I found an apartment in a duplex, the upstairs, at 1614A Main Street in Stevens Point. Monthly rent was \$110, a leap from \$65 a month paid for living on the farm. The landlord's preference was a long-term tenant. Being a local teacher was recommendation enough for longevity. About my plans for Australia, I zippered my moosh until it became necessary to break the verbal agreement.

Of course the apartment wasn't large enough for storing all the things I'd accumulated for farm life. Instead of placing advertisements in the newspaper, I put signs at the head of the farm's driveway. Word-of-mouth prompted sales to get rid of unneeded items of value. I picked up a few bucks easily. The two Round Oaks sold almost immediately, as did the middle room's gas wall furnace and the power lawn mower. I freely offered the porch rocking chairs to my sister Mary.

Not so easy to sell were Goober and Maudie. I rang the veterinarian who fixed Goober's head and asked if he knew of anyone looking to buy horses. He arranged a buyer with children, daughters. You know the story... "Daddy, I want a pony." The vet brought the family to the farm and I demonstrated Goober's gentleness. Maudie, though more spirited, also interested the family. Offers were made and I accepted \$40 for Goober, a \$15 increase from what I'd paid, and the same \$60 as I'd initially paid for Maudie, although this day she wasn't in foal.

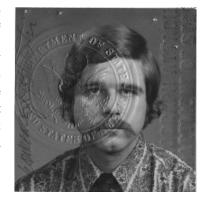
Two double beds and two single beds seemed impossible to sell, probably because they were Holiday Inn beds without headboards. I stooped to calling on a second-hand dealer willing to buy the unwanted beds. Junk dealer would have been his more appropriate title. He offered a paltry \$10 for all four beds. Bent over a barrel, I had to accept his offer. Worse, I sold him the original Civil War vintage McClellan saddle for \$10. I'd have preferred giving it away to someone who'd have appreciated it for what it was; maybe even donating it to Dave Jurgella for his collection of Civil War memorabilia, but Dave wasn't interested, nor was anyone else.

Moving into the apartment was fairly easy. I didn't need to rent a trailer. With help from Steve and Keith, my station wagon had sufficient room for several trips carrying one double bed, bedding and pillows, the kitchen table and its four chairs, the Zenith 21 inch color TV, one of the middle room couches, crockery, cutlery, cooking stuff, and a few odds and ends with which I couldn't part, like the crock for fermenting sauerkraut or dill pickles.

The upstairs apartment was less than modest. It had a bathroom with a tub, toilet and sink cramped behind a door one immediately reached the top of the stairs, and a pantry and unlighted storage space to the right of the stairs. A short passage divided the one big bedroom from the pokey kitchen. It even looked too small for a not-so-shrunken Alice in her Wonderland after I arranged the dining setting. There remained barely enough space to stand at the cooking stove. The only space I considered large was the carpeted living room with big windows and open draw drapes and old-fashioned lace curtains overlooking busy Main Street, which also served as Highway 10. Even after one couch, one lamp, one television stand with TV, and the foam pillow/mattress Mom made, the living room still looked huge.

I'm almost embarrassed to say that as the new school year started I signed a teaching contract on

September 2, 1971 which covered August 23, 1971 to December 31, 1971 for the sum of \$3701.37 AND the sum of \$4602.44 for the period of January 1, 1972 to June 1, 1972. With four good months to be productive in the classroom and simultaneously earn money before flying off to Australia, there was no reluctance on my part to sign the contract. I, however, took special note of the clause, "The parties understand and agree that this is a solemn, binding contract not to be breached by either party without good and sufficient grounds. The contract may be terminated before the end of the term by mutual agreement of both parties." Whew!



Compared with life on the farm and its never-ending chores and possibilities, life in the apartment was nothing short of lackluster. Four rooms and a television... well, that was it. If for nothing else, living upstairs on Main Street was convenient. I saved on gas money for the car. A walk of two to three blocks and I was in the central business district. Banking and going to the Post Office was uncomplicated. During these earliest and still warm days after moving into the apartment, I arranged my first-ever passport through the Post Office, my passport photo pictured right. A requirement for entering Australia, I obtained an International Certificate of Vaccination which carried Dr. Rifleman's verification of my having been vaccinated against smallpox. I mailed my valid passport to the Australian Consulate in Chicago and hoped I be granted a visa to enter Australia. I'd given up on the Victorian exchange program suggested by Mr. Cable and applied instead for a Migrant visa. I wasn't keen on the arrangement of teaching for 18 months and having no choice except to return to the United States when the contract expired, then maybe reapplying and spending more money to come back and take up where I left off.

For grocery shopping I drove to Red Owl, sometimes with Keith coming along to help. If I'd walked and carried full brown paper bags without handles all the way home, uncomfortably heavy cans, bags of flour, bottled goods and such might have risked bags' breakages.

Downstairs renters was a young and friendly married couple who never posed a nuisance, never made annoying noise with the records they played, nor did I ever hear them fight cat and dog. Loud voices weren't heard. They had a small dog which enjoyed playing with my Kluski when we allowed it.

Poor ol' Kluski had a major adjustment after having been so free-running on the farm. He couldn't wander and explore because city life didn't permit loose roaming. Kluski was tethered to a stake on a leash in the yard, just as I'd tethered Goober on the first farm while I had to be at work in school. Unlike Goober, Kluski didn't break free and ramble. The yard was fenced, but without palings or gate between the house and garage. When weather turned inclement, too much forecast rain or snow, I kept Kluski inside where I didn't provide a pan of dirt for a toilet. After all, I thought, Kluski wasn't a cat! He often peed and pooped because he had no way of letting himself outside to do his business. I hope this doesn't come across as cruel, but when I came home and found his unpleasant "messages," I shoved his nose in his own duty and shushed him down the stairs and outside to finish. It may have been extreme, but Kluski learned from my unpleasant lesson. More often than not, Kluski waited patiently at the bottom of the stairs by the door, no doubt with crossed legs and gritted teeth, if that's what a dog can do. I'd hear him scampering in a circle until I unlocked the door and let him outside. Like a rocket he launched himself to the elm tree and... well, you know.

The biggest adjustment I had was learning to cook on the electric stove. I'd grown up with gas appliances in the family homes, the university dorm's basement kitchen, two farms, and now I had to re-learn everything I knew about cooking. I frequently burned foods I wanted simmered. The oven turned out impossibly over-done roasts and too-baked cakes that flopped. Either that appliance required attention or I'd turned into an incompetent!

Of all my adaptation to change, most difficult was being on my own most of the week. Did that translate to lonely? No. It merely meant alone. Pray-Sims Hall, both farms, I'd grown too accustomed to having others around; instant company always, or so it had seemed.

Keith had successfully finished Year 9 and so had his attendance at Ben Franklin Junior High. He'd moved on to Year 10 and the school in town for big kids, P.J. Jacobs High School. He rode the school bus in from Plover. There was no convenient time for me to drive to his house ahead of his bus to give him a ride. I to Franklin, he to Jacobs, we traversed in opposite directions, even crisscrossed some mornings when I'd see his bus and he'd spot my car.

Weekends, however, when he wasn't holding a dish party at the tavern, we had our weekends together. Rarely did I pick him up at Jacobs because he preferred not waiting and met me at the apartment. I'd given Keith a spare key to the door so he'd never be caught in the rain or later, snow.

