NINE DECADES IN THE HUMAN RACE

By Wheeler McMillen

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Ohio Northern University
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Preface

At the time of his death in 1992, Wheeler McMillen left an unpublished autobiography consisting of a single printed copy and a set of computer disks. Although the printed copy is not dated the computer files, from which it was produced, were dated October 1987.

His son, Robert, was apparently trying to have this work published at the time of his own death in 1998. A heavily-revised version of his father’s original work along with correspondence supports this view. Both versions were included in the McMillen papers sent to Ohio Northern University at the time of Robert’s demise.

In selecting the text for this work, I decided to use what appears to be Wheeler McMillen’s original version. Some minor editorial changes have been made to punctuation and some single-sentence paragraphs have been combined. The basic content is, however, unaltered.

Readers will note that this is a distinctly personal work. Written near the end of Mr. McMillen’s eventful life, it is as much a collection of reminiscences as a formal autobiography. The content is arranged basically in chronological order but with numerous anecdotes and digressions.

In addition to the text, photographs have been included for some chapters. A bibliography of Wheeler McMillen’s books is also appended.

This is the final work in a set of three autobiographical books. His Weekly on the Wabash describes his sojourn as a newspaper publisher in Indiana between 1914 and 1918. In 1974, McMillen wrote Ohio Farm, a work that provides an over view of the pre-WWI farm life that heavily influenced McMillen.

Paul Logsdon
The autobiography of Wheeler McMillen, noted farm journalist, will likely appeal to three groups of readers. Those interested in local history will find the first five chapters worthy of note even though some of the content was previously presented in his 1974 work *Ohio Farmer*. Readers concerned with McMillen’s early years as a journalist will likely find material of interest. Those concerned with his role in the Chemurgic movement, however, may be disappointed as this part of his career is lightly sketched. This is particularly unfortunate given the sixteen years that he spent as head of the Chemurgic Council.

Never-the-less, during a life that at ran from 1893 until 1992, Wheeler McMillen was well placed to observe and comment on the rapid evolution of American agriculture. He grew up on his family’s farm south of Ada, Ohio and recounts in these pages the life of a farm boy of that era. He also ran the farm upon his father’s retirement. By the time he became associate editor of *Country Home Magazine* in 1922, McMillen had acquired considerable practical farming experience.

His long career in farm journalism afforded his the opportunity to analyze and comment on the challenges facing the American farmer. McMillen came to believe at an early date that the single greatest problem facing farmers was low crop prices brought on by overproduction.

He argued that overproduction was the logical result of rapidly rising productivity caused by farm mechanization, improved plant hybrids and chemical fertilizers and insecticides. This, coupled with a slow increase in domestic demand for farm products and the inability of farmers to export surplus crops, meant the failure of many traditional family farms.

From McMillen’s perspective, it was not surprising that a dwindling percentage of the population was needed to feed the nation. In 1890, just before his birth, 42.3% of all Americans were farmers.¹ Shortly after he retired, in 1970, that number had dropped to just 4.8%.²

Unlike some, McMillen viewed this situation unsentimentally, arguing in his 1929 work, *Too Many Farmers*, that various forces would inevitably lead to fewer but larger farms. He concluded:

Certainly no virtue inheres in maintaining in agricultural occupation more people than are able to derive therefrom an American standard of living. Already that condition exists. More people are

farming than can make decent profits with the prevailing levels of prices and costs.\(^3\)

Inexorably, the self-sufficient family farms, like the one he knew from childhood, would be replaced with larger operations specializing in a smaller number of crops and employing fewer people. He also foresaw the creation of today’s corporate farms. This natural process required no government intervention, and indeed, McMillen remained skeptical throughout his life about the federal government’s role in agriculture. *Too Many Farmers* was published on the eve of the Great Depression. The agricultural policies of the ensuing New Deal were to be a trial for him.

Those remaining on the farm still faced the difficulty of disposing of excess crops, and McMillen had a solution in mind. If America could not consume farm products as food and fiber then non-traditional uses had to be found.

As he noted in *New Riches From the Soil*, 1924 marked the beginning of his interest in this issue. He saw increased research into the industrial uses of crops as being crucial to farm prosperity. In 1926, he and others successfully lobbied Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover for a $50,000 appropriation for this purpose. That October, McMillen used his position as editor of *Farm and Fireside* to promote the creation of a foundation encouraging the industrial uses of crops. Further discussion resulted in the creation in 1935 of an organization, the Chemurgic Council, to encourage research in this area. In 1938 this group secured federal funding for four regional research laboratories. McMillen served as the council’s head from 1937 until 1962.

Despite his work with the Chemurgic Council, he found time to continue his career in farm journalism. Between 1939 and 1955, Wheeler McMillan was editor-in-chief of *Farm Journal*. He also served as vice president of the publication until his retirement in 1963.

There was an irony to his life of which McMillen was probably aware. In retirement, the proponent of agricultural innovation and progress reflected nostalgically on the pre-World War I period that he believed marked American agriculture’s golden era. Both in this work and in *Ohio Farmer* he wrote movingly about the rural world of his youth and those who inhabited it. Yet he would also have known that his life’s work, about which he was obviously proud, had contributed to that world’s passing.

\(^2\) Ibid
Six years old! Old enough to go to school! Father's blue eyes twinkled that warm May morning in 1899. He had dressed up in a clean blue shirt, his second best pants, and his good straw hat. Old Doc, the roan driving horse, was hitched to the buggy, ready to go. Mother handed me a round, two-quart tin pail, packed with lunch, and gave me an extra warm hug and kiss. I sensed that this was an important day in my life; the thought did not occur that it was a kind of time-mark in their lives, too.

Father let Doc walk out the short lane as though in no hurry. We turned south. Then he shook the lines, clicked his tongue, and our little journey was under way at a mild trot. Doc's maximum speed was five miles an hour, a mile in twelve minutes; that was only when he was urged. He preferred a vertical jog with short steps that progressed about three miles an hour. He was not a racehorse and had no ambition to become one. So in fifteen or twenty minutes the Rising Sun district school was reached. Dinner pail, McGuffey's First Reader, pencil box, tablet and slate in hand, I clambered out while Father tied Doc to the hitching rack. The first day of school was about to begin.

Miss Meda Everhart, the teacher, greeted us pleasantly and talked to father with all the deference and respect to which I considered him to be entitled. He was one of the three directors of Rising Sun School District, and was thus partly responsible for her having the school to teach, but I did not think of that. He was simply entitled to everybody's respect because he was a good man.

He pulled the rope to ring the first bell when half-past eight came, and that seemed kind of him for I knew the teacher was supposed to do that. Then he went home, and left me to work things out with the public school system.

A few of the pupils I knew fairly well, because they went to the Sunday School at Huntersville and I had played with them when Mother took me to the monthly meetings of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. Several strange youngsters came from families in the district who did not attend our church. Fifteen or eighteen small "scholars", as we were called, rather than "pupils," attended this six weeks' summer term. The big boys and girls came only during the winter term, four months at that time. In summer they were expected to work.

My seat was in the front row. Just behind sat Dorothy Dutcher, who was also a new "scholar". I aspired to be a good boy and obey the rules, which forbade all whispering and unseemly sounds. One day Dorothy whispered over the back of the desk that she had a "toothache" in her big toe. I laughed "out loud". She had said something very funny--she had called an ordinary cramp a toothache in her
big toe! No six-year-old with a decent sense of humor could resist laughing at so ridiculous a remark.

Miss Everhart, however, was sternly unreasonable. She made me stand in the corner, in front of the whole school. The more I thought the thing over the more vehemently I blamed the females involved. Was it my fault that Dorothy Dutcher had a cramp in her toe and called it a toothache? Was it my fault that she made me laugh? I had not even been whispering. A girl had been the entire cause of my humiliation, and a woman had unjustly punished me instead of the guilty girl. I formed doubts that day as to the sense of justice possessed by the female of the species.

Father had already taught me to read, so that the lessons in McGuffey's First and Second Readers appeared to be no more than dull word exercises; only in the later books did the text begin to get interesting. By the third winter I was advanced to the Fifth Reader, although I had borrowed and read the book a year before.

That first day was one of the few times I ever rode to Rising Sun School. I walked home that night, and walked the round trip of slightly more than a mile each way for seven winters. All the other children walked, some a greater distance, except the Huggett girls, Frances and Adah, who drove a horse. In the far corner of the schoolyard a rough board shed sheltered their horse and that of the teacher. Frances and Adah were two of the nicest and most popular of the girls at the school, but no one ever thought of offering to hitch or unhitch their horse. Country girls naturally did such chores for themselves. One very stormy late winter afternoon Frances did ask Ross Miller, a boy of my own age, if he "didn't want to hitch up the horse" for them. "Don't want to, but I will," he answered gruffly.

It was Ross who one other day provided the basis for repeated schoolboy laughing spells. Walking with four other youngsters through the woodlot which bordered part of the way home, we had noticed evidence of a nocturnal struggle which had ended in tragedy for a rabbit and dinner for a hungry owl. "Yeah, rabbit feathers," Ross said, when I pointed to the scattered fur. That slip of the tongue we thought was exceedingly funny, and for weeks the mere mention of rabbit feathers kept us in laughter.

Nelson Cooney taught the winter term, 1899-1900. Stern and dignified, we thought him, though he must have had a sense of humor. Otherwise he could not have devised such appropriate punishments as he did for Marvin Phillips and John Shrider, "Marve and Johnny", the two boys who were slowest at their lessons and most capable of antics which broke the monotonous level of good behavior.

Johnny one day was leaning across the aisle from his seat to look at something on Marve's desk. Marve, noting that Johnny's gravity was far off center, gave a
quick push that dislodged the hand which supported Johnny's leaning weight, and Johnny crashed headlong to the floor. The two boys were promptly ordered to the stage, a seven-inch elevation across the end of the schoolroom. The teacher drew two small circles on the blackboard approximately at the level of their faces. "Put your noses on the board in those circles, and hold them there until I tell you to take your seats."

The school was so happily entertained by that episode that before long Marve and Johnny found occasion for another infraction. Again they were abruptly ordered to the stage, but this time no circles were drawn on the blackboard. Seizing a reader, the teacher directed them to stand back to back and hold the book firmly between the backs of their two heads until permitted to desist. The boys were of uneven height, and not practiced in an accomplishment requiring such concentration. The experiment was highly successful from the standpoint of the other pupils, who watched their struggle with high glee; experiment evidently it was, for after replacing the book a time or so, Nelson sent the boys back to their seats.

Marve’s scholastic career ended when he was still struggling slowly with the Fourth Reader. Nevertheless he possessed attainments which the rest of us envied. He could draw what appeared to us to be a perfect likeness of the Battleship Maine. He had never seen a battleship, nor had we, but I later learned that a chromo of the Maine was on the wall of the "Dal" Preston home where he lived. Mrs. Preston was his mother and "Dal" his stepfather.

Marve could also draw a traction engine, smoke and all. Most of his school periods were spent drawing either the Maine or a traction engine. No one was surprised after he quit school that he became water boy and eventually engineer for John Culbertson's threshing outfit.

 Corporal punishment? It had not gone out of style with the turn of the century. We called it "getting a licking". More of it might have been good for my future. On two occasions, once at Rising Sun School and once at home, fundamental treatment was administered for the improvement of my behavior. One time before I was ten, Father paddled me fairly vigorously. I remember the fact, but do not remember the cause, perhaps because I was so well entitled to the punishment as to prefer to forget the particular misdemeanor which brought it about. That may or may not tell something about how a memory works.

Not long after winter school opened the boys, some of whom including the teacher's brothers, Metellus and Milo, who were nearly as old as he, took the noon hour to lead us through Amanda Mathew's interesting woods across the road. Hickory nuts could be found under trees where squirrels had been gathering them. There were saplings of the right size and texture to encourage a boy to climb into the top and then swing over to the ground. Hickory, tough and flexible, was ideal for this thrilling sport. Elms would serve. The reckless fellow
who tried to swing from ten or twelve feet up a beech or basswood learned, as
the top snapped off and he plunked to the ground, to choose a tougher species
next time. There were trees, too, which when saplings had been bent by fallen
neighbors into saddle-shapes and upon which a small boy could mount and
pretend to be riding a horse.

The first afternoon bell rang at five minutes before one. Every pupil was expected
to be seated immediately after the second bell. With only five minutes notice, it
was not always possible to return from the far corners of the woods by one
o'clock. For several days we had straggled in after the last bell. Then the blow, or
blows, fell. The teacher stood at the boys' door with a substantial switch in hand.
Each latecomer, and that was every one of us, received a sound swing from the
switch as he entered the door. Nothing was said. Nothing needed to be said.
Thereafter we managed to be in our seats when the rules required. We minded
the licking less than we resented the smug looks over on the girls' side of the
schoolroom.

When the weather was warm enough we went barefoot to school. Hat, shirt and
overalls were the only garments. Midwinter called for long flannel underwear,
trousers and overalls, and felt boots. No one with felt boots ever worried about
cold feet. The thick felt reached from toes nearly to knees, with heavy rubber
shoes that buckled over the felt well above the ankles.

No one thought of arranging hot lunches for school, nor would have thought them
important, though we had two substantial heating stoves and plenty of fuel. My
lunch pail always contained about the same menu. Sandwiches of homemade
bread, thickly buttered and well filled with crabapple jelly or strawberry jam were
the main course. The next course was a piece of pie, usually apple. Now and
then cookies or some other favorite delicacy were included. I drank no milk from
about the age of four until long after becoming full-grown. The thermos bottle had
not reached us. A bucket and dipper on a shelf, and a rusty tin cup at the
schoolyard pump, provided for our thirsts.

School began at nine o'clock in the morning and let out at four in the afternoon.
The noon recess lasted for an hour. Fifteen-minute recesses at 10:30 and 2:15
broke the morning and afternoon sessions. If the weather was too rough to
permit play out-of-doors--and that meant it had to be violently bad--the pupils
amused themselves restlessly inside. The favorite blackboard game was tick-
tack-toe, although we did not know that name we called it "playing puzzle."

Out-of-doors we played one-ol'-cat, black man, fly-ball and hide-and-seek. Fly
ball was simple. One player knocked flies until a fielder caught one whereupon
the catcher of the ball became the next batter. One-ol'-cat was baseball with only
one base, two-ol'-cat if there were enough players for two bases. Blackman might
be played with a ball or without one. Sides were chosen by two leaders. One
tossed a bat or stick to the other who caught it, and then fists were alternately
placed one over the other. The leader who could last hang on to the stick got to make the first choice of players. Players were chosen partly for their skill and partly by personal preference. The two sides lined up some distance apart and when one player darted toward the opposite line, the blackman who was "it" either tried to tag him or hit him with a thrown ball.

The construction of the school building made impossible another game we all knew, and liked, which we called "andy-over." In this game chosen players took places on opposite sides of a building. A ball was thrown over the roof whereupon the thrower cried "andy-over". If it was caught on the other side, the catcher ran quickly around to try to hit an opposing player who, if hit, had to join the catcher's side. The Rising Sun school building had been built with gutters which rose at right angles to the lower edge of the roof, instead of having normal eaves, and these gutters were sure to retain the ball -before the game was finished.

A snowstorm opened up engaging new opportunities for fun. Then we could play "fox and geese." One of the biggest boys chose a suitable spot in the schoolyard where no previous tracks had broken the snow. Taking short steps without lifting his feet, he marked out the largest possible circle. The circle completed, he bisected it, then quartered it with cross-paths. Next a second circle was marked out three or four feet inside the first one. Where the cross paths intersected, a center, five or six feet in diameter, was stomped out. That was the safe place. The game was simple "tag". Whoever was "it" could tag anyone found anywhere in the pattern except the safe center, but no one could jump or deviate from the paths which had been marked out. Fox-and-geese was by all odds our favorite winter game. To obliterate the course was an outrageous vandalism. Once a course had been laid out we played daily until the sun melted it away and returned us to other amusements.

One winter an extraordinarily heavy snow covered the road more than two feet deep. The roadside ditches were filled and drifts topped the rail fences. Before the snow had begun to melt the temperature moved upward and a freezing rain fell. Then the thermometer plunged to zero. A hard icy crust froze two or three inches thick while the snow underneath was still soft and not closely packed. We all knew what fun could be had sliding on frozen-crusted snow; that we had done before. Here, however, some of the boys recognized a special opportunity. A hurried huddle at the morning recess spread word about the plan.

At noontime every boy gobbled his lunch in extra haste, and dashed out as though impatient to begin enjoying the unprecedented opportunity for exceptional sliding. Before the girls had finished their lunches and their more complicated preparations for playing out-of-doors, we boys had made preparations for them. Over the deepest roadside ditch each boy had carefully broken out a block of crusted snow about two feet square and had laid it aside. On the soft snow underneath he jumped up and down until he had tamped a hole three feet deep.
Two companions came and carefully hauled him out. The block of icy crust was exactly replaced. Within minutes the boys had prepared at least a dozen of such girl traps.

The moment the girls came shrilling out to join the fun, every boy was merrily sliding over a chosen stretch of undisturbed crust. We shouted to welcome them on. The loudest tomboy of them all, Idora C., led the rush and immediately disappeared, skirts overhead, screaming into the deepest pit. All boys doubled with glee. Her furious imprecations entertained us so gloriously that we felt so well repaid for our trouble as to be willing to help some of the other girls' to extricate themselves. We were, of course, conscientiously denounced by the whole girls' side and that, too, we thought was pretty funny. All in all, it had been a wonderful snowstorm.

Nelson Cooney was responsible for starting the Rising Sun school library. He announced a series of box suppers to which the neighborhood public was invited. For the information of those who may not know what a box supper is, or was, each feminine participant prepared a meal which was stowed into a box, usually a shoebox. The box was carefully wrapped, presumably with no identifying marks. An auctioneer sold the boxes to the highest bidders. Occasionally a box, suspected to have been prepared by some particularly desirable belle, or by an especially favored cook, commanded a high price, maybe as much as a dollar. The purchaser then ate his supper with the lady who had brought the box, and was expected to act as though he had known all the time whose companionship he had sought to purchase.

From the proceeds of the box suppers, plus a few donations, Nelson purchased some forty books, and a bookcase. Probably I read all the books, two became favorites. One was Swiss Family Robinson. I read it over and over. The other was Nat the Naturalist, a story about a boy whose ornithologist uncle took him on a collecting expedition to New Guinea. Nat the Naturalist will lead to another chapter.

Rising Sun school is no more. The schools of the township were eventually consolidated. Buses now haul the pupils to a central, and perhaps much better school, in McGuffey. The township has sold the building and the land, and Rising Sun has been obliterated except from the memories of its pupils.

The old-fashioned one-room district school was not without some advantages. Every class recited within hearing of the whole school. If one listened, he could learn what the more advanced classes were learning. Repetition, year after year, helped to make the lessons stick. He had to learn, too, how to get along with youngsters of varied ages.

The teacher at Rising Sun school when it was first opened, not long after the Civil War, had been a young fellow from Hancock County named Stephen Biggar. He
was so popular that he was re-employed by the directors year after year until eventually he chose to teach no more. From that date until after my time, no winter teacher from outside the district was ever hired; competent home talent always was available. (The Rising Sun summer terms, attended by the smaller children, were discontinued after my first introduction to school life). My wintertime teachers were Nelson Cooney, Orange Powell, Ross Runser, each for one term, Clem Runser for two terms, and Emma Guider for two terms. I liked them all. For two or three summers, I attended the Mustard school in the district to the north, in adjoining Liberty Township. Another neighbor, Norah Shanks, was the excellent teacher there.

The teacher came early enough to build the fires and to ring the first bell at eight-thirty. His job, or hers, included carrying buckets of coal from the coal shed located a needless distance away, taking out the ashes, and sweeping the floor after school. Now and then a lad might be gallant enough to carry a bucket of coal for a lady teacher but she could not regularly expect such assistance. Salaries ranged from $1.25 to $1.75 a day while I attended Rising Sun, though later they rose to $2.00.

During my last two winters Emma Guider was the teacher. A slim, trim neighbor girl, she wore well the teacher's costume of the time: skirts to the ankle, high-topped shoes, white shirtwaists, with a watch in the shirtwaist pocket or tucked under a belt. She treated all pupils equally and taught with touches of imagination that made lessons interesting, especially in my favorite subjects of history and geography. Her day went about like this: 9 a.m., first, second, third, fourth and fifth reader classes, U.S. history; recess 10:30, beginning arithmetic, second arithmetic, advanced arithmetic, two spelling classes. Noon, one hour. Second and third readers again, beginning grammar, advanced grammar, sentence analysis, physiology or first year algebra; recess; beginning geography, advanced geography, orthography or writing, and three spelling classes. Out at four.

The blackboard at Rising Sun reached across the full length of the wall behind the teacher's desk. Over the blackboard hung two portraits. Crude and ill drawn, for all those years these were the only oil paintings I had seen. One represented Stephen Biggar. It had been painted and hung after a subscription had been initiated by admiring former pupils. I knew Mr. Biggar and could recognize the likeness in the picture. Nearly every winter on some occasion, perhaps on the last day of school, he would drive in his "storm buggy" from his home twelve miles away. When called upon he spoke briefly in his soft voice, saying little of himself, something of former pupils who had earned his pride, and uttering a kindly homily about study and work. We heard his words respectfully because everyone admired him, and plainly he deserved respect.

The other portrait depicted the face of a man who had been dead for just a hundred years at the time I went first to Rising Sun, yet was a living force. I soon
learned that from my history book. The painting was an amateurish copy of Gilbert Stuart's Athenaeum portrait of George Washington. Every school day for seven years it was before my eyes. Today a print of the same portrait is hung in my library, and another in my office.

That first history book was fascinating. The teacher always called up the "red history class", when the elementary class in history was to recite. "Red" had no connotation then except color; the textbook had a bright red binding. It told the great stories of America's history, about Christopher Columbus, Washington, Franklin, Patrick Henry, Daniel Boone, Jefferson and Lincoln. While I was yet too young to enter the class, I could listen to the recitations and read the book. The more advanced classes recited from "Barnes History" and that was interesting, too.

I somehow absorbed the impression that this was a great free country, and that it was great because it was free. I didn't understand clearly what tyranny might involve, but I was glad that in this country we had overthrown and outgrown it.

We used McGuffey's readers, too; whoever did so will endorse the praises with which others have celebrated their merits. The beginners, called the "chart class", studied the alphabet from a wall chart. They mastered the ABCs in proper order, then began the first reader. No product of Rising Sun was ever unable to locate a word in the dictionary for failure to know that K comes somewhere before and not after M. Our arithmetics were "Ray's."

Education went on at home, too. Mother subscribed to the *Youth's Companion* for me, $1.75 a year, and I read the newspapers and Father's magazines. The mailman came about noon, so that during vacation times I brought the mail in time for it to be examined during the noon hour.

The Pittsburgh livestock market paper had a joke column which I read devotedly. Jokes like this:

First tramp: I met a dog yesterday so tame he ate out of my hand.
Second tramp: I met one yesterday so tame he ate out of my leg.

I giggled immoderately while trying to read that one to Father and Mother at the dinner table. They laughed more at me than at the joke. It didn't seem quite so funny when I saw it printed again a few weeks ago, but I still read jokes.

One day in Ada after Father made a purchase in Kemp's drug store, he picked a book out of the revolving case which offered a selection for sale. Father paid thirty-five cents and handed me the book, saying he had read it when he was a boy, and he thought I would like it. I did. The title was *Robinson Crusoe*. It was
the first title for my private library that was soon to have its own shelf in our new twentieth-century house. Last year I read and enjoyed Robinson Crusoe again. The one-room district school started me on the essential basic, the three r's, glimpses of the earth and its history with grammar, sentence analysis and physiology.

In Nelson Cooney's 40-volume box supper library at Rising Sun, though, I found a book with effects more durable than Robinson Crusoe. Nat the Naturalist initiated an interest that seasoned with pleasure all the years thereafter. Let us detour, before going on to more schools, to take note of that.
Chapter 2 - FUN FOR A LIFETIME

Cash Deficiency...Ornithologist, Junior...Suspense...Binoculars...Red-Heads out of season...Meeting the eminent Frank M. Chapman...Audubon Society

William Ream, the only town boy I knew well, confided that he had more than twenty dollars in the bank. My own pecuniary resources seldom ran into more than one figure. I envied such opulence and regretted that a country lad had small chance to make money by running errands and doing odd jobs.

Although my cash income was small, I was never totally destitute. Each year one or two orphan lambs were mine to raise—a happy task that required hardly more than holding the bottle after Mother had filled it and attached the nipple. After the lambs had been fattened and sold the entire proceeds, sometimes three dollars or more, belonged to me. Now and then I earned a half dollar or even a dollar by helping one of the neighbors. Most years I managed to gather up thirty or forty cents worth of old iron and rubber which was saved until his annual rounds brought Matt Stull, the wooden-legged Adirondack junk buyer, with his creaking one-horse wagon. Matt weighed up the collection exactly on his steelyards and paid for it to the penny. While no such thing as an allowance was established, Father and Mother now and then found excuses to see that my cash was never entirely exhausted. I never felt poor.

However, the world was full of things I wanted. It was not to be expected that the money supply could ever equal, much less exceed the possible wants, but nevertheless money was to be used as well as to be saved. The mail order catalog from Montgomery Ward displayed scores of items that I could have ordered cheerfully. After rigorously boiling down the want list, one item remained which promised more pleasure than the jingle of its price. I took $1.98, plus a few cents for a money order, out to the rural mail carrier. A week or so later the purchase arrived, a copy of Bird Life by Frank M. Chapman.

After reading Nat the Naturalist in the Rising Sun school library, I had begun to notice the birds around home and interest soon grew into fascination. I wanted to become an authority on birds and maybe a naturalist of some sort. Bird Life was a terrific book "with 75 full-page colored plates representing 100 birds in their natural colors, after drawings by Ernest Thompson-Seton". Other species were described clearly enough to accomplish their identification. Several pages in front set forth primary scientific information about the structure, classification and physical characteristics of birds.

With this book for reference, I soon considered myself a learned and superior youth. I discovered that our blackbirds were grackles, that our "shikepokes" were American bitterns or little green herons, that the big cranes were great blue herons, chimney swallows were chimney swifts, bee-birds were kingbirds, redbirds were cardinals, wild canaries were goldfinches, and what we called
ground sparrows were really several different species of sparrows; and that chicken hawks were four or five kinds of hawks, most of them not interested in chickens.

A whole new realm was opening up. I sent for other books, such as Chester A. Reed's pocketsize bird guides which had more color pictures than Chapman's book contained. For the extravagant price of $3.65, I obtained Chapman's *Color Key to the Birds of North America*, which was helpful though the colors were quite imperfect. I subscribed to a periodical called *The Oologist* devoted to the now nearly and happily extinct hobby of egg collecting which despite other collecting propensities, I did not pursue.

After feeling sure that I had identified practically every bird in our area that could be seen clearly with the unassisted eye, I was bothered by tantalizing glimpses of little birds high in the treetops whose markings could not be distinguished plainly enough for certain identification. Autumn plumages presented puzzles that I could not work out. Time had come for another decisive advance. I laid the mail order catalog in Father's lap one evening and pointed to a picture. This was no impulsive gesture. I had contemplated the matter for days. "I want to buy that field glass," I said. "Then I can identify more birds." I had selected one priced at eight dollars, my total capital at the moment. I thought it advisable to get his approval in advance before plunging with all my savings.

"Well, let me look at it," he answered. He laid aside his paper and settled down to examine the catalog. He turned pages until I suspected that he was looking at harness or hardware instead of field glasses; but he kept his finger between the leaves I had opened. Though he was never hasty about any decision, it seemed on this occasion that he was being extraordinarily deliberate. My apprehensions increased with my impatience. He might not approve. I gave up trying to appear unconcerned and occupied with reading something else, and sat waiting in compulsory patience. The "angle lamp" cast its mild glow over his bald pate and down on the pages of Montgomery Ward. At last he spoke. "Here's a glass that I believe is better than the one you picked," he said.

I leaped to examine the binoculars his finger indicated, noted the price and read the description of the fine Jena lens and technical details. Sure, that's a better one!" I said. "But it costs sixteen dollars. And I've only got eight dollars." "Well," he said, "let's order this good one. I've always thought it would be nice to have some field glasses around the house. We'll go halvers on it."

Never before had he ever so much as mentioned a desire for field glasses. My interpretation was that he considered my ornithological enthusiasm worthy of encouragement, and felt that if I were going to spend eight dollars it might be better to invest sixteen and get a really satisfactory pair of binoculars instead of an inadequate pair. That they justified the outlay, I was soon sure. I spotted a cerulean warbler and a blue gray gnatcatcher with them shortly after they came.
After twenty-five years of travel and hard use, the binoculars ceased to focus properly. I took them one day, about 1934 when few prices were high, to a repair shop in New York's west forties. When I returned to call for them, the owner of the shop offered seventy-five dollars. "We can't get those fine Jena lenses any more," he said. "No, these have a sentimental value," I told him. Within a month they were stolen from the summer home we then had in New Jersey.

With bird guide-books in my pocket and binoculars slung around my neck I spent Sundays and other free hours roaming the woodlands for as far as I could go and expect to be home in time for meals and chores. I knew the only pond where mallards nested in spring, the places to find little green herons, and the fencerow thickets where tree sparrows lived in winter. The biggest snowstorm one winter became memorable because it brought out of the north to sit by our rail corn cribs a rarely visiting redpoll. Once I found a humming bird's nest and another time, in the same thicket, discovered the little sawwhet owl, no larger than a sparrow. I located the hollow trees where larger owls lived by hunting around the bases for the pellets of mouse bones and fur which they regurgitated. One Sunday afternoon I sat captivated on a stump for an hour while a pair of barred owls performed their humorous mating antics and was equally fascinated on another Sunday morning to find six tiny screech owls sitting erect in a compact row and turning their heads toward me in unison, on the branch where they had first emerged from the nest into the big new world.

In the midst of a great February snow I made a sensational ornithological discovery, or so I thought for a while. Big, wet flakes were falling thick that Sunday morning. The air was still and not very cold. I set out to explore new territory. Skipping quietly through first one woods and then another, climbing fences and trying to be unseen by curious neighbors, I entered in a 40-acre forest two or three miles from home. The fat, soft flakes continued to fall quietly and straight down, lodging and clinging wherever they first touched. Bare branches--no native evergreens grew in our area--were covered with an inch of the clinging snow. The northwest sides of the numerous beech tree trunks were coated with the adhering flakes. Upon entering the tract, I began to hear from every corner what Frank M. Chapman had described as the unmistakable "loud, rolling call of ker--rruck, ker-r-ruck." Redheaded woodpeckers in February? Absolutely impossible! But there they were! I saw them, one after another, galloping through the air tree-to-tree, alighting always on the sheltered sides of the snowy trunks. Redheaded woodpeckers positively had no business in Ohio before corn planting time in May, ten weeks later! Yet my eyes were not deceived. No other bird even resembled this rollicking redhead. I considered going for witnesses to prove the astonishing fact for the ornithological authorities! A 12-year-old could make a contribution to science! Home late for dinner, I sadly found a sentence I had overlooked in Dr. Chapman's *Bird Life*, about these redheaded favorites. "If well supplied with beechnuts, may remain through the
winter," it said. Although my discovery collapsed, it had given me a few wonderful hours, and its collapse began to emphasize the value of good reference books.

Shortly after I became editor of *The Country Home* in 1934, a woman came in to sell an idea for an article. Her idea was acceptable and I knew she could write. I was about to authorize her to go ahead when she happened to mention that she was a niece of Frank M. Chapman, the author of my first bird book, then still active as curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History.

"I'll talk no further about your article until you arrange for me to have lunch with your uncle," I told her. A day or so later I met Dr. Chapman. He rose from a table covered with scores of skins of bronzed grackles, all tagged with the name of E.A. McIlhenny, Avery Island, La. Only a few weeks before I had visited McIlhenny. Chapman had for many years studied grackles, seeking to determine why the purple ones of the east and the bronzed ones of the Midwest had evolved their differences.

From long years before, I had pictured Chapman among the great. He was a genuine scientist who had pioneered in popularizing birds. To sit by his desk, to watch him handle bird specimens, and then to visit with him across the luncheon table in the museum, was indeed to be in the presence of eminence. I bought his niece's article.

A dozen years later I decided that too many boards and committees were absorbing time and was in process of resigning from some. Meeting a luncheon appointment at the Mayflower in Washington, I faced across the table a tall, erect, powerful looking man, with bald head, black moustache and a firm voice. He was the president of the National Audubon Society, John H. Baker "We want you to join our Board of Directors," he said. My resolution faded. That was a board I wanted to be on. The service brought pleasant experiences and new friends, among them Roger Tory Peterson whose guides every birder carries and cherishes.

Although they never made me an authentic ornithologist, the early investments in bird books and binoculars paid superlative lifetime dividends. To those who know the names and something of the habits of the birds they see, every hour out of doors gains an increment of richness. Afoot or through a windshield, wherever or whenever, the bird watcher is expectant. Taking notice of the nuthatches and chickadee clips a bit of the bleakness out of winter. Noting the annual return of the migrants intensifies the excitement of Spring. Summer pleasures grow when one is alert to the sparkling variety in avian activity. A journey through a new area gains in adventure because it offers the prospect of adding new species of birds to the "life list". The desire to meet with new species and to see feathered acquaintances in differing environments leads to interesting places where one might not otherwise choose to visit. The fully confirmed bird watcher would not
trade a week-end in fresh birding territory for passes to all of a year's gaudy entertainments on Broadway.
Chapter 3 - ADVENTURES IN HIGH SCHOOL

Horrors of Knee Pants...First Long Ones...Big Day with Orange Powell...At High School...First of 100,000 Cigars...Johnny Punctures the Ceiling...Inter-Class Contest...Deflated Orator...The Debate

To the world at large, 1906 may not have been an especially notable year. The first long pants were enough to make it memorable for one to whom other excitements also came.

The dress-up attire for an Ohio country boy in those days included a repulsive garment known as knee-pants. His ordinary daily attire was comfortable. No one could object to a cotton shirt, blue denim overalls and a straw hat, nor even to socks and shoes in summer. Underwear was superfluous then. Long, heavy underwear had to be accepted in winter, overlain by stockings, his old knee pants, overalls, plus whatever coats were still wearable. For footwear one could choose, according to weather, strong leather shoes, rubber overshoes, arctics, rubber boots or felt boots.

Persons with sensitive noses were known at times to indicate disapproval when felt boots were removed. The boot of half-inch felt reached nearly to the knee, and was worn within a two- or three-buckle rubber overshoe which kept out external moisture just as the boot kept out external cold; but the combination kept internal heat and moisture inside the boot which could give rise to perceptible aromas when the boots were taken off. The wearer was not much troubled by his felt boots. If his feet became over-warm indoors they were also comfortably warm on a zero day in a frozen, snowy field.

Knee pants did trouble the wearer. These were not knickerbockers, the kind which could buckle neatly about the knee. They were just plain pants. Long cotton stockings were pulled upward over the knees and theoretically extended up under the lower ends of the pants. Elastic garters, buttoned at the belt of the pants, reached under and down to fasten to the tops of the stockings. Normally the stockings sagged and twisted and looked sloppy. The pants were buttoned to the shirtwaist on a small boy, or hung by suspenders on a taller boy. If they sagged a little the stockings sagged and wrinkled twice as much. In winter the necessity to make them work in unison with the long woolen underwear contributed to a distressful complication. One had to fold the lower ends of the drawers around the shin to get the stockings up. The fold always showed. Knee pants, long stockings and long underwear simply were not intended to be worn together, no matter what the clothing makers, fashion experts for boys, and mothers said. Among the great achievements of the first decade of the twentieth century, they were, in contrast, an outstanding failure.

For me they were worse than failures. I grew rapidly until by the time I was thirteen, I almost matched my father's six feet. Knee pants, on the contrary, never
grew; they shrank. Mother thriftily selected for me suits that were too large. The pants reached below the knee for a few weeks. Then their lower edges began barely to meet the kneecaps and soon were continuing their customary ascent to a point approximately mid-thigh which in time exposed the garter clamps and might even leave the stocking top and a circle of thigh or, more humiliating, a circle of underwear, quite exposed. The unhappy state of affairs was compounded by the fact that a Sunday suit had to be worn with care so that it did not become needlessly scruffed nor worn. A boy could not actually wear one out. Consequently the necessity for getting a new one could be postponed by months.

Boys were not promoted out of knee pants by size, but on account of attaining age. As a 13-year-old, I had no reason to hope for any relief from the embarrassments, exposures and unhappiness of knee pants until I became fifteen or maybe seventeen. I knew of no boys younger than that who wore long trousers.

Nevertheless, 1906 brought not only long pants but a much-broadened horizon. A remark overheard one afternoon on Main Street of Ada, even though it burned my sensitive cheeks, hastened the pants relief. Mother and I were passing in front of the cigar store. Mother's head barely reached to my shoulders and my pants fell far short of reaching to my knees. I heard and undoubtedly Mother heard when "Pat" Patterson remarked to the other fellows on the bench under the awning, "Gee, looky! That kid's growing right up out of his pants, ain't he?"

Neither Mother nor I referred then or later to what Pat had said. Likely I was silent for the rest of the afternoon. At any rate, on the next trip to Ada, Father came along. We all went to C.E. Rhonemus's store where I was outfitted with a fine new gray suit with long trousers, a vest, a new hat, and a new pair of shoes. The suit cost ten dollars, the hat a dollar and a half, and the shoes two fifty-five. I have never since felt so well dressed.

At the dinner table a week later, Father asked a most unexpected question. "How would you like to go to high school?" Just what high school might involve, I had no idea. I didn't know how a high school ran nor much about what it taught. It was, I did understand, an advanced step in education. Not a single youngster from our school district had ever gone to high school. Only one country pupil whom we knew at all had ever done so, a girl from an adjoining township.

A few of the brighter young men from the neighborhood, after exhausting the resources at Rising Sun, had taken a term or so at the Ada "Normal," already then officially called Ohio Northern University. With this extra schooling, they obtained teaching certificates and taught for a few years before marrying and settling down to farm, or going West to become lawyers. None had gone to high school.
The state of Ohio had made provisions a few years before by which rural school students who passed a certain examination could attend any nearby high school, if they could find one, and their home townships were required to pay their tuition. Passing the examination, called the "Boxwell" after the legislator who had sponsored the law, was supposed to be the equivalent of passing the eight grades of a town school. To take the examination one went to Kenton, our county seat, where boys and girls from all over the county assembled some spring Saturday at a schoolhouse. The county superintendent passed out questions and writing tablets, and collected the papers. After a week or so of suspense, the reports were mailed to the applicants.

I had taken the "Boxwell" two years before at the advanced age of eleven, and had passed it, so no new formalities were to be required. I found shortly what had led to Father's question.

As a member of the Marion township school board, Father shared with his colleagues the responsibility for choosing the textbooks which schools in the township should use. Professor C. H. Freeman, principal of the Ada high school, in his summer-time capacity as a sales agent for the American Book Company, had called to see Father. Learning that a 13-year-old boy in the family had two years previously passed the "Boxwell," he forgot about selling textbooks for long enough to sell Father the idea of higher education for me. Seeing no reason to spend further time going over the familiar subjects at Rising Sun, I welcomed the new challenge. The decision was made at once.

That very week another wonderful thing happened. The telephone rang "two shorts" about six o'clock Thursday morning. It was for me. Orange Powell asked if I didn't want to go along with him to the Kenton fair that day.

The week before I had been a little boy in knee pants. This week I was wearing long pants to the fair, about to start to high school in town, and Orange Powell was inviting me to companionship for the day. He probably never knew what a tremendous lift that invitation provided.

Orange was the younger son of Joe Powell, our nearest neighbor. Three or four years before he had been my teacher for one winter at Rising Sun, and had moved to other schools for winter earnings. He was then probably twenty-two, an upstanding, clean-cut young fellow whom everyone respected. He neither drank, smoked nor swore; didn't even chew tobacco. He taught a boys' class at Sunday School. He was full of enterprise, vigor and hustle. On frosty Fall mornings, we could hear his resonant voice as he hurried about his morning chores. He was always in a hurry, yet did his work well.

He had the shiniest buggy and the fastest trotting horse in the neighborhood. It was behind this fast-stepping bay, with a newly shod foot hanging nonchalantly outside the buggy box, that I went to the fair with Orange. We undoubtedly had a
good time; I remember only that it was a great occasion. Orange soon afterwards
married Frances Huggett, the prettiest girl in the neighborhood, and became one
of the county's outstanding farmers.

Father arranged for me to room and board with an Ada family who lived not too
far from the high school building. On the first morning I went to the office of the
superintendent, Professor O. O. Vogenitz, and was shown by him to a seat on
the freshman side of the assembly auditorium. When the bell rang the principal,
Professor Freeman, welcomed the new school year, announced the few rules of
behavior and procedure, and directed the freshmen to a recitation room. There
he explained that the high school offered a choice between two courses, a
"science" course and a Latin course. The difference was that the first provided
more science and no Latin. Seeing no need for a dead language and being
interested in science, I chose the science course, but after a few weeks I began
to believe this was a mistake. Most of the brighter pupils and better-looking girls
were taking the Latin course. Permission was granted to change over. I had to
cram hard to catch up with memorizing the declensions and conjugations of first
year Latin and never learned them with complete thoroughness. This deficiency
led to trouble when Caesar, Cicero and Virgil came along.

The school building, a gloomy semi-gothic, two-story structure of dark red brick,
stood in an unadorned lot at nearly the northernmost end of Main Street. Rooms
for seven lower grades filled the first floor. The eighth grade used the front corner
room on the second floor. Three classrooms remained on this floor for high
school recitations. When not in a class we sat in the large high ceilinged
auditorium at the rear of the floor. Class schedules were so arranged that one
teacher was always free to keep order in the auditorium. The playground back of
the building was available only for the grade school pupils. We had no
gymnasium or swimming pool. No manual training or "vocational" subjects were
taught, so no shops were necessary.

Despite my green country gaucheries, the town boys and girls were kind and
friendly and often helpful. Most of them had attended previous grades together
and knew each other well. Perhaps the rural additions to the class were
welcomed as new faces and personalities. Beside myself, two others came in
from country schools, Frank Henry and Beff Beagle, both good students and
high-minded lads. In fact, the whole school seemed to be clean and healthy of
mind and behavior. The only report of scandal or "juvenile delinquency" during
the four years came when a freshman girl dropped out of school in favor of
unmarried motherhood.

I was flattered by the cordiality of one town boy in particular. Cloyd Jameson
wore white trousers and bore himself with unfailing suavity and self-possession.
He thoughtfully explained customs and procedures which he saw might be
strange to me and showed me how to get along in the new worlds of school and
town.
The first year I boarded with the Blossers, who were friends of our family. Jake Blosser had been the carpenter in charge of building our barns. At this time he was in Camaguery, Cuba, where a little later most of the Blosser family emigrated, only to return after some disappointing years. I ate at the family table, and shared a room with Ray, a grown son who was working hard to complete an engineering course at the university. He belonged to the town National Guard Company and to its basketball team, a team which under the skilled coaching of Dr. Breck, a local dentist, became good enough to beat highly advertised touring professional teams. Watching the guard company drill and the basketball team practice in the armory were among my freshman year amusements. Ray also took me skating when the ice was thick enough on Ed Wallack's pond. With a quiet fellow freshman, Eugene Preston, I worked out lessons, went to midweek prayer meetings at the various churches and to occasional free events at the college. Father or Mother came to town regularly on Friday afternoons to take me home for the weekends, and saw that I was back early enough Monday morning to resume school on time.

When the sophomore year began, I suggested that it was not necessary to board in town during the fall, while weather was mostly pleasant. My parents were glad enough to have me home nights. After all, the high school building was only six miles from home, and I had the choice of riding my bicycle, driving Old Doc to and fro, or of walking. After driving the horse a few trips, I decided that hitching up and unhitching, besides going at lunchtime to feed him, combined to be more trouble than walking. The bicycle was for some reason, perhaps because it was about worn out, rejected. So for several weeks that fall and the next, until winter set in, I walked the six miles each way five days a week. Occasionally I got a ride, but traffic going my way was slight. Actually the walk was varied and pleasant. The farm was four miles southward from the schoolhouse and two miles eastward. The roads in that level country were all straight with the compass, either one full mile or half a mile apart. Two of the east-west roads between home and school were half-mile. It was possible to take different routes every day for a week before going over the same one again. If I chose to cut across woods and fields the variety was still greater. By hurrying I could do the six miles in an hour; that called for trotting some of the way. By dawdling it could be made a two-hour trip.

Most of the time I balked at carrying a lunch as Mother wanted me to do. It was more fun to walk uptown at noontime with other students who went home for their lunches. To lay out cash for a daily meal was a sort of extravagance which Father and Mother could not quite endorse, but which they permitted as long as I was spending money I had managed to earn myself. For fifteen cents at Aunty Conner's restaurant, I could buy a large mug of coffee and two delicious breaded veal sandwiches, or coffee, one sandwich and a generous slice of pie.
By mid-November the shorter and colder days began to take the fun out of walking twelve miles daily. Then I shared a room with Beff Beagle, a studious classmate, and began to be a regular boarder at Aunty Conner's. A meal ticket, good for twenty-one meals, cost two dollars, and they were all good meals. The room cost a dollar and a half a week for the two of us.

Beagle, a year or so older than I, came from a Mennonite community several miles north of town. He was working for all his expenses, and had to study harder than some of us to get his lessons, but he always had them and had them well. Beagle may have been what elsewhere the boys would have called a "grind," but he was affable, polite, dependable, and well liked. He was tolerant, too. One night he and I fell into a discussion of the hilarious dissipations which some of our fellow-students were supposed to pursue, and agreed that we should not condemn such exuberance even though we were not disposed to share in it. "Why," Beagle confessed, "sometimes I go down town on a Saturday night and buy a bag of peanuts and stand around on the corners and have a high old time!" I could hardly believe it of him. Despite such merry practices, Beagle was the member the class selected to be its senior president.

Professor Freeman intensified my ready interest in reading and widened my curiosity about various authors. I read through most of the high school library and occasionally acquired a new book of my own. Quite a number of classics and other good titles were then obtainable in cheap cloth editions for as little as a dime and no more than a quarter. One of the books I bought and read was by J.M. Barrie; its title, *My Lady Nicotine*.

The book gave me an idea. I thought it over for several days before deciding to act. Then, one evening after supper, I went to a restaurant where I was not well known, laid a dime on the cigar counter and bought an "El Verso," the best cigar to be had in town. Crossing over to Johnson Street where observers were likely to be few, I cut off the end of the cigar and lighted up. Thick, soft snow was falling and no wind was blowing. I strolled up and down the street, drawing in the fragrant smoke and blowing it out, until the last inch of the cigar was reached. The experience was as pleasant as Mr. Barrie had led me to expect. I enjoyed that El Verso as much as any cigar since then, and through the intervening years I must have smoked more than a hundred thousand cigars, though years had to elapse before I could afford ten-centers. That ten-cent book of Barrie's turned out to be expensive!

The next year I shared rooms for the first months with college students. One, Otto Hankinson, became a lawyer and judge in Toledo and another, Wilbert J. Huff, achieved distinction as a physicist and as an outstanding authority on explosive gases. Finally I decided to afford a room by myself and found a large, comfortable one at Mrs. Povenmire's. Here my books and typewriter could be arranged as I chose, and no one was disturbed if I wished to read or work late
into the nights. At two dollars a week this room was headquarters for the rest of the time in school.

The typewriter, incidentally, had been obtained by perspiration. I had seen one advertised, a rebuilt L.C. Smith, for $36, which I did not have. Father offered to buy it, providing that Cliff Hinkle, the hired man and I would finish hoeing a cornfield by the time the clover had to be harvested. Cliff declared that he had never seen such an industrious boy; he could not hoe that fast. The typewriter later earned larger sums.

The high school, of course, had a football team. A half dozen visits to the practice field sufficed to bring the conclusion that no time should be wasted at that sort of thing; I had neither interest nor talent to such ends. This may have been a mistake. More participation in athletics at that age might have improved the proficiency in coordination of mind, nerves and muscles which I have admired in others and found lacking in myself.

We had no fraternities nor sororities and not much purely social activity. No high school group held dances. Along about the junior year a group of ten of us, five boys and five girls, began meeting on occasional Friday nights for games, talk and refreshments. I doubt whether any one of the ten had learned how to dance. The only organized dancing in Ada then took place at the armory where young married people and a few others occasionally arranged for music after basketball games. The college authorities forbade students to dance and the town folks generally sympathized with the college rules of conduct.

One April Monday morning during the freshman year, I found the whole high school buzzing with chatter. As we took our seats in the auditorium, we saw a gaping hole in the plaster of the high ceiling. Johnny Bentley, we were told, had nearly fallen through from the attic. Johnny, a lovable classmate with an impish smile, was enjoying his unusual distinction and, like others of us, picturing the broken body that might have been found had his fall not been interrupted.

The story soon came to light. As a freshman I had not heard that juniors and sophomores by tradition vied to tie a class flag to the cupola of the school building. The contest involved a bit of dangerous climbing. Johnny, although also a freshman, had somehow become involved and while exploring the dark attic had fallen part way through the lath and plaster of the ceiling. Quick help had saved him from disaster.

At noontime, after lunch, I had waited at Clayton's clothing store where Eugene Turner worked. Gene, afterwards a railway mail clerk, Alden Elliott, later a sales manager for Heinz pickles, and Edwin Jameson, who became a farm machinery dealer, and I often met at the store to walk together for the half mile northward to the school building.
As a newcomer from the country, I wanted to know all about the school customs, and here was one about which I had not before heard. I asked the boys to tell me what had been going on and what it all meant. "What difference does it make," I asked in innocent ignorance, "whose flag flies from the cupola? Why risk breaking a leg over that?

The boys poured their contempt over my failure to appreciate the niceties of the situation. "It shows class spirit," Alden Elliott informed me. "It proves class superiority." That floored me for a few minutes. Then I brashly remarked that all it appeared to prove was which class had members more nearly like monkeys and therefore best able to climb up to the cupola. The boys patiently tried to make clear the high significance of school traditions and class spirit.

I was not convinced. "If you want to prove which class is superior," I said, "why not organize an inter-class contest of some kind? Why not have an oratorical contest, a debate, or essay and recitation contests? Seems to me that might prove something worth while about who is superior."

