You Can Go Home Again

[2012-2018]

Part of a Larger
Collection of
Autobiographical Materials
By Nicholas Johnson

Last Revised: 13 Jul 2018

Formatted for PDF Viewing: 1 May 2022

Contents

Introduction: As I Recall

This collection of essays and snippets is not a formal autobiography or a detailed full-length memoir. Each entry is simply a collection of individual and often unrelated puffs of memory from the past, written as recalled.

Because they were written at different times, and few readers will find themselves unable to put the book down before finishing it, there is occasional repetition of some material from one chapter to another to make each a stand-alone read.

Moreover, I do not represent what's here to be "the truth." There are no known and deliberate lies. But even our most well-intentioned memories are unreliable, especially those going back a half-century or more. Memories add, as well as lose, details. What are believed to be recollections of events may be built in fact from recollections of newspaper clippings, often-told stories, photographs, or home movies.

My mother, Edna, and her sister, Josephine (Auntie Jo), had very different, though precise, recollections of their father's immigration from Germany as a young boy. Similarly, if you participated in, or heard about, some of the things described here, you too may have a recollection different from mine.

While many of the entries involve identified years, presented in a loose and overlapping chronological order, that is most often not my focus or intention. They may be focused on educational policy ("Experimental Schools"), or the impact of war on children ("World War II"). "Brown

Street" (originally titled "Lawnmowing" for a writing exercise in a 1997 essay writing class) describes life in the Great Depression, among other things.

In the case of "Good Fortune and Serendipity," the focus is on my acknowledgement of the role of others, fortuitous timing, and plain dumb luck from the time of my birth to my last years.

The first chapter following this Introduction, "In the Beginning," starts with the beginning of the Universe, a nod of acknowledgement and thanks for the miracle of life on an Earth warmed by a furnace 93 million miles away. The next, "Predecessors," fast forwards through the lives of my immigrant ancestors.

The first full section, "Childhood and High School: Iowa City, 1934-1952, includes some memories from perhaps age two or three through high school graduation. My earliest memories of Iowa City in the chapters Mom and Dad, Early Memories, Brown Street, World War II, and Experimental Schools. They include participation in the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station programs for two, three and four-year-old children and enrollment in the University Elementary and High School beginning with kindergarten in the fall of 1939. The move from Brown Street to Melrose Court was almost immediately followed with the entry of America into World War II and its impact on the young neighborhood boys and girls who were my playmates.

The second section, "Family and College: Texas, 1952-1959," covers the years of marriage to Karen Chapman, University of Texas, Austin (as undergraduate and law student), birth of our first child, Julie, and first job,

as law clerk to U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit, Judge John R. Brown in Houston.

The third section, “Young Professional: Washington, 1959-1973,” starts in Washington (as law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black) and ends in Washington (with my term as Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission). It includes the birth of Sherman (1961) and Gregory (1964), teaching at the University of California Law School (Boalt Hall) in Berkeley, 1960-63; the year at Covington & Burling in Washington, 1963-64; followed by the first two presidential appointments (Maritime Administrator, 1964-1966, and FCC Commissioner, 1966-1973).

The fourth section, “The Years Between: Washington, 1974-1979, aside from the birth of my son, Alexander, marked the end of my ever-upward career. It began with a devastating divorce when Karen chose another partner, the end of a seven-year term as FCC commissioner (and with it my “15 minutes of fame”), a failed effort at congressional politics (with a narrow loss in Iowa’s Third District 1974 Democratic Party primary), cancellation of a book contract, and ultimate closing of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting.

The fifth section, “Home Alone: Iowa City, 1980-1989, marked another ten years as a bachelor, a return to Iowa City with my son, Gregory, and to teaching (a semester as distinguished visiting professor, University of Wisconsin, Madison; University of Iowa, College of Law and Department of Communication Studies). There was time with my mother and my son, public lecturing, a column and public radio commentaries, hosting a TV series on

PBS stations, and wondering what I would do with the rest of my life.

The final section, “Life With Mary: Iowa City, 1989-until death do us part,” begins with lost and found in 1989: the loss of my mother and the find that was Mary. Mary and I were married in 1991. The law school teaching continued until 2014. There was some foreign travel for the State Department, and our return to the family home on Melrose Court that I had left in 1952 – giving rise in 2006 to the name of my blog: “FromDC2Iowa” and the realization in titling this book that, yes, you can go home again.

Welcome to my life. Enjoy.

Nicholas Johnson

Iowa City, 2018

In the Beginning

My story begins some 14 billion years ago – yours, too, if you are equally willing to suspend disbelief.

We are but "star stuff" rearranged – the hydrogen and oxygen combination we call "water," and a diversity and sufficient number of minerals and other items now cataloged on the Periodic Table of the Elements to form the basis for a rather thorough semester in a college chemistry course.

An even greater modesty compels the additional confession that most of what appears to be "me" is in fact some 100 trillion microbes and bacteria – distant relatives all -- for whom I provide a bed and breakfast service they seem to find acceptable.

The software (technically "wetware") that runs the human cells in this cooperative housing project is a string of DNA that varies only slightly from that of a mouse, fish, bird, or earthworm.

That it all began with one "Big Bang" is not an intuitively satisfying explanation. The idea that everything came out of nothing bears more relation to a children's fairy tale, or element of religious faith, than what we normally think of as even scientific theory, let alone fact. The belief of an indigenous people that the Earth is held up on the back of a turtle, supported in turn by another turtle – and, when pressed by the obvious next question, respond that it is "turtles all the way down" – seems more poetic and just as likely. Nonetheless, the notion that the history of everything began with the first, and never-equaled, wondrous fireworks display coming out of nothing, the "Big

Bang," seems to be the best that today's over-educated scientific minds can offer.

As Senator Everett Dirksen might have said, "A billion (years) here, a billion there, pretty soon you're talking real time." So it was with the billions of years it took for "the dust to settle," so to speak; that is, for the dust to coalesce into astronomical objects such as stars and planets. The Milky Way took form, ultimately our star (the Sun), and 4.5 billion years ago, its planet we call Earth. It took more billions of years before a single cell of stuff resembling "life" emerged, and still more time before single cells could reproduce.

We got a couple of lucky breaks that made the difference between life and death. The first is that the Earth found itself at exactly the right distance from the Sun; slightly further away and we would freeze; slightly closer and getting out of the kitchen would provide little relief. Earth would be too hot for humans to survive anywhere. The other lucky break was the Earth's switch to an oxygen-based atmosphere and the form of life oxygen made possible about a billion years ago. Evolution, plus a few hundred-million years, and the Earth was supporting plankton, fish, insects, amphibians, trees, reptiles, dinosaurs, mammals, birds, flowers (in roughly that order) -- ultimately our more immediate ancestors, and then us (homo sapiens, 200,000 to 500,000 years ago).

The human history thereafter is but a flash on the timeline of the universe. If you compress the time from the Big Bang until now into a calendar of 12 months (8,760 hours), our species' evolution all occurred after 11:00 p.m. on December 31xst, the last hour, the last 1/100xth of one percent. By that time our ancestors were using stone tools;

by 11:45, fire; there were early seafarers at 11:58; cave painting at 11:59. Everything else came during the last minute of that year: agriculture; the first cities; early legal codes; use of bronze and iron; invention of the alphabet and compass; Roman Empire; birth of Christ; the zero and decimals; Mayan civilization; Sung Dynasty; European Renaissance; and the other developments of the last 1000 years somewhat familiar to us.

Migrations out of Africa made their way through what is now the Middle East, further east to Central Asia, and west to what is now Europe. My ancestors ended up in Northern Europe, in areas that later took on the names Germany and Scandinavia (Sweden).

I mention this early history of the Universe and the humans who came to inhabit the Earth to put in perspective a sense of humility genuinely felt. Those who oppose almost all that governments can do on behalf of their people have come to say in recent years, “I built that.” They seem to be saying, “Anything and everything I have is the result of my efforts alone.”

For starters, humankind’s grandiose sense of comparative superiority to all other species is wildly off the mark. A species’ cognitive abilities must be judged by their relevance to its survival – not by comparing theirs to ours. We can respect each plant and animal species for at least some abilities that exceed our own – physical prowess, navigational abilities, communication skills. Face it, with all our industrial and military might we can’t even keep the squirrels out of our bird feeders.

From my perspective, there are far more individuals and circumstances for which I give thanks and credit than

for the results of my own efforts – up to and including where the Earth settled into an orbit, and its oxygen atmosphere.

In terms of other humans' contributions, just think about it. We begin life benefiting from the accomplishments of those who preceded us during the past 100,000 years. Those are very substantial shoulders on which to stand. To those unknown individuals must be added those we knew and can name: family members, friends, teachers, mentors, and those from whom we have learned during what may have only been a brief encounter.

It may have been "my life," but it was not my creation; I certainly don't believe that "I built that."

Predecessors

The essay, “In the Beginning,” acknowledges my generalized debt to all that has happened since the Big Bang, the evolution of single cells into dinosaurs and the first of our species, and the civilizing contributions of the 100 billion persons who have lived on Earth during the past 50,000 years.

In this essay, we begin taking names. But do not fear what follows. There will be no need for the kind of directory of 160 characters one needs to navigate Tolstoy’s War and Peace. Various members of the family did some pre-Internet digging that did not go back very far. My daughter, Julie, is the primary post-Internet researcher and the source of most of the family’s current genealogical information.

First, some of the basics. They will only take a minute.

My father, Wendell Andrew Leroy Johnson (b. 1906, m. 1929, d. 1965) was the youngest of six children; my mother, Edna Bockwoldt Johnson (b. 1905, m. 1929, d. 1989) was the middle child of three sisters.

There are but five principals in addition to my parents: my mother’s parents, Mox Bockwoldt (b. 1875, m. 1901, d. 1956) and Bertha Watke Bockwoldt (b. 1883, m. 1901, d. 1931); my father’s parents, Andrew Johnson (b. 1860, m. 1892, d. 1942) and Mary Helen Tarnström Johnson (b. 1866, m. 1892, d. 1925); and Bertha Watke’s mother, Emma Kohlmorgan Watke (b. 1860, m. 1883, d. 1941), who lived with us during the first six years of my life.

The wives of both my grandfathers died before I was born. I only met Andrew Johnson on one occasion I can

recall, and that was before I was six years old. Therefore, Mox Bockwoldt, whom we called “Pop,” and Emma Kohlmorgan Watke (who died when I was six), were the only “grownups” from prior generations with whom I had contact.

During the 19th Century the population of the United States grew 15-fold, from five or six million in 1800, to 23 million in 1850, and 76 million by 1900. By 1930 (the last census before the year of my birth, 1934), there were 123 million persons living in America. The most recent census, in 2010, put the number of Americans at nearly 310 million.

In 1850 two-thirds of all Americans were farmers. (Prior to that the percentages were even higher.) By 1916 their percentage declined to 32 percent; by 1933 to 25 percent; and today it is little more than one percent.

During the years 1850 to 1930, when the U.S. population exploded five-fold, from 23 to 123 million persons, 25 million of that increase were immigrants from Europe. Five million came from Germany, and most of them, like Mox Bockwoldt, settled somewhere in the Midwest.

Why mention population data?

To understand my grandparents’ and great grandparents’ lives requires at least a minimal understanding of the times during which they lived – and how those times differed from the America in which we live. Theirs was a much less populated and simpler America than the one we know.

Iowa's first non-Native American settlers started arriving as recently as 1830. The area became a state in 1846. Before the railroads came in the 1850s and 1860s, the Mormons pulled their own carts by hand from Iowa to

Utah, arriving in the early 1850s. Horses and oxen provided farmers' transportation to markets along dirt roads (muddy after a rainstorm) and the "horsepower" to pull plows and wagons. There were no networks to provide electricity, clean water, or sewers – not to mention radio and television programming and an Internet.

My parents grew up on farms. Both Mox and Andrew were cattlemen. A quarter to a third of Americans were farmers. During their lifetimes many farmers and their children were born, raised, married, worked, and died on farms – some never leaving the county of their birth.

Today almost one-third of Americans have a four-year college degree. When my parents were in high school half of the American population had less than eight years of education. From 1900 to 1920 the number of B.A. degrees granted annually increased from 27,000 to 37,000 to 48,000 (of which only a quarter to a third were women). Even with the additional increase in college educated adults after 1920, 20 years later only 4.6 of American adults had a college degree in 1940. That both my parents (a) left the farm, (b) enrolled in college, and (c) graduated (Dad with a Ph.D.) was remarkable.

In the 21st Century, we are not likely to know many farmers – and certainly few if any engaged in the kind of mixed-agriculture, small family farms that my parents and grandparents knew.

Moreover, my grandparents were immigrants. That was also common. In 1900 over 123,000 of Iowa's 2.2 million residents were, like Mox Bockwoldt, born in Germany.

No American who is not of 100 percent Native American heritage can claim to be a pure American. The

rest of us are hyphenated descendants of immigrants – in my case Swedish-Americans and German-Americans. Some immigrants were invaders; others came in peace. All too many were involved in driving the original Americans from their homes, killing many in the process.

Moreover, my people arrived in the 19th Century; none could claim membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution. They were part of the waves of immigration that brought to our shores those who helped build 20th Century America.

They arrived with little or nothing, and no alternative but a life of very hard work if they were to survive and raise families. It was a time of strong ethnic ties – where they lived, went to school and church, shopped, and how they voted. There could be an inter-ethnic distance, unfamiliarity, suspicion, prejudice, even hatred and hostility – especially toward whatever immigrant group happened to be the last to arrive.

