

Bridges To My Maturity

Delightful Memories of What It was Like to be a Young Lad in the 1920s Along the Choptank River on the Eastern Shore of Maryland

George W. Swartz

BRIDGES TO MY MATURITY

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DEDICATION

[image] George W. and Avis N. Swartz

This book is dedicated to my first family of my boyhood days -- Mother, Dad, Sister, and Brother, and other relatives -- whose love and care made my early years happy ones; and to my second family of later years -- Wife, Children, and their relatives -- particularly my wife whose love, support, and help have made it possible for me to have a happy and successful career and a meaningful retirement.

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FOREWORD

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Many of my childhood experiences were centered around the old drawbridge (pictured above) that crossed the Choptank River at Denton, Maryland. This old bridge, now replaced by a high arch bridge, inspired me to think of it as a symbol -- a symbol of the many bridges of learning and experiences that I crossed in the process of growing from childhood to maturity. Some of these learning experiences came about from the activities centered around the old drawbridge itself, while others came from the community surrounding it. Most of the opportunities for such experiences no longer exist and it seems only sitting to write about them, thus preserving them for my children, grandchildren, and other interested people.

George W. Swartz

INTRODUCTION

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Everything grows or matures. People mature -- physically, mentally, spiritually, culturally, in their relationships to others, and in many ways. Crops mature and have to be harvested. Cities and towns grow... in size, influence, and in importance. Growth toward maturity is a never ending part of life, from birth until death.

How difficult it is to determine, to visualize, to capture, to record all of those factors that contribute to one's growth. And yet, how interesting it is to see that this growth takes places among the young in the same manner in this century as it did in the last, even though times have changed and conditions are never the same.

We are told that more changes have taken place in the twentieth century than in all of the other periods of recorded human history combined. As I reflect back to the '20s and compare living and working conditions then with those of today, it almost seems impossible that we have advanced so rapidly in short a period of time. Even more fascinating is the fact that this progress took place right under the noses of many of us who lived during this era who are still unaware of such phenomenal change.

Much has been written about the Colonial days, the period during which our nation was getting a firm foundation, and the early pioneer days, but perhaps not enough has been written about the way of life within our own twentieth century.

As a young lad in the '20s, I had a number of unique and varied experiences which do not exist for youngsters today, just as the pioneer youngsters experiences that did not exist for me. As I have grown older, now retired from regular employment, I have this constant urge to record some of these experiences, for whatever they are worth, especially for the benefit of my two sons and my granddaughters. Lately, I have regretted that these kinds of experience of my own parents and grandparents were available to me only in very limited form. In fact, my granddaughters might even find it hard to believe certain things were as they were in the '40s and '50s before they were born. That would be the basis for another book, or perhaps my sons will want to write about these as they get older.

Thus, this book is dedicated to my family, as well as to others who might want to hear how things were in what some like to call "the good old days. (The good old days????.. before bathrooms, electricity, automobiles, interstate highways, airplanes, radio, TV, etcetera....) George W. Swartz

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Chapter One

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THE DRAWBRIDGE

Putt... putt.. .putt. . putt... putt... putt.... The sound that drifted around the corners of the buildings along the waterfront and over the treetops until reached my ears as I worked in the backyard of my home sawing up wooden palettes for kindling with the bucksaw that my grandfather had given me, was a familiar one. "Oh boy! that's the unmistakable sound of a yawl boat (or jolly) boat pushing a sailing vessel," I said to myself as I listened intently to the sound coming from down the river. "This means that the sailing vessel, loaded fertilizer, and expected by Mr. Butler, is about to arrive," I thought, "and maybe I can help raise the drawbridge, and also maybe I can get a job helping to unload the boat."

Sailing vessels were quite popular as a means of moving bulk freight along the tidewater tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay during the '20s, and they of various types, including schooners, bugeyes, three masters, and others. The sails were quite efficient for moving a sailing vessel in open water when a good breeze was blowing, but as they wound their way up the narrow rivers the sails were usually lowered and a small yawl or jolly boat containing a one-cylinder gasoline engine was pressed into service to push the sailing vessel along to its destination.

I put down my bucksaw and headed for the drawbridge. By now, the vessel sight and the captain began blowing his horn, a long conical piece of sheet metal with a mouthpiece containing a vibrating reed. The horn could be heard for a half mile or more when the captain emptied his lungs into it.

The horn signaled the bridge tender, "Uncle" Sam Ewing, that the vessel wanted to go through the drawbridge. The sound was a sort of fish horn effect: phrom..m..m..m..p, phrom..m..m..m.p, but much louder, and usually the captain started blowing it in plenty of time to notify the bridge tender with blasts repeated at various intervals.

Now to stop the forward motion of a sailing vessel, especially if it is moving with the tide, is not an easy task since it has no engine that can be reversed. The bridge tender, "Uncle" Sam Ewing, did not remain on the bridge during operations of the draw. He went home -- about six or seven hundred feet down the street from the bridge, where he lived from early morning until late at night, seven days a week, with his ears cocked for the sound of a boat. Even if he received notice ahead of time that a boat might arrive the next day, there was no

way to know the precise

THE DENTON DRAWBRIDGE

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These pictures were taken in 1975. The old bridge looks the same as it did in the '20s except that the pilings and buffers appear to be new.

The picture at the left was taken from the site upon which my dad's store was located. The picture below was taken from a site in front of our home.

The small control house for raising the draw can be seen just to the right of the counterbalance. This bridge has now been replaced by a high arch bridge under which vessels can pass freely.

hour he could expect it. Thus, if the boat captain waited too long to blow his horn the first time, he might find himself in the awkward position of having to stop the forward motion of his sailboat with no good way to do it, or.. crash into the drawbridge. I do not recall having seen one crash into the bridge, but I have seen it necessary to quickly turn the boat around in the river, or to bring it close to a wharf and try to lasso a piling with a rope to slow down the forward motion. Of course, the boat captain had no way of knowing whether or not "Uncle" Sam was on the job. So, most captains, especially those who had traveled the river before, gave ample time to get the draw open by blowing the horn as soon as the vessel got within hearing distance. "Uncle" Sam was very dependable, however, and on the job all of the time, or at least within hearing distance. After all, it might take him a few minutes to put his shoes on and walk the short distance from his home to the bridge.

So I rushed to the bridge ready to put the chain across the road, thus halting all traffic whenever "Uncle" Sam indicated that he was ready to raise the draw. I was "Uncle" Sam's helper! If I got the chain with the fertilizer sack hanging from it across in time, perhaps he would hold up long enough for me to run to the far end of the draw where the controls were located. There he might allow me to raise and lower the draw.

The control was electric -- very similar to the control on a street car -- a lever on a rheostat that you moved to the right of the center to raise the draw, bring it back to the center to hold the draw up at the desired position, and then move it to the left to lower it. Of course, with a rheostat controlling the amount of electric current being used, the farther you moved it to the right or to the left the faster the draw would open or close. The railroad bridge, about a quarter of a mile further up the river, was opened by hand, using a turnstile type of device with two horizontal arms connected to a vertical central post. That bridge, however, did not have a draw that opened vertically -- it was a draw that rotated 90 degrees and was attached to a small support island located exactly in the center of the draw. When it was opened, the vessel could use either one of the two passageways, to the right or to the left of the center island.

To help "Uncle" Sam raise and lower the draw on the bridge was an experience "out of this world" for a lad 12 to 15 years of age, and not only that, I was the only one who had the honor of being "Uncle" Sam's helper. Of course, "Uncle" Sam was at my elbow ready to take over should I make a mistake or act too carelessly, but I don't recall of that ever happening. In fact, as time went by there were occasions when I manned the controls all alone.

The draw itself was counterbalanced by a large overhead concrete block and the whole apparatus was mounted on tracks, one on each side. Each of these runners was maneuvered by a heavy chain connected to three sprocket wheels mounted in triangular fashion all of which was attached by gears to the electric motor. The draw was heavier than the counterbalance, causing the old motor to groan when the draw was being raised and to coast as it was lowered. I maintained a sort of cautious fear in my heart that I might raise the draw too far and that the whole works would topple over backward. But "Uncle" Sam had the limits clearly marked on the moving parts, eliminating the danger of that catastrophe happening if one kept his eyes open and paid close attention to the job. In later years, a new set of pushbutton automatic controls with built-in safety precautions were installed, including electric gates with flashing lights at both ends of the bridge.

Once the sprocket wheels and the chain drives broke as the draw was being lowered and it descended rapidly out of control from a position of about two-thirds open. It hit the concrete resting piers with such force that it bounced several times until it finally came to rest. Other than knocking part of the counterbalance to the floor of the bridge there was no apparent damage done, but it did make a thundering noise and it jarred much of the merchandise from the shelves in my father's store located on the bank just at the west end of the bridge. My dad was in his store at the time and the noise surprised him, but he knew immediately what had happened. The possibility of the falling draw had been discussed many times.

I was not operating the controls that time, for which I was thankful. The boat that had gone through the draw just before the accident was forced to remain tied up at the wharf on the other side for a week or more until the bridge mechanism could be repaired, the draw opened again, and the boat sent on its way.

As I recall, this incident sort of dampened my enthusiasm for being "Uncle" Sam's helper. By now the novelty had worn off anyway, as I was about to graduate from high school and leave home for further adventures. However, this old drawbridge, the Choptank River, and the activities surrounding them contributed much to the experiences of my early life that could not have been duplicated in any other way.

The experiences surrounding this old bridge contributed greatly toward my decision to title this book, "Bridges To My Maturity."

Chapter Two

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ACROSS THE RIVER

The events described in Chapter One are centered around the drawbridge at Denton, Maryland, that spanned the Choptank River from 1913 to 1980.

I remember I had the feeling that I was not quite as "good" as some of people in Denton proper because I was born and lived in a section of the town "across the river" unofficially called West Denton. Denton, located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, is in the center of the County and is situated on a major river of the Eastern Shore, the Choptank. It is about ten miles south of the head of the Choptank. Only one other small town, Greensboro, about eight miles north of Denton, is touched by river, but the river is too shallow between Denton and Greensboro for use by commercial vessels. George Washington would have had no trouble throwing a silver dollar across the Choptank at Denton. In fact, a favorite pastime of mine as a lad was attempting to skip a flat oyster shell across the river surface

to the opposite side. About forty miles south of Denton, where the Choptank merges with the Chesapeake Bay, the river is approximately a mile wide.

Caroline County was the last of the Maryland counties created under the provincial government, and it was named for Caroline Eden, the daughter of the Second Lord of Baltimore and the wife of Sir Robert Eden, the last Royal Governor of Maryland, 1769-1774. The county was created in 1774 and a controversy lasted for nearly twenty years over the location of the county seat. It wasn't until 1791 that Pig Point was chosen by public vote to be the county seat. The two locations in dispute were Choptank Bridge (now Greensboro) and Pig Point (now Denton).

Denton evolved from a thin, narrow tract of land containing three hundred acres extending along the eastern shore of the Choptank for about a mile north to two miles south of the center of the present town site. Originally it was a mere landing called Pig Point. Upon being selected as the county seat, it was renamed Eden-Town, and later Edenton. The E was soon dropped in favor of the name Denton. One who is fond of colonial history would find it interesting to follow the events related to this process of establishing Denton as a town and later as the county seat, but that is a story in itself.

It may be appropriate to note, however, that this section of the Eastern Shore originally was inhabited by two Indian tribes, the Nanticokes and the Choptanks. Both tribes were tidewater people and they lived along the rivers that now bear their names. Their habits, customs, and ways of life were very similar to those of other Indian tribes about which much has been written in the past. As the white man began to encroach upon their territory, the Nanticoke migrated north, stopping in Pennsylvania and New York where they joined the Iroquois (except for a few who went on to Canada). The fate of the Choptank Indians was similar to that of the Nanticoke's, and by the end of the eighteenth century there were only four Choptank Indian families left on the Choptank River. They left their mark on the Eastern Shore, however, in the form of customs and ways of life adopted by the white man, and more specifically in the Indian names attached to the rivers, tributaries, river landings, and villages

Crossing the Choptank River, whose channel depth is about 25 feet, was not an easy task in the early days of Denton. The most practical way was by small boat or ferry. The winters must have been much colder in the early days of the town because I can remember many tales of how the Choptank would remain frozen over all through the winter with a thick coat of ice strong enough to support mule teams with wagonloads of wood, grain, and other kinds of cargo. This was seldom true in my time.

In November 1792, the General Assembly of Maryland authorized the building of a causeway through the marsh on the east side of the Choptank and the erection of a wharf at the end of the causeway. This probably shortened the distance of the ferry crossing.

A History of Caroline County, published in 1920, states that "in 1811 a number of citizens on seeing how much more convenient it would be to have a bridge here, decided to form a company to erect one, so they were incorporated by the General Assembly under the name of 'The President and Directors of the Denton Bridge'.

This first bridge was a narrow, one-way drawbridge with a draw twenty-six long. It was a toll bridge to all persons not residents of Caroline County. The Levy Court paid a small sum (\$280) each year to allow Caroline County residents to go over the bridge free. Those who came from other counties had to pay twenty-five cents for a four-wheeled vehicle, twelve and a half cents for a two-wheeled vehicle, six and a fourth cents for a horse and rider,

three cents for each mule or horse, and two cents for each foot passenger. In 1818, this toll was doubled. About 1875, this bridge was replaced by an iron bridge and the toll was lifted. The iron bridge was replaced in 1913 (the year before my birth) by a concrete bridge which was closed in 1980 upon opening of a high arch bridge constructed a little to the south of the 1913 structure. Boats now using the river can go under the arch, making a drawbridge unnecessary.

At the immediate northwest corner of this concrete bridge crossing the Choptank, my father operated his general merchandise store. In fact, the back end of the store rested on piers built along the river bank and it extended a little past the west end of the bridge. Almost immediately to the west of the bridge the Hillsboro-Denton road and the Easton-Denton road crossed. There were stores on three of the corners formed by this crossroads: my dad's, Knotts' store, and Pastorfield's store.

The other corner along the river bank was vacant and was used for access to barges, small oyster boats, and other vessels. Beyond this corner lot, along the river to the south, and also beyond my dad's store along the river to the north, there were fertilizer warehouses, oil storage yards, several wharves and appropriate places to tie up small boats and to fish. The two roads mentioned formed the major streets in West Denton, although there were several smaller streets and alleys leading off from these two major ones. There were a number of houses, perhaps fifty or sixty, along these streets and alleys and several other commercial establishments such as canneries, a garage, and a shirt factory. During the '20s, the population of West Denton was approximately 200 and of Denton proper about 1,400. It was in this setting that I spent the first 17 years of my life, from 1914 to 1931.

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to being born "across the river. Some of the youngsters, and perhaps some of the adults in Denton proper, considered this the same as being born "across the tracks." Maybe this was due to the fact that in West Denton all of the people, black or white, lived near each other and not in any particular section as they did in Denton itself. It was an early example of "there goes the neighborhood." Also, the causeway, referred to earlier, was low and sometimes covered with the Choptank waters. The town of Denton rested upon an incline, which in addition to the eliteness of its environment caused us to refer to it as "uptown." I know that sometimes I wished that I lived "uptown."

It is difficult to say exactly why I felt this way, but I suppose it centered around the social aspects of the community. The fact that Denton was the county seat meant that the courthouse was there, providing the place of business for many lawyers who lived "uptown." Other professional people, such as judges, congressmen, school officials, ministers, teachers, and doctors lived in Denton. Even the owners of the two stores across from my dad's and the canneries in West Denton all lived "uptown." Thus, most of those who lived in West Denton could be classified as day laborers with a very few in the blue collar group. Inasmuch as my father was an independent businessman, I'm sure that the feeling in our family was that he could hold his own with the professional people. He was active in his political party, being one of the chief judges at all elections, and he was urged several times by lawyer and political friends to run for public office, an honor that he rejected. I guess I wondered many times why we didn't live "uptown" with the other professional people. It wasn't that I considered myself above the other kids in West Denton -- I fished and played with the darkest and the poorest of them. All of the adults were my friends, no matter what their race or social status. Although I can't remember any specific incidents, I know that there were times when the "uptown" kids had some unkind remarks about those who lived "across the river."

Since most of my immediate neighbors lived on a day-to-day or season-to-season basis, I am quite certain that living in this environment inspired me to want to become prepared to live a better or more meaningful life. To work day to day when there were unskilled jobs to do and then live at other times on credit or a few dollars saved from earnings when work was available did not seem to be the way I wanted to live. I resolved that someday I would live "uptown" and not "across the river."

Chapter Three

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ACTIVITIES ALONG THE RIVER

Commercial Activities

Without a doubt, I grew up loving the activities that surrounded that old bridge and river. Of course, I practically "ate, slept, and drank river" since Dad's store was at the edge of the bridge and our home was diagonally across from it, facing the river and the vacant lot beside the steamboat wharf. Shipment of freight by water was a big thing during the '20s. As many as four or five two- and three-mast sailing vessels at a time were often tied up at the Denton wharves. I have spent many hours on the deck of a sailing vessel or down in the captain's galley. A portion of the bowels of the sailing vessels was always reserved for the cargo, was partitioned off near the stern in most cases for the captain's galley and sleeping quarters. Frequently, in the evening, the smoke from the old iron wood-burning cook stove in the captain's galley would drift across the river bank, and it was a sure sign to me that a hot biscuit with butter or jelly would be tendered by some sympathetic old sea salt if I would but venture to the galley door and slip down the steps. To this day the smell of wood smoke from a fireplace anywhere brings back memories the ship's galley known to me in my boyhood days. In fact, I can almost revive that smell without the benefit of the fireplace.

By far, the major cargo coming to Denton in sailing vessels was Fertilizer. Products from the canneries were often shipped out on the same vessel that brought fertilizer. Fertilizer then was shipped in 167-pound burlap bags (except for sodium nitrate which always came in 200-pound bags). One of my earliest math lessons was that it took twelve bags of regular fertilizer to equal a ton and ten bags of sodium nitrate. Usually I was a little too small and light to handle those bags when they were stacked on their sides eight or ten bags high in the warehouse. It took two men to swing them by the ears on the corners and stack them this high. However, there were some jobs that a boy could handle, such as hooking the tongs around the individual bags in the ship's hold, tripping the tongs on the wharf to release the bag, or even pushing the two-wheeled bag truck from the wharf into the warehouse. Most of the time the men in charge did not want boys around because the younger set would want to work a few minutes and then resort to foolishness. I found that if you were serious about really working and could gain the men's confidence, you were welcome.

Hoisting the bags out of the hold was done then by one of two methods, the use of a mule or the use of a gasoline engine windlass on the deck of a boat. A strong rope fed through pulleys on the ship's mast and containing tongs on one end was used. The tongs, of course, were lowered into the ship's hold where a worker fastened them around a sack of fertilizer. The other end of the rope was fastened either to the mule on the riverbank or the gasoline engine windlass on the ship's deck. If a mule was used, I often could have the job of leading that mule forward to lift the bag out of the hold and backing him up again to drop the bag on the wharf and to lower the tongs back into the hold for another bag. You get

the picture - the mule and the boy - back and forth all day until the last bag was out of the hold. Occasionally the tongs slipped or the man on the wharf tripped them too soon and a bag would miss the wharf and slip down between the boat and the wharf into the water where it became fish food. The mule and the boy usually got blamed regardless of who made the mistake. I have also operated the gasoline engine windlass on the deck but this was considered dangerous because of the chance of getting your hand between the rope and the drum of the windlass; so the captain was usually a little reluctant to let a boy operate it.

[image] Boy Leading Mule Unloading Sacks of Fertilizer From Schooner

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In the late '20s the shipment of petroleum products began to increase. Big storage tanks and oil distribution yards were built at various points on the navigable rivers and motorized oil tankers were used to bring the petroleum products to these distribution points. Three big oil yards were constructed along the Choptank in West Denton and these became distribution points for Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (later divided into several companies including Exxon, American Oil Company (Amoco), and Sun Oil Company (Sunoco). I became acquainted with the men in charge of these oil companies and found opportunities to work in the yards as I will describe in more detail in Chapter 6.

During the early part of the twentieth century many handsome steamboats provided a link between Baltimore and the little towns on the Eastern Shore rivers. With the new drawbridge over the Choptank at Denton, built in 1913, the advent of the automobile, and the building of a new railroad crossing the county through Denton, fewer and fewer steamboats served the towns along the rivers. I do remember, however, the steamboat "Joppa" which came from Baltimore once or twice each week and tied up at the wharf directly across from our house. The big event of the week for some folks, young and old, was meeting the steamboat. Sometimes there were mule teams with lumber carts, horses, carriages, or wagons loaded with livestock or chickens, all with wares destined for the city markets; or there may be empty conveyances awaiting the arrival of merchandise. Sometimes the steamboat was off of its schedule and needed to move on hurriedly, other times it seemed to have no particular schedule to meet and the crew seemed happy to visit with the county people.

I distinctly remember the time that my father went over to the freight warehouse on the wharf upon the arrival of the "Joppa" when I was about six years of age and returned with a small red and yellow wooden express wagon for me directly from Baltimore. Was I a proud youngster: It was so new that the paint in several places was still sticky.

The steamboat was discontinued around the closing years of the '20s. A group of Denton citizens hoped to revive it and organized a company to do so, purchasing a steamboat that they named "The City of Denton." During the years 1930 and 1931 it operated for about a year, but it didn't last ... other more modern means of transportation had replaced the majestic, handsome, and mystifying old steamboat.

During the oyster season there were always one or two oyster boats tied up along the river bank with oysters for sale in the shell by the bushel, half bushel, or tomato basket. People would stop by, purchase whatever quantity they needed, take them home and prepare them for eating. In case the customer did not want to bother with shucking them, the boatman would shuck out a quart, half gallon or a gallon for which he could get a better price.

A gallon of shucked oysters would sell for \$2.50 or \$3.00 Today they would more than likely be \$25.00 or more a gallon. A half-dozen oysters on-the-half-shell at a restaurant

will cost about \$3.50 or \$4.00. More than once I have sat on the side of an oyster boat, shucking oysters and eating them from the shell. The oyster boat would stay around for a few days until all of the oysters were sold. Once out of the water, oysters will not keep very long in the shell without spoiling unless refrigerated. Thus, the boatman had to dispose of his boatload quickly. If at the end of several days, sales had not been good and quite a few oysters were left, they could be purchased for bargain prices.

