

Chapter 1

Ithaca



This house, in Ithaca, Michigan is the scene of my earliest memory. As I recall, we had just moved in and I was playing in the backyard with some ducks in a pond. Strange things are locked in when experienced by a four-year-old child.



My oldest sister, Mary, was born in this house. We were obviously renters, as



Mary can remember moving several times before we came back to this house after Dad had purchased it.

Rumor has it that I was not always a smiley child.

Here's a shot with my best friend during those years, Tom Haley.



We spent most of our time playing outside. There was no shortage of playmates.

This picture is Tom and myself holding his sister Winnie.

Our address was 236 S. Jefferson Ave. It was the corner house on a street with many, many kids. There were eight in our family when we moved in grandmother, Mary Ella, my two aunts, Yula and great Aunt Rose, my mother and father, myself, and my two sisters. The second floor of the house had two rooms and the attic, as well as a bathroom. I remember that my aunts cooked on a kerosene stove in one of the rooms. I also remember that, for a time, I slept in the attic. The downstairs parlor was converted into a bedroom for my two sisters.



This is an early picture of me with my sisters Mary and Dorothy.

Ithaca was a typical small town with typical small town sporting activities. My



sister Mary and neighbor Joanne Crawford enjoyed skiing. It was a very flat town with maybe a 10-foot hill on the outskirts. That is



probably why they were able to handle their seven foot skis.

We also had two tennis courts at the high school and Dottie was a player. Her uniform is quite casual.

I never really knew my sisters while growing up as they were five and seven and a half years older. I was the bratty kid brother.

My Parents



I can't find a formal full-length picture of mom and dad's wedding, so here is one that I like where they were wading in Lake Michigan at a place the family owned near Thompson. I remember we called it "Venuses". My niece Cathy just sent me a wedding photo of mom and dad. I have no idea who is behind them. (We just identified her as Aunt Nil).

Mom was the second of five girls in the family. There was also an older and younger brother. Dad met mom when he was a county agent in the upper Peninsula.

My older sister Mary was 11 years old when we moved back to this house. She remembers that we moved some five or six times during those 11 years. The moves were always in Ithaca and mostly up and down S. Jefferson St.



There were several families with kids my age on S. Jefferson St. As you can see from this birthday party when I was five

years old, a number of them were girls. I think the birthday party pictured above was given by Emily Chalker's mother. Notice my friend Tom with his early white golf slacks.

My Grandparents

My grandmother lived with us in our first house. She lived to be to 97. My grandfather Frank died much earlier, apparently from a stroke.

After a number of years, my grandmother and my two aunts purchased a house two doors up the street and moved there. They lived in the downstairs and rented out the upper floor. At



that point I moved out of the attic and into a bedroom on the second floor.

In retrospect, I have no idea where the money came from to purchase their house. Grandmother did not work, Rose was somewhat unbalanced, and Yula was a librarian at the town library. In any event, they did buy the house.

There was a Presbyterian Church on the same block where our house was located. I remember this because I went to preschool in the basement there. I have no idea why, but still remember being criticized for failing “nap.” I remember the large building blocks and the rowdy and noisy games.

The town was the county seat and had a courthouse square in a small downtown. It



had 2,500 inhabitants and to the best of my knowledge still has 2,500 inhabitants. It also had this very formal and imposing school, shown below. The first floor was for the lower grades, but junior high and high school were on the upper

floor. The school was about six blocks from our house and we obviously walked there.

The high school day was classic and simple. We had three classes in the morning from 9:00 to 12:00, a one-hour lunch, and three classes in the afternoon. The last hour from 3 to 4

was reserved for sports or study hall. It was a classic college preparatory school. I had four years of English, three years of math, one year of science, and three years of American history, typing, and world history. If you were not in college prep, the guys got one year of shop and the girls got one year of home economics.

Grade school was much simpler. We had a single teacher and the classes were all on the first floor. We had an hour break for lunch, as there was no cafeteria when we were in grade school.

Growing up in Ithaca for me is a series of memories which are not necessarily chronologically related. I remember walking to school from home to kindergarten, usually with a bunch of other kids. We only had one large street to cross, Main Street, and the total distance from home to school was six blocks. Each grade had about 25 students in the class

Grade school memories all blend together into a routine, studying, recess, studying, coming home.