Ed Jameson thought that was a good idea and said I ought to talk to Prof. Freeman about it. I urged him to speak to Freeman; he knew him better. I stood too much in awe of the brilliant principal to venture to offer him an idea.

Ed agreed to do it, and I saw him talking earnestly to Freeman before school took up. The principal was nodding and smiling, and Ed told me later that he thought the idea was going to be used.

It was. Within a few days, Professor Freeman announced the first Ada High School Inter-Class Contest. Sophomores and juniors were to debate. Each class was to choose members to represent it in oratory, in recitation, and in essays. We held separate class meetings to choose our contestants.

Seldom, up to that time, had I ever wanted anything quite so much as to be chosen to represent the freshman class as its oratorical contestant. That, I thought, would be the peak of glory. I surveyed the membership of the class and easily came to the conclusion that I was the logical choice. While I had not made any speeches, I was sure that I could make a better one than anyone else. Moreover, it was known that I had originated the contest idea, and I assumed that I might be entitled to consideration on that account.

When the class met to choose its representatives, my hopes were high. My friend Eugene Preston, who did not himself aspire to participate in the contest, placed my name in nomination. The ballot was secret. I got some votes, but lost by a large majority. Edith Black, a bright and fluent girl, was to be the orator.

I was appalled to learn that my classmates so definitely disagreed with my own evaluation of my oratorical talents. It might now seem appropriate to say that this
taught me a valuable lesson; however, it is possible that the afterthoughts then did not emphasize the need for humility so much as they enlarged my doubts about the merits of mass judgment. I was only slightly consoled by a unanimous election as cheer leader; and when Edith Black won the contest, I did have sense enough to admit to myself that her oration, and not the cheers I had led was responsible for the victory.

The next year the story was quite different. Professor Freeman, no doubt planning to forestall another flag raising, announced early that the contest was to be repeated. The class showed improved judgment. When time came for the contestants to be picked, I was chosen to be the orator.

First came the problem of choosing a topic. Determined to be original I discarded such ideas as "The Past, Present and Future," and "To the Stars Through Difficulties." Being entranced with the fascinating field of nature, I finally settled upon a subject. My oration was to be about John Burroughs.

A more unlikely topic for high oratory than the gentle sage of Slabsides would have been hard to find. Nevertheless, I was certain that I could make the rafters ring with brilliantly intoned phrases about him. For weeks I wrote nearly every night, and the next night started over. The date kept creeping closer. Because the contest had stirred up such great interest, it was announced that instead of being held in the school auditorium, it would be held in the opera house—the Whiteside Opera House, named years before for a popular stock player named Walker Whiteside.

After a dozen futile starts, I finally completed a manuscript of the prescribed length, and when it was done, I could not look upon it with much pride. I had not found much to say about Mr. Burroughs and realized that a better subject could have been found. Nevertheless, I was sure that the ringing diction of a natural-born orator could bring down the house and win the decision of the judges.

Then I discovered a new problem. I could not remember the sentences I had written. I had read about orators such as Albert J. Beveridge who could write out an hour's address and deliver it without the change of a word. That gift clearly was not in me. At every free moment, I recited paragraphs to myself, audibly when possible, but continued to have trouble recalling which line came next.

The crucial Friday night came. I had a new brown suit, new tan shoes, and a brown tie carefully knotted around a gates-ajar collar. I peeped out from the wings of the opera house to see every seat filled, even to the last rows of the gallery. If I were to outdo Daniel Webster, here was the multitude to cheer. I could see Father and Mother sitting expectantly in the seventh row on the right.

My friend Cloyd Jameson had agreed to hold my manuscript and to prompt me if, in the great test, I should have difficulty remembering. He had listened to it and
pronounced it great, and had read it over aloud to be sure he could follow the pencil script down the long, shiny yellow sheets. The contestants took their places on the stage, and the curtain rose. I was not nervous. I sat confidently looking over the audience during a musical number and while the first speaker delivered his entry. The time came.

The opening paragraphs came forth loudly and confidently. All my assurance seemed justified. No high school sophomore orator's discourse had ever sounded so good, to me. The first half of the speech, I had managed to memorize well enough. Then a line failed to come promptly to my tongue. I stood in anxious expectation that another second would produce it. The seconds went ticking off while I stood in pained and awkward silence. The splendid audience waited sympathetically. My classmates waited unhappily in fear that the lapse would give the victory to another class. Silence deepened over the whole house. I glanced desperately toward the wings to see what had become of my prompter. In the dim light he was frantically scrambling through the pages to find where I had left off. My good start had left him so sure I was getting along well enough that he had not followed the text. I glanced down and saw a red flush mounting up the back of my father's neck, up to his ears, and finally over the top of his bald head. At last Cloyd found the place and I shouted another sentence.

My confidence was gone. Moreover, I didn't know the second half of the speech as thoroughly as the first part. At the end of that one sentence, I paused again. Cloyd gave me the cue, and I finished a paragraph but could not remember how the next one started. I could not even remember the final paragraph and sat down ingloriously, wholly depriving the multitude from hearing the ringing delivery I had planned for the peroration.

Compliments – utterly failed to shower down after the long evening finally ended. The orator for the juniors won the contest. After it was all over, Father and Mother and I rode home to the farm in the buggy. They were kind enough but disappointed. When Monday morning came and I had to face my fellow sophomores again, I was glad that not much was said one way or the other. It was positively clear, nevertheless, that I had fallen short of becoming the class hero. Out of the depths of humiliation the conviction asserted itself that I had not underestimated my potential talent, but that if anyone else were ever to agree with my evaluation I should have to depend upon actual performance. No one was going to adopt my own secret estimate until they saw the evidence.

The next year, as a junior, I knew I could not hope to be chosen again as the class orator. The seniors were to debate with the juniors. I hopefully figured that our class really had but three qualified speakers. One had to be chosen for the oratorical contest. Another would go on the debating team of two persons, and I, as the third qualified person, would get the second place in the debating pair.
The class had not sized up its material in the same fashion. It chose the orator I had expected, and the first debater. But for the second debater the vote fell to a shy new lad whose potentials for such a responsibility were so uncertain that I had not expected him to be in the race nor willing to accept. It looked as though I might not even get to be a cheerleader.

After a night's reflection I came up with a constructive idea. Certainly, I thought, it must be obvious to every junior that except for me the class had absolutely no further platform material. Next morning I hurried to see Professor Freeman and proposed that the debating teams ought to have three and not merely two members. What logic I used to convince him I don't recall; perhaps none at all. He may have detected my strategy and may have sympathized with what he must have known was my secret desire to repair the damage done by the inglorious failure of the year before. At any rate, he announced that the faculty had decided upon debating teams of three members each and asked each class concerned to elect one additional. I got the job.

"Resolved: That the Philippine Islands should be independent," was the question. The juniors drew the affirmative. I was innocent of either preconceived convictions or previous knowledge but determined that justice demanded the islands ought to become free. I hurried down to the university library and read for hours. Then I bethought myself of the university's Big Four debaters who entertained the town each winter with a resounding debate upon some popular topic. There were four eloquent and popular members of the faculty, at that time including Professor S.P. Axline, head of the law school, the professor of history, Frank B. Willis, later governor of Ohio and United States Senator, and Dr. Aaron S. Watkins, who became the Prohibition Party's nominee for the presidency. Axline and Willis generously took some evening hours to argue both sides of the Independence question. I soon had more points than I could use. The other two boys, Clyde Deeds and Henry Simon prepared well in their own ways. We pooled our arguments and planned which each should use.

The debate speech proved easier to write than an oration on John Burroughs. Three weeks before the contest date I had it as near perfection as I could bring it with a little more free help from Axline and Willis. I memorized it, too, until every sentence and word came naturally in its proper place.

Another preparatory measure suggested itself. The university had a department of elocution. The professor, A.A. Crecelius, was known to give private lessons at an hourly rate. Probably it was fifty cents, maybe a dollar; anyway a lot of money. I invested three dollars in coaching by the professor. Clyde Deeds found out what I was doing and also acquired some coaching.

The judges voted that the Philippine Islands ought to be given their independence and that the juniors had won the debate. What I learned about the
importance of preparation has cost innumerable hours of advance work on many occasions since.

As this is written, the mail brings a program of the 81st Annual Interclass Contest at the Ada High School. I shall be fortunate if any other idea of mine (and Professor Freeman’s) survives as long. Without Freeman’s push, the idea would have never gotten beyond the sidewalk; the credit belongs to him.
High school brought opportunities, which the district school at Rising Sun had not offered, to be measured against the capabilities of others. As the youngest freshman, I noted that while classmates all were older than I by a few months or a year, the age difference was slight. Even the juniors and seniors were at most three or four years older. Here were more than a hundred young people of my own approximate age. Could I hold my own among so many?

Certainly three-fourths of the boys were superior athletes. That caused me no concern. I had good health and no intention ever to rely on muscles to earn a living. Many students obviously possessed better memories. Whether this was a natural gift, a consequence of greater concentration or the result of more dogged application, I was often to wonder. I could retain the substance of whatever really interested me and hoped perhaps that was sufficient. An assignment to "learn by heart" a poem or a passage from literature meant laborious hours. After nothing through years that men who excel usually possess exceptional memories I wish that more hard hours had been invested in developing the knacks of retention and recall.

Pupils with musical ability were numerous, and I had none whatever. My efforts at song were never praised, perhaps because I could neither carry a tune nor remember the words. I admittedly envied Guerdon Bryant, the handsome junior with curly red hair, who played melodiously thundering marches while we kept step from the assembly room at noon and at the day's close. I was disappointed that he later chose to become a pharmacist instead of a Paderewski. His marches inspired me to take a few piano lessons one summer, but the teacher soon saw that both of us were wasting time.

In another department I discovered talents that were miserably inferior. That was in mathematics. I had managed through arithmetic and simple algebra with moderate success. Their usefulness was evident. The third year curriculum demanded that I pass plane geometry. This subject was not notably difficult, but I thought it extraordinarily uninteresting. I watched with amazement the eager joy with which the superior mathematicians worked out laborious problems. After noting that most of these fellow-students who excelled in mathematics did badly in English and in most other subjects, I consoled myself with a theory that mathematical skill, like proficiency in music, was a gift which had little relationship to solid intellectual ability.

Armstrong Stambaugh, our principal, Professor Freeman having become superintendent, made no allowances. He demanded not only that I understand
each geometrical proposition, but that I, along with all the class, should turn in
daily papers with all the “originals” worked out. These required two or three hours
of homework just to set down all the necessary figures, although they were not
actually difficult to do. I resented what I regarded as an improper imposition on
my time and decided to learn what would happen if the original work was not
turned in.

For a day or so nothing at all happened. When the principal did not find my paper
on the third day, he quietly said, "You may may after school and do those
originals."

I stayed. While Mr. Stambaugh graded papers and made out reports, I continued
reading a book which I thought far more inspiring than plane geometry. It was G.
Otto Trevelyan's "Life of Thomas Babington Macaulay." At 4:30 the principal
closed his desk and came to mine. "Have you finished those originals?"? "No,
Sir, I have not." "Why not?" "Because I don't think they are worth the time they
take." His jaws took on a grim set as he sensed insubordination. He decided,
however, to try reason before discipline. "What have you got against geometry?"
he asked. I tried to explain that mathematics, to my way of thinking, formed no
necessary part of an education. "They prove that two and two make four," I said,
"but things don't always add up that way. Mathematics, however, can mislead
people into thinking so."

Mr. Stambaugh patiently emphasized the merits of mathematics as a mental
discipline and as an aid to exact thinking, and sought to draw out my answers. I
said that for one who intended to become an engineer, or a bank clerk or a
mathematics teacher no doubt the subject was essential. I planned no such
career, and I suggested that all the mathematics above arithmetic and simple
algebra should be left off the curriculum.

"You are forgetting," he grinned, "That we school teachers have to teach
something! What would you suggest we should introduce in place of
mathematics?" "I don't know. But if you keep me after school again I'll have an
answer -- or else do this homework."

A day or so later he again directed me to remain after school was dismissed.
"Well," he asked, "shall we have a new course to teach or are you going to do
your assignments?" "I didn't believe it would be much trouble to think of
something better than geometry, and it wasn't," I said. "I propose that we
substitute a course in learning to play checkers and chess." The news about
"progressive education" had not reached Ada. Mr. Stambaugh displayed all the
astonishment I had hoped for and asked if I could justify a suggestion so
preposterous. I thought that I could.

"The trouble with mathematics," I argued, "is that it deals only with exact
quantities. Thus it is valuable to the engineer and to the bookkeeper. Such
specialists must know mathematics. But most of us here in school will be dealing
with people. Human beings are not exact quantities. We shall need to learn how
human beings act. Where is the other fellow going to jump next? A course in
checkers and chess should therefore be more valuable than the study of
geometry." "Very ingenious," commented Mr. Stambaugh. "You may go now. But
I think you ought to work out a few of those originals. You might meet an exact
quantity sometime!

A half-century after this episode I picked up the autobiography of Charles Francis
Adams, son of John Quincy Adams, who acquired note for himself as a railroad
and business leader. After writing the volume during the very years while I was in
high school, he sealed his manuscript and delivered it to the Massachusetts
Historical Society to be held until after his death, which took place in 1915. The
book was published a year later.

Referring to his years in Harvard's Class of 1857, Adams had written:

"At Harvard there was quite a sufficiency of elective courses in my time;
and, since then, they have been multiplied all out of reason. And yet what
would for me have been the most valuable of electives for purposes of
mental training has never been proposed -- a course in chess! Gravely to
suggest it even would give rise to a look of surprise -- probably a smile.
Yet what is it but the German Kriegspiel adapted to civil life vocations? In
playing chess, you must have a defined plan of campaign and follow it up
intelligently and consecutively; you must watch your opponent and
understand and meet his play. You must measure yourself against him. All
this I have been doing after a fashion throughout my life; yet I never went
through any special training in preparation for it. A course in chess would
have been for me -- kriegspiel! So, also, for others. Why not sometimes
educate through amusement?"

Thanks to a little harder work on my part and considerable indulgence by the
teacher, I passed the course. The geometry did me no permanent harm, nor did
his knowledge of the subject prevent Armstrong Stambaugh from getting on fairly
well with the inexact characteristics of human beings. He became Chairman of
the Board of the Standard Oil Company of Ohio.

Professor Freeman was always the outstanding teacher; others left their
memories or made their marks. One young man stayed with us only the first
year, and his absence was not regretted. In his place came Marian Finley, a
capable, healthy, smiling young woman who inspired her classes to meet the
standards she set. Almost as popular as Freeman was W.W. Meyer who sang so
wonderfully that we expected him to become a famous concert artist. Instead he
went to Yale, studied law, and became general counsel for the New Haven
Railroad. Principal Stambaugh was effective and popular.
Back in the 1870’s the town of Ada had bonded itself for $30,000 to pay for a new building needed by the then privately owned Ohio Normal University. Around 1900 new administrators had changed the name to Ohio Northern University. Still in force, however, was an agreement made when the bonds were issued. It provided that the senior year instruction for Ada’s high school students should be given by the university. Thus during our final year of high school we were students in college, too.

I came perilously near failing to graduate. The new environment was stimulating and challenging. The library, the college literary societies and the varied acquaintanceships invited participation in diverting activities. I worked hard at the studies I thought useful and neglected others. Among the “others” was physics. No doubt I then blamed the professor because the physics classes and laboratory work appeared to be dull. He was unquestionably generous when, despite my inattention to the work and a fortnight’s absence from classes during a simultaneous attack of mumps and measles, he gave me a term grade of 69. The college required a minimum of 70 for passing.

This was a violent blow to my rampant ego. I couldn’t laugh off that grade. I knew I deserved even less. All my plodding classmates were going to graduate while I, humbled by knowing that I could easily have made a higher grade by trying, was to be left behind. The hurt might have been less if I had worked hard and failed. I had outsmarted myself by being too independent.

Searching for some comfort in the situation and some way to justify myself with a minimum of public humiliation, I assumed a "What's a diploma?" attitude. No one, I persuaded myself, was ever going to ask to see my diploma. What I had learned I had learned, even though the sum of my accomplishment in mathematics and physics was small. No one could take away whatever education I had obtained and it was to get an education, not to win a mere diploma, that I had spent four years in high school. I vowed that even if I had a diploma, its ribbon would never be removed unless some prospective employer insisted on seeing the document.

E.H. Brown, the superintendent of schools in our senior year, called the class together one day to discuss the approaching commencement plans. I took occasion privately to express my regret that I would not be graduating with the class. "Why not?" he asked in obvious astonishment. "You have always made pretty good grades!" "I failed in physics." "No, you didn't. I'm sure you didn't." He took me to his office to re-examine his records. Why, no! What made you think you had not passed? The passing grade in high school is 60, and yours has been certified to me as 69. You have nine points to spare."

I had not been aware of or had forgotten about the different requirements. As a college student I had failed in physics; but as a high school boy I had passed.
The fright taught me not to get too sure of myself; the outcome suggested that the worst does not always happen. The incident should have taught me a little humility also. Instead I promptly became guilty of a streak of ill-mannered and unsocial individualism for which I should have been decently ashamed. Having persuaded myself that a diploma was a needless decoration, I argued that the graduation exercises were useless flub dubbing. Instead of sitting on the stage with the class on commencement night I sat in the audience with my puzzled Father and Mother. I am sure my actions won no admiration from the classmates who had been friendly, helpful and tolerant during our four years together. Superintendent Brown handed me the diploma privately after the commencement exercises were over. No one ever did ask to see it.

So I had a diploma; a diploma and four years of Latin, four years of algebra and geometry, a little general history, half a year of physical geography, a little science and four good years of English. High school had given me those with small effort on my part. It had not supplied any particular sense of direction. Some of the boys talked about becoming engineers or pharmacists, but there had been no "vocational guidance," nor any adult discussion as to how we might eventually make our livings. Beyond exhortations to determine to aim high and "make good" the future prospects of having to earn livings were mentioned less often than the importance of going to college. We gazed at Halley's comet those 1910 spring evenings with little more idea of where we were going than of the comet's future course.

Being only seventeen, and being able so far as I knew to continue in school, I assumed that I would "complete" my education in our hometown Ohio Northern University. I had not thought much about what services I might later offer to society in return for a living. I did not intend to follow my father's footsteps as a farmer, nor did he ever appear to expect that I would. I had already discovered, as a wit remarked recently, that everything one picked upon the farm was heavy and often had to be lifted. So far, however, I felt no call to any future mission. If I thought at all about making a living, it was to assume that a young man with an "education" who was willing to work would find a place.

Professor Freeman had ignited a spark that was to keep glowing, although I had as yet no thought of its meaning. His teaching had made English and American Literature exciting and the English language fascinating. He assigned writing tasks to his classes as generously as Mr. Stambaugh had loaded us with geometry problems. The topics he chose had point and purpose. His criticisms after the themes were read in class always helped toward making the next writing job better. He implanted the desire to read the master authors. As one result, I have never yet caught up with reading.

Tall, lean, firm-jawed, square-shouldered, well built, Freeman had been a football player. Black hair, gleaming dark eyes, a wrinkly countenance that could break in a flash from grim bleakness into merry smiles, a rich voice combined with an
apparently endless fund of literary and historical knowledge, and a penetrating knowledge of young people made him by far the most stimulating of our teachers. He became superintendent of the public schools after my first year in high school and two years later went on to the university as head of the English department. Years afterward he served a few terms in the Ohio legislature, but continued to teach until he was eighty. When we learned the word "dynamic" we agreed that he was one man who the term fitted perfectly. He always moved quickly and purposefully; and he galvanized his pupils into study and work.

I never saw him move faster than one day an instant after two of the biggest boys had committed some misbehavior against which the superintendent had warned only that morning. Freeman appeared out of nowhere, seized two coat collars and almost before anyone saw what was going on, yanked the two tall fellows out of their assembly room seats and flung them down a stairway. Then he quietly strolled forward and opened the afternoon session.

Though he always sought to appear impartially interested in every pupil, there was some thought, in which I probably shared, that he favored me a little because I read more and wrote more than most others in his classes. One day he asked class members to read their themes aloud. Mine, I thought, was above my previous best. It had action, fancy vocabulary and special metaphors. I read it loudly and oratorically. During the next few minutes I learned a great deal, not only about Professor Freeman's verbal resources but an even more valuable lesson. I had odiously compared a revered and sacred institution to an aggressive python. Had I been looking at him, I might have seen the thunderclouds gathering around Freeman's face. The lightning struck almost before I could sit down. His denunciation of my bad taste was picturesque, vivid and violent. He scorched me for every pretentious sentence, wilted me for every irreverent phrase, ridiculed and denounced me until the bell rang. The class was almost as stunned as I was. Never before nor since have I been tongue-lashed so marvelously, nor more justly, nor more effectively. That lesson I never forgot; and I couldn't resent its manner. He was so eloquent and convincing that I could find no defense except to never again to make so gross a mistake against good taste.

A high school boy in Ada who wanted to make a little extra money could find ways to do it, but most of the ways required either physical labor or extra early rising. I didn't need money badly enough to want to open and sweep out a store at 6 a.m. nor to deliver groceries. Father provided adequately for room, board and books. He would have added more "spending money" had I asked for it, but it didn't occur to me to ask. If one wanted luxuries, he was supposed to earn them for himself and that was that.

One afternoon after school the editor and proprietor of the Ada Record found me inquiring whether he needed a willing worker. The urge to earn some additional money no doubt provided the primary motive. Maybe Franklin's autobiography
had inspired some special interest in printing offices. Perhaps the interest Professor Freeman had aroused in literature had made me want to become associated with its sources. At any rate, the Record editor, Agnew Welsh, agreed to let me work in his shop. That he did so I am sure was not because he particularly needed help, but because he wanted to encourage a youngster.

The first assignment was to sweep out the shop at the close of day. He showed me how to spread the oil-sweeping compound over the floor and how to leave the shop completely neat and clean for the next day's work. Within a day or so this art had been learned well enough that the job only took a few minutes.

"Want to learn how to set type?" Mr. Welsh had anticipated my earlier affirmative by selecting an old case of ten-point for my first effort. Seated on a high stool, I found before me a wonderful area of esoteric and technical knowledge. In the slanted flat box were compartments for all the letters, for punctuation marks and for spaces to put between words. An upper case contained the capital letters. Mr. Welsh explained why the biggest, most easily reached compartment contained the pieces of type from which "e" was printed — because "e" is the letter used most often. He pointed out that the "a" and "c", the "h" and "n" boxes were bigger than those for "x" and "q" and "z" and other less frequently used letters. Then he put in my hand a printer's stick, a sort of metal box adjustable to the width of a column, in which the pieces of type were placed, one by one, upside down. It held about two inches of type. He gave me a rule, the metal strip which a typesetter used to back up the line he was setting and which he moved with each new line. He showed me how the "leads" were inserted to space between the lines of type, and then how to put the spaces between words so that in printing the white space-intervals in each line appear equal in size.

After several hours of assiduous work, spread over a week of afternoon spare times, I had half a galley of type. Each time the stick was full it had to be wet thoroughly with a sponge, so that the letters would adhere together while the type was lifted over to the "galley," a sturdy sort of long, brass pan. The galley usually rested on an unused, slanting case. The type was carefully slid all the way to the upper end of the galley and rested on the lower side. A heavy piece of lead prevented the last lines from falling. The galleys were nearly as long as a column. Their lower ends were open so that the type could be moved when the time came to and easily pushed off on a composing stone or into a form.

Mr. Welsh had speared the text of that first "copy" from an exchange with his long editor's shears and had pasted it up on a letter-size sheet of blank newsprint. It was a half-column history of the American flag. When finally and proudly I reported to Harlow Povemire, the shop foreman, that the last line was finished, he dropped whatever he was doing and set about to "pull a proof." He laid the galley, with the type carefully braced on its unprotected side and bottom, on the long proof press, inked it with a rubber roller, spread a long narrow sheet of paper, and then turned the heavy, cloth-wrapped proof roller over it. When he
lifted the sheet there in printed words was the text I had been setting. Before I had a chance to read it over Mr. Welsh took the proof to his desk, seized a pencil and with a mischievous look at me over the tops of his nose-glasses said, "Now, we shall see how many egregious errors you have made!"

His pencil darted to mistake after mistake, drew lines out to the wide, blank margins of the proof and by signs and letters indicated corrections. When he had finished he offered the compliment that at least half the lines had no errors in them and declared that for a beginner the proof was fairly clean. Then he explained one by one the meaning of the marks he had made. The foreman showed me how to work the type-errors out of the lines, replace them with the correct pieces, and how to readjust the spaces when necessary. After one or two additional proofs had been taken the job was pronounced "OK" and some time later the article appeared in *The Record*. That first proof with Mr. Welsh's eleven corrections survives as a prized item in a scrapbook of those days.

The smell of printer's ink was agreeable, and I liked the creative atmosphere of the newspaper office and print shop. After a few weeks I became a fairly accurate typesetter, although never a fast one. Mr. Welsh suggested that I try reporting basketball games and other school events. He printed the accounts about as they were written. The dollar or so a week he gave me seemed to be generous pay for the pleasurable chores I performed.

The art of shuffling piles of loose sheets into perfectly neat stacks, the use of the wire stapling machine to make booklets, the management of the big knifed paper cutter to reduce big sheets to desired sizes and to trim edges, the way to make paste and the uses of binder's glue, all these elementary skills he taught. Interesting as I found work in the shop to be, and much as I liked seeing my little pieces in the paper, the idea of becoming a newspaperman had not established itself. Mr. Welsh was nudging me in that direction. I enjoyed learning something new and was proud to be doing something no other boy of my acquaintance had attempted.

Harlow Povemire patiently answered questions about printing, and was too much the gentleman to make me the victim of the standard practical jokes which were inflicted on printers' devils. He never sent me to find the paper stretcher. He did show me the type lice, but in such a manner that I understood the idea without suffering its consequences. Despite the processes of modernization and disinfection, no doubt type lice may still be discovered in many printing shops. They are found by leaning closely over a galley of handset type which has first been made dripping wet. Half the type is shoved three or four inches down the galley and the observer urged to look hard to see the lice scampering in between. Then, when the type is quickly pushed back into place, the dirty water splashes up into the observer's face.
Harlow was too kind to play such tricks. A bachelor, he lived with his mother and two sisters who ran a large student rooming and boarding house. He was an ardent student of Lincoln and eventually owned a creditable collection of Lincoln books and memorabilia. Aside from work and Lincoln, his interest centered principally in Company G of the Ohio National Guard, the Ada company of which he was then a lieutenant. He served with the Guard in its 1914 Mexican adventures. Later Captain of the company, he led it through France during World War I. Profitable investment of his savings enabled him to live in Ada through later years of quiet ease, never again permitting himself to be conspicuous except for a short period when he consented to become president of one of the banks.

With constant encouragement from Mr. Welsh I continued to write news articles about school events. One summer I took an excursion to Niagara Falls. The round trip fare was five dollars, by rail to Cleveland and by boat overnight to Buffalo. Lake Erie chose that particular night for a grand storm which I proudly enjoyed, especially as no sickness overtook me. In Buffalo I stayed with relatives, so that my total fund of fifteen dollars was still not exhausted at the end of the trip. At the Albright Art Museum, I saw sculptures for the first time and decided that they represented my favorite art form; a bust of Oliver Wendell Holmes was especially impressive. I had been reading the publications of the then widely known Elbert Hubbard, so I journeyed out from Buffalo to East Aurora to see his printing establishment and Roycroft Inn. I even had a glimpse of the long-haired sage himself. Mr. Welsh printed the account I wrote of the visit to East Aurora, and even sent to Hubbard for a cut of the Inn with which to embellish my story. So I was a travel writer!

Mr. Welsh permitted me to become a sort of columnist, too. Something I had read about the walking philosophers of Greece led to adoption of "The Peripatetic" as a title. Under this heading, boxed double-column, I wrote a weekly grist of youthful observations upon human nature in general. If any of them were clever, they were not likely original, and if original, they certainly were not clever. Nevertheless, the astute editor was building self-confidence into his protégé. Only my little news articles, with their local names and events, had any real value to his business, but he printed the other things because he enjoyed helping a youngster.

One cannot always be certain who has influenced him for good or bad, but of the men with whom I associated during the early years of youth the two who, besides my Father, did most to fan the sparks of ambition and confidence were unquestionably Professor Freeman and Agnew Welsh.

Mr. Welsh was lean, pale, slight of figure and brisk of movement. His body may not actually have sloped forward a little from the hips though it seemed to do so. His hair and close-trimmed mustache were silver and his bright blue eyes usually seemed to be looking over rather than through the glasses which sat easily on
his generous nose when not dangling from their black cord. He was a leading participant in every constructive effort for the community. He had been secretary of the long successful Tri-County Fair, secretary of the town school board for years, an officer of the Building & Loan, and a leader in the Church of Christ. His weekly, *The Record*, was a good paper for the times and did a profitable business. Cheerful, gay, helpful, every acquaintance was his friend.

All of Ada and the nearby countryside were a bit stunned when Mr. Welsh announced that he had sold *The Record* and his home on north Main street, had disposed of his other interests and was retiring to live in Miami. He was then not quite sixty years old and apparently vigorous as ever. He did retire for a while, but found he could not overcome his industrious habits.

He took a job on the *Miami News* and for another twenty years worked busily and happily in charge of that newspaper's "morgue," or clipping library. His enjoyment of systematic and orderly procedure made the work ideal for him. When well into his eighties he retired again but continued for another ten years to write a weekly column of reminiscence and observation which was printed in the *Ada Herald*. He compiled useful scrapbooks of Ohio and Florida history which he presented to appropriate libraries. His sight failed at last and the old nose glasses no longer served. He died at the age of ninety-eight.

The only member of the Class of 1910, Ada High School, whose writings had been published, and the only one with practical knowledge of print shop procedure, was clearly the obvious person to elect to the editorship of the class yearbook. No one else had even half the qualifications. That was what I thought. The class displayed its total incapacity to judge such matters by electing some one else yearbook editor-in-chief. I was to be an associate editor.

Don McDowell, the class choice for editor-in-chief, had been delayed by illness and had not joined our class until late in our junior year. He had poise, personality and charm that everyone admired, plus a baritone voice that better than any other in school could sing, "Sailing, Sailing, Over the Bounding Main."

He made himself the ideal editor-in-chief from my viewpoint by agreeing to such ideas as I offered about producing the yearbook and encouraging me to go ahead and put it together.

The *Record* office was not equipped to produce so pretentious a volume, so a deal for printing it was made with the rival *Herald*. The *Herald*, then primarily a university weekly though privately owned, did much of the university printing. Whatever the merit of the contents in the book which finally emerged, it was nicely printed. There was no trouble about getting enough material. Whenever any prospective contributor failed on an assignment, I rose to the occasion happily if not nobly by putting one of my own compositions, verse or prose, into the space. When the *Herald* shop found itself swamped with work, I set type on
the yearbook to hurry things along. Whether others shared the sentiment or not, I greatly admired the finished product when finally it was distributed.

The yearbook was printed. The diploma was laid away. No "call" had been heard to indicate the future. What next? The question of how to earn a living was coming closer.
To an Ohio boy just out of high school in 1910 no paths looked too difficult. With health, energy, a disposition to work and suitable education he could choose his future and set out to gain his goals. The world was at peace. The nation was growing. No impregnable walls stood between youth and wealth if one chose to aim at them, nor between him and any one of a hundred more modest ambitions. Anything seemed attainable.

The key to all achievement, all voices chorused, was education. From teachers, friends and acquaintances the advice was unanimous and continuous, “Get an education!” No one attempted to define an education. All were positive that if one went to college and attended seriously to his studies he would emerge educated, and thereby find himself fitted for some loftier, more profitable and probably easier occupation than his uneducated fellows.

This was agreeable counsel to one who liked books and enjoyed school. Father and Mother had taken it for granted that I would enter college. The facilities of Ohio Northern were at hand in our hometown. So, it came naturally that September of 1910 found me enrolled as a full-fledged student in Ohio Northern University. Once more I was established in the pleasant room at the Povenmire house, and eager to swig at the larger fountains of learning.

Up to this point I had experienced neither the necessity nor the liberty to make many decisions. Once the decision to go to high school had been determined, the only major choice had been between the science and the Latin courses. I had only to follow the prescribed instructions. The university promptly presented variety of choices and those were glorious liberties.

Students who were not seeking degrees were permitted to undertake whatever studies and to enter whatever classes they chose. I determined to pick and choose from the educational menu, rather than to pursue conventional credits and win a probably useless diploma. Whether or not this was wise I no longer had to follow courses of study that academic authority had prescribed. No more mathematics! That was one cheerful prospect.

First of all, I chose Professor Freeman's class in English, then enrolled in Spanish, Greek, economic geography and history of philosophy. I had wanted an American history course, but not badly enough to enroll after finding that it was scheduled to meet at seven a.m., and took the history of philosophy instead. The topic sounded so impressive. A schedule of five classes daily was over-ambitious.
as became evident almost immediately, As a result, I dropped out of the Greek class without learning even the alphabet.

Regulations demanded daily chapel attendance at eight a.m.; and all male students were required to drill for a period in one of the four infantry companies or two artillery batteries. I inquired what penalty could be invoked for non-compliance with these requirements. No diploma, the authorities replied. Not being a candidate for a diploma, chapel and military could be crossed off. I did learn the manual of arms with infantry Company B only to find that the process of repetitive drill dissipated the one-time small boy enchantment with military glamour.

The flashing cavalry sabers which "Battery B" possessed, along with an old Civil War cannon, promised a little more interest, but after a transfer the saber drill began to suggest swinging a corn knife without corn stalks to cut; and taking the old cannon apart and putting it together again was not unlike taking the wheels off the old farm wagon to grease the axles. I therefore abandoned the voluntary military hours. After having proved that chapel could also be ignored, I attended only whenever an announced speech by a faculty member or visitor promised to be interesting.

Professor Freeman engaged me to mark and grade the written themes which he assigned daily to his several classes. In return he obtained a remission of the dollar a week tuition, thus reducing expenses by twenty per cent.

Ohio Northern had begun to attract a number of foreign students. Not infrequently these boys arrived with too imperfect a command of our language to understand what was being taught. They entered the English classes without realizing that these were not planned for students who still had to learn the basic elements. Freeman asked me to try tutoring those who wished to pay for such help.

To one of these was S. Y. Lee. English had been baffling and I was equally baffled at teaching him. A Chinese, he had enrolled for engineering; and although he had been in the United States for more than a year, he could understand neither his textbooks nor his professors. He was older than most students; I thought him middle-aged. He had been Governor of a city in western China; he pointed it out on the map. Distressed by their poverty, he wanted to learn how to help his people. A rich aunt who shared his feelings had sent him to America. They had heard of Tuskegee Institute. He had gone there first and had observed much even without knowing English.

Though his earnestness was overwhelming, the language problems had reduced him to the verge of hopelessness. He knew many individual words but no grammar; almost any sentence entangled him in difficulties. While I was still hunting for a way to help him effectively, Lee came one day with an expensive
new camera. Impatient to take pictures immediately, he could not understand the printed directions. We sat down with the booklet and as he read each sentence, I showed him the action it explained. That proved to be his key to English. He had a natural mechanical understanding, and within a week the booklet of instructions for the camera had clarified enough of the mysteries of verb forms and grammar that he was able to progress rapidly.

Before six o'clock on a January morning I answered a peremptory knock to see a blizzard in progress and a snow-covered, agitated S.Y. Lee at the door. He came in but refused to take off his coat. “I must go back to China,” he said. “At once. I go this morning. I bring you goodbye gift.” He unfolded a silk scarf, delicately hand-embroidered. “I want you to keep and give to your girl.”

The manner of his speech made clear that he meant I should keep the scarf until I had chosen a girl for a wife and then give it to her. “One of my wives made it,” he added. “Now go. Thank you for so much kindness.” “Why must you go so quickly?” I asked. He had shaken my hand and stood at the door. “Dr. Sun Yat Sen send for me to be governor of my old city.” With that S.Y. Lee disappeared into the blizzard and into China’s 1912 revolution. I never heard from him again.

Acquaintance with students from outside America suggested an idea. There were in all about thirty. With the help of the Y.M.C.A. secretary, Ralph Donnan, a meeting of the whole group was arranged where I presented a plan for forming a Cosmopolitan Club. The plan was accepted on the condition, which I did not resist, that I should be the club’s president. We met weekly, usually having one member talk about his country as the principal program feature, and then discussed problems the boys found as students in an unfamiliar land. One day we assembled at Paezler’s Studio for a group photograph. China, Cuba, Japan, Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, Norway and Greece were among the countries represented.

The effort to learn some Spanish led to my sole experience as a class instructor. The professor of modern languages, William Groth, was both genial and exacting and most of us liked him. Little was known to the students about his past; all he ever revealed to me was that while performing his term of military duty in Germany he had once served as a sentry before the tent of Bismark, the Iron Chancellor. A whispered half-believed, half-doubted rumor heightened interest in Professor Groth. It was to the effect that he could stand the arid atmosphere of our Methodist town and college for only so long. He would then disappear for a week presumably devoted to alcoholic relaxation.

As class broke up one day he called me to his desk and said, “I want you to teach my Spanish classes a few days. I t’ink I am going to be sick.” I protested that the other class was a term ahead of me. “No matter,” he said. “You teach until I come back.” So, whether I taught or not I did hold classes and assigned
lessons for several days until the professor returned bright-eyed and grateful. He didn’t explain his absence.

Nearly all the older professors were regarded as “characters” by the students, probably because they had developed marked individualities which made them seem unlike the home folks in non-university communities. Professor Hufford, a gruff and assertive Civil War Veteran, surprised students and scandalized others on the faculty by his method of conducting examinations. After writing questions on a blackboard, he customarily rode his bicycle downtown to pick up a steak for luncheon or to do some personal errand, and returned two minutes before the end of the examination period to pick up the papers.

“Why do you leave the room during examinations?” a student asked in class one day. “So you ladies and gentlemen can’t ask me a lot of fool questions about what the questions mean,” he snorted. He knew that the student who cheated on examinations cheated only himself and saw no reason to be concerned about those who had failed to work hard enough to pass the moderate grade requirements.

Professor Schoonover walked with a limp but there was no limp in his mentality. He taught Greek, religious subjects, and almost anything else which might be asked of him. One of Schoonover’s contemporaries as an early student at Ohio Northern had been the Rev. John Wesley Hill, Jr. Hill had become pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York and for a time had served a church in London. He had accompanied William Howard Taft’s campaign train in 1908 and was noted for eloquent political speeches. The story was told that when Hill was still preaching in Ohio he had been chosen to deliver the keynote address at a Republican state convention in Toledo. At the last moment the exigencies of polities forced the state chairman to notify Hill that the keynote address would be made by another person, but that Hill was to deliver the invocation instead. Undaunted, Hill was said to have converted his planned keynote into so moving and eloquent an appeal to God on behalf of the Republican party that after the “Amen” the convocation rose and applauded the prayer.

After an announcement that Dr. Hill was soon to address chapel some one remarked that if I wanted to learn more about Hill I should prod his old fellow-student, Professor Schoonover. Accordingly in a class next day I asked, “When does John Wesley Hill speak in chapel? Wednesday morning or Thursday?” “Thursday morning,” Professor Schoonover intoned indifferently. I asked another question. “Professor, how is it that Dr. Hill has achieved so many conspicuous and eminent places – pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York, preacher in London, and intimate friend of President Taft? What particular qualities have enabled him to rise so high?”

Schoonover pushed aside the books on his desk and slammed its lid with a bang. He tipped his chair backward and tilted his head until the tip of his reddish
Van Dyke beard pointed directly at me. In the nasal drawl with which he knew how to be overwhelmingly emphatic he replied: "Pu-u-re bra-s-ss!

Years later when Hill was chancellor of Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee I encountered him one evening in my room in Washington’s Willard Hotel. We spent several hours visiting in my room. I ventured to relate this incident. Hill made no comment at the moment. It shook him a little, and I was sorry for having told the story. Two hours later, as he said goodnight, he turned to remark: “Well, maybe if poor old Schoony had had more of that metal in his composition he might have gone farther in this world.”

Among the old-fashioned gentlemen of the faculty was Professor Whitworth whose specialty was Latin. I had found Virgil on the difficult side, considering my poor grounding in those first year declensions and conjugations, and had therefore taken what seemed at the time to be a highly practical step of acquiring from a small mail order house – no college bookstore dared to carry such an item – a literal line-by-line translation of the kind known among language students and a “pony.” I had sought to ride my pony, apparently the only one in the class, with enough discretion to avoid revealing its existence. One day when Father and I were walking down street, I introduced him to Professor Whitworth. “I hope you find the boy to be a good student,” Father said. “Well,” smiled the professor as he carefully chose his words so as to inform me that he knew more than he was telling my father, ”he always renders a smooth and free translation.”

Father was pleased at the answer and so was I. However I thought Professor Whitworth thereafter tended occasionally to press me a little hard to explain Virgil’s grammatical constructions. On a later occasion I was to become even more indebted to his thoughtful kindness.

In town and on the campus everyone admired the professor of American history, Frank B. Willis. A farm boy, he had come to Ohio Northern because it was the cheapest school he could reach and after working his way through had remained to teach. More than six feet tall, broad-shouldered and erect, usually over-weight even in his unusual proportions, he was handsome, swarthy, black of hair and black-eyed. His features, striking though they were, were less remarkable than his tremendous voice which in ordinary conversation might have shattered a modern public address system.

One warm spring day when classroom windows were opened wide I was late and hurrying across the campus to the history class. Willis was calling the roll. Still far from the building I heard my name. “Here”, I whooped. When I entered the room Willis was explaining an outline on the blackboard. Without waiting to end a sentence he said, “It’s all right, McMillen, just so you’re inside the three-mile limit,” and went on with his explanation.
After serving an apprenticeship in the state legislature, Willis on a second attempt defeated the district Congressman, Ralph D. Cole, one of his O.N.U. classmates, for nomination to the national House of Representatives, and won election. Chosen governor of Ohio in 1914, he later became a United States senator and continued in the Senate until his death from heart failure while making a political address in 1928. His colleague from Ohio in the Senate was another Ohio Northern alumnus, his predecessor as head of the history department, Simeon D. Fess, who in the interval had been president of Antioch College. In the same period Indiana and Kentucky had chosen O.N.U. graduates to represent them in the Senate.

The university library probably was pitiful by modern standards, but I found endless excitement in its shelves. I pored over old files of the *Atlantic* and of *Blackwood’s* and devoured scores of English and American essays from Bacon and Addison to De Quincey, Hazlitt and Emerson. The borrowed Macaulay and Carlisle volumes claimed more time than textbooks. I discovered Pepsy and Boswell and through Boswell acquired an addiction to the ferment of the eighteenth century.

Almost as stimulating as the professors and the library, three literary societies added a lively interest to campus life. Called the Philomathean, the Franklin and the Adelphian, the societies had then already flourished for thirty years. Each society had its own allotted hall in the university buildings, and maintained a parliamentary organization to which new officers were elected each term. Their Saturday night programs brought out all the known forensic talent in the school for debates and speeches, all the dramatic talent for skits and recitations, and all the musical talent for instrumental and vocal interludes. If a student could not speak, recite or make music, but could do magic tricks or juggle Indian clubs, he was in demand. The university prohibited dancing so if any hoofers were enrolled they, almost alone, had no offers to develop their talents in the presence of the Saturday night audiences. I was given opportunities to orate and to debate – and to be the Philomathean Washington’s Birthday speaker at chapel exercises.

In March 1911, I left school for a six-month work interlude and returned in September. Professor Freeman welcomed me to the old job as his assistant and I settled in with firm purpose to extract whatever Ohio Northern could offer as equipment for the imminent task of making a living. The term turned out to be more turbulent and, in a way, more educational than I had anticipated.

I had found it easy to pick up a few dollars monthly by sending news correspondence from Ada to newspapers in Toledo, Cincinnati and Cleveland. The Cleveland *Press* had taken particular interest in Ada news features and had become my best customer. After a weekend at the farm, one Monday forenoon I was told on the street that long distance was calling from Cleveland. Kemp’s drug store had the only long distance telephone in town. When a call came for anyone
whom the store could not reach on the local telephone, the druggist told a few
passersby and eventually notice was passed to the recipient of the call.

"Why did you let us get scooped?" The voice of Frank Ryan, the state editor
sounded angry. “What about?” I asked. “I just came into town and haven’t heard
a thing.” “The News is on the street here with a story that all your chapel seats
have been smeared with molasses and that President Smith has ordered the
military companies to clean up the mess.” I could only reply that I would check
the facts and wire them as quickly as possible.
“O.K.,” Ryan said, “but in the meantime we’ll cover ourselves for our next edition
with a re-write of the News article.” That re-write caused trouble.

I soon discovered what had happened. Hoodlums had entered the chapel
auditorium during the previous night and had daubed nearly every seat with New
Orleans molasses. They had been careful to spread the sticky stuff extra thick
over the faculty chairs on the dais and had been so irreverent as to put a few
drops between the pages of the pulpit bible. The university janitors and student
volunteers were doing a good job of cleaning up. No order or request had been
given to the military companies.

One point was puzzling. The Cleveland News had no regular correspondent in
Ada. The condition of the chapel would have not been discovered until nearly
eight o’clock. Yet the News had received the story in time for its early forenoon
edition.

The Cleveland News sold hardly any papers in Ada, but the Press sent a
hundred or more copies to Ada. We received the state edition, printed in the
middle of one day and delivered in Ada next morning. Unhappily my report did
not get to Cleveland in time for the state edition so the copies, which came next
morning, carried Ryan’s rewrite from the rival News.

Only a few people saw the News story, but the Press re-write was eagerly read.
Ryan had not softened the News’ misstatements. That I was the Ada
correspondent for the Press was generally known. I was immediately held
responsible for false reporting and for denigrating the school and its president.
This alone might have been bad enough. The situation was aggravated by the
fact that there were two factions on campus, one who supported President Smith
on all matters and another, which had criticized many of his positions and
pronouncements. I was identified with the rebellious faction. This set the stage.
Issues need not be big when a student body gets in the mood for excitement.

The president of Ohio Northern University, Albert Edwin Smith, Ph.D., D.D., was
an eloquent and able Methodist preacher who came to head the university after
serving his church as a district superintendent. He was a rugged, handsome,
dignified gentleman. During his administration, his vigorous efforts had almost
single-handedly raised the school from a few struggling colleges, liberal arts, law, engineering, pharmacy, commerce, and music to something approaching the status of a real though small university. He was not blessed with superior tact to match his superb energy, nor was modesty his most notable trait. One of my offenses had been to mention that by actual count he had used the perpendicular pronoun one hundred and eighteen times during one morning’s chapel service.

A week or so before the molasses episode another incident had caused the good president considerable annoyance. Robert M. Lafollette, the progressive senator from Wisconsin, had begun his campaign for the 1912 presidential nomination. I found several students who admired the senator and who were willing to join in forming a Lafollette Club. A dozen or so of us organized the club and I was elected its president. I wired the news to my papers. It got a rather extensive play because no college club of the kind had been previously reported in Ohio.

The commencement speaker in 1910 had been the President of the United States, William Howard Taft. After his election Taft had asked Dr. John Wesley Hill, our eloquent alumnus, what appointment he wanted. Hill replied that he wanted nothing except that Taft should give a commencement address at Ohio Northern. Taft had given the promise and kept it. Ohio Northern received more national publicity than ever before in its history. Dr. Smith was naturally and properly grateful to Taft and distressed for the public to hear that members of the student body had so rudely announced to the world their preference for Taft’s opponent, Senator Lafollette. I thought that a student had an independent right to his own political preferences, and that others were free, if they wished to organize a Taft club.

In a rousing chapel speech Dr. Smith regretted the formation of our club and denounced Lafollette as “an Absalom, kissing the cheek of the American public for its favor.” His speech was news that I hastened to put on the wires. The Associated Press sent the story across the country.

That night Dr. Smith took a train for Pittsburgh where he had an appointment next morning with a prospective donor to the university. The prospect, according to an account which came to me indirectly, shoved a morning paper across his desk, pointed to the AP story from Ada and inquired whether Dr. Smith had been correctly quoted. Assured that the quotation was correct, the prospect said, “I am a Lafollette man,” and rose to close the interview. Dr. Smith was not pleased.

Two or three mornings after the molasses incident my friend Irving Garwood, the only other student who handled news correspondence, banged on my door. I had missed the chapel event of the term. Two students had sent requests to the platform for permission to take the floor. This was customary procedure when announcements were to be made. The first student up, however, did not have an announcement. He read a poem, long and fiery, denouncing in Shakespearian measures those “vile students who would sell the good name of their school for
paltry gold.” The second, a respected leader of the pro-administration faction, rose to move that it was the sense of the student body that the faculty should expel those students who were known to have been disseminating news, false or otherwise, about the university through the press of the state and nation, and that such news correspondence from the university should henceforth be prohibited. Dr. Smith being absent on his travels that morning, Dean Whitworth was in charge of chapel. The good dean was so amazed that he stood silent for a moment, whereupon the student put his own motion and, hearing only one or two dissents, declared that it had passed.

Garwood was perturbed. He believed the feeling against us to be general and intense. I told him we should be flattered by so much attention. No one had ever written poems about us before! I did not believe that the faculty would expel us and thought we could endure a little temporary unpopularity. After all, what the boys had proposed was censorship repugnant to the principles of freedom for the press. The more I talked the more I became convinced that the opposition had put themselves squarely in the wrong and that in some way they could be made ridiculous. How? That had to be figured out. Garwood agreed that we two should stand or fall together, and he stood nobly for whatever was to come.

I went out for breakfast and then headed toward a late forenoon class, wondering unhappily what we could do. This was an undesired sort of prominence. After all the thing could turn out to be embarrassing. Professor Whitworth was the first person I encountered. “Looks like you’re in trouble, McMillen,” was his greeting. “I suppose you have heard what transpired in chapel this morning.” “Do you think it’s really serious, Professor?” “Well, the mood struck me was quite unpleasant and I sense that it has grown worse as the talk has spread this forenoon. I only hope that they don’t try to ride you out of town on a rail.” “A mob might try that, Professor, but I don’t think they’ll fight that way. How about giving Garwood and me the chapel platform tomorrow morning?”

The professor looked startled. “They’ll howl you down,” he predicted. “But since you have asked, and your opponents have already had the privilege, I don’t see what I can do except to give you the chance to reply and,” he added thoughtfully, “to advise you not to accept the chance.”

