Bobby and the A-Bomb Factory

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Growing up on the Banks of the Columbia

By Bob Myers

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The portrayal of my parents in this book may appear mean-spirited at times. But they loved my sisters and brothers and me and sacrificed endlessly for them. I dedicate this book to them.

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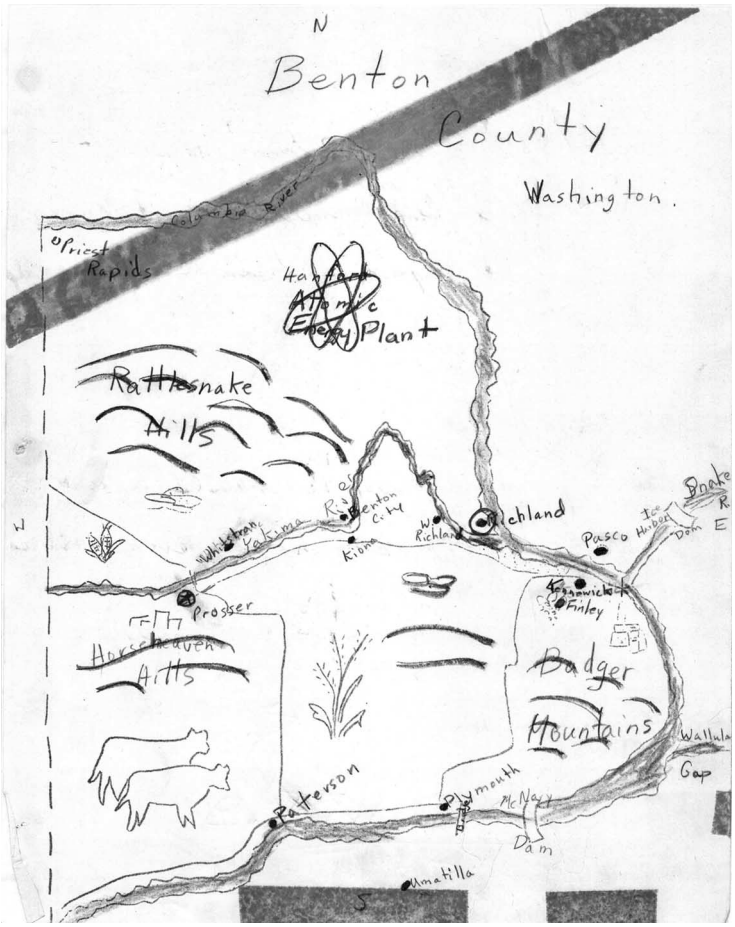

Map of Benton County, Washington, drawn by Bobby in fourth grade

Preface

This book presents my life as I experienced it between the ages of three and ten. My life has been nothing special. I'm your average baby boomer who grew up in the America of the 1950s and 1960s (in my case out in the desert near an A-bomb factory where my father worked). But as I combed over my early childhood years, I was struck by many intermingled threads: the Manhattan Project, Native American culture, human disease, the settling of the West, famous brands, American religions, and, of course, my own family history. Following these threads and watching them weave together yielded a rich perspective on my early youth.

A disclaimer: I've made every effort to be accurate in these descriptions of historical situations in this book, but this is not supposed to be a history book and I'm not a professional historian so I may well have made mistakes, for which I apologize in advance.

I hope you enjoy my story about Bobby and the A-bomb factory.

Bob Myers
West Hollywood, California
June, 2004

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I'd like to thank my sister Claire Summerhill ("Sandy" here) for her generous review of early drafts, and Sakiko Kimura, my friend and partner, for her support and forbearance.

Bobby at three

Three

Bobby's House on Cottonwood

I was three and inside our little house at 1513 Cottonwood and opened the front door to go out. Rays of morning sunlight bathed my face and washed into the house and across the sofa and rug. I walked out onto the porch, although it was not what most people would call a porch—it was more of a stoop, a concrete slab lying in front of the door. But my family called it a porch.

Looking straight ahead, I saw Cottonwood Drive running in front of the house. It seemed cold and hard and enveloped in a distant haze, even though it was actually only about twenty feet away. There were no cars on the street. In 1956 there were no two-car families in this little company town. Once the Daddies took the car to work, the Mommies were stuck at home. Which was fine since the Mommies had little kids like me to take care of, usually several of them. Just like my Mommy had Nancy, already in second grade. And Sandy, who was playing in the house. And Alyssa, who was lying in a baby basket, since Mommy had just brought her home from the hospital six months ago. Mommy had the basket right by the window, where the cool northerly winds could bring the baby some relief from the crisp dryness of the hot desert air.

I descended the steps of the porch and walked around to the left side of the house. This area was isolated and uninviting, an anonymous void between our house and the next, attempting to conceal its emptiness with a bit of lawn. I groped for some sense of connection between myself and the forlorn patch of grass. I wondered how many more times in my life I would have this sensation.

The sky was cloudless, as it usually was in this desert town; the winds blowing in from the Pacific Ocean were drained of all their moisture as they crossed the Cascade Mountains that cut down through the center of Washington State, so the air reaching our little town was dry and warm.

I walked towards the back of the house, where there was a big open field covered with weeds. The field extended all the way back for several hundred feet to a row of tall thin trees, spaced maybe twenty feet apart, planted along a big road called the Bypass. Although the field was a bit scary, I walked across it all the way

to the row of trees. But I stayed behind the row of trees since if I walked through it I'd be right at the edge of the Bypass, which was a big, big road with lots of cars going really fast. The Bypass basically said to all of us, "OK, your little town stops here." Beyond it were just open fields. In the distance to my right, in roughly a northwestern direction, rose a small prominence.

A tumbleweed blew down the Bypass, carried along by the northerly wind. We had tumbleweeds everywhere. They were the trademark of our town. During their lifetime tumbleweeds remain rooted like normal plants, but after dying they break away from their roots at a special location on their stems, their desiccated carcasses curling into lightweight balls harboring a quarter million live seeds, each of which contains a coiled embryo. As their parent's corpse is blown along, the seeds are knocked off and land on the ground, where they uncoil and immediately start growing, even in the most inhospitable conditions. For instance, tumbleweeds were the first plant to grow back in areas in Nevada scarred by nuclear tests. Our town was filled with these weeds, bent on posthumous reproduction.

I walked back through the field behind our house, which was filled with the weedy clumps called sagebrush, also known as bunchgrass. One variety of this is bluebunch wheatgrass, the state grass of Washington. Bunchgrass is so named because it takes the form of bunches, on average around one foot in diameter. There is also rubber rabbitbrush and green rabbitbrush, Indian ricegrass, tall sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, needlegrass, bluegrass, and who knows what else. But mainly there's the stuff called cheatgrass, which has the little sharp-tipped seeds that stick to your socks as you walk through them. There is no way to get them out of your socks other than picking them out one by one. But it is sort of fun to do that.

Nearing the house, I passed our sandbox with its wavy green semi-transparent fiberglass cover, and went in the back door, which led into the kitchen. Mommy was in there making dinner. The kitchen had a linoleum floor and lots of Formica counters. The counters were almost completely bare, though, except for a set of canisters containing flour, sugar, and the like. That's how Daddy liked Mommy to keep them.

I walked through the kitchen into the living room. It seemed like the living room in someone else's house. There was Daddy's chair and a sofa in there. The sofa seemed remote and a little bit sad to me, as if it didn't really like being in that living room. Daddy's chair was where he'd sit reading the newspaper after he came home from work. There was a threadbare rug on the floor.

Straight ahead was the front door leading out onto the front porch. Toward the right, there was a hallway, off which led one door to the right, into Mommy

and Daddy's room; another to the left, into my room; and one at the end, into the girls' room.

I was still living in a crib in my room. Mommy would read me a story and put me to bed every evening around eight o'clock in the evening. Often I was not in the mood to sleep, but couldn't get out of the crib except by extreme measures such as climbing over its side. I'd do that sometimes and then go over and kneel at the inside of the door, banging on it with my fist and crying and calling for Mommy to come. I wouldn't have minded going to sleep except for the monsters. They were really bad guys that were trying to break in and attack me. They lurked both outside the window, which looked out on the front yard, as well as inside the house itself, right outside the door to my room. There was a little hook-type lock outside my door that Mommy had installed to prevent me from getting out of my room and running around the house, but I imagined it was there to prevent the monsters from getting in, so I'd make sure Mommy hooked that up. Of course, a smart monster could figure out how to unhook it, but at least it was some protection. Sometimes I'd get worried that Mommy had forgotten to hook it, or that it had gotten unhooked somehow. Then I'd jump up and down in my crib and scream until Mommy would come in and I'd tell her that maybe the hook had come undone and she would tell me that she would make really sure to hook it on her way out. I'd wake up in the morning, the monsters not having attacked, but lying on cold, clammy, wet sheets, since although I was basically toilet-trained I still had bedwetting problems.

The fiction about my bedwetting was that I was just sleeping and then oops, it happened, so what could I do about it? Actually, I knew more about why I wet the bed than I let on. I would generally wake up when I needed to go to the bathroom. I think most people do. Then I would lie there thinking that I needed to go and wondering if I should get up. It seemed vaguely bothersome to have to get up out of bed and walk out of my room and down the hall to the bathroom just to empty my bladder. So then maybe I'd doze off again, a gentle feeling of fullness in my abdomen. Then I'd wake up again. Then at some point I'd just let it out. I could feel the urine flowing down my urethra, then streaming out slowly, warm on my skin, wetting my underwear so it stuck to my body, running down my sides. Then I'd lay there in my own urine and go back to sleep. In the morning it was cold and sticky, but I'd just get up and change. The next morning Mommy would come in with a resigned look on her face saying well, you did it again, and strip the sheets off the crib's mattress in a single fluid motion.

Lying there in the bed, knowing I had to go, held out the tangible promise of eventual warm release. As long as I held it in, the promise stayed alive. It was

something concrete and real. It was my anchor to a known future. It was less that I enjoyed the act of urination, and more that I enjoyed the anticipation of that act, its utter forthcoming certainty. Once I had urinated, it would just be me, lying in my crib in the darkened room, all alone again.

Over time, we tried a number of things to deal with my bedwetting. Actually, I think one good talk with some adult could have solved the problem. Something along the lines of "Bobby, when you have to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, *get up and do it!*" Instead we went to a lot of doctors to try to fix me. Today I'm sure they have drugs they give kids for bedwetting. Back then, one doctor recommended a contraption involving a foil pad that you spread out on the bed under the sheet. It was connected to some wires, a big dry cell battery, and a bell. I'm sure some genius has a patent on this invention. Of course, the thing was designed to ring the bell when moisture touched the foil pad; it was called a "bed-wetting alarm" and if I recall came from Sears Roebuck. It sounds like a good idea, but in reality, once you start urinating when laying in your bed you don't do it just a little bit first, so that the bell could ring and wake you up so you could get up and go to the bathroom—you do it all at once.

Later we ran into a doctor who had a better idea. He gave me a pint jar and told me that my job was to fill the thing up every time I peed. All the way up. This was fun! At first, I could only fill it halfway up. Then I'd try to hold it in a little bit longer so I get up to three-fourths full. Eventually, of course, I did manage to fill up the whole pint jar. And bingo—my bedwetting problems were over. I still laid there in bed knowing I needed to go, and still didn't usually get up, but no longer wet the bed.

I walked over to that old sofa. I touched one of the two cushions sitting on it. It seemed sad. I squeezed it a little bit, inside was some kind of foam. I can't remember what color that couch was. It could well have had a sort of greenish color to it.

I went over to the front door. It was already open, so I opened the screen door and went out on the porch again. There was Cottonwood running right in front of the house, just twenty feet away. But it seemed so far away. I struggled to find the connection between myself and the street. Maybe I could walk down the concrete steps, then walk across the lawn, then across the sidewalk to where it met the curb at the edge of the street, and if I did all of that slowly enough then I would experience the connection between myself and Cottonwood. But maybe that wouldn't be enough. Maybe I would need to get down on my hands and knees and examine every blade of grass, encounter every ant, crawl across every inch of the sidewalk, before I would really know what the connection was. And I

could do that once, but if I lost the connection I'd have to do it all over again to bring it back again. I'd spend my whole life crawling between the porch and the curb twenty feet away just to keep alive the experience of how those two things were connected. I pondered: exactly how were little grains of things and bits of distance and moments of time connected into wholes?

Bobby's Itchy Arms

My arms itched. They itched all the time. So did my ankles. I had had some kind of eczema-like rash ever since I was born. The doctors had no idea what caused it. It itched so badly that all I wanted to do was scratch it, if necessary until it bled. It was oddly pleasurable to scratch it until it oozed blood; it was sort of like showing that nasty old eczema who was the boss here. Sometimes it would be bleeding and I'd still be scratching as the blood streamed down my arms, it itched so much. If I stopped scratching, the affected areas would crust over, dry out, and turn a scaly brownish-gray.

When I was ten months old, my mother took me to the doctor to have a look at it. Nancy was already in kindergarten by then, but Sandy had just turned two the Christmas before and was along with us. After looking at the bleeding rash on my arms and legs, Dr. Hasting, worried that the sores might become infected, decided on the spot to admit me to the hospital. Little Sandy, watching this process unfold, came to the conclusion that Mommy had just decided little Bobby was damaged goods and was going to return him to the hospital. It took a good bit of explanation to convince her otherwise.

In the hospital, the doctors put me on a diet of goat's milk and bananas, as if they really had any reason to believe that would solve whatever my problem was. They put splints on my arms, to prevent me from scratching them. I was a sorry sight, sitting there in my crib trying to scratch my ankles with the sides of my stiff, splinted arms. Mommy would come see me every day, which of course I was grateful for, but the problem came when she had to leave. She tells me that her tactics of trying to distract me by handing me a toy to play with would fail miserably; in a fury, I'd hurl the toy across the room against the wall of the hospital room. I'd scream so loudly that she could still hear me when she was already all the way out in the parking lot getting in her car to go home. I was in the hospital for two full weeks, from February 4 through February 19, 1954.

I had gone into the hospital again just after I turned two. My arms and ankles still itched, and I would still scratch them until they bled. The hospital's daily room charge was twelve dollars. This time I was there for just a week.

I heard the whir of the sewing machine. Mommy used it for mending when she had to. It was an old black one. That was one of the few machines of any kind in the house. We had the Singer sewing machine and the Remington Rand typewriter. Technology-wise, it was closer to the turn of the previous century than that of the next in that little three-bedroom house on Cottonwood Dr. in Richland, Washington in 1956.

Pretty soon it would be time for Daddy to come home. He was a scientist and had an important job that he went to every day out in the desert at a secret lab. And yep, here he came now, driving up Cottonwood in his old Hudson. The Hudson was a big nice-looking brown car with a classic rounded nose. Perhaps my family had the 1948 model, called the Commodore. Today the only vestige of the Hudson brand is the gas-guzzling Jeep Cherokee. Back in 1954 Hudson had merged with another company called Nash to form American Motors, or AMC, one of the major automotive manufacturers of its time, famous for the Rambler in the 1960s, and the Gremlin and Pacer in the 1970s. Later, it was acquired by Renault which was then bought by Chrysler in 1989, the remnants of AMC becoming the Jeep division. Chrysler eventually became part of Daimler-Chrysler, of course. American Motors' first chairman was George Romney, best known for his failed presidential bid in 1968. A Mormon icon, George was held up to children like me as a shining example of how Mormons could be successful in the "real" world of business and politics. Modern-day readers might be better acquainted with Mitt Romney, who successfully ran the Salt Lake Olympics a generation later in 2002, using that as a springboard to the governorship of Massachusetts. He is George's son.

Daddy pulled into the driveway. He walked into the house and into the kitchen and gave Mommy a peck on the cheek, making the kind of "Mmmmh" sound he used to show some emotion, before settling down in the old greenish sofa. He always came home from work at the same time; my mom told me that when they married, he made a commitment to her that he would always come home on time.

The old black rotary phone was ringing. "Ira, it's for you!" called Mommy. I listened without being too involved. It seemed like a church thing. That Sunday Daddy was going off to some other place to do some kind of church business. He needed to be somewhere at some particular time that Sunday. Somebody was checking on something. It seemed pretty important. Daddy said yes, he'd change things around so he could be there. He was going to have to leave the night before to be there on time on Sunday. He had that look on his face that meant he was talking about something important. That was a look that he did a lot. He did

it with us kids too. He'd stop, and wait for us to get ready to hear whatever important thing he had to say, putting that look on his face. It involved squinting his eyes a bit, and sort of bunching up his cheeks. Then he'd tell us whatever it was with this really serious tone in his voice.

Daddy's voice echoing in the background, I felt somehow alone. I didn't really have any friends. Mommy kept saying that some of the kids I played with were my friends but they didn't feel like friends to me. Other kids played together and you could tell that they were friends, but there was something about me that just didn't click with the other kids.

Bobby Learns to Read

In the living room, where Daddy was sitting on the couch reading the evening paper, my mother's magazines were strewn across the coffee table. I picked up the one called "Better Homes and Gardens." (Yes, "Better Homes and Gardens" did exist in 1956; actually it was first published in 1924. Unlike Hudson, BH&G has endured for a full eight decades.) Perhaps the issue I was reading was the one with BH&G's first article on the microwave oven, published in 1956, although the Myers family did not acquire a microwave oven until at least twenty years later. The microwave had been invented in 1945, by a researcher at Raytheon, whose first instinct, oddly, was to see if it could pop popcorn; in 1956, a microwave oven cost $1,300, nearly $20,000 in today's dollars. Anyway, looking at the cover, suddenly it hit me! That big "B" on the cover of the magazine was the same letter that my mother's name, which I had seen written so often, started with!

"Mommy! Look! That's the first letter of your name!" Mommy came in from the kitchen to hear first-hand the details of this revelation from her brilliant three-year-old son, and was duly impressed, but needed to hurry back to the kitchen to check on her casserole. It took little Bobby only about three more months until he could basically read most things he saw. The alphabet was just a coding scheme, it turns out, and not a very complicated one at that. Reading was useful, and also fun.

One of the books I soon was able to read by myself was *The Story of Babar*, a favorite bedtime story in our family. In the shocking initial scene, Babar's mother is shot as the baby elephant cowers in fear, but rather than frightening the three-year-old Bobby, it seemed somehow inevitable to him. Babar of course then wanders into the city. The Old Lady whom he befriends is an archetype of urban

sophistication that even a three-year old can appreciate. Eventually Babar returns to his herd and is crowned King of the Elephants with Queen Celeste at his side.

And, of course, *Curious George*. "This is George. He lived in Africa. He was a good little monkey, and always very curious." That was how the first book began. Each page brought a new adventure for George—an ocean journey, a visit to the house of the Man in the Yellow Hat, a false alarm George accidentally called in, a fabulous fantastical flight over the city holding onto a bunch of balloons—yet each step in the story seemed ultimately natural, almost predestined. Between its yellow cloth covers, the thin book captured George's life so precisely, from jungle to zoo.

Once a week, I'd go grocery shopping with Mommy. One thing she always bought was Campbell's soup. She'd buy a lot of Cream of Tomato, which I loved, as well as Cream of Mushroom, of course. She and millions of other housewives used Cream of Mushroom soup, a Depression-era invention, so often in their cooking that it became one of the single best-selling items in the mid-century supermarket. For instance, you could just put some chicken pieces in a baking dish with Cream of Mushroom soup and some water and rice and stick it in the oven for forty-five minutes at 375º and there you were with "Campbell's One Dish Chicken and Rice Bake." Or, put two cans of Cream of Chicken together with a can of corned beef and some elbow macaroni in the same kind of baking dish, add chopped onion or grated cheese if you prefer, and again forty-five minutes at 375º gives you a great "Corned Beef Casserole." Feeling adventurous? Brown some ground beef and onions on the top of the stove, add a can of Franco-American spaghetti and a can of Cream of Mushroom, simmer for fifteen minutes, and voilà, it's Spaghetti Alfredo. Boil potatoes, peel and grate them, toss in a can of Cream of Chicken soup, along with sour cream, grated cheese, and chopped onions; then top it off with some crushed Wheaties before sticking it in a 350º oven for thirty minutes. The recipe card for this one Mommy had marked "super" because everyone liked it so much. For some variety, start off also browning ground beef and onions, but this time make it Cream of Celery soup, and top it with frozen Tater Tots; like all the other recipes, this one also took forty-five minutes in a 350º oven, and was affectionately known as "Tater Topped Casserole." Want to go Chinese? Just combine diced chicken with Cream of Chicken soup, some Hellmann's mayonnaise, and chopped eggs, top with LaChoy Chow Mein noodles, and pop it in the oven.

We'd get up to the checkout with all our cans of Campbell's Condensed Soup and all sorts of other things packed into our cart, since there were already six people in the family to shop for and my mother went grocery shopping just once a

week. Campbell's were not the only cans my mother was buying, by any means: there were canned peas and canned beans and canned tomatoes and canned fruit as well.

In her annual Christmas letter for 1956, my mother wrote about me: "All boy, and as rough and tumble as they come. The highlight of his week is the two mornings he attends nursery school [discussed in the next chapter], which he dearly loves. He too finds Sunday School, primary [a church activity], and story hour much to his liking and he continually amazes me at how much he learns there."

The Christmas letter also devotes an entire paragraph to Mommy's new electric ironer, which impressed her with "how easily [it] could do puffed sleeves and gathered shirts. I can now look forward to ironing with pleasure instead of dread," she wrote. That ironer, a miniaturized version of the kind of contraption you would find in a commercial laundry, followed us across the country in 1963 where it took up position in the corner of the family room in the basement of our new house in Cleveland and ironed hundreds of thousands of items during its lifetime, continuing to give Mommy pleasure, one would hope, the entire time.

Daddy got Mommy the ironer exactly ten years after he wrote her, in one of the letters the college sweethearts exchanged weekly, that he was marrying her not to "darn my socks or press my pants, but because I love you and want you, both as a mate and as a companion. My shirts are going to be done by a laundry, and you're going to spend that time doing anything you like—reading, studying, or playing." But that was not to be the case.

Finally, the Christmas letter describes how in the summer of 1956, our family went on a camping trip to the Wallowa Valley down across the nearby Oregon border. Personally, I do not remember this trip, although that is not surprising since I was only three. The odd thing is that no one else in our family, including my mother and older sisters, can remember it either. According to Mommy in the Christmas letter, "Perhaps I should say we tried to go camping. It was sort of a fiasco and we decided to let our family grow up some before we tried it again." That is not too hard to imagine—after all, we are talking about a family with four children ranging in age from eight years to nine months.

I have never been back to Wallowa, although I would love to visit it again some day. It is a verdant valley in northeastern Oregon, with abundant natural beauty and copious fish and game.

Our station wagon, crammed with camping gear and headed for the campsite at Lake Wallowa, stopped briefly at a "Historic Site" by the edge of the road, which turned out to be the place where a certain Indian named Old Joseph had

died in 1871. Old Joseph was the father of the famed Chief Joseph, who had lived around here. The family piled out of the car and tromped over to the historical marker at the site, which lay at the confluence of two small rivers. A plaque there recounted Old Joseph's heart-felt deathbed wish: "My son, never forget my dying words. This country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and your mother." The younger Joseph, as it turns out, was not able to honor that wish.

To me the letters on the plaque seemed inert, wholly unimpressed by the story they themselves were supposed to be telling. They went on to convey Young Joseph's own thoughts on the burial of his father: "I buried him in that beautiful valley of the winding waters," that being what Wallowa meant in his language. "I love that land more than all the rest of the world," Joseph went on to say.

We camped up further in the valley at Wallowa State Park, whose website today advises potential visitors, "If you're interested in a campground surrounded on three sides by 9,000' tall snow-capped mountains and a large, clear lake, this is the area for you."

Bobby at four

Four

My first distinct memory is from when I was four. I went into my father's little workshop area attached to the rear of the house to see what he was doing, which was storing some beans in big round cardboard canisters. Our family kept lots of bulk food, in preparation for emergencies like a nuclear attack by the Russians. My father had a marker that he always used, a fat, silver, roundish pen-like marker with a thick, ink-soaked wick of felt that wrote big black letters. With it, he wrote on the top of the cardboard canister: "BEANS 1957." Then he put the cap back on the pen and put it back in the pocket protector in his shirt pocket like he always did.

Bobby Goes to Nursery School

By the time I turned four, I had already been going to nursery school on the other side of town since the previous fall. To be precise, it was in the direction of the river, which ran along the edge of our town. But I couldn't seem to fit it anywhere on my mental map. There were some family friends—the Lamberts—that we would go to visit, who lived on a street which ran right along the river (although their house was on the side away from the river), and there you could figure out exactly where you were—namely right there, next to the river. To get to the nursery school, on the other hand, you started off like you were going to the river or those friends' house, but then before you got there you turned left and drove through a maze of streets until Mommy would finally just stop the car, you would get out, and there you were. It was like traveling through a wormhole into another galaxy.

For my mother, having the kids go to nursery school was more than just a way to get them out of her hair; she conceived of it explicitly as the beginning of a pedagogical and developmental process. It is hard to imagine that she was not influenced in this by the legendary Dr. Benjamin Spock, whose *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* had been published just a decade earlier, the year before my parents got married. In that book, Dr. Spock says of nursery schools:

"The cooperativeness, initiative, and creativity which children develop in a good nursery school or day care center will help to prepare them socially, emotionally, and intellectually not only for kindergarten and the elementary grades but also for their careers as adults. This is not an exaggeration, I feel."

I am not just guessing about the Spock influence on my mother; we know that she was one of the early purchasers of his book (which cost twenty-five cents when it originally came out), and read it religiously. She and fifty million other readers made the book into the best-selling book in the United States next to the Bible. (Like Better Homes and Gardens, the Spock franchise aged well; both now have the requisite web site, and *Baby and Child Care* is now in its seventh edition, replete with sections for gay and lesbian parents.)

Dr. Spock was a breast-feeding advocate at a time when that was not popular, and my mother was indeed a committed, if not always successful, breast-feeder, nursing me up the age of three or four months. I seem to remember her breast-feeding a brand-new baby and a three-year-old at the same time; those were probably two of the later kids.

Certainly part of what attracted my mother and millions of other post-war suburban mothers to Spock was his open, human approach to child-rearing, with its common-sense, positive attitude. Today we would say that he "empowered" mothers to raise their children the way that made sense to them. The first sentence of his book summed it up: "Relax. You know more than you think you do." (Mommy found no answers in the Bible according to Spock, however, for little Bobby's nighttime monsters, or his bedwetting.)

Above I said "mothers" because, as enlightened as Spock might have been compared to his predecessors, his books always used "he" for the child and "she" for the parent. He focused on preparing girls for motherhood, nor careers. He wrote, "My prime concern is that, back at the childhood stage, parents and schools not encourage girls to be competitive with males if that is going to make them dissatisfied with raising children, their most creative job in adulthood." Other Spockian recommendations also are quite dated, such as his advice that little boys be circumcised as infants, as indeed all five of the Myers boys were; to Spock's credit, he reversed this recommendation in 1989, writing in Redbook that "my own preference, if I had the good fortune to have another son, would be to leave his little penis alone."

All children of the 1950s share the Spock legacy to some extent, in those penises as well as in their minds.

The odd thing is that while my mother embraced Spock in his child-raising-guru personage, she disagreed violently with his later political views, such as his opposition to the Vietnam War. She could not see, I suppose, how his views as a pediatrician and his views as a social critic were intimately interconnected. As one observer succinctly stated, "Pediatrics *is* politics." Dr. Spock came to see that if a society wants to raise children which are healthy in every way, it is not enough to merely breast-feed them or teach them good sleeping habits or cuddle with them; we must create a social and economic and cultural milieu where those children, for one, are not physically and psychologically endangered by nuclear testing and the threat of nuclear war. It seems perfectly reasonable to conclude that Spock's theories and their application to the baby boomer children had a major influence on how the whole cohort of college students in the 1960s and early 1970s turned out, politically and culturally—something which was also certainly not to my mother's liking. The permissively parented Spock babies of the 1950s were dropping acid a mere fifteen years later.

Spock devotees such as my mother probably knew little of his personal life. Like George Romney, who was a fitness buff to the very end (dying at eighty-eight while exercising on a treadmill) and whose life overlapped his almost exactly, Spock had an athletic bent; in fact, he was a member of the US Olympic rowing team in 1924. On a personal level, though, he was "detached and distant", according to his two sons; one went so far as to call him "scary."

A young mother, approaching the end of her first decade of marriage to a scientist, also somewhat detached and distant, developing devices to destroy humanity, embraces the child-rearing theories of a man who would evolve into an ardent opponent of exactly such weapons, while the application of his theories to the raising of her own children would drive them away from the societal and religious values she held dear.

Nursery school was the start of an emotional, social, and intellectual development process for the Spock baby generation. The intellectual aspect was paramount. In 1957, learning more things, faster and better, was an unquestioned good. Knowledge was the key to pushing civilization ahead and beating the Russians, who launched Sputnik just a month after I started nursery school. Modern science was how Daddy himself had transformed himself in a single generation from the hayseed farm boy throwing buckets of slop to the pigs on the family farm at age twelve, into a whiz kid in a white jacket with a fancy degree working at a top-secret lab on projects directly affecting the national security of one of the world's two major superpowers. And he had the hefty $540/month paycheck to

prove it. So far his earning ability had actually kept ahead of the financial requirements of supporting his burgeoning brood

But my mother was focused, I am sure, on the social benefits of nursery school as well as the intellectual. There were a dozen other kids in the class that I could hardly avoid making some kind of connection with, making "friends," as she would say. It still seemed strange to me. She'd keep referring to kids as my friends when I had no more connection with them than basically knowing their name and what they looked like and having slept next to them at naptime. Maybe she already knew, intuitively, that I was just not the type of kid that had lots of friends or ever would. Or maybe she hoped that her children would be spared the friendless loneliness she had faced as her family wandered nomadically around the country, staying barely a year, if that, in each new town as her father was transferred over and over again.