He looked after Kluski's toilet needs Fridays and made sure the dog got plenty of exercise in the yard. Sometimes Keith had coffee brewed for me when I came home from school. Oddly enough, here in my last months on the job I managed to stay after school attending the boring English staff meetings.

Having written Principal David Schapper almost immediately upon our return from the West, in time and forwarded to my new address, I received his reply in the form of an aerogramme, a blue prestamped one-sheet light-weight paper folded and sealed and sent via air mail for  $10 \, \text{¢}$ . Prior to this correspondence, I'd not ever seen an aerogramme. Perhaps Mr. Schapper worried I'd given up when he'd heard nothing during my two weeks out West. He wrote, "I started to wonder whether you had lost interest or had become too disheartened. 'Twas beaut to know 'twas neither." Interesting his use of the word beaut and the spelling of aerogramme on that one-sheet. New words to me.

Mr. Schapper advised that I wasn't to allow the Victorian Education administration to shunt me around. I was instructed to be adamant that I came out to teach only at Maryvale High School, no other school. If they didn't accede, I was to walk out and he, Mr. Schapper, would appoint me in any case. But, of course, I wasn't to tell them that.

Further, he recommended I bring complete copies of academic qualifications and teaching credentials, but under no circumstances was I to surrender my originals to the administration. They should make photocopies, if they insisted on having them on file. There was an ongoing dispute between the administration and the teachers' association which wasn't going to see a quick and satisfactory resolution. Mr. Schapper wrote that he didn't want me used as a pawn in the struggle. It all sounded like so much foreign intrigue, the stuff of movies, and everything with which I was unfamiliar!

Mr. Schapper said he was thrilled at my decision to join the staff at Maryvale High School; he expected I'd develop a brand new course of study in Film Appreciation, adding that it would take some time for me to get used to them, but after a while I'd find myself very much involved and more than loathe to leaving.

Develop a whole new course in Film Appreciation? Holey-moley, I had no academic qualification in Film, but if that's what Mr. Schapper wanted, that's what he was going to get. Forget about it be called work. This was going to be fun. I'd be teaching my hobby.

In pleasant conversation with my downstairs neighbors I learned that my upstairs apartment held an unexpected bonus, cable TV. I found the cable lying on the carpet hidden behind floor-length curtains in the living room idly waiting to be connected. Hooking up was merely plugging the cable into the TV's socket for only \$10 a month. My Zenith's screen glowed with channel reception on every number of the manual dial, most cable stations coming out of Chicago, others from South Dakota and Minnesota. Sundays I bought a Chicago newspaper so I could read its supplement TV magazine for programs scheduled over the next seven days. It turned into heavy decision-making because there was too much choice. Weekends in particular, from as many as ten good movies on at the same time on the same night, I'd have to pick just one.

Surfing Chicago stations one Friday night, Keith and I and happened to click onto the definitive Robin Hood, 1939's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* starring Errol Flynn. Keith hadn't seen it and, remember, I'd only ever watched it in black & white, even after I'd bought my color TV. When the Warner Brothers logo came onto screen, my reaction was one of joyous disbelief and, excitedly mussing Keith's blond hair, I whooped, "Color! Lookee, Keith, it's in color!" Keith had no idea what had animated my exuberance until I explained I'd never known it had been made in color. I doubt Keith was as enamored with Errol Flynn as was I, but we both enjoyed the movie, especially the swordplay... and all in glorious Technicolor.

Late Friday and Saturday night TV choices included old horror movies from the 1930s and '40s; in some instances, films scheduled were titles I'd bought as second-hand 16mm prints and added to my collection. *Frankenstein* (1931) starred Boris Karloff. I always found the credits amusing. The

Monster was credited with ...? At the film's conclusion came a credit list headed "A Good Cast Is Worth Repeating." The question mark wasn't used and the Monster was revealed as Boris Karloff. The sequel was *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), again a 16mm print added to my collection. The Monster is credited to just Karloff and the question mark follows The Monster's Mate in the opening credits and again within "A Good Cast is Worth Repeating." Credited in the opening and Repeat Cast is Elsa Lancaster as Mary Shelley. It wasn't difficult to figure out Elsa Lancaster also played the Monster's mate.

I made sure old-time movies in my collection were used as a treat or a reward in my 9<sup>th</sup> grade English classes. Aware now that I was expected to develop and teach a course in Film Appreciation once I made it to Australia, I spent many dollars on secondhand 16mm prints of classic movies from Movie Wonderland in California. The films may have been from private collectors, ex-airline movies screened on board long flights, or small theatre screenings in clubs, bars, or schools. I picked up titles I thought might be useful in the classroom. As soon as prints were delivered in the mail, Keith eagerly hauled out the Bell & Howell projector from the unlit storage area near the stairs and cranked up a screening of the newest acquisition. Sometimes my brother Steve and friends were invited, more often than not Joe Sikora and Barbara Meyer who eventually married to become Mr. and Mrs. Laughter was loud and spontaneous, frequently leading to stomachs aching and eyes tearing up over Charlie Chaplin's *The Pawnshop* (1916) and *Shoulder Arms* (1918), Buster Keaton's *Cops* (1922), and W.C. Fields' *The Fatal Glass of Beer* (1933) and his notorious *The Dentist* (1932). Movies made during the silent era I always bought with an optical soundtrack of music, sometimes with cleverly added sound effects.

I picked up a few bargains in Standard 8mm films from Niles Film Products on Mishawaka Avenue in South Bend, Indiana. Films could be purchased new or secondhand. Invariably I chased the lesser costing second-hander, placed my order for the used title, and hoped luck intervened so I'd obtain it.

Except for the odd film screening, I remember nothing of the classes I taught in those final months of 1971. I guess because I knew I wouldn't be around in 1972, I was hesitant to become well acquainted with anyone or anything. However, I was befriended by one Year 7 boy who couldn't have been in any of my classes. How I bumped into him or he bumped into me remains a mystery. Maybe we talked in Study Hall, the corridor, after school. Dale Bigus was a talented musician, played a trumpet, and had a knack for carrying a conversation with an adult. He claimed he was just "a crazy mixed-up kid," but I saw in him a kid in control of his destiny.

A letter arrived from Bill Cable. After pointing out that the most unusual thing about being in Australia was Maryvale High School, he wrote that for accommodation I might be interested in sharing an apartment. His initial suggestion was that I take an unfurnished room in an upstairs apartment on the busy highway three blocks from the school with another teacher already working at Maryvale High. Apartment upstairs? Not interested. Sharing? No thanks. Unfurnished room, just one room? Too much work finding a bed, so nix to that.

Bill finished his letter with his view on finances:

Yank dollar now worth 80-81 cents on the dollar exchange, compared with 89¢ on February 1, 1971 — Can't win! Have put you in contact with the Bank of New South Wales. You should be hearing from them soon.

Within days of Bill's letter arriving, a large brown envelope showed up from the Bank of New South Wales. The standard form letter invited my custom with the bank to set up a savings account. Enclosed was *Facts about Australia*, a booklet for prospective settlers. Though aimed at people migrating from the United Kingdom, it provided the kind of information I needed. Weekly wage was estimated at 63 to 73 dollars per week, depending upon the employment; teaching, however, wasn't listed. I had no idea what I'd be earning. Average food costs included a 2 lb. loaf of bread at  $20\phi$ ,

one lb. of sugar at  $11\phi$ , potatoes at  $5\phi$  a lb., eggs  $65\phi$  a dozen, milk  $23\phi$  a quart, rump steak (whatever was that sort of cut?) at  $95\phi$  a lb., pork chops at  $60\phi$  a lb., and loin lamb chops at  $42\phi$  a lb.

