A Family Story

of the

TAORMINAS *& the* MARTINOS

Anthony Taormina

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A Family Story of Taorminas and the Martinos

First published by Anthony Taormina

Designed by Adam Robinson for Good Book Developers

Produced and edited by Leah Dobkin
Legacy Letters
www.legacyletter.org

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Anthony's Story

ANTHONY TAORMINA

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PREFACE

Halfway through my 81ST year, I had a stroke while picking fruit from an apple tree at my Aunt Nora's orchard in Columbia County, New York. The medical profession prefers to call a stroke, a cerebral vascular accident (CVA). A CVA is a terrifying incident. Every year, more than 795,000 people in the United States have a stroke. We are left with varying degrees of disability ranging from dizziness to death. In my case, the left side of my body, which for 81 years had been loyally responsive to my wishes, had suddenly become unresponsive to my commands, as the right side of my brain became partially disconnected from it.

As a consequence, my dear sister, Joanita, has urged me to reflect on my life-long-experiences and sort out those that might seem to be the most interesting to her and other family members. Fortunately, the CVA has not seemed to limit my ability to remember, so I am able to plug into the millions of internal videos that hopefully remain stored in my fading memory bank to be played back on demand. To initially accomplish Joanita's request, I created binders of memories, outlined chronologically with associated photographs and other supporting materials. The binders, like me, are aging and unwieldy.

At ninety-five years-of-age, I decided, with the help of a friend, Leah Dobkin, to distill these binders into one book and a companion book to my mother's family history. Hopefully, this personal history will stimulate more memories, and provide a historical perspective on a lifestyle so very different from the ones we live today and in the future. More importantly, I hope my reflections provide insights and a deeper sense of family roots. So, here it goes. Let us see how many memories can be salvaged and captured in writing before the dual demons of dementia and death foreclose that option forever.

CHAPTER ONE

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, But Many Fruit Trees Grow in Claverack

1921 – 1932

Anthony's first photo

It has been reliably reported that I was born March 12, 1921, in the most famous of American human spawning grounds—Brooklyn, New York. It was just nine months after my parents, Leo and Jenny Taormina, had been married at the Martino farm, where mom had lived with her parents in Claverack, New York, 120 miles north of Brooklyn. When Leo was fifteen, he was sent to America by his father, who ordered the obedient teenager to go to work and earn enough money to send some home to his parents in Menfi, Sicily, which he did for many years until eventually his wife, Jenny, put a stop to it.

Leo Taormina and Jennie Martino married in Claverack, NY at the Martino farm on June 13, 1920.

I was born in the house of Jenny's oldest sister, Frances Lazzara, at 1659 83rd Street, Bay Ridge. Although Frances and her husband Tony had six children, she was pleased to rent her upstairs, cold-water-flat to her newlywed teenage sister for $27/month. Leo was earning a good living as a barber at the very busy nearby docks. After a year living with the Lazzaras, the newlyweds moved to a better apartment on 58th Street, very close to Leo's barbershop. All went well until a major crisis occurred three months later.

When I was six months old, my Mom got appendicitis and had to be hospitalized for the operation. The doctor botched the job when he left something in her abdomen that got infected causing her to be very sick and near death. Furthermore, since I had only been nursing from my mother's milk and was left in my father's care, I also became sick and run down. When my Mom returned home after three weeks at the hospital, she claimed to have barely recognized her weak and thin baby. My Mom thought I was dying—as she told the story:

> *After two hours, we both woke up. The baby wanted to nurse, so I decided to nurse him again. I was sure that my milk must have dried out, but if my milk would resume, it would save my baby. Like a miracle, milk came back. The next day I told the doctor what happened. He could not believe that milk would come again for I had not nursed for 3-1/2 weeks while I was sick in the hospital with a drain tube in my stomach. "No," the doctor said, "You are too weak to nurse again; you will die if you do."' I said, "I will die if my baby dies—he needs my milk, his stomach is so upset he cannot hold food of any kind." The doctor said, "If you must nurse, drink liquids every two hours and include tea, beer, milk. You will have to nurse him as if he were just born to help him heal his sick stomach. Don't give him any other food for at*

least four months." He was so surprised that my milk came back the way it did that he said he would put me in a medical book.

An embarrassing, but related memory entails my younger brother, Sam. Brother Sam was born twenty months after me, and I remember being very unhappy watching my Mom nurse him but not me. It could be argued that prior to Sam's arrival; I had the nursery and Mom's attention all to myself. Therefore, it was only natural to be a bit jealous. Undoubtedly, some psychiatrist could suggest other impulses.

In another very early memory, I could remember standing on a corner with my parents waiting for a streetcar and crying. My parents could not understand why I was crying. The reason, as I remember it, was very simple and had nothing to do with emotion. I was fascinated by the discovery that while peeking through tears, many sparkling colors emerged, which changed, as I squinted through the teardrops. I felt bad for being such a nuisance, but could not figure out how to explain this discovery to my befuddled parents.

I always had a fascination with the human animal, as well as other animals and nature. Prospect Park is a 500-acre city mecca encompassing a zoo with as diverse animals as sheep and kangaroos. I had my own zoo at home. I remember a shelf full of celluloid animals, including a rhinoceros, elephant, and camel—popular toys in the 1920s and 1930s. According to my Mom, by the time I was two, I could name them all.

My Mom became quite content living in the cozy Brooklyn apartment. But as soon as winter changed to spring, her thoughts drifted to her family at the Martino Claverack fruit and dairy farm and the rural life she missed. So, as soon as I could walk, I was chasing chickens and playing in the barns where the cows and horses lived. There is a memory of grandma scolding me for having stepped on a young chick—or maybe just scaring it, (I hope). Sam and I enjoyed associating with the various farm animals: cows, horses, pigs, ducks, pigeons, chickens, and rabbits; and especially enjoyed being with all our relatives. There were also many fruit trees—apple, pear, plum, peach, and cherry, and a vineyard to add to my pleasure.

During those early years, we stayed much of the summer at my grandparent's farm, with my dad usually taking the train from New York City to visit us on the weekends. He was doing quite well in the barber business in Brooklyn, yet to please my Mom, Sam and me, my dad agreed to buy a 16-acre fruit farm for $6,900 that adjoined the Martino fruit and dairy farm. We moved from Brooklyn to the Claverack farm in 1925.

The fertile 16-acre apple, peach, and concord grape farm included a two-story house, small barn, and a garden area that bordered a lengthy swamp. Living there was a major change from the amenities we had in the Brooklyn apartment. The house was on a dirt road. The bathroom was an outdoor "outhouse"—although chamber pots were kept indoors. Water came from a hand pump in the kitchen, heat from a kerosene stove in the kitchen (in winter, the coziest room in the house). Upstairs bedrooms were not heated except for whatever heat moved up from the coal stove in the living room. Baths were taken in a small round basin as my Mom poured warm water over our heads. Kerosene lamps provided light after dark.

Nevertheless, I recall never feeling deprived or inconvenienced at that time since being able to enjoy the outdoor farm life more than made up for any uncomfortable indoor living conditions. Furthermore, most of our friends lived a similar lifestyle. Apparently, "poverty" is a relative term. My Dad also preferred to stay on the farm, but he was well aware that income from the farm could not support us, so he opened a barbershop one mile away in the center of Claverack hamlet across from the Post Office.

The wonderful wildlife at Prospect Park's zoo in Brooklyn paled in comparison to my new rural life. There was an abundance of wildlife in their own natural habitat to experience, especially pheasant, rabbits, and squirrels—but only an occasional deer. I can still hear pheasants fussing as they settled down to roost at the edge of our nearby swamp each night.

In the fall, many of the men went hunting. I recall that a favorite sport of my Uncle Floyd (he married My Mom's sister, Mary, and his farm also bordered ours) was to spend Sunday afternoons with friends and special hounds pursuing European hares over neighboring hills

and valleys. Hunting for deer, cottontails and especially pheasants were also important for food as well as recreation, and time to hunt was taken from the busy daily chores. I was too young to participate. I do remember "hunting" nuts in the many hedge rows and bushy areas that supported different kinds of trees and shrubs, especially shagbark hickory, black walnut, and butternut. There was one peculiar tree that produced smelly, ball sized fruit that no one was able to positively identify. Not till many years later when at Forestry College did I learn it was Osage orange. The only such tree I ever saw in Columbia County.

Much pleasure came from eating the abundance that grew on the trees around my farm. We eagerly looked forward to each year's fruit harvest, especially the peaches, of which we had many. We also enjoyed the Jonathan and Delicious apples, as well as the concord grapes. Equally pleasurable was eating the food our neighbors grew. The first money I ever earned was picking strawberries on Azro Miller's farm for two cents a quart. I made four cents, and in the process, ate so many berries that I came down with an allergic rash.

We also raised livestock for our own consumption, a process very different than shopping in a grocery store today. Each evening, while my Uncles Joe and Jimmy were milking and caring for the cows, my job was to carry our 2-quart pail to the barn and have it filled with milk straight from the cow, unpasteurized and not homogenized. Usually, while waiting, I had the job of giving a measure of grain to each cow—the cows sure loved that grain. They would get very impatient as I started down the line; their long tongues stretching out to lick every morsel from the floor in front of their stanchions. Once through with their portion, some of the more aggressive ones would reach over to their neighbors to steal some of their grain if they could get away with it.

CHICKEN DINNERS—NOW AND THEN

While spending five minutes shopping for an affordable ready-to-eat barbecued chicken from Publix for Sunday dinner, I was reminded how simple and pleasurable that

experience is today when compared to the extended complex process during my boyhood days 75 years ago. Then, preparing for chicken dinners began in the spring when 100 "day-old" chicks were purchased through either a Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalog. Upon arrival, the cute fuzzy chicks were safely and comfortably housed and fed in a properly prepared coop. Expired catalogs were utilized in the outhouse.

After several weeks the rapidly growing chicks were allowed outside to roam freely during the day, but safely "cooped up" at night. At 10-12 weeks the lustiest young males, no longer cute and fuzzy, began pursuing and sexually harassing the confused females (pullets), providing us with early sex education lessons. By that time, the cockerels were big enough to cook; we initiated the weekly routine of choosing and capturing one or two for Sunday dinner, followed by the unpleasant job of execution, usually on the chopping block. The beheaded fowl would reflexively flop wildly on the ground for a few moments becoming the basis for that description of a person "acting like a chicken with its head chopped off."

The next task was to remove the feathers, often by first plunging the bird in hot water to make the feathers easier to pull while keeping the small fluffy ones from blowing around. The plucked bird then was eviscerated (gutted) providing us the opportunity to learn bird anatomy—the nature of gizzard, heart, liver (the giblets), as well as crop, lungs, intestines, etc. When hens were gutted we marveled at the magical ovarian cluster and shell gland. Most pullets were allowed to grow into egg laying hens, but in turn became dinner when their egg laying days diminished, as determined by my Grandmother, who felt the hen's belly to tell whether or not an egg was hardening in the shell gland. Grandma ate two eggs, soft boiled, for breakfast daily well into her 90s. Back then we were unaware there was such potentially dangerous stuff in

eggs as cholesterol, probably because it was not much of a problem for physically active people.

Finally, the carcass was cleaned, washed and ready to be cooked on or in the big wood burning stove. Of course, having an ample supply of dry wood was another major pre-programmed job. The picked over carcass usually ended in the soup pot.

Aren't we glad to be spared that prolonged, messy routine in order to enjoy chicken for dinner? Of course, all the preparation and work still has to be done by someone; mostly, by folks on large commercial poultry farms and grocery chains working for minimum wage. On the other hand, think of all the lost opportunity to learn about the harsh reality of the real world. Future generations will have a lot of "catching up" to do. When did you last buy a chicken with its head and feet still attached?

In addition to chickens, we kept pet animals, mostly rabbits, ducks, cats, and even a lamb. My grandparents had a collie dog, Prince, who was often at our house. Unfortunately, Prince, like so many dogs, loved to chase sheep. He and some other dogs got into neighbor George Finch's sheep pasture and killed several of them. So, Prince had to be disposed of, a disappointment for me.

As I grew older, I began to venture beyond helping to raise food on the farm into the hunting arena. I must tell the story about a special pair of hi-top shoes that our folks got us. They were unusual in having a pocket on the *side* of the right shoe that held a jack knife. I thought we were really "hot stuff" with those shoes. Looking back, they were small versions of the "combat boots" we wore during the war. On my first hike we walked to the adjoining Baker farm and saw a cottontail resting next to an old apple tree and not moving. I decided to bag the rabbit with my lethal weapon and clearly remember taking careful aim at the rabbit only about four feet away. The knife bounced off the rabbit, which quickly ran away.

My hunting skills did improve with age, and I always saw responsible hunting as a better alternative to animals starvation or road kill.

Equally entertaining to my hunting was watching other animals hunt for their food. One day while Sam and I were on our porch, our cat brought us a mouse that was still alive and active. Imagine my surprise when reaching into my pocket for a handkerchief—no Kleenex in those days—I grabbed the mouse, which had escaped from the cat and sought refuge in my pants pocket. Now that was a very neat vision of a "flying mouse" as I threw it in the swamp.

Almost as interesting was the time we saw one of our ducks chasing a garter snake across the lawn; ultimately catching it and gulping it down. For many minutes we watched the duck's chest heaving as the snake wiggled within.

Another time we brought home a pail full of shiners we caught in Uncle Floyd's brook and placed them in a tub of water on the lawn. The lamb took a shine to the shiners and amazed us as she put her head in the water and caught several fish, which she ate. No strict vegetarian our lamb—who liked "shiners sushi." She also liked to follow us to school until chased back home.

One "animal" we did not like was lice. They were hunting us! Most of the kids during my childhood smelled of kerosene for two reasons. First, a treatment for head lice was to soak the scalp with kerosene. Second, many houses, including ours, were partially heated with small kerosene stoves.

My life on our family farm, as a child, was very different than farm life today. Obtaining an education back then was equally as different to current times. Some of my most vivid memories relate to walking to our one-room Stone Mill schoolhouse, one mile of dirt road past several farms. Our elderly teacher, Miss Loomis, was in charge of teaching all subjects from grades one through eight. She had 31 students and emphasized the "3 R's"—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmatic. A "Jane of all trades," she was also the janitor, school nurse, music director on our ancient organ, guidance counselor, principal and athletic director. She did it all for $900/year. I do not remember her ever complaining.

We sat in single or double desks. Each unit had an inkwell and a storage area under the desktop. There were only two of us in my grade level as I progressed from first to sixth grade. I was always ranked number two, the bottom of the class. Margarite Holmes was always ranked number one, which at the time seemed appropriate since I regarded girls smarter than boys beginning with my grandmother and mother. Furthermore, at that time I had never seen a male teacher.

On our way to school, we usually accompanied our nearest neighbor, Gloria Sniffens, who was around our age and whom we called "Girly." We all walked in rain, snow or shine. One day, after a rainstorm, we jumped over many mud puddles. There was a particularly wide puddle that Sam and I had no problem jumping over, but when Gloria jumped, she slipped and landed on her bottom in the middle of it. She had to walk back home to change her dripping, muddy clothes. Such were the hazards then.

There were no school buses and most of us did not even have a bicycle. Only one boy in school could afford one. I was very excited one day when he allowed me to ride it. On that first wobbly journey, I promptly crashed into a tree. It was not so easy to do as I had expected.

Looking back, it seemed so simple and logical in those "good old days" when we kids considered school the center of our social life and were happy to be there, while many of today's students and teachers seem to regard school as an unhappy, stressful experience. It doesn't have to be that way.

I enjoyed school, playing on the farm, as well as doing chores on the farm. There was a patch of sturdy lilac bushes at the edge of the garden that we would climb on and move from one to another like monkeys. Another simple pleasure was jumping off the beams in the hay barns landing in the stacks of newly harvested hay. Brother Sam and cousin Sam Martino thought it was fun to work with the horses during haying season—when the dried hay, after being piled into hay stacks, was pitched on the hay wagons using pitchforks. The wagon was then pulled by horses, not like tractors today. I remember one major steep hill. The horses had to strain to hold the loaded wagon in check while coming down this hill. Once on level ground,

they could relax, inevitably releasing bursts of gas as they trotted towards the barn, which would prompt Uncle Floyd to cheerfully recite the following ditty:

A farting horse never tires.
A farting man is the man to hire.

Once at the barn, the horses were hitched to a series of ropes and pulleys to lift the hay on a special fork into the barn. I felt quite special and useful when I was allowed to handle that chore. A different chore during the winter in the evening, while the cows were being milked by my uncles, was to lead the horses to the watering trough about 150 yards away in the pasture (The cows had an automatic water basin by each stanchion). The horses would eagerly head for the water, but once they got there, they would often stare into space rather than drink—sometimes for ten minutes or more. When the weather was cold and nasty, as was often the case, I would become quite impatient and anxious to get back to the house to the warm kitchen and tempting supper smells. Farmers recognized this nature of horses years ago with: "You can lead a horse to water—but you cannot make him drink."

It seems to me that the horses, having evolved on the open plains and having been cooped up in their stalls in a dark barn all day, enjoyed being back outdoors. They were probably reassured that the world of open space was still out there and for ten special minutes or more preferred to drink in the scenery rather than the water, which they eventually drank.

Not all of my memories are pleasant. Some are sad, as when Sam slid down the sloping door to the outside cellar entrance. It was fun until he poked a nasty splinter into his butt, and our Dad had to rush him to the hospital to get the deeply embedded splinter out.

While most of our neighbors were pleasant, not all were. On our way to school, we had to walk through the extensive farm of the March family. Occasionally, one of the men would drive his vehicle at us as we walked along the dirt road. He acted as though he wanted to run us over. Consequently, as soon as Sam and I saw the vehicle, some kind of 1920's station wagon, we would sprint off the road

as far as we could as the old man driving would gesture at us in a very unfriendly manner. We were not sure why he did not like us. We never spoke to him, but assumed it was some form of ethnic or religious prejudice, which was very common in Columbia County at that time. Ironically, one of the sons married an Italian girl who later lived on that farm and in that house. Of course, the old man was dead by that time.

My saddest memories are of my little brother, John, born just after we moved to the farm from Brooklyn. Brooklyn was the epicenter of a polio epidemic when I was a young boy that expanded to the entire United States by the 1940s. John became paralyzed with the disease before he was one-years-old. A nurse urged my mother and father to move John to an upstate hospital in Rome, New York, where he died at age four. There will always be an empty space in my heart for John.

I am grateful that no one else was infected in our family, and to have my other younger brother, Sam. I have many fond memories of him and me on the farm as children. We loved to fish in the small brook that ran through Uncle Floyd Merrifield's farm. About one mile downstream it was dammed to form an ice pond and a water-powered sawmill on the farm of Charles Swartz (now owned by cousin Floyd Merrifield, Jr.). Mostly, we caught small red-fin shiners; however, once in a while we caught trout or a large sucker, which we proudly took home for dinner.

At the time, we had little appreciation of the working complexity of the saw mill. Looking back, it is a wonder that Charlie Swartz ever allowed us to fish around his intricate saw mill machinery. We must have made him very nervous. While there were many mills and blacksmith shops in Columbia County then, I have never seen another water-powered saw mill anywhere since. Unfortunately, floods from the severe 1938 hurricane destroyed the dam and the saw mill.

Eventually, electricity was brought into our community around 1932. On our way to school we walked under the power lines that were being supported on tall steel structures that to us looked quite wonderful and beautiful. Looking back, it is amazing how quickly

we take such an amazing amenity for granted. Many people regard power lines as ugly and obtrusive when passing through their neighborhoods. To me, they will always be symbols of one of the major blessings of the 20th century technology.

Something else we considered quite wonderful was our first car—a plain black Model T Ford. The car provided adventure, although it was primarily used to go to the Claverack barbershop and back—a one mile distance. On some of the hottest days, we would drive to Spook Rock on Claverack Creek to cool off in a shallow, gravelly pool.

A quest to understand and appreciate the gains in science, ecology and technology and maintain the balance with nature was a theme in my life, especially through reading books. My Dad would stop off at the nearby library on his way home from work and bring me nature-themed books by Thornton Burgess and the Mother West Wind Series. My fantasy friends became Lightfoot the Deer, Thumper the Rabbit and others.

Part of my quest for understanding the world was reading through the Bible. It was during this period, when I was ten-years-old, that I resolved my feelings toward the Catholic Church. Although my folks were not strongly religious, they thought I should get confirmed in the church. So, on some Sunday mornings we would drive to the Hudson Church. I found the language in the catechism and confirmation material illogical and confusing. At the same time, I was fascinated by the Biblical account of Noah's Ark. Finally, one day I got up the nerve to ask the priest if he could explain how Noah managed to get so many different pairs of animals and birds on the ark and then provide them with the proper food. I personally knew how difficult it was to catch even one little animal in a field or the forest.

The priest put his hand on my shoulder and said: "Antonio, there is something you should know—a good Catholic never questions the Bible." His answer disappointed me very much. After all, at that time I was not questioning the Bible, I was looking for clarification. Of course, I know now that the entire story is a myth and could never have happened. That night I told my folks the story and I said

that I did not want to return to get confirmed—and never did. To their credit, they did not try to change my mind.

However, they did insist on a music education. There was a piano in a large room at my grandparents' house that I enjoyed tinkering with whenever I was there. As a result, the folks thought I should take piano lessons from Mrs. Esselstein in Claverack. I enjoyed the lessons and practiced faithfully all through one summer. However, the room was unheated, faced north and was two rooms away from the stove in the kitchen. So, as the weather got colder, so did the room—until it got so cold that my fingers could not function. Thus, I was obligated to quit for the winter, but for some reason I did not start again in the summer.

Later, to resolve the cold room problem I decided to take guitar lessons from a man who came to the house for each lesson. I enjoyed the guitar almost as much as the piano, and was progressing nicely until the time came to leave the farm and move to Brooklyn. That put an end to guitar lessons, along with the fact lessons cost money and we did not have much.

It may have been that same winter that we had a very heavy snowstorm that closed all the roads. Traffic, though never very much, was at a standstill. Nevertheless, my folks told Sam and me that we had to go to school, that the road would probably soon be cleared. We had no radio or telephone then to give us useful information. So, off we went, trudging through snow drifts over our knees and seeing no sign of human activity all the way to school. When we got there, the door was locked and there were no tracks of any kind.

So we headed back home over our same tracks to warm up by the kerosene stove and enjoy a cup of warm Ovaltine and freshly baked cookies that my Mom made for us. I would suspect the homemade cookies were provided because she possibly felt guilty forcing us to go to school when no one else even tried. Of course, neither did my Dad get the Model T to the barbershop that day. I wonder, sometimes, if that day may have been the time when my parents began to seriously think about returning to Brooklyn because as it turned out, it was our last winter on the farm.

Russ Beck, three, and Joanita, one year old

Anthony and Sam in 1925, with Jennie

CHAPTER TWO

Growing up in Brooklyn and Upstate New York

1932 – 1943

Stone Mills School, 1932

In 1932, when I was in the sixth grade, our agrarian lifestyle came to an abrupt end. That year we lived in four different places. The Stock Market had crashed in 1929, beginning the era known as the "Great Depression." By 1932 most people felt the fallout of the crash. Farm income had declined dramatically. Peaches sold for $1 a bushel, and grapes and apples were not much better. My Dad was sure he could make much more money if he returned to Brooklyn, so he was ready to move when a couple who had been summer boarders at the Martino Farm for a several years made him an offer he could not resist. They would trade their two-family home on Ryder Street in Brooklyn for the farm. Many people were tight on cash, so trade and barter were common financial transactions during the depression. They loved our farm, having seen it only during the plush days of summer—never during the harsh days of winter.

My folks counted on rent from the upstairs apartment to pay most of the bills. But, there would be no cows, garden, chickens, or orchard to provide us with some basic food. At least we were never hungry on the farm. Our diet often included wild vegetables, and game rabbits, squirrels or pheasant. In the spring, we ate fiddlehead ferns and the young tender stalks of burdock (cardoon), which tasted like asparagus, and lots of dandelion leaves.

Sam and I said goodbye to our friends at Stone Mill School in May, and off we went to start a new life in Brooklyn and Public School 222. It was bad enough we changed schools with only three months left of the school year, but P.S. 222 was one of the larger schools in the city. I did not enjoy it. My Dad's barber business in Brooklyn was not as busy as the small shop in Claverack. To make matters worse, our tenants living in the extra apartment in our home in Brooklyn were worse off than we and could not pay the rent. The situation was soon becoming very stressful, and we longed to return to the rural life of Columbia County.

As soon as the school year ended, I was the first to return to the Martino Farm. What a relief, although I missed a few aspects of living on Ryder Street, such as playing stickball on the street. I also missed a friend who lived in the best house on the street and who had a neat sister, whom I liked.

By mid-summer, my folks traded the Brooklyn house for 12 undeveloped lots on Long Island, thinking they were making a wise investment. Once again trading rather than purchasing was a common financial transaction during The Depression. Unfortunately, the land was located where the government built LaGuardia airport and the government paid my family a pittance for the land under eminent domain.

Our family moved back upstate. This time we rented an old house in the tiny hamlet of Churchtown—only about five miles south of Claverack. The house and large yard were across the street from the Lutheran Church that the Merrifield's attended. My mother's sister married neighbor Floyd Merrifield, who was Lutheran. My cousin Floyd Junior still belongs to this church, as its treasurer.

We had a memorable first morning in the house when Mom noted a cow in a field next to ours. She considered it a good sign from God and promptly milked the neighbor's cow, so we had something for breakfast. She did this only once to help us get established. She had milked cows most of her teenage years on three different farms and was very good at it.

Part of getting established in our new community was selecting which school we would attend. I remember there was a debate about this. There was one school about a half mile away, but the local municipality required us to go to a school over a mile away, probably to balance taxable income associated with student numbers. Once again, my brother and I walked dirt roads to a one-room schoolhouse. The young and beautiful Miss Porter was our teacher. She was in charge of only 16 students in eight grades. We enjoyed going to our new school and making new friends.

One fun memory involved getting to and from school one winter morning. The walk to school was uphill most of the way, which meant that going home was downhill. During our last month in Churchtown, we had an icy snowstorm, so we took a sled to school and found it very enjoyable to slide almost all the way back home on the hard-packed slippery dirt road.

My education expanded beyond the school walls. Since the Lutheran Church was next door of our home, we attended services and Sunday School there with no problem except that the Reverend could not give me the answer any better than the priest could about how Noah could get all those wild creatures on board the Ark and feed them for 40 days. At least he did not tell me I couldn't question the Bible, as the priest did.

There were several painful memories from this time in my life—most painful were my bouts of poison ivy. Sam and I could go to the same places. I would get terrible ivy poisoning, and he would not get a single blister. I had it so bad; I was in bed for a week with blisters over most of my body. Sam, obviously, was immune.

Another painful memory was when a neighborhood cat brought us a chipmunk that was still alive and squirming to get loose from the cat's jaws. I wanted to save the chipmunk, so I took it away from the

cat. The chipmunk had no way of knowing my intention, so when I held it, he bit my fingers so hard that I had to shake it loose. I learned a major lesson—chipmunks have sharp teeth, so never grab one. I now preferred watching animal life, rather than engaging with them.

For example, there was an open field near our house where bats would fly over it in the evening. I have never seen so many bats over one field since—at least four different species. We would throw large sticks at them to watch how they darted to avoid them. I wonder if they are still around in great numbers—20 or more.

There was a small pond near the school that froze that cold December. Before the snow came, we were walking on the clear ice and watched a muskrat swim under our feet as he went to an underwater entrance to his house. I have never had that experience again. Uncle Floyd bought the pond and 100+ acres of woods around it years ago for a place to go deer hunting. Now, there are more deer around the Merrifield Farm than in the woods around Churchtown.

Back to Claverack

The fourth and final move in 1932 occurred when in December, Mr. Loomis, the owner of the house in Claverack, in which my Dad had the barbershop, offered us the opportunity to rent half of the large house (four bedrooms on the second floor) plus the basement barbershop for a very reasonable rent. My Dad accepted the generous offer, and we moved in at $25 a month. A few months later, my Dad was able to buy the home for $5,000 and reestablish his barbershop business. I remember the excitement of exploring our new big house and the neighborhood. The house had good indoor plumbing, electricity, central heating with a large coal furnace in the barbershop basement.

Mr. Loomis worked his blacksmith shop behind the south side of the house (an area now a grocery store). There was a post office, and stores across the road and only 200 yards away there was a six-room schoolhouse, where I could continue seventh grade and Sam the sixth. Going to school was again a pleasure. There were eight of us in my class and for the first time I had a male teacher, Joe McCourt, who taught seventh and eighth grade. Near our home and school

was the beautiful Claverack Creek, ideal for fishing, swimming and exploring.

Boy Scout Troop 21 met at the school auditorium under Scoutmaster Earl Coons. I was eager to reach my 12th birthday to join the troop, which became an important part of my life the next six years, finally becoming an Eagle Scout. I have vivid memories of camping trips, cookouts, working on merit badges, hikes to Buttermilk Falls and Mt. Ida in North Claverack.

My Dad had been a volunteer fireman and regularly attended meetings at the nearby fire station. As with most volunteer firemen, the firehouse with its pool table and card games was also a major social club on most evenings after supper. My Dad enjoyed riding the fire truck on those critical occasions when the siren wailed calling the volunteers to duty. My Dad was personable and well-liked, both professionally and personally. But, it was still quite a surprise when the firemen turned on the siren to give Dad a loud welcoming salute upon his return home from the disappointing Brooklyn experience.

I appreciated my community because, at the height of the Depression, there were many opportunities to make extra money. One day, a man came to the barbershop and tried to convince Sam and me to replace the Meredith brothers, Dick and Palmer, in the delivery of the Hudson Register newspaper. He had a large display board with all kinds of sporting equipment placed on it—baseball gloves, ice skates, tennis racquets, fishing equipment and other items that had been way beyond our means to afford; but, they could be ours if we delivered the newspaper and got new customers. We were to collect 12 cents from each customer weekly: six days, six cents to the paper and six cents for us. We signed up right away to do the job and divided Claverack into two sections. Sam covered the east section and I covered the north and west. We each had about 30 customers. Another paper carrier was Ann Buccholz, who delivered the Albany Knickerbocker News on the same route I had. She walked her route, and I often rode her back home on my bike. We soon became good friends and remained so for 70 years. Her husband was a submarine officer in WWII.

There were many other opportunities to keep busy and earn money. In July picking red raspberries for the nearby Green family (many years later their nephew, Bob Green, became a great friend in the New York State Conservation Department). In the fall we picked apples on the weekends for the relatives. There were many lawns to mow, in addition to caring for Claverack's four clay tennis courts; a job offered to us by Eben Hickey—one of the four Claverack Hickey brothers. Soon, we could afford good bicycles, all kinds of sporting equipment and even splurge on an occasional ice cream soda. Neighbor, Martha Andrews, opened an ice cream shop nearby for a short time.

I also tried to make money trapping. Back then, furs were in style, and there were several mink and silver fox fur farms in the county. I trapped a mink, which I proudly displayed hoping to get at least $20 for the pelt. However, much to my shock and disappointment the fur buyer claimed it was in inferior "cotton back" (not solid dark color) and worth only $1. To make matters worse, I skinned it in the cellar, unaware that mink have strong musk glands. The damp cellar retained the strong musky odor for over a year, which did not blend well with the stored apples, potatoes, and wine—not to mention the adjoining barbershop.

A slightly more successful enterprise was when Sam and I were in the 4-H Program, we were permitted to raise pheasants under the supervision of our Columbia County 4-H leader, Bob Dyer. Under the program, the New York State Conservation Department would give us pheasant eggs to hatch provided we had the proper facilities to feed and care for the chicks for seven weeks before releasing them in the "wild farm country." Behind our garage and next to the blacksmith shop, there was an old, beat-up shed we made into a suitable pheasant coop. The hardest job was to locate "broody hens" from local chicken farmers willing to part with them. Mature hens naturally fall into the brooding instincts to hatch a clutch of eggs. Once we got the hens safely on a nest in the remodeled coop, we placed a dozen eggs under each one and waited patiently for the eggs to hatch—about 24 days. Within 24 hours after hatching the precocious baby birds scurry about looking for food and have to be

kept safely warm and fed under the watchful eye of their surrogate "mother hen." We had good luck caring for the chicks while they stayed in the coop, but after a few weeks when we let them out to wander the unfenced yard with the hens they quickly became "wild" and were enjoyed by our neighbors. At night, we would round them up and get them safely back in the coop.

Once the chicks were seven-weeks-old they were considered capable of surviving on their own and we could release them in the wild fields and collect 75 cents for each one. However, after the birds were five to six weeks old they could fly a little and some were becoming less willing to be cooped up at night to be with the hen. By the time they were seven weeks old about one third of them would go off on their own and not return to the hen, much to our displeasure since we got paid only for the birds we kept for seven weeks before releasing them. We made only a little money, but we sure enjoyed the experience for a few years.

Best of all, we enjoyed swimming and fishing in the many local waterways, especially Claverack Creek, Buttermilk Falls, several ponds, Lake Taconic (a State Park), and Copake Lake. One of my good friends, Howard Tichay, and I enjoyed fishing so much that for several years we pedaled bikes the 18 miles to Copake Lake to be there for the opening of the black bass season at midnight on July 1. We would rent a rowboat and sleep "under the stars" till midnight then fish by trolling behind the boat all around the lakeshore.

During the summer after a rainstorm, we fished for eels after dark in the creek, using night crawlers for bait, which we picked up from wet lawns. On Sundays, Dad's only day off (though he often went to the house of homebound older men to give them a shave and haircut on Sunday mornings), we usually went to a movie in Hudson or occasionally a movie and vaudeville in Albany. From there, we would visit relatives at their farms those nearby the grandparents and Merrifields, those across the Hudson River, Will Martino in Cairo, Frank Martino in Palenville. At each farm, we enjoyed visiting and playing with our cousins. We especially enjoyed crossing the Hudson River by ferry from Hudson to Athens.