Yes, it was definitely true that I didn't have any "friends" there at nursery school. The other kids might as well have been robots for all the human connection I felt with them. It wasn't that I disliked them; I just didn't relate to them, or to the things that they related to. It seemed odd to me how everybody got so excited about everything. For instance, there was a model train set-up in the nursery school, which was actually just someone's house with a couple of rooms set up to function as a nursery school. As I recall, it was a Lionel model train layout belonging to the teen-aged son of the woman that ran the nursery school, and to whom the house belonged. Now this setup was actually quite large as those things go; it might have been as big as ten feet by twenty, and that whole area was filled with model tracks, of course, but also model houses, model cars, model telephone poles, model rivers, model railroad stations, model railroad signs, model bridges, model people walking around, and even model tunnels, allowing the train to sweep right through the model mountains. There were several locomotives with little lights on them, whistles they could blow, and even little puffs of steam coming out of their smokestacks, a feature Lionel had introduced in 1946 when it restarted production after the war. This model train setup served an important role at this nursery school; basically it allowed the lady running the place to keep all the boys occupied for virtually as long as she wanted by just turning the thing on. The boys would stand or sit around the layout, their eyes glazing over in fascination, their heads moving mechanically and rhythmically to follow the endless movement of the trains around the layout, even though most likely none of them had ever seen an actual train.

Bobby Has an Accident

"Bobby, what happened?" The nursery school teacher was talking to me in her pretend-like-I-care-about-the-little-morons voice. I was standing there in the middle of the playroom, a telltale stain running down the front of my pants, a puddle of amber liquid spreading around my feet. It had just happened—I'd peed in my pants. This was not something normal for me; I did wet the bed but this was completely different. One by one, little pairs of eyes looked up from wherever they were playing and locked in on the scene of Bobby's accident.

The teacher picked me up sideways in one arm around my midsection making sure not to touch the wet part of my pants or let the urine-soaked bottom of my shoes further besoil her floor, and hauled me into the bathroom. Once there she unceremoniously yanked off my shoes and socks, and then my pants and underwear together, leaving me standing there with my cute little bottom entirely exposed but my shirt still on. For some reason, she thought the most important thing for me to do right now was to go to the bathroom again. I mean, I had just finished pissing in my pants and she thought the problem was I might need to go again? She frog-marched me over to the toilet, grabbed my tiny wrinkled ruddy circumcised penis and stuck it over the rim of the toilet; it barely reached. She pulled back the foreskin a bit. "OK, go now, Bobby," she encouraged me, as if it might be beyond me to figure out that my wee-wee in position pointing at the toilet bowl meant that it was now OK to once again start the process of elimination.

But I didn't want to urinate standing up in front of the toilet. I wanted to urinate like I always did, sitting down on it. I told the lady this, but she was adamant: "*All* boys go number one standing up!" Well, not this boy, nor his Daddy, whom I'd never seen go to the bathroom. Oh, maybe I'd seen him sitting on the toilet a few times when I'd barged into the bathroom accidentally, most likely reading the latest issue of *Reader's Digest*, that unmistakable daddy-in-the-bathroom smell in the air. He had a lifetime subscription to *Reader's Digest*, which he had taken out for the price of twenty-five dollars right after the war. Since he lived until 1996, that means that he read the magazine for a full fifty years, twelve issues of that magazine for a mere fifty cents per year, or about four cents per copy. But I'd certainly never seen my father urinate standing up. I really don't think he did.

My underwear was soaked, so the nursery school teacher found a replacement pair for me—something belonging to her seven-year old. They were really big for me, and they were made out of some kind of funny material that was a lot softer

and thicker than mine were. But I had to wear them anyway. She put my wet underwear into a little brown bag that I had to carry out to the driveway where all the kids stood around waiting for the moms to come pick them up after school. For what seemed like an eternity, I had to stand there holding that stupid little bag with the underwear I had soiled, all the other kids staring, until Mommy finally showed up. She got out of the car and the nursery school lady beckoned her over and they had a little chat and Mommy looked over at me with a weird kind of smile on her face. The next day I carried back to school another little brown bag, returning the underwear belonging to the nursery school lady's seven-year-old kid.

Bobby Goes to Church

Every Sunday we went to church two times, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. We'd get dressed up and pile into our car for the quick trip to the proud new church building down by the river. Then we'd come back, have a late lunch, and then repeat the whole process again in the early evening.

Mormon church in Richland, Washington, around 1950

The service in the morning was Sunday School, that in the evening "Sacrament Meeting." In Sunday School they taught us about God and how he loved us. I was not real clear on who this guy was supposed to be or why he was so intent on loving us. But God seemed to me like another interesting thing to study and learn and get good at. They told us that if we were good little boys and girls God would let us go to a special place when we died that would be really nice. And we would get to stay there forever and ever. That image really stuck in my mind. I imagined just being in one place without ever being able to escape. At the innocent age of four, it was clear to me that living forever was not an attractive prospect. It sounded boring. For me, doing new things was what was interesting. I'd usually start to think of what to do next as soon as I'd started to do the previous thing, or sometimes even before. When I sat down at the table to start eating I'd start thinking of what I could do after the meal was finished. When I picked up a book and started reading it, I'd be thinking of what to do after I was done with it. Even worse, the Sunday school teacher told us that in the special place where people went who were extra good, we would be able to be with our parents and brothers and sisters for ever and ever. Even my unformed four-year-old self was already *very* sure that was not something I was interested in.

In between church meetings we'd have lunch. This was a substantial affair, the biggest meal of the week. The menu for this and all other dinners was decided as part of Mommy's weekly meal plan, which she would post on the side of the refrigerator on a piece of paper written in her distinctive, graceful, roundish handwriting, and based on which she would carry out those weekly food shopping expeditions. Feeding the growing family was a major undertaking, one to which she devoted a large part of her considerable energies.

We'd all sit around the table and Daddy, at the head of the table, would call on one of us to give the blessing on the food. "Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for this food on the table before us. Please bless it to nourish and strengthen our bodies." Taking plates one by one from a stack sitting next to him, Daddy would then serve up on each the boiled meat, the mashed potatoes, the Jell-O salad, and the canned vegetables, passing each loaded plate in turn down to its lucky recipient. Often the meat was beef tongue, an inexpensive cut which my mother would cook in her old pressure cooker until it was so tender it could be cut with a fork, and for which I retain a taste to this day. My father would invariably serve himself the largest portions, the food literally forming a mountain on his plate. On top of the Ore-Ida instant mashed potatoes made with reconstituted powdered milk, he would lob a huge cube of margarine which would melt down into the

potatoes, rivulets of yellow grease running across and down the pasty whitish mass and pooling around its base.

In Sacrament Meeting, all the church members sat in the main room for the entire ceremony. The church felt warm, friendly, and reassuring. Three or four times during the service the whole congregation would join in singing hymns. I liked "Abide with Me," which they usually sang as the last song:

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

And of course I liked "Come, Come Ye Saints," the rousing Mormon pioneer anthem. The organ's sonorous, silken subtones resonated throughout the chapel and into the benches we sat on and I could feel them in my bones. The church leaders would sit up on the podium. They looked spiritual, knowledgeable, and caring.

Many years later, after the period covered in the book you hold in your hands, and after I had disassociated myself with this church, I went back to that church building in my childhood town and sat in the chapel, and felt the same feelings again, although they were enveloped in a remote, hazy fog.

Bobby's Lab

I had some fun projects and things, which interested me, but I still didn't really feel like things were going well, or that people liked me that much. The world seemed pretty hostile.

Maybe I could create a special place to hang out. It would be underground. There would be an entrance in our back yard, about one yard square, camouflaged so other people couldn't tell it from a regular piece of lawn. You'd open that entrance as a kind of trap door and then there would be a ladder that you'd go down, closing the door over your head. The ladder took you down, down, down into my special underground space.

I would be down there all by myself and no one else would know about my special place. It would have lots of rooms. In one room, I'd do all different kinds of science experiments like Daddy. It would be full of refrigerated cabinets with glass doors that contained vials of all kinds of special substances, and have stainless steel lab tables with flasks filled with blue and green and yellow and orange

liquids and tubes connecting them to each other. Bookshelves would contain row upon row of canvas-bound notebooks detailing the results of my experiments.

There would be another room filled with really soft, comfortable furniture. It would have big easy chairs, beds, and huge couches, soft lighting overhead, a plush rug on the floor. It would also have lots of bookshelves containing all kinds of Babar and Curious George books and atlases of the world and also not just the twenty volumes of World Book Encyclopedia that we had at home and which I liked to read, but hundreds of other volumes that I could take out and stretch out and read as long as I wanted with no one bothering me.

In another room, I would keep the live animal specimens I would use in different kinds of biology-type experiments.

I was lying in the bed in my parent's bedroom, the covers pulled up over my body, sucking on my bottle, thinking about my special underground lab. There was something comfortable about their bed, something warm in the mussed sheets, something of my parents' musky grown-up smell in the pillows. And I loved sucking on my bottle, which Mommy would make me whenever I asked. She'd grab a bottle and a screw-on sleeve and a nipple out of a cabinet and put some milk in the bottle, heat it up in a pan of hot water on the electric range, and squeeze a few drops onto her upturned wrist to make sure it was just the right temperature. I'd grab the bottle and head off in search of some safe hiding place to spend time with it, my parent's bed being the favored choice.

But this time things did not go as planned. As I lay there luxuriating in the safety and comfort of the bed, Daddy came storming into the room. He seemed very upset, I couldn't really tell why. He didn't say anything to me, just ripped the bottle out of my hands and my mouth. He was yelling something along the lines of "I've had enough of you sucking on bottles all day long!" It took him a total of less than five minutes to go into the kitchen, empty and wash out that bottle, grab all the rest of my empty bottles and nipples and screw-on sleeves from the cabinet, put them in a box, get out the stepladder, take it over to the squarish opening in the ceiling that went up to the attic, climb up the ladder and remove the cover over the attic entrance, climb up into the attic itself with the box under one arm, clamber around until he had found somewhere to stick it, climb back down, replace the cover, mutter to anyone who was listening "the kid is four years old!", carry the stepladder back out to the shed where he kept it, come back inside and go over to the couch and sit down on it and pick up the paper again and start up to read it again where he had left off.

After he put my bottles in the attic, for a while I kept on going in to my parent's bedroom and lying down in their bed, but it just wasn't the same without the bottle to suck on.

In the 1957 Christmas letter, pounded out as usual on our family's old black Remington Rand, my mother wrote: "Bobby is still the runningest, jumpingest, shoutingest boy ever and we both enjoy very much the two mornings each week he spends in nursery school."

Bobby at five

Five

Bobby's Daddy's Job

I still hadn't really figured out what Daddy's job was. I knew he was a physicist. He had just gotten his Ph.D., his thesis entitled "The Energy Required to produce an Ion Pair in Various Cases." He worked at the secret government lab out in the desert called "Hanford." Nobody other than employees, not even wives and children, was ever allowed to go out there. But I did eventually deduce that he was involved in making atom bombs.

Specifically, he had a job called *health physicist*. Atom bombs give off radioactivity while you're making them and also when they go off. Radioactivity can hurt people, since it alters the structure of the matter into which it penetrates. It has so much energy that it can knock the electrons right of their orbits around the nucleus of the atom. That can cause cell damage. Sometimes the cells die, or sometimes they mutate. If enough cells die, the body won't be able to replace them, which can cause skin burns, vomiting, or internal bleeding. Large amounts of radiation can go right in and damage the DNA in your cells, which can cause you to get cancer later. And the damage can be passed down to your kids as well.

Daddy's basic job was to figure out how much radioactivity was needed to kill someone. That kind of information could come in handy in various situations. For instance, it is important to know the health effects of radiation in order to plan for nuclear war. Of course when you drop an atom bomb on a city, the people right near the epicenter simply get vaporized, and a number of people will die from buildings collapsing on top of them; but the real serious damage comes from all the people who die of radiation exposure, even though they might be miles away from where the bomb was dropped. That was where my father came in. He could tell them how big a bomb would kill what percentage of people how far away. Or he could advise them on things like how high off the ground the bomb should be set to explode to maximize the number of people the radioactivity would kill. He had a slide rule which was just the tool for carrying out all these calculations.

But there was another important reason to have health physicists like my father. Just working out at the lab, people got exposed to radiation. That could have undesirable effects like making them sterile, or causing their hair to fall out. So Daddy, as a member of the Health Instruments Group, was involved in designing these little badges that all of the people out there wore to show how much radiation they'd been exposed to or if they'd been exposed to too much. These badges were called film badges. Everyone also had two of the things called "pencil chambers," which were air-filled ionization chambers. They needed two since sometimes one failed.

The trick was figuring out how much radiation was too much. They guessed that five rems per year would be a good threshold, but later it was realized that number was off by a factor of ten or so when Hanford workers died of low-level radiation diseases like cancer of the pancreas or bone marrow who had received a total of only two rems over the course of an entire decade.

Of course the people working at the secret lab were at the greatest risk of getting exposed to radiation, but the radiation from the atomic reactors at the lab could also get out and affect people living nearby. One of the main ways was through the air. The radioactive particles were released and if they weren't caught or filtered then they just went wherever the wind blew them, to be inhaled by animals and people—not a good thing for their lungs. And since the water from the Columbia was used to cool the reactors, it also got radioactive. Then the fish swimming in the river would become radioactive too. Rain falling on farms would make the vegetables radioactive.

This was really complicated stuff, but my father was a very smart scientist with a Ph.D. For instance, how does radiation really cause genetic damage? Was it a radioactive particle, alpha or beta particle or gamma ray that initiated the subsequent "genetic event"? It was an intriguing question, and the kind my father liked to work on.

Some of the experiments used animals. They would start off with mice or rats, to make sure they basically knew what they were doing and the doses to use and everything, then move on to dogs, which of course were more expensive. Down in Nevada they would actually just explode an atom bomb right by an animal to see what the effects were, but Daddy was not involved in that kind of experiment at his lab. Another experiment they did in New Mexico was to inject people intravenously with plutonium, uranium, and polonium to determine how these substances are distributed in the body.

What would happen if your penis and testicles got irradiated? That was certainly a worrisome possibility. The experiment was a little tricky to set up. They

ended up using prison inmates from Walla Walla. There was no risk that the recipients might produce mutants with their genetically mutated sperm, as they were all carefully given vasectomies after the experiment was done.

The guys my father worked with all had a great sense of humor. Once one of them painted his arm up to look like he had a bad radiation burn. Everyone had a good chuckle when they figured out what he had done.

They also used sheep and goats and pigs. In one experiment, they fed iodine and other radioactive materials to the sheep to see what would happen. They had a batch of a hundred ewes that were going to have specialized sperm from different places used to artificially inseminate them to see if the children were mutants. Unfortunately, a ram got into the ewes' cages one night and impregnated all of them, completely ruining the experiment. Another time they tried injecting plutonium right into a beagle. And my father was probably the only man in the world who learned how to clean fish in a biophysics lab. The scientists would grab salmon and other fish from the Columbia and bring them to the lab and dissect them so they could measure the concentrations of radioactive substances in their organs. This was in the Biology Laboratory at 100-F. The "100" referred to what was called an "area" at the Hanford site, and the "F" was one of the buildings in that area.

One substance Daddy had to really worry about was radioactive iodine, or iodine-131. Hanford produced a lot of this. They had released a huge amount in 1944. Overall, between 1944 and 1972 they released 740,000 curies, about 30,000 times the amount released at Three Mile Island in 1979. Iodine floats through the air, gets into the plants, and then into the milk of the cows that eat those plants. The Myers family always drank powdered milk, not fresh, so we did not get any iodine-131 through our milk, but many others in our town certainly did, especially babies and children, with their small, vulnerable thyroid glands. But our mother was likely irradiated through the locally produced meat and then passed it on to the babies she was breast-feeding, an eventuality it is doubtful Dr. Spock ever considered when he recommended the practice. Iodine-131 does not even bother to wait until the child is born; it crosses the placental barrier and starts accumulating in the thyroid of the child *in utero*.

And it turns out the thyroid gland is critical in the growth and development of children. This butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of the neck below the Adam's apple is in charge of making and storing hormones that play a significant role in metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and the rate at which food is converted to energy. To do all these things, it utilizes iodine taken from the bloodstream and concentrates it within the gland. But it also takes up

radioactive iodine, with a major negative impact on its function. This can cause thyroid cancer, although that is uncommon, accounting for just one percent of all cancers in the United States. Still, each year about 15,000 people are diagnosed with thyroid cancer, and one percent of those diagnosed will die.

You can imagine radiation as being like an apple tree, which is dropping apples onto a guy sitting underneath it. There is the question of how many apples the tree is dropping, and then that of how many dents are in the guy's head from apples having hit it. A curie is the unit used to measure the number of apples that are dropping. It is a measure of radioactive material, based on the number of atoms that decay each second. One curie is thirty-seven billion atoms undergoing decay each second. That is the measure used to express the amount of radiation given off by Three Mile Island or Hanford. A "rem," on the other hand, is the unit used to measure the number of dents on the guy under the apple tree's head. That's what they measured with the badges people wore.

Right after my father started working at Hanford, they did a special experiment. There was some important equipment being developed to monitor the USSR's nuclear activities. But there wasn't any place radioactive enough to test it. So they just released 7,200 to 12,000 curies of iodine-131 into the air over Hanford two days in early December 1949. This was called "Green Run," because it involved a processing "run" of uranium fuel that had been cooled for only a short time (sixteen days), and was, therefore, "green," in other words, it had had less time to decay to safer levels.

These were heady days for the health physicists working to save our nation in the cold war against the Soviet Union, especially for my father, who this year got his promotion to Senior Physicist.

Bobby Goes to Jason Lee

At the age of five, I started kindergarten. On the first day of school, my Mom walked me down the six houses to the corner of Cottonwood and Birch. I told her I could make it the rest of the way myself and waved goodbye. It was just a block from there down to the big street called Van Giesen. You turned right on Van Giesen, and the school was about a half-mile down.

The name of my school was Jason Lee Elementary. The schools in our town were all named after prominent regional historical figures. Everyone knows Lewis and Clark, for whom one school was named, and Sacajawea (spelled in this case with a "j", not a "g"), the namesake of another, but who was Jason Lee?

Actually it wasn't entirely clear why they ended up naming a school after this guy; maybe they were running low on historical figures. Or maybe they thought that his educational orientation made him a good candidate, even though it turns out he was from way down around Salem, Oregon. Lee was a Methodist missionary who came out to convert the Indians. He built a mission on the Willamette River, north of current-day Salem, in the area the Indians called Chemeketa, which is between Portland and Eugene. This was in 1834, quite early in the whole history of opening the west—just thirty years after Lewis and Clark.

What was a nice boy from Canada doing roughing it out in Oregon among the natives? Apparently Jason had a religious experience while still a teenager. God himself told him to go forth and save the heathens.

Things didn't go too well for Lee at the beginning. The first year there were fourteen Indian students, but half of them died (of diseases brought by the very white men running the school), and all but two of the remaining ones ran away. The following year, Lee managed to get enrollment up to twenty-five, but again a majority of the students fell ill or died. Although the point of the whole exercise was to convert the Indians to Christianity, Lee managed to convert just a single one of the students. The Indians were not interested in attending church services, and came up with the interesting proposal that they should be paid for doing so.

Realizing that his crusade to save the Indians was a lost cause, Lee turned his efforts to stealing their lands instead. He got involved in setting up the political mechanisms for the whites to take over Oregon. In 1836 and 1837 he helped draft a petition for the establishment of a territorial government.

Lee spent much of his time trying to get more money and people from the church headquarters. In 1837 the first group of reinforcements arrived. One of them especially caught his eye: the lovely Anna Maria Pittman, whom he wasted no time wooing and wedding. Two months later, on July 16, 1837, the couple was married in a beautiful fir grove east of the Mission house. Jason and Anna did not dawdle when it came to baby making; Anna soon was pregnant. Unfortunately she died in childbirth less than a year later, earning the dubious distinction of being the first of the white Oregon pioneer women to die.

Actually, Lee wasn't even there when she died; he was on a business trip back east. One of the things on his agenda for the trip was to present his petition to set up the territorial government to the authorities in Washington. But mainly he was visiting church headquarters, trying to get more budget and headcount for his projects, to put it in modern business terms. He apparently succeeded, returning in 1840 with reinforcements in the form of ministers and teachers, farmers and mechanics, all ready to assist him in the expansion process.

As well as—a new wife! Yes, that's right, after hearing of his wife's sad death while on his trip back to New England, the pioneer and missionary wasted no time starting to hunt for a replacement Mrs. Lee. What luck to have an old classmate introduce him to one of his students, who had just graduated at the top of her class in religious studies. After a whirlwind four-month courtship, the new couple tied the knot in July 1839. They returned to Oregon by ship around Cape Horn.

Unfortunately, Lee's new wife Lucy did not do much better than the first Mrs. Lee or the Indians at the mission school. In 1842, she died of pleurisy, leaving behind an infant daughter to whom Lee had given the bizarre name of Lucyanna, combining the names of his two wives. The baby was less than one month old. Pleurisy is an inflammation of the pleura, the space between the lungs and the chest walls, most likely caused by infection, and is known for being horrifically painful. Lucyanna, gurgling in her cradle, looking up at her mother gasping and crying in pain, was far too young to sense how near Lucy's life was to its end.

This was the second wife whose death Jason had missed. He was on another important business trip. During this period he was engaged in a major expansion of his mission, setting up little branch missions around the Northwest, such as one near Seattle, one up near Portland. He also continued to be active in politics. Around the time of Lucy's death, he was presiding over a meeting to set up the territorial organization, and later participated in actually forming it. He also was involved in setting up schools for white people, including the school that later became Willamette University.

It must have come as a shock to Jason to lose his second wife in four years. Then to add insult to injury, he was summarily fired. The Methodist Church simply didn't feel he was converting enough Indians to justify all the money spent maintaining the mission. There's no record of how much the church elders would have been willing to shell out for each Indian convert. We do know that Lee's initial funding, which he ran through before returning east to beg for more, was $100,000, a huge sum at the time. The bad tidings that he'd lost his job were brought by Marcus Whitman, another missionary, who had set up shop in eastern Washington, close to Richland actually. On his way home from a trip of his own back to the East Coast to get more money and support, Whitman stopped by Salem to let Lee know he was out of a job.

Lee promptly set off with little Lucyanna on a trip back to the east coast to plead his case and try to save his job, as well as defend himself against charges he'd misused mission funds. His itinerary took him and Lucyanna first to Hawaii, where they and a couple they were traveling with by the name of Hines,

the husband a colleague of Jason's, the wife indispensable for taking care of the baby, were to transfer to another ship for the long trip around the tip of South America. But evidently there were some problems with the travel arrangements, and there was no room on the New York-bound ship for the couple. Unwilling to travel alone with Lucyanna, Jason left her with the Hines and continued on his trip alone.

The route he ended up taking was most circuitous. First, he got a ride on a Hawaiian ship going to Mexico. He traveled overland by stagecoach to Guadalajara and Mexico City, then to Vera Cruz. From there he sailed to New Orleans. Then he went up the Mississippi by steamboat, arriving at Pittsburgh in May 1844. From there, he took the stage to New York City. The entire trip took five months. He arrived too late to plead his case to the Methodist authorities.

Two-year-old Lucyanna ended up returning from Hawaii to Oregon a few months later with the Hines.

Less than a year later, on March 12, 1845, Jason Lee died of internal organ failure while visiting his sister. Unbelievably, word of his death never got back to the Hines or Lucyanna. In 1846, the Hines took the now four-year-old Lucyanna to New York to return her to her father, where they first learned of his untimely death. He had managed to leave a will entrusting his daughter to the care of Reverend Hines and his wife. The three returned to Oregon when Lucyanna was eleven.

Students of Lucyanna's at Willamette University, where she became a teacher and later Governess after graduating in 1863, described her as tall and slender. On winter days, it is said, they would sit around the fire with her while she read her favorite poem, Longfellow's "Evangeline":

> *THIS is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,*
> *Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight…*

Lucyanna died at thirty-nine, leaving a single daughter, Ethel. Ethel remained unmarried, marking the end of the progeny of Jason Lee, the Methodist pioneer and missionary. A half-century after his death his earthly remains were brought back to Salem.

In the fevered hallucinations he experienced in 1845 lying on his deathbed in his sister's house in the little town in Ontario where he had grown up, could Jason Lee have imagined that one hundred thirteen years later, little Bobby would be taking his nap in the kindergarten room in a Jason Lee Elementary School, built in the middle of the desert to educate the children of elite scientists

embarked on a great quest to create weapons of unspeakable destructive capacity, two hundred fifty miles northeast of the Oregon mission he had founded a decade earlier, where, even as he drew his final breaths, his three-year-old daughter wept for her dead mother and dying father?

Nor, exhausted and diseased, stripped of his job, isolated from his only daughter, accused of embezzlement, widowed twice, could Jason have imagined that in coming decades he would be lionized as one of Oregon's leading pioneers and founding fathers, his statue occupying a place of honor in the State Capitol in Salem.

Bobby Gets Skipped a Grade

It didn't take long for the school authorities to notice that I was smarter than the other kindergartners. The main difference was that I could already read. I was bored to death with the kindergarten teacher trying to teach all the other kids the letters of the alphabet and doing other "reading readiness" exercises, and can easily imagine that I was an obnoxious distraction in the classroom. I remember Mrs. Peterson, the principal, calling me into her office for a series of tests. The conclusion was that I should be promoted, or "skipped," as they said, to the first grade. I don't remember when I was promoted but it must have been soon after school started since in the Christmas letter this year my mother reported, "He is going [*sic*] very well and has made a good adjustment to his group." When that letter was written my older sister Sandy was still in first grade with me, but later the powers that be, realizing she was no intellectual slouch herself, took the opportunity to skip her to the second grade, a decision in which they could well have been influenced by Dr. Spock's injunction to be careful not to encourage girls to compete with boys lest they lose interest in rearing children.

Although I have no memory *per se* of actually writing it, I found in my archives a book I apparently wrote in first grade at the age of five. I don't know if everyone in our first grade class was writing a book, or if it was something I took it upon myself to do. I can however imagine myself as a boy of five thinking I had important insights that needed to be captured on the printed page and conveyed to the world at large. I chose the topic of toys.

First, I characterized what made a good toy. The world could certainly be divided into good toys and bad—what aspects characterized the good ones? Little Bobby identified a number of criteria, the first of which was:

A good Toy is safe.

Why was I, a mere five-year-old child, focused on the safety of a toy as the first condition needing to be satisfied for it to be considered good? And why was I capitalizing the noun "Toy," as it would be in German? Perhaps this was the wisdom of a child, understanding intuitively that Toys really lay at the heart of this book, and that capitalization was a way to highlight their central role.

A good Toy can move.

That's understandable—little Bobby certainly was interested in trucks and trains.

A good Toy is sturdy and will not break easily.

A good Toy is fun and makes us happy.

How basic. Perhaps I should copyright this before a leading toy company like Lionel can adopt it as its slogan.

On the back of that first page was a single line:

This Book is about TOYS.

Why was it there and not on the first page? Or did I perhaps insert this page into the book backwards, intending the list of characteristics of good toys to be what was on the back of the first page?

In the remainder of the book, I undertook a classification of types of toys. I defined four categories. Each got its own page, with an illustration of one or more example of the type of toy in question.

Some toys can go.

The illustration showed a train and a car. Like all the illustrations in the book, it shows a distinct lack of artistic talent or possibly even artistic intent.

Some toys are music toys.

The illustration shows what appear to be a harmonica and a castanet.

Some toys are stuffed animals and dolls.

The illustration was a stuffed tiger.

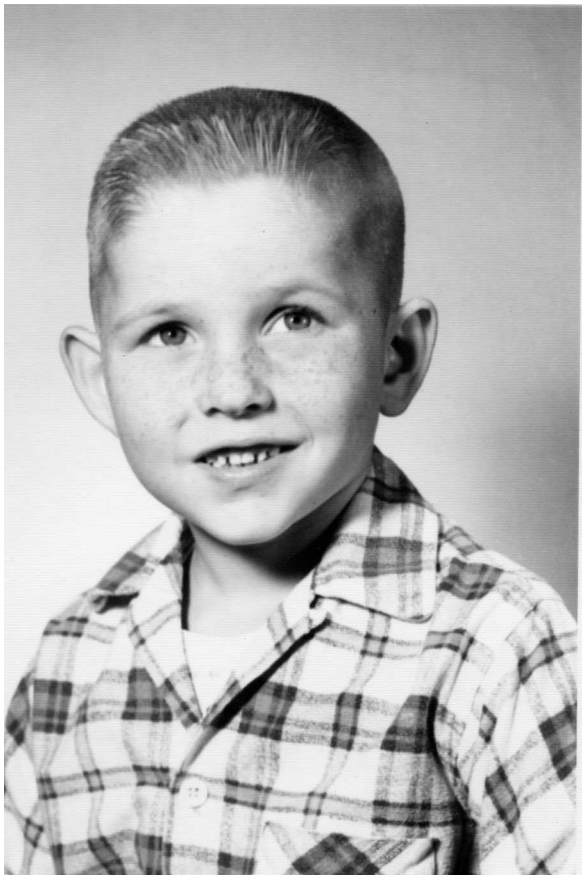
We can Make things with some toys.

The illustration showed some Lego-like multi-colored building parts that apparently could be fitted together.

And that was the end of the book, except for the clumsy drawing of Santa Claus on the rear cover—I guess this book must have been written around Christmas-time, since the drawings on the front cover as well seem to include a Christmas tree as well. A Christmas tree was indeed an indispensable part of the Myers family Christmas tradition.