Bill Cable wrote that lamb was the most popular meat in Australia. It was inexpensive. People ate it for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and Sunday was usually a leg roast. I had never had lamb in my entire life, so here was the prompt to try it. I thought it would be special to prepare an Australian breakfast for Keith and me. We could get ourselves used to what we'd eat almost daily "Down Under." Yes, early in September the plan was for Keith to go to Australia with me.

Keith and I searched supermarket meat shelves of a late Friday afternoon. Nowhere was a lamb chop to be found. I pressed a button bell to speak with the supermarket butcher. My request for mid-loin lamb chops made the butcher's eyebrows lift as he informed he had none in stock, but if I came back tomorrow, he'd have some for me. "How many do you want," the butcher asked. "Four," I answered, "Two for Keith, two for me."

Saturday morning my order was filled for four lamb chops. There they were: rigid, frozen, looking so alone clustered on white butcher paper, four practically miniscule mid loin cuts costing an exorbitant \$6.00. Six dollars? Oi yoi yoi! That was super expensive when compared with 29¢ a lb. for chicken, the cost of a whole fryer less than a dollar. No wonder lamb was never on my family's menu, nor ever served at the Allen Food Center no times a day during my five years in college. Mine being a special order, a negative head shake and handing it back wasn't an option. I parted with the price and hoped I'd bought a treat we'd enjoy.

The lamb chops thawed overnight and Sunday morning were pliable. I set the mid-loins beneath the stove's electric grill. Eggs were poached to go all goopy onto toast. An unfamiliar aroma lingered in the kitchen air. I wondered what we were getting ourselves into because the odor of spluttering lamb fat failed to juice up our taste buds. As for the flavor, well, it would take some getting used to and, frankly, neither of us was impressed. I'm certain I overcooked the lamb chops and my excuse was having been unfamiliar with the electric griller. It probably didn't matter that Keith didn't much care for the lamb chops. Good thing he wasn't in the cast of TV's "The Brady Bunch." Alice, it seemed, was always cooking lamb chops for dinner.

In another brief letter from Bill Cable, questions were answered about my bringing Keith with me to Australia. He wrote that the school would offer Keith a lot and that he could graduate after 18 months. However, he added that I would personally have more than enough difficulty and problems adjusting to a whole new life. Maybe I should consider flying to Australia on my own and send for Keith once I'd settled in, felt comfortable, and was a bit more familiar with an Australian way of life. I'm sure Mr. Cable wrote from experience and, at the time, I didn't consider that he had his whole family in tow. Wife, several school age children, plus himself, of course he'd faced more than desired difficulties with adjustment. That I should leave Keith behind was a bruising blindside, but I put Mr. Cable's two cents worth to Keith's mother, as well as to Keith. Neither raised objection to Bill's recommendation, but the disappointment was so evident on Keith's face; even after he tried looking cool as the proverbial cucumber.

October was a harvest month and the Farmer's Market on the Square was loaded with fresh produce. I invited my parents to visit so they could see the apartment where I'd spend a further two months. They could take home a few worthwhile items I'd saved from the farm, as well as load the trunk with vegetables. Root vegetables and pumpkins were plentiful on the Square and I'd saved a couple of gunny sacks of potatoes dug at the farm before we moved. It was also the opportunity I needed to come clean with Mom and Dad about my plans to take up a teaching position in Australia. I'd already had the conversation with my brother Steve who wholeheartedly approved. After all, time was passing faster than I cared and I still hadn't bought my one-way ticket to Melbourne, Australia.

Need I say that Mom and Dad weren't overly surprised at my plan? Perhaps Steve had inadvertently leaked my secret. Perhaps it was a mother's intuition. I can't say that they were happy about my

decision to be gone for two years at the least, but they somewhat admired my tenacity. Dad saw my decision as adventure, just as when he had been shipped overseas during the war, except that my going far, far away, though filled with unknowns, added up to a lot more safety. I remember Mom saying something to the effect of, "That's going all the way to the other side of the world... Just you don't forget to come back home."

## Chapter 72: Abounding (A Bounding) 'Down Under'

ighway 10 to Highway 110 to Highway 41. Into Milwaukee and onto Interstate 94, then the Kennedy Expressway aka Interstate 294. Drove past busy O'Hare International Terminals. Highway 34. But it didn't look like a highway. I parked outside the designated apartment on a signposted but unremarkable North Cass Street, the main drag of Westmont, Illinois. Brad and Roger expected my visit and I wasn't about to disappoint. It was a Saturday and parents weren't home – both out working. After having been given the quick two bit tour of the family apartment – Roger especially keen to show he had his own bedroom at last – as a trio we piled onto the front bench-seat of my wagon. Brad navigated to Chicago's Old Town to find lunch. Old Town was located on North Wells Street between Division Street and North Avenue on the Near North Side and Lincoln Park. The sun I enjoyed during my drive down to Illinois had long disappeared and had been replaced with nuisance misty rain. That hadn't prevented myriad shoppers taking up roadside spaces as Old Town was busiest between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. That is to say until nighttime when that place jumped to its soulful jazzy music and dancing until sunrise. Brad picked a long term parking spot on Sedgwick near the 'L' Station<sup>1</sup>. I remember our briefly huddling close to the elevated train structure to avoid getting soaked. We walked with purpose in light rain, perhaps nine or so minutes, as Brad knocked at my brain seeking verbal response to his admission of having smoked weed, his considering tripping out on LSD, perhaps experimenting with peyote. My response was ignoring anything he'd said – in one ear and out the other. All teenage talk I figured just to raise my hackles. My only egocentric thought was steering the boys to a place in the "Cabbage Patch" I remembered enjoying a few years earlier with Chicago natives Johns Primm and Palmisano.

Sometime in our university days back in the late '60s of a spring's break weekend Primm, Palmisano, and I wandered the Old Town neighborhood, then the center of the yippy and hippy counter culture in the midwestern United States. Sometime after our visit this small piece of real estate adjacent to Lincoln Park, Old Town included itself in the anti-war protesters' violent events that took place during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. As part of its history, St. Michael's Church was one of the area's few buildings that survived the 1871 Great Fire. John lead our leisurely walk to North Wells Street and The Pickle Barrel, a Jewish-style restaurant/deli where hamburgers stacked between thick slices of black bread bigger than our mouths were a staple on the menu for anything from \$1.05 to \$1.60 depending upon condiments and extras. Guests were greeted with a barrel of kosher dill pickles and a bucket of free popcorn for snacking. Instead of a small vase of flowers at the center of each table, a small barrel of kosher dills and a bottle of Heinz ketchup were found among settings of a menu and cutlery. The walls were decorated with oddities and antiques. It was well lit and well-peopled, the hubbub noisy and loud forcing us to speak in overtone. Furnished with oldfashioned tables and cane chairs, a clown made balloon animals for the kids and from the bar adults could merrily order pitchers of Budweiser for \$1.25. It was a fun place with a happy family attitude. On its menu was not the breakfast or lunch or brunch, but one they called the Sunday Blunch Club. Non-Jewish deli fare included, hickory barbecue ribs (baby backs, whole slab \$3.95), French fried shrimp (\$2.10), Sloppy Joes, grilled ham steak and broiled pork chops.

