Somewhere in the east of Prussia where the white Russians were popular in the 1870's was born Michael Mostwikowski. Michael like many others came to America to find a new life - when he came and with whom we do not know. Most likely he came as a young man, alone seeking a new adventure some time just before the 20th century. As best we can tell none of his relatives followed.

Eleanora Tyska was born to a nobleman in Krakow, Poland in the 1880's. Her only sister and her mother died while she was still a child. After her father remarried, Eleanora came to America at the age of 12 years - with hopes of bringing her father with her later. She lived a short while with relatives or friends after her arrival through Ellis lsland. She was already living in Baltimore in 1904 when the Baltimore fire leveled the inner city. She was a petite woman about 4' 10" with salt and pepper hair as she grew older. ln Baltimore Michael and Eleanora were wed in an arranged marriage as was the custom of the times. She was 13 years old and he was near 30. Together they lived the life of the immigrant family, initially at 2718 Elliot Street and later at 2905 Dillon Street. It was a classic Baltimore row house, with a stone stoop, painted wood grain doors, stained glass trim and window screens with painted country scenes. Michael was a factory worker all of his life. Children came quickly to the couple but as was common in those days many of the sons and daughters died early in life.

The offspring in order of birth included Frank, Walter, Virginia, Stella, James, Mary (1910), Helen (August 15, 1911), Eduard, Eleanor, Anna (1920), Casimir (1923) and Michael. Only Stella, Mary, Helen, Edrrvard, Anne, Eleanor and Casimir lived beyond their infancy. By the time Casmir was born in November of 1923 the girls had their fill of new family. Helen and Anna were sent out to fetch the midwife as the delivery approached.

They figured if they didn't get the midwife there wouldn’t be more diapers to change and clean. It was an easy decision to go take a walk instead of bringing home the midwife. Despite their efforts Casmir arrived and a midwife did sign his birth certificate. The children went to Saint Stanislaus or St Casimi/s school for their education. By the time they were on Dillon Street, Michael was working in a licorice factory nearby; life was less hectic. The children had lots of fun growing up in the new neighborhood and there was a good supply of licorice candy to be had. Mary and Helen were especially close and they shared both love and battle scars to prove it. Once while Mary was in the hospital recovering from an appendectomy, a visit from her sister Helen made her restless to see what was doing on Broadway. Out came the tubes, off went the hospital gown and the sisters spent the day checking out the local neighborhood. By the time they returned home the parents had been alerted, and needless to say, the girls were grounded. Helen clearly remembered people dancing in the streets when Lindberg landed in Paris in 1927 for the first crossing of the Atlantic by air. During Prohibition - a homemade still was working under the hands of Michael, the house was heated with coal and an outhouse served the family. The summers found Eleanora and the older children on the Eastern shore of Delaware at Camden after a long train ride. There they spent their days picking strawberries and tomatoes while sleeping on straw beds at night - it was hard labor but a fun way to make money even if it meant getting back to Baltimore after the school season had started. With the coming of the Depression in 1929 times got really hard; Michael, the youngest child died and his father often walked to the family grave site at St Stanislaus Cemetery to visit his name sake. In 1930, the father permanently joined his son after a bout of pneumonia. He was about 55 years of age. Eleanora became the head of the family and all of the older children had to leave school and start working to provide some income to keep the family together during the Depression. She developed asthma early in life and diabetes later in her years. ln addition to the summers of farm picking, the local cannery offered employment and the family survived. The children were married or settled over the next decade.

Stella married Harry Koffienberger, a policeman, and they had two children: Pat and Harry

Jr. Mary married John Weber, a delivery driver and they had two children: Jerry and Kathy. Helen marriedMartin Stark and they also had two children: Martin Jr. on March 31,1937

and Dennis on May 16,1942. Edward remained a bachelor and as a tugboat mate supported his mother and sister Eleanor who was born with Cerebral Palsy. They all lived together on Dillon Street until Eleanora died in her early seventies, in 1960 of a stroke. They all rest together still at the family grave site. Edward had a long history of problems with binges and died of cirrhosis.

Eleanor moved in with Stella, Mary and Anna but died a year or so after her rnother of a

viral infection. Anna marriedEdward Miskiewicz, a boat builder and had five children: Beverly, Wayne, Bryan, Mark and Cynthia. Casmir, a banker and the last to marry, married Virginia Mae Ruby in 1950 and had three children: Glenn, Kevin and Myla.

