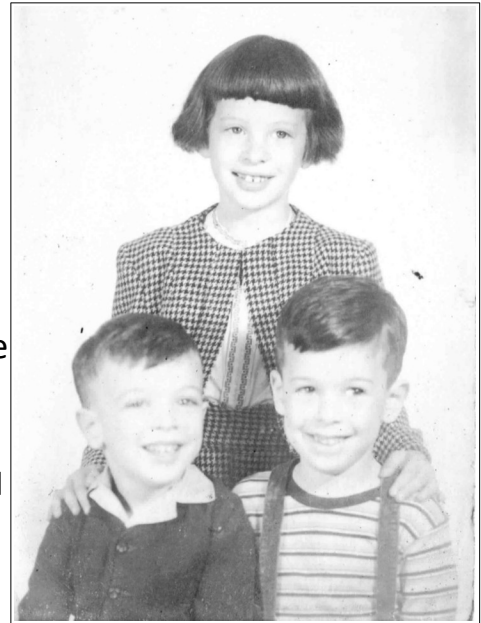


WARSAW

It all looked familiar like the streets of a town when you're too young to drive ...

James McMurtry

I lived in Warsaw, NY from the time I was five until I was ten, from kindergarten through fourth grade. We lived in a four bedroom house, with a living room on one side of the first floor, and a dining room and kitchen on the other, a standard house built in the twenties, with oak trim, as I remember, and a fireplace. Each of us three kids had his/her own room. This is a picture of us when I was in second grade, my two year younger brother Steve on the left, and my two year older sister Jane above us. I won the lottery, in my mind, by getting the room which had, on its back, a screened in porch. While this meant I had less privacy, it also meant that I could spend time in the protected outside. My clearest memory of that porch was taking apart the antique radios my father had salvaged from some dealer, because he knew I liked to take things apart.



Moving to Warsaw, for my mother, must have been in many ways a relief. While Warsaw was a small town, in remote upstate New York, at least it was a town, and we lived in a house with central heat, and plumbing, and she could walk to the Main Street shopping district four blocks away, or drive to the relatively well stocked library. She was even able, once my younger brother was in school, to get a job, at a stationary store, as a clerk, gaining some independence, and a life other than the drudgery of child care and housework. Small rewards for a woman who had grown up in Europe with servants, had a degree from Mt. Holyoke, and a library degree from Columbia, but no doubt immensely freeing.

She missed the possibility of intelligent conversation with some of the neighbors of the farm. Not five miles away, just outside of Amenia, lived Lewis Mumford, whom my parents had come to know through political activity, especially their failed attempt at removing Hamilton Fish from Congress. She must have been aware, also, of who Alan(?) Spingarn's visitors were. Spingarn had inherited his estate, Troutbeck, as the son of a mill owner, and saw himself very much as the Engels, supporting the work of

Marx, or in Spingarn's case, W.E.B. DuBois.

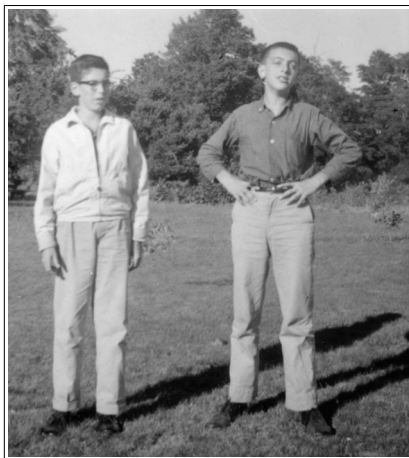
I remember visiting the estate, an old Victorian House, rotting into the ground, facing a lake, where we went swimming. I believe we were invited there to play with Spingarn's guest's son. In the home movies we have, there is a segment of us on the dock, with an African American child. I remember wanting to go back, but being told, no, we had to wait for an invitation, and I remember wanting to go inside the house, during that visit, but being told no, we were not invited. My mother was most clear on social proprieties.

I lived in Warsaw from the time I was five until I was ten, from kindergarten through fourth grade. As such the town was where I really became myself, began my individuation.