As a third-generation immigrant and first generation raised off the farm, their history and mine has played a role in shaping who I am.

Many of these immigrants did well financially and as community members. Neither Andrew nor Mox joined the robber barons and others in the 1% of their day, but my guess is that they would have been in the top 10% to 25%. Andrew was a Kansas cowboy, riding horseback, driving his cattle across the state to the Kansas City stockyards. But he was also reportedly the first in his county to purchase an automobile and amass a substantial collection of books. That collection included a multi-volume History of the World (if I recall the title correctly) that Dad read from as a child and later kept in our home.

There are only two other stories I recall regarding Andrew. One involves his driving. When his eyesight had declined to the extent that he drove his car into a ditch in his late seventies or early eighties, the family insisted he give up driving. He rejected the suggestion with the assertion, “I can still see large moving objects.”

The other involves his death in a doctor’s office, where he was waiting to see the doctor for what would otherwise have been his last routine physical exam.

Although there is no record of precisely when Andrew reached America, it was probably very close to the time that Mox arrived, in 1890. Andrew and Mary Tarnström were married in 1892. I’m guessing they would have met, and married, in the U.S. And their first child, Lennard Frances, my uncle “L.F.,” was born in Kansas in 1893.

My mother is the source of most of what is known about Mox’s 19th and early 20th Century life.

Mox was born in Berg auf Fehmarn, the main town on a little, 70-square-mile island in the Baltic Sea off the northern coast of Germany. Settled in the early Middle Ages by a Slavic tribe, it long retained confusing, simultaneous and alternating ties to both Denmark and Germany, until sometime after until the Second Schleswig War of 1864 when it unambiguously became a part of Germany.

The Bockwoldt family name first appeared in Fehmarn records sometime between 1450 and 1500. Mox’s parents, Johannes Bockwoldt and Dorris Wenndorf Bockwoldt, were born in 1835 and 1840, respectively – which means, if both were born on Fehmarn, that Mox is the son of German-speaking Danish subjects. It also

means that Mox, an only child, spent his childhood with parents in their forties and fifties rather than their twenties.

The story told me is that his grandfather was a ship's captain who died at sea during a storm off the coast of Fehmarn. The story did not indicate whether the ship was used for transportation or fishing, but two of Mox's relatives, Lottie and Ria, were fish mongers in Burg. (I don't know their last names, or relationship to Mox.) Mother, a skilled photographer, took and framed a large photo of one of them cutting up fish, during a trip she and Dad made to the island. The picture still hangs in our living room.

Mox's father, among other things, wove and sold the heavy ropes used on the local ships. The weaving began by tying the starting end of the fibers at one end of the barn. The weaver walked backwards, toward the open barn door, carefully weaving the fibers – like a mother weaving a braid on her school-bound daughter – until reaching the desired length of the rope.

When Mox left the island for America in 1890 and his father asked why he wanted to leave, Mox replied, "I don't want to spend the rest of my life walking backwards." When he later returned for a visit (his U.S. passport record indicates 1914), very well dressed and groomed, the story is that his father greeted him with his boyhood name and said, "Well, Mattie, I see that you haven't been walking backwards."

Mox recalled as a boy walking with his father to the local beer garden on Sundays, where they would simply sit for a long afternoon. His father would bring the cigar that lasted many weeks, order one glass of beer, and young Max would watch as the rings slowly accumulated on the side of the glass. Once the beer sipping was finished, and

the cigar was put out and saved for the next week, they would walk home.

Little is known, at least by me, of his life in America from 1890, when he arrived, until 1901 when he was in Davenport, Iowa, studied double-entry bookkeeping at a "business college," and married Bertha Watke. Since he left Germany at age 15 he could not have had much more than the U.S. equivalent of a junior high school education, and we don't know how much additional education he received in Davenport – only that he certainly put whatever it was to very good use in business.

Sometime between 1901 and 1905 Mox and Bertha settled in Galva, Iowa, ultimately building and living in what Mother referred to as "the home place," a mile or so west and north of "downtown Galva." How and when he could acquire farmland is unknown, only that much of it was north of the home place, and that he succeeded in his lifetime goal of being able to leave an acreage to each of his three girls. I have a foggy memory that he began by selling meat out of a cart he pulled along Galva's dirt roads – though that sounds both a little too romantic and unlikely as a business plan for someone whose customers are equally involved in a mixed agriculture that includes livestock.

When a farmer's livestock died they needed to be hauled away. Their dead bodies could be purchased cheaply (or perhaps free for the removal). South of the home place Mox built one of the very few rendering plants around northwest Iowa. He brought the animals to the rendering plant and cooked them into animal feed – and possibly gelatin from the hoofs – and sold the products for a profit.

All of which brings us to the years 1905 (in Iowa) and 1906 (in Kansas) and the story of my mother and father.

Mom and Dad

At the turn of the century, Dad's mother and father, Andrew and Mary Johnson had been married since 1892, were living on a Kansas farm, and had given birth to five children: "L.F.," 1893; Myrtle, 1894; Wilbert, 1897; Marion, 1898; and Edna, 1900.

Mother's father, Mox Bockwoldt, 15 years younger than Andrew, had arrived in America in 1890, and made it to Davenport, Iowa, by 1900 -- having taken the scenic route across the Atlantic Ocean by ship and the Eastern United States by land.

Mother's mother, Bertha Watke, the only one of the four grandparents born in the United States, took the much shorter route to Davenport from Denison, Iowa. The following year she and Mox were married in Davenport, and soon moved to Galva, Iowa.

Dad was born in Kansas in 1906, the sixth, youngest, and last, child of Andrew and Mary. Mother was born in Iowa in 1905, the second of three girls born to Mox and Bertha: Josephine ("Auntie Joe"), born 1902; Mother; and Doris Bertha, born 1910 (and given the names of Mox's mother and wife).

There are few stories I recall of their lives from 1905 and 1906 through their high school years. I imagine that their homes, surroundings, and tasks growing up on farms had more similarity to those of Iowa's first settlers in the middle of the 19th Century than our lives during the second half of the 20th. Both Andrew and Mox were raising and marketing cattle and relying on horses to pull plows and wagons. They probably grew hay and oats for horses, and maybe corn for the cattle, using animal manure for

fertilizer. Andrew may have contributed to Kansas' production of wheat.

Mother and Dad's morning chores as young children might have included gathering eggs from the hen house, or carrying food scraps out to the pigs ("slopping the hogs"). As they grew older and stronger, they might have walked behind a horse-drawn plow, milked the dairy cows, or walked a cornfield at harvest, throwing the ears of corn against the bank board of the wagon.

Mother told the story of wanting to go wading or swimming in the nearby Maple River, but being forbidden to do so – presumably because of her parents' fear of her drowning. Once of college age, and home on holiday, she walked to the river with anticipation of the long-postponed dip – only to discover, once there, that she no longer wanted to swim in the Maple River.

There are a couple stories involving Dad.

Apparently, he showed more early enthusiasm for reading than farming. He was fond of the little books of sometimes serious, classical, radical, or even humorous content published by Emanuel Haldeman-Julius through Appeal to Reason, a socialist publishing house that began in 1919 in Girard, Kansas.

The firm sold copies of their 2300 titles of 3-1/2 by 5-inch, quarter-inch-thick paperbound books for five cents. There was once a collection of 100 or more of them in our attic. They were just the right size for the back pockets on his coveralls, and provided a diversion from farm work in general.

When it came to plowing, however, the results were more serious, like the experiences of those today who try to walk while looking down, texting on a smart phone.

Walking behind a horse or mule with a single-bottom plow, it is very difficult to multi-task concentration on reading and plowing straight furrows.

Mother tells a story that suggests he at least learned something of the ways of a cattleman while growing up. When she went with him to visit Dad's family farm, he fetched a horse, threw his hat on the ground, road a couple hundred yards away from her, turned, drove the horse to a fast gallop (bareback as I recall the story), and as he flew by her reached over, picked up his hat from the ground, put it on his head, slowed the horse, and returned to where she stood. He might have some trouble speaking, she thought, but this fellow sure knows how to ride.

Although baseball was "invented" in 1839, the first World Series did not occur until 1903. During the 1910s grand, new stadiums were built, as baseball became the country's most popular sport and the World Series its most popular event. Dad's passion, like that of many boys his age, was to become a major league baseball player, preferably a pitcher. When he was not reading, one of his most popular activities was throwing rocks at fence posts – something he continued when I was a boy when we were where it was safe to do so.

In addition to these stories, there is his remarkable autobiography written in his early twenties: Because I Stutter (1930). There is no reason to repeat its contents here, as the book is currently available online. It won him not only a master's degree, but the distinctions of (a) authoring one of the first books about stuttering from a stutterer's perspective, and (b) becoming a commercially published writer at a very young age. Clearly, it is the most

important go-to source for information about his childhood and teenage years.

Following early morning chores, Mother and Dad would have walked to school along dirt or gravel roads, often snow-covered in the winter. Apparently, both must have had above-average intelligence and enjoyed learning in school, as they both went on to earn college degrees. (Even as late as “1940, more than half of the U.S. population had completed no more than an eighth grade education. Only 6 percent of males and 4 percent of females had completed 4 years of college.”

It is neither necessary nor the purpose of this collection of family stories and experiences to provide a detailed history of the 20th Century. However, at least a random sampling of events and dates may be useful for a variety of reasons. The news, events, inventions, and fads of their times undoubtedly helped shape Mother and Dad’s experiences, sense of “normal,” aspirations, expectations, and beliefs – as much as similar events during our lifetimes have for us.

For example, try to imagine one’s reaction upon seeing for the first time a vehicle that could propel itself without the need for horses (initially called a “horseless-carriage”), an airplane, or hearing music and voices coming from a wooden box.

Here are some examples from ThoughtCo’s “1900s Timeline.”

Would you have guessed these inventions and products arrived at the beginning of the last century: Kodak’s “Brownie” box camera (1903), silent movies (“The Great Train Robbery,” 1903), New York City subway (1904), Kellogg’s Corn Flakes (1906), electric washing

machines (1907), the Model T Ford (1908; one million from a moving assembly line by 1915), plastic (1909), Oreo cookies (1912), parachutes (1912), crossword puzzles (1913), traffic lights (1914), self-service grocery stores (1916), the polygraph ("lie detector," 1921), insulin (1922), sliced bread ("the greatest thing since," 1928), bubble gum (1928), penicillin (1928), and car radios (1929).

Radio was huge in the 1920s. From the time of the KDKA-AM, Pittsburgh, broadcast of the Harding-Cox presidential election returns, November 2, 1920, until 1930 about 60 percent of American homes acquired radio receivers.

Events more commonly thought of as "history" might include: the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, the first year of his second term. This launched Teddy Roosevelt's presidency (1901-1909), one of the most transformative of the Century – with the introduction the following year of his namesake, the "Teddy Bear," an early ancestor of the one I would have 35 years later. By 1904 Teddy Roosevelt started the digging of the Panama Canal, opened in 1914.

The Wright brothers took flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903, the year before the New York City subway opened. Less than a quarter-century later Charles Lindbergh completed his solo flight across the Atlantic.

Einstein's theory of relativity and Freud's theory of sexuality date from 1905.

1906 was the year of the San Francisco earthquake; 1908 the year Jack Johnson became the first African-American world heavyweight boxing champion.

Why mention Jack Johnson? Because Dad's nickname, "Jack," undoubtedly came from the fact that he (like Mary Vasey's father, Wayne) was a boxer.

Robert Peary reached the North Pole in 1909, the year before Halley's Comet nearly reached Planet Earth and the Boy Scouts began.

1912 is best remembered for the Titanic – its last voyage, not the movie.

Of course, perhaps the most significant event during these years was World War I, 1914-1918. America joined the effort in April of 1917; the armistice was signed in November of 1918, and the Versailles Treaty in June of 1919. Ultimately, with its deadly trench warfare and the Germans' poison gas, an estimated 10 million soldiers and millions more civilians had been killed and some 20 million wounded.

Of less consequence during those years, 1915 saw the launch of both transcontinental telephone service and Babe Ruth's first home run. The world's first communist country, Russia, was spawned by the revolution of 1917.

1920 was a big year. The League of Nations came together. Constitutional amendments were ratified prohibiting "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" (18th Amendment; "prohibition") and declaring that "the right . . . to vote shall not be denied . . . on account of sex" (19th Amendment; "women's right to vote").

The Reader's Digest began publication in 1922; Henry Luce's Time Magazine in 1923 – along with the introduction of the Charleston dance.

J. Edgar Hoover began his 48-year term as Director of the FBI in 1924, launching his fight against America's

most notorious criminals, five years before Al Capone gunned down seven men from a rival Chicago gang in the St. Valentine's Day massacre.

Hitler's Mein Kampf was published in 1925, the same year that William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow squared off in debate over evolution in the famous Scopes (Monkey) Trial – a year before the much less controversial publication of A.A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh.

1929 is best remembered not for the launch of the motion picture industry's Academy Awards, but for the momentous Stock Market Crash in October and the Great Depression which followed throughout the 1930s.

Most important to my family history is May 31st of that year, when my mother and dad were married in Galva, Iowa. That is also the year he finished working on his master's degree and manuscript for Because I Stutter.