I was 10 years old when World War II started. In the middle of the country, in a farm town, nothing much changed until suddenly, older brothers of some of my friends were being drafted into the Army. I remember everyone on our street started a victory garden, a large vegetable garden. There was an empty lot a block away which was a collection center for scrap metal and other things that the war effort might need. I remember taking a wagon load of wax records to the center. We also started buying stamps to fill our album and get enough to trade in for a war bond.

Soon after that we had meat and gasoline rationing. Business people got an extra ration of gasoline if they could prove they needed it. Since Dad was running the poultry hatchery and had to visit the farms and do testing on the hens, he got a larger ration. We ate very little red meat, I assume most of it was shipped to the military. We were never short of chickens, however, any of the hens on the farm who did not continue laying eggs, ended up as our dinner. My mother knew more ways to cook an old chicken than you can imagine. Let me insert a review of the poultry hatchery.

The Pressley Hatchery

The main equipment in the hatchery was the incubator where the eggs resided for several weeks. The incubator was an large square insulated box with doors on one side to insert the large trays holding the eggs and a lever on the end that tilted the trays and eggs from one side to the other every eight hours or so. After some time, the eggs were candled and the fertile ones were placed in hatching trays in the bottom of the incubator.

My father ran this as a one-man show. It was a seven-day week and a 12 hour day operation. He also had a very large garden behind the hatchery. A sign on the counter inside said "I am in the Garden." Someone wanting to buy something would go to the back window and call out for Perth, who would then come in and close the sale and then return to gardening if it was the gardening season.

I worked at the hatchery as a kid, first scraping the chicken droppings off the trays in the cages where the unsold chickens were kept until they were sold. I typically filled a garbage can during a Saturday's work. Later I candled eggs from the incubator to determine if a chick was developing and throw the infertile eggs into another garbage can. The infertile eggs were filled with a foul-smelling green liquid, so it was reasonably important to not break them. Again, there were several hundred infertile eggs among the several thousand fertile ones.

A later and somewhat unpleasant job was to cull the lame or sickly chickens from the rest during their first few days of life. This involved a quick breaking of their neck and throwing them in the garbage can. If we did not cull the sickly chickens, the rest of the chickens would peck them to death. Rural kids working with animals are much more familiar with life and death of their animals, so I thought nothing of the culling.

While I was away at Michigan State College, Dad closed the hatchery. The chickens grown in the factory farms in the south had reduced the price of chicken so much that no-one bothered to raise their own. While Dad managed to pay for college for three kids, I found out from his records after he died that he never made more than a few thousand dollars a year. In those days in the 1940s \$10,000 a year was upper middle class. We were not upper middle class. Dad was respected as a business owner. We just had minimal money.

After the hatchery closed Dad went to work in the insurance office of a good friend and later worked in the office of a grain elevator owned by an in-law. During all of this time, he was

also the village tax collector and both made out the tax bills for the entire town and collected the payments either at the hatchery or at our house. There were no computers then and the tax assessments were different for different properties. Dad had to total them up one by one. He did this on a mechanical adding machine and would work for hours almost every evening.

Dad rented out the hatchery building for a few years, but finally sold it to the County Road Department. They removed the building and used the land for their own expansion. While the war never got anywhere near Michigan, we had outlines of all the Japanese planes on our walls and were ready to identify them if they flew over Ithaca. There was a small oil



refinery in the neighboring town of Alma, and local gossip was that the Japanese would be sure to attack it.

Somehow, we in Ithaca thought we were the most important town in the world. We were sure during the war the Japanese would attack us first. Small towns can be very self-involved. And Ithaca was a small town.

The picture below shows three blocks of Center St. during a celebration of our town anniversary parade.



I graduated from junior high school just as the war ended and I remember the celebrations. The town burned a local small barn or garage and we all cheered and we all celebrated.

The Town of Ithaca

As I mentioned before, everyone in the grade school lived in Ithaca. The town had 2,500 inhabitants and a three-block-long Main St. It was reasonably prosperous, with good farmland surrounding the county seat and the courthouse. There was only one stoplight in town.

We had a five and dime, a movie theater, two lunch places, and two drugstores. There was a small grocery store and a clothing store. There was a bowling alley on the second floor above the grocery store and also an old unused opera house on the second floor above some offices. It was an absolutely standard Midwestern rural American town.

