

Growing Up: 1939-1957

This is the first of a series of mini-memoirs, this one about growing up on Long Island, family, schools, travel. The next installment will cover my years in the Jesuit order.

Brooklyn

I began life on a banana boat. In late September 1938 my parents married in Pittsburgh; that same day they boarded a DC 3 to New York City and honeymooned on a banana freighter making a roundtrip to Belize. Returning, they settled down in their new apartment in Brooklyn Heights. I was told this so long ago that I don't remember learning it, and I saw photos of the freighter and their apartment.

Assigned to be born in July, I rushed into the world in mid April 1939 weighing 2 2/3 pounds, together with a 3 pound twin brother — who died quickly. My sister Nancy wrote a comment on my 75th birthday that told how I had been fortunate to be born in a hospital with a better way to care for preemies — learned from a German doctor who had been exhibiting preemies in incubators (though not me) at Coney Island and at the just-opened 1939 World's Fair:

David's nurse, Ruth Tosti, repeatedly visited the exhibits. She used the techniques — Perhaps most important was to hold that tiny baby. Her improvised incubator used light bulbs for heat and a pan of water for humidity, and a five-inch bowl became David's bath tub. The high concentrations of O₂ that elsewhere destroyed brain cells and caused blindness were diluted. . . . As a little girl I knew David's birth story, but it wasn't until many years later hit by a Harvard physician. She cited the breakthrough in premature infant care by the famous German doctor and the exhibits at the World's Fair — I raised my hand and I told David's birth story. At the end she gently asked where he was now — I think expecting him to be institutionalized — When I replied that he was the Chair of the Philosophy and Religion department at Bates College she gasped, Does he know he is a living miracle! So it was that David beat all the odds, survived and finally in July three months later came home to a great celebration in our parent's walk up apartment in Brooklyn. Relatives came and my uncle Joe was most impressed with the ironing board set up for a bar — our parents were great partiers. And David didn't "just survive" — My aunts and uncles told many stories of the little guy who read almost before he walked and who could ID any car from his stroller when he saw the hub caps, and read high school texts in first grade.

Over my months in the hospital, Ruth became friends with my mother, who visited the hospital daily to be pumped for milk that was fed to me, in the beginning, through a tiny bottle with a nipple on one end and a valve on the other where the nurse would blow to force the milk into my mouth until I developed the ability to suck on the bottle. My mother wrote to Ruth for years with news of me and the family. When my mother died in 2009, I took over the correspondence by mail, photos, and phone, and met her again in person at age 97, She passed away at 104, the longest friendship of my life.

Later my parents moved to a larger apartment in Brooklyn Heights. When I could, I explored that apartment. I would crawl out of my crib at night and my parents would find me in the morning, often snuggled up in a closet next to the vacuum cleaner. To be alerted when I escaped, my parents tied a cow bell on a ribbon to my leg. For many years that bell stood proudly on my dresser.

I have been told, as my sister said, that I was skilled at recognizing models of vehicles automobiles by from seeing their hubcaps. But my own first vehicle was a tricycle. I needed a road, so I made a path on the floor out of my parents prized 78 RPM jazz records, and rode over them. (As a teen I took many of the remaining records to my friends next door, where we danced and managed to ruin more.)

Outside the apartment, my mother walked me all around Brooklyn Heights and across the Brooklyn Bridge and back. She also wheeled me into a garden at the end of the block near the river, where those mothers who passed an interview with the owner were allowed to go, if they wore white gloves and a good hat.

I was proud of being born in Brooklyn, yet I never revisited Brooklyn Heights until I accompanied my mother on a visit in 2005. My father's abundant photographs had supplied my memories.

Military Years

My first clear memory unprompted by a photograph is of being confined in a gray room with a long thin window high on the wall above me. My parents told me that was the hospital in Hershey, Pennsylvania, where I was recovering from a 1942 tonsillectomy

We had moved to Pennsylvania when my father, ROTC in college, left his job with Esso Standard Oil Company to start active duty with the Army Air Force. He was assigned to the Middletown Air Depot near Harrisburg. Later he was sent to Wright-Patterson air field in Ohio. My parents often reminisced about their handsome Tudor house in the officer quarters there. It included a backyard roller coaster! In pictures I am riding a box with wheels set on a platform about 5 feet high, down a long undulating track to the ground. I remember the house from pictures and I saw the outside on a postwar visit to friends at the base. But what I most remember from that visit is swimming in the officers club pool with my friends, eight kids sitting on a single B-29 tire tube

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At Middletown and at Wright-Patterson, my father created and directed schools to train civilian employees. In 1944 he was assigned to develop a training school for officers who would command airbases. This took us to Homestead air base in Florida. His assignments to organize training schools, and especially the Florida assignment to develop curricula for managers, changed his life and mine, because he became involved with and helped shape the nascent field of organizational development.

Our house in Winter Park, outside Orlando, was the first that I remember clearly on my own, cream stucco, an enclosed stair, huge insects. Nature, not city, for the first time. Trees in a real yard, where my father built a playhouse from military packing crates. An enormous stump I played on at the end of the road. Tangerine orchards where I filched fruit on the way to the school bus. An abandoned golf course across from our house, with rattlesnakes sunning on the road — we picked them up with rakes. Bats nested in our chimney and my parents would swipe them with tennis rackets as they orbited the living room, while I watched from the steps. On my sixth birthday we were joined by Tacky, a patient and good-natured mutt who lived with us all through my boyhood. He would gambol along with a big greyhound from down the street leaping around and over him. When Tacky came up north he would sit on snowbanks and howl.

Florida taught me lakes and beaches. When we had enough gasoline ration coupons, we drove to the ocean in our black Ford. I recall walking through high grass to Vero Beach, where I discovered surf. A man at the Driftwood Hotel there taught me to play checkers; that was the weekend the Hiroshima bomb was dropped.

