

At seven years of age one doesn't think of "pivotal" moments or dates when a big change happens. Though it did seem big at the time. It was in the month of May, 1945.

When I was born in 1938, my father was a sharecropper on land owned by Judge Davenport of Searcy, Arkansas. Grant Clark, who still lives in Dewey, Arkansas, where I was born, and coincidentally was also born in 1938, tells me that much of the land in that area is still owned by heirs of the Judge.

I spent several hours talking with Grant on May 13, 2015. Sat in a chair rather facing toward Grant and a cousin, David Reaves in a covered area, probably a carport at one time, at his home about a half-mile up the road from where I was born. As Grant sat in a kind of porch swing, he rocked and told me of some of the people he remembered, including Carlen and Lucille Meharg, Horace and Evie Graham, his father Herschel Clark, my Uncle Everett and Aunt Retha and their family (my cousins) of two boys Verdi and Merle and their daughter Vonnie. Between Grant and David, we pieced together who lived where, including relatives of David's, the Williams, who lived across the road from the Mehargs and a bit north.

As it turns out, Grant and I started school together in the first grade at a one-room schoolhouse pretty much across the road from Everett and Retha's house in Dewey. He remembered the teacher's name, Orin Shere. His recollection had Orin being pretty tough on the kids. I just remember liking him. He seemed to like me and, for some reason, I remember him getting a big kick out of his writing the word "see" on the blackboard and asking me to tell him what it was. I said "let's see," not being aware that "see" was the word he was looking for...that is, until he laughed about. I also remember him holding me up high enough so I could pull on the rope that rang the school bell to call the kids in from recess.

I don't remember whether I started school at the age of five or six but do remember being told half-way through that first year that I was being promoted to the second grade.

It seems like there was an entry area, kind of a vestibule, at the entrance to the school. That's where the bell rope hung, the bell hanging in a tall steeple at the top of the building.

The memories of first and second grade are vague. Dick and Jane reader, pictures of interesting places around the world in file cabinets in the back right of the school room. A large wood stove stood pretty much in the center-left of the room with old-fashioned school desks in rows all facing the blackboard. I do remember somehow one leg of the stove getting knocked off its pedestal and Mr. Shere sending us out of the building as he and my cousin Verdie, a sixth (eighth?) grader, I'm thinking, propped the stove up.

If anything was available for playground equipment, I don't remember it. One thing I do remember is kids taking a board of about six feet long, placing it at it's center on a flat rock. One kid stood on the end, another jumped on the end sticking up. This was supposed to spring the other kid into the air and he or she was supposed to land on the board to spring the other kid upward. Some of the older kids got pretty good at it. I don't remember being particularly successful.

As one faced the school, a couple of outhouses stood to the right and rear of the property.

No trace of the school could be found when I visited the area in 2015.

A large wooden bucket filled with water sat on a table in the back of the schoolroom. It had a dipper in it. Everyone drank from the same dipper. I can't remember if there was a well on the school property, or who supplied the water. I don't recall being sick during that year or so, despite the shared drinking dipper.

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My cousins, Verdie, Merle, and their younger sister Vonnie Mae, lived almost directly across the road from the school. They were the offspring of my father's brother, Everett, and his wife, Retha. While the house they lived in no longer stands (another has replaced it), the half-circle drive-through driveway that I remember is still there serving the "new" house, a manufactured home.

We lived on the west side of the Dewey dirt road about a quarter of a mile north of the school. During my visit on May 13th, 2015, I could find no trace of the house or barn, or of the well that was across the road from the house.

The house was an unpainted frame building with a tiny front porch. It had a front room, a kitchen, and a covered area in the back southwest corner that was for storage. The foundation was made of rocks at the corners and other locations to get it off the ground. The chickens ran around under it, as I recall.

It had no bedroom. The beds were in the front room, along with a wood stove, a table of some sort to the front right as you entered the house. It had a linoleum floor with a pattern around the edge that made for a great imaginary "road" for the little toy car I had to play with. My sister Rachel, also born in that house in Dewey...we think with the assistance of Dr. Spain or maybe Dr. Peeler (two household names) we both remember from that era in our lives. Rachel never actually learned to crawl. She discovered there was no need for crawling. She was able to pull herself along the linoleum floor with her heels. When her diaper was wet, my mother claimed (jokingly, we think) that there was no need to mop, for Rachel did it for her.



This is not our well, but serves to illustrate the general idea. Our pulley looked like this, but we had no circular concrete surrounding the hole in the ground. The hole into which we lowered the bucket (see the photo to the right), was about 8 to 10 inches in diameter.

We had no electricity and certainly no running water. Water tasted great and cold and came from a well, a ceramic encased tube that dropped down about 25 feet. The well was across the road. It had two posts and a crosspiece at the top. Hanging from that was a pulley. A rope, run over the pulley, was attached to a three foot long narrow bucket of about six inches diameter. It had a flap toward the bottom that opened as the bucket was lowered into the water and allowed the bucket to fill. When pulled up the flap closed and kept the water in the bucket. A wire ran from the flap to top of the bucket. When the bucket was pulled to the top, it could be lowered to a galvanized pail. A loop at the top end of the wire could be pulled to release the flap and the water transferred to the pail. It took skill to loop the rope over a nail as you raised the water from the well. The whole process was a tricky maneuver for a six-year-old, and I don't know if I ever mastered it, but I did think drawing the water a fun thing to do...I'm sure with help from dad or mom. The photo on the right above shows



The well bucket attached by a rope through the pulley is lowered into the well. A flap at the bottom allows water in. When raised, the ring at the top is pulled to release the water.

an actual elongated “bucket” like we used, along with the ceramic “hole in the earth” where we lowered the bucket on a pulley and pulled it back up to be dumped into our water bucket.

Bath time was once a week and (as the standing joke) came whether we needed it or not. Water heated on the wood-fired cook stove in a tea-kettle was mixed with buckets of water from the well across the road to make for a warm tub-full of water. The tub was literally a tub...a round galvanized tub brought into the kitchen. This was it for the whole family!

Our meals consisted of breakfast, dinner, and supper. The big meal being dinner at mid-day. Breakfast was often biscuits and gravy. At the right time of year (after butchering the hogs) we might have sausage. Meat was not at all a staple and actually rare for a meal of any sort.

Since we were basically subsistence living, it was what could be grown in a garden and either eaten fresh or, in the case of green beans, as an example, canned in Mason jars using a pressure cooker on the cookstove.

The storm cellar served as a cool place to store the canned goods on shelves on the back wall of the pit in the earth 20 yards from the back door of the house. The house also had a corner “room” accessed only from an outside door. It had a dirt floor. I believe it also served as a storage place for canned goods.

When we did have meat for a meal it could have been fried chicken. Dad also hunted squirrels. He’d come home with two or three squirrels he’d shot with a twenty-two or a shotgun. He’d skin them out and cut them up for frying. These squirrels were much bigger than the little ones we see running around here. I can’t remember the taste, but no doubt they fell into the tried-and-true category of “tasting like chicken.” I do remember having to watch out for the bee-bee sized shot in the meat when eating it if he’d used the shotgun for the kill.

Dad also “gigged” for catfish on the Little Red River. This was a night venture using a three-pronged spear on a long pole. Catfish could get fairly large in the warmer waters of the Little Red. This before Greer’s Ferry Dam went in and cooled the water downstream so that now one is more apt to catch trout than catfish on the river.

I think gigging for catfish was actually illegal...as was stringing a line across the river with short fishing lines hanging from the “trot-line” with baited hooks.

He would come home with a catfish now and then. I remember it tasting wonderful, but I also remember how bony each piece was. I don’t know if that was because of the way he cut it up or if that was the nature of a channel catfish.

Otherwise, the staple of the diet was pinto beans and fried potatoes. Cornbread was common, baked daily as I remember it. Not the sweetened kind fixed nowadays and often made with ingredients from a box, but made from scratch. I always liked the corner piece, kind of crusty and really good with butter. And that was an almost everyday thing. The piece I tried to avoid was one with the yellow glob of baked soda. I suspect humidity cause the Arm and Hammer (yes, even then) soda in that same familiar box as today, to clump up. By the way, cornbread was called cornbread, but white bread...the kind made from wheat flour and yeast, was called “light” bread. (Not “white” bread...but light-bread!)

Supper...the evening meal...was most often left overs from dinner, the noon meal. This was when dad often had his dessert. Carlen’s dessert was cornbread crumbled up in buttermilk and in a glass, eaten with a spoon.

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Well, OK, some of us had our food idiosyncrasies. Mine was the childish habit of not wanting one kind of food to mix or touch another. So, you ate one food, say, the fried potatoes before going on to eat the pinto beans, and then the cornbread. And you certainly didn't want the bean juice to touch the potatoes. It made sense to me!

Staples such as flour, cornmeal, salt, sugar, and perhaps oatmeal...those items that could be stored without refrigeration...were bought in Pangburn, about six miles from Dewey. A trip to town was rare as it meant hitching up the mules to pull a farm wagon. I don't remember our having a car until after we moved from Dewey to a few miles and across the Little Red River, where we lived about six to nine months before our move to Washington.

Here's a couple more memories from that time and those trips to Pangburn. There was a movie theatre in Pangburn...long gone now. I saw my first movie there, the title or story of which I can't even begin to remember. But what I do remember was the MGM lion roaring at me and scaring me to death.

There was a little grocery store across the street from the theatre. My dad bought me a banana, my first taste of that fruit. I loved it. Still like bananas to this day!

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that flour sacks came in patterned designs and the cloth was valued for making clothing, especially dresses. A flour sack dress was not at all uncommon in those days. Mom's pride and joy was a treadle powered sewing machine. Paper patterns were just a few cents each. I don't know much about the procedure, so how a flour sack became a dress remains a mystery to me. It was not at all uncommon, for manufacturers of flour obliged rural customers by selling their flour in fifty pound sacks made from cloth that could be repurposed for clothing.



An icebox, similar to this one, was the way milk and other food was kept chilled for as long as the ice lasted. The ice block often served as the source for ice for sweet tea in the summer.

We had an ice-box. It was literally an insulated box shaped appliance, the fore-runner of the refrigerator. Remember, no electricity. The ice-box was cooled by...you guessed it...a block of ice. The ice-man came down the road about once a week during the summer. He'd break off a block of ice, attach his tongs to it and carry it into the house dripping water all the way. He'd deposit it in the ice-box. As long as the ice lasted...and I'm not sure it always lasted a week...we'd have a place to keep milk and butter. I don't know how much a block of ice cost in those days. Maybe a dime...who knows?

We had a cow. As long as it was "fresh," meaning had had a calf and was producing milk for part of each year, we had milk to drink. Occasionally, in the spring, the cow would get into some wild onions out in the pasture behind the house and the milk would take on that taste, but mostly it was good drinking and also made good milk-gravy.

To this day I don't know the procedure, but milk (probably sour milk) was placed in a ceramic churn holding maybe two gallons of liquid. It had a lid with a hole in it. A stick with an X shaped piece at the lower end fit into the hole. You grabbed the stick at the upper end and worked up and down, up and down, until the creamy milk began to turn into butter. I think a little salt was added to it. All I know is that the result was butter. Another item stored in the ice-box.

While I can't remember mother baking often in the Arkansas days, I do remember some treats I thought pretty good stuff. She could make what she called "chocolate gravy" using sugar and cocoa and it was great

over biscuits. I suspect she used a bit of flour for thickening and that what we might simply call chocolate sauce today took on a gravy-like consistency then.

Another treat was to take a small amount of cocoa and mix with sugar. The usual way to eat it was to pretend it was snuff, like Grandma Genila used, and place it in your mouth behind your lower lip and let it dissolve. (Yep, Grandma Genila “dipped” snuff. A tobacco in powdered form. More later on this.)

Of course, the real treat was home-made ice cream. This was a rare thing. I don’t remember our making this while we lived in Dewey, but just before moving to Washington in 1945, we had relatives over who brought an ice cream maker. It’s pretty much the same thing people use today, except hand-cranked. We used an ice pick to break the ice up, along with rock-salt...same system as today, other than the source of the ice!



I keep reminding you that we had no electricity. The cook-stove demanded considerable skill in placing the right sized chunks of wood in the firebox. Note the photo to the left. Baking was definitely a tricky thing for getting the temperature to remain even throughout the baking of a cake, or even cornbread, was nigh onto impossible.

And while we’re talking treats, we can’t forget the “parched peanuts.” Somehow on the acres he farmed, dad would find an area to grow peanuts. For the uninitiated, the plants are leafy but the peanuts grow underground, rather like potatoes. When they’re ripe, the plants are pulled up and the peanuts are allowed to dry. Dad had a spot in the barn where the peanuts dried. When they were deemed ready to eat, he’d pull them from the plants and bring them into the house and put them in a cornbread pan and dry them further, almost baking them, to make what he called “parched” peanuts. They end up being pretty much what you’d buy now as roasted peanuts in the shell at the grocery store. The peanuts he grew, however, were the smaller variety, more like what we

now call “Spanish” peanuts. I liked them raw, too. Nowadays, you can buy raw peanuts...most often used in the making of peanut brittle.

While I mostly remember how hot the weather could be in the summertime in Arkansas, it also got cold in the winter. That had to be a problem in a drafty frame house without insulation. Of course, there is the memory of my dad standing with his back to the living room stove with his hands behind him to get warm. But, that was him...he did the same thing with the “modern” oil stove we heated the house with after we moved to our Longview house on Florida Street in 1951.

Our Dewey house where both Rachel and I were born was on the west side of the road and faced east. It had a small front porch that served as a good place to take dining chairs and prop them against the house for a cool place to sit in the summer early evenings.

We used what we called “coal oil” as a fuel for lamps. I’ve never known for sure, but assume what we called “coal oil” was nothing more than kerosene. We had a coal oil lamp for the kitchen and another for the living room. I can’t remember when we got it, but at one point in our no-electricity days mother and daddy (that’s what kids called their parents then) bought what they called an “Aladdin” lamp. It had a mantle of fragile material similar to those found in camping lamps of today. While the fuel was the same (coal oil), the light it

gave off was very bright...as compared to a conventional lamp with a wick. It might have been as bright as an incandescent 75 watt bulb.

I've given some thought to the subject of our living conditions over the years. Here in 2018 we are so accustomed to plenty of light 24 hour per day. In so many ways, our living in that part of the state of Arkansas in the early 1940's was very much like living in the 19th century or even much earlier. Yes, we had a radio. A car or truck might go by a few times a day. Occasionally one might even see an airplane way off in the distance. We knew big cities existed. We knew about railroads. We knew some people had electricity, running water, and telephones. But all of this was far away and only other people lived like that.

We went into town in a wagon pulled by mules. My dad ploughed his field with a single-bit plough pulled by those same mules. When it was dark, it was bed-time. You didn't pick up a phone and chat with friends. No such thing as TV. Relatives stopping by to visit came unannounced. "Well, come on in...make yourself at home!"

As an aside to all of this, I have some sense of how our primitive ancestors came to believe in ghosts and spirits and how superstitions were easy to accept. It was dark outside. Shadows in the moonlight could easily be taken as specters. Thunder seemed ominous. Our knowledge of science explains eclipses and comets. Most people, even one hundred years ago, had no explanation except the supernatural one. All who lived then were easy prey to story-tellers, and yes, even preachers who could grab the fearful by their imagination and lead them wherever they wanted them to go. Magic was easy to accept. Devils and devil possession were easy to accept as the cause of diseases, especially mental issues. A person suffering from occasional convulsions might be considered insane (or possessed) and locked up in an asylum of some sort. Yes, even in the last century. (I hasten to say that I'm not speaking from personal experience or even as one having seen this sort of thing in our family, but it was not really uncommon a century ago.)

Today we know that special effects in movies and on television can be made to look real. We may choose to be frightened or not, depending on how much we suspend our disbelief. In those days, even one lifetime in the past, there were no quick explanations for the mysteries of nature or of human illness.

But, getting back to the analogy of light...