Living in town had immense benefits to us kids. Next door lived Johnny Wilsie, whose father was an executive with Morton Salt. This part of New York State had immense underground salt deposits, which Morton mined. His house was large; his house had not only a TV, but a color TV, where we could watch the Howdy Doody show, broadcast from Buffalo, 50 miles to the west.

On the other side, two houses down, were the Humphrey twins, Freddie and Charles, and the four of us would roam at will through the backyards that connected our houses. There were no fences, as I recall, and behind the Humphrey's house was the athletic fields of the high school.

Having age cohorts was, it turned out, a mixed blessing, for I was much smaller than the other kids my age. My brother, two years younger, remembers that it was even back then, when I was perhaps eight, being introduced to my parents friends with me, and they would comment how they thought Walter was the older. I was, but it did not show. This picture, taken when I was about twelve, shows me on the left, and my brother, two years younger, but taller, on the right.



My parents, especially my mother, was concerned, and I remember being taken to Buffalo, hooked up with a lot of wires, and told to lie in a bed in a small room. I believe they were looking for neurological abnormalities; they found none. I was just small, immature, for my age. This lasted through high school.

This also meant that I was the smallest kid in the gang, and, in the physical pecking order, was frequently dominated, even by children younger than me. My father really could not understand it; he had grown up just the opposite, the dominant child. I remember complaining about Johnny Wilsie beating me up, and his advice was to get a stick and hit him with it. My reaction was not so much fear of the consequences, of getting beat worse, but that using a stick would be unfair. Somehow, it violated my sense of justice. What I had wanted from my father was for him to take my side; what he wanted from me was self-reliance.

I remember only one time that I was spanked. My brother and I had been playing with matches under the front porch, in a pile of leaves. Needless to say, we deserved some extraordinary punishment, which was spanking, a spanking I recall not so much as painful, but odd. I had done something wrong, I knew, but the punishment hardly hurt. I would bet that my father spanked me as much to show the neighbors that he could, and would, as much to physically hurt me. That was the only time he ever hit me. I deserved it.

It was in Warsaw that we learned how to swim. Warsaw had wonderful park, with a swimming pool, and a recreation hall, and a playground, and a large inner field where a carnival would come once a year, with rides and cotton candy. My guess, looking back, was that the oval road that surrounded these facilities had been a race track, back in the twenties, back in the heyday of small towns of upstate New York.



This is a picture of my third grade teacher, Mrs. Knopf, sitting next to the wading pool at the park with two of my friends, Tommy and Teddy Jenkins. Obviously it is the summer, but, more impressively, she is hanging out at the town pool with us, because we all lived in the same small town. Behind them you can see the rec hall, which had a shuffle board court.

At the west end of this park was a large hill, at least a large hill to an eight year old, where we would sled in the winter, and people would toboggan. The park was a long walk from our house, but a walk, nonetheless, and, when we got old enough, we could walk there on our own during the summer.

The recreation hall had a number of activities during the summer. It was there that I learned shuffleboard, which, for some reason, I tremendously enjoyed, could not get enough of it. It was there also that I first saw ballet. I remember asking my mother if I could take that class, and, as I recall, she said no with a particular passion. Her great fear, was that her son might be a homosexual, even though I was seven or eight at the oldest. I think I just wanted to dance, something that in my later years I have found tremendous joy and expression in doing.

It was in Warsaw also that I had my first crush. I was perhaps nine years old, because we moved shortly after I turned ten, and I even remember her name, Joanne Marchant. I nagged and nagged, and finally my mother arranged what must have been a play-date, at Joanne's house, which I recall as at the top of a hill in South Warsaw. Joanne did not have a father, apparently, as I recall, and that was socially awkward, perhaps a divorce, perhaps an unwed mother. Anyway, neither Joanne nor I knew what to do with my affection.

There was a Catholic school in town, but I had scarcely any interaction with the kids who attended it. All my friends went to the public school, and many of them attended the same church we attended, the united Presbyterian/Methodist church at the center of town. I have two memories of the church, one sitting with my parents during a service, and the second a Sunday school class. The church service left me cold. Worse, what we were taught in Sunday School made no sense. We were reading the story of Job, and I remember disputing with the teacher its meaning. She probably was a well meaning volunteer, I remember her as having gray hair, and had suffered enough in her life, the depression, and then the loss of life during World War II, to have an appreciation of God's unfairness, and probably had little truck with inquiring nine year old minds, who would question the wisdom of the Bible. She probably tried to answer my objections, why would God punish his servant, with something like, you will understand when you get older, but, when I persisted, she laid down the law: This is what you must believe. This is the Bible. Blind faith. I no longer wanted to go to Sunday School.

