Different Pathways Through Life

By Paul S Gruic

My Walk-Through Life

Story of Paul from a shy, unsure, and uncertain guy to a fun-loving, thrill seeking one to settle down to a very happy marriage and family life. Then to a calling to serve others and God with extraordinary joy then to great sorrow and to renewed life including another happy marriage then to another call to serve others and God.

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Chapter One - Family Background & Early Life

On October 19, 1941, at 11:47 AM it was a nice sunny day and within St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio I came into this world. My parents were Simon and Loretta Gruic. My father was 27 years of age and my mother was twenty-three. My brother Tom was born November 18, 1943. My parents had another child, Joseph, who was still born in 1947 and is buried at Holy Cross cemetery. I was 6 years old and did not fully understand what had happened.

My father and mother told Tom and I they married on May 30, 1938. Although they never mentioned it to Tom and me I discovered they originally ran way and married in West Virginia in 1937. They later remarried on May 30, 1938 at Annunciation Catholic Church in Akron. My dad was twenty-four and my mother was twenty. For their honeymoon they camped at 'Mahoning River.' I heard there was a sign outside their tent which read 'KEEP OUT – 'Honeymoon Hilton.'

'Mahoning River' was a location at Berlin Reservoir in Mahoning County where my mother's father purchased an option to buy about ten acres of land near the Mahoning River. It was a semi-isolated location which the family used for many years to picnic and camp. Originally Mahoning River was just a river, however in 1943 the federal government dammed up river and created the Berlin Dam and reservoir as flood protection for Youngstown and its steel mills.

Loretta was born on May 8, 1918 in Akron. Her father was named Peter and her mother was named Alice. Peter's parents, my great grandparents, Joseph, and Catherine Majchzak, were born in Poland and married in 1880. Her maiden name was Catherine Manseylea-Malinsky-Wolinski. They immigrated to the United States in 1881. Upon entering the United States via Ellis Island in New York the American authorities could not pronounce Majchrzak so they changed their name to Mysock. My uncle Jim later changed his name to Misock. Peter's family originally settled in the coal-mining region of Pennsylvania. At the time my great grandparents immigrated to the United States Poland was rich in coal and coal miners. The U.S. coal mining companies were luring Polish and Eastern European workers to the United States to work in the coal mines in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. The Mysock's eventually moved to the Akron area to work in the tire and rubber factories.

My grandfather, Peter, was born June 9, 1883 and died September 19, 1944. He worked as a pipe fitter at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. Peter was very outgoing who loved his children and enjoyed playing with them, especially at Mahoning River. Peter was also very interested in politics and would often argue politics with anyone who would listen or argue with him. He was also known to love his beer and whiskey. In fact, during the probation era (1919-1933) like many others he made his own beer and whisky in the basement of his house. Pete was bald so this must be part of my inheritance. The only memory I have of him was sitting on his lap when I was two years old. He died later that year.

Alice was of Irish decent born in Scotland. She was born April 7, 1882 and died February 22, 1959. Her maiden name was Lennon and arrived in United States in 1885 at age 3. Alice was a schoolteacher prior to becoming the mother of ten children. She was not as outgoing as Peter and much more studious. Alice's parents were Patrick Lennon and Marian McCartney. I do not know much about her parents except that my mother often told me I was like her father, Patrick Lennon, both in stature and interests. He was tall and slender with several intellectual interests.

Peter and Alice were strange marriage partners because their interests were so different. As I said Peter had a very outgoing personality where Alice was quiet and intellectual. However, among them they had the following children, Leonard, Leo, Theresa, Anna, Alice, Edward, Paul, James, Loretta, and Catherine. Leonard died in a truck accident at age 24. Alice died at age 3 and Paul was killed in a swimming accident at age 19. His death occurred when he dove into a body of water (off Cottage Grove Rd.) that was much shallower than he thought, and broke his neck. Paul was my mother's favorite brother. My grandmother died when I was 17 years old. She had many grandchildren and always seemed like an old lady to me. Since I was one of many grandchildren I did not have a close relationship with her. After my grandfather died she lived with my Aunt Catherine and Uncle Hank until her death in 1959.



Patrick Lennon and Marian McCartney my Great Grandparents on my mother's side and my Uncle Paul after whom I am named.



Mom & Dad



My dad – late 1930's



Mom & Dad in late 1930's

The following is a brief history of my mother's brothers and sisters: Edward married Ann Watcher and they had four children; Teekee, was 7 years older than me lived in Florida for most of her life and died in 2023. Ed, who is about 5 or 6 years younger than me and lives in Tulsa and is thinking of moving to Texas. Carolyn lives in the Atlanta area with her husband Merlin. Danny lives in South Carolina with his family. I liked my Uncle Ed; he seemed like a real nice guy who most people seemed to like and admire. They lived in East Akron until his employer, General Tire, transferred him to Kentucky when I was in high school. My uncle Ed died in the mid 1970's and his wife Ann died in the 1980's and that was the last time I saw Teekee, Ed and Danny.



My mother's family: mom, Leo, Ed, grandma, Theresa, grandpa, Jim, Catherine, and Annie. My grandparents married on July 7, 1903.

Leo married Mamie and they adopted Elaine, who was actually the daughter of my Aunt Annie (Winnie). Uncle Leo was sort of the leader, and well-liked by many people however he died of cancer in 1963. They lived on Inman St. next to what is now the Hoban High School football field. Elaine and Teekee were the same age and were close friends while they were young. Elaine died in 2012.

Theresa married Ray Ford and they did not have any children. Ray though had a son, Les, from a previous marriage. Les was one of General George Patton's secretaries during World War II and had many stories to tell after the war about General Patton, especially when he was not allowed to enter Berlin near the end of the war. Ray and Aunt Theresa spent a good part of their lives living in El Cajon, California, near San Diego. Ray was sort of a wheeler-dealer and had many different jobs and businesses. Ray was somewhat older than my Aunt Theresa and they owned a home on Portage Lakes when I was young. They moved to California when I was about ten years old and

opened a beer bar restaurant in the then desert town El Cajon. Ray died in 1971 and my Aunt Theresa moved back to Akron and lived in Ellet area until she died in the 1980's. She was one of my favorite aunts.

Annie married Jake Zemlansky. They had three children, Pete, Bill, and Sue Ann. Ann was often called Aunt Winnie. They lived in a big house on North Arlington St. Jake was a furnace installer and also was interested in politics. He was also known as a big drinker; whenever we were at my Uncle Jim's farm and before that 'Mahoning River' he was known for often falling into the campfire during the evening when he had too much to drink. My cousins and I often got a big laugh out of this; however he was never injured. Aunt Winnie died in 1973 and Uncle Jake died about 5 years later. My cousin Pete died in 2007 in an auto accident and Sue Ann died in 2021. Shortly before my Aunt Mamie's died she told Elaine she was adopted, and that Aunt Winnie was here biological mother. This shocked the family and was a secret that only my Uncle Leo's and Aunt Winnie's brothers and sisters knew and vowed secrecy forever. Aunt Winnie was not married when she became pregnant with Elaine and Uncle Leo and Aunt Mamie agreed to adopt Elaine. My cousin Sue Ann discovered the secret in 1983 through a slip of the tongue from my mother and she told Sue Ann never tell anyone. So biologically Elaine was the half-sister of Sue Ann, Pete, and Bill.

Jim married Grace. They had five children; Jim, who lived in Cambridge, Ohio, died in 2021. Mary, who lived most of her life in Missouri died in 2014. John now lives in Washington D C area with another home in Florida, Barb lives in Indiana with her husband Tom. Janice lives in the Akron area. Jim and I were the same age and got along however since we were very different in our interests we were not real close. Jim quit high school and joined the Navy however later he received his high school diploma. Uncle Jim was well liked by most people and was a union organizer for the United Rubber Workers. He was a strong believer in the union movement, his job was almost like a religion to him. In his early days while working as a union representative he was often the target of company management that did not want unions in their plants. He mentioned several times that company officials made attempts on his life. He said he was shot at and attempts were made to run him over with cars and trucks. In 1958 Uncle Jim bought a beat-up old farm in Randolph. The farmhouse was in very poor condition and the land was not used for much of anything. Many people derided him for buying the old farm especially since he had a newer home in Brimfield. However, he had the last laugh after he remodeled the house, turned the land into a small operational farm and created a several acre lake from the many springs on the property. The family got together and built a small shelter in the early 1960's and Uncle Jim's farm replaced Mahoning River as the family picnic and camping area. In 1969 a severe storm destroyed the shelter and in 1970 family and friends built a new sturdier shelter with cement block and created a floor with Goodyear conveyer belting. They also built a fireplace and sliding metal sides on the shelter. The shelter hardly changed through the years. My Uncle Jim died in the early 1990's. After his death my cousin, Jim's son, John, bought the farm, and the family used the farm like we had prior to Uncle Jim's death. Unfortunately, John died in his forty's and the farm had to be sold. That was the end of the era of Uncle Jim's farm.

Catherine married Hank Czaplicke. They had three children, Alice, who lived most of her adult life in Springboro, Ohio and moved back to Akron in 2019. Mike lives in Connecticut and Cathy in east Akron. Aunt Catherine was my favorite aunt. She was very outgoing, and she and Uncle Hank had a wonderful marriage. They were very outgoing and friendly and enjoyed partying, as did most of my aunts and uncles. Catherine and Hank were my godparents and kind of were like second parents to me. I miss my Aunt Catherine the most of my aunts and uncles along with Uncle Jim. Aunt Catherine died in 1997 three months after Janet. She suffered with Parkinson's disease for about the last five or six years of her life. which finally led to her death. Aunt Catherine and my mother were each other's best friend.

While growing up I saw my aunts, uncles, and cousins often. During the summer we would camp out at 'Mahoning River' (Berlin Reservoir area) every Memorial Day, July Fourth, and Labor Day weekend. This was my favorite picnic and camping area. At Thanksgiving the whole family would all get together and during the holidays all the men would take vacation between Christmas and New Years and we would party every night at each other's house. Each family would take turns hosting a party each night beginning on December 26 through December 30. On New Year's Eve my parents would go to the Slovenian Center to party with my dad's side of the family. It was a time with many fond memories.

Most of my aunts and uncles were interested in politics and sports and were very outgoing. As you read this you will notice that we all liked to party, and I was not aware of much bickering within the family.

You may want to know where the Gmerek's come into play. The Gmerek's were half cousins to the Mysock family. The whole ancestry is a bit complicated but simply when my mother's grandmother's husband died, she remarried, and had a daughter named Theresa Wolansky. She married Joseph Gmerek and they had nine children including Butch, Mike, and Ted. Butch and his wife Helen's children are Ray, Lenny, Phyllis, and Stan. Stan died many years ago. Ted and his wife Martha had three children Dorothy, Helen, and Richard. Mike and his wife Rita had eight children including Bill, Rita Mae, Betty Lou, Donna Jean, Joan, Mickey, Marcie, and Bernie. Ted and Mike Gmerek and their families and Mysock's grew up close to each other in East Akron but I did not intermingle often with Gmerek family while growing up. The Mysock and Gmerek's all originated from Poland and immigrated to Pennsylvania to work in the coal mines then most moved Akron. Butch & Helen Gmerek, parents of Lenny, Ray, Stan, and Phyllis, built a two-family house on north hill on Julien Ave. They lived with Helen's sister Stella Czarnecki, her husband Ziggy, and their daughter Florence. Phyllis Gmerek has bought the Julien Ave. house after their parent's death and Ray and sometimes Lenny currently rents the house from Phyllis.



1958 photo of grandma and many of her grandchildren at the Christmas party at our house. Back row from left to right; Mary, Elaine, Alice, Barbara, Jim, Tom, me, and Teekee. Second row Pete, Carolyn, Cathy, Sue Ann, Bill, Michael, Eddie. Front row; John, grandma with Janice. My grandmother died two months later.

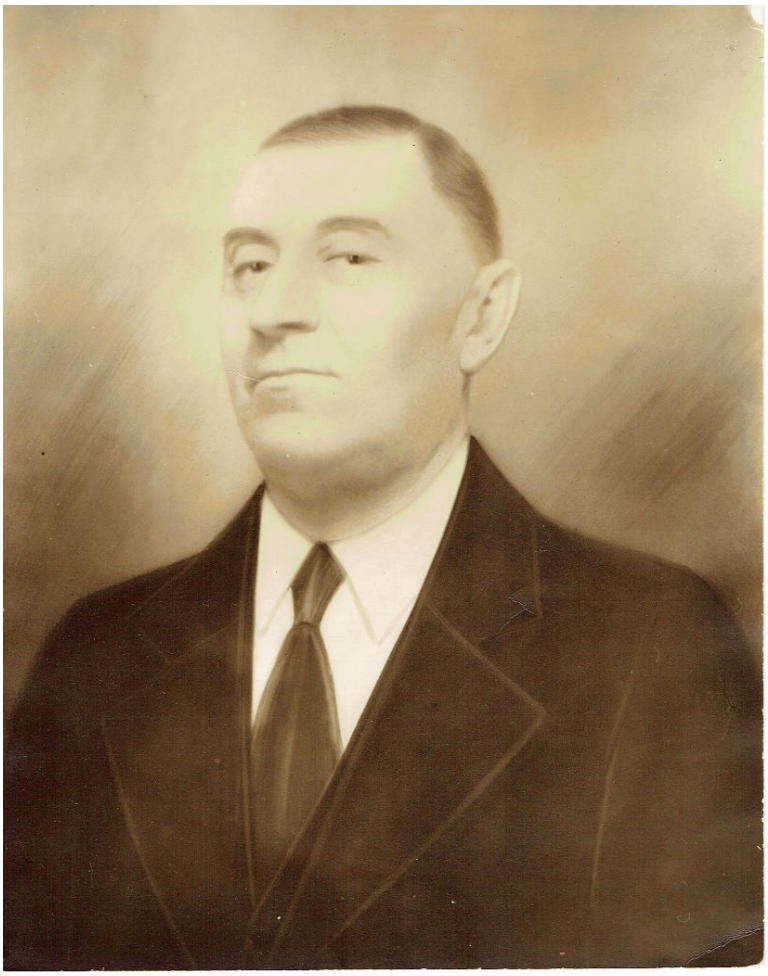
On my father's side of the family the situation was different. They were not the party people as on my mother's side of the family. The Gruic's were more serious, but they did enjoy a good party, only not nearly as often as the Mysock's. My dad's father's name was Isaac and was born February 22, 1886 in Sidrim, Serbia. He immigrated to the United States in January 1907 and died December 17, 1939. His birth name was Gruich but changed it to Gruic. From what I understand he was not well liked by many people. My dad told me he was a mean person, Serbian by birth and emigrated to U.S. via Croatia. According to my dad his father was like the 'bad guy' in the old western movies, who wore black, went through the saloon door and everyone and everything stops in terror. From what my dad told me many people were afraid of him. In 1921 he was arrested for making and selling whisky in their basement; later that year he was sent to prison for assaulting his wife, my grandmother. In 1922 he was in a fight and stabbed in the neck with a screwdriver; his attacker was charged with attempted murder. He was a tough and mean critter.

My dad's mother was named Theresa Kititich Gruic (although her marriage certificate indicated her name was Rose) whose personality was apparently opposite her husband. She was born November 8, 1886 in Austria of Serbian decent and died of cancer September 13, 1930 at age 43. My dad told me his mother was kind and gentle. She immigrated to the United States June 6, 1907. Prior to this my grandmother married in Croatia and had three children, Steve, Milan, and Katherine then her husband died. She then immigrated to the United States with Katherine leaving Steve and Milan behind in Croatia. After arriving in United States, she married my grandfather Isaac. I have no reason why Steve and Milan were left behind. What my dad told me was that his mother told him that she thought her sons would have a chance for a better life in Europe. This does not make any sense to me. Why did my grandmother leave Europe if it was not for a better life in the United States, plus leave her two sons behind?

I should explain why I am writing about Serbia, Croatia, and former Yugoslavia. Croatia and Serbia are countries in the Balkan area of Europe. Prior to World War 1 Croatia were controlled by the Austria-Hungarian Empire while Serbia was surrounded by the Austria-Hungarian and Russian Empires. These empires were constantly battling for Serbia. During this time many Serbs fled to Croatia to try for a better life than in Serbia. After World War 1 Serbia, Croatia and several other countries were joined and to form a new country called the former Yugoslavia. Then in the 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union the pre-WW1 countries were reestablished, hence one hears today of Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Slovenia etc.

My father loved to play baseball, but his father forbad him to play insisting that playing baseball was a waste of time. Because of his love for baseball my dad would often sneak out to play ball, but he needed to be sure his father did not catch him. My grandfather told my dad after his mother's death he had to quit school keep house, work around the farm, and take care of his brothers and sisters. After my grandmother died the family moved to east Akron. My mother told me she feared going to my father's house because of his father.

My father's brothers and sisters were Nick, Zora, George, Helen, his half-sister Katherine and half-brothers Steve and Milan. My father was my grandmother's second born in the U.S. then came the four other children. The first-born was named Milan (again), but he died in infancy. According to the 1920 U.S. census the language spoken in their house was Serbian. My dad and Uncle Nick were the only children born at the time and it wasn't until they went to school did my grandparents learn to speak English.



My grandfather - my dad's father

The following are the families of my aunts and uncles on my father's side. Nick married Ethel. They had three boys, Hershel, Nicky, and Tim. They had a basement house in Lakemore which they added onto for years. When it was completed it with a nice house. My Uncle Nick was not like my dad. He had more of their father temperament and at times could be mean. When I was 20 years old there was a tragedy in the family. My aunt Ethel, Nick's wife, Hershel, and Nicky were all involved in an auto accident. They were going up a hill in a small car and at the crest of the hill were hit head-on with a semi-truck. Ethel, her mother, and Hershel were all killed, and Nicky was thrown from the car. Nicky had a head injury but survived. The funeral had to be awful for my Uncle Nick. All three bodies were displayed at the funeral home. Several years later Nick married again, this time to a widow named Ann Doyle. When Uncle Nick retired he started a small furniture business on Canton Rd. near US 224. The Gruic's were much more business oriented than the Mysock's. After a while he and Ann bought a remote summer cottage in Canada and would spend most of their summers in Canada. My uncle Nick died in late 1980's. I was never really close to these cousins. We were so different. They liked to cause mischief and to bully other kids. I hated it when they would visit us or we visited them. All they wanted to do was go outside and throw stones at or light small fires on neighbors' porches. I remember one time when I was about ten years

old we visited them in the winter and they took me out near Springfield Lake and tried to get me lost in the woods. That day they succeeded in bullying me by leading me out onto some large fallen trees on the lake then running away leaving me stranded. I wasn't sure where I was and it took me over an hour to find my way back to their house. When I returned Hershel and Nicky were both laughing at me. I was angry because it was cold and lost for almost an hour.

Zora married Frank and they had one daughter, Peggy. They lived in Goodyear Heights. Aunt Zora tended to be bossy and a busy body who wanted to know everyone else's business. Frank was a quiet and very easygoing guy. Peggy is three years older than me and has been divorced for a long time. She now lives in Uniontown. My Aunt Zora was very good cook and many people asked her how to cook the good Serbian food. My Aunt Zora died in 1999 and Frank died in 2005 at age 94. Aunt Zora was only sixteen when she married Frank who was twenty-four.

Helen married Pete Rusyn and they had two girls named Patty and Cheryl. Pete was an officer in the Akron Police Department and built houses on the side. During their marriage Aunt Helen and Pete would often build a house move into it, sell it and do it over again. The last home they built was on about forty acres in Copley. Pete died of a heart attack at age 62 while playing racquetball. Patty graduated from college with a degree in education and went to teach for two years in the Australian outback. She told me it was a very interesting and rewarding experience. Patty married Don and they had one son, Pete, unfortunately Patty died in February 2014 at age 62. Cheryl is a very pretty girl who lost an eye while in college. She is now married to Steve Masters and living in Jacksonville, Florida. They have one son, Dillon. Aunt Helen never remarried and died in March 2018.

Pete served in the European campaign during WWII and served as an interpreter of German POW's. His family was Ukrainian and when he was young learned to speak German and Ukrainian which is close to Russian, therefore the Army used his skills as an interpreter. Pete was also involved in the D Day invasion.

Katherine married Louie and they had a daughter, Pauline. Louie was a preacher with a small church in the Firestone Park area of Akron. Pauline was an attractive girl who married a very nice guy, Sam Granada. Katherine lived into her 70's while Pauline into her 80's.

George married Gert and they had five children, Danny, Mark, Greg, Debbie, and Becky. They lived in the same Kenmore house for as long as I knew them. My uncle George had a lot of tragedies in his life. Danny was mentally handicapped and when he was a teenager he killed a little 10-year-old girl when he hit her on the head with a shovel. He was angry about something and took out his anger by hitting her with the shovel. Danny has been institutionalized ever since this incident. During the 1990s' he killed a woman on the institution's grounds and was indicted for murder. During the trial Danny was found mentally incapable of standing trial. For months there were multiple Akron Beacon Journal headline stories about the case.

When Mark and Greg, who are close in age, and about 4 or 5 years old they were playing with matches and burned their house down. This was not an isolated event. After the house was repaired they played with matches again and burned the house a second time, only this time not as extensive as the first time. Mark went on to marry a wonderful girl, Cheryl, and they live in Norton. Greg moved to Toledo years ago. Debbie, who is the youngest, is also mentally handicapped. She lived with my Uncle George until he died. She now lives in a Section 8 apartment in Barberton. Becky moved to Connecticut with her husband; however, she died from Lupus in 1998. My uncle George died in June 2006.

My Uncle George was a paratrooper in World War II. He was one of the first paratroopers in the Normandy D-Day landing and a member of the famed 82nd Airborne Division. He told me he engaged in several fierce battles. Uncle George did not like to recall his wartime activities until he was about 75 years old. His most memorable experience was when he parachuted into France in the very early morning hours of D-Day. The wind had taken many paratroopers off course and Uncle George was headed to the middle of a reservoir in the dark. With about one hundred pounds of gear on him he was sure he was going to drown. God must have been with him because he landed on a sandbar. However German soldiers on a nearby bridge noticed him and began shooting at him. Uncle George was able to unload much of his gear and swim underwater to avoid being hit by the Germans. It took him awhile, but he was able swim to shore. To move forward he needed to cross a bridge. He proceeded to sneak up behind one of the two German sentries patrolling the bridge. To avoid being heard he stabbed him back then his slit his throat and killed him. Then he snuck up behind the other German sentry and did the same thing. By now it was near dawn then he wandered lost for three days in the French countryside until he reached a farm. He went into the barn and fell asleep. The next morning a girl about 12 years old discovered my Uncle who immediately gestured for food and she soon brought him some bread. After resting for a day or so he left to try and find an American unit. While on his search he came across an intersection with several German soldiers patrolling the intersection. Once again he snuck upon the Germans and he started shooting and was able to kill them. Uncle George said the last German soldier he killed was at close range. Upon shooting him in the chest he saw his ‘guts’ come out and Uncle George threw up from what had done to another human being. Later that day an American unit arrived and they were ecstatic to learn that the intersection had been cleared. Apparently both the American and German armies were headed to this intersection. The fact the intersection was cleared prior to the arrival of the large American unit prevented the German soldiers patrolling the intersection from notifying the larger oncoming German army that an American force was arriving. The intersection was an important one that enabled the Allies to go further into France without a major battle. Many years later my uncle discovered how important his action was in clearing the intersection. When the book *The Longest Day* was written Uncle George was mentioned as a hero in preventing a major battle at that important intersection. After the D-Day landing he went on to fight in France, Holland, Belgium and then in the Battle of the Bulge. It was here that he was wounded and sent to a hospital in England. He received a Purple Heart for his heroism. By the time he recovered from his wounds the war in Europe was almost over.



My Uncle George during World II



My dad's siblings are from left to right Aunt Zora, Uncle Nick, Aunt Katherine, my dad, Helen, and Uncle George

With this background I can now go on to talk about my mother and father. My mother was born on May 8, 1918. As a member of a family of ten brothers and sisters and growing up in the depression she definitely was not spoiled as a child. As I mentioned earlier her favorite brother was Paul. Her favorite sister was Catherine and they remained best friends until Aunt Catherine death in April 1997. The family grew up in East Akron and lived on Weeks St. My mother liked to swim and learned from my grandfather. His method of teaching his kids to swim was to throw each of them in the Mahoning River and then yell to them to 'start swimming.' Of course, he would watch them to make sure they didn't drown. Mom attended Annunciation grade school and went on to East High School. East high school was rare in its day in that it had a swimming pool and my mother would swim there as often as she could. The swimming coach at East High took a liking to my mother and would let her swim as often as she wanted. He was encouraging her to become a member of the East High swim team. Unfortunately my mother was not that interested in school and dropped out after the 10th grade.

She liked to tell the story when her and several friends would often cut school to go downtown shopping or just hang out downtown. At the time, the depression was on so not much was thought about her quitting school. In fact, during this time less than half of high school students graduated. She met my father when she was about fifteen and I have been told by several of her friends they felt envious because she had a good-looking boyfriend.

My father was born on December 16, 1913. He was oldest in the family excluding his half-sister Katherine and half-brothers still in Croatia. They lived on a farm in the Edinburgh, Ohio area then moved to east Akron after his mother died. As I indicated earlier my dad was forced to quit school at age 16 and help raise his brothers and sisters. By the time he was nineteen the Depression was on and my dad thought Nick was old enough to take care of the younger children so he decided to leave home. He wanted to get away from his father. He left home and became a hobo traveling around the country in freight trains. My dad would hitch rides on boxcars going wherever the train went, often staying in Hooverville's' along the way. While in California he worked in a CCC camp helping build roads in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. He told me It was while working here he experienced the scariest moment in his life. As he was working on a mountain highway he decided to take a break and sit on a bank on the side of the road. As soon as he sat down he heard a loud hissing sound. He looked around and saw that he was sitting right next to a pit of rattlesnakes. It was March and snakes were out sunning themselves. My dad was thinking he would be a goner with all these snakes, but he slowly backed down and luckily was able to escape without getting bitten.

While traveling the country via trains he was in thirty-two states. My dad eventually arrived in Florida and was invited to spring training with the Cincinnati Reds. My dad was a third baseman and told me he had a good chance to make the big-league team but he came down with a sore arm and was cut from the team. Back in those days big league teams did not coddle players like they do today. If one got hurt, especially a

newcomer, one was told to spit some tobacco juice on the injury and keep playing, remember this was during the Depression and times were tough for almost everyone. It was like survival of the fittest. I am not sure how my long my dad bummed the country or how he was invited to spring training with the Reds. He eventually came back to Akron but did not have a regular job. He soon found work on a railroad, repairing cars, and picked up odd jobs like peddling advertising fliers house to house.

One thing my dad had was a lot of pride. He had a very strong work ethic and was a perfectionist in almost anything he did. My dad and others told me he took a lot of pride in his cars; his cars were usually very clean and sharp. My mother told me dad's car was the envy of many people, however my dad probably was not very happy when he tried to teach mom how to drive. Apparently mom was driving the car on a back road when dad told her to turn, thinking she would turn at the upcoming intersection, she fooled him and immediately turned and ran right into a tree.

In the late 1930's the threat of war was heating up in Europe and Asia and employment became plentiful. My dad acquired a job at B.F. Goodrich Co. Several of my dad's friends were recruited by a local steel company to play baseball for them. His friends kept asking my dad to come work at the steel company and play ball, however my mother talked him out of it telling my dad to keep his 'good' job at Goodrich. In the 1930's many companies had their own baseball teams and there was a lot of competition among companies as to who had the best team. During this period Akron had a New York Yankee's minor league team and I asked my dad if he ever went to any of their games? He said 'no, we were better players than they were.'

When my parents married my mom worked as cashier at the O'Neil's department stores' restaurant in downtown Akron. She worked there until I was born. Their first apartment was above Robinson Florist on S. Arlington Street and this is where they lived when I was born. Shortly afterward they bought their first house on Malacca St. in Goodyear Heights. When my brother Tom was born they decided they needed a bigger house and in 1944 moved to 555 Whitney Ave. This is the house where Tom and I grew up. It was located two blocks from the intersection of Arlington St. and 7th Ave. and halfway between Lovers Lane and Fifth Ave. At the time Arlington St and 7th Ave. area was a lively part of town with quit a few small businesses. There was an Islay's dairy store and malt shop known for their Skyscraper ice cream cones, several small grocery stores, two drug stores, 5 & 10 cent stores, the Cameo Movie Theater, several bars, a gas station, two bus stops, several appliance repairs stores, a used car lot, an ice cream stand, a pool hall, and others I can't think of at this time. Across the street from the of corner of Baird and Arlington was a Nickel's bakery were my mother worked part time for several years. She worked with Martha Gmerek, mother of Dorothy and Richard.

The neighborhood was a nice area in which to grow up in. All the people were working class (non-professional) types. For the most part the people were all cordial and friendly. In the mid-fifties two European displaced families from WWII moved into the neighborhood.

Our house was a relatively large two-bedroom two story with a lot of oak wood. We had a large living room with a gas log fireplace, which we didn't use. The living room also had oak pocket doors dividing it from the dining room. The kitchen was also large with plenty of cabinets with a kitchen table and chairs and a nook for the icebox. Yes, I said icebox. We didn't have a refrigerator until I was about seven years old. Every day or so the ice man would deliver a 50-pound block of ice and put it the ice box to keep the food cool. There was a large drip pan under the icebox to catch the melting ice. Upstairs there were two bedrooms and a bathroom. Both the bedrooms were of considerable size, and each had relatively large walk-in closets. Tom and I shared one bedroom. The basement was large and divided by a cement block wall. One side of the wall was our play area. The other side had my dad's workbench, the washer, stationary tubs, a toilet, shower (not enclosed), and a coal furnace and coal bin. We had a coal furnace until I was about 8 years old. A coal bin was next to the furnace where a coal truck would deliver coal and slide it into the coal bin through a basement window and using a steel ramp to slide coal into the coal bin. My dad would then need to shovel the coal from the coal bin into the furnace. Eventually my Uncle Jake converted our coal furnace to a gas furnace. Furnace installation was my Uncle Jake's (Aunt Winnie' husband) line of work. Since we didn't have a clothes dryer my mother would hang the wash on clotheslines in the basement. As you may imagine often the clothes would get dirty just from the coal furnace while hanging on the basement line. In warm weather the clotheslines were outside and went from the house to the garage. When the clothes were hanging outside they would also get dirty from the soot particles escaping from the smokestacks from the rubber companies in Akron. Goodyear has several plants in East Akron and was nearest to our house. My dad's favorite part of our house was the garage. It was a two-car garage, which was unusual for its day. The garage also had a crawl space underneath it and this is where my dad stored a lot of scrap wood. The crawl space had a small door behind the garage leading to the crawl space and at times there were rats in the crawl space. Often I would use the crawl space to hide when us kids would play 'hide and go seek.' My dad loved to work around the house and used the garage often. Since we only had one car there was plenty of room for two workbenches for him to work.

Our house had a double gravel driveway that we shared with our neighbor, the Henninger's. The Henninger's were an older retired couple who were partially raising their granddaughter, Carol. When we moved to Whitney Ave. the Henninger's raised chickens. I can remember chickens running around the driveway and yard, and the chickens brought rats. The city finally outlawed raising chickens when I was about six years old. After the chickens left the Henninger's used their whole backyard for a vegetable garden. They grew many vegetables, but what I remember most was the rhubarb, they seemed to have lots of it. There was a fence dividing our yards and I remember climbing the fence and eat their rhubarb, of course the neighbors did not like it.

My earliest memories living in our house were the chickens. I also remember the area between our house and garage was dirt and when it rained it was all mud. By the time I was about eight years my dad paved the area with concrete.

Another memory I have was the ‘rag man’ coming around in a horse drawn wagon trying to collect rags by yelling out “rags, rags.” I have no idea what he did with all those rags. Then there were the delivery people, the bread man, the milkman, the iceman, and the coalman. It was common for most of these items to be delivered. Supermarkets were not present in our neighborhood until an A&P store opened several blocks away when I was about 7 or 8 years old. The A&P was built next to Case Egg Company near the intersection of Lovers Lane and Arlington St. At the Case Egg Company not only did they sell eggs they also had live chickens. If one wanted a chicken for dinner you would go to Case Egg look at the chickens in their cages and choose which one you wanted. Then you would come back several hours later and they would have the chicken ready for you to take home. Remember there were no freezers at this time.

When I was three and four years old I remember having this recurring dream. My bed was on the second floor next to a window. Frequently I dreamed the ‘B*ig Bad Wolf’* was climbing up a ladder then climbing through the window to ‘come and get me.’ Several evenings my mother was having her Canasta card party at our house and I would run downstairs to yell ‘B*ig Bad Wolf* was coming to get me’ and she would let me stay downstairs with them. Usually, I would go under their card table to hide from ‘B*ig Bad Wolf.’*

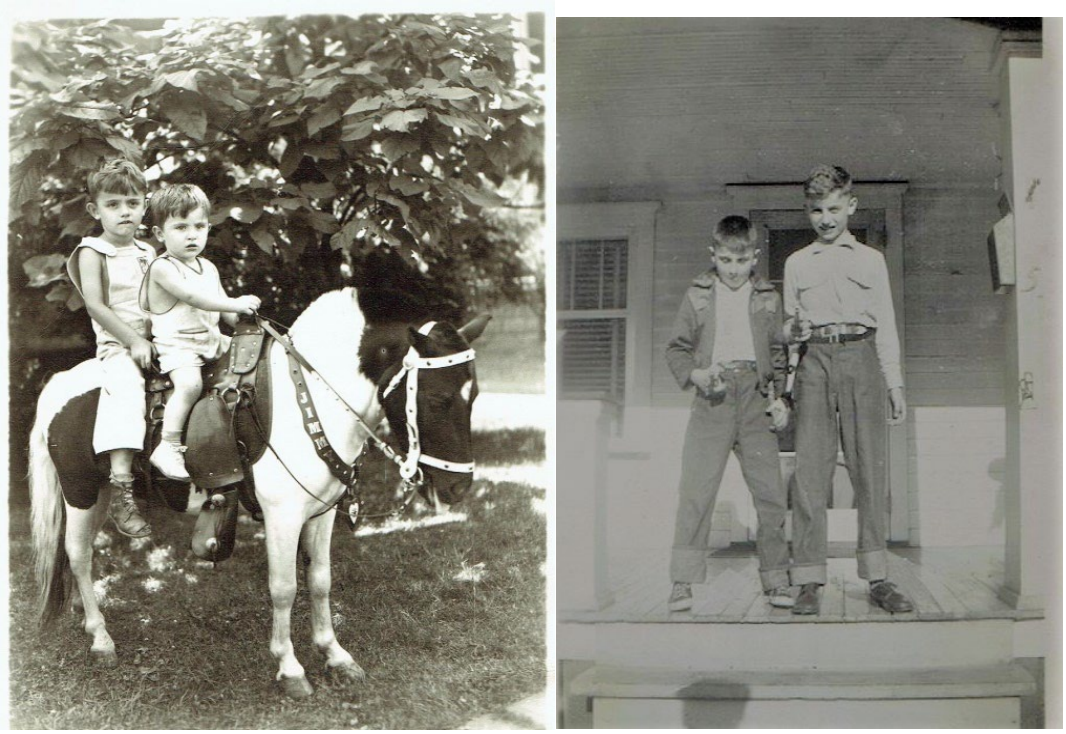
Christmas was not a big celebration while I was growing up. Santa Claus would come every Christmas Eve night with gifts for Tom and me. In addition, Santa also brought our Christmas tree. That had to big effort for my parents to bring in the tree, decorate it and set out gifts after Tom & I went to bed. I am sure when Tom & I woke up early the next morning they had to be tired. This tradition lasted until I was in sixth grade, this is when I stopped believing in Santa. After we opened our gifts we would attend the 11 o’clock Christmas Mass. As an aside I believed in the Easter Bunny until I was in the third grade.

When I was four years old I remember my mother taking me to a speech therapist. Apparently I had a stuttering problem and they were obviously concerned about it. I remember sitting down with the therapist and just talking. We came out of our session and he told my mother I had no stuttering problem. I think to this day I have difficulty speaking whenever I am nervous. I know I have several nervous habits; one being cracking my knuckles. When I had hair, I used to run my fingers through the hair back of my head over and over again.

At this time I was only aware of two other kids close to my age on our street. One was Carol who was my age (The Henninger’s granddaughter) and Bobby McCormick who was Tom’s age and lived two houses down from us. His grandparents lived in the front house and were partially raising Bobby while his mother lived in a smaller house behind her parents’ house. Bobby’s grandparents were very nice people. I remember a time when I wasn’t very nice to them. I was about four years old and ornery; I poured gravel in Bobby’s grandfather’s car gas tank. He never knew who did it and obviously was not a happy camper.

Another early memory I have is when I was four years old is and Tom fell out of the car. One evening we were driving in Arlington. St. and Tom opened the back door and fell onto the street. A car ran right over him, but very fortunately the wheels missed him. He was taken to the hospital; however he was all right. A few days later my dad took off the door handles in the back seat doors. His 1937 Packard did not have door locks.

In 1946 I started kindergarten at Robinson School which was located at the intersection of Fifth Ave. and Chittenden St, about 8 blocks away from our house. I don't remember very much about kindergarten except nap time. Each child had to bring a pillow to school and we used it to lay on the floor and take a 15-minute nap every day. Kindergarten was split into two shifts, one was held in the morning, one in the afternoon. I attended the afternoon session. There were no school buses in those days so I walked to school every day.



Tom & Me

It was in kindergarten that we got our first dog, *Blackie*. He was a Labrador retriever and a very good yet big dog but liked to chase birds and would jump the neighbor's fences to go after the birds. My mother got tired of complaints from neighbors so we finally gave the dog away to some farmer where the dog could run. Then when I was about 8 years old I found a stray black dog which I brought home and begged my mom to keep it. She finally relented and we called him *Blackie. Blackie* and I were good buddies for a long time until he finally died when I was 15 years old, I think someone poisoned him. As I was growing up most neighborhoods had a movie theater. As I mentioned our area had the Cameo Theater on Arlington St., this is where my Tom and I would often go to the movies. We were able to go to the movies for ten cents, see a carton, the weekly newsreel, a segment of the Superman series and a double feature. Each week another

segment of Superman would be presented, sort of like soap opera. One of best parts of going to the movies is we could sit and watch the movies a second or third time. We were not forced to leave after the movie was completed. I imagine this was a good babysitter for my parents on Saturday afternoons.

Chapter 2 – Grade School Years

After kindergarten I attended and graduated from Annunciation grade school where I began first grade at five years old. Annunciation was the church we attended and is located on Broad St. near the intersection of S. Arlington and E. Market St. The school was all on one floor and it was the same building when my mother attended Annunciation school. There wasn't much of a playground. It was just a blacktop parking lot with two basketball hoops. There were two levels to the playground. The upper level was for grades one through five and all the girls. The lower level was for boys in grades six through eight. I guess it was thought the older boys were too rough for the younger boys and the girls. As I think back to this time we older boys did play rough. One of our favorite games we older boys played was called B*acon and Eggs* which we played on *t*he lower-level playground which had a full-size asphalt basketball court. The game *Bacon and Eggs* consisted of several boys being in the middle of the court while the other boys would try to go from one end of the court to the other without being tagged. Sometimes we played tackle. This is when the boys in the middle had to tackle the boys trying to get from one end to the other. We always played tackle when there was snow on the ground. One other thing is that when it did snow the playground was never plowed or the snow removed. As you may imagine often our clothes got torn when we played tackle *Bacon And Eggs.*

As early as the first grade I went to school by city bus or walking to school. The buses were run by overhead lines powered by electricity. When I was young there were also streetcars in Akron. They mostly traveled on the major streets downtown and were powered by rails in the street. By the time I was in third grade most of the street cars were replaced by overhead trolley line buses.

I cannot remember my first and second grade teachers. The nuns who taught us were from order of Holy Humility of Mary. During grade school I had only two lay teachers, one was in the third grade and the other in fifth grade. I don't remember very many incidents from my first three grades in school except for one I vividly remember. I was in second grade and the class was asked what Jesus, then 12 years old, said to Mary and Joseph after they found Him in the temple after being 'lost' for three days. I was sure I knew the answer, so I raised my hand. Sister 'what's her name' called on me and I answered, 'when Jesus saw Mary & Joseph He went and hid in the corner.' Sister was furious with my answer, then she sent me to a corner of the room where I had to stand the rest of the school day. I did not feel embarrassed at all since I was convinced I gave the correct answer.

Annunciation grade school was located behind the church on a lower level from the church grounds. Each morning before school began we were required to attend 8:30 Mass. After Mass we would then march, by grade, from front of the church to the school ground. Then we would all stand outside the school by grade and say the Pledge of Allegiance while the flag was being raised. When school was over each afternoon we all would line up according to class in the school then '*march*' from the school to the front of the church via the playground and the sidewalk on the side of the church. We would

‘*march’* to John Phillips Susa type marching music. The marching music was played over a loudspeaker that could be heard all over the neighborhood. We would line up in two lines, one side for the girls, and the other side for boys. To this day I have many of those John Phillips Susa marching songs memorized.

Another major event I remember from second grade was one day coming home from school. By this time, I usually walked about three miles home from school and came through several back yards. On this day I was close to home when someone came up to me and asked if I knew that our neighbor boy Bobby had died. Not to feel stupid I said ‘yes.’ However, I did not know. There was a fire in Bobby’s house, and he died from smoke inhalation. He was five years old and Tom’s best friend. I was seven years old.

My favorite teacher at Annunciation was my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Backus. After having two nuns she seemed to be very sweet and pleasant to me. My fourth-grade teacher I feared more than any other teacher in grade school. Fourth grade is also when corporal punishment began to be dished out. Our teacher seemed so mean. She would get angry if we did not know our work and often would punish us for it. An example is when we would go to the blackboard for math problems, there were two large blackboards on each wall in the room. Multiple students were sent to the board and given a math problem. Each student was told to work out the problem on board. When we were finished *Sister Mean* would walk around and look over our shoulders at the board to check our work. If a boy’s problem was not solved correctly she would bash his head against the blackboard and tell him to do the problem again. She didn’t seem to treat the girls as severally. Another form of corporal punishment was when sister suspected someone of misbehaving. *Sister Mean* would then ask the suspected student to come in front of the room to face the big wooden ruler and have their knuckles smacked. The same thing would happen if an incident occurred and if sister did not know who caused the incident she would ask someone in the class to identify the misbehaving student. If no boy or girl identified that student all boys had to come to front of class to receive a whack on the knuckles from the big wooden ruler. We would then have to put our hands out, knuckles up, and get smacked with the ruler. If we flinched at all we would get smacked again. If one of us squealed on another student the misbehaving student would get smacked. Of course, if someone squealed on someone else the playground is where the one who’ tattletale’ would receive the kids’ punishment.

Fourth grade is when us kids got the ‘privilege’ to help clean the schoolroom. Since we had hardwood floors they had to be cleaned. We were each given some steel wool and told to put it under our shoes and scrub the floor around our desk. This cleaning would often take an hour or so. We would do this about every three months. In the fifth grade I had my other lay teacher. I don’t remember very much about fifth grade except that after fourth grade our teacher seemed like a dream. One interesting note about going to grade school at this time was in the third grade we began to use ink for some of our work. At this time ball point pens were not available therefore we all had ink wells with ink bottles imbedded in our desks. We used an ink or fountain pen and dipped the tip of

the pin in the ink to write. When our ink ran out our teacher would refill the ink bottle for us. The ink was in addition to our pencils.



Me at Seven Years Old

When I entered third grade my parents began giving me an allowance of five cents per week. Since this didn't go very far I picked up extra money by collecting bottles and returning them for a deposit. During those days there were no plastic bottles, all bottles were made of glass and retailers would charge two cents deposit on Coke type bottles and five cents for quart bottles. Sometimes people would not bother taking their bottles back to store for deposit so I would go around the neighborhood looking for bottles.

My best friends in my early grade school years were Kenny Geiger and Larry Parsons. We gradually drifted apart and by the time I was in seventh grade most of my friends were those with whom I played baseball, football, or basketball. Kenny and Larry did not play any sports.

When I was about nine years old I was fascinated by state license plates. A cereal company had an offer that if you returned two cereal box tops and one dollar they would send miniature license plates of all forty-eight states. Well, I saved up my money and

sent the box tops and a dollar bill to receive my license plates only they never arrived. My parents and I were naïve, not thinking a clerk would keep the dollar bill for themselves and not send me my license plates. My parents did not have a checking account, everything was paid in cash. I even remember my dad telling me that during payday at work the paymaster would come around in a wheelbarrow with pay envelopes for the employees. Inside the envelope was cash, not a check.

Also when I was nine years old I became interested in Astronomy. I would go to the library every two weeks and read books on Astronomy. By the time I entered seventh grade I had read all the Astronomy books in the Firestone Park library and many at the downtown library. At this time, my dream was to be an Astronomer. I was fascinated with outer space, especially deep space. At Christmas when I was ten years I received a pair of binoculars. Many a night I would go outside and look at the stars with my binoculars. By the time I was in the seventh grade I knew many of the constellations in the sky and the major stars in each. I was also very fascinated by how large the universe is and that there were thousands if not billions of galaxies and that our Milky Way was just one of those galaxies.

My mother enjoyed listening to music especially her favorite music, polkas and the ‘big bands. She also listened to what is now called country music. then it was called ‘hillbilly’ music, My mother usually had the radio on during the day and evening until we got a TV. My mother’s favorite bands were Glen Miller, Artie Shaw, and Benny Goodman, among others. By now I was beginning to listen to her music and also enjoyed ‘hillbilly’ music. To this day I remember many of the songs, especially the ‘big band’ music from the 1930s and 1940’s. Around ten years old I was given an older radio and put it next to my bed. In the evening before I went to sleep I would often listen to county music from southern radio stations.

At ten years old several significant things happened in my life. It was when I began to take guitar lessons. My mother originally wanted me to take banjo or accordion lessons, but I said no to these instruments. I took guitar lessons from the time I was 10 years old until August just before I entered my freshman year at St. Vincent high school, which is when football practice began. I could not play football and continued with my guitar lessons. Each day I would practice playing my guitar for one hour. I would play and practice by reading sheet music. I really didn’t have much rhythm. It wasn’t until my later years in high school that I began to develop some musical rhythm. While playing guitar there was only one song I could play from memory. For all the other songs I needed sheet music. My parents bought me a good used Gibson guitar. I didn’t realize it, but it was a very good guitar. Today I think such guitars are in high demand if they are in good condition. I still have my guitar.



Me playing guitar for relatives at age 13.



Tom & me in our backyard cherry tree - 1952

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In the summer of 1952 we got our first TV set. Prior to us having a TV the only family in the neighborhood that had a TV were the McCormick's, Bobby's grandparents. Often Tom and I would go over their house to watch TV, even after Bobby died. My Uncle Leo and Aunt Mamie were the first family members to own a TV and I remember our family going to their house to watch TV. Their TV was unique. As most TV's of this era it had a very small screen, about to 9 inches wide. One thing about Uncle Leo's TV is that had a huge magnifying glass in front which made the picture much larger. All programs were in black and white. When we got our TV there was very little programming. We were only able to receive three stations, one each for NBC, ABC and CBS. Programming usually didn't begin until about noon except for weekends when they began around 8 AM. In the evening programming ended at 11 PM with the playing of the National Anthem with a picture of the American flag. When there was no programming only a test pattern was on the screen. I remember when we first acquired our TV it fascinated us so often we would just sit and watch the test pattern. Shortly after we got our TV my favorite programs were the *Lone Ranger, Captain Video and His Video Rangers* and old western movies made in the 1930's. My mother's favorite was *I Remember Mama*. My dad enjoyed the *Life of Riley* and boxing matches. Many programs were only fifteen minutes long and they were live except for movies. No such thing as taping a program and showing it at a later date. In 1954/1955 I enjoyed watching the *Honeymooner's* with Jackie Gleason and Art Carney, they were great and I still laugh when watching their episodes on DVD or You Tube.

Prior to television our entertainment was reading or listening to the radio. I remember before we got our TV most evenings I would listen to the *Lone Ranger* on the radio at 7:15 PM. Often I would come in from playing outside to listen to my favorite program. I also remember being in the kitchen during the evenings with my mother as she ironed clothes and listened to the radio. Her favorite radio programs included *Fiber McGee and Molly, Gangbusters, The Fat Man,* soap operas*,* among others. In the mornings my mother would listen to the news on radio station WAKR as we were getting ready for school.

Also when I was ten years old I began to take swim lessons during the summer. I rode the bus to Summit Beach Park which was an amusement park with a large swimming pool. The lessons began at 10 AM and I remember the water being really cold. Summit Beach Park was located next to Summit Lake in south Akron and was torn down a few years later. Around this time my parents began to pick up two orphan boys from the Children's Home and take them to Mass on Sunday mornings. We did this for several years.

While I was in grade school my mother would take Tom and I to *'Sand Banks'* to swim in the evening. Yes, this is the place where my Uncle Paul died in a diving accident. *Sand Banks* was a neat place to swim because it was in an isolated location and near a sand and gravel operation, which resulted in the bottom of the lake being all sand, no muck. My mother really enjoyed swimming but would only swim in the evening due to having such a light skin complexion. At times my parents would take us to Water Works Park in Cuyahoga Falls. The Waters Works Park was supposed to be limited to Cuyahoga Falls

residents but when we entered we would say we were from Cuyahoga Falls. Often I didn't care to swim there though because the water was so cold.

As I mentioned earlier we shared a gravel driveway with our neighbors the Henninger's. In the summertime I would often play for hours in the driveway making gravel cities and fortresses. Looking back it was a terrific way to develop our imaginations.

When we went camping or picnicking at Mahoning River I made mud cities and forts at the lakes edge. The shore of the lake was mud and I loved to swim and play on the muddy lake bottom and shore. The wet mud made it good to build castles, forts, and cities. Often I would spend hours at the lake making these mud forts and cities. I remember once when I was about ten years old I went to the lake around ten in the morning and did not come back to the campground until dinnertime. That afternoon I fell asleep near the lake's edge and got a spotty suntan due to mud covering parts of my body. At that time there was very little boat traffic at Berlin Reservoir and few people used the lake. I have very many fond memories of Mahoning River.

Berlin Reservoir was built around 1943 for the city of Youngstown and its steel mills to support the war effort. When I was a kid it was a relatively new lake and not everyone had automobiles to travel to Berlin Reservoir. Whenever we went there our family (aunts, uncles, cousins, and family friends) were often the only people around, so it was like our private campground. Where we camped and picnicked was off a dirt road near US 224 in Mahoning County. Once we crossed the bridge over Berlin Reservoir we turned left on the first road then about a mile or so down the road we would turn down the dirt road to the campground. The dirt road was about a half mile down to where we camped. Whenever it rained the dirt road turned to a mud road and usually more than one car got stuck in the mud trying to get to our picnic area. To us kids this was fun because all the men and kids would need to push cars stuck in the mud, and usually more than one car.

There was no running water at 'Mahoning' so there was an outhouse about a quarter mile from the campsite. Every family would bring drinking water and after it ran out we kids had to walk about a mile or so with large buckets and pump water from a farmer's well. Then lug all the water buckets back to camp.

We would picnic and camp out under a huge oak tree. Every evening we had a big campfire and all us kids would try to find more wood to make the fire bigger and bigger. Of course, we all camped in tents and my Uncle Leo had a small motorboat. The boat was called *'Hells a Poppin.'* One year when I was about 12 years old the boat sunk, and I remember that winter my family going to Mahoning River to try and find the boat when the water level was lowered, but no luck. Berlin Reservoir was significantly lowered every fall to feed Milton Reservoir, which was the water supply for Youngstown.

As a kid I seemed to always enjoy riddles and when I was about ten years old my Aunt Theresa bought me a riddle book. I felt delighted and I think I drove most adults crazy with my asking them all kinds of riddles.

Also, around age ten I became interested in collecting baseball cards. Most cards came in bubblegum packages. For five cents one could purchase six baseball cards and a stick of bubblegum. In order to afford more baseball cards often I would collect bottles in the neighborhood and return them to stores in to collect the deposit. All bottles were glass and when one purchased a drink, be it pop, milk etc. a deposit was charged with each purchase. I loved my baseball cards and often would fall asleep with all of them over my bed. I must have had hundreds of cards. In the 1970's these cards were becoming collector's items and worth a lot of money. During this time, I asked my mother where all my baseball cards were and she told me she threw them out when I left home. I like many others could have made a small fortune on those cards.

As a child I was sort of a quiet, docile kid, however when playing with neighborhood kids I was the organizer and leader of the games we would play. By nine years old Tom and I discovered more kids in the neighborhood. There was Larry Stouffer and his older brother Billy, Dave Sitko, Jim Benko, and several other kids whose names I can't remember. We often played cowboys and Indians, war, hide and go seek, red rover/red rover, baseball, and football. When playing cowboys and Indians I always wanted to be the cowboy (good guy) or when playing war, the war hero. This was the part of me who wanted to lead. But there were several bullies in the neighborhood with whom I had a tough time. There were the Fox boys, Billy Stouffer, and our paperboy.

The Fox's had two boys who seemed to always want to fight. I remember one time the older Fox boy and I were fighting on his front porch and his parents were watching us from the living room. All they did was watch. They did not say anything to us. Guess that tells a lot about the environment the boys lived in. It seems it was the older kids who were always picking on me. Billy Stouffer was two years older than me and often wanted to pick a fight with me. One time we did fight and he gave me a bloody nose. When I came home all I can remember was my father being very upset with me, not because I was fighting but because I lost the fight. Then there was a kid 3 or 4 years older than me who lived about a block and a half away and it seemed he always wanted to beat up younger kids. Once I remember walking home from Dave Sitko's house he saw me and came running after me. I took off running for home and I think it was the fastest I had ever run in my life. It seemed as though I was flying when I finally reached my house then he quit running after me. Then there was our paperboy. He was about five or six years older than me and I never had a problem with him. One day I was walking home from Arlington Street and he was in the ice cream stand at the corner of Arlington St. and McKinley Ave. As I was walking past the stand he asked that I come over to him, I did, then he punched me right in the nose. When I mentioned this to my parents they waited until he came to collect the money for the paper several days later and they asked him about the incident, of course he denied everything.

At school I had very little problem with the other kids until the sixth grade; this is when two boys, Joey Gaikowski and Jim Boland began to tease me. On the playground often they would just hit or shove me then run away. After several months of this I got fed up and approached them about it. They said, 'do you want to fight about it' and I said OK, let's fight. They thought I was an easy mark, but I started dancing around like a boxer

and he hit each of them once in the mouth and they both ran away and never bothered me again. I used to watch boxing matches on TV, *The Friday Night Fights*, and picked up a lot of boxing techniques and moves which I used on Joey and Jim.

I did not have another fight until the eighth grade. There were two brothers, Steve, and Jim Antel, who transferred to our school from Parmadale, an orphanage in Parma. Steve was a year older than the rest of us and stood about six feet two inches tall. Both were known as bullies and troublemakers and most of us boys tried to avoid them. During one lunch time recess apparently the older one, Steve, was picking on my brother Tom and several kids in my class came over to me and asked sarcastically what I was going to do about it. They obviously thought I would be' chicken' to challenge him. Well, I went over to Steve and challenged him to stop picking on Tom, he just laughed at me. Then I challenged him to fight about it. He thought he had an easy mark however, I took out my pocketknife opened the blade, his eyes opened wide, then I threw it down, and threw the first punch and bloodied his lip. He gave up immediately. It just so happened that we sat next to each other in class and I remember him turning to me after recess and saying this fight isn't over. However he never bothered Tom or me again. After our fight suddenly I was the hero of our school for I challenged, fought, and beat the school bully.

In the sixth grade we had another nun who issued corporal punishment. If one of us boys was caught acting up in class she would motion to that boy to come up to her desk. She would then reach into her bottom drawer and pull out a bag of rice, put some rice on the floor then tell that boy to kneel on the rice for an hour or so. Yes, some of the nuns were mean.

One of the biggest events in the sixth grade was when the school wanted to put on a performance at Goodyear Theater, so it was decided to have a dance recital. The school hired the Dixon's as our dance instructors to teach us kid's tap dancing. The Dixon's were a husband-and-wife team and spent a good part of the school year trying to teach groups in each class a tap dance routine for a spring performance with costumes. Every student from third grade up was to be in the show. I was chosen along with nine other sixth grade boys for the *By the Sea* dance routine. The whole recital was to a Gay 90's (1890's) theme and my group was dressed in full striped bathing suits and tap dancing to the song *By the Sea, By the Sea by the Beautiful Sea.* I think the ten of us were the worst dance students in the school. None of us were interested in tap dancing and we just made light of it. When it came time for the big performance at Goodyear Theater the theater was full of hundreds if not a few thousand people. Our routine was about in the middle of the show. I remember the applause all the acts were getting and I wasn't feeling very comfortable I knew my routine and I don't think the other guys felt very confident either. Well, our big time came, and we went out on the stage and did our routine to the music *By the Sea, By the Sea, By the Beautiful Sea.* As we were performing all I heard from the audience was laughter. I knew we were way off on our routine and couldn't understand why the laughter and excitement. After we finished our routine I went to see my parents and other relatives in the audience and discovered why the reaction. Apparently we were so off on our routine that the audience

thought we were the comedy act and our routine went ‘so well’ we received a big ovation. I don’t think the Dixon’s nor was the school’s principal very happy about it though.

Being a boy in sixth grade at Annunciation Grade School meant two events were going to occur. One was that all boys would have to audition for the choir and the chance to try out to be an altar boy. The children’s choir at Annunciation was an all-boys choir and my tryout for the choir did not go very well. The choir teacher/director would evaluate every boy as to his ability to sing. We had to try and sing the scale then join with another boy and sing a church hymn. Well, I didn’t qualify, in fact, I was one of only two boys who did not qualify to sing in the choir. The boys’ choir at Annunciation had a very good reputation and the choir would sing at all the weekday masses prior to school, special services, and once a month at Sunday masses. My reputation for not being a good singer lasts to this day. Around 1975 the choir director at Queen of Heaven once heard me sing at a party and said to me ‘Boy I’m glad you’re not in this choir’.

Next was trying out to be an altar boy. Being an altar boy, no girls allowed in pre-Vatican II days, and was a lot different than today. The liturgy at Mass was a lot more ceremonial and the altar boys needed to recite all the responses the people say today, only in Latin. In addition, there seemed to be more responses than there are today. To be an altar boy one needed to memorize all the responses in Latin and the testing was very strict. Well, I memorized all the responses and was selected to be an altar boy and really enjoyed it. Altar boys served at weekday Masses and once you proved yourself served at Sunday Masses. When I was in the seventh grade I became the lead altar boy at Annunciation. Being the lead altar boy involved leading the processions for 40 hours devotions, Holy Week services and any other special liturgies of which there were many. One additional benefit of being an altar boy was that I was able to skip some school time in order to practice for processions and serve at funerals. In fact, I served at more funerals than any other altar boy during my years at Annunciation. Unfortunately, I did not serve at many weddings. The servers at weddings would usually receive tips from the groom or father of the bride after the wedding Mass. There was one time though I received a tip after a funeral Mass which surprised me. I continued to be an altar server at Sunday Masses throughout high school and even for several years after high school, the parish priests would call me whenever they were shorthanded.

Christmas at 11 years old brought me a special gift, my first bicycle. Mom and dad got Tom and me 26-inch Roadmaster bicycles, Tom’s was red and white, mine black and white. My bike was very special to me and I took very good care of it. I washed it several times a week and even waxed it several times each summer. I would ride my bike everywhere. I often remember several of us would ride our bikes to the Akron Municipal Airport and watch the planes take off and hoping some pilot would offer us a ride on his plane. For an 11-year-old that was a long ride from our house to the airport and back. Often Tom would also join us on bike trips; however, Tom was not as diligent as me in caring for his bike. I remember whenever Tom fell off his bike he would get mad and kick the bike. Often I would ride my bike to school and during the summer to church whenever I would serve weekday Mass. One summer morning when I was 14

years old after serving at Mass I went to get my bike and it was gone. Someone had stolen my bike and I felt heartbroken. Thus my relationship with my bike ended.

When I entered seventh grade my parents raised my weekly allowance from five cents to fifty cents. That was a major increase for me. Prior to seventh grade I usually spent my five-cent allowance on a candy bar each Friday at school or on Saturday mornings prior to the 10 AM western movies that were on TV. The cowboy movies were sponsored by *Chuckles* candy, of course I went to the store in the morning before the program started and bought a *Chuckles* candy bar.

About the time I was eleven years old I became more interested in sports. I liked sports prior to this time but never participated in them on an organized level. Back then there was no Little League baseball or Pee Wee football in our area, so I just played with neighborhood kids in our back yards or in the street.

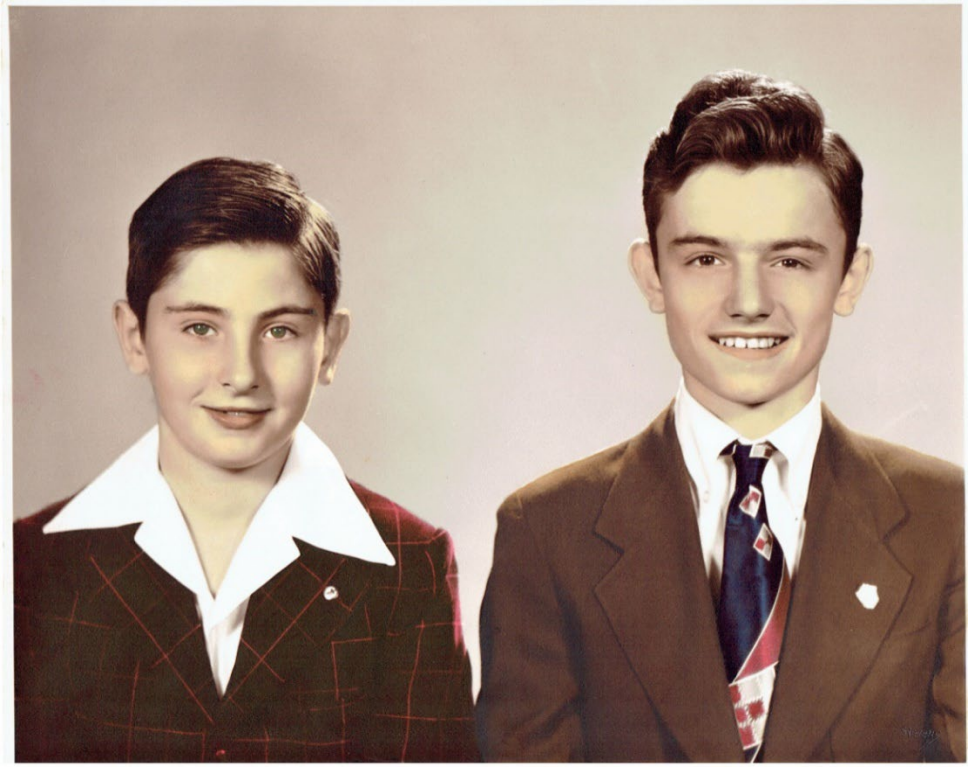
In August before entering the seventh grade I went out for the Annunciation school CYO football team. The weight limit at the time was 125 pounds and I must have weighed about ninety pounds. Since this was my first year playing football I didn't know many of the fundamentals of playing any position except quarterback or halfback and did not know anything about blocking. The coach put me at end on offense and defense, probably because I was tall. I enjoyed playing football but realized I had a lot to learn about the game. Our coach was Steve Sitko, who was a former All-American football player at Notre Dame. He was a very good coach. As the season went on I thought I was improving as a football player and couldn't wait until next year's season. Our team placed second in the league behind the dreaded St. Sebastian team. They were considered the rich kids from the west side that had all the money for fancy equipment. At the time the league had eight teams from greater Akron, there was Annunciation, St. Paul, St. John, St. Sebastian, St. Martha, St. Peter, St. Vincent, and St. Joseph.

In the seventh grade we had another nun who I considered to be a mean teacher. I can't remember her name just that she was short in stature. There doesn't seem to be many extraordinary events in the seventh grade. We still attended Mass every morning before school, marched to the music from the church to the playground, recited the Pledge of Allegiance outside as some boys raised the flag on the flagpole, marched to our classrooms, had class, then a fifteen-minute recess in the morning, then an hour lunch period, back to school and marched from our rooms to the front of school to marching music blaring from the load speakers. Every day we carried our lunches in lunch boxes or bags and had milk brought to us. Each Friday we would order our milk for the following week and I usually ordered chocolate milk. The price for milk was fifty cents for the week for which my mother gave to Tom and me.

While in seventh grade my mother obtained her driver's license and sometimes drove us to school. I usually felt embarrassed that my 'mommy' would drive us to school and upon approaching the school I would put my head down on the seat to avoid being seen by the other kids, Tom did the same thing in the back seat. Fortunately, she didn't drive us home from school. At times we would take the bus home, however usually several of

us would walk home from school. We would walk home via Arlington St. or behind Goodyear on River St. to Second Ave. to Arlington St. I remember one time when I was about 10 years old and walking home from school on River St. where there is a train trestle. That day we heard a train coming on the track and one boy decided to climb up the hill onto the trestle and play ‘chicken’ with the train. He went up and stood on the track and waited to see if the train would stop for him. As we watched from below we saw that the train was not going to stop and at the last minute this boy slipped down between the railroad ties and hung down below the rails while the train passed. Once the train passed he pulled himself up and all was well. Even being 10 years old the rest of us thought he was crazy.

The summer after seventh grade my interests were beginning to change, one being I was losing interest in astronomy and becoming more interested in sports. That summer I played for Annunciation CYO baseball team. I can’t remember too much about playing that year, but it was my first year of playing organized baseball. As I mentioned there was no Little League in our area.



Tom & me - June 1954

I do remember though I was really fired up to play football in the eighth grade. Practice began in August and all of us on the team thought we were going to have a fantastic team. The Annunciation Holy Name Society held fundraisers to finance the athletic teams and in my eighth-grade year they financed a trip for about twelve of us boys to attend the CYO football camp at Camp Christopher. The camp lasted for one week and Lou Baldacci and Gene Kapish were the coaches. Lou was a senior football player at Michigan and Gene was an All American at Notre Dame. It was an excellent camp and

we learned a lot about football fundamentals. Near the end of camp the coaches named an all-star football team and seven of us from Annunciation made the first team. What was surprising to me was that I was becoming a pretty good defensive football player. I had confidence I would be a fairly good receiver, not necessarily a good defensive player. At the end of camp I felt shocked when I was chosen as the best defensive player in camp out of over one hundred boys. This award had me in disbelief.

About a week after football camp I was walking down the street with my mother and she told me she would give me $5 for every touchdown I scored. I felt all excited because I thought I would score touchdowns by the dozens. We had a very good quarterback named Jimmy Cardin who was an excellent athlete and had a very good arm. In fact, following the school year he won the first Athlete of Year Award in the Akron area CYO. We were dreaming of grandiose things from our team. We had Jimmy at quarterback, Steve Berish at running back, several good linemen and me at end or receiver. Our offense was excellent. On defense I played end and was starting to excel at the position. Our first game was the Sunday after Labor Day, however five days before this game a tragedy hit our team. Our coach, Steve Sitko, announced to us that Goodyear was transferring him out of town and would not be able to coach us anymore. Now here we were five days before our first game with no coach. We practiced for several days without a head coach then Mike Mitchen stepped forward to become our head coach. We did not know him and he did not know any of us and his football background was nothing like Steve Sitko. Our team was in complete disarray. We went on to win only two games that year and I did not score a touchdown. Obviously, we were all very disappointed. I did, however, become a good defensive player.


COACH BALDACCI GIVES THE YOUNGSTERS SOME ADVICE

Photo in Akron Beacon Journal with article on the CYO football camp. I am the tall kid with X on my helmet.



Me after a game in eighth grade

In eighth grade we had a good teacher who also served as the school principal and we were in a new building. The building that served as the church hall for years and in which we practiced for the sixth-grade dance recital was renovated to classrooms for the seventh and eighth grades (the building is now the Fr. Hilkert Ozanam Center). We now felt special because of our new ‘digs’ and became leaders of the school. I was asked to be a school crossing guard, but I turned it down. I thought others would think of me as being a ‘nerd’ if I were a school crossing guard. As you can see I was becoming more aware of my social status and what others were thinking of me. I thought being a good football player enhanced my image among my peers and I didn’t want to lose it. as the best in the school and felt proud of this honor.

Also being in eighth grade brought special privileges. One was for those who had good grades and didn’t misbehave in class received the ‘privilege’ of cleaning the convent, the nun’s residence. This was another ‘perk’ of attending a Catholic school. Cleaning the convent meant we were able to skip classes to dust, vacuum floors, wash windows etc. Now it sounds like a rotten deal but at the time we thought it was great because it was a diversion, and we didn’t’ have to attend class.

After football season ended I thought about playing basketball. I had never touched a basketball before but I went out for our team anyway. Most of the boys in my class did not have much experience playing this game so we didn’t think we would have a very good team. Once again Jimmy Cardin was our best player. As expected we did not win

many games at the beginning of the season. One advantage we did have though was we were a tall team. Steve Antel and Ralph Lazor were 6 ft. 2 in., I was 5 ft. 11 in., Jim Carden was 5 ft. 9 in. and Steve Berish was 5 ft. 8 inches. Annunciation and St. Martha were the tallest teams in the league. By the middle of the season we were becoming a halfway decent team. Most of our games were played at St. Vincent High School gym. After one game in February the St. V high school basketball coach called three of us into his office and told us that if we were interested in attending St V each of us would receive a basketball scholarship. I was totally surprised if not shocked due to my limited basketball experience.

Up I until this time I expected to attend East High School. This is where Carol and all the neighborhood kids in my neighborhood attended or were planning to attend. Beside St. Vincent High School another option was to go to Hoban High School. It was very close to home, about three blocks away and Annunciation parish and our pastor Monsignor Dowed were most instrumental in starting the school several years earlier. He pushed hard for the boys graduating from Annunciation to attend Hoban. In order to attend Hoban, St. V or St. Mary each student had to pass an entrance exam. Well early that spring many of us eighth graders took the entrance exam, which was good for any of the four Catholic high schools in Akron, the three I mentioned plus and The Elms. The exam was supposed to be fairly rigorous and several weeks later our teacher announced to the class which students had passed. There were about twenty kids in our class who took the exam. As she started to read off the names of those that passed I assumed I wasn't on the list. When the teacher mentioned my name as passing the entrance exam she said it in a very surprised voice, like *how could I* pass the exam while others did not. I felt proud of passing and gave my intention to attend St. V.

After basketball season ended we learned Annunciation school was going to have a fast pitch softball team. Many of us had played baseball before but not fast pitch softball. Mike Mitchum was going to be our coach; he was the same person who stepped in to coach our football team. When practice started my dad served as assistant coach and I overheard Mike tell my dad that he did not think we would be a very good team since our football team did not do very well. Once we started to practice he noticed we had some talented players. During an early practice I was warming up on the sideline and started to throw like a pitcher. I was wild and stopped throwing. The coach happened to be watching me and told me to continue to throw like a pitcher; he wanted to watch me throw a bit longer. I did and all was forgotten because we had a pitcher, Bob Mehock, who was a kid who played on our various teams but did not attend Annunciation school but belonged to the parish. As the season started we were doing fairly well and in contention for the playoffs (there were about fifteen teams in the league). It was about halfway through our season and we were scheduled to play against St. Peter who had the best pitcher in the league. It was a Sunday afternoon game and my dad could not make it to this game. As I pulled up to Cricket Field on my bike the coach came over and told me I was going to pitch this game. Obviously, I was surprised but I felt nonchalant about it. I had never pitched in my life, but apparently the coach noticed something about me trying to pitch on the sideline weeks earlier and wanted to see me pitch in this game. Maybe I was to be the sacrificial lamb. But why this game since it

was a very important game against one the best teams in the league? Well in the first inning I walked the first three batters I faced, the bases were loaded and with no outs. I then proceeded to strike out the next three batters. I finished the game and pitched a one hitter with many strikeouts. We won the game 1-0. For the first time I was a sports hero. Strangely I did not pitch another game the rest of the season. Our team made the playoffs, but we lost in the second round.

Finally, eighth grade graduation came. For our graduation there was a nice Mass and a backyard reception at the home of a girl's house that lived close to the school. That evening we were invited to a party at the family restaurant of one of our newer students. The girls brought records and tried to teach us boys how to dance. It started out awkwardly since many of us boys were not that interested in girls or learning to dance. The' jitterbug' was the main dance. After a brief time, some of us guys, including me, gave in and began to try and dance with a girl. I didn't do very well trying to dance, no rhythm. Perhaps this was just me, but it seemed that boys in our class and especially me did not have a big interest in girls. We seemed to focus mostly on sports. I must admit though in fifth grade a girl named Sandy and I would walk part way home together. We would walk from school to the intersection of Arlington and Exchange St., then she had to walk west on Exchange St. to go home. Sandy transferred from Annunciation in the sixth grade. My eighth-grade class was unique in being not that interested in girls but from what I heard Tom's 8th grade class was very girl crazy.

The summer after graduation I played baseball again and by this time I became a good hitter, I think I lead the league in batting average and hit more than a few home runs. I had become the best hitter on the team and maybe the best in the league. We won quite a few games. I remember my dad telling me several years earlier that if a player can hit he will play, that hitting was the most important part of being a good baseball player. When I was just five years old he taught me to bat left-handed because left-handed batters have an advantage since most pitchers are right-handed. During my eighth-grade year my dad's work schedule changed and he began to help coach the team as he did the fast pitch team.

Baseball had now become my real love. That summer my cousin, Richard Gmerek, gave me an older version of *the All-Star Baseball* game. This was a board game with a spinner around a card of a major league player with their batting statistics divided into areas based on frequency of their singles, doubles, home runs, strikeouts, ground outs etc. The game was a popular one in the 1950's with cards from current players. The game I had was probably the original game because it had almost all of the greatest players up to that time. The players included Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Ty Cobb, Ted Williams, Stan Musial, and many more of the all-time great players. I would make up teams from the American and National leagues and play for hours. Often that summer I would play until 2 or 3 in the morning. Other kids in the neighborhood had the modern players with their game and we would often play against each other, and I won almost all of the time. To this day *All Star Baseball* game has been my favorite board game.



Eighth grade graduation with some classmates

Chapter 3 -High School Years

In August 1955 I quit my guitar lessons, I just wasn't into it and it interfered with me playing sports. That August I began football practice for St. Vincent High School. The first day of practice was the physical exam and my height was measured at 6 ft. 1 inch and I weighed in at a robust 118 pounds. Needless to say, I was tall and skinny. Once again I played end, but I wasn't a starter and often I would get beat up pretty good at practice. I just did not have much meat on me. This was my only year of playing football in high school. I think if I had continued to play in subsequent years I could have been a halfway decent player but I just couldn't gain much weight and didn't want to get beat up at practice. In my junior year a friend of mine gave me the nickname 'Stork' indicating how tall and skinny I was in high school.

Upon entering St. V there were only five of us from Annunciation, Steve Berish, Nancy Kropac, Valerie Schiebilla, Bonnie Driscol, and myself. As I began to interact with the other freshman at St. V I began to feel a little out of place. It seemed most of the other students had money and I was just a poor kid from east Akron. An example was one afternoon prior to the beginning of the school year I arrived early for football practice along with a guy from St. Sebastian. We were both wearing jeans and I remember him noticing my jeans had patches on the knees. His jeans were new and more expensive. I could sense him looking down at me because I wore old jeans with patches. To me patches were normal since my mother often bought our clothes at rummage sales, especially our jeans. The jeans often had holes in the knees and my mother would patch them. To kids in my neighborhood that was not out of the ordinary. Most of our parents did not have much material and shopping at rummage sales then mending them was the norm.