It's not by accident that we use the word "enlightenment." Just as daddy and mother's "Aladdin" lamp filled the room with light, people who are determined to learn, people who are committed to find truth, people who ask questions and refuse to accept superstition will continue to shed light and dispel fear.

The house in Dewey had a woodpile in the back yard. As a kid I don't think I ever knew how the chunks of wood ever got there. Someone, probably dad, managed...along with neighbor help, to cut down a tree with a big cross cut saw...not a power saw, of course...haul it in by wagon to the back yard. There it was a matter of splitting it into smaller pieces. The smaller of the pieces had to fit into the wood cookstove. Operating one of these had to be a real art for the cook. Maintaining the right amount of draft for the fire and stoking the firebox with the right amount of wood simply had to be a delicate balancing act. The living room stove had even fewer ways to control the heat. A damper on the chimney pipe offered a bit of control, but so much depended on the type of wood and how dry it was it could drive you out of the room with heat or, more than likely, die down in the middle of the night so you woke up with frost on your nose. All this to say, it wasn't easy for folks then.

You're rather at the mercy of the wandering memories of a child those first five or six years in Dewey and of how we lived in that "first" house...my first house. So, more random than organized, here are a few more memories. Forgive me if I "jump around" as the story unfolds.

All of the kids went barefooted in the summer. It was not only cooler, but probably saved on the cost of shoes and socks. Gravel roads, chicken poop in the yard...hey, no problem. You developed callouses and walking, even in the woods, was no problem. Foot washing was not a sacred rite...just a necessity of living.

Other than that little rubber toy car I "drove" around the linoleum floor in the living room, I don't remember many toys. I played with a hoop (probably from a small barrel) that you could roll down the road by pushing it and chasing it with a stick. The lower end of the stick had a rectangular flattened Prince Albert (tobacco) can with turned up edges nailed to the stick. That sorta guided the metal hoop down the road and you just ran along behind it giving it a push to keep it going...not so easy on that dirt and gravel road in front of the house.

Oh, and I had a tricycle. I don't know where it came from. I don't believe it was new. But I do recall riding it in our yard and also in the yard of the Grahams, who lived across the road and maybe a quarter of a mile south of us. Horace and Evie Graham lived there. They had a daughter maybe a year older than I by the name of Genevieve. We all pronounced her name Genavee.

We had neighbors to the north of us a quarter of a mile...the kid who lived across the road and north of us near that slight curve in the road.. I'm thinking his name was Jackie Williams. He was two or three years older than I, so I didn't play with him much. I do recall playing in the loft of the barn one day. He either ran home to get it or brought it with him, be he had an umbrella with him. The drop from the loft to the barn yard was maybe ten or twelve feet. It seemed like a good way to go...using the umbrella as a parachute and making the jump. Fortunately...for me...he went first. The umbrella, as you have already surmised, quickly collapsed and the kid landed hard. I could only look on from my lofty perch as he squalled, but managed to get up and hobble on down the road. To this day I don't know whether he broke anything or not, but I did learn how quickly umbrellas collapse in the wind.

Dad and mom were married in 1934. This was about four years after the death of Carlen's first wife. Her name was Nettie Pauline. Nettie was born in 1912. She died at 18 in 1930 in a Searcy hospital. I was told that she died from complications after they not only removed her appendix, but also decided to do a tonsillectomy on her while she was "out" from the ether they used then for an anesthetic. I know nothing else of Nettie, though the photo here with dad and his brother is Nettie. She is buried in the Roosevelt Cemetery located about halfway between Dewey and Pleasant Plains and near the little Pentecostal Church

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of God we attended later. (I had no idea she was buried there or that dad even had a first wife until I was of high school age.)



This could be the only photo we have of Nettie Meharg, dad's first wife. Photo was taken in about 1929. L to R: Nettie Meharg, Carlen Meharg, Gladys Meharg, and Carles Meharg.

My mother, Lucille Reaves, was born in 1913 near Pangburn. The photo below was taken when she was about 14 or 15 years old. I believe she told me she went as far as grade eleven in the Pangburn schools. She stands in the back row, second from the left and immediately to the left of teacher, Pearl Howard.



Class of about c. 1929 - Pangburn, AR School

Back row: Pearl Howard (English teacher), Lucille Reaves, Adrian Marsh, Jack Albert, Eldridge Johnson, Howel Lewis, Van Glen David Butler, Woodrow Matthews, Lewis Crook.

Middle row: Norma Shearer, Lucille Norman, Doris Pierce, Vada Bell Hughes, Pauline Ghent, Ruth Edwards, Fay Ramsey, Winnie Mae Short

Front row: Elmer (Slim) Ramsey, Mr. Hickman (Civics teachers), Mr. Fraser (Principal and algebra teacher), Claud (Babe) Dumas, Ereil Craig, Paul Anders, Alvin Buckmaster.

I simply don't know when my parents, Carlen and Lucille, moved into the house in Dewey. I was told that dad worked for awhile in a rock quarry. Mom told me that one thing they did to make a living before moving to Dewey was working as "itinerant" cotton pickers, travelling to the southern part of the state during the fall harvest and to southern Missouri one year to make enough money to live on. A book by John Grisham called "A Painted House" tells of such folks who travelled the cotton harvest circuit, camping on the grounds of the farmer/owner and working long days trying to earn a few dollars.




While we had no electricity or running water, we did have a radio. It was a small Philco radio, probably about ten inches wide, eight inches tall. It sat on a table in the front corner of the house. Under it, on the floor, was a rectangular battery that was probably fourteen inches long by five inches wide, a rather heavy device. The radio, of course, plugged into the battery for power. Since the battery was expensive, radio listening was limited to preserve battery life. The antenna, what we called the "aerial," was a wire strung between two tall posts maybe 50

feet apart in the yard. A lead-in wire from the aerial was attached to a wire going through a hole in the house wall. That lead-in could be easily unhooked so that a lightning strike to the antenna wouldn't "lead-in" to the house. Someone had to remember to unhook the "aerial" every time a thunderstorm blew in.

We seemed to be on the edge of coverage for about every station on the air. Some of the first music I listened to was by the Stamps Baxter gospel quartet out of KARK in Little Rock. My mother loved that quartet.

We also listened to "The Grand Ol' Opry" from WSM in Nashville...whether that was via KARK, I don't know. But Nashville was only 275 miles away....as the radio waves fly, so it's possible a strong station like WSM covered us. These were the days of such prominent country musicians as Roy Acuff and his group "The Smoky Mountain Boys." "The Grand Ol' Opry" introduced us to Minnie Pearl in the early 40's. It was about then that she became a fixture on the long-running show that ran weekly out of the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville.

Minnie Pearl



Pearl in 1965

Born	Sarah Ophelia Colley October 25, 1912 Centerville, Tennessee, U.S.
Died	March 4, 1996 (aged 83) Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.
Resting place	Mount Hope Cemetery, Franklin, Tennessee, U.S.
Alma mater	Ward-Belmont College
Occupation	Country comedian
Years active	1939–1991
Television	<i>Hee-Haw</i>
Spouse	Henry R. Cannon (m. 1947)

My earliest days of any memories at all coincided with World War II. Even as a child I remember the somber tones of newscaster Gabriel Heatter coming from the little radio and telling about how the war was going.



We also loved listening to “Amos n’ Andy.” Both “Amos” and “Andy” were white, but portrayed as black for the radio show.

Freeman Gosden (Amos) and Charles Correll (Andy).

Chester Lauck (Lum) and Norris Goff (Abner), originally from Waters, Arkansas...later named Pine Ridge because that is what they called their

town for the radio show.

While “Amos n’ Andy” eventually made it to early television, “Lum and Abner” didn’t make a successful



transition. The two men who developed the 15-minute radio show were from Waters, Arkansas (later renamed and called Pine Ridge because that’s what these two guys called their town for their show.) Here’s what Wikipedia says about the characters on the show:

*The series was created by co-stars Chester Lauck (who played Columbus "Lum" Edwards) and Norris Goff (Abner Peabody). The two characters performed as a **double act**, with Lum generally playing the **straight man** to Abner's attempts to break free from Lum's influence. As co-owners of the Jot 'em Down Store in the fictional town of **Pine Ridge, Arkansas**, the pair are constantly stumbling upon moneymaking ideas only to find themselves fleeced by nemesis Squire Skimp, before finally finding a way to redeem themselves. Lum and Abner played the **hillbilly** theme with deceptive cleverness. The hillbillies knew that the slickers would get what was coming to them sooner or later and either didn't mind or knew more than they let on that the slickers getting theirs was a matter of fortunate*

circumstance. Aside from its “another era” characters, it seems doubtful that a show like “Amos n’ Andy” could even be considered for radio or television in the early 21st century. Both black characters of the radio show were voiced by white men, Freeman Gosden (Amos) and Charles Correll (Andy). While we never thought of the show as racist or even unflattering to blacks (certainly not in the



mindset of the era in which we lived), the accents and characterizations would likely be considered politically incorrect if not out-and-out banned today. I suspect for very good reason!

I don’t know how many acres of land that Carlen had to raise cotton on. I do remember the field down near the Little Red River at the intersection of the road coming east from Pangburn, turning northeast to cross the river or to the south to go into Dewey where we lived. (Actually the road continued east as a path to an area just east of Dewey called Pumpkin Town. (Punkin’town). It wasn’t a town at all, but rather a few houses accessed by that road.

That plot of land...I’m guessing 10-20 acres...is now over-grown in brush, briars, and trees. At least it was in 2015 when I passed by while visiting Arkansas. It’s hard to believe it actually was ploughed and used for growing cotton in the early forties.

The map to the left shows the land that my dad farmed with a single blade plow, and a cultivator, pulled by the team of mules. The community called Dewey was just to the south, near the Hwy. 305 marking . I’d guess that the house in which I was born was only slightly south of that marking on the map. That house and barn no longer stand.

He would hitch up the mules, Nig and Shorty, and pull the wagon with his plow in it, or pull the cultivator down to the field and till this soil each year. The field had a big black-walnut tree not far from the east end. It made for a shady spot for a rest, or to park the wagon. In the fall, when it came time to pick the cotton, it seemed to me that this was a communal effort with neighbors helping neighbors. Both men and women would pull long bags down between the rows of cotton, picking the fluffy stuff out of the cotton bolls and stuffing it into the bags they were dragging. When full, they would drag them to the

wagon and dump them, going back to where they left off and repeating the process. It was hard, hot, work.



When the wagon was full, dad would drive the mules across the river and three or four miles to the cotton gin owned by a fellow named Siler. He'd drive the wagon into a drive-through port. A long pipe of about 12 inches in diameter hanging from the roof and powered by an engine somewhere back in the gin, rather like a large vacuum cleaner, would be lowered and hand operated to suck up the cotton from the wagon and deliver it into the gin. The seeds were removed in whatever process goes on in a cotton gin and the cotton baled up to be sold on the market. I can only assume that dad was paid at that time by the pound. He'd head back to the field for another load.



The two photos (taken in 2015) above show the old cotton gin building where Dad brought his wagon load of cotton. The open space was the area where he had the mules pull the loaded wagon. The pipe hanging from the ceiling (photo on the right) of the building was moveable and was the suction device that "vacuumed" the cotton out of the wagon and into the gin area.

He used to say that his earnings from growing cotton amounted to an average of \$365 per year. As far as I know, this was his only source of cash income.

Someplace on the land he had access to, he grew potatoes and some corn. The corn was mainly used for feeding the animals. The barn had a special place called the corn crib. Ears of corn filled that area. I do remember you had to watch out for snakes there. I don't know if it was a good hiding place, a good place to catch a rat, or if snakes like corn!

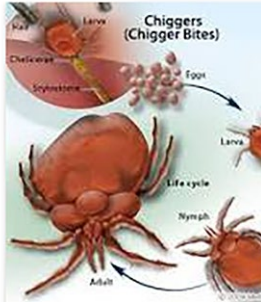
We had a few pigs. All I remember about this is that food-stuff garbage was tossed in a pail called the slop bucket. It was carried out to the pigpen daily and poured into the feeding trough. The expression was, "I gotta go slop the hogs." Well, one other memory, the awful sound of the squealing pigs when it came time to castrate the males. I remember sitting in a corner of the house trying to cover my ears, for it scared this four or five-year-old.

I don't know if he also planted sweet corn or if the field corn, when picked very early, was used for corn on the cob. But at the right time in late summer, we did eat corn on the cob. Loved it then and still do.

Both the house in Dewey and the land that dad farmed were owned by a man who lived in Searcy. I heard him called Judge Davenport. So, he must have been a judge. One source said Davenport's father was governor during the 30's. If the judge had a first name, I never heard him called by it.

Grant Clark told me that the Davenport family still owns a large amount of land in that part of the state. Dad, as a sharecropper, had to share part of his earnings with Judge Davenport...rather, I suppose, as payment for rent on the house and land.

Speaking of snakes sometimes found in the barn, they are plentiful in Arkansas. A few are poisonous. Rattlesnakes were around, but not particularly common. The most common poisonous snake seemed to be the copperhead. Dad killed one in the barn one time and drug it up into the firewood storage area. Big long thing, scared me and I didn't want to go near it...dead or alive. Down on the Little Red River, it was the cottonmouth snake (also called a water moccasin) you had to watch out for. They tend to be water snakes and are swimmers. I've seen them swimming across the water. The good part is they are not usually aggressive and you rarely heard of anyone getting bitten.



Then there are the chiggers. They're almost microscopic, a form of a mite. You'll get them on you walking in the woods or through brush, especially in moist areas. They're found on plants relatively close to the ground surface and especially in humid times of the year. (When the temperature goes low, sayin the 40's, they die off.) They'll bite and feed on skin cells, but not on blood. Mom used to suggest applying a little "coal oil," (kerosene) around pants legs to ward them off. Since chiggers are said not to carry or transmit disease, it may be that her treatment was more harmful than the chigger. The most common itchy places are around the ankles and lower legs. But they'll go for any moist area on the body, including the crotch. Very itchy. Part of the spider/tick family.

I've also had ticks burrowing into my hide. I don't remember ever becoming sick from it, but they're not uncommon in Arkansas. I've heard of all sorts of methods for removing them, but apparently the secret is to remove it with leaving any parts of its head inside the skin.

The Arkansas where we lived is no different from a large part of the south with regard to its insects and crawling things. In addition to snakes, chiggers, and ticks, we also had scorpions. I remember my dad crushing one crawling on the floor of church. It was moving toward Rachel, who was sleeping on a "pallet" (a folded quilt) on the floor near my mom's pew or maybe it was just a chair. I got stung by one when we lived in "Grubtown," just east of Pangburn the year we moved back to Arkansas after our first year in Washington.



Our house in Little Red...the home we lived in at the time of our first move to Washington. This photo taken in about 1981. The owner was Boyce Wood. To the left of the driveway stood a long shed. To the right and down the hill was a barn. No electricity and no running water in 1944-45.

I was sliding down a concrete culvert near the house with my hands on the edge of the concrete. It was very painful. Again, I don't remember it making me sick, but the pain was bordering on excruciating...at least at my tender age!

We moved from Dewey and across the Little Red River in 1944. I can't remember what prompted the move, but the house in Little Red (the name of the area) was somewhat bigger. It also had a shed and a large barn. I'm sure most of the houses in that part of Arkansas had a "tin" roof, probably a galvanized metal, and not actually made from tin. What I remember was the sound of heavy rain on that "tin"

roof. There's nothing quite like it. Believe me, there is no insulation in the rafters and so nothing except the ceiling itself to dampen the sound.



When I visited the area in 2015, I walked as close as I could get...without a machete. Trees and brush had taken over and only part of the structure is standing now. The house in the photo above looks decrepit, but aside from the rusted roof and the aged look, the house was not that much different from when we lived in it. The photo to the left, believe it or not is the same house. Photo taken in May of 2015.

In May of 1944, it "came up a cloud" and hailed with hailstones bigger than a golf ball. We picked 'em up and used them in our iced tea! The hail also damaged the fabric roof in a car that dad had managed to buy. To this day I don't know the origin of that car and how he had the money to buy it.

