

# SNIPPETS

Bits and Pieces of Jimmy Howe's Childhood Memories



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## INTRODUCTION

### The Early Years

These memories are real but some of the dates are fuzzy. When dates are given it is through research and logical deductive reasoning. For example, when Mom and I danced in the streets with all the neighbors because Japan had surrendered thus ending WWII, I simply had to check the history book to know it occurred in August of 1945.

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## Chapter I

### What Mom Told Me

On the Occasion of my 57<sup>th</sup>. Birthday, Mom told me:

“Dear Son,

I forgot a card for you, please forgive me. I hope your day will be everything you want it to be.

Dad and I were very proud the day you were born. We were dirt poor. Ask Uncle Jerry & he will tell you, we lived in a 3 room tin house, with a dirt floor, only electricity in it. Dad got a job at Falls Machine for 12c & hour, his first pay was \$12.00. We gave \$9.00 for rent and the other \$3.00 went to the milk man as we would have milk for Dave and Harry.

Dad got a Christmas tree from a man who run a gas station near Aunt Ruth’s house. Dads step mother Julia crocheted scarfs & mittens for the 2 kids we had, Lloyd let Dad get a little bike at Western Auto where he had & account. I had to stay at Mom’s at the Old House for a week before you were born because I was bleeding & having contractions & then 10 days after you were born. Uncle Jerry took care of Dave & Harry until I could come home.

Anyway I only wanted to wish you A Very Happy & Healthy Birthday & may God grant you many, many more. I love you & your family very much.

Love You much

OOOOOXXXXX Mom”

Mom told me that I came to be born in the Old House because the Tin House that the family lived in was not suitable for the birth of a baby as it had a dirt floor and was cold and damp. Also she was having some problems carrying me and needed bedrest so she could gather her strength. So she went to the Old House so that her Mom could care for her.

As the time came that Mom went into labor Dad went up the roadbed of ashes to find a phone to call the doctor. When he got back he told Mom that the doctor was on his way. Well as time wore on the labor intensified and yet no doctor. So Dad went back out and got into his car and went looking for him. It turns out that as Dad was headed up the roadbed of ashes the doctor was coming in. The doctor seen Dad’s headlights and knowing he was probably beside himself, pulled into the drive way of the little house and turned out his lights. After Dad went by the doctor started his car and proceeded on down to the Old House. As I was being born Dad pulled in and seeing the doctor’s car knew we were going to be OK.

After I was born on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1940 I became their Christmas baby and they wrapped me up and laid me in front of the Christmas tree. It was a very special Christmas that year.

Several months after I was born I developed something called "Whooping Cough". I was in bad shape when the doctor arrived as I could barely breathe. Mom said I was as good as gone when Old Doc Allen put his fingers into my throat and pulled the Phlegm out. When that didn't help he literally used his mouth to suck it up out of my throat so that I could breathe. If not for that old doctor I wouldn't have made it. Thank You Doctor, wherever you are!

## Chapter II

### The Old House

#### The Gypsies (summer of 1944)

My earliest memory at this old house was when the Gypsies came. I was about 3 ½ years old and remember waking up one morning and looking out the back door to see a huge tent in the driveway maybe a couple hundred feet from the house.

I went to the front porch and asked my Mom what was the big tent for? Both Mom and Grandma France (both the Frances and Howes were both living there) explained that the tent belonged to a band of Gypsies, who had come during the night, and I was forbidden to go anywhere near the tent.

But as I watch the tent I noticed a small dark haired boy looking up at me and he seemed to be about my age. Well Caution to the wind I snuck out the back door and down the driveway. The little dark haired boy and I made an immediate connection and we played and ran around the tent and joyfully went in under the tent where I see a very pleasant looking dark haired woman who was his Mom.

She smiled at me sweetly and her son and I ran back outside. Then I heard my Mom yelling for me and I ran back up the drive to see what she wanted.

She scolded me, spanked me, and grounded me on the front porch.

The next morning the tent was gone and along with it my new found friend. All I had left was the memory.

#### Going for Water (summer of 1944)

I was only 3 1/2 years old when Mom asked me if I thought I could carry a bucket of water. Of course I said, so I grabbed both buckets and headed out the door. Mom stopped me and said maybe just take one, I said OK and headed out the door.

Now the spring was a pretty good hike to get to as it was across the roadbed of ashes and

(The roadbed of ashes was put in by Grandpa France to fill in the ruts that were left behind when they tore out the tracks to the Old Mountain Line. Grandpa had a truck and he had a route where he would go from house to house and pick up the ashes from the folks coal burning furnaces. Then instead of going to the dump he brought them home and tossed them into the ruts. Eventually he had built a small road. That led to the old house driveway.)

over two small hills. There was a pathway through the woods that I had to follow. I knew the way because I had went with my two older brothers, Dave and Harry, many times before.



So as I neared the spring there was a small steep hill that I had to go down in order to get to it and I slipped and tumbled down the hill. I gathered myself up and made my way over to the spring and played around the stream that ran down the hill looking for crawldads. Finding none I took several gulps of the ice cold spring water and then filled my bucket.

I then studied the steep hill I had to climb to get to the pathway through the woods in order to go back home. I noticed some bushes on the left side that had red berries on them so I decided to go slow, step up one foot at a time, and of course eat some of those red berries. As I moved more up the hill the bucket grew heavier and some of the water spilled out.

When I Reached the pathway I headed up and down the two hills and I noticed that a little more water had splashed out. The bucket seemed much heavier than I thought.

Across the drive way I went and proudly delivered a bucket of water to mom that was maybe a third full. She said thank you son but she never ask me to go for water again.

I always wondered why mom sent me for water when I was young, she had to know that I was incapable of doing it.

When my two older brothers, Dave and Harry, got home from school she sent them to the spring right away.

#### [The View \(summer of 1944\)](#)

At the end of the driveway just before it turned to the roadbed of ashes there was a path that led up a small hill. On more than one occasion Dave, Harry, and I would walk down the driveway and up this small hill to lookout at the valley below.

The view was spectacular as we looked down into the valley we could see a river flowing and off to the left were the tall buildings of the city of Akron, Ohio and there was a large bridge that ran from the city across the valley and over the Little Cuyahoga River to the hill on the other side.

## The Old House Burns (November 16, 1944)

When I was almost 4 years old the house burned down. Mom woke us up.



“BOYS GET UP THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE! Go down the stairs and out the backdoor!” All of us hurried down the stairs and out the backdoor into an early cold rainy November morning and mom was right behind us carrying baby Ralph.

Mom grabbed my hand and told Dave and Harry to head up the hill and she took us up that cold wet graveled path in our bare feet and pajamas. It was a long path to the Harlon’s house but that’s where she took us.

When we finally arrived we stood outside there porch and mom screamed “I need help! Help me please!”

Mrs. Harlon came to door and when she seen us she swung the door open with a look of amazement on her face. Mom said again, “I need help, my house is on fire”.

“Oh my God”, exclaimed Mrs. Harlon as motioned for us to come in.

Mr. Harlon, pulling on his trousers, ran out the door and down the path to do whatever he could to help. Mom said “I need to get down there too” and Mrs. Harlon said “GO! I’ve got the kids!”

