

I Grew Up In Valley Stream

By Walter F. Todd



In memory of my great-grandmother, Katherine D. O'Connor

My great-grandmother, Katherine D. O’Conor, née Keller, was known to the family as “Nice Lady.” On March 4, 1938, at age 86, she completed her memoir, “Thoughts and Reminiscences of a Long and Happy Life.” I have read her entertaining narrative many times, and I am grateful that her descendants have preserved and shared our family history. In addition to writing about the O’Conor family, my great-grandmother also wrote about America during the early twentieth century. Because of her book, my cousin Jack Griffin was inspired to record other facts about the O’Conor and Todd families. He completed his family history in the late 1970s and amended it in 2005.

About 25 years ago, I began to record the William and Estelle Rita (“Rita”) Todd family history, but never completed it. Recently re-inspired, I picked up where I left off. Unfortunately, four family members (my mother and three brothers) have passed on, and with them, their stories. Having reached the age of 76, I know that I had better keep writing, as the light at the end of the tunnel draws nearer. The following pages represent my memories during the years 1944 through the early 1960s. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

*—Walter F. Todd
November 8, 2018*

Acknowledgments

Since 1993, family member and friends have helped me recall and document my childhood while living in Valley Stream. I would like to acknowledge them.

Estelle Rita Cooke Todd — *My mother, who contributed many anecdotes to this memoir, but passed away before having the pleasure of reading about her beloved family.*

Joe, Bill, and Paul — *My brothers, who all shared their family stories, but who also didn't live to read about themselves, their family, friends, and community.*

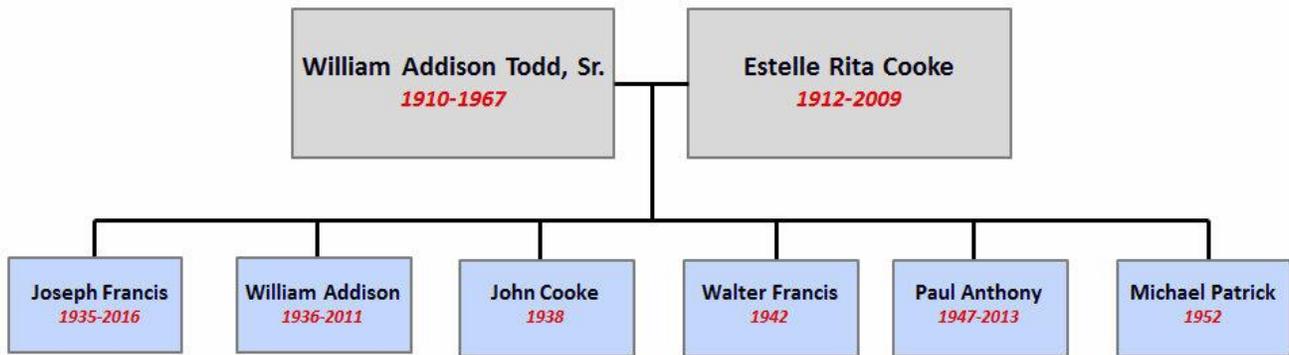
John Todd — *My older brother, of whom I am especially grateful. His support throughout the writing process has been steadfast. John has confirmed memories or disputed what I believed was fact. With great patience and diligence, he has read, and reread many passages for accuracy and truth.*

Stacey Todd — *My dear daughter, who encouraged me to stay focused, and has inspired me to record more of my life, post-Valley Stream. Together, we have published two books: "My Pack Burney the Hollywood Puppy" and "The Studio." Stacey has also authored "Secrets of the Pacific," a book of poetry.*

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Amy Bentley — *A trustee at the Valley Stream Historical Society. "I Grew Up in Valley Stream" was a much longer memoir when I submitted it to the Valley Stream Historical Society for their archive collection. Amy condensed and edited the original story. The unabridged version has been archived at the Pagan-Fletcher Restoration on Hendrickson Avenue in Valley Stream.*

Todd Family Tree



The Todd Family

Top: John, Joe, Bill Jr., Middle: Paul, Rita; Bottom: Walt, Mike, Bill Sr.



Paul, John, Bill Sr., Walt, Bill Jr.

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The Early Years Brooklyn, NY

1942-1944



1943

Bill and Rita Todd

I was born on Thursday, March 5, 1942, at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Brooklyn. I weighed 10 pounds, five ounces and was delivered by my physician grandfather Joseph's friend and colleague, Dr. Searle. I've been told that my father, U.S. Army Infantry Captain William A. Todd (1910-1967), learned of my birth after his return from field maneuvers some three weeks after my arrival.

In a letter dated November 18, 1993, my mother, Rita Todd wrote:

"We lived in an apartment on Clarendon Road, Brooklyn when Joe was born and then we moved to Butler Place. Bill and John were both born on Butler Place. Joe, Bill, and John were christened at St. Jerome's Catholic Church in Flatbush. You were born on St. Mark's Place and christened at St. Gregory the Great Church in Brooklyn. Paul was born in the Munro Boulevard house and Michael on Seventh Street—they were both christened at Holy Name of Mary Church in Valley Stream. That was really looking back...many different addresses...many moves during our married life of 32 years. Happy, busy and wonderful years—some tough ones, but survival is possible with God walking along and many prayers for all."

A short time after my birth my parents packed me and my three brothers into their 1938 four-door Buick sedan and traveled to Dad's duty station at Fort McClellan, Alabama. We stayed with "Captain Bill" until he received orders to deploy to the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations (CBI). While too young to remember our life at the Army camp, there were two stories that were told relevant to our stay at Fort McClellan. One was about my mother's sister, Catherine Cooke. While visiting us from Brooklyn, she met Lieutenant James Kelly who was stationed at the Fort. They later became Mr. and Mrs. James Kelly. The other story is tragic, but interesting, as it is indicative of the things civilians did to help during the war effort. Wives of military men stationed at the Fort were asked to save bacon and other cooking fat to be used in the production of ammunition. Mother dropped a pan of hot fat and severely burned herself. She suffered from those burns for many years and Dad said she deserved a Purple Heart for being injured in the line of duty.

After Dad received his deployment orders, he and Mother packed up the Buick and drove us back to Brooklyn.



**12 Marlboro Road
Valley Stream, NY**

1944-1946



1944

Joe, Bill, John, Rita, and Walt

In 1944, my mother moved the family from Brooklyn to Valley Stream. My Dad, by then a major in the Army, was stationed overseas. We rented a house at 12 Marlboro Road in Gibson, just east of the Long Island Railroad train tracks. In 1922, William Gibson, a builder, purchased land in Valley Stream from a real estate concern and from the Queens County Water Company. He designed a community of “ideal homes” for the many white-collar city workers who were seeking a country-style environment along with the convenience of living close to the city. In 1929, Gibson, using his own money, built the Long Island Railroad’s Gibson train station. City workers could now easily commute to and from the city each day.

When we arrived in Valley Stream, I was approximately two years old. I had two stuffed bears that were gifts from Dad. One of the bears was a black and white panda I named “Panda” and the other was a brown teddy bear I named “Major.” I kept them for many years. While living at the Marlboro Road house my nickname became “Uppy” because I couldn’t pronounce certain letters—“W” being one. Walter somehow came out as “Uppy.” Ergo, that’s what everyone called me.

Mother was always finding things for us to do—just to keep us occupied and to give her some relief from managing a house full of young boys. Walking to the grocery store was a fun activity as we always got a treat—a candy bar or some ice cream. During the war, gas and food were rationed. Mom had ration coupons—small booklets containing stamps for staples such as food and gas. One station owner was suspected was selling low-grade fuel for the same price as regular gas.

My favorite shop was the candy store—I think there were two, one on our side of the tracks, the other on the west side of the tracks. We would buy licorice sticks, candy drops on a long sheet of paper, and baseball cards. The baseball cards contained a sheet of bubble gum that was the same size as the card. It tasted great.

Lance was a friend who lived down the block. Just before we moved to the Munro Boulevard house, Lance and his family moved out of state. On the next street lived Kenny McKenna, Kenny Wallace, and Kevin O’Neill. I remained friends with Kenny McKenna throughout high school.

Directly across the street on Marlboro Road lived a family that owned a beautiful Irish setter I loved to play with and pet. This family had a 17-year-old daughter who had left home and returned a year later, unmarried, with a baby. This provided the neighborhood with much gossip.

All the houses that William Gibson built on Marlboro Road looked the same. They had brick stoops, were two stories high with attics, and basements. Most had a one car detached garage with a small backyard. Our rental house was smaller than the others but suited our young family while Dad was away. In the backyard, my mother had what she called a "Victory Garden" where she grew vegetables and flowers. Mother recalled:

"Late one night, about midnight, I received a phone call from Dad; he would be arriving at the Gibson train station at 1:00 a.m. He was finally coming home from the war! So, I called Mrs. Jarvis, my friend, and neighbor, and told her the good news. I asked her to watch the kids when I went to the train station to pick up Dad."

All this occurred while I was sleeping and I've been told that the next morning, I went into my mother's room and saw a man sleeping in her bed, so I ran to tell my brothers. They told me that the man was my father; he had just returned from the war, and that I should go back and meet him. This was strange because I didn't know him by sight, only by name.

My father's college friend Paul Firing and his wife once paid us a visit. While my parents and the Firing's were in the house talking, my friends and I were playing in front of the house close to where they parked their car. For reasons unknown, I poured sand and dirt into their gas tank. Thus, when they were ready to leave, their car would not start, and I got into a lot of trouble. All ended happily as they eventually got their car started with no major damage.

We had a wall phone hung at the bottom of the stairs on the first floor. To place a call, you lifted the earpiece and spoke into the mouthpiece that was attached to the phone. I believe it also had a hand crank. When the operator came on, she said, "Number Please?" Our number was VA5-4054. Joe recalled that the phone was an older pay phone, but the coin slot was not connected. He remembered telling his friends to put money into the coin slot to call home—he made a few cents at their expense! Mother recollected that you had to be careful when gossiping on the phone because the operators all lived in our town and could listen in.

The Marlboro Road house had an icebox that required the purchase of a block of ice from the nearby ice house. The block was put into the upper part of the box; the bottom section was for food. The ice was secured between bumper and fender on the front of the family car for transport home. A refrigerator eventually replaced the icebox. Milk was delivered to the front door and the milkman would put the bottles in an insulated milk box. The milk was not homogenized, and the cream rose to the neck of the glass bottle. Mother had a special funny-shaped spoon she used to scoop out the cream when she made whipped cream. Otherwise, the cream and milk were mixed for drinking.