Like my brother and sister, I was one of the smartest kids in my classes. The school was a central school, drawing people in from the surrounding farms. Our home was in the minority: we had plenty of books on our shelves. Teachers got tired of me raising my hand, I recall.

I also recall, very vividly, the duck and cover drills, in case Rochester, forty miles to the North, or Buffalo, 50 miles to the west, was attacked with atomic bombs. We would put ourselves under our desks, and look down, and under no circumstances, look towards the windows. Of course, that is exactly what I did. I can still see that wall of windows in the fourth grade room facing north, toward Rochester.

After we moved, I heard my parents lamenting what they had heard, that the better Warsaw high school social studies teacher had been let go, once it was discovered that she had attended a Norman Thomas, the Democratic Socialist who ran for president, rally in the early thirties. This was the mid-fifties, and the Red Scare came to Warsaw late, because McCarthy was already long gone. I remember seeing a part of the Army/McCarthy hearings on TV, at the Humphrey's house, not understanding it, but knowing it was important. And I remember, the week I was at the YMCA camp in Wyoming County, hearing that the Korean War was over.

It was in Warsaw that I first became aware of racial differences. My brother was saying that there was a colored person, a kid, outside, and pointed out of the window of our attic play space at him. I was surprised that he was brown, and not more like Joseph and his multi-colored coat. Then my brother, or I, called him a nigger. This upset my mother, who reared up, with passion, and told us to never use that word again. We were to call them "colored" as in the National Association of Colored People, the preferred liberal appellation for the descendants of enslaved people. I believe that Warsaw, with a population of maybe 3,000 had but one or two black families. It was the second time in my life that I remember seeing someone with brown skin

When I was eight, I learned how to ride a bike, and my brother, who also could ride, and I would ride maybe half a mile to the town dump, on the edge of Oatka Creek. We would fish, or lie on the bank, or search for treasure, or throw rocks at the glass bottles, the kinds of things boys would do.

Next to us lived Myrtle and Jim McGrath. When I first heard their name, the family joke went, I heard it as "They are murderin Jim." I was very concerned. The couple had no children, but they did have a shower, something our bathroom lacked, and my father would occasionally go over to their house to use it. Odd, now that I think about it.

Myrtle worked as an operator for the phone company. Our phone number was simply three digits. To call someone, we merely picked up the phone, and an operator would ask what number we wanted. She, always she, would connect us. But I did not really

need to remember the phone numbers of our friends, because Myrtle was the operator. Back when phone systems had operators. She would just ask us with whom we wanted to talk. I distinctly remember this, one time, calling Freddie Humphrey down the street. She asked, "Hi Walter, who do you want to talk with?" Small town America.

Jim McGrath, her husband, was an engineer on the Erie Railroad, which ran through town. It was the line that ran from the New Jersey docks, in New York's harbor, to Buffalo, cutting off several hundred miles from the New York Central route, which ran up the Hudson, and then across following the Erie Canal. The Erie was the hypotenuse of that right triangle.

Anyway, one day Jim gave me a special treat, riding with him in the engine. My mother made it a point that her father too was an engineer, but a different kind than a locomotive operator. Anyway, it was going to be one of the last coal fired steam locomotives running on the Erie, which, like all other lines, was switching to diesel/electric. Steam locomotives were called choo-choo



trains, because that was the sound they made, as the steam entered the driving cylinder, and exited. It was just a short ride, maybe a mile, across the Oatka Creek bridge, but I remember it distinctly because as we crossed, he asked me to duck down, keep out of site of the other kids, playing on the bank of the creek, who would want a ride if they saw me.

Since Warsaw was on the Erie Railroad, hobos who had caught freight cars would often wind up in town, and sometimes on our back porch. These guys were really holdovers from the depression, when this is the way many men had lived, and I believe they were probably mentally disturbed, or alcoholic, just getting by, what we call homeless today. Back then, there was not so much shame involved, because so many people had been so close to economic disaster, and my mother would give them some food, in exchange, I hope, for some minor tasks.