As I said, I actually don't remember writing this book at all. Somehow, it's survived through the years, in one box or another, in the back of a closet, or in the corner of the garage, and now, forty-five years later, I have it here in front of

me, its yellowed pages, its childish hand, its awkward pictures, calling out to me through time.



Bobby at six

Six

Bobby Moves to Goethals

I turned six in April 1959. On my final report card for first grade my teacher Miss Miller gave me an "M" (for Medium) in the social development categories of "assumes responsibility," "adjusts to the group," "respects and is thoughtful of others"; the work and study habits category of "takes cares of materials"; as well as art, music, and writing, although I got an "H" (for High) in everything else.

Then that summer my parents moved the family into a new house befitting the rising economic and social status of an up-and-coming young scientist. The new house was not merely a status symbol; a larger house was required by the couple's procreative tendencies. The little three-bedroom house on Cottonwood was simply bursting at the seams with five kids. The new house was a two-story duplex which my father converted into a single-family house, and had six bedrooms, two baths, a family room, dining room, kitchen, living room, study, utility room, furnace room, storage room, shop, and recreation room.

My mother made sure the new house was in the same school district as the old one. The littler kids could have changed schools without much trouble but my oldest sister Nancy was going into her sixth and last year of elementary school and didn't want to have to make friends all over again.

Our new house was on Goethals Drive, named after the man who built the Panama Canal—West Point graduate George W. Goethals. Many of the streets in Richland were named after military people. For instance, Mahan Ave., running parallel to Goethals just a few streets up, was named after Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, a Naval officer who lived in the latter half of the 1800s and was a leading theorist of sea power, as well as being a friend of Teddy Roosevelt's like Goethals. Armistead Ave. commemorated Brig. General Lewis Addison Armistead, who died fighting for the Confederates at Gettysburg. McPherson Ave. was named for General James B. McPherson, William Tecumseh Sherman's right-hand man in the Civil War, and so on. Like Goethals and many of the other army figures for which Richland's streets are named, McPherson had a civil engineering background—not surprising in light of the fact that it

had been a massive civil engineering project to build Richland, the town where my family and I lived, along with Hanford Engineer Works, those labs where Daddy worked north of town.

Richland and Hanford were built in order to create an atom bomb to drop on Japan and win the Pacific War. This was part of the Manhattan project, under the direction of the corpulent General Leslie R. Groves, renowned for his rudeness but also his ambition, vision and drive. As far as I could tell, he named the streets after other military officers less to honor them than to poke fun at them.

When you're trying to figure out what material to build a bomb out of, a key question is how "fissile" it is, meaning how easily its nucleus can be split to create a nuclear explosion. The scientists determined that plutonium 239 has great fissileness. and that this is what they should use for the bomb. But making plutonium is complicated. You irradiate uranium 238, contained in natural uranium, which turns it into uranium 239, which in turn turns into neptunium 239, which spontaneously changes to plutonium 239. This process requires a huge reactor. And then the plutonium has to be separated from the other materials, no small feat in itself. The process requires a massive extraction facility. A ton of uranium yields a mere 250 grams of plutonium.

On January 1, 1943, Groves chose the Hanford site for the plutonium project. The Grand Coulee Dam, a mile-wide concrete barrier across the Columbia, was scheduled for completion in northern Washington just six months later. That dam would bottle up the mighty Columbia in a newly created Lake Roosevelt, one hundred thirty miles long. When released, water from the lake would course down huge internal waterways to powerhouses where it would rotate twenty-four six-hundred-ton turbines, generating more electricity than any other dam in the country, more than enough to sate even the Hanford reactor's ravenous appetite. Having delivered up its hydroelectric potential, the river would then flow down to the Hanford area where it would perform its second essential task for Groves, cooling the intense heat that the reactors generated.

Groves had been granted virtually unlimited powers to get the bomb made. The first priority was to get rid of the people at the desired site. Luckily, it wasn't much of a problem getting rid of the local Indians. Puck Hyah Toot, leader of the indigenous Wanapum and grandson of the great Wanapum spiritual leader Smohalla, was simply told the land was needed to help win the war and was given thirty days to vacate it. With broken hearts, the Wanapum quietly surrendered their ancient homesites and ancestral fishing grounds near the rifted canyon walls at the site on the Columbia River known as White Bluffs—so named for the white and black layers in the cliffs on the east side—as well as one of their princi-

pal camps near the town of Hanford, which they called Chanout, or "Water Whirls Around," all simply because the government said the land was needed.

The government neglected to share with the Indians the minor detail that they'd never be able to return, and was wholly unconcerned that they would essentially become homeless. The whites who had dug irrigation canals and planted cherry and apple orchards in the area, also thought they would be returning after the government finished whatever it was going to do with their farms, and also were given thirty days to leave, but at least got checks compensating them for their property, albeit at low-ball government valuations. Those farmers who stayed around got to enjoy the sight of their farms and orchards being bulldozed, after prisoners were brought in to harvest the crops. Residents were ordered not to even inform their own children serving in the armed forces in Europe that they had been uprooted from their homes. Nineteen forty-two was the last class graduating from Hanford High School, which for some reason was never demolished, its empty white shell a ghost from the past looming over the river. All that remains of the little town of White Bluffs is some foundations, including those of the Oakley Hotel, which had just been completed. One hundred seventy-seven white corpses were exhumed from its cemetery for reburial in nearby Prosser; no such care was taken with the Indian graveyards.

Construction started in the fall of 1943, although my father Ira was certainly not aware of that; instead, at age eighteen, he was busy preparing to leave for college. He had lost his father three years earlier, and graduated from high school the year before, but spent the year helping out his mother on their farm in Addy, Washington, finally helping her move into a house in nearby Chewelah (about one hundred miles east of the Grand Coulee Dam) when they realized there was no way she could to run the farm on her own with two young children. In the spring, he had his first real job, working on the railroad, where he obtained his Social Security Number. Now he was finally off to college. A war was raging on two fronts, but Ira had his 4-F medical deferment because of his foot. His mother's car was broken down, so they traveled the mile from their house in Chewelah to the bus station on the old pony they had, my father's large black suitcase and a smaller one (color unknown) tied onto the saddle. My father's mother bought him the bus ticket. The bus first took him thirty or so miles south to Spokane, where because of the newly constructed Grand Coulee Dam, for the first time in hundreds of years the annual summer salmon harvest on the Spokane River had *not* taken place, the genetic imperative of millions of chinook salmon, to return to the waters of their birth in the upper Columbia, remaining unfulfilled. From Spokane Ira's bus proceeded the remaining seventy miles to Pull-

man, Washington, where he would enroll at what was then Washington State College, now Washington State University.

Perhaps my father taking the bus to college accounts for why he chose to send me to college on a bus as well. That would be mid-August 1969. My college was about five hundred miles away from Cleveland, where my family had moved in 1962, but apparently the $89 plane fare was too much of an extravagance for my father. Driving would have taken only one full day but that would have required, I suppose, that he take time off work, not to mention paying for a tank or two of gasoline. He often discussed the cost per mile to operate a car, pointing out that it should include, importantly, the depreciation cost, which many people simply failed to take into account when calculating how much it cost to drive somewhere. Whenever he talked about this he invariably put on his here's-another-thing-I-know look, with his eyes slightly narrowed and head slightly tilted, peering at you to make sure both that you understood how important his unique insight really was, and also that you appreciated that he was sharing it with you. So it's quite likely that he was including the fully-loaded cost of vehicle operation in his calculation about the expenditure in money and time that would be required to somehow get me to college.

In the end, consciously or unconsciously, he chose for me to go Greyhound, which charged a fare of eighteen dollars. We drove downtown to the bus station, just the two of us, and my father bought me the bus ticket just as his mother had bought his fifty-six years before. We proceeded out to the loading area.

"Take this, you might need it," intoned my father, and pulled his wallet from the rear pocket of his threadbare pants. He had been using the same wallet for several decades, and its leather was so polished from those years of rubbing the inside of that same left rear pocket that it gleamed. The wallet's shape precisely matched that of my father's left buttock, against which it had rested for fourteen or sixteen hours a day probably since well before that day when, as legend has it, in an unusually frisky moment my father and his cute wife conceived me in the back seat of their Plymouth. Perhaps as he and Mommy squirmed around back there, he felt the wallet and it bothered him enough to pull it out and toss it on the floor. Or maybe, as Mommy was pulling off his pants, the wallet fell out onto the floor of the car. There it would have lain, a silent leather witness to a brief moment of ecstasy which gave rise to the existence of the eldest son to whom seventeen years later my father would make the pathetic going-away-to-college gift of two twenties and a ten plucked from it with clammy hand.

I shuffled up the stairs into the bus. When the bus pulled out of its slip five minutes later, my father was gone. I was on my way to college, which is the topic of an upcoming volume of these memoirs.

The scale of the Hanford project was inconceivably large. At the peak of construction in June 1944, Hanford was home to over 45,000 workers, attracted by wages of up to fifteen dollars per day. Thanksgiving that year required 12,000 turkeys. The "colored" construction workers were indispensable; the six thousand colored men and one thousand colored women were kept in separate quarters, though. The first order of business was to bulldoze away a huge amount of old Indian stuff; over a hundred archaeological sites including campsites, housepits, hunting blinds, game-driving areas, quarries and sites where stone tools were made, and spiritual quest sites were quickly and thoughtlessly destroyed.

Construction of Hanford involved the use of 8,500 major pieces of construction equipment and the building of three hundred forty-five miles of permanent roads, one hundred twenty-five miles of railroad, fifty miles of electrical transmission lines, and hundreds of miles of fencing. Twenty-five million cubic yards of earth were excavated and 750,000 cubic yards of concrete were placed, along with 1,500,000 concrete blocks and 750,000 cement bricks. Forty thousand railcar loads of materials were received, including forty thousand tons of steel, 160,000,000 board feet of lumber, and 11,000 poles for the electric power and lighting system. By the time the war ended in August 1945, over five hundred non-residential buildings had been built, including the B, D and F Reactors and sixty-four underground, high-level waste storage tanks. The B Reactor was the centerpiece, a graphite cube fifty feet tall. Huge intake/outtake facilities on the Columbia were built to suck in the 42,000 gallons of water per minute needed to cool up to a dozen planned reactors and then dump it back in the river.

The construction workers were needed only until the construction was finished. But the scientists and administrators who would run Hanford—six thousand of them plus twice again as many family members—needed somewhere to live. Groves solved the problem by simply buying the entire town of Richland, which at the time was a tiny farming community of 247 south of Hanford, nestled in a crook of the Columbia at its confluence with the Yakima. In 1811, six years after Lewis and Clark, a scout visited the area and recorded, "The landscape at the mouth of the Eyakima surpassed in picturesque beauty anything we had yet seen." The little village was named in 1904 after Nelson Rich, a settler who came to the nearby town of Prosser in 1883 and later bought land in the area that would bear his name.

In two years, by early 1945, Richland had been transformed into a town with four thousand prefabricated houses shipped up from Portland—the cookie-cutter town *par excellence*. Each different type of house had a letter name; wood-shingled A-houses and B-houses and C-houses and D-houses and houses designated by every other letter of the alphabet lined all those streets named after military figures and civil engineers. The design of all the Richland letter houses was said to have been inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. In the northwest part of town, evidently running out of army heroes, the street namers fell back on trees. Thus you had Birch, the street where my parents first lived when they moved to Richland (in the one type of house without a letter designation, called simply a "ranch house") and Cottonwood, where they lived upon returning from a year spent back in Pullman for Daddy's graduate work. The house at 1513 Cottonwood was also a ranch house, identical to the one on Birch down to the location of the light switches—that sure must have made figuring out where to put the furniture in the new house easier. When I was born, we were living in the ranch house on Cottonwood.

Nancy, Bobby, and Sandy in front of our house at 1513 Cottonwood, Richland, Washington. Monsters would lurk outside my bedroom window (foreground).

The entire Hanford facility was finished in just over a year, well ahead of schedule. Dupont, the contractor, was concerned about being viewed as profiteering from the war, so they agreed to build the plant for cost plus one dollar. Due to the way the contract was drafted, by coming in ahead of schedule they reduced their profit from one dollar to fifty-six cents.

As my father returned to Pullman for his sophomore year at WSC in the fall of 1944, the construction at Hanford was complete, at a total cost of $230,000,000 (equivalent to more than ten times that amount in current dollars); the reactor was started up on September 26, 1944. The plutonium manufacturing process had never actually been validated—there had been no time—so it was not surprising that the reactor sputtered and died. It restarted itself, then stopped again. An urgent call went out to Enrico Fermi, the inventor of the process to analyze the problem and devise a fix, which he did.

The cans taken to Portland and from there by train to Los Angeles on February 2, 1945, did not contain Campbell's Cream of Mushroom soup, but rather the first few grams of Hanford plutonium, laboriously extracted from the uranium isotopes produced in the reactors. In California, the cans were turned over to a junior army officer from Los Alamos, New Mexico, where the actual bomb was to be constructed. By May 1945, a system was in place where regular shipments of Hanford plutonium were being made to Los Alamos, using one-kilogram jugs that looked like big thermos bottles, in convoys protected by submachine guns. The scientists at Los Alamos labored mightily and finally produced a test bomb containing Hanford plutonium at its core, which they named "Gadget." It was detonated at the Trinity Test Site near Alamagordo, New Mexico at 5:29:45 a.m. on July 16. Seeing the detonation, Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the head scientist of the Manhattan Project, recalled a line from the Bhagavad-Gita, the Hindu text he had been studying: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds." The cloud reached a phenomenal height, over 50,000 feet. The blast was certainly a rude morning wake-up call for one particular wild jackrabbit, found dead and partially eviscerated eight hundred yards from ground zero after the blast.

President Truman, in a diary entry from July 25, wrote: "This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10. I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop that terrible bomb on the old capital or the new.

"He and I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I'm sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance."

Many of the scientists did not want to drop the second bomb, or even the first. But Groves had been adamant. Consumed by the desire to demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt his success in building the monstrous new weapon, he lobbied vigorously for its use. Finally the military managed to convince Truman to drop the bomb on a real target, instead of making a demonstration like many scientists recommended, but Truman insisted the target be military. Fortunately, that took candidates like Kyoto and the Emperor's palace in Tokyo out of the running. Unfortunately, it was then an easy end-run for the military to claim that Hiroshima, or Nagasaki, was a military target, since of course, both cities did contain factories producing war materiel. The orders that went out on the very same day of Truman's diary entry, July 25, made no mention of military vs. civilian targets, and simply designated the entire cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among others, as targets.

The bomb detonated over Hiroshima, "Big Boy," was a uranium bomb, which Hanford had nothing to do with. It was dropped on August 6 1945. Riding along in a separate plane, named "The Great Artiste" and carrying monitoring equipment, was a certain Major Charles William Sweeney. Three days later Sweeney, commanding a B-29 named "Bock's Car" after its usual pilot, Capt. Frederick Bock, dropped "Fat Man," so named for its pudgy shape, over Nagasaki, a little Japanese port town on the southern island of Kyushu. Nagasaki was not really a strategic target, other than being where a Mitsubishi plant had produced some of the torpedoes used at Pearl Harbor. When Fat Man was ignited, conventional explosives violently squeezed the softball-sized capsule of Hanford plutonium inside until its density reached the point of supercriticality, causing a nuclear explosion. The fierce blast wind, heat rays reaching several thousand degrees, and deadly radiation generated by the explosion crushed, burned and killed everything in sight and reduced the entire area to a barren field of rubble. Hanford's plutonium had performed its work admirably.

Bock was much less creative in naming his plane than one Capt. George Marquardt, who came up with the cute moniker "Up an' Atom" for the weather plane he flew along on the run.

Fat Man almost did not make it to its August 9 date with destiny. There was a firing unit on Fat Man's front that needed to be connected to a cable going through the bomb's innards to a radar antenna on its tail that detected when the bomb was at the right altitude to ignite. Technicians in the Marianas from where

the flight was to take off were trying to hook up the bomb on the night of August 7 when they discovered to their horror that both connectors were female; somebody had threaded the cable through the bomb backwards! There wasn't enough time to disassemble the bomb and reverse the cable. Without telling anyone, the two got a soldering iron and some extension cords. They secretly, and very carefully, removed the two plugs on the cable and swapped them so everything fit.

The technicians evidently did their job well, since the bomb detonated as planned. Sweeney recalls that as he watched the bomb falling free on its forward arc, the somewhat bizarre thought flashed through his mind: "It's too late now. There are no strings or cables attached. We can't get it back, whether it works or not." The mushroom cloud was "multicolored…intense…angry…mesmerizing…breathtaking…ominous."

In Pullman, Washington, it was 7:00 p.m. on August 8, 1945 and my father was at work at the college radio station KWSC when the Japanese plant in Nagasaki where the Pearl Harbor torpedoes had been manufactured was completely incinerated—since by coincidence, the single hole in the clouds that Sweeney could see through was right over that plant, which was actually at the edge of the town. Much of the rest of Nagasaki was destroyed as well. My father's job at the radio station, where he worked during the summer, was as an electrician. That weekend he had a date up in Spokane with Betty LaFaver, the cute nursing student. Getting dates was pretty easy with all the boys off to war. He'd met Betty and her roommate Grace waiting tables in the college cafeteria the semester before, and started dating both of them—two for the price of one, as he would joke. But Ira was also a conscientious student; his studies always came first.

Four years earlier that student nurse, my mother, just finishing up eighth grade, had been alone in her house in Muskegon, Michigan, when she heard about the Pearl Harbor attacks using those Nagasaki-made torpedoes. Her father and new stepmother were both out. She was petrified. Little did she know then that only nine years later fate would lead her to a life with a newly-minted physics graduate husband living in the town charged with making the deadly weapon that would show those Japanese once and for all how badly they had miscalculated when they picked a fight with the U S of A.

My mother the summer before Pearl Harbor

Horace Axtell, a Nez Perce who was born just a year before my father and grew up in Lapwai, Idaho, just across the Washington border, was a member of one of the first expeditionary forces to enter Nagasaki after the atomic bomb exploded. A member of the 529th Army Engineering Unit, he recalled:

> *When the ship pulled into the harbor I could see bodies still floating, killed by the atomic bomb. I saw all the dead Japanese, the children, women and elders.*

Including the floating corpses Horace saw, the bomb dropped on Nagasaki killed an estimated 35,000 immediately, with another 35,000 dying by the end of the year, and wounded 70,000. If the entire cost of the Manhattan Project, $20 billion in current dollars, is applied to the people killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, then approximately $150,000 was spent to kill each soul. If another $100 billion of cleanup costs are added to the equation, then the cost per vaporized Japanese goes up to about $1 million, the equivalent of dropping two hundred pounds of gold bars on each and every one of the late lamented citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We do not know if Horace was ever afflicted by multiple myeloma, the disease many of the GIs who first went into Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the bombings

came down with. Multiple myeloma is a type of blood cancer which can cause pain, fatigue, kidney failure, and in some cases "hyperviscosity syndrome," where the blood becomes thick and sticky.

Japan's surrender on August 14, just five days after the bomb containing Hanford's plutonium was dropped on Nagasaki, produced great rejoicing in Richland. A Richland newspaper headline proclaimed: "Peace! Our bomb clinched it!" The victory celebrations held in the "atomic city" were covered widely in newspapers and on radio programs throughout the nation, and the little city basked in admiration and praise. The War Department authorized "A-Bomb" pins, bearing pictures not of mushroom soup but rather of mushroom clouds, to be given to all workers. The reactor site received several national awards as a nuclear and engineering landmark, and has the distinction of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Even the fuel-making processes used at the Hanford Site were cited as "historic processes" under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Groves was rewarded with a promotion, but soon thereafter decided to switch careers from atom bombs to computers, leaving the army to join Remington Rand, the company that made the old black typewriter sitting in our house. There he managed the labs developing the Remington Rand 400, the first business computer. In 1949 Remington Rand acquired the company that made another computer called ENIAC. Groves was acquainted with that machine because it had been used for the incredibly complex calculations required to create the next-generation hydrogen bomb. In 1951 the company started selling its UNIVAC machine, a later version of which Bobby would program in high school. As the result of a series of mergers, Remington Rand later became Sperry Rand, then Unisys.

Bobby Goes to Sacajawea

Twenty-five miles south of Hanford back in Richland, our old house on Cottonwood was in the Jason Lee district where I had gone to kindergarten and first grade, and we thought the Goethals house was too, but unfortunately, over the summer the school board changed the boundaries and we ended up in the Sacajawea school district instead. My mother tried to arrange for Nancy to stay at Jason Lee for her final year of elementary school before entering Chief Joseph Junior High School, but it wasn't to happen.

Sacajawea wasn't really that much further than Jason Lee—maybe a twelve-minute walk instead of a ten-minute one.

I was in the second grade with Mrs. Stolte. You could tell just from her name that this lady was unpleasant. She seemed to think it was an imposition to have to teach the bratty six- and seven-year olds, even though that was her job. She also didn't seem to like me very much. One of the documents in my records is a letter she wrote home to my parents after I had a little tiff with some kid at lunch, saying that she was sorry to inform them that the behavior of their son, Bobby, during the noon hour is not up to the standards they set here at Sacajawea, and that I'd have to eat at home for a week.

Ms. Stolte would give us math quizzes where there was a page full of addition and subtraction problems; the idea was that it was a kind of time trial, with everyone standing up at their desk as soon as they were done. I was usually done first, and I'd leap up from my desk to a standing position, moving my eyes from left to right without moving my head, to see if anyone else had already finished or was going to finish soon without making it look too obvious that that's what I was doing.

The cranky second-grade teacher soon got tired of this. "OK, Bobby, you can go to the back of the room and work on other projects for the rest of the period." It was not like I actually had any other projects or that there was anything to do back there—there was just a table with some books in a bookshelf. Essentially she just wanted me out of her hair, and preferably her life.

Combing through the books, I came across a world atlas. It had maps of every single country in the world, their major cities, topography, and natural resources. It hit me—I could learn every single country in the world by just going through this atlas. Each map represented an actual country; every single point on the map was an actual point somewhere on the earth's surface that in theory, at least, I could go to and stand on. The roads shown on the map corresponded to actual roads that I could travel on if I wanted to get from one city to another. Each dot represented an actual city, with houses and streets and people walking around. These maps were the gateway to geographic reality.

I determined to make a list of all the countries in the world and their capital cities, which were shown on the maps in the atlas with a special star symbol. Over the next couple of weeks, I spent all the bits and pieces of time that I could in the back of the room with the atlas, completing my list of world capitals.

And I could make maps myself as well, representing the reality around me precisely! I constructed maps of Sacajawea Elementary School, and of the area around our house.

When I was done with the map project, I would work on my binary number project. I had learned how to write numbers in the binary system—all 1's and 0's.

For instance, 412 could be written as 110011100. I found this fascinating. The two representations meant exactly the same thing, but expressed it in different ways. It was a completely different, yet parallel, way of encoding numbers.

I started a project to write all the numbers up to one million in binary notation. I got white, grid-lined pads of paper. Tingles ran up and down my spine just looking at these blank, pristine, rectangularly-ruled sheets and thinking of how they would soon be covered with binary numbers. I never got to a million, but I do recall making it up to about ten thousand, or 10011100010000, which amounted to over a hundred sheets. I planned follow-on projects to do the same thing in base 3 or base 4, but those never got off the ground.

The Soviets did not distinguish little boys interested in binary notation from any other of the citizens of Richland; the US was aiming Hanford bombs at them so they would aim their bombs right back at us. Bomb drills were a regular feature of our school schedule. The bell would go off, and we would get down under our desks to "duck and cover." It did not occur to the six-year-olds to wonder how being under a desk would help protect them when a Soviet megaton-class nuclear bomb detonated over our town.

After a drill, sometimes we'd go out at recess and play wiffle-ball behind Sacajawea Elementary School in the yard of a church. First they picked a captain, and then each captain picked his side. I was always the last to be chosen, and for a very good reason: I had never gotten a hit in all the games that I had played there. No nerve fibers seemed to connect my eyes to my brain to my hands on the bat. But then one weekend my cousin Butch, son of my father's older sister and ten years older than I, came down to Richland to visit us. He pulled out the bat and ball and gloves. We tossed the ball around. He hit some fungoes for me to field. He came over and stood behind me, putting his arms around me, holding the bat with me, swinging it with me, back and forth, letting me get the feel for it.

Standing there with his big, warm chest pressed up against my back, his teenager smell just inches away, his big hands (which had little tufts of teenage hair growing on the upper part of the fingers) lying over my little six-year-old ones on the bat, moving our bodies back and forth from side to side as if we were somehow attached to each other—suddenly it clicked, and the bat was just an extension of my arms, something to reach out with so very naturally and just poke the ball with. My father had never showed me how to bat, played catch with me, or even put on a glove or held a bat in his hands as far as I know.

The next game at school everyone was flabbergasted when I reached up and smacked the very first pitch for a single.

After we moved to the Goethals house, my father bought us a TV. I remember gathering around as a family in our living room and watching "Lassie." The protagonist Timmy, in his checked shirt, jeans (with cuffs), and Keds, was my idea of a perfect older brother. Lassie's heroics were incredible: leading lost children to safety, warning her family of impending disasters, helping the sick and injured.

But my family never had a dog. Perhaps Daddy didn't want to be reminded of Smoky, the dog he grew up with, or any of the things he associated with Smoky, mainly his family's destitute Depression-era existence on the rented farm in Addy just north of Chewelah, or more specifically the day his father almost chopped his foot off with the big mower. After that accident as my father lay on the couch in his decrepit house, hemorrhaging from his ankle, it was Smoky that had come bounding into the house, full of a dog's urgent concern, leaping up onto the couch, first nuzzling my father's foot, his nose cold against the mass of mangled muscle, then licking my father's face. But unlike Lassie, he could do nothing to help.

Once I was watching TV with my two older sisters and after the regular program gave way to a Campbell's Soup commercial (with its "M'm! M'm! Good!" slogan), I thought I'd like to see the program that had just been on again, so I asked my sisters to turn the TV back so I could. It turns out that I thought the channel knob was a way to go back in time. I had invented the concept of the TiVo forty years ahead of its time.

Bobby Visits Chewelah for Thanksgiving

This year we drove up to spend Thanksgiving with Daddy's relatives in Chewelah, Washington, a little town of about 2,000 souls lying fifty miles north of Spokane.

The name Chewelah comes from a band of Indians by that name who were part of the Kalispel Indian group, also known as the Pend d'Oreilles because of the large shell earrings they all wore when the first Europeans encountered them.

My father had lots of relatives up there since that is where he'd lived from the age of four when he arrived with his family from South Dakota, where he was born, to the age of eighteen when he took off for college. My father was born in South Dakota because it was there that his father Coy Thomas Myers met his mother Elizabeth Ann Dooley, commonly called Bessie; they both worked for the a local family named the Thompsons, my grandfather as a mechanic, my grandmother as a kind of nanny. Apparently Coy was not put off by Bessie's lazy eye, a condition resulting from her running into a table when she was three and cutting

a deep gash over her left eye. Coy and Bessie were married in 1919. They enjoyed a honeymoon in neighboring Iowa.

Ira was born on June 10, 1925, the first son and third child. Calvin Coolidge was President. The second child, Evelyn, who had been born in 1923, died before she reached the age of one. The state of medicine back then was such that nobody ever figured out precisely what she died of—she just got weaker and weaker and eventually died. My grandmother records in her autobiography that Mr. Thompson, whose land they lived on, got a lovely little coffin for her, and his wife, Lucille, made a nice little white dress for her and sang a lovely song at the funeral.

There is story behind my father's slightly unusual name of "Ira." That name actually commemorates his father's older brother James Ira Myers, always called just "Ira", who had died back in Tennessee as a child of five from a disease called "membraneous croup." Apparently this was something a lot of people died from in the late nineteenth century. Related to diphtheria, it is a dangerous contagious disease in which a substance slowly oozing out of the throat, larynx, and trachea, solidifies and coats them with a false membrane—hence the "membraneous" part of the name of the disease. It is as if your pulmonary passageways were covered in the equivalent of Saran plastic wrap. The "croup" part of the disease's name comes from the symptoms: a hoarse, ringing cough and difficulty breathing. Little Coy, my grandfather, caught the disease at the same time, but survived. He vowed to name his first-born son after the brother snatched from him so cruelly. My father's middle name was "Thomas," the same as his father and grandfather, a tradition that continues in our family to this day.

When my father was four, in 1929, his family decided to move from South Dakota to the Chewelah area where Coy's father Granville, his brother Dick, and his sister Allie already lived. They made the trip in the bitter cold of mid-winter, arriving in Chewelah before Christmas, and moved into a rented farmstead near the tiny town of Addy, ten miles north of Chewelah.

Soon the family grew to include another girl, Joyce. She was one of the two Myers sisters (the other being Lenice, the oldest) that married the two George brothers, Bill and Eugene, the latter known as Jack from his middle name John. So they were my uncles by marriage. They lived on farms on the east side of Chewelah that were so close to each other they were almost touching, just a little bit up the hill, on Cottonwood Creek Road. The Thanksgiving festivities were always at Uncle Bill's place. He had a nice three-bedroom house that he'd just built. Across the road, you could still see the primitive one-room log cabin Uncle

Bill and Lenice had lived in when they first moved there, with its smelly outhouse.

Uncle Bill's new house

We children loved to play in the big red barn on Uncle Bill's place. It had a kind of second floor, piled up with bales of hay. They kept the hay up there so they could just drop it down through special openings into the feeding troughs for the horses on the first floor of the barn. But you could move the bales of hay around and make passageways and tunnels and little secret rooms. My older sisters and I would play up there for hours during our Thanksgiving trips.