Brad, Roger and I ambled past crumbling shops overstocked with psychedelic posters, fluorescent colors standing out from under-lit interiors, bongs displayed in windows with spiders' webs in corners, and clothing shops with the frippery of gaudily-colored shirts and wider-than-wide cuffed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The 'L' was the accepted abbreviation for Chicago's elevated train.

bell bottom pants. Tourists may have thought they savored a true Bohemian atmosphere. Being lively, artsy, fascinating, colorful and crowded, North Wells was a Disneyland-like attraction and a veritable pot of gold for merchants. Sidewalks were packed with pedestrians. It had a carnival atmosphere with the aromas of food, incense, and sweat; emanating from the music stores, clubs and taverns where sound never melded to make a tune. It wasn't rare to catch the sweet smell of Mary Jane in the air. Had this possibly stimulated Brad's unusual one-sided conversation?

Down a quaint, cobblestone passageway was Piper's Alley. We'd check it out after lunch. Retailers' names included Off the Hook (furnishings and decorator items), "in" sanity (posters, pendants), Caravan: For the Unusual in Handcrafts, Charlie's General Store (everything displayed deliberately in disarray), The Sweet Tooth (candy store), Aardvark (art movie theatre), Male M-1 (Male Fashions), Jack B. Nimble (candles, very popular in the day, especially scented ones used to overwhelm the unmistakable hay-sweet odor of marijuana), and Personal Posters, Inc.

Among the Victorian-era buildings were more places to choose for eating than fingers found on our hands. All I was interested in was the Pickle Barrel. On the menu, 2 broiled hot dogs with oven baked beans \$1.35. Grilled cheese sandwiches 75¢. Jewish specialties included giant hot pastrami on rye for 90¢, the colossal for \$1.30. A corned beef giant was 80¢, the colossal for \$1.20. Potato pancakes with apple sauce or sour cream 85¢. We opened our mouths wide to bite into the mammoth-sized burgers on black bread. Brad and Roger couldn't believe bowls of popcorn and whole dill pickles were free! Free food at the Pickle Barrel was popular. In an average week the restaurant went through 10 barrels of pickles and 400 pounds of popcorn.

Following lunch I dragged the boys along to The Second City, also on North Wells Street. I had a vested interest having entered *Jamie* in The Second City International Short Film Competition. There was no entry fee and judging was to take place during the first two weeks of May 1967. First prize was a \$500 cash award, screenings at the Playboy Theatre in Chicago and airing on Chicago's Channel 11. Additional awards of cash, bookings and equipment went to the makers of runner-up films. Regular rates were paid by The Second City for all public screenings held in connection with the contest. I had been made to believe that *Jamie* had been scheduled for a screening in the Aardvark Theatre, but my print had gone missing. The Second City wasn't known for film festivals. It was far more influential and prolific for its live theatre sketch comedy and improvisation, a notable starting point for many comedians, award-winning actors, directors and others in show business. An array of posters of well known comedians who'd started here and "made it" covered poster displays and windows: Alan Arkin, Joan Rivers, Fred Willard, Harold Ramis, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner, John Candy, John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Catherine O'Hara, Eugene Levy, Mike Meyers, and more. Much as we enjoyed looking at the posters, no one was around who could help me locate the whereabouts of *Jamie*.

In October of 1967 I'd written my parents asking if they'd received my print of *Jamie* from either The Second City or The Aardvark Theatre which had been at the Second City building since 1966. The Aardvark showed art house and experimental films, many on 16mm, including Marlene Dietrich's *The Blue Angel* (1930) and movies made by Andy Warhol. It moved into Piper's Alley after The Second City relocated in July 1967. Maybe that move was the reason for their losing my print of *Jamie*.

With the boys in tow I spoke with an Aardvark manager. He had no idea what may have happened with my film, couldn't offer a plausible explanation, and had no recollection of *Jamie* having ever been screened here, let alone returned to me. For all the negative nods of his head I was given the impression he'd had nothing to do with the Second City competition. He recommended I best talk with someone at Second City since they had been in charge of running the film competition. I said we'd already been to The Second City and it was closed. "Oh, too bad," he muttered, overt disinterest displayed. Perhaps as consolation, however, since no screening was scheduled at this time, he led us inside the Aardvark cinema. To put it mildly, it lived up to the slang name of fleapit. The floor wasn't raked. Seating rows were made up of creaky wooden chairs all joined together and each

without upholstery. Certainly they couldn't have been comfortable. It looked the sort of place that would have been popular among an audience stoned on pot or LSD. It didn't look like the kind of cinema which would have happily screened *Jamie*, nor would it have received any semblance of satisfaction from its possibly addled audience.

My overnight with Bard and Roger was spent in the living room on a sofa which folded out into a double hide-a-bed. Chicago's nighttime TV movies were pretty much the fare I received via cable in my Stevens Point apartment, but something was missing. Brad, and especially Roger, knew that whatever magic had been on the farm was altogether missing here in the Westmont apartment. We reclined together on the fold-out bed, heads propped by pillows, gawking at the television – and that was it – the free banter we'd relished on the farm held tightly inside vacuous minds. After all, parents were present, parents who'd scrutinize and stifle silly small talk. Now that I think about it, the farm would have been the perfect place to further the conversation Brad had attempted to ignite with this stolid bovine at the time... that cement-headed Taurus being me.

Sunday morning Roger rolled out of his bedroom early and prepared a cooked breakfast of crisp bacon and eggs Benedict. Where had this boy been all my life and, I'd never known, that he was able to cook such a decadent repast? Exchanging simple pleasantries with the Paulson parents over coffee, I bid my good-byes and drove, weather and traffic unimpeded, back to Stevens Point. I came home, the downstairs neighbors having looked after Kluski. All smiles, I collected the pooch and climbed the stairs to a dark and empty apartment. Over the weekend Keith had been doing mom hours at the tavern earning some money as a dish pig, hosting a plate party in the kitchen dish pit; all the while, I'm sure, ignored by Morty's inattention.

Within days – sending and receiving letters seemed less complicated and more dependable back then – I received letters from both Roger and Brad. Thank goodness they didn't try to save meager postage by enclosing individual letters in the one envelope.

Roger's outpour of affection was eye-opening. Funny thing about being a teacher, when it's a kid in your classroom, you rarely learn what impact you've had. With a kid who's never been in your classroom, it becomes an even rarer learning experience. It takes years to find out what good, if any, you may have done. With Roger, I was fortunate to have learned almost immediately what worthwhile impact I may have made and, other than being there, I've no idea whatever it was I did.

Thank you very much for all you did for me when you were down here. I was really sad when you left. I'm really going to miss you, though I'll be thinking of you constantly. Please write soon buddy.

Lots and lots of love, Always,
Roger

Brad's letter, on the other hand, shredded me into itty-bitty scraps. Ambling toward Old Town a week earlier, Brad had declared he was considering an experiment with drugs.