He writes in that book that he began his third year as an undergraduate in 1926. Aside from that, I know little of my parents' life, times, and studies during their college years. Dad wrote for some student magazine. Mother studied dance and poetry among other things, and told of her awe when taking canoe lessons on what was then one of the nation's largest indoor swimming pools (in the University's Field House).

Nor do I know much about the five years that followed. Mother was teaching school, perhaps in West Branch. Dad was probably working on his Ph.D. and other research, perhaps paid as someone's assistant. I came upon an address of a house in which they had an apartment during this time. There's a picture of it somewhere. It was, as I recall, on Johnson Street.

But the biggest event in my life, aside from the Big Bang that created the Universe, was my birth in the then-new University of Iowa Hospital on September 23, 1934.

Early Memories

Mother once told me that she and Dad lived in an apartment, possibly on Burlington Street, then a house on Johnson Street, prior to moving into the Court Street house – probably my first home.

My "memories" of life on Court Street are undoubtedly entirely based on a couple of photos rather than anything independently recalled. In one I'm in the side yard on a snowy, winter day in a snowsuit. In the other I'm sitting in my high chair with chocolate cake and frosting all over my face – perhaps a birthday.

My sister, Katy Lou (formally "Katherine Louise," sometimes then "Lady Kou," and now simply "Kate") was born in July 1938 in the University of Iowa Hospital. I have what I believe to be a memory, although it could be constructed from what I was told, of running down the hospital hallway after seeing the new baby with my mother, calling into each hospital room as I passed, "I have a new baby sister! I have a new baby sister!" Whether this represented genuine affection and enthusiasm, or merely the anxiety of a near-four-year-old boy who was vaguely mindful of major changes to come, I can only speculate.

An elderly woman named Grandma Watke lived with us on Brown Street. Mother's mother (the wife of Mox Bockwoldt, whom I will identify as "Mrs. Bockwoldt") died of cancer at a very young age, I believe in her forties. As a boy, I assumed that the woman living with us on Brown Street was probably Mrs. Bockwoldt's mother, which would be consistent with my mother referring to her as "Grandma Watke." I have no present recollection of any experiences with her, or of the affection that young children often have

for great grandparents. My only recollection is that she once punished me by hitting me on the head with a rather large metal dishpan – an act undoubtedly justifiable under the circumstances, but one which I recall having considered rather mean spirited on her part at the time.

There was a wooden chest in the hallway upstairs, which I recall as being about four feet long, three feet deep, and three feet wide. This is where my toys were stored. There were two rules regarding my toy box. Toys were removed and used one at a time, and all toys were to be picked up and put away before bedtime.

These were the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s. There were not a lot of toys, but enough to hold my attention. The one thing I always wanted, but was simply beyond my parents' financial resources, was a red metal fire truck. It had a seat for the driver, pedals for motive power, a steering wheel, and a bell.

I have a memory of wanting to go outdoors to play, sitting by the living window and watching the rain. Mother had once made the mistake of letting me go outdoors to play in the rain, because, she said, it was "a warm rain." Ever after I wished for another warm rain, but none ever fell.

Stories were often read to me at bedtime by either Mom or Dad. I remember *Ping the Yellow Duck*, *The Little Engine That Could*, *Babar*, and of course *Winnie the Pooh*.

My father would often make up stories or poems. There are two I now recall:

We always look between Nicky's toes before he goes to bed,
because that is where the whiffy grows,
and if we look elsewhere instead

we'd never find the whiffy.

Based on this next one, I have the impression I must have been a little stubborn around the age of two or three:

Nicky is terribly sick with no
He hasn't said yes for ages
It started off slow
but the terrible no
got worse and worse by stages
The doctor says that people with no
are usually kept in cages

Naps are something we resist but are required to take as children, and something we would like to take but forbidden to have as adults. One of my greatest frustrations was being required to go to my room and lie down during the middle of a sunny afternoon.

Aside from the small pox vaccine, in those days children achieved immunity to contagious childhood diseases not with yet-to-be-invented vaccines but by suffering through the disease. If the child survived they were immune. If they did not they were not immune, but because they were dead their lack of immunity was no longer an issue.

At various times I had whooping cough, mumps, measles, chickenpox, pink eye, and very possibly others I do not recall. On each occasion, a public health official would come by the house and tack a "Quarantined" sign on the front door. Doctors made house calls in those days. Mine came with a little black bag, a stethoscope and a bottle of sweet, colorful placebo pills. So, I was always happy to see him and eventually, sure enough, my various diseases were cured.

Mother recalled for many years, and would never let me forget, one occasion when I was sitting on her lap and she wanted to read to me, when suddenly I decided I wanted none of it and got down. Apparently, I had really hurt her feelings.

Whether true or not, she said she would sometimes ask others to "Go see what Nicky is doing and tell him to stop it."

We had a neighbor, whose name was Mrs. Grady, perhaps hired to help mother around the house or maybe only as a baby sitter. On one occasion when I had been playing outside and failed to return when Mother had wished, she asked why I had not come home sooner. According to her I replied, "I didn't see Mrs. Grady come to the door and call me."

Universities are progressive with regard to some things. The University of Iowa was no exception during the first 100 years of its existence. One was its creation of one of the world's first institutes for the study of so-called normal children: the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station. It was located at 9 E. Market St., and had groups for two-year-olds, three-year-olds, and four-year-olds. I was in turn a member of each group.

College friends of my parents included John and Ginny Knott. John was one of the early scientists doing research with brain waves, or encephalography. His father, or perhaps it was his grandfather, was the editor of the unabridged Webster's International Dictionary. I remember one time when John and Dad made a record of my brain waves. They seemed relieved to discover I had them.

Ginny worked at the Child Welfare Research Station. My primary memory of her there was how cold the

instruments were that they used to measure the length of our bones and width of our joints. In the wintertime we, and the researchers, would suffer the frustration of getting ourselves in and out of our snowsuits and boots when we went out to play and came back in again.

The story was also told me of one occasion when I grabbed a broom and swung it in a circle into the wading pool sending a continuous spray of water on my young colleagues.

When Karen and I were at the University of Texas and she was taking courses in education one of her textbooks displayed a picture of her husband as a very young boy at the Research Station.

I was an early admit to the University schools, not turning five until the September of my fall semester in kindergarten. Many of the students with whom Mary and I graduated in 1952 were members of that kindergarten class in 1939.

The University Elementary School was only about two blocks from the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station. For most of those years I was driven to school by my father. One of the grown-ups who sometimes road with us I later discovered to have been the well-known early social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, whose work I read as a college student at the University of Texas.

By the time I was in first grade I was walking from our Brown Street house to school. Sometimes after school I would walk to Dad's office in East Hall at the corner of Iowa Avenue and Gilbert Street. Because the University buildings were not air conditioned in those days, his ground-floor office window would be open and I could crawl in or talk to him from outside. Walking home, I would

sometimes cross the street rather than walk into a group of boys, older and larger than I, who gathered near Brown Street.

Aside from a vague memory of a moving truck, my first memory at 508 Melrose Court was standing under the locust tree in the southwest corner of the property with Katy and the neighbor children with whom I would spend the next 11 years – probably Pat and Ann Holland, maybe Jerry, maybe Willie Weber. It was sunny and warm that day, probably late spring or summer. By December America would enter into World War II.

Brown Street

The rough grain of the aged wooden handles cut into my soft little hands. The lawn mower may have been twenty years old. Maybe it was left to weather outdoors. Experience with the pain of slivers would normally have made me cautious, but not this day.

Rusty wires held the handle insecurely to the structure of metal wheels, rotating blades, and cutting edge. But the blades had been sufficiently sharpened, or oiled, that a five-year-old could experience the thrill of operating this piece of adult machinery.

My father, mother, new baby sister and I shared the house at 414 Brown Street in Iowa City with Mary and Paul Engle during the years when Paul (my parents' friends were all known to me by their first names) had just begun the Iowa Writers Workshop program. (For years thereafter I continued to refer to box elder bugs as "box Engle" bugs, believing them for some reason to have been named after my friend Paul.)

The Brown Street house is an apartment complex now, a student warren called "Gaslight Village." But in the 1930s, when we lived there, it was still a stately brick home on a hill, one of the first homes in Iowa City, now registered as a "national historic" something or other. In fact, a part of its attraction to a young boy were the stories that it had secret passageways where slaves were hidden by abolitionists in the mid-1800s. I searched the house as a boy, but found neither secret passages nor any evidence of the railroad tracks in the basement I assumed would have been necessary for this station on the "underground railroad."

There were only three or four homes on that city block, with lawns accordingly wide. Ours was perhaps one hundred feet long as well, flowing down to the all brick street, where a hitching post, a black pole with a ring, awaited any visitor who might wish to tie up his or her horse before ascending the steps. The hitching post was no mere ornament, the result of some yuppie shopper's effort to buy nostalgia. It was used by the man who brought us the ice that cooled our "ice box" (the non-electric predecessors to today's "refrigerators"– which, for years, we continued to refer to as "the ice box").

One day a neighbor from the farm behind us (Iowa City was then a much smaller urban oasis surrounded by rolling farm fields than it is today) came running through our backyard and onto the front lawn chasing a horse engaged in its own escape from slavery. (My father's father came to visit us once from Kansas, and – because I had been told he was a cowboy– I rather hoped he would arrive on horseback. He drove.)

Until my first mowing day, the front lawn was just my playground. Because I was forbidden to cross the streets, but liked being outdoors, I spent a lot of time there. It supported two large elm trees, with their deep-furrowed bark – probably there 100 years before any runaway slaves.

My father told the story of a Kansas neighbor who, when asked if he believed in baptism, replied, "Why sure, I've seen it done." Had I known of baptism, and the Druids, the elms would have provided my baptism into the Druid religion. And when, years later, the dreaded Dutch elm disease wiped them out it was as if most of my own family had been wiped out by a medieval black death.

The elms provided my source of "locust shells," carefully picked from the bark and stored in fruit jars which, at my insistence, my parents dutifully carried to our next home and stored in its garage. (We moved in 1941; 48 years later I would return from Washington to that house, where Mary and I still live.)

The Brown Street lawn also gave me a place to lie on my back and wonder whether it was the swaying branches and leaves that caused the breeze, for why else would air move? I was also curious about how high the clouds might be.

(It was Jim, a graduate student of my father's, who added to my understanding of natural phenomena an explanation for thunder. One evening I was sitting on the floor of the front porch taking in as much as a five-year-old could of Jim's academic discussion with Dad. The screened-in front porch ran the length of the house. It had a three-person swing, attached to chains suspended from hooks in the porch ceiling that caused a relaxing, rhythmic squeaking sound as he and Dad talked and kept the swing in motion. It was a stormy night. The wash-day clean smell in the air when the rain just begins to tip-toe through the dust had long since passed. Now the sound of heavy rain hitting the metal porch roof drowned out the squeaky rhythm of the swing and with it any other sensory input, whether of smell or sight on this black night. Suddenly there was a flash of lightning and the rumbling, rolling crash of thunder. I jumped. "What was that?" I asked. "That's just potatoes rolling on the roof," Jim said. "Oh, OK," I responded, and filed away this new knowledge along with my theories about wind and clouds.)

The lawn was also a place to lie on my stomach and watch the industrious ants. I still like to watch ants, and feel somewhat protective of them, as of all animal life. (Some of this may have come from my Native American teacher, Senawakowak. One day in 1974 I pointed out to him that he had a mosquito on his forehead that he might wish to swat. "They have to live, too," he told me.) In fact, I now have a small portion of my lawn I do not mow, my own little protected wildlife area, where the ants can play and prosper without the noise and physical threat of a lawn mower.

This is surprising in a way, because it was ants that provided my first bee sting. How can this be (so to speak)?

I loved my ants and wanted to do something nice for them. So, one evening before bed I sneaked into the kitchen, got a chair, climbed up into the cupboard, and carefully removed the china sugar bowl and its spoon. I had observed that ants carried little bits of things in their mouths – although sometimes far larger than themselves – like grass, insects, and pieces of dirt. Since I liked sugar, and little pieces of sugar seemed to be just about the right size for an ant's mouth, I provided my ants the nicest gift I could think of for them: three teaspoons of sugar crystals around the entryway to their home.

They had already gone to bed, so the next morning I awoke early to see if the ants appreciated my thoughtfulness. Much to my disappointment I found that the morning dew had transformed the sugar to syrup. Almost simultaneously, and to my much greater disappointment, I discovered bees, their love of syrup, and their mean-spirited willingness to sting little boys. Mother removed the stinger, applied a paste of baking soda and water to the

wound, soothed my broken heart, dried my tears, and explained that ants probably wouldn't eat sugar anyway. But I still like ants – and am cautious around stinging creatures.

There was no threat to the ants this first time I was permitted to mow the lawn. If I did not know every clump of grass I at least knew every clump that held an ant hill and protected their homes even then.

I was mowing! The metallic whir of the blades on the cutting edge, the spray of grass bits, the smell, the thrill of this initiation ceremony into adulthood – or so I thought. I can do this! Just like the grownups.

Honesty pulls from me the confession that the memory is dim. The memory is that I mowed the entire front yard. Is it likely such an accomplishment would have been mine? Perhaps it was my father who was mowing the yard, and I only pushed the mower down the hill, following which he finished the task.

Would we have had a "lawn boy"? Highly unlikely. This was the depression. Money was scarce. Hobos would stop at our back door asking for food. Mother would usually give them something, even though it often meant we would have less to eat at our next meal.