The folks were happy in those days. My Mom was an excellent shopper and housekeeper. She could make a dollar go a long way. On our Sunday drive, she would always sing in the car. She had a good voice and could easily carry a tune, including operatic arias. Her favorite movie stars were Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald and never missed their musically-themed movies.

For the first time, I enjoyed going to religious services, mostly Sunday School, at the local Dutch Reformed Church, and especially the Sunday evening social get-together called Christian Endeavor where we young people, mostly teenagers, enjoyed discussion groups and indoor games under the guidance of the Reverend and Mrs. Thielpape. Mrs. T. also directed us in several plays, which we performed at the local Grange Hall. The Reverend T. could not give a satisfying answer to the Noah Ark riddle, but at least he welcomed open discussions.

I remember the excitement when brother Joe was born the first year we lived in Claverack. In contrast to our earlier unfortunate polio-stricken brother, John, Joe was strong and healthy. We all fussed over him. Someone, I think Uncle Will, remarked that he lived a charmed life. As a consequence, for many years we called him "Charm." My Dad bid on a bulk-mail delivery route from Hudson to Philmont when Joe was two years old. I can still picture little Joseph riding in the car as Dad made the daily trip in his Buick sedan that he bought to replace the worn-out Model T Ford.

A real "eye-opener" memory was when I was still in the eighth grade. I received a major shock when taking an eye exam. Much to my astonishment, I could read none of the letters with the left eye—not even the big "E." My central vision was blank, although there was some peripheral vision. The cause of such impairment was unknown at the time. The local eye doctor, Dr. Galster, believed tuberculosis, syphilis, or both diseases caused my eye problem. These diseases were common in the Hudson area at that time.

Even though I told the doctor that eyeglasses were of no help, he insisted on selling me a pair for $30. I have a vivid memory of walking out of his office on Warren Street and feeling very despondent. Thirty dollars was the equivalent of two weeks of hard work, and glasses

were of no benefit. He was a thief. I was determined I would never be ripped off like that again.

Another unfortunate and disabling event occurred in May of 1937 when I was sixteen years old. A car ran me over while riding my bike on Route 23. My friend, Leon Cook, Jr., foolishly pushed the front wheel of his bike against the back wheel of mine that caused me to flip over in front of a passing car. My right leg was doubly fractured just above the ankle. My new $32 Rollfast bike crushed. I can still picture how my foot dangled on the way to the Hudson Hospital. The first doctor to see me felt he could not save the foot and planned to amputate. Fortunately, the best doctor in the County, Dr. Edwards, checked me out and decided he could save my foot, which he did!

After recovering from the anesthesia (chloroform) several hours later, I was very nauseous and had to vomit. I was in bed flat on my back with a weight hanging on the end of the foot and stayed in that fixed position for seven long, anxious weeks. While adults could visit, people under 18 could not. I felt isolated and lonely and concerned about the financial burden caused by the bike accident. Since there was no insurance nor lawsuit money, my Mom went to work in a dress factory for two years to pay for the doctor and the hospital bills—over $500.

Other than the bike accident, High school was an enjoyable time in our lives beginning each day with a bus ride that took us Claverack students to Hudson. In 1937 we moved into a brand-new school with expansive grounds. Sam became very active in sports, but I was still walking with crutches and then a cane. It took two years before I could walk without a limp.

In high school, I entered the College Entrance Academic Curriculum just in case I could get to college someday. I took two languages, Latin and French, courses required for enrollment at N.Y.S college of forestry. In June 1937, I took the required Regent's Exams in the hospital and passed them, thanks to the bedside help given by several teachers, especially chemistry. The most memorable occasion was graduation day with the realization that starting the next day

daily activities would no longer be scheduled according to mandated school attendance, but would now become my responsibility.

What would I do from now on? There was no money for college; nor were there any places to get college loans. What careers could I explore that did not require a degree? My Dad wanted me to learn the barber trade or maybe work in a Hudson candy store. I wanted neither and learned radio and television technology by taking an affordable home course offered by Lee DeForest, a pioneer in TV technology. I took whatever odd jobs were available, with the goal of saving enough money for college somewhere someday.

Two friends joined me with the Radio-TV Program, Ernie Hewett from Claverack, and Harry Dingman from Hudson. Occasionally, we studied together mostly material mailed to us on film, which required that we purchase a movie projector. In 1938-1939 TV was in its infancy and we were on the "ground floor." When I completed the home course in 1939, we were invited to travel to Chicago where they would offer us a job. The thought of leaving Claverack for Chicago was very scary, and I refused to go, much to Dad's displeasure. Neither did Ernie or Harry go. We all wondered why we spent all that time and money for nothing.

I was now sure I could afford to enroll in the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse. I worked at different jobs for another year, including Barnard's Florist business in Claverack, for 25 cents/hour, ten hour days, six days a week. In the spring of 1940, Sam and I drove Dad's car to Syracuse to meet the Dean of Admissions for the college and formalize plans to enroll in September, 1940 with the Class of 1944. It was a very exciting time in spite of a mishap on the way to Syracuse when we ran into dense fog, and I ran the car off Route 20 near Cherry Valley and it had to be towed to a nearby garage to get repaired. Luckily, it only cost us $5 for the towing and $5 more for the repair. We only had $20 between us and we still had to get to the college and then back home. The thought of leaving home to go to Syracuse did not seem to be the least bit scary as going to Chicago, but I had to earn more money.

For those of us willing to work for 25 cents an hour, there were many opportunities, considering that 35 cents/an hour was

considered a good paying job. Locally, several men supported their families on that amount. The city of Hudson supported two cement plants, and several of my paper customers were high-level administrators. Mr. Pritchard gave me an excellent job at 35 cents an/hour in the nearby Lone Star Cement Plant Lab. Much to my disappointment and surprise, I failed the obligatory physical because of the blind left eye. I was also rejected at the Atlas Cement Company, Hudson Match Factory, and Montgomery Ward in Albany. In those days insurance companies were very intolerant of the disabled. Looking back, it was probably a lucky break because if I had settled down to an enjoyable 35 cents an/hour job in the lab, I might not have gone on to Syracuse. Ironically, after the war both cement plants shut down.

The eye handicap shaped my future more than any other factor in my life. Not until I was 45 did a doctor on Long Island recognize that the eye damage was caused by a protozoan that entered the bloodstream and settled in the optic nerve in the dead center of the eye. Usually, the damage is done to the peripheral vision part of the eye, and the victim is never aware of it. Probable cause comes from contact with animal feces—dogs most likely. Was it Prince? Consequently, I have never enjoyed binocular vision. For many years whenever having a physical, I was taken aside for special inspection. To get a driver's license at 16, I memorized the eye chart so as not to admit to being handicapped and could do each line even when told to do it backward. My Mom was also trying to learn how to drive at the time. She was very nervous and hated getting behind the wheel, so I was eager to help with the driving because my Mom did very little. Soon, I would be on a new adventure.

Aunt Lenora in 1930

CHAPTER THREE

Off to College and Army Life Stateside

1939 – 1946

"Killer" Taormina with a carbine rifle

By August, 1939, I had saved enough money to start Forestry College, and I packed to leave home for a happy adventure. Sam had chosen business as his major at Syracuse University. However, on the day before leaving for Syracuse, we received the terrible news that Uncle Jimmy Martino, my Mom's oldest brother, with whom I spent many hours working in the barns, was killed accidentally in a mishap on the farm in Hollowville where he occasionally worked. Grandpa, Sam (Saverio) Martino, had died a few years earlier. I remember consoling Cousin Sam, Jimmy's son, in the Martino house and saw little of him after that, even though we had played together several times a week for many years.

In Syracuse, I lived in a lovely house on Clarendon Street owned by Mrs. Pennington, the widow of a former Forestry College Professor. I paid $2.50 a week for a shared bedroom overlooking

the rose garden in adjoining Thorendon Park, a beautiful and peaceful vista. My roommate was a senior in the college's Landscape Engineering Course, Leonid Michaelson, who was rarely home. The house was about a 15-minute walk to the Syracuse campus and very comfortable. I paid $4/week for three meals a day at the University Dining Facility. Compared to 1939 and 1940, when I went to college, the cost of college today is out of reach for many young people.

These years were happy years. I enjoyed the campus atmosphere and most of my courses—Botany, General Forestry, Math, English, and Chemistry. Since there was war talk, I also joined the Reserved Officers Training Program (R.O.T.C.), especially for the uniform. However, in my sophomore year, I was rejected because of my blind eye.

Once classes started, I quickly made lots of friends, of which George Katibah was one of my best. Art Wingerter from Buffalo had a car which allowed us to do a lot of exploring around central New York on weekends during the lovely fall weather. The big event of the fall was the day off to attend the annual College of Forestry Barbecue, a lovely day with forestry-type contests, sporting events, as well as the barbecue. On some weekends there were football games, which we dutifully attended. Coincidentally, our star fullback, Toots Morabito, was a Duckwood resident where I live.

Back then there were no women enrolled in forestry, so it was difficult to meet compatible coeds (today, 50% of the enrollment includes women). The one exception was English taken "cross campus." The class was noteworthy for two reasons: the coeds, but more important I had one of the most dynamic teachers I had ever known, Dr. Rhine, who had a powerful influence on my thinking process, especially critical thinking towards organized religion.

One of my housemates was Bart Stone, a minister's son from Scranton, PA. Despite his upbringing, he was impressed that I went to High School in Hudson because of the town's famous reputation for being a center for prostitution. Bart liked to fancy himself a "rah-rah" college boy who envied my pint of homemade wine. He bet with me on the evening of a football rally he could drink the pint in half an hour and feel no effect. The proof would be that within

half an hour after he finished he could recite an outlandish poem we agreed on without making a mistake. If he could, the wine was free; if not, he would pay-up two dollars. Bart won the bet with no problem, but shortly after that, when we went outside in the cool night air to attend the rally, he passed out and fell on the porch floor. Bart weighed about 200 pounds, and we had a terrible time picking him up and getting him to his bed without Mrs. P. finding out. She tried to be very strict. She did not want women in the house, but Bart sneaked his Scranton girlfriend in one weekend, and Mrs. P. was never the wiser, so much for the Protestant minister's son.

Having to be miserly with money, I could not afford to date often, but saw an occasional movie. My favorite was *Fantasia*, and I can still remember the night we walked to the theater to see it. The major recreational event some weeks was to walk downtown on a brightly lit-up S. Salina Street with its many movie theaters, and then on the way back stop at Sunny Simon's for a nickel beer. For Sunday dinner—not part of our meal plan, we would walk downtown to an Italian restaurant that featured an ample steak and spaghetti dinner for 75 cents. To help make "ends meet," I would get several part-time jobs. The college employed several students to help with janitorial work for 35 cents an hour. My financial situation was always something of a crisis, but even more critical were the academic requirements.

The college marked on a "curve," meaning every course there would be A's, as well as F's. We suspected that the college policy was to reduce the freshman class of 160 to 125 or less by the end of the year. I mentioned having a tough time with chemistry, most of it taught by graduate students. For our first critical mid-semester exam, I got a "28." I can still feel the pain of "academic terror" when I saw that grade on my paper. Never had I ever gotten such a poor test score. I was sure that was the end of my budding forestry career. However, it so happened that the majority of the class failed the exam, so the question became "maybe it was the teacher rather than the students."

Consequently, the exam was declared void, and we were allowed to take another test. What a relief to get an 85 on the second one. It

was the only time I had such a close call to "flunking out." I weathered the rest of my freshman year in good shape and hitchhiked home for the summer of '41.

Many times when I traveled home for the holidays or some long three-day weekend, I would hitchhike to save money. I traveled mostly on Route 20 from Syracuse to Albany and Route 9 or 9H from Albany to Claverack. Most of the time my rides were pleasant and comfortable, but there were two notable exceptions.

On one occasion the driver offered me a drink of Scotch and a cigarette. When I politely turned down his generous offer, he became quite upset and questioned what kind of dull college boy I was who didn't want to have any fun. Smoking and drinking was not my idea of "fun."

Another time the man who picked me up at Kinderhook said he was traveling south past Claverack. When we were about three miles from home, he reached over and groped my crotch and asked if "I played with this much." This was my first experience with an aggressive gay person, and I was not sure how to respond, especially since he was driving 50 mph. I decided to let him play and not react considering I was almost home. Once we reached the Claverack traffic light he had to stop, and I jumped out of the car with my laundry case. He smiled and said goodbye.

The father of my Claverack girlfriend, Ann Buchholz, was a Bureau Chief in the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and in the summer of 1941, he offered me a job working for the Bureau tracking the spread around the Albany area of the recently introduced nuisance Japanese Beetle. They had become a major pest, especially on lawns, golf courses, and in plant nurseries. It became the best job I ever had as part of a three-man crew exploring the countryside in a 50-mile radius from Albany for a pesky green and bronze beetle. The job helped carry me through my sophomore year with little financial strain. To go to work, I drove from Claverack to Albany in Dad's car. Unfortunately, I burned out the engine in the process when I carelessly ran out of oil; so, for a few weeks I was obligated to rent a room in Albany, as Dad had to get another car. In Albany, the crew foreman drove us around in his station wagon.

I went back to Syracuse in September. The courses included zoology, dendrology, surveying, and physics. The zoology staff had the responsibility to manage the Wildlife Research Station in the Huntington Forest near Newcomb in the Adirondacks. Because of my strong interest in wildlife, I was invited to participate on occasional weekends with various research projects, for which I was paid a little. It was my first experience in the Adirondacks, and I found it very enjoyable even in the cold of winter. I have many pleasant reflections of those experiences with Professors King, Dence, Webb, and Stegeman, along with several other students: Stan Ernst and Marv Hauben.

One of my favorite courses was dendrology—the identification and description of trees, and the wood they produce, I was one of the few students who could get 100 on field tests. I had sympathy for those students who could not easily distinguish an oak from a maple or hickory. Dr. Harlow was the professor in charge of the program. He was an early pioneer in time-lapse photography.

Since Italy was at war with Germany, they were regarded as our enemy, even though the U.S. was trying to remain neutral. One day, I was called into the Dean's office where, much to my surprise, I was to be interviewed by an FBI agent. Someone—probably from Claverack, though I never found out who—had written to the FBI that I should be investigated as a disloyal American fascist. There was a significant amount of anti-Italian sentiment, even by some of the faculty. I was embarrassed as the agent tried to determine my sympathies by asking all kinds of questions. Looking back, I remember thinking Dean Shirley was as embarrassed as I was since by then I had developed a good reputation as a student. When I returned after the war, Dean Shirley gave me some excellent advice and urged me to go on with graduate work. Meanwhile, back in the FBI files somewhere in Washington, there is a record of that meeting and a nasty letter in my file written by someone who I was not given the opportunity to know, although I had my suspicions.

All went well until December 7th when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Our perceptions of the future were completely altered that day. Everyone in my class was in the prime age bracket for the

military and wondered how long it would be before either enlisting or being drafted. Some of the guys who were having a hard time with college work, enlisted immediately.

I spent the summer of '42 at the required forestry summer camp in the Adirondacks on Cranberry Lake. The emphasis was on surveying and forest management. From time to time, a classmate would be called to duty and would have to leave camp before completing the course. One of my best friends and surveying partner, Frank Stoecker, was notified to respond for service while we were at Side Camp, which was quite a distance from the Main Camp. Side Camp was the headquarters for our two-week long topographic surveying class.

I volunteered to help Frank return to Cranberry Lake from where he would report for duty. The easiest way to Cranberry Lake was by canoe down the Oswegatchie River, a very scenic trip over Beaver Dams. Frank made a career of the military as a tank specialist, and we have remained close friends, trying to visit each other once a year usually at his summer home south of Old Forge in the Adirondacks.

When registering for the fall semester of our junior year, the Class of 44 was gradually becoming decimated by the draft. We were now down to 62 students. Since I could not work that summer to earn enough for my junior year expenses, my financial reserves were disappearing fast. By the end of the semester, I was flat broke and I had no funds to continue the second semester.

The question is—What do I do now? Military service was an obvious option, but I was classified 4-F—unfit for the military because of the bad eye. I tried to join the Marines and Air Force, as Sam had done, but they quickly rejected me. Mom discouraged me from "joining," especially since I also had a farm deferment when Uncle Joe gave me a job working on the Martino farm for 25 cents an hour, but I was not content. Meanwhile, the war was going badly for our side, and lots of troops were needed.

One cold, overcast January day while shoveling out loads of ammonia-rich manure from the chicken coop, I decided that I was not happy being "safe." I decided the time had come to "volunteer to be drafted" in the Army. The military was becoming more liberal

in accepting less than perfect physical specimens. The folks were not pleased with my decision, thinking the family had sacrificed enough—Leo in WWI and Sam in the Air Force, but I was ready to take the calculated risk of surviving the experience.

There were three major reasons joining:

1. I was becoming bored with the routine farm work and looked forward to some exciting military experience.
2. I was broke, and at least I would be economically solvent, even though privates made only $50/month.
3. It now seemed like the patriotic thing to do since the political and societal implications of the war made more sense than it had earlier.

With the decision made I put the manure fork in the corner and told Uncle Joe that I was leaving, then went home to tell the folks and drove to the Draft Board in Hudson.

Under the policy of the time, the Draft Board technically could not draft me, but they had no problem with me volunteering for duty. Within two weeks, February 1943, I was on my way to Camp Upton, Long Island, 25 years after my Dad went there as a soldier in WWI. During the train ride from Hudson to Yaphank, I felt a sense of relief for having made the decision. For at least a while, I would not have to be concerned about what to wear, what to eat or what to do. I was now under the control of the military hierarchy, and that was that.

1943 - 1946 Army Life Stateside

I arrived for active duty at Camp Upton on February 12th, a very cold day, even on Long Island. As soon as we recruits arrived, we had to wet mop our assigned barracks' floor; it became slick with ice and we "skated" from one end to the other in a futile effort to keep warm. The next day we began being processed through a series of stops, including getting uniforms, shoes, various inoculations, and eventually a very short haircut. The next day we were awakened at five A.M. and marched several miles in the cold and dark to a Prisoner of War (POW) camp full of German POW's.

We spent the cold day—at least it was warm inside—doing kitchen duty with and for the POW's. It seemed outrageous that the military hierarchy would demean us in this manner, but I guess the intention was not only to keep us busy, but also to impress on us "who was in charge." On February 18th some of the other recruits and I were put on a train and told nothing more until we disembarked with all our military possession in a duffel bag at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to begin basic training at what was an artillery camp.

We had comfortable barracks, good food, and an interesting training agenda. Best of all, it was a lot warmer than New York. I soon ascertained that most of us in my platoon seemed modestly handicapped in some manner—many like me had one bad eye. Basic training went by quickly, as I enjoyed being in the North Carolina environment with its different plant and animal life. My Mom even stopped by for a visit on her way to her brother, Uncle Will, in Florida. So far, in spite of the sour Camp Upton experience, I was pleased to have left the farm for the Army. Sam was also content in the Air Force.

On April 23rd, after completing basic training, I was put on a train with no idea where we were going until we arrived in Boston. From there a few of us were taken to a ferry which took us across Boston Harbor to Fort Standish, a coast artillery fort, on one of the many islands in Boston Harbor. During World War I, the fort manned six-inch retractable cannons, which were now regarded obsolete and were being replaced with automatic 90mm cannons. We had a battery of four cannons guarding the entrance to Boston.

I was soon classified as a 2nd class gunner, and my job was to lock on a target, usually something towed by a boat or plane, through a special telescope unit I controlled, while comfortably seated on a machine that coordinated firing four guns. It was a great job. I thoroughly enjoyed the island atmosphere of the Harbor in spring, especially the coastal wildlife which I could observe through the telescope.

Some of our soldiers had been local fishermen and were of Portuguese ancestry. I learned a lot from them. Occasionally, lobster buoys would float by, and they could easily be purposely

misidentified as submarine periscopes to generate a little excitement at the command post.

Once a month we would get a three-day pass to the mainland which gave me the opportunity to go home by train from Boston, although twice I spent the pass touring Boston, including the well-known strip joints on Scully Square—now long gone. One of them featured, famous stripper, Sally Rand, who was popular because of her titillating tassel twirling breast routine.

I was engaged in some performing as well. I auditioned to take part in Camp shows. So far, life in the military had been a pleasurable venture. I had great sympathy for the guys who were getting beat up in the Pacific and North Africa, and thankful that the Marines had rejected me as "imperfect."

In the summer of '43, the military was recruiting servicemen to return to college to get specialized degrees, especially in engineering. It was known as ASTP, the Army Specialized Training Program. I filled out the forms and waited for the outcome. Meanwhile, the Special Services people, who went to the camp entertaining the troops, were also recruiting and because of my previous audition, I was accepted and assigned to a major unit in Boston. Thanks to my "theater" experience with Mrs. Thielpape, the minister's wife, who directed home town shows, and singing experience with the College of Forestry "Sangerbund," singing group.

On October 15 we rehearsed several skits such as "Section 8," an Army Show at Fort Banks and on October 29 started the show "Shellz a Poppin," also at Fort Banks. I played numerous roles, including the part of a "hillbilly" in "This is the Army." It was the first and only time I had the chance to work with women from the Women's Army Corp (WAC). It was obviously a very pleasant experience but did not last long. On November 23 I was ordered to report to an ASTP base at City College of New York in the City (CCNY). Reluctantly, I left "show business" and started another adventure. While awaiting my future assignment at CCNY, I took advantage of visiting many of the places in Manhattan I had heard about, including a variety of U.S.O.'s.

On December 3, I was once again on a train, this time going to Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine. There I could continue my education, but majoring in Engineering. It was another great assignment. I found the professors to be excellent and enjoyed all my classes, including chemistry. My primary job was to study and get good grades. I felt guilty to be living so well in a college dorm while so many G.I.'s were getting beat up.

However, there was a "fly in the ointment." The officer in charge of the Bowdoin operation was a frustrated ex-cavalry captain who, according to rumor, got hurt when he fell off his horse. He took out his unhappiness on us. Each Saturday morning, he would line us up for "inspection" in the big dark Bowdoin gym. We soon learned that he was haircut-obsessed, so we kept the Brunswick barbers busy.

One gloomy, frigid Saturday he strutted down our ranks wearing dark glasses. He soon was berating me and others for not getting a haircut even though I had been to the barber the day earlier. When I told him as much and said I did not think my hair needed cutting so soon, he glowered at me for talking back and said it must have been a lousy haircut because I had "hair from my neck down to my asshole." For punishment, I was to march all Sunday morning around the campus. That Sunday was one of the coldest days of the year. During my four hours of unjustified penance, my feet nearly froze. My feet have never felt right since. I was chilled to the bone and very resentful. It was my first bitter experience against any Army officer. I found sympathy with the various stories about how such officers were often treated in combat and other situations as targets of "friendly fire." When I was discharged, I failed to mention my concern to the authorities about my frostbitten feet.

While at Bowdoin, the military was selecting college people to transfer to a med school to become doctors for the military hospitals. I was interviewed on January 28 by three Harvard doctors, who were impressed by my credentials and urged me to transfer immediately to Harvard to begin medical training. I felt I was only a few semesters from an engineering degree and a commission and did not feel like starting all over again, and, much to their surprise, I did not accept their generous offer. Much to my surprise a few weeks later

on March 4 the ASTP came to an end. The military determined that there was a greater need for men in the infantry rather than officers for the future, and on March 17, after a three-day pass home, I was transferred to the 26 Yankee Division doing maneuvers in the mountains of Tennessee at Camp Forrest—near the City of Tullahoma. It was quite a radical change from the comforts of college dorms to the discomfort of the cool, damp Tennessee hills, and to think, I could have been at Harvard instead. As it turned out, some men who took advantage of the med-school option graduated in time to go to Korea.

We arrived at night under "blackout" conditions with no idea where we were or what we were supposed to do. I recall being told to take my gear into the woods and find a place to sleep. I could hear thunder and was sure that a storm was coming. We were in a steep ravine apt to get flooded if we had a downpour, so I scrambled up the steep bank to get as high as I could just as the rain started. Those who stayed in the ravine got soaked a lot more than those of us up the bank. As we groped in the dark to find some comfortable spot, we were grateful for the occasional lightning, which helped us see, especially since one of the southern boys said he could smell "cucumbers" and that meant there was a poisonous copperhead in the vicinity. I heard the cucumber story many times but never saw a snake prove the association. After that night I enjoyed the infantry. Sending us college boys to fill in the ranks of the hardworking infantry units was a great morale booster for the guys already in, especially since we had all been ranked as buck privates.

I enjoyed "maneuvers" in the forested hills of Tennessee; sleeping on the ground, eating C&K rations, washing in water in our steel helmets and coming in contact with real "hillbillies," who lived rustic, isolated lives. Also, the first time I ever met an adult in our company who was illiterate. As maneuvers were coming to an end, we were promised hot showers at a nearby school. There were so many of us lined up, that by the time it was my turn to take a shower, there was no hot water. The cold shower was still better than pouring cold water from my helmet, making it a makeshift sink, though not much. On March 26 maneuvers ended, but not the rain.

On April 1st we went to tents in Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, and resumed basic training in the infantry. I became an expert marksman, despite my impaired eye, and after a few months had fired most of the weapons used—the Enfield Rifle, Garand, Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), Springfield "03" (my favorite for accuracy), and the Bazooka. The hardest work was the 35-mile forced march and other long marches with full field pack, rifle, and steel helmet, which was hard on my sore feet.

I was assigned to the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon, Headquarters Company 3rd Battalion 101st regiment of the Yankee Division. We were modest combat engineers building simple bridges, locating and disarming mines and booby traps. It was tricky and scary business, but critical to the welfare of the Division. One day, while resting next to a pine tree after having been on the shooting range, I noticed a rattlesnake coiled by my knee and looking at me. With the help of another GI, we took care of the snake without getting bitten and had fun showing it off to the other troops.

During time off, I explored the countryside and wondered how I, as a limited service GI, ended up in the infantry. I was soon to find out when I was told to report to headquarters. I was to be transferred to an outfit more appropriate for my physical limitations. So, on May 30 I was assigned to the 4170th Q.M. (Quartermaster) Depot Company at Fort Benning, Georgia, a unit in which I remained for the rest of my military career. Later, the 26th Division was sent to Europe and was engaged in the terrible Battle of the Bulge, and took many casualties—over 75% of my old company, according to a friend who kept up with the Division; so, there are advantages to being disabled.

Assigned to the Quartermasters meant a full round of basic training, this time supplying and handling food and other materials while preparing for combat situations. Our weapon was a lightweight carbine rifle, easy to carry but not as accurate as the heavier rifles.

From July 3-14, I represented the company in a specialized "Combat Swimming Course" taught by Harry Lyons and Al Gordon through the Red Cross. Fort Benning had a large pool and diving tower. The goal was to float our tightly rolled pack in front of us after

jumping in the water, then rest the rifle on top of the roll and swim and shoot your way to shore. At the end of the course, we had a major demonstration in front of high-level officers and concluded we, the best swimmers in each company, could barely function holding the rifle with the heavy steel helmet on our heads. My thought was that the guys in front of the combat swimmers were more apt to get shot by the men behind them than by any of the enemies in front, and since most men were not strong swimmers, they were more apt to drown, but as far as I know the tactic was never put into action.

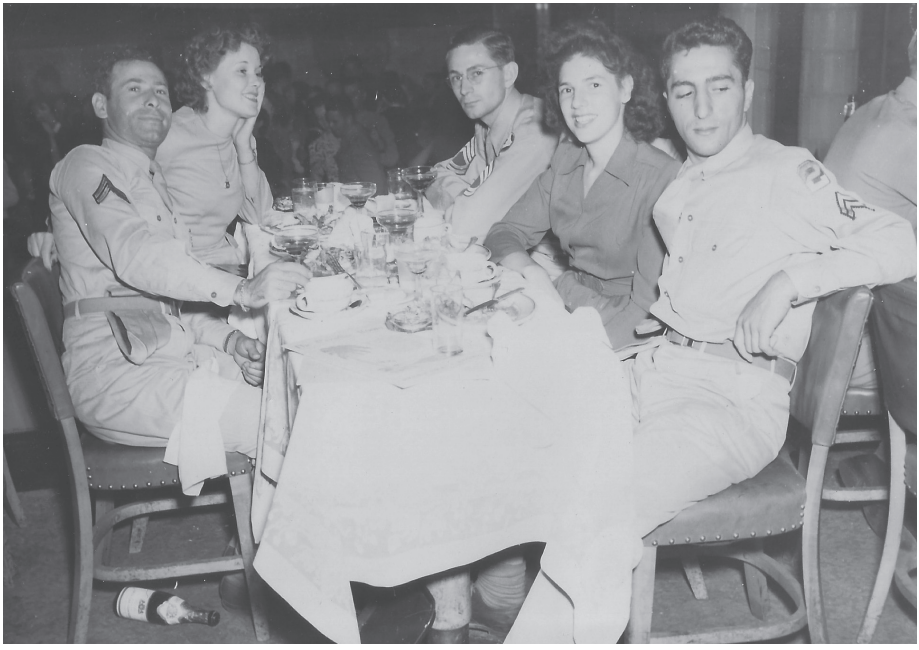
On July 19, 1944, while on a pass to Atlanta, I met a lovely girl, Louise Houghton, with whom I became infatuated and dated several times. She became my primary girlfriend throughout the rest of my military service. We corresponded regularly, and I sent her many presents from overseas.

In August, I finally made Corporal again (We were all demoted when entering ASTP). Then in September a notice was sent to all units in Fort Benning that there was to be a contest to determine which outfit in the Fort could present the best show to entertain the troops overseas. We had talented men in our unit, who were eager to meet the challenge, and we developed what we regarded as a very good "show" for G.I.'s overseas. By coincidence, we soon learned through the Fort newspaper that the actress, Bette Davis, had a boyfriend in another unit that would compete. On the night of the show, September 26, we were backstage getting make-up, etc., when we noticed that the large auditorium was being quickly filled by officer wives and their daughters, all of whom were far more interested in seeing Bette Davis than our production. We were in a panic because much of our "production" was geared to sexual situations, including some of us dressed as women. Unhappily, we took out the most suggestive and funniest material, and we were disappointed after all our hard work. The audience voted Bette Davis' boyfriend's group skit number one, and we were voted in second place.

The next day Lt. Molinari, my favorite officer, who worked with us, was called on the carpet" for allowing such a scandalous program to be presented in front of an audience of women and girls. Such

was the hypocrisy of the military—training soldiers to be ruthless killers, but getting bent out of shape over some modest sexual fun. After the show, I applied for Officers Candidate School in Medical Administration. In early October, we were "alerted" that we were scheduled to go overseas. Thus, our commanding officer told me to forget the OCS application—I was too valuable for the outfit and was promoted to Sergeant for the 1st Squad 2nd Platoon.

Once alerted, we spent several weeks on "maneuvers" followed by a nice furlough, which I spent mostly with Louise. We went to Stone Mountain, the Civil War Cyclorama, various parks and had a great time. On December 25, Christmas Day, we all left Georgia for our Port of Embarkation (POE), which turned out to be New York City; so now we were sure we were going to Europe and not the Pacific. After another furlough, which I spent home in New York, we boarded the USS Wakefield (formerly the Manhattan) on January 30, 1945, quickly passing the Statue of Liberty, wondering if we would ever see it again and then out into the cold, stony Atlantic.



Love blooms for our hero in Atlanta

CHAPTER FOUR

Army Days Overseas

1945 – 1946

Thinking things over.

We were soon zigzagging alone with no other ships in sight, wondering how many Nazi submarines were in the shipping lanes between New York and Europe waiting to get us in their sights. We would find out soon enough.

For most of us, it was the first time on the "high seas." We were crowded and stacked in narrow bunks, five high in the forward hold, which, after a couple of days, became quite smelly. Thus, many of us soon became quite seasick, especially since the ship was always rocking from side to side. I remember going for a meal and being greeted by the awful smell of mutton while watching the aluminum trays sloshing back and forth on the long mess tables. Between the zigzag maneuvers, to confuse submarines, and the stormy seas, the only comfortable place was in our sleeping bags in the bunks. It was so rough one day that our piano tipped over, but that was not the

worst of it. On February 6th we were awakened by terrible booming sounds. The whole ship shook and vibrated as one boom followed another. We, apparently, were under submarine attack in the middle of a dark and stormy night. There was so much confusion and chaos that some men were shouting that the ship was hit and that water was gushing in the hold. It was the most terrifying time I had ever experienced and was sure we were "goners." While some men were jumping out of their bunks to go who knows where—I stayed in my sleeping bag having determined there was no future ending up to die in the bitterly cold Atlantic—might as well die in the sleeping bag.

After 20 minutes of pandemonium, it became quiet. There was no water gushing into our area and no mention over the speaker concerning the incident; but, apparently, we were okay. Later, it was rumored that what we heard were depth bombs as destroyers came to our rescue. Two days later, we landed at Liverpool, England, at night under blackout conditions and very thankful to be on land and safe. After a few hours, we were on a train heading someplace. As it turned out, the train ride across the lovely English countryside was very enjoyable. We ended up at an airbase outside of London—Camp Columbia. Once again, we waited for orders while rumors flew. We could hear occasional German rocket bombs blasting in the distance.

After a few more days at this very busy airbase, where each morning we could hear many bombers taking off for bombing runs, we were loaded on a ship to cross the English Channel. Once more, we were attacked by submarines. Later, rumors flew that German submarines sank a ship ahead of us while in the English Channel, they sunk the last ship in our group. Again, all this information was unofficial.