That settled it. “I’ll be in chapel tomorrow morning, Professor, and thank you for being so fair.” “All right,” he said, “but don’t take your assigned seat. Sit right by the steps to the platform. When I announce that a student wishes to speak, get up there quick and get started. I won’t be responsible for what happens after that.”

His earnestness was alarming. I wondered whether I had underestimated the campus hostility. That night I sat up late to outline what to say. The first sentences had to capture and hold an unfriendly audience. The story of how the Press’s inaccurate story came to be printed had to be told in such a manner as to
suggest that the perpetrators of the molasses prank must themselves have sent in the offensive story in order to catch the early edition of the Cleveland News. The dangerous impropriety of censorship needed to be asserted. The advantages to the university in having full and accurate news coverage by sympathetic and well-informed local correspondents had to be set forth. Suitable regrets might be expressed that some irresponsible and malicious person had caused the erroneous report to be printed.

The next day, when Professor Whitworth gave me the cue, I leaped the steps two at a time and began talking before reaching the lectern. The college cheer leader, a member of the opposing faction, jumped up and called for the locomotive yell, the best noisemaker in the rooters’ repertoire. When only two or three responded he subsided. The students heard me out. Garwood followed with an able and effective statement. After chapel adjourned Professor Whitworth said, “Don’t worry about being expelled.” The episode was soon forgotten as other events came along to occupy the campus mind.

Only two weeks remained in the first fall term. While university life was pleasant, and at times, exciting, the kind of education it offered left me impatient. I was eager to know what turned the wheels of affairs. A taste of newspaper work had given me a glimpse at human activities not disclosed in the comparative seclusion of our little academic world. However, I didn’t want to appear to be leaving school under pressure, so I borrowed twenty-five dollars from the town moneylender and enrolled for another ten weeks. Before they were ended a more realistic life was to begin.
Chapter 6 - GROPING FOR A FUTURE

The Lecture Business?...A Newspaper Job..."Can't Print Excuses"...Introduction to Sin...Sports and Fashions...Temperance and T.R....John D. Rockefeller

After six months of college the future had become no more clear than it had been at the close of high school the previous spring. I looked about at fellow students and talked with them. Here were young men who had decided to become lawyers and already were well launched into the legal studies. Ohio Northern attracted aspirants to the law. Graduates seldom failed to pass the state bar examinations and year after year one of them had won top honors in those tests.

I could find no desire in my heart to become a lawyer; the business sounded dry and dull. Lawyers, I thought, were intermediaries, whose work though necessary could seldom be constructive. Other young men were training for engineering. I appreciated the constructive aspect of their profession, but the dislike of mathematics ruled it out. I thought of teaching as a useful life, but it appeared too limited. Although with no dreams about acquiring great wealth I did hope to be able to earn a generous income and to be able to range over more territory, literally and figuratively, than teachers appeared able to do.

There must, I thought, be some interesting and useful activity in which I could hope to earn a living and have a good time doing it. I sought something that was productive, constructive and satisfying, that involved a minimum of repetitive drudgery even though the work might be hard and exacting. I had, however, no clear idea of just what that activity might be.

I enjoyed a few fantastic daydreams about entering a profession that did appeal to me, one which appeared to meet my specifications and not to be overcrowded. That was the lecture platform. We had a lecture course every winter in Ada. I heard that the lecturers received as much as $100 for a single engagement and that $50 was customary. Fifty times three hundred and sixty-five, well, say fifty times three hundred, would produce fifteen thousand dollars! What wealth! Even if one took a long vacation and spoke, say, only two-hundred times a year that would still earn ten thousand dollars. At a time when twenty dollars a week was big money, lecturing offered enticement.

Moreover, the lecturers always looked impressive. Normally they spoke in white tie and tails, an outfit few of us in Ada ever saw except on the lecture platform. A week before each lecturer's engagement large placards with his picture appeared in the windows of all the business houses. Folders were distributed which plainly asserted that the speaker brought a message; he was eloquent, famous and inspiring. I did not definitely decide to become a lecturer; but it did look to be worth attempting.
I had never missed a lecture course program while I was in Ada High School or in the University. Usually the course had six programs. One was always a musical and occasionally another was dramatic. I enjoyed David Bispham's songs and remember him best among the musicians. The lectures, though, supplied the real treats. They may have been platitudinous, but I had not yet heard the platitudes too often. They were intended to be inspirational, and to me they were.

The names of many of those whose eloquence fascinated me have been forgotten. Edward Amherst Ott lectured on "Sour Grapes" and Sylvester Long on "Lightning and Toothpicks." Richmond Pearson Hobson, the "Hero of the Merrimac," came to Ada and so did Thomas P. Gore, the blind senator from Oklahoma. Lou Beauchamp talked about "The Sunny Side." Col. George W. Bain, then an aged platform veteran, unpretentiously mastered his audiences. I never got to hear Russell H. Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds," though. He had delivered it in Ada before my time. Among the memorable personages was the "Off Ag'in, On Ag'in, Gone Ag'in Finnegan" man, Strickland W. Gillilan, Whose audiences laughed their sides sore. These men were impressive. Giving the same speech night after night in different places they knew their lines well and were, in fact, not only excellent speakers but in some instances orators able to stir the hearts and minds of the receptive audiences.

Gillilan continued to be a popular speaker until he was in his eighties. I came to know him slightly later on. One day I met him on High Street in Columbus. "You look all dressed up," I remarked. "Where have you been?" "Been around the corner making a speech." "Was it a success?" "Yes, sir! More people stayed than left." Horace Greeley had used the same joke fifty years earlier, I learned long afterwards.

Ada's favorite lecturer was Ralph Parlette. We considered him a homeboy. He had come to Ada for his education and in partnership with M.L. Snyder had established the University Herald, later the Ada Herald. Parlette was a humorist. Tall, lank, lantern-jawed and near-sighted, he kept audiences laughing for many years with his droll drawl. His technique was mainly to make fun of himself in stories of ordinary adventures. He told folks what a sucker he had been. "I was see-lected...," he might begin. "Were you ever see-lected?" We knew just what he meant. Sometimes from a green bag he produced a two-quart glass jar partly filled with white beans and a half-dozen walnuts. From time to time as his lecture proceeded he would shake the jar. At the appropriate passage he held up the jar to show how the walnuts came to the top. "The big ones always do." We got the point.

We had a great night the time Champ Clark, Missouri congressman and speaker of the House of Representatives came to town with General Charles "Old Figgers" Grosvenor, a then famous Ohio Congressman. Clark and Woodrow
Wilson competed for the 1912 democratic presidential nomination. Clark and Grosvenor were both political opponents and personal friends. They debated "the issues" with furious and convincing vigor, then surprised us by walking to the hotel together afterwards.

It was not yet a definite choice, but I began to think I was aiming to become a lecturer. One little difficulty interfered for the time being. I didn’t know what to lecture about! I attempted to write a lecture. The result, even permitting some pride of authorship, was sadly commonplace. I concluded that my effort had failed because I did not yet know enough nor have enough experience really to have “a message” or, in plain words, something to say. (I learned later that having nothing to say was not needfully a handicap to successful public speaking). How was a country boy to learn to have a “message”? From the courses in college? Anyone could read books! Nothing original there. The answer, I thought tentatively, must be to find some life experiences closer to reality than those which the university taught us about or provided.

Already I had discovered that there was money -- maybe not much, but some -- in writing. This was something I had begun to learn, after a fashion, how to do. Mr. Welsh had printed my local news stories and basketball reports in the Ada Record, and had printed The Peripatetic, my effort at a column of opinion. The University Herald had carried some of my stuff. I had corresponded for the state’s larger newspapers and had been paid well for several brief features in the Cleveland Press. I had sold one fiction piece for six dollars and a non-paying magazine had printed bits of my verse. Why not try getting a regular salary for writing as a newspaperman?

The outlines of a possible future began to emerge. By working at newspaper jobs I thought I could get a more stimulating, up-to-date and practical kind of education. The function of the professor most of the time, it had seemed was to ask the students to report upon what he had read in the textbooks, to explain the points that some students found difficult, and more than anything else to keep one’s attention on an assigned course until it had been completed. Professor Freeman was accomplishing far more; he was the exceptional teacher who expanded the horizons and stirred the energies of his classes every day. Books, I knew, held vast stores of knowledge and experience from the past that I needed to know. I saw no reason, however, why if I were diligent and disciplined myself, I could not gather what I wanted and needed from the textbooks and from literature without a teacher to act as middleman; plainly only I could hope to educate myself. If at the same time I were working on newspapers, I might learn what was actually making the wheels go ‘round’. I could see human nature at work under environments as yet unfamiliar to me and get to know about things and people that the textbooks did not include. Maybe I could learn enough fast enough to know how to prepare a scintillating lecture. The idea was still vague but time was fleeting. I was eighteen already and wanted to get going.
John Scott, foreman at the Herald office, told me that the Bellefontaine Examiner had advertised for a reporter. Bellefontaine was the seat of the next county south. I went at once to ask for the job.

The Examiner publishers, brother and sister or Frank McKinney “Kin” Hubbard of Abe Martin fame, received me kindly. The place they had to fill paid six dollars a week. They gave over most of a Saturday to asking questions about my experience and knowledge and finally indicated that my preparation did not appear adequate for their requirements. They were not convinced that I was worth six dollars a week.

Reflecting that one could hardly expect to succeed on the first try for a job, I left Bellfontaine on the interurban car for Lima, there to await Number Eight, the late train to Ada. While in Lima I walked into the office of the Republican-Gazette, the morning paper, and asked for a job as an excuse to get a look at the inside of a really professional newspaper office. The city editor was busy and curt. “Never can tell when we might need a man,” he said. “Leave your address and telephone number. Might call you.” I was catching on to the ways people put one off without saying no.

Two weeks later a call came. Don Campbell, city editor of the Republican-Gazette was on the line. “We’re short of help, two men in the hospital. Can you come over and help us out a day or so?”

I caught the next train. It was March 17, 1911. Campbell was still brief but less curt. “One of our men is in the hospital sick and another from a motorcycle accident, the damned fool. Can you cover two assignments?”

Both were St. Patrick's Day observances by the city's two Catholic churches, one at the Faurot Opera House and the other at Memorial Hall. How could I be in two places at once? At the Opera House I caught the first part of the program there, dashed to Memorial Hall to see the close of the other, and at each place made sure that the items listed which I had not heard were appearing as scheduled. Hastening back to the Republican-Gazette office I typed out the reports and turned in the stories. Campbell glanced over them hurriedly. “Can you come back Monday at one o’clock? Might have regular work for you.”

I was there Monday. "Can only offer you twelve dollars a week," Campbell said. Twelve dollars a week just for reporting, writing, getting a real education? Twice the pay offered by the Bellefontaine job I didn't get! I managed to say that it seemed all right for a start. Regular assignments were quickly outlined. I was to visit the principal hotels each evening and copy names from the register; visit the justice courts each afternoon and check their dockets; call at the "dead shops" (undertaking establishments, Campbell thoughtfully explained) for obituary news; and I was to report daily at one p.m. for special assignments to be pursued during the afternoon and evening. The paper went to press at two thirty a.m.
Time off at six p.m. for dinner and at ten-thirty for lunch if events were not too pressing.

I found a dingy room a few blocks from the Republican-Gazette office and soon fell into the morning paper routine. Staying up until three or four o’clock and sleeping until noon seemed to come naturally. The assignments given me proved easy. I enjoyed trying to write each story as well as I could. Don Campbell had worked on newspapers in Denver and Chicago and for Hearst in New York and knew well the disciplines of the newsgathering profession. He quickly made clear the techniques of answering the “who, what, when, where and why” questions in the first paragraph and of building a story so that the least important and least interesting details fell into the later paragraphs. Then these could easily be left out, even after the article had been put in type, if the piece had to be shortened. The patterns for modern news-writing have become more flexible than in 1911 when the literary touch was scorned, and the opening paragraph that failed to answer the “five w’s” was tossed back to the reporter to be re-written.

The paper was owned by the Campbell family. Don’s father, “W.A.,” the publisher, quietly occupied the first cubical in the row of offices behind the front counter where Zeke Owens, the cashier, and his assistant greeted visitors, kept the accounts, and accepted advertisements. Soon after I had joined the staff, Mr. Campbell had bought an adding machine to facilitate the front office work. Zeke continued to tally each column of figures for six months before he was persuaded that the machine could add as accurately as he could do. Next to Mr. Campbell’s cubical was another, unoccupied all day until six o’clock when the telegraph instrument began to tick. Precisely at six Frank, the Associated Press operator, put two long sheets of copy paper, carbon between them, into his old blind Remington typewriter, (machines that wrote visibly were new then) and pounded out the telegraph news which poured in steadily from the state desk at Columbus until two-thirty, with a half hour pause between ten-thirty and eleven for lunch. The telegraph news usually filled the front page. An afternoon paper, the Times-Democrat, received the daytime Associated Press report. Their carbons were delivered to us, and ours to them, so that each paper had twelve hours of wire material available.

A slightly larger cubical was the editorial room where Don Campbell and his staff of four had tables and desks. Here copy was written and edited, headlines written and proofs read. The composing room was immediately at the rear, and the presses in the basement.

All of Lima, then a typical and solid Ohio city of thirty thousand, had become my campus. Courts, hospitals, stores, streets, hotels, amusement parks, business offices, factories and the people in them, all were new, different from the farm, different from school and college in Ada. It was a place to learn, though the lessons were not yet clear. The text was not arranged in as orderly a fashion as in books. Teachers did not explain, but it was an exciting way to learn. What
useful or profitable lessons were to be derived I presumed would depend on my capacity to turn experience to some worthwhile account.

Within a few days I began to think I was a seasoned professional reporter. Campbell printed most of my simple stories with few changes and suggested briefly how others could be improved. The unforgettable lesson of the first weeks came one day after I had been given a special afternoon assignment. Not until well afterwards did I find out that this was an assignment to try to get a story that all the other reporters on the staff had attempted without success. No one expected that I would succeed either. It involved interviewing the president of an important local manufacturing company about plans which were rumored to be under considerations. At the company offices I was first told that the president was out of town, then that he was “tied up” and probably could not be seen all week. I managed to learn enough about the man’s appearance to be able to identify him and hung around outside the building in hope of being able to confront him when he left for the day. That worked out, but the man refused absolutely to hold ant conversation on the topic of my assignment. I was obliged to confess to Campbell that my efforts had failed, and started to explain what had taken place. “Can’t print excuses,” he snapped. He couldn’t have known that I was never to forget those three words although he probably hoped their effect would last through the summer.

Twelve whole dollars, my first week’s pay, were resting proudly in my pocket at 2:30 a.m. Sunday morning while I watched the city editor seize a piece of copy paper, write “30” on it with a big black pencil, and send it to the composing room as a signal that we had finished. He turned to me. “We observe a weekly ritual here after the Sunday paper goes to bed,” he said. “We play a little poker. Want to join us?”

I had never held a deck of playing cards in my hands and didn’t know spades from diamonds. None had ever been in our home, and probably there had been few in our community. I had heard the preachers denounce card playing as a sin. After seconds of hesitation I decided I ought to have enough character to keep from becoming a professional gambler and that it might even be a good idea to know a little about sin if I were going to be a newspaperman or a lecturer. I said I would join but apologized for my complete ignorance of the game. “Good!”, the city editor said. “We’ll help you. Be part of your education.”

The boys were indulgent while I caught on to the names of the cards. That took only a round or so. To grasp the relative values of the various hands took a little longer. After winning two small pots I gained confidence and decided to play along, win or lose, until I really understood the game, lost half my wages or, unlikely as such an outcome seemed, until the game ended with the wages enhanced.
Shortly a pot began to build up until I feared it might be getting beyond my means. I was sure I had a pretty good hand, but fearful that some flush or straight, which I did not yet clearly comprehend, could be better. So, as instructed to do when doubtful, I announced that I must ask for information. Everyone was “in” and the pile of cash on the table, we didn’t bother about chips, was four or five times as big as in any previous round. “What do you do,” I inquired,” if you’ve got two pairs, both alike?” All hands dropped, and the pot was shoved over to me. The two pairs, both alike, were four kings.

Poker did not, by then, seem to be such an immoral game. However, I never became an expert at any card game nor interested enough to spend much time trying. Father and Mother probably had never kept cards while I grew up because they feared the influence might not be good. In their later years they spent pleasant hours at rummy and solitaire, evidently content that they had never encouraged their son to become a professional gambler.

A stunning announcement from Don Campbell greeted my entrance to the office one April afternoon. “You’re going to be the sports editor,” he said. I couldn’t have looked nor have been much dumber, “Baseball season starts Friday,” he continued. “You’ll cover the games. Better go down to Hamilton and see the opener.”

Up to that moment I was unaware that Lima had a professional baseball team. I knew that baseball was a popular sport but I had never seen a game with eighteen players to fill all positions. I had never read a complete account of a game. I didn't know what a box score meant. Education was rushing upon me fast!

Furious study of Spalding's baseball guide failed to prepare me to be sports editor. I needed a simpler instructor. The guide assumed that its readers already knew something about baseball. Had it not been for the generosity of my fellow-reporters, the Republican-Gazette’s baseball coverage could have been even more inferior than it was. The Times-Democrat man, Edwin W. Gableman, kept box score for me all summer and the Lima News reporter, John Markham, was equally kind at explaining the fine points of play. Gableman later became Washington correspondent for the Cincinnati Enquirer and Markham became financial editor of the Cleveland Press. With their aid I managed to understand most of what took place on the field. No one ever complained or commented about my stories other than to remark that touches of originality were noted in my sports style, which under the circumstances, were usually touches of ignorance.

Lima belonged in a Class D league along with Marion, Lancaster, Newark, Hamilton, Portsmouth, Springfield and Findlay. Attendance at San Felice Park was not large. All summer long I wrote accounts of the home games and tried to become a fan as well as a reporter. I lacked the essential qualities. The ball players, no doubt all colorful and interesting individuals, seemed to turn their dull
sides to me. As long as it was part of the job I didn't mind sitting lazily in the press box on pleasant afternoons, while thinking how much more useful those husky fellows would look at home in the harvest field than they did chasing and batting baseballs. Since the Lima team finished the season of 1911 I have seen one professional game, the season opener at Yankee Stadium in 1923, and note the mighty annual struggles of the big commercial leagues with slightly less concern than the all-year rivalry between Gimbel's and Macy's. No doubt I have merely excluded myself from a great area of American interest.

Baseball ignorance proved to be only one of the areas where my total unsophistication must have taxed the confidence of the Campbells. A Saturday came when Don said, "Mac, Miss Mullen is out sick. You'll have to cover the style show this afternoon." Miss Mullen was the "society" editor.

For this problem not even a Spalding guide could be consulted, nor was any time to be spared, either. I had to get right over to the Faurot Opera House where the show was opening in twenty minutes. The house was filled with women to the last seat in the top gallery. I was escorted to a box. The only possible help I could think of was the cross-eyed society reporter for one of the other papers, but she was sitting in an opposite box and had never appeared to be friendly anyway. I reflected upon the situation. This was important; Don said he wanted a column and a half. G.E. Bluem, the style show's sponsor, was Lima's leading merchant and his department store was our biggest advertiser. Here was I, the only child in a farm family with no sisters. My mother, though neat and modern, paid little attention to the fine points of style, or at least had never brought them into the family conversation. I didn't know a gore from a girdle.

Despite furious note taking, I left the opera house with no idea of how to write the story. After eating my early dinner, the forty-cent full-course meal that night at the Congress Café, I reported back at the office in a fog. Happily some violence had broken out in town and until midnight I was busy running down details on that. It was after one when I finished turning in the crime story and my routine material. "Where's that style show story?" Don demanded. "Just going to write it," I said. No paper ever looked so blank, but before two o'clock the column and a half had been written, just how and what about I was not too sure. The Republican-Gazette could not fail to print a story about Bluem's great event. Don hastily read the copy and without comment wrote a headline and put it on the hook. I was worried.

We printed no Monday morning edition so I could not expect any comment for thirty-six hours. At one o'clock Monday afternoon when I entered the front door Zeke, the cashier, sang out "Mr. Campbell wants to see you!", I hurried back to the publisher's little office. "Did you write that style show story in the Sunday paper?" I admitted that I had. "Well, Mr. Bluem wants to see you. Better go right over."
Apprehensively I hurried to the department store and found Mr. Bluem in his office. He was a quiet little man like Mr. Campbell. "You wrote that story in the paper about our style show?" he asked, rather grimly I thought. I said that I had. Mr. Bluem pushed a button and looked at me contemplatively. Shortly a side door opened and through it came the biggest and strongest looking man I had seen in Lima. He was well dressed but certainly tough. "Jim," said Mr. Bluem, "this is the fellow that wrote the article in the Republican-Gazette about our style show Sunday."

I thought I could see the malevolence build as Jim looked me over. He didn't appear to be much concerned over the probable difficulty of his next job. Mr. Bluem deliberated before issuing his next instructions while I stood wondering what a sophisticated reporter might do in such a situation. I was prepared for criticism but not for assault. Finally Mr. Bluem spoke again.

"Jim, take Mr. McMillen down to your department and give him the best hat you've got or any hat he likes better. That story will do us more good than if he had known what he was writing about." With Jim's kindly advice I picked out a hat that I wore with pride long thereafter. I was beginning to learn that people might be nicer than one supposed.

I still was not absolutely sure that the decision to abandon college was wise and so, in the fall of 1911, returned to Ohio Northern to try for more "education". By the middle of the winter I was thoroughly convinced that newspaper work combined with private study could be more instructive. Certainly it was more fun.

Having already been a reporter for all of six months, I thought the next experience should be as a city editor in a town smaller than Lima and answered a blind "help wanted" advertisement in the Publishers' Auxiliary. The answer came from the Uhrichsville Chronicle whose publisher, Mr. William H. Stout, invited me to come for an interview. Uhrichsville was a town of four or five thousand in eastern Ohio, about halfway between Columbus and Pittsburgh.

Mr. Stout had instructed me to come to his office after working hours. He looked sharply from under his remarkably bushy iron-gray eyebrows. Do you drink?" he demanded to know. He had already asked about that in his letter and had been assured that I did not. Although he appeared a bit doubtful about my obvious lack of years, I persuaded him that I knew how to meet the requirements of the city editor's desk on a small afternoon daily such as the Chronicle.

"I shall have to take you into my confidence and explain my situation," he said. "We have a city editor. He has been with us for fourteen years and we are perfectly satisfied with his work. Fred comes from one of our best and most respected families. But he drinks. Every two or three months he goes on a toot. He misses several days' work. I could stand that but I just can't stand liquor. We run a temperance paper and it doesn't do to have a drunken editor. I have
pleaded with Fred and have threatened and warned him, and he promises to stay sober, but he doesn't. Now I am at the end of my patience. I have told him that the next toot will be his last one as city editor of this newspaper.

"I know there will be a next one. It is only a matter of days or weeks. So I want some one to become familiar with the paper and the town and who can step in and take over. Will you come and act as an additional reporter, learn the town, get acquainted with the people, and be ready to become city editor when Fred's appetite for drink next takes control?"

I was not anxious to be a mere reporter on so small a paper, and said that I had come with the understanding that a position as city editor was open. "It will be only a few weeks at most," Mr. Stout insisted. "Fred can't stay sober. But out of respect for his family, I don't want to let him go until he again gives me clear provocation after this last warning. And don't let anybody know the real reason you are here."

I knew it would be useful to learn the town and finally agreed on condition that I be paid the city editor's salary from the beginning. That was fifteen dollars a week. A few days later I had moved my trunk of books and clothes and had found a desirable room with bath on the second floor of the fine home of Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson, a nice elderly couple. Meals at the Hyatt House, the principal hotel, were good and the hotel was conveniently located across the street from the Chronicle office. I soon found that Mr. Stout meant what he said about liquor. He wrote and printed one or more temperance editorials every day. So far as anyone knew he never touched alcohol himself. He hated it fervently. Almost as much, though not quite, he hated Theodore Roosevelt. The Chronicle was vigorously Republican but bitterly anti-Teddy.

Fred, the city editor, proved to be a genial, easy-going, and handsome fellow in his early thirties, a friendly bachelor. He welcomed me cordially and introduced me to the mayor, police chief, lawyers, ministers and other news sources. Moreover, he made opportunities to introduce me to some of the nicer young people who he thought might make congenial friends. I found that he was competent enough for his job although not likely to set Tuscarawas County afire, much less the world. Fred never mentioned liquor. He spoke well of Mr. Stout except to say that "the boss may get a little monotonous for his readers about temperance and about T.R. You know McKinley appointed him postmaster here and T.R. didn't reappoint him. That's why he hates Roosevelt and everybody knows it."

When closing time came on Saturday afternoon the bookkeeper, who was the publisher's daughter, handed me an envelope with twelve dollars in it. I counted out the money and looked at Mr. Stout. He asked me if I could wait around a while. When he saw that the composing room force had gone home he took me out behind the linotype machine and slipped three silver dollars into my hand. "I don't want anybody, even Dale, to know about our agreement. She will pay you
twelve dollars every week and I'll give you three more." Every Saturday thereafter after closing we met behind the linotype machine.

Reporting Uhrichsville was fairly routine. Search the town as I did, no extraordinary matters appeared to call for reportorial attention. Within a week or so I was able to tell Mr. Stout that I was in daily touch with all the usual and many of the out of ordinary news sources and was prepared to take over the city desk at any moment. “Well, just take it easy. You are helping the paper by bringing in more news than we have had. Fred will get drunk soon and you will be city editor.”

I did find a few interesting people and caught a few interesting events. A boarder at the Hyatt House who shared the corner round table at many meals was a Dutchman named Van Zeder. Uhrichsville, perhaps because of Mr. Stout's constant thundering, was dry under the state local option law. Adjoining Uhrishville, separated only by a creek and a little hard feeling, was Dennison, a town of equal size, which was not dry. Every morning before breakfast Mr. Van Zeder walked the two miles to the nearest saloon in Dennison, enjoying his morning libation, and returning in time for a reasonably early breakfast. I enjoyed joking with him about taking so much trouble to get a drink. More than six feet tall, tremendously broad of shoulder, he wore a pair of mustaches that almost might have been tied in a bowknot behind his neck. I had never seen such sweeping ones. His voice was pitched high.

"Well, you know," he said in the squeaky tones that sounded so inappropriate from one of his physique, "I just wrote Mary a letter last night," Mary was his wife who was at home in Massilon. "Mary," I said, "I've been reading about this terrible Titanic disaster and about all these lives lost by water. I don't want you to worry. I've resolved that I won't touch the stuff."

He told us about a conversation with his wife when last he had been home. They had been talking about the future life. "Mary told me she didn't want to go to heaven," he reported. "She said, 'Van, I've been thinking it over and I've decided I'd rather just go with you.'"

Ohio, in 1912, was holding at the capital in Columbus a convention to revise the constitution of the state. I was earnestly interested in the convention and all that pertained to it. Uhrichsville, I found, had a delegate, one of the two from Tuscarawas County. His name was W.B. Stevens, and I haunted his office when he was home. It was his habit to lean his chair back against the wall as he talked. An irregular horizontal patch of oily wallpaper marked the movements of his head.

"Who is this colleague of yours, Donahey, the fellow from New Philadelphia?" I asked one Saturday. "Vic Donahey is a job printer from New Philadelphia. He has nine children by his own wife and God knows how many by other men's
wives." I never heard of Stevens again after leaving Uhrichsville. Donahey became state auditor. He won fame and political future by refusing to approve the expense account of a judge who had itemized a baked potato at thirty cents. He later became governor and senator.

Stevens got me tickets to the convention gallery and I found Mr. Stout quite willing to give me days off occasionally. These days were without pay, which I expected as being only fair. I went to Columbus soon after the convention organized. Delegates were arguing whether to cause the entire debates and proceedings of the convention to be printed each day.

A Cincinnati delegate, Stanley Bowdle, who appeared to esteem himself as a humorist, spoke at considerable length. He was, he said, a devoted friend of the great green forests and of every tree and took half an hour to elaborate. "I am opposed to the resolution to print these proceedings," he declared. "I do not ever wish to feel that any tree has had to be felled in order to preserve the words I utter on this floor."

Walter H. Brown, a delegate from Toledo, rose. "Mr. President," he said, "if the gentleman from Hamilton county wishes to preserve the trees, there is an obvious way for him to do so. I shall support the resolution." Brown, who became postmaster-general under Hoover, was an able man who won an ironic and hardly deserved fame because he complained that the roof of his official limousine was too low for a man wearing a silk hat.

The 1912 battle between Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft was beginning to shape up, and Mr. Stout already was strengthening and lengthening his denunciations of T.R. Without particularly knowing why, except that he was colorful and vigorous and was called progressive, I was a partisan of Roosevelt. When I read that on February 21 the ex-president was to address the Constitutional Convention I promptly asked Stevens to see that I could have a ticket. The problem was to be sure to have the day free. I knew that Mr. Stout would frown prodigiously, his normal frown was forbidding enough, upon the idea of any employee of his going to Columbus on purpose to hear Theodore Roosevelt. Discreetly on the plea of "personal business" I arranged some days in advance to have the twenty-first off. It turned out to be the historic day when Roosevelt, in response to questions at Cleveland, had declared that "his hat was in the ring." I was in the crowd that cheered his arrival in Columbus and had full possession of my gallery seat so early that no one could dispute it. The convention was meeting in the chamber of the Ohio House of Representatives.

Escorted by a special committee, the Colonel strode down the center aisle amid fervent applause. He wore a frock coat. His shoulders were thrown back and his great chest was thrown out. I noted that the famous mustache was a sparse collection of bristles which appeared to grow forward rather than sidewise. At the speaker's desk he displayed the world famous grin.
The President of the Convention, Herbert Bigelow, shortly silenced the crowded room and spoke: "Gentlemen of the Convention: Benjamin Franklin once wrote to his daughter a letter in which he said, 'My face has become almost as familiar to the people of the world as the face of the man in the moon.' The same might well be said of our distinguished guest today. Colonel Roosevelt, the gentlemen of the convention!" I have not since then heard a neater introduction.

It was in this address that Roosevelt proclaimed his controversial doctrine of the recall of judicial decisions. The convention had been debating a provision to permit the people of the state to initiate legislation and another provision to permit them to reverse the legislature by referendum. The "initiative and referendum" were regarded as radical steps. The recalling of judges had been mentioned. The recall of judges decisions in state courts was an even more radical idea which was never, I believe, adopted in the United States. It won Roosevelt little support which he did not already have.

Twice more that spring I had opportunities to see the ex-president. One other morning when I was riding into Columbus he and Lawrence Abbott, editor of The Outlook to which T.R. was a contributor, were engaged in vigorous breakfast conversation at the dining car table opposite me. T.R. disposed of a stack of pancakes as well as his bacon and eggs. In early April, when Taft and Roosevelt were fighting for votes in the Ohio primary, both came to Uhrichsville on the whirlwind speaking trips which closed the campaign.

The Uhrichsville weeks dragged on through March, April and May. Spring was beautiful in eastern Ohio, and I was wasting time as a reporter. Fred was still sober and still city editor. Not for years, Mr. Stout whispered to me one Saturday afternoon behind the linotype, had Fred remained sober for so long. At last, early in June, Mr. Stout asked whether I would consider releasing him from his bargain.

"I can't afford to continue to pay two men fifteen dollars a week," he pleaded. "You can see that we do not really need an extra reporter, and it looks as though Fred has really decided to behave himself." Having no desire to stay longer in Uhrichsville without gaining the experience I wanted as a city editor, and understanding the position in which Mr. Stout found himself, I agreed to seek work elsewhere. I decided to go to Cleveland try there, and wrote Don Campbell at Lima asking him to let me know if he heard of any good openings.

Johnny Markham, my Lima News friend of the previous summer, was working on the Cleveland Leader. I called on Frank Ryan of the Press whose re-write had made me so unpopular at Ohio Northern. Markham introduced me around at the Leader and invited me to go along with him on his evening assignment. The assignment carried us a distance out Euclid Avenue by trolley. I followed John as
he swung off and entered a church. "I'm assigned to interview John D. Rockefeller," he explained, and "he is supposed to attend a function here tonight."

The occasion was to celebrate an anniversary of the church. Sitting at one side, John and I watched for the arrival of the famous multi-millionaire. He came a few minutes late and walked directly with his wife to a pew not far from the center rear and close to a balcony post. After taking his seat he surveyed the entire room apparently noting every person present. His eyes, steely gray and large, seemed extraordinarily bright. After looking over the congregation he settled back and paid close attention to the proceedings. In the course of these the pastor, who was reviewing the church's history, asked Mr. Rockefeller, as one of the early members, to come to the platform and to speak about his memories of the church.

Rockefeller walked briskly to the front and referred pleasantly to his early experiences as a member, speaking for perhaps ten minutes. Because he was then known as the richest American, and perhaps the world's richest man, I listened closely and was perhaps needlessly surprised that he spoke much as any elderly and faithful church member might do in recalling his memories. He paused to ask if any persons were present who had been on the church rolls at the date when he had first joined. Two old ladies rose. He recognized them at once by name and asked them to join him on the platform. After gallantly helping them up the steps he closed his speech by kindly references to their loyal participation in the church's affairs over the years.

After the program, a reception line formed in front of the pulpit, with the pastor at its head and Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller at the lower end. The guests at the services were invited to pass along to be greeted by these, the church's officials. I remained at my seat to watch while Johnny went through the line to get his interview. When he reached Mr. Rockefeller the old man shook his hand heartily and smiled, and reached so quickly for the hand of the next in line that Johnny had not even a chance to attempt a question. Seeing himself thus frustrated, Johnny signaled for me to join the line, which I did, being nearly the last person in it. When Mr. Rockefeller reached for my hand he said, "Young man, I have never seen you here before. Is this your first visit to our church?" It was, I told him, and mentioned certain of his remarks that had interested me. He talked leisurely for several minutes in response to questions.

"Do you live in Cleveland?" he asked suddenly. No, I am here today for the first time," I said. "I am looking for a job." "Well," he replied, "I'm glad you are spending your first evening in church. Come to church regularly, work hard, save your money, and I'm sure you will get along!"

Neither John D. nor I on that evening could have expected that thirty years later one of his grandsons and my son would happen to be attending the same high
school. During the interval I fear I have followed less than a third of his advice. He had, however, in the course of our conversation said several things which Markham was able to weave as quotations into his story and the Leader next morning had an exclusive Rockefeller interview. Moreover, the Leader's assistant city editor asked me to come in the next night when his boss would be on duty; there might be an opening for me as city hall reporter.

Next morning I had a wire from Don Campbell urging me to return at once to Lima to be a telegraph editor. He wished to spend the summer in Colorado. Perhaps I should have waited to see whether the Leader offer would be made. However, Don's wire was an appeal as well as an offer and I thought I would like the new experience of being telegraph editor. I went on to Lima where in a few days a letter from a Uhrichsville friend brought news that Fred had not yet returned from a record-breaking "toot."

The year was to yield more excitement.
A telegraph editor had a bit of responsibility. It was for him to decide which of the state, nation and world news, from the Associated Press offices in Columbus, should be passed on to the Republican-Gazette’s readers. We had room to print only a portion of the complete report. I had to determine how to display the principal articles, write the headlines and see that the wire copy, completely ready for the printers, moved to the composing room in ample time. After watching my decisions for a few nights Don took off for his sojourn in Colorado.

I promptly committed a major error of judgment, unless every other telegraph editor in the country was wrong. I had privately determined upon a general policy of giving preference to the wire news that seemed most to concern people in Lima and Allen county where the paper circulated. With that idea in mind, I tossed on the floor the several thousand words that poured in one night about a murder in New York. Of what interest to Lima was another underworld killing in that remote metropolis? The Republican-Gazette carried not a paragraph about it. Next day and night the New York murder produced more words on the wire than any story I had ever seen come through. any story I had ever seen come through. Again I tossed it on the floor, wastebaskets were not part of the city room equipment, and sent the paper to press with news I rated as more interesting and locally significant. The Lima afternoon papers were printing the story at length. As exchanges came in I noted that every nearby daily was playing it big with top front page headlines.

On the third night I yielded to the general news judgment and our readers finally learned that a gambler named Rosenthal had been shot and eventually were to read that a police captain named Becker was to be accused of the murder. Not even my office colleagues had complained that we had skipped the story but I felt a little safer to fall in line. The Rosenthal murder, though it involved serious municipal scandals and corruptions, was greatly over-played just because it happened in New York. New York City news gets far more attention nationally than it actually deserves. New York and Hollywood are over-reported, Washington is badly reported, and most of the rest of the country is under-reported.

As telegraph editor, it was exciting to be getting the news from everywhere hot off the wires. It was exhilarating to seize the big shears and lop off paragraphs, to be deciding moment by moment which stories to feature, which to play briefly and which to leave out. I liked the exacting task of writing headlines. We followed
the style, now abandoned by many newspapers, of writing two- and three-line top
titles exactly balanced, each line's letters and spaces carefully counted to look
even and orderly, with equally precise banks and sub-heads. If a line allowed for
sixteen or seventeen letters and spaces, fifteen were too few and eighteen were
too many. One did not write "ROOSEVELT SAYS" but "ROOSEVELT
ASSERTS." Don had taught me the art the summer before and had been a
meticulous instructor. I knew he would be reading the paper days later in
Colorado and that any headline which did not match his standards would in a
way betray the trust he I had given.

I telegraph editor from six o'clock until two-thirty a.m. In the afternoons I was a
reporter. Grant Sprague, long the paper's star reporter, was acting as city editor.
He did not much like the job; reporting suited him better.

Sprague came to be one of my educators. Born in Vermont, he had come to
Lima a quarter of a century earlier as an official of an oil company. Lima had
been the center of one of Ohio's first productive petroleum fields. After a
business failure he had turned to newspaper reporting. His range of learning and
broad knowledge of business and of public affairs, along with a competent writing
skill, made his stories authoritative. Conventional in other respects, his blond hair
was combed back to reach his coat collar, and he wore always a cutaway coat
and derby hat such as by then were seen infrequently. Gentle and unassuming,
he met all men as equals. He penciled his articles in a large and legible hand
which the printers could read as readily as typewritten copy. He spoke as
precisely and vividly as he wrote.

Those summer nights after "30" at 2:30 I strolled out West Market Street with
Sprague until we reached his gate. His house, wanting paint and obviously
decaying, stood flanked by the town's finest mansions. He never referred to this
conspicuous contrast to which his reduced circumstances had led. He liked to
talk of public affairs and of literature and sometimes of distinguished men he had
known. He encouraged me to widen my range of reading. He spoke with modest
pride of his daughter who was then dancing in the Ziegfeld Follies in New York
and of his good-looking youngest son, Tom, who sometimes called at the office
to see his father. Tom was shortly appointed to Annapolis and rose to be a Vice-
Admiral of the United States Navy after winning distinctions in World War II.

Sprague and I usually had our dinners together. With a princely salary of sixteen
dollars a week, I could easily pay all expenses and eat regularly at the best place
in town, the Congress Cafe, where the dinner check might run as high as forty
cents. On Sundays, if I did not go home to the farm, we often met at the office in
the late afternoon and strolled around to the Lima House to enjoy the big
seventy-five cent Sunday table d'hote. Sprague always insisted on signing the
check. I learned later that in consideration of the frequent mention of the hotel in
our columns, our meals there were on the house.
One Sunday night in Indiana, two hundred miles away and four or five years later, I dreamed so vividly of Grant Sprague that I described the dream at breakfast. The dream was a re-enactment of one of our Sunday afternoon walks and talks together, beginning at the office, including our dinner at the Lima House and our usual stroll out Market Street. A day later the Republican-Gazette came in the mail. The news that I half expected was there. Grant Sprague had died that Sunday night. Some things one cannot explain.

The Taft-Roosevelt split had made 1912 a dramatic political year. Sprague asked me to handle the local political news. I didn't know just what was evil about the conservatives and standpatters, but I admired Theodore Roosevelt and wanted him to win. Soon after the Progressive convention had nominated him the local Bull Moosers went to work. They launched a full county ticket against the Taft Republicans and nominated a candidate for Congress. Their activities made news. Daily I managed with no difficulty to find a column or more of Bull Moose news to report. If I looked hard I could stir up a quarter of a column apiece from the Republicans and Democrats. The Democrats felt so sure of victory against the divided Republicans that they foresaw advantage in keeping comparatively quiet. The Taft Republicans were so paralyzed and discouraged by the defection of party workers that they barely kept up the appearance of a normal campaign.

The new figure that year was the Democratic presidential nominee, Woodrow Wilson. I went to Columbus to hear him open the Democratic campaign in Ohio. "He's a fine fellow -- but he lacks the punch," was the estimate my story reported. "The most vocal democrat went home with no huskiness in his voice." Accustomed to judge political oratory by its pyrotechnical intensity, I under-rated Wilson's "punch", though reporting that "his personality is quite engaging."

As the campaign warmed up during September I continued without restraint to favor the Bull Moosers both by the space accorded to them and by the slant of the writing. The Republican-Gazette seldom published an editorial column, but had always supported the Republican Party in previous campaigns. Asked daily whether the paper was going to come out for Taft or for Roosevelt I could only answer that I had received no instructions whatever.

I was no less than stunned one morning to find a two-column boxed editorial statement. No one had warned me that it was going to appear. The Republican-Gazette, it firmly declared in boldface type, had always been a Republican paper and was then a Republican paper. It favored the re-election of William Howard Taft for President of the United States.

My spirits sank as I read the piece and were low that afternoon as I went to work. Everyone appeared to be busy as usual. No one discussed nor even mentioned the editorial. Mr. Campbell was in his office and passed me in the halls two or three times. I gave him every opportunity to offer any suggestions he might have in mind. Sprague had nothing to say. Next morning I had a sparkling column of
Bull Moose news, tinted no less than usual, and a few paragraphs each from the Democratic and Republican headquarters. No one objected, so I continued as before.

On the second Saturday night before the election a special rally of Roosevelt party workers from the entire congressional district filled the courthouse auditorium. The congressional nominee, the county chairman and principal party candidates and workers from Allen and nearby counties were called upon to speak. Enthusiasm was high. The program was about over when I heard Dr. Pence, the district chairman, say: "We have with us tonight a young man who has done much for our noble cause. May we have a few words from him? I introduce Wheeler McMillen, the reporter from the Republican-Gazette."

I rose and attempted to speak. Totally surprised and unprepared I could only realize that I was saying nothing worthwhile. I put my hands in my pockets and took them out, buttoned my coat and unbuttoned it, shifted weight from one foot to another, and did everything else which one should not but is likely to do in such a situation. Meaningless words continued to emerge while I tried desperately to think of some way to get stopped without having to sit down in complete disgrace. Then I recalled that a year or so previously I had delivered an oration on Theodore Roosevelt before a college literary society and discovered that I could remember how some of it went. For its peroration I had cribbed a few resounding phrases from Robert G. Ingersoll's famed "plumed knight" speech in nomination of James G. Blaine in 1876. My feet shifted into place and shoulders came back as I spoke more confidently and decisive gestures began to cut the air. The quiet audience was listening in pleased surprised at a tribute to their hero.

Swinging into the borrowed but good peroration, I pivoted to take in all the audience. Only then did I spot a listener whose presence until that second I had not suspected. Slumped down in a bench far at one side was Mr. W.A. Campbell, publisher of the Republican-Gazette and author of the editorial pronouncing for Taft.

The speech ended quickly and the speaker hardly waited for applause. Back at the office I wrote a fairly full report of the rally which completely omitted reference to what had unexpectedly turned out to be the principal speech of the evening.

I spent an uneasy weekend, and it was no surprise as I walked into the office Monday afternoon when Old Zeke shouted "Mr. Campbell wants to see you!" He was not at his desk. Wherever I went to look for him some one announced that Mr. Campbell had been looking for me. When he did arrive after half an hour I went to his door. He looked up and said, "Come on in!"
As I entered he said, "Shut the door." I did that, glad the conversation was at least going to be private. "Sit down!" he directed. I sat. "Have a cigar!" he said, offering one of his Wheeling stogies that tasted of coal dust. He held out a lighted match. "Pull your chair up close," he ordered, glancing to make sure again that the door was actually closed.

Then, leaning back and looking at me contemplatively, as though he had never really examined me before, he remarked, "Quite a speech you made at the courthouse Saturday night!" That didn't tell me anything. From the proceedings so far I could only guess that, being a kindly and essentially timid man, he intended to spare my feelings as much as he could even though he had an unpleasant duty to perform. "Yes," I replied, "I saw you there, Mr. Campbell."

He looked again at the closed door and hitched his chair over closer to mine. "You know," he whispered, "I'm going to vote for Roosevelt myself." Our eyes held for a few seconds before we both broke out laughing. Both the formal editorial policy of the Republican-Gazette and the character of its political news continued unchanged right through the election.

William Jennings Bryan came to Lima that summer to deliver a lecture. The committee appointed to meet him expected his arrival on a later afternoon train while by some chance I met the right one. Bryan agreed to my suggestion that we go to the Lima House from where I would try to locate his reception committee. The hack ride to the hotel and the waiting time there permitted an hour's visit with the man who had then been three times nominated and defeated for the presidency. While we were seated on a sofa in the hotel lobby a colored porter emerged from the bar with a mop in one hand and bucket of water in the other. Seeing Bryan, he plopped the bucket down and, mop still in hand, said, "Howdy, Colonel!" Bryan leaped to his feet. "Why, how do you do, William! How are you? How are your children?"

William reported on his family and in return learned that Bryan had a new grandchild and that Ruth was all right, along with other domestic details. He then picked up his bucket and disappeared into the bar.

"His name is William Boetler," Bryan explained, carefully spelling the last name. "He was the groom for my horse at Jacksonville when we camped there during the Spanish-American war. I usually look him up when I come to Lima."

Then the bar door swung again. This time there emerged a jaunty fellow wearing a light suit, straw hat, gay necktie and signs of having been at the bar a bit too long. He offered Bryan his hand and as the Colonel shook it explained; "I know you'll remember me Mr. Bryan! Remember how the glee club sang when you spoke in Celina in 1896? I was the tenor in the back row." Bryan graciously asked that his regards be conveyed to his Celina friends. The tenor was so pleased that he returned to the bar for further celebration.
About one o'clock one night, Fred Koch, the night baggage agent at the Pennsylvania station, called to tell me that "Dr. Frederick Cook, the famous North Pole man, is here in the waiting room." "You ...are Frederick Koch," I retorted. "Are you kidding?" "I'm Fred Koch, but I ain't never been to the North Pole and I don't know whether this one has either but if you want a story come on down."

Dr. Cook was sound asleep on a waiting room bench. When I shook his shoulder and spoke his name he rose smiling and brushed off my apologies. He was enroute from a Chautauqua date in Celina to another in Illinois. He assured me that he did not and never had denied Peary's claims, that he was leaving his case with the American people, that he had no intention of returning to the polar regions and that he thought western Ohio was beautiful country full of intelligent citizens. He was a likeable fellow.

Not only was the 1912 political campaign in Ohio exciting, but another vigorous contest was being fought. The Constitutional Convention had submitted its work to the voters. Most notable of the speakers who came to Lima on this issue was the mayor of Cleveland, Newton D. Baker, later to become Wilson's Secretary of War. After his speech I went to ask him some further questions.

"Surely. But let's take a walk. I am out of smoking tobacco and you can show me where to find some." He wanted Imperial Cubecut and we had to visit several stores to find the brand.

"Now, if I have answered your questions, will you answer some for me? You have a new Socialist mayor here in Lima and I want to know about him." By this time we had gone to his Lima House room. "I understand that your Mayor Shook has closed out the red light district and is enforcing all the saloon regulatory ordinances. How does he do it?"

Corbin Shook was a job printer who had unexpectedly defeated the old party candidates. I explained that Shook simply took his oath of office seriously, compelled the police to enforce the law, and watched to see that his orders were not evaded. He had the same police force except for a different chief and a new safety director in charge.

Baker asked about a multitude of details. I decided to ask an impertinent question. "You have ordinances in Cleveland similar to those we have in Lima, and you operate under the same state laws. When you took your oath as mayor you swore to enforce all the laws. Why don't you do in Cleveland as Shook has done here?" "You mean why don't I enforce the saloon laws and close out the restricted district?" "Yes." His reply illuminated a philosophy of administration that, however practical, did not appeal to me as quite meeting the American ideal.
"You no doubt have a medicine chest in your home," he said. "You keep it stocked with remedies for several purposes. You don't use all of those medicines every day. When you have a burn or a cold you take down the one you need. So we like to have on the statute books laws that provide appropriate remedies for whatever problem may require treatment. In a city like Cleveland some things are more urgent than others. We attend to those first. If we feel the need to clamp down on the saloons or to close out the district we shall use the remedies that are ready in our medicine chest for these purposes."

One o'clock had come and I had to get his speech on paper before two-thirty. As I left he said: "I am wondering how you are going to report my speech. I watched you at the press table and you made very few notes." I produced the envelope which carried my notes on one side. He looked at it uneasily. "Let me send you the clippings," I proposed, "maybe it won't be so bad." In a gracious note he later acknowledged the nearly three-column story. It said: "I shall be fortunate if I may always be quoted so completely and accurately."

With an eye to future experiences, during the summer I had made brief weekend trips to Detroit and Chicago. One afternoon on a bench in Grant Park I gazed at the Michigan Avenue skyline. The Blackstone Hotel, then more conspicuous than now, loomed before my eyes as a symbol of achievement and luxury. I determined that sometime the Blackstone would be my Chicago address instead of the $1.50-room hotel on State Street where I had registered. Shortly after the election I decided to look at Cincinnati. Don Campbell had returned and I was equally free to continue with the Republican-Gazette or to venture elsewhere. I thought I might try The Cincinnati Post.

After checking in at a small hotel I took a walk around the principal streets without finding the newspaper buildings. In Fountain Square I asked a policeman the way to the Post office. "Right over there," he pointed, "just a block." I followed his direction but could see no newspaper office. Another policeman answered the same question with the same directions. Discovering nothing in the vicinity that resembled a newspaper office I paused to reflect upon the curious mysteries of the big town. Suddenly it dawned that I was standing in front of the post-office. After inquiring next for "the office of the Cincinnati Post" I reached the city room. The city editor, Elmer Fries, asked a dozen questions, glanced at a few clippings I had brought along, and asked if I could report for work next Monday morning -- eighteen dollars a week. A fifty per cent salary increase within a year and a half was fair progress, I thought, as I hurried to Lima and home to pack my books and clothes into the old trunk.