In the early fifties, we took a ferry on Lake Erie from Buffalo to Toledo, then drove to

Detroit to meet Uncle Charlie. What with interstates now, these sorts of boats no longer exist. The trip was an overnight trip; I remember the grand staircase in the boat, coming down to the public area, which most likely had gambling tables. Those I did not remember, because we were not allowed in: Adults only.

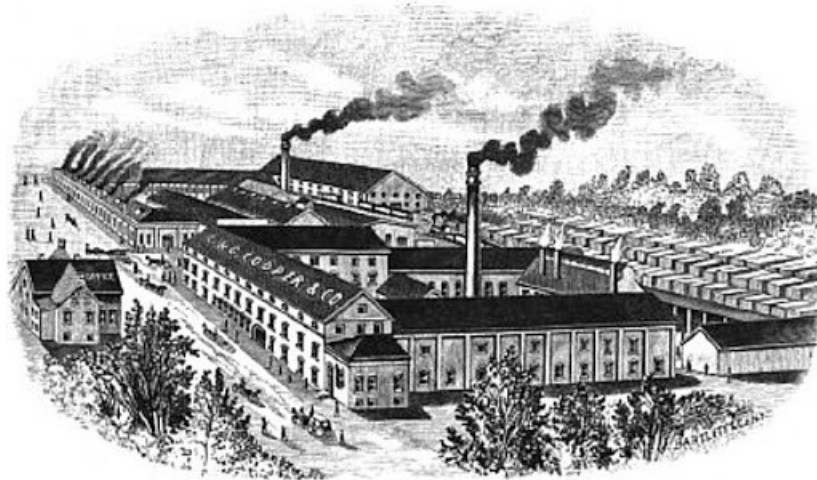
Uncle Charlie lived in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, the “ancestral” home of my mother. He was not really my uncle, but my mother's uncle, unmarried, who lived in a large and decaying house overlooking the family business, Cooper Bessemer. More about this later, but, for now, we were in Detroit, actually, Dearborn, at the Henry Ford museum, and another picture comes to my mind, a gleaming Model T ford, with all kinds of brass fittings, displayed within a glass case that we could walk around, to see the car from any angle. I was fascinated. I just stood there and stared. I remember my mother lightly scolding me, telling me not to dawdle. She wanted me to be on my best behavior for Uncle Charlie. But he loved it, entranced by my engagement in the display, remembering when he was a young boy and fascinated with machines. He and I had the same gift.

My mother told me the story of how, just as automobiles were being developed, he built one, and drove it down the street. But he had forgotten to include brakes, and, when he tried to stop, did not know what to do, and only shouted, “Whoa, Whoa!” because he was used to driving horses. It was the last one he built.

We left Dearborn and drove to Mt. Vernon, OH, and there met the cousins, Ethel and Eunice Cooper. We visited the factory. I was fascinated. The company made large diesel engines for boats, and gas compressors for the oil fields of Texas and Oklahoma. Large blocks of pig iron, or steel were delivered, heated, and rolled and forged into the parts for the compressors or engines. At one point, a large crane brought down to me a bottle of Coca-Cola, which the operator, far above us, had sent, with a smile. In the blast furnace area, sparks were flying. One hit my brother. He started crying. I wanted to stay, but we could not, even though I could see that it did no damage to him. This was long before OSHA, and I don't remember if we wore safety glasses, or protective clothing. I imagine we did not, otherwise we could have stayed.

We visited the plant manager's house, which had formal gardens, cousins Ethel and Eunice Cooper, who gave us cupcake papers and candles to make boats for the street fountain, the civil war monument, and the visit to Cousin Edna's house, or more accurately, mansion, Roundtop, up on a hill, at the end of a long driveway, where where she lived alone in a few back rooms of the house, the rest of the house filled with

ornate furniture, Louis XV style, all covered with dust clothes. We were given the grand tour of Mount Vernon, Ohio. Looking back, part of the reason for the trip may have been to decide what to do with the furniture, and the possessions, both at this mansion, and in the house where Uncle Charlie lived, who used only several rooms of a large and expansive house. This picture shows the factory about the turn of the century, and even, I believe, the house Uncle Charlie lived in. The factory in this picture is much larger than I thought, and Uncle Charlie's house was converted into a parking lot, when he retired and moved to Cleveland.