But Uncle Bill's main business was dairy farming. He had a herd of several hundred cows. Some of the cows were named for family members, including the one named for me: Bobby. They pointed her out to me but I wasn't too impressed. The cows were milked twice a day, as all cows must be. Bored and stinky and farting and shitting, their tails flicking away flies on their backs, their huge udders hanging pendulously low, the cows needed to be lined up in front of the entrance to the milk house. (Sometimes, being creatures of habit, they would line themselves up.) Around the perimeter of the milk house ran a passageway with several dozen stalls, into which the cows would be led one by one. An important role in this process, which I proudly fulfilled even as a six-year-old, was the shit shoveler, who walked behind the cows as they ambled along the milk house hall, and scooped up the moist, malodorous patties they left behind—cows

could shit all they wanted outside but the milk-house needed to be kept reasonably tidy.

The central part of the milk-house was a cement-floored area three or four feet lower than the surrounding hallway and stalls, so that the men working there could quickly move to a stall containing a new cow, apply the udder cleansing solution, grab the udder attachment device hanging by an accordion cable from the ceiling, and attach it to the udder of the cow in question, one plastic tube for each red teat. Vacuum action in each tube started the milking process, stimulating nerves in the teat to send a message to the cow's brain, which responded with a hormone instructing the teat to start giving out milk, a phenomenon known as "let-down"—the same thing that happens when a calf starts to suckle, or a human baby, for that matter.

The milking machine technology used in Uncle Bill's milk-house had its roots in innovations in the late nineteenth century which succeeded in imitating the pressure of human hand on cow teat, or later, the pressure of a calf's mouth.

The milk drawn from Uncle Bill's cows flowed through the tubes, also known as cups, and up a flexible plastic tube into a system of transparent pipes as big around as your arm running across the ceiling of the milking hall. It was quite a sight—all the white fluid coursing across the ceiling through the piping. The milk in the pipes headed to the next room, where it flowed into a massive stainless steel holding tank. This tank had a huge stirring blade that rotated at the leisurely pace of about once per minute. Uncle Bill would open up the top of the holding tank and hold up little Bobby to let him peer down on the lake of thousands of gallons of absolutely fresh, warm ivory-colored milk. Once a day, the Carnation truck would pull up, unfurl its hose and attach it to the outlet which allowed it to suck out all the milk in the tank into the truck and take it to the dairy where it would be processed into milk, cheese, cream, and butter to be delivered to homes across western Washington to build the bones and teeth of America's next generation. My uncles made a good living off this business.

Uncle Bill and Aunt Lenice had run a pipe from the tank directly to their kitchen in the adjacent house. So they literally had "running milk." You held your glass under a tap and turned it on. What came out was utterly fresh, warm, creamy, unpasteurized, unhomogenized milk. Drinking this milk, it was impossible to avoid realizing that it had been produced by a living, breathing animal.

All the women, including my mother, Grandma Myers, and Aunt Lenice and Aunt Joyce, Daddy's two sisters who married the two George brothers, would spend all day in that kitchen preparing Thanksgiving dinner. Normally, two to three dozen guests would attend. This year there were twenty-seven. Just the Ira

Myers family by itself was seven people (David, the fifth child, had been born in 1957 and was already two). Then there were all of Daddy's siblings, their spouses, and their children; and that wasn't even the end of the Myers', since there were also Daddy's uncles on his father's side like Dick and his wife Lena and their kids and Jack and his wife Mabel and their kids and Aunt Allie and her husband Clyde. I never really felt much of a connection to these people. Frankly, I even had a problem remembering their names or who was who. Then of course there was Grandma George, the matriarch of the George clan, who still lived up in the old little house on the edge of the forest in between her two boys' houses.

The turkeys were quite fresh, because they just went outside and grabbed a couple of unlucky ones and brought them over to a place in the yard with a kind of platform where they chopped off their heads. I learned that it is not only chickens, but also turkeys, which continue to run around even after their heads have been chopped off. What kind of signals continued to race along the nervous pathways of the decapitated fowl telling their muscles to place one leg before the other?

After the blood stopped spurting from their necks and the headless turkeys stopped running around and were plucked and cleaned, they were roasted. Besides your basic turkey and stuffing and cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes and creamed onions, these Thanksgiving feasts specialized in pies. I remember an entire table covered with more than a dozen pies: cherry, apple, pumpkin, mince-meat, pecan, raspberry, blueberry, blackberry, loganberry, blueberry, serviceberry, huckleberry, gooseberry, and chokeberry.

Not once in all of our Thanksgiving visits, though, did Daddy take us to see his childhood home, which was after all just fifteen minutes up the valley in Addy. Maybe he did not want us to see the dilapidated house his family had rented there. Maybe he was worried about running into someone he knew from his past life. Maybe he wanted to forget about his foot nearly getting cut off. Maybe he had painful memories of his family's poverty-stricken existence during he depression years Maybe he was trying to avoid being reminded of his father's anticlimactic death when he was fourteen. Maybe he thought he would be embarrassed if we saw the one-room schoolhouse called West Side School, a mile from their house, where he and his siblings had gone through junior high school. Whatever his reasons, he never took us to the home where he lived thirteen years of his childhood.

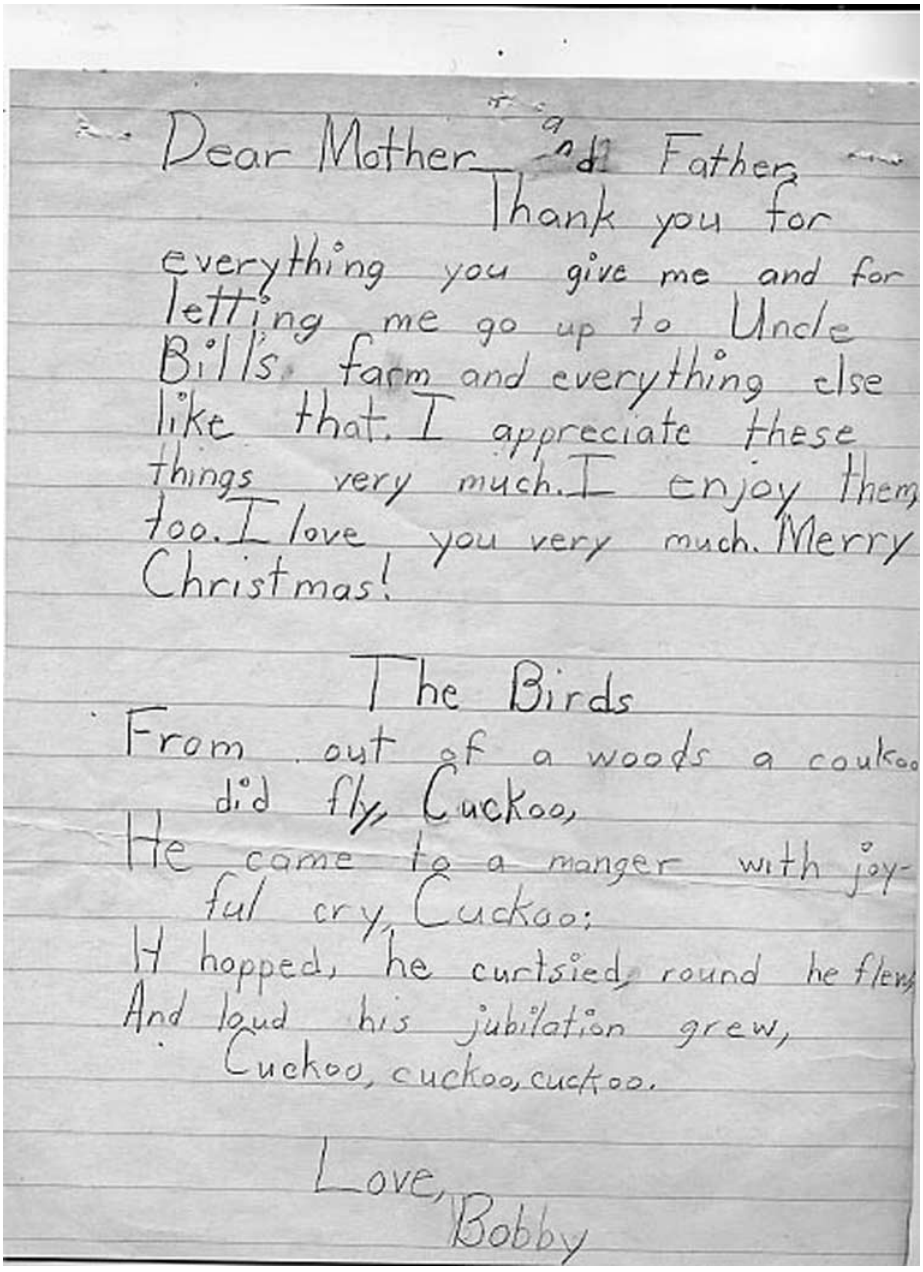
I am a little bit confused by a letter I have in my records, which I wrote to my mother and father that Christmas about the visit to Chewelah:

Dear Mother and Father,

Thanks [sic] you for everything you give me and letting me go up to Uncle Bill's farm and everything else like that. I appreciate these things very much. I enjoy them too. I love you very much. Merry Christmas!

Love,

Bobby



Dear Mother and Father,
Thank you for everything you give me and for letting me go up to Uncle Bill's farm and everything else like that. I appreciate these things very much. I enjoy them too. I love you very much. Merry Christmas!

The Birds

From out of a woods a coukoo
did fly, Cuckoo,
He came to a manger with joyful cry, Cuckoo;
H hopped, he curtsied, round he flew,
And loud his jubilation grew,
Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo.

Love,
Bobby

The problem is that I don't really remember having these types of emotions. Perhaps a Sunday School teacher gave us the homework of writing a letter to our parents thanking them for something.

Usually the weekend after Thanksgiving Daddy would go out deer hunting with the George brothers, his brothers-in-law. He had an old rifle he'd take, the .45-90 that had belonged to his dad. He'd used that rifle on many a hunting expedition; for instance, that was the one he used during his senior year in high school on a hunting trip he went on with Bill George, where they snagged two deer which actually helped feed the family during those lean times. He brought the rifle out into the living room of Uncle Bill's house and took it apart on the table and cleaned it. It had a woody, metallic smell. The men would take off before dawn the day after Thanksgiving, clad in red-and-black checked flannel jackets, and return in the late afternoon, sometimes dragging parts of a dead deer behind them, sometimes carrying pieces of the deer on crude wooden backpacks they had built. The men had a raw, bloody, meaty smell to them when they returned. I didn't really think of my father as the kind of guy who would go out with a gun and shoot some deer and kill it and bring it back or our family as the kind of family that would have that kind of father but I guess he was and we were because that was what he did. They'd finish butchering the deer and wrap the pieces of meat in plastic.

To celebrate their hunting success, they'd polish off the leftover pies. All the pie ingredients were freshly picked, of course, especially the berries. These were the same berries that the Chewelah Indians had lived on; they were ripe for picking in the autumn. And those Indians also took the opportunity at this time of year for socializing with other tribes, just as the Myers clan did. The term "powwow" comes from the Indian dialects of this region and refers to these autumnal social gatherings. Afterwards, they would settle into winter camps, where they held more ceremonies and visited and traded with each other.

The winter camp of the Myers tribe was our house in Richland, to which we then returned, the meaty smell of the fresh venison pervading the inside of the car during our five-hour trip back home. Once home, mother would take the meat and put it in the freezer in the garage.

The 1959 Christmas letter appears to have been written by my father, who noted:

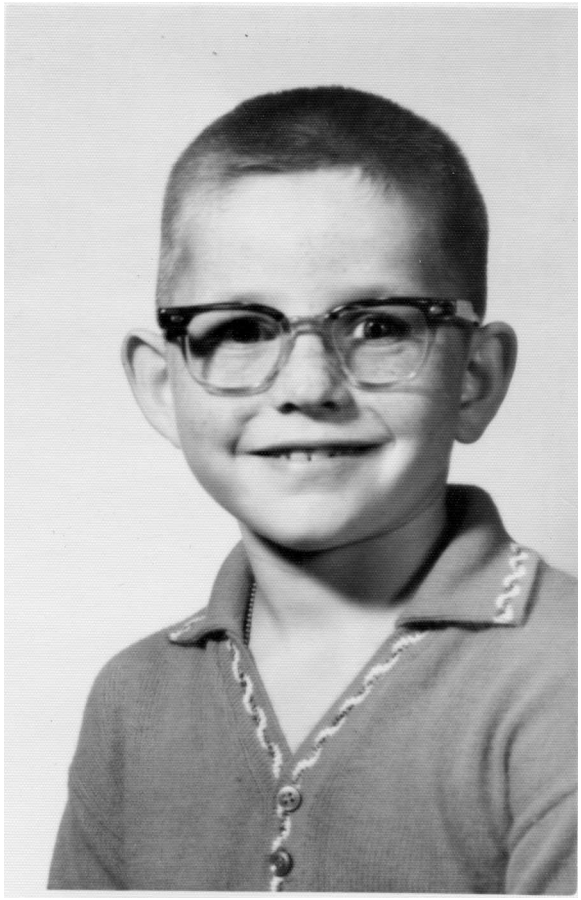
> *Bobby is a vigorous and energetic (what an understatement!) second grader. He enjoys the YMCA Indian Guide program [which I'll discuss in the next chapter], which we attend together, and is beginning to show an intense*

interest in all things mechanical. Although not entirely appropriate, he is playing the part of the Littlest Angel in the school Christmas program.

The following spring, on March 26, 1960, right before I turned seven, my mother had a little boy, the sixth child in our family. They named him James Ira Myers, after his great-uncle, his father's father's older brother, the one who had died at the age of five of that cruel disease. It was a hot month for March, setting a new record high of 82°. Jimmy, as he was known, was born in the main Richland hospital, called Kadlec Hospital. That is where I myself had been born back on April 18, 1953. The hospital bill shows a daily room charge of eleven dollars, with a five-day total of $103.60, including a dollar for the little beaded bracelet they put on the newborn to identify him.

Originally, this hospital was simply called Richland Hospital. Apparently they had used up all the names of dead army engineers on the streets and had none left over for the hospital. Then, however, help arrived from an unexpected quarter. Lt. Col. Harry R. Kadlec, Deputy Area Engineer and Chief of the Construction for the Army Corps of Engineers at Hanford and a key figure in the operation of the project, had literally worked himself to death. He suffered a heart attack on July 2, 1944 and was admitted to the hospital where he then proceeded to die, the first time anyone had done so in the new hospital. Bingo! A new dead army civil engineer perfect for naming something after, in this case the very hospital in which he perished. The dirt still fresh on Kadlec's grave, the hospital assumed his name only eight days later.

Kadlec Hospital had been doing a lot of obstetrics and pediatrics work ever since it was first set up in 1943 and was well prepared to handle Jimmy's birth. Richland's birth rate in 1946 was almost double that of the nation as a whole, although that was a one-time spike attributed to the end of the war. Even nerdy scientists needed to do something to celebrate their country's victory, and there wasn't that much to do back then in Richland in terms of social activities. The high birth rate was actually considered a military secret at the time. Military intelligence worried that it could provide a clue to the Germans and Japanese as to the number of people working at Hanford.



Bobby at Seven

Seven

I turned seven in April 1960. In June, I graduated from second grade. My final report card gave me "M's" in work and study habits, art, music, and writing.

That summer my father built a fire escape. Our new A-house on Goethals was two stories (with a basement), and the bedrooms were all on the second floor. There was only one big stairway going from the first floor to the second right in the middle of the house. So it could have been a problem if the house had caught on fire and we couldn't get down that one stairway to safety. Actually, though, jumping out the windows of the second floor would not have been that much of a problem since they were no more than twenty feet off the ground.

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when my father decided to build the fire escape outside the window of *his* bedroom, the master bedroom. What was he thinking—he'd climb out first and from the ground below yell up encouragement to us children as we groped our way through the smoke-filled hallways, dampened towels over our faces, towards his bedroom (which was all the way down at the end of the hall on the other side of the house from where my bedroom was, by the way), just so we could climb down his stupid fire escape, which was, in typical fashion, crude in the extreme? It was basically just a bunch of two-by-fours nailed up on the side of the house. There was no easy way to climb out onto it; you had to sort of stick the lower half of your body through the window and then feel around with your feet until they found one of the crosspieces, after which you could clamber down. The only glimmering of esthetic sense in his design of the fire escape was that he didn't just leave the wood unfinished; he actually painted it to match the color of the house, green as I recall.

Bobby Goes to the Mall

This was 1960; a presidential campaign was underway between Nixon and Kennedy. Kennedy was vaguely sinister. He was from way over on the other side of the country; held questionable religious beliefs; quite possibly was associated with the Communists in some way; and probably had sex more than was good for

him, whether with his lovely young wife or with someone else, it didn't really matter. We knew these things because we heard our parents talking about them.

The Kennedy/Johnson campaign office was in the mall complex downtown, which in Richland was called "uptown." We could ride our bikes down there. We'd go in and pretend to be interested and grab some campaign pins. I especially liked the ones that were semi-holographic and changed from a picture of Kennedy to one of Johnson when you tilted them a little bit.

Everyone knows that Kennedy won the election in 1960. Fewer know that Richland played an important, if indirect, role in one of the defining moments of his presidency. After the bomb the town made was dropped on Nagasaki in 1945, Richland suffered a bit of an identity crisis. Many workers left, thinking there were no challenges left, and production was cut back. But President Truman then set a clear new direction for the Hanford facility: kick it back into high gear, make hundreds and thousands of new bombs, and run a cold-war foreign policy based to a large extent on the threat of being able to completely wipe out the other side. Huge budget increases were put into effect, continuing through the mid-50s. The Atomic Energy Commission was formed to take over from the Manhattan Project. General Electric was recruited to take over the next phase of Hanford construction from Dupont. New reactors were planned. Unbelievably, between 1947 and 1949 more money was spent ($350 million) in the expansion project than had been spent building Hanford in the first place, making it the largest peacetime construction project in the history of the United States.

And more scientists and administrators were needed to handle the expansion of activities at Hanford. So it was that in June 1949 GE recruited young Ira Thomas Myers to join its team at Hanford. The farm boy-turned-scientist, still reeking faintly of cow manure and wet hay, brought his wife of two years and his infant daughter, Nancy, just about to turn one, to Richland and moved into the "ranch house" on Birch, joining GE's nascent health physics team. Perhaps Ira and Betty were attracted to Richland by its optimism and vigor. That year Time magazine called it a "model residential city…an atomic age utopia." To Betty, the ranch house, with its three bedrooms, living room, dining room, and even laundry room, seemed like a "palace" compared to the one-bedroom prefab in which they'd been living in Pullman.

The Cold War continued to intensify. Just a few months after Daddy started working at Hanford, in September 1949, the Soviet Union finally managed to detonate its own atom bomb (a copy of Fat Man, right down to its wiring mistake). The ensuing panic kicked off another huge growth surge at Hanford. Then in 1950 the Korean War started, plunging Hanford into another huge expansion.

In September 1951, the young family returned to Washington State College in Pullman, a second baby on the way, so that Ira could fulfill the residency requirement for his Master's degree. Right before the presidential election, in the summer of 1952, Daddy and Mommy and Nancy and the new baby Sandy returned to Richland. In the fall Eisenhower was elected, and the war hero President had a new plan that boded well for Hanford's future: reduce overall military expenditures by focusing on atomic weapons, as laid out in his first State of the Union address:

> *"We will not be aggressors, but we…have and will maintain a massive capability to strike back."*

Hanford continued to grow rapidly. The K reactors coming online in 1955 brought the total number of reactors to eight. There were lots of new types of bombs to develop and each gave rise to more health physics work. Then there were the challenges of "excursions" and "criticality incidents," fuel ruptures, radioactive corrosion, and isotope leaks. Throughout Eisenhower's two terms in office, Hanford continued to ramp up its production levels.

This in turn required more natural uranium, but luckily a prospecting frenzy fueled by government bounties turned up many deposits such as the one found on the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1955. The mine being right on the reservation, there was plenty of cheap Indian labor handy to work the open pits as well as to work at the mill to which the uranium oxide ore was transported to be processed. Native America's multifaceted contribution to the building of our country's nuclear arsenal was repaid many times over in the contamination of the local water supply by radiation leaks at both the mine and the mill, and the silicosis, pneumoconiosis, and renal disease suffered by the hapless workers. Navajo workers in poorly-ventilated underground uranium mines in the Southwest fared even worse.

It was beyond the imagination of us kids pestering the campaign workers at the Kennedy office in Richland in 1960 that two years later the man whose pins we were collecting would, as President, be facing the Cuban missile crisis, in which he successfully challenged the Soviet attempt to place intercontinental ballistic missiles in the Western Hemisphere. Hanford had just set a new yearly record for plutonium production: 4500kg. It would be in no small part Hanford's weapons production that gave teeth to Kennedy's policies. My father had played a small but meaningful role in winning the Cold War, or at least one of its

major battles. As far as I know, the government never proposed handing out pins, with mushroom clouds on them or otherwise, for this accomplishment.

The mall where Kennedy's campaign office was located also held Richland's single movie theatre. The summer of 1960 the movie showing on its single screen was "Spartacus," starring Kirk Douglas. Mommy said we shouldn't go see it because he was a Communist. Or he let other Communists work on the film. Or something like that. According to her, there were lots of Communists in Hollywood and movies were one of the ways they were undermining our country.

We slipped in anyway. The kids' admission was thirty-five cents.

Bobby had a hard time relating to lots of things but he didn't have any problem at all relating to the rebellious slave Spartacus who'd led a freedom revolt against the decadent Roman Empire. It was perfectly clear in his seven-year-old brain that Spartacus was fighting first for the woman that he had just met but felt something incredibly special for; next for his own life, due to be lost in the gladiator's duel the following day; and then for political freedom.

But in a way all of these fights were for freedom, albeit of different sorts. Freedom to be with the person you want to be, in this case Varinia, his slave lover. Freedom for her not to have to be with the powerful Roman guy who was going to buy her. Freedom to live. Freedom to be equal. Freedom to trust your friends. Freedom from arrogant powerful people like Crassus, the Senator. Freedom to be human, no matter what your social status or station of birth. Freedom to sacrifice yourself for the sake of freedom.

Yes, I think the Communists successfully sent out a powerful message with this one.

Bobby was a bit unclear on exactly what Spartacus and Varinia did together the night before the revolt, but he knew it was a boy-girl thing and was quite sure that he wanted to do it himself when he got the chance. He thought it was connected to the thing his Mommy kept telling him, about how Daddy put his penis up inside her to make babies. Bobby didn't think that hard about precisely how this might work; maybe he didn't *want* to think that hard about it. The way Mommy described it, he imagined it as a sort of clinical or almost medical process; the participants were probably in a room in a doctor's office up on an examining table wearing white hospital gowns.

Bobby and Daddy Go to Indian Guides

My father himself had put his penis up inside my mother approximately seven years earlier, and this had led to the arrival of his first-born son. He was commit-

ted in his own way to forming a relationship with that son. The YMCA ran a fine program for fathers and sons of my age, called "Indian Guides." (The program for pre-schoolers was "Indian Papooses," and the one for girls "Indian Princesses.") A half-dozen father-son pairs formed a "tribe," which met once a month at one of the members' houses to enjoy Indian-related activities. The dads took special roles in the tribe: Chief; War Chief (apparently a kind of assistant chief); Medicine Man, one of whose jobs was insuring that the tribe had adequate supply of beads and claws, as well as being responsible for Big Medicine awards; and of course Wampum Bearer.

We each took Indian names. Mine was "Talking Rock," but I've forgotten my father's. I've also forgotten most of the activities that we did, but I do remember making a headband-type thing out of beads on a little loom kind of apparatus. The headband contained some of the symbols that the Indians used to mean different things, since they couldn't write using regular letters. For instance, a half circle with lines coming down from it meant "rain." It could also mean "plentiful crops."

We had a slogan: "We, father and son, through friendly service to each other, to our family, to this tribe, to our community, seek a world pleasing to the eye of the Great Spirit." We'd recite this at each meeting.

According to their official history, the Indian Guides were formed in 1926 by a man named Harold S. Keltner, the director of the St. Louis YMCA. One evening around a blazing campfire during a hunting and fishing trip to Canada, Joe Friday, an Ojibway Indian who was guide on the trips, gently chided his white employer: "The Indian father raises his son. He teaches his son to hunt, to track, to fish, to walk softly and silently in the forest, to know the meaning and purpose of life and all he must know, while the white man allows the mother to raise his son."

Well, my father was a white man who certainly fit the mold of allowing the mother to raise the son. Whether the reason was that he was white, that he was not interested in the parenting process, or that he simply did not know how to proceed, is open to question.

So perhaps the father and son program that Keltner conceived, based upon the strong qualities of American Indian culture and life—dignity, patience, endurance, spirituality, feeling for the earth, and concern for the family, could bring Bobby and his Daddy closer together.

And Ira had a soft spot in his heart for the YMCA. After all, the Spokane YMCA was one of the preferred locations for the young impoverished college junior to take his belle Betty on dates those weekends when he hitchhiked up

from Pullman to see the "pretty, lovable" student nurse intern. The Y was actually just a mile north of the Shriners Hospital where he had gotten the follow-up operations on his foot when he was eight. The YMCA had a game room, a refreshment area, and a quiet corner where the lovebirds could just talk—or, in the infelicitous phrase my father used in one of his nearly daily letters to my mother during their courtship, "give our vocal cords free rein." He added: "Yes, Betty, your ability to talk sensibly about so many varied subjects is one of the reasons I think so much of you." But my mother's afternoon shift ended at 7 p.m., and she had to be back in the dorm no later than 11 p.m., so sometimes, to maximize the time they had to spend together, they'd just go down to talk on "their" rock by the Spokane River, the rock in question belonging to the striking series of smooth stone steps over which the river drops to form the turbulent Spokane Falls right below Mother's dorm on Summit Blvd.

The Indian Guides, although a YMCA program, had a couple of major problems. First, it was boring, at least to me. Second, they kept talking about the Great Spirit. In fact, one of their six "aims" was "*to seek and preserve the beauty of the Great Spirit's work in forest, field, and stream.*" But just like no one at church ever bothered to explain to the kids exactly who "God" was, no one here ever bothered to explain to us what the Great Spirit was supposed to be. There were no pictures of him, so apparently he was not an actual guy with a white beard in a white robe like the one the Mormons called God. But this Great Spirit did seem to be in charge of things in the whole Indian area. I suspected he was kind of an assistant that God had put in charge of worrying about the Indian stuff.

Today, the white dads and white kids were sitting in the family room of a white family's house in Whitesville playing at being Indians, or working on Indian crafts, or trying to emulate Indian values, or whatever. Actually, we were planning a picnic, which didn't have anything to do with Indians, but sounded fun anyway.

We had the picnic that Saturday at Columbia Park, which as you might expect was on the Columbia River. Remember that the Columbia River drives down through Canada across the Washington border; welcomes the Colville River flowing down from the little Colville Valley along which lie Chewelah and Addy; sweeps to the west toward Lake Roosevelt and the Grand Coulee Dam; and then cuts south toward the laboratory in the desert where they were making the atom bombs, dropping off its precious gift of massive cooling capacity and picking up a few little presents itself in the form of zinc-65, arsenic-76, phosphorus-32, sodium-24 and neptunium-239, the sodium-24 in particular amounting to 13,000,000 curies during the period when the eight reactors that were cooled

with the Columbia's water were at their highest power during the ten-year period bracketing our little picnic in the park, meaning that the amount of radioactivity released into the river during the single day of our Indian Guides outing was three times that of the Three Mile Island incident; passes the little town of Richland; joins the meandering Yakima River descending from the valley to the west; and then finally passes Columbia Park, where it flowed by the picnic tables where the Indian Guides were having their picnic. The Snake River, at the end of its one-thousand-mile descent from the Rockies across Idaho, joins the Columbia just beyond Columbia Park.

The boys, their face paint still on from a game of "scalp-em," had jumped into the river for a quick dip before their dinner of grilled hot dogs and hamburgers, to be followed by a "council fire" where Indian legends would be told. My father was over at the grill cooking up the hot dogs. This was standard operating procedure for him—latch onto some clearly identified role as a means to simplify his social interaction. In this case, he could just be the grill-master for the whole picnic, and relate to people that way. "Hey Ira, how're those dogs coming?" It also let him avoid questions about why he wasn't pulling on his trunks and diving into the river like the other dads. For some reason, he hated taking off his clothes.

The grill-master certainly was aware that the soft pink bodies of the seven-year-old Indian Guides cavorting in the shallows of the Columbia River were being exposed to lots of bad radioactive substances. If he'd had his slide rule with him he could even have computed exactly what percentage of a fatal dosage they were receiving. And if he wasn't calculating the radiation we were being exposed to, neither was he aware that we were also swimming right on top of a certain dead Indian's body. That was the body of Kennewick Man. He had died nine thousand years earlier, and would be found there just thirty-six years after our picnic.

It was in 1996 that two boys named Will Thomas and Dave Deacy came to see a boat race on the river and were wading about ten feet offshore when Will's foot hit something. "Hey, Dave!" he joked presciently. "I found a human head in the water!" But when he pulled out the brown, round object and noticed it had teeth in it, he realized it actually was a skull. The boat race was going to start soon, so the boys hid the skull in the bushes, waiting until the races were over to come back to pick it up.

The Kennewick police, alerted to the human remains that had been found in the river, soon cordoned off the area and searched for additional bones, which they found—a human hip bone, a couple of legs and some vertebrae, all apparently from the same person. They revealed their ignorance of history by first pos-

tulating the skull might be Caucasian from several hundred years ago, something patently impossible since Lewis and Clark were the first white people in the region, having visited it in 1805.

A month later, carbon dating proved the skull was over nine thousand years old—only five thousand or so years after the Bering migration. Those results were consistent with the two-inch-long serrated spear point lodged in the skeleton's hip, which was of a type used thousands of years ago as well.