The Post issued five editions a day and the pace was fast. Every edition was a series of races to beat the strong afternoon competition, the Times-Star, and to keep from being beaten by them. I dashed from one corner of the unfamiliar city to another, covering fires, suicides, accidents, small features, business deals and all sorts of the trivia defined as news. I was instructed in the sometimes-
unpleasant art of obtaining pictures of people from piano tops or family albums who were caught in the news but could not be photographed because they were missing, dead or hiding. It was experience, fast and furious, and I knew this kind of work had to be endured before "better, more dignified assignments could be expected.

For five or six weeks I engaged in this rough and tumble reporting, much of which was mere leg work to hurry facts to the telephone. One was expected to dictate to the re-write desk a story ready for print. Mr. Fries directed me one morning to go to City Hall. "You've met Al Crouse, our City Hall man. He's going to Columbus next week to cover the legislature. You'll handle the City Hall beat until the session up there is adjourned. "Guess we --can pry off a couple extra dollars a week for you," he added.

City Hall was considered one of the choice "beats." The hall had a pressroom where reporters could write their stories and could loaf when work was light. One didn't have to leave the building except for lunch. My ignorance of city government and of Cincinnati politics was comprehensive but if the city editor considered me suitable for the job I intended to vindicate his judgment.

Al Crouse introduced me to the mayor, Henry T. Hunt, who headed a reform administration after long domination of the city by the old George B. Cox Republican machine. I also met the city health officer, John H. Landis, one of an unusual quartet of brothers which included Charles, a congressman, Fred, congressman and writer, and Kennesaw, federal judge and baseball commissioner. Al also introduced me to the heads of departments, members of City Council and other individuals whom I was going to be seeing daily. Mike Mullen, a saloonkeeper and councilman who had inherited the machine leadership from George B. Cox, growled genially at the new reporter from what he called the "Penny Pest." The council president, courtly Dr. Simeon, repeated my name and said "You will be very welcome, Mr. McMillen, as long as the name is not Mike Mullen."

The City Hall routine proved not to be difficult. The most important story coming up was to be the report of a special committee appointed by the council to draft a new city charter. The Post had been campaigning for the new charter and I determined to beat the Times-Star on the report. My best friend on the council, a young lawyer, fortunately was on the committee. On the Monday before the Tuesday evening council meeting when the report was to be presented I asked him to supply me with an advance copy. He said he would gladly do it but could not because all the special committee members were pledged not to reveal any content of the report before its presentation to the full council. He conceded that the Post was his only newspaper supporter and entitled to some consideration but insisted that he must keep his pledge.
"Charley," I said, "there will no doubt be a copy of that report in your desk in the council chamber by tomorrow morning, won't there? You can't help it if some one happens to find it." Tuesday morning I lifted the lid of his desk hopefully and, sure enough, there was the document. I slipped it under my coat and rushed to a quiet spot to read it through. It was long, complicated, and dealt with several aspects of the city government that I did not understand well. Secure with the advance copy, I determined to get the provisions straight in my mind and to write a real knockout forecast of the report for the 12:30 edition. I knew I could get a partial account into the 10:40 edition but that a good job could not be done so quickly. This was my big chance to scoop and shine. I let the 10:40 deadline pass with a few routine items.

While I was toiling away at the big scoop the telephone rang. It was Victor Morgan, the managing editor, and he was screaming. "Where in hell is our advance story on the charter report?" "Don't worry, Mr. Morgan, I've got it sewed up and half written. You'll have it in plenty of time for the next edition." "Next edition! Hell, the Times-Star is on the street with it now and they've scooped the liver out of us." There was more which I did not enjoy hearing. Mr. Morgan had a sharp tongue and a flexible vocabulary. The joy had fallen out of the morning.

A few decades later at a Washington party I encountered my old Cincinnati friend, the young councilman who had permitted his desk to be raided, and reminded him of the incident. He was Charles Sawyer, then Secretary of Commerce in the Truman administration. "What unprincipled son of a gun," he asked, "do you suppose leaked that story to the Times-Star?"

The Post had carried on a prolonged editorial battle for reforms in Cincinnati's city government. It had supported Mayor Hunt as a reform candidate in the previous election. Also it had stood behind the city and statewide efforts of the Rev. Herbert Bigelow, the civic-minded liberal preacher who had been president of the recent constitutional convention. Hunt and Bigelow were looked upon as the Post pets and more or less as twin leaders for better government. The two, however, held opposing views about certain features of the proposed new city charter.

In an endeavor to commit both of them firmly to support of the charter, the Post staged a big public rally one night at Music Hall. I was not given that assignment; it called for the star reporter. The early edition next day proclaimed unity between Hunt and Bigelow as charter supporters.

A few minutes after the edition had gone to press the mayor's secretary came to the pressroom and whispered that the mayor wished to see me. I found Hunt scribbling furiously on a big yellow pad. He ripped off the first two sheets and handed them to me. "This may be something the Post will want to print," he growled. I glanced at the first paragraph. "I shall hereafter have nothing to do," it
said, "either personally or politically, with Herbert Bigelow." I dashed out to the telephone booth with his promise to send the rest of the statement as he finished it. Before more than a few lines had been read to the copy desk Victor Morgan, the managing editor, came on the wire. Castles were crashing in his office. At first he angrily refused to believe the statement was genuine. "All I know," I told him, "is that I saw the Mayor writing it out and that he handed it to me. You can ask him!" Morgan told me to continue reading to the copy desk but left the impression that it was a pretty poor city hall reporter who couldn't keep the mayor in line with the paper's policy.

Responsible though not arduous, the city hall assignment brought pleasanter interludes, too. One was when Harry Lauder, the Scottish singer, came to call on the mayor, as was his custom in every city, and on the reporters. Noting the elaborately shaped meerschaum pipe he smoked I asked what kind of tobacco he found appropriate for it. "Perique, straight perique," he said.

My colleagues later expressed doubts that anyone could enjoy smoking so strong a tobacco continuously. I had never before heard of perique and rashly bet a dollar that I could smoke it for a week in my own pipe. I won the dollar, although by the seventh day I was more nearly ready than at any time since to quit smoking entirely.

The City Hall job was interesting, and I felt that I was learning, but what was to follow? Al Crouse would come back to the Hall when the legislature adjourned; that had been understood. The prospect of returning to the miscellany of street assignments, prying into the misfortunes and miseries of unhappy people, was not attractive. Because the Post had five editions a day every assignment was a rush assignment. One snatched up the information as quickly as possible, hurried to a telephone and dictated his story to a man at the city desk, who with a telephone receiver hooked over his head, typed it out and tossed it to the copy desk to be edited or re-written.

The experience at telling stories in minimum wordage was valuable. One day the managing editor put me to work at cutting printed syndicate copy which already had been written with brevity in view. I was amazed as he showed me how many single words, phrases and whole sentences, even paragraphs, could be deleted without significant loss.

Compared to the other places where I had worked Cincinnati was a big town. The population then was more than 370,000. If the soggy old city possessed glamour, I was insensitive to that quality. Certainly there was no glorious atmosphere about the narrow little bedroom, with the bathroom down the hall, which was my home in the cheap Walnut Hotel. I found a few stimulating friends, but made no attachments. Perhaps I was too dull, or maybe just too much of a country boy to fit into the city.
About this time I began to note a preference for editorial rather than reportorial work. To decide what should be printed was more exciting and educational than to be rushed about digging for answers to inconsequential questions from people who usually were also inconsequential. I saw no reason to expect a meteoric rise to editorial status in Cincinnati. Such desk jobs as I might hope to reach within a year or so were not what I wanted.

Again I turned to the *Publishers Auxiliary* which was a weekly small newspaper trade periodical, as well as house organ to promote the services which its owners sold. The employment columns of the *Auxiliary* had produced the Uhrichsville job. I answered the blind advertisement of a small city daily in Illinois asking for a city editor.

The paper turned out to be the *News-Herald* at Litchfield, Illinois. The owner was willing to pay the $20 a week I was then getting. By early March 1913, after a little more than four months in Cincinnati, I moved to Litchfield. I missed the excitement of covering the great floods which struck Dayton and the Ohio Valley two weeks later, but otherwise looked back to Cincinnati with no regret.

More education awaited in Illinois and Indiana.
In the last minutes before press time at the Litchfield News Herald we faced a daily crunch. Printing had to start at 2:30 in order to catch afternoon interurban departures or papers would not be delivered the same evening in nearby towns. Andy, the elderly foreman of the composing room, was willing but exasperatingly slow. New ideas for changes in front page make-up bothered him and made him slower. One day when time was vanishing I asked Andy if he would mind letting me finish the front page. He cheerfully handed over his composing rule and stood back to see whether I knew how to handle type.

That simple art having been learned long before, I soon had the page ready to lock up. For several days I regularly made up the front page. Then one morning the proprietor strolled around to my desk. "I hear you have been helping to make up the paper," he remarked. "Yes!" I told him why, fully expecting a nice compliment. "Well, don't do it any more. Don't touch a line of type." I was stunned. It was incredible that one should be reproved for doing all he could to facilitate putting out the paper. Seeing that I was hurt and wholly baffled, he explained: "This is a union shop, and some of the printers have complained. They say that if we haven't enough printers we'll have to hire more help. Or else that you will have to take out a union card." That made no sense to a farm boy. Andy's job had not been jeopardized. It had been made easier. But orders were orders, so we closed off the flow of copy earlier so Andy could finish the front-page make-up in his own deliberate time.

Work started each morning at seven. On top of other papers on my desk two or three mornings each week I found a little roll of manuscript penciled in legible, ornamental Spencerian script on ruled sheets from a five-cent tablet. The rolls were tied with black sewing thread. The manuscript was verse. Simple, mildly sentimental, it dealt lightly with ordinary daily topics in good, non-dialect English. Occasionally a rhyme or foot was faulty, though not often. It could not have made the grade with the national magazines, but many of the pieces were good enough for use in a local newspaper. Far worse had gained the dignity of print. The poems were signed "E.E. Kelly."

"Who is this E.E. Kelly?" I asked Milo Hart, a reporter, one morning after finding the usual deposit of rhymes. "He just left," Hart said. "He puts that stuff on your desk before you come in, and then stands around to see whether you are going to read it. When you read it he leaves." "You mean that walrus-mustached old fellow in the denim suit I see hanging around here mornings?" "That's Kelly. He's a bricklayer."
Kelly and I soon became friends. "My big ambition has been realized, and you have done it," he said when we met. "You have put my poems in print. But why do you choose one against another? I know you probably can't print them all, but how do you decide which ones to use?" Many of those rejected, I explained, had defects in meter. That was one reason. "Meter? What's that?" Here obviously was a completely untutored troubadour to whom the special techniques of the versifier were unknown. "If you don't know what meter is how do you get so many of your pieces so nearly perfect in that respect?" I asked. "Oh, I just read 'em out loud to my wife after supper. If they don't sing I make changes; if they do sing I guess that they must be all right."

He was so eager for instructions that I obtained for him a little book which explained various poetic forms. The book afforded Kelly endless entertainment. He tried to fit his singing voice into iambic pentameters, trochaic tetrameter, rondeaus, triolets and sonnets. I kept on printing his best because he was known locally, but became aware that I had not discovered a new poet, major or minor. The barriers were the limits of his imagination and of what he had to say.

Agriculture, railroads and coal were the main interests of Litchfield. The town of about 6,000 people lay forty-five miles southward from Springfield, the capital of Illinois, and fifty miles northeastward from St. Louis. Located in the western end of the county it lacked the advantage of being the Montgomery county seat; that belonged to Hillsboro. The main line of the Wabash, Toledo to St. Louis, served Litchfield. There were branches of the Big Four, the Illinois Central and the Burlington.

No less important, an electric interurban railway ran through Litchfield from Springfield to St. Louis. The electric interurban railways early became a casualty of the bus and motorcar age. Powered by electricity, the interurban usually ran a single car, rarely two. The tracks were seldom well graded so that the car, as it scurried at thirty or maybe forty miles an hour, swung, swayed and bounced. Except on the rare express runs the motorman stopped wherever a passenger signaled his wish to board or to alight. Interurban routes, lacing the Midwest and northeast, provided transportation that was highly satisfactory for its time.

E. E. Burson, owner of the *News-Herald*, busily ran a job printing and office supply business. Along with the advertising side of the newspaper this was his principal interest. "Give us a clean, lively paper," was his only demand. I had the help of another reporter, Milo Hart, an earnest and willing young man about my own age, and of Mr. Burson's sister-in-law, who collected social and personal news. Twice daily, we received from the then young United Press in Springfield a telephoned "pony report," a summary of telegraph news. Mr. Burson provided a stenographer to type the report. Myrtle knew nothing of geography, public affairs, spelling and but little of stenography, so that to reconstruct her wire service transcripts into intelligible and reasonably accurate copy provided daily
amusement and puzzles. Mr. Burson appeared to approve the few changes I introduced to enliven the paper. Having no diversions or distractions in town I worked happily through long hours.

Because we were in the midst of an agricultural area I felt that news from local farms and news of concern to farmers should have a special place in the News-Herald. A permanent heading, "Farm Gossip," was established. It appeared whenever I could collect enough material through interviews with farmers who came to town or from other sources to make a few paragraphs. My acquaintance was small and I had no means of traveling the countryside, even had there been time to do that. The column was often padded by "localizing" material from outside sources. For instance: "Litchfield area farmers will be interested in a statement from the state College of Agriculture, Urbana, that, etc."

Horace Greeley had printed farm material in his Weekly Tribune long years before. Nowadays nearly every good daily in the agricultural regions carries a farm page and many of them employ highly competent farm editors. So far as I know the Litchfield News-Herald was the first small-city daily to attempt a regular farm department; and so far as I know it was not imitated extensively at the time. I hesitate to claim that it was actually the first effort of the kind, although I had then heard of no other.

Reporter Hart and I had rooms at a boarding house three blocks from the office and took our meals there. The roomers and boarders included an unmarried young dentist, the superintendent of the local plant of the American Radiator Company Mr. Dobie, and his wife, and occasional transients. The widow and daughter kept the rooms clean, set a good table, and rigidly maintained conventional decorum.

A pre-summer spell of heat and humidity sent the temperature high into the eighties. The boarders were complaining about the discomfort one noontime as we waited on the front porch for the lunch call. "That dining room will be an oven," one of the men said. "I wish we didn't have to wear our coats." "I don't see why you should," Mrs. Dobie said. "Why don't you leave them off?" I'm going to," I declared, and hung mine on the hall rack. The other men did the same.

Our landladies served the meal silently with none of their usual pleasantries. At first we thought that the heat had probably upset them. That was not the reason. As we finished the desert the daughter, Marie, had something to say. Standing at the end of the table with hands on her hips she addressed her speech to me "Mr. McMillen, I want you to pack your trunk and be out of this house before supper. You were the first to take off your coat and start all this. This is a decent place and we won't stand for your kind of behavior."
She was within her rights to throw me out, I supposed, so I agreed to go. I would go to the hotel, I told her. "What's more," she said, "You won't get into the hotel dining room, nor any other respectable place in Litchfield in your shirt-sleeves."

After work that afternoon I moved to the hotel. The town was still steaming hot at suppertime. I put on a fresh shirt and headed for the dining room. The heavy-set proprietor stood inside the door waving a palm-leaf fan. Drops of perspiration ran down his red face and glistened on the hairs of his black mustache. "Sorry, I can't seat you unless you put your coat on," he said. "Where is your coat?" I asked. He looked with apparent surprise at his damp shirt, and grinned. "I guess you've won. Go ahead; I'll tell the rest of the men to make themselves comfortable."

Next morning a clatter on the fire escape awakened me. A small colored boy was trying to carry a tub half filled with water to a second story door across the court. I heard a voice giving the boy directions in accents unmistakably British. The British accent, I learned when we shared a table at supper, belonged to the Rev. William Millar, an Episcopalian clergyman in his middle years. Litchfield was to be his temporary headquarters while he served as a missionary pastor, seeking to increase the denomination's nuclei in Litchfield and nearby towns into self-sustaining units of the church. "I hope my boy does not disturb you in the mornings," he said. "Being English I have to have my cold bath, you know."

Having never met an Episcopalian minister before, nor even quite so authentic an Englishman, I welcomed the companionship which he cheerfully granted. Reticent to a most un-American degree about himself, he did disclose once, when I mentioned Boswell's Life of Johnson, that when he was a student at Pembroke College, Oxford, his room had been the very one once occupied by Samuel Johnson. It was a thrill to look at a man who had been so close to the great sage even at more than a century's distance.

On fair evenings when Millar was in town we regularly walked to a street end and back to the hotel. His knowledge of literature and of many subjects foreign to my experience proved stimulating and entertaining. He listened sympathetically to my chatter of hopes and experiences. Invariably, however, he turned the conversation away from any approach which reached toward his own personal background. Except for the Samuel Johnson matter, he told nothing of previous experiences, nothing of his time in the United States, and even nothing as to whether he had a family or not. His excellent talk remained completely barren of personal anecdote.

At first I supposed that he was merely displaying in exaggerated form the personal reticence which was alleged to be characteristic of cultivated Englishmen. Nevertheless there built up in my mind a sense of mystery regarding the man. How could one so affable, so learned, so much the gentleman, fail to reveal to an interested friend more than one or two single facts about himself and his past? Was he hiding something? Did he wish not to be recognized or to be
identified with anything in his previous history? One observation after another intensified suspicion that Millar was a mystery man with a past to conceal. I was prepared not to be surprised at any denouement.

Along came one of those spectacularly gorgeous evenings of which early June is capable. The trees finally were in full leaf. The temperature after dark remained above seventy. A big moon, shining resplendently from a cloudless sky, outlined separately the shadows of individual leaves on the sidewalks and pavement. So splendid was the beauty of the evening that the reverend and I strolled a half-mile or so into the country before turning back. As we talked I was oppressed by the mystery with which I had surrounded my otherwise delightful companion and by the feeling that an unpleasant climax must be building.

We had no more than reached the sidewalks on our return when two men came walking toward us rather more purposefully than was to be expected from strollers out only to enjoy the beauty of the superb evening. As we met the older and heavier of the two men spoke. “Are you Reverend Millar?” he asked. "Yes, sir, that's my name," my companion responded. "I've been looking all over five counties for you. I'm the sheriff of Fayette County, from Vandalia. Will you come with me?” "Certainly," my friend replied, apparently not at all surprised. I admired his calm unconcern. He fell in step with the sheriff and they walked rapidly toward the hotel. The younger man dropped back and walked with me. I was so amazed at the sudden justification for my apprehensions that I offered no conversation beyond a remark about the nice evening; the youth seemed indisposed to talk.

When we reached the hotel a young woman joined the sheriff and the clergyman. The younger man and I were several paces behind, and I only heard Millar say, "Well, will you all come to my room until I can change my clothes?” We clustered silently in his room. Millar retired behind a screen. After a few moments he emerged. Clad in the habiliments of his priestly office, he directed the young woman and young man to stand before him, bade the sheriff and myself to act as witnesses, and proceeded to read the Episcopal marriage ritual. "My niece insisted on having an Episcopalian preacher perform this ceremony," the sheriff explained. "Reverend, I sure had to hunt all over hell to find one.

About the first of July Mr. Burson startled me with an inquiry. "Would it inconvenience you very much to quit?" "Not at all," I said. I could always get another job. He explained that he thought I had taught Hart enough to get out the paper, and that the business hardly justified my twenty dollars a week. We amiably agreed that I would leave at the end of the next week. If I was being fired for any offense or failure the fact was concealed, and I assumed that economy was the real reason. The News-Herald survived my departure. It is still published.

An office a door or so away from the News-Herald was headquarters for a newspaper broker, H.F. Henrichs, who sold newspaper properties on commission. Later he abandoned that business in order to publish Sunshine
*Magazine*, a unique and successful venture. *Sunshine*, a pocket-sized monthly, is distributed mainly under the imprint of business firms and professional people who for ethical or other reasons do not pursue the usual advertising methods to keep their names before their clients. Operated by Henrichs and his sons, *Sunshine* has become Litchfield's most widely known enterprise. A lifelong friendship with H.F. Henrichs was the largest profit I gained from the four months in Litchfield. After a few days at home I began a third stint in Lima on the *Republican-Gazette* while planning to look for another new experience as an editor.

Father called me on the telephone one evening. "I'm figuring on starting out next week to visit Uncle Ed, and see a little new country. Thought you might like to go along." "I'd certainly like to, but" I had to answer, "I don't believe I've got enough money saved up." "Well, I calculated I could buy the tickets." I could almost see his grin. Next week we were off together to Chicago, St. Paul, and out the Northern Pacific to Yellowstone Park, our first major stop. Motor vehicles were not yet permitted in the park in 1913. We took six days for the circuit, traveling in coaches pulled by four or six horses. The leisurely pace was an agreeable memory during another visit forty years later, when less than a day sufficed to view Yellowstone's major points of interest. We camped at night in tent villages. We enjoyed the rugged country and amazing natural phenomena, our fellow travelers, and the young college people who worked at the camps. From the park we took trains to Spokane, Seattle and Portland, and then went up the Columbia to the new Oregon town of Hermiston to which Uncle Ed, Father's next old brother, had moved a few years before. Uncle Ed had joined Father in buying the Keyser land in Hardin County in 1891. He sold his farm about ten years later and, after successful business ventures, acquired lands in the Umatilla irrigation project and moved to Oregon. He and Aunt Alice lived in the small town. Uncle Ed grew alfalfa on the part of his land that had been cleared and leveled for irrigation, and apparently was doing pretty well.

After a fortnight at Hermiston we started eastward. While waiting at Pendleton for the through train we saw numbers of Indians and cowboys in costume and felt that at last we must have struck the authentic West; then we noticed posters announcing that the already famous Pendleton Roundup was about to open. At Salt Lake City we stopped for a day. Joining a crowd in Temple Square we heard Joseph F. Smith, then the President of the Church of Latter Day Saints, eloquently dedicate the monument that commemorates the sea gulls which by eating the grasshoppers had saved their first crop for the Mormons in Utah. We stopped overnight at Grand Junction, Colorado, in order to travel through the Rockies by daylight. A day at Colorado Springs took us to the Garden of the Gods and gave us a look at Pike's Peak. Then to Denver, the Union Pacific to Chicago, where we stayed at the Stock Yards Inn and visited a meat packing plant before taking the familiar Pennsylvania on home to Ada.
While seeing the dozen states covered by our itinerary, I thought much about plans for the future. The scenery and climate of the Washington coastal area had been novel and alluring. Was the still new and growing West the place for a young man? As we rolled across the Nebraska plains I considered going back to look for a job and a start in the Northwest. Then in the morning before we reached Chicago, I awoke to see again the green and golden harvest beauty of the Midwest. This was my home, and here was my place.

What I wanted most was eventually to own and publish a newspaper. I had confided this ambition to Father and had told him that I intended to try to save up enough money to acquire a small paper. "You are pretty sure, are you, that this is what you want to do?" I had no doubt of it. A few days later he remarked casually that until then he had supposed I would wish to continue further in college and might perhaps choose to go to Yale or Harvard. "It would cost quite a lot to go to a big school," I said. "I haven't stopped studying, you know, and I can keep on learning without going to college. I have no desire to spend more time in schools. It's time to get into my own business." "Well, if you have made up your mind you might as well go ahead. I've been keeping a couple thousand dollars laid aside to send you on through college, but if you are not going to do that you might as well use it to get started in business.

Here was a circumstance of first order. The dream of a newspaper, however small, with my own name at the masthead as "Editor and Publisher" was within reach. Touched by the generosity and confidence of Father's offer, I made profound promises to myself not to disappoint him by failing. He had placed no emphasis on the figures as he spoke them, but I knew that "a couple thousand dollars" in terms of net savings represented two years or more of hard work on the farm. The prospect of acquiring a newspaper meant that I needed to accumulate a few dollars as fast as possible. Shortly I found a job as city editor of the Kokomo Dispatch, a morning daily.

The proprietors of the Dispatch were J.O. and Oscar Henderson, who had grown up with the town and old with the paper. The managing editor, also elderly, was a gentleman of exceptional charm named Charles H. Havens, known to his friends as "Goof." He promptly confided that he wanted me to run the paper. He didn't care what I did as long as the Dispatch remained as good or became better than it was, and he agreed that it could stand improvements. He explained that he enjoyed the company of John Barleycorn and indicated that getting out the paper often had interfered with his pleasure. His addiction, I wrongly concluded, was hopeless. Among the archaic features ripe for improvement was a standing heading, "CRADLE--ALTAR--TOMB," over the daily reports of births, weddings and deaths.

A line of type, as cast by a linotype machine, is known as a "slug." Because headlines are in different sizes than body type, and usually set up by a different compositor, the editor writes an identifying word at the top of his copy which the
linotype operator sets to indicate the headline under which it is to be assembled. This is the "slug" line, usually the first word of the headline or department, and not intended to be printed. The make-up man, with the headline in type, finds the appropriate slug-line and after putting headline and article together discards the identifying slug.

One morning I found that the make-up foreman had committed an oversight. Under the standing head, "CRADLE--ALTAR--TOMB," there had appeared a line recognizable by any editor or printer but doubtless mystifying to readers. It read simply "CAT," the slug-line which the make-up man had failed to discard. My first change was to order an end to "CRADLE--ALTAR--TOMB." Births were to have a standing head of their own, as were weddings and deaths except those of special interest which were to be treated as separate news stories with individual headlines.

Oscar Henderson was waiting my arrival next afternoon, and his older brother, J.O., joined in. "CRADLE--ALTAR--TOMB" has been in every issue of the Dispatch since we started the paper," Oscar informed me. "Ever since 1877," J.O. added. "Now it's gone," I said, "and I hope you will not object if I continue to omit it." I explained that it represented an obsolete technique, and that the innovation would intensify readership. They were good enough to yield the point. The Dispatch preserved another antiquity, a style of headline which began with one word at the top, often meaningless by itself, and continued down the column in varied type sizes. I wrote a heading in the style most papers were then following and asked the foreman to have it set. He reported that no type in the shop was suitable, but agreed to order the condensed Gothic type it required. When the type arrived I wrote all the headlines in the new style. The paper which appeared next morning presented, I thought, a remarkable improvement in appearance.

J.O. and Oscar did not agree. They were astounded that a young city editor should have had the effrontery and initiative to change the cherished style of headline which the Dispatch had so long used. "Goof" promptly came to my support. So did the printers. The owners consented to the changed headline policy, although they probably never were really pleased. Both were mild and kindly men not disposed to slap down well-intentioned assertiveness. It would have been wiser to have discussed the changes with them in advance. After all, it was their Kokomo which paid my twenty dollars a week.

The great story of the Dispatch's history had appeared some forty years previously. "Goof" showed it to me in the files. It was the discovery and first publication of a poem entitled "Leonanie." The story related that a woman from a nearby county had supplied the text of the poem and an account of the circumstances concerning it. Her forebears had been Virginians. At her father's boyhood plantation home a stranger had appeared one stormy night to ask shelter for himself and for his horse. When he departed the next morning he
offered an old book in payment. On the flyleaf the poem had been written. The poem was "Leonanie," signed, in distinctive handwriting, "E.A.P."

The Dispatch printed the poem and all details of the woman's story. The handwriting closely resembled that of Edgar Allen Poe. The book was old enough to have been his. The poem was obviously in Poe's style:

"Leonanie-angels named her,
And they took the light
Of the laughing stars and framed her
In a smile of white,
And they made her hair of gloomy
Midnight and her eyes of bloomy
Moonshine, and they brought her to me
In the solemn night.

There were in all four stanzas. The final one:

Then God smiled, and it was morning.
Matchless and supreme,
Heaven's glory seemed adorning
Earth with its esteem,
Every heart but mine seemed gifted
With the voice of prayer and lifted
Where my Leonanie drifted
From me like a dream."

The discovery of an "authentic" new poem from the pen of Poe was hailed in literary magazines. The Kokomo Dispatch gained temporary national fame.

Eventually it was disclosed that the poem "Leonanie" had been written in imitation of Poe by a frustrated Hoosier versifier who felt that his poems were rejected by the big magazines because his name was unknown. He was an itinerant sign painter and patent medicine show banjo player. James Whitcomb Riley was his full name. He had written "Leonanie" in imitation of Poe and had lettered it in diluted, antique looking ink in an old book. With the connivance of his friends "Goof" Havens and the Hendersons he had arranged for it to be printed, with the accompanying article, in the Kokomo Dispatch. "Goof" and the Henderson brothers were proud of their part in proving that an authentic poet, without the benefit of fame, might have difficulty in obtaining an audience. Less than three years after hearing this story, while on an errand in Indianapolis, I joined the queue of mourners who passed through the state house to view the body of James Whitcomb Riley

Kokomo's most notable citizen was Elwood Haynes who had built one of the first American automobiles. Also in Kokomo were the Apperson brothers, who had
been blacksmiths and machinists. Under Haynes’s direction they had constructed his early car and were then making motorcars under their own name. At that period both the Haynes and the Apperson autos were becoming well known. An interview with Haynes produced a first announcement of his invention of "stellite," an early form of stainless steel.

Two years after leaving Kokomo I saw "Goof" Havens again. I remembered him as I had known him nightly in the Dispatch office, always disheveled, generally with a vest bearing remnants of his breakfast, and speech addled with liquor. Instead I now met a brisk, clean-cut gentleman, neat and spotless with no evidence of having been near bar or bottle. "Goof," aware of my surprise, explained frankly what had happened. The Congressman from the district, Martin A. Morrison, had proposed to make Havens postmaster of Kokomo; but only on condition that he quit drinking. "Goof" had accepted the appointment on that condition. He had quit drinking, and that was that.

One day in January I had a letter from H.F. Henrichs. A county seat weekly newspaper at Covington, Indiana, could be bought with a two thousand dollar down payment. I had never heard of Covington, but hastened to get there.
After three years as a reporter, telegraph editor and city editor, I considered myself to be a seasoned newspaperman. The Covington Republican offered the opportunity to be my own boss. My Father's hard earned two thousand dollars was ready for the down payment, and the purchase was made. On March 1, 1914, barely aged twenty-one, I happily and optimistically owned a paper, its business and goodwill (if any) and the printing equipment. The staff of two consisted of the foreman, Bill Harden, a small, pleasant sixtyish man, expressed pleasure when I claimed not to be wholly ignorant of the printing trade. His assistant, an agreeable young fellow about twenty, Cooper Clifton, was son of the retiring owner. Bill's weekly wage was eleven dollars, and Cooper's eight or nine.

Aglow with satisfaction, I surveyed the composing rooms upstairs, the presses in the back and the stock room which held whatever paper was on hand. The cluttered front office, heated by a large coal stove, faced a street, and an alley ran alongside. I looked through a few past issues of the Republican and saw ample opportunities for improvement.

Only for curiosity, I counted the cash in my pockets. The total was $16.56, my entire working capital. That it would not quite meet the first week's payroll did not seem disturbing. More, surely, would be coming over the counter.

Cooper Clifton made a timely suggestion. He thought some of the merchants, if asked, would greet the new ownership with some advertising space, and said he would be glad to make a canvass. By the next evening he had brought in orders for forty or fifty dollars' worth, most accompanied by cash. We were off to a good start!

In eagerness to own and control a newspaper, I had never bothered to think about the economics of its location. Clifton, the former proprietor, evidently had not starved. He owned a good home, a big automobile, and the old brick building which housed the paper. The town held around 2,000 human beings, and fertile farm country reached for miles around. I had hardly noticed that Danville, fifteen miles west across the Illinois state line, was a prosperous commercial center of 30,000, and that its two daily papers carried most of the interesting news from our area; nor that within the county were seven other weeklies, including a long established competitor in Covington itself. Besides Danville, Lafayette, and Crawfordsville, other large towns attracted trade from the county. I did not realize until later that Covington, the county seat which taxpayers and litigants had to visit, might really be a dead end town.
A practical problem emerged before the first week passed. I had intended that the paper should be entirely "home set," without resort to filling space with the miscellaneous but convenient "boiler plate" which most weeklies used. The first press run, usually done on Wednesday, printed pages 2, 3, 6 and 7. Then the sheets were turned, and the other four pages put on the press. Bill brought word that the type supply had been so nearly exhausted that, before the remaining pages could be complete, the used type would have to be redistributed. Even with a little boilerplate, the issue did not come from the press until Friday forenoon instead of on Thursday, the scheduled date.

The front-page news of that first issue not only reported the change of ownership, but was obliged, I felt, to announce a few major points of policy. The critical one had to be political. The paper had always supported Republican tickets. No other paper in the county did so. Hoosier party organization and strength demanded an "organ". I did not wish to operate an organ, but did believe that I could honestly advocate Republican principles. In the previous election, the Roosevelt ticket had its followers, but it was evident that the "progressives" were returning to the old party. So, my political declaration was, "We shall support all that is best in the Republican Party."

For twelve years previously, Democrats had occupied all the county offices, and were thought to be formidable, if not impregnable. In preparation for a fall campaign, and in consultation with party leaders, a strategy was devised. Simply, we proposed that a best man, a well-respected Republican would be nominated for each position. Most of those solicited refused at first; they wanted no office. They were told that the party needed men such as they to recover its strength, but that actually there was not much hope for their election if nominated. However, was not it a duty to lend their names, a duty to the Grand Old Party? A strong ticket was thus obtained. Once in the race the candidates did not want to be defeated, so they all campaigned. The Republican tried hard to help, and was praised for the fact that it slung no mud at the opposing candidates. An "honest, businesslike administration" was the main promise. To general astonishment, we won every office except one, though by thin majorities, the highest was 152 votes, and the lowest only three.

An admission is due here. The county's printing was usually done by the party newspaper. That, I knew, could be helpful, and it was; I was awarded the contract. In retrospect, I am pleased to say that in 1916 and in later years, the "honest, businesslike administration" we had promised the county was re-elected by larger majorities, including the one office we had missed.

A more personal item must also be recorded. In Covington I met a girl who attracted me more than any I had ever met. She was Dorothy Doane, beautiful, practical, intelligent, forthright, talented in music, and, best of all, she seemed to find my attentions agreeable. In late May, 1915, we began what proved to be
nearly 59 years of amiable companionship. Moreover, during those decades I
never encountered another woman whom I thought could be preferred.

A little more than a year later, she presented me with a son, whom she named
Robert Doane. About him I could write a chapter. He has never applied for a job,
but has served as an assistant to four secretaries of agriculture, as an executive
in two national trade associations, and been employed in journalism. Always jobs
seemed to be reaching for him. For five war years he was an officer in naval
intelligence, located in Cape Town and in West Africa, returning as a lieutenant
commander. As this is written, Bob gives unfailing, devoted care to his rather
aged father, as we live happily together in northernmost Virginia. He is by far the
most valuable product of my Covington years.

Another election, took place in the spring following our county victory. Only
Covington was involved. The town had been dry under local option. Under state
law, men who wanted to run saloons could initiate petitions and could renew the
question biennially. When such a petition was filed for Covington, opponents of
saloons immediately formed a committee to save the town from the liquor
business. Preachers pressed a proposal. "Bring in an evangelist," they said,
hold a big joint revival meeting. Enough sinners will be converted to keep the
town dry." "That will not work," I asserted. "In the first place, the election date is
only a few weeks away, and the best evangelist could do little in that time. Worse
yet, remember that we have certain people who will always vote wet and about
the same number who will always vote dry. Others may be influenced to change.
They are the voters we must persuade. The tactics of an evangelist will only
annoy them."

I went on to declare that I would give an evangelistic campaign no support. The
evangelist was obtained and a wood barn tabernacle hastily erected. The
election by then was only four weeks off.

The Republican carried no announcement of the revival, and refused to print a
large picture of the evangelist offered by the Methodist preacher. A week after
the opening blast, the paper carried a short piece about the election that included
a quiet but explosive sentence: "The maudlin mouthings of an itinerant evangelist
have sounded practically the only note of bitterness so far injected into the
campaign."

The imported soul saver responded with fury. Not even had his name been
mentioned! For four weeks the evangelist denounced card playing, movie going
and dancing as the cardinal sins. He denounced me from the pulpit in seething
language. Audiences dwindled. After pocketing the final night's collection he took
the midnight train out of town without paying his personal bills at the hotel. The
dry committee never bothered to tell me how much they had to make up.
The saloon men won the election. When time came to publish their license applications, four of the six were sent to the Republican. "He fought hard against us," their attorney reported, "but he was fair and never personal." The six saloons prospered, and contributed some additions to the police news.

The year was to see still another election, a contest in the fall for town offices. When it was proposed, not very loudly, that I run for mayor, I set down lists of reasons why I should and why I should not. The negatives seemed to carry more weight. Nevertheless, I agreed to be named on the primary ballot. A local livestock buyer, Farmer McMahon, native and well liked, was my opponent. The Republican did not advocate votes for its editor, and did pay some compliments to McMahon. Neither "campaigned". He won the primary by eleven votes, and was defeated in the fall, and during the same summer I was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced. Appreciation of this joyous incident requires some advance detail.

Thomas H. McGeorge had been mayor of Covington for twelve years. A large-scale dealer in implements and harness, he was admired as a businessman and generally respected as a personality. But he had his quirks. As a magistrate, for instance, when an offender was brought before him in his first term, he had denied a motion for change of venue. "This court will never grant a change of venue," he declared, and in twelve years he never had. The Indiana constitution provided this right to any defendant who felt that his judge might be too prejudiced to be fair.

The city council adopted a new ordinance to regulate traffic; it covered motors, parking, horse vehicles and pedestrian conduct. Apparently it had been drawn in imitation of an ordinance for Indianapolis, or some city far larger than Covington. McGeorge's reputation for enforcing laws was spotty. He could be vigorous when he wished, or intermittent and lax.

The Republican reported the provisions of the new ordinance and advised readers to observe them for two or three weeks, inferring that by then its force would abate. The mayor was enraged. Not only was the new law treated lightly, but the likelihood that he would enforce it was questioned.

As I went home for lunch next day, I had picked up my hometown paper from the post office and was reading it as I walked. Crossing diagonally a corner of the square, in a path thousands of feet had worn in the bricks, I heard a shout. Charley Lyons, chief of police, in unusual full uniform, commanded that I go back and cross by the angles. Already by his side, I laughed and said that I would try to remember thereafter, and proceeded home.

That afternoon Charley brought a warrant for my arrest to the office. I demanded that he read it to me, which he did with some difficulty. His instructions were to take me before the mayor.
McGeorge, sitting lonely in the city hall, a room which he rented to the town, asked if I was guilty. I refused other reply except that I wanted a trial. He set the time for two o’clock Monday, and waved aside questions as to whether he wanted me confined over the weekend, or wanted to set bail. "I guess you'll be here if you say so."

With the aid of two lawyer friends, a course was planned. A motion would be made for change of venue. If denied, further proceeding would be illegal and subject the mayor to consequences that could be made serious. He did deny the motion and added casually that the occasion's purpose was not to persecute me, but it was only a sort of court of inquiry to learn whether I had deliberately flouted a city law. This change from a misdemeanor trial to a court of inquiry, a grand jury proceeding, amused the lawyers, who agreed that we might watch or participate but would recognize no legality. Charley Lyons testified as to my action at the corner, and a nearby loafer confirmed that he had witnessed what was done and said. Finally the mayor tore another shred out of legal precedent. His court of inquiry closed by finding me guilty, and inflicting a sentence. It was that I should apologize to the police chief.

This was too good to ignore. I began a mock apology, using for every phrase the biggest words I could summon. Charley threw up his hands and cried, "I don't know what you are saying, Mac, but it's all right." The crowded room broke out in laughter and the viewers dispersed. Next day Charley resigned as police chief and turned in his handsome uniform.

Mayor McGeorge came to my office the following week with copy for a page advertisement and an order for 5,000 copies of it for distribution as handbills. That was like Covington. Feuds could flare, but need not endure. We had to live with each other.

No one in Covington or Fountain County owned great riches. A few, by thrift, industry or inheritance, were considered by their neighbors to be wealthy, while a somewhat larger number might have been classed as well to do. Probably no more than ten per cent of the population belonged to either of these categories. In general, people attended to their businesses, professions and farms expecting at best to earn enough to provide what, by common standards, was regarded as a comfortable living; and perhaps to save a little. Not many could be rated as abjectly poor. Day laborers and handymen found work to do.

I can recall only four men in Covington who were born abroad, two from Germany and two from Denmark, and heard of none in other parts of the county. With few exceptions the people were native Hoosiers, and most had been born in Fountain County.
Individuality was pronounced. No two persons seemed to be alike in actions, thoughts or manners. Far better than a campus or a desk, here limitless opportunity offered itself for learning about the human race.

The county seat weekly never suffered from a shortage of news. The routine affairs out of the courthouse and town offices had to be covered. Special events and gatherings at churches and schools found space. A number of organizations held frequent meetings that made copy. All provided names, and names, however humble, were important, and if word of a party came in, or a club meeting, the names of any officers or performers were listed, if possible of all who attended. A corps of country correspondents, mostly women, sent in weekly letters, recording whatever had become known in their communities. No birth, wedding or death was overlooked.

The pursuit of paid advertising provided little pleasure and, time revealed, little promise for future growth. Many businessmen thought they were well enough known that their merchandise or services needed no advertising. Arguments about the sales they were losing to Danville concerns or mail order houses brought more agreement than orders. Even when the paid space in a week’s issue provided enough income for the payroll and bills, which was not invariably true, I had to think hard about the weeks ahead.

The shop did job printing besides putting out the newspaper. Rates for this work were held low by competition and custom, although an occasional order was fairly profitable. I did not much like this necessary operation, was poor at estimating costs, and disliked the diversion of staff energies from the paper.

Early news of war in Europe disturbed no one. After all, Europe was thousands of miles away, and might as well have been thousands of years in the past. Almost all sympathy went to the Allies; the Kaiser was roundly condemned. We all felt fortunate that America was too far away to have to take part. We might even profit nationally by selling supplies to the belligerents. Some effects could be perceived. Prices of farm products were rising. Stock buyers reported that at least $150,000 worth of horses from the general area had been sold, to die on the battlefronts.

Patriotism flamed when the declaration of war against Germany was heard. Young men began to enlist. Committees were formed to promote the war effort, to enlarge farm production, to conserve materials, and to elevate morale. All these the Republican heartily supported. In January, convinced that Covington was not going to meet my hopes for the future, I asked my friend Henrichs, the newspaper broker, to find a buyer. None appeared. I thought of applying to the officers’ training school. The draft examiners put me in the fourth classification because they said I could not touch my toes without bending my knees, though I suspected a little friendly consideration may have influenced them.
No war prosperity reached the Republican. Merchants were struggling to keep their shelves supplied and saw no reason for advertising goods that were in demand and hard to get. I had so far managed to meet the bills and semi-annual payments, but the future looked bleak. What to do if I sold the Republican? City newspapers were needing experienced help, but neither reporting nor deskwork now sounded attractive. I also had no desire to subject Dorothy and our son or myself to city living.

A buyer did appear in January. He acquired the property for less than half what I had paid. In the same week a letter from Father announced that he was looking for a tenant to work the farm, and that he and Mother were moving to Ada. I wired him to make no deal until I could see him. We were able quickly to make a partnership agreement.

Settling accounts did not take long. All bills were paid. By March first the Republican was no longer my responsibility. The yearning to be editor and owner of my own newspaper had been appeased.

I had not made money but was sure that I had given the community a competent and bright newspaper to read each week. Obviously I had been a better newspaperman than businessman. Four years before I had been rash to seize the first newspaper property offered. Clearly, its location was not the choicest. Covington persuaded me that it was a dead end town, not likely to grow or improve. Fifty years later the population numbered only a few hundred more, largely due to the establishment of a large factory only two miles away.

In the long run, though, I have claimed a profit. Covington and Fountain County provided a four-year course in human nature that ever after proved valuable. Nearly every week I had seen people engaged in incidents that reflected common individual character. These humorous, pathetic, but ever human, occurred so abundantly that they could fill a book; this, in fact, they did. Fifty years later, with the aid of files and memory, they were told in Weekly on the Wabash, published by Southern Illinois University Press. Only a sample of the incidents have been retold in this chapter.

Perhaps it is permissible here to report that on the book's publication date, a "Wheeler McMillen Day" was observed in Covington, with a parade, banners in all store windows, and speeches from the courthouse steps. It should be added that the "day" was instigated and vigorously promoted by the publishers who sold more signed books than they brought for the occasion. Covington had not thought of the idea, but went along.

Had I done the community any good? I had supported good causes and encouraged others to think constructively about possible progress in worthwhile directions. I was leaving Covington no worse than I found it, but not noticeably
better, unless in intangible forms not easy to perceive. The farm was ready and waiting.
Chapter 10 - THE FARM AGAIN

Between the Plow Handles...Dorothy's Chicks...Her Threshing Triumph...Old Doc Passes....Shocked by a Dinosaur...Hog Business...Economic Bump...Corn at $1.80...The Expensive Speech...Nickel an Hour...The Horse Lifter...The Star Salesman...The Martin House...Farm Bureau Organizer

Ben and Dick leaned into their collars and pulled the plow smoothly through the black earth. The bronzed grackles, their iridescent plumage fresh in the sunlight, searched for grubs along the new furrows. Yellow breasts with black crescents flashed as the meadowlarks sang cheer-i-o-s from the fence posts. Killdeers tinkled along ahead of the plow and vesper sparrows ran through the stubble. A turkey vulture circled overhead. Bobwhites whistled from the pasture.

Between the plow handles, I felt free again. No more concern about coaxing advertisers; no more exasperating struggles with the print shop's balky gasoline engine, nor with the vagaries of the grumbling old press; no payroll to meet come Saturday afternoon! All bills paid, and no debts!

I had no doubt that those furrows would eventually lead to some amply satisfactory end, but also no idea as to what the end might be. To be free, to be confidently at work was enough just then.

For me this was the home neighborhood to which I had merely returned from an absence. If I had been concerned about the adjustment for Dorothy, who had never before spent more than a brief visit or so in the country, I need not have been. She soon made friends with the women of the neighborhood. Vigorously and competently she took on the duties of a farmer's wife. I laughed at her for using a long-handled pitchfork to lift a setting hen off the nest, but she got it done.

She set the old 120-egg kerosene incubator. One forenoon when I rushed into the house on some urgent errand and was about to rush out again she called: "Mac, look here at what I've got!" A hundred fluffy baby chicks nestled in boxes by the kitchen stove. With no more than a glance I said, "Yes, I've seen chickens before," and trotted back to the barn. For that unappreciative remark upon her first major achievement as a countrywoman she never forgave me.

When threshing time came, however, she received her accolade. Threshing dinners were a bit competitive, and as a new cook in the neighborhood Dorothy knew she was going to be judged. When old Stimp Bloodworth, the expert bundle pitcher, paused with knife in one hand and fork in the other to look up at her from his plate, his black eyes gleaming over his beard, and broke the silence to tell her "That's good eatin'!"; she knew she had passed with flying colors. Later, when the county agricultural agent always seemed to manage to reach our place just
before noontime, she could be sure of it. He had the whole county to choose from.

Old Doc had grown too old to haul the buggy. He spent his summers lazing in the pasture and occasionally worked up a little gallop, whether to prove his youth or to limber up his old muscles we never knew. Through the winters he was content to stand in his warm stall. The March day came when he could no longer rise to his feet. He was thirty-four years old. The veterinarian pronounced him past all help. We were all wet-eyed and quiet as we made ourselves busy at separate tasks that morning when faithful, gentle Old Doc was gone.

For a time we impressed old Nora, a fat and slow old farm horse, into transportation service. Father was thoughtful about taking us in his car frequently enough for shopping and business errands in town. Shortly, though, a few sales paid for a Model T Ford touring car and thereafter we traveled as proudly as anyone else.

The summer passed busily and the winter went quickly as I fed and looked after a carload of western steers. By early April the beeves were fat and sleek. “Let’s go down to Pittsburgh and see them sold,” Father proposed. Never having seen Pittsburgh nor the market there, I agreed gladly. The transaction at the stockyards took only an hour or so. “Our train doesn’t leave until evening. Shall we go to a show?” Father asked. He seldom missed a chance to see stage entertainment. I showed him the figures I had put down. “These cattle have brought exactly $26.58 more than we paid for them at Ada last fall. That’s our pay for fourteen acres of corn and a year of work. "I don’t think we can afford to go to a show,” I said. "We had better find something free. Let’s go out to the Carnegie Museum. That will cost only carfare.”

He laughed and to the museum we went. As we strolled into the first great hall we were startled by a huge mounted skeleton. Farmer-like, we paced off its length, Father on one side and I on the other. As we met under the enormous jaws he said, "Gosh! That thing’s bigger than our barn!" "Eighty-four feet, I made it," I said. "And the barn is only seventy-two feet. He would have to curl his tail before the doors could shut." Then we found the sign that described the skeleton as eighty-four and one half feet long. It was a Diplodocus, a species of dinosaur.

In all my miscellaneous reading I had never learned that dinosaurs had ever existed. The discovery shocked me, and so occupied my mind that I almost forgot about our unprofitable cattle-feeding winter. To find in my knowledge a gap wide enough to hide a dinosaur was humiliating. If I were so ignorant as never to have heard of dinosaurs it seemed probable that I could be equally illiterate in other and perhaps more significant areas.

The next winter our cattle made a fair profit. Digging through studies farm economics, I found that a bushel of corn could produce about twice as much pork
as beef, and proposed that we abandon cattle and concentrate on hogs. Father
was quite willing, although he pointed out the comparative considerations.

"Cattle make a market for our roughage, the corn fodder and hay, which hogs
can't use so efficiently. Feeding as we do in winter does not conflict with fieldwork
in spring and summer. Cattle give us a lot more manure. But if you would rather
work with hogs that's what you ought to do."

We fed a few cattle again but began to acquire registered Poland China breeding
stock and to build up a hog herd. Father enjoyed cattle. He soon knew each
individual steer in a shipment and all winter watched with keen judgment to see
whether each animal met his early estimates as to how it would do. I found an
equal pleasure in knowing the swine herd.

I admired the intelligence of hogs. It exceeded that of the cattle and horses. No
hog willingly did anything which he did not understand to be in his own interest.
Given a choice he was expert in balancing his diet. He never overate his
digestive capacity. Given the opportunity he was clean, in fact the cleanest of
farm animals for he was the only one who would not foul his own nest.