He was, according to the company history of Cooper Industries, the last family member to work for the firm. My mother told me that he was the one who got the company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, as CBI. The company served as the foundation for a sixties conglomerate, Cooper Industries, which grew and grew, until finally being swallowed about 2005 by Eaton. The continue to manufacture equipment for the oil and gas industries, including deep sea blowout preventive valves. Reading the history of the company now, I am amazed at all the buying and selling of well known brands, for example, Crescent Wrench, and Lufkin tape measures, Crouse Hinds Electrical equipment and, surprise, surprise, McGraw Edison, which had the patents to the field recording equipment that was portrayed in the movie Sounder.. As part of the expansion, the headquarters was moved to Houston, TX, and the physical plant was sold, first to Rolls Royce, and then another, and then another, and then torn down, as the various pieces of the company, were sliced and diced, bought and sold. I had never thought my family was rich, which we were not, but we were far more financially secure than many of my friends. Both my parents, especially my mother, had grown up in far wealthier environments, which probably enabled them to accept, with some misgivings, the relatively low income jobs of librarian and civil servant. Uncle Charlie, unmarried, childless, was the rich one.

Having a rich uncle Charlie had its advantages. Each Christmas, the family would receive a bushel basket of Florida fruit, oranges, grapefruit and kumquat. They were very good, except for the kumquat, sour, which, for some reason, my father liked. [My sister remembers this as being from the Wilcoxes, friends of our parents who had moved to Florida.] From Uncle Charlie, I would get a nice present, erector sets of increasing complexity, which I managed to build, and a train set, and rolling stock for the trains. I remember having made a carnival ride with the erector set, four airplanes that hung from the tower. My first or second grade teacher, as I recall, was over for dinner, and was quite impressed by what I had done, but I really did not think much of it, except as a toy, because I was not the designer, and had just followed the instructions. I also remember my frustration and the small nuts and bolts always losing their torque, and becoming loose. Later, when I was about 12, I received a science kit of the month from him, which was the inspiration for a business I tried to create when I was in my fifties.

As I mentioned, my father's job was to advise farmers on various scientific soil and water conservation strategies. He would lay out contour lines for crops, to lessen erosion, and we could see the results of his work on the hills around Warsaw. He would also advise farmers on how to build farm ponds, where they could be built, and the advantages of having a ready supply of water in case there was a fire at the farm. This was a very good idea, because the farms were typically served by volunteer fire departments, miles from the location of the equipment, which was miles from the homes of the firemen. Construction of the ponds was subsidized, costing the farmers little or nothing. He also laid out wildlife habitats, swamps, essentially, which were stop over points for migrating water fowl.

One did not have to be a farmer to take advantage of his services. You just needed to be a resident of the county. Soon we found ourselves camping on the farm of Fran Striker, or what had been a farm before Fran bought it. Fran just wanted a quiet place in the country, not too far from Buffalo, I guess. He was unmarried, and I think got some joy out of seeing my father, my brother and I actually using his property, enjoying its rural charm.

Who was Fran Striker? He was best known as the author of the Lone Ranger Series, what had been a radio serial, and had become a movie, and then television series. "Hi Ho Silver, and Away!" was the Lone Rangers call, who with his faithful Indian companion Tonto ... We were too young to think it odd that this nice man, who shot off the toy

canon, which took 20 gauge shot gun blanks for our enjoyment, might be slightly odd, choosing to live in the abandoned farmland of western upstate New York, whose closest cultural center was Attica State Prison, but there he was, and there we were.

The farm ponds made nice swimming, though I wanted a sandy bottom, not the muck of the clay which kept the water in the pond. I did learn to enjoy fishing, though, and remember visiting one pond, stocked as was normal with bass and blue gills, sending my line into the pond, and pulling out fish after fish. In fact, there was something wrong with the pond, it had become overstocked, and my father explained to me that we were helping the pond by taking these fish out of it.