Mom left and we all gathered in the Harlon’s dining room window and looked out at the fiery glow lighting up the early morning sky. We could not see the house but we saw the fire licking the night sky above the trees. As we stood there the glow got brighter and brighter and soon we seen a gigantic ball of flame, like a mushroom cloud, come up over the trees and then slowly settled back into a dim orange colored glow.



Mrs. Harlon got us some towels to dry off and her children brought some dry clothes for us to put on.

It wasn’t long before Mr. Harlon came back and told his wife that the old house was gone.

A total loss. He further explained that the fire department simply ran out of water and they did not have hoses long enough to run from Dan Street, which is where the nearest hydrant was located.

Dad, Mom and Uncle Jerry arrived shortly after and we all got into Dad's car and we drove to his sister Ruth's house.

### Christmas 1944

I don't remember much about Christmas 1944 except that it was the very first Christmas that I remember. I recall that we were at Aunt Ruth's house and Mom gathered us boys and told us we could go into the living room to see Aunt Ruth's Christmas tree but cautioned that there would be no presents under the tree for us. It was a small tree that sat up on a table. It had lights and some ornaments. It's my guess that it affected Dave and Harry more than I as they were probably hoping for presents whereas I didn't know what Christmas was even about.

We stayed at Aunt Ruth's house until after Christmas and then we stayed with Grandma France on Lloyd Street. I don't remember much about those days but I do remember going for vaccinations when we stayed at Grandma Frances house on Lloyd Street.

### Vaccination

I remember we were at Grandma's house and Mom took me for my vaccination. We were ready to walk up to the Bus stop when Uncle Bob, Mom's youngest brother, offered to take us to the doctor. I remember that when we got into the car there were some wires hanging down from under the dash panel and Mom brushed them with her leg and they sparked burning a hole into her hose and her and Uncle Bob got into it.

When we got to the doctor's office I remember Mom and the doctor talking about how the previous shot for smallpox did not take as I had no scar. So the doctor smeared some stuff on my arm and proceeded to jab me with a needle over where he had smeared the stuff. Today I would say he probably gave me a tattoo. I sure had a scar after that!

After a few weeks Dad found a small house he could rent. It was the Little House that sat midway between the Old House and Dan Street.

## Chapter II

### The Little House

#### Part 1

(Spring 1945)

I was 4 years old. The Little House sat between the Old House and Dan Street. Its address was 728 Dan Street (in the rear) which was OK because the old house was gone. The driveway came in from the roadbed of ashes and circled by the house and back out to the roadbed. It had an inside bathroom, an enclosed front porch, 2 bedrooms, electricity, telephone, and city water.



I believe it had a septic system and the water was delivered by an above ground hose that ran from Joe Wahl's house on Dan Street to the little house. Off to the right in the rear of the house was a large rock that projected out from the hill and a big beautiful rose bush would bloom every year. Mom said it was a "Seven Sisters" rose bush.

Eventually Dad had a well put in to avoid the high cost of city water.

We lived there on two occasions. Once when the old house burned down and again when we lost 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

Bare Feet (spring of 1945)

I was about 4 years and 4 months old and I was outside playing. I decided to go down and see if I could find the spring again. So off I went into the woods in my bare feet. And as I went I came upon the path to the spring and everything came back to me. I went down the path to spring and drank my fill. I looked for crawl dads and found a few. The crawl dads looked like tiny lobsters with big pincers.

On my way back I seen two guys walking down the path and so I stepped aside and sat down on a grassy spot until they passed. They had rifles or BB guns, I don't remember which. The bigger of the two looked at me and said to his buddy "look at this". He then asked me my name and I told him my name was Jimmy.

He said well Jimmy I'm going to shoot your toes off. As he aimed his rifle at my toes I became terrified and covered my toes with my hands and cried hysterically. As I cried the smaller guy

urged the bigger one not to do this as they would get into trouble. So I guess he decided not to shoot my toes and they walked away. After I had calmed down a little I got up and ran all the way home going straight up the road bed of ashes.

As I remember I seldom wore shoes and always ran around in my bare feet during warm weather. And on more than one occasion cut the bottom of my feet and Mom would come out with a basin of water, a bottle of Lysol, and bandages.

### Going to School (Spring 1945)

Mom took me to Forest Hill School to enroll me in Kindergarten. I was only 4 years old but would turn 5 in December. As we neared the school I began to sense fear. What was Mom doing to me? What had I done wrong? Look at the size of this building, boy it was big.

The school agreed that since I would be 5 in that year I could attend but not everyone so young is ready for this. So off we went down the hall way to the class room. The teacher met Mom and I in the hallway and Mom and her talked for a few minutes.

Then the teacher took my hand and we walked into the class room. There were rows and rows of children and I was very nervous. The teacher walked me over to a desk and said Jimmy this is your desk. Then she introduced me to the rest of class. I sat down and looked around and didn't see Mom anywhere. I looked towards the door and couldn't see her there either. The tears welled up and I began to cry. I was absolutely terrified. I cried louder and louder.

The teacher came back and took my hand and we headed for the door. When the door opened there was Mom. I was very upset that she would do this to me. The teacher said to Mom "He is too young. He just isn't ready yet". Mom said OK and she took my hand and we walked down the hall way and out the door and we headed back home.

So much for going to school. But at least I had shoes on my feet.

### Circus

One day Grandma France came to our house and picked up Dave. Harry and I and took us to the circus in Downtown Akron, Ohio. It was in the Akron Armory that had the two statues of Lions at the beginning of the Stairs that led up to the entrance. I recall the Elephants, the clowns and all the pretty ladies twirling around on ropes high above.

## Chapter III

### The New House



Somehow, some way, Dad was able to buy this beautiful house for us. Mom said that Uncle Ralph, Dads brother, sold some war bonds and sent money home to Dad for the down payment. It was quite spectacular compared to where we use to live.

The New House was at 2570 8<sup>th</sup>, Street, Cuyahoga Falls. It was built in 1944 and didn't even have a lawn yet. But it had 3 bedrooms and a bath with living, dining and kitchen.

I remember watching Dad haul the soil with a wheelbarrow and then rake it all out. Then he spread grass seed and threw straw over top. Wasn't long before we had green grass popping up all over.

### Our First Movie (April 1945)

We were at Aunt Ruth's house in Cuyahoga Falls and Dad and Mom decided us boys could go to a movie. Our very first movie "Son of Lassie". Dad took Dave, Harry and I down to the movie theater and we went in. I got through the cartoon ok, and the first part of the lassie movie. But when Lassie was going through the war zone and the big tanks shot off their guns I was totally terrified and began to cry uncontrollably. I cried so hard the usher came and told us to leave. Dave called Dad and dad came to get us. I don't know why I cried but I was terribly afraid. It was a long time before I went to another movie.

### Lost (Fall of 1945)

It was towards evening and we were all out in the street up around the corner. I can't remember why but I want to say maybe it was the 4<sup>th</sup> of July because all the neighbors were out as well and every one was having a good time. Suddenly I looked around and everything had gone quiet and nobody was there. I was all alone and it was dark. I was lost and did not know which direction to go in to get home. I started to cry and started to walk not knowing which way to go. Finally I seen lights on at a house around the corner. And I heard voices.

