

Some Autobiographical Notes

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Chapter 1

Paternal Ancestors

Family myth says that great grandfather Hickey and his brother had emigrated with their family from Ireland to Boston. The story is that they got crosswise with their family and left home ending up on the Nebraska Plains and farmed. Lived in sod houses. Were known for being tough customers.

1.1 Paternal Grandfather: Michael Andrew

Grandpa Hickey, Michael was my name sake as was my mother's father, Albert. I was the first born on both sides of the aisle. Rock Island railroad engineer, Died with Alzheimer's in a State Mental Institution at Hastings Nebr. Also probably had colon cancer. He was not home much as he was driving a locomotive for the Rock Island RR. We would go to the round house in Fairbury to watch him come in. He and my Dad and I played pitch. He was not terribly conversant even when playing cards. He was most likely socially limited as was my Dad. Dad's younger brother, Uncle Ed, on the other hand was a very outgoing guy and knew everyone. I enjoyed spending weekends with him when I was stationed back East.

Grandmother Mary Freitag (Friday) a pleasant, round homemaker, excellent cook. Quiet, subservient to Grandpa who was somewhat of a tyrant but not physically abusive.

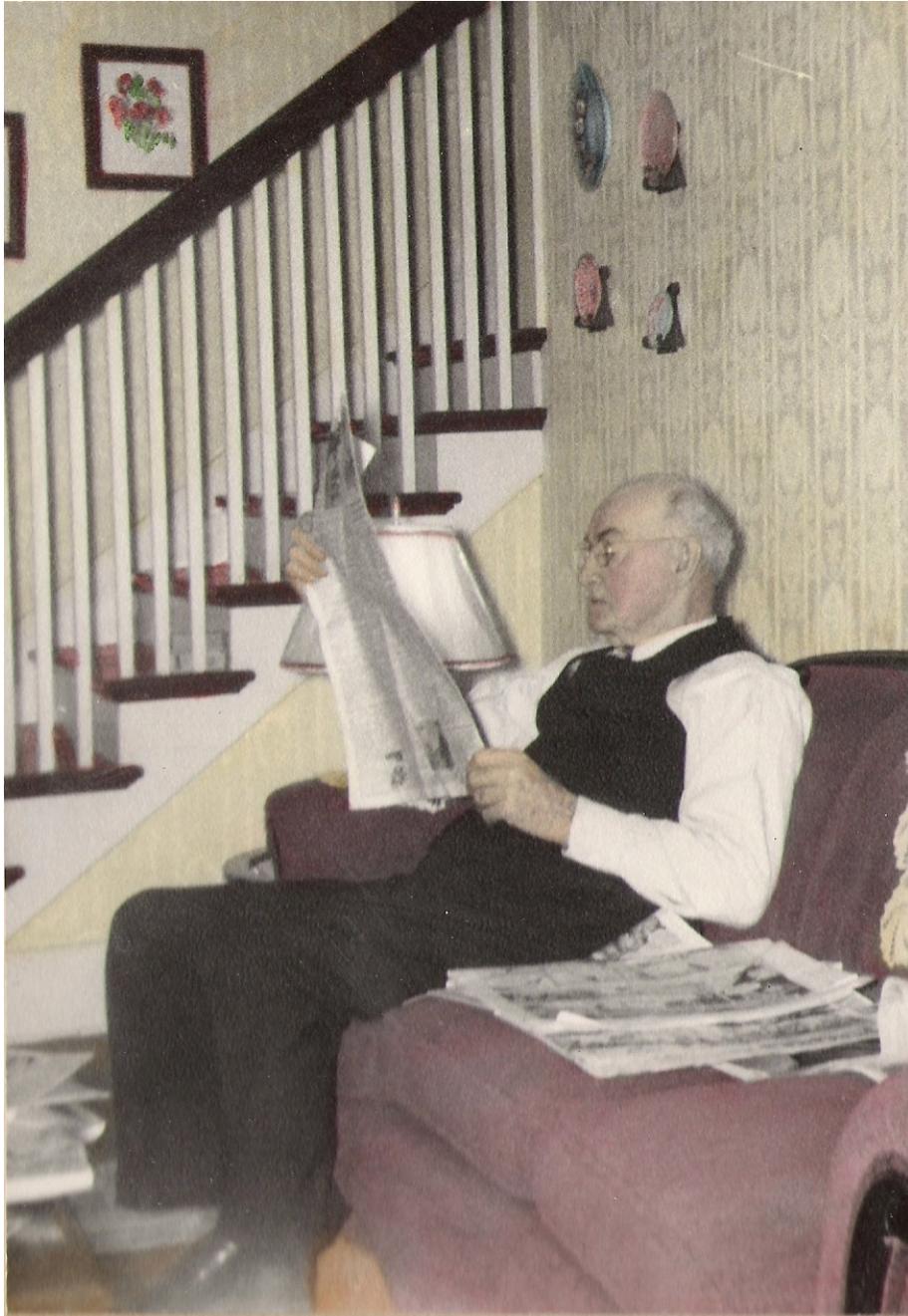


Figure 1.1: Michael Andrew Hickey

Chapter 2

Maternal Ancestors

2.1 Grandmother, Mary Hergott

She came from large family in Canada, Saskatchewan, several of whom moved to Nebraska to farm. Grandpa Albert, was killed when kicked by a mule. Grandma raised the kids on a farm outside of Gilead Nebr. Eventually moved to town, Gilead, a tiny town with less than 100 inhabitants. Kids were Rose, still living in her 90's, Dutch, Clem, Veronica, John, Chuck, and Agnes also known as "Tootie", all deceased except Rose and Veronica.



Figure 2.1: Mike and Larry with Grandma Mary Hergott in Pawnee City



Figure 2.2: Some of the Hergott siblings and their sweethearts



Figure 2.3: Mr. and Ms. A Rauner, and some of their children: Joe, Albert, Dennis, Leo, Ben (from Right to Left).

Chapter 3

Birth Family

3.1 Father: John J

My father, John J. Hickey, was the oldest of four. His three sibs, Lucille, Ed, Helen, are all deceased. Lucille had one daughter Karen and Helen a daughter Barbara, each had several kids, they are still living and contact me from time to time.

John went to a small college in Kansas, majored in Spanish but never became literate in it.* story later. Athletic, football and baseball. Claims to have briefly played for St. Louis ? Had a tendency to embellish stories especially pertaining to himself. The family mostly ignored the stories.

Somewhat hypochondriacal. Symptoms usually ignored as well but he spent a lot of time with vague physical complaints. He did have a congenital back anomaly that eventually required surgery and several weeks in a full body cast. This was a family malady as his brother Ed and Uncle Larry also had back surgery and Tim, Pat, Dan and myself had back structural abnormalities as well.

