

Appendix B:

Writings of Gino Ullian: **Memoirs to February 1946**

[As dictated to his daughter Karen in about 1966, and very lightly edited here.]

Gino Ullian – Born August 17, 1925 in Northbrook, Illinois, to John Ullian and the late Linda Ferraro Ullian.

My earliest recollection of my life takes me back to 1929. I was dressed in short black pants and a black coat sitting at a table in a kitchen. The people all around me were also dressed in black. I think we were getting ready for a funeral which I presume was for my mother and baby sister. My sister died at birth and my mother died with pneumonia. I was later taken to the Angel Guardian Home with my two brothers, John and Joe and my two sisters, Mary and Livia.

This Home consisted of four buildings which housed the children. Each had an upstairs and a downstairs. The last building in the row was the church which we visited quite a bit being this was a Catholic School. The long building which was straight ahead and to the left was the school. It was made up of school rooms on the main floor. Downstairs was a commissary where we could purchase candy if we had a few pennies. As we went down the steps to get candy, on our immediate left was a heavily wired screened-in room which housed all the rags and a very big police dog. He sure scared us half to death since we were so small. I imagine I was in Kindergarten. At recess time we could go outside and play. It was also the time to go to the bathroom which was the only one we had and was shared by boys and girls. One time I didn't make it because of the runs and I sure took a whipping for dirtying my pants. All around the trees were benches nailed to the trees to make a circle around them for us to sit on. My brother John and I were watching the team practice baseball one day when a player hit a line drive right into my stomach. I cried pretty hard while Johnny rubbed my stomach and tried to soothe me at the same time.

Each night before we went to bed we had to show the sister (nun) our hands, the backs of them, our elbows, our knees, our heels, and then our ears. If any were dirty, we got a hair brush on the rear and back to the soap. We prayed before and after everything. My father said we were pretty hard to teach since we spoke all Italian and hardly any English. I heard through life the reason we left the Home was by special request. My brother Joe said "darn" to one of the nuns and was made to eat soap. My father, hearing of this used some brute force on her which caused her to enter a hospital for a month or so and us out on our ears.

One thing I remember about our school classes was a break in the morning and one in the afternoon when we were given a thin slice of Baby Ruth candy. Sometimes I swore the inside of the candy bars moved while they were being sliced but they sure were good tasting.

We were moved to a house in Evanston in the dead of winter. I had to walk to school, I think about four blocks. The first day the lady took me to school after giving me a new pair of boots. The next day I made it to school alright but coming home I ran into a small black and white bull dog. The louder he barked the more scared I got. I ended up running home and losing one boot. When I got Home with only one boot, I caught the dickens. While still sobbing, she took me by the hand and went back and found the boot. It must have been 1930 or 1931 so clothes were hard to come by. Being in the Depression wasn't too good anyway. My dad lost everything he had, which I understand was quite a bit being a landscaping contractor.

Next, we were to go to Normal, Illinois to the Soldiers and Sailors Children's School. I had the whooping cough pretty bad so we couldn't leave right away. I remember the doctor coming to the house and putting a big black and red sign on our door reading "QUARANTINE – WHOOPING COUGH." We stayed there through Christmas. I remember my father bringing two large bags on his shoulders. One was full of toys and the other clothes. We had a great Christmas, but I was still sick. We later drove to the Home in a long touring car which had shades and tassels on the windows and a whole lot of room in it.

Upon arriving at the Home we were put in a screened-in large room with radiators that had steam coming out of them. It scared me since I had never seen steam before. This also was the "quarantine cottage" for all new people entering the Home. The first day we got there they gave us some hard Christmas candy and an orange. I cried a long time having to leave my dad and never knowing when I would see him again.