We went to the Ithaca theater every Saturday after having obtained 12 cents from our parents for the ticket. The theater was run by the son of the Gibbs Dime Store owners (next door to the theater), and he took a personal interest in making sure that the patrons (schoolchildren) were distributed among the seats and not causing any trouble. Don Gibbs ran a very well-controlled theater.

There was always some kind of a short serial program projected before the main show. It continued from week to week, and the main show changed each week. I remember the first Frankenstein matinee, I was afraid to leave the theater after watching the show.

My father's poultry hatchery was about one mile down Main Street on the outskirts of Ithaca and next to the County Road

Commission. He had a very large vegetable garden behind the hatchery. All of us helped out there occasionally, as it constituted a major fraction of our food.

Another indication of what kind of a town it was is the fact that dad ran the hatchery by himself. He came into the center of town for lunch every day and left the sign on the unlocked door that he would be back at 1 o'clock. He did work seven days a week because he was the only worker, the eggs had to be tended each day, and the chickens had to be fed. I helped out at the hatchery on weekends and during the summer. The chickens hatched in an incubator and then had to be moved to trays. Somehow that one-man hatchery made enough money to buy our house and send three kids to college at Michigan State.

My aunt Yula was the local librarian. Often, after school and on weekends, I would head off to the Thompson Home library and curl up with a good book. I remember they had a children's reading room which had the complete set of the Oz books. I also learned to repair books, as well as how to do



bookbinding at the library. My memory is that it was very large and very quiet. It had obviously been some wealthy person's home.

School Memories

Ithaca High School Yellowjackets Sports

In my freshman year I really hated the study hall period we had during the last hour of school and so I went out for whatever sport happened to be offered that season. In the fall, I played freshman football where I played the offensive as well as defensive ends. Since there were only 40 students in each class, making an athletic team was not too difficult. Up until the eighth grade, we only had 20-some students per class, but in high school, the students from the neighboring rural schools joined us and the class-size doubled.

One of my best friends in high school, Bob Brown, played quarterback on the football team. His idea of a good pass play was for me to take two steps across the line, turn and go directly opposite him. Then I would reach up and he would lob me a pass. Since I was tall, he thought this was a great idea. The first few times, I was tackled while stretching up to catch a pass. This made it seem like a less attractive idea to me and I protested his play-calling. My protests had no effect on him.

My football career was cut short when I was diagnosed with a partial retinal detachment in my right eye. This necessitated several months of wearing pinhole glasses and being involved



in no contact sports. I realize that I became used to people staring at me during this time. In any event, the doctor removed them in a few months and life went back to normal.

I discovered I really liked track as a sport. I was able to run a credible quarter mile in approximately 60 seconds, which placed me as third runner in a four-person mile relay team. I still remember the feeling when the muscles froze up as I rounded the last turn headed towards the finish line and realized other runners were whizzing past me. I was more successful in the high jump, where I practiced a form called a scissors jump. I liked that because you landed on your feet. Some of my classmates practiced a Western roll form of jump where they flattened out above the bar and dropped to the sandpit still flat out. This was long before there were any forms of inflated landing pads. I was also part of our tennis team.

In my senior year I achieved a jump of 5'6" and set the record for our high school. Thinking back, I realize that the majority of the boys in high school were hard-working farmers or relatively strong bulky people who were not good at jumping. The best thing I liked about being part of the high jump team rather than the running team was that we could sit by the high jump and contemplate when we might want to try another jump. None of this running wind sprints or endurance runs.

I was, however, a member of the mile relay team and ran the third segment quarter mile. I usually did okay until we came around the last curve and the lactic acid hit my leg muscles.

