

THE
LIFE HISTORY OF
WILLIAM PIUS SHANAHAN

PART 1
MAY 5TH, 1924 - FALL, 1942



PROMPTLY SPRING 1941

This is the condensed life history of William P. Shanahan. I was born on May 5, 1924 in Far Rockaway, New York, a small town on the south shore and western end of Long Island. My brothers told me I was born at home in a second floor cold water flat at 521 Central Avenue. (Everyone had ice cream to celebrate my birth.)

I was the seventh (and last) son of Timothy and Nellie (Manning) Shanahan, both of whom were immigrants from Ireland (County Limerick and County Galway, respectively.) Although I have been asked this many times I do not know if I was the seventh son of a seventh son, which supposedly would have made me especially lucky, according to Irish folklore. My brothers' names were John, James, William, Thomas, Joseph and Timothy, but only Thomas and Joseph survived the difficult times of the early 1900's. Timothy was run over and killed by a truck when he was about eight. It is interesting to note that I was the second William in the family, which was a fairly common practice in Irish families in those days. My middle initial, P. for Pius, was related to the fact that I was born close to the feast day (in May) of Pope Pius X.

My earliest memories are of my mother taking me to church (St. Mary Star of the Sea) which was just a half block from where we lived, and also to the beach, which was about 3/4 of a mile away.

The apartment on the other side of the second floor was occupied by the Moreo family, immigrants from Italy. The father, a rather small man, was in the roofing business, and the mother was a homemaker, of course. They had five children, two boys (Peter and Rocco) and three girls. Pete and "Rocky" were good friends of mine all my life. Mrs. Moreo would bake a lot of Italian bread and would sometimes give us a loaf, right out of the oven. What a treat!

Mr. Moreo made wine at certain times of the year, and the cellar of the house would have strange smells when the boxes of grapes were piled up against the walls, and then again, when the

grapes were being pressed to produce the juice which would become wine. I remember how damp the cellar always was; probably helpful to the final process. He would also make my mother and father a gift of several bottles of his wine when it had aged sufficiently. Great neighbors!

There were two stores on the ground floor underneath the two apartments but I don't remember what they sold. There was an empty lot next to our building, and than another house occupied by a shoemaker (cobbler) in one half of the ground floor and by a tailor in the other half. The tailor was Mr. Cittadino, and he and his wife had two children, Vincent and Margaret. Like the Moreos, they were good friends all our lives. In fact, Vinnie and I went to Navy boot camp together. (More on that in a later part of this chronicle.)

Another family, the Lavelles, lived in a very nice house behind the Cittadinos. I believe the father was in the soft drink (soda pop) business and they were pretty well off. Again, the four children, Frank, Ed, Tommy and Virginia, were all good friends of ours for many years. (There seems to be a pattern here, lasting friendships from close associations in early years of growth.)

When I was about six or seven, maybe it was 1931 or 1932, we moved to a different apartment at 1721 Lockwood Avenue, only about a block and a half away. Again, we occupied one half of the second floor, and the other half was occupied by a number of different families during the seven or eight years we were there. (When I say "we", I mean my father and mother, and my brothers, Tom and Joe.)

Our apartment wasn't very large (in fact, I don't know how the five of us fit into it), but it had a large uncovered outside porch, which sounds pretty nice, except we weren't into sunbathing in those days, so it was rather wasted. My mother kept pots of geraniums on it, and I can remember taking family snapshots out there from time to time.

The first family that lived next to us was a father, mother and three daughters. They were very nice, but the mother had some problem that involved hallucinations, or visions of people who weren't there, and we could frequently hear her at night talking to these imaginary people. It was pretty eerie sometimes for a little kid!

The next family was the Hannigans, father, mother, one son Steve, and four or five sisters. They were great people and Steve (a couple of years younger than I) became one of my closest friends. In fact, he was in my wedding party, and I was his best man a few years later.

The last family was a father, mother, son and daughter. The mother worked very hard in the catering business, but the father seemed to float in and out of the house. He apparently drank a little too much and, when he was in bad shape, he would sometimes knock his wife around. Very sad! But we remained very friendly with the mother and the kids for many years.

The house we lived in was owned by Patty Naughton, who did some construction work (bricklaying, etc.) and had done pretty well financially. He and his wife (I don't remember much about her) had a rather large family, most of whom were older than my brothers, but they all knew each other. The daughter, Mary, was very pretty. I think my brother Tom acted in a local play (theater) about the Civil war, and that he sang a song ("Mary Lou") to her. But they were not romantically involved.

Patty Naughton was our landlord, of course, and came to collect the rent each month. I recall him as a rather gruff individual but maybe that's because he was our landlord. (Sometimes the rent wasn't available when it was due, but it always got paid.) One amusing thing about Patty Naughton was the fact that he was a snuff user. Some people in those days apparently thought it was healthful for the sinuses to be cleared by an occasional sneeze, which could be triggered by

a pinch of snuff in each nostril.) Well, when Patty did his thing with his snuff, he could be heard for miles (a slight exaggeration, perhaps), and there would always be a series of loud sneezes, not just one or two.

Although the Naughtons owned the house we were living in, they had another house down the street. The ground floor of our building was occupied by the Simpson family (no relation to Bart), very nice people with two sons and two daughters, all of whom were very tall. The younger son, Emery , was a good friend of mine and we played basketball together after the war. He wasn't a great player, but he was very tall.

My mother was rather frail, physically, and after we moved to this apartment, she gradually seemed to lose her strength. I think she was in and out of the hospital several times. Since we never had a telephone in those days, we would receive news (usually bad) about her condition via a telegram. (In fact, the only time that we received good news via a telegram was when my brother won a new car in some raffle.) In January 1934, my mother died at the young age of 48. I was nine. We were notified by telegram from Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, New York.

During this difficult time we had strong family support from my mother's older sister, affectionately known by us as Aunt Maggie. She and her husband, Uncle Tom, had seven children, three boys and four girls, one of whom died when she was relatively young, sixteen or seventeen. They lived in Cedarhurst which was four or five miles to the north of Far Rockaway. The wake was at Dieringer's Funeral Home on Central Avenue, just a block away from our prior house. (My brothers and I were close friends of all of the seven Dieringer children, four sisters and three brothers.) My mother had another sister, Aunt Delia (and her husband, Uncle Louie) who lived in Brooklyn, New York, and I'm sure they and their children were also at the wake. As previously mentioned, I was nine (almost ten) at this time and already had a lot of friends

from school, and I remember that they chipped in and sent a bouquet of flowers to the funeral home. I remember a lot of them came with their parents to pay their respects. I don't recall any other details of my mother's funeral at St. Mary Star of the Sea Church.

We lived on Lockwood Avenue (subsequently changed to Brookhaven Avenue- why, I don't know, maybe it was an upgrade for the neighborhood) for about six or seven years, at least until 1938. I know we were still there when I graduated from St. Mary's Grammar School in June, 1938

Far Rockaway was a nice little town in those days. Our school was about two blocks away, an easy walk except for the occasional winters when we would have a two or three foot snowfall. Boys and girls were in separate classes at St. Mary's the whole time I attended. (This changed five or six years after I graduated.) The boys were taught by ladies in the first three grades; Miss Dwyer had 1A, 1B and 2A, and Mrs. Jones had 2B, 3A and 3B. From fourth grade on we had Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As far as I can recall, the girls had nuns, the Sisters of St. Joseph, for all eight grades.

Rule #1 (I don't remember Rule #2) was that the boys stayed on the boys' side of the school, and the girls on the girls' side. The building was u-shaped with a large open space between the two wings. We could see the girls' second story wing (where grades 6 and 8 were) from our side (and vice - versa), but it wasn't a good idea to get caught looking through the windows in that direction or one might get a rap on the skull from one of the Brothers. The Brothers were good teachers, but tough. They had to be because there were some "tough" students in the upper grades, who would challenge the authority of the Brothers. They seemed to have eyes in the back of their heads when they were writing on the blackboard. Brother Gregory (about the 5th grade) could wheel from facing the blackboard and accurately fire an eraser (about two inches

wide, five inches long and one inch thick) which usually hit some student who happened to be whispering or fooling around. Brother Berton, a tall slender man, had long bony fingers, and I can remember him wrapping them around my neck if he caught me (or anyone) talking while we were lined up to go to recess or church or whatever. The school yard had a mixed surface of dirt and small stones (which resulted in many scraped knees and elbows, or occasionally, a nose) and was divided into two sections. The girls had a small section on their side of the school, the boys had a similar section on their side, plus the entire back part of the yard which was larger than the other two sections combined. It doesn't sound fair but that's the way it was.

The activities in the boys' school yard were dominated by the older boys, of course. The two games I remember best were what we called "soccer" (really kick-ball) and punchball. Soccer was played during the cool weather with an inflated rubber ball about the size of today's soccer ball. When the ball was kicked by the biggest guys, such as George Strassel or Danny O'Brien (the older brother of Christine O'Brien whom I did not know existed at the time but whom I eventually married- lucky me!) if you were unfortunate enough to turn and block it, you would have a large red welt on your behind for the rest of the day. And when it was cold, it really hurt!

Punch ball was played with a tennis ball or a lively red Spaldings ball (pronounced "Spaldeen"). The rules were those of baseball (first base, etc.) but you hit the ball with the knuckles of your clenched fist. (It didn't hurt, honest) Some of the guys had the knack of hitting it on the point of their knuckles so that the ball would soar to the deepest part of the yard. We always chose up sides, so these guys were in big demand.