At farrowing times I watched into the nights to prevent mothers from laying upon
newly born pigs, and to see that none became chilled before he had a chance to
start to grow. More than once a little fellow, found stiff and nearly breathless in
the early morning, was brought to the kitchen. Dorothy would wrap him in
flannels, watch him carefully as he warmed by the stove or on the oven door, and
feed him warm milk with a spoon. Usually by noon he would be back with his
fellows ready to push for his share of maternal bounty. We sought to raise at
least eight pigs per sow.

The autumn of 1920 brought a new experience. That spring we had a good start
with several fine early litters. I planned to make them weigh 200 pounds or more
by early October, and to sell them then ahead of the usual fall break in prices. By
early August the pigs were sturdy, healthy shotes. The price then was 22 cents
per pound. I knew they would pass the 200-pound mark by October first, and had
begun to calculate the returns. October came and the shotes had reached the
200-pound goal. But the price was no longer 22 cents; it was 11 cents. That
made it sharply clear that forces far beyond one farmer's control could make or
break his agricultural fortunes.

Another great new area for more education was presenting itself. I didn't realize
that the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, alarmed at postwar inflation,
perhaps not aware as to how far-reaching the effects of its powers might be, had
taken steps for the contraction of credit. Over-extended ranchmen two thousand
miles from Ohio had been compelled to sacrifice herds to meet their bank
obligations. Midwest farmers had had to put animals on the market to pay off the
ninety-day notes that normally the banks would have renewed. The price of beef
crashed and prices of hogs went down. The generous returns of my August calculations were cut in half.

During the first summer on the farm, the summer of 1918, I had found hours to tramp the forty acres of pasture that lay along the north side of the place. The dozen acres nearest to the barn were adequate for the milk cows and horses. I proposed that we fence off the larger end, clear out the stumps and remaining trees, and add another sizeable cultivated field to the farm. "It will produce enough," I argued, "to hire a man. Then I can give better attention to the hogs and have a little more free time."

Father and I were operating under the usual "fifty-fifty" landlord-tenant arrangements. He furnished the land, paid the taxes, bought half the seed and fertilizer, paid half the threshing bill, maintained the buildings and fences. I furnished the equipment and labor. We divided the proceeds of all sales half and half. I saw that our volume of sales had to be increased before I could afford a full-time hired man. Without such a man I was certain to be tied continuously to the farm routine. The agreement was not only customary but in this case more than fair because Father contributed his own labor nearly every day. He preferred work to idleness. That fall, for the first time since Father had owned it, corn was sold off the farm. It had been his policy to sell no crop except wheat; everything else left the place wrapped in the hides of livestock. This time, with the twenty-seven new acres, we had more corn than we could expect to feed, and corn was in great demand. Buyers gladly came for it and paid $1.80 a bushel. "Son, you will never see $1.80 corn again," Father said. "That's a big price. We can afford to sell some." He was right for more than two decades ahead until war and inflation returned.

He was right about most things, and we seldom failed to come to easy agreement on the farm operations. His generous willingness to let me take the lead in an occasional new venture made our relationship a pleasant and happy one. He was willing to let me make a mistake occasionally, expecting that I would learn faster that way.

One mistake left a deep impression. As soon as corn began to come up it was the practice to go over the field with a spike tooth harrow. This turned thousands of tiny sprouting weed seeds up to the sun and killed them. I had expressed some doubt about the necessity of this job, but he had convinced me by showing a handful of earth in which the sprouts were numerous.

The commencement speaker at Ohio Northern in Ada that spring was to be Senator James E. Watson, my eloquent Indiana friend, and I was anxious that we all go to hear him. The exercises were to begin at 2 p.m. I had a few acres of young corn yet to harrow and had gone out early that morning expecting to finish by noon. Although I had pushed the horses hard, about an acre and a half
remained unfinished when noontime came. That much, I figured, I could easily complete in the late afternoon after we returned from town.

We heard the speech. It was not nearly as eloquent nor exciting as those I had heard from him in Indiana political battles. Before four o’clock we were caught on the way home in a May thunderstorm that delivered a deluge. The cornfield was too wet for more harrowing. More rains followed. By the time the ground began to dry it was too late for the harrow. The foxtail grass gained such a start that cultivators could not cope with it. When the corn ripened those few unharrowed rows bore only nubbins in an otherwise good crop. I had never heard so expensive a speech!

I have mentioned Father’s inclination to be employed at something useful. One mild winter morning he drove out to help with some project we had planned. While we were having dinner at noon a blizzard set in -- a cold swirling snow that put an end to outdoor work for that day. After the meal I turned to a desk job. I presumed that Father would read until the weather calmed enough to ease his drive back to town. About three o’clock I discovered that he was not in the house. I started to the barn to look for him where a tinkling sounded in the workshop. He was standing at the bench with a hammer, straightening bent and rusty nails on the piece of railroad iron we used as an anvil. "Dad, you’re not making very big wages at that job, are you?" I jibed. He faced me and grinned. Hammer still in hand he dropped his arms and looked straight at me. "Son, I’ve always thought that when I worked I would like to make a dollar an hour. But I would rather make a nickel an hour than to do nothing and make nothing."

A new series of hired men began to occupy the old house north of the orchard. First came Edward, a genial powerful mulatto whose gentle, nearly white mother kept house for him. He told us he was strong enough to lift a horse. Bending himself low under old Nora, who weighed about 1450 pounds, he tested his position until she was balanced and then raised his shoulders until her four feet swung free from the ground. Nora showed less surprise than we did.

Every visitor to the farm was welcome if he did not take up too much time. The prize among salesman was a handsome blonde lad who came trudging out to the cornfield one forenoon. I stopped the cultivator and let the horses rest until he came up. When he was twenty feet away he called out, with no preliminary greeting, "D'yuh wanta buy a map?" "No," I said, "I've got maps." "This is a nice one." He carried no sample and offered no hint as to whether the map showed Hardin County, Ohio, the U.S., the world or the universe. "No, I've got maps enough to paper a room." "I guess you don't want one then." He stood a minute as though choosing where next to try. "How far have you walked this morning?" I asked. "From Alger." That was about six miles. "How many maps have you sold this morning?" "Ain't sold none." "How many did you sell yesterday?" "Didn't sell none. Sold one the day before, though." "You have picked out a pretty tough
game, haven't you?" He pondered a moment before delivering his clincher. "Yeah, I guess so. Who in the hell wants a map, anyway?

We enjoyed our neighborhood. Kindly, friendly and interesting folks lived all around us -- Runners and Powells, Shanks's and Mathews's and many others. Old Sam Philips, erect and neat, silver of hair and beard, was a favorite. Dorothy and I invited him to our house for dinner on his eightieth birthday. He made the occasion memorable by remarking that he frequently wondered how people felt when they got old.

At the Grange we had frequent dinners, debates, a minstrel show, a mock trial and other diversions. Dorothy and I were not active in the Huntersville church, but we joined with a lively group of the younger members who organized to build up the Sunday school. Our town friends liked to come out for occasional picnic suppers. For one of these I lighted an old stump in the pasture to make a fire for cooking wieners and warming the prepared dishes. No rain had fallen for weeks and I was afraid to leave the stump burning. The fire extinguisher needed refilling so I brought it out from the house. As I turned the valve the hose slipped from my hand. John Lantz, the telephone company manager, stood in line of squirt. His silk shirt and most of his trousers disintegrated. Fortunately none of the acid from the extinguisher spray struck him in the face.

We planted ornamental shrubs around the house and lawn, and took pride in the appearance of the farm. Wild life was not abundant though we tried to offer it some encouragement. Toward the end of April the first spring I noted a solitary purple martin sitting atop the windmill, and resolved that if he came scouting for a home the next year he would find one. During the following winter I built a two-story eight-compartmented house and found a long pipe on which to mount it. One rainy spring morning the hired man and I set the base of the pipe against a gatepost and started to heave the house into position. As it was halfway up I glanced over my shoulder and there, having arrived unseen, was the year's first martin actually riding up with the house. He spent the day looking it over, disappeared for a day or so, and then returned with a colony of his associates to adorn our premises for the summer.

Don Campbell, still editor of the Republican Gazette at Lima, called me over to handle the telegraph desk on special nights. I liked doing that but found no temptation to return to the daily press.

I answered the telephone one January day to be told it was a long distance call. "This is H.P. Miller of Sunbury," the voice said. He was one of the state's best-known farmers. "We are organizing a Farm Bureau in Ohio. We are asking some substantial men to leave their farms to solicit members in other counties. We are paying them $10 a day and expenses. Could you report to Bucyrus Monday for a week's work in Crawford County?" For $10 a day just then I should gladly have
reported anywhere: the hired man was reliable and Dorothy was not afraid to stay alone. "If I do get afraid I will drive in and stay with your folks."

The Crawford County campaign for Farm Bureau membership, one of the earliest in the state, had been fairly well organized in advance. Each membership salesman was met every morning by a picked local farmer. Together they called upon as many of the man's neighbors as the day's time permitted. The dues were $10 a year. We were expected to collect cash if we could; if not, to get the farmer to sign notes for three years. The week turned out to be bitterly cold. Many in the German neighborhoods were skilled in sales resistance. The farmer often managed to be found in the chilliest corner of the barnyard and to be oblivious to hints that we could talk better in a more comfortable spot. We pointed out that organized farmers could develop cooperative marketing methods, buy cheaper, sell more advantageously and exert more legislative power. All of this has since been well proven. Many farmers were skeptical. Results usually depended more upon the influence of the neighbor who was driver for the day than upon the persuasiveness of the visiting solicitor. We managed to sign up five to a dozen or more members a day, and before long the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation was an effective going concern.

I joined other crews in Henry, Hancock and Seneca Counties. Seneca was especially well prepared in advance and our daily totals rose. I was for a few minutes the champion membership solicitor in the state. I had brought in twenty-seven membership applications with all the checks and notes to match. The crew manager went over the report unbelieving until he added up the evidence. He promptly called the state director and shouted the news, and put me on the line to receive congratulations from Uncle George Cooley. Hardly had I hung up when another man walked in and laid down twenty-nine applications, beating my record by two. My championship had lasted about thirty minutes. Next morning I was called home to direct the organization work in Hardin County.

We decided to launch our campaign with a countywide banquet on Saturday night. I learned that the state Federation had employed an executive secretary. He was to take office on the Monday following our dinner. He yielded rather unwillingly to my suggestion that, as his first Farm Bureau undertaking, he should come to Kenton to address our dinner. He later organized and became president of the Nationwide Insurance Company, president of C.A.R.E., Inc., and a highly influential American, Murray D. Lincoln. The campaign itself came off satisfactorily.

Our county Farm Bureau shortly set up a livestock shipping association. Shipping at cost, with a percentage deduction for the managers, we began to net one to two cents extra a pound on most of our livestock. The Farm Bureau's cooperative activities have grown to great proportions and in sales, purchases and insurance have been helpful to farmers without, apparently, diminishing the opportunities for efficient private entrepreneurs in the same fields.
The farm meant work, and fun, and what we thought was good living. Each year showed some progress. And we never knew what might turn up next. What did occur was totally unsought and unexpected.
Winter work was daylight work. The kerosene lantern seldom appeared in the barn except for a bedtime inspection to see that all was well with the animals. The toils were less arduous than in summer. The livestock had to be fed and watered on time morning and evening. The two cows had to be milked. Feed supplies had to be kept in readiness. Those were jobs to be done on schedule. Other tasks could be fitted to weather and convenience. These were numerous, stables to clean, wood to cut and haul, machinery repairs to be made, fences to be fixed, all sorts of necessary but less urgent jobs.

The winter evenings brought welcome freedom for uninterrupted reading or deskwork. From state experiment stations and U.S. Department of Agriculture I collected bulletins rich with useful farm information. These, along with clippings from the agricultural press, were built into a convenient library of reference files. Besides keeping cash records, I attempted enough cost accounting to learn how much it took to produce a bushel of wheat or to maintain a horse for a year. Plenty of time remained after these matters were attended to and the daily mail was read. This was time for settling down with a selection from Dr. Eliot's Five-Foot Shelf; Boswell's Johnson, Macaulay's Essays, Emerson were favorites. There were sets of Mark Twain, O. Henry, Kipling, Poe and others for lighter hours. I subscribed to the Bookman and Atlantic Monthly, and regretted that my income permitted rare indulgence in the new books so temptingly reviewed. The furor over The Education of Henry Adams was too much to resist; that one I had to have. Henry's problems were quite different, I discovered, from my particular educational needs.

After its services in school and its newspaper travels -- to Lima, Uhrichsville, Cincinnati, Litchfield, Kokomo and Covington, the old $36 rebuilt typewriter had come back to the farm where I had hoed corn to earn it. I wondered if it could be used to make the farm produce another salable item What could a farmer write about?

Short stories filled the magazines and were reported to bring good prices. Alone with his team in the field for long hours at work which demanded little mental effort, a farmer ought to be able to dream up plots, so I thought, and people them with characters. I invested in a book or so which attempted to explain the mechanics of the short story. Situations and characters were developed and put on paper; but the technique eluded me. I was not a storyteller. The idea of fiction farming expired quickly.
Some of the farm papers paid for articles. The rates were modest but cash was cash. My farm experience had so far yielded few ideas that could benefit other farmers but out of it I managed to sell an occasional short item. Now and then I found a topic in what a farm acquaintance was doing. On a visit to Covington County I picked up the story of a 4-H club girl who had made $250 with a prize calf. *Farm and Fireside* paid $40 for the article. That was real money.

The horse was beginning to give way to the tractor. A new magazine called *Power Farming* appeared to promote and exploit the trend. The editor, Raymond Olney, wanted personal experience articles from farmers who were mechanizing. I had no tractor, but I knew farmers who did, and they had experiences which made copy. When I hired a truck to haul wheat direct from the threshing machine to the grain elevator, a *Power Farming* article described in detail the operation and its economy. Better yet, it paid for the truck hire.

Walt Mason's "prose poems," syndicated in hundreds of newspapers, were widely popular then. They were short, semi-humorous editorials in meter and rhyme, though printed in prose form. The doggerel style was not hard to imitate. I wrote one about a tractor farmer and sent it to Olney. He answered at once with a generous check and asked for one each month. When the thing appeared I was puffed up to see that a special cartoon had been prepared to illustrate it. Olney also edited *Power Farming Dealer* for the equipment trade, and asked for more "prose poems" for that special field. He bought articles, too, for this publication, about a farmer's reactions, mine, to sales and advertising efforts, and an interview article about our leading dealer in Ada. I tried Olney with another idea, a column of jokes, gags, and wise cracks to be entitled "Exhaust." This became a monthly feature.

The *Ohio Farmer*, the *Indiana Farmers Guide*, the *Breeders Gazette* and others bought occasional pieces. The typewriter was earning six or seven hundred dollars a year. This was as much as thirty hogs were bringing, but the hogs and crops demanded first attention. Writing was strictly for fun and extra income.

I tried hard to sell *Farm and Fireside*, then a leading national farm publication, something at least once a month. Their rate of payment was among the best in the farm field. In this I had not succeeded -- not more than four or five pieces a year had been accepted. So it was a big surprise to read a letter one day from Andrew S. Wing, managing editor. They planned, he said, to print a series of informal personal sketches and photographs of their "regular" contributors, and would I send material about myself.

It was essential, Wing said, that the picture be informal. Bill Frederick, Ada's leading "art photographer," was nearly speechless, for him a rare condition, when after making the appointment, I appeared at his studio in my usual working garb of blue denim overalls and jacket, to pose for the photo. He had apparently never known anyone to have a picture taken except in best Sunday clothes, and he
seemed a bit doubtful as to whether his equipment could stand the ordeal. The picture, along with a 200-word autobiography eventually appeared in Farm and Fireside.

Shortly there came another letter. The editor, George Martin, suggested a much longer article on "Why I left the farm, how I liked working in town, and why I came back to the farm." That topic demanded no research and within a few days the article was mailed. Weeks passed. I decided that the editors had not liked the effort but had neglected to send a report.

At noon one day as the hired man and I came in with our teams from the corn field Dorothy met me at the barn. "Here's your check from Farm and Fireside," she said. "It's for either $15 or $75. I can't tell which." The magazine used a translucent envelope in which the enclosure was always dimly visible. "Look's like $15," I said, holding the envelope up to the sun. I opened it. The amount was $75.

Later in the summer we used part of the money to visit Dorothy's folks in Covington and for a day or so with her uncles in Illinois. The day after our return to Ohio was a warm Friday. A softly pleasant drizzling mist fell all forenoon. After I had brought the mail Dorothy and I sat on the front porch together to read O.O. McIntyre's "New York Day by Day" column in the morning paper. We had followed it for years because it was entertaining, and different from anything else in the papers then, though we had no personal interest in New York. A few weeks before, however, an article in our National Geographic had sharpened our curiosity about the big town.

When we had finished with McIntyre, Dorothy looked through the drizzle across Hetrick's fields and remarked, musingly, "Maybe you can sell enough $75 articles now so that we could go to New York for our vacation trip next year."

The idea of actually visiting New York had never before occurred to me. Perhaps it had never occurred to her, either. Just then the telephone rang and Dorothy answered. "It's for you," she reported; "Western Union has a telegram." The operator read it. "Can you come to New York next week at our expense for a few days' business visit," it said. "George Martin, Farm and Fireside." We talked it over, of course, but took it for granted that I should go. "At our expense" had decided that. I wired that I would arrive Tuesday morning.

We had lunch in town Monday with Father and Mother. "What do you think those fellows want to see you about?" Father asked. We were standing in the back yard looking over his vegetable garden. "I don't know," I said, "unless they want to arrange for some articles from around this part of the country. They may figure that from this location I could take assignments over three or four states." "That might be," he agreed. "They've used several of your pieces and know how you write. I think, though, that they have something else in mind." What this might be
he didn't indicate. He looked at his watch. "We had better be getting you over to the depot.

Then he added: "Son, I don't aim to give you much advice, but I have some now. They're obviously going to offer you something. Take your time to think it over. You know, I have been farming all my life. It's a good life and I don't regret it. Maybe I could not have succeeded as well at anything else. Farming has its ups and its downs. Sometimes a fellow has to figure pretty close to keep ahead. There's lots of hard physical work about it. You can't avoid that if you're going to succeed. Your Mother and I enjoy and appreciate having you here. You and I have gotten on together pleasantly, and it's been a great satisfaction to us. I know you are enjoying your work. You have improved our business, and I know you are enthusiastic about the hogs and other plans. I know the farm's limitations. I also know you have some special talents. Whatever you do, I want you to make the most of them. If these people in New York offer you a big opportunity, don't let your feeling of loyalty to the farm or to us keep you from thinking it over carefully. Mother and I want what is best for you." For Father that was a long speech. He had thought it out in his own way, and meant every word.

Next morning I was up in time to see the Welsh names on the station signs along Philadelphia's Main Line, and noted Merion, recognizable as the suburb where I knew Edward Bok lived. From the dining car window I watched in New Jersey for Menlo Park. A place associated with Edison's name meant more than Trenton or Newark. By following the crowd I found the way out of Pennsylvania Station and took a taxicab to 381 Fourth Avenue, where I was promptly shown to George Martin's office.

He looked at me for a brief moment and came at once to the point. "Trell Yocum has quit us. We want you to come to New York and help us out." Yocum had been managing editor. I tried not to look surprised. "Well," I said, "that will be something to think about. What makes you think I'm the man you want?" "You've been a newspaperman, you're a farmer, and you can write. I don't know anyone else with those qualifications." "I like what I'm doing on the farm," I said. "I don't want to have to live in a big city. I don't want to be tied by office hours, and I don't think I want to work for a big corporation." "All right, I guess we understand where we start from," Martin answered. "Ever been in New York before?" I told him I had not. Well, you're here now so you might as well look around. You're our guest. Take a week or so if you like. Maybe we can change your mind about a few things. We reserved a room for you over at the Pennsylvania Hotel. Suppose you go over there and check in, and I'll pick you up for lunch."

At lunchtime he directed the cab driver to go to the Ritz-Carlton. I made no comment, but I knew from the McIntyre column that New York then offered no place more posh and expensive. Martin ordered Long Island scallops, of which I had never heard. I was too hungry to take chances on unfamiliar dishes and
chose a veal cutlet. Another chapter will describe a Ritz-Carlton lunch with Martin twelve years later.

Martin introduced me to members of his staff, and to officials of the Crowell Publishing Company. I was delighted to meet John M. Siddall, then at the height of his fame as editor of the *American Magazine*. One of his editorials had been titled, "Don't Come to New York; Wait till New York Sends for You." Well, New York had sent for me!

Little by little, as Martin had expected I came to feel that although it was a corporation Crowell might be a stimulating, humane and pleasant place to work. One day he drove me around Westchester County to prove that one would not have to live in the city. I took time to go to the top of the Woolworth building, the city's tallest then, to ride the ferry to Staten Island, all the while pondering what to do.

I was careful, meanwhile, to give no indication that I was being persuaded in favor of New York, after all, no salary figure had so far been mentioned.

How much should the salary be? Was Martin going to make an offer, or ask how much I would expect? By some process I arrived at $4500 as the minimum salary on which we could hope to live comfortably in the New York area and expect to save any money. The figure was merely an ill-informed guess. The money was essential but not the only consideration. The job itself sounded full of interest. New York itself was a challenge. The thought of a new career with the whole of agriculture and the whole nation for its field -- that was exciting. I was approaching my thirtieth birthday. It was time to be climbing, and here was a new ladder that looked safe. Even the bottom rung looked higher than I had ever been.

A week passed quickly. I told Martin that I was ready to go home. "Made up your mind yet?" "You haven't made me an offer yet." Martin picked up a red card, wrote on it and handed it to me. I glanced at what he had written: "Associate Editor. $5,000." That was $500 more than the minimum I had arrived at, and the title sounded good

"I'll want to talk this over with my wife and with my Father. Give me a week or so to turn it over." He walked along to the elevator. "I hope you'll be coming back to stay." "I'll let you know soon. But no other promises now. After all, I've been used to having a twenty-acre field handy when I want to spit, and your offices don't even have cuspidors." "Well, I'll improve the offer. Come, and I'll buy you the biggest cuspidor in New York."

Next morning in Pittsburgh I went to see Edwin S. Bayard, the sage old editor of the *Pennsylvania Farmer*, whom I had met a time or so and for whose judgment I had utmost respect. He heard the details. "They won't pay you enough to keep a
family in New York," he said. I told him the salary offer. "You're a damned fool to come this far without taking them up. They may change their minds."

That pretty well decided that question. "If it suits you it suits me," was Dorothy's verdict as she heard the story. "You can't afford not to try that," Father said. "If anything goes wrong, the farm will still be here." After a few days I wrote George Martin that I would be ready to go to work about October 1. He responded with a wire: "Welcome to our city. Have large crew of cuspidor polishers hard at work."

Father had offered to see the fall season's work completed. Our hired man, the faithful John Evans, was there to finish the corn harvest and to look after the hogs until they were ready to sell. Father expected no difficulty in finding a new tenant-partner. Applicants were certain to appear as soon as the vacancy became known. The Grange gave us a heart-warming farewell party. We sold the furniture and the Model-T, and packed only a few personal belongings and books. We even sold the old typewriter.

Elated at the imminence of a tremendous new adventure, we blithely assumed that the sharp change from farm to metropolis could be taken in stride. I looked across the September corn, now turning dry and harsh in the sun. I could not be sorry to escape the corn-cutting job; yet at leaving those solid home acres on which I had grown and worked and dreamed, over every square foot of which I had tramped, there was affectionate regret. Beyond the corn lay the familiar homes and farms of neighbors and friends. Beyond the ripening corn lay the horizon. The search across Ohio and Indiana, through newspaper offices and over the farm, the search for a place to grow, had suddenly lifted the horizon beyond all dreams. All the farms of America -- they were to be the field for the years ahead.
Chapter 12 - *FARM AND FIRESIDE*, 1922-29

Introduction and Cuspidor...Advice on Expense Accounts...Clemenceau...Publicizing *Farm and Fireside*...Writing about farmers, and dinosaurs...Excuse to visit Florida...Thomas A. Edison and George Washington Carver...Associates...George Martin...Hog Farmer at the Ritz Carlton...Another Mistake

After greetings on my arrival, Mr. Martin said: "Here is your office. That's your desk. This young lady here will be your secretary. If you want to go to Maine or Mexico or anywhere, send over to the cashier and get your expense money. Try to be here on Fridays, that's payday."

Manuscripts already purchased and in the inventory, were brought to my desk for opinions, also incoming submissions. I saw that decisions were involved with the job, but they were seldom difficult. Other staff members took pains to show me what they did. The art editor, Bob Dumm, explained the procedures for illustrations and page layouts.

One morning that first week an enormous unopened carton appeared on my desk. In it I found the biggest, brassiest, shiniest cuspidor anyone had seen. Mr. Martin had fulfilled his promise. That special ornament decorated the floor until it later disappeared.

Martin suggested a week in Washington to get acquainted with people in the Department of Agriculture and farm organizations. While there I took time to visit the galleries of the House and Senate and glimpsed Uncle Joe Cannon, Senator Lodge, and other political celebrities of the period. Returning, I carefully put the trip expenses down on the blank form provided. Martin shortly brought the paper to my desk. "Didn't you get any suits pressed? Have, your shoes shined? Didn't you have any laundry done? Didn't you tip anyone?" "Sure," I said. "Then why aren't those items listed here?" "I figured those were personal expenses." "Do it over, and put 'em all down. If you don't, you'll make the rest of us look bad." I tried faithfully thereafter to keep expense accounts up to standards.

The training process next led to Chicago for the International Livestock Exposition, the annual convention of the American Farm Bureau and other meetings which brought agricultural people from distant states. *Farm and Fireside* reported little of these events -- because of the time lag between editorial closing and mailbox delivery. We attempted to meet people, to pick up ideas, and to sense trends of farm thinking. That year the world famous Frenchman, Clemenceau, spoke to the Farm Bureau people. If he said anything memorable I have forgotten it; just to see the square-shouldered, short-legged, long-armed old fellow wearing gray silk gloves as he spoke -- that was enough.
The March issue carried my first article, three-fourths of a column headed "My Sheep Used to Wear My New Suit." It told how we had sent several fleeces from the farm to a woolen mill. From the returned bolt of cloth an Ada tailor had fabricated suits and overcoats for Father and me.

An early assignment asked me to go through some midwestern areas to learn from farmers and other agricultural people what sort of impressions *Farm and Fireside* had been making. "A lot of people say their grandfathers used to read *Farm and Fireside*, but they don't seem to be very aware of it now," I reported.

As a step toward improving this condition, I suggested that we send advance proofs of forthcoming articles to newspapers which might be interested. Since we were printing material with names from many parts of the country, nearly every piece thus distributed received publicity in papers glad to report that people of their communities were being mentioned in a national magazine. As clippings piled up, the value of the procedure became evident. After supervising the work for a few months I asked to be relieved of it on the ground that I wanted to be an editor, not a publicity agent. Martin hired Ed Anthony, who had had some professional experience in publicity, to take over the work. Anthony did it so well that other company magazines demanded his services. Then an innovation, the issuance of advance releases to obtain notice, was to become a common magazine practice.

The new associate editor shortly received responsibility for the "back of the book", where varied brief articles filled the columns. I read submissions from contributors and handled correspondence from readers. These were desk jobs. I was encouraged to explore any interesting aspect of rural America. Visits to agricultural colleges, farm organization officials and other sources, yielded names of outstandingly successful farmers and of farm people who were known for unusual ideas or practices. *Farm and Fireside* did not depend heavily upon outside contributors. Staff members searched the country. While stories of financial success were welcomed, many other kinds of "success" we thought were of equal or greater interest to readers. When the subject lent itself to first person treatment, and the person was willing, we wrote accordingly.

A few samples will illustrate. An Indiana farm leader, John Brown, put his name over the story he told me: "I Have Never Whipped One of My Nine Children." A California woman told that "I Put Up Twelve Tons of Fruit Last Fall" describing how she processed and sold the output of her husband’s ranch. In North Carolina I found "A Big Dixie Farmer Who Does NOT Grow Cotton". That farmer, incidentally, was to be father of one governor and grandfather of another. "Folks Said He was Crazy to Pay $2,500 for a Hog and $10,000 for a Stallion." This was about an Illinois livestock man; the progeny of his sires were sought to improve the herd of hundreds of Midwest farmers. "This Quiet Little Man Discovered the Serum that Stops Hog Cholera" told of Marion Dorset, a Department of Agriculture scientist. Another article was about Herbert Knapp, the Ohioan who
was in the van of the baby chick industry, "The Man who Started a Settin' of 30 Million Eggs." Martin wrote most of these headlines. "If you can't find a good headline, you haven't got a story," he reminded us.

From among the innumerable examples of farm boys who made good in the cities, the only one we celebrated was "Chic Sale, A Broadway Star Who Won't Get Over Being a Country Boy." I was proud to report the feat of an old Ohio neighbor, Ira Marshall, who produced "The Biggest Corn Crop Any 10 Acres Ever Grew." His 178-bushel yield per acre stood as a record for several years.

Even the cities could yield occasional *Farm and Fireside* copy. "How We Feed the Animals in America's Biggest Zoo" came from the director of the New York Zoological Garden, and amused farmers who had only domestic creatures to feed. From museum authorities I obtained material about the dinosours, the monsters about which, until recently, I had been totally ignorant, "Animals Behind the Barn Ten Million Years Ago." An interview with Lorado Taft let us express his hopes for rural aesthetics in an article he signed, "We Are Growing Up To Beauty."

With George Martin's encouragement and the aid of the company's expense accounts I was acquiring some skills and considerable acquaintances around the Nation, and perhaps more self-confidence than was justified. Extensive though my mileage had been, I was bothered that no good excuse had ever arisen to take me to Florida, especially at a time when I might visit Father and Mother. They usually spent a few midwinter weeks on the Gulf Coast. I could have paid my own way, of course, but that did not seem sensible as long as expense accounts were available.

One August Sunday, I read that Thomas A. Edison was experimenting with various plants, hoping to find one by which rubber could be grown as a farm crop. Having long regarded Edison as the greatest living American, I rejoiced at the prospect of talking about this with him, and spent Sunday evening preparing a memorandum that would persuade Martin to let me undertake the assignment.

On the hot subway ride to the office Monday morning another magnificent thought struck. Edison always spent part of the winter in Florida! I laid the memorandum aside and grimly kept my mouth shut, hoping no one else would tumble to the idea, until Edison should be safely reported from Fort Myers. It was a long winter; the old inventor never left New Jersey until the end of February! On the morning the *New York Times* reported his arrival in Florida, the memorandum was submitted.

"Go and see him right away," Martin said, and within hours I had a telegraphed reply, "Will see you any time" from Edison. "That's going to be a pretty important story," Martin added later in the day. "Guess I had better go to Florida with you." He did, with enjoyable results.
Mr. Edison discussed freely and cordially his venture into experimenting with plants. The story did turn out to be an important one. The day at Fort Myers included an unexpected premium. Henry Ford was there as Edison's guest, and visited with us for a while. A later chapter will relate a few anecdotes about that.

After a pleasant weekend with my parents in Bradenton, I went to Tuskegee, Alabama, where two days with George Washington Carver yielded another good article. The Negro scientist, then at the height of his fame, told how he was developing new products from peanuts, sweet potatoes and other common plants. That, too, will call for a later reference.

Through these ever-exciting Farm and Fireside years I was but one of the group responsible for the magazine's monthly issues. The managing editor, who handled much office detail, was Andrew S. Wing. Russell Lord, imaginative and contemplative, wrote with skill and eventually produced several books. Stationed in Chicago, Tom Delohery, a bright Irish redhead, patrolled the stockyards for tips from farmers and cruised about the Midwest. A staff of corresponding editors, mostly experts in the agricultural colleges, replied to reader inquiries about poultry, livestock, crops, engineering, veterinary problems, and also contributed articles. The magazine bought material, too, from freelance writers, and carried some fiction which I thought was a waste of good white paper.

Had he chosen the stage, Martin might well have succeeded as an actor. Occasionally he gave us all an example of his dramatic sense. He had often kidded me about a tendency to offer both sides when a question was posed, my "Scotch" answers, he called them. One day he asked, "Do you know So-and-so in Washington?" I said that I knew the man. "What kind of fellow is he?" "He's a Grade A, blue ribbon, topnotch son of a bitch." Martin rolled out of his chair as though in a faint and fell to the floor. His secretary grabbed a carafe and began to dash water over his face. "Mr. Martin! What happened? What's the matter?" George propped himself up on an elbow and shortly resumed his chair. "Nothing much, Miss McAvoy. I just asked Wheeler a simple question and he gave me a straight answer." His minor antics gave the staff many laughs, yet he never lost their admiration and respect.

The five-day week had not yet arrived. At closing one Saturday noon Martin emerged from his office and stood in the managing editor's door. "Andy, you're fired!" he proclaimed loudly enough for everyone to hear. Turning to another editor, he said, "Rus, you're fired!" On to the art director and all the secretaries, to each he gave the message. The girls began looking to see what they should remove from their desks. I happened to be the last on his round. Joe, the itinerant bootblack, was shining my shoes. "George," I asked, am I being fired too?" "Yes, Mac, you're fired." "How about Joe here," I asked. After all, Joe was an independent contractor, not on the office payrolls. "Is Joe fired?" Martin
glowered. "Joe, you're fired! Never darken my shoes again!" Merrily we all went home.

Expert though he was at choosing and improving manuscripts and planning issues, in the field of matrimony Martin managed to achieve failures. Late in the 1920s the wife of his youth, with his consent, obtained a Mexican divorce. He gave her half his savings. With these in hand, she promptly remarried and took her new husband, a writer, to live in Portugal.

Before many months had passed he married again, this time to a good-looking, semi-intellectual blonde a few years younger than he. That marriage terminated suddenly. On going home for dinner one evening he found a note on the otherwise empty table. It informed him that she had that morning left for Europe with a woman friend.

An unusual number of Crowell people that season were taking their vacations in Europe. When the company secretary stopped at Martin's door and casually inquired, "George, are you going to Europe this summer?" George rose to his feet, laid down his glasses, stared belligerently, and in his most assertive tones replied, "Me go to Europe? Hell, NO! I can't go to Europe. I've got Europe full of wives!"

Depressed by marital failures and troubled by the company's decision to change the name of Farm and Fireside to Country Home with changes in contents, George gave way to his weaker characteristics. He resigned as editor. He fell down the stairway in a noted speakeasy and broke some bones. A friendly doctor helped him to prolong a hospital stay. Because he had done so much for me and taught me a great deal, and because our friendship had been close, I kept in touch with him through the adversities that followed. One evening near the end of the hospital weeks, he said, "Mac, I am nearly fifty years old. I've lost my job. I have lost both my wives. I have lost all my money. I have lost most of my friends. I guess it's time that I got out and started all over again."

Friends were astonished when he took on a radio job that required his appearance at six o'clock each morning -- he who seldom came to the office before eleven. After that he became editor of a prominent in-house magazine.

When in 1934 I was called to the editorial chair he had distinguished, I wanted him to be first to know. We met for lunch at the Ritz-Carlton, near both our offices. After telling him the news, I remarked that I had not lunched at the Ritz-Carlton since he took me there on the day of my first visit to New York. "Haven't been here since then myself," he said. "And that was the first time I had ever eaten here." "I have often wondered," I said, "why on that day you chose to bring me to this particular place." He pondered the question. "I guess I just wanted to see how an Ohio hog farmer would act in the Ritz-Carlton."
Of all the articles I wrote for Farm and Fireside I probably erred most in one that appeared in the next to last issue of the magazine under that name, in December 1929. Near Burlington, Iowa, I had found that Roy Murphy was operating a successful crop and livestock farm without having a single horse on the place. Tractors and trucks were in common enough use by that date, but here was the first farmer who had dared to dispense entirely with horses. Some thirty million horses and mules on farms were then pulling wagons and doing odd jobs, if not still furnishing the major farm power. The number has fallen to about one-tenth of that, and is around three million, most are pleasure horses.

I reported Murphy's experiences rather as the eccentricity of a man who liked machines and failed to foresee that most farms were to become horseless. There was much history yet to watch!
Publishers, as well as editors - and other human beings, are not so wise as never to make mistakes. The Crowell Publishing Company, to which *Farm and Fireside* belonged, was then the second largest magazine publisher in the United States. The Curtis Company stood first. Crowell issued the *American Magazine*, for a dozen years or more a highly profitable property. *The Woman's Home Companion* ranked second to the Curtis *Ladies' Home Journal*. *Farm and Fireside* was eclipsed in revenues by the *Country Gentleman*, the Curtis farm periodical. Rivalry between the two companies was most intense in the weekly field, where *Collier's* sought to catch up with the better established and more widely accepted *Saturday Evening Post*.

The president of Crowell, Thomas H. Beck, had one obsessive purpose; that was to overtake the Curtis lead. A flamboyant salesman, he liked any sort of bold gesture, personal or business. For example, he was a passenger on the first commercial trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific flights. From selling soap to selling automobiles he had advanced to selling advertising space, and outselling the competition was his constant goal. He cared little about what the magazines printed as long as we kept pace in the advertising and circulation races with Curtis.

Once when I remarked that certain policies *Collier's* was supporting during the New Deal would lead toward Communism, his reply was, "So, what? If we have Communism, Curtis will be under Communism, too, won't they?"

In 1929, Beck decided that *Farm and Fireside* was not riding the waves of the future. "Firesides are out of date," he said. "Everybody has radiators now." To make a dramatic change, he had directed that after more than a half century, *Farm and Fireside* should adopt a new name, new garb, and new purposes. It was to become a "shelter" magazine, appealing to the building material and home construction industries, while retaining its agricultural character. After debating scores of suggestions for new names, the one decided upon was *The Country Home*.

George Martin, whose personal depression had preceded that of the stock market, could summon no interest in the big change. From a speakeasy at four o'clock one morning he telephoned Beck that the new magazine could be located wherever in his anatomy Beck chose, and that Martin was resigning. Understandably the resignation was accepted.
The new editor was Thomas E. Cathcart, who knew little and cared less about agriculture. He had been a clever producer of advertising promotion material, and actually was not a bad editor, though he proved to be a rather difficult one. He recognized good writing. His usual method, when a manuscript had been submitted by one of the staff, was simply to say, "Rewrite it." How it should be rewritten, or what was wrong, he found it difficult to explain. The eventual result usually, however, was something a little better. Almost any first draft can be improved.

Cathcart and I were not exactly simpatico, though he tolerated me and I managed to get along with him. The first issue of The Country Home appeared in February 1930. The succeeding years were not the best for building up advertising images in a new magazine. We were not doing too well, and I felt that Tom would be more happy with some one else in my place. These were not good times to be out of a job, and so I tried to continue to be essential. One of his ideas called for "big name" signatures in the magazine. Most of all, he wanted a piece under Henry Ford's by-line. A well-known and conscientious Midwest free lancer was assigned to the job. After two weeks of effort he reported that he had been unable to see Mr. Ford. Cathcart then sent not one but two New York writers to Dearborn. They returned with a manuscript. When it was circulated to the staff, I reported to Cathcart that it was a fake; that the boys had not seen Mr. Ford, and proved it by showing from my files on Ford that the article was made up from quotations out of other Ford statements. "If you really want a Henry Ford piece," I said, "I'll go out and get it."

This was Cathcart's chance to get rid of McMillen. If I failed, as three others had already done, here was an excuse that he could justify to the higher-ups for a staff change. "I will go out to Detroit tomorrow night," I promised him. "I may be back this week, or some other week. Ford may be in Dearborn, or Georgia or in the Upper Peninsula, and I may have to wait until he returns."

From Detroit I telephoned William J. Cameron, who handled Ford's public relations. "What do you want him to talk about?" Cameron asked. "Education," I said. "All right, he will see you. Come out tomorrow morning by ten, and some time during the day he will be with you.

I knew that Mr. Ford would talk to people he knew about a topic that was concerning him at the moment, and that he had recently been thinking about educational ideas. By the next afternoon I had spent two or three hours with him, and had the material for a provocative article. Returning late in the day to my Detroit hotel, I found a wire from Cathcart. "Where is that Ford Story?" It was with a certain glee that I could reply, "It will be on your desk the day after tomorrow."
The piece was written that night and a draft mailed to Cathcart. Cameron approved it next morning without change. Country Home had its Ford signature, and Reader's Digest reprinted it.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was governor of New York and being talked about for the presidency. His was another big name Cathcart wanted. So I went to Albany. "What do you want me to talk about?" the governor asked when I came to his office. "Reforestation, I suggested; this was a rural topic in which he had shown interest. Beforehand I had prepared by reading the current authorities. He gave me a point that made a useful lead, a couple of anecdotes, and then said, "You seem to know just as much about this as I do. Why don't you go ahead and write the article, and let me see it."

Next day, sitting on a sofa at the governor's mansion, he read the piece I had prepared overnight, wrote "OK, FDR" in a corner of the first page, and that completed the interview.

Some months later another article for his signature was done after an equally brief interview. A statement about the effect of certain land retirement legislation was modified after being checked with statehouse sources, but the piece was approved in much the same casual manner. In a note of thanks for the published copy, he wrote, "The only thing that disturbs me is the suggestion in your box that I might become a candidate for president."

Another experience from four years earlier came to mind. After a talk with W.M. Jardine, then Secretary of Agriculture, about the possibilities of research to find industrial uses for farm products, he urged that the idea be presented to Herbert Hoover, then his colleague in the cabinet as Secretary of Commerce. To this I gladly agreed, providing Jardine would make the appointment, which he did.

Hoover listened to my exposition. Whether or not it led to the $50,000 item in his next Bureau of Standards budget for work on farm wastes, I never knew. He began asking questions about general farm affairs. He brought out some correspondence and copies of statements which he had made. As the talk went on, I said, "Mr. Secretary, you have made several remarks here that I believe would be interesting to our readers. Would you mind if I try to write them down and submit the manuscript for your approval?" "Sometimes I think I have already said too much about agriculture," he laughed. "But go ahead, and let's see what you come up with."

Having heard that he was scrupulous about the wording of his statements, I stopped in the outer office and obtained copies of whatever was on file there that might be useful. A long night's work produced a synthesis, nearly all in language he had used previously, but which set forth the points we had discussed. When he read it next day he asked when we would need the article. I named a date about five weeks ahead.
"You have done a good job putting this together," he said, "but some of the figures you have used are a little out of date. Let me put it in my pocket and work it over a little. You will have it on time." A day ahead of the date set the manuscript was on my desk. I found in it exactly one paragraph which had not been changed.

Features on complex economic subjects, constituted much of the work in the Cathcart period. One, for instance, attempted to explain what the Reconstruction Finance Corporation meant to farmers. The mail that followed this article was slim, but one letter came from Joseph P. Knapp, the principal owner of the Crowell Publishing Company. The letter noted a figure in my article that referred to so many millions of dollars; the correct amount, Mr. Knapp only and he of all people noted, should have been in billions. I had omitted three ciphers. On my first chance to deal in figures that required ten digits, I had muffed it!

Well before the Roosevelt administration began, Dr. George Warren, farm economist at Cornell University, had proclaimed that commodity prices, including those of farm products, would rise if the price of gold were to increase. An ably organized publicity campaign supported Warren's viewpoint. This was, to the ordinary reader, an abstruse subject upon which he could not easily form an opinion. I undertook to explain the matter. Warren would give me no help. I learned later that he was under White House instructions not to talk. From study of his books and earlier statements and from interviews with his colleagues, I managed to arrive at some understanding of his proposals, and wrote an article.

The manuscript was accepted, but it was not immediately used. When time came to make up the November 1933, issue, something urged me to insist that the article be put into print. Advance promotion then announced the article to the Associated Press and other agencies. Our publication date was Monday, October 25. On Sunday night, October 24, President Roosevelt announced the upward change in the price of gold from $20.67 an ounce to, as it was settled a little later, $35 an ounce

Country Home had the only current explanation in print of what the change was intended to accomplish. We did not offer the magazine on newsstands, although a few news dealers subscribed and resold their copies. These were all gone in Washington and elsewhere before noon on Monday. Whether it was a good article remained in doubt after letters were received from the principal advocates of the change and also from its best known opponents, both commendatory!

A trip during this period produced an incident or two. The initial destination was Winnipeg. An experiment in handling milk as a public utility invited inquiry, as did another in public medicine. A seat had been reserved on a United Airlines Boeing two-engine plane leaving New York at four in the afternoon. Meanwhile, having made a dinner appointment in Chicago, I changed this so as to leave at two --
service then provided a flight every two hours. Toward midnight when I climbed into the limousine at the Chicago Palmer House a gentleman in the back seat was moaning over the early edition of the Tribune spread out on his lap. He was headed, he said, for his first airplane flight. The headlines reported that the Boeing, from which my reservation had been changed, had exploded over Indiana with the loss of all aboard. "I oughtn't to have bought this paper," the old fellow groaned.

After a night flight by Ford tri-motor I was given a cot in the St. Paul airport for a short sleep before going on to Fargo in a Hamilton six-seater. From Fargo the craft was a four-seater. After Pembina, at the Canadian border, I was the only passenger.

"Monday the deer season opens," the pilot announced before we took off. "There's a woods up here a ways that I want to scout. I'll look out the left side. You look out the right. We may see if any deer are there." Air schedules at that time, like radio timing a few years earlier, were still informal. We saw no deer.

After Winnipeg I went to Regina and employed a driver to take me some 75 miles up-country to where a township had hired a doctor to look after its people. This was a pioneer experiment for North America in public medicine, and we wanted to tell about it. A few miles out of town the chauffeur reported that the doorman of the six-story Regina Hotel had told him I was from New York.

"I've read that there in New York there's a building that's over fifty stories high," he said. "Is that true?" "Yes," I told him. "It is actually 102 stories high, more than 1200 feet." He was properly amazed. "Gosh! That's higher than our hotel in Regina, ain't it?"

He was a careful driver, who had not only never seen a high building but had never seen a real hill. Whenever we approached a "draw" he shifted the Cadillac into low gear.

We found the township doctor, who said he liked getting paid regularly, and some of the people who said they liked his services. This was, in a way, thirty years ahead of Medicaid.

Despite its slick paper, color printing, house plans big names and other innovations Country Home did not prosper. The management decided that after all it should be a farm magazine rather than another "shelter" publication. One early autumn morning in 1934, Beck called the two of us to his desk and announced that I was to become editor and Cathcart editorial director.

When we returned to our 11th floor offices I asked Cathcart how he interpreted the news. "Well," he said, "if I am to be editorial director, I expect to direct."
"O.K.,” I said, "and if I am to be editor, I shall expect to edit. If I need any
direction, I'll call upon you."

With this understanding I took charge. Cathcart was shortly returned to the
advertising promotion field where his abilities were best fitted and where he was
happiest. Later he became promotion manager for This Week, a national
newspaper Sunday supplement.

The first dollar I ever earned from writing had been paid me by Farm and
Fireside, back about 1910, for a short article in which the blue jay was
condemned as a thief, a robber, predator and nuisance. I had not then become a
real conservationist.

The first caller to appear in the afternoon after I had taken the new chair was
announced by my secretary. "Mr. Silas Bent wishes to see the editor," she said.
Mr. Bent was well known. He had long written a column for the New York Times
editorial page as well as several books and many magazine articles. He had just
come from having a good lunch and was glowing with an idea. Since moving to
the country in Connecticut, he explained, he had discovered that blue jays loved
peanuts. He wanted to write us an article advising farmers to provide peanuts
about their premises to attract the jays.

I tried not to laugh. Thousands of farmers that year were so short of cash that
they could hardly afford a nickel bag of peanuts for the kids if they went to the
county fair. "Mr. Bent," I told him firmly, "this magazine has taken a stand on the
blue jay subject. It is against them. I was responsible for that stand and do not
now propose to reverse our position." Then I explained, and we had a laugh
together.

In a day or so it occurred to Beck to ask what I proposed to do with Country
Home. "I intend to make it important to the 35% of farmers who earn 80% of the
agricultural income," I asserted. "Jesus!" he exclaimed. "Say those figures again!
How do you know they’re right?"

The agricultural papers for long years had had trouble persuading city-based
advertising people that farmers had any real purchasing power. The census
figures time after time indicated that farmers averaged much less cash income
than town and city people. But in 1930 the census had asked some new
questions and, for the first time, had figures to show, as I had said, that 35% of
farmers produced 80% of the output and received 80% of the farm income. Not
only that, but the counties in which these more prosperous farmers were located
could be identified. A Department of Agriculture economist, O.E. Baker, had
worked over this data and in pencil had prepared tables which set forth the
information in simple form. An old friend of mine, he had given me Photostats of
his tables. I had carried the Photostats in my coat pocket on the hunch that they
could some time be used to advantage. Now I laid them before Beck.
Tom Beck was no man to let an idea dangle. Before I had had time to begin changes in the magazine he called in an advertising agency and our promotion people, and appropriated $150,000 to emblazon "Farm Market A -- The Blue Ribbon Farm Market" in the trade press and in mailing pieces to advertisers.

"Before this goes too far," I suggested, "let's see how our circulation map jibes with the maps of the counties where these top farmers live." The examination showed that there were many such counties where competing magazines had more subscribers than we did. "Don't worry about that," the circulation director said. "We'll go right to work in those counties." They did, but there will be an addendum to the story.

Revising the editorial content and character moved along rapidly. Serial fiction was immediately banished, partly because the space was needed for better material, and partly because I thought the day had passed when monthly story installments attracted readers. I knew and engaged writers who could write what was useful and interesting to farmers and could write it clearly. Photographs of genuine farm interest were used freely. Short articles were given preference; we tried to avoid that "continued on page 54" line. When a controversial topic was timely we tried to present it effectively and fairly. We wanted as much heart and humor as we could find room to print.

The "household" department presented a problem. On a farm, the whole family takes part in the business, and the farm wife is no less important than the farmer. The editor I inherited for this department was an able woman with every qualification except that she had no knowledge whatever of farm living. I scrutinized every line of copy she prepared or passed, to make sure that nothing unsuitable got by.

When a recipe came over my desk that called for fourteen chicken livers, I called the lady in and told her it would not do. "Why not?" she asked. "Don't all farmers keep chickens?" "Yes," I told her, "most of them do, but they can't get fourteen chicken livers without killing fourteen chickens, and they won't want to do that." We shortly found an Iowa farm girl, a graduate in home economics, to take over the department.