I learned to swim in a lake at Rollins College. That lake merges in my memories with an exciting lake at the base officers club, where alligators basked on the far shore. The military discouraged the alligators from swimming across the lake. The college lake was smaller and safer. I have a clear memory of standing on a dock with my teacher waist deep in the water telling me to jump off and he would catch me. I refused. He told me that I had jumped down the week before. I still refused. He threatened to end the lessons. I still refused. That's my memory. I always presumed that the lessons had been stopped. When I mentioned this to my mother later, she reassured me that the lessons had continued because the next week I had gone back and performed the jump.

While I have clear memories of my house, swimming, and nature in Florida, I have no clear memories of the public school there where I started first grade, except an image of its front door. School was not a big change since I was already reading books avidly on my own, and I had experienced kindergarten in Ohio. I do remember good feelings for my teacher, a Miss Peacock. Either she or someone else from the school lived in a house full of wonderful music boxes.

At the end of the war my father was offered a chance to stay in the Air Force with a promotion from lieutenant colonel to full bird colonel. That would have meant an overseas childhood for me, in Burma or the Caribbean. After he died I found among my father's papers letters to friends debating what to do. He seriously considered joining a management consulting firm. He chose instead to return to Esso. With his new expertise he went back not to his prewar job as a technical writer but into employee training, later employee communications, and worked at organizational

development as an in-house consultant.

Pittsburgh and Family

In the late fall of 1945 we journeyed north in our black Ford. While my father went on to New York to get established in his new job and find us a place to live, my mother and I spent six months at her family home in Crafton, near Pittsburgh.

I remember Crafton well from many visits over the years. The Sterrett Street house where my mother grew up held many memories of her youth, and many nooks for me to explore. It was near woods to wander in -- woods that are now suburban housing. I remember crowded family meals — most of my mother's siblings lived in the vicinity. My grandparents were genial and kind. Thomas McKeon, my maternal grandfather, died a few years later, but I have good memories of his calm temperament and the ways he could be fun. I didn't appreciate how much my maternal grandmother, Olivia Heisel McKeon, could be non-calm, but my mother told stories that made that clear. Grandma McKeon lived on for many years and visited us often.

I remember taking the streetcar into Pittsburgh, sledding on the hilly streets, and walking to school. I had resumed first grade, now at the same Catholic school that my mother had earlier attended. St. Philip's in my memory was a dark forbidding building with a narrow brick play yard penned in by high walls. On a later visit with my mother, we shared memories of the school building and the church, and of its ferocious pastor.

It was different to visit the Kolb family house, which I remember as dark and quiet, though it had a great yard with a real brook running through it. Grandma Kolb was kind and concerned, but not as expansive or as mercurial as Grandma McKeon. To my young eyes she seemed severe and distant, but I later heard tales of her softer, loving side. She too visited us often.

In 1946 the air quality in Pittsburgh -- genuine smog, a mix of fog and steel mill smoke -- was so bad that that if you put a handkerchief to your mouth and breathed a few times you would see the dark outline of your lips on the outside of the handkerchief. Shirt collars grimed in a day. It was strange to link that with my uncle Bill McKeon's exciting stories about his foreman's job in the steel mills. As we continued visiting over the years, the air gradually improved.

Both my mother and father had grown up in Pittsburgh, on opposite sides of the city; they met in the middle at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon University). My mother, Mary Catherine McKeon, had been elected campus queen in college, and remained strikingly beautiful all her life. After graduating from college at age 20 in 1932, not the best time for a job, she taught typing and business courses for five years at public high schools in small coal towns around Pittsburgh, traveling home by bus on weekends. She was the oldest girl of eight siblings, four girls and four boys, who all finished college, and her salary helped her younger siblings.

My father, Harry Damain Kolb, the fourth oldest of five boys and three girls, also graduated in 1932 at age 20, then spent a year in Ann Arbor studying for an MS in aeronautical engineering. He later moved to New York, lived in the Village and worked for Esso. His father died in 1936 at

age 65, leaving his mother destitute because the Pennsylvania Railroad had found a way to cheat her out of his pension. My father and his siblings supported her for forty years.

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My father had met my mother while they were in college, and as the newspaper editor he organized the campaign that had made her campus queen. He re-met her at their fifth college reunion and persuaded her to marry him and move to New York. He was energetic and thoughtful, ingenious at finding new ways to do things, whether fixing things around the house or restructuring a division of a corporation.

In college during Prohibition he and a chemist friend produced vodka in a lab; my father offered it for sale to fellow students by riding up and down a busy elevator in the main classroom building. In 1932 when hired by his fraternity to improve the academic standards at their house at University of Michigan, he began by installing a bar in the basement in order to keep the fraternity brothers at home close to their books.

Later that year Prohibition was ended. The local district attorney, a fraternity brother, donated a celebratory keg of beer to the house. All present had come of age during Prohibition and no one knew how to tap a keg of beer. My father, always the engineer, analyzed the situation and announced that it seemed obvious that they should first remove the bung sealing the keg, then insert the spout which had been provided. This mistake produced a geyser of beer flooding the basement party room. They managed to clean up before the guests and the district attorney arrived.

Those stories, told proudly by my father, show his ingenuity and his willingness to go beyond the rules, as well as his ability to laugh at himself. I've tried to adopt all three of those qualities, though I am not as adept as he was at the smiling smooth escape when confronted with transgressions. But it is always seemed obvious to me, as it was to him, that the rules of an organization, be it a game or a college or the Jesuits, were to be bent or manipulated or transgressed when necessary for some important goal, or maybe just for fun.

He taught me so much, how to work hard, write and keep figures, solder a wire, catch a ball, fish for bass, balance a checkbook, take pictures and work in a darkroom, be honest and forthright and energetic even when I was tired or out of sorts.

Both my parents were from families with eight children. In my father's family a brother had died young but I still had 28 aunts and uncles and 45 first cousins, most younger than me, so holiday reunions were busy times. I found my Kolb uncles and aunts less easy to get along with than the

McKeons. Some were eccentric, some distant, and one, my father's elder brother, seemed severe and judgmental despite a jolly manner.

