Tales of My Father

By John A. Munroe

A NOTE

Occasionally notes I was using were dated, in which case I repeated the dates, in brackets, after the information these notes contained. Scarce as these dates are, they do suggest that many of my father's tales were recounted when he was in his eighties. His precise memory of details, therefore, such as the price of sturgeon, may be questioned.

Tales of My Father

My father, Michael John Munroe, was a born storyteller. I understand that storytellers are not uncommon in Ireland and that they are highly respected. My father was Irish, but he never visited Ireland and as far as I know he had no one in his family to mimic in this regard.

For many years I listened to his stories, usually with rapt attention. I was an only child and my father was my great chum when I was a boy. I lived at my parents' home until I was thirty-one, and even afterward I lived only thirteen miles away, close enough to see him frequently. He lived to be ninety, and in his last decade I began making notes of many of the stories he told me, sometimes even as we talked over the phone, sometimes soon after I left his company.

When I was young, my father told me stories adjusted to my age. In putting me to bed at night he made up tales about a Little Bobby who was always getting lost. He caused his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Casey (there was also a sister named Mary), a good deal of trouble. Fortunately they had a resource they could turn to when all their own efforts to locate Bobby were unsuccessful. This resource was Detective Murphy. No matter where Bobby had wandered—the engine room of a ship, in the players' locker room at a baseball game, into the monkey house at a zoo—Detective Murphy was equal to the challenge. He always found Bobby.

Other tales were more factual. I heard many tales about the great prizefighter John L. Sullivan, of how he soaked his hands in brine to toughen them, of his courage in watching his own operation through a mirror as surgeons worked on him, of his 80-round bare-knuckle contest with Jake Kilrain on a raft in the Mississippi, of his final defeat by Gentleman Jim Corbett, a scientific boxer who danced around John L., avoiding the wild swings of the old hero who called "Come on and fight" when he was desperately and vainly trying to reach his challenger.

And when John L. came to Wilmington as the star in a traveling theatrical company my father was in the crowd of boys who followed his cab from the depot to the Clayton House, Wilmington's premier hotel. Here, when he left his cab and was about to enter

the hotel, he stopped, turned, took a handful of coins from his pocket, and threw them to the boys. Later, when he proceeded from the hotel to the Grand Opera House, he repeated the coin tossing. On the stage, in a starring role, the heroic John L. saved a distressed maiden, besieged in a cabin by a gang of ruffians, by slipping his arm into the place of a splintered bar that held the door shut against the effort of several men to break into the room where the girl cowered. But with John L. protecting her, she was safe and the cutthroats were foiled.

A few tales were about a bad boy, Culey Coyle. My father was innocently standing on a corner when a group of older boys, Coyle at their center, began to plan a burglary at a Chinese laundry nearby. They turned to my father, who was trying to inch away and told him he was to be their watchman. He was afraid to refuse outright, but as soon as they conducted him to his station and left him, he ran home as fast as he could—Culey wound up in jail, of course.

When he was a small boy, Dad and his friends called their pick-up baseball team the "Little Potatoes, Hard to Peel" or the "Little Tin Cans, Hard to Dent." With some bigger boys who had a boat, he went across the river to Penn's Grove for a frolic. When they got hungry, they took a watermelon from a farmer's field and cut it. Dad's share was mostly of the rind, but the boys told him it was the sweetest part.

On an occasion when a bigger boy wanted to fight him, Dad made a fist holding the middle finger so that the knuckle protruded. When they squared off, the big boy saw Dad's fists and protested that if the protruding knuckle struck him in the eye, he would be blinded. Dad knew he couldn't really keep his knuckle protruding if he struck a blow, but he didn't let on; he just kept his fists as he had them. The big boy said this was unfair and walked away, refusing to fight, which suited Dad fine.

Don't swing wildly in a fight, Dad advised; "a short jab carries more power." But I was not a fighter, I preferred to wrestle. It did prove useful that Dad showed me how to grab an adversary around the neck and throw him over my thrust-out hip. We boys wrestled a lot at recess as a form of play, without being angry at all.

Other stories chronicled the doings of the James boys—Jesse and his brother and their gang of Western desperadoes. I wonder where my father learned these tales. He spoke of dime novels, but also of plays he saw, some when he was quite young. At fifteen he would go to a theater called the Academy of Music, where a gallery seat cost ten cents. He didn't get uptown often then and he had no money to see *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when a traveling company brought that show to town. However, he got a job leading their bloodhounds in a street parade. He was outfitted in a red coat and given a free ticket when the parade was over. He tried often to get a job as a "supe" but was always turned down as too short.

Dad did not stay up late as a boy; he was too tired—and I suppose there was little artificial light. On cold days the children undressed downstairs in the kitchen and then ran upstairs to unheated bedrooms.

When my father was nine he spent much of his time on the marsh that lay between South Wilmington and the Delaware River, beside the Christina River. Christiana Avenue ran from this marsh to Lobdell's foundry on the Christina River. Though ashes were dumped on the roadway once a week, the water would wash over it in floods, and then people would walk along the railroad tracks, which were higher than the road. A German girl whose father had a farm about where the Memorial Bridge begins today walked to town along the tracks daily to attend Sacred Heart School, where German Catholics went.

Along Christiana Avenue there was one farm, kept by a man who raised tobacco. He had a tobacco barn and a solid board fence eight feet high around his ten acres, but he gave his farm up about the time my father was fourteen.

Many other fields were drained and used for pasture. Dad and other boys would drive cows out here (householders often kept a cow to have fresh milk) and then went swimming while the cows grazed. Hay was cut on some of the fields.

One day when swimming in the Christina, Dad came up from a dive underneath a barge. For a moment, panic struck him—as it struck me when I heard the yarn. It was dark and he couldn't see which way to go to get out from under—if he chose the wrong way the barge might be longer than he could hold his breath under water. Fortunately he chose the right way.

This story thrilled me when I heard it, even more than the tale of when Dad fell off a roof and broke his nose. The mark of that accident, a slightly crooked nose, he carried to the grave, but the story lacked the suspense of being caught under the barge.

Part way out Christiana Avenue was a sluice and bank, with water deep enough to float a rowboat. It was called the City Ditch and had been built by the city government—perhaps it was the city boundary, my father thought. Wild celery and other feed for game were sewn in the area by wealthy people to attract plovers and other birds that they shot.

My father trapped muskrats here and hunted opossums and coons. [May 22, 1961] When he caught muskrats, it was the pelt that was most valuable. He would be glad to get five cents for the meat, which he could only sell to a Negro. (White people downstate liked to eat muskrat, sometimes called marsh rabbit; I have eaten it at the Port Penn firehouse. But apparently the Wilmington Irish spurned it.)

Dad wouldn't eat possum either; it was too fat for his taste. But he caught possums easily on the marsh because they couldn't run fast. One day he and another boy tracked a possum to a willow tree, where it nested in a crotch. The other boy climbed the tree, stuck a piece of wood in the possum's mouth, grabbed his tail, and threw him to the ground where Dad waited. He charged at Dad, who hit him with an old piece of wood. The possum rolled over and played dead. Dad picked him up and put him inside his coat. He and his friend carried the possum under their coats to the Liberty firehouse (in South Wilmington). They would put a hand in his pouch every now and then to keep warm.

When they got to the Liberty, a man bought the possum from them and put the animal inside his coat to show him to someone. Soon he came running back yelling, "Take him off! Take him off!" The possum had stirred from his previously somnolent state, bit the man's suspenders, and was now hanging on.

Another winter day on the marsh, a man shot a duck that dropped in a pond about halfway down the road to Lobdell's. He tried to send a dog out to get the duck, but the dog wouldn't go. Finally he said to the kids, "If any of you get that duck, you can have it." Dad took off his pants and plunged right in the cold water. He got the duck, but when he got back to the shore, he was so cold he couldn't put his pants on. He just picked them up and ran home by the back way, pants in one hand and duck in the other.

Parenthetically, I should explain that "the Liberty" was the name of Volunteer Fire Company No. 9. I grew up knowing about the Liberty (of which my father in time became a member) and such rival companies as the Washington and the Wiccaco. Sometimes, I gathered, they spent more time directing their hoses over a building at each other than at the flames before them. I wore my father's uniform, the shirt and jacket anyway, as much of it as I could (there was also a very dressy visored helmet, made to be carried in parades rather than worn) to masquerade parties when I was big enough, and I knew the shout that didn't quite rhyme,

> "Liberty, Liberty, No. 9,
> Beats the Washie every time!"

"Lobdell's" also deserves a word of identification. It was a foundry on the Christina, just upstream from where the Marine Terminal was later built. Both my father and my grandfather worked there.

Raccoons, my father told me, were faster than possums on the ground and could be trained like a dog. A man trained two raccoons as pets and gave them to the zoo in Brandywine Park. Then he would go there early in the morning, let them out, and pet them. "But be careful; a raccoon can bite hard." [March 14, 1965]

There was marine life as well as possums and coons on the marsh. After a "blackberry storm" (a heavy rain in the spring), the river would overflow its banks into the South Wilmington marshes. Kids could wade in the flooded fields and catch fish in their hands. Big carp, eighteen inches long—leatherback or scaled—could be caught this way. Pike, too. Across Eleventh Street Bridge (another part of Wilmington, the Gander HIll area over the Brandywine), the people would get wheelbarrows to collect pike after a freshet on the Brandywine. Herring would come up Shellpot Creek and be caught by men standing on rocks so as not to get wet. They'd throw the fish ashore. It was near Todd's Cut (northeast of Wilmington), where the railroad shops (the Maryland Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad) were built that my father, as a boy, took part in this hand fishing on Shellpot Creek. [Apr. 11, 1962]

Another sport for the boys was eel fishing on the Christina. They would take a boat out on the river at night, where the Marine Terminal was to be built. From the boat they would drag a line that had a bobbin on the end and was studded with worms. Soon eels could be felt jerking the line. The boys would pull their line up gently until they saw their quarry at the top of the water, when quick action would tumble them into the boat.
[Apr. 11, 1963]

"We used to knit nets," Dad continued, talking of another adventure, "using umbrella wires for staves, with a brick to hold them down." A dead chicken would be lowered in such a net into a ditch in the marsh, like the City Ditch, and crabs would pile in. "We'd raise the net and bounce the crabs out on the grass. A boy would hold one with his shoe, or, if he was barefoot, with a stick until he could pick the crab up from behind and toss it in a peach basket."