Mother was busy running the house and keeping up with her sons. Washday was usually on Mondays and with a house full of boys, there were always plenty of dirty clothes. Laundry was hand washed. Mother had a rippled washboard and a separate squeezer. The clothes were dried on a line that extended outside the kitchen window to a pole at the other end of our backyard. Each end had a pulley so that when clothes were attached to the line, the rope could be pulled. Mother would open the window and lean out, using wooden clothespins to secure the laundry to the line. Extracting the clothes from the line was easy; she did everything in reverse. Somehow, Mother and all the other women around the world managed to keep their families in clean clothes. During the winter, the clothes and sheets would be frozen when she removed them from the line. Over time, the method used for washing clothes evolved and we bought an electric washing machine with an attached squeezer and eventually a dryer.

A coal-fired furnace heated the house during winter. The coal was delivered by truck and stored in the basement. We shoveled coal into the furnace to stoke the fire.

Life for Mother was not all work; she was able to partake in activities other than routine chores. Mother was active in the Catholic Daughters Association and occasionally, my parents would play Bridge with card-playing friends. From time to time, Mother would join Dad at Harlan's Tavern (located across from the Gibson train station).

We had a cat that my brothers named Hominy Grits. After several years, poor Hominy Grits had to go, as life with the four Todd boys took its toll on her.



1945

Joe, Ruth Mackin, Jimmy Olsen, Barbara McNamara, and Walt



105 Munro Boulevard
Valley Stream, NY

1946-1952



1950
Rita and Bill Todd



1947-1956
Bill Todd—Village Trustee

During the latter part of 1946, Mother was expecting her fifth child and our little rental house no longer fit our needs. Mother and Dad purchased a home, and we moved to a similar, but larger house, about ten blocks northeast—105 Munro Boulevard. The house cost approximately \$4,500. It was a pleasant house: three main rooms and a half bathroom on the main floor, three bedrooms and a full bathtub on the second floor, an attic, and a basement. The main floor had an enclosed front porch that later became a television room. There was a breakfast nook in the kitchen where we ate most of our meals. I enjoyed climbing the maple tree in the front yard, close to the boulevard.

My parents added storm windows and new siding to the house. Dad was not much of a handyman, but he tried to build a back porch. We needed one because when you opened the back door, the distance from the doorway to the ground was about four or five feet. Mother reported that she built the foundation using cinder blocks and asked Dad to complete the flooring and steps. The project remained unfinished for many years. I'm not sure, but I believe they finally hired someone to complete the job. Our front stoop also needed some TLC—a few of the bricks became dislodged. I don't think, however; they were ever replaced.

Mr. and Mrs. Enie was an older couple and not thrilled with having five Todd boys living next door to them. We never got along with Mr. Enie. Mrs. Reichert lived in the house behind ours and loved to sit at her kitchen window and look into our backyard (see Chapter 5, Friends and Neighbors).

Joe, Bill, and John entered Brooklyn Prep Catholic High School in Brooklyn and went to school by train. Dad had attended Brooklyn Prep and his great-uncle Father O'Connor had been a teacher there. There were two Jesuit priests in our family: Dad's Great Uncle John O'Connor, and Uncle John O'Connor who taught physics at Saint Joseph College in Philadelphia.

My brother, Paul Anthony, was born in 1947 and I remember the fuss made over him when he first arrived home from the hospital. It changed my life forever as I was no longer the baby of the family. One family story involving Paul has been retold many times: apparently, a car just down the street from our house hit a child. Mother ran to

out to help and was shocked to learn that the child was Paul. As it turned out, he was okay, but Mother needed a stiff drink to get over her shock.

My mother's sister Catherine Kelly and her family also lived in Gibson. Like our family, they lived in a rental house on Waters Place before moving to a larger house on Liggett Road; which was just two blocks from our Munro Boulevard house. We visited the Kelly's often, and it was nice to have cousins close by. Between the two families, there were 14 children—eight for them and six for us. The Kelly's moved to California for several years but returned and settled in Rockville Centre, two towns east of Valley Stream. My aunt Catherine lived in her Rockville Centre home until her passing.

Mother's brother Walter was a New York State senator who lived with his wife Lillian, and their three daughters: Joanne, Maureen, and Deborah in Brooklyn. They frequently visited us as did Grandmother Cooke and mother's younger brother Gerry. Senator Cooke was also a funeral director and he would drive everyone to and from Brooklyn in one of his limousines. The ones I liked best were the Packards and LaSalles. The limos impressed us because they were equipped with an intercom that allowed the driver to roll up the window between the front and rear seats and still be able to communicate with the passengers. Uncle Walter always kept his limousines clean and well waxed. I don't remember Mother's other brother Jack and his family ever visiting us at this house.

Squirrel Stories

The backyard was fenced, and two huge oak trees were home to a family of squirrels. One year a family of gray squirrels took up residence in our attic, and my parents worked diligently to get them to find a more suitable home. After deploying many tactics, the battle with the squirrels was won, and we got back our attic

Another family of squirrels, this time black, was living in our neighborhood. Since black squirrels were scarce, my older brothers arranged with the local game warden to catch them and move them to an area that would enhance their breeding. After many hours of coaxing the squirrels with nuts, the boys finally got them to move under a box. They were captured! The boys felt like big game trappers and the game warden got his black squirrels.

My brothers also concocted a game that fit the confines of our backyard on Munro Boulevard. It was a baseball-type game, but instead of using a baseball, or a rubber ball, they used a basketball. They named the game "Baseball-Basketball." Using the basketball allowed them to play in the small yard and not lose the ball when hit over the fence. Also, hitting a basketball instead of a baseball helped to prevent breaking nearby windows.

I loved to play stoop ball. I would throw a rubber ball on the steps. If the ball bounced back and landed in the street, I would call it a hit. My brother John and I often played this game and I'm sure he always won. But, it still remained one of my favorite games while living in the Munro Boulevard house.

Dad's footlockers from the war were stored in the attic. They were painted a brownish-green and his name and other identifying information were stenciled in white paint across the lid. The footlockers were filled with mostly Army clothing, but the item I liked most were his splats. He also had a silver officer's saber he used during various military ceremonies. I don't remember the other contents of his military footlockers, but I am sure I probably wore many of his uniforms. Along with the footlocker, there was also an armoire that contained some of his dress uniforms, and military hats.

My parents owned a 1938 Buick. It was a black four-door sedan that was large enough for our family. I believe it was the same car that my parents drove when we all went to Alabama in 1943. One time the battery was dead and Mother called the local service station owned by a man named Stoney—it was close to the Gibson train station. After waiting several hours for help, she got impatient, so John and I pushed the car to get it started. Since my mother was angry at Stoney for not showing up, we drove to another gas station to get the battery charged. When the mechanic pulled up the back seat to get to the battery, there was nothing there! With a big smile on his face, he informed us that the car wouldn't start because someone had removed the battery. That someone

turned out to be Stoney, as he did, in fact, respond to Mother's call for service. When he arrived at the house, no one answered the door, so he removed the battery, took it back to his station, and hooked it up the battery charger—unbeknownst to us. This incident, while embarrassing, was humorous and often retold at family gatherings—and like so many family stories, the facts were slightly different each time it was told.

In 1949, Mother traded in the old Buick. She bought a Hudson, the most talked about new car on the market. Mother was pleased when the dealer offered her \$300 for the old Buick (I'd give my eye tooth to buy that car today for \$300!). We were very proud to own that car although the Hudson didn't survive in the highly competitive auto market. Joe had the distinction of being the first one to dent its fender.

Mother always wanted to have a piano. I guess that she really would have liked one of her six sons to learn to play. They acquired the piano while we were living on Munro Boulevard and it followed us to the Seventh Street house. Bill became a fair player while John and I tried our best to learn this wonderful instrument.

When television first came on the market, several of our neighbors and friends would invite us over to watch. Thursdays were the most popular night for us boys. However, because of my young age, and much to my horror, I had to be home by 8:00 p.m. The shows I wanted to see started after that time. My parents eventually bought a television, and we converted our enclosed porch into a "television room." The room was small but large enough to hold a couch, a piano, some chairs, and the television. We spent many hours in that room.

Dad was active in the community's civic affairs. In 1947, he was elected a Valley Stream village trustee. On Monday evenings after dinner, he would go to the Village Hall to take part in weekly board meetings. This position was similar to a city councilman, but because our town was an incorporated village, his title was Trustee. Later, he served as Deputy Mayor. During his time in office, Todd Street was named in his honor. Years after he died, Mother gave me his Trustee badge that is now proudly displayed in my home office.

One Christmas, we got a high-fidelity radio and record player console. The unit was "state-of-the-art" and we enjoyed listening to music on this sound system for many years. Mother's favorite songs were Irish and sung by Bing Crosby. On another Christmas, my older brother Joe, a Boy Scout, received a long-handled ax as a gift. He wanted to try it out, so I tagged along. We hiked to a nearby wooded area where he found some fallen trees. He started to chop away. Bored with nothing to do, I occupied myself with finding rocks and throwing them in the woods. Unfortunately, I walked behind Joe as he swung his ax and he hit me in the head. He rushed me home for first-aid and the scar on my forehead became my "badge of honor." I had headaches for years and when moving from a sitting position to a standing one, I always got a head rush. With what we now know, my injury was probably a concussion. I no longer get the head rushes and my "badge of honor" has faded away.

Once while walking with my friend Willie Molner I fell and hit my head. When we arrived back home, he told me to stop asking him the same questions over and over. I had no knowledge of falling, hitting my head, or of asking him questions. When I looked at my watch, I noted that thirty minutes had passed since I last checked the time, and I didn't remember what happened during that half an hour. Thirty minutes of my life was missing from my memory. Ergo, I had received another concussion.



50 Seventh Street
Valley Stream, NY

1952-1964



January 1964

Bill Jr., and Bill Sr. with the 1953 Ford we called “Freddy”



1960 Buick convertible

Rita, Bill, Walt, and Mike

In 1952, with the expected arrival of their sixth and final offspring, Michael Patrick, my parents began their search for a more spacious house. They also wanted a large yard where their five growing sons could comfortably play. Fortunately, they found the perfect house on Seventh Street, about one mile from our Munro Boulevard house, and closer to Holy Name of Mary School. No more playing in the street or hitting balls into Mr. Enie’s yard for the Todd boys! When the big day arrived for us to move, excitement permeated in the car as we drove to our new place. The house sat on three-quarters of an acre. Mother recalled:

“During July or August, we moved to Seventh Street, and what a day it was, as I was well underway with number six...hot, busy...cellar to attic cleaning...exhausting! Then I found Irene, a great black lady to give me a hand. She was the downstairs gal and me the upstairs. A big house needed lots of hands. What a great house for a large family. Grandma Cooke came when Michael was born and stayed long enough for me to feel OK. We had a lovely christening with Aunt Ba (Elvira) and Uncle Walter Earle as godparents, and a housewarming combined. Dad arranged a wonderful day.”