Despite all the new families, Grandma's house on Dillon Street remained a family spot for all. Even in the 60's it was heated with coal and the fumace had to be stoked early each morning and all through the winter days. By the time grandchildren were visiting the old outhouse in the back left corner of the cement covered backyard was an antique worth visiting. Behind the house was an alley separated from the yard by an old wood fence and a swinging door weighted to close with a pulley and old metal stove burner for ballast. Almost every Saturday the girls - Stella, Mary, Helen and Anna would be over to help with cleaning and household chores. This gave lots of time for the cousins to become good friends while attending the local cowboy movies, church or family gatherings. When the grandchildren arrived their grandmother would draw them aside and give them a few coppers (pennies) from her little black change purse. There was a confectionery store just around the comer next to the movie house. At that store the coppers were like gold. At Easter the children were assigned the task of getting a basket of food to St. Casmir's church for the special blessing. The reward was chocolate, more to their liking than the baskets contents of eggs, bread and cheese. Christmas Eve was a special event for the family at grandma's. A little artificial Christmas tree sat on top of the radio in the living room. All the sisters would arrive early in the day with the cousins to begin to prepare for Wigilia, a special feast but without meat in keeping with the catholic fast of Christmas eve. The sisters would prepare fried whiting, shrimp in sauce, pierogi stuffed with cottage cheese or sauerkraut, crab cakes, black bread with sweet butter and strong coffee for the adults and RC cola for the kids. Promptly at six when the sun had set, the feast would begin with special prayers led by grandma. After we ate and the dishes had been cleaned everyone rushed to the living room where each child received gifts from his or her aunts and uncles. Often the gifts were clothing or other "useful" items, which made everybody all the more anxious to get home to see what was in store under their own Christmas tree. A favorite gift was a shiny silver dollar from uncle Ed.

At about the same time that the Mostwikowski family was establishing itself in the new world, in the early twentieth century, Steven Stachurski arrived by boat at Curtis Bay, Maryland or in New York City. He was from a small town near Krakow, Poland. He quickly sought out work in the tailoring trade which he had learned back in Poland. Luckily he was good at his craft and soon became a master tailor, working for some of the best clothing manufacturers in Baltimore including Hass. He had followed his sister to the United States but she had located in the Boston area where she went to work in a shoe factory. She married a man by the name of Malinowski and eventually had three children, Pauline, Joseph and Steven. Steven Stachurski kept in touch with his family in Boston and in Poland. He kept up his tailors trade until years later when he retired. When he had a family of his own he made many suits and coats for them in his attic shop above the house on Ann Street. His parents played the accordion and Steven learned the harmonica. The woman Steven married, Julia, was one of six children of John and Rose Tomaszkiewicz who were migrants from Poland in the 1880's. John worked as a train mechanic at Montclair, Maryland but contracted Rheumatic heart disease and died relatively young just after 1920. Rose lived a long life which was complicated with arthritis until her death in 1949. Julia had one brother who died in his teens and four sisters. One of the sisters also died as a teenager but the rest of the girls prospered, and were married. Marie married Leonard Sliwinski and had four children. Pauline married Walter Doda and produced a daughter called Dorthy. Rose married Peter Jagodzinskin, having three children. Steven was in his early twenties and Julia 16 at their marriage on February 2. Soon after the wedding they decided to return to their homeland of Poland to visit with the family who remained there. The crossing was very stormy. The honeymoon trip was a long one and while there they gave birth to their eldest child Martin on November 11, 1910. Steven's parents wanted to keep their new grandson in the old country but America won in the end.

They returned to the States, after one year and for a short time lived on Eastem Avenue near Patterson Park before purchasing a home at 423 South Ann Street near Fells Point where they raised their family of seven children. The house was a vintage Baltimore row house with a stone stoop and a brick front which had been pointed over and lined to once again resemble its original self. It contained a closed circular staircase to the second floor and a two story addition which almost filled the backyard. The addition contained the kitchen and laundry room on the first floor and a huge bathroom on the second floor. The yard was the cement-covered home of the family dog - Mitzie by name in the 1950's. There was an adjoining house separated by the narrowest of dark alleyways connecting the street front to the yard. The adjoining house was the home of good friends - the Connolly family. Such good neighbors were these families, especially the wives Julie and Carrie that the wood fence between their yards was eventually taken down to enhance family exchanges and give Mitzie more leg room. Subsequent to Martin, Julia and Steven had four more sons and two daughters - Edwin, Marian, Joseph and his twin sister Helen, Steven and Matilda. Helen died in her infancy and Edwin died at 16 due to a burst appendix. Martin married Helen Mostwikowski in 1932 and had two sons: Martin and Dennis. Marian married Mary Bratkowski and had four sons, Kenneth, Richard, Wayne, and Glenn. He worked at Glenn L Martin as did Joseph making airplanes. Joseph married Mary Mach and had three children, Denise, Mark and David. Steven worked in the shipyard offices of Maryland Drydock for nine years after returning for the second world war and later married Mary Ann Stevens (nee Szczepanski). Matilda married Warren Smith and had two daughters, Joyce and Marilyn. All the kids attended Holy Rosary Church school.