I had a disc removed several years ago as an outpatient at UNM. I went out to dinner the same night and liked to brag about it to my friends who were contemplating back surgery. None of them had such miraculous results however. Dad would have “chest pain” routinely at Txgiving about the time the food was being served. After several Dr’s. home visits, these too were ignored. Had a tendency to drink to excess especially when anxious or when barbequing. Cook outs usually ended up with grandpa out on his back in the back yard and the kids, piling beer can empties on his chest. The steaks were good though, thanks to Grandma; silent supervision.

John would become quite angry and was verbally and physically abusive to mother and sons. As we boys got older, we would be able to run away and eventually struck back. After one incident in which Dad’s nose was injured, the physical abuse stopped. Home life was less than pleasant, lots of fault finding and blaming along with guilt. Seldom took vacation as these usually ended in



Figure 3.1: Father, John J. Hickey

some sort of unpleasantness so were avoided. In addition, there was little money for vacationing.

I was in Naval Reserve during Korean War. Was not doing well academically but was a social butterfly in college at Univ Nebr and volunteered for active duty after receiving a recommendation from the University to leave academia and grow up. Good idea actually. Served two years.

3.2 Mother - Agnes

My mother, Agnes Eleanor, was the next to youngest of her seven sibs. They still lived on the farm when mom and dad married. Larry was born on the farm. We used to tease him that he was born in a barn.

3.3 Brother- Larry

Lawrence Lee Hickey, about two years younger than me. We were close as kids but grew apart in early adulthood. He had a hard time escaping from mom who was a world class enabler and quite controlling. Whenever my parents moved, Larry seemed to find a way to move to the same area. He had a serious alcohol problem and although he was an intelligent and well trained accountant, couldn't keep a job and usually ended up living with or near Mom and Dad. He was married twice. His first family was close to my kids, not so close with the second set. His final years were those of a sick, invalided man with multiple medical problems. He died at home; pulmonary disease was one of his most serious maladies, but he also had colon cancer with mets. I flew to Oregon to visit him during his last year of life. We has not had much contact for years so that was a sort of family healing, at least I hope so.



Figure 3.2: John, Agnes and Mike in 1932

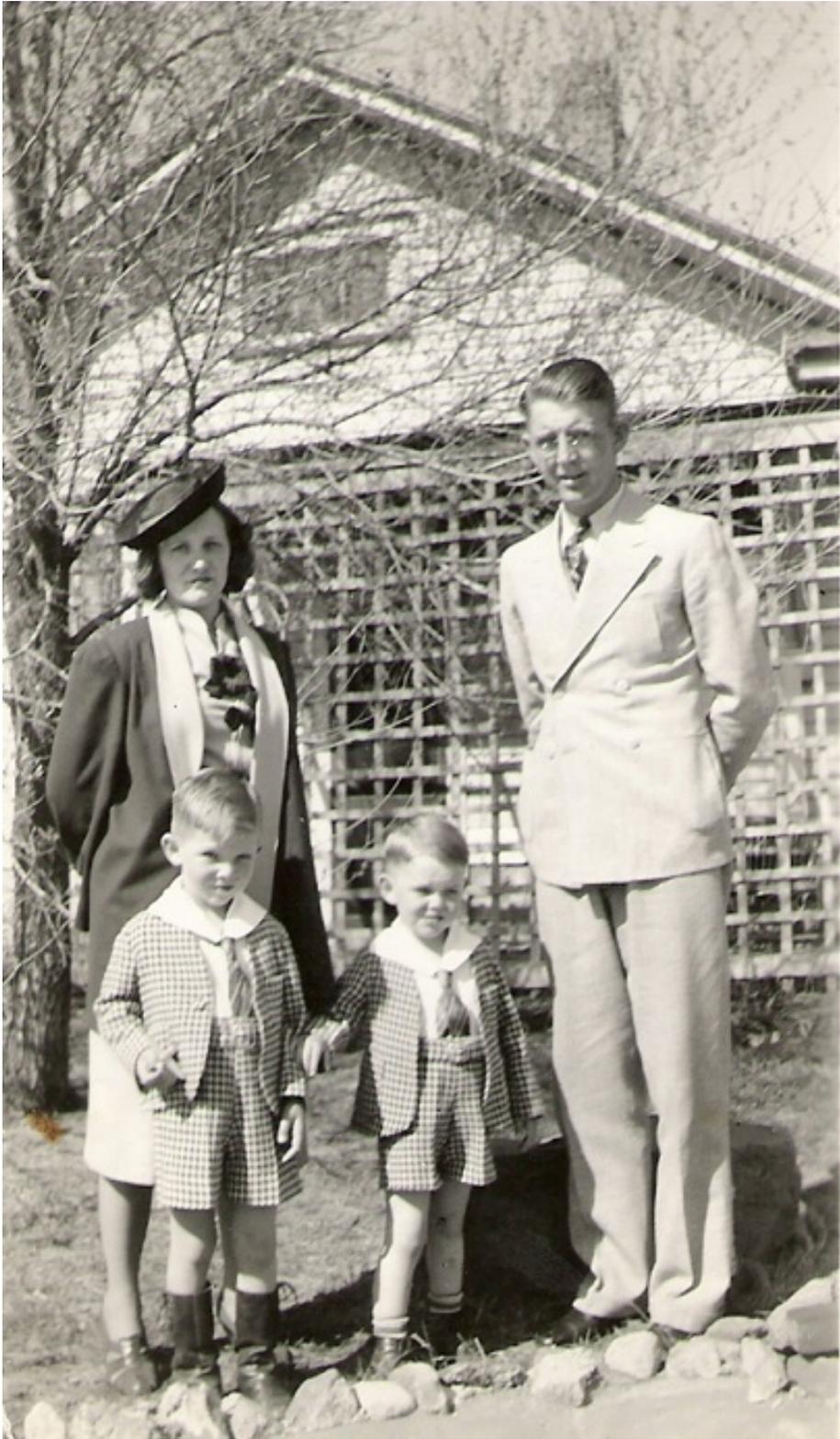


Figure 3.3: Mike, Larry and Parents in 1936?