It was during this time when I stopped being called by my nickname, “Uppy.”

Our Seventh Street house had at one time been converted into a two-family home and reconverted back to a one-family home by the previous owners. A pebbled driveway led from the street in an easterly direction toward the backyard and curved north to the back of the house where it opened to a large parking area. Cars were parked there or in the detached two-car garage. The backyard had a walkway that ended in a wooded section that bordered the rear of our property. The backyard had five trees: two large apples, two pears, and a very large berry tree that helped separate our yard from the house next door.

When we pulled into the driveway at our new home, we saw a young girl, enjoying a ride on a homemade swing attached to the limb of the very large berry tree. I remember my brothers’ concern about the nerve of this girl using our tree! Our swing! Much fuss over a small incident—our families soon became close friends and young Kathy Monks was always welcome to use our swing. Under the berry tree was a slate patio with a pole and bell. At dinnertime, the ringing of the bell summoned us home for dinner. The bell also helped us ring in the New Year.

The east side of the property was bordered with a hedge and lilac bushes. There were three entrances to the house: the front door, the side door (which brought you to a small landing with stairs leading up to the kitchen or down to the cellar), and a back door—the one most often used.

The main floor had six rooms. The foyer was located inside the front door where a staircase led to the second floor. The foyer also contained a bookcase where Mother displayed memorabilia from Dad's war days while serving in India and China. There were two sets of double doors: one to the right and one to the left. To the right was a room Mother referred to as the library, although there were no bookshelves, and it really served no other purpose but to gain entry to either the living or dining rooms. It probably was used as a front room or parlor when the house was first built. The living room was added on many years after the original construction. Our phone was located in the library—so some of us called it the phone room.

Adjacent to the dining room and library was a large room with a fireplace; we referred to it as our living room where Mother's beloved piano was proudly placed. Two love seats were positioned in front of the fireplace and they were the most popular seats in the room. Over the fireplace was a mantle that was used to display various knick-knacks. For most of my formal dates, Mother asked that I bring my date back to the house so she could take photos of us while standing in front of the fireplace.



1960

Jim Norton, dk, Mary Baffa, and Walt Todd

Passing through the left set of double doors from the foyer was a large room that may have been the original living room. Mother and Dad first used it as a master bedroom and later as Dad's office. Another door from this room led directly to the kitchen. The kitchen had a small pantry that led to a half bathroom. The kitchen had two additional doorways, one to the dining room and the other to the family room—and like the living room, it was an add-on. When my brother Bill was in high school, he took a mechanical drawing class and one of his projects was to make a design of his house. We all agreed that the finished project was great although he only included the first floor. He received an "A."

The second level consisted of four bedrooms. One had been used as a kitchen when the home was converted to a two-family. The master bedroom led to a large deck that was situated over the living room. Several years after we moved to this house, Mother and Dad replaced the wood railing that surrounded the deck with an iron railing. The attic had a finished bedroom that my brother Bill used as a bedroom.

On moving day, I was eager to explore the house and went to the attic, the basement, and to the garage—while everyone else was moving furniture and boxes. The previous owners were antique collectors and had left neat things in the garage. There was a long-handled clam rake that later worked well when used to shake apples from the tree. It could get to places that normally couldn't be reached. There were a number of parts for an ox harness and other farm items. Stored in the rafters were many pieces of wood and miscellaneous lawn equipment.

A family friend, Monsignor Francis Fitzgibbon, Pastor of Our Lady of the Skies Chapel at Idlewild Airport (later renamed John F. Kennedy International Airport), blessed each room with holy water. It was quite moving. Afterward, we all felt safe knowing the Holy Spirit now protected us.

The Seventh Street house served our family well, and for me, it was the part of my early years I remember best. What I recall most was the woods behind the house. They stretched for about an eighth of a mile to a stream, and beyond the stream for another eighth of a mile. I spent a lot of my free time in the woods and stream. It was a great place for a young boy to use as his playground. I would pretend that I was an Indian or a hunter and run the various trails and climb the trees. There were many wild animals living in the woods: rabbits, garden snakes, birds, owls, squirrels, and other critters. Occasionally, a fox could be sighted. At night, bats would be flying every which way. I chased the rabbits until I was exhausted. The stream crossed Rockaway Avenue and ran behind our house. Eventually, a land developer bought up the woods surrounding the stream and built houses. The stream was converted to a concrete culvert with paved roads on either side. The road became a popular drag strip for the kids and their hotrods.

Dad served as a Village Trustee until 1956. That year he was appointed to the position of Postmaster of the Valley Stream Post Office by President Eisenhower. His law practice did not provide enough income to support our large family and the new job gave him a bi-weekly paycheck that was much needed. A few years prior, we started to help out financially by becoming newspaper delivery boys and securing other part-time jobs. The family finances improved, and Mother purchased a new Buick after Dad's postmaster appointment. John was a midshipman while attending the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. He looked great in his uniform. When we visited him he was surprised to see the new car because he knew of the family's financial problems. Mother assured him that Dad's new job helped us become financially solvent.



1957

Bill, Sr. and Walt with the 1956 Buick Special—a two-door hardtop convertible

Mother bought Dad another new car, this time while he was in Washington DC. Dad and some fellow attorneys traveled by train to the Capitol to take part in a Supreme Court ceremony that granted lawyers the authority to practice before the court. Upon his return from Washington, we drove to the Valley Stream train station to pick him up. We parked our new vehicle in the front of the station, across from the ticket room. When Dad's train pulled in, we were waiting for him on the platform. Once we walked down the stairs and into the street, Dad asked, "Where'd you park the car?" "That convertible over there is our new car," Mother replied. She opened the door of our beautiful 1960 Buick convertible and ushered Dad in while we all congratulated him.

My parents loved to entertain, and we all enjoyed their parties. One time, my father invited so many people over he needed to hire a bartender. Father Schoenenberger, our priest at Holy Name of Mary, was a frequent guest where he enjoyed a tall glass of Scotch. Parties often consisted of relatives. The Cooke's of Garden City and Brooklyn, The Kelly's of Rockville Centre, the Griffin's of Brooklyn, the Earl's of Huntington, and The Todd's of Brooklyn. We also had visits from my father's uncles: Dan O'Connor, Dr. Joseph O'Connor and Father John O'Connor. Dad's cousin, John O'Connor of Greenwich, was an occasional guest. Uncle Dan arrived in his chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce and we were thrilled when shown the interior of this magnificent automobile. Old friends often visited our home and the Corwin's of Brooklyn and Mattituck were welcome guests.

My friend Paul Tekworth attended one of the parties and he had a "state-of-the-art" double reel tape recorder we used to tape our favorite rock-and-roll songs. Uncle Gerry, Mother's younger brother, asked us to play a tune and a great idea came to him. In the middle of our recorded songs, Uncle Gerry used the microphone and pretended to be a disc jockey. In a DJ-like voice, he gave a little spiel about the great party going on at the Todd's house in Valley Stream! He even mentioned names of some guests—Mildred McNamara and Eileen Monks are a couple of the names that come to mind. About ten minutes later, after our "clandestine" recording, Paul and I brought the tape recorder into the living room and we played the music loud. When the taped part with the DJ was played, the room became quiet—the guests needed to hear what the "DJ" was saying. Some looked around expecting to see a DJ in the room. The party guests couldn't believe the DJ-like voice was Uncle Gerry and not a professional!

George Monks played a mean guitar and he and my brother John would often play together at parties. Many tunes were also played on the piano and company would gather around and sing along. George Monks in addition to playing the guitar also played piano, and he and Bill McNamara were often the ones who made Mother's piano the center of attraction at our parties. Occasionally, my brother Bill would play a few songs, as would Cousin Jane Cooke. I guess Mother's dream of me becoming a musician never came to fruition. I dutifully took accordion, piano and guitar lessons, but never got the hang of these great instruments. Many dollars in music lessons were ill-spent on me. John was her only success story—he became an excellent guitar player and had a good voice.

While in college, Joe often invited his friends over for what he called his "Summertime Ski Parties." It was like a "Christmas in July" party—a costume type party where all the guests had to wear ski clothes and talk about their favorite ski resorts. Wine and Swiss fondue were served. Skiers brought guitars and sang winter-type songs. The only thing missing was the snow and slopes.

Dad's friends, Frank Boening and Chappy Frederick were volunteer firemen. They came over our house, on Dad's request, to inspect the smell of smoke in the living room. Both men suspected that the smoke smell was smoldering ashes under the living room floor. But, the living room was an add-on to the house and didn't have a basement, just a crawl space. With flashlights and portable fire extinguishers in hand, they crept through the crawl space until they reached the base of the fireplace. After a dirty crawl of about 20 feet, they opened a small metal door at the base of the fireplace, found smoldering ashes, and quickly extinguished them. Someone, perhaps "little old me," had swept the embers down the ash disposal door. Unbeknownst to us, there was a way to remove the ashes from the exterior of the chimney base. Frank and Chappy showed us the firebox door on the exterior of the chimney. For years, it had been covered with ivy and not visible from the exterior of the chimney. If we had known, we could have solved this problem ourselves! With the mystery solved, Dad offered our heroes cold beers.

Dad wasn't much of a gardener. In fact, the only gardening I ever remember him doing was raking leaves into a pile. The pile of leaves would remain untouched until one of us disposed of them. One time, while Dad was in the backyard raking leaves, our neighbor George Monks came over and the two men talked for what seemed like an hour or two. That's about all the leaf raking Dad did that day.

But Dad was a good delegator and finally got Joe to do the yard work. Joe was a student at Hofstra College and had a part-time job, so he wasn't home much. However, Dad assigned him the job of trimming the hedge in front of our house. One hot summer day, Joe returned from Hofstra with a friend, and both tackled the front hedge. It was the kind of day that called for a thirst-quenching drink, to help ward off the evils of working and sweating in the hot sun. "How would a tall, cool gin and tonic taste today?" pondered Joe. "Great," he answered to himself. He proceeded to make two glasses of this fine summer drink. Well, to make a short story longer, they continued working on the hedge and were doing a great job until the bottle of Beefeater's was empty. Then they emptied the Gordon's bottle. The hedge trimming complete, the boys raked up the clippings and disposed of them in a neat and orderly fashion. When Dad returned home, he was pleasantly surprised to see his beautifully trimmed hedge although it appeared a little crooked near the edge. This was probably due to the after-effects of the gardeners consuming Dad's gin. Dad was both pissed and pleased. His gin was gone, but the hedge was trimmed. Probably more pissed than pleased.