It seemed we were always outside (regardless of the weather) but I guess sometimes it got too wet and we would go inside to the "gym." Again, there were two separate gyms, boys and girls, with big vertical sliding doors in the walls which would always be closed if the girls were in their

gym. Do not think of "gym" in the modern context. These were two long and wide rooms and I do remember a couple of "Horses" or "Beams", whatever they're called, but no other equipment. The wooden floor in the boys' gym had apparently been damaged by water over the years (the gyms were at the lowest level of the school, sometimes called "the basement"), and, instead of being flat, was warped into an undulating surface. Skateboarders would have loved it!

One other comment on the weather of those days is in order. Aside from the occasional snowstorms previously mentioned I remember a hailstorm we had one spring that left about six inches of hail in the school yard. You sank into it when you walked and there was not much sports activity until it finally melted.

I always did well in my school work fortunately, but I can remember my father helping me with arithmetic problems some nights. He was a carpenter by trade and had apparently done some teaching in Ireland, so he could usually help me solve a particular problem. But there were some things he would do a little differently so that when I brought the solution to school the next day, the teacher would do a double take and even ask me exactly how I got the answer. I do remember he was always ready to help me. One other thought comes back about my father. When we went into a new grade and received new books, we had to put new paper covers on them. In later years, you could buy book covers in Woolworth's or Grant's (bargain stores of those days like Walmart or Target). But my father would always buy some brown wrapping paper, measure each book, and produce the best covered books in my class. (I can remember covering books for our own children but I don't think I was as good as my father.)

A special memory about grammar school, especially the early grades, was the June plays that each class put on at the end of the school year. We rehearsed for these several times a week starting in about February. I don't know who decided on which play for each class but one thing

was constant while I was at St. Mary's. Mrs. Jones, the third grade teacher, always played the piano for all the shows. I recall clearly our first grade show. (Remember, the classes were either all boys or all girls.) We sang "Alexander's Ragtime Band" by Irving Berlin, and everyone wore straw hats and we all waved them as we sang the final chorus. (The shows didn't last very long, obviously, because there were so many of them for the one night.)

Mrs. Jones' class always involved a march (sometimes the whole show was a march) with her pounding away at the piano right in front of the stage. I don't remember the songs from that class, however.

Our fourth or fifth grade show was unique. I guess you could call it the original version of "Annie". (Our title was "Little Orphan Annie!") Keep in mind this was an all-boy cast. Who would play the role of Little Orphan Annie? The lucky guy (?) turned out to be Joe O'Brien (first cousin of Christine, whom I have already mentioned), decked out in a dress with a shocking red wig. Wow! We were before our time with a female impersonator! The show consisted mainly of numerous choruses of the song, "Little Orphan Annie", a number I have personally sung by popular request, and made famous in all corners of the U.S. ('Who's the little chatterbox, the one with pretty auburn locks, Whom do you see? It's Little Orphan Annie"? Bright eyes, cheeks a rosy glow, there's a store of healthiness handy, Mite size, always on the go, if you want to know! Arf, says Sandy Always wears a sunny smile, now wouldn't it be worth your while, If you could be, like Little Orphan Annie!"')

I can't remember our sixth and seventh grade shows but the theme of the eighth grade was "Catholic Action." We were all dressed up in something like a toga, with wooden swords, (like crosses) and, besides marching (of course), we sang the following stirring aria:

"An army of youth flying the standards of truth,

We're fighting for Christ, our Lord!

Heads lifted high, Catholic Action our cry,

And the cross our only sword!

On earth's battlefield, never a vantage we yield

As dauntlessly on we sing!

Comrades true, dare and do, 'neath the Queen's white and blue,

For our flag, for our faith, for Christ the King!

One nice aspect of the June shows was that we had a dress rehearsal the afternoon before the real show on Friday night, and we got to see all the other classes' shows, including the girls' (I think).

Since St. Mary's was a Catholic school, Religion was a very important subject, and we all (well, most of us) pretty well knew the "Penny Catechism" by heart. "Who made you?" "God made me!" "Why did God make you?" "God made me to know him, to love him and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in the next." (Still makes sense to me.) The questions and answers got a little harder, of course, as we advanced to the higher grades. First Holy Communion and Confirmation were very special occasions, since they only happened once in each of our lives. Every year there would be processions in church during Holy Week, and in our early years the boys would wear their white Holy Communion suits (until they out grew them and then the next generation of communicants would take over, I guess). I believe we also carried white calla-lillies clenched tightly between our palms. The girls all wore white dresses, but I don't remember whether they carried anything.

Ours were the days of the "Three Rs." of course 'Reading and 'Riting and 'Rithmetic, taught to the tune of a hickory stick". Although we didn't encounter hickory sticks that I can recall, in

the early grades a crack on an open palm with a long wooden ruler was not uncommon, and helped us to mend our ways.

We had several subjects, such as Art and Music, which were only taught once a week. Although our art teacher, Miss Parotti, was very nice, I never was especially artistically inclined, so this was not one of my better subjects. I can say the same for Music, which was taught by the Choir Master, Professor "Pop" Nielsen. (We called him Mr. Nielsen, of course, but "Pop" was how we referred to him in our private conversations). I did learn the technicalities of music, i.e., lines (E,G,B,D,F) and spaces (F,A,C,E), eighth notes to whole notes, clefs, etc., but I never could put them together and read (or sing) music from the written scores. I did have a good ear for music, however, and a good voice in my younger days, which eventually resulted in my becoming a member of the boys' choir, under the tutelage of Professor Nielsen. I believe I was in the fourth grade when I joined the choir. I think you could stay in the choir through eighth grade, or until your voice changed.

Being in the choir was fun, even though it required a lot of commitments. We practiced several times a week, sometimes getting out of regular school classes for an hour or two, and also sometimes had practice on Friday night, which was a good excuse to get out of the house. Fortunately, most of us usually managed to stay out of trouble on the way to or from Friday night practice. (No one lived too far away from the church). We usually sang at 10:30 A.M. High Mass on Sundays. The Mass was said in Latin in those days, so we all learned a lot of Latin words (although we didn't speak it, of course.) Our busiest time of the year was Holy Week. The liturgical activities were all held in the morning (not the evening, as now), so Holy Thursday started with a Solemn Mass (three priests, not just one) at about 8:00 A.M. At the Gloria, all the bells on the altar and in the church steeple would be rung and then there would be no more bells until Holy Saturday. Instead, a wooden clapper would be used when the host and

the chalice were raised by the priest at the Elevation. It was a strange sound indeed! In addition, the organ would not be played after the Gloria so the choir had to go it alone "a capella". But "Pop" Nielsen always had us well prepared. The Holy Thursday service ended with a big procession to move the Holy Eucharist to a temporary location and the choir was part of the procession, of course. On Good Friday, the Mass of the Presanctified was celebrated, again at 8:00 A.M.

One part of this service involved the reading of many petitions for many things, e.g., the church, the clergy, the people, the world, etc. Between each petition we would sing in Latin "Flectamus genua" ("let us kneel", which everyone in the church did), followed by "Levate" ("let us stand"), which everyone also did. Many years later, when the Mass was now being said in English, we were with friends of ours from Wichita, Kansas at a Good Friday service. After a series of kneels and stands, their son, Anthony (about twelve) piped up. "Why can't they make up their mind?" A perfectly logical question, if not liturgically sound at the time. The Three Hours Agony service on Good Friday was quite an experience for the younger generation (and probably the older ones, as well.), starting at noon and ending at three. I believe we sang, in Latin, the Seven Last Words of Jesus on the Cross (not single words but short sentences- "I thirst", "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit") and a priest would preach on each such theme. The priest was frequently from another parish, and was often very inspiring. But it was a long afternoon. I remember one Good Friday (I was probably in fifth or sixth grade) when, after participating in the morning service from 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. or so, I had to get to a baseball game with my team. (Remember, Far Rockaway was a small town so it didn't take long to walk, or run, to any part of it.) As soon as the game was over (don't ask me who won- I have no idea), I raced home, washed my hands and face, combed my hair, dashed back to the church in time to put on my choir

outfit and march into church with the priest and the rest of the assembly. (Baseball was important, even in those days!)

Holy Saturday was an important part of Holy Week also, because Lent officially ended at 12:00 Noon in those days. This meant that at twelve o'clock whatever you had given up for Lent (usually candy, or in later years, beer perhaps) became available again. So the choir sang the Holy Saturday Mass with a lot of enthusiasm, and anticipation. At the Gloria, the silent bells returned, of course, and the church was full of glorious singing and ringing. I think the Holy Saturday liturgy included the chanting of the Litany of the Saints, in Latin , of course. One of the frequent responses in the litany was "Libera nos domine" (Lord, deliver us) which we occasionally translated and sang as "Meet me on a stormy day", which frequently was followed by a petition which sounded suspiciously like "Bring an umb-a-rella." (I don't remember the Latin but honest, that is what it sounded like.) At any rate, Lent eventually ended each year and we sang like angels every Easter Sunday.

However, nature was taking its course, as it usually does, and at the beginning of the eighth grade I (and several others, including Danny O'Brien, the older brother of sweet Christine, who was probably in second grade about then) were "retired" from the choir due to forces beyond our control - voice change!

However, since I had gotten so used to wearing a cassock and surplus, I promptly applied for a position with the Altar Boy Society of St. Mary's, and, after a short period, was accepted. (One bonus was the altar boys didn't have to wear a starched round collar like the choir boys.) The Altar Boy Society required new commitments, of course, like serving Mass at 7:00 A.M. for a week at a time (6:30 A.M. on First Fridays), but it was an enjoyable experience which I put to use many times over the years, (including serving Mass on a ship at sea during my Navy career.)