Would Mother have been mowing the yard? Probably not. She was a teacher, and a poet, and a dancer. But she was also a worker. She would get down on her hands and knees to clean the kitchen floor. She could build cabinets. She certainly could have mowed the lawn. But I have no memories of her doing so.

Dad could have mowed the lawn, too. He was a big, athletic man.

Mother told me the first time she visited his folks on their Kansas farm Dad got on a horse, threw his hat on the ground, rode a couple hundred yards away, then came galloping toward her, swung down the side of the horse, picked up his hat, put it on his head and circled back to her. (I never saw my father on a horse; but I have seen the farm, and where he rode, and the vision is clear.)

Growing up in Kansas he had been a boxer. And a pitcher. He wanted to play in the big leagues and might have made it if he had not crushed his hand in a printing press – a rather dramatic way to change careers from ball player to writer I always thought. But he rather preferred what Senator Bob Dole once said of the Vice Presidency: "indoor work with no heavy lifting."

I don't remember there being many tools around the house: a hammer, saw, pliers, screwdriver. That was about it. I found the resources a little limited when I wanted to build an entry for the Soap Box Derby. Mother must have, too. Maybe she had her own secret stash of tools.

Dad's brothers told me that on their Kansas farm Dad used to walk behind the horse-drawn plow reading the little Haldeman-Julius paperback shirt-pocket books. It didn't make for very straight rows, but it did create a desire in this lanky, stuttering farm boy to get out of that field and into the one he ultimately chose – or chose him – speech pathology.

So I don't think Dad spent a lot of time with the lawn mower, either. Maybe I did mow that enormous lawn all by myself. Maybe most of the enormity was in the eye of the child.

Or maybe Bruce did it.

Exploring our house one day, I discovered it had an attic. Moreover, it contained evidence that someone was living in a corner: a mattress on the attic floor, a couple shirts, a stack of books. How could someone be living in my house and I not know it? I don't remember having much contact with Bruce, though I do remember seeing him. After we moved in 1941 someone told us he had gone to fight World War II. Later my mother told me she learned he was killed in the Pacific. I was very sad. He had been a part of my early life, however remote, and now had contributed my first knowledge of death and the war that was dominate my elementary school years.

Maybe Bruce mowed the lawn, and it was he who let me push the mower one day.

Our new house came with a new lawn mower. It was kept in the garage, with my canning jars of locust shells. It had rubber grips over the metal handles, and hard rubber tires on the wheels. But it made a similar metallic whirring sound when you pushed it, threw the little bits of grass you could feel stick to your bare legs, and made that sweet summer smell of newly cut grass – a smell which, in high school, I came to associate with mid-August football practice.

I have a friend named Mason Williams who wrote a book about all the cars he owned. He called it his "auto-biography" – the story of his life in automobiles. This is not going to be my "lawn mower-biography," but mowing the lawn is an ongoing activity that has played a role in my life.

One high school summer I got a job as part of a mowing crew for the University of Iowa. We all had push mowers, sweated profusely, and tanned rapidly without our shirts – as skin cancer had not yet been invented. The crew

leader rewarded our efforts with gallons of root beer from the A& W Root Beer stand. There was considerable prestige associated with the job, as the seventy-five-cents-an-hour wage made it one of the best paid jobs in the county.

There came a time in my life when, as chair of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, I had to raise a considerable amount of money for the organization. Just as Willie Sutton replied to the question, "Why do you rob banks?" with the line, "Because that's where the money is," I found myself hanging out with liberal and radical millionaires because that's where our money was.

It inspired me to think about the ways in which one could live like a millionaire without having any money.

Many of my wealthy donors were vegetarians, walked and rode bicycles, and wore old clothes. All those things I was already doing.

They travelled widely – something I could not afford to pay for. But I could do it by travelling the public lecture circuit. I couldn't pick when I would go, but it was likely I would sooner or later hit most of the resort areas they favored.

Finally, they had someone else to worry about all the details of running their half-million-dollar homes. That one had me stumped. They not only had a roof over their heads, and a roofer to fix any leaks, they didn't even have to spend time talking to the roofer. A staff person did that for them.

Had I the skill to fix my own roof, I couldn't even afford a small house, not on the $5000 a year I was paying myself at the NCCB. How could I solve this problem?

And then it came to me: live in an apartment. Let the owner and the manager worry about the roof, the furnace, cleaning the swimming pool – and mowing the yard.

And so it was that I came to retire from lawn mowing for nearly 15 years.

Now, back in the house the family moved into in 1941, I am mowing lawns once again. I have a power mower, called "Lawn Boy," although I am my own lawn boy. (When Mary is asked if she has a dish washer she says, "Sure. And his name is Nick.")

Ever since I drove my uncle Chet's little Ford tractor around his Ida County farm, the first vehicle I ever drove, I always wanted a Ford tractor. Still do. But I never really wanted one of those riding mowers. They remind me of golf carts. Mark Twain said golf is "a good walk spoiled." With a cart, it's not even a spoiled walk. When I watch a 300-pound guy hanging over the seat on one of those riding mowers the vision I see is a man on a tricycle about eight sizes too small, a circus act. If you're not even strong enough to push a power mower you probably ought not be getting out of the house at all.

But my neighbor, a cultured guy who used to run the art museum, expressed quite clearly to me his distaste for the sound of the power mowers in the neighborhood.

Moreover, the pollution from them is supposed to be far worse than that from automobiles – like the difference between the tobacco-filtered smoke in the lungs of the smoker and unfiltered smoke in the lungs of the bystander. And power mowers are ecologically unsound, a kind of unnecessary use of petroleum resources.

So Mary and I went off in search of a push mower.

Today's push mowers are of similar design to the one I first operated over a half-century ago. But there the similarity ends. The sponge rubber cover on the handles of the new ones slowly shapes to your palms. The watch-like precision of the construction produces a metallic whirring sound that seems to have passed through a muffler. The mower we chose is all black, a stealth mower, with enough adjustments to satisfy the most demanding macho man.

And it cost more than both of my first two cars combined. (Lest the reader think I have gone totally profligate in my old age I should probably explain that the first car cost $25 and the second $75.)

I like mowing. In a world, and a life, of uncertainty and unfinished tasks, there's a kind of finality, a finished quality, to mowing a yard. You pick up all the sticks and other objects first and then debate whether to use a grass catcher in order to add to the compost pile, or leave the clippings to fertilize the lawn.

There are many other choices. You can mow in one direction, or in both directions. (I would never mow in circles.) You can finish a logical section, or mow across the sidewalk to the front porch, doing two lawns at once. You can be compulsive or free form.

However you do it, you can see where you've mowed. You know when you're done – at least for this week.

I have come to like memorials, reminders of those who were dear to us and are no longer. As my mother was dying of liver cancer I told her that I had planted in my garden the seeds for a giant pumpkin, one of which was beginning to form. It was called "Edna," I told her, in her honor.

"I'm not sure how much of an honor that really is," she said, eyes twinkling until the last, "except, perhaps, for the pumpkin."

Although there's a bit of debate about it, and Mary's mother denies it, Mary remembers that her late father liked to edge his sidewalks. So, I do that, too. I call it the Wayne Vasey Memorial Edging, since we have an Edna Johnson Memorial Flower Garden in the front yard (but no pumpkins). I have not yet come up with any better way to honor Wayne, and the memory of this Johnny Appleseed of schools of social work. Like my father, he, too, was a boxer, a story teller, a delightful personality – and, in fact, a friend of my father's. Though I rather suspect that he might have about as much enthusiasm for the honor of an edged sidewalk as my mother had for the pumpkin.

Whoever it was who first introduced me to the lawn mower, whatever may have been the circumstances, and the quality of my first effort, I am grateful. There's no satisfaction, no beauty, quite like that of a freshly mowed and sidewalk-trimmed yard – especially the next morning when you rise early and go out to admire it, and check on the ants, and don't get stung because you've learned not to make them gifts of sugar.

World War II

My six-foot-three father towered over me, holding the family' globe of the world.

I was seven years old on this cloudy, winter day in Iowa, with neither plans nor inspiration for a lazy Sunday afternoon. With a hearing loss that almost sent me to Iowa's School for the Deaf, I lay on the maroon carpet in my new home, head buried in the speaker on our Sears Silvertone console, with its AM and shortwave radio and automatic 78-rpm record changer and player.

It was December 7, 1941, and the announcer was talking about the Japanese war planes' attack on the Pearl Harbor Navy base on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

Dad looked down to judge my mood, and then sat on the floor beside me. Holding the globe in his lap, he placed the index finger of his left hand on Oahu, the index finger of his right hand on Iowa. It was his way of reassuring me that the war was far away, and that I was safe – though at that moment his concern probably far exceeded my own.

After all, "war," especially inside America, was far beyond my experience or even my imagination. He, by contrast, lived through the build-up to World War I (1914-1918), and would have been 12 when American soldiers entered Europe during the last few weeks of that war, prior to the Armistice, November 11, 1918.

What we would both come to share was the impact of war on young boys – he from age 8 to 12, I from age 7 to 11. (Wars, even "world wars," were much shorter then.)

War has its most devastating impact on the children who live, and die, during wars they do not want, did not start, and do not understand. Sometimes adults force them

to engage in battle. Often they lose family members and friends. Almost always they suffer life-changing emotional harm along with their physical wounds.

But the existence of wars impacts all children in a variety of ways. They may have fears and nightmares, however irrational, that they may soon be in danger – fears certainly not eased by drills in school involving ducking under desks or seeking other safe places in case of attack. They may know someone or hear talk of named individuals who are in the military.

Before moving to the family home in the Iowa City Melrose neighborhood in the summer of 1941, we lived in “the Brown Street house” – a large, mid-Nineteenth Century brick home on the National Register of Historic Places we shared with another family.

Exploring the house one day, I went to the attic for the first time to look around. Much to my surprise, there was evidence someone was living there: a thin mattress and blanket on the floor, a couple college text books, and a box of Nabisco soda crackers. My parents did not seem alarmed at my revelation of this intruder. I simply accepted, like poet Hughes Means' "Antigonish" character, that I had simply "met a man who wasn't there."

Later, during WW II, they told me only that his name was Bruce Hill, and that he had fought, and died in the Pacific Theater.

Imagine: a civilian economy supporting 132 million Americans, as the U.S. then was, that had to be turned on a dime into a war economy. Taxi drivers were drafted and trained to be soldiers driving jeeps, auto workers stopped making trucks and started making tanks, “Rosie the Riveter” symbolized the 19 million women who went to

work in munitions factories and the shipyards (where they built 6,000 cargo ships, the survivors of which were in the "reserve fleets" that became my responsibility 20 years later.)

Everyone, including us kids, were involved in "the war effort."

Rather than fund the costs of war with a credit card and increasing debt, much of the money was raised in advance with a "Victory Tax" and the sale of "war bonds." Children came to school with coins and their little paper, war savings bonds albums, filled with stamps representing each 10-cent purchase. When we'd licked enough stamps to total $18.75 we could purchase a war bond worth $25 years later.

Everything useful to the military was rationed, such as food, gasoline, and rubber tires. The necessary "ration coupons" were as valuable as money in acquiring a family's share of limited resources. But even ration coupons were not enough to buy bubblegum – one of the many sacrifices we were willing, if not happy, to make for the war effort.

To save gasoline, we walked and biked more, rather than being driven around. And we dug, planted, and maintained "Victory Gardens" (in the shape of the letter "V") to help provide food for our families. We gathered the apples that Dad turned into cider, and Mother made into applesauce – among the many foods she canned in Mason jars for the winter. I took care of the chickens that provided our eggs.

Recycling was not just a nice idea, it was an added source of material for war. Bacon fat was saved in old tin cans that we took to the redemption center to be used in

making bombs. Those of us who were Cub Scouts rode on the trucks picking up newspapers for recycling. Tinfoil collection was assigned to the young, first separating it from the wrapping on chewing gum and cigarette packs.

There was undeveloped land around the Melrose Neighborhood in those days – including across the street from our house. Greenwood Drive (connecting Melrose Court with Benton Street) was then a dirt road (as it had been for the previous 100 years). After it crossed the Rock Island Railroad tracks there was nothing but farmland and Melrose Lake, suitable for ice skating in the winter when we could remember how to get to it.

Most important, north of some of the homes a block east of where Melrose Court joined Myrtle Avenue was a densely forested ravine. Why was that important? Because it was common during WW II for children across America to switch from playing “cowboys and Indians” to “playing war.” We would choose sides, use a broken tree limb or broomstick handle for our rifle, and go after the “enemy” in maneuvers more resembling the Revolutionary War than WW II.

Thankfully, not only did the children of the Melrose Neighborhood not experience the true horror of actual battle, we did not even need to play war. The War came to us.

Actually what came to us was not really the War. It was a manifestation of the United States’ preparations for that War. Established two blocks from our homes was one of the five U.S. Navy Pre-Flight Training Schools.

These schools, set up on university campuses, were one stage of the Navy’s rigorous program for turning civilians into fighter pilots. The training combined physical

fitness with book learning and other skills. It also included the welcoming of curious young boys and girls.

An “obstacle course” was created that, of course, we loved to run in the early evenings when it was not being used by Naval cadets. There was a wall and a cargo net to be climbed, a rope that could carry you over a water pit (unless you didn’t hang on), things to jump over, and crawl under – a young boy’s delight.

