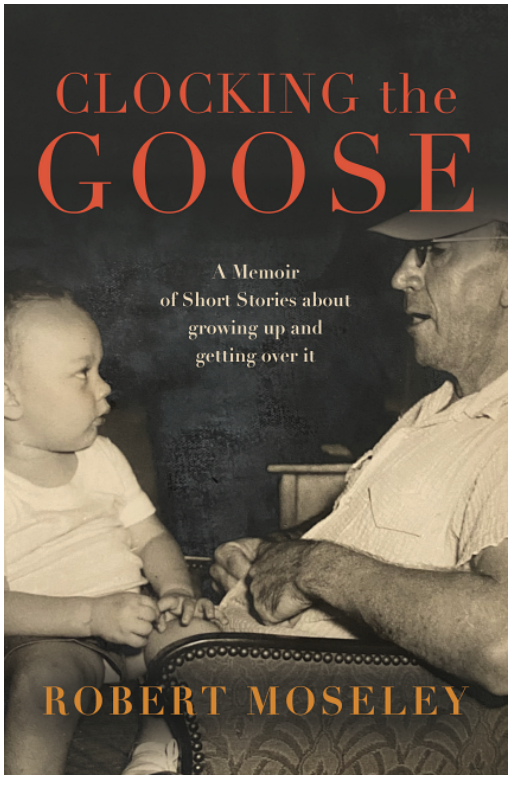

The short stories in Clocking the Goose are about growing up, getting over it, becoming yourself and fulfilling your destiny. The key to all this is trusting and honoring your inner voice, despite family insecurities or social blowback.

Clocking the Goose:
A memoir of short stories about growing

By Robert Moseley

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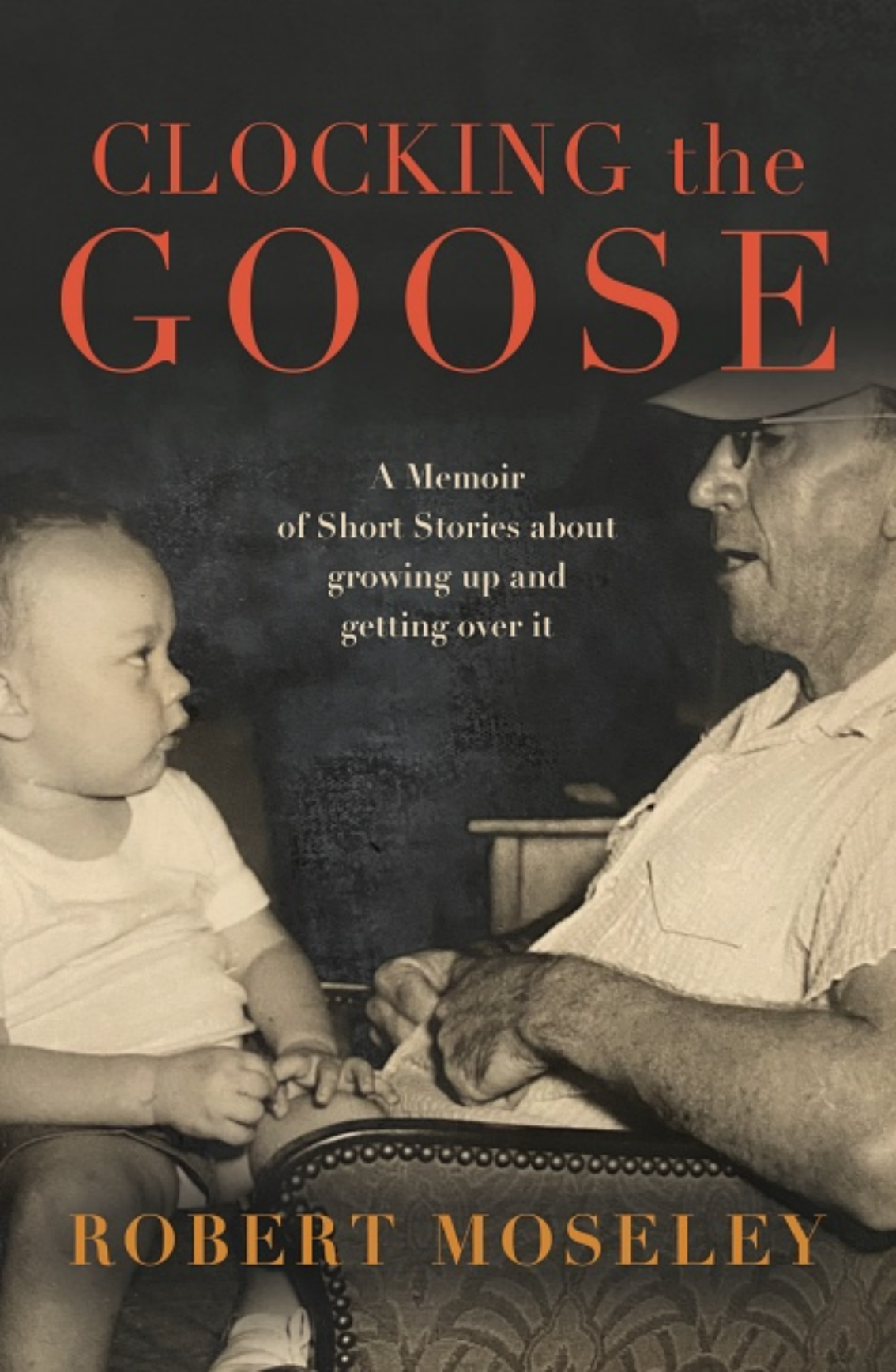

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CLOCKING the GOOSE
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INTRODUCTION

There's something gothic about growing up in the south. The states comprising the underbelly of the Mason-Dixon line are often celebrated for their conviviality, yet mainstream southern graciousness has a dark, inscrutable side. No less a human observer than D.H. Lawrence might have referenced this when he said; *"The essential American Soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. It has never yet melted."*

This sinister quality, like a haunted house, frames the work of southern writers from Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Wolfe, to James Dickey, Tennessee Williams, and many, many more.

As a Tennessean raised outside the Deep South, I didn't have this understanding. But as an adult who has lived beyond the region and travelled the world, I see that many white southerners never got over losing *the war of northern aggression*, known more broadly as the American Civil War.

This loss; this gnawing resentment and shame, if now only a psychic inheritance, has passed generation to generation of mainstream southerners from Appomattox to today. It often stays with us whether we remain in our birthplace or live as far from it as possible.

There are many manifestations of this resentment; this grudge. Some good, some bad depending on how you see it and what you do with it.

At its root, many descendants of the Confederacy feel stigmatized; they feel *other* or *less than* Americans from the north, east and west. This, *otherness*, again if only psychological, has similarities to yet is

vastly different from the *otherness* experienced by most Black people who have roots or grew up in Dixie.

I feel incapable of writing about the complexities of the Black experience in the region of my birth. That's a story beyond the scope of this memoir and my current understanding. But I can speak with clarity and depth about being a child in my family and that's something almost all of us can relate to.

All people who struggle with feeling *other* or *less than* share a common pain and a common need.

Unless and until they become conscious of their alienation; and then become responsible, intentional, and disciplined in addressing and integrating the emotions that go with that affliction, they never get past it.

I offer this perspective at the beginning of my memoir to show how where I came from affected the man I became and how the ghosts of my past have never completely left me.

Clocking the Goose, a collection of short stories from my life, is about how I grew up and how I'm getting over it.

At first glance, I am a person of no importance. My life has not been distinguished by great achievement of any socially significant kind, and my voice is not celebrated nor sought by anyone.

Yet amidst cultural forces that now diminish our experience of *feeling truly alive*, I cry out for a renewal of human values in an America today that prizes image over substance, political correctness over candor, corporate greed over the equitable sharing of our bounty, and never-ending commercialized excess over the preservation of healthy personal boundaries and social limits.

In this or any era, if we are to live lives of true meaning, getting past the wounds of our youth is relevant to everyone, everywhere, regardless of how or where they grew up.

We now exist in a social media culture that trivializes our hopes and dreams, as attested to by "Reality TV" shows like the Kardashian family opus, or politicizes our interactions to the point of absurdity, like all the revamped telecasts of *Bachelor, Bachelorette, and Survivor* of who gives a damn where.

We have more sophisticated means of communication than at any time in history, yet true connection and real intimacy are as rare as a moment of authentic humanity in the overhyped, repetitious, and polarizing 24-hour news cycle.

In this context, my stories call for a rebirth of integrity, humility, and common sense in our relationships and for each of us to become the authority in his or her life. Being my own authority need not be seen as insurrection and egoism run rampant. For if I decide what is best for me, I recognize and respect the same is true for you.

In this regard, I see civilization as a 24-hour agreement adults renew daily to make things work despite the never-ending challenges that mitigate against that. I strive to live in ways that makes sense to me, and I respect my fellow travelers' right and need to do the same.

Today, branding and buzz surpass substance and simple human decency. By and large, experts in contemporary America, credentialed and counterfeit, dominate our self-involved and self-indulgent culture. Yet their advice seems to produce automatons, aping woke, reactive or corporate narratives that are antithetical to healthy self-possession, self-reliance, sound judgment, and to our collective well-being.

How else can we explain the passive compliance of the critical mass of our populace who mindlessly consume pharmaceutical symptom suppressors, the taking of which are normalized by an avalanche of prime-time TV commercials, which cost hundreds or thousands of dollars per dose yet cure nothing, and produce a demon's list of toxic, sometimes terminal side effects.

There's got to be a better way.

Becoming conscious, intentional, and inner-directed people who make real contributions to their fellow humans and who enrich of our public life, is a notion hostile to the drone-like, politically correct existence our profit obsessed corporatized culture would have us adopt. Moreover, corporations use their many public service initiatives to brainwash us into believing how much they care and to *camouflage* their soul-diminishing, profit at all costs agenda.

Deep down in our hearts, we know this.

In America today, individuality is quashed in service of collective corporate standards, practices and returns. Our personal value is reduced to and determined by what we consume. We subsist under a plethora of dehumanizing "industrial complexes;" from the governmental industrial complex to the technological industrial complex, the military industrial complex, the medical industrial complex, the social media complex, and now even the entertainment industrial complex.

Sadly, most of our encounters with these multiplexes diminish our self-confidence, our enthusiasm and our humanity, no matter how faithfully we follow conventional wisdom, stay up-to-date, or how many "likes" we get.

So, my voice, undistinguished though it may be, is a solitary call for staying true to yourself; of standing in solidarity with genuine human values, whether they're popular and trending, or not.

At least, I hope it is.

At the end of the day, my voice and my experiences; my stories, are how I make myself known and my viewpoint credible. I believe the most powerful gift a person can share is his or her authentic story and that reading mine will inspire you to take account of your own.

But let me get underneath the self-liberating context I hope you bring to reading this book, get more personal than my analysis of life in America today, and focus with some precision on the feelings and facts that underpinned my upbringing.