We did drive it north on "up the road" (for there was a hill to climb) to the church at "Roosevelt." I remember being placed in the shelf behind the passenger seat and "sleeping" there on the way home from church.

One indelible memory remains with me to this day. That was the day shortly after Christmas in 1944 that cars pulled into the yard of our house and people got out to tell my mother that her only brother, younger than she by several years, had been killed in action in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. I find that I cannot even write this part of the story without tears. I suspect it's because of the profound grief my mother experienced at this news. Her brother, Howell, was the "baby" of the family with four older sisters...all of whom rather doted on him and loved him deeply. It's hard to explain how that experience has shaped my own views about war and the excruciating price that a good many common people in this nation paid and continue to pay. I do feel that World War II was necessary. The terrifying thought of Fascism and Nazism controlling the world and



From behind the memorial wall, looking toward Aunt Kate (Murphy's) house on the main street of Pangburn, Arkansas. Photo taken in May of 2015.

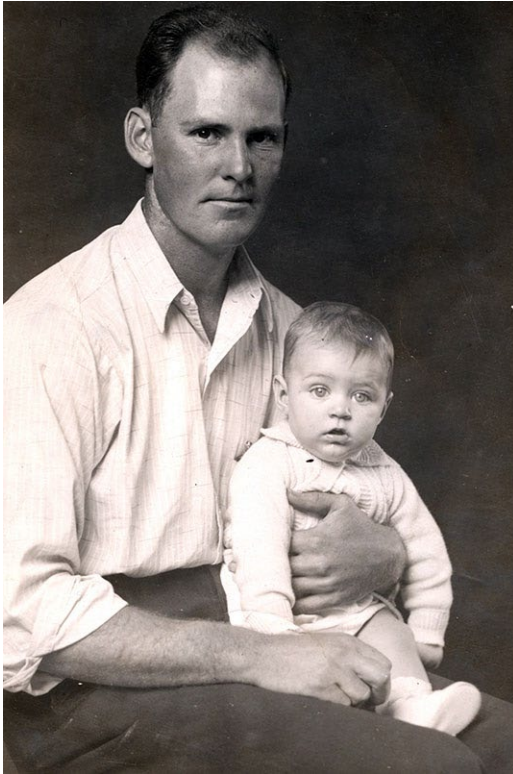
the unimaginable loss of millions of lives among the Jews, gypsies, and other ethnic groups because of a belief that white Europeans were of a superior race made that war perhaps one of the few, if not the only, wars that simply had to be fought. Virtually every other in the 20th and 21st centuries (for sure) were based mainly on either the selfish ambitions of leaders or politicians, the mistaken assumptions about regimes, or simple monetary ambitions couched in glorified political terms.

Howell had been married shortly before being drafted into the army and he and his wife (Aline) had a baby boy who he had had so little time with before being shipped off to England and then the battlefield in Belgium. This son, David Reaves, lives



near Pangburn and was one of those instrumental in the building of a war memorial that stands across the street from the home of Howell's oldest sister, my aunt Kate Murphy, in downtown Pangburn. The memorial was built in about 2012, long after Kate's death and the deaths of each of Howell's sisters...my aunts and my mother...but I rather think each of them would be pleased to see this nice memorial.

David Reaves was the baby boy born to Howell and Aline. This a photo of David I took while visiting Arkansas in 2015. He, of course, remembers nothing of his father, Howell.



*Your husband, at the
Nation's Capital, Wash DC.*

I'm not positive who owned the actual farmland that dad tilled and planted in cotton in the spring of 1945. I do know that the house was owned by a man by the name of Boyce Wood. The Woods lived not far from the cotton gin where dad took his cotton...the gin being just a few miles northeast of the house in which we now lived. I've talked with and emailed messaged with daughters of Boyce Wood, Mariola (Wood) Payne and her sister, Laquita (Wood) Kent. This is an excerpt from Mariola in an email dated July, 2015.

Hi, I am Mariola Wood Payne, sister of Laquita Wood Kent. As you know mother was the writer of the above book. I was so happy to receive your order and letter regarding the book. I am in the process of sending it to you.

Our father also used the old gin for his cotton. I well remember riding in the cotton wagon, laying on my back in the soft cotton and looking up at the stars. The cotton was cozy and warm. we played all over the gin while the wagons were lined up to "get the cotton sucked up in the big pipe". Now days no kid could play on the second floor of the gin, looking down to see the wagons pull in to be emptied. Too dangerous, someone would sue if an accident happened. Those were different days. Then I stood in the rattly old empty wagon holding on

to the sideboards going home. It was in the fall of the year and it would be cooler going home. Lots of times the neighbor kids rode with us. Just a little excitement for country kids.

The house you pictured we called the old Brock House. The people who lived there in the fifties worked for my father on the farm. I'm not sure when my dad purchased that house and land, but my sister and I still retain ownership of it.

We lived in house on the corner of Hwy 124 and Hwy 305. We lived there in the early fifties. The house is still there now and I'm sure you passed it during the trip you had back to Arkansas. Before that we lived in an older house just up the road which is no longer there.

Mother wrote the stories of growing up while we lived in that corner house. The Little Red River played a big part in our lives.

I hope you enjoy the book as much as I have enjoyed your correspondence. We grew up just a few years apart in the same area. I was born in 1944 and my sister war born in 1940. We only missed getting to know you by a few years. Just too young to remember the 1940's.17

[The Little Red River](#) seemed to have played a significant part in my life, albeit indirectly, I suppose. First, I



The bridge, under construction, in 1909.
formed the roadway for the wheels of the wagon or car.

have to tell you of the bridge that crossed it a few miles north of Dewey and a mile or so south of the community called Little Red. The bridge was a one-lane suspension bridge. Two tall piers carried the weight of the bridge with wire cables strung from the ground on each side, up to the piers, down in the central part of the bridge, up again to the second pier and down again to the other side. Both cars and wagons pulled by mules (most often) crossed the bridge. Cars normally sounded their horn at one side to let people (out of sight because of the upward curvature of the bridge) on the other side know they were about to cross. Heavy planks



I'm reasonably certain that the photo with the man walking across the bridge was of what was known as the Pangburn bridge, not the similar looking bridge 6 miles down-river that I recall. The photo is of one immediately north of the town. It also crossed the Little Red River and looked very much like the one near the area called Little Red.

I feel certain the bridge I recall was steeper and the piers were taller, but it was very much like the one in the photo



The old suspension bridge collapsed in about 1954.

The bridge had a tendency to sway and swing a bit as you crossed. It was a thrill for a little kid to cross it by wagon or car. The bridge, in that configuration, continued to be used until 1954 when it collapsed, killing a couple of young people who just happened to be crossing.

I remember at least one time going swimming in a "swimmin' hole" just down river from the bridge.

Dad said he and others fished for catfish using a "trot line" not far up the river from the bridge. They would string a line from one side of the river to another. Every few feet they'd attach a shorter line with a baited hook. This was, or became, illegal but it did not stop back in that day. It was one way to catch the tasty-eating channel catfish.

In the spring of 1945 the Little Red River flooded. Heavy rains in the area, especially up-river from our area caused very high water which literally washed away dad's newly planted cotton. This promised to be catastrophic, for growing cotton was the only source of income for our family.

Coincidentally, in that spring of '45, my mother's sister's husband and their two boys (Jerry and Vernon) returned from Longview, Washington to attend the funeral of Uncle John's father. John E. Adams, who was called Johnny, talked things over with my parents. The decision was made to pick up all we could take with us and move 2000 miles west to Longview. Johnny was certain dad could get a job at Reynolds Metals, Co., an aluminum plant that had offered many jobs during the war and still was flourishing.

So, that was what prompted our first move to the state of Washington. My parents packed up everything they could manage to get in old suitcases. We managed to get to Little Rock and the train station and off we went to Portland, Oregon. I remember very little about the trip other than it was crowded and that we tried to sleep in the Pullman car seats. I'm sure it had to have been a tiring and stressful trip, especially for mom and dad. This move to Longview, Washington was that pivotal time in my life.

The photo below was taken in May of 2015. This was taken from a boat launch area about three miles west of the land dad farmed on the south side of the river. The river was high when the photo was taken but now the flow is monitored by the dam at Greer's Ferry and is unlikely to flood the farmland as happened in the spring of 1945, washing out dad's cotton and prompting us to accept the urging of John E. Adams to move to Longview, WA.



The Little Red River, (photo taken in 2015) is about three miles upriver from the suspension bridge that crossed it near the acreage my father farmed.

It is only incidental to all this about the river, but I feel inclined to tell you that the Little Red was once commercially navigable. Boats traveled the river from its mouth where it flows into the White River a few miles southeast of Searcy. Both the White River and the Little Red were river "highways" used by keel boats to carry crops and serve towns in the early part of the 1900's.

Let me break from the story to talk a bit about my parents' families.

Dad was born in 1912 to Henry Arthur (known as Buster) and Genila Meharg near Pleasant Plains, Arkansas. Carlen James was his name. His twin brother's name was Carles (pronounced Car-less). Carles died in 1974 of cancer. My father outlived his twin by sixteen years.

My father's father (Henry Arthur Meharg, aka Buster) Grandpa, to me, was born in Coosa County Alabama on July 13, 1882. He died March 24th, 1965. My grandmother (Genila Blankenship) was born in White County (includes Searcy/Pangburn, etc.) adjacent to Independence County (Pleasant Plains) on June 19th, 1887. She died February 23rd, 1969.

In addition to twins, Carlen and Carles, Buster and Genila (my grandparents) were parents of an older child by the name of Everett, an older sister by the name of Ina, always called "I-ny," a sister by the name of



Jewell, and a much younger sister, Hazel. Hazel is the mother of a cousin, Jerry Lindsey, who is a great source of information and helped me immensely in putting together many of the pieces of the Meharg story. Jerry told me something I did not know when I visited in 2015. Buster and Genila had a baby boy name Lemmie who died at only three months old. Jerry, who had actually lived with my grandparents for several years as a child, said that Genila wept every time she told about Lemmie. I'm probably missing a great deal of the



Grandpa (Buster) Meharg and Grandma (Genila) hold Everett, the oldest child in the family, and the next oldest, Ina. Photo had to have taken in about 1906.

history of the Mehargs, but we know that they came out of Coosa County, Alabama. Several years ago, I gave a presentation at a choral music workshop on the campus of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma. After my talk, I sat down in the back row of the room. A young woman leaned over and said, "you're the first person outside of my immediate family I've ever come across who has the same last name as mine before I got married." I was astounded. It turned out her father lived in Alaska. I got his address and wrote to him. He put me in touch with another relative, a man who was of the Mormon faith...and who had done considerable research on his ancestors. He had produced a book which detailed all the Mehargs as far back as 1750. This to a John Meharg of Alabama. Moving from there forward one can see the family tree, including my grandfather's (Henry Arthur) move as a child to Arkansas.

Farther back than 1750 is mostly speculation. We are fairly certain that Mehargs came out of Ireland and/or Scotland. Some apparently settled in Canada and some migrated south through the Appalachians

Ah, the speculation reigns...

One, fascinating story (to us Mehargs, at

least) is that the name Meharg is Graham spelled backwards...well, almost. I wrote the following article several years ago:

Writer lives under 500 year old curse

By Howard Meharg

With a name like Meharg, there must be a story behind it. This is mine and I'm sticking to it.

A distant relative, who I just discovered and who writes columns for the Times-Journal in a town near Ontario, Canada, says the whole Meharg family name is "cursed." No, really! This guy, Bob Meharg, says he's discovered that since the 1500s, we've been under a black cloud placed there by the Archbishop of Glasgow.

My distant (and unknown) relative, Bob, has discovered that our family hails from a blood-soaked region along the border of Scotland and England he describes as once being in the "grip of feud and organized gangsterism." Trust me, Bob says, this was bad stuff. And it was made that way, largely, by a bunch of murderous clans known as the "border reivers," whose only major contribution to English culture was the word "blackmail."

These "goons" (Bob's word) thought nothing of sacking and looting a farm or neighboring clan. Now, right in the thick of all of this were our ancestors, who at that time went under the name of Graham. The Grahams, he says in a bit of understatement, were so good at their business that they brought a "certain amount of ill will." Thus, they were savagely persecuted by the English king of the day.

But that was just the beginning of the Grahams' problems. The Archbishop of Glasgow issued a tirade which, in part, went like this: "I curse thair heid and all the haris of thair heid; I curse thair face, thair ene, thair mouth, thair neise, thair tounge, thair teith, thair crag, thair schulderis, thair breist, thair hert..." Only a Scot could come up with something like that! But it worked. It became so unhealthy to be a Graham that many of them, at the behest of one smart family member, decided to change the name to avoid further attention. In a blaze of inspiration, he put the letters backwards, from Graham to Maharg and later to Meharg.

Then, in an equally bright move, a branch of the family ran off to the peace and safety of Northern Ireland.

It all makes so much sense now! In a trip to Ireland a couple of years ago, I found a Meharg near Dublin who said he (we) had many relatives in the Belfast (north) region.

So, there you have it. This explains the intense desire to wear kilts, the totally unexpected tears that well up when singing about the "Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond," fear of monsters in large bodies of water, and (worst of all) baldness. Remember the part about "all the haris of thair heid?" Actually since there are few "haris" to be concerned about, I suppose I should worry more now about my "ene" and my "crag." I'm a little uncertain about what part of the anatomy the Archbishop is speaking.

In a book called "The Steel Bonnets," by George MacDonald Fraser, a historical non-fiction book that covers the history of southern Scotland and what is called the "Border Reivers," the author confirms the story that some of the Grahams were sent off to Ireland...and a few returned. Fraser offers a footnote on page 373, which reads:

Many of them bided their time, and probably some came home under assumed names. It is interesting that one unusual name in Western Scotland and Northern England is Maharg (as distinct from McHarg), which is Graham spelled backwards.

Not long ago I stumbled on a website bearing the name "Meharg Truck Services." Turns out it's in Belfast, Ireland. I contacted them, asking about the name and got this response:

Hi I'm a mechanic so was my father grandfather and great grandfather. We have lived in the same place in Co. Antrim Northern Ireland this past like 150 years. As far as I know we came from Scotland before that and we're called Grahem. Obviously Meharg is Grahem in reverse as it was changed to amalgamate and fit in to Roman Catholic Ireland as Grahem was a very Protestant Scottish name.

Matt Meharg

I think it only fair to say that the Graham spelled backwards story, though probably a true story for some Mehargs and certainly fun to speculate about, *may not* be accurate for us, though it is possible. The name McHarg or even McHargue is also a possible link to our past. Who knows what kind of spellings and misspellings of the name happened among our early ancestors. It's well known, for example, that the spelling of names often changed as immigrants were accepted into what became the United States. A great many newcomers were illiterate and didn't know how to write their own name, thus accepting the spelling given by clerks who did the best they could as they listened to the pronunciation of the name.

Both of my sons, David and Stephen, have done some research into the name Meharg. Steve sent this to me March 6, 2018. Again, lifted from Internet sources:

Last name: Meharg

This very unusual Irish name is believed to originate from Galloway in Scotland where it was originally spelt as Mac Giolla Chairge - 'the son of the servant of Carraigh' - a personal name meaning 'the rock'. There are number of alternative modern spellings including MacIlhagga, McIlharga, MacElhargy, Maharg and Maharg, these alternatives being found generally in counties Antrim and Derry. The abbreviation of 'Mac' to 'Ma' or 'Me' is common in Ulster for reasons of dialect. The name also appears in The Famine Record for 1845-46 as Mahagin (son of the son of 'Harg') and Michael Maha, as well Joan Maharg of Liverpool, described as a lady who emigrated to America in 1846. The first recorded spelling of the family name is shown to be that of Mac Giolla Chairge which was dated 1659 the All Ireland Census during the reign of Richard Cromwell, The Lord Protector 1658-1659 Surnames became necessary when governments introduced personal taxation. In England this was known as Poll Tax. Throughout the centuries, surnames in every country have continued to "develop" often leading to astonishing variants of the original spelling.