A comic book depicting a soldier using vines around his feet to help him climb a Pacific island palm tree inspired me to try to climb the telephone pole on our property using clothesline instead of vines. While I made it almost to the top, I knew enough not to hang onto power lines for support. (Clothesline, our equivalent of today’s duct tape, was a near-universal solution to the day’s challenges. I also used it to wrap around my rear bicycle tire in winter as what proved to be an ineffective bicycle version of car chains.)

I never followed along on the 20-mile hikes, but Jerry Holland did. He was the older brother of Patty, who was near my age, and Annie, who was my sister Kate’s age. As it happened, John Glenn (the astronaut and senator) was one of the cadets who Jerry came to know – and who subsequently played a role in Jerry’s acceptance into Annapolis. Ultimately, Jerry retired from the Navy with the rank of admiral.

My first introduction to Morse Code (which took the form of an amateur radio operator’s license 30 years later) came in the training sessions for cadets in the attic of the University’s Engineering Building.

The University’s “Field House” (combination swimming pool, basketball court, ROTC Armory, and

auditorium for graduations), was just across the street from our neighborhood. Hanging from its hallway ceiling were unmarked, small, coal black models of Japanese and American fighter planes for cadets to practice accurate identification.

Immediately south of the Field House on the west end of the asphalt tennis courts (sometimes used as a parking lot) was a full-scale wooden model of a ship's deck and bridge. When cadets said they were ill, they were required to stand there with semaphore flags, communicating with an instructor standing on "the ship." My recollection is that my interest in this form of communication resulted in my being presented with a pair of those flags and an invitation to participate in that training.

Across the street to the east from the semaphore training was a building that housed the program's director, Captain Hanrahan. He kept a map of Europe on his wall, where a constantly updated string indicated the front line's movement east. He said we were welcome to visit him to check up on the progress of the War.

During the last year of World War I, U.S. Senator Hiram W. Johnson (R-Calif.) is purported to have observed, "The first casualty when war comes is truth." What we today call "fake news" or "alternative facts," during wartime is referred to as "propaganda." Indeed, after WW II the subject matter called "general semantics" was propelled by awareness of propaganda's powerful potential for evil when wielded in the past by Hitler or in the future by other authoritarian leaders.

One of the major purposes of wartime propaganda is the building of popular support for the war by vilifying what a nation's leaders characterize as its enemies. The

process was captured in a Richard Rogers' song from the musical, South Pacific, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught," with the lines, "You've got to be taught before it's too late/Before you are six or seven or eight/To hate all the people your relatives hate/You've got to be carefully taught!").

Sadly, though perhaps necessary in wartime, the U.S. had its own propaganda program. Those creating motion pictures, radio programs, songs, comic books, and news stories were encouraged to, and did, support the war effort. They endeavored to keep up Americans' spirits with the good news, and make sure we were "carefully taught" to hate the Germans and Japanese.

I recall a poster on a building in downtown Iowa City, with an unflattering depiction of a Japanese soldier viciously attacking one of ours.

By 1945 the War was over. So now what? The rebuilding began. The U.S. Marshall Plan provided over $130 billion (in inflation-adjusted dollars) to help rebuild the economies of countries that suffered severe destruction from the War.

But recovery from a war requires a good bit of human recovery as well. Many of those military men and women who lived to return brought back physical and emotional wounds with them – sometimes to last the rest of their lives. Reuniting families did not always go smoothly.

The GI Bill provided veterans low-cost mortgages, other loans, and was best known for the program providing free tuition and living expenses for college and other education. The University of Iowa campus that had played a role in training men and women for battle during the War

began training them for the roles they would play in one of the nation's greatest periods of economic expansion.

But what of the children who had been taught to hate?

What were children to do with their hatred of Germans and Japanese? My own grandfather had immigrated to this country from Germany. Many of my Iowa friends and neighbors had German heritage – after all, Germans were the second largest immigrant group throughout Iowa's 99 counties.

I made a visit to my grandfather Mox's home, Burg auf Fehmarn, on the German island of Fehmarn. Because his father had made rope line for ships, and his grandfather was a ship captain who had died in a storm off the coast of Fehmarn, the island was also of interest to me as a former Maritime Administrator. Moreover, the second oldest church on the island, St. Nikolai Kirche (built about 1230), was named for St. Nicholas (no relation), the patron saint of sea travelers. Of perhaps greater interest to music fans, Fehmarn was the location of Jimi Hendrix's last concert, the Open Air Love & Peace Festival, September 6, 1970.

In George Orwell's book, 1984, he describes how state propaganda was used to explain to the citizens why countries once thought to be friendly had somehow become enemies, and how countries once enemies were now allies. So it was for Americans after WW II.

The Germany that my Aunt Jo Raybourn affectionately referred to as "the old country," had become our nation's enemy during WW II, only to become one of our strongest economic and NATO allies after that war. This was dramatized for me during a visit to Germany during my bachelor years to see a woman I had come to

know when she was studying in Washington as a Fulbright Scholar.

One of the many things we had in common was our German heritage.

On a trip to Berlin (where we passed through the Berlin Wall under the watchful eyes of East German military) we paused to view a burial site that held some 10,000 Russian soldiers.

Those soldiers had been America's allies when they were killed – but we were now engaged in a "cold war" with the Soviet Union, so on the day of our visit Russian soldiers would be our enemy. I was standing there with a woman whose father had been part of the Nazi military (very much our enemy), until captured and held by the Russians. The Germans – then our enemy and now our partners – were the ones who killed those 10,000 Russians – then our allies, now our enemy.

My head was spinning. What was I thinking? What should I have been thinking? I couldn't make sense of it. What I did know was that I felt no less affection for my companion, and that perhaps, just perhaps, the whole experience had helped to put behind me what I had been "carefully taught to hate" about Germans.

Japan offered the same challenge. How could I rid myself of the hatred I'd been taught? Our family had no ties to Japan; no family members, not even photos from a visit. The first and only Japanese person I knew as a child was Dad's general semantics friend and colleague Don Hayakawa – whom I probably never met until after the War.

My first two presidential appointments (Maritime Administrator and FCC commissioner) required travel to Japan, and I seized the opportunity to cleanse my soul of

any remnants of anti-Japanese propaganda. I learned a few Japanese phrases, insisted the Embassy put me up in ryokans (traditional Japanese inns) rather than high-rise Hilton hotels and the like, ate Japanese food, and arranged to meet with Japanese young people – as well as the public officials and business representatives. Ultimately, I felt myself fully cleansed, and Mary and I now have permanent good friends in Japan.

I had finally put WW II behind me. Of course, I have yet to go through this process in the 15 or more additional countries in which we have fought wars in the years since WW II, a subject addressed in the Appendix to this chapter which follows.

Appendix

So far as I know, neither side of my family has a strong military tradition. The oral history suggests my grandfather on Dad's side came from Sweden because of the poor economy at the time. My mother's father came from Germany, perhaps in part to avoid conscription. Dad was too young to fight in WWI and old enough to avoid WW II. My sons were too young for Viet Nam and did not later choose to volunteer for military careers.

As Maritime Administrator (1964-1966) I had some responsibility for sealift to Viet Nam, working with the Pentagon and visiting the agency's MARAD office in Saigon. My "rank" was considered the equivalent of an admiral, and in prior years had carried the additional title of Director, War Shipping Authority. However, while my MARAD service provided valuable experience with the military, it was not "military service."

Wars were shorter then. American soldiers were fighting in WW I for less than a year. WW II in Europe is said to have begun with Hitler's invasion of Poland in September of 1939. The U.S. provided support, but American troops didn't land in Europe ("D-Day") until June 6, 1944 and declared victory May 8, 1945 ("V-E Day") – just under one year.

WW II in the Pacific Theater began December 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor (along with attacks on Thailand, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong the same day) and ended with the Japanese surrender on August 14, 1945 – a little over three and one-half years.

Of course, the war involved many other countries and theaters of war, in Africa and elsewhere. There was a reason it was called a world war.

That's not to say these relatively short wars were easy. Altogether, over one million American military were killed or wounded during WW II – a number that needs to be multiplied by all who experienced hardship during their absence, and grief upon their failure to return whole, if at all.

But we must apparently now deal with the impact of perpetual war. Following the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001, the U.S. began our never-ending military action in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. In 2017 President Trump was sending still more troops. You do the math.

We spend more on our military than the next ten nations combined to, among other things, maintain a military presence in roughly 150 countries.

In addition to the wars in Afghanistan, Korea and Viet Nam, we have also conducted military operations since

WW II in Bosnia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Gulf War (1991), Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, Panama, Somalia and Syria, among others.

Couple that with the Defense Department's overwhelming share of the federal budget, and the potential availability of the National Guard for domestic disturbances and disasters, and it is difficult to deny that America contains many of the elements of an actual and potential military state.

Experimental Schools[1]

The University of Iowa, and its experimental schools from which I graduated in 1952, have influenced nearly the whole of my life in one way or another.

My mother and father were graduates of the University. My father, Wendell Johnson, spent his entire professional life there. After his death in 1965, my mother continued living in the family home in Iowa City until her death in 1989. My sister, Kate, is also a U High graduate (1956). I returned to Iowa City in 1981 and taught in its College of Law until retiring in 2014.

I was literally born on the University of Iowa campus, in the University Hospital. By the age of two I was enrolled in the University's pre-school, the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station. Next to my parents there has probably been no greater influence on my life than University Elementary and High School.

During our graduation from U High we embodied our energy in a musical extravaganza we presented as a farewell. Classmate Joe Howe was the principal author and producer of this production. He went on to become a lawyer, law professor, and judge before retiring. Another classmate, Dick DeGowin, who earned his M.D. degree and a position on the UI's College of Medicine faculty, found a copy of that script for a show we called "Real George."

[1] This material was selected and modified from a verbatim transcript of the author's extemporaneous remarks on the occasion of the last commencement of a graduating class from the University High School, Iowa City, Iowa, June 1, 1972.

It was hard to keep up with my classmates. Many were with me from pre-school until we graduated from U High. One fellow, whose name was Howard Berg, was so smart, he used to play with toys in elementary school that I would later read in Scientific American hadn't even been invented until ten years later. He was reputed to have received the highest score in the state of Iowa on a test that won him a Pepsi Cola Scholarship.

And it was in that spirit that this show was put together. It looked at the future. And as I reread that script I discovered that we had predicted in 1952 the following:

travel to the moon,
rampant inflation,
a renewed interest in clairvoyance and astrology,
electronic music,
parodies of TV commercials,
teaching machines,

and even resistance by the United States Senate to a growing investment in militarism – including an investigation of a new weapons system, very much like the ABM, that had cost the American people twenty-eight billion dollars.

But perhaps of greatest relevance to that 1952 graduation is our prediction in twenty years there would be a very important gathering of U High alumni; and that on that occasion someone would be coming back to Iowa City from Washington. (No one predicted, or even imagined, least of all me, that I would be that person.)

The investment that the University of Iowa made in its experimental schools was not much – certainly not in terms of programs in Washington. The 57-year total outlay was about $6 million.

Nor did the school require much land or many buildings. First housed in a small building on the Pentacrest, in the 1920s the school occupied what is now called North Hall. The schools never had an auditorium. The last commencement before it closed had to be held in the University's MacBride Hall.

Dr. Ernest Horn, who came to Iowa City from Columbia University's Teachers' College, established the schools in 1916.

Many administrators and teachers supported the idea in the years since, so this essay is limited to those during my time there.

Dr. Virgil Hancher was then the president of the University. His daughter, Mary Sue, was a member of our class.

Dr. Peterson was Dean of the College of Education.

Dr. Vernon Van Dyke's term as director almost exactly paralleled my own from 1941 to 1952.

Dr. Herbert Spitzer was a grade school principal who appeared to me at the time as at least eleven feet tall.

The high school principals we seemed to drive through the school with a little greater regularity than elementary school were Drs. Murray Martin, Myron Olson, John McAdam and Dwight Davis. They shared the idea of U High and were responsible for it in ways none of us really knew, understood or appreciated as fully as the faculty with whom we spent our time.

Grade school teachers are like surrogate mothers who deserve a special place in our educational hall of fame. They either get us off to a good start or mess up our education forever. We should be forever grateful for their love and skill, that made it possible for us to enjoy school.

Many of the high school teachers who helped me were there a relatively short time. Some who were around longer had a positive and lasting effect on whole families: giants like Drs. Louis Alley, M. F. Carpenter, John Haefner, Camile Le Bois, Vernon Price, and many more.

During one period of about twenty years there were some two hundred Ph.D.'s who spent time on the staff at U High. I have no idea how many student teachers have passed through the school. But about the time our class graduated we had interacted with about as many student teachers as we had students.

The only way to think in terms of the impact of an institution like this is in terms of the people whose lives it has affected, and the ripples it produces throughout the rest of society. There are hundreds of former U High staff, students, and student teachers, who are today university presidents and deans of schools of education, professors and teachers, and officials of educational institutions and associations.

The effect of U High has been felt not only through people, but also in terms of the teaching materials and new teaching methods and texts that have been evolved here.

Indeed, I think it's somewhat ironic that U High really began at the behest of the President of the University, Walter Jessup, because of the difficulty he was running into with educational experiments in the public schools. They wouldn't let him do it the way he wanted.

His reaction was very much like that of Howard Hughes. Billionaire Hughes was staying in a Las Vegas hotel where he didn’t like the service. His response? He bought the hotel. That's kind of what President Jessup did, as Emil Trot recalls it, who was one of U High's first

students. He said, "If that's the way you fellows are going to be, all right, I'll just start my own school." And he did.