On February 24, we landed in Le Havre, France, getting ashore on L.C.T. (Landing Craft Tank) and then quickly transferred to a smaller LCI (Landing Craft Infantry), which took us on a spectacular ride up the Seine River. There was wreckage everywhere, but also many flocks of wintering waterfowl. Ultimately, we ended up at the "20 Grand Staging Area" to regroup for a few days before our next move to our final assignment. While waiting, I took the time to hike over the interesting French countryside to test my three years of high

school French with a few farm families. I met one family, who was especially friendly and interesting who operated a farm similar to the Martino farm. While chatting in the kitchen, the man wanted to know the nature of the fruit that he knew only from a can that was round with a hole in the center, "Ananas." I could not figure it out until back in camp; it was pineapple. I ended up trading some chocolate bars and cigarettes for a chicken.

That night, I cleaned and cooked the chicken and ate it along with some "C" and "K" Rations in our tent. The C-Ration was an individual canned, pre-cooked, and prepared wet ration. It was intended to be issued to U.S. military land forces when fresh food (*A-ration*) or packaged unprepared food (*B-ration*) prepared in mess halls, or field kitchens were not possible or not available, and when a survival ration (*K-ration* or *D-ration*) was insufficient. It was a noteworthy meal considering that in the middle of the night we could hear a constant procession of troops shuffling by our tent on the way to the latrine. The troops who ate supper at camp got a severe case of diarrhea (the G.I. shits) that lasted several days. We lucked out.

Finally, on March 12, we were loaded into box cars, the classic (40 or 8), 40 men or 8 horses, and taken to our work station in Belgium. There, we were to manage and operate a major food depot a few miles south of Charleroi in a coal mining community called "CeCi," Chatelet-Chat lineau. My squad was housed in a very comfortable private house about a mile walk from the Depot.

On the first night, while I was outside on the street practicing my French on some very curious and friendly kids, we heard a buzz bomb flying overhead. The kids said that as long as we could hear it we were safe, but if the noise stops run for the cellar because the bomb is falling. Sure enough, in a few seconds, the motor stopped, and we rushed for the cellar. Not until the next day did we learn that the bomb exploded in a huge pile of coalmine tailings and caused no harm. Later, we would regularly go to the mine for our showers. Unlike Tennessee, there was always plenty of hot water from the coal-fired furnace.

Once I got to know the local kids, who were all very curious and friendly, I was asked if I was a "Walloon" or "Flemand." Had no idea what they were talking about, but soon learned that the small country of Belgum was culturally divided among the French-speaking people in the southern part, bordering France and the Flemish speaking people of the northern part, bordering on Holland. Of course, I became a Walloon and enjoyed cordial relationships with the local people. We often traveled by streetcar to Charleroi, Brussels and even Antwerp. Many evenings we spent in local bars and cafes, which were frequented by whole families who enjoyed music, beer, cognac and companionship.

I also made many friends among the Belgian crew chiefs, one in particular, Georges Schepens; corresponded for several years until he and his family were murdered as he worked in Africa in the then Belgian Congo.

On April 12, we learned that President F.D. Roosevelt died. I had a feeling that the Belgians were more saddened by his death than the Americans because they were so grateful that President Roosevelt helped defeat the Nazis who were particularly cruel to Belgians. A month later, on May 8, while I was writing to my brother Sam, the church bells started ringing. The war was over—in Europe! That night we worked until 1:00 am. Our primary job was to oversee receiving and unloading box cars of packaged food and ship them out to various units in the field. Labor was mostly provided by German and Italian POW's. For the most part, the POW's were content to be safely assigned to our depot and were willing workers. However, there were certain German prisoners who were so militant that they could not be trusted and were kept confined. They were the SS Troops.

On most days, squadrons of bombers flew overhead, flying eastward towards Germany in the A.M. and returning westward in the P.M. The German POW's could not believe we had so many planes. Right until the day the war ended, the POW's could not believe they were going to lose.

When the European War finally ended, the main concern was "Where do we go from here: Home or to the Pacific?" The military

had determined that we would be graded according to a point system—those who had the most "points"—I had 35—based on length and type of service, would go home, the others elsewhere; but, most likely, the Pacific. On May 29, the 4170 was "alerted" to pack up and prepare to leave Belgium for a "staging area" in southern France. We said goodbye to our many Belgian friends and girlfriends and enjoyed a pleasant train ride through Belgium, Luxemburg, and central France, finally stopping at the desert-like Arles staging area.

Rumors were rampant that we were going to invade Japan to finish the war there. Some soldiers, remembering the casualty rate as the Marines invaded Japanese-held islands, panicked at the thought and tried various means to get out of the service by deliberately handicapping themselves, such as getting VD or shooting off a toe or two. I have no idea how those who did so were treated. I looked forward to this new adventure and figured it was worth the risk.

While waiting for final departure orders, we had lots of spare time, so I managed to travel a bit going to Marseilles where French was spoken with an Italian accent. I saw a bull fight where the Matadors did not use swords, but tested their skills by plucking tassels from the horns of the bulls as they rushed by. I saw an opera— "The Pearl Fishers"—at the Avignon Opera House and went for a swim in the cold Mediterranean. One memorable day we got word that the company was awarded several three-day passes to celebrate Bastille Day in Paris, July 13-16. Winners would be drawn by lottery. My name was not called, but to my surprise, one of the winners did not care to go, and my name was drawn to replace him.

I teamed up with Al, a good friend, who also was a lucky winner, and we quickly collected dozens of cartons of cigarettes from the guys, who wanted me to sell them on the black market. My duffel bag was packed full. When we arrived in Paris the first thing I had to do was find someone who would buy all the cigarettes. I found someone very quickly. We agreed on a price and since what we were doing was "illegal," he waited to negotiate our transaction in a special building where he led me down a long, empty and dark corridor. About then I got apprehensive, since I felt very vulnerable to any mischief he might have in mind, so I told him to stop and

I put my hand in my pocket, as though I had a pistol. He was very compliant, and I was nervous. We counted out the cartons—Camels were the most valuable, followed by Lucky Strikes and then the others—and figured out the total worth. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a huge roll of francs. I then had more money in my possession than I had ever had in my life. I quickly walked away and was relieved to see Al waiting for me outside the building. We were now free to plan the rest of our trip. This was the first major holiday the French could celebrate in many years, and they were doing so by opening up the places that had been closed because of the war.

We went to the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triumph, Rue Pigalle, and even the opening of the Follies Bergere, as well as play a round of golf. We were welcome everywhere. During our last night in Paris, while walking along the Seine, we were approached by two young women who bluntly asked if we were interested in sex. "Voulez-vous zigzig" was the question. Not knowing what the future had in store for us, nor how long it might be before we had another chance to be with an attractive woman, I was agreeable, but, Al declined. The two women were then competing for just my business. The one I chose claimed to be a war widow, of whom there were thousands, with two children and a very sick mother to support, and hoped I would appreciate her situation. In my best French, I assured her that I did.

We learned that we had our departure orders when we returned to Arles. We left from Marseilles aboard the U.S.S. Sea Flasher and enjoyed a calm voyage in the Mediterranean towards the Straits of Gibraltar. My brother Sam was also scheduled to leave Europe for the Pacific. As we passed the Rock of Gibraltar with the coast of Africa visible to the south, there were porpoises everywhere, hundreds. I have never seen so many at one time since. That entrance to the Atlantic must have been loaded with baitfish to attract so many porpoises.

Our quarters were fairly clean aboard ship; nevertheless, after a few days on the Atlantic, the below decks bunk area became very smelly and unpleasant. While I stayed on deck I was okay, but as soon as I went below to my bunk I became nauseous. Since the weather was comfortably warm, I took over an area below one of

the lifeboats and slept there for most of our 45-day voyage. While I enjoyed being on the deck looking for fish and wildlife, many of the men were gambling below deck.

Some of the more enterprising soldiers controlled a small space below deck to set up a gambling operation on a blanket, mostly "craps" (dice) or blackjack. Their "fee" was to collect 10% of each winner's "pot." After 45 days at sea guess who ended up with most of the money on board? I was not surprised to hear the one man had collected $20,000 and was concerned about being robbed, but he was also concerned about how to get the money back to the States.

Until we arrived at the Panama Canal on August 11th, we never knew where we were. One day we were in an area that was alive with flying fish. They popped out of the water in flocks of all different sizes and numbers, as our ship frightened them. They skittered above the water by the thousands. At night we were awed by the florescent organisms that illuminated when there was movement of the water in the bow of the ship. Some areas produced a more brilliant luminescence than others.

We had a fascinating ride through the Panama Canal in the daylight and even got a batch of mail from home including mail from Louise in Atlanta. I read most of the mail while sitting on the elongated two-row back-to-back latrine. Since it was very hot, I put my jacket, along dozens of other similar-looking jackets. The jacket had large pockets in which I put my mail and wallet in it. When I got up to go outside my jacket was gone. I felt that someone grabbed it by mistake. When after three days I was not called to pick it up I figured whoever picked it up threw it in a heap next to his bunk and probably seeing the sergeant stripes would not pick it up knowing it was not his. Not until we were ready to leave the ship in Manila did I get a call telling me to pick up my jacket. Much to my relief, everything was in it—mail, money and wallet.

Many of the men got mail from their Belgian girlfriends, who wrote them in French. I became their interpreter and became quite frustrated trying to translate until I realized most of the girls could not spell and used phrases that were also misspelled, but I was able to read enough to make the guys happy.

It was a long trip from Panama to our next stop at Hollandia, New Guinea. On the way, we crossed the International Date Line on August 27 and the Equator September 11, and each time received the appropriate certificates. I stayed in the forward part of the deck most of the time enjoying spectacular sunrises and sunsets, noting the birds I observed over the open ocean every day. Most of them were easygoing, shearwaters gliding and dipping over the waves in search of floating food particles. On September 4 we landed at Hollandia to refuel and saw thousands of birds along the New Guinea coast and shark fins in the water. The weather was gloomy and the water very dark and uninviting.

Shortly after resuming travel on September 5, we got caught up in a raging storm (typhoon) and for two days travel the ship was most unpleasant; so much so, in fact, that we heard several men got so seasick and dehydrated that they died.

Finally, after 45 days at sea, we arrived in battled scarred Manila Harbor. There were hulls of damaged and partially sunken ships scattered throughout the harbor along with about 200 others safely anchored. But, what surprised me the most was the fact there were sea snakes swimming on the surface everywhere you looked.

Once on shore we were loaded on open boxcars and, once again, riding a train to somewhere unbenounced to us. By this time, we had heard about the super bomb equivalent to 20 tons of TNT that had demolished Hiroshima. Of course, we were skeptical, but if true, the war could be over without having to invade Japan, and that gave us hope. The open train ride through Luzon was very interesting though uncomfortable. We were all hot, sticky and thirsty**.**

JUDGING THE BOMB ON 4th OF JULY

Do you think that during World War II, President Truman's decision to drop atomic bombs on two cities in Japan that incinerated thousands of Japanese was justified? Following is some history to refresh your memory when watching colorful fireworks this month.

In the spring of 1945, World War II ended in Europe but continued unmercifully in the Pacific. Consequently, thousands of American military personnel, no longer needed in Europe, were sent to the Pacific war zone. My company was loaded on a troop ship in Marseille, France, and ordered to sail west by way of the Panama Canal.

We knew nothing about the scientific race to develop an atomic bomb, but felt, that most likely, we would be needed for the probable invasion of Japan—an action that was bound to result in thousands of casualties on both sides. Hopefully, we would not have the bad luck to be one of them.

After a 45 day "cruise," we entered battered Manila Harbor to learn that on August 6th Hiroshima had been devastated by a powerful atomic bomb. Our initial reaction was disbelief. How could such a single bomb be so powerful? A few days later, we were told that a second atomic bomb had destroyed Nagasaki. We now felt that such a monstrous bomb was fact; in which case its terrible consequences might convince the Emperor to capitulate prior to any dreaded invasion.

A few days later Japan surrendered. The war ended along with our anxiety. My brother's troopship had not reached Panama yet and was ordered back. He got home 6 months before I did. Hal Oprandy was still in Marseille. His ship was scheduled to travel east through the Suez Canal. It was now cancelled. He returned to Germany on a 5 day train ride in "40 or 8 box cars." (Each car was designed in World War I to either carry 40 men or 8 horses).

Was the use of atom bombs justified? Looking back 70 years, those who were there firmly believe it was. Most likely, far more people would have been killed during a prolonged bloody invasion than were killed by the two monster bombs.

Moreover, we should all be eternally grateful that our team of atomic scientists won the race to learn how to unleash atomic energy in a bomb. Think what would have happened if the other team had won that deadly race. Nevertheless, we hope that no future president will ever have to feel the need to justify dropping another monstrous atomic bomb on anyone again. Meanwhile, enjoy the colorful exploding fireworks and be grateful they are only "make believe" bombs.

At one prolonged stop, I volunteered to climb a nearby coconut palm to get some milky coconuts for the group. I easily climbed the tree to much applause and was quickly grabbing and tossing coconuts to the gang below. Suddenly, I realized that my body was covered with dozens of red ants that were stinging me all over. Later, I learned that this nasty species commonly nested in the crown of palm trees. I quickly slid down the tree, scraping my chest and legs. Once on the ground, I jumped into a puddle of water and started washing the nasty ants off my body. The stings hurt for only a few days, but worse, I developed a persistent fungus infection on my chest and ankles that bothered me over 20 years.

Our final destination was in San Fernando La Union on the shores of very scenic Lingayen Gulf. At first, we were in very leaky squad tents (It rained some every day.), but after a few days, we moved into much better quarters, though still tents. I was delegated Camp Landscape Engineer to spruce up the area and then promoted to Staff Sergeant in charge of one major section of our vast, sprawling food depot.

By the time we got settled down, we had heard that the war was officially over. It seems that the "atom bomb" did the trick. The bombs were real, and we were relieved. Nevertheless, there were still Japanese soldiers scattered in the forested hills who needed convincing, so we never felt completely safe. Our work crews consisted of Japanese prisoners of war, black American service troops and Filipino day laborers. The POW's were so happy to be alive and safe that they were the easiest to handle. Their officers were

very strict disciplinarians. The black American service troops were understandably visibly surly and unhappy with the way they were treated. Remember, back then the services were not integrated. There were no black soldiers in our Depot Company.

The local Filipinos were a mixed lot with some of them untrustworthy, as we would soon learn. Some would try to break into our depot at night to steal stuff and even shoot at us if cornered. I had two such skirmishes. Others hijacked some of our trucks, especially those loaded with sugar. On the other hand, our Philipino foremen, who were educated, were very congenial. I made some friends, who confided in me about some of their feelings about Americans colonizing their country, making them feel like subjects.

We ate well, although our flour was so badly infested with grain weevils that I rarely saw a slice of bread that did not have weevil parts in it. Nevertheless, the local people were so hungry that they would line up behind our mess hall after each meal to salvage any food that was discarded. The POW's were mostly fed on rice.

Because of the potential for contracting malaria, our cots were shrouded with mosquito netting, and we were given daily atabrine tablets to counter any infection. The yellow tablets turned our skin yellow. By looking at the color of a person's skin, you could pretty much tell how long a person had been in the tropics.

We suffered a few casualties, but not from enemy combat. On the first morning of our arrival, we heard the sordid news that one of our men was found near our camp badly beaten and dead. Ironically, he was the one with the most points and had several bullet wounds from European combat. Unfortunately, knowing nothing about local customs or behavior, he had insisted on finding a female sexual partner that first night and, obviously, found something else. We soon learned that the sexual atmosphere in the Philippines was more conservative than Europe. Moreover, the black troops were very possessive of their Philapino women and pretty much kept to their own bars, which were off limits to white troops. We frequently heard reports (rumors) of grenades being thrown into bars frequented by black troops and vice versa. It was not a harmonious situation between the races.

Climate caused another casualty. By the end of our first week one soldier, who was very pale, light-skinned and redhead became critically sick with heat rash. The soldier's entire body was covered with sores. He was quickly sent home on a medical discharge. This is an example how thousands of years of evolution weeded out the white skinned people leaving only the darker skinned to survive in tropical climates. Conversely, white skin is a major advantage in cold northern climates to absorb a greater amount of vitamin D.

I soon made some Philippine friends, both among our workers, as well as from the local village. The village consisted of a series of thatched huts raised on stilts along the shoreline. There were many ethnic and linguistic differences among the Filipinos. Those at the bottom of the social order being the very primitive Igorot's,while those with dominant Chinese or Spanish ancestry considering themselves at the top of the heap. They were very sensitive to Colonialism, especially toward the Dutch in Indonesia, French in Viet Nam, and even the Americans in their country. It did not help that many Americans called them "Spics" or "Flips." I found some to be very well-educated and sophisticated.

A story about General MacArthur that we heard was that "of course he would return" because he owned so much property, including the railroad.

Most of my leisure time was spent on the water or going to Baguio, the summer capital, a beautiful city located on one of Luzon's highest elevations. The truck ride from sea level to the high mountain plateau took us through a great variety of changing ecological systems. Most impressive were the tree ferns. At Baguio, I played golf several times. The course was surrounded by beautiful pine trees.

When "eating out," I always ordered fish, not trusting any meat dish since one of their favorite foods was dog meat. I remember packs of dogs tethered together and sold for food, not pets. Their pigs, which roamed freely throughout the village, were the ugliest I had ever seen. They were the sanitation workers eating anything organic, including human wastes deposited under the huts through a hole in the floor. Sea turtles were prized and featured for special holiday meals.

I made a friend with a local fisherman and would often go out with him. Sometimes all I did was to glide along resting on the outrigger of his boat while looking down at the great variety of sea life within the fantastic coral reef. My vision was enhanced by a pair of goggles he made for me from flashlight lenses.

While he fished, the fisherman had his partner swim ahead until he located a school of fish. He would then signal the boat and head back as fast as he could to climb aboard while my friend threw an explosive charge, usually a grenade, into the area where the fish were spotted. The timing had to be perfect so that the grenade did not explode until the scout was safely back on board. After the explosion, the water would be clouded with sand and debris. Once it all settled we would gather the stunned fish—some floating, others on the bottom. It was a very destructive method practiced throughout the Pacific. Once back to shore the families would gather around the catch and systematically choose the preferred species; very few fish were discarded. There were two to three-foot-long fish in our area called "half beaks," which when frightened would scoot along the surface very rapidly like so many mobile spears. Anyone in their way could be hurt badly.

I got severely injured swimming while inadvertently blundering into a box jellyfish. At first contact, I thought a shark was attacking me. I was so severely traumatized that I barely made it to shore and remained quite sore for several days before the toxins from the jellyfish stinging cells—nematocysts—wore off. It was one of my scariest experience of the war.

Rice, Philippine's most important food, was grown throughout our area in many rice wetlands. A special fish, Bangos, was free to grow with the rice. Bangos are an important food source. On some of our coastal wetlands there also lived one of the most interesting of all fishes, the mudskipper. They would skip on the muddy surface breathing air. They have big heads, bulging eyes and strong fins that serve as legs.

I was also fascinated by the many white-headed sea eagles that were quite similar to our bald eagle who also fed on fish. They were common enough that I saw some almost every time I went near the water. Geckos, a lizard-like creature, easily climbed the walls and

ceilings of the buildings in this region. Invariably, we would hear them at night as they vocalized "gecko gecko" for hours on end. I enjoyed hearing them, but some men felt the sounds interfered with their sleep and tried to get rid of them.

We had strong thunderstorms on most afternoons. They were so predictable that we could time our showers with them. Although, if you were late soaping up, you could be left unwashed and covered with lather, since the storm would come and go very quickly.

Sundays were special days in our area. The locals would get dressed in their best clothes and go to church or visit friends and family in their horse-driven small carriages that were usually very colorfully decorated. A favorite Sunday past time was cockfighting, where the men would congregate in a special tent and bet a lot of money on a favorite rooster, each armed with razor sharp steel spurs on their legs. Usually, the loser would be killed or mutilated by the winner in a matter of seconds as the fighting pair would jump up and down slashing at each other with their feet armed with the lethal spurs.

On both days, Christmas and New Year's, I thought I would get drunk since so many men seemed to enjoy the experience. Try as I might, on both occasions, I found out that before I could feel any exhilaration, I would get sick to my stomach and very sleepy thus get no pleasure from drinking. My metabolism must be much different from the guys who enjoy drinking. Some could drink an entire case of beer (24 cans or bottles) in one weekend binge. They are probably all dead by now.

In early January, I got a five-day pass and went to Manila. I visited many areas and was especially impressed by the Chinese impact in the city. Much of the city had been badly damaged and there was reconstruction everywhere. I took a special trip to Corregidor; the area first attacked after Pearl Harbor. Many G.I.'s were killed or captured there.

When I returned to San Fernando, there were rumors that all men with 30 months' service would be sent home. I had 35 months and was on my way home on January 23. While the war had been over for five months, there was still a lot of work to be done offloading ships, and preparing for the occupation of Japan rather than the invasion. Consequently, several of us were offered a promotion or

even commission if we would stay on for a while. Some did, but I said no thanks.

Those of us scheduled to leave on the 23rd were loaded on an open tractor-trailer and driven to Manila. On the way, we rode on a causeway with rice fields on both sides. I noticed that a bull water buffalo was vigorously chasing a smaller one in our general direction. I saw a potential disaster in the making and banged on the hood of the truck to alert the driver. Sure enough, the two buffalo climbed the bank and started to cross the highway in front of us. The driver quickly put on the brake, and we almost jack-knifed into the swampy rice field. Luckily, I had alerted the driver just in time to keep from getting killed. What a unique and ironic end it would have been — smothered in the muddy, flooded field of rice. I wondered how the Army would have reported our deaths to our folks.

On January 29, we boarded a beautiful new ship, the Marine Swallow, and headed home on the best boat ride I had in my 95 days at sea. I stayed belowdecks most of the time and was never nauseous because I had a top bunk right next to a clean ventilator. The most memorable event happened when we passed through a pod of over 50 "sleeping"whales. However, the most exciting part of the trip was passing under the Golden GateBridge in San Francisco Bay.

We disembarked at Camp Stoneman where we were treated royally, and then on February 16, put on a train. I had a beautiful ride up the California Feather River Canyon, through the Sierras with a stop by the Great Salt Lake and then on to New Jersey with many stops along the way.

On February 24, I was officially "honorably discharged" at Camp Kilmer in New Jersey and sent home to renew life as a civilian. I had a lot to think about on the peaceful train ride from New York City to Hudson—while appreciating how lucky I was to have experienced such a safe and adventurous military obligation. Both of my friends, Ernie Hewitt and Harry Dingman, were killed during the war. Many of my buddies died from the HQ Company of the 101st Regiment, who had high casualties. They were sent to the "Battle of the Bulge" in Belgium. They were the company I was assigned to before being transferred to the 4170th QM Depot Company. Yes, I was a very lucky man.

War is not all fun and games

OCT. #- 30

SAN FERNANDO
LUZON IS.
PHILLIPINES

Dear Folks,

Received your letter today of the 19th. and was sure surprised and glad to hear that the Ace is home and is enjoying that wonderful Fall weather, not to mention the hunting. Well I had it last year but believe me nothing will keep me away next year.

Am still feeling fine physically, but my mental condition is not very good. After reading those letters today I became decidedly homesick, but "I'll be back", as Mac Arthur said. The rumors are flying around fast as usual. The latest is that we are all to be reassigned to different units according to the number of points that we have .

All men with 36 points or less will be asigned to an A company or one which will stay here until the end." All men with 36 to 59 points will be in a B outfit or one which is scheduled to leave "soon," that is with in 2e or 3 months. The 3rd. classification is the C which includes all men with 60 Or more points, who are supposed to leave here in a month; on paper anyway. Of course I'm on the B classification, and hope to be leaving here in 2 or 3 months, but its anyones guess as to just when we are liable to leave.

Today all of our 60 pointers took a chance by volunteering for a secret mission, which turned out to be ~~as a not so secret mis~~ sion after all, since they are to be gaurds On boays which are to carry Jap prisoners back to the States. The orders claim that they will work not longer than 2 months after which time thay are supposed to be sent home. They figure that they will get home faster this way than if they had to wait their turn by points sieq-- since as I've already told you our 80 pointers are still with us, and that's not good. In fact even our 35 year old men are still in the company, and they too were supposed to havee headed for home weeks ago. Of course everyone bitches as much as possible even to the extent of writing to their congressmen, and in some cases it is showing signs of obtaining results.

Thru constant complaining in the mail bag section of our paper "THE PACIFICAN", some Colenel made the statement that he could reconvert Liberty Ships to haul troops back to the States in 3 days if he had 50 men to work on each ship. Immediately he was swamped with volunteers from all over the Island, and today the first reconverted Liberty pulled out of Manila Harbor with 500 homeward bound troops. Which all ups our morale very much since there are supposed to be a lot more to follow suit.

Heard from Ann today and was surprised to see that she is now in Frisco chasing her husband around as did a couple of my cousins.

By the way have you heard much from Frances and Nicky, is Nick still in the Army? So Sammy Martino is practically married to one of the Gentile girls ,dont tell me thatshe8--she's marrying him for love because it certainly cant be for his money. Tell me mor e about it Ace. Hows your love-life making put these days Ace? Are you still chasing Jeanie around or hw have you entered other fields, just what is the f female situation in and around Claverack anyway? The situation in good old Georgia is more or less at a still- stand or should I say stand- still. However I suppose that I will go down to Geirgia to see her as soon as I do get home; that is provided that she isn't married by that time. So many of the boys have been receiving divorce fr requests from their wives these days that I am beginning to lose faith in most of them even tho their husbands arent any angels either.

Have you bought that car yet Ace? It sure sounds like a good deal to me, provuding of course that the doggone thing has some sort of a good motor in it, which I trust it does. There's no doubt about it's being a convenient thing to have around the campus, not to mention it's handiness in getting us home weekends. You can always get enough guys to go home with you to pay for the expences and the wear and tear on the tires. Of course the other advantages of having a vehicle on the campus I wont mention. I dont want to give Mom any bad ideas, as if that were possible , eh Mater?

Naturally those hunting excursions sure sound wonderful and I dont need to tell you how much I'd give to be there with you just now. By this time you have undoubtedly been eating game of some kind every day. You are just about ready or should I say due to bag a deer this year, Ace, so be sure to pick out a big one with 9 or 10 pernts. Ask Pop to show you the place where Joe Cheerio and I almost bagged that 10 pointer. If you see Joe around ask him to tell you the story but dont by any means go deer hunting with him; he just isn't the type to go with if you care to have a successful deer hunt, and brother I don't mean maybe.

Well that's just about all that I have to say for now, anyway its almost quitting time and I have to make out my reports, so I will have to say so long for now and dont work too hard, as for yp--- you Charm I hope that you didn't hit Royce Coon too hard with that monkey wrench, you sounded just a little too morbid to suit me.

So long ---

Your loving relative

Anthony S.

Can't understand why you hadn't received my watch and film yet - I sure payed enough to have it mailed home.

CHAPTER FIVE

Unfinished Business

1946 – 1950

During the homeward bound train ride along the Hudson River, I had several priorities for the rest of the year. The first order of business, after visiting relatives and other acquaintances, was to go to Atlanta to resolve my relationship with Louise Haughton, my special wartime girlfriend. Next, I needed to confirm the status of my promised summer job and then to resume studies at the College of Forestry beginning with the fall semester.

My trip to Atlanta was disappointing. Louise Haughton, in the presence of her domineering aunt, was lukewarm to me. It turned out that the family was Jewish and her aunt did not want Louise to be serious with a "Catholic," Italian boy. I concurred that this would never be a "match made in heaven."

I left Atlanta and headed for Uncle Will Martino in Orlando. I got word at Uncle Will's that my Mom had a baby girl on March 25, and I couldn't wait to get back home and see my baby sister. I hitch hiked a ride all the way from Florida to New Jersey. Hitchhiking was easy back then and not dangerous like it is today, especially if you are dressed in a military uniform. I made it back home, and Baby Joanita was a delight. She was the perfect little daughter and sister. We were all thrilled about her. I then learned that the Professors in the College Zoology Department confirmed my job at the Huntington Forest beginning the first week in May, and that I could work there until classes resumed in the fall. Best of all, Congress had passed legislation creating the G.I. Bill that would pay veterans, depending on the length and time of service, tuition, fees, and a monthly check for room and board. It all seemed too good to be true.

By a remarkable coincidence, two of my friends and co-workers were members of Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity, the same house that Sam and his friend, Bud Beck, were members. They had gotten home six months before I did. So I joined the fraternity in the fall with Joe Muniz as my roommate. With the room arranged, I then got a job for meals waiting tables in the girls' dorm. My finances appeared to be in good shape.

For the next summer, my good friend and classmate, Frank Stoecker, invited me to work with him "cruising timber" for the International Paper Company in Maine. We started work as soon as classes ended recording the species, number and size of the trees (diameter at breast height) within carefully designated sample plots in the most remote section of the Maine woods in the NE corner of the state. We lived in tents, many miles from the main road and isolated from any social life. Meanwhile, Sam was working at the luxurious hotel resort, Huletts Landing, on Lake George.

I spent a month timber cruising, swatting hordes of black flies and mosquitoes, eating cold baked bean sandwiches for lunch, and spent mostly in weather that was cool and rainy. I wrote to Sam and said if he could get me an outdoor job—Sam was a desk clerk—I was ready to quit timber cruising and join him. He wrote right back and said there was a good job available helping the landscape gardener.

I wrote Sam to hold the job, said goodbye to the work crew and hitchhiked home. I felt it was time for me to give up hitchhiking and buy a car. Our neighbor, Clarence Kells, ran a used car lot just down the road. So brother Joe and I went down to see what was available. I bought a 1928 Model A Ford Coupe with a rumble seat. After a few tips on how to operate the Model A, I headed to Lake George—quite thrilled to have my own little car.

It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable summers I ever had. The gardening and landscaping were a pleasure. Each morning began by selecting flowers from the main flower garden to place on the guests' tables before breakfast. I liked my boss, the gardener, and usually had plenty of time after work to fish, swim, play golf on the resort's course, and party at night in the clubhouse. The waitresses were college girls. I soon began seriously dating one of them, Marilyn Stewart, from Glenn Falls. I even took her home to meet the folks, but we broke up two years later. Sam was dating Juanita Eastman, who worked in a theater across the lake. Sam also brought her home Christmas weekend. A year later, after Sam met Moya and broke up with Nita, I had a date with her, but on the day I was to pick her up we had another ice storm and we canceled out. I have never seen her since.

I went back that fall to finish my course work and graduated with a B.S. in Forest Management in January 1948. Jobs were plentiful for graduates, but I was unsure what to do, but seriously considering working for United Fruit Company Banana Plantation in Central America or Firestone Rubber in their rubber plantation in Africa. For advice, I went to Dean Shirley, who strongly advised me not to take either job but stay on as a graduate student since I was still eligible for financial assistance under the G.I. Bill. I agreed and was approved by the Zoology Department to work for a Master's Degree in Wildlife Management, a profession that barely existed when I started school in 1940, but was gradually becoming a major profession.

As a graduate student, the University gave me a good job as a resident supervisor for a major dormitory at Collendale—a housing facility outside of Syracuse. As the resident supervisor, my job was to be sure that the male students behaved and did nothing to damage

the building or facilities. For that service, I got a private room and meals at the nearby dining hall. Before that, as I mentioned earlier, I had worked as a waiter at the girls' dining room for meals. Now, for the first time, I felt I had enough money to afford a few luxuries. I bought an Old Town Canoe which a classmate, Bob Bennett, was selling because he needed the money to get married. For years, I had wanted a canoe and was happy to give Bob $300 for it along with paddles and a support rack that fit the top of the Model A. I thought it was a shame he had to give up the canoe to get married. I got the $300 and planned to meet Bob after supper to complete the transaction. While eating supper at the Collendale dining room, one student in my dorm wanted me to see the car he had just bought and that was parked just outside. He insisted that I see it right then because he had to leave. Even though I had not finished eating, I agreed to go and placed my red plaid jacket with wallet over my chair and left for less than five minutes. When I came back, my jacket was gone along with the wallet and $300. Plaid red jackets were quite common then, and I figured someone might have grabbed it by mistake, although it could have been an outright theft. Either way, when the person found my exotic snakeskin wallet, which I had bought in Manila, along with all the money I figured I would never get it back—and never did.

My bargain canoe now cost me $600, plus my beautiful wallet loaded with pictures and other stuff attached to lots of memories. From then on, I took much better care of my belongings. That year I took two fun courses: Typing and Appreciation of Fine Arts. I dated my young typing teacher, as well as the stenographer who typed my thesis. During this time, I also met and dated a very interesting grad student. The first time I went to her house in Syracuse to pick her up her mother answered the door. I introduced myself and then in a stern voice she asked: "Are you a Catholic?" Surprised and in a rather weak voice I said "Yes—sort of," thinking here it is "deja vu all over again." I dated the girl—whose name I forgot—four times. Each time, our date either began or ended in the church. Finally, I decided to break up. As compatible as we were otherwise, I would

not be controlled by the Catholic church or any other religion, and I would have to find a girl who felt the same way.

During the summer of 1948, I worked on my thesis doing a survey of plant, animal, soil and topographic of the nearby four square miles Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area managed by the N.Y.S. Conversation Department Office in Syracuse. The College paid for an assistant, Walt Sabine, and each day we would drive to Baldwinsville and do field work, completing the paperwork in time to graduate in May of '49. Sam graduated at the same time.

In the fall of '48 Don Scherbaum, a biologist with the State Conservation Department, came to the College looking for a grad student who he would pay to trap and band ducks on Oneida Lake as a part-time job. I agreed to do so, and it became my first job with the N.Y.S. Conservation Department. As a consequence of working with Don on the duck banding project, we became good friends, and he invited me to stop by and visit him at the Albany office when I went home to Claverack for Christmas. By a fortunate coincidence, on the day I saw Don, he told me it was the last day anyone could qualify for the next entering wildlife biologist exam for the Conservation Department. I filed, later took the exam, passed it and was placed high on the Civil Services list for the job, which I was told would be available as soon as I graduated. By this time, I had met quite a few Conservation Department personnel, and decided that I would work for New York State rather than go anywhere else.