I also got my first ride in an airplane while we lived in Warsaw. Part of my father's job was to take aerial photographs, to help with his planning, and to show the results of his work. He had a set up which allowed a stereoscopic viewing of the land he photographed, allowing him to see it in 3D, and thus plot the contours he would lay out to stem soil erosion. I was unimpressed, first of all because the photos were grainy, and second, because they were in black and white.

I wanted 3D like what the movies had, with color, and knives flying at you. I remember seeing several of these movies at the Warsaw movie theater which showed them for Saturday matinees. I also remember seeing a film about prehistoric human society, which was so violent, and scary, that I hid behind the seats in front of me, and had nightmares for months. Something about a wild man /animal climbing up into a tree, and dropping down on innocents below, killing them was particularly scary to me.

About this time, also, I saw Disney's Fantasia. I was fascinated with the music, but petrified by the sorcerer's apprentice scenes, the flood that keeps growing and growing. I still have anxiety each time I see it, and was always amazed that my son loved horror stories and movies, because, to me, they simply made me too uncomfortable, squirming in my seat, wanting to block them out.

Why was I so afraid? I am not sure. It may have been because I was terrorized by my parents fighting. Their arguments were screaming matches, never physical, but terribly verbal. I believe their cause in both of them was having had very difficult emotional childhoods. My father was very angry, and my mother was simply accustomed to a much more genteel life, and had been so wounded by her father's domination that she never really trusted any relationship. At least, that is my guess. When I look at how her sister and brothers turned out, the only one who seemed pretty much whole was the

communist brother, who quite clearly rebelled by becoming a communist.

This is the inheritance I wished to avoid, this anger. Even now, in my second long term intimate relationship, I see myself recapitulating the infantile anger I learned as a normal loving relationship from my parents. I just wish I did not have such a willing set of accomplices, in both relationships, but, as the saying goes, we frequently marry our parents.

It was in Warsaw that I learned to ride my bike. I can remember my father helping me learn, pushing me down the street in front of our house. And I can remember buying, with money I had save from Christmas and birthdays, and an occasional odd job, a three speed, English style bike from the Western Auto in Batavia, about 20 miles distant. My mother liked the bike, because it reminded her of her summer in England, while in college, with her friend Lee, biking around the Lake District.

We owned our own home. I thought everyone did. For a short while, I made friends with another boy who lived in an apartment above his father's bar on Main Street. I remember throwing darts into a wall, and it being OK, and asking my father what steaks and chops were, they advertised in a neon sign in the front window, finding out, and wanting, wanting very much, to eat there. We never did. My friendship faded.

I loved the town library, and remember taking out books I was told were too old for me. They were right, but I would try to read them anyway. I remember one book, which I took out again and again, because it described deep sea diving, old style, not SCUBA, which had just been invented, but waterproof canvas suit with an air line and a brass helmet, very much like an antique space suit. I even remember one of its stories, of a diver who always returned drunk from a deep sea dive. Turned out he had found an air pocket in the galley of a sunken ship, found the wine cellar, and was able to take off his helmet, breathe the ancient air trapped there, open a bottle wine, and drink it.

I also remember the gruesome stories about the bends, and about diver's whose air supply failed, and were crushed by the tremendous pressure of the water. They fascinated me, the suffering, the horror. Looking back, it seems somewhat odd, this fascination with such extraordinary suffering and death, but it continued through my mid teens, much to my present embarrassment. Read on, and you will find out.

The McGrath's had a cousin who was a farmer, lived up in the hill towns above Warsaw. We stayed there for a long weekend, while my parents went to visit Uncle Charlie, I

believe. I remember sitting at the dinner table, and teasing my brother with the joke buzzer I had gotten somewhere, perhaps through the mail, advertised in the back of a comic book. More sadism on my part, though I feel no guilt about it. Anyway, I would wind it up, keep it in my palm, and press it on his head, and he would jump away. Eventually, I believe, he started to cry, and I was told to stop doing it.