Read more: <http://www.surnamedb.com/Surname/Meharg#ixzz5912dKtvG>

No one seems to have a very good explanation as to why the family pronunciation of the name Meharg is Muh-herg...with the accent on the last syllable.

Aside: As a personal matter, if I were to relive my life, I'd seriously consider a legal change of my last name. I'd do it early in life. If you have any aspirations or plans that would lead you to stand before people...as in teaching, conducting music, or if you think at any point you might run for public office, why make it difficult for people? If people can't easily pronounce your name, the first impression is one of suspicion. I've considered using my middle name "Howard" as a last name. In which case my name would be James Howard. Maybe keep "Meharg" as a strange middle name, thus, James Meharg Howard. I think I could answer to "Jim" quite easily. :) Another option: change the last name to Graham!

I remember visits in about 1944 to Grampa and Gramma Meharg's house on "Fourteen Mile Creek," east of Pleasant Plains and not too far from an area called Board Shanty (now called Union Grove). As far as I know, this home is where Buster and Genila lived the entire time of having their children and eking out a living in the foothills of the Ozarks. Their house seemed large to me. It even had a screened in back porch. For some reason I remember the appliance with a crank used for skimming milk. They had several cows. Another device on the back porch...a sausage or meat grinder. As you stepped down into the back yard and turned to the left, you'd find the "dug well." We little kids were always warned not to fall in the well. It had a circular "wall" around it and you could look down into the well and see the water. It had a pulley contraption with a bucket on a rope that you could lower into the well to draw water.



Grandpa and Grandma Meharg's "dug" well looked like this, except I don't recall it having a roof or a covering over the well itself.

John Alex Meharg	
Birth:	Apr. 15, 1850 Marble Valley Coosa County Alabama, USA
Death:	Jun. 30, 1917 Pleasant Plains Independence County Arkansas, USA

marker was for J. A. Meharg.

The chart on the next page shows information about John Alex Meharg, my great-grandfather. Anyone exploring Marble Valley, Coosa County, Alabama, would no doubt find a good many Mehargs (Mehergs, etc.) buried there.

But in my visit to Arkansas of 2015, Cousin Jerry Lindsey took me to the Cedargrove Cemetery where I saw the markers for some other Mehargs and more for my grandmother's side of the family. One

Family links:

Parents:

William Archibald Maherg (1795 - 1862)

Katherine *Favor* Maherg (1803 - 1870)

Spouse:

Rebecca Caroline *Roberson* Meharg (1850 - 1918)

Children:

Burel Adoulphus Meharg (1872 - 1944)*

Mary Frances *Meharg* Castleberry (1876 - 1933)*

Elizabeth Lutia *Meharg* Adams (1878 - 1931)*

Henry Arthur Meharg (1882 - 1965)*

Siblings:

Cleopatra Patricia *Meharg* Hosey (1827 - 1888)*

James Shackelford Meharg (1828 - 1891)*

Griselda Catherine *Meharg* Gayden (1830 - 1907)*

Susan Turner *Meharg* Hosey (1831 - 1909)*

William Malcolm MeHearg (1834 - 1915)*

Rebekah *Meharg* Roberson (1836 - 1911)*

Willis Archibald MeHearg (1838 - 1911)*

Lucinda Elisebeth *Maherg* Honeycutt (1840 - 1874)*

Chelona V. *Maherg* Roberson (1843 - 1907)*

Julia *Meharg* Brazier (1845 - ____)*

Chelona Viola *Meharg* Roberson (1845 - 1907)*

Mary Frances *Meharg* Vardaman (1848 - 1917)*

John Alex Meharg (1850 - 1917)



The Independence Missionary Baptist Church in Pleasant Plains, founded and pastored by Herbert Meharg.

A road to the right of the house led down a hill to the barn. Jerry Lindsey told me that Buster and his father ran a grist mill there decades before I was born and they made a living with this mill operation. I assume that their mill was used primarily for grinding corn into cornmeal. To my knowledge, no one grew wheat in that area.

When I visited in 2015 there was not a trace to be found of the house, the barn, or the well. Now just what looked to be a lovely spot for a home in the rolling hills.

In the early forties, Carles and his wife, Gladys, lived in a fairly large home about a half mile to the south of Buster and Genila's house. What I remember about the house was that it had an open hallway...that is, an area that could be opened to the breeze that separated the living room and bedrooms from the kitchen and eating area. I thought it an unusual floorplan, but later learned that this was not uncommon in the south, for it allowed for better cooling in the hot summer.

All three of their children have died. (This narrative is written in 2017 and updated in 2023.) The oldest, Herbert, was born in 1931. I remember him first when he was a teenager. He was very near-sighted and wore thick glasses. He often had his nose in a book, literally. Herbert became a teacher, later the superintendent of schools in a district near Batesville, and also founded and pastored the Independence Baptist Church in Pleasant Plains. His wife, Margie, born in 1939, died in 2022. She had lived in the house they owned just east of Pleasant Plains.

Harold, his younger brother, was born in 1934. Harold, after college, made a career in the army, rising to the rank of Lt. Colonel. His obituary gives interesting information about life in that part of the state while he was a

child.

He was born Sunday, March 11, 1934, six miles south of Pleasant Plains on Fourteen Mile Creek. He was

the son of Carles and Gladys Wood Meharg.

For thirteen years, he lived on Fourteen Mile Creek at the end of the road with no electricity or running water. He crossed the creek on a "foot log" and walked two miles to his uncle's house to catch the bus to go to Pleasant Plains School. When he was in the seventh grade, his parents moved to a farm on Floral Road. Not only did he then have electricity, but the school bus ran past his house for the short ride to school.

In 1952, he graduated from Pleasant Plains High School in a class of twelve (six boys and six girls). In the fall of that same year, he started Arkansas State College (now Arkansas State University). While in college, he met his wife, Thelma Gregson. They were married in his senior year on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1956. Harold graduated from college in May 1956 with a BSA degree and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery. He entered the Army on October 6, 1956 and served for twenty-five years, two of which were in Vietnam. After his second tour of Vietnam in 1967, he attended the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas where he later taught for four years from 1974 to 1978. Harold retired from active duty on July 1, 1981 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and moved back to the farm on Floral Road.

His obituary also went on to say that he has two sons, Gregory (Fort Smith) and Steven (who lives in Korea). Steven, as I understand it, is married to a Korean woman and they have a grown daughter who lives in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Her name is Karen Meharg, and she, coincidentally teaches choral music...as well as having the same first name as my wife, Karen.

I suspect the "uncle" whose house Harold's obituary said he walked to in order catch the school bus was that of Ted and Ina Beaver. Ina (called I-ny) was a Meharg and married into the Beaver family. As I said earlier, my cousin Velma was their daughter. Their house may well have been the turn-around place for the school bus back in the early 40's.

Carles and Gladys had a much younger son, Keith, who came along a bit later...a younger brother to Herbert and Harold. Keith was killed in a tragic accident in 1983...as I recall, he was a teacher driving or riding in a school bus and was killed in a collision with another vehicle. Keith was a graduate of Arkansas State University.

With all the first names starting with H, my grandmother was always calling me "Harold" or "Herbert" instead of Howard, since my cousins lived just a quarter of a mile away in the latter years of my grandparents' life. During that last visit with them was in 1955, we spent a week or so in Pleasant Plains during some of the hottest days of the summer. Stayed with Grandma and Grandpa Meharg. While they had running water in the house, they still had no indoor bathroom.

Cousin Harold was the only Meharg to ever visit us here in Washington. This was a few years after his retirement from the military. Others in the family either couldn't afford it, couldn't fathom riding on an airplane that far, or had no interest in us far-flung relatives.

Buster and Genila had also moved to Floral Road, (probably in the early 50's) just east out of Pleasant Plains, Arkansas, and lived in acreage near to that of Carles and Gladys, my dad's twin brother and his wife. For years, they had a large operation growing chickens on both "farms." We, of course visited them several times on those auto trips to Arkansas from Washington when I was in junior high and high school...the last time in

1955, the year I graduated from R. A. Long in Longview. They would get thousands of newly hatched chicks from some source, house them in long rows of chicken houses, feed them and water them until they were large enough to be fryers and then sell them, I'm pretty sure, to the Tyson chicken people. Tyson was a huge business in Arkansas, and I suspect still is.

In my visit to Arkansas in 2015, I met and talked extensively with Thelma, my cousin Herold's wife. It turned out that she lived (then) in Searcy and her condo was only a few blocks from the motel I stayed in while in the state. (I see via Facebook that she has since moved back to Pleasant Plains.) I picked her up and she went with me to Pleasant Plains where we visited with Velma Wood, dad's sister Ina's daughter. Jerry Lindsey, my father's younger sister's son, also stopped by. He and Thelma took me to Board Shanty...now called Union Grove, where we visited the cemetery where so many Mehargs are buried. We then visited the Cedar Grove Cemetery, several miles to the north. Here we found graves of relatives of my grandmother, Genila.

Genila's last name was Blankenship. Jerry told me that her father and his brother both fought in the Civil War...but one for the north and one for south. She told Jerry that she remembers they got along quite well at family gatherings (as she recalled as a child), but did argue a bit when the subject of the war came up.



I hadn't known this, but Jerry showed me the grave of Buster and Genila's firstborn son, Lemmie. Lemmie was born November 26, 1904 and died three months later, February 28, 1905. Jerry thinks that Genila never got over this infant's death. He said she still wept when she talked of him.

Genila's parents were James Martin Blankenship (1826-1900) and Nancy Angeline Tyler Blankenship (1846 – 1909). That would make Genila's mother 20 years younger than her father. It's clear that James Martin, Genila's father was married earlier, for Genila's siblings (according to Jerry's records), all boys, are listed as half-brothers (William Martin Blankenship, Green Blankenship, Gilbert Sherman Blankenship, and John Sheridan Blankenship).





Carlen (left) with his twin brother, Carles (center) and their older brother, Everett (Photo taken c. 1952)

Any family members researching or visiting Arkansas may find Meharg relatives living in the Searcy, Arkansas area. My dad's older brother, Everett, had two sons I mentioned earlier, Verdie and Merle...as well as a daughter, Vonnie May. Though both Verdi and Merle died a good many years ago, I'm certain there are Meharg sons or daughters and probably grandkids of theirs in or around Searcy. The same may be true of Vonnie May, though I don't have last names for them.

For some reason, I remember little about Jewell, dad's other sister. I think she married a Williams. But we do have a photo of Jewell, standing beside a vintage car...probably one owned by her and her husband. (Previous page.)

Searcy (p. 24,000 now) was the "big city" nearest Pangburn. Somehow, I remember only one trip to Searcy as a child. Why I remember going into a men's clothing store with dad, I'll never know. But dad always prided himself on looking good. Whether he was able to buy a suit or just enjoyed

looking at nice clothes that day, I have vague memories of stopping there.

Harding University rather dominates Searcy. Harding, with a student body of about 5,900 in 2017, takes up some 350 acres in the virtual center of the city. It's a school run by the Church of Christ denomination. I found it interesting that the school also runs Camp Tahkodoh, a retreat center which is located in the Ozarks not far from Pleasants Plains. A fellow choral director, Cliff Ganus, who has become a friend as a result of our connection with the American Choral Directors Association, took me for a tour of the campus after we had breakfast together during my visit in May of 2015. Several years ago, I described to Cliff the house and location where my family lived in Little Red. He found it and shot a picture of it.

My first memories of going to church date back to the year we lived in Little Red. In some way, dad had been able to buy a car. It had a fabric top. I also remember that the "shelf" behind the back seat was large enough for me to climb onto, making a good place to sleep on the ride home.

I don't know why I remember this, but I do recall how odd it seemed to look out the window of the car as we travelled along and notice that the moon seemed to be moving along with us. Somehow, that illusion remains locked in my mind. What an odd memory!



“All Day Singin’ With Dinner on the Ground”
All available tables, but mostly church pews were made into a table for all the victuals for the dinner part of the event.

We attended a church in an area called Roosevelt. We attended a Pentecostal Church of God. While there was no “snake-handling” or other such daring of the mercy of God, there was plenty of speaking in tongues and some “dancing in the spirit.” I remember some spirited preaching, too. I suppose the closest thing to this to illustrate what I’m describing would be to see decades old videos of Jimmy Swaggert in action.

But what I remember most was the singing. These people were unafraid to belt it out. And a good many of them could read music, too. Frankly, I don’t remember what sort of “hymnbook” they used in that particular church, but you could rest assured that it used “shaped notes” for the music. In simplest terms, shaped notes assigned a different shape for the head of the note for each of the tones of a major scale. Conventional key and time signatures were used, but (in some ways) it really didn’t matter what key the song was in. Once the key feeling was established, those who had had a bit of training and practice in reading the music knew exactly what pitch to give a

note based on the shape of the head of that note. Both my dad and mom could read this music pretty well, so a new song was not an obstacle and part singing was not uncommon.

I remember “all day singin’ with dinner on the ground.” I’m guessing a bit here, for I don’t have relatives left who actually participated in these events, so you’re at the mercy of a six-year-old child’s memory. What I recall is that it was a joyful time. My guess is that it all started in mid-morning, or maybe even with a Sunday church service in the morning, then tables and church pews were hauled outside and lined up so that the fried chicken and all the rest of the potluck type of food could be spread out so all could take what they wanted, rather like a picnic. After dinner, it was back to the singing.

In the 30’s and 40’s, itinerant music teachers would travel around and offer classes in how to sing and read music. With my mom and dad, I visited a singin’ class at Board Shanty (Union Grove) when I was 5 or 6. My cousins, Herbert and Harold were both in the class. I don’t remember what the teacher was telling the class, but I remember Herbert asking him questions and everyone seemed enthusiastic about learning how to read music. It was an important skill to have.



Brush-arbor church used sometimes in the summer for camp meetins.

It was not uncommon in the summertime to have what they called “brush-arbor” revival meetings. While I can’t give too much first-hand information on this, I do remember being taken to such a meeting as a child. People would drive (cars or wagons pulled by horses or mules) from miles around. My guess is that many literally camped there...hence, a sort of camp-meeting experience. The “church” was erected in such a way as to have open sides but with a roof held up by poles with, literally, brush or tree limbs laced together in some way to form shade or a cover over it all. What people sat on, I honestly have no recollection. No doubt benches were hauled in and I vaguely remember some kind of platform and a

makeshift pulpit. Singing was an important part of the services. I wish I could tell you specifics as to what they sang, but can’t. The preacher or evangelist was a skilled orator, capable (I’m sure) of scaring the hell out of people and making sure that the faithful stayed faithful and the sinners knew they were sinful. Really, you just had to have been there!

I understand that these flashback memories pop up at random here, but at about the same time of year as the flood that washed away dad’s cotton crops, and on May 9th...my birthday, we had a big hailstorm. This is true! The hailstones were approaching the size of tennis balls. We picked them up after the passing storm and used them in our iced-tea! Dad had seen the storm coming and had left the fields, hitched up the mules to the wagon and had gotten to the safety of the barn as the storm moved in. He said he ran to the house with a piece of wood over his head, but got hit on the thumb by a hailstone, causing a bit of pain. That car with the fabric top (was it a convertible?) also got damaged. I have no idea how, or if it got repaired before we sold it prior to moving to Washington.

The Reaves side of the family

My mother was born in 1913 near Pangburn. I can only assume she was born at home in an area to the north of Hwy. 124 they called Bruce Mountain, for my mother mentioned that location as her childhood home. From the best I can tell, it wasn’t a mountain at all, but maybe a low hill just south of the Little Red River about half way between Pangburn and Dewey.

I never met my grandfather. He had the unusual name of Pleasant Andrew Reaves. My mother simply referred to him as “poppa.” Mom didn’t talk much about him, but I suspect his sudden death...likely a heart attack or stroke...came as a blow to that whole family. His death was somewhat of a “marker” of time for her, for she would say things like “after Poppa died, such and such happened,” or “before Poppa died...” I don’t even know what he did for a living, though most of the men in the area were farmers.