A lady came up to me and asked me my name but all I could do was cry. She told the others that she was going to drive me around a few streets and she told me to get into the car. Then she said she would drive slowly and if I see anything that looked familiar to tell her. I nodded OK and began to settle down.

After a few streets I seen Mom and Dave and Harry all out calling my name. I told the lady to stop and I jumped out of the car and ran to Mom. Safe at last! Mom thanked the Lady for helping me and it turned out that when I got lost I was only a few houses away. If I would have started walking in the other direction I would have found home.

### Field on Fire (Fall 1945)

I was 4 ½ years old and I snuck out the back door one morning and went to the back door of the next door neighbor. I told the lady that Mom had sent me over to borrow some matches. She said ok and gave me two blue tip wood matches to take back home. She watch and made sure that I actually went back into the house. I waited a short while and went back out when she wasn't looking. I went and got the boy across the street, we had played together several times before, and showed him the matches.

I said lets go up to the corner field and we set up a little camp fire. So that's where we went. The field was filled with dried grass and junk. So we gathered up a couple handfuls of dried grass and some small twigs. I struck the first match and it went out. I struck the second match and it lit up. I touched it to our pile and it lit up so fast my buddy took off running. I tried to stamp it out but no luck.

I took off running and went straight home so that none were the wiser.

Well then the whole neighborhood came unglued as the firetrucks with sirens screaming and red lights flashing pulled up. Mom and I went to the door and I saw the whole corner field on fire.

After the firemen put out the fire, they talked to some of the neighbors and then headed straight for our front door. They accused me of setting the fire but Mom vigorously defended me saying that I was with her all morning. Meanwhile I was scared to death and coward behind her.

Eventually the firemen left and Mom asked me if I set that fire and I said no. It was a long time before I ever touched another match.

### Victory over Japan (August 15, 1945)

I was 4+ years old and there was a ruckus out in the street. Mom went to the front door and I was right with her. All of neighbors were in the streets hooting and hollering so we went outside and Mom asked one of the neighbors what was going on. **THE WAR IS OVER! JAPAN SURRENDERED! THE BOYS ARE COMING HOME!** Everyone was hugging and kissing each other and joyfully celebrating. They were literally dancing in the streets!

### Christmas 1945

With the war over the boys did come home. Uncle Ralph (Dads brother) came and stayed through Christmas. On Christmas Eve Dave, Harry, and I snuck to the top of the staircase and quietly watch Dad, Mom and Uncle Ralph decorate the Christmas tree. That Christmas morning

we awoke to a wonderful Christmas. Dave and Harry got a new 2 wheel bike. I got a scooter, and Ralphie got a monkey bar tricycle.

I know that I left my scooter in the driveway and Dad ran over it so it didn't last too long. And I remember that Harry was riding the bike to the corner and he slid on the gravel at the gas station wrecking the bike and cutting his knee open pretty bad. So the only toy that stuck around for any length of time was Ralphie's monkey bar tricycle.

#### [Aunt Pat and Uncle Jerry \(summer of 1946\)](#)

Aunt Pat and Uncle Jerry came to live with us. Uncle Jerry got a job as a bus driver. One day he came home from work and brought us kid's kites. He helped us put them together and make tails for them. Then he took Dave down the street and ran with the kite until it flew into the air. He showed him how to fly it. Then he took Harry up the street and launched his kite for him as well. He then took me up the street and around the corner to another street and launched my kite and taught me how to fly it. My kite was blue on top with white stars and the bottom was red and white stripes (it was like the flag). I must have flown that kite for several hours steadily pumping the string to keep it air borne. After a while here came Uncle Jerry to help me bring it back down in one piece.

#### [The Swing set \(summer of 1946\)](#)

I was 5 ½ years old and Dad put a swing set up in the backyard. Two swings, a trapeze and a ladder. Dave and Harry claimed the swings and I claimed the trapeze. Brother Ralph got the ladder and the two support bars on either end could be used by any of us.

Well when Dave and Harry weren't around I got on the swings and had a gay old time. Then I would work on my trapeze skills until my arms ached. On a nice sunny day I eyed Ralph's ladder and decided to climb. I climbed a few steps and looked around and then climbed a few more. Finally I reached the very top and stood up on the top of the very top bar to show the world how good I was.

That didn't last long and I fell off the top bar and crashed into the ground face first. The pain was excruciating and I jumped up and blood was pouring out of my nose. I ran screaming to the house.

Aunt Pat and Mom came running and seeing my problem got some cold wet towels and cleaned me up and stopped the bleeding. Aunt Pat look me over and touched my nose. She turned to Mom and said "Sis, I think this nose is broken, He should maybe go to the emergency room". But Mom said "I think he will be ok". And so I lived the rest of my life with a broken nose that healed but still made my breathing difficult for a long, long time. I always wondered why Mom wouldn't take me to the hospital.

#### [Marbles \(summer of 1946\)](#)

I was 5 ½ years old and each of us had gotten some marbles and I watch Dave and Harry play the game with the neighborhood kids. We drew a circle and each guy put some marbles into



the center of the circle. Then each kid in turn would attempt to shoot from outside the circle using his favorite marble called a shooter, (it was usually bigger than the other marbles) at the marbles and any of them he knocked out of the circle he got to keep. Well somehow along the way I started to win a lot of marbles and had accumulated a nice big bag of them.

When it was time for school I put my big bag of marbles into the rear corner of the coat closet that sat at the base of the staircase.

#### [Back to School \(September 1946\)](#)

I was 5 years old going on 6 and Mom took me down to St. Joseph's catholic school and enrolled me to start the first grade. This was the first time I went back to school after the disastrous attempt a year earlier. All went well. I did not cry and I had shoes on my feet.

#### [First Holy Communion \(May 4, 1947\)](#)

I was 6 years old and in the first grade. I don't remember a whole lot other than all the practicing at the church to receive my first Holy Communion. On that day the whole class was dressed in white. The boys wore white short pants and white shirts with a white coat and tie. I think even the shoes were white.

Aunt Rose and Uncle Ronnie were there and we celebrated and took pictures and had cake. Everyone was very proud, even me.

#### [The New House is Gone \(summer of 1947\)](#)

I was 6 ½ years old and Mom said we were moving back to the little house. I never did learn why but somehow somehow something went wrong and Dad lost the new house. When we moved I forgot the marbles that I had put into the closet.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Little House

#### (Part II)

##### Concussion (1947)

I was 6 1/2 years of age and we heard a lot of chopping going on up by the Flights house. We walked up the drive way towards the Flights house and found several older boys chopping down trees and building a log cabin. The cabin looked to be complete up to the windows. I was amazed at the way they were working because they had started cutting in the woods between the Flights driveway and the roadbed of ashes then worked their way up the hill and were building the log cabin above the driveway.

I wondered down into the area that they had already cut down forgetting that when they cut the trees down from above they would fall into the area that was already cut. That's the area where I was. As I was looking over the stumps I heard someone yell and the lights went out. The falling tree hit me on the top of my head and knocked me out. The next thing I remember was all of them standing around me and helping to stand up. My head hurt like hell and there was some bleeding from a huge bump on my head.