Friends and Neighbors



1957

Back Row: George Monks, dk, Bill Todd

Middle Row: Mike Todd

Front Row: Rita Todd, Eileen Monks, dk

Marlboro Road

Barrett

Julius and Mabel Barrett lived down the street from our house. With great pride, they grew beautiful roses. In the summer, while walking with my parents through the neighborhood, we would often stop at the Barrett's house to admire their flowers. My father and Mr. Barrett were active in the Gibson Civic Association and they loved to talk about things that were of no interest to me. [Barrett Park in Gibson was named after Julius, Village Trustee 1956-64.]

McNamara ("Mac")

Bill and Mildred McNamara, and their daughters, Barbara and Maureen, were our next-door neighbors. My brother John recalls they also had a son who had polio and was his friend—unfortunately the boy died. My other brother Joe recalls that the McNamara's had a welcome home from the war party for Dad and that Joe met Dad at the door with a toy rifle held in a salute.

One day, I went to the McNamara's garage and took Barbara's doll carriage and went for a walk. My adventure took me about a mile away, to the other side of the Long Island Railroad tracks—I was lost. Mother called the police; they found me and brought me home. The McNamara's garage and Barbara's carriage became off-limits, thereafter. The McNamara's were great neighbors and were tolerant of the Todd boys who lived next door. One morning after it snowed we all were outside waiting for Mother to drive the older boys to school. Mr. Mac, as we fondly called him, was backing his car out of the garage when we bombarded him with snowballs! He got out of his car and started a snowball fight with us. Meanwhile, Mother couldn't get our car started and had to ask Bill to drive the older boys to school; he willingly agreed—even after we tossed snow at him! The McNamara's remained friends of the family for many years. Barbara still keeps in touch.

Tutschulte

On the next block lived Donald Tutschulte, the first president of the Gibson Civic Association. “King Tut,” as my father fondly referred to him, was active in many local affairs and we often visited his family.

Munro Boulevard

Enie

Mr. and Mrs. Enie were an older couple and not happy with the Todd boys who lived next door to them. We never got along with Mr. Enie. My brother John recalls we often played ball in the street around the corner from our house. The Enie’s lived on the corner lot so we were still playing alongside their house. Mr. Enie would get upset when a ball would land on his lawn—invariably he would come out and shake his fist at us and tell us to get off his property. On one occasion, one boy told him “to retire to the lower quarters.” Mother recalled:

“Mr. Enie was grumpy and he could not relate to children. However, Dad and I never had words with him. When we moved to the Seventh Street house they were tickled! In fact, Mrs. Enie was all smiles and gabby when I met her in the market. Mr. Enie died soon after; I guess he missed the Todd activity after all.”

Reichert

Mrs. Reichert lived in the house behind ours and often sat at her kitchen window and that looked into our backyard. In the warmer weather, she loved to open the window to talk to us while we played. As young kids, we thought she was nice, but a crazy old lady. Her brother Charlie lived with her. He was a character—he spent his free time at the local watering hole, Harlan’s Tavern. Charlie enjoyed singing and sometimes in the mornings while we were at the bus stop waiting to be picked up for school, he would be walking home from the tavern singing loudly and “feeling no pain.” Mother recalled:

“Poor Charlie had severe eye problems and finally became practically blind. One night he missed a turn to the bathroom and fell down the entire flight of stairs and into the cellar—poor Charlie’s life ended tragically.”

When Charlie died, his body was cremated and his ashes were placed in an urn that Mrs. Reichert displayed on her living room mantle—she talked to him every day. He must have been a good patron at Harlan’s because for many years his portrait hung in a place of honor behind the bar.

Seventh Street

Cox

The Cox’s were a family of five. The Cox business was located on Brooklyn Avenue and was four or five blocks from our house. On Election Day their business was a designated voting facility. Mother and Dad would walk over and cast their votes. When I was old enough to vote, I proudly walked with them to do the same.

The oldest child was Jim, and he worked with his father in the family’s plumbing business. Next was Bobby, he was my brother John’s age. Bobby attended Cardinal Farley Military Academy and when he graduated he received a new Ford. Bobby also joined the family business and was a member of the volunteer fire department. Once the fire sirens went off, we could hear his car screeching down the street as he made his way to the firehouse. Barbara, the third child, was a year or two younger than me. Many years ago, while attending embalming school in Manhattan, I ran into Barbara on the train ride home. She was in nursing school, and we had an enjoyable conversation. Barbara was a pretty girl, but for some reason we never dated.

Frederick

Happy (Harriet) and Chappy (Charles) Frederick lived at 83 Dubois Avenue, which was close to our home. The Frederick's owned a dry-cleaning store.

Gunther

A few houses down the street from us lived another family of five. Mr. Gunther owned a construction company, and he and his wife had three children. Two girls, I seem to remember were twins; and the boy was named Billy. Occasionally, John would work for Mr. Gunther. One time when a concrete sidewalk was newly poured, John had to stand guard overnight to ensure that no person, or animal, walked on the wet surface.

Lohse

Our neighbors, Charles and Thelma Lohse, lived next door at 52 Seventh Street. Like the Monks, they had two children, Valerie and Adrian. Val was John's age, and they briefly dated. Adrian, the younger daughter, was closer to Paul's age. The family owned a 1948 Hudson two-door sedan. Mr. Lohse maintained a beautiful rose garden. One summer when I was working with George Monks, he suggested that we take a walk over to the Lohse's yard to see their garden. Apparently, Charles Lohse had successfully spliced a limb from a yellow rose plant onto a red flowering plant. When we arrived, Mr. Lohse proudly told of his success and we saw a rose plant with two red and yellow flowers.

The Lohse's were good neighbors, but I'm not sure how they felt about living next to a family of rowdy boys. One summer, John got a job with the village and was required to be at work early each day. John and Joe owned a 1939 Ford hot rod with loud mufflers. The car had starter problems and John had to open the hood and wiggle something or fool with the carburetor while pressing the starter button. Once the engine kicked in, he quickly closed the hood and got behind the wheel while putting his foot on the accelerator. He kept the engine running at high revolutions for about five or ten minutes until the engine warmed up and then off to work he went. This was his routine every morning and the fact that the car had loud mufflers did not endear him to our good neighbors.

Long

Joe, a Chevy car salesman, and his wife Maude lived on the other side of the tracks and they had an adopted son named Timmy. We became good friends and, of course, we got into a lot of trouble together.

Lynch

John Lynch was a close friend of the family, and he would visit our home often. He would sit with my parents around the dining room table talking and enjoying each other's company. We loved his visits because he would sometimes give us a dollar—sometimes more.

John and Lillian Lynch first lived in Gibson but eventually moved to a beautiful house on North Corona Avenue. Their backyard faced the Valley Stream Pond. They built a beautiful lanai behind the garage. Mr. Lynch converted his two-car garage into a "man cave," although we didn't call it that at the time. The Lynch's had three children: Nancy and Jack, who were twins, and another daughter Patty. Jack died in a car crash while he was serving active duty in the Army. My brother John recalls he was at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point during this time. Mother and Dad took him to the Lynch's right after Jack died, insisting he wear his uniform. John remembers Mrs. Lynch breaking down in tears when she opened the door and saw him.

Lynch owned a Ballantine beer distributorship and operated Country Wide Beer and Soda home delivery service in Valley Stream. He later sold County Wide and moved the beer business to a new location in Lynbrook. He liked hosting Christmas parties for employees and friends at his store. I also have fond memories of Friday night cookouts at the Lynch's and drinking a frosty mug of Ballantine directly from the keg.

Mr. Lynch offered Dad the position of general counsel for his businesses, complete with private offices. Dad liked the idea of having his own law office, so he resigned from the Manhattan firm of Seibert and Riggs. We all attended the farewell party at the firm's offices at 30 Broad Street. It was a sad day for him as he worked in there for 20 years.

Lynch owned a beautiful green Cadillac convertible he would drive in the annual St. Patrick's Day parade. Another time, he hired a horse-driven coach with an Irish bagpipe band to march in the parade down Rockaway Avenue.

Once, Mr. and Mrs. Lynch invited their close friends to join them on a Queen of Bermuda cruise. Mother and Dad scraped together some spending money and all the kids chipped in. I had a paper route and had saved about \$45 dollars which I gladly gave to them. Passengers were permitted to invite guests aboard the ship for a *bon voyage* party. It was my first time on a ship and I was delighted to be among the many guests. Uncle Jack Cooke came from his Manhattan offices at McGraw Hill Publishing Company, as did other friends, and relatives. I don't remember if my brothers were in attendance, but probably Joe and Bill were. John may have been a student at the Merchant Marine Academy.

When they returned from the cruise, Mother and Dad had many stories to share. For many years, we never tired of looking at the photographs and slides they took. They bought home a few keepsakes: Wedgwood Jasper teacups and a record album recorded by one of the groups that played at a show they attended. It was a lively calypso tune called the "Zombie Jamboree." The first verse was not easy to forget, I remember it to this day:

*"Well, now
Back to back, belly to belly
Well, I don't give a damn.
'Cause it doesn't matter really
Back to back, belly to belly
At the zombie jamboree."*

Monks

The Monks, which included George, his wife Eileen, and their two children, Mike and Kathy, were our neighbors. As a younger man, George played football and baseball (he ended up playing pro football for at least a year), and preserved his athletic build throughout his life. He spent his summers at the Valley Stream Pool as the head lifeguard. A graduate of Central High, and Alfred College, with a commission in the Navy, he always maintained the "Navy-look," especially on weekends. For many years, George was an executive at the Manhattan offices of New York Life Insurance Company. He eventually helped my brother Joe gain employment with New York Life. At parties he was always the center of attention—he would lead the partygoers in song and fun. Over time, we all came to enjoy the company of this complex man who could strum a guitar, pluck a piano key, and sing like a cocktail lounge crooner.

Over the years, Mr. Monks probably employed all the Todd boys to help with his many yard projects; he was always working on improving his well-manicured lawn. He taught me a lot about gardening, which resulted in the cultivation of a garden behind in our backyard. I transplanted four saplings from the woods behind our property and several white lilac trees. All four saplings grew very large over time. The lilac trees didn't do as well—I had planted them in the shaded area next to the Monks garage. While they produced a few beautiful flowers each year, they never grew big and bushy.

Mr. Monks built an extension on the back of his garage to store his gardening equipment. He made it large enough so that Kathy could use part as a playhouse. The finished product contained a wall that separated the two rooms and he allowed Kathy to decorate her side. It made a fine playhouse for her and her best friend Barbara Cox.