Mollie Reaves (1876-1952) was my grandmother’s name. Her maiden name was Howell. Her father was William Howell. I know so little about her and I’m sorry about that. Part of it is that it’s so hard to trace the ancestry of a female family member as the last name changes with a marriage.



Mollie Reaves at about 18.



Mollie Reaves - 1950

This

This much I do know...

Mollie was probably married before her marriage to Pleasant Andrew Reaves. She had two children, one of which I know for certain was Fred Scott, born in 1897. Mom mentioned this half-brother a number of times. I think she wanted to visit him but never had the opportunity or took the opportunity to do so. He moved to

California, I assume at a fairly young age. It's a big state. I don't even know what town he lived in, but mom did say he was a shoe salesman. I can only assume that Grandma Reaves was married to a man whose last name was Scott. (I just wish I had paid more attention, or asked more questions.)



Lucille with Eudora in front of her, Johnny Adams, Murl, Iru, Kate with Leon in front of her, Mollie, Hazel, Romy, and Judon in about 1935.

Or maybe she wasn't actually married to a man named Scott. It's also clear that Kate (Reaves) Murphy was not the daughter of Pleasant Andrew Reaves. According to Donna Rainwater, Kate's older son's daughter, Kate's father was a man by the name of Yingling. We can only surmise, but Donna says that late in Kate's life...after the death of her husband, Iru...a man and his family visited Kate regularly as if they were part of the family. That man's name was Austin Yingling. Perhaps a half-brother or cousin of Kate's. Donna thinks Kate's father's first name was Garland, maybe a brother of Austin's father. What I remember is that the name Yingling was

mentioned in casual conversation each time my family visited Murphy's. As with most young people, I just didn't pay attention and can shed no light on all this.



Grandma Mollie Reeves' parents, John Howell and wife (no name available)

One source has Mollie's father named William Howell. Another has him as John. I don't have a first name for her grandmother. The photos on the left are the best I can do. One should take care not to be confused by grandma's last name which was Howell and the naming of her only son, Howell, who was KIA in the Battle of the Bulge toward the end of World War II. The photo below was taken before Howell, the younger brother was born. That's Lucille on Andy's lap.



The Reaves family in 1917...(before Howell was born) . L to R back row - Hazel and Kate. Front row - Murl, Mollie, Lucille, and Pleasant Andrew (called Andy).

Kate Reaves -Murphy (1903-1991) was the oldest child in the family. As I said, I believe Kate was not the daughter of Pleasant Andrew Reaves., Sorry to be so vague about this. But it does show a bit of intrigue about the Reaves family, Mollie, and even my aunts.

Kate married Iru Murphy (1896-1972) in 1920 when she was 17. They had two boys, Judon and Leon. As a young child I remember visiting Aunt Kate at their home on Hwy. 124 and three or four miles east of Pangburn. While I don't remember what Iru did for a living, I suspect they were a bit better off financially than my sharecropper father. First, they had a large home. It had a shingled roof. It was painted and pretty. One of the fascinating features to me was that they had a telephone. First one I'd ever seen. It was the type that had a bell-shaped speaker that you placed to your ear. You had to stand with that to your ear and speak into a microphone attached to the phone itself. It had a crank you had to turn a few times to generate the electricity to make it work.

In the late 40's, Iru and Kate moved into Pangburn, literally downtown. That is, their lot was adjacent to a store that was part of the block constituting the main street of businesses of downtown Pangburn.

Iru was a World War I veteran. I never heard him talk about the war, but have always wished I had been old enough to ask the right questions and hear his story. For quite some time, he served as Justice-of-the-Peace for that part of White County, Arkansas. I don't know all the duties of a JP, but am sure he presided over many-a marriage in his stint in that role.

Kate, mom's oldest sister, was what one would call rotund. She always had a smile and was quick to laugh. My sister, Rachel, and I loved her.

Her younger son, Leon, served in the United State Navy. I regret to say I never had the chance to know him at all. I do know that after he returned from the Navy, he worked as a fireman Wichita, Kansas. At some point in his fireman career, he was severely injured in a fire and damaged his lungs, causing him to have to retire early. Leon died a good many years before his mother did.



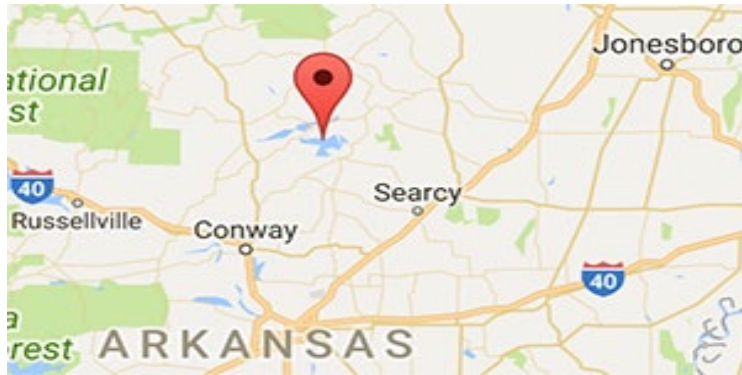
Murl, Lucille, Hazel, and Kate Reaves
in 1934

Kate's older son, Judon (1921-1999), stayed in Pangburn all his life. He married a woman named Violet Gray. They had a daughter, Donna (Rainwater), who lived for quite some time in Russelville, Arkansas. She has a son named Bobby. With help from Rachel and Facebook, I was able to make contact with Donna. She now lives in Florida. While she admits to knowing little about her great-grandmother Mollie, she did confirm some of the information I had about her. She also promised to look into a bit more of her family's history when she visits Arkansas in 2018.

Judon was a solid "fixture" in Pangburn. I was always impressed with his intelligence and his caring attitude. Both he and Violet were kindly people. It was always a pleasure to visit with them. Judon ran a general merchandise store...mostly hardware items, I'm thinking. It was in the building

adjacent to his mother and father's lot in downtown Pangburn. Judon also became a homebuilder and was responsible for a development just north of Pangburn in an area right on the Little Red River. After the dam was built at Heber Springs, it became safe to build on the river without danger of flooding.

Hazel Reaves-Staggs (1906-1989) was the second daughter of the family. She married Romey Staggs. My memories of Romey and Hazel had them living about 15 miles west of Pangburn on Hwy. 16, a road to Heber Springs. Heber, as they called it, had mineral springs that at one time people prized for the water for medicinal purposes. It was supposed to cure arthritis, among other benefits. The water had a strange taste. Exactly what minerals were in it, besides sulphur, I don't know, but I suspect people still drink it to help with what ails them. Aunt Hazel always had a fruit jar or two filled with Heber Springs water on hand.



It's worth noting that Heber Springs close to Greer's Ferry Lake, now a destination spot for vacationers and water recreation. So, this takes us back again to the Little Red River saga. The lake was formed when the Little Red River was dammed, and 40,000 acres of land was flooded to form the lake. It was completed in July 1964, but dedicated in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy...one of his last public appearances before being

killed in Dallas a few days later.

Several things happened to the Little Red below the dam in 1964. The water being released from the lower part of the lake was considerably colder than that of the free-flowing river. Catfish and other warmer water species of fish no longer inhabited the river. According to locals, as well as the tourist advertising, the Little Red became well-known for excellent trout fishing.

As mentioned earlier, prior to the building of the dam at Heber Springs, the Little Red was prone to flooding. Remember that it was a flooding Little Red that washed away my father's crops in the spring of 1945 and prompted us to make the move to the state of Washington.



With that little "aside" about Heber Springs, let's go back to Romey and Hazel. While they had no children, Hazel was pretty much my favorite of my aunts. I loved visiting them. They had what I thought was the coolest house. It had rock siding and looked like it could stand a tornado. But they also had a dandy storm cellar right out in front of the house. Like all storm cellars of the era, it was dug into the earth, but this one was made from concrete. It looked like a safe haven from any storm. I'd like to add drama to it all and say we rode out a storm there, but I don't recall

ever making use of it for that purpose when we were visiting.

When I was very small, like all houses of the time, they had no running water or inside plumbing. I suspect they were one of the first in the family living in Arkansas, however, to add electricity and running water.

Photo immediately above is of Greer's Ferry Lake, near Heber Springs.

Romey and Hazel owned a small grocery store and gas station across the road from their home. One memory of mine is being allowed to “man” the pump handle on the gas pumps to refill the glass container at the top of the pump. (Again, no electricity!) Cars would drive in next to the pumps. Romey would open the gas cap and insert the nozzle. He would then pull a handle on the nozzle to allow the gas to flow by gravity from the pump to the customer’s tank. There were markings on the side of the glass containing



the gas that indicated gallons dispensed. I don’t know the exact price for a gallon of gas in those days at Romey’s store, but the national average price per gallon was 17 cents.

Romey also had an oil changing pit at the side of the store. I think it was concrete lined with steps down into it. A customer could drive his car straddling the pit so Romey or whoever could easily reach the oil pan of the car to drain the oil for an oil change or any other work requiring one to be under the car.

I’ll come back to Hazel and Romy...and the always fascinating store a bit later.

In one of those “never thought to ask that question” times, again I’m a bit vague about my mother’s side of the family and its history I have no clue about her ancestry. Nor do have much information on my grandfather. I think this is true largely because he died before I was born and was not a part of my life at all.

Despite not knowing too much about my mother’s ancestry, I’ll tell you what I do know.



Her father was Pleasant Andrew Reaves. They say he was called “Andy.” His photo is to the left. I do not know his occupation, but assume he was a farmer. (That may not be the case, but I have no one to ask who can tell me what he did for a living.)

That’s Lucille, my mother standing in front of her childhood home. You’ll have to speculate on her age, but she looks to be between 8 and 12 years old here.



The family of Murl and Johnny Adams (Murl, mom's slightly older sister)

My mother's third sister, Murl, was born in 1909. Murl married Ray Landis November 12, 1925. Their daughter, Eudora, was born March 4, 1926. We assume the marriage to Landis ended in divorce. Murl married John E. Adams in 1931. Even as a child I was fascinated by Eudora. She was pretty and seemed incredibly smart to me. She also got a degree from Oregon State University. I'm guessing she was in her late teens when Johnny (as he was called though his first name was simply John and middle initial E.) and Murl

moved the family to Longview in about 1943.

Another discovery as I compiled this material...Murl had a child, Dayne Edward Adams, in September of 1932. He died three months later.

They had two sons. Vernon was born on May 9, 1936. Jerald was born on August 10, 1940. Their "baby" sister, Peggy Joan was born in 1943. As I remember, she was born in a hospital in Longview. I can't remember her birthdate. I always found it easy to remember Vernon's birthday because we share the same date in May, though I was two years younger than he.

I might note that John E.'s father, Thomas, was married to my grandmother's sister, Elizabeth (Lizzie). So Carlen and John E. were cousins by marriage, it would seem. Right?

To the best of my knowledge, it was Johnny Adams who influenced my parents to pack up all the belongings they could take in suitcases and head to Washington in 1945. With little prospects for a cotton crop due to the flooding river, it wasn't looking good for us in Arkansas. Johnny was working at Reynolds Metals Plant, an aluminum producing plant next to the Columbia River and just west of Longview. He told dad that a job at Reynolds was a sure thing. It was.

Shortly after moving to Longview, Washington, my dad got a job at Reynolds. It was a tough, hot job, but one that made 95 cents an hour. His job was "punching pots." It meant standing near boiling aluminum pots and "punching" down the slag that developed. The money-per-hour that he made was approximately what he made in a day in Arkansas from his cotton crops.

We lived for a few weeks in the Green Gables Boarding House on 11th Ave. in Longview. I don't know the story of how Murl and Johnny became the managers (eventually the owners) of Green Gables, but they had room enough for us and we lived there among the boarding house tenants.

It was pretty much a full house at Green Gables back then. First, jobs were plentiful for wartime kept available young men serving in the military. Reynolds, Weyerhaeuser, International Paper, Long-Bell Lumber...all the large industries were thriving. Rooms at Green Gables were basically sleeping quarters only with a shared bathroom down the hallway on two floors. A lobby area provided the entrance.

Murl had to work hard to prepare a hot breakfast, a sack lunch, and dinner for maybe 10-20 men. One of my memories was the way the sack lunch was prepared. It was basic. A sandwich along with an apple or other fruit. But what I remember was how she folded the sack. To us nowadays we call it the Aunt Murl fold. Fold one top corner completely to the side. Fold the other halfway to make a point at the top and then fold the flap under so the sack stayed shut.



What appears to be slave labor in the garden next to The Green Gables Boarding House is Vern (behind the plow), Jerry doing all the pulling, and me...not sure of my job. This would have been in about 1945.

It wasn't long before we found housing in Huntington Villa. Just to the west of what is now a busy thoroughfare in Longview, 15th Avenue, over to what would now be 16th through 19th, they had built row after row of wartime housing. These buildings were basically adjoining one and two bedroom apartments built as a single structure in a line with an alleyway between them. Each building had about nine units. These rows stood just to the southwest of the current 15th Avenue Safeway store in Longview.

I don't know how much we paid for rent, but it had to be a fairly low rate even in those days. Our unit had two bedrooms. The best part was that it had a bathroom, electricity, and a cookstove. While I don't remember for sure how it was heated, I suspect it was a wood-fired stove, I do recall presto-logs and planer-ends being delivered. Planer-ends were the sawed-off ends of dimensional lumber...scraps of dried lumber sold as fuel.

I was enrolled in a third grade class the fall of '45 at Kessler Elementary School. (Kessler was exactly where it's located today.) It was about a seven block walk past Freeport Village, another wartime housing area similar to Huntington Villa, and then across a vacant, sandy field to the playground and the school. My teacher's name was Miss

Kito. Our room was on the second floor of the old two-story Kessler School. I have very pleasant memories of that school year. Even though I probably spoke with some Arkansas accent and may have been sent to school wearing overalls, I honestly don't remember anybody making fun of me or treating me badly. Interesting, to me at least, is that I ended up teaching music at Kessler Elementary School in 1981. My room was in the basement of the Kessler auditorium. While the old two-story building had been replaced by a modern building for all grades K-5, the old auditorium still stood...just as it was when I went to school there in grade three!

We lived next door to some people named Moore. I think my parents remained in contact with that family for a good many years. They had a boy about two years older than I who was normally pretty nice, as I recall, but for some reason got mad at me one day and punched me in the stomach. Knocked the wind out of me. Hurt. I pretty much avoided ol' Don after that.

A nickel would buy you an ice cream slice at the Monticello Market a couple blocks away and toward Washington Way from Huntington Villa. An ice cream slice was exactly that, similar to what you might be able to buy today, but without the stick and pretty much square shaped. You had to eat it fast or it would melt in the little paper sack it came in.

Oh, here's one for you...

Huntington Villa and Freeport Village had a ton of kids living in it. But at Halloween time...a first for us folks from Arkansas...they came to the door by the hundreds. Not just on Halloween night, but for two nights in a row!

R. A. Long Park, in front of the Hotel Monticello, was just an easy walk from our place in Huntington Villa. Here's a photo taken in the park sometime in that year we lived there.

We attended church at Kelso Assembly of God. Had to ride a bus to get there...and the church provided one. I suppose that church was the closest thing to a Pentecostal Church of God my parents could find, so we ended up there, for a very long time as it turned out. The pastor of the church was John Manchester. I believe that was his first name, but in those days all the adults in that church were either Brother Somebody or Sister Somebody, so mostly what I remember is Brother Manchester. That church building was exactly one block north of the current Kelso Assembly of God.

I'm apt to ramble on quite a bit about that church, but will wait for a later chapter for that part.

OK, so I blame it on mom. She was homesick for Arkansas. While she had her sister Murl in Longview, her mother and her other family members all lived in Arkansas. She wanted to move "home."

So, we did. In 1947, we packed up and moved to Arkansas. For some reason, how we got there is a total blank. Had dad bought a car, did we go back by train? I haven't a clue. We apparently had saved enough money for the trip and maybe then some.