I walked back home and Mom looked me over and I told her what had happened. She said I would be OK. Looking back on it now I probably had a concussion and I probably should have seen a doctor. I'm probably pretty lucky I wasn't dead!

##### Stuttering (1947)

I was 6 1/2 years old and I suddenly began to stutter. It was exasperating and frustrating for me and for Mom and Dad. I always wondered if the "concussion" might have caused the stuttering.

When school began (September 1947) Mom enrolled Dave, Harry and me in St. Martha's grade school but we weren't there very long maybe 3 weeks when she pulled us out and took us to Forest Hill public school. I don't know why but apparently there was some sort of argument between Mom and Monsignor Frye at St Martha's and Dad said the hell with it. "Put them into Forest Hill". I don't know, I kind of felt maybe it was my fault for stuttering so bad.

Well Mom took me up to Forest Hill and told them that since I completed first grade at St. Joseph's I should go into the second grade. But the school said because of my stuttering they would hold me in first grade and send me to speech therapy class. Mom agreed.

So I was back in the first grade and was the laughing stock when I would stutter, but a couple times a week I was pulled from class with about 5 other kids and sent to speech therapy. After about 4 weeks of therapy I and my family noticed that my stuttering had gone away and I was

beginning to read a little better also. Thank God for Forest Hill and their speech therapy it literally saved me!

I began to come out of my shell and had a few friends.

#### [Our Dog Lucky \(summer of 1947\)](#)

Dad got us a dog, we named him lucky and we had a great time playing with him. He was just a mutt and was mostly black with a little bit of white on him. Lucky loved to sleep under Dads car but would always wake up and run out whenever the car started. One day he didn't wake up and the car ran over him. He ran around in a circle and then dropped in front of us. He was Gone! Not so lucky after all!

Dad felt real bad about it and it wasn't too long before we had another dog. This one looked a lot like Lucky so, guess what, we named him lucky as well.

We had lucky for a while and really enjoyed him. But later he ran into some problems.

#### [My Friend Joey 1947](#)

Joe Wahl, Joey, and I became good friends and oft times walked home from school together. Joey lived on Dan St. with his Mom and Dad and I think a sister. His house sat on the corner of Dan St. and the roadbed of ashes.

His Dad Joe Wahl was good friends with Dad and I believe he owned the little house that Dad rented from him. The water came from Joe Wahl's house through a long hose that ran from his outdoor spicket to the outdoor spicket of the little house. This hose was eventually replaced with a well. The well was installed during our second occupation of the little house. I know the hose was there because I stumbled upon it as I was heading for the grab apple tree off the drive way.

#### [Cream Sticks 1947](#)

One day we had just finished building our little fort over in the side yard between the house and the woods. (We built it with cinder blocks that were laying around) and wood and sheet metal for a roof. It was high enough to crawl inside and sit-up. One Day Uncle Jerry came to visit with several boxes of frozen cream sticks. He claimed that there had been an accident and the delivery truck overturned and a lot of the boxes of cream sticks and spilled out. He noticed that some had not broken open and hence would still be good so he gathered them up and brought them to us.

Each of us boys grabbed a box and headed for the fort. These cream sticks had just begun to thaw out and so were super cold and very delicious. Each box had about 8 cream sticks and we ate our fill saving some for later.

That was just like Uncle Jerry, he was always thinking of us.

### The Dump 1947

Down where the old house had burned down the ravines were turned into a dump. Trucks came down the roadbed of ashes to dump their junk and filth. Mom had warned us to stay away but no such luck, all 4 of us, Dave, Harry, me, and Ralphie, snuck down to the dump what a mistake for me as I again cut my bare foot, I wonder where my shoes were, and Ralphie cut his forehead. Brother Dave found some balloons. When we got back home there was mom with that young tree (a switch) in her hand again. She gave some swings to Dave and Harry and then promptly started to treat Ralphie and me for our cuts.

Since we could no longer go down to the dump Brother Dave would stand in the driveway next to the road and stop each dump truck asking if they had any balloons. They all said no and drove on. One day a dump truck stopped and called Dave over and handed him a bag full of balloons. I think the driver felt bad for us and went out and bought us a bunch of balloons. We had a ball with them. We would blow them up and made water balloons out of some of them and have a water balloon fight.

### A Birthday Party (August 1947)

It was the occasion of a new baby brother being born that brought Uncle Jerry and Aunt Pat to the little house to watch over us while Dad and Mom went to the hospital to pick up brother Rickie. They brought with them a bunch of noise makers. Horns and the twirling noise makers like you would have at a New Year's Eve party.

So they gave them too us and we went outside to the swing set. Aunt Pat took one swing and Uncle Jerry took the other, Dave Harry, me, and Ralphie climbed all over the swing set blowing our horns and rattling the noise makers. Boy did we have a lot of fun.

### Snake in the Bush. (Late summer 1947)

Joey and I loved to run around all over and pick black berries. One day I was picking berries and I came upon a bush that had a lot of them. As I was picking these berries I spied a really big black one inside the bush so I carefully moved my right arm inside the bush being careful so as not to be scratched by the thorns. Just as I was about to pick the berry I saw two tiny black eyes following my hand. My eyes refocused and I recognized a big green snake slashing its forked tongue. I was startled and jumped back scratching my arm and hand in the process. I was terrified and grew to hate and be afraid of snakes from that day forward. I wondered why I couldn't see it before I stuck my hand in there.

### Christmas Eve 1947

It was Christmas eve, 1947, I was 7 years old. Dave, Harry and I slept in one bed in the rear bedroom. Mom and Dad slept in other bedroom with Brother Ralph, and Brother Rick in his crib. Aunt Pat and Uncle Jerry slept on the living room floor.

Dave, Harry and I were all excited and couldn't sleep but as the evening wore on we decided to listen for sounds of Santa. As we grew tired we heard hoof beats somewhere outside and

listened very intently. It had to be Santa's reindeer and his sleigh. Then off in the distance we heard soft clattering of the reindeer's hoofs and a soft HO-Ho-ho in the distance! We were convinced that Santa had indeed come and we fell fast asleep.

### Christmas Day 1947

Christmas of 1947 found us at the little house. We had a Christmas tree and Dave and Harry both received a Royal Flyer sled while I received a Western Flyer which was slightly smaller. We took them out to the hill across from the driveway and slowly climbed up towing our sleds behind us. We were soon joined by Wayne Flight who also had a new sled.

Once at the top of the hill we surveyed the slope and determined that we could go all the way to the roadbed of ashes if we could make the hard left turn at the base of the hill which would throw us into the gully that wound down onto the roadbed. We all agreed that we would go in turns until we could all make that hard left.

Wayne went first and sailed over the top failing to make the hard left turn. Then Dave went and swerved slightly to his right thus softening the turn and made a nice run all the way to the roadbed. We all hollered and clamored for him making it. Harry went next and then me with my smaller western. I too made it. And we joyfully began our trek back up the hill for another run.

As we neared the top we heard a yell and turned to see Sidney Harlon coming at full speed running through the snow. We all watched as we knew he was going to make a belly slammer and go on down the hill.