My freshman year in high school was OK. I made some friends, but almost all of them lived in other parts of town. I seldom interacted with them after school except to play sports. Most of the kids I ran around with were in my neighborhood. One friend I did have from St. V was Gerry White. He was a JV football player and when I told him I had taken guitar lessons for four years he wanted me to teach him how to play. So one Friday evening I went to his house in Firestone Park and reviewed a few chords with him. Jerry told me he wanted to start a rock and roll band and asked if I would join him. I wasn't that interested in being in a band and declined. That Friday evening, I joined Gerry and several of his friends to attend the movie*, Rebel Without A Cause.* This was the first 'teenage' movie I attended, it starred James Dean and Natalie Wood.

After my freshman football season, I began basketball practice. At the first practice it seemed the half the freshman class came out for the team. At the first several practices I was placed on the second team and this sort of irritated me. I thought I should have been on the first team. Like an arrogant little boy I quit the team. Once I quit I began to play lots of basketball on our backyard court. During my eighth-grade year my dad put up a hoop on the front of our garage and with the concreate area in front of the garage it was a nice area to play. As far as playing basketball is concerned I ended up playing in

the CYO high school league for Annunciation. This league was competitive, but not like playing high school ball.

By late fall of my freshman year our backyard court attracted several other guys to our house. One who came to play was our paper boy, Butch Kozy. Butch was a senior at Garfield high and brought several of his friends from Garfield to play on our court. This enabled me to expand my horizon of friends, especially Dick Headley. From this point on I began to run around a lot with guys from Garfield. Around January Butch offered me a job as his helper on his paper route. Since I hardly had any money except my 50-cent allowance I said yes to be his helper. Butch paid me $.50 each day and $1.00 for Sunday morning. I was supposed to have a basketball scholarship to St. V, but I was so shy I did not ask about it upon entering high school. My parents paid the $70 tuition for my freshman year but could not afford or didn't want to pay the tuition beyond that first year. They told me I could attend East high school, therefore, after my freshman year I had to pay my own way through St. Vincent high school.

One of the guys Butch introduced me to was Richard Cunningham who we called 'Feet.' He got his nickname because he had such big feet, I think his shoe size was fourteen at age 16. 'Feet' and I became good friends for several years. As I mentioned Butch introduced me to Dick Headley who became my best friend in high school. He was the same age as me and a freshman at Garfield high school. In his senior year he went to the prom with a Geraldine Speroff, who later became Mrs. Tom Gruic.

During the spring Butch was about to graduate and offered me the opportunity to buy his paper route. In late March I agreed and became our neighborhood paperboy until March of my senior year in high school. In those days paper routes were something of value and one had to buy a route to become a paperboy. In essence you were like a businessman who bought your route and sold it later. For the route I paid $35 which I borrowed from my parents and was able to pay them back within a month. In those days, the Akron Beacon Journal was an afternoon paper, so it was delivered to houses after school. Being a paperboy meant that my after-school activities were limited, but I was able to earn from $15 to $20 per week. At Christmas I usually received $100 in tips which was great for that time. I thought that was very good money for a high school student. When several of my friends turned sixteen they worked in stores and earned about a $1 per hour. They had to work close to 20 hours per week to earn what I earned. While working the paper route I worked about an hour a day and about 2 hours Sunday mornings. Then it would take me about 3 hours each weekend to collect payment from my customers. This totaled about 11 hours a week and I could set my own hours for collecting. In addition, I was my own boss with no one looking over my shoulder and telling me how to do my job. It was a job that I enjoyed, and I got along well with most of my customers. As a paperboy for three years I not only paid my St. V tuition I was able to save enough money to pay for my first two years of college. This gave me some independence and from age 14 I have been able to pay for all my clothes and shoes in addition to buying other things I wanted.

During my freshman year I gradually began to take an interest in girls. I felt shy so I seldom talked to many girls one on one. However, I did become more interested in the social aspect of life. Near the end of my freshman year as I began my own paper route and collecting my customer's money I met a girl named Linda with whom I became attracted. She had just graduated from St. Paul's grade school and was about to enter St. Mary's high school. During her sophomore year she transferred to Garfield. In the summer of 1956 I intentionally made her house the last house on my collection route. After I had collected the money from her mother Linda and I would sit down and count the money I had collected, then spent the rest of Saturday afternoon together. Although we spent a lot of time together that summer I was too timid to ask her out on an 'official' date. Several months later I saw her walking hand and hand with another boy and they became semi boyfriend and girlfriend. I still liked her though and we stayed friends through high school.

Since St. V didn't have a baseball team I played in the summer PONY league for 13 and 14-year-old boys. The St. V track coach watched me high jump during gym class and wanted me to high jump for the track team. But baseball tryouts and practice were in the spring and I wanted to play baseball, not be on the track team. I also had my paper route which prevented me from being a member of the track team.

When I tried out for the Akron Floors PONY league baseball team I noticed the team had several particularly talented players and I was able to hold my own. During most of our practice games I proved to be the best hitter on the team. We practiced twice a week and on Saturday. My brother was to cover my paper route when I had practice. Then the week came when the team was to be chosen Tom wouldn't cover me on my paper route, so instead of going to baseball practice I had to work delivering papers. Due to me missing two practices that week I didn't make the team. The coach called and told me he couldn't keep me on the team since I missed two practices and that he was sorry. He told me though he thought I was a very good hitter. I felt extremely disappointed because I got to know many of the guys well and during the next few days guys on the team called and told me they also felt disappointed because they thought I was one of the better players on the team. After being cut from the team I was able to join a team located in Firestone Park. My season that summer was OK, but I didn't enjoy it as much as would have if I had played with the Akron Floors team, by the way that team went on to win the league championship. I remember several of the coaches saying it was the best PONY league team in league history. During the summer I also played for Annunciation CYO high school team. This league was for high school players but I was not a regular on the team since many of the players were seniors and two ended up signing professional baseball contracts.

This year for Father's Day I took my dad to a Cleveland Indian's double header. Since we both loved baseball it was enjoyable for both of us. My mother made sandwiches for us which we ate between games which was allowed at this time. This became sort of a tradition as I took my dad to Cleveland Indians games as a Father's Day gift for the next 14 years.

In August before my second year of high school a bunch of guys decided to play football on Sunday afternoons at the Garfield high school practice field. These games attracted guys from other parts of town and for the next three years we had a standing football game every Sunday afternoon from mid-August until March. Eventually many good athletes from the Akron area came to play on these Sunday afternoon games. We had some very good if dangerous games. By dangerous I mean we played tackle football with no pads and several times we played with metal spikes. Once a guy came to play with metal track spikes and I told everyone that this escalation of wearing of metal spikes had to stop. A lot of guys also said they were going to stop playing if metal spikes were worn. So, after that no one wore spikes to our games. It was during these games I began to feel confident that I could have been a fairly good football player. Many of the guys played for their high school teams and I was able to hold my own against them. Importantly, since I often played quarterback at these games I seldom had huge lineman banging into me.

It was in my freshman year of high school that I began to hitchhike my way around town. It was not as dangerous as it is today but one still had to be a little careful. I hitchhiked to school and back most days and this was my main mode of transportation. Occasionally though I would get a ride from a friend. This lasted until I graduated from high school. Since I did not get timely rides to school every day I was often late. The school rule was if one was late three times you got a detention, which meant an hour after school. Needless to say, I ended up with quite a few detentions. During my sophomore year I was able to come up with what I thought were good excuses for being late to school and got excused. Many kids used the lame excuse they had a flat tire or missed the bus for being late to school. Several times I said the power went out in the neighborhood so my radio alarm clock did not go off. Another was I took the bus and the bus had an accident. The nun in the office accepted these excuses for a while but after being late so often I just got detentions. Sometimes going to school I waited almost an hour for a ride and ended up taking the bus. I could have taken the bus to wherever I wanted to go but taking the city bus wasn’t cool.

While hitchhiking I had several interesting experiences. One time on the way to school I got a ride on East Market St. While riding in the front seat the guy who picked me up put his hand on my knee and started to rub my leg. I immediately got out of the car as soon as possible when he stopped at a traffic light. When I got out of the car I then proceeded to hitch another ride to school. This happened to me more than once. After school trying to hitch a ride was sometimes more difficult. Several guys who lived in Firestone Park were also hitchhiking and we used to jockey for position on W. Market St. Often it was so difficult to get a ride with so many of us out there with our thumbs out. So we devised a plan where just two guys would be in the street and the rest of us would hide behind some bushes. When a car stopped to offer a ride for the two in the street the rest of us would run out behind the bushes and jump in the back seat. Often the driver wasn’t too happy about it. Then there was this one guy who would always pick us up no matter how many of us were hitchhiking. While driving he would tell us to ‘check out’ the magazines on the ledge near the rear window. They were all ‘girly’ magazines and there were many of them. He eventually tried to sell us the magazines and when we declined

he quit picking us up. There were many more interesting ‘experiences’ but I can’t remember all of them.

On New Year’s Eve of my freshman year several of us guys got together and decided to play cards. We played penny poker until very late that night. Our game became an annual event through high school. Usually about six guys would come over as my parents were leaving for their annual New Year’s Eve outing at the Slovenian Center with my dad’s family. When my parents came home around 2 AM we were still playing cards and for several years we played until dawn on New Year’s Day.

As I began my sophomore year my life began to expand again. In August, a friend of my parents asked me if I was interested in bowling in the Annunciation Holy Name bowling league. I had never bowled before but I accepted the invitation. My dad was a good bowler and bowled in several leagues, but not the Annunciation league. I was the youngest in the league by far. Most of the guys in the league were in their 30’s, 40’s and 50’s. We bowled on Sunday evenings and a Doug Murray would pick me up to go the bowling alley. He was about thirty-five, single and had a neat 1955 Chevy convertible. Mid-way through the year I got my own bowling ball from Ace Mitchel's. It was a Manhattan rubber ball that I still have. That year my average was about 155 and I really enjoyed bowling. I bowled in this league through high school. While in college I really got into bowling and will tell you more about that later.

By now I was fifteen and suddenly became interested in music, especially rock and roll. It was 1956 and rock and roll music was in its infancy. With my job as a paperboy I was able to buy a Hi-Fi record player and bought at least one record every week. Usually on Saturday afternoons or Monday evenings I had to pay my paper bill at the Beacon Journal office in downtown Akron. I would hitchhike downtown, pay my bill then go shopping for clothes and records. *Leroy’s* was the place to buy records. I would go there to get the current Top 40 list and buy a 45 record or two. I had bought a few records before but with my Hi Fi I could enjoy them much more with my own system. Often during the summer friends would come over and we would listen to records on my front porch. My mother was not a fan of ‘Rock and Roll’ and preferred it if we played our records outside. Of course on New Year’s Eve my records were playing through our all-night poker games.

While in eighth grade I bought my first record, it was *Smokey Joe’s Café,* it was a 78-rpm record. Several of the first ‘45’ records I purchased included Elvis’s *Hound Dog, Don’t Be Cruel* and *Too Much*. Other records included *Rock Around the Clock*, *Stranded in the Jungle, Ubangi Stomp, Maybelline, Butterfly, Ka Ding Dong, Wake Up Little Suzie, Peggy Sue, Honky Tunk, Short Fat Fanny, Long Tall Sally, Goody Goody,* and many others. As I went through high school I collected quite a few records, many I still have. It was ironic that I really started to enjoy music after I quit taking guitar lessons. As I mentioned I would also go shopping for clothes. This was a real treat for me because I was never able to pick out my own clothes until now. I would often go to O’Neil’s to buy shirts and Modern Men’s to buy pants. At St. V we always had to dress nicely for school, no jeans, jerseys, or sweatshirts. The ‘in’ thing for guys dress pants

was to buy them at *Modern Men's* on Main Street. The pants had to be pegged, no more than fifteen inches and a lot of guys had them pegged at 14 inches. Pegged meant the width of the bottom of the pant leg. Modern Men's also had a unique style for the rear pocket flap. One could buy them with 'flaps up' or 'flaps down.' Most times when someone bought pants the first question from other guys at school was 'are the 'flaps up' or 'flaps down.'

During the summers of my high school years besides playing baseball I did many of the usual teenage things of the day. One of them was going to drive-in movies, of course for me that meant with the guys. During the 1950's and 60's drive-in movies were a 'big thing' and often we used to pack the car with friends to go to a drive in-movie. During my freshmen year usually the admission price was per car, later it was changed to cost per person. To get around this we would often put three guys in the trunk of the car and two would be in the front seat. At the drive-in entrance two would pay their admission price then once inside the drive-in movie the driver would come around open the trunk and the three in the trunk would pile out and into or on the car to watch the movie. Once we even tried it with only the driver in the car but the attendant at the admission gate became suspicious and ordered the trunk open. Upon opening the trunk and seeing the three of us he ordered all of us out of the drive-in. The type of movies we would watch were the typical teenage movies of the day such as *Creature from the Black Lagoon, The Fly, The Blob.* Although me and my friends would pack into a car going to drive-in movies many movie goers were couples. Often drive-movies were called the 'passion pits.'

Then there were the drive-in restaurants, like the *Waterloo* and *The Flame* in Firestone Park, *Garner Brothers* in west Akron and *Swenson's* or the *Hungry Eye* in Cuyahoga Falls and North Hill. These were the places that made 'cruising' famous. These restaurants would have a small area for inside dining and a large area outside where cars could park for curb service. On weekends these places were mostly hangouts for high school students. When a car would pull in for curb service often the order was for only French fries or onion rings and a coke. Then we would just hang out. Often many guys just cruised around the drive-in `parking lot showing off their cars or visit friends. Many times we would drive around for hours just 'hanging out.' On Friday nights after St. V football games we would hang out at *Garner Brothers* on W. Market St. When I was with my Garfield friends often we would hang out at the *Waterloo* or as it was called *'The Loo.'* To get a flavor of the scene see the movie *American Graffiti.*

During the summer many of us went to Clearwater Park to swim, especially in the evening. The pool was open until 11 PM and it felt 'cool' to swim with the underwater lights and three diving boards.

As I mentioned earlier I loved to go to Mahoning River. While in high school several of us guys would go camping there, sometimes for three or four days. I remember once we were there for about three days when Ed Dolinsky came out for a visit. Ed was a year ahead of me at St. V and lived next door to 'Feet.' His family was also close friends with my parents. That evening Ed amazed me by baking a cake on an open campfire. I

couldn't believe it but he said he had done that several times in the past. Ed's dad, Dub, would take Ed and his brothers camping in Pennsylvania and taught them a lot about camping including how to bake a cake on an open campfire.

As I indicated sometimes I felt out of place at St. V. Most of my close friends were from Garfield, but I did seem to get along with most of the guys at school. I think my confidence at St. V really took a hit though in my sophomore year. This resulted from a project in Biology class. Each student had to do a report on a plant or something and my subject was on some tree. The final report had to be delivered orally in class. When my turn came to deliver my report, I felt nervous and my hands were shaking as I was showing a branch from the tree. After class many of the guys (Biology were all the same sex classes) several guys made fun of me because I looked so nervous. I felt devastated. Many of the guys who made fun of me were those whom I admired and my confidence level really sank after this episode. This also affected my confidence with girls. I was still shy and timid around them and had a tough time talking to them about anything other than school.

During my time at St. V I only had a few lay teachers. Most of the nuns were good teachers, some I feared, and others were what you may call interesting. The good ones I didn't appreciate until after I graduated. First there was Sr. Imelda. She was a science teacher who I had for General Science my freshman year, Biology my sophomore year and Chemistry my senior year. She was a teacher who I feared. I thought she was an extremely strict and hard teacher, however after I graduated I realized she was an excellent teacher. Then there was Sr. Bonita, she was my English teacher in my sophomore year. I remember on Ash Wednesday she had a jar with two eggs in it and passed the jar around the classroom for everyone to observe. She then put the jar on a shelf in the room and after several days we all forgot about it. Then on Good Friday the day before our Easter break she took the jar off the shelf and gave it to someone sitting in the first row. Then she asked that student to open the jar and smell inside it. Well after sitting in a jar for six weeks the eggs smelled awful. Sister then told that student holding the jar to pass it around to everyone in class. As each one of us took a sniff of the awful smell we each let out a groan and passed it on to the next person. When each of us smelled the jar she asked us how we liked the smell. Obviously, each of us said we hated it, Sister then said she just wanted to give us a brief experience of hell will be like if we don't live a good life. We all got the message.

We also had several teachers boys liked to give a tough time. One was Sr. Bernard, the librarian. She had the nickname of 'Moose.' During our study hall period we had the option of going to the library or the auditorium. In the library most of the students were busy studying or drafting reports, but some of us went to the library to have fun. Often while many students had their heads down studying one of us would cover our mouths and yell out 'Mooooose, Mooooose.' When Sister looked in the direction of the' Mooooose' call someone on the other side of the library would also yell out 'Mooooose.' We would take turns yelling out "Mooooose," so she seldom had any idea who was yelling out. However, if one of us got caught it meant a detention. Then there was the time on the last day of school in my junior year when someone put a bologna sandwich

in a book then put the book back on the bookshelf. The book was not opened until the following school year and I don't think Sister was very happy about it the following September. Sr. Bernard lived a long life so maybe all the torment did not affect her too much. In fact, she celebrated her 100th birthday in 2002.

One of better teachers was Sr. Loretta, who taught history and was first Assistant Principle, then Principle. She also had the senior boys for homeroom. She was strict, but not as fearful to me as Sr. Imelda. I respected Sr. Loretta more than feared her. However, several times in my senior year when Paul Miller and I would be late for school because we couldn't hitch a ride in time for school Sister would yell at us and give us detentions. Paul Miller became one of my better friends at school and lived about six blocks from me. In our senior year Paul and I hitchhiked together almost every day to school.

I had one male lay teacher and he was Ned Endress. He was a lawyer, who also taught a several classes and was the basketball coach. In my senior year I took my first non-science or required class, it was Economics and Mr. Ned Endress taught the class. I thought the class was fascinating and led me to become a business major in college. There was a time near the end of the school year in Economics class when Sr. Loretta came to our room and asked Ned Endress if Ben Jakubowski was in the room. Ben was then summoned out into the hall with Sr. Loretta and suddenly we heard Ben being shoved into the lockers several times by Sr. Loretta. The classroom got quiet, then when all was quite Ned Endress said, 'I guess Ben did something wrong' To this day I don't know what Ben did wrong.

During high school I wasn't the most diligent student. My freshman year grades were OK, but not spectacular. During my sophomore year my grades started to slump. The main reason was because I was playing basketball in our backyard court too often. After school when I completed my paper route guys would come over and we would play basketball until dinnertime. Then after dinner another group of guys would come over and we would play until about 10 PM. My dad had hooked a light for us to play after dark. By the time the last guys left there was little time to do my homework. Many times, the next morning I asked someone for help wih my homework assignments or asked to copy the answers. Needless to say, I didn't score very well on my tests.

Around age 15 I began to read many sports magazines including the Sporting News. The Sporting News was considered the 'baseball bible' and I bought a copy every week and devoured practically every word. About a year later a friend, Jim Benko, quizzed me as to how many big-league players I could name. Jim took my copy of the Sporting News which listed all the players with their current averages each week. I named 398 of the four hundred big league players, I was definitely a baseball junkie.

In 1957 the Russians launched Sputnik and suddenly there was a mad rush to educate American students in science and math. I felt a sense of urgency to study hard, especially math. However, my basketball playing got in the way and my grades continued to suffer. My junior year wasn't much better, I know that at the end of junior

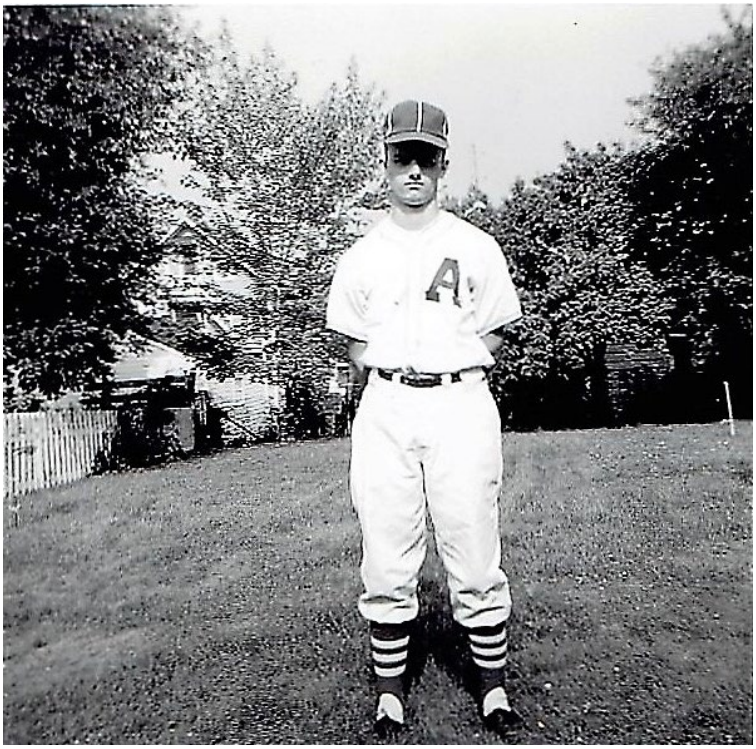
year I ranked third from the bottom in our class. In my senior year I began to apply myself much more and my grades improved significantly, but I never found out how I ranked by the end of my senior year.

When I turned sixteen I wanted to drive, but my dad felt very apprehensive about me driving. My birthday was in October and he said I if take Driver's Training at school in the spring semester perhaps I could get my license. Well, I took the class and John Cistone was the teacher. John was the assistant football coach who later became one of the best high school coaches in the state. Well, I passed the class but I still was not allowed to drive or even take my driver's test until I turned seventeen in my senior year. When I finally got my driver's license the only places I allowed to drive was the store, library, church, or pick up my mother from work. She worked part time at the Polish American club on Friday nights and once a month on Sundays afternoons for their steak dinners. I was never allowed to take the car with any of my friends. It wasn't until after I graduated and I got my own car was I able to drive where I wanted to go.

The summer after my junior year I began to play on two baseball teams, one in the Prep League (ages 15 to 17) and one for the Annunciation CYO team. My dad was now coaching the Annunciation high school team and in those years the CYO high school leagues was very competitive. I remember one situation very well for it was one of the few times my dad complimented me on my play, he was very stingy with compliments. We were playing at Old Forge Field and while batting I hit a ball way over the right fielder's head (there was no fence). I was running around the bases as fast as I could and as I came to third base, my dad, who was coaching third base, kept frantically waving his arms for me to run toward home. As I was running home I looked at the right fielder to see where the ball was and saw that he was still chasing it. I made it home easily. After the game several of my teammates and my dad told me the exact place where the ball hit on the fly. Looking out I couldn't believe I had hit the ball that far. Naturally, I felt proud of myself. The next day a friend drove me to the field to measure how far the ball had traveled. According to my measurement the ball traveled almost four hundred feet. That is an enormous distance for a 16-year-old to hit a baseball, especially for a skinny guy like me. That may have been the furthest I have ever hit a ball in my life.



My 16th birthday



Summer - 1958

In my junior year I played on an intramural basketball team which won the school championship. We then played the faculty in the annual faculty versus non-varsity player basketball game. The game was played before a full house with many of the nuns attending and we won. Prior to my senior year coaches and players were begging me to play for the varsity team. Since I still had my paper route I had to decline once again. I needed the money to pay for my expenses.

My senior year in high school was uneventful, although I did interact more with other kids in school. I quit my paper route job in March of that year and sold it to Tom. Once I quit I was finally able to participate in some activities after school. Right away I got involved in intramural basketball and was able to play in our new gym almost every day after school. Once again our intramural team won the school championship and played the faculty, we won that game again. By the way, my brother only kept the paper route for several months. It just wasn't his thing.

Graduation day from St. V came and I remember us boys sitting in the auditorium prior to going to Mass and the graduation ceremony. Sr. Loretta was encouraging us to behave and respect this occasion. She went on to say that this would be the only graduation ceremony most of us will experience, so respect and enjoy it. This statement really challenged me. Why would this have to be my last graduation? Why couldn't I experience a college graduation? When the graduation ceremony was over our class had a party at Brookside Country Club in Barberton. The party was a usual high school affair for its day with music, dancing and just hanging out. After several hours Marty Misbrenner, one of my classmates, who had emigrated from Austria during our freshmen year brought out some of his father's homemade wine. I and several others began to drink the wine and I was close to being drunk. This was the first time I drank, and I didn't know when to stop. I came to the party with Paul Miller and when the party was about to end others suggested going to someone's house to extend the party. The difference was we were going to pair up with a girl. Of course, I didn't know with whom to go with, so I was fixed up with a girl named Judy. Looking back, I really feel sorry for her. By the time we got into the back seat of Paul Miller's car I was really feeling the effect of too much homemade wine and came close to passing out. I don't remember much about the rest of the evening. This was the first time I had drank alcohol and was my first drunk.

The Sunday after graduation my parents had a party for me. In hindsight I thoroughly appreciated that party. My dad was on strike at B F Goodrich and was short of cash. It seemed every three years Goodrich would go on strike for weeks or even months and it would take over a year for my parents to get caught up financially. It took me quite a while to come to appreciate what they did for me.

The summer after I graduated my dad painted houses in order to derive some income. I think he was on strike for three or four months that year. Surprisingly, he asked me to help him paint several houses; this is how I learned to paint houses. He paid me a few dollars for helping him. In August we painted a large three-story house and he paid me more than normal. My dad bought me my first car. It was a 1951 Chevy with stick shift

that cost $90. I was in heaven. During the rest of the summer I leaned a little bit about cars and how to do some mechanical work. By now most of my friends had their own cars and we would help each other work on them however, I must admit I did not know very much about the mechanical parts of cars. My 1951 Chevy was my pride and joy, but it died the following March.

About a month after graduation a friend of my dad, Rudy, who worked for a small company offered me a job as draftsman. I felt excited about the offer; however, I could not work because I was only 17 years old. In those days one had to be 18 years old to obtain a full-time job, so I went on to college and have never regretted it.

As I mentioned in the fall of 1958, my Uncle Jim and his wife Grace moved from a nice house in Brimfield and purchased a 64-acre farm in Randolph. The house was in bad condition but my uncle wanted the land. Everyone in the family thought he was crazy for buying this property. In November shortly after he bought the farm my dad took Tom and I hunting there looking for pheasants. I had never been hunting before and really didn't have much interest in it but went anyway. While the three of us were walking through the cornfield not much was happening; then while walking by myself a group of pheasants bolted up right behind me. This really startled me and I just turned around and shot wildly in the air toward the pheasants. I probably didn't even come close to hitting any of them. That was the first- and only-time hunting. As an aside, my dad kept a shot gun under our living room couch but it was always empty. I remember when I was a kid and no one was home several times I took the shot gun from under the couch and just shot it even though there were no bullets. I knew how to load the gun and always checked to see if it was loaded.

Chapter 4 - College Years

As I began college I didn't have a difficult transition academically. St. Vincent high school had prepared me well for college work. I decided to major in Business Administration and took accounting classes along with the other required courses. Maybe I was starting to mature a little; even my classes seemed much more interesting than high school. In those days men students were required to take two years of ROTC, either Army or Air Force, I chose the Air Force. I had no interest in the Army but the Air Force seemed interesting. I even thought of becoming a pilot, however, during my physical exam I discovered I was colorblind. This meant I could not be a pilot or even a navigator. This lessened my interest in the military so I just spent the minimum requirement of two years in ROTC.

With a car I was now able to drive to school and felt even more comfortable in the classroom. At first I hung out with friends from high school since many of us were attending Akron U. Gradually I got to know other students even though most of us were commuting from home. Eventually I stopped running around with Dick Headley and my neighborhood friends. None of them were attending college and we did not have much in common any more. Paul Miller and I ran around quite a bit my first semester but after one semester Paul flunked out of Akron U. He was a smart guy but was not that interested in college. Paul was much more interested in girls than school. As the semester went on I was beginning to know some of the 'jocks' at Akron U. These were guys I had played ball against in high school or who I knew by reputation who were playing ball for Akron U. I then began to hang out where what was called the 'A' room at Memorial Hall. Memorial Hall was where the athletic offices were located and included Akron U's basketball arena and swimming pool in addition to the 'A' room. It was supposed to be a lounge area for athletic letter winners where they could relax and study, however several of us freshmen also hung out there.

Freshman men could not go through fraternity rush until our second semester. The girls could go through sorority rush in their first semester. I think I would have liked to go through rush; however, I still didn't feel socially confident enough to pursue rush. So, I just hung out with the jocks and a few friends from high school. During my freshman year I also was becoming what was called a 'gym rat.' These were guys who would spend much of their free time playing basketball in the gym, however I knew I had to be careful not to overdo it and spend some time studying.

In the second semester of my freshman year I decided to try out for the baseball team. Since St. V didn't have a baseball team I was an unknown commodity to most of the players or our coach Harold Sloop. This was his first-year coaching at Akron U and he didn't know any of us players. He was a former baseball scout for the Philadelphia Phillies then went on to couch and teach at Stow High School where he had just retired. He was the best coach I ever had because he taught me a lot about some of the finer points of the game

During tryouts it really became apparent that my fielding at first base was not up to par, but I could hold my own as a batter. Well, I made the team, but I knew I would not be a starter because a slick fielding first baseman, Larry Beam, had just transferred from Ohio State and the team was committed to playing him. Our first game was a road game against some college in western Ohio and a one hitter was being thrown against us. In the ninth inning I was told to pinch-hit and I immediately lined a shot down the right field line for a double. This seemed to impress many on the team. The next day we traveled to another school and faced one of the best pitchers in the league who was going to sign a pro contract after this his senior year. Well once again I was told to pinch hit and came through with another hit. My reputation as a hitter was beginning to climb. A few weeks later while taking batting practice I was facing our best pitcher who was a senior. I begin to hit the ball pretty hard against him and when I hit two balls off the outfield fence he began to get angry for no one had hit a ball off that fence all year, it was at least 20 feet high and over 350 feet down the right field line and veered out to well over 420 ft. in center field. Now it seemed like all the players and coaches stopped what they were doing and began to watch as our best pitcher and me were squaring off against each other. He began to bear down and throw me his best stuff. When I hit another ball off the fence I could see he was seething because his reputation was at stake against some kid freshman. On his next pitch I hit a ball over the fence and now things were getting nasty. On his next pitch he threw close to my head, then our coach stepped in and told him to cool it and asked someone else to pitch batting practice. After hitting several more line shots in practice my turn was over. It was at this time that I really earned the respect of my teammates. Unfortunately for me I only played in one more game that year because I injured my hand and couldn't properly grip a bat. I was out for the rest of the season; however, I did earn my 'A' letter sweater.

Playing baseball enabled me to meet more guys and I became good friends with two of them, Bud Axline and Russ Nelson. Often after practice the three of us would go back to campus and watch the 'Three Stooges' on TV, each of us really enjoyed joking around a lot. During the school day I continued to hang out in the 'A' room and around Memorial Hall.

In this my freshman year I did meet a girl I liked; her name was Jeannie. While on campus we joked and talked frequently then I finally got up the courage to ask her out for a date. It was for an event at Akron U. She said yes then the day before our date I called her to remind her what time I would pick her up, then she told me she had other plans. Being stood up like that really affected my self-confidence again with girls and felt too shy to ask any other girl out for a date. I did meet other girls, but I just talked and joked with them while on campus.

At the end of my freshman year my grades were OK, nothing to get excited about. The main thing was that I didn't flunk out of school like my buddy Paul Miller. In high school I never had any interest in many subjects except math and the Economics class. Once in college I actually became interested in English, however I still had a challenge writing properly, many coma faults. I became interested in the old Greek writers like Homer and even Shakespeare. I enjoyed being exposed to academic areas other than math and

science, which was heavily emphasized at St. V. I also took an interest in my two accounting courses. Also, much to my surprise I learned to play chess and by year end became a halfway decent player.

Once the school year was over I played on the Annunciation men's fast pitch softball team. I would have liked to have played in the baseball 'A' league that summer but wasn't able to due to my hand injury. Every time I hit a baseball my hand really hurt, however hitting a softball didn't bother me as much. The 'A' league was particularly good because there were more than a few ex-minor league and collage players. The Annunciation fast pitch team won the league championship that year. I was by far the youngest player on the team and felt a little out of place. I was 18 years old, and the rest of the team was in their late twenties or thirties.



10—CATHOLIC UNIVERSE BULLETIN—September 2, 1960

NEW CATHOLIC OPEN Softball League champions in Akron, these Annunciation players are, left to right in front row: Batboy John Matuska Jr., John Matuska, Del Volchko, Bill Simpson, Bob Kaverman and Ed Volchko; back row: Playing Manager John Anderson, Don Martin, Paul Gruic, Bill Gmerek, Al Yahner and Jim Burgy.

It was now 1960 and there was an economic recession in the country. I needed a job that summer but there weren't many job opportunities available. My dad painted several houses that summer and I helped him on several of them. However, that still didn't provide me with much income. 1960 was a difficult summer for me especially since didn't have a car or much money. I still had money saved from my paper route, but that was earmarked for next year's college books and tuition. My social life was really put on

the back burner. Once in a while I would hang out with a few of my old high school friends, but we had really drifted apart. Our interests had changed, they were more interested in their jobs and girls they were dating, while I wasn't dating at all and was more interested in college life.

During the summer of 1960 I became interested in the political conventions for the Democratic and Republican presidential nominee. I remember staying up late at night watching the conventions and I thought the entire process was fascinating, obviously, my interests were beginning to expand. This was the beginning of my interest in government and politics. That fall as the presidential campaign began to unfold I became keenly interested in the campaign between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy

As I began my sophomore year at Akron U I hardly had any spending money or social life, my hair was beginning to fall out and I had developed zits on forehead. My self-confidence became very low. Around this time my uncle Leo advised me to try to get a job on the 'B' squad at Goodyear. This was a program where a guy in college would work three six-hour shifts a week in the factory while in school. I tried to get on the "B" squad but there just wasn't any work with the recession. I remember walking to Goodyear every Monday morning for four months to apply for a ''B'' squad job. The person who oversaw the program finally told me that he was really impressed by my determination and that he would hire me but there just wasn't any work and no hiring was being done.

As mentioned my 1951 Chevy died and I think my mother usually drove me to school and Russ or Bud would often drive me home. That semester I had an evening Economics class and remember several times walking home from Akron U after class. As that fall progressed I was really feeling depressed, I didn't even feel comfortable talking to some guys let alone girls. During this time, I usually stayed home on Friday and Saturday evenings. Even my parents were becoming concerned about me. I remember one weekend evening I was home alone as usual and the next day my mother came to my room to talk. She told me she and my dad were concerned about me, for I had hardly any social life and just stayed home on weekends and either read or watched TV. This was very unusual for a 19-year-old college student. My parents were outgoing, had many friends and most weekends they were out with their friends as was Tom.

One way I did make a few bucks was through ROTC. In my second year I was appointed a Flight Leader, how or why I don't know. The squadron was made up of forty-eight guys and a flight was twelve guys. ROTC squad leaders were upper upperclassmen who were going into the service as officers after graduation. Well as members of ROTC we were required to march in several local parades each year. Most guys in ROTC hated the parades especially those not wanting to pursue an Air Force career. Me as a Flight Leader was in charge of taking attendance of the flight each time we got together. For parades guys would slip me a few dollars to mark them present. Being desperate for money I accepted their money and at the parade less than half

guys would show up, yet I would yell out to our squad officer *'All present and accounted for sir.'*

In late fall 1960 my dad purchased a 1952 Ford from a friend which was to be shared by Tom and me. Having a car, even part time, helped but my biggest boost came after Christmas when the father of a friend from high school, Jim Hadley, offered me a part time job delivering groceries at his small meat market in south Akron. Jim and I knew each other in high school but became better friends in college. I worked at his father's store on Saturday's and this gave me a little bit of spending money. One thing I really remember working there was Jim's dad, who was a butcher, would make lunch for his workers by taking a good steak, grounding it up and making super steak sandwiches. These were the best steak sandwiches I have ever eaten. Jim's dad was known over the Akron area for having exceptionally good meat in his store. My job consisted of stocking grocery bags for call in orders then delivering them with the store's station wagon to the customers' homes. During baseball season I worked on Saturday's whenever we didn't have a game.

Having even a little bit of spending money helped my confidence, but I was feeling so depressed during this time I wasn't as happy as a normal college sophomore should be. I even had serious thought of quitting school, going to New York, and getting away from it all. This year was by far one of the most depressing years in my life.

In the spring I once again went out for the baseball team. This year we had a new coach, but he knew little about baseball. He was an assistant football coach and the track coach. He was more interested in physical conditioning than practicing baseball. Anyway, this year my lack of confidence manifested itself on the baseball diamond. I didn't hit very well at all, however my fielding improved. I think the only reason I made the team was because teammates kept telling the coach of my hitting ability my freshman year. I was playing so poorly that I didn't even think I deserved to be on the team. However once again I sustained an injury and didn't play much anyway. After the season was over that summer I played for a team in a different men's 'A' league. I played, but not nearly to my ability. At times I actually felt embarrassed by my play.

During the summer of 1961 I went on my first date, although it was sort of a semi-date. Richard & Laura Gmerek asked me to be the godfather of their first son, Eddie. The godmother was Laura's sister. Dorothy. She was from Pittsburg staying in town with them for the week. Dorothy was the same age as me and several days before the baptism Laura suggested I ask Dorothy out on a date. Well on the day of the baptism I asked her to go to see the movie *West Side Story* and she agreed. On the date I felt uncomfortable and unsure of myself, however our date went very well, and I liked Dorothy. She was an attractive dark Italian girl who seemed like an incredibly good person who could be a lot of fun. We got together once more that week before she had to go back to school in Pittsburgh. That was my first date, I was 19 years old.



Dorothy & Me as God Parents

The summer after my sophomore year I was still working Saturday afternoons for Jim Hadley's father. Then Jim's uncle, Mr. Camille Hamad, offered me a part time job working in his parking lot in downtown Akron. My hours would be Monday and Thursday evenings and Saturday. I accepted this job for the summer because it provided me with more income. This job was really good for me because it gave me the opportunity to meet all kinds of people. The parking lot was located across the street from St. Bernard's church in downtown Akron and it had a small hut which was my 'headquarters.' It wasn't like it is today's parking lots where someone sits in booth collecting money or paying electronically. I would greet the people in the lot, and hand them a ticket indicating the time they arrived then either they or I would park their car. Often when the lot was full I would have them just park their car in an aisle and I would park the car later when a parking spot opened up. Upon returning to pick up their car I would collect their money. By working that summer I earned enough to pay for next year's tuition and purchase my own car. When school started Mr. Hamad said I could continue to work there on Monday and Thursday from 4-7 and all day on Saturday. This job and the extra money eventually helped my self-confidence.

That fall with my dad's help I purchased a 1956 Oldsmobile from a private owner. This car turned out to be a lemon. Often it would smoke and be difficult to start. My dad was furious at the seller. After a few weeks I went with my dad to the seller's house as my dad argued with the seller, my dad may have even threatened him physically. He definitely did not like someone taking advantage of a young guy like me. Finally, after

having difficulty with my car my dad suggested just getting rid of it and buying another car. I sold the Oldsmobile at a big loss and bought a 4-door 1955 Chevy. It wasn't' the classic looking 1955 Chevy but it proved very functional for the rest of my college career. In fact in time it became one of the most recognizable cars on campus.

As I began my third year of college my life really hadn't changed much. I still mostly hung out in the 'A' room lounge and not very socially active, although occasionally I would hang out at the 'Chuckery,' Akron U' student center. Several times I was invited to hang out at the Lone Star fraternity house or a few of the other fraternities on campus, however I knew more guys who were *Lone Stars* than from any other fraternity. I didn't participate much in campus activities and still hadn't dated at all. By this time in my college career my academic interests were changing. I really enjoyed the Western Culture course and other social science courses. In addition I decided I didn't want to be an Accounting major. In my primary major I took mostly the required courses for Business Administration and other degreed required courses. Although my confidence was low I would still talk to some girls on campus but I still felt too unsure of myself to ask a girl out. Often I felt sorry for myself and wished I were more outgoing. As I said my parents were very friendly and outgoing people as were most of my relatives, they all had many friends. Why couldn't' I be that type of person?

One thing I did have was a burning ambition to be the team's best hitter in the upcoming baseball season. Not just the best hitter on the team, but the best hitter in the league. I also dreamed of signing a professional baseball contract. My dream since high school was to play at least one year of professional baseball and thought this upcoming season may be my chance to be noticed by professional scouts. That fall and winter I worked out lifting weights and running to be in the best shape possible for the upcoming season. Our first baseman graduated and now the position could be mine. I wanted to prove to everyone that my sophomore season was a fluke. I may have lacked confidence in most aspects of my life but I still felt confident in my baseball ability.

When the first semester ended I was ready for baseball practice to begin. During the semester break I decided to go to Memorial Hall and play some pickup basketball. Well, this decision changed my life. While playing I came down hard on my ankle and injured it pretty badly. As soon as I went down I went to the locker room, showered, and drove home. My ankle was really hurting so my mother drove me to the hospital for an X-Ray. The X-Ray proved my ankle was not broken and the doctors said it was just a sprained ankle. I sprained my ankle playing basketball in my freshman year and I was fine in a few weeks. So, I thought I would recover soon from this sprain. I was on crutches for several days but was having more pain in my ankle. I went to the doctor again and he told me I had a very severe sprain and that I would have to stay off my feet for several weeks or longer and keep my foot elevated. A week later the spring semester was about to begin and I could hardly walk even with crutches and the pain was still intense. I thought to myself what am I going to do with so much pain? I went to the doctor a third time and he said the ankle is going to take a lot more time to heal, so I was confined to sitting at home with my foot elevated. Finally, I resigned myself to the fact that this healing process was going to take a lot longer than I had originally thought. I was not in

school and my dream of playing baseball that year was over. Now my self-worth was really low I wondered what I was going to do. My plan had me playing ball and making a name for myself, now I am just sitting at home feeling sorry for myself.

While sitting at home with my leg propped up on a chair several interesting things happened. First, Jim Benko, who was a good friend of Tom and I came by to see me. Jim had gone to St. V, was smart, a good athlete and a very good baseball player. Jim, now a freshman at Akron U was interested in playing baseball in college. In fact, we had talked about it often during the fall and he seemed to be really dedicated to playing ball for Akron U. That evening when Jim came by he told me he was quitting school and joining the Air Force. This really took me by surprise for I thought Jim had a lot going him and Jim joining the service never entered my mind. I even thought Jim and I would make a good one-two punch in Akron U's batting order. Well Jim went off to the Air Force and spent most of the next four years in a remote radar site in Japan not far from the Russian border. Little did I know at the time that Jim and I would really become involved with each other later in our lives?

Another interesting thing that happened while sitting at home was that I bought a book to read. It wasn't reading a book that is surprising, but the book itself. The book was '*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.' This is a very long book documenting the rise and fall of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany. This book fascinated me and was one of those books that was difficult for me to put down. Thus, began my real interest in history and politics.

During this time my parents began to think of selling our house and moving. This mildly surprised me. I know my mother really like our house and this was the only house I really knew. However, our neighborhood was starting to change and become a bit dangerous. My dad had seen footprints outside our windows like someone was snooping on us or looking for an opportunity of burglarizing the house. I also told my dad when coming home in my car at night for the past few months I noticed a man hiding behind a tree about a block away from our house. It was like he was waiting for someone to walk down the street to rob him or her or whatever. My dad wanted to move before the neighborhood got worse and our houses value would decrease although my mother was still feeling hesitant to move. My dad said another reason to move now was that Tom was graduating from high school in June and they would not have to be concerned about him transferring to another school. Finally, my dad convinced my mom it was time to move, so they put up a *For Sale by Owner* sign in the front yard. Then to my parents surprise a few hours later a couple living across the street came over to look at the house. They were living with his parents and liked our house and wanted to buy it. Well, this took my parents by complete surprise to sell their house in a few hours. Now my parents were forced to buy another house in a hurry because they had not looked at any houses to buy. So, for the next several months they went house hunting. For me, the process of selling and buying was fascinating. I went on several of their house hunting trips, crutches and all and listened intently to the real estate salesman and the 'real estate talk.' This began my interest in real estate.

Two months after my ankle injury I was still in a lot of pain and needing to elevate my foot most of the day. In early March I got a call from Mr. Hamad the parking lot owner. He had become aware I was not in school and wanted to know if I was interested in working in the parking lot full-time. Mr. Hamad also owned a bar/restaurant near the B F Goodrich Company on S. Main St., and he nor his wife didn't have the time to work both places therefore was desperate for someone to work at the parking lot. I told him I would work as soon as my ankle healed. He felt relieved and told me to come to work as soon as possible. This took some pressure off me for now I knew that at least I had a job when I was back to normal. After a week he called again and asked if I was ready to go to work. I told him I was still on crutches and needed to continue to elevate my foot. Mr. Hamad called me about twice a week for several weeks begging me to start work. Finally, in mid-April I went to work at the parking lot; however, I was still on crutches. My mother drove me to and from work. I was able to function for about half a day without elevating my foot and it wasn't until May that I was able to walk without crutches and drive a car.

Looking back, I realize that I probably didn't just sprain my ankle, I must have torn ligaments or tendons because my ankle took so long to heal. It was four months since my injury before I was able to come close to walking without pain. In fact, it was almost a year before I was able to walk normally. Ever since that injury my ankle has been weak.

That summer I wasn't able to play baseball and a few times I went to watch friends play in the 'A' league games. I was feeling left out but now realized there wasn't anything I could do about it. During the summer I worked four days a week in the parking lot and on Monday and Thursday evenings. In those days downtown department stores were bustling and open on Monday and Thursday evenings, and the parking lot was open until 7 PM. Mr. Hamad told me I would be paid until 7 PM, but if I wanted I could stay later and that any parking fees I collected I could keep. At times this was really a good deal because sometimes 'special events' would occur downtown and the parking lot would become full. At these times I almost earned as much after 7 PM as I did in a normal week.

While working at the parking lot I was meeting and interacting with new people and earning money for my return to college. During this spring and summer, I gradually regained some of my confidence. In fact I met several college age girls at the parking lot who were working summer jobs in the county courthouse in downtown Akron. There was one girl with whom I got along with really well. When she came to work in the morning and left in the afternoon we would laugh and joke around a lot, we even shared many of our interests. She went to college out of the area and lived with her parents in the Portage Lakes area. I knew she really wanted me to ask her out but I still felt too insecure to ask her for a date.

In the fall of 1962 I began school again. I was able to continue working in the parking lot on a part time basis. Again I would work on Monday and Thursday evenings and all day

on Saturday. I was finally able to go to school with some spending money and was feeling somewhat more confident in myself.

In September our family moved to our new home at 2189 Quayle Drive in the Ellet section of Akron. This area was on the eastern outskirts of town and populated mostly with middle-income 'white collar' workers and people who came up from southern U.S. to work in the Akron rubber factories. This was different from where I grew up since where most men worked in one of the factories in town. During my time growing up very few married women worked full time outside the house. Many streets in Ellet were not paved and there was a lot of vacant land in the area. Our new neighbors included the husband who worked in the Accounts Payable department at Goodyear and the other side was Mr. Jim Ball who managed the B F Goodrich hanger at the Akron Municipal Airport. Another change we made was switching parishes from Annunciation to St. Matthew.

Driving to Akron U now was a longer journey but I didn't mind at all. Now finding a parking space at Akron U was another situation. It had always been a challenge unless you went to school very early. Shortly after classes began someone told me that if I joined the Newman Club I could park in their lot for free. So I joined the Newman Club for the free and guaranteed parking. Newman Clubs are Catholic centers established on many secular campuses in the U.S. In my freshman year I went to the Newman Club for several religion classes but quit after several months. Not only was I not that interested in more religion classes after twelve years of Catholic education, but I thought many of the students who hung out there were sort of 'nerdy.'

Not long after I began to park there I started going into the building, usually to use the bathroom or just look around. Many students I met there were sort of what I expected, the 'nerds.' However I did meet several who seemed OK, like 'normal' college students. About a month into the semester Jim Hadley asked me if I wanted to 'sub' in the Newman Club co-ed bowling league. Jim had bowled in the league since our freshman year and said it was fun. Since I usually wasn't doing anything Sunday evenings I said OK. I bowled for several weeks and discovered that most of the bowlers were 'normal' students, not the 'nerds' I expected. In fact many were 'Greeks,' fraternity, and sorority members. I also discovered that two girls in the league lived in Ellet, not far from where I lived. They were Judy and Carolyn. Once I got to know them occasionally I would drive them to school. Eventually I became interested in Carolyn and in early December I asked her to go to an Akron U basketball game. She said yes and we went to the game then to Luigi's for pizza afterward. We had an enjoyable time, but even though I liked Carolyn I still felt too insecure to ask her out for another date. This was my first real date, and I was already 21 years old. Carolyn was a member of Theta Phi Alpha sorority and I saw her frequently on campus and in the bowling league on Sunday evenings. We still talked a lot but as mentioned I still felt too insecure to do more than that.

Gradually though I became more socially active in school. As I mentioned many of the guys who bowled in the league were fraternity members and they invited me to their 'frat' houses, and I was able to meet more people. I had known a few fraternity

members before, mostly *Lone Stars*, but I was now meeting more guys and girls on campus. My self-confidence was gradually improving, but still not near what it should. At this time, I thought about pledging *Lone Stars*, but on second thought I determined at age 21 I was too old to pledge a fraternity.

This semester I also began running around with Ray Gmerek. Ray was a classmate at St. V., half second cousin and one of the many *Lone Stars* I knew. Ray, his family, and friends liked to party and drink and I began to do some drinking. Prior to now the only drinking I did was at the high school graduation party. In October 1962 I turned 21 years of age and was just beginning to have some sort of a social life. I think my coming out event happened on Christmas Eve of 1962. Someone invited me to attend the midnight Mass at the Newman Center and since Christmas Eve was not a particularly special day at home I decided to attend the Mass. When I walked into the chapel I was shocked to see so many students at Mass. I expected to see about 30 to 40 students, but there were over 150 people in attendance. Everyone was dressed up and most were non-nerds at Mass who I never expected to see at the Newman Club. I had a real misconception of who did what at school. When Mass was over Ray Gmerek invited me to his house for a party. Upon arrival at his house on Julian Ave. I was surprised to see so many students. Well, I really got into the party and began drinking, singing, dancing, and just having a fun time. This was my first college party and I was really enjoying myself. Once again I was able to meet more people. Ray's sister, Phyllis, attended the party. She was a sophomore at Akron U and eventually we became very good friends. I didn't leave the party until dawn and remember driving home with my gas tank reading empty and desperately trying to find a gas station that was open early Christmas morning. I finally found one near Central High School which was near Akron U.

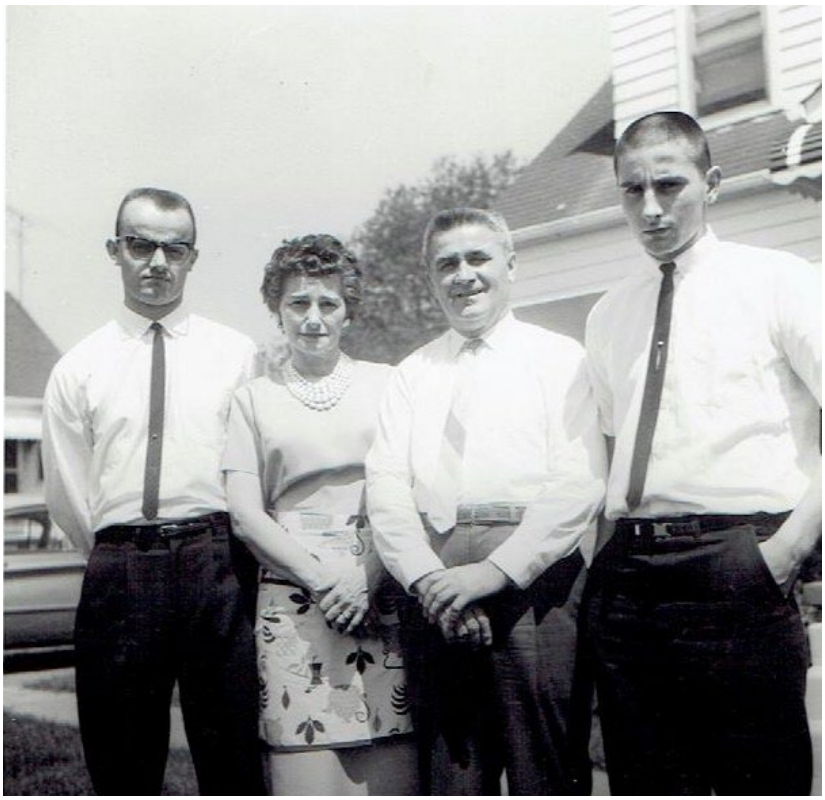
At the beginning of the second semester I elected to take some political science courses. I had become interested in politics since the 1960 election and wanted to learn more about it. I had completed most of the general required classes and was able to focus on elective classes in addition to classes in my major. At this time I decided to major in Finance. I had become interested in the stock market and Finance was the major where I could learn about it and business in general.

In January 1963 the second semester began and my ankle was still bothering me, and I couldn't run nearly as well as I could before my injury. It was now a year since my injury and I finally realized my baseball career was over. I did attend several practices and was feeling left out, so I just quit going to practices or games. However that spring I was asked to play fast pitch softball for the Newman Club team intramural team. I thought this was a big come down from playing with the varsity baseball team, but said OK, at least I would be able to play something close to baseball. I wasn't expecting to see many talented players but the team did have a few halfway decent players. Then I discovered the Newman Club had a summer team that played in a county wide league and I was asked to play. Once again I agreed and enjoyed playing to some extent, although I had a challenging time adjusting to playing fast pitch softball from baseball. Most of the players on the team were average at best and we ended up in last place in the county league.

May 30, 1963 was my parent's 25th wedding anniversary and my aunts and uncles planned a big reception at the Polish American Club hall. My parents were all excited about the reception however they became angry at my brother Tom. The Friday night before their reception he got into a fight at the Waterloo Drive Inn and was beat up pretty bad. He had bruises and black and blue marks on his face. With his face in this condition he didn't attend the reception. At the reception my only responsibility was to pin a corsage on my mother. I struggled with my only task. Sunday there was a 25th anniversary Mass for my parents at St. Matthew church.



Mom & Dad's 25 anniversary party



Our family after 25th anniversary Mass

During the summer of 1963 I once again worked at the parking lot four days and two evenings a week. In addition to working in the parking lot Ray Gmerek and I decided to paint houses. That summer we painted three houses. Two to three days a week Ray and I would paint then go play ball, Ray also played on the Newman Club team.. We had a fun time and many laughs painting together. My 1955 Chevy by now had several dents. One dent was received as the result of a cement truck backing into me. The cement truck company offered to fix the car but being a poor college student I accepted cash instead. Anyway, Ray decided that after every house we should put a notch on my car the color of house we just completed. These notches covered my rust spots. When summer was over my car had three notches in differing colors of the houses we painted.

Usually after our games several of us would go for a few beers and have some laughs. Often about five or six girls would come to watch us play and usually joined us for beers, often at Luigi's. By now I was becoming more self-confident and much more outgoing.

Late that summer Ray Gmerek and John Koneff invited me to play in the PRCU softball tournament being held on Labor Day weekend in Muskegon, Michigan. I knew John from St. V as we graduated together. I accepted the offer to play and participated in my first PRCU tournament. This was the first of what was to become many more. PRCU is an acronym for Polish Roman Catholic Union, a fraternal Polish insurance company. We drove about 5 hours to the tournament. The weekend was more about partying and drinking than about playing ball. When we arrived in town the first thing we did after

checking in at our hotel was go out and have a few drinks. After about an hour of drinking we went back to the hotel, ate some dinner then went to the party room. Around 8:30 PM someone offered me a drink of whisky in a water glass, I then proceeded to add scotch, vodka, and tequila. I went on to chug the whole glass. Less than an hour later I felt woozy went to my room and passed out. This was the first and only time I have passed out drunk. The next morning I woke up to discover a girl was sleeping next to me in bed. I then looked around the room and realized there were about seven or eight sleeping in my room, both guys and girls. I guess I missed a good party. Then someone came in the room to wake us up to play ball, but first we had to go to the local jail to bail Ronnie Pogwizd out of jail. Apparently he took off by himself the night before and walked into the middle of a race riot and was thrown in jail. Remember this was the 1960's and race riots were not an infrequent thing. We especially needed Ronnie out of jail because we needed him to field a team for our game that afternoon. So, we all chipped in a few dollars to bail him out of jail. Ronnie who we called 'Uno' had some real interesting stories to tell us about his night in the slammer, especially when he asked the guard for a menu. Needless to say I had a fun time and purchased a $1,000 PRCU insurance policy to insure I could play in more tournaments.

As the school year began in fall in 1963 I hung out a little more at the Newman Club, but also much more time in the Chuckery and at several fraternity houses. I spent hardly any time in the 'A' room anymore. By now many of my friends from St. V who attended Akron U had left school, so most of my friends now were those I met at Akron U. At this time Ray left Akron U and moved to California to attend college in the Los Angeles area. Once again I bowled in the Newman Club league and really had a fun time. The league was smaller than the previous year but there were some fun people in the league this year. Hadley was president of the bowling league even though he was going to graduate in December. Phyllis's cousin, Florence Czarnecki, had now entered college and joined the league. Flo's family lived in the same house as Ray and Phyllis. The house was a large two-family house in North Hill.

A few weeks after bowling someone suggested we go to the Jednota Club for a few beers because they heard they had a good band. Several of us went to the club, however there was no band. What they had was a great jukebox, so we spent the rest of the night drinking beer and dancing. From that Sunday through the following two years of bowling season we spent just about every Sunday evening during bowling season at the Jednota Club. Carolyn, who I went out with on my first date taught me all the dances. Each week more of us went to the club and it was like a big party after every bowling night. We would have some drinks, dance, joke and just have a fun time. Often we closed up the club at one o'clock in the morning. I was really coming out of my shell. However, I would be hurting the next morning if I had an eight o'clock class.

The first evening of bowling season I noticed a new girl and she was very attractive. That evening I found out she was a freshman and the sister of a guy in the league. The second Sunday we bowled I was really attracted to her so I asked her out for a pizza after bowling. She said yes, her name was Diana and soon we began dating. This was the first girl I dated and was the most attractive girl in the league. It wasn't that other

girls weren't attractive, but Diana was exceptional. We dated for about five months then she started seeing someone else and I came to realize Diana was really looking for a husband. Perhaps part of the reason for us breaking up was that I still felt a bit insecure in the dating routine.

After Diana and I stopped dating I met two other girls in the bowling league, however neither were regular members of the league. The first girl, whose name I can't remember, was visiting a cousin who bowled in the league. She was also very attractive and many of the guys were eying her up. After about a half hour I went over and I introduced myself and discovered she was from California. That evening the California girl joined us at the Jednota Club and I asked her out for the following Saturday night. She said yes and we went to the *Blind Owl* in Kent, a folk music coffee house. At the time coffee houses with folk music were a big hit on many college campuses, however, there weren't any near Akron U. Folk music was a big music item in the late fifties and first half of the sixties. We had a really enjoyable time together and she told me a lot about California and California began to interest me. Unfortunately, I never saw her again since the following day she had to return to college in California.

Several weeks later I met another girl who I hadn't seen before and was subbing for another bowler. I was introduced to her and she said she was going to sub for the rest of the year, her name was Cathy. Then the following week I met her again in the Newman Club parking lot and we talked for a short while. The following Sunday evening we chatted for a short while then I asked her out for the following Saturday night. She said OK and we went to a movie then for a drink at *The Lemon Tree*, a local lounge bar. Cathy really looked good that evening. She was attractive, wore a short mini skirt and seemed to know how to order a drink. As we talked I discovered she just transferred from another college and had graduated from St. V in 1960. Then she shocked me by telling me she had recently left the convent. She thought she wanted to be a nun and entered the convent but after a year or so she decided it wasn't for her. It was difficult for me to grasp that a girl who was in the convent for almost two years could be so attractive, wear short mini- skirts and knew how to order drinks. She also said before entering the convent she was dating a guy named Joe. I knew Joe and later found out he was still interested in Cathy, but she didn't want to date Joe exclusively. Cathy and I never went out on another date, but later Cathy and I became remarkably close friends.

At the end of the bowling season we had a banquet and at the banquet I was elected President for the following year and Cathy was elected Secretary (Cathy was very personable). I had come a long way socially and being elected president of a bowling league was something I never would have dreamed of two years earlier.

During the early 1960's many things began to change in the United States. First there was the Civil Rights movement, the space race, and President Kennedy creation of the Peace Corps. I thought briefly about getting involved in the Civil Rights movement, but I was still not feeling confident enough to pursue getting involved in the Civil Rights Movement or the Peace Corps. I did know several people who did join the Peace Corps and they had interesting stories to tell about their experiences. Not only were they doing

excellent work in foreign lands but their experience was once in a lifetime experience. The most memorable experience I heard was from a guy I knew from high school and college. His name was Tom and he was sent to the Congo in Africa to help the backwoodsmen began small farms. Shortly after he arrived a nearby witchdoctor heard of Tom's arrival and the witchdoctor felt threatened by someone coming to help the people. Then one evening a member of the small village where Tom was living informed him the witchdoctor was coming with a group of warriors to kill him. Several villagers hid him before the witchdoctor and his warriors arrived. Upon their arrival they searched high and low for Tom but couldn't find him. The villagers told the witchdoctor no one was there to help them he must be somewhere else. Tom said the warriors were close to where he was hiding and just escaped with his life. After that event the witchdoctor never returned.

One of the most momentous events in our countries' history happened on November 22, 1963. It was the day President Kennedy was shot and killed. This event was something everyone living in the country at the time will remember and what he or she was doing when they heard the news. I had just completed a class and was walking across campus when a friend, Mary Ann, came up and told me Kennedy had been shot. I immediately went to the Chuckery where everyone was gathering listening to the radio playing over the loudspeaker, no TV. We all just sat there listening, then about an hour later it was announced that the president was dead. The Chuckery turned to stone silence and we all just walked out stunned by what had happened. I think the United States has not been the same since.

During the summer of 1964 I was still working in the parking lot and painted a few houses with Ray, although I did paint a house by myself. Once again I played ball for the Newman Club team. This year I became manager of the team and wanted to beef up the quality of the players, so I went out and tried to recruit some talented players, even players who were not college students. One of the players I recruited was John Koneff. John was married with several kids. John was a good athlete who had a basketball scholarship to Kent State though he was not that interested in school and quit during his freshman year. As time went on John became one of my best friends. Another player I recruited was John Adam. I knew John when he was a freshman at St. V then he transferred to Garfield graduating in 1960. John was another person who later on would become a close friend. I also recruited Charley Smith. Charley and I both were in the 1959 class at St. V and was a part time Akron U student. Charley had grown quite a bit since high school and had become a good athlete.

Our team was much improved and we made the league playoffs. As for myself, I was becoming more proficient in playing fast pitch softball and learned to become a good hitter once again. There is a major difference between baseball and fast pitch softball. For one the pitcher is only forty-six feet from home plate whereas baseball pitchers are sixty feet, six inches from home plate. It is a major adjustment in a player's swing to hit a good fast pitch pitcher. Another difference is the bases are only sixty feet from each other compared to ninety feet in baseball. This is the major reason I could play softball

vs. baseball. At 60 feet I could run the bases, at 90 feet I couldn't run fast enough due to my ankle injuries.

Sometime in the summer of 1964 Florence Czarnecki was getting married. I didn't go to the wedding but was planning on attending the reception. My parents knew the family and my mother went to the wedding. Around noon my mother came home and told Tom and I that Flo's fiancé did not show up at the wedding and left Flo alone at the church. After waiting a while, the priest finally came out in the church and told everyone that the wedding was cancelled. That evening the reception was still on since there was no time to cancel the caterer, band etc. Flo actually showed up at the 'reception' and the evening turned into a birthday party for her 19th birthday. She had to be totally embarrassed, but she did not shy away from the situation. In the following months I was at the Julian Ave. house frequently and often saw Flo run to her room crying after being out with others. She had to be feeling devastated and totally embarrassed. After a while Flo realized it was the best thing for her. Her former fiancé turned out to be a real jerk and from what I heard he did the same thing to another girl.

During the middle of summer our next-door neighbor, Jim Ball, asked me if I wanted a job as a lineman at the airport. Remember he was manager of the B F Goodrich hanger at the Akron Municipal Airport. He told me when school started I could work part time. After I thought about it for a while I accepted his offer. Airplanes always fascinated me and this was an opportunity to work with them. I told Mr. Hamad about my opportunity and told him I was going to accept the job offer. He was very accepting of my decision. I had worked for him for two and half years and he said he was very appreciative of me doing such an excellent job. I left with a very good relationship with Camile Hamad.

At this time the airport was relatively busy. Most of the area's major companies had their aircraft fleet based at the airport and except for Goodyear's fleet we supplied the fuel, oil, and most of the aircraft maintenance at the airport. B.F. Goodrich had developed very good deicer systems for planes and the hanger had about six aircraft mechanics that installed and repaired deicers. The mechanics also performed required 50- and 100-hour maintenance for aircraft, so the hanger was a busy place. B.F. Goodrich also had the retail operation as the supplier of fuel and oil for corporate planes and other aircraft. My job was to gas and oil planes when they needed service and when possible help the aircraft mechanics with some basic maintenance. When school started I worked three afternoons a week and every other weekend. With this work schedule I was able to continue to take twelve credit hours a semester, the same as when I worked at the parking lot.

On the Thursday evening prior to Labor Day Jim Hadley asked if I and several others wanted to go to Atlantic City for the weekend. That sounded exciting so John Rudy, Terry Haddox, and I joined Jim and we left Friday evening. John and Terry were Akron U students and bowlers from the college league. John was a friend who lived close to me in Ellet and a frustrated baseball player, Terry was a friend and a Lone Star. Jim had graduated from college the previous December and was working as an accountant and bought a neat 1963 Olds Cutlass convertible. We drove all night to Atlantic City, which

then was a popular beach and boardwalk. No gambling in 1964. We spent a lot of time on the beach and this was the first time I swam in the ocean and saw girls in bikinis. I enjoyed both the swimming and the girls. That weekend we all had a fun time and lots of laughs.

Upon arriving home school was about to start and my main focus was organizing the bowling league. The previous year the league was down to six four-person teams and I wanted to increase the number of bowlers. I called Cathy to get together and plan how we could improve the league. Cathy and I decided to meet as many students as possible and invite them to bowl. We especially recruited freshman by attending many freshman orientation meetings and talking to their parents. Our efforts paid off for the league increased to twelve teams and the owner of the bowling alley was impressed. That bowling season went very well. Of course after bowling on Sunday we continued going to Jednota Club only this year many more bowlers and even some non-bowlers joined us. We all had a fun time drinking, dancing, and partying. By now I was known for my drinking ability. I could out drink most guys without getting drunk. At the end of the bowling season we had our annual banquet and many gave a public testimony how appreciative they were to me for improving the league. In fact, they gave me a standing ovation. This was the first time I received such applause and really increased my self-confidence. When the bowling season was over the owner of the bowling alley approached me and offered me a job as assistant manager and the opportunity for me to open a Pro Shop. This also boosted my ego, but I didn't want to work in a bowling alley just graduating from college.

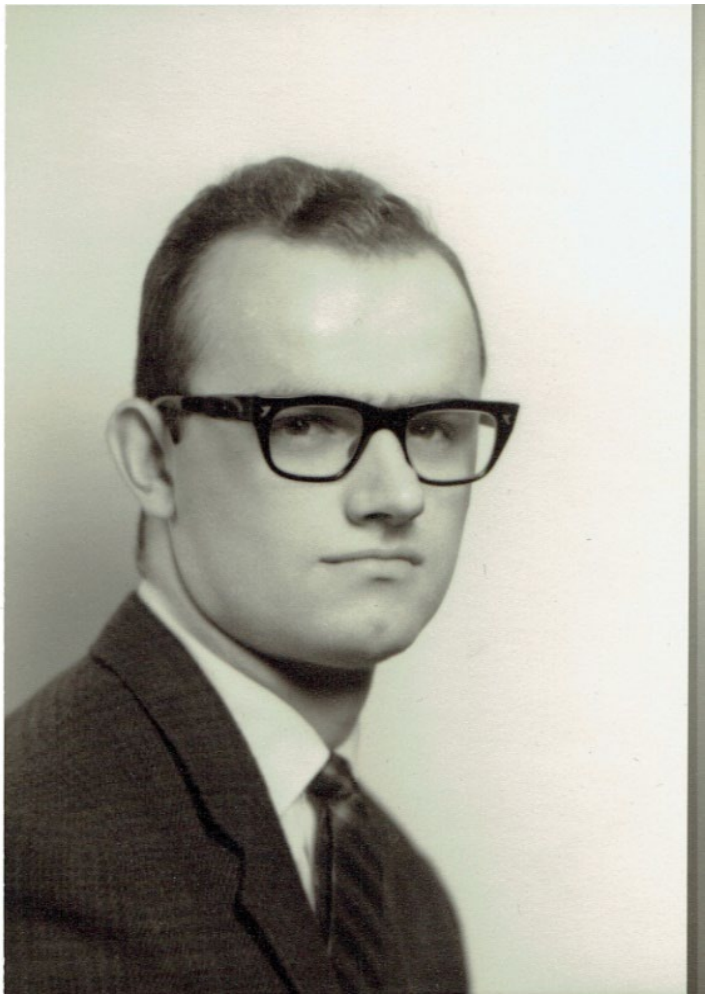
As I mentioned earlier Cathy and I became very good friends. Even though we only went on one 'official' date we spent a lot of time together. I was at her house many times related to the bowling league and I even became friends with her parents and siblings. There were times I wanted to take Cathy out for another real date, but I felt hesitant for I feared we could become serious. At this time in my life I didn't know how I would have managed such an emotional relationship. I'm fairly sure Cathy wanted to date me and at times I was really tempted. I think if I had asked her out on a 'real' date again we definitely would have had a meaningful relationship. Cathy was really a good person, attractive and a lot of fun. She was the type of girl I thought someday I would want to marry.

During my senior year I attended several students 'political parties.' These parties, held in off campus sites, were open to all students and just fundraisers for student organizations and basically an excuse to have a large party with a band, pretzels, and beer. Upon leaving one of these parties I discovered my car's passenger side vent window smashed out by someone trying to break into my car. After discovering my window broken I drove home upset that I would have to spend money to fix it. The next day I saw an old license plate in our garage and it looked like it might fit into the window. I tried and sure enough it fit perfectly. So until I sold the car that old license plate was a fixture in my car's passenger's side vent window. My 1955 Chevy ended up having many unique features. It had a replacement dark green hood as a result of an accident, the three-color stripes from houses Ray and I painted, and a dented rear door from an

accident with a cement truck and the license plate in the front small passenger-side window.

It was during my senior year that I really began to date more girls. I can't even remember how many girls I went out with; it was quite few. I also was friends with many other girls on campus. As I mentioned Phyliss Gmerek and I became close friends, we spent a lot of time together and often we would share many of our problems with one other. At the time we may have been each other's best friend. The Gmerek/ Czarnecki house was a gathering place for many of us.to hang out. Flo and several other guys and girls would often meet there and we all became friends.

As graduation neared I began to feel a little sad. I was finally enjoying college life and I didn't want it to end. In my junior and senior years I took enough courses in Political Science to have a major in it; however, I lacked two years of a Foreign Language. So I became a member of the 1965 graduation class from Akron U with a major in Finance in the College of Business Administration.



My college graduation photo



My 1955 Chevy and Tom's cool 1957 Chevy

Chapter 5 – Post College

After graduation I continued to work at the airport, however I did have several job interviews. There was one job that really interested me. It was with *John Hancock Life Insurance Co*. for a position as an office manager trainee. I would eventually be the local office manager and become a licensed insurance salesman. After a second interview the company told me they would like to hire me, however because of my draft status they declined to offer me a position. I felt disappointed not obtaining this position but understood their rationale. By 1965 the Vietnam War was really hot and the Army draft was in full gear.

At this time full time college students were exempt from the draft, but once they graduated or left school they were fair game for the draft. By 1965 almost all guys who were eligible for the draft enlisted in the miliary or were drafted into the Army. Teachers and certain professions were exempt from the daft. After hearing the response from *John Hancock* I decided to play ball that summer then join the Army Reserve. With the Vietnam War going on I didn't want to be drafted. I wanted to choose my own course of action for military service.

That summer I was able to start my own fast pitch team. With the help of Ray's older brother, Lenny, the Pilsudski Club sponsored a team and I was able to pick up several more talented players. We didn't have a great pitcher but we won a lot of games due to our hitting ability. Lenny was older, married and a trustee of the club. Lenny fought for us to have the club not only sponsor a team but buy uniforms. Obviously we returned the favor by drinking beers at the club after most of our games.

One evening in July after a game in which we faced Reggie Kence several of us including Reggie stopped in a small bar in north hill called the Starlight Lounge. While having a few beers we thought of the idea of entering the NEO tournament and asked Reggie to pitch for us. He had graduated with me from Akron U and was a very good, yet unknown pitcher. He played on another team in the summer league, and we were good friends. The NEO was the premier tournament of the year for it led to the state championship finals. Our problem was we didn't have a sponsor, so that evening we asked the owner of the Starlight Lounge to sponsor us for the tournament. He wasn't much of a sport enthusiast but after buying him a few drinks he relented and paid the sponsor fee for the tournament. I then rushed to enter the Starlight Lounge in NEO.

Our first game was scheduled for the following Saturday evening and I was scheduled to work at the airport that night. What was I to do? I really wanted to play in this tournament and I couldn't get anyone to switch shifts with me at work. So, I did something that wasn't very responsible, I quit my job at the airport to play in the tournament.

For the tournament I was able to pick up a few more talented players. When we showed up for the tournament we didn't have a team uniform so each of us wore practice clothes. This is while all the other teams had nice uniforms. Usually these games

attracted several hundred fans and the tournament directors were not happy with the way we looked. I was wearing my dad's old jersey from when he played for a team called Mill 4, but the letter M was missing so my jersey read ILL 4. John Adam was wearing an old fishing hat; John Koneff was wearing no hat on his baldhead and the rest of us looked pretty ragged. Our first game was against Whitey Wahl, who was nationally known as a great softball pitcher. Whitey though was now 40 years old and not the pitcher he once was but was still very good. We were losing the game until the last inning when we rallied to win the game. Our next game was against the team from Abbeville, Ohio, the defending state champions for the past two years. Well Reggie pitched a great game and we won 2-0. John Adam and John Koneff both made outstanding catches in the outfield to rob the other team from scoring runs. After the game their manager came over and congratulated me on our win and said that Reggie pitched the best game against his team in years. Abbeville had not been shutout in over two years.

After this win the Starlight Lounge team was making a name for itself and with our raggedly look many fans began to really root for us, we had become the fans favorite. The tournament was now down to four teams and the top two would represent northeast Ohio in the state tournament. Our local softball commissioner was rooting against us because he did not want our area to be represented by such a raggedy dressed team, however, we had hundreds of fans rooting for us.

Now we were down to double elimination and we lost the next game 2-1 on a passed ball by our catcher in the last inning. Then we lost our next game to be eliminated from the tournament, however we had become famous in the Akron area softball world. In fact about fifteen years later I met someone who I didn't know, and he came up to me and said, 'Starlight Lounge.' He didn't know my name but knew me as the manager of the Starlight Lounge team from many years earlier.