Because George Monks was such an intense and excellent gardener, he needed plenty of water to maintain his lush green lawns, decorative plants, and vegetable garden. He was continually moving hoses to water the

various areas of his yard and I'm sure his water bill in summer was exorbitant. So, he decided to sink a well close to the rear of the house. Plans completed and supplies purchased, he engaged his son, Mike, and me to assist in the difficult task of drilling the piping down to the water table. We worked for many hours and *voilà*; we hit pay dirt! He now had access to a free supply of water! All he needed then was to connect the piping and electricity to the pump in his basement. In the course of the next few weeks, he accomplished this task and was able to maintain his beautiful lawns and garden at no further cost. However, during the heat of the summer, when watering restrictions were in place, he had to do his watering in the middle of the night, to avoid neighbors noticing that he was in violation of the water restrictions put in place by the Village Water Department (his well was not included in those restrictions).

We fondly remember Mrs. Monks. Eileen was a cheerful woman who always had a smile and news of ongoing events. When I worked for Mr. Monks, Eileen would serve great lunches on their back porch. Every Thursday she would play cards with friends and often Mother would join the group. At other goings-ons, or while at parties, she seemed to be the center of conversation. We loved having her as a neighbor and as a good friend. Some of my fondest memories were of watching television in the Monks' basement. They enjoyed watching the western shows on television, the same as I—but I can't remember which ones, perhaps the "Maverick" series.

Mike, their son, followed in the family tradition, he was an accomplished piano player. He was also a pitcher on the Central High School baseball team; in spring we would hear the slap of Mike's baseball hitting his dad's mitt—they often played catch together. It wasn't the sound of a normal game of catch though; it was more like the sound of an 80 plus mph fastball hitting a catcher's glove! After high school, Mike married a pretty girl named Toni, a commercial artist, and they settled in Englishtown, New Jersey. George and I traveled one Saturday to their new home to bring gardening tools, rhododendrons, and other plants. We took a ferry to Staten Island on our way to New Jersey. It was a fun day as I got to spend quality time with Mr. Monks.

Kathy was maybe a year or two younger than me, but she became a close friend during our early teenage years. Years later, when I was on leave from the Army, I had lunch with Kathy in Manhattan and it was enjoyable as she caught me up on the news of her life as a young businesswoman living and working in New York City. Kathy keeps in contact with all the Todd boys and I, for one, enjoy our dialogue and e-mail messages. In her own words: "I consider myself to be a member of your family."

The Valley Stream Central High School Alumni Association evolved from the committee that was formed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the Village of Valley Stream. A Central High School reunion for all classes up until 1975 was held on September 27, 1975, at Carl Hoppl's concession at the Malibu Beach Club. Over 1,200 graduates and friends attended. Following the reunion, the Central High School Alumni Committee was formed. The Valley Stream Central Alumni Association was officially incorporated on November 1, 1978. The first president was George Monks, and he was chosen, appropriately so, from Central's first graduating class of 1927. His legacy continues at Central's Senior Awards Night. The "George Monks Memorial Scholarship," worth \$2,500, is awarded to a deserving senior each year.

Both the Todd and Monk houses have been torn down and replaced. It is sad to know we can no longer drive down Seventh Street on our occasional visits to Valley Stream and see these wonderful old homesteads. They are but ghosts of our past—but they live on in our minds and in this chronicle.

Munson

Across the street and down the block from our house was an apartment building. A man named Munson occupied one of the units. He was an attorney and held an elected office with the county. We remember this because he owned a beautiful Buick Skylark convertible with a continental wheel mounted on the rear bumper. This car, along with Mr. Munson, was the envy of the Todd boys.

Holy Name of Mary School and Catholic Church



School

I started school at age six and entered the first grade at Holy Name of Mary Catholic School. My three older brothers preceded me and I am sure that my teachers, the Sisters of St. Joseph, would have preferred that the fourth sibling to have been a girl. My first-grade teacher, Sister Joseph Alphonse, taught me my ABCs, and I enjoyed her class. That year, the student body was so large we had split sessions—one half of the class attended school in the morning, the other half in the afternoon.

Air raid drills were often conducted in our village during and after WWII. When I entered the first grade and the air raid siren sounded, we were told to get under our desks while the teacher used a long pole to close the high windows and blinds. The nuns told us that the Germans or Russians might attack us and keeping the windows shut and the lights off would help protect us. I am not sure, but I think my father was a block captain after the war and a member of the local civil defense organization.

Sister Margaret Loretta taught second grade, and she was my least favorite teacher. I was not a good student and she and I had many discussions about my inappropriate classroom behavior. I was greatly relieved to learn that at the end of the school year I had passed and was promoted to the third grade. My grades did not improve in third grade, however, even after Mother's attempt at tutoring me with flashcards—which failed miserably. My parents transferred me to Sacred Heart Academy in Garden City where I repeated the third grade. Mother arranged for me to carpool with Patty Lynch, John and Lillian's daughter, who was a senior. I became an "A" student that year.

The following year, I returned to Holy Name of Mary as a fourth-grade student. Miss Mary Conklin, a lay teacher, taught my class, and under her guidance, my grades and behavior improved. (Miss Conklin retired from teaching at Holy Name in 1993—many decades after I graduated.) Our class was held in a temporary room in the basement of the school because there were more students than classrooms. Paul Tekworth, a new student, enrolled that year at the half-year mark. Paul told us about his adventures at his previous school and boasted that his dad had played professional baseball for the Cleveland Indians. He also bragged that his family had purchased a large television and told us many other stories we later found out were not true. In light of his shortcomings, we became best of friends. His father, in fact, had played professional baseball. In later years, his younger brother, Pete, became lifelong friends with my brother Paul. Another one of my friends at Holy Name of Mary was Raymond McGrath who, during his later years, represented our Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

After the fourth grade, my grades slid again, but I managed to pass my classes and was promoted.

Mother would drive me to school and pick up other kids along the way. One day, she was driving a “loaner car” when she picked us up at school. On the way home, she turned a corner and the passenger door flew open and one of the kids fell out. Fortunately, the little girl was not hurt, but henceforth, Mother made sure that all the doors were closed tightly and locked (this was before seatbelts).

Being a member of a large family, I was use to roughhousing with my older brothers. But, I had never been in a serious fight with anyone other than a brother. As fate would have it, my first fight was with one of my friends. Brian Weeks, Kevin O’Neil, and I all walked home from school together. Kevin was the smart one of the group—he got all “As,” and Brian and I were jealous of him. One day on the way home from school we stopped in a wooded area near the Brooklyn Oval baseball field, and Kevin and I got into a fight. After many minutes of wrestling, we continued the fight the next day at the same time and same place. Our big fight lasted for many days and each day kids on their way home from school stopped to watch. By the end of the week, there were as many as ten kids observing our fight. As the days progressed, though, Kevin, and I got over being mad at one another. We continued to fight only to amuse our audience.

Kevin and I got into another squabble. We were playing in the woods and on our way home we had to cross a stream by walking on a tree trunk that had fallen into the water. Kevin was behind me and when we were about halfway across he pushed me in the stream. I got soaked! My new sneakers were wet and muddy and I knew when I got home my mother would be furious! I followed Kevin to his home and told his father what Kevin had done. I expected Kevin’s father to punish him. Much to my dismay, Dr. O’Neil said if I was so upset with Kevin I should have pushed him in the stream. I went home that afternoon feeling that justice was not on my side.

Kevin had an older brother, Brian, two years older than me. I didn’t like him because he was wimpy but smart. One day Brian and I got into an argument and started pushing and shoving one another. He was taller than I was, and getting the best of me, so I fled as fast as I could, never expecting he could outrun me. But he did! I got the worst of that altercation and respected Brian a lot more after that. He was one of the few kids that could run faster and longer distances than I could. Years later Brian was frequently seen running all over town. He attended Georgetown University where he was a successful member of the cross-country track team.

The students congregated in the schoolyard to play and socialize. Sister Joan Xavier was a familiar sight as she often organized and played in our stickball games. I will always remember gathering with my friends and pitching or flipping baseball cards. (If only we had kept those cards they would be worth a small fortune today!) When the school bell rang we assembled in columns of twos by class, and the nuns marched us to our respective classrooms. We had our lunch in the large room in the basement, and if you lived close to school you were allowed to go home for lunch. When I was in the seventh and eighth grades, I would often ride my bike home for lunch. One day my friend John Faraday came home with me. While we were crossing Sunrise Highway, a four-lane, busy highway, I slipped and banged my face into the bike’s handlebar and broke a tooth. Henceforth, I had a fat lip and a chipped tooth that were unwelcome additions to what I already considered a homely face.

It was in the seventh grade that my schoolyard friends: Kenny McKenna, Kenny Wallace, Paul Tekworth and Malcolm (Mac) Lorma, invited me to a party. Apparently, they had already hosted a couple of parties but they needed one more boy to round out the group. The Lindy was popular, so in the schoolyard during recess, they taught me the basic steps of the dance. Most of the parties took place in Paul Tekworth’s recently finished basement. Everyone needed a date, so we paired up: Kenny Wallace with Carol Zawata, Paul Tekworth with Patricia Horan (she later married one of my brother Bill’s friends), Kenny McKenna with Jewel Seaman and Mac Lorma with someone not in our class. Fortunately, Kenny McKenna couldn’t come, so I asked Jewel to be my date. Our dating span lasted ten years. She attended all my proms and many dances, and I attended hers, as well. We never became romantically involved, just good friends. Jewel, who had long blonde hair and was beautiful, always dressed like she was going to church.

A small group, we formed a club and bought red and white sweaters that distinguished us from our other classmates. In the middle of the seventh grade, Kenny Wallace's family moved to Rockville Centre, so we needed to add to our group. We asked Ray Worsdale to join. We loved the music played on "The Moondog House," Alan Freed's radio show (later renamed the "Alan Freed Rock 'n' Roll Party"—apparently the name Moondog was already in use). In later years we went to Alan Freed's live shows in Brooklyn and Manhattan. We liked songs by Elvis Presley, Patti Page, Fats Domino, Count Basie, The Platters, Bo Diddley, and Little Richard. Aside from dancing to great music, our favorite game was Spin the Bottle.

Occasionally, Dad would take us to the basement auditorium at Holy Name of Mary to see the boxing match held every Friday night. He loved all sports and taught us to share his enjoyment. While he didn't want us to get involved in boxing, we learned to enjoy being spectators. They also used the auditorium for school assemblies, plays, and during inclement weather, for exercise. The Catholic Daughters, Holy Name Society, Knights of Columbus, Cub and Boy Scouts, and the Young Catholic's Association, all used the auditorium for their meetings and special events. On Sundays, it was converted for church services, as the old church was not large enough to hold the expanding congregation. Monsignor McGovern was the pastor, and he loved his small old church. After he passed away, Father Butler was appointed pastor because of his ability to raise money for new construction. He was always finding ways to get parishioners to give more, and he was successful, as an addition to the old church was soon built. My father did not like Father Butler's money-raising tactics, but years later they were both in Mercy Hospital. They got along fine as they were frequently visiting on another.