Well Sidney made his belly slammer but his sled stop abruptly and he went head over heels ahead of his sled. He came up crying and bloody. And Wayne helped him up. We all looked at his sled and saw that he had not removed the rust from his runners and this is what caused his sled to stop. Sidney grabbed his sled and slowly made his way back home whereas the rest of us went back to our joyful downhills.

### Christmas Night 1947

We all loaded up in Dads car and he took us to Grandma France's house so we could see them and their Christmas. When we got back home we found the Christmas tree had fell over and many of the ornaments had broken. Dad lifted it back up and Mom cleaned up what was broken. Dad said it must have been that our dog Lucky pulled on a branch and caused it to tip over. Poor Lucky got blamed but I never felt he was guilty. I think it just fell over because it wasn't seated in the tree stand properly. But Lucky got blamed anyway, too bad lucky I still loved you!

From that Christmas on every Christmas tree would be tied with two strings going to two different walls and it never fell over again.

### My First Kiss (spring of 1948)

If you followed the roadbed of ashes past the little house you would come to a fork in the road that went up a hill to the Flight's house. The little girl that lived there was named Leona and she was in my glass.

As it happened we walked home from school together and when we got to the little house we decided to walk up the hill which was across the driveway. When we got almost to the top we sat down on the ground and looked all around.

I don't know what happened but suddenly we leaned towards each other and kissed on the lips. After the kiss we kind of looked at each other and as we started to kiss again she jumped up and ran down the hill and up her driveway. Wow what was that?

We still walked home together on occasion but we never kissed again.

### Fighting Coming Home from School 1948

As we walked home from school Dave was a little ahead of Harry and I and Sidney Harlon would come running after us and would attack Brother Dave. They would fight all the time. One day here came Sidney running after us and I called out "Look out Dave". Dave turned around just in time and busted Sidney a good one. I think he broke his nose because there was blood everywhere.

Later that evening Mr. Harlon came to the house and talked to Dad about how they had to do something to stop this fighting. He acted like it was Dave's fault so we told Dad that it wasn't Dave's fault but it was Sidney that always started the fights. So Dad said look I cannot stop him from defending himself but I will talk to him and you talk to your boy and hopefully it will come to a stop. Well the talks worked and the fighting stopped, although I always thought the broken nose went a long way to end it.

### Leona Taking a Bath (summer 1948)

Brother Dave and I were out walking and found ourselves walking up the Flight's driveway when from a distance we could see Leona on her back porch taking a bath in a galvanized tub. We moved into the woods and bushes and moved to get a little closer.

We heard Leona yell for her older brother Wayne and he came out of the house and Leona told him that someone was out in the driveway watching her. Wayne came down the driveway looking and watching carefully. Brother Dave said "don't move" to me and we lay on the ground hoping Wayne wouldn't see us.

Well Wayne got to where we were hiding and he looked right at us but didn't see us. So he turned around and headed back. We breathed a sigh of relief. Wayne reassured Leona that there was no one around and went back into their house.

Leona continued with her bath by standing up and we could see her plain as day full frontal and as she turned full backside. I will never forget that. And we swore we would never tell anyone.

### Lucky II (summer of 1948)

I mentioned earlier that Lucky ran into some problems well, you see, there was a farm just up before Joe Wahl's house on Dan St. and that farm stretched all the way back to the back of the little house. This farmer had a bunch of chickens and Lucky must have thought they were there for him to hone his hunting skills because one day he caught and killed one and the farmer must have seen him.

The farmer came to the house and took Dad, and we kids followed, to see where Lucky had killed his chicken. Dad promised that we would keep Lucky tie up and that it wouldn't happen again.

Well a few weeks later Lucky got loose and when we found him we could see the feathers around his mouth so we went searching up on the farm and sure enough there were a couple of dead chickens.

We told Dad and he went to see the farmer. When he came back he told us that Lucky would have to go. Dad found him a good home and lucky was gone.

### Speaking of Chickens

We three boys were out walking through the woods and we came out of the woods up by Harlon's house and saw Mr. Harlon out by his chicken coop so we stopped to see what he was doing. We saw him grab a chicken by the neck and twirl it until the chickens head and neck separated from the body. He did this to three chickens and you would have thought that a chicken without its head would have fell dead but it didn't. Those headless chickens, with blood spurting, ran wild around the coop at least once before they dropped.

I was stunned and wondered how this could be!

### Yellow Teeth (summer of 1948)

I was 7 ½ years old and Mr. Wahl offered to take me with them for a trip to Nelson's Ledges. He cleared it with Mom and Dad and he drove down to our house to pick me up. We were all in the car and my friend Joey said "gee Jimmy, your teeth are all yellow". He told his Mom to look at my teeth and she told him "Joey, some people don't brush their teeth".

When I got back home I ask Mom about it and she said don't worry about it. Here we kids were and that's the first time we had ever heard about brushing our teeth. In fact it was many years later before we got our first toothbrushes, but alas it was too late. By the time I was a teenager I had a toothbrush but every time I brushed my teeth my gums would bleed and I had several cavities.

### Going for a Swim (summer of 1948)

On a summer day Dave, Harry, me, and I think Wayne Fight decided to visit the spring and look for crawldads. As we walked down the hill where the stream from the spring flowed we decided

to see just where the stream went. So we traveled on down following the stream and looking for crawdads on the way.

Brother Dave had a big stick and he was on one side of the stream and I was on the other and he had stuck the big stick out to the streams bank on my side and told me to move back because he had pinned a big snake with his stick. I looked but could not see a snake under his stick. He yelled at me and said "Jim I can't hold him any longer please get back". So I jumped back and there went the snake. I don't know why but I had a hard time discerning anything in nature's camouflage.

We continued on down the stream and came out of the woods in a small clearing on the banks of a big river. Looking down the river was a big bridge that crossed over it. I learned much later that the bridge was the Akron viaduct and it crossed over the Little Cuyahoga River. So we decided to go for a swim. We stripped down and, naked as a j-bird, into the water we waded. I waded out to about the middle of the river and got behind a big rock as the current was quite strong and the water was up to my chest. After I caught my breath I slowly made my way back to the shore. We got dressed and headed back home.

Of course as we neared home we could hear Mom yelling for us and we figured we had been gone for a while and we were probably in trouble. Well Mom seen us and we see her standing there with a young tree in her hand. She knew instantly where we had been and started switching us on our legs with that young tree. We each in turned hollered out in pain and she warned "Don't ever go there again." And we never did.

### [Old Forge Field 1948](#)

Somehow Brother Dave learned that there was some sort of football game being played in the afternoon at Old Forge Field. Old Forge Field set on North Street just down from Dan Street. Well Dave convinced Dad and Mom to let us go see it. Off we went out to Dan Street, up the hill and down the hill to North Street and across the street to the field. Apparently the game was just about over so we explored and found a small river or canal that ran behind the bleacher stands on the far side of the field.

When we left Brother Dave said he was taking a shortcut home but Harry said he was going home the way we came. I decided to take the shortcut with Dave even though I didn't know what that was.

We crossed the street and Brother Harry walk away going up North Street. Dave turned and we faced a big cliff. He proceeded to climb up this cliff so I followed but my fear of heights was catching up with me and I hollered up to Dave "I don't think I can make it". He hollered back "you can make it just don't look down".