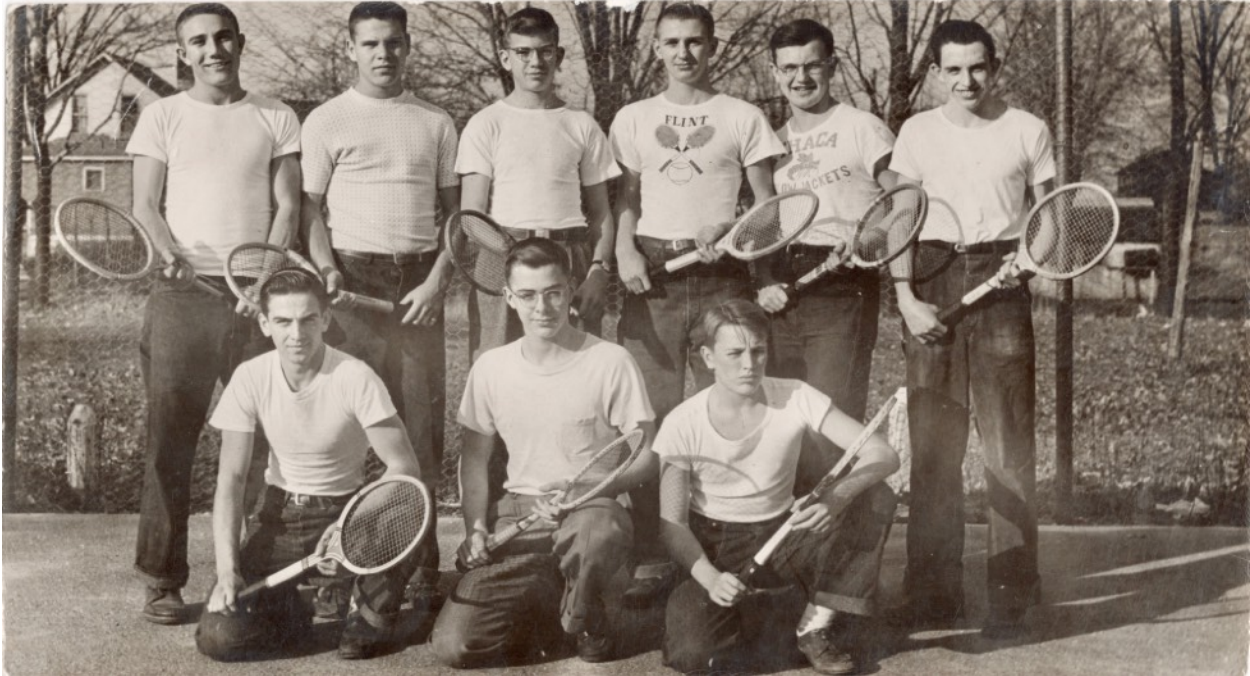
We also had a tennis team. The high school had a concrete court in the middle of the playground and we competed with some neighboring schools. The high school population reflected a Midwestern farm neighborhood and was totally white.

Back to Junior High School

As you can see from the report card we had a very standard set of classes in junior high school. We had arithmetic, English, history and science. There seems to have been something called citizenship which I obviously did not do well in. I also seem to have been absent a bit.

Science was by far the best class. Our teacher was Fred Kabbe. He had an advanced degree and obviously impressed me a lot. He told the class that his goal was to have a garden and be totally self-sufficient in the state of Michigan. He said that he failed because of the failure of his tobacco crop.

The science classroom had a large equipment room adjacent to the back of the classroom, where the experimental equipment was kept. There were Bunsen burners, beaker's and various things, along with something called a Windhurst machine. This machine was a large glass rotating disc with magnets along the edge which could be rotated by a hand crank and which generated a high-voltage but low-current



ITHACA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ITHACA, MICHIGAN

Report of Pressley, Robert

GRADE 5th Year 1945-1946

	First Semester				Second Semester			
	1	2	3	Final	1	2	3	Final
Days Absent.	1	4	6	11	8	5	4	
Times Tardy.		1		1	1	1	1	
Citizenship	B	B	B	B	B	B	C	
Arithmetic	A	B	A	A	B	A	A	A
English	A-	B+	A-	A	A	A	A	A
History	A-	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Hygiene								
Penmanship								
Reading								
Spelling								
Geography								
<u>Science</u>	A	A	B	A	A	A	A	A

CITIZENSHIP MARKS

A—Excellent
B—Good
C—Average
D—Cautioned
E—Unsatisfactory

MARKING SYSTEM

A—95 - 100
B—90 - 95
C—80 - 90
D—75 - 80
E—Failure
I—Incomplete

Jane Sawyer Teacher

electrical signal. One of us would crank the machine up while the others held the chain of hands to the doorknob. Our conspirator in the back of the class could then put one hand on the doorknob and create a major spark to anyone he touched. This kind of activity may well have contributed to my relatively low grades in citizenship. Actually, the science teaching was excellent and the excitement it generated for me probably set me on my course of studies in a future career.