Recall that Keltner's original vision for the Indian Guides included having the young braves come in contact with real Indians. Joe Friday, the Ojibway, would attend meetings and talk about actual Indian life. Now the white boys were having their own contact with a real Indian, although in this case it was indirectly with a dead one hidden under the riverbed. But it does not seem that this was Kennewick Man's grave. Rather, forensic anthropologists constructed the scenario that he suffered the injury to his hip years before his death, perhaps while protecting his beautiful young bride from unspecified bad guys. Then the injury continued to dog him through his adult life, his sole form of relief being to stand in the cool, soothing waters of the Columbia River. The indomitable Columbia was indifferent to whether its cooling powers were applied to an old Indian's hip wound or a nuclear reactor.

Kennewick Man was named for the town where he was found, Columbia Park lying right over the boundary with Richland on the Kennewick side. Perhaps he knew his village as Anhwash, the name given to present-day Kennewick by the Wanapum tribe. The name Kennewick itself is an Indian name, said to mean "Grassy Place." but no one knows what Indian language it's from.

Perhaps Kennewick Man, standing a proud 5'10" tall and a mature forty years in age, was on his way home from a trip to a nearby trading center. About a hundred miles downstream is the town now called Celilo, which has been permanently inhabited for eleven thousand years—longer than any other settlement in the region. Its key attraction: salmon so plentiful they could literally be plucked from the waters of the river by hand. The Indians built scaffolds out over the water, standing on which they could scoop fish from the water using long-handled dipnets. The semi-desert climate in the area was perfect for drying the salmon, which they hung on long racks, allowing them to keep it to eat throughout the year, or trade it for other goods. And trade they did—with other tribes from as far away as the Great Plains, who brought buffalo meat, hides, and horses; Alaska, with its blankets and beads; and California, from which came baskets, shells and precious stones. Kennewick Man would have likely gone there to trade berries from eastern Washington for the dried salmon.

Celilo's strategic location did not escape the attention of one Jason Lee, who in 1838, nine thousand years later, chose it for one of his satellite missions, putting it under the charge of his nephew Daniel Lee. He did not manage to convert many Indians here, either. Celilo was eventually inundated when the Dalles Dam was built in 1957.

The Indians Jason Lee's nephew failed so miserably to convert would have been the Umatilla ("Waters Rippling Over Sand"), one of the proud tribes comprising the vibrant Indian civilization covering the semi-arid plateau that the Columbia had carved out over hundreds of thousands of square miles in western Washington, northeast Oregon, and eastern Idaho. The Umatilla ranged across most of northern Oregon, south of where we were having our picnic.

Over to the east in Idaho the Nez Perce held sway. Locals pronounced the name of this tribe "Nezz Purse." Their noses were never actually pierced; the name stems from a mistake on the part of a Lewis and Clark translator. They called themselves the Nimipu, which just meant "the people." The one Nez Perce that everyone knew, of course, was Chief Joseph, who came from the valley where our family vacationed in 1956 and after whom the junior high school Nancy would attend after she finished her last year of grade school at Sacajawea was named.

Marcus Whitman, Pioneer

According to the creation myth of the Plateau Indians, the Coyote destroyed the dragon living in the Columbia River by building a fire under its heart, then flung its body parts across the Columbia Basin. Each body part gave birth to a tribe. One body part gave rise to the Nez Perce. From another, flung towards the east, sprang the Cayuse people. White accounts of the Cayuse describe them as reserved and imperial; their own language describes them as the "superior" people. Today, they're jammed onto a little reservation in northeast Oregon together with the Umatilla, but in the early 1880s the Cayuse were active in the area near Walla Walla, where they murdered a contemporary of Jason Lee named Marcus Whitman, another pioneer after which a Richland elementary school is named.

Whitman was a doctor who, like Jason Lee, was on a mission to convert the Indians. Six feet tall, with iron-gray hair, Whitman made a preliminary trip to scope out the project in 1834, returned home in 1835 with two Nez Perce boys whom he had renamed Richard and John, married a fellow do-gooder named Narcissa on February 14, 1836 and then embarked on his return trip to Oregon. Marcus and Narcissa established their mission near the Walla Walla River, at a

place named Waiilatpu, an Indian word meaning "place of the rye grass." Alice Clarissa Whitman, the first pioneer baby born in the northwest, came into the world there on March 14, 1837, her mother's twenty-ninth birthday. "Alice" was the name of her paternal grandmother, "Clarissa" that of her maternal grandmother.

"Alice, dear, can you go get some water from the river for Mommy?" Clarissa's voice rang out from the kitchen through the new T-shaped house they had finished the previous year; she was preparing some of the bountiful harvest from their gardens, which they were having some luck getting the Indians interested in. The problem was that the Indians were basically nomads who kept moving around all the time, going here to fish, there to pick berries, and somewhere else to party with other tribes. With a lifestyle like that, it was impossible to get them to come to Sunday School every week like good Christians. So the first order of business was to teach them how to stay in one place and grow crops, something white Europeans had figured out how to do thousands of years ago. The project was having some success; in the most recent year, the farm had produced three hundred bushels of corn, seventy-five bushels of wheat, a thousand bushels of potatoes, and lots of vegetables.

Little Alice Clarissa Whitman had two favorite cups she liked to take down to the Walla Walla River and get water pretending she was helping her mother. It was June 23, and Alice was two years, three months, and nine days old. Mungo, a fourteen-year-old Indian the Whitmans had adopted, noticed the two cups floating ominously in the river. The Whitmans gathered a group of Indians and began searching for the baby. Finally, an old Indian got in the water where the baby had disappeared and rode down the current. It carried him to some tree roots which were holding the child's lifeless body under the water. Alice was buried four days later.

Narcissa Whitman described the days after Alice's death in a letter to a friend. "The morning came, we arose; but our child slept on," she wrote. "We buried her just four days from the time her happy spirit took its flight to the bosom of her Saviour…"

Alice's death was an omen foreshadowing more bad things to come. Narcissa's eyesight was deteriorating and eventually she was almost blind. More importantly, the Cayuse continued to refuse to accept the gospel, which after all was the whole point of the Whitmans being out there in the first place.

The Whitmans did not have a good relationship with the Indians, and the feeling was apparently mutual. Narcissa was described as having an attitude towards the natives that "verge[d] on outright repugnance." The Whitmans made

fun of cultural values basic to the Cayuse, such as gift-giving. It did not help the Whitmans' reputation among the Indians that they spent more and more time helping the exploding number of white settlers coming through Walla Walla on their way west.

In 1847, things came to a head. The Indians were already upset due to the recent murder of the son of Peu-Peu-mox-mox, a Walla Walla chief who had met Lewis and Clark in 1804. Then an epidemic of measles struck, sparing neither white nor Indian. Remember that Whitman was a doctor. He took care of all the stricken, but as a natural consequence of the Indians' lower immunity levels, most of the Cayuse died while most of the white children lived. In the end, nearly half the tribe perished.

This was a problem, since Marcus was considered by the Cayuse people to be a *te-wat*, or medicine man. Unfortunately the Cayuse had a tradition that the family of someone who the medicine man failed to cure could go ahead and kill the medicine man.

Whitman had a premonition of death. In a report on the Whitman massacre that I wrote for my fourth grade history class, I note that Whitman's suspicion was aroused by, among other things, hearing the Indians hum the "death song" whenever they passed him.

On November 29, 1847, chief Tiloukaikt led several other Cayuse in a revenge attack on the Whitmans, killing the entire family and a total of fourteen whites. They then burned down the whole mission for good measure.

In the words of the later criminal complaint lodged against the Indians:

> *…and that the said Indians, with certain knives, tomahawks, and other weapons….[which they]…then and there in their hands had and held, her the said Narcissa Whitman, in and upon her head, neck, shoulders, breast, and back, then and there feloniously, willfully and of their malice aforesaid did strike, cut, and thrust, giving to the said Narcissa Whitman then and there with the knives, tomahawks and weapons aforesaid, in and upon the body of her the said Narcissa Whitman, several mortal wounds, of which said mortal wounds the said Narcissa Whitman then and there died…*

The blood which splattered the walls of the Whitman mission home as the stone point of the tomahawk wielded by Tomohas, the actual murderer of Narcissa, crushed into the pious woman's skull, might as well have been spurting from the veins of the dying Cayuse Nation. The Cayuse took fifty hostages, mostly women and children, whom they held for a month, further inciting the

whites' anger. Then some whites attacked a band of Cayuse, unfortunately the wrong ones, and things went downhill from there for white-Cayuse relations. Much fighting ensued in which the Indians repeatedly found themselves on the short end of the stick. In an attempt to calm the situation and avoid the total decimation of the tribe, Tiloukaikt, the leader of the massacre, gave himself up in 1850 along with others who had participated.

Even one hundred fifty years ago, it seems you could find a lawyer to take any case. The lawyer that defended Teloquoit, as he was called in the legal documents, claimed extraterritoriality as his defense:

> *And the defendent Teloquoit, Tomahas otherwise called the murderer, Clokomas, Isiaaskiluckas, and Kiamasumkin further sayeth that, Wai-et-at-pu the place where the alledged felony is supposed to have been committed, was part and parcel of the country known as claimed and possessed by the said Cayuse nation, aforesaid and without the jurisdiction and laws of the United State at the time aforesaid, and subject to the laws and ways of the said Cayuse nation of Indians…*

On May 22, the trial began. Among other testimony one witness testified that he had warned Whitman of the danger of living among the Cayuse, and in particular against giving medical treatment to them since they were prone to killing their medicine men. So this was somewhat more than a kangaroo court. Records show the total cost of the trial was $31.25.

After four days of testimony, the defendants were found guilty. An appeal based on jurisdiction was lodged and rejected. The sentence of hanging was carried out on June 3.

From the gallows, Tiloukaikt gave a defiant speech, throwing his newly-learned Christian theology back in the face of his accusers: "Did not your missionaries teach us that Christ died to save his people? So we die to save our people." Clearly Whitman had been at least somewhat effective in giving his Indians a Christian education.

The whites continued to launch raids against the Indians, whose ranks were already decimated by infectious white diseases. Gradually, the remnants of the Cayuse merged into nearby tribes. The net result of the Whitmans' missionary efforts was not only their own death, but also the death of the Cayuse as an independent tribe.

To commemorate these accomplishments, a statue of Whitman was placed in the National Statuary Hall in the US Capitol in Washington, DC, one of just

two placed there by the State of Washington And a school was named after him a century later in Richland, Washington.

It was the descendants of the killers of the Whitmans and the tribes they merged into that claimed the remains of Kennewick Man: the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, which includes the Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Cayuse; the Yakama Indian Nation; the Wanapum band; the Nez Perce Tribe; and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

"Dogs are up!" came the cry from the grill-master. The young white Indian braves clambered up the banks of the Columbia, radioactive water dripping from their bodies, the skeleton of Kennewick man still hiding in the muck at its bottom.

My father winched up sagging trousers around his widening waist. The boys marched up single-file, paper plates in hand, past the grill where he doled a plump hot dog out to each. He was successfully carrying out his designated role as grill-master, another one of the disconnected segments in which he lived his life. My father was a devoted husband, a competent scientist, a caring church leader, a so-so harmonica player, a father, and a member of the Indian Guides tribe, but he had no idea how these pieces were supposed to fit together.

There was intense conflict between scientists and Native Americans over whether Kennewick Man was an ancient Indian who should immediately be reburied in accordance with Indian tradition, or just an archaeological relic that anthropologists should study. Some said that he was too old to be a real Indian: could you really call people from nine thousand years ago Indians? Scientists that had already examined him said he looked less like a real modern-day Indian and more like an Ainu, the tribe indigenous to Japan. But what would be wrong with having the current lineage of the aboriginal inhabitants of America care for the mortal remains of a descendant of their proud, hairy brothers from Ezo, or Hokkaido as we know it now?

The Wanapum

It was probably the Wanapum band, although not a federally recognized tribe, that had the strongest claim to Kennewick Man. After all, the Wanapum were the Indians that had inhabited the actual Richland area for centuries; they called the site Chemna, and the Yakima river which flowed into the Columbia at that point Tapetett or Tapteal, meaning "narrow river."

If the Richland Indian Guides had had as part of their program any contact with actual Indians, it should have been the Wanapum. Called the "River Peo-

ple," at the time of Lewis and Clark about 2000 Wanapum lived along the water between Richland and Priest Rapids (named for a native priest seen there by an early fur trader), at the northern tip of what is now the Hanford Reservation. The Wanapum were a peaceful tribe who lived in reed houses along the river and bathed in it. Their children played games with rocks and hoops made of willow. The adults fished for seasonal runs of salmon. (Their language has different words for every salmon species in the Columbia River Basic, even distinguishing between fish of different ages within the same species.) They hunted small game, deer and antelope. They made tools and gathered berries, greens and root vegetables along the water and on the nearby hills.

Across the river from Kennewick and Richland is current-day Pasco, previously one of the largest villages along the Columbia, known as Kosith ("At the Point of Land"). There the Wanapum would catch eel by moonlight, hang them on racks, then smoke and dry them like salmon.

Lewis and Clark met a group of two hundred Wanapum here, led by their chief "Cuts-Sah-nim," on Thursday, October 17, 1805, and called them the Chimna-pum. In describing the scene, Lewis wrote, "The multitudes of dead salmon on the shore and floating in the river is inconceivable." He could see salmon at depths of fifteen to twenty feet because the water was so clear.

The Yakima Indians named Kennewick Man "Techaminsh Oytpamanatityt," meaning "from the land the first native," or, more simply, "Ancient One". Their language was one of the twenty-three distinct dialects in the Shahaptian (or Sahaptin) language family that linked the one hundred thousand members of the tribes of the Columbia Plateau, among them the Wanapum. (Of the twenty-three dialects, more than half are now extinct.) The speakers of this language themselves referred to it as "chiskin," literally, "this way of speaking." Words, phrases, and sentences were formed by a complex system of agglutination, particles piled on the front, end, and middle of roots to show tense, person, direction, relation, and feeling.

The Wanapum peacefully co-existed with the farmers who started settling along the Columbia in the early decades of the twentieth century to take advantage of the area's perfect apple-growing climate. Their reed houses could still be seen as late as the 1950s.

But unlike the Yakima to the west and the Umatilla to the south, who merely had hunting and fishing rights to the lands that were to become the Hanford Reservation, the Wanapum, who had never signed a treaty and thus were not confined to a reservation, actually lived there.

It was the Wanapum who were given thirty days to leave Hanford when the government took it over in 1943. They were booted off with no consideration for how they would procure food or shelter. The home they left would soon house more nuclear reactors than any place on the planet.

Today, a few hundred remaining Wanapum live near the Priest Rapids Dam, where Bobby and his father would later go fishing, and which had been completed just a year before Bobby's picnic. (The ancestral Wanapum homes now lie under the waters of Priest Rapids Lake.) Most of the Wanapum work in jobs related to the dam.

In 1993, fifty years after being forced off the Hanford lands, the Wanapum were once again given access to visit parts of the reservation for religious ceremonies. In one of history's startling ironies, they found much of the area unspoiled. For instance, Rattlesnake Peak, 3600 feet in height and a sacred site to the Wanapum, lies on Hanford's western boundary, and is known in Sahaptin as Laliik; that is the mountain Bobby could see off in the west from the back yard of 1513 Cottonwood. Native American legend holds that Rattlesnake Peak was the single point of dry land remaining above the waters of a great flood twelve thousand years ago, and was where their ancestors huddled for survival. According to another legend, it is the point of departure for Wanapum when they depart this earth:

> *When you die you step first upon Laliik. There on the summit is a beautiful shining circle of light, like silver. A drum sounds. There to the spirit drum they would step, there to be judged finally and sent wherever. You can never see this while you live. You must first die; then you will see it. That's all that I know, just that ancient story. There is no other way…*

The flood was not just a legend. Geologists believe that a huge flood did in fact occur during the last Ice Age when the Columbia exploded through a huge ice jam somewhere in current-day Montana, forming what they call Lake Missoula, and creating the deep gash in the topography known as Grand Coulee, which would later become famous for the great dam across it.

Rattlesnake Peak was closed off for the Hanford project but never saw any actual construction, other than a Nike Ajax missile complex placed there in 1952 to protect against a Soviet strike on the area, and later an observatory at its summit. Returning after fifty years, the Wanapum found a pristine, untouched wilderness. Recent surveys show that wildlife making the region their habitat include mule deer, mountain lions, elk, coyotes, badgers, rabbits, skunks, bald and

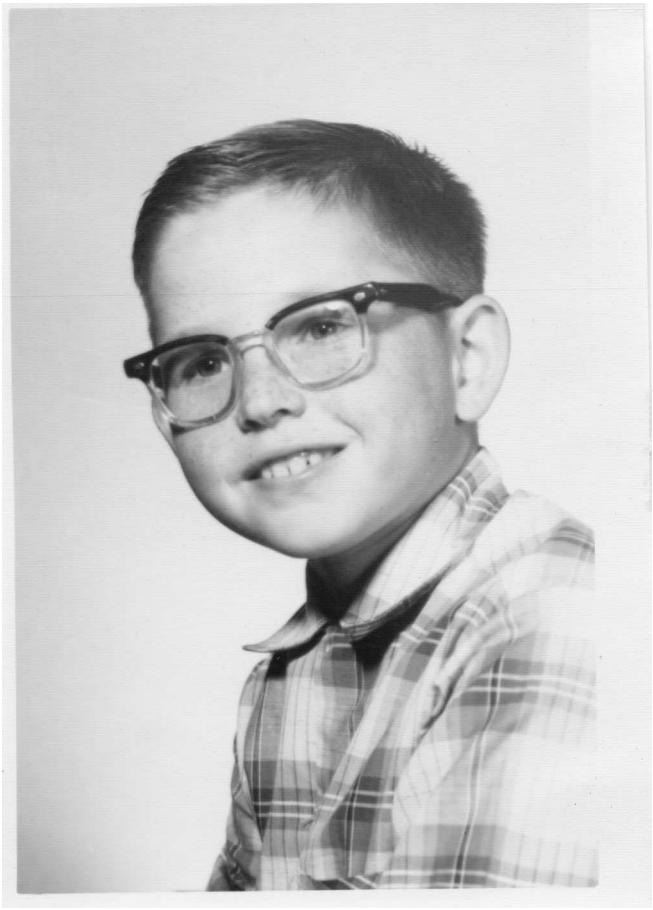
golden eagles, herons, ducks, ground squirrels, several species of mice, lizards and three species of snakes, over two hundred species of birds, and close to a thousand insect species, including nineteen new to science. There are many varieties of desert shrubs and the ubiquitous cheatgrass, as well as fifty-six new populations of rare plants.

A tribal elder commented, "Maybe it took the government to protect this place all these years."

The fall after I turned seven, when I started going to Indian Guides with Daddy, and went on this picnic, I also started the third grade, still at Sacajawea. My teacher was Mrs. Avery. But I don't really remember very much about this year in school. I don't think anything important happened. I look at my class picture and probably more than half the names are familiar—Kendal Smith, a girl I think I had a minor crush on; Marjean Last, whose brother Dean I also played with; Richard Crigler, whom I remember as a bit of a "bad boy"; and others like Judy Ellingson; Brad Bergam; Robert Teats; Johnny Chapman; and Richard Myers, no relation to me. But I didn't really connect with anyone.

This year's Christmas letter was once again written by Mommy, who saw fit to give me more than the usual sentence or two:

> *Bobby is an eager and energetic third grader and continually on the go. He still attends Indian Guides with his father and recently has been receiving weekly instruction at the rifle range. The variety and range of his interests never ceases to amaze me. It's not at all unusual to find him engrossed listening to Ira's German language records, working on his touch typing, writing the numbers from 1 to 1000 in numerals or in the binary systems, or playing chess with one of his many friends. He passed his beginner's swimming test this summer and was elated to be able to swim in the deep end of the pool. My heart stood still the first time I saw him dive off that high diving board, but before I knew it he was posed for another dive and very proud of his new accomplishment.*



Bobby at eight

Eight

Bobby Gets a Gift from Daddy

My father was handing me something in a brown paper bag—his trademark way of "wrapping" gifts. Whether this showed some admirable refusal on his part to be a slave to social custom, or just laziness or lack of class or failure to care about the recipient of his gifts—well, that depends on the observer, I suppose. Anyway, we were in the living room of our big Goethals house, sitting on the threadbare couch. It was my birthday, and my father had a birthday present for me. Inside the brown paper bag was a box about eighteen inches long and three inches wide and an inch or so tall. I opened the box. Out slid a—slide rule!

Remember this was 1961 and so there were no personal computers or even calculators, other than big mechanical adding machines. The way real men computed—took logarithms and calculated trigonometric functions—was with their *slide rules*. Here was my moment of father-son bonding. My father was initiating me into the secret fraternity of *guys with slide rules*. Through this gift, he was engaging in a rare expression of his innermost feelings and his wishes for our relationship—apparently, his wish that I turn into an anti-social and maladjusted nerd like himself. And I'm sure the slide rule also cost at least ten dollars. Back then, that was serious money, especially for my father, who I rarely saw spending money. The ten dollars was quite likely the most he ever spent on anything that he bought me, although he did also pay ten dollars for the used trombone he bought me in tenth grade.

I already knew about slide rules since I had played with his, an old one he had had since college days, in a worn, black, leather case. For those who don't know what a slide rule looks like, it's a piece of polished wood about one or one-and-a-half feet long and perhaps three inches high; the middle third can slide back and forth from left to right by virtue of a system of grooves. A sliding plastic piece with an ultra-fine vertical hairline that you move left and right is used to line up the numbers on one scale with those on another. The scales themselves, of which there must have been at least ten or twelve, include logarithms and sines and cotangents. Each scale had a name: one-letter or two-letter names on the left edge

of the slide rule, C and D being the main ones you used to multiply with. Imagine all the things you could calculate! The numbers on each scale, and the little tick marks, were printed on the slide rule in the finest imaginable ink.

The slide rule I got was yellow. That looked more sophisticated than the white kind, which is what my father's was.

I spent a few hours fiddling with it and learning how it worked. A little catalog had come with the slide rule, which showed the whole line of slide rules from the company that made it. There were some really high-end ones with lots more scales than the one I had, which was a mid-range model. Those looked really cool. They had things like log log scales and even advanced trig scales for things like cosecants.

The only problem was that I had no use for a slide rule. It wasn't exactly something that I was going to take over to a friend's house to play with, or sit in my own room playing with like I did with the Erector set I had. And working on your slide rules together is not a common joint activity for fathers and sons to engage in, like fishing or throwing a ball around. And I had no radiation exposure levels to work out like my father did.

Luckily, a nice slide rule case came with my new slide rule. The slide rule fit into it slick as a whistle, luckily, since that's where it stayed for the next God knows how many years until it disappeared for good or someone threw it away.

It was soon after receiving the gift that I remember riding south down Van Giesen in the front seat of our brown Hudson, Mommy driving, when we heard the attack sirens. They were unmistakable: scores of screeching alarms screaming from every direction. The sirens alerted the residents to an impending atomic bomb attack. Mom pulled over to the side of the street and stopped the car. She sat upright, looking straight ahead, paralyzed with fear. I looked in her eyes and saw in them utter, abject terror. The attack sirens continued. Finally, after two minutes, they stopped. Mommy slumped down in the driver's seat, exhausted by her two-minute encounter with impending death.

Was this the moment that the erstwhile cute young nursing student, now a 1950s housewife caring for five young children in prefabricated housing in a government town built in the middle of nowhere to house scientists devoted to figuring out how to blow up the world, would, just fifteen years after meeting the shy physics student, be vaporized in a mushroom cloud?

The sirens were familiar to all residents of Richland, because they were used in weekly drills. I imagine these drills were just to make sure the sirens were working, since it's hard to image what else they would expect people to do—run down and lock themselves in their bomb shelters? It took my mother about a minute

after the sirens had stopped to realize that this had just been a drill too. She had forgotten that they changed the day of the week for the drill.

Bobby is Baptized

In Mormonism, baptism occurs at the age of eight, which is called the "age of accountability." The theory apparently is it doesn't do any good to baptize a baby, since the baby doesn't know what is happening. They had been teaching all the kids in my Sunday School class of seven-year-olds various stuff for what seemed like an eternity to get us ready for the big event.

One of the points my teacher kept harping on was that baptism was really a unique chance, since it was the point at which God would forgive all my sins. The implication was that He might not forgive additional sins I committed in the future, since after all, I could only get baptized once. The confusing thing was they also told us that in certain cases He might forgive additional sins, but in that case why make all the fuss about this one baptism ceremony?

At any rate, at the moment that I came popping up out of the baptismal waters (in Mormonism, baptism is by "immersion," meaning they dip you completely under the water), I would be sin-free. And that was a state worth going to considerable lengths to preserve. I was quite sure that I wanted to stay sin-free, and was willing to do whatever was necessary to do so. The problem was that I didn't really know exactly what I had done in the past or was doing then that was sinful. Maybe I was intrinsically sinful. Probably fighting with my sisters was sinful, but there was no guarantee that I'd be able to stop doing that. I'd probably keep on fighting, but that would not be a real sin, or at least not a major one. All in all, I figured I'd be able to maintain my sin-free state for all practical purposes.

There was a related problem though. The teacher was making the point that in order for the baptism to work right you had to first *repent* of all your sins. I didn't really have any problem with repenting, which of all religious concepts is one that an eight-year-old could best understand: it means "I wish I hadn't done it," an emotion every kid that age is familiar with. The problem, once again, was that I didn't know what sins I was supposed to be repenting of. What if I really had some bad sin, and the whole baptism thing didn't manage to cleanse me of it just because I didn't realize I was sinning and so hadn't repented of it in advance? It didn't seem fair.

And what about something like wetting the bed, even thought I didn't do that any more? Was that a sin? It seemed like it could be, and you could try repenting of it, but maybe you couldn't really stop committing it. Would it count if you

really wanted to stop doing something and repented of it in your mind but just couldn't help going on doing it?

Basically, sins were things that you did that you weren't supposed to—*commandments* that God gave. But what exactly were all these commandments? One of our church leaders said that "each command we obey sends us another rung up the ladder" and "every law disobeyed is a sliding toward the bottom," making it sound like a game of Chutes and Ladders, which I could relate to since it was one of my favorite games. In the game things were clear: when you landed on a square with a ladder on it, up you climbed, and when you landed on one with a chute on it, down you slid. The makers of the game are explicit about this: they advertise it as "the game of rewards and consequences. As kids travel along the game path, they encounter situations that reward them for good deeds by letting them climb the ladders or punish them for misbehaving by sending them down chutes. All the while, they are learning to recognize numbers and count to 100." For instance, good action #36, eating everything on your plate, leads to good consequence #44, growing big and strong.

But for this kind of thing to work with commandments, all the commandments would have to be written down somewhere. Were they? What if there was a commandment that you didn't know about, and you violated it, but you really were a good person and wouldn't have if you had known about it?

I had all these questions, but no one to ask them to. Before I got baptized I had to go meet the bishop for an interview but that wasn't for talking about the things I was wondering about. He just asked me if I knew what baptism was and if I felt I was ready to be baptized, questions to which I was obviously just supposed to answer yes.

If I had been born into a native American society living on the Columbian Plateau, I would have had a much different religious initiation at the age of accountability. When the day arrived, my mother or father would have informed me that it was time to gain *tiwdtitmils*, or spiritual power. I would have been sent to a mountain as far as ten miles away, such as the prominence called Rattlesnake Peak that I could see from the back yard of my old house at 1513 Cottonwood. I'd have been instructed to find a circle of rocks on a hilltop, with openings on the east, west, and south. There I'd build a fire and keep it going while I sat in the western opening of the circle and watched the sun set. Sitting there through the night, fasting, I'd continue to stare to the west, experiencing its reality in the howls of prowling coyotes and the rustling around me of other nocturnal wildlife. At dawn, perhaps now growing familiar with this absolute alone-ness, I'd move to the eastern opening in the rock circle and watch the sun rise, its rays caressing the

sage-studded desert. At mid-day, I'd move to the southern opening, staying there, my stomach now rumbling with hunger, until the sun started its downward journey. Finally, I'd move again to the western opening and watch the sun from there until it slipped, once again, under the horizon. My first religious experience would then be complete and I would return home.

It was May 5, 1961. "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." That's the standard little prayer that they give before baptizing someone, the one that my father was intoning now. The Father and the Son I sort of understood, but I never figured out what the Holy Ghost was supposed to be, and frankly, I don't think my Sunday School teachers knew either. In any case, the person saying the prayer, always an adult male who's been ordained to the Mormon priesthood, stands next to the person to be baptized in waist deep water and then dunks the initiate, making sure he or she is completely immersed. Baptisms are often performed in batches. Right before me my father was doing an older lady. He pushed her down in the water and she lost her footing and sort of started to helplessly float in the little baptismal font. Her dress was floating on the surface and you could see her stockings and even a little bit of her girdle. Everyone seemed quite disconcerted by this mini-drama, before they finally got her feet back on the bottom and up and out of the font safely.

My father and I were both dressed in the white clothes used in baptism ceremonies. We were barefoot. We clambered down the little stairs into the water in the font and made our way to the middle. My father, although just thirty-five, had already started his inexorable progress towards the severe obesity that would eventually pack more than two hundred pounds on his diminutive 5'6" frame. The beginnings of eventual drooping jowls were already visible in the fat deposits on his cheeks that jiggled subtly every time he turned his head. There were fleshy folds on his chin that would soon form into a double, triple, or quadruple chin. His belly was already starting to bulge over his belt, a special white cloth belt that was part of his baptismal clothing; he baptized enough people in his role in the church to actually have his own. The pants no longer fit him, especially around the waist, a problem he solved with the baptismal clothes and with all other clothes he owned by simply lowering the waist of the pants to the point on his body where he could finally get them pulled shut.