For the first part of the twentieth century many of the roads on the Eastern Shore were top dressed with oyster shells. When spread on the road surface several inches thick, they would eventually become mashed into small pieces and thus form a hard surface on what would otherwise have been a sandy or muddy road. Occasionally, boatloads of oyster shells would be brought up river to be spread on the roads by the county employees.

It was a rare occasion, but always interesting, when a pile driver came to the river to engage in a pile driving job. This would happen around Denton at least once in every two or three years. A pile driver was a barge with a derrick mounted at one end. A piling (which was a large tree that had been processed and waterproofed) would be placed into the derrick and driven into the river bottom by means of a heavy iron weight which operated up and down a track within the derrick. The weight was lifted with a windlass and allowed to fall by gravity, thus pounding the piling blow by blow into the river bottom. Later, a diesel-driven hammer was substituted for the iron weight. Wharves and piers were built on pilings, drawbridge passageways were buffered on each side and river banks were shored up and reinforced with pilings and logs. Pilings were also used as pillars upon which to build warehouses along the river banks. At several places along a wharf and even along river bank pilings were driven and allowed to extend from three to six feet above the surface of the wharf or river bank for use in tying up all kinds of boats. The process of contracting for a pile driver to place a number of pilings was an expensive one and therefore used only on occasions when the job was large enough to justify the expense. If only one or two pilings needed to be driven or replaced, this job would usually have to wait until a driver was brought in to do a larger job. A pile driver carried its own crew, so there was no employment for local people - just a form of entertainment for those who had time to watch.

Barges were sometimes towed up the river for transporting materials that were difficult to move in the holds of a sailing vessel, such as oyster shell or stone. My most memorable occasion involving a barge occurred when a very large one loaded with stone sank shortly after it had been tied up along the river bank and open lot in front of our house. The stone was to be used in building a concrete road near Denton. It was later determined that under the barge, four or five feet from the river bank, there was a broken off piling, previously not known to be there. It apparently had not been a hazard to other boats, but the broad bottom of the barge, low in the water, could not miss it. The barge had been tied up at high tide and had just barely eased over the top of the submerged piling. As the tide went out the barge dropped lower into the water and came to rest upon the top of the piling. The weight of the stone caused the bottom of the barge to yield to the broken-off piling creating a hole that soon allowed the water to rush in and sink the barge. Fortunately, the river was somewhat shallow along this bank and the barge was not completely submerged. It took some intelligence and ingenuity, however, to figure out how to recover the stone from underwater and to eventually float and save the barge. The whole process took several weeks. Mules and leveling pans like they used in that day to move and level soil were used. The work was done mostly at low tide when most of the stone was visible and could be dragged from the deck of the barge. Men would drag the pans from the river bank onto the deck of the barge, wade into the water, sometimes waist deep, and guide the pans so that they would self-load as the mules drug them back to the land. Today any number of

soil moving machines could make short work of the whole process. Eventually, enough rock was removed so that the bottom of the barge came off of the submerged piling far enough that it could be patched. Then the remaining water was pumped out and the barge salvaged. Local residents never forgot the location of that submerged piling and made it a point to warn other captains seeking to tie up at that point.

There was some commercial fishing on the Choptank also. At least two families in West Denton made a living by fishing on the river. In season they would go down the river daily in their boats and use their nets to fish for shad, herring, rock fish and carp. The nets, about four feet in depth, would be suspended in the water by floating corks and were usually placed so that they covered the distance from shore to shore. As one fisherman rowed the boat, the other one would "pay out" the net hand over hand until a continuous net approaching a half mile long would cross the river diagonally. Then came the process of gathering it in, removing the fish, and folding it layer upon layer so that it was ready to be "payed" out again. Much care had to be taken to prevent tangling and to make it easy to "pay" it out and gather it in time after time. In the winter months, they would spend much time repairing their nets or making new ones, as well as repairing and painting their boats.

Recreational Activities

There were always plenty of activities on and around the Choptank to keep a young lad busy and entertained, in addition to the ones already described. The highlights of some of these follow:

Swimming. During the swimming season there were always some local young people swimming from the wharf or diving from the bridge, especially Saturdays and Sundays. I must have been in the tenth or eleventh grade in high school before I learned to swim and only then at the insistence and patience of my brother when he spent one summer at home. Even though I could not swim, I was in the water (under the bridge or somewhere that was shallow) whenever I got a chance, often at the risk of being reprimanded by my parents. I am sure that my brother's awareness of the risk involved prompted him to take me to Williston Lake, about six miles from Denton, each day for my swimming lessons. At this lake there was a diving board and a sloping beach that had been prepared especially for swimmers, making it a good place for beginners.

Fishing. Fishing for the sport of it was almost a daily activity from spring to fall. As a boy I spent many hours with a homemade pole, hook and line, and a cork float fishing for sun perch and white perch. If large enough to justify cleaning, they were good eating when fried in hot grease. Catfish were plentiful, but due to the fact that they fed largely on the contents of the Denton sewer lines that emptied directly into the river, most people did not eat them. There were large carp in the river and several of acquaintances made it a practice to fish for them with their own special bait. These were hard, round cooked balls made from a mixture of flour, corn salt, and other ingredients, which they placed upon hooks fastened to a strong line and threw into the water. Some commercial fishermen also used nets to catch carp. When a carp gets a little old and yellow, it begins to have a muddy taste, so it was not a very popular fish.

The back of my father's store was at the immediate edge of the river and there was a window in the back from which we used to fish with drop lines. A drop line is a strong cord with two or three leaders containing hooks tied so it and weighted with a lead sinker. Without the benefit of a pole or boat you fed it out into the water and let it go as far as it would until the sinker reached the bottom. A drop line was better than a pole for fishing out of the window since we could tie it fast while we waited on a customer in the store if

needed. Once, I recall, when my dad returned to the line after waiting on a customer, he pulled in the line and it contained two large catfish and an eel. Eels were delicious eating after being skinned, soaked overnight, and fried in hot grease. Many would not eat them because, as they put it, "they look too much like a snake" or "you can't kill them-they'll even flip over in the pan while being fried." The pieces of eel would curl up in the pan after they had been flattened out but I do not ever recall having seen one "flip over." There is a small amount of skill involved in salvaging your drop line after catching an eel. They are so wiggly that they will hopelessly knot up your line in no time flat after they are out of the water. One secret is to pull your line rapidly from the water and, all in one process without pausing, flop the eel hard on the wharf or river bank to stun it long enough to remove the hook and free the line. Thereafter, they will revive and continue to wiggle for a long time.

Accidents. In addition to drowning, accidents can happen even while doing simple fishing. One has to be aware of the fins on fish that will hurt if they penetrate your hand. The catfish especially, has a "stinger" which is no more than a large protruding fin on his back behind his big mouth that really stings if it penetrates your hand. The hand will remain swollen and will hurt for several hours. I have never heard the real explanation for why this fin stings more than any other fish fin, but we Denton boys all assumed that it gave off some kind of poison that irritated human flesh.

One can get hooked by fish hooks, also, and they are not easy to remove without tearing some flesh. When using a drop line from a wharf, the kind with the leaders, hooks, and sinkers near the end of it, the technique of throwing it out into the water is to grab the line a short distance above the top leader, get up momentum by revolving the sinker and hooks in a circle by your side or over your head and let it fly out into the channel. This requires practice and can be dangerous, even with much practice. The most serious such accident that I witnessed happened to an elderly gentleman who, with his wife, fished almost daily from one of the wharves along the river. When he let his drop line fly one of the hooks caught him in the hand ripping a long gash. His wife had to get him to the doctor where several stitches were required. Their daily fishing was interrupted for several weeks.

Those standing nearby could get hurt in a like manner if too close. Every boy gets his share of fish hooks in his hand and falls victim to other small accidents which may be a practical but not necessarily best way to learn.

The end of the drawbridge that opened rested upon concrete piers and each side of the draw contained a swinging electric lantern having clear glass in it. Mounted in front of the lantern was a quarter-circle piece of lass, half of which was red, the other half green. When the draw was closed the lantern rested behind the red glass, showing red to the boatman progressing up the river, especially at night, and indicating to him that the draw was closed. As the draw was raised the lantern swung over to the green glass, showing green to the boatman and indicating that the draw was open far enough for the vessel to pass through. The bottom of the huge lanterns were open and at night the light shown down onto the water. This light would attract hundreds of fish, swimming around under the lantern along the side of the concrete piers, often breaking the surface of the water.

I conceived the idea that I could catch lots of fish easily if I had a wire basket that I could let down into the water under the fish, let it rest awhile until the fish accumulated again, then pull it up rapidly above the surface. A friend of mine, Charlie Taylor, helped me make a basket of wire netting, about two feet square, with sides six inches deep. Cords extended up from the corners, then merged into one cord which was used to hold the basket and pull it out of the water. It worked: I would drop it below the fish, wait a few minutes until they reassembled in a school, then jerk the basket up rapidly. Of course, the slightest

movement would cause the fish to scatter in all directions, but if you were fast enough you could get a few. The most that I ever caught in a single trial was about thirty-six. They ranged in size from minnows to as much as six or eight inches in length. I think this was probably an illegal catch but I was only doing it for the fun and sport of it, and as soon as counted my catch I would dump them back and try again. After awhile the novelty wore off and it became more work than fun.

Crabbing. Another form of fishing on the river was fishing for crabs, generally called crabbing. To catch crabs one needed a cord to which a piece of meat was tied (usually fat-back because it was the cheapest) and a dip net. The end of the cord containing the meat was thrown into the water from the river bank or from a boat, and it would slowly sink below the surface. By holding the cord so that it crossed your forefinger you could feel the vibrations when a crab started to nibble. Then you started pulling in the cord, meat, and crab very slowly so that the crab, who by nature is very suspicious of any movement near him, would not depart from his source of lunch before you could spot him. In the meantime, while pulling in the cord with one hand, you had lowered the dip net into the water, out of sight of the crab, with your other hand. As the crab came into sight. ..swish... you quickly brought the dip net under him, lifted him out of the water and flopped the net over your basket or can so that the crab landed inside.. all in one quick operation. Then.. overboard again with the cord and meat for another one. Crabs are very fast in making their getaway once they sight the slightest movement and many a crab has been lost in the process of applying the dip net, proving that the eye (crab's) is faster than the hand (boy's).

[image] Crab Fishing Along the Banks of the Choptank River

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When a party of youngsters went crabbing a favorite form of recreation was not only to catch them but also to build a fire, fix a lard can containing a small amount of water over the fire, drop your live catch into the can, cover it so that the crabs were well steamed, and eat them on the spot. This was called a crabbing party.

Boating. Today almost everyone near a lake or a navigable body of water has a boat with either an outboard or inboard engine for recreational purposes. During my boyhood days, only those who made a living with a boat (fishermen or oystermen) or the well-to-do had such a boat. Even then, outboard engines had not yet been invented. The rest of us had no boat, except or a few who had rowboats. I learned at an early age how to row a boat and have at times in later years surprised friends at such places as scout camps, vacation spots, et cetera, with my ability in this area. My cousin and I jointly owned a secondhand rowboat, which I believe he bought for five dollars.

My part of the deal was to caulk and paint it. Since I lived at the water's edge, I was appointed the caretaker. Our biggest problem was to keep the old boat afloat; it had a strong inclination to leak and to sink even with repeated caulking. When in use, it required a two man crew - one to row and the other one to bail water. But we had a lot of fun with it.

My dad's friend, Charlie Taylor, had a boat which he was always improving by changing the inboard auto engine, and he would take my dad and me occasionally for a cruise on the river, usually on a Sunday afternoon. I remember once we went almost to Cambridge, at the mouth of the Choptank, a round-trip distance of about eighty miles.

The most elaborate motor yacht to ever come to Denton when I lived there was one from Baltimore, owned by a Mr. Emerson, reportedly the inventor, manufacturer, and owner of

the Bromo-Seltzer product. About once a year he came in his yacht with his servants and tied up at a wharf for a few days. One can go to any marina near the bay or the coast today and see many such exotic yachts, but that one from Baltimore when I was a boy seemed to be the only one of a kind in the twenties. It attracted a lot of attention and was as unique as its millionaire owner.

The most interesting local boat was one owned by Layman Redden, one of the owners of G. T. Redden & Sons, a cannery in West Denton. Layman had an adventurous spirit and he decided that he wanted a motor boat that could be surpassed by none in speed. Thus, he proceeded to purchase an airplane engine for his approximately 18-foot boat, which he mounted inboard, leaving off the propeller, of course. Those of us who remember the old barnstorming days of the airplane remember that these early airplane engines were started by having a person other than the pilot turn the propeller while standing on the ground after yelling, "contact." Because of the high torque of the engine, the propeller would usually kick backward perhaps several times before the engine finally started, making it necessary for the one on the ground to jump backward at each attempt to start it or suffer a broken or mangled arm.

In place of the propeller, Layman had devised a crank for his boat engine. Only one man, known as "Turk," an employee of Layman's, had nerve enough to crank it. More than once, while standing on the river bank, I have seen that crank kick backward with such force that it would fly off, hit the bottom of the boat, and bounce overboard into the water. Layman often had a couple of boys handy to dive overboard and retrieve the crank. Eventually they rigged up an attachment for the crank so that when it bounced overboard, they could retrieve it without leaving the boat.

The engine of Layman's boat had no gears. It had a direct drive to the underwater propeller beneath the boat. When it did finally start, the boat had to be directed toward open water because it took off like a streak of lightning and otherwise would have climbed the river bank. It could be heard for miles around, and it was undoubtedly the fastest boat that ever rode the Choptank. I'm sure that the novelty never wore off, but the problems connected with an engine of that size and power in a small boat on a narrow river must have been too great, for it was eventually abandoned in favor of a more sophisticated motor yacht.

Another boat that plied the waters of the Eastern Shore was the showboat. Usually when the showboat arrived it would stay for several days, giving theatrical performances on board in afternoon matinees and evening shows. I don't believe that my parents attended to any great extent, at all, but I remember seeing crowds of people coming in the evenings to the glamorous, all-lit-up showboat. It seemed like a touch of the big city brought to a small town. That was one event held in West Denton that was patronized by the "uptown" people.

Firemen's Practice. Denton developed one of the best volunteer fire departments in Maryland, and was able to purchase the latest equipment and keep it updated. This was due in large measure to the support given to the annual Fireman's Carnival, which was then the chief money raising activity. A minstrel and variety show also was held each year to help raise money for the Fire Department and I participated in the chorus of this show for several years.

I remember the first Seagrave fire engine purchased by the Denton Volunteer Fire Department, red with yellow trimmings and black lettering. It was followed by the purchase of other trucks every couple of years. The firemen used the lot on the river bank across from our house for practice and would usually hold their practices on Saturday

afternoon. The suction hose from the pumper was lowered into the river and the fire fighting hoses were aimed at various points along the river. Here I made my first and only attempt at holding the end of a fire hose while it was emitting a stream of water at very high pressure. The firemen gave me a try at it - actually it was sport to them to see a small boy try to hold it - but needless to say they didn't turn it completely loose or it would have flipped me around like a kite in a strong wind had I been able to hold it at all. For youngsters, there is always a lot of excitement and fun around a pumping fire engine. I rather suspect that the firemen enjoyed the practice sessions also.

[image]Fireman Allowing Small Boy to Help Direct

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[image]Fire Hose Across River During a Practice.

Adventure. The Choptank River and the activities around it contributed much toward the meaningful and enjoyable experiences of my early life. There seemed to always be much adventure associated with the river. Even the ebb, low, and high tides were fascinating to me. A boy soon learned that fishing with a pole and float was best at ebb tide, a time when the tides were changing and the surface of the water was as smooth as glass. Then there were storms that brought very high tides. For a while, all tide regularity ceased - the river might overflow its banks and the water remain at high tide for several hours, even a full day or more. I have seen the tide high enough that the water reached our front yard and lapped at the back end of my dad's store.

There were unusual experiences too. I remember the time that a sailboat captain tried to leave Denton during a storm that was bringing a high tide and strong winds. He requested the draw to be opened so that he could leave, which in the minds of a few local people around the drawbridge was a questionable action in view of the storm. Along with the strong wind, the tide was flowing very rapidly through the draw part of the bridge, so fast that his little yawl boat couldn't push the vessel through the drawbridge. It lingered there in the draw part of the bridge for quite a few minutes.

The captain was a feisty old salt who listened to no one, and all the while he was bellowing out orders, interspersed with numerous curse words, to his one shipmate in the yawl boat - all of this to the delight of the local I-told-you-so citizens who on previous occasions had a dislike for the old salt because of his cockiness. All of a sudden he decided that he could do the job better himself and ordered the shipmate out of the yawl boat and jumped in himself. By some freak action he caused that yawl boat to rush forward, climb the ropes that attached it to the stern of the vessel, and then drop straight down into the water stern end first, submerging the engine and carrying the old captain with it. He came out of the water like a drowning rat clinging to whatever was available. Naturally, the engine was dead, and without its push the strong tide caused the vessel to drop back out of the draw. The old captain had managed to get back on board and he had to throw lines over to the wharf where some local residents helped tie up the boat again. The next couple of days were spent in dismantling the yawl boat engine, drying it out, and preparing for another attempted departure. All of this had tied up the drawbridge and traffic for the best part of an hour.

After leaving Denton at age seventeen, only to return briefly during a couple summers, the remainder of my life has been in the mountains, towns, and cities of Virginia. However, I have never really lost my love for the Choptank River and the adventures and experiences of my boyhood days. Every now and then something causes me to recall some experiences or adventure that happened there many years ago.

Chapter Four

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TRUCK PATCH EXPERIENCES

The Eastern Shore was then and still is to a great extent big "truck patch" country, as well as a producer of staple farm products. Truck patch growers would have acres of strawberries, asparagus, watermelons, cantaloupes, and other marketable products in season. Also there were large fields of grain, mostly wheat, other small grains, and corn to be harvested. Today soybeans have replaced many of the grains as a money crop. In addition, many farmers grew large fields of tomatoes, sugar peas, sweet corn, green beans, and even lima beans for sale to the many canneries.

Strawberries and asparagus were harvested by boys early in the morning each day during season. I would rise as soon as the sun was beginning to show and ride my bike to the strawberry patch to begin picking the berries. We carried a tray that held eight quart boxes which we would fill by picking the ripe berries. We would take these to the "boss," usually the farmer-owner, to a spot in the patch that he had selected as a work station. He would check them over, record our picking, and put the boxes in a wooden crate that held thirty-two quarts (four rows deep with eight quarts to a row), ready for shipment to the market. We were paid two and one half cents a quart for picking them. If the berries were good and large, I could make from \$1.00 to \$1.25 each morning that they were in season. About 8:00 or 8:15 I would have to leave, rush home, and get ready for school. I particularly remember picking for Mr. William Samis, a Canadian, who did much truck-patching and who also sold Maytag washing machines. His farm was less than a mile from my home.

Cutting asparagus on Mr. Archie Griffin's farm was an early morning experience also, but I do not remember on what basis or how much we were paid. Asparagus was cut to a certain length, usually about ten inches, tied in bunches weighing approximately two pounds, and sent to market in wooden crates resembling the strawberry crate. Asparagus shoots grow rapidly, and in season they must be cut every day in order to market a tender product. Otherwise they become woody and lose their tender texture.

The production of tomatoes for commercial canneries was a farm job requiring much labor in those days and boys could play a big role in producing this crop. Today the labor is done largely by machines. It was a common thing to have two or more fields of tomatoes ranging in size from four to ten acres each on most farms. The work that boys could perform began with the planting of the tomato plants and extended through to the harvesting. The planting process began with plowing, discing, and harrowing the field to a smooth surface, then marking it off in both directions with a corn planter. At the place where these marks crossed, a tomato plant was set, thus enabling cultivation in both directions while the plants were young. For the process of setting the plants a man and a boy were teamed together. The man carried a heavy square-bladed spade which, with his foot, he sunk into the ground on the cross-mark and pulled it backward. This separated the dirt far enough to enable the boy to drop in a tomato plant from the bundle he was carrying. Then the man withdrew the spade with a quick jerk and pushed the dirt around the plant with his foot, thus setting the plant tightly in the ground. These plants were developed especially for commercial growing, and the survival rate without watering them was amazing. However, about a week later the field always required a replanting of those that did not survive. Sometimes a second replanting was needed. After that the farmer cultivated and took care of his crop until harvest time when boys and girls and women were recruited to pick the tomatoes as long as the crop lasted. This was where you soon learned

that not everyone in the world can be classified as a nice guy. When you were bent over picking tomatoes you could so easily get clobbered with a rotten tomato without a smidgen of evidence of who might be guilty - everybody in the field resembled an angel. Of course, I was a good guy - I never threw a single rotten tomato. Half-rotten? Well, maybe!

Tomatoes were picked and placed in tomato baskets - five eighths of a bushel. We were paid from three cents to five cents per basket for picking them, depending upon the market price the farmer received from year to year. We were assigned rows so that your basket could be left in or near the end of each row until picked up and recorded. The farmer would haul them to the cannery via horse and wagon. Since nearly every farmer grew tomatoes and since the season usually lasted from six to eight weeks with a high peak of production in the middle, there was usually plenty of opportunity for work if one really wanted it.

There was no work for boys related to the sugar pea crop. Peas were planted with a planter, cut when mature, raked, and loaded just like hay and brought to the cannery by the wagon load. There they were pitched into the mechanical sheller with pitchforks. By a process of vibration the peas were separated from the pods, and the peas conveyed into the cannery while the vines and pods were relegated to a huge pea vine stack. Often the farmer took back with him a load of the pea vines from this stock to spread on his field as humus.

Green beans (or "string beans" as we called them) did require picking. Again, rows were assigned and we picked into a container which we dumped when filled into a burlap fertilizer sack. When the sack had all it would hold we would take it to the station where the boss would weigh it and credit us with the number of pounds picked. We were paid about two cents per pound for picking as I recall. Some smarties (probably the same ones who threw the rotten tomatoes) would try to get by with putting a few rocks in the middle of the sack to accumulate more weight. Having had lots of lessons already in the difference between right and wrong, I don't believe I was ever guilty of this kind of deception. Those that did use such deception usually were fired if caught and not hired again by that particular farmer.