High School

Sophomore Grades

As you can see from the report cards, the curriculum in high school was very basic. We had algebra, trigonometry and geometry in math, world history and American history, English and science. We also had typing, where I demonstrated that I was the fastest typist, but also made the most mistakes. As I mentioned before we had six class periods, three in the

ITHACA HIGH SCHOOL												
ITHACA, MICHIGAN												
No. <u>65</u>												
Name <u>Pressley, Bob</u> Grade <u>10</u> Year <u>1947-1948</u>												
FIRST SEMESTER						SECOND SEMESTER						
Hr.	Subject	1	2	3	Final	Hr.	Subject	1	2	3	Final	
1	<u>Am. Hist.</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A</u>	1	<u>Am. Hist.</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A</u>	
2	<u>Math</u>	<u>B₃</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>A₂</u>	<u>A</u>	2	<u>Am. Hist.</u>	<u>B₃</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>B₂</u>	
3	<u>Science</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>B₃</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>A</u>	3	<u>Science</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>A</u>	
4	<u>English</u>	<u>B₃</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>A</u>	4	<u>English</u>	<u>A₃</u>	<u>B₃</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>A</u>	
5						5	<u>g. H.</u>	<u>2</u>				
6						6		<u>2</u>				
Days Absent.....		<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>		Days Absent.....		<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>		
Citizenship.....						Citizenship.....						

CITIZENSHIP MARKS

- A—Excellent
- B—Good
- C—Average
- D—Cautioned
- E—Unsatisfactory

MARKING SYSTEM

- A—95 - 100
- B—90 - 95
- C—80 - 90
- D—75 - 80
- E—Failure
- I—Incomplete

Carl Anderson
PRINCIPAL

morning and three in the afternoon. It looks like I had reduced my academic schedule to typing, algebra and English. So much for my comments about how hard school was.

Junior High School Grades

My junior year was the year that I got the best grades so I am putting the report card here as proof.

I obviously had time for social activities. Besides the yearbook, I ran for president of the student council and was

ITHACA HIGH SCHOOL ITHACA, MICHIGAN											
No. 226											
Name Pressley, Robert					Grade 11 Year 1948-1949						
FIRST SEMESTER					SECOND SEMESTER						
Hr.	Subject	1	2	3	Final	Hr.	Subject	1	2	3	Final
1	English III	B+	A-	A	A	1	English III	A-	A-	A	A
2	Chemistry	A	A	A	A	2	Chemistry	A-	B+	B+	A-
3	Physics	A	B	B	F	3	Physics	A-	A-	A	A
4	Spoken English	A	A	A	A	4	Spoken English	A-	B+	A	A
5	Music	B	B	B	F	5	Music	B	B	B	F
6	Art					6	Art				
Days Absent		0		1 1/2		Days Absent		2 1/2		1	
Citizenship						Citizenship					

CITIZENSHIP MARKS

- 1—Excellent
- 2—Good
- 3—Average
- 4—Cautioned
- 5—Unsatisfactory

MARKING SYSTEM

- A—Excellent
- B—Good
- C—Average
- D—Poor
- E—Failure
- I—Incomplete

Carl H. Anderson PRINCIPAL

elected class president my senior year. I lost the student Council president race to a guy named Dale Beck who said that if he was elected, he would get a swimming pool for the school. I protested that that was impossible, but obviously the

student voters thought it was an excellent idea and elected Dale Beck. This was my first of two defeats in politics.

One of our classes was music. I had minimal talent but the boys in the chorus were told to stand in back and not make too much noise. The music teacher was a young lady who had just been hired and I think all of us had a crush on her. We also had a play of some kind that involved me doing the minuet.

The best part of music was when we did operettas such as the "HMS Pinafore" and the "Mikado." I still remember the lyrics. I have trouble remembering last week, but those lyrics are firmly in my brain. "We sail the ocean blue and our saucy ships a beauty we are sober men and attentive to our duty" and we all volunteered to work with the young female teacher.

My classmates were a relatively small local group. Tom Haley lived right across the street from me and we were together so much of the time that most people in town did not know who was Tom and who was me. Bob Brown lived down the street, his father ran the dental office. Tom Haley's father owned something called the "abstract office." I had no idea what it was but it certainly looked professional. Also Jack McCall his father ran the local newspaper, the Gratiot County Herald. Donald (duck) Goodwin's parents ran the drug and soda store, where I worked for a time behind the counter. Emily Chalker lived one block away and Bamberly Myers and Donald Westerlund both lived on our same street. This concentration of kids the same age on S. Jefferson St. usually made it the center of after school activities for our corner of town.