Once a year the choir boys and altar boys were treated to a free trip, such as the circus at Madison Square Garden. We traveled in one or two buses and had a great time, on the bus as well as at the circus. One time a bus broke down on the way home and the chaperone had to take us to a movie while the bus was being temporarily repaired. What a day!

We had sports for all seasons, of course. Spring (which began as soon as the snow was gone) and summer to some extent was for baseball. "The National Pastime"- no doubt about it! There were no Little Leagues then. We played baseball on any kind of a field that was large enough for four bases and a little outfield. Actually, we played on fields, called "lots". A lot was an open area of either dirt, or grass which might be growing kind of high until we wore it down by running on it. There was no pitching mound, just a spot between first and third, and home plate and second, where the pitcher stood. The bases were made of whatever was handy, a piece of cardboard or a newspaper with some stones to hold it down, or, as we became more sophisticated, a potato sack filled with dirt (not too far from the real thing). Umpires-who needed them? The backstop was whatever pieces of debris were available on the lot- a wooden door from a house, propped up by some logs or large rocks, was the best, but we always found something to keep the ball from going past the catcher and delaying the game. A baseball rarely had its original cover, or, if it did, the seams were broken, and it was only used until the loose flaps of the cover became too annoying to play with. What we usually used were "Taped" balls. After we removed the remnants of the original cover from a ball, someone would tape it up with a roll of black friction tape. (I do remember someone using white surgical adhesive tape once in a while, but this was not the norm.) Taping the ball was an art! If it wasn't done correctly, it usually ended up lopsided (egg-shaped, perhaps), or sometimes almost square. Although my

father knew nothing about baseball (never played in Ireland), he was the best taper we had. And it seemed he always had a roll of black tape handy. When properly taped, such a ball lasted a long time. (When a ball came to the end of its career, it was always fun to unwind all the string that it was made of and to find what was in its core. At the moment, I can't remember what we found. Was it cork? Was it hard rubber? Whatever we found will remain hidden in the archives of our game of "lot" baseball.

The nearest lot to our house on Lockwood Avenue was called "The Chelsea," which was the name of an old abandoned hotel that still occupied part of the lot, on the first base side of the field. After a long afternoon of baseball we sometimes would climb through the open windows on the ground floor of "The Chelsea" but there wasn't much there, mainly a large open area that was probably the dining room of the hotel. My most exciting memory about the building itself was when it burned down one evening. And I missed the fire! I had gone home early after school and wasn't feeling well and I apparently fell asleep. Although the building was only a few blocks away, I never woke up to hear the fire engines or to witness what in those days was always considered an exciting event- the burning of a deserted house! Fortunately, such things didn't happen very often, but they were conversation pieces when they did. There was another old deserted hotel on the third base side of the field, called "The Belvedere", but it never burned down, and was eventually torn down after we had moved away.

As we moved into the upper grades of grammar school, we did play on fields, rather than "lots", but they were mainly dirt; no grass, with lots of pebbles for bad bounces. Two of these were called the "Big YM" and the "Little YM", ("YM" presumably being an abbreviation for YMCA, but there were no structures or signs on the fields indicating that anyone owned or sponsored the "fields".) The big YM. was a little larger than the "Little YM", but just as bad physically. We also played on a field called "The Colony Club", which was dirt with patches of

sand scattered throughout the infield and outfield. (This field was near the beach, hence the sand.) Playing the infield was hazardous to say the least (I usually played short or third, but obviously, I survived). We also played other teams in different part of Far Rockaway, i.e., we "traveled" (walked) to some of our games against the Jr. Menorah, a Jewish team in the eastern part of town near the public golf course, and also to Bayswater , on the western side of town, near Jamaica Bay. Joe O'Brien, Christine's cousin (see "Little Orphan Annie"), played shortstop for the Bayswater team- he was pretty good. We also played a team from Edgemere, which was the next small town to the west of Far Rockaway. Their field was on 32nd St., and the Colony Club field was on 20th St., so it was about a mile walk from Far Rockaway to Edgemere. Everybody usually showed up on time for the games so the traveling was obviously not a problem.

I played for a lot of different teams while I was in grammar school. Although I was small, I was pretty good, so I usually ended up playing with guys a little older than I was. I remember playing for the Jr. Pirates, the Dodgers, the Clovers and the Red Sox. My experience with the Red Sox was interesting. One season, for some reason (probably more money?), I switched to the Red Sox from one of the other teams which had a lot of my close friends on it. The Red Sox had at one time been known as the "AlleyRats" when we lived on Central Avenue. I knew all of these guys very well too. Nicknames were in vogue then and some of my new team mates were Moe and Willie Daly, "Hooksie" Ryan, "Brother" and "Sonny" Cassesse. The Red Sox were a pretty good team and we had some hotly contested games with my former teams. Eventually, most of us who were close in age, ended up on the same team when we went into high school. That team was called the "Panthers," and included most of my closest friends.

Summer meant no school, probably some kind of a job,(but not until we started high school) and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean whenever we had a chance, which meant every day that it didn't rain. All three of the main streets in Far Rockaway (20th, 19th and 17th) ran down to the Atlantic Ocean. Actually there was a tidal body of water called Reynolds Channel at the foot of these three streets; this separated Far Rockaway from Atlantic Beach, which was about fifty yards across the channel. When the tide was coming in (high tide) or going out (low tide), there was a strong current in the channels. Some of the better swimmers used to occasionally swim across the channel, but I was not one of them. There were three private "clubs" (I use the term advisedly) along the beach front where the channel ran. But the beach to the west was all public, beautiful white sand, with huge white capped waves breaking on the shore when the tide was coming in. The best waves were about a half mile to the west of 20th St. where the neighboring town of Edgemere commenced. We body-surfed (this was before canvas or plastic mattresses came into vogue), and somehow always survived those times when we underestimated where a wave was going to break and ended up topsy-turvy in a sea of white foam. There were sometimes those moments when you would think, "Am I ever going to come up" from the bottom of the wave. But that was part of the fun of the beach. After a few weeks of the beach activity we were all pretty tan (usually after enduring at least one or two pretty painful sunburns) Sun screen? Never heard of it Are we paying the price for not having it? Perhaps some more than others; skin cancer is fairly common in the older set, I believe.

Although I indicated earlier that we probably didn't start working in the summers until we were in high school, I think we may have been in the work force as early as age twelve, if this was the age when we were required to get "working papers." (It was either twelve or fourteen, but

I'm not sure). New York State was probably a leader in being protective of its young citizens so before we could be hired by anyone we had to obtain our "working papers." This involved taking the bus to Jamaica (in Queens County, of course, not to "where the rum comes from"), finding the New York State Employment office on Archer Avenue, filling out numerous forms and then standing on line while someone processed the paper work and ultimately gave us our formal "working papers". With the legal requirements out of the way, we were now eligible for our first job caddying at the Inwood Country Club (a golf course). This club was the closest one to Far Rockaway where you could actually make some money, but it wasn't really close in the sense of distance; it was a long walk from where we lived to the country club. And, of course, a caddie's life consists of constant plodding in search of a small white golf ball which was not always directed down the middle of a beautiful fairway, but more frequently into the rough, or into bushes, shrubs, flower beds, clumps of trees and various other nondescript areas where the ball might hide. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself. Before we were selected to pick up a huge leather golf bag containing innumerable clubs, we had to report to the caddie yard. (I never saw the movie, "CaddyShack," but if you have I assume it might give you some idea of what was involved. I also recall an old movie called "The Caddy", starring W.C. Fields, which was pretty funny.) You had to sign in at the gate so the Caddy master knew you were there (and at what time you had arrived). Then you went into the enclosed caddie yard which was about 30 feet by 30 feet, with a bunch of wooden benches along each fence. It was not exactly a "friendly" environment, since we were from Far Rockaway and the club was in Inwood, and we were looked upon as outsiders. In addition, we always felt, rightly or wrongly, that the Caddy master gave preference to the local boys in assigning them to carry a bag. I think the waiting in the caddie

yard prepared us all for life in the service of Uncle Sam, , where we would all end up in a few years, standing in one line or another, waiting to go somewhere or to get something. We were happy when we were picked to carry a bag, and always optimistic that we would get one of the good tippers. We were paid \$1.00 to carry one bag for eighteen holes, and \$1.70 to carry two bags. The bigger guys usually got the "Doubles" (two bags) - I was not one of them. But on very busy weekends I did occasionally get a "double". And remember, after walking the course, which on a straight line would be over 6000 feet (more than a mile) but which was more likely to veer in one direction and then another, we still had to walk (crawl?) back home to Far Rockaway. I guess we were pretty rugged! In addition we didn't get paid cash but received a stub which indicated whether we carried one or two bags for nine or eighteen holes. Pay day was on Friday so we had to walk to Inwood every Friday to pick up our money, which was pretty exciting as I recall, coming home with two or three or five dollars in cash. As we got older, we started caddying at Lawrence Country Club and Woodmere Country Club, which were also a good distance from Far Rockaway but which had somewhat friendlier environments. The courses were not as long as at Inwood, either. On Monday, the courses were closed and the caddies were allowed to play on them for free; some of my friends became pretty good players, but I never really got interested in the game.

Back to sports! The fall was the time for football, which was the most popular sport in Far Rockaway in those days. There were teams at all age levels, from the Pirates (the oldest) to the Braves (my brothers Tom and Joe played on this team) to the Shamrocks and then to various descending age groups in lower high school and upper grammar school. I played football on most of the same teams that I played baseball on. I'll talk a little more about football when I get to my high school years.