I grew up in a haunted house; at least that's how it felt to me. A terrifying environment not troubled by the legacy of states' rights vs. federal domination, or by the curse of slavery and the ghosts of the possessed and the possessors, but by the consequences of the Great Depression and the havoc that social catastrophe twisted into my father's soul.

Raymond Herbert Moseley, the central figure in my world, was a towering figure to me. He was a warm, active, action-oriented, and accomplished man, with a deeply thoughtful, articulate, and poetic soul. Dad, in his pragmatic way, had immortal longings. He was abundantly gifted physically and intellectually; equally skilled using his hands as a craftsman, and his mind and voice as an advocate of clients who hired him for his widely acknowledged skill as an attorney.

He was also a man of compassion, common sense, and social conscience, though you only saw this if you looked at how unobtrusively he helped those in need. He never spoke of his charitable

actions or donations; never blew his own horn. My father was a man of deep integrity and character, filled with flaws, contradictions, and denials, *as we all are*, but whose strength of character and desire to do good was clear to anyone with eyes to see.

And in all the most important ways he knew his quality; knew who and what he was. Dad didn't want and would disdain reviews by anyone presuming to pigeon-hole him one way or another, whether they "liked" him, or not.

Yet as gifted, humane, and self-possessed as he was, as loving and dedicated to our family as he made us feel, my father was also afflicted with a toxic rage that overwhelmed and haunted him his entire life. That rage drove him to success and renown among his peers, but it wrought chaos at home. It was like a raw, open wound that would and could not be healed, and when it erupted as it often did, everyone in our family ducked for cover however and wherever we could find it.

The reduced circumstances of his parents in the Depression era south were devastating to dad. He was traumatized even more by the shame of being perceived by some as a *ne'er do well*.

My father's dilemma, the split between his good and bad sides, gives rise to one of the most important ideas in this book; *that all of us, everywhere, are obliged to grapple with the light and darker angels of our conflicted human nature*. For if God exists deep within us, the devil lives there, too.

I believe we are meant to come to grips with this seeming impasse. That only by doing so can we become fully alive, fully human and reach the empathy, compassion, and grace essential to the preservation of a civilization worthy of the name.

Ultimately, my father's struggle with his light and darker impulses, speaks to another fundamental contention of these narratives; *that to fully realize our creed as Americans and our potential as human beings, we must develop a healthy relationship with our pain.*

Pain is meant to instruct and purify, not to be avoided at all costs. In its highest incarnation, our existential pain does not affirm humanity's original sin; it calls on us to deepen and grow.

So long as we mollycoddle ourselves in self-indulgence and entitlement, so long as we abide in trivialities like participation trophies and Reality TV, so long as we evade the elements of our personal character that keep us on the periphery of our best selves, masking our shame by how we manage our Facebook profiles, we will suffer needlessly in the shallows of what we might otherwise become.

Lastly, please know that my intention here is to heal, not to hurt; to find my way to the freedom, liberation and redemption that only come from digging deep into my soul and speaking with candor about my life. And not least, to put an end to generations of unspoken shame and pain within my family and yours by calling out what needs to be faced and transcended by people everywhere.

That said, I can only share what I experienced and perceived, and memory is a tricky biographer. Moreover, my memory is biased towards my viewpoint. This makes reality, past and present, illusive.

If, therefore, what I say here is hurtful to the survivors of those I write about or to sensibilities you hold dear, I ask for your forbearance. If I commit errors in fact, make mistakes of omission or commission, or voice things that seem cynical, wounding, or hateful, know that the tone of what I chronicle here is straight and true to my experience.

I loved my now dead family members with all my heart and soul. I believe they always knew and still know this; and that they will take this into account as I come to grips with them and myself through this memoir.

Likewise, if you disagree with my view of how we live in America today, please consider what I see and say is not tainted with malice, but imbued with hope for a happier, healthier world.

I've learned that life without love isn't worth living; that to love others I must first be true to myself, and that love is the constant act of forgiveness.

I hope my efforts here inspire you to do the same.

RM

THE STORIES

CHAPTER I:
In My Beginning is My End

Terribly Two and Tyson Park: The Battle is Joined

Several years ago, my dad told me a story that unlocked the beginning, if not the root, of my lifelong battle with him and with myself.

When I was two, as my father told it, we were playing together in Tyson Park. We lived in Knoxville, Tennessee, where I was born at 2:38 pm on December 12, 1952. Dad told me that I got so mad at him I held my breath till I turned blue. My rageful self-attack terrified my father. He picked me up by my feet and slapped my back with his open palm, just so I'd start breathing again.

The instant I heard his recollection it was as if I witnessed a movie of my life go black. In my mind's eye I thought, *"Aha, so this is where the battle was joined!"* It was if the tumblers inside a lock fell into place. Tracking back from this unexpected revelation, even with no specific memory of the episode myself, I began to realize why certain lines from books or films stuck with me.

For some reason I thought of Captain Ahab from Melville's Moby Dick,

"*To the last, I will grapple with thee!"*

Now, with the insight triggered by my forgotten tantrum, I knew why this sentiment resonated with me. *I had a vendetta with dad from a time before I could remember*.

My father was not an evil or abusive man, but he was very VERY controlling, and he ruled our family driven by his fear of the Great Depression that befell him as a child. Although I was too young to realize it, his mercurial nature mirrored my own. Even as a toddler, I bristled at being controlled by him or anyone

Patricide is a threatening concept, especially for a two-year old; that's probably why I couldn't remember anything before I was five. No doubt, as a toddler, I couldn't abide being manhandled, as from time to time my father was wont to do.

But why did I take my anger at dad out on myself? What was the meaning, beyond my unfettered rage, for not just this episode, but what I'm told was my infantile pattern of shutting-down and breath-holding whenever I got mad?

Answering these questions would take time.

In writing these memoirs, a start and stop process that took many years, I would come to learn that I wasn't the only one in my family with blank spots in my memory and a pattern of self-abuse.

For my father's part, he had an odd way of relating to pets, which correlated to how he interacted with me and all his sons. He would aggressively handle our family dogs or cats so severely the poor animals would try to bite or scratch him.

I saw dad behave this way with a kitten we had named Jack. My father became so enraged at being clawed, *which he damn well deserved*, that he put poor Jack in a box, drove him out to the boondocks, shook the container forcefully, dumped him out and abandoned the hapless creature to fend for himself in the wilderness.

My discovery of the Tyson Park puzzle piece now confirmed another feeling I've always had; **that a person born with a warrior spirit is imbued with that savage, unfiltered and primordial energy from birth.** I connected now in a deeper way to my unspoken, defiant, and deep-seated refusal to take action, especially when an activity was forced on me against my will.

I was just beginning to glimpse the consequences of the silent vow I made in that small and narrow little park when I was barely two.

Again, it was Melville's Ahab who prompted me to realize the vengeful oath I took that day:

"From Hell's heart, I stab at thee! For hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee!"

Now, I began to grasp the lengths to which I had gone to keep this unconscious vow.

"I will go to the end of time to beat you, you son of a bitch! I will get you if it kills me. No matter what I have to do, no matter what it costs me, you are going down!"

Such was my resolve from a time before I could remember.

Cowlicks and Popsicles

If I was a vengeful tyke, I was loving and playful, too. Like many children with an unfettered spirit, I had the ability to kill someone off, then instantly recreate them. I also had an enormous range of possibilities. Moreover, when my feelings came up, they hit me like a thunderbolt.

My mother told me I was forever getting into things and insatiably curious. Apparently, I also had a giggle/laugh that would fill a room, especially when granddaddy Hawk, mom's dad, sat me on his knee to tell me stories.

My temper was as big as my laugh and I had an appetite for danger, too. At home, for instance, I would find a way to crawl up near the stove, attracted by the redness of the eye that was cooking God knows what on any given day.

Mom told me that I definitely had to be watched.

Out in the yard, I nearly waddled onto the busy road that fronted our house, just to get one of granddaddy's cigarette wrappers that had blown into the street. The triumphal climax to my manic curiosity came when I figured out how to switch on mama's floor polisher. It bounced around like a bucking bronco, I'm sure to my utter delight, till its long power cord got tangled up in its rotating floor brushes, burning the motor out.

Then, when I was just past three, we moved from Knoxville to Chattanooga in January 1956. Looking back on this new chapter in my life, what I remember is how fully in the moment I was. My days seemed endless.

One of my fondest Chattanooga memories was when the ice cream truck came to our new neighborhood. I would hear the familiar sound of its calliope, heralding its approach to my new domain at 777 Brookfield Avenue. The appearance of the ice cream man, delightful though it was, always presented me with a challenge. I remember twisting the cowlick of my burr haircut and thinking, *"I wonder how I can get a nickel from mom today?"*

Early one Saturday, the ice cream/popsicle truck appeared anew, suddenly transformed into a flying saucer. It looked neat but caused me a BIG problem. Popsicles and Nutty Buddies were no longer a nickel:

NOW THEY COST A DIME!

As far as I was concerned this was an outrage; a grave injustice; a true national crisis.

Suddenly, *"What do I have to do to get a popsicle, today"* became *"How will I ever get a whole dime out of Mom?"* Mother was a tough nut to crack. *"What will happen to me if I'm deprived of the yummy deliciousness of my favorite banana pop? How will I go on living if I can't lick it till my gums go numb? If I can't suck on my flat popsicle stick till I get splinters in my tongue, I just can't go on!"*

Something's got to be done!

At first, mama seemed as outraged as me. I think she gave me a dime a few more times but going forward my memory of enjoying banana popsicles trailed off. I imagine I got an early lesson here in economy/scarcity.

At any rate, I learned to live without a treat I could no longer afford.

Kindergarten and Graduation Day in a Combat Zone

"Now don't forget, shake the principal's hand THEN take the diploma." These were dad's last words to me as he readied his big press camera, the one he used to take pictures of car wrecks. Why he did this I wasn't sure, but it had something to do with bankrolling Mom

to feed my popsicle habit. I knew Dad was a lawyer, but I wasn't sure what that had to do with busted cars.

Anyway, today's project was to memorialize my graduation from kindergarten, and I could feel my father's demanding presence from across the entire auditorium. There seemed to be hundreds of thousands of people attending this highly anticipated event and all us graduates were decked out in white shirts, shorts, socks, and shoes.

My appearance might have been angelic, but my thoughts were anything but. *"Stop telling me what to do! Whatever you say, I'm doin' the opposite! I'll grab my diploma from that old man and if he doesn't give it to me first, I won't shake his hand!"*

Here I was barely out of nursery school and dad was already trying to control me and everything else around me. *"Fat chance, buddy. You can't push me around. Back off!"*

Unconscious of my anger and defiance, deep down inside I felt something was wrong with me. I'd already started to second-guess myself and I wasn't even in grade school yet. Dad's concern that I get things right was such an ongoing worry for him that I began to think my first impulses must always be wrong.