Figure 3.4: Mike and Larry on wheels

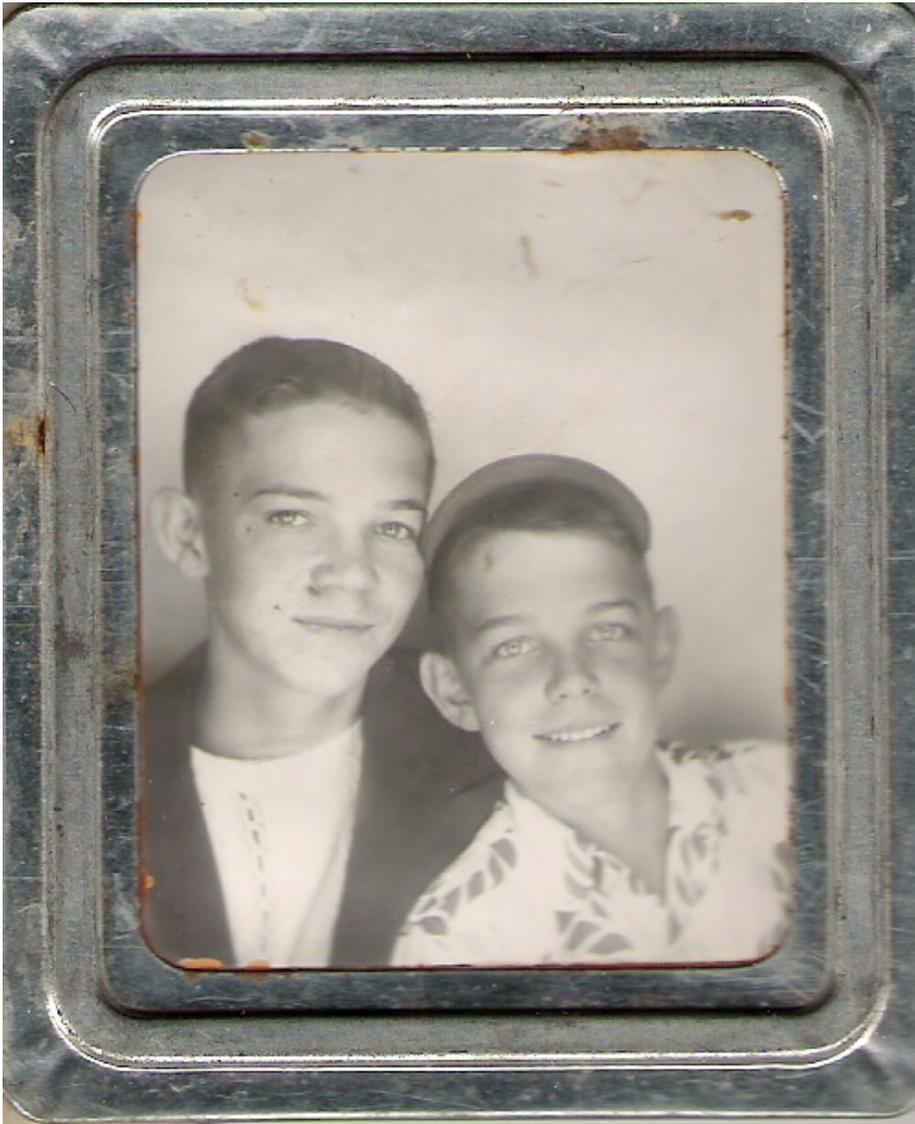


Figure 3.5: Mike and Larry as kids

Chapter 4

Early Days

Some of my fondest memories were living in Gilead. When I was around 4 and Larry was two, there is a story that we were playing “grocery store” and made sausages by rolling our turds in dirt and wrapping them in butcher paper. When older 8-10, we spent a lot of time roaming the country, fishing in the little Blue river, caught catfish and bullheads. Playing with lots of neighbor kids; had a large garden, at least an acre to tend, as well a raising chickens for meat, 400 chickens. Picked tomatoes every morning so grandma could can them. Before freezers, had to butcher and can them. Learned to dislike chicken. Got to help a cousin drive his tractor. Had a big barn we used to play in. Smoked cornsilk cigarettes. Dried the silks on the roof of the barn and then rolled them in cigarette papers, filled up old Lucky Strike packages and sold them to the other kids.

Played the harmonica in the local bar for nickels and bought candy bars with it. Went to community dances in the town hall where kids and adults danced to the same music. The village had an outdoor theater. Rough planks set on concrete blocks in a field next to a grocery store that had stone walls. A screen was painted on the wall. It was somewhat lumpy but the show was free.

Every Saturday night the kids went to the movies while the women shopped at the grocery store and the men drank beer and played pitch at one of the two beer joints.

One Sunday after having dinner at grandmas, I went home, a couple of blocks away and was playing with a printing press. A sudden storm came up. I was so engrossed in the printing that I didn't hear my Dad trying to get into the house. The wind was so strong, it created a vacuum around the house. He finally got in. We were in a tornado. It sounded like a locomotive was roaring thru the house. It didn't last long and when it was over, we went out to survey the damage. It had picked up the outhouse and threw it down the road a ways. I remember my mother's famous comment, “Where's a lady supposed to pee?”

I was born in Topeka, Kansas where Dad was coach at Topeka Catholic High school. He held many jobs during the depression, eventually was hired by the CCC's, (Civilian Conservation Corps). This was a government project



Figure 4.1: Mike and Larry and Christmas



Figure 4.2: Mike and Larry with Grandma Mary Hergott and Cousin Eleanor in Gilead

to provide jobs for unemployed young men of whom there were thousands. They lived in army barracks type setting in the countryside outside of small towns across the US. They worked at many Public building projects, building libraries, roads, dams, improving drainage in farmer's fields, etc. Dad was athletic director for the camps. We moved around frequently, setting up athletic programs, then moving on. I counted all the times we moved for one town or house to the next. Until I graduated from high school we had moved over 50 times, many towns in Nebraska and Iowa and even Idaho and Utah, until we sort of settled down in Hartley, Iowa where Dad taught school and coached until he was drafted into the Navy.

Since he was older and had athletic experience, he was a coach at the Naval Training station in Farragut, Idaho. While he was in the service, we moved to Fairbury, Nebraska where his folks lived. We lived in an apartment above the Majestic Theater. I was 13 and got my first job washing dishes at the Green Lantern Cafe, next to the theater, I went to St, Michael's parochial school. Had a dog named Rex. Eventually moved to Gilead, Nebr. until Dad returned from the war.

4.1 Broken Bow

Then lived in Western Nebraska, Broken Bow, Blue Hill.

Some recollections from Broken Bow. Arrived at night and couldn't see much but in the AM was awakened by a noise I had never heard. Looked outside and there was a cattle drive going right down our street. Real cowboys



Figure 4.3: Mike and Larry with Grandma Mary Hergott and four cousins



Figure 4.4: Mike, Larry, and cousin Eleanor in Gilead



Figure 4.5: Mike's 3rd grade class (he is at far right with the big ears!)



Figure 4.6: Mike and Larry in Broken Bow

driving hundreds of cattle to the railyards. I was impressed. This was about 1941. Another Broken Bow Memory was wakening on Sunday December 7, 1941 to hear President Roosevelt on the radio declaring war on Japan. "A day of infamy" he called it. Dad taught school for a while, then took a job in Lincoln, Nebraska with the VA. I went to Jr. High and High School in Lincoln, we lived at 1010E Street. Walked everywhere. The entire family would walk about 6 blocks to the grocers and carry bags of food home. It was actually much healthier to walk everywhere.