We also played roller skate hockey on the streets before the winter snows came. There were no technical aspects to our game, such as the "blue line", the "red line," the "neutral zone". We used chalk to draw an open-ended box as goal at each end of the street where we were playing. Our favorite "rink" was Beach 19th St., right in front of St. Mary's School, because the surface was very smooth, and the car (and bus) traffic wasn't too heavy. We also occasionally played on Central Avenue. (Beach 20th St.) near where it intersected with Brookhaven Avenue. The surface was also smooth and the street was wider, but the traffic was worse. As a "puck", we used square pieces of wood which we could always get from the lumber yard. Our "puck" was about four inches square and about 3/4 of an inch thick. The longer we used one, the rounder the corners became and the faster it flew when it was hit. This was a fast game and was really one of our favorite sports, when the weather was right (and the traffic was light). One of the hazards of the game was the potential loss of our "puck" in the storm (sewer) drains that were at the corners of some of the streets. Although the wooden puck would float in the water, it wasn't easy to retrieve. We usually tried to have a spare puck handy.

News of the world (mainly sports, of course) came to us via the radio or the newspapers. There were kids' programs on the radio from five to six as I recall, and, believe it or not, they only ran for fifteen minutes; "Little Orphan Annie", "Tom Mix" (cowboys), "Mandrake the Magician", "Omar the Mystic", were some of them. I don't think they overdid the advertising since the total program time was so short, but most of them had singing commercials. (You've already heard "Little Orphan Annie.") One of the best was to the tune of "When It's Round-up time in Texas" and went as follows:

"When it's Ralston time at breakfast, then it surely is a treat

To have some rich full flavored Ralston made from golden western wheat!

Wrangler says it is delicious

And you'll find before you're through

With a lot of cream, boy, it sure tastes keen,

And it's tops for breakfast too!

Ask your mother in the morning

To serve you up a steaming plate

It's a grand hot whole-wheat cereal

And the cowboys think it's great!

Once you try it, you'll say buy it!

Tom Mix says it's best to eat!

Jane and Jimmy too say it's good for you-

Ralston Cereal can't be beat!

Frankly, Ralston cereal wasn't a favorite of mine, but I always enjoyed the stories on the radio. "Little Orphan Annie" was sponsored by Ovaltine, which is still advertising today. When I was young, I didn't like milk, and Ovaltine made milk taste good, and was not only acceptable, but enjoyable. Some of the shows were on Monday through Friday, some only Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but you learned the singing commercials pretty quickly. There were other adventure programs on in the evening, usually for a half hour, such as "The Shadow" "The Green Hornet", "The Long Ranger"(some great background music). I usually did my homework while I listened to the radio; this seemed to work out ok. (Radio was less distracting than television, I would say). Also in the evening there were dramas ("Grand Central Station"), musicals (Manhattan Merry-go-round"), comedies (Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, Fred Allen). We had it all! Radio made us use our imaginations just like reading does.

My two brothers were always reading, so I followed their example. They had collections of various series, such as Frank and Dick Merriwell and their sports exploits at Yale, Tom Swift, Don Sturdy, Bomba the Jungle Boy, Tarzan, The Boy Allies (on land and sea). I read them all! Tom Sawyer, Treasure Island, Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea- it was great fun! As I got older I began to use the library, of course. Mystery and detective stories, tales of exploration- they were all fascinating and enjoyable!

On Saturdays we usually went to the movies. There were originally two established theaters in Far Rockaway, the Strand and the Columbia, which were less than a block apart on Central Avenue, just north of St. Mary's Church. They both were pretty large, with wide formal stages, which had apparently been put to good use in the days of old fashioned vaudeville. I can vaguely recall an occasional stage show being presented at the Strand specifically- a magician and the associated paraphernalia comes to mind but no real detail. In the mid-1930's, the country was still in the midst of "the Great Depression" and they were probably struggling to make money, like everyone else. My recollection is that both the Strand and the Columbia charged a quarter for kids, which entitled the ticket purchaser to two movies ("a double feature"), cartoon, Fox Movietone News, sometimes the "March of Time" (a documentary type short subject) and, of course, previews of coming attractions. This usually provided a full afternoon's entertainment, depending on the movies, of course. We tried to avoid the mushy romantic ones, but didn't always have a choice. However, at least one of the two had to be an action movie on some subject-the Wild West, pirates, cops and robbers.

Sometime in the thirties a new movie house opened near the library. It was called "The Gem" and probably was the beginning of a movement in the direction of lower operating costs, and also the beginning of the end for the old vaudeville type theaters like the Strand and Columbia.

Its big draw was the price of admission - ten cents! This was the magic number that attracted us all to "The Gem," even though it was small, had no lobby to speak of like its older competitors, and only a small balcony area to supplement the regular orchestra area. Although we would still occasionally go to the other movie houses, usually because some spectacular movie was playing there, "The Gem" was the place to be at 12:00 noon on a Saturday. In addition to the double features, etc., they also introduced what we called "serials" or "chapters." Each week there would be one chapter of a series of twelve chapters on all sorts of fascinating subjects, e.g., "Buck Rogers in the 25th Century," "Flash Gordon" (who came along after Buck Rogers) "Hop-along Cassidy and the Rustlers," and so on. Each chapter ended with the hero (or the heroine, or both) hanging over a cliff facing a stampede of crazed cattle, or what have you-they were always impossible situations from which there was obviously no escape! Then we had to wait a whole week until we could see the next chapter and find out how the hero and friends managed to not only survive but to temporarily turn the tables on the villains, until the next crisis occurred. It was great! Of course, we could always see that some parts of the scenes of greatest peril at the end of one chapter had been manipulated by the cameraman so that it became possible for the hero to escape in the next chapter. But we always came back for more! "The Gem" eventually became known as "The Germ," not for any reason relating to health problems that I know of,

but the name stuck as long as it stayed open, which was for quite a few years. One other special Saturday attraction at "The Germ" was "The races". When you bought your ticket, you received a card with a number on it. At some point during the afternoon's entertainment, there would be a "short subject" which showed ten or twelve Indianapolis Five Hundred - type racing cars in competition. They would race around the track four or five times, with everyone cheering for his particular number. If your car (number) won, you would receive a candy bar on the way out of the theater. This idea was undoubtedly the basis for present-day "dot racing" at the Oakland Coliseum, and the new "motor boat racing" at Pac Bell Park- but we could win a prize in those days-today's baseball fans receive no tangible rewards.

For most of the time while I was growing up on Lockwood Avenue, my brothers Tom (nine years older) and Joe (seven and a half years older) were always around. They both graduated from St. Francis Prep, in Brooklyn. (This was the preparatory school for St. Francis College, from which I later graduated in 1950). They were both great baseball (New York Giants) and football (Notre Dame) fans; so naturally I followed in their footsteps. They also played local teams such as the Bulldogs and the Maccabees. I vaguely recall seeing them play football a few times, and I distinctly remember one baseball game in which one of the opposing players had a collision with our catcher at home plate, and broke his (the runner, that is)leg. It was a pretty shocking incident!

The walls (I do mean, "the walls") of our bedroom were covered with sports pictures and articles from the newspapers and magazines of the day, also with college pennants (Notre Dame, of course, Yale, Holy Cross, I can't remember them all.) My friends used to love to come to my house and admire the pictures and articles. At some point in time, we also had a real Civil War rifle hung up on one wall. (I think Tom had acquired this while he was in the CCC's - more on

that subject later.) Naturally, this was always the focus of attention when my friends were there. You could actually shoot "caps" with it, since the hammer and the trigger still worked. Of course no bullets (or more properly, rifle balls) were permitted (or available). I have no idea what happened to the rifle when we moved from Lockwood Avenue- we may have given it to someone who had the room to display it.

Shortly after my mother died in 1934, my brother Tom signed up for the CCC's (Civilian Conservation Corps) which was a government program designed to provide jobs and some income (not much, I don't think, but it helped) for the thousands of young men who could not find work where they lived. The participants would be sent to different parts of the country, some to do forestry work and flood control, some to build roads, or to perform whatever useful work the government felt needed to be done. In a sense, it was similar to being in the army, but not quite as regimented. From what I have subsequently read about it, it was a very good program for the times. Tom was sent to Fayetteville, Tennessee, I believe which is the south central part of the state, about eighty miles southeast of Nashville and not far from the Alabama border. I remember that he wrote letters home but don't recall the contents. Joe also joined the CCC's a year or so later and was stationed in the Catskill Mountains in the southeast part of New York State, which wasn't too far from Far Rockaway. In fact, Joe contracted pneumonia after he was there for a while and was sent to the hospital at West Point, home of the U.S. Military Academy (Army, to the football fans among you.) Our first cousin, Jack Rush, (one of the three sons of Aunt Maggie), who was always very close to our family, took me with him to visit Joe in the hospital. Joe was very glad to see us, of course, and we were happy to see that he was recovering OK. While we were driving on the grounds of West Point, we saw a lacrosse game being played on one of the fields. Jack explained that this was an old Indian game, and boy,

it sure looked like a rough sport. Interestingly, many years later, Jim McCarthy, my grandson, played lacrosse while he was attending St. Mary's College, and Chris' niece's sons, Jim and Richie Mormile, played all through high school and eventually at Brown University.