When Martin was 16, Edwin 14 and Marian 12 their father had a serious problem with a hernia and Julia and the three boys went to work in the canning factory. The boys worked before school and full time in the summers from daybreak until 9pm when the factory was inspected to make sure the child labor laws weren't violated. A treat for them all was an occasional 3 cent ice cream cone. At 16 each of the three quit school to begin working full time to help support the family. Martin had one job which was a mixture of selling flowers and just as often moonshine gin to many of the Baltimoreans who were protesting the federal amendment which prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol. His family especially liked his other job in a bakery since he was the source of the family’s morning cinnamon buns.

Visits b the Stachurski home were different than those to the Mostwikowski house for grandchildren. Less frequent but overnight trips were the rule. This was fine because Grandma Julie made a great pineapple upside down cake which required several servings to finish. Also her homemade pound cake was at its best over morning coffee. Holiday get-togethers provided ample time to get to know all the cousins and the table was always covered with great hams, turkey, and polish sausage. During overnight stays the less fancy but wonderful borst and fried fish were frequently on the menu. Shopping at the far corner Ma and Pa grocery store or the Broadway Market provided two really different but exciting experiences.

ln the 1950's the Stachurski's moved to the "sticks" as they called the area before the move, just a few blocks from Martin and Helen. It was a typical Victorian house at 3919 Belview Avenue and Joe and his more handy friends set about to remodel it into a two family home. Steve moved into the second floor with his new bride Mary Ann. Joe still single lived down stairs with his parents but took over the second floor after he and Mary Mach married and Steve and Mary Ann moved to Ocean City in 1956 where they bought a business. The house was close enough to the Starks that Dennis often walked from grade school once a week to spend the evening here while Martin and Helen worked late. Pop continued to work and shortly after he retired, died in 1959 of an acute heart attack. He was in his early seventies. Twelve years after Pop died, Julia sold the house and moved back to the old Ann Street home which the family had rented during their fling with the "sticks". Julie lived there for several more years next to the Carrie family before moving in with Matilda. She died of congestive heart failure while in her mid-eighties. Helen and Martin met while traveling to and from their jobs in downtown Baltimore

on the trolley. Helen was an usherette at the Hippodrome Theater when she wasn't rolling cigars or making pants for a living. Martin was beginning a business as a beautician. His shop, Martin's Vanity Box, was the second such shop in Baltimore which was priced to serve the average woman. Before this only the rich would go to specialized shops to have their hair done. They eloped and were married in Elkton, Maryland in 1933 and later at the old cathedral of Mary Our Queen in downtown Baltimore. They lived in a number of apartments, starting on Elliot Avenue near St. Joseph Monastery. Just six months after Martin Jr. (Chappie) was bom on March 31, 1937 they moved to the country on an acre lot at 5504 Groveland Avenue. The house was a big victorian with cedar shingles, a covered porch on two sides of the house and three stories. Later there was an addition on the back which let the second and third floors be converted into rental apartments. The original house opened into a reception room with a piano, numerous chairs and steps to the upstairs. Off to the right was the living room often with a fire going in the fireplace. Behind the living room and two pocket doors was the formal dining room with its dormer windows and gas fireplace. Off of the dining room through a swinging full door and behind the reception hall was a mammoth kitchen. In the early days there was a set of stairs from the kitchen to the other floors. On the second floor were four rooms one for each of the boys and a master bedroom plus dressing room for the folks. After the conversion to apartments two bedrooms and a bath where added to the back of the kitchen. The boys were grouped into a single room and the fun of constant bickering interspersed with one great friendship that began in those days.