All of the houses had large yards with many mature trees. When the leaves fell in the fall, we raked them in the front along the road in a huge continuous pile that went the length of the entire block. Once the kids had gotten tired jumping in these leaves, they were all burnt in a huge, long smoky fire.

It was a very simple childhood. We knew nothing of drugs and thought cigarettes and beer were the worst things imaginable. Every Halloween we tipped over one particular man's outhouse. We were not immune to tragedies though, three members of our basketball team were killed in an auto accident and a girl up the street was killed when her horse threw her.

Dr. Brown's dental office was upstairs next to the old opera house. We were members of his "I Can Take It Club" and had our names on his chart. He gave a party every year for his Club members, show a movie, have refreshments, etc. Going to the dentist meant making little plaster of paris models of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (while waiting for the novocain to take effect).

Our student world still revolved around Ithaca and only rarely would we go to the neighboring towns, Alma and St. Louis, which were all of 8 miles away. St. Louis had a large indoor rollerskating rink, which was a hotspot of our high school entertainment. It was a chance for us to show off our skill in couples dancing, jumping, and participating in the men only racing. These were not the current outdoor skates with all the wheels in the line. The wheels were flexibly mounted so you could turn merely by shifting your weight. They also had

rubber pads on the front so that if you wanted to stop in a hurry you just turned around and jammed on the brakes by tipping forward.

There was so little auto traffic at night that we used to play touch football on Main Street by the light of the streetlights. There was also a local softball park on the outskirts of town where there was a regular league. One summer, I was the announcer for the games. It did not, however, lead to a professional announcing career, but was a lot of fun.

We played softball in our South Jefferson street. Home base was in front of Haley's house - and I don't know what we used for home plate. 1st base was the old hitching stone in front of Bam's house, 2nd base was an old rag permanently part of the street as it had been tarred over, 3rd base, the telephone pole in front of Haley's. We played "work up" and "flies take place." If you caught a fly you changed places with the batter.

Crystal Lake

Every summer we had a one-week family vacation at our next-door neighbor's cottage at a small nearby lake called Crystal Lake. They had a dock and a motorboat on the lake. The cottage had a large screened-in porch. I remember the families playing Categories in the screened-in porch in the evening. Dad drove us over and then went back to work.

Crystal Lake also had a carousel and a large abandoned rollerskating rink on the other end of the lake from the cottage. During my senior year in high school, the rollerskating rink



was refurbished into a dance hall called the Palladium. The local rumor was that it was done with gangster money from Detroit. In any event, it opened with a full band and a vocalist. It was initially a dime-a-dance place. Later it became one of the dance halls where



t h e
big touring bands played.

One Saturday night, my classmate Bob Brown and I decided this would be an inexpensive date, and drove our dates over to Crystal Lake. To our amazement, we were the only four

people at the dance hall. We each bought a string of 10 tickets for a dollar and our two couples ventured out on the dance floor. The place was so empty that the singer and bandleader were so bored that they cut in on me and my date, and so I danced a couple numbers with the singer. I think Bob and I each spent another dollar for more dances but I do not remember anyone else coming. The Palladium dance hall burned to the ground sometime in the 70s.

Crystal Lake also had a beautiful carousel. I remember riding it a couple times when we were visiting the Crawford's cottage. When the Crystal Lake community decided they could no longer support the carousel and they found out that someone wanted to take it away, they donated it to Michigan State. I recently discovered that my sister and a team of people at Michigan State recently spent many a day cleaning and restoring the historic horses. Michigan State was never willing to put up a building on campus to house the restored carousel. Its future remains in limbo. (or in storage)

Crystal Lake remains very much the same today as it was then a small, middle-class resort community.

The Upper Peninsula

As you can see on the map, Ithaca, (lower red dot) is at the very center of the lower Peninsula of Michigan. The Great Lakes were 100 miles away in any direction and the big cities were also 100 miles away. Our 29 mile trips to Crystal Lake in the summer were a big deal!



We did have relatives in the upper Peninsula, in a town called Manistique. The red dot at the top of the red line on the map marks its location. The line shows our trip. Mother had grown up with her family near there, in a town called Thompson, where her father operated a local meat market. We had many relatives there when I was growing up and one week every summer we would make the trip. Again, my father could not leave the hatchery so mother had to figure out how to take us.