There was a big marsh near Holloway Terrace called The Moors where a railroad trestle went over it, carrying trains headed for New Castle. Near it were good persimmon trees. For chestnuts, Dad told of taking the People's Railway (a trolley line) when he was older and courting my mother. The two of them, once taking mother's youngest sister, Pauline, would ride out the Brandywine, past Rising Sun, to the last station. They would collect chestnuts from the Du Pont grounds near Christ Church, where there would be five or six chestnut trees in a little grove. They would bring their lunch (this excursion had to be on a Sunday after church) in a flour bag, which was also useful for carrying the chestnuts home. The chestnut shells could easily be broken with a foot, sometimes even with the fingers.

Arrowheads were plentiful in South Wilmington. "Us kids," my father said, "would throw them at each other, skim them through the air. City kids would collect them in cigar boxes."

As a small boy my father watched men shoot snipes (game birds), but he never shot any himself. He never had a gun, though other kids had old muzzle loaders from the Civil War and bought powder and shot at Third and French. Men who worked in the shops had the barrels cut down to scatter the shot more.

The larger game birds were called jacksnipe and lived in the marshes like plovers and ducks. The hunter pushed through weeds, seeking them for food. Smaller snipe lived in the banks of quarries.

Hunters with guns would shoot through the ice on ponds in the winter. Their shot would stun fish, which could be pulled out when the ice was broken. The fish could be stunned by a hammer blow to the head and then quickly grabbed and tossed out. Yellow carp were in most of the ditches over Third Street Bridge.

On a cold winter day when he was eight, Dad would go out skating. He never had to buy skates, for he could always find a pair in the scrap heap at the rolling mill. There were no shoe skates then, only skates that locked onto heel and sole with a key. No boys he knew

bought skates, but they all had them. (On the other hand, Dad never had a bicycle and did not know how to ride one, though by holding a bike for me—a Christmas present when I was eleven—and running beside me on an open lot, he taught me how to ride.) Big crowds, he said, turned out for skating on the ditches, one of them a round pond near Third Street Bridge "down towards the glass house and the oil factory."

When skating, kids would stay up till ten o'clock. If at home, Dad fell asleep at eight. In summer when kids ran barefoot, he had to wash his feet and legs before he went to bed. He never washed inside the house until he moved to his sister Kate's (in 1910). In the morning he washed his face outside at the pump no matter how cold it was. He seldom had a cold. If his throat was sore, he would quit playing, run home, and drink some coal oil, which would cure him. (My brother-in-law tells me he too—a generation later—was given coal oil, with sugar, as a tonic for the croup.)

When gas lights were put in houses, there was no longer much use for coal oil, except in shops where lamps had to be kept lit around machinery so workmen could read the gauges. But until gas was piped into houses, people took oil cans to the corner store to fill them from a tank each store had outside. A wholesaler like my Uncle Harry Hurff (a great-uncle, really) would make regular visits, maybe on alternate days, to the stores to renew their supplies from a large tank on his wagon. To pull his wagon, where he sat up high in front, Uncle Harry had two horses. It was through his oil route that Uncle Harry met my great-aunt, Mary Dettling (for whom my mother was named), who helped my widowed great-grandmother run her little grocery store. [Jan. 28, 1962]

On the road to New Castle there were many truck farms, generally of twelve to fourteen acres. The farmers were usually Irish—Riley, Lynch, Kelly. The Kellys had a dairy farm rather than a truck farm—and when they retired they moved to Philadelphia, where their children had gone to school. The Lynches had a big farm, Eden Park, and had a sale when they moved away. A big hole on it, where Dad swam, came from the last explosion at the Garesches' powder mill. There was no other relic of this old mill. The parents of Dad's chum, Jimmy Dugan, had worked for the Garesches.

The Irish truck farmers raised corn, peas, beans, and squash. A farmer named Sutton would have his wagons busy going to King Street market, and he would send another wagon to sell to stores on Tuesdays and Fridays. His produce included spinach, kale, cabbage, cauliflower, onions, beets, tomatoes, potatoes, celery.

There were some German truck farmers like Simon. Most owned their own farms, but Lang, the butcher, owned Sutton's ten-acre farm and would dump slaughterhouse leavings, like guts, on the farm to make the soil fertile.

Sutton's wife was dressed up all the time. She was the boss and carried a big pocketbook. She hired four colored women in the field picking, and a white woman and white man in the field and house respectively. Two daughters worked on the farm; one married a Davis and one a Cochrane. Two or three boys thinned out onion sets and picked weeds at five cents a row.

According to Dad, there were three sorts of white people in the working class neighborhoods where he grew up—the Irish, the Germans, and those from "down home." Each thought the others didn't belong there. Occasionally they got into fights, especially at election time.

On one occasion three Butler boys, down-homers, came through the streets on election day singing "we can lick every Irish S.O.B." By 6 P.M., these three big fellows were hanging unconscious over a fence.

All whites over Third Street Bridge were Democrats, all Negroes Republicans. For elections, in the old days of Democratic control, many whites would be sworn in as constables, wearing a badge and carrying a potato masher. (Dad's father, Martin, was a constable one year.) Paid five dollars each when that was a large sum, they served their party by forming two lines of voters at the polls, one of whites and one of blacks. Then they let two whites enter the polling place for every black admitted. When time came to close the polls, all of the whites would have voted, but half of the blacks might still be in line. This system insured that the Democrats carried the Second Ward, but when the Republicans got control, they set up a second polling place in a black neighborhood.

On one occasion the Democrats got a big man named Duncan appointed an official at the polls, and he dipped his hand in ink, smearing it on the ballots of Negroes, thus disqualifying them. The Republicans found who was at fault and got Duncan expelled from the polls.

Most Negroes and many whites were paid for voting. One dollar or two dollars was the standard remuneration; never over two dollars.

The ballots were handed in a window. A man whose vote was bought had to hand in the ballot he brought (and not take a fresh one to mark) or he would get beaten. A voter who hesitated to answer when asked where he lived might be pushed away from the window and lose his vote.

Having good challengers at the polls was important for each party. A Democratic challenger once jumped in a window to keep it from being closed because he knew some Democrats were still on their way from work to vote. The police were called, and Sergeant Walsh, seven feet tall, threw the man across the street and closed the polls by himself.

My father's chum Doc Cannon once had a job on election day paying the Democratic poll workers, who were to get five dollars each. Doc gave them only three dollars apiece and kept the difference. When he held on to some of the money, the workers were angry and chased Doc down an alley, threatening to beat him up.

Once before Dad married he didn't get to the polls because he was off somewhere with my mother on election day. "Well," he explained to Cy Moran, a Democratic worker when he saw him, "this is one vote you didn't get, my vote. I was away."

"Don't you be too sure of that," answered Cy. "You voted. We didn't lose you."

Many of the Irish immigrants in Wilmington were employed at the Diamond State Rolling Mill, where they worked six days a week in shifts that started at 6 A.M. on Monday and continued day and night until noon on Saturday. The shifts were for eight hours, ending at 6 A.M., 2 P.M., and 10 P.M. (Did the work on Saturday stop at 2, instead of noon? Dad never clarified this point.) Laborers without special training worked twelve hours.

The Irish workers, if single, lived in boarding houses like one called the Hobnail Boarding House, kept by the sister of Dad's friend Mike Donlon, who had so many boarders she didn't know them all. Rolling mill workers wore hobnailed shoes and could be heard a square away walking on the brick pavement.

At some boarding houses the boarders slept in shifts. The older men went to bed early on Saturdays to be sure to have a place to sleep. Young men would stay up drinking in saloons; they would get drunk and not know where to sleep.

All kinds of iron were thrown in the furnace in the "puddle mills" (my father's term). The puddle miller was always a little short Irishman. ("I don't know where they got so many of them," said Dad.) His helper, called "the puddler's pup" (Dad pronounced the word in three syllables, "puddeler's"), was a big countryman, a "downhomer." The puddler got paid for any work he touched with his tongs. A laborer pushed iron around the yard, etc., all day for $1.20—ten cents an hour.

A thousand men would be working in the big Diamond State mill at night with only one boss to supervise them. The puddlers worked "on tonnage"—a kind of piece work, and though the mill made so much noise that people could not talk on their porches, they didn't complain, because the noise meant jobs.

Bob Tolmie told of having worked in an iron foundry in New York State where he made a remark about the danger to workmen of improper light. Some days men could not work safely for more than four hours. His boss asked him if he'd made this statement. He said he had. Who would get the day reduced, the boss asked, the workers? No, said Bob, the company would do it, for states would pass laws making companies completely responsible for injuries to men caused by insufficient light in the plant (as in the late afternoon). "Pick up your pay when you leave today," said the boss, "you're through!"

Industrial accidents were not rare. My grandfather lost his forefinger and part of his right hand (just its use, I suspect) when a car wheel fell on it. He could no longer work on car wheels, for he could not grip them. Lobdell's then gave him a job at the gate, a job newly created, and the city directory described him as a watchman.

His son Pat, a teenager, was given a job working on car wheels. But when a government order changed the form of car wheels and held up the manufacturing, young Pat Munroe and some others were fired. Pat got the notice with his pay check, and when he came home he declared that he and "Tater" Cochrane, a prizefighter, were going to Philadelphia to get work. "Stay here, Pat," his father said, "you'll get a job."

But he wouldn't, and he and Tater took off the next day (my father wasn't sure about the timing), not for Philadelphia, as they had said, but for Chicago. Pat was about sixteen then.