The yard was rather formal in the front and had lilac bushes separating it from the neighbors on either side. There were numerous huge trees, several apple trees two of which were planted in honor of the boys, a cherry tree, several Japanese maples, a pear tree, a grape vine and lots of shrubs. An outdoor grill, a small fish pond, vegetable and flower gardens, a seasonal badminton court, the dog run, sandbox and a large set of swings and slide, complements of Uncle Joe and his friends, provided lots of free time activities.

Martin had a large number of employees at first, but after both their sons entered school the business became mostly a family affair. Aunt Tillie worked with them both early in the business and just before it was sold in the late 1970s. They had a number of locations mostly in the business section of town. The longest occupied site was at the comer of Lexington and St. Paul Streets. The shop was an old barber's shop in the basement of a three story brick brownstone. It was filled with mirrors and marble. Most of their customers were the professional women working for the city or in business. By the time the boys were in school they had a regular schedule with Wednesday and Sunday as holidays and Monday and Friday as late working nights, usually till after 7 pm. For a few years after Helen went back to work, Dennis who was born five years after Martin on May 16, 1942, stayed home with a housekeeper Lulu. Lulu was a big friendly woman who would walk you all the way to the racetrack if she had a big bet on a favorite horse. She could pass for a model for Aunt Jemima pancake mix. During World War ll

there were chickens out back and always Martin had a big garden. Behind the house there was a huge field bordered with cherry trees and a rock wall which where the remains of a real farming effort from previous years. Beyond the field was a forest which went on for miles and miles. Just down the street was the county line and after a good hike you came to Mount Hope, a Catholic Church sponsored hospital for the mentalty ill and old age horne for the religious community. The focal point of the extensive grounds was a large abandoned boat lake. During the winters the neighborhood families would use this pond as their private skating rink. Lots of the outbuildings where in various states of disrepair and over the years their continued degeneration was a sad thing to watch. But for most of the boy's youths Mount Hope was "the" place to spend a long sunny or damp day. For years after the Starks arrived the street had only a dozen houses along the very long block which ended about 500 meters past house located just three houses down from the cross street of Rogers Avenue.

Each morning the day would start with Martin cooking up breakfast. Helen had required that if she was going to work she would be allowed to sleep late and have breakfast ready before the start of the workday. Usually at about 7 am the sounds of the radio morning news carried into the bedrooms to roust Helen, Chappie and Dennis. On Mondays and Fridays the morning fare was usually made up of cereal, oatmeal or toast while Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday were the egg days. Egg days were special because only the cook liked his eggs as raw as he usually made them, and the sounds of "ugh" were often the start of a day. Sundays after Mass and a stop at the bakery, the biggest breakfast of the week was prepared. Regular meals were served in the kitchen with Helen and Martin on the outside of the table and Chappie and Dennis opposite each other against the wall where they could be better controlled but unfortunately could easily kick each other under the table. After breakfast everybody got ready for whatever duties they had. The boys, while at All Saints school, started school with a required 8:15 mass. Everybody was out of the house by 8 am for many years all piling into the Plymouth or Mercury. After the boys were dropped off at school Helen was left off to open the shop. Martin parked the car at the Sun Papers office about a mile from the shop in an effort to get some walking in each day and to use the cheapest parking lot in downtown.

After school Martin and Dennis returned home for homework and chores. The Starks dogs, German Shepards, were a neighborhood phenomenon. Often taking unauthorized walks in the woods for days and not always recognizing where the property line ended, they often kept the post school hours active. The dogs were not only pets but also when litters arrived every six months or so they became a source of family income. Shortly after Martin and Helen moved to the house they purchased a german shepard called Penny and a cat called Kitty. Later a lineage of german shepherds began when Cassandra was rescued from the local pound. She lived with and eventually was succeeded by a series of offspring: Gypsy, Heidi, Heidi ll, Gretchen and Gretchen Il the latter even made it up to Hicks Road for the retirement years along with an unrelated successor and last family dog, Penny ll. Kitty was succeeded by Silvester, a cat with cartoon qualities for the boys, then came Mahitabel and her son Timmy. Timmy ll the last of the cat lineage lived out his later years with Dennis and Simone after Martin died. Since Chappie was a full five years older than Dennis the role of babysitter often fell on the former. Walks through the woods in all sorts of weather, with dogs in the lead was the standard Sunday fare for the males of the family. Because of their difference in ages, the boys shared few friends. Dennis made friends and enemies off and on with a number of local kids. Ken Adams lived across the street and being a year older than Dennis he often was both mentor and friend over the years. At times the neighborhood heard beagle howls from them as they called to find each other. At other times a stone thrown from opposite sides of Groveland Avenue marked some new misunderstanding. The Rosendales lived behind the Starks in what was probably the original house linked to the farmed areas mentioned earlier. Ray Rosendale was just a year behind Dennis in school and their friendship cycled over the years too. Other kids in the neighborhood were less involved in the early years but Beth Smerha, Barbara Young, Bobby Minix, Pat Agetstein, the Koffenbergers and others made the neighborhood especially lively in the summers. The neighborhood youth regularly set up "camps" and "clubs" in the woods, basements or fields. Several of the locals contributed pets and roadkills to a growing annex of graves near Kitty which eventually expanded to more than forty tended plots in the field behind the house. A grade school now marks the site.