On one of our earlier trips we went by passenger train from Ithaca to a town called Manistee on the Great Lakes. We then took a car ferry to Escanaba in the the upper Peninsula. My



sisters remember this trip well because I managed to burn



myself fairly badly on a steam radiator in the car ferry.

On our other trips we drove by car to Mackinac which was the northernmost city in Michigan. We then drove the car on a railroad car ferry which crossed the Straits of Mackinac. The

car ferry was named "Chief Wawatam." We bought loaves of bread and tossed pieces to the seagulls. Life was simple in those days, no electronic gadgets. Upon arriving at St. Ignace in the upper Peninsula, we got back in the car and drove off the car ferry to go 100 miles West to Manistique.



My Relatives

The upper peninsula, where my mother grew up, was still mainly woods and open land. In the 1890s the woods had been the main supplier of lumber for the lower peninsula industry. The business boomed until the late 1890s when there was a recession. My grandfather Hruska it is said, owned large tracts of land, but went nearly bankrupt in the recession. This is a picture of him with his employees at the combination grocery store and meat market that he ran. This was in the town of Thompson, where my mother grew up. There was a railroad line connecting Thompson to Manistique. My mother related that there was a

hand-car on the line and several of the kids would pump it from Thompson to Manistique and back. They obviously had to keep an eye out for real trains.

Grandpa later became a Probate Court Judge, which is the position I remember him in when we visited. We obviously made the trips when I was fairly young as you can see from this photo with my cousins, Jimmy and Joey Nelson, doing our own parade.

I have fond memories of grandpa piling us into a large car, driving around the woods, and pointing out the tracts of forest that he once owned. I remember him pointing with a large cigar that he invariably was smoking. Sometimes it was a truck, where we got to ride in the back. Grandpa and Grandma Hruska had a big old house in Manistique. They had a large family, two sons and five daughters, of whom Mom was the next-to-youngest.

I remember their house as large and friendly. The kitchen had a big wood-burning stove in the center, and I remember Grandma Hruska continuously adjusting the fire so that the temperature was right for whatever she was cooking. Our job was to get new kindling from the woodshed in the back of the house so that she had a constant wood supply.

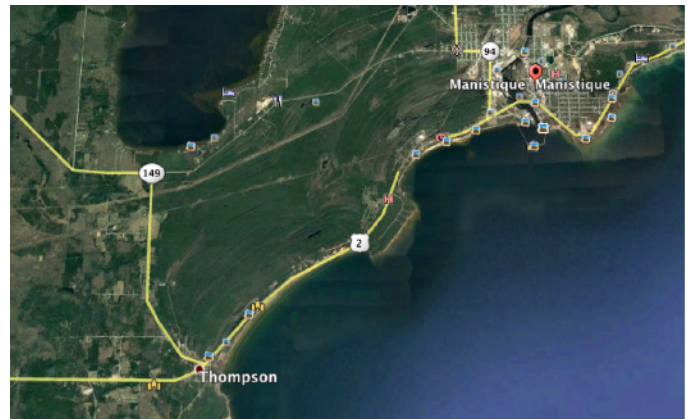
We had several relatives in the fishing business. Lake Michigan, in those days, had a very abundant fish called "whitefish," which were delicious. They were almost depleted in later years by a predator called the lamprey eel which latched onto the fish and killed them. Over the years these eels have been almost wiped out. Whitefish and other game

fish are back in the Great Lakes. I mention this as it was very impressive as a kid to go down to the docks and find the fishermen filling crate after crate of this 12- to 18-inch long fish. If the fish were above a certain size, they would not fit in the iced crates and we got to take them home for the evening meal.



One of my other memories is about our trips to pick blueberries. There were acres and acres of areas of the upper Peninsula where

there had been a forest fire in years past. One of the first plants to take advantage of this seem to be the blueberry bushes, as they were endlessly present throughout the scrub brush. We were warned that the ever-present bear population also loved the blueberries and that we should be somewhat cautious.



Grandpa would always take us on a tour to the natural wonders such as the Big Spring and the Keweenaw Peninsula. The Big Spring was a large kind of acre-size spring which was incredibly clear. There was a raft on one side with a rope running to the other side so that the tourists moved the raft across the spring by pulling on the rope. I was more excited by pulling on the rope than by viewing the fish in the depths of the spring.