The harvesting of sweet corn involved hiring laborers by the hour. Usually the farmer would pick the field on the day when almost every ear was ready to be pulled. By driving his wagon down the already picked row, adjacent to the row to be pulled, several men would be able to pull the ears as the wagon kept moving. Boys were often used to drive the horses and some boys were fast enough to be used as pullers. When the wagon was full it was driven to the cannery and unloaded by hand. A helper might ride the wagon to help unload or he might remain in the field pulling ears and loading a second or third wagon. The farmer never knew how much time might be consumed by a backup of wagons waiting to unload so he usually did not send many helpers if any, along with the wagon. I have seen wagons lined up for a half mile at a cannery awaiting their turn to unload. Again, the farmer sometimes took a load of corn husks back with him as feed for his livestock or as a buildup for the soil.

In late fall, the harvesting of field corn was another crop providing an older boy opportunity to earn some money. In those days and for many years afterwards until the corn picker was invented, the corn stock with the ears on it was cut off near the ground with a long-bladed knife. Several stocks would be gathered in the arm while cutting and assembled together in one place until a small bundle had accumulated. These were tied together with binder twine and carried to a central location to form a large shock. Later, during the fall and winter months, the farmer would husk the corn out of the shocks and save the fodder

for feed for his cattle. When forming a shock, with or without corn in it, it was always a trick to get the first bundle to stand up long enough to go for others to set around it, eventually building it into a large shock that would remain upright securely against storms, rain and snow so that the corn and the fodder would deteriorate as little as possible until used. I remember how the blades of the corn stock would chafe the neck, face and arms of one with a tender skin in the process of corn cutting.

Haymaking also provided work for boys who were willing to work. Hay was cut with a horse-drawn mower, raked into windrows with a buggy rake, and piled by hand with a pitchfork into reasonably large stacks. These stacks were then pitched on a wagon, usually by men, although older boys who were strong could pitch hay onto the wagon and also load the wagon properly. The hay was unloaded by hand at the barn, often pitching it from the wagon high up into the barn loft.

Work was also available at times during the season when wheat and barley were threshed. This operation required the use of a steam engine and a large threshing machine with many movable parts. This work was considered too dangerous for boys, although they were used sometimes to hold a burlap bag under the chute through which the grain passed as it left the machine as long as the boy was accompanied by a man who carried the grain to the storage bins when the bags were full.

In later years, between 1945 and 1958, my own family lived on a small 38-acre farm and our two boys grew up there. By that time most farmers had the benefit of modern machines, especially if they had very many acres. On a small 38-acre farm, however, since the expensive machines could not be justified, much of the work was done by hand and the experiences learned in my teens on the Eastern Shore proved to be quite helpful in operating this farm.

Chapter Five

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THE CANNERIES

At one time there were five or six canneries operating in Denton. Three were in West Denton. One of these three went out of operation long before I can remember, but the old shell of the building and some of the machinery stood for years after the operation ceased and provided a bit of adventure for young lads who mustered enough courage to explore the remnants. Later, during my childhood, the old building was razed in favor of oil storage tanks and a fertilizer warehouse. Another of the three canneries was operated by L. B. Towers and Bros. and was about two hundred yards south of our home. The third one was about a half mile north of our store and was operated by G. T. Redden & Sons. This area, which included a number of homes surrounding the cannery, was unofficially known as "Redden Park." My cannery experience was limited to this one particular cannery since the Towers Bros. did not employ very many young boys.

These commercial canneries operated from spring to fall each year, with sugar peas being the earliest crop processed. Some of the canneries followed the peas with string beans and lima beans. Then came tomatoes and sweet corn with alternate periods of each throughout the remainder of the summer.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, peas were harvested like hay and brought to the cannery by the wagonload, resembling a load of hay. Here they were fed into a mechanical sheller that vigorously shook the peas from the pods and sent the vines and empty pods by

means of a conveyor to a huge pile in the cannery yard. Farmers were lucky if the pile was small enough that they could drive their wagons under the chute and fill them with the processed vines without having to load them by hand with a pitchfork. The pea vines, when spread on the land, helped to enrich the soil. If you have grown peas in your garden you know that the pea crop time is relatively short. In two or three weeks the Redden Cannery usually completed the processing of peas. Since this process was mostly mechanical, there was little or nothing for boys to do; also, it usually took place before school closed for the year.

The tomato crop came into maturity continuously from July to September. Frequently, the peak period coincided with the peak period of the sweet corn crop and the cannery would have to alternate its processing between the two crops, processing each for two or three days at a time. Also, during these peak periods the cannery might run for twenty-four hours a day using a couple of shifts. Boys were usually employed in the fields picking the tomatoes, but the older ones could find work at the cannery, especially in the warehouse loading the big baskets with empty cans and removing the hot cans of processed tomatoes from the baskets as they came from the cookers.

Tomatoes were brought to the cannery on horse drawn wagons and a few Model T Ford trucks in tomato baskets, five eighths of a bushel and slightly larger than a peach basket, one half bushel. The bottom of the wagon would be filled with baskets, and a rack placed over them to allow a second row, sometimes even a third or fourth row of baskets. As boys will do, many tried to swipe a tomato or two as the wagon passed by, but most of the drivers were prepared to heave an overly ripe one into your face when this was tried. Since most farmers grew a field or two of tomatoes, many of them ripened at the same time thus flooding the cannery with the product. Often the tomatoes would be stacked several baskets high in the lots adjoining the cannery until they could be taken to the scalding and processed.

Baskets of tomatoes would be carried to the scalding and from there to the skinning tables in sixteen quart buckets. A cousin of mine, older than me, says that he and another fellow have carried as many as 3,000 to 4,000 sixteen-quart buckets a day to the skinners for which he received thirty-five cents an hour. The skinners almost always were women who, with a spoon-like knife, cored and skinned the tomatoes by hand and placed them in a bucket to be sent on to the people who packed them in cans and prepared them for sealing and processing. The cans, after being sealed, were placed into large round metal baskets and lowered into the big cookers. From there they went to the warehouse for storage until labeling time in the fall and winter months. I still have a picture in my mind of the "buggy" as it was called, used for transporting these baskets containing two hundred or more cans of tomatoes from the cookers to the warehouse. It was a vehicle with two wheels on an arched axle that had a long pole attached to it. At the point where the pole was attached to the axle there was a large hook. The baskets had a heavy metal arched handle and as the buggy operator lifted the end of the pole he would engage the hook with this handle. Then, by bearing down on the handle he could lift the basket, suspended between the two big wheels, far enough off of the floor to enable him to move it along to the warehouse, guided only by moving the pole to the right or the left. The route was usually downhill, except perhaps for a ramp at the warehouse door, but the speed and momentum of the heavy basketful of cans provided the force necessary to conquer the incline. It took quite a man to handle the loaded buggy since it had no brakes and had to be guided through the doors into the warehouse and up to the place where the cans could be unloaded and stacked until labeling time. On his return trip, the buggy "driver" would bring back a basketful of empty cans. In the warehouse, the hot cans were removed from the basket by hand with leather gloves. Several men were employed in the fall and winter months in

labeling the cans, placing them in cardboard boxes and labeling the boxes.

Processing sweet corn provided the most work for boys in these canneries. As previously explained, the ears of corn in their husks came from the farm by the wagonload. Since these had to be thrown by hand from the wagon into the husking shed, it was a common sight to see wagons lined up from a quarter to a half mile awaiting their turn to be unloaded. The husking shed was a long V-shaped building with the sides sloping outward. The bottom of the V, however, was wide enough to allow room for a conveyor down the middle, a walkway on each side of the conveyor and space along the walkways for the huskers to sit and husk the corn. The wagon was pulled up to the sloping side of the shed and the corn was thrown by hand high overhead through the opening between the sides and the roof. The corn would roll down the sloping sides to the feet of the huskers who sat from two to three feet apart all along the floor between the walkway and the corn. As they husked out the corn, the ears were put into a slatted crate and the husks were placed on a pile to be pushed onto a conveyor belt which carried them to the outside of the building. The crates held about two-thirds of a bushel and, like the tomato skinners, the women were paid by the crate for husking the corn.

Down through the center of the building between the walkways there was a built-up rack about two and a half feet wide and three and a half feet high containing two conveyor belts, one at floor level and one at the top of the rack. On the top of the rack, about every six feet down the line, boxes that were five feet square and eight inches deep had been built. The whole purpose of the mechanism in the center of the building, was to dispose of the husked corn and the husks. There were three other types of workers whose work centered around the huskers and the conveyor belts. One type was responsible for checking the crates of husked corn, punching the husker's card, and emptying the crates into the boxes on top of the conveyor belt rack. The second type of worker patrolled the floor with a pitchfork and pushed the husks onto the bottom conveyor belt.

The third type of worker stood at each of the four corners of the box where it protruded over the rack holding the conveyor belts. For several summers I was one of these workers. Our job was to take the ears of corn one at a time and cut the wormy places and the ends from the ear and then drop it onto the top conveyor belt running along immediately under the box. We stood on a small platform about eight inches above the floor level in order to be out of the way of those workers pushing the husks onto the bottom conveyor. To cut the bad places from the ears we used a large butcher knife.

I always hoped for good partners on the other three corners of the box because some of these fellows were rather careless and inconsiderate and when they wanted another ear to trim they might try to snag it by driving the butcher knife half way through it and pulling it back to their corner rather than reaching for it by hand as they were supposed to. If you happened to be reaching with your hand for another ear in the same vicinity you could get a finger whacked off or a severe cut. The foreman would fire anyone who consistently used this method but that did not prevent the really mean ones from continuing to do it when the foreman was farther down the line.

For this job we were paid 25 cents an hour and the length of the day might depend upon how many wagonloads of corn were waiting to be unloaded. The cannery owners did not like to leave too much corn piled up on the sloping sides of the building for any length of time since it would begin to heat up and spoil. During the peak season, one shift might work ten or twelve hours followed by another similar shift the same day. The conveyor belt took the trimmed ears on into the cannery building where the grains of corn were removed from the ears after washing and where they entered the cans ready for sealing and

processing.

The warehouse provided some work for boys. Here they could place the empty cans into the big baskets that transported them to the main cannery building. They also could help unload the baskets coming from the cannery building with the hot cans of processed tomatoes, corn, or whatever. And they could help unload a railroad boxcar of empty cans and transport them to the warehouse. In those days the cans were packed loose in railroad boxcars from the floor to the ceiling laid flat on their sides. The trick was to pick up at least five empty cans in each hand and very quickly transfer them to the container transporting them to the warehouse. It took a little practice to position your ten fingers just right so that you did not fail to pick up the next ten cans as you progressed from the ceiling to the floor. The process was reversed, of course, as you stacked them in the warehouse. The cans were sharp even though they had a slight flange on them, resulting in some minor finger cuts. Most canning was done in the No. 2 (16 oz.) size can, although tomatoes were sometimes canned in the No. 4 (30 oz.) size. Occasionally No. 10 (the gallon size) were used if the cannery was processing a vegetable for use in commercial institutions, restaurants or hotels.

Many people in my neighborhood had little or no work at any time during the year except during the canning season and their earnings had to last them during the year unless some kindhearted merchant, such as my dad, would allow them to have a charge account during the non-employed seasons.

I am not sure exactly what the labor laws were governing the use of boys in the canneries. The minimum age must have been about 14 or 15 except in the more hazardous parts of the cannery. Some must have been employed earlier than the law allowed for I remember that if the cannery was warned ahead of time that the inspector was coming, the youngest workers would be told to sit around as if they were loafing. Apparently they were not too strict in enforcing the law in the non-hazardous parts of the cannery. Also, I do not remember any time when boys were employed in the cannery where there were dangerous machines, steam, or pressure cooking.

During World War II, our government urged people to raise much of their own food and also provided funds for the establishment of several community canneries so that they could process their meats and vegetables. Around 1950-51, I was the manager of one of these community canneries for two summers. My experiences in the commercial canneries during my teenage years were quite helpful in carrying out the responsibilities associated with this task.

During the '30s, practically all of the small commercial canneries on the Eastern Shore either sold out to or folded up because of the competition of the larger ones. By the '50s, the major cannery operation on the Eastern Shore was the Phillips Packing Company of Cambridge, Maryland. Farmers were still able to grow crops for this cannery but now they sent their harvest further from home and faster via motor trucks. Then, too, scientific improvements in processing and new inventions brought major changes in the whole operation. Not too long ago I read of a major canning company that now has a machine that can be taken to a field of peas, for example, and all in one operation harvest, process, and can the peas in the field.

When my father used to order canned tomatoes for shelves in his store from the wholesaler, he might get a different brand of tomatoes on each order. This was because the wholesaler would buy his supply from many different small commercial canneries. Today there are a small number number of major brands of all canned fruits and vegetables, many of them

distributed nation-wide. This type of major operation by just a few companies has eliminated the small commercial cannery as I knew it and has also eliminated much of the back-breaking labor previously attached to the operation.

However, I believe that it can be said that the small neighborhood commercial cannery in its day not only provided an opportunity for many people to earn money but also was a major social event of the season and an opportunity for people to work together on one community project. The people of West Denton, for example, were proud of the fact that they had a part in producing the can of tomatoes on the store shelf that exhibited the bright red label of the Towers or the Redden Cannery.

Chapter Six

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THE OIL STORAGE YARDS

One of the three canneries in West Denton ceased operation long before I remember, but the old building and part of the machinery stood idle just a short distance north of my father's store. It was a good place for the kids of the neighborhood to explore and to use for the hide and seek game. During the early '20s it was demolished and eventually three oil storage facilities were built there, one each by the Standard Oil Company, the American Oil Company, and the Sun Oil Company. Each of these yards had large storage tanks for storing gasoline and kerosene as well as one or more buildings for housing drums of oil, the distribution truck, pumps for loading the truck, and other items.

The tanks for the Standard Oil Company were vertical, with one end resting on the ground; the others were in a horizontal position and rested on steel posts. I remember when the large upright cylindrical tanks were constructed on the Standard Oil property (the closest one to our store). Starting with a concrete base, the round bottom of the tank was constructed first. Then from the ground up each tank was constructed by riveting together large sections of curved metal approximately eight feet by four feet in size. These sections already had matching holes in them about two inches apart all of the way around and about one and a half inches from the edge of the metal. Each section was riveted to the previous section with red hot rivets in each hole using an air hammer. The curve was so calculated that when a certain number of sections were riveted together the results would be a cylindrical tank. The riveting process drew the sections together tightly, but when they cooled, the shrinkage of the red hot iron rivets drew the sections even tighter so that they would not leak when the tank was completed and filled with gasoline. For several weeks the rat-a-tat-tat of the rivet hammers echoed all over West Denton. As the tank construction progressed upward, scaffolding was built inside and outside of the tank upon which the men worked, one man inserting the hot rivet into the hole from the outside and holding a weight against it, while another man on the inside used the air hammer to clinch the rivet. The rivets were heated in a portable forge on the ground and tossed up to the men on the scaffold.

Pipes were attached to each tank and constructed from the tank to a small wharf at the water's edge so that the oil tanker could dock at the wharf, hook up its hoses to the pipes and pump the gasoline and kerosene into the storage tanks. As soon as the tanks were filled, the tanker departed, sometimes even at night using one or two large search lights to assist in staying in the river's channel. It would return in a couple of months and repeat the process.

I became acquainted with the crews of these oil tankers, especially the Standard Oil crew,

and primarily the captain and first mate. Although they were strict about allowing visitors aboard the tanker, I was always allowed in the captain's and crew's quarters, partly because I worked around the oil yard and also because they knew my dad and often purchased items at his store, sometimes sending me to the store for them. The crews of these oil tankers were rough men and I received a kind of education from them that probably would not have received the approval of my dad and mother, although I'm now sure that my dad knew more than I gave him credit for. But since it did not take them long to unload the tanker, my exposure to their language and philosophy about women and life in general was minimal in terms of the influence it may have had upon me. Nevertheless, I was exposed to the language associated with playing cards and shooting craps as well as expressions about the wild and wooly ways of woeful women.

The oil yards also offered several other kinds of experiences not found elsewhere. I was employed there to keep the yards mowed and looking neat and this was my major job. The mowing of the grass was done by a hand push mower and the trimming of weeds around the tanks, under the pipes, and near the fence was done with a hand sickle. Often there was painting to do as the oil companies were particular about their facilities, desiring that they give a pleasing appearance to the community. Drums used for trash barrels were kept painted, and even the pipes and valves around the tanks and the lines to the dock, as well as the gasolines engines in the pumping room, were painted regularly.

At the Standard Oil yard, the delivery truck was washed and cleaned every Saturday morning. This truck was a small GMC truck with a Buick engine and had a capacity of about 500 gallons divided into three compartments. It was filled by means of two gasoline driven engines in the pump house. When the delivery truck was to be loaded, it was driven up to a platform containing pipes that extended out from the pump-house and vertically to the top of the platform. Attached to each vertical pipe was a flexible hose with a nozzle on the end that could be pulled down to the opening on the top of the tank of the delivery truck. Each pipe was painted a different color indicating the type of fuel therein, either regular gasoline, high test gasoline, or kerosene. I would often assist Bill Carroll in cranking up these gasoline engines and filling the tank truck with the kind of fuel needed for the next delivery. In the pump-house, there were valves on the pipe lines that came from the storage tanks. The same gasoline engine could be used for pumping either of the three kinds of fuel by opening or closing these valves. Each of the three compartments on the tank truck had a cap that screwed on or off. The compartment was filled almost to the top but not quite, allowing sufficient space for the fuel to expand when the tank was exposed to the hot sun.

At the rear of the tank truck there was a shallow compartment for the storage of five gallon gasoline cans sometimes used in the delivery of the fuel. The valves on the end of the pipelines from the compartments were also in this rear section. These were spring loaded valves for the purpose of safety, meaning that the driver must hold the valve open when discharging the fuel in order to prevent an overflow. If the driver was sure that an underground tank at the delivery point would hold all of a compartment from his truck, he could prop the valve open thus avoiding having to hold it while a couple hundred gallons flowed out of the truck.

I liked to ride on Mr. Carroll's delivery truck, and sometimes if his delivery was to be a short one he would let me go with him to make deliveries. This was against company regulations but Bill and my dad were good friends, Dad was a Standard Oil customer having Standard Oil pumps at his store, and after all, I was a sort of employee anyhow in the yards. Most gasoline customers would get two or three hundred gallons of gasoline at a time which would flow out of the tank truck by gravity into the underground tank (usually 300 to 500

gallons in size). Today, of course, underground tanks at service stations hold several thousand gallons, and delivery is made by large trailer trucks with a capacity of three thousand gallons or more.

Deliveries of kerosene were made to many country stores and general merchandise stores whose operators dispersed kerosene to customers from a fifty gallon drum in one or two gallon lots. The kerosene would be drawn out of the tank truck in five gallon cans, and while Mr. Carroll would be carrying in two of these five gallon cans filled with kerosene to the tank in the store, I would be filling two more. The storekeeper was at the mercy of our tabulation as to how many five gallon cans we dumped into his tank. Lessons in integrity and honesty were learned through my association with Mr. Carroll -- it would have been so easy to stop filling these five gallon cans an inch or so from the top or to add one or two more cans to the count, but I never knew Mr. Carroll to be anything but totally honest.

Each Saturday we took inventory of the big storage tanks in the yard. This could be the most dangerous job attached to the oil yard work since it had to be done by climbing up to the top of the tanks, hand over hand, via a ladder mounted to the tank. Mr. Carroll always cautioned me to climb carefully and to hold on tightly. As we stood on the platform, Mr. Carroll opened a manhole and lowered very slowly a chalked steel tape into the fuel. The tape was weighted on the end and was lowered gently until the weight hit the bottom. When it was drawn up you could read the tape where the chalk ceased to show from being submerged into the fuel. This was done at least twice, maybe three times to assure accuracy. The reading on the tape in terms of inches was then converted into gallons from a chart that had been computed previously. Since the tanks varied in size, each had a separate chart. When I accompanied Mr. Carroll to the top of the tank on this mission, my job was to record his readings while he manipulated the tape. The number of gallons left in the big tank as computed from the reading on the tape, when added to the sales for the week, should equal the inventory for the previous week. Mr. Carroll was required to do this computation and make reports to the company headquarters each week along with the reports of sales, expenses of the tank truck, yard expenses, et cetera. I'm sure that these reports were used by company headquarters in determining when to send the next delivery by the river tanker.

It would be difficult to list all of the lessons that I learned from these experiences that I'm sure were helpful in later life. I soon learned that doing a good job in the oil yards and perhaps even doing more than expected would pay off. For example, after my father bought a 1925 Whippet, he stored his old 1917 Model T Ford. Later, after I got my driver's license, I took the old Model T out of storage, fixed it up, and used it to deliver newspapers and to drive to school my senior year. The old car needed painting. Now the American Oil Company used a real bright red and yellow on their gasoline pumps. Beautiful colors, I thought. So you can guess where I got the paint to paint that old Ford a bright red with yellow stripes and yellow spoke wheels. I got quite a ribbing for doing it from my friends and newspaper customers, but it was a showpiece and I loved it. Needless to say, had I been anything other than diligent in my work around the oil yard, I would not have had a chance of getting that paint. I have always been grateful to Mr. Bill Carroll and to others for providing the many experiences that taught me responsibility and the importance of doing a good job in return for wages received.

Chapter Seven

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THE BLACKSMITH SHOP

Some farmers had their own blacksmith shop, others had all of their work done by a professional blacksmith. Wilsie Clayton Ikenberry, in his publication "The Gay Nineties - Country Style," tells of a blacksmith shop located between his home farm and another farm and which was used by both families. The usual blacksmith jobs were done by unskilled farm workers, but as the boys in a farmer's family grew up one or more of them would assume the role of blacksmith for the more skilled jobs.

In West Denton during my boyhood days there were two blacksmith Shops serving the farmers and residents of the area. One was operated by a Negro named Walter Moore, and the other by a white named Thomas Pollard. Both were in business to make a living. I have memories of "loafing around" some in each of the shops - in the Pollard shop because he had two boys close to my age with whom I played and grew up since they lived only a couple of houses from ours, and in the Moore shop because he always seemed glad to have a little assistance from me. Mr. Pollard did not care for boys other than his own in his shop so I did not spend much time there; I was likely to be run away anyhow. So, most of my blacksmith knowledge was learned in Walter Moore's shop.