Chapter 5

Navy Days

I bought a car, 1934 Ford four door, the first car in our family. I learned to drive on the way home from the lot. Paid 50 dollars for it. Eventually got a driver's license. Was a terrible driver. Lots of fender benders. Traded it in on a 37 Chevy two seater coupe belonged to my Jr. High teacher.

Eventually got such poor grades due to an overactive social life and an extremely immature attitude, girls, and beer, that I joined the Navy and was sent to Great Lakes Naval training station. Actually went active duty as I was already in the Naval Reserve. The base was right on the edge of Lake Michigan. In the Fall and Winter it was very cold, damp and windy. Had some good times on Liberty in Chicago and Milwaukee. Stayed at Great Lakes for Dental Technician school. Was then stationed at the Brooklyn Naval Yards Receiving station. Worked in a large Dental Clinic. I was assigned to an endodontist named Hugh McDowell. A very pleasant man who taught me how to do root canals while he read novels. Had a fabulous time as a service man in NYC during the Korean War which was a popular war. People were very generous with service men. Free food and drinks, baseball, football, symphony, Broadway plays. I saw the original South Pacific with Mary Martin, Peter Pan, Guys and Dolls, My Three Angels, etc. After the play we would go for dinner in the theater district and eat in the same places the actors would eat. We spent most of our free time in Manhattan at various clubs listening to jazz. Stan Kenton, Count Basie, Ramsey Lewis, Dave Brubeck, Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, at Birdland, the Band Box, and at the Paramount Theater in Brooklyn. Free baseball tickets, saw Satchel Paige, Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, etc. Went to the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, stood next to President Truman in front of Dave Garroway's Today show window. While stationed in NY, I would catch flights from the Naval Air Station and go to Washington DC to visit my relatives.

Uncle Ed (Whom Eddie Hickey, Larry's son, was named after and Eddie Benavides was named after Eddie H.), Aunt Lucille, Uncle Orville and cousin Karen Coulter lived in Alexandria VA. I spent some fun times with them as well.



Figure 5.1: Mike in the Navy



Figure 5.2: Mike, Larry, and their Dad in the Navy



Figure 5.3: Uncle Ed Hickey

Took Karen to her High school prom and drove around Dist of Columbia all night. A cousin , Mike Moles, from Nebraska, was stationed in the Army near there and he went with us taking Karen's girlfriend. The following day, we went to the beac and Mike and I fell asleep on a blanket while the girls went to the casino. After several hours they awakened us and we wer horribly sunburned. That night we were scheduled to take a tourist boat trip on the Potomac but instead laid in Aunt Lucilles couh while she put vinegar poultices on our burned backs. Not very funny at the time but we were the butt of jokes for years afterward.

Chapter 6

Settling Down in Omaha

After my enlistment was up, I returned to Nebraska. It took several weeks to get acclimated to the slow pace. Lived with my parents for a while, started back to school at Univ. Nebraska. Met Kathy McMullen and after a very brief courtship, married and moved into an apt. I worked at many jobs during this period. Changed jobs to fit my school schedule. Dept. store shipping clerk, repairman at an army surplus store, bread slicer in a bakery, bread delivery truck driver on week ends, bar tender.

I was somewhat surprised to make the dean's list after such abysmal earlier academic work. Enjoyed pre-med. I took French and German to accumulate some high grades to make up for all the poor grades I had received earlier.

We began having children. Tim was born while I was still in undergraduate school. He delivered breech and it was a very long hard labor. I was accepted to Dental School but my friend Cliff Hamilton let me know that there was an opening in Medical school, I applied, was accepted, and then took the entrance exam. School didn't start for several months so we moved out to Utah where my parents were living and working on a bacteriological proving ground. I worked as a groundskeeper trying to keep grass alive in the desert. Drove an old Henry J out there and back. It was a hatchback, four cylinder Willys engine that burned 50 weight truck oil. However, it got us there and back. Started Medical School. Lived in public housing in south Omaha. At first couldn't get in to housing because my income was too low to fit on the siding scale Got a job as an OR tech at the Children's Hospital to supplement my GI bill income and became eligible for an apartment.

The housing project was in the very center of the packing plant district, with a major plant in each direction. Wilsons, Cudahy, Swift, and Armour. The aroma was overpowering but once we got used to it it was all right. At 6:00 AM they would run the hogs from pens to the slaughter house, a real squealing racket that awakened everyone.

There was a Serbian Orthodox church nearby and they roasted lambs on spits. The aroma from that was heavenly as was their choir. We attended a Lithuanian Catholic church a couple blocks way. Their choir was also beautiful.



Figure 6.1: Apartment in the Omaha Projects where Sheila and Maureen were born



Figure 6.2: Son Tim in back of apartment in the Omaha Projects



Figure 6.3: Mother, Agnes Eleanor Hergott with Mike, her mother, and Tim?

Enjoyed mass there because we couldn't understand the sermons.

Car pooled to school with four other med students. We were close friends. Had little money but had fun. Drank a little beer. Falstaff Brewery was nearby and beer was 15 cents a bottle. Main recreation was playing cards, bridge, Frisbee, and watching Gunsmoke at one of the student's houses who has the only TV. Gunsmoke was a very popular, neer miss a session show that half the neighborhood came in to view with us.

Bridge became an obsession. We would get to school early to play a few hands before classes began. One time, we got into such an intense game that we forgot to go to our orthopedic final exam. We ran over to the professor's office and confessed. He arranged for a makeup exam that was half orthopedics and half bridge.

While in Medical School, Sheila and Maureen were born. Their mother worked as a receptionist at the Psychiatric Institute and a woman who lived in our project building watched them.

Chapter 7

Albuquerque in the 60's

After graduating, I took an Internship in Albuquerque. My parents had moved there for a civil service job at Kirtland Air Force Base. We visited them over Christmas and were impressed by the warm sunny weather. There were several feet of snow on the ground in Nebraska and the sunny climate looked good. I didn't even try for any other places, just signed up. At that time it was a County Indian Hospital with 100 beds and a very small house staff and attending staff. We got to do everything with little supervision. It was a little scary.

I started off on the Emergency Room service over 4th of July week end. After the week end, I was ready to return to Nebraska. Overwhelmed was an understatement, major trauma, heroin overdose, babies popping out everywhere. Without the able help from the nursing staff, we would have been dead ducks.

I got to do lots of moderately complicated surgery, delivered 75 babies. Treated infectious diseases that now a days, seldom exist. Tuberculosis, Whooping cough, mumps, measles, diphtheria,

Nora was born at my hospital and I got to assist as the Dr. was late. We lived in a little Bellamah home on Cuervo Drive. Went to drive in movies.

I can recall one afternoon when we found Maureen lying naked on top of an old dog house, singing, "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child." Maureen seemed to enjoy the unclothed state.