Meanwhile, the New York State Department of Civil Service was establishing a new position called Public Administration Intern, and one such position was being assigned to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. It was designed so that the intern would become familiar with game farms, fish hatcheries, research, management, law enforcement and marine fisheries. I applied and was appointed at $2,850/year salary beginning July 1, 1949. So, I had two good jobs beginning at the same time. In deference to my Veteran's status, an arrangement was made whereby I would do the internship starting July 1, 1949, through June 30, 1950, and then begin the Biologist job July 1, 1950. I was very satisfied and couldn't wait to begin work.

In May of 1949, I finally handed in my thesis, completed the course work and took the required faculty administered oral exam, and graduated with a Master's Degree in Wildlife Management. The folks came with Uncle Joe and Aunt Rose to the graduation. Before leaving Syracuse, I traded in the Model A for a '39 Plymouth Sedan. The Model A, as old as it was, never broke down on the road. I tinkered with it a lot to keep it running.

I had many fond memories of the old car. When students were trying to see how many could fit in a phone booth, I squeezed eight into the little car; two boys and two girls in the rumble seat and the same number in front. On New Year's Eve, I came home from Hudson with future brother-in-law Bud Beck at 2:00 A.M. I did a very stupid thing. It had been raining most of the day over frozen ground, which meant that almost all the rain flowed off the land and into Claverack Creek where the creek crossed Rt. 23 just east of the Lone Star Cement Plant. We could see it had flooded across the road for about 200 yards. We decided we could get through without stalling. When we got halfway across the water came over the running board and the engine stalled just as I noticed a submerged car abandoned in the ditch. We were stuck, and the engine would not start, but luckily the battery was strong. I kept the car in gear, and each time the car inched forward a few feet until we finally got on solid ground and waited for the engine to dry out. I got home O.K.

I bargained with a used car dealer in Syracuse for the trade and made a poor bargain, but he was the only dealer in town who had a '39 Plymouth for sale and that is what I wanted. The car seemed to run fine, but I hadn't gotten two miles away when it stalled and died. The gas gauge showed "full" but the tank was actually empty. I walked back to the dealer and expressed my displeasure and said the least he could do is give me a tank full of gas. His response was that I should be grateful to have a car that ran since so many people did not have one. But, he gave me a gallon can of gas. I walked back and put the gas in the tank and headed for a gas station. Once full, the car ran fine for over a year before I traded it in for a 1950 Kaiser Traveler, my first new car.

So, in May of 1949, I felt very comfortable and secure. I had fulfilled most of my long-term objectives, satisfactorily completed the military obligation, graduated with an M.S. and had two jobs lined up that I was sure I would enjoy. Sam and I had helped the folks buy the Claverack house for $5,000. The family was healthy, content and secure. I was now ready to get married; I just had to find the right girl.

I believe for most of us, life can be divided into three main phases or periods. The first phase occurs while we are nurtured and educated to prepare us for the second phase, or the "Main Events." The Main Events is the functional and mature period, at which time one has developed enough to get a satisfying job that ideally is not only enjoyable, but also is beneficial to society, while even more important, paying enough to support home, wife and family. The third phase is for those of us lucky enough to retire from the stresses and daily routine of work obligations, with enough income to do other more pleasurable and relaxing things until the end of our days.

At the beginning of 1950, I felt I had completed Phase One (although learning never stops) and was ready to begin Phase Two. With my present and future job status reasonably secure, I was eager to find a home (away from nurturing parents) and a wife. During the period after graduation in May 1949, and before going to work for New York State on July 1, I spent time in Claverack. On several occasions I noticed a very attractive young lady walking along the path of my old paper route whom I did not recognize. During my previous furlough and vacation periods spent home, I had learned that the "walking lady" was Louise Beck, the sister of my good friend Harold "Bud" Beck.

The Becks had moved to Claverack during the war from Reading, PA. Mr. Russell Beck came to manage a textile mill in Hudson, so they were new in the area. I should add that during the war, my Dad took a full-time job at the Stottville Woolen Mill, which he enjoyed and stayed on for a while after the war ended. Bud and I had gone "out" on several occasions, and one night I met his sister, Louise, at the family home. She had been a secretary for a Doctor Knight in

White Plains, New York, but the doctor had moved to California so she was now living at home with her family and worked as a clerk at Marsh's Department Store in Hudson.

Despite her smoking habit, I asked her out to a Strawberry Social at the Dutch Reformed Sunday School in Claverack. From that pleasant gathering, I asked her for a formal date, namely a canoe trip and evening swim at Capake Lake. That date was a very positive one, as I found Louise to be not only very attractive and congenial, but also a very good sport about changing clothes behind the car for a swim and very comfortable paddling the canoe. From that time on we continued to date regularly, including my giving her a refresher driving course in the '39 Plymouth. On Tuesday nights we watched Milton Berle on TV on the couch with my folks, filling laughter in our living room. At the end of June, I had to leave for Rochester for my beginning job as an intern with the Conservation Department, and by that time I had decided Louise might be the "keeper" I had been looking for. She agreed to stop smoking, so we began corresponding, and in a short time, we were going "steady." It was helpful to have a girlfriend from Claverack. It was a lot more convenient to have a girl from the hometown area rather than one from Atlanta, Glens Fall, or Belgium.

During my first week on the job in Rochester, under the guidance of Bob Perry, the Lake Plains District Game Manager, Bob gave me some terrific assignments. The first was to drive around the county in the '39 Plymouth to become familiar with the nature of the Finger Lake and Lake Ontario region since I had never been in this western part of New York before. One interesting observation was that the Finger Lakes region supported many vineyards, wineries, and acres of black raspberries that ripen the first week in July, at the time I was exploring the region. Back home in years past, Sam and I would spend most of a day walking through hedgerows and odd corners to pick a quart or two, and here one could pick a quart in five minutes.

Many of my jobs entailed retrieving animals. I "saved" a beaver that had received lots of newspaper attention because it seemed to be "trapped" at the foot of the falls from the dam in the Genesee River that flowed through Rochester. One week I was required to

bring a fox head to Cornell to have their Veterinarian Lab check it for rabies. Another week, I was asked to retrieve a fawn lost on Cornell's College campus. It thanked me by kicking me in the stomach that left a bruise lasting for weeks. My trickiest job was to rescue a skunk that had fallen into a basement window well at a local convent. With a simple cardboard box, I enticed the skunk into the box. Unfortunately, I left the skunk on the back seat of my car that hot July day and the poor skunk died, releasing a lot of skunk smell that persisted for weeks.

After working with wildlife, I was assigned to the Fisheries Management Unit, also headquartered in Rochester, under the supervision of Dr. Udell Stone and Don Pasko. Their main summer job was to check the many excellent streams in Western New York for trout populations to determine which streams merited stocking with hatchery-reared trout. There were several of us on the crew besides Dr. Stone and Don. Bill Bentley, a Cornell Fishery graduate, later became a good friend and influential in my career. I worked with the Fisheries Unit until September when I was asked if I would mind doing the annual Aerial Waterfowl Survey. The survey covered all of New York's major waterways by a small seaplane piloted by John Shempp, a wildlife biologist. I thought it would be a great experience and agreed, especially since I could live at home when not flying, and see more of Louise to determine whether to propose marriage.

My first day on the flying job, my Dad took me to the Hudson Ferry pier to where John flew the plane to pick me up. The plane was based on Round Lake just north of Albany. We were scheduled to do five monthly surveys, September through January, with each survey scheduled for about two weeks depending on the weather. We surveyed Lake George and Champlain, the St. Lawrence River and the south shore of Lake Ontario to the Niagara River and Niagara Falls. John gave me a beautiful extended aerial view of the Falls, Lake Erie and the Erie Canal system, Finger Lakes, Oneida Lake, Hudson River, and finally the harbors and bays of both shores of Long Island. From above, I quickly learned to identify more than 35 species of ducks, geese, swans, and other wildlife by their distinctive wing and flight patterns, which are different for each species. John was a

good teacher. We had location sheets for each major section of the waterways upon which I would record what we saw. Sometimes as many as 10,000 birds flew in a flock, and we did our best to make careful estimations of the numbers.

It was very interesting and exciting work except for one major problem—nausea. The flights were rarely smooth, as there were always air currents that bounced us along the various shorelines, and often we would have to circle back and dip to double-check an area. That motion was the most disruptive to my senses. I soon got airsick with awful memories of my days at sea. John was never bothered and even enjoyed smoking a cigar, which I found "disastrous."

When flying, we had several "close calls." Once in November, when flying along Lake Ontario on a stormy, overcast day with snow showers, we suddenly flew "slam bang" into an ice storm. The plane quickly iced up. John, the veteran pilot, immediately turned back and we settled down for the day at a dock near Sodus. John had learned the best places to keep the plane overnight were near a decent motel. On my last day of the survey in January 1950, we were over Great South Bay at Long Island. It was a nasty winter day when suddenly, while over the middle of the Bay and with the plane on wheels (John had removed the floats earlier, as many of the waters iced up), the engine stalled and we fell toward the icy water. There were no clam boats in sight, and I figured we were doomed, but John did some strong cursing and jerking at the control, and just as we were about to crash, the engine started and John yelled "carburetor heat." It was with great relief we completed our last flight for the year. However, as a result of the constant feeling of unease, my body was badly screwed up and my back was covered with a rash—not very pleasant considering I was to get married in two weeks.

I had proposed to Louise in October, asking her if she could think of any good reason we should not get married. Having none and based on my work schedule, we planned our wedding for February 4, 1950. My folks liked Louise very much, as well as her family liking me. My Dad couldn't wait to help me choose an engagement ring. He was smitten with Louise and wanted to solidify the marriage. We were married in the Beck home by the Reverend Sibley from the

Claverack Reformed Church. Sam was best man and Louise's sister, Janet, Maid of Honor. We had our reception dinner at the Yorkshire Inn on Rt. 23 near Hollowville. Following the reception, we headed for Florida on a two-week honeymoon in the Kaiser Traveler. The most thrilling moment of my life came when Louise placed her suitcase on the backseat of my Kaiser Traveler and sat next to me as we started on our honeymoon to Florida. I had been to Florida several times beginning in 1939, but for Louise, it was the first time.

After three days on the road, we stopped at Uncle Will Martino's beautiful house in his citrus grove in Orlando. Cousin Sidney was there helping his father manage their many acres of citrus (Now the trees are all gone, replaced by houses and malls). Syd still enjoys talking about seeing us sleeping in the back of the car. Kaiser was the first to modify the back seats so they could be pushed forward to make room for a spacious deck in the back. With an air mattress, the bedding was very comfortable and relatively private. Uncle Will was even more than generous, giving us a wedding present of $50.00. In those days that was a lot of money. Later, we went on to the Everglades and the Keys.

Upon returning to Claverack from our very enjoyable honeymoon, I stopped by the snowbound Martino farm. Uncle Joe had installed a ski tow on the big hill behind the barn, which had jammed on top of the ice-crusted hill. He asked if I would mind going up the hill to untangle the jam and then ski back down. I agreed to climb to the top with skies and take care of the problem. On the way down I lost control on the icy snow, fell hard and in the process badly hurt my right ankle, so much so I could hardly step on it. A few days later, I had to drive to Bath for my next intern assignment at the Bath Trout Hatchery. My right foot was still very painful, so I had to drive all the way—about six hours—during a snowy winter day crossing my left foot over on the gas pedal. The Kaiser had a standard transmission.

Shortly after renting our first apartment in Bath, I went to the nearby Veteran's Hospital to have my leg checked and was told that I had a slight break in my ankle and should stay off my feet for six weeks to give it time to heal. I did not want to jeopardize my

standing with the Hatchery foreman, so I told him I had a sprained ankle as I hobbled around.

After several weeks learning the hatchery business, I was given the job of driving the hatchery truck loaded with trout to various locations, but most east to Westchester and Dutchess Counties. My ankle had healed well, and I had no problem driving except for deer in the middle of the road. Two of us shared the driving, which was usually at night, most of the time on Rt. 17, which was a rough highway known as "Gov. Dewey's Washboard Trail." At the end of each trip, we would meet with sportsmen groups who would help stocking the trout in the various streams in their neighborhoods. I should add here that the Division of Fish and Game (Wildlife) was entirely funded by the license fees paid by hunters and fisherman and not by general taxes. The money collected was kept separately from other State funds. Our funds were also supplemented by Federal funds collected from taxes on sporting goods. In effect, we worked for the sportsmen, and they kept us busy.

In April I was transferred to the Pheasant Game Farm in Ithaca. With Ithaca being a college city (Cornell University), we could not find an apartment there and had to be content renting one room with no kitchen. We shared a bathroom and "made do" with very little. Louise got a job with Morse Chain, a power transmission company based in Ithaca, while I learned about raising pheasants and the grain crops to feed them.

One worker had a saddle horse, and Lu had her first horseback ride. The horse was nervous and hard to handle. Lu couldn't get the horse moving, so I made the mistake of smacking the horse on its rump. The horse ran off with Louise as she was hanging on for dear life. She did not enjoy the ride one bit. Luckily, she did not fall off,

but we did have our first spat. She felt I should have been more careful and more concerned for her welfare. I didn't know the horse would bolt like that, so she forgave me. Lu eventually rode horses again, but she always preferred a bike to a horse.

My last internship assignment was with the Bureau of Marine Fisheries on Long Island. We rented a lovely small apartment and felt like we were on vacation, as I spent a lot of time traveling from the Fulton Fish Market to Montauk learning about the many valuable marine fisheries resources of New York under the supervision of Al Tucker. Having had no education in marine resources, little did I know that 25 years later I would learn enough to become the Director of the State Marine Program.

Upon completion of the internship on Long Island on July 1, 1950, we went to my permanent assignment with the Ten County Lake Plains Region under Bob Perry's supervision with whom I had worked a year earlier. Bob said I would be working in the five eastern counties of the region—Monroe, Livingston, Wayne, Ontario and Seneca. Don Spitler and Harlan Brumstead were assigned to the five western counties. Bob advised me to locate somewhere convenient to the extensive work area. Thus, we found a very nice apartment in Holcomb, 15 miles southeast of the Rochester office. The apartment was part of a big private home owned by Doug and Jean Hall. Much to my surprise, a key business associate of Doug's was Neil Van Deusen, one of the several Van Deusen brothers from Claverack. The Halls were from Canada and had three young sons. I fondly remember their lovely yard with a big old basswood tree, in which lived a family of saw-whet owls that often serenaded us with their unique calls. In the evenings, while visiting on the back porch, we learned to drink warm beer, the way Canadians like their beer. I never did prefer it to cold beer. With housing temporarily secure, I now had to learn the intricacies of my job, which I soon found out were to be far more complicated than I had expected.

Airplane for duck surveys

CHAPTER SIX

Canandaigua

1950 – 1955

Louise and Anthony's wedding, February 4, 1950

I accepted the job July 1, 1950, as a wildlife biologist in five of the ten county lake plains region of New York State. My office was based in Rochester. At that time, a major wildlife program was the construction of wildlife marsh ponds—primarily

for waterfowl, on both private and public land. In the 1950s the most enjoyable and challenging of our many tasks was the surveying, designing and development of shallow wildlife marsh ponds, often in close cooperation with each county's U.S. Soil Conservation Service staff (SCS).

Any landowner could be a cooperator of the SCS and gain their services at no charge. I quickly contacted each of my five county SCS officers to learn the business, which involved working with various landowners, mostly farmers and well-off estate owners.

Also, in the spring we were to organize and supervise the planting of thousands of trees and shrubs for wildlife food and shelter, at the same time being responsible for any other activity including wildlife. Since there was so much travel involved working five counties, the job included a pick-up truck. This perk meant the Kaiser was always available for Louise while I was at work.

I rapidly became enchanted with my five-county area, and we bought a 40-acre farm with house, barns, vineyard and berries for $9,000. I fell in love with this property at first sight—a beautiful, well-kept house, barns, etc. on a knoll with a beautiful view. Louise gradually enjoyed the farm and especially all the household contents.

The reason for the bargain sale was that the current owner was the well-off niece of the husband and wife who had operated the farm and had just died. They cared for the two acres of grapes, five acres of raspberries, fences, buildings, grounds, water supply, etc. She and her husband lived in Syracuse and just did not want the burden being caretakers, so they wanted to get it off their hands as soon as possible.

Veterans could get a G.I. loan at 4% if otherwise qualified but had to pay 10% down. The niece and her husband, the Newmans, left the house completely furnished and the barn and other buildings full of all kinds of "stuff." They were asking for an additional $1,500 for the furnishings, tools, an old truck and many other things. We weren't sure how to handle that amount and quickly toured the vineyard to see what might be the potential crop.

We figured the grapes crop to be about 10 ton and worth about $100/ton in October and would cover most of the $1,500. I told

the Newman's that we would gladly buy the property, but only if she would wait until October for the extra $1,500. Our realtor, eager for the sale, helped us negotiate and we gave her $50.00 for a binder to hold while we worked out the details securing the mortgage. As part of the negotiation, the Newman's would keep the piano and a set of sterling silver tableware, but we could keep everything else and move right in to take care of the property.

My $3,050/year State salary and veteran's status was good enough for the mortgage, provided we had the $900 down payment. We scraped for a week to get the money. Finally, in August we were the proud owners (along with the bank) of what I regarded as ideal property. Louise, the city girl from Reading, PA, was a bit apprehensive but went along. I had judged her to be very adaptable, and she was.

From one day having nothing more than the clothes that would fit in a couple of suitcases and the car, we suddenly had a four-bedroom house with every room furnished along with 11 other buildings complete with all kinds of stuff. The farm included a big barn with a horse and cat, a berry dry-house, garage, two carriage sheds, chicken coop, corn crib, outhouse, smokehouse, springhouse and pig pen. The first night we slept in the house was like a second honeymoon, only better.

There was plenty to think about and no end of work. I would have to learn how to proficiently manage the two acres of Concord and Delaware grapes and the five-acres of black raspberries, and then to figure out the water supply, septic pool, coal furnace, property boundaries and which building were worth maintaining. I was sure we could handle things after work and on weekends. Meanwhile, I would also have to be busy learning my job, building wildlife marsh ponds.

There would be a series of problems to overcome at our new farm. We soon learned that the farm had a major water problem that kept me adjusting the plumbing, and smiling every time it rained when we could hear the rain falling into the cistern in the cellar. Drinking water came from the spring that recharged slowly in the late summer and fall. In the winter to keep the pump from freezing,

the springhouse had to be insulated and a light kept on. The deer mice loved the environment, and many would end up drowned, and I would periodically fish them out, never telling Louise. The arrangement also was home to a large milk snake, which scared me when I first saw it, but it earned its keep by helping to keep the mouse population in check.

The large furnace in the cellar gave us forced hot air for heat, but it had to be fueled by coal, which meant that someone had to be around every day during the cold weather to shovel coal in and ashes out. I could hardly wait to save enough money to install an automatic oil-fired system the next year. When that oil-fired furnace started humming, it was like being liberated from slavery.

Several spooky events unnerved us for a while. At night, we heard a very scary sound like someone in pain. One night there were some 60 such "screams" in a row about five seconds apart. Although I never saw the beast, I decided it was a fox, probably a gray one, and that helped us to relax. One night while in bed we could hear footsteps in the back of the upstairs. They were very slow and deliberate and sounded as though someone was walking around and coming toward us. As frightened as we were and with no weapon at hand, I finally got the courage to get out of bed to locate the culprit, which was on the metal roof that covered the kitchen. It was a bright moonlit night and much to my relief I saw our cat walking back and forth. That day I had placed the ladder against the roof to check the gutters and left the ladder, which, apparently, the old cat had no problem climbing, but could not climb down.

Over time, we got better acquainted with our neighbors. A small grocery store was just down the road from our house. It was handy to buy needed supplies for our cat and other animals and staples for us. It was run by widow, Alma Brand, with occasional help from her son and daughter-in-law. Across from the store lived Henry and Gertrude Mellenbacher. Gert was a retired schoolteacher, while Henry farmed 100 acres as best he could. We could see his cow from our kitchen window. Henry gave me many good tips on how to handle the grapes, berries, and the horse. We soon became very good friends.

The horse belonged to another neighbor, Murray Brand, who had arranged a deal with the Phillips, the past owners of our farm, if they let Murray keep the horse in the barn and pasture he could use it to work on the farm. We continued that valuable exchange. When it came time to pick the grapes, which were placed in boxes under the vines, I would hitch the horse to our stone boat. A stone boat is a flat sled-like apparatus that slid on flat steel runners. They were originally made to pick stones from the fields and move them to boundaries. Now, we loaded the boxes on the stone boat with grapes and took them to the side of the road near the barn, where they would be picked up by a trucker, who would haul the boxes of grapes to whoever bought them.

One night I was late and tried to put more boxes on the stone boat than normally; obviously, the more boxes on the boat the harder it was to move. I knew the horse pretty well and could tell when she had enough to pull. But this night, I added five more boxes than usual to finish the run and "Old Paint," the horse, took exception. Each time we stopped to load a box or two, she would have to strain to get the load moving. Once in motion, she had no problem keeping the load going; but, when I put on those extra boxes, the horse had a hard time getting the load in motion. Once it moved, she headed full speed right for her stall in the barn. No matter how loud I yelled at her to stop she kept on going. I knew she would have to make a sharp turn to get through the door. She made the turn O.K., but the load of grapes did not. The stone boat crashed into the side of the doorway with a loud whack and half the load of grapes scattered on the ground. Everybody in the neighborhood heard me yelling at the horse, and it made for good storytelling the rest of the year. Such were the joys of being a hobby farmer.

We had a great grape crop that first year, selling ten tons of Concord at $100/ton and a ½ ton of Delaware (champagne grapes) for $100. Unfortunately, another three tons had to be nearly given away for $20/ton because the market was glutted, or so they told us. We could pay off the $1,500 owed the Newman's, but now the grapes had to be pruned and tied to get ready for the next crop. Louise was now a farm girl and tied the whole two acres.

A very important part of the grape story, that first winter I, along with all the other concord grape growers, were approached by a representative of the Concord grape industry to join a concord grape cooperative being formed to purchase the Welch's Grape Juice Company. Mr. Kaplan, who owned Welch's, was willing to sell his business on what appeared to be very desirable terms. The growers within the Cooperative had to agree to a series of conditions: 1) We could not plant any more vines unless given permission (quantity control). 2) We could not pick the grapes until they were as fully ripe as they were likely to get to maximize sugar content, making better grape juice (quality control). The growers were always under pressure to harvest the crop before the first killing frost damaged it, usually by the third week in October, which meant that many times some grapes were picked too "green" to make good juice.

In return, we the growers, would become owners of Welch's Grape Juice. We would be paid market value for the crop immediately; but, more important, we would receive Allocation Certificates (promissory notes) for the same amount of tonnage and at the same market value. The Allocation Certificates were to be delayed compensation, probably 10-20 years. I was quite agreeable to the idea, especially having felt we got screwed on the last three tons of the '50 crop and signed up. However, many farmers were reluctant to give up their control and held back. Enough of us signed up that by the '51 crop we were in business. Over the next 20 years, the Certificates paid enough to cover Lee's, our first son's college education, and later "seed" money to open his tennis store in Stuart, Florida.

We had a good time that first winter on our farm going through all the stuff in the house, barn and other buildings. Louise's favorite was a large curved glass china closet filled with blue willow dishes. We converted one room to be my office with desk and drafting table. There was a large picture window in the living room, as well as large windows in the rest of the house. The cellar was organized into four sections. One became the laundry area and another the wine cellar. Our neighbor, Henry Mehlenbacher, taught me how to make wine.

We bought a large, used Coca-Cola barrel into which the crushed grape juice was poured. We had a ½ ton of mixed grapes crushed at Widner's Winery in Naples. The juice could ferment for about a week with the bunghole on top of the barrel open, but the barrel had to be kept full with replacement juice as the juice fermented or "worked." Once the "fermenting" slowed down, the "frothing" stopped.

The next step was to pour a certain amount of sugar into the juice through the bunghole and then cover the hole with a small bag full of sand. The porosity of the sand allowed the pressurized escape of carbon dioxide while preventing air from entering. By mid-December, we were sampling the wine through a spigot at the end of the barrel and enjoying it throughout the winter, sharing it with friends who stopped by quite often.

The next summer, in July of '51, we had to harvest the five acres of black raspberries. Since most farmers grew some along with grapes, it meant that enough local pickers were not available. Consequently, Louise had to travel 17 miles north to get several girls willing to pick in the hot July sun. That meant two round trips or 78 miles a day. Brother Joe stayed with us that summer and helped. With so many fresh berries for sale all at once, the market would be saturated in one week. Many farmers, including Irv Phillips, had built dry houses to dehydrate the surplus berries enough so they could be preserved and stored for future use, primarily as a blue dye to mark meat, such as choice sirloin, etc.—a common practice then. The dry house had a large stove beneath a carefully slatted floor. Each day, after coming home from work, I fired up the stove and scattered the day's pick of berries on the heated floor. It took about three days to properly "cure" a batch to be thoroughly dried. Many had to be turned over several times with a large scoop to dry properly. Once dry, they were bagged and taken to a nearby location where an established buyer would examine them and pay by the pound. It was a lot of effort for what little was made, but a little went a long way back then. By the end of the season, after three "pickings," I decided to cut back on the berries and get rid of the least productive acreage. Obviously, there was a lot of labor involved in running the farm operation so to be fair to my job I had to either cut back or get help.

A pair of brothers, the Thompkins, wanted to work our farm on shares. We would provide the farm and expenses, and they would do the work and share 50/50 on the income. They even agreed to plant our five-acre open field in red kidney beans, corn or wheat (we had a federally approved wheat allotment), or anything else. We agreed, and it turned out to be a satisfactory arrangement for the remaining years we kept the farm.

My job kept me very busy. In the summer, I learned how to evaluate land to determine its suitability for wildlife, marsh ponds, and then how to hire contractors to build the ponds. In those days, our collective ability and judgment, which included supervisors, as well as legal and engineering staffs, to analyze soils, watersheds, storm water runoff, construction methodology, costs, etc., was considered adequate and responsible. There was no requirement to spend weeks generating formal environmental impact statements for each project, as would most likely be the case today. Not every project became a howling success. Ponds were developed on private lands under a leasing arrangement, which gave the Department the right to develop and manage each project at no cost to the landowner. Our management responsibility lasted from 5-25 years depending on the cost per acre of marsh pond.

As I became skilled in pond construction, I was determined to find a location on our property where a small recreation pond could be built. I tried a spot below the springhouse and hired a contractor with a backhoe to dig it out. It turned out fine and only cost $150. I sawed the chicken coop in half and converted it into a "beach house;" then built a large picnic table. Soon the pond became the focal point of many picnics and gatherings. We stocked it with trout that I caught in Naples Creek, and skated on it in the winter. Later, I built an even larger pond in front of the house, not only for fishing and swimming but also for household water to supplement the cistern. During the process of evaluating hundreds of potential pond sites I had some interesting experiences. With my soil auger to probe the soil and my hand level to survey the topography, I felt like a doctor probing and analyzing a patient to determine his soundness.

As our on-the-job training skills improved the marsh pond program became so popular that sportsmen and landowners were constantly searching us out to have various sites evaluated for potential development. It was a fascinating program. Each year, after the winter and spring precipitation had filled the previously dry basins, it was quite a thrill to see our new creations for the first time. Most important to note was what wildlife was using them, especially black ducks, wood ducks, blue-winged teal, coots, and gallinules. They were often remarkably successful. On a marsh in Wayne County, developed for Ken Israel near Sodus, each of the four wood duck nesting boxes constructed and erected during the winter, sheltered a nesting female wood duck in the spring. In July 1994 with time on my hands and lots of nostalgia, I revisited some of the ponds and landowners not seen since 1955, when I transferred to the Syracuse area.

Looking Back to the "good old days" of 1950, when I was one of a dozen newly hired wildlife (game) biologists working in the Division of Fish and Game of the N.Y. State Conservation Department. Our salary was about $3,000 a year, and it did not seem possible to have a more enjoyable job, which included working very closely with the sportsmen of the state.

The Division was exclusively funded by the sportsmen, not only through their purchases of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses (the Conservation Fund), but also through a federal tax on sporting goods and ammunition (the Pittman-Robertson fund). The Division has since become the Division of Fish and Wildlife with all state taxpayers now joined with sportsmen in funding the Division's broadened responsibility towards all wildlife, whether hunted or not.

I had considered my job ideal. It included a lot more than planting trees and building ponds. Some of the most interesting work, including censusing various wildlife populations, including woodcock, a small game bird living in the moist environment. The statewide numbers and associated trends were used to establish the duration of hunting season. A similar census was done for pheasants. In the spring, male pheasants would announce their territorial presence by "crowing" (a harsh squawk) to the hens. We would tally how many different crowing males we could hear from each station. The

Lake Plains of Western New York had more pheasants than any other part of the State.

In the fall we operated deer check stations to age and examine the deer brought in by hunters. Deer teeth molt and wear at a very predictable rate so we can tell what proportion of the deer population has been harvested, as well as their well-being. On a good range of ample food supplies, primarily in winter, a 1½-year-old buck can have good sized legal antlers while on poor range might only have tiny spikes. This would indicate such deer were subject to starvation as their range was overpopulated and that the hunting season should be extended.

At one time, the lands belonged to optimistic, hardworking families, who broke their back, as well as their hearts, trying to make a living on land which had thin topsoil often underlain with heavy clay. The land was better suited for ponds than crops. For many, there was barely enough income or produce to feed and house the family, let alone to pay the taxes. Thus, with so many families barely surviving on such marginal farms, any deer, rabbit, grouse or other wildlife that came within gunshot, no matter what time of year, was destined for the pot. Consequently, deer and turkey were extirpated throughout most of western N.Y. Then, as well as now, we must realize that hungry people in rural areas perceived wildlife quite differently than well-fed folks. When farmers gave up their properties because they could not grow and sell enough to support themselves, as well as pay taxes, thousands of acres (The cost of an acre was only $10 at that time.) reverted to public lands purchased and owned by the federal, state and county governments.

Because of these countless heartaches, N.Y. State purchased and owns millions of acres of wild lands throughout N.Y. state where well-fed hunters, campers, and other outdoor enthusiasts simply enjoyed their natural beauty without having to make a living from them. Furthermore, the deer and turkeys, once obliterated, have become abundant as people moved away, allowing food sources to regenerate.

However, there are now quite different concerns, namely to what degree should public use be regulated to prevent our most popular lands and water from becoming degraded from overuse. The

problem accelerates in proportion to our growing numbers and to the increasing numbers of leisure hours many folks have to enjoy our magnificent resources.

While it seems imperative that a reasonably staffed tax-supported bureaucracy continue to do this important job, there are those who would dispense with the costly bureaucrats, allowing our free roaming and free spirited citizens unlimited access to our resources whenever and however they please. Hopefully, most of us would call that perception "looking backward."

We recognize that to the current generation of young newlyweds, owning a farm is practically out of reach. Even though professional salaries are about 8x higher than 45 years ago, farm and land values have escalated far beyond that number, because our population has nearly doubled since that time, while there are only about half as many farms and a lot less available land to buy. What has not changed is that universal law of supply and demand. Protecting family farmers, public lands, including wetlands will always be a struggle between supply and demand. So, folks keep your waders on and voting eligibility intact. While major wetland battles have been won, the war is far from over.

On a personal side, by 1955 we were living quite comfortably, but there would soon be a change. John Nemes, the District Game Manager of the Syracuse Region, died in the spring of '55. This meant that his job would have to be replaced, and I had taken and passed the Civil Service Exam for it. Syracuse was the only region in the state for which I would leave the farm and the Rochester area since I could commute back to the farm only 1½ hours away. Almost every other less-ranked biologist in the state also wanted the job because it was in a desirable location. Perry Duyea had been Conservation Department Commissioner when I started work, but now Lou Wehle from Rochester, owner of Genesee Beer, was Commissioner, and I thought I had a shot at the job even though I did not know him. I waited all summer to get word that the job was to be filled, but no word came, so I gave up any notion I would get it since there was intense political wrangling for it.

Finally, in October on a Friday afternoon, I got a call from Bill Senning, the Director of the Division asking if I would take the job

and be at work the following Monday. I said,"yes" and made plans, leaving Bob Perry the job of finding my replacement. It was an exciting time. Back then, the District Managers were the Conservation Department's "top guns" in the field and held lots of responsibility, as well as a good salary increase.

We were now thoroughly enjoying our lifestyle on the farm. Louise and I (especially Louise), had many good friends, including belonging to some social groups. We enjoyed going to Naples to play tennis on the high school courts where Louise invariably beat me. She had been on her high school tennis team. We had many summer visitors and guests, including our families and especially Russ Beck, Jr., who enjoyed everything about the farm, especially the ponds, horse and barns, and a young neighbor his age, Tommy Brown, not to mention the loving care he got from his sister. I hated the thought of having to give up all our wonderful amenities but rationalized that maybe we could somehow keep the farm and have the best of both worlds.