It hurt me terribly when you showed no concern whatsoever. I stated this to you in hopes of your discussing it with me. I felt that if we discussed it, it would help me make the decision. But when you almost ignored me I began to wonder if you really cared about and for me at all, really. It hurts so much to realize that you were so blind. I am not a little child or some robot who must be preached to. I am a human being and I also wish to discuss things. Unfortunately, you have to get to learn how to handle delicate situations. And I'm afraid that experience is the only teacher. I pray to God that we can get together and discuss various things such as drugs, homosexuality, maturity, psychic experiences and us. I myself feel better having written this; I hope you feel better after reading it.

Still with love, Brad

Brad's handwriting had blown into four pages. I have condensed his letter to its essence. Brad's letter bowled me over. He spared nothing, just let loose every emotion of fragility and injury and all due to my inaction, my being nonresponsive and, using his words, acting immaturely. After a first reading I admit I felt miffed. I thought at the time Brad said something in passing, yet nothing of significance to get a rise from or to rile my goat. On subsequent reading I determined Brad was more astute, perceptive and analytical than I'd ever realized. I wished we could have been face to face, spent together that time Brad so desired to discuss those many and various things.

Also in October, Jim tapped into the apartment's mailbox after taking a break and writing from his work. What he said toward letter's end had been long in coming:

My vacation, I used it all up recuperating from my motorcycle accident because I didn't have enough sick leave. I surely do wish that I was planning a trip to Point to see you — but at the moment it looks very improbable.

It sounds like your film collection is coming right along. Any more new ones? I guess your forthcoming adventure to Australia is just about all squared away – everything looking O.K.?

How is Keith doing? Tell him 'hello.'

Lare. I realized when you were here last on your trip that you had still a lot of miles to cover & many strenuous hours ahead — as it was you barely got back to Point for school. You stopped in Salt Lake though — and that was enough — just to be with you, to see you & talk with you was enough — no matter how short the time. It was wonderful - don't ever forget about this crazy kid here in S.L.—because this is one kid who loves you one hell of a lot—take care of yourself LARE.

Love always, Forever Jim

November days unfolded and my passport with a visa for Australia still hadn't been delivered but I wasn't panicking. The longer time took to pass, the more time I could spend with Keith. Our weekend life amounted to plans for the future – his and mine – helping with homework, cooking meals together, watching nighttime movies on cable, nothing noteworthy. We simply enjoyed being in each other's company. We conversed without words. There'd be a look, eyes met, smiles emerged, and automatically we'd know what each was thinking. It was the finest expression of a platonic brotherly love.

When words became necessary I remember Keith telling me that in high school he'd become unnecessarily aware of classmates using drugs: smoking grass, taking downers, dropping acid... and bragging about it. He said he'd been offered weed and pills and always declined. "You don't hafta worry about me," Keith assured, "I won't be doing any of that stuff. I hate it," thus making it obvious he was dead set against using any of the popular recreational drugs.

As Thanksgiving approached, no feast was planned for Stevens Point, no drive to West Allis was arranged to be with family. The passport with visa for Australia hadn't arrived in the mailbox. Still, time was close enough to write a letter to Principal Gil Oelke and tell him of my plans. This was a first time experience. I'd not ever composed a letter of resignation. My office copy of the original letter is herein reproduced.

November 18, 1971

Mr. Gil Oelke, Principal Benjamin Franklin Junior High 2000 Polk Street Stevens Point, WI 54481

Dear Mr. Oelke:

This is to inform you that I wish to terminate my contract with the Stevens Point Board of Education as of December 23, 1971.

My reason for leaving is that I have accepted a new teaching position at Maryvale High School in Morwell, Victoria, Australia. I feel that this venture is an opportunity to broaden my own educational horizons.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Lawrence J. Klobukowski

English Department

News of having submitted my resignation swept through the school faculty like a tidal wave. As would be expected, the greatest ruction wracked the English Department. First reaction I recall had nothing to do with my own welfare or my future. No, it was something to the effect of their facing difficulty to find a replacement to fill the classes I'd leave behind. I heard no congratulations, was asked no question about my decision, asked nothing to confirm where I was going. Ah, yes, that is, except for Miss Priss and her, "What do you want to go to Australia for? There's nothing there." This pronouncement came from the mouth of a never-married woman who was born in Stevens Point, went to Grade School in Stevens Point, attended High School in Stevens Point, earned her teaching degree in Stevens Point, and had never been on vacation outside of Stevens Point! She was teaching children without any life experience, but she had an answer, an opinion for everything.

My kind landlady was next for notification. It was important she had a month to find a new tenant. I handled the situation delicately without resorting to more letter writing. For a winter's day, the sun beamed exceptionally warm. I simply knocked on her door and told her that an opportunity had come up wherein I had been invited to teach in Australia and, since it was a boyhood dream to go to Australia, I accepted the offer. It wasn't necessary to backtrack the months of preparation and inquiries. The landlady appeared excited about my going to Australia to teach. I paid her in advance and in full for the month of December and said I'd let her know the day I'd vacate before Christmas.

In the minds of some faculty, but not among those of the English department, my leaving meant a party whether farewell or just for the sake of celebration. Staff member Tom was a year or two younger than me. He may have been teaching Social Studies and our connection was overseeing a Study Hall. Although every session was supposed to be conducted in silence, as if commandeering the Library, when we weren't marching around the hall monitoring 8<sup>th</sup> graders, we conversed under our breaths sharing mutual thoughts of administration and department heads. In other words, we knew how to solve all the problems in the Education system.

There was a time in this Study Hall well ahead of resignation when I'd been assigned a student teacher for this class filler only; a tall lanky fellow who towered over me like the basketball player stereotype, he didn't handle any of my English classes. In fact, I've no recollection whose. Wouldn't it have been a hoot if it had been Miss Priss in charge? He was appointed to me to learn the ropes of competently conducting Study Hall. Tom and I had earned that reputation. Tom continued his presence, but the student teacher was in my charge. What was I supposed to teach him about being a classroom cop? Don't hit the kids? Don't yell at the top of your voice to achieve silence? Don't wear squeaky shoes when walking around the room because they might cause a breakout of kiddie giggles? What the bureaucratic reason may have been for placing him in Study Hall was probably no more than a ploy to fulfill a classroom requirement of face-to-face hours.

As had Tom and I, and always away from student earshot, this university senior and I quietly engaged in the gab we teachers were permitted, but that students weren't allowed. One day he complimented my mustache and asked how I managed to grow it so well. "I can barely get the hairs thick enough and long enough to make it look like something." Ah, personal memories of when I attempted same back in my freshman year. But wait, the practical joker in me surfaced and so did my Drama training in improv. I made it up on the spot, "There's an old Polish remedy for making hair grow, especially below the nose." I baited my hook, cast the line, and waited for the nibble. "What's that?" he asked with the kind of excitement associated with a child seeing a zoo giraffe for the first time. I had him hooked. "Well," hesitating for effect before adding, "it's kind of gross, but old Polish farmers swear by it." "Tell me," the student teacher whispered enthusiastically. This was too easy and I set him up initially with a firmly uttered, "OK!" A beat, then, "First you need to get hold of an oak leave. Not a fresh one picked off a tree, mind, but one which has fallen. Make sure it's not too crumbly and can still be rolled with your fingers. "Uh huh," he agreed. "Next you need to get some chicken shit." I paused. His look was stupefying, but accepting. "Not a really freshly dropped one or one that's dried and been sitting around on the ground too long. It needs to be somewhat moist, but not dripping wet." That young man looked at me incredulously and I continued reeling him in. "Before you go to bed, put the chicken shit inside the oak leaf lengthwise, roll it like a small cigar and make sure nothing leaks out of either end; then shove it under your upper lip. In the morning you will have a mustache." Throughout my recipe he hadn't shaken off my hook.