Well I didn't look down and I climbed like a monkey all the way to the top. After we reached the top we began to walk and soon came across a huge farm with row after row of neatly planted vegetables. I especially remember the large heads of cabbage. As we continued to walk we left



the cabbages behind and passed an old farm house. Then we came upon another smaller farm or garden, it belong to the Harlon's. We past the Harlon house and headed down the path to the Flights house. Mr. Harlon was at his table in the woods cleaning a bunch of catfish and the cats were going nuts.

We beat Harry home and told Mom and Dad we just took a short cut, they had no idea that we had climbed this cliff.

### Back to School (September 1948)

So I was 7 years old and going on 8 when we went back to school at Forest Hill. I was finally in the second grade and although the stuttering was gone I still wasn't doing very well with my studies. But I was a good tree climber and was chosen to climb up the third tree on the playground to hang the big piece of suet for the birds. It was a class project. I was up in that tree quicker than a blink of the eye. And everyone was staring at me as I hung the rope around a limb and let the suet hang down.

### Another Snake 1948

Joey and I was out playing and he said he had to go home and tear down and old wall so I went with him. On the hill in his back yard was this old cinder block wall with a concrete floor and his dad said he needed it tore out of there. Joey said we could work on the floor first since it was all cracked and we could just throw the pieces down the hill.

Right after we started he was called in for dinner so I continued taking one piece at a time. I came to this bigger piece that I could not lift so I decided I would flip it and then roll it down the hill. Well I flipped it and underneath it was the largest snake I have ever saw!

I jumped back in utter terror as it stared at me with its beady black eyes and working its fork tongue back and forth out its mouth. I screamed! Snaaaa-aaa-aaake ! I yelled! And I kept on screaming SNA—AAA-AAA-AAAKE!

Mr. Wahl came out of his house and hollered up to me Why are you screaming and all I could do was point and scream some more. Up the hill he came and he seen this huge green snake. Is this what you're screaming about, he asked as he bent over and grabbed the snake by its tail. Then he gave it a mighty heave and down the hill it went. Joe Wahl was a very big man and when he threw something it went. I watched that snake sail through the air and I spied exactly where it landed.

I stood there trembling in fear and he said calm down now Jimmy it's all over the snake is gone. So I went down his drive way and as I walked down the roadbed of ashes I gave the spot where the snake landed a wide birth and then I ran like the wind the rest of the way home.

### Copperheads (Fall 1948)

The next day Joey and I were out playing on the hill after school and I told him about how Brother Dave had stopped the snake on the stream bank and how I didn't see it. He said it was probably a copperhead and I was damn lucky it didn't bite me. I said I didn't know what a copperhead looks like and maybe that is what was under the concrete yesterday. He said no couldn't have been as copperheads are not green. Then he said I can show you one and that

way you'll know. So he took me down the hill and as we walked down the path we came across several small black snakes with red tails but Joey said he didn't know what they were. When we got to the bottom of the hill we went over to a wooded thicket which was just about across the roadbed from his house.

Joey said, bending down so he could see in under the brush, look in there up on the log do you see that snake? That's a copperhead, my Dad told me all about them and they are poison. So I bent over and took a hard look but I couldn't see anything but the log. I said "Oh I see him", but I was lying.

### Christmas 1948

This Christmas Dave, Harry, and I got toy machine guns. We took them outside and ran through the woods playing war games in the snow. That was our last Christmas in the Little House because Dad had bought a bigger house on Fifth Ave. After we moved I never saw Joey again but years later Wayne Fight showed up at my house on Pelton Ave. It seems he was visiting his cousin who was my neighbor.

### Good bye Joey (1948)

One evening Dad took us for a ride to East Akron and stopped at house on 5<sup>th</sup>. Ave. He told Mom this was our new home and he unlocked the door and we all went in. It seemed like a nice big house and we liked it very much. We moved in shortly thereafter.

I never saw Joey again although later on when I got married His Mom and Dad came to my wedding. Goodbye Joey!

## Chapter V

### Fifth Ave. House



The house on Fifth Ave. was a 2 story house that had no garage and sat up on a small hill. It had a steep brick driveway that was shared with the neighbor's house. It had a nice front porch. Mom sent us to Annunciation church and school.

We walked to school every day, down Fifth Ave. to a street that ran past 4<sup>th</sup>. Ave. to a steep bridge that crossed over the Little Cuyahoga River and landed on River Street. As we came down the bridge there was Mohawk Rubber Co. and of course Goodyear Tire. The bridge passed over the Little Cuyahoga River and came down onto River Street which ran to Case and we crossed over to Market Street and up the hill to Annunciation.

Going Home was pretty much the same route except the stores were open and we could cut through the Five and Dime on Market St. and go out their rear entrance to the parking lot that

put us on Case and River.

I liked cutting through the five and dime because at the rear entrance was a large tank of goldfish and I would often stop to see them and check the price. 10 cents for a goldfish, but of course you still needed to buy the fishbowl and the food.

#### 1948

It was a great neighborhood. At the corner was a bar and next too it a candy and ice cream store. Big Bazooka bubble gum for a nickel as well as 3 musketeer candy bars. Ice cream cones were also a nickel. I recall when the pop truck came to deliver soda pop (the truck was open on both sides) and some of the neighborhood teen agers would wait for the driver to go into the store and then they would run up and steal bottles of pop.

There were kids everywhere. Across the street was a 4 unit apartment building and a boy my age lived in one of the upstairs units. One day we were playing and he said that they had gotten a TV and asked if we had one yet. I said "What's a TV?" He said come on and I'll show you. He took me upstairs to his place and showed me his TV. I was absolutely fascinated as I watched some women cooking stuff on this little screen.

Between the candy store and our house was two houses. The closest was Mrs. Easley's who had fenced her backyard so when we tried to play ball in our backyard the ball would go over the fence and she would keep it.

The next house a boy named Sonny lived and he was friends with Dave and Harry. Then up in the back were several apartment buildings.

## Hansel and Gretel

There was a little boy and a little girl who lived with their mother in an apartment up behind the corner candy store. I never seen their father. I would go over and visit with them from time to time. They were not allowed to be outside so I sat on their back porch next to their screen door and they sat on the other side of it. We talked and talked but they would never tell me why they could not come out side to play. One day I went over and they were gone.

## The World Series 1948

One Sunday afternoon Dad gathered us all into his car and we drove up to his sister Ruth's home in Cuyahoga Falls. When we got there we were in for a real treat. Uncle Ralph Thompson, Aunt Ruth's husband, had bought a television. It only had a small screen, maybe 8 or 10 inches, but it was like the boy had across the street.

And guess what Uncle Ralph, an avid Cleveland Indians, fan had on. Yep, the 1948 World Series with the Cleveland Indians. We all gathered around the TV and watched as Bob Feller, a famed Indians pitcher, pitched the game. What a thrill. The Indians won the World Series.

On other occasions when we visited Aunt Ruth we watched Milton Berle, Syd Caesar, and Suspense Theater all of which were quite interesting to kids like us who had never seen TV before.

## Straight A's (Fall of 1949)

I was 8 ½ years old and started the third grade at Annunciation School. It was the first report card of the year. When I got the report card I got all excited, every subject, was an "A". I had never had A's before.