On another occasion I heard a different explanation of Pat's departure. We were out riding—my parents, Stephen, and I—when Stephen, then a boy, made a remark I considered disrespectful. Angered and feeling I needed to teach him a lesson I raised my hand to smack Stephen, who was sitting beside me in the front seat. "Don't do that, John," my father suddenly called out, "Stephen's too big to be hit. My father hit Pat and he left home."

Whether this was a reference to Pat's first or second departure, I don't know. After he first left home, Pat returned, spread out money he'd made on the table, and gave it to his mother. But after a time he left home again and did not return (or even write) for forty-five years.

My father held Pat in his mind as an admirable boy, vigorous, strong, and when Dad took a job at Lobdell's, he reminded men there of his brother. So they called him Pete, as a way of saying "young Pat" or "Petey." The nickname never made sense to me, but it clung to him. My mother was introduced to him as Pete, and so she always called him. So did her sisters, his fellow workmen at Lobdell's, and all of his friends. But not his own family. To them, to his sisters, Mary, Katie, and Sadie, and to their children, he was "Mike" or "Uncle Mike."

Before proceeding much farther, I will depend on my notes of Dad's stories for a few more words about the Diamond State rolling mill. Dad said that when he first remembers the Diamond State, George (Reddy) Todd was president—not related to the Todd from Wilmington who ran a shipyard in Brooklyn. The mill was large and kept busy, even through Cleveland's panic. It caught on fire, however, and after it burned down, a man was brought from Pittsburgh who rebuilt it and enlarged it, buying more land, and extending it down to A Street. The enlargement must have been behind the times, for it didn't do so well. After it burned down a second time, it was never rebuilt.

In its heyday, the Diamond State mill employed a large force of men. Galvanizing of nuts and bolts was done in just one corner; they were dropped in a solution and powder or gas rose in the air. The man in charge of galvanizing was a bearded Jew, brought from England, Dad heard. Only two or three men worked under him at galvanizing.

The pay office was at Third and French, where each week the firm began paying the men at 1 P.M. on Saturday. Each man was assigned to a window to get his pay—in cash, not a check. A great crowd would gather.

I had precipitated this discussion by asking Dad about Jethro Johnston McCullough, whom I had read of as a past owner of the Diamond State mill. Dad knew nothing of this connection, but he did remember the McCullough iron works, somewhere on Church Street or nearby. He was never inside this foundry, though he knew men who worked there.

In his recollections, my father recalled some, but not many, outings with members of his family, his brother Willie taking him to a swimming pool, his sister Maggie taking him to the Brandywine. He recalled that boys, himself included, went to the Liberty firehouse to get their hair cut when a man came there to clip the hair of the horses.

His memories of dentists were more painful. Dad told of going to a dentist named Honeywell, who assigned one of his students to pull Dad's tooth. The man put a hand on Dad's chest and pulled. Dad came out of the chair and on to the floor, but the student dentist got the tooth—or part of it. The tooth broke and he had to go back after the rest. Dr. Honeywell sat in an outer office with Dad's friend, Ant'ny May (Dad always pronounced the first name with just two syllables). When he heard Dad yell, Dr. Honeywell laughed and laughed. He was a big man with a large belly.

The next time Dad (now 21) had a bad toothache, he went to the American Dental Parlor, accompanied again by Ant'ny May, who lived next door or at least very close. When he got outside he told Ant'ny his tooth had stopped hurting, and they went down to Frank Thomas's saloon and had some beer. The toothache did not come back until the next day. Dad and Ant'ny returned to the American Dental Parlor. The dentist said he could pull the tooth out without hurting Dad, and he did, using a needle, the first time Dad had seen this instrument used.

Dad was so impressed that he went back and had a lot of teeth extracted and false ones made. The cost of the false set was $3.50.

Dad's mouth bled all night. After the extractions, he and Ant'ny went to Thomas's saloon, and Frank Thomas, who knew them well, gave Dad whiskey to wash his mouth out. Dad didn't drink whiskey, but each time he washed out his mouth, he inadvertently swallowed some and soon "got a load on" (in his words). Walking home, he couldn't wait for Ant'ny, a tall thin fellow who walked slow. Dad was three blocks ahead of Ant'ny when they got home.

Dad drank only beer but enjoyed the fellowship in, for example, Dutch Joe's saloon. On Saturday nights, before prohibition, free codfish balls were brought out on a plate and put on the bar, where the men drinking picked up the cold balls with their fingers and ate them. Dutch Joe Sperle's bar was on the west side of King Street (in Wilmington, of

course) between Fourth and Fifth. My mother's second cousin, Fred Kleitz, was a partner in the enterprise, I believe, but my father may not have known him then.

My father told me that a man could get a meal by going from one saloon to another, enjoying in each the free food the owner put out. If he specified what food was available, I unfortunately kept no record of it except in this one case of Dutch Joe's.

At school my father's main problem was spelling. At No. 14 school, over Third Street Bridge, his teacher, Kate Cannon, a "Bridger" herself, made him stay in at recess and study. He was angry because recess was when he shined. But he stayed in and studied and on the test he had only two words wrong. "Ye gods! That was as good as anybody did!"

It was Kate Cannon who told him something about himself once that he regarded as a compliment and often repeated. "You are not a bad boy, Michael," she said, "you're just mischievous." (He remembered the word as "mis-chee-vous.")

"In those days," he told me in January 1960, when he was eighty-one, teachers often whipped children. In the public schools each teacher had a rattan, and when a strong boy misbehaved, his teacher would open the door and call in other teachers to help her, particularly the burliest, strongest teachers. These young teachers would come in the room smiling, full of life, swinging their arms, eager to get a little workout.

The offender, called to the front of the room, would refuse to come, knowing what was in store for him. Then a strong teacher like Kate Cannon would go down the aisle to get him and haul him by the neck to the front of the room. One teacher would hold him and two or three others would beat him with their rattans on the backside. All the boys wore leather boots in winter, and this boy, stretched forward, would kick out with his feet. The teachers would back off, out of range of his boots, while they laid the blows on him

To escape punishment for misbehavior, Jamesie Serson ran away from school one day but had the misfortune to run into his father coming out of a saloon. Mr. Serson collared Jamesie (who couldn't run fast because he was crippled) and took him back to the schoolroom.

Mr. Serson was "half-lit" from his visit to the saloon, so he asked the teacher for her rattan and proceeded to whip his son in the front of the room before the students. He laid it hard on poor Jamesie, who alternated between crying and calling his father names, like "You drunken bum, stop beating me!" The teacher had to intervene and stop Mr. Serson.

My father left school abruptly—like Jamesie, but more successfully. He had transferred from public school to a parochial school, St. Mary's, on Church Street, after a priest came around asserting that Catholic boys should make this switch. At St. Mary's, where he was in the sixth grade, he got into a fight with Lefty Donohoe. They were in the back of the schoolroom, and Dad was on top of Lefty when the sister came down the aisle

carrying a whip. She whipped Dad over the shoulders, and as he got up, she whipped Lefty.

Dad ran to a side of the room, the sister in pursuit, and as she chased Dad, Lefty got away too. He jumped out one window, and Dad out another.

Two men loafing on a corner--one a sandy-haired young man who taught Sunday school—set out after the two boys. The man chasing Lefty caught him, for Lefty, though long-legged, was an awkward boy who couldn't run fast. Dad was never caught. Lefty was brought back to school by the man who caught him. The sister sent Lefty home and dispatched a note to his father, who took off from work the next day to visit the school and get Lefty readmitted.

No word came to Dad's father, and for a long time, perhaps a year, Dad let his father think he was still going to school, leaving home every morning at the appropriate time. His mother found out but protected him.

Dad got small jobs here and there, until a neighbor suggested he ask Jim Malloy to get him a job on the third shift at the Diamond State rolling mill. (At another time, Dad said it was Joe Feeney who got him a job in the mill.) He went to this man and was hired for bench work—which did not mean work at a bench. El Hamilton, who later worked with Dad at Lobdell's for decades, got the same kind of job at the rolling mill at the same time, and the two boys started in at work together.

Their job called on them to handle tubes of iron with tongs. The tubes, long and thin, shot down an incline to them and had to be picked up by tongs and switched to some other place, perhaps an oven. Behind the boys was a shield; sometimes they missed the iron and it hit this shield. Often this led to fights. There was a fight every night, but the fights were soon forgotten and friendships were resumed. [Jan. 31, 1961]

It doesn't seem to have been hard for a boy or young man to make some money. Dad always had some change in his pocket from such work as picking peas or catching muskrats. He could make $1.25 in a few hours "picking doggies," dog turds that were sold to the morocco leather shops.

Dad was learning to be a cooper at the barrel factory when a job opened at the glass house. Coopers made only $10 a week and glass blowers were better paid, so Dad changed jobs. He worked at the glass factory several years, but only as an apprentice at $6 a week. Every summer the glass factory would close for two months while it was too hot to work there. The fires were let go out, and the boys had to dip out the glass from the furnace so the furnace could be worked over (cleaned) in the summer.

All the men would take a vacation at this time. Some would have had part of their pay held back, so they could go hunting and fishing now. They might go down the river, not farther than Woodland Beach, where they could camp, leaving their wives and children in Wilmington.

Dad would look for a temporary job. In the summer of 1898, he was working on an ice cart as a helper or driver at $6 a week when his mother died. The route followed by the ice cart was between Front Street and Ninth and between Shipley Street and Tatnall. At the end of the run the boss got off with his books at Second and King, near the market house, and Dad took the cart to the stables.

Dad quit when his mother died, and his job was promptly given to another boy. Dad went to Lobdell's and got a job in the foundry as an apprentice molder at $3 a week. He had never meant to do this, for he knew what the foundry was like when his brother Pat had worked there.

Somehow I have overlooked a part-time job my father had when he was young. It was on a huckster's truck, for one of my notes reports that it was this job that brought him for the first time to Brandywine Village. But earlier, perhaps in the spring of 1888, when the schools had temporarily closed, his sister Maggie and some friends took him to Tatnall's woods on the Brandywine, where they had a little May party. But they didn't cross the stream.