Chapter 8

Las Cruces

A year or so later, we lived in Las Cruces and our neighbor and landlord, who was also my partner, Dr. Jim Sedgwick, brought her home naked. She had been playing in his irrigation ditch. He was quite embarrassed.

Drove back to Nebraska for a visit. At that time we had a 1957 four door Ford. Thought I would be clever and gave everyone a dose of Phenobarbital to sedate them for the 700 mile trip. Unfortunately, they all were sensitive to Phenobarbital and it turned them into wild animals. Needless to say, it was a very long trip for all of us.

Following Internship, we moved to Las Cruces where I was hired by the Sedgwick Brothers, Bill and Jim, and Peter Voute. They were all three general practitioners. Jim did a lot of general surgery, Bill did a lot of internal medicine, Peter was a true GP and delivered lots of babies. I worked mostly with Peter and likewise had an eclectic practice. I had patients of all ages, delivered 20 or so babies each month, did minor surgery and orthopedics and scrubbed in with Jim in the OR nearly every morning and nights and week ends on call. Just like when in Medical School and working for the Children's Hospital OR nights and weekends.



Figure 8.1: Tim, Sheila, Moe, Nora, and Kathy (carrying Patrick) in front of their house at 4 Lebanon Arc in Las Cruces in 1963



Figure 8.2: Nora in the cactus garden at Lebanon Arc

Chapter 9

Cars

I developed an obsession for cars and impulsively purchased many new cars. Two VW campers, a VW bug.

I bought the first Mustang to be sold in Las Cruces.

It was a poppy red convertible with white leather interior, 4 speed transmission. A really fun car.

In less than a year though I had traded it in on a 1964 Porsche 912, Bahama Yellow. I loved that car and still dream about driving it.

In the ensuing years, I had several more cars, Pinto, MGB, Subaru. Then pick ups, both Fords and Chevies. One interesting one was a double cab VW pickup. We drove it to California. Built a home made camper shell with green and yellow striped canvas cover. Before seatbelts – the kids would sit in the back on mattresses and crawl back into the cab thru a small window. We were quite a sight crossing the Golden Gate Bridge in the hippie wagon. All the kids had very long hair and tie died clothing, bell bottoms, etc. We sang a lot while driving. Later on they acquired instruments and musical skills and now are quite accomplished musicians. When they play and sing these days, it brings tears to my eyes.



Figure 9.1: VW Bus in front of 4 Lebanon Arc



Figure 9.2: Mike's Poppy Red Mustang in front of the house at 4 Lebanon Arc in Las Cruces, NM



Figure 9.3: Mike's Bahama Yellow Porsche

Chapter 10

Recreation

We used to camp a lot. Kathy was not comfortable in tents so we had a VW camper and a tent. Lots of fond memories of the outdoors. Once went camping in the Gila wilderness just with the kids. Got there late, set up camp and cooked steak and baked potatoes. I can still remember seeing the kids all sitting on an old log near the fire with a baked potato in one hand and a piece of steak in the other, no knives or forks, just caveman style, and no complaints.

They were good campers and hikers. When older, we went on more serious hikes. I became involved with a mountain club and on occasion would take Tim on a climb. He once led a climb up the knife edge at the North end of the Sandias with me and George Goedecke, Physics Professor at NMSU. We also hiked from Bandelier to Cochiti Lake and went on many back pack trips in the Gila Wilderness. I liked race cars and was a member of an Auto racing club but wouldn't race my Porsche. Although I did volunteer my services as one of the mandatory physician's in attendance at all races. I also served as track physician at Sunland Park Horse racing track, along with the other members of the County Medical Society.

I played racquet ball for a while but discovered that I was not a competitive athlete. When I first moved to Las Cruces, I was approached by the Mountain Rescue team to be the team physician. I had no climbing experience but agreed to try it if I could learn to climb. I learned to climb during rescues, mostly late afternoon or early evening, nearly always fellow club members were the victims. Only occasionally serious.

One major two day rescue was when a climber George, fell and suffered a dislocated hip. He had to be lowered in a metal basket. My partners arranged for helicopter assistance and dropped supplies. It began to snow and there were lot of Peace Corps kids there, improperly attired for a rescue so they airlifted duffel bags of army blankets and sandwiches in addition to morphine. My partners slipped in a bottle of Tequila which broke when it hit the ground. That night we dined on Tequila bologna sandwiches and slept in Tequila soaked blankets. The rescue made the AP wirephoto and national news. About the only news worthy thing I have ever been involved in.

At another time, I developed an interest in sailing which was a struggle living in the desert. Nevertheless, I ended up with two little Styrofoam sail boats and sailed several NM lakes. Elephant Butte, Caballo, the wind was erratic and strong. Northern NM lakes were better suited to small boats. Cochiti, Heron Lake, several small mountain lakes near the Colorado border. One memorable trip was near Carlsbad. The ever present wind came up and I tried to get back to shore with a tiny gas engine. Unfortunately the spark plug had fouled and the engine would not work, the wind blew us into a large expanse of marsh plants. I got out and pulled the boat through the weeds for a long time. Felt like Humphrey Bogart and the African Queen. Eventually turned around and started back. When we reached the open water, a long black bullet shaped boat came along side and tossed us a line. They began pulling us across the lake. Half way out, they stopped and brought their boat alongside ours. They wore camo outfits and were a little rough looking. However, they only wanted to offer us a beer before continuing cross the lake. We got back to shore. That night the winds became really strong. We were in a little tent trailer and spent most of the night keeping it from blowing away. That was the last sailing trip Sandra went on.

Earlier we brought both little boats up to Heron Lake with the entire family, even Tim and his group. We had rented a large stone lodge with lots of rooms and also rented a pontoon boat. Between the pontoon and the two sailboats, we had a great time on the water and even greater time afterward. Everyone brought their instruments, there was a piano there.

Chapter 11

Marriages and Divorces.

Out of respect to my partners, I have decided to keep this section brief. Suffice it to say that my marital history represents in a very graphic way a major problem that has plagued me for my entire adult life. I believe I have had a form of bipolar disorder that has been erratic and unpredictable, erupting from time to time with episodes of pressured thoughts, flight of ideas, impulsivity, poor judgment and, early in the process, complete denial that there was a problem. I made many quick and questionable decisions affecting my life and that of my family. Many changes in employment, living arrangements, marital partners, and vocational direction. These changes were all instigated by me almost on a whim, with little long term thinking through. Four marriages and four divorces, selling homes with financial losses, inability to amass wealth in spite of always having a good paying job. At times, I self medicated with Lithium and Prozac with appreciable results but other times used alcohol.

Eventually it seems that I have been able to avoid impulsivity, have been able to save a small sum of nest egg money and have been able to live within my means. I do not miss living in the fast lane. Amen! However, in retrospect, I can now appreciate the true meaning of denial. It is not, "refusing to accept reality" but an inability to judge reality from fantasy, a true mental illness. This knowledge was quite helpful to me in later years as a therapist but I certainly wish I could have figured it out years earlier.