With my two brothers in the CCC's my father and I were left holding the fort together. Although he apparently did some teaching in Ireland, he was trained as a carpenter and had worked on some interesting jobs after he immigrated to the United States in the early 1900's. I think my brothers told me he worked on the early phase of the construction of the Empire State Building which was started in 1930 and completed in 1931. We also have a picture of him standing in front of an early model seaplane at Floyd Bennett Field, which was a Naval Air Station in Brooklyn, just on the other side of Jamaica Bay from the western end of Long Island. Presumably, there was some carpentry work going on there, but I don't think he was building airplanes. He was also a volunteer fireman, and I remember him telling me about the night the Tackaousha Hotel burned down. Tackspousha was the name of an Indian chief of the Rockaway Indians, who inhabited the area many years before. He also helped build the parish rectory for St. Mary's Church, which is a beautiful brick exterior structure, still in use today. By this time of his life (he was 63 in 1934, when my mother died), he was only doing occasional work, mostly around St. Mary's School and Church. He was a wonderful father, very low key with me, and didn't seem to worry about me when I was traveling all around Far Rockaway (by foot, of course.)

Aside from school and sports and radio and movies, there were plenty of other things to do in Far Rock (our affectionate term for the town.) I spoke earlier of our conventional sports activities (baseball, football, roller-skate hockey) but we didn't play those in the winter, of course. A good winter hinged on the availability of lots of snow! We all looked forward to the

first storm of the season. My brother Tom said he could “smell it in the air” even before it started falling. As I grew older, I came to believe that you actually could “smell” it. I was always interested in the weather from an early age, and it was fascinating, and exciting, to watch as storms developed, starting with the high fine cirrus clouds, becoming cirro-cumulus, and cirro-stratus, then alto-cumulus, alto-stratus and finally the low dark nimbus (rain clouds) from which the snow fell when the temperature was right. When we had a good (to us kids, but maybe not adults) storm, it meant sleigh riding. Everyone had sleds in those days, the most desirable being a Flexible Flyer. If you didn’t own one, you made it number one on your Christmas list. The Flexible Flyer was so named because it had a very flexible steering mechanism, which permitted you to make incredible turns to the left or the right as you went down a snow-covered hill. Why was it so important to make such turns, you ask? In order to avoid another sled (and its occupant) which might be heading directly at you or conversely, to turn your own sled into someone else’s when the situation called for it. There were also some tricky turns at the bottom of some of the hills which required the ability to maneuver that was only provided by a Flexible Flyer. We were fortunate enough to have two good hills for sleigh riding only a few blocks from 1721 Lockwood. They intersected each other at right angles at the crest of each hill, where the kids gathered with their sleds. If too many kids were going down Rue de St. Felix hill (named for the street), which was shorter but steeper, you did a belly flop down the Cable Hill (which was on 17th St.); this was not so steep but gave you a nice long ride. Cable Hill was so-called because a structure named the Cable Building was at the bottom of this hill on the west side. It was our understanding that this building contained the western terminus of the trans-Atlantic cable which permitted telephone connections between the United States and Europe. It had a high iron-grate fence all around it which seemed to imply the need for security. (I wonder

if it is still there, and, if not, what happened to it and the important cable connection to Europe.)

Back to sleigh riding! There were two other hills that were popular in Far Rock. There was a short but reasonably steep one on Beach 19th St., just below St. Joseph's Hospital on the way to the beach. Unfortunately, there was more automobile traffic there, so we only used it once in a while. The best and most challenging hill was Norton's Hill, which was in the back of a large old abandoned estate in Wavecrest, not too far from Far Rockaway High School. The house had a brick terrace on which we gathered before going down the hill. One route was straight out from the Terrace, down a short steep slope, then a flat run of about twenty five feet to a cliff-like drop onto the final flat surface, which took you to the bushes surrounding the property. The second drop was pretty tough on our sleds (also on our bodies, I guess) so it wasn't used that often. The preferred run was down the right side of the property on a more gradual slope which required you to maneuver between a cluster of trees, most of which had scarred bark resulting from the numerous crashes which continually occurred. This was when the steering mechanism of the trusty Flexible Flyers came through. If you were successful in getting past all the trees, you had a nice long gradual run ending out in the street (no traffic, fortunately) or actually across the street if you had a perfect run. Boy, that was fun!

Sometimes self-generated hazards were introduced to this winter sport. One such hazard was usually initiated by the older boys, and was called "wrecking." Sleighriding involved a short run with your sled held in front of you, usually with both hands, but sometimes with only one, in which case the sled was to the side. At the end of the run (you didn't want to run too far down the hill, of course), you dropped your sled to the snow-covered surface and dived onto the sled. It sounds complicated but really wasn't- this was called "belly-whopping" or "belly-flopping" (name your poison). "Wrecking" occurred when someone followed you in your run, also dove

onto his sled, and came up behind you without you expecting it, and then grabbed one of the rear supports of your sled, and gave it a wrench. If he was successful, the result would be that you flew off your sled, and landed on and slid along the cold snow, while your sled went careening down to the bottom of the hill. (Naturally you had to go and retrieve it.) Sounds pretty rough, I know, but most of the time we thought it was fun, especially when you "wrecked" someone who had previously "wrecked" you. I do remember one serious accident resulting from sleigh riding, but I don't know if it was caused by "wrecking." A fellow named George Monahan was involved in a pileup at the bottom of the Cable Hill and eventually lost his sight in one eye—everyone felt pretty badly about that.

Another hazardous activity was called "hitching." This was something we knew we shouldn't be doing but we did it anyway. When we had a good snowfall, and the weather remained cold it usually stayed on the ground and roads for a week or two. There were not that many cars in Far Rockaway in those days so it took a while for bare spots to start to appear on the roads. "Hitching" was usually done after dark and involved laying on your sled and hanging onto the rear bumper of a stopped car with your hand. Assuming the driver didn't know you were there, you could get a pretty good "hitch" for a few blocks. Sometimes, there would be guys on other sleds hanging on behind your sled, in a chain. Usually, the driver would become aware of this very quickly. He would either stop the car, in which case we all picked up our sleds and ran like heck, or he would speed up his car, spraying snow in our faces, and start zig-zagging along the road trying to shake us off, which usually didn't take too long. We would end up face first in a snow bank and the driver would take off laughing to himself. When I mentioned "bare spots on the road" a few sentences ago, I was referring to a special hazard of "hitching." You could be getting a good "hitch" when suddenly the car came to a bare (no snow) spot on the road. When

this happened, your sled's runners would generate a shower of sparks, while at the same time you felt like you were going to lose your arm due to the friction of the runners on the bare road. We learned to let go quickly, believe me! We also remembered which roads had bare spots at that particular time. There was one young adult who lived in our neighborhood, the son of a local barber, who drove an ambulance at St. Joseph's Hospital. He had his own car and thought it was fun to let us "hitch" on to him and then take us for a wild high-speed ride. It was fun but also pretty stupid on both our parts.

Behind the Cable Building, and directly accessible from Rue de St. Felix, was a major point of interest to us called the Indian Graveyard. I don't know where the name came from because I never saw any traces of Indians there. What it actually seemed to be was the private burial plot of an early 1700's family by the name of Cornwall. There had been an iron-grate fence around the entire area at one time but much of it had apparently been destroyed over the years. The area was about thirty feet square with very tall pine trees casting dark shadows into every corner. There were many small headstones, most of them partially broken, with names of various members of the family carved into the stone along with the years of birth and death. There were also three or four large stone plaques which were laid flat on the ground, probably special grave sites, again with information identifying those who were buried there. It was a very eerie and fascinating place. I believe it was eventually recognized by some local organization as a place that had historical value, and rightly so. It would be interesting to see what it looks like today.

Earlier I mentioned the Chelsea Hotel and the lot where we played baseball. The baseball field was actually just a small section of the full lot, which extended from 19th St. on the west (across from St. Joseph's Hospital) all the way to 17th St. to the east. We spent many afternoons there, playing Ring-O-Leavio or Hide and Seek, roasting "mickies" (potatoes) in a fire

we would start with a magnifying glass, or just wrestling and rolling in the high grass that grew there. Every few years a fire would burn down the high grass, the firemen would eventually put the fire out, and the grass would grow back taller than ever the following spring. On the other side of 17th St. was the Tackapousha Garage, a large oblong shaped building which presumably had once serviced the Tackapousha Hotel, which had burned down sometime in the 1920's. As far as I can recall, the Tackapousha Garage was inactive in those days, but we used to climb all over the tumbled-down ruins of the hotel, which remained there for many years. (Remember, it was the time of the Great Depression and there was nothing going on in the way of building development like there is today.)

Since we lived on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, it was inevitable that we would all be great fishermen, right? Wrong! But we did go fishing once a year, in August. During this month, schools of young bluefish, called "snappers", would migrate to the waters around Long Island. At that time we dug out our trusty bamboo poles with fishing line and cork float attached, and headed for the eastern end of Reynolds Channel near the bridge to Atlantic Beach. Since fish are early risers (or so rumor has it), we started out at about 5:30 A.M., which was pretty early; in-fact, the sun was barely rising when we first dropped our lines into the water. There would be a whole bunch of kids sitting side by side on a bulkhead, each one with his own line in the water. Everyone's float would drift to the left or right, depending on which way the tide was flowing. It was inevitable that some of the lines would become tangled. When this happened, it usually took a while to get untangled, of course. Somehow, we managed to survive these challenges and frustrations and catch some snappers. It was very exciting to see your float start to gently bob up and down as the bait was being nibbled on, then to have the bob go completely under the water as the snapper took the bait and was caught on the hook. Up went your pole and out of

the water flew a beautiful silver-green snapper, wriggling with all of its strength to get off the hook, and sometimes succeeding, to the frustration of the fisherman. We always caught at least a few, sometimes ten or fifteen. As we caught each one, we would string it on a line and drop the line into the water to keep the fish fresh. Then we walked home (remember, we walked everywhere in Far Rock), with the string of fish hanging from the end of our poles, which were slung over our shoulders. I learned to clean them, and to fry them, from my brother Tom, who personally hated fish. They weren't very big, five or six inches long, so two or three would provide a tasty meal. My father and my brother, Joe, also liked fried fish, so they never went to waste.