But we rented a house at the foot of a hill on the road from Pangburn to Dewey and Little Red. This area was called...may still be called...Grubtown. It wasn't a town. Where the area got its name, I don't know. The



Our house in Grubtown, looking only slight worse in this 1980 photo than when we lived in it in 1947.

house was run down then. Here's a picture of it taken in about 1982. It didn't look much better in 1946.

We were back to no running water and no electricity...and certainly no indoor toilets. Peeing and pooping for me was a trip across the road to the woods. Not even an outhouse!

The house had a well, but the water was so hard (so full of minerals) you could hardly drink it, though we got used to that. The part that you couldn't get used to was washing clothes in it. No lather. No clean clothes. I had a Radio Flyer wagon. We pulled the wagon filled with empty tin buckets down the road to a neighbor's house where they had a well with good water. The neighbor

allowed us to fill up the buckets and pull the wagon on back to the house. Mom washed in a galvanized tub with a scrub-board. She often filled a big iron pot that sat in the backyard over a pit where she built a fire after chopping some wood. She boiled water in the big pot. I guess some clothes don't come clean without boiling water or at least hot enough water to allow for scrubbing.

We must have had a little money left over, for I also had a very nice bicycle, along with my Radio Flyer wagon. The bike was fun to ride. Somehow I managed to get it up the hill toward Pangburn and then decided

to coast down the hill a breakneck speed. That resulted in a crash and lot of pain and skinned knees. No broken bones.

We even had a dog. Bounce was his name. Bounce was of undetermined breed. We probably name him for his energy and alertness. Bounce had a tail that curled up in a semi-tight circle over his back. Most families have those quotes from kids that they keep repeating to the embarrassment of the kid for the rest of their lives. One of mine resulted from someone asking me once if I wanted to be a farmer. I said, "I'm too little to make a farm." Why that was funny or repeatable, I don't have a clue, but it stuck. Rachel's repeatable line was related to Bounce's curly tail. She said, "Put your tail down Bounce so I can't see nothing."

We had to give up Bounce when we moved back to Washington in 1948. I vaguely remember he was given to one of my cousins, Verdi or Merle. One of them reported that Bounce became a "good squirrel dog." What that meant, I don't know. I've never met a dog that wasn't a good squirrel dog!

I took a school bus into Pangburn schools for the fourth grade. My fourth grade teacher's name was Crook. She was pretty and she was nice. I don't remember too much about the year other than it seemed to me that our room was in a building detached from the rest of the school.

As I think about it, and as a child in Arkansas, the only time I saw a person of color was in Searcy. That was a rare trip and even there I can't actually say I saw a black person. But I do remember Miss Crook talking in class one day about people being the same whatever the color of their skin. I have a hunch she was venturing into territory that some of the other teachers...most of the folks in that all-white town...would not agree with her about. White County, Arkansas...as far as I could tell...was white. There were other towns in Arkansas where people of color lived, but I never saw them. Yes, it was that segregated in those days.

We lived in the Grubtown house the summer and fall of 1946. Sometime before Christmas we moved to a house about a half mile to the west of Hazel and Romy. This was a much larger place with separate bedrooms. There was a well with good water. Mind you, it had no electricity and no indoor plumbing, but it did have an actual outhouse. I can't tell you who owned the property, but can only assume that Hazel and Romy had something to do with our renting the place.

I walked to Hazel and Romy's store on the main highway to Pangburn to catch the school bus to Pangburn each morning. Kids who lived further to the west of us walked by and I remember walking with them to and from the bus each day. I continued in the fourth grade for that school year of 1947-48.



Gas pumps like these were in front of the Staggs Grocery and Gas Station.

Romy ran it for many year and, I'm rather certain, made a good living operating it, though I'm sure is was hard work every day of the week. They also had a small farm going. Well, at least they raised pigs and had pasture land for a few head of cattle.

As intelligent and business oriented as he must have been to keep that store going for years, Romey was definitely "of the hills" with his grammar. For some reason, even I noticed his starting a sentence with something like, "Hit don't matter," and for whatever reason, placing an "h" with the word "it." As much as I liked him...and he always treated us kids with humor and kindness...for some reason I always thought he had just a bit of a mean streak. He seemed to me to treat Hazel with some mean words now and then.

- **One famous relative on the Reaves side of the family...and he wrote a book.**

Alf Humbard, born in Pangburn, Arkansas. As far as I can tell, his mother was a Howell, part of the same family as my grandmother, Molly Reaves...probably a first cousin of Molly. I save the book for it gives a glimpse into the kind of religious life typical of what Humbard called those who lived the "old-fashioned" gospel of the era.

This book, written in the style of a "fireside chat," takes on some rather racist overtones in some of the stories told by Humbard. Alf's children became the Humbard Family Ministries and traveled the country as musical evangelists. *

Rex Humbard, on of Alf's sons, who served as Alf's MC and general manager of the tent revivals, eventually had his own tent revival enterprise that led to the "Cathedral of Tomorrow" in Akron, Ohio. Rex's story is told in this article currently (2016) on the Internet:

<http://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/churchandministry/clergy/humbard.aspx?mobile=false>

Though both my father, Carlen, and my mother, Lucille were fairly solid believers in the "old-fashioned gospel" that Alf preached, I suspect they also had private doubts about a good deal of this approach to faith, and especially about the huge amount of money that poured into the Rex's Humbard Family ministries in Akron from 1953 and onward. Rex Humbard died at the age of 88 in about 2007.

*The Humbard Family visited Kelso Assembly of God at least once during the time I attended there. I have to guess the year, but am thinking about 1955. Two things I remember about it: my mother was able to introduce herself as a relative, and how much I enjoyed their music. Alpha Humbard had died quite some time before this.

It was a quite an entourage of people who made up the “band.” I’m assuming not all were actual family, but a good many were. Rex led the way, but he had a brother, who also had a wife (maybe) who also played an instrument and sang. Guitars, bass, accordion...all prominent in the music making.

Rachel, though very young when we lived in the house down the road from the Staggs, says she remembers going out into the hilly fields near that place with mom and me to look for a Christmas tree. She says Grandmas Reaves gave her a set of play dishes that she treasured. A few got broken much later (she blames Paula). Still later, apparently Dad gave the rest to Goodwill, much to Rachel’s dismay. What I recall about that Christmas of 1946 was that I was so eager to get a toy cap gun that I guess I begged my parents so much about that they gave it to me days before Christmas just to shut me up.

Now that I think about dismay...I’m still dismayed that mom gave that little Philco radio away!

Rachel says she remembers mom making hominy in the big iron pot (used for boiling water over a fire for laundry purposes) that sat in the backyard. I truly don’t know the formula for making hominy except that I know it involves soaking the fully grown corn kernels in lye before boiling the corn and canning it. I still like the taste of it, especially in soups.

I find so many “holes” in my story about living in Arkansas. For the life of me, I can’t remember if we had a car...though we must have had...and what kind it was. Dad worked in a sawmill in Pangburn. It was fifteen miles away. How he got there I just don’t know. Car? Probably.

It also remains a mystery as to the conversations that must have gone on between mom and dad regarding the decision to return to Washington. I vaguely remember that our return to the west took us through California. This still another place where I wish I had paid more attention...or better yet, had mom or dad right here to talk to and tell me all about this. Somehow, the very thought of this saddens me and I miss them and remember how much I loved them.

Whether there was consideration about living in California, I have no idea. (What city or area we visited, I simply don’t know.) Somehow, relatives of Romy and Hazel enter into the foggy story. Romy’s brother, Fess Staggs, was married to a woman named Jessie. Fess and Jessie may have lived in this “undefined” area of California and we may have stayed for a few days with them.

Somehow, and I truly don’t know how, we ended up in Kelso, Washington. I think we lived for a very short time in a dump of a house near the Cowlitz River in South Kelso at first. Then we moved to 315 N. First, in West Kelso. Well, I should say, that was the address of an actual two-story house plus an attached apartment at the rear of the house, and two shacks (for want of a better description) rentals at the back of the property.

and his wife. A house still stands at 315 N. First in West Kelso. It's across First Avenue house in 1947 was two-story and much closer to the road than the smaller one now on that property. An apartment was attached to



the rear of the house itself. A covered porch allowed entry into the laundry room of the house, from there a door into the kitchen. The door to the attached apartment was a few more steps to the south on the covered porch and to the left. A bathroom, shared by all the tenants of the rentals was to the right.

An open shed like structure served as a woodshed for both wood and presto-logs. A shack, rented to a disabled man (he used crutches, but got around pretty well, as I recall) and his wife lived there. Our little shack of a house stood alone to the right of that. That's it just behind Rachel and me. (Photo taken in about 1949). While it had running water and electricity, I did not have its own bathroom. So, it was a trip across the yard to use the shared bathroom with two other rentals.

We lived there for a year or so before the tenants of the main house moved out and Jordan's rented the two-story house to us. Now this was not exactly luxurious, but was **much** bigger. I don't remember how it was heated, but do know that the kitchen had a wood cookstove. I was often given the task of cutting presto-logs into small rounds to use in that stove.

I'm not sure anyone makes presto-logs anymore. Weyerhaeuser Timber Company was the manufacturer then. They used the plentiful sawdust from their mill, pressing it, along with some sort of flammable adhesive in heated, circular molds. The end product was about 16-18 inches long and about 5-6 inches in diameter. By laying the presto-log on a chopping block and using a hatchet, and hitting it just right you could cut several two inch "wheels" out of each log. These were just right for popping into the cookstove...after getting a small blaze going with kindling. They burned long and hot and made it easier to maintain control over the heating surface. We also got loads of "planer-ends" delivered to the place. These were scraps from dried lumber cut to specific lengths. They made good firewood. Heating companies would deliver a load of planer-ends in a dump truck.

While I don't remember the names of the elderly couple who lived in the shack behind the main house, I do remember they were friendly to us kids. At a certain time of year they would gather horseradish roots...from where, I don't know...chop it up and can it. I assume they sold it for supplemental income.

Two women and two boys lived in the apartment attached to the house. The boys were sons of one of the women. Their name was Duncan. The older of the two boys was named Don. Don was just a bit older than I. Both were courteous, nice kids who were well-behaved.

We lived at this house from 1947 to 1951. Dad got a job at Weyerhaeuser. He worked hard. For some time...I can't remember how long...he pulled lumber on what was called the "green chain." Huge logs (especially in those days) were cut in the big band saws and then into smaller sizes and placed on conveyor equipment. Men would pull the lumber from the conveyors and stack it. It was then taken to the kilns for drying. Green lumber is heavy and the job on the "green chain" was tough.

He later got a job in Weyerhaeuser's plywood plant. He had various roles there. I remember him talking about operating machinery that applied patches to plywood. He also worked for a while in the "green end" of the plant. This is where the huge lathes cut the thin sheets from the logs. Dad worked in the plywood plant from over twenty-five years, until his retirement in the mid-seventies.

When I started school for the fifth grade my mom enrolled me and Rachel in Kelso's Catlin School. This building may have been the oldest of all the schools in the county...certainly of the Kelso School District. It was located on the edge of West Kelso, near Ocean Beach Highway and the Longview city border. It's a shopping center...a kind of strip mall now. The building had one floor which was a daylight basement floor and then two above that. I got to attend the old Catlin school just a few days. It was crowded! Those of us who enrolled late in the summer of 1947 were soon told we were to catch the bus there and be taken to Washington School on the other side of the Cowlitz River. Washington was located just down the hill a bit from the current Kelso School District offices on Crawford Street. Rachel attended the old Catlin School for the entire year. That's her, first row, third from the left.





Photo of the old Catlin School is to the left. It was located in West Kelso on the border between Longview and Kelso.

Mrs. Patterson was my 5th grade teacher's name. I suppose of my elementary/junior high years. By that I mean I have no memories of fights, kids picking on me, or of my getting in trouble...no dramas. Even though I'm sure I still had an "Arkansas" accent and expressions, I got no static from the other kids. I do recall, however, that Mrs. Patterson had to quit toward the end of the 47-48 year. As a class, we walked over to her house just past the high school (then on the hill not far from Washington School) and visited her. Though no

one ever talked about it then, I recall that she died a while later. I'm pretty sure she had cancer.

During that year, the new Catlin school was being built. It's still there and it's still being used. The walk from our house on north first was across some vacant lots (fields) and to the playground and in to the back doors of the brand new building. I was in the sixth grade. Mr. Mott was my teacher. He was great. Used to go outside with us and play softball or a form of softball where the "pitcher" rolled a soccer ball sized ball to you at the "plate" and you kicked it. This, instead of using a bat and gloves as with a normal softball game. My guess is that the idea was to avoid a fly ball hitting someone during a crowded recess or lunch time game.

It was in the sixth grade that I got my start as a music person. Well, the official start. Bernard Butler was the band director, maybe the only instrumental person in the district. He came to Catlin and offered sixth grade students tryouts on various instruments. I had been rather taken by the fancy looking saxophone that our neighbor kid, Don Duncan, was learning to play. So, naturally, that just seemed like the way to go. Mr. Butler, taking a look at my lips and appearance of my chin and lower lip, advised against a reed instrument. (Later, I learned why.) He suggested a brass instrument and had me buzz my lips and blow into one. But I rather insisted on the saxophone. (I don't remember being advised or steered any particular direction by my parents.) "Well, we don't start students on the saxophone," said Mr. Butler. We went downtown to Korten's, the only music store in Longview/Kelso, and rented a beginner's metal clarinet. So, complete with practice charts and the Belwin beginning band book, I began my "career" as a band member.

I was on the noon lunch-break schoolboy patrol at the cross walk on Catlin Street when the earthquake of April 13, 1949 struck. I was standing at the curb when the ground started to shake. I first thought it was a log train on the Weyerhaeuser tracks (just a block away), but soon realized this wasn't the cause of the shaking ground. While I wasn't inside to see it or hear it, I assume there was a bit of panic in the classrooms. One boy was reported to have jumped out a window. (No problem at Catlin as the windows were all just a few feet above ground level.) They closed school for the rest of the day and I went down to the second grade classrooms where I found Rachel and we walked home.

(As an aside to all this, at least one local person was killed in that quake, the largest ever recorded in the state at 6.7 on the Mercalli scale. Kids at Castle Rock High School rushed out of their building and a brick fell from the building and hit a young man...the student body president, I'm told...the one fatality in this area.)



The photo (left) doesn't show a house at 315 N. First. It's there, but hidden by the trees. The vacant area is still there between our house and Ainslies (not shown, but to the right of the white apartment building). The garages or storage units behind the apartment building were not there in 1947-51.

It's a real hit and miss kind of thing that one remembers...as I keep

finding in telling this story. There was a space...rather like a large vacant lot between 315 N. First and the next building, a two story apartment building. Both our house and the apartment building had driveways that went down from First Avenue into this area, so it was just a bit lower than street level. Puddles of water always formed when it rained...large puddles of water. This made for excellent places for my little boats carved out of planer-end wood and cut just right so that a notch at the "stern" could have a rubber band



attached, along with a paddle wheel that could be wound up and used to propel the boats across the water. Hey, we didn't have a lot of toys to play with, so it was improvise!

However, in the summer, one of my favorite things was a balsa glider that could be thrown and on a decent breeze, could go a long ways. But the best of all was a rubber band propeller driven balsa plane with wheels which could

actually take off from the ground or be launched with a toss.

The seventh grade was in Kelso Junior High School. It was a long walk. I walked south on West First and turned left on West Main, crossing the bridge over the Cowlitz River, through downtown Kelso on Allen Street, past Fraser's Bakery and continued east to Fifth Avenue. I turned up the hill to the north to go one block and then east up a long hill on Academy Street. The building at the top of the hill housed both the junior high and the high school. The school(s) took up space for at least two blocks between Academy and Church Streets.

My seventh-grade room, with Miss Evenson as my homeroom teacher, was located on the second floor near the east end and just to the west of the stairs. That room was just about exactly across the hall from what became the choir room, the room I called mine when I took the job as choir director at Kelso High School...much later, in 1961.