Another time, Winter, my father took my brother and me on an adventure that I still do not understand. We piled into the McGrath's panel truck, and went out to the farm. We did not stay very long. The truck had no heat, and on the way back, the tires kept blowing out. As I remember, we just kept driving. I complained, I think, and my father was uncharacteristically gruff, or distant, because he could certainly be gruff. Perhaps because he did not want to be there, either, and was irritated. I took from this trip a lesson, somehow, that this is how poor dirt farmers lived.

The farms around Warsaw were marginal, at best. The valleys, carved out by the creeks, were very fertile, but the farms around Warsaw were all struggling. It was largely dairy country, and small scale dairy farming was dying. This is why my father had sold the farm in Millerton, and begun working for the Department of Agriculture. Already, unproductive productive land, atop the hills in Wyoming county could be bought cheap. In fact, my father, in partnership with two co-workers, bought about forty acres which he planted in Christmas trees. Well, actually, we planted, his partners, he and my brother and I. He also established part of it as a swamp, a wild life habitat, and put in a farm pond. We would go there, camp near the pond, and swim. We would also plant seedling Christmas trees in the Spring, thousands, made available through the Agricultural extension of the state, and prune them into the shape of Christmas trees each June, battling the incessant, bothersome, god damn blasted deer flies. They drove me crazy. The idea was that once they had grown to six or seven feet, they could be harvested and sold as Christmas trees, but one winter, mice girdled about half of them, killing them, and then, people did not want the long needle Scotch and Austrian pines we grew, but short needle Douglas fir.

Going up to this land, in the township of Wyoming, we would pass cellar holes, dug into the ground, and occasionally finished cellars, the ground level deck sealed with tar paper. My father told me that people lived in these holes, they were veterans from World War II who had received an allowance for housing, and this was all that they could afford. I imagined it must have been a very dreary existence, living in a basement.

For the 1950 census, my mother was hired to enumerate, go from house to house. She only lasted several days, because, one afternoon, on one of those isolated hill tops which overlooked Warsaw, she knocked on the door of a decrepit house. Someone answered, an older, and even more decrepit man. She asked the first question: "How many people live here?" He answered, " People don't live here, they die here." In my mind is the picture of her running down an overgrown dirt driveway, toward the dirt road, toward her car, toward safety.

People were not the only things dying in the hills above Warsaw. Dutch Elm disease was ravaging the elm trees. I was just at the age where I could identify things, different makes of car, different airplanes , and trees. Elm trees looked like upside down umbrella trees. Their demise saddened my mother.

Another memory is my mother pointing out a sunset to us, a particularly beautiful one, in her mind, and her complaint that we were not looking towards it. We were simply too young to make such distinctions about natural phenomena.

While we lived in Warsaw, we would occasionally make trips back to Millerton. As my brother and I got older, ours would be work trips. My father was planting pine seedlings, again in the hopes of selling them as Christmas trees after ten years of growth. We were big enough to help with the planting, in the late Spring, and the pruning, around the middle of June. The trees were not naturally Christmas tree shaped, but would tend to grow run their leaders out too far, resulting in a scraggly looking tree. Same goddamn deer flies, buzzing around my head, but the good part was that we would camp on the land, and eat in a restaurant, down at the bottom of Silver Mountain. There were two great things about this restaurant. First of all, it was always a treat for us to eat out, and we could order anything we wanted! Another great think was the very large photograph on the wall, a picture of the stunning scene looking West into the Hudson River Valley and the Catskills above Saugerties. This was the view where Franklin Roosevelt like to picnic. Did I mention the story about the letter? I guess I did not.

The back side of the farm could be reached by an old cart-way through the woods. On the other side of the mountain, across the road, was an untillable field. The structure of the mountain was too close to the surface. So my father used the field to pasture heifers, cows which had not yet born calves, and thus were not yet producing milk. The gate to the field was a simple bar, made out of a sapling, and this kept the cows from straying out onto the seldom traveled road. Occasionally, people would picnic there,

the view was stunning, and my parents thought it was fine as long as they did not leave a mess, and kept the bar up across the opening. One day, before any of us kids were born, my mother was driving by, saw some picnickers, and yelled out of the window, "Don't forget to close the bar." A week later, she received a very nice note from the White House, from Franklin Roosevelt, thanking her for her hospitality, and assuring her that he would always close the bar.