Pittsburgh was our clan home; we made frequent trips to visit relatives. We drove 12 hours: into and through Manhattan, across the stinking Jersey meadows, and along Route 22 to reach the Pennsylvania Turnpike near Harrisburg. We drove through Christmas snow and ice, through Easter rain. When the Turnpike was extended to Philadelphia and then the New Jersey Turnpike was constructed, our trips became easier, but it was still an expedition to go to hilly Pittsburgh from flat Long Island. Sometimes we would return with a grandmother in tow.

There were families of cousins in the Pittsburgh and Cleveland whom we visited regularly, and I especially enjoyed seeing my nine Munsch cousins, near Pittsburgh. We would sometimes stay at their big old house north of the city. I was the same age as the oldest of their children, while my sister was more acquainted with the middle group. Over the years we came to know them all.

Garden City, Long Island

In the spring of 1946 my mother and I joined my father at the house he had purchased in Garden City, a suburb of 25,000 on Long Island about 25 miles from Manhattan. The town was well-to-do, and although we were living in a "poorer" section, our street was nicer than many in the nearby towns. We belonged to a Roman Catholic minority in a town dominated by an Episcopal cathedral and a "gentlemen's agreement" old money network. The town had been founded early in the century as a "planned community" with spacious parks and wide streets. It was a good place to grow up, with real neighborhood spirit. It was safe to bicycle long distances. The town organized fun celebrations on holidays. It supported an excellent school system. On the other hand, one of the connotations of being "planned" was that somehow Jews and African-Americans found it very difficult to purchase homes there. I wasn't aware of the exclusion but just accepted as natural that our town was different from those around it.

To our north were the Great Gatsby towns on the north shore of Long Island. To our south were crowded towns down to the south shore beaches and fishing ports. To our west lay Queens and Manhattan. To our east, farmland, all filled in since then.

We were an hour by train from Manhattan, twenty minutes from Queens, twenty five minutes from lovely Jones Beach with its steady surf. We picnicked there together many evenings when the beaches were mostly deserted. I took swimming and diving lessons in its saltwater pool, where I progressed from being scared to jump off a dock in Florida to diving off a high platform on Long Island.

There were empty potato fields three blocks from our house, where I and my friends could dig forts. Once we dragged back the carcass of an old airplane from nearby Roosevelt Field (Lindbergh's starting point). We set the fuselage in my friend's backyard and outfitted it with old switches to produce a simulated rocket ship. We had fun setting it up, but then hardly used it.

Our house sported a brick front with white pilasters, and clapboard sides that I came to know intimately when my father assigned me to paint them. A small den attached on one side had a flat

roof I could get to through a window; sometimes I would read there. A large tree in the front yard had a perch I could climb to and read. I had a large bedroom with room for toys and books. When I was almost nine, my sister was born and I was moved into a small cozy room that became my refuge and study.

My father and I refinished the basement together, laying tile and building walls. We installed a ping-pong table, constructed a workbench and our darkroom, set my elaborate train set on another big table we built, with a papier-mâché mountain, and outfitted a storage room with a nook where I could read unseen. My mother and I hung laundry in the basement when it wasn't practical outside, and my sister and I played hide and seek amid the sheets hanging in rows ceiling to floor.

Our backyard was large enough for a badminton court in the summers. Friends would come and play. Two Pittsburgh friends of my parents lived a few blocks away, as a family we became close to three families nearby. There were a dozen children old enough to play with on our block. We surged through the neighborhood playing Ringolevio, Red Rover, and punch ball in the street. We socialized in one another's houses. Neighbors were tolerant and friendly. A fascinating inventor lived two houses to our left and the neighborhood's official grouchy couple three to our right.

The Garden City house seemed large to me, as had my grandparents' houses in Pittsburgh. I recently discovered that the Garden City house contained only 1450 sq.ft. and I have since realized that my grandparents house was smaller than I remembered it, especially for ten people with one bathroom.

My mother had hoped for six children, but she suffered many miscarriages, including an almost full-term premature sister Mary who died swiftly when I was three. In Garden City my parents had decided to adopt a child, dealing with a Catholic agency in Brooklyn. In those days a doctor had to certify that my mother could no longer bear children. One day when I was at home alone a phone call came from the agency saying that they had found a new brother for me. I replied that that was no longer necessary because my mother was pregnant. My parents had not reported this because they expected this pregnancy, like the others, to end in a miscarriage. But the agency called my father at his office and said that they had just had an unusual conversation with me. Since my mother's condition no longer met their requirements, they closed the case. Fortunately that pregnancy delivered my sister Nancy, normal and energetic. I have no memory of the phone call, though at age 8 I was certainly old enough to remember, and moreover I have no memory of our prior discussions about adoption, a decision my father said that I had agreed to, at least on the surface.

Nancy arrived in 1948. She was bright and healthy, and since my parents assigned me as a babysitter we two spent a lot of time together. I enjoyed showing her things; she enjoyed learning and teasing me. We played games and imagined worlds together.

She soon discovered the best ways to tease me. A favorite game was to find ways to bother me

when I was working on school homework. Strange demands and unexpected emergencies appeared. Once I returned from the bathroom to find that in the middle of the sentence that I have been typing the words "Nancy Kolb" had been added. This happened more than once and soon became a story we enjoyed sharing. Both of us were proud of her ingenuity. When a college friend heard it he continued the practice, sneaking into my room and appending "Nancy Kolb" to unfinished sentences in my graduate school papers. In retaliation I hid one of the pages in his room. Months later I found it hidden in my room. The exchange went on for years, I would ask friends in faraway cities to send the page to him in an envelope that he would not recognize, then receive it back in some unexpected manner. I still have that tattered page in my files.

I left home when Nancy was nine and didn't see her more than a few times a year until I left the Jesuits 12 years later. Since then we've kept in constant touch despite varying distances. She moved with my parents to Houston in 1961, and after an adventurous high school attended a Catholic college in Colorado, spent her Junior year year in Vienna, graduated, married and taught school in Boston, obtained a MA in special education, and eventually became head of pupil services, de facto assistant superintendent, and a school principal in an excellent district in a Boston suburb. We worked closely together during my parents' illnesses, and I have watched with pride her daughters grow up whole and mature.