I don't remember if I had directly experienced my father's ferocity yet. But I knew how demanding he could be. Dad had been an active-duty Naval aviator a few years before I was born and things were to be done in a proper way, dictated by his fighter-pilot standards. I wasn't sure what the fighter pilot thing was all about, either, but I probably saw on TV, *an instrument that fascinated me*, that flyers like dad killed their opponents in intense aerial combats.

For sure, I felt the pressure of getting things right according to his militant rules and regulations. I also recall feeling pushed by him to meet his standards quickly and efficiently. That also pissed me off.

My nature and rhythm, as opposed to my father's which seemed all fire and fury, had both quicksilver and deliberate qualities. I thought quickly and usually picked up what was happening around me fast. But I was measured and would mull over things, too. This was especially so when I wasn't sure what I was doing, or why, or when I felt pressed into service or to behave in a certain way.

Dad was always in a rush, or so it seemed to me.

The best example I can recall of our contrasting styles was manifested in my father's never-ending weekend projects. These ventures ran the gamut from getting the best photo op for my graduation today, to pouring a concrete walkway in our front yard or building a patio at the rear of our house, to extending the parking area of our driveway, to putting a full bathroom in a closet, to installing an air-conditioning system throughout our home, and on and on.

In all these projects, my older brothers, Rick, and Steve were expected to keep up with dad, who did things five-times faster than sound. So was I, and we all had to do this WITHOUT ANY INSTRUCTIONS!

I don't know how my brothers felt about this and for some reason I never asked them, but I could have used some guidance, or God forbid, a little context.

This illustrates an element of our family life that now, looking back, I find sad and still puzzles me. *None of us ever seemed to reach out to each other for help*. We all did things on our own. This might

account, at least in part, for why isolation became a major theme in my life and in the lives of everyone in my entire family.

At any rate, dad never took time to clue us in. He never told us what we were working to accomplish, why, or explain how our assignments fit the overall goal. No, it was sink or swim, figure shit out for yourself, get to work, do what I tell you to do, and get it done fast and properly or there'll be hell to pay.

Not only was there a frenzied quality to the work we did but my brothers were better at adapting to pop's weekend sprints than I was. *They got with it*, one of dad's catch phrases, in ways that escaped me.

"Get with it, son. Why aren't you with me? Stop dreaming and get with me," seemed to be my father's constant complaint about me. My subconscious reply to my father's command, (that is the more reactive, R-rated version) was firmly in the realm of *"Get with you? Get with you? GO FUCK YOURSELF, YOU TYRANT!"*

In time, many years later, I came to realize what dad meant by saying *"Get with it."* He was giving me a life lesson; he was saying that, when necessary, it serves you to ignore how you feel about any particular task, *especially if you don't like doing it*, and focus all your energies on getting it done and doing it well. Don't fight the problem, align with the challenge. You might learn something that improves you. And at the very least you'll get back to doing whatever you like as quickly as possible.

This is a lesson I wish I learned much earlier than I did but it's also one he began giving me when I was four. I didn't know any four-year-old fighter pilots.

In retrospect, I think my brothers got this distinction instinctively. My fear of dad and my anger at him blinded me to this insight. Only

with age and experience did I also realize that he intended his projects to make a better life for all of us and to prepare us to be successful on our own.

There is truth in this, of course, but it's also true that dad did what he wanted to do because he wanted to do it and he justified it without considering anyone's viewpoint but his own.

Although there is value in living life with some rigor, relaxation is just as important. As an adult, I've found that I don't have to tend to my car as if it were an airplane in flight, where any malfunction can kill you if you don't anticipate it in advance and have a contingency plan if things go wrong.

Rick, my oldest brother by just under six years, was extremely deliberate, much more than me, but he was also dogged and practical in ways I never will be. As dad's first born, he was in some ways uniquely capable of handling that impossible role.

Looking back now, the thing I marveled at about Rick, who we called Dick or Dickie till he went away to college, was that he could take a psychic beating from dad, which he most certainly did, get back up off the floor, so to speak, and then just keep working and working till he "*got a good job,*" another of dad's catch phrases for how to live a good life.

"Get a good job," was my father's parlance for doing everything with excellence and simplicity at high speed. This was another damn good life-lesson. What I objected to was the pressure, the feeling of oppression, and the contextual void in which we were expected to accomplish excellence in everything we did.

Rick had no problem taking his time, yet somehow, he could adapt to dad's furious pace, too. He was also temperamentally suited to

excelling at the kinds of projects my father took on. I just wish pop showed him more appreciation and affection than he did when my oldest brother was a little boy.

My brother Steve, three and a half years my senior, was gifted with great intelligence and a splendid work ethic but could be selfish and sometimes he was cruel to me. Like Rick, Stephen was deliberate and dogged, but he also had a brilliance Rick did not possess.

Although Steve was deeply sensitive, as I was, and like me he had the Moseley temper, he never seemed to let his powerful moods or anger derail his desire to do well at everything he did. He kept his eye on the prize of accomplishing whatever he set out to do, so his anger or moodiness narrowed his focus to carry out whatever task was at hand.

For far too long, I was too self-involved, both as a boy and a man, to give much thought to how my brothers handled their own difficulties dealing with dad.

At any rate, back to kindergarten now, dad got a great picture of my graduation and somehow I shook hands with my principal before he handed me my diploma.

What I learned from this was to avoid getting into an open conflict with my father over something he wanted me to do. If I was clear about anything it was you did not want to be the DIRECT object of my father's rage. I was about to learn this in a big, BIG WAY.

Life Without Training Wheels

As the wrench in dad's hand gripped the lug nut on the first training wheel of my used red bike, backing it off its bolt, I remember watching

him in utter futility. *"I can't stop him." "I'm gonna die now and there's nothing I can do about it!"* With every turn of his wrench, I could hear him say, not literally but in my imagination, *"You know how to play. I'm going to teach you how to work."*

"Why the hell does riding a bike have to be a lesson about work, anyway," I puzzled, or at least I would have if I hadn't been petrified.

The world of being a boy and the hazards of becoming a man were about to collide in a way that forever changed me.

In theory, putting my bike on the sharp slope of our driveway, sans training wheels but not sans me, would give me a runny-go and some needed speed. Speed would give me momentum which ought to help my balance, and clearly balance was the key to riding a bike.

All this had a certain logic, but I wasn't a disciplined test pilot, nor was I feeling logical! I was four going on five and I was terrified!

On that overcast and temperate summer morning in 1957, our driveway seemed like Mount Everest to me. To my left, as I stood trembling atop the world's tallest peak, a wall buttressed our front yard. Topped by three tall pine trees, this cinder block partition tapered out, curving left and growing in height until it stood some ten feet high and tied into the north end of our home.

Dad was wearing his weekend project uniform; khakis pants, a white tee shirt and black or cordovan shoes. No doubt I was in knock-off sneakers and shorts, also with a tee shirt, dressed like almost any boy my age. Preschool boys always look the same, somehow, even as styles evolve, and times change.

To this day I don't remember if I actually rode my bike, or not.

When I go back to picture this event, what comes up for me are grey, unfocused images. The sounds I hear are muted, like a slow-motion movie with shouting drawn out at half volume and quarter-speed.

The people present, except for my father, stand as blurred and darkened statues, frozen in time and my memory. As far as I know, mom didn't know, *or more likely she didn't want to know*, what was going on with my father and me. Mother was home, but though physically present, emotionally she was rarely there.

I remember my brothers standing by. I wish I'd asked them for HELP! Maybe they could have gotten dad to give me a break, but they, like me, were intimidated to the point of silence, if not stupor, by his dictates and demanding ways.

Maybe because Rick and Steve were older and could do things I could not, like work right alongside dad doing practical stuff, they existed in a world separate from mine. I was in a world of my own, and when I could avoid working with dad, which in those days I always dreaded, I would go off and play by myself.

I had a special place I'd hide in our tool shed in the back yard. It was cool and dark there and I'd turn the wheelbarrow dad stored there on its side blocking the open doorway and go into the world of my imagination.

My brothers and I weren't really playmates. We only came together as indentured servants when dad needed help around the house, like digging out an extra garage space, which thank God I was too small to do, or laying a patio after pouring a cement base, which I was big enough to handle in a supporting role.

On that occasion dad told me to hold a running hose over his head as he laid flat stones in the unformed cement he'd just poured from our cement mixer. In the sweltering heat that morning, he tied a bandana around his head to keep sweat from running down onto his glasses and clouding his vision. Pop said, *"Hold this hose over my head so I don't die of heatstroke."* And I thought, *"Are you crazy? Wait till its cooler to lay the damn stones. Why do you have to do everything so fast and always RIGHT NOW?"*

Anyhow, back on Mount Everest as dad hoisted me onto my bike, then gave me a gentle push, I shut him out in terror. Afraid of going too fast, terrified at being out of control, I deliberately steered into the wall, cutting the knuckles of my left hand as I tried to slow down using my body as a brake.

It didn't work, and the more I shut dad out, the angrier he got. I'd witnessed dad's fury before, but now it was fully directed at me.

Dad's screaming at me now, making me get back on the bike to go again and again and again. Each time he grabs and shakes me I cower, raging at him from within, yet trying to comply…

"Why are you doing this to me?"

"Why do you want to hurt me?"

"Why don't you care that I'm afraid?"

"Why won't you leave me alone?"

"Leave me alone." ***"LEAVE ME ALONE!"***

Every time he shook me, trying to guide me, doing his best to help me get past my fear, but acting like a madman, I pulled more and more

inside. In a way I had to deny, it was as if I was returning to Tyson Park and saying again,

"To the last I will grapple with thee!"

Amidst my father's shouts, my brothers and neighbors watched in stunned silence. It felt like the entire world was witnessing my abandonment, failure, and shame. No one knew what to say. They couldn't have stopped my father if they'd tried; nobody could.

At least that's how I saw it then.

Afterwards, we gathered at the kitchen table to eat tuna salad sandwiches laced with diced sweet pickles, or maybe it was the egg salad version that day.

There was a terrible, deafening silence.

I'm sure I was sniveling or maybe I was all cried out by then. I felt battered, numb, and ashamed. Mom said something to ease my pain, but dad, ever responsible to his obligation to toughen me up, said defensively: *"Well, if he's going to be a man, he's got to…"*

I don't recall how he finished the sentence. I didn't give a damn. From that moment till we finished eating it seemed no one uttered a word.

Each of us tried to survive my father's extremities and insanities, in his or her own way. Although we all evolved individual strategies to do so, culling tactics from one another we hoped would protect us from his wrath; none of us escaped unmarked by dad's drives, demons, and demands.

It was all I could do just to survive.

Rick got the worst of it because he was first born. He was stoic, yet so, so sad. My oldest brother seemed forlorn and beat down. Steve fought back, although I don't remember how. It seemed that was a better way to go but I was too afraid of dad to take him on directly. More to the point, I was probably petrified because I wanted to kill him. So, it was from mom that I learned how to handle pop. She followed his commands, was loyal to him even when he was abusive or wrong, and the two of them seemed to get along, so I copied her approach.