As to sports in Dad's youth, one of his memories was of his brother Willie taking him swimming in a pool near the Brandywine, probably one that I remember, though I was never in it. It was within a wooden enclosure on the strip of land between the Brandywine and the west side race, just north of Washington Street bridge.

Although Dad's father ordinarily allowed no singing or dancing in their home (and once locked Katie out when she had not come home by 9:00—6:00 being when children were normally expected home), Dad does remember a party in the house when he was very little. The participants were mainly Maggie and her friends. This was the first occasion when Dad remembers seeing his oldest sister, Mary, there, for she had been living as a servant with the Lobdells and Allmonds for years. She got $3.50 a week from Mrs. Allmond (who was a Lobdell) as a child's nurse when Dad was 4 or 5. For a time she had worked with her Aunt Mary, and had made "big money" as a child's nurse with Jewish families in New York City.

Martin Munroe's strictness was not unique. One man went to a Liberty firehouse masquerade carrying a razor strop to punish his daughter if he found her there. Masqueraded, she went right by him, rubbing his face, and then went up the steps with Gus Roller; her father never recognized her.

A strop also appeared in another of Dad's tales. The kids who ran barefoot in summer had to wash before dinner or they might be whipped. Their mother never whipped them and, when necessary, she would get between her husband and the children to spare them.

Speaking of games he played as a boy, shinny had a prominent place, but I know little about it. I believe it resembled hockey but was played on the street. Every boy, Dad

said, had a shinny stick he had cut in the woods. Each stick was curved at one end and had a knob on it. The puck was also cut in the woods. [July 7, 1963]

Prisoner's base was another game Dad said he played. This was a game I liked to play with my friends on Monroe Place when I was about thirteen. I can remember only a few elements of the game. With chalk we marked off a large rectangle in the street, divided it in half, and then added a semi-circular line to form a base at each end. Two teams played, each defending a base to which its prisoners were confined. How a player was made a prisoner I don't remember, but the players sought to free their teammates who had been taken prisoner by darting across the median line and touching (and thus releasing) a prisoner without being touched by an enemy while on the wrong side of the line.

I have mentioned Dad's hunting and trapping but perhaps not the prices he got for his catch: ten to twenty cents for a muskrat, twenty-five cents for a possum, and fifty cents for a coon. The coon would put up a fight for its liberty, whereas the possum would play dead.

For lack of a boat, Dad could never go fishing on his own when shad and sturgeon came up the Delaware River to spawn, but with one of the Serson boys, who were neighbors "over the bridge," Dad got some experience shad fishing.

The Sersons were a big family; the boys included Jamesie, Dingy, Joey, Wormy, and Gus. The oldest of them had a store and took Dad fishing with him in his shad skiff off New Castle. His shad skiff was about eighteen feet long. (A sturgeon skiff would have been three feet longer.)

Skiffs were then as thick on the river as autos are now on the highway. The fishermen formed an organization to sell their catch. Dad didn't mention the price of shad (which were cheap when I remember shopping with my mother, because they were so bony), but he said sturgeon weighed from 250 to 300 pounds and were worth two hundred to three hundred dollars.

Seldom were more than two or three sturgeon caught. Dad has seen two or three lying on the wharf waiting for a man to skin them. When he came he first cut hand holds on the stomach and then skinned them right on the dirty wharf, where they were shipped on boats. (A lot of hauling was done then by boats.)

On Sundays fishing was not allowed, so men would mend their nets on the Green at New Castle. They would sit on stools, and the nets would be strung up in the air. The Serson girls would help with the mending. [Jan. 11, 1968]

Dad never mentioned playing basketball: probably he had no access to a court when he was the right age. But he liked the game and took me to see it when I was young. I think we went to the old Salesianum High School gym to see a semipro team representing

Wilmington play a team from another town, some Pennsylvania city, maybe Coatesville or Downingtown.

Dad told me of games at the old Pyle Cycle Academy on Tenth Street between Shipley and Orange, a site later occupied by the Du Pont Building. The teams that played there were not local, Dad said. He spoke of a strong center named Izzy Charleston and a team with short guards being beaten by a team with big guards from the University of Pennsylvania.

At the first game we saw together, probably in the Salesianum gym, a net was lowered around the playing floor to separate it from the few rows of seats for spectators—the "stands." Many times during the game, especially after a contest for possession of the ball, it was "centered" (tossed up by the referee) between two players. As a result, the game was slowed down, and there was more opportunity for short, agile men to play, men who could keep the ball away from the tall, less mobile players.

Dad did play football, though his football stories centered on one game played at Delaware College in Newark, in 1901. A quarrel of some sort had occurred between the college varsity and the junior varsity, or "scrubs," who refused to help the varsity prepare for a big game by scrimmaging with them.

To meet the emergency, Jesse Bronstein, who had worked at Lobdell's and now went to the college, persuaded some young Lobdell apprentices who played football under the name of Minquidale, to join with players from a team called Ex-High and go to Newark (their train fare paid) to scrimmage with the college team, led by Captain Jack Huxley (later a Wilmington lawyer).

Harry Lewis, who was fullback for the Orange A.C., and McClure, a halfback bigger than Lewis, were among the recruits from Wilmington. The college players had tried unsuccessfully to get these two to come there to play football. Jesse Bronstein played for the college team but wasn't much use because he had hurt an ankle or a knee. Big Sheldon, who lives now at the top of Penny Hill, Dad said, was also on this team, as were Johnny Hanley, who was short, and Al Zebley, Carol Hoffecker's grandfather, who lives at Eighteenth and Franklin Streets.

Dad weighed only 138 pounds and normally played halfback or fullback, but this day he was called on to play end, a position he'd never played before. It was the age of "guards back" and massed strength on offensive plays, so Dad played far out, intending to avoid getting hurt and let the blockers get by him.

The college crowd thought a trick play was being set. "Look how far out that end is!" they shouted. Dad said he'd have been farther out if possible; he'd have liked to have been across the street. His father was old and hobbled, just a watchman, so Dad's wages were needed to support their home.

The hero of the game, as Dad told of it, was his pal and fellow apprentice, Jimmy Dugan. He scored the only touchdown, rushing across the goal line with several tacklers clinging to him.

I heard this story not only from Dad, several times, but also from Mr. Dugan when I met him and his wife on the train from Philadelphia. Dugan was a notably upright man. For much of his life he was a "bookie" who took bets on horse races, an illegal profession, but he didn't smoke or drink or use bad language. After meeting downtown on the corner he and Dad would sometimes go to Govatos's store and have an ice cream soda or a similar treat. When the war came, Dad got him a job back in the foundry as a molder, his first profession.

The day after this scrimmage, my father said, he saw the Delaware College team beat Lebanon Valley College in a game played in Wilmington at Front and Union Streets, where there was an athletic field until the area was developed during the First World War.

I don't remember my father talking of playing baseball himself, but he was an enthusiastic spectator. When daylight saving time lengthened the daylight hours, especially in June and July, the Wilmington sandlots saw fierce competition among local teams, organized in leagues. When we lived on Market Street near Thirtieth, my father would take me to what came to be called Price's Run, especially to see a local team named for the area, Eastlake. The great local pitcher of the day was Hawk Hayes, but he was not on our team. After we moved to West Twentieth Street, our neighborhood diamond was in Brandywine Park, atop Monkey Hill, at Eighteenth and Van Buren. The home team was the De Molay Alumni and the star players included Jekel McDaniel, a catcher, and Clarence Lynn, a powerful outfielder. My friend James Hallett sold snowballs at these games. They were made of shaved ice (he had a big chunk on his express wagon) onto which he poured the flavoring a customer requested. "Hokey, pokey, snowballs!" was the vendor's cry.

Sometimes Dad and I went to another part of the city to see a crucial game in the annual contest for the league championship. The Kentmere Red Sox, with a star pitcher named Hughey Hageman, and a home field in Rockford Park, was often our team's main rival.

On some glorious occasions Dad took me to Philadelphia to see a big league game. By boat (on the Wilson Line—a 2½ hour trip) or by train (on the Pennsylvania Railroad), with trolley cars furnishing local transportation at both ends of our trip, we had a grand outing that my father seemed to enjoy as much as I did.

Once we went to Baker Bowl, where the Phillies played, but all other times it was to Shibe Park to see Connie Mack's Athletics and their chief rivals in the late 1920's, the New York Yankees (though once the Washington Senators was the visiting team).

I still recall how thrilled I was to see with my own eyes the heroes I had read about or heard about on the radio. (Remember, I could not see them on television as a boy could

today.) Here were Lou Gehrig, Jumping Joe Dugan, Earl Combs, and the great Babe Ruth on the Yankees, with such pitchers as Herb Pennock and Waite Hoyt. The Athletics included Jimmy Dykes, Bing Miller, Al Simmons, Mickey Cochrane, Jimmie Foxx, Lefty Grove, and George Earnshaw. Once, leaving the ballpark, our trolley was stopped by traffic, and right beside us we had the thrill of seeing Babe Ruth in an open roadster with his wife and, in a rumble seat, his step-daughter. To be so near the great man in person!

A good many of Dad's tales involved boxing. He spoke of such characters as Joe Goldstein, who fought professionally under the name of Patsy Flannigan—a very nice person, Dad said—and of Jim Taylor, a rougher man, whose father kept a club next to St. Mary's Church.

Boys whose fathers could afford it might take boxing lessons at such a so-called club. Dad would hang around (his term) in the hope the trainer would call him in to put on gloves with the boy being taught. The trainer would coach his student to make use of the ring knowledge he was learning, while Dad would try to use his "street smarts" to upset the trainer's plans for his boy.

Dad didn't speak, as far as I recall, of doing any wrestling, but he told me of seeing the sport. Fights, wrestling matches, and basketball, even a fair, were presented at such places as the North End Athletic Club on Eleventh Street and the Pyle Cycle Academy.