School Days

I had begun first grade in Florida in 1945, continued at St. Phillip's in Crafton, then spent the last weeks of first grade at another catholic school in Garden City, St Joseph's. I remember a pleasant building and large playground whose jungle gym I clambered on when I wanted to avoid the crowd, since I often felt picked on, being smaller than many my age. St. Joseph competed with the high quality public schools in our town. I remember we felt superior to the public schools, but I can't recall any basis for that opinion. I don't have too many good memories of St. Joseph's, but the nuns did teach grammar well, and basic math, and my socializing improved. Some nuns were difficult, others inspiring. The nuns and the parish priests constantly harped on purity and avoidance of anything sexual, with bad effects on my psyche.

In the spring of 1946. My family had just arrived at our third home for that year, in Garden City, on Long Island about 25 miles outside of Manhattan. As a new student I am introduced to the class. During the first week the nuns discovered that I already read well. One of them walked me up to the eighth grade classroom where she handed me a history or social studies text. She asked me to read the text aloud to the students. I did. Why should they be surprised, I thought, isn't that what everyone does, read all the time. But they were surprised. They applauded, and gave me a piece of candy as a reward. Then they walked me back down to the first grade and set me to reading with the rest of the class the first grade books about Dick and Jane and Spot their dog. I was bored, appalled. Why did I have to read this trivial stuff, do this homework over and over. The nuns didn't care. Stay in line. I learned a lesson: if you want to get outside the system you have to do it on your own. So I become a devoted user of a local library. When the system gets in your way, get outside the system.

I don't remember learning to read, but I know my parents helped me to learn very early. By the time I started the first grade I was reading widely. I remember a fascinating book about the life of whales and the military handbooks that my father had at home. I devoured my parents' Readers Digest, Life and Look magazines. But it was the library that opened new horizons.

That public library sponsored a summer reading contest. If you managed to read 12 books that summer you would win a free book. I entered the contest and Miss Holman, the librarian, suggested titles. They included my first encounter with science fiction, Hal Clement's Needle about an alien detective searching for a criminal, where both are hiding inside human bodies. The young hero and the detective talk and work together. I was hooked on sf. Always wanting to meet the Other, I read more science fiction stories about aliens and kept hoping that they would arrive to visit us.

I tried but didn't much enjoy standard boys books such as the Hardy Boys. I recall enjoying Mark Twain and some of Terhune's dog novels, as well as Alcott's Little Men and Little Women, but I think I missed their real themes. Science fiction brought wider horizons with H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, and the new authors of the '40s and '50s. I wanted to enter new worlds, so I favored long series. I eagerly awaited each Robert Heinlein juvenile with another story about a young man growing up in a strange environment and meeting challenges by a combination of good ol' American honesty, responsibility, and getting himself out of corrupt Dodge. I remember following the serial publication of Asimov's Foundation stories, his robot series, and Zenna Henderson's People stories. It's not surprising that later on I find myself excited by Tolkien, Lewis's Narnia books, and science fiction series such as those of C. J. Cherryh, William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and Vernor Vinge, as well as mainstream worlds by Austen, Trollope, and Sayers. I reread such books to live in their worlds. I wanted new feelings and perspectives that would question what I had learned and shake up my presuppositions. I am easily bored by yet another tale of suburban life and infidelity.

The '50s science fiction novels were resolutely American, capitalist and technophilic; I thrilled to their optimism. But something was lacking that I found in fantasy novels: more personal sentiments and familial dilemmas, and cultures not so devoted to growth and tech. So I read stories of Dr. Doolittle who spoke with animals, and L. Frank Baum's Oz books about a peaceable kingdom and its ruler, Ozma. Zenna Henderson's stories told of loneliness and difference, the search for family and community.

At home I discovered a copy of The Book of Marvels by Richard Halliburton, a traveler and writer from the 20s and 30s. He took me to real Other places as he described his adventures: a secret swim in the pool at the the Taj Mahal, Victoria and Iguazu Falls, the Pyramids, Lhasa, flying around the world in his small plane. When I visited Iguazu Falls in Brazil I was reliving a chapter of that book.

On another home shelf I discovered Lin Yutang's The Wisdom of China and India. The book included original texts of Hindu myths, Buddhist scriptures, old and new Chinese fiction and poetry. I remember how the family life of a Chinese minor official struck me as strange and memorable and I remember being very moved by the poems by Po Chu-i and Tu Fu.

So by the time I entered high school I had already read a life of the Buddha, excerpts from the

Rig Veda and Upanishads, a condensation of the Ramayana, selections from Confucius and Mencius (the first philosophers I ever read). Not much of that entered my day to day cultural world but I realized there were further horizons to explore. I knew, too, that if you want to get outside you have to do it on your own; you couldn't wait for the system to open up.

That desire to explore led me into amateur astronomy. Early on I proudly memorized the names of the then nine planets. Later I purchased a telescope with a three inch mirror that I would set up in the backyard and examine the moon, stars and planets. It showed surprisingly good images but was hard to aim. I frequented the American Museum of Natural History and its Hayden Planetarium. I kept reading and visiting astronomical expositions and planetaria, and have continued to read astrophysics and cosmology, gradually improving my math skills for that purpose.

Another early fascination was architecture. I read Frank Lloyd Wright eagerly. Visiting midtown Manhattan as its architecture changed after the war, I kept an eye out for the latest modern buildings near my father's Midtown office. I was blown away by Mies van der Rohe's Seagram building and by Lever House across the street. I mourned the destruction of Pennsylvania Station. It wasn't until much later that architecture became something I wrote about but interest came early.

Thinking back now I realize that the happiest times, the times when I have been most feeling a sense of flow, was when I was roving beyond a local horizon, learning a new language, finding a new kind of mathematics, reading a new history, exploring a new culture. Then, the excitement of returning, bringing word of the wider world, trying to explain to others that there was More. When I became a teacher I saw my role that way: to open up the students world, lead them into wider vision.