Walter Moore was a patron of dad's store and often stopped in to Loaf a short time after his work in the evenings. I remember that he was a jolly fellow and that he had the largest front teeth that I have ever seen on a human being. Everyone seemed to be playing jokes on him because of his good nature. There was one joke that was pulled on him several times in my dad's store. Walter had a habit of leaning back against the counter and bracing his hands behind him on the flat surface. Sooner or later dad or someone would set a mouse trap and slide it up carefully behind him close to his hand and, given time, he was sure to touch the trap and catch a finger in it. Needless to say that with his large "and sinewy hands" he wasn't hurt, but he would jump a "country mile," rave and carry on, and then break out in a bellowy laugh, thus providing entertainment at his expense for those around. Even though he was the "victim," he enjoyed it immensely.

I spent quite a few hours in Walter's shop. There were always things for the homeowner or farmer to be fixed, plow points, picks, mattocks, hoes, and other tools to be sharpened or repaired, horses to be shod, and many other tasks. Welding, as we now call it, was then done by heating the two pieces of metal to a red heat and then pounding them together on an anvil until the two pieces became as one, immediately immersing them in a tub of cold water to harden the metal. Horse were brought in to be shod. Iron tires were replaced on old wagon wheels or put on new wheels being built. All kinds of repairs were made to wagons, springboards, buggies, even if it required the use of wood as well as metal. If repairs slacked off, the blacksmith even built a new wagon for sale, complete with body, wheels, tongue, etcetera. Eventually, when completed, the wagon would get a coat of paint, usually red, and I might be allowed to help with that.

Horseshoeing was one of the major tasks of the commercial blacksmith. The blacksmith would shoe a horse by taking each foot, one at a time, and holding it between his own legs, resting it on a heavy leather apron that he wore. With a large heavy rasp and a curved knife, he would first trim the hoof so that all of the ragged and dead parts of the sheath were removed, leaving a solid base upon which to nail the shoe. Then the shoe would have to be tailored to fit the hoof. The blacksmith would buy the shoes in quantities of various sizes but even then each one would have to be heated the forge of red hot coals and pounded on the anvil to fit the hoof. Then they were immersed into a tub of cold water to cool and to harden the metal.

The blacksmith carried to the shoeing site a tray with his tools and various sizes of horseshoe nails. As he held the horse's foot on his apron between his own legs, he drove

nails through the holes already molded into the shoe into the hoof at an angle one at a time. As the nail cut out of the side of the hoof he would cut off the end not needed and then bend and pound the nail tightly into the side of the hoof. The blacksmith must have been aware of the old saying that goes something like this: "For the want of a nail the shoe was lost; for the want of a shoe the horse was lost; for the want of the horse the rider was lost; for the want of the rider the battle was lost; and for the want of the battle the kingdom was lost", although I doubt it I doubt if any kingdom ever fell because Walter's nails came loose.

The production and use of the work horse in our country has become almost nonexistent except in a few isolated sections of the nation. However, the production and use of the pleasure horse has increased in many places. This type of horse is used for racing, riding, rodeos, and horse showing. These animals have to be shod just as the work horse did. The person who does this horseshoeing today is not called a blacksmith; rather, he goes by the name of farrier. The farrier does not work in a shop as did the blacksmith. Instead he works from a pick-up truck and he takes his services directly to the farm on which the horses are housed. The demand is not too great and thus there are not very many farriers. They usually serve a rather large section of the country.

The town blacksmith also served as a general mechanic in his community. He did not work on autos nor mechanical appliances such as garden tractors, power lawnmowers, tractors and similar inventions that have been introduced into our society in recent years. He did, however, repair garden tools and push-lawnmowers, sharpen cutting tools such as axes, crosscut saws, hand saws, and knives. In many localities today you will find a shop and a person called a general mechanic who is the modern equivalent of the earlier blacksmith. He does welding, repairs power implements, and serves as a blacksmith but in a different way - perhaps not as glamorous as the old blacksmith's aura.

The making of a wagon wheel was always fascinating to me. The wooden parts such as the hub, rim sections, and possibly even the spokes were purchased, although I have seen the blacksmith make his own spokes. After assembling them together on a huge sturdy table or platform, they had to be fitted with an iron band or "tire" around the outside of the rim. This tire not only held the wheel together but provided a surface that would withstand many miles of wear on hard-surfaced or graveled roads. The tire was exactly the width of the rim and about one-fourth of an inch thick. It would be heated on red-hot coals, shaped and tried fitted several times until the blacksmith was satisfied that it would go on the rim tightly enough to hold the wheel together and to provide many miles of travel without loosening. Then the entire metal tire was heated to expand the metal sufficiently enough to pound it onto the wooden rim of the wheel. It would fit very tightly, and as cold water was poured all the way around until the metal tire was cool it would shrink enough to hold the wheel together and not come off in everyday use. Sometimes the wood in a wagon wheel already in everyday use would shrink so as to loosen the tire, making it necessary to refit the tire by the same process. I have often helped with the pouring of water on the rim of a wheel to cool the metal and make it fit tightly.

The blacksmith always had a forge, a table-like affair constructed of brick and standing about thirty inches high. It was hollow inside and had a grate across it for the bed of coals. A set of bellows forced air up from the inside through the coals to make them red-hot and to increase the temperature. The bellows were turned by hand via a crank. Just above the forge was a huge hood to catch the smoke and sparks and carry them out through the chimney. The blacksmith had to turn the bellows with one hand while he maneuvered the metal through the red-hot coals with the other hand when metal had to be heated. This could become a bit of a problem, especially if he was holding a large piece such as a wagon

tire. He knew how to do it alone if necessary, but needless to say, Walter Moore was always glad to have me around to turn the bellows when he had pieces of metal to be heated. The forge was fired up every day and the coals would lie there smoldering until needed and until the bellows brought them to life again and to a red hot glow. Today, welding of metal is done via oxygen/acetylene torches or via an electric welder using electrodes instead of by the method used by the old blacksmith.

Nevertheless, through his method of repairing wooden and metal parts for use in the home and farm, shoeing horses, and his ingenuity in making new things, the blacksmith performed an important role in the progress of our nation, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to witness and to experience it.

Walter Moore was one of a kind, a large black man, good-natured, hard-working and as trustworthy as they come. He did his part in the development of the Denton countryside. I learned quite a bit from him as I lingered from time to time in and around his shop. I can still hear the ring of the old anvil as piece after piece of metal was pounded out by the big blacksmith hammer. I'm sure my dad was not concerned for my safety or well-being when I was in this old blacksmith's shop.

Chapter Eight

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OUR COUNTRY STORE

During my early years from 1916 to 1936, my father owned and operated a general merchandise store, or what really could have been called one of the last of the country stores.

In the early days of our nation much of the goods and news from the outside world was brought to the inland areas that were sparsely settled by way of peddlers. These peddlers first traveled by foot, later by horseback and then via the peddler's wagon. The peddler's products at first were small necessities, such as spoons, knives, needles, pins, spices, and other small items that he could easily carry. Later, his wagon included pots, pans, patent medicines, flavorings, stove polish, beauty aids, candy, vehicle parts, and the like. It is estimated that by 1860 there were more than 15,000 peddlers in our country.

As towns and villages began to emerge along the waterways and the improved roads that were built, inns and general merchandise stores became a part of the progress.

My dad operated a feed store in Washington, D.C. during the first few years of this century which he sold and then purchased a farm near Henderson, Maryland. Shortly before I was born, he sold his farm and purchased a grist mill in West Denton. After operating it a short time, he traded it for a general merchandise store located just a few feet from the mill. About the same time, he purchased a home along the Choptank waterfront in West Denton. The mill, store, and home were all just a few feet apart. The store was at the immediate northeast corner of the Denton drawbridge and the rear of the store rested on brick pillars along the river bank. They were high enough for me as a boy to walk under the store at the river's edge and then crawl further along under the building in the sandy soil to the front which rested on the ground. I often sat under this part of the building thinking or perhaps fishing or sometimes shedding tears after my older brother or sister had been home for a while and had departed leaving me rather lonely.

Some say that the country store went out of existence, for the most part, around the end of

the 19th century, giving way to their most fierce competitors, the chain store and the mail order houses. However, many country or general merchandise stores hung on and it was into the mid-'30s before my dad's business had fallen off to where he no longer could make a living. He completely closed his store around 1936 and spent the remaining years of his life taking care of a fertilizer warehouse for Mr. E. T. Orme.

My dad's store was a two-story building with a connecting one-story shed or warehouse. The second floor had partitions in it and must have at one time been used for living quarters or for offices. My dad stored a few things up there but for the most part the second floor was vacant. The first floor, however, had shelves on all sides except the front, from the floor to the ceiling. There were long counters in front of the shelves with a walkway between them and the shelves. The fronts of the counters were closed but the backs, facing the shelves, were open, making space for drawers and bins for storing flour, beans, rice, tea, dried fruits, sugar, salt, and other items not on display. On top of the counters were stacks of overalls, denim and khaki pants, jackets, and also showcases containing candy, small items such as pins and needles, and tobacco. On top of the showcases there were cards containing pipes and various novelties, and candy jars. Also, at different locations along the counter, there was a coffee mill, a cash register, a wrapping paper unit with string attachment, a Clark's O.N.T. (Our New Thread) counter case full of spools of cotton, a paper bag rack, a plug tobacco cutter, a large cheese cutter containing a wheel of cheese, one or more types of scales for weighing grocery items and nails, and perhaps even a counter seed display case. There was not much space left on the counter tops, only enough at various intervals to wrap a few items and to set things from the shelves or bins when filling an order. Customers were never allowed behind the counters, and that was so impressed upon me when I worked in my dad's store that to this day when I enter a supermarket, a hardware, or a department store I always size up the situation to determine whether or not as a customer I am supposed to go behind this display or that table of merchandise.

The middle of the store between the counters contained a pot-bellied stove surrounded by one or more chairs, barrels of various commodities such as pickles, salt herring, mincemeat, jelly beans, cookies, and crackers. One also found a seed rack; a broom rack, several sacks of potatoes, a case or two of eggs, and always a coal bucket and a spittoon. Almost every country store had an empty nail keg containing a checkerboard near the stove. However, my dad did not encourage the type of socializing and loafing that took place in most country stores and he kept his checkerboard hidden, using it only on certain occasions or when special friends asked for it.

The rear counter in the store was usually reserved for meats, cheese, and scrapple. We did not handle fresh meats, except for a short time in hog-killing season, and our meat selection consisted of such processed meats as bologna, bacon sides, fat back sides, hams, shoulders, and

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The shelves behind the counters, from the floor to the ceiling, contained items arranged as nearly as possible by sections of things that were alike or similar, such as canned goods in one section, cereals in another, soaps and soap powders together, patent medicines, spices, shoes, rubber boots and overshoes, a few bolts of gingham, flannel or pillow and mattress ticking, tobaccos, kerosene lamps, wicks and glass chimneys, dishes, kitchen utensils, and many other items all arranged by similarities. Food items that were to be weighed and packaged, such as sugar, flour, dried beans and the like, were in bins under the counter on the side of the store where the other grocery items were located. On the other side of the store under the counter you would find excess items that duplicated those already on the shelves, for example, additional pairs of shoes, boots and overshoes, additional overalls,

pants, and jackets, and some additional bolts of dress material and ticking.

Also, there were always items hanging on hooks from the ceiling, such as tea kettles, dish pans, pots, pans, funnels, lanterns, coffeepots, buckets, wash tubs, washboards, heavy iron skillets, scoops, slaw cutters, pitchers, and baskets. Near the front there was always a stalk of bananas hanging just inside the front window. At that time, bananas came shipped by the entire stalk in a tall banana basket packed in straw. The straw was of very fine texture, not like any found in the United States, and whether or not it was superstition or truth, I don't know, but we were always cautioned to beware of poisonous banana spiders that might be in the straw. The price that the merchant had to charge for each banana was determined by the number of "hands" on the stalk. My dad would count the number of "hands," and use an average number of bananas for each hand and figure how many bananas the stalk contained. By dividing the cost of the stalk by the number of bananas it contained he knew how much each banana cost and how much he had to charge for them to make a profit. I can remember selling them for as little as 2 for 5 cents. In grocery stores or supermarkets today you will find bananas spread out by the "hand" but they are now sold by the pound. An average size banana today costs from twelve to fifteen cents each.

The shed or warehouse attached to the store contained hardware, farm and garden tools, kegs of nails, horse collars, horseshoes, harness, axe handles, shovels, stove pipe, wire fencing, screen wire, window screens, a kerosene tank including a hand pump, one or two coops of chickens brought in as barter, chicken feed, bags of fertilizer, egg crates for eggs as barter, coils of rope, an assortment of machine and carriage bolts, wood screws, garden plows, stoneware crocks, cases of Ball jars for canning purposes, and a number of other items too numerous to remember. In a corner near the rear of the store, my dad had his roll top desk where his book work was done. There was also a safe for protecting his account books. He seldom trusted his safe for the storage of daily cash receipts. Instead, he usually carried this home with him each night in a bank deposit bag. He would make a deposit in one of the banks uptown about every other day.

[image]Lot Upon Which My Dad's Store Was Located
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Pictured above is the lot upon which my dad's store was located. The store building was torn down after his death and a small building placed there as a sub-station for State Police. The oil tanks and the corner of the old Pastorfield store are also visible. Traffic lights and gates at the bridge are additions made in later years.

It was in this setting that I was taught to help out in the store from the time that I was old enough to see over the counter until I left for college. Dad always opened his store around 6 a.m. and closed it at 9 p.m. except on Saturday when he stayed open until midnight. He had the store closed on Sunday but always found time to make a special trip to the store if someone came by the house and made a plea for some item that had been overlooked when purchases were made during the week. From age twelve on, I was entrusted with complete charge of the store while my dad went to the house for breakfast and supper and perhaps for a little work in the garden. Also, about twice a year, during a period when I would be out of school, he would take the train to Love Point, on the Chesapeake Bay, and the passenger ferry to Baltimore where he visited supply houses and placed orders for supplies to be shipped later. He would usually be gone most of the week. On these occasions I opened the store, managed it all day, and locked up at night. I endeared my dad for his trust in me to manage his store on these occasions and I did my best to be worthy of his trust. My mother never had much to do with the Store but she would, of course, keep a close eye on me to assure that all was proceeding properly in my dad's

absence.

Barter and credit as well as cash played a large role in the operation of a general merchandise store. A family might bring in butter, eggs, live chickens, or other goods for trade. These they exchanged for sugar, salt, gingham, candy, staples, or whatever they needed. The merchant then either resold these items to his customers or shipped them to dealers, usually at a profit, but sometimes at a loss if he had miscalculated market prices.

Keeping records was an important part of the process of operating a general merchandise store. This record keeping process was quite different from the records required and kept today. For example, my dad had the following system. If a person charged his purchases or credited the items brought in for barter, each item was recorded along with the price on a small sales ticket book page. The family also had a small family account book to bring with them when they came to the store in which the same purchases and barter were entered. Periodically, these ticket totals were transferred to a ledger and the tickets filed for future reference if needed. When the customer came in to pay up, the family account book and the merchant's ledger should correspond. "Due bills" were also issued to a customer who brought in items for barter but who needed no merchandise at the time and only wanted credit for future purchases. The "due bill" would be traded later for merchandise. The terms of purchase then were either cash at the time or pay when you can, with no such thing as interest on the unpaid account. I have known my dad to carry farmers on an account basis for a whole year without payment during the year. They would come in and pay up the account for the year after they sold their crop of wheat, corn, tomatoes, or whatever. I don't know how he managed to carry several customers like this, for he was not a wealthy man. My brother indicated to me once that he believed that if my dad had collected all that was owed to him and had he not made some poor investments he might have been worth upwards of a quarter of a million dollars in the early '30s. As it turned out, he died penniless and still owed a mortgage on his home. At his death, the home was sold for just enough to pay off the mortgage. He was certainly trusting of his fellowman and softhearted to those in need.

Some of the things I remember the most about my experiences in my dad's general merchandise store:

- ... the times when I was responsible by myself while Dad was away on a purchasing trip, or at the house for meals;

- ...the "drummers" who came with carloads of merchandise (shoes, pants, and other such goods) in quantities, or sometimes with samples, quantities to be shipped later. They would bargain and argue with Dad until a price was agreed upon and a purchase would be made for resale at the store;

- ...the long lunch and supper lines that would form during the canning season by the cannery workers who were given time off to eat. They would call to the store for "a nickel's worth of cheese and crackers which we always had to ask the question "mustard or oil?", "a slice of bologna and bread," most of which were accompanied by a bottle of soda pop. Dad always wanted me there at those hours, and Mother also sometimes, as we would be quite busy supplying a hundred or more people with their lunch in just a few minutes. The canneries usually paid many of their workers on a piece basis and as they completed each unit would either give them a metal token or punch a card that might have as many as fifty units on it. On payday they would redeem these tokens or cards for cash. Many of the merchants in the town, including my dad, would also accept the cards or tokens in lieu of cash.

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Later, my dad would send me a dollar.

Some cars had a dip stick for measuring the oil in the crankcase just as they do now. But the Model T Ford had a rather unique way of determining the oil level. On the right side of the crankcase under the engine there were two pet cocks, one about one and a half inches above the other. To check the oil level in the engine, one would reach under the car with a long forked rod and open first the top pet cock. If oil flowed from the pet cock it was not necessary to check further. If not, the lower one was then checked. If oil flowed from that one, the engine was about one quart low; if no oil flowed it had to be at least two quarts low. So, two quarts would be added and then the process repeated until you had sufficient flow from the top pet cock.

The merchant pumped oil from an oil drum (in our case just inside the warehouse door) with a hand pump mounted on the top. We used either a quart or half-gallon galvanized container with a spout. Later, we began using quart bottles with a long screw-on spout which we kept in a rack in front of the store. Since we had at least two grades of oil, the quality and color could be seen through the glass bottle. We also had a drum of denatured alcohol used as an antifreeze in the automobile radiators in winter months. When the water got hot in the engine, it was a common thing for the denatured alcohol to evaporate rapidly, even boil over. So, it was a common task to add alcohol to the radiator as well as replenish the gasoline and oil. It was such a nuisance that many people simply drained the water out of the radiator each evening. If one did much driving during the day, however, alcohol was almost a necessity since on a very cold day the water in the engine of a Model T Ford would freeze up even while the car was being driven.

During the Prohibition Period (1920-33, which also corresponded to the time I was helping in my dad's store), I had many more firsthand encounters with drunken people than at any other time in my life. There must have been a number of sources of "bootleg" whiskey around West Denton. I knew several farmers who would come to town, especially on Saturday, find some "bootleg" liquor and get too drunk to get back home. One fellow in particular was one of Dad's best customers. Sometimes he would come into the store, sit down by the stove, and upon getting warmed up he would soon be feeling no pain, whereupon my dad and I would help him into his buggy, prop him so he wouldn't fall out and head his horse toward home. The old horse knew the way and would take him right to his door; what happened there we never knew. Another big fat farmer always came to town driving a two-horse farm wagon. He was likely to lie down anywhere, even in the ditch and sleep off his inebriation. Occasionally this lasted for a day or two and someone usually sent his two-horse team back home without him. Incidents such as these were pretty common on weekends.

Toward Easter, we always had a large wooden barrel full of jelly beans for sale by the pound. A scoop in the barrel made it possible to scoop up and weigh the amount wanted by the customer. By the time the barrel was half sold, I had managed to fish out and consume most of the black licorice ones. I never lost my taste for black jelly beans.

I remember well the night I accosted the town drunk for stealing merchandise from the front of the store. The upper part of my dad's store had burned and most of the goods on the first floor had suffered smoke and water damage. Since the Knotts' store was vacant at the time, my dad had rented it, moved everything that was left in the burned store across the street and was having a "fire sale." Captain Waters, a sailboat captain, had bought a couple of wash tubs full of items and we had set them just outside the front door of the building. Captain Waters, my dad, and I were sitting toward the back of the store and from where I was sitting I could observe a part of the front porch of the store. I saw a hand

reach around the corner of the store and grab an item or two from one of the washtubs. Again this happened, then again. By that time I was on my feet and rushing to the front of the store. There I met the town drunk face to face; he was, as usual, quite inebriated. I grabbed him by the shirt and held on while I called for my dad and the captain. Dad found his pockets full of items that he had taken from the tubs, collected them all, gave him a good bawling out, and turned him loose while warning him to never set foot on his property again. It appeared to me that some items were still missing from the tubs so I began looking around behind the building and sure enough, I found a collection of items hid in some weeds. I recovered them, returned them to the tubs and then hid where I could observe the spot where the would-be thief had hidden his booty. Soon the drunk returned to the spot, surveyed the situation, and muttered, "That little x#!ox#!x (expletive) he's been here and found them." I was a little concerned about what he might do to me so I stayed clear of him for a while.

I had another experience with the same fellow prior to his attempt to steal the goods from the store's front porch. We always tried to keep a cat around the store to keep the mice under control. Mr. William Sammis had given me two of the prettiest Maltese kittens to be found. These cats crossed the road from the store to the house often and eventually both were killed by autos. On the day that the second one was hit, both the town drunk and I saw it happen. He was in his usual state of inebriation and nothing would do but that we had to bury that cat along the river bank behind the store. So, at his insistence we dug the hole, both of us got down on our knees, laid that poor kitty nice and straight in the hole, said a few words and both cried and lamented over how much we loved that cat, how it shouldn't have happened, and how much we would miss him. It was quite a scene -- one that I've never forgotten.

After several such experiences with cats, I think we decided not to get any more. Instead, my dad invented a unique way of catching mice. The problem with traps was that sometimes a mouse would get partially caught in one, drag it around behind a crate of barrel, and we would not find it until it began to smell. So, my dad would take an empty oatmeal box, cut a small round hole in the side of the box about an inch from the top, put a small bit of cheese inside the box on the bottom, and set it next to some canned goods on a shelf. The mouse would run along on top of the cans, smell the cheese in the oats box, go in the hole and down to the bottom to the cheese. Since the oats had made the side of the box very slick, he could not climb back up to the hole. My dad would hear him scratching around trying to climb up the sides of the box, whereupon Dad would pick up the box and shake it until the poor mouse was dead. The mouse was removed, more cheese added, and the box reset for another catch. It worked better than traps. I think my dad got a kick out of outwitting the mouse.

In season, Dad always had a wagonload of watermelons at the store. One of my jobs was to carry them outside to be on display each morning and back inside at night. After a customer had selected a melon we always plugged it to determine if it was ripe. I learned early how to stick a butcher knife at an angle in the melon on each side of a one-inch square and come out with a pyramidal piece that showed whether or not it was a good melon.