My father was never malicious, at least not intentionally so. When he lost his temper with us, it was because he wanted us to be smarter, or faster, or better at *"getting a good job;"* at achieving the ideal outcome of whatever stupid project he had us slaving away at.

Dad was such a titanic force that I never considered how much pain he was in; how much he wanted to help us avoid the horrors he endured growing up but rarely spoke about. Pop's heart was always in the right place, I just couldn't see this. It was all but impossible to see how much he loved us when he went OFF!

The best example of how his rage felt to me was depicted time and again by two actors I always loved, Kirk Douglas and George C. Scott. My father combined the charm and ferocity of both these men and would have given both a run for their money when it came to volcanic behavior.

It was not long after this that I began to say, almost as my default reaction to everything I did, *"So what, who cares,"* trying in my growing shame, futility, and rage to set boundaries that were already crashing down in an avalanche of self-contempt and subconscious, covert vengefulness.

My knuckles healed from this traumatic episode, but the bruised and bloody wounds to my psyche remained for years to come. Many times, in future days I would steer into walls of my own making, in a re-enactment of this pivotal event, and every time;

"To the last I will grapple with thee!"

Yet, amazingly, ironically, the most vividly joyful of my childhood memories, *once I'd learned to ride my bike on my own*, is that of my reckless freedom on two-wheels. Part of me quickly forgot my traumatic initiation on that hellish hill.

I became as fearless as I was bold.

In short order, I felt bullet-proof on my bike, and only the prospect of being put to work, a fate I avoided and grew more and more to hate, would crush my joyful world of play.

I wanted my life to be fun, adventurous, and carefree. When the men in our family were working, I began to imagine I was surrounded by a "force-field" which made me invisible; a protective shield that freed me from their scrutiny and exempted me from the slavishness of dad's projects.

Sometimes this worked. For dad's intense focus would so narrow on the task at hand, he would overlook my playful ways and the obligation he felt to make me into a man.

Rick never seemed to mind that I stayed as far away from the forced labor as I could. For me he had a gentle spirit that I was always drawn to. Steve, however, hated it when I disappeared from the cauldron of dad's projects, often to grab us water, or do anything peripheral to the action, just to get away.

Often I wondered why we couldn't play music while we worked or tell jokes and laugh. Why did work have to be such a pain in the ass?

When I couldn't escape a project, I'd imagine myself at play. Besides riding my bike, playing guns was my favorite pastime. It was great fun to battle friends my age, like my neighbor Scott Norman, and make the sound of rifle fire before toys made those sounds for you. When I got shot, I'd lie down momentarily, then get back up and fight some more. *"You can't do that, I just shot you! You're dead!"* my buddies or I would protest, depending on who had blasted who.

Our standard reply, no matter who had gone down was *"Un-uh, no way, you didn't kill me, you just wounded me!"*

I regret this never-say-die response didn't stick with me as my real life unfolded, but I had much work to do on myself before I could allow such resilience to abide.

Sadly, I never remember playing guns with Rick and Steve. Occasionally, the three of us would wrestle each other in the front yard. Steve would jump on me and rub my face in the lawn, then Rick jumped Steve, pulling him off me, and then I'd jump Rick for jumping onto Steve.

Through all this I always knew my oldest brother loved me and that he would look out for me. Stephen, I wasn't so sure of.

And yet I always loved Steve, too. He was often mean to me but nothing about the way he treated me had the toxicity of my interactions with dad. I never felt the obliterating force from Steve I felt from my father's messianic rage, even though I knew somehow that dad's animus had nothing to do with me.

Why and how I knew all this and how the complexities of love worked in the world of sibling relations reminded me years later of a memorable line from the movie *Shakespeare in Love*. *"I don't know how things resolve,* the line goes in my memory, *it's a mystery."*

And the ultimate mystery in my life was the interplay of love and hate continually taking place inside me and within my family.

A New Model is Replacing Me and SHE'S A GIRL!?!?!?

1957 had been a tough year. Dad made me bungee jump with my bike off Mount Everest and then on December 19th a new Moseley showed up. To make matters worse, she was a girl.

"Oh, God," I thought, *"I'm being replaced. Shit, they must not want me anymore. "Hum, three boys in a row. I was definitely supposed to be a girl. Hell, Steve was supposed to be a girl! If I'm not perfect now, I'll get kicked out of the family. If that happens, I won't have a place to eat or sleep. Where will I get popsicle money? When will I get to play? Oh, God, does this mean I have to go to* ***work****?!?! How much do gofers make?"*

"God help me if Dad finds out how mad I am at him. God help me if I find out how mad I am at myself."

Such were my subconscious concerns when I first greeted Diane Louise Moseley.

The day mom and dad brought sis home was hot for late December, way too warm for how bundled up she was. Her baby face was nearly beet red when I first laid eyes on my baby sis and I thought, *"Wow, doesn't mama see it's way, way too hot to have her wrapped up in all those blankets?"*

I showed off with apparent delight at our new addition. If I had concerns for my place in the family, AND I DEFINITELY DID, you would never know it as dad filmed this special occasion with his Bell and Howell movie camera.

The character of welcoming big brother to baby sister was one of my earliest acting roles. The dominant feeling I had about Diane was curiosity. I'd never been around a baby girl or any girl for that matter, and she seemed subtly but powerfully different from us boys. I couldn't pinpoint this difference, but the source of my anxiety centered on my shaky status. I didn't take my anxiety out on her, at least not in the first years of our relationship.

To my enduring shame, however, once I got into early adolescence, I terrorized my sister by chasing her with the lawnmower when we were outside and the vacuum cleaner when we found ourselves indoors. The pinnacle of my abuse was when I held the flame of a Bic cigarette lighter to the stem of a can of deodorant and directed its torchy blaze at her, trapping her in the upstairs hall bathroom.

To this day I'm upset at the way I treated her, and I periodically ask her again to forgive me. God bless her sweet heart, for although Diane too has our family temper and tendency towards vengeance, she never bore a grudge at me.

At least she didn't seem to.

Of all my siblings, Diane saw it all; she bore witness to the entire panoply of my parents' behavior and of how we, their progeny, adapted and responded to their good and bad traits. I think one reason she forgave me for terrorizing her was that Diane always saw I was in pain.

Sis and I seemed to have similar trajectories yet separate realities.

In some ways our new family member took pressure off me, almost as if she were my Guardian Angel. This is certainly a role Diane would take on in our relationship as adults.

For now, however, although I felt greater pressure to conform to my father's standards with her arrival, her presence seemed to soften dad, and I was all for that.

On Family Dynamics and Reversals of Fortune

The abandonment and betrayal I felt from Dad with the training-wheel episode became my excuse to go into hiding. Now, however, an equally alienating event occurred at home that sealed my commitment to go so far underground in my family that even I didn't realize the extent of my withdrawal. From this point forward, I was like a secret agent operating behind enemy lines.

What went down now also left me feeling that mom was no more my ally than dad was my champion.

As *"Baby Bobby"* a term of endearment Steve tormented me with, I was always, always, always trying to catch up with both my older brothers. On this particular day I not only caught up, I blew by them, BIG TIME!

Dad had just replaced our kitchen appliances and suddenly we had tons of giant cardboard containers at our disposal. My older brothers, always clever and inventive, decided to break up most of these cartons and make a runway on our steep driveway, keeping the best ones intact so we could race each other down the hill to our giant back yard.

My box, which I dubbed *Alligator I*, turned out to be the fastest of the lot. With every race, probably because I was a lightweight and created less friction, I beat the pants off Rick, Steve, and all comers.

To my amazement, I was now the champion of our entire neighborhood. Not bad for a squirt! Unexpectedly, I had arrived and I was in Hog Heaven. In triumph, I might have crowed a little too much, but I'd never won anything before, so strutting my stuff was understandable.

At long last I was not only a winner but undefeated and unbeatable, too.

"Now this," I reveled, *"is more like it. This is how things OUGHT to be around here!"*

All glory is fleeting and so it was now with my first triumph.

Mom called us inside for lunch and I quickly left our battleground to chow down. If I'd had my wits about me, I would have realized that something was amiss when I found myself eating alone. After all, on those rare occasions when we ate out or even at home, our practice as boys was always to say, *"I get to eat that if you don't want it!"*

As I wolfed down today's egg salad sandwich, eager to get back to my winning ways and wondering where my brothers were, I ambled from the kitchen to the dining room window that overlooked our back yard. There, at the foot of our runway, *Alligator I* was going up in flames!

MOM, MOM, I screamed, ***THEY'RE BURNING MY BOX. THEY'RE BURNING MY BOX!"*** Nothing could have been more devastating but then things got even worse.

Mother didn't lift a finger on my behalf. She didn't say a word to Rick and Steve.

I remember her glancing absent-mindedly at the demise of my golden chariot. She looked out the window in a preoccupied way, but for me her indifference was an unforgivable betrayal. This event, combined with the trauma of the training wheels, put the last nail in the coffin of what would now become my deep withdrawal into myself.

"I hate you! I hate every last one of you! I hate you and I'm gonna get you if it's the last thing I ever do!"

"Why don't I matter? I agonized, *why am I not worth loving, or protecting or being stood up for? Damn this family! Damn me! Damn everything!"*

"To the last I will grapple with thee!"

Then I thought; *"I'll show'em; I'll become a monster more powerful than the monsters they are! I'll become a monster they can't see!"* Such became my ***raison d'etre*** before I was five.

I felt hopeless, helpless, powerless, and invisible. Worse still, I became hell-bent to fight these feelings; to eradicate these hated emotions or to die trying. And I realize now that I held my breath as a toddler to obliterate these feelings by trying to obliterate myself.

Worse still, losing *Alligator I* highlighted something about mom that deeply troubled me.

In one sense, I couldn't have had a better mother. Mama made a beautiful, clean, and calm home for all of us. By all conventional standards, we were safe, secure, well-fed, and loved.

But there was something amiss with mom; something off.

Lois Virginia was the first of Dick and Irene Hawk's three children. Born in April of 1926, she kept her family's household from the age of ten because her mother worked long hours in the clothing trade.

Dick was a stern and exacting father. As his first born and only daughter, mom wanted his approval and feared his criticism, which could be both nitpicking and severe. Sometimes she would clean their family home on Chestnut Ridge in Kingsport, Tennessee not once but *twice*, just to make sure it was done right.

My mother's outstanding trait was determination, followed closely by her curiosity about whatever was going on around her and out in the world. But only to a certain point. She had high standards of her own, was honest, frugal, and loyal to a fault. What is more, mom had great endurance plus a naughty fun-loving side dad often quashed, but she also had a deep sense of emptiness.

Like everyone in our family, mom was filled with contradictions.

What puzzled me the most about mama was that she was deeply compassionate yet would shut down if I hugged her for more than a few seconds.

Intimacy was just not her thing.

I hated this part of her because when she froze me out, I felt second-rate.