After I quit my job at the Akron airport John Adam and I acquired a job working on the docks at Consolidated Freightways in Richfield. This job paid very well because we were all members of the Teamsters Union. The work was very physically demanding, I loaded and unloaded semi-trailers with goods to be shipped all over the country. When I started I was told that anything weighing over forty pounds I could call for a forklift truck to help load or unload the truck trailer. Well that wasn't the case. In fact I heard several forklift drivers tell dock workers not even think of asking for help unless something weighed over one hundred pounds. You definitely had to be macho to work on the docks. Also, the other workers didn't respect anyone unless you were tough in more ways than one. A wimp would not have lasted very long working these docks. I remember one evening I was working the night shift and a forklift driver was driving quickly down the dock with his fork raised up. This is a real no-no. As he was driving down the dock he ran into a worker who was turning the corner at a terminal intersection. The truck fork hit him in the head and killed him. Although I didn't see the accident it affected me for a long time.

In October my foreman, Ronnie Franks, who happened to be 1959 St. V classmate, told me soon I was going to be laid-off. Business was slowing down and many workers were going to be let go. So, now I didn't' have a job but I didn't care since I thought I was about to leave for basic training with the Army Reserve.

With the softball season nearing its end I went to enlist in the Army Reserve at the station near North High School. The reserve and National Guard programs entailed six months of basic training then committed to six years of monthly weekend duty with two weeks additional training during the summer. If drafted you had two full years of active duty and at the time it meant almost certain duty in Vietnam. Not only that but I thought the Army didn't respect training or education one had prior to entering the Army. I knew lawyers who were made cooks and cooks who were assigned to vehicle maintenance. In mid-August I was accepted by the Army Reserve recruiting office then went for my physical. To my complete surprise I failed my physical due to high blood pressure and was not accepted in the Army Reserve.

Once rejected by the Army Reserve I thought it would be a promising idea to volunteer for the draft thinking that if I failed the Army Reserve physical I would not pass the regular Army physical. In September 1965 I went to Cleveland with a busload 18 and 19-year old's who were being drafted. At the physical my blood pressure reading was high and I thought I would again be rejected by the regular Army. However upon completing the rest of my physical exam an Army sergeant told me that I had to go home and obtain two daily blood pressure readings from my doctor for three consecutive days. Now I felt a little concerned thinking that the Army was going to draft me no matter my health. Well I went home and received my six blood pressure readings and the doctor sent them to the Army. A few weeks later I received their response, I was drafted and expected to report soon for basic training. Apparently one of my six blood pressure readings were within the Army guidelines and I was in the Army. This upset me very much and my next step was to join the National Guard unit the Akron Canton Airport, knowing that I was drafted they readily accepted me. I was to report for weekend training each the following weekends until basic training. In the morning of my third or fourth weekend of training I was called out of formation and told to report to the administrative office. I felt a little apprehensive because I had no idea why I was being called to the office. At the administration office I received unexpected news. I was issued an honorable discharge from the National Guard due to my blood pressure readings from both the Army Reserve and regular Army physicals. I remember driving home that mid-November morning feeling jubilant because I wouldn't to be concerned about serving in the army especially with the hot Vietnam War.

My next step was to go job-hunting again. Then two weeks later I received another unexpected piece of mail. It was a notice that I had been drafted into the Army and expected to report for my draft physical. Now I was really upset. Both the Army Reserve and National Guard rejected me for physical reasons, yet the regular Army still wanted to draft me. As I mentioned the last thing I wanted for my military obligation was to be drafted and more than likely going to Vietnam. Now what was I going to do? My instructions were to report for my draft physical in January, so I had two months to think

about my options. I thought my best bet was to take the physical again and see what happens. I could have tried to join the Air Force or Navy but that meant a four-year commitment and who knows if they would have accepted me due to my BP readings. Prior to my next draft physical my Aunt Catherine, who worked for a doctor suggested several ways I could possibly elevate my blood pressure. She even got her doctor to write a letter for me explaining my physical status and that it would be dangerous for me to enter the Army especially in a war zone. So on the morning of my physical I ate as my aunt directed. I had a heaping portion of waffles, with lots of syrup, drank lots of milk and other foods that I can't remember. Anyway, at the physical the Army Sargent was very unhappy with me when I presented the letter from the doctor. When it came time for my blood pressure reading it was 235/110 and the Army doctor told me I belonged in hospital. Going home on the bus I still didn't know my status. Then several weeks later I received a letter informing me my draft status was reclassified from 1A to 1C. This meant I would not be called to military service unless of a national emergency, in effect I would not be drafted. It was now early March 1966 and I finally knew where I stood as far as military service is concerned. It wasn't that I didn't want to serve. I volunteered for the Army Reserve and National Guard; I just didn't want to be drafted. I am not certain what I would have done if the Army still wanted me after the second physical. So, it took me almost nine months after I graduated to determine my military status. After having these blood pressure readings I should have been concerned about my health but I wasn't. I was just felt glad I didn't have to serve in the Army and go to Vietnam. Vietnam had become a very dangerous and unpopular war with the president and generals lying to the people about our reasons for being at war in the first place. Over the years 58,000 Americans died in the Vietnam War.

When I was discharged from the National Guard and received another draft notice I decided to find another temporary job. In late November I found a job working as a Planning Aide for the Tri County Regional Planning Commission. This job I found very interesting. It involved working with three regional planners and several staff people who were all working on their masters' degree in geography. My job entailed inspecting buildings located on aerial photographs in Medina and Portage counties. We traveled in pairs and I was able to inspect almost every building in Medina County and a portion of Portage County. We had to grade the physical condition of each building based on aerial photos as to whether it was in good, deteriorating, or deteriorated condition. I also worked a day or two a week in the office. The planners then used this information to determine future use plans for the Summit, Medina, and Portage counties. As I indicated I really enjoyed this job and I continued working there until mid-March 1966. While working for the Planning Commission we went out to lunch every day. There was a Brown Derby steakhouse close by the office and whenever I was at the office I would have steak for lunch. Of course, when I was in the field we would eat lunch in some restaurant. By the time I quit working at the Planning Commission I had gained about ten pounds. While working at the Planning Commission I was still driving my 1955 Chevy. However, doing a lot driving for the planning commission took its toll on my car, when the transmission began to drop in early March I bought another car, a 1958 Chevy. My 1955 Chevy served me well, but it needed a new home, the junk yard.

During this time, I not only worked at the Planning Commission I also became a bartender at the Pilsudski Club. Lenny Gmerek as club trustee along with other trustees wanted to enhance the image of the club, so Lenny hired several guys to bar-tend on Saturday and Sunday nights. These nights were very busy at the club and the current bartender staff was undermanned, so the trustees led by Lenny hired me, John Koneff, Jimmy Rocco, Jack Malloy, and John Adam as weekend evening bartenders. We all dressed in white shirts and red vests and we really had a fun time bar tendering together. During the weekends the club had a polka band and was very crowded wih people who came to the party, especially on Sunday.

In those days private clubs were the only places one could buy a drink on Sunday due to the Ohio Blue Laws. In the Akron area that included mostly civic and nationality clubs like the Pilsudski Club, Polish American Club, Polish Legion of American Veterans Club, German American Club, Italian Center, Hibernian Club, and the like. Anyway, on Sunday the crowd was usually standing room only. The door was locked with someone standing at the door to verify anyone entering had a membership of the club. What was interesting was that often the state police would come and check to verify we were only serving members of the club. However, I soon found out they were easily bribed. They wore plain clothes and sat at the bar and as long as we served them free drinks they would close their eyes to anything that went on unless an obvious underage person wanted a drink or fighting was involved. Often they just sat at the bar and drank for several hours before they would leave for their next destination.

As I indicated earlier Ray Gmerek had left Akron U and was attending college in the Los Angeles area. In February 1966 he completed his classes and returned home, but he had to return to take one final exam. In March he asked Charly Smith and me if we wanted to drive to California with him for his final exam. I said OK as did Charly. I quit my job at the Planning Commission and we traveled to California. I had a keen interest in travelling around the country since I was about ten years old and thought this was a terrific opportunity to see part of the country, especially California. So, around March 15 we left Akron drove to Chicago then traveled to Los Angeles via the famous Route 66.

We traveled non-stop to Las Vegas in 50 hours. This included an auto repair stopover in Oklahoma City. We arrived in Las Vegas about eight o’clock on a Sunday morning and stopped in front of a Catholic Church. We stopped and went to Mass. What I thought was fascinating was that there were slot machines in the vestibule of the church. We then booked a room at the Stardust Hotel.

While in Las Vegas we saw two lounge shows one featuring *Nina Simon,* the other *The Four Freshman*, there was no admission, just had to purchase two drinks. I also played a little blackjack. This was my first experience gambling in a casino and big time shows. I was in awe of several things I saw and did while in Vegas. The first night I sat down at the blackjack table and bet my one-dollar chips. This was a lot of money for me to bet and felt happy that I was winning. There was an older woman sitting next to me and she had four or five large stacks of chips in front of her. After a while she lost her chips and went to get more chips. When she returned to the table I was shocked to discover she

was playing with $1,000 chips. Here I was sweating my $1 dollar bets and she was betting thousands on each hand. Another thing I found interesting is that if one were gambling at any table you could order drinks and even food free on the house. So, I ordered several Manhattan's and a steak dinner while playing with my $20 in chips. While in Vegas we decided to attend one of the big shows in town, The Lido. This was a dinner show in a fabulous dining room. We ordered a nice meal and saw a very good show. Our bill came to $29.95. Since each of us left most of our money in our hotel room all we had was $30 between us, so we gave the server $30. A few minutes later she came back with a huge tray with our nickel change on it. Since this was all the money we had we just left the nickel as her tip. I am sure she wasn't too happy; there were not any credit cards in those days, just American Express.

After two days in Vegas we traveled to Los Angeles and stayed with another high school classmate, Jim Chisholm. Jim was single and living with a friend above a garage in the Los Angeles area. The next day Ray took his test then we bummed around the Los Angeles area for several days. The next day Ray and I went to try and see my Aunt Theresa and Uncle Ray Ford who lived in the desert town of El Cajon outside San Diego. I hadn't seen my aunt since she left for California when I was about ten years old. I knew her and her husband Ray opened a beer bar and restaurant in El Cajon, so Ray and I went looking for her. Charlie stayed with Jim Chisholm. El Cajon was a small desert town and I felt confident we would find her even though I didn't know the name of their establishment. We went to four or five bars and couldn't find her. Ray asked me if I knew what she looked like; I said I can't remember for sure, but I was sure I would remember her voice. Finally, we went into a bar and I told Ray 'this is it' for I definitely recognized her very distinctive voice. We proceeded to sit down at the bar to order a beer. I saw my Aunt waiting on other customers and I felt sure she would not recognize me since it had been so long since she had seen me. Aunt Theresa finally came over to take our order. Ray and I asked for a beer and she said OK. I then asked her if she wanted to see our ID's to verify we were 21 years old. She said 'no' we looked old enough, but I persisted and said she needed to see our ID's. When we pulled out our ID's and she saw them and realized who we were she yelled out 'Oh my God.' She then proceeded to give us a few free beers and we chatted for a while. She then had to work but it was good to see my Aunt Theresa again. Little did I know at this time how we would interact in the future?

After spending about five days in California we had to leave for home and so Ray and I could begin our search for a real job. On our way home we made side trip to Tijuana, Mexico. At the time Tijuana did not have a very good reputation and after spending about six hours there I got to see how it deserved its reputation. The town's streets were not paved and the town was full of houses of prostitution, gambling, and other illegal activities. Upon leaving Tijuana we began our drive home. After crossing the country and coming home I really felt the itch to travel and see more of the USA.

When we arrived home, it was near April 1 and I began my job search. After four weeks of searching on a Monday morning I was offered a position as an Accounts Payable Auditor with Goodyear Aerospace Corp and I accepted their job offer. Then about an

hour later I received a call from General Electric Credit Company who offered me a position as a credit analyst trainee. I found it surprising that after searching for a job for a month I received two offers within an hour.

The position at GAC was an entry-level job but I was happy because I now had a regular job. I began working on the first Monday in May and after my first day of work I was feeling excited to tell my parents about it. Upon coming home I began telling my mother about my new job, but she didn't seem very interested. She seemed very sad and despondent and this was not like her. After about ten minutes she finally told me what was bothering her. She said Tom & Geraldine had been over earlier in the day and informed my parents Geraldine was pregnant. Tom & Geraldine had dated since high school although Geraldine was two years older than Tom. She graduated from Garfield in 1960 and Tom in 1962. Geraldine was twenty-four and Tom 22 years old.

During the last weekend in May 1966 Tom & Geraldine traveled to Monroe, Michigan to get married. Geraldine's parents were ashamed she was pregnant and wanted as few people as possible to know her situation. The wedding was a very small affair; In fact, the only persons attending the wedding were Tom, Geraldine, my mother, and her mother. Jim Benko was my brother's best man and Sue Ann Alverez was maid of honor. Neither Geraldine's brother nor I were invited and did not know they were getting married. Tom & Gerri eventually got a small apartment on Kuder Ave. in west Akron. The apartment was so small it didn't have a kitchen-sink. They washed dishes in the bathtub. Then about a month after they married Vicki was born, five months premature. Vicki was in the hospital for about three months, when she left the hospital she stayed with my parents. Geraldine wanted to finish the year at her job at Ohio Edison to get her year- end bonus. My mother and dad cared for Vicki 24 hours a day until January. From this time forward my mother and Vicki became very close. Tom was now working at Goodyear. In early 1967 they moved into a twinplex unit in the Firestone Park area of Akron.

I found working at Goodyear Aerospace Corp. (GAC) to be interesting. Not only was I learning the 'how to's of my job, but also about the company and other business functions. However, the most interesting part of working was my interaction with my immediate supervisor, Tom Dale. Tom was in his early fifties but often joked around like someone much younger. Not only that but he had reputation for flirting with many women, going out for drinks after work and being a real operator. Despite all of these characteristics Tom and I got along very well. It seemed he knew everyone in the company and he introduced me to many people. Once we got to know each other we would often joke and batter back and forth at work. About year later he even went out drinking with me and several of my friends at a 'soul bar.'

During the summer of 1966 I once again coached the Pilsudski Club team. This year I wanted to get even better players and working through others I was able to acquire several very good players. These included Jack Barnett who just finished playing pro ball, but had a quick temper, Mike Hunter, George Cooney, and Jack Malloy all of whom were very good athletes who were well known in the Akron area. With John Koneff,

John Adam, Charlie Smith, Ned Endress, Jack Barnett, Mike Hunter, George Cooney, and Jack Malloy among others we sure had lots of ‘individuals.’ I remember one game where I had to break up a fight in the outfield between John Koneff and Jack Barnett. We even had a part time pitcher named Cash who was recently released from prison for shooting his cousin. That summer I remember Jack Malloy telling me he wondered how I was able manage such a group of ‘characters.’

The one position we were lacking was a star pitcher. In fast pitch softball the pitcher is the most important player. We were able to get Don Schubert, athletic director at Hoban and Don Lippert, a football coach at Hoban and later at Ravenna High School to pitch. This was in addition to Cash. Don Schubert was adequate, but once again we were able to win a lot of games because of our hitting. Don Lippert was a big guy and a good pitcher; however, Don was working on his Master’s degree and often could not make all our games. Don and Don pitched for us for several years and I got to know them well. That summer Don Schubert told me he liked the way I managed the team and appreciated my knowledge of baseball. He then offered me the job as head baseball coach at Hoban High School. The next year Don Lippert was coaching at Ravenna High School and offered me head baseball coach at Ravenna High School. I felt surprised by these coaching offers. These are jobs I would have really loved but being that I could not get off work from my ‘day’ job until later in the afternoon I had to turn them down. However, I appreciated their confidence in me. My dream job would have been a small college baseball coach.

This year in addition to playing with Pilsudski Club I played with Poda All Stars. This was a team managed by the then Summit County Commissioner, John Poda. John was a long-time politician who liked to get his name in the paper. One way he did that was by sponsoring sports teams. He always wanted the best team he could find and play many independent games. Whenever we won, which was 95% of the time, he would have a small article in the Akrom Beacon Journal the next day announcing, ‘*Poda All Stars’ win again’* with a brief summary of the game. I remember one day John Adam came to watch me play and John Poda needed someone to keep score, so John volunteered. In the sixth inning Poda came over to John and asked him the score. John told him we were losing by two runs. Then Poda told John Adam to cheat in the score book, John refused. This is an example of how much Poda wanted to win games so his name and team would be the newspaper.

During this time I remember playing a game with Poda All Stars on Wooster Ave. in Akron against a very good all black team. This was their home field and we were surprised to see so many fans attend the game. There must have been around three hundred fans watching the game and rooting for the home team. Several of us were feeling a bit wary playing on this field due to a potential fight breaking out between the fans and us. However, the game went very well. We won the game but there was no problem with the fans or the other team. Remember this was a time of extreme racial tension in the country. It once again reinforced me knowing that sports and music bring all people together no matter their politics or the racial tension of those days.

After working at GAC for several months I decided it was time for me to buy a nice car, so for weeks I looked for a late model convertible. Since high school I had dreamed of owning a convertible and now was time to buy one. I was very particular about the car I wanted therefore I must have looked at about twenty convertibles. Then in August friends of my parents, Fuss & Stella Gaikowski, informed my parents they were going to sell their car and wanted to know if I would be interested in buying it. At first I thought why I would want an ‘old' fogies’ car and it wasn’t even a convertible. Out of respect I looked at the car anyway, and guess what, I was interested. The car was a 1964 Ford Galaxy XL with 15, 000 miles and was a real beauty. Stella & Fuss said they wanted to sell this car and buy a car more befitting their age and one that was easier for them to get in and out of. This car was red with a white vinyl top. The interior had white leather seats, chrome trim everywhere including the seats and blue carpet on the interior doors with red, white, and blue lights on each door. It had a center shifter encased within a large white leather case. The interior roof was white vinyl. I had never seen a car like it before then or since. Stella & Fuss had special ordered the car and it was certainly unique. Well guess what? I bought this car and sold my 1958 Chevy. This red Ford was to become my pride and joy.

The following summer a friend of mine was getting married and offered me a chance to buy his 1964 Jaguar XKE convertible. It was a really cool car but I liked my Ford Galaxy XL and declined his offer. By the way my friend sold his ‘Jag’ convertible and bought a station wagon, talk about a lifestyle change.



Image similar to my 1964 Ford Galaxy XL

On the Labor Day weekend of 1966 I once again attended the PRCU softball tournament. These tournaments were a lot of fun and many stories have been told

about them. To attend these tournaments, one needed to have a PRCU life insurance policy. I had my $1,000 policy, but I now bought a $5,000 policy. With my PRCU policy I was eligible to join any one of three Polish club in the area. They were the Polish American Club, Polish Veterans of Foreign Wars Club, and the Pilsudski Club. PRCU sports tournaments were held in various cities and included tournaments for softball, basketball, bowling, and golf. I will talk more about these tournaments later

The fall of 1966 several events occurred that really changed the direction of my life. In September John Koneff asked me if I was interested in attending some of Cleveland Brown's games. I said 'yes' and ended up purchasing tickets to all the games and I joined John and two other guys in attending these games. This was the beginning of me becoming a rapid Brown's fan. In fact, I purchased season tickets for fifteen of the next 16 years.

Several years earlier John Koneff introduced me to jazz music and I took a real liking for it. Since high school I have become a big music lover. First of course was rock and roll, then folk music and now it was jazz. I had even grown to like polka music that my parents listened to on Sunday's with the Polka Varieties program. Of course, all the weddings I attended over the years had a polka band. But jazz was becoming a big favorite of mine. I bought many jazz albums and even subscribed to *Downbeat* magazine, the big jazz music review publication. Among my friends they couldn't understand how I could like jazz so much. Well in the next year or so I converted many of them to appreciate jazz. I also purchased a nice portable stereo and a leather case to carry many of my albums. I usually carried my stereo and the leather case of albums in the trunk of my car and many people started to call me 'the man and his music.' My albums in the case included rock, pop, folk, and jazz music. One other tidbit was that during my latter years of college and now many friends just called me 'Grubber.' What was interesting is that my brother had the same nickname among his friends and most of his friends and mine did not know each other.

In September 1966 I started to bowl in two leagues, one with John Adam and several other friends on Wednesday night and the other on a Sunday evening in a Catholic mixed singles league. I enjoyed bowling in both leagues but for differing reasons. The Wednesday league was little more serious bowling along with drinking beer. The Sunday night league was more for fun since it was a mixed league. After bowling in a coed league in college I thought it may be fun to continue to bowl in a mixed league. When I joined I didn't know anyone but in the next several weeks I met some interesting people, especially two girls. These two girls were close friends with whom I eventually began to joke around with a lot. One girls name was Darlene and the other girl's name I can't remember. Then one Sunday evening the girl whose name I can't remember told me she was a 'Go Go' dancer on weekends at a bar in Akron and invited me to come see her perform. Well, the next Friday night I went to this bar but didn't see her. I then asked the bartender if she was here and he told me 'I never heard of her.' It was then I realized she had pulled a 'fast one' on me. It was payback for several pranks I pulled on her and Darlene. At first I was attracted to the so-called 'Go Go' dancer but later it was Darlene who attracted my attention.

In October 1966 I thought it was time for me to leave home and get my own place. While discussing this with several friends two of them were thinking the same thing. They were John Adam and Jim Benko. John had quit college and was working in the factory at Firestone. Jim Benko had returned from the Air Force and was attending Akron U and working the night shift at AAA. Then the three of us began looking for a house to rent together. We looked at three or four houses and ended up renting a house in the Firestone Park area of Akron. It was on Brown St. catacorner from St. Paul Church. We moved in on November 1 and this was the beginning of a fun packed and very interesting time in my life.

John Adam was a real character who was a fast talker with good lines yet very funny. He seemed to know everyone in town and the two of us became very good friends. It's interesting how I became such good friends with many fast talking 'crazy' guys. Jim Benko had been sort of a wild guy in high school but upon returning from the Air Force he became very serious and interested in business and politics. It was like he was a totally different person from high school. The three of us were very different, yet we got along well.

We moved into the Brown St. house on a Saturday, however I had a 'blind date' scheduled for that night. Adam and Benko had to move their furniture that Saturday evening and they were not too happy that I wasn't with them to help. I had moved most of my 'stuff' during the afternoon. This 'blind date' had been planned for several weeks and it turned out to be my one and only blind date. We doubled with Jim Hadley and his girlfriend Teddi and this date did not turn out well. I felt bored during most of the evening and would rate the date a 'D' at best.

John, Jim, and I chipped in to purchase furniture for our house. A co -worker at GAC had just bought new living room furniture and I purchased his older furniture from him. This used furniture was in good condition and was more for a family home than for three single guys. It included a sofa and two nice chairs; later many people complemented us on our good taste in furniture. I also needed a bed and Flo's mother, Stella, offered to loan me a big four-poster double bed they were not using. I had agreed to pay a little more toward our $150 a month rent and got the right to the biggest bedroom and use of the garage. During the first few weeks of living on Brown Street we were basically setting everything up and learning to live together. We also took turns with dinner. John and Jim cooked our meals and since I didn't know how to cook I did the dishes.

After two weeks of living together John said he wanted to have a party on Friday night. That night was Tom's birthday and my parents were having a little party for him, so I went to see Tom, Geraldine, and baby Vicki. I stayed at my parents' house until around 10 PM then went home to Brown St. When I walked into the house all the lights were out and as I walked into the living room I was surprised to see many people just lying on the floor drinking and listening to music. No one was dancing or singing, just all laying there listening. Well, I first went up to my room for a few minutes then returned to the living room. Once I returned downstairs I put on some upbeat music on my stereo and the party gradually began to pick up; eventually the music got loader and people started

dancing. Other than John and a few other guys I didn't know anyone at this party, but eventually I got to know many of them. Some even became good friends. This party was the beginning of what was to become many, many parties.

After I finished college I usually joined several friends on Friday nights to go bar hopping and try to find some interesting girls. Friends who would join me included John Adam, Jim Benko, Jim Hadley, Steve Tonti, John Rudy, Jack Malloy, Duke Balun, and several others. We would go to places called Red's, Bucket Shop, Lemon Tree, Thunderbird, Demo's, several bowling alley lounges, and other places I can't remember. At one of these places in late November I met a girl, Carol, I had known from high school. I hadn't seen her since 10th grade when she transferred to Garfield high school. Carol was more attractive now than she was in high school. After meeting that evening I asked her out and soon we began to date and have fun together. Friday night though was usually a boys' night out. However, eventually late Friday evenings became party central at our Brown St. house. John and I would start out Friday going our separate way but ended up with friends at our house around midnight. Then we would party until at least two or three o'clock in the morning.

On Christmas Eve both John and Jim went back home to stay with their parents, but I stayed at Brown St. I still wonder why I didn't go home, however; I did go home on Christmas Day.

The Wednesday evening between Christmas and New Year's John didn't go bowling with us, some girl invited him to a formal Christmas dance at Akron U. That evening I bowled, had a few beers with the guys, came home and went to bed around 11:30. Then at about 12:30 I woke when I heard John and others coming into the house and beginning to party. I tried to go back to sleep since I had to work the next day but couldn't sleep. Around 1:30 AM I went downstairs to see what was happening. After the formal dance John invited many from the dance to our house. Well, I joined in the party and it really picked up. I put my stereo up full tilt and we danced, drank, and just had a very good time. We even called several people to join us. It was a great party but by 5 AM most people began to leave except for about 5 or 6 of us who continued to party. By now I knew I wasn't going to work the next day, so I just continued to party. Around 6 AM we were getting tired so we all went up to my bedroom, sat on my large bed and just talked and drank more wine. At 8 AM I called into work to report off 'sick'. Then around 8:30 AM we heard a knock on the back door. We all wondered who would be knocking at our door at this time of the day. I went down to peek out the window to see who was at the door. To my surprise it was our landlord. Our landlord lived in Toledo and we had not seen her since we signed our lease. I quickly ran upstairs to tell everyone our landlord was at the door. It seemed everyone began to panic and didn't know what to do. The house was a real mess from the beer cans, wine bottles, cigarette butts and just a lot of clutter. Well, I told everyone be calm, I would invite my landlord in and tell her we worked nights and the morning and daytime was our party time. We all rushed downstairs and I invited our landlord in and told her about 'our work schedule and party situation.' She walked through the messy house and talked to me for a short while then left. We all felt relieved. My story about our work schedule must have

convinced her or she didn't care because she didn't seem concerned about the condition of her house. She left around 9 AM and shortly after that the party broke up.

On New Year's Eve about 10 or 12 us of partied at the Pilsudski Club. I took Carol and we danced to the Polka music all evening. She was Polish and was familiar with all the music. It may seem odd today to go the Pilsudski Club, but back then nationality clubs were popular places to go. However, the Pilsudski Club was not our favorite but we all had a fun time.

At this time Jim Benko was seriously dating his girlfriend and becoming more serious about life. Since he worked at night he hardly ever attended any of our parties. I also think we intimidated his girlfriend by our lifestyle. However, Jim was very active in the Japanese martial art called Jiu Jitsu. While in the Air Force he was stationed at a very remote radar site in Japan and became interested in and became an expert in this martial art. Upon arriving back in the U.S. he discovered he was one of very few Americans who were expert in this martial art. He became a leader in establishing Jujutsu in the US and once a month on Sunday mornings several others from the Midwest would come to our house and discuss how to forward this martial art in the U.S. These were very interesting guys. I remember one time this very big guy who attended the meetings came with a huge gash on top of his baldhead. We asked him what happened. He said he was at a party, drank too much and tried to break cement blocks with his head. And they used to call me a 'dumb Polack.'

After we were in our house for about a month, a girl, Judy Rainey, who John and I knew asked if we wanted a painting for our living room wall. We said 'sure' without even seeing the painting. When she brought us the painting we weren't quite sure what it was. It was obviously a picture of a woman partially clothed in purple lying on the floor, but we didn't know which side was up. We decided to put the painting with it looking like she was lying on the floor face down. Soon others said it looked like she had been murdered or assaulted, so the painting got the nickname as the 'Murder on Brown Street' or 'The Rape on Brown Street.' The painting definitely attracted a lot of attention and became a conversation piece.

After the holidays, our Brown St. house started to become famous in Akron. It seemed every Friday and Saturday evening and often during the week we would party at our house. Many times we began our Friday nights having drinks at the Pilsudski Club before heading out in the town. Our thinking was we could get inexpensive drinks at the Pilsudski Club then then head out on the town to the more expensive clubs and lounges around town. After being out and about we usually would bump into others we knew and invite them to Brown St. to party into the night.

John Adam had many girlfriends. It seemed he knew almost every girl our age in town and would invite many of them to our house, especially to party. Seldom did John date the same girl more than a few times and used to brag about all his 'dollies.'

I met many girls at our house but only dated a few of them. I recall many girls asking me about my job and often they would ask me what type of work I did at Goodyear Aerospace. Well, I would tell them I was in astronaut training and sadly many of these girls believed me and thought I was serious. Talk about 'dumb broads.' One girl I did go out with was for 'kicks.' She was over six feet tall and I thought it would be interesting to go out with a girl that tall, we only had the one date. Also, by this time I was at the point in my coming out that I would do almost anything for a laugh. Most people thought John was crazy, but now many of them were saying the same thing about me.

After about three months and half Carol and I stopped dating. This didn't bother me too much since I really wasn't interested in settling down with one girl. Then one Friday night I met a girl at Red's who attracted me. Red's was known as a pickup lounge and usually wasn't a place where I would expect to meet someone who would interest me. We danced a few times then I asked for her phone number and she gave it to me. We went out several times and I liked her. Then one Friday night John and I planned to have a big party at our house. Well, that Friday evening I picked her up at her East Canton home, went to dinner, then took her to our place. When we arrived no one was home. After waiting for about an hour and no one was showing up for a party she told me she thought my intention was to seduce her. I told her to be patient and that the party would start soon. Well around 10:30 people began filling in for our party. Well around midnight our house was full of people. I remember us resting on the couch after dancing and realizing we couldn't see the other side of the room because of all the people. She was surprised we knew so many people and ended up having a very good time. About a week or so later we were out and she took me by surprise telling me she was quitting her job and moving to California. She said this had nothing to do with me and that she had been thinking about this for quite a while and a job opened up for her in Los Angeles. Then several weeks later she left for the southern California. I felt somewhat disappointed, but as I said I wasn't ready to settle down with one girl.

By this time, the concept of John, Jim and me eating dinner together had long passed. We usually went our separate ways for dinner and usually ate out, often at Thomastown Café or Ido Café. I would go back home to see my parents about once every ten days and my mother would have a nice meal for me. During the time I lived on Brown St. my parents did not come to visit me at my place. I think they were afraid of what they might see.

Often on Saturday morning John and I would begin our day cleaning up the house from Friday night and get ready for another houseful of people on Saturday night. After cleaning we would relax by drinking some wine and watching Saturday morning cartoons on TV. Speaking of cleaning one nice spring day we thought the house needed a real good cleaning, so on a Saturday morning we did a very thorough cleaning. We then realized the furniture was beginning to smell pretty bad, so we took the furniture outside and hosed it down with a garden hose, let the sun dry it out then put the 'clean' furniture back in the house.

By now most of our neighbor's didn't like us. We were loud, often had people coming and going all day and night and were not your typical neighborhood 'family. In fact, we heard that neighbors with teenage daughters told their girls to avoid our house at all costs. An example of how we were perceived in the area was when one day the city was working on the water lines in our neighborhood and temporally shut off our water supply. We didn't have water. John and I went next door and asked the neighbors if we could borrow some water. Their answer was an emphatic 'NO.' That was our first clue we were not welcome in the neighborhood. We just laughed about it and went without water for a day. Little did these neighbors know that when warm weather came our place would become livelier and louder than ever?

In March I went to another PRCU basketball tournament. By this time Stan Murkowski, head of PRCU in the Akron area, recruited me to become a PRCU insurance salesman. As a salesman I was able to sell quite a few policies by enticing guys with the PRCU tournaments. This years' tournament was in either Chicago or Detroit. I drove with several guys and of course took my stereo and tunes. On Saturday night we began partying in some club then went back to the hotel to continue the party. As usual about seven or eight girls attended the tournament with us. I brought out my stereo and the 'Grubber All Star Band' started up our routine. What was the 'Grubber All Star Band'? Well, I would play some great up-tempo jazz music and lead a group of guys to pantomime to the various instruments. I usually pantomimed to the lead instrument, be it drum, organ, flute, and other guys would chime in whenever the other instruments played. Didn't I tell you I would make converts to jazz-music? Anyway, a crowd would gather around and cheer us on and the more they cheered the more emphasis we would put into our act. Well this didn't go very well with the other hotel quests since we were doing our routine in the hotel hallway. After a while the hotel police came and told us to stop. We did stop, but only until the policeman was out of sight. When we started up again the policeman came again and since I was the leader he cuffed me and lead me off to jail. When we got down to the street he let me go and told me to discontinue playing music in the hall. I agreed, but that didn't stop me though. I returned to the hallway and started the 'band' up again. Once again the same policeman came and arrested me. When we got to the street he once again released me and told me to stop the music. What did I do? I returned and got the 'band 'out to continue playing our music in the hall. Once again the policeman came. This time someone noticed him coming and fearing I would really go to jail this time I tried to hide from the policeman. I was hiding in various hallways and he was chasing me. It was like a spy chase in a movie. Well, the policeman finally caught me and once again put the cuffs on me and led me off to jail. This third time he released me again in the street. By now it was getting pretty late, so I finally gave up my quest for another 'jam' session. So that evening I was arrested' three times, yet never saw a jail cell.

While living on Brown Street I became good friends with several of John Adam's friends, Jerry Dies and Garland Trusley or Truz. Truz and I became very good friends. We both loved baseball and were willing to do almost anything for laughs. Truz home situation was sad. His father was an alcoholic and his parents 'kicked' him out of the house. Truz was about two years younger than me and lived in the Anthony Wayne hotel in

downtown Akron. At one time this was a charming hotel but by the mid 1960's it was becoming more of a 'dive' hotel. Truz was working part time at Firestone and attending Akron U and at times did not have enough funds to pay his rent at the hotel. Often after a night on the town I would drop him off at the rear of the hotel so he could go up the fire escape to his room in order to avoid the front desk because he was in arrears in rent payments.

Quite often several of us would go to 'soul' bars because we loved 'soul' music. One of our favorite places was a neighborhood bar near Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. I can't remember the name of the bar, just the bartender, her name was 'Coochie.' This bar had the best jukebox in town and often during the week we would spend several hours there having a few beers and listening to all the great tunes on the jukebox. On several weekends Truz and I went to 'soul bars' on Howard Street. These bars or lounges usually had good jazz bands but very few white people would enter these bars. The one we frequented most often was the Hi Hat Lounge. I remember Good Friday in 1967 very well. Several of us went out on the town and found the action very slow. It seems most people were respecting Good Friday. Since most bars and lounges were quiet that night I suggested we go to the Hi Hat. When we arrived there was a good crowd and we were the only white people in the lounge. That evening they had a great white band from Pittsburgh, it was one of the best bands I had ever heard. We were in heaven listening to all the great music. We discovered the next afternoon they were going to have a 'jam' session at the club. So on Saturday afternoon four or five of us attended the 'jam' and it was great. I remember several local Black musicians joining in on the band during the jam and all the Black people in the bar yelling at them to get off the stage and 'let the white guys play.' That Saturday night we went to the Hi Hat again to hear this band play and once again we were the only white people in standing room only (SRO) crowd. Being the only white people in these black bars didn't bother me a bit; in fact, I enjoyed learning the black lingo and the way many of them lived. Once again remember this was 1967 and the height of the civil rights movement when many whites and blacks did not respect or interact with each other.

The spring of 1967 began another softball season and once again the Pilsudski Club sponsored our team. Truz joined our team and both of us loved to practice and talk baseball. One early Saturday afternoon in April we had a practice and when practice was over Truz suggested the two of us get something to eat at a small black bar in East Akron. We spent a good part of the afternoon at this bar then at about six or seven o'clock we decided to get something substantial to eat. Since we were wearing our 'skuzzy' practice clothes Truz suggested going to some small neighborhood restaurant. I said I was hungry and suggested going to the Brown Derby for a steak dinner. Truz thought I was crazy since the Brown Derby while not exclusive was a fairly nice restaurant. I told him 'no' I am serious, so we went to the Brown Derby for our steak dinner dressed in our dirty old practice clothes. While sitting at our table I noticed many people staring at us but this didn't bother me, we were just having a good meal. After we left the restaurant Truz turned to me and said, 'now I know you are crazy, even I would not have thought of doing this.'

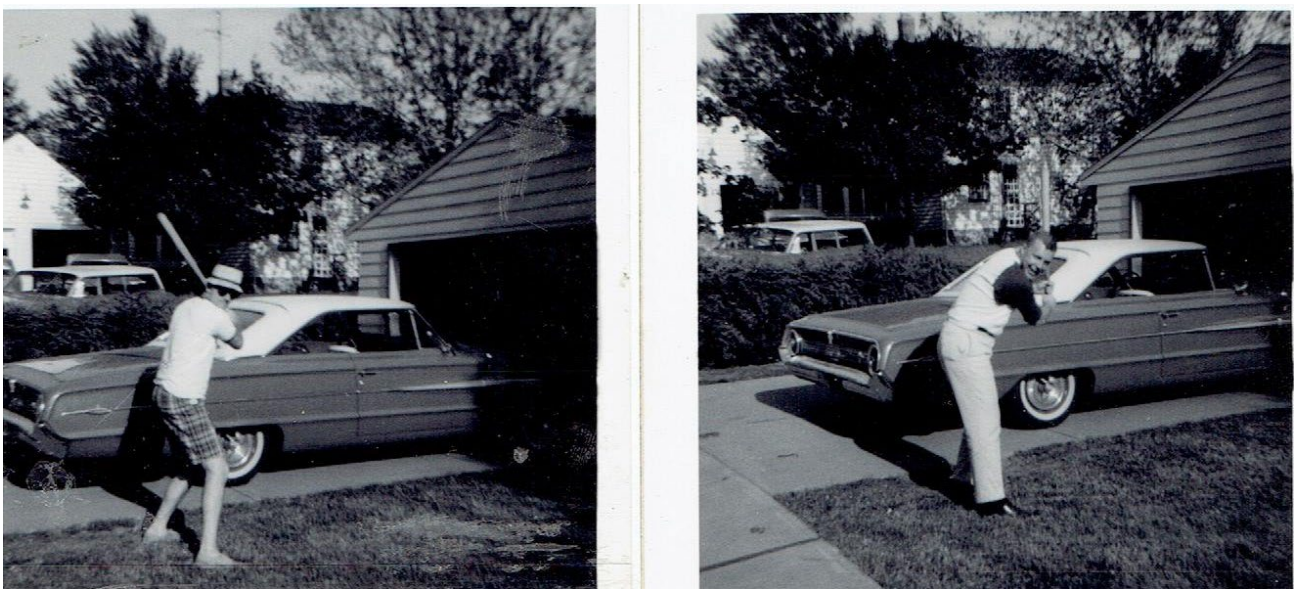
In April Tom & Gerry asked if I would be godfather for Vicki. Elaine was the godmother.



Elaine and me as God parents for Vicki in 1967

In March I was thinking of buying a boat, it was something I had dreamed and thought about for a while, so I thought I would start looking for one. One problem though was I didn't know much about boats, so I asked Darlene of our Sunday night bowling league if she would go with me to look at a boat. She was living with her parents in the Portage Lakes area and they had a boat so I thought she might be able to help me in my search. On a Sunday afternoon we looked at a boat then I took her to our house on Brown St., then took her home. During our time together this afternoon I got to know her better and wouldn't you know I was beginning to like her and we began dating. Darlene was a lot of fun and owned a neat Dodge Dart convertible. I really liked Darlene and even her family. They belonged to St. Francis parish and Darlene was the oldest of five children and would often need to baby sit for her younger brothers and sisters. One neat thing about the family was all their names began with the letter 'D,' even the dog. Darlene graduated from St. Mary's high school and went to college in Minnesota for several years then returned to Akron. Darlene was tall, slender, and attractive. Whenever I was with her it seemed like electricity passed through our bodies. At one of our early season Pilsudski Club games she surprised me by coming to see me play. She came directly from work, was dressed up and really looked good. All the guys on the team were eyeing her up and curious who she was then seemed jealous once they discovered Darlene had come to see me. During the game we talked between innings but Darlene couldn't stay for the whole game so she couldn't join us at the Pilsudski Club. We dated for about 10 weeks then during Memorial Day weekend we had a little tiff and I didn't see her again that summer. I never did buy a boat that year.

With the arrival of warm weather our attention on Brown St. naturally turned to the outdoors. Often when friends were over I would place my stereo speakers in our living room windows facing out, put some albums on the stereo and would lounge in our front yard listening to tunes while having a few beers. Of course, we didn't play our music quietly. Obviously, our neighbors didn't appreciate it, especially if it was after dark.



Truz and I posing in 1967.

During the summer, several events occurred that changed what was going on in my life. Ray Gmerek had joined the Air Force; married Gloria and they were living at an Air Force base in Illinois. In late July Jim Benko married and moved out.

In June Jim Hadley married Teddi. Hadley invited me to be a member of his wedding party and their wedding was a very nice affair. Teddi was a really nice, funny, artistic, and attractive girl. Many people I knew attended the wedding reception and after the reception I invited many of them to our house to continue the party. Little did I know this party was to be one of the best parties we ever had on Brown Street. Not only did people from the wedding come to Brown St. but also others discovered there was a party going on at our house. And it was not just young people who attended the party. Mrs. Rainey (Judy's mother), Stella Czarnecki, and several other older people were there. Around 1 AM I got the 'Grubber All Star Band' cranked up. We must have performed for several hours. During our 'performance' someone turned out the lights and used a lamp to spotlight each of us in the band. Of course, I was the lead performer and the night's highlight were me and the band performing to the sound of *Coming Home Baby* by Herbie Mann. The 'Grubber All Star Band' usually received standing ovations whenever we performed but this night the audience gave us multiple standing ovations. There must have been 40-50 people at our house and almost all were watching our performance. The party broke up around 4 AM and all left having a fun time. The song *Coming Home Baby* by Herbie Mann was and is one of my favorite jazz tunes.

I had become a real jazz lover and often enjoyed way out jazz. By that I mean music that was truly unconventional. My favorite jazz artist was Don Ellis and his band. He had a master's degree in music and wrote music with truly unconventional times, like 19/4 and 3 2/3 times. I remember one summer afternoon one of Truz's friends from high school was back in town and came to pay Truz a visit. In high school this guy was a very good athlete and had a football scholarship to Kent State. Well, he played one year left school and became a hippie. After being gone for several years he was back in town. He was living in Alaska with a 16-year-old runaway girl from Minnesota and an Alaskan Husky dog. Anyway, while they were visiting I played Don Ellis's song in 19/4 time. After listening to the song, they said listening to that song was better than being on an LSD 'trip.'

Speaking of LSD, I can say I never took any drugs. During the mid and late 1960's and into the early 1970's taking drugs became very prevalent, yet I just stuck to alcohol. However, many people I knew had at least taken marijuana. I had seen guys who had mixed alcohol and drugs and how messed up they became, so I tried to avoid drugs at all costs.

Another interesting night that summer was when a group of us were just hanging out having a few beers then around ten o'clock someone suggested we go swimming at Portage Lakes. One of us, I can't remember who, said they knew someone who had a home on the lake and wouldn't mind us swimming in the lake at their house. Well about ten or twelve of us piled into several cars and headed out to the lake. While some of us were swimming someone suggested we all go 'skinny dipping.' Since both guys and gals were there this suggestion surprised me and several others, but most of the guys including me, stripped all the way and 'skinny dipped' while the girls just stripped to their underwear and we all swam under the night sky. By the way, the owners of the house were not home and never knowing we had used their property to swim.

After I stopped dating Darlene I went out with several girls once or twice but no more than that. I played a lot of softball, went out on the town on Friday and Saturday nights, and continued to party along with going to work every day. Then on a late July afternoon I was driving down Killian Rd. and I saw Cathy, my friend from college, in her front yard. I hadn't seen Cathy for over a year and a half. I stopped to say hello and we spent several hours together. She was now dating someone steady and was thinking about getting married. After spending time with her I realized how refreshing it was to be with someone who was so wholesome, yet a lot of fun. I had spent so much time hanging around bars, lounges, having loud parties and just acting crazy I forgot what a special girl she was. Seeing Cathy again made me realize what my priorities are in regard to someone I could become serious about.

In July when Jim Benko married he paid us for another month's rent, then we had to find another roommate to help pay the rent. In August Truz decided to move in with us, he was finally leaving the old decrepit Anthony Wayne hotel. Since Truz didn't have a bed he slept on the couch and I remember waking him up every morning by playing Charles Lloyd's song *Love In* on the stereo. However, after Truz moved in many guys began to

hang out at our house and it seemed to become more like a fraternity house. Guys seemed to come and go at all hours of the day and night and just hang out. After a few weeks this began to bug me. Maybe I was just beginning to feel bored with this lifestyle.

At work I was also becoming bored with my job as an Accounts Payable auditor. I mentioned this to my boss Tom Dale, and he suggested that I join the management training program. I thought about this for a while but I was more interested in becoming a Purchasing Agent. In my Accounts Payable position I interacted frequently with purchasing agents and this type of work interested me. Could it be that I was losing interest in living on Brown Street and becoming more interested in a career? Was I maturing?

Although I said I didn't date anyone steady this summer in mid-August I did meet a neat girl. Her name was Joanie and she was an English teacher. We met at the Gmerek/Czarnecki Julian Ave. house where a group had gathered. That evening I asked her out to have a drink at a jazz club. We went out several more times and I visited her at her apartment. She was a nice and attractive girl who was someone I could have dated on a long-term basis. However, nothing came of this relationship because I made a major decision in late-August. I decided to quit my job, move out of Brown St., and travel the country. Ever since Truz moved in the idea of traveling the country came back to me. This is something I had dreamed of since I was about ten years old. I thought if I was ever going to do this now was the right time. I was single, with no major responsibilities and was becoming bored with my job and lifestyle. After making this decision I tried to get someone else to travel with me, but no one was willing to drop his life for adventure. There was one guy who worked at GAC who thought he may join me, but in the end he too was unwilling to risk adventure. On September 1 I moved from Brown St. back to my parent's house. On Labor Day I finally did something I hadn't done up to this time. I took a girl to my uncle's farm for the family picnic. She was Joanie, unfortunately my parents were not at the picnic that day. They had never met any girl I dated. That was the last time I saw Joanie.

Once I made my decision to travel around the country I felt excited and every day I would think about where I would go and routes to travel. My last day at work was the Friday after Labor Day then the following morning I left with $200 and a handful of gasoline credit cards. As I mentioned there was no VISA or Master Cards only expensive Americana Express or Dinner's Club cards in those days. I packed for winter and summer along with my stereo and tunes. My first stop was to see Ray & Gloria in Illinois. Upon entering the Air Force Ray spent nine months training to be an F-14 fighter pilot but when he flew solo for almost an hour he became sick and had to quit his dream of being a fighter pilot. He then was assigned to teach about aircraft at the base at the Rantoul Air Base. Ray and Gloria just had their first child, Chucky, several months before I arrived. I stayed with them for about five days then decided it was time to move on. I left early one morning leaving some money on the table for them and resumed my journey. About a year later Ray was sent to Vietnam.

From Rantoul I traveled across the farmlands of Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska then headed north to the Dakotas. In Sioux Falls, South Dakota I needed to have my car's front end aligned then headed toward the Bad Lands and Mount Rushmore. I was fascinated by the how flat the land was in the prairie and was especially fascinated by the Bad Lands. I had heard of the Bad Lands since I was a kid watching all those cowboy movies and always wanted to see it. It did not disappoint; the Bad Lands are very unique.

While driving in Iowa I stopped at a rest stop and my seat belt wouldn't open. I tried for quite a while to open the seat belt, but to avail, so I slivered down through the seat belt, head, and all to escape the belt. I was not able to use my seat belt for many months.

While driving through the farmlands and prairie the selections on the car radio were very limited and every 15 minutes the updated farm reports were announced. These included the updated hog, cattle, corn, wheat, and soybean etc. prices. This and not having a suitable selection of music was very annoying to me. Remember at this time FM radio hardly existed and was rare in car radios. Tape decks, cassettes and CD's were not available yet. I also remember arriving in a town called Spearfish, either in South Dakota or Montana. The town was just like towns I would see in those old western movies. There were hitching posts for horses in front of every building and stairs on the side of building to get to the second floor. It was like the late 1800's and early 1900's as seen in the movies.

After leaving Ray and Gloria's house I slept in my car but once I arrived in South Dakota it was getting cold, so I had to spring for a motel. At this time I was glad I decided not to drive to Alaska. I had thought about it but after reading the Alaska Highway was dangerous to travel I decided against it. The highway was all gravel and one needed to put a lot of protection on one's car undercarriage to prevent damage to the car's underside. In addition the highway was very isolated and if one had car trouble it could be very dangerous. This plus by mid to late September it was beginning to get cold.

From western South Dakota I headed south to Denver. I traveled though Wyoming and it was very desolate, the most desolate area I had ever seen. Upon arriving in Denver I visited a friend from Goodyear Aerospace who was vacationing there visiting his son. He was the one who sold me his furniture for the Brown St. house. The Denver area was the most beautiful country I had ever seen. The air was clear and clean and the snow-capped Rocky Mountains around the city were just gorgeous. What I also found interesting was that on leaving Denver the temperature was around 85 degrees and after driving about 30 minutes up the mountains it began to snow. This was all new and fascinating to me. After staying in Denver for several days I moved on again.

My next stop after leaving Denver was Salt Lake City. To get there I needed to cross the Rocky Mountains and cross Utah. While crossing the mountains in Utah I came across what seemed like a dust storm on a mountain road. This seemed strange to me but decided to go through the dust and to my surprise my car hit something. It was a road-cleaning vehicle that created so much dust that I couldn't see it. I thought to myself what

such a vehicle is doing on a little traveled mountain road. The damage to my vehicle was minor; however, one of headlights was broken. Since I didn't have much money to fix the headlight I continued my trip with only one headlight. Fortunately at the time of the accident I was the only car on the road.

After driving over the mountains I entered Salt Lake City. While in Salt Lake City I visited the Mormon Tabernacle and a few other sites. I remember my first night in the city I was wondering where to sleep. Usually while sleeping in the car I chose a rest stop or remote site to park and sleep. Since there weren't any remote sites in a large city I decided my best bet was to park in a residential neighborhood. I chose the same neighborhood for several days and upon waking in the morning I went to the Greyhound bus station to clean up for the day.

My next major destination was San Francisco. Heading west from Salt Lake City I came across a flat area that was all white. I thought it was snow-covered land but as I continued to drive I realized the white covering the ground wasn't snow, it was salt. I had entered the Bonneville salt-flats. I had heard of this area; it was where they used to have auto car races and where they tested new race cars. After leaving the salt-flats I entered Nevada and crossed the state until arriving in Reno. I thought Wyoming was desolate; the Nevada desert was even more desolate. Hardly anyone lived in this desert; in fact, I only went through one town while driving across the state. That town was Winnemucca and of course it had a small gambling casino. I stopped briefly in Winnemucca then continued traveling. Upon arriving in Reno I was surprised to realize it was near the Sierra Nevada Mountains. After visiting a casino in Reno and spending the night I headed to Carson City then needed to cross the Sierra Nevada mountains. I looked at my map and decided to take a scenic road to cross the mountains. I can't remember which road I traveled on but it sure was scenic, yet I discovered it was very dangerous. The road was one and half car widths wide with no guardrail. The mountain came down to the road on one side of the road and the mountain dropped off steeply on the other side. I was wondering what would happen if another vehicle came upon me from the other direction. It took me about three or four hours to cross the mountains and only one car came upon me. Fortunately, I was on the mountainside. I pulled over as close to the mountain as I could and the oncoming car went as far as he could on the other side without tumbling off the mountain. Yes, I will admit I was a bit scared crossing these mountains. The Sierra Nevada mountains are beautiful yet very high, in fact the highest mountains in the lower forty-eight states. Coming down the other side of mountain I came upon a beautiful scene, it was Lake Tahoe. it was like a mirage. After spending so much time in the desert and crossing the mountains it sure was a beautiful sight. After viewing the Lake Tahoe area, I continued my journey into California.

Driving through California was more relaxing than crossing the mountains. I arrived in Sacramento and thought it was a nice city. At the time Sacramento was not the large town it is today. After Sacramento it was on to San Francisco and the land of the 'flower children.' I had heard so much about San Francisco and it didn't disappoint. I was surprised though with all the large bridges here and in Oakland. Of course, I crossed Golden Gate Bridge, drove down Lombard Street, the most crooked street in the world,

visited Fisherman's Warf and saw San Quentin prison from the shore. I also went down the Height-Asbury district. This was the center of the hippie culture in the U.S. It was everything I had read and heard about. Girls with flowers in their hair, everyone had long hair, lots of musicians and artists on the sidewalks and of course rampant drug use. Most people were dressed rather raggedly. Since I really wasn't into the hippie movement after several days I headed south to Los Angeles.

While driving to Los Angeles (L.A.) I traveled through the San Joaquin Valley, the vegetable and fruit growing capital of the U.S. I stopped at several fruit and vegetable stands then headed south. Upon entering L.A., the city of freeways, I soon discovered that one really had to plan in advance for your exit off the freeway. There were six lanes in each direction with bumper-to-bumper traffic with what seemed like all cars going 70-80 mph. This may seem common today in many cities, but in 1967 L.A. was the only city with traffic like this. L.A. freeways were world famous.

My first stop in Los Angeles was to visit Helen and Charley Hoye and their family. Helen was Dorothy (Gmerek) Anderson's sister and she married Charley at age 17 and they moved to California several years later. I had heard a lot about the Hoyes' basically because they had so many children, fifteen at that time. They had one more child about a year later. When I arrived at their house I knocked on the door and Helen answered. Since she didn't recognize me I introduced myself and Helen was more than surprised. I really didn't know Helen, but she and Charley knew my parents very well and knew of me. She invited me to their house and told me to make myself comfortable but not to expect any special treatment. It was a weekday afternoon and she was busy with her household duties before the kids came home from school. She went to the kitchen to finish cooking dinner. We talked while she was cooking in large Army style pots and pans. Helen told me she spent most of her day cooking, washing and mending clothes. However, she did have a book to read at each of her 'workstations' to keep her mind occupied. Their oldest child, Ginger, was the same age as me and was married as was another child. Helen invited me to dinner and that was an experience. In the dining room was one long table and each member of the family had their place with Charley seated at the head of table. It was almost like the painting of the Last Supper. Charley was late coming home from work that day but the whole family waited for him to arrive before they sat down to eat. After dinner they invited me to stay with them awhile and I took them up on their invitation. I was given a bed to sleep in which I very much appreciated, not for a bed to sleep in, but because beds sometimes were scarce at the house since one or more of the kids often had friends staying overnight. I remember the next evening after dinner Charley took me outside to talk and told me that he was now a vice president of the frozen food company where he worked (he started as a milkman) and if they didn't have so many children he and Helen would really be living nicely. But he went on say that he would much rather have all the children than material things in life. This really impressed me. He also asked me if I wanted a job just to ask him. Their oldest son, Kenny, also told me if I wanted a job he could arrange for me to become a management trainee at the drug store chain where he worked. It seemed jobs were for the taking in Los Angeles. I told each of them I would think about the job offers and let

them know. After spending two days with Charley and Helen I decided I had better move on.

After leaving the Hoyes' I went to see Jim Chisholm. Jim was whom we stayed with a year and half earlier when Ray, Charley and I traveled to Los Angeles. I called Jim a day before I arrived and he invited me to stay with him while I was in town. Jim's situation hadn't changed since the last time I stayed with him; he was still living above a garage with his friend. Upon entering his apartment he invited me to open the refrigerator and take whatever I wanted. When I opened the refrigerator door all that was there was a bottle of mustard, a bottle of ketchup and six cans of beer. I could relate this to my Brown Street days. Jim and his friend offered me their couch to sleep on but I had to manage myself for food. This was great for me so most of the time while in the Los Angeles area I stayed with Jim.

Soon after arriving at Jim's I contacted another high school classmate, John Skeese. John was the track coach at a local all boys' Catholic high school. John ran track at St. V and entered and graduated from Notre Dame and earned a degree in Physical Education. Upon his college graduation he was one of only three Phys. Ed. majors at Notre Dame and Catholic high schools all over U. S. contacted him to coach. He chose the Los Angeles area because at the time it was the sports capital in the country and the track season lasted for five months. John also lived with a friend, another teacher, and they had a really nice apartment. His apartment was a place in an area where I thought it would be neat to live with Palm trees surrounding the apartment complex. I hadn't seen John since 1963 when he invited Jim Hadley and me to the Notre Dame vs. Iowa football game. After contacting John he told me I could stay with him, but not too often since he was usually pretty busy at school. I was now feeling comfortable in the L.A. area now that I had several places to stay without having to pay for any lodging.

After a week in Los Angeles, I bought a newspaper and searched for employment opportunities. There were a multitude of jobs advertised for those with Finance degrees. I thought it should be easy to obtain employment here in the L.A. I hesitated to look for a job though because my goal was to travel the whole United States and I was only halfway through my trip. While in L. A. I went to several places I wanted to see including the Griffith Observatory, Hollywood Bowl, Sunset Strip, Beverly Hills and of course Hollywood. While in Hollywood I discovered where *Shelly's Manhole* was located. This was a famous jazz club I had read about in Downbeat magazine, so one Monday evening I went to the club and discovered to my great surprise Don Ellis and his band played there every Monday evening. I was in heaven that night. All I had to do was buy two drinks and I could listen to my jazz idol for hours. Guess what? Several Monday evenings after that night I was at *Shelly's Manhole*, it was fantastic.

While I was in town I also called another old friend, the girl I had dated before she left for California. When she arrived in California she wrote me a letter telling me her new address and phone number and now I was going to look her up. I called her and she was glad I contacted her and offered to take me to Disneyland the upcoming Sunday. So that Sunday we spent most of the day at Disneyland and I really enjoyed myself.

She really looked good and had obtained a job she enjoyed and seemed very happy with her move to California. I felt happy for her but since she was semi-dating someone else I only saw her one more time.

After staying with Chisholm about week he invited me to join him one Sunday evening where he was a member of a Catholic singles mixed bowling league. While I was there I met a girl named Susan. After bowling I asked her to have a drink with me in the lounge and she accepted. We spent a lot of time together that evening and discovered we had several common interests including jazz, and baseball. I decided to ask her out again and saw her often including one Saturday evening when we went to see *The Modern Jazz Quartet,* another one of the great jazz groups at that time. Susan had graduated from college and was working part-time while continuing her education to be a dietician.

During my time in L.A. most days were usually spent just seeing the sights and exploring the area. Then one day I decided to visit my Aunt Theresa again in El Cajon. When I arrived at her bar/restaurant she was busy working but told me to stay at the bar until she left for the day. Ray Ford's health was not good and he couldn't work anymore. Upon leaving work for the day we went to her house and I saw that Ray was not doing well physically, he was basically housebound. My Aunt Theresa said she would get something simple for Ray to eat and offered to take me to a smorgasbord restaurant for dinner. While at the restaurant I went back for three helpings of food. My aunt couldn't believe I could eat so much while still being thin but what she didn't know was that I hardly eaten anything for three days. I stayed with my aunt and Ray for two days then went back to Jim Chisholm's apartment.



Aunt Theresa's Cafe in El Cajon, California



Hippie car in California

After being in Los Angeles for almost a month I was becoming enamored with the area, maybe I should say I fell in love with the area. Jobs seemed plentiful, it was a haven for jazz and was the sports mecca of the United States, this in addition to the great weather. I had seen the hippie culture, their quirts, and the whole southern California scene. I was becoming obsessed with this area. I wanted to stay but as I said I wanted to see the rest of the country. My plan was to continue on with my journey, return home, then return to Los Angeles. So, one morning I packed up my things and headed to Las Vegas. On my way to Vegas I stopped and mailed a post card to Susan telling her I was leaving. Shortly after mailing the postcard the song came on the radio, *By the Time I Get Phoenix by Glen Campbell.* It is a song about someone writing a letter to a girl telling her that he was leaving and going to Phoenix. I realized I was doing the same thing since Phoenix was to be one of my next stops after Las Vegas.

I crossed the desert to Las Vegas and stayed there for two days. I stayed at a very inexpensive hotel and just bummed around the town. It was a much smaller city than it is now and the Strip had only about ten hotels. While in Vegas I thought seriously about getting a job and working for several weeks but decided against it. I thought it would be neat to get a job in Vegas and tell everyone back home about it, I am sure many would have felt envious. One evening I went to a casino and discovered Fats Domino was playing in the lounge, so sat at the bar, had a few drinks, and listened to Fats perform for several hours. He and his piano were seated right in front of me behind the bar.

After Las Vegas I went to Zion National Park. Ray Gmerek had seen it and advised me to take it in. It was beautiful and worth the trip to see. After visiting Zion I was in St. George, Utah and it was getting dark. So that evening I went into the desert and pulled my car behind a large boulder to sleep. I remember waking in the middle of the night and stepping outside the car and seeing all the stars. It was gorgeous. The stars were very numerous and bright. Without any lights or clouds one could see thousands if not millions of stars in the sky. I had never seen so many stars in the sky and I thought it was a spectacular sight.

From St. George, Utah I was now heading to Phoenix to see Stan Adam. Stan was John’s younger brother and we bowled together on Wednesday night while I was living on Brown St. Stan was now in the Air Force and stationed at Luke Air Force base in the Phoenix area. I remember crossing the mountains at night heading into Phoenix. The city is located in a valley surrounded by mountains and coming down the mountain I could see all the city lights, it was a neat sight. I arrived in Phoenix around midnight and the temperature was around 85 degrees. The next day I got an inexpensive room and remember during the day the temperature hit 115 degrees. There wasn’t any humidity but the sun sure was hot in the middle of the day. I was unable to get hold of Stan, so I continued on with my journey.

My next stop was Tucson. The most interesting part of this area was seeing the cactus in southern Arizona, it was like they were farming cacti. After leaving Tucson I had no specific destination. I just headed east toward New Mexico and Texas. Driving in the desert by myself was a lonely experience. I remember one day I drove for hours without

seeing any other vehicles or life of any kind. At one point there were large cliffs in the distance on both sides of the road and the land was very flat. Then I saw what looked like some sort of statue or sign in the distance. This figure was next to the road and I was anxious to see what it was but it was still several miles ahead of me. When I got closer to the figure it looked like a wooden Indian one used to see in front of barbershops. Then when I got within about a quarter of mile from the figure it jumped out in front of my car. I was startled and didn't know what to think. I swerved my car abruptly to avoid hitting the figure. When I passed the figure, I saw that it was a Native American woman. It sure looked like she trying to commit suicide. I thought to myself what is a person doing alone in the middle of the desert? I thought of stopping, but I had visions of a band of Indians attacking me from the cliffs. So, I continued driving without stopping. I must have seen too many cowboy and Indian movies when I was a kid.

After crossing the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico I arrived in El Paso, Texas. While here I drove along the Rio Grande river, which borders Texas and Mexico, I could clearly see into the town of Juarez, Mexico. I was able to see how miserably the people lived. I had thought it was bad in Tijuana but Juarez was worse for many people lived in caves, it is like night and day from El Paso. From El Paso I crossed the whole state of Texas to Houston. Talk about a long drive, it took me about two days to cross the state. West Texas was very desolate with just scrub grass and mountains. As one goes further east the land begins to flatten out but it still isn't very scenic. I remember driving past the LBJ ranch. Since Lyndon Johnson was president at the time his ranch was famous. To me it was located in the middle of nowhere with just a bunch of long-horned cattle. After passing the LBJ ranch I came into a horde of butterflies. Since I didn't have air conditioning in my car all the windows were open and I had to stop quickly to close all the windows to prevent being invaded by all these huge butterflies. These butterflies were larger than any I had ever seen before.

When I arrived in Houston I finally got a room. I hadn't cleaned up since leaving Phoenix and I thought it was time to get a shower and sleep in a bed for a change. While in Houston I saw all the oil wells in the Gulf of Mexico and the Astrodome, which at the time was called the 'eighth wonder of the world. One evening I didn't have anything to do so I went to see the movie, *Becket*.

From Houston I drove to New Orleans. Of course, I went to the French Quarter and downtown on Canal Street. This street was the widest street I had seen and the area was very clean and nice. However I wanted to see the town outside of the tourist areas. I discovered once outside the tourist districts New Orleans was the dirtiest city I had seen in the United States. There was garbage all over the streets and most of the houses were not kept up. It was much worse than any slum I had seen in any other city. Also, while in New Orleans I sent my parents another post card. I had been keeping in touch with them via postcards; however, I hadn't sent a postcard to them for several weeks. They had no idea where I was or what I was doing, so I sent them a card to at least let them know I was still alive and well.

Upon leaving New Orleans I headed to the Deep South, Mississippi, and Alabama. I was very curious what it was like in these areas, especially the rural areas. I had heard and read so much about life in the Deep South because of the Civil Rights movement. After driving to coastal Mississippi, I headed north to the more rural areas and I felt very surprised to see how many of these people lived. Most of the houses were relatively far apart, they had no indoor plumbing and by seeing the people and their living environment it looked like a scene from the pre-Civil War era. These houses had not been painted in many years if ever and they were supported off the ground by cinder blocks. As I continued to drive through rural Mississippi I came upon a small town and pulled into a gas station. It looked like a scene right from the movies. It was a small station and in front of the building were about 5 or 6 men sitting on cracker barrels wearing bib overalls. In those days one could not pump their own gas so an attendant would pump your gas, wash your windshield, and check your oil. As I approached the building to ask for gas the men out front checked me out pretty good then asked what I was doing in town. I told them I was passing through town and needed gas. They scrutinized me carefully and said 'OK, you are welcome to get your gas but then just keep moving on. We don't want to see you in this town anymore.' I then realized they saw my Ohio license plate and probably thought I could have been a Civil Rights worker. By the look on their face and tone of their voice I could tell they meant what they said and I had better get out of town quickly or who knows what they would have done to me. I found out quickly white southerners didn't like anyone from the north or mid-west. They wanted to keep the south segregated and thought northerners were a threat to them and their way of life. See the movie *Mississippi Burning.*

After I left the gas station I continued my journey through rural Mississippi then on through rural Alabama down to the Gulf coast. From here I traveled the whole Florida coastline, first along the Florida panhandle through Panama City and Pensacola. These towns were basically fishing villages along with military bases for the Navy, Coast Guard and Air Force. I continued down the west coast of Florida through Tampa-St. Petersburg to Naples. At the time Naples was also just a fishing village like those in northern Florida. After spending the afternoon in the Naples area, I headed across the state via Alligator Alley. This is a straight road going east from Naples to the Miami area that comes close to the Everglades. I left Naples near dusk and discovered this was not a wise thing to do. As I was driving it was becoming dark and Alligator Alley did not have any streetlights and the swamps were near the edge of the road. I was actually starting to feel concerned when it became dark because if I had car trouble or had to stop my car alligators could be anywhere. I don't think this road is that dangerous anymore. Anyway, I made it across the road to Miami. Once in Miami I became lost and after driving in some not so safe neighborhoods I ended up in Coral Gables. I finally found what I thought was a safe residential area parked my car and slept again in the backseat. The next day I went to see the Everglades and traveled down to Flamingo, the most southern part of Florida except for Key West. Flamingo is at the southern tip of the Everglades and at the time wasn't a town, just a security outpost. I found the Everglades very interesting with all the beautiful wildlife and alligators. While I was exploring this area there were no other people, just me. I'm sure you will not find it that way today. In fact, today this area is a National Park.

After leaving the Everglades area I headed north along the east coast of Florida. It was a Friday evening and I was driving on Route A1A toward Cocoa Beach, near Cape Canaveral and the NASA space station. Around 10 PM I passed the street where I wanted to make a right-hand turn so I decided to turn right at the next street then circle back to A1A then to the street where I wanted to turn. When I turned off A1A to the side street it was like going from heaven to hell. Rt. A1A was a nice well-lighted highway and this side street was dark without any street lighting; I also noticed all the houses were really shabby. When I pulled up to the first cross street to turn right I stopped at a stop sign, it was a warm night so I had my windows down. As soon as I pulled to a stop all of a sudden a Black man jumped out behind a bush and put a knife to my throat. It was a fairly long knife, about six inches long. I thought I was a goner or at least my car would be stolen. The man got into my car and kept his knife to my throat. Needless to say I was scared. I wasn't sure what he wanted when he began talking to me with the edge of his knife right on my throat. He then told me to start driving. I had visions of him taking me to isolated field, killing me, and stealing my car. Soon I began to talk 'jive' with him, lingo I learned from all the black bars I used to frequent in Akron. As we drove I continued to' jive talk' with him and after driving for about ten minutes he seemed to relax a bit and took his knife from my throat and put the point at my side. He was telling me where to drive but it seemed that we were driving aimlessly. As we were driving we kept talking to each other, yet I still had no idea what he wanted. About ten minutes later he started to give me directions to a specific location. Finally, about a half an hour after he initially put a knife to my throat he told me to stop at a certain house in a residential neighborhood. When we arrived at this house I stopped the car while he still had a knife to my side. He finally put his knife away and told me the house where we stopped was a 'whore' house' and that he was going into the house. Then he really surprised me when he told me I was 'pretty good white guy' and invited me in for a 'freebie.' I told him 'no thanks, I was in hurry to get somewhere.' I really was in a hurry to get somewhere, and that was out of this area. He finally got out of the car and said goodbye. I felt totally relieved and thankful I wasn't dead, I then realized that if it wasn't for the black lingo I learned in all those soul bars I might not be alive. I then pulled away as fast as I could and headed to Cocoa Beach. That night I pulled into a nice neighborhood and slept in my car. The next day I toured the NASA space station and thought it was fascinating. I even thought NASA would be an interesting place to work. Looking back, I am thinking the experience from the previous evening probably didn't bother me very much the next day. I seemed to take a lot of things in stride.

Once I toured NASA I headed north to my next major destination, Washington DC. While driving through South Carolina at night a state trooper pulled me over. He came up to my car and asked me why I was driving with only one headlight. I told him I was in an accident and was going to fix it once I got back to Ohio. He sternly told me that in South Carolina they didn't drive with one headlight and if I knew what was good for me I would get out of South Carolina ASAP. He didn't give me a ticket but I was sure it was another case of a white southerner not wanting anyone from Ohio in his state.

Upon arriving in Washington DC, I got a room. While in Washington I visited the John Kennedy's grave site and several of the famous monuments and buildings. While here I

even thought it would be interesting working for the CIA, but I knew it would be very difficult for an Akron U grad to work for the CIA or anything related to national security. At the time most of these positions along with working for the State Department were reserved for Ivy League or prestigious school graduates.

After departing Washington, I didn't know where to go so I thought I might as well head home. I decided to take the scenic route home, so I took US 50 across West Virginia. What a mistake. I was crossing all those mountains east to west and it took me 14 hours to cross the state. The road was very winding and I could only travel about 25 mph through the state. That evening when I reached the Ohio state line I realized I really didn't want to go home so I decided to continue on to Illinois to visit Ray and Gloria again. I stayed with them for a few days then headed home. I was now completely out of money and remember borrowing $1 from Ray in order to have some cash while traveling home.

I arrived home in the middle of the night while my parents were asleep and I slept on the couch. The next day both my mom and dad were very glad to see me and that I was OK. After spending a few days relaxing with them I told them I wanted to return to Los Angeles. Right away I knew that were not too happy with me leaving again. I thought to myself I was now 26 years old, and I should be able to do what I wanted. There was one major problem with me returning to California, I did not have any money and my car needed some work. I had driven over 16,000 miles and my tires were bald, and my headlight needed replaced. So, my plan of immediately going back to Los Angeles was put on hold. I had to find a temporary job in order to realize my dream of eventually returning to LA. It was near Christmas and not a suitable time to find a job, however I did begin my job search though. After being home for a few weeks life in Akron felt empty and being with my old friends felt shallow. I had experienced so much in the past few months that being back in Akron was not very appealing to me.

I had one major surprise when I returned home, it was a letter waiting for me from Susan. Then on Christmas Day she called me on the phone encouraging me to return to Los Angeles. I told her what I was telling everyone else, I was out of money and needed to work. Susan was interesting, but I really wasn't super enthused about her. I kept communication open with her via phone or letter but I didn't think anything would come of our relationship. She was the one who encouraged me to continue our relationship.

About a month after Christmas my dream of returning to California was dimming. I didn't have any money so I decided to search for a regular full-time position. I began my job search in earnest; however discovered it would not be easy for me to obtain a job. Seems my being unemployed for months raised issues with many employers. Most didn't consider the fact I would quit my job to 'bum' the country wasn't very responsible. There were even several companies that told me that for all they knew I could have been in jail during the past several months. No computers to check on this possibility. As I kept getting turned down for jobs I was starting to feel very discouraged and despondent. I was once again losing confidence in myself. At this time jobs were

plentiful yet I could not obtain one. Finally, in late February I went to work for a temporary agency working in a warehouse. I needed some money to get by day to day. At the warehouse I met an old friend from high school, ‘Feet.’ He was married and working full-time in the warehouse. After working at the warehouse for a week or so I quit to return to my job search. Finally, in late March I obtained a job as an Internal Auditor at American Electric Power Company (AEP).

I began working in mid-April at the Canton office. AEP is a large electric utility that at that time had operations in over six states. The job required that I train in Canton for three or four months then begin traveling throughout the AEP system to help perform audits at their various offices and power plants. I was assigned to work in the Ohio Power Co. and Wheeling Electric Co. These companies were within the AEP system, although I could be assigned anywhere within the AEP conglomerate.

When I began working at AEP it was about the same time we began spring training for the upcoming fast pitch softball season. Once again I managed and we had the makings of a good team. When my AEP training was completed in mid-July I received my first assignment, it was in Mount Vernon, Ohio. By this time I was fully involved with our softball team and felt very disappointed I could not play the rest of the season due to me being out of town. Around 9 PM after each game I would call from a bar in Mt. Vernon to the Pilsudski Club to talk to John Koneff and other players to find out how our game turned out.



1968 Pilsudski Club Team - Front row; Dave Cooper, Tony ??, me, Jim Hadley, Jack Barnett. Top row – Ken Geiser, Tom Popp, Dick Rasinski, Charley Smith, John Koneff and Garland Trusley (Truz).

In May I received a surprise call from Susan in California. She called to tell me she was moving to Cleveland to complete her dietitian training at St. Luke's hospital in Cleveland. This was a real shocker for me, for I never expected her to leave southern California. In June she arrived in Cleveland and I picked her up at the airport and took her to her new residence at St. Luke's hospital. After she settled in we dated off and on for about eight months. With her busy schedule and being in residence at the hospital and me working out of town times were few when our schedules were in sync. As I mentioned I was just semi attracted to her, she was more interested in me than I was with her. I didn't see her again after February 1969.

When I arrived in Mount Vernon I met my supervisor and the other auditor working in the Ohio Power and Wheeling Electric territory. The senior auditor and my boss was Kermit Long. He had been an auditor for many years and was the most respected auditor within the AEP system. Kermit was in his late fifty's or early sixty's and his wife traveled with him; they had no children. The other auditor was Sergei Jackson. Sergei was in his mid to late forty's and had been an auditor for three years. Previously he had

worked in the accounting department at the Newark, Ohio branch office. Kermit and Sergei both lived in Newark. The three of us were the only auditors within our territory. Kermit set me up with my first hotel room. It was a large old hotel in downtown Mt. Vernon that in its day was probably a grand hotel. I had a suite of two large rooms however the rooms had no air conditioning or telephone. Mt. Vernon was relatively close to Newark therefore both Kermit and Sergei commuted to work each day, which left me alone every evening. Soon I began to feel, especially since the town did not provide much entertainment in the evening.