Surely this student teacher wasn't so naive he wouldn't figure out my practical ruse, but no! His eyes glazed over and, sure enough, he must have been thicker than blackjack molasses in a cold pantry. Next day at the start of Study Hall he spoke to me in an aspirated whisper, "It didn't work!" I couldn't believe my ears! "And do you know the awful taste your Polish remedy leaves?" I wasn't up to controlling my conniption fit of laughter. Kids' attentions were drawn to their supervising teachers, me laughing like a jackass; the other looking stunned as if hit on the head with a cartoon-sized wooden mallet. Spluttering I had to ask, "Whatsa matter? Did it leak?" Uncontrolled tears leaked from my laughter. The kids had no idea what was going on; neither did the clueless student teacher. Honestly, I never expected he'd be that hapless a target and go ahead with my joke. Did I ever tell him any different, let him know he'd been hoodwinked? Uh... no!

So, back to Tom who suggested hosting a bon voyage party on a Friday evening. He knew I usually had Keith weekends and Tom invited Keith too.

Tom's home was a rental shared with others his age, some being university seniors. Arriving after dark, lights lit up inside the house like it was a Christmas tree, Keith and I heard the thump-thumping bass of Neil Diamond's music as we walked the path to the front door. Although it wasn't a Greek fraternity, the noise, the frantic movement, décor, and down-market dress of its dwellers supported my impression of its appearing as a frat house. The party was a typically disorganized male hodgepodge with unlimited flow of Point beer, the only eats being salty store-bought potato chips, pretzels, Fritos, and stove-popped corn. Any civil conversation was quickly drowned for the noise. Keith, sitting on the floor and youngest in the crowd, looked uncomfortable. There was suddenly a waft of marijuana in the air. Someone came around with wacky backy and I waved away the offer.

Keith jumped to his feet and assumed a John L. Sullivan stance. His hands fists, he said loudly, "You're not pushing that crap on us! C'mon, Lare! We're going home!" He handed me my coat ushering me by the shoulders to the door. Tom was dumbfounded. I never got to say "thank you" or "good-bye" and, if it happened in Tom's mind that I was going to tattle on him at school, he could rest assured such wasn't in my character. Suum cuique. To each his own. According to Plato, "Justice is when everyone minds his own business, and refrains from meddling in others' affairs." You mind your business Tom and I'll mind mine. Everything happened so, so fast. In the car Keith stared ahead intently before snarling, "That was no party."

December 10, 1971 was a Friday. Arriving home from school I found my passport heavy in the mailbox. There it was on page 7: Migrant visa for Australia (Subject to grant on arrival of an entry permit under the Migration Act, 1958). The document finally in hand, I walked to the Travel Shop and booked a one-way flight to Melbourne. "Why only one way?" the woman seated behind her desk asked. I showed her the Migrant visa in my passport. All she mustered was a faltering, "Oh." In her mind she may not have comprehended why an American citizen chose to leave America, much less good ol' Stevens Point. I never saved the hand-written carbon copy of the airline ticket and I don't remember the specific cost of the fare. I'm guessing it may have been somewhere between \$600 and \$800. I do remember asking the desk lady to hold my ticket until I walked across the street to the bank where I withdrew several Benjamin Franklins in cash. I handed over the envelope of hundred dollar bills and my ticket was secured: Chicago-San Francisco, San Francisco-Melbourne, with Sydney as Australia's first port of call before a connecting flight to Melbourne. That ticket meant arranging to fly, take a train, ride the bus, or have the family drive me from Milwaukee to Chicago's O'Hare January 19, 1972.

That same Friday our Sheepshead group piled around the kitchen table and dealt the deck for a final card night. No school to worry about next day. We'd eat and drink and play as long as possible. I even invited the young married couple to come upstairs for a drink. Neither had ever played Sheepshead. Ordinarily I'd suggest teaching them so they could join in, but not tonight, our last card night. Teaching the rules takes hours of practice to fully grasp the game and its intricacies. Gerry, Bob, Don, Dan the Mouth, and Zelmo met and welcomed my downstairs newlyweds and we laughed and enjoyed a neighborly shot. If we made a bit of noise above their heads, the downstairs newlyweds would be forgiving. The couple left with smiles on their fresh faces and we sat at the kitchen table to some serious Sheepshead.

"What the hay," complained Gerry, "where's the elbow room from the farm?" Dan the Mouth couldn't resist chiming in, "Yah, yer farm kitchen had more room. Kinda tight here, ain't so?" I recommended Gerry and Dan the Mouth sit at either head of the table so they'd have their needed elbow room. Zelmo sat opposite Don and me. I had to agree. When compared with the farm kitchen, in this kitchen we felt as cramped as cage hens. As it was our last night together, I'd bought ham, bologna, salami, lettuce and a loaf of soft bread so that Dan the Mouth couldn't complain, "Where's the sandwiches?" But he'd have to make them himself.

Keith took turns from lazing on the couch to lying prone on Mom's homemade oversized mattress watching cable. Occasionally he joined the kitchen table and asked me or one of the others for a glass of beer or a taste of Canadian Club or the Coronet VSQ, the latter being Dad's favorite tipple and he'd left behind almost a full bottle after his last visit. As a big brother I shouldn't have permitted my little brother adult beverages.

It may have been around 1:00 a.m. when Keith said, "Ga nite" and slipped off to bed. Noses adhered to cards, oblivious to Keith's nonchalant exit, our only interest was playing a trump card to take a trick. Half an hour later all the pretzels, chips, popcorn, beer, brandy, and whiskey had petered out. Dan the Mouth had had his fill of meaty buttered sandwiches with or without lettuce. Cigarette smoke choked the close air and burned eyes red. We called it a night.

"Ah, God, it's time we go home," muttered Dan the Mouth and he started singing, "Good night Ladies... Farewell gentlemen..."

"Sssshhh! Shhh," I heard someone shush as he clomped down the staircase. "Don't wake the neighbors."

"Good night, Larry," said Don, the teacher who initiated my relationship with Keith. "Gonna leave you to it," meaning I'd have to clean up in the morning after our get-together.

"Idz do domu spać" said Bob."

I slept on the couch, the TV flickering with a dulled speaker on some Chicago station throughout night's passing hours.

In the morning Keith wandered into the living room and shook me awake. I opened my eyes from dreamland. Keith had a towel wrapped around his waist. "I been in the bathtub and I made some coffee." I groaned. "Yeah," I managed, "Now for the cleanup after last night." Keith looked somewhat puzzled before smirking, "Nah, I already done it."

## JUST US

It was the time when leaves unhinged and a sun yellowed tired fields when he smiled in his shyness and outstretched his hand saying, "Will you be my friend?"

I knew I shouldn't refuse and would have regretted not accepting him.

He was younger than me.

We spent many morning hours in taciturn disinclination, yet openly talking with one another in a language spoken only by those who don't need words.

I would be thinking about him at times when I should have been doing important things.

He was more important now.