Garden City had repeatedly voted down money for a public library (and also refused a swimming pool and a teen center — after I left town, they relented). The nearby Hempstead library occupied a fascinating old house with odd corridors connecting small rooms. In the back, down a winding hidden stairway, you reached a secret room with a puppet theater set up for marionettes, a lovely blue painted front stage with curtains that opened and closed, and a bridge above the stage where the puppeteers operated the puppets. Entranced, I joined the group. We would decide upon a fairy tale story, then go up to the cluttered attic to choose puppets from previous shows. We would select those that could fit the new characters, and each of us would take the one or two puppets home. We were responsible for costuming and restringing them. Some of the costumes were already available; others had to be manufactured by our parents. Then we would bring the puppets and practice the show. I'm proud that I became good at manipulating the marionettes. I don't remember whether we memorized dialogue or had it posted on the bridge. We performed several shows a year; it was incredibly enjoyable. But in 1951 Hempstead built a new library and the puppet theater disappeared.

Then I built a hand puppet theater in my basement and put on shows for neighborhood kids. I made my theater from old boxes that I could stand behind raising my hands into a stage created

by another box with open sides. It worked well except that with only two hands I was limited in the complexity of stories that I could put together. My diverse cast included a dragon and several humans in different styles. At that time television featured several puppet shows, and I particularly enjoyed Kukla, Fran and Ollie. Once I dared write to Burr Tillstrom, their puppeteer, asking if he had any discarded puppet heads. I received no response, and to his credit Tillstrom never allowed his puppet characters to be merchandised. I still keep a few hand puppets around for occasional use. I have strong memories of puppeteering: learning to perform, to act, memorize, work together in a shared team. It brought a sense of competence, and perhaps also the feeling of wielding a secret power.

In 1950 I became an altar boy at St. Joseph's. I enjoyed the feeling of being on the inside, close to the core of the ritual. Playing with the rules, for a few weeks I tried to make the altar boy ritual more important by adding extra bows. Some of the nuns who attended Mass soon put a stop to that. That memory still embarrasses me but that desire to be near the center later dogged my philosophical career.

Altar serving brought my first encounter with a foreign language. We weren't urged to learn the detailed meaning and grammar of the Latin words, but only to read the parallel English text so we would know generally what we were saying. Still, I enjoyed figuring out the Latin.

I would ride my bicycle to serve early Mass, but once I started high school that was no longer practical, so I only served for large ceremonies. I had become a senior altar boy and master of ceremonies at high mass, preparing incense and guiding the other servers. Besides the solemnities, at weddings and funerals; the altar boys might occasionally receive tips that supplemented my weekly allowance. (I was astonished when one year my father suddenly tripled my allowance, only to discover later that he had done so because my orthodontist had reduced his fee by the same amount, as my treatment had taken longer than promised.) My high point: the Vatican had decreed a new Easter ritual and nobody quite knew what to do during the long vigil ceremony. I studied the new manual and drew a series of diagrams on postage size pieces of paper that I kept in my left hand for surreptitious consultation during the ceremony. I would make covert gestures to the other servers directing where they should go and what they should do.

Once I was asked to attend a Catholic picnic day at a nearby boarding school. They dressed me up in the full regalia of a priest at mass. I and others were paraded out on the steps of the school for a pageant. I don't remember the details but I remember feeling nervous and unhappy. This should have been a clue to me that I really wasn't interested in the priesthood. My desire to be at the center of things was more intellectual and contemplative than preaching and representing an institution. But I didn't learn that lesson until many years later.

My religion in grade school was organized around a demanding God who issued challenges and strict guidelines. I wanted to be near that center and feel less oppressed. Personal piety involved responding to commands, getting rituals right, and responding to challenges to go further than the ordinary person, as we were being constantly urged to do. Had I received a "vocation" to a higher life? Then there was my fear of being judged. I remember sometimes going to bed at night

worrying about dying during the night, and whispering “Jesus,” figuring if I died it would be safer if this were my last word. This was hardly the warm personal relation to Christ we were being urged to establish.

Summertime

During the summers of 1949 and 1950 my family sent me to a camp on a lake in in the Pocono mountains of Pennsylvania,. I enjoyed camp life in shared cabins, know-it-all counsellors, campers divided into opposing teams, swimming, canoeing, braiding lanyards, elaborate games in the woods, spying on the nearby girls camp, visiting the town. I learned much, but there was one feature that puzzled me. We had bible classes and there were assemblies on Sunday night when we would hear the Bible read to us with some preaching and singing. We Catholics were allowed to go to mass in town. It never occurred to me, given the elaborateness of Catholic ritual, that what we were attending on Sunday evenings was a standard Protestant church service. In fact the camp was run by students from a religiously affiliated college in Indiana. When I realized what was going on at those services I was thrilled -- this was a time when Catholic kids were forbidden even to look in the door of the lovely gothic Episcopal Cathedral in Garden City. I did, of course, on the sly.

Summers after those camp years until I was 18 my family spent at Lake Mascoma in New Hampshire, near the Connecticut River and Dartmouth College. The lake was several miles long, less than a half-mile wide, and along its western shore were scattered remnants of a spread-out Shaker community. We lived in a Shaker barn that had been converted into three large apartments. The barn belonged to the family of Ada Foster, who had helped my mother after my sister’s birth. The apartment, more spacious than our Garden City house, faced the lake and a strawberry field and meadow where we played. I would go hiking in the mountains, boating on the lake, swimming everyday, taking baths and doing laundry in the lake (so ecological!), playing on a huge sawdust pile at the sawmill across the road, sharing with cousins who were spending weeks with us, walking down the road to get fried onion rings from a stand, going to church in a chapel added to a huge Shaker residence then owned by a Catholic order who ran a summer camp where, unknown to me, one of my future friends in the Jesuits was at that time a camper.

I recall those idyllic summers happily. They were full of exploration, relaxing playful times, discovery and adventure. I learned to waterski, hike and spend nights in the woods, eat new foods, fish in the lake, deal with local kids, and very hesitantly learning to deal with the girls on vacation nearby. Unfortunately, because he had only three weeks vacation my father could not be there the entire summer; he would drive up from New York on weekends.