When school let out I ran across the playground and around the church. I crossed the street and ran to Mr. Moore's house where I knew Mom was waiting for me. As I approached I could see Mom on the front porch with Mrs. Moore and I yelled out excitingly "Mommy, Mommy I got all A's".

I handed Mom the report card and she looked at it very intently and then showed it to Mrs. Moore. I said again "I got all A's". Mom look down at me and said "Son, these are not all A's these are all D's!"

How could that be? Certainly I knew my alphabet? I knew what an A looked like, and I knew what a D looked like. But I had a hard time when the letters were in script instead of print (*A vs. D*) as opposed to (**A vs. D**). The teacher had recorded the grades in handwriting rather than in print.

I argued with Mom. But she assured me that they were all D's and Mrs. Moore nodded her head in agreement. I was devastated!

### The Ice Slide (Winter 1949)

The church parking lot sloped to the street and so the older boys had made an ice slide on the slope out of all the snow that had fallen. After school I decided to try it.

I got way back and took off running as fast as I could and as I neared the start of the slide I jumped on the ice just like the older boys and down the slope I went on both feet. I was picking up speed when suddenly I hit a dry spot and went tumbling down in a bad crash.

I hit the ice face first and was jarred with terrible pain. I managed to roll over and stand up and blood was pouring out of my mouth and lower lip. I made my way to the little boy's room and got some paper towels and looked into the mirror.

My lower lip was split wide open and swollen. My right front tooth was cracked open and a piece was missing. I washed off the best I could and started the long walk home holding a paper towel to my lower lip to stop the bleeding. When I got home Mom noticed right away that my mouth was mess. I told her what had happened and she looked me over. She said I would be OK and that I should go upstairs and change my clothes and wash up.

She never took me to a doctor or to a dentist to fix my tooth. I never understood why except she didn't have a car, and she always had a little one to take care of. That tooth bothered me for a long time. By the time I got to the Navy they performed oral surgery to remove a tumor that had formed above the tooth. The tumor came out in two pieces one a little larger than a golf ball and the other a little smaller. They performed a root canal.

### Red Ryder (Christmas 1949)

For Christmas that year we three older boys all got a book. I got a book about Red Ryder and his little Indian companion Beaver. None of us really wanted to read at Christmas time so the books kind of got shoved back.

However as the hoopla wore off and I was looking for something to do I rediscovered Red Ryder. As I began to read this adventure story I noticed that I became more and more interested as I read more. Something began to happen to me. I can't explain it! But it was like I was beginning to understand what I was reading. I was beginning to have an awareness! I could comprehend the story.

When I finished Red Ryder I went looking for some other books to read. I found one called Black Beauty. It was a story about a beautiful horse. I could not put it down.

I then was reading everything I could get my hands on. School books, newspapers, etc. I was finally learning. The result was that my grades were beginning to improve. I was more responsive in class. Thank You Red Ryder! But something else was also happening.

### Expanding my mind 1949

Somehow or other Dad got a big console radio and it sat in the living room. Every evening we would all gather around it to listen. Sometimes it was "The Green Hornet", or "Amos and Andy", and sometimes the Lone Ranger.

But Saturday mornings was my time. The fairy tales were on. I would ask Mom to tune it in for me and I would set there for hours listening to fairy tales. I found it fascinating and as I listened intently I could see them in my mind. They were real to me!

### Hide and Seek Dangers (Spring 1950)

On the way home from school, on River Street, was a large company called Guran. In their yard was all kinds of steel objects and they were all painted yellow. Dave, Harry and I would oft times play hide and seek in and around these objects. On one such occasion I decided to climb to the top of a cone shaped object, biggest thing in the yard (looked like a small silo), figuring I could hide behind the top of it and they would never find me. When I got to the top there was a huge hole that allowed me to look down inside. This hole was big enough for someone to lower themselves down inside. Even better I decided. And when they could not find me I would pull myself up and claim victory.

Well I lowered myself down inside this thing and hung onto the lip of it so that I would not fall into it as it was at least 10 foot tall. Well they searched for me and could not find me so I decided it was time to pull myself up and claim my victory. However I soon discovered that I did not have the strength to pull myself up and I am about to fall in. I started to scream for help and Brother Dave heard me and came scampering up to the top. He reach down and grab my arm but was unable to get me all the way up so he hollered for Brother Harry who came a running. Harry grabbed my other arm and two of them got me out. By this time I was crying and all shook up.

Both Dave and Harry told me that I should not tell Mom of this as we would all get an ass whipping when Dad got home. That sounded like real good advice to me so we never told nobody about it and we never played in that yard again! I always wondered what would have happened to me if they hadn't found me before I fell in.

### Easter 1950

That Easter Mom prepared Easter baskets for all of us kids and dutifully hid them around the house. When we got up Easter morning we gleefully searched the house until we each found our baskets. But before we opened them Mom noticed that something was wrong, the baskets had already been open. The pretty colored cellophane that enclosed them had holes in them and some of the candy inside had been partially eaten. The Mice had gotten into our Easter baskets and spoiled everything.

Mom threw the bad out, washed off the Easter eggs, and with candy that she had left over she put together some modest baskets for us. When we went to bed that night she had us place the baskets on the dining room table and she covered them with a sheet. When we got up Monday morning we found that her plan was successful as the mice did not get the sheet.

Dad bought a bunch of mouse traps and we set them up that night. When morning came it was my job to check each trap and if it had a dead mouse I took it to the basement and threw the mouse into the furnace and then we reset the traps. Meanwhile Dad went about trying to find the holes that allowed them to get into the house and sealed them up.

## Summer of 1950

It was coming up on summer and I got through the third grade with better grades than I usually got. Only a few D's and rest were C's. I was looking forward to the Fourth grade come September. Summer was pretty good that year and I made a lot of new friends. There was Robert, who was a little older than me, and he taught me the value of pop bottles. A regular pop bottle was worth 2 cents, a big pop bottle was worth 5 cents. Many times Robert and I would search the neighborhood for pop bottles and then we would cash them in at the little corner store. 5 cents would get you a candy bar or and ice cream cone.

Brother Dave got a job at Robinson school helping to set out the recreational items for that summer's program. They had basketball, baseball, pool tables, ping pong and the like. We spent many a summer afternoon at Robison playing all sorts of things.

## Swim Call (Summer of 1950)

When school let out Mom decided that us three older boys should learn how to swim. So we each got a swim suit and a towel. Mom gave Dave bus fare for us to go to Summit Beach Park as the Red Cross was conducting swim lessons at the Crystal Pool.

We walked up to the bus stop on Arlington. When we boarded the bus brother Dave asked for three transfers. That bus took us down Arlington to Exchange Street. We got off the bus on Main Street in down town Akron and using the three transfers boarded another bus that took us to Ira ave in South Akron. From there we walked to the Summit Beach's Crystal pool.

We arrived about 10:00 AM and as we entered the locker room we were each given a hanger and directed to the changing rooms to get into our swim suits. After changing the instructors directed us through the footbath and out onto the deck that surrounded the pool. I was sent to the very shallow end for the beginners training and Dave and Harry went to the waist high section.