I know my siblings felt the same way about this part of her.

When I started Kindergarten and elementary school, I also loathed how mom would turn vampire when I got home. I could literally feel

her sucking energy from me whenever she asked me how things were are school today.

She struggled with an existential loneliness she seemed ill-equipped to address.

I wish I'd asked her what was wrong; *"why do you need me to fill you up,"* I would have probed. But this part of her creeped me out. It made me want to get away from her and when mom leeched my energy, I did my best to keep a safe distance.

What I hated most about mom is that she would never, ever challenge dad when he went on one of his rampages. She feared for her own welfare if she crossed dad on any family issue. So, when her children came into conflict with him, not one of us could call on mother to stand up on his or her behalf.

The irony here is that mama was tender hearted. There was just something inside her that could not let anyone get too close. Her actions proved how much she loved us but as far as I can tell, and years later my sister Diane told me to my surprise that I was mom's favorite, something remained frozen in her soul.

Perhaps mother's greatest contradiction was that she was a great humanitarian but lacked the human touch. Especially with those closest to her. When it came to motherlove; to the idea of warmth, tenderness, and unconditional acceptance, sometimes it was there, sometimes not, and you never knew which type of mothering to expect.

Once again, I never asked my sibs how they felt about all this, nor did it occur to me to do so.

Hereto, mom's remoteness mirrored a detachment in both of my box-burning brothers.

It's a mystery to me that although I never doubted Rick and Steve loved me, we never deeply bonded, at least not when we were growing up. And it's odd, because I wasn't aware of my desire to be closer to them than I was. Things in our family were just the way they were, none of us had any other frame of reference, and no one ever challenged the self-isolating nature of our family's status quo.

Perhaps I wasn't the only one who felt haunted, alienated, and alone.

My brother Richard was one of the kindest, most soft-spoken, and sweetest people I ever knew. He loved me and was always, always protective of me in ways I wish I felt dad could have been. But I would not describe Rick as warm or easy to know. All his life he was shy and reserved about relating to others with anything like joyful banter or real spontaneity. I believe Richard felt so beat down by dad that he was reluctant to swing out in the world. At the same time, his reserve could not be blamed entirely on how dad treated him. Rick had a guarded constraint all his own.

Sadly, the infamous image of a Holocaust survivor comes to mind when I think on my oldest brother. The well-known film of this prisoner's liberation as he sat on a stretcher with his hands in a praying gesture revealed a person traumatized to the point of paralysis and split between two worlds. In the film he reached out for help but was terrified he would be beaten for doing so.

As an adult, Rick became something of a Renaissance man. In addition to his practical know-how, a trait he shared with dad, Rich loved classical music and was extremely well read, although much of

his reading ventured into the sci-fi realm. And when I pondered this and his adult habit of playing solitaire on his computer, it seemed a significant part of him sought escape into a world of his own.

My brother Stephen was something of a loner, too. Two and a half years younger than Rick, he probably had more friends, but neither of my brothers ever brought their buddies home. Steve was self-sufficient yet soulful; self-contained yet charismatic. You found yourself wanting to be with him and to please him. At least I did. So much so, that even though he put me down when we were boys, I've forgotten most of those episodes, and always adored him anyway.

What I most admired about Steve was that he excelled at everything he did. He made things look effortless, but that quality was hard won. He had polio as a child and overcoming that affliction, which lasted most of his formative years, gave him a sense of ambition and resolve only matched by my mother and father.

The most telling physical manifestation of Stephen's challenges was his withered right calf, which also resulted in his shortened right leg. As I understand it, and I could be in error here, a doctor treating Steve's polio cut the tendon of his right Achilles heel. I never learned why, and I don't think Steve did either.

Did being literally hamstringed light a rocket in my brother to excel? I think unquestionably it did.

Stephen was very accomplished early in life; he was a Merit finalist in high school, voted Best All Around in his senior class, was a champion footballer, elected Mr. Brainerd High by his classmates, was offered a full scholarship to Yale, and the girls loved him. But it was only after we became adults that I learned all these achievements didn't boost his self-confidence as much as they should have.

To me he was an amazing person.

Again, *I never asked* him why his early achievements didn't raise his confidence. Perhaps all the things he did compensated for but did not really salve an inner sensitivity that he could not admit to, understand, or sometimes control.

Stephen was deeply emotional but not open. He was also profoundly determined by his habits and patterns, which became entrenched. Like most of us, he bore grudges, too.

As adults we got much closer. My brother reached out to me when he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in his mid-sixties. Yet even though we were in constant communication from that time forward, Stephen was never as transparent with me as I wish he could have been.

I've used the metaphor of ghostliness to describe my family life in this memoir, and it applies to my sister, too.

Diane, who took my place as the baby of the family, was anything but remote, but she too, was a contradiction. Part of her seemed mute to me, at least when we were growing up. Maybe as the youngest and only girl it was overwhelming for her to witness everything that went on in our family. Maybe, I was mute and projected that trait onto her. Maybe, early on, she didn't have words or sufficient experience to articulate how she felt about our family or how she saw herself.

Sis, however, was no milk-toast. Diane had something to say, and she was going to say it.

When I was eleven and she was six, we got into a fight in the playroom in our home on Missionary Ridge. I punched her in the gut, and she wacked my shin with a two by four construction block. My

sister had guts, was not afraid to fight, and was no push over. What is more, she was savvy enough to keep a low profile if speaking up or making a fuss would trigger dad's wrath.

For all these reasons, I was puzzled by Diane's tendency as an adult to pull back from going all-in out in the world. This was not a function of her competence. She became a superb producer for the NBC affiliate in Nashville and she was also successful with projects she produced independently, but Diane suffered from an incredible inner pressure to excel, dad's legacy to her, and this was hard to live with, much less sustain.

My sister seemed to gravitate towards periods of intense, all-out effort at work, and later in areas of her health or her other interests, followed by longer periods of inactivity or even dormancy.

Slow and steady wins the race was not Diane's *modus operandi*. She seemed able to sprint with the best, but at least from my perspective, steady, long-distance running was not her *forte*.

Of course, I tended to withhold myself and still do. Perhaps I'm projecting this onto my brethren and how they went about their business, but even if I am, I still saw this tendency in all my siblings.

With all the angst and drama happening inside everyone in my family, however, my ability to recover from the murder of *Alligator I* was remarkable.

In one moment, I was devastated by monsters and resolved to out-monster them all. In the next, I was back in the thick of things, banging heads with Scott Norman, Joel Cohen, and the rest of my neighborhood buddies.

Sometimes my handicap at being the fledgling of the family saved me, too. My lack of stature worked on occasion to my advantage, although I would never have thought so at the time.

I was standard size for a boy my age. By now, going on age six, I could pretty much keep up with everybody on my bike, but physically there were other things I couldn't handle, like climbing to the top of the tallest pine tree in our front yard.

Rick and Steve were amazing about coming up with things to do, and now they invented the greatest ride ever. It all started when they found a giant pulley Dad stashed in the basement of our home on Brookfield Avenue. The fact that he'd tucked this device away should have been a clue he didn't want it messed with, but their idea for using the pully was too cool for my brothers to consider that.

Atop the wall I'd steered my bike into were three massive pine trees. They rose, it seemed, a thousand-million feet into the clouds. Easily fifteen or twenty feet tall, Rick and Steve decided to climb the tallest tree, pulley in hand, rig a rope from the treetop above and across our infamous driveway, and then tie it off on a very stout tree in our neighbor's yard, far, far below.

Then they found or cut off an old broomstick, slid it through the hook at the bottom of the pulley, and held on for dear life as each one in his turn ***FLEW*** all the way down to the Flemister's backyard.

"Oh, wow, let me try, let me, let me," I exclaimed, pleading for a boost so I could fly too. But I was too big to carry and too small to climb. *"Forget it runt, if you can't climb, you can't ride,"* was Steve's dismissive reply.

"Shit, I never have any fun," I moped, but suddenly my entire perspective changed.

Just as Rick was in mid-flight, dad came home unexpectedly for lunch and drove right underneath him.

"What the hell are you doing," my angry father screamed as he jumped out of his car. *"Get down from there! That pulley is an exhibit in a lawsuit! I can't leave anything around here without you TWO trying to ruin it!"*

Suddenly being powerless and invisible wasn't all that bad.

CHAPTER II:
Moving to the House on the Hill

As our family grew and Dad became a partner in the law firm of Noone, Moseley and Noone, moving became a practical possibility as well as a necessity. I don't remember much about when or how long we looked for a new home, only that when we found it, it opened up a whole new world to me.

A Change of Venue: 468 North Crest Road

It was after dark. We were coming home from a day of picnicking at Lake Chickamauga. At first, we drove past it. When we backed up to take a look, what we saw at 468 North Crest Road was a large, 4-bedroom home of some 5000 square feet, whatever that meant.

A palace that stood atop Missionary Ridge. It was situated on a slight grade that ran gently downhill from the house's north side, where the screen porch was, to the Sunroom at the south end of the acre and a half sized property. This was the biggest house I'd ever seen. Inside, every room seemed as big as our entire home on Brookfield Ave. Well, not everyone, but the living room, for sure.

Dad bought our new house for $37,500 with a 1% mortgage on a thirty-year note and we moved into our new digs just before Thanksgiving, 1959. This dwelling of light and darker shades of reddish-brown brick became, and always will be, the place I go to in my imagination when I think of HOME.

I was nearly seven years old now.

Except for the enormous distance between the Dining Room and the Sunroom, an expanse that seemed to run the length of a football field, I didn't think too much, one way or another, about our new home. When we moved in, we had so little furniture that you could hear your echo when you shouted out; *"How will we ever fill this castle up…"*

What I most recall about our new digs, which is also what I grew to love about it, was the whistling of the eaves in the fall, winter and sometimes even in early spring.

When the wind came up on Missionary Ridge, the sound our house made in reply was a beautiful, haunting, and unique visitation. I had never heard a house talk before. Many a night, I lay in bed listening to this other-worldly serenade. My brother Steve told me that this sound came from the copper weather stripping that framed the wooden windows of our new abode.

Through years of repainting, these windows would never fully shut, and when the Ridge running wind hit the unsecured and exposed copper stripping, a mournful, wail cried out in varying pitches and volumes according to the force and direction of the breeze. It was the feeling of the sound, not the facts of its origin, that captured me. Just thinking of those unique tones, especially those that haunted our chilly winter nights, takes me back there every time.

Our view of the city of Chattanooga was amazing, too. I didn't admit it back then, of course, simply because it meant so much to dad. It wasn't that I dismissed his dream house come true, I was just preoccupied with my own world. Besides, I could feel it when he fished for affirmation as he waxed poetically about the beauty of our view.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, OK its cool, but it's not the greatest thing I ever saw. So, stop trying to get me to say it is…"

It really was something though.