Then there was the time that a sailboat my father had lovingly refinished capsized at the dock and broke its mast. And the time that my \$10 bill blew over the side of a girlfriend’s speedboat we were taking up the lake to refuel. And the time I had to have surgery at the hospital in Hanover. There I learned that an appendectomy was a small matter: I shared a room with a boy who was incredibly burned; his chest was a mass of scar tissue and his face was normal only

because of lengthy skin grafts. He had thrown some lighter fluid on charcoal to make it burn — the can exploded.

Years later Anne and I drove by the old summer barn. The idyllic summer place had been downgraded, divided into motel units. The religious institution still existed but had turned its old Shaker residence into a motel where we stayed the night.

In New Hampshire my father made continuous efforts to teach me to fish. I was never very good at it. Often I went out with a local boy, who would reel in one fish after another while I cast in vain in the same direction with the same lures. Later in Texas my father would take me out with a local guide who again would catch fish after fish while I cast without success. In Maine my father found yet another guide, with the same results except that I did once catch a sizable bass we brought home and cooked for dinner. I kept trying, to please my father, but I didn't enjoy fishing and never found in it the contemplative relation to nature which fly fishermen here in Oregon enjoy. Perhaps fishing for bass is not solitary enough.

New York City

My father traveled the Long Island Railroad from Garden City to the center of Manhattan. Because of a vision problem — I can only read with one eye (amblyopia)— I wore a patch on my good eye for several years, and for many months in third grade I would travel alone into New York for treatments. My father had showed me the way. I would be excused from school, walk to our station, take a train to Penn Station, a subway to 14th St., then a bus crosstown to the New York Eye and Ear. I would do their tests and exercises, then return uptown to join my father at his office. We would return home together. My father didn't worry about my wandering around Manhattan unescorted at that age. Later, living in Tokyo, I would see even younger children riding trains and subways on their own. I felt at home in Manhattan, and later during high school I would travel into the city for debate tournaments, to museums, or to visit my father's office. I thought myself as quite the urban sophisticate, but I realized later when I lived in the Bronx that my high school acquaintance with the city New York had been limited to Midtown from 30th to 76th with outliers at the Cloisters and the Staten Island ferry. My wanderings had almost never brought me to Wall Street, the docks, the Village, the upper East side, or the other boroughs.

The years of eye treatments affected my image: a small kid with glasses and one eye covered. While I was energetic and coordinated and could handle solo events like swimming or running, I was never much good at ball games because my "lazy eye" caused poor depth perception. So I never participated in the sports which inspire devotion to professional teams. I have never considered this a deep loss. I did follow the Brooklyn Dodgers until they moved away, and then lost interest in baseball. Swimming, archery, canoeing, diving, water skiing were all passions at one time or another. Later on, hiking and mountain walking. For a while, running, until my knees protested. Always, walking. That's even more important now with Parkinson's.

High School Days

Garden City offered an excellent high school but my parents sent me to a Catholic school, Chaminade, in the next town north. Discipline was tight but there was a good spirit among the students. Many young enthusiastic Marianist Brothers taught there, together with committed laymen. I was impressed by the brothers, who seemed to have more varied and full personalities than my grammar school nuns had shown, ranging from the forbiddingly stern principal to jolly younger brothers, from an acerbic biology teacher, a smiling chemist, to one or two who became friends and advisors.

I rode a bike the mile and a half to high school; it had a rack to carry my saxophone and my books. On weekends I would roam around town or bike a few miles north to Roslyn to sit quietly in a park with a small waterfall, peaceful and usually deserted. My first bicycle had been red with fat tires that I rode to church. To high school I rode a black "English" bicycle with three gears, which I won in a contest sponsored by a company that manufactured marbles; my father and I invented a game to be used with marbles. It was a fun adventure for us both./

At Chaminade from 1953 to 1957 homework began to take up more time. I had learned to type from my mother who had taught typing in Pennsylvania high schools. My little room contained a desk, a narrow daybed surrounded by shelves my father built. A closet with more bookshelves provided a trapdoor to an unfinished attic. I rigged up a radio and lights I could control from bed so I could read quietly. That plus late night dog walks gave me lots of time to think.

I truly enjoyed language courses. Four years of Latin was a fun, and useful later. Three years of French excited me. The summer after my first year French I wanted more so found a novel in the library, *Sans Famille*, by Hector Malot, about a boy abandoned by his family. I read through it with a dictionary. I remember the good feeling of completing the novel, but only enough of the story to see now how it echoed the search for acceptance so frequent in other books I was then reading. But most of all I remember my high school activities. I worked on the school newspaper and became its news editor in my senior year. I joined the science and chess clubs. But my major activities were band and debate.

The concert band practiced every morning before school, performed classical and pop music at two concerts, marched and played at parades and football games. We showed up an hour and a half early every day, and marching meant outdoor practice in bad weather, and parades in hot weather.

The music we played was difficult enough that I had to practice every day. We were released from class for our weekly music lessons, mine from a Mr. Donofrio who would play examples on his clarinet. (When I was studying saxophone in grade school, a Mr. Queary would come to my house. He would pick up my saxophone to demonstrate for me. But he was a smoker and he left a very bad taste and saliva on the mouthpiece. It's hard to imagine anyone doing that today.)

After a few months in the alto saxophone section, I was given a soprano sax to play, sitting with the flutes and oboes. Because our English horn player was lazy, I was often assigned English horn solos from pieces such as the William Tell overture or the New World Symphony. There also were individual solos accompanied by a piano. Once, playing a transcription of a Fritz Kreisler violin piece I neglected one of the repeats and went straight into the final section.

Standing at the front of the stage and I looked down in panic at Ferdie accompanying me, but he

had already picked up what I'd done and swung right into his closing bars. It was a moment of communication and musicality that I treasure.

Our energetic conductor, the temperamental Angelo Ferdinanado (who unknown to us had led and recorded a big band in the mid 1930s) was a hard task master. He instilled great loyalty and a spirit of dedication. We continually won band contests in the New York area. In a concert band clarinets take the part of strings, and we played transcriptions of classical symphonies and operatic overtures. We often played from handwritten scores of classical pieces which Ferdie had arranged for band. We felt quite professional. At practice he would beat time with a drumstick that he would hurl at people not playing well. His rehearsal music stand had a deep groove where he beat hard on it — but in concerts he used a thin white baton.