I learned how to float and how to hold my breath under water. And each day we learned new stuff and moved up to various depths of the pool. Eventually we learned how to swim and how to dive into the pool.

When the instructions were over we retrieved our hangers and got dressed. We walked back to the bus stop and headed home.

Brother Dave got us there safe and sound and we all had a good time.

## The Old Norka Theater

Talk about expanding my mind every Sunday Dad would send us three older boys to the movies. He would give Brother Dave a dollar and off we would go.

Brother Dave always seemed to know the way and so we followed him as we walked down River Street, to Case. Down Case to Market St. and then walk all the way back up Market to where the Norka Theater was.

That is the way we went the first few times until Brother Dave found a short cut. He was always exploring. There was this very narrow path up the steep hill at the back of the Guran storage lot. So we cut through Guran's and climbed this hill being careful where we stepped. Then we carefully ducked

through the hole in the cyclone fence at the Market street sidewalk. This saved us a lot of walking and a ton of time.

The Norka cost a dime a piece to get in which left us with 70 cents. We could each get a pop and popcorn or candy bar. What a treat. Usually it was a double feature plus a cartoon.

On some occasions Brother Dave took us to the Cameo Theater on Arlington Street. They had better movies and also ran the 15 minute serials like Rocket Man which we all enjoyed.

### Goldfish (Summer 1950)

Somehow I got a dollar and I headed for the Five and Dime store to get my Goldfish. I bought a small fishbowl, pretty colored pebbles for the bottom, a box of fish food, and of course, a nice little goldfish. The lady put my goldfish in a small cardboard carton with a handle on it and put everything else into a bag.

I rushed home and Mom helped me set it up. I spent hours just watching this thing swim around the bowl. One day when I came in I noticed that there was a small brown thing in the bowl down in the pebbles. I ask Mom if this was an egg. She said no and not to worry about it. But I was convinced that my goldfish was soon to have a baby fish.

It turns out that when Mom had cleaned the bowl and changed the water a small coffee ground had entered the water. I was greatly disappointed.

### The Talk 1950

Dad and Mom gathered Dave, Harry, and I around the dining room table after supper and after Ralphie had went to bed. Dad done the talking and he said that he had already told Dave and Harry these things before but wanted them to listen again.

Son, he said, first of all there is no Santa Clause and there is no Easter Bunny! Everything that you've enjoyed at Christmas and Easter is because of your Mother and me.

Now I have some other things to discuss with you. You see that brown thing in the fishbowl could not be a fish egg because it takes two fish to make an egg, a mommy fish and a daddy fish. It's the same all over the world and with all the different animals and also with us as well. This comes about because of sex. Male and female must mate to produce babies of any kind.

When two people love each other very much they get married just like me and your mother, and when we love each other very much we come together and we are very close to each other and we have sex. Sometimes that results in the woman becoming pregnant with a baby and she carries that baby in her womb for nine months and as the baby grows inside of her belly gets bigger.

With that Dad reached for this very big book that he had sat on the table. He open it up showed me pictures of everything he had talked about showing the baby growing inside the woman.

Dad talked about how some people have different words to describe what a man and woman do to have a baby. He even talked about the F word and how it was a very vulgar word and should never be used.

I, of course, was astonished, I could understand the sex thing and that there was no Easter bunny, but No Santa Clause! Give me a Break!



## Blizzard 1950

I was 9 ½ years old and just before Thanksgiving we were hit with a blinding snow storm, they called it a blizzard. School was cancelled because nobody could hardly move. Dad was already at work and we worried that he wouldn't make it home.

Several feet of snow fell and the high winds drove it into high snow drifts. Mom called us three boys and said just in case your Father makes it home I know he won't make it up the drive way with his car. So I want you to bundle up, grab the shovels, and go outside and dig out the snow in front of the house on the street so that he can park his car.

Outside we went and we started shoveling it took us a while but we made a real nice parking space for Dad and wouldn't you know it but here came some guy and stole the spot. We yelled and hollered at him and Mom came to the door and told him to leave and he did.

While we waited for Dad to come home we guarded the parking spot and went to work shoveling the sidewalk. I swear the snow had drifted so high it was over our heads. It was slow going but we got it done.

The lady next door came out on her porch and said she would pay us if we shoveled her walk as well. What the hell let's make some money. So we shoveled her walk. When we were done she came out and we went up to her porch she gave me 75 cents and gave Dave and Harry a dollar each. I was wore out so I guarded Dad's parking spot by laying my shovel in the spot and sitting on the steps. Dave and Harry went around the neighborhood to see if they could find more walks to shovel and they did and they made a few more bucks.

Dad finally got home and we all went inside feeling very thankful that Dad was safely home and very grateful that we had made some money.

## Christmas Shopping 1950

A week or so after Thanksgiving the streets and sidewalks were clear and it was time to start thinking about Christmas. Dave and Harry came to me and said they were going to ask Mom if we could go to the drugstore and buy some Christmas gifts with our hard earned shoveling money and did I want to come with them. Of course I would.

So Brother Dave asked Mom and she said it would be OK. So we set out to go to the drugstore that was at the corner of Arlington and Exchange Street which was about the same distance as Annunciation school.

When we arrived we immediately went our separate ways in the store looking for would be Christmas gifts. We had agreed that we would each get something for Mom and Dad. I came upon a Christmas candle that was made of a small whitish log with Holly and Berries on it and right in the middle was a big red candle that was really pretty. Boy I said to myself Mom would really like that. I checked the price and it was 75 cents, which was all the money I had so I continued to look around.

Dave and Harry caught up with me and asked if I had decided on anything so I showed them the Christmas candle that cost 75 cents and that I wouldn't have enough money for Dad. Dave said that I would still need a few pennies more for the sales tax. Harry said I have a few pennies left and should cover the tax. They both said that they thought Mom would really like it and that Dad wouldn't mind not

getting a present as long as I got Mom something. So it was done and we went to the counter to pay for it. This was the first time I had ever bought a present for Mom or anyone else for that matter. Boy Did I feel good about it. We headed home to wrap our precious gifts with great anticipation of Christmas morning!

### December 19, 1950 (My 10<sup>th</sup>. Birthday)

It was a tradition, in our family, that when anyone had a birthday it was celebrated with Ice cream and cake. I was looking forward to my 10<sup>th</sup>. Birthday and was full of excitement for the celebration. After supper Mom prepared the birthday cake and everyone sang happy birthday to me. She than sliced up the cake and began serving without ice cream. Where's the ice cream I asked? To which she replied be happy you have cake.

I was mournfully unhappy, NO Ice Cream! I began to pout about it and played with the cake but not eating any of it. Mom got mad and took the cake from me and sent me to bed without any of it. OK, so be it, I deserved it.

Four days later it was Brother Harry's birthday and guess what He got ice cream and cake! I mumbled about it and Mom said I could just stop mumbling or I would go to bed without once again. OK I stopped mumbling but I would never forget that my 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday was a very gloomy one. And I always wondered why Mom didn't treat me the same as everyone else that year. It deeply hurt and I never forgot!

From that birthday on Brother Harry (Dec. 23) and I (Dec 19) celebrated our birthdays together.

So that's the 10 years in a nutshell! Oh sure there is a lot more to tell but I just don't remember all of it.