The first night as I was looking out the window, I saw a boy come out on the sidewalk with a bugle in his hand. He started blowing it which I later learned was "Taps." All children had to be in their cottage by taps or suffer the consequences. I stayed awake most of the night falling asleep in the morning hours only to wake up to the bugle again blowing "Reveille." We were located across the street from the Junior High Cottage which was located in the basement of the Administration Building. Below us, as we were located in the second story across the hall from the hospital, was the barber shop. In the years ahead this barber shop furnished me all the cigarette butts Mr. and Mrs. Crosby, the red-headed barbers, would throw away.

We stayed in the Quarantine Cottage for three weeks to be sure we weren't coming down with or had any sickness. The boy who cleaned our room used to sing the same song every day. This was the first song I recall hearing. The first few lines were "The Judge said stand up boys and dry up your tears, you're sentenced to Nashville for twenty-one years." I tried to get the words in my adult years but couldn't find them.

We later were transferred to the Little Boys Cottage. It was a building which came out of a fairy book. The building was a white brick cottage with tiled roof. Each window had shutters with an animal cut out in the shape of a rabbit, squirrel, duck or what have you. The inside was a large room with a fireplace that had a Mother Goose theme above it such as Mother Goose, The Three Bears, etc. depending which cottage you were in. We had thirty boys to the cottage, thirty small beds, thirty chairs around small tables and inside plumbing which had the stools built low for our size. There were eight cottages in the village. Miss Polly was our house mother. Discipline was the name of the game. Each boy did his share and toed the mark or else. Or else included a rash of punishments. All of us dressed alike so we didn't have too much trouble getting dressed. We would walk to school, about eight blocks, lined up in rows of two and not saying a word knowing if you did you would suffer later.

After a couple of years in the Village, we were transferred to No. 1 cottage which was named Harbor Cottage. There were eight big boy cottages plus Harner Hall which was built around 1933 and named after the Governor of Illinois. Our house officer or house father's name

was Ottie Klienglehoeper. His wife was the house mother. They had a daughter named Ruth who was housed off the grounds and in town.

I was soon to find out if there was any man in the world I would like to see dead it was Ottie Klienglehoeper. He had a hook nose which looked like Dick Tracy in the comics. I learned later not to call him that – the hard way. I was overheard calling him that and had to stand in the corner with my hands behind me and my nose pressing the corner for eight hours a day while the other boys played. This went on for five days. I then learned to keep my mouth shut. This cottage was two stories high with thirty boys also. We each had our chores to do every day. For instance, one would clean windows, one wash dishes, one dry dishes, one mopped the dining room and kitchen and so on. All jobs were inspected after they were done and if it didn't pass inspection, you would eat bread and water instead of your regular meal.

Our day consisted of getting up at 5:00 a.m. om the winter and 4:00 a.m. in the summer. We each made our own bed and they were inspected. If any wrinkles, they were torn apart and made again. If it didn't pass the second time, it was torn apart again but you slept on the hardwood floor the next night. Believe me the floor sure got hard but we got used to it. Sometimes there wasn't anybody sleeping in the bed, everybody was under it. We then dressed in the same clothes and went downstairs to wash. After washing, we sat on the floor in the hallway with our arms and legs crossed and our eyes closed until the first bell rang. At the second bell, we marched behind our chairs and stood until all the boys were in the dining room. We sat at the third bell and ate on the fourth. Anybody whispering or fooling around in the hall waiting for the bell had a check marked behind his name. We had to eat all the food put on our plates. All the food was cooked in the large kitchen called the Main Hall and Kitchen. It was put in stainless steel containers and pulled to the cottages in a wagon. I remember that every Thursday we had buttered beets. Every bite of buttered beets I took, I threw up, cleaned up my mess, took another bite and repeated the process. In my later years I traded my ice cream to anyone who would eat my buttered beets.

After breakfast we did our house chores and got ready for school. We marched to school in silence. Any talk would mean another check behind our name. The list of names was on the wall in the Hall next to the wind-up telephone. Upon receiving three checks behind your name meant bread and water for the day you received your third check, sleep under the bed for the week and you could not see the movies on Friday night. I knew I would get a lot of checks so I would try to time my third check so it would fall on Thursday and I wouldn't have to eat the beets only to welcome the bread and water.