I loved playing in the band, but in my senior year a conflict arose between the finals of a national debate tournament in Pittsburgh and the finals of a band contest at Town Hall in New York. After much agonizing I chose the debate, figuring that I was only one of six debaters rather than one of fifty band members. I got yelled at for that decision, but the band won easily without me. A few weeks later, at graduation, much to my surprise, I shared the award for best band member. Of the awards I received in high school that's the one I treasure most.

An odd band memory comes from that senior year. I was 18 and my driver's license now allowed me to drive into New York City. As preparation for that band contest, we had to submit a recording of our music to a judge on an old wire recorder. I was given instructions, drove alone into an empty city on Sunday morning, searched deserted streets until I found the correct Wall Street building, and made my way through empty corridors to a darkened office where the judge sat alone. We seemed to be the only inhabitants of Manhattan that day. I triumphantly plugged the recorder into the wall and turned it on. Nothing happened. We tried and tried to no avail. I came home and discovered that the recorder had been damaged. It turned out that the building was one of the last in New York City that employed direct rather than alternating current. The recorder couldn't handle it, but nobody on the music scene realized the fact. I still recall a strangely empty city and the mysterious curse on the recorder.

I had had no intention of joining the high school debate program but one day as I was entering a religion class the teacher, Bro. Joseph Lynch, blocked my way into the school room and said, "you are coming into the debate meeting this afternoon." I replied with some confusion "yes, Brother". But at the meeting I felt at home, and Bro. Lynch became a close friend and valued advisor. He and the club introduced me to a wider social and cultural world than Garden City, and to conversations on topics not discussed much at home.

Besides debate I competed in extempore speaking, where I would be given a topic and 20 minutes to prepare a 10 minute talk to be delivered before judges. Usually the topics were drawn from current affairs, so we brought magazines and sources. Sometimes there were religious topics. Compared to the style of policy debate popular at that time, with one topic for the entire year researched more and more thoroughly and argued about more and more finely, extempore speaking favored quick conclusions and dramatic appeals. Both were good training for teaching.

Most of my high school social life revolved around debate friends and tournaments. Many of my closest friends at Chaminade were in the debate program, and the only friend I still keep up with from high school is Rodney Mason, a fellow debater. My own fine friend and debate partner, Ed Kraus, was killed in a tragic winter car accident returning from a debate contest two years after we graduated from high school. He was first of my friends to die. He would soon be followed by another who lived a few blocks away, and a third who suffered from hemophilia but refused to give in to the disease.

Me and My Parents

In the Air Force, especially when developing his training program for base commanders, my father had worked through the foundational texts of the growing field of Organizational Development. When he returned to Esso he joined the division of employee training. Among other projects he established a training center at Elizabeth, New Jersey, where management and labor were brought together to learn how to improve their communication. I visited the Center and read its teaching materials when my father brought them home to write or edit. He went on to hire many of the pioneers of OD as employees or consultants, and I met many of them over dinner or at his office. He often spoke to me about his work, its projects and techniques and its successes and failures.

When my father spent time at the National Training Laboratory in Bethel, Maine, he learned their techniques for their Training Groups (T-groups, later called encounter groups). He participated in intense group sessions and learned to run and manage them. He came away with an expanded repertoire for improving employee communication and interaction. In the strict model for T-groups people remain anonymous and make no reference to their “outside” lives. They focus purely on becoming aware of their present emotional reactions, interactions, and the roles they assume within the group, learning to notice the intention and effect of every statement, and what was going on with other group members. This stressful but effective way of making people self-aware aimed to improve the functioning of organizations. My father tried this technique for Esso’s labor disputes and intra-company frictions. He told me that the group experience did increase employees’ self-awareness, but the focus on the present moment meant that there was no active consideration of the roles and patterns already established in the workplace. After the group sessions, old patterns reasserted themselves. So my father developed other techniques that focussed more on improving awareness and confronting roles and patterns in the workplace. He summarized his process in a small book he wrote, *Organizational Improvement*. I do not think all that group theory had much influence on our family life.

I talked with my father about his work and read his writings. Then I ran into group theory when in my second year at Chaminade, I and a dozen other students were invited to a week of discussions at a retreat house up the Hudson River from New York. We formed discussion groups, and members monitored the discussion, drawing diagrams showing who spoke to whom or to the group as a whole, classifying each statement that was made according to a grid of roles and individuals. (Later we heard that the forms we were filling out were used in a dissertation from one of the brothers leading the exercise). I don’t recall what we discussed but only the

meta-discussions about the group activity. The experience strengthened my tendency to regard groups I was involved in as processes to be improved.

learned much from my father, not only about groups and organizations. He helped me learn basic sports, and he never quite gave up trying to get me to improve at ball games. Science projects, chemical and erector sets, basic woodworking and carpentry. More distinctively, photography and darkroom skills, and we cooperated to mass produce produce annual Christmas cards. He had long been a skilled photographer, preferring patterns and semiabstract compositions that he displayed on large prints that he produced himself.

My father always had projects and we worked together laying tile, painting rooms setting up the darkroom, fixing plumbing, building the train set, rewiring the TV antenna, and so on. The slightest malfunction became a project and a teaching opportunity. Our first TV did not pick up all channels well so we installed a special rotating antenna on the roof and my father fiddled with the tuner. We added a switch for the higher channels, plus a piece of my erector set sticking out that you jiggled to improve the picture. Dad loved reengineering household chores, trips, and corporate structures. He taught me to follow directions but not be afraid to extend beyond them.

My father taught me much about home repair and upkeep, but he deliberately kept his housekeeping skills at a low level so that he could enjoy traditional gender roles. It was my mother who introduced me to cooking, cleaning, laundering, and housekeeping skills — and provided an example of insightful gracious dealing with people, steadfastness, patience, and equanimity.

As I learned much, I did find a need to distance myself from my father's seeming omniscience. When I became more intellectual later on, I moved into areas that he was not familiar with, though he was capable of following. That role reversal was satisfying to me and it never bothered him; he was proud of my accomplishments. I always found my parents supportive, encouraging, willing to make suggestions toward whatever goals I was pursuing. They opened many doors and never forced me to walk one particular path.