My father had that special look on his face that said something *very* important was going on here. It was a very holy occasion, but he was accustomed to these types of holy situations. There were twenty people attending this ceremony, relatives and friends of all the people being baptized, and my father carried himself

with the air of a man who knew that he was very spiritual and was convinced that all the people watching knew it as well. He did his narrowing-the-eyes thing, and tilted his head slightly. He used his special holy stuff/spiritual/church voice, slower and several notes lower than his usual one, as he recited the baptismal prayer, with his eyes cast upward at about a thirty degree angle. Evidently that's the direction in which he felt God was resting on his celestial throne. Actually he was looking up at a basketball hoop, since the baptism room was located next to the gym in the church.

As we walked up the steps out of the baptismal font, I could see the wound on the front of his ankle where he had almost gotten his foot cut off when he was five: it was horizontal and maybe an inch across, with a little flap of skin covering the top of it. Without his special shoes with the left one's heel built up, his limp was quite pronounced. His mother, my grandmother, wrote that after the accident she tried "rub[bing] his leg with lotion and oil to try to make it grow better. It helped some but not enough as the other leg grew faster." As indeed it did.

What was little Ira thinking that bright summer day on his family's farm north of Spokane, Washington, the cherries ripening on the vine, the apple trees blossoming? His mother was inside, changing his baby sister's diaper; he was out in the yard where his Mom had told him to stay. The reason he was supposed to stay there was that his father was running the big mower on the hillside west of the house. But Ira wanted to play with his father and the mower. Coy was mowing the hillside in up and down swaths, coming down the hill to the dirt road that ran between the hill and the house and the yard, swinging the tractor around there and heading back up the hill to mow another swatch. Daddy ran out from the yard onto the road, waving and shouting to my grandfather, who could neither hear him over the racket of the tractor, nor see him standing on the dirt road. Coy was getting ready to make a big sweeping U-turn on the road and go back up the hill. It was about halfway through his U-turn that the twenty-foot-wide mowing device attached to the tractor caught Ira's little left foot, the rapidly rotating metal blades slicing through his ankle like a fresh spring Washington apple, leaving his foot hanging by just a few shards of flesh. The plan to bake some pies from the cherries that my father's parents and sister had gone to pick earlier that morning was going to have to wait.

Of course, everyone in the family knows how my father's foot was almost cut off, and how at my grandmother's insistence the new hospital in Chewelah, which originally wanted to amputate the foot, instead miraculously reattached it, tied the cords, set the bones, and restored the majority of its function in a marathon three-hour operation. And that one of his legs is shorter than the other;

actually that foot is smaller than the other as well, I suppose by the amount it didn't grow while Daddy's foot was healing. And all the Myers kids got used to seeing his special shoes, with the heel built up, about an inch if I recall. Since his feet were different sizes, he actually bought two pairs of shoes, and used the right shoe from the bigger pair and left one from the smaller. This would have been a problem for someone who had more shoes, but my father probably only bought one pair every couple of years, always exactly the same kind, laced-up black leather shoes. He wore them everywhere, to church, to work, on the weekends.

But the funny thing is that my father himself never, ever talked about his foot. I not only never heard the story from him, but never heard any reference to his foot. He never told me about his excitement when, in his third week in the hospital after the surgery, he first was able to wiggle his big toe up and down. He did not share with me the discomfort in being forced to use crutches for months on end after that surgery, or the humiliation of having to crawl around the house on his hands and knees when his crutches were not handy and he just had to get somewhere. There were no father-son chats about how he felt about being unable to discharge his responsibilities as the eldest and indeed only male child, unable to help out with even the most basic farm chores. He never mentioned how it felt to spend the entire eighth grade on crutches after a required follow-up operation. He never discussed how his foot injury earned him a 4-F medical deferment draft classification, thus relieving him of the obligation of becoming a soldier in the latter part of World War II. What lesson was burned into his five-year-old mind by how an innocent childish desire to play with his father resulted, in the course of a few short minutes, in severe and lifelong bodily mutilation?

Thirty years after the fact, my father had not vanquished the fear of the terrified five-year-old hemorrhaging on the couch in the old farmhouse, his mother's old dish towels forming a makeshift tourniquet around his ankle while his father sprinted up the hill to the neighbors' house to borrow their car to rush him to the hospital in the little town ten miles away.

Bobby's Paper Route

I was standing petrified with my back up against the hedge running along the sidewalk. From the porch of a house across the street a large, mean-looking dog—maybe a German shepherd?—glared at me ferociously and barked at the top of its voice, obviously meaning me harm. I edged cautiously along the hedge, hoping to get far enough away from the dog that he would lose sight of me or lose interest or both. I was all alone.

It was 5:30 a.m., and I was on my way to my paper route. This scene repeated itself daily. The dog lay in wait for me, and seemed to almost enjoy watching me cowering and creeping along the opposite side of the street. It doesn't seem that he was tied up, because some days he actually came down to the bottom of the porch stairs to bark at me from a point slightly closer. If he had wanted to, he easily could have bounded across the street, chased me for the few yards it would have taken him to catch me, and then attacked or bitten me. For me, it was the same experience of terror over and over again. I had no way to deal with this fear. I never grew out of it, and I never grew used to it.

Now the reader may be wondering, if I was a better writer, wouldn't I be putting more interesting little details into this mean dog story? For instance, I could mention the color of the dog, perhaps using an adjective like "chestnut"; or lyrically describe the chirping of the birds in the trees that early morning, or even mention the dew cradled in the moss-green blades of grass. The problem is that I didn't actually sense any of those things. Many times I felt like I was trapped in a black and white movie. It seems I inherited none of the poetic talent of my father, who demonstrated his sensitive perception of nature in a college love letter he sent to his belle "Betts": "After a long day of snow and rain, the clouds parted this evening and let the sun shine through. From my room, I can see the newly burst buds as a contrast against the somber browns of the roof tops…"

It turns out eight was the earliest age at which you could get a paper route delivering the little local morning paper. If I recall correctly, I earned about $1.50 a week. I'd wake up at 5:00 a.m. To get to my route, I first walked down Goethals to the north to where it crossed a larger artery running east and west. I'd turn right, to the east, and pass the house with the barking dog on the other side. After passing a couple more little streets, I'd come to another major artery, this one running north and south. I say "artery," but it may have been just a single lane in each direction; in any case it was one of the bigger streets in town, heading in the direction of downtown to the right, to the left leading north to the edge of town and then across the desert to the labs.

These two big streets met at what seemed to me to be a very big intersection. The traffic light swung lazily up there in the middle of the intersection, taking its time and giving no outward clue as to its plans; then the green would change to yellow, where it seemed to me to just hang in time for an unreasonably long time before finally changing to red. A single car that had been waiting in the dawn's light while the signal in its direction had been red accelerated and pulled away, its metallic hulk passing just a few yards away from me. I looked down and saw the pavement; it looked lighter and grayer and colder than I expected.

I had to cross twice, to get to the diagonally opposite corner of the intersection, the northeast, where my route started. On the corner I would find the pile of newspapers that had been dropped off by the delivery truck who knew how many hours earlier. My first job was to sit there on the ground in the cool darkish morning air rolling up each individual paper—this was a small town and the paper was just a few dozen pages—and stacking them in the canvas paper bag that would go over my shoulder once I set out on my rounds.

The large block making up my route was a relatively new development, composed of a bunch of townhouse-like buildings, arranged in a sort of diagonal grid pattern. Each building had four units, I think, two upstairs and two down. To me, the diagonal layout was confusing. I would have much preferred a rectangular grid. I had to figure out whether to follow the straight diagonal lines, which meant doubling back to cover the little short lines in the corner, or try to keep to my preferred rectangular course, which meant zigzagging between the buildings. Trying the latter approach, one day I managed to miss an entire building, depriving four Richland families of their indispensable morning newspaper reading experience.

I hated collecting the money from people, which I had to do every month or so. It seemed like I was bothering them, and it made me feel uncomfortable taking money from them, even though it was money they had agreed to pay for a paper they presumably wanted. I'd come home emotionally exhausted from having to harass and demand money from dozens of strangers.

One morning on my way to the route, convinced that the dog was really going to hurt me, I simply turned around and found a place in the bushes outside to hide until the time my mother expected me home from my route. It was about an hour after I had arrived home that the call came, obviously from the newspaper company, given the sideways glances my mother was giving me as she talked on the phone. Her voice on the phone sounded distant and disembodied. My movie was not only in black and white; it also had subtitles in place of speech. For whatever reason, she chose not to discuss the problem with me but just slipped on her jacket and left the house, obviously going to deliver the papers herself. The topic was never raised between us again.

This was my first encounter with the world of business. After the first year, though, we were informed by the newspaper company that they had another delivery boy for the route and would not be needing my services for the upcoming year.

Bobby Studies Music

I had been taking piano lessons from Mrs. Carter, a widow living a couple of blocks away. For me, music was just another coding system: little marks with agreed-upon meanings that you could figure out pretty easily. Getting your fingers to follow the music was a little bit trickier, but something I didn't have too much problem with. We worked on John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course. At a recital sponsored by the Washington State Music Teachers Association, I played "Minuet in F Major" by Mozart and "Country Gardens (Morris Dance)." The judges rated me as "Needs Improvement" on Time Values, Staccato, Dynamic markings, Clarity, Evenness, and Conviction, giving me an "Outstanding" just for Posture and Imagination.

Which was not surprising, since, typically, I didn't really work very hard on playing the piano. I had some kind of natural talent, not exactly for playing itself but for reading music and figuring out what was going on, that let me muddle through. The concept of working hard and practicing and doing something over and over again until I got really good at it was not something that occurred to me naturally, nor did my parents manage to convey it to me.

My family had no real connection with music. My father played the harmonica; he had learned it in grade school and often pulled out one of the several he owned and played it but frankly he didn't seem that good at it to me. He took violin lessons when he was in the fourth grade with a teacher in Addy, and according to his mother "got so he could play some pieces"; but eventually gave it up, although he kept his violin throughout his life. I seem to recall seeing it occasionally in its dusty black case stacked in a corner of the basement. My mother was tone deaf. In any case, in our house there was no music: no record player or records, no radio, no musical instruments. My mother did understand the importance of music and to her credit actively encouraged the children to take music lessons, but I rarely heard my parents listening to music, or talking about a piece or a performer they liked. They never went to concerts. Maybe they just never had the money at the time to go out and get a record player or buy records or get the concert tickets, or even get a radio, although that seems unlikely.

In fourth grade I had a musical composition I wanted to share with the world. I had learned enough from my piano lessons that it was easy for me to write it down. I didn't know how to score it or arrange it but my fourth grade homeroom teacher, Mrs. Bresina, was a talented pianist and she took care of that. The proud day came when she played my piece in front of the whole class.

No one seemed to care, though. Actually, this had just been a song playing in my head. It wasn't really a song I composed; it composed itself. It wasn't even a song, but just a few bars that just kept playing over and over again. That was the end of my composing career.

Bobby Goes Fishing with Daddy

It would not surprise me at all if the reader at this point were quite tired of the interminable repetition in this book. Something slightly weird happens to Bobby, and this is presented as if it is something momentous that the reader should actually care about. Or a tenuous connection is made between something in Bobby's life and a local historical figure, as if that really mattered. Or Bobby has another unsatisfying interaction with his uninvolved, hypocritical, holier-than-thou father.

So I won't spend too much time talking about my ill-fated fishing trip with my father. You'll recall that in the various Christmas letters I've quoted so far I was described as essentially hyperactive. This may be related to the fact that I also clearly had some massively internalized anger. I can't say where this really came from; it doesn't seem that my eczema episodes were serious enough to cause something like this. Did something bad happen to me that I've repressed or forgotten about? Perhaps it was something biological—doctors say that there is a correlation between angry children and bed-wetting. Or could it have been my unsatisfying interactions with my father that gave birth to my seething rage?

But my father himself may well have been nothing more than a bit player in a psychological drama spanning generations. It is well known that intense poverty can have long-term negative emotional effects, and my father's family certainly was poor, although I don't know exactly to what extent. The immense trauma stemming from having his foot nearly sliced off at age five could easily have given rise to a childhood form of what we today would call post-traumatic stress syndrome—which is known to cause disturbances in self-esteem, body image, intimacy, and sexuality, and has been reported to cause difficulties in parenting and interpersonal and family relationships. Just getting Daddy's foot sewn back on again was all the medical system of the time could manage; there was no psychotherapy or "cognitive-behavioral therapy" of the sort we would probably give a child who had suffered this type of life-threatening injury today.

And it's possible, although just speculation, that my father's father was abusive to him in some way. That would certainly be consistent with the fact that I can't remember a single time in my entire life when my father recounted an experience

he had with his father or even something his father said. As a result, my mental image of my paternal grandfather is a complete void. In a drawer in my house, I have a small clear plastic bag containing a few of my grandfather's effects. These had apparently been in my father's possession and I inherited them when he died. There are two straight razors, one with a light yellow handle and the inscription "51 The Victor" on the blade, in a case reading "Victor Razor, Chicago," the other black and unmarked. There is a shaving brush and a cheap leather bag with an old broken pipe in it, the bowl still smelling faintly of decades-old tobacco. That, and some old pictures, represent the sum total of what remains from my grandfather in my life. The theory that my grandfather was emotionally or physically abusive to my father would also be consistent with the expert theory that "the combination of poverty and abusive parents gives rise to children who strive to succeed and overcome feelings of defeat and failure by having power over others and creating a false image of their own goodness and self-righteousness," which seems to describe my father remarkably well.

In any case, I was angry. Things never seemed to go my way. People didn't seem to like me. My anger expressed itself more verbally than physically, and often took the form of making fun of people, including my siblings, or gratuitously lashing out at them. I have a vague recollection that my parents consulted a psychologist who made the obvious diagnosis that I was missing a strong father figure. Hearing this, my father came up with the idea of a father-son fishing trip.

For the location, Daddy chose Priest Rapids Lake, the reservoir that had been formed by the brand-new Priest Rapids Dam. Priest Rapids lay right at the northwest corner of the Hanford Reservation, fifty miles northwest of Richland, past Rattlesnake Peak. Originally there were actually seven rapids; apparently the first white man to see them was Robert Stuart, a scout for the Pacific Fur Company. As he passed the dramatic, swirling rapids, a native priest was leading the Wanapum in a ceremony to give thanks to the river for its bounty, and it was for that priest that the rapids were named.

Having been unceremoniously booted out of Hanford in 1943 and the Army's Yakima Training Center directly to its west shortly thereafter, in 1956 the luckless Wanapum were once again getting kicked out of somewhere, this time their homelands in the Priest Rapids area, which were going to be inundated by the new dam. The wild, untamed Columbia was well along in the process of being essentially turned into a series of large lakes.

Leading the tribe to the new village they would occupy was their leader Puck Hyah Toot, also known as Johnny Buck. He waxed stoic about the fate of his beloved Columbia:

> *It is the water of life, our water, and it flows now on the dry land across the river in our old horse range. The White Man has torn deep gashes in the Mother Earth, making her bleed. There is nothing we can do about it, nothing. Perhaps there is nothing we should want to do. Perhaps the Watcher wants it that way, because the earth freely offers her gifts to be shared with everyone.*

Dams release cold water perfect for trout. The area several miles downstream is usually where the fishing is best; these areas are called "tailwater fisheries." The water level may go up and down depending on the schedule for releasing water from the dam, but the flow of the water is gentle enough to not wash away the aquatic plants and insects that trout eat from the river bottom. Perhaps this is where we went to fish. And my father may have been acquainted with trout fishing at least to the extent that his father is known to have done some fishing, including for trout, as it turns out; his wife, my grandmother, mentions at one point in her autobiography that "Coy liked to go fishing and caught some nice trout."

Unfortunately, my father had forgotten whatever fishing skills he might once have had. He had no fishing equipment either, so we stopped off at a fishing supply store on the way to pick up everything: poles, lures, bait, and buckets. He had no friends who could tell him the best places to take his little kid fishing, so he chose the spot based on something he had read, perhaps, or just where he imagined fishing might be good. He didn't really know the right types of poles and line and bait to use, and would not even ask the guy at the fishing supply store, as usual not wanting to look stupid.

It was a hot summer even for southeastern Washington. The blazing sun that day in June drove the temperature to a record high of 109 degrees. I remember a wide, shallow river under a flawlessly blue sky, with willowy grasses growing out of the water in the shallowest areas along the river's edge.

Not much father-son bonding occurred on Daddy and Bobby's fishing trip. In fact, we ended up fishing for only a couple of hours, and caught nothing. Maybe the problem was that we forgot to do the Wanapum thanksgiving ceremony the trapper had seen one hundred fifty years earlier. The topography of the place on the river that my father chose was such that you really needed to wade into the river to get good casting range, but we did not have wading boots, so we were too far away from where the fish presumably were, and neither of us could cast far enough to reach it. We'd cast but only manage to reach a point still far too close

to the edge of the river. Meanwhile, our feet were getting wet and cold from standing too close to the edge of the river.

Finally, on one cast I hooked some stubborn weeds on the bottom of the river—probably the roots of those grasses growing in the water—and just couldn't get my hook loose. I tried and tried, but eventually ended up breaking the line. My father had not gotten any additional hooks. Our fishing expedition had come to an end. It was impossible to tell which were worse: my father's parenting skills, or his fishing skills. My father probably imagined he had actually accomplished something in terms of developing his relationship with his boy; he could go back and report to his wife and/or the psychologist that like the good father he was he had now actually spent some quality time with his son.

It's strange because my father did know some people in this general area in connection with his church work and so should have been able to talk to them about good fishing spots or techniques. He knew them because as part of his job he'd often visit congregations in outlying areas. For instance, he'd visit Yakima, which was only about fifty miles west of Priest Rapids.

My father's job in the Mormon church was managing local people trying to find new converts. There were "real" full-time missionaries who came from elsewhere in the country or world, of course, like the ones that had converted my parents, but there were also local people who did missionary work part-time, and those were the people my father was in charge of. His geographical area of responsibility was the "stake," roughly equivalent to a diocese. The Richland Stake at that time covered much of south central Washington and even extended down into northeastern Oregon. His title in this role was "Stake Mission President." I never really understood what he did on his frequent trips to far-off corners of the stake, although I suppose he was meeting with the missionaries to encourage them and give them guidance, or perhaps meeting with prospective new converts directly. Maybe he was helping to plan programs like the one they had in Yakima, where they organized dances for all the Indian teenagers. This was a good idea in theory—much of the Indians' social infrastructure was in tatters and they were receptive to new opportunities to meet and socialize. The dances were hugely popular. My father had neglected to anticipate one outcome of the dances, though: the spate of cute little Indian babies that were born nine months later. He had forgotten one of the main *raisons-d'être* for the big parties the Plateau Indians had been holding for thousands of years.

My father would also visit congregations in the little towns on the road from Richland to Yakima: Prosser, Toppenish, Sunnyside. Dipping down into Oregon, he'd visit Hermiston and Umatilla, or even Pendleton, a three-hour drive

from Richland in those days. He'd go to Walla Walla to the east or Moses Lake to the north. Moses Lake was not named for the Biblical Moses, but rather the legendary Chief Moses, chief of the Columbias (also called the Sinkiuse) in the last half of the nineteenth century. It was this Chief Moses who, after a generation of navigating the treacherous waters of white-Indian diplomacy with relative success, having ended up on the Colville Indian Reservation just west of Addy, Washington where Daddy grew up, in 1885 invited Chief Joseph to come live with him. But have no fear—I am not going to segue into another boring story about some Indians that lived more than a century ago.

Sometimes Daddy would even go to Wenatchee, a bone-rattling one-hundred-twenty-mile trip nearly halfway to Canada. That name is also of Indian origin, meaning "Great opening out of the mountains," referring to another Columbian tribe. Whether in Wenatchee or any of the other towns my father visited, part of the missionary work was focused on the Indians who lived in or near them. Converting Indians was pretty easy. (One year my father's team was responsible for converting a hundred people, although there is no record of how many of those were Indians.) For one thing, the Indians' destabilized social structures made them vulnerable to the Mormons' family/community pitch. Second, the Mormons had a particular bit of theology that related specifically to the Indians, namely that the Indians were the descendants of a Jewish family that had immigrated to the Americas six hundred years before Christ. This is basically the story told in the Book of Mormon. Two of the sons were unrighteous fellows whom God decided to punish by turning their skin red and making them into loathsome savages. Much later, around 400 AD, the offspring of the two bad sons annihilated all the righteous white descendants of the two good sons; the latter left a record of their civilization inscribed on golden plates which were found in a hole on a hillside in New York in 1827 by Joseph Smith, becoming what we know as The Book of Mormon.

It seems odd that Indians would be attracted by a religion whose theology held that they were the descendants of evil men, their color the result of a divine curse. Nevertheless they were. Perhaps it was just the fact that Mormonism was about the only religion around that gave any special thought to the Indians at all. Or, it could be that subconsciously the Indians thought that since whites were obviously superior—they had proved this by successfully killing off most of the Indians, stealing all their land, and depriving them of their way of life—their religion must be superior as well.

This last point is more than supposition. Way back in 1831 four Nez Perce and Flathead chiefs made an historic 2,000-mile journey to St. Louis to formally

request that the white man instruct them in his superior religion. The native Indian religion, to the extent we understand it, was animistic in nature—that is, it assigned power to natural objects and animals. By attuning themselves to those objects and animals, the Indians could share in that power, useful for killing enemies and hunting. Watching the trappers and other early white explorers, the Indians came to believe that the white men must have access to a new and possibly greater source of power, a very special kind of "big medicine," perhaps based on new and advanced incantations and dances, one which could potentially even raise the dead. The chiefs made their pilgrimage to ask for instruction in the whites' big medicine. They also knew that this big medicine was associated with the "Book of Heaven," as they called the Bible, and that to access it they would have to learn how to read.

Arriving in Saint Louis after an arduous journey, the chiefs met William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame, who had met chiefs of their fathers' generation just twenty-five years earlier on his famous expedition, and by then was Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Because of a lack of interpreters, whatever discussions the chiefs had with Clark must have been carried out in the so-called intertribal sign language used between whites and different Indian tribes. In the end, whether because Clark had no Bible in the Indians' language, or had no missionaries he could send, he turned down the chiefs' request for Christian training. Eventually two of them collapsed of sickness and exhaustion and died. One of the returning chiefs reported back to the tribal council that Clark had indeed promised to send missionaries to them "with the book." But this doesn't square with the famous speech that Chief No-Horns-On-His-Head is reputed to have given the evening he finally left St. Louis six months after first arriving:

> *I came over the trail of many moons from the setting sun. My people sent me to get the white man's Book of Heaven…You make my feet heavy with gifts and my moccasins will grow old carrying them, yet the Book is not among them. When I tell my poor blind people that I did not bring the Book, one by one they will rise up and go out in silence. My people will die in darkness, and they will go on the long path to the hunting grounds. No white man's Book will make the way plain.*

What is not in question is that the white Christian community interpreted the Indians' visit as a direct plea to be taught Christianity, and that, as such, that visit was one of the immediate impetuses for dispatching Christian missionaries to the

Indians in the West—notable among them a certain Jason Lee and Marcus Whitman, who undertook their missions just three years later.

But Lee passed by Nez Perce territory, continuing on to Oregon, while Whitman settled among the Cayuse tribe one hundred miles to the west near Walla Walla. The white man that eventually did bring the Book of Heaven to the Nez Perce clan that dispatched the mission to St. Louis was Henry H. Spalding. (And yes, he too was commemorated in Richland, in the form of Spalding Elementary School.) With his wife Eliza, Spalding built up a settlement on the Clearwater River in western Idaho, known as Lapwai. He translated the Book into the language of the Nez Perce, completing the project in 1845.

Things did not go much better for Spalding than they had for Whitman, although at least Spalding avoided getting his skull bashed in with a tomahawk. He had trouble with the complex language, and would grow furious when the Indians couldn't understand what he was saying or wouldn't do what he was telling them to. The Nez Perce were interested in the new religion and would faithfully attend Sunday services, at least as long as they were not off on buffalo hunts or partying with other tribes, but were not happy about Spalding's prudish opposition to their gambling, singing, and flexible sexual practices. The whole Christian thing about original sin was very hard to sell to the Indians as well. And remember that the initial reason the Indians went to St. Louis was to get the "big medicine" that would make them more successful in love and war, but the new white religion did not seem to be bringing the desired material benefits, leading to much disillusionment.

One of the favorite forms of gambling for the Nez Perce was the Stick Game, a kind of Indian version of dice, which used four sticks: red male, red female, blue male, and blue female, each with a decorated side and a blank side. The players would throw the sticks and accumulate points depending on which sides landed up. For instance, one male and two females landing face-side up were worth two points (corresponding to the Nez Perce tradition of one already-married warrior "adopting" the wife of a fallen brave). The first player to reach a particular point total was the winner. But Spalding's religion not only failed to bring them luck at this game, it tried to abolish it altogether—especially strange since for the natives the game itself was spiritual in the way that it offered direct insight into the will of the God of chance. It would be 150 years before this aspect of Indian culture would be resurrected in the form of casino-style Indian gambling.

In response to the simmering dissatisfaction on the part of the Indians, Spalding resorted to whipping the complainers, or even announcing that they were consigned to eternal damnation and would burn in hell.

In spite of this, many of the Indians continued to support Spalding and he made a number of converts, notably a certain Tuekakas, who was the leader of the Nez Perce band in the Wallowa Valley of northeastern Oregon, where Bobby's family had its unsatisfactory vacation experience in the summer of 1956. Spalding gave Tuekakas the Christian name Joseph, and gave Joseph a copy of the Book of Heaven that he treasured deeply. When in 1840 a son and heir was born to Joseph, named Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekht, "Thunder Rolling In The Mountains," Joseph rushed to Latwai to have him baptized by Spalding. The baby was given the Christian name of Ephraim, although he would become much better known as Chief Joseph, a great Indian chief of uncommon bravery and intelligence, after whom that junior high school that Bobby's sister Nancy attended in Richland was named.

For a quarter century, Old Joseph cherished the New Testament Spalding had given him. But in 1863, he destroyed it when he discovered that the same white men that had taught him the Beatitudes now intended to banish him and his entire tribe forever from their home in the Wallowa.

In any case, the Indians' thirst for the truth as shown by their St. Louis visit in 1831 certainly lives on in the mind of the red man today. And what better paleface to help them quench that thirst than my father? After a busy week making atom bombs to ensure that as much as possible of the earth would be destroyed if World War III ever occurred, in a lab built on land acquired by kicking out the Indian residents, the crippled scientist would go travel around on the weekends to try to see if he could get those very same Indians to embrace a highly implausible story involving their skin color being the result of a divine curse on their evil ancestors. For the Indians there was a silver lining in the cloud: if they would merely accept Mormonism, their skin would magically revert to regular white color, this according to holy scripture no less!

> *Their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and a delightsome people. (2 Nephi 30:6)*

The Mormons have since changed the wording here, replacing the word "white" with the word "pure" in 1978. But at the time this was the way the scripture read, and it was by no means an obscure teaching from Mormonism's past. Just the year before Bobby's abortive fishing trip with his dad, a senior church official and future president of the church observed in a major church magazine that the scripture's promise was indeed being fulfilled: "[The Navajo]…are fast

becoming a white and delightsome people." He went on, "The Indian children in the home placement program in Utah are often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogans on the reservation."

Where did this unlikely religion originate? The religious tumult in the eastern United States in the first decades of the nineteenth century took many forms. For instance, Jason Lee received a vision from God telling him to preach the way of salvation to the savages. At around the same time, Joseph Smith, an unemployed diviner from New York, had the more ambitious idea of creating an entire new religion. The origins of that religion, which became known as Mormonism, are well documented elsewhere. Suffice it to say the religion's doctrines are rife with elements that challenge typical notions of logic. The Book of Mormon, for instance, was written in a non-existent language ("Reformed Egyptian") on "golden plates" which experts agree could not have physically contained the amount of text in the book, and which were seen only by a few of Smith's cronies before being returned to the angel who had guided Smith to them. Smith allegedly translated the reformed Egyptian characters (into a weird parody of King James English) by peering into a top hat through a special egg-shaped rock that he had found. The resulting book describes a society that scholars agree could not have existed in the Western Hemisphere, plagiarizes major sections of the New Testament in its account of Jesus' supposed visit to the ancient American peoples, and is based on a fundamental assertion that is contradicted by definitive DNA analysis, namely that native Americans descended from Middle Eastern immigrants. In spite of the quirkiness of Mormon beliefs, or perhaps because of it, Mormonism has not only survived but turned into one of the world's larger and faster-growing religions.

Their fishing adventure at an end, Bobby and Daddy piled into the car for the trip home. Looking back, I could see the dam in the distance. It struck me as being oddly low and wide.

Actually the building of this and other dams on the Columbia had been foretold, with incredible prescience, by the great Wanapum religious leader of the late nineteenth century, Smohalla (the grandfather of Puck Hyah Toot), who prophesied:

> *In time to come the white men will build dams which will close the Chiawana to the salmon. In time the suyapo [whites] will ride in big canoes and the boats will make fire. In the seasons ahead the Upsuch [Greedy Ones] will ride over our land as wide as the sky, on strips of something harder than*

wood or rock. At Priest Rapids there is nothing the suyapo wants in our little life, and there we may live unmolested.

As for the "strips of something harder than wood or rock," well, that was what Daddy was piloting the old Hudson down right at the moment—an asphalt road that Smohalla had somehow imagined decades before such roads were invented.