Figure 11.1: Mike's first house in La Luz canyon

Chapter 12

Medical career.

I have held aspirations to be a physician since I was a child. There were no health professionals in my family.

I nearly didn't make it because of my mood swings alluded to earlier. After a disastrous two years in college at University of Nebraska, I spent two years as a Dental Technician in the US Navy, stationed at the Brooklyn Naval Yards (which no longer exists). Upon return to civilian life in Nebraska, I made a commitment to get serious about my education. However, I was certain that Medicine was out of reach because of my abysmal GPA. I applied myself to the academic life and began collecting decent grades. I applied to Dental School at the University of Nebraska and was accepted.

At about this time, my high school friend, Cliff "Bud" Hamilton, was graduating from Medical school and advised me that there was an opening or two if I was interested. I applied and was accepted to Medical school. As school had already begun, I had to wait out nearly a year so I packed up my family in the Henry J and drove to Dugway, Utah where I had a job described elsewhere. The following July, I started Medical School. It was a lot of work. Not so much academically difficult, but high volumes of material needed to be absorbed and retained and used as building blocks. The first two years then were devoted to basic sciences, anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, etc. and the last two years were more clinically oriented, Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics, OB/GYN. Although these topics were "clinical" there was minimal hands on clinical experience. This was the rule in Medical training at the time. Fortunately more recent modern training allows for a personal experience from the very beginning.

I accepted an Internship position at the Bernalillo County Indian Hospital in Albuquerque. The climate was infinitely better than Nebraska and I was interested in the multiethnic clientele at BCI. I was introduced to a tripartite ethnic program: "Anglo", Hispanic, and Native American.

I have been practicing Medicine of one sort or another since 1960. Having retired a year or so ago, that makes it 45 plus years. The changes have been mind boggling, for the most part a great improvement in knowledge and the application of that knowledge in a scientific way. The human side of medicine

has been approaching extinction. The Art of Medicine was taught by example and role modeling. The science of Medicine has become powerful highly complex and awe inspiring and that is where the money is. Third party payors have not appreciated the value of the direct person to person, human approach and these practitioners providing that service have not been terribly effective in presenting their position. As a consequence, primary care physicians work 60+ hours a week and make a comfortable living, almost exclusively as a salaried position while specialty physicians work much more civilized hours, and command obscene incomes. The latter group does the most complaining about fees and rates.

There was a time in 1960 when a General Practitioner not only knew every medication available, he/she could identify them by color, shape, manufacturer, major effect and side effect. The PDR was a rather small book. Since there were such a small number of drugs available, drug interaction was much less of a problem and minimally understood at that. When I began practicing in 1960, pharmaceutical reps visited doctor's offices regularly. They brought food, toys, limited scientific information and lots of samples. Every physician had a large closet or even an entire room dedicated to samples. Controlled substances, especially stimulants filled several shelves. There was no oversight or security and office staff could theoretically help themselves. There was minimal appreciation of the potential for overdose, abuse and addiction, interaction, or appropriateness of use of these free drugs.

A major change during this period had to do with Medical Economics. Most of us older physicians refer to the 60's fondly as the Golden Years, Camelot, and similar terms. There was hardly any regulation dictating treatment or diagnostics. Our fees were described as "usual and customary". Insurance companies paid whatever was billed as long as it seemed to be within a vague set of parameters.

Overhead costs were much lower and as a result, charges were lower as well. Physician's made a good living but there were few really wealthy ones. The era of specialization was just beginning. As specialists perfected diagnostic and therapeutic tools, they were able to actually diagnose and treat things that were previously considered hopeless or may not even have been recognized. Along with this explosion of knowledge, there was an equally explosive movement in the area of technology. Machines, electronics, chemicals were produced that were truly wonder workers. Although the costs of these wonders were high, the cost/benefit ratio looked good even to the insurance and pharmaceutical groups which, along with various government funding sources, paid for most of the research work.

Pharmaceutical houses began advertising directly, with the "caveat" of course, to discuss this with your doctor. Imagine, a new "miracle drug" on the market that other doctors have researched, (while being paid for this research by the drug company directly), that your doctor doesn't seem to know about yet. A powerful marketing ploy that resulted in the proliferation of a drug for every symptom and the near demise of the minimalist physician.

The practice of medicine has always been an inefficient, individualized cot-

tage industry, jealously defended by physicians who treated the "doctor-patient relationship" as sacrosanct. We also held the right to arrive at diagnoses and treatment plans as extremely personal and resisted change.

As a consequence, third party payers and pharmaceutical houses were able to exploit our stubbornness. In a two decade period from 1970-90, physicians watched their power and autonomy fade away. Communication was a major problem not just between practitioners, who now had to work much more closely together because of the knowledge and technical explosion, but working with the rest of the health care professionals, which most physicians saw as an inconvenience, perhaps even a nuisance.

As a result there developed an awareness of the dangerousness of this situation. The Institute of Health studied the phenomenon of hospital morbidity and mortality and published several papers. The most inflammatory one announced that hospital deaths due to medical errors could run as high as 90-100,000 yearly.

While I was Medical Director at Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center in Alamogordo, we decided to try to deal with at least part of the medical error problem by installing a completely paperless medical record using a top of the line Computer software system, Cerner Millineum. In my estimation, it was a tremendous success. It eliminated or at least significantly decreased errors. Once people got past the learning curve, it was much more efficient in every respect. We did a really good job of preparing the medical and nursing staff and it was inaugurated with very little problem. I am now receiving care as a patient in a large Medical Center that only has bits and pieces of the electronic record and it is quite clear where the errors come from. Literally at every interface between each care giver at every level, the opportunity for miscommunication is there and occurs with predictable regularity. People just don't see each other as true team members. There is a hierarchy, almost a caste system, and many individuals on one end of that system or the other are unable or unwilling to share information with their colleagues at the other end. This does not occur all the time but often enough that the potential for disaster is ever present. As I work my way through the medical care world, I am constantly on alert for this. This phenomenon is not limited to certain socioeconomic groups, it can happen to anyone.

I seem to be having difficulty giving up my identity as a physician. Although I am truly retired and no longer see patients, I paid for another round of licenses and certificates to the tune of several hundred dollars. I miss working with patients. If my illnesses weren't so incapacitating, I would still be practicing at some level.