In early August while working in Mt. Vernon Kermit called Sergei and me to a meeting to inform us we had been assigned to do a full audit of the Wheeling Electric Co. in Wheeling, West Virginia. Apparently this company has not had a full audit in quite a few years and this audit would take a long time to complete. So, on a Sunday evening in mid- August the three of us went to Wheeling to spring a surprise audit early Monday morning. The audit in Wheeling lasted until mid-February so my home for the next six months was Wheeling's Down Towner Hotel. While in Wheeling I frequently came home on weekends, especially during the football season since I had season tickets to the Cleveland Brown's games.

On the Saturday evening of Labor Day weekend John Koneff and I planned on attending the Brown's pre-season doubleheader. In those days, the Brown's had excellent teams and were in the playoffs every year. They also had an annual exhibition (pre-season) doubleheader with the Brown's playing one game and two other teams playing the other game. These doubleheaders were always a big hit and quickly sold out. For some reason we didn't get our usual season ticket seat location for this game. Our season tickets were on the 45-yard line, but high in the stands at old Cleveland Stadium. For this exhibition game our tickets were in the end zone and we were not too happy about it. John and I arrived early for the game and noticed there were a lot of scalpers outside the stadium. We approached several scalpers to see if we could improve our seat location and we found one who sold us 50- yard line seats in the second row of the upper deck. These were prime seats. After we bought these tickets for slightly above face value I told John we now had to sell our other tickets and we should sell them at face value in order to get rid of them quickly. We put our tickets in our outstretched hands indicating we had tickets for sale. A crowd gathered around us to see what tickets we were offering were offering. It wasn't even a minute before John grabbed our 50-yard line tickets and yelled out 'I have two on the 'fifty'. I yelled to John 'save these tickets for us,' but after he yelled a huge crowd gathered around him. There must have been close to around fifty people who wanted these tickets. People began asking how much he wanted for the tickets and John feeling powerful told everyone he wanted $100 a ticket (we paid the scalper $10 a ticket). When he said he wanted $100 people started to leave, then one man dressed in a sport coat came up and asked again how much for the tickets and John once again said $100. The man pulled out cash for the tickets and when John handed over the tickets and accepted the cash the man pulled out a police badge. He was an undercover police officer. At this instant I ran away as fast as I could and tried to hide in the crowd. From a distance I noticed three police detectives had handcuffed John and put him in a police car, then drove off. For a

while I didn't know what to do, then I realized that John was probably taken to jail. After driving around downtown Cleveland trying to find the police station and a place to park I arrived at the station more than an hour after John was arrested. When I went inside the police station I went to the desk to ask what happened to John Koneff. They told me he had been arrested and was in a jail cell. I asked if I could talk to him and they said I could via a telephone. When John answered the phone, he yelled 'Grubber, Grubber you have to get me out of here.' He then told me there was a bail bondsman named 'Big Daddy' who came to see him. John told me he said to 'Big Daddy' 'I'm John K from Akron, O and you need to get me out of here."' Big Daddy' was a huge Black guy who told him that his bail was set at $500 and that he could get John out of jail for 10% of the bond or $50. So, I put up the $50 to get John out of jail then we drove home. On the way home I told John this was an expensive evening. First we paid for our regular tickets, then the scalper tickets for our fifty yard-line seats and $50 for bond. The police had confiscated all of our tickets. When we arrived back in Akron we went to the Gmerek house because they were having a party. At the party John and I were the 'hits of the party' retelling over and over again our experience. It seemed the more people drank the funnier and funnier our story seemed. The next day, Sunday, the Cleveland Plain Dealer had a front-page article about the scalpers at the game who were arrested and listed the names of those arrested. Yes, John made the front page of the Plain Dealer. John and I had learned our lesson of dealing with scalpers. John went to court the following week to face charges.

Beginning in the fall of 1968 whenever I came home on a weekend my mother would often ask me about all the letters I was receiving from girls living out of the area and Ohio. I think she was feeling worried about me being some kind of wild playboy or something. It seemed like every girl I went out with who was living outside the Akron area were sending me letters, some encouraging me to move into the area where they were living. What a change from 1961.

Later that fall I attended a St. V football game with several guys and when the game was over Lenny Gmerek asked me if I would join him for a pizza and beer at Luigi's. It seemed a little strange to me that I was the only one he invited. Although Lenny and I were friends we were not close friends. While having a pizza and beer together Lenny started to tell me what was happening in his home life. He told me his wife, Patti, with whom they had five kids, had left him for a woman. Lenny was obviously in pain and needed to talk to someone. Apparently I was the first person with whom he discussed his situation. We talked for a long time then the next day Lenny told others what had happened. Patti leaving him for a woman really affected Lenny and his children. Lenny and his kids life were not the same, in fact some of what happened to them were tragic. Unfortunately, I couldn't be there for Lenny very often because I was working in Wheeling.

While working in Wheeling I learned a lot about the state of West Virginia and the Ohio Valley. One very positive aspect of being an AEP auditor was being able to discover a lot about an area, the geography, people, politics, social life etc. Wheeling was a 'dry' community, there were no bars and no alcohol served in restaurants. The only way one

could obtain a drink was in a ‘private’ club. Fortunately, Sergei knew someone who worked at Wheeling Electric who was a member of a ‘private ‘club. So, it became our routine every Wednesday evening we would go to this club to drink beer, eat pistachio nuts, and have a fun time. Sergei and I soon became good friends. He enjoyed having an enjoyable time and it became a routine for Sergei and me to visit each other’s room after work for a drink. We would each bring a bottle of bourbon with us and would have a drink or two before we went out to dinner together.

Kermit was much more conservative. He was with his wife every evening, so we seldom interacted with them after work. After several months in Wheeling Sergei was occasionally assigned to perform ‘cash audits’ at our power plants along the Ohio River. This usually meant I was alone again in the evenings and I still remember the many evenings eating by myself in restaurants.

As I said Kermit was very professional in his job and he taught me a lot about how to conduct myself in a businesslike professional manner. Kermit was also very good teaching me about the electric utility industry and how to conduct good audits. He was one of the best bosses I ever had in my working carrier. I was learning much more about business than I could have learned at Goodyear Aerospace as an accounts payable auditor or even as a purchasing agent. After a while as I was learning more about my job I found it to be very interesting. In fact, it was the most interesting work I had until my mid-1980’s career at Goodyear.

By mid-February, our audit was just about completed and I was sent out alone to perform ‘cash audits’ at several of our power plants. When the Wheeling audit was completed we were sent to western Ohio to perform ‘cash’ audits at our various offices in that part of the state. These audits usually lasted only two or three days. We performed cash audits in Ada, Lima, Findley, and Van Wert. After auditing western Ohio we then went to central Ohio to perform cash audits in Newark, Lancaster, and several smaller towns in this region. While in central Ohio Kermit and Sergei usually commuted to work from Newark and I was alone again in the evenings.

While traveling I didn’t have many opportunities to meet girls, although after the Mt. Vernon audit was completed I did have dinner a few times with the home economist at the Mt. Vernon office. In Wheeling I did not meet any girls, however, there was a girl I began to see occasionally. She was originally from Akron whom I had met months earlier. Her name was Mary Lou and she was living in a house in Pittsburgh with two other girls, all three had graduated from Duquesne University. On about a half a dozen evenings I drove from Wheeling to Pittsburgh to see her and she showed me a lot of the Pittsburgh area. Once we completed the Wheeling audit I never saw her again. Then there was the time, through a friend of Sergei I was introduced to a girl from Bel Air, Ohio. We went out a few times but that was it.

One weekend in November 1968 I was home and bumped into Carol, the girl I had dated several years earlier. She was now living in her own apartment and we went out a

few times; however, with me working out of town it was difficult for me to see her very often.

In January my mother told me that one of the Hoye girls, Janet, from California was going to be in town for several weeks staying with Richard & Laura Gmerek and perhaps I would like to see her. I was told she was about twenty-three and really liked to party, so on a Friday night I took her out on the town. We went to a lounge, danced and I introduced her to a few guys I knew at the lounge. Being with her that evening I could see she was a real party animal. At the end of the evening she told me she had a really enjoyable and fun time; however I never saw her again after that weekend.

In late February 1969 I ran into Darlene, the girl I dated when I was living on Brown St. She invited me to her house so we could catch up on our lives. Darlene was now working as a technician in a local hospital and looked better than ever. She was also working as a part time professional model and she showed me several portfolios of her work. I thought Darlene had the looks, the poise and personality to become a full-time professional model. After 'catching up' with each other we discovered we still liked each other so we began dating again and the more I saw Darlene the more I liked her. Then one April evening she told me about how sometimes she and her fellow technicians would sometimes laugh about some patients' problem behind their back. I told her that wasn't very nice but she said at times they had to do that to break the tension while working with unhealthy people. This comment turned me off a bit, but we continued to see each other for a while. Darlene was one of two girls who at the time I thought I could have a long-term relationship with, but the best girl was yet to come.

Another girl story happened one evening in 1969 when I was on an audit in Steubenville, Ohio. Someone I knew invited me to meet his girlfriend and one of her friends. We visited them at his girlfriend's apartment and I was introduced to her friend. She was attractive, seemed nice and interested in me. however she told me she was married and her husband was serving with the army in Vietnam, I quickly became disinterested and decided to leave. That would have been awful for me to see someone who number one was married and number two her husband was in danger serving in Vietnam. However I think that sort of thing happened a frequently during the Vietnam War.

In late March we were assigned to perform another full audit, this time in Wooster, which for me was much closer to home. However, I still got a hotel room and did not commute to Akron. While working in the Wooster office I found it fascinating that many of the young Mennonite girls working there would leave home wearing traditional Mennonite clothes then change to much more stylish clothes once at work. One could see they wanted to escape their Mennonite environment, but did not want to offend their parents.

The Wooster office was not nearly as large as Wheeling so Kermit told us this audit should last only several months. While working in Wooster ball practice started in April and I drove in from Wooster to attend practices and the early season games. Then in

mid-May we were assigned to audit the Zanesville, Ohio office. Since Zanesville is about a two-hour drive from Akron I knew I wouldn't be able to play ball anymore. I was now feeling discouraged, isolated, left out and lonely. At this point in my life I was a person who enjoyed interacting with many people and organizations. My job involved almost 100% travel hence I was basically living in hotels and unable to be involved in anything other than work. This included not being able to see Darlene on a regular basis.

Early in 1969 my 1964 Ford XL was beginning to wear down and I was feeling concerned about mechanical problems while on the road. I already had several instances where my car needed repairs on semi-isolated roads and needed to have my car repaired out of town. So, in February I began looking for another car. I almost bought a neat Buick Rivera in Wheeling but decided against it since I knew I wouldn't be in the area very long. Then in late April while in Akron I got a good deal on a two door 'demo' 1968 Ford LTD. I hated to give up my neat 1964 Ford XL but knew I couldn't chance driving all over Ohio and other states without it being dependable. During the buying process I really tried to deal with the dealership. I made an offer trading in my Ford XL and they turned it down. I counter offered and they turned me down again. Finally after this happened a third time I walked out of the dealership. I was about to get into my car when the salesman came running out to see if we could still make a deal. He said they wanted to make me a final offer. I said OK, what is your offer? Then finally after four negotiations the dealership came within $100 of my offer and I accepted their offer. The dealership really wanted my 1964 Ford XL.

In May we began the Zanesville audit and I was beginning to understand the intricacies of my job more fully. Even though I was feeling semi socially isolated I was enjoying my work. Kermit and Sergei didn't need to monitor my work closely anymore and I conducted several minor audits myself in small branch offices in the Zanesville District. I would travel to such exotic places as McConnelsville and Crooksville, Ohio. I also found it very interesting being able to know what was going on within the state traveling to so many different towns and meeting the people. Sometimes Sergei would take me to places in central Ohio that were interesting. He introduced me to the famous Cleveland Brown's player Lou Groza's brother at his restaurant in Lancaster, Ohio. The restaurant was called the *Huddle*. Sergei also introduced me to the finer restaurants in Columbus. However, several times a week Kermit and Sergei would travel home to Newark. Often during these evenings I would have dinner then just scout out the area to see if I could find anything interesting going on or just visit various sites.

Working in the Zanesville office was very different than Wooster or even Wheeling. For one thing it was a much larger district with many more employees. Most of the young women working in the office wore very short miniskirts that made things interesting. I met the Zanesville District Manager's executive secretary and we got along well. In early August she told me she was leaving AEP and moving to Florida. Her boss, the top executive in the Zanesville District, helped her obtain a job as an Executive Secretary with Florida Power in Titusville, Florida. This was near Cape Canaveral, the home for our space launches. As soon as she made plans to move she began to encourage me

to move to Florida and told me her new boss could easily arrange for me to get a job as an auditor with Florida Power. Once in Florida she was tempting me to move there, even sending me photos of her in her bathing suit on a Florida beach. However, I wasn't attracted to living in Florida. This girl was one of more than several I knew who were leaving Ohio for either California or Florida.

On the Friday evening during the third week in May I went to John Koneff's house to discuss renewing our Cleveland Brown's season tickets for the 1969 season. Shortly after entering John's house I noticed John's wife, Jean, John's mother who lived next door, an older woman and a younger girl were playing cards in the kitchen. While talking to John there was a break in the card game and the younger girl came into the living room and John introduced me to her. She was Janet Marie Capotosto. We talked for about 20 minutes then she left to continue with their card game, and I left to go out on the town. When I left I thought it was nice that a girl in her mid-twenties would be with her mother on a Friday evening instead of running around to various bars in town. This impressed me since most of the single girls I knew that was standard operating procedure. Janet seemed interesting so on the following Tuesday I called Janet from Zanesville and asked her to go to a Memorial Day picnic. She seemed totally shocked I would call her, especially from Zanesville, Ohio. However, she agreed to attend the picnic with me. I discovered later Janet called Jean, John Koneff's wife, and asked '*who is this Paul Gruic?'* Apparently all Jean did was laugh. The only thing Jean told Janet was that I always carried a bunch of record albums and a stereo player in the trunk of my car. After not getting very much information about me from Jean Janet asked my cousin Elaine '*who is this Paul Gruic?'* Elaine and Janet both taught at Kenmore High School. When all Elaine did was laugh, Janet said she was beginning to feel nervous about going out with me. She asked two people who knew me well yet all they did was laugh. Apparently I wasn't aware that I had a 'reputation.' What kind of reputation I wasn't sure? As an aside Janet later told me she was often out in the town on many Friday evenings, just like me.

Our first date was my family's traditional Memorial Day picnic at my uncle's farm. In those days my family's picnics were really big affairs with as many as one hundred people attending. I usually had a lot of fun at these picnics with swimming, horsing around in the boats, playing games, and just having a fun time. On Memorial Day the weather was sunny and warm and as I introduced Janet around I was astonished to discover that she knew some members of my family. My Aunt Catherine and Uncle Hank knew Janet and her parents very well from St. Anthony church, my cousin Elaine of course, and Janet knew several of the Gmerek's. Janet lived in north hill and during her freshman year at St. V Ray Gmerek had driven John Koneff, Carol Koneff, Toni Cygan and Janet to school almost every day. Janet graduated from St. V in 1962. That Memorial Day Janet was one of the few girls I dated my parents met. Janet and I had an enjoyable fun time together and I took her home around 1:30 AM. Janet's mother was angry. She told Janet what kind of nice guy would keep you out until 1:30 AM while going on a picnic? Janet just laughed it off. I discovered later her mother, Vera, was very protective of Janet. Her father, Peter, had died in December 1965. Her brother, Jimmy, was thirteen when he was killed by a drunken driver on December 8 while he

was walking to church. So, Janet was the only family member Vera had left. In addition, Vera had some health issues.

Right after Janet's father died she had one more semester to complete for her math degree from Akron U. During semester break Janet received a call from the Akron Public School System informing her that a position had opened up for a math teacher at Kenmore High School. They told her she could begin teaching at Kenmore with a provisional teaching certificate as long as she completed her degree before the beginning of the next school year or September. So, she began working full time in January 1966 and completed her degree in August.

On our second date Janet and I attended Florence Czarnecki wedding reception. She married Mickey Balca who was and is a nice guy. Anyway, while the band was on a break and after many people had a few drinks or more Richard Gmerek asked many family members to gather around Janet and me. He then proceeded to say, 'this is Janet, Paul's new girlfriend, do you think she would fit into the family?' Janet and I were both a bit embarrassed, but since we both had a good sense of humor we just laughed it off.

Janet and I went out one more time before she left to continue her work on her master's degree in math at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. At this time there was a critical need for math, science, and foreign language teachers in the country, so the government offered to pay these teachers to complete their advanced degrees. Janet spent three summers at Purdue working on her master's degree while the government paid for her tuition, room, and board along with a spending stipend. Not a bad deal. Anyway, while dating these few times I was becoming attracted to Janet, but it still wasn't anything extra special. When she left for Purdue in mid-June I missed her but not to a great extent. Although in mid-July I did drive from Zanesville to Purdue to pay her a visit. We spent a good part of Saturday together, but she was sort of cool to me. One thing she told me later was she thought it was kind of strange for me to drive all the way to Purdue just to see her. What she didn't realize was that a five-hour drive was' a piece of cake' for me to relative to all the driving I had been doing for the past several years.

During the July 4 weekend in 1969 John Rudy and I attended the Newport Jazz Festival in Newport, Rhode Island. This event was and is one of the premier jazz festivals in the world. The main attractions were on a Saturday and we arrived during midafternoon and heard some great jazz. The festival was held outside with a fence encircling the grounds. The 1969 Newport Jazz Festival was the first time Newport included several rock groups. On Saturday evening the rock group *Sly and the Family Stone* was scheduled to perform along with several other rock bands. Late on Saturday afternoon many people interested in seeing *Sly and The Family Stone* began to arrive at the festival. Since most of them did not have tickets they just milled around outside the fence. During the afternoon and early evening John & I were enjoying all the great jazz groups until *Sly* was scheduled to perform around 9 PM. When *Sly and the Family Stone* came on stage the people outside the fence were all screaming and eventually stormed the gate to get inside. Security could not hold them back and eventually the

crowd tore down the fences and soon a full-fledged rock concert riot broke out. *Sly* tried to calm the crowd down by playing the same song over and over again but all that did was further incite the crowd. Finally, the huge crowd stormed the stage and as soon as they arrived at the stage a huge bolt of lightning struck, and it began to pour down rain. It was like something out of the Old Testament. The pouring rain and lightning stopped the crowd from going on stage, but the festival had turned into one of the first full-fledged rock concert riots and the whole festival was cancelled. John and I were standing on our seats in the rain watching all what was happening. I can say now I was at the one of the first rock concert riots. The next month the famous Woodstock rock concert was held in upstate New York.

On our way home from Newport John and I stopped in New York City to have a drink in Joe Namath's nightclub called *Bachelor's Three*. Joe Namath was a famous quarterback/playboy with the New York Jets football team and was thought to be involved with the mob. His nightclub had become world famous. While we were in the club having a few drinks we noticed several older gentlemen wearing sport coats and sunglasses walking around in the dark bar. I determined they were 'mafia type guards' watching for any trouble. After leaving the lounge we went to my car that was parked on Lexington Ave. and discovered it had been broken into and several items were stolen, including John's camera. I couldn't believe it. The streets were crowded with people, typical of New York, yet someone burglarized my car in front of all these people. That was when I vowed never to return to New York. I guess I should have been thankful that after burglarizing my car they had the courtesy to lock the car doors.

Shortly after returning from Newport I had an opportunity to buy a boat. Lenny Gmerek introduced me to his aunt and uncle from his mother's side, the Backalowski's and their son Tom. They wanted to sell their very solid wooden Century inboard boat with a powerful Greymarine engine. I went out and looked at the boat. The boat needed some electrical work but other than that it was in very good condition. After taking the boat out for a ride I told them I would buy it. They then told me I could continue to dock the boat at their dock on Lake Milton. I quickly agreed. Tom and his parents had lakefront houses with docks on the lake.

Owning a boat while traveling meant I would need to come every weekend to enjoy it. One Saturday afternoon in August my dad and I were driving on I-76 to Lake Milton to go for a boat ride. All of sudden we heard a loud sound and discovered it was from a pickup truck in front of us with a full load of dirt. The truck had a tire blow out and the driver pulled over to the side of the road. When I heard the noise, I slowed my car down quite a bit then when I saw the truck pull over to the side of the road I began to speed up. Then all of a sudden the truck went out of control and swerved onto the road and came to a stop right in my drive path. I tried to avoid hitting the truck but couldn't. I hit the truck head on with its full load of dirt. I wasn't hurt, but my dad hurt his knees pretty good but not bad enough to go to the hospital. We never did make it to the lake that day and I had to get my car repaired.

In July I was able to spend a week at home when there was an AEP auditor's conference in Canton. During this time I played ball again and after a game many of us were at the Pilsudski Club when our astronaut Neal Armstrong became the first man to land on the moon. When he landed I got up on a table near the TV and lead cheers for those in the club for our new national heroes.



AEP Auditors Conference in July 1969

By early August I was feeling more isolated working on the road and living in various hotel rooms. I really enjoyed my job but not being able to become involved in anything and not having a set place to live was beginning to really affect me. The lure of California had long passed and the thought of living in Akron was not so bad after all.

In mid-August Janet returned from Purdue and we began dating again. On Labor Day weekend we went to my family's Labor Day picnic at the farm. During the afternoon I took Janet, my cousins Alice and Elaine on a boat ride on Lake Milton. We had a nice ride then I decided to drive the boat up a channel when all of a sudden my prop hit bottom. Unknowingly I had driven into very shallow water which is something one needs to avoid with an inboard motorboat. The prop was bent and the boat would not travel very fast, so we limped back to the dock. The following weekend I came home and got the boat out of the water and stored it in my parent's backyard. After I fixed the prop I didn't take the boat out again that year.

Soon after Janet returned home I was becoming more attracted to her and thought I would try to pursue a job in the Akron area. On the Friday after Labor Day I took a day of vacation and applied for a position at Goodyear. To my surprise they were very interested in me. I interviewed with three different managers that day and all seemed to have a positive attitude toward me. This attitude was so different than when I was applying for a job after my adventurous trip across the country. The following Tuesday I received a call from Goodyear at my hotel room in Zanesville indicating they wanted to hire me as a cost accountant. I quickly agreed to their offer and gave AEP a two-week notice then began my Goodyear career on September 22, 1969.

After a few days working at Goodyear I noticed a tremendous difference in the workplace environment from AEP. While working as an auditor at AEP I felt confident that I was a professional in my work. People I worked with and those with whom I interacted treated me with respect and very professionally. In the cost accounting department at Goodyear I felt less confident this was a professional workplace. It was like I was a clerk just out of high school. The workday began at 8:15, lunch was 12 N, back to work at 12:30 and quitting time was at 4:45. At each of these time intervals a loud bell would ring indicating it was time to go to work, time for lunch, time to return from lunch and time to go home. Many of the employees were like Pavlov's dog. At quitting time I noticed a real junior high school attitude and behavior with many people. They would clear their desks ten minutes prior to 4:45 and wait in anticipation for the bell to ring. As soon as the bell rang many would jump out of their seats and just run out of the building. The work I was assigned to perform was not very challenging in that it was mostly repetitive semi clerical type work. In mid-October, a former Goodyear senior accountant came through my department and said he was looking to hire someone to be his assistant Controller at a new college in Tampa, Florida, named the University of South Florida. This job interested me but I didn't pursue it since I just began working at Goodyear and I was becoming more interested in Janet. Two years later I discovered the person who was hired for the University of South Florida position was a friend, Steve Tonti, but I hadn't seen him in several years. Steve had worked as an auditor for Sohio (now called BP Oil).

By mid-September Janet and I were seeing each other frequently. She was not only a math teacher at Kenmore High School she was also adviser for the Team Backers Club at school. This was a group of girls that led the students in supporting the various sports teams at the school; in those days there weren't any girls' varsity athletic sports. In the 1960's and 1970's Kenmore High School had good sports teams and they had a good following in the community. During the fall of 1969 Janet and I attended the Kenmore game on Friday nights, often attended Ohio State games on Saturday afternoon and Brown's games on Sunday afternoon. The Kenmore football coaches were given free tickets from the Ohio State Athletic Department and usually the coaches could not attend the games and Janet was able to obtain two tickets. Also in 1969 we had only three guys who bought our four Browns four-season tickets so usually I took Janet to Brown's games with our fourth ticket. We were both football junkies.

It was during football season when we had our first argument. One weekend In October we went to the Kenmore football game on Friday night, then to the Ohio State game in Columbus on Saturday afternoon. On Saturday evening we attended the St. V vs Hoban game played at the Rubber Bowl, a lot of traveling to games. After the St. V vs Hoban game we went to an annual after game party at Richard and Laura Gmerek's house. They lived near the Rubber Bowl and many people went to their party, even some older people who did not attend the game. Around 11 PM many of the older people (like my parents) would leave for home, then the real party began. It was a tradition that at midnight Richard and Laura would bring out a big orange rug and everyone would sit around the rug, have a few drinks, listen to Kingston Trio records, and tell jokes. Around 2 AM Janet said she was tired and wanted to go home. I told her this party lasts until dawn then Richard and Laura would serve breakfast for everyone. Janet wasn't happy but agreed to stay a while longer. Then about an hour later Janet said she wanted to go home. At this time even Richard said this party lasts until dawn. Hearing this Janet felt angry and got up to call a cab to take her home. At this I relented and took her home around 3:30 AM. It was a quiet ride to her house, but the next day I called her, we met and made up.

As I mentioned that fall I saw Janet almost every day. Usually I would visit her in the evening and would stay until we watched the Johnny Carson monologue on TV. Often we enjoyed going out to dinner, nicer restaurants. Our favorite was Anthe's on Tallmadge Ave. We also enjoyed dancing and would frequently go dancing either with friends or just the two of us. Janet and I also enjoyed going to the movies and we saw many over the years. We had both experienced life to a certain extent and had traveled. Janet had gone to the 1968 Montreal World's Fair, New York over Thanksgiving Day weekend and saw the Macy's parade from her and friends hotel room. She also went to Miami Beach and Las Vegas. The more I got to know Janet the more I realized we had so many common interests and friends. Her best friends were girls I knew; yet Janet and I never met until this past May. Several of her best friends were Carol Koneff, John's sister, Penny Cummings whom I knew well from Annunciation and Akron U, Judy Cory also from Akron U and Toni Cygan, who was a friend from north hill and married Ron Pogwizd. This was in addition to Ray and Phyllis Gmerek, Flo Czarnecki and Jim Racco. Janet was attractive, very intelligent, had a wonderful personality and enthusiastic sense of humor. She graduated second in her class from St. V and had several academic scholarships offers but chose Akron U. For a while she even thought of becoming a trial attorney. Janet had many friends, enjoyed parties, going to movies, concerts, plays, and especially enjoyed sports. We also shared many of the same values. What else could I ask for in a girl? We both agreed though it was a good thing we didn't meet earlier because if we did we would not have hit it off together. I had changed or should I say matured from my Brown Street days and that if we had met earlier we would have never dated.

In November Tom returned home from his tour in Vietnam. Tom had gotten a raw deal from the Army. In the mid 1960's Tom joined the Army Reserve, went to his six-month basic training annual two weeks training and monthly training Then in 1968 he was called up and went to Colorado to train for Alaska duty. After training in Colorado for six

months Tom was surprised to receive orders that he was assigned to Vietnam. The normal tour of duty in Vietnam was one year and he spent the full a full twelve months there. So, Tom joined the Army Reserve hoping to serve six months active duty, one weekend a month and annual two weeks of training in the summer; he ended up serving much longer than the normal two years of active duty. Tom's tour in Vietnam was pretty rough.

A week after Tom returned home I took him, Gerri, and Janet out to dinner at Anthes's. During the evening Tom hardly spoke at all, I could tell he was having emotional difficulty from his tour of duty. Later Tom only told me two things that occurred while he was in Vietnam. One was when at night the U.S. army would surround their encampment with barbed wire and in order to get through the barbed wire the Viet Cong would take off all their clothes and try to crawl under the barbed wire. It seems they didn't care if their bodies got ripped up, as long as they wouldn't get their clothes caught on the barbed wire. This was an attitude Americans could not relate to. The other time Tom mentioned was that most days he was on patrol and on two of these patrols he was the only one to come back alive. This had to really affect him, not only that he survived but see all of his buddies killed. It took Tom more than five years before he became near normal. Often at family gatherings Tom would sit in the corner by himself and not say a word to anyone. Vietnam affected him badly. In total more than 58,000 American troops died in the Viet Nam war and many more came home with PTSD like Tom.

Just before Christmas 1969 my boss called me into his office. When I went to see him he was with a high-level Finance executive. They brought me in to ask if I was interested in transferring to Geneva Metal Products located in Geneva, Ohio. This took me by surprise and didn't know what to say since Goodyear only employed me for three months. Being caught totally off guard I told them I would consider the transfer. They said they would get back to me at a later date.

On Christmas Eve I went to midnight Mass at St. Anthony's Church with Janet and her mother. After Mass they had a few people over for a small brief party, then Janet, her mother and Janet's aunt Gladys left for Florida. Janet told me Christmastime was usually a sad time at her house. Both her father and brother died near Christmas and her mother would become very depressed during the Christmas season. Janet wanted her mother to get away for Christmas and suggested they drive to Florida over the Christmas holidays. Janet originally was planning to return January 3 but decided to return on December 31 so we could go out New Year's Eve. This indicated she really liked me, however, while she was gone I called up an old girlfriend, Darlene. I asked her if she wanted to go out one evening but she told me she was busy. This was the last girl I asked out other than Janet. Upon Janet's return on New Year's Eve we joined quite a few other friends at St. John's hall where they were having a big bash including a band, and we all had a very good time.

On New Year's Day Janet invited me to her house to watch the football bowl games on TV. To my surprise we watched the Cotton Bowl. Rose Bowl and Orange Bowl and

Janet missed just one play. These games lasted for over ten hours, what a woman. She was like me, a definite football and sports junkie.

During January and February Janet and I continued to date going to movies, dinner, dancing, going to a few parties and just enjoying being with each other. By March I had forgotten about Goodyear's request for me to transfer to Geneva, then in mid-March they asked me again. They gave me a brief overview of the job. It was for a new position as a cost accountant within a pilot plant for a thermoplastic film operation Goodyear had in Geneva. They told me to think it over and even drive to Geneva during the weekend to check out the town.

A few days later, on a Friday, I called Janet and suggested going to a movie on Saturday night. She then told me she was busy Saturday evening. I asked her 'what you are doing?' Janet told me she was going out with another guy, a teacher. I felt stunned and was so flabbergasted I didn't know what to say except 'why.' Janet then told me she thought I was taking her for granted and that we were going nowhere. I thought I had lost her and asked if I could come over and we could talk. She said OK and that Friday evening we talked about *us* until around 3 AM. It was during our long conversation that I t asked Janet if she would like to live in Geneva, Ohio? She then asked, 'What are you telling me, is this a marriage proposal?' I said 'Yes.' She told me she would have to think about it but she was still going out with someone else on Saturday night. I said 'OK,' then I asked her if on Sunday she would drive with me to Geneva to check out the town. She said she would.

That night I didn't sleep very well. On Saturday evening I drove by her house several times to see if she was home yet, but each time I drove by she was still out. Then early Sunday afternoon I picked her up for our drive to Geneva. She told me that her date Saturday evening went well and that he was a coach in addition to being a nice guy. After the 90-minute drive we arrived in Geneva and surveyed the town. We walked out on ice- covered Lake Erie and made snowmen for each other and wrote a large 'I Love You' in the snow for each other. During our time together that day we continued to talk about our relationship and us. This Sunday afternoon was enchanting, even magical. I never felt closer to Janet as I was on this day and I think she felt the same about me. When we arrived back at her house we spent more time together. The next day, Monday, I visited Janet again and this is when she said 'yes' to marry me. I felt exhilarated, however Janet wanted to keep it a secret between us and not announce our engagement until her birthday Friday April 10. I never felt happier in my life. By the way, the following week I accepted the job in Geneva.



Janet on shore of frozen Lake Erie on our visit to Geneva

Within the next several weeks we shopped for rings then on her birthday we went out to dinner at Anthes's and I presented her with a ring. It was the ring she really wanted. After dinner Janet wanted us to be alone but I suggested we stop by her house for a few minutes to tell her mother about our engagement. She reluctantly agreed and to her surprise her mother and friend Judy Obermeier (Cory) had a surprise birthday party for her. I was aware of the party and it was my job to get Janet home after our dinner. It was at this party that Janet's mother and others learned of our engagement. Janet's mother and Judy were surprised and happy to learn we were engaged. After a while we went to my parent's house to inform them of our engagement. My parents seemed pleased but not giddy but I knew they were happy by the way they talked about us and me being aware my dad very seldom showed feelings of excitement.

The Sunday after we announced our engagement Janet's mother wanted to know when we planned to get married. When we said August 22, Vera, Janet's mother became concerned because there was little time to plan a wedding, especially since Janet would be at Purdue during the summer. So, in the next few weeks we looked at many halls for a wedding reception. Janet and I first met with Fr. Sam Ciccolini, associate pastor at St. Anthony's parish. The date August 22 was open at the church, so our wedding date was set. After looking at many halls Janet and her mother chose Cambria Hall, an Italian club on north Britain. Rd. The club closed several years later.

Prior to me moving to Geneva I was with Janet and her mother while they were planning our wedding. I soon realized Janet's mother was a very generous person. She had very little income and few financial resources, yet she was willing to give up almost half her money in the bank for our wedding. Vera was not only generous, but also very religious. I remember one evening going around counting the number of religious pictures, statues, and plaques etc. she had in the house. I counted fifty-two and it was a small two-bedroom house. She was also very considerate. Whenever I visited Janet's mother would always offer me something to eat or drink. She would usually go upstairs to her room around 9 PM so Janet and I could have some privacy. However, whenever 11 PM came she would always call down to remind Janet what time it was, indicating it was time for me to leave. Janet being an independent person, respected her mother but usually told me to stay until after we watched the Johnny Carson monologue. In the coming years I learned that Vera was one of the nicest people I have ever known. She was a very considerate, religious, and generous person who would do anything for anyone.

On May 1, 1970 I moved to Geneva. For the first two weeks I stayed at a small motel near 'downtown.' During my second week in town I found a nice two-bedroom apartment near I-90 which was about three miles from my work. The apartment complex was built three years earlier and was behind a Howard Johnson motel. This may not sound too inviting, but it really was a delightful place with about three acres of grass between Howard Johnson's and the apartment complex. The motel had a pool that apartment residents could use during the summer. The apartment complex was comprised of two two-story brick buildings and surrounded by acres of green space. My apartment was on the first floor and I had a covered parking place. I was the one who chose the apartment since Janet didn't have much time to come to Geneva and look at apartments. The apartment complex was called Old Orchard Apartments because it was built on the site of an old apple orchard and there were many apple trees within walking distance of the apartment complex. The rent for my apartment was $155 per month.

Geneva was a small town of about five thousand people and the closest 'big' town was Ashtabula, around fifteen miles away. Cleveland was about fifty-five miles to the west. Geneva was about two miles from Geneva on the Lake, which at the time was an older resort community that was dying due to the condition of Lake Erie. The lake was really polluted at this time and many Lake Erie resort communities were becoming abandoned. I remember the first time I walked along the beach after I arrived and saw many dead fish that had washed up on shore. At the time there was fear Lake Eire would become a dead lake. Fortunately, the state and federal governments took action to save the lake.

By mid-May we had a hall for our wedding, the church date was set and most of the wedding plans were in place. Then Janet decided to buy a new car, a 1970 Olds Cutlass. Janet said this might be the last major decision she would make on her own. It was a nice light blue two-door sedan with a black vinyl top.



Janet on her new Olds Cutlass



Janet with her mother in 1968



Janet at Boulder Dam in 1969

During May I also wanted to play ball somewhere. There weren't any good fast pitch teams in the Ashtabula County area, so I decided to drive all the way to Cuyahoga Falls to play ball. Then one evening in late May I was playing ball and sprained my ankle badly sliding into home. I drove to Janet's house and her mother let my sleep on their coach for the night. The next day my ankle wasn't any better, so I called off work and went home to my parent's house. During the next three days while I was recuperating I read many vacation brochures for our honeymoon. Janet wanted to go to a beach resort and we finally decided on the Nassau Beach Resort in the Bahamas.

In the second week of June Janet returned to Purdue to finish work on her master's degree. During the summer Janet was able to plan the rest of our wedding while living in Indiana and me in Geneva. Janet and her mother did a terrific job. Janet's mother arranged for a friend of hers to make Janet's wedding dress and another friend to bake our wedding cake. Both turned out to be excellent choices.



Janet @ Purdue - July, 1970

By the end of June my job in Geneva was turning into a nightmare. My job function was to create a cost accounting system for Goodyear's thermoplastic film operation (neothane) pilot plant located in the Geneva Metal Products facility. I also helped with Geneva Metal Products month-end financial book closing. Geneva Metal Products made small rims for such items as golf carts, baby buggies, go carts etc. The neothane film operation made a film coating used to preserve movie film and Goodyear had no idea whether it was profitable. It was my job to determine what the costs were in making

the product prior to selling it to customers. Since I had no experience in cost accounting I had to rely on my boss's help. His name was Ted Volchko, the controller for Geneva Metal Products. Ted was not a very popular person in Geneva. It seemed he always had a chip on his shoulder and was usually gruff to put it nicely. Part of his personality may have been due to the fact he had a noticeable limp due to having polio when he was a child. Working extensively with Ted became very stressful.

I also discovered the morale within Geneva Metal Products Co. was very low at best. Goodyear had purchased the company in 1962 and it kept the previous owner Al Ford, as President. Al Ford was not well-liked and seemed not to care who was hurt as long as he got his way and his bonuses. In addition he named his 23-year-old stepson as plant supervisor. He was arrogant despite not knowing what he was doing. Almost all of the hourly workers and most salaried workers despised him. He enhanced his reputation by firing anyone that disagreed with him, it seemed the union had very little power to stop him. If anyone complained Al Ford would back up his stepson despite even knowing his stepson's decisions were wrong. With these types of people managing the company there was a lot of backstabbing and many unhappy people working in Geneva. Each morning as soon as I entered the building I could feel the tension and stress within the building. It really was like one could cut the tension with a knife.

The Goodyear operation was completely different. The small pilot plant was in the rear of the factory building and somewhat away from the metal products operation. Most of the people who worked for Goodyear were much more pleasant and easier to work with. My office was in the main building that housed the metal products business operations. One positive thing about working in the main building was that I was located on the second floor away from Geneva Metal Products personnel. The second floor only contained offices for five people. One was the office of Bob Dobson, director of the neothane operation. He had a very large office and next to his office was a smaller office for his secretary. Next to the secretary's office was my office. It was a large office, about 12 x14 feet in size. Next to me was an office for Joe McVay, Geneva's draftsman. There was also a small office reserved for a consulting engineer who would often visit the plant. Every morning before we arrived for work the cleaning lady would clean each of our offices, including washing the tile floor and dusting each of our desks and file cabinets.

Bob Dobson or Dobie was a very pleasant person who was easy to work with. Our secretary was also pleasant and easy to get along with the consulting engineer. Joe McVay was great guy. He was my age and we got along very well. In fact, he and I soon became good friends. Joe was married with three children. He was from Hollywood, Florida and moved to Ohio to obtain work. At the time Florida had very little industrial business, how times have changed.

Although my main job function was to help develop a cost system for neothane film Ted had me work almost exclusively helping the Geneva operation. Since this was a very unpleasant atmosphere at work I was beginning to feel very stressed. Adding to my

unhappiness was being alone. Janet was in Indiana and Joe was my only friend. Most of the people living in the Geneva area were older and there was very little in the way of entertainment except Geneva on the Lake. As I indicated though Geneva on the Lake was declining in popularity and not a lot of action. With Joe being married we seldom got together in the evening, although several times he and his wife invited me over for dinner.

As I mentioned there was one positive thing about living at Old Orchard and that was the Howard Johnson swimming pool. Many evenings after work I would go for a swim by myself then walk over to Howard Johnson's for one of their good ice cream cones. Since I was not the worlds' greatest cook I ate very little that summer. Most evenings I would heat up a chicken potpie or frozen TV dinner. For lunch I often just packed my lunch or went out for a burger. I think I lost ten pounds that summer. In the evenings I would often drive around the area just to sight see or observe what was going on in the community. It was not a very exciting life. The best part of the day was opening my mail. Janet and I wrote to each other every day and I really looked forward to reading her letter or card. Then we would phone each other every Sunday evening. To sum up my life at this time was that I hated my job, didn't like the town of Geneva, and my only friend was Joe. As I said I had become very unhappy, stressed, and nervous. Every weekend I came back to Akron and stayed at my parents' house.



Joe McVey and his family with Janet

In mid-July Janet came home for a brief visit to attend one of her wedding showers, this one given by my family. Prior to the shower she traveled to Chicago to buy alcohol for our wedding reception and gave it to my parents. The price for alcohol was less expensive in Chicago at that time and she brought home several cases of alcohol for

which my parents repaid her. During the shower I tried to paint Vera's garage white. After several hours of painting it began to rain so I quit painting, cleaned up and went to the shower since it was about over. When I arrived Janet told me she had never been to a shower like this one. They had a huge punch bowl and she drank quite a bit of punch, only Janet was unaware that a fifth of Southern Comfort was in the punch bowl. She was feeling somewhat tipsy when I arrived and when she told me about the Southern Comfort in the punch I didn't think much of it. It was always traditional for my family to celebrate with alcohol. She told me at most showers they did not serve alcohol, little did I know. Later that evening when Janet and her mother came home from the shower they noticed I was used an off-white color to paint the garage instead of a pure white. I didn't even notice it. That was my mindset and how stressed I felt at this time. I painted it pure white later that summer.

Finally, about ten days before our wedding Janet returned home from Purdue with her master's degree and I felt uplifted, I really missed her. A few days after her return she came to check out our two-bedroom apartment. The first thing she did was open the refrigerator to see what I was eating. To her amazement all she saw was a few frozen potpies, TV dinners, a jar of mustard and several bottles of beer. Now she realized why I lost weight. Then she checked out the rooms and felt disappointed. In the master bedroom all I had was my single bed I had since childhood, my small desk, and my childhood chest of drawers. In the living room was a small older couch I borrowed from her mother, lawn chair and a small thirteen inch black and white TV. I did, however, buy a new kitchen table and chairs for two. That was the extent of furniture in the apartment so in the next few days we went shopping and bought a queen size bed for us along with blankets, sheets, and pillows. While looking in our large master bedroom closet Janet found a photo of a Playboy bunny girl with the inscription 'To Grubber' and her signature. Ray had given me the picture as a gift several years earlier when he visited the Playboy club in Las Vegas. There was also my 'little blue book' of phone numbers of all my old girlfriends, and Janet was surprised to see so many names in the book. Janet obviously wanted me to get rid of these items, so I threw out my 'little blue book' and Playboy bunny girl photo.

The Saturday before our wedding was my bachelor party. The party was held at the Gmerek backyard on Julian Ave. At the time of my party I was not the 'old Grubber.' My time in Geneva had changed me into a more quiet anxious person. I was one of the first to arrive at the party and right away I was given a shot of bourbon. The guys wanted to play payback for all the previous bachelor parties I attended when I had the groom drink a shot of whiskey with every guy who attended the party. Well after about 4 or 5 drinks I began to loosen up. I can't remember the number of guys who attended but the party included most of my current and old friends. For the first three or four hours it was a standard bachelor party for its day, lots of drinking, a stag movie and lots of joking around. Then around midnight several guys suggested we visit several bars. At first someone jokingly suggested we go to the Moulin Rouge on Main St. This was a gay bar, the only one in Akron, and all were afraid to go into the bar except me. I went into the bar while three others waited for me in the car to come back and give them a report. Well needless to say there were no women in the bar and it was a pretty disgusting

sight to see all these gay guys dancing, hugging, and kissing. We soon left the gay bar and headed to a lounge on Akron's west side. Many guys had gone there ahead of us and there must have been about fifteen of us from the bachelor party. Then around 1 AM one of the guys from the bachelor party got into an argument over a girl who was with the drummer in the band. Soon a fight was about to be breakout but some cooler heads prevailed and the argument went outside to the parking lot. There a fight did break out; the police came and several guys from my bachelor party were arrested. This put a damper on the party so the rest of us went back to the Gmerek house to continue the party. Then around 4 AM I remember looking around and everyone had left or passed out except John Koneff, my brother and me. Since Tom didn't drink just John and I were able to hold our 'booze' and remain standing. I guess I hadn't lost my touch after all. Then we decided the party was over, however my brother said he had a gift for me. It was a nice valet chair. Being boozed up I joked that it's an 'electric chair' and I am sure this didn't please my brother. Later on, I really appreciated the valet chair and kept it for almost thirty years.

The next day I called Janet from the Polish American Club to tell her about the bachelor party and she said she already heard about it from John Koneff's wife Jean. Janet told me she couldn't' believe that I was able to function after all the drinking I must have done the previous night. Shortly after my call I went to see her for she only lived two blocks from the PAC.

I took two vacation days before our wedding and of course the week after the wedding. I remember Janet's mother complaining that Janet was too tan and would look too dark for her wedding. Janet loved the sun and spent many hours at Purdue's pool. I must say she did have a very dark tan that summer.

The evening before our wedding was our wedding rehearsal and rehearsal party. At the rehearsal several in the wedding party were caught off guard when Fr. Sam told everyone that anyone who needs to go to confession they should go this evening. Several guys told me they weren't prepared for confession and I told them do whatever you need to do. Janet and I had met with Fr. Sam several evenings earlier and went to confession. After the rehearsal my parents had a small party at their house. It wasn't anything fancy but we all had an enjoyable time. Janet left the party just before midnight to preserve the tradition of the bride and groom not seeing each other until their wedding.

Our wedding party consisted of the following: Tom was my best man; groomsmen or ushers included Jim Hadley, John Koneff, John Rudy, and Lenny Gmerek. Ray was scheduled to be in my wedding but he was delayed coming home from Vietnam so Lenny stood in for him. Judy Cory Obermeier was maid of honor. The other attendants were Carol Kaiser, John Koneff's sister, Monica Gazzo, Janet's cousin, Penny Cummings, and Mary Nugent. It's interesting to note that except for Monica I knew each of these girls before I met Janet. Janet's uncle Frank came from Los Angles to walk her down the aisle. My niece, Vicki, was the flower girl. She was now four years old.



Janet, Carol Koneff Kaiser & Jean Koneff after rehearsal

Chapter 6 – Years 1970-1981

On the morning of August 22, 1970, I woke up around 10:30. After getting something to eat I dressed into my tux and arrived at the church about an hour before the wedding. The photographer wanted several pictures of me and the ushers before the wedding. Several hours prior to this he was at Janet's house taking photos. When the wedding Mass at St. Anthony Church was about to begin I was standing in the Sanctuary and felt a special pride as I watched Janet walk down the aisle, escorted by her Uncle Frank. She was beautiful. I couldn't believe I was getting married. During Mass apparently we talked a lot to each other, at least this is what many people told us after the wedding Mass. Our wedding was at 1 PM and the reception was at 6:30. Between the wedding and photos many family members went to Vera's house until the reception. It was here where some of Janet's extended family discovered they knew members of my extended family. It was truly amazing that Janet and I had so many people we knew in common yet we didn't meet until May 1969.



August 22, 1970



Our Wedding Party, left to right, Mary Nugent, Penny Dirrig Cummings, Carol Koneff Kaiser, Monica Gazzo, Judy Cory Obermeyer, Vicki, Tom, Jim Hadley, Lenny Gmerek, John Rudy, John Koneff

Capotosto-Gruic

AFTER a honeymoon in Nassau, Bahamas, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Simon Gruic are residing in Geneva, O.



MRS. PAUL S. GRUIC

They were married in St. Anthony's Catholic Church with a reception at the Loyal Sons of Calabria Hall.

The bride, the former Janet Marie Capotosto, is the daughter of Mrs. Peter Capotosto, 675 Ranney st., and the late Mr. Capotosto.

Parents of the groom are Mr. and Mrs. Simon M. Gruic, 2189 Quayle dr.

Mrs. Daniel Obermeyer was matron of honor. Also attending the bride were Mrs. Ray Cummings, Columbus; Mrs. Dan Gazzo, Pittsburgh; Mrs. Tom Kayser, Tampa, Fla., and Mary Nugent. Vicki Gruic was flower girl.

Best man for his brother was Thomas Gruic. Guests were seated by John Rudy, Leonard Gmerek, James Hadley and John Koneff.

Both the bride and groom are graduates of Akron U.

Nearly four hundred people attended our wedding reception. As was the custom in those days my parents hired a good polka band. Also, it was the custom at this time for many family members to help with the wedding by baking special pastries, making favors and bar tending. Around 9:30 PM Ray Gmerek and his wife Gloria surprised everyone by showing up at the reception. He came right to the reception from the airport after flying in from Vietnam. Neither I nor anyone else expected see Ray due to his delay in Vietnam. Everyone could see Ray was totally exhausted and his coming to our wedding meant a lot to me.

Not only was it a great reception but also I became more appreciative of all the time, effort and money Janet's mother spent on our wedding. Remember she was not financially well off and her health wasn't the greatest. She just wanted to give her special daughter a special wedding. She was a very kind and generous person.

When Janet and I were leaving the reception and walking to our rental car all the bridal party sang to us as we walked to the car. Limos were not used very often for weddings in those days. Lenny had volunteered to get the car for me in the parking lot and bring it up to us. As he pulled the car up he opened the door for Janet and she got in while Lenny was still in the driver's seat. When I tried to open the car door it wouldn't open. Lenny had played an old trick on me by switching keys. He had the car keys and I had a similar key but it wouldn't open the door. Lenny then said he was going off with Janet to the Bahamas. Finally after everyone had a good laugh Lenny got out of the car and gave me the real key. Janet and I then went to her house to change clothes and left for the Sheraton Hotel at Cleveland Hopkins Airport. Our plane left for Nassau Sunday around noon.

Our flight to Nassau was very special. This was the first time I had flown on a commercial plane and as was the custom each of us dressed up. I wore a suit and tie where Janet bought a new outfit for our getaway. When we arrived at our room at the Nassau Beach Hotel my eyes bugged out as I saw the view. It was spectacular. Our room was on the first floor right on the beach. All we had to do was walk about one hundred feet from our room to the beach. At the time there were only three major hotels on the beach and it was like we had the whole beach to ourselves. During our honeymoon I fell asleep almost every day while lying on the beach. Janet laughed at how easily and often I fell asleep but I was really exhausted from the stress of my time in Geneva. Janet & I had a beautiful honeymoon and when it was time to go home we both felt a real sadness.



On our honeymoon

We arrived back in Akron Saturday afternoon. That evening we went to the annual Gmerek wine festival on Julian Ave. I was back with many friends and we stayed until around midnight. That night as Janet and I were in bed I heard her begin to cry. I asked her what was wrong and she said she was feeling sad, that being at the party made her realize our honeymoon was over and it was back to reality. We both had really enjoyed our time alone together and neither of us wanted to come home. The following day we went to my family's Labor Day picnic at my uncle's farm then on Monday went to our new home in Geneva. When we arrived at our apartment we were very surprised to see that someone had decorated it with balloons. While we were gone Judy and Janet's mother had come to our apartment and decorated every room with balloons, Janet's mother had a key to the apartment. Seeing all the balloons made us both feel special and uplifted after feeling demoralized knowing that our honeymoon was over and we were back in the real world.

Now that Janet and I are married I should provide some information about Janet's family. Since many of Janet's relatives were older and some died before I met Janet I do not have a lot of information about some of them. Janet was born April 10, 1944 to Peter and Vera Capotosto. Pete and Vera were a bit older when they married on January 27, 1940. Pete was 40 years old, and Vera was thirty-two. Pete (Pietro) was born on June 27, 1899 in Castell di Sangro Abruzzo, Italy. He immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1903 departing from Naples, Italy. Vera (Demyanchik) was

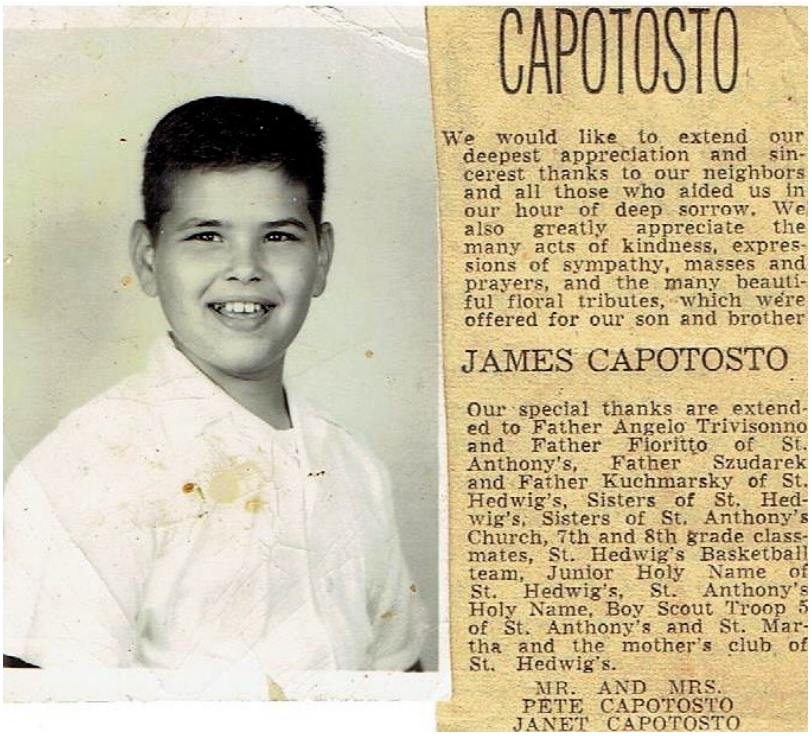
born August 2, 1908 in Slovakia and immigrated to the United States in 1911. During the Depression they both worked at Goodyear and supported their families. Because they were the only members of their families that had steady jobs both Peter and Vera needed to put their lives on hold to provide income for the rest of their families. When they married many members of Janet's mothers family did not attend the wedding. They were very upset that Vera, a Slovak, was marrying an Italian. In those days many people were very bigoted toward Italian's, thinking they were all mobsters and greasers. From what I have heard Peter was a very good and well-respected man who was very involved in St. Anthony's Church and many Italian organizations. In fact, at times he was president of the Italian Center and the Castle di Sangro Club. The Castle di Sangro Club and similar names are named after a section of Italy from where Italian people immigrated. This is sort of like American people immigrating to another country and forming clubs from the state they came from, such as Ohio, Utah, and Pennsylvania etc. Peter was also well known for his gardening and landscaping skills. I have seen photos of how well trimmed and landscaped the many bushes were at their home on Rainey St.

Pete and Vera's first-born was Jimmy who was born in 1942. Jimmy was a big kid who attended St. Hedwig's grade school. St. Anthony did not have a grade school at the time and several Italian families children attended St. Hedwig's, the Polish parish school. From what I heard Jimmy was a good athlete and was also John Koneff's best friend. When Jimmy was 13 years old he was six ft. 2'' inches tall and weighed 210 pounds. On the evening of December 7, 1955 Jimmy was walking to church to be an altar server for Mass at St. Hedwig Church. On his way to church he was hit by a drunk driver and killed. Obviously this really affected his parents. I remember Janet telling me the first thing she thought of when she heard of Jimmy's death was now she wouldn't have to share a room with her brother. Janet was eleven years old when her brother died but when it sunk in that her brother was dead she really began to feel depressed. From this time forward Janet's parents became very protective of Janet. I think if Jimmy had lived I probably would have known him and may even been friends. He would have been about my age and would have attended St. Vincent High School, probably graduating in 1960. After Janet, Pete & Vera had another child but he was still born.

Janet really didn't know her grandparents except for her mother's mother. While Janet was in high school her grandmother became ill with diabetes and had several parts of her body amputated due to her diabetes. During this time she lived with Janet's family on Rainey St. From what Janet told me her grandmother hated Janet's father because he was Italian even though he brought her into his house and was helping care of her. Janet said many times her father would bring a tray of food to Vera's mothers room and she would just cuss him out then throw the food tray across the room. Janet's parents put up with her grandmother because it was the right thing to do even though she totally disrespected Janet's father. Janet's parents had to be really respected and admired for their tolerance and compassion. Janet's grandmother died before Janet graduated from high school.



Janet with her family - 1946



CAPOTOSTO

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation and sincerest thanks to our neighbors and all those who aided us in our hour of deep sorrow. We also greatly appreciate the many acts of kindness, expressions of sympathy, masses and prayers, and the many beautiful floral tributes, which were offered for our son and brother

JAMES CAPOTOSTO

Our special thanks are extended to Father Angelo Trivisonno and Father Fioritto of St. Anthony's, Father Szudarek and Father Kuchmarsky of St. Hedwig's, Sisters of St. Hedwig's, Sisters of St. Anthony's Church, 7th and 8th grade classmates, St. Hedwig's Basketball team, Junior Holy Name of St. Hedwig's, St. Anthony's Holy Name, Boy Scout Troop 5 of St. Anthony's and St. Martha and the mother's club of St. Hedwig's.

MR. AND MRS.
PETE CAPOTOSTO
JANET CAPOTOSTO

Jimmy's and his obituary in 1955

Pete had two brothers, Mike, and Frank and two sisters, Mary, and Edith. Mike died before I met Janet and I only met Mary and Edith a few times. Mike married Gladys and they had three girls, Shirley, Joanne, and Pat. Shirley married Joe Petracca, Joanne married Dan Budiani, and Pat married Paul Boak. Aunt Gladys was Janet's favorite aunt. I really don't know a lot about Mary or Edith. Edith lived in Waynesburg and had a daughter, Theresa, who married Pete Bitzel.

Frank married Kitty. They were semi famous during the Depression as ball room dancers. They participated in several dance marathons and won several of them. See the movie 'They Shot Horses Don't They' to give you an idea what it was like for these marathon dance contestants during the Depression. From what I heard Kitty was beautiful but she and Frank divorced. Kitty eventually moved to Las Vegas and became a cocktail waitress. Once when Janet and her mother visited Kitty in Las Vegas she told Janet not to call her 'aunt.' She was 55 years old and apparently looked great physically and did not want anyone at work to even think she was old enough to be an aunt. If they knew she was 55 years old she could have been fired as a cocktail waitress for being too old. Times sure have changed.

Vera had a brother and three sisters. Her brother's name was Joe and he married Erlene. They had George and Donna. Vera's sisters were Aggie, Mary, and Helen. Aggie married Joe Znidarsic and they had three children, Joey, Karen, and another girl whose name I can't remember. Mary married someone whose first name I can't recall, but their last name was Fall. He died before I met him, and Mary died shortly after Janet and I married. They had Maryanne, Monica, Midge, Nick, Bill, and Phil. From what I understand Helen was the 'outcast' of the family. I have no idea who she married. They lived most of their adult life in New Mexico. They had a daughter, Ann. I heard many stories about Helen most of them not good. From what I heard Helen distanced herself from the rest of the family and most family members thought she was a very difficult person to be around. I remember one evening while Janet and I were dating Janet came running out of her house as I pulled up in her driveway and said, 'let's get in the car and go somewhere.' She said her Aunt Helen was in town and in the house visiting Janet's mother. Janet went on to say her Aunt Helen caused a lot of trouble from things that happened many decades ago. Janet said she did not want to be in her house while her aunt Helen was there.

Mary and Aggie were the ones who kept grudges. In fact Janet told me as a kid if Aggie was angry at one of her sisters she wouldn't let her kids, especially Karen, play with her cousins at family gatherings. At the time of our wedding apparently Mary was angry with Vera and wouldn't come to the wedding. From what I gather Mary was still upset about something that happened thirty years ago. Janet and her cousins all thought this bickering was silly but what could they do about their parents? Fortunately Vera was very different from the rest of her sisters. Her brother Joe was a real nice guy but when he was young he had a serious drinking problem. In fact he disappeared for several years and no one knew where he was living. Then one day a family member received a phone call from Joe. He was picked up as a vagrant in Miami while literally lying in the gutter stone drunk. He eventually returned to the Cleveland area joined AA, married

Erlene, and straightened his life out. Vera's siblings Aggie died in the early 1980's and Joe around 1990.

When Janet & me arrived back in Geneva not only were we beginning a new life together Janet was also beginning a new job. After I accepted the job in Geneva Janet began looking for a teaching position in the Geneva area. The closest school to Geneva to offer her a well-paying position was Mentor High School. The high schools nearer to Geneva were smaller and did not have any openings or the pay scale was very low. After becoming acclimated to a new school Janet enjoyed teaching at Mentor. At the time Mentor High School was the largest high school in Ohio and Janet thought the school was well organized with an excellent administration. Each teaching department had separate offices and Janet had her own desk, which was unusual for teachers. She also thought all the math teachers were very good as was the department head. Mentor though was a 35-mile drive along I-90 from Geneva. During autumn, the drive was very nice since I-90 was a tree lined highway and there were beautiful views of the changing leaves. However, after a few weeks of teaching several other teachers told Janet to watch the odometer on her car to determine exactly how far it is from the entrance onto I-90 in Mentor to the exit at Geneva. They told her in the winter the snow may be so blinding she may not be able to see the road signs and that she would need to turn off I-90 at exactly the tenth of mile she calculated during that autumn. She thought they were all kidding but she made the calculation anyway, little did she know she would use that calculation many times that winter.

Two weeks after we came home from our honeymoon I went to the Monday Night Football game in Cleveland with Joe McVay. I promised him several months earlier he could go to the game with me. This was the first ever Monday Night Football game and the Brown's played the Super Bowl champion New York Jets with Joe Namath and the game was sold out. The Jets were favorites to win the game but the Browns beat Namath and the Jets. Howard Cosell who was announcing the game on TV was not a happy camper being he was from New York. Janet felt disappointed she was unable to go to the game and it was the first time we hadn't been together other than working since we were married. Janet, however, did join me at all the other Brown's games that season and until 1975..

With our wedding money one of the first things we purchased was a new TV set. There was no cable TV at that time and we were only able to get four stations, three in Cleveland and one Canadian station across Lake Erie. Of the Cleveland stations only one, Channel 8 came in clear. While living in Geneva we also purchased good China dinnerware, real silverware along with nice living room furniture which we put in storage until we had our own house.

While living in Geneva we returned to Akron almost every weekend and stayed at Janet's mother's house. For one thing there was almost nothing to do in Geneva on weekends and Janet wanted to go home for her mother's sake. She was now living alone with poor health and there were household chores we needed to do for her.

It wasn't very long after we were married I discovered what a great cook Janet was. I thought my mother was a good cook but Janet was much better. During the fall Janet and I would take long walks almost every evening, with all the trees in the area the scenery was very nice during our walks. Usually after our walk we would walk to Howard Johnson's for an ice cream cone. Janet and I both loved to tell jokes and almost every evening while lying in bed before falling asleep we would tell each other 'old mother Hubbard' jokes. We each would start out saying 'old mother Hubbard' and come up with some story to mimic the nursery rhyme.

It was during these first few weeks we were married that I came to really appreciate that Janet was such a wonderful person. Janet also said the same thing about me. I remember Janet and me telling each other that if either of us should die we wanted the other to marry again because we each thought the other had too much to offer someone to remain alone for the rest of our lives. Looking back this may sound like a strange thing to say to each other after only a few months of marriage, but it was representative of the love and respect we each had for one another.

In October my parents brought Janet's mother to our apartment to help celebrate my birthday. It was the first time my mom and dad saw our apartment. Janet's mother saw it when she and Judy decorated our apartment with balloons. Both of our parents liked our place and we had an enjoyable evening. This was one of the few times we had visitors to our apartment.

The weather in Geneva was gorgeous during the autumn. Lake Erie warms during the summer and helps keep the coastal area of the lake warm during October and early November. From people who lived in the area we kept hearing the winter can be brutal but we were not expecting to have fourteen inches of snow the two days before Thanksgiving. That was the first snowfall of the winter and snow covered the ground until mid-April.

During the Thanksgiving Day weekend we stayed at Janet's mother's house and upon our return to Geneva we began to realize how rough the winters are in far northeast Ohio, it really is a *snow* belt. Often when Janet was driving home from Mentor the snow was so heavy and winds blowing so hard off Lake Erie that she actually could not see the road exits. During these times the visibility was no further than the windshield wipers. These were very scary drives for her since she couldn't see the vehicles in front of her, this was especially scary if she knew semi-trucks were in front of her on I-90. I could relate to her fear because on occasion I experienced the same thing driving home from work. The significant difference was I was not on a major interstate highway. It was not unusual for me to return home from work to see Janet taking a warm bath with a glass of brandy trying to relax from her treacherous drive home. Also there were more than a few nights she had difficulty falling asleep for fear of the drive to work the next morning. It wasn't long before both of us realized we did not want to spend another winter in Geneva.

For the Christmas holidays I took a vacation at the same time Janet was on break from Mentor High School and we returned to Akron. The day we returned we bought a Christmas tree in Geneva and brought it back to Akron. The next afternoon we put up the tree in Vera's house and after we had decorated the tree we both looked at the tree and said, 'what an ugly tree.' When we bought the tree in Geneva it was frozen and when we put it up in the warm house it had thawed and it looked nothing like the tree we saw in frozen Geneva. We then went out and bought another tree. After we decorated the new tree I decided to place our ugly tree in the ground near the front porch, the ground in Akron was not frozen like in Geneva. On Christmas Eve we invited my parents over for dinner. Upon entering the house my dad said he did not remember the pine tree next to the porch. I 'kidded' him saying the pine tree has been there for a long time and he just scratched his head. Finally I told him what I did and then he just laughed. I kept the pine tree there until spring.

While in Akron during Christmas break I had a job interview with Sack's Electric for a position as accountant and office manager. A friend of my mother worked for Sacks and told me about their need for an accountant and I told her I would be interested in the position. An interview was set up for a Sunday morning with the two owners. The interview went well and they were very interested in hiring me but wanted their CPA firm to review my resume. Several days later the owners called me back and said the CPA firm recommended not hiring me due to my lack of experience in tax matters. This wasn't the only time I tried to get out of Geneva. I also was trying to gain a position at Ohio Edison thinking my experience at AEP would be very beneficial to them. Nothing came of this effort either. My job at Geneva had not improved and I was still very unhappy working at Geneva Motor Wheel. If it weren't for Janet joining me in Geneva I think I would have gone loony.

After Christmas break we returned to Geneva and really began to experience the brutal winter. I remember one morning school was canceled for Janet but I still had to go to work. When I opened the apartment building door snow had drifted up to my shoulders. I went back into our apartment, got a snow shovel, and shoveled a path to my car. When I got to my car snow had drifted up to the door handles and I struggled to just open the doors. Since heavy snow was no excuse to miss work in Geneva I shoveled the snow away from my car and drove to work. One thing about Geneva was the city and township were well prepared for the heavy snows and the roads were usually in decent shape after a snow, the problem was getting to the street. Then there was another day when I went to work and the weather was reasonably good. While at work it began to snow heavily with high winds. After work I went to my car but it wouldn't start. I then looked under the hood and discovered why the car didn't start; wind had blown about six to eight inches of snow atop the engine, and it was still snowing. I then went back into my office to call Janet and she came and brought me home. Janet drove me to work the next day and we discovered my car still wouldn't start, so I had to have it towed to a garage to melt the snow and ice. This took three days and each of these days Janet took me to work early each morning and picked me up in the evening. By February Janet and I were absolutely determined not to spend another winter in Geneva.

As I mentioned most weekends we returned to Akron except when the weather was bad. Looking back, we both wished we had spent more weekends in Geneva. It was becoming a strain returning to Akron almost every weekend but we were returning for Janet's mother sake.

When spring finally arrived it was a big relief. Leaves did not sprout from the trees until late-May but that was OK, at least the snow stopped falling. In the spring we went to several parties with math teachers at Mentor High School and during the next few months several times we visited Janet's cousin Karen, who lived in Mentor and her uncle Joe, Aunt Erlene, Donna, and George who lived in Euclid.

By the time school was out Janet came to really appreciate her summer vacation. The Howard Johnson pool was open and she was at the pool every day when it didn't rain. Even though Janet loved to be at the pool she couldn't swim. So that summer I taught her how to swim and then she enjoyed the pool even more. Quite often during the summer I would come home from work and join Janet at the pool. We would swim for a while then have dinner and go for a walk.

Two weeks before school was out Janet went shopping at Great Lakes Mall in Mentor and registered to win a vacation trip to Florida. About a week later she received a call notifying her that she had won the trip to Ft. Lauderdale. Then during the second week in June we drove to Ft. Lauderdale for a weeks' vacation on the beach. On our way home from Florida we stopped in Tampa to visit Carol (Koneff) & Tom Kaiser. Tom was teaching at South Florida State University. Yes, the same school where the former Goodyear accountant was Controller and was looking for an assistant. I knew Tom from Akron U and of course Carol. During our visit I mentioned the situation about the assistant Controller position. Tom then told me that my friend, Steve Tonti, was hired for the position. This really surprised me. Tom went on to say Steve was having some difficulties with his personal life and the job. Since we had to get back home I didn't get a chance to see Steve. On our drive home I remember us singing all the way while driving through Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. It was really nice to get away after the rough winter.

Later that summer we made what became an annual visit to Cedar Point. We had gone to Cedar Point shortly after Janet returned home from Purdue in 1969 and realized we both enjoyed riding the many roller coasters.



Janet and me in Ft. Lauderdale

In early summer things began to change at work. Plans were underway to expand the thermoplastic pilot plant and build a new plant somewhere in the south. Dobie was spending a lot of time studying floor plans and construction of the new plant. Building a new plant meant that salaried employees at the Geneva pilot plant would receive nice promotions at our new location but I wasn't sure though what would happen to me. Then one day in mid-July a Goodyear Executive Vice President came to visit our plant operation. During his visit he discovered that although the film was very effective protecting products like movie and TV film we only had one customer, RCA. With this discovery he decided to scrap plans to build a new plant and in fact decided to close the whole operation. That meant that within a few months the thermoplastic operation would close in Geneva. Now everyone went from excitement to apprehension of what his or her future would be at Goodyear. In late-July I received a visit from Goodyear's Assistant Controller in charge of accounting at Goodyear's North American plants. His

name was Jim Ake and he came to offer me the position as Accounting Manager at a new Film & Flooring plant in Calhoun, Georgia. When Janet and I drove to Florida several weeks earlier we passed through Cartersville, which wasn't far from Calhoun and I knew that this location was much more remote than Geneva. After discussing the situation with Janet it didn't take long for me to turn down the offer in Calhoun. Jim Ake was not pleased I turned the offer down and after I returned to Akron he ignored me for years. Now that I turned down one offer I did not know what my future would be at Goodyear, however I wanted to return to Akron. Since Janet and I were determined not to spend another winter in Geneva she searched for a teaching position in the Akron area. We agreed that if necessary I would leave Goodyear and search for a position somewhere in the Akron area. In mid-August Janet was offered a teaching position at Copley-Fairlawn High School.

At about the same time Janet accepted the Copley-Fairlawn High School position I received another visit from a Goodyear executive. He wanted to know if I was interested in returning to Akron to work in Statistical Accounting. I said yes and traveled to Akron for an interview. Statistical Accounting was Goodyear's largest and most important accounting department. The department had four sections but only the ones for government reporting and assisting in the monthly financial closing of Goodyear's business units Profit and Loss statements, were open to me. The other two sections were reserved for more experienced accountants. I accepted their offer but was told I would need to stay in Geneva until late September to help wrap things up at the Goodyear operation in the plant.

Not only were Janet and I excited to leave Geneva due to my working conditions and the weather, but my good friend Joe McVay was moving back to Florida. In July his father called and asked Joe if he would be interested in speculating in some Florida land. He said they could buy hundreds of acres of vacant land for fifty cents per acre. Joe agreed to purchase this land in Florida with his father and moved back to the Miami area. Janet and me and Joe and his wife Sharon had become good friends and with them gone we really didn't have any close friends in Geneva. This was just another reason to leave Geneva. By the way the land Joe and his father purchased was north of Orlando and the following year Disney announced it was expanding Disney World and purchased the land Joe and his father owned. Unfortunately, I have not heard from Joe since he moved from Geneva. I am sure he and his father made millions on their land.



Janet walking back from Howard Johnson's and pool to our apartment

God must have looked after us for our dream of leaving Geneva was in place. Now the question Janet and I needed to address was where to live. I suggested we buy her mother's house but Janet objected to this idea because it needed a lot of work. She also didn't want to live in that house any longer but I argued it would be beneficial to her mother. She could move into a senior citizen apartment and not need to worry about maintenance around the house. Also, we could update the house, sell it, and buy a newer house. Janet finally agreed to my suggestion and her mother was very receptive to the idea. We purchased Vera's house for $9,500 and I arranged for the funds to be deposited into an account where Vera would receive a monthly check with which would provide her ample income along with her social security and pension check. However, Vera was very disappointed she was unable to get into the senior citizen apartment she wanted on North Hill. She had to settle for a senior apartment on Akron's near west side on Diagonal Rd. She was unhappy in this location since she had lived in North Hill for 33 years. Vera moved into her senior apartment in mid-September.



Janet and I at her mother's house on our first anniversary

In late August Janet moved to Rainey St. since school began the day after Labor Day. I stayed in Geneva until everything was wrapped up at work and moved back to Akron on September 22.

My first assignment upon my return to Akron was in the governmental reporting section of Statistical Accounting where to my surprise my old friend, Jim Benko, was working. So once again Jim and I were together. Our boss was Reggie Deats. The work was more interesting than my previous position in Akron plus there were no more bells and the working environment was much more professional. Five months later I was promoted to the Profit or Loss (P & L) section of Statistical Accounting.

Within the first few months of working in Statistical Accounting I developed two friendships that have lasted to this day. One was with John Richardson. John had joined Goodyear in 1967 worked for about a year then was called to active duty by the Army Reserve. John was sent to Vietnam and had recently returned home from action. He was one of the most nervous persons I had ever met. I thought I was somewhat nervous, but John couldn't be still for more than a minute. I soon learned the reason for John's nervousness and anxiety, he was a 2nd Lieutenant in Vietnam and an advance scout for patrols. From what I heard the life expectancy for advance scouts was about 20 minutes. John didn't want to talk about his duty in Vietnam until many years later. About two years later John was offered a position in Auditing and asked for my advice whether to accept the position or not. I told John to 'go for it' and it turned out to be a very good decision. John eventually became a Goodyear vice president and his advancement began from his position as an auditor.

The other friendship I developed was with John Ward. John and I were the same age and graduated from high school in 1959 and Akron U. John played football for Buchtel

high school and we both had very similar interests, sports, and jazz. Both of our careers at Goodyear eventually paralleled each other in fact we both retired within a few months of one another. I think we were each other's best friend at Goodyear. After retirement John moved to Sun City, South Carolina, near Hilton Head. The last I heard John's health has deteriorated and is now living in Columbus, Ohio near his son, who was an All-American swimmer at Ohio State.

On October 18, 1971 Matthew was born and we kept Vicki for several days while Gerri was in the hospital. Janet and Mike Czaplicke were Matt's godparents.



Janet, me, Vicki, and Matt on his baptism

In October Janet & I began to update the house on Rainey St. We painted every room in the house and brightened up the basement. The basement was so dark and dinghy that it was almost scary. Gradually I became obsessed with fixing up the house, so much so that I was overextending myself and there were several nights I couldn't sleep. In addition, my parents could not believe I was doing so much work on the house. They told me their perception of me was that of a sports nut and party animal that had no interest working around a house. The truth was that while growing up my dad would teach me how to do things but hardly permitted me to work on projects around the house. He was a perfectionist and thought that I wouldn't perform the work to his expectation. Therefore, I was not interested in working around the house while growing up. However, now that I had my own house I became very interested. Not only was I working on the house Janet was adding her special touches to enhance its appeal. She

made special curtains for the living room and solarium and decorated the house very nicely. Of course, she also helped me paint some of the interior rooms. We both wanted to fix up the house to sell but also for our enjoyment. In addition Janet became interested in crafts and very proficient at making lighted ceramic Christmas trees and pinecone wreaths. She continued to do this for about 12 years. Not only did she make these crafts for our house but also for my parents and our friends.