To make the most of our color printing, which no competitor commanded at the time, I engaged Edwin Megargee, a top animal artist, to prepare a series of paintings of purebred animals and fowls, cattle, horses, hogs, sheep and poultry. These were to be given full-page space, along with articles by Sam Guard, the country's outstanding livestock writer.

Joseph P. Knapp, our controlling stockholder, also owned a separate large printing company. This company had obtained the rights to a new color process, called gravure, much cheaper than our traditional letter-press method which
required four separate plates to produce a four-color print. Mr. Knapp decided that the gravure process was ready for magazine use, and that it should first be introduced in *Country Home*. So far was the process from being ready that my beautiful portraits of red Duroc hogs came out purplish and the dignified Angus cattle appeared in red or yellowish, to the astonishment of every cattleman who knew they should be solid black. I had to suspend the series.

The need to make *Country Home* better known, a household word if possible, in all rural areas of the nation seemed urgent. Neither mere circulation sales effort nor special advertising could accomplish this economically. I devised a plan that was intended to obtain considerable publicity for the magazine directly, and at the same time to gain the goodwill of local, weekly newspapers. We announced modest cash prizes, any cash in those mid-thirties was attractive, for writers of the most interesting and readable "crossroads correspondence" to be submitted either by the writers themselves or by the editors of their papers. The trade press gave the contest liberal publicity. Hundreds of entries poured in.

The winner, by unanimous decision of the competent judges, was Mrs. Elizabeth Mahnkey, who wrote for a weekly in an obscure Missouri Ozark town. We were about to send Mrs. Mahnkey her modest check when Tom Beck learned about the enthusiastic response the contest had produced and saw potentials we had not envisioned. "You're shooting at an elephant with a flea gun," he snorted. "Send her a thousand dollars! Bring her to New York and take her to Washington!"

Tom was right, for Mrs. Mahnkey was a hit in New York. A delightful, sensible, unpretentious but bright grandmother, she met every occasion with grace and poise. Twenty hard-boiled and cynical reporters came to her Sunday afternoon press conference, expecting to write funny stories. She soon had them sitting at her feet. In the scores of columns written about her doings in New York and about her observations not a single line ridiculed her. She was a Grandma Moses of her kind before Grandma Moses became known. She met Mayor LaGuardia and Al Smith, attended night court, and by invitation wrote columns for one or two of the big papers. Characteristically, when she had lunch with us at the somewhat pretentious outdoor restaurant of the Hotel Chatham, one of the few such places then available in the town, she said it was "like eating at home on the back porch." Mrs. Mahnkey gained bales of publicity in New York and across the nation for the *Country Home*.

The $150,000 campaign to tell the advertising world about "Farm Market A", that 35% of farmers who earned 80% of farm income, made a lively splash. Some important advertisers who had avoided the farm field became interested in reaching the farmers who could buy their products, and *Country Home*’s orders for space enjoyed a healthy growth.
Then, out came the July 1, 1936 Audit Bureau of Circulations report. The A.B.C. is maintained by periodical publishers to examine the records of subscriptions and newsstand sales and to publish semi-annual findings. The publishing industry had suggested it to counteract the ancient tendency to exaggerate circulation figures. At first glance, our report was gratifying. The circulation department had, indeed, built up our numbers in the several "35%" counties where we had needed to make a better showing.

The A.B.C. not only analyzed the circulation and its location, but disclosed how much went to rural villages, to recipients on rural routes and how much went into larger towns. Scrutiny of these facts brought to light the awful fact that not only one but two of our strongest competitors, Farm Journal and Country Gentleman, each had more actual RFD farm circulation in the "35%" counties than we did.

What had happened? Our subscription solicitors in these key counties had found it easier to stay on the sidewalks than to slog their ways down the rural routes. They sold the magazine, but sold it to town people.

Consequently no conspicuous rise in advertising contracts for 1937 took place; they may have declined. I was "promoted" to editorial director. The conversation in Beck's office, where Hubert Kelly learned he had the job of editor, gave no more indication than the one in 1934 as to how the duties of editor and editorial director were to be distinguished. I told Kelly that as he had been named editor all the decisions should be his; if he wanted any advice or counsel I would try to help. At his request I continued to write the editorial page. Otherwise about all I found to do was to make speeches. Feeling more or less like a sign hung out the window, I looked around for a more useful spot.

While in Texas in early '39 a Dallas News editor handed me an Associated Dispatch reporting that Farm Journal had bought The Farmer's Wife of St. Paul. I wired the publisher, Graham Patterson, that he now had everything he needed for a great farm magazine except an editor, and that I would be in to see him shortly. The two magazines together would have two and a half million circulation, just the kind of opportunity I wanted. By mid-March I was on the new job, in time to oversee the first issue of the combined publications. Publication of the Country Home was terminated a few months later; I had moved just in time.
Chapter 14 - FARM JOURNAL

Founded 1877...Charles Francis Jenkins...Arthur H. Jenkins...Graham Patterson...Clarity, Brevity, Usefulness, Heart and Humor

The atmosphere at Farm Journal in Philadelphia differed pleasantly from the brisk rush about the Crowell offices in New York. Instead of passing through restless revolving doors at 250 Park Avenue, where elevators to the 20th floor were ever in motion, one climbed six dignified stone steps to the entrance of a sedate five-story structure. The building faced placid, tree-filled Washington Square which corners into historic Independence Square. Within, one became quietly aware of an unbusying activity that seemed almost serene compared to the sense of tension that so often enveloped the bigger company in the bigger city. This was to be my headquarters for the next quarter of the century.

Wilmer Atkinson, an aggressive Quaker journalist, had founded Farm Journal in 1877. His first issue proclaimed the monthly's intent to serve farmers who lived within a day's travel of Philadelphia. John Wanamaker's new store had bought the first advertisement. During forty years as publisher and editor, Atkinson had extended circulation into all the states and had pushed it to more than a million copies per month. He was the first magazine publisher to announce that he would accept no quack medical advertising; and the first to promise reimbursement to any subscriber who could prove he had been cheated by an advertiser. I was proud to be allowed to use his old desk.

After Atkinson's death in 1920 the company was controlled by his nephews, Charles Francis and Arthur H. Jenkins, who had grown up with the firm. With C.F. as president and Arthur as editor, the magazine prospered during the 1920's. Then, though subscribers were loyal, so many advertisers deserted Farm Journal pages in the depression years that by 1935 a receivership had to be faced. The Pew estate purchased the magazine and installed Graham Patterson as publisher and president. Charles Francis Jenkins became chairman of the new corporation.

C.F.J., as he was known within Farm Journal, then in his late sixties, pursued varied outside interests, historic, philanthropic and horticultural. On his estate in Germantown he grew what was probably the largest private collection of hemlock species. He published a periodical leaflet about it. His garden, included a "Signers' Walk," each stone of which came from the home of or was associated with a signer of the Declaration of Independence. I was able to help complete this walk with a rock from the cave in the Sourland Mountains near Hopewell, N.J., where John Hart had hidden himself while being hunted by British soldiers. (The walk has been given to Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge). Mr. Jenkins had acquired one of the few complete sets of signatures of the signers. When he dispersed the collection, one of these, that of Button Gwinnet, sold for more than $50,000. He wrote a book about Gwinnet, one containing the letters Jefferson...
had written while living in Germantown, and another about Germantown's historic remains. Hearty, vigorous, genial, CFJ was admired and liked. He made no effort to influence the magazine under its changing regime. After he died at 87, we were all grateful to join in planting an oak in Washington Square as a memorial to him.

Having assumed responsibility for the editorial side of the magazine, it was my duty to take over the authority which had belonged to Arthur H. Jenkins, the much younger brother of CFJ, who had long been the editor. Reluctant to deprive him of the editor's title, I adopted a more grandiose designation as editor-in-chief. In any such shift of authority the opportunities for friction and misunderstanding are present. Never, by any word or act, did Arthur create a problem. He accepted the changes and did his utmost to see them carried through smoothly. We remained congenial friends until his death at the age of 99.

In an establishment where virtually everyone was agreeable and none notably otherwise, Arthur Jenkins was without doubt the most affectionately regarded. Often blunt, he was blunt graciously; witty, quietly jocose, readily humorous, he possessed and used a sharp mind equally capable of deleting a redundant phrase or penetrating a fallacious argument. His most notable extra-curricular achievement was to modernize Adam Smith's noted economic work. Published as *The Wealth of Nations, Simplified, Shortened and Modified*, the book provided current American readers with all the original's essence in thought and language but in about one-third fewer words, and in more logical organization. He also compiled and published a Jenkins genealogy. Long after partial retirement he kept a desk at the office which he visited two or three days weekly.

Not until after we had been associated for twenty years did I learn about one of Arthur's very special accomplishments. As a small child he had often played in his father's library where an encyclopedia graced a lower shelf. He memorized the "titles" on the volumes and when approaching his 90th year could still recite them in order from "A" to "Zymos."

The "SDNN" was one of Arthur's special creations. He and his good wife were childless. When contemplating a major expenditure, such as a trip to Europe, he said they always charged the outlay to the SDNN account -- the Society for Defrauding the Nieces and Nephews.

The Chief at *Farm Journal*, of course, was the publisher and company president, Graham Patterson. Before coming to Philadelphia he had made a good record at building up the *Christian Herald*.

His first move at *Farm Journal* had been to discard the obsolete printing plant which demanded three to four weeks' time to produce an issue. He contracted with the Donnelley Company to do the mechanical work in Chicago. There the *Farm Journal* editors could put final touches to an issue on Monday and before
the weekend most copies would be in subscribers' mailboxes. Thus Patterson was able to tell the advertisers about a "four-day writer to reader" service.

The *Farmer's Wife*, a popular and respected monthly issued from St. Paul, appealed as the name implied, primarily to farm women. The duplication of circulation was slight. Patterson was therefore positioned to move forward in the farm magazine field with an audience of more than two and a half million subscribers.

Patterson's forte and primary interest was selling advertising. At this he worked aggressively and constantly. He seldom left the office without copies of the magazine under his arm; associates even accused him of carrying copies to church. "You never know when you may meet some one," he would say, and the copies were indispensable because those who dictated the placing of advertising were not usually regular readers of farm literature. He could swing any conversation around to the merits of *Farm Journal*’s advertising space. One night on the Broadway Limited two chance dining car acquaintances who turned out to be possible advertisers, invited him to their drawing room. As he was leaving after giving them a two-hour sales talk one asked, "Mr. Patterson, what was the name of that magazine you are connected with?" The gag pleased and amused Graham so much that he told it for months.

His gift for laughing at himself was a trait that attracted men to him and helped his sales work. Only five feet, two inches tall, he was well built and good looking, with a round head, clear blue eyes and a quick smile. Some of the attributes often charged to men of small stature, such as assertiveness and vanity, he not only possessed but knew how to capitalize on them. Introduced at dinners, he would stand diffidently, not always fully visible to some of the audience behind the flowers and dishes, he would then shout with a defiant grin, "I am standing up!"

At breakfast he always had oatmeal; over the cereal he sprinkled a product, carried in an envelope in his pocket, which he believed aided his regularity. An acquaintance caught him in this act one morning at breakfast in the Waldorf. "What is that stuff, Graham? Vigoro?" The story served him even longer than the Broadway Limited incident. (Vigoro was then widely known as a garden growth stimulant.

Patterson never attempted to dictate or even suggest the editorial content. He was wise enough and experienced enough to know that advertisers respect editorial independence. He wanted, as I did, to produce a magazine that readers would appreciate, enjoy and to which they would renew their subscriptions. He also wanted what he called "visibility." To that end he encouraged my inclination to accept speaking engagements, serve on influential boards, and to maintain acquaintance with leaders in varied fields. He never asked for an accounting of my time, nor criticized an activity. To an editor this was important, and gratifying.
With a considerate publisher, agreeable associates, and the largest circulation in the farm field, I felt that the opportunities for an extraordinary editorial and financial success were at hand. Behind me were the seventeen years of national farm magazine experience with *Farm and Fireside* and *Country Home*, four years as owner of an Indiana county seat weekly, a healthy farm boyhood, and the four and a half years operating the home farm in Ohio. The background seemed suitable for the job. The small staff in the new office was able and amenable. As events developed, the years ahead were to bring their turbulences and disturbances, some disappointments and failures, rather less success than I had anticipated in both editorial and in financial respects. Nevertheless they were to be rewarding, happy and pleasant years.

The first job for a farm magazine, I thought, had to be the obvious one of making itself interesting to its readers. In each issue they should be able to find something useful to their farming and living, some humor and entertainment, some inspiration and, from time to time, intelligent discussion of the public issues which concerned themselves as farmers or as citizens. Whatever we printed should be presented in the simplest language possible, so clear that the writer had to understand his topic and so simple that any reader could comprehend. If the least literate reader could understand, then the more intellectual ones would not miss the point either.

Another objective was brevity. I assumed that the capacity of most persons to pay sustained attention to the printed page was such that the shorter the article the more likely it was to be read. We eliminated serial fiction, and in time also discarded short stories in the conviction that we could print other material of greater reader interest.

*Farm Journal* had always been terse; that had been one of Wilmer Atkinson's policies. Besides preserving that quality, I hoped to carry along a certain tone long characteristic of the magazine, a sort of quaintness. This we were soon to lose, partly because it had involved an avuncular attitude toward readers which seemed out-dated, and partly because we didn't know how to write that way.

We did long continue, though, two or three of the popular old features. One was Peter Tumbledown, a character of "Uncle" Wilmer's invention, who was always exemplifying characteristics of a shiftless, ne're-do-well farmer. Peter appeared monthly until W.A. Dwiggins, the cartoonist who drew the accompanying illustration, passed away. Another regular feature persisted longer. This was "Now is the Time to...", a quarter column of one- and two-line paragraphs which were reminders, serious and semi-serious, of timely matters for the month.

With teletype connections to our Chicago printers and the late closing date, we could supply our readers with whatever late-breaking news came to light, especially from Washington. While for a monthly periodical this was not a major
advantage, it did permit us to provide our readers with useful and significant information before it reached them from other sources. We had an old background, modern tools and room to create a first-rate magazine.
Chapter 15 - ON WITH FARM JOURNAL

The Owners...Joseph N. Pew...Faith in Editorials...How to Influence Voters...No Word for Oil..."Wheeler is Lazy"...Against War...A Libel Suit...Invited to Retire

When the Pew estate purchased Farm Journal in 1935, their primary and perhaps only motive had been to possess a medium with which to resist the New Deal sentiment existing in rural America. The estate owned the Sun Oil Company, Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, both enterprises of considerable magnitude. Spokesmen and general managers of the estate were the brothers, J. Howard Pew and Joseph Newton Pew, Jr. who, with relatives, had inherited the large business from their father, the founder.

It was to be expected that, as owners of the magazine, the Pews would desire to have something to say about what it printed. I was agreeably surprised to discover that they held certain illusions which shielded the editor from all but a minimum of interference.

One of these illusions was that for their purposes nothing counted except what was printed on the editorial page. Another was that even the editorial page didn't matter much except during the two or three months preceding the biennial national elections, or occasionally for the month in advance of the political conventions.

Although it was not certainly confessed fact, I had been told that, in 1932, they had voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Supposedly their interest in politics had been slight until the New Deal produced the National Recovery Administration's efforts to interfere with normal business decisions. This had aroused their fears and launched their determination to fight for their ideas and ideals.

These ideals, centering around the preservation of the maximum individual liberty allowable in a free society, were my own. I had expressed them freely in the Country Home and elsewhere. I may have felt a little moral superiority over the owners in that I had voted and spoken in 1932 for Herbert Hoover, and never for Franklin Roosevelt.

Whatever problems I had to face with the Pews, then, were confined almost entirely to the editorial page in the campaign seasons. These seldom concerned what to say, because little conflict appeared between their thinking and mine. How to say it, however, was a special kind of problem.

In 1936, Farm Journal had campaigned for Landon and the Republican ticket with brass knuckles. Its approach to the issues and the language used to express its viewpoints had been offensive to thousands of readers. Many were admirers and supporters of the administration and did not expect their farm magazine to engage in politics. Reports had come to the office about subscription solicitors
being driven off by angry farmers. In fact, many thousands of subscriptions had been cancelled or refused renewal. I did not propose to let this happen again in 1940.

The Pews wisely designated one person to handle for them all matters that concerned *Farm Journal*. That spokesman was Joseph Newton Pew, Jr. He was tall, dark, with shaggy brows over baggy eyes and seamed face. Deep-voiced, deliberate in manner, Joe was always an impressive figure. Kindly, willing to listen, he was forceful without being imperious. One did not forget the power of the millions behind him, but he was amenable to reason.

During the political seasons I usually prepared a tentative editorial several days in advance of closing. Joe was not much impressed by deadlines, and normally he would make no appointment to discuss editorials until a late day, then usually so far in the afternoon that I would miss my trains home. When he learned of this, he considerately tried to choose an earlier hour. He might agree to the editorial I had prepared. More likely he would toss out other ideas. If convinced that one of these was mistaken he would drop it from discussion without admitting any error, and turn to something else. Occasionally he would suggest a few sentences, pausing to raise his brows and grin when he thought he had hit upon a particularly dynamic phrase. Rarely he would call in his male secretary and undertake to dictate an entire editorial, none of which ever saw print in the original form. His political vocabulary was strictly nineteenth century, of the kind that might please the already convinced partisans but certain to alienate the undecided.

Once the discussion was over, Joe left me to decide as to what actual form the editorial was finally to take. I tried to embody his basic ideas in the language of reason. He never complained about the printed version, nor ever complimented. The only praise from either of the Pews, came second hand when J. Howard told a friend that "Wheeler doesn't make mistakes."

My conviction as to how to be politically effective was simple. To arouse the enthusiasm of one's partisans, and to supply them with argument, had some value. The convinced opposition one could seldom expect to change. Through every election campaign, however, large numbers suspend judgment, remain undecided and uncertain. These people are not moved by violent denunciation and not often by mere argument, but they do recognize fair discussion. I sought to convince the undecided and the changeable. To what extent we did influence anyone we had no way of measuring, although an occasional past election analysis of rural congressional district results appeared to indicate that our effort was not all in vain.

The Pew influence in high-level Republican affairs was potent for a decade or more. Members of the family contributed liberally, to committee and congressional district campaign funds. When Joe Pew put in a telephone call for
Joe Martin, the Republican House leader and later speaker, or other such individuals, he seldom had to wait long for a response.

Only on one occasion, and then much to my discomfiture, did Joe manage to get *Farm Journal* to print an item to which I objected. Before the 1940 conventions, his strategy was to advance the then governor of Pennsylvania, a mediocre man named Arthur James, as a presidential candidate. Whom he really favored I was never sure, although he would have liked James as an obedient henchman. In the last hours when we were closing an issue, a more than commonly troublesome closing, Joe demanded a piece endorsing James. Had there been time to talk with him, I might have discouraged and prevented the statement, but the Chicago presses were snapping at our heels and it was allowed to appear. It did no good, but may have done no harm.

Whatever admiration I may have had for Joe's political wisdom and courage faded at the Philadelphia Republican presidential convention of 1940. Senator Robert A. Taft and Wendell Willkie contended for the nomination. I knew Taft and believed he had the solid virtues his subsequent senate career disclosed. I had seen something of Willkie around New York and regarded him as a more or less exhibitionistic clown. On the critical ballot late at night, with packed galleries whooping for Willkie, I saw Joe rise to cast the vote of the decisive Pennsylvania delegation, which he controlled. He threw the votes to Willkie.

Willkie lost the election and perhaps Taft would have lost also. The party, however, would have lost with some principles and organization intact instead of falling into disarray, and it would have had a powerful leader to guide it through the following years.

One anecdote about Joe Pew I must tell, although it made me angry at what I thought was a grossly uninformed remark. Felix Morley, a former Haverford College president and former editor of the *Washington Post*, reported it. He had called one Sunday forenoon to see Pew, whom he found on a massage table in the sunny backyard of his lavish Ardmore estate. My name came into the talk. "The only trouble with Wheeler," Joe pronounced, "is that he is lazy."

Coming from a man who seldom began his business day before lunch, who knew nothing about my own full and strenuous routine, and who at the moment was getting his physical exercise at the hands of a professional masseur, the remark aroused a bit of resentment, although I had to agree with Felix that the circumstances made it amusing.

It was difficult for critics to believe that the Pew's interest in public affairs could be motivated only by patriotic devotion to their ideas of American principles. Weren't they big in oil and in shipbuilding? Weren't they principally concerned with protecting those interests?
I was unable, at any time, to discern any wish on their part to utilize our magazine pages in behalf of oil or ships. I don't believe I was too naive or blind to have failed to detected such an effort, nor too timid to have opposed it. One month Joe was not impressed by the editorial I had prepared, and he had not come up with any suitable idea of his own. The discussion drifted toward trying to present a certain principle, and he offered as a possible illustration a recent move by government. "Didn't the petroleum industry feel that it would be hurt by that action?" I asked. He glared thoughtfully for a moment and then said, "You're right. We shouldn't involve Farm Journal in that one. Let's use the editorial you have written. That was the nearest oil ever came to our pages, and it wasn't very close.

All things considered, I was fortunate to edit a magazine controlled by owners such as the Pews. They were genuine patriots. While they hoped that the magazine would earn its way or make some money, that consideration was secondary. Whether Joe and I agreed or disagreed, he was more considerate than might have been expected from a man who, at a word, could have snapped off my head and my job. He never infringed on what is called "editorial independence" in the editorial page and rarely outside it.

The owner of a publication ought to be entitled to some influence on the opinions it expresses. Fortunately Joe's principles and mine seldom were too far apart for comfortable agreement. He died, not long after my retirement, at the age of 78.

Aside from politics and farm problems, the first big issue to face Farm Journal had to do with the looming war. Just six months after my initiation Hitler invaded Poland and a new World War was begun. I was entirely and wholeheartedly against military participation by the United States, an isolationist. Fortunately my colleagues, and the Pews, fully agreed. For various reasons I did not join the America First organization, although it had much of my sympathy. Until after our December, 1941, issue was in the mails, we fought as best we knew against our nation becoming involved. I refused to believe that our future depended upon what happened to England, unhappy as we might become if she were conquered. I did not believe that Germany, even if dominant in all Europe, could muster reserve power to invade the western hemisphere. I thought that our resources and power could far better be spent to build the United States, while helping as best we might without killing our youth and to aid the Allies where our sympathies belonged.

After the Pearl Harbor attack, induced by the provocative intent of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and perhaps others, and after war was declared against Japan and Germany, we had no further choice. Thereafter we supported the war effort with whatever means and intelligence we could command.

No one can say whether Hitler and Stalin, had we not entered the war, would have destroyed each other. Certainly we gained little by the conflict in terms of
world peace. The outcome was that we acquired, in Communist Russia and China, potential enemies more costly, more subtle, and more threatening to the human race than we have known before. Communications and transportation have made the old forms of isolation impossible, and we have to live in a far more intimate world where the problems of our neighbors, weak or strong, must give us concern. Nevertheless, could I have in 1939 foreseen all the events of the three decades since, I would have taken the same stand. It is yet to be proved wrong.

The war did nothing to advance Farm Journal's prosperity. Important advertisers, such as the automotive, farm machinery and tire industries, were struggling with priorities and rationing of raw materials and could sell their output without special sales efforts. We had limitations upon paper supplies, ceilings on salaries, and other regulations. Our expenditures upon another magazine, The Pathfinder, were to increase the deficits the company found at the close of most years.

The only libel suit encountered in my editorial years was filed against Farm Journal. Occasion to impugn individual character never arose. However, in an article about a certain farm trouble in upper New York state, a staff investigator referred to the agitation's leader as a Communist. Since the Communist party was recognized on ballots, it did not occur to me that the designation could be libelous, although I might have known that some courts had so decided. Anyway, the man sued Farm Journal for some $7,000,000, partly for defaming him but mainly to defray the cost of sending transcripts of his hoped-for vindication to all our subscribers. Our author, Robert Cruise McManus, and our attorneys proved in federal court that the plaintiff was a Communist, and the judge ruled that we had not libeled him by saying so.

Our publisher, Graham Patterson, struggled valiantly with his multiple difficulties. A superb personal salesman, and quite competent with figures, he had little capacity to plan far ahead. He liked to splash a new advertising sales idea with a page in the New York Times, but seldom followed it up with a persistent, continuing campaign such as might have made an effective impression in the advertising world. Six months ahead was about his limit for a "long time" plan. Another idea would arise by then.

His most painful moments came at the year ends when it was necessary to display the annual financial results to the Pews, along with a budget for the year forthcoming. The Pews always patiently met the deficits. They neither insisted upon more careful planning for the future nor provided the additional capital that any plan might have required. Thus Farm Journal coasted along from year to year until a bolder hand took the helm.

The bolder hand belonged to Richard J. Babcock, who had the courage to terminate our unprofitable publication of Pathfinder, buy out the competitive Country Gentleman from Curtis and back varied publishing innovations. He even
had the uninhibited nerve to persuade me to retire at age seventy, which I had been semi-prepared to do, but had hesitated to precipitate the final decision. Before this we had wrestled with another problem.
Chapter 16 - THE PATHFINDER

Another Magazine...I choose Myself as Editor...Dealing with the Newspaper Guild...What is Objectivity?...Pathfinder's Bias...New Departments...Staff Characters...Sued for Plagiarism...End of Pathfinder

Pathfinder, an unpretentious weekly of news, comment human interest and odds and ends, had been published from Washington for fifty years. The million subscribers were mostly small town people. When rising costs and shrinking advertising made the magazine unprofitable in the early years of World War II, it was offered for sale. Wanting to reach such an audience, the Pews bought the property in 1943 and turned the operation over to Farm Journal.

After nearly three years of experiment and small progress, Graham Patterson was persuaded to make Pathfinder into an all-out news weekly after the patterns successfully established by Time and Newsweek. Printing was transferred to the Donnelley Chicago plant from which Farm Journal was published, teletypes were installed, the staff considerably enlarged, a good reference library acquired, researchers and photographers employed.

The editor resigned, and a new one was engaged. Until this time, aside from contributing an occasional editorial upon request, I had shared no responsibility at Pathfinder, but I was partly to blame for the new editor. I checked his references with former employers whom I knew, and who spoke well of his performances as a writer and sub-editor.

He turned out to be a disaster. In a few weeks he had the Washington staff in turmoil. He issued edicts without discussion, threatened dismissals, and behaved like a dictator. The alarmed staff responded by petitioning the National Labor Relations Board for an election, in order to become a chapter of the Newspaper Guild. They could protect themselves from arbitrary management and could negotiate with their employers. "Wheeler," Graham said after this news, "will you go down to Washington and size up this situation? And get us a new editor?"

A few days at the Pathfinder office led to two conclusions. One was that a tangle of misunderstandings had been created which time, patience and considerate dealing might alleviate. The other had to do with the fascinating character of the editorial opportunity. "If you will agree," I told Patterson, "I will be the new editor.

I felt free to propose this. Two years earlier, I had promoted Carroll P. Streeter to the Farm Journal managing editor's desk. He was doing the job so competently that I no longer needed to watch the details, and he didn't mind responsibility. Patterson agreed.

After the offending editor was fired and the production routines observed, the major task was to become acquainted with the staff and to try and win their
confidence. It consisted of editors, writers, librarians, researchers, secretaries, filers, and telephone operators. They were young, mostly under thirty, eager, personable and willing to work. Several of the young men were not long out of military service. Most had had some newspaper experience. Nearly all the copy producers wrote with skill, a few with exceptional ability. The prospect for making *Pathfinder* into a highly readable, popular magazine looked favorable.

The election to determine whether the staff should belong to the Newspaper Guild was only a few weeks ahead. If the Guild won, it meant that we would be dealing thereafter with a labor union, holding contract negotiations, and facing rigidities regarding promotions, dismissals and other normal management prerogatives. Personally I felt that "professionals," such as our writers and editors, should not be hampered by a union's leveling influences. The law, however, included them along with janitors, clerks, secretaries and telephone operators, as potential Guild members.

My efforts to counteract the Guild idea failed. The election was nearly, though not quite, unanimous in the Guild's favor. "We might have trusted you," one of the boys said, "but we felt that we didn't know much about the owners and the people in Philadelphia."

Except for the time-wasting annual contract negotiations the Guild proved to be only a minor nuisance. In the negotiation meetings I sat between two fires. Our top writers, I felt, were not being paid enough. Editorial staff salaries, in fact, were always to be a point of continuous disagreement between Patterson and myself. He had the responsibility of holding the budgets as low as he reasonably could, while I wanted to pay our best writers at least as much as they could hope to earn elsewhere. As to the minor employees the only policy was to pay the going Washington rates, which we did.

One year I managed to get Patterson's consent to offering the Guild quite substantial advances for our top people, actually a little more than the Guild had demanded, while continuing the customary rates for others. The proposed beneficiaries naturally were delighted, but not the Guild's outside-Washington representatives who were party to the negotiations. They denounced me for trying to split the *Pathfinder* chapter. Such a side effect I would not have minded, but it had not been the primary intent.

Another year the Guild proposals were so vague and indefinite at the first contract meeting, that I told the committee to shape up their demands, unite on what they really wanted, and come back next week. The young man who was chapter president asked to postpone the meeting, and then for still another week. After we had found agreement a month later, the young president told me confidentially of the difficulties he had encountered in getting the members to meet and to reach decisions. "I never knew before," he said, "why executives are paid so much more money."
The investment already placed in equipment and staff seemed to require that *Pathfinder* work its way forward along the general news magazine formula. While I thought that approaches more fundamental and more human were desirable, the practical problem was to try to fuse them into the news reports. Then, as now, Washington was a major source for news of national significance. To report such news truthfully and meaningfully was a challenge.

Few, if any, of the staff people were old enough to remember living under any other than the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. This fact, their college backgrounds, and their healthy young ideals inclined them to place much faith in the good intentions of government and in its ability to carry out such intentions.

At an early staff conference, the nature of news and its proper treatment for the *Pathfinder* audience became the topic. "We should be objective," every voice agreed, meaning of course that we should present news fairly and without prejudice. No one could quarrel with that; but one could ask how objectivity was to be achieved. The *New York Times* was promptly cited as an example of objective journalism. "The New York Times," I suggested, "may consider itself objective when it presents two sides of the same lie; two versions of the same untruth. Should it not be our purpose to dig out the truth, so far as we shall be able to do so?"

That this was a formidable challenge there could be no doubt. A few of our leftishly inclined young people, however, began to grasp the fact that human experience has generated some general principles that are guiding lights; and to comprehend that the real truth seldom offers two sides.

To emphasize our fundamentals, both to the staff and to our readers, I wrote a brief statement which ran in each issue on the contents page with the title, "*Pathfinder's Bias*"

We favor the American ideal of freedom for individuals. We oppose statism and totalitarianism in all forms. We believe we can best support freedom by printing facts without bias, because we think that all the facts are on the side of freedom.

Then as now, I thought that New York and Hollywood were over-reported, the rest of the country under-reported, and Washington badly reported. If we could achieve more penetrating, better-balanced treatment of governmental news, and print more significant material from the nation at large, I believed that we might produce a different and more truly national magazine.

Al Knight, a news veteran with a pliable mind and good eye for what we sought, took on the job of reading newspapers from all over the country and passing on
promising tips. With the aid of "stringers", news workers employed in various locations -- we were able to add local color and meaning.

New departments were established, each having one to three columns per issue. "Resources" was devoted mainly to conservation news, wildlife, soil, water, forests and minerals. "Good News" sought to select items reflecting human decency, in contrast to the prevailing newspapers' abundant reports of crime and disaster. Another department specialized in material of concern to women other than fashions and recipes. For humor we had "Bypaths," usually two columns of fun in rhyme, joke or cartoon, edited by Robert D. McMillen. Added to this we occasionally printed "World Wit," selected from foreign publications to show what other nations thought funny.

Instead of an editorial page we had a signed two-column feature by Dr. Felix Morley which usually dealt with American concerns abroad. Always as much inclined to editorialize as to edit, I introduced "Along the American Way," usually in two columns. This was an effort to connect the current news with economic, political and human fundamentals; the quality probably did not always rise to the intent.

Oldest among the staff members was Tom Wisehart, whom I had known when he worked with the American magazine. Tom was a skilled and persistent interviewer, never abashed by high office, who came through with much of our best Washington reporting. For a time while he was suffering matrimonial complications I assigned him to a Reno base, from which he produced pages of excellent western news. Wisehart later was to write the best life of Sam Houston that has appeared.

A quiet and unassuming chap who wrote fluently but seldom seemed to get under the surface of his topics was Allen Drury. More than once, whether he knew it or not, his job was in jeopardy when we considered upgrading the staff. A few years later he would be writing such best selling novels as "Advise and Consent" and "A Shade of Difference."

It was perhaps to be expected that in the search for talent whenever replacements were needed, we should have acquired some unusual specimens. One plausible and likeable Irishman seldom failed to come up with a well-done story, an obviously padded expense account, or a request for advances on his salary to meet the exigencies of his sick wife. Pleading for an office key to be able to work at night, he managed to impregnate one of the researchers. Another character, middle-aged, a brilliant writer, created minor turmoils by accusing fellow-workers of mysterious conspiracies against him.

The job of producing a page of significant short prognostications, printed in typewriter style type, fell to a staff man whose work had been reliable. Suddenly we were confronted with a suit for plagiarism from Willard Kiplinger, whose
Monday Washington letters were highly successful. The evidence was incontestable. Our man, time after time and line after line, had reproduced Kiplinger material. I called Kip and protested against the suit, saying that a mere telephone call from him would have alerted us. He was adamant. Too many were doing the same thing, and his attorneys were instructed to sue wherever they found a case. The incident was closed by paying a $3,000 attorney fee to one Thurman Arnold. It was hard to believe that our young man had deliberately stolen the Kiplinger material; he seemed too intelligent to have used any of it, especially verbatim. He could offer no explanation and, of course, had to leave.

The advertising world determines the fate of mass magazines. Most of that world was blind to the buying power and responsiveness of consumers in countryside America. Despite editorial advances and the hard work of our advertising sales forces, *Pathfinder* ended each year with a deficit. Economies, including fortnightly instead of weekly publication, could not bring the figures into balance. Carroll Streeter took over the editorship and brought in new approaches, including a change of name to *Town Journal*, as a companion to *Farm Journal*. Finally, rather than face continuing losses, the publishers terminated the operation and concentrated efforts on *Farm Journal*. *Pathfinder* joined the lengthening list of magazines that disappear into oblivion.
Chapter 17 - NEW DEAL EPISODES

Before Court Packing...A Subsistence Homesteader Explains...Henry Wallace...88 Government Men, 27 Taxpayers...Some Acutely Embarrassing Seconds...Advice Ignored...Credits to the New Deal

During the Roosevelt regime, personal relations with federal agricultural officials naturally were never intimate. They quite properly saw no reason to consult with one known to think that most of their programs inconsistent with the American spirit, and what was worse, who predicted their ineffectiveness.

Differences of opinion did not prevent friendly discussions when occasion arose. Russell Lord, a former Farm and Fireside colleague who was working with Henry Wallace, organized an impromptu luncheon to which he asked Rex Tugwell, then undersecretary, Jerome Frank, a legal adviser, and others. This took place shortly after the original Agricultural Adjustment Act had taken effect. The act required processors of farm products to pay a tax which, in turn, was used to pay farmers for planting fewer acres. Having doubts whether the courts would sustain such a law, I asked Jerome Frank whether he apprehended that the Supreme Court might declare it unconstitutional. “There's nothing in the constitution that limits the size of the Supreme Court,” he answered. That was three or four years before Roosevelt's unsuccessful attempt to "pack" the court by adding more judges.

The "subsistence homestead" idea attracted a measure of favorable attention. The legislation provided appropriations for buying suitable land and building homes for unemployed people where they could grow some of their necessities and could live in communities where some jobs were to be created. It was planned that the occupants of the new homes would, by making small annual payments over a long period of time, become owners. Considering the desperate conditions in certain areas, the idea made a degree of sense.

The first attempt blossomed in northeastern West Virginia. Jobs had all but vanished from the coalmines in the neighborhood. With some sympathy for the effort, and after the publicity had indicated that the beginnings were well under way, I went out to see what was going on. An interview with one of the prospective homeowners did not entirely clarify the somewhat confused picture.

He was a native of the area who, except for a brief interval, had spent his life in the nearby coalmines. He was a large, sturdy, pleasant man in his fifties who, had his years been spent in a sedentary instead of a muscular job, would have greatly resembled William Howard Taft. I asked what he thought had caused the depression and the unemployment.
"Why," he said, "that's simple. The country is built. We have all the railroads, all the houses, all the roads, all the automobiles, and everything people need. So now there are no jobs to make anything new or anything more."

I had heard that sort of thinking in Washington, though expressed less simply. I expected him to be a vigorous advocate of the new administration's measures. "What do you think," I asked, "about this New Deal? Where is it going?" He replied with a story. "When I was about nineteen I went across the river into Ohio and got work on a farm. I got the job because the farmer's son had gone west, as many boys did in those days, to make his fortune. He was the only young fellow, though, in that neighborhood to try such an adventure, and everybody kept asking how he was getting along. I guess the boy wasn't really doing very well. The neighbors' questions began to bother the old man, especially when letters from the west had not been coming very often. One day a friend from some distance stopped by. He asked my boss whether he had heard lately from the boy, and whether the young fellow had made up his mind yet what he was going to do. 'Yes,' the father said, 'he's finally decided. Got a letter yesterday. Said he was either goin' on farther west, or come home, or else stay where he is.'" “That," my old miner smiled, "I guess about sizes up the New Deal situation."

Henry Wallace, secretary of Agriculture during the first eight Roosevelt years, was an unusual and somewhat strange individual. I had known him very slightly as editor of Wallace's Farmer, and never was to know him well. Shy, friendly, articulate, with streaks of common sense, intellectually he was a confused man.

Not until in his second term did I find any reason to want to talk to Wallace about a farm matter. I had been urging a large increase in research to find more non-food uses for crops and to find new crops. Knowing that Wallace was himself a scientist, he had had an important and creditable part in developing hybrid corn, I thought there might be a chance to persuade him to support some of the research measures I believed desirable.

An appointment was made, and Russell Lord was present. I stated my argument. Henry listened attentively, and then not only flatly rejected my suggestions but went on to declare that they were not at all in agriculture's interest. I shall not here detail either my arguments or his. Russell Lord reported the interview in his book, The Care of the Earth, fully and accurately except that he added: "I had to take my friend out and walk him three times around the Washington Monument to cool him down."

The American Association of Agricultural Editors usually gathered once a year in Washington to freshen the members' contacts with official agriculture. We were surprised one year when Secretary Wallace invited the group to be his guests for dinner at the National Press Club. It turned out to be a pleasant and a useful occasion, because in addition to the editors many leading men from the Department of Agriculture were present. What had run through my head at the
time will seem to indicate some "smallness," which perhaps cannot be denied. I had wondered at the Secretary's incurring the expense for our dinner, especially as it might set a precedent for entertaining many other equally important delegations that might expect the same treatment. This may have been floating through my mind when an aide leaned between Wallace and myself to say, "Mr. Secretary, we have 27 editors here and 88 Department people." I had not been thinking of the customary "over-ride" on banquet and luncheon tickets until I thought I could see Wallace quickly calculating that the paying guests had helped considerably to feed the editors.

After his welcoming remarks, Wallace introduced me as president of the association. What he actually said I have forgotten, but the humor he intended was heavy-handed and, I heard later, was so regarded by the audience. At least I felt that it justified saying that I found it interesting "to face an audience so representative of modern America, 88 government men and 27 taxpayers."

The then-famous New York Herald-Tribune Forum program devoted an afternoon in 1937 to "Some Proposed Changes in Government," which included a labor bill, a reorganization act, and Wallace's "Ever-Normal Granary" proposal. One or more speakers had been chosen to champion each idea, and others to offer comment. Mrs. Reid, publisher of the Herald Tribune, and her helpers had lured a brass studded array to the platform, Secretary Wallace, US Senators Arthur H. Vandenberg and Robert F. Wagner, Congresswoman Mary Norton, General Hugh Johnson and others then in the news. The Waldorf-Astoria ballroom was packed to capacity.

I had been asked to follow Wallace with comments on the "Ever-Normal Granary" idea. The invitation had come by telephone only a few days before the event, so I presumed that I was a second choice for the assignment. The only excuse for telling this story was that I experienced that afternoon what must have been the most acute moment of public embarrassment in all my days.

As we took seats on the stage, Wallace asked me not to consider him discourteous if he left immediately after finishing his speech. He had a city hall appointment with Mayor La Guardia. He was the first speaker. After concluding, however, instead of leaving he remained to sit through my comments.

The audience was probably a bit anti-New Deal to begin with, and began shortly to interrupt with applause some of my more pointed paragraphs. As I finished, Wallace rose, shook hands and made his way off the wide stage to the wings. I sat down. Applause, wave after wave of it, was continuing. Some of it I thought might be for my talk, but supposed that most of it was a polite and proper salute to the distinguished cabinet member as he left the stage.

Mrs. Norton, sitting next to me, seized my arm and almost lifted me to my feet. "You must get up and bow," she urged. "You are receiving an ovation!"
was the embarrassing instant. I still suspected that the applause might be for Henry. What a presumptuous ass I would seem if I took a bow that wasn't mine! All this took only seconds, but it was agony. When Mrs. Norton offered another muscular push I acknowledged the applause, and hoped to heaven that she was right. It turned out that she was. All in all, it was a disappointing afternoon. That terrible moment of fearing to be a fool before 3,000 people, and then the realization that this had been a moment one ought to have savored proudly, and I had missed the savor!

Only one occasion during the Roosevelt years brought an official invitation to offer counsel on agricultural or other matters. M.L. Wilson, then Undersecretary of Agriculture, was chairman of a committee appointed by Secretary Wallace to review the department's research programs and offer suggestions for their improvement. In July, 1935, Wilson asked me to present my views.

The essence of these was: "The national defense must always be a foremost consideration of statesmen...From the standpoint of national defense, the clear objective of research should be to make provision for the production, at some cost, from some domestic source, of every item that it is anticipated may ever be required for the use of our defensive forces; and, further, of every item of domestic need that might be shut off by the incidence of foreign wars in which this country may not be engaged."

A memorandum elaborated the idea in detail with specific examples of appropriate projects. No proliferation of such research followed, however; and Pearl Harbor plunged the country into scores of shortages, of which rubber and sugar were only the most conspicuous.

With all its expensive measures and improvisations, the New Deal neither restored agricultural prosperity nor wiped out unemployment. Until well into the war preparations period did prices of farm products begin to rise; until then eight or nine millions remained unemployed.

Nevertheless, a few credits must be acknowledged. Despite errors and misrepresentations, the Tennesee Valley Authority produced constructive results. The Social Security Act has eased old age for the thriftless who would not save under any conditions, and for many of the thrifty who, robbed by severe taxation and by steady inflation, both caused by irresponsible wastes and reckless entry into war, could not save as they would have preferred to do.

For farmers the most meritorious act was to create the Rural Electrification Administration. Although a fairly large fraction of farms had received electricity by the early thirties, most public utilities were dragging their heels against extending power lines into rural areas. "Only three farms to the mile," they cried, thinking that farmers would hang a few lights and use little other current. In a 1930 speech I had urged them to think in terms of the potential kilowatts per mile,
rather than to worry about the spacing of farms. The REA not only built miles of power lines into the countryside, but stimulated the private companies to try to get there first. The average farm uses current to turn grinders, move materials, milk cows, refrigerate, pump water, and do scores of other chores. The REA has been constructive and successful.
Chapter 18 - FARM QUESTIONS

During all the editorial years, my "clients" were U.S. farmers, their families, and the businesses dependent upon them. Except for the prosperity of World War II years, they have had difficulties and troubles, and still do.

The basic problem was first called "overproduction". In the 1920's farmers shared little in that boom decade's general prosperity. Overproduction depressed prices for agricultural output. The term later became "surplus," the word still pronounced wherever farm questions are discussed.

High hopes were entertained by many when the McNary-Haugen bill was advanced. Named for the chairmen of the senate and house agricultural committees, the proposal won much acceptance, especially after endorsement by the highly respected former governor of Illinois, Frank Lowden.

The McNary-Haugen plan proposed that wheat, corn, cotton, hogs and cattle were to be named basic agricultural commodities. A federal board was to be created. Whenever a surplus of one of these commodities threatened, the board was to provide that a price be paid to farmers roughly equivalent to the world price plus the tariff. The surplus was to be dumped abroad for what it would bring. The thousands of packers, millers and processors buying the product were to collect from farmers an "equalization fee," to cover the losses incurred on the exported portions. If the wheat price at home were to be $1.50, and the grain brought $1.00 a bushel abroad, a farmer's 1,000 bushels were to bring him $1,500 less 12-1/2 cents a bushel tax, or $1,375.

During a lunch meeting at his farm home near Oregon, Ill., Lowden and George Peak, one of the plans originators, tried to convince me that Farm and Fireside should add its support. When I asked unfavorable questions, Lowden said "those are details that will be worked out." It was such details that had kept me doubtful. I agreed to give the proposal careful study.

The study proved difficult. Administrative problems were obvious, but other holes were suspected. I was ignorant of international trade procedures. The statistical reports issued by the government left me uncertain that they meant exactly what they seemed to indicate. To make my article convincing I needed certain figures in non-contravertible form. One morning, James R. Howard appeared in the office. He had been first president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. He was a man I could believe.
Howard handed me a memorandum, twenty-nine mimeographed pages, neatly stapled with a blue covering. A quick reading disclosed that it contained the figures I had been worrying about, and covered effectively two or three points that I wanted to use if they could be made to stand up.

"Jim," I asked, "where did this come from?" He grinned. "I am under instructions not to say who prepared it; but I can assure you that it is correct and authentic in every particular." By chance, some five years later, I learned the source; it had been sent by Herbert Hoover.

The article was printed under the resounding title, "Look Out! - What the McNary-Haugen Measure Can do to Farmers." As was to be expected, the piece brought more expressions of resentment and criticism than of refutation. Perhaps the most satisfactory comment came from a distinguished agricultural educator who said, "Now for the first time I think that at least I understand the McNary-Haugen plan." Twice passed by Congress, the bill succumbed to Coolidge vetoes.

To explore the defects of a popular measure was a useful service. I was impressed however when Clifford Gregory, able editor of *Prairie Farmer* and earnest McNary-Haugen advocate, said: "You may be right; but when are you going to be for something?"

We did later present, with mild favor, the export debenture plan developed by Charles L. Stewart, an Illinois farm economist. This proposal was vigorously advocated by the National Grange, whose national master Lewis J. Taber, told me of an experience.

President Coolidge invited Taber to his Adirondack vacation spot for a day. "Let's go fishing," was the president's greeting. With guide and equipment they headed into the lake. When lines were out, Coolidge said: "Mr. Taber, I want you to tell me all about this export debenture plan your grangers are pushing."

"Here I was," Taber said, "a lobbyist, out on a lake in a rowboat with the President of the United States, invited to state my case. I had to do my best. He asked question after question, and I gave him the answers until I was sure that no better presentation could have been possible.

"After lunch, Coolidge retired for a nap, then late in the afternoon came down to see me off. 'Mr. Taber,' he said, 'about this farm question. I guess we had better just let nature take her course.'"

Meanwhile another idea was incubating. In late 1924 I had heard a big grain exporter, pessimistic about foreign markets, remark that "unfortunately the human stomach is not elastic. If that were true, why should not farmers grow materials for other purposes than food, and fiber? Obviously, no matter how rich people became, they were going to eat no more than three meals and maybe a
snack each day. Yet they might buy two or three homes, or automobiles, and much else. In addition to food, ordinary Americans, wanted or needed a multitude of items to improve their living or add to their pleasures. The plants farmers were growing contained chemical components -- cellulose, starch, sugar, proteins, fats and oils. Industry already was using some of these; might not research disclose more non-food uses?

A January 1927 article outlined the idea, and specific examples were described as they came into notice. The research director of Dow Chemical Co., Dr. William J. Hale, wrote that industry could profitably utilize much farm-grown material. He was seeing the picture from a manufacturer's standpoint, I from the farm angle. We met, talked, and by 1935 had arranged for a Conference of Agriculture, Industry and Science to be held at Dearborn, Michigan. Henry Ford's name on the invitations brought an unexpected 175 participants, many prominent in industry and science as well as agriculture. From this group the Farm Chemurgic Council was formed. The term "farm chemurgy" had been invented by Dr. Hale, meaning "putting chemistry to work for the farm.

The Chemurgic Council, of which I served as president or chairman for a score or more of years, by print and platform spread the basic ideas. A national conference assembled each year and, in response to local interests, numerous regional gatherings were held. All voiced demands for federal money to expand research for new uses and new crops. The Council did no lobbying, but Congress heeded the call, and authorized funds for four large regional laboratories, located near Philadelphia, New Orleans, Peoria and San Francisco. War needs diverted the laboratories for a time. At Peoria scientists found a mold which, cultivated in corn steepwater, made it possible to produce penicillin in tank car lots instead of in bottles. The laboratories have since notably extended uses and markets for farm materials. No one expected chemurgy to "solve" the farm problems, though we hoped that measurable contributions would result; they have done that.

The New Deal attempts to restore agricultural prosperity had been mostly futile. The depression affected farmers seriously. Considering that for decades farmers had in effect by cheap food subsidized the growth of cities, I saw no wrong in channeling some federal funds into farmer pockets. I thought, though, that the national good as well as help for farmers should be kept in mind; and that killing little pigs, plowing under growing cotton, restricting acres and trying to support prices could not be effective. When it appeared that the Supreme Court would declare the prevailing Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional, in December 1935, I offered an alternative.

Calling it "the incentive payment plan", I proposed that since farm subsidies seemed necessary they should be paid for purposes that would serve the national interest. The first four points were:
Pay farmers to produce more of items not then being grown in quantities sufficient to meet the national demand or need.
Pay farmers to produce more crops for industrial uses -- the bounty to help bridge over the farmer's experimental risks and those of manufacturers.
Pay farmers to follow practices to prevent soil erosion, thereby preserving for the future a basic national resource.
Pay farmers to grow larger percentages of soil-building crops, thus improving future fertility.

To these in subsequent months I added further suggestions. One was to pay farmers for building ponds, which by conserving water and affording recreation, could be good for everybody. Another was that, by accepting bids from owners, government might lease for a decade certain lands and keep them out of production until needed; this was aimed primarily at the excessive production of wheat in one-crop areas.