Later, after Dad's marriage, Uncle Charley (my mother's bachelor uncle) took Dad to the Playhouse to see a weekly wrestling show featuring such headliners as the great Strangler Lewis, who would take on any volunteer from the audience. Dad also mentioned seeing the Butcher Boy from Chicago, Hercules (a German who worked at the railroad shops), a reputed champion of Belgium, and Doc somebody from the University of Pennsylvania.

By my time, professional boxing was outlawed in Delaware, so my father and I could follow this sport only by the newspapers or the radio. We were quite excited by the much ballyhooed contests between Jack Dempsey and opponents who included Georges Carpentier (a Frenchman), Luis Angel Firpo (an Argentine), Tommy Gibbons (an American), and Gene Tunney (an ex-Marine who ended Dempsey's reign as heavyweight champion). The fact that Dempsey married a Wilmington film actress named Estelle Taylor probably increased the news of him available locally.

If there was any wrestling in Wilmington, I knew nothing of it. But thanks to my father, I could have named all the heavyweight champions back before Dempsey to the great John L. Sullivan.

In spite of the fact that he "hung out" with some pretty tough boys, Dad was proud of the fact that neither he nor any one else in his family was ever arrested.

He was careful in this regard, as witness one story he told me. Once Dad was in a gang of boys who were walking by the one-room rural Rose Hill School (south of Wilmington) when it was still in session and the children were reciting. Their shinny sticks were out in

the yard, where the boys with Dad began playing with them and raising a hullabaloo, further irritating the teacher by peering in the windows. She dispatched a child to the farmer across the road, and he soon sent Dad's gang off toward town.

In a mischievous spirit, these boys noticed new street lights that seemed to beckon boys to make them a target. As the boys began throwing stones, Dad started for home, knowing his father was a poor man who couldn't afford to pay for damages to keep his son out of jail. The boys were eventually arrested for breaking the street lights, and each of their fathers had to pay about $4.50—a much more significant sum then than now.

Similarly, Dad refused to go with the boys when they went down to the barrel factory to have fun. They entered the factory secretly, threw barrels around, and were very destructive. Arrested, they were fined almost $10 each.

Some time later a friend suggested Dad apply for a job opening at the barrel factory.

"What's your name?" he was asked.

"Mike Munroe."

"Don't you go around with those boys who broke into the factory?"

"Yes, I go around with them, but I didn't go with them then."

The question and the denial were repeated. He got the job.

In a way, the rolling mill and the good wages he knew were paid there spoiled Dad for other jobs, like the one in the barrel factory at $10 a week.

Pat was the wildest of the Munroes, but he was a good worker. Even when he was eight, he worked, carrying water for the men digging Lobdell's canal (a harbor for barges bringing ore and taking away heavy products).

Dad's mother got little rest. She had to wash clothes twice a week because they didn't have enough clothes to go a week without washing. In Dad's tales she is a rather obscure person, respected, almost revered, sympathetic to the children, seeking to soften her husband's rather tough and demanding attitude toward the children.

From his mother Dad heard tales of the tinkers in Ireland. They formed roving bands of rootless people living like gypsies, but unlike gypsies they were ethnically Irish, speaking the same language as the other Irish people. They sustained themselves by doing minor repair jobs, thus their name, and were felt to be untrustworthy. Dad's mother declared that her family was once missing a goose when they returned from church, but a tinker encampment behind a wall near their house reeked of the smell of roast goose, which the tinkers had killed and consumed rapidly to get away before the family came home.

[July 19, 1967]

When Bridget McCabe Munroe came to America to join her husband in 1876, she brought along her middle child, Willie, who was never strong, suffering in childhood from St. Vitus's dance.

Dad's father was very strict. He allowed no dancing or singing at home, and he couldn't stand anyone who wouldn't work. Willie couldn't work—or wouldn't—and consequently left home to live at a livery stable at Front and Tatnall streets, where he was useful for odd jobs. In 1906, he was listed as a driver in the city directory, and it may be he who is listed as a teamster in 1899.

Perhaps Willie was frequently at home until after his mother died in 1898. Dad remembered at least one story Willie told from his boyhood in Ireland.

There was, Willie said (according to Dad), a man called Uncle John who'd come in to town and wrote and read letters for illiterate people. He'd lend his buckled boots to shoeless boys in winter so they could slide on the ice. Boys wore heavy knitted stockings then but couldn't slide in them. Uncle John would sit in the crotch of a big split tree and tell boys stories if they'd give him a penny. For three pennies he could buy a pint of beer. [Jan. 13, 1968]

Perhaps a strange custom of his father's came from Ireland, like Willie's tale of Uncle John. His father, Dad recalled, frequently suffered from rheumatic cramps in his feet at night. When they were bad, he would call on his wife to turn his shoes around, where they lay on the floor. This done, the cramps would go away.

Martin Munroe's name (as Monroe) first appeared in a Wilmington city directory in 1877-78 as a laborer residing at 115 Tatnall Street. He was still at this address (though now listed as Munrow) in the next two directories, but in 1880-81, he is reported at 113 Washington Street, where he remains for several years, with his oldest child, Mary, being recognized at this address in 1886.

Mary and her brother Pat, both left in Ireland with relatives when Bridget came to America, finally made the ocean voyage to join their parents in the summer of 1879. Meanwhile the family had been enlarged by the birth, in Wilmington, of Maggie in April 1877. Soon there was Michael John, my father, born in 1879, and then, in a regular succession, Katie, in 1882, Sarah (Sadie) in 1884, and Marty, named for his father, in 1886.

My father said his parents intended to name him John, but on rushing him to St. Peter's Church for baptism on September 28 when only one day old (because he seemed so frail his survival was doubtful), the priest, Father Edward Taylor, suggested he be named for St. Michael in honor of his day. It must have been a good omen since the apparent weakling survived for ninety years.

The last child was the real weakling. Marty, Dad said, had "membrane's croup," for which there was no medicine. His parents steeped lime and held the boy over it. The lime cut out the infection but left Marty weak afterward. Dad had nothing but praise for his little brother, noting that the child was always dressed well. [March 14, 1965]

Dad's father, who had worked on railroad construction in the Midwest, was employed by a morocco leather shop when he first came to Wilmington. Without a trade he could follow here, he soon was employed at the Lobdell Car Wheel Company (as first noted in the 1882-83 city directory), where at one time he had a contract for breaking up old railroad car wheels so the metal could be used again. The directories usually listed him as "laborer," though later in his life (in 1898 and then consistently from 1904 on), after a crippling accident, the directories list him as "watchman."

The year 1888 was a notable one to my father because of some unusual events. He spoke of both a hurricane and a blizzard. Since he became only nine in September of this year, I think it possible he may have confused events or dates. The hurricane, he said, ripped the roof off one Wilmington factory. As to the blizzard, he gave more details. He stood at the window of his home on Tatnall Street and saw a big fire at West Street, where a snow train had hit a passenger train. He remembered seeing the Fame Hose (a fire company) go by on the way to the fire, with men instead of horses pulling the carriage through the snowstorm. [March 13, 1968]

Another notable event in 1888 was moving across Third Street Bridge over the Christina into an area sometimes called South Wilmington. The Munroes moved because Lobdell's moved from Front Street across the river. This company had been founded by Jonathan Bonney and Charles W. Bush in 1836, according to an article by W. Emerson Wilson in the Wilmington *Evening Journal* of May 13, 1968. At Bonney's death in 1838 his place was taken by his nephew, George G. Lobdell. After Bush died, Lobdell bought out his heirs and changed the name of the company to reflect the new ownership in 1867.

One of the first manufacturers of railroad car wheels in the nation, under Lobdell's leadership the company grew until it employed 750 men at the end of the nineteenth century. Its products then included large iron rolls for paper mills; the preparation of the molds and the pouring of the molten iron became, in time, the particular responsibility of my father and his longtime partner, Harry Fox. By strange coincidence, each of these men had a son who became a college professor.

Lobdell's was located near Front and Spring Streets when Dad first remembers the plant—with an upper foundry, as he called it, at Second and Pine (later bought by Hoopes' bolt and nut works). When Dad was born, the Munroes, he said, lived on Washinton Street between Lafayette Street (an alley) and Second Street. A colored family lived on Lafayette Street and cooked gingerbread, which tasted delicious. His sister Maggie took Dad up Lafayette Street in his first pants (previously he wore dresses), and an old Irish woman put two pennies in his pocket. (This was an Irish custom of which I have read in, I think, an autobiography of a man who lived on the Blasket Islands, off the Dingle Peninsula.)

By 1885, according to the directory for that year, the Munroes had moved to the same block (between First and Second) on Tatnall Street. Here an early playmate was Johnny Knotts, who lived next door (1886 Block Directory).

In the late 1880's, Lobdell's bought land along the Christina River (then written as Christiana and pronounced Christeen) just above where the Marine Terminal was eventually built. When a new foundry, with associated pattern shop, office, etc., was erected here, the Munroes moved too, to be nearer Dad's father's work.

They occupied one rented house after another, as the city directories show, going from 206 Heald Street to 1109 Lobdell Street and 4 New Castle Avenue before moving back to Heald Street in about 1904.

In those days South Wilmington was a distinctive neighborhood, a poor one but with a pride of its own. The boys, the "bridgers," often got into fights with city kids when they crossed the river: probably it was like crossing the tracks in towns divided by a railroad.

Two hacks (hackney coaches) brought residents from "over the bridge" to the city, especially women on shopping errands. Tom Porter ran one and Josh Pyle the other, Dad said. Later, Jim Philips built a hack and put the name Nancy Hanks (for a great race horse) on it. [1959]

Many—indeed most—of the names featured in Dad's stories came from the years (1888 to 1910) when his home was "over the bridge."