Once, many years later when all my siblings were adults with children of their own, Stephen's family was visiting the house on Crest Road. His youngest son, David Patrick brought a friend with him whose name escapes me now. As this little boy took in the view from our home atop Missionary Ridge, he gasped in astonishment viewing the evening lights that illuminated the city of Chattanooga. *"Look,"* he exclaimed, *"diamonds!"*

My Father as a Son

One of my fondest recollections of childhood came from an exchange that passed between Granddaddy Moseley, a big, frail, and gentle man by the time I spent real time with him and his youngest son, my dad.

Grandaddy had come to visit us on Crest Road. It was the early sixties now, and I was somewhere between nine and ten. The patriarch of the Moseley clan, John Alfred Moseley wore light, seersucker clothes and a broad brimmed straw hat. Sometimes, after I got home from school, I'd walk with him when he took his afternoon stroll.

As we ambled along our stretch of Missionary Ridge, I felt like I was walking next to a kinder, gentler version of King Kong. I was astonished by the size of his hands and feet. My paternal grandfather was by now a white-haired man in his seventies, and he had a quiet, humorous, and unassuming intensity.

Over the years, mostly due to "getting religion," a phrase I'd heard but didn't yet understand, Grandaddy had tempered the fire in his belly that came out as fits of temper within his generation of our family.

Once, when John had called on his son Raymond to say a prayer before dinner, my dad came up with this; *"Oh Lord, we thank thee for this meal. We feel indebted to thee for this feed, indeed…* At which point John backhanded dad, knocking him under the sewing machine in the family dining room.

There was a darker episode Pop never spoke about, too. John once went to prison for manslaughter. This was a family secret we were never meant to know, but my cousins, Uncle Paul's kids, told Rick and Steve and I picked it up from them.

The story was that during the Great Depression John was a guard at the Eastman Kodak plant in Kingsport, Tennessee. A former employee showed up drunk at the gate on my grandfather's watch, demanding access to the plant. This fellow persisted and just wouldn't take no for an answer. John wound up punching the drunk, who staggered off, fell headfirst into a puddle, and drowned.

Grandaddy served a year in prison for this.

All this had long since passed. These days my grandfather was a devout Christian, read the Bible daily, and was a gifted carpenter who had built ten churches in various towns in the Smokey Mountains almost all on his own.

My brother Rick told me a story about our grandfather from our days on Brookfield that seemed to jibe with his single-handed construction of the Smokey Mountain church. During the time dad replaced our kitchen appliances there, he realized that he needed to expand the kitchen, too.

Grandaddy Moseley was visiting us at the time and while dad was at work Rick saw grandad use a hacksaw blade to behead every nail securing the outer wall of the kitchen to our Brookfield home. When dad got back home from work, they built a jig together and slid the outer wall away from the body of the house, then framed in the extra space expanding our kitchen.

Grandad had an interesting habit that came from working so much with his hands. He would regularly and meticulously paint cuts on his fingers with mercurochrome. Consequently, he had mostly purple hands.

Inevitably, Dad had a weekend project on and so, as always, there was work to be done. Among today's tasks was securing the railing of the basement stairs at our Crest Road house to its cinder block foundation wall.

There were four or five brackets that locked this banister into that partition. The railing was around fourteen feet long and each bracket, save for the one at the foot of the stairs, was secure.

Dad was stumped over how to seat this last bracket because the hole in the wall was too wide for the bolt that fastened the railing there.

Presented with this problem, grandaddy shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly and said, *"That's easy, son. Just stuff some large gage steel wool in there. When you drive the bolt it'll catch the wool, grip, and hold."* My dad, always the one to come up with ingenious solutions to all manner of challenges, looked at his father in amazement.

I had never seen dad look like this and I never saw him look this way again.

"Would that really work?" my father's face exclaimed, looking like he was my age at the time.

"*Watch,"* said Grandaddy, as he successfully applied his solution to the task at hand.

"Well, I'll be damned," my father's face beamed, as if to say, *"I never would have thought of that."*

It was great to see dad could be just like me.

New Neighborhood, New Life, New School

These next few stories come from my days at Missionary Ridge Elementary School. More like a huge, rambling estate than a modern 1960's style teaching facility, this grand three-story building made mostly of brick was built in 1915. A one-of-a-kind structure that sadly burned to the ground in 1992, it sported massive ground floor windows, oversized, airy rooms and classroom ceilings some twenty feet high with hallway ceilings even higher than that.

General Douglas MacArthur's father, Arthur, a young officer from Wisconsin, had won the Congressional Medal of Honor at the Battle of Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863. The 18-year-old MacArthur inspired his regiment during an uncoordinated and spontaneous frontal assault of Union forces against entrenched Confederate soldiers ***at the very site of our school****.*

Legend had it that the battle started because Rebel sharpshooters were sniping at the Union forces at the bottom of the Ridge. This enraged the Yankees, who spontaneously and without orders charged up to the crest of the ridge and drove off the confederate forces.

During the charge, the regimental flags of the Union were carried in front, so that every flag-bearer was constantly a target, causing immense casualty among them. MacArthur seized the flag from a fallen comrade and planted it on the crest of Missionary Ridge at a particularly critical moment, shouting "On Wisconsin!" He was brevetted colonel in the Union Army the following year. Only 19 years old at the time, he became nationally recognized as "The Boy Colonel."

There were several large monuments on the school grounds, commemorating the feats of daring-do that had happened there, and folks from all over would come to visit the battle-site. We used to climb all over these monoliths, as other students in the region did, to have pictures made for their school yearbooks.

It's a wonder no one ever fell off a shrine and broke his or her neck. Perhaps the spirits that look over battlefields felt enough harm had come to folks on Missionary Ridge.

My favorite teachers at Ridge school were Mrs. Johnson, who taught third grade and Mrs. Cobble who was my fourth-grade instructor. I enjoyed their classes because I liked them, but I was an indifferent student. The curiosity that marked my earlier childhood seemed to evaporate in proportion to how much I hid from my parents, and I found it hard to engage with any particular subject at school.

At the Ridge I was out of the full-time grip of my parents for the first time, but this change in circumstances didn't open me up. My biggest recollection of these times, other than the stories that follow here, was an epic battle we had during the 1960 Presidential election. Dad was an independent who always voted Republican, so I was in the Nixon camp. One day at recess, a whole bunch of students lined up across from each other, according to their allegiance to Kennedy or

Nixon, forming impromptu skirmish lines. When someone said charge, that's exactly what we did. It's a miracle no one was hurt, but I don't remember a single casualty from this episode.

Starting Over with Charlotte Thurman

Mom was running late, as usual.

The new school in our new neighborhood, which I was attending today for the first time, was deathly quiet. More important, I was deathly afraid. I was repeating first grade, which the authorities had already decided. Looking back now, I think I was a depressed little boy and that impacted my schoolwork. I remember feeling insecure that day, starting at a new school.

By the time Mom got me there, classes had already begun which made me feel even worse.

You could hear a pin drop in the cavernous hallways of Missionary Ridge Elementary. Once Mom learned ***from the principal's office*** where I was supposed to go, matters got even worse. She left me alone to knock on the door to Mrs. Powell's first grade class.

Some Mom I had.

"What kind of stupid, drunk or brain-dead stork dropped me down this family's chimney anyway!"

I don't remember how I got in the door, but I was seated in the rear of the class, sharing a double-wide desk with a tall, gangly girl who had freckles and wore horn-rimmed glasses. Suddenly, our teacher Mrs. Powell gave us instructions, but I was so embarrassed and anxious that I didn't hear what she told us to do.

"I'm already late. I don't dare ask her to repeat what she just said, I thought, *now what do I do?"*

I looked over at freckle-face, to see what she was writing. Puzzled by what I saw, I copied it down anyway. Then we were told to pass our papers forward.

Suddenly, Mrs. Powell got mad and called ME to the front of the room.

"Oh God, I thought, *what have I done now?"*

I just sleepwalked to her desk in front of everyone. *This is not the beginning I had in mind*. I can see her thin-lipped scowl and her narrow, National Lampoon-like spectacles even now, as in view of the whole class Powell confronted me with two papers. Still not comprehending, she pressed them under my nose.

I had copied Charlotte Thurmond's name on my paper instead of my own.

"What a way to start first grade ALL OVER AGAIN."

I'm not sure what happened next. Maybe my teacher got a ruler and slapped my hand with a *"Don't you ever, ever cheat again,"* love tap, or maybe she just threatened to. I felt like a complete idiot.

"Welcome to your new world, Bozo!"

Mrs. Johnson's Art Prize and the Ice Cream Sandwich

"What a stupid idea," I thought, as Mrs. Johnson, my third-grade instructor explained how our art contest worked; *"Why have an art competition with black construction paper and white chalk? Art is*

supposed to be colorful, isn't it? Why not use purple paper with chalk of assorted colors?"

Then my new teacher said, *"The student with the best drawing will win an ice cream sandwich!"*

"Oh. Boy, all right! Gimmie my stuff, I'm ready to go!"

Unlike Mrs. Powell's class, which had desks set side by side in pairs, and in double rows from front to back, Mrs. Johnson, who had a great big nose but was warm and caring, had all her desks set in a square so everyone could face inward and see each other. *"This is a much better way to teach and learn,"* I judged approvingly.

I was glad Mrs. Johnson was different than the witchy Powell, who'd slapped my hand or threatened to when I went *temporarily insane* by becoming Charlotte Thurmond, a malady that could befall anyone, or so I'd heard on TV.

Mrs. Johnson was fun! She'd get mad quick if anyone sassed her, but she'd laugh out loud with us, too. She was great with people, and I would have hired her and given her a big salary if I had my own company. She smoked as I recall, but I didn't mind that. Mrs. Johnson was real, smart, and down to earth. I liked her.

As I remember, she gave us an hour to create a picture, but I'm sure we had less time than that. The theme Mrs. Johnson gave us was *"coming to school,"* but maybe I recall it that way because that's the kind of picture I made.

Anyway, I drew a picture of a mummy lying underneath the old bridge my parents took to get to the Ridge. On top of the bridge, I drew a car driving south with broad, beaming headlights as it came rolling over the gilded overpass. There was also a smaller, curvy road that

snaked under the bridge. It passed right by my mummy, so I put the lower road in my picture, too.

I guess there were twenty-five kids in Mrs. Johnson's class. When she announced I'd won the prize, I was ecstatic. I hadn't won anything since our box races at Brookfield Ave. and unlike then, my pride and joy could not be burned up and obliterated. Better still, I got to keep my drawing and eat my prize, too! And best of all, no one could ever take it away from me.

When I picked out just the right ice cream sandwich and plucked it from the freezer in our school cafeteria, my mouth watered in delightful anticipation. As I strode back to my seat, preening in triumph, the woman at the cash register said,

"Whoa, where do you think you're going?"