Meals at the Starks were usually first rate. Martin and Helen had gone through some hard times as children because of the Great Depression, and when they were married, they agreed never to skimp on food. Lunches were usually just sandwiches and a dessert but dinners were special. Sunday dinner was at 1:30 pm in the dining room and traditionally included wine and a roast or poultry made with one of half a dozen recipes repeated for variation. Monday found the same meal served as leftovers for the boys as they waited for the return of the folks. Tuesdays were the night for chops; Wednesday being a day off was usually a casserole or some special meal which could take a little longer to prepare; Thursday was steak night; Friday was fish night as was the tradition in Catholic households then; and Saturday was ethnic night with Polish or Chinese dishes being the mainstay. Martin Junior from the time he was in seventh grade wanted to be a priest. The folks were opposed to his decision so early in life but the vocation persisted through grade school, high school and into college where at the end of his second year, he officially went off to the priesthood at The Portsmouth Priory in Rhode Island, with the family's blessing. Till then he filled his time with numerous classmate friends, and two especially well

received roles in his high school dramatics club. He was more studious than Dennis but was

faced with the same chores, and neighborhood activities. The Saturday house cleaning was a special ritual for the boys. Their duties included scrubbing the kitchen and bathroom floors, dusting and vacuuming the entire house plus other special assignments. Since the Starks had the second television in the neighborhood and since the boys were in charge of the house all of Saturday the day was often spent watching kids shows with lots of the neighborhood kids often until it was too late to get the chores done before the folks returned from work. Dennis went through All Saints. He repeated the first grade as he was too young when accepted but it enabled Helen to get back to work without a full time housekeeper. He was not much of a student until after the fourth year when one of the nuns suggested that he do extra work at home over the summer after that he had several teachers who encouraged him to catch up and he did. He went to Calvert Hall high school where he decided to become a teacher. When he found out how poorly paid teaching was as a profession in those days, he thought otherwise about that vocation. The raising of the dogs, cats and lots of turtles, fish, etc from the wild most have made the difference for when he entered the University of Maryland it was in the pre-veterinary programs.

The Starks had lots of friends in the area; the Youngs, McParlands, Parkes and other neighbors often got together for a barbecue or evening drinks. The families of Martin and Helen often visited on holidays like the fourth of July, with the site being rotated often. Probably the true "man who came to dinner" for the family was Harry Greenwald. Harry was a recent widower when he met Martin and Dennis while at a class for obedience dog training. Soon Dennis and Harry were training the dogs on weekends and Harry was invited for more and more dinners. Before Harry moved out of his home and took one of the apartments on Groveland Avenue, Dennis became his lawn boy. This was a way both boys made extra money in the neighborhood, and Dennis had five regular lawn jobs at one time. Harry became a regular member of the family and even moved to Hicks Road after the new house was built there.

ln the early sixties the Starks bought a seventy acre farm north of Hereford as a summer house and potential retirement home. Before this purchase, most family vacations were spent at the Jersey shore in Avalon or Cape May. It was closer to get to Hicks Road but we missed the ferry ride over the Delaware and the spaghetti of Miss Maza. After Dennis was off to Georgia at Veterinary College, the parents built their retirement home and sold the Groveland Avenue house. The street was now filled with traffic, as much of the woods had been cleared in the fifties and filled with developments and apartments. Martin and Helen had a hand at raising cattle on Hicks Road for a few years, but keeping up the new shop on Monument Street at Charles in a retirement complex and their advancing age meant that they were gentlemen farmers short on time. Helen had a bad stroke in the early seventies but did eventually go back to work. The Starks finally retired just before 1980. Martin died after a couple of years, and Helen, who always had resented moving to the country house lived there alone refusing to move until, suffering another stroke, she died in early 1989.