Chapter 13

Illness

I had enjoyed a relatively healthy life until I became a cancer victim. I had several surgical procedures when younger but recovered quickly. There have been years that I never missed a day of work due to illness. Therefore, when I finally acquired a serious, chronic medical problem, it was an affront to my personal feelings of near invincibility. This has been a sobering and humility building experience that I am only recently coming to grips with. Over 5 years ago, I had radical prostatectomy following a rapidly elevating PSA and a positive prostate biopsy, 6 out of 12 samples were positive with an average Gleason of seven which was interpreted as indicative of rather rapid course, both the seven and the rapid increase in PSA. Following the surgery which was really easy to recuperate from, I did well for a few months, then the PSA took off again, doubling in a couple of months. The rate of acceleration was considered an ominous sign and my life expectancy was around two years. I underwent local irradiation, receiving 40 radiation treatments at Gerald Champion Hospital. Likewise an effortless and easy procedure. Went to the center, had my treatment and went back to work.

Again I did well for a while, but back came the PSA and I was faced with chemo. I chose orchiectomy as it was the ultimate chemotherapy, eliminating over 95% cancer cells depended upon. I did really well for a while, but PSA began going up once more. By that time, I had moved to Albuquerque and had the great fortune of being referred to UNM Cancer Research Center by Bruce. I am being treated by Dr. Ian Rabinowitz. A very competent and really nice guy. I am taking a course of Taxotere which has been used for breast cancer for some time and only recently has been approved for certain other cancers, including colon and prostate. During the last year, I developed scleroderma which is thought to be an immune problem, in my case precipitated by the neoplastic disease. It is a systemic disease that affects many things including the vascular system and therefore, raising havoc with kidney function. I developed an acute hypertensive crisis, several days in ICU and eventually lost all renal function. I am now a prisoner of the dialysis machine – 4 hours, three times weekly just to eliminate toxins, regulate electrolytes, deprive me of many delicious foods

and limit my fluid intake to liter a day. I take over a dozen different meds, mostly for blood pressure control and they are effective, but expensive. I have high option GAP insurance with AARP. Last year my cost share for meds was over \$2000.00. The Pharmaceutical Industry is an out of control monster. Many of the very poor can get relief. The wealthy or well off, can manage, but the middle class is taking a beating and the near poor are devastated. One more tragedy that has befallen the Medical Profession because they were not able to make the transition away from independent entrepreneurs in a cottage industry to get into the next millennium and make the system changes that are required.

I am most grateful that, although I have rather extensive bony metastasis, I have no pain. Severe anemia with fatigue, muscle loss with weakness, and intermittent nausea from chemo are the thorns in my side. I am able to live independently with a lot of physical and emotional support from my children. They are all sweethearts. I do not look forward to further incapacitation and am not interested in a nursing home experience. When the time comes, I do not anticipate a problem making a good decision. I have a living will that prohibits useless treatments and have discussed this with my family.

However, until that time comes, I am planning on enjoying my family and friends and the world to the fullest. I am planning a trip to return to Paris this summer. I will get to visit the Impressionists one more time and to enjoys the sights and sounds of the City of Light.

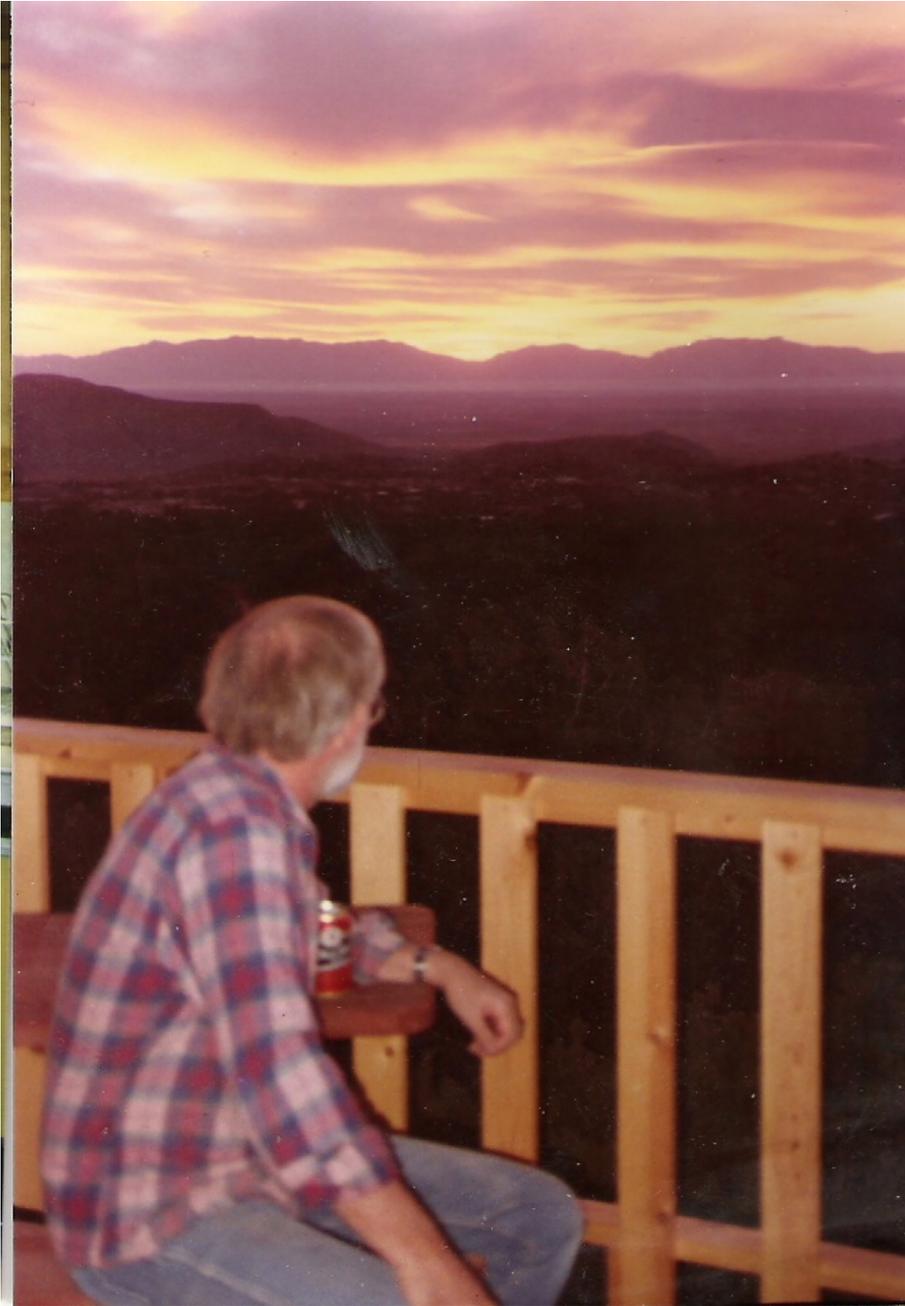


Figure 13.1: Mike enjoying sunset view from La Luz canyon

Appendix A

A Letter of Reminiscences, from his son, Tim, 8/19/2006

Dear Dad,

I thought it might be nice to thank you for some of the things you've done for me over the years. It is an ever growing list, and its clearly not exhaustive, but its nice to think back over some of the good times and, as I teach my children, it feels good to say "Thank You"

First of all, thanks for giving me life.