Usually on Sunday's mornings we would pick up Vera at her apartment and attend Mass at St. Anthony's church. Often after Mass we went to the spaghetti dinner St. Anthony held after Sunday Masses. That fall If we were not going to a Brown's game we would watch the game on TV and also scour the Real Estate ads in Sunday's newspaper. One November Sunday before watching the game on TV I noticed an ad for an open house in Manchester. Believe it or not during halftime of the game Janet and I went to the open house. Upon looking at the house both Janet and I fell in love with it. It was a ranch house with three bedrooms and one and half bath. It had a nice living room and kitchen with a neat eating area. The dining room was not large, but adequate. What really sparked our interest though was the basement recreation room and backyard. The recreation room had a large bar with a huge solid wood floor, like a dance floor. We both imagined all the cool parties we could have in this room. In addition, the basement was plumbed to install a full bathroom. The yard though is what most attracted both of us. It was a flat pine tree lined with a half- acre lot that gave great privacy to the beautiful in-ground swimming pool. Both of our imaginations were swimming (pun intended) with visions of great times we could have with this house. After viewing the house we asked the agent if we could call my parents to view the house later that afternoon. He said yes, we called my parents, and we met them at the Manchester house. After viewing the house my parents had some reservations about it. My mother thought Manchester was way out in the 'boonies' and we would be too far away from activities in Akron. My dad though had the biggest objections. He didn't think the basement provided a good place for a workbench and the dining room was too small. His biggest objection though was the entrance to the basement was through the house, there was no outside entrance. This was always a big deal for him in any house. All the houses he had lived in had outside entrances to the basement. Because of these objections we decided to pass on the house. Looking back I realized we did not make an offer on the house because it did not fit my dad's idea of what he would want in a house, not what we wanted. Also, little did we know we would eventually live very close to this house.

During Christmas week 1971 Janet's mother was not feeling well and was staying with us, however we had plans for our first party. We went on with the party while she went to her room to rest. Many of our friends attended the party along with a few friends of mine from work. Around 11 o'clock after many of us had more than a few drinks I brought out the old 'Grubber All Star Band'. Around midnight my cousin Elaine and her boyfriend Gus arrived and Elaine couldn't believe her eyes as to what she was seeing in 'Grubber All Star Band.' Performers included Ray, Lenny, John Koneff and of course me. Elaine kept shaking her head in amazement at me for neither she nor my family ever knew I was so crazy. After our 'performance' Gus announced he brought a bottle of

one his favorite Greek drinks, Ouzo. Most of us then went on to drink the Ouzo and the following day I had a severe hangover, I blamed it on the Ouzo, as did others who were hung over the next day. A few days later at a family Christmas party I told Elaine about our hangovers and she just laughed and said it wasn't the Ouzo; most of us were 'plastered' when she and Gus arrived at the party. For years Elaine liked to tell me about that party.

During 1972 we looked at many houses, hoping one day to sell the Rainey St. property and buy a newer house. During that winter we went to many open houses, especially in Tallmadge. We looked primarily at newer developments but eventually realized most of these houses were out of our price range. Gradually we expanded our search to Ellet, Wadsworth and then the southern part of Summit County.

While looking for our dream house we kept sprucing up Rainy St. In addition to repainting every room, the basement walls, and the shower area in the basement I repaired the front porch and spruced up the yard. I had become a real handyman. There was one thing I hated about the back yard and that were all the fruit trees. In the summer the trees' were loaded with cherries and pears and some fruit would fall to the ground. While cutting grass often a piece of fruit would fall on my head or bees, which were attracted by fallen fruit, would sting me. These trees' and the yard were Janet's father pride and joy, when he arrived home from work Janet told me her father would spend hours working in his yard. The yard also contained many flowers, shrubs, and trees, but the yard's maintenance had deteriorated since his death in 1966.

In the spring several neighbors were planning to start a Pee Wee football program in North Hill and asked me if I would be interested in helping them. I agreed to help with fund raising and became their Treasurer. The fund raising was very successful and the Pee Wee football program began to play that September. This program also led to the formation of Patterson Park and all its activities. I continued as Treasurer for two years.

Soon after Janet began teaching at Copley-Fairlawn High School she became very disenchanted with the position. This was a totally different teaching environment than either Kenmore or Mentor. She would often complain to me about the students with 'well to do' parents. To her many of the students were very spoiled, arrogant and with an attitude that they could obtain anything just because of their parent's money or position. She said many students walked around school with several $100 bills in their pockets and driving expensive cars 'mommy' and 'daddy' provided for them. Janet had more than a few students who didn't work very hard at school or do homework yet expected good grades. An example was a student who did not complete *any* homework assignment, participate in class, or even bring a pencil to math class. She gave this student an 'F' for a midterm grade. Immediately this drew the wrath of the principal. The principal told Janet that this student's father was a very prominent in the community and if his son did not receive good grades he couldn't get into a prestigious university. Janet told the principal the student's grade is what he earned. This was not the only student of prominent parents she gave a poor grade at midterm. The principal told Janet she better not give these students a poor final grade or there would be consequences. This did not

deter Janet. At final grade time she gave students the grade they deserved, several received an “F” grade, and the principal was livid. It was then Janet decided she had enough of Copley - Fairlawn High School and resigned. The principal told Janet if she hadn’t resigned he would have fired her because she did not adhere to Copley-Fairlawn ‘standards.’ Janet was like me; we could not stand prima donnas. The following semester and year Janet taught at Central/Hower High School and enjoyed teaching there much more than at Copley-Fairlawn. She said the students were from families with modest incomes at best but were much more appreciative of any help or attention she gave them.

In January of 1972 my Aunt Teresa's husband, Ray died and in April she returned to Akron. She had sold her house and bar/restaurant in El Cajon and moved into a small twinplex apartment near my parent’s house in Ellet. However, she left her car in California and shortly after her return to Akron she asked me if I would drive her car back to Akron. After discussing this with Janet I told my aunt that we would drive her car home under one condition; that we could drive back via any routes we wanted. She said that is fine with for she hated to drive and the car had relatively few miles on it. I then made plans to take two weeks’ vacation surrounded by the July 4th holiday.

In late June Janet and I flew to San Diego and met a friend of my aunt Theresa at the airport who had her car. From San Diego we drove to Los Angles to visit several of Janet’s relatives. We stayed with her uncle Frank, the one who ‘gave’ her away at our wedding. As I mentioned Uncle Frank was divorced from his wife Kitty and lived in an apartment complex with a pool. While in LA we also visited Uncle Frank’s son Steve, his wife, and children. I had never met them and they seemed very nice. I was also planning to see my friend Jim Chisholm but discovered he moved to Oregon. After several days we began our drive from Los Angles to Seattle via the coastal highway. As we drove north from Los Angles the scenery become more spectacular. By the time we arrived in Big Sur country we just marveled at the scenery. I had visited a good part of the country and this was the most beautiful views I had seen. The highway straddled the mountains on one side and the ocean cliffs on the other side. The ocean had these very large boulders come out from the shore and helped form many small beaches along the coast. At the time hardly anyone lived in the Big Sur area except Kim Novak, the movie star. She had a home on a large cliff overlooking the ocean and the scene from her home had to be nothing more than spectacular; however, I do not know how anyone was able to get to the house except by helicopter. Her house was truly isolated.

Our next stop was San Francisco. We toured San Francisco and while touring China Town we ran into Dick Fortner and his wife. Dick was head football coach at Kenmore High School and knew Janet very well. Dick and his wife were returning from a Hawaiian vacation. One evening while in San Francisco we tried to see the Golden Gate Bridge only to discover the fog. It was so foggy that one could hardly see the bridge, let alone drive on it. However, we did drive down Lombard Street, the most crooked street in the world. I had also driven down Lombard Street in 1967. During our second day in San Francisco I was beginning to feel sick. By evening I had a severe headache and was coming down with a bad cold. I went to bed around 9 PM and for the

first time in my life took a 12-hour cold capsule. That night I slept very well and when waking in the morning I was still feeling aa bit sick. However, we still headed out from San Francisco to the Napa Valley wine county. The weather in San Francisco was cool and damp (perhaps the reason I caught a cold) and upon leaving the area I was wearing a winter jacket. As we drove into wine country I noticed the temperature was getting warmer, so I took off my jacket. After Janet drove for about three hours the temperature was getting really warm so we turned on the radio and discovered the temperature was over one hundred degrees. I also realized my cold was gone. Apparently the cold tablets and the 100-degree temperature cured my cold. At Napa Valley we toured the wineries and I was even feeling well enough to do some wine tasting.

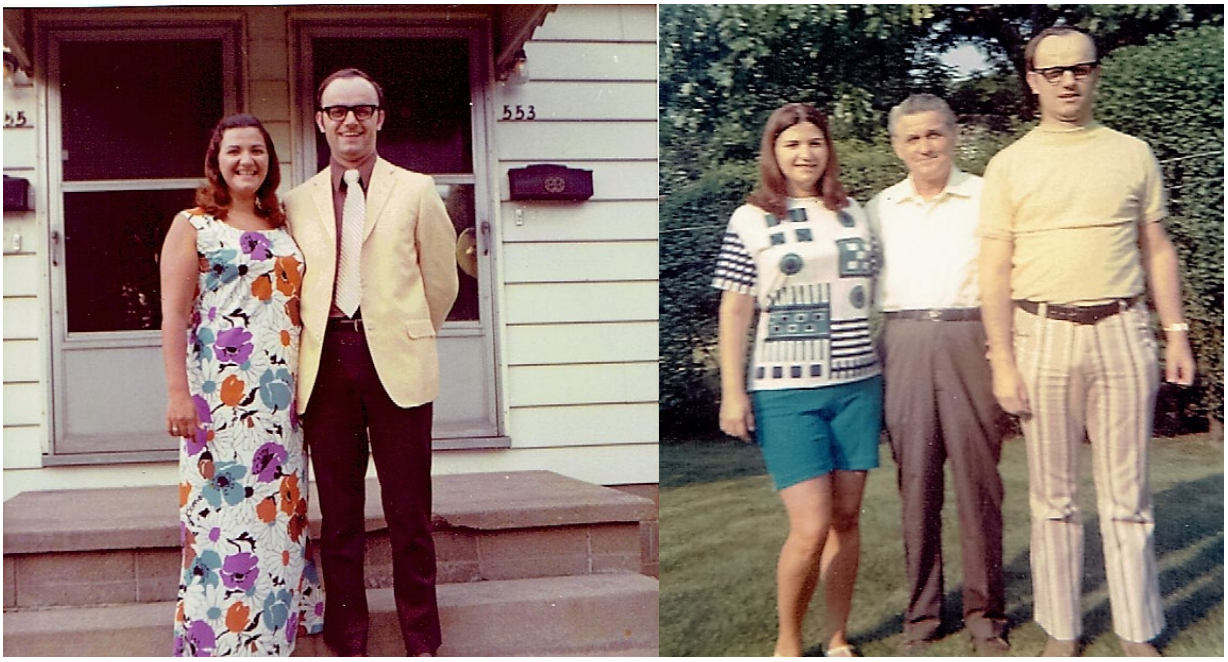
After visiting the wine country we drove through the big Redwood tree country and logging industry in northern California. From there we traveled the coastal highway to Seattle. In Oregon the terrain was similar to California only more spectacular. I was just amazed at the beauty we were seeing. Unlike California we were able to stop and walk on a beach. We were both surprised to see a large sign warning people not to swim in the ocean. The sign went on to say the water temperature was so cold that swimming could cause a heart attack due to the dramatic change in one's body temperature. That was probably the reason there were very few people on the beaches.

Upon our arrival in Seattle we stopped at a motel in search of a room. I was wearing shorts and the motel clerk looked at me in disbelief. He said people here don't wear shorts since the weather is so cool. To me the weather was sunny and fine for shorts since the temperature was in the 70s. One evening we had dinner in the Space Needle and had magnificent views of the whole area including Mt Rainer and the whole Puget Sound. From what I have discovered Seattle is usually very cloudy and rainy, so we lucked out on our visit to the area.

After leaving the Seattle area we drove east across the state of Washington toward Spokane. While driving across Washington I was surprised to see how the interior of the state is compared to the coastal area. The land was like a desert terrain. From Washington we crossed Idaho which is very mountainous, and the big sky country of Montana then south through Wyoming. While in Wyoming we visited Yellowstone National Park and saw the geysers including Old Faithful. After leaving Yellowstone we entered the town of Lander and discovered there was a rodeo that afternoon so we stopped and saw the rodeo. It was interesting and a lot of fun. From Lander it was on to Denver where we stayed for a few days then headed back home. This trip was very enjoyable and exciting because I had never been to the northwest. Upon returning home my Aunt Theresa was very happy to have her car back.

Several weeks after our return I came home from work and Janet told me she was visiting a friend in the neighborhood whose dog just had a litter of puppies and Janet wanted me to pick one out for us. This took me by surprise since we had not discussed getting a dog; however, since I'm a dog lover I decided to look at the litter of puppies. We choose the smallest puppy, which was a female beagle/dachshund mix. When we

brought the puppy home it was so small she fit into one of my shoes. The puppy was very cute and we named her Covers. Covers became an integral part of our family until she was hit by a car and killed in February 1984.



Janet & me going out on town and us with my dad - 1972.

In mid-July we began looking at houses again. One Sunday afternoon Judy & Dan Obermeier joined us in looking at open houses. After becoming disenchanted with the houses we had seen Judy & Dan suggested we think about building a house. This never occurred to us but we gave it some thought and soon began looking at builders. There was one big question we needed to answer though before we decided to build a house. That was where do we wanted to live. After doing some serious thinking we decided we would like to live in the southern part of Summit County. We now needed to focus on builders in this area. We finally found a builder who had a floor plan we really liked; it was split level house by Suburban Builders in Uniontown. Upon researching the builder, we discovered they had a good reputation and now we had to find a lot to build our house. Suburban Builder's main development was in Stark County and we wanted to live in Summit County, therefore we needed to find our own lot to build our dream house. After looking around we found a lot we really liked on Honeymoon Dr. in Green Township. Janet really liked the name of the street, however there was one problem; the lot did not pass the perk test. This is the test to determine if the land is suitable for a septic system. We felt disappointed but we went on to look at four other lots but each lot failed the perk test. Our builder was now becoming concerned because we had been searching for a lot for three months. Finally in early January we finally discovered a lot on Charleston Dr. in Green. It was not in an allotment but it was a fascinating lot. The land had a creek running through the back of the wooded lot with hardly any other houses in the area. We decided to buy this lot and it even passed the perk test. We purchased the lot for $5,000.

Construction began on our dream house in late January. We were all excited to be building our own house and almost every day after work Janet would drive to our home building site and film the contractors at work. Before we could move into our new house we first had to sell our house on Rainey St. The builder said our house should be ready to move into by June so in early April we put our house on the market for $15,500 and gave the realtor a 30-day listing agreement. We wanted to be sure they worked at our house. Our house sold several weeks before we were ready to move into our new house on Charleston Dr.

By late March construction of our house was to the point where we could begin to do some of the work ourselves. To save money we agreed with the builder we would do all the interior painting and staining. It doesn't sound like much work but it was more work than we thought.

One Sunday afternoon in early April my parents were helping us paint and stain when a sheriff's car pulled into our driveway. The deputy came and asked if Janet and Paul Gruic were here. When we told him who we were he told us Janet's mother had been rushed to the hospital and for us to go immediately to St. Thomas's Hospital. When we arrived at the hospital we discovered Vera had a heart attack. She had angina pains in the past so we knew this day would come. When we arrived at the hospital she was in stable condition and was resting comfortably. We visited her every day after work and by Thursday evening she appeared to be in much better condition. As we left that evening we were looking forward to her coming home that weekend. Shortly after we arrived home our phone rang; I answered it and it was St. Thomas hospital calling us to return to the hospital immediately. We hurried back to the hospital and arrived in about ten minutes. As we arrived at her room Vera's doctor rushed over to inform us that she had died. We couldn't believe it. When we left her side, she looked much improved and ten minutes later she was dead at age 65. Janet's father Peter also died at age 65.

Janet had a very difficult time with her mother's death. After her father's death Janet and her mother had become very close. Now Janet not only had she lost her mother but also the last remaining member of her immediate family. Janet was also very upset with the priests at St. Anthony's parish, especially the pastor Msgr. Trivasano. Although the rectory was notified of Vera's condition neither the pastor nor Fr. Sam came to visit her in the hospital. Both of Janet's parents had been very active and contributed a lot to St. Anthony parish yet Msgr. Trivasano did not come to visit Vera in the hospital. It took Janet about a year to forgive Fr. Sam, but it took her several more years to forgive Msgr. Trivasano.

During the calling hours at Rossi Funeral Home Janet's Uncle Joe D. (Agnes's husband) told me that I must wear a black suit and tie to the funeral. I wasn't wearing a black suit at the calling hours and he and several of Janet's male cousins from Pennsylvania told me any color other than black was disrespectful to wear at the funeral. In fact, Uncle Joe D. even brought me a black tie to wear. When I told Janet what her uncle and cousins from Pennsylvania were telling me she told me to ignore them and wear what I felt comfortable wearing. She said the Demyanchik side of her

family was very conservative and Janet told me she was not wearing black to her mother's funeral. All I remember was that I didn't wear a black suit to the funeral. Vera was buried alongside Janet's father and brother at Holy Cross cemetery. Janet was now left with just aunts, uncles, cousins, and me. She had experienced a lot of death and sorrow in her life by the age of twenty-eight.

From this point forward my whole family, including Tom & Gerri, all my aunts, uncles and cousins treated Janet as if she were a blood relative. Janet had always been very well-liked and well respected by everyone who knew her, now she was 'bona fide' member of my family. My parents were especially fond of Janet and I knew she felt very comforted by them and held them in high esteem.

After Vera's funeral we didn't have much time to mourn since we had to finish the painting and staining of our new house and sell the Rainey St. house. From Janet's point of view I think the timing of our move couldn't have been better. Janet had lived in the Rainey St. house her whole life except when we lived in Geneva and the house contained many memories. I am sure if we had continued to live there for a while longer the memories may have depressed her more than she was already feeling. By mid-May the Rainey St. house was sold and we completed the painting and staining our new house. During Memorial Day weekend we moved to 3553 Charleston Dr.

The first thing we needed to do upon moving was install a lawn. The building contractor leveled our lot and we hired someone to grade it some more and to remove as many rocks and stones as possible. Finally during the third week in June with my parents help we planted grass then took a week vacation to Williamsburg, Virginia. During July my dad and I built a deck off our dining room and a paver patio off our family room. My parents, my dad especially, helped quite a bit with painting, staining, and just preparing our house to live in. I felt very appreciative for all their help.

During that summer we decided to trade my 1968 Ford LTD for a smaller car. The LTD was getting a lot of miles on it so we decided to get rid of it before repair bills started to pile up. We had the Old's Cutlass Janet purchased before we married so that was our 'main' car. We purchased a new Plymouth Gold Duster. It was a very nice smaller car; however, Janet did not like it because it had neither power steering nor air conditioning. In those days these items were not standard on cars. Since I usually drove the Gold Duster Janet was able to tolerate it, for a while.

Our new home was really different than anything I had experienced. First the area was quiet. Living in the city most of my life I became accustomed to traffic noise and the like. There was some auto traffic on Moore Rd. but usually after 6 PM traffic really diminished. In the morning leaving for work I often saw pheasants in the vacant land surrounding our house and ducks swimming in the creek behind our house. Our house was also very private. The closest house to us was about 250 feet away and with the woods and creek to the rear of our lot and a wooded area across the street, it was like living in a semi-rural area.

One decision we had to make upon moving to Green was which parish to join. We had two options, St. Francis de Sales, or Queen of Heaven. Technically we were in St. Francis's boundaries but we decided on Queen of Heaven. It was a much smaller parish and we thought it would be easier to meet new people and become better acclimated in a smaller parish.

Soon after we moved in we became good friends with our closest neighbors, John & Vicki Lyons. We were the same age and had similar interests. Janet and Vicki were both teachers and John worked at Firestone. They also had an infant son, Jay. John & Vicki introduced us to other couples living in Green Township and our circle of friends expanded including Dick & Carol Loesch and Bob (Shell) & Sandy Shelestovich. Vicki, Sandy, and Carol invited Janet to become a member of a women's civic group called Suburban South Women's Guild. Often this group would meet socially with their husbands and within a few years the women's group expanded to quite a few women and our circle of friends continued to grow. Not only we were meeting new people and making new friends but my cousin Alice and her husband John Costigan moved to Green. Alice and Janet were already good friends and we introduced them to many of our new friends. In 1979 Janet was elected president of the Suburban South Women's Guild.

Although Janet no longer had a teaching contract she decided to accept a substitute teacher position at Rex Lake School which was located in the Portage Lakes area. She would substitute one to three days per week. Rex Lake was a school for high school students who had behavior problems at their home high schools in the Akron area. These students were very disruptive in their previous classrooms and at Rex Lake they were all together. From what Janet told me these classrooms had no windows and there was very strict control at the school. She said most of these students really didn't want to learn but by law they had to be in school. Although most of these students were troublemakers Janet said she did not feel intimidated by them. Due to the strict control at the school most of these students behaved and eventually learned something.

When Janet and I married we both thought we would like to have four to six children. By the time we moved into our new house we did not have any of the children we were hoping for. Janet then asked me if she could quit working in hopes of improving our chances of becoming pregnant. I said yes that would be fine since my income was sufficient for us to live comfortably. By the autumn 1973 we had not become pregnant, so we began the process of being evaluated to see if there was a physical problem that prevented a pregnancy. After a series of tests for each of us indicated there was no physical reason for us not to have children, we both felt relieved yet feeling frustrated. A few months later Janet asked me if I would be interested in adopting a child. This took me by complete surprise and I told her I would need to think about it for a while. After several weeks of debating the question with myself I said OK. We then contacted the Catholic Service Organization on N. Main St. in Akron to investigate the possibilities of adoption. After several interviews including a home visit with us they asked each of us to write an autobiography of ourselves. After we wrote our autobiographies Shirley, our caseworker, said they would get back to us. About a week later Shirley called and said

we were accepted to be adoptive parents; however, the wait would probably be about two years. At this time, we both felt saddened the wait would be so long, but at the same time we still had hope we could become pregnant ourselves. Knowing that eventually we would have a baby we prepared one of the bedrooms as a nursery.

For our first Christmas at our new house we decided to get as big a Christmas tree as possible that would fit into our family room. Since the room was large we were able to put up a very large tree. From this time forward we became well known for our large Christmas trees. During this Christmas season we had our first of many parties in our new house. As usual on Christmas Eve we invited my parents and Tom & Gerri and Vicki and Matt for dinner. Janet again made lasagna from scratch, except for Tom who had to have spaghetti. We all had an enjoyable time especially seeing a fire in the fireplace while eating dinner and relaxing. This became a tradition until Janet died. On Christmas Day we went to my parent's house and in the evening to Dorothy Anderson's open house party.

At Christmas time Janet did a lot of baking. She baked a lot of Italian cookies, nut bread and poppy seed roles. We would usually keep one of each roll and a plate of cookies then give one of each to my mother, Tom & Gerri and to other family members or friends we visited during the Christmas season.

Several days after Christmas we had our first big party. We invited many relatives along with good friends. There must have been close to fifty people in the house and we were all having a fun time. Around 11 PM many 'older' relatives left, however most of us younger couples continued to party. Then the party really livened up. I remember taking many people up to a spare bedroom and bringing out my dancing music. We were all having a fun time; however, I must have drunk too much for the next day Janet told me Teddi Hadley and I were dancing on our couch. I didn't remember dancing with Teddi at all. This must have been a good party! These were the first of what became a tradition where we hosted a party between Christmas and New Years for many of our friends. We continued to have these big parties until Janet's health deteriorated years later. Our party usually attracted about forty to fifty people. On New Year's Eve we often went with a group to the dances at Annunciation or Our Lady of Victory churches. Dave & Cathy Enlow were with us just about every year until Janet's health worsened.

When Laura came into our life Christopher and I began a tradition where we would go out and cut down our Christmas tree. This lasted until Laura was older then all four of us would trudge through tree farms and select a tree. Christopher would help me cut it down then we would tie it on top of the car and take it home. This is something I really enjoyed.

Janet and I really enjoyed entertaining and by now most of our friends knew we threw good, fun parties. One of our favorite parties were the 1950/1960's parties. These began in the winter of 1973/1974 and continued for several years. We would invite Tom & Gerri, Jim & Teddi Hadley, John & Jean Koneff, Ray & Gloria Gmerek, Dick & Carol Loesch, Dave & Cathy Enlow, Flo & Mickey Balca, Ron & Toni Pogwizd along with

several other couples. Most of us would dress in 1950's retro clothes, play music from the 1950's and early 1960's, dance and just have a fun time. John, Ray, Dick, and I would often pantomime (remember the Grubber All Stars) to groups of that era while their music was playing on the stereo. Of course, those watching would all be clapping, yelling, and laughing. I usually wore my old black horn rim glasses, a skinny tie and a short sleeve shirt with the sleeves rolled up, ala late 1950's and 1960's.



John Koneff, Dick Loesch, and me with Florence cheering us on at one our 50/60's parties

Not only did we party with these friends and as I mentioned we also partied with members of Suburban South Women's Guild and their husbands. Almost all of us had a lot in common and we had many good times. Often we went to unique restaurants, had many house parties and several times went to Disco clubs to dance. However, John & Vicki Lyons seldom partied with us. They were well liked by almost everyone and were outgoing, yet they hardly ever went to parties. In fact, they were the only couple we knew that stayed home on New Year's Eve and were in bed before midnight.

In the fall of 1973 Jim Hadley invited me to join him and a few other guys to form a bowling league team. I agreed and we bowled every Wednesday evening in Cuyahoga Falls. That summer Jim also asked if I would play with a fast pitch team he was on. They were short a player and I agreed but did not play on a regular basis. Then in the spring of 1974 several younger guys on the team asked me if I would coach their team. Most of them were in their early to mid-twenties and wanted me to teach them the finer points of playing baseball and fast pitch softball. So during the summer of 1974 to 1977 I coached and played with this young team. Several of these guys had a lot of athletic ability and finally developed into halfway decent players. Once again our big problem was acquiring a great pitcher, although we eventually did get a good pitcher, Mike

Griggs. Once again I enjoyed playing, but most of all I enjoyed coaching and teaching these guys the finer points of the game.

During the 1970's Janet and I partied, had cook-outs and did many things together, though the year 1974 was a relatively uneventful year. As mentioned I bowled, played ball, and went to work while Jant was involved with the Suburban South Women's Guild. Janet also began bowling on a team with my cousin Alice, Carol Loesch, Sandy Shelestovich and Vicki Lyons. They bowled and had a lot of laughs together. In late September we took a nice vacation to New England where we visited upstate New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire. After visiting these states, I had now been to almost all the states in the lower forty-eight within the country.

Since we began to date Janet and I attended at least one Ohio State football game each year. After Janet left Kenmore tickets to home games were difficult to obtain so beginning 1970 we went with friends to an away game. In 1970 we traveled with Flo (Czarnecki) & Mickey Balca to Purdue. In following years, we traveled with Flo & Mick, Phyllis (Gmerek) and her husband, Dick & Carol Loesch, or Ray & Penny Cumming's. We would call Ohio State and obtain visitor tickets to away games at Purdue, Michigan State, and Indiana. We were also lucky to obtain home game tickets a few years. Attending these games was a lot of fun and we had many laughs and fond memories of these football weekends, especially the away games.

On October 29, 1974 the Enlow's and us went to the first Cavs game the Richfield Coliseum. The Cavs finally moved out of the old Cleveland Arena into their new digs. We each received a charter membership to the Cavs official fan club.

Ever since we sold our house on Rainey St. and built our new home I had become more interested in the real estate business. Then in January 1975 I began to take classes to become a licensed real estate agent with Buc-I Realty in Uniontown. I took and passed the state exam in late May. Shortly afterward Bernie Gmerek asked me if I would try to sell his father, Mike Gmerek, house for them. Bernie and his wife Karen were living with him. Mike was widowed from his wife Rita, in fact, Rita died the evening of Janet & my wedding rehearsal. Mike & Rita had lived in their home next to Mason Park in east Akron for quite a few years but the neighborhood was declining, and Bernie and Karen wanted to move to a more secure location. I was able to sell their house that summer and I remember after Mike signed his name to the sales agreement he left the room. After a while he didn't return, then Bernie told me his dad went to his room crying. His wife died, now his house was being sold and Mike was having a challenging time with all the changes in his life. Mike died several years later.

Since I was selling real estate on a part time basis I really did not sell many houses. In fact after several years being an agent, I came to realize how difficult it is to make a living selling real estate. I would spend a lot of time with people showing them houses etc. without a sale. They would change their minds about buying, couldn't qualify for a loan or some other reason and I would be left with nothing but a lot of time wasted. In the late 1970's the interest rate on mortgages soared to around 18%. I finally quit being

an agent in 1982. I sold my last house, a building contract, in 1981 to Steve Strong, a friend at work.

During the 1975 Memorial Day week Janet and I went to Ocean City, Maryland to spend time at the beach. I had never spent a whole week at a beach so I was looking forward to it. When we arrived the weather was nice and we decided to take a long walk along the shore. We must have walked for almost two hours and when we returned to our hotel room I noticed my feet were sunburned. I hadn't put any sunscreen lotion on and the next day almost my whole body was severely sunburned. In fact, it was so bad I couldn't withstand to be in the sun and I could barely put on my Bermuda shorts. This was on Monday and it wasn't until Friday that I could even walk on the boardwalk. I spent most of the week in our room or covered up outside with a blanket over my head and body while Janet spent time on the beach, alone. She had darker Italian skin so didn't burn in the sun and was not a happy camper being alone on the beach. This event surely taught me a lesson about protecting myself from the sun. This week though was the first of many beach vacations for us.

In June we received a call from Catholic Service asking us if we would be open to adopting twin babies. This took us by surprise for we never thought about twins. We thought it over for a day and called back indicating our answer would be 'yes.' They said 'great' and would soon get back to us. After a week of waiting with no feedback we called Catholic Service and asked what the status was of us adopting the twins? They said the twins had been placed with another couple. We felt disappointed and continued to wait. It was now close to two years since we first applied and were beginning the think that maybe adoption wasn't meant to be for us. Then in early August I received a phone call at work. It was Catholic Service again and this time they said there was little boy waiting for us and we were to pick him up in two days. He was about two weeks old. Although hoping for a call this call surprised me. When I called Janet and told her we both went into a semi-panic mode. Although we had a room ready for a baby we did not have any of the basic everyday needs for a baby. That evening and the next day we scurried around different stores getting diapers, baby formula etc. Now that we knew we were going to have a boy we needed to decide what name to call him. Janet and I had discussed at length for over a year what name we would choose if we had a boy or a girl. I first halfheartedly suggested we name a boy after my father and Janet's father first names. Our sons' name would be Simon Peter. Of course, Janet said no way. Janet was pushing for Christopher, but I was hesitant because I didn't want to choose a name that would end up shortened, i.e. Chris. I really wanted to use the full name, not a nickname. Once we agreed on that point we agreed to name our little boy Christopher.

When we arrived at Catholic Service I felt nervous. I had no experience taking care of a baby and wasn't sure if I was up to the task. Once Shirley, our caseworker, handed Christopher to me I felt awkward, but almost immediately came to cherish holding him. Janet was so thrilled to have our baby she could hardly contain herself. Arriving home with Christopher was one of the best days of our lives. I remember putting Christopher down on the floor in his little seat and Covers came over to him to check him out. It was really a neat scene. Also, once we were home Janet remembered that on July 18,

Christopher's birthdate, she fell at the Lyon's house where we met prior to going to an Elvis concert together. Her fall occurred at about the same time Christopher was born, she said it was an omen.

At first I felt very awkward taking care of Christopher. I had never changed a diaper, feed a baby, or even know how to hold an infant. However it didn't take long before I came to enjoy taking care of him. He was now our pride and joy. We christened him Christopher Paul and Tom & Gerri were his godparents. For his christening we dressed him in a gown that had been passed down through many generations on my mother's side of the family. The gown was over one hundred years old when he was baptized.



Christopher's Baptism – August, 1975

I soon began to take many home movies of Christopher and many of his firsts, rolling over, first step etc. When Christopher was six months old we enrolled him in swim lessons at the North Canton YMCA. Janet took him to swimming classes two to three times a week. Now that we had our baby Janet and I both agreed she should not work, that she would be a full-time mom. Janet felt thrilled to be a full-time mother and not need to work.

During the following months we both enjoyed and loved our new family member. Having a baby was a real change for us though. We had been married five years with no children and it was like a five-year honeymoon for us. Janet and I really loved each other and truly enjoyed being together, now we had to share each other with Christopher. We did not regret adopting Christopher; it was just a change for us. As time went on we discovered our lives were much fuller with Christopher. Christopher was like the perfect baby. He was beautiful, good-natured, laughed a lot, seldom cried, and usually slept through the night. He was everything we could ask for.

Our first Christmas with Christopher was special. Janet made Christmas stockings for each of us including Covers which we hung over the fireplace, it made our home more Christmassy.

Although we really enjoyed Christopher we didn't give up too many of our social activities. I continued to try and sell real estate and went to Brown's games. Janet continued with the Suburban South Women's Guild, bowled and we continued enjoying ourselves with our many friends. When going out often we had Mary Anderson babysit for us. One thing we did discontinue though was attend Ohio State football games.

The July 4th activities in 1976 was memorable to me. This was our country's 200th anniversary and It was like a weeklong celebration. We really had an enjoyable time as we went to the farm for two or three days and there were many people there most of the week. This year I began to take Janet's uncle's WWII flag and placed it on a long metal pole and stuck it in the sand. I continued to do this for many years. That July 4th week there were many national celebrations and we took Christopher to the July 4th fireworks in downtown Akron. We were able to park close to where they were shooting off the fireworks. Although the view was excellent it was too close for Christopher's ears. The fireworks were very load and too sensitive for his one-year-old ears. He cried through most of the fireworks show even though I put my hands over his ears.

During our first year with Christopher Catholic Services made several home visits. Finally, in September 1976 Catholic Service gave the court's approval that we were suitable parents, and we were able to officially adopt Christopher. When we went to the County courthouse to finalize the adoption we met a friend of mine, Ron Amidio, and his wife. They were also finalizing the adoption of their son, also named Christopher. Now Christopher Paul was officially ours.

Christmas 1976 was especially enjoyable for Christopher. He was now old enough to enjoy some of the festivities. On Christmas morning he just loved tearing off the wrapping paper from his gifts and then again at Grandma and Grandpa's house. After spending Christmas afternoon at my parent's house all of us, including my brother's family, went to Dorothy's open house party. We stayed until around midnight and upon returning home Christopher was still wound up and didn't want to sleep. He wanted to play with his new toys, so Janet went to bed and I stayed up and played with Christopher. Christopher and I did not go to bed until around 2:30 in the morning.

1976 included an almost drastic event. On a mid-July Sunday afternoon there was a widespread storm with lots of rain. We also had a significant amount of rain on Saturday and by late Sunday afternoon the creek behind our house was rising fast. When the creek came within about ten feet of our house I called several neighbors to help us move furniture from our family room and basement to higher levels. I also turned off the power and gas line feeding our furnace. It turned out to be a good move since soon the rising water began to pour into our basement through the vents in the basement crawl space. I was really beginning to feel scared thinking what if the water began to enter the family room. The creek had turned into a torrent of running rising water and I had never

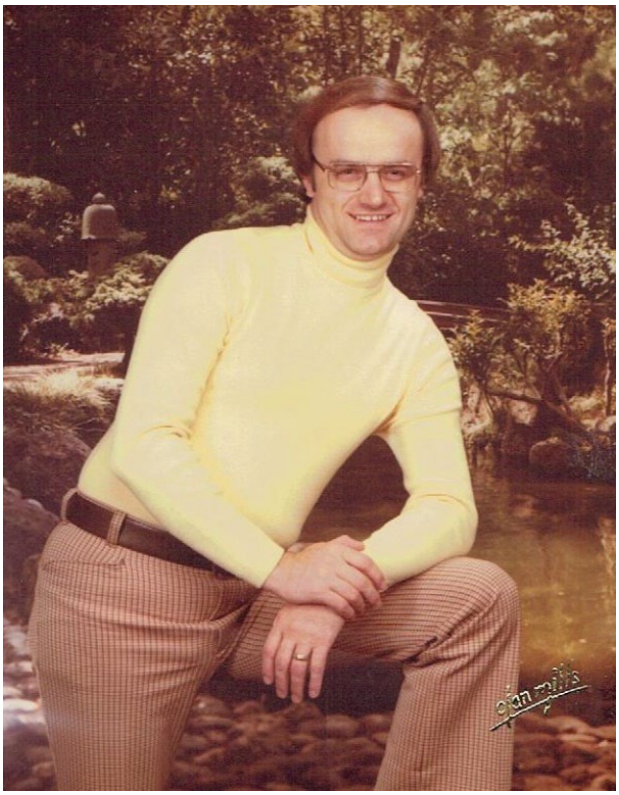
seen anything like this before, and the water kept coming in the basement. Finally, the water stopped rising and I felt a big sense of relief. The water stopped rising about two inches from entering the family room, however there was about forty inches of dirty, muddy water in our basement. Our washer and dryer were destroyed along with everything stored in the crawl space including my electric train, Janet's textbooks from college and teaching material. Some of Christopher's toys were also gone. When the water stopped rising my next thought was how we were going to remove three and half feet of water from the basement. A neighbor suggested we call the Green Township Fire Department to determine if they could be of assistance. Around 10 PM the fire department came and pumped all of the water from the basement back into the creek. By this time, the creek had subsided back to near normal levels. Once the water stopped rising and we calmed down I called my parents and asked if they would take care of Christopher for the night. Janet and I knew we had a lot of work ahead of us to clean up the mess. For the next few days we hung clothes lines outside and tried to dry some of the clothes, towels, blankets, etc. that were wet and dirty in the basement. Not only was it a real mess I also had to try to clean all the mud that had entered the basement, this was a real chore. We also had to take many clothes to the laundromat or toss them out. Like I said this was a real mess. Obviously we had to purchase a new washer and dryer.

We were very fortunate the water did not enter the living area of our house and thankful for all three of our neighbors who helped move things from the basement and family room to the living and dining room. I was also very curious as to why the creek rose so quickly for it was not a gradual rise. Then about a year later I was talking to some kids who liked to play upstream and near the small lake from which the water ran. The kids told me the small lake had been dammed up by the sand and gravel company which operated at the lake. During the heavy rains the dam burst causing a quick torrent of water into the creek. Since we had no proof that had occurred we had no recourse. Our neighbors did not have too much concern about flooding since their houses sat back much further from the creek. From this time forward I always felt concerned about flooding after heavy rains.

During the next year, 1977, not much changed in our lives, it was still very good. Christopher was into his 'terrible two's,' but he really wasn't too bad. In late summer Christopher was two years old and we again applied for another child at Catholic Services. Only this time we requested a girl. When we adopted Christopher they told us we would have to wait for two years to make another adoption application and now was the time. Once again they told us it would be at least another two years before we heard anything from them. This time though the application process was much simpler. We did not need to provide an autobiography nor have home visits.



Family photo – 1976



Me - 1976



At the farm July 1977

During the early 1970s things at work were relatively unchanged until late 1975. Then Statistical Accounting was split into three departments, Tire Division Accounting, General Products Division Accounting and Financial Analysis. The Division Accounting departments were to focus on the operations and profitability of their respective divisions while Financial Analysis would focus on the big picture along with corporate worldwide financial reporting. Since I was working on the parent company's Profit or Loss Statements I was placed in Financial Analysis. The new manager of Financial Analysis was my old friend Jim Benko. Jim had become a real go- getter and was driven to move up the company ladder and becoming Manager of Financial Analysis was a great first step. My immediate supervisor was Tom Johanni. Tom was a good guy and we got along very well. Soon after I began working for Tom he was promoted to Assistant Manager of the Treasury Department. I felt happy for Tom but now the question became who would replace Tom. To my surprise Jim Benko offered me the position. Accepting the position would be a good promotion and a nice increase in salary. During my interview Jim told me if I accepted the position he expected me to give more than 100% and that Goodyear would need to become the number one priority in my life. That evening Janet and I discussed the situation and how I felt uncomfortable accepting the promotion. I did not want to be a slave to Goodyear and taking the new position and working for Jim Benko would put a lot of stress in my life. I was happy with

my life the way it was. After thinking about the job for several days I told Jim that I was not interested in the promotion. This stunned Jim, for he could not understand why I would pass up a promotion. He had already prepared all the paperwork thinking I would accept the offer. After I told Jim I was declining the promotion I felt much more comfortable. I really did not want to spend more time than necessary away from home.

Six months later Jim moved me to a different job function within the department. I was now working with Harold Evelyn preparing the company's and each division's quarterly Return on Investment (ROI) statement. In addition, I would be working with Harold preparing some of Goodyear's reporting of defense contract expenses. This was not a demotion; it was an opportunity for me to gain broader experience. Harold was 58 years old and the company wanted someone else to learn how to prepare these reports and statements. I soon discovered Harold to be one of the most difficult persons I ever had to work with. He was very secretive about how he performed the work and was somewhat reluctant to teach me. He was also like a Jekyll and Hyde person; I never knew how he would act or react to anything. Sometimes he was jovial, but most often grumpy. In addition, I thought he spoke in a crude manner and often felt tense working with him. About a year later Harold was moved to another position and I was given full responsibility of determining and reporting the ROI (Return on investment) and defense contract expenses. The ROI reporting was the most important function of the position and I thought Harold had made the job much more cumbersome and complicated than it needed to be. At the time all the work was done manually and it took several weeks just to prepare the working papers. The ROI was a quarterly report and as I began working on it I found it to be very frustrating and stressful. I was trying to follow the concepts that Harold had used in the past and couldn't understand his logic. They did not make any sense to me. For the first time in my career I had to work Saturday's to complete my job and I was not a happy camper. I enjoyed being home with my family. Using what I thought were more logical allocations I finally finished the ROI statements, and all went well.

In the spring of 1978, I learned the company was going to try and mechanize (computerize) the ROI. I was told not to get too involved with the project because the company needed me to continue to report the ROI manually in case the mechanization did not work. In the third quarter of 1978 the first attempt to run the ROI by computer was tested and verified against my manual calculations. The mechanization worked well and now it was my job to learn and report the ROI via the mainframe computer (job A2030). In a brief time, I became the company's 'expert' on the ROI. As an aside, the defense contract reporting was becoming less important. It was based on laws passed by Congress during World War II and this type of reporting was becoming obsolete. Little did I know how important defense contract expense reporting would become in my job in the coming years.

During the 1970's working at Goodyear was not all work and no play. Many of us had a good sense of humor and almost daily barbs were going back and forth between the guys and some of the younger gals. Quite often I was butt of many Polish jokes and of course I would retaliate in some way. Over my years at Goodyear I gave nicknames to

many guys. I don't want to say here what they were but as you may think they were not complimentary. It was all fun and it made work much more enjoyable.

Except for the changes going on at work 1978 was a fairly uneventful year. However in early June we did take the vacation to Ocean City, Maryland, with four other families. They included Tom & Gerri, the Enlow's, the Loesch's, and Shellastovich's along with their kids. (Kathy Enlow and Janet had been friends since they worked together part time at Sears while in college). To our surprise the water temperature was cold and other than the kids few of us went in the water. There happened to be ten adults and ten kids and all of us had a very good time. We spent a lot of time on the beach, played volleyball, went searching for shells and laughed a lot. To this day many of us say this was one of the best vacations we ever had despite the cool ocean water. This is when we discovered the ocean temperature varied throughout the year. Cool in early summer then warms up as summer goes on.

In May 1978 was my parent's 40th wedding anniversary and Tom & I planned to have a surprise party for them. Mom & Dad both said they didn't want any special affair for their anniversary but we knew they enjoyed good parties. On the Saturday closest to May 30, their anniversary date, Tom & I planned a surprise party at Queen of Heaven church hall. I arranged the hall and catering, and Tom knew a small polka band that he hired. The evening started out with Tom & Gerri and us along with Vicki, Matt and Christopher taking mom & dad out to a nice dinner. After dinner I made an excuse that I had to go to Queen of Heaven church to pick up something in the church hall. Once we got to the church parking lot I asked everyone to come in and take a look at the hall. When we went down the steps to the hall my parents were shocked to see over a one hundred people waiting for them and all yelling out 'Happy Anniversary.' Even though my parents said they didn't want a party they thoroughly enjoyed the whole evening. Many of their friends and all of their siblings attended except my Uncle Ed who was living in Kentucky. The following Sunday my parents celebrated their anniversary with a Mass at St. Matthew's church.





Mom & Dad at their 40th wedding anniversary

In 1977, we were robbed again, this was our second robbery. Our first house robbery occurred in 1974. During the summer of 1974 robbery Janet was coming home one summer morning, opened the garage door and saw our stereo and several other items in the middle of the garage floor. She went into our house and didn't see anyone. She realized we were in the process of being robbed and called me then the sheriff's department. By the time I came home the sheriff's deputy was at our house and I discovered they had already apprehended the robber. Apparently a neighbor up the street had seen a strange car parking on our street and mentioned this to the sheriff deputy. A sheriff deputy soon discovered the car in Tamarack Estates. When the robber saw the sheriff deputy he took off running and the deputy took chase, tackled him and they rolled down a small hill where the robber was apprehended and taken to jail. Sounds like a movie scene. Fortunately we recovered all the items that were taken.

However, in summer of 1978 our third robbery was more severe. On this occasion Janet came home and discovered our house had been ransacked and robbed. The house was a total mess; the robber went through every drawer in every room and threw clothes, papers and just about everything on the floor. Janet felt violated by having all of our personal possessions including our underwear gone through and tossed astray. One of the items trashed was Christopher prized Cookie Monster bank. It had been hammered into many pieces. The robber gained access to our house by breaking in through the kitchen window. A week or so later the sheriff's department told us they apprehended the robber. He was a repeat offender and had recently been released from prison.







Photos from our 1978 house burglary

That fall there was an ad in the local newspaper (Green Views) about a meeting for the Suburban South Democrats Club. Since I had an interest in politics and this Club interested me, I went to the meeting and met some local politicians. Since college I have enjoyed politics and thought this was an opportunity to become involved with local politics. After attending a few meetings I began to get acquainted with several county office holders and enjoyed meeting these people. Eventually I met all the county officeholders and got to know the Green Township trustees very well. In fact after each meeting several of us went to Don Poncho's restaurant to have a few beers, eat taco chips, and discuss politics. It was here that I got to know many politicians on a personal basis. During the 1978 elections I became acquainted with many Democratic candidates within the county and a few state officeholders. The whole political process fascinated me and I thoroughly enjoyed it. On election night 1978 I was invited to a township trustee's home for an election night party. Many were in attendance and we waited for the election returns while snacking and having a few drinks.

In 1979 there was election of officers for the organization and to my surprise someone nominated me for president. I sheepishly accepted the nomination and to my further surprise I was elected president of the Suburban South Democrats. I felt inadequate to be president since I had very little political experience. During the next year I met more state legislators and county politicians. Janet and I were invited to several political fund raisers and rallies in the county. In 1980 the organization reelected me president and I became involved in the 1980 Democratic presidential primary election campaigns. Neither I nor the organization favored any Democratic candidate but our role was to provide organizational assistance to any candidate who was campaigning in Summit County. To my further surprise several in the organization suggested I run for Green

Township trustee, however I declined. I didn't want to become an officeholder because I was aware how much time it took out one's life and I wanted to spend time with my family. Then in late 1980 it was becoming apparent many county officeholders were engaged in one scandal or another. These were people who were either members of the Suburban South Democrats or whom I knew. When many were found guilty of a crime (usually fraud from using county funds for personal use) I quit the organization. These were people I trusted and I became somewhat sour on politics, for a while. During the 1980's the national Democratic Party became the 'pro-choice' party and I became a Republican. After Janet and I struggled to conceive, abortion was very abhorrent to us, killing babies when us and many others were struggling to have children. This is in addition to the outright immorality of abortion.



Christopher helping me chop wood - October 1978

During the late seventies Janet began to have severe migraine headaches and often she was unable function. I was beginning to feel concerned and asked Janet if she thought a move to the southwest would help her migraines. She said she wasn't sure but neither Janet nor I were opposed to moving. I even inquired about Goodyear transferring me to their Goodyear Farm location in Phoenix. I had worked via the phone with the accounting department at the Farm operation and was fascinated with what they were doing on the 'Farm.' In addition to running a huge farm operation Goodyear also had one of the world's most exclusive resorts named the Wigwam. Since there

were no openings for me there was no option of a job transfer. I then asked Janet if she would want to pull up stakes and just move to the southwest. She said no, not at this time, but maybe later if her headaches became worse.

1979 was an eventful year. In early June, the Enlow's joined us vacationing in Myrtle Beach and we all loved it. The weather was nice and best of all the ocean temperature was warm; it was great weather for swimming in the ocean and pools. We arrived at our condo, the Sea Mist, on a Saturday and spent most of the day at the beach. We then discovered that the first weekend in June was 'Sun' weekend at Myrtle Beach. One of the important things about Sun weekend was that Myrtle Beach Air Force base brought in many older jet fighter aircraft from Luke Air Force Base in Arizona along with Air Force Thunderbirds. Saturday and Sunday the air base was open for everyone to visit and see and sit in many of the Korean and Viet Nam War era fighter jets. Being that most of us had too much sun on Saturday we decided to visit the air base on Sunday. We saw many of these planes and the kids got to sit in them. I was familiar with the Korean War era planes from my Air Force ROTC days and a few of the Vietnam era planes. We all enjoyed the day very much. In addition, all during the weekend the Thunderbirds flew over the beach and put on great air shows. It was really neat to be sitting on the beach watching a fabulous air show. The Sea Mist, which was almost oceanfront, had three different pools and each one was unique from the others. Christopher loved swimming and almost every morning he and I would go to the pool around 9 AM, he would run ahead of me go on the diving board and jump into the water. Whenever he did this people around the pool would gasp because they didn't think he knew how to swim, however Christopher was now almost four years old and could swim very well. Janet had continued taking him to swim lessons at North Canton YMCA and it was common for him to jump off the 'Y' board into the pool. Our whole week at the Sea Mist was one vacation I especially remember. The Enlow's and us thoroughly enjoyed this vacation.

In late August Christopher began pre-school at what is now the Portage Lakes Career Center. The pre-school was run by several of Janet's friends from Suburban South Women's Guild who had leased some rooms from PLCC for the pre-school. I really enjoyed watching Christopher progress in pre-school. Also, in 1979 Janet was elected president of the Suburban South Women's Guild.

In September 1979 Janet and I attended a political rally and party in Merriman Valley and while there it began to rain very hard and continued raining hard while we were driving home. When we arrived home we noticed the creek had risen very high and the water was only about ten feet from entering our house. We both became very concerned especially after experiencing the 1976 flood. Fortunately, the water did not rise much further but from that time forward I always began to feel concerned whenever it rained very hard for a lengthy period of time. I didn't want to experience another flood. One other thing these hard rains did was begin to erode the creek bank. Therefore from then on I began to place as many rocks as possible along the bank to try and prevent erosion. I think if we had stayed at Charleston Dr. we would have needed to bring in

truckloads of large rocks to prevent further erosion of not only the bank but also the back yard.

Christopher was now four years old and I felt very comfortable and happy with our situation at home. Janet and I were enjoying Christopher to the hilt, our marriage was very good, our social life was full, and I was being fulfilled in my job. What else could I ask for in life? Then in mid-October we received a phone call from Catholic Service informing us there was a baby girl who may be placed for adoption and we may the right family for her. They went on to tell us this case was one of the most complicated cases they have ever had and weren't sure if the infant girl would be available for us. Shirley told us they would be getting back to us as soon as the parents made their decision. Since we had requested a girl this was our chance to complete our family. Janet was all excited about the news but I felt somewhat ambivalent. As I indicated I was very satisfied with our life and adding another child may disrupt our lifestyle. I was being selfish and after discussing it with Janet and her persuasive arguments about adopting another child, especially a girl, I agreed. Now all we had do was wait for a phone call and be prepared to pick up a baby girl on a day's notice. Janet and I had discussed names for a girl and finally we agreed to name the girl Maria, if she was Italian or Spanish, or Laura if she was neither of these ancestries. I became enamored with the name Maria when I first saw the movie 'West Side Story.' On October 30 we received the call from Catholic Social Service informing us the parents and grandparents had decided to place the girl for adoption and that we needed to come to the agency the next day to pick her up. So, on a warm and sunny Halloween we drove to Catholic Social Service Agency on N. Main St. to pick up our new baby girl. First our social worker Shirley had a long talk with us about the girl and her situation. She went on to tell us a lot more information about Laura than they gave us about Christopher. Shirly told us the parents were high school students at a local Catholic high school, that they were athletic, and that even the grandparents were very much involved in the decision to place the baby girl for adoption. Shirley then told us the parents and grandparents put quite a few restrictions on the type of family who may adopt this girl and that is why Shirley thought we would be the perfect family for this little girl. After going over the administrative paperwork Shirley led us to the room where the baby girl was lying in a crib. As soon as we saw her we knew her name would be Laura. After Janet and I held Laura Christopher then held her very tight and looked very excited to have a baby sister. After saying 'goodbye' to Shirley we drove Laura to her new home.



Picking up Laura from Catholic Social Services October 31, 1979.

After we brought Laura home my feeling of apathy toward another child turned into excitement. She brought another new dimension to our lives, even Covers seemed excited to have another person in the house.

One of the first things we arranged was to have Laura baptized; so on the third Sunday of November. Laura was baptized into the Church with the name Laura Marie. The christening took place at Queen of Heaven Church with Mary Anderson and George, Janet's cousin, as godparents.

After the christening we had a big celebration at our house. Most of our relatives came to the christening then to our house for a party. This Sunday happened to be the day of Brown's vs. Steelers' football game and the big rivalry. Since most of Janet's relatives were from Pittsburgh we all watched the game. The game was very close, and the score continually changed as to who was in the lead. There must have been at least fifty people in our house and almost all of us were yelling and screaming as we were watching the game. It was a fun time since half the people were rooting for the Steelers' and half for the Brown's. The cheering and yelling became very loud yet Laura, who was sleeping in the family room with us slept through the whole game. Laura, who was

a light sleeper, sleeping with all the noise was most amazing. Almost everyone who was there that afternoon remembered the game and all the fun we had cheering and yelling. I can't remember who won the game except that the game went into overtime and Laura slept through all the noise and commotion.



Eventually everything at home calmed down and we settled into a routine. Christopher continued in preschool and swim lessons while Janet was enjoying being a mother more than ever and I continued with my political and real estate activity.

When Laura was nine months old Janet started Laura with swim lessons at the North Canton YMCA, so now both Christopher and Laura were taking swim lessons. Quite often on Saturday evenings or Sunday afternoons we went swimming at the 'Y, during open swim. At first Laura did not like the water, she cried frequently while in the water, even in the Water Baby pool which was much warmer than the regular pool. Eventually Laura began to love the water and she progressed very rapidly in her swim lessons. In fact, by the time she was five years old she had become a stronger swimmer than Christopher when he was her age, and he was a very strong swimmer for his age.

When Christopher was about to complete his swim lessons prior to entering kindergarten he had to pass a swim test. The test involved what I thought was quite extensive for 5-year old's. It included having the kids dressed in all their clothes then tossed into the pool where they had to undress and swim back to edge of pool, they wore swimsuits underneath their clothes. They also had to get into a canoe in the middle of the pool; then the canoe would be tipped over and the 5-year-olds had to right the canoe and be able to get back in it. Quite a task I thought for these young kids. Laura went through the same routine to complete her swim lessons four years later.

In 1979 Janet and I attended my 20th high school reunion. Prior to the reunion we first met at Jim & Teddi Hadley's house with Ray & Gloria Gmerek, John & Jean Koneff, and several other couples for a few drinks. The reunion was held at Fairlawn County Club and there Steve Berish and I began talking about having a 25th Annunciation grade school reunion the following year. About a month later we formed a small committee and the following August held the reunion at the Hofbrau House, a German restaurant in east Akron. This was a neat reunion for each of us grew up on the east side of town therefore we had a common background, not like St. Vincent High School where students came from all over the county and beyond.

At the Annunciation reunion two of my best friends from grade school came from long distances to attend. Kenny Gerry came from Los Angeles and Jim Cardin from Florida. Kenny and I were best friends from fourth – seventh grades. Ken went on to Hower High School (trade school) but quit school at age 16, married at age 17, moved to California and finished high school. Once he earned his diploma he went on to college and earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Kenny then went on to build his own machine shop business and it was going very well. For Ken and his wife our little grade school reunion was special to them because they did not have what one would call normal high school years.

Jim on the other hand went to East High School and was one of their star athletes during his sophomore and junior years, however he quit school and never graduated. Jim then moved to Florida completed high school and went to landscaping school. At the time of our reunion Jim was managing the grounds of several large condo complexes in Florida and loved living there. Like Ken this grade school reunion was special to Jim since he also did not have a normal high school senior year. I really enjoyed seeing many of my old classmates most of whom I hadn't seen since grade school.

During the early spring of 1980 I decided to try coaching F League baseball which is comprised of boys 13-15-years old. I volunteered to coach one of two Green teams in the Suburban South 'F' league. The teams in the league were from Green, Manchester, Springfield, and Canal Fulton. The Green teams were formed by a draft, mainly from boys who played the previous year or graduated from Little League. Knowing very little about any of the players I asked some others for advice and at the draft I ended up with what turned out to be the youngest team in the league with only two 14-year-old boys and the rest were 13 years old. During the early practices I realized most of the boys did

not have a good foundation in the fundamentals of baseball. Since all but two boys were directly from Little League they did not know how to steal a base, slide, the fundamentals of hitting, bunting, pitching, signs etc. I very much enjoyed instructing these boys about the fundamentals and the best part was most of them were eager to learn. I especially remember telling them after one of the early practices that each of them to wear some sort of shorts under their jeans for the next practice since we were going to practice sliding. At the next practice I began to teach them how to slide and they really enjoyed it. I taught them various basic slides and had the boys practice these slides for almost an hour. After practice several of the boys told me they were having a lot of fun learning how to slide. Sliding was not allowed in Little League. Once the season began Christopher was to be our bat boy but that was short lived since he preferred to play with other young boys in the cornfield behind our ball field. Our season began on a slow note as we lost most of our games but we were competitive. As the season progressed I began to see a lot of improvement in the team and we finished the season relatively strong. After the season ended I felt very hopeful for next year since most of the boys would be returning. After our last game most of the parents gathered and called me over to tell me they were very appreciative of me coaching the team and said I did a very good job not only coaching the boys, but also liked the way I handled them. This made me feel very proud and I was excited to coach the next year.

During the summer of 1980 we did not go on a vacation due to Laura being so young. This was the last year in which we did not take a vacation.

After Labor Day Christopher and our neighbor boy Darren Lyons started kindergarten at East Liberty School. It was a big step for now they would be entering the real world and no longer be little boys. The following year Christopher entered the first grade.



Christopher and Darren entering the school bus for their first day of school

Guild needs joiners to serve area

The Suburban South Junior Women's Guild is looking for area women who are interested in joining a working community service organization. To open the 1979 membership drive, the Guild is hosting a fall style show at its meeting Thursday, October 4, at 7 p.m. in the Gallery Room at the Portage Lakes Joint Vocational School. Joyce's Boutique of Canal Fulton will sponsor the fashion program.

The Guild is organized to advance social and civic conditions in the home and the community. Members have an opportunity to exert a positive effort in several areas:

(1) A pre-school eye screening program, which met with much success last spring, will be continued and expanded. The screening is designed to determine if a youngster has vision difficulties that could cause problems for him as he learns to read. To help meet this goal, the Guild will purchase a vision testing machine.

(2) Support of the new Green Branch Library and its services will continue. One possibility is the initiation of a shut-in service, in which volunteers would deliver books to the homes of shut-ins and later return the books to the library. This would help to compensate for the loss of a service the Bookmobile had provided.

(3) The Guild will continue to support the activities of the local Y.W.C.A. To date the Guild has purchased cabinets and floor cushions for the Y-sponsored Small World Pre-School program. Additional assistance will be provided as the need arises.

As a special project, the Guild will again sponsor a needy family for the Christmas holiday. Guild members will provide food for the family's holiday dinner, as well as gifts for each member of the family.

In addition to community service work, Guild members are accorded opportunities for personal enrichment and social activities. Programs planned for this year include a discussion with a psychologist on coping with stress, a disco dance lesson, and a discussion on law that everyone should know.

For couples, there will be a mystery night, Scotch doubles bowling, and a progressive wine and cheese tasting party. The Guild will also sponsor Halloween, Christmas, and Easter parties for young children.

All women in the suburban south communities who are interested in the Guild's projects and programs are cordially invited to attend the October meeting. Additional information can be obtained by calling either Janet Gruic, President, at 644-5314 or Judy Burkett, Membership Chairwoman, at 644-5716.



NEWLY INSTALLED OFFICERS of the Suburban South Y Junior Women's Guild are: left to right, Vicky Lyons, Secretary; Joan Mowery, Vice-president; Sandy Shelestovich, Treasurer and Janet Gruic, President.

Sally's area happenings

The morning and afternoon Kindergarten children at Lakeview Elementary School will be having a Harvest Fest on November 21. They are going to make their own applesauce and pumpkin bread under the supervision of their teacher, Miss Kowalski.

Mr. and Mrs. Gruic (Janet and Paul), who reside on Charleston Drive in Green Township, have just adopted a five week old baby girl named Laura Marie, adored by her brother Christopher and the entire family.

1979 article in Green Views about Suburban South Women's Guild and Laura's adoption notice in Sally's area happenings

During the fall of 1980 Goodyear began to implement a new Profit or Loss reporting system (A2400). The General Products Division was the first to implement the system and now the plan was to implement it throughout the parent company. Jim Benko was still the manager of Financial Analysis and responsible for getting the system up and running. He decided to bring in a new Section Manager, Ron Chrisman, to head up the implementation. Ron came from the General Products Division and was instrumental in implementing A2400 for General Products and became my new boss. I knew Ron well but did not think highly of him for this position. Anyway, I was to be involved with the implementation process of A2400 in addition to my regular job.

Christmas 1980 was as usual. On Christmas Eve we hosted my family for dinner and Santa came to visit the kids. The Portage Lakes Kiwanis Club had volunteer Santa's visit homes in the Portage Lakes area on Christmas Eve and bring gifts to the children. Parents dropped off gifts at the Coventry Fire station a few weeks before Christmas Eve. Matt, Vicki, Christopher and now Laura received gifts from Santa. We usually attended the 5 PM children's Christmas Eve Mass at St. Francis then hurried home to be there in time for Santa to arrive usually around 6:30 PM. The kids opened their gifts then we would have dinner. Since Janet was in the choir at Queen of Heaven she left home around 11 PM to sing at the midnight Mass while I stayed home and put out Christmas gifts for Christopher and Laura. On Christmas morning the kids would wake up early to see what gifts Santa brought them then after lunch we continued to my parent's house for more gifts, drink champagne, and have dinner. In the evening we would go to Dorothy Anderson's open house and continue partying.



Christopher in Santa's sleigh on Christmas Eve



Tom & Gerri @ Christmas

This year two days after Christmas we received a panic call from my mother. She called to inform us that my dad had a heart attack after shoveling snow and was at St. Thomas Hospital. My dad's heart attack was not critical but it was serious. My dad arrived home from the hospital two weeks later and seemed to be doing fairly well, however he needed to undergo several more tests. It took several months of testing to make the determination that bypass surgery was needed. In 1981 heart bypass surgery was considered very risky but doctors told him he had at least one artery maybe two that were blocked and by-pass surgery was needed, or he would die. So surgery was scheduled for July 6 at Cleveland Clinic.

In January 1981 there was an announcement during Mass that nominations were being made for Parish Council representatives. Since I thought the parish lacked many social functions I volunteered to be nominated for Parish Council. My idea was if I got elected I would try and bring some social activities to Queen of Heaven. I remembered Annunciation and St. Matthew parishes had many social activities for parishioners and my parents used to really enjoy them. Well low and behold several weeks later I received a phone call to inform me I was now a member of the Parish Council. My first meeting was to be during the third week in March.

Also during the fall I was beginning to feel somewhat disillusioned with my marriage to Janet. During the first five years of our marriage it seemed like we were on a perpetual honeymoon. Except when Janet's mother died everything seemed to go almost

perfectly for us. When Christopher arrived he added a new dimension to our life and I was really enjoying my life. Shortly after the arrival of Laura I began to judge Janet was putting more emphasis on being a mother than a wife; that she was more interested in being with Laura and Christopher than with me. This judgment really hit home when I took a week vacation in October and it seemed every time I wanted to be involved with Janet and the kids she told me she was too busy taking them to ‘this’ place or ‘that’ place. I was beginning the feel used, that she just wanted me for my paycheck so she could do her thing with the kids. I kept these feelings of being used and unimportant to myself and did not express them to Janet. Looking back I think Janet may have also felt a bit disillusioned with me by my spending so much time in Real Estate, politics, coaching and attending Brown’s games.

Chapter 7 – Years 1981-1997

Near the end of January Janet asked me if I would be interested in us attending a Marriage Encounter weekend. She had mentioned this to me several years earlier and I had no interest in such a thing. In fact, in 1979 a couple came to Queen of Heaven Church to speak about Marriage Encounter during each Mass. After Mass Janet asked me what I thought about what the couple said and about attending the Weekend. I told her 'what couple'? I had daydreamed through Mass and honestly did not even know anyone was even speaking let alone what they were saying. I was probably daydreaming about the Indians or Browns. In January 1981 I didn't even want to hear about attending a Marriage Encounter weekend. I told Janet I did not want to be involved with any *'Jesus Freaks.'* However, after thinking about it and realizing how I was beginning to feel somewhat distant from Janet a few weeks later I agreed to go on a Weekend on the condition it had to be within the next few months. The baseball season started in April and the Brown's season began in September, so I had a short window to attend a weekend. You can see what my priorities were. Janet then made a phone call and discovered there was a Weekend scheduled for during the first weekend in March, so she scheduled us to attend the Weekend. The registration fee was only $15 so I thought if nothing else I would at least get an inexpensive weekend away from home. My parents generously agreed to keep the kids while we attended the Weekend.

The Weekend was being held at the Holiday Inn across from Summit Mall in west Akron. Janet and I had dinner at the hotel then proceeded to the Weekend reception area. We were surprised to see couples welcoming us, even taking our luggage to our room. We then went down to what was called the Conference Room to begin our Weekend. There were three couples and a priest presenting the Weekend and all of them individually welcomed us prior to starting the Weekend. The couples were the Dombrowski's, Weber's and Gazick's. The priest's name was Fr. Tom Shields who was from Cincinnati. When the Weekend started everyone was asked to introduce themselves and give their spouses most endearing quality. I struggled to come up with an endearing quality for Janet but when my turn came I was able to come up with something, what I can't remember. I felt nervous introducing myself for I felt uncomfortable talking about myself in public. Friday evening was fairly uneventful. The presenting team told us that during the Weekend we were going to learn a communication technique called Dialogue whereby we would write to each other a reflection in a notebook, exchange what we wrote, then discuss what we wrote. After the second and last presentation on Friday evening we went to our room and talked about the presenting team. We were surprised the Gazick's' were one of the presenting team couples for we casually knew them from Queen of Heaven Church. I thought the priest was very different, he seemed very shy and nervous and this seemed unusual to me.

On Saturday I was surprised, even shocked hearing what the presenting couples were saying about themselves and their relationships. It was very personal and had to be extremely difficult for them to say such things in public. The priest was especially having a challenging time. Eventually I realized what they were doing was giving us an

example as how we are to share with our spouses, to share our deepest feelings no matter how difficult it may be share with one's spouse. On Saturday I gradually began to open up to Janet with my fears and apprehensions about myself and our relationship. Janet was also doing the same thing regarding herself. The first presentation after dinner was titled *Risk and Confidence in Dialogue*. During this talk I was really amazed at what the presenting couple and Fr. Tom told us about themselves and their relationship. Fr. Tom's relationship was with the people to whom he ministered. They were extremely deep sharing's and this encouraged me to share my deepest and darkest feelings in my letter to Janet. My secret feeling was insecurity. I often felt insecure but never wanted anyone to know this about me. As I handed my notebook to Janet I felt very nervous. In her letter to me Janet also revealed one of her deepest feelings and we had a very deep and sincere dialogue. It was a real turning point in our weekend and our relationship. During the last presentation that evening the team encouraged us to go back to our room but not to sleep. They asked us to choose our own questions and continue to dialogue for the sake of our relationship. They told us this night may be one of the most important nights of our lives. The last presentation was over at 11 PM and we were both tired but we decided to continue to dialogue. We must have continued dialoguing and talk about us and our relationship until at least 3 AM, we were really opening up ourselves to each other. During these dialogues Janet and I were becoming more open with each other than ever before and falling deeper and deeper in love.

On Sunday of our Weekend we were both tired but a very good tired. We definitely were not the same couple who arrived on Friday evening. We felt more in love now than on our wedding day. This Weekend was probably the most significant event in my life. The last presentation of the Weekend was titled *Open and Apostolic Couple* and was presented by John & Helene Gazick. The talk was encouraging and challenging us to take our newfound coupleness out into the world to make a difference in the lives of other people. During their talk it seemed John Gazick was looking right at me. I felt nervous for I could tell he was challenging me and it made a real impact on me.

When the Weekend was over the team asked Janet and me to stay in our room for they had something to discuss with us. We thought they were angry with us making a phone call Saturday afternoon. Janet had called my parents to see how the kids were doing. On Friday evening the team told us not to make any phone calls because we were to focus on each other and not to be concerned with anything else. If there was an emergency the team would notify us. After waiting about 15 minutes the team arrived at our room. To our surprise they were not concerned about the phone call we made. They came to tell us they saw something very special about us and wanted to invite us to a meeting at another couples' house to hear about becoming a Marriage Encounter presenting team. We were both flabbergasted. I thought to myself I could never be a presenting team; I could never say in public what these couples shared about themselves. They went on to tell us someone would call in a few days to inform us when the meeting would take place.

When we left the Weekend we went to pick up Christopher and Laura at my parents' house. While there my dad was trying to get me to watch something on TV but I wanted to be with Janet all the time. I remember going into the living room with my dad for just a few seconds then going back into the kitchen to be with Janet. I wanted to be by her side at all times. Janet and I were definitely a different couple than the couple who arrived at the Weekend on Friday evening. As I said our Marriage Encounter Weekend was the most significant event in my life.

The next day when the alarm went off for me to get ready for work I felt so close to Janet I decided to call off work and stay home. I was in a state of euphoria and did not want to leave Janet's side. I had never felt so peaceful in my life. That Monday I just enjoyed being with Janet and Laura while Christopher was at school. I felt so peaceful that I did not even turn on the radio for over a month. This was very uncharacteristic for me since I listened to the radio in the morning while getting ready for work and on the way to and from work. This was in addition to listening to the radio often during the evening.

Several days after our weekend we received a call from a couple named Ron & Mary Ellen Durbin. This was the couple we were to meet to discuss becoming a Marriage Encounter presenting team. We decided to meet with them in April. When we met with the Durbin's we found them to be a very nice couple. They were a bit older than us with two teenage daughters. When we arrived at their home we met a guy with somewhat long hair who was talking to one of their daughters and we assumed he was a friend of one of their daughters. Later that evening we discovered he was not one of their daughter's boyfriends, but a priest friend of the Durbin's. He left their house shortly after we began our meeting. During our meeting we dialogued (the Weekend called us to dialogue daily) then the Durbin's told us what the duties and expectations were to be a Marriage Encounter presenting team. As they were telling us these things both Janet and I felt overwhelmed at what the responsibilities and expectations were to be a presenting team. The Durbin's told us these expectations were very high but the rewards could be very significant and we would be doing the Lord's work. The Durbin's told us we had three days to make our decision to say, 'yes' or no.'

When Janet and I left the Durbin's we continued to feel overwhelmed and did not know what to do. We knew if we said 'yes' this would be a life changing event for us and would drastically affect our lifestyle. We would have to write presentations for the Weekend have them reviewed by another couple, attend many meetings, present Weekends then follow up with the couples afterward. We were told that Marriage Encounter would be a major part of our life; in fact, it should be number four in our priority list after God, spouse, and children or family.

That night Janet and I did not sleep very well. We both were thinking about our answer. The next several days would become some of the most agonizing days of our lives. Each evening after the kids went to bed Janet and I dialogued about our answer. We discussed the pros and cons of saying 'yes' and how we felt about it, we did this over and over again. At the end of the first night Janet wanted to say 'yes,' and I wanted to

say ‘no.’ Since we had to agree on our answer we continued the process the next evening. Now I was the one who wanted to say, ‘yes’ and Janet ‘no.’ We both were really agonizing about what to do since the next evening we had to call the Durbin’s with our answer. Janet and I finally decided when I returned home from work the next day we would each write our answer on a piece of paper and hand it to each other and if we were not in agreement on a ‘yes’ our answer would be ‘no.’ At work the next day I was very tired because I hardly slept the past two nights thinking about becoming a presenting team. I spent most of my day thinking about whether to say, ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ This third day was Janet’s birthday and on the way home from work I stopped in a drug store to buy her a birthday card. While in the store the song *‘Dulcina’* began to play on the store’s radio. This song was from the play *Man of La Mancha* and was played Saturday evening during the *Risk and Confidence* talk. This song had a very special meaning to me and I took it as a sign to say ‘yes’ to becoming a ME presenting team. When I arrived home Janet and I exchanged our answers and they were both ‘yes.’ Janet and I felt very peaceful with our answer and then called the Durbin’s with our answer. We both felt relieved that the process was over. Deciding to become a Marriage Encounter team was the most difficult decision I ever made in my life. Little did I know how much of a life-changing event this would be in our lives. Within the next few days we received another call from the Durbin’s informing us our Deeper Weekend was scheduled for June in Chicago. We were told attending a Deeper Weekend was a very important step in becoming a presenting team. All of our expenses would be paid for by Marriage Encounter and it would be a very special weekend for us as we prepare for our new mission. After our phone conversation we felt somewhat excited but since it was more than two months away we kind of put it on the back burner. We had to get on with the rest of our lives.

The Weekend had a very spiritual impact on me. After the Weekend I began doing some simple things in the parish, like volunteering to usher during Mass, if needed. This was a significant difference from the guy who daydreamed through many Masses in the past.

As I mentioned earlier my first parish council meeting was during the third week in March. When I walked into the meeting who did I see but Geza Katai. Geza and his wife Elaine were our prayer couple who prayed for us on our Marriage Encounter Weekend. I soon learned that many on parish council had made a ME Weekend. While on parish council I was soon able to achieve one of my objectives, have a social gathering in the parish. In May we had a dinner dance with a band and the evening was a considerable success with the church hall filled with parishioners wanting to have some fun. The success of the dinner dance gave me confidence to try and do more within parish council.