Most candies came in bulk and would be emptied out of the bulk box into compartments in the candy showcase (much like those seen at Sears and other stores today in the candy department). It was later that the wrapped candy bar made its appearance. At Christmas, Easter, and Hallowe'en there were many varieties of candy not available at other times during the year. Candy would be scooped up from the showcase by the merchant and put in a paper bag in the quantity wanted by the customer. It was sold by the pound

and by the piece. Pound prices varied from fifteen cents to twenty-five cents a pound, and for a penny a kid could buy from two to five pieces. I did my share of sampling and consuming each variety, but I never learned to appreciate the pink and white striped coconut strips.

Cookies also came in bulk and were sold by the pound or by the piece. Dad purchased a rack from one company (Keebler, I think) for the display of cookies. The cookies from this company would arrive in boxes about fifteen inches square and ten inches deep containing about twenty-five pounds. The lid of the cardboard box would be removed and a metal frame containing a glass lid would be fitted over the box. The glass lid was hinged so that it could be lifted for removing the cookies, a more sanitary method than the open box. The rack held about twelve or fifteen boxes of various kinds of cookies. These I also sampled at frequent intervals.

Saturday was always a long and busy day. The store was open from 6 a.m. until midnight and my dad expected me to be there most of the time. This was one day that I did not go anywhere without his permission. He especially wanted me to take care of the gasoline sales and the items from the warehouse. I would get pretty tired and sleepy by midnight and many times I fell asleep while still on my feet but slumped over a stack of pants or overalls, only to be awakened by my dad to take care of a customer at the gas pumps.

I always liked it when a customer bought a quart or half gallon of molasses. They usually brought their own jar and it was held up to the spout with one hand, while with the other one you would open the pet cock and turn the pump handle until the jar was almost full, allowing for a little amount that would flow even after the pumping was stopped. After the pet cock was closed, it continued to drip for a short time with the drip being transferred from the pet cock to your mouth via a finger. Yum! Yum!

I learned the merchant's code system for marketing the cost and the selling price on his merchandise. An example of the code were the words CASH PROFIT. Under this code, if a shoe box contained the letters and figures SIR/5.25, it meant that a pair of shoes cost the merchant \$3.96 and would sell for about one-third more or \$5.25 (SIR being the 3rd, 9th, and 6th letters in the code words CASH PROFIT). Only the merchant knew his code letters and he quickly could look at a price and determine how much he could reduce it and still make a profit. This helped considerably if an item had been on the shelf for quite some time and the merchant wanted to sell it quickly.

Tobacco products sold in our store consisted of several varieties of snuff; plug, twist, and bags of chewing tobacco; a number of varieties of cigars and also of pipe tobacco; and cigarettes. There were three major brands of cigarettes then -- Chesterfield, Camel ("I'd walk a mile for a Camel") and Piedmont. Old Gold ("Not a cough in a carload") were also introduced during the decade. Chesterfields and Piedmonts were packaged in two sizes, 12 cigarettes to a pack and 20 to a pack. The others came only in the 20's size. The small package of 12 cigarettes sold for 10 cents and the larger package of 20 sold for 15 cents. My dad would open a pack and sell the cigarettes for a penny a piece for those who lacked the amount needed for a full one. I remember the plug tobacco cutter and how you had to guess where to place the plug under the cutter in order to cut a half or quarter of a plug for those who did not want a full plug. A variety of pipes were on hand, from the corn cob and the clay pipe to the more expensive rosewood pipes.

There is one more item that merits special comment. Crackers. There were two kinds of crackers, the square soda cracker and the round cracker. The square ones were larger than the squares found in the saltine boxes today. The round ones were almost as large and

were creamy in color. They also had a sweet milky taste. They had a good flavor and I've often wondered what happened to the "round" cracker; they have disappeared from the market, In the early part of the '20s they still came in barrels, but the barrel later gave way to the more sanitary box.

And speaking of sanitation, today's society is much more germ and sanitary conscious than that of the '20s. There are tales about the cat sleeping in the cracker barrel in the country store and I'm sure it happened, but not in my dad's store. In fact, he was pretty rough on the store cat if it even got up on the counter where the overalls were stacked, I still remember, however, how little attention we did pay to sanitation, was no running water in the store and the only way to wash your hands was via a wash basin. My dad kept a galvanized bucket with a rope on it which we would toss out of the back window into the river and bring up a bucket of water. We used that to pour into the basin to wash hands whenever we thought they needed it. But I'm sure we didn't wash our hands every time we moved from handling bolts, stove pipe, gas and oil, live chickens, and so forth, to putting cookies a couple at a time or pieces of candy in a bag or cutting a piece of cheese on the cheese cutter. I remember when bread was delivered and sold in its unwrapped state. Bread was delivered to our store via a Koestler Bread Company truck and I recall when they first came out with bread in a wrapper. By the sanitation standards in the '20s we were as sanitary as anyone, perhaps even more so, but by today's sanitation standards the way things were handled in the country store would not meet with anybody's approval. In comparing an individual's average life span then and now, one can only conclude that improvement in sanitation standards has been at least one factor that has contributed to longer life as well as to a more pleasurable one.

There are many more things about that old store that I remember, such as patent medicines, coffee grinding, coffee being purchased in the bean stage by the merchant in 100 pound bags, soaps and soap powders, and many things that for the most part have ceased to exist. A few of the same brands sold then are still on the market today. But I must conclude this chapter. Some of the values that I learned and carried over into maturity will be listed in one of the final chapters of this book.

Chapter Nine

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EXPERIENCES WITH OUR MODEL T FORD

I am not sure if my father owned a horse and carriage as a means of transportation after he sold his farm and went into the milling and country store business. Our lot contained a house, a couple of small utility buildings and a barn. As I grew up, I do remember seeing a couple of horse collars, an old harness, and some other items that might have indicated that the old barn once had a horse and buggy as occupants.

Nevertheless, I do know that he bought a Model T Ford touring car, which I always thought was a 1915 model. Literature from the MODEL T TIMES, however, convinces me that it was a 1917 five-passenger, four-cylinder, twenty horsepower Ford Touring Car, priced at \$360 f.o.b. Detroit, as pictured on Page 4 of the May-June 1973 issue of Model T TIMES. The term "touring car" meant that the waterproof canvas-type top could be lowered to the back of the vehicle, thus giving you a wide-open car. The windshield, however, was in two parts, the top half of which could be folded down. When it was in the upright position, the side posts provided attachments for the car top when it was raised. Likewise, there were places for the support posts (attached to the top) to be secured to the sides of the vehicle. Curtains with isinglass windows were attached very quickly on the sides if you got caught in

a rainstorm. These were carried in a compartment under the back seat. Isinglass was a transparent, almost pure hard gelatin prepared from the air bladder of certain fishes such as the sturgeon. In time it became cloudy and yellow from age and less transparent.

There were three doors, one in the front and one in the back on the passenger side, and one in the back on the driver's side, but no door where the driver sat. I often' wondered about the reasoning behind this construction. Perhaps someone thought that the driver might fall out if the door came open, thus endangering the lives of the passengers. More than likely, however, it was because the "emergency brake" lever (which also served to shift the transmission into high gear) worked back and forth on the driver's side close to where the door would have been.

The earlier Model T's engine operated from a magneto, which, according to the literature supplied by the Ford Motor Company, "furnishes a surplus of electricity for exploding the gas in the cylinders. It is an integral part of the Motor, being attached to the flywheel -- and is simplicity itself. No brushes, no commutators - no batteries - no dry cells are necessary. The Ford magneto is a big and sure item in the Ford's ease of operation and economy of upkeep." The magneto also furnished electricity to the front headlights. As the engine speed increased so did the amount of light generated in the headlights. If you were driving slowly on a dark night, you just barely generated enough light to see five or six feet ahead of you. Two front lights mounted on sides of the windshield and the tail light were not electric. They were kerosene lantern type fueled by kerosene and lit by a match. The front ones contained a clear glass door and the rear one a red glass door which you opened in order to light the wick. If the wind was blowing hard, it was difficult to keep them burning. It did not seem to matter much about the front ones; they were mostly for show. But it was important to my dad that the small red tail light was always visible at night.

The engine had to be started by cranking it with a small hand crank in front of the car. Our Model T was always hard to start and often "kicked" even when the spark was retarded. The "spark" was a device on the steering column (opposite the gas control) that could be advanced or retarded to control the electric spark generated by the magneto. I remember that once the engine "kicked" so forcefully that the crank reversed itself quickly enough to break my brother's wrist. After I started using the "T" in later years, I found that it was usually necessary when the weather was cold to jack up one of the back wheels, throw the emergency brake lever in high gear, and then crank the engine. This resulted in its starting much easier. Also in cold weather, the act of pouring hot water over the manifold and carburetor helped to start it. Without these two maneuvers you could crank until you were blue in the face without it even so much as firing one time. There was some danger in the wheel jacking procedure since the starting of the engine made the wheel start turning rapidly, jolting it off the jack and occasionally causing the car to run you down. However, this could also happen even when not jacked up if the notches on the emergency brake lever had worn. I once had to help a Mr. Butler who had cranked up his Model T in front of his fertilizer warehouse only to have the emergency brake lever slip into gear, causing the car to move forward and pin him against the warehouse. It was lucky that I was standing nearby and could shut off the engine. He wasn't hurt but the old man was shaken by the experience and vowed to have that lever fixed at once.

On the floorboard under the steering wheel there were three foot pedals; from left to right: the clutch pedal, the reverse pedal, and the brake pedal. Each operated on the transmission by means of levers and bands at the point where it connected to the drive shaft. You began moving the car forward by pushing down on the clutch pedal, then moving the emergency brake lever as far forward as possible, finally releasing the clutch pedal when

sufficient speed was attained, all of which resulted in your rolling in high gear. Simplicity in operation was Ford's motto. A good Model T might reach speeds of 30 miles per hour. The three bands in the transmission had to be tightened or replaced often. Obviously, the clutch and the brake bands were used more often than the reverse. Tightening the bands was not too difficult but replacing them was, so the mark of a good driver was to use his reverse pedal as a brake often enough that he could replace all three bands at the same time when they wore out. When pulling up a rather steep hill, the car would stall in high gear so that it became necessary to push the floor clutch pedal into low gear and creep up to the top of the hill. If the clutch band was badly worn, it sometimes became necessary to turn around and back up the hill.

There were other reasons why backing up a hill occasionally became necessary. The gas tank was mounted under the front seat and the gasoline was fed by gravity from the tank to the carburetor. Ours had a cylindrical tank but other models apparently had a square tank with the feed line attached to the front. During my first year in college, I borrowed Jesse Ziegler's Model T (in which he and I had traveled from Maryland to Virginia) to take a group to Harrisonburg to a tea given by Miss Georgia Shrum, our class sponsor. She lived in a classy house on top of a steep hill. About half-way up I began having trouble with the clutch and suddenly the engine sputtered and stopped. We never had enough money in those days to buy more than a gallon or two of gasoline at a time, so I recognized immediately that I had double trouble. The gasoline had run to the back of the tank and the level was too low to feed through the line to the carburetor. That left nothing to do at the time but to turn around cautiously in the street and back up the hill and right on into her driveway. What a beautiful way for a group of freshmen to make an impression on their class sponsor at a dignified affair!

My never-to-be-forgotten memories of our Model T Ford included my dad's annual pilgrimage over the Fourth of July holidays from Denton to Harrisonburg, Virginia to visit his relatives. This took place every year from about 1918 to around 1923. My older brother did all of the driving. To prepare for the trip, my dad always put new tires on the car and hung a couple of new ones on the posts that supported the top. In the trunk (homemade) on the running board, he had several new tubes and a supply of tube patching material. The wheels on our Model T had permanent rims (not demountable as in later years) and were supplied with thirty by three inch tires on the front and thirty by three and a half on the rear. In case of a flat you jacked up the wheel and with tire irons removed the tire from the rim right on the spot and proceeded to remove the tube for necessary patching. Often it was a "blowout" requiring a new tube and a blowout casing to be inserted in the tire. This was a 350-mile trip and on the average we had tire trouble every fifty miles. On a hot day, like the Fourth of July sometimes could be, it was just a "simple" matter of the previous patch melted off of the tube. "Simple" though it may be, it still required the same procedure of dismounting the tire from the rim and replacing it after repairs were made. Then came the "fun" of putting 65 to 70 pounds of air back into the tire with a hand pump which, at best, probably emitted a quarter to a half pounds with each stroke.

Several tube patching kits and blowout casings were always carried in the trunk on the running board. If the tire simply went flat it was always examined for a nail, piece of wire, sharp rock, or piece of glass puncture before dismounting. In such case, it might be possible to remove only the front bead of the tire from the rim, slip the tube out, and patch it. It was always easier and less time consuming to remove only the front bead than to remove the whole tire. Patching was done by roughing up the tube around the hole with the perforated cap from the patching kit, supplying rubber cement from a small tube, pulling the cover from the sticky side of the patch, applying it to the area around the hole, and then rolling it on a hard surface with the patching kit tube to be certain that the patch

was adhering tightly to the tube. In working the tire bead back onto the rim one had to be careful not to pinch the tube and cause another hole. It was discouraging) to say the least, to get a tire back on the rim, start pumping air into it, and find that air was escaping as fast as it was being pumped in. Some ingenious fellow discovered that if you put a little bit of air into the tube to round it out some before inserting it into the tire, you were less likely to pinch it. With today's tubeless tires it is virtually impossible to repair one on the road without replacing it with the spare wheel and tire, which is probably a blessing to both the driver and the service station operator.

In addition to tire trouble, since the roads were uphill and downhill requiring the use of the clutch and brake pedals quite a bit, it was necessary now and then to remove the front floorboards, take off the top plate on the transmission box, and with wrenches tighten the clutch and brake pedals. On a long trip, you were lucky if you could get by with tightening the bands several times without replacing them. Replacing them was a much more complicated and time consuming procedure.

My dad would close his store around midnight on July 3 and we would travel all day on the Fourth, arriving at my uncle's home in Harrisonburg at midnight that day, a twenty-four hour trip that today can be made easily in six hours. Traveling was at a snail's pace, due largely to the limited speed of the Model T, the bad one-lane roads, and the innumerable number of flat tires. Some of the roads were not hard-surfaced and those that were surfaced followed property lines and went up and down hills according to the topography of the land. There was one stretch on the Valley Turnpike near New Market, Virginia, that was laid up and down over rock ledges which gave a similar effect to riding a roller coaster. I don't believe we ever made the trip that there wasn't at least one bridge that was washed out requiring an extensive detour.

Our route was from Denton north to Elkton, Maryland, west to Havre de Grace and Baltimore, then to Frederick, south to Harper's Ferry and Charlestown, West Virginia, on to Winchester, Virginia, and south on the Valley Turnpike to Harrisonburg. The bridge at Havre de Grace and the one at Harper's Ferry were almost always out of order, requiring detours to Conowingo to cross the Susquehanna River and to Hagerstown and Martinsburg, W. Va., to get around Harper's Ferry. Road repairs at other places often required a detour also.

My father never drove the car. My brother did all the driving and the tire repairs, often causing blisters on his hands by the time we arrived back home. Since Dad didn't want to leave his store closed very long, we usually stayed only one day, two at the most, and arrived back home at the end of the third or fourth day after leaving for the trip. My dad rode on the front seat with my brother, and my mother, sister, and I occupied the back seat. Our luggage, supplies, and food to eat on the way was stashed away behind an expandable luggage rack on the left running board and any other place that would permit it to be tied on. I must admit that I was quite apprehensive about these trips and often sat on the floor board in the back with my head covered up. For the rest of my life I was teased by my family about the fact that every few miles I would come up from the cover and inquire, "Are we coming or going?" Even if they didn't know what I meant, I did! I wanted to know whether we were still going away from home or had turned around and were coming back home!

I was even more apprehensive after another car hit us in the rear on one of those trips. We had pulled over as far as we were able to, probably to eat a snack and to stretch a little, when a car popped over a knoll and rammed our rear, putting a big dent in the back of the car, eliminating the tall light, and bending the fenders, but not sufficiently enough to keep

us from moving on to our destination. The tail light was eventually replaced, but the dents remained with the Model T for the rest of its life. Collisions at 10-15 miles an hour were not so destructible, coupled with the fact that the Model T was practically indestructible anyhow! But it frightened me, to say the least. I guess that all of my life, even with the modern car, I have remained somewhat apprehensive about taking a long trip. I have traveled thousands of miles in my career but no trip ever impressed me quite as much as those pilgrimages to Virginia. I must have gained a little bit of empathy for the pioneers who went west in the wagon trains!

In 1926, my father bought a Whippet and stored the old Model T. A couple of years later, even before I got my driver's license, I got the Model T out of storage and began painting and preparing it to run again. The engine had some knocks in it and Mr. Charlie Taylor, a carpenter and jack-of-all-trades, as well as a friend of my dad's, diagnosed it as the connecting rod bearings. He said that the connecting rods needed to be disconnected from the crankshaft and the shims, if there were any, needed to be removed. If there were no shims, the caps needed to be filed down some to make the bearings fit tighter around the crankshaft. He said I could do it. The Ford Motor Company advertised that, "all interior parts of the motor may be reached by removing the plate on bottom of crank case -- no 'tearing down' of motor to reach crank shaft, cam shaft, pistons, connecting rods, etc." So with Mr. Taylor's advice and help I proceeded to do the job, thereby learning something about the inner workings of the engine.

I was using the Model T to deliver newspapers and when I remarked about how cold it was in the winter, Charlie Taylor said that he had an old Model T closed coupe body that he wasn't using and would trade with me for the touring car body, assuring me that the bodies were interchangeable on the two chassis. With my dad's permission, we set a date and in Charlie's garage we removed the touring car body and replaced it with the coupe body. I soon discovered that it was a little more top heavy than the touring car body and I almost turned it over one evening when I slid around a corner on an oyster shell road. The shells stopped sliding in a rut before the body did. This coupe was rather unique. It was a two-door vehicle but it had two windows on each side, each of which had a strap attached to the bottom that permitted you to raise or lower them as desired. The back glass likewise could be lowered or raised with a similar strap. The windshield was in two parts that permitted you to lay it out flat, so that with all windows open you had a "fresh air taxi."

By this time in my life, in addition to the Model T's usefulness for newspaper deliveries, it had become a "fun" machine. I decided that the black color was too drab, so with the help of the manager of the American Oil yard (where I did some grass cutting) I salvaged some of their bright red and yellow paint. I painted the body a bright red with yellow stripes, and the wheels a bright yellow. It was quite a showpiece for which I took quite a ribbing from my friends and newspaper customers. I drove it to high school during my senior year and used it there almost every day to take a bank deposit from the principal's office to the bank. Once or twice I returned from downtown to the high school at noon hour with ten or twelve high school kids hanging on. This stopped abruptly, however, when I received a summons to the principal's office and a mandate from him to either stop such maneuvers or leave the car at home. I'm sure that had my father known about it there would not have been any either/or.

No auto ever contributed as much to the growth of America as did the Model T. Millions of them were built and except for improvements in the starting and lighting systems in later years, there were very few changes in the design and the engine. In 1928, I believe, Ford replaced the Model T with a Model A, a more advanced and faster piece of machinery. When it came time to go to Bridgewater College in Virginia, Jesse Ziegler and I traveled

together that first year in his Model T Ford Sedan, dubbed "The Blue Goose." After that he and I and Rufus King traveled together in Rufus' Model A Ford. I'm not sure what my father did with my old Model T after I went to college, but I have some recollection that he sold it to someone primarily for the engine. (Who would want a bright red and yellow coupe, anyhow?) The experiences with the Model T undoubtedly contributed a link between my childhood and my maturity. It was a great car.

Chapter Ten

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Other Experiences

Sometimes if only one farmer was bringing in grain I would accompany him to the box car to unload. The grain was in burlap bags. If large quantities were being brought in by one or two farmers, Mr. Moore might employ two men to remain at the boxcar site to help unload the wagons. The inside of the boxcar was always sealed around the cracks so that the grain could be dumped loose in the car. As the level of grain rose in the boxcar, boards were placed across the door in the center of the boxcar, one on top of the other with burlap in the cracks to keep the grain from seeping out. As these boards reached a height close to the top of the car, it was quite a chore to pitch the sacks from the wagon over the boards into the car. Inside the car, one or two fellows would be emptying the sacks, always filling up the two ends first in order to leave as much room as possible at the center door until the car was filled to its capacity. As I mentioned, on a day when perhaps only one farmer was bringing in grain, I might have to accompany him to the railroad car to help unload since it wasn't practical to employ someone to sit around and wait for another load of grain. Then the farmer and I would together toss as many of the sacks as we could from the wagon into the car, then crawl into the car, untie the sacks and work the grain to the far ends of the boxcar. This was hot and heavy work, especially inside the car on a sweltering July or August day.

Later in the fall, when the corn was husked out, Mr. Moore would purchase the field corn on the cob. On his lot behind the office he had two or three large corn cribs for storing the corn until shelling time. Unless it was Saturday, I was not involved much in the corn purchasing since school was already in session. When the cribs were full, Mr. Moore hired the owner of a corn sheller and tractor to bring his equipment and shell the corn. The grain would fall into a leak-proof wagon bed and be sent on to the railroad siding where it was transferred from the wagon to the boxcar via scoop shovel, filling the car in the same way as with the small grain. At the sheller the cobs went up an elevator to a large pile. Mr. Moore gave the cobs away and many people from all around came with sacks, pushcarts, wheelbarrows, and other receptacles for the cobs. They were excellent for starting a fire in a wood stove, especially when dipped into kerosene. Some of the cobs still had few grains of corn left on them which could be shelled off by hand for the chickens. At shelling time, I would always get as many cobs as I could in the evenings after school and store them in our cob bin in the barn.

I was grateful to Mr. Harry T. Moore for his confidence in my ability to handle the work at the scales, to make the calculations involved in changing pounds into bushels, and to believe in my honesty. The amount he paid me was not great but was adequate for my age and the responsibility involved.

The Wholesale Meat Truck. One independent wholesale meat salesman drove his own delivery truck and furnished most of the cured meats for my dad's store. These would include cheese, bacon, wieners in ten pound boxes, fat pork sides (called pork bellies),

several varieties of bologna, cured hams and shoulders, and in season, such items as pork sausage, scrapple, and other varieties of meat products. When I was not in school and dad did not need me in the store, this wholesaler (whose name I have forgotten) would ask my dad's permission to allow me to accompany him on the remainder of his route to the other stores in Ridgely, Hillsboro, Queen Anne, and places in between. I would help him make deliveries. He always returned via Denton and it was easy to drop me off. Since I liked to go, I suspect that I requested the permission more often than he did. It was an enjoyable and learning experience.