El and Stump Hamilton, for instance, dated from that time. I didn't know them, but all my life I heard their names, particularly El's. The Hamilton family had a well that was on the way to Lobdell's, and all the bridgers went there to drink the good water. Dad and his pal Joe Feeney used to walk out there at night. Across the street from the Hamiltons' house was a plate mill, but "the cyclone" lifted it up and carried it away. (I believe Dad told me of ducking down behind some railroad tracks and watching this cyclone in the distant sky.)

El Hamilton (his first name was Ellis) never could do tricks, but he kept trying. Once when they were loafing in front of Cad Conner's father's store, El tried to make a dime disappear up his sleeve by spinning it. It did disappear, for Dad felt it fall into his pocket. While El was searching for it, Dad walked into Conner's store, had a ten cent dish of ice cream (there were also five cent dishes) and came out, saying "My, ice cream certainly is good on a hot day!"

Suddenly El noticed him and had an inkling of the truth. "Hey," he yelled. "Where did you get a dime? How could you buy ice cream?"

(In those days, Dad explained, ten cents was a lot of money and dimes were hard for boys to come by.)

When El, who was rough and tough, quite unpolished, died, Dad went to the funeral home to pay his respects to the family. El's widow greeted Dad effusively. "Pete," she called out to him, "it's no time to be sad, it's a day for rejoicing. He went straight up there," and she gestured, "with the angels. He's not here; that's just his body. He's up there looking down at us. We ought to be happy."

Dad said, "And you led him there, I know."

"That's right, you know it, Pete! I led him there." [Oct. 28, 1967]

Dad was working on the ice cart when his mother died in the summer of 1898—a temporary job when the glass factory was closed. Then he went to Lobdell's and got a job in the foundry. He never meant, he said, to work in the foundry, for he knew what it was like. His brother Pat had worked there, so Dad could have gone there sooner.
[Oct. 28, 1962]

Dad often said to me when I was small, "Don't go in the foundry, son!" I was never tempted. But he served a seven-year apprenticeship and stayed at Lobdell's for over fifty years, 1898-1949.

He was a very good molder, I was told by Jim Watkins of Rose Hill, who had also learned his trade at Lobdell's. He was there when Dad poured his biggest roll, 54 inches long. There was an explosion and Watkins ran out of the foundry, blackened. As he gained safety he found Jimmy Dugan behind him. "How did you get out?" he asked Dug. "Right on your back," was the answer.

Despite the explosion, Dad stayed up on the scaffold and calmly finished pouring the molten iron. Old Mr. George Lobdell was there and just kept puffing his pipe.

"Your father was a great molder, the best," Watkins told me. [Apr. 3, 1970]

Dad showed me when I was a boy how he got off the scaffold fast when something went dangerously wrong. He would wrap his legs around the outside of a ladder and slide down without touching a rung. Of course, he also had to climb up a ladder to get in position to pour the iron.

He was very agile in my early years, though he grew fat as he aged. The muscles in his arms were very strong, developed by years of pounding sand in the molds he constructed to receive the iron. He could easily have knocked me down when he was in his eighties and I in my early fifties and taller than he by six or seven inches.

In 1961 when a teacher from St. Andrew's School stopped to interview my son Stephen, he and his grandfather, then eighty-two, were on the roof of my garage, where they had climbed to make some minor repair.

Dad did not always escape danger in the foundry. I recall that he once received some nasty burns from the hot iron. But the most serious accident occurred in the 1930s or early 1940s, when he was struck on the head by a cog wheel, which fell from a crane that ran on tracks in the ceiling.

It was a glancing blow or he would have been dead. He sustained a fractured skull and a concussion. He was carried to the first aid room unconscious, and as he came to, as Jim Watkins told me, "that funny little smile of his came on his face and his eyes lighted. 'I know that's that big Watkins boy,' he said, 'for I can see his shadow.' It was the first thing he had seen as his sight came back." [Apr. 3, 1970]

He was taken immediately to the Memorial Hospital, and after a period there he was brought home, confined at first to bed. I can't remember how long his recovery took, but eventually it was complete.

After his mother's death in August 1898, Dad's slow but steady progress through his long apprenticeship gradually made him a stabilizing influence in the Munroe household. His father, after all, had no trade he could rely upon in industrial America. In Ireland he had apparently been a farmer or herdsman, but here he was only a factory laborer, breaking up car wheels or doing other tasks for which he became less fit as he grew older.

Mary, the oldest of the children, married Reuben Brown, a tinsmith or roofer from Newark. They moved to Wilmington and lived just a few doors from the Munroes "over the bridge.".

The next three children in age had all left the house. Willie lived at a livery stable where he obtained occasional work as a driver, finally moving to a more settled position in the employ of an undertaker named Fisher.

Pat, after a quarrel with his father, had run away at sixteen. He was known to have gone to the West, but no one knew exactly where until he reappeared forty-five years later. He had been living in the Pittsburgh area, where he had a respectable situation—having recast himself as Frank Monroe, married, and raised four children.

The fate of Maggie, the first child born in America, remains a mystery to me. She moved to Philadelphia and apparently a career the family did not talk about. My cousin Sarah Brown thinks Maggie became the wife of a man named Jones who was Jewish, and that she died, childless, when still young. Sarah says my father went to her funeral in New Jersey. If so, it must have been before I was born or very early in my life, for I never heard a word of it. Since my father was thirty-four when I was born, and Maggie was two years older, it is likely that she died even before my father's marriage (when he was thirty-three).

The youngest child, Marty, apparently died before his mother, which means that only three Munroes were left at home with their father. Michael (my father) and his sisters Kate and Sadie. Kate soon married John Collins, a steady railroad worker, and moved to

her own home on the west side of Wilmington. Sadie remained as the housekeeper, and my father increasingly the man of the house, as his father's physical condition and age forced him to a minor role as a watchman at Lobdell's.

Dad remembered these years, however, as very happy ones. "Each year," he would tell me, "would be better than the year before." At least so he said, it had been for him—up until he married.

He meant no reflection on my mother by this comment. It was the memory of the carefree years he had enjoyed as a bachelor with good health, a job, a secure family home, and no serious concerns. He was basically a happy man, boyish even. He came home from work singing, or trying to (he had no voice), as he walked up the alley to enter by the back door (because he was dirty from his foundry work), headed for the bathroom, a tub bath, and a change of clothes before dinner.

On those occasions, and they were not rare, when I, a bleeder, was sick, I hated to face my father, to spoil his happiness. He would do anything to cheer me up. He turned a somersault once; another time he stood on his head to make me laugh. My mother would almost welcome sickness as a challenge to her, but Dad felt helpless.

This partly explains why he said his life constantly grew better until marriage. Marriage meant responsibilities, worries, primarily for his wife and son, and secondarily for finances, our home and its condition, his job.

In the years at the opening of the twentieth century, dancing and parties were the delights of Dad's life. His partner on many adventures was his next door neighbor, Doc Cannon, who was approximately of Dad's age.

These happy days bulked large in Dad's memory, and he sought to give me advice for situations I never met. "Be careful," he warned me, "not to let a girl give you her purse or pocketbook or anything else to hold for her while she goes to the powder room. If you take it, she has you captive; you aren't free to go off as you please."

I didn't go to dances as he did; at least not until I was out of college and graduate school; hardly before my early years on the faculty when I was a chaperone.

(This advice reminds me that Dad said, "When you work in a foundry and lose something, the first place to look is down at your feet." But, of course, I never worked in a foundry.)

Another word of advice was to avoid making a date with a girl who lived on the edge of the city. One night he had to take a girl home who lived in Henry Clay, a small group of houses on the Brandywine. When he started to his own home (across Third Street Bridge), the trolleys had stopped running.

Parties and dances sometimes kept Dad out so late that it was difficult to leave his bed when an alarm called out all the firemen in the middle of the night. The final straw came one night when he had been out late and had just settled in beside his sleeping father (they slept together in their small house) when the Liberty's hose wagon came clanging up the street (they lived near the firehouse), pausing before his house while the men on it called out, "Pete, Pete!"

Dad pretended he was asleep and didn't hear them, but his father woke up and nudged him, saying "Get up! There's a fire." But Dad had just got into bed and now played possum, pretending he was too deep in slumber to hear the firemen shouting outside, or his father in the bed beside him. Eventually, the firemen went off without him. This incident marked the end of his active days with the Liberty. The city soon replaced the volunteer companies with paid firemen. Though the only lasting memento of Dad's days as a fireman was his uniform and the stories he told me, I recall that he continued to pay yearly dues to a Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association, which had a clubhouse on East Fourteenth or Fifteenth Street. He visited it just once a year to pay his dues in cash.

In those pre-television, pre-radio, pre-phonograph days, young men and women often gathered around a piano to sing or dance. Even families of modest means had a piano in the living room (though my father's parents didn't). One party my father attended was dead because the young men and women were too shy and self-conscious to lead off in singing. Dad and another fellow decided this situation could not be allowed to last. So, though neither of them could sing, they went to the piano boldly and did the best they could. Their effort got people laughing. Soon some joined in, knowing they couldn't do worse than Dad and his friend. The whole party became alive, with everyone singing or talking or laughing.

Another of Dad's stories of party-going does not reflect well on him. One time in New Castle, Doc Cannon got a friend of his to invite them for a pork chop supper at the intermission of a dance, allowing opportunity also for sewing a ruffle on Mena Dettling's dress. Dad, still a bachelor, was squiring both my mother (Mary Dettling) and her stout older sister, Mena, and Dad had stepped on Mena's dress and tore it while showing her how to cut a corner. After the meal, the guests—Dad, the two Dettling girls, Doc Cannon, and the girl he'd brought from Wilmington—all went back to the dance, leaving the New Castle girl (a Gormley) to wash the dishes. (Her family kept a little store in the middle of the block, like the Dettling girls' grandmother's store in Wilmington.)

Dad and his friends had such a good time that they missed the last trolley to Wilmington at 2 A.M., and they had to wait until 5 A.M. for the next one. Fortunately, the hall was open, and so was a place where they could buy ice cream. "It was all right with Grandmother, since Mary and Mena were together." [Feb. 1964]

Dad told me so many stories of parties and dances and of pretty girls he took out that I asked him once, "Who was the prettiest girl you took out?"