April I began coaching again. I had many players back from the previous year and was hoping to have a good team, we ended up having an excellent team. The players improved quite a bit from the previous spring and we finished the season as the second-best team in the league. About half the players on the team furthered their athletic careers after this season either going on to be stars on the baseball, track, or golf

teams. One player went on to become one of the best track athletes ever at Green High School. Another went to a high school academy in the south and was their star pitcher and eventually played college baseball. It was a very enjoyable time coaching these boys. About ten to twelve years later I met one of the players on that team who went on to star in other sports and to my surprise he told me that I was the best coach he ever had. This shocked me and made me feel proud; I sensed that my efforts were not totally forgotten. It also reinforced a statement I had heard that many will not necessarily remember all their teachers but most will remember their coaches. The 1981 season ended with this being the last year I coached.



Baseball team – Christopher was the batboy.

Prior to us attending the Deeper Weekend John & Helene Gazick began to tell us about it. They told us the format of the Weekend is very similar to our original Weekend; however, only one couple and a priest would present the presentations. The teams sharing's would be much deeper and after each presentation couples would dialogue by verbally sharing their thoughts and feelings to their spouse to the whole group. When I heard this I began to feel very nervous about this Deeper Weekend. John told me the best way to prevent becoming too nervous was to try and share early. Since there was no set order to share John said the earlier I shared the better, that way I would not be

worrying about what I was going to say. Janet did not feel nearly as nervous about the open sharing as I did; in fact, she was looking forward to the Weekend.

Finally, in June it was time for us to attend our 'Deeper.' My parents once again agreed to watch the kids while we were gone and took us to the Akron/Canton airport. They waited with us for our plane to depart and once we were seated on the plane I could see Christopher and Laura along with my parents waving 'goodbye' to us from the deck above the terminal. I remember feeling very regretful leaving the kids behind. At that moment I wanted to get off the plane, cancel being a 'team couple' and take the kids back home. I had begun to feel closer to them since our Weekend and did not want to ever leave Christopher and Laura again. Then our plane began to move and I realized it was too late. I had this regretful feeling until we arrived at the Chicago airport concourse. Looking back I realize that through our Marriage Encounter Weekend I not only felt much closer to Janet but I also felt much closer to Christopher, Laura and to God.

The Deeper Weekend was like the Gazick's described it. The presentations were much deeper, and each person was asked to share openly after most presentations. As I was feeling nervous about this open sharing and did as John told me. I came to realize being one of the first to share eased my nervousness, although I didn't think I shared very deeply. From the open sharing we got to know others on the Weekend and that all of us were feeling nervous. About thirty to forty couples and four or five priests were making the Weekend. Priests were also required to make a Deeper Weekend in order to become ME team priests. The couples and priests on the Weekend were from all over the United States. By Sunday afternoon I was flying high from the Weekend. This was truly a gift from God and such a meaningful experience. I was not only closer yet to Janet but also much closer to God. For me, the most significant part of the Weekend was the closing Mass. During Mass the team priest conferred a special blessing with oil on each couple and priest signifying we were now given a special mission within the Church to go forth to try to change the world. I definitely felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. Sadly I didn't see several couples from the Deeper Weekend. We discovered these couples were told due to their lack of open sharing they were not being invited to continue on the journey to becoming a ME presenting team couple. After the Weekend we did not go home. Each couple and priest were driven to certain other couples home in the area to spend the evening along with several other couples from the Weekend. This was a great bonding time for each of us and an evening we all would remember. On Monday morning we all went back to the hotel conference room and the presenting team gave us some hints on writing our first set of talks for our first Weekend. When the morning session ended and Weekend was completed the presenting team gave each couple and priest their first Weekend assignment. Our first Weekend as presenting team was scheduled for the second weekend in August. This was much sooner than any other couple or priest. The norm was three months for a couple to write their first set of talks prior to presenting their first Weekend, we were given five weeks. We were also given the names of our 'angel couple' to help us with our talks. They were Sam & Donna Itzoe. This is a couple we knew from Queen of Heaven and were a member of our Dialogue Share Group.

That afternoon as we flew home I was a changed person. The Holy Spirit had descended upon me; I even wore a silver necklace with a crucifix around my neck. When we arrived at the airport we were both feeling tired but very uplifted. As we walked into the Akron Canton airport concourse I could see the kids and my parents in the distance but before we could give them a hug we were interrupted by a large group of people who encircled us and began singing to us the Marriage Encounter theme song '*There's a New World Somewhere*' Many area presenting teams and other ME couples came to welcome us back by singing and giving us big hugs. We were shocked at this reception but felt very special by it. Neither Janet nor I had ever experienced anything like this before and I am sure my parents were also shocked by all that was happening. This was definitely the beginning of a new journey.

On Tuesday after we returned home the Itzoe's called us and wanted to meet on Thursday evening to discuss writing our first talk, *Encounter with Self*. They told us since our Weekend was scheduled in August we didn't have much time to write our talks. Sam & Donna had been a presenting team for about three years, and told us we were now one of three presenting teams at Queen of Heaven parish. This was quite a feat since the parish was relatively small and we learned that Queen of Heaven was a hot bed for Marriage Encounter. From what we heard on the Deeper Weekend and from Sam & Donna is that writing talks for a ME Weekend was not easy. There was a very strict outline to follow and we had to share deeply about ourselves and our relationship. We learned the same outline is used throughout the world therefore must be adhered to strictly. After our first meeting with Sam & Donna they told us to meet with them in a week to review the draft of our first talk, *Encounter with Self.* We told them my father was having open heart surgery the following Tuesday and we wouldn't have a lot of time to write. The Itzoe's told us we didn't have time to put off our writing and we needed to meet in a week or first week of July.

During the July 4th weekend we drove my parents to Cleveland Clinic for my dad's surgery. His surgery was not scheduled until July 6th, but the doctors wanted him at the hospital two days prior to the surgery. My mother stayed at a small hotel across the street from the hospital. On July 4th we took the kids to my uncle's farm to celebrate the holiday then on Tuesday Janet and I went to the Clinic to be with my mother during my dad's surgery. He was in surgery for close to six hours and my mother was a nervous wreck. While we were waiting during surgery Janet and I worked on our 'Self' talk. We had worked on it for several evenings since we met with Itzoe's but still had a lot to write. My dad's surgery came out fine and that was a big relief for us all. However, he had five bypasses. In 1981 bypass surgery was very scary and not nearly developed as it is today. My dad would go on to spend another week in the hospital while my mother continued to stay at a small hotel across the street. Janet and the kids visited with her several times that week but since I had to work during the day and write our talk during the evening I didn't have a chance to visit with my mother or dad.

When my dad returned home he was told to take it very easy for several weeks and not to travel anywhere. Christopher's 6th birthday party was July 18 and to our surprise my dad came to his party. He was still very weak but he did not want to miss his grandson's

party. Christopher and my dad had a special relationship and really enjoyed being with each other. After several months of recovery my dad's health was back to normal and he was enjoying life again.

On Thursday evening after my dad's surgery we met again with the Itzoe's and read our talk to them. I felt very nervous reading my part of the talk and when they began to critique our talk I began to feel more nervous. When we left the meeting Janet and I knew we had a lot of work to refine our talk. We soon discovered writing presentations for a ME Weekend were very demanding. The following Tuesday we met again with Sam & Donna. This time I still felt nervous reading the talk to them but felt more confident with its content. There was one section of the talk where I am to share very deeply and the Itzoe's asked me how I felt reading it. I told them it was a bit difficult but felt fairly comfortable with what I wrote. Then Sam & Donna told me it wasn't good enough. They said if I felt comfortable with this section of the talk then I needed to go home and take a real deep look at myself then rewrite this section. I thought I was sharing deeply and felt devastated thinking what do they want from me? The next evening after dinner I went off to our bedroom by myself to try and rewrite this section of the talk. After some deep soul searching I reached down and took a very honest look at myself and began to cry. I couldn't believe I could ever search so deep into myself. I then began to write and it was very, very difficult to put down on paper a truly honest view of myself. It was one of the most difficult things I had ever done. The next evening we met again with Sam & Donna and when I read my part of the talk to them they could tell it was very difficult for me. They then approved our talk and we moved on to our next talk. We had to write four talks for our first Weekend and had already spent two weeks trying to write one talk.

Prior to each Weekend the presenting team meets at least three times, usually four times to discuss Weekend preparations and to our surprise review each new talk for the Weekend. This meant we had to read our talks to the presenting team and needed their approval. Our Weekend team was Frank & Chris Kriska and John & Joyce Buckovesky's along with Fr. Tom Shields. Frank & Chris were the 'Administrative team' or lead couple and John & Joyce were second couple, and we were the 'Rookie' couple. Fr. Tom Shields was the same priest who presented our original Weekend and he was going to come in from Cincinnati. At our first meeting we read our 'Self' talk to the rest of the team and we couldn't believe it when the Kriska's wanted us to change part of our talk. We had worked hard writing this talk and now they wanted more changes! Frank & Chris could also sense I felt very nervous reading my part of the talk to them. They tried to be gentle but I had never read anything like this before and was feeling more nervous reading to them than the Itzoe's. I also sensed the Kriska's were much more challenging than the Itzoe's. And I thought they were tough. Frank & Chris also told us and the Buckovesky's our talks should be completed one week prior to the Weekend. This way we could spend time focusing on each other and do administrative things for the Weekend. Now I had to write the second talk for the Weekend and rewrite part of the 'Self' talk. This writing for the Weekend was really beginning to wear on me. I was working during the day, being with the kids during the evening then writing for the Weekend after the kids went to bed. Often I didn't get to sleep until 2-3 o'clock in the

morning. Then the next day do it all over again. Needless to say I was becoming very tense and nervous. My usual outgoing personality was turning into one of lacking self-confidence and being very quiet. I was no longer the happy go lucky person I was prior to going on the Deeper Weekend. During the next week we wrote our second talk, and I rewrote 'Self' once again. The Itzoe's told us we needed to make corrections for the second talk. Then we met again with our Weekend team. At our next meeting the Kriska's OK'd my 'Self' talk then suggested we make changes to our second talk. Janet & I were both becoming frustrated and more nervous. We now had less than two weeks to complete our talks and we wondered if we could ever finish them. The pressure was really on us. To make a long story short we finished writing our talks and met at the Kriska's for our last team meeting. Chris, who is German, prepared a great German meal for all of us. Then we had our meeting and Janet and I read the final two talks to them. We were really feeling concerned but Frank & Chris and John & Joyce both said they were great and we did not need to rewrite anything. We felt thankful and very surprised we didn't need to make any revisions. Now we were ready to present our first Weekend in one week. Janet and I both felt very relieved and both of us knew we were never so challenged in our lives. Not only did I feel super tense but Janet was also very tired and tense. After doing all this work and feeling so tense and exhausted I really began to wonder why I was going through this entire struggle. The Kriska's and Buckovesky's told us our reward would be presenting the Weekend but I could not perceive that would be a reward. I was thinking of quitting.

The following day we received sad news. Our Weekend was cancelled; not enough couples registered to attend the weekend. In a way I felt relieved. I was so exhausted and tense I didn't think I could present a Weekend. In about four weeks we wrote our first four talks and I hardly slept much of that time. I remember at work often I would go off alone and stare out the window. I just didn't have the energy to focus on my work. When the Kriska's called to inform us the Weekend was cancelled they suggested the three of us couples go out for dinner the Friday of our scheduled Weekend. They said we all had worked so hard and formed such a tight bond that we should be together that evening even though it wasn't the Weekend. We went out to dinner but it didn't seem like much fun to me. Having the Kriska's mentor us was difficult and challenging but we learned a lot from them. The Kriska's and us eventually developed a close friendship. Frank worked as a cartographer at Goodyear and in the following years we would frequently visit each other at work.

The following weekend we left for a much-needed vacation with the Dick & Carol Loesch's and their kids to Myrtle Beach. While at the beach I wasn't my normal self. I still felt tense but still enjoyed the beach. Laura was cute in her little bathing suit and Christopher had a fun time with Julie Loesch. I remember Dick and I would go out into the ocean on our rafts and spend a long-time drifting back toward shore. Once back on shore we came back to one of our rooms and cooled off with a couple of 'cold ones.' This vacation really helped me unwind and I felt much more relaxed by the time we headed for home.



Dick & Carol Loesch and girls

Upon coming home from Myrtle Beach Christopher went off to first grade at St. Francis school. I went to work late that day to see Christopher enter the school bus to begin his academic carrier. Not only was it a big day for him it was also a big day for Janet and me to see Christopher begin a new chapter in his life. In a way it was sad to realize that he was no longer just a little boy.



Christopher off to his first day of first grade

During the summer John Lyons invited Christopher and I to join Indian Guides. Indian Guides is a father/son organization which provides opportunities for them to bond together along with other fathers and sons. Tribes consisted of 4-10 father/sons who would meet twice a month. These tribes were part of a larger nation. Christopher and I were members of the Pawnee tribe within the Manakeekee Nation. The nation would meet once a month for a big event. These events included two yearly campouts, Halloween parties with father/son pumpkin carving contests, boys costume contests, bowling, swimming, canoeing, and an annual banquet among other events. Our first get together for our 'tribe' was in August with the first campout in September. Christopher and I were members until he was 12 years old. It was a wonderful way for fathers and sons to bond.



Christopher & me and our Indians Guides Tribe – 1981

Shortly after our return from vacation we received a call from Joe & Bernie Darker, the Akron area ME leaders. They asked if we would help the Gazick's' recruit for and present an October Byzantine Marriage Encounter Weekend. Both John & Helene were raised as Byzantine Catholics and had a dream of having a Byzantine Weekend. They asked the Dierker's if we could be on the team since Janet came from a partial Byzantine Catholic background. Her mother's extended family, those in Pittsburgh and Cleveland, were Byzantine and Janet was familiar with the Byzantine liturgy. To present the Weekend though we were told to write another talk and help recruit for the Weekend. Well I thought having over a month to write one talk would be easy compared to what we went through during the summer, and it was relatively easy. What I found to be interesting was recruiting couples for the Weekend by visiting various Byzantine parishes in the area. I learned a lot about the Byzantine rite and structure and was surprised by the number of Byzantine churches in Summit and Medina counties. We had one team meeting with our presenting priest who was biritual, this meant he was able to preside at the Byzantine Liturgy and say the Roman Mass. I never knew there was such a thing as a bi-ritual priest. Unfortunately the Byzantine Weekend was cancelled for lack of couples. I discovered Byzantines were usually very conservative and were reluctant to try anything new like a Marriage Encounter Weekend. For us it made two Weekends we prepared for yet were cancelled. We had put in a lot of work and no Weekends.

Not long after the October Byzantine Weekend was cancelled the Akron area teams had a discernment to select new leaders. The Dierker's term was up and a new leadership couple had to be selected. This was the first time I had ever heard of discernment let alone be involved in one. To my amazement the process was very prayerful and Tom & Agnes Walters were discerned as new leaders. This was the first time I had been involved in anything where the Holy Spirit was called upon to produce wisdom in a selection process. What a difference between politics and business. Tom & Agnes had been Akron Area ME leaders previously and had just returned from South America where Tom was working for Firestone. Tom & Agnes were very good leaders and had very good team raps. Team rap was a monthly meeting for all presenting teams where there is some business conducted, but most of the meeting was for enriching each team couple in their relationship and encouraging each of us in our ministry. Shortly after Tom & Agnes were discerned leaders they told us we were to be part of the November Weekend and said we didn't need to write any new talks since we already had five talks completed.

Later in October Tom & Agnes made a visit to our house and asked us if we would be open to coordinating something new that was happening in Marriage Encounter. This new thing' was something called 'We Believe in Marriage.' Janet and I said yes even though neither us nor Walter's realized what it was to encompass.

October 19, 1981 was my 40th birthday and Janet surprised me with a big party at our house. It was a Saturday night and most of our usual party friends attended as well as our new Marriage Encounter friends. After a few drinks I began to be my old self and acting crazy and all of our ME friends saw a different side of me. Most couples brought me gag gifts and I made the most of it. The party lasted late into the night with our old party friends staying late. Once again I was dancing on the couch and all over the house and had a very enjoyable time. The old Grubber was back again.

Around mid-October Janet began to complain of pain around her elbow. Then one night she woke me complaining of severe pain in her arm and feet. The next day Janet went to the doctor who said her pain could be the result of several things and proceeded to have her take several tests. Several weeks later Janet was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. Our doctor, Dr. Al Feltrup, began prescribing several medications to help ease her pain. The medications helped somewhat, but she still had pain.

Finally, the third weekend of November 1981 arrived and our first Weekend as a presenting team. Roger and Sandy Gray, a couple in our Suburban South Marriage Encounter share group volunteered to have Christopher and Laura stay with them during our Weekend. Their kids were similar in age and Christopher and Laura were excited to stay with them. One of the things that was so different about Encountered couples was that most were so supportive of each other, such as volunteering to help other couples with things like babysitting. This was in addition to supporting each other in their marriage relationship.

The Weekend's other presenting teams were our angel couple Sam & Donna Itzoe, Mitch & Sally Bednarick and Fr. Tom Shields who had just transferred from Cincinnati to Walsh High School. The Weekend was being held at Mt. Augustine Convent in Richfield which was a large convent for an order of nuns where retreats etc. also took place. All day Friday I was feeling nervous about presenting the Weekend. As a team we met, had dinner together then arrived at Mt. Augustine, then I began to feel more nervous. As part of the team we greeted couples as they arrived for the Weekend and made small talk with them to help make them feel welcome and comfortable.

As the Weekend began on Friday evening I felt less nervous since we did not have to present any talk. That night we had to sleep on cots, and they were not very comfortable. There were so many couples attending the Weekend that all the rooms with double beds were taken by Weekend couples so the team was left with cots to sleep on. That night neither Janet nor I had much sleep. The cots were uncomfortable; both Janet and I felt nervous and Janet's arthritis was hurting her. On Saturday morning I was extremely nervous to present our first talk*, Encounter with Self,* which was the first talk of the day. Janet also felt nervous due to the pain she was experiencing which had become more intense. Donna & Sam and Mitch & Sally decided not to have a table in front of the presenters, we just sat in chairs. As we sat down to give our talk I was feeling so nervous Janet had to hold our presentation and I did not think I could even speak. While presenting our talk I was feeling so nervous and tense my knuckles were white from holding onto the back of Janet's chair so tightly. When I began to read my part of the talk I somehow was able to speak coherently. When we finished our presentation, I felt a huge relief. Somehow I was able to present our talk, then I realized the Holy Spirit must have been with me. When our talk was completed husbands and wives separated to write their reflections. As the husbands were leaving to write one of the husbands came up to me and said this presentation, especially what I shared in *Encounter with Self,* was a real eye opener for him and may be a turning point in his life. His comment made me realize that what we were doing and saying may really have an impact on others. After our talk Janet was supposed to go back to our room to write her reflection, however she said her feet and arms were hurting so badly she didn't want to walk all the way back to our room. So, with an OK from the nuns she wrote in a small dining room off the conference room. As the Weekend progressed I still felt nervous before and during our presentations and Janet's pain intensified. However, we were able to finish the Weekend and it turned out to be a huge turning point in our lives. I think the stress of preparing for and presenting our first weekend really affected how Janet was feeling and I know it affected me and my stress.

When the Weekend ended I felt very tired but was on a super high. I never felt so uplifted or so in awe of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Neither Janet nor I thought we would be able present this Weekend; me for my nervousness and Janet for her pain. We were now convinced of the power of the Holy Spirit. Janet and I also came to realize that we were called to this ministry, to do God's work through Marriage Encounter.

The week after our first Weekend as a team couple both Janet and I not only continued to feel our high but I was feeling more relaxed than I had in months. Janet also felt

relaxed and her arthritis pain actually subsided. However, by mid-December her pain was becoming more pronounced and was spreading to other parts of her body. In addition her fingers and toes began to deform. At this point Dr. Feltrup told us that he could not help Janet anymore and suggested she go to Cleveland Clinic for more testing and evaluation.

1981 was truly an amazing year. I was elected to parish council, we made our Marriage Encounter Weekend, became a presenting ME team, presented our first Weekend, Christopher and I joined Indian Guides, my baseball team did very well, and my dad had successful major heart by-pass surgery. Obviously the biggest setback was the onset of Janet's' Rheumatoid Arthritis.



Christopher & Laura –1981

Shortly after presenting our first Weekend we began to work on the "We Believe in Marriage Day" event which was to be held the weekend nearest to Valentine's Day. We discovered it was a national ME event to proclaim the goodness of marriage to the world and to promote Worldwide Marriage Encounter. Each area was given several

ideas on how to promote the concept of “We Believe in Marriage.” Janet and I explored multiple ideas then with the assistance of the Walter’s we called a meeting at our house with several senior ME presenting teams to present our plan. From that meeting a plan was developed and assignments were given to each of the couples who were in attendance. Parts of the plan included publicizing ‘*We Believe in Marriage’* in as many parishes as possible, to have events at Chapel Hill Mall and Rolling Acres Mall, acquire as much media coverage as possible and get as many ME couples as possible involved in the promotion. Janet & I directed the plan. We had further meetings at the Akron U Newman Center and at St. Bernard’s hall with ME representatives from each parish. We also met several times with each mall manager, arranged an event and came up with a plan for each mall. We planned for ME couples from the various Akron area towns and cities to have their mayors proclaim a *We Believe in Marriage Day* the second Sunday in February and have articles in various local newspapers promoting “We Believe in Marriage Day.” The Walter’s were able to have a front-page article with their picture in Catholic Universe Bulletin. The Saturday mall events were the major focus and many ME couples became excited about it and became involved. The ‘*We Believe in Marriage Day’* events were a tremendous success thanks to so many couples who became excited about and helped to promote it and Marriage Encounter.

Several Saturday evenings later there was a special ME event with a romantic dinner at Akron U’s Newman Center. The hall was full of area ME couples and at the end of the dinner the Walter’s gave a short presentation then began to praise the work Janet & I did coordinating ‘*We Believe in Marriage Day’* activities. They then showed off the latest issue of the local ME publication which had our picture on the cover. We were astonished by the praise and discovered this was the first time a couple’s picture had been on the cover of the local ME publication. The praise and notoriety really boosted our confidence. We did work hard coordinating *‘We Believe in Marriage Day*,’ but our efforts were from all the energy and the high we derived from presenting our first Weekend. It was once again the Holy Spirit working in our lives. From this experience Janet and I discovered we had a gift for organizing ‘special events.’ Little did we know at this point how many more events we would organize in ME and our parish?

Following the *‘We Believe in Marriage Day’* events we were assigned to present the April Weekend and to write two more talks. Joining us on the Weekend were Ron & Mary Ellen Durbin, Dave & Mary Weber, and Fr. Tom Shields. At this time we were gradually becoming good friends with Dave & Mary. They were about seven or eight years younger than us but we had very much in common. They had kids close in age to Christopher and Laura. Dave and Mary liked to have a lot of fun. Mary was very outgoing who was a person who was liked by about everyone. Dave was a bit quieter but he was also outgoing. Dave & Mary made their Weekend about a year prior to us and were very committed to Marriage Encounter. As time passed the Weber’s and us became each other’s best friends. The Weber’s had five children, three girls and two boys. The oldest were the girls, Terri, Rose, and Laura. The boys were much younger. Their daughter, Rose, was the same age as Christopher and the two of them became very good friends as they were growing up. Terri was two years older than Rose and Laura was two years younger than our Laura. Whenever we got together with the

Weber's Rose and Christopher were always together. I especially remember when they were 10 years old Christopher and Rose would sit together, share popcorn and when there were dishes to wash they would do it together. Dave and Mary and we even wondered if someday Christopher and Rose would marry. Laura soon became friends with their Laura even though there was several years' difference in their age. The Weber's lived in Doylestown before moving to Canal Fulton several years later.

We presented the April Weekend at Brunnerdale seminary in Jackson Township. This used to be a seminary run by *Society of the Precious Blood* order of priests and brothers. Brunnerdale had closed as a seminary about ten years earlier; however, several Precious Blood Brothers continued to live at Brunnerdale and kept the facility open for retreats, ME Weekends and other spiritual events. It was a beautiful and peaceful place sitting on over sixty acres of land with a nice lake. It was a wonderful location for retreats. This was the beginning of what turned out to be one of very many times we were at Brunnerdale. The April Weekend went well although I was still nervous presenting our talks. On Sunday evening after the Weekend the team went to Don Poncho's restaurant for dinner and ended up staying for hours. We began to share our lives more fully with each other and began to bond and become very close friends with one another. The Durbin's were originally from the Chicago area and I remember being fascinated hearing them tell us about their experience of being in an underground Catholic church in Chicago area during the 1960's. I had never heard of such a thing and was becoming more aware of what was and had been happening within the Church. This was also the third time we had been with Fr. Tom and we gradually became good friends. Little did I know at this time how close friends we were to become.

Shortly after the Weekend the Akron area ME community became shaken by the news that Tom Walter had suffered a nervous breakdown. Tom had a responsible job at Firestone and his wife, Agnes, thought the additional burden of being ME area leaders had taken its toll on him. With Tom's condition the Walter's had to step down as area ME leaders and the area held another discernment to determine the next area leaders. Norm & Mary Ann Duffy were discerned as our new area leaders. They were a veteran team who were well known throughout the United States. Norm & Mary Ann were very charismatic and had participated in many ME events in North America. It was during this time period several presenting teams began to 'retire' and few if any new teams were being formed. In fact Janet and I were still the youngest presenting team in terms of experience. In addition, Weekends were beginning to cancel for lack of couples wanting to attend the Weekend. At this time, the U.S. economy was really suffering as interest rates were sky high. In fact, the interest rate on a 30-year mortgage with 20% down payment was 18%.

In January 1982 Queen of Heaven parish council held elections for new officers. To my great surprise I was elected President of parish council. I had volunteered to run for parish council so I could start more social programs and now one year later I was president. With my brief ME experience I had changed quite significantly in the past year and now as president of parish council my goal was to bring more spiritual

programs to the parish. Fortunately, with the help of several others I was able to bring several spiritual enrichment programs to the parish, including an all-day retreat. This retreat was accomplished with the help of Mary Ellen Durbin who worked at the Diocesan Planning Office. I judged I was able to bring about a more prayerful atmosphere within the council and more interaction with the pastor, Fr. Technip. What was also interesting was that an old friend from the 1960's, Ron Pogwizd, was elected parish council president at his parish, Christ the King, on North Hill. We actually spent several evenings getting together to discuss our roles as parish council presidents; we would have never dreamed of this 15 year earlier.

One Friday evening in January 1982 Janet and I went to Loyola of Lakes Retreat House in Green to help greet for the ME Weekend being held there. On our way home there was freezing rain and the roads were very slippery. I was driving very carefully and when I turned onto Moore Rd. from Arlington Rd. I was traveling at about five mph. Upon entering the hill on Moore Road I lost control of the car and we began to spin down the icy hill totally out of control. The further we went down the hill the faster our car began traveling and I had no control of it and began to slide down the hill sideways and as we neared the bottom of the hill we slammed into a large tree on the passenger side. Fortunately the car slammed into the rear passenger door; however, the rear window shattered and the glass flew up toward the front of the car and hit me on the back of my head. When we settled down a bit Janet realized miraculously she was not injured. When I tried to get out of the car I realized my ribs were really hurting and the back of my head was bleeding profusely. Janet and I both realized I needed to go to a hospital however our car was in no condition to drive. Fortunately we were very close to our house but this did not help us. Soon a pickup truck came down the road, seen our condition and stopped to see if he could help. He said he would take me to Barberton Hospital, so Janet walked to our house told our babysitter the situation and Janet followed me in our other car to the hospital. At the hospital, the ER department picked all the glass out of my head and performed an X-Ray of my ribs. Fortunately, my ribs were not broken, however they were badly bruised and very painful. It was more than a week before I was able to go to work. My ribs hurt to a certain extent for two months. The accident could have been much more serious than it turned out to be. If the tree hit the front door instead of the back-door Janet probably would have been killed, thankfully she was OK. God was with us.

Near the end of January 1982 Janet's appointment at the Cleveland Clinic came and fortunately she was assigned to see the head of the Rheumatology Department. At the Clinic they did extensive tests on her and discovered her Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) was in 98% of her body. The doctor then told us there wasn't any cure, but there were several options Janet could take for treatment. By this time Janet's toes and feet began to curl badly and the doctor said immediate action was needed to try and prevent further damage. The doctor told us there was the standard gold treatments or a new experimental treatment with which he was involved. After some discussion Janet decided to go on with the experimental treatment. I can't remember the doctor's name but he happened to be a pioneer in this new treatment which was a combination of certain drugs. One was an anti-cancer drug along with an anti-malaria drug. The drug

turned out to be methotrexate. We were praying the new drug would prevent any more damage. Our prayers and the prayers of many others were answered as the treatment seemed to work very well. The disfigurement was impeded and Janet began to feel less pain. She was able to function fairly well but not as well as she had just a year earlier. With Janet's toes being curled she could no longer wear shoes with heels and felt embarrassed and frustrated whenever she wore a dress, she had to wear flat shoes. As a side note the doctors' experimental treatment proved to be very successful and several years later methotrexate became the standard for treating RA.

In April 1982 Christopher and I attended our Indian Guide camp out. We stayed in cabins and had a lot of fun. On Saturday morning Christopher and I went fishing and he was impatient. When he put his line in the water and if no fish bit within one or two minutes he said 'Dad, the fish aren't biting here so let's move to another spot.' This went on for over an hour before we finally went all around the lake, then we quit fishing for the day. The same thing happened on Sunday morning. During the weekend we did many activities together. With Indian Guides Christopher learned how to canoe, shoot a bow and arrow, ride a horse and many other things. The highlight of the weekend was the campfire ceremony on Saturday night. It lasted over an hour and was actually impressive. The campfire ceremony ended around 10 PM and all formal activities ended. Then the kids began playing among themselves but around midnight they all 'crashed.' On Friday night most of them were up until 2 or 3 in the morning and after a full day of activities on Saturday they were out for the count by midnight. For some of the fathers one of the highlights of the weekend was just beginning. After the kids crashed for the evening several of us would make a campfire then sit around the fire drink beer, tell jokes and stories until three or four in the morning. Obviously by Sunday morning we were all 'whipped.' Christopher and I attended two camp outs a year for the next five years while we were in Indian Guides. These were very tiring but also very enjoyable. I found Indian Guides a terrific way for fathers and sons to spend a lot of quality time together along with growing closer.

In May 1982, the wife of a veteran ME team who was a social studies teacher at Hoban high school called and asked if we would be willing to give a talk to Hoban High School students on adoption. We accepted and took Laura with us to Hoban. During our talk we introduced Laura to the students and she began intermingling with all the students while we were talking. The students got a charge out of Laura for she was flittering from one student to another. I don't think the students heard much of what we said they were all focused on Laura. I'm positive this gave the students a very favorable impression of adoption.

Also in the spring Christopher began to play on a Green T Ball baseball team along with Jay and Darren. Our neighbor John Lyons coached the team and I was an assistant coach. I don't think Christopher enjoyed playing baseball very much but he did play for two years.



Christopher & Tee Ball

In late June we drove to Ocean City, Maryland for our vacation. This year we did not go with another family, just the four of us. I remember during our drive to Ocean City all four of us would sing all kinds of kid's songs, sometimes for hours at a time. One interesting antidote about this vacation was when Christopher and Laura began dropping seashells from our balcony down to the ground. The condo's security came up and asked us who was throwing these seashells? He said several of the shells just missed hitting people on their heads. When we discovered it was Christopher and Laura we banned them from collecting any more shells. This was also a vacation where each evening we had to brace the dresser against the door so Laura would not sneak out of the room in the middle of the night. We discovered early one morning while the rest of us were asleep Laura somehow snuck out of our room and went up and down the elevator and strolled around the condo building. Laura also liked to try and run off by herself while we were on the beach. The lifeguards got to know her well. Fortunately, she was easily recognizable with her cute green and orange bathing suit, Laura had become 'famous' on the beach.

Another incident involving Laura occurred one summer evening after we tucked her into bed and went to our family room to relax and watch some TV. About 45 minutes later we received a phone call from our neighbor down the street. This neighbor was one we did not have much contact with and they asked us if we knew where our daughter was. We said 'sure, she was in bed sleeping.' The neighbor then proceeded to say no she

isn't, she is playing in the creek behind their house. I then ran upstairs to check on Laura in her room and sure enough she wasn't there, so we hurried down to the neighbor's house and found Laura playing in the creek. She had snuck out the front door while we were in the family room and went to play with Christopher and the Lyon boys. Needless to say we were a little embarrassed and from that time on we kept a much closer watch on her at all times.

This was not the first time Laura had us feeling embarrassed. When she was about a year and half years old we had gone to the Saturday evening Mass at St. Francis. We arrived a few minutes late and sat near the back of the church. As soon as we were in our seats an usher asked us if we would take the offertory gifts up to the altar. We said sure. When the time came to present the gifts Janet and Christopher each took one of the cruets and I took the paten with the unconsecrated hosts with one hand and held Laura in my other arm. On our way down the aisle Laura pushed up the bottom of my hand holding the paten and the hosts went flying in the air and landed on the floor. Needless to say I was feeling embarrassed, and while bending over to pick up the hosts I looked up and saw a few people I knew in the pews and they were all smiling. I eventually picked up the hosts then we continued down the aisle to present the gifts.

Then there was the time Christopher was making his first Communion. The first communicants were all sitting in the front pews and parents and family were sitting on the side of the church. When Janet and I returned to our pews after receiving communion Laura insisted she wanted a stick of gum. Janet told her 'no' and Laura began to throw a temper tantrum. She began screaming out loud that she wanted a piece of gum and would not stop screaming. By this time the priest was ready to continue with Mass and it was obvious he was aggravated by Laura's loud commotion. He stood at the altar ready to give an after-communion reflection but didn't speak. I then picked up Laura and made my way out of church with her yelling all the way out 'I want a piece of gum, I want a piece of gum' As soon as I took Laura outside the church the priest said, 'we can continue now,' then proceeded with Mass.

Then there was the time Janet & I were to give a short after communion talk at Queen of Heaven church. Christopher and Laura were to stay in the pew while we went up to the present a few words. As we began to speak Laura came rushing up to us crying that she did want to sit with her brother. I picked her up and we tried to speak while Laura was crying in the MIC. Needless to say we didn't get our message out very well.

During the summers of the early 1980's Janet often would take the kids swimming at Pine Valley Park in Green. Vickie Lyons usually joined her along with Jay and Darren, Alice and her son Jeff and Carol Loesch and her two girls. On a few Saturdays our family along with the Lyon's, Costigan's' and Loesch's' would all get together at Pine Lake and have fun swimming and having a picnic.

In 1982 our country was still in a deep recession and interest rates were very high. I still had my real estate license but trying to qualify anyone for a mortgage was very difficult. However, that year I was able to sell a building contract to Steve Strong, a coworker at

Goodyear. He built a lovely home in Green but this was the last house I sold. My involvement with Marriage Encounter, being with Janet, Christopher and Laura were much higher priorities for me so I finally retired as a real estate agent.

In August we presented our third Weekend. This Weekend was held at the Holiday Inn by Summit Mall, the hotel is now the Sheraton. We wrote more talks for the Weekend and this was the first time we presented with a priest we didn't know. Fr. Harry was from Pittsburg and the three team couples and Fr. Harry met at Huckleberry's restaurant on W. Market St. for dinner. Janet & I arrived at the hotel before dinner and discovered the hotel staff hadn't set up the conference room or anything else for the Weekend. So we had to instruct the staff how to set up the conference room and all the other requirements for presenting the Weekend. We felt a bit nervous doing this for we didn't feel confident yet with everything that needed to be done. However everything concerning the Weekend set up went well. This helped increase our confidence in being a ME team.

1982 also marked the end of me purchasing Cleveland Brown's season tickets. I realized I was being selfish by attending the Brown's games and leaving the rest of the family at home. During my 16 years of having season tickets I saw several championship games, many thrilling games, and some really bad football. As I indicated earlier there were many stories I could talk about attending Brown's games. In fact, in all those years I only missed one home game and that was due to a huge December snowstorm.

When Laura was nine months old she began swim lessons at the North Canton YMCA and like Christopher, did very well. In the fall of 1983 Laura began pre-school at Portage Lakes Career Center and tumbling with 'tiny tots' at the Firestone Park YMCA. Little did we realize that when Laura began tumbling at the 'Y' it would lead to a much fuller involvement in gymnastics. When Christopher finished first grade the teachers told us that he really wasn't mature enough for second grade and they recommended he repeat first grade. Actually, Christopher was one of the youngest kids in his first-grade class.

In November Norm and Mary Ann Duffy called to ask us if we would coordinate the 'We Believe in Marriage Day' events again. They told us the name was being changed to 'World Marriage Day' to reflect that the event was being celebrated in several countries. Once again we agreed to coordinate the event. To this day 'World Marriage Day' is celebrated every year on the second weekend in February.

At the December team rap Norm and Mary Ann announced that due to cancelations of too many Akron area Weekends we were to merge with the Canton and Youngstown areas. Several months earlier Youngstown merged with Canton. All future team raps were going to be held on a Thursday evening at Brunnerdale Seminary in North Canton. That is when and where the Canton area had their team raps. Also, at this December team rap Norm & Mary Ann asked to talk to the Weber's and us privately. They told us the future of Marriage Encounter in our area will depend on the four of us. Several of the veteran presenting teams were becoming burnt out and were not willing to go above

and beyond the ‘call’ to promote great marriages and enhance the Weekend. In addition, the Duffy’s told us we had the qualities needed to revive and lead the area forward. I sloughed it off and didn’t think too much about it.

With Marriage Encounter 1983 not only did the Akron Area merge with Canton and Youngstown the year also brought an entirely new Weekend Outline. This meant all presenting teams throughout the United States needed to rewrite their talks. With this merger and with the demands of rewriting talks many Akron and Canton area presenting teams retired. However, Marriage Encounter meant too much for us and we continued on without any hesitation. Now we had new leaders again, they were Canton area leaders John and Kathy Swigert. They had a difficult job trying to encourage couples and priests to rewrite their talks in addition to trying to develop a new cohesive Akron Canton Youngstown community.

1983 also brought many other new adventures. First my tenure as President of parish council ended, however, I then became our parish’s representative on Diocesan Deanery Council. The meetings were held at St. Francis with Fr. Schlechter and Bishop Sheldon presiding. My term was for two years and I found this involvement very interesting. I was able to become aware of a lot of what was going on in the diocese and the Akron area. After one year on the deanery council, it was time to elect a new lay president. Fr. Schlechter and Bishop Sheldon asked if anyone was willing to nominate themselves as president. No one was stepping forward and I could sense both the bishop and Father really wanted me to step forward, but I didn’t. My priority was with Marriage Encounter.

At work Jim Benko was transferred to Goodyear Aerospace Corp. and Larry Swanson became our new manager. Larry was Controller at Kelly-Springfield Corp., Goodyear’s largest subsidiary. Ron Chrisman continued on as Section Manager. By this time the A2400 P or L operating system was up and running well and I was given the additional responsibility of coordinating the company’s function of operating and reporting of the A2400 system. This was in addition to me coordinating the company’s Return on Investment (A2030) reporting and being involved with Goodyear’s defense contract compliance. Later in the year Ron was transferred back to the General Products Division and Tim Ladd was transferred from the Treasury Department to become our new section manager. Since neither Tim nor Larry knew much about Goodyear’s internal financial reporting systems I evolved as the company’s expert on these systems.

During 1983 my involvement with the Goodyear Aerospace Corp. (GAC) became increasingly important. Ronald Reagan was president and one of his goals was to increase Defense Department spending as a way to defeat the Russian’s via an arms race with his ‘Star Wars’ initiative. The U.S. Defense Department weapons systems were becoming obsolete as a result of deemphasizing national defense after the Vietnam War. This increase in spending resulted in increased business for GAC, but the Defense Department began to have much more oversight by its auditors for Defense Department spending. I needed to get up to speed on Defense Department accounting

regulations and attended a defense contract accounting classes in Cleveland and Wright Patterson Air Force Base. I also began to meet regularly with Finance Executives at GAC. In addition I began to meet with Defense Department civilian personnel who were responsible for verifying Goodyear was not overcharging the Air Force on defense contracts. During these meetings I met Bob Donatelli. I knew Bob from Akron U and he graduated with Janet from St. Vincent High School and St. Hedwig grade school. Little did I realize years later I would become involved with Bob in an entirely different role? I also began a close business relationship with Carl Ford. He was employed by GAC and was one of the country's experts in the Defense Departments Cost Accounting Standards. He taught me a lot not only about Defense Department contracts but also about the Defense Department and how the top generals in Washington operate. By 1985 my involvement with GAC became of prime importance and very time consuming.

In January of 1983 we began to write and rewrite our Weekend talks and we were assigned to present the April Weekend. One evening in February we met with a Canton area team to prepare for the Weekend. During our get together Laura was as usual present with us and all of a sudden she began to shake and shake. We became very concerned and when she continued to have seizures we asked the Canton couple if they would stay with Christopher while we took Laura to Children's hospital. At the hospital Laura's seizures continued. I stayed at the hospital for several hours then went home to be with Christopher. During the night Laura's seizures became increasingly frequent and doctors were having difficulty stopping them. The next morning Janet told me they placed Laura in sort of a caged bed because her seizures were not only becoming increasingly frequent, but also more intense and out of control. Janet said she was never so scared in her life. It was estimated Laura had over one hundred seizures that night. The doctors were eventually able to control her seizures but Laura stayed in Children's Hospital for several days. Once home Laura continued to have seizures but with medication they were much milder, and not nearly as frequent. The doctors told us that hopefully Laura would outgrow her seizures around the age of 7 or 8. Needless to say Janet and I were very concerned about Laura and how this beautiful little girl could go through such an ordeal. Janet and I fervently prayed for Laura's seizures to ease up. As time went on Laura's seizures did become less frequent, however what was amazing was that eventually Laura knew when a seizure was coming. Very often when Laura sensed a seizure coming she would come over and sit on my lap. While I was holding her she would have her seizure then when it was over she went back to what she was doing prior to that. It was obviously comforting to Laura to be on my lap but was also comforting to me that I was able to hold onto Laura as she went through her seizure. Fortunately Laura did outgrow her seizures when she was around seven or eight years old. After her seizures stopped she continued to take her medications for several more months until we were sure they were completely gone.

Most evenings during this time and for many years I would tuck Laura into bed at night and tell her a spontaneous story or sing her a song. My favorite song to sing to her was 'take me out to the ballgame.' I did this for many years, I think it helped me and Laura grow closer together.

In 1983 Janet's rheumatoid arthritis became stabilized and Janet asked her doctor at the Cleveland Clinic if it would be possible to switch to a doctor in the Akron area. She had been driving to Cleveland Clinic often for over one and half years and the drives were getting tiresome although her treatment was working relatively well. Her doctor said there was only one doctor in the Akron area he would trust her with and that was Dr. David Bacha in the Crystal Clinic. He had studied under the head of the Cleveland Clinics' Rheumatology Department. So this year Janet began going to Dr. Bacha for RA care and they became good friends. In fact over the years Dr. Bacha would have medical school grad interns with him and Janet was Dr. Bacha's favorite patient to discuss with his interns.

During 1983 Janet's toes had become so disfigured that she needed to have metal rods inserted into each toe. They placed long metal rods into each toe with each rod extending 3 or 4 inches out beyond the end of her toes. Usually Laura or I would help insert the long rods in the morning and take them out at bedtime. Janet couldn't have them inserted while in bed. These long rods were in place for several weeks then taken out and shorter permanent smaller rods ones put in place. This was a painful and embarrassing experience for Janet.

As mentioned earlier Janet and I again coordinated the newly named World Marriage Day. This year we only focused on Chapel Hill Mall for our Saturday event. Our names must have become more prominent because we received a call from a Protestant minister who had a weekly radio program, radio programming was much more prevalent compared to today. He wanted to discuss in depth World Marriage Day and Worldwide Marriage Encounter and invited himself to our house for the for the discussion. When we met he further invited us to be interviewed on his radio program. We agreed and on the following Wednesday afternoon the interview was taped in the radio studio to be broadcast the following Sunday. About the same time we received a call from an Akron Beacon Journal reporter who said he wanted to conduct an interview about Marriage Encounter in our home. Once again we agreed and the reporter came to our house for an interview. After the interview he surprised us by asking us to be available for a photographer from Beacon Journal to do a photo shoot. So on the following Thursday evening the photographer came to our house and must have taken over fifty photos of us. The following Sunday, a week before World Marriage Day, the Beacon Journal ran a real complimentary article about the interview at our home, Worldwide Marriage Encounter, World Marriage Day and to our surprise a large photo of us with the article. If nothing else we were helping to get the word out about Marriage Encounter and how it can enrich marriages.



Beacon Journal photo by Bill Wade

Janet and Paul Gruic of Green Township

Akron Beacon Journal article about us, ME, and WMD

The April ME weekend we were to present in Canton was cancelled; however, another major Marriage Encounter event occurred. Dave and Mary Weber gave the first ME pulpit talk in our area in over five years. Norm and Maryanne Duffy had arranged a meeting with Bishop Sheldon to discuss the possibility of a Marriage Encounter presenting team speak about ME from the pulpit preferably during homily time. Bishop Sheldon agreed with the covenant that a ME priest speak with us. He then wrote a letter for us to present to area pastors granting his permission. In April Dave and Mary gave the first pulpit talk at St. Martha's church in Akron. We then spoke to the pastor at St. Anthony's church in Akron asking for pulpit time. Janet knew Fr. Jim well since she was a lifelong parishioner until we moved to Green. After several meetings with him an arrangement was worked out that we could speak at all weekend Masses with Fr. Tom Shields if we help conduct a parish survey at the same time. We agreed and in June we gave our first of what was to be many pulpit talks. At the first Mass I was feeling nervous being in front of the whole congregation with the three of us standing on an old-fashioned elevated pulpit. The three of us got through the pulpit talks just fine and were able to recruit several couples to a Marriage Encounter weekend. Once again the Holy Spirit was with us and me.

In May Christopher made his first communion at St. Francis with his second-grade class.



Christopher's first communion – 1983



First Communion Day wih Janet

In late June we again went to Ocean City for our vacation. While there Christopher and Laura played with another boy and girl who were the same age. Then on our last day we talked at length to these kids' parents and discovered we had a lot in common. They were a Marriage Encounter presenting team in Baltimore and even coordinated their area's World Marriage Day. We all felt disappointed we didn't meet earlier in the week because they were staying in the same condo as us. After now having vacationed four times at Ocean City Janet and I both agreed we wanted to spend future vacations where the ocean temperature was much warmer. In June or early July, the Ocean water temperature was still too cool for us to fully enjoy swimming on Ocean City, Maryland beaches.

In August 1983 Laura began pre-school at the same school Christopher attended and Christopher began third grade at St. Francis. Laura was also continuing with Tiny Tots at the Firestone Park YMCA and her swim lessons at the North Canton YMCA.

This year our good friends John & Helene Gazick told us some sad news. John's job as a plant manager in Barberton was in jeopardy. One day his boss, the owner of the company, told John to change the timecards for the employees to reflect fewer hours than they actually worked. John told his boss he would not do that to the workers, but the owner said either amend the timecards or you are fired. John refused to do it and was fired by the owner. Now John had no job. In a month or so he obtained another job but not one he what he would have liked, but it paid well. John's function was to work with a crew whose job was to change the oil on electric utility poll transmission boxes. One day while John was on the job the hot transmission oil spilled on one of his crew mates and the oil and the crewmate caught fire. John immediately rushed over to his crew mate and wrapped himself around him rolled over the ground multiple times to try and put out the fire. He succeeded and saved his crew mates life. By now John Gazick had become a hero and role model for me. He stood by his values at the expense of his job and risked his life to save another person. I still value knowing John very much. He finally found another job in Knoxville, Tennessee working at an atomic power plant. We were able to visit John & Helene several times in future years. Unfortunately, Helene fell down their stairs, broke her neck and died around 2003.

John & Helene's teenage son Johnny was one of the many babysitters we had over the years. Other's included Mary Anderson, Ralph, Chris Fahey, the Breen girls, Donna Tomcik, Maria Prinzo and many ME couples and other friends.

In 1983 we presented our fourth Weekend and over the next 13 years we must have presented anywhere from 40-50 Marriage Encounter Weekends. In September the Cleveland Catholic Diocese had their annual special Mass for couples who were celebrating their 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries at St. Vincent church. Each of the couples celebrating their anniversaries would walk down the aisle of the church escorted by a Marriage Encounter couple. It was a special occasion with a short reception afterward. During the reception Janet and I wanted to ask the pastor of St. Vincent Church if we could give a pulpit talk during Sunday Masses. We felt hesitant though to ask him since we heard he was reluctant about letting Marriage Encounter

couples speak during homily time. Then Janet and I noticed the pastor was talking to Bishop Sheldon, we looked at each other and said this is the time to ask the pastor about speaking. As we approached them Bishop Sheldon spoke first and introduced us to the pastor as Mr. & Mrs. Marriage Encounter. This introduction really surprised us, and we immediately asked the pastor for pulpit time. With the bishop standing there the pastor was feeling obligated to permit us to speak at Mass. So in October we gave pulpit talks at St. Vincent church. This was our second pulpit talk and over the following years we went on to present many more pulpit talks throughout the Cleveland, Youngstown, and Steubenville dioceses.

December 16 was my dad's 70th birthday and we decided to have a surprise birthday party for him with Tom & Gerri and my mother supporting the plan. We invited many people to our home for my dad's birthday party; included were not only family but many of his longtime friends. My dad was completely surprised but he thoroughly enjoyed himself. Having this party for him was one of my better decisions in during life, for my dad died 7 months later.

1984 was a very challenging, exciting, and sad year. First, in late 1983 Christopher he became an altar boy at Queen of Heaven. When we transferred to St. Francis he continued as a server at Mass until he was 16 years old. On a February evening Covers was hit by a car in front of our house. I along with Christopher rushed Covers to a vet's office in north hill as Christopher held Covers in his arms while I was driving. Upon arriving at the vet's office I picked Covers up and realized he had died while in Christopher's arms. Covers was 12 years old and it was a sad occasion for both of us along with Janet and Laura.

1984 though was focused a lot within Marriage Encounter but my parents were the major focus during the summer months. Also, Janet's health was becoming more of a concern. During the winter we installed cable TV for our house. Our house sat in sort of a valley and our TV reception was not very good so we decided to purchase a cable TV which was a relatively new service at this time.

A week after we gave our pulpit talk at St. Vincent's we were god parents for my cousins Cathy and husband Jack's new son, Ben. After the baptism at Annunciation church we asked Fr. Horley, pastor of Annunciation, if we would be able to speak about Marriage Encounter at the Masses some weekend. He told us he would think about it and get back to us. In January Fr. Horley called and said if we included Fr. Tom Shields we could speak at all the Masses in early February. Then the three of us met with Fr. Horley to plan for the day. We had a long discussion with him and during our conversation he confided with us how unhappy he was being a pastor at Annunciation due to all the infighting among some parishioners. Then about six months later we discovered Fr. Horley asked the bishop to relieve him as a pastor and be reassigned as an associate pastor in another parish. His request was granted and was reassigned to a parish in the Cleveland area.

Annunciation had five weekend Masses including a 7 PM Mass on Sunday evening and we were to speak at all the Masses. Prior to each Mass we placed ME trifolds and request forms for more information on Marriage Encounter in each pew. During the Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses we received quite a few forms requesting more information on Marriage Encounter. We spent Sunday afternoon with Christopher and Laura and did not feel enthused about going back to Annunciation for the 7 PM Mass. At this Mass when we began to speak we were totally surprised to see the church was packed. After the Mass we received a substantial number of forms requesting more information about Marriage Encounter. This made us feel very excited. On Monday we discovered we had so many requests for more information we felt super confident we could fill a whole weekend from Annunciation. We also discovered most of the people who attended the Sunday evening Mass were from outside the parish, they were from all over Summit County. After calling many of those couples requesting more information that by Tuesday evening we felt very confident we were going to fill a weekend from Annunciation. With so many Weekends being cancelled this made it all the more exciting.

The following Sunday there was a special Marriage Encounter team meeting to discern new leaders for our area. John & Cathy Swigert and Fr. Bob Kawa our ecclesiastical leaders were discerned as new leaders of the Ohio unit of Marriage Encounter. Now the ACY area had to discern new ecclesiastical leaders.

Janet and I had to decide if we were open to be the new leaders as were thirty or more other ME presenting couples and priests. Part of each couple decision was whether there was anything in their lives that would prohibit them from being leaders. Thinking you were not good enough was not to be a factor in a couple's openness.

The discernment process is very spiritual and all of us are to let the Holy Spirit work during the discernment process. When it came time for each couple to decide to be open or not each couple went off by themselves for about 30 minutes to dialogue and pray about being open and decide to say either YES or NO. Then each couple were to write YES or NO on a piece of paper and give it to the couple from Michigan leading the discernment. Both Janet and I felt tense determining to say, 'yes' but or 'no,' but thinking there was no major impediment to us being leader we wrote 'yes' to be open to leadership. However we judged ourselves we were not good enough or experienced enough to lead such a large, diverse group of team couples and priests.

Upon returning to the large group the couple leading the discernment read through all the 'yeses' and 'no's,' then announced to the group only three couples had said 'yes.' This really surprised us, then we began to feel very nervous. Now the discernment process has really started. After some prayers to the Holy Spirit for guidance each couple and priest was to verbally affirm one couple of the three couples to be the new leaders, however a couple or priest could affirm more than one couple or priest. This process went on for a while. Then each couple and priest would vote secretly on whom they wanted to be their new leaders. Any couple not receiving more than a few votes would be eliminated until there is a true consensus for the new leaders. After the next

round of voting the lead couple said we were now down to two couples, Lou & Gail Capuano and the Gruic's. We felt shocked and nervous but felt confident the new leaders would be Lou & Gail. They were much more experienced, vibrant, and well-liked by everyone.

The discernment process started again, then the voting. Then the leaders counted the votes and announced we had new leaders. They are Paul & Janet Gruic. We were flabbergasted and I felt extremely nervous. We could not believe we were new leaders, especially being in the combined Akron/Canton/Youngstown area for only one year.

Not only were we the new leaders we were also informed we needed to go to Washington D. C. the coming weekend for a national meeting of all Marriage Encounter leaders in the country. So, we planned arrangements for Christopher and Laura and flew to Washington D.C. on Friday. This was the beginning of many more new adventures and experiences for us.

Once we were discerned as new leaders we had to choose a priest from one of the eight team priests in our area to serve with us to form an ecclesiastical team. We thought about it for several days and we chose Fr. Tom Shields. Fr. Tom was not the most dynamic person, but he was experienced and someone with whom we felt comfortable. When we asked Fr. Tom to serve with us he felt uncomfortable about it and did not think he was qualified to serve in this capacity. He even suggested we ask Fr. Jay Clarke, but we told him even though 'we liked and respected Fr. Jay we wanted you, 'Fr. Tom.' Fr. Tom finally said 'yes.' During our time serving as ecclesial leaders he really began to blossom and gained a lot of self-confidence as did each of us. This was further proof when God calls He will be there for us.

One really sad part of this was we had to hand over all the forms we received from Annunciation for someone else to follow up on. Now that we were area leaders we did not have time to pursue our dream of filling a weekend from Annunciation.

On Memorial Day weekend we attended the picnic at 'The Farm,' and then two days later my mother called frantically and said my dad was taken to the hospital. We immediately rushed to St. Thomas Hospital and discovered my dad had suffered a stroke. We knew this could not be good since he had multiple bypass surgery three years earlier. My mother was beside herself and I felt real concern for her and her mental and emotional health.

We soon found out my dad's stroke was very serious. He had lost almost all of his movement and speech; he was practically lifeless. After a few weeks my dad improved enough to be moved to a nursing home. My mother searched all over the area for a nursing home and the only one available with a room for my dad in his condition was *Health Haven* which was across the street from St. Thomas Hospital. This nursing home was horrible, my mother called it 'Hell Haven.' This was by far not one of the better nursing homes in the area. My mother visited my dad every day and I visited my dad as often as I could while I was working and had a family a home.

As I said my mother was a nervous wreck during this time. I especially noticed it when she had a minor auto accident on the street next to the nursing home. She did not manage the minor accident well and this was not like her.

After my dad was in the nursing home for about a month he had another stroke. My mother called me immediately and we went to the hospital. After several hours we were able to go into the CCU to see my dad and he looked awful, and my mother cried out 'he's dead.' My dad improved somewhat and a week later he went back to the nursing home. A few days later he went back to the hospital. After several more days in the hospital the doctors told my mother, Tom, and I there wasn't anything more they could do for him. He was connected to what seemed like an endless number of machines. The doctors told us we could leave him on these machines or just disconnect them except for oxygen and a liquid drip. The doctors went on to say if we disconnect him he might live for a few days. My mother, Tom and I decided to disconnect the machines except for oxygen and a liquid drip and wait for him to die. There wasn't any hope he could survive in his current condition.

During his time in the hospital Christopher did not want to see his grandpa in his room. He would go to the hospital with us but stayed outside his room. Christopher and his grandpa were very close and I'm sure Christopher did not want to see his grandfather in his current condition. Laura on the other hand would lively go into his room, sit on his bed, and just talk to him. I'm sure my dad could hear every word Laura was saying to him.

The doctors had given my dad about two days to live but after five days he was still alive. Then on the seventh day the doctors said this would definitely be his last day, he couldn't go on any longer. This was a Saturday and by late afternoon all of his family had gathered at the hospital to say 'goodbye' to him, all but my Uncle Nick and his wife Ann. During the summer they would go to a remote cabin in Canada to fish and get away from it all. They had no phone and it took several weeks for mail to get to them. There was a general store that was in their area where we left a message to inform my Uncle of his brother's condition.

Around 11 PM my dad was still alive. Then the hospital received a call for one of us. I took the call and it was my Uncle Nick. He just arrived in Akron. I told him where we were in the hospital and I went to the parking lot to meet him. Upon his arrival at my dad's bedside Uncle Nick bent over close to his brother and began talking to him. A few minutes later my dad died. It was like he wasn't going to die until he saw his brother.

My father died on July 29, 1984 and his funeral was August 2. I planned for the funeral including the hymns and readings for the funeral Mass. As a special remembrance I asked two of my dad's best friends, Raleigh Chadwick, and Fuss Gaikowski to be honorary pallbearers. Both had played baseball with my dad when they were young and remained very good friends the rest of their lives. Both Raleigh and Fuss told me they felt honored to be asked to be honorary pallbearers.

Soon after my dad's funeral I needed to spend time with my mother trying to give her emotional support and help her going over all her financial and legal issues related to my dad's death. I think my mother never fully recovered from my dad's death.

With all the stress my mother was under since my dad's stroke she developed a severe case of shingles. Shingles were all down her back basically from the bottom of her shoulders to her waist. It left permanent scars on her back and she suffered with this pain for the rest of her life.

About two weeks after my dad's funeral we traded in our 1979 Chrysler Newport (the one with which we had the serious accident) and bought an almost new 1984 Buick station wagon. This looked like the perfect car for our family. The car was very good looking, had vinyl seats in the back seat for the kids, and had the 'woody' look of the original station wagons.

In September Janet and I began to look for another house. Janet's RA was getting worse and all the steps in our split-level home were becoming more of a struggle for her. One of the first houses we looked at was a nice three-bedroom brick ranch in the southern part of Green Township. The house had a living room, a large kitchen with a large family room adjacent to it. This formed a nice open area. On the other side of the kitchen were a half bath and the bedrooms. The master bedroom and family room had covered patios just outside their sliding glass doors looking into the backyard which had a beautiful in-ground pool. Beyond the backyard there was a large farm, so there were no neighbors to the rear of the house. The house had one big drawback in that the sale of the house was due to a divorce and the wife was currently living in the house. It was obvious she did not want to sell the house because the house was a real mess. First, the master bathroom was all cluttered with make up all over the sink, floor and on the mirrors. The basement looked like a scene from a horror movie. Cobwebs were everywhere and one could hardly walk through the basement without cobwebs getting on your hair and clothes. Then the pool had not been maintained, the pool water was all green with frogs living in it. I really liked the potential of the house and it could have been my dream home, but on the day we looked at the house Janet had a migraine headache and didn't even want to think of cleaning this place, so we passed on the house.

At work I was still heavily involved with Goodyear Aerospace and Defense Contract Accounting Standards; in fact, about 50% of my time was now being spent with this work. My boss, Larry Swanson, was not too happy about me spending so much time being involved with GAC and the Department of Defense, but there was little he could do about it. I was the only person within Goodyear Tire who knew anything about parent company expense allocations to GAC and how to defend them to both GAC and Defense Department auditors. DCAA auditors looked for any hint of overcharging the Pentagon. This involvement lasted for another two years until Goodyear was turned upside down by an unfriendly buyer for Goodyear. There will be more on this later.

Around September 20 Janet took Laura for a haircut then about two days later Laura cut her own hair. She really chopped it up and Janet was not a happy camper, so Janet took Laura back to the beautician to have her hair shaped and look better, however her hair was really short.



Laura's 5th birthday after she cut her hair.

In September Christopher continued at St. Francis School while Laura continued pre-school at the Portage Lakes Career Center (PLCC). Although Laura was turning five years old in late September the teachers thought it would be much better if she stayed in pre-school for another year. It turned out to be a wise decision. I think it would have been better if Christopher had stayed another year in pre-school before heading off the kindergarten. Laura also continued taking swim lessons at the 'Y' and with tiny tots at the Firestone Park 'Y.' This year Christopher began to play flag football through the 'Y' with several of the kids from our Indian Guide's tribe. This was the beginning of Christopher's interest in football. He played flag football for two years before moving on to pee wee football.

While Christopher was in fourth grade he began to take enrichment classes on Saturday mornings at the PLCC. I think he took classes in ceramics and carpentry.

By the fall of 1984 Janet and I were really beginning to enjoy our role as area leaders especially our time with the Section Board. Along with Fr. Tom Shields we were leaders of an area that stretched from just south of Ashtabula County to the Ohio River. There were about thirty presenting team couples and about eight priests. It was a lot of responsibility and a big challenge but by now we began to relish it. The Section Board consisted of the 16 Marriage Encounter area leaders in four states: Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Kentucky. Members of the board were all very committed to Marriage Encounter and working and interacting with them encouraged us on our journey. The Section meetings were held bi-monthly and often in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, which was sort of the geographic mid-point in our section.

Traveling with Fr. Tom was interesting. By now we were all comfortable with each other and Janet & I came to realize he had a lot of wisdom. Although he appeared shy he knew many people from all over the country. I remember one weekend we were traveling somewhere in Indiana and stopped for lunch in a small town. As we sat down at a table Fr. Tom surprised us by saying he was going to make a phone call to a former student of his that was living in this town. We were amazed he even knew a former student was living in this small town let alone the student's phone number. He had a great memory and remembered many of his former students.

While we traveled to many places Christopher and Laura would stay with many of the other team's families, almost always those with kids about the same age. As I mentioned Christopher and Laura became good friends with the Weber's and their kids. As time went on they also became good friends with many other team's families.

Christmas 1984 was sad now that my dad died. My mother was still greatly grieving, she had lost the man she loved for 46 years. We had our usual Christmas Eve dinner with Tom & Gerri and their kids but that night my mother wanted to stay overnight with us. This was very unusual for her since she always wanted to sleep in her own bed. On Christmas morning she really enjoyed watching Christopher and Laura open their gifts and later that day we went to Tom & Gerri's for Christmas dinner then on to Dorothy Anderson's open house.

In January we had a Section meeting in Dayton, Ohio. That weekend a huge winter storm was forecast and I had to work Saturday morning. On Friday Fr. Tom and Janet took a flight to Dayton while I stayed home to work. By Saturday morning the temperatures dropped way below zero. I finished my work at Goodyear around noon and headed on to Dayton. Driving on the highways was very treacherous that day. In the afternoon the temperatures never made it above zero and there were very few cars on the interstate. By late afternoon I arrived in Dayton and joined Janet and Fr. Tom at the Section meeting. That evening the Dayton area surprised the attendees with an 'Italian Dinner.' This was our first 'Italian Dinner' and it was a lot of fun. That night we stayed with a couple from the Dayton area and on Sunday morning we discovered the

temperature overnight went down to a minus 24 degrees. During the day it warmed up a bit but it was still very cold as we drove home.

In February we had another Section meeting only this time it was for discernment for new Section Leaders. The current Section leaders were Mike & Monica from Michigan and we judged they were doing a very good job although some leadership teams did not share our enthusiasm about them. Before this meeting Janet and I dialoged a lot about being open to leadership on the Section Board or continuing as leaders in Akron-Canton-Youngstown area. By now we were feeling confident in our role as area leaders but decided that due to Janet's health not to continue as area leaders however decided we may be open to Section leadership. Janet thought Section leadership would not be as demanding in the day-to-day work as Area leaders. However being Section leaders would include much more travel including meetings at the national level. At the Section discernment we dialoged again about being open to Section leadership only this time with Fr. Tom. Although Fr. Tom and I felt uncomfortable being open to Section leadership we agreed with Janet to let the Holy Spirit lead us in this process. This was a very big decision however I didn't think we even had a chance to emerge as leaders. The discernment went on for a very long time and we felt surprised we were in the running to emerge as Section leaders. I was becoming nervous, but in the end Mike & Monica emerged as leaders again. We came in second. I felt relieved but was very surprised the rest of the Board thought so highly of us. It was mostly due to Janet's leadership qualities that we were even in contention. Janet was highly thought of no matter what situation we were in, she had the smarts and true leadership qualities.

In March we had discernment for new area leaders for the Akron/Canton/Youngstown area with Mike and Monica leading the discernment. Our very good friends, Dave and Mary Weber emerged as leaders. They choose Fr. Jay Clarke as their ecclesial priest to serve with them. When Dave and Mary were discerned leaders I recalled what Norm & Maryann Duffy told us and the Weber's in 1982; that the future of Marriage Encounter in our area was dependent on the Weber's and us, I never would have dreamed of such a thing. About a week after our term ended in March we spoke about ME at all the weekend Masses with Fr. Tom at St. Joseph parish in Cuyahoga Falls. We were astonished to discover the pastor put our pictures on the cover of their parish bulletin that weekend. After speaking at all the Masses Janet and I were able to relax a bit from our Marriage Encounter responsibilities.

Shortly after we exited as A/C/Y area leaders we assumed the position of area Reservation Couple. We had some concern with the current Reservation Couple and judged we could do a much better job in this responsibility. We held this position until Janet's death in 1997. Within the next few years we accepted various other positions within Marriage Encounter; they included being scheduling couple, supply couple, facility couple in addition to reservation couple.

In March we received a very good tax refund and Janet suggested we spend our refund on a family trip to Disney World. I felt a bit hesitant to spend our refund this way thinking of using the refund on more practical things. Janet convinced me to go to Disney World

by saying the Lord has been good to us with our return and we may not have another opportunity to go to Disney World. So we purchased a three-day pass to Disney World. We took the kids out of school and flew to Disney World Memorial Day week. We were very fortunate that Disney World was not very crowded that week so the lines were short. All of us thoroughly enjoyed riding on Space Mountain. Laura's favorite ride though was 'It's a Small World,' I rode this ride with her over and over again. Since we had a three-day pass we had three other days to spend in the area. On one of those days it was especially warm so we went to 'Wet N Wild' waterpark. We all enjoyed being at the water park on such a sweltering day. In the late afternoon I checked the thermometer and was shocked to see it read 108 degrees. What a wonderful day to be at a waterpark. When we were about to come home I felt much gratitude that Janet suggested we go to Disney World, all of us had a wonderful time.



Laura with Donald in Disney World

When we returned from our vacation Laura graduated from Pre-School and we enrolled her in kindergarten in Green schools. Laura also graduated from her swimming lessons at the North Canton YMCA and Christopher completed third grade. Earlier in May he and I went to the annual Indian Guide spring campout. Christopher was almost ten years old so we thought this would be our last Indian Guide camp out since the age bracket for Indian Guides was 6-10 years old. However, our friend and neighbor, John Lyons, was elected Nation chief and he forced an age change to 12 years old. John did this so both Jay and Darren could participate in Indian Guides a few more years. So Christopher and I continued in Indian Guides until the fall campout in 1987.

In September Dave & Mary asked if we would be open to becoming an 'angel couple' for a new presenting team, Denny & Sally Smith. This is one area both Janet & I both doubted

our ability. Many other presenting couples and priests said our Weekend talks were very good but we judged we would be too critical in helping other couples write their talks. After dialoguing and some discussion Janet and I decided to say yes to try and help Denny & Sally. We angeled the Smith's and went on to 'angel' many couples and a few priests in our area. Surprisingly, in time many couples in the Presenting Team community said Janet and I became the best 'angel couple' in our area. In fact, many veteran teams began requesting us to be their 'angel couple.'

Over the years we became very close friends with more than a few other team couples we had 'angeled.'' They included Pat & Peggy Ailes, Tom & Susan Hughes, Al &Sue Kramer, and Joe & Karen Stoll. We would meet at each other's house, meet their children, and got to know them well. Tom & Susan's son TJ and Christopher became good friends. They were both the same age and had similar interests.

Laura and Shanna Ailes also became very close friends. Shanna and Laura were the same age and both were involved with gymnastics. One interesting note about the Ailes was they had a balance beam in their living room for Shanna. When I first saw it I couldn't believe they would place a balance beam in their living room. Low and behold within a year with the help of Bob Killie I built a balance beam for Laura. First we kept it in the basement rec room but it eventually ended up in our living room.

In the spring of 1985 Janet's arthritis wasn't getting any better so we decided it was time to get serious about moving into a ranch house. In mid-April we placed a 'For Sale by Owner' sign in our front yard, advertised it in the Beacon Journal along with the weekly Goodyear newsletter. We had a few bites on the house but nothing came of it. After a month or so we became aware we didn't have the time to devout to selling our house on a timely basis so we listed our house with a married couple who worked as a team. They turned out to be excellent real estate agents. On our search for another house we wanted a large ranch, with three bedrooms, two baths, and large yard and preferably a swimming pool. Also, the house had to be either in Green or Manchester so Christopher and Laura could be bused to St. Francis school. We also discovered a house we viewed and were interested in the previous year on Rawlins Dr. was still on the market, this time as 'for sale by owner.' We contacted the owners again and agreed on a sales agreement to purchase the house on contingency we sell our property. Since the real estate market was tough at this time they were having difficulty selling their house, within a few months they listed their house with a provision in the listing agreement that we, the Gruic's, would be excluded from the listing. This meant that if we purchased the house on Rawlins Dr. we would not have go through the real estate broker which would save the seller's and us money.

During the summer Janet and I looked at many, many houses but could not find anything we really liked except the one on Rawlins Dr. We were beginning to feel frustrated due to our house not selling, nor finding another house we both liked. I thought if our house didn't sell by Labor Day it wouldn't sell and we should take it off the market until the following spring.

In the meantime I became interested in buying a boat so we could all enjoy time on the water. In mid-August we ended up buying a used boat from a family who had used it on Springfield Lake. After buying the boat I immediately joined the Goodyear Boat Club in Portage Lakes in the hope of acquiring a boat slip. I discovered there was a waiting list and it may take a year or more to get dock space. However I did join the boat club so we could eventually acquire a dock instead of trailering our boat.

When Laura began school Janet began to tutor students in math. This became more prevalent once we joined St. Francis parish. She got to know the teachers at St. Francis and word got out about Janet's teaching ability in math. She tutored many students from grade school and high school, even one college student. She tutored at our home until 1995.



Our boat at Portage Lakes

As I mentioned earlier at work I was fully enmeshed in Goodyear Tire's expense allocations to Goodyear Aerospace and related meetings with GAC executives and U.S. Defense Department auditors. The company's internal Income Statement and Return on Investment (ROI) systems were working very well; however, I determined the ROI could become a world-wide Goodyear system. I mentioned this to my boss Larry Swanson and after consulting with Goodyear's Controller and Chief Financial Officer I got the go ahead to lead a team of Goodyear financial analysts and accountants to implement a

worldwide ROI reporting system. This took some time and effort but within a year a worldwide system was in place.

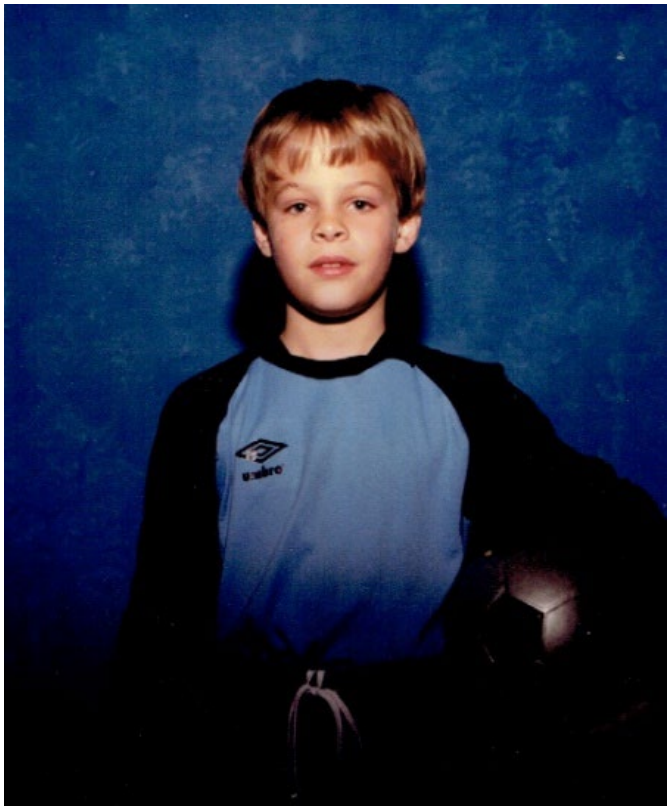
Also, during this time, I was promoted to the position of Group Leader in the Financial Analysis Department, the highest-level department in the Goodyear's Finance Division. However, with this promotion I was also given more responsibility including being Jack Madison's boss, who worked exclusively with departmental budgets. This position was especially busy in the last five months of the year when preparations were being made for the next years departmental budgets. During budget time this became a satisfying job as I was able to help many department managers prepare their annual budgets. In addition, I was given the responsibility for Goodyear's accounting Chart of Accounts. Any and all changes requested to the Chart of Accounts had to come through me.



Janet and me - 1985

In 1985 Janet and I heard from a team couple in another state that they sponsored a very poor child in a ‘third world’ country through CFCA, Catholic Foundation for Children and Aged. We were interested in this program, found out more information about the program then sponsored a child. It cost us about $15 per month to sponsor a child and the foundation provided the child a Catholic education, school supplies, food, and clothing. We were able to correspond with the child via letters and an interpreter. About ten years later we decided to sponsor another child. Children could be in the program until they were 18 years old. Through the letters we received from the children it became obvious the children and their families were very poor and us sponsoring them was very much appreciated. I continue to sponsor two children, but the program has changed its name to UNBOUND.

When the school year rolled around Christopher was in the fourth grade and decided to play soccer for the St. Francis school team. He played goalie and played very well despite this being his first year playing soccer. Laura began kindergarten at Green East Liberty School.



Christopher – St. Francis soccer team

The week after Labor Day our house hadn’t sold so we told our real estate agents we planned to take our house off the market until next spring. Our agents told us they wanted to have one more open house. We said OK but did not have much hope in it selling at this time. So, on the third Sunday in September our agents had an open house. Upon arriving home after the open house Stan, our real estate agent, and his wife told us we had an offer on our house. We were very surprised when the offer was

just $2,000 below our listing price. We readily accepted the offer and signed the purchase/sales agreement. Early the next morning I called the couple who had the house on Rawlins Dr. and told them we were ready to buy their house at our agreed upon price. What excitement I had at this time was burst when they told me their house sold the previous Friday. I now felt shocked and real panic set in, we had sold our house and now we didn't have another house to move into.