Newspapers and Magazines. In a sense, I was in business independently for myself. I had a regular daily newspaper route including morning, evening, and Sunday papers. The evening and Sunday routes were the largest. Most of the morning papers were picked 'up' at dad's store. My evening route was fairly large in West Denton and my cousin, William McDaniel, had an even larger one in Denton. Sometimes I helped him, and when he went away to college a year before I did, I took over his route also. Later, I went into partnership on the Denton route with the pastor's son, Fred Woodie, who took over after I went to college. Together we were delivering in West Denton and Denton well over 100 copies each evening.

The paper was the evening edition of the Baltimore Sun and just as they are today, the bundle of newspapers was dropped off at various locations via delivery truck directly from the newspaper plant. In those days a newspaper boy was entirely on his own and did not have the advantage of a district supervisor as they do now. Nor did we have the advantage of prior payment directly to the newspaper as they do now. Today, my paper is delivered by hand to my door but I do not see or know the carrier. The cost is paid six months or a year in advance to the newspaper company from which the newsboy (or girl.) gets his customer list and his share for delivering the paper. It was quite the contrary in my day. The newsboy solicited his own customers, ordered the number of papers he needed, and was responsible for paying the company directly for the papers ordered. If I did not sell all of them, I could clip the name and date of the papers unsold and return them to the company for credit. The newsboy then was also responsible for collecting from his customers. He could demand cash each week or extend credit for as long as he wished. As I remember, the price of the paper was 2 cents each or 10 cents per week with 5 cents added for those who also got the Sunday paper.

I had my own accounting system for those who charged the paper and I entered the charge and collections in a little book. It was not always easy to collect each week and sometimes customers would argue that they had already paid when you tried to collect for two or three weeks in arrears. I also had some customers who would promise to "pay next week" and beg you not to stop the paper. I was able to understand my dad's problem when his customers wanted him to extend their credit. Most newspaper customers paid up eventually but in the end I had a few uncollected accounts. I kept the book and the money at my dad's store so that if someone wanted to pay when I wasn't there he could take care of it. It also gave him a chance to offer advice on how I was operating my business.

There are still some newspaper carriers who continue to be responsible for collecting from the customer. Most of these have a book for each customer with small squares for each week already printed for several weeks in advance. When the customer pays, the carrier will remove that square from the book and give it to the customer. Some customers still think they have paid, but when the carrier presents them with the evidence that the little square for that week is still in his book they have little grounds for argument.

Delivery to my customers was first made on foot, then by bicycle, and finally with my Model

T Ford with the gasoline coming from my dad's gas pumps.

Once each week I had a regular route for the Saturday Evening Post and once a month for the Country Gentleman and The Ladies Home Journal, all of which were then published by the Curtis Publishing Company. In the case of these magazines, just as I did with my newspapers, I ordered the number of copies needed, always allowing for a few more than my regular customers, collected for them, and paid the bill. I have not forgotten one poor old crippled black man who always looked forward to getting the next issue of the Saturday Evening Post but who seldom ever had the nickel that it cost. But considering his condition and the fact that he enjoyed it so much I kept letting him have one each week. Occasionally he had the 5 cents and he was always appreciative and wanted to pay but usually just didn't have it.

The experience that a successful newsboy or newsgirl gains has proven over the years to be quite valuable to that person in his or her adult career.

Boat Captains. Captain Lord was the name of the captain of the old steamboat JOPPA. He as a big and kindly man and visited with my dad as well as purchased things from him on each of his visits to Denton. His most outstanding physical feature was his big red nose - the W. C. Field's type - a little frightening at first to a small boy but later an insignificant feature compared to his compassionate personality. He was always friendly to the children of the community and usually had a sucker or piece of candy for each of them.

The only black captain that I remember was Captain Waters, who commanded the "Edward V. Hendrixon," a sailboat owned by L. B. Towers of Denton. Captain Waters later purchased the boat from Towers and operated it independently. Loads of fertilizer and other products were brought to Denton rather regularly by this sailboat and it usually took a load of canned goods from the Towers Cannery on Its return trip to Baltimore. Captain Waters always visited with my dad and I would say that they were very good friends. He was not married and the sailboat was his home. I remember on one occasion that the blacks of Denton and surrounding vicinity were having a camp meeting just east of Denton, Captain Waters wanted to take a date to the camp meeting but he had no means of transportation and there were no taxis available. So he rather reluctantly and apologetically asked my dad if he would let me drive him in my dad's Whippet to the campgrounds with his date and then return for them about midnight. My dad and I consulted with each other and decided that I could do it especially since there was about \$10.00 in it for me. Now for the time, that was a switch - a white person as a chauffeur for a black couple. Had it been anyone other than Captain Waters, I doubt if either my dad or I would have agreed to it. Captain Waters was a fine, trustworthy man. When the appointed evening came he was dressed up in the very best and I drove him to the lady's home. He escorted her (who was also immaculately dressed) to the car and they both got in the back seat. He introduced her to me and off we went. I dropped them off at a certain spot on the campground and received instructions from Captain Waters to check at that exact spot at 11:30 p.m. promptly. So at that point I returned home, awaited the appointed hour and made the return trip to pick them up. When we arrived at her home, Captain Waters escorted her to the door, said his "goodbye" and I brought him back to his boat which was tied up at the wharf across from our home. It was an interesting experience and one that I didn't mind because I had shared many a hot biscuit with him in the galley of the old Edward V. Hendrixon. I don't know when I saw Captain Waters last. A book entitled "Chesapeake Circle" by Robert H. Burgess, 1965, states that "the Edward V. Hendrixon made a locker for herself in the mud flats on the shore of the Tred Avon River at Oxford, Maryland, about 1943." I'm sure that Captain Waters probably retired long before then and likely sold his boat to someone else. The same book indicates that the last of the

schooners ceased operating by sail power around this same date, although a few of them were converted to diesel power and operated until the late '50s.

Steam Engines. There were a variety of steam engines in the early '20's, the most popular ones being the Peerless and the Frick. These engines were used for power at saw mills, for threshing grain, and for other business operations where a source of power was needed. For the most part, they had large cleated wheels on the rear and they were able to creep along on the roads at a snail's pace by transferring the steam to the wheels. When used as a power source for threshing, sawing et cetera, the rig was chocked in a permanent position and the steam was transferred to a large drive wheel on the side of the boiler from which a long flat belt was connected to the thresher, saw, or whatever. The lengthy belt itself, once it began rolling at full speed, helped to reduce the amount of steam needed because of its forward momentum. Wood was used in the firebox to convert the water in the boiler into steam. The steam engine carried a supply of wood and water with it. The carrying of water to the steam engine on a farm or at a sawmill was quite a chore, so the steam engine would always stop when crossing a river and fill up the two large tanks that were located at the rear of the boiler between the rear wheels, one on each side. This was done by the osmosis process, using the steam to produce the suction, and sometimes took an hour or so. Lingered around the many steam engines that stopped on the drawbridge at Denton to replenish their water tanks was always fun.

Just behind the Pastorfield store and adjoining the side of our barn lot was a garage owned by Oscar Smith. This garage was built on the site of the old mill that burned. Oscar was in the threshing and sawmill business and owned about six threshing "rigs." In addition to a couple of Peerless steam engines, he also had three or four tractors, mostly Case. Shortly after automobiles became popular, so did farm tractors, the most popular in our part of the country being Fordson and Case. The term "threshing rig" meant the combination of either a steam engine or a tractor and a thresh box to go with it. Oscar had a crew that accompanied each of his rigs and operated all around the countryside during threshing season. In the winter months, he would store these rigs in his garage and under a shed attached to it. Then he would completely overhaul each rig and repaint it so that in the spring he could start out with overhauled and freshly-painted rigs, of which he was quite proud. Oscar believed that there was no one else in the country who could do as good a job as he could in threshing grain. Also, there was hardly any job that he would not tackle if it involved the type of equipment that he owned. He did not allow boys to fool around his garage, but I used to watch him some from our lot as he was overhauling and trial-running his equipment.

Tending Warehouses. I was occasionally involved in another activity that involved some responsibility, that of tending the fertilizer warehouses for the owners. Often the owner wanted to visit the farmers to get orders for fertilizer and would need someone to stay in his warehouse while he was gone. This required knowledge of the kinds of fertilizer, such as 5-10-10 (the numbers standing for the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium in the mixture), or nitrate of soda, as well as the number of bags in a ton or fraction thereof. It also demanded accuracy in loading the wagon, so that neither the farmer nor the warehouse owner was cheated. Later, when my dad closed his store for good, he spent the remaining two or three years of his life tending to the fertilizer warehouse on a full-time basis for Mr. E. T. Orme at a salary of \$30 to \$35 per week.

Fun and Recreation. In West Denton there were five or six boys and girls in my age group and during the year when outdoor play was appropriate we would get together in the evenings for fun and games. The most common games were marbles, hide and seek or fox and hound. In the winter there might be sledding or ice skating. I never learned to ice

skate but I could slide on the ice in my shoes. There were stories about the Choptank being frozen so hard around the turn of the century that teams of horses pulling wagonloads of wood could cross on the ice. I do not remember seeing that happen but the river would often be frozen solid enough to allow ice skating. Whenever I was involved in the play I usually stayed nearby so that my dad could call me if he needed me in the store. But he was liberal and didn't expect me to be at his right hand all of the time. As I think back on my experiences, I feel that he was quite liberal in allowing me to participate in as many things as I did, and he was usually very protective to be sure that I was involved in a learning or a productive experience.

Chapter Eleven

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The Two Big Fires

During my childhood days Denton and West Denton had their share of fires that destroyed property but to my knowledge no lives. Among fires that I remember, other than the two big ones that are the subject of this chapter, were a commercial garage, a car dealer's showroom and garage, one house in West Denton, and several houses in Denton. The two fires that affected my life the most were (1) the one that burned the mill previously owned by my dad, two stores, and two houses all in one afternoon, and (2) the one about ten years later that burned my dad's store.

By all logical reasoning, our home, barn, and our store should have been destroyed along with the mill, the two houses, and the two stores. But miraculously, they were saved although they were somewhat damaged. The sketch that follows shows how close together these buildings were and will help the reader see that it was a miracle that our buildings were saved, especially since they were no more than 25 feet from the ones that burned to the ground.

This first fire, the big one, took place one afternoon in the year 1918. I was only four, but the memory of this fire lingered with me long after it happened. Many times after 1918 I was to hear regrets expressed over the fact that the steamboat JOPPA had just departed from the wharf at West Denton and was observed going out of sight around a bend in the river just as the fire broke out at the mill. Regrets were expressed because the JOPPA had fire-fighting equipment aboard that could have easily doused the fire at the mill before it got out of hand. There was no way of communicating with the JOPPA and no available boat faster, to send to catch her. Also, I was to hear my dad say many times, as the accident of the fire was told and retold, that when he owned the mill he always kept buckets of water in the loft close to the equipment that might get overheated and cause a fire (which is what actually did happen). These buckets were found to be empty when the fire did break out, and by the time water was brought to the scene the fire was out of control.

Two conditions caused the fire to spread rapidly to other buildings. One was the lack of fire-fighting equipment, and the other was the fact that the roofs of all buildings nearby were covered with wooden shingles which ignited quickly when sparks and coals of fire landed on them. During the early part of the century, most cities had some kind of reasonably adequate fire-fighting equipment, but small towns had none or at best very primitive equipment. I don't think that any was available in Denton on the day of this big fire.

Fortunately, the river was only a few feet away. Men, boys, women, and girls from the whole community gathered at the scene to move furniture and help fight the fire and to try

to keep it from spreading to other buildings. They brought buckets, kettles, ropes, ladders, burlap sacks, and everything possible to fight the blaze. I was too young to be aware fully of the procedures used and, in addition, some of the younger children, including me, were taken to another home far enough away from the scene to be safe and left in the care of the lady there. From the stories that I heard later, however, I do remember that the firefighters, after determining that the mill was too far gone, concentrated on the other buildings closest to the mill. How much effort was concentrated on the stores is unknown, since they were much larger than the dwellings, and I doubt if the firefighters' methods were at all effective. I do remember stories about the bucket brigades, ladders, and burlap sacks used on our house, barn, and store, all three of which were closer than any other buildings to the heart of the fire. By putting the ladders on the sides of these buildings away from [?] shielded from the fire, men climbed them and spread wet burlap sacks over the roofs. Some stayed up on the roofs. Brigades of men and women formed lines and passed buckets of water from the river to the ladders and up to the roof. There the men on the roof continuously dashed water on the burlap sacks, keeping them wet and providing excess water to run down over the sides of the buildings nearest to the fire. In the meantime, furniture and valuables were moved out of the nearby dwellings and far down the street away from the fire. Other groups of men were posted at the buildings farther away from the fire to watch for sparks and chunks of burning wood that constantly were landing on the roofs of surrounding buildings. It was necessary to dash water on these burning coals to prevent them from setting another building on fire.

There was a house between ours and Pastorfield's store with almost no space between it and the store. Actually, there were no more than twenty feet between this house and ours. The house next to the store burned along with the store. Our house suffered roof damage, broken windows, severe paint blistering, and some weatherboard damage. Another house, some distance away from the mill, back somewhat from the Hillsboro-Denton road, and northwest of Knotts' store also burned. Logically, it should not have burned since it was farther away from the intensity of the fire than several other buildings that were saved, but the wind was carrying sparks and burning chunks in its direction. These got out of hand before they were noticed and proved fatal to the building.

In the meantime, the lady keeping us little kids did her best to console us and to keep our attention away from the fire. We were close enough to see the flames and smoke but were unable to see the details of the firefighting. I was very concerned about my cat; afraid that it was "getting burned up." I was too young, I guess, to be really concerned about my mother, dad, brother, and sister who were all involved in trying to save our household goods, home, barn, and store. I'm sure I didn't understand all that was involved [to remove] his records from the store.

The fire burned itself out sometime that night. I do not know when we were able to get our household goods back in place and return to our home. I do remember that my cat was gone when we moved back in; now I was sure that it "got burned up" and my family tried to assure me that it had only been frightened, had gone somewhere far away from the fire and would return soon. As it turned out, it did return after several weeks, but in the meantime I was sure it had "burned up."

My dad's store had some damage to the roof, the front windows broken from the heat, and the sides badly scorched. The mill, two houses, and the two stores were completely destroyed. A pile of coal between the mill and the Pastorfield store smoldered and burned for days afterward. The stores were both rebuilt, a garage was later built on the mill site, but the two houses were never rebuilt.

I am sure that there were scores of dead-tired people by the time that fire was brought under control and people could return to their homes. As close as our home, barn, and store were to the center of the fire it would be miraculous if modern fire-fighting equipment could save them even today. I do not possibly see how the people involved stood the intense heat and the strain of many hours of very, very hard work. It was definitely a wonderful display of dedicated friendship and community spirit.

The second fire that left its mark upon my boyhood memories took place approximately ten years after the big fire and on that occasion my dad's store did actually burn. It was in the spring of the year, the exact date I have forgotten, and it started shortly after midnight on the second floor of the the two-story building. We never knew what caused it. Since it burned through the ceiling of the first floor directly opposite the chimney where the pot-bellied stove was located, we envisioned the chimney as being the cause, but as I recall, my dad ruled out that possibility on the theory that he had not had a fire in the stove that day and did not believe that it could have smoldered for a day or two before igniting. I think that he believed that arson was the cause of the fire.

Someone traveling west on the causeway between Denton and West Denton spotted the fire apparently shortly after it started and turned in the alarm. By that time, Denton had a new Seagrave fire engine, an early model of the more sophisticated ones today, and a volunteer fire department that had already won awards up and down the Eastern Shore. They were on the job promptly. They parked on the river bank across from our home, placed the suction hose in the river, and sprayed several streams of water on the store.

Someone had awakened my dad and he was promptly on the scene removing his records. I, too, was awakened, looked out the window, and promptly got back in bed and pulled the covers over my head. I was in high school by this time and this kind of reaction on my part was inexcusable. Somehow, I could not bring myself to accept the fact that our store was on fire, nor to get out of bed and go help my dad. Finally, my mother shamed me into getting up and going to help.

Upon my arrival at the front of the store, I found that my dad and others had removed his records and some equipment and merchandise near the front of the store. It was too risky to try to remove very much of the merchandise.

The fire company soon had the fire under control. The final result was that the upper story and roof were burned, a section about two feet wide across the first floor ceiling in front of the chimney had burned through, and the roof of the warehouse was badly damaged. The contents of the store and warehouse were also badly damaged from smoke, burning coals, and water. The large front glass windows were destroyed.

The next day the front of the store was boarded up for the insurance company's inspection. Within a day or two my dad had decided to have a fire sale and to rebuild the store. The Knotts store was vacant at the time due to the death of Mr. Knotts, and Dad was able to rent that space. He moved the salvageable contents across the street and for several weeks we had a fire sale. New merchandise was gradually added in preparation for the opening of the remodeled store. Dad contracted with Charlie Taylor to rebuild the burned building. Since the first floor structure had been badly damaged, a new building was designed using this much of the old building and the foundation. The burnt embers and remains on the floor of the second story were shoveled to the rear and into the river, and the ceiling of the first story was cleaned up and repaired. This time a second story was not added. Instead, a hip roof was attached to the old first story and the front of the hip roof was extended six to eight feet beyond the front of the building, making a cover for the front

porch and gasoline pumps. Likewise, the warehouse roof was repaired or replaced where necessary. After construction was completed and the building painted inside and out, the result was a new store. For several years, in this new setting, my dad's business was good, but it never reached the peak of a few previous years. Then the Depression hit, as well as the competition from the chain stores sweeping the country. The other independent merchants adjusted prices and methods to compete with these chain stores but my dad was steadfast in his resolve to do business just as he had in the past. All of these factors finally led to his closing the store around the mid-'30s.

For me, these two fires were major unhappy experiences in what otherwise was a good and profitable boyhood. For my father, the second fire must have also been the beginning of the unhappy ending of a career that had been good to him. However, I believe that my dad could have adjusted to these adverse conditions just as many others did, but I hesitate to be critical of him because he also suffered from health problems. He found his limitations very difficult to cope with, and I also know that he felt that he lacked the funds needed for the proper medical advice and treatment. He really should have lived longer than he did.

Chapter Twelve

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MY SCHOOLING

It is indeed more difficult to write about [my] public education experiences than the other experiences already described. Apparently the others made a more lasting impression upon me. From the things already described, one might think that I never went to school at all and that all of my time was spent in the store, the cannery, oil yards, grain yard, truck patches, or in some other experience. Quite the contrary - these were all done before or after school hours, during vacation times, weekends or in the summer. I do not remember missing any school because of these activities. Even my dad's trips to Baltimore would be scheduled at a time when I was not in school.

My first three or four years of school were in the primary building, a wooden, four-room structure closer to [home] than the other school buildings that I attended. Later it became a community center for the town. I do not remember much about those years, except the things that we used to make to take home around the holidays, such as turkeys pilgrims made from construction paper at Thanksgiving, paper chairs and decorations for the tree at Christmas, and goblins and black cats at Halloween. I do remember getting a good whipping from my first grade teacher, who was also the principal of the primary school, for supposedly locking some girls in the girls' outdoor toilet. The boys' and girls' outdoor toilets each had a high board fence around them and each had one gate for entering, the gate made of the same kinds of boards. The gate contained a hasp so that it could be locked at night. Some older boys shut the gate on some girls in the toilet, rammed a stick through the hasp, and drafted me to stand guard to keep others from removing the stick. I was naive and gullible. Some other girls immediately reported my guard duty to the principal and also gave me the credit for the whole affair. The principal issued summons for my appearance and promptly let me have it with a part of an old buggy whip that she kept on hand for such incorrigibles. I tried to explain my minor role but not in enough detail as to implicate the others for fear that I might get beaten up by the [others] also. This experience taught me to be more selective in choosing my playmates in the future and also not to be so trusting of just anybody.

In trying to write about it, I am embarrassed that I remember so little about my early

school experiences. Going to school was definitely not one of my favorite activities; there was so much to do and to learn elsewhere. I guess no one was more surprised than I when I decided in later years to make teaching my career. When it was put to me to decide what course I would follow in college, I guess I was impressed then by my brother's success already as a teacher and decided that I had to keep up with him.

I think that both my fourth and fifth grades were spent in temporary buildings on the grounds of the high school. We called them "chicken coops."

During this period a new high school building was constructed and the following changes were made: the high school classes and the sixth and seventh grades were moved to the new building in the fall of 1925 and the first five grades were housed in the old high school building. I do remember that it was a nice experience to spend the next six years in a new building. Just as recently as 1980 some school divisions throughout the nation were discussing the possibility of "departmentalizing" the upper grades. My sixth and seventh grades in 1925-26 and 1926-27 were departmentalized to a degree because we remained in the same room all day but had different teachers who came in to teach music, art, arithmetic, English, and social studies. I have been impressed during my public school teaching and administrative experience with the number of times we turn a complete circle in public education and come up with a "new" idea that was already in practice as much as forty or fifty years ago.

Having a sense of humor and finding things to laugh at or about, is a great asset and I have always tried to develop and maintain one. I recall that in the new school building the floors in the halls were made of terrazzo and a noise created by contact with them made an echo throughout the hallway. One day during the "silent reading" period some lady wearing shoes with hard heels came walking down the hall at a rapid pace and the click.. click.. click of her heels on that terrazzo echoing throughout the hallway struck me as funny and I laughed out loud. To me it was funny but not to Mrs. Rairigh, my teacher. I spent the next hour or so standing in the cloak room facing a corner until she thought I might be able to return to my seat and maintain a serious composure.

The Maryland schools had a good, well-planned, statewide physical education program. Students in the upper grades and even in high school participated in various athletic events such as high jumping, broad jumping, relay running, hurdles, shot-put, discus throwing, and other such events. Awards were given at the local school level during the year when one attained the stated requirements. These awards were bronze, silver, and gold badges with appropriate bars to be attached for achievements beyond the gold badge. Each level required achievements in broad jumping, high jumping, chinning, and running. These awards were made by the State Department of education on a statewide basis. Thus, each badge was recognized anywhere in the state as representative of a certain level of attainment.