"I'm gonna eat my ice cream sandwich," I replied, with a slight tinge of outrage, thinking to myself, *"Who are you to challenge me?!? Haven't you been informed of my victory; don't you know who I am?!?"*

Well, that's fine and dandy, the register lady said, picking up on my lofty disdain with an equally indignant comeback, *but if you want that ice cream sandwich it'll cost you a dime!"*

"This is an outrage, I now silently bristled, *"Just who the hell do you think you are?* I thought, *I won this prize fair and square! Mess with me now and I'll crush you!"*

Slamming my tarnished prize on the counter, but careful not to crush it, I now marched up to the teacher's lunch table in barely contained fury. Normally, I spent most of my energy hiding how

volatile I could be. This was the first time the diva side of my personality came out for all to see.

"Mrs. Johnson, they won't give me my prize!"

In my delusion of grandeur, I thought there must have been a big, school-wide announcement that I had won the third-grade art prize. Mrs. Johnson just laughed at my haughtiness, reached into her purse, and handed me a dime for the cashier.

The Sincenset

My first attempt at effective storytelling was also an abject failure at spelling. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar have always been my Achilles heel, and even with spell-check, they probably always will be. What better way to share this with you than to reveal here my first unedited masterwork, written early in the fourth grade when I was nearly ten.

"The Lost Wallet"

One night as I walked down the street, I was pulled into the *allie.* Then I felt a jab at my back. It was blunt and felt like a gun. There, in the misty fog, a low *studdering* voice said, *"Give me the wallet!"* I said *studdering "I have no money"* but he would not believe me. *Suddy*, I felt something hit me and I fell but got back up. Earlier I did not *minchen* my *profoshen*. I am a *Sincenset*. Anyway, I saw him *clyming* up a water tower. I would have let him go but inside was a little hall light. It was a red light. Inside the light was a small germ in a tube, which I was trying to find the cause and cure for.

Well, back to the robber.

I knew he would catch the germ's *dezezee*. He was at the top of the water tower. Now suddenly he was red and white and black and blue and all the other colors. Then he turned to stone and fell off and the wallet flew right into my hands. Boy, what a job us *sincets* have. Back to the laboratory.

Dad positively howled with laughter upon reading my story. I was happy it brought him such pleasure, but vaguely aware that his delight had just as much to do with my incompetence as with my talent.

"What the hell, I thought, *I'll take approval however I can get it."*

A Fourth Grade Science Experiment and first time Therapy

Mrs. Cobble was my fourth-grade teacher. Her snow-white hair distinguished her as the oldest teacher at Missionary Ridge. She was gentle but firm with her students in a courtly way. Soft-spoken, but nobody's fool, her combination of grace and savvy reminds me now of Eleanor Roosevelt.

I can't imagine a person better suited to teaching children, then or now.

By this time, I'd graduated to the second floor at the Ridge. No one remarked on this but to me it meant I was moving up in the world.

The most vivid experience I had in fourth grade was my unexpectedly hazardous science experiment. Charged by Mrs. Cobble to come up with something scientific that I could demonstrate to the class, I chose to explain how water evaporated. As I completed this volatile, extremely complicated process to underwhelming applause, I began to break down the materials I used in my presentation.

The first thing I grabbed was my tripod.

Suddenly, my demonstration of evaporation erupted into a scalding clash with CONDUCTION!

My hand felt like a combination of white-hot super glue and silly putty. Stifling the pain with an embarrassment that trumped my physical agony, I winched, but didn't make a sound.

Mrs. Cobble saw all this and became concerned for me.

Shortly after my science experiment, a woman started coming by once or twice a week to take me to a separate room and talk with me. We'd go up to a room somewhere on the third floor, and she'd ask me questions for an hour, or so, and then take me back to class.

This was something new in the world of education; an attempt to address and effectively treat psychological hang-ups that inhibited performance. In retrospect, I believe this was a step in the right direction. The inhibitions it sought to address then have morphed today into an institutional attempt to eliminate not only low performance, but all perceived cultural inequality and victimization.

In my view, the initiatives of Woke culture don't work. Over emphasis on diversity and inclusion derails the educational process for the sake of preventing minorities from having their feelings hurt and shuts down students from risking innovative explorations because they fear being perceived as politically incorrect.

The chief impression I got from my therapy sessions was that I was screwed up. When Dad declined to have me see a psychologist, as the school now recommended, I figured I wasn't worth fixing.

Dad was an ex-fighter pilot in the Navy, however, so he never ignored warning signs. Although he decided not to put me in the hands

of experts he deemed crazier than I might or might not be, he now began a campaign to bring me out of my shell.

Pop began with a direct approach to assess what was going on with me and what I needed.

It went down like this;

We had a coal furnace at home. Rick and Steve's job was to remove the clinkers (the waste product of the burnt coal) and take them to the street in heavy metal trash cans. My job was to bring these empty cans back up to the furnace, which I often forgot to do.

I was playing in the side street that fronted our driveway one day when Dad came home from work. I waved to him as he pulled his new maroon Chevy Chevelle coupe into our two-car garage.

It was late fall now and my father was wearing his grey and black herringbone overcoat and a grey Knox hat. *"Hi, Dad"* I said, as he got out of his car, whereupon dad said, *"Son, are you afraid of me?* The abruptness of his query stopped me in my tracks. No warmup, no chit chat, no preliminaries; he just cut straight to the jugular.

As clear as day, I remember thinking *"UH OH, I'm scared to death of Dad, but how do I tell him, what should I say?"*

What happened now was a short but furious internal debate; the angel on my right shoulder said; *"OK kid, here's your chance! Speak up and tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God.*" The devil on my left shoulder said; *"Dummy up! If you tell him you're terrified of him, you're done for. Remember you've sworn to beat this bully in a battle for supremacy. Fess up now and he wins."*

Of course, I wasn't conscious of this point counterpoint at the time, but the truth or consequences time bomb was ticking. I had to say something, so I gulped and semi-whispered *"No."*

In that moment, I secretly hoped the trial lawyer in Dad would smoke me out. Sadly, he accepted my answer and said; *"Then son, why don't you bring up the trash cans?"*

I wish dad dug a little deeper here. He was an expert in cross-examination, a pro at ferreting out the truth. Many times, I've wondered what would have happened if I'd said; *"You bet I'm scared of you, and I'm mad as hell about it!"*

Who knows how things might have changed for me if I'd found the courage to tell my father how I really felt about him? Maybe if I reconsidered my reply and told him the truth, I could've gone in a whole new direction, but I never really considered telling him how I felt about him after this happened.

Oh, how I wish I had.

Sir George Beagle

My father was no quitter and he never quit on me. One of his strategies to bring me out, and it was a good one, was to give me something to love and care for. He was trying to put me in the position of a nurturer.

As it happened, I was watching TV, my favorite means of escape, when my father came upstairs to the playroom the evening of my eleventh birthday. He had a pure-bred beagle puppy in his hands and put it in my lap. I called him Sir George, and he came at the end of a long, unhappy line of dogs and a rabbit that had been my earlier pets.

"Shit, just what I need, another dog!" I thought, as I moped bleakly while George nuzzled me. Georgie was warm, friendly, and soft to the touch. He was the nicest dog I'd ever had. Most of my previous K-9's had been mutts. I really don't remember what became of them, and now, sadly, I was in no frame of mind to love this sweet little beagle who was barely past his puppy stage. It wasn't so much that I mistreated George, as I neglected him. I've always enjoyed dogs, and I've always had good interactions with them, but I just felt loveless and unlovable.

I didn't realize that loving Georgie was possible when I felt so empty and deficient inside. I also didn't realize how angry and hurt I felt all the time. I just didn't have it in me to care for anything, including myself.

I wish I knew then that my pattern of thinking was just digging me deeper into a black hole.

Once more, just like the episode where pop asked me point blank if I was scared of him, I wish I admitted how angry and hurt and ashamed I felt. Blaming pop for my problems helped me evade the simple fact that I had put myself in this state of mind by my own self-condemnation and stubbornness.

Dad was right. My loving George would have been wonderful for both of us.

Everyone liked Sir George and he liked them, too. His friendliness probably got him kidnapped. For when I came home from school one day, he was nowhere to be found. Dad and I talked about what to do to find him and I recall the two of us driving along the Ridge to see if we could rescue him and bring him home, but my heart wasn't in it.

The truth is I never really lifted a finger to rescue him.

Years later, I was living in New York City and doing a role play therapy session utilizing my experience with Georgie. For the first time my remorse and guilt at abandoning my little beagle came up and overwhelmed me.

Sir George Beagle is long gone now. An elder in Dog Heaven, I'm sure, he was more of a joy and comfort to me than I realized. I hope while he was still in this life, he found the love and affection he deserved.

Knowing Georgie, when I see him again, I'll bet he forgives me.

I hope so.

Breathing Room

One thing that usually brightened my childhood was when we visited mom's parents. The Hawk household in Knoxville was half the distance to the Moseley homestead in Kingsport, and we'd often go there while dad flew one weekend a month with the Naval Reserve.

What I liked about grandmother and granddaddy's place was that there was lots of breathing room. I didn't have to DO anything when I was there, there were no weekend projects, no ***work*** to be done, so when I was there, I always felt I could simply be.

Richard Frank Hawk, my granddad, loved to laugh, enjoy a good story, and kick back and RELAX with a beer. A man of medium height and build with a balding pate, granddaddy's high cheek bones suggested he had some native Indian blood. He had a dry wit, was charming when he chose to be, and he could be disarming. He also had no tolerance for bullshit and didn't suffer fools. My oldest brother,

who was named after him, thought Mr. Hawk would have been a helluva gambler.

Now a retired foreman from the Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge, where he had worked on the atomic bomb, Dick Hawk was a gifted and resourceful craftsman. A great teacher with a patient, Socratic style, he'd take my brothers and me through the process of learning a new skill, like shooting his .22 gauge rifle, in a step-by-step fashion that was never hurried.

Unlike dad, granddaddy was always very thorough with his instructions.

He would think out loud, as we went through whatever we were up to. "*What if we did this,* he would say, *"would that work best here? How bout if we did that, what do you think would happen then?"* He always included us in the process and made us feel respected, useful, and valued.

I remember thinking; *"I wish dad could be like this."*

By the time we'd finished a venture with Dick, we felt good about ourselves and the new skills we'd acquired. He showed us love by giving us his time and teaching us how to do things, especially how to think.

Grandmother was always good to me, too, but she was at work all the time. Irene Bishop Hawk was a jobholder in an era in the south when that was rare for a married woman with three children. She loved the independence working afforded her and was devoted to the clothing business. I remember her for her stylish outfits and for how she cried.

Whether we were coming or going grandmother would always tear up. This struck me as odd because whenever we were around, she was always away selling dresses, so how could she get to know us, and if she didn't really know us, how could she miss us?

Except for holidays, and often even then, Irene was rarely home. Then again, the fact that she spent most of her free time with mom and Diane showed my perception of her was probably based on the limited time I spent with her. My sister Diane loved her warm and nurturing ways.