Because what President Jessup realized – as everyone who has dealt with bureaucratic institutions knows – whether the military, school systems, corporations, government agencies, or a television network – is that it's not really a place where genuine creativity and intellectual activity can take place.

Some people hired to execute a mission they don't control may be superb at what they do. But they don't have the time, talent or temperament to think about and challenge the basic assumptions of their institution. For that, a separate group of individuals must be created. For our public schools those individuals are the ones who do research in experimental schools.

The University of Iowa pioneered in the field of academic testing – using those of us in the experimental schools as the guinea pigs to evaluate and improve those tests. The Iowa Tests of Educational Development were used throughout the state of Iowa and elsewhere. Iowa City is now headquarters for commercial testing service companies.

Speed reading enjoyed a boom nationally in the late 1950's and early 60's. It was first tried out on us by Dr. Jim Stroud in the 1940's. It's unlikely such a radical experiment would be approved by any school board in the nation at that time.

Nor were Iowa's parents easily persuaded, Jim found out, as he travelled the state trying to sell the program elsewhere. They complained students wouldn't understand the material they read.

In his best tweed sport coat with elbow patches, Mark Twain moustache and Missouri drawl, he'd take a puff on his pipe and explain, "If it now takes your child two hours to make it through the evening's homework reading assignment, and he or she doesn't understand it, and I can teach them how to read it in one hour, and they still don't understand it, I figure I've done them a favor."

It was the staff of U High that developed comprehensive curriculum guides in the late 1930's and 1940's that could not be developed within the Iowa public school system, guides still valued by teachers in and out of the state years later.

The concept of interdisciplinary team teaching was evolving in the 1920's and 1930's at U High – some twenty years before it became widespread throughout the nation.

The work of Dr. Ralph Ojeman in giving junior high school students an awareness of basic psychology was carried out at U High in the 1940's.

The list goes on and on and on:

foreign language teaching in grade school,

techniques in music instruction,

research in physical education,

new curricula for teaching the sciences,

Ernest Horn's innovation in teaching spelling to grade school pupils,

Dr. Carpenter's approach to teaching high school English, and Dr. Price's geometry students writing their own textbook.

There's more, but that should make the point.

The accepted methods of teaching today all had to begin at some time and in some place. As often as not when you track it back the place was U High and the time

was about twenty years before public schools decided the ideas were safe enough to try.

The trouble with U High was that it was all done naturally and relatively quietly. U High has never had an Office of Public Information, it never hired a public relations firm, no principal ever called a press conference.

As often happens, what the permanent staff of U High had – their concern, commitment, excitement and adventure about life and education – was passed on to us, the student teachers and junior staff.

Kozol describes in his book *Death at an Early Age* how some public schools almost sadistically drive any creativity and curiosity and sense of individual worth and development out of their wards.

My wife, Karen, who attended the University Schools with me for nine years, has told me similar stories over the years about things she has witnessed in public schools where she taught in Virginia, California, Texas, and the District of Columbia.

My own experience is limited to that of a parent; but I must say it has often left me in a state of despair about the quality of education offered my own children by public schools that often brag of their national superiority.

As I know from my term as a school board member there are many public-school teachers who are committed, competent and concerned – many more than are ever recognized, thanked or adequately compensated.

But many to most feel the oppression of a bureaucratic system. The best merely do what they are told to do, rather than feeling a part of an exciting adventure at the frontiers of educational innovation. Whatever the public schools may be, they are not that.

All teachers – at some point in their career, and for however short a time – ought to have the opportunity to be exposed to such a faculty and student body.

Somewhere, in the seventy-billion-dollar[2], barnacle-encrusted, bureaucratic industry that goes by the name of "Education," somewhere in amongst the concrete buildings and the computers and the layers of administrators, somebody better be watching to make sure that the torch of learning has not gone out entirely.

If that is not to be the University of Iowa, so be it. We certainly have lots of company. Lab schools are closed all over the land. It's now a politically acceptable way to “save money” and “cut taxes.”

But as anybody knows who has tried to keep a camp fire going all night without a match, you can start it up again by blowing on one red hot coal, but once you are left with nothing but ashes you're just going to be blowing dirt into your face and the darkness.

Lab schools, experimental research schools, may not be able to single-handedly reform public education, but they sure could help.

# # #

The commencement address excerpts, above, are at least in part descriptive of life inside an experimental school during the 1940s. Much of the rest of it, though not the stuff of a conventional memoir, is revealing of my life and thinking while serving on the FCC – thinking ultimately

[2] In 2018 $600-plus billion. National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Facts, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=66.

taking the form of the book, *Test Pattern for Living*. Those excerpts follow:

This afternoon Tommy Smothers called me and tracked me down at Mother's house. He was about to leave for France to watch and film his brother, Dicky, in the auto races at Le Mans, and he wanted to know what I was doing. I said I was writing a commencement address for my high school. And he said, "Well, you know, I really think you owe them the opportunity, the option, to back out. " And I said, "Why, Tommy, why is that?"

And he then reminded me of my record, in terms of association with public performances. He went through it all.

The time he carne to Washington to talk to me, and then went back to Hollywood and found out his show had been canceled.

And then the last time I went on Dick Cavett's show, and the rumor's now going around that it's going to be canceled.

The last time I was on the Merv Griffin show, a couple weeks later CBS canceled his contract and put him into syndication.

And Tommy reminded me it was about that point I got out of the television business entirely and went into the theater, the Broadway theater.

I became the technical advisor to a Broadway play called "The Selling of the President." It's a delightful musical, I thought, a version of Joe McGinniss' famous book. And it's about the impact of television commercials on politics. Well, I say it was a Broadway play, but while it did open on Broadway, but the next morning it closed.

I'm pleased and flattered to be invited back here to do my act. But you can understand why I'd be a little concerned that I may wake up tomorrow morning to read in the paper that somebody's closed the school.

# # #

The fundamental problem, of course, as you will soon discover, is that there is a basic conflict between the values of genuine education that you have been provided at University High School and the values of the corporate state into which you are now – or in a few years – going to move.

School is where you learn about freedom and democratic or popular control. It's the last time you'll hear it mentioned, let alone practiced.

Learning gives you a sense of your unique, individual worth. But your value to the economy – as a consumer and employee – is not as an individual, but as a predictable piece in a mass merchandised economy (as a consumer), and as a reliable machine in an industrial state (as an employee).

As your education progresses, you are given more and more choice and control over selecting your own activities and goals. This is called maturity. Once you graduate, however, you are expected merely to execute predefined goals under the close direction of others. You have virtually no control or choice over what you produce, how you produce it, or what it's used for.

Teachers encourage you to challenge assumptions, to ask basic questions. Employers, you will find, fire you when you do. Paul Goodman has described your dilemma

under the descriptive title, *Growing Up Absurd*. If you haven't read it, you might enjoy it.

Two alternatives are basically available, neither of which do I find very acceptable.

One is to simply drop out. John Prine has a delightful little song in which he puts that bit of advice with the line, "Blow up your TV" – which always delighted me for a starter – “Blow up your TV/Throw away your paper/ Move to the country/ And build you a home." Well, that's not necessarily bad advice, but neither is it going to solve the problem because for most of us it's not very practical.

Another solution is to try to modify the educational system. As Kozol and my wife will tell you, that now appears to be the most widely accepted solution.

If we could only train young people in school to really like Barbie dolls, motel decor, neon signs along suburban highway shopping centers, television programs, Detroit cars, hair spray, and Coca Cola, then they won't be so frustrated when they get out.

I saw a film the other day about how they do it in South Africa, the way in which they sustain apartheid. Essential to the life and economy of that nation is the enforced ignorance of its blacks. They are simply not permitted to see the swimming pools, tennis courts and schools their labor, and misery, support.

No, I don't think the answer lies in seeing to it that no one in our society – students or student teachers – ever experience what a subculture of truly dedicated free minds and educational researchers might look like. I don't think keeping people from that vision is going to solve the problem.

I think they should be given that spark, that vision, that dream, against which to measure their daily lives. John Gardner, whose two books, *Excellenc*e and *Self Renewal*, may very well be among the most important of the Twentieth Century, has said that a nation that does not value excellence in its plumbers as well as its philosophers will find that neither its pipes nor its theories hold water.

No, I believe it is work that must change, not quality education.

The work place is today, as it was at the time when Louis Brandeis described it, the place where we have the greatest abridgment of citizens' rights.

Workers and consumers, you and I, simply must be permitted to exercise greater control over the products as well as the means of production. And gradually, in some places in this country and others, that principle is being extended. Because a democracy simply cannot survive when it forces mature people to spend their lives dying in their jobs. We cannot give people the right to grow, and question, exercise discretion, and control their activities for only the twelve years of their lives that they are in school – and that only if they are lucky.

A citizen cannot be repressed and treated as a machine subject to authoritarian control eight hours a day all year long and then suddenly perform as a mature person of judgment for eight minutes every four years when he or she enters the polling booth.

Well, that's the challenge that confronts you: how to put the U High idea into practice, to live your life in ways that argue more eloquently than words or buildings that those who preceded you as staff and as students were right to have invested in U High what they have.

Good Fortune and Serendipity

I would not be here
If I hadn't been there
I wouldn't been there
if I hadn't just turned
on Wednesday the third
in the late afternoon
got to talking with George
who works out in the back
. . .
John Hartford, "I Would Not Be Here"[3]

Among other things, John Hartford's poem, and song, "I Would Not Be Here" – from which this excerpt is only the first eight of 69 lines -- goes on at great length listing events that propelled someone from one coincidence to the next.

It's a useful introduction to this essay. Most essays in this collection focus on a time, place, family relationship, job, or interest. This essay, by contrast, explains a theme: most of what has come my way came as the result of the kindness and assistance of others, serendipity, and just dumb luck.

President Lyndon Johnson used to say, "They call me Lucky Lyndon, but I've always found the harder I work the luckier I get." I don't disagree with that sentiment. In some measure, one does make one's own "luck."

---

[3] One of many sources from Google: http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=35318.

But those who point to their business, land holdings, or professional accomplishments and say, “I built that,” are immodestly and inaccurately missing something.[4]

I, too, have found that “the harder I work the luckier I get.” But I’m realistic enough to know that what has come my way the last 80-plus years has been as much or more the result of coincidence and luck as anything I did.

It was Kansas Senator Bob Dole who described the vice presidency as, “Indoor work with no heavy lifting.” Similarly, whatever work I’ve done has not been “hard work” – in the sense that running a family farm in the 1930s was “hard work.” Most of my undertakings, like the vice presidency, have been “indoor work with no heavy lifting.”

For these reasons (luck and ease of task), whatever others may see as my “accomplishments” are the result of many more factors than ability and hard work.

Looking back, it may well be that a more balanced life – more time with family and friends, developing musical ability with an instrument, an occasional game of bridge or poker, the New York Times crossword puzzle, and at least modest proficiency with, say, tennis or golf – might have been a better choice. Not only might it have been more pleasant for me and those around me, but it might well have constituted a greater contribution to the world than

[4] A drawing from 1964 illustrates for me the audacity and arrogance of many a “self-made man.” Senator Barry Goldwater was the Republican’s presidential candidate that year, and the subject of the “Barry Goldwater Coloring Book.” One of the illustrations depicted him looking down at three street urchins, sitting on the curb, as he berates them, “Why don’t you have the initiative to go out and inherit a chain of department stores like I did?” One-time Republican presidential primary candidate Herman Cain expressed a similar idea as a negative: “If you’re not rich it’s your own fault.” Some seem to suggest a similar cause-and-effect relationship between “hard work” and an outstanding academic record, or professional reputation.

the 1000 boxes of my papers that sit in the University of Iowa Library archives or in thousands of files on the Internet.

But I digress.

The point is that while one's accomplishments, professional reputation, or wealth, are in part a result of personal effort, most of the credit rests elsewhere. One's wellbeing mostly comes from parents, governmental programs, fortunate blessings brought by others – or the serendipity of being in the right place at the right time.

What follows is a long list of examples; my story of a life filled with good fortune and serendipity.

Not only was I born in North America, rather than Afghanistan or Bangladesh, but in a college town. As a result, I was not among those 10 million children under the age of five who die each year from the preventable diseases that come from polluted water, lack of toilets, and often malnutrition.

That town was not in, say, Mississippi, but in Iowa, which at that time had one of the best educational systems (and results) in the country. Moreover, my parents were both college graduates -- a rarity at that time, especially for a couple of farm kids.[5]

More than that, Dad was a college professor, Mother a teacher.

We lived in Iowa City, Iowa, home to one of the nation's top research universities and hospitals – no small

[5] "In 1940, more than half of the U.S. population had completed no more than an eighth grade education. Only 6 percent of males and 4 percent of females had completed 4 years of college." National Center for Education Statistics, "National Assessment of Adult Literacy" (undated), "Educational Attainment," http://nces.ed.gov/naal/lit_history.asp#attainment, last visited June 27, 2017.

benefit. As an example, when feeling ill during a Christmas visit to Iowa City during my college years, Dad diagnosed my condition as appendicitis, call a surgeon friend, Dr. Tidrick, who was willing to come to that hospital (three blocks from our house) in the middle of the night, and perform the appendectomy. Moreover, in those days "professional courtesy" meant there was no medical bill for such service, though an occasional gift of modest value might be accepted – both practices long since abandoned.