My earliest memories are from the house in Omaha where Sheila and Moe were born. I remember standing on the stairs going to the bedrooms and looking down at you studying for Medical school at the desk in the corner. I'm ever grateful that your 23 year old self started a family and that I got to be the first born.

Thanks for teaching me how to drive a car and for letting me drive the Porche and the old Bus. I remember getting to drive that bus on back country roads way before I was legal!

Thanks for buying me a motorcycle and teaching me how to drive it. I still remember the thrill of cruising along at 45 mph (the top speed with the governor attached) and feeling the wind in my face!

Thanks for taking me hiking in the Gila where we dammed up a stream, chased sucker fish, climbed around the cliff dwellings, and played hide and seek.

Thanks for taking me on a hike to Lake Katherine in the Pecos in Junior High School and buying all of the sleeping bags, tents, etc we needed! I developed a love of camping and hiking that I now share with my own wife and children.

Thanks for teaching me all those silly songs that I now sing with my own children (like "Horsey keep your tail up, Mountain Dew, etc."). I may not be able to carry a tune easily, but I do love to sing.

Thanks for building us the adobe play house at the Lebanon Arc house,

and thanks for building the "tree house" at Sequoia Court, we had years of fun playing games of imagination in those structures.

Thanks for always washing the dishes when we went camping. I clearly remember how you would heat up the water, add a little soap and clean all the pots and pans (though we sometimes had to get the big stuff off by dipping them in the stream and using sand as soap!)

Thanks for playing slip and slide with us in Las Cruces on the front lawn!

Thanks for planting the garden in the back of the Sequoia Court house, I have many fond memories of picking fresh strawberries and canteloupes; and of following the growth of interesting shaped gourds, which later got made into other interesting objects!

Thanks for entertaining us with all of your jokes over the years. I'm afraid I never learned how to tell a good joke (though Caitlin might disagree) but I've always looked forward to hearing the latest jokes you had discovered (or created on the spot!)

Thanks for being there at mom's funeral. I was pretty shook up and I'm very grateful that you were there to comfort us and help us get through those difficult days.

Thanks for keeping up your relationship with us throughout your life, even as you went through several different marriages with new step children along the way. Seeing successful mixed families has helped me be a better step-parent over the years.

Thanks for driving me out to Brandeis for my freshman year. I was pretty anxious about travelling 2500 miles away to a place I'd never been and driving out there with you and Sheila made it a fun and exciting trip.

Thanks for taking us on that trip to California in the early 70's. I remember catching (and eating) crawdads from a stream around Lake Tahoe, and riding down the twisty streets in San Francisco.

Thanks for taking me on that Ski Trip to Sierra Blanca in the late 60's. I fondly remember riding shotgun in that Bahama yellow Porche as we drove (just us two) down to Ruidoso. It was great fun!

Thanks for teaching me how to drink sensibly. Although I did drink to excess occasionally in high school and college, by and large I learned by example how to drink socially and to savour fine beers and wines!

Thanks for teaching me, by example, to be an adventurous eater. Yasuko is thankful that I like all of the exotic Japanese foods, but I think I get it from you (as I remember being offered oysters and sardines, pig skin, and strong smelling cheeses from a very early age!)

Thanks for supporting me through college with your monthly checks. They allowed me to go to Brandeis and that, clearly, had a major effect on my life.

Thanks for the many exciting Halloweens, especially in Las Cruces. I remember in particular the time you played some spooky music and turned down the lights. I remember thinking that was so cool!

Thanks for helping me launch rockets with vinegar and baking soda while I was in 5th grade. I remember remarking about how expensive the materials

were and you told me that Science is expensive (and I really know how true that is now!)

Thanks for the many trips to the cabin. I remember in particular one winter when I was in college and we went cross country skiing during the day and stayed in the cabin at night.

Thanks for teaching me how to split wood and start fires. You've often had wood burning stoves and I've always enjoyed the crack of wood when it splits down the middle.

Thanks for teaching me to pick and savor Chantrelles and various other mushrooms (and to be very cautious about eating the right ones!)

Thanks for teaching me so many card games. I have many fond memories of sitting around a table playing cards and talking (and sometimes drinking!) Hearts was always a favorite (and still is!)

Thanks for teaching me how to fish. There aren't many places around Boston to fish safely, but I do have many great memories of waking at the crack of dawn and dropping the line in just the right places in the little streams.

Thanks for taking me to great grandma Hergott's house in the late 50's. I remember her saying she was going to go out and dress a chicken for dinner and I was amazed that chickens in Nebraska wore clothes.

Thanks for the various hand-me-downs you've given me over the years. Some of the sweaters and belts you gave me were my favorites for many years. I remember in particular one belt with a cannabis buckle that someone gave you and you promptly gave to me! Also, there was a very nice tightly woven wool sweater that I kept for many years as well as a silk and suede waist coat.

Thanks for all the funny birthday and xmas cards and the imaginative presents you've given me (and my kids) over the years. I especially liked the time you sent me the "Merry Christmas to our priest" card!

Thanks for coming to Boston for my wedding. We rather indulgently wanted everyone to come out for several days before the wedding and I'm thankful you were able to share those days with us.

Thanks for the steady stream of entertaining emails, many forwarded from Joe Glass, I was always glad to be on your cc-list for funny mail and websites, not all of them were politically correct however!

Thanks for getting me all the medical care I needed growing up. I remember in particular the muscle relaxants I needed after pulling my back muscle before the State Meet my senior year. Also, the detection of my back problems in high school, which allowed me to exercise caution and avoid the back surgery that I might have needed otherwise.

Thanks for teaching me how to enjoy cooking interesting foods. I remember you kneading breads and cooking Paella and barbecuing T-bone steaks.

Thanks for taking us out to White Sands starting in the early 60's we've had many good times there over the years and I'm glad that my own kids have been able to sled down the dunes or just jump off the highest ones!

Thanks for your positive attitude, your decision to enjoy your life especially these last few years has been an inspiration to me! I'm glad you moved to

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Albuquerque and that we have been able to see you so much in the last few years.

Thanks for taking us out to breakfast at the old "Double Rainbow" we had a nice time.

Thanks for taking Ryan for a drive last week. He really enjoyed getting to do something by himself with Poppa Mike. Caitlin wants me to thank you for letting us swim in your pool! We had fun, and they love an audience!

Thanks for all the thoughtful presents you've bought over the years. We use Caitlin's binoculars all the time (especially when going to concerts!)

Thanks for letting me make my own mistakes and not trying to control my life. I've always felt that you respected my ability to make my own choices, whether you agreed with them or not.

Thanks for a million other things large and small, both in the past and to come! I'm sure you already know that I'm thankful you were so much a part of my life, but its nice to reminisce.

Love, Tim