School was something else. We had about sixteen school rooms. Veto Bo Bauer was our arithmetic teacher and Mae Goodwin our history teacher. She later became principal. We had a fourth grade teacher, Clara Keppner, who grew up in the Home, went to college and came back as a teacher.

Every Thursday the sewing lady, who we called Ole Lady Jacobson, used to come to our cottage and sew the clothes up that were torn. One incident that stands out in my mind took place with her. Our house officer bought a new 1933 or 1934 Ford. He asked Clarence Green to get the oil can out of the sewing machine and oil the door hinges. When he got done he put the oil can in

the glove compartment. Ole Lady Jacobson came to sew and missed her oil can. The house officer immediately blamed me for stealing it. He grabbed me by my kinky curly hair and mopped the floor up with this frail body of mine. This went on Friday, Saturday and into Sunday. It just happened that my dad came up from Texas where he was working on the King Ranch taking care of Gene Autry's horses. He went to the visitor's hall and asked to see me. He was told I was a bad boy and I couldn't see my dad. He had to go back to Texas without seeing me because of the oil can. I yelled and said a few things to the hooked nose house officer I later regretted. I was made to squat up and down with my hands behind my head until I dropped from exhaustion. I was then put in a cold shower and sent to bed, sleeping under the bed on the hardwood floor again. The oil can was found later on in the week.

After school and on Saturdays we could play outside. Once we went out we couldn't come back in till bedtime. It wasn't bad in the summer, but the winters were sure cold. In the summer, we got up at four as I said, ate breakfast and went out in the field to cut weeds or pick beans or whatever Pearl Petticord, the farmer wanted us to do. We picked beans till dark, loaded them on the horse drawn wagon, went back to the cottage and snapped them. Pearl was as ornery as the day was long. He used to chase us with a pitchfork. He jabbed at us all the time, once putting a hole through my pants, just missing my leg. The high school boys would watch over us while we picked beans. We were allowed a drink and a small break in the morning and one in the afternoon. Danny Cahil complained of stomach pains but was made to keep picking beans. He later collapsed and died in the field from ruptured appendix. If we straightened up too many times, we got the rubber hose across our back. I received three stitches on the back of my head one time but had to go back to the field before I got the stitches out. We had a horse called Paint. We were told he was an Indian pony. The high school boys rode him around with another horse called Sway Back because his belly just about touched the ground. My brother John was playing in the hay loft and fell on a pitchfork. It went through his leg.

When our shoes became torn or had holes in the bottom, we went to the cobbler who came from Russia. He used to have a Russian flag hanging on the wall of his shop. We each had two pair of shoes. One for school and Sunday and one for playing outside in. We had to keep them polished and each pair had a pigeonhole to put them in with our name on it. The pigeonholes were located under the steps. Our shoes had to be cleaned at all times.

We had a dentist and a hospital. Nurse Castle was a grouch. Every time we had something wrong with us she would think you were faking so she gave us castor oil to drink.

I got my tonsils out 6:30, September 2, 1939. This was the day before the war in Europe. I remember going into the operating room and laying on the table. The nurse gave me gauze for over my nose with ether on it. I woke up sick and coughing blood. After the second day I lowered a rope down the side of the hospital and my brother got me some ice cream. Boy did that taste good. I stayed there a week before they let me out. My favorite nurse was Sue Comstock. She was very pretty and kind. No castor oil!! I later named my second daughter after her.

The boy that got to empty the barber Crosby's trash cans would empty them in the big incendiary that was behind our cottage. We did him favors if he would empty them on the side so we could get the cigarette butts out of the trash. Mr. Crosby would smoke "Twenty Grand"

cigarettes, and Mrs. Crosby would smoke filter tip “Wings.” What we didn’t like about her butts was that they were loaded with lipstick. We took the butts under the school in a pipe tunnel and then chain smoked the butts till we were turning green, sick and puking up. We felt like big shots till we got sick.