I was a planned, wanted, and loved child. My mother read and followed the advice in the then-current best books on pregnancy and pre-natal care. (She once told me she and a woman friend who was also pregnant had a contest during their pregnancies to see who could eat the most servings of vegetables each day. Whoever got to nine usually won.)

Until my sister, Kate, was born, four years later, I was an only child. I was free to explore, to be curious and have my questions answered[6] – though kept from running wild. Thankfully, my parents had more sophisticated child rearing and behavior modification techniques than physical punishment. I do not remember being spanked, or otherwise hit. But there were plenty of alternative punishments and rewards. And there were rules regarding nap time, playing with only one toy at a time, and putting them all back in the box before going to bed at night. And of course, Mother and Dad read to me at bedtime from books like The Story About Ping, The Little Engine That Could, and Winnie the Pooh.

---

[6] Dad later described young children's unrelenting stream of questions as "Four Hundred Little Tugs Each Day," the heading for Chapter Two in his book, Your Most Enchanted Listener (1956).

It was a blessing to have been born healthy and large enough to grow into a six-foot-four-inch frame of 200-plus pounds. Why? Two consequences. (1) Irrationally, we tend to foist leadership disproportionately on tall people – for reasons unrelated to their ability, wisdom or compassion. (2) To the best of my memory, I have never been physically attacked or felt a need (and certainly not a desire) to get into a fight.

On the other hand, it did have a restricting impact on mother's religious beliefs. In my later years, she confessed that the idea of my being "born again" never appealed to her very much, given her memories of my having been born the first time. She once told me that giving birth to a 10 or 12-pound baby was like pulling your upper lip up over your head to the back of your neck.

My first four years (1934-1938) were in the middle of the Great Depression that followed the stock market collapse in October 1929 and lasted through the 1930s. My parents did not own a home, a farm, or any investments. So, we were not only not "rich," we were probably poor. It would be many years before Dad would earn as much as $5000 a year from the University, and Mother, like most married women at that time, had more than enough physical work to do around the home (plus looking after me, and her grandmother, then living with us) to preclude earning additional income.

My blessings were many, but wealth was never among them.

There can be benefits of growing up with few financial resources. My parents shared an adage with which they'd grown up: "Use it up, wear it out, make it do,

or do without." That alone has been worth thousands of dollars in savings to me over my eighty-plus years.

A life insurance agent who was a friend of Dad's gave me a little booklet with a story about a wealthy Middle Eastern man who always saved and invested 10 percent of whatever he earned. It included some simplistic lessons about the power of compound interest. I took it to heart, always spending less than what I earned, and investing regularly.[7]

"Deferred gratification" was not just a good idea, it was the only reality we knew. My first bicycle could be purchased only after I had saved enough money from my paper route money, not before. There were no plastic credit cards, and we couldn't buy things with borrowed money.

The only exception? Just before my seventh birthday Dad bought our family's first and only home. The down payment probably came from what he inherited from his father's and mother's wills. The mortgage was gradually paid off over the years. The purchase price for the house and back lot on Melrose Court was $7000.

When older, the lessons from books like Vance Packard's *Hidden Persuaders* and Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* were totally consistent with my preexisting beliefs, beliefs that would ultimately find their way into my own book, *Test Pattern for Living*.

[7] It was probably a modification of "The Richest Man in Babylon" in George S. Clason, The Richest Man in Babylon (1926), pp. 11-16; *e.g.*, "A part of all you earn is yours to keep. It should be not less than a tenth no matter how little you earn. It can be as much more as you can afford. Pay yourself first. Do not buy from the clothes-maker and the sandal-maker more than you can pay out of the rest and still have enough for food and charity and penance to the gods." p. 13. http://www.ccsales.com/the_richest_man_in_babylon.pdf

In terms of physical “stuff” there is little difference between living on 90 percent or 110 percent of one’s income. But there can be enormous differences in sorrow, stress, happiness and finances.

The beloved, late Texas columnist, Molly Ivins, a friend of Mary’s and mine, once described those Texans who believe “more is better, and too much is not enough.”

Knowing what is “enough,” forming one’s own non-materialistic goals and values, has the added benefit of increased freedom of choice. It is no longer essential to suffer the stress of the job that pays the money needed to live in an apartment or house that’s bigger than you need. “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

If memory is accurate, never have I chosen a job because it offered a “raise” over a job that offered association with a valued mentor, learning experiences, or an opportunity to improve others’ lives.

I owe my parents for the foundation upon which those choices, beliefs and benefits rest.

There was stability in my boyhood life.

As far as I knew, my parents were happily married. At a minimum, there were never physical or verbal fights, and there was never even talk, let alone a child’s fear, that parents might divorce.

There are no recollections of the rental house on Court Street that was probably my first home. There are two photographs: one in a snowsuit, and one sitting in a highchair – face covered with cake and frosting – possibly a birthday. Maybe the latter was the inspiration for Mother’s lines, “Little Nicky, fat and tricky/Got his face and hands all sticky.”

The only memories of a move are the one from Brown Street to Melrose Court.

As for most children, the number of people in my life were limited – primarily my parents and younger sister. Mother had an older (Aunt Jo) and younger (Aunt Doris) sister, but neither lived locally. The sisters' mother died long before my birth; their grandmother lived with us on Brown Street. Their father, Mox Bockwoldt, and Aunt Doris and husband Chet Challman, farmed in Ida County in northwest Iowa (Ida Grove and Galva). Doris and Chet had two children close to Kate and my ages: Chet, Jr. ("Skeeter") and Jo Anna. I loved spending time on their farm.

There were friends of my parents, who were therefore friends of mine: Ginny and John Knott, Hattie and Orv Irwin, Thelma and Don Lewis, Gail and Jim Curtis, Mary and Russ Meyers – and those from out of town who would occasionally stop by, such as S.I. "Don" Hayakawa and the musician Artie Shaw – along with former students of Dad's, and others.

I spoke with these adults and may even have been encouraged to do so. They seemed to expect me to call them by their first names. It was certainly not a "children should be seen and not heard" household, though I also enjoyed sitting and listening to the serious, often academic, conversations of "grownups."

That stability, network of family and friends, and the respect of adults, were among the benefits bestowed upon me, rather than earned.

I was blessed to be a part of the Iowa Child Welfare Research station where Ginny worked. It was a preschool, but much more; among the first in the world to study so-

called normal children. Some in the two-year-old, three-year-old and four-year-old groups remained as classmates through elementary and high school.

By age five we were attending the University of Iowa's experimental schools, University Elementary and High School (a building now called "North Hall." They offered small class size, stimulating classmates (about half were also children of University of Iowa professors), and a high level of skill and attention provided by our teachers (all of whom were, by definition, university professors). These educational experiences were gifts that made an enormous difference in how well I could do academically as an undergraduate and law student at the University of Texas, and throughout my life.

The timing of my birth, is another serendipitous blessing – about the best collection of years one could possibly choose to be alive. For one thing, in 1930 the Planet was only plundered by two billion people. Today it's over seven billion, headed toward nine billion. The U.S. population was 123 million; now it's 326 million. Iowa City was 15,000; now 75,000. (Johnson County is now 131,000.)

It is inevitable that the, say, 200 high school students at U-High would each receive more attention than the 2000 or more in many of today's high schools. Each of us not only had the opportunity, it was almost a necessity, that we "play all the parts" – participate in football, basketball and track; band and theater; newspaper and yearbook; student council and numerous clubs. Fewer people means less need for impersonal rigid rules and bureaucracy, more compassion, less cold-hearted "competition," more opportunity.

As children, we were free to explore the neighborhoods and downtown, the university buildings and tunnels beneath them, the undeveloped wild areas and the parks. The road connecting Melrose Court across the tracks and up to Benton Street was then a dirt road. Across the tracks, south, and then to the west, was farmland.

Another aspect of being born in the 1930s was that when we visited Doris and Chet, their life on a mixed agricultural farm was not that different from what it would have been in the 1830s.

Horses provided the motive power, there was no indoor plumbing, water was pumped indoors by hand for the humans and outdoors by a windmill for the livestock, the toilet was an outhouse, food for the winter was stored in an underground potato cellar, cows were milked by hand, the milk separator was cranked by hand, the house (and weekly bathwater) was heated by a kitchen stove fed corn cobs and wood, and in the evenings light came from kerosene lanterns. I was born just in time to be exposed to that way of life (available to Iowa children today only in the form of the “Living History Farm,” essentially a museum, north of Des Moines).

Because I had experienced such a life on my Aunt and Uncle’s farm, I was also aware of, and could fully appreciate, the transformation brought on by the Rural Electrification Administration – electric lights and kitchen equipment, milk separators, pumps replacing windmills – and tractors, hay balers, corn planters, combines, and milking machines.

Had I been born 10 years later I would have missed both that sampling of an 1830s-like farm life, and awareness of the stark contrast from the revolutionary and

historic transition in American agriculture (and rural life) brought on by electricity and mechanization.

Iowa was laid out in 99 counties, most of them square. As a result, no farm would be more than 10 to 25 miles from its county seat, and most were closer. County seats were the shopping centers, the political and social centers; their county courthouses housed the governments closest to the people. Smaller communities were about seven miles apart.

These distances represented pragmatic decisions. For the late 19th and early 20th centuries, transportation – along often dirt roads, muddy after rains – was by horse-drawn wagons. Early settlers could manage those distances by horse in a day. Just as Doris and Chet's farm was an example of 1930s agriculture, so was Iowa City during the late 1930s and early 1940s an example of such a county seat town (albeit, one with the State's university, then called the "State University of Iowa," or SUI, represented in the call letters of one of the nation's first radio stations, WSUI-AM).

In the 1930s, the functions provided by today's Coral Ridge Mall, in Iowa City's neighboring town of Coralville, were then provided by downtown Iowa City. That's where farmers came on Saturday to get a haircut and a shave, go to one of Johnson County's five movie theaters, stop by the hardware store for some items, pick up work clothes at Sears or Montgomery Ward's, and return home with a week's supply of the groceries that couldn't be grown in their gardens.

By the 1930s almost all of them came in cars, rather than horse-drawn wagons, but the wagon that brought the ice to our Brown Street house was still pulled by horses,

tied to the hitching post at the foot of our front walk. (“Ice boxes,” not “refrigerators,” kept food cooled.) Being able to witness a bit of what early Iowa county-seat life was like was another example of the blessing of being born when I was.

Another blessing are the Amish from the Kalona area 20 miles south of town, still traveling in horse drawn carriages, and farming Iowa’s true living history farms as they did a century ago. (The Amana Colonies, about 25 miles northwest, were settled by persecuted German Pietists in 1856, unrelated to the Amish.)

I lived during World War II, a time when patriotism and Americans united in common purpose was the norm; when Franklin D. Roosevelt’s served so long throughout my childhood that his name was synonymous with “The President,” a president who was admired by most Americans. It was a time when a worldwide war could be wrapped up in four years.

Here are some other examples of fortuitous good fortune that have come my way for which I can take no credit whatsoever.

A former student of my father’s, Bill Wolfe, was a professor at the University of Texas in Austin. It was his contacts and efforts, not ours, that led to our jobs (Karen at Brackenridge Hospital, and subsequently K-12 teaching, mine at the University Co-op student store); a multi-living-unit at 1909 Red River that we managed in exchange for free rent; a Model A Ford for $75 (after saving that much money over the course of a year), and access to seemingly every scholarship for which we might be eligible (and probably some for which we were not; those never claimed by others, that I characterized as designated for the

descendants of left-handed, West Texas Civil War generals).

Bill may even have been the source of my ability to pick the most highly regarded professors in each department from whom I took courses. It was Bill who was responsible for my being able to spend time one afternoon with Bob Hope, who had come to Austin to play golf with Governor Allan Shivers in a fundraiser for Bill's national cerebral palsy organization. My guess is that he was probably not the one responsible for the chancellor singling me out for an offer of employment with the CIA, but he may have been. Nor do I recall the details of the offer to join the Texas football team. (Both were kindly declined.)

Page Keeton was dean of the University of Texas School of Law. He was a nationally known torts scholar. As it happened, I got the top grade in his first-year torts class. As it also happened, Judge John R. Brown, an Eisenhower appointee to the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, looked to Dean Keeton for recommendations of potential law clerks. My first job after graduating from law school was the clerkship with Judge Brown.

During that year I met, and established a nice relationship with, Judge Richard T. Rives.[8] When, during my year with Judge Brown, I decided to take a shot at a clerkship with Justice Hugo Black, Judge Rives agreed to write a letter of recommendation for me. At the time, I knew nothing of Judge Rives' connection to Justice Black, aside

[8] "Richard Taylor Rives (January 15, 1895–October 27, 1982) was an American lawyer and judge. A native of Alabama, he was the sole Democrat among the 'Fifth Circuit Four,' four judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in the 1950s and 1960s that issued a series of decisions crucial in advancing the civil rights of African-Americans." Richard Rives, Wikipedia.org.

from the fact they were both from Alabama. I later discovered that Justice Black and Judge Rives had a long history and close personal friendship. The rest is history.

It was probably the summer between the second and third year of law school that Karen and I went to Washington, D.C., for my summer clerkship with Covington & Burling. I have no idea how I happened to get that job, but I can't believe that I would have done it on my own. My suspicion is that some law school professor must have suggested the idea to me; possibly someone at the firm inquired of the school and made me an offer. This association was to play a major role later.

After the clerkship with Justice Black, Dean Bill Prosser, University of California School of Law ("Boalt Hall"), offered me a job as associate professor.