A couple times we went for a drive to the Kewenaw Peninsula. This ride was all scenery, which we, as children, were not impressed by. I was more impressed by Grandpa thinking we wouldn't know any better and might like cigar smoke.

The family owned a piece of property on the shore of Lake Michigan near Thompson, which had a nice beach and a small stream running through it. We call the place Venuces. The family sold it after grandpa died. My cousins Sue and Mike Barnes helped me track it down on Google Earth and found that it had changed hands several times and had been converted into a trailer park. It is now named Miami Beach. It still has the small stream that was the delight of all of the kids when we were there. You can see from this blowup of the beach area that the stream is still there, but a few structures have been added. Mike Barnes reports that the area is up for sale, but I think I will stick with my memories.

As I remember the stream was small enough so that the boy cousins and I could find enough sand and dirt to dam it up for some time. We then celebrated when it broke through the dam. Swimming was fun, but I remember the lake as cold. On one trip to the beach, we almost lost a cousin. He had wandered away in the woods, and his disappearance resulted in a massive search by all available people. He was found before evening, but I remember we were all yelled at for not paying attention to where he was.

Since Dad did not drive us up, Grandpa Hruska arranged for us to get a ride home. We rode home in a pickup truck. My

sister Mary tells me that I was young enough so that I got to ride in the front with my mother and that the girls rode all the way back to Ithaca in the back of the pickup truck. Mary also remembers that they had a washtub full of frogs we captured and were bringing home for the fishpond. These annual trips to the upper peninsula stopped after I graduated from high school because I was working summers and mom was less interested in making the pilgrimage.

Back to High School Memories

There were a couple of events that stand out about the end of my senior year. One was the fact that as a Catholic, I did not go to the baccalaureate celebration because it was in a Protestant church. I assume my mother made that decision. I also remember that my mother borrowed a suit jacket from a family up the street for me to wear at my graduation. Tom and I parted as he went to Notre Dame and I went to MSC.

The second was our senior trip. It was two-day trip on a paddlewheel steamer that went up and down the Great Lakes. We rode a school bus to Detroit. The bus was left there and we rode on a commercial bus to Chicago. It was a long trip and I think we traveled all night, finally arriving at our Great Lakes ship. The paddle wheel ship went up Lake Michigan, stopped at Mackinaw Island, went on to Sault St. Marie where we got to see the Locks (don't think we went through them) then down Lake Huron to Detroit. Our school bus was there and took us home and the school trip was over. There were students from several towns in Michigan on the trip and I

somehow remember spending most of my time with a girl from Bay City.

A Few More Old Ithaca Financial Memories

Emily Chalker Moore, Verla Shaull, Bam Myers, Tom Haley, Coleen Cummings, Nancy Barden, Rosemary Hunsiker, and Bob Brown, were our local play-mates.



Tom Haley - Bob Pressley

In downtown Ithaca Sprague's drug store (next to the dime store) was also a restaurant and they served noon meals, 26 cents for a whole dinner, and Thursdays when the county board members were in town, they served a full chicken dinner for 31 cents! Goodwin's drug store was the high school hangout after school. (I worked at the soda fountain) It was a classic soda fountain with high stools and a few booths. A small sundae (one scoop ice cream with choc. sauce) was 6 cents. With nuts, 8 cents. A small milkshake (one scoop), also 8 cents.

Our class had a bad reputation with several trouble makers: Bob Brown, Jim King and others. Someone saw our 3rd grade teacher, possibly in her first year of teaching, sitting at her desk, head on her hands and crying. The first day of 5th grade, Bob Brown got up from his desk, walked across the room, and gave Jim King (I think) a friendly punch, then sat

down. To see what the teacher would do. In Mr. Kabbe's Advanced Algebra and Trig. class, he let us advance at our own speed and said he would give help as needed. I think there were only about 15 or less in the class. Tom Haley, Jack McCall, Harold Rose and I went off to college. Emily Chalker and Bam Myers also went on to college. Most of the graduates either stayed in Ithaca or their families owned farms in Gratiot County. A fair number are still there although at this 2019 printing date it's our 69th graduation anniversary.

As you can see Tom and I are still together at our high school graduation.

Now on to Michigan State!