Our home and pond

First car, 1948

Janet and Joe, 1952

Sam and Moya, 1950

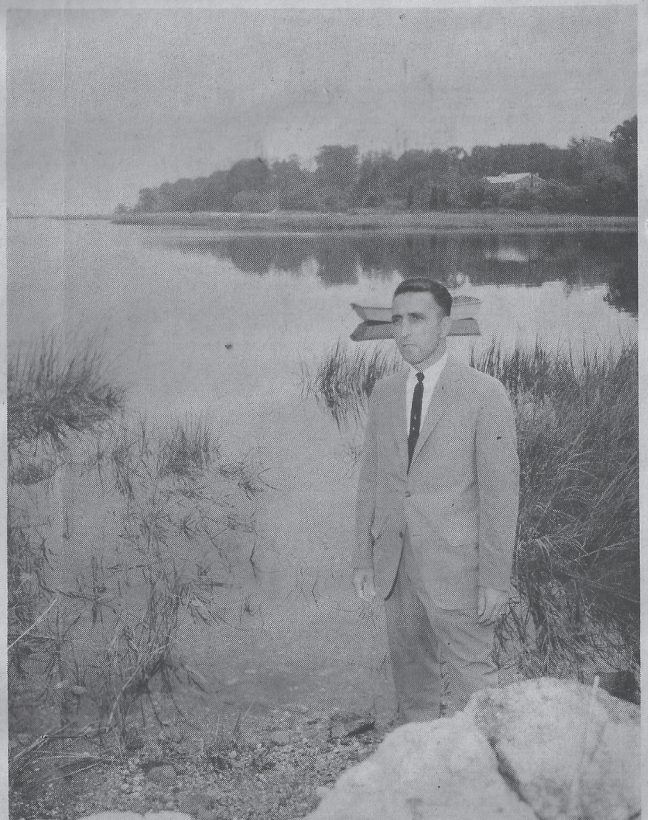
Jay and Lee

Jay and Annette, Anthony's Secretary

A 1966 Article about Anthony's work

HE GUARDS OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

They're abundant but not unlimited, says Anthony Taormina



In business suit before flying trip upstate, Conservation Department's Anthony Taormina poses at Setauket Harbor, part of his vast Long Island domain.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 1972

The Nissequogue River: Fine Stream Now, but—

Continued From Page 1

to nourish a real river. But with the combination of more than 40 inches of annual precipitation and the porous sand and gravel in the area, water is released to the stream at a fairly heavy and constant rate."

After the lecture, which included a discussion of Long Island's over-all water problems, the teachers, bundled against the early-morning chill in heavy sweaters and wind-breakers, were assigned to the six canoes according to their swimming and canoeing abilities.

Before heading downriver and toward the Sound, Mr. Taormina, with the aid of his 14-year-old son, Lee, led the party about 100 yards upstream to the small dam that forms White's Pool. This is as far as the tide carries salt water.

Further upstream, past the dam, are the headwaters of the Nissequogue. During the stop in White's Pool, Mr. Taormina left his canoe to deliver another lecture on the river, this one on the shallow, fresh-water pool, which the state stocks with trout.

As the canoes passed under the Jericho Turnpike, the complexion of the river changed drastically. The clear water and smooth gravel of the riverbed in White's Pool had now become brackish, debris-filled water.

In this area of the Nissequogue, less than a mile from the start of the journey—obstructions choked the river and garbage lined the shores.

It was here that Mr. Taormina, after moving his canoe to the shore and pulling a rusted shopping cart from the stream, delivered the third lecture of the journey.

"This is a classic area of the river," he said. "The west bank is owned by the state, and the natural environment has been basically preserved. On the east bank, you can see what happens when the property is privately owned."

It was then that Mr. Taormina stretched his deeply tanned right arm in the direction of a parking lot whose rotting cars were hanging almost over the edge of the river.

The pollution in the river, according to Mr. Taormina, is the result of a combination of the general industrial development of the Smithtown area, the widespread use of septic tanks and the flushing of holding tanks on boats near the mouth of the river.

After the trip, the teachers took time out to voice their impressions of the journey.

"Besides giving me a better understanding of the delicate balance of nature, the trip has also shown me how to get my students excited about the environment," said Charles Herman, a science teacher at Brentwood High Schools.

The trip down the Nissequogue was part of a four-Saturday environmental studies workshop sponsored by SCOPE, a cooperative serving Suffolk education.

The New York Times

Anthony S. Taormina, wearing the sun visor, during the last class of the journey

A 1972 New York Times article about Anthony

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LONG ISLAND PRESS, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1973

Anthony Toarmina checks fruit on the fig tree in his back yard in East

Environmentali

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

He practices what he preac

By JUDY FISCHER

Tony Taormina plucked some fresh figs from the tree in his back yard and said, "I bring groups of high school teachers here to teach them about suburban environmental management."

The East Setauket development house he owns sits on a half-acre of property where Taormina has created a microcosm of what he feels the world should be.

Two compost heaps sit neatly far in the far reaches of the back yard. His totally organic garden includes tomatoes, kohlrabi, 18 varieties of grapes, Swiss chard, beans, eggplant, flowers, mulberry, dogwood and mimosa trees, raspberry bushes, and of coure, the fig tree. Weeds peacefully coexist with the grass in his lawn.

Taormina is regional su
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of Environmental Conserva
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One office on the camp

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"LAKES, ponds and
job. I deal with water,
for any progress that
he said.

October 1, 1974

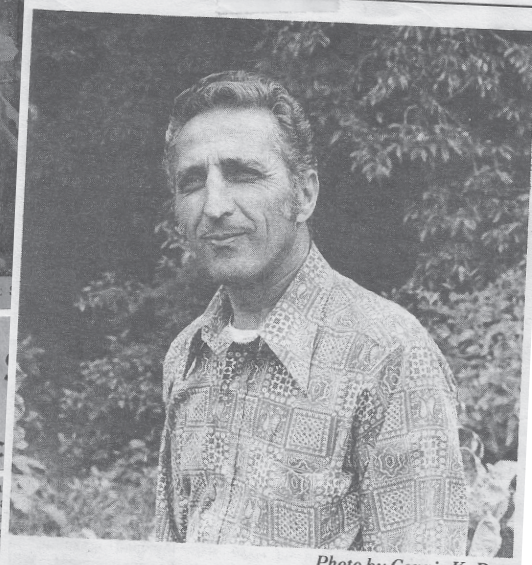


Photo by Connie K. Bart

A New Face — Anthony "Tony" Taormina is DEC's new director of Marine and Coastal Resources.

Taormina Heads DEC Coastal Unit

DEC's Division of Marine and Coastal Resources has a new leader — Anthony (Tony) Taormina, a 25-year veteran of DEC service, a backyard farmer and a man with his finger on the pulse of Long Island's environment.

Because of the intense pressures on the Island's fragile ecosystem, Taormina's responsibilities as division director are difficult and complex. He and his staff must:

- evaluate the impact of development on the marine and estuarine environment;
- make sure the waters open

Taormina's office is already reviewing the environmental impact of as many as 50 proposed alterations to tidal wetlands on Long Island each month. Once DEC completes its wetlands inventory and develops regulations for their use, Taormina's division will work closely with village, town and county governments to see that the intent of the Tidal Wetlands Act is carried out.

"Our approach in implementing the Tidal Wetlands Act must be one of assisting local governments by en-

Two more clippings about Anthony's work from 1973 and 1974

WILDLIFE— and New York's Marine Environment

by Anthony S. Taormina

Osprey

TODAY most of us can enjoy wildlife in terms other than as potential stew meat, pot pie, fur coats, lamp light, feathered hats, thieving varmints or even hog feed. It may be difficult for the well fed, comfortably clothed and housed members of our younger generation to appreciate that such was the practical perspective through which man generally viewed our diverse wildlife resources until only recently. Today, with our dramatic change in life style, most of us can regard our fellow wild creatures with far more compassion than at any other time. Nevertheless, even though we no longer seek their hides or flesh, (we raise millions of domestic animals for that purpose) we still covet the lands they inhabit and daily appropriate them for our own.

Fortunately for most of our marine oriented wildlife, our salty waters still represent a relatively inhospitable habitat for man so that wildlife can continue to use them at least for a little while longer.

It was the bountiful wildlife resources, as much as anything else, that supported the early colonial settlements. Whales, not only originally from along our own shores but also later from all the seven seas, provided a mainstay to the trading economy which reached its peak during the period from 1750 to 1850, although it continued weakly until World War I when the local whale stocks finally dried up.

Moreover, it appears that all of our marine mammals are far less abundant today than in colonial times in spite of the vastness of the seas. Paul F. Connor in Bulletin 416, "The Mammals of Long Island, New York," published by the New York State Museum and Science Service, lists 20 porpoise and whale-like mammals that have been recorded in Long Island waters. Unfortunately very few of us can identify these mammals by species during those few seconds when they are on the surface, thus when we see big black ones we call them whales and the smaller gray ones porpoises. The bottle-nosed dolphin of Flipper fame, the common dolphin of the ocean and the small harbor porpoise have all been regular visitors to our waters, including Great South Bay, Peconic Bay and Long Island Sound. Except for observations regularly noted in ocean waters, very few sightings have been made from shore during the last five years, yet large schools of 25 to 75 "porpoises" could be seen regularly as recently as 8-10 years ago in Long Island Sound during the summer. While "porpoises" have been exploited for their oil, hides and flesh it has not been a common practice so it is difficult to account for their disappearance.

Most of our whales have been harvested nearly to extinction, so that hardly anyone sees any of the large species such as the extremely rare blue, the rare but possibly increasing humpback or the uncommon right (formerly the bulwark of the Long Island whaling industry). Finback whales seem to be the most common of our big whales and as many as several dozen have been reported in our Atlantic waters at one time by local fishermen.

An article by Anthony for The Conservationist

CHAPTER SEVEN

Syracuse and the Erie Canal

1955 – 1961

Left to Right: Joe, Tony, Joanita, Maura, Leo (father), Sam, 1955

I ACCEPTED A DESIRABLE PROMOTION AS WILDLIFE MANAGER to a neighboring six-county region headquartered in Syracuse, New York. The Syracuse office was responsible not only for the kinds of programs we did in the Lake Plains region, but the office was also responsible for managing several very specialized State properties. Our responsibility included the counties of Cayuga, Oswego, Onondaga, Madison, Oneida, and Herkimer; the latter mostly in the Adirondacks.

The Syracuse office was small, in an old building on Salina Street, which adjoined a movie theater. On most afternoons we could hear the noisy movie playing, especially the war movies. Three of the thirty people on the district payroll also applied for my position. Naturally, they and the 27 other staff were curious and apprehensive about their new boss, and it would take time for me to get to know them.

Besides my new supervisory responsibilities, I was also managing six different budgets for thousands of acres of public lands.

My new district included the Three Rivers Game Management (GMA) area where I had done my Master's thesis, and therefore, was familiar with the land except that it had now become a nationally respected bird-dog-field trial area where championship trials were held annually. Also, it was a public hunting ground. Howland's Island, specialized in rearing "wild turkeys" for stocking, as well as wild ducks, pintails, and mallards. Two other G.M.A.'s included Cicero Swamp, located just outside of Syracuse and Tioughnioga in Madison County. I was also responsible for the Boys Conservation Education Camp on Raquette Lake in the Adirondacks.

There were many challenges in my district, from nuisance beaver dams flooding roads, railroads and farms to a growing deer population that caused massive deer starvation and a growing public health problem with Lyme disease. Better deer management policies and regulations required a full-out PR campaign to educate the outdoor sportsmen and writers that there were too many deer to live comfortably in their crowded environment.

One of my favorite spots was the Tioughnioga Game Management Areas (GMA). It had a shale quarry full of ancient marine fossils and it was a place where we stocked wild-trapped snowshoe hares from our upstate woodlands. Our trappers were kept very busy. In the 1950's, coyotes were becoming common in Central New York and the Adirondacks. We wanted to learn all we could about their eating habits. One trapper, Cecil Gotts, was given the job of collecting coyote droppings to analyze them to determine what they were eating. He would put each "collection" in a paper bag, which he then placed in a compartmented soda box in the back of his pickup. One day, while he was in a diner having lunch, someone stole the entire box of coyote crap. We often wished we could have seen the thief's reaction when he opened each smelly bag. Coyotes, like dogs, eat almost anything, including deer.

In each of the six counties I worked there were very active county sportsmen organizations, and I was expected to attend each one of their monthly meetings, as well as their annual banquets to keep

them up-to-date on pending legislation and to hear their concerns. Also, many other organizations would invite me to be their "free" speaker. Most weeks, I would be out at least three nights. At least I had the flexibility to arrive at the office later in the morning the next day. The only way I could make it up to Louise was to take her to these special banquets.

I met many interesting people, including a Madison County dairy farmer named Norman Evans. Norman was an ardent sportsman, and a gifted water diviner. We had many discussions about the nature of the water divining craft. When Norm found out that he was allergic to cows, he gave up the dairy business and became a preacher. We kept in touch for years until he became obsessed with his "God-given gift" and believed he could locate water by divining maps. I called that nonsense, but I started to believe in magnetic and electromagnetic fields, creating "energies" sensitive to dowsers who use hand-held instruments such as metal rods or a freshly cut forked branch to "react." I have seen rods flare outwards and extended forked branches dip down, indicating possible veins of water or something else unknown.

I soon rented a satisfactory apartment on the second floor of a private home on East Genesee Street in Syracuse, and the following week Louise and I moved in. The apartment was furnished, so we did not have to bring in much from the farm. With winter approaching, it now made sense to rent the farmhouse if we could find responsible tenants, which we did—a young couple our age. He worked as a therapist at the Canandaigua Veteran's Hospital, which mostly cared for Vets who were mentally incapacitated; many of whom were schizophrenic. The couple became ideal tenants so we could relax in our apartment that very stormy winter without having to travel to Canandaigua. The Tompkin brothers continued to work the farm. We got along O.K. with our new landlords, but the relationship was nothing like the one we had with the Halls from Holcomb, which continued throughout their lifetime.

We had one interesting experience in the apartment I recall. In the middle of winter while moving a tall bookcase that rested against a wall in the living room, a bat emerged from the back and flew back

and forth in the apartment creating a mid-winter dilemma. If I let it outside it would probably die, so Louise and I allowed it to find another secure place inside to stay with us until Spring.

While I was getting settled in Syracuse, Louise had a minor car accident in Canandaigua. She was driving the Kaiser down the steep hill to the lake to visit a dear friend, Jean Rutledge, when she slid off the road and crashed into the ditch and bank. The damage was severe enough that I felt the old Kaiser should be replaced. By now, my brother, Sam, had an administrative position with Ford Motor Company in Michigan and had advised me that should we ever want a new car he could get me a special deal available to a special class of Ford employees and their immediate family. We happily took advantage of the offer and bought a '55 Ford V8 Station Wagon, an excellent car. The '55 Ford lasted ten years with no engine problem; but driving through five very snowy Syracuse winters, where salt was liberally used on the roads, the body actually rusted off the frame.

Meanwhile, while all of the above was happening Louise and I were having something of a family crisis. She desperately wanted a baby and was unhappy that we weren't producing one, and she was thinking of adoption. We had practiced strict birth control for three and a half years but then relaxed allowing nature to take its course, but with no success. No matter how scientifically we programmed our efforts there was not a hint of success, and then it happened quite unexpectedly.

In the Fall of 1961, I was away on a field trip in Pennsylvania learning how the Pennsylvania Game Managers handled their public hunting grounds, when Louise got word that her father, who we thought was recovering from an earlier heart attack, suddenly died. She took a train from Syracuse to Hudson while I drove to Claverack to plan for the funeral, which was to be held in Reading, Pennsylvania, where the Becks had a family plot. A short time later after we returned to Syracuse, Louise excitedly announced that she was finally pregnant and Lee was born the following October 1. Coincidentally, Jason was born seven years later, nine months after the shocking death of J.F. Kennedy. We have often wondered if there was more than coincidence involved, probably so. Sam and

Moya, on the other hand, never had a problem in that arena. They ultimately had ten children.

With a baby on the way and our finances secure it then seemed like the appropriate time to buy a house rather than continuing to rent. Since I had to do a lot of traveling, we bought a very comfortable small, two-bedroom house for $14,000 that was ½ mile from the Thruway, only four miles from the office. The house with attached garage was only a few years old and had a big backyard that abutted against the Thruway. It was a good place to raise a child, although the backyard was so full of mosquitoes in the summer that we could not go outdoors after supper, in contrast to the mosquito-free environment at Canandaigua.

At the same time, my Dad was serious about retiring to Hollywood, Florida; so, before Lee was born they sold the Claverack house and bought a home in Hollywood, Florida—two blocks from my Mom's brother, Frank's home. They stayed there for one year and then bought a much nicer house across the street from the school that my sister, Joanita, could attend. My sister was 25 years younger than me.

My Dad got a part-time job in a local barbershop and was very content. He had been thinking about moving to Florida for years. They were only five minutes from the very fine Hollywood Beach. From then on we took our vacation in mid-winter to spend several weeks with my folks in Hollywood.

About the same time, Grandma Martino died, and Uncle Joe sold the Martino Farm of which I have many fond memories. Also, my Dad's parents had died earlier back in Menfi, Sicily that year.

The Erie Canal—Exhilaration—Frustration—Deportation

When the Canal was completed in 1825, it became a major force in the development of New York State and was especially important to Syracuse. It was also a major factor in the development of my career. Moving into a new State office building allowed me to meet regularly with Eddie Barnes, who worked for the Canal Agency and who was a great source of information.

Much of my interest was generated because then Governor Nelson Rockefeller had announced that he felt that the operation and management of the Canal should be turned over to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers since he felt that the Canal's basic function was still the same as it had been in 1925. However, I knew, along with many others, that the Canal system had become a major recreation area for the people of the state, and it was a lot more than just a stretch of polluted water supporting barge traffic. While the cost of maintaining the lock system could be considered a burden on the taxpayers of N.Y. it was also 100% N.Y.'s resource and something to be proud of.

But, Rocky wanted to transfer the tax burden to all the people of the U.S., a scam practiced by many politicians who wanted to gain favor with local voters at the expense of others. As I saw it, there were two factors in his thinking. First, he was being touted as the next candidate to run for President of the U.S. and wanted to get national exposure; also, he was very conscious of taxes. When Rocky became Governor, the State budget reached $1 billion for the first time in its history. Unbelievably, it increased by $1 billion each year of Rocky's leadership. He also naively wanted to transfer the Adirondack Park to the Federal Government; however, he ran into a real buzz-saw on that issue when the public adamantly refused to go along with it. He did not understand how proud New Yorkers were of their Adirondack Forest Preserve, the first one so designated in the U.S.

The sportsmen of Central N.Y. acutely knew of both issues and every time I was at a meeting, there were discussions and arguments pro and con. I felt it was a serious mistake to transfer control of the Canal along with 1/3 of N.Y. State's watershed, which fed water into the Canal system, to the Federal Corps of Engineers. At a noteworthy meeting in Herkimer County a prominent N.Y. Senator, who was hoping to ride Rocky's coattails into the White House, got into a heated discussion with me over this issue. I recognized that I was treading on dangerous political ground. I felt that my job was to present conservation issues no matter what the politics. Also, I expressed the strong opinion that the Canal system should be designated a State recreational area and managed for multiple uses. Most of the

sportsmen agreed with that position. After all, I had not only flown over the entire system five times, but had canoed over many areas, fished it, and was working with a group from Syracuse to develop a portion of it in Onondaga County into a special park-like zone. By 1960, I realized that I knew more about the entire system than anyone else; and, therefore, could legitimately discuss all sides of the argument, which I did at many meetings.

While all this was going on the Conservation Department was establishing a new position of Regional Supervisor of Fish and Wildlife; whereby, all units within the Division of Fish and Wildlife, including Law Enforcement, would be coordinated and supervised by the new position. A Civil Service Exam was offered, and I was one of only eight who passed it. There were supposed to be nine regions. Therefore, I expected to get a region, and there was still an extra region.

I was asked to attend a special meeting in Albany and assumed it was about the new Regional Supervisor Exam, which it was, but not the way I thought it would be. To my absolute surprise, the Division Director, Mason Lawrence, told me I had embarrassed the Governor about my position on the Erie Canal. Not only would I not be given a position as Regional Supervisor, but I was asked to quietly resign from the department or else be transferred to Jamestown, the Southwest corner of the state, which did not appeal to me at all.

Meanwhile, the new tenants at our farm had failed to pay their rent for four months after giving me two month's rent at the beginning and assuring me he had a good secure job at the Veterans' Hospital. I soon found out he no longer worked at the hospital and his family was on welfare. To make matters worse, later that winter the family left our house when they ran out of fuel oil and could not get anyone to sell them any since I found out they owed everyone. I walked into the house on a freezing winter day hoping for the best and fearing the worst. Sure enough, the house was ice-cold and anything that held water was frozen. There was trash everywhere. I was sick and furious, but there was nothing I could do but get the house cleaned, plumbing replaced and decide whether to move back in.

The word had gotten out among the Conservation Department personnel that Tony T. was in serious trouble. As a consequence, I got a call from Bill Bentley, who I had worked with in fisheries ten years earlier and who was now in charge of Fish and Wildlife programs for Long Island. Bill wanted to know if I would work on Long Island. He needed a wildlife person there to work on wetlands and other wildlife problems, which had always been handled from the upstate office in Poughkeepsie. It had never occurred to me to work there, but Bill wanted me to come down for a few days to check it out, so I did and was pleasantly surprised at the nature, especially in the eastern half of Suffolk County. Most of us upstate New Yorkers pictured Long Island mostly as a congested area of Nassau and Queens, but in 1960-61 Suffolk County, over 1/2 of Long Island, was still a virtual rural paradise with the additional beauty of marine edge on both shores. I told Bill that if Albany was agreeable, I would return with Louise and go house shopping. Albany said O.K. and we returned.

Louise and I had an interesting time looking over the Port Jefferson area where the Bentley's lived. We stayed with them and their three boys. With Lee, we shopped for houses, schools, and other amenities for our family. After three days of comparing the area the Bentleys lived in called Setauket Gardens had the best deal. There were only three houses left in the 84 house development at the western edge of Port Jefferson Village. We especially liked a three-bedroom, two-bath high-ranch with a 1/2-acre plot that backed up against a woods for sale at $18,200.

So, we agreed to buy it and put down a binder. We now had to go back and sell the Liverpool house, rent the farm again and quickly move to Long Island; but, it would not be so easy. Upon returning upstate, I was told that I could not move to Long Island. Apparently, I was politically unacceptable to the Republicans on Long Island. Bill was furious because he and I had been assured that it was O.K. to transfer me. I was still on the payroll, but not sure where to go or what to do. Meanwhile, the weather was terrible. In February, it snowed some every day in the Syracuse area, and we never saw the

sun for the entire month. Bill said to sit tight and he would take care of things. It became the most depressing period of my life.

Finally, in March, Bill and I went to Albany determined to stay there until I was cleared to move. We stayed there all day as the Director, Mason Lawrence, made one phone call after another until finally at five o'clock he said O.K. Later, I figured out the problem; the same people who were involved in barge traffic on the Erie Canal and wanted it transferred to the Corps of Engineers were also involved in controversial sand and gravel operations on Long Island. They had powerful political connections and just did not want to take the chance I would get involved with their sand and gravel operations in the wetlands, which, of course, I did. We sold the Liverpool house within a week for $1,000 more than we paid for it and rented the farm to a young couple, who our friends, the Trimbles, said were O.K. We packed up and moved in April to 108 Glenwood Lane in Port Jefferson.

The sun shone every day in April. We loved the house and the neighborhood, and we began a new lifestyle in comfort and in a much better frame of mind; but, I always maintained that the politically dominated Conservation Department deported me away from upstate to Long Island where it was unlikely I could embarrass the politicians and their supporters. In the business I was in that would not be possible. Eventually, "Rocky," my nemesis, died of a heart attack, which, according to some papers, happened while he was shacking up with a couple of young girls; so, the screwing I got was minor when compared to his.

As it turned out, "Rocky's" plan to transfer the Erie Canal system and the Adirondack State Park to the Federal government, never happened. The proud people of New York State strongly objected. Nor did he become President, much to the dismay of his political backers. Ironically, the Canal Plan, which I had proposed and for which I was publicly humiliated—though not professionally—became State policy about 15 years later under a different administration. No one in Albany ever apologized to me for the way I was treated, but then that's "politics" and somewhat normal for the Erie Canal, which has been a political "hot potato" ever since it was first envisioned.

Also, during this time, my folks had gone to Italy to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary while brother Joe and Jack Fisher, Louise's stepbrother, were involved in the Korean War. Joe was sent to Germany, Jack in the trenches of Pork Chop Hill in Korea, where he was badly wounded in the chest and just barely survived. Jack died in 2016 and was given a military funeral by his half brother, Russ Beck, and buried in Claverack's Dutch Reformed Church's courtyard.

My brother, Joe, was a courageous and dedicated man. He had secondary progressive Multiple Sclerosis, yet was undeterred from continuing his higher education. In 1952, he attended Paul Smiths College in New York. Then was drafted into The U.S. Army and was editor for a military intelligence unit in Frankfort, Germany from 1954 until 1956. He volunteered for the Army, as I did.

After returning home from the war, he went back to college and received his B.A. in English from Michigan State University in East Lansing, and an M.A. in speech/theatre from Wayne State University in Detroit.

Joe married Joan Wilkes. They had no children, but as teachers, they regarded their students as their children. Joan was a media arts teacher and Joe was the speech drama director at Southeastern High School in Detroit, Michigan from 1961 to 1965. He was the speech, oral interpretation of literature director in the Performing Arts Department at Cass Technical High School, also in Detroit, from 1965 to 1986. Joe was fortunate. In spite of his MS, he was able to teach for 25 years.

As teachers, they were off in the summer and often traveled abroad on their summer vacation. I admired their love of adventure. On their first trip together, they took a freighter going to Japan and stopped at many islands on the South Pacific.

My brother died on February 2, 2005 at Hospice of Naples in Naples, Florida. Traveling abroad was so important to Joe that he had Joan deposit some of his ashes in Barcelona, Spain, his favorite city in Europe.

Teaching pond management at home in 1955

CHAPTER EIGHT

Long Island

1961 – 1982

Anthony examining Bufflehead, 1963

Our house on Long Island was only a five minute walk from the Bentley home in the same development. Each morning, Bill would pick me up and take me to the various areas on Long Island to help me become familiar with the environment and the kind of problems that needed to be addressed. Long Island is about 120 miles long and 20 miles wide

with Brooklyn on the west end bordering the Hudson River estuary and Montauk Point at the eastern end of the south fork, with Orient Point at the western end of the north fork. There are four counties: Brooklyn (Kings), Queens, both part of New York City, then Nassau and Suffolk. While counties seemed to be the dominant government agencies upstate, here town governments reign supreme. They control the zoning along with cities and incorporated villages, while neither the counties nor the State have such power. We lived in the town of Brookhaven in Suffolk County. Port Jefferson is a village, as is neighboring Port Jefferson Station, the eastern terminus of the northern branch of the Long Island Railroad, which originates in Penn Station.

Eastern Long Island, Suffolk County, was developing rapidly, as houses were being built in vast numbers on former potato farms, as well as marginal land along the beaches and marshes (wetlands). The land is valued in terms of how it is zoned. Thus, the power to control zoning is a major source of political influence. In New York State only towns, villages, and cities have the power to zone. One of my primary jobs was to try to protect and enhance the "wetlands" that were being dredged and filled to make high value "waterfront" lots. This was a political hornet's nest.

Bill also wanted me to consider the possibility of developing a cooperative public hunting ground since there had never been one on Long Island to satisfy the thousands of sportsmen who had to go upstate to hunt. That seemed a lot less controversial than saving wetlands if I could find cooperative landowners.

The regional office was at Freeport, 40 miles away in Nassau County. I needed an office closer to home in Suffolk County. We agreed that a small building on the Quail Game Farm at Ridge would be an ideal location, and I set up an office there, sharing it with the Game Farm Foreman, Windsor Gow, and his assistant, Frank Ott. We also agreed that if I were to take on all these responsibilities, it would be nice to have an assistant. I knew that John Renkavinsky was very unhappy with his transfer from our former Syracuse office to the Cortland office, and since he came from Bridgeport, Connecticut right across the Long Island Sound from Port Jefferson, he

might welcome the chance to join me. He eagerly did and we soon became a team.

To help me learn more about the marine edge environment, Al Hall, Chief of the Bureau of Game (Wildlife) arranged for me to spend a week with the staff in New Jersey responsible for their wildlife—wetlands program. One week there, with Freddy Ferrigno, I learned more than I could have with a bunch of college courses. The entire eastern and southern shores of New Jersey are bordered by excellent tidal wetlands very similar to those on Long Island. Then to add icing to the cake, Art Viertel, a Professor from the College of Forestry, was giving a class on Long Island to his landscape students on identifying trees and shrubs of Long Island. Art welcomed me to join his weeklong series of field trips. In a very short time I became quite familiar with plants and animals that were common on Long Island, but not upstate.

Meanwhile, the sportsmen and conservation officers were eager to help us organize the public hunting area on public and private lands, which we did in a very short time, as well. The hunting area remains in operation today. I was amazed at the variety and abundance of wildlife still present. In conducting the pheasant survey, there was one section on Strongs Neck, just a few miles from Port Jefferson, where we could hear as many as 30 different crowing pheasants. There was nothing like that upstate, and I am sure not like that anymore on Long Island. Also, there were many areas where wild flocks of bobwhite quail were maintaining themselves in spite of hunting and predator pressure. In time, we dispensed with the quail game farm because it was not needed and was possibly a detriment to the healthy wild stocks, much to the displeasure of the game farm foreman, where my office was located. Nevertheless, pheasants were stocked on the coop hunting area for the hunters.

Our family was easily adjusting to the Long Island lifestyle. When compared to Syracuse the weather was wonderful, lots of sunshine and moderate springtime temperatures. I was impressed by the fact that farmers could plant their fields after plowing them as early as March and April. On weekends, we enjoyed eating "out" at the "Schooner" restaurant in Port Jefferson, especially enjoying the baked clams. Seafood was abundant and relatively cheap. The Bentley's

told us about blue mussels that could be easily harvested by hand from the local marine rocky shore edges. They were abundant and soon became our favorite shellfish. I remember being eager to catch a flounder, which were abundant in the local waters in spring.

Eventually, we purchased a used wooden boat to fish in the harbors and Long Island Sound. The town of Brookhaven had control of many shorefront properties on both the north and south shores where there were excellent beaches. Our favorite area was nearby Mt. Sinai Harbor, where we went at least once a week at low tide to harvest hard clams, mussels, soft clams, razor clams, oysters, periwinkles, and sand worms for bait to catch finfish. Practically every square foot of the harbor produced something catchable and edible. But, to our astonishment, these magnificent wetlands were being mined for sand and gravel by permission from the town government, which had control of them. The local baymen, fishermen, and sportsmen were furious at the desecration of their shallow tidal waters, but those who had boats for deep water fishing and sailing thought it a good idea because deeper water gave them better navigation and places to moor and dock their boats. I could see that professionally there were going to be some major battles, and they were not long in coming, especially when we learned that many of the same people involved in the Erie Canal freight hauling business were also mining sand and gravel on Long Island.

We soon recognized that if we were going to preserve tidal wetlands, we had to generate a broad public base of voters besides baymen and sportsmen. Soon, John Renk and I were putting on shows and exhibits extolling the virtues of Long Island's tidal wetlands. The major allies in this program were the Ladies Garden Clubs, of which there were many. I addressed a major one in New York City to which the Rockefeller wives belonged. We even prepared an exhibit in the Coliseum in New York City where we were welcome but learned a sad lesson about "unions." When we tried to hook up our equipment to a power source, just an outlet box in the wall, we were told we had to hire a union electrician to do that simple one-minute task.

I had a very interesting experience with Euell Gibbons, an internationally known author who published many books on surviving on wild plants and animals. He had heard about me and asked if I

would spend a few days with him so that he could learn more about the very productive marine environment in our area. The year we met, blowfish or puffer fish—also called "chicken of the sea"—were very common on Long Island, and we were able to catch several of them by dipping a net under them as they slowly swam by the rocky jetty in Mt. Sinai Harbor. Of course, the Harbor was full of shellfish, which he thoroughly enjoyed catching and eating. Euell was quite a character, and we remained friends for many years.

In due time "Saving our Wetlands" had become a rather honorable idea, much in the same way that saving the Adirondacks from the destructive loggers had been a *cause celebre* one hundred years earlier. The Conservation Department had initiated a cooperative agreement with agreeable Long Island Townships to manage Town wetlands in the 1980s, for example. A prime example was the town of Oyster Bay in Nassau County, where such an agreement worked fine at Tobay on the south shore adjoining Jones Beach. There we had built a four-story observation tower, natural trails, and small ponds, all protected by the Cooperative Agreement.

We also had a unique agreement with the Village of Quogue to cooperatively manage 200 acres of uplands and wetlands jointly owned with the South Hampton Town Waterfowlers Association. It has since become one of the prime nature-education centers on Long Island, and where I spent many days developing the area with many diverse groups, each one with its own opinion, but with patience, it all worked out.

Renk and I were soon asked to inventory the wetlands of many of the townships, a job we thoroughly enjoyed and spent many days doing. Gradually, we developed considerable expertise, and I soon felt qualified to write major essays on the subject, which were published in our State Conservationist Magazine and reprinted all along the Atlantic Coast. Public attitudes were changing so much that the State was proposing legislation to protect all tidal wetlands, and we became deeply involved in that process.