My parents were once in a musical production held in the auditorium. As a young member of the audience, I was proud to see them on stage singing and dancing. Years later, as a member of the Young Catholics Association, I was the one on stage and my parents were in the audience. I didn't sing or dance, though, and had no speaking parts, much to my relief. I feared speaking and performing in public.

I don't know how I did it, but I graduated from Holy Name of Mary. I'm sure that the nuns just wanted to get rid of the Todd boys! We had a graduating class of 60 students.

My Classmates and Friends

Walter Adams, Carolyn Ang, Martin Von Bartheld, Patricia Baumann, Gregory Bell, Josephine Braun, Ann Broderick, Roger Brown, Lorraine Brunner, Vincent Cafaro, Joseph Cancellare, Patricia Clamp, Frances Connelly, James Cousins, Judith Curto, Marian Croak, Pauline Cusano, Nancy Dalton, Michael Deguilio, Charles Dougherty, John Faraday, Richard Feldman, Gerard Graseck, William Griffin, Nancy Huber, Patricia Horan, Edward Hogan, John Humins, William Kernan, William LaFave, Andy Lanzilotta, John Lee, Robert McKinney, Gail Merritt, Helen Meyer, Eileen Moore, Kathryn Muller, Francis Murphy, James Naughton, Jim Norton, Ronald Nolan, Robert Nolan, Maureen Oberer, Patricia O'Brien, Texas Pempf, Caroline Puccio, Peter Rader, Eugene Riggs, Barbara Scher, William Schopps, Barbara Schurr, Edward Scott, Mary Searing, Ernie Shaffer, Carl Ann Smith, Diane Southerland, Victoria Stillwagon, Jerry Sullivan, John Tadler, Paul Tekworth, Anne Walsh, Jane Walsh, John Wunner, Ralph Yondola, and Carol Zawada.

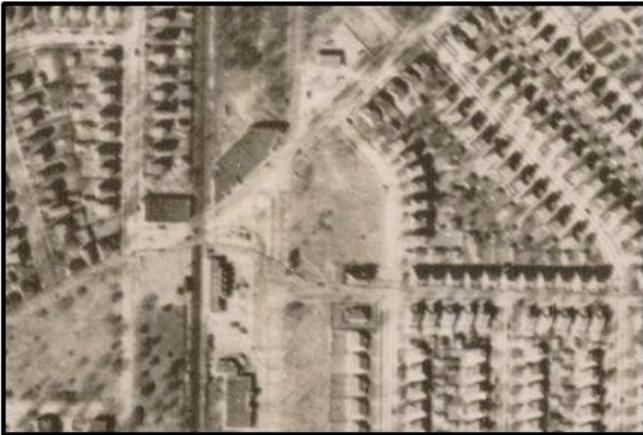
Church

Sunday mornings were devoted to church. We often went to noon Mass and afterward we would gather on the sidewalk and wait for the family to assemble. This was fun as we got to greet friends and acquaintances as they exited from church. If we missed the noon Mass at Holy Name of Mary, we would go to the neighboring town of Hewlett and attend the 12:30 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph's. Joe taught me how to read the missal and the altar boy's responses in Latin. He was always teaching me something new.

After Mass, Mother would take us to a local bakery for some tasty treats. Sometimes she would drive to Rockville Centre to another great bakery for doughnuts. Jelly-filled donuts and coffee cake were my favorites. From time to time, Dad would invite us to join him at a father and son communion breakfast at a nearby restaurant after Mass. There usually was a meeting and then some speeches—Dad always had us stay in the back of the room so we could leave before the speeches began. Learning this tactic was a good lesson, and I followed it all of my life.

Some of our favorite radio shows, "The Lone Ranger," "The Cisco Kid," "Tom Mix" "Inner Sanctum," and "The Shadow," aired on Sunday evenings. The shows usually began at suppertime and since we kept a radio in the kitchen, dinner was served at the kitchen table. But, before we were allowed to listen, we first had to recite what we had learned during Sunday Mass. That was tough for me since I rarely paid attention to the sermon—I would just repeat what my older brothers said.

Activities, Sports and Athletic Fields



1950

Gibson Oval

east of Gibson Train Station

Bounded by: Gibson Blvd., Dubois Ave., Amherst Rd., Munro Blvd.



1950

Brooklyn Oval

west side of Rockaway Ave.

Bounded by: Rockaway Ave., S. Brush Dr., Gibson Blvd., Alsop St.

There were two ball fields in the Gibson of my youth, the Gibson Oval and the Brooklyn Oval. The ovals were where aspiring athletes would gather to play pickup baseball and football. Dreams of playing professional ball were always on our minds although few would transition to pro ball.

The Gibson Oval

The Gibson Oval was located east of the Gibson train station on Gibson Boulevard. I was a young boy when we lived on Munro Boulevard, so I didn't play organized sports, but I have memories of playing pick-up games on this old field. When we moved to Marlboro Road there was a boy next door who was my age, and we became friends. As a hobby, his father built remote-controlled airplanes. Often, they would invite me to join them when they flew planes at the Gibson Oval.

The Brooklyn Oval

The Brooklyn Oval was another ball field in Gibson. It was larger and in better condition than the Gibson Oval. It was where we played organized ball. I was about 10 years old when we moved to Seventh Street and our house was a block from the Brooklyn Oval, making it easily accessible for a young boy. A brook and wooded area were adjacent to the playing fields—and that is where I spent most of my playtime. Family friends, the Croaks, lived on Brush Drive which was next to the field. The most memorable time for the residents of our village was when the carnival took over the Brooklyn Oval for a week or so and we enjoyed the rides, food, and festivities.

The Gibson and Brooklyn ovals are gone now, replaced by houses. A shame, but that is life. My friend Bob Napolitano's parents purchased one of the duplex homes that were built on the Brooklyn Oval—I spent many hours there and attended parties in his finished basement.

Scouting

Mother and Dad involved all their children in Cub and Boy Scout programs. While I loved the Cub Scouts (it probably helped that Mother was the Den Mother), I was not enthused about the Boy Scouts. A relative of the Tilyou family (who owned Coney Island's Steeplechase Amusement Park) was one of the boys in our cub den. Thinking back now, I believe that I never really liked this boy, but his family provided our den with tickets to the

amusement park. That was the good part of our friendship. The downside of our relationship was when the boy used my special Cub Scout project and turned it in as his school project and received an “A”! We were in the fourth grade, and I reported this to our teacher, Miss Mary Conklin. After discussing this incident with our parents, I received the “A” and he got an “F”. He never returned to our Cub Scout meetings, and I was never again invited to join his family when they went to the Steeplechase Amusement Park.

My older brothers Joe, Bill and John, loved hunting, fishing, and trapping. They owned BB guns, Type 22 rifles, hunting knives, slingshots, etc. At times, I would be invited to join them. They trapped in the streams and woods on the waterworks property. The boys brought home many muskrats and other critters of the wild. They would sell the pelts to local taxidermists. They were always into something new and exciting.

Firemen’s Field and Organized Sports

As I recall, most of the village firemen were volunteers, and to honor the firefighters, a new ball field, Firemen’s Field, was constructed. The field played an important part in the lives of our family. Four of my brothers attended Central High School and John and Bill played on the football team. Their coach was Darry Irwin. When my brother Paul was attending Central High School, he joined the soccer team. Once, while playing at Firemen’s Field he shot the ball over 20 yards into the goal and his team won the game—1 zip! At the time, I thought it was strange that he was playing soccer when all his older brothers played baseball or football.

Like my brother, I participated in many local sports teams. For baseball: Holy Name of Mary, Tudor Rangers, and the Valley Stream Mail League. For football: Pop Warner, Green Hornets, and the Green Sox. Most of the games were practiced and played at Firemen’s Field.

Fourth of July fireworks were always held at Firemen’s Field and were sponsored by local service clubs. One Fourth of July while entering the parking lot we were greeted by a couple of Dad’s friends from the Lions Club—Chappy Frederick and Frank Boening. Both men were also volunteer firemen. They were directing traffic in the parking lot as part of the Lion’s Club’s community service commitment. I think Joe worked in the refreshment stand on one occasion.



1954

Holy Name of Mary Baseball Team
Firemen’s Field, Valley Stream

*Back Row: Manager Tom Dinzler, Paul LaRocca, Frank Reingold, Mac Lorma, Ray McGrath, and Walt Todd
Front Row: Tom Dinzler, Jr., dk, dk, dk, dk, Frank Saffioti, and Paul Tekworth*

Summers

Around the Fourth of July, boys would come to our front door and ask if we had any firecrackers for sale as Joe always had a stash. He and Bill would ride the Long Island Railroad to New York City and take a subway to Chinatown to buy fireworks so they could resell them and make a profit.

During the hot humid summers, we all loved to go swimming, and Mother, as often as she could, would take us to the ocean or the bay for the day. Sometimes, we would go to Far Rockaway to swim in the ocean—we enjoyed diving in and riding the big waves. We would spend hours in the water. When not swimming, we would stroll on the boardwalk, go on the rides, and play games at the arcade.

We would also visit the Jones Beach State Park (we loved their putt-putt golf course), Long Beach, and Hewlett Point beach. When the family went to Jones Beach, we would cook hot dogs, hamburgers, and “mickeys” (baked potato wrapped in aluminum foil and cooked for an hour directly on the hot coals) at the end of the day. After dinner, when the sun went down, we toasted marshmallows and sang songs, or listened to stories while sitting around the fire. My father was a good storyteller, and I loved to listen to him tell a tale. Those days usually ended on a happy note, except on one occasion: as we were packing up everything and getting ready to leave, my father gave me the car keys and asked me to bring something to the car. On the way back, I dropped the keys. We spent hours looking for them. Luckily, we were driving the old Buick, and someone knew how to get the car started without keys. Our pleasant day ended on a happy note. It was a long time, however, before my parents trusted me with the car keys again.