One thing that will always stand out was a day when Junior Powell and myself were shining the brad in the bottom of the urinals. We had two of them. I was shining the first one when the house officer came in and looked at me and told me to do a better job. I told him I was doing the best I could so he kicked me very hard and told me not to sass him. My head hit inside the urinal and I got a goose egg on my head. He then turned to Junior Powell and told him the same thing., then kicked him. Junior grabbed a can of lye and threw it in his mouth. He was taken to the hospital where they found most of his tongue eaten away. The managing officer asked him what happened and Junior told him by writing on paper that the house officer made him do it. They fired the house officer. That was a big day for the rest of us kids. No beatings and no check marks.

The first three years I was there, the upstairs part of the Administration Building was the Catholic Church. We had Church every Sunday and every Holy Day and you had better not play hooky. Friday night was movie night. We had silent movies. In order to see the movies we had to push the altar away from the front of the big screen which was part of the wall. After the movie we pushed the altar back for Church Sunday morning. We had a good piano player for the movies if he wasn’t sick or absent. Our new Auditorium was finished being built around 1935 so we saw the movies there instead of the Church. After the Auditorium was built we were shown double features, three cartoons, and a Pathé news every Friday unless you had three checks. Then you would go to the movies and sit on the concrete floor with your back to the show. One Friday I knew I had to sit on the concrete so I found a piece of glass about three inches square. I then went out to the road and got some tar off the joint in the pavement and put it on the back of the glass. After the movie started I brought out the glass and used it for a mirror. I watched two cartoons with it before I was caught. I was sitting next to the house officer so I knew my chances of seeing the whole movie were slim. I ended up missing the next Friday night movie on account of cheating with the mirror. If you happened to fall asleep during the movies while being punished, the house officer would thump your head with a thimble.

As we got older we were sent to different cottages. I went to the fifth cottage which was called Chateau Thierry. All the cottages were named after a battle of World War I or a famous man. At the fifth cottage we had a basement where we could change clothes, shower and play especially in the winter. The house officer’s name was Homer Masters. He had a rabbitry in the back of the cottage where he raised rabbits. My brother John was there before I got there. He was once feeding and cleaning the rabbit pens when one bit him on the arm and gave him a scar he carried for life. We all had to clean the coops and feed the rabbits. Homer would take the rabbits to different fairs and bring home the ribbons.

In the summer we used to take hikes to the park outside of the orphan’s Home. One day we stopped at Tom Manning’s Store and all the guys started getting candy and ice cream. I ordered a turkey leg which was a cone with ice cream and nuts and chocolate on it. It was as big, if not bigger, than a real turkey leg and tasted delicious. As we were getting ready to leave the

store, Tom Manning said one of the boys didn't pay. You guessed it, it was me. I thought the American Legion was paying for it like they did a few times before, but not this time. Homer pulled a nickel out of his pocket and paid for my turkey leg. When we got back to the cottage, I cleaned and shined Homer's car each day for a week.

On another hike we walked a couple miles towards town. We had to stay on the sidewalks. In those days, the sidewalks were mostly all brick. Fannie Bright had an orchard along the sidewalk we were walking on and the branches hung over the fence above our heads. We knew they hung down about a foot over our reach, so George Doggett and myself hung back on the column. When we got to the tree, I bent over and put George on my shoulders and he picked some good red apples. It just happened Fannie was in the orchard that day and caught us. We said the apples were across the fence but she said they were still hooked to her trees. George and I had to work in her orchard picking apples for a week after school to pay for the apples we got.