While all this was going on, our main office was moved from Freeport to Dowling College on the old Vanderbilt Estate in Oakdale. Moving there gave me the chance to work and meet with our Marine Fisheries Unit. We were there when the shocking news of

President Kennedy's assassination was announced. Shortly after that, Louise was pregnant again and Jason was born in August of 1964. In celebration of Jason's birth, we built a swimming pool in our backyard; one of the best investments we ever made, especially with the shallow wading pool we incorporated at the end of the pool. Dozens of kids, including our two boys, learned to swim there. Once we had the pool, we rarely went to the beaches to swim. Our area was developing so rapidly that son, Lee, went to seven different schools while going from grade one to eight. Property values, land especially, were increasing at an unbelievable rate. I feared that the lovely woodesd area in back of our and a neighbor's property might be developed, so we thought we would buy an acre of it. Much to our surprise, the owner wanted $1,000 for it. I could not imagine paying that much for only one acre. Later, when the Long Island State Parks Commission was wisely buying so many of the large park-like estates and sportsmen's club on our best trout streams, I was asked by a news reporter if I felt the price being paid, on average about $1,800/acre, was reasonable. Considering their quality, I said "yes." Within ten years later we could not have bought any of it for ten times that amount. So, the "now or never" Bond Act, one of Governor Rockefeller's major accomplishments, was conceived at just the right time. Whereas, I had selected 54 parcels to be purchased under that program while at Syracuse, the Long Island staff had not proposed any. But, now, the Long Island Parks Commission was doing all the buying, and some magnificent properties were secured in the public domain. However, later in the '70's, I was able to initiate the purchase of thousands of acres of privately owned tidal wetlands under a separate statewide program. We also purchased a boat launching area on the biggest lake on Long Island, Lake Ronkonkoma.

Meanwhile, things were going along quite well with the family at home. As we realized that life on Long Island in the Port Jefferson—Setauket—Stony Brook area was quite wonderful, it probably made sense to sell the Canandaigua farm, especially since the young couple we had living there were not doing a very good job of taking care of the place. Also, it was a long, 10-hour trip from Port Jefferson to Canandaigua to check up on things from time to time. I really hated to part with it, but Louise was eager to do so.

We sold the farm for only $13,350 to a doctor. Land values had not increased very much upstate in the 12 years we owned it, but they started to increase rapidly just after the doctor completely remodeled the house. As much as I missed it, it was good not to have to care for it anymore.

The soil at the edge of our Port Jefferson backyard near the woods was excellent soil to grow a garden, and soon we were growing three kinds of raspberries, all kinds of vegetables, and even 12 varieties of grapes. We had wild grapevines two inches thick and 40-feet high in the woods, so I knew grapes would grow O.K. However, grapes are very susceptible to fungus rot and during the hot, humid days of August they would quickly deteriorate, some varieties much worse than others, but we had so much wildlife that between the birds and raccoons, as well as possums and squirrels, we had few for ourselves.

With the development of high-pressure mist sprayers that can control fungus, a young couple from Canandaigua bought land on the "east end" of Long Island on the north fork and started a vineyard and winery. It was the beginning of a major industry. As of 2016, there are more than 40 wineries and associated vineyards with many of them catering to tourists, who can visit the facilities, sample the wines, and buy some at about twice the price of California wines.

In 1960 there were 54 duck farms on Long Island located on many of the eastern waterways. The same group that organized the Concord Grape Growers upstate tried to organize the duck farmers into similar co-ops but failed to do so. Waterside property was becoming too valuable to raise messy ducks and ducks could now be raised just as efficiently on dry land. At last count, the 54 farms have been reduced to four. The mainstay demand for ducks is the metropolitan Asian population who prefer live ducks, which can be easily trucked from Long Island to the city.

Another major farming change has been in vegetables. Because of the nature of Long Island soils—flat, loamy and stone-free—potatoes had been the main crop for over 100 years; but, again, with the increased Asian market, more than 95 kinds of vegetables are now grown with varieties that most of us have never tasted. Another major farm crop has been sod, which is used to make instant lawns for the thousands of new homes that are being built. Simple bare

lots on the flat sod farms are now selling for more money than what we paid for our house in 1961. Unfortunately, nearly every acre of this excellent farmland has been zoned for "development." With the rapid disappearance of open space and farms, the taxpayers have been willing to buy up the development rights from many willing sellers so that the land would always be open for agriculture pursuits, including raising horses. The rapidly changing landscape prompted me to write some essays, which were published in the Conservation Department magazine.

There were also changes in the Conservation Department. When our old friend, Al Tucker, Director of the Marine Fisheries Unit retired, Bill Bentley wanted his job, but the powers in Albany would not give it to him. Instead, they brought in Dave Wallace from the Federal Marine Bureau to take over. Bill was very disappointed, but later he moved to Albany as Chief of the Bureau of Inland Fisheries. The move left a vacancy on Bill's title, which I argued for and eventually in 1965 was promoted to, Regional Supervisor of Fish and Wildlife, the promotion that had been denied me in Syracuse. The expanded responsibility covered the interior surface fresh waters of Long Island, which were quite remarkable for their quality.

The three best trout streams on Long Island, along with most of their watersheds—Connetquot, Nissequogue, and Carmans—had been purchased years earlier to become a superb fishing and hunting preserves for wealthy sportsmen, but they were now part of the State and County Park systems, thus protected from obvious surface degradation. However, the excellent streams or rivers, as they are called on Long Island, are also directly connected to the ground water table, which was gradually declining due to increased withdrawal. Therefore, I needed to become as knowledgeable as possible about the extremely politically sensitive relationship among such major activities as housing and industrial development, sewage and waste disposal, farming, highway and mall paving. Each activity generated hard to quantify major negative impacts on water quality and quantity.

Long Island was becoming the primary battleground for the inevitable environmental wars in-as-much as it had become one of the most crowded places on earth. Unfortunately, as educated

as Americans are, they have been quite ignorant on critical environmental issues. Thus, the battles were bound to be nasty between groups with one side "knowing a lot of things that were not true." This phenomenon continues today with global warming debates.

Meanwhile, there was talk about the construction of a new State University in the area of Stony Brook. Ward Melville, a man who inherited a lot of wealth from a family-owned shoe company, had purchased hundreds of acres in the vicinity of Stony Brook and became a controlling force in how the area was to be developed. Consequently, Stony Brook was a unique community where every architectural detail had to be approved by Melville's staff, including the nature of the proposed university. Mr. Melville wanted a relatively small "Ivy League" type college and was promised as much by the Rockefeller administration. Thus, he gave the State land for the proposed university with his blessings. Soon the State University at Stony Brook was growing way beyond the original concept, much to the frustration of Mr. Melville. Within 20 years the university became a major educational facility, as well as a medical center. Also, the Conservation Department later established our central office there when it became the Department of Environmental Conservation, just three miles from our house in Port Jefferson.

Throughout this period, we were preoccupied with saving the tidal wetlands, which were being wiped out at an astonishing rate in spite of public protests from baymen, sportsmen, garden club ladies, and others. Also, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked with us for the same purpose. I met regularly with their Long Island representative, Sumner "Al" Dole, to make evaluations and judgments about the impact each proposed project would have on the public domain. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, responsible for controlling construction in U.S. navigable waters, had to publish a map and description of any activity that affected navigable waters. We received such notices on a regular basis, as did many other public and private agencies. Earlier legislation had given the New York State Conservation Department jurisdiction over the navigable water of the State except for those in Nassau and Suffolk counties which had been "conveniently" excluded from such legislation. Thus, while we could comment and complain, we had no jurisdiction and could

do nothing legally. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as a federal agency, had some control over Corps of Engineers who had to review its comments.

To coordinate and emphasize public input Al Dole and I formed a committee, including representatives from both the recreational and commercial fishing interests, other sportsmen, academics, and others to meet regularly to review each of the pending Army Corps announcements and to pass judgment on them. Those Township Supervisors who appeared to be most involved in questionable projects became very annoyed at us, and at me in particular. They complained to Albany, and once more I was on the "hot seat" for doing my job. I was accused of interfering with progress and should cease and desist. Mr. Meschutt, the Town Supervisor of South Hampton, wanted me fired or transferred. As a consequence, I was visited to state my case by Cecil Heacox, a professional fishery biologist, and a political appointee as Secretary of the Department. Cecil was such a decent guy that I could not understand how he got such a political appointment. We had a good meeting, and we parted as friends, but with the understanding that there was only so much that Cecil could do to protect me from potential mayhem.

Nevertheless, we wanted to prove that there were significant political connections with those owners who were getting their waterfront property "improved" at the expense of the county taxpayers. "Renk" spent some time checking property records at the County Courthouse and sure enough, people who were having wetlands filled that adjoined their upland properties invariably had political ties, sometimes just after buying the property. We had to be very careful how we used this information, especially since the county engineer in charge of the dredging operation lived in my neighborhood and I often visited with him. He was caught "in the middle" doing what he was told.

Meanwhile, sand and gravel mining activities were continuing at a nonstop pace. It was known that north shore sand and gravel was an excellent constituent of high-grade concrete needed to build the massive buildings in New York City and that if the industry were denied access to it, there would be significant financial hardship for the industry. I was soon approached by Hans Weigert, who had been

hired by a major sand and gravel company CEO to "take care of me" by letting me know I was treading on very dangerous ground. After months of meetings and deliberations, Hans and I became good friends, but for many months I was apprehensive about starting my car for fear it might explode.

With public pressure mounting to protect tidal wetlands the Governor appointed a "blue ribbon" committee of nationally known "conservationists" to propose appropriate legislation. When I was asked to review it, it had one major flaw; the law proposed that tidal wetlands be defined by their elevation above sea level. I knew there was no way we could fairly survey the 2,000+ miles of irregular tidal shorelines to make that determination. By now, I learned how to define tidal wetlands by the specific plants that could grow on them. I worked with the State Attorney's General's Office (given the job to polish the legislation) to define tidal wetlands according to the nature of the vegetation, as well as other features, which we did, and our input became law.

However, the legislation still contained some ambiguous statements, such as the protection of not only tidal wetlands but also those bordering such wetlands, as well as those now or formerly connected. Much of New York City was on formerly connected wetlands and how wide is a "border?" Since it was going to be my job to administer the law we had to make sense of the well-meaning, but ambiguous language. So, the Department appointed a committee, including lawyers, myself and others, to write appropriate Rules and Regulations. The legislation took only a few pages. The Rules and Regulations took over 90 pages and months of meetings to develop them. The Department also contracted with an aerial photography firm to photograph all the marine edge in infrared so that the tidal wetlands boundaries could be officially delineated on maps.

These were all major undertakings but successfully concluded. Salt marshes are usually flooded twice daily and salt meadows (from which salt hay has been harvested for centuries) are only flooded several times a month. Only certain salt-tolerant plants can grow in each type. Then there are the non-vegetated tidal flats that are exposed at low tide. The high tides on Long Island could normally be as high as six feet on the north shore and only several inches at

some parts of the south shore and, of course, much higher during storm surges. Furthermore, the Legislature appropriated millions of dollars available to us to purchase the best of the wetlands. These purchases had to be approved by the State and required a permit. I became the "Permit Agent." To help make good decisions, I had written and published a manual on management principles to apply to permit criteria. The public liked it, and the Department published several thousand copies.

Meanwhile, other major activities were demanding much of my time, as environmentalists throughout the country, and especially on Long Island, became very concerned about the impact certain chemicals used to control nuisance insects, especially mosquitoes, were having on other creatures that were not the targets. We could see that some bird species, especially robins that ate earthworms and ospreys (fish hawks) that ate fish were dying and not reproducing. Chemicals known as chlorinated hydrocarbons, DDT in particular, seemed to be the major culprits and we wondered how to deal with them. They were regarded as outstanding useful pesticides, in terms of benefiting human health; yet, there was the water—sewer pollution connection. My job was becoming even more complicated and political.

Especially complicated was the social and biological conflict emerging from the intensive use of DDT and other toxins that control mosquitoes, especially the salt marsh mosquito. Both suburban Long Island counties had costly mosquito control programs that the public demanded, but that seemed to be harming the very productive and desirable marine life. There were baymen who were convinced that critical marine life was declining and mosquito control was the problem and that I must get involved. Could we not find less harmful ways to control the pests?

Major responsibilities and much public attention in the press came with my promotion to Regional Supervisor of Fish and Wildlife. A major political and environmental activist was a young lawyer friend from Patchogue, Victor Yannacone, and his wife, Carol. They wanted me to join them in a lawsuit against the Suffolk County Mosquito Control Commission that was spreading DDT all over the wetlands and apparently causing a considerable impact on many kinds of marine creatures, as well as birds. We were soon joined by

other scientists in varying professions who felt the same way we did. Several were from S.U.N.Y. Stony Brook and others from the South Shore. We began to meet regularly, often at our house where Louise would be the hostess and often on the South Shore at the home of Dennis Puleston, a scientist working at the Brookhaven Lab. Together, we became a formidable group that was determined to take legal action against the county's DDT program. Our best scientist, Dr. Charles Wurster, a chemist from S.U.N.Y., was convinced, based on good data from people out of state that DDT was killing birds by interfering in their reproduction process. But we needed evidence specific from Long Island. We got it in the form of a major fish kill in the Yaphank Lakes. It was my responsibility to determine the cause and the culprit. The day after the press reported the "kill" in major headlines, I got an anonymous phone call from a worker on the Suffolk County Mosquito Control Unit, who told me that they had emptied their daily unused portion of DDT on the relatively dry headwaters of the stream that fed the lakes. That night a severe thunderstorm must have washed much of the disposed DDT material into the lakes creating a lethal concentration to fish. We collected several fish of different species and sent them to George Burdick, our Chief Department Chemist, in Albany, who had a gas chromatograph which could analyze the fish for a variety of chemicals. The tests came back strongly positive for DDT. We had our "smoking gun" and now our group that we named the Environmental Defense Fund could go to court. We did, and the Judge made headlines by giving us jurisdiction as a "class action" lawsuit, which we won amid headlines all over the country.

The chemical industry was furious and soon labeled us a bunch of sexual misfits, among other things, and that they were going to sue us. My supervisors in Albany were very apprehensive about the State Conservation Department being involved and became concerned about my involvement.

Soon, we were getting phone calls and letters from all over the country from groups who wanted us to use our scientific expertise to help with their environmental problems. We had no money, other than the few dollars we each chipped in to pay for stamps, paper, legal briefs, etc. We were all on a legitimate payroll except for our

lawyer, Vic Yannacone, who wanted some payment for his unique, time-consuming services. We soon had a "God Father" in the person of Louis Batts from Michigan, who gave us seed money and then we started getting outright "grants."

We were asked to go to Wisconsin, Michigan, Montana, Florida, and other places. Every trip cost a lot of money and time. I went to Florida one weekend to help the Florida Defenders of the Environment fight the Cross Florida Barge Canal on the beautiful Ocklawaha River. In a matter of months, I was spending every weekend on EDF concerns. With two young sons and a wife at home, and a very busy schedule outside of EDF, I realized that something had to be given up, and decided it should be EDF; thereby, reluctantly resigning from the Board of Trustees after two years of active duty. EDF, now just called Environmental Defense, flourishes and is certainly one of the most active and respected environmental organizations in the country. Charlie Wurster has since written a book about the DDT conflict.

Art Cooley, one of our EDF Trustees, was a Bellport High School Science Teacher and someone I had been in contact with before EDF. Art was active in education programs and asked me if I would teach an environmental course to teachers through a Suffolk County program called SCOPE—Suffolk County Office for the Promotion of Education. I would be paid about $1,000 for each two credit hour courses that could be given evenings. It sounded like something I could do without undue stress on the family or at work. I developed a course giving an overview of natural resources and environmental issues. To summarize, I taught for 22 years through most of my retirement and added about six other courses.

Under the SCOPE philosophy, each instructor had to be graded by the students, who were teachers and who were charged a fee. A course had to have enough paid participants to pay the instructor. As I continued to get positive responses, I added several courses; the most popular were those that involved three consecutive days of field trips by bus with the final day at some school. Courses I taught included "Farming Long Island." We visited with many farmers, who I knew and who were quite literate, as well as the Cornell Agricultural Research Station near Riverhead. I also taught "Marine

Fisheries of Long Island." In this class we visited with clam diggers, oyster farmers, net fishermen, lobstermen, and marine research people, and recreational fishermen. For the Water Issues of Long Island class, we visited sewer plants, water production facilities, streams, and ponds. My third course was "Wildlife Resources of Long Island." I was sorry to give it up when we finally left Long Island. I gave most of my files to friends who were willing and able to continue some of the courses after I left. Also, I was appointed Adjunct Professor at Stony Brook University, a non-paying position that allowed me to be guest lecturer teaching environmental classes mostly to nursing students and others in various courses.

Another controversial chapter in my career was my involvement in the controversy regarding building a large sewer system with ocean outfalls and the not too clearly understood impact such large public works projects would have on the Long Island aquifer and our excellent ponds and streams that were tied into the potentially declining ground water table. Politically entwined "developers" argued that Long Island was unique, having so much surplus water that it would not decline. They quoted poorly done "research" to enforce their argument, which Lee Dennison, the County Supervisor, and other political leaders accepted. However, I had spent months doing research with Phil Cohen of the U.S. Geological Survey and others and realized that such "conventional wisdom" was way off base and said so.

Ultimately, after angering several Republican politicians, environmentalist, scientists and the press, the matter was to be settled after a public hearing. The County had spent $340,000 hiring Holzmacher, McClendon and Murrell outstanding water experts, to make a scientific study and publish a report on the impact that sewers with ocean outfalls and no recharge would have on the status of the water table and associated lakes, ponds, and streams, the H2M Report.

Their report was published in two large, complex volumes, which I felt sure no politician was going to take the time to read and digest. Charles Banks Belt, an active conservationist friend and ardent Republican, practically begged me to review the entire two volumes and let him know how the major issues were summarized. I spent two long weekends digesting the material, which reinforced

my position in opposition to that of the County Executive, Lee Dennison, who was a Democrat, as well as a friend. Dennison, years earlier had invited me to be part of his Advisory Council, which met once a month to discuss a large number of controversial issues, including water. I attended faithfully.

I reported to Charlie Belt what the significant elements of the H2M report were and he was very grateful, and not too surprised. However, many of the politicians, also Republicans, were unhappy with the report, which was contrary to the nonsense they wanted to believe; namely, that continued "growth" had no impact, so no one had to take the initiative to change. Meanwhile, the Nassau County Sportsmen Organization was having their annual meeting. Their leader, Sherwin Allen, an attorney and also a good friend, invited me to be the keynote speaker at the meeting and to talk about the sewer-water controversy. I went back to the County Exec and told him my plans and asked how he felt about them. He said: "No problems—go right ahead."

That meeting was well attended, especially by the press, which reported what I said in major headlines. Dennison became furious and in his next weekly column in the paper he ripped me to shreds without mentioning my name. Of course, this got back to Albany where, unfortunately, the two men in charge of the State's water program were no more knowledgeable than Dennison and believed that I was way out of line. The Republicans were in charge under Governor Rockefeller and Henry Diamond was the Conservation Department Commissioner, but now the Department of Environmental Conservation expanded to include waste disposal, water supply and all things that could be considered environmentally related. In no time, the Administration sent George Humphreys, who I had never known, to Long Island to get rid of me.

George came to my office and immediately told me that I was no longer in charge of anything and that I should resign. He then started to yell ethnic insults at me. I yelled back and called him an ignorant, redneck, and a Rockefeller hit man. He was a former college football player from Georgia, who happened to be an English major, who I later accused of being a "closet intellectual." After half an hour of verbal abuse and sparring, we settled down. The Conservationist

Magazine had just published my latest essay "Journal on Jamaica Bay, " and he begrudgingly told me that he enjoyed it. He then wanted to know how I got into this ugly, very sensitive political controversy. I told him about Charlie Belt, the very supportive and active Republican. That cooled off George a bit and then I asked, that in fairness to all parties, especially myself, I would like to have a hearing in Albany in front of Commissioner Diamond and other pertinent staff. He agreed to set up the meeting and a week or so later I was in Albany. By this time, I had become quite infamous, and the hearing room was packed with most of the major administrators.

They were all very attentive, and I was given ample time to state my case, including the fact that according to the United States Geological Survey (U.S.G.S.) (the most knowledgeable public agency on water), I was the only public employee or politician ever to come to their office for advice and information. The two men in charge of the Department's water policy were equally stunned by my testimony, which was contrary to their opinion. At the end of the meeting, Commissioner Diamond told me how grateful he was that I had done so much homework and that he learned an awful lot. Most important, I was reinstated to my former status, and all was forgiven. Significantly, Jim Biggane was at the meeting. Two years later He became Commissioner of New York State DEC and my benefactor.

Upon returning to Stony Brook, I had a happy reunion with family and staff and settled down to a less hectic routine. The new State Office Building on the Stony Brook campus, which Dave Wallace and I had designed to house Dave's Division of Marine Resources and my Fish and Wildlife Staff, was now crowded. It included several former agencies from the New York State Health Department that were now part of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC). Unfortunately, Dave could not enjoy working in the building he spent so much time planning. On a cold winter day his wife, Libby, found him dead from a heart attack while shoveling snow from his driveway. Al Jensen, the Associate Director, took over the Division. Al and I had been acquaintances since our days at the College of Forestry when I, as a grad student, helped out at the Zoology Lab while Al was a student. Since coming to Long Island our families socialized quite a bit.

Long Island Marine 1970s - 1982

As the water wars settled down I was able to spend more time on the tidal wetlands programs, which, from day to day, were as nearly politically explosive as the fresh water issues. Conservation Commissioner Jim Biggane (Henry Diamond had left) unexpectedly appointed me Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries. He had been favorably impressed by the testimony I gave at the "water hearing" when he was there representing the Parks Division. He was also impressed with my manual on managing tidal wetlands.

This very happy turn of events changed dramatically when we learned the terrible news that Sam's oldest daughter, Maura, had been tragically killed in a car-truck accident on an icy road in Michigan. A loss that Sam's family can never forget not to mention my own.

But, now I had to prove my worth as a competent administrator of a major program that was critical to Long Island's economy. D. Wallace, my predecessor, had the Division organized into three major sections—Research, Management, and Shellfish Sanitation The latter program was responsible for the continuous monitoring and mapping of all Long Island's waters from which shellfish could be safely harvested.

Within a year I reorganized the Division into three management bureaus—Shellfisheries, Finfish and Crustaceans, and Tidal Wetlands—responsible for the management, not the research. There were many other organizations working on various marine programs with which we had to participate. Most important was the newly created Federal Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (FCMA) within the Federal Department of Commerce. New York State was part of the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Council, which included the coastal states from New York through North Carolina, with the responsibility to develop fishery management plans for the complex and dwindling Atlantic fisheries. I was the Commissioner's representative on the Council, which meant monthly meetings at various locations. Then, there was the longstanding Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission; the Chairmen of which was Irwin Alperin, a former DEC employee and a good friend.

There was never an end to meetings, phone calls, correspondence, administrative details, and personnel and equipment problems. Consequently, there was never enough staff to properly cover everything, especially when some staff members were not doing their job and had to be reassigned—one of the most unpleasant responsibilities of the Director.

Meanwhile, Lee and Jay were going to school and had their share of growing up problems. To help ease the strain of my being so busy, I would take Louise and the boys, when appropriate, to some of my major meetings at interesting out-of-state hotels (The Golden Eagle at Cape May, New Jersey; Hershey Hotel in Pennsylvania), as well as local banquets and parties. Most noteworthy was the annual banquet at the Commercial Fisherman's Association, to which we were always guests. Each winter we also spent a few weeks with my folks in Hollywood, Florida. It was not too bad a life, but it did have its stresses.

I noticed that my eye blurring transitory ischemic attacks (TIA's) were occurring more frequently and that worried me. It came to a head when one day while working with some legislators in Albany, I suddenly felt my face and fingers becoming numb. I could feel the sensation creeping over me and wondered where and when it would stop. When I got home, I told Louise and my secretary, Barbara, about it and they immediately got me an appointment with a local doctor, who prescribed some blood pressure pills. The medication was troublesome because I could not bend down without becoming very dizzy, almost falling. I went back to the doctor, who changed the meds somewhat; but, it did not change how I felt, including a significant loss of libido.

I had not been to a Veterans Hospital since the time at Bath after our honeymoon, so I went to the one at nearby Kings Park. After waiting around all day, the doctor there told me that he would never have prescribed the combination of meds that I had been given and that my condition was minor so that he would prescribe different medications. With the change, I felt much better, and soon was feeling no signs of the numbness after going to a chiropractor.

Coincidentally, while on an inspection tour with some legislators on Long Island Sound one of them had heard about my problem and wanted to know more about it. He was a holistic doctor and

said my symptoms were a classic response to a pinched nerve in my neck. I had noticed while driving that I could not turn my neck very far and went to a chiropractor, who agreed with the observation and stretched my neck back into a more normal position much to my relief. I stopped taking the pills and resumed my peripatetic lifestyle, and soon became far more concerned about my Mom's condition than my own.

While we were visiting the folks in early 1978, my Mom noticed that she was developing lumps in her neck and armpits. Apparently, they were swollen lymph nodes and needed a doctor's attention. A few years earlier she had a hysterectomy in the Hudson Hospital and had to have some blood transfusions, a possible source of infection. Though she was not in any pain, we were all concerned. Before returning to Long Island, I asked my Mom if she would mind writing down the history of the Martino family from their early days in Sicily since she was the only one of her family who seemed to remember events as told by her mother. My Mom readily agreed and spent the next month's writing over 200 pages of "history" as she remembered it. It was a masterful job resulting in my editing her pages ten years later and consolidating the most significant into "Jenny's Story," a copy of which I gave to many of our relatives. Mom's health deteriorated rapidly as she spent her last days with Joanita in Virginia dying of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in October 1979. The chemotherapy and radiation treatments she was given made her life more miserable than if she had lived without them. Joanita has prepared a Memorial plot for our Mom and Dad on her property in Virginia, an appropriate resting place for their ashes.

As for my health, I had noticed that when I was jogging in the woods behind the house I was getting pathetically out of shape. The lifestyle I was leading, while exciting and financially rewarding, was taking its toll. I did not want to end up like Dave Wallace and Al Tucker, dying relatively young; but the lure of the job was strong, and I was not ready to give it up even though I would fantasize about retiring to the 15 acres overlooking Canandaigua Lake. However, several events were brewing that pushed me to the inevitable decision.

One of the most contentious fishery management issues is related to striped bass, one of the most popular recreational, as well as commercial species in our waters. Members of the Council had asked me to Chair a special committee to resolve the many problems associated with the fishery. I resisted the offer and asked that I be given time to think about it, knowing full well that it was going to be a time-consuming, stressful job that I should not accept.

At the same time, I was being considered for the post of Regional Director of the entire DEC operation on Long Island. It was a purely political appointment, but only two grades higher than my own Civil Service position. Even though I knew that the current Commissioner, Ogden Reid, approved me, there were several Long Island legislators who did not, so I would always be politically vulnerable to criticism.

Then, there was the growing controversy over the nuclear power plants being built at Shoreham on Long Island. I had been meeting regularly over many years with their engineers, as we did our best to design a cooling water system that would have minimal impact on Long Island fisheries. I had been, and remain, a strong proponent of nuclear power as the least harmful of all unpleasant alternatives to meeting current and future energy demands. But, public opinion was wavering as the fear of a nuclear accident had some people so panicked that they would not be able to escape Long Island's dead end in time to be spared a horrible death from radiation exposure. I felt it was going to be an overwhelming emotional political argument and that I could be on the losing side, even though the nuclear facility was ten years in the planning and the building stage did not generate public concern. As it turned out, the plant when completed was never allowed to function after billions were spent developing it. What a waste! Of course, when the time comes to decide, as it will, whether to have risky nuclear power take care of our surging electric power demands or do without, you know the answer. Ironically, there are 104 nuclear facilities in the U.S. and except for the incident at Three-Mile Island in Pennsylvania they have done their job safely and efficiently.

But, the "coup de grace" came over an incident that I had not considered to be overly sensitive. Marinas everywhere must be

periodically dredged to maintain water depth. The resulting dredge spoil has to be deposited somewhere. The cost of taking such spoil far out into the Atlantic Ocean for disposal is outrageously expensive. I was told to establish an environmentally acceptable disposal area in Western Long Island Sound. Others before me had failed to do so. I got staff together to check with fishermen, especially the lobstermen because I felt that lobsters were the most important marine resource in Long Island Sound, to see if there were areas of little interest to them. I wanted an area where the bottom sediments were soft and stable indicating very little scouring by currents so that any material dumped there would not likely move. After months of evaluation, we came up with what I regarded as a very appropriate location in waters under the jurisdiction of both New York and Connecticut. I met with the appropriate Connecticut people and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who had final jurisdiction, and both agencies were very agreeable, as were the dozens of marina operators.

The Corps scheduled a "hearing" in Huntington to discuss the proposal and get public input. Their meetings in Connecticut had gone well with hardly any controversy, even though most of the proposed disposal area was in its waters. Our hearing was held at Huntington High School in early 1982, and the auditorium was packed with standing room only.

As near as I could tell the main reason for the antagonism toward the project was because several months earlier a scattering of medical wastes were found on one of Huntington's beaches. Some people said the terrible stuff came from dredge disposal and the press played up the story. I was sure it had no relation to dredge-spoil disposal, but could not figure out or prove how the stuff got there. The Army Corps of Engineers ultimately approved the site, which has been used for dredge spoil disposal from marinas in western Long Island Sound ever since.

When I got home late that night, I pondered how much longer do I want to keep getting professionally involved with such stressful hostility. With my combined military and state service of 35 years I could retire with a pretty good pension, plus Social Security at 62 or 65, plus other income if I chose to work at something else. The thought of retiring to the land in Canandaigua seemed more

appealing than ever. No question about it, I would start making plans immediately. At the next Council meeting I would get rid of the Striped Bass Chairmanship and plan to retire in July; but, leaving Long Island for upstate was not so appealing to Louise. Lee was finishing college in Alabama, and Jay was finishing high school.

Home of 40 Years in Port Jefferson

114C

STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
ALBANY 12224

HUGH L. CAREY
GOVERNOR

June 29, 1982

Dear Mr. Taormina:

It gives me great pleasure to extend congratulations on the occasion of your retirement after 33 years of dedicated service with the Department of Conservation.

You can take great pride in your achievements during your long and successful tenure of service. Your innovative leadership on behalf of many noteworthy endeavors has earned you richly deserved commendation and appreciation.

Best wishes to you for a very happy retirement.

Sincerely,

Hugh L. Carey

Mr. Anthony S. Taormina
108 Glenwood Lane
Port Jefferson, New York 11777

A tetirement letter from the Governor

Anthony's 50 Year High School Reunion

BACK ROW: John Salm, Dan Predpall, Leon Turek, Ron Mitchinson, John Naboxny, Tony Tkatz, Erwin Schneider, Howard Beebe, Bill Cook.

ROW 2: Bill Pierson, Janice Brocksbank O'Hara, Anne Richards Cordato, Marie Bartolotta Conte, Olga lesawyer Toulmin-Rothe, Tessie Bujnovsky Curtin, Sophie Super Grabowski, Irene Toth.

ROW 3: Wendy Neefus, Thelma Hagadone Fischer, Tony Nabozny, Mike Maruniak, Sam Kwasnowski, Hugh Templeton, Janis Best, Betty Gohl, Dan Durniak, Howard Jeffers.

FRONT ROW: Tony Taormina, Dorothy Gallagher Van De Carr, Elenore Propst Goetz, Alice Hennessy Van Deusen, Nathalie Lampman, Sybil Meade Hagan.

CHAPTER NINE

Retirement

1982 and beyond

Anthony and Louise in California

With the coming of Spring, I fantasized more and more about what life would be like without the rigid demands of such lifelong obligations or employment. It would certainly feel different than a daily work schedule. If we returned to Canandaigua for the seven warmest months of the year, and then to Florida for the five coldest ones, there should be plenty to do and to keep boredom at bay and to keep Louise happy and content. Although my Dad was doing O.K., we would spend more time caring for him. Lee was finishing college and hopefully would be on his own, while Jay could attend the Finger Lakes Two-year College Program at Canandaigua. The transition seemed very doable and pleasurable.

We would miss many of the good times we had on Long Island, and I would probably miss many of the intellectual challenges that the job gave me. There would be less income, but I was sure we would have enough to live comfortably. I felt sure I would be more physically active, thereby improving my health. The more I thought about it, the better I felt that there were far more advantages than disadvantages and that July 1982 seemed like an ideal time to make the changes necessary to transfer from phase two to phase three in my life cycle.

Having chosen the date, I then notified staff and Albany to plan accordingly. Hardly anyone believed I was serious at first, and some even bet I would change my mind. However, I reminded them of the statistics that on average State retirees in the 1970's died at 73.5 years with younger wives living on average four years longer. Hopefully, I would beat the odds and I have! Since State retirement fiscal plans were based on the above numbers, I opted to take the plan that would give Louise half my pension should she outlive me. That meant taking less money than if I were to maximize my monthly income, but I could buy her an expanded life insurance policy on my life to make up for it.

As my planning jelled, staff were finally planning for my retirement party. Once those plans were well underway, there was no way I could change my mind. Bruce MacMillan, Chief of our Bureau of Shell Fisheries, took charge of planning for my retirement party, while I worked on making things as easy as possible for whoever was chosen to replace me. In "no time" the day to retire arrived and we enjoyed the final get-together with many of my friends and associates. I had invited Aunt Nora (mom's youngest sister) to join Louise and me at the head table. The party was a dinner dance with 125 people attending. My last going away gift was the best canoe Grumman could make. I remembered that when I left Syracuse Conservation Office, Tom Milbower, who repaired watches in his off-duty hours, gave me a beautiful Bulova wristwatch, which I still have. I had a great career with the Department, and I was grateful that it ended on a positive note.

Retirement—California

After the retirement party, we headed for Canandaigua to start to build the proposed house. We stayed with old friends, Homer and Louise Smith, who had bought a farm in 1950; the same year we bought ours. Homer had developed health problems as an executive in the phone company in Rochester. He was advised to change his lifestyle radically. Their land now bordered ours.

My house plans were fairly complete, so I staked out with what I figured were to be the corners of the house with its magnificent view of the lake and called an architect friend, Bart Valvano, for whom I had built a beautiful marsh pond 30 years earlier. Bart came right over, and we discussed the design and probable costs to build. I was shocked when he told me that a designed new construction would cost about $80,000, about $30,000 more than I had thought, but according to Bart by 1982 building costs would rise even more rapidly. Now, I had to think things over seriously before building.