I continued to play clarinet in the band in grade seven. Who was the director? Mr. Butler, of course. He seemed to be pleased with my progress and I began to understand a bit more about music notation.

While I don't remember my general music teacher's name, I do recall her trying to teach our homeroom how to sing. I had a friend by the name of Roger Sprague. His dad was the pastor of the Methodist Church in Kelso...same location as today. Roger was a good singer and the two of us had a decent understanding of music notation and may have outshined a good many others in the class. Well, at least that's what I thought...and that's when I had the first inkling that I'd definitely want to continue in music making through my school years, at least.

P.E. classes were in a small gym...small by high school standards nowadays. It was on the southeast side of the school and used by both the high school and the junior high. As much as I dreamed of being an athlete, it never materialized. Not in the seventh grade or the eighth grade in Kelso and not after moving to R. A. Long High School later. While I'd like to blame my lack of athletic success to having to compete with kids older than I (since I started school early and had just turned 17 a few days before graduating from high school), I'm certain the main problem (aside from being skinny and not all that strong) was that I was not fast afoot. It does take some genetic disposition toward athleticism.

In the fall of the year we would be sent down the hill, via a long concrete stairway, across Allen Street and on to what was the athletic fields for the schools. The football field was there, complete with the grandstand which faced to the north. That whole area now is made up of state offices a fire station, a dental office...among other buildings. The tennis courts were on the northeast side. The track circled the football field and then on the north side nearest Allen Street, we had a baseball field. As I recall, part of the running track cut across deep right field. The backstop and home plate were at the northwest corner of the acres owned by the school. In other words, home plate was near what is now A-1 Vacuum on the south side of Allen Street. We had no outfield fence, so if a fly ball got by an outfielder, it was likely to be a homerun.

I suppose that Kelso kids of the era who took P. E. classes could easily have kept in shape by having to climb those stairs between the athletic fields and the school. It was a bit of a trek.

Speaking of sports...

In either the seventh grade or the eighth, someone thought of the idea of having what they called a "smoker" as entertainment for the kids...a kind of assembly for both the high school and the junior high. One of the items on the agenda was a series of boxing matches. Roger Sprague said, "let's box for this." I reluctantly said "OK." So, with the whole school watching, the two of us were helped with putting on the gloves on us two skinny kids, put in our corners and with the crowd yelling, the bell rang for round one. We sort of pummeled around each other the first round without much damage to either of us. In the second round, I guess we must have been slowing down a bit. The referee said, "all right boys, let's mix it up!" Roger lowered his hands and said "Huh"? I thought, there's an opening, and hit him pretty hard on the side of the head. I don't think it hurt him much, but I was declared the winner!

By the eighth grade, Mr. Butler moved me into the high school band. I don't know whether he thought I was that good or whether he just needed another clarinet to fill things out. Not long after being placed in the high

school band he asked me to play the bass clarinet. It was almost bigger than I was, but somehow I thought it prestigious to play and, beside that, I liked the sound of the lower pitched instrument. Better than that, we were given band uniforms. It's probably needless to say, but I loved being in the band!

There were a few "kids" I remember who lived in the West Kelso neighborhood. Across the vacant area (and the mud puddles) lived the Ainslies. While he had an older brother named Bill, the main Ainslie I remember was Bob. He was maybe a year older than I and could be a bit on the mean side, but mostly we got along pretty well. We shot slingshots and BB guns and shot baskets at a basketball hoop someone put up at the west end of the vacant lot between our two houses. I do recall...now that my mother is gone I can tell this story...Bob and I shooting BB guns at each other. Him from his yard a couple hundred feet away and me on the cover porch at the rear of our house. I don't know if I ever hit him, but he got me once on the leg. BB's do sting!

I remember visiting the water treatment plant a few times. This was just a block away to the north on Fisher's Lane. A big white building that was actually on city of Longview land. Not everyone knows it, but Longview actually adjoins the Cowlitz River just north of Fisher's Lane. This is where, at that time, they took water from the Cowlitz to supply the city. The water was pumped from the river into the treatment plant and run through filters before hitting the pipes to supply the entire city with water. The guy who ran the plant always put on a short little "magic" show for us kids. Mostly, I think what he did was change the color of the water in test tubes using food dyes he had somehow dipped his fingers in. You can't fool me! As far as I know, that plant is no longer used. I understand that silt in the Cowlitz created such a problem that Longview now gets its water from the Columbia.

The year school year of 1949-50 was memorable for still another reason. In early January of 1950 we had what had to be termed a genuine blizzard. I had a paper route that covered virtually all of West Kelso. I delivered the Oregon Journal. The snow was starting even as I started my route, but by the time I was on my way home it was "white-out" conditions as I slogged my way to the north on First Avenue. The wind was severe from the north and it was biting cold. I don't mean to dramatize it, for I doubt I was ever in danger, but believe me, it was an experience I won't forget.

I suppose I'd have to talk with Rachel about this, but I do remember that she started violin lessons when we lived in Kelso. Mom would drive her over to a teacher's house in South Kelso. Details...

We had a guitar in the house. I don't remember who was supposed to be able to play it or how we got it, but I do remember picking it up and learning a few chords. I also remember looking at hymnbooks and sort of figuring out how the parts went. Though my voice hadn't changed, I could actually sing the bass part.

We had a guy at the church by the name of Pilbeam (can't remember his first name, other than he was Brother Pilbeam to us kids) who came up from Portland and gave lessons on various instruments...actually starting several people as beginners. One guy, for example, was Lindsay Chadderton, who started learning how to play the baritone horn. Several others got started this way with Pilbeam.

Pilbeam came to Kelso once a week for over a year, I'm thinking. He directed the choir. At some point I came to believe I could sing parts and I "joined the choir." My voice had not changed. Pilbeam seemed to think it funny that I could sing the bass part, but was singing it an octave higher than written. Oh well, it seemed easy to me, changed voice or not.

Kelso Assembly of God

Yes, the church still exists and, as far as I know, still has a good many people in attendance. However, the building of which I speak was located on the upper half of the block up the hill to the north of the current church. The entrance was on 5th Avenue. Diagonal parking was allowed facing the church and there was a parking lot adjacent to the church and to the south...where the present church is now located.

When we first moved from Arkansas in 1945, we attended Kelso Assembly of God. My assumption is that this was the closest type of service they could find as compared to the Pentecostal Church of God they attended in Arkansas.

After moving back to Washington in 1947, we resumed attendance at this church. So, roughly, from age seven until I was in my mid-twenties, I attended that church...with the exception of the two years I was in Bellingham for college.

The "song service" part of the Sunday morning and Sunday evening services (and we had both) at Kelso Assembly of God always had an "orchestra" to accompany the singing...along with a piano and a Hammond organ. In my early days there, it was a guy by the name of Claude Farmer who played the piano. Later it was Cora Pearl Taft. I don't recall who played the Hammond or if, perhaps, it wasn't brought in until the fifties, but a fellow by the name of Guy Brown was often at the organ keyboard.

Church rather dominated life for our family. Sundays, it was two services. The morning was filled with Sunday School for all ages. Then it was the 11:00 a.m. service that could go on until nearly 1 p.m. We then went home for Sunday dinner...often the "fanciest" meal of the week. A Sunday evening service started at 7 or 7:30 pm. Wednesday was "prayer meeting" night, and Friday was "young people's" service night.

But, there was more. Two to three times a year we had revival meetings. This meant we had a visiting evangelist...sometimes with his family of musicians...who would often be charismatic and whose preaching was extraordinary, a measured on a scale of his ability to grip his audience. They called it preaching "under the anointing of the Spirit." I'll say this again and again. You had to be there! It's impossible to describe the pull and the sway these preachers had over their audience. Congregations were swept up by this oratory. "Hallelujahs," "Praise the Lord," "Glory!," "Amen" shouted out by believers. Church services were held every night up to two weeks or longer. True believers pretty well had to be there every night. For one thing, it was great entertainment. The singing, the special music, as well as the preaching was mesmerizing. and could grab people.

One characteristic of the service, at least once a week during such a revival was what they called a "love offering." For want of a better description, this was "hyped" in a big way. All money collected in this special offering went to the evangelist. Many of those guys (and it was always a man) did very well financially, I feel certain.

I might mention that for a long time it was the custom at Kelso Assembly that on a given Sunday morning each month that the entire offering went to the pastor. If they really liked the pastor (and I don't remember any they didn't like), that could mean people would save up or give extra for that offering. By the standards of the day, the pastor was doing well. At some point, the board of the church, noting that upkeep and church operations money was dropping off, decided that it was time to put the pastor on a set salary.

Even your social life was centered around the church. Your childhood friends were church kids. Your parents social contacts were primarily with others of the church.

One family in particular was loaded with musical talent...the Eldreds. Jack Eldred was one of those guys who could pick up virtually any instrument and given even a short period of time, could play it really well. He was very good on the clarinet and the saxophone. He played them both with a considerable touch of vibrato, rather in a pop style. I thought this was the way it was supposed to sound. Lois, his wife, was adept at the accordion. She also learned to play the sax and did well on it. I should add that Jack could even play the musical saw. This was literally a handsaw with the handle held between the knees. The left hand held the small end of the saw and was used to bend the blade as a violin bow passed over the straight edge to cause the vibration and thus make the sound. Jack was adept at playing melodies in this way!

Jack, Lois, and a woman (who became a good friend of my mother's later in life) Eleanor Backstrom, often played a saxophone trio for "special" music during services.

The church had its own radio program. It was live. Singers and instrumentalists went over to Longview to radio station KWLK each Sunday afternoon to do the broadcast. KWLK was up a flight of stairs on the south side of a large brick building later called the National Bank of Commerce. That structure came down years ago and a new one erected which housed Rainier Bank. Later sold and used now as the Longview Police Station.

The radio program was a half-hour, or only fifteen minutes...I'm not sure. The format was some introductory remarks from the pastor...as with John Manchester and later Wes Morton and then two or three songs by the musicians. The Eldreds were fixtures on the broadcast. Another accomplished musician was Ruth Bonner, who played the viola. I kid you not, she was good. She played with a rich tone and I learned to love the sound of the viola. Very often the music for all the folks was a hymn or gospel song. A few times, I played my clarinet. I don't remember what song or songs, but it was a thrill to "be on the radio."

The Sunday morning church service usually had the largest crowds. The format didn't vary too much from service to service, however. Songs sung by the congregations with the orchestra, piano, and organ accompanying, sometimes a choir number (on Sunday mornings especially), testimonies, special music (a vocal solo, instrumental solo, or on Sunday mornings or evenings a number by the orchestra) an offering, and then the preaching. The preaching most often took most of the time and could go on for up to an hour.

I didn't sing in the choir until I was a bit older. My singing didn't start until late in high school. The clarinet was my instrument. Somewhere in this time period, my parents bought a Selmer wood clarinet. (This probably happened about the time we moved to Longview.)

Meanwhile, at the church, the publishers of the hymnbook had editions in folio form for all the various instruments. Since I played a Bb instrument, I used the Bb book which allowed me to play my part, not always the melody, in harmony with the rest of the orchestra. My buddy, Bob Peeples, even played his steel guitar in the orchestra. You know, I truly don't know how that "orchestra" sounded, but it was fun...and it worked for me as a kid.

I also, rather quickly, learned to transpose. When you saw a note on the page, those of us playing Bb instruments, such as cornets, trumpets, clarinets...learned to play that note one full step higher than written. It got to be easy...unless you got into a song with lots of sharps. The other thing you learned was that the pianists didn't like to play in sharp keys. Too many sharps and they would transpose the piece to flats. Relatively easy thing to do. A song in three sharps, the key of A, would be transposed down a half step and

played in Ab. You simply imagine four flats in the key signature and read the notes as they are. The only tricky part comes about when you come across accidentals...sharped notes, flatted notes, or notes with a naturalsign in front of them. There you might have to think a moment to be sure you play it corrected...a half-step lower. Again, us Bb instruments just learned to deal with it. Oddly enough, this experience came in handy later on in music theory classes.

A church service at Kelso Assembly of God...

It didn't matter which service, a "message in tongues" was not unusual at all. Certain people in the congregation seemed to have this "gift" more than others. Sister Carrie Pride, who was an elderly fixture in her chair near the front (stage right) could be counted on to rise to her feet at any moment in the service and give her message in tongues. Others in the congregation, some of them the same ones who also spoke in tongues, would "translate." These translations were often prefaced with "thus saith the Lord," for after all these messages were, in fact, the Lord speaking to "his people."

You simply had to have been there! It was as if the preachers, whether pastors or visiting evangelists, were somehow rated on how powerful their oratory could be. How much fear of hell and damnation they could stir up. And how they could get to people's deepest emotions as if they knew every sin and evil thought people might have. Guilt was laid on and it was palpable. Very often the subject was the second coming of Christ. "Any moment now." Sin was rampant. We're living in "the eleventh hour." Only those who had given their hearts to Jesus could possibly be spared and would be swept into heaven "at the last trumpet."

In those days, the preachers used no microphones. It was straight out old-fashioned oratory. Plenty loud enough. Most often accompanied by a Bible in one hand and striding from one side of the platform to the other. Sometimes there was humor and storytelling. It might be anecdotes of miraculous healings, because such stories were common. Crutches tossed aside. Wheel chairs no longer needed. Tumors shrinking before your eyes. All it took was faith. (If it didn't happen to you, the implication was that your faith was not strong enough.) It could have been about visiting the bedside of a dying man who looked up in abject fear as he gasped his last breath saying, "I feel the fires of hell...Jesus, help me!"



Occasionally the "big names" would come along...not necessarily to Kelso Assembly, but as close as Portland. I once attended a big tent event there with many hundreds, if not over a thousand in attendance when Oral Roberts came to town. They had the usual robust singing, the gospel music and then...the grand entrance, center stage...Bro Roberts himself. And yes, they lined up at the conclusion of his sermon for healing. The photo to the left could have easily been taken at the Portland event. I was sitting stage left not far from the platform. Did anyone get healed? Through a narcissistic showman? Highly unlikely.

Most church services at Kelso Assembly of God included the "altar call." "Every head bowed and every eye closed." The plea was for sinners to raise their hand. "I see that hand." The call then was to come forward. Designated folks met with the repentant sinner at the front and knelt with him or her as this person "accepted Jesus" and became "born again."

But it wasn't always over at this point. All were then invited to come forward for prayer. Most often at the altar at the front, but also in the "prayer room" which was entered

from the side doors on either side of the platform area. At Kelso Assembly this was a room that ran the width of the church behind the pulpit and choir loft area. It was partitioned off on Sunday morning for use as Sunday School rooms. As a prayer room it often became the place where people sought to be filled with the Holy Ghost. People would pray, often very loudly, begging the Lord for the anointing His Spirit and to be allowed to speak in tongues...the ultimate test of whether you were a "Spirit-filled" Christian.

Other indications of your sincere Christianity or tests of your faith had to do with smoking, drinking, dancing, and spending time with unbelievers who might do those things. Women and girls were especially admonished not to wear lipstick or any other makeup and to be circumspect with hair and clothing styles. Movies of almost every type were either forbidden or very suspect. (Watching a film taken of the natives of the Belgian Congo were OK, however, if the visiting missionary presented it.)

For a very long time, Friday nights were the "young peoples" night at church. This, of course, was also the night for football and basketball games at the high school...and, of course, the dances which followed. It was obviously an attempt to counter-balance the temptations of mingling with "the other."

Many of those "restrictions" have been lifted since those days. But they were of high importance back then.

When you grow up in this, you quickly realize that "we" have an exclusive grip on the true faith. Though people of that church and at that time might be have been reluctant to say it, the underlying view was that even other Christian denominations were "nominal" only. While folks there might have denied it, I was there and this is what I felt was being said. "We have it, y'all don't." "When the trumpet sounds, we're going to heaven...sorry about the rest of you."

I want to be very clear as I write the next paragraph or so. In that church at that time there were people I loved and respected and still do. I'll refrain from mentioning names, but you were valued people then and your family members are still considered as friends.