And of course Smohalla's remarkable prediction about the white man's dams had in fact come true. The Chiawana, as he called the Columbia, was indeed closed to the salmon. The Grand Coulee made no provision whatsoever for salmon migration and so its construction closed its upstream waters forever to returning adults, bringing the annual salmon harvest at Spokane Falls to an end that summer of 1943. Downstream dams allow access only to fish lucky enough to survive rapidly rotating turbine blades and determined enough to make their way up tortuous fish ladders.

Smohalla certainly knew the salmonid life cycle: salmon are born in fresh water rivers and tributaries where they spend their first year or two, and then head off down the river toward the ocean, living there two to five years before finally returning to their childhood homes to reproduce. In fact, Smohalla was renowned for his ability to predict the arrival of the annual salmon run, which was always an occasion for thanksgiving and communal feasting. He probably could not imagine, though, exactly what problems the dams he foresaw would present to the fish both coming and going. The young fish heading out to the ocean end up in a pipe called a "penstock," filled with highly pressurized, fast-moving water, which hurtles them into a turbine rotating at 120rpm. Although it sounds like they ought to be chopped to bits, actually around ninety percent of the youngsters survive. Remember, though, that they have to make their way through not just one, but more than half-a-dozen dams before reaching the ocean. No more than fifty to sixty percent manage that.

Some dams also have a "juvenile fish bypass system" which is basically some screens in front of the turbines which deflect the fish into pipes which either dump them downstream, or in some case, into a holding pool from which they are carried downstream in a truck. The number of fish successfully deflected is called the "fish guidance efficiency," and it ranges from thirty to eighty percent depending on the season and type of fish. Another concept is simply to spill water around the times of the migrations, with the fish getting an exhilarating ride over the dam.

What about the adult fish returning to their birthplaces? How do they cross the dams? This is the function of the fish ladder. Most people have seen salmon

leaping up waterfalls. It turns out they are genetically preprogrammed to jump whenever they encounter the water motion characteristic of the bottom of waterfalls. Scientists recreated that motion at the bottom of the fish ladder, which first attracts the fish to the ladder and then stimulates them to jump. The so-called "ladders" are actually more like staircases, which allow the salmon to climb up over the dams step by step.

But the fact remains that at its heart Smohalla's prophecy was indeed fulfilled. The efficacy of the systems to aid the salmon in their migration is still so low that today serious discussions are underway to tear down dams on the Snake River in a last-ditch attempt to avoid the complete extermination of salmon there, much as the Coyote of the Nez Perce creation myth smashed waterfalls so that the salmon could travel upriver.

Of course, the dams are only one of the problems the salmon along the Columbia face. They also risk getting sucked into the Hanford reactor cooling intakes, or absorbing fatal doses of radiation.

But in his last prediction, namely that there was nothing at Priest Rapids the suyapo wanted, Smohalla was too optimistic. It turns out there was absolutely nothing the suyapo did not want. In this case, the suyapo wanted his tribal lands as a reservoir, inundating the very land upon which he was standing when he made his prophecy.

It seems natural to the Westerner that religions evolve over time and new religions emerge. But we tend to think of Native American religions, if we think about them at all, as static, simplistic belief systems based around the Great Spirit. In actuality, religion in any society is a mirror reflecting what that society is experiencing. The Indian society of the mid-1800s was experiencing intense turmoil, change, and cultural disintegration, stemming from close contact with the whites and the forced moves to the reservation ghettos.

Smohalla's new religion was a creative, dynamic reaction to these pressures that the Indians faced, while at the same time wholly in the spirit of the historic shamanistic religions of the Native Americans of the area. The prelude to Smohalla's ministry was a long spiritual quest in which he is said to have wandered as far south as Mexico, or, by some accounts, to other spiritual worlds. Returning home, he began to preach a message to the Indian race from his Indian God: the Indians must return to their primal Indian identity.

Adherents of the religion Smohalla founded, and there were many, were popularly known as the "Dreamers," referring to the dreams that Smohalla had in which he traveled to the spirit world to be taught divine principles, dances and

songs, which he brought back and taught to his disciples. Those disciples also then had dreams of their own.

Singing the songs and dancing the dances until they entered a dream-like hypnotic trance; following the guidance revealed to Smohalla and other leaders; adhering to sacred rules of behavior; rejecting white values and culture—all these things would cause the whites to permanently disappear from Indian lands and a bright new day to dawn for the Indian nations. Like Joseph Smith, Smohalla taught that when God was ready he would destroy the sinners, and resurrect the faithful. Smohalla's teachings were so compelling that Native Americans across the Plateau embraced them, and other teachers arose as well. One notable adherent to the Dreamer cult was our friend Chief Joseph.

The Smohallan dances, accompanied by drums (hence the alternative name "Seven Drum Religion") symbolized the human spirit rising to heaven. The dancers would flex up and down on the balls of their feet, as if they were birds about to take to the air, the image reinforced by feathers they held in their hands, which made arcing motions in the air as if to describe the path of a bird's flight.

Smohalla held that "men who work cannot dream, and wisdom comes to us in dreams." The short-legged shaman with the oversized head counseled his followers to accept the bounty of nature as their God-given gifts, and while most Indians eventually took up residence on reservations, the Wanapum continued moving about the Plateau harvesting those gifts until the unfortunate arrival of Leslie Groves and the legion of men he brought with him—all workers rather than dreamers.

Joseph Smith was known for his skills, learned from his father, in divining for hidden treasure using special stones like the one he translated the Book of Mormon with. Smohalla was also a diviner; in addition to forecasting the salmon runs, he could predict where root-diggers would find fertile grounds. The Indians dug camas bulbs, bitterroot, and Indian carrot, making them into bread or mush.

Both Joseph Smith and Smohalla were in the revelation business, but Joseph Smith's revelations were of a distinctly different nature. In 1843, God spoke to him and revealed the principle of plural marriage, and he immediately put the new divine law into effect for himself. Just a year later he was killed in Illinois; his successor Brigham Young then led the famous westward migration of the Saints, starting in 1846 and reaching the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and 1848, an odyssey during which the hymn "Come, Come Ye Saints" was composed. The reader need harbor no fears, however, of being subjected to extended lectures on early Mormon history.

Compared to Smohalla, Smith's revelations tended more to the practical. For instance, in the plural marriage revelation mentioned above, he pulled off an amazing trick: winning a fight with his wife by having a divine revelation where God says He'll destroy her if she doesn't obey him:

> *And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.*

My mother and father joined this religion before I was born, in 1950, and it guided the raising of all their children. My father himself told me the story about why he had joined the church: he found archaeological evidence that gave incontrovertible proof of the veracity of the Book of Mormon. This was the famous "Tree of Life" stone discovered in 1941 in the archaeological ruins of Izapa near Chiapas, Mexico. A Mormon archaeology professor at BYU (actually, the Founder and Chairman of the Archaeology Department) asserted that the stone, known as Stela 5, depicted a particular dream described in the Book of Mormon, involving a fruit-bearing tree, a river, and an iron rod.

My father's sense of scientific rigor must have completely deserted him when he chose to accept the claims of this single researcher, one with an obvious bias, to establish the truth of and justify joining a fringe religion he would not only spend the rest of his life pursuing himself but also follow as a framework in raising his eight children. He must also have forgotten what he wrote to Mommy before they were married: "…We'll worship, not…in a stuffy church, but by…being alive under the great blue tabernacle of the sky."

In fact, reputable scientists later concluded that in his analysis the BYU professor in question ignored basic archaeological methodology, made errors in reproducing the stone, imagined non-existent elements in the sculpture, ignored elements which failed to support his thesis, such as ones which showed self-mutilation and blood-letting, engaged in wishful thinking, and ignored elementary linguistic evidence.

It is unknown whether or not my father ever encountered evidence that the alleged hard scientific proof of the Book of Mormon that he used to justify his decision to join the church was essentially fabricated. Then again, the whole pseudo-scientific aspect may have been nothing more than a fig leaf justifying a decision to join the church that was actually being driven by some other reason, such as a socialization impulse. According to the memoirs of my mother, cur-

rently in preparation, it was my father who took the initiative in moving towards the decision to join the church.

This was a very busy year with many other notable events. We visited Olympic peninsula where I swam in the Pacific surf. We climbed partway up Mt. Rainier. We visited Lake George. Apparently I participated in a six and one-half mile hike into a high mountain lake in the Idaho wilderness area near Stanley with a group of explorer scouts. My cousin Butch, the one who taught me how to bat, lived with us while going to a nearby junior college. We went to Chewelah again for Thanksgiving. But I've written enough about this year of my life.

This year I once again got a whole paragraph in the family's Christmas letter:

> *Bobby's eighth birthday was a momentous one for him as he was baptized and confirmed a member of the church. He's a Top Pilot in primary and studying the life of Christ. For the first time this year he attended YMCA Day Camp and enjoyed every minute of it. They had a wonderful program for the boys—archery, swimming, crafts, games, and air rifles. He is doing very well with his piano and even tends to his practicing with a minimum of reminding. This fall he because a cub scout and is busy with lots of interesting projects. His fourth grade teacher does a good job of keeping him on his toes. He enjoys school and does very well in it.*

Nine

In the summer of 1962, the Myers family was preparing to move to Cleveland, Ohio, but first we went to visit the World's Fair in Seattle, which opened on April 21. The theme was "Century 21: life in the twenty-first century." The fair site was dominated, of course, by the newly-built Space Needle, which we reached from downtown Seattle via the brand new Monorail, both tremendously exciting for a nine-year-old. There were five main theme areas, or "Worlds": World of Art, World of Century 21, World of Commerce, World of Entertainment, and World of Science. The United States Science Pavilion, designed by the architect Minoru Yamasaki, was an unforgettable forest of buildings and courtyards and pools and arches signifying the future. One exhibit featured a huge transparent pillar filled with one million silver dollars; this also had a mesmerizing effect on Bobby.

In June, I completed fourth grade. On my final report card, my teacher Mrs. Bresina commented:

> *Bobby is inclined to hurry through his assignments in order to finish first. This results in untidy work and much wasted time, because he must redo the work in order to have it acceptably neat. He has shown improvement in social development during the past 2–3 weeks.*

Bobby Moves Across the Country

On July 8, Daddy nosed the car out of the driveway for our big trip across the country. The entire family, now numbering eight, was packed into it. We were leaving Richland forever. The huge Bekins moving van had already come and taken away all of our furniture and personal belongings. Normally, before getting in the car and taking off Daddy would always have some last-minute thing that he would run into the house to take care of, keeping everybody waiting, but this time he couldn't do that, because the house was completely empty.

As usual, Daddy hadn't bothered to tell us anything about what he was doing or why. According to my mother, he felt that possibilities for advancement at Hanford had become limited, thought it was a "dead end" and wanted to do different things—not surprising, since Hanford was increasingly moving into a maintenance or recovery mode. He had looked at job opportunities in several locations across the United States, including New York and Southern California. Think of how moving to California might have changed our lives! Bob, the surfer boy! Instead, Daddy settled on the cultural oasis of Cleveland, Ohio, home of NASA's Lewis Research Center (named not after Meriwether Lewis but rather George W. Lewis, a noted aeronautical engineer; in 1999 it was renamed the John H. Glenn Research Center after Ohio's favorite astronaut-turned-Senator). Daddy's move there was a not-very-subtle symbol of the tide of the times in the world of science—away from atom bombs and towards exploration of space. President Kennedy's famous declaration had come only one year earlier:

> *…I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.*

Lewis, however, was focused not on the manned space program, but rather on satellite and space power research. My father, for example, would do research leading to US Patent No. 4,092,712, issued May 28, 1978, titled "Regulated high efficiency, lightweight capacitor-diode multiplier DC to DC converter", on which he was listed as co-inventor, or the paper titled "Multimegawatt inverter/converter technology for space power applications," which he published in 1992.

Daddy left behind a Hanford where all of the original eight plutonium production reactors were operating at the highest power levels in history, with contamination of the Columbia River also at an all-time high, affecting not only fish in the Columbia but even Pacific oysters far off in the coastal areas of Washington and Oregon. In April, while we were visiting the World's Fair in Seattle, a "criticality accident" (a self-sustaining nuclear reaction) at the Plutonium Finishing Plant released an estimated 1,200 curies of radioactive gases over three days. Three workers received high exposures inside the plant. These incidents were also called "excursions"—as if the radioactivity were just out for a stroll.

The bombs Daddy was helping to build needed to be tested too. During the years he worked at Hanford, the US and the Soviet Union carried out nuclear tests with a combined explosive power 40,000 times that of Fat Man, strewing fallout across the globe and leading to an worsening of child mortality as well as a

long-term weakening of the world's immune levels, possibly contributing to the AIDS epidemic to come at the end of millennium. But of course those tests yielded invaluable scientific data, such as the information on the thermal properties of military uniforms gained from the test at the Nevada Proving Grounds where they lined up 111 pigs in zippered garments at different distances from ground zero and exploded a bomb to see how the pigs would do—not at all well, it turns out, in the case of the seventy-two pigs that died instantly. Around a thousand tests were carried out just in Nevada, on land belonging to the Shoshone.

Daddy's timing was good. It was just eighteen months later that President Johnson announced a decreased need for nuclear materials and a concomitant scaling back of production at Hanford. (It was in 1992 that President George H. W. Bush announced the United States would no longer produce any plutonium or enriched uranium for nuclear warheads.)

But Daddy left before some of the experiments his group had been planning could actually be carried out, such as the one where humans drank milk from cows that had been given iodine-131 in order to see how much of the radioactivity would end up in their thyroid glands, or the one where volunteers stood in the path of an intentionally-released cloud of iodine-131.

The first leg of our trip was from Richland to Pullman, to meet and pick up Grandma Myers, who would be going as far as South Dakota with us. Our Plymouth station wagon was packed to the hilt, with the old white wooden trailer hitched on behind, piled high with suitcases, blankets, sleeping bags, coolers of food, and miscellaneous camping gear, all covered by the big old green canvas tarp it seemed like we'd had for ages.

I have a clear memory of stopping at Lewis and Clark Caverns in Montana, These caverns actually have nothing to do with Lewis and Clark, except that their expedition passed by them unknowingly in 1804; the caves weren't actually discovered until 1892 (by white men, that is; the Indians certainly knew about these caves, and Indian artifacts such as arrowheads have been found inside).

And of course no trip across the country would be complete without a visit to Yellowstone National Park. By this time, we were far to the east of the areas inhabited by the Nez Perce, Wanapum, or other Plateau tribes, so you might think there would be no more Indian-related stories in this book. In that regard, you'd be quite wrong. It turns out that Chief Joseph visited this very area in 1877. Earlier that year, Joseph had finally made the heart-wrenching decision to leave his beloved Wallowa Valley and take up residence with his band on a reservation. This was just a realistic assessment on the part of the young chief of the

relative power of the natives vs. the whites, and it was typical of his reasoned, mature powers of judgment to have come to this conclusion:

> *I learned then that we were but few while the white men were many, and that we could not hold our own with them. We were like deer. They were like grizzly bears. We had a small country. Their country was large. We were contented to let things remain as the Great Spirit Chief made them. They were not; and would change the mountains and rivers if they did not suit them.*

Joseph could not even imagine how far the white men would go in changing the mountains and rivers.

Unfortunately, two of his young braves could not contain their frustration and, without Joseph's knowledge, acted out their anger by attacking and killing several whites in the area. The whites reacted with panic and rage and threatened to exterminate the entire tribe. Joseph resolved to lead his band of seven hundred men, women and children to safety, perhaps in Canada. What followed is considered by military historians to be one of the most brilliant military retreats in history; according to none other than General William Tecumseh Sherman, "the Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise…[they] fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish lines, and field fortifications." The little band repeatedly defeated the army forces, led by the one-armed General O. O. Howard of Civil War fame, in battles large and small.

About two months after the beginning of their odyssey, in August 1877, the Nez Perce made their way into Montana. August 9, however, turned out to be a very bad day for them. In Montana's picturesque Big Hole Valley, about one hundred fifty miles west of Yellowstone, the U.S. troops attacked the Nez Perce at dawn, brutally attacking and killing many defenseless women and children.

One of the braves at the battle of Big Hole was Timlpusmin, the great-grandfather of Horace Axtell, the Nez Perce who entered Nagasaki right after Fat Man's fist-sized core of Hanford plutonium had started the atomic reaction that obliterated the city. Horace recounts how the devastation in Nagasaki evoked the stories of Big Hole he had been told by his father and grandfather:

> *I went to the crater where the bomb had landed and the devastation, the carnage, brought me back to the feelings of Big Hole where my great-grandfather fought in that war down there, and the way women and children and*

old people were massacred or killed (at Big Hole). And that kind of almost a comparison to what I seen with my own eyes.

It was later that month that the fleeing Nez Perce passed through Yellowstone. From there, the beleaguered Indians headed toward the Canadian border but before reaching it were finally trapped by the army forces. This is where, on October 5, 1877, Chief Joseph gave his unforgettable speech of surrender:

I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Toohoolhoolzote is dead. The old men are all dead…He who led the young men [Olikut, his younger brother] is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

Ironically, by losing this campaign Chief Joseph cemented his place in history, among other things ensuring he would be selected for the honor of having a junior high school named after him in Richland, the only Indian other than Sacajawea to be so memorialized.

Joseph surrendered with the understanding that he would be allowed to return home, but that agreement was breached by the government, with Joseph and his people instead being confined on reservations in Kansas and then Oklahoma. Nearly a decade later, he was finally allowed to return to the northwest, but, inexplicably and cruelly, not to the Nez Perce reservation in Oregon where other members of his tribe lived, but rather to the Colville Indian reservation in northeast Washington, where he joined another resident, Chief Moses.

It was in 1899, twenty-eight years after his father's death, that Chief Joseph was allowed to return briefly to the Wallowa Valley. The white owners had long since dug up Old Joseph's skeleton and taken his skull, which was exhibited in a dentist's office in Baker, Oregon; its current whereabouts are unknown. At the sight of his father's ransacked, desecrated grave, in the middle of a plowed field, one observer recalled that Joseph "melted and wept." On September 21, 1904, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce died alone in his lodge, sitting before his fire, on the Colville Indian reservation.

In her autobiography my grandmother Bessie described the next portion of our trip, eastward across Wyoming and into South Dakota, in typically understated fashion: "We went on winding around the mountains to the Black Hills." Entering South Dakota, we passed Rapid City, near which silos under construction that very summer would soon be harboring Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles equipped with H-bomb warheads, which, with not a minute to spare, would be ready to be placed on alert that fall of 1962 during the thirteen days of the Cuban missile crisis.

It was Hanford's B reactor that had irradiated the tritium gas for the very first hydrogen bomb, the predecessor to the ones that would go into those silos. (Tritium is a key ingredient in hydrogen bombs.) A cylindrical twenty feet in length and six in diameter, "Mike" had been detonated in a test back in 1952 at Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands. It was five hundred times more powerful than Fat Man. It still made a mushroom cloud—but this one was twenty-seven miles high and eight miles wide. It also made a crater a mile wide where an island had been. The manufacture of tritium at Hanford in the early 1950s had provided plenty of solid radiation biology challenges for my father and his team. They had even done some human experiments, such as the one where subjects' abdomens were exposed to tritium to see how it was absorbed through the skin. They found it was absorbed easily; since tritium is actually just another type (an "isotope") of hydrogen, it can combine with oxygen just like regular hydrogen does, to form a special type of water called tritiated water, which has easy access to all body tissues. So it's an equal-opportunity carcinogen and mutagen, affecting the entire body rather than concentrating in just one organ as iodine does. It has a half-life of over ten years. It's also a *teratogen*, which means it can affect fetuses, especially female ones, causing cancer, genetic mutations, mental retardation, microcephaly (shrunken heads), and malformed genitals. Hanford released 200,000 curies of tritium between 1944 and 1972, most of it while Sandy and Alyssa, not to mention Bobby, were inhabiting their mother's womb in the early 1950s.

As we passed the missile silos, perhaps Daddy thought back on the "very inspiring" speech that renowned WSC physics professor S. Town Stephenson had given to the initiates into the Tau Beta Pi engineering fraternity, Daddy among them, entitled "The Atom and You." In a letter to Mommy in late 1946, Daddy wrote:

> *He told us, in essence, that we, as Physicists and Engineers, are giving tremendous technical improvements to the world with little or no consideration as to how the world will handle it. If we produce it, it's up to us to see that*

> *it's used carefully. In other words, most technical men are not aware of the social groups in which they live, and how the advancements made by them will affect those groups, communities, and nations.*

One of many effects of the particular advancement known as the H-bomb on the social group in which the technical men lived was to give rise to cool new toys for the kids to play with. This year's crop of toddlers back at Bobby's old nursery school in Richland might have been playing with the new Lionel models introduced that very year of 1962. These new train cars were capable of launching satellites and Minuteman nuclear missiles—perfect playthings for young aficionados of model railroading who were also fond of missiles and A-bombs and wanted to play real grown-up Cold War games. And they were great follow-up products to the No. 175 rocket launcher car and "Atomic Energy Commission" rolling stock that had debuted back in 1958, and the No. 470 IRBM missile-launching base with radar array brought out a year later. The new models, unfortunately, do not seem to have halted the downward slide in Lionel's business, as it was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1967, then two years later sold itself to General Mills of breakfast cereal fame.

In the Black Hills, we made the obligatory visit to Mount Rushmore, of course. About three hundred miles further along to the east lay the tiny hamlet of Iona, South Dakota, the birthplace of my father—and before him, his mother—an isolated, hostile, barren outpost in the middle of nowhere. There my great-grandfather, Francis Dooley, a short, pudgy, redheaded Irishman, had scratched out a marginal existence farming his scrap of land and trading with the Indians. At the relatively advanced age of thirty-eight, he met and married one Harriet Mobley, herself thirty-seven. They started a family immediately, my grandmother Bessie the first child to arrive later that same year of 1895.

Francis' Irish heritage showed through in his dancing, singing, swearing, and drinking. He doesn't seem to have had any particular gift for business; once he lost to thieves all the timber he had purchased at great expense to build a new house; another time, an entire herd of cows that he had neglected to build a shed to shelter froze to death in a terrible blizzard. Nor does he appear to have been particularly gifted in the parenting department; Grandma notes dryly that her dad "didn't have a very good way with the kids."

Grandma records that their family's horse, Babe, was obtained from the Sioux, probably the Oglala, or perhaps the Lakota, in return for a pig; later, her dad traded a sack of flour for another horse. The entire family was fluent in Sioux;

even in her old age, Grandma would regale us with Indian songs and show off her ability to count in the Sioux language.

Life was tough on the prairie. The Dooley kids shucked corn, hauled water, picked all kinds of wild berries, grapes and other fruits, put up hay, fed chickens, and hauled rocks. Francis had both a drinking problem and an anger management problem, at one point being served with the equivalent of a restraining order telling him to keep his hands off his wife. And he was sick as well, his legs eventually growing so weak he could no longer walk. They rigged up a rope hanging from the ceiling of their little shack that he could grab onto to lift himself up and shift position in his bed. He passed away on January 12, 1912, aged fifty-four, his last words being "Goodbye, Hattie." His daughter Bessie, my grandmother, was seventeen.

Somehow, the mother and children he left behind were going to have to run the farm—a situation which would repeat itself a generation later when Grandma herself was widowed at a young age. But the mother in this case, namely Hattie, was not in very good shape herself, with a bad case of inflammatory rheumatism, a disease where the envelope around your joints (the "synovium") becomes inflamed, making them painful, stiff, swollen, and hot. Eventually, the cartilage and bone within the joint is destroyed. The surrounding soft tissues weaken and fail, leading to deformation and intense pain. Perversely, this disease always affects both sides of the body symmetrically, depriving you of the use of both of your hands, or both of your knees, or both of whatever joint the disease has decided to attack.

We do not know the details of Hattie's particular case, but after destroying your joints rheumatism can move on to the lungs and the heart, which was perhaps what finally killed her about a year later. The future Mrs. Coy Myers, her little brother George, and little sisters Emma and Jennie, were now orphans, both parents taken from them in the space of a single year. It was precisely fifty years after Hattie was laid to rest that her daughter Bessie, grandson Ira, Ira's wife Betty, and Ira and Betty's children Nancy, Sandy, Bobby, Alyssa, David, and Jimmy, were passing through the area on their way to Ira's new job in Cleveland. Emma still lived nearby with her husband Ralph, as did George and his wife Elsie, and so of course there was to be a huge reunion.

I remembered Uncle Ralph from when he had visited Richland the year before; he wrote a card to me saying, "Ralph L. Cruson from the banks of the Missouri greets Bobby Myers from the banks of the Columbia Sept 9—1961." It had been terribly impressive to me how he identified himself and myself with the rivers on which we lived. He didn't live quite as close to the Missouri as I had to

the Columbia, but still, from Iona it was a mere five miles to where the Missouri cut its contented curlicues through the prairies of mid-South Dakota. This was the same great river which Lewis and Clark sailed up in 1804, meeting the forefathers of the very Sioux children that my grandmother played with outside her childhood home, the same Missouri that the Nez Perce elders had followed in 1831 on their way to St. Louis to obtain the white man's big medicine. At the time we visited in 1962, in nearby Chamberlain the Big Bend Dam was under construction at the exact location where Coy and Bessie, in their cousin's new Ford, had crossed the Missouri on a ferry on their way to their wedding in 1919; Bessie's parents Frank and Hattie had themselves been married in Chamberlain, by a Justice of the Peace in 1895.

The orphaned siblings that Frank and Hattie left behind lived separately at neighbors' houses, working for their board. Bessie was living on the Thompson farm. In 1919, an itinerant handyman named Coy Myers, also working for the Thompsons, proposed to Bessie and they were married around Christmas. We know very little about Coy. It seems he was small and weak and sickly—so much so that he was not called to serve in World War I. Another source indicates that he was a light drinker, if not a teetotaler. The new couple continued to work for the Thompsons and live in a house on their property; it was the Thompsons who thoughtfully provided the little casket and little white dress for the funeral of Evelyn, the second child, who died as an infant. My father, the third child, was born on June 10, 1925, at 9:30 p.m., weighing seven-and-a-half pounds. Grandma writes, "Ira was a real good baby and grew well. Of course, I fed him real well and gave him lots of milk and cream."

It was just four years later that Ira's parents decided to make their own big move to the Pacific Northwest.

If Interstate 90 had existed in 1929, my grandparents' family could have made it from Iona, South Dakota, to Addy, Washington, in eighteen hours. It would have been twenty-five miles from Iona to the Interstate, then a straight shot of almost exactly 1100 miles right down I-90 to Spokane, Washington, from where it would have been just a hair over fifty miles up to Addy. With or without I-90, the move would definitely have been a lot easier if Coy and Bessie had only used Bekins for the move just like the modern-day Myers family did, and that would indeed have been possible, since Bekins not only existed back then (having been founded in 1891), but had just started a new transcontinental moving service the year before, in 1928; financially, however, using a moving company was of course out of the question. Instead, Coy and Bessie and the kids spent three weeks mak-

ing the move in a used Chevy truck, loaded to the rafters with all their worldly possessions, including, we are told, five hens and two roosters.

Although Coy looked dapper in his wedding photograph in his new suit and tie, there is no real evidence that he ever accomplished anything useful in his life. He may have been the first, although certainly not the last, of the Myers men with the knack of attracting women above their station. For instance, there is no record of him ever managing to even acquire ownership of a house or farm—the Coy Myers family rented wherever it went. Nor does he seem to have done particularly well at the farming business. His no-nonsense wife Bessie seems to have been the dominant force in the family. After he fecklessly chopped off his son's foot with his mowing machine, it was Bessie who took charge and yelled at Coy to go get the neighbor to take Ira to the hospital in Chewelah. Coy's final act of human ineptitude was to leave his wife and kids to fend for themselves by dying prematurely at the age of forty-nine, when my father was only fifteen. My grandmother had far too much dignity to speak to her grandchildren about her emotions on the issue, but it would be surprising if, deep in her heart, she did not regret her decision to marry the skinny hired hand.

Inexplicably, Coy and Bessie undertook their move during the cold of winter, leaving Iona in the middle of November when it was fifteen degrees below zero. The children had whooping cough. My grandma reports that "many people thought we shouldn't go" (just as "some folks hadn't approved of our wedding" ten years earlier). They funded the trip with a kind of garage sale at which they sold their chickens and livestock; Coy managed to haul his hogs over muddy roads to market twenty-five miles away. We don't know the connection between their hurried departure and the stock market crash of Black Tuesday, which occurred on October 29, 1929, just two weeks earlier.

For reasons we are not privy to, the family first traveled south through Nebraska.. Perhaps they wanted to check out some amber fields of grain before heading up over the purple mountain majesties. Reaching Denver, Coy put the truck in low gear, coaxing it up over the Rockies. Little Ira huddled in the cab of the Chevy truck, consumed by paroxysms of dry coughing; when the coughing stopped, he would gasp for air with the "whooping" sound that gives the disease its name. Since after particularly severe coughing spells he would throw up, his mother, sitting in the passenger seat, would hold him up so he could stick his head out the window into the frigid mountain air rushing by to vomit outside the truck.

As the old truck crossed Tennessee Pass, elevation 10,200 feet, the roosters in their cage on top of the back of the truck raised their heads and let out a startling cry.

The Myers family had little to be thankful for on Thanksgiving Day that year. Their lonely journey inched down the mountains and into Utah, where they passed through Salt Lake City. The temperature was right around freezing—although that was warm compared to what the weather had been in the mountains. What went through little Ira's four-year-old mind as the family's truck bumped along the depressed streets of Salt Lake City, and, nose pressed against window glass, he looked up to see, atop the tallest spire of the Mormon temple, a golden status of a figure in flowing robes, horn to lips? He had no way to know at the time that this golden image memorialized "Moroni," a man who around 400 AD supposedly buried a set of gold plates on a hillside in New York and then came back as an angel in 1827 to give them to Joseph Smith so he could translate them (with his special magic rock) into the "Book of Mormon" with its story about Lehi and his dream about the tree of life and iron rod, a fraudulent archaeological "proof" of this dream to be what would convince him twenty years later to join and commit his life to the Mormon church.