Meanwhile, Dan Natchez, whom I had met during the winter at the controversial Long Island Sound Dredge Disposal Hearing, had contacted me about working with him in a Marine consulting business he was proposing to start. He had been a financial officer in one of New York's major banks specializing in international loans and wanted out. So, I figured why not postpone the Canandaigua move and stay on Long Island a while longer while working with Dan and expand my SCOPE courses. Louise was happy with the idea, but neither of us could anticipate that son Lee would generate a major change in our plans.

Lee had finished college at Jacksonville State University in Alabama that year. He was restless to do some traveling with a close friend, Glen Kuhlman. They wanted to tour the West Coast and do a lot of fishing. His friend had been a marine fishery major. We agreed that it was a good time to experience some travel before getting a job and settling down. In October, while traveling in California, he called to say he wanted me to look at some property near Redding that had a beautiful salmon stream on it and that we might consider buying. The timing to go there was just right. I had made extra

money during the summer working for Dan in our new consulting business, and had added several SCOPE courses.

I flew to Sacramento, rented a car and met him at the office of a realtor, about 10 miles south of Redding. The October weather was perfect. I enjoyed the trip immensely and met Lee as scheduled. The property Lee liked had an excellent salmon stream. The king, also called Chinook salmon, were spawning and it was exciting to watch them splashing and jumping in the clear, cool stream. However, I did not like the house or the 100 acres of land, and it certainly was not worth the asking price of $115,000. The realtor, not wanting to give up so easily with a potential customer from the east, persuaded me to look at two other properties he had for sale. We figured why not. We were enjoying the adventure, so we returned to Anderson, a community seven miles south of Redding, to inspect a five-acre parcel at the end of a lovely dead end road. Within 15 minutes, I fell in love with the entire property and felt it was a place where we all could enjoy living. It had a small orchard, which featured pears, apples, walnuts, almonds, and especially a Japanese persimmon, loaded with brilliant orange fruit. The land was bounded on two sides by streams—Anderson Creek to the west and an irrigation ditch on the east; both were fed by water from Shasta Lake and both drained into the Sacramento River from where the salmon came. The house was a one-story ranch with large kitchen and three bedrooms with two baths, attached garage, and porch. The water supply seemed excellent in both quantity and quality. A bonus included a single-wide trailer away from the house that was rented.

The seller was recently widowed, Georgette Shelp, who could no longer manage the property, which was rapidly becoming overgrown with Himalayan blackberry vines even though a neighbor was pasturing two young steers on the property. Mrs. Shelp was tired of the country and wanted to live in a trailer court nearer town. The asking price was $118,000. I told the realtor, we were interested and would get back to him the next day. We returned to Anderson to mull things over and to rent a small room for the night. The next day we toured all around the Anderson-Redding area and even caught trout

in nearby Shasta Lake, all the while discussing the pros and cons of buying the Shelp property and moving to California.

That evening, a local restaurant cooked our trout for dinner and we discussed whether to make a purchase offer considering we were favorably impressed with the entire Redding area of Shasta County. The region was still very rural and only 80 miles south of the Oregon border. We then went back to see if we could make an offer I could afford and she would take.

I felt we could handle $20,000 less than she was asking, but Mrs. Shelp said, "no way." I told her I was sorry, but that was all I could afford, and we said goodbye and headed for the car to leave. Just as we were driving away, the realtor came rushing to the car telling us to hold on, Mrs. Shelp changed her mind and would accept the offer under certain conditions.

We finalized our terms, which included giving Mrs. Shelp enough down so she could purchase a trailer, as well as allowing Lee and Glen to live with her until she moved out whenever she felt ready to do so. Everyone seemed pleased with the arrangements, so I said goodbye and headed south 120 miles to cousins Bill and Betty Weaver, Uncle Frank's daughter, to tell them the good news.

Bill was familiar with the Anderson area since he had a younger brother who lived there until his tragic death a few years earlier in a plane crash while fighting a forest fire. They had moved into the house they were building and were equally excited about the chain of events. When I returned to Long Island it took some convincing, but eventually, Louise and Jason became equally enthusiastic, even though it meant we would probably have to sell our Long Island home.

Back in California, Lee was having a hard time finding work. He tried selling expensive solar panels to homeowners, but solar panels were no bargain compared to the current traditional energy costs. The winter was cold and rainy, as it usually is, and the house mostly unfurnished, so the California bloom was fading fast from Lee's perspective. In April, just as soon as Louise and Jay drove there to take over, Lee left to come back to Long Island. While in college he had been on the tennis team and was considering work as a tennis

pro. He soon got a job locally and urged me not to sell the Long Island house so he could live there and take care of it. It sounded like a good idea, so I agreed and soon headed back to California to start a new experience. Retirement was hardly a bore, and a lot more interesting than I had expected.

Back in the '80's flying to California was very inexpensive for seniors. A book of four roundtrip tickets cost less than $400. We could fly to Anderson by way of Redding in less time than it took to drive to Canandaigua from Port Jefferson, and it was a lot more interesting. We soon adapted to a lifestyle that revolved around three seasonal changes:

1. Keep the Long Island house under Lee's care and spend the summers there working for Dan and SCOPE;
2. Louise and I spend the winter months in Florida caring for dad, and
3. Louise, Jay and I spend spring and fall in California enjoying the amenities of a new lifestyle while furnishing the house (mostly with good secondhand furniture), clearing the land of blackberry vines, building ponds, developing a garden, and exploring northern California.

We hoped that Jay would attend junior college in Redding. Instead, he bought a motorcycle to tour the country.

The realtor's sister-in-law rented the trailer with her 11-year-old daughter and kept a nice saddle horse on our property, which was sufficiently fenced. We bought a wood stove from a local factory in Anderson and had it installed in front of the fireplace. Between digging out blackberries and cutting wood, I was getting plenty of exercise and feeling good.

In October, the salmon came up our creek and were held back by a pipe flume at the end of our property. It was exciting watching them trying to jump the falls and into the 36-inch pipe. They would fall back and regroup in a pool at the edge of our yard. By the time they reached our area 200 miles from the ocean they were pretty well beaten up and I found them not very good to eat, although each year we tried one or two. There is a major hatchery on Battle Creek

just 12 miles from the house where we spent many hours watching hundreds of fish moving from the creek to within the hatchery ponds where they were captured and their eggs and sperm collected and hatched.

In the fall, we could harvest enough walnuts to give bagsful to friends and relatives. We had wild pecan trees that produced many nuts that were small, but tasty. We also had figs. Our most distinctive trees were the dozen very large Valley Oaks, into which each night some of our noisy and messy peafowl would fly and roost high into the strongest branches.

I especially enjoyed learning the different species of wildlife we did not have in the East—four species of hummingbirds, several different woodpeckers of which the acorn was the most common, many California quail, miscellaneous ducks, magpies, jays, sparrows, warblers, hawks, and flickers. In the Spring and the Fall, hundreds of flocks of high-flying geese would migrate along the valley. Sandhill cranes wintered near us. We routinely saw otters, beavers, muskrats, jackrabbits, gophers, gray and ground squirrels. We bought a canoe and traveled many of the local streams and lakes with our favorite being the beautiful Whisky Town Lake west of Redding where we could swim until the end of October.

We joined several senior dance clubs, our favorite one in Anderson, which met on Tuesday afternoons with music by a small band featuring a 100-year-old lady playing the piano.

A major activity was to mow the three acres of pasture and lawn. Overgrown, it became a fire hazard since rain rarely fell between May and October, so we had to buy a $1,200 ride-on lawnmower; fun to ride, but costly to maintain. I enjoyed observing our abundant wildlife, but some were a major nuisance. The very abundant flickers loved to drill holes in our wood panel siding. Gophers were constantly digging holes where we did not want them. Beavers had a lodge at the edge of our property and built dams in our creek that interfered with canoeing, but their worst habit was to chew down whatever peach, plum, and other trees I planted near the water just as the trees bore fruit. My neighbor and friend, Ben said the only good beaver was a dead one. Otters ate the bass in the ponds when they reached

a decent size. The beautiful gray squirrels and pesky ground squirrels harvested the pecans and walnuts in constant competition with us, while the common brown towhees were always after the figs. Other birds and beasts made sure we rarely got to eat a ripe grape from our five different vines. The coastal black-tailed deer wandered into the garden, especially after the strawberry plants, which I had to enclose in wire mesh. One day, there were 13 antlered bucks in the garden. Coyotes, which I never saw, took care of Ben's geese.

On the plus side, peafowl (peafowls are both sexes and peacocks are male) loved our property. One peacock, in particular, became obsessed in searching through our lush tomato plants in search of tasty green tomato hornworms, but the peafowl had two bad habits—during the spring mating season the males would emit loud squawks night and day to attract females, and they chose our driveway and sidewalk to defecate their large, sticky and messy droppings.

There were many Jehovah Witnesses in our area. On most nice weekends, we would expect a carload or two to stop by to leave us the Watch Tower and then preach their version of the truth. We talked to many of them and became good friends with an elderly couple, Jodie, and Jim, who came by to visit many times. They did not preach to us once they realized we would not convert.

By coincidence, Lee surprised us in 1984 by bringing his bride, Kenda, a Jehovah Witness, to California for their honeymoon. We knew he had been dating her. We even had something of a confrontational meeting with members of her "temple," who were unhappy that she would marry outside her religion. We liked her very much in spite of her distinctive religious convictions. They lived in our Long Island house for over a year before getting a divorce for reasons which I never fully understood, but it was very interesting while it lasted. She had a complex family of Japanese ancestry on her mother's side, German on her father's with whom we remained on good terms long after the marriage ended.

Louise was tiring of traveling back and forth to different homes after twelve years. She wanted to "stay put" in our house in Florida, so I had the five acres legally subdivided into two parcels—one with the house, the other with the trailer—and put them for sale, hoping

to sell the trailer parcel first and then keep the house part a while longer. Much to my surprise, a neighboring walnut grove operator from across the stream had been looking at our property for years and bought it almost immediately.

Some of my most vivid memories of the years I lived in California are:

1. The wild, scenic ride on Route 16 along Cache Creek from Route 20 to Bette and Bill at Rumsey, especially colorful in the Spring when thousands of redbud were in bloom;
2. the pair of soaring golden eagles I saw many times that seemed to be in command of the valley;
3. the delicious navel oranges, figs, apricots, and pomegranates Bette and Bill grew; the navels, the best oranges we ever tasted;

I also have sad memories:

1. the Cuban cigars my cousins Betty and Bill constantly smoked—an addiction they picked up while in Cuba during the '50's;
2. the last walk I had with Bette as she gasped for breath after 50 feet (she died in '95);
3. the last time Bill called to say he wasn't feeling well (he died in '96);
4. and how still and quiet it was in their valley in contrast to so many of the crowded places. I hope it stays that way for a long time.

Most of California is rapidly becoming so densely populated by humans that the pleasurable amenities derived from beautiful "open spaces" are rapidly disappearing, much to the concern of many of us. Do the people of "Faith," who believe an omniscient God was the Creator of all wonderful things natural also believe God must then be very disturbed at the desecration of His magnificent creations? Such believers should be in the forefront of policy determinations that place a brake on human population expansion. Unfortunately,

they fail to see the connection and do the opposite, much to the detriment of future generations, as well as our orbiting planet.

Terminating Canandaigua

Having decided to go to California rather than to build at Canandaigua, we were left with the question what to do with those special 15 acres that overlooked the south end of the lake. In the township of Canandaigua, property along the lakefront appreciated rapidly along with their associated taxes. A good friend, now retired, who had enjoyed a lifestyle along the lake for many years, was very upset because of the high taxes he could no longer afford to live there. Part of our property was just within Canandaigua Township. Naples Township property taxes were significantly cheaper. Naples allowed mobile houses, which Canandaigua did not. Consequently, the decision was made to subdivide our 15 acres into two parcels and sell them separately, which we did at a substantial capital gain.

The Florida Adjustment

The last home that my folks bought was a small condo on the first floor of a three-story, 32-unit condominium in Hollywood. The location was within walking distance of major shopping areas, as well as being very economical to maintain with just their income from Social Security. With only 32 units everyone knew each other. The folks were very happy there while spending summers in New York. After my Mom's death, My Dad spent a few years there alone, until he became forgetful and needed more care in his 90's.

We had thought of keeping the condo for the family to use from time to time, but the neighborhood was degenerating. Thieves were breaking into units during daylight, while residents were present and there was no open space left nearby. For several years while visiting my Dad, Louise and I scouted much of the state north of Hollywood before deciding to live in the Stuart area of Martin County, 85 miles north of Hollywood. Martin County, unlike its neighbors north and south, limited building heights to four stories and had excellent beaches and other waterfronts, so in 1987 we purchased

for $104,000 a three-bedroom house on half an acre in a 139-unit development controlled by a homeowner association.

Our spacious backyard borders a 2,400 acre preserve that supports a great variety of wildlife, which, from time to time, wander across our yard, including deer, feral pigs, bobcats, otter, raccoon, gray squirrels, cottontails, quail and turkey. There were also four species of Florida's poisonous snakes—diamondback and pygmy rattlesnakes, cottonmouth moccasin, and coral snakes. While mowing the lawn four years ago, I was bitten by a pygmy rattler and had a very sore leg for two weeks. The most common snakes are the black racers, which are constantly crawling through the shrubbery bordering the house hunting for lizards and tree frogs. Our most annoying nuisance are the numerous fire ants. On the plus side, we have had fruit trees, including red and white grapefruit, navel and Valencia oranges, Robertson and Satsuma tangerines, mango, lychees, persimmon, and guava.

We have the use of a lovely swimming pool and clubhouse, and bocce and shuffleboard courts. Our major maintenance problems are repairing the sidewalks (lifted by tree roots) and our main roads, which we own and must maintain. For two years I was President of the homeowner's association. Son, Lee, became tired of working as a tennis pro for several clubs and resorts. He now runs a retail tennis shop in Stuart, and owns a nearby oceanfront condo.

Louise has adjusted so well to our Florida lifestyle she didn't even want to travel north with me anymore. Her sister, Janet, lives only seven miles away while my brother Joe, and his wife, Joan, lived in Naples in the western part of the state. Brother Sam and wife, Moya, have spent several winter months in Destin on the northern gulf coast.

Figs, Apricots, and other Flashbacks

My memory of figs begins as a little boy admiring the tempting bluish fruit growing on the fig trees, which I could not touch, in the Brooklyn backyard of my Aunt Frances. Also, I remember that my grandfather nurtured a fig tree in his expansive Claverack garden. He carefully covered it each winter with straw and other stuff to protect it from the harsh upstate winters. Grandpa had fond memories of the many fig trees he managed on his farm in Sicily, where they flourished in climate and soils that were quite amenable to their optimal development. I never tasted his figs, but there were always plenty of other fruits to enjoy.

Many years later in 1962 I met a backyard hobby farmer, like myself, in Oakdale, Long Island, who requested advice on how to deal with deer that were demolishing his beautiful plantings. The hungry, fearless deer went on his porch to browse the yews and most of the less desirable shrubs that bordered it. While there I admired his garden and landscaping and was especially impressed with his vigorous fig trees. Because of our congenial meeting, he offered me a small fig tree. Knowing I had a perfect site, the small potted plant was happily accepted and soon transplanted to a niche in the southeast corner of our chimney. It proved to be an ideal location, as the tree prospered for all the years we lived in Port Jefferson, providing us with several months of delicious blue fruit each year. However, to guarantee that the plant would survive the winter, each Fall I would gather about 20 plastic bags full of leaves from the neighborhood to stack them all around the dormant tree, which was kept trimmed and reduced to as compact a form as possible. Fig branches of the previous season's growth are quite flexible and with care can be easily bent over so that the volume of the plant to be covered can be significantly reduced.

Later, the blue fig was accompanied by a white one planted by the back steps, also in a protected southerly exposure. The white fig, unlike the blue one, usually carried over small fruit buds through the winter that started to grow in the Spring before the leaves emerged so that ripe fruit was available by early summer. Blue figs grew only at the base of each leaf. Figs on Long Island were prone to neither disease nor insect damage, thus needing no special care to protect them from those pests, but they were vulnerable to hungry squirrels, raccoons, and possums, that raided the yard and gardens regularly. I have trapped and transferred many of them. However, during the 12 years we kept Lee's Gordon Setter, Sparky, the dog stayed outdoors and kept the pesky animals at bay.

In California, we had an excellent sprawling blue fig complex that covered an area of at least ten feet by thirty feet. The major nuisance was the common brown Towhee, which practically lived within the fruitful extensive canopy, pecking into each fig just as it was getting soft enough to eat. When I tried to scare them away, they would just move around within the protective canopy. I rarely ate one fig that had not been pecked by the birds, but at least the figs did not need winter protection.

I had very poor success with figs in Florida even though vigorous plants of several varieties are regularly sold at the flea market and nurseries. The plants, including those I brought from Long Island, never grew with any vigor. The fruits were small and not very good, although plentiful. Mockingbirds ate them. On Long Island, the fig tree could easily grow 6-8 feet a year. In Florida they grew less than 6 inches a year. I finally gave up growing fig trees after five frustrating years. I even had poor luck with a persimmon, but grapefruit, oranges, tangerines, mangos, lychees, and guava flourish. Only pesky fish crows are a major predator on the beautiful red lychees.

Nothing much bothers the citrus except a nasty windborne fungus that so threatens the commercial growers that the State Agriculture Department destroys all citrus trees within 1,900 feet of an infected tree. I expect hurricanes probably spread the fungus throughout the state and consequently our trees are on borrowed time. If it's not one thing, it is another. As the Yiddish saying goes; you can't have everything."

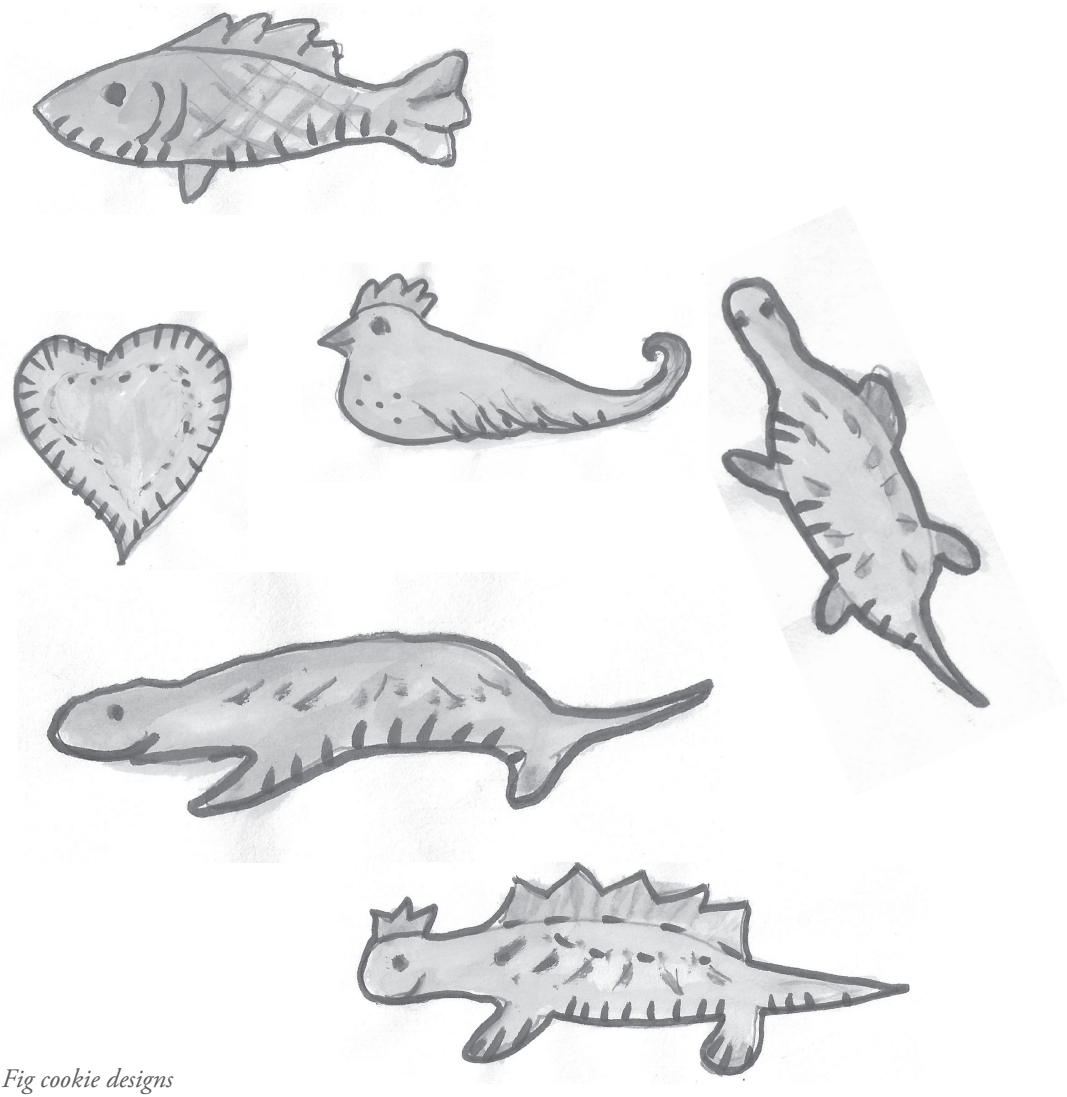


Fig cookie designs illustrated by Joanita

Fig Cookie Recipe

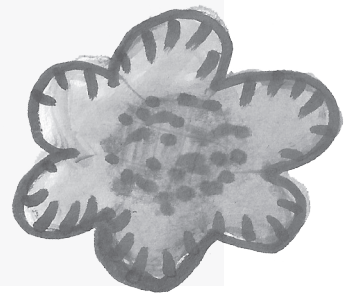
Submitted by my cousin, Carol Merrifield

Finding this fig cooking recipe took me down memory lane because the ingredient list doesn't tell the story. I tried remembering all the steps and included instructions. We spent hours shaping the cookies only to have my brothers grab a handful. The cookies would disappear quickly. When we made cookies, it was one of the few times my Mom would sit and talk about her childhood and early years of marriage.

FIG COOKIES

Dough
- 5-1/2 C. unsifted, stirred flour
- 1 C. sugar
- 1/2 Tbsp. salt
- 1 T. baking powder
- 1 C. Crisco[1]
- 1 to 1-1/2 C. cold water

Filling
- 2 lbs. dried figs. soaked and ground
- 1 T. cinnamon
- 1/4 C. honey
- Rind of one orange
- 1 C. chopped, toasted almonds
- 1 slice bread, broken into crumbs



1 My mother used Crisco. Traditionally this was probably lard. This dough is rather bland but easy to shape. Over time people opted for a different dough, using butter and more sugar. Bakeries often use a sugar cookie or shortbread dough. These taste more like cookies, but cannot be shaped traditionally.

Dough Instructions

Prepare dough using piecrust technique, cutting Crisco into dry ingredients until crumbly. Stir in water until mixture holds together.

Knead to distribute ingredients, forming large ball.

Chill thoroughly, keeping dough chilled while forming cookie

Filling Instructions

Pat figs dry to remove excess moisture. My mother ground the figs in a meat grinder. She used a piece of bread to clean out the grinder as the figs became very sticky. The bread was mixed into the filling to extend the fig mixture and soak up moisture. The figs she used were the dried figs shaped into a rope sold around the holidays. A food processor might work, but the figs are very sticky. They may need to be hand chopped.

Shaping the cookies

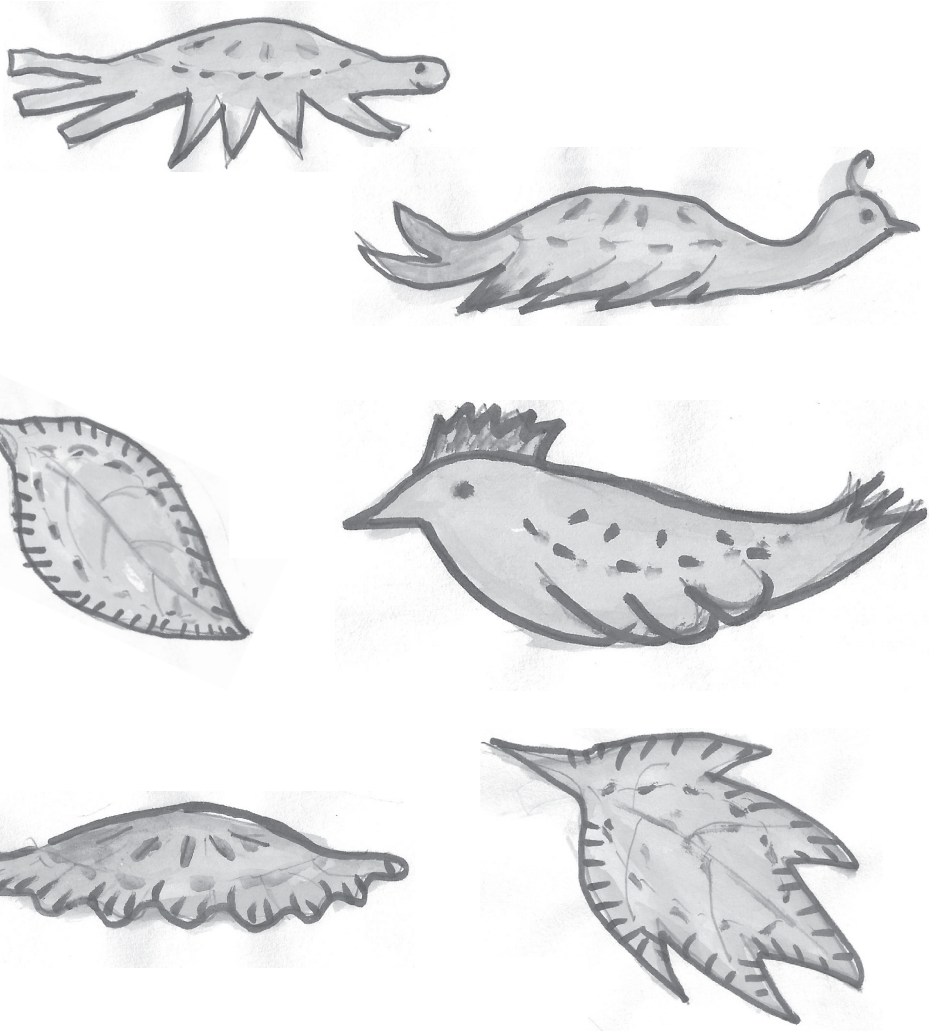
Cut a small amount of dough using a ball big enough to make an oval 4” by 3” when rolled to a thickness of 1/8”. Knead slightly to smooth out air bubbles, 4-6 times.

Place a small amount of filling lengthwise in the center of the dough. Trim off a tiny bit of each long edge. Trimming allows the edges to stick together more easily. Do not overfill, because the filling will ooze out.

Pinch the edges together, encasing filling. Toll on board to make a smooth shape. Flatten slightly seam side down.

Dough works more easily if cool, so work quickly. Form shapes and make small cuts to expose filling to heat. The exposed filling helps develop flavor. With practice one can cut with one hand and fold the cut over to one side with the other. This step is hard to explain. Just make cuts.

Lightly brush cookies with milk for browning and bake at 400 degrees for 15 to 20 min.



Farewell to Long Island, 1998

After selling our home in California, we found that our lifestyle in Florida was quite agreeable to our aging bodies and fixed finances. An added benefit was that Lee had moved to Florida and was very happy teaching tennis in Stuart, Florida and eventually running a tennis store. However, we still had our Long Island home. As much as we had enjoyed Long Island, there were several negative factors that made living there less desirable than it had been:

1) Traffic congestion seemed to worsen daily. Driving to the east end of Montauk had become more difficult and hardly pleasurable;

2) Our neighbors built an addition with three windows overlooking our pool just ten feet away so that pool privacy, one of our summer pleasures, was now zero; most summers, we rarely put on a bathing suit;

3) Jason had the house full of renters so we had no privacy in our home, and

4) It all came to a climax while I was on the roof cleaning out the gutter that each year filled with leaves. While leaning over the garage area where there was a ten foot drop to the driveway, I felt dizzy and insecure and realized that if I were to fall, I would become crippled or worse. I thought here I am almost 80-years-old and I should have enough sense to accept my roof climbing days should come to an end. I placed the house for sale.

Once again, it seemed it was time to try selling the house, especially since suddenly real estate prices were escalating rapidly. Louise returned to Florida, and I bought a large sign—"For Sale by Owner: $249,000" and placed it on the front lawn. Within 24 hours a prospective buyer knocked on the door and wanted to check out the entire house and grounds. Much to my surprise, he liked all the changes Jason had made, especially converting the garage to living quarters since the couple, the buyers, Jay Sclafani and his wife, Lisa, wanted Lisa's mother to live with them. Lisa and her mother had lived in the neighborhood years earlier and wanted to return. They asked if I could lower the price. I said if he gave me $100 and a written offer I would drop the price to $245,000 and take it off

the market. He agreed and only requested that I put in a doorway entrance to the garage room from the outside.

For two months I had been packing and having yard sales, selling much of the stuff we had accumulated over the years in long Island. I hired a local mover to move what little we kept and said goodbye to long Island and headed for Florida. I left Long Island on a bleak December day with mixed emotions. We had lived there for 40 years with no regrets, but to paraphrase Shakespeare, "Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Lee, Louise, Kendra, and Anthony in California

CHAPTER TEN

Valatie

2002 - 2004

Anthony, after the stroke, 2003

After suffering for several years with declining eyesight due to a cloudy cataract, on February 19, 2002, Dr. Davenport (Stuart Eye Institute) replaced the old with a new one and my corrected vision with glasses was miraculously

restored. I could resume driving at night and reading road signs long before the need to turn. It was time for a road trip.

In June, I flew to Long Island and picked up our '85 Taurus I had loaned to Jay's friend. I visited old friends and cousins, and our former house at Port Jefferson. From there, I drove to Claverack to spend time with Aunt Nora, my mother's youngest sister, by way of an overnight with Dan Natchez at his home in Mamaroneck.

Aunt Nora was now in her 90's, and after 80 years of taking care of others, she had reached the time when she needed others to help care for her. While there, I noticed that the former Martino farm was for sale with old acquaintance Lou McNamee the realtor. Lou had been an especially close friend of Louise's brother, Bud.

I stopped by to chat with Lou, and he asked me to show him around the farm and tell him what I remembered, especially about the exceptional artesian spring and stock watering tank behind the barn. The springhouse was tightly closed in and smelled strongly of honey. There were many bees hovering nearby, so I did not take the chance to have one last drink of the excellent water I had enjoyed hundreds of times. There had been no farming activity for many years, so the pastures were all becoming overgrown. We walked through the dilapidated house where the smell of honey was strong also, as a major hive of bees had moved into the wall. I relived many childhood memories as we walked through the old house and was surprised when Lou commented that he had a potential buyer who liked the old house so much that he wanted to transfer the house to Connecticut; I guess with bees, honeycomb and all. It hardly seemed worth it.

I then spent more time with Cousin Peter Chiaro, Aunt Nora's son, as he drove me around to inspect many of the fruit farms he was managing. On June 29, the day before I was to return to Florida, I was with Pete and his wife, Sue, at their farm stand on Route 9 in Valatie where they had a "U-Pick" strawberry field. A neighbor of Pete, Russ Reichart, whose house was visible from the stand, had his house for sale and was having major yard sales. He was selling off a lot of stuff, including a refrigerator, which Pete wanted to look at to

see if it was worth buying for his seasonal help—up to 50 Jamaicans living in Pete's trailers and other buildings.

We went to check out the fridge, which we decided was not worth buying, and while there I asked the owner a few questions about his 130-year-old house he was selling. The very cluttered house and even more cluttered grounds had been for sale for some time, but now he proposed placing it in the hands of a realtor because they were anxious to retire to their preferred home in Hudson, Florida.

There were many features about the house and property I liked and was especially impressed that there were two associated rental units that provided monthly income. They were eager to show me the entire home. Everything was in good working order; a relatively new oil fired furnace and a new water pump for their well. The more I looked at the farm, the more I thought if the price was right why not buy it and live in Columbia County once more. The only negative was that it bordered Route 9 with all its busy traffic, but it was right across from Pete's farm, and the Catskill Mountains were visible. He was asking $150,000, but it would jump to $170,000 as soon as it went with a realtor. I knew Columbia County was becoming more attractive to metropolitan buyers, who especially liked old farm houses so I was sure that once the grounds were cleaned up there should be no problem selling it at a profit should I choose to do so. Meanwhile, Russ had contracted for a new roof, which was to be installed in mid-July. Furthermore, it seemed like an ideal living situation for Jason. I had reservations to fly back to Florida the next day and had to make a quick decision on whether to make an offer. I had only $20 and gave Russ the $20 if he and his wife, Jane, would hold the sale for me for two weeks while I went to Florida to convince Louise it was worth doing. They agreed and off I went.

Reluctantly, Louise was agreeable, and two weeks later I flew back to seal the deal. Russ and I agreed that I would pay him $139,000 cash plus pay the cost for the roof separately. Pete thought I was paying too much and could have bought it for $125,000. I felt that $139,000 was a bargain, provided that the Reichart's cleaned up the yard, garage and house and especially the attic and cellar, which was full of ceramics, and a large kiln. The garage was so cluttered it

had not housed a car in years. For several weeks I commuted from Aunt Nora to Valatie helping the Reichart's clean up the house and grounds and handling yard sales.