Once each year, in addition to the local contests, a district contest was held with the best representatives selected from each school to compete for the highest honors, especially in events requiring a team effort. Individuals could also participate for district recognition if they cared to do so. The same types of badges and honors were given, bronze, silver, and gold, but they had "district level" inscribed on them to distinguish them from the local level.

Our high school was called "Caroline High School." A newspaper called the "Carolinian" was published monthly by a staff of selected students under the supervision of a faculty advisor. I had a role in publishing that paper in my senior year; I was sports editor. In the last issue of my senior year I noted that Caroline High School took first place in the district track

meet that spring, scoring more points than any school had previously scored in a track meet.

The 660-yard relay was my specialty and I, as one of the four runners on the team, ran the 110-yard part of the 660. I remember that we were taught to back up on the track and start running along beside the runner from whom we were to receive the stick so that by the time he crossed the line at the end of his sprint the next runner was traveling at the same speed and no time was lost in the transfer. As I watch relays on TV today it seems that many teams are not taught this kind of continuity and often the second or third runner of the relay simply stands and waits for the transfer of the baton and then starts out running, thus losing valuable time. This could make the difference between a winning or losing team.

Other high school sports for boys included soccer and baseball. The girls also played a competitive sport called field ball, somewhat similar to soccer but not as strenuous or aggressive. I made the soccer team but warmed the bench more than I kicked the ball. We did not have a gymnasium, making it necessary for all sports to be played outdoors. Basketball and football were sports unknown to students on the Eastern Shore in my day and I did not see either sport played until I enrolled in college at Bridgewater, Virginia. Soccer eventually gave way to football almost everywhere but has been making a comeback in recent years.

My scholastic record was not the best and by standards for college entrance today many colleges would not consider it good enough. Fortunately, in 1931 most colleges were beginning to be troubled financially because of the Depression, especially the private colleges, and they probably accepted some students that in better times economically they might have rejected. I had good high school teachers and they were always "on my back" to work up to my capacity. Many of them previously had taught my sister and my brother, both several years older than I, and these teachers kept reminding me that my sister and brother had worked harder and made better grades than I and they knew I could do it, too. Their intentions were good and meant to inspire me I'm sure, but their comparisons usually created more resentment than inspiration. Later, I taught both elementary and high school students for twenty-one of my forty-two years in public education, many of whom were brothers and sisters of some of my previous students. But remembering my experience, I tried never to remind them that their older brother or sister was better or achieved more than they.

In addition to working beneath my academic ability in school, I also was a rather mischievous student. I did a number of mischievous things that kept me from making the honor roll. I attribute this to two things. One was that I simply was not motivated to do my best. I was no dummy but I just did not like studying foreign language, comprehending social studies, dissecting frogs, or reading classical literature, and consequently I often found myself into mischief or in trouble with the teacher. The other was the influence of the gang. There were four of us, often a fifth one, who palled around together throughout our high school days. Since we did not have the options that students have today, we usually were members of the same classes. What one couldn't think of, the other three or four could, and sometimes we even played tricks on each other as part of the game. I remember once being bored in a French class and I proposed to pick up a waste basket in front of me and toss it to one of my pals just a short distance away. He agreed to catch it since the teacher was looking in another direction and was concentrating on another student's interpretation of the French lesson. Just as I let it go he wheeled around in his seat and was "concentrating" intensely on the lesson. Of course, the waste basket landed on the floor with a great amount of noise and interruption. In a burst of rage, the teacher

expelled me from the room for a week.

My teachers were a little reluctant to send you to the principal as that would weaken their position in his eyes as a disciplinarian, they merely sent you from the room and gave you zero for the days out of class. After a day or two I sneaked back into French class, sat on the back seat and gradually resumed my regular seat. Unknown to my parents, I was expelled from class on several occasions for mischievous behavior, and I usually sought refuge away from the principal either in the locker room or in the boiler room. The custodian was a friend of mine and a member of our church. He would reprimand me but would let me hide there until the bell rang for the next class.

Throughout my career as a teacher, I had a respect for the mischievous youngster as a result of my own experience. I'll admit that their behavior was aggravating, but I'm convinced that it takes a reasonable degree of intelligence to be mischievous and get by with it. The major task for the teacher is to keep the student motivated and challenged so that he has more fun doing something constructive than being mischievous. The teacher makes little progress in simply appealing to the student to work to his or her ability, especially where the subject matter has little interest to the student. The teacher's job is to find those motivating and challenging things for the student to do that end up in his becoming quite interested in things that heretofore were worthless nonsense to him.

I must have either repented or been motivated in my senior year, however, because I had some accomplishments of which I was proud. I was one of eight achievers honored with an invitation to the Rotary Club one month, was one of two best citizens nominated for membership in the De Moley, a Masonic-sponsored organization for promising young high school seniors (which my parents prevented me from accepting since it was sponsored by the Masons, a secret organization which were then opposed by the Church of the Brethren), was on the Carolinian staff, participated in sports, and to top it all, worked one period each day in the principal's office. In this particular job I ran errands, posted bulletin boards, helped count the daily receipts, and took the daily deposit to the bank along with several checks for teachers when they were paid at the end of the month.

I assumed this job conscientiously and did well. Mr. B. C. Willis was our principal and he took a liking to me. Either he was not aware of my mischief of previous years or he was finding that motivating and challenging experience that I spoke of in a previous paragraph. Mr. Willis served as principal during the same four years that I was enrolled in high school, then left to become principal of Catonsville High School, a suburb of Baltimore. He later returned to Caroline County as superintendent of schools. He received fame for his work later as superintendent of Chicago schools. About thirty years after my graduation from high school, I attended a convention of the American Vocational Association in Chicago and Dr. Willis spoke briefly to the group. After the meeting I approached him, introduced myself, and he immediately remembered me and mentioned some of my "good" achievements. He was very gracious and glad to see me. Shortly thereafter he was appointed by the President to the position of Chairman of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, the field of work in which I was involved for most of my educational career, and he exerted a very positive influence on the status of vocational education in the United States.

There was some social life among high school students at Caroline High School but most of it was self-sponsored, by various groups on their own. Such activities consisted of going to the beaches (Rehoboth Beach and Ocean City), outings to Williston Lake or the old mill pond near Denton for swimming, and a few home parties. I have no recollection of social activities sponsored by the school, except perhaps an event in the senior year. If there

were any, I did not participate. Most of my social activities were church sponsored except for participation in P.T.A. programs and the volunteer firemen's carnival and minstrel programs.

There were school buses that brought students into Caroline High School but those of us that lived in West Denton lived close enough to the schools to be ineligible for bus pickup. One of my close friends, Kenneth Altfather lived about two miles west of Denton on the Hillsboro road, which had been paved with concrete during my childhood. There were several children in the family with Kenneth being my age and even slightly younger. They rode the school bus in cold weather, but for a couple of years they roller skated to school when the weather was warm, wearing out many sets of metal wheels on their skates. Later Kenneth would ride his bicycle to my dad's store and we would ride together to school on our bikes. Once in a while, on Saturday morning, I would go to his home where we would make repairs on our bikes, or we might take a ride to one of the nearby towns. His roller skating inspired me to try to learn to skate, but after a considerable number of unsuccessful attempts on the sidewalk of the old drawbridge (where I could hold on to the hand rail) I gave up.

Before my bicycle and Model T rides to school, a group of us from West Denton walked together to and from school. Sometimes we would try to catch a ride on a farm wagon or on the back of a horse drawn buggy, risking the possibility of the occupant lashing his buggy whip around behind the buggy and giving us a good flogging. It was on one of these walks from school that I learned from the group about Mr. Carrol Pastorfield's death. He had accidentally killed himself crossing a fence while hunting that day. Mr. Pastorfield operated the store diagonally across from my dad's store and, while he and dad were competitors, they were good friends, always lending each other merchandise if one ran out before the next shipment arrived.

I did not fail any grade while attending primary or elementary school, nor did I fail any subject in high school. I had above average grades on the whole, and that record, along with my participation in extra-curricular activities, was another one of the bridges that I crossed in preparation for entering college and eventually for participating in a successful career.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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MY CHURCH EXPERIENCE

My mother was a strong supporter and worker in the Denton Church of the Brethren and you can be assured that she saw to it that I accompanied her and participated in church activities. My dad seldom went to church on Sunday morning but frequently did attend the Sunday evening service. He supported the church but resisted all efforts to get him to attend on Sunday morning. Part of this was due to the fact that he did not hesitate to go to his store on a Sunday morning or afternoon to assist someone who needed an item that was forgotten during the week. Then, too, he felt like he needed that rest that Sunday provided since his store hours were 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 6 a.m. to midnight on Saturday. I had worked those hours, I imagine the effort involved in getting to church on Sunday morning would have been too much for me, also.

Our church life consisted of Sunday school and Worship on Sunday morning, worship on Sunday evening, prayer meeting on Wednesday evenings, Bible School for two weeks each

summer, a ten day revival meeting each year, and various groups and social activities during the year. The youth also had meetings and activities, summer camp at New Windsor, Maryland, and picnics at Tolchester Beach or at other places at times during the year.

We frequently went to other churches such as Ridgely, Easton, or Cordova to participate in revivals, youth rallies, or other events. I liked to sing, and my cousin, Elma Seese, and I would sing a duet on many occasions at our own church and at other churches. I sang the melody and she sang alto or sometimes she would sing the melody and I would sing tenor, whatever made the best combination for the piece of music selected.

In the early '20s, various auto companies sprang up all over the United States and a variety of cars came on the market in addition to the Model T and the Chevrolet. We had a few quite prosperous members at the Denton Church and it was always interesting to us small boys to see who would appear with a new or different automobile on Sunday morning. We had Model T Fords, Chevrolets, Buicks, Dorts, Overlands, Whippets, and a Velies, as well as the customary horse and buggy. There are, of course, many more makes and models of autos on the market today but I doubt if the differences and virtues of each are discussed any more now than they were in the parking lot after church on Sundays in the '20s. I don't believe that the Brethren ever let simple living stand in the way of progress in transportation.

The services on Sunday, while following a usual pattern, were also somewhat informal, especially the music. Often the members of the congregation would be asked to suggest a hymn. Immediately old brother Levi Spicher would ask for "Happy Day," a hymn that he dearly loved and sang at the top of his voice, out-singing all others. Among his other virtues, he served as church janitor even though he had only one arm. We were modern enough to have a piano and usually a choir and a lot of special music consisting of quartets and duets.

Our elder or moderator was Brother W.M. Wine from the Bethany congregation. He was a minister and often preached at Denton. My first recollection of a full-time pastor was Brother S. Ira Arnold, who had previously been a missionary to India. He was followed by Brother E. C. Woodie who was the pastor when I left for college. The Denton church at that time "called" a person from the congregation to the ministry. Some churches still do this. I remember well that several times during the ministries of Brother Arnold and Brother Woodie I was approached about being "called" to the ministry. However, I resisted, not feeling the call myself and also not feeling worthy of the same. I am sure that such expression of confidence in me contributed more than I knew at the time to my dedication to the church in later years.

Two events in the life of the church before I left for college stand out in my memory. One was the attendance at Youth Camp at Blue Ridge College, New Windsor, Maryland, which took place in the summer of 1929. For a period of four summers, Dan West, Al Brightbill, Perry Rohrer, and Chauncey Shamberger travelled together to all of the church camps in the United States in a Studebaker which they dubbed the "Sweet Chariot." They were selected by the General Board of the church to be the camp leaders in an effort to strengthen the summer camp program. They called themselves the "Four Horsemen" and they were very effective leaders. On one occasion they left New Windsor on Saturday morning after camp closed for the week and were at Lake Colorado on Monday morning signing in campers there, a distance of over two thousand miles. They traveled continuously, without stopping to rest, in West's Studebaker touring car by taking turns at driving, even conducting their own Sunday morning service as they traveled.

They were impressive leaders, especially Dan West with his messages and counseling, and Al Brightbill with his music. If I ever had a "mountain top" experience this was it. The influence of Dan West changed my life and I was dedicated to being a better Christian because of him. For just one example, I had been sneaking cigarettes from my dad's store and smoking them at times when I wouldn't get caught. I was so impressed by Dan West that I vowed that such deception had to stop and it did; I never smoked another cigarette after that. I have always attributed my faithfulness and work in the church and the good life that I have consequently enjoyed to the impression that Dan West made upon me that summer at camp.

The second event in the life of the church during my boyhood that stands out in my memory was attendance at Annual Conference at Hershey, Pennsylvania in 1930. This was my first and only participation in Annual Conference until several years later. My cousin, William McDaniel, went with me to both the summer camp at New Windsor and the Conference at Hershey. We rode together in his father's Velie auto, a large black sedan with a straight eight engine, to one of these places - I believe it was to New Windsor - but I do not remember how we traveled to the other. At Hershey, I stayed in a tent with my brother-in-law, Millard Wilson, and one of his fellow pastors. Some of the Hershey sites, including a trip through the chocolate factory, were enjoyed. Although I do not remember much about discussions or programs at the Conference, I do remember being impressed by the enormity of the Conference and the number of programs, displays, and meetings taking place at the same time. This was my first experience at attending any kind of conference that did not have everyone attending the same meeting at the same time. In later years I was to attend many conventions where fifty to a hundred meetings were all in progress at the same time and I never actually solved the confusion attached to knowing just which one was appropriate to attend. Attendance at this Annual Conference did give a much better perspective of the church as a whole and a feeling of belonging to a denomination in which there may be some differences of opinions but a strong desire on the part of the people to find the will of Christ and live accordingly.

I definitely believe that the influence of the church in my early years had much to do with the honesty, integrity and dedication exemplified in my dealings with people and with the responsibilities associated with my career in later life.

Chapter Fourteen

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MY LIFE AT HOME

Due to the fact that my father was a "workaholic" spending from fifteen to eighteen hours a day in his store, my mother assumed most of the responsibility of the home. This is not to say that she did not have my dad's support because all she needed to do was to tell him that I was obstinate about something or had misbehaved and he would confront me with, "Your mother says that and you'd better straighten up, young man." He kept a hair brush in his store for more reasons than just to brush his hair. However, his being away from the home did not mean that we actually lacked his presence, as in the case of some "workaholics" today, because I was with him at the store a part of each day and he was also home for his meals twice a day.

I always had some chores to go around the home. For example, we cooked on a kitchen range fueled by wood or coal. Basically we used compressed soft coal that came in pieces the size of a biscuit. As a matter of fact, we had a visitor once who looked in the coal

bucket and [made] some remark about my mother's misfortune of having burnt a batch of biscuits. I had to keep kindling or corn cobs in the house to use in starting fires and also keep the coal buckets full. There was an old barn on our [lot] where we stored the auto, kept some chickens and also some rabbits. All of the wooden boxes, cheese boxes, banana and tomato baskets that were used to ship things to the store were saved and tossed up to the loft of this barn. I sat on a box in this loft for many hours chopping up boxes and baskets into kindling. My grandfather McDaniel had given me a backsaw shortly before his death and he also handmade a saw horse for use in cutting tree limbs into stove length pieces with the saw. He taught me how to use them, and any broken tree limbs or pieces of wood that could be sawed up for stove use were salvaged for that purpose.

We also had a big stove in the living room and above it there was a register in the ceiling that allowed some of the heat to ascend into the bedrooms upstairs. This stove would burn either wood or coal and I kept a supply of both on the back porch. We had a 'parlor' next to the living room which was seldom used during the winter. Each fall we would erect a small sheet metal stove in the parlor, including the stove pipe, damper, stove collar, and other parts. If we had guests or the occasion demanded it, we could make a fire in this small stove and heat up the room in just a few minutes. (After I was married we used the same kind of stove to heat our small apartment for a couple of years, so my previous experience prepared me to deal with this situation.)

We did not have electricity until around 1928, although there was electricity in my dad's store as far back as I can remember. Prior to getting electricity in our home, we used kerosene lamps for lighting at night. One was a kayo lamp which used a large round wick and gave off more light than the small kerosene lamps. Another kind was called an Aladdin lamp and used a very flimsy mantle for lighting. When the mantle became fully lit it gave off a very bright light, much brighter than the regular kerosene lamps using a wick. There was always a lantern for use at night when necessary to go to the barn or to the outdoor toilet. Wicks had to be trimmed and globes washed and dried and I did my share of both. My homework was done at a table in the living room using the Aladdin lamp.

There was a path down the middle of the backyard from the house to the barn and on each side of the path we had a garden. Dad worked in the garden sometimes when he went to the house for meals. Mother would work in it also, and I was expected to help spade it up, plant it, pull weeds, and clean it off in the fall. Mother always had flower beds, and she particularly liked to grow cannas, coxcomb, and dahlias. The canna and dahlia bulbs had to be dug up in the fall and stored until planting time again in the spring.

Many homes in those days had a second kitchen, often a back porch so that the big kitchen range need not be used in the hot summer. The range helped to provide heat in the winter as well as space for cooking and baking. But in the summer it was too hot to use the range. We had a small building attached to the back of the house which we referred to as our summer kitchen. We used a kerosene cooking stove there and it gave off very little heat except that which was directed to the cooking utensil. So we moved pots, pans, and eating utensils to the summer kitchen in the spring and back to the house again in the fall. Later, we had the back porch closed in with weatherboard at the bottom and windows that would be opened around the top. A portion of this closed-in back porch was used thereafter for the summer kitchen.

Our water came from a drilled well to which was attached a pitcher pump. It was also located on the back porch, and freezing weather one had to remember to draw some extra water for priming the pump the next time and to raise the handle which tripped the holding valve inside the pump and allowed the water to return to ground level to keep the pump

from freezing. Sometimes in the coldest weather this had to be done during the day as well as at night. If water was allowed to remain in the pump, it would freeze and likely burst the pump, thus requiring a new one. The sucker and the valve were made of leather and once they became worn it difficult to pump water or to hold it in the pump, thus requiring a priming each time the pump was used. Therefore, it was necessary each couple of years to take the pump apart and replace the leather parts, which were available at any country store.

Life was very simple then -- no plumbing, no electrical problems, no TVs, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, electric fans or air conditioners, or other such appliances that could cause trouble. Or perhaps it wasn't as simple as it seems now because there were such problems as cutting and fitting stove pipe, replacing grates in the heating and cooking stoves, polishing the stoves and pipes each year, rebuilding the insides of the water pump, harnessing the horse when necessary to go somewhere, or cranking by hand the old Model T, huddling around a stove to keep warm, undressing near the stove and then rushing to crawl in under ice cold sheets and several blankets, visiting the outdoor toilet, or a score of other things made unnecessary today with our modern conveniences. Back then you lived and worked during daylight hours, did after dark using poor lights, or visited neighbors, or went to bed early. Daylight saving time had not been thought of then. You just got up early and made use of the daylight hours. What do we do today if the electricity goes or the water is cut off? I guess the problems of living, although they vary in nature, remain with us in any age.

Some of my mother's relatives lived in or near Denton. Her brother, George McDaniel, and his wife and four children lived in Denton, and her sister, Lettie Seese, and her husband and five children, lived close to Denton. My mother's Aunt Ella Brumbaugh, husband Levi, and children, lived at Greensboro, a town about eight miles from Denton. One of the Brumbaugh cousins, Arthur, operated a department store in Greensboro; another cousin, Mrs. Mary Rairigh, was a teacher at Denton. She was my seventh grade home room and major teacher. Her husband, Norman Rairigh, was in business with her brother, Arthur, at Greensboro. I mention these because it meant that Mother and I frequently visited these relatives, but Dad seldom did because of his store. We often went to Aunt Lettie's or Uncle George's home, or to the Rairigh's home in Denton, and occasionally to Greensboro. Mother drove the car until I was old enough to get a driver's license, and it seemed that we were often going to relatives' or to some church function together. It also meant that I got to play with William McDaniel and the four Seese boys, all of whom were my first cousins, not much older or younger than I. My Uncle George McDaniel had electricity in his home long before any of the rest of us, and I remember hearing a radio in his home for the first time in my life. My dad later got one for his store, and after our home was wired for electricity, we got a new Atwater-Kent radio there. It had three dials that had to be coordinated in order to get a particular station. Uncle George also had a large cabinet model Victrola with the round cylinder type recordings. I remember hearing Amos and Andy on these recordings long before they were on radio. My Uncle George McDaniel had so many things that we didn't have that I thought of him as a wealthy man. He was a regional representative for the Gulf Oil Company, did a lot of traveling through several states, and perhaps received a salary that was very good for the times.

At sometime during my boyhood days my mother decided that she either wanted some money of her own or else felt that she needed to supplement Dad's income. She had been a professional seamstress before marriage. She lived in Washington, D. C., and was a seamstress for a family there when she met my dad. So with her sewing skills it was easy for her to get a job in a shirt factory very close to our home in West Denton, where she was employed for several years. She also decided to start raising rabbits for home consumption.

Helping to take care of these was another one of my chores. We had several pens of female breeders and one or two bucks. Rabbits are quite prolific and we raised quite a few. Neither she nor I liked to kill them or skin them but two of her neighbors, Earl Cooper and S. B. Kitchen, would do the job whenever she had sale for a dressed rabbit. Home raised rabbits are delicious, better than chicken I think, but because of the "pet" or Easter bunny stigma attached to rabbits, many people do not like the thought of eating them. I read recently that even today the market for rabbit meat is poor, and the one large national company that raises them commercially for home consumption and freezes them for the market is attempting to stimulate the market through more publicity.

Wild rabbits used to be one of the main sources of food for country people, and may still be in some places, but generally interest in them waned when tularemia (rabbit fever) became so prevalent among wild ones. It can be transmitted to humans by handling the infected animal. After I left home, my mother finally gave up raising rabbits. But for years that old barn had many uses: nests and shelter for chickens, a loft for storing boxes for kindling, storage for feed, a coal bin, bins for corn cobs, rabbit hutches, storage for garden tools and miscellaneous items, and finally a home for the Model T and later the Whippet. Once or twice each day I had chores around and in that barn.

Since my sister was ten years older than I and my brother was eight and a half years older, they were both off to college shortly after I started to school. I do not remember much about our family life before they went to college except for family trips in the Model T and my sister's hours at the piano in the parlor. While in college they were usually home during the summers, but even then they were off to visit or to go somewhere with their friends. For most of the time during my school days, Mother, Dad, and I made up the family at home. Then, due to Dad's preoccupation at the store, we were together as a family only after 9 p.m. or weekdays and on Sunday afternoon. You can imagine what meals were like. Sunday noon was really the only time we ate together, often snacking on Sunday evening. At other times, Mother would get me up early enough in the morning to get my breakfast, and I would be off to the store so that Dad could core to the house for his breakfast, and he would be back to the store so that I could leave the store in time for school. Sometimes he caused me to be tardy and really couldn't say very much when the tardy marks showed up on my report card. The same thing was repeated at supper time. I know that I formed a bad habit of eating fast since Mother was usually hurrying me to finish and go for Dad so that his food would be warm when he came to eat. I have had difficulty all through life trying to break that habit.