Pinecrest Dunes Summer Camp

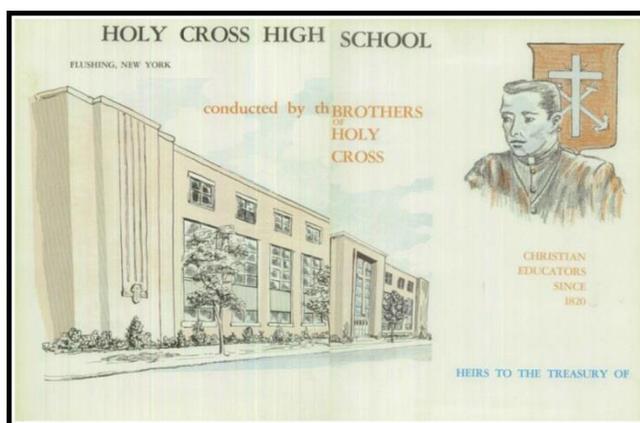
When I was 11 or 12, I met a girl at the Valley Stream movie theater. Over the course of the year, we sat next to each other every Saturday and watched movies. She lived on the opposite end of town, so we only saw each other on Saturdays. As summer approached, she told me that her parents had enrolled her in the annual Kiwanis Club’s one-week camp session at Pinecrest Dunes Summer Camp. She wanted me to ask my parents to enroll me for the same week. They did—lucky me! I enjoyed my stay at this camp and I got to see my girlfriend often—we would get up before everyone else and walk the trails together, enjoying each other’s company.

My parents knew Thomas Ward, the owner, and manager of this beautiful camp. Tom, whose nickname was “Derbo,” was a colorful character. Ward was born in Paterson, New Jersey. By 1929, he was living on Long Island, and working in Valley Stream where he became the director of the first physical education program at Central High School. He worked there for many years while spending his summers managing Camp Dunes in Southold. Tom and his wife bought the camp in 1931 and renamed it Pinecrest Dunes. In 1971, he became Mayor of Valley Stream. That year, the Suffolk County Department of Parks, recreations, and Conservation took over the camp operations and renamed it Peconic Dunes Camp.





Holy Cross High School



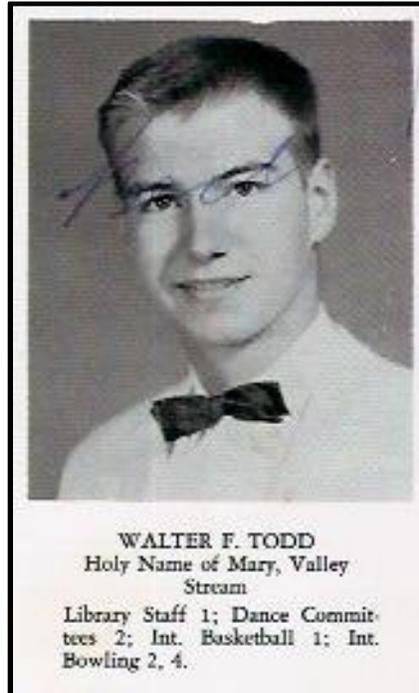
1960 Yearbook

When I was in the eighth grade at Holy Name of Mary Elementary School, my parents encouraged me to apply to several Catholic high schools: Brooklyn Prep, a highly selective Jesuit preparatory school; Chaminade High School, a Roman Catholic college preparatory high school for young men in Mineola; St. Agnes High School, a prestigious private co-educational Catholic school in Rockville Centre; and a new school, Holy Cross High School, an all-boys Roman Catholic High School, founded in 1955, in Flushing. I took all the school entry exams and was accepted in all but Chaminade. After considering my options, I chose Holy Cross. I wanted to attend South High, the new public school in our town where most of my friends attended; but Mother and Dad were adamant about me attending a Catholic school.

During the first three years, I took a yellow school bus, and that was quite an adventure. Imagine spending 45 minutes each way with 22 wild high school boys! The drivers were patient, and we usually got to and from school without many reprimands. Some boys I remember, some fifty-plus years after graduation, were: Al Caputo, Chick and Jimmy Goodwin, (Jimmy was frequently kicked off the bus), Leroy Hoeffner (his father owned orange groves in Florida and gave Leroy a new Corvette one Christmas), Jim Finley, Charlie Martin, and John Pellegrino, whose uncle owned the Plymouth dealership in Lynbrook. I attended junior and senior proms at Holy Cross, South High and a couple of others schools whose names I don't remember.

During our senior year, four of us were of driving age and we alternated driving our parent's cars to and from school each day. It was a relief not to take the school bus, and we enjoyed the luxury of driving ourselves. Occasionally, we would skip school and drive all day along the roads of the north shore of Long Island. Returning to the school after our sojourns required us to develop innovative ways to justify our absence. One time, I went to the nurse's office and said I had stomach pains. The nurse told me to lie down and a few hours later a doctor determined that I was suffering from appendicitis. Not really in pain, I went along with this ruse, but soon it became serious as I was transported to Mercy Hospital for an emergency operation. Mother and Dad were out-of-town, so the staff called my uncle Gerry who arrived a few hours later and allowed the removal of my appendix. To this day, I never believed my appendix needed to be removed. I guess that was an innovative way to get away with skipping school!

In 1960, during the last week of the school year, the seniors had nothing to do since they had finished testing the previous week. They were, however, required to attend class or study hall. A few of us left the school grounds during the afternoon study hall to smoke cigarettes. Being adventurous and of drinking age, we visited a local tavern for a beer. Returning to school for the last class of the day we were called, via the intercom, one at a time to Brother O'Donnell's office. He was the Dean of Men and feared by many—a stickler for discipline. With no time to collaborate our stories, I told the truth and hoped that the others would do the same. After suffering his wrath, I was suspended for the last two days of school and not allowed to attend commencement, but was awarded my diploma. Mother and Dad were kind and took me to dinner at a good restaurant on the afternoon of the graduation ceremonies.



Various Jobs of My Youth



Valley Stream Village Hall
123 Central Avenue, Valley Stream

Paperboy

My dreams were to own a bicycle, and it came to pass one Christmas morning when a beautiful 26-inch Schwinn Hornet was displayed in front of our decorated tree—it had my name on it. It was red and white and had a streamlined tank with a built-in horn. A light was on the front fender and there was a luggage carrier over the rear fenders. I named the bike “Sylvester” and for the next few years I rode it all over town—it was my best friend.

I wanted to follow in the footsteps of my older brothers, Joe, Bill and John, and deliver the afternoon newspapers to the homes in my neighborhood. My journey into the world of work began slowly; I had to wait until I was old enough to be hired. But that didn’t stop me from learning the “ins and outs” of having a paper route. A friend who lived on the next street had a great route that included my block—it was the envy of other paperboys because it included over 60 customers and only one apartment building. He could deliver most of his papers without having to get off his bike. He just had to fling the folded paper onto the customer’s stoop. Often, I would accompany him during his deliveries. He taught me how to fold the papers in such a way that the papers didn’t come apart when chucked. Certain days of the week he was required to put inserts into the papers. These were weekly ads from the local stores and made the paper thicker and heavier. On those days, the paperboys would fold the papers and secure them with rubber bands. This was time-consuming but necessary work—and not much liked by the boys. Another task that paperboys had to do once a week was to stop at each house and collect the weekly fee; they called it Collection Day. I always accompanied my friend on Collection Day because after the route was completed we had ice cream sodas at the local soda shop—his treat.

When I was finally old enough to become a paperboy, I was given a route that covered customers in a neighborhood approximately two miles from my home. It consisted of about 30 customers—a small route, but perfect for a first job. The tips were great and seemed better than what my friend received each week. My customized bike had no fenders (I had removed them) and raised handlebars to accommodate the new canvas bag I proudly kept on my bike—even when not delivering newspapers. It was a “badge of honor” for me. Over time, the bag had to be replaced, at my expense, because the front tires wore a hole into the bottom of the bag. I had to invest in fenders, which solved the problem and also helped keep me a little dryer when it rained.

About a year later my friend’s family moved to upstate New York and when his route became available, my boss awarded it to me. Patience has its virtue. I kept that job throughout grade school and earned a lot of money. The tips were a lot better than I expected and I continued the Thursday stop at the soda shop for my weekly ice cream soda.

Laborer for the Village of Valley Stream

Dad arranged for me to apply for a job with the Village of Valley Stream during the summer after I turned sixteen. Fortunately, my application was accepted—it's always convenient to have a father who knows people that can help a son get hired for the summer! Some village jobs included working on garbage trucks, cleaning gutters, storm drains, and working at the pond off Merrick Road. I also worked at the new Village Hall on Central Avenue watering their lawns and preparing the grounds for the free summer concerts held each Wednesday evening. My girlfriend often joined the orchestra and played her French horn; I was proud that my friend was performing for the entire village.

Ed's Tropical Aquarium

Living across the street from us on Seventh Street was a two-family house. The top floor was rented to a man and his nephew, Willie Molnar. My brothers gave him the nickname of "Willie the Mole." We became friends and during our last two years of high school we hung out together. He got a job at Ed's Tropical Aquarium, a nearby tropical fish store; and shortly thereafter, Ed Sisco, the owner, hired me. Thus began my stint as a tropical fish enthusiast. Business was great, so Mr. Sisco purchased a lawn and gardening store about fifteen miles east of Valley Stream. On weekends, Willie and I worked in the yard behind the store. The work was difficult—we hauled trees and bushes around the yard, often carrying newly purchased shrubbery to a customer's car. Occasionally, we would load up the two-ton truck and deliver an order to a customer's residence. If we were asked to plant the shrubbery after dropping it off, we would get a great tip. The lawn and gardening business didn't do as well as the tropical fish store, so after a few years, he sold the shop.

Kiki's Gas Station

Alexander and Betsy Daries were friends of the family. Mr. Daries, known as "Kiki," owned the gas station on the northeast corner of Rockaway Avenue and Sunrise Highway. Kiki graciously employed some of the Todd boys. I worked on Saturdays pumping gas and fixing flat tires. It was a fun job because I already knew a lot about car maintenance—I had three older brothers who were always working on their "jalopies," or to put it nicely "their cars." The cars from the 40s and 50s required periodic spark plug changing, much more frequently than they do today. Kiki's station had a machine that cleaned the plugs, thus avoiding the cost of plug replacement. As I recall, once the dirty or fouled plug was inserted into the machine, a flip of a switch activated it and a sandy compound blasted the plug—thus removing dirt and corrosion. The final step in the cleaning process was to air blast it and re-gap it. The air blast insured that every particle was removed, even the ones you couldn't see. I was allowed to clean the spark plugs on our family cars long after I stopped working at Kiki's.

Polychron's Liquor Store

Polychron's was located on Rockaway Avenue in the heart of the shopping district. Harry owned and operated the store and hired me to work the evening shift: 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., and sometimes on Saturdays. When the adjacent store became vacant, Mr. Polychron opened the first laundromat in Valley Stream. The Polychron's lived on Valley Stream Boulevard (only a few blocks from the store) with his wife and four children. His oldest son John and his daughter Penny were good friends with my brother Joe. The other two members of their wonderful family were Harry, Jr., and Jimmy. The Polychron's loved to entertain. On Christmas Eve we all went to their home after midnight Mass to help bring in Christmas Day with a "bang."