Except for the war period, agriculture has not in this century enjoyed equality in prosperity. Laws have been passed, revised and changed by Congress after Congress, yet after six decades the 1980's found farm troubles in the headlines.

Explanations may be offered in abundance, and questions difficult to answer may be raised. Was the Homestead Act, providing free land in the public domain, a mistake that put too many acres into production too soon? Foreign markets have diminished and foreign competition has increased. Such matters as the value of the dollar, as quotas and interferences in international trade, U.S. and foreign tariffs, enter the discussion.

Farmers, being human by nature, have outsmarted the efforts to restrict use of their acres. "Farm income", a sage Iowan, J.B. Davidson, remarked long ago, "equals price times volume minus costs." Persuaded to idle part of his land, a farmer naturally tries by better cultivation, fertilization and pest control to enable his other acres to yield more volume, that being the only one of the three factors he can control. The need for volume also impels him to go into debt for more land on which he will need bigger machinery and incur more costs. Then comes weather, another factor beyond his power.

Pages of laws and billions of dollars have not made all farmers prosperous. Acute problems continue for some. The number of farmers has sharply diminished. More than half remain solvent and some do prosper, but basic problems remain. President Coolidge's prescription might have been as helpful as all the complicated legislation has been. Whatever the course of events the fact cannot be ignored that "farmers are the only people the world cannot do without." A further remark will appear later, but no solution.
Chapter 19 - AGRICULTURE

Human History's Greatest Event...The Pattern for Conquering Hunger...Changes of Attitude...More Engine Power, Bigger Farms, Fewer Farmers...Way of Life, or Business?...Part Timers...Individual Decisions...Expectations

With a front seat from which to watch the parade of agricultural progress for nearly eight decades, I have witnessed what I call the most splendid single event in all human history, an achievement of which the general public remains vaguely if at all conscious. I have seen American farmers, with their scientific and engineering allies, create a pattern for the complete conquest of hunger on earth.

Famine, starvation, hunger, malnutrition and under-nourishment have plagued masses of people since before any history was recorded. The threat and the reality still hover over human millions. These can now be overcome. They will be overcome, unless excessive population increases prevent it, or unless communism stifles individual incentives.

Farmers in the United States have shown how it can be done. First of all, they have taken command of massive resources of energy by way of internal combustion engines and electrical power. Second, they have applied myriad advances by science to improve productivity. Third, they have educated themselves and their children so that they can appraise, understand and utilize new knowledge and new skills.

When the twentieth century began one farm worker did well to produce enough to feed barely a half dozen people. By 1980 one worker could feed eighty. Many farm workers already are feeding more than one hundred.

The creation of a pattern that can conquer hunger everywhere does not mean that United States farmers can feed all the world; nor does it promise that their specific methods can be transferred without change to other climes.

The pattern, that's the key word, includes research, education and adaptation. The underdeveloped country that aspires to feed its own people amply can copy a few of the steps directly. Scientific research can determine the capacities and limitations of soil and climate, discover or breed the types of plants and animals that will flourish best. The nation will have to train leaders and to educate farmers and farmers' children. It will have to consider economic factors; how much labor is available, how fast machines and costlier techniques can be afforded. Honest, intelligent efforts of a generation, or two generations, may be required. The fastest route will begin with educating and inspiring young people.

The pattern will not always be easy to follow. If followed wisely, it will always work. Wherever soil, sunshine, water, energy, intelligence, incentives and individual freedom can be combined, food in ample quantities can be produced.
Here in our country the validity of that pattern is demonstrated each day. American consumers have at their constant command the greatest abundance and variety of high quality foods ever available to all anywhere. An ordinary family can eat better than could kings a century or so ago. They can enjoy this blessing at a fraction of what poorer food costs, in terms of work hours, in most of the world. Farmers have been triumphant soldiers in the war on poverty.

The stream of progress which has culminated in the great pattern has grown from a quiet but moving brook at the turn of the century into a majestic flood. The last two generations of farmers have made most of the growth. Advances have gone forward in so many salients, in such variety of places and time and manner, that all cannot possibly be mentioned here. To comprehend the whole, though, one must examine part of the process.

A nineteenth century farmer was likely to look upon "book farming" with skepticism. He had his reasons. The periodicals that he read printed many unproven theories. His agricultural experiment station bulletins used language that was hard to comprehend.

The sons and daughters of farmers, attended one-room district schools during four or five winter months, and few advanced beyond the fifth reader. In spring, summer and fall, the boys' muscles were needed in the fields. Once they had mastered reading, writing and simple arithmetic, their further education was likely to be considered superfluous or even dangerous. It might lead the boys away from farming. This viewpoint was understandable, since nothing was taught about agriculture, not even that it was respectable. Teachers were inclined to encourage a bright boy with talents to "be something better than a farmer."

Until well after the first decade of the new century these attitudes changed slowly. Now they have vanished. The new county agricultural agents found ways to demonstrate that scientific techniques produced profits. Reluctant farmers soon followed practices that they could see were making money for their more progressive neighbors. Greater leaps came when the 4-H Clubs for farm boys and girls and vocational agricultural teaching in rural high schools produced a new generation of open minds. The vast majority of men running today's farms were once 4-H or vo-ag boys. The time lag between the announcement of a scientific finding and its application by farmers has become almost too short to measure.

The one-room country school has given way to the large centralized school which offers better teaching, better equipment and broader social contacts. The country youngster who reached high school was formerly the rare exception among many; now all can go to high school, and most can go on to college if they wish.
The big change from muscle power to engine power, completed between 1920 and 1950, forced and accelerated other changes. The man who farmed 154 acres -- the average operation as late as 1930, had to buy more horses and hire an extra man if he wanted to expand. With the engines that year by year became more powerful and versatile, he needed only to buy or rent more land. Indeed, the engines demanded more land if they were to pay their way.

One consequence has been that the average farm now exceeds 350 acres. Another, exerting a powerful impact in the national scene, has been drastic reduction in numbers of human laborers, the old hoe hands of the cotton fields and the more versatile "hired men" of the north. Millions migrated to the cities, often without sufficient skills to earn livings. Moreover, thousands of capable farm-raised young people had to leave, not necessarily from preference, but because they lacked the capital essential for land and equipment.

As the inputs of human labor declined, the inputs of capital mushroomed. To make the new machinery produce maximum profits, farmers have not only expanded acreage, but have invested heavily in commercial plant foods, chemical herbicides and insecticides. A feature of the "revolution" that would most astonish an old time farmer is that his grandsons may regard animal manures, once a main reliance for aiding fertility, as a waste and nuisance, hardly if at all worth the trouble of spreading over the fields. They buy chemical fertilizers cheaper. They also employ more precise and more effective, herbicides to control weeds, and pesticides to reduce insects and plant diseases.

For their livestock today's farmers add to their grain, hay and silage minerals and biotics and "boughten" preparations to enhance health and nutritive value. Breeders continue to provide farmers with animals that use feeds economically. The salable output from animals and their products has doubled since 1920, an improvement even greater than the 85% increase in per acre crop yields.

"Farming is not a business; it is a way of life." So we were gently told for generations by people who preferred some other way of life for themselves. A measure of truth in the statement did apply to thousands of families who liked the land better than the towns and who were able to eke out, in most years, a few dollars beyond subsistence. Although they were in relative poverty, they actually were able to live more richly than their urban counterparts. The old concept has had to be abandoned. Farming still is a way of life, and an excellent one. When, however, investments of fifty thousand to a quarter million dollars are involved not much question remains as to whether it is also a business.

Preserve "the family farm" has long been a shibboleth of politicians and sociologists as well as a realistic concern for a majority of farmers. The family farm is preserving itself. It continues to be the prevailing agricultural unit, albeit a much larger one than formerly. The corporation-owned and operated farm, which
is the alternative, has grown but slowly in numbers, though its contribution to total output is substantial.

The farm family often incorporates itself for business advantages. Along with the heavily capitalized farmers who operate large tracts a new type has emerged, the part time farmer whose enterprise is smaller. He has a job in a factory, service station, store, as a teacher or school bus driver, in other public service, wherever his talent fits and the job is available. He may drive thirty miles or more to reach his employment. His wife, too, may be drawing pay for off-farm work. After hours and on weekends, with mechanical equipment, he can run a small farming operation, with or without livestock. With two or more incomes, the family may accumulate capital for larger scale farming, or for launching their own business in another field. More than half of all farmers now take in more cash from other sources than from the land.

Consolidation of farms has made available numbers of substantial country houses -- pleasant, habitable places where families can be reared in sensible surroundings. These now are mostly occupied by "rural non-farm" families, a census category that has become more "numerous than those classed as farm families. Both the part-time farmers and the rural non-farmers owe their special opportunities, in part, to good roads and motor vehicles.

Operation of open-air recreational facilities is expanding as a rural, non-agricultural income source. Areas of low fertility, especially those that city people can reach, can be managed for camping, fishing, hunting, skiing and other forms of play and vacations for which visitors will pay.

The number of farms counted by the census as late as 1935 was 6,812,350. Now fewer than three million are reported. The farm population totals have fallen from nearly thirty-five million to fewer than ten million. From the long ago day at the nation's beginnings when farmers were 90% of the people, now they are less than three percent.

These survivors in agriculture are the people who have created the unprecedented pattern for the universal conquest of hunger. Their assets equal a quarter of a trillion dollars. Behind each farm worker stands some $30,000 or more in assets. The output per man hour of labor has increased, even since 1950, two and half times as much as the non-farm man hour output, 6.6% a year against 2.6%.

Except as funds have been provided for scientific research and for education, government can be given little credit for what farmers have accomplished. One might add a negative point, that acreage restrictions actuated farmers to strive for higher yields in order to maintain volume and net income resulting in continuing surpluses.
Government action has, impinged but slightly upon farmers’ right to choose; acreage limitations have always left open other options that not infrequently were discovered to be preferable to whatever was denied.

The great leaps forward have been accomplished by individual farmers acting upon their own initiatives -- aided, it must always be emphasized, by engineers who have improved the machines and by geneticists, biologists, chemists and allied scientists.

Does one exaggerate to say that the pattern American farmers have created is really the greatest achievement in the records of humankind? Other advances have opened the way. But did invention of the wheel stop hunger? Did the invention of printing stop hunger? Did the discovery of the western hemisphere stop hunger? None did; none by itself could have; but in the United States farmers have shown the way. Latin America, Africa, Asia, need only to study and to imitate the pattern: with research, education, incentives under individual freedom, they will be able to foreclose on hunger. Then, once their foods are plentiful, their industrial futures can unfold.

To watch this stupendous and historic accomplishment by American Farmers has been a privilege. I feel fortunate to have been born at the time and to have been allowed the vantage point from which to have seen and to have been associated with the greatest of all mankind's advances.
Though radio in 1924 was no longer quite a novelty, it was still new. I had heard a few sounds on a friend's crystal set, but we had not bought a set of our own. A letter came from Sam Guard, manager of the new Station WLS which Sears Roebuck had established in Chicago. He asked for a series of eight or nine noontime and evening talks during the second week of the station's operation. I cheerfully agreed. Just preceding the date he indicated, I had scheduled a farm trip through Missouri and Nebraska, but felt confident that it would be easy enough to write out the talks in spare intervals while on the road.

The talks failed to take shape. I had jotted down a list of themes and managed a few paragraphs but found it difficult to do more. Consequently, on the Thursday afternoon before the fateful week I holed up in the old Baltimore Hotel in Kansas City and worked steadily until Saturday night, when the drafts were completed as best I knew how.

Uneasy and uncertain about this new and strange medium, at dinner Sunday night in Chicago I pried Guard with questions about radio techniques. Was it more effective to end a sentence with a consonant than with a vowel sound? Were very short sentences best? To these and a dozen others Sam supplied evasive answers, or none at all. Just go ahead and talk naturally, he advised.

Next forenoon, a young lady called, explaining that she was doing publicity for WLS, and that she understood from Mr. Guard that I had asked a number of interesting questions about radio speaking. Would I repeat them to her? I could, and did, expecting that she might answer them. She carefully wrote down the questions, but offered no more advice than I had obtained from Sam.

The week passed without noteworthy incident. I described "The Ten Marks of a Good Farmer," "How Farmers Get Rich," "Why Farm Boys and Girls Get Mad" and other obvious topics that today would be widely tuned out, but in those days owners of radio sets would listen to anything.

By 1924, nearly every large newspaper had begun to publish a weekly special section about radio. During the weeks following the WLS appearances clippings accumulated on my office desk. All were alike; all headed "How to Speak on the Radio." The WLS publicity gal had simply turned all my questions into assertions. At the hour of the interview I had never been in a radio studio, had never seen a microphone, and indeed had seldom if ever heard anyone make a radio talk! She had made me a national authority on radio technique.
The ingenious young lady later became editor of *Farm and Fireside*’s women’s pages, and after that the nationally famous foods editor of the New York *Herald-Tribune* and *This Week*. Her name was Clementine Paddleford.

While in Chicago again a few months later I called after dinner one evening at the WLS studios to pay my regards to the staff members who had been kind during that momentous week. The receptionist opened the door into the broadcasting room where the announcer, "Judge" Hay, was reading verses into a desk microphone. Split second programming, necessary after the networks formed, was yet unknown. Hay nodded to me and indicated a seat at his side. Shortly he introduced a violinist and added, "Our old friend Wheeler McMillen has just dropped into the studio. After this violin solo we will hear a few words from him."

Unprepared, I hastened to scribble a few quick notes on an envelope, and planned to tell a Negro story that I thought amusing and appropriate. When the violinist had finished I rose to the standing microphone, cleared my throat, adjusted my glasses, concentrated on what I intended to say and how to say it. Just then, while Hay was announcing me, the door opened and in walked five of the huskiest Negroes I had ever seen. They were the Pullman Porters Quartet and their accompanist. No one hesitated in those days about telling "minority" jokes, but I didn’t feel too sure about using one before this large-sized visible audience. They were all big men and in that small studio, just then, they were a majority. Not being able to think of a different story, I proceeded, and was much relieved when the singers guffawed merrily.

Although over the years I made scores, probably several hundred radio and television appearances, I was never certain as to how valuable these sporadic occasions really were. One who is heard or seen regularly may acquire a following, and perhaps exert an influence. The voice heard only occasionally must be less effective. Perhaps because I was willing and available, and especially because agricultural voices were not numerous, invitations did come frequently from the networks and individual stations. My employers always encouraged acceptance because they felt that all publicity for the magazines had value. Now and then a few letters followed the talks, usually quite sensible ones.

Once in a while, though, some reported result conveyed a little reward. One of these came after a network debate on the merits of the reciprocal trade treaties. The program emanated from New York, where the Foreign Trade Council was in session. I believed in foreign trade but opposed the treaties in the forms then being negotiated. My position was that when every willing worker in the United States had a job, and every arable acre was profitably cultivated, the freest possible trade was desirable; but since that condition did not prevail, not all our industrial and agricultural products should have their protection given away. Nor, I argued, did the people of the countries whose products we were to import in larger quantities always benefit. They were encouraged to work at low wages to
grow rubber, sugar or something else to be sold abroad when they might prosper much better by producing more for their own needs.

For this particular discussion, I had to speak from Chicago because of engagements there. However, an interested personal friend stood by at the New York studios. His report was that after my voice from Chicago concluded one of the free traders stomped up to him and said, "The trouble with such a speech is that you can't answer his arguments." I still wonder whether it was a compliment, or a complaint as to radio's time limitations.

In 1935 Bill Drips, farm editor for the National Broadcasting Company, arranged for members of the American Agricultural Editors Association to join in a network Farm and Home Hour broadcast during a meeting at Columbia, Missouri. The University of Missouri journalism week for that year was devoted to the farm papers. The broadcast was to be made at noon. The chosen editors were to assemble at eight that morning to prepare a script. A competent stenographer was on hand, but some of the men were late. By the time we were due at the broadcasting studio only eighteen minutes of script was on paper. We had twenty-eight minutes to fill. Drips refused to be worried. When the script had been exhausted, I followed his orders by ad libbing. He had warned that at the cutoff time he would give me the usual signal, a finger across the throat. I had talked only about three minutes when he slashed at his Adam's apple, and I quickly closed. Bill then proceeded to talk, repeating himself frequently, for another seven minutes. I was puzzled, and a little disturbed although I could think of nothing I had been saying, or seemed about to say, that was unsuitable for the program.

Once we were off the air Drips sighed a deep sigh and explained. He had misunderstood a signal from the engineer -- or the engineer had made a mistake -- but once he had taken over he had to continue. Silence is one thing radio forbids.

A week prior to the Missouri visit I had received, on Kappa Tau Alpha stationery, a letter from the Chapter's president, explaining that Kappa Tau Alpha (Knowledge, Truth and Accuracy) was an honorary fraternity confined to the upper ten of the senior journalism class. It invited me as president of the American Agricultural Editors Association to attend a luncheon and to be made an honorary member. I promptly accepted. I thought that for a country boy who had never finished college to become an honorary member of an honorary fraternity in a great university was too great a recognition to ignore.

At the lunch I was surprised at the way the members had done their homework. Several rose to praise my alleged accomplishments in varied capacities. I began to feel that the name of Wheeler McMillen was indelibly engraved on every mind present, and must moreover be rebounding, re-echoing and reverberating and perhaps ricocheting from every corner of Missouri.
Then the young man who was president of the fraternity rose. "Sir," he said, "it is our custom to present our honorary members with a gold key on which is the emblem of Kappa Tau Alpha. You see the key which each of us is wearing. We had hoped to present yours here today, but unfortunately the jeweler does not have it ready. Now, if you will just leave us your name and address, we shall mail it to you." I left the name and address, and still have the key.

I another radio incident I was only an observer. Walking out to dinner one evening in Washington with an old friend, Jim Derieux, we encountered Harry Butcher. Harry was then head of the CBS Washington operation and later to write *My Three Years with Eisenhower*. He told us that General John J. Pershing would come to the studio later in the evening to speak at the opening of the annual national Red Cross campaign and asked us to be present if we wished.

After the talk, which the General had delivered with characteristic straightforwardness, Butcher handed him a fountain pen and asked if he would sign the manuscript and leave it.

Pershing eyed Butcher coldly and at length, as though he might have been asked to sign a blank check. "What do you want it for?" he demanded. Butcher pointed to the framed photographs and autographs which covered the walls. "Why, we like to keep souvenirs of the visits we enjoy from distinguished persons such as yourself." Pershing held the pen as though doubtful, and still unconvinced. Turning to me, merely a bystander, he asked "Do you think I ought to do this?" "General," I replied, "I have known this young man for at least ten years and never knew him to do anything improper." Still a little reluctant, he signed the manuscript and stalked out.

My radio talks were wholly unsuccessful with one identifiable portion of the audiences. My wife and son were listening at home, in company with Pagan, our Boston terrier. At the sound of my voice Pagan leaped up, ran into every room upstairs and down, to check whether I had come into the house. Not finding me he put his head on Dorothy's knee for a moment, then sat on the floor and howled. Whether the speech met canine disapproval or some other reasons prevailed I never learned.

Mrs. McMillen was spending the winter in a Florida hotel when I wrote her that, at a certain hour, I would be heard on one of the networks. She invited one or two friends to join her in the lobby, where the only radio was located. The friends told others, so that a dozen or more were assembled.

In the midst of the talk a traveling man came in to register. Noting the gathering, he assumed that something important had transpired and came over to listen. After a few moments he spoke up. "That guy sure thinks he knows a lot, don't he?" Other less than complimentary interruptions followed. The guests stirred
with some embarrassment until one of them shushed the man, pointing to Mrs. McMillen and saying, "The man speaking is that lady's husband. The traveler stood his ground. He listened to the end and then said, "Lady, you don't know me and I don't know you, but I will say that you sure have a lot to put up with."

Television experiences have not been numerous. The first may have been unique. Before World War II, before television became public, the Radio Corporation of America entertained a group of farm editors in Radio City, and had prepared an advance look at the television to come. While actors were getting ready to perform in another room, a "March of Time" film, taken some months previously, was shown. It included a clip from a meeting in Mississippi in which I had participated. So, the first time I ever saw TV I saw myself in it.

A popular program for a few years was called "Strike It Rich." In this a needy person was awarded a liberal sum of cash, the amount depending upon the success of some "celebrity" at answering a few questions. As the "celebrity," appearing one day when real ones must have been hard to find, I was able to locate the Green Mountains, name a state capital, and to answer another simple question or two. Then I was asked to identify a tune the orchestra played. Never having been able to be sure whether Yankee Doodle or the Star Spangled Banner was being rendered, I was not surprised at producing no recognition. I stood dumb. The tune was "Old MacDonald had a Farm."
Chapter 21 - PLATFORM

The speaker's platform is a lonesome place. Once introduced, the speaker is in business for himself. The actor's lines are written for him and a director rehearses him. The writer can back up, erase and rewrite. The painter can rub out and do over. The speaker, once launched, has to perform. Maybe that is why, to some persons, the platform has attractions.

When the Coit-Alber Lyceum Bureau wanted a farm speaker for its 1924 independent Chautauquas season, their approach found me willing. George Martin thought *Farm and Fireside* would benefit and urged me to go. After preparing one speech and announcing two or three titles, I set forth in late June for Worthington, Minnesota. I never heard what reports were made regarding that initial effort, but at least the itinerary was not cancelled. The next town was St. Peter, in the same state and not far away. The weather was good, and few farmers were attracted by the chance to hear a farm editor from New York. At St. Peter I noticed that toward the rear of the tent two rows of seats were filled by men who, though apparently not a business or professional group, did not look quite like farmers. Just as I was launching into my last and most eloquent five minutes they arose as one man and walked out. "What happened? What did I say wrong?" I demanded of the local manager as soon as the program was over. He looked blank. "Why," I asked, "did a quarter of my audience get up and leave?" "Oh! You mean them fellows back there? Don't pay no attention to them. They're from the insane asylum down the road, and had to go to get back in by four o'clock."

At Eau Claire, Wisconsin, I was scheduled for an evening talk at the state teachers' college on July 2. The head of the institution met me at the train and immediately asked about McAdoo's chances for winning the Democratic presidential nomination at the convention then in session in New York. He seemed to think that, having lately come from New York, I ought to know. During dinner he revealed his McAdoo enthusiasm further. As we drove out to the auditorium he remarked that when scheduling the evening's event the imminence of the Fourth of July holiday had been overlooked, and he doubted whether many would be present.

He was right about that. Not more than twenty people were seated by eight o'clock. Without mentioning his intention to me, he rose promptly on the minute and said: "I think it would be a great injustice to Mr. McMillen to ask him to speak to this small assemblage. We will adjourn to the laboratory where we can listen
over the radio to what is going on at the convention." He wrote a check for my fee, and we listened to "Alabama casts 24 votes for Underwood."

After Mouse River Loop, North Dakota, near Kenmare and not far from the Canadian line -- the next engagement was in McConnellsville Ohio. The bureau had plotted out all the routings and train schedules. Until late in August the itinerary crisscrossed and backtracked over Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri while, under one title or another, the lecture was repeated. That no copy of it can now be found may be just as well.

The Chautauqua had known its hey-day during the century's first two decades. From miles about people came to camp out, or rent rooms, in order to attend. Dozens of communities erected wooden pavilions, with up to a thousand seats. Others used tents. The programs, running from five to ten days, included lectures, musical concerts, entertainers and small dramatic companies. Several bureaus supplied talent. A community might buy its whole package from one bureau. The larger independent Chautauquas used the bureaus, too, but often preferred to engage some of their speakers directly.

The idea had originated in 1874 in Chautauqua, New York, and spread widely through the Middle West and into other states. By 1924, interest was waning, and within a year or so most of the Chautauquas had been discontinued. I might have put in a claim to have assisted the demise, but actually moving pictures, good roads and other competitive influences brought about the end.

One small reward, aside from the experience, came out of the Chautauqua summer. A year later, the office wired me some expense money at Plattsburg, Missouri. The bank cashier was properly cautious about paying the order until he was sure of my identity. While he hesitated, a young lady behind the next window said, "I will identify Mr. McMillen." From a drawer she brought out a copy of the 1924 Plattsburg Chautauqua program and showed him my picture. I not only got the money, but also went out feeling that I had been touched by fame.

Platform demands were not frequent for another ten years. I worked at trying to learn something about national agriculture and about the magazine business. After 1935, editorial positions and other connections led to numerous invitations. My publishers encouraged acceptance of as many as did not interfere with the editorial jobs and, moreover, frequently "promoted" the idea by circulating the speeches in pamphlet form. So, again, I was trying to become an orator.

The years of pyrotechnical and floral orators, the Websters and Clays and Sergeant Prentiss's had long gone by. No one wanted to hear that brand of speech. It belonged to an era that offered little public entertainment from other competing sources and when people were willing to listen for two or three hours. I thought that thirty minutes were enough for "our principal speaker." Nor was it
ever wise to bring up an old story. Audiences would laugh, but usually they would have heard the yarn over the radio or from other speakers. Another rule was never to repeat or make a vulgar joke. It was always better to assume that there were gentlemen present.

Audiences do like to laugh, and they will laugh easily, especially at the unexpected and at the immediate. If it seemed desirable to open with a moment of amusement, some incident of the day, some recent personal embarrassment, some jovial allusion to a well-known person present, could always lighten the beginning moments. Or, if one felt the need for a break in serious talk, nearly always something then and there could be made into a joke; a dog barking outside: "Our overflow audience is applauding."

Most invitations came from groups and for occasions where no "set" speech would do. People did not go to conventions, annual dinners, sales conferences and association meetings merely to hear speeches. They wanted ideas or facts that pertained to their particular interests. Consequently it was usually essential to prepare appropriate material, little of which could be re-used for the next engagement.

Many invitations came from around the country for the editor-in-chief of *Farm Journal*. The one I remember best came from Fred Hoppin, county agent at Lincoln, Illinois. He urged that I plan to arrive early and to stay around a day after, so farmers could come in for personal visits. As he put it: "We don't want you just to blow in, blow off and blow out!"

Every speaker should be conscious of his time, unless he is marvelous his audience will not forget the clock. If one faces only a hundred people but uses up six minutes of his half hour in needless triviality and platitude, he has wasted ten hours of human time, besides his own.

Whether to read a speech from manuscript or trust to notes was a question that came up often. If the audience was known in advance to be an important and thoughtful group, likely to be impatient with meandering, it was safer to use the manuscript. That, however, does not necessarily impair the effectiveness of delivery. If the lectern aids the speaker to conceal his papers, and if he will look at his listeners more than at his manuscript, he can conclude an address without many realizing that it has been read. For such gatherings as the San Francisco Commonwealth Club, the Chicago Executive Club or the New York Economic Club a manuscript was preferred.

One occasion taught that it is best not to step on the platform without knowing what has preceded. The South Dakota Stock Growers Association was meeting at Hot Springs. Wind prevented the plane from Cheyenne from landing at Hot Springs and had to leave us at Rapid City. The alert association secretary had a car on hand to get me back to Hot Springs in time for the scheduled afternoon
talk. We made it, but with no time to spare, and I hurried from the car into the auditorium without my brief case. This had gone on to the hotel with the baggage.

As I sat in the wings for a few moments, Douglas McKay, then Secretary of Interior, was standing at ease with an elbow on the lectern while fielding questions directed at him from the audience. I admired the forthright way he handled them.

Until the introduction I had not thought about the missing manuscript. Then it was too late. I explained what had happened, offered to speak without it, but assured the crowd that "I can put on my spectacles, put my nose in a paper and read it just as well as anyone else."

The remark seemed to bring down the house. I didn't think it was funny enough to evoke such a gale of laughter. Only later did I learn that the Secretary of Interior, before my arrival, had read his set speech in monotone, with his glasses on and his nose down. At the buffalo meat barbecue that evening several people were more cordial to me than was Mr. McKay.

Speaking from notes, or without any, can be more fun because, no matter how serious the topic, one can be more informal and can more easily inject the humorous touches. Either notes or extemporaneous utterance can, however, betray the user.

After an address before a considerable crowd of Michigan farmers in a pavilion at the State Agricultural College, I left the platform better satisfied than usual with the performance. I knew what I wanted to say, paid little attention to the brief outline, and loudly belabored what seemed to be a very friendly audience for a half hour and a few minutes more.

A friend on the college staff had taped the talk, and sent me a copy. I found a tape player in the office and started to listen, a solitary audience of one ready to admire his own eloquence. After seven or eight minutes I stopped the machine. Horror is about the only appropriate word for what I felt. I called in two colleagues who had frequently heard my speeches. "Here," I told them, "is a speech I want you to hear, by Senator Klaghorn, it must be." When the tape had run long enough I stopped it again and said, "If that's the way I sound, I don't believe I shall ever make another speech."

The boys argued that the tape reproduced only the voice, with none of the facial expressions, turns of body, gestures or other actions that had accompanied the words, and that it must have been a pretty good speech. I was willing to be convinced, but determined to try thereafter to be a little less orotund.
Tape reproduction affords an excellent means for anyone to study and correct his performance defects. Before it became available I occasionally was able to arrange for a fast stenographer to give me an exact transcript of an extemporaneous talk. These helped to correct errors in grammar, sentence structure and arrangement.

At the Indianapolis Rotary Club the old Claypool ballroom was well filled even before I was escorted to the dais. While chatting with the president of the club, I saw more and more people coming. Waiters were crowding in extra tables. "Mr. McMillen," the president said in apparent astonishment, "you must be the greatest attraction our club has ever had. Never, never before have we had such a crowd."

Well, after all I was a son-in-law of Indiana, had lived there four years, had been there often since, and knew a few people in Indianapolis. It was really pleasing, and beyond all expectation, that so many were going to hear my speech.

The let-down was soon to follow. Before introducing me the club president, who with a straight face had been attributing the swollen attendance to my drawing power, proceeded to welcome the large number of visiting Rotarians who were in the Indiana capital attending the national convention of high school principals. Knowing that Rotarians are expected to attend regularly, wherever they may be, I was well deflated.

Even after twenty-five years of making twenty-five to thirty speeches a year and appearing in forty-six states, the ambition to become a polished orator was never quite achieved. I never learned the art of triggering a burst of applause every few minutes. It was enough if no one walked out. The "standing ovation" after a speech has become too often a perfunctory courtesy to count for much. The best accolade comes when some listener walks up and says, "I heard you in St. Louis in 1954, and I have never forgotten something you said there," and proves it by quoting the point.

Nevertheless, I hold the public speech to be the topmost of the performing arts. No one listens to speeches any more? Annually some 18,000 or more conventions gather in the United States with six to two dozen addresses listed on their programs. Nearly 1,700,000 men belong to the luncheon clubs that meet weekly in every town and usually hear speakers. Clubs to which 11,000,000 women belong search for speakers. Labor, business and farm organizations are led by speaker. Teachers and clergymen are most effective if they speak well.

No young person who aspires to leadership should fail to develop his speaking ability. Whether to sell ideas, arouse emotions or to impart facts, effective platform delivery has power. A successful speech is also a magnificent tonic for the ego.
Chapter 22 - POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Col. Knox's Farm Proposals...Thomas E. Dewey...Thanks From Bob Taft...Joe Martin and the National Chairman...New Jersey Senatorship...Or Governorship...A Bigger Proposition...Rather Editor Than Senator...So, Only and Barely Among the Also Mentioned

In 1936, Col. Frank Knox was publisher of the Chicago Daily News, and a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. I had called at his office to discuss matters relating to the Chemurgic Council, of which we were both directors. That disposed of, the talk turned to politics and to farm questions. I outlined ideas for promoting more research, and for using incentive payments to farmers for constructive purposes. "Will you put that on paper for me?" he asked. "Right now?" He wheeled a typewriter from an adjoining room, and added "I'll be out for a while so when you finish leave the copy with my assistant."

I followed instructions and went on to a luncheon appointment. Then, picking up an early afternoon edition of the Daily News, I found a front page box announcing "Col. Knox's "Farm Proposals." The text, in 10-point type, reproduced my memorandum with hardly a word changed. Some men, I had to conclude, can make up their minds quickly.

Knox lost the nomination to Alf Landon, but went on the ticket as vice-presidential candidate. After war began, he became Roosevelt's Secretary of the Navy.

Another experience contrasted sharply. Over the big coffee cups on the New York Harvard Club, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., always curious about everything, wanted to know what should be done about farm legislation. We had become friends as colleagues on the Boy Scouts of America executive board. He was eager to promote the political advancement of Thomas E. Dewey, then district attorney and candidate for governor of New York. At Ted's request Dewey received me at his office. After raising a few questions, he asked that I place the ideas before his people at the political office uptown. "We'll look into them seriously, and use them if we can." Whether he ever heard or thought more about them I never knew. We did discuss some of the same points again at his farm near Pawling in the fall of 1948, early in his second presidential race, but they did not emerge in his "high level" campaign.

Whatever thanks came from Knox or Dewey has been forgotten, but not those from another figure of the times. In May 1938 I gave a talk at a dinner on the Ohio State University campus in Columbus. A visitor came next morning to my hotel room. "My name is Dick Forrester, and I am helping Bob Taft in his campaign for the senatorial nomination. I've heard that in your speech last night you presented some interesting ideas on the farm situation. Taft ought to hear them. If you will name a date, I'll have him come to New York to see you."
Since I was going to be in Cleveland two weeks later, we met there. Taft opened our talk by saying, “Mr. McMillen, I am running for the Republican nomination for United States Senator here in Ohio.” I was amused at this beginning, for certainly he knew that I was aware of that fact. Then he continued: “I know what I want to say to the business people, to the labor people, to the veterans and to the women of the state. But I don't know what to say to the farmers. Dick Forrester tells me you have some ideas that should be useful.”

After an hour's talk he wanted to know if I would put the suggestions in written form, along with arguments in their support. The material was mailed to him a few days later. Nothing more was heard until August, when the mail brought copies of a Taft campaign circular addressed to Ohio farmers. My material was printed nearly verbatim.

Early in January 1939, a dinner was given at the Cosmos Club in Washington for the freshman Republicans in the new Congress. Clarence Brown presided. I had been asked to offer such counsel as I chose about desirable farm legislation. Before the meeting closed Brown, a veteran Ohio congressman and close friend of Taft, asked the new senator if he had something to say.

Although he had been sitting on my right at the speaker's table, Taft paused as though he had not expected to be called upon. Finally he said, "I can say something about these ideas you have heard from Wheeler McMillen. In our campaigns in Ohio last year we presented them to farmers all over the state. We lost the big cities, but we carried the state by 168,000. I commend them to you as good Republican political doctrine." That, I thought, coming from a man already supposed to be a cold character, was handsome enough thanks for anyone.

Taft was far from being cold or remote, although when absorbed, he could be brusque, as I heard sometimes from others. He introduced into the Senate a measure for special research into new crops which I had promoted, and which August Andresen of Minnesota offered in the House.

After Wendell Willkie snatched the Republican presidential nomination from Taft at the 1940 convention, political pundits were speculating as to whether the Ohioan would be a contender again in 1944. As we were driving in his car one evening in 1941 for dinner at a waterfront restaurant, I observed that his Buick was of the same 1936 model we had at home, and remarked that we were wondering about trading it in. "I told Martha," he said, "that if I could get reelected to the Senate in 1944 we would buy a new car.”

That may have been an unintentional tip-off, but he was reelected Senator in 1944, and Martha probably got her new car. He stood aside that year for his fellow Ohioan, Governor John W. Bricker in the presidential contest, and then lost the nomination in 1948 to Dewey and in 1952 to Eisenhower.
Wendell Willkie's futile campaign against the third term nominee, Franklin D. Roosevelt, left me angry and depressed. As a spectator at the 1940 convention in Philadelphia I watched the "eastern establishment" put over the nomination of Willkie. From previous observation of the man, when he had been president of the Ohio Society of New York, I regarded him lightly. His acceptance speech at Elwood, Indiana, terminated my hopes for that campaign, although it did include one memorable line: "Only the free can be strong, and only the strong can be free."

As the third term began I, along with many others, felt that the Republican Party had to be revitalized and reorganized. It was no particular responsibility of mine, but I hated to see the loyal opposition drift along with no program and no conspicuous principles. Joe Martin was the party's national chairman, likeable, agreeable, and inactive in those areas necessary for the party's success. As representative from his Massachusetts district and as house minority leader, Martin had much else to do. Senator Hugh Butler of Nebraska, whom I had known before he came to Washington, and who was national committeeman from his state, Senator Raymond Willis of Indiana, and a few other concerned persons met from time to time to consider what might be done. Specifically, we canvassed the short list of Republican governors and recent ex's who might be qualified to rehabilitate the party's leadership. No promising name came up. Suddenly one night at dinner Butler burst out. "Why don't we make you the national chairman?"

I knew that it was unheard of for someone who had never worked his way up through the ranks from local to state and to national politics to become the chairman of his party's national committee. From a slight experience in two small county campaigns in Indiana years before I knew the importance of organizing effort down to the precincts; I knew also that a party ought to have principles and a program. I had neither the experience, the qualifications nor the acquaintance to discharge such a responsibility.

Butler was insistent and kept planting the idea wherever he thought it might sprout. A few newsmen gave it mention. Occasional editorials. I remember especially a vigorous one in the Journal of Sioux City, Iowa.

Joe Martin sent word that he would appreciate a call at his office. In effect he said: "I think the national committee needs some one who can give its work more attention than I can. It needs an executive director. He ought to have at least a three-year contract so he could work into the next campaign. He ought to be paid, say $25,000 a year. Would you undertake such a job?"

I thought I might. It offered the substance of the work that needed to be done. "I would want it understood that I would be free to talk about policy and programs as well as about organization matters," I stipulated. "It would be troublesome to
have to clear every possible remark with you or some one else." Martin agreed. "You will be hearing from me," he said as we shook hands.

I read a few weeks later, in the papers that Clarence Budington Kelland, author of the famous Scattergood stories in the *American* magazine and of other fiction, then national committeeeman from Arizona, had taken the job as executive director, unsalaried. That was that, and I had a magazine job to attend to.

The political fringe was to widen in 1942. Three men had announced themselves as candidates for the New Jersey seat in the United States senate. Albert W. Hawkes, wealthy and respected president of the Congoleum Company was one. Gil Robb Wilson, a former minister and eloquent aviation advocate, was another. A New York banker, Joseph E. Bower, a Montclair neighbor of Hawkes, had also announced. One Saturday afternoon, James E. Selvage drove up the Hopewell house lane. He was an old friend and nationally known public relations man with offices in New York and Washington. He declared that no one of the candidates would do or could win. "Why don't you run?"

This was flattering, and more than a little tempting. From boyhood I had supposed that a seat in the Senate of the United States was, next only to the White House itself, the pinnacle of political glory. As a realist, I was aware that I was not well known in New Jersey, in fact, was new to it; and that a senate campaign required financial resources far beyond my means. "Leave those things to me," Jim insisted. I went as far as to say that while the idea was tempting I thought the venture doubtful, and would not decide until it was given considerably more ventilation. I could see no harm in letting it be talked about.

The evening after the morning papers first mentioned my name as a possible candidate, Mrs. McMillen met me at the station with a question. "Do you know what the Hopewell people are saying about your running for the senate?" I had no idea. "They are saying that they hope you won't do it. They say that New Jersey politics are such a dirty mess that a decent person such as they think you are should not get into it."

That almost made the decision. It was nice to know that our neighbors thought well of us; but it also seemed that if such were their opinion of state politics, the time had come for decent people to get busy. When I used this story later in a public statement the Newark *News* made a warm and kindly editorial comment about it.

H. Alexander Smith, later to be a senator himself, was then the state Republican chairman. He feared the effects of a statewide primary fight over the senatorial nomination and wanted to head off an open battle. To that end, he called an informal convention of county leaders in Trenton and invited the announced candidates to appear.
One of them, he hoped, would win over enough organization supporters that the others would withdraw.

Selvage was indignant when he learned of this maneuver, and demanded that I, too, should be invited. Smith at first protested that I had not announced, but finally telephoned me an invitation the Sunday evening before the Monday morning convention.

Each of the prospective contestants, now four in number, was given ten minutes time. As the last and least known, I decided not to discuss issues as the others did. Instead I paid tribute to the invaluable party services of the organization workers, the county chairmen present and particularly to the usually unrewarded precinct workers who got out the vote and did so much of the party's hard work. This impressed the boys. Here was a guy who appreciated how elections are won and who wins them! I added, however, that I did not appear before them as a candidate; though grateful for the opportunity to meet them, any announcement would be deferred until the right decision could be made.

The decision was deferred until the last hour before the law required a candidate to file his petition. His petition had to be signed by several hundred voters. Selvage had provided that. No one, however, had offered any substantial money for a campaign. We knew that Hawkes could finance his own battle, and presumed that both Bower and Wilson had resources behind them. A few friends, one a manufacturer, another a state farm leader, met in a Trenton office on the last evening. It was with reluctance that I said we should not file the petition. Another similar decision, six years later, was easier to make.

Nearly a year later an urgent invitation came from Arthur T. Vanderbilt to join him for dinner at his club in Newark. Vanderbilt, a leading lawyer, then was the political power in Essex, the most populous county, with strength in other north Jersey areas. As head of the "clean government" movement he had ousted the former powers and installed in key offices men whom he believed more responsive to their public trust.

Before the soup was served Vanderbilt came to the point. "I want you to be our candidate for governor." With the idea coming from so influential a source I could almost see myself in the state house, but there were still considerations. I was unknown in the state's metropolitan areas, for one thing. "How much circulation does Farm Journal have in New Jersey," he wanted to know. I gave him the figure. "That's a pretty substantial basis to build on. Think it over, and let's have dinner here again a week from tonight."

By then I had an answer. I had read the constitution of the state to see what it said about the governorship. "I can't qualify," I told Vanderbilt. "The constitution requires a governor to have been a resident of the state for seven years. While I have owned property and lived here part of the time for ten years, I have voted
here only since 1938. So that let's me out!" The lawyer-politician, and future chief justice of the state, pondered briefly before saying: "If you get the nomination, I don't believe that point will come up."

His instructions were that I should one by one visit with the county chairmen, telling each firmly that I intended to run; but to intimate to no one that he was behind me. I had seen three or four of the twenty-one and then had to fill speaking engagements in the Midwest.

During that absence I learned that Walter E. Edge, a former governor, former United States senator, and former ambassador to France, had decided to run again for governor. A wealthy citizen of Atlantic County, he was well and favorably known.

Meanwhile I had reviewed my own insufficient qualifications. The governor of a state needs to know how to run a multi-million dollar business; to know qualified people to head the departments; to be politician enough to manage a legislature; and he ought in addition to provide the people of his state with some moral and civic leadership. Edge didn't need the job, but he wanted it and I knew he was as capable as anyone in New Jersey to handle it well. When he telephoned the night I had returned home I was prepared to say that he would have no opposition from me. Vanderbilt was furious. He didn't want Edge, who won nomination and election and made a constructive record as governor.

Completeness compels recording another interval which, despite my comparative immunity to modesty, still seems so unlikely as to be not quite believable. Only because documentary evidence reposing with my papers in a university library can provide proof, this episode, widely unnoticed at the time and by everyone long since forgotten, is included here.

Alvin Park was a Lutheran minister at Bartonville, a suburb of Peoria. He was squarely built, blond, clear-eyed and friendly, was warmly admired in his church and well respected elsewhere in the Peoria area. As the operator of some 400 acres of land, he was keenly interested in progressive agriculture -- and also enjoyed more financial freedom than do most pastors. We had become friends at Chemurgic conferences, meetings of the directors of the National Swine Growers, and on an occasion or two when I had spoken in Peoria.

His bombshell exploded in my face one afternoon in a Chicago hotel. We had been talking for an hour or so about both farm matters and the national political situation. It was evident that he was leading up to something. Suddenly he came out: "Wheeler, why don't we run you for president in 1944?"

"You can't take an unknown colt out of the back pasture and win a race like that," was my answer at the moment. Park argued that it could be done. He had talked about it, he said, with enough Peoria leaders that he knew preliminary backing
could be obtained. He pointed to areas where he was sure support could be developed.

No doubt any person would have been flattered and, of course, I was. I finally said that I felt such an effort could not succeed, but conceded that even if it were only to be talked about it might build a higher platform from which I could sell the ideas I believed in.

Before long Park was arranging interviews with political and business leaders in Peoria and Chicago. He raised some funds. Paul Shoemaker, one of my old Associated Press friends, resigned his job and set up a headquarters office in the Adams Building, Chicago, from which much mailing and telephoning was done. Public appearances were arranged in Peoria, Danville, Topeka, Indianapolis and other places.

The fire never blazed high enough to attract real notice. Park lost none of his tenacity, but finally had to agree to discontinue the effort. The decision was made in contemplation of the Wisconsin primary. Not enough money was in sight to make an effective campaign there, and a good Wisconsin showing was clearly necessary to get into the big time.

I was sorry that Al Park had so little to show for his efforts, though I never really knew what impelled him. His only remark of disappointment must have been a true one. "You never wanted to be president badly enough." Our friendship continued until his untimely death two or three years later. And Paul Shoemaker, to my delight, soon got a job that was much better than his old one.

The final political episode was a slight one, but had the value of clearing my mind as to what I really wanted out of life. New Jersey in 1946 adopted a new constitution. The governor, Alfred E. Driscoll, asked me to take the chairmanship of the newly created Public Health Council which was to assume the functions of the former state Board of Health. I knew less than nothing about public health problems, but learned that my major duty was to arrange for the former department head to retire and to see that the Council elected a properly trained and up-to-date new director. After consulting with United States Surgeon General Parran and some other authorities, a vigorous and able young man was found and elected by the Council. My chairmanship took a day or more out of each month and it was a no-pay, no-thanks job in a field I had no disposition to cultivate. I did not request to be reappointed.

However, at the Council's December meeting in 1947 a message came that the governor wished to see me as soon as we adjourned. "Wheeler," he asked, "how would you like to be the next United States Senator from New Jersey?" The term of Al Hawkes, winner in the 1942 election, was about to expire, and Driscoll wanted him replaced. Driscoll had become strongly dominant in the party. That
the next senator would be a Republican, all signs indicated. This was, therefore, virtually a "silver platter" offer.

A decision already had been reached, for while Driscoll's words were unexpected, suggestions from other sources had prompted thought. My answer was ready: "Governor, I would love to have been a United States senator, but I don't want to be one."

As editor at that time of *Farm Journal* and of *Pathfinder*, both with large circulations, I felt that I had a more useful and influential job than that of being a junior senator, one voice among ninety-six. And while in a sense I had to run every day to keep my job, at least it was not necessary to stage a campaign every six years. Regardless of the starting advantages, campaign funds would be necessary; the idea of being obligated to contributors was repugnant. The cost of maintaining two homes had to be considered. A major factor, strengthened when Mrs. Hawkes told me about people sitting on their home doorstep Sunday mornings, was a strong preference for privacy. This was something few senators, and probably none from a populous state as near to Washington as New Jersey, can expect to enjoy.

Then, the personal future was to be considered. If elected, I would no longer have an editorial job. If not re-elected, as was probable if I appeared to be too independent, in six years I would be too old for a new job and probably not in demand for anything else. Unlike a lawyer or farmer, I could not expect to pick up where I had left off.

One other consideration had been taken into account. Senator Hawkes had not made known his intentions. Although his popularity had declined in the state, he would be a formidable primary opponent. I admired Hawkes. We had become good friends, and I would not have enjoyed a contest against him.

During dinner at his apartment in Washington a few days after the interview with Driscoll, Hawkes remarked that he was doubtful about running again, and added: "If you will agree to be the candidate, I will definitely get out and give you every support I can." That, of course, would have smoothed the way even more, but it didn't alter my decision.

My political career might be summed up thus: "He was never nominated or elected to office. He was never even an 'also-ran'. He was merely among those 'also-mentioned'".
Chapter 23 - AMONG THE BOY SCOUTS

A Persuasive Caller...The Great Executive Board...Uncle Dan Beard...A Rule Broken...The Organization...Lesson to A Scouter...Other Outside Jobs...Surprise at the U.S. Treasury

If all my energies had been devoted strictly to magazine details, I might have been a better and more successful editor. Diverging temptations were usually embraced if they seemed likely to make the magazine better known to the farm or advertising public. Each such diversion offered a chance to learn something new, and usually the experiences were more fun than arguing about what we ought to print on page 36. The staff could be trusted to decide that.

Working with the Boy Scouts of America turned out to be the most deeply satisfying of all digressions. A tall, lean, bespectacled man came to the Country Home office one day in 1937 and announced that I was wanted for chairmanship of the National Committee on Rural Scouting. His name was Oscar H. Benson. As a county school superintendent in Wright County, Iowa, he had started one of the first rural youth clubs, and had designed the 4-H cloverleaf (Head, Heart, Hands and Health) which became the movement's national emblem. At this time he was director of rural scouting for the Boy Scouts of America. Benson was persuasive and didn't give up easily. He wasn't impressed that I already had a fulltime job and a sideshow or so. He also discounted the fact that that I knew nothing whatever about scouting except that the boys met in troops and on occasion wore uniforms. He displayed figures showing that a vast majority of rural boys belonged to no youth organization and needed one. His clincher emphasized the Lone Scout. A country boy, too far from others to join a troop, could gain all the inspiration and training scouting offered, with the help of a man of his choice.

"The boy," Benson said, "is told to choose the best man he knows as his friend and counselor, his father, or maybe a neighbor. No man ever refuses that boy's nomination."

I agreed to take the job, and the next year was elected to the B.S.A. National Executive Board. This unusual body and its operations are not as well known to the public as it deserves. Among the members in 1938 were Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Marshall Field III, Frank Hoover of the vacuum cleaner firm, Paul Litchfield, builder of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, R. Douglas Stuart of Quaker Oats and later ambassador to Canada. It also included Amory Houghton of Corning Glass and later ambassador to France, Thomas J. Watson, Sr., founder of International Business Machines, Earl Sams, President of J.C. Penney Co., and Daniel Beard, a founder of the scout movement. The total board membership then was fifty-two. Meetings occurred four times a year; and attendance was regularly thirty to forty. All members came when possible. No habitual absentee was reelected.
Being responsible for all the basic policies and general operations of the Boy Scout organization, board members worked as seriously and conscientiously as at their own affairs. Each took part in one or more committees. Committee work usually began on Wednesday morning. Meetings were scheduled through that day and evening, Thursday breakfast, forenoon and lunch, until time for the full board meeting Thursday afternoon. Many committees were necessary because scout activities were wide ranging. Among them were Finance, Scouting Supplies, Boys’ Life, Public Relations, Field Operations, Personnel, Health and Safety, Camping, Insignia and Uniform, Merit Badge Requirements and others. Most of the committees included important scouters who were not board members but were especially qualified for their subjects.