"Oh, your mother was," he answered immediately. And I knew this was his honest opinion.

Dad told me several times the story of how they first met. It may have been as early as 1905. Dad and Doc Cannon went on a straw ride to the village of Christiana, because one of the Carrs, "an older brother of Jim who owns the taxis and the Grand Hotel," across from the Pennsylvania Railroad depot on Front Street, invited them. My mother, her sister Mena, Bessie Richardson, and other friends of hers were along. "They went to a hall—maybe the Odd Fellows'—and played a game, "In and Out the Window."

"A lot couldn't dance," Dingy Serson and John Carr among them. Dad and Doc Cannon were almost the only men who could—"maybe two more." Dad danced with my mother (it was the first time he met her), but most of the time was spent playing games; "climbing in and out of windows" was the only specific one Dad recalled.

It was a beginning. Their next encounter occurred when Mother, her sister Mena, and others, including "a red-headed girl," invited Dad and Doc Cannon around."

[Jan 22, 1968]

Dad was soon seeing Mother often. After a time, he was calling regularly on Wednesday nights, when they frequently went to a neighborhood dance at St. Mary's, and again on Saturday and Sunday. Sometimes he was asked by Mother's sisters, by Katie or Mena, to take them to a dance. He remembered a time when Katie came up to him outside the Owls' Club (perhaps at Fourth and Market on an upper floor) on a Friday night and got him to take her to a dance.

As Dad became a regular visitor in the Dettling home, he used to tease Mrs. Dettling (my grandmother). He told her how fast she ought to be able to clean the house, and in turn, she called him a prevaricator—a term he took delight in, as he did with a teacher's declaration that he was not bad but mischievous.

Once he persuaded my grandmother that the rope at the end of a ham was meant to flavor it and should be retained when the ham was cooked. (Where he got such an idea is a mystery.) My German-immigrant grandmother was willing to learn from an American young man, so she left the rope in a ham she was cooking. The results were disastrous. "Oh, you Peter, you prevaricator!" she called.

Often Grandmother would sit in the living room while Dad was calling on Mother. When they were saying good-bye in the vestibule, she would call out, "What have you got to talk about now! You've been together for hours!" Sometimes when she had gone upstairs on a weekday night, she would call down, "Peter, it's time to go home! You've got to go to work tomorrow and so does Mary."

There was little kissing in the Dettling household, Dad noted. The children kissed their mother only when they were going away overnight. There were few "honeyed words," either.

Dad also observed differences among Mother's sisters. When Katie came in late in the evening and Grandmother started to scold her, Katie quickly began relating a wondrous tale of what she had been doing, whom she had met, etc. Grandmother stopped to listen, became interested in the details, and eventually forgot all about the scolding. When Pauline came in late, the scene was different. Pauline was, of course, seven years or so younger than Katie, which might have been thought to make her more amenable to correction, but she was far more combative. When her mother started scolding, Pauline answered back, and soon a verbal battle was under way, a regular Donnybrook.

The slow progress of my parents' courtship—about seven years—was undoubtedly affected by circumstances in each of their homes. As his father's strength and health declined, Dad became its financial mainstay, while his youngest sister, Sadie, became the housekeeper. I do not know whether Sadie had any job outside the house after she was left as the only woman in the family, when Katie moved away following her marriage to John Collins.

In the Dettling family, there was an example to follow in showing caution in regard to an early marriage. Mrs. Dettling had come to America as a teenage girl from Germany, taking advantage of a visit by a native of her town, now resident in the New World, who could serve as her chaperone on the trip. As Sophie Hanselmann, she had been left an orphan in the Wurttemberg town of Sindringen.

In Wilmington she met Andrew Dettling, the American born son of German immigrant parents. Their marriage took place only after she had gained control of a modest inheritance from her father's property, enabling her to buy a brick home, with the help of a $500 mortgage from the Wilmington Savings Fund Society.

Ownership of her home proved an important resource for Sophie Dettling in 1898, when the death of her husband at 39 left her a widow with five children, ranging in age from fourteen to less than one year old, and no financial resources beyong the house, still mortgaged. As a further example, there was the case of Andrew Dettling's mother, Wilhelmina, who had also been left a widow with five children by the early death of her husband. Wilhelmina Dettling, my mother's grandmother, had supported her family by establishing a small neighborhood store and by great prudence and care in its management.

With these examples before them, it is not strange that my mother was shocked to find my father had no savings at all when they contemplated marriage. She took control of the situation by requiring that they together must save enough money to buy a house before they married.

Mother had withdrawn from school—and cried about it—when she completed the eighth grade and followed her older sister to a job in a textile mill. Attending classes in a business school (Beacom's) at night, she was able to leave the mill for a job as secretary and bookkeeper (the entire office staff) for John Bryson, Wilmington's leading plumber.

Her sister Mena became head bookkeeper at Topkis's, a Wilmington store that eventually became locally famous as the Wilmington Dry Goods Company. And Katie, in her turn, became secretary-treasurer of the printing firm that published the *Sunday Star*, Wilmington's only Sunday paper.

At some time during his long courtship, Dad accompanied three of the Dettlings—Mother, one of her sisters (probably Mena), and her brother Andy—on a trip by railroad to Niagara Falls. I have no notes on this journey, but I remember that my father told me many stories about Niagara Falls when I was small—stories of the *Maid of the Mist*, a vessel that took tourists into the waters at the foot of the falls, of adventurers who dared ride over the falls in a barrel, and of a circus aerial acrobat who walked across the falls on a wire. And when I was a boy, my mother corresponded with a couple named Pearl and Jess in Tiffin, Ohio, whom she had met in Niagara Falls on their honeymoon.

My father described to me, quite vividly, the scene of the terrible Johnstown flood, which he claimed to have seen on this memorable trip, the longest he or my mother had ever taken. But after years of hearing this story, I began to wonder aloud, what railroad line went through Johnstown on its way to Niagara. My mother answered this question. My father, she explained, had seen a diorama of the flood somewhere, probably in Atlantic City, and remembered the scene so well that, after a time, he began to believe he had been there.

My grandfather, Martin Munroe, died in 1910, possibly of a heart attack, in my father's arms. My father took consolation in having been there, for he obviously loved his father. (The bill for Martin's funeral in Cathedral Cemetery was dated 1910; the undertaker was J. Fox.)

Martin died in his home in South Wilmington, but that home now was abandoned. His two children remaining there, my father and Sadie, his youngest sister, moved in with Katie, her husband John Collins, and their two young children, John and Catherine. Before leaving the old house, my father's zeal led him to an action that distressed me whenever I heard about it. Dad gathered and burned all of his father's papers, including his passport, his naturalization papers, and letters from Ireland.

I noted my father's remark that "it was easy to be naturalized in those days if you were a Democrat," as most of the Irish in Wilmington were. Democratic office holders were, of course, eager to add to the number of their supporters by seeing that Irish immigrants were qualified as citizens as soon as possible.

Living with the Collins family, Dad was able to wash indoors for the first time in his life. So he told me, but I wonder how he could get completely clean at the pump in his back yard. He must have carried water into his father's house, for when I knew him, he was scrupulous about cleanliness, taking a bath (we had no shower) and changing his clothes, which were very dirty from the foundry, every weekday evening before dinner.

He took pleasure in playing with his nephew, John Collins. He sparred with John as he later did with me, offering John five cents if he could hit his Uncle Mike on the nose. (In the families of his sisters, Mary and Kate, he was always "Mike" and "Uncle Mike." Elsewhere he was Pete.)

His father's death removed a responsibility which might have delayed his marriage. Now he could save money conscientiously. Of his salary of $21 a week, he gave his sister Kate $6 for room and board and put $12 in the bank, leaving very little for expenses such as carfare for the trolley that took him to Lobdell's, on the south bank of the Christina, next to the site of the present Marine Terminal.

My mother saved too, and between them, they had $900 by the fall of 1912 ($600 my father's savings and $300 my mother's). This was enough, with a mortgage, to buy a house.

The house was provided by my mother's uncle, Harry Hurff, husband of my mother's Aunt Mame, formerly Mary Dettling. The two women were very close, their intimacy dating from 1898 and my grandfather Dettling's death. To aid the stricken family, Mother had moved to her grandmother's house for her last year of school, the eighth grade. Her grandmother had a small neighborhood grocery store with which she was assisted by her then unmarried daughter, Aunt Mame. (My mother's account of working in the store was published in Delaware History magazine in 2001.)

The two women, twenty-five years apart in age, got along very well. They never had a quarrel. They were, of course, Americans by birth, each with an immigrant widowed mother. Aunt Mame was forty or a little more when she married a widower, Harry Hurff, slightly less old than she.

Uncle Harry was an orphan, born in New Jersey, but raised in the family of his young aunt, Lizzie Comly, who lived on a farm near Cooch's Bridge and Dayett's Mill when I was a boy.

Though he had little formal education, Harry Hurff was a very shrewd businessman (he seemed a David Harum type to me), who moved from one undertaking to another, gradually accumulating capital. When he met Aunt Mame, he had a kerosene route, serving grocery stores like the one she and her mother ran. Soon he was in the real estate business, essentially retired in his early forties for the real estate he handled was mainly his own.

He bought very cheap houses and collected his rent weekly, in person. When a tenant pleaded he was out of work and could not pay, Uncle Harry put him to work, if possible, painting or repairing his properties. Gradually he moved from this exacting responsibility into investments, lending money on mortgages and buying corporate stocks. When I knew him best, he spent much of his time in the brokerage office of Laird, Bissell, and Meeds in the Du Pont Building.

Life had been a serious business for Uncle Harry. His first marriage was to a woman named Brittingham, of whom I know little except that the marriage was childless and she died young. Aunt Mame was far more outgoing than he. She had also learned to be prudent with money, but she made friends easily, and Harry enjoyed her friendships, including those in her family and her church, which was St. Stephen's Lutheran Church. Harry had no church connection that I know of until his wife persuaded him to join St. Stephen's in his old age.