Christmas and New Year's were busy times at Polychron's. During my first year at the store, I was surprised by the number of family members and former employees who helped during the holidays. I would make deliveries to customers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and other places outside the village. Since one of my jobs was to close the shop at 10:00 p.m. and bring the keys to the Polychron's home, Harry would invite me in and I would tell him about the activity at the store that evening. I learned a lot about working in a retail store—Harry was a good teacher.

I have great memories of both working in his shop and socializing at his home. But, what stands out most in my mind were the simple moments. After I washed and waxed the floor, washed and dusted the bottles on the many shelves, I would sit down and enjoy a snack with Harry. Located a few stores down the block was a great German deli. Harry would have me buy a jar of creamed herring, a loaf of German rye bread, and a couple of Heineken's. I loved those special times—he was a gregarious man, and we always had interesting discussions.

Once, a well-dressed couple entered the store and asked about Mr. Polychron, acting as if they were good friends. They were in the shop for over an hour and filled their cart with liquor worth more than \$350. They pretended as if they were familiar with the store and the various spirits. After I rang them up the man wanted to write a check. I informed him I couldn't accept a check. He asked me to call Harry since they knew one another. The customer had a long and detailed conversation with Harry, and we accepted his check, which, of course, bounced. The detective that investigated the case said there were four similar scams that evening in other towns with well-dressed patrons—a man and women. I spent many hours at county offices looking over photos of felons—to no avail.

The Polychron's owned a Scottish terrier named Socrates; Harry loved this friendly little dog and often would take him to the store. When I visited the Polychron home, Socrates would give me a wonderful greeting and sit on my lap. The family also rescued a squirrel that was injured in the mouth and unable to eat. The squirrel lived in their basement where he would run wild. The poor creature had to have its nails and teeth clipped so he wouldn't damage the furniture.

Many years later when I visited Mother in Florida, she took me to visit Harry and Lucille, who had retired to a town just a few miles from where she lived. We all enjoyed reminiscing about Valley Stream and my time working at their store. When my brother Joe passed away, Penny attended his service.

Valley Stream Post Office

As the Postmaster of the Valley Stream Post Office, Dad, from time to time, would get us jobs during the week(s) preceding the heavy Christmas mail season. The pay was great for a young man and the work wasn't difficult. Most of the time I worked the swing shift, sorting mail and running it through the canceling machine. Sometimes, I would work one of the "pigeonhole desks" as we called them. Each delivery route had a desk containing a compartment for each house on the delivery route. They looked like the pigeon houses seen on the rooftops of apartment buildings and that is how we came to call the mail sorting desks "pigeonholes." A couple of times I was asked to work the front desk, but that didn't turn out well—my cash register never balanced at the end of my shift. I fared better as a letter carrier.

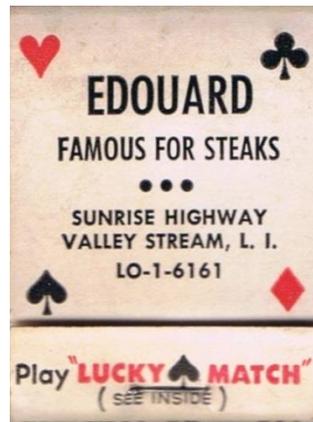
Far Rockaway Post Office

One summer, Dad got me a job at the post office in Far Rockaway, which was great because I could commute to work from our summer cottage in Breezy Point. The only problem, there was no bus service from our bungalow to the bus station. So, every morning at 5:30 a.m., I had to hitch a ride to the bus stop and at that time of day, traffic was scarce. But, I always got a ride, and I was never late for work. My favorite route was delivering mail to the homes along the Far Rockaway beach. Mother and Dad were friends with a family who lived along my route. They would invite me for lunch and their daughter, who was a model or actress, joined us. I heard stories about Sandra Dee and other famous people when I visited their home.

Riverside Memorial Chapel

I was hired to work as an apprentice at Universal Memorial Chapel in New York City. In 1955, Universal was acquired by Riverside Memorial Chapel, a Jewish organization, the largest funeral company in the United States. Riverside also acquired two other nonsectarian funeral businesses—Frank Campbell and Walter B. Cook.

Restaurants, Taverns and Soda Shops



Casa Tina

Casa Tina in Gibson served delicious Italian food. We dined there many times, especially when Dad was away. In the late 1940s, several Brooklyn Dodgers were invited to eat at Casa Tina on the same night that Mother treated us to dinner there—she heard they would be dining at the restaurant and hoped we would see them. Mom recalled that Dad was away at a Mayors convention. My parents grew up in Brooklyn and were avid Dodger fans, so my brothers and I followed suit. In those days, the Dodgers had not yet won a World Series but still were a great team. When we arrived at the restaurant, we were lucky that there were only a few other diners that night. We got to see Carl Furillo (who was friends with the owner), Duke Snider, Gil Hodges, Pee Wee Reese, and Billy Cox. They were sitting at the next table! My brothers, who were apparently afraid to ask for autographs, sent me. I was about eight years old and I fearlessly approached them with spaghetti sauce all over my face. Furillo, seeing my messy face, wiped it, and then the ballplayers signed the menu. They told me not to share the menu with my brothers. Snider promised to hit a home run for me during the next game, but it took a few games to fulfill his promise.

Central Inn

This establishment was a favorite watering hole for my brothers and me. I enjoyed many a pleasant evening sipping a few, dancing, and having a good time. One time, Mr. Joseph Hammond, assistant postmaster, along with his wife and daughter joined me for a few glasses of the “sudsy” stuff.

Coral Inn

A fine-dining establishment was close to our Seventh Street home and on special occasions, we enjoyed some wonderful meals.

Edouard's Restaurant

This was another great restaurant also located close to our home. In fact, it was on the corner of Seventh Street and Sunrise Highway. Many times, I would join my parents and their close friends, the Lynch's for a late afternoon meal.

Harlan's Tavern

Across from the Gibson Oval baseball field was a traffic circle adjacent to a row of retail stores. While my favorite store was the candy store, Dad's favorite was the tavern owned by his good friend James Harlan. He had many acquaintances at this local bar and many were members of the Gibson Civic Association. The tavern had a side room for events and I attended a number of parties in that area. The Harlan's also lived near us and they had a son named Jim. He was quite the athlete in high school.

One Thanksgiving someone gave us a live turkey (Mother recalls that Dad won it in a contest at the local tavern). My older brothers tried to chop off its head. After several attempts, the poor thing was still alive, and we all lost heart in the project. I'd like to believe the turkey never fell to our ax.

Larry's Pub

On Rockaway Avenue in the center of the village, Larry's was a popular place both during the day and in the evening. I spend many nights enjoying the company of friends at this friendly establishment.

Mill Road Inn

This place was one of the many stops we made while touring the local taverns. It had a long bar that was usually filled with patrons, especially on Friday and Saturday nights.

Rendezvous

The Rendezvous was Bill's favorite bar. It was located on Mill Road not far from South High School. Bill knew the owner and his son. In my early 20s, when I was working as an apprentice at the Universal Memorial Chapel in Manhattan, I would stop by the Rendezvous at the end of the day—specifically when I worked the 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. shift. The bar had a bowling type of pinball machine my brother Bill and I both loved to play. One evening the bar was empty and the owner's son was tending bar. I played many pinball games while sipping a foamy glass of beer or two. On this lucky night, I scored the jackpot and won a free bottle of liquor! Lucky me, the bartender told me to pick any bottle on the shelf. My wide-open eyes focused on the bottle of Chivas Regal. Obviously, I selected it.

Teddy's and Mitchell's

While there were other soda shops in the village, Teddy's and Mitchell's, both located on Rockaway Avenue were popular with youngsters and adults. My older brothers frequented Teddy's, while I preferred Mitchell's, as they had an ice cream machine near the front door—it was a thrill to watch ice cream being made. We loved buying a cup of ice cream with hot fudge, whipped cream, and a cherry. This was a favorite of Dad's.

Valley Stream Park Inn

I have attended many functions at the Valley Stream Park Inn; sometimes just for dinner with the family, while others were for weddings, award ceremonies and service club meetings. It was a great restaurant. Carl Hoppl was a friend of my father's and always gracious to our family. We also loved dining at his other restaurants.

Frank Boening, Chappy Frederick, and Dad belonged to several service clubs. As a teenager, Dad invited me to join them at some of their meetings. One time, before a Lion's Club meeting, we were at the bar at the Park Inn enjoying a glass of draft beer with Frank and Chappy. I might have been with one of my brothers. When Dad excused himself for a few minutes, the men told us that Dad was a great man and an important friend. We were proud to hear them say such wonderful things about our father.

Military Service



William Sr.
Army



William, Jr.
Army



John
Air Force



Walter
Army



Paul
Army



Michael
Army

Joseph F. Todd (1935-2016) entered the Army and completed his Basic Combat Training (BCT) at Fort Dix, New Jersey. He spent the remainder of his two-year tour of active military service at Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

William A. Todd (1936-2011) entered the Army on August 21, 1956. After BCT at Fort Dix, he was assigned to the Military Police Training School at Fort Gordon, Georgia. After graduation, he was transferred to Korea and was discharged in 1958. During this tour of duty, Bill was awarded the Korean Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal. He was active in the VFW association.

John C. Todd (1938) received his initial military training at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York. After attending the academy for one year, he decided to “change course,” as he wanted to fly rather than sail. After a short stint in the Air Force ROTC program at Manhattan College, he enlisted in the Air Force. He entered active duty in New Orleans on March 9, 1959, and subsequently received extensive electronics and communications training. During his nearly four-year tour of duty, he was assigned to the following bases: Lackland AFB, Texas; Keesler AFB, Mississippi; Offutt and Scribner Air Force Bases, Nebraska. His last duty station was at Sonderstrom Air Base, Sonderstromfjord, Greenland. His application to flight school was finally approved at the end of his tour of duty but decided to enter civilian life and take care of his young family.

Walter F. Todd (1942) entered the Army on March 1, 1966. He completed BCT at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Walt completed Advanced Infantry Training at Fort Dix, New Jersey; and Officer Candidate School at Fort Lee, Virginia. He was assigned to Fort Lewis, Washington, for the duration of his three-plus years of military service. Among other awards, Walt received was the Army Commendation Medal.

Paul A. Todd (1947-2013) was the only son of Major William A. Todd to serve in combat. Like his father, he was in the thick of the fighting. A Communications Specialist, he often served as a door gunner on a combat helicopter with the Americal Division. He entered the Army at Fort Hamilton, New York and received his BCT at Fort Jackson, South Carolina (March 1967). He served a full tour in Vietnam and came home with a chest full of medals.

Michael P. Todd (1952) proudly served in the Army from 1971 to 1974. He attended BCT at Fort Jackson and served at Fort Sill and Fort Benning during his three years of service.