I graduated from St. Mary's School in June, 1938. I had done well in school for those eight years, and won a lot of medals that were awarded to each class each June, usually for Excellence (high average) and Religion. My brother Tom and his girlfriend, Helen Carpenter, (whom he eventually married in 1944, when he was on leave from the Army) attended the graduation and took me to one of the local ice cream parlors for a soda afterwards. (I guess my father wasn't feeling well, and my brother Joe was probably still in the CCCs.)

In September 1938, I entered Far Rockaway High School. Many of my close friends started there at the same time so the transition wasn't that difficult. The walk to school was different though! From a block and a half to St. Mary's, it became about a mile and a half to high school. Because of my grades at St. Mary's, I was assigned to a lot of Honors Classes in Far Rockaway High School. Some of the subjects were new, especially Latin. I ended up taking four years of Latin, which I really enjoyed. I had only two different Latin teachers- Miss Craft and Miss Smith. (I don't recall which one I had first.) They were both up in years, but they were excellent teachers- more about them later on.

Shortly after high school began, the entire East Coast of the U.S.A., including Long Island, of course, was hit by a major hurricane. Since Far Rockaway was on the south shore of Long Island, we really got pounded. Trees were down all over town, the electricity was out, schools were closed (no one complained about that.) As soon as the center of the storm was past us, we went down to the beach to watch the surf- it was spectacular! I have previously mentioned Edgemere as the first small town to our west. The island was very narrow in that area (half a mile wide) with the mighty Atlantic to the south and peaceful Jamaica Bay to the north. The force of the hurricane was so great that the water from the Atlantic ocean surged over Edgemere and joined with Jamaica Bay for several days. All of us from Far Rock remember it as "The Hurricane of '38"! You can verify that in the hurricane record books.

My father had occasional heart problems after my mother died, and was in and out of Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn several times. In February 1939, he died in the hospital- he was 68. Again, we were notified by telegram in the middle of the night. Always bad news. I was fourteen, a freshman at Far Rockaway High School. Again we received great support from Aunt Maggie and Uncle Tom and their family.

Strangely, I do not have any recollection of the wake or the funeral. I know Pop was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Lawrence, next to my mother. It was pretty lonely in the apartment after he died. Tom and Joe were both working whenever they could, most of the time for Liggett's Drug Store on Central Avenue. Liggett's also had a store on 116th St. in Belle Harbor, about five miles to the west of Far Rock, and, as Tom and Joe became more experienced, they were frequently assigned to shifts in Belle Harbor also. Transportation to Belle Harbor was provided by the Green Bus Line which ran east and west between Far Rock and Belle Harbor. It was a long slow trip from start to finish, so their days were long when they were working in

Belle Harbor. Tom got a regular job with Manhattan Bank in Belle Harbor or Rockaway Beach (I don't remember which came first) sometime in the late thirties and worked for the bank until he retired.

Shortly after Pop died, my brothers apparently decided to find a smaller (and cheaper?) place to live, so we moved to a one bedroom apartment with a small kitchen on 17th St. which I believe was also called Caffrey Avenue- I can't recall the number. We lived on the second floor of a small house, the bottom floor of which was occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Carroll, and their three children, Dorothy, Maureen and Joe. We knew the family from their previous residence at Muhlback Court, which was on 19th St., a block away from 1721 Lockwood. Maureen was what we called a "tomboy" in those days. Although she was small, she was very athletically inclined and competed very well with boys her own age. She was six years younger than I- why do I remember that? Well, many years later I discovered she was in the same class at St. Mary's as Christine O'Brien (my wife-to-be). She was in our wedding party and their friendship has endured to the present day. In fact, one of our daughters is named after her. (Far Rockaway was a small town!)

Our new location was a little further from Far Rock High School but not a lot. It was also at the foot of Hurley Court which ran north from 17th St. to Greenport Road (I think). Although I didn't know it at the time, another close friend of my wife-to-be lived at the top of Hurley Court-Ann Hynes. (Chris had a lot of friends checking up on me, I guess.)

Life at our new home was relatively peaceful, although the Carrolls might question that statement. Although I was nine and seven years younger than my two brothers, we frequently had friendly (?) and noisy (?) wrestling matches which were obviously apparent to the family below us. It never got to the point that they called the police, but there's no doubt they often

wondered what was going on above them. I don't think the Carrolls lived there very long after we arrived (did we drive them out? I hope not!). I believe the building was owned by a nice lady named Mrs. Nolan, who eventually moved in along with one of her daughters and her daughter's husband, John and Mary Hynes. They had three children, a boy and twin daughters- a very nice family. I believe they came from Rockaway Beach, a few miles to the west of Edgemere. Mrs. Nolan was especially nice and frequently provided Tom, Joe and me with tasty left-overs of one sort or another. One of her specialties was apple cake- delicious!

There were a lot of kids in the neighborhood, all younger than I, so I taught them all the games I knew like "Kick the Can", "Red Rover, Red Rover", "Giant Steps", "Hide and seek", and they all had a lot of fun, boys and girls playing together. Some of the kids were old enough to play baseball so I exposed them to my comprehensive knowledge of the game in the lot (always a lot available) next to Hurley Court. One of the boys was named Bobby O'Meara. Many years later I discovered he became the father of the famous golfer, Mark O'Meara. (Was there a message in the fact that the son took up golf and not baseball?)

At the same time that I was starting to make new friends, boys and girls, in high school, my group of friends from St. Mary's started to develop into an athletic organization looking for new fields (and teams) to conquer, especially in football. We eventually took the name, "Panthers." Since we were primarily (but not entirely) of Irish background, we chose green for the color of our uniforms. What uniforms? We didn't have any. The only way to get uniforms (jerseys, at least) was to run a raffle. The precedent for this had been already set by the older teams that preceded us, i.e., the Pirates, Braves and Shamrocks. Someone's father knew someone who worked in a print shop, we drafted a simple ticket format, and lo and behold, we had books and books of raffle tickets which we started selling all over town. I can't remember the price of a

ticket but I'm sure it was reasonable because we sold a lot of them. Was it legal? Probably not, but no one, including the customers, seemed to be concerned about it. When the raffle was complete and the prize (or prizes- I don't recall if there was more than one) awarded to the winner, we then had to find the best store with which to bargain for our jerseys. Everyone had to be measured, of course. It was quite an operation but, lo and behold, one day we got a call to pick up our green Panther jerseys. We had a "fight" song too, to the tune of (you guessed right) Notre Dame's fight song:

"Cheer, cheer for Panthers A.C.

When they hit that line, you will see

That there's not a soul in sight

When they unleash their thundering might!

What though the odds, etc., etc., etc."

A few of our players were good enough, and big enough, to play on the Far Rockaway High School football team which, unfortunately, had a history of having the worst record in the league (not due to our friends' abilities, of course.) Herbie Smith played quarterback and Vinnie Cittadino (from our old neighborhood) was a lineman; I can't recall any one else who played for Far Rock High School. But the rest of us were pretty good players for the Panthers all through high school. I mentioned that we bought jerseys on our own, but the rest of our uniforms we begged, borrowed or stole (not really) from our older brothers and their friends. To complement our green jerseys, our helmets were painted with green (what else?) and white stripes, and looked pretty classy. We played at the Colony Club field where we also played baseball. You may recall I mentioned sand in the infield.) Naturally, the football field had its own patches of sand, especially near the goal lines. Those goal line stands took their toll on all of us. Nothing like a

couple of big linemen jumping on top of you and pushing you face-down into a patch of sand! I played a little (which I was) quarterback, then was assigned (demoted?) to halfback and finally to end, which was a lot safer place than the backfield. As we got older, some of the fellows who had played for the Pirates and Shamrocks took an interest in our team and started coaching us, which was probably a good idea. Fred Webster (Shamrocks) was the first, and then Bill Michaels (Pirates), who had played college ball for Holy Cross and was pretty knowledgeable. (They and their friends also had cars, which we didn't, so that permitted us to schedule away games with teams from all over the Rockaways and even as far as Rosedale, about ten or fifteen miles away.)

We played some of our home games on Sunday at about 1:30 P.M., and usually attracted a pretty good group of spectators- at least a hundred (?). These were a mixture of parents (not too many), older brothers and friends (a few sisters) and "the girls." (Life was starting to get exciting for us football heroes!) The officials (one or two guys) were volunteers from the spectators, so if you were playing at home, you had an advantage, of course. ("Homers", they are called.) But we never really had a lot of disputed calls, or even arguments. We did mark the sidelines and yardlines on the field with white sand (plenty available). This was done the day before a game and took a while but we always found someone willing to do it. We had a pretty good team and I think we won more games than we lost while playing through our high school years. One problem was that our opponents kept getting bigger and bigger each year, and, speaking from a personal viewpoint, I seemed to be falling behind. (I was the smallest boy in our high school graduation class). I remember one game that both my brothers were able to attend. We were getting ready to play a team from Edgemere and their fullback (named Moskowitz) was also on the Far Rockaway High School team. He was large! My brothers took one look at this guy, grabbed me by the neck, and said, "You're out of this game!" (I don't think I protested too long

after an initial display of temper and indignation). Except for the last game I played (I'll talk about that later), I only got hurt once. We were playing a tough (good, that is) team in Rosedale. I was playing end, Herbie Smith was quarterback, and we were a couple of points behind with not much time left. I got loose in the end zone, Herbie threw me a pass for the winning touchdown-and that's all I remember. Apparently, as I caught the pass, one of their defenders nailed me as he was coming at full speed. I was knocked out (but held the ball.) The coach got me home and I missed a couple of days of school. Looking back, there's no doubt in my mind that I had suffered a mild concussion. (Steve Young-retire now!) I guess I was a hero (with a headache) for a few days, the guys and girls came to visit me and cheer me up while I was out of school; and things quickly went back to normal. I was lucky that it was no worse than it was.