The Hurffs had no children, but they entertained a lot, frequently hosting relatives of Aunt Mame from Philadelphia, children of her sister Kate, the wife of Maris Vandever. I remember Aunt Kate (my grandfather Dettling's sister) only as seeming to a little boy enormously fat and being told she was very jolly but not a good manager.

A third member of the Hurff household was my Uncle Charley, a great-uncle really, for he was the youngest sibling of Aunt Mame, who told me she had suggested his name at his birth. For all the years I knew them, Aunt Mame acted as Charley's protectress. A bachelor, he was apparently a very good and exact draughtsman. Perhaps because he needed a stimulus to break out of his ordinary prim demeanor and let loose the rollicking spirit locked within him, Charley had a tendency to drink too much, even to go on binges, where he might disappear for a day or more. At his club, the Idle Hour, on the Delaware River bank north of Wilmington, Charley could be the life of the party.

When sober, he was a grim, grouchy uncle, warning me not to encourage boys to cavort on the Hurffs' lawn. When he was drinking, on the other hand, he was very generous, giving me as much as a five dollar bill, but asking me to agree that my Uncle Charley was a very fine fellow.

After his marriage to Aunt Mame, or perhaps just before it, Uncle Harry bought a large frame house and a lot that took up two-thirds of the block on Market Street, just north of Thirtieth, at what was the far end of Wilmington. There was also an old stable where Uncle Harry kept a horse until he replaced the animal with the first of a series of Franklin air-cooled automobiles. He then built a garage on the south side of his house.

Aunt Mame frequently had my mother as her guest and, of course, my father too. As their savings grew and the time for the marriage of my mother and father approached, the Hurffs proposed building a house in the garden north of their home. Uncle Harry did not hire an architect, but hired a builder, taking him to see some new houses in the vicinity to use as a model. Two semi-detached brick houses were built next to the Hurffs on Market Street. They were numbered 3031 and 3033, because the Hurffs' house was 3029, a preposterous number, as there were no houses between it and Thirtieth Street, and certainly no room for the numbers of houses 3029 suggested. The second new house, next to my parents', was built as a speculation and purchased by a childless couple named Anderson, whom I called Tommy Andy and Gawoggy, as a little boy.

My parents had a mortgage on their house—probably from the Hurffs, but possibly from a bank. They paid 5½ per cent interest, Dad said. I recall that when the mortgage was

paid off, my parents held a private celebration in our kitchen. I was included and given a sip of grape wine—homemade, undoubtedly, and illegal in those years of Prohibition.

Dad said that the need to save money for furnishing their new house delayed the wedding. But when the time came, many gifts provided for their necessities. The Liberty Fire Engine Company gave them their living room furniture. The dining room furniture was a gift from the Hurffs and Uncle Charley. My mother, accompanied by Mrs. Oliver Mousley, a friend of the Hurffs who lived at the top of Penny Hill, went to Van Sciver's in Camden to buy rugs.

At Megary's furniture store in Wilmington, my parents bought a mahogany bedroom suite for $100. A coal stove, almost new, came (by purchase, surely) from the Comly farm, near Newark.

Lacking money for a rug in the back room upstairs, they bought straw matting. Additional furniture was purchased from John Bryson's cousin Sally Dixon, a person I never heard of otherwise.

All these details were locked in my father's mind for fifty years. With one more recollection-- that Canby Cox (was he the builder?) put "a specially good brick" in the house for no extra cost. It came from Canada, and Uncle Harry had to pay for its use in the adjacent house.

For the wedding itself, when it occurred, Mother told me she had none of the instruction I thought was given to a Protestant marrying a Catholic. She had never seen the priest until he came into the room to marry them in his residence, not the church. I don't know what witnesses were present--possibly my father's sister Kate, with whom he lived and who was my godmother when I was baptized about two years later.

Thanksgiving Eve was the date of the wedding, chosen so that my father would lose as little time—and money—as possible by taking a honeymoon trip. In 1910, this probably meant November 22, since the next day was the fourth Thursday in November. My parents always remembered the event as the day before Thanksgiving rather than as a numbered day in the month.

The planned journey was to New York City, no great distance but a new destination for them, a fabled city they had never visited before.

Dad had many tales to tell of his honeymoon trip to New York, though it lasted only for a weekend. None of these tales touched on the emotional issues of the beginning of a marriage that was to last over a half century and be the central theme of his and my mother's life. Nor did any tale reflect the excitement of coming home to a new house of their own.

When the newly married couple arrived in New York, almost certainly by the Pennsylvania Railroad, a rough gang of travelers grabbed all of the available taxicabs but

one. The one they left was disreputable looking. Dad walked over to it and inquired of the driver the way to their hotel. Then, instead of getting in the cab, he paid the driver the fare and took Mother to the hotel by trolley car.

On Thanksgiving, he told me, he had good tickets to the matinee of the Follies of 1912, but Mother, looking at the billboards, concluded it was a burlesque show and got him to turn his tickets in. They then got tickets to the Hippodrome, which had what Dad called a "stupendous" show. Airplanes carrying mail, as Dad remembered—fifty years later—flew around inside the theatre, and a circus put up its tents on the stage. That night, after the show, Dad took Mother to a restaurant, but when they saw a biscuit sign in the window, they thought it belonged to a biscuit company and Mother insisted they go somewhere else—why, was not clear to me. Another night they dined at the Atlantic Gardens, a huge, block-size German restaurant.

Such details remained in my father's mind a half century later. He talked to me through my boyhood as though he was rather well acquainted with New York, and as though that metropolis did not change though twenty-five years, at least, probably passed before he was ever back in the big city. [Nov. 22, 1962]

At other times he told me of their traveling to an outlying section, probably Brooklyn, to visit cousins with whom his sister Mary kept in contact. The name I recall is Garrity (spelling unknown to me). This family had one member who was a policeman (not unusual for an Irish family in New York) and also a young unmarried woman named Florence, who sometimes visited her Wilmington cousins. From his New York contacts, my father told me that front steps could be called a "stoop."

Characteristically, my mother was less talkative about her adventures in Gotham, but she did display knowledge of hotel fare for which she must have relied in part on her New York experiences. In giving me prunes for dessert, for instance, she assured me that though she was giving me five of them, I would get only three in a hotel.

My parents, particularly my mother, went to Philadelphia several times a year, sometimes by train or even by a trolley that ran by our Market Street house (connecting with a Philadelphia trolley in Darby), but most often, at least on the outward trip, by a Wilson Line boat, which was cheap and comfortable in good weather, though the trip took two and a half hours. If we took the boat from its wharf at the foot of Fourth Street, my father would stand in the large open doorway of Lobdell's foundry and wave to us as we passed. The boat would stop at Penn's Grove and at Chester. Mother loved to shop in the four large Philadelphia department stores (Wanamaker's, Lit Brothers, Gimbel's, and Strawbridge and Clothier's).

The last years of my parent's engagement and the first years of their marriage must have been a merry time. Every Friday night, my father told me, there used to be a party, either at the Springers, the Mousleys, the Hurffs, the Spiegelhalters, the Munroes (after their marriage), or somewhere else.

The Springers I hardly knew. Perhaps this referred to a childless couple who lived on the southeastern corner of Thirtieth and West Streets. Of them, I heard that Mrs. Springer was painfully clean, that Mr. Springer had owned a saloon, and that he drove a Cole car. The Mousleys were country folk who sold eggs to the Hurffs and were the only ones in this group who were not German. They too were childless. I'm surprised they were lively enough to have a party, but I recall that after Prohibition, Mr. Mousley made wine but couldn't wait for it to ferment or cure before he began drinking it.

The Hurffs, of course, meant Aunt Mame and Uncle Harry, and also Uncle Charley. Andy Spiegelhalter and his wife were related to the Dettlings. They lived on East 14th Street (near King) and had grown children. One, young Andy, became president of Pusey and Jones (shipbuilders and proprietors of an iron foundry), and a daughter became secretary to my friend Alex Taylor at the Delaware School Auxiliary (a charity of Pierre du Pont's). They were lively people, or at least old Andy was. I used to be sent to their home to play with their grandson, Bobby Watson, when he and his mother, formerly Rose Spiegelhalter, were visiting from their home in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Dad said that Mother changed a lot after marriage, becoming more like her mother. Before marriage she had been very jolly and full of fun, whereas after marriage she became quite nervous, more severe, a worrier, easily upset. It was, I think, the weight of responsibility. She realized, I suppose, that she must take responsibility for family finances and all planning for the future. And after I was born, she worried constantly about my health, looking for diseases and physical problems (like weak ankles) that I probably didn't suffer from, and magnifying the maladies I did have.

She was so nervous that I would turn to my father for sympathy. He told me not to upset Mother; he said he gave way to her often just because of her nervousness.

I remember hearing that once, when Mother broke a good dinner plate, she started to cry. Aunt Mame, whose kitchen overlooked ours across a small side yard, became aware of Mother's nervous anxiety and called through an open window, "Look, Mary, I can break a plate too!" and dashed one of her plates to the floor, shattering it.

With the Hurffs next door for the first ten years or so of my life, it was like having two families. I never had a babysitter. If my mother went out, she left me with Aunt Mame. My sandbox was under their tree. I learned to ride a bicycle in their big side yard.

But it was my father who told me stories; it was he who whetted my appetite for history; it was he who took me to games—football games, baseball games, basketball games--and who discussed them with me. I know now that his education was limited, but the best parts of it—stories of fact (his boyhood) and of fiction (Little Bobby)-- comforted me in my loneliness as an only child. He was my best friend in boyhood.

My mother grew in my esteem as she supported my career—reading my books, understanding my ambitions and furthering them. She became my reliance in my maturity. I wanted to make her proud of me.

But my father was my boyhood pal—I admired him then. And I still do.