More times than can be counted would he change a raining dawn into a morning of sun storms, and I would wait eagerly for the moment his eyes burst into a smile. I was never critical of him, even when we had our differences, because I respected him.

He was my young friend, my Little Brother.

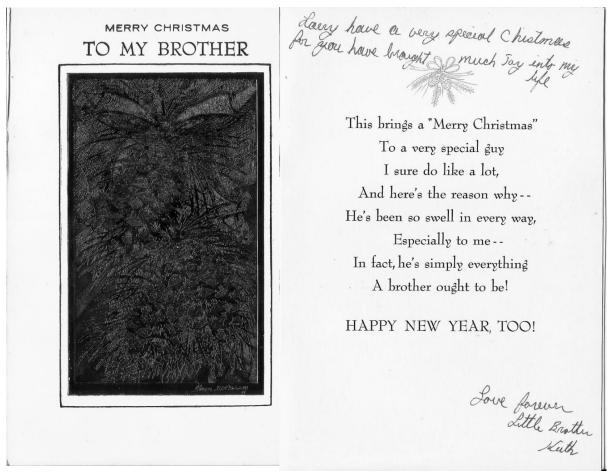
What was I going to do with the furniture I'd had since Farm the First? The kitchen table and chairs, the davenport, that foam "pillow" Mom made belonged to my parents. The bed was ex-Holiday Inn,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Translation from Polish is "Go home to bed."

so it meant nothing to them. I rang Mom and Dad and asked them if they wanted their furniture returned. Having been children of the Depression, having gone through times when hand-me-downs were viewed with a fresh eye, of course they wanted the furniture which, in their minds, still held memories. Dad recommended I leave the davenport behind because they had no room for it. They had American colonial kitchen and living room sets. The kitchen dining set was old, but could be useful in the basement. I'd need to dismantle the table legs and figure out how to stack the table and chairs in my wagon. I wanted to return Mom's home-sewn "foam pillow" so the twins could use it.

Mom and Dad had that Zenith console I gave them for a Christmas gift, so they weren't interested in my Zenith color TV. I suggested, maybe, Keith's mother might like replacing her black and white TV with mine. She offered \$200 with the proviso of paying later as she didn't have the cash on hand. I agreed and the arrangement was to deliver the Zenith December 22 ahead of my driving to West Allis. It would be my final 150 mile journey from Stevens Point to West Allis.

He shouldn't have, but Keith skipped school Wednesday. Before helping me load the car with my few possessions, he handed me a white envelope. Inside was his Christmas card.



Together we carried the dismantled kitchen table, the color TV bound for his home, and a few packed boxes down the stairs. Kluski sitting on Keith's lap was well behaved in the car. I reminded Keith that this would be the last time I'd drive him home. After my rhetorical statement, he looked at me as if I'd just stamped Stupid on his forehead. "Sorry," I said, "I meant it to sound nostalgic." Keith briefly formed a disapproving sneer.

We unloaded the television, screwed the legs back on, set it up; even got the stations working after attaching the cord of the rooftop antenna. With a solemnity reserved for church services Keith said, "Gonna miss those movies we saw on cable." After a long embrace, I climbed behind the wheel of

my wagon, Kluski on the passenger seat, reversed, took off down back down Highway 51 and watched Keith's home miniaturize in my rear view mirror.

There were two Christmas gifts from my family. One was a very large pale green suitcase presented to me Christmas Eve. It had to be big for packing my every essential need for Australia. Christmas morning I was handed a prettily wrapped box which suggested clothing. It was a topcoat, a dressy style in dark grey for keeping me warm in winter. Dad said that I needed it to look professional in my career. Little did anyone realize that a Wisconsin winter didn't equate with Australia's December-January weather.

An air mail letter arrived at my parents' West Allis address from Bill Cable just after Christmas. Postmarked December 21, it had been addressed to my Stevens Point apartment and forwarded in red handwriting to "West Ellis." The letter was entertaining, interesting, enlightening and, with typos and misspellings, here's a photocopy of most of it.

It seems strange to be writing a Christmas greeting while sitting on a beach on an 80° day; but there are many other strange things here in Australia.

The animal life is very different-We haven't seen a robin yet; but the cackel of the Kookaburra and the flash of color of the Rosella are common. Galahs and Cockatoos block out the sky when they take off in their immense flocks, Emus walk awkwardly up to you and take a bite of your sandwhich when you picnic in the bush; and the "theiving Magpies" have robbed us of a few hours sleep each morning- since they wake us with their delightful song. They are the most plenteous bird in this part of Australia. We've seen several Platypus; still don't believe them. A week ago our neighbor found a ring-tailed possom in his yard. She stayed around for a week-much to the whole neighbor-hoods delight. We still haven't seen a live Kangaroo in the bush- only in wildlife sanctuarys. The carcass's of the "Roo, Wallaby, and Wombatt" are frequently seen along the roads-so we know they are there. Koalas are as cute as they look in pictures-We've held them, and if they aren't frightened, they are gentle. The Huntsman Spider is a frightening thing-especially in the shower or crawling your kitchen wall-They are hugh, look like a Tra ntula; but are harmless; In fact, a great benefit to a household, as they eat the pests (Flys- which we have in abundance). All of these animals are strange to us; but are becoming less strange with lengthening association.

becoming less strange with lengthening association.

Language is unusual. I think it's English. Our baby,
Martin, is beginning to takk and he says, "Tah dah" rather than,
"Good Bye". "I reckon we'll give it a go ", "She'll be right,"
mate", "The bloody bloke was crook Saturday last." "I wouldn't
have a clue", are all frequently used expressions and words not
to difficult to understand; but when complicated by the accents
of the Scotch-Italian-Greek; sometimes make verbal communication
difficult. A common expression is, "What are ya", which seems
to mean, "your kidding". But most often heard is the long, drawn
out "Yeh-ahh". Nearly every statement you make, is
acknowledged with a, "Yeh-ahh". Fair Dinkum.
The roads in Australia are ridiculous. We have covered some

The roads in Australia are ridiculous. We have covered some 14,000 miles since we bought our car. (It cost a much higher price than we would have paid for the same car at home.) We feel with this much experience in driving all kinds of Australian roads we can vouch for their inadequacy. Highway1, which is the only major highway and goes under the various names of Queæns, Kings, Princes, Highway, definately the Royal Road, is at some few spots a four-lane-new highway; but in most places a very narrow-rutty asphalt trail We have traveled this road from Port Augusta and the Flinders Ranges to the South of Cairn's, and you by pass very few towns and none of the cities, as yet. We understand that by-passes and super highways are in the planning and construction stages. With this major highway described. I'll leave the local and outback roads to your immagination.

The most unusual thing we have encountered here is, Maryvale, the school, where Bill and I are teaching(?), and

our two oldest learning (?). Maryvale is six years old, and one that is so absurd that it is internationally known. We have over 1500 visitors yearly, from all over the globe- It is a gold fish bowl in more than design. Similar in many aspects to Summerhill, Maryvale goes beyond; in that it refuses to shut the dbor on any one. In fact, it makes every effort to seek out the Aboriginal, drop out or reform school kid. It's a peculiar school, where no child fails, The teacher is more often the learner; there is alot of noise; kids and teachers are happy, enjoying themselves and active. There are no tests, bells, or grades. At times

I started this letter with the word "strange" and got carried away. There is much, in our new enviormment, that is familiar. The smog, pollution, litter that we were so aware of back home are many times worse here. The smog in the Latrobe Valley is "bloody awful". Litter is a "shocking" problem-the whole populated coastal area is one gigantic "Tip" (junkyard-dump).