Passing through Idaho, and finally into Washington, the family arrived in Chewelah, where they were reunited with Coy's brother and father. It was Coy and Bessie's tenth wedding anniversary.

The modern-day Myers family did not linger in South Dakota. We had to get to Cleveland. However, we did take the time to drive by the little two-room house where my father was born in 1925. Nothing about the house struck any chord in me, though; my father's birth and childhood seemed unreal and irrelevant to me.

On the long drive from South Dakota to Ohio, Bobby sat in the car with his nose in the big Rand McNally road atlas, tracking the family's exact progress. They arrived in Cleveland on July 18, having spent a total of ten days crossing the country.

Bobby Settles in Cleveland

After the family had stayed two weeks in a motel, my parents rented a tiny house near the airport, on a street called Midvale, until they could find a house, buy it, and move in.

Eventually they chose a large, dignified old home on a broad leafy avenue in the upscale western Cleveland suburb of Lakewood, known for its excellent

schools. The house had to be large to accommodate the still-growing family; there were seven bedrooms, depending on how you counted, on three floors plus a basement. And a porch—a real one this time, where we installed a porch swing. The house cost only $18,800, not much more than one year's salary for my Dad.

Our house on West Clifton Blvd., Lakewood, Ohio. My room was on the second floor to the left.

We had a book of detailed maps of Cleveland. It was one of those books of city maps where each page showed one section and told you which page to continue on for the map of the section to the left, right, top, or bottom. The maps were printed in blue ink. I continued to be fascinated with maps, with the very idea that each line on the map corresponded to one actual, real street. I felt that maps, as faithful representations of reality, could bring me closer to it. I found out the address of the house we were going to be moving into and found it on the map and, without telling Mommy what I was doing, spent one entire afternoon following the route on the map riding my bike through the scary streets of the big city, along the edge of the big valley, all the way up to the house where I would be living for the next seven years of my life, and back again.

I would be entering the fifth grade at McKinley Elementary School—by an odd coincidence, a school with the same name as that my grandmother had attended in Iona, South Dakota, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Grandma's McKinley was a one-room school that she had to walk (or ride Babe)

three and a half miles to get to, whereas the McKinley School in Lakewood was just a quick five-minute walk down West Clifton Boulevard from our house, and comprised the squat, square, two-story original red brick building facing West Clifton, housing the lower grades, and a larger addition to the rear.

My fifth grade classroom was on the second floor of the new building. I remember walking down the hallway. The first door on the left led into a long, narrow cloakroom, with hooks on both sides for the kids to hang their coats and wooden shelves for them to put their stuff on. I walked into the cloakroom to hang up my coat. The first student to notice me and say hi to me and show me where things were was a boy named Mott, who was to be my friend throughout junior high, high school, and college.

Bobby Makes Friends with Mott

I started going over to Mott's house almost every day after school. We didn't usually invite anyone else over or go to anyone else's house; it was just me and Mott at Mott's house. Mott's mother was from Korea. Now she was living here in this little house on this little street in this little suburb of Cleveland. Mott's father met his mother while fighting in what is now North Korea. The story is that she had fifteen minutes to decide whether she wanted to stay in Korea with her family or leave for the US with her new Army boyfriend. She decided to leave with him. Six weeks later, she was living in Cleveland. Her parents never made it out of the North, living there until they died with no contact with the daughter to whom they had waved goodbye in 1952. Maybe if Truman had let MacArthur have his way in using one of the big bombs from the brave little atomic city where I had grown up, things would have turned out different over there. Instead MacArthur was fired and ended up joining Remington Rand, where he worked with Leslie Groves making computers.

Mott's mother never learned English. In fact, she couldn't even pronounce the "t" sound at the end of her own son Mott's name. She would call him: "Maah!! Maah!!" Mott was their oldest, conceived in Korea under circumstances easily imaginable. Mott's father, a proud man, did not even consider leaving his pregnant girlfriend in Korea. If he had, Mott would have died as a child if he was unlucky, or grown up starving in an orphanage in North Korea, despised as the half-breed offspring of the enemy.

Instead, he was sitting in his house on Rockway Avenue in the Cleveland suburb of Lakewood, playing Parker Brothers' new game called Risk with me, or Monopoly, also from Parker Brothers. We played a lot of board games. The pair

of social outcasts also went through a craps phase, as well as playing a lot of Yahtzee, the dice game that is basically a modern version of the Stick Game beloved of the Nez Perce. Yahtzee was a relatively new game from Milton Bradley, the same company that put out Chutes and Ladders, the game of rewards and punishments that was one of Bobby's childhood favorites. By 1991, when Parker Brothers was bought out by Hasbro, all the companies that made the games Bobby had loved during his youth had been brought together under one huge game company umbrella; Hasbro had already acquired Milton Bradley seven years earlier.

The house on Rockway was dark inside, since the windows were all covered with makeshift cloth curtains. Mott's mother was afraid of the North Koreans lurking outside. I never thought too much about this—I just imagined that there were all kinds of different mothers and she was one of them. Now, I cry when I think of the intensity of the pain and fear that left her huddled in her darkened house.

"Maah!! Maah!!" she would call from another room, asking if we wanted some tea.

The darkened house somehow felt just right to Mott and me as well. We'd sit in the corner on the floor, hovering over our Risk game or the Monopoly board, engrossed in the game and oblivious to the outside world. It was a comforting time. We were in total control of what we were doing; no one was going to laugh at us here. The dice rolled themselves over and over again, the pieces flew around the board, the play money whisked itself in and out of the money tray.

While the boys played the board game of Risk, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a real-life version of the game. It was in October 1962 that Kennedy stared down Khrushchev over the Cuban missiles, thanks in no small part to the hydrogen weapons with Richland's radioactive tritium gas at their core, now ensconced on the tips of Minuteman missiles concealed in those silos arrayed across the frozen northern prairies on which my grandparents had struggled to eke out an existence.

The North Koreans could not peer in through the shrouded windows. Our eyes adjusted to the dim light in the shadowy room. We became the cannon, or the shoe. Hundreds of hours of play had reduced the game for us to a kind of pantomime. We were completely in control of this little world of our own making, while at the same time at the mercy of each roll of the dice.

I rarely saw Mott's father. He had named Mott after his own father, Mott's grandfather. It was an honored family name. I could imagine him dreaming as a boy about the family he would build and the male child he would have and how

he would carry on the proud legacy of his grandfather by naming that child after him. Lying awake in bed at night, did he ponder what had become of his dream?

Weather-wise, the school year started off reasonably enough with September temperatures in the sixties, but then the weather grew inexorably colder; in midwinter below-zero temperatures were not uncommon. We bundled up in coats, scarves, and earmuffs. There was no doubt we were in Cleveland and not Richland, where even in the winter it had rarely gotten down to freezing.

Our family's move to Cleveland provided additional opportunities for bonding between my father and me. For instance, one weekend late that fall my father made the time to take me on a very special outing: we were going to do an experiment to compute the value of *g*, the earth's gravitational constant. For the nonphysicists among my readers, *g* basically determines how fast things speed up as they are falling. The experiment my father designed was to drop a rock or some other object, I don't remember, off the Brookpark Bridge, which spanned the "Valley," a deep ravine cutting through much of the west side of Cleveland; this was the ravine I had ridden my bike along on my trip to see our new house. The sides of the Valley were massive shale cliffs that in places dropped several hundred feet; at their bottom lay meadows and forests of sycamore and willow. One of those vertical cliffs was right at the south end of West Clifton Blvd., just half a long block from our new house, a sheer drop down to the gurgling Rocky River below. The Valley was part of a system of parks around Cleveland designed by the prolific nineteenth century landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who also designed a park centering on the dramatic rocky shelves and waterfalls on the Spokane River near the YMCA where Daddy had taken Mommy on dates in college, although that design, under the name Riverfront Park, would not be implemented until 1974.

We drove to the bridge, parked the car at one end, walked to the middle with our experimental equipment, which consisted of the weight and a stopwatch, dropped the brick or stone or whatever it was, and measured how long it took to hit the bottom. There is no record as to whether Major Charles William Sweeney experienced any similar subjective disruption in his perception of the flow of time as Fat Man was falling into the hole in the clouds over Nagasaki. That was all there was to the experiment, other than plugging the time we measured into a particular formula to yield *g*. Its value, in case you were interested, is $9.8 m/s^2$. I assume we came reasonably close. Physicists say that the gravitational constant may be changing its value subtly over time, depending on whether the universe is expanding or not, but our experiment did not have the necessary precision to determine that. In any case, sharing the mysteries of gravitational physics did no

more for the father-son relationship than the abortive fishing trip to Priest Rapids had.

The Valley cast its subconscious shadow over all those who lived around it, or me at least. It was a deep, lush gash in our physical and mental landscape.

That year, my mother wrote in the Christmas letter, "Robert is his usual busy self with a string of interests as long as your arm." She referred to me as "Robert" because it was around this time that I decided to start going by "Robert" instead of "Bobby," although people continued to call me Bobby and I'll use that name for the rest of this book.

As always, Mommy wrote the Christmas letter on the old black typewriter, now over twenty years old. In our new house on West Clifton, it rested in the little room at the back of the house we called the "study," on the desk looking out over the back yard. That room was nominally Daddy's—he had all his textbooks from college in there, including the German readers that were so old they were written in that old-fashioned German font. Also to be found lined up on his bookshelves were his diaries, numbering over a dozen now, one volume per year, which we kids furtively read. But whatever secrets my father had he entrusted none of them to his diaries:: day after day after day, each entry simply read, "Went to work today as usual," written in his unmistakable hand with his trademark black fountain pen.

Ten

Bobby Skips Again

The educational authorities once again decided that I was simply too brilliant to be held back by having to sit in the same classroom with a bunch of laggards. After I completed a project on space exploration that they found particularly precocious, they informed my parents that they "could not offer Bobby anything more" at McKinley. Or maybe they were just too lazy to try. Or maybe they thought I was already socially maladjusted enough that skipping me another grade couldn't cause any more harm. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills that I took that year scored me in the 99th percentile in every category but one, where I was in the 98th. I was officially a genius.

In any case, they decided to push me ahead another grade, but this time in a way that showed particularly bad judgment: I would spend half my day in sixth grade at McKinley Elementary, and the other half at Horace Mann Junior High down the street. Logistics were not a problem; it was just a ten-minute walk down West Clifton Blvd. between the two schools. The problem was that I inherited a netherworld. In my mother's words, I was a man without a country, a boy without a school. I was not in the sixth grade, nor was I in the seventh. It didn't really matter what the sixth graders I was leaving behind thought, but the seventh graders were the kids I was going to spend the next six years of school with and my introduction to them was as a snot-nosed kid who obviously thought he was smarter than they were.

This book is intended mainly to describe my years in elementary school, not junior high school, but I really have no choice but to describe my first year in junior high since it coincided with my final year in grade school.

My schedule involved attending seventh grade at Horace Mann in the morning and sixth grade at McKinley in the afternoon. I walked into my first junior high class—geography, with Mr. Black, up in the corner room on the second floor, perhaps?—early on that first day of school in September 1963 like an alien who had descended from another planet. I might as well have had a puddle of

urine around my feet like when I wet my pants at nursery school at four, judging from how the twenty-five pairs of seventh-grade eyes stared at me.

I was still commuting between the two schools when President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963. I was in music class, one of the classes I had down at McKinley. The principal came in the room and whispered something to our teacher. Shaken, she turned to the class and pronounced, "I have horrible news. Our President has been shot." Then they let us out of school. We kids spent the rest of the afternoon and evening watching the news. Kennedy's death really did not mean anything to me. But I thought I'd put it in here because everyone is supposed to remember where they were when it happened.

After half a year of the crazy split-grade situation, everyone finally saw the light and decided to move me permanently into the seventh grade at Horace Mann, although I was still basically an outcast there. At least in the fifth grade I had made Mott as a friend; now I was a full two years younger than my fellow students, had started for some reason to put on weight, wore funny clothes from Sears Roebuck, had the unmistakable look of a nerd, and with a few notable exceptions made no friends during the remainder of my time in junior high and high school.

You might think I would at least have made friends at church, since my parents dove into Mormon activity the minute they arrived in Cleveland, my father assuming some other leadership position I don't remember. Of course I met lots of nice kids there. But they just flashed into existence on church days and flashed out again just as quickly.

This year in the Christmas letter, Mommy wrote about me: "He still has strong mathematical and scientific interests, but also enjoys athletics, his stamp collection, and trombone lessons," which I had started as part of the seventh grade music program.

Bobby Gets His Testicle Fixed

One of my balls was missing! In other words, I had an undescended testicle (my left one); in medical terms, a "cryptorchid." Normally, testicles descend before birth from the abdomen, where they form right behind the kidneys, into the scrotum through a tube-like space called the inguinal canal, In about five percent of babies they don't, although they almost always descend before the baby reaches the age of one. I was ten, and one of my testicles was still undescended.

Why does it matter if you have an undescended testicle? First, it looks weird. More long-term, a testicle not located in the cooler environment of the scrotum may not produce as many sperm cells, or may not produce any at all.

The surgery to correct an undescended testicle is called "orchiopexy"—literally, "pulling down the testicle." Today doctors recommend that this surgery be performed early in life, say around three, but that is perhaps due to the recent finding that earlier intervention helps reduce the risk of testicular cancer to which undescended testicle patients are exposed—thirty to fifty times normal.

My surgery was scheduled to take place at the renowned Cleveland Clinic, over on the other side of town. I was checked into the pediatric unit, which was full of basically healthy, fun-loving kids between maybe five and twelve who were in for this that or the other operation. I was about the same age as my father had been when he went into the hospital in Spokane for the follow-up operation on his foot, and I too had exhilarating wheelchair races down the corridor. At the end of the hall was a large playroom with picture windows looking out on the sunny grounds of the hospital, filled with toys and children's books and televisions. In the hospital, we felt special and well cared for.

The operation was carried out the next day. They put me under general anesthesia, then made an incision in my groin where my undescended testicle was lodged. They found where the spermatic cord was located, and disconnected it from the surrounding tissue to maximize its length. Then they made another small cut right in my scrotum, which me being a ten-year-old was basically just a sort of dried up prune, to make a pouch for my newly descended testicle. Finally they pulled the testicle (carefully!) down into my new scrotal pouch, and stitched it in place. Everything went fine. Only a few hours later I was in the recovery room tenderly massaging this new little addition to my bodily geography.

But something didn't feel right to me. I still had the old stabbing pain in my left side. It was weird—not like a normal pain coming from some physical condition. It would just sit there and pulse a couple of times, then stop. Then it might happen again thirty seconds later, or two minutes later, or not at all. It wasn't really all that painful, although sometimes I did jump a bit when the pain hit. This wasn't something that had just started recently; actually, I had had it as long as I could remember. Anyway, I thought, I am in a hospital now after all, why not tell them about this and see where it goes? Just maybe, I might get to stay here in the hospital another couple of days.

The doctors did their tests and found no physical causes. Instead of just sending me home and telling me nothing was wrong, however, they developed the

hypothesis, literally, that it must be in my head. I wonder if it was something my parents told them?

The doctors' idea for finding what was wrong with my head was to give me an electroencephalogram—a brain wave scan, a graphical record of the electrical activity in my brain—the idea being to detect abnormal electrical misfiring, the "wires" in my brain getting "crossed," as it were.

An EEG can detect brain abnormalities causing confusion or dementia, but needless to say. I was not suffering from such symptoms. Nor I had I suffered a head injury recently, another case where an EEG is employed. And it was very unlikely that I had encephalitis, which an EEG could confirm with a showing of an abnormal increase or decrease in electrical activity.

The classical disease that can be detected with an EEG is epilepsy. Did the doctors in their white coats imagine my little stabbing pains were related to epilepsy? True, I was just at the age where a type of epilepsy called "absence" was common. This is a form of "generalized" (meaning whole-brain) epileptic seizure; its name refers to absence of conscious activity, mental absence. Some readers may know it better by the older term "petit mal." In an absence seizure, you stop what you're doing and have a blank look on your face for a few seconds—a kind of staring spell. Normally people around you just think you're daydreaming. I think I might indeed have been suffering from this "childhood absence epilepsy," since I did in fact regularly "tune out" for seconds at a time. The doctors would be able to detect this condition from a particular pattern of spikes and waves on the EEG printout.

A nurse in a crisp white uniform and old-fashioned nurse's cap attached about twenty little pads to my head. Microscopic voltages from the electrochemical activity of the dense dendritic foliage of millions of my neurons assembled themselves into alpha, beta, gamma, and theta waves, their frequencies and amplitudes read off my scalp by the pads and recorded in thin wavy black lines on the old 1960s-style machine.

The EEG did in fact reveal an abnormality in my brain. The doctor found the suspected synchronous and symmetric 3 Hz spike-and-wave brainwave patterns normally associated with epilepsy (as well as slow learning). He asked my mother if I tended to have vacant spells, and when she confirmed I did, proposed putting me on Dilantin, a standard epilepsy medicine which works by slowing down the impulses in the brain that cause seizures. The doctor never actually issued the prescription, though. Maybe he was worried about the effects of the medicine on someone who doesn't really have epilepsy: back-and-forth eye movements,

slurred speech, stumbling or staggering walk, imbalance, drowsiness, unconsciousness, nausea, vomiting, tremor, low blood pressure, and slow breathing.

Two years later, for reasons lost in time, another pediatrician ordered another EEG for me. This EEG was read by a doctor who indicated that some peaks were too high, some too low, and others too frequent, but no specific diagnosis was made and no treatment proposed. Children are supposed to grow out of the generalized absence epilepsy which I seem likely to have had, but it does not seem that I did; I still have those instantaneous space-outs.

This time, my parents decided to proceed with psychological counseling. They appear to have been concerned with some uncontrolled anger episodes, notably one where I hit a bratty little neighbor girl (completely justifiably, by the way). Was I still angry about being locked in a hospital ward when I was two with eczema that itched so badly I wanted to rip my own arms off? Or about having my bottles snatched away from me at the age of four? Or was my anger of more recent origin, possibly stemming from being rudely uprooted from the social context where I had spent the entire nine years of my life up to then, moved halfway across the country, and then after one year, at the age of ten, uprooted yet again and thrust into a hostile junior high school environment? Was I just angry that things never seemed to work out right for me? Were there genetic underpinnings of my anger? Could I have felt angry about always feeling angry?

I don't remember how my parents presented the idea of going to the psychologist to me but I can imagine it seeming like something fun to do at the time. All I remember about the actual sessions is the Rorschach test, where when shown a colorful splotch of ink, I identified it as two warring insects (which it did actually look like in a way); and the test where I was shown a picture of boy sitting quietly under a window and imagined that he was contemplating suicide (which seems odd because I am not really any more suicidal than the next guy).

We did not pursue therapy, for whatever reasons. The doctor did in fact conclude his treatment with a diagnosis of "anger."

The unassailably correct diagnosis would have been that I had the "human syndrome", that relentless and nearly pathological inner questioning about one's relationship to the world. That was one of my first conscious experiences when, as a toddler, I wandered around the outside of the Cottonwood house. Along with his diagnosis, it would have been nice if the doctor had given me the "good" news as well: everyone on earth is plagued by this same disease. If pressed for a fancy name for the affliction, the psychiatrist could have used the term "depersonalization disorder"—the feeling that things are not real, or that you're in a movie. Depersonalization is a "disease" in the "dissociative disorder" family,

which also includes dissociative identity disorder, popularly known as multiple personalities. Depersonalization is defined as feeling detached from your body and mental processes, as if you were watching it from outside or from within a dream; you feel like a robot. Unlike more serious dissociative or mental disorders, however, you never really lose contact with reality, although you may experience an associated phenomenon called "derealization," where things suddenly appear weird.

It's known that depersonalized people are usually highly intelligent, and have a tendency to over-intellectualize everything. It's unusual, but not unheard of, for it to strike a child. It's more common in girls, but occurs often in boys as well.

Smohalla's Dreamerism was a religion of depersonalization, with its intensely hypnotic dances and dreams. Many permissively reared Spock babies first became acquainted with depersonalization at the end of a bong in college. It turns out depersonalization comes in various forms, depending on the culture and the era.

My amateur diagnosis of my own case is simply that, as I experienced at the age of three in the side yard at 1513 Cottonwood, I have an innate ability to dissociate easily, which is, tautologically, one of the so-called "causes" that the medical manuals list for depersonalization. Another contributing factor is the influence of other relatives with dissociative symptoms.

I felt a dissociated relationship with Detroit Avenue, which ran east to west and intersected West Clifton just a dozen or so houses down from where we lived. (West Clifton started at the cliff descending abruptly into the Valley and ran north past our house, crossed Detroit Avenue, passed McKinley on the right, then proceeded under the railroad bridge to Horace Mann, finally dead-ending into Clifton Blvd.) Detroit was actually also US Route 20. a proud transcontinental artery in the pre-Interstate era. Originating in Boston's Back Bay, Route 20 proceeds west across Massachusetts and passes through Albany, New York; we'll encounter both these towns in future volumes of these memoirs. Streaking westward across New York, it briefly transects Pennsylvania before, hugging the southern shore of Lake Erie, it sweeps down into and across Cleveland. Judging from how the Detroit Avenue half a block down from our house looked, you would never have guessed that it had once been a major route across the country. On one corner was the barbershop where I'd go to get my hair cut for the kid's price of seventy-five cents, on another an old bowling alley and cocktail lounge, on the third and fourth a pair of churches.

Continuing on its way west, the Smohallan strip of something harder than wood or rock known as Route 20 crosses over the Valley on an old bridge, skips its blacktopped way across the rest of Ohio, then Illinois, Indiana, and finally

Iowa, crossing the Missouri River into Nebraska just a few miles south of Yankton, South Dakota, where my great-grandmother Hattie Dooley née Mobley had been born in 1858, and continues to a point just a few miles south of Iona, where Hattie died fifty-five years later, orphaning my grandmother. Entering Wyoming, Route 20 passes through Casper, where it briefly runs along the original Mormon trail, before angling northwest to cut through Yellowstone Park, emerging into Idaho, dipping down and then up again to Boise, eventually passing through mid-Oregon, just forty miles south of Jason Lee's doomed mission in Salem, Oregon, before finally arriving at the shores of the Pacific.

But for us that street was just "Detroit." We'd cross it every day on our way to and from school, or travel down it ten blocks, one five-thousandth of its length, to Lakewood Public Library, or another ten blocks to the town center of Lakewood. Whenever I was in downtown Lakewood, I would always visit Burroughs, the stationery store; I'd go in and look at the shelves filled with different size pads of graph paper, their fine, light blue lines aligned in perfect rectangularity, just waiting for some intricate, precise design to be drawn upon them. I'd look at the racks of notebooks and notebook paper, just like the ones I would have in my secret underground lab to record the results of my experiments. Sometimes we would walk downtown, but if we needed to get there quickly we'd take the bus; I still remember the time I found the discarded copy of Playboy in the very back seat of the bus, centerfold intact.

Bobby Fails Gym

During the first half of this year, my PE classes were back in the sixth grade at McKinley, but when I transferred completely into the seventh grade at Horace Mann I was dumped into the big boys' world of junior high PE, testosterone-filled locker rooms, and group showers. Everyone was required to wear an athletic supporter. The huge mesh jockstrap dwarfed my minuscule, wrinkled, prepubescent organ.

I didn't do well at PE. I was going through a chubby phase, and I had never really moved my body, done any sports, or exercised, nor had anyone else in my family. It just wasn't in our vocabulary of things to do. I was weak and flabby. One of the things we'd do in gym class was to climb the rope, but the best I could do was to grab the rope and jump off the ground and just hang there on the rope. I had my great-grandfather's red hair and ruddy complexion but not the upper-arm strength that before he died he had developed from hoisting his withered lower body on the rope hanging from the ceiling of the freezing shanty on the

bleak South Dakota prairie when he wanted to shift position in his bed. Nor were my legs much more use than his paralyzed limbs would have been in trying to grab the rope and push myself up it. The gym teacher didn't even try to give me any help; he probably thought I was a lost cause. We'd all be standing in lines in front of the three or four ropes they had hanging from the ceiling and when it was my time I'd go up and do my little hanging thing for a few seconds until the teacher would say "next!" and then I'd go over to the side and the next kid would go running up to the rope and scamper up to the top of the twenty-foot length in about five seconds.

We would also play dodge ball, but I wasn't much better at that. The way dodge ball works is that there are two sides, and you throw the ball at people on the other side; if the ball hits them, and they don't catch it, then they are out. Dodge ball requires, obviously, good throwing strength and accuracy and also good reflexes. My flabby little arm just didn't function well when it came to throwing any kind of ball; I had never had the basic throwing experience that most ten-year-olds have. And I couldn't catch the ball when it came flying at me so I'd either clumsily try to dodge the ball and get hit by it, or try to catch it and drop it.

After gym class, we would all tromp into the locker room to change back into our school clothes. One day while changing I noticed "David." He was completely naked, just out of the shower. He was resting in front of his locker after having toweled himself off, skin glistening. One foot was up on the bench that ran between the rows of lockers, fine tufts of blond hair on each of his toes, which were splayed out comfortably on the bench. His hands were resting on the knee of the leg he had up on the bench. His hair was blond, short and curly. He had a strangely attractive look on his face, as if he was in absolute control of this entire situation, but yet was entirely relaxed or even unconcerned about it. His penis was shaped less like "Fat Man," and more like "Mike," a perfect cylinder, not too long but longer than average, not too thick but thicker than average. Silky curls of blond pubic hair surrounded it at its root.

During the year I was ten years old, many other things happened. I continued to struggle to find the connection between them and myself. My experiences were pages in a book, but unlike Curious George the pages held no sense of inevitability, told no story. National Geographic maps in second grade had shown me where the world's capitals were; a Rand McNally map had shown me where we were on our trip across the country; a map of Cleveland had guided me on my bike ride up to our new house. But I was missing the map that would show me the topography of life.

Bobby Cries in Math Class

I felt so stupid—I was actually crying right there in math class. I tried to stop crying and I tried to hide it, but there was no denying the fact that I was in fact sitting right there at my desk in the front row, crying. My eighth-grade math teacher was Mr. Corina, pudgy and balding. We were learning algebra that year, in a room up on the second floor of Horace Mann, facing the street. The topic was the rational numbers—numbers resulting from dividing one integer by another. The teacher had drawn a line on the board, marked off 0 and 1 on the line, and proceeded to make the implausible assertion that there were an *infinite* number of rational numbers in between that 0 and that 1. This seemed so obviously wrong to me that I thought he must either be making a joke, or be very confused. It was obvious: a line of finite length could not have an infinite number of rational numbers or any other kinds of numbers on it. And I told the teacher as much.

Of course, he then proceeded to lay out a very simple proof that there were indeed an infinite number of rational numbers between zero and one. This is not a math textbook, but the proof proceeds by first assuming the converse, that there is just a finite number of rationals in that interval. Then take two adjacent points in that set of rationals. It turns out there's an easy way to find another rational number lying in between those two. And this process can be repeated ad infinitum. Voilà—infinite numbers of rationals in a finite length of a line.

And I don't know why I cried then. The obvious reason was that I was unhappy that my simplistic mathematical understanding had been proven wrong. Or maybe I was crying out of embarrassment—imagine, the supposed math genius didn't even understand the idea of infinity! Perhaps my tears sprang from amazement that even the shortest of line segments could harbor a wondrously large number of points. Or was I really crying from relief that I had suddenly found the answer to the question that three-year-old Bobby, sitting on the stoop back at 1513 Cottonwood, had posed to himself about the number of blades of grass that could crowd into the few feet from the porch down to the street?

On the way home up West Clifton, where I was in the eighth grade, there was a dip in the road where it dove under a railroad overpass. On the way home from school, sometimes I'd climb up the side of the overpass. I don't really know why I wanted to go up there. There was a sign saying Keep Out, but no fence. I'd sit down in the grass next to the tracks. The tracks were laid on these little stones, an inch in size or less, that had obviously been brought here when the railroad was

built. Every single one of the uncountably large number of little stones had been brought there, probably in some big truck when they were building the railroad. Where had the stones come from? Maybe they had been hacked out of a quarry, and then taken to a factory where they were broken down into that very regular size, and then put in a truck to be brought here? Such were the random thoughts that would fly through my head.

I don't really know why I used to go up there. Maybe it was something about the railroad tracks—I mean the actual iron rails. They just lay there, on top of the rough wooden ties nestled in those rocks, maintaining precisely the same distance from each other as far as the eye could see. They just sat there waiting for a train, the Lionel model train from nursery school exploded a thousand-fold in size, and then after the train with its endless string of freight cars clacked by on top of them and was gone the silver rails went back to lying there waiting for the next one, in perfect, casual alignment, resting on top of those darkish-brown ties on top of those little gray rocks.

I got up, walked back down the embankment to the street; walked homewards along West Clifton past the intersection with Sloane Ave. where there was a McDonald's, one of the original kind with real golden arches, where a hamburger cost fifteen cents, although even that was out of reach for me given my paltry weekly allowance of fifty cents; walked on down to Detroit and waited for the light; crossed and continued home, where I climbed the steps of the porch and went in the house. The warm afternoon sun, beaming down from the west into our living room through the little stained glass window in our front door, cast cool, concise, colored contours onto the couch and carpet.

Bobby, Sandy and Alyssa in 1956

About the Author

Bob Myers grew up in southeastern Washington State near the Hanford A-bomb plant where his father worked. His professional training is as a computer scientist, focusing on how computers relate to our language and our culture. Bob currently resides in West Hollywood, California, where he writes, translates and studies.

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