I'm not familiar with all the details of faculty hiring these days. I believe there is a form of online registration by potential applicants. In any event, the Iowa Law School sends a committee of professors to Washington, where a mass interviewing process takes place between lawyers wishing to be law professors and faculty from numerous law schools. Those applicants of interest are brought to Iowa City for interviews, a presentation to the full faculty, a review of their scholarship by everyone, followed by numerous faculty meetings reviewing, and finally settling upon, those who will be offered positions.

In 1960, Dean Prosser could simply offer me a job, and if I accepted the offer I was a member of the faculty. I looked on a map of the Bay Area in northern California; Berkeley was just a little dot, which I took to mean it was a little town separated from others by woodlands (it was, in fact, part of an extensive metroplex). That was an

appealing notion of a nice place to live. There was no interview. There was no trip to Berkeley. I accepted, we packed a U-Haul trailer in Washington, and moved to California to see the law school, and Berkeley, for the first time.

Once again, serendipity played a role. Dean Prosser was looking for faculty. (a) Former Supreme Court law clerks were a logical pool of potential professors. (In those days, the Justices only had two each, so clerkships possibly carried even more prestige than today, and there were fewer to review.) (b) However, something else undoubtedly played a major role in his offer. Dean Prosser was, if not the, certainly one of the nation's preeminent torts experts in 1960 ("Prosser on Torts"). Thus, he probably would have asked Dean Keeton for his assessment of this Texas graduate.

Which brings us back to Covington & Burling. It may be that the earlier summer clerkship was the firm's first experience with anyone from law schools other than Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Pennsylvania. It sure seemed that way during the summer of 1957. In any event, whatever may have happened then, it was enough for the firm to keep sending offers of an associate position – after my law school graduation, after the clerkship with Judge Brown, after the clerkship with Justice Black, and while teaching at Boalt. Each was politely declined.

My teaching and scholarship interests were increasingly focused on administrative law. Time in Washington practicing administrative law had some, but not overwhelming, allure.

From Berkeley, I responded to the latest Covington offer with an outrageous proposal – a stay limited to two-

years (on the condition I could get a leave from the University of California with the right to return), pay above the firm's base, the firm to pay moving expenses both to Washington and back again to Berkeley, with my choice of cases and partners with whom to work.

If the terms were accepted, it would be useful experience for an administrative law professor. If they were rejected, I could get on with my teaching and research without regularly dealing with, and declining, the firm's offers. My proposal was accepted. We filled another U-Haul trailer and headed back to Washington.

That was probably late 1962 or early 1963, which placed us in Washington on November 23, 1963, the day President John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas, and Vice President Lyndon Johnson became President Johnson.

One of the partners with whom I worked was Howard Westwood, who handled the American Airlines account, including the airline's relations with what was then the Civil Aeronautics Board's regulation of the airlines industry. He, like some other partners, would sometimes take one or more associates to lunch – as he did with me November 23. Walking back to the firm, we saw the news on a TV screen in a store window. I was devastated and inquired whether we were going to close the firm that afternoon. He saw no reason to do so, and we went back to work.

Sometime a couple of months later I got a call from the White House informing me that Bill Moyers wished to see me.

Although newspapers reported at the time that Moyers and I were friends, even roommates, during our University of Texas days, that was not true. We were both

married at the time and had never met. As it turned out, we didn't on the day of our White House appointment either.

After entering the gate with Secret Service approval, and settling down in a waiting area for an uneventful 45 minutes or hour, someone I later discovered was Jack Valenti took my arm. He led me down a long hallway, through a door, into another chair, closed the door, and departed.

Looking around the room it became more and more likely that this new room was, in fact, the Oval Office. There was a fellow sitting behind the desk across the room. Could he be the President of the United States?

Yes, it was. President Lyndon Johnson beckoned me over and, after pleasantries, informed me that he wanted me to be his U.S. Maritime Administrator. It was not just that I was totally unprepared for a surprise conversation with the President of the United States in the Oval Office. The subject of the conversation made it even worse. I had majored in political science as an undergraduate, clerked for a federal judge who had been an admiralty lawyer, a Supreme Court justice who as a senator tried to reform the maritime industry (I learned later), focused my law school teaching on administrative law, and yet had never heard of the Maritime Administration ("MARAD").

Why would he want me for this job? I certainly had no qualifications for managing any government agency, let alone one responsible for U.S. shipping, ports, and shipyards. (As I would later answer a senator who asked about my shipping experience, "Well, I once operated a canoe on the Iowa River, but not very successfully.") Based on the novels I'd read involving presidents, I even wondered whether an imminent MARAD scandal might be

about to break for which I would be expected to take the blame.

I explained that I wanted to finish my two years at Covington and return to Berkeley. President Johnson began to grasp that I was not thrilled by his proposal. This was my mistake. He persisted. (I later heard there were about 30 individuals who wanted the job.) Only after dealing with the agency did I come to realize that he had been prescient enough that day to know that anyone who wanted to be Maritime Administrator was, if not corrupt, at least capable of becoming so, and therefore unqualified to hold the position in a Johnson Administration.

This was February of 1964; I went before the Senate Commerce Committee, and was sworn in, March 2nd. Given that President Johnson asked most, if not all, of President Kennedy's staff to stay on my appointment may very well have been one of, if not the, first presidential appointments President Johnson made to the Executive Branch (aside from his personal White House staff).

Was this an illustration of "the harder I work the luckier I get"? Certainly, my record was relevant to the appointment. Modesty is not sufficient to restrain my quoting the President on the occasion of my Cabinet Room swearing in at the White House: "You, Mr. Johnson, represent to my mind, the caliber of young men who infuse this Government with spirit and energy and an intelligent, commonsense grasp of what needs to be done. You are a Phi Beta Kappa whose mind is swift and whose honor is high. . . . Secretary [of Commerce Luther] Hodges and I both agree that this young man, Nicholas Johnson, has the qualities of brain and temper to do all that is right and all

that is just in the carrying out of his duties."[9] But political realism tethers me to the realization that such hyperbole well served the interests of the president as well.

So why me?

Several possibilities unrelated to my Phi Beta Kappa key, "spirit and energy," might include the following.

(1) Once anyone becomes president they quickly discover that the 4,000 or so presidential appointments they have to make are going to require searching well beyond their present and former staffers, friends and relatives. Covington & Burling would always be fertile hunting ground for potential presidential appointees.

(2) American Airlines had a representative in Washington at that time, much of whose time came to be dedicated to serving Lyndon Johnson. Could he have been charged with finding potential appointees? Might he have inquired of Howard Westwood?

(3) The fact that I'd clerked for Justice Black couldn't have hurt. Robert Caro refers to "the legal briefs that persuaded Justice Hugo Black to issue the last-minute ruling that saved Johnson's [1948] election [to the U.S. Senate]."[10] That memory might have caused the President to look kindly on anyone associated with Justice Black, and perhaps even resulted in someone seeking comments from the Justice.)

(4) Counting my first clerkship, I had spent seven years living, studying, and working in Texas.

---

[9] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Book I, pp. 329-30.

[10] Robert A. Caro, The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate (2002), p. 288. (It was late reporting of less than 100 suspicious and newly discovered ballots from West Texas that pushed Johnson over the top and gave rise to the nickname, "Landslide Lyndon.")

(5) Knowing that, there may have been inquiries of political allies of President Johnson in Austin. There were Democrats there who might have recalled my work as a precinct captain, and their urging me to run for the Texas Legislature. I had not been allied with any group within the Texas Democratic Party (there were virtually no Texas Republicans when I was there) who opposed Johnson.

The point is, had I not gone to the University of Texas, clerked for Justice Black, and been in Washington, and working at Covington & Burling, the chances of my ending up in the Oval Office that day are, as we say, "somewhere between very slim and none at all."

Ultimately, President Johnson appointed me as a Federal Communications Commission commissioner. Unlike Executive Branch appointments, where one serves "at the pleasure of the President," removable at any time, the FCC appointment was for a seven-year term. That provided me both a version of President Teddy Roosevelt's "bully pulpit," and virtually no restraints on my free speech.

Again, a major cause of my "15 minutes of fame" was the fortuitous timing. The term ran 1966-1973. These were tumultuous years. There were plenty of outspoken anti-corporate-abuses radicals during those years. There were plenty of commissioners of federal regulatory commissions. What was rare, and delightful for the media, was the combination of both that I represented. (As I once told an audience of disk jockeys, "Some ask why I look and dress this way [bushy moustache, long hair, old clothes, riding on bicycles instead of in limousines]. I just figure in a town like Washington where so many people behave like bandits but want to look like public officials, there ought to be at least one who behaves like a public official but looks

like a bandit." This should also give you some sense of my lack of popularity with the other public officials and Washington lobbyists.)

What did not follow from those seven years were any job offers from Washington law firms or corporations looking for Washington representation. Fortunately, those were not roles I sought anyway.

What did follow was chairing the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a public lecture business with the Leigh Bureau, an unsuccessful run for Congress (Democratic primary; Iowa's then-Third District), and a distinguished visiting professorship at the University of Wisconsin the spring of 1980, when my son, Gregory, began living with me. Three years later those UW associations led to my selection as host for a public broadcasting program produced by WHA-TV, Madison: "The New Tech Times."

Because Mother had developed breast cancer, Greg and I decided to settle back home in Iowa City in the fall of 1980. The University of Iowa College of Law Dean, Bill Hines, offered me a teaching position. Once there my friendship with a former dean, Dave Vernon, later led to my being selected by his friend, Dick Remington, as a co-director of Remington's Iowa Institute for Health, Behavior and Environmental Policy.

When Karen found a new partner and wanted a divorce, I was stunned and devastated. Aunt Jo gave me good advice: do not jump into another marriage right away. Well, I certainly didn't. I knew I couldn't.

One day 17 years later I ran into Karen's mother, Evie, with whom I'd maintained a warm friendship over the years. All our high school classmates loved Evie and I was

no exception. On this occasion Evie commented that it might now be time for me to consider another marriage. My response: “Given the team I’m on, Evie, that would require that I find a woman.” Did she have anyone in mind? She did; my former high school classmate, Mary Vasey. Mary was an even better friend of Evie’s than I was.

I trusted Evie’s judgment. When I was in third grade she had selected me to be Karen’s future husband. That had worked well for 17 years. Why not let her pick my second wife as well, I thought.

Mary was ultimately tracked down in an apartment house in Mt. Vernon (20 miles north of Iowa City). We started dating in 1989. It was a comfortable relationship from the start. We’d shared four years of high school, in a small class of 40-plus students, had other friends in common, our parents knew each other, we’d been in each other’s homes, shared politics, and lived through the same years.

The story is told of a middle-aged man known for dating much younger women who showed up one evening with a woman his age. A friend took him aside and asked why the change. He replied, “I finally decided I didn’t want to wake up with somebody who didn’t know who Adlai Stevenson was.” Mary and I knew who Adlai Stevenson was.

When I was in Berkeley I had met Laura Nader and her nuclear scientist friend Norman Milleron. When they decided to get married, in Laura’s hometown of Winsted, Connecticut, they asked that I attend the wedding and take 16mm movies. That led to my first meeting her brothers Ralph and Shaff, sister Claire, and their parents.

I kept up the family ties and started the practice of taking my women friends with me on visits to Mrs. Nader. This turned into seeking her advice regarding the women – which was always negative.

It was soon time to take Mary to Winsted. At that time Mary and I thought we'd explore living together, but that marriage really wasn't necessary since we would not be having more children. (We had seven between us from our prior marriages.)

Mrs. Nader was having none of that. She had made a delicious Lebanese dinner for the three of us and had already given me a thumbs-up on Mary. After dinner when she suggested we marry, sensing a little hesitancy on our part, she simply insisted we get married and proceeded to do a marriage ceremony right there in the dining room.

With something between enthusiastic support and insistence coming from Evie, Mrs. Nader – and not incidentally, Mary's mother and my mother – we were married in a shelter house at the Lake Macbride State Park in 1991. The announcements were sent to friends on Post Office pre-stamped post cards on which I explained that although I planned on buying a new pair of khakis for the occasion others should feel free to come in more casual attire.

Following my mother's death in 1989, rather than continue to live in a house I had purchased on Wylde Green Road (from, in another serendipity, my then ham radio and computer guru, Craig Fastenow), we moved back into the family home on Melrose Court, where I had last lived from 1941 to 1952.

That, in turn, was a part of the good financial fortune that enabled Mary and me to live on an adjunct professor's

income. That we can live on so very little is a bit misleading, and mostly nothing for which we can take credit.

Any mortgage on the 1941 purchase of the house has long since been paid. None of our children (Mary's Joel, Jason, Karl; my Julie, Sherman, Gregory, Alexander) are now in college, subsidized from our incomes while running up $100,000-plus student debts. Our parents are deceased, and not dependent on us for their assisted living facilities. With a three-block walk to the law school, UIHC hospital, Field House fitness center, and other west campus facilities, and a four-minute bike ride to town, we don't need two cars. Given Iowa City's, and the university's, informality we don't need expensive wardrobes. Those are the major expenses of others; their absence makes it possible for us to live without significant sacrifice on very little.

So there you have it.

"The harder I work, the luckier I get"? Well, to a modest degree. But by now you have a greater appreciation of the extent to which most of the "luck" has been provided by others.

Similarly, most of the memories and anecdotes that follow are the result of the contributions of others, plus the unplanned fortuity of times and places totally beyond my control. For all of them I am grateful.