Dad usually snacked at the store for lunch, Mother was on her own, and I would either take a lunch to school, go downtown to the bakery for a sticky bun (2 for 5 cents), or rush home to the store to snack with Dad. I remember when he bought a special hot dog cooker and served hot dogs to quite a few in the neighborhood. The top of it was flat and shallow with the four sides extending up about one inch. In this part he would put about a quarter of an inch of cooking oil and lay the hot dogs in it, turning them often so that they became crispy brown all over. The bottom was an oven-like arrangement for keeping the buns warm. When assembled with a special pickle dressing that he had, they were delicious. I came home often for one or two hot dogs at noon.

Also, since my dad never left the store before 9 p.m. and went back the next morning at 6 a.m., I was usually off to bed soon after he came home and still in bed when he left the next morning. I have often told people that I seldom remember my dad as one who ever slept, since I was in bed before he was and still there when he got up. There were occasions when he didn't feel well and he would call me to go and open the store for him. He required very little formal sleep, often sitting on the front porch after closing the store

until midnight. After I started driving the car, he liked to have me drive him toward Hillsboro or Ridgely for about an hour in the evenings after he closed the store, especially in the summer in order to relax and cool off. Sometimes Mother went along.

This is probably enough to indicate that my home life was a bit sporadic and divided between the store (Dad) and the home (Mother). However, while we spent much time going our own way I did not feel any division of family unity. Mother and Dad supported each other as far as I was concerned, and I gave my allegiance to them as a family and not necessarily as individuals. There was no such thing as taking sides with one against the other. While they may have had differences of opinion, it did not result in my being allowed to be partial. For example, my father was a staunch Democrat and my mother just as staunch a Republican, but I wasn't expected to support one or the other.

My home life, centered around the activities described, provided in itself another supportive bridge in crossing the gap from childhood to maturity. I have been grateful for the fact that, while differences of opinion often existed between my mother and my father, together they provided the love, support, and care necessary to carry me through childhood and into maturity even though I was the last of the offspring and had to be raised and cared for during part of the worst economic times in their lives.

Chapter Fifteen

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INTERESTING PEOPLE; INTERESTING STORIES

Through my experiences in my dad's store, in church and in school there were many interesting people with whom I came in contact. Some perhaps made more impression upon me than others but memories of their contacts with me have lingered through the years. Some have been mentioned in previous chapters, including Captain Waters, Charlie Taylor, Layman Redden, Walter Moore, Harry T. Moore, and L. T. Orme. From them I learned the meaning of friendship and I was nurtured by their abilities and the way in which they loved and approached life.

There are a few others who were special people in my early years. I'll start with "Uncle" Sam Ewing. He was the drawbridge tender, as you will recall. Long before I began helping at the drawbridge, Uncle Sam and I had contacts. As a small lad, I loved to play hockey with a tin can and a bent oak rib from an old touring car top (shaped much like today's professional hockey sticks), or to push an iron rim with a wooden T-shaped pusher made from pieces of lath. These I would push or hit up and down the concrete road between our house and the river. There were very few autos then, so I practically had the road to myself. Uncle Sam would sit in front of Mr. Pastorfield's store hoping to see a sailboat on the river and he would give me a hard time about the noise made by hitting the tin can or by the iron rim striking the concrete. He would say, "Boy, don't you ever get tired of that **##1! noise?" However, we maintained a reasonably good friendship which was evident later as he allowed me to help with raising the draw.

Grant Roe was another of my favorite people. He was probably in his sixties during my teens and he lived or boarded with the Satterfields, just two houses from us. He was always jolly and good-natured. When he felt like it or someone requested his services, he worked as a carpenter. In the summer, he was a foreman at the Redden Cannery. It was through him that I got my jobs at the cannery. He was regarded by all as a "jolly good fellow" and never treated anyone unkindly. When he wasn't working somewhere he would

make at least one, maybe two trips a day to my dad's store for a banana and as he walked along he was always singing one of two songs: "They Oughta Stop Kickin' My Dog Around" and "O Mary Don't You Weep." I can still see and hear him coming down the path in front of our house singing his tunes. He probably never knew that he was making a lifelong impression upon me

A current TV advertisement shows a box-like milk wagon being pulled by a horse. It is almost an exact duplicate of one used by Mr. Roland Gary and son when they delivered milk around Denton. At the corner of the picket fence around our yard we had a small wooden box for use in leaving the milk and the empty bottles each day. In cold weather, we were not so careful about bringing the milk into the house immediately, and I have seen it freeze to the extent that the cardboard cap and the cream would project an inch or so above the top of the bottle (that's when I got to eat the cream above the top of the bottle). In warm weather, it was my job to watch for the milkman and to get the milk into the ice box immediately. When he returned from Denton, Mr. Gary usually stopped at my dad's store and among other things always bought five or six loaves of bread. He was a small man with a slight limp. Later, after my marriage, we lived at Craigsville, Virginia, and our milkman there was about the same size, limp and all, and reminded me so much of Mr. Gary.

Our mail was delivered under the RFD (Rural Free Delivery) and Mr. Dunning was our mailman. Most of the time he used a Model T Ford to deliver the mail but in the winter, if there was much snow, he used a horse and mail wagon (very much like the milk wagon) or a sleigh. Just to the southwest edge of the [missing text]

One of my dad's best customers was a Chevrolet mechanic who lived in "Redden Park" in West Denton and worked for the owners of the Chevrolet Garage in Denton. His name completely escapes me, but I do remember how faithfully he came every Saturday night to buy a quantity of groceries for the next week and to pay his account for the items that his family had charged during the week. He was usually about our last customer on Saturday night. He was also a dedicated volunteer fireman. Another neighbor, Roland Satterfield, who lived two houses south of us, was also a dedicated fireman, and both Roland and the Chevrolet mechanic belonged to the Denton Fire Department. Roland's wife used to say that he kept his boots, rubber pants, coat, and hat beside the bed at night to be ready to dash out of the door as soon as the fire siren sounded uptown in Denton. It surely was true, because I remember being awakened several times at night by the siren and hearing Roland's front door slam almost immediately as he rushed to the corner to catch a ride with the above-mentioned Chevrolet mechanic to the fire station.

Speaking of teaching and of the fire department reminds me of another of my teachers who served both organizations well. He was a Mr. Smith, my mechanical training teacher for five years. I took this class for one period each day in grades seven through eleven. Mr. Smith, in addition to being a good craftsman was also a good musician. He always directed a benefit program each year for the fire department. It was usually a minstrel involving a chorus in which I participated each year for several years. He did an excellent job both as a teacher and as a musical director. Shortly after I began teaching, I started a shop program for some of the disadvantaged boys in our school and my leadership in being able to do this was a result of the learning experiences under Mr. Smith in my manual training classes in high school. My son, Fred, still has a desk that I designed and constructed in one of these classes more than fifty years ago. Later in my career, I took formal training in industrial arts at a university, taught it for twelve years, moving on from there into supervision of vocational education. Part of the success that I enjoyed in these two fields of education can be attributed to the skills that I learned in that first manual training class

and the influence of its teacher, Mr. Smith.

It appears that sometimes, even though one has no direct contact with an individual, the indirect observation and influence of that person leaves some lasting memories. Such was the influence of a farmer from Tuckahoe Neck who was of Dutch descent and who had a rather reckless and adventurous nature. He owned a Dodge touring car and because of his fearless and almost reckless driving had a reputation of being a "flying Dutchman." His old car impressed me because it was the only one that I can remember that had a silent electric starter. This starter was absolutely silent and would turn the engine over without the slightest bit of noise. One could be standing beside the car and hear nothing until the engine started. It always puzzled me as to the reason why the silent starter was discarded by the auto manufacturer in favor of the more noisy ones now used.

When this "flying Dutchman" came to Denton he always went uptown first and then would stop in West Denton on his return. Fortunately, there were few cars on the road then because he never slowed down as he came from Tuckahoe Neck on the Denton-Easton road and as he made the almost abrupt right turn at the west end of the drawbridge to go uptown. One morning he turned abruptly and at full speed onto the bridge only to find it very icy. His old Dodge bounced against the concrete sides of the bridge from one side to the other a time or two but he never slowed down -- just kept plowing through. This experience still did not slow him down at all and he continued to make the same kind of approach to the bridge each time he came to town. We all held our breath hoping that he wouldn't collide with the bridge or with another car that might be traveling on the Hillsboro road and approaching the bridge from that direction.

I had another high school teacher, Mr. X, who taught math. He was a brilliant fellow and had helped, in World War I, to develop the method whereby a machine gun on a fighter plane could be timed consistently with the plane's engine so that it could be mounted at the front of the engine's hood and fired while the plane was in flight, allowing the bullets to be ejected between the propeller blades even though the propeller was turning at a very high speed. He had been a teacher in another community but had been fired for his consistent drinking problem. Rumors were that even his wife had left him. He had recovered, however, and had been "on the wagon" long enough to get the teaching job at Denton. He had been successful in this position until, for some reason, he moved in with his brother in West Denton. He began to drink again and would occasionally come in to Dad's store at night to chat. On several occasions his drink began to take effect and he needed help to get home. My dad would call me to help him up the street to his brother's home. Mr. X would beg me not to tell anyone about this and I did keep his secret, even on days in the math class when his hangover caused him to nod in his chair while we were working on a class assignment. I liked him except for his problem and, as you might expect, his and my secret paid off for me when report cards came out. I was not all that bad in math anyhow and majored in it in college. His habit got the best of him eventually and he was fired from this job, too. I learned two things from this experience: one, that alcohol is a powerful drug causing an illness that can ruin the life of the most brilliant person as well as his or her relatives, and second, that my dad, while he didn't tolerate drunken people around his store, still had some compassion for those who had become the victims of the disease.

Each of these people, along with scores of others including some already mentioned in previous chapters, had one or more unusual characteristics that have lingered in my memory all these years. Fortunately, I was able in my youth to have the kind of upbringing that enabled me to distinguish the good characteristics in some from the bad in others. I believe that in later life their examples enabled me to profit from the good ones and to avoid falling prey to the bad ones.

Chapter Sixteen

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THE PAST WAS A PROLOGUE

One of the government buildings in Washington, D.C., contains an inscription, "The Past is Prologue." It is said that a passenger in a taxi asked the driver what that meant and he replied "That means you ain't seen nothin' yet." The dictionary defines a prologue as the lines introducing a discourse or play; an introductory act or event. The years of my boyhood were, in a sense, the prologue to the main event that was to follow. After leaving the Eastern Shore and spending the next four years in college, then having a career of forty-two years in public education, combined with numerous other types of employment during the summers, and various types of other activities all the while, the description of the boyhood experiences that I have recalled here leads me to agree with the taxi driver - this was only the prologue and "you ain't seen nothin' yet." The experiences and activities during these years beyond my boyhood were so varied that they would make another story.

In this book, the pronouns I and my have been used often and will probably have even more extensive use in this chapter. I have always been conscious of the use of these pronouns when another person is talking or writing, usually because they are used in a boastful manner. My intentions are not to be boastful; I simply am not able to find other ways of recording the events in which I participated. The reader has my apologies.

As a conclusion to this book, I would like to evaluate the contributions that the experiences of the first quarter of my life made to the remainder. Thus, it would seem appropriate to briefly describe the experiences that I have had since my boyhood days on the Choptank River and then to list the contributions made by the earlier experiences. They begin with the four years at Bridgewater College. I entered college anticipating that between my brother and my dad there would be no problem with finances. Wrong! My dad's business was failing and my brother was involved in starting a family on a Teacher's salary that was not very adequate. Results were that very little was paid to the college after my first year. My experience with work in my teenage years began to pay off. I worked at two student jobs at the college and on weekends in a grocery store. During the summers, I sold Fuller brushes the first summer, calendars and various sundry items the second summer, worked on my uncle's farm and in a silk mill the third, and in my fiancée's father's stone quarry the summer following graduation. These summer jobs provided me with just enough for my personal expenses during the college years. After deducting the amounts earned through the college student jobs in the kitchen and the bookstore I graduated owing the college for most of three years' board and tuition. Part of this was covered by a note to the college with monthly installments to begin after I became employed and part to my uncle, from whom I had borrowed money, in a similar note. It took the best part of eight years after graduation to pay off these notes.

I had selected teaching as my career and had prepared to teach math and science in high school. Teachers were plentiful in 1935 and jobs were not easy to find. Also, because of a slow recovery from the Depression, school divisions were having budget problems. I had almost given up finding a teaching position for the fall of 1935 when, just about two weeks before school was to open in September, the superintendent of schools in Rockingham County, Virginia, where I had hoped to be employed, advised me that there was a position available in the adjoining county of Augusta. I immediately went for an interview and was given the position of principal of Craigsville Elementary School a school with grades one through seven with 375 students and eight teachers in addition to the principal. In addition

to being principal, I was required to teach the seventh grade. I found that outside of teaching the three R's there had never been any organized program of activities of any sort. At recess and noon hour the children had been free to do what they chose, which included fights galore, while the teachers also enjoyed their own freedom to get together and converse. There was not a single library book in the entire school. Over the next few years it was quite a challenge to change the teachers' attitudes, first about the "free" recess periods, and then to develop a program of constructive intramural sports for recess and noon hour, to accumulate a library with new books added each year, to begin a hot lunch program, to get teachers and students involved in constructive activities other than reading, writing, and arithmetic (the May Day program being the most extensive one each year), and to begin a program of hand-skill activities for both boys and girls of the upper grades, most of whom would fall into a category today called "disadvantaged." After three or four years of success with the hand-skill program, the principal of the high school (in a separate building) helped me convince the superintendent of schools to provide a teacher for the seventh grade, allowing me the time to teach a couple of periods of shop work at the high school in addition to the elementary school skill activities program and the principal's work. During my last year at Craigsville, I was principal of the high school, supervised the program at the elementary school under a head teacher arrangement, and also continued the shop program.

Avis and I married in 1936 and we lived in five different houses in Craigsville from 1936 to 1944. The reason for so many moves was the fact that for several summers we moved to Harrisonburg to a house on her father's quarry property and worked in the quarry during the summer. Then we went back to Craigsville in the fall and usually to a different house. Both of our sons were born while we were at Craigsville.

From Craigsville we moved to New Hope where I became principal of New Hope High School and Elementary School (grades one through eleven) for three years, from 1944-1947. In contrast to Craigsville, an industrial-centered community, New Hope was agricultural in nature. These were World War II years and the agriculture teacher and I were the only men out of approximately 20 on the faculty. Later we were able to get a local minister to coach and to teach some physical education on a part-time basis. The agriculture teacher was gracious enough to coach baseball even though it was not in his job description, while I did just about every other job that required the services of a male, including much of the janitorial work, and the opening and closing of the building several nights a week for program, ballgames, and other activities. Just about two days after the close of school in June 1946, the wooden frame elementary building at New Hope was destroyed by fire. The adjoining brick high school building was only slightly damaged. During the summer, a temporary building was erected for the primary and elementary grades and school opened on schedule that fall.

With the beginning of the 1947-1948 school session, a move was made by both the school board and me that was to change my educational emphasis from academic to vocational. The board consolidated five high schools, including New Hope, into one Wilson Memorial High School at a vacated army general hospital near Fishersville (14 miles from New Hope), which they, along with the State of Virginia, acquired from the federal government for a fee of \$1. There were nearly 150 buildings on the site and they were divided into three sections after the local school board and the state acquired them. One section housed the consolidated high school, another a regional vocational school, and the third a state rehabilitation center for physically handicapped. The high school and the vocational school were both operated by the Augusta County School Board and the rehabilitation center by the State of Virginia Rehabilitation Service. The school board also leased part of the buildings to the Navy for a regional Naval Reserve Training Center. Thus, there were four

separate educational institutions in addition to a number of storage and apartment buildings that grew out of the former Woodrow Wilson Army Hospital which had treated thousands of soldiers during World War II.

Since I lacked seniority among the other four principals of the high schools that were consolidated I was sure that I would not get an administrative position. Also, I was weary of administrative duties because of the strain of the war years, so I requested to be appointed as head teacher of the industrial center. Becoming the director of training for the rehabilitation center meant for me a transfer from the local school board payroll to the state payroll since the rehabilitation center was operated by the state. I held this position until 1961 and my work with the vocational rehabilitation personnel and students was quite enjoyable and educational. I have fond memories of that experience.

In early 1961, I was approached about accepting the position of Assistant State Supervisor for Trade and Industrial Education for the southwestern part of Virginia with my office to be in Abingdon, Virginia. After some discussion with the state officials the position was definitely offered to me. The pros and cons were discussed with my family and I accepted. During the next two years, we lived at Glade Spring and at Abingdon. I taught at both places and I traveled all over the southwest counties of Virginia supervising the trade and industrial and the industrial arts programs.

Near the end of 1962, the Trade and Industrial Education State Supervisor position in Richmond became vacant and I was approached again about accepting this position. Although I had thought once or twice that someday I might have a chance for this position if it became available, I never dreamed that the opportunity would come so soon after the move to Abingdon. The final result was that I became the State Supervisor of Trade and Industrial Education for the State of Virginia in January, 1963, and we moved to Richmond. Beginning in 1965, with new legislation passed in Congress, vocational education received its greatest support of the century from Congress, state legislatures, and local school boards. During the period from 1963 to 1976, I had the opportunity and privilege of helping to design, construct, and put into operation eighty-five new vocational centers at the high school level in Virginia, each one having from five to twenty-two vocational offerings, and also a number of other individual programs in smaller schools. This period of time also saw the beginning of many special vocational programs for disadvantaged and handicapped students. The number of students enrolled in vocational educational programs increased drastically at all levels.

During this same period, we in Virginia, along with officials in several other states, were instrumental in developing a national student organization for trade and industrial education students, called VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America), comparable to the FFA (Future Farmers of America) for agricultural education students. I had the privilege of serving on the national board for VICA and also of being president of the board.

Upon retirement in August 1976, after nearly forty-two years in public education at all levels, we moved to a retirement community (Friendship Manor) in Roanoke, Virginia. For the first three years here I worked part-time as special assistant to the administrator. Following that we spent two years on a volunteer basis as director of our church camp, Camp Bethel, near Troutville. After the camp committee found a permanent director, we finally retired and have been doing only what we choose to do each day.

Just what contributions did the experiences of my boyhood days make to the fulfillment of my life's work? A few of these contributions, along with some comments, follow, but these are surely not the exhaustive list.

Hard Work. Most of what I did in later years required hard work, some of it physical hard work, especially in the summers and on our small farm.

Many of the experiences in my teenage years involved hard work handling large bags of fertilizer, working in the truck patches and the cannery, and some chores around the home and store. I'm glad that I did not shirk those responsibilities or quit because they were hard.

Endurance. So often during my life a task required long hours and much endurance until completed, especially reports due by a certain date, or physical tasks that took hours to complete. I had plenty of opportunity to learn "to hang in there" until completion time in my dad's store, in the cannery, in unloading boats, and in other jobs during my teenage years, and I really believe that these experiences resulted in developing a pattern of staying with a job until completed.

Skills. In later years I was to further develop and use many of the skills that I learned in manual training in high school, in the blacksmith shop, in working on the Model T, in painting at the oil yards and in many other tasks. The starting of the shop program at Craigs ville was a direct result of the few skills that I knew I had developed in manual training. These were further developed through additional advanced training later in my career.

Specific Learnings. I had to have a knowledge of many different tools, equipment, and supplies when approving lists for funding in the vocational programs under my supervision. Becoming acquainted with the many hardware items and small tools in my dad's store, in the blacksmith shop, and in school helped me considerably to have a knowledge of these items. Of course, the general education received in school was of value also because had it not been for this I would not have been able to enter college or to pursue the advanced education in later years necessary for my career.

Agricultural Skills. I know that the work on our small farm and in our gardens was made much easier by the things learned and the skills developed while working in the truck patches on the Eastern Shore. It also helped me to have a better rapport with my colleagues in vocational education who were in the field of agricultural education.

Understanding People. Many times during my career it became necessary to make a decision about employing or recommending a person for a position. First impressions of people can be deceptive, but sometimes only one chance is all you have. I believe that my association with many people of all types in my early years helped me to understand people and to evaluate the potential of many of them upon first contact, as well as to understand that underneath some people are different from what they appear to be on the surface.

Honesty, Integrity, Responsibility, Reliability. These are but a few of the attributes that were learned in my dad's store, the oil storage yards, working for Mr. Harry T. Moore, working in the principal's office at school, the truck patches, fertilizer warehouses, and in the canneries. I have been grateful for the moral values taught to me through which I learned and developed these attributes early in my life. They were responsible for my success experience in later life.

Moral Values. The influence of my parents, my church, and the leaders at our church youth camp enabled me to develop moral values that I have cherished and honored throughout my life.

Finally, credit must be given to my family for caring, loving, and giving me the feeling of belonging. Too many youth today are allowed to grow up on their own without receiving the love and care of their parents. In the matter of providing a wholesome and caring home life for the offspring it would appear that our society as a whole has definitely and regrettably regressed.

Recreation. Unfortunately, in later life I never seemed to have the time to enjoy the type of recreation that I experienced in boyhood days. Associates of mine who traveled all over the state just as I did managed to keep fishing tackle and gear in the trunks of their cars so that they could stop at a mountain stream and fish for an hour or so. I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I have gone fishing, boating, or hunting since my teenage years. I regret this and I believe that everyone, regardless of how much responsibility they feel toward their work, should find some time to get away from it all and "smell the roses" for just a little while.

I want to direct my final thought toward the young who may chance to read this book. It seems fashionable today to do as little work as possible and to get by with as little study or learning experience as you can. This attitude will only lead you down a path of false security. Make use of your teenage years to learn all that you can, to experience many things, and to do some really hard work. My experience proved that it will pay off in later years.

THE OLD CHOPTANK

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Flow gently, Old Choptank, among thy green braes;
Flow gently, Old Choptank, I'll sing thee thy praise
Three score years ago, and a little more,
 I worked, and played along thy shore
The memories of those days are still quite clear
 and will remain forever dear.