As a young person in that church, even then, I never felt comfortable. I don't think it was because I was a sinner who never "gave his heart to the Lord." I tried. I'm pretty sure my thoughts were no more wicked than any of my friends, though as a teen, I had plenty of those. I was, quite frankly, embarrassed by the emotions, the shouting, the heavy-handed preaching, the speaking in tongues. As much as we were told how important is was to win souls for Jesus, I really had a hard time even wanting to invite friends to church with me. I didn't even want to tell people which church I attended.

Deep down I questioned, even as a youngster, whether those message in tongues were a real language. It seemed like gibberish to me. Certainly it didn't sound like any earthly languages one might hear. Was it supposed to? The story in the Bible's book of Acts says that after the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they were able to speak in other languages and that people were astonished to be preached to in their own language by these "unschooled" men. All I'm saying is, even in those days...with never a word spoken about it...I had my doubts. That didn't stop me from trying to live up to my calling and attempting to "find the will of God for my life." I stayed connected to this church for about three years even after starting my teaching career.

Without a doubt, stepping away from this was very difficult. I have the sense that the grip held by many evangelical, especially Pentecostal, churches is somewhat like that held by an abusive husband over his wife. Please don't get me wrong. No one was threatening physical abuse. These are loving people. The grip this church (not specifically the one I attended) has is tied up in religious beliefs. "What we're teaching is straight from the Bible, God's inerrant Word." "Your eternal soul is in jeopardy if you leave the faith." In addition to

that “spiritual” side, long standing friendships and acquaintances are lost. No, no one is “shunning” you officially, but the sense is similar. The following recent anecdote is actual a comment on that very thing:

Aside: I had a voice from the past contact me recently in response to my fairly long statement on Facebook about some political views in which I intimated I no longer held many of the evangelical Christian beliefs I once had. This individual wrote to say “I can’t say that I’m shocked but I am saddened. You are someone that, as a teenager, I looked up to. I’m sure that I learned more from you than any other teacher I had. Your expertise in regard to music is admirable as well as inspiring!!!!

I remember a time years ago when you professed to be a “Christian” and came to speak to a group of young people when my father invited you. You were inspiring..... I wonder what happened.... “

I have since come to believe that those of us growing up in this “faith” environment were held as much in the clutches of this “exclusivity” as those of the Jim Jones cult, or of Mennonites or the Amish. We were admonished not to marry outside the faith. To do so was to risk your very soul. The grip of such notions as the Bible being inerrant and the last word on all things was ingrained. Please don’t assume this sort of shift from believer to skeptic was easy. Just as the words “just walk away from it” to an abused wife doesn’t cut it, I urge anyone who hasn’t lived in the religious environment I lived in for some 35 years to back off. These feelings run deep and they’re not easily explained. The intellect can tell you one thing...so very logically, but there’s more to it than that.

I’ve been told that my current beliefs or lack of beliefs is probably a sort of rebellion against all of this childhood “traumatizing.” Could be. Maybe later in the book I can speak to this once again. I will say, however, that as short a time ago as maybe twelve years, as I drove by Kelso Assembly of God, I would feel a “clutching” in my gut. So, you see it’s only been since the age of 60 or so that I’ve finally felt liberated from the “entrapment” of that tight web. It feels wonderful, just like a comfortable deep breath.

I claim no insights or absolutes when it comes to spiritual matters. I’m sure of a few things, however. One of them is that those who claim to have all necessary answers don’t. I’d rather have questions I can’t answer than answers I can’t question! (That last sentence didn’t originate with me, but I surely do like it!)

Well, I thought I was through with this subject, but must add this...

Music enriches my soul. It doesn’t matter that I don’t know what “my soul” is. My very being is uplifted by so many forms of musical expression. Surprisingly, it doesn’t have to be choral music. It can be a simple song. Some music speaks truth. I don’t know how to explain that. In a lovely little Christmas song that Megan, Margaret, and Steve presented in a 2017 Christmas service at their church...and which Steve sent as a video...I was moved because it was not only lovely...it spoke truth. That doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with the lyrics of the song. Skeptics would say, “you felt this way just because it was your granddaughter and family performing this song.” That could have been part of it. Does it matter? I’m been lucky enough to stand before a wonderful choir many times in my life. Time after time, I’ve caught these “glimpses of beauty” that transcend normal explanation. My friends, the Green’s (former priests at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church where I worked for ten years) use the phrase “thin places” to describe moments of insight where one might find glimpses into the spiritual dimension. I’m not given to “magic” or the supernatural as explanations for any of this. This is perfectly normal. However, if beauty is an attribute of God and the glimpses we find are insights into him, her, or it. I’m good with that. Now and forever.

Moving to Longview

In the summer of 1951 we moved to 3176 Florida St., Longview. We not only moved, but my parents were able to actually buy the house. The price for this two-bedroom home of about 750 sq. ft. was around \$7200, with monthly payment of about \$43.

It was a trim little home that mom and dad kept up well. It had a small Hawthorne tree in the front yard near the front corner of the lawn. I say "corner" because the house was on the corner of 32nd Ave. and Florida Street. I mowed that lawn many times with a push mower, but I suppose Dad would say "not nearly as often as I should."

In 1951 there were no houses on the west side of 32nd. This was more or less the edge of town, though Weyerhaeuser and Reynolds were on the Columbia River to the west and 33rd Avenue had a few houses on either side of the road across the slough from us. This drainage slough provided an overflow outlet for Lake Sacajawea and meandered 200 feet to the west side of 32nd. It ran into other lowland sloughs in vacant land to the west of the city and eventually ran into the Columbia River. Trees and brush lined the slough and it was a refuge for ducks and other waterfowl. We even had pheasants flying over to finish off dad's garden corn crop in the fall of the year.

I know about the pheasants because one morning a couple flew into the garden behind the house. Big game hunter that I was, I put a .22 short bullet in dad's rifle and aimed at one of them from the back door of the house. Pulled the trigger and it fell over dead. My only kill ever, to this day. Not only do I still feel bad about killing it, mom took the poor thing, defeathered it as you would an Arkansas chicken, and cooked it in some way for dinner that night. It was inedible. Too tough to chew!

More on school, including music experience

I walked from 3176 Florida Street some 12 to 15 blocks each day to attend R. A. Long High School in Longview. At the time, it was the only high school serving this area.

My experience playing the clarinet in band was a good thing for me, though I suspect I didn't contribute much to the clarinet section. Cal Storey was the band director. He was a clarinetist himself and didn't seem to appreciate that my "audition" with him included playing with a bit of vibrato. "Where did you learn to do that?" He asked. "At church." "That's strange," he said. "Vibrato is what the jazz clarinetists use." Anyway, I sat rather far back in the 3rd clarinet section that year. While I'd like to say that I improved and moved on up...that didn't happen. Cal encouraged me to take private lessons (as a good many of the kids did..with him, of course.) Took money we didn't have. I didn't clamor for lessons. So, I remained in the 3rd clarinet section for a couple of years. I was never a great player, but Cal took note of the fact I had played the bass clarinet while in the 8th grade in Kelso and so he asked me if I wanted to play bass clarinet in the R. A. Long band. I did. While I may not have been great at it, I did enjoy playing that big instrument in my junior and senior years...alongside a fellow by the name of Jim Crook.

The band was superb. Cal rather hated the marching and pep band aspect of his job, but he turned out a marvelous concert band. We marched in parades and did some half-time shows, and did 'em well, but this was not what band was all about to Cal. At one point I remember him inviting Raphael Mendez...at that time one of the world's finest trumpet players...to solo with the band. The concert went well. Mendez laughed and admitted he had never played one of his signature pieces quite so fast as we took it...pushing him to his limit. Apparently, we rushed the tempo ever so slightly.

We always received superior (top) ratings at divisional festivals and I was proud to be in that band. Furthermore, it contributed greatly to my music reading skills. Something that playing an instrument will do for anyone.

I did not sing in a high school choir until the last semester of my senior year. When I asked to be in the choir as a senior they first put me in the beginning choir directed by Charles Houglum. Later, Chuck became a good friend. His choir that year had a good many non-committed ninth and tenth grade kids in it and it didn't sound great. I asked if I could possibly be moved to the advanced choir. Somehow the switch was made. I was placed on the second tenor part. It always seemed high to me, but I managed.

Most of my previous singing was limited to singing in church. While I knew I could find all the right notes in the school choir music, I don't think that Roy Bryson, our director, was aware I could actually sing until the last time the choir sang that year. We were to sing at the senior assembly at the end of the school year. The choir was crowded onto the stage at R. A. Long auditorium and I ended up practically singing in the ear of Bryson, who directed the piece on the cramped stage. On the way back to the Monticello Junior High building (which shared the band and choir room with R. A. Long students), Roy walked with his arm around my shoulder telling me how great I sounded. Oh, well. Better late than never. By the way, I had gotten a "C" grade in choir at the 3rd quarter grading period because I deliberately missed an evening rehearsal (prep for the contest) of the school choir to attend a church event.

One distinct memory of that last semester at R. A. Long was singing under the director of Jester Hairston. Hairston was revered as one of the great arrangers of spirituals. The concert was held in the R. A. Long gymnasium. Of course we sang his "See the baby...wrapped in a manger, Amen" with him singing the solo. Hairston appeared on the television situation comedy *The Amos 'n' Andy Show* as society sophisticate Henry Van Porter and portrayed the character of Leroy on both the radio and television *Amos 'n' Andy* programs.

The uptake of it all is this...I recommend instrumental training for anyone who loves music and even considers the idea of becoming a music teacher, including being a choir director of any sort. If one can't join band or orchestra and start as a 5th or 6th grader on such an instrument, it might even be better to take piano lessons. The keyboard itself is basic to understanding music theory.

As I look back on high school, I also have fond memories of taking woodshop. I designed and built an oak desk which sat in our house for years. (If you should ever build one, don't build it out of oak! Too heavy!)

While I had the usual variety of subjects and teachers in high school, several stand out. I particularly remember Margaret Kohlmeier, who taught literature and also directed plays, including one musical "Annie Get Your Gun." I had a minor part in that one. Her friend, Rosemary Leadon, was a superb English and Journalism teacher. I think it was Rosemary's influence that led me to believe I would major in Journalism/Photography in college. More on that idea later.

Other outstanding teachers and coaches included Tiz Miller (baseball coach and Algebra), Joe Moses (basketball coach), Buck Hammer (PE and football coach), Miller was my ninth grade algebra teacher. While I had always done well in arithmetic, I found algebra difficult. I'd like to blame it on not being "brain-ready" for the concepts, for I was almost two years younger than most of my peers...having started school at the age of 5 or 6 and promoted to the second grade quickly. My thought at the time was that Miller catered to the athletes in the class and didn't take the time to explain things thoroughly to the rest of us. Well, whatever...! I got through it with a "C" grade and then vowed to never again take a math class if I could help it. As necessity

would have it, I was required to take a “senior review” math class. Got through that just fine, as I recall. No algebra to speak of!

Being younger than most of my peers was a disadvantage in sports. I think I wanted in the worst way to play basketball and baseball. My freshman and sophomore years I suspect I was one of the shortest in my class. My growth started in the latter part of my 10th grade year and I managed to reach about 6’ 4” by the time I was a mid-junior...albeit a very skinny guy. Too late, too slow, and unable to play either of my favorite sports well. As long as they’d let me stand still and shoot a basketball I could hit a good many of my shots, but that’s not the way the game is played.

Baseball was much the same. I turned out but played little. They used to put the worst players in right field. I played a little right field. My cousin, Vern, who was actually drafted as a pitcher by one of the major league teams, was pitching one day in a practice game with the JV’s...my team. He took me aside and said, “now I’m gonna throw nothing but fastballs to you when you bat...no curves.” “OK, great,” I said. I swung and missed a couple of his fastballs. Next pitch he threw was a knuckleball. I was way out in front as the ball fluttered up to the plate. I missed terribly. He laughed! I’ve never forgiven you, Vern! Laugh, if you will, from your grave!

As much as I loved sports, I decided to at least hang out with the “jocks” by being a “manager” for both the football team and for baseball when I was a senior. Being a “manager” meant being the “gofur” for the coach as well as passing out towels...about all the menial tasks one could think of. Frankly, I rather enjoyed it. Got to travel with the team and be on or near the bench and see things “up close.” Got a “letter” in the sport just like the big boys!

College days began in the Fall of 1955

I graduated from high school in 1955. Lower Columbia College in Longview was the best place to go. My high school grades were not spectacular, but good enough to warrant college. When I enrolled at LCJC (as they called it then...Lower Columbia Junior College), I was assigned a counselor, the guy in charge of the music program at the two-year college. I didn’t quarrel about it, but assumed that since I had taken music classes in high school they thought I should have the music guy as my advisor.

That turned out to be a major “turning point” in my life. I entered LCJC fully intending to major in journalism. My hope was to write for a paper and also eventually to be skilled as a photographer. I even had an Argus C-3 35mm camera by that time! Frankly, there was not much being offered by way of journalism classes at the college. All the required courses for anyone of any major were offered, but only one journalism class. I took that class. But my advisor, Jim Callihan...the music guy...convinced me to not only sing in his choir, but to also take music theory and music history. I did. Loved both and did well in both.

The choir was pretty good. It had a good many students in it who had excelled in their high school choirs. I remember Sandra Brown from high school. She was a fine pianist as well as singer. Lyle Frenter, from the Castle Rock area became a good friend. Hal Ness, who later taught at the same time I did in Castle Rock, was also in that choir. Hal and I always had a contest before choir started to see who could sing the lowest note. Lyle Frenter also became a teacher. Hal left Castle Rock and taught and coached basketball in a school district in northern Oregon. I lost track of both of these fine men.

After two years at Lower Columbia, I was able to transfer to WWSC in Bellingham. It was called Western Washington State College back in 1957. A few years later it became a university and was called Western Washington University.

I continued with the prescribed required subjects as well as with my music classes. My chief advisor was Bernard Regier, later to become Dr. Bernard Regier, who directed the choral program at the school.

The choir was excellent. About 50 in size. Somehow, I remember our singing a setting of "The Creation" based on the "God's Trombones" thing. A wonderful bass by the name of Bob Brown was the narrator who proclaimed the story of creation as from the Bible...and in terms like a black preacher of olden times. It was dramatic and fun to perform. I'm not sure if anyone ever performs it nowadays. It could easily be construed as "politically insensitive." I don't remember any other titles, but Regier loved the works of Schumann.

I was named choir manager while in my senior year. Responsibilities included booking hotels for the choir's tour around the state in the spring of 1959. One other honor comes to mind. I was selected to be the soloist with the Bellingham Symphony. Oddly enough, I can't remember the title of the piece I sang. It was in French...not my favorite language in which to sing and it took me up to a high F. That scraped the top of my range. Got through it.

Interesting (to me, at least) was that the teacher of a speech class I took seemed to like my speaking voice. He recommended I contact KVO5-TV in Bellingham regarding an announcer position they were trying to fill. I was busy setting up the college choir tour and somehow the dates for interview didn't line up well. Who knows? That could have been another "pivotal" moment! I stayed "on track" to become a music teacher.

I graduated from WWU in 1959 and started a job search. My first music teaching job was in Castle Rock, WA, not far from my hometown. The superintendent of the CR schools was Herb Hanson. The band director was a man by the name of Marv Clark, a wonderful colleague.

Marriage

I got married in 1958, while still in college. We first lived in an apartment above a garage in Bellingham. Most of what I remember is that the doorways were about six feet high. I'm 6' 4". I constantly bumped my head. My first wife was Elizabeth Bittner of Longview. Our son, David, was born in Bellingham eleven months after Liz and I got married. I owe Liz a great deal. She helped me get through college in Bellingham by working at what was then called the National Bank of Commerce. She also bore us two marvelous sons, David and Stephen.

Stephen came along the first year I taught in the Kelso School District...this after my first two years teaching in Castle Rock.

For further life story information, I suggest you see www.howardsong.org. That website also has photos of the old Kelso High School, among other photos and information you might find interesting.

Thanks for reading!