On the other hand, on matters of smaller import than life goals my father could be very stubborn and controlling. When he had set up a plan for a day, woe to you if you disagreed. Sometimes I did. Once when I was visiting Texas my father announced that his good friend from Esso was coming to visit overnight and I would be sleeping on the living room couch to give them a place to sleep. There was no question, no opportunity to negotiate. Taking umbrage at this order — I was 50 years old and felt it important to have my own place in his house — I took advantage of the fact that I had already arranged to attend a play in Austin that evening. (Camus' Caligula, with the title role of the insane Emperor well played by Leonard Nimoy). I decided to stay on in town, at a motel. I arrived home the next morning and visited for a short time with the friend. My father was furious; I had broken the family contract to present a united front to the world. I had not done it his way. My reaction to his order had been far out of scale for that occasion, but expressed a long suppressed rebellion.

My parents could enliven any group, my mother in her quiet way, my father more boisterously. He could ingratiate himself with children almost instantly; they remembered him as the fellow

who could teach them new games and would cheat at them with a smile. I envied those skills.

I thought my mother was very centered but I often felt that my father was secretly insecure. I found myself “supporting” him in his projects even when I thought them ill-conceived or incomplete. I felt I had a duty to help him actively maintain his image of himself. Looking back now, I find no reason to think that my impression of him was correct; he was quite self-confident; I was projecting some inner need of my own. There were times when he told me about his own doubts but I generalized these far more than they deserved. I mention this pattern because it showed up later in my dealing with other authority figures as a way of accepting authority while internally distancing myself from it.

My family was many things a child could hope for, and the larger clan on my mother’s side shared her calm acceptance and loving support. I idealized my parents, and it took me a long time to understand that though they showed calm harmony they did have severe disagreements. Their arguments were invisible because they were carried out in slow-motion — a comment today answered by a comment next week.

Travels

Our family enjoyed travel on long car trips. All over Long Island, throughout New Jersey, Connecticut and upstate New York. To Pittsburgh. Up to New Hampshire and Vermont in the summers. Down to Washington DC and a favorite, the Blue Ridge with the Shenandoah Valley and Luray Caverns. My father was a careful trip planner and drew up itineraries and detailed schedules. Since he worked for Esso we found gas stations from that company, with dramas when we misestimated the distance to where he could use his employee discount. With only two children the car was never crowded. In high school my father indulged himself by buying the first of several convertibles, a big yellow Oldsmobile, wonderful for long trips. Not to mention that I enjoyed driving it around Long Island showing it off to my high school friends.

Around 1950 my father was invited to address the Freedom Foundation in Search, Arkansas. He invited me to accompany him, and planned a wonderful series of new experiences for me. I remember my first plane flight, from New York to Pittsburgh, my first night on a Pullman car, down to St. Louis, my first long-distance bus, to Arkansas, my first view of the South. After his talk, another bus to Memphis and a night in the storied Peabody hotel, with its famous ducks riding the elevator. Then a bus ride across Tennessee and through the Blue Ridge Mountains, followed by a flight back to New York. A vivid collection of experiences, widening my world.

Although I didn’t realize it at the time, my father was featured at this and other business gatherings because of his experience applying theories of organizational research and development in a real corporate environment. A neighbor and longtime friend who became quite a successful businessman once told me that when he was in business school the word went round that Harry Kolb was coming to speak, and people were excited because he was someone who would speak about organizational development not from theory but from living practice. He published a few articles and wrote several short books about his work and theories. Many were

for internal consumption or for his later two-year volunteer work on loan from his company to organize the Postal Management Service Institute in Washington DC.

In 1956, my father spent three months advising the Creole oil company in Venezuela. In the spring my mother, sister, and I flew down on a prop plane and spent three weeks in Caracas. We stayed at a great hotel, swam, ate food, toured the city and made day trips in the surrounding countryside. My sister came down with chickenpox, which we hid from the hotel staff by elaborate ruses. I practiced my hastily acquired rudimentary Spanish. We returned on a Grace Line freighter that stopped in Columbia and cruised past Cuba. Crossing across the trade wind belt I was seasick, but so was almost everybody.. I also remember watching a movie in the dining room with a skylight open, watching the stars sliding from side to side. I still enjoy the memory of our entering New York Harbor, more impressive from the ship than from the Staten Island Ferry. A girl whom I had gotten to know had been eagerly awaiting the Statue of Liberty — she looked up aghast, crying “but...it’s green!”

This was my first trip to a foreign country other than short visits to Canada, and I would not go abroad again until age 30. I wrote an article about Venezuela for my high school newspaper. The excitement of seeing new places and being surrounded by a new culture and language invigorated me. I had been full of questions; at one point on a tour led by an oil company man through a government facility, I asked about the government, and told in a whisper “we don’t talk about such things in public.” This was during the time of the dictator Perez Jimenez. I was not so sophisticated after all.

In the summer of 1957 our family drove our big yellow convertible out west as far as Salt Lake. This trip that opened my eyes to landscapes far different from New England and the Atlantic states I knew. We rode horses at Jackson Hole and along the north rim of the Grand Canyon; we hiked in Bryce Canyon; we drove at my stubborn insistence up Pikes Peak even though from the top we could see only ten yards. It was all wonderful.

On our drive we had a contest: who would be the first to record license plates from all 48 states. Returning through Kansas all four of us had claimed 47 states. Missing was the state of Maine. My mother and I went into a dinner restaurant; my father and sister came in behind us and proclaimed that they had discovered a Maine license plate in the parking lot. I accepted defeat, but just to be sure, on the way out I walked around the parking lot and, sure enough, there was a car from Maine. The next morning, though, my father and sister admitted that they had been teasing me; they had seen no car from Maine. Then I could triumphantly say that indeed there had been one that I alone had seen. Twenty years later that missing state would become my home for another twenty-plus years.

On that trip, in Cody, Wyoming, a friend watching our mail read me a letter over the phone. I had been accepted into the Jesuit religious order. I remember feeling happy and queasy at the same time.