Drugs are frequently used and creating the usual problems; there is a terrible crime boom, unemployment is rising; Inflation is rampant; the political scene is not only corrupt but ineffectual-All is not a "bloomin" paradise "Down Under".

Another usual aspect of this society is the friendliness

Another usual aspect of this society is the friendliness of the peaple. The respect and consideration shown foreigners that they sometimes forget to show their own. We are most grateful that these "Aussies" have invited us into their homes and shared with us their knowledge of the History, Geography, Art. Wildlife of the gounthy, and their companionship.

and shared with us their knowledge of the History, Geography,
Art, Wildlife of the acuntry, and their companionship.

Christmas is another mutual bond. We are sharing
Christmas day with a family that has never had a tree,
decorations, presents, a meal or ary other of the Traditional
flurishes. They usually work, after going to church to acknowledge
the Birthday of Christ. The one Christmas that they didn't work—
they had sand, sandwiches along with the flies on the beach.
This year we will have an Aussie-American celebration— a trip
to the beach or bush—depending on weather and a dinner with
exchange of Love if not gifts at our house afterward. Our
love to all of you.

In his own handwriting Bill Cable informed he had contacted a real estate agent at the Keith Williams Estate Agency and told him of my needs. Bill did not arrange accomodation as anything rented now would have to be paid for now. Because housing was such a personal matter, it was recommended I write to Roy and explain exactly what I was looking for and when I wanted it available. His final penning wrote, "Don't know where we will be January 21 – holiday perhaps – write when your plans are final. Something will be arranged." I wrote a letter to the agency requesting something adequate, clean, furnished, and with rent reasonably priced. The same day I replied to Bill Cable writing to inform of my travel dates, date and time of arrival in Melbourne. Everything a blank at the moment, I'd arrive in a country I didn't know and furthermore, had no idea if anyone would be at the airport to meet me.

I asked Mom and Dad what they wanted to do about my departure for Australia. Dad said he didn't want to trust the weather for a family drive to Chicago. He said he'd take me to the Milwaukee Greyhound depot and I'd ride the bus direct to Chicago's O'Hare Field.

Saturday January 8 I drove the 90 minutes to Illinois to see Brad and Roger. I could have just as easily made a phone call. In fact I did Friday saying that I preferred seeing them in person before leaving for Australia. The boys were delighted to see me, although Brad questioned my decision of going. "Isn't your main reason for moving to Australia to escape yourself?" This philosophical thought cut me down at the knees. He'd said something to the effect that if I was to continue writing to him while down there I would complain in basically the same way I did at present about restrictions in movie work. It had to be Brad's way of lashing out at my leaving. He didn't know the job I was going into was an invitation to specifically develop a course in teaching movies. My visit was only long enough to let Brad and Roger know where I'd be Wednesday, January 19, so they could arrange to see me off.

Roger followed my lightning visit with a January 13 letter. He thanked me for coming down and apologized for looking "like such a slob" (his words as I thought he looked no different from any other time). He wrote, "I was really sad when you left. I think I filled up the bathtub more with tears than with water from the faucet. I hope you have a great time in Australia, Lare, you deserve it. I'm really going to miss you. Lots and lots of love always."

The West Allis Star got wind of my travel plans. Well, better be honest about that. I called the newspaper the Thursday before going to Illinois, told them what I was doing and bingo! Instant news story! Interview was done over the phone, and the journalist said they had plenty of information about me on file. The item was published on Thursday, the same day I received Roger's letter.

I'd gone out of my way to invite Roger and Brad to meet me at O'Hare to say good-bye, or bon voyage if they so wished. More than anyone, however, I wanted to see Keith. I called his home in Plover and asked if he wanted to come down to Milwaukee to see me off on the 19<sup>th</sup>. He was excited about riding the Greyhound bus on his own. "Come down the day before and I'll pick you up at the station."

I wired money to Keith from the Post Office in West Allis to the Stevens Point Post Office for a round-trip ticket. Keith arranged his fare at the Greyhound station, not far a walk from the Post Office, and then fed coins into the bus station pay phone to tell me his travel times. He'd depart Stevens Point before 9 a.m. Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup>, and be in Milwaukee 4½ hours later, so before 1:00 p.m. As did Shakespeare's feuding characters in *Romeo and Juliet*, Keith was saying, "I bite my thumb" at school!

Tuesday lunchtime I met Keith at the bus station. All he carried was a small bag with his toothbrush and comb, no change of clothes. As happy as always to see Keith, there was no getting around the fact that for us both the day was melancholic.

Wednesday my family filled the station wagon, a fully packed green suitcase in the rear compartment, and me looking handsome in a suit worn beneath my new career-defining topcoat. Back then dressing fine for any travel was the expected custom, as stated in the old adage, "Clothes maketh the man." It was a freezing January day. Inside the bus station I carried my burdensome suitcase to the Greyhound bound for Chicago's O'Hare. The driver stashed my suitcase below in the luggage specific compartment. Keith carried his toiletry bag as he'd board a bus for Stevens Point soon after I departed. I hugged and kissed Mom, hugged my Dad, the twins, Steve and Keith, and climbed the steps of the Greyhound. I grabbed a window seat. I looked at my family standing, staring, all wearing a funereal expression. Tears rolled from Keith's eyes down his cheeks, my brother resting an assuring hand on his shoulder. Many years later my mother described the look on my face as "trying very hard to smile but looking absolutely lost and forlorn." With a large chuff the Greyhound came to life and slowly accelerated from of its dock. My head turned to see my family; I saw their hands' final wave.

As the Greyhound pulled into its bay at O'Hare I looked around, over tall heads and the bustle, for Roger and Brad, but I didn't find them. I searched in vain for Roger and Brad; they were nowhere.

My transition from Greyhound to TWA 747 Chicago to San Francisco was as smooth and tireless as anyone wanted. In the air and above the clouds, bulky black ones heavy with snow forecast for Milwaukee, I unhitched my seatbelt and wandered upstairs to the bar lounge. For most of the flight my time was spent with San Francisco businessmen. All wore suits. In the usual timeless conversation of asking what everyone does for a living, my response coaxed a raise of eyebrows. The men were generous after my revealing I was bound for Australia to teach. My statement lead to sipping drinks without ever having to pay.

In San Francisco John Primm met me at Arrivals. Now that was unexpected. I was surprised and delighted to see John. Sure, he knew of my plans, my schedule, but I never thought he'd fly from Los Angeles to San Francisco just to greet me and see me off! For a couple of hours in a lounge over a beer we reminisced about our university days. laughed. John told me about his work shooting and editing professional movies. We promised to keep in touch and then it was time. At 8:30 p.m. I boarded a Qantas 747B. I didn't know at the time that this 747B was a maiden flight to Honolulu. I didn't know that a maiden flight meant special treats for all passengers. As I walked through the door with its ramp to board the plane, John snapped my picture.



\* \* \* \* \* \*

To Be Continued in a Second Book:

Movie Maker, History and Memoir of the "Elkay" Productions, My Australian Experience