Now we began a desperate search for another house. After looking almost every day for three weeks we could not find a house we liked. With time running out Janet suggested we look at a house we looked at several months earlier on Valley Crest Dr. On our first visit to the house I could see it wasn't well maintained and they had several teenage boys who were damaging the house. On looking at the house a second time Janet said the house had a very good floor plan with a lot of windows, large rooms including large bedrooms and closets with hardwood floors under the carpets.

The only pluses for me were that it had a walkout basement, large private yard with no houses behind it and it had a large partially finished basement. I still wasn't sold on the house but finally in exasperation I agreed with Janet and we made an offer on the house even though it was not even close to what we originally wanted when we initially began our house search. Our offer to purchase the house was accepted and we felt a bit relieved and we were set to move into our new house the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The first thing we needed to do was switch schools for Laura, transferring her from Green to Manchester kindergarten.

After we agreed to purchase the house Janet and I both knew we needed to make repairs and updates to it. In the following few weeks we visited several home improvements fairs and stores with the first order of business was to replace the windows. The Valley Crest house did not have good windows, in fact the owners had heavy sheets of thick plastic covering many windows during the colder months. We soon envisioned the house being cold during the winter.

We moved into the Valley Crest house the Monday before Thanksgiving. The prior Saturday evening we met with the owners who went over a few details with us and gave us the keys. While meeting with them I became very unsettled by what they were telling us. First, they told us we would need to replace the rubber washers on all the faucets in the bathrooms and kitchen every month. I asked why do such a thing? Then they told us there was a lot of acid in the water which would 'eat up' the rubber gaskets. I asked why you didn't put in a water softener or acid remover. They told us they didn't want to spend the money. Right then I knew we were in for problems.

On moving day Christopher was really upset and reluctant to move. He didn't want to go to school that day and when the movers came to move the furniture out of his room he was still in bed, he just put the blankets over his head. We were finally able to coax him out of bed and his bedroom furniture was taken out to the moving van. Christopher was in tears most of the day, he knew he would miss his friends Jay and Darren;, we discovered Christopher is a very sentimental person. Later in the day once all our

furniture was moved into our new house the doorbell rang. It was several of Christopher's friends from school who rode their bikes to our new house. On seeing his friends he really brightened up for now he knew he had some of his buddies nearby

Several days after we moved in I discovered many more problems. For one, while I was cleaning the garage I removed two large sponges covering the rear wall. When I removed the large sponge coverings I discovered there were two large holes in the rear wall of garage. I immediately called the prior owner and they just said several times one of their son's pulled his car in the garage and just went too far and ran into the wall. Then on the third evening we were in the house Janet decided to make dinner instead of us eating out. After dinner and cleaning up the dishes the kitchen sink drain became clogged, so I tried to unclog it. After a while I was unable to unclog the drains and began to feel frustrated and angry. I then called Dave Weber for I knew he had a drain snake. I went and picked up the snake then tried to unclog the drain. Upon using the snake to unclog the sink all the galvanized pipes broke. Now I was really angry. The next day we had to call a plumber to replace all the kitchen sink plumbing. After this our third day in the house I felt so angry with the house that the only way I was able to sleep was to realize we needed to put the house for sale the following week. I was very upset not only with the condition of the house but also with the previous owner. They lied to us and did not inform us of any problems prior to signing the contract to buy the house. I eventually overcame my desire to immediately put the house up for sale only by Janet's insistence to keep cool that everything will work out OK. She was an optimistic person and in the end she was right. In 1985 they didn't have regular professional home inspections. We just trusted sellers would not lie about key issues with the house.

After Christmas we hired a carpenter to install all new windows in the house. This was a big expense since the house had many large windows. The living room had three floor-to -ceiling windows, each of the bedrooms had a wall-to-wall window halfway from the floor to the ceiling, the dining room had a large window overlooking the back yard and the family room had a sliding glass door along with floor to ceiling side windows. About a year after replacing the windows we hired our good friend, Pat Ailes, to install a new solid oak family room sliding glass door. Pat also installed oak trim around the family room and kitchen windows along with oak baseboards in several of the rooms. Pat did an excellent job. He was a very good carpenter by trade who owned a carpentry business and built two of his and Peggy's houses.

After the windows were installed we hired my cousin Bill Zemlansky to update the main bathroom. Bill also did an excellent job as he replaced the tile flooring, added a new sink, and refurbished the bathtub. Then I repainted all the bedrooms. I painted our room a light blue and Laura's in her favorite color, pink. She ended up with pink walls, a pink carpet, and pink bedspread; Laura loved pink. Later we hired a painter to paint the living room and dining room walls since the ceilings were too high for me to reach the 14-foot peak. We also added a large deck off the family room, new siding, insulation in the walls and ceilings. Within a month after moving in we added a water acid remover.

One item the house had that I really liked was the wood burner in the basement where the heat circulated through the duck system in the house. During our first year in the house we didn't use the wood burner often because the wood the previous owner left was all rotted and wet. However, for the next seven years we used the wood burner extensively. I purchased a used U Haul trailer and collected about five or six cords of wood each year to heat the house. The wood burner really warmed the house, much better than a gas furnace. One more thing, in the spring of 1986 I purchased a used Cub Cadet lawn-tractor, which was one of my better purchases. The tractor was built like a tank, they don't make them like that anymore. Our lot size was 100 x 270 with a semi wooded area at the rear of the lot.

One additional purchase we made shortly after moving was a waterbed. Water beds were a big item in the 1970's and 1980's. Janet really wanted a waterbed hoping one would be much easier on her feet while she was sleeping. The blankets on a regular bed would cause pressure and pain in her feet since the mattress didn't have very much give to them. We purchased a semi wave-less waterbed and once we began sleeping on it we both loved it. The waterbed was much easier on Janet's body and since water beds have heaters in them it really felt nice and warm during the winter. About a year later both Christopher and Laura wanted water beds so we ended up with three water beds in the house, theirs were full wave beds.

Within of week of moving we transferred to St. Francis parish. We had made many friends at Queen of Heaven but transferring was a no brainer. Christopher was already enrolled at St. Francis School and soon Laura would be attending St. Francis. Also, the Manchester area is much closer to St. Francis than Queen of Heaven. Little did we know this turned out to be one of the best changes we made during our marriage, God was guiding us.

Finally, by May 1986 we were pretty much settled in the house. By now Christopher and Laura discovered two neighbor kids with whom they became friends. Their names were Brian and Angie Killie. They both went to St. Francis School; Brian was a year ahead of Christopher in school and Angie was two years older than Laura. Eventually we became friends with their parents, Cindy & Bob Killie, they lived two houses down from us.

Laura seemed to adjust well in the transfer from Green to Manchester kindergarten. She likes to tell the story of Henry who would try to kiss her under a table while in kindergarten.

During the summer of 1986 we took another vacation to Myrtle Beach only this time we ran into a problem. We were late trying to book the beach side hotel where we usually stayed but it was booked up so we had to choose another hotel. When we arrived at this hotel we discovered it had a very small swimming pool and it was closed for several days for maintenance. We immediately cancelled our reservation and searched for another hotel. After several hours of searching we found another hotel which was much better. It was not beachfront but was within walking distance to the beach. It was also

near a pine tree wooded area. This hotel was not what we wanted but was adequate for our needs. The following year we made a momentous change in our vacation plans

In September Janet and I attended a ‘mandatory’ ME team enrichment in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. This turned out to be the best enrichment or ME convention we ever attended. The enrichment was so powerful Janet & I decided it was too good not to be shared by the larger ME community in northeast Ohio. Upon coming home Janet & I contacted the Kopacheck’s, the former leadership couple in Cleveland. We asked them if they would help us bring the enrichment weekend to northeast Ohio. They agreed and after contacting all the Catholic high schools in the Akron area St. Vincent/St. Mary was the most agreeable to hosting the enrichment. The enrichment was In March 1987 and proved to be an enormous success with most couples attending excited for such a rewarding experience. Janet & I did most of the planning and organizing for the enrichment and turned out to be an excellent weekend, much better than we anticipated.



Akron area ME teams at 1986 Ft. Wayne Enrichment – photo includes Frank & Chris Kriska, Dave & Mary Weber, Fr. Jay Clark, Joe & Jeanie Wilson, us, Herm & Ronnie Gray, the Van Sise’s, Joe & Karen Stoll, and Bill & Theresa Williams.



Weber's and us at 1986 Ft. Wayne ME team enrichment

In the years following we brought several more conventions or team enrichments to our area. We wanted area couples who were unable to attend a convention or enrichment to be able to experience these programs. Janet & I would determine who the presenters would be and where the enrichments would take place. It ended up that most were held at Walsh High School. Many community couples really appreciated these marriage enrichment programs. This was another example of our leadership and organization skills we were able to use for God's people. On our original Marriage Encounter weekend we learned we are all called to use our God given gifts for His church which we tried to follow.

That September Laura began first grade at St. Francis School. She was feeling shy and very unsure of herself going to St. Francis. After a few days Laura said she didn't have any friends. Janet told Laura to just go up to some other girl and just say 'hello' and introduce yourself to her. Laura did that to a girl named Lisa and soon Laura and Lisa became friends. Soon Laura gained more confidence and made many friends, including Brianne Hogan.

In the fall Laura began to take gymnastics lessons at Kohler Academy in Manchester. Her instructor was Bob Anderson and became Laura's main coach for years, eventually gymnastics became a real passion for Laura.



Laura - age 6



Christopher 1986

In late summer of 1986 Christopher tried out for the Manchester Pee Wee football team. Christopher played flag football with the YMCA league for several years and was feeling eager to play real football. One interesting tidbit was that one Saturday in August the boys and their fathers were asked to volunteer to spruce up the Manchester Youth football stadium. Well as one might expect soon after we began working the boys went off to play with the father's doing most of the work. Well Christopher didn't, he stayed with me as we painted the seats in the stands. He was and is today a very reliable and diligent worker. Christopher played Pee Wee football until he reached junior high school then played football for the Manchester JV and varsity teams until an injury prior to his junior year of high school. He enjoyed playing football much more than baseball.

After attending Mass one Sunday in May 1986 we approached Fr. Schleicher about creating a Pre Cana-Day for engaged couples at St. Francis. He invited us into the rectory to discuss it further. He listened to our idea but we could tell he was feeling hesitant. Although he knew me from my days serving on the diocesan deanery council but didn't know Janet. Father told us he did not want to 'look a gift horse in the mouth' but said he would think about it and call us back with his answer. Well several weeks later Father called and wanted us to observe the Pre Cana-Day St. Sebastian parish was having in two weeks. He wanted our feedback on what we thought, so, we attended St. Sebastian's Pre Cana-Day as observers. To say the least we were not impressed. The next week we reported back to Fr. Schleicher and told him our impression and that we judged the diocesan outline for Pre-Cana Days was weak and asked if we could create St. Francis own version of Pre Cana-Day. He said OK but after we created an outline he wanted to review it. Once we created the outline and gave it to Fr. Schleicher he approved it but said he wanted to listen to every presentation for his approval. He was especially emphatic that he did not want the Pre Cana-Day to be a recruiting tool for Marriage Encounter. It was now July and we had until the following March to prepare for the day, Father wanted the Pre Cana day to be held during Lent. We also thought Lent was a suitable time since most marriages occur during the summer. Months later we discovered one of the reasons Fr. Schleicher was so open to having a Pre Cana-Day was that at a diocesan priest conference he attended shortly after our first meeting with him several other pastors encouraged him to have Pre-Cana days. They told him that since with so many marriages struggling better marriage preparation programs were needed.

One of the first things that had to be done was decide who best to be on the team. Although we had only been members of St. Francis for 7 months we, mostly Janet, had recruited several couples to the Marriage Encounter Weekend. They included Bill & Ellen Barber and Ray & Cathy Herrick. So we asked Fr. Schleicher to include them on the team and he highly approved since they were active members of the parish. The first Pre Cana-Day was presented in March 1987. The team included the Barbers, Herrick's, and us. Dave and Diane Anthony presented the talk on Natural Family Planning and Fr. Schleicher and assistant pastor Fr. Weaver each give a talk. The day went very well and since it was held on a Saturday Fr. Schleicher said a private Mass at 5 PM in the school cafeteria for all who attended the day, then surprised us and all the couples with a special romantic dinner. He planned for parish members to arrange

tables for two with candles and soft lights all done while we were at Mass in the cafeteria. A year or so later we heard Fr. Schleicher was bragging to other priests that St. Francis had the best Pre Cana-Day in the diocese. Janet & I led the Pre Cana-Day programs until Janet's death.

In 1986 most things at work were going very well. However, in late September we noticed Goodyear's stock price was edging up quickly and we could not understand why. It seemed every day for almost a month many were watching our stock price go up and becoming concerned as to who was buying Goodyear stock. Then one morning I was in a meeting and a financial officer of the company barged into our meeting and announced we discovered who was buying Goodyear stock; it was Sir James Goldsmith. There was an SEC rule that any person or entity who had acquired 5% of a company's stock their identity was made public. Immediately the company knew we were in trouble for Goldsmith, who was from England, had a worldwide reputation of being a corporate raider, acquiring companies, selling off many of their assets and raiding pension funds then pocking all the cash. He was one of a handful of famous corporate raiders from the 1980's. See the 1987 movie, *Wall Street*, to get an idea of what it was like.

We at Goodyear knew Goldsmith wanted the stock price to go up and up and for Goodyear pay him multimillions or billions in order for him not to acquire the company and sell off all of our subsidiaries, plants and raid our pension fund. Immediately our work in the Financial Analysis and Treasury departments became hectic and frantic. As Goldsmith was pushing Goodyear's stock price up we knew we had to buy him out which was going to cost Goodyear a fortune. My work involved getting several years and quarters of very accurate and precise internal financial information that we could present to Wall Street banks in order to obtain a loan to buy out Goldsmith. Our work was not only intense but involved working many long hours. I remember one Sunday morning we had just come home from Mass and were having lunch when Goodyear called me and said they needed me at work. They said I would probably be needed for a few hours, so I went in and low and behold I ended up working one the longest days of my carrier. When I went to work I soon realized the finance team was having a lot of difficulty finalizing financial reports to present to a large Wall Street bank the next day. To make a long story short it was around 2 AM Monday morning when the manager of the Treasury Dept. and I were trying reconcile multiple months and years of internal and external financial reports and banking accounts. At about 3 AM the Treasurer of the company was pacing back and forth in front of the two of us urging us to hurry and finalize those reports. He said he had a plane to catch at 5 AM for New York to present our data to several large banks in order to acquire multibillion dollars in loans. His meeting with the Wall Street banks was at 7 AM. Needless to say I was feeling very stressed. Not only had I been at work since 12:45 PM Sunday but I also had not eaten anything during this time. No time, the pressure was on to finalize these financial reports. All I had to drink or eat that day was a diet Coke.

Well Goodyear acquired multibillion dollars in loans which was used as a financial package to buy out Goldsmith. Unfortunately, what eventually happened was Goodyear

sold off many of its assets to repay the loans, but at least Goodyear was retained as a company; albeit a much smaller company. Six months later Goodyear sold its largest asset, Goodyear Aerospace Corp. This ended my responsibility working with GAC and defense department auditors.

One weekend during the Goldsmith crisis Christopher and I planned to go with John Lyons, Jay & Darren and several other fathers and sons on a camping trip in the middle of Pennsylvania. On Friday evening as I was backing out of our driveway to leave Janet rushed out and said I had a phone call from Goodyear. I knew they wanted me to come to work but I told Janet to tell Goodyear I had already left for my camping trip. I was stressed out enough already and didn't want to go back to work at 6 PM on a Friday evening.

All of us really enjoyed the camping trip. We stayed at John Lyon's uncles' hunting cabin near the middle of the state. There was no electricity or running water but there was a small stream close to the cabin from which we got our water. We had several kerosene lanterns for light and the cabin was heated with a wood burning stove. It felt great to get away to the middle of nowhere with no phones, radio, or TV. It was truly an enjoyable time and I was able to relax.

By 1987 Janet was taking more medications for her RA which had several more side effects, one of which led to her gaining even more weight. There wasn't much she could do about it since the medications were helping contain her rheumatoid arthritis pain and joint disfigurations. Janet was feeling uncomfortable with her weight gain but felt thankful she could still function.

With Marriage Encounter we continued presenting Weekends along with our responsibilities as 'registration couple,' 'supply couple,' 'logistics couple' and 'scheduling couple' along with 'angeling' other couples. As 'logistics' couple we were responsible to find various sites to present Weekends, even though most Weekends were still being presented at the old Brunnerdale Seminary. When we went to check various hotels very often we were treated to meals by the hotel as an enticement to acquire our business. By the early 1990's Brunnerdale Seminary closed and was purchased by a real estate developer.

In 1987 I was able to acquire a boat slip at the Goodyear Boat Club; now we were able to dock our boat for the summer and enjoy just going to the boat club get in our boat and enjoy the Portage Lakes. Also, that summer we joined the Manchester Swim Club which we heard about from Dick & Carol Loesch. For the next several years we had a lot of fun at the swim club. We discovered many members were parishioners from St. Francis and we made many new friends. 1988 was a very hot summer and on many days Janet would take the kids to the swim club and I would join them after work. Christopher and Laura joined the Manchester Club swim team which led to more fun. The Manchester Swim Club was unusual in that it had both a low and high diving boards.



Christopher & Laura on Manchester Swim Club Team

In 1986 and 1987 we went to Myrtle Beach on vacation. Both years were fun; however, I was getting little rest and relaxation since the kids wanted to go to all the various other activities rather than being at the beach or pool. Little did I think at this time that 1987 would be the last year we would spend at Myrtle Beach?

For many years Laura loved to spend time at her grandma's house. Grandma let Laura sleep with her and in fact during these years Laura asked her grandma if she could have her bed when she died. Grandma laughed and said 'yes' and when my mother died in 2002 she willed her bed to Laura. Now many years later grandma's bed become Julia's bed. One of Laura's favorite things to do at grandma's house was climb the tree in the backyard. It seemed whenever we were there the first thing Laura would do was climb the tree.



Laura in tree on Grandma's house



Cristopher at 12 years old

While living in Manchester Halloween was fun for us. In the area where we lived there were many houses with large trees and open fields so it made the aura of Halloween special, even spooky at times. On ‘beggars night’ usually I would walk with Laura and her friends while Christopher and Brian Killie would go trick or treating on their own. Janet would stay home and hand out candy while a in the background a cassette player played lots of spooky music. After several hours of trick or treating Janet & I would meet at the Killie’s house where the kids would check out their candy and Bob & Cindy and Janet & I would have a few drinks. This became an annual event for about five years.

1988 was a very eventful year. In February Christopher became sick. He was sick for about a week before we were to present a Marriage Encounter Weekend in Marietta, Ohio. Christopher stayed with some friends for the weekend and upon our return he was still not feeling well. Several days later Janet finally took him to the doctor, and he said Christopher just had the flu and he would be better in a few days. Toward the end of the week Christopher still was not feeling any better, in fact he was feeling worse. So, we took him to the doctor again and this time he suggested we take him to the hospital. Once in the hospital they initially said he had the flu, but when we said he was feeling worse than he was a week earlier the hospital began to perform tests on him. Finally, later that day it was determined Christopher’s appendix was leaking. The doctor said this was very unusual and his condition was becoming critical. We called the parish office to inform the priests and within an hour Fr. Schleicher arrived at Christopher’s bedside and administered the Sacrament of the Sick. Just as he was finished administering the Sacrament Christopher threw up. On that note Fr. Schleicher said it was time to leave. We came to realize that Christopher was very sick and if we had not taken him to the hospital he very well could have died. I’m not sure what the doctors did for him but one doctor told us this is only the second time he had a child with flu-like symptoms whose appendix was actually leaking, instead of bursting. Christopher was in the hospital for two weeks and a few more days before being able to go back to school. He missed about a month of school.

One day while Christopher was in the hospital I went to see him after work and Janet and Laura were to attend a Girl Scout Brownie affair. However, right as they were about to leave Laura began to have difficulty breathing. Janet became scared and immediately took her to the Children’s hospital. Laura was admitted to the hospital because her condition was scary. That evening the doctors said they wanted Laura to stay in the hospital overnight. The next day doctors wanted Laura to continue to stay in the hospital. Then Janet asked the hospital staff if it was possible for Laura to be moved to the same floor as Christopher; for they were separated by two or three floors. The staff was able to arrange it so Laura and Christopher were in adjacent hospital rooms. After two days it was determined Laura’s breathing problem was caused by her being allergic to peanut butter. Just before Laura and Janet left for the Brownie event Laura ate a peanut butter sandwich.

While Christopher and Laura were in the hospital they had many visitors, although Christopher was still weak. Joe & Karen Stoll gave Laura a teddy bear which she loved and took it to bed with her every night for many years.

Christopher's sixth grade class sent him many cards and painted pictures for him. One day when I went to see him after work all the paintings were posted to the wall in his room. I especially remember one painting by a girl, Nicole. It was a very good painting of a big needle with a drop of blood dripping from it. It was typical of a sixth grader, but I thought it was a very good drawing.



Get well cards from classmates



Get Well Card from Nicole

During the spring several notable events occurred. May 8 was my mother's 70th birthday. She said she didn't want any special party, but I wanted to do something special so I arranged a little surprise party for her on the Sunday nearest her birthday. Many of her closest friends and relatives showed up for a small gathering in her backyard. Even though she said she didn't want anything special for her birthday by the time the evening was over she told me she really appreciated the get together and thoroughly enjoyed herself.

That spring Janet and I became lectors during weekend Masses at St. Francis. Janet arranged this without telling me and I felt very surprised and upset that she did this without saying a word to me. I finally went along with it but felt a bit nervous about being a lector. But as with most other things we did within the Church all went well. At the weekend Masses I usually read the first reading and Janet read the second reading. We continued as lectors until 1993 or 1994 when Janet's health prevented her from lecturing at Mass.

In May Laura made her first communion with her second-grade class.



Laura on her first communion.



Grandma and Laura's at her 1st communion

In 1988, we were assigned to angel another ‘rookie’ couple, Al & Sue Kramer. Little did we know at the time, but Al & Sue would become one of our closest friends. Janet & I were known as a ‘tough’ but well respected ‘angel couple,’ in fact I can say by 1988 Janet & I were considered by the entire ME team community as the best ‘angel couple’ in the Akron/Canton/Youngstown area. We tried to instill in each couple we ‘angled’ not only how to write their best Weekend talks but also the dedication to ME it would take to try and change the world. Al & Sue really bought into this dedication and I would say Al & Sue were the best and most resolute couple we mentored for they would eventually go on to become real leaders.

During the previous winter I was talking to my uncle Hank and told him we were getting frustrated vacationing at Myrtle Beach and he told me why not check out St. Augustine. My Aunt Catherine and Uncle Hank had been spending their winters there along with a few friends. I called the condo complex where they had been staying and arranged for a weeks’ vacation. Then in late June we traveled to St. Augustine’s Anastasia Island. We discovered it was a much easier drive than driving to Myrtle Beach. It was about two hours longer drive but was interstate almost the whole way versus spending about three hours on two lane roads while driving into Myrtle Beach from the interstate.



Laura and friends in our first year at St. Augustine

We really enjoyed our week at the condo in St. Augustine, it was much more relaxing than Myrtle Beach. Christopher and Laura also enjoyed it because we had a nice pool and the ocean beach was a very short walk from our condo which overlooked the ocean. There were also several sites to see including the historic district as the oldest city in the United States, the major old fort, and the alligator farm. Laura and I went to the alligator farm and we both enjoyed it, in fact Laura was really fascinated by it. Christopher found a friend while we were there and the two of them hung out together for almost the whole week. Laura also made a few friends, but they were not as close as were Christopher and his new friend. From this time forward we spent all of our future vacations at St. Augustine. All of us really came to love it there.

By 1988 Marriage Encounter was once again booming in our area. The Akron/Canton/Youngstown area was presenting many weekends, in fact during one weekend in February there were two ME Weekends being presented at the same time in the same hotel in Youngstown. We also had many team priests. I think during Janet & my tenure as a ME team couple there were at least fifteen priests, they included Fr. Tom Shields, Fr. Bob Kawa, Fr. Tom Petronic, Fr. Jay Clark, Fr. Tim O'Neil, Fr. Jack Murray, Fr. Bob Edwards, Fr. Tom Cebulla, Fr. Sam Decissio, Fr. Neil Walters, Fr. Andy Toma, Fr. Martin Aitsebaomo, Fr. Joachim Misaki, and several other whose name I can't remember at this time.

During the late 1980s we continued to remodel our house. By now we had vinyl siding installed along with insulation, installed new carpeting, a new kitchen, a large deck, a new garage door and updated the basement family room.

Despite all what was happening in 1988 our biggest happening involved the RENEW program at St. Francis parish. In the early spring of 1988 St. Francis parish was embarking on a major spiritual renewal program called RENEW. Fr. Schleicher installed Dave & Connie Morocco and Ray & Kathy Herrick as overall coordinators. During their first meeting Fr. Schleicher told the Herrick's and Morocco's to get Paul & Janet Gruic involved in some way. Well they asked us if we would be open to coordinating all the small groups that were to be formed during RENEW. We discovered this would be a major commitment since RENEW was a two- and half-year program. There were to be five six-week sessions with the priest's homilies during Sunday Masses focused on each session's aspect of RENEW. However, the biggest aspect of RENEW were the small groups and we said 'yes' to coordinate the small groups. Several months later eventual leaders of each small group were invited to the parish hall to hear more about RENEW and the small groups. We were asked to present to these small group leaders what RENEW was about and the role of each small group. When this meeting arrived, we were surprised to see so many small group leaders attend, there must have been at least 40-50 people attending, each representing a small group. During our presentation we tried our best to explain their roles and build excitement for RENEW. All went well and after the meeting Dave & Connie Morocco and Ray & Kathy Herrick rushed over to thank us trying to build enthusiasm for RENEW.

We led our own small group of six couples and we stayed together for not only the next two and half years but continued for about another year. Despite the way this may sound this commitment to coordinating all the small groups was not as demanding as we expected. All of our ME experience prepared us well for this commitment.

In 1988 Goodyear began to offer incentives for veteran employees to retire early. This was in lieu of the Goldsmith attempted purchase of Goodyear and the tremendous debt Goodyear acquired to buy out Goldsmith. Goodyear was forced to sell many subsidiaries along with several large retail tire companies Goodyear had acquired over the years. As a result of these divestitures Goodyear needed fewer employees so Goodyear offered great buyout packages to lure veteran employees to retire. These offers were so attractive that many employees with 30 years of service or more signed up for the buyout. In 1988 I attended more than a few retirement parties. When Don Knight and Roy Nickel of the Financial Analysis Dept. had their retirement dinners much to my surprise they asked me to lead a prayer prior to the dinner. As far as I knew praying prior to a retirement dinner had not been done prior to now. Praying before the dinner proved to be very acceptable and others began having a prayer recited at their retirement dinners.

During the years I worked at Goodyear they had what they called the Goodyear Spirit Award. These awards were presented annually to someone in each of the major divisions of Goodyear. The Spirit Award was awarded to those who not only went above and beyond in their work performance at Goodyear, but also provided a positive impact within Goodyear and their communities outside of Goodyear. In October 1988 when time came to announce and present the Comptroller's Division Spirt Award about two hundred employees formed in front of the Comptroller's Division executive offices to hear the announcement and presentation. As usual there was cake and many other goodies for all to enjoy after the presentation. The Controller & VP announced, 'this year's winner is Paul Gruic. I felt flabbergasted and shocked; me of all people. I had no idea I was so highly thought of within the Goodyear. When I came forward to receive my award Janet came out of one of the financial executives offices to join me. They told her in advance and asked if she would come for this special occasion. I was very surprised almost shocked again to see her with me. I still have the plaque I was given. My immediate boss, Dennis Keppel, sponsored my nomination.

In the spring of 1989 I decided along with Dennis to sponsor a member of our department, Jack Madison. Jack worked for me and on departmental budgets. Jack was always very considerate and helpful with department managers when dealing with their budgets. While preparing the data needed to sponsor Jack for the Spirit Award I felt surprised at how much time and effort it took to prepare a good endorsement. By this I felt very appreciative of all the work Dennis did for me. By the way Jack Madison won the Comptroller's Division Spirit Award in 1989.

In August we bought another new car, a 1988 Chevy Nova. The first weekend after we bought the car was our wedding anniversary and we drove it to Pittsburgh to celebrate

with Janet's cousin Monica and her husband Danny. Their anniversary was near the same date as ours. It turned out that small Chevy Nova was one of my favorite cars.

During our married life together Janet and I owned about fifteen cars. As far as I can remember they were:

1968 Ford LTD
1970 Olds Cutlass Supreme
1973 Plymouth Gold Duster
1978 Plymouth Valarie Station Wagon
1973 Plymouth Duster, used, not the Gold Duster listed above.
1979 Chrysler Newport
1984 Buick Station Wagon
1979 Olds Delta 98 – was Bishop Sheldon's car
1981 Chevy Conversion Van
1984 Ford Conversion Van
1988 Chevy Nova
198? Ford Mustang – forced purchase due to Christopher's not making his loan payment
1992 Ford Conversion Van
1993 Honda Accord EX
1997 Honda Accord EX – after Janet's death
2000 Camry LE – with Marcy
2004 Camry LE – with Marcy
2012 Camry XLE – with Marcy
2011 Camry XLE – with Marcy

The summer of 1988 was very hot, I think there about 35 days when the temperature was above 90 degrees even reaching 104 degrees one day. We spent many days at the Manchester Swim Club and on our boat. On Labor Day we were looking forward to going to the swim club however it rained all day long, so I took the family to look for a new stereo system. I bought a system that played 45 and 33 records, cassettes, and CD's in addition to the radio. I also was able to record on cassettes from any of these devices. From then on and for many years I recorded many oldies and jazz music to cassettes. I got this idea from Janet's cousin, Monica Gazzo, and her husband Danny. For about eight years after that I spent many hours of my spare time recording oldies and jazz music. Whenever we traveled in our car I would play oldies music on the car's cassette player for hours. Both Janet and I really liked the music from the 1950's and 1960's. Janet's favorite group was the Vogues. By the way I also recorded cassettes of big band music from the 1930's and 1940's for my mother. She loved it and played them frequently.



Laura's birthday cake in 1988

In the fall of 1988 Christopher transferred from St. Francis School to Manchester schools. He was now in the seventh grade and was academically struggling at St. Francis. At Manchester Jr. High Christopher still struggled in the classroom but had a few subjects he enjoyed, especially the Mechanical Drawing classes. One interesting note was the subject Christopher struggled with the most was English and his teacher was Joe Harp, a friend from college. Joe told me Christopher just would not complete all his assignments. Despite this Christopher seemed to enjoy Manchester schools better than St. Francis which was more rigorous academically. When he transferred to Manchester schools he began going to CCD classes at St. Francis. His teachers were Rose & Earl Reckenwald; this is a couple we knew well. Sadly, later Earl developed dementia and died in 2020.

In the fall of 1988 I remember sitting in church one Sunday morning thinking that these years now will probably be the best years of my life. I was at peace most of the time and enjoying life. Janet and my relationship WAS GREAT if not fantastic. Our involvement in Marriage Encounter really changed our lives for the better, and most of the time Christopher and Laura were great kids, I enjoyed my job and we had many, many friends. We thoroughly enjoyed belonging to St. Francis de Sales parish, there were many organizations and events and we were making many new friends. One event we especially enjoyed were the dances being held at St. Francis, they had two a year and were a lot of fun. Except for improvement in Janet's health I couldn't have asked for anything more; I was and am so thankful to God for all these gifts.

By 1989 Laura had become truly fascinated with gymnastics; in fact, I think much of life was focused on gymnastics. For several years now and for several more years we

attended almost all of her gymnastic meets. Laura was doing very well in gymnastics however her gymnastic meets lasted for many hours. I taped the movie 'Nada' on our VCR and Laura seemed to watch the movie every day for several years. 'Nada' is the story of Nada Comaneci, probably the best female gymnast of all time. She was from Romania and was the first female gymnast to score perfect '10s' in any events. In all she received perfect '10's seven times and three gold medals in the 1976 Montreal Olympic events. It is an amazing story of a young 14-year-old girl who grew up in Communist backward Romania. I also taped the movie 'Sound of Music' which Laura also loved, and she must have watched that movie almost as many times as 'Nada.'

By the late 1980's we began to send Laura to Woodward Gymnastics camp in Pennsylvania. It was located near Penn State College. Woodward was where several former Olympian gymnastics had trained. Laura usually went with a fellow girl on her gymnastic team and they trained for a week each summer at Woodward.

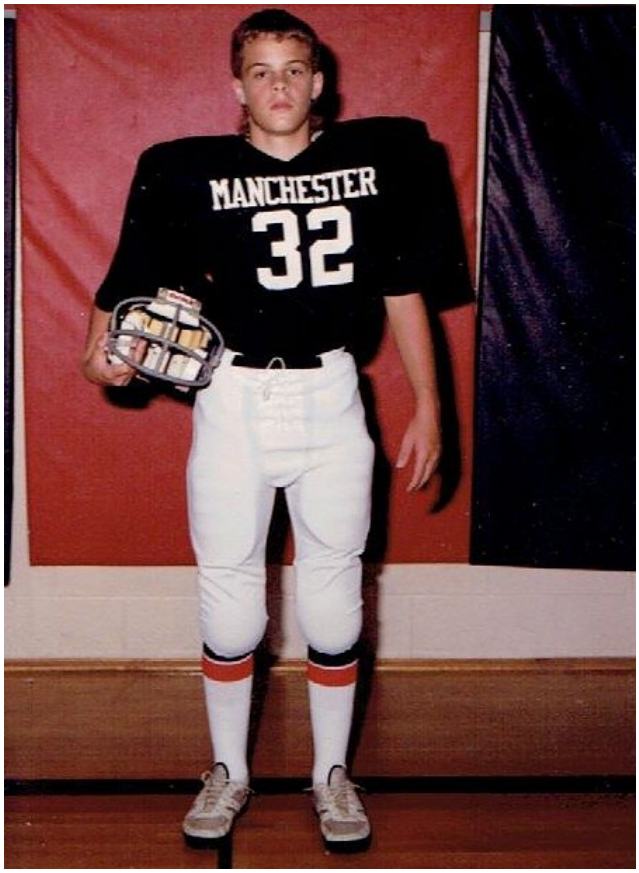


Laura with her gymnastics team – Christopher in background

1989 was a very fun year despite Janet's ongoing RA problems. We attended several adult parties at the Manchester Swim Club; these parties were also a lot of fun, with music, dancing and even throwing people fully clothed into the pool. Unfortunately, 1989 was the last year Manchester Swim Club was open. The pool developed a crack in it and the owners did not want to spend the money to repair it. The swim club eventually became Oasis Party Center, the site of Laura & Mike's wedding reception. Many of us felt very disappointed with the swim club closing. Manchester Swim Club was also the site of St. Francis annual parish picnic the Sunday after Labor Day.

Beginning in summer 1989 the Killie's began to have annual swim parties at their house. These parties were also a lot of fun with Brian & Christopher working as servers for the adults, mostly drinks. The main event was a dance contest on the pool diving board. The Killie's invited their next-door neighbors to serve as judges. They were older and the Killie's invited them as judges to be a part of the party so they wouldn't complain about the load music and noise. By the way, the dance contest winner would receive a night at Steve's Motel.

In the fall Christopher entered Manchester High School and played on the JV football team with his games on Saturday mornings. I attended all of his games, both home and away while Janet took Laura to gymnastics practice.



Christopher - 1989 football

Since our ME community was going great guns we began to have Marriage Encounter dances for which Janet & I volunteered to be the DJ's. I had recorded a good volume of music by now and had a fairly good repertoire of songs. We DJ'd our first dance with Warren and Darlene Stoner. Janet and I continued to be the DJ for several more ME dances over the next eight years. I was able to borrow DJ equipment from ME friend Mark Shaffer. Mark's family was involved with Irish dancing and Mark had a band specializing in Irish music.

In January 1990 there were some major changes at work. For one there was a new VP/Controller. His first name was Ludwig, and he was promoted from being the Finance Director of European Operations. In addition, Ken Earhart was promoted to a new position as Director of Financial Reporting. My boss, Tim Ladd was promoted to Finance Director of Goodyear Malaysia. Dennis Kepple, our Section Manager replaced Tim. I was in turn promoted to Section Manager of Financial Analysis or the equivalent of Assistant Manager. As I mentioned earlier the Financial Analysis Department was considered the most prestigious department within Goodyear's Finance Division. I had never aspired to management positions, my main focus in life was my family and serving in the Church especially Marriage Encounter. Dennis and Ken both recommended me for the position and I accepted since I knew Ken and Dennis would be great to work with and wouldn't expect me to work long hours. When it was announced I was named Section Manager many of my peers congratulated me and said I should have had this position several years earlier. This made me feel confident, yet somewhat surprised.

Three months into his job as Controller Ludwig died of a heart attack. Charley Edmiston replaced him. Charley was Goodyear's Director of Auditing or The General Auditor. I knew Charley fairly well since I had interactions with him in the past. With Charley, Ken and Dennis I had wonderful superiors. Often Charley would bypass Ken and Dennis and assign me to special projects, many investigating what Charley thought was poor or even illegal financial dealings in the company. About a year later Charley would visit me often in my office around 4:30 and just chat. He would usually slouch down in a chair and tell me he was thinking about retirement. I also got to know Goodyear's Chief Financial Officer, Oren Shaffer, fairly well; in fact, every now and then he would stop by my office and offer investment advice. Oren was very well respected within Goodyear and many expected him to be Goodyear's next CEO.

In the spring of 1990 Christopher made his sacrament of Confirmation. His cousin Matt was his sponsor.

Shortly after Christopher's confirmation his friend from school, Matt Millert, was about to make his confirmation in his home parish in Barberton. To my complete surprise Matt asked me to be his Confirmation sponsor. During the Confirmation Mass each student being confirmand had a song they had chosen to be played as they approached the bishop for their confirmation. Matt chose the song "*Wind beneath my Wings'* by Bette Meddler. While this song was playing it really touched me because it reminded me of Janet and her as my *Wind beneath My Wing.* After the confirmation there was a small reception at Matt's house where I asked his parents why Matt chose me to be his sponsor; once again to my surprise, they told me they thought I was the 'holiest' person they knew. Wow!



Christopher's confirmation with Matt



Confirmation with Fr. Schlechter

In 1990 we still vacationed at St. Augustine only this year we tried out a new condo on Anastasia Island. It was the Ocean Gallery, and we fell in love with the place. We continued vacationing there every year until 1997. This year Laura brought Katie

Vorkapich, her friend from her gymnastics team with us. This was the beginning of Laura bringing a friend or two with us on vacation us.

On our way home we stopped and visited Steve & Meriam Hobbs and Bill & Eileen Oskinski. The Hobbs and Oskinskis were ME presenting teams in Akron who had moved to Atlanta. While there Janet & I took Christopher, Laura, Katie, the three Hobbs's kids and two Oskinski girls to Seven Flags over Georgia theme park. So, we had eight kids with us, however, what made it very interesting was the Hobbs's youngest, Halley. She was about four years old and full of energy. Halley stayed with us at the park while Christopher went off with the two Oskinski girls who were near his age; however, we did keep a bit of a close watch for Laura, Katie and the other two Hobbs's girls. In later years Laura would not only bring Katie, but also friends from high school, especially Brianne, Theresa, and Amy.

During the summer of 1990 Laura's gymnastics coach, Bob, moved his gymnastics training location to Kent, which made it a longer drive to take her to practice. If I recall Laura practiced three days a week and on Saturdays until the gymnastics meets began in November.

At Laura's meets usually there was a lull after the gymnasts competed. During the lull judges would be computing the gymnasts final scores and the gymnasts would have a handstand competition to see which gymnast handstand would be the longest. Laura won almost all of these handstand competitions. At home she would frequently walk around the house with her hands. This along with the balance beam in our living room really indicated Laura's love for gymnastics.

At age 11 Laura began to babysit. She loved kids and was an excellent babysitter all through high school. Laura was frequently asking for new things, like a new comforter or desk for her room among other things. We told her we would buy it for her if she paid one half the costs. When Laura saved enough for half the cost of what she wanted we would pay the balance. We hoped that would teach her she had to work for whatever she wanted in life. Christopher began to earn money at age 13 when he acquired the first of several grass mowing jobs. He was and still is a very industrious worker, except for schoolwork.

In the fall of 1990 Christopher had his first girlfriend, Becky. She was a personable and lively girl. I remember early in the morning the Friday after Thanksgiving, Black Friday, she had Christopher join her to go shopping. This is something he would have never done on his own or with us.

Around this time Janet began to read novels, especially crime and spy novels. Her favorite authors were Tom Clancy and John Grisham. The only time I would read was when we were on vacation, usually sitting by the pool. The one book I especially enjoyed was about Lee Iacocca and the automobile history of General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler.

Early in 1991 Goodyear's VP & Controller Charley Edmiston told me he was getting feedback from many accounting department managers that many employees were not very fluent in Goodyear's Accounting Chart of Accounts. So, Charley asked me if I would head up a small team and develop a training program for Finance Division employees for a basic understanding of Goodyear's Chart of Accounts. I came up with an outline for a class on the account code structure and how to use the Chart of Accounts. When it was approved a team was formed with my good friend John Ward from the Tire Division Accounting and Dante Tropia from General Products Division Accounting. Our presentation was enhanced to include examples related to their products. During the presentation I did most of the talking while John presented the slides (no Power Point in those days) while both John and Dante answered questions related to tires or General Products. During part of the presentation Dante showed a tank track produced at the St. Mary's, Ohio plant which gave the audience a sample of a product produced at a plant. Almost all the attendees at the presentations were never inside a plant or seen a product Goodyear produced other than a tire. The presentation went very well and Charley asked us to give multiple presentations, we ended up giving the presentation about six or seven times. All three of us received a lot of positive feedback and now I was known throughout the company as the real guru of Goodyear's Chart of Accounts.

Since we purchased our house on Valley Crest Drive I was usually unhappy with the house. Every now and then Janet & I would visit open houses of homes for sale that looked interesting to us. In March of 1991 we along with Laura went to an Open House in Green. On our way home we were driving west on SR 619 near the intersection with Massillon Rd., and had an accident. An oncoming car hit us head on and Janet's head went into the windshield and was injured badly. Her face was cut up and bruised along with a broken arm and a piece of broken glass was in her eye. Fortunately for us someone nearby saw the accident and called 911 on his cell phone, cell phones were rare at this time. Janet was taken by ambulance to Barberton Hospital where they were able to dislodge the glass from her eye. Janet's face looked awful and it took over a month before she looked close to normal. The driver of the other car was 16 years old and had just acquired his driver's license two weeks prior to the accident. He had run through a red light and was left of center of the road when his car hit ours.

About 8 weeks after our accident the responsible driver's insurance company called us and offered Janet a financial settlement for pain and suffering. Janet asked what we should do with the money and I told her to make the decision since she was the one who suffered. Janet said she would really like a swimming pool. I told her that even with the settlement we couldn't afford a swimming pool. Then I thought if we sold our boat and put the money and her settlement together we could afford a pool. So, during May and early June we looked for a pool company to install a pool. We found a pool that we really liked and could afford. It was an above ground pool; however, it wasn't your typical above ground pool. It had a slope from three feet to five ½ feet. We were able to build a nice deck around the pool which attached to our deck off the family room, the pool looked like an in- ground pool. The pool was installed around mid-July with the deck completed in August. I remember right after the pool water was delivered

Christopher and some of his football buddies jumped into the pool only to come out immediately, not realizing the pool water was very cold. We didn't buy a pool heater, but we bought a solar blanket which the sun heated up the pool. All of us were very happy we had a swimming pool; it was much more fun than the boat.



Our Completed Pool

That summer we also needed to replace the leach bed from our septic system, so that summer our backyard was a mess with all the hardened dirt. We planted new grass in September. In the photo above you can see a truck in the background that was working to replace our leach bed.

In October,1991 we presented a ME weekend in Canton. That weekend Laura stayed with a friend and Christopher was staying with his friend Scott. On Saturday evening around 11 PM Janet remembered she forgot several of her medications. She asked if I would go home and bring them back to the hotel where we were presenting the Weekend. When I arrived home all seemed well and quiet, however as I entered the house via the garage I felt surprised and shocked to see a bunch of high school kids running out of our basement door and others running out the front door. There were beer cans all over the place, there must have been hundreds of them. When I began to look through the house all I could see was beer cans. Christopher was sitting on the

floor next to the door leading to the basement. I could see he was very upset. The only guy left was Scott, and he was drunk as a skunk, in fact he could hardly stand up. Needless to say I was very upset and angry. After I realized all the kids had left except for Christopher and Scott I practically carried Scott to the front porch and let him fall to the floor because he was too drunk to stand. I immediately called his parents and told them in no certain words to come pick up their drunken son. Christopher told me he and Scott invited a few guys over to our house to drink beer and as high school kids do once word got out there is a party they came in droves. With Scott laying on the front porch, I gave Christopher a couple of trash bags and told him to pick up all the beer cans. As Christopher was picking up the beer cans I called our friends Tom & Susan Hughes and asked if they would take Christopher for the rest of the weekend. They readily said 'yes' for their son TJ and Christopher were good friends and the Hughes knew we had to complete presenting the Weekend. I then took Christopher to the Hughes's house and went back to Janet and the Weekend.

When we arrived home Sunday night after picking up Laura and Christopher Janet and I told Christopher what the consequences of his actions were going to be; he was to be grounded and not able to get his driver's license for six months, he was not a happy camper but realized what he did was wrong.

In the spring of 1992 Christopher finally obtained his driver's license. I told him if he had halfway decent grades and participated in some extra-curricular activity I would buy him a car and insurance. However, he wasn't interested in any kind of car I was planning to purchase for him, he was interested in a car with a super-hot engine. I was not going to buy that for him. All of this became mute though since his grades were not great and he did not become involved in any extra-curricular activity. On subjects he liked he did very well in, but not subjects like English, history etc. Christopher eventually bought his own car, an older Oldsmobile with a hot engine. One great point about Christopher was that he always seemed to be able to earn money. By the way I made this same offer to Laura when she was about to get her driver's license.

In February 1992 Laura competed in the Ohio state gymnastics championships in Byron, Ohio near Toledo.. Laura competed in all the events and won the Level 6 state championship in the vault. All of us, including Christopher, felt very proud of her. The vault and bars were Laura's best events. Below is an article on Laura's achievement with a mention to Katie Vorkapich..





Laurie Gruic

Laurie Gruic is state champion on Level 6 vault

Laurie Gruic, 12, of Franklin Township, placed first on the vault with a 9.25 in the Level 6 U.S. Gymnastics Federation State Finals in Bryan, Ohio, February 1 and 2.

Also competing was Katie Vorkapich, 12, of Franklin Township. Katie placed tenth on the vault with an 8.85 and tenth on the beam with an 8.55. Laura and Katie compete with the Kent YWCA gymnastics team.

In late June we went on our vacation to St. Augustine but did not include Christopher. He had a summer job with the father of Laura's friend Erin Fish. He started a company trenching lines to install computer and TV cable lines to homes and businesses. During the time we were gone Christopher seriously injured his shoulder using a jack hammer digging a hole for a cable line. Shortly after we were home Christopher had shoulder surgery and was in an awkward cast for three weeks, which was very uncomfortable. The doctors told him to discontinue playing sports and any contact activity. Thus ended his sports career in high school. Christopher was on the track team in addition to the football team.

One day during the summer of 1991 we were with the Weber's and came up with the idea of having the Akron/Canton/Youngstown Marriage Encounter community host the 1992 Marriage Encounter regional convention. Over the next several weeks we spent multiple evenings contemplating not only the idea of hosting but also developing the outline for the three-day convention. We knew this would be a major effort but also knew it would be a major boost to ME in our area. As I have indicated Janet & I attended many ME conventions and team enrichments and brought several of them back to our area. The community couples really appreciated these opportunities to enrich their relationships and we felt confident they would support hosting a regional convention. Regional conventions were presented every other year with the off year being a national convention.

The states involved in our region involved two sections and encompassed Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin. After a few months of planning we met with our area leaders, Fr. Bob Edwards, and Tom & Lois Beck, to discuss our idea. At first they felt lukewarm to our idea for they thought it was too much of an effort for our area; however, I think our enthusiasm won them over. Then the Beck's and Fr. Bob presented it to the Section Board leaders then to the Section board. The Section board said OK but be aware there are several other areas interested in hosting the convention. In the meantime, Janet & I contacted Kent State University with the idea of holding a ME convention during the summer 1992. We reminded the KSU 's representatives that the 1978 ME national convention was held at Kent State which turned out to be a huge event and Kent State received positive national attention. After several days KSU called us and said they were open to the convention and for us to get back with them on dates etc.

In February 1992 we met in Sandusky with the Becks and leaders from Detroit and Louisville. Ky. Upon listening to the Weber's and us present our ideas they said all the host area does is host, not develop the outline for the convention. The Weber's and Janet and I pressed with our idea for also developing the outline. We continued to present our idea for the outline and they were impressed with our outline and enthusiasm for what we planned. They finally agreed with us, however, there was one caveat and that was the Section leaders would select the presenters. We agreed to that and the Akron Canton Youngstown area was selected to host the 1992 ME convention. Now we knew we had our work cut out for us.

Our first order of business was to contact Kent State to confirm a date. Then Janet and I went to KSU to select which auditoriums and rooms would be needed, including the approximate number of dorm rooms for couples. Next we needed to do much more planning, so we formed a team for an overall plan. The team included us, the Weber's, Fr. Bob Kawa, and Fr. Jack Murray. All was going well then in early June Dave & Mary called us and said they were backing out of our team. This caught us completely off guard and now Janet and I were responsible for doing almost all of the work preparing for the convention. The priests helped further develop the outline and gave us moral and spiritual support, but they had their own parishes to run to do much more.

Prior to receiving the OK to host the convention Janet & I and the Weber's knew we would have to form multiple sub-committees of area couples and couples from other Ohio ME communities to plan the details for the convention. Now without the Weber's we had to put our plan into action. We ended up with eight sub-committees with each couple having a specific responsibility for an aspect related to the convention. As I indicated this was a major effort, but many area couples became very enthused and excited about hosting the convention and readily wanted to become involved in some capacity. We asked the Columbus area to plan for the closing Mass on Sunday afternoon. The closing Mass for ME conventions was always a very special Mass and a highlight which included up to thirty priests concelebrating. At national conventions there would be well over one hundred priests concelebrating.

The summer of 1992 was very hectic for us with questions coming from all aspects of planning for the convention. Our Section leaders were from Kentucky and began bombarding us with questions almost on a daily basis, along with multiple questions from area leaders throughout Ohio and the sub committees, they were driving us nuts.

Finally, the convention was held in August 1992. All went very well and we estimated at least eight hundred people attended from over eight states. We gave the opening talk with Fr. Jack Murray; it was basically an opening prayer and a nuts-and-bolts type of talk. The Weber's and Fr. Tim O'Neil gave the second talk on Friday night then it was onto the rest of weekend. During all ME conventions Saturday evening is a fun evening with a nice dinner and usually music with a dance. Halfway through the evening there was a break and the Section leaders got in the middle of the dance floor and introduced Janet & me to the hundreds who attended. They gave us a great introduction and praised us for all the challenging work we did in preparing for the conventions. This surprised us because the Section leaders seemed very concerned whether we could pull this off without the Weber's help.

The convention ended with the Closing Mass on Sunday afternoon. As I mentioned the Columbus area planned the closing Mass. It was very special with the procession into Mass lead by a huge banner and large special balloons followed by the many priests. The bishop of the Youngstown Diocese was the main celebrant. Christopher and his girlfriend Chrissy attended the Mass (people not attending the convention were allowed to attend the closing Mass). Later Christopher told us that everyone seemed to be 'crazy' at the Mass with an unusual entrance procession, around twenty-five priests concelebrating and all the couples and priests singing all the hymns loudly and all the hugging at the 'Sign of Peace.' Everyone seemed joy filled.

When the closing Mass ended the convention was over and we felt more than satisfied that it proved to be an enormous success. We were on a real 'high' and didn't want to go home. Finally, it was time to go but we wanted this 'high' to continue so we invited all the sub-committee couples to our house. They were also feeling a 'a high' and wanted it to continue, so we had an impromptu gathering at our house. This gathering was great as we all commiserated about the convention. Then they all had to leave and it was all over but we felt confident it was more than just a very successful convention; it bred enthusiasm within the ME community in our area and throughout Ohio. This enthusiasm was very contagious and helped with recruiting for the Weekend for several years.

Earlier that year I was walking down the hallway at work and all of a sudden I felt very unsteady and needed to brace myself against the wall. I got back to my desk and just sat there waiting to 'right' myself. I mentioned this episode to Dennis, my boss, and he told me to go home. I went home that afternoon and stayed home the next day and felt fine. The next day I went back to work then a similar episode occurred a few days later. The following day I went to my doctor and he told me I was having anxiety attacks. Looking back, I realized I was under a lot of stress with my job, the ME convention and being involved with Christopher and Laura. Dr. Feltrup prescribed a tranquilizer for me

and this helped me a lot. I have been on this or similar tranquilizer ever since on an as needed basis.

In September 1992 Christopher transferred from Manchester High School to the Portage Lake Carrier Center (PLCC). He originally wanted to focus on auto mechanics but I talked him into Computer Aided Drawing or CAD. Looking back, I probably should have let him focus on auto mechanics for that was his real interest. I thought CAD would be a better future for him since he did very well at Mechanical Drawing in Jr. High. While in Jr. High school he designed and built a large model home which I thought was excellent and it hung at Manchester High School for over 20 years. For the two years he was in his CAD class I think he ranked either number one or two in the class.

By 1993 Janet's RA and her medications began having more of an impact on her. Her pain was intensifying and the side effects of her medications were having a more significant impact on her, especially the weight gain. She was taking twenty-four pills a day including several steroids. About every three months Janet would receive cortisone injections into each of her knuckles, these were painful but she didn't complain to anyone about her health except me. Janet continued to be that cheerful, fun loving, smart, and outgoing person she always was however I knew she was suffering. We discontinued being lectors at Mass but we continued with our extensive involvement with Marriage Encounter and leading the Pre Cana-Day. Several times we seriously discussed stepping down from being a ME presenting team but we both wanted to continue our journey of trying to change the world the best we could. Both of us knew the best way for us was to try to impact the love between other married couples and in the process strengthen their family life. We knew the strength of a society is rooted in families with the key being the relationships between husband and wife. Our experience in Worldwide Marriage Encounter dramatically enhanced our relationship.

During the summer of 1993 we attended the national Worldwide Marriage Encounter convention at Rutgers University in New Jersey. The Kramer's and Fr. Jack Murray joined us driving to the convention. While driving we of course played a lot of 'oldies' music. Al Kramer really enjoyed the 'soul music' of James Brown and as these songs were playing on the cassette player Fr. Jack really got into the music. He began singing along while moving and grooving to the sounds.

It was around this time the Kramer's began to join us going to St. Augustine. They really enjoyed vacationing at Ocean Gallery since it was nice and relaxing. Al was struggling at his teaching position due to so many students acting badly in class. He taught courses with all boys and more than a few times he had to break up fights in the classroom. With Al being the perfectionist, this really affected him. He told me at times he hardly spent any time teaching; it was spent trying to keep peace in the classroom.

Around August Laura told us she wanted to quit gymnastics. This really surprised us, especially me. Laura had moved up to a Level 8 while her gymnastic friends were still at Level 7. Level 8 was more competitive and required more intense practices. I felt very disappointed since I judged Laura had the ability to keep moving up in the gymnastics

world. She was a good athlete and I wanted her to go as high as she could in gymnastics. Perhaps I was trying to live a little bit of my life through her. Laura wasn't feeling comfortable continuing with gymnastics without her Level 7 friends. Laura did quit and looking back that was probably her best decision. That fall Laura and Brianne joined a competitive swim team.

In November 1993 we attended a Browns game in Cleveland with Herm & Ronnie Gray. This game was very significant in Cleveland Browns history. Bill Belichick was in his second season coaching the Browns and had benched Bernie Kosar and started Vinnie Testaverde. At half time the Browns were losing by over two touchdowns and Kosar started the second half. Midway through the second half Belichick called in a play as he usually did and while in the huddle we saw Kosar diagram a play in the muddy field. Well the play went for a 60-yard touchdown. Everyone was very excited about the play but as I watched Kosar leave the field for the sidelines I saw Belichick grab Kosar's jersey and yell and scream at him. Kosar had changed Belichick's play and he assumed Kosar disrespected him even though the play went for a touchdown, Belichick's ego was bruised. The next day the Brown's cut the beloved Bernie, the Dallas Cowboys signed him following day and he helped lead them to the Super Bowl.

On January 29, 1993 we finally completed Goodyear's year-end financial closing with all its associated financial reporting. This was always a major task and when it was completed I and others always felt a sense of relief. Then around 5 PM Dennis told me and Russ Hartline, our top financial analyst, to stick around for a few minutes. Then about ten few minutes later Dennis and his boss Ken Earhart asked us to come into Dennis's office. At this time Russ and I were informed we were to report to a large conference room on Monday morning; we were being assigned to the new SAP team. This was very surprising, even shocking to both Russ and me. We had known that Goodyear was planning to implement the SAP business integration system, but hardly anyone was familiar with it. I felt very unhappy with this move because I truly enjoyed my present job but I had no say so with this transfer. Apparently Dennis and Ken also had no say in us being selected to be a part of this SAP implementation team. Both Ken and Dennis told me they vigorously tried to convince top Finance Executives not to let Russ and I leave the Financial Analysis Dept., that we were too valuable in our present roles, but to no avail.

On February 1 I reported to my new assignment. The conference room was full of people, most of whom I didn't know. John Evans introduced himself as the leader of the SAP integration team, there must have been nearly seventy-five of us in the room. He said Goodyear was spending millions of dollars to implement SAP within the company and only the 'best and brightest' were chosen to be part of the implementation team. I was chosen to be a part of the Finance team within the SAP project. There were areas devoted to sales, billing, materials management, finance, and a large contingent of IT people. After several months of training on SAP we were to begin implementing the 'order, ship, bill' process for the North American Tire Division. SAP was a mainframe computer system. There were five of us on the Finance team and for months we had no idea what our role was to be within the overall project. After our initial training we spent

about five months floundering about what we were to do. In September we decided to visit several other companies who had already implemented SAP to see what the financial role was in their implementations. We visited Kodak in Rochester, NY, Bristol Myers outside New York City and Dow Chemical in Midland, Michigan; now we had a better understanding of what our role was to be with Goodyear's SAP' implementation. My role was to create an SAP accounting Chart of Accounts and the accounting for all the various business transactions within the scope of the 'order, ship, bill' process.

In my previous 10 years at Goodyear I maintained Goodyear's Corporate of Accounts and knew the accounting process well so I didn't think this would be too difficult for me. However, when I dug into Goodyear's current accounting for the sale of wholesale tires to the retail division I found it to be very complex. Upon getting an understanding of this accounting my first order of business was to simplify the system. I found this to be a big challenge due to the reluctance of current management in retail accounting to change. Over the years they made what should have been a relatively simple accounting system into something very confusing to most everyone. After several months I was able to get the accounting simplified and eventually implemented within SAP. The following January I was surprised when John Evans, the project director, gave me an envelope. Within the envelope was a letter complimenting me on simplifying the accounting for Goodyear's sale from wholesale to our retail division. Also included was a generous gift certificate to Tangier Restaurant. I used this gift certificate to take Janet and Laura to dinner on Valentine's Day.

It was now 1994 and the project was moving along but too slowly for Goodyear's top management, they were looking for results quickly but had no idea how complex implementing SAP was for the project team. During 1994 and early 1995 the pressure became very intense on the whole team to have SAP up and running ASAP. I and many others began working many hours a day and on Saturdays. As the year went on I began feeling more stressed at work than at any other time in my working career at Goodyear. In the middle of night I was receiving many calls at home from the IT team to correct accounting data created by the billing system. I was given a computer for home use to connect to Goodyear's mainframe computer. By October 1994, the Finance team was finally able to complete the Accounts Receivable part of the system.

During the next five months my main focus was working with Goodyear Canada on the accounting of sales from the parent company to Canada. I eventually traveled about five times to Toronto, the headquarters of Goodyear Canada. By March of 1995 we were near completion of our project and many of us on the Finance team were wondering what was going to happen to us when the project was completed, would we still have a job at Goodyear? The Financial Analysis department had been disbanded and Dennis had been promoted to Finance Director of Goodyear Malaysia. Finally, in May 1995 I was asked to be part of the Finance team in implementing the Chemical Division's 'order, ship, bill' process in SAP. This time however it was to be on a PC based system, not a mainframe system, so I went to work for the Goodyear's Chemical Division.

The school year beginning in September 1993 Christopher began his senior year in high school and Laura her last year at St. Francis. In Christopher's senior year he participated in building a robot for a *Seabase Project* in conjunction with Copley High School. According to his teacher Christopher really worked hard and excelled on this project.



ED SUBA JR./Beacon Journa

Chris Gruic and Jason Owens, seniors at Portage Lakes Career Center, assemble a robot for the Seabase Project at Copley High School.

Beacon Journal article on Copley's Seabase Project

In the spring of 1994 Christopher went to the prom and we rented a convertible for him for the weekend with the understanding we could use the car on Sunday; unfortunately for us it rained that Sunday.

A few days prior to his high school graduation Janet & I went to a presentation at the PLCC where students were awarded for their accomplishments and a photo video of the students at school. At first we felt excited about attending this ceremony, however a few hours before leaving for the event we received a message that Christopher was not going to graduate. He had failed his math class and was one credit short for his high school diploma. As Janet and I sat at the award ceremony we felt heartbroken and sad as we watched the proceedings. Christopher was featured in many of the photos in the video for his work at the PLCC. That summer we begged him to go to summer school to complete the one class, but he refused to go.



Christopher and his prom date

After high school Christopher worked several jobs including being a bar back at the Upper Deck on the Portage Lakes. He eventually went to work at O'Neil Lube on Manchester Rd., he still had that keen interest in working with cars.

In the spring we took a trip to Washington DC with Laura and Brianne. It was a good trip and we were able to see many monuments and visit the House of Representatives, Supreme Court and tour the White House among other sites. Christopher had no interest in going with us.

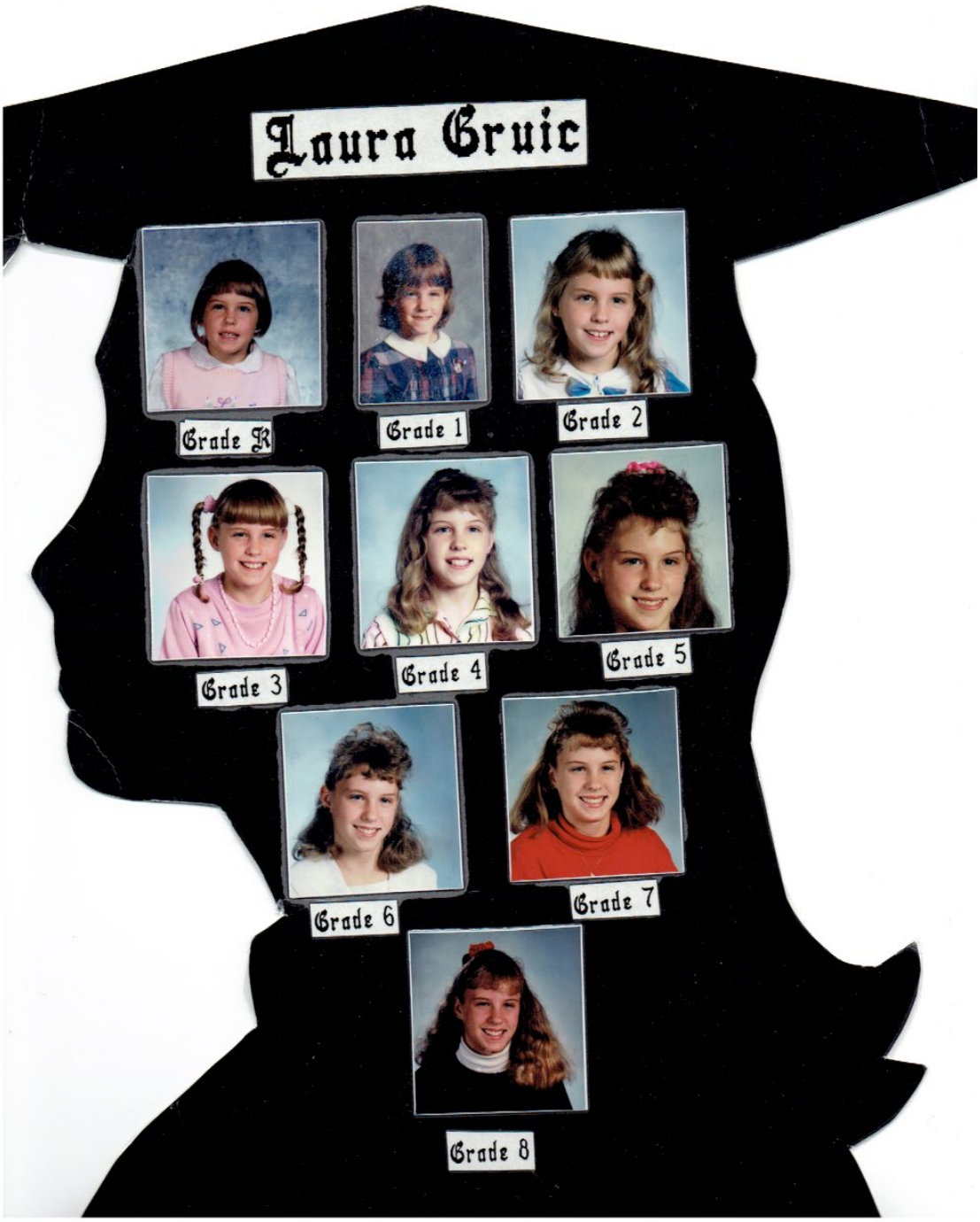
In the spring of 1994 Laura made her confirmation with all her classmates at St. Francis.



Laura with friends at their confirmation



Laura on her conformation with George and his mother Erlene



Laura through her years @ St. Francis School

During Laura's 8th grade year she visited all four Catholic high schools in the Akron area. After the visits Laura was dead set against St. V/M and had little interest in Walsh High School. It came down to her deciding between Hoban and the Elms. At first, her decision was to attend Elms, which I liked since they told us before each student graduates they will be in some sort of leadership position. However, Laura chose Hoban, I think because many fellow St. Francis classmates were going to attend Hoban.

This definitely ended up being Laura's best decision. She excelled at Hoban and was very happy there. Laura graduated from St. Francis in early June 1994.

During the summer of 1994 Laura seemed to feel a bit anxious about attending high school. She knew everything would be different and Laura was concerned how she would fit in at Hoban although two of her best friends from St. Francis, Brianne Hogan and Theresa Decenzo were attending Hoban. In early August I suggested to Laura why not try out for the Cross-Country team, not only would she be able to compete but also meet some new girls before school started. Cross Country practice began several weeks before classes began and Laura did become friends with several girls on the Cross-Country Team. She performed well as a freshman and Laura continued on the Cross-Country team through her junior year.



Laura – Hoban Cross Country

In the spring of 1995 Laura went out for Hoban's track team and did well as a freshman. Near the end of the track season I was able to attend several of her meets. At the district track finals I mentioned to her coach, Joe Lutz, that until a few years ago Laura was a gymnast and he became excited. Joe knew most gymnasts were good athletes and was excited to coach Laura the following year, perhaps having her enter multiple events. Her coach called Laura 'Skittles' because before each event she would eat a handful of Skittles.

During our years being involved with Worldwide Marriage Encounter we were privileged to work with and be involved with many priests. In the spring of 1995, a priest from the Akron area made a ME Weekend and was invited to become a team priest. After hearing the requirements and commitments he said yes, went on his Deeper Weekend

and was ready to begin working on his Weekend talks. We were asked if we wanted to 'angel' him and we said yes. His name was Fr. Neil Walters who was an Assistant at St. Sebastian parish. Like people, all priests are different and Fr. Neil sure was different. He was a young priest around 30 years old and was a fun-loving guy with whom we were able to joke around with a lot. As you might expect we got to know Fr. Neil very well and we both enjoyed each other's company. In the fall of 1995 Fr. Neil was assigned to present his first Weekend and two of the team couples were us and the Kramer's. During our pre-Weekend team meetings the other two couples got to know Fr. Neil well and he and Al Kramer would also joke around a lot.

During the Weekend presentations Fr. Neil would tell jokes and make joking jabs at Al and myself. At first we couldn't understand why he was doing this, but eventually the Kramer's and us realized Fr. Neil was just nervous and this was his way of hiding it. We could relate to his feelings because most presenting teams are nervous during their presentations, especially the first few Weekends they present. While preparing for and presenting his first Weekend together Fr. Neil and I became good friends.

August 22, 1995 was our 25th wedding anniversary and we planned to have a big celebration. August 22 was on a Tuesday, so we planned our celebration for Sunday August 20. We invited all of our extended families and many of our friends. We wanted a large but informal celebration, so we rented a large tent and had it placed in our back yard. Our 25th anniversary began with an outdoor Mass with Fr. Bob Kawa and Fr. Tom Shields concelebrating. We invited all who were in our wedding party and most were able to attend. When Jim Hadley arrived I felt very surprised to see Jim with a woman named Jill. Jim's wife, Teddi, had died about a year or two earlier and I didn't expect to see Jim with someone else. Jim and Jill married the following year. Jim and I have been good friends since we were in high school.

Our anniversary party was a very happy day for I never dreamed Janet and I could be more in love now than the day we married.

That previous spring we began our celebration with a weeklong Caribbean cruise. Our ME friends Lance and Phyllis Talbot organized the cruise and we cruised with about eight other ME couples along with members of the Talbot's parish. During the cruise we stopped in Jamaica, Grand Cayman and Cozumel, Mexico. We had a lot of fun and enjoyed our cruise very much.



Our 25th wedding anniversary invitation

During the fall of her second year at Hoban Laura had her first boyfriend, Jason, also a Hoban student. Their first date was Hoban's homecoming dance. Laura and Jason dated through most of their high school years. In October Laura took and passed her driver's test with the 1988 Chevy Nova.

1996 brought a lot of stress and some excitement. In the spring I was still working on the Chemical Division's SAP implementation. At the time I was feeling somewhat left out of making significant input to their SAP implementation. Most of the upfront work was finished and I was relegated to making Power Point presentations for training end users of the SAP system. In addition, the Chemical Division's SAP project was nearing completion. Then one day in late spring I received a call from George Nagel, Finance Director of the Engineered Products Division. He asked me to come to his office to discuss something. When we met I felt surprised when George asked me to lead the Finance Team for Engineered Products Division's SAP implementation. So, after discussing the situation with George, who I know well, I agreed to accept the position of Finance Team Leader for Engineered Products SAP implementation. However, during the year I began to work many hours again and was beginning to feel stressed once again.

During Laura's sophomore year she began to excel in track. She and three other teammates made it to the state finals in the 4x4 relay at Ohio Stadium. They didn't finish well but considering there were two sophomores and two freshmen on the team I thought they did very well just to make it to the state finals at Ohio State. Janet & I went to see them compete and it was a fun weekend. That year Laura had competed in many different events just as Joe Lutz told me the previous year. Laura even competed in the shot put, which was unusual since Laura had a relatively small frame for that event.

Also, during the Easter break at school Laura went with a Hoban school group to visit Boston. To Laura the highlight was going to Fenway Park to see the Boston Red Sox play the Cleveland Indians and getting a game ball from Kenny Lofton, Cleveland's star centerfielder.

During the year both Janet and I were both feeling more concerned about Christopher's behavior. He stayed out very late and at times did not even come home. At times he was rude to us and my need for belonging with him was not being met. He had refused to attend Mass with us for several years and this concerned us. This attitude went on for quite a while.

Once again we planned to vacation in St. Augustine, however this year I felt very stressed about going. My stress level at work had increased, dealing with Christopher, and not sleeping well all contributed to my stress level. The evening before we left for vacation I was cutting the grass and my lawn tractor went out. I didn't know what to do so I had Christopher help me push it into the shed. Later that evening when the van was all packed I went to close the garage door but it wouldn't close. I tried for over an hour to close it or go up and down but to no avail. So, I backed our van into the driveway and with Christopher's help we were finally able to close the garage door. This was about midnight and we were to leave early in the morning. By now I was feeling really stressed and I told Janet I didn't even want to go on vacation; I told her that she could take the kids (Christopher, Laura and two of her friends were also going) I would stay home. I was in no mood to drive about 950 miles. Janet begged me to go, she didn't want to go without me and she knew once we were there I would be able to relax. I finally relented and we went to bed got a few hours' sleep then we were off to St. Augustine. While there it took me about three days to unwind and by the time we came home I felt much more relaxed. This happened to be our last vacation together as a family.

In August, a stray dog appeared at our house. It appeared to be a very nice dog, but it did not have a collar, however we knew the dog didn't belong to anyone in the neighborhood. The dog stayed on our deck for several days and we didn't know what to do with it. Then Christopher and Laura begged us to keep the dog. I was against this but even Janet was open to keeping the dog, so against my better judgement we kept the dog and Laura named him Omar, after the Cleveland Indians shortstop Omar Vizquel. Now we have two dogs, Cleo, and Omar; fortunately both dogs got along well together. After a while I was feeling attached to Omar but was feeling concerned about keeping Omar over the winter. Omar stayed with us for several months then sometime

in October someone came to claim Omar. Well Omar left us and I even felt a bit sad for he was a very nice dog.

1996 was also the last time we went to Cedar Point. As I mentioned earlier Janet and I went to Cedar Point every year from the year we meet in 1969 except for the year Christopher was a year old. Janet & I both really enjoyed the roller coasters as did Christopher and Laura. When we moved to Valleycrest Dr. they would usually bring a friend with them. We would usually arrive at the park around 11 AM and leave at closing usually 11 PM.

In August we received very sad news. Our dear friend, Fr. Tom Shields, had died. We, especially me, became very close with Fr. Tom and news of his death marked one of the sadder days in my life. I felt sad almost like when my dad died. He was very inspirational to me and he cared for us. We were losing one of our best friends, Fr. Tom was 78 years old.

Around this time we received an invitation to attend a Byzantine priest's installation as a bishop. He was Fr. Mike. We had presented a ME weekend which Fr. Mike attended and got to know him fairly well seeing him several times after the Weekend. This invitation came as a complete surprise to us but we attended the liturgy for his installation as a bishop. The church had no air conditioning and the day was very warm, about 90 degrees. The liturgy lasted about three hours and it became very hot in the church since the liturgy was in the afternoon.

At this time within Marriage Encounter there was serious discussion in the United States about making very significant changes to the outline. We heard about some of the planned changes and we and many others within our ME team community were not happy about them. In September our Akron, Canton, Youngstown team community nominated Janet & me to travel to Grand Rapids, Michigan to discuss these outline changes with leaders from other areas in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin. This was a two-day meeting to discuss and present our and our area's opinions and ideas. We voiced our opinions and many objections quite vigorously. I knew we were in the minority with only the couple from St. Louis strongly agreeing with us. However, when we left the meeting and drove home Janet and I felt comfortable our opinions and ideas would be taken to the national level.

In October an issue came up with Laura which came as a complete surprise, even shock. One evening Laura came home with her friends Amy, Theresa, and Jason. After a few minutes came an awkward silence, no one said a word. Then Amy, Theresa and Jason told us that Laura was not eating properly. In fact, she was hardly eating at all and all three were very concerned about her. After talking for a while Laura finally admitted she had an eating problem. She had bulimia, which we discovered could be very serious. Soon afterward Laura was back to eating normally but we obviously felt concerned about her, yet very thankful she had such good friends who came to tell us about her condition. It took some courage on their part and Laura's since she had to admit she had her problem.