At the close of the board meeting those who could stay dined as a group, and occasionally did a little more work. One evening on the way in to dinner I was walking with Dan Beard, who had been sounding me out to know whether I had really ever been a country boy. Uncle Dan,” I asked, "have you read this new book by John Bakeless about Daniel Boone?” “Yes,” he said. "I read it.” He offered no further comment. "You don't sound very enthusiastic about it,” I pursued. He explained with emphasis. "Bakeless couldn't write a good book about Boone. Bakeless is a round-faced man and Boone was a long-faced man. A round-faced man can't write a good book about a long-faced man, because he won't understand his subject." Since Uncle Dan was professionally an artist and had for most of his ninety years been a keen observer of people, I had to be impressed, though not necessarily convinced.

I was truly impressed, though, and continued to be through twenty-five years as an active participant, at the assiduity and attention with which the board members studied their committee jobs, and the time they devoted. They worked as faithfully as though the fates of their own multi-million dollar companies were involved. The staff professionals, of course, were able to lay out the groundwork and at times offered recommendations or alternatives. No member of the board received any fee for attending, nor expenses, and all were usually billed for their group meals.

Among those who joined the board in later years were former Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, Ezra T. Benson, Secretary of Agriculture, Dwight D. Eisenhower while president of Columbia University, Eddie Rickenbacker, Ivan Allen, later mayor of Atlanta, Norton Clapp, president of Weyerhauser Timber, Col., Leonard and Roger Firestone. President of the National Council when I came in was Walter W. Head of the General American Insurance Company. Others who succeeded to that office were Amory Houghton of Corning Glass, Kenneth Bechtel of the California contracting company, Ellsworth Augustus, Cleveland industrialist, John M. Schiff, Thomas J. Watson, Jr., and Irving Feist.
To strengthen committees, active scouters, frequently specialists who were not board members, were chosen from various fields. While serving as chairman of the editorial committee I had the help of Doubleday's executive book editor, Ken McCormick, and of Andrew Heiskell from *Time-Life* as examples. The "power structure" of agriculture was represented on the Rural Scouting Committee by men from the Farm Bureau, Grange, the cooperatives, farm press, Future Farmers and 4-H leadership, and from the rural church organizations.

The Rural Affairs committee produced, among others, one innovation in scouting that has been notably useful. Waite Phillips, an Oklahoma oilman, presented to the Boy Scouts of America the Philmont Ranch, 130,000 acres of wonderful wild land in northern New Mexico. To help maintain the ranch he also gave an office building in Tulsa. His dream was that through the scout organization a boy could come to the ranch, camp in the mountains, ride horses, experience a little of the Old West that had helped to make America. Attendance at Philmont year after year crowded the facilities and supervisory capacity, as troops from every state made a Philmont trip one of their goals.

It seemed to me that the scoutmaster, the local man who builds, leads, instructs, watches over and inspires the home troop, had to be the most important man in scouting. It also seemed that he might often be the least appreciated. He was likely to be the sort of man who would be thrilled by a week or so at Philmont, yet probably would never get the chance to go. I proposed the idea of Philmont "scholarships" as awards to faithful rural scoutmasters. While we were discussing this one-day the Committee suddenly got out of hand. Simply because no one likes to be abruptly confronted in the presence of others by a request for money, a tacit but stern precedent of long standing had been that, although money might be the prime solution to a problem, Scouting committee members were never solicited for contributions while in session.

Our talk was interrupted when some one said, "Why don't we get this idea going? I'll give enough to support one scoutmaster at Philmont." Before the chairman could explain the precedent, enough offers were made to provide a Philmont scholarship for one rural scoutmaster from each of the twelve regions. The reactions of the chosen scoutmasters could have been predicted. The idea spread until through donations from Sears Roebuck and Lutheran foundations and individual sources, four to five hundred scoutmasters and their families each year have a week at the ranch.

For administrative purposes B.S.A. was divided into twelve regions under which 508 Councils operated. Each region had its board, an executive and staff, and each council its board and one or more professional workers. Currently nearly 4 million boys are members, served by 4,300 professional workers. Net assets of B.S.A. total $46 million.
Each scouting unit, whether cub pack, troop or explorer post, must be sponsored by a qualified local institution. About half of these are churches, with civic groups and schools or P.T.A.s next in number. More than thirty church organizations participate, from Protestant and Roman Catholic to Buddhist. As chairman for several years of the Relationships Committee, which dealt with all sponsoring groups, I enjoyed meeting their leaders, especially the clerics. With friends in so many denominations, and having been an impartial chairman, if I ever approach the pearly gates I hope that one of them will be qualified to sponsor me for entrance.

Thomas J. Watson, Sr., invited a few board members to join him one day at a lunch in honor of a visiting Boy Scout troop from Venezuela. Nothing had been said about speeches. The idea occurred to me, however, that if anyone spoke he should address the boys in their own language, and sat wondering whether, if called upon, I could frame a few sentences from scanty memories of school day Spanish. Meantime, Jim West, the chief scout executive, called up Frank Wozencraft, a former mayor of Dallas and then prominent Washington attorney. Wozencraft pulled from his pocket a bit of manuscript and in impeccable Spanish read what he wished to say. West then called upon me; I spoke in English.

After lunch I assailed West for notifying Wozencraft in advance, while giving me no notice at all. "I could have had a Spanish speech ready, too!" West insisted that he had not given Wozencraft advance notice. I asserted that he surely had, for hadn't Frank produced a prepared manuscript? Wozencraft, standing near, overheard my protest, and confirmed that West had given him no warning. "But, Frank! That manuscript!" Wozencraft looked at me soberly, eyes a-twinkle, and replied, "Wheeler, the motto of the Boy Scouts of America is 'Be Prepared.'"

Through all the magazine years I was, technically, a mere hired man, a salary-slave of corporations, though the opposite could be asserted. The corporations were my servants. They provided means and background that opened ways to do things I wanted to do, things that otherwise I would have had no opportunities even to approach. For the time and travel expense often incurred in affairs not strictly editorial, payments came as freely as for toil at the desk. I like to believe that most or all of the "outside" activities reflected advantageously on the magazines.

The interests which might have been thought extra-mural include the 25 years I served as president or chairman of the Farm Chemurgic Council; a few years each as trustee of Rutger University and of Ohio Northern University; six as director of the National Audubon Society; periods as director of the Farm Foundation, the Agricultural Hall of Fame. One might also mention the two years as president of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture (founded 1785 and still active); fifteen years as a director of the New Jersey Telephone Company and seventeen as a director of the Bankers National Life Insurance Company.
An especially interesting assignment occupied several 1957-58 months. The President's Commission on Increased Industrial Use of Agricultural Products called me in to be its executive director. With information contributed by a hundred knowledgeable members of task forces, and the help of several competent aids, the commission made a report that was printed as a senate document of 135 pages. How much effect it had would be hard to measure, but it had to be useful. Perhaps the most notable fact, though, was that with an appropriation of $150,000 for the commission's work, $25,000 of that amount was returned unspent, to the astonishment of the U.S. Treasury.
After we began living in New York I was interested and amused at the comments made by acquaintances who learned that we had come to the metropolis directly from an Ohio farm. "If I could have a farm, you would never catch me staying in a city like this."

Fifteen years before then an Irish-born New York lawyer and reformer, Bolton Hall, had published a book called *Three Acres and Liberty*, followed by two others. These argued and attempted to show how anyone with a small piece of land could live in comfort and plenty. They were not very realistic, but had sold in large numbers. Believing that a more objective book might sell, I produced *The Farming Fever*. The intent was to tell what farm life and work was really like, what qualifications a farmer needed, with something about the particular specialties and hobbies that seemed to interest city people.

After *The Farming Fever* appeared in 1924 another idea emerged, an instructive book for youngsters about various collecting hobbies. With the aid of a researcher who dug up factual material, chapters were prepared about stamps, coins, Indian relics, insects, shells, minerals, flowers and other botanical materials, dolls, photography and scrapbooks. Published in 1926 as *The Young Collector*, and although soon confronted with competition from a similar book by a well-known juvenile writer, it kept selling for twenty years.

Who buys books? Where do the ordinary non-bestsellers go? When a new work appears the author usually sends a few copies to friends. The publisher mails review copies, and forwards the clippings he collects. The few thousand sold fall into the hands of strangers, stand eventually on bookshelves or drift into the second hand stores. One little thread did reach over three and a half decades. A young publisher had come to my library to talk about a proposed book. His eye, as he scanned the shelved, noted the one remaining copy of the Young Collector. He took it down and opened it fondly. "My mother bought me this when I was a young boy," he remarked. Our relationship became warmer.

The right title can do much for a book. A book or a speech is harder to name than a baby. It has no rich uncles or notable ancestors. A title, *Too Many Farmers*, attracted some attention to book number three.

The prospective publisher agreed that we might market a lively book that pictured the then current status of agriculture, described clearly the numerous controversies over farm questions, and proposed some remedies. Already in *Farm and Fireside* I had written much material which could be adapted. After
putting this together a few new chapters were added, and we seemed to have a
book. No name for it, however, struck sparks. I wrote perhaps fifty or more, and
liked none. Thayer Hobson, president of William Morrow & Co., the publishers,
eventually hit upon an idea. In one of the new chapters I had casually, remarked
that although more than one fourth of Americans were then farming,
unquestionably before many years ten per cent of America's population would be
ample to supply the nation's table and lunch counters, and three per cent of
Americans are now farmers, instead of the more than twenty-five per cent then,
would indicate that the title was justified.

Timing can be an element in a book’s success. Too Many Farmers appeared in
October, 1929, a month in which stock market events had given people
something other than farm questions to worry about. Hobson sold out the first
printing and most of a second, but finally cleared the warehouse of 175 leftovers.

An early morning telephone call came from Firman Bear, then director of
agricultural research for the American Cyanamid Company, with an office in
Radio City: "My copy of your Too Many Farmers book has gotten away from me.
If I bring one along to lunch tomorrow will you inscribe it for me?"

We fixed the time and place. A few minutes later a co-worker burst in with news.
"Did you know that Liggett's window was full of copies of your Too Many
Farmers? And selling them for seventeen cents each? "Liggett's drug store in the
Grand Central terminal building, then did a substantial business in remaineder
books. I promptly called the manager and arranged to buy his entire stock.

Next day at lunch Dr. Bear exclaimed, "That book of yours must be selling like
hot cakes! Yesterday morning I saw some in Liggett's and intended to buy one to
bring along today, but last night when I went home they were all gone!" Over
subsequent years orders trickled in for copies at the original $2.00 price and I
more than recovered my seventeen-cents each investment for the 175 leftovers.

The next projected book came to a different sort of end. The beginning was a
lunch table conversation with James C. Derieux, managing editor of the
American Magazine. His uncle, a Confederate, and one of mine, a Union Soldier,
had both been participants in the battles of Gaines Mill in 1862, where thousands
had been slaughtered. I kept wondering how it could have come about that these
two men, doubtless not greatly different from Jim and myself, could have been
induced to shoot at each other. What really caused the Civil War? Although long
interested in United States history, my knowledge was not very deep, and I
wanted to find an answer. Aware from experience that one good way to learn
about a subject is to write about it, I decided to undertake a biography of a figure
who had been active in the pre-war decades.

Excellent books about Webster had recently appeared. When an autograph
dealer told me that probably 40,000 of Henry Clay's letters were scattered around
in private hands, I knew that to hunt for those would be a full time job. Calhoun was unattractive, and Thomas H. Benton's papers had mostly been lost in a fire. Then I noticed that John Tyler's life almost exactly spanned the period I wanted to investigate, 1790 to 1862.

Preliminary scouting turned up the surprising and welcome fact that a son of President Tyler was still living. He was Dr. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, the last son and second to last child of the President's fourteen offspring. Who's Who told me that Dr. Tyler, a former president of William and Mary College, was living at Charles City, Virginia, not far from Williamsburg. His prompt response to a letter, in quavering but clear handwriting, expressed his delight that a "Northern Republican" should be interested in his father, and urged me to visit him.

I had already schedules a trip to Virginia in order to inquire, for article purposes, into county government changes then under way. Fitting it into his Easter vacation, I took my son Bob along, figuring that we could thus have some time together and could visit a few historical spots we had not seen.

Having telephoned for the appointment, we found Tyler's sprawling frame cottage in a wooded setting that overlooked the James River. We planned to spend the afternoon, and then to stop overnight in Williamsburg. As we drove in, two sturdy boys, about ten and eleven, came running to greet us. Close behind was Dr. Tyler. Instead of the decayed old gentleman I had expected to find in a wheel chair, a sturdy man looking no more than sixty shook our hands and seized our bags. Protests that we would be leaving before night were overruled.

We had an afternoon and a long evening of informative and helpful talk. He promised to supply any material he could for the proposed biography. As midnight approached he suggested a nightcap. At that time, not only because the prohibition laws were still in force, I did not drink, but the occasion was too pleasant to refuse, and obviously Dr. Tyler wanted someone to drink with him. He appeared shortly with two tall tumblers, spoons, a bowl of sugar, and a glass jug of transparent liquid. He filled and stirred the glasses, and handed me one. Wondering about the aroma I passed it under my nose. Neither the foul smell nor the pungent taste were inviting. It was plain Virginia moonshine, corn liquor.

When the doctor had drained his glass he prepared another, and seemed to be disappointed that I had not kept up with him. Finally I explained that I was really a teetotaler, and he allowed me to set the glass down after only a few sips. Bob and I went to bed in an adjoining room. Before getting settled I heard him return to the table and finish off what I had left.

The two small boys were Dr. Tyler's sons. He himself had been born when his father was sixty-three, and at this time he was in his late seventies. The boys are now, I believe, practicing law in Richmond, still young enough to live another few
years. Thus three generations of one historic family will span two hundred years of the nation's history, from 1790-1990.

Next morning, we were taken along to church services in the old Westover chapel. Bob and the boys rode with Dr. Tyler, who set his Model-T Ford at thirty-five and took the road as it came. Mrs. Tyler, then probably in early forties, rode with me. She said that was his habitual way of driving. "I try to keep him away from liquor," she said, having mentioned his midnight hospitality, but in some way that I can't discover he always seems to have a supply."

After my comment upon his obviously remarkable energy she told of their New Years Eve experience. They had been invited to Blandford, a famous old plantation on the opposite side of the James. Some of the road they had to take, this was before every by-road was paved, had been quite muddy. Although Blandford was only a short distance by crow's flight, they had to drive nearly 40 miles to the Jamestown ferry and then upriver again.

On the return trip, after midnight, they asked the ferryman whether an alternate road might be better. He advised taking the road they had previously used. "We drove off the ferry," Mrs. Tyler related, "and promptly he headed out on the road we have been told not to take. In a few miles we were hopelessly mired, and it was raining hard. Without a word he jumped out of the car and disappeared into the darkness. I waited for at least a half an hour, when he reappeared with two strangers, both in full evening dress. They pushed us out of the mud hole. Woman like, I could not help remarking that it might have been better to have taken the ferryman's advice." "Oh! no my dear," he said. 'This was an adventure. And I love adventure!' "What can you do", she added, "with a man like that?"

En route to Charles City the day before we had passed Westover, the great house built in the 1700's by Col. William Byrd. I had remarked to Bob that I would give an arm to see it, but that it was in private hands and we would not intrude.

After the church services a gracious young matron invited the Tylers to come with their guests for Sunday lunch. She was Mrs. Crane, whose father-in-law had given her Westover as a wedding gift. So we enjoyed Westover in its early spring beauty, gardens and all, and later visited Berkeley, the old home of the distinguished Harrison family.

With materials and suggestions from Dr. Tyler I soon had a substantial body of information at hand, including his own three-volume The Letters and Times of the Tylers. A book on my own shelf, obtained earlier in a Chicago second hand shop, had been a factor in settling on Tyler as a subject for biography. Issued anonymously by Harper in 1843, it praised the President's career and argued vigorously in support of his administrative actions. Dr. Tyler knew the book, but not who had written it. He remembered that his older half-brother, who had been one of his father's secretaries, had mentioned "Abell" as the author, and thought
perhaps it had been Arundah S. Abell, founder and long publisher of the Baltimore Sun. This was unlikely, since Arundah Abell had not been a Tyler supporter. Harpers reported that fires had long since destroyed their records for that period. J. Franklin Jameson, then head of the Congressional Library, who had shown me some of the Tyler papers there, set some of his helpers to work on the problem. They came up with the answer, discovered from study of contemporary newspapers. President Tyler had named one Alexander Abell to be his "messenger to Texas". The Texas annexation was then a major controversial subject. Abell, it appears, did not have to go to Texas every day, so he sat down in the White House and produced the book to build up Tyler for a second term.

Before more had been done than to organize the preliminary notes and to write a few tentative pages my appointment as editor of Country Home took place. The biography was never written by me since there was too much else to do. A good biography by another writer appeared some years later. In time I worked out, to my own satisfaction, at least, the question that had initiated the biographical intent. The basic cause of the Civil War was, indeed, slavery; but it was precipitated by the loud mouths of extremists on both sides.

Another book was not to emerge until 1946. Malcolm Johnson, editor for D. Van Nostrand Company, wanted a book about chemurgy. The opportunity to wrap up several the years of thinking, observing, writing and speaking on this subject was welcome. The book contained a history of the Chemurgic concept and its organization, a series of narratives reporting the numerous practical developments, and a section setting out the implications of the underlying philosophy. The title chosen was New Riches From The Soil.

The final chapter, "A Force for Peace," emphasized that the philosophy of production could achieve far more of mankind's desires for abundance to be enjoyed in peace than the ancient predatory ideas to which statesmen were yet adhering. "Growing things and making things pay better than taking things," it concluded. Neither writer nor publisher became rich from New Riches, although it did sell out two printings and did not land in Liggett's window.

Land Of Plenty, The American Farm Story, appeared in 1961, When the John C. Winston Company of Philadelphia inquired who could produce a brief but comprehensive history of American agriculture for a teen-age audience, I volunteered. No longer involved in editorial details, I thought I had time. Moreover, having for years been trying to write simply for a mass audience, I thought that writing a juvenile work would be little different. If anyone could write plainly enough for any audience I was confident that I could do it.

The Winston editor, an able young female, accepted the outline readily enough. She proved to be a tiger for details, prepared to question any statement and criticize any phrase. Much of the time, perhaps most of it, she was right in her
efforts to produce the utmost simplicity and clarity, as well as unassailable veracity. When once she caught me wrong by a century, I had dated a Jacques Cartier incident in 1635 instead of 1535, her vigilance became even more relentless. Her persistent querying at first became annoying, and then amusing. After the job was complete she reported that she was resigning to get married. I advised her that if she ever questioned her husband as she questioned her authors, the marriage would not last long. Did it? I have not heard.

By publication time Winston had been absorbed into Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Through the U.S. Information Administration the book was translated and published in French, Arabic, Burmese, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Gujarati and Telegu. The latter five are languages of India.

I enjoyed a morsel of gratification from being printed in other tongues, the USIA contracts offered slight financial satisfaction. The publisher receives $50 for a printing up to 5,000 copies, with a scale reaching $200 for 15,000 copies or more. Of such sums the publisher remits half to the author. Inasmuch as the government pays well for its munitions, and makes extra allowances for its overseas servants, these pittances to authors would seem discriminatory. My attempt to interest the Authors Guild in the situation produced no actions.

A final humiliation pursued Land Of Plenty. After all my pride in writing simply, and all the furious help from the editor lady, there arrived one day a neat little paperback edition. Even my satisfaction in having been put into eight languages melted. This time the book had been "translated" into English! Basic English it was, with a vocabulary of only 2,000 words, intended for readers to whom English is a second language. That it was a job well done, and that little really essential had been omitted, I had to concede. Nineteen translations into thirteen languages stands as the score for four of my books.

An even more determined effort to write simply had been under way a year or so before Land Of Plenty. I wanted to explain Why The United States Is Rich, which became the title. The intent was to produce a small volume which, probably in paperback, would carry far and wide. This was that our country's exceptional good fortune is due, much more than to anything else, to the right to choose. Terms such as "capitalism," "private enterprise," "free enterprise," "the American system," "the American way," "individual liberty," "constitutional government" and others I thought to be too abstract for many to comprehend, and they convey different meanings to different persons. I believed that the American freedom of choice in selecting a job, in education, religion, speech, location, etc., has been the primary factor in our well-being.

When the manuscript was finished, with every word and every sentence as simple and clear as I knew how to make it, I thought that a large market could be found. Certainly, it seemed, it would be useful in schools. Likely, corporations would buy quantities to place on the reading racks for their employees. The
potential for its use in explaining the United States economy to foreigners appeared unlimited.

The larger commercial publishers promptly or belatedly returned the manuscript with their usual nice, short letters. Those whom I knew issued what would be termed "right wing" books, or books that at least followed conservative American thinking, reported that they could see no way to market such a small book profitably. Finally I turned to an old friend, J.H. Gipson, whose Caxton Press in Caldwell, Idaho, often speculated in what he called "libertarian" books. Jim accepted the challenge, and printed up a handsome 68-page edition with an attractive paper cover.

As a small regional publisher, Caxton lacked facilities or money for major promotion. Two or three corporations bought a few hundred copies. USIA had the book translated and published in Portuguese and Spanish. A foundation paid $500 for the privilege of reprinting 10,000 copies. There were, of course, a moderate number of small sales.

Samuel Johnson said, "No man but a blockhead ever writes except for money." Although I usually write only for money, Why The United States Is Rich was written because I thought it was needed, with the hope that it would help thousands to understand the U.S., and as perhaps a patriotic contribution. That it has not had the desired circulation has, therefore, been a greater disappointment than the failure of an expected moneymaker would have been.

Possums, Politicians And People was a gratifying venture for various poor reasons. Suggested by Farm Journal colleagues, it afforded a welcome opportunity to put between covers what I considered the best of my writings through twenty-four years in the monthly "All of Us" column. Then, Dick Davids, who did the final editing, wrote an introduction that described me as I would like to imagine I might be. Finally, because the book was so largely personal, it provided a little volume that has been useful as a gift to hostesses and friends who might not appreciate a heavier tome.

Leonard Harris, the young publisher mentioned earlier, came over one day to suggest an anthology of American farm writing to be done for his Channel Press. This was a pleasant assignment, and easy. All the material that went into the 417-page book was on my shelves. Christopher Columbus's account of finding corn and tobacco opened the book; two passages from Louis Bromfield closed it. Harvest, as it was entitled, will stand as my best book, with 100 picked writers it has to be!

As long ago as the late 1940's the notion occurred that one might do a book about the one hundred most useful Americans. I wanted to emphasize the usefulness. Perhaps I wanted also to be able to omit certain characters. The list of potential candidates for inclusion grew to more than two hundred and fifty
names. The manuscript, however, was finally reduced to what became, in 1965, *Fifty Useful Americans*, which Putnam's published as a juvenile book. I will defend my chosen fifty against any of the omissions.

After Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* became a bestseller in 1960, its effects eventually began to alarm the pesticide manufacturers, and farmers as well. Donald Lerch, a publicist in the field, proposed that I write a rejoinder. This, I thought, was needed, The Carson book had been neither wholly accurate nor wholly fair. The public is bound to suffer from unsound restrictions on the use of the pesticides and antibiotics that have become essential to producing food in either abundance or quality. Pesticides were being charged with effects upon the environment which are due to other causes. So, *Bugs Or People?* was written and published in 1965 by Meredith, under their Appleton-Century imprint. It has sold fairly well, though in no such quantities as Mrs. Carson's book, which indeed was excellently written and did create healthful effects.

It was embarrassing to find that a scientific error went into the manuscript; and interesting that it was first called to my attention by a farmer, not by a scientist. In writing of the Irish potato failures of the 1840's I referred to their cause as a virus, when it was a fungus. Such inexcusable mistakes diminish the authority of a book.

In response to a request from Cary T. Grayson, Jr., head of Potomac Books, Inc., a slim volume called *The Farmer* was prepared in 1966. One of a series, it was intended primarily for overseas uses in English, and was also translated into French.


The thirteenth book might also be considered the fourth. During the early thirties when other duties were not exacting, I wrote an account of four years spent as publisher and editor of The *Covington Republican* in Indiana. Memories were still fresh, some notes available, and I was able to borrow files of my 1914-18 issues. After two or three tries the manuscript failed to shape up. The publisher or so to whom I mentioned it showed no enthusiasm; those were not venturesome years in the book trade.

The manuscript was laid aside. After retirement in 1963 I reworked it and offered it to the agent who was handling my output. He declined to bother with it -- two strikes against it, he said, as autobiography and newspaper stuff. Not convinced, I peddled it to one publisher after another. On the fifteenth trip out it was accepted by Southern Illinois University Press for a "New Horizons in Journalism Series." Under their imprint it appeared in 1969 as *WEEKLY ON THE WABASH,*
a title which my son supplied. Covington celebrated the publication date with "Wheeler McMillen Day".

Ohio Farm, a title chosen by the Ohio State University Press, though essentially a biography of my father, told in detail how we worked, played and lived through the century's early years. Because the life portrayed was experienced on countless other Midwest farms, I had preferred to call it A Farmer's Golden Years. Reviews were kind, and the book sold out.

Feeding Multitudes, a History of How Farmers Made America Rich, occupied nearly 500 pages, and still sells moderately. The subtitle supplied the urge to write the book, for I had long insisted that the nation's well being has rested upon the original new wealth yearly created by tillers of the soil.
Two months' time off at full pay! The Crowell Company closed its offices at noon Saturdays on thirteen holidays, and gave two weeks paid vacation. Compared to former newspaper and farm hours the two-month difference, at first mildly astonishing, was easy to accept. Full Saturday closing came in due time.

Regardless of how enjoyable it was, work's primary purpose was to make a living. We had to be sheltered, fed. Cloth ed and amused, preferably in as much comfort as we could afford. Affording grew a bit easier each year as work paid better.

Real living in New York began for us when Dorothy and our six-year-old Bob arrived from the farm. We endured a few weeks of hotel hospitality. Two Brooklyn apartments followed, each on Ocean Avenue next to Prospect Park. After a few years, disgust with subway travel impelled a move. In Jackson Heights, a grassy new development in Queens offered more comfortable travel. We bought a house at 3425 85th St. Three stories with only six or seven rooms, this was one-fourth of a brick structure to which other houses were joined, each with a garage and a small lawn. The whole area, then quite open, is now covered solidly with apartment buildings and houses.

Apartments, however pleasant, had always left me feeling that I lived on a mere shelf. The house at least had a few square yards of ground outside and was more satisfying. And more happened here.

The depression years of the 1930's swept down. Many of our friends, especially those who had depended upon stock market prosperity, were broke or worse. We saw the apple sellers on Manhattan corners and abundant other evidence of the disaster. We, however, were among the fortunate. The company cut salaries ten per cent at one point, though within a year the cut was restored. We knew other publishing companies where the cuts were deeper and longer. My salary had increased steadily, and with growing receipts from writing jobs, our income rose a little each year.

A maid helped Dorothy keep the house and with the cooking. Christine was happy to work for $15 a week with Thursday afternoons and every other Sunday off. This was the going rate. A little, blue-eyed Irish blonde, she was proud of her first job since leaving County Limerick. Cheery and quick of tongue, she contributed no little to our amusement, and tried hard to please. For a time I had
some crotchet about my breakfast which she had not immediately grasped. One morning I said, "Christine, if you can't do this right I'm afraid I'll have to get me another girl." Not sure how seriously I meant the threat, she quietly proceeded with polishing a sideboard until her answer was ready. "Mr. Mac," she said, "don't ye think ye'd better fight wi' a dog that ye know than wi' a dog ye don't know?"

Eddie, a hefty Long Island native, was king of the basement. He made his modest living by taking care of several furnaces nearby, disposing of the trash, and doing other chores. Because we were frequently absent, we had placed a sturdy cot in the room next to the furnace and arranged with Eddie to sleep there when we were away, or at any time when he chose not to go to wherever his home was. He used the basement room often, sharing it with Toby, our police dog.

Once when we planned to be gone for longer than usual I suggested to Eddie that he might find my bed upstairs more comfortable than the basement cot. After our return he reported that he appreciated the offer, but it had not worked out. "The first night I went upstairs. Toby followed me and threw herself crossways on the bed. When I took off my pants and started to sit she snapped at my rump. She had never even snarled at me before. After two or three trials I gave up, took my pants and went back to the basement. Toby came along and went quietly to sleep on her rug. "Guess she knew that I belong below stairs."

Another handy man who undertook odd jobs in the neighborhood was Miller, a light mulatto who owned a variety of skills. When I found that he held a driver's license I asked him what he would charge to drive our car into the city each morning, and to come for me in the evenings. He asked if fifty cents a trip would be too much. For a dollar a day I had the service of a competent chauffeur, escaped both subway and bus travel, and felt as exalted as a millionaire.

The urge to get back into the country became insistent. Connecticut and Westchester sounded too expensive for our means. Weekend searches located a virtually abandoned 81-acre farm on a back road north from Flemington in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. We bought it for $3,600. The frame house, battered and worn, nestled neatly into a slope near the road. Its great stone fireplace was big enough to walk into. The walls were frail, the wide floorboards creaked, and cracks between the shingles admitted shafts of light into the attic. The house had been built about 1815. Between the outer siding and the interior plaster the walls were filled with clay, crisscrossed between widely spaced studding by split oaken sticks. Only a major overhaul could have fitted the place for winter occupancy even had we wanted to chance the long dirt road. On the other hand, it was a delight for summer, and I cheerfully undertook the nearly two-hour house to office journey. With a few hundred dollars and many agreeable hours of labor we made it habitable for use any time from early spring until cold weather. We kept the Jackson Heights place.
The land itself was virtually worthless. Poor farming methods pursued for a century or more had permitted the topsoil to trickle into Pleasant Run, the attractive little brook that ran the length of the place. Gullies cut deep on the steepest slopes. In a radio talk I described the place as "Acres gone broke". Aside from renting a few pasture acres, we made no attempt to produce revenue.

After our purchase had become known, the Flemington Rotary Club invited me to talk before one of their weekly luncheons. The New Deal agricultural legislation had recently been passed, by which farmers were to be paid for reducing output of various products. Thinking this to be a timely topic, I described the law to the club audience, and explained with a straight face how it would enable me to pay for my new farm. I would not grow so many acres of wheat and corn, and not raise so many hogs, and with the government checks would recover my investment. Of course, I could have done nothing like that, having no previous production, but I thought that this satirical treatment would indicate clearly enough my opinion of an unsound and probably unworkable law.

“You made me more trouble than anyone who ever spoke in Flemington,” Ed Gauntt, the county farm agent, told me years later. “Half of that crowd took you seriously. They kept me busy explaining that you were kidding.” You can’t always win when you try to be funny!

Besides being unsuitable for all year occupancy, the place was inconvenient for my travels. We liked the area but needed to be closer to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Weekends of search located the right spot, seven miles from Princeton, a dozen from Trenton, and two from the village of Hopewell.

One reached it by driving three fourths of a mile up a narrow but solidly graveled road. On the left, Stony Brook bubbled and dawdled along. The house sat quietly up a slope, some 600 feet from the road. Ancient elms, pines, oaks, a gorgeous copper beech, a perfect old horse chestnut, towered over the broad, unkempt lawn. A sturdy red barn, with high foundations of stone, stood back to the right, and near it slumped a combination wagon house and corn crib.

At this spot, we learned, Leni Lenape Indians had villaged long ago near the spring that poured copious waters down to the brook. Here, in 1696, the proprietors of West Jersey had sold their first Hopewell township tract to Roger Parke, a Quaker physician whose descendants held title for a century and a half. Here a local magnate had lived in the 1880’s, a man who loved trees and had planted the splendid specimens that dominated the site. In all there were 80 acres, part of them on a steep hillside across the brook.

A later succession of careless or impecunious owners had let everything but the trees deteriorate. The once noble house was decrepit, but dignity still clung to the exterior. Inside it had been divided to accommodate an extra family. We found 18 rooms, large and small, five staircases and five fireplaces.
Carpenters, masons, plumbers and painters all liked the place so well that a year elapsed before, in the spring of 1938, we were allowed to move in. They had shored up sagging floors and ceilings by steel beams, cut the rooms down to eleven, paneled the dining room with old pine boards taken from the wagon house, and built on the front a handsome stone porch with four tall white columns. It looked like an estate instead of a simple rural retreat, and the final cost was three times what I had estimated we could prudently afford. It was, however, comfortable and quiet and beautiful. We loved it, and finally managed to get it paid for.

The arable fields had good soil, but the acreage was too small to farm economically. When 100 acres of adjoining land were offered, I took an option on them and employed a farm manager. As editor of a farm magazine I could not afford to do a poor job of farming. While our man was first class, I was too short of cash to equip and stock the place properly, and after two or three years concluded that I had better be either an editor or a farmer, and not try being both. So we disposed of all land except 30 acres.

For seventeen glorious years we reveled in the beauty and interest of the Hopewell place. Any day could bring a surprise. One year fourteen migrating male tanagers flaunted their scarlet and black uniforms for a day or so. Wood ducks and mallards hatched on the brook. When we ate out of doors a deer might stare from under the nearby apple tree to see what we had on our plates. Barn swallows nested at the barn, purple martins in their house, cardinals and brown threshers in the shrubbery, and kingfishers along the brook. Over the years we listed 130 species of birds both resident and visiting.

During our first spring Bob brought for his Mothers' Day gift a tiny black kitten. Unable to find on her a single non-black hair, we called her Sheba. When her first kittens arrived they were nearly as black. Before long we had twenty-seven cats with hardly enough white hairs among them to whiten one paw. Meter readers and superstitious persons found visits hazardous. Another generation broke the ebony pattern, and because we liked birds more than cats, the feline multitude was reduced by veterinary action to one.

Meter readers and repairmen also found winter visits to our basement intimidating. Florida friends of Dorothy sent her a pair of two-foot alligators. Named Handbag and Valise, in summer they were confined to a backyard pool, but in winter they enjoyed the warmth of a corner behind the furnace. Though the meters were in an opposite corner, a sudden awareness of the reptiles bothered the men enough that they demanded escort service. Valise met with misfortune, but Handbag grew to a four-foot length before he was taken into saurian society at the Philadelphia zoo.
Copen and Hagen, Dorothy's beloved Great Danes, moved to Hopewell with us and enjoyed the freedom of the acres until both died. We were hardly consoled to their loss by the fact that their deaths came just before meat rationing was imposed. Sheppie looked and behaved as the aristocrat he was with champion setters as maternal and prize-winning collies as paternal ancestors, a half-breed aristocrat! Shona, the Rhodesian ridgeback, and Sadie, the Corgi, arrived at war's end from Africa, where Bob had collected them. The farm gave them all room to develop their canine personalities.

We were blessed with congenial neighbors. Jack Fausett, whose farm adjoined ours, viewed life through a humorist's eyes. His wife, Mary, he maintained, did all the planning, directed all the crop, cow and chicken operations; he merely obeyed orders and did the work. As he approached seventy, consultation with a heart specialist became necessary. He reported the verdict: "You must remember, Jack, that you are no longer young. From now on you must never, never, do any hard work whatever. "Mac," Jack added, "the man said that while Mary was sitting right there and heard every word. Mac, you just couldn't find a better doctor than that!"

The contours and slopes invited decoration. I aspired to grow every kind of flowering tree or blooming woody shrub that would survive in the climate, without requiring the work of a horticultural hospital. Wholesale purchases obtained quantities of common forsythia and spirea. One nursery provided twenty-four species of flowering crabs and six of magnolia. The dogwoods, cherries, golden rain, golden chain, Chinese Scholar and other blossoming trees flourished, including the rare Franklinia. Mulberries and others were planted especially for the birds.

I enjoyed planting and delighted in clearing away the briars and undesirable growth that had taken over areas destined for neater and lovelier adornment, but with so much to be done indoors and out, we had to have help. For two summers Dorothy brought David and Eloise up from Florida. Eloise, gentle, educated and faithful, was a good cook and housekeeper. David was a flop at most work except driving the cars. We had at the time a station wagon and a dignified black Buick. One afternoon David came to Dorothy and asked, "Mrs. Mc., can I take the Buick to get Mr. Mc. this evening?" "What's wrong with the station wagon?" she demanded. Nothin' wrong, Mrs. Mc., but all them other chauffeurs over at Princeton, they think the station wagon is the onliest car we's got!"

David had pride in his employers, even though he never over-exerted himself. Another year Dorothy brought a new couple, James and Susan. James was perfect, but his wife was worthless.

Amongst the extra workers we hired for occasional projects a wizened Sicilian, one Sebastiano D'Agostaro, nicknamed Tony, appeared frequently. A veteran of the World War I Italian army, Tony had immigrated to New York, and the
depression had pushed him out to Hopewell. As Dorothy was worrying one fall about how I would manage out if she made her winter stay in Florida, a usual procedure because I had to travel much of the winter months, Tony volunteered to take over the house. She was worried about my meals until we discovered that Tony had run a restaurant. He proved to be a superb cook and reliable caretaker. Thereafter Tony was with us the year around, yard man in summer and house man in winter.

I loved the Hopewell place fervently, every corner of the old house, every acre, every tree, every shrub, every trickle of the brook, every flower that blossomed from root or branch, every stone. It had always seemed that a family ought permanently to own a piece of these United States, and we had there our happy thirty acres. The old home farm in Ohio, cherished though it was, had been sold to the tenant who had earned the right to own it, and part of the proceeds had helped to pay our obligations at Hopewell.

The rising costs of maintenance and operation, however, became a matter of concern. When a young couple offered a tempting cash price we agreed to sell. I walked the boundaries for a last time with tears.

We bought, and then sold, a winter home in Florida, drifted a while in hotels and apartments, until we found and kept for eight years a pleasant, secluded home in New Jersey at Moorestown, some fifteen miles from Philadelphia. Then the doctors told Dorothy she must no longer climb stairs nor face cold winds. Hence we bought a modest, one floor house on Anna Maria Island, at the edge of the Gulf. Here we lived happily and comfortably another six years until Dorothy's ailing heart gave way in March, 1974.

Bob promptly invited me to share quarters with him in Washington. Three years later he retired, and bought an attractive ten-acre spot in northernmost Virginia, fifty miles from Washington. For this he designed and had built what has turned out to be for our needs and wants, a thoroughly satisfactory house. Over the long years I have inhabited about fourteen houses or apartments and have called each of them home.
Chapter 26 - PEOPLE AND INCIDENTS

Chuckles and Smiles...Trivial but Unforgotten Remarks... A Chosen Few That Did Not Fit Into Earlier Chapters...Not Necessarily Funny. Some May Be Just Reading Matter...Let Them Keep Each Other Company

At a New York Economic Club dinner the man on my right responded to ordinary remarks with icy reserve. He looked and acted like the traditional stuffed shirt, and the bulging bosom under his black tie accentuated the effect. I had no idea who he was nor what he did, but I was determined to find out. “What did you usually have for breakfast when you were ten years old?” I asked. He glared at me for an instant before answering, “Bread and cheese. I was a Shepard boy in the Swiss Alps.” The rest of his story came pouring out, all the way to his place as a vice-president of a big Wall Street bank.

The breakfast gambit nearly always yielded a tale, along with the identity and current interests that I wanted to hear. Another one that will loosen most tongues: “Do you know what your great grandfather did for a living?”

During the first Dearborn Conference on Chemurgy, immediately after the second day luncheon, the guests were taken to visit Henry Ford's Greenfield museum, and told to reassemble at three o'clock for a session in the Martha Mary chapel. At two forty five I emerged from the museum in company with Irenee DuPont. Noting the time, I lit a cigar, smoking had not been allowed in the museum nor would be in the chapel. Mr. DuPont said, "I'd like to have a smoke, too."

Reaching hesitantly toward a vest pocket, he added: "I've got some fine Havana cigars here; just brought them back from Cuba last week." Glancing at the clock, he then said, "Hate to light one, though, just for fifteen minutes." From his overcoat pocket he pulled out and filled a calabash pipe and puffed it until we reached the chapel door. I began to understand DuPont success; and how he had been able, a few days earlier, to make a princely gift for cancer research.

A pleasant elderly automobile liveryman drove me from Washington, N.C., to Plymouth, a county seat on the southern shore of Albemarle Sound. We fell into conversation about the Civil War, and joshed each other freely about the differences between North and South. After finishing my errand at the Plymouth courthouse, the driver beckoned me to a side of the courthouse yeard opposite his parking space. “Something over here I want you to see,” he said. It was a granite boulder to which a bronze plaque had been attached. “Read that!” he said.

I read the text aloud. It went something like this:
Confederate troops led by Brig. Gen. R.F. Hoke, achieved a brilliant victory in the capture of Plymouth from the United States military and naval forces, April 17-20, 1864."

"That's splendid," I said. "Now show me the monument erected to the northern troops who captured Plymouth in the first place." "Oh!" he said quickly. "That ain't come yet."

Over the Fourth of July weekend in 1933, a depression year, Bob and I floated down the Current River, through the Ozarks. We caught bass, sunfish and catfish, watched the birdlife, camped on sandbars and enjoyed our guide's open-air cooking, without seeing a skyrocket nor hearing a firecracker. Back at our starting point, we headed west for Springfield.

I had run out of cigars, except for a bag of unsmokable stogies from a roadside store. As we entered the oblong "square" in the Springfield business center, I spotted a cigar store and looked for a parking place. None was vacant on the first round, but I saw a car backing out behind us and hoped to find the space open next time around. Someone else got there first, and I stopped the car to decide what next.

A policeman, solid, broad-shouldered, paunchy, blue shirt with a badge on his suspenders and wide, thin mouth firmly inverted, came charging up, snorting, "Can't park there! You can't park there!" As he reached for the window I said, "Officer we are just passing through, and I want to stop long enough to spend about five dollars. Tell me where to put the car for a few minutes." "Five dollars!" he exclaimed. "Well, that's different. Leave 'er set right here, and I'll watch 'er till you get back." With a box of my favorites in hand, I gave him the bag of stogies and proceeded, admiring the officer's devotion to his city's economy.

Tom Delohery, Farm and Fireside's red-headed Irish South Chicago staffer, adhered faithfully to the precepts of his church. He grew uneasy ask to whether he might be drinking to a sinful intent. "So I took the wife," he told me, "and Saturday night we went to see the priest. I said to him, "Father, I want to know. When is a man drunk? Ecclesiastically drunk I mean?"

When the National Catholic Rural Life Conference was convened in Boston, the purpose was to enlighten prospective priests and nuns, future teachers around the country, as to the basics of agriculture. Monsignor Ligutti, executive of the Conference, asked me to tell a Sunday night audience, in the simplest possible terms, what farming is about.

Archbishop Richard Cushing, later cardinal, made a gracious introduction. I began by exhibiting a few grains of corn, explaining how they were planted in early spring and how they multiplied a thousand-fold, into the ripened ear, which I then displayed.
After the program Cushing rushed up and demanded my manuscript, then asked for the ear of corn. Receiving them, he said, "You also held up some grains of corn when you started. I want to make this same speech some day, and I want all the props." He was too little of a farmer to think that he could easily have shelled off a few grains from the ear.

In January, probably 1927, prior to a trip to Ottawa, I wrote to a friend there suggesting that I would appreciate his arranging a little real Canadian winter for me. As the morning train left Montreal a snowfall began which did not stop until sixteen inches had fallen; and next morning the thermometer was down to sixteen below zero. The hospitality was perfect!

The Dominion parliament was about to open, and I was made a guest of the press corps for this formal occasion. After a short time to watch the lower house assemble, the reporters went outside to observe the arrival of Lord Willyngdon, the Governor-General. As he emerged from the limousine and I noted his pink knee breeches and thin shanks, clad in silk stockings, I wondered whether felt boots might not have been more comfortable. A voice behind me struck a less sympathetic note, "Ay, he eyen 't the sport that Byng was. Byng always come up in a sleigh."

Anticipating an early visitor, I had asked that my room in the Chateau Laurier, Ottawas, might be made up. The maid was a big girl, not far from 200 pounds, squarely built, with a square face, a curiously thin mouth, arched brows, and a high, squeaky voice that contrasted strangely with her general bulk. She was talkative and a native of Holland. She told me that she had gone to England at thirteen to work and to learn the language, hoping eventually to emigrate to the United States. Quotas had thwarted that ambition, so she had come to Canada instead, and was then twenty-eight. "Do you like it in Canada?" "Oh, yes, I do, sir! I have been here only six months, sir, and already I am engaged to a policeman, sir." Have you ever been married before?" The eyebrows arched higher as she paused for a moment and turned back to her work. "Not in a church, sir!"

While visiting with friends in Charleston, I was included in an invitation with them to dine at three in the afternoon at the home of Mrs. Stoney, one of the city's aristocratic matrons. I thought to please our hostess by speaking of a notable South Carolina family whose history I had lately read. I spoke glowingly of the distinguished lieutenant-general, governor and senator, the wealthiest planter in the South, Wade Hampton. I mentioned the General's father, also a rich planter and a friend of Henry Clay, and then referred to the earlier Wade Hampton who had been a Congressman, and later a Brigadier-General in the War of 1812. "Yes," the hostess agreed. "The Hamptons, seem to have done well, but, you know, we never heard of them before the Revolution."
Jim Derieux, managing editor of the American Magazine invited son Bob and me to accompany him, one autumn day in 1929, to Northampton, Mass., where he had an appointment with recently retired President Calvin Coolidge. Coolidge was writing articles for the American.

After introductions and moments of casual talk Mr. Coolidge turned to Bob and asked, "What's your first name, son?" "It's Bob, Mr. President," the youngster replied. Coolidge drew a blank card from a desk drawer, and on it wrote: "To Robert McMillen, with very best wishes. Calvin Coolidge." To him, Bob apparently was an inadequate name.

Anne Morgan, daughter of the formidable J. Pierpont, Sr. and sister of the then head of the great banking firm, became interested at one time in the farm situation and had heard about industrial uses and new crops. She asked me to join a small party for dinner at the Colony Club. While putting on the black tie I reflected that this must be one occasion when a country boy would need to be careful not to pick up the wrong fork or spoon. The party included Senators Mahoney of Wyoming, Flanders from Vermont, and five or six others. One was Maude Elliott Howe, daughter of Julia Ward Howe. Miss Morgan seated me at her left, and immediately began an earnest disquisition about something on her mind at the moment. With her nearly masculine voice and vigorous manner she spoke impressively. She emphasized a point by striking her fist on the table between us. A fork rose into the air and circled over my shoulder to the floor. While trying to keep track of her discourse I managed to make a mental note to quit worrying about bungling the silver etiquette.

During a lunch with George Ade at his Brook Farm home in Indiana, he remarked that no Indiana writer who achieved fame had ever given up keeping his home in the state. He named Lew Wallace, Booth Tarkington, Meredith Nicholson, Charles Major, James Whitcome Riley and one or two others. "How about Theodore Dreiser?" I asked. "I was speaking of writers," he replied, and changed the subject.

In search of a fact that I thought he might be able to disclose, I stopped without an appointment at the office of Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi. I assured him that ten minutes would suffice. "Take all the time you want," the senator said, with an expansive gesture. "Mine is paid for by the year."

The eastern shore of Virginia is a narrow peninsula, seldom more and in many places less than five or six miles wide from Chesapeake Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. A favorite fishing resort on the ocean side is Wachapreague. Here, for many years, Capt. A.H.G. Mears owned the hotel, the fishing boats, and engaged the guides.

One morning Capt. Mears himself was our guide. Threading narrow channels, he remarked that for more than fifty years he had gone fishing every day that the
weather permitted. "Were you born here at Wachapreague?" I asked. "Oh, no," he said. "I was born inland." Wondering how he might have migrated from Iowa or Ohio, I asked, "Whereabouts, inland?" "I was born at Onley," he said. Onley is on the eastern shore, about two miles from the bay and two miles from the sea. Inland, sure enough!

While we lived in Brooklyn Dorothy and Bob and I decided one nice summer evening to go for a ride on the Staten Island ferry. We asked our maid, Adah, a colored girl from Barbados, if she would not like to go along with us. "No, suh! Not me. The sea ain't got no back door!"

The Future Farmers of America annually elect new officers. These young men go to Washington for a week of indoctrination as to their work for the year. It was good business for Farm Journal to get acquainted with them; most would spend much of their year traveling and speaking. Their official supervisors set apart for us one of their Washington evenings. After a dinner we adjourned to my suite where questions were raised and ideas discussed.

On one occasion the boys had been routed out at six in the morning and kept going through a tightly scheduled day of interviewing officials and a trip to Mt. Vernon. They were tired and hungry when they reached the hotel at six that evening. The roast beef dinner disappeared with no dawdling over the plates.

The hotel was the old Statler, where an especially delicious chocolate ice cream pie was a favored desert. The pies vanished in no time. I asked Peter, the head waiter, to see if any of the boys would like seconds. All accepted the offer.

Then a long, lank Tennessee boy, Tom Vaughan, leaned back in his chair and said solemnly, "Mr. McMillen, I will never forget you!" While all had been busy eating, I had attempted to keep a little conversation going and to offer what I thought might be a remark or so that would provoke later discussion. I wondered what stunning thought I might have advanced to elicit Vaughan's unusual pledge. "Tom," I said, "that's mighty nice to hear you say that, but would you tell why you will never forget me?" From farther back in his chair he breathed forth the explanation. "Th-a-t p-i-e!" This story, first related in my personal Farm Journal column, was picked up by Reader's Digest and also by Bennett Cerf in This Week. If it sounds old to anyone, that's why.

Under a spinal anesthetic, on the operating table I became even more garrulous than usual, an effect that I am told anaesthetics may produce. The surgeon's knife was not bothering me and the surroundings were interesting. "This set-up looks rather like a business meeting," I said. "Obviously Dr. Greene here is the chairman, since he is giving the orders. These other two doctors act like vice-presidents. These young ladies seem to have jobs. And you," I told the anesthetist who was taking notes, "you are plainly enough the secretary. I'm
here, too, and must have some function, but I'm not sure what." "Mr. McMillen"
the young man flashed back, "you are chairman of the finance committee."