But I digress. To get to the east side of the Hudson, you had to either cross near Albany, or down near Poughkeepsie. In between there was a ferry, one of the last on the Hudson, which was replaced by the Rip Van Winkle bridge. I have in my mind a clear picture of looking down at the Hudson River, while crossing on the ferry. .

So far, I have avoided writing about my parents' fights. They were epic. It was in Warsaw that I became conscious of them. My father, all agree, was a very angry man, especially in intimate relationships, and my mother had a wobble in her personality that made her sometimes, almost mad. I am not quite sure how to say it, that she would sometimes be very present, and other times consumed with an anxiety, a disassociation, which made her feel very lonely.

The result was that happy times would sometimes be ruined. I can remember quite clearly one huge fight, we were going to go away for a long weekend, stay in a guest house, what would today be called a B&B, in the hills of Pennsylvania, a couple hours south of where we lived. Why? Probably because my mother wanted a trip like this, just to get out of the house, out of the town. My father agreed, took some money out of the bank. Writing now, I imagine he presented it to her in a sarcastic manner, "Homage to the royalty" and she, never one to duck a challenge, literally threw it in her face. Twenty dollar bills were everywhere; I started picking them, for \$20 was a lot, back in 1951, to an eight year old. My sister, two years older, wisely counseled caution about such an activity.

When I was older, my father indicated that the my mother's moods were menstrual, but I have a feeling they were keyed by things other than her bodily cycle. Even after menopause, apparently, she would have periods of intense and moody fretting. Me, I did my best to avoid being around that emotionally toxic environment.

Our back yard in Warsaw was a fairly decent sized one, became a garden, because that is what my father wanted. He loved to grow things, and this was his compromise of becoming a salaried employee, to continue to till the soil. It did not do too much for

me, but it was central to his soul.

My sister got a summer in Mexico, with our grandmother, my father's mother. Gammy Irma, as we called her, and her sister Edna Lewis, had organized an artist's work shop in Taxco, Mexico, in the heart of the silversmith area, and would spend each summer there. That year, probably 1952, she was taken along, and even spent a week in Acapulco. She brought back a huge amount of Mexican craft materials - for a long time, the special glasses we used were hand-blown from Mexico. They were left on the back porch. A mistake; the weekly rubbish pick up retrieved it, and took it to the dump. About half was retrieved, but half of it was lost. A great crisis that may have been precipitated by my father, who probably did not want all that junk in the house, especially since his mother was strenuously nagging him to pay for my sister's expenses. See the pattern? A good thing, a weekend in the mountains, a trip to Mexico, ruined by an irrational emotion. The following year, they moved the art workshop to Positano Italy, on the Amalfi Coast. I thought it would be my turn for the trip to some foreign land, but it never happened. Again, I believe the reason was there was a "misunderstanding" about who should have paid Jane's air fare, between Irma and Bob. You see, my grandmother was a travel agent, and probably got her trip comped, and maybe that of her sister too, so my father expected her to wangle a comp for Jane. It did not happen. The drama continued.

Wyoming, a small village just north of Warsaw, was above a gas field first developed in the nineteenth century. It still had gas street lights, because the town, village actually, had negotiated with the gas companies for a hundred years of free gas. It gave the town a charming, nineteenth century look.

Polio was still common. I had wanted to go to a large amusement park west of Buffalo, on the Lake Erie shore in Canada, and almost got to go, but for a polio epidemic that summer. Pictures of children in wards of iron lungs were in the magazines. No way my parents would take me to such a place. No-one knew how polio was transmitted; All that was known was that it had something to do with large assemblages of children. Turns out, it is a virus, transmitted through fecal matter, often on beaches, which is exactly why my parents were correct in avoiding the amusement park. It was not until several years later that Jonas Salk finally developed his polio vaccine.

My father received a promotion. Rather than being the Assistant Work Unit Conservationist for Wyoming County, a county whose dairy farms were long past their peak, he became the Work Unit Conservationist for Monroe County, NY, home of

Rochester, and its skilled industries, like Eastman Kodak and Bausch and Lomb, and its University of Rochester, with the Eastman School of Music. Of course he took the job, and so, the summer between my fourth and fifth grades of school, we moved to Mendon Center, a hamlet about 10 miles South of Rochester.