Bottom line- football is a rough sport!

Continuing in the sports theme, I did try out for the high school baseball team but didn't make it. Too many big, better players. (Far Rock's baseball record was much better than its football record.) However, in some way (I can't remember how), I worked my way in as Assistant Manager, then Manager of the team. Although this was my title, I think I was more of a glorified bat boy. But I was part of the team, that's all that mattered. I got to get out of class a little early for home games, and a lot earlier for away games, which included traveling in the bus with the team. I did this during my junior and senior years and it was a great experience, visiting all the high schools in the Queens County league. One special highlight was when we (the team, that is) had a game at La Salle Academy in Oakdale, Long Island, which was a long trip in those days. LaSalle was a military prep school with lots of rules. It turned out that the team was invited to stay for dinner in the mess hall but there was a requirement that visitors wear a jacket and a tie. The players had apparently been advised of this but no one told me. (I don't think I

had a jacket, anyway). Fortunately, one of the cadets was able to locate a tie and a jacket that fit me (extra small), so I was able to eat dinner with the two teams. Pretty exciting experience! (I think La Salle won the game.)

High School was great! I had a lot of very demanding but very good teachers. Miss Temple was one one of my English teachers, and she was detail-oriented. We had lots of reading assignments and she would give us frequent quizzes that required us to remember the finest details about both the characters and the events in a particular story. She made us pay attention, believe me. I mentioned my Latin teachers earlier. Both of them had already taught at Far Rock for many years before I arrived. This was one of the honors classes I was in and there were some very bright young men and ladies competing for the best grades. As we became more proficient in our ability to translate the language (we also read it aloud but didn't speak it, unless we were reciting a passage by memory), Miss Craft and Miss Smith started preparing us to enter various contests sponsored by classical Latin clubs. They made us practice hard on samples from earlier contests and we always felt we were well-prepared for the competition we would face. Most of us won a medal or two, which made both our teachers and our school happy and proud. One of my personal claims to fame was scoring a grade of 99% on a Latin Regents exam (Regents tests were administered by the State of New York, and everyone was required to achieve at least a passing grade in a number of specific subjects, e.g., English, History, Geometry, Latin, etc.) At one time I could remember the question I had missed that kept me from scoring 100%, but it has long since faded away.

Miss Smith somehow acquired an awareness of my family situation and offered me a job taking care of her flowers and shrubs. She was single and elderly, born and raised in Trumansburg, New York, in the Finger Lakes area of the Catskill Mountains. Her family

apparently had some involvement in the settling of the town; she also had a brother Truman who still lived there. She was always very nice to me and kept me in pocket money for the last two years of high school. I think my starting salary was fifteen cents an hour which eventually was raised to thirty cents. Doesn't sound like much, but remember, at the risk of being repetitious, it was the days of the Great Depression. She always gave me lunch too. And I learned a lot about planting and nurturing flowers.

Oh yes, girls! There were lots of girls in Far Rock and they were all pretty! We, at least I, didn't discover girls until the summer after graduating from grammar school. It seemed like everyone started having parties all over town and that my friends and I were invited to every one of them. We started meeting girls who had apparently been around for a long time (at least a year or so), many of whom had apparently gone to St. Mary's while we were there, some of whom went to different public schools in Far Rock. It was a great summer. At least one other circumstance brought girls to our attention. In the fall of 1938, since we were now in high school, we were eligible to attend weekly C.Y.O meetings on Friday night, (C.Y.O. meaning Catholic Youth Organization). The meetings were conducted by one of the parish priests (usually the youngest) and we discussed readings from the scriptures and the Catechism for about forty five minutes. Then someone started playing music from records (33RPM) and it was time to DANCE! Well, at least for some of us, mostly the girls. Eventually we all learned to dance, some better than others, and the meetings became more interesting. I acquired most of my dancing skills from Carol Bacon, who happened to live next door to us on Caffrey Avenue and whom I knew from playing "Red Rover, Red Rover", etc. in our neighborhood. We remained close friends after high school, in fact, I think I took her to dinner to celebrate my graduation with my brother Tom and Helen Carpenter (Tom picked up the tab, of course.) She married a nice fellow, not from Far

Rockaway, named Joe Devitt and there lies an interesting tale. Many years later, Chris, (my wife) and I were at a reunion of shipmates from my Navy ship, the U.S.S. Appalachian, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, I think it was. We were talking with a group of people and discovered that one of the men was named Devitt (Jim, I think). Believe it or not, he was the brother of Joe Devitt, who was the husband of Carol Bacon. Small world!

I had crushes on and/or dated lots of girls in high school. We were a compatible and innocent group of socially active young people. I think the CYO was the glue that kept us together all that time. It was a good organization with good purposes, helping us to strengthen our faith while still having a good time. One of our best activities (aside from dancing) was the annual CYO show which was presented in June each year after many months of practice (which also was fun). I sang "Deep in the Heart of Texas" (you all remember that, right) in one of the shows. For three days before opening night I was sure I was coming down with laryngitis. But my vocal chords held up and I even earned a couple of encores. Our last high school show was June 1942, when the country was already involved in World War II. One of the songs we sang was "Let's Remember Pearl Harbor". For the grand finale we sang Irving Berlin's "God Bless America". It was a stirring moment, one I will never forget. (Some of my friends were already in the service, so it was especially meaningful.)

I seem to have gotten a little ahead of myself, talking about high school. In 1940, more than a year before Pearl Harbor (December 1941), our government decided it better prepare for the worst, considering what was happening in Europe.

Most of Europe was already controlled by Germany and Adolph Hitler. A peacetime draft was initiated as the fairest way of beginning to build up our armed forces, primarily the Army. My brother Joe was one of the first ones drafted, in September 1940. He was almost

twenty four and had already been away from home for several years, in the CCC's. Tom and I hated to see him go but he took it as a new challenge and left in good spirits. He was stationed at a lot of different camps in the U.S., starting in Camp Wheeler, Georgia, another camp in Florida, and then Houston, Texas. While he was in Florida, he was near the Cleveland Indians spring training camp, and he sent me a baseball autographed by Bob Feller, one of baseball's budding super-stars. I cherished the trophy for quite a few years before giving it to the son of a good friend of my cousin, Jack Rush. Joe eventually ended up in the CBI Theater of War (China-Burma-India) but I'll talk about that later on.

Now it was down to Tom and me. Time for another move, we said. (No, it really didn't happen that way.) But, for whatever reason, we did move to 1833 Greenport Road, the home of longtime family friends, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Phelan, and their seven children, four boys and three girls. Their oldest child was Bill, also know as Sonny or Sunny, I'm not sure how it was spelled or how he got the name. He was a few years younger than my brother Joe. Their family had originally lived in the Campbell Building, just across the street from where we lived at 521 Central Avenue. They had then moved into a house on New Haven Ave., across the street from St. Mary's Church, which was where I got to know the family, especially the boys, very well. The second son was Jim (nicknamed Bugs or Bugsy- why I don't know) then Pat (or Corky, so named after he broke one of his legs) and finally Tommy. I was a year behind Corky at St. Mary's, and he was eventually one of the pioneers of the Panthers A.C. Bugs was a couple of years older than Corky, so he had a different group of friends, but he was my idol.

I took James as my confirmation name after him. Why was Bugs my idol? I can't explain it - he was just a special guy! Mrs. Phelan was a big, tall woman, a great mother, and Mr. Phelan, whom we called a garbage man (he worked for the Department of Sanitation) was a great laid-back father. I never saw him get excited, even with all the kids (including me most of the time) around the house. While the family was living on New Haven Ave., so close to the church, they were frequently called into emergency service when some altar boy didn't show up for an early Mass, or for Benediction - on Sunday afternoon, or whatever. Mrs. Phelan fully approved of this and the boys didn't seem to mind. Eventually the three oldest boys all went away to St. Columban Seminary in Silver Creek, N.Y. (near Buffalo) and although they each spent more than a few years there, none of them became priests. (After the war, they all married and raised large families.)

So this was the family, now living on Greenport Road, that Tom and I moved in with. We had a room on the third floor - that was it! As a result, Tom and I ate out a lot (mostly in Liggett's, I guess). But the Phelan family treated me like one of their sons and frequently invited me to breakfast or to supper. They were great people!

There were two other families that were especially nice to me, again because of my friendship with their children. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Whelan lived on Muhlbach Court, just across an empty lot from Greenport Road. Frank and Jack were their sons and my good friends. They also had a daughter, Janet. The other family was Mr. and Mrs. Jim Gillis, who had a son, Jim, and a younger daughter, Carol. Jim and I played baseball and football together and I knew Carol well also. I frequently was invited to their house for Sunday dinner after a football game. All these parents were also good friends of my cousins in the Rush family, so these were very close-knit relationships.

As you may have gathered, I had a lot of very good friends growing up, But my two closest friends were Charlie O'Neill and Frankie Lehman. (By now, you should have noticed that most of my friends' names ended in "ie", as above, or "y" as in my own case. When I talk to any of my old friends who still live back East, I am still 'Billy'. (Must have been an Eastern custom). At any rate, Charlie, Frankie and I were known as "The Three Musketeers", (stolen from Alexander Dumas' book of the same name). Once in a while there was a little competition between us, usually when two of us liked the same girl at the same time. We usually both ended up losing the girl, which eliminated the problem.