The closing was held without a hitch on July 25 in Hudson. The Reichart's loaded the last of their stuff, mostly religious books to their van and headed for Florida. Russ now headed a religious school in Florida. Louise, Jay and I moved into the house, which then had to be furnished with more than the few card tables and old chairs that were left. Cousin Rodney Dykeman was a big help in finding the best merchants in Hudson, where I bought a fridge, washing machine and lawn mower in Valatie. On September 13 we enjoyed a get-together with many of Louise's relatives at Katy's wedding at Cortland Manor near Fishkill. Katy was the daughter of Louise's sister Janet.

With the house mostly furnished and Jay pretty well settled in, I made plans to drive back to Florida on October 21 and to take several boxes of apples, leaving some to sister Joanita, in Virgina, on the way. On the morning of October 20, I came down the 15-step stairs to the kitchen and felt a bit dizzy. As I got ready for breakfast, the feeling soon passed away, and I forgot about it as Jay and I made plans to go to Aunt Nora's to say goodbye and pick a box of late season apples. It was a perfect October day, and there were several trees still loaded with fruit. Ninety-nine percent of the trees had already been picked. I had always enjoyed picking apples, and this day was no exception. We drove through the orchard and began picking.

Suddenly, with no warning, I found myself on the ground struggling to get back on my feet, but unable to do so; and feeling very confused and anxious, not knowing what had happened. Had I been shot? It was hunting season, but there was no pain. I called for Jay, who was picking apples in a tree 100 feet away, and he rushed over to help me up and get me to the car, which we had driven into the orchard. We drove back to the house, limped inside and talked to Aunt Nora and called cousin Rodney, who came right over. We soon determined that I probably had a stroke, and I should go right to the Hudson Hospital. Rodney drove me there, and they checked me in immediately.

At the emergency room, I was met by Dr. R.C. Tobey, who checked me quickly and confirmed the stroke symptoms. He arranged for a series of tests and scans and admitted me to a pleasant room with TV, phone, and roommate. I tried to assess the damage to my body and learn all I could about stroke or Cerebral Vascular Attack (CVA). Until now, strokes had always happened to someone else and, therefore, of no particular concern. What were my chances of recovery? At least I had not died, and I could think and even talk, though not clearly. Fortunately, my right arm (I am right-handed) and leg seemed O.K., though my left arm and leg seemed frightfully unresponsive. I was having a hard time swallowing, and controlling the many intricate facial and throat muscles.

As mentioned earlier, back in 1937, I had been a patient in Hudson Hospital for seven weeks recovering nicely from the car-bike-broken leg accident. Would I be as lucky this time? My folks had a tough time paying for the misadventure. This time, Medicare and my supplemental New York State insurance would probably pay most of the hospital costs.

Dr. V.A. Keukjian became my primary doctor, who prepared additional tests, and recommended a special soft diet to provide better control of my impaired swallowing process. In the past CVA patients often died from pneumonia because their lungs became contaminated through faulty swallowing and choking. As much as I tried to compose myself, I became uncontrollably emotional when talking to relatives and friends about my awkward state, a common phenomena associated with strokes.

By the next day, Joanita arrived from Roanoke and Lee from Florida, while I insisted it would be more convenient if Louise remained in Stuart, where we could keep in daily contact by phone since I was in good hands and there was not much she could do if she were here. After a few days, Lee drove the Taurus back to Florida while Joanita stayed with Aunt Nora rather than with Jay in Valatie.

A week later I was transferred by South Columbia County ambulance to North Dutchess Hospital(NDH) in Rhinebeck, about 25 miles south, to be under the care of a neurologist, Dr. A.T. Frontera, who had a skilled staff of nurses and therapists. While I

suffered no pain, what was most bothersome was that my mouth always felt dry, especially at night, and that drinking thickened water was very unpleasant; but, other thickened liquids—soups, shakes, etc.—were O.K. At night I would fantasize about having a cold drink of water and would ask the nurse for ice chips. Some would readily comply while others would not, claiming they could not do so. My urine flow was constantly monitored since there was concern I was dehydrated to the point of needing extra fluid through an IV, which I received.

At the hospital in Rhinebeck, I had my first experience with physical and occupational therapists (OT) and many other different specialists. I had no idea that this recent profession was so well-organized and differentiated. There was a special section in the hospital where patients were taken for treatment. The O.T.'s treated the upper body while also teaching me how to best handle simple household chores, including getting dressed—a task very simple with two hands, but surprisingly complex when using only one. They also manipulate the affected arm and hand in an attempt to get the brain to reorganize itself to control the muscles and nerve formerly under the control of that part of the brain now damaged.

Physical therapists (P.T.'s) specialize in helping me regain control of balance and walking with various aides, and safely moving around in a wheelchair. Speech therapists helped to rejuvenate the many intricate facial muscles that control speech, chewing and even swallowing. It is amazing how such "simple" tasks we take for granted can get screwed up. Jay and Joanita came to see me regularly for a week until Joanita returned to Roanoke.

The assigned nurses' aides were especially important since they were the ones most intimately involved with my care—getting in and out of bed, transferring from and to bed, chairs, eating, and toilet needs. While most are women, my favorite at N.H.D. was a young man who was an aide even though he had several math degrees. He did not take enough education courses to become a teacher, something I urged him to do. We ate our meals in a special room where we could socialize with other patients. The meals were good and prepared to accommodate each patient's special needs.

There was always someone unable to feed themselves who had to be helped. I was lucky; I could feed myself.

A psychiatrist, Dr. D. Schiffman, visited me once a week or more. I felt that one visit was enough. I had no idea what he reported that justified more than one call at $140 for 45 minutes, mostly paid by Medicare.

It was determined that I could get satisfactory treatment at a facility closer to home in Valatie, so on November 8, I was transferred to the Barnwell Nursing Home in Valatie, two miles from our house, making it much more convenient for Jason to visit, as well as other friends and relatives. Cousin Walter Merrifield was there where his wife, Jane, had worked for many years. I found all the staff and therapists to be very competent and pleasant and was soon feeling very much "at home." My first half-day excursion away from the nursing home was when brother-in-law Russ Beck invited Jay and me for Thanksgiving Dinner. They lifted me up the stairs in his house with the wheelchair. We had an excellent dinner prepared by Russ's wife Lynn. I felt weak and awkward being moved in and out of the car. Eventual recovery of the use of my left arm and leg would be partial at best and very slow in evolving, but at least there was hope. For many patients in the nursing home, there was little hope.

More basic to the concern was the question "What could I have done to have prevented my stroke and future strokes. I exercised regularly, including mowing the extensive lawn, tried to eat sensibly, got plenty of sleep, etc. I didn't smoke. I had little alcohol and an occasional aspirin. However, I had no control over the age factor nor a probable genetic disposition. I had a history of occasional TIA's (Transient Ischemic Attacks). Now, to minimize a second CVA, I am on a daily series of medications.

There were far more women than men recuperating at Barnwell nursing home, many with some stage of dementia. We assembled in the same room for meals at a dozen different tables for four, during which time there was often an interesting exchange of conversation, although some patients never said a word, many of them needed to be fed by an aide, while a few others chattered constantly.

There was one lady in particular who rarely spoke, other than to complain about the food. "I raised eight kids and would never feed them this slop," she repeated quite often about a meal which most of us enjoyed. One day while her attentive daughter was visiting she complained, as usual, until her daughter ultimately said: "Well, mom, tell me what you want, and I will get it." Mom replied, "How about a bologna sandwich on rye bread with lots of mustard!" A rather surprising and simple solution the kitchen staff was happy to prepare and please her for a change.

Another time, two ladies were vigorously arguing about the day of the week. One insisted it was Friday while the other argued that it was not Friday, but Saturday. Finally, after bickering for five minutes, they agreed to ask a nurse for her opinion. The nurse replied that it was definitely Saturday. That did not satisfy the one who claimed it was Friday. She shot right back saying, "Well if it is Saturday what the hell happened to Friday!" Another proper lady from the same table complained each breakfast either that her coffee was too cold or the toast not done right and would demand that one aide, each of whom was busy trying to help someone eat, heat the coffee or get better toast. To make matters worse, she never learned the names of the aides or nurses but would address them as "Miss" or Nurse," a habit unappreciated by the staff, who liked being addressed by their names, especially from the non-demented old timers.

My most annoying problem was with Jack, one of my three table mates. Our meal trays were delivered a few minutes apart and were placed close together on our crowded table. When Jack was not the first to get his tray, he would glance at one of ours and if he saw something he liked he would reach over, grab it and quickly stuff it in his mouth. No matter how often he was reprimanded he would repeat with the retort he didn't see the other person's name on the food; therefore, he had the right to take it. He was a bit demented, but we could not say that. Another sloppy table mate was a long-term resident, Joe, who had very poor hand-eye coordination and was always trying to stack a cup or glass on some other unstable object spilling it all, invariably making a mess on the table, the floor and himself. To minimize messing your clothes we were all issued clean

bibs or "clothing protectors" at every meal, a practice I continue at home. On my last day at Barnwell, I was given a most enjoyable Jacuzzi bath by my favorite nurse's aide, Wendy Paul, from Ghent. Before that memorable event, we were given showers twice a week seated in special chairs under the shower stalls, assisted by an aide.

My stay at Barnwell ended on December 15 when Louise had me transferred to the Manors at Hobe Sound just five miles from our house in Stuart. Our Valatie tenant, Zack, drove Jay and me to the Albany Airport. From there, Jay helped me in the wheelchair to get to West Palm Beach by way of Southwest Airlines with a stop in Baltimore, getting excellent care all along the way. Louise and Lee met us at West Palm Beach and drove me directly to the Manors where the quality of the facilities and staff are comparable to those at Barnwell, including patient care and meals.

Louise could now come by nearly every day, often having lunch with me at the modest cost of $3. I resumed speech, physical and occupational therapy, and was soon feeling strong enough to be discharged home for home therapy on February 4. Adrienne Farineau, the occupational therapist had checked the house and recommended certain modifications, primarily in the bathroom, so I could qualify for Medicare approved home therapy several times a week by a group of therapists different from the ones at the Manors. Medicare approved a custom fitted wheelchair and quad cane so I have been able to move about comfortably and safely outside around the yard.

A friend and former neighbor, Dan Troxler, installed a ramp from the living room to the lower sun porch so I could move the wheelchair from one room to the other. Unfortunately, the ramp proved to be my undoing. On April 11, while slowly walking up the ramp with the quad cane, I somehow lost my balance, which is still somewhat precarious, and crashed to the hard porch floor. I had slipped or fallen several times before but had never gotten more than a few bruises. This time was dramatically different. I felt pain in my left leg right away and called 911. The team came in a few minutes, assessed the damage, carefully placed me on their stretcher and drove me

to the emergency room at nearby Martin Memorial South Hospital where my leg was immediately x-rayed to reveal a broken hip bone, just a few inches from the socket.

I was scheduled for surgery the next day. The doctor placed a plate and pin over the broken bone and said it was done easily and there should be no complications. After a few days in the hospital, I was returned to the Manors to recuperate. I felt very foolish and stupid for having been so careless, and surprised that my bones had gotten so fragile. Over the years, I have had hundreds of falls and jolts with nothing more than a bruise. I had repeatedly been cautioned by all of the nurses and aides to be very careful not to fall since persons my age could easily break a bone or two.

Within ten days from the surgery, I resumed walking. A month later, I returned home and once more received therapy as an outpatient both at the Manors and to the hospital for pool therapy, which helped me feel strong enough to fly alone nonstop to Charlotte, North Carolina to spend time with Joanita and give Louise a break. Joanita and her companion Brian picked me up at the airport and drove the three and a half hours north to Roanoke, where I stayed until August 26, during which time Joanita was very solicitous to my care and talked me into writing "My Memoirs."

Jason had come to Roanoke on August 21 to fly with me to Valatie (Albany) on the 26. We got along O.K. in the Valatie house since I did not have to climb the stairs to the second story bedroom. Instead, Jay put my bed in the big sunroom next to the bathroom and kitchen so that there was no problem moving about with the wheelchair, including getting to the outside deck. Rather than taking a chance to climb into our tub or shower, Aunt Nora let me use her walk-in shower once a week. I had a pleasant time visiting friends and relations, as well as enjoying Cousin Pete's berry crop across the road.

By mid-September, I was back "home," in Stuart, feeling confident enough to take several "swims" in our Duckwood pool, getting there in the battery operated cart that brother Joe and his wife Joan had given me. During the summer, Lee started a business selling tennis supplies, and stringing racquets and opened his shop "Tennis Frenzy," renting space in a mall-like area along Route 1 in

Stuart. Overhead was high then and now and he must work six days a week, but he enjoys doing it so much more than the other tennis pro jobs he had working for others.

In March 2004, I no longer qualified for the Medicare paid therapy so I privately paid a therapist to increase the strength and function of my left leg, arm and hand. The broken hip was healed, but my left knee continued to feel insecure each time I would get up from either the bed or chair. Apparently, recovering from the hip fracture, set me back. And, at the age of 83, healing and recovery was not so easy.

In 1937, when my right leg and knee were immobilized for 14 weeks, it took two years for the knee to recover. My doctor looked at x-rays and determined that there was nothing mechanically wrong with the left knee. The physical therapists thought it was the muscles and ligaments that tightened and they needed to be stretched on a continuing basis.

Over time, my arm and hand showed some progress. I could clench my left fist and pinch my fingers together. The left arm has not recovered enough to allow me to swim the "crawl," but with a float around my neck, I could kick my legs and move comfortably around the pool without fear of drowning even though I could awkwardly paddle with just the right arm. Brother Joe gave me his electric cart (AMIGO), and it came in very handy carrying me back and forth to the pool, which has solid steps with a hand rail to help in getting in and out.

My recovery has slowly improved, but I still must walk with the quad cane and continue to use the comfortable and secure wheelchair. Louise, my dedicated "guardian angel," patiently cared for me with meals, laundry, shopping and driving to wherever we had to go.

In mid-September 2004, Hurricane Frances left us mourning its tragic path of destruction, fear, and frustration through much of Florida. While I have experienced the fringes of many hurricanes beginning in 1938 in Claverack and then with many others on Long Island, as well as Florida, this is the first time I was in the direct path of one. Frances' eye came over us at 11 A.M. but because its forward motion had slowed to less than ten mph it lasted until 5 P.M.—six

hours of continuous quiet between many anxious hours of howling winds tearing at house and yard as we tried to sleep. It seemed it would never end and that the house would be torn apart.

Son, Lee, and his delightful girlfriend, Pam, at the time, had put on the storm shutters two days earlier and had stayed overnight. Lee had to evacuate his home on Hutchison Island and was not allowed back for three days. Pam went to Fort Pierce to stay with a girlfriend who was alone. Jason, safe in New York, kept urging us to close up the house and head north, a fretful journey that many folks attempted with varying degrees of success.

Hurricane Frances finally fizzled out in the North Atlantic, the "the final resting place" of many hurricanes, but not before devastating thousands of homes, schools, businesses, traffic signals and trees. Our damage was confined to the roof and trees. About fifty pieces of shingles flew off into the yard, and much of the trim and soffits ripped off or dislodged; but, thankfully, no leaks or broken glass—the storm shutters did their job.

Relatively speaking, on a damage scale from one to ten, the impact was about a four. No one in our Duckwood community lost their home, but many were damaged at a scale of six to seven. We lost three of four wax myrtle bushes and some ruby red grapefruit and tangerine trees. The banana plants were badly beaten but recovered. Many trees in the adjoining preserve were shattered making former pathways impassable. Much to our surprise, the Duckwood clubhouse remained intact, but we lost some oaks, palms, and cypress trees. Without power, the lift pump to our gravitational sewerage system could not function so that equipment had to be brought in to pump out the sewage stored in large holding tanks before it could back up into our homes.

We had water, but were without electricity, telephone and cable TV for seven days and felt very frustrated without these now taken-for-granted amenities that some of us had comfortably lived without years ago.

Meanwhile, Hurricane Ivan, the next one of nature's unprincipled terrorists threatened the west coast of Florida on its way to clobbering the good folks in the Panhandle. So much for the calculated risk of

living in Florida during the potentially explosive hurricane season, which, thankfully, ends around Thanksgiving, but probably placed a temporary damper on the booming real estate business.

The frightening fury of Frances will forever remain in the memory banks of those of us who felt its awful power. At least we outlived the heartless, miserable Frances that died a slow death in the cool waters of the North Atlantic. However, those of us who choose to live in Florida must deal with the unpleasant fact that each summer season the warm South Atlantic will continue to spawn a series of troublesome whirlwinds, many destined to torment and haunt us no matter how much we pray.

Anthony, after the stroke

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Remembering Louise

Louise in her last photo

My personal history book would not be complete unless I created a special section about my dear wife, Lu. Mary Louise was born in Shillington, Pennsylvania (near Reading), June 22, 1921, to Russell and Emma Beck. It was a noteworthy event because 18-year-old Emma's mother

and grandmother and great-grandmother were still living. Tragically, Louise's mother, Emma, died while Louise was only a teenager. Grief-stricken, Louise was suddenly obligated to become a caretaker to younger brother Harold and sister Janet. Louise graduated from Shillington High School in 1939 and went to work for the Principal. Several years later, Louise's father, Russell, married Hazel Fisher, who already had three children—Mary, Tom, and Jack. Louise then became free to pursue her own interests.

Soon after that, Russell Junior was born, and her father moved the family to Claverack, New York, my hometown, to manage a textile plant in Hudson. My memories of Louise began when I met her blended family in 1949, now cemented together by Russell Junior. I saw her socially at local special occasions, and especially at a June Strawberry Festival, while becoming a close friend of her brother, Harold.

We had our first special date that July to canoe and swim in nearby Copake Lake. She impressed me with how well she handled herself in a canoe for the first time. She also had no problem changing into a bathing suit outdoors behind the car to enjoy the evening swim. I could not help but notice how beautifully athletic she was and decided to see a lot more of her. After several more dates, we seemed as compatible as any couple could expect to be. Since I had a steady job as a wildlife biologist with the New York State Conservation Department earning $3,000 a year it was time to consider marriage. We were married on February 4, 1950, in Claverack by the Beck Dutch Reformed minister then honeymooned to Florida driving my new Kaiser-Traveler. The car's back bench seat folded forward, so occasionally, we slept in the car much to the amusement of my Orlando cousins.

I was impressed with Lu's flexibility and how supportive she was of my evolving career. My work took me all over the state, requiring several moves. Upon returning to New York from our honeymoon, we rented our first apartment near the Bath Fish Hatchery. We next went to Ithaca, Delmar, and finally to Long Island to learn something about marine fisheries. Louise enjoyed it, although we were

cramped in one room in Ithaca where Louise worked a few weeks for Morse-Chain.

In July 1950, I had a different job working from the Rochester office, mostly to build wildlife marsh ponds in the five county Finger Lakes Region. In August, we bought our first home on a 40-acre farm close to Canandaigua Lake for $9,000. For an additional $1,500 we purchased all the home furnishings and farm stuff. The farm supported five acres of black raspberries and two acres of grapes that produced 13 tons that fall. The crop helped us pay off the $1,500. I had no problem getting a 4% veteran's mortgage, but a problem gathering the $900 down payment. Having grown up on fruit and dairy farms, I could not have been happier. City-girl Louise had to make many adjustments, which she easily did. With her cheerful, outgoing personality we soon had lots of friends and helpful neighbors, as well as various wildlife "pets." Louise enjoyed a pet raccoon and a pair of flying squirrels the most, which we kept on the porch. Young Russ spent many summers with us, as did other family members, especially enjoying the ponds I built so that Louise could enjoy summer swims without having to drive to a local lake.

In 1955, I took a promotion to Syracuse and bought a small five-year-old house in nearby Liverpool. Our first son, Lee, was born there in 1957. Louise now felt complete and enjoyed motherhood as much as any woman could. It took only 90 minutes to drive from Syracuse to the farm, so we kept it allowing two neighbors to work the farm on shares. Louise felt that maintaining two households and a baby was becoming a strain and wanted a simpler life.

Conditions changed in her favor when I agreed to transfer to Long Island, which turned out to be an excellent move for our entire family. We easily sold the Liverpool house, placed the farm for sale and bought a new three-bedroom house in Port Jefferson. She thoroughly enjoyed the home, warmer climate and overall environment. In July 1964 Jason was born. To celebrate, I presented her with a swimming pool just ten feet from the back door. She loved the pool, even though we were only a few minutes from saltwater beaches, which she also enjoyed. As usual, she soon had many friends and soon worked for *Response*, a local crisis center. Later, she trained to be a

licensed beautician and cosmetologist, something she enjoyed and became very good at cutting my hair from then on. Louise was also a talented seamstress and knitter. One of her favorite pastimes was shopping at thrift stores. Since she always maintained her trim figure, she could get many expensive items donated by wealthy women who grew out of them, especially bathing suits. I admired her thriftiness. Naturally, we had a normal amount of prickly moments, but we always managed to pull out the thorns before they dug too deep.

When I retired in 1982 from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Lee was exploring California. When he wanted to buy a property on a salmon stream, I flew there and ended up buying a house and small farm 80 miles south of the Oregon border, near Redding and Mount Lassen, an area that specialized in walnuts and cattle. Louise was not too happy about the deal but agreed as long as we kept our Port Jefferson Home. As usual, she soon made many friends, enjoyed the walnuts and persimmons and become content when I built two ponds to swim in even though we often drove to the delightful Whiskey Town Lake. We participated in many senior programs, especially dances that Louise always enjoyed.

For ten years we spent spring and fall in California, summer on Long Island and winter with my father in Florida. I enjoyed the routine, especially exploring the northwest, but Louise soon tired of it. In 1986, we noticed a big sign on Route 1, in Florida, advertising Duckwood. Curious, we checked it out, saw only a few houses, but the clubhouse and swimming pool were almost completed. With the pool in place, we figured Duckwood an ideal, affordable place to retire. We bought Lot 73, ordered a "Mallard" model home and homesteaded in November 1987. In 1990, the first indications of future health problems came when Louise spent ten days in Memorial North's Intensive Care Unit diagnosed with congestive heart disease. She recovered to resume enjoying the Duckwood lifestyle. In 2002, I suffered a stroke that left my left side partially paralyzed. Once more, Louise had to become a caregiver.

For 24 years, Louise enjoyed living in Duckwood until March, 2011 when her worn out heart forced her back into the hospital. When she was released after ten days in ICU, the doctors placed

her under home hospice care. Luckily, son Jason was still here to be our caregiver. On May 11, while under the excellent care of hospice medical staff, Louise woke up feeling upbeat. She had a hearty breakfast and drove the electric cart we had just gotten to replace the bicycle for a swim in the pool. She had lunch with a special friend, Ed Kubish, played Monday afternoon cards with friends in the Clubhouse, came home and told me what a great day she was having on the road to recovery, and felt energetic enough to wash her hair in the sink. What a terrible shock to see her at 5:30 PM lying motionless on the floor by the sink. I called 911 our close friend, Nancy Dowd, a nurse who then called hospice. Apparently, her death was instantaneous with no pain or suffering. She left us with thousands of pleasant memories of a very special lady who was very much loved. We should all be so lucky.

Louise in Florida

The Beck Family in 1949

Louise with her brother, Harold Beck, andFamily

Louise at the pond in Canandaigua, summer and winter

Anthony and Louise's wedding, February 4, 1950

Left to Right: Sam (Best Man), Janet (Louise's sister, Maid of Honor), Louise and Anthony

Toasting the happy couple at the reception

Louise with her pet raccoon

Louise and Anthony

Louise and Lee

Louise and Jay

Louise and Lee

Louise with Lee and Jay

Louise in Florida 1981

Louise swimming in 1985

Louise in 2009

In the End

Naturally, for all of us, life is full of "what ifs." "What if" I had not been blind in one eye and had been accepted into the Marines or became a pilot? I could have easily been killed or badly wounded. "What if" I had accepted the invitation to go to Harvard Medical School? Would I have had a better or happier life? "What if" I would have had my stroke a day later while driving 70 mph on the interstate on the way to Florida as planned? Everyone's life is full of "what ifs" and while it is interesting to speculate about them, it's just as well that we can't do much more than that.

Meanwhile, "what if" I had not had the stroke? Would I be writing this personal history? Probably not. More likely, I would be outside in the balmy Florida weather either working in the yard or fishing on the beach. While gardening and fishing have always been an enjoyable activity, I can say that writing and updating this personal history has also been enjoyable. I hope my nephews and nieces find their family background interesting and enlightening.

I believe reflecting and documenting my life would not be complete without sharing briefly my religious beliefs. When it comes to religion, I believe everyone has the right to believe whatever he or she feels comfortable and reassuring. However, no one has the right to force their religious beliefs on anyone else. Although I am non-religious, I am not anti-religion.

In 2010, after many years of exploring numerous organized religions, Louise and I joined the Humanists of the Treasure Coast, headed by Joe Beck. I find no evidence to support a belief in the supernatural, heaven or hell, for that matter. However, I do find evidence to support the benefits and the necessity of practicing the Golden Rule of treating others as we would like to be treated. I continue to participate and enjoy my affiliations with this Humanists

group. My participation has reinforced my belief that reason guided by compassion and empathy is a viable approach to seeking solutions to personal, family, social problems and social justice.

My life has been committed to using rational, pragmatic thought and science to protect the environment and animals sharing our planet. This pragmatism extends to my own life and inevitable death. Although many may feel uncomfortable talking, and, in this case, reading about death, I believe my awareness of death is like a friend infusing my life with more meaning. Since I believe we only have this life and no afterlife, my life is even more valuable to me.

This awareness has provided clarity to my end-of-life wishes. Rather than paying for a tombstone to cover a lifeless coffin-filled grave, I have directed my sons that upon my death, to mix my ashes and those of Louise and spread them under the oak and red gum trees in our backyard. We will then be recycled for years to come into those beautiful trees. I call that a happy ending.

APPENDIX

Anthony Taormina Personal History Dossier

1921	Born on March 12 in Brooklyn, New York
1925	Moved to farm in Claverack, Columbia County, New York
1938	Graduated from Hudson High School—Hudson, New York
1943 - '46	Served in the U.S. Army in Europe and Philippines Staff Sargent (Coast Artillery, Special Services, and Infantry Quartermaster)
1948	B.S. in Forest Management from New York State College of Forestry
1949	M.S. in Wildlife Management from New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse, New York
1950	Married Mary Louise Beck in Claverack

Professional Career

Through 1948	Many miscellaneous jobs from farming to timber cruising
1950	Appointed Assistant Game Research Investigator—Rochester area (worked mostly in developing wildlife marsh ponds in Western New York)
1955	Appointed District Game Manager, Syracuse—Central New York area

1961	Transferred to Long Island as Regional Game Manager and especially to develop a marine wetlands program
1965	Appointed Regional Supervisor of Fish and Wildlife for Long Island
1966	Appointed Permit Agent for Long Island and New York City regarding issuance of permits in navigable waters and trout streams as result of new legislation
1974	Appointed Director Division of Marine and Coastal Resources—New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
1982	Retired from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Major Functions as an Educator

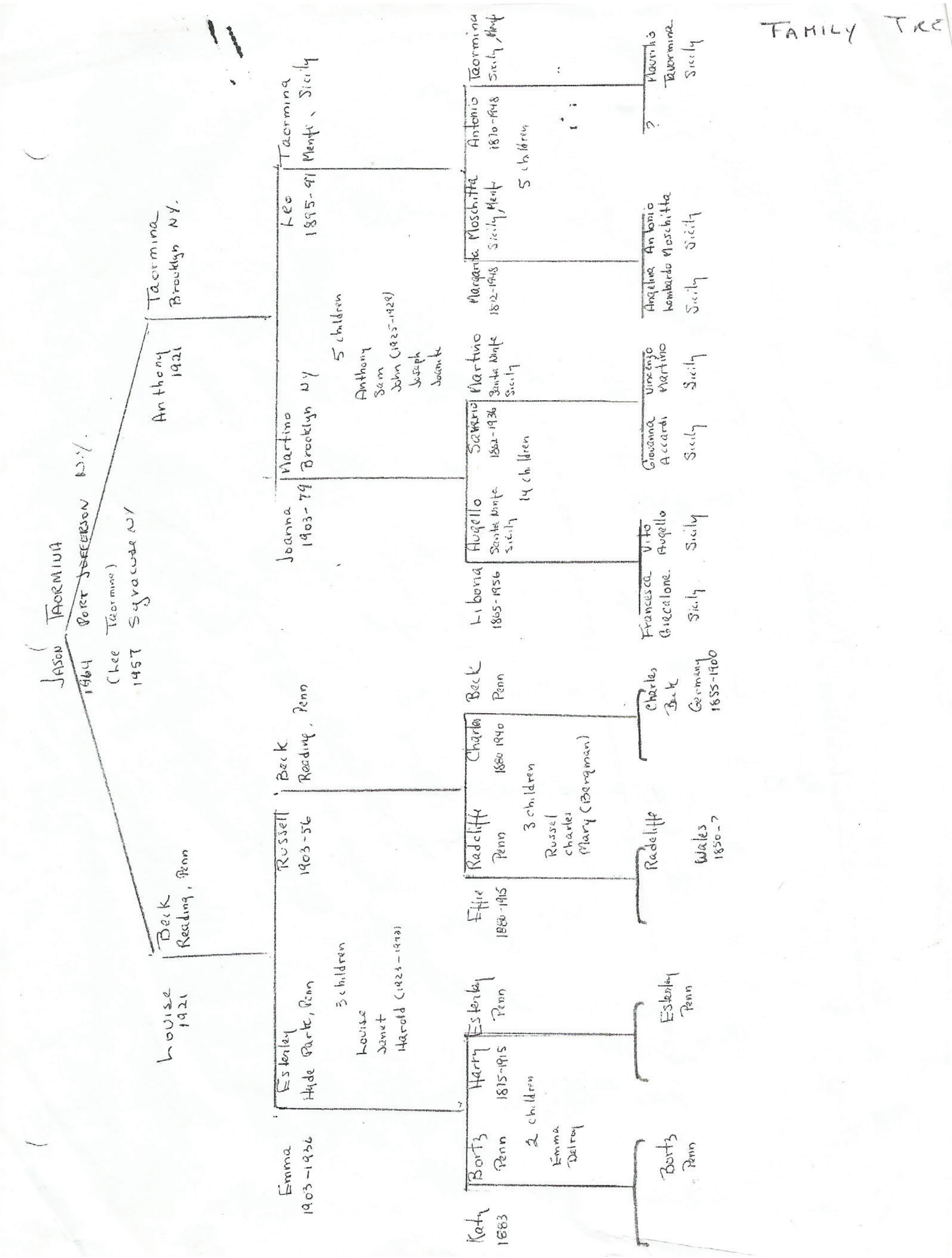
1963-1982	Guest Lecturer at 30 or more universities and colleges relative to environmental management issues
1984-1985	BOCES-SCOPE Course Farming Long Island

Major Functions as an Author

1965	"Sermon on the Mount (Mt. Sinai Harbor that is)"
1966	"Journey Down the Nissequoge" (Conservationist)
1966	"Mosquito Problems in Fish and Wildlife Management in New York" (Technical paper)
1967	"Natural Value of Marine Wetlands" (Conservationist)
1969	"Journey Down a Roman Road" (Conservationist)
1970	"Journal on Jamaica Bay" (Conservationist)

1971	"Art and Science of Composting" (Conservationist)
1971	"Discussion of Conflicting Relationships between Sewers and Surface Waters and suggestions for resolving the conflict"
1971	"Proposal for Management of Nassau-Suffolk Freshwater Resources"
1972	"Wildlife and New York's Marine Environment" (Conservationist)
1973	"Journey Down a Country Road" (Conservationist)
1973	"Total Management for Resource Values of Long Island's Tidal Wetlands" (Technical Publication)
1974	"Salt Marsh Meadows and Spongy Bays" (Conservationist)
1975	"Proceedings of Shellfish Management Workshop" (Technical Paper)
1979	"Management Needs and Interactions Relating to Anadromous Fisheries Management"
1981	Managing New York State's Marine Fisheries" (Conservationist)
2006	Traveling with Genie and Me (Children's Poetry Book) Self-published by Trafford

Family Tree


FAMILY TREE
Jason Taormina
1964 Port Jefferson N.Y.
Chee (Taormina)
1957 Syracuse NY
Anthony
1921
Taormina
Brooklyn NY.
Louise
1921
Beck
Reading, Penn
Joanna
1903-79
Martino
Brooklyn NY
5 children
Lee
1895-91
Taormina
Menfi, Sicily
Emma
1903-1936
Esterley
Hide Park, Penn
3 children
Louise
Janet
Harold (1923-1993)
Russell
1903-56
Beck
Reading, Penn
3 children
Russel
Charles
Mary (Bergman)
Katy
1883
Bortz
Penn
2 children
Emma
Delray
Harry
1875-1915
Esterley
Penn
Effie
1880-1915
Radcliffe
Penn
Charles
1880-1940
Beck
Penn
Liboria
1865-1956
Augello
Santa Ninfa
Sicily
14 children
Salvatore
1862-1936
Martino
Santa Ninfa
Sicily
Margarita
1872-1948
Moschitta
Sicily, Menfi
5 children
Antonio
1870-1948
Taormina
Sicily, Menfi
Bortz
Penn
Esterley
Penn
Radcliffe
Wales
1850-?
Charles
Beck
Germany
1855-1900
Francesca
Giacalone
Sicily
Vito
Augello
Sicily
Giovanna
Accardi
Sicily
Vincenzo
Martino
Sicily
Angelina
Lombardo
Sicily
Antonio
Moschitta
Sicily
?
Maurizio
Taormina
Sicily

A Family Story
of the Taorminas & the Martinos

At ninety-five years-of-age, I decided to distill the binders full of my photos and memories into one book of our family's history.

Hopefully, this personal history will stimulate more memories, and provide a historical perspective on a lifestyle so very different from the ones we live today and in the future. More importantly, I hope my reflections provide insights and a deeper sense of family roots.

–Anthony Taormina