The thing I liked best about grandmother is that she never bossed me around unless I got out of line. Then she'd put her foot down, but mostly she was cool, hip, and unassuming. Irene, like mama, was always up for a new adventure, even though she seemed to be nursing some new malady whenever I saw her. Grandmother showed us love by giving us nice clothes and a 10 or 20-dollar bill on our birthdays or at Christmas.

The Hawk homestead was a two-story, three-bedroom home that my grandfather built as he approached retirement. It had a terra-cotta roof and was situated at the center of a five-acre plot which included a two-car garage, with separate bays barely wide enough to fit one car apiece.

This double garage also had a loft space and there was a separate workshop behind it that overlooked Beaver Creek, a waterway that formed the north, east, and south boundaries of the Hawk homestead. The entrance to the main house faced Solway Road, a highway on the western extreme of the property. The Hawk's place was large and rambling with trees lining the creek and an orchard on site. It was a great place to run, play and explore.

Dick built his dream home with the help of his two sons and my father. Construction was nearing completion, and granddaddy was facing the house from top to bottom with a sectioned veneer called perma-stone, when a nosy passer-by pulled into the driveway.

Apparently, my dad and Mr. Hawk strongly agreed on at least one point; *"Never bother a man while he's working; especially by asking stupid questions."*

Seeing that the perma-stone was being laid from the gutter down, this intruder, a middle-aged lady with a pompous manner, looked up at my granddaddy and said; *"I say, how do you keep that stonework up?"* Never one to suffer fools, Dick curtly replied, *"Helium."* Then he turned his back to her and got back to work.

My grandfather was a reformed wild man. A unique brand of hellion who could only have been bred in the south. He was over his heavy drinking and skirt chasing by the time I came along, but what remained of his wild days was a raw vitality that his meticulous nature kept in harness like a turbocharged Ferrari. Whatever the speed limit was in these pre-interstate highway days, I'll bet Dick's standard driving pace was twenty miles per hour faster than whatever was posted.

Dad always worried about us riding with granddad because he'd once been such a lead-footed hell-raiser. What pop didn't realize is that his grandchildren brought out Dick's protective side. Granddad never drove over sixty with one of us in his car.

Looking back now, I see my grandfather made a deliberate effort to keep himself in check whenever he was with his grandkids. Of course, it didn't always work. One day, when we went to a lawn and garden store on Kingston Pike, someone boxed us in. Granddaddy,

who was blind in one eye, started muttering a spicy litany at the stupid idiot who blocked our exit.

As he struggled to extricate us from the parking lot, hearing this side of him made me laugh. Still, I never saw him lose his temper outright. Dick Hawk had an unmistakable edge but when my brothers and sister were around it always showed up as wry, knowing, and understated humor, with a touch of cynicism.

Thanks to grandmother, the rooms at Hawk Haven were abundantly appointed, each with a style all its own. The only thing I found disconcerting was the stairway to the upstairs bedrooms. It had no railing. When I was little, I was always afraid of falling off those stairs.

It seemed like most of our time was spent in the basement, which was part den and part storage area. There was also a large kitchen that comprised at least half of this subterranean space.

The only fixed rule at the Hawk house was that Saturday night at 8pm you'd be watching *The Lawrence Welk Show* on the telly or nothing at all. I thought Lawrence Welk sucked and very much preferred *The Saturday Night Movie*, but there were plenty of other things to do that made this one bummer easy to take in stride.

For example, there was granddaddy's twenty-two rifle, the one he'd taught me and my brothers how to shoot. There was sneaking a sip of his beer while he was underneath his car changing the oil. (*It was awful, but I'm sure he left it on the front fender of his yellow and white Studebaker just so I could try it*).

I also loved the musty smell of the attic-like space above his garage. That's where he stored his now cobwebbed pipes after he quit smoking cold turkey just before I was born. Other than shooting acorns

in the creek, which was my favorite thing to do at the Hawk's, I don't remember what I did with granddaddy. What I recall in rich detail, however, are the stories I heard about him.

Once, my grandmother's car broke down when she was away from home. When Irene complained at what she'd been charged to replace her Buick's timing belt, Dick got so mad he drove forty miles from Kingsport to Morristown, where the breakdown happened, to beat up the mechanic who ripped her off.

All this took place near the end of World War II when gas rationing was still in effect. Dick got one weekend off a month. In that time, he had to drive from Oak Ridge where he worked on an electro-magnetic process to harvest U-235 for the atom bomb, to the Hawk family home on Chestnut Ridge in Kingsport, and then back again. This was nearly a three-hundred mile round trip on old, two-lane roads. Add to that the trip to Morristown, and you can see how angry he was.

I guess we got our temper from both sides of the family.

Just as he arrived at the scene of the crime, Dick saw a state trooper in the waiting area of the repair shop having a coke. Now unable to speak with his fists, he walked up to the apparent proprietor and said, *"You own this place?"*

When the mechanic nodded yes, my granddaddy tore into him with a verbal tongue-lashing demanding where the hell he got off, charging Mrs. Hawk triple what the repair was worth. *"Well, I'm just starting over,* said the chastised cheat, *I just got back from Germany and the war."*

Unsatisfied but constrained by the presence of the trooper who was now enjoying the show, Dick shot back, *"Well, it's too goddamn bad the Krauts didn't shoot you down for the no-good dog you are!"* Then

granddaddy left, got back in his car, and drove a couple of blocks, steaming at the gills and still in need of physical satisfaction.

Torn by what to do next, Dick saw a palette of bricks next to a nearby Baptist church that was under construction. When he looked back and saw the trooper leave, grandad got out of his car, picked up a brick, drove back by the mechanic's repair shop, and threw it through the big picture window at the front of the thieving bastard's business.

All and all, I think that mechanic got off light.

My grandfather loved dogs. He bought a pair of Airedales and dubbed them Jack and Jill. When Jack got killed chasing cars on Solway Road, Mr. Hawk built a zip line for Jill, which kept her a safe distance from the deadly highway. She still had plenty of room to roam the big front and side yards and could even go round back to drink from Beaver Creek or sit in her doghouse.

One day a man named George stopped by for a visit. He had worked with Granddad at Y-12 before Dick retired. George was driving a new Plymouth station wagon and he clearly wanted to show it off. He chitchatted with Dick, who was busy spading his potato patch, and fished for a compliment on his new wheels. After a few minutes of inane talk George asked Dick, *"Say, where are your two Airedales?"* Apparently, Airedale Jill was nowhere to be seen.

George's query about the dogs gave granddaddy just the opening he needed. Continuing to work while he deliberately ignored the shiny new Plymouth, granddaddy said;

"Well, George, it's a sad thing. Ole Jack got killed chasing a car in the road and Jill took it awful hard."

"Oh, that's too bad," said George.

"Yeah, it got so bad Jill needed some therapy to get through it all," Dick went on.

"Therapy...? How'd that work?"

"Well, her shrink got her to counting cars and trucks to get her mind off her loss and she was making progress for a while, but that's all over now."

"What in the world went wrong, Dick?"

"These goddamn new station-wagons came along, and she didn't know if they were cars or trucks. Confused her so bad she had a nervous breakdown!"

George turned three shades of red, took off in his slandered vehicle, scattering the gravel in Dick's driveway as he went, and never again bothered grandaddy when he was working.

This next story was the result of an auto accident granddad had in his front yard. Solway Road made a long straightaway that passed in front of the Hawk's place, but it was only a two-lane highway with not much of a shoulder on either side of the pavement.

Granddaddy drove home at the front of what became a protracted line of traffic as he waited for oncoming vehicles to pass so he could pull into his driveway. Just as Dick began his left-hand turn, some impatient jackass tried to pass him at high speed on his right side and clipped the rear end of grandad's hunchbacked 544 Volvo, knocking his car some sixty feet into his front yard.

Dick got a pinched nerve in his neck from this collision, resulting in some terrible, recurring headaches. One day when he got one of these mind-benders, granddad couldn't read the dosage of the

medication he was supposed to take. He reasoned that if some medicine was good, more was better, so he took most of the bottle, and blinded himself in his right eye.

But all this is just the background to my favorite story about R.F. Hawk.

One day when Dick got yet another headache, he phoned his youngest son, my uncle Larry and asked him to come over right away.

"Dad, what's wrong," Larry asked as soon as he got there.

Dick said, *"Larry, go out into the shop and get my rubber mallet."*

"Why?"

"Because I want you to hit me on the back of the head with it just as hard as you can."

"Hell, Dad, you're crazy," Larry protested, *"if I do that, I could kill you."*

Without missing a beat Dick said, *"I'd rather be dead than have this goddamn headache!"*

Larry did as he was told. When Dick came to, he was fine.

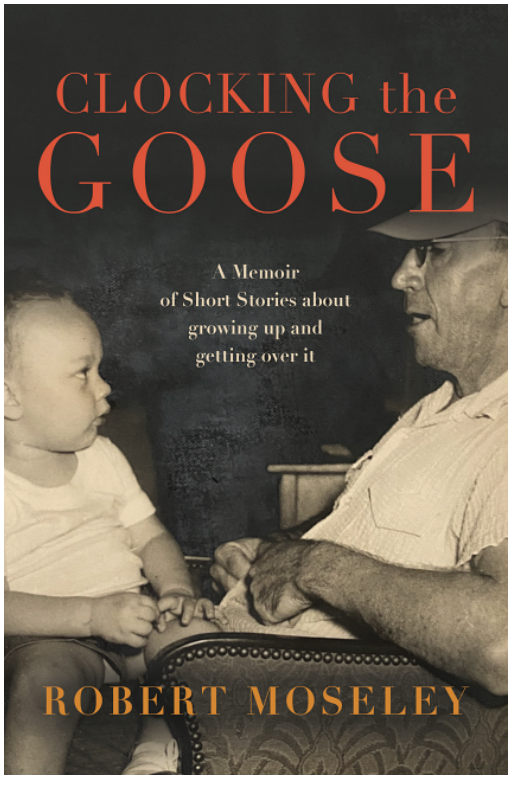
I had some of my best and most memorable moments at the Hawk homestead. I recall lying awake long after bedtime, just to hear cars drive by. Like the ghostly whistling of the eves on Missionary Ridge, the sound of vehicles passing Dick and Irene's place was a unique and lush experience.

The highway fronting my grandparent's home ran straight and true for some three or four miles. Hawk Haven, my nickname for their

place, was situated about a mile west of where this stretch of road began. Beginning with the faintest murmur, a single car would make its presence felt it seemed as far away as China. Slowly but steadily, the rumble of its engine would build, louder and louder in a progressively rich vibrato, creeping closer and closer at speed, till it roared by with a distinctive whoosh, waxing and waning in an instant, as the sound of its passing vanished back into the night.

Single cars were the best. The melody and light of their night passage far and away trumped the sound and sight of cars passing by day. Even now, my memory of that exquisite hum, always unique in tone to the size, shape and speed of the passing traveler, combined with the ever-changing shadows their headlights formed on the ceiling of my room, taps the tuning fork of my heart.

Such were the delights of the nighttime on Solway Road.



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