Here's another story about coincidences. (I hope you enjoy all of these tales because they are factual.) Early in high school, Charlie had a crush on a pretty young lady named Mary Greenwood. She had a couple of parties at her house that summer, and naturally, the other two Musketeers were invited along with the rest of the crowd. I'm sure we played an occasional game of "Spin the Bottle", or "Post Office". (You better believe it!) Guess where Mary lived! Right next door to the O'Brien family, home of "Sweet Christine," my future bride- to- be. Of course, Chris was only about ten years old at the time, but she says she used to peek through her back window to see what was going on when the Greenwoods had a party. She never claimed to have seen me at one of those parties (and we didn't know eachother anyway) but sometimes I wonder. Was she fatally attracted (sub-consciously, of course) to her husband-to-be? Yes, it is a small world!

One of the major social (I use that word loosely) events in Far Rock each summer was called "Dollar Day." Actually Dollar Day was the next day after the action that occurred on the preceding evening. On Dollar Day eve, (we never called it that but it makes it more specific), all

the merchants in the village (primarily on Central Avenue, between Mott and Cornaga Avenues) conducted a give-away in the form of yellow numbered tickets, about three-quarters of the size of a regular mailing envelope. These tickets were not peacefully handed to you as you walked past a particular store. Oh No! They were thrown in clusters and bunches from the second floor of all the buildings that had a second (or even a third) story, or an open roof. (The street was closed to traffic for the evening, of course.) One of the challenges was that you never knew which building would be the source of the next cluster of tickets to come floating down. Central Avenue became a replica of the famous "Run with the Bulls" which occurs annually in Spain, only instead of bulls, there were hundreds of kids (usually just boys, as I recall) of ages from eight, maybe ten, to eighteen, charging up and down the street whenever someone spotted some tickets floating down. It was not easy to catch one in the air, believe me. What usually happened was that the tickets would fall to the ground, where they were grasped at, torn, crumpled and even "folded, spindled and mutilated" (which you weren't supposed to do to IBM punch cards, much less a Dollar Day ticket.) Sometimes the tickets would not separate in the air and you might be lucky enough to catch a bunch of eight or ten of them still in mint condition. What did we do with whatever tickets we accumulated during the course of the evening's work (which it was)? Assuming that you had enough of the ticket to see the number, the next day (Dollar Day), we would march up and down Central Avenue trying to match our number with any of the lucky numbers displayed in the windows of each store. If you got a match, you won the particular item which was displayed with the number in the store. I did win something once but have no recollection of what it was. Maybe an umbrella? Or a shaving kit? (Fabulous prizes and practical too.) Was it worth all the effort expended the previous evening? You better believe it! One of the negative

aspects of the evening was that inevitably two guys would start arguing over who had full control of a particular ticket. Occasionally, this resulted in an exciting fist fight which usually didn't last long because someone would yell, "more tickets coming down from Grant's", and off everyone would dash to compete for a lucky ticket. So much for the social event known as "Dollar Day"!

Of course, in order to maintain our high standard of living, it was necessary to find some kind of summer job. I've talked about caddying and landscaping, but sometimes we had to seek other sources of funds. One summer, I worked primarily as a "soda jerk", not a very flattering term for someone who served his customers delicious ice cream sodas and sundaes, but it was the job description of the period. I worked in a small shop on Central Avenue, but I never really enjoyed that job. Another summer (maybe the same one) I worked for about a month as an elevator operator at the Atlantic Beach Hotel, on the other side of the Reynold's Channel, not very far from the Atlantic Beach Bridge where we went snapper fishing. This may have been the most challenging job I ever had (full of ups and downs). But not even the fancy bellhop-type uniform could motivate me to stick it out.

My last two years at Far Rock were especially interesting. In my junior year, I was selected to participate in a debate on the pros and cons of Isolationism vs. Lend Lease, the former being the opinion held by many Americans that we should not get involved in the war in Europe, the latter favoring the sending of all types of aid to Europe, short of actually declaring war. Although I personally leaned towards isolationism at that time, I was asked to argue in favor of Lend Lease. Since a good debater (which I wasn't, this being my first experience) is supposed to be able to defend whichever side he is given, I made the best of it and prepared myself with lots

of research. The debate was held in front of the full school assembled in the auditorium so it was rather a big deal. There was no formal decision as to who won, just applause for and against each debater's presentation. I think I held my own. Interestingly enough, only six months later the country was at war, and many of the seniors and even some of the juniors would be in the service. It was a good experience.

In senior year I was encouraged by several of the teachers to run for Student Body President. (I guess they were having trouble finding qualified candidates.) My friends got behind me (pushing and shoving) and formed a campaign committee. It was a lot of fun, really. Pictures and posters all over the school, pep rallies (oh, sorry, those were for the athletic teams) just like the real thing. To make a long story short, I lost. But I gained invaluable experience - don't get mixed up in politics!

I did have several major accomplishments as a senior. I was selected as Boy Leader of Arista, a National Honor Society, and also voted the boy "Most Likely to Succeed," (The yearbook did not specify what I would succeed at, but I guess I have had a satisfactory career to date.)

I didn't mean to skip over the "day of infamy" that occurred in the middle of my senior year. We were all well aware of the war in Europe and rooting for England and France to make a comeback, but there was a wide ocean between Europe and the U.S., and I guess we thought we would never get involved. We also knew Japan was doing terrible things in China but there was an even wider ocean between us and them.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, I was playing Monopoly at the home of a friend of mine, Phil Christ (rhymes with fist). We were actually listening to a football game on the radio. When

the first report of the attack on Pearl Harbor was announced we couldn't believe it. Naturally, we immediately became angry at the Japanese. We kept hearing the bad news for the rest of the afternoon, then went to a CYO meeting which was scheduled for that Sunday evening. The attack on Pearl Harbor was the only thing we could talk about. I'm sure that for each of us this was the spark that ignited our patriotic feelings until we ultimately were old enough to join some branch of the service and defend our country. These feelings continued to grow through the rest of our senior year.

Because of the war, our senior prom was held in the school gymnasium and was a rather subdued affair. Some of our classmates had already enlisted and were in training camps in different parts of the country. Our spirits picked up somewhat for graduation day which we celebrated with our families and friends.

After graduation, the burning question became- "Do I enlist or wait for the draft?" We all had had to register for the draft when we reached eighteen, even though most of us were still in high school. At that point in time, all draftees were being sent to the Army. To get into the Navy or Marines, you had to enlist. My brother Tom had not yet been drafted but he expected his number to come up at any time. I decided to wait to see what happened to him.

Having made my first major decision since graduation, I was suddenly aware of a new reality of life - I was among the ranks of the unemployed. With no financial support available, college was out of the question. The next alternative- get a job. So I started buying the daily papers and going through the want ads. The fastest way to find employment seemed to be to try the employment agencies. There were no jobs available in Far Rock at that time so I am referring to agencies in New York City. (which was not called "The Big Apple" in those days). The cheapest, not the fastest, way to get to the city was via the Jamaica bus to Jamaica, where

you transferred to the Eighth Avenue subway (the first subway station being about a mile walk from the bus station). I don't remember how long it took me to find a job, maybe a couple of weeks. I was finally hired by the Commercial Union Assurance Company, LTD. It was an English company, located at 48th street (I think) and Park Avenue. I was assigned to the IBM section, probably because of my high grades in mathematics. They had all kinds of EAM (Electric Accounting Machine) equipment, all of it manufactured and maintained by IBM, which pretty well had a monopoly on this type of work. Essentially, we worked with punch cards (7 inches long by 3 inches wide) which initially were blank, with eighty columns horizontally and twelve columns vertically, into which a policy holders' vital statistics were punched. Since no one even remembers punched cards any more, I will go no further in attempting to explain how everything worked. Bob Newhart, the comedian, did some short films for IBM on the mysteries of punched cards about twenty years ago. They were hilarious. But now we live in the world of the PC and the Internet where everything is visual and safe (that is, if you don't hit the wrong key on the console).

I liked the job and met a lot of nice people, including one pretty young lady named Dolores, whom I dated a few times after work. I think she lived in the Bronx, which tended to discourage me from asking her out for a date on weekends. To me, the Bronx was the end of the world (travel-wise that is, not aesthetically).

The dreaded day arrived sometime in September or October when my brother Tom received his draft notice to appear for a physical in anticipation of being inducted into the army. I started doing some serious thinking. Since it was obvious that I would be drafted in the not-to-distant future, did it make any sense to sit tight and live alone until my notice came? After several discussions with Tom, I decided to find out if I could volunteer for the service, take my physical

at the same time as Tom, and perhaps be assigned to the same training station as he.

The draft board was cooperative. (It probably helped that we knew Mr. Chapin, a local citizen serving as a volunteer on the board). So one fine fall morning in 1942, Tom and I and a bunch of other young men from Far Rock were herded into a bus and taken to the city for our physical.

I won't spend time describing the physical examination procedure. Anyone who was ever in the service, or has seen Andy Griffith in the old movie, "No Time for Sergeants", will understand. Again, to make a long story short, Tom was accepted and I WAS REJECTED! The doctor said that I had a hernia condition in my right groin - I would be classified as 4-F- unfit for service!

In spite of the way I felt at that time, life went on. But I will save the second part of my story for the near future. Hopefully, there will be a happy ending. There has to be - I'm still alive!