Also, in October Hoban high school asked us to help once again on their annual Extravaganza held in the spring. We helped the previous year and this year they asked if we would coordinate the effort on acquiring ads for the 'auction catalogue.' This catalog was for their oral and silent auction. We said 'yes' to this since this didn't seem like a major time commitment like some of the other commitments we made over the years.

On Friday November 9th Janet's breathing became very strained and we were both feeling concerned. By Saturday morning Janet breathing had not improved so I drove her to Akron City Hospital ER. Wouldn't you know it that morning all the non-medical personnel at the hospital went on strike. When we arrived at the ER there was complete chaos. Janet was having a lot of difficulty breathing but a doctor didn't see her for several hours. Janet was becoming very agitated and aggravated. When a doctor finally arrived they scheduled several tests, and we waited several more agonizing hours waiting for the results. When the doctor finally arrived to see Janet all he said was she was not having a heart attack then he left. This left Janet hanging and feeling very frustrated and upset because she was still having breathing difficulty. When we arrived home I decided to call Dr. Al Feltrup at his home. He was not only our doctor but also a good friend. When Janet described her condition to Al and that the ER doctor said she was not having a heart attack Al thought she may have pleurisy. Dr. Al Feltrup then called the drug store and prescribed medications for pleurisy. When Janet began taking the medications her condition improved. We both felt very relieved and I went to work on Monday morning.

Although Janet's breathing improved her RA continued to really bother her. Despite not feeling well Janet was a real trooper, she was very extraordinary. Janet wanted to continue being a very active member of the ME team community, our commitments within ME, coordinate and help present the Pre Cana-Day and help with Hoban Extravaganza. This was in addition to being active with many of our friends and of course Christopher and Laura.

In October one of our best friends, Tom & Susan Hughes had moved to Atlanta, Georgia due to Tom receiving a very job good offer in Atlanta. I first met Tom at Goodyear in 1985 when Goodyear hired him after Firestone Tire let him go. Tom was an auditor for Firestone and shortly after Bridgestone's acquisition of Firestone Bridgestone eliminated Firestone's Auditing Department. Tom was then hired as an accountant in Goodyear's aircraft tire operation. After getting to know Tom at Goodyear I invited him and his wife to attend a Marriage Encounter Weekend, they did, and rest you know about. After several years at Goodyear Tom became disenchanted with Goodyear's aircraft tire finance management and quit to take a position with Crystal Clinic. Within a few years the Crystal Clinic moved their facility from near City Hospital to a new facility in the Montrose area. So Tom was elevated to the position of CEO. From here he accepted the position in Atlanta.

In mid-December we received a Christmas card and letter from the Tom & Susan. In their letter they informed us Tom was fired from his new job in Atlanta. Tom told us his

job in Atlanta was not what he expected, that when he reported to work the company told Tom the position was just a temporary one. This was really sad news for us to hear. We called Tom & Susan and they seemed in good spirits, but we knew they had to feel very discouraged. Tom eventually got an excellent position in Jacksonville, Florida.

Ever since we moved into our house on Valley Crest Drive I felt frustrated with it, so I kept looking at other houses for sale. At times this was frustrating for Janet because she was content with our house in Manchester. However, with the washer and dryer in the basement she was beginning to feel the strain of going up and down the stairs to wash clothes. Often I would do this chore.

During the summer of 1996 we looked at a ranch house on Venus Dr. in Green. It was a nice ranch with a swimming pool. We made an offer on the it with a contingency we needed to sell our house before we could close the deal. The offer was accepted however someone made a cash offer on the house almost immediately after our offer, so we lost out on the Venus house.

In early December I saw another ad for a ranch house for sale that looked intriguing. It was on Buhl Dr. also in Green. I asked Janet if she would be willing to look at it. She told me yes if the washer & dryer were not in the basement. When we looked at the house it looked like the house met most of our wants and needs except the washer & dryer were in the basement. However, there was a large mud room and we wondered if that room could be converted to a laundry room with access to the garage. At first I felt excited about the house, but Janet wasn't quite sure about it. Then we saw the house a second time and Janet felt more positive about it. In addition to thinking about purchasing the house Janet felt concerned about the pressure of getting our house ready to sell and the additional pressure I may have had since I was already feeling stress from my job. We also wanted Christopher and Laura's input. After thinking and dialoging about the house we thought about asking a carpenter friend, George Ott, if the mud room could be converted to a laundry room. On a Saturday George took a good look at the room and access to the plumbing and told us he could see no problem in converting the mud room to a laundry room. This was all Janet needed to hear to say yes to us making an offer on the house. She actually felt excited about it. When we met with the realtor she said two other couples were looking at the house and were serious about making an offer on it. In mid-December we made an offer on the house $1,000 above the asking price. A few days later we discovered our offer accepted. Janet was not only excited about it she thought Christmas time was an excellent time to show our house. Our house always looked very Christmassy during this time of the year and would be appealing to potential buyer; both Janet and I really enjoyed decorating for Christmas. We hired Patti Coler to be our real estate agent to sell our home. We knew Patti for a long time since her daughter and Laura were good friends since grade school at St. Francis.

After our offer on Buhl was accepted we applied for a mortgage then began to search for some new furniture. On New Year's Day we bought a leather couch and chair from Wayside Furniture, however since it was very good Italian furniture they told us it had to

be manufactured in Italy and eventually shipped to the U.S. They said it would take about five or six months for us to receive the furniture.

We had a good Christmas season and on New Year's Eve we went out with Dave & Kathy Enlow. Since Janet & I were married it was sort of a tradition for us to be together with the Enlow's on most New Year's Eves. Janet and Kathy had been friends since they worked together at the Sears Catalogue Store while Janet was in college.

During the first week in January 1997, we were looking forward to a good year. Janet had visited both her heart and lung doctors along with Dr. Bacha and all said she was in good condition considering her health history. We were also looking forward to presenting a ME Weekend in Marietta in February along with the Pre Cana-Day in March and of course moving into a new house. In addition, in the spring we were looking forward to visiting various colleges with Laura for her to attend once she graduated from Hoban.

On January 14 Janet had another difficult breathing episode. She told me she was feeling only mildly concerned since she had these flare-ups every now and then, sort of like when her RA really bothered her. However, Janet did tell me that since she had her pleurisy episode on November 14 she had other labored breathing incidents. Her concern was tempered due to her positive breathing tests just a few weeks earlier.

On January 16 we signed the final papers to purchase the house on Buhl Dr. along with the mortgage loan. Now all that was needed was to formally close the purchase with the title company.

At this time we were not only finalizing the purchase of the house on Buhl Dr., trying to sell our house on Valley Crest Dr., preparing for the Marietta ME Weekend, and Pre Cana-Day, we were also dealing with the work involved with Hoban Extravaganza. We were both feeling a bit aggravated with the Hoban staff for not taking more responsibility for the Extravaganza. It seemed to me they were leaving most of the work to us. My job was stressful at this time trying to get Goodyear's Engineered Products Division up and running on SAP. This along with Janet's health had both Janet and me feeling very stressed. In the past we were able to deal with all these projects going on with little stress, now it was different.

On Sunday January 19 once again Janet's breathing became more labored so I rushed her to the ER at City Hospital. She was admitted and doctors discovered she had fluid in her lungs. They said they were going to administer medication to her for a few days to decrease the fluid buildup. On Tuesday I went to the real estate office to sign the final papers related to the purchase of the house on Buhl Dr. Since Janet was in the hospital they told me to take the papers to her the next day. On Wednesday Janet signed the papers while lying in her hospital bed. She was in good spirits and was looking forward to going home by the weekend. I visited Janet in the hospital every day after work then went home to be with Laura and Christopher.

On Thursday I was extremely busy at work. About 3 PM my boss received a phone call from the hospital for me to go there immediately because Janet was being transferred to CCU. The hospital had tried to call me on my work phone, but I was away from my desk. When I got the word I quickly finished what I was working on and went to the hospital. When I arrived at the hospital Janet was on a breathing machine and they were trying to accelerate the removal of the fluid from her lungs. I was there for about three hours when a doctor came into Janet's room and asked if he could see me for a few minutes. We went out into the hallway and he told me Janet was going need a heart valve replacement. He said the plan was for the fluid in her lungs to be removed by the next day and they would perform the heart valve replacement Monday morning. Of course, I agreed to this because the doctor seemed very confident Janet would be fine after the surgery. After talking to the doctor, I discussed this with Janet and she seemed fine with the procedure. Shortly after this we had a visit from Joe & Karen Stoll. Joe & Karen stayed for about an hour and shortly after that I went home for the evening. Neither Christopher nor Laura had yet to visit their mother.

On Friday morning I went in to visit Janet before going to work. When I arrived, she was eating breakfast and I stayed with her for over an hour when I noticed several nurses and doctors began to closely monitor the screens on the machines Janet was hooked up to. About a half an hour later a doctor came and told me they were going to administer to Janet and asked that I leave the room for about 20 minutes. I roamed the halls for a while occasionally looking to see if the doctors and nurses had left her room yet. Finally, I noticed no one was in Janet's room so I began to walk to her room only to be intercepted by two doctors who asked if they could talk to me in a conference room. I was expecting the doctors to explain to me what procedure they had just completed and medical plans for the weekend. Once we were all seated they doctors told me Janet died. I went into complete shock, broke down and cried very hard and long over the conference table. She was 52 years old. Once I was able to compose myself the doctors told me they tried to put a ventilator in Janet to assist in her breathing, but her heart wasn't' able to withstand it and gave out. Both doctors told me they were very surprised Janet's heart wouldn't withstand a ventilator. I then asked if I could see her and they said yes. When I went into her room she had the ventilator in her mouth. I stayed by her side and cried for about 10 more minutes. When I returned to the conference room one of the doctors and an administrator told me they had called Hoban High School and a Hoban staff member was driving Laura to the hospital. In the meantime they asked me which funeral home for them to call. I told them Anthony Funeral Home. I then called Christopher at work and not thinking properly I told him on the phone his mother had died. Shortly, both Christopher and Laura were at the hospital CCU conference room with me. I can't remember what was said between us, but we were all in shock. I asked if they wanted to see their mother, but both said no they didn't' want to see her that way. About 15 minutes later I called Al Kramer and asked him if he could come to City Hospital. Since he was flexible at work he immediately came to the hospital. When I told Al Janet had died he was also in shock. Christopher drove Laura home and Al drove me home. During the drive home neither Al nor I spoke a word.

Once home I can't remember if anything was said between the three of us, however, I did call my mother to tell her about Janet. I also called St. Francis parish to tell them Janet died then called Tom & Gerri. I planned for Janet's funeral for the following Monday morning. Then about an hour later Al & Sue came to our house with several bags of groceries. Later more people came to the house to help comfort us with each family or couple bringing food. This was an immense help since I was not in any mood or emotional condition to entertain anyone, but it was very comforting to me to have friends and relatives at the house. By the time the evening was over more than thirty people must have come to the house.

Sometime during the day I called Fr. Bob Kawa and asked if he would say the funeral Mass for Janet. He gladly accepted. Fr. Schleicher was on vacation and Fr. Stein was acting pastor. When I told Fr. Stein another priest was going to say Janet's funeral Mass he felt relieved; apparently he had already presided over three funerals that week and another scheduled for Tuesday.

The next morning many members of St. Francis parish went to Mass to pray for Janet. Later that day several who attended the Mass told me Fr. Stein's entire homily was a tribute to Janet and how much she meant to the parish and how she inspired many people.

On Saturday morning Christopher, Laura and I met with Dave Anthony to plan for Janet's funeral. When we arrived home and opened the door I vividly remember Laura crying out 'Now who is going watch me run track'?' This hit me very hard, and my heart cried out for Laura. I then vowed I was going to every one of her tracks meets no matter what the cost as it related to my job.

Later that day more people came to comfort us. Each brought more food, so we now had enough food for an army of people. Late in the afternoon Christopher told me he did not have a suit to wear to the funeral, so I gave him my credit card and told him go out and buy a suit. He arrived later that evening with a new suit only he said the cost was $400. Normally I would have been very upset, but this time I couldn't care less. Also, on this day I asked the following people to be pallbearers: Matt Gruic, George Demyanchik, Terry & Sue Smith, Ellen & Bill Barber, and Ray & Kathy Herrick.

On Sunday morning the three of us went to Mass then got ready for calling hours at Anthony Funeral Home. The calling hours were set for four hours, 2 PM – 6PM. We arrived about 45 minutes early and people were already in line. When Christopher, Laura and I went into the room where Janet's body laid in the casket I immediately broke down crying again; the sight of seeing Janet in a casket really hit home that she had died and was no longer with me. I felt devastated for Janet was my life. We had grown so close over our twenty-six and half years I could not bear the thought of her not being by my side.

During the calling hours there was a steady stream of people coming to pay their condolences. There were so many people the calling hours went past 7 PM with a

constant stream of people waiting to pay their respects. Many stood a long time outside on this cold January day waiting to get inside to see Janet. I stood for the entire time greeting people who came to wish their condolences. I remember seeing so many people who I never would have expected to come to the calling hours. This was very comforting to me. The last persons to arrive were Dave & Mary Weber.

The next morning, we arrived at the funeral home and already there must have been over thirty people who arrived ahead of us. Once again when we went into the room where Janet was lying I broke out crying. These were the saddest days of my life. A driver drove the three of us in a limo to the church. When we processed down the aisle of the church behind Janet's casket I felt amazed at the number of people who had come for Janet's funeral. St. Francis church was nearly full. I saw many from Goodyear, even those from Anderson Consulting with whom I had worked for several years. I also noticed more than a few Marriage Encounter couples came from Cleveland, Columbus, and Youngstown. When Mass began I felt very surprised to see three priests concelebrating Mass. They were Fr. Bob Kawa, Fr. Neil Walters and Fr. Andy Torma, all Marriage Encounter priests. With the help of Fr. Bob Kawa, I arranged all the readings and hymns for the Mass. After communion Herm & Ronnie Gray played the guitar and sang the Marriage Encounter thyme song, *'I'll Never Find Another You.'* All those who had attended a Marriage Encounter Weekend stood and joined in the singing including myself. I cried while trying to sing this song because it was very special to Janet and me. Even today whenever I hear this song on the radio I turn it off because of the pain of remembering Janet.

After the funeral Mass and service at the cemetery most returned to St. Francis for a luncheon put on by St. Francis parishioners. During the luncheon I remember my Uncle George coming up to me and telling me how surprised he was to see so many people at Janet's funeral. He said it was like she was a movie star or big celebrity. Janet had touched the lives of so many people and was liked by almost everyone who knew her.

Two days after the funeral both Christopher and Laura wanted to return to their routines; Christopher went back to work and Laura back to school. I am sure neither wanted to grieve at home. For me, my grief became intensified. I was alone and feeling devastated thinking of how much Janet meant to me and now she was gone. In remembering Janet, I recalled how each of us knew our marriage was truly made in heaven. Too many special circumstances lead up to when and how we first met and our eventual marriage. She brought real happiness, joy, and meaning to my life. Our relationship was really magical. We both truly enjoyed being together, laughing together, working together, entertaining friends and family, and praying together. Also, how we as a couple were called to serve God and others by our involvement in Marriage Encounter, Pre Cana, RENEW, our parish and other activities in our lives, and of course our adoption of Christopher and Laura. Janet was very intelligent and had a fantastic sense of humor; we seemed to complement each other very well. Janet taught me in her own way to put others before myself. This was very evident when she was really suffering physically yet almost always put others concerns before her own. She was a very caring person who was also the real leader in our various endeavors and as

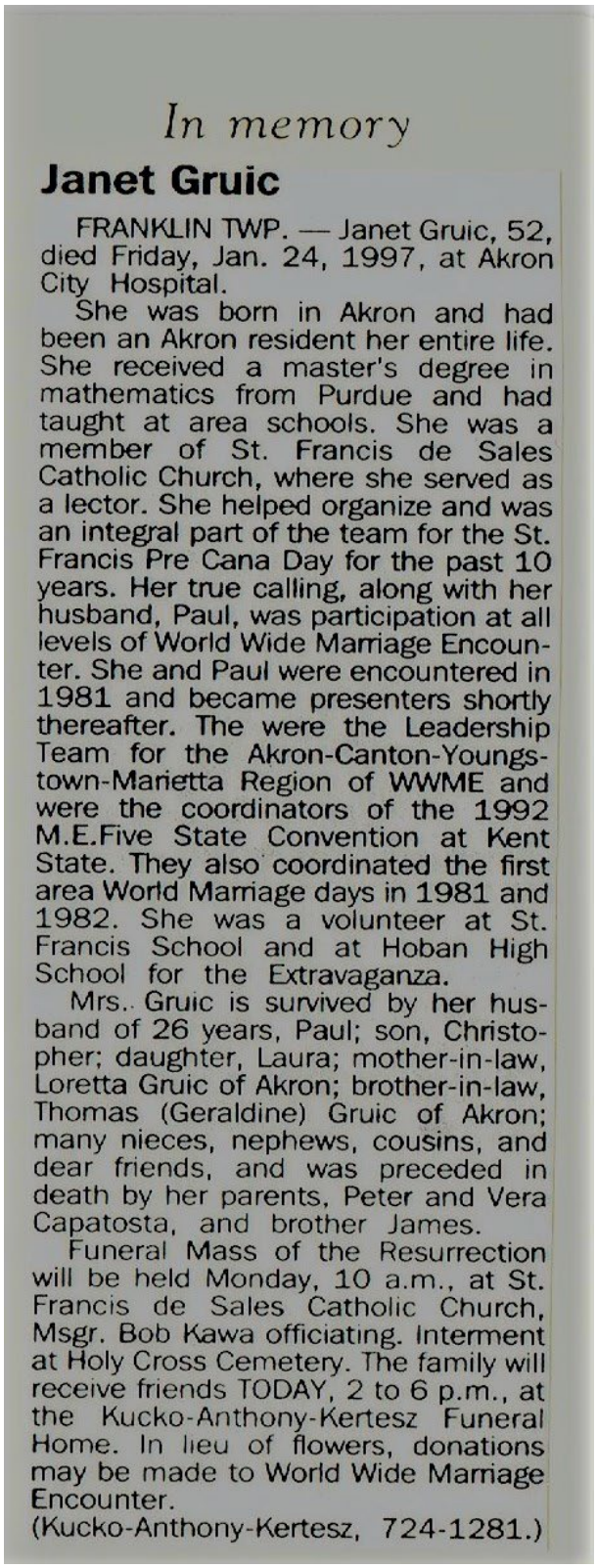
I said Janet was very much liked by almost everyone who knew her. We had a love for the ocean and lakes; we even dreamed of living in a waterfront home. Part of our long-term dream was for us to spend part of our retirement years in St. Augustine, Florida. The hopes and dreams for our lives were almost identical.

The day after the funeral I began to write notes to everyone who attended the funeral or calling hours. I gave a special emphasis to personalizing each note reflecting on some aspect or event of them and Janet. I did this for eight hours a day for three days; there were hundreds of notes to write. I often cried while writing these personal notes, but it helped me in my grieving process.

In remembering Janet I can say poetically that when I met her ‘I was wondering in the desert and Janet lead me to the land of milk and honey.’

In thinking of Janet, I remembered the words of the song sang at Matt Miller’s confirmation, “Wind Beneath my Wings.” she was my wind. Janet was truly an inspiration to me. The lyrics to the song are:

It must have been cold there in my shadow,
To never have sunlight on your face.
You were content to let me shine, that's your way.
You always walked a step behind.
So, I was the one with all the glory,
While you were the one with all the strength.
A beautiful face without a name for so long.
A beautiful smile to hide the pain.
Did you ever know that you're my hero,
And everything I would like to be?
I can fly higher than an eagle,
For you are the wind beneath my wings.



In memory

Janet Gruic

FRANKLIN TWP. — Janet Gruic, 52, died Friday, Jan. 24, 1997, at Akron City Hospital.

She was born in Akron and had been an Akron resident her entire life. She received a master's degree in mathematics from Purdue and had taught at area schools. She was a member of St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, where she served as a lector. She helped organize and was an integral part of the team for the St. Francis Pre Cana Day for the past 10 years. Her true calling, along with her husband, Paul, was participation at all levels of World Wide Marriage Encounter. She and Paul were encountered in 1981 and became presenters shortly thereafter. The were the Leadership Team for the Akron-Canton-Youngstown-Marietta Region of WWME and were the coordinators of the 1992 M.E.Five State Convention at Kent State. They also coordinated the first area World Marriage days in 1981 and 1982. She was a volunteer at St. Francis School and at Hoban High School for the Extravaganza.

Mrs.. Gruic is survived by her husband of 26 years, Paul; son, Christopher; daughter, Laura; mother-in-law, Loretta Gruic of Akron; brother-in-law, Thomas (Geraldine) Gruic of Akron; many nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends, and was preceded in death by her parents, Peter and Vera Capatosta, and brother James.

Funeral Mass of the Resurrection will be held Monday, 10 a.m., at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, Msgr. Bob Kawa officiating. Interment at Holy Cross Cemetery. The family will receive friends TODAY, 2 to 6 p.m., at the Kucko-Anthony-Kertesz Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to World Wide Marriage Encounter.

(Kucko-Anthony-Kertesz, 724-1281.)

On the Friday after the funeral I ran into Ellen Barber at the dry cleaners. We talked a bit then she invited me over to their house for lunch. While there she told me Dave Anthony

told her Janet's funeral was the largest funeral he ever had for a nonpolitical or celebrity person.

Looking back I wonder if I contributed to Janet's death. Janet had been complaining of having some difficulty breathing for about five months yet here I wanted to look at houses and move. She did not feel the urge to move like I did. I wonder if this was pressuring Janet and was putting more stress on her heart and lungs. During this time, I was feeling most concerned about her RA.

Nine days after the funeral I went back to work. I felt very nervous like I was going to a banquet in my honor; that I would be on center stage with everyone asking questions. However very few asked questions except as to how I was feeling. Everyone was very supportive. I told my bosses that I planned on going to all of my daughters track meets even if I had to leave work early or not come to work on Saturday's. They all were fine with that arrangement. I really appreciated their support.

Around this time I also had to purchase a monument for Janet's grave and meet a lawyer to change my will. A few days later when I discussed the details of my updated will with Christopher I could see he was feeling very sad for even needing to discuss this with him. He was very close to his mother.

The following week Tim & Linda DeFrange came to our house for me to hand over all the Marriage Encounter materials we had in our possession. This was another very sad experience for me since so much of Janet and my life was focused on Marriage Encounter. Handing over these materials was a death in itself since I would no longer be involved with Marriage Encounter.

Two weeks after the funeral Patti Coler asked if I was ready for her to have an 'open house' for our Valley Crest house. I said OK. During the 'open house' I went to the Buhl house and began to do some painting. While in the house I began to cry; this house was to be for Janet's sake and now she was gone.

Our house sold a few weeks later and we moved into the Buhl house the last Saturday of March, this was the Saturday before Easter Sunday. That week Laura was on Easter break from school and did not want to be home alone and asked if she could go with Brianne and her family to Florida on vacation. I said OK so Laura was not home when we moved to Buhl.

Many people offered to help me move but I felt very surprised to see at least twenty-five arriving to help with the move. I really did not move many move things that day, I just acted like a traffic cop directing everyone where to put furniture, boxes, etc. Several people prepared food for all the volunteers to eat during the move. Tim DeFrange even arranged all my tools on the work bench in the basement. I felt so appreciative for all my friends who helped Christopher and me move.

The next day was Easter Sunday and it turned out to be another very sad day for me. I woke up in the morning to attend Mass but I could not find anything. There were boxes all over the house and I could not find my razor, shaving cream, toothbrush, or toothpaste. I had to go to Wal Mart to purchase these items. I felt very sad attending Easter Mass without Janet and how special she made Easter for me and our family, including my mother, Tom, Gerri, Matt, and Vicki. This year we went to my mother's house for Easter dinner. Laura was coming home from Florida and I picked her up that evening. It took me several months to get most of my 'stuff' organized and put away.

Saturday March 8 was the Pre Cana-Day at St. Francis. That morning I attended Mass with the Pre Cana team prior to the beginning of the Day and it brought tears to my eyes. The Pre Cana-Day was one of the dreams Janet and I had which had come to fruition and we were the leaders for 10 years. Not being part of the team was more than disheartening to me, although Fr. Schleicher did ask me to assist with several things prior to the start of the Pre Cana-Day. During the Day the team placed a photo of Janet on the presenting table as a way of honoring her.

About a week later Laura was with her boyfriend Jason. When she did not come home at the time I thought she would I went to Jason's house. His parents let me in and told me they were in the basement. When I went downstairs I saw Laura sitting close to Jason and crying very hard. She was grieving very much for losing her mother. I felt so sad seeing Laura cry yet comfortable thinking her crying would help make her grieving process easier than keeping her feelings bottled up inside.

During the third week of March I went to the Lenten communal penance service at St. Francis. I noticed Fr. Sam Ciccolini was one of the priests, so I went to him for confession. As I began my confession the first thing I told him was that Janet had died. This caught him totally off guard and he was speechless for about a minute. Going to confession to Fr. Sam brought back many memories of our wedding. I felt very saddened and melancholy remembering our wedding during my confession to Fr. Sam.

About ten weeks after Janet's funeral a Gerry Kansa from St. Francis came up to me after a Sunday Mass and gave her condolences. I casually knew her since she was also a lector at St. Francis and from Koehler Academy, site of Laura's gymnastics team practices in Manchester. She worked as a part-time cashier at Koehler and the person to whom we paid for Laura's gymnastics lessons. After the Mass Gerry told me if I ever wanted to talk regarding Janet's death to let her know. Gerry told me she may relate to how I was feeling since her husband had died suddenly about six- or seven-years prior. I told her not now I am too busy, but maybe later. Then in late April I saw her again at church and told her if she was still open to listen to me regarding Janet's death. She said OK and we met a few weeks later. I remember both of us talking about the death of our spouses and how both of us ended up crying quite a bit. I met with Gerry several times in the next six months. Also, for many months after Janet's funeral I often cried while taking a shower before going to work.

In April, my Aunt Catherine died from her Parkinson’s disease. She was my favorite aunt and her and my Uncle Hank used to babysit me when I was just a baby, they were also my godparents. Aunt Catherine used to joke to my mother that I turned out so well due to her care while babysitting me. For the last several years of her life she suffered quite a bit as a result of her Parkinson’s disease.

Chapter 8 – 1997 -2002

During the spring Laura worked very hard to excel on Hoban's track team and I did attend every one of her track meets. Laura's specialties were the 800-meter run and as a member on the 4 by 4 relay team. Come late May she had qualified for the district, regional and finally the state finals at Ohio State stadium. In the state final she came close to winning the state title in the 800-meter run but was boxed out when she was about to make her big push to the finish line. She felt extremely disappointed, but I felt very proud of her. As I said she worked very hard that spring. At school Laura also had the best report card she ever had at Hoban, I think she received an 'A' in every subject.

During track season I purchased another car for Laura. She was driving the Nova which had well over 100,000 miles on it and it was beginning to have some mechanical problems. I purchased a used Honda Prelude and Laura loved it. As I mentioned earlier I had made a deal with Christopher and Laura that once they received their driver's license I would buy them a used car as long as they participated in an extracurricular activity at school and kept their grades up. While Christopher was playing football and on the track team his grades were just OK, but I still offered to purchase him a car. However, he did not like the Ford LTD I offered to him; he wanted a 'hot' car with a big engine, but I refused. He later bought on his own an older Olds with a big engine with his own money. He worked at a pizza shop while in high school along with other various jobs.

In May Fr. Neil Walters called and invited me to go out and have a few beers with him. Within the next six months or so we went out several more times. Fr. Neil introduced me to 'Blues' music and I became a fan of 'Blues. We went to Northside near Luigi's Pizza and Pal Joeys in the Belden Village area. I really appreciated Fr. Neil reaching out to me, he was very supportive.

During the summer Laura, her friend Brianne and I vacationed once again at the Ocean Gallery outside St. Augustine. I had made reservations before Janet died. I spent a lot of time that week walking along the beach thinking where my life was going from here. Shortly after our return from St. Augustine I sold our 1992 Ford Conversion Van, there was no need for it now and it did not fit in the Buhl Drive garage. I still had the Honda Accord I purchased earlier.

Also during the summer Laura received multiple letters from various colleges to see if she was interested in participating on their track teams. Several were for athletic scholarships and included larger schools like Duke and Kentucky, Laura just filed them away.

In early July Fr. Stein and the Deacon Butz of St. Francis suggested I think about becoming a deacon in the Catholic Church. I felt very surprised, even shocked when they asked me to think about becoming a deacon. I was in no place emotionally to even think about it besides, I never had an interest in being a deacon. I felt appreciative

though they thought I had what it takes to be a deacon. Also in July Fr. Paul Rosing, pastor of Annunciation parish, suggested I attend the Catholic Widowed and Divorced group meeting in the Annunciation church hall. Fr. Rosing was Laura's friend Theresa's uncle, whom I casually knew.

July 18 was Christopher's 22nd birthday. It was a sad occasion. I took him to dinner at Don Poncho's restaurant and vividly remember him saying this 'really sucked.' Janet had always made Christopher and Laura's birthday's special occasions. She made their favorite meal and any type of cake they wanted; now it was just the two of us at Don Ponchos. We all grieved for a long time. Christopher was still working at O'Neil Lube.

Around this time Christopher mentioned to me he was having a difficult time sleeping so he went to see Dr. Feltrup who gave him some sleeping pills which helped him. Then a few months later I began having difficulty sleeping. I saw Al Feltrup who gave me a prescription for Ambien, a sleeping medication. They worked very well for me but fortunately and unfortunately I have been on this medication on and off ever since then.

During the summer Laura obtained a job at the Regal Theater. There she met and worked with her old friend Darren Lyons from Charleston Dr. While Laura was working there she was able to acquire tickets to several movies for me.

During the time after Janet's death so many of my friends, especially those involved with Marriage Encounter made a real effort to support me, but they could not relate to how I was feeling. Upon the advice of Fr. Paul Rosing, in August I decided to attend the Catholic Widowed and Divorce group meeting at Annunciation Church. I went hoping to be able to share with others who were experiencing the same grieving feelings as me. I discovered there were several meetings a month, one general meeting and two smaller monthly group sharing's. I attended two of the smaller group sharing's only to become feeling very disillusioned. Most of those in the small group were divorced and were just bad-mouthing their ex- spouse, so I quit attending this small group sharing's but continued to attend the larger group meetings. One of the things they did have was several social events each month. Since many members lived alone it was a way for them to have social interaction. After three months of attending meetings and attending some social events I volunteered to become a member of the social committee and got to know quite a few people.

In August that year Matt & Donna married close to the same date as Janet and my wedding day and invited Christopher to be part of the wedding party. They along with Tom & Gerri invited me to the rehearsal dinner and the day after the wedding to Matt & Donna's apartment while they opened their wedding gifts. Then Matt & Donna left for their honeymoon. I felt appreciated that they made me feel welcome during the rehearsal dinner and the day after.

In September I decided to buy a new car. I traded in my 1993 Honda Accord and bought a new 1997 Honda Accord. I almost bought a Toyota Celica convertible. When I test

drove it home and showed it to Laura she was excited, but I decided it was too small for my needs and Laura felt very disappointed.

Around the middle of September, I began to feel bored with my job as Finance Team Leader for Engineered Products Division SAP order, ship, and bill implementation. The project was nearing completion and I was getting tired of OSB implementations for the Tire Division, Chemical Division and now Engineered Products Division. So, at this time I inquired about a position back in the business side of Goodyear. After talking to several Finance Division managers, I received a call from John Cannon, Finance Director for the Chemical Division and he asked if I would meet him in his office. I knew John fairly well but had no idea what he wanted to discuss with me. During our meeting John told me the Chemical Division is planning to implement SAP with all their business functions including all financial reporting. He then offered me the position of Finance Team Leader for this project. This seemed interesting and challenging, so I readily accepted the job offer. What also interested me in this position was that Alan Branstein was to be the main SAP finance consultant for the project. I had worked briefly with Alan shortly before Janet died and I considered Alan to be the brightest and most knowledgeable SAP consultant I ever worked with, and was a great guy. So, by mid-October I was back in the Chemical Division. I ended up working very closely with Alan and we became very good friends. We both had similar interests including being big-time sports enthusiasts. I also think Alan respected me for my knowledge of Goodyear's financial reporting and associated legacy financial systems.

That fall Laura began her senior year at Hoban and decided not to run on the Cross-Country team, instead she opted to play on the tennis team. I don't think Laura had ever played tennis before but she did well in her first year. During the season I remember Laura telling me she wished she had tried out for the tennis team earlier. Once again I did not miss any of her tennis matches.

Also, that fall I took Laura to visit 4 or 5 colleges in Ohio to investigate their nursing programs. We visited Walsh, Toledo, Otterbein, Capitol, Miami (Ohio) and I think Baldwin Wallace. After months of thinking it over Laura finally decided to attend Walsh U. in North Canton, I think she wanted to stay close to home and she knew several Hoban students who were also planning to attend Walsh.

In November Marriage Encounter had a large dinner dance at St. Eugene's parish hall. Earlier I had volunteered to be the DJ for the dance and I finally enjoyed myself for the first time since Janet died. I really had a lot of fun being the DJ that evening and this was the fourth or fifth dance I had DJ'd. The dance was on a Saturday evening and the next day I was scheduled to attend a grief retreat at a retreat house in Cleveland. The grief retreat helped but it again brought many painful feelings of losing Janet. It was an emotional day, there was a lot of sharing and I did my fair share of sharing. That weekend I went from an emotional 'high' on Saturday to a 'low' on Sunday.

In December I again attended the Catholic Widowed and Divorced general meeting. After the official meeting was over there was some social time and I went to get a cup of decaf coffee and a woman and I arrived at the coffee pot the same time. Her name tag read 'Marcy.' When she noticed my name tag which read, 'Paul Gruic,' she said my name sounds familiar and asked, 'what school I went to and I said Akron U.' She said, 'no, what high school?' When I said 'St. Vincent' she asked me if I knew Dick Rasinski. 'I said yes, I knew him for years.' She then told me that Dick Rasinski was her husband who died eight years earlier. I felt very surprised for I knew Dick since high school. He was in the St. V class of 1960 and in 1968 we played a few games together for the Pilsudski Club. He also worked at Goodyear and in the mid to late 1980's we would bump into each other in the hallways at Goodyear and chat for a while. Marcy told me Dick, she called him Richard, died suddenly June 29, 1989. I told her I remember hearing about his death upon returning from our vacation that year. I said to Marcy that if we were home I probably would have attended his calling hours. Richard may have also known Janet since they both lived on North Hill and attended St. Hedwig grade school along with St. V.

As we were talking Marcy told me when Richard died her kids were ages 23 and 19. I also discovered we had several things in common related to our spouses' deaths. After about ten minutes I asked if she would be open to meeting me for dinner sometime to talk; especially about how her kids handled their father's death. My self, Chrisopher and Laura were still grieving and I still needed to talk to people who experienced the death of their spouse. After some reluctance she gave me her phone number and I called her a few days later for dinner. She agreed and on a snowy Saturday evening we went to dinner and talked for a long time about our kids, a bit about our own histories and other things. I discovered we had several similar interests, especially history. Several days later I called her again and asked if she would like to join me a few days after Christmas to see the light display at Oglebay Park in Wheeling West Virginia, she said 'yes.'

In December I was still feeling grief and sadness and I didn't even want to put up a Christmas tree. Christmas was such a special time all through my years with Janet and I did not want to face another Christmas without her; however, Laura really wanted a tree, so I got a tree and later felt happy I did.

As Christmas approached I was feeling very apprehensive without Janet at my side. My mother had the Christmas Eve dinner and Christmas day we went to Tom & Gerri's house. By the end of Christmas Day I felt uplifted for I hadn't experienced the deep sorrow and pain I had anticipated, although Christmas was not nearly the same without Janet.

The Saturday after Christmas Marcy and I went on our trip to Oglebay Park and I had an enjoyable time, however on our drive home Marcy hardly spoke to me. I assumed she was feeling bored and indifferent toward me. That night and the next day I was feeling somewhat rejected and let down. Monday when I came home from work I opened my mail and there was a large envelope. I opened it and discovered Marcy had

mailed me a neat sketch of us driving through Oglebay Park with the Christmas lights. Needless to say I felt very surprised, even a bit shocked. Immediately I called her and she told me the sketch was an expression of much enjoyed our time together. Marcy went on to tell me she was very tired when we drove home from Oglebay Park because she hardly slept the night before our trip, and that was the reason for being she was so quiet on our drive home. Marcy then invited me to her house on New Year's Day to watch the Rose Bowl football game, so I guess she wasn't feeling that indifferent after all.

On New Year's Eve I went to a singles dance for widowed and divorced persons that I heard about from the Annunciation group. At the dance I met several people I knew and actually had a fun time. I danced with quite a few ladies and stayed until the end of the evening.

In late January I attended a Beginning Again Weekend in Cleveland. This is a weekend based on the format of a Marriage Encounter Weekend only the perspective was entirely different. Its focus was to look forward after losing your spouse either through death or divorce. The participants were about evenly divided amount those who were widowed or divorced. The most difficult part of the weekend for me was Sunday morning. After a talk we were told to go off and take about an hour to write a goodbye letter to your former spouse. I was alone in the conference room when I wrote my letter and I remember writing a lot and crying a lot while writing this letter to Janet. This was one of the most difficult things I have had to do in my life. At the end of the weekend I was very surprised to see Fr. Neil Walters was going to say the closing Mass. After Mass Fr. Neil and I talked for a while then several of the team members came and asked if they could talk to me alone. In our meeting they invited me to become a team member for future weekends. I politely told them 'no,' I was not interested. After being so involved with Marriage Encounter for sixteen years, being a team member of a Beginning Again Weekend was not interesting to me at all.

By March I was seeing Marcy on a fairly regular basis. She would go with me to Hoban girls' basketball games; Laura was the team statistician. We also went dancing quite often especially at Northside next to Luigi's or Pal Joey's near Belden Village mall. We both enjoyed dancing and listening to most kinds of music. We also attended several movies among other activities. Marcy was not working but was volunteering at Akron General Hospital and EJ Thomas Hall. While volunteering at EJ Thomas she was able to see every show or performance. In addition, Marcy was taking art lessons and had painted quite a few pieces of art which I thought were very good. She told me her father was an accomplished artist as is her brother Michael. Marcy was also very interested in art history and had enough art history credits from Kent State and Akron U to have a degree in it, however she was shy two years credit in a foreign language to receive a degree. I also discovered Marcy was a very spiritual person, which was attractive to me. She attended St. Paul's church in North Canton and was involved with a women's charismatic bible study group at the parish. On more than a few occasions Marcy and I

had long serious discussions regarding spirituality and faith. These conversations led to become more serious about Marcy.

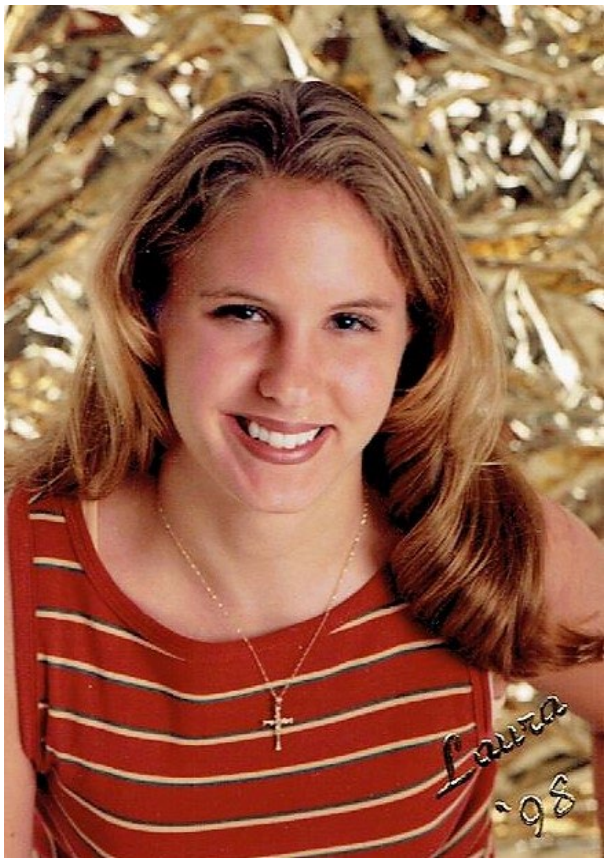
One interesting tid bit was on weekdays I usually called Marcy on the phone in the evening. When she answered the phone Marcy often sounded out of breath and I felt concerned, but discovered she was just exercising by working out to ‘oldies’ cassette tapes. Marcy was in very good physical condition.

In 1998 during Hoban’s spring break, Laura, her friend Theresa, and I went to visit Tom & Susan Hughes for a week in Jacksonville. They had invited me earlier to visit them. Tom & Susan lived just a short distance from the beach and Laura, Theresa and I went to the beach almost every day. It was an enjoyable week; Tom & Susan went out of their way to make us feel more than welcome. I was still grieving and really appreciated and enjoyed our stay with the Hughes.

In the spring Laura performed well on the track team, but not as well as in the previous year. Her senior year she didn’t qualify for the state championships, however she thoroughly enjoyed her last year in high school. In May Laura attended the prom with Jason. They looked like a cute couple. Later that month Laura graduated from Hoban.



Laura & Jason – Hoban Prom 1998



One of Laura's senior photos

By now my work at Goodyear was becoming more stressful. What made it so stressful was the Tire Division wanted to implement all their financial reporting on SAP. Then Corporate Goodyear decided to do the same thing for all the parent company's legal and internal financial reporting. So, I was the 'go to guy' for many Goodyear accounting, financial, and IT personnel to assist them in their implementations. I was being pulled in many different directions. I felt exasperated many times because the Corporate and Tire Division often did not want to listen to my advice although I had six years' experience implementing the financial aspect within SAP. Six months after I retired Goodyear became involved in a huge legal and PR problem because their published 2002 financial results in the annual report and 10K were not approved by our outside auditors, and as a result Goodyear's stock price dropped significantly. In 2003 several Goodyear executives called to ask me to come back to Goodyear and give a disposition to several Goodyear financial executives and attorneys along with several outside attorneys from New York. They wanted my opinion on why Goodyear reported incorrect financial information. I volunteered to come back and give my opinion. The inaccurate published financial results were due to errors in the corporate implantation of SAP.

Around this time I was again feeling very concerned about Christopher. This feeling intensified when he did not come home for several days. Then, I called him at work at O'Neil Lube. The owner told me Christopher had not been to work for two weeks and

now I felt very worried. A day or two later I finally got hold of him and discovered he was living in an old trailer at a junk yard in Coventry. This made me feel angry and very depressed but what could I do, he was twenty-two years old and did not want to listen to me, just do his own thing. I think a big part of his problem was still feeling depressed from the loss of his mother.

In September Laura began her college carrier at Walsh U. in North Canton. She originally wanted to live in the dorm on campus so when classes were about to begin we brought her luggage and things she wanted for living in the dorm. Many upper-class students met us in the parking lot and lugged all of Laura's luggage, boxes etc. to her room. When I left Laura seemed happy for she knew several Hoban students who also were living on campus. However, the next day Laura called me crying saying she wanted to come home, so I went to the administration offices and told them Laura no longer wanted to stay in the dorm. Several people working in the office tried very hard to convince me that staying on campus would be the best for Laura, but as I explained her situation of losing her mother 17 months earlier they finally relented. Laura and I packed all of her 'stuff' and took them home, only this time no students assisted us. Laura did well academically in her first year at Walsh.

During the spring through the autumn Marcy and I were now seeing each other or talking on the phone almost every day. In May Marcy's son John became engaged to marry Stephanie. They were living in Albuquerque, New Mexico and came to visit Marcy and introduce Stephanie to rest of their family. Their wedding was on New Year's Eve of 1998.

While Christopher was living in the junk yard he met Amy who was working as a cashier at a nearby gas station. They dated and Amy eventually became pregnant, and they decided to marry in April. They exchanged vows at a chapel in Tallmadge and we had their reception at the Italian Center on Tallmadge Ave. Jamie, Amy's daughter was five years old. Jacob was born on August 18. Christopher eventually obtained a job at Munroe Auto Repair and he and Amy lived in Kenmore for several years before moving to Cuyahoga Falls. Unfortunately, around 2018 Amy left Christopher and she continued to live in the Cuyahoga Falls area. Christopher eventually moved to Manchester not all that far from our former home on Valley Crest Dr. Not long after this he began dating Jackie and they live on Center Rd.



Marcy & Me – May 1998



Jacob and family – August 1999

In late October Marcy and I attended the wedding reception of Brian Killie, my former neighbor on Valley Crest Dr. and Christopher's friend. Later that evening I proposed to Marcy, without hesitation she said 'yes.' We had known each other for about ten months. We planned for an April wedding but later moved it to May to accommodate Christopher wedding.



October 1998

On May 22, 1999 Marcy and I exchanged wedding vows with Fr. Bob Kawa concelebrating the Mass along with Fr. John Warner of St. Paul's parish in North Canton. Christopher, Laura, John, and Jane served as attendants. Marcy and I honeymooned in Charleston, South Carolina. She wanted to see many of the old pre-Civil War mansions near Charleston Bay. Remember the Civil War was started by the South's attack on Ft. Sumter in Charleston Bay. We had an enjoyable honeymoon in Charleston and were not anxious to come home.



Marcy & my wedding – May 22, 1999

Some background information on Marcy. She was born November 1, 1945. Most of her first five years were spent in Chicago where her father was attending art school on the GI Bill. Marcy's parents' names were Carl (Carol) Musgrave and Doris Nupp. Marcy's parents met when they attended Barberton high school together and married in 1944 while Carl was stationed at Ft. Riley Kansas during WWII. Marcy is the oldest of six children, her siblings included Becky, Carla, Mary Jane, Mark, and Michael. Unfortunately Carla died at age 3, Mark died in 2013 with MS disease. When Marcy's family moved from Chicago they lived in Cuyahoga Falls eventually moving to Silver Lake as Marcy entered ninth grade. Carl worked and retired from Ford. Marcy attended Grant grade school in Cuyahoga Falls then St. Joseph grade school for grades 7 and 8. From St. Joseph Marcy attended St. Vincent high school through her junior year then transferred to Cuyahoga Falls High School for her senior year and graduated in 1963. One tidbit is Marcy's uncle, Bob Nupp, and I were good friends at St. V however he transferred to North High during his junior year. He is Marcy's mother's brother. Another interesting fact was that Bob was one of Laura's math teachers at Hoban.



Marcy as a child



Marcy high school graduation photo – 1963

Marcy met Richard during her freshman year at St. V when he was a senior. Richard attended and graduated from Akron U in June 1965 with an engineering degree along with an ROTC commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army. Marcy and Richard married in October 1965 then several months later they were stationed with the Army first in France then Germany in 1967. Richard was originally scheduled to go to Vietnam but through a paper work error he was fortunately assigned to France and Germany. Marcy told me during the day while Richard was working was a lonely time for her since they did not have a phone, radio, or TV. Their son John was born in France on January 4, 1967, Jane was born in Akron on May 30, 1970.

Upon their return to the United States Richard worked briefly at Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. then left and went to work for General Tire in Akron. While at General Tire he was transferred to Iran in 1975 where the family lived for almost a year. Upon their return Marcy & Richard lived in Cuyahoga Falls. In 1976 Richard joined Goodyear Tire and in 1977 was transferred to Goodyear's new tire plant in Lawton, Oklahoma. They lived in Lawton until Richard's transfer back to Akron in 1982 when they moved to Moongloo Dr. in Uniontown. As mentioned, in June 1989 Richard died suddenly of a heart attack, he was 46 years old and Marcy forty-three.

John and Jane both attended schools in Lawton then Lake High School. John attended and graduated from Ohio State University majoring in Dairy Science. After graduating he attended Oklahoma University to obtain a master's degree in animal nutrition but that didn't work out so he went to work for a year at a cattle feedstock ranch in Kansas. After one year he left to work on a dairy farm in southern Ohio then went back to work on a feedstock ranch in Kansas for seven years. While working as a cowboy in Kansas John had a friend whose father was a Chemistry professor at Camron University in Lawton Oklahoma. John became interested, attended Camron University, and earned a Chemistry degree. After earning his Chemistry degree he moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. John met Stephanie while at Cameron and they married on December 31, 1998. Shortly after their wedding John adopted Stephanie's five-year-old daughter, Beth. Soon they moved to Wamego, Kansas where John worked as a chemist. Unfortunately John and Stephanie separated and divorced in 2004. They had two children, John Paul, and Catherine. In November 2004 John obtained a position as a chemist with Goodyear in Akron.

Beth married in 2023 and is now living with her husband Al in Atlanta, both work in the movie and film industry. Cate was living near Destin, Florida and working in the school district's bus garage as a diesel mechanic until she quit in May, 2003. She was also 'living the life' surfing and playing beach volleyball. She was a beach lifeguard in Florida but in July 2024 quit and is now searching for something else in life.



John as a Cowboy – 1992

Jane attended Akron U and earned a degree in Education in 1992 and has been teaching at Green High School since graduating. Jane married Jason Pramik in December 2005 and their son David was born in March 2007. Jane has been living in Jackson Township since she left home after college, first in an apartment then purchased a house several years prior to her marriage to Jason. Jane, Jason, and David still live in the same house; however David attends North Canton Hoover High School.



Jane & Jason Wedding – December, 2005

A month after we married Marcy and I along with Laura and Brianne vacationed at St. Augustine's Ocean Gallery. Marcy enjoyed the Ocean Gallery, however, when she first went on a raft in the ocean she became ill with motion sickness and spent the rest of the day in bed. During our trip we again visited with Tom & Susan Hughes in Jacksonville, This was the last time I saw Susan before she died several years later. Tom has retired from his job and as a Deacon and has remarried living in Jacksonville.



Marcy & me in St. Augustine – 1999

When Marcy and I married I sold my house on Buhl Dr. and along with Laura moved into Marcy's house on 3810 Moongloo Dr. in Uniontown. While there I updated the basement making a rec room and added a storage shed for my lawn tractor. After living there for about a year Marcy and I determined it would be best if we bought our own house together. So, for the next nine or ten month's we began our search for another house and Marcy would often drive through Mayfair Lakes Estates searching for houses for sale. We came close to purchasing a house in Fairway Dr., but decided against it when we discovered many small cracks on the basement walls. In 2001 after looking at

many houses we choose to purchase a house at 1749 Sand Dr. in Green and moved in during the week of July 4th..

Ater we married I transferred parishes from St. Francis to Marcy's parish, St. Paul North Canton. This was a difficult transition for me since I felt so comfortable and an integral part of St. Francis parish. I really enjoyed being a member of St. Francis and probably knew more than half parishioners; it was like a second home to me. Once we moved to Sand Dr. we became members of Queen of Heaven parish, the parish Janet and I joined upon moving to Charleston Dr. in 1973.

Three months after Marcy and I married Laura was determined to find her biological parents. When she was 12 years old she discovered a letter her biological parents had written when they placed her for adoption, Laura wasn't to read this letter until she was 18 years old. They signed the letter but their names were blacked out. Now in mid-August Laura got that letter out and determined the first initial of the father's first and last name was R. Laura then began a search for her biological parents. Laura and her friend Amy snuck into St.VM, Walsh and Hoban high schools to browse through their 1978-1979 yearbooks looking for a name that had the initials R and R. In a St. VM yearbook they saw a graduate named Ronald Ross. So, with Amy, Laura looked through Akron's phone book and found the name Ronald Ross. Laura called the number and 'low and behold' it was her biological parents, Ron & Diana Ross. They were St VM classmates. They married about four years after Laura was born and were living in Cuyahoga Falls. A few days later Ron, Diana, and Laura met and Laura discovered she had four biological siblings. Several days later I received a phone call from Laura's biological grandmother, Margie Darlington. I felt shocked since Margie and I were classmates at St. Vincent high, class of 1959. Margie called to provide some background information on Ron and Diana. Margie told me she married at age 20 and had her first child, Diana, when she was twenty-one. Laura visited the Ross's multiple times and they even invited Laura to live with them. Laura did stay with them several nights but I think the emotional impact of me marrying again and the welcome her biological parents gave her took a toll on her.

In June 2000 Laura finished her second year at Walsh University then decided to transfer to Miami (O) University where her boyfriend Jason was transferring to from Purdue. I think Laura wanted to get away from the emotional environment she was experiencing. During Labor Day weekend shortly after entering Miami Laura decided to drive home but had a severe auto accident near intersection of I 75 and I 70 not far from Springfield, Ohio. A vehicle cut her off, Laura lost control of her car and it rolled over an embankment. Laura called me and we rushed to the hospital. Laura was OK but her spine and back were injured and she continues to feel pain from that injury.

Laura's attended Miami for three years and graduated with a nursing degree in 2003, then went to work as an RN at Akron City Hospital. While working at City Hospital she earned a BS in Nursing from Walsh University while living with Marcy and me. When Laura completed her BS degree, Laura, one of her biological sisters and another friend rented an apartment in Stow. Laura lived in the apartment for one year then bought a

house in Cuyahoga Falls. With a house Laura got a nice dog she named Sammy. Several years later she obtained a Nurse Practitioner degree from Kent State. Laura is now working as a Nurse Practitioner at Western Reserve Hospital in Cuyahoga Falls.

In fall of 2001 I was offered a ride in the Goodyear Blimp. This was a privilege since very few employees were able to ride in the blimp. Blimp rides were usually reserved for customers and dignitaries. It felt neat riding in the blimp, there was very little noise and it was a magnificent view of the area as we flew relatively close to the ground.



After my ride on the Goodyear Blimp – September 2001

In late June 2002 Marcy and I joined Al & Sue Kramer on a Caribbean cruise visiting Grand Cayman, Cozumel, Mexico, and New Orleans. In New Orleans It was fascinating to see all the above ground graves. The water table is very low in New Orleans so people are not able to be buried in the ground. The whole cruise was very relaxing and we all enjoyed the warm, clear waters of the Caribbean Sea.

The evening we returned from our cruise there was a phone message from Tom. He called to tell me our mother had been in a serious auto accident that afternoon on SR 585 heading into Wooster. She was driving to attend a baby shower for my Aunt Helen's daughter Cheryl at my Aunt Helen's house in Copley. My mother got lost and ended up driving on the wrong side of the road heading to Wooster. She was rushed to City Hospital and spent several weeks in the hospital then was transferred to Wyant Woods's nursing home near Summit Mall. My mother hated it there but fortunately a few

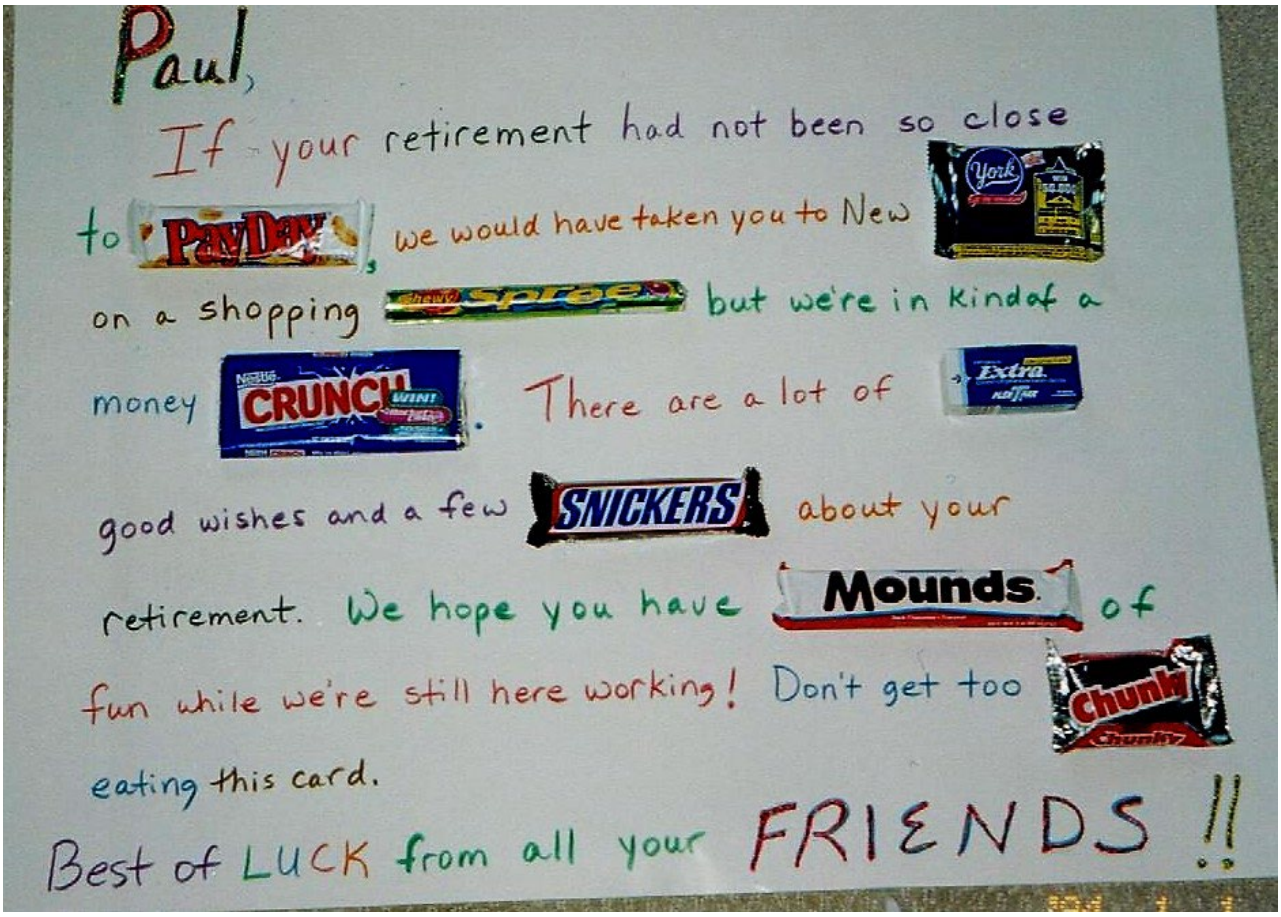
weeks later she was transferred to Edwin Shaw Rehabilitation facility in Springfield Township for physical therapy.

At this time I realized I needed to find an Assisted Living/Nursing Home for my mother for it was apparent she was not ready to come home for a while. I choose St. Edwards Home near Summit Mall. It had a good reputation and was Catholic. After several weeks at Edwin Shaw my mother was transferred to St. Edwards in the Assisted Living section. She had a small but nice living area but did not like it there however after a while she came to accept it. My mom wanted to be in her own home and bed.

On the morning of September 22, I received a phone call from St. Edwards informing me my mother fell and was taken to City Hospital. Marcy and I rushed to the hospital and discovered my mother had broken her hip and would be hospitalized for a while. My mother spent several weeks in the hospital, several times being rushed to ICU with heart issues. She eventually returned to St. Edwards only now in the nursing home section of the facility. Over the following weeks her health weakened and told us more than a few times she wished God would take her. On December 17, the nun who was the head of nursing told my mother she was going to die that evening. It really surprised me that the nun would tell my mother this, then very early the next morning, December 18, I received a call informing me my mother had died during the night. She is buried along with my dad and Aunt Theresa in Section 17 of Holy Cross cemetery. This Section is where many of my other relatives are buried. My mother suffered a lot in the last five months of her life. It wasn't long after my mother's death that I really began to miss her. Events would come up and I reached for the phone to call her to tell her about it, then suddenly realized she was gone from us.

Chapter 9 – Retirement and Beyond

In January 2002 I was transferred from corporate headquarters to the Chemical Division's headquarters on Archwood Ave. in Akron. During that summer Goodyear Chemical Division was planning another major upgrade of its SAP system. Upgrades in the past were usually stressful and not wanting to go through the stress of another upgrade I decided to retire. In early September after 33 years working at Goodyear I retired. Goodyear put on a nice retirement event for me at Corporate Headquarters. Many people came to wish me good luck and offer congratulations' on my retirement. It was nice to see so many people I had known and worked with over my 33 years at Goodyear. I was presented with a large, framed photo of the Goodyear blimp. As people congratulated me many wrote notes with 'good wishes or 'whatever.' Another thing, they presented me with a large display of candy bars since many knew I often ate pieces of candy off the desk of a Shelia that she often offered to everyone every day.



Prior to my retirement Marcy and I planned to take a long sightseeing trip in the western US later in September. On September 22, 2002, the day we had planned to depart was when I received the phone call that my mother had fallen and broken her hip. We immediately canceled our trip. It was not until Tom and I sold our mother's house and finalized her legal and financial affairs in 2003 that Marcy and I were able to leave for our trip out west. In late August 2003 we flew to Las Vegas, rented a car, and traveled

throughout southern Utah, Arizona, and California. We traveled for three weeks and both of us have said this was our favorite trip of the many we have taken over the years. Our favorite sites we visited included the following National Parks, Zion, Bryce, Grand Canyon, and Sequa along with Monument Valley on the Navajo reservation.



In Monument Valley

In 2004 we took a driving vacation throughout the upper Midwest, the Dakotas, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Colorado then back home via the plains states. On our drive back home we visited Marcy's son John in Kansas. He was now renting a smaller house than he had since his divorce. Two months later John received a job offer from Goodyear and moved back to Akron.

Over the years Marcy and I traveled quite a bit. Beginning in 2006 we did the first of three tours of Europe, the first being a 35-day tour of Europe. The following year we made an 18-day tour of Eastern Europe and two years later a tour of Great Britain and Ireland. I really enjoyed these trips; they gave me a greater perspective of Europe and its history. We experienced many places from the luxurious life in the south of France to the horrors of Auschwitz. I think in total we visited about 25 countries. During Marcy and Richard first few years of marriage Richard was stationed with Army in France and Germany and they traveled throughout Europe several times. Now with our trips Marcy has increased the number of times she has been to Europe to eight. Marcy really enjoyed traveling through Europe.

Beginning in 2011 we began spending some time during January or February in Naples, Florida. For a few years we spent a month there, then by 2014 almost all condos were only available with three-month or longer leases. So we would stay in a hotel for just a week. Marcy also really enjoyed Naples for there are multiple women's clothing stores in which to shop and browse, The beach in Naples is very nice but parking near the

beach is limited. In the winter the weather is warm and sunny and a great respite from our cold winters. On the down side Naples can be very expensive.



Marcy and me in London - Buckingham Palace 2006



Marcy on the Naples pier – 2012

In May 2002 at the urging of Marcy we attended a St. Vincent de Paul meeting at Queen of Heaven parish. At the time I wasn't that interested in St. Vincent de Paul, but God has His ways of directing me. Wouldn't you know it I became Treasurer at that first SVDP meeting? The Society St. Vincent de Paul Society is a worldwide Catholic organization whose mission is to reach out to the poor and needy in our respective geographic areas. Gradually I became heavily involved with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul both within Queen of Heaven parish, the Akron District Council, and the Fr. Hilkert Ozanam Center. In September 2004 I was elected president of the SVDP conference at Queen of Heaven. In 2006 I was chosen to be the Treasurer and Board member of Akron District Council, which encompasses four counties within the Cleveland diocese. I held this position for six years. When the Ozanam Center opened in 2007 I was selected as treasurer and a board member. In January 2023 I retired as Treasurer of the Ozanam Center but have continued serving as President and Treasurer of Queen of Heaven SVDP. In January 2024 I retired as president. Since my ME days I have discerned I am called to serve God in some capacity.

Being a SVDP member or Vincentian mostly involves visiting needy people in their homes, interviewing them, and determining how we can best assist them. Usually their needs are for rent, utilities, or food but also other needs. Marcy has assisted me on many home visits to needy families. These visits made me much more aware of the difficulties many people and families have in their lives. The Ozanam Center is a SVDP Special Work located on the grounds of Visitation of Mary parish, formally Annunciation. Opened in 2007 it distributes groceries, clothing and at one time furniture to the needy of the greater Akron area. 12 to 15 parishes are involved in volunteering on Saturdays.

In addition to becoming a member of St. Vincent de Paul Society I became a Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion. Not only did I serve as Eucharistic Minister during Mass I also took the Eucharistic to people who were homebound and in nursing homes.

In 2006 I saw an ad for volunteers needed to help prepare income tax returns for low to middle income earners. I responded and signed up to volunteer, but first I needed to take a tax course at Akron U law school in January. During the classes I met Bobbi Ravingani, a member of Queen of Heaven parish, and tax prep volunteer. Bobbi encouraged me to volunteer with her at the Green location in the Green library where Bobbi and I soon worked closely together for six years. After three years I was asked to become site leader at the Green location supervising about six other volunteers. I really enjoyed preparing and filing tax returns for others; I was able to meet many people and most of the people were very grateful they could have their tax returns prepared at no cost.

I continued doing all these volunteer activities until I began to feel stressed. As I indicated I was president and treasurer of Queen of Heaven SVDP, board member and Treasurer of SVDP Akron District Council, Treasurer, board member and site leader for the Fr. Hilkert Ozanam Center, and volunteer to prepare tax returns during tax season. Eventually I met with Dr. Al Feltrup and he suggested I needed to cut back on my volunteer activities, so after six years I retired from volunteering to prepare tax returns.

In 2006 Marcy and I made a Marriage Encounter Weekend in Columbus. I didn't want to attend a Weekend locally since I still knew many of the presenting couples, I knew this would be a big distraction for both Marcy and especially me. Several months after our Weekend we joined a local ME dialog support group in our area. Terry & Sue Smith were the only members of this support group I knew, we continued with this support group until mid - 2021.

Shortly after Christopher married he obtained a job at Munroe Auto Service on Romig Rd. then moved to his current employer S&S Tire in Barberton. While living in Cuyahoga Falls Jacob played Youth football then for Cuyahoga Falls high school team. Christopher now lives in New Franklin (Manchester) not that far from our old home on Valley Crest Dr.

After Jacob graduated from Cuyahoga Falls high school he was living with a friend in Cuyahoga Falls then began working as a water systems specialist. In May 2022 he left that position and began working as a technician with Silco, the fire protection systems company and now as a foreman with S.A. Comunal Inc. Jacob has dated a girl named Mellissa since high school and they married September 2, 2023. Melissa is a nurse at Children's Hospital in Akron. Jacob and Melissa live in a condo in Stow. Jamie is now living in Charleston, South Carolina and working as a manager of a gas station/convenience store. She is hoping to move back to the Akron area.

While at Miami U Laura dated several guys other than Jason. In 2007 she met and dated Mike Griffith for about a year. I liked Mike a lot and in 2008 Mike called and asked if he could talk to me privately. He visited me at home, knelt down on one knee, and asked for Laura's hand in marriage. Of course I said 'yes.' Laura wanted to have their wedding at St. Francis church. Fr. Bline was the new pastor and when Laura and I requested her wedding take place at St. Francis Fr. Blynn consulted Fr. Schlechter. He had recently retired and living at St. Francis rectory but in poor health. Of course he knew me very well along with Laura. Fr. Schlechter gave Fr. Bline his approval and Laura and Mike's wedding was on June 20, 2009 with the reception at Occasions Party Center, the site of the former Manchester Swim Club.

Mike grew up in Dover, Ohio and has a brother and three sisters. Mike graduated with computer science engineering degree from Case/Western Reserve University. Mike is highly skilled in his field of work and is in great demand for his knowledge. Laura and Mike live in Tallmadge on almost three acres of land with their children Joey, Bryce, and Julia. All three are very athletic, the boys enjoy playing baseball, football, and basketball. Julia, inspired by Laura, is involved with gymnastics, and does very well. Mike played football at Dover High School and is very involved with boys and their respective teams. Being athletic is in all Mike and Laura's children's genes.



Laura and Mike

Over the period of several years I had several health scares. First in July of 2011 one morning I went the ‘Y’ to work out and during my workout I began to feel weak. I took a shower drove home and fell asleep for three hours. Upon waking I still felt exhausted so I visited my doctor and discovered my pulse rate was 35, way below normal. I was referred to Dr. Jason Smith at City Hospital and the following December I had a pacemaker implant and my energy level was back to normal.

During April 2012 I was sitting on our couch around 5:30 when Marcy called me for dinner. I got up from the couch and suddenly my eyesight became completely full of color like a scattered maze. I couldn’t see anything and I felt very scared, I thought I was having a stroke. Marcy immediately called 911 and I was taken to City Hospital again. All my symptoms indicated a stroke and was rushed to have a CAT scan to check my brain. No MRI since I have a pacemaker. During the next 24 hours I had three CAT scans trying to verify a stroke. Finally on my third day in the hospital it was verified I did not have a stroke but was urged to see an ophthalmologist. Upon a lengthy visit to an ophthalmologist it was determined I had double vision. I asked the doctor how long this would last and he couldn’t give a direct answer. He told me my double vision could last for several weeks, several months, several years or for the rest of my life. He told

me my double vision could have been caused by dehydration and that I should drink at least a half-gallon of water every day.

After a week or two I could tell I still had double vision if I woke up in the morning and saw two photos on the wall instead of one. Four months later I finally saw only one photo and my double vision was cleared up. During that four-month period I was unable to play ball, drive, or even drive my lawn tractor and to avoid physical activity. However I was able to watch TV and read. Every afternoon I went for a 45-minute walk in the neighborhood. My activities were very limited. I am very thankful my eyes healed and realized once again that life is very fragile.

The following winter I had symptoms of a heart attack and was rushed again to City Hospital. I felt scared and that night while lying in my dark hospital room when all of a sudden my Guardian Angel visually appeared to me and said 'Paul, everything is going to be OK.' This vision only lasted a few seconds. This definitely startled me and the next day I was told my health was fine, my supposed heart attack was probably just muscle tension which had built up over some time. A visit from my Garden Angel comforted me and I felt blessed and comforted to have such a rare experience.

In 2014 Marcy's father died of cancer, He was in a nursing home and suffered for several years before his death. He was highly regarded in the water color art field. In 2018 Marcy's mother fell and broke her hip and all of her family were very concerned. She was in City Hospital's Rehabilitation facility for several months and recovered nicely considering she was 93 years old. She also had a more minor hip fracture in 2022 and again recovered well for being 97 years old. To this day Marcy calls her mother every day at 10 AM and they talk for about 30-45 minutes.

After I graduated from St. V I didn't attend my 10th nor my 30th high school reunions. As I mentioned earlier I attended my 20th reunion but it wasn't that appealing to me. However my class had an impromptu 40th reunion which I attended with Marcy and enjoyed it. Then I attended our classes' 50th reunion that included a Friday evening gathering before the St. V football game at Green St. stadium and on Saturday the major event at Fairlawn County club, many classmates returned for this reunion. I also enjoyed this reunion for it seemed now that we were all older all those high school clicks disappeared.

Four years later Margie Darlington and I organized a more casual 55th reunion. It was held at Burnside Restaurant in Cuyahoga Falls and was well attended. In fact many came to this more casual reunion who hadn't attended any other reunion. Five years later I was also on the planning committee for our 60th class reunion. In the years since my 50th high school reunion a group of about 15 of us have a bi monthly breakfast or lunch gathering. Many of us said we should continue to meet every few months since any of us weren't getting any younger.

In June 2016 there was a party at the Polish American Club to celebrate Ray Gmerek's 75th and Lenny Gmerek's 80th birthdays. The party was a 1950's theme when the

following photo with Tom was taken, I was wearing my Akron U letter sweater. The other photo was taken at Christmas, the sweater was a gift from Jane and Jason.





During the winter of 2003 Marcy and I were out to dinner with friends, Jim & Rosalie Swickert. Jim told me about the Akron Silver League senior softball league. I was interested and the following year I signed up to play, however I was only able to play about 6 or 7 games, I kept pulling my hamstring muscles. I was thinking I was 25 years old and did not need to warm up or stretch that much before playing. I learned my lesson and began to stretch before practices and games. Despite numerous minor injuries I played for the next 16 years. Through the years I played every position except pitcher. One year I took over as team manager after our manager came down a with an eye problem. I would have liked to have managed in the following years but there were not any openings for a manager.

I thoroughly enjoyed playing ball again and going out after games to have a few beers with other players. We would joke around, discuss baseball and other sports a lot, this is something I really missed once I retired. Until 2019 all the games were played at the Barberton complex and near the field were many restaurants and bars where we could have a bite to eat and have our few beers. We frequented the Moose Club, Angie's Pizza, Hungarian Club or Hunky Club among others. In 2020 COVID cancelled the season and after trying to play in 2021 I retired due to back and knee injuries. What was interesting about playing in the Silver League was playing with and against several players I played against in the 1960's, including my friend Bud, from the 1960/1961 Akron U teams. Now that I am no longer playing I miss the comradery with the other

guys, most of whom were athletes in their younger days and loved sports so we had a lot in common.



Siver Leaue – 2017

In October 2016 we received an invitation to Tom & Gerri's 50th wedding anniversary party at the Jednota Club. We arrived at the Jednota Club around 7 PM and as we entered the reception everyone stood up and yelled out 'Happy Birthday'. I was completely surprised. The hall was just about full of about a one hundred people attending who came to help celebrate my 75th birthday. Laura planned the surprise party along with Marcy, Gerri, and Sue Kramer. There was even a DJ along with a buffet and bar. Attending were friends I hadn't seen in many years. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and was just about my best birthday party. Laura created a photo collage of me over the years and displayed it at the party. It is kind of neat.

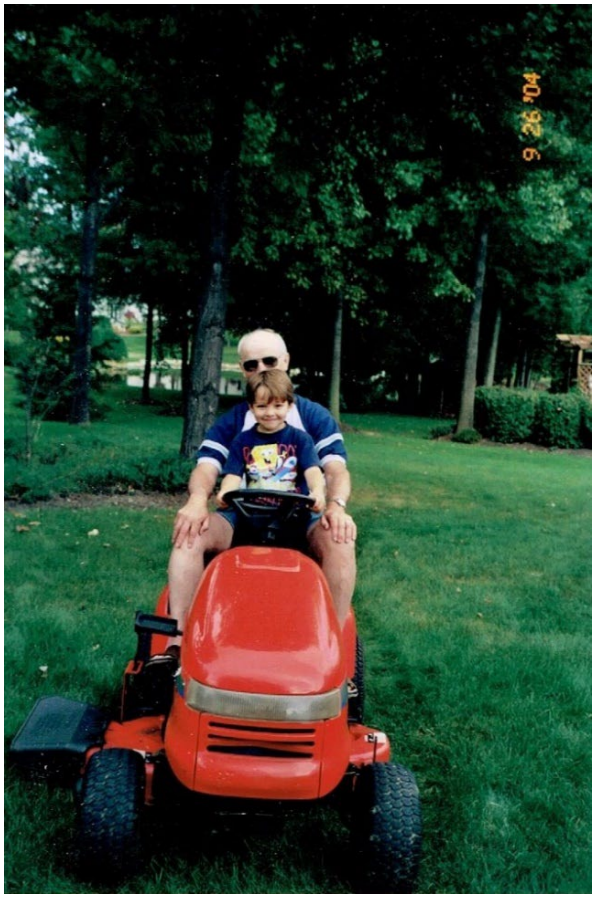


My 75th birthday photo collage

Below are photos of my grandchildren through various years.



Jamie on her 25th birthday



Jacob and me on lawn tractor – 2003



Jacob & Melissa wedding day – September 2023



Joey & Me – June, 2013



Bryce & me – March 2023



Julia and me – August 2021

Looking back on my life I feel very thankful for everything God has given me. I have had my difficulties like everyone else, but for the most part my life has been very good. Over the years I have been very blessed with loving parents, Janet, Christopher, Laura, and Marcy and many friends. I have had good jobs and many interesting and challenging experiences. God has and continues to have a plan for my life, God and the Holy Spirit have been with me all through my life, both the ups and downs, and for all this I feel very blessed.



Christopher Eve – 2019
Julia, Bryce, Joey, Jamie, Laura, Jacob, Marcy, Christopher, me, Mike