Each year the State would put out a list of towns and send them to each of the eight cottages. Each boy was able to take three choices where he wanted to go on a three day trip. I think the State reimbursed the people who took the kids. One year I chose the town of Hoopeston. When I got there it was a farm where we rode horses and had a lot of fun. Another time it was Chicago. I went to Riverview Park and rode the roller coasters and all the other rides. Once I went to Pekin. It was right after a tornado hit part of it. I remember seeing all the damage it did. That's where the father of the family smoked a lot of pipes. I saw his pipe rack on the table by the chair. I thought it would look good if I smoked a pipe after I got back to the Home and I stole one pipe. When the family took me to the bus to go back to the Home, I felt guilty so I gave the pipe back. I felt good after the bus left. Once I went to Fairbury, which was a small farm town. I ended up living the three days behind a milk dairy. Our job was to pick up the milk from the farmers every morning. It was more work than fun.

We also had a day which we called Legion Day. That day was one of the biggest days of the year. Each cottage was sponsored by a Legion Post throughout the State. We had eleven boys cottages, nine girls cottages, and eight village cottages so you can imagine how many Legionnaires came to the Home. We had rides on the 40 and 8 trains. They were the trains used in World War I. They either carried 40 men or 8 horses so that's how they got their name. The Legionnaires would give us new radios, baseballs, bats, and also put on a big feast. We would have a big ballgame in the afternoon, fireworks at night and free ice cream and pop. We also had a telephone pole put up with a \$20.00 bill on top. After greasing it we tried to climb it to get the \$20.00. It seemed the same guy would get it every year. I think he waited until all the grease was worn off then he went up and got the \$20.00. We also looked forward to the crazy car. When you got on it, it went forward in circles then the back end would go down and the front end up in the air. It sure was a lot of fun.

Our laundry was done at a building located behind Pearl Petticord's house. It was manned by two men and nine women. We had to go down every year for a day and help wash the clothes. I liked to run the tumbling dryers because at the end of the day we might find some money and jewelry in the bottom of them.

The Home was heated by a big boiler house that was run by a fireman by the name of Satterfield. He used to live in a house behind Tom Manning's Store. It was a yellow house and we would see him walk home every day after his shift. He looked forward to going to the 1933 World Fair in Chicago. The only trouble was he never came back. The word that came out was he met with foul play because he had a lot of money on him.

If you tried to run away from the Children's School, they would catch you. If you made it over the fence and were caught, they put you in the boiler room shoveling coal in the boilers. Boy was that hot, dirty and tiring. Three of the boys stole the Home's bus and drove it out of the fence. The last we knew, they all had escaped.

Each cottage had to take all left over food and wheel it outside of the kitchen. We had a large hogshead barrel on wheels that we pushed down to the hogs pen after the barrel got full. After sitting in the hot sun, it was a job nobody wanted. It took three of us to pull it down in the winter through the snow. Joe the Cook was a heavy short man who yelled all the time. We used to go thru the main kitchen when we had to get food for the cottages. Sometimes he would have something good on the counter and we would snatch some only to hear him yell and throw pots and pans at us. Once in a while we got hit pretty good and he would laugh and tell us it would be a butcher knife the next time.

Located off the main kitchen was an ice house. We made all our own ice to chill the vegetables we grew. If you were good to the ice keeper, he was a real friend in the summer. The house closest to our cottage was the maintenance building which had the painter and carpenter in it. The old carpenter fixed all the windows that were broken in the buildings. I think he was afraid of height because every time he was up on the ladder putting in a new glass pane, we would shake the ladder about the time he swung the hammer and he would break the pane next to the one he was putting in. Boy did he get mad. If he would have caught us he would probably have killed us. If we caught the painter on the ladder painting, we would get a rag, dunk it in the paint and paint the ladder rungs so he would get full of paint coming down the ladder.

The new industrial arts building was built around 1937. It included a wood working shop run by Max Hahn, a real good printer, a leather craft shop run by a guy named Knuppel. We sure teased him about his name. The last part of the building was a tin shop. Fred Brown taught us all about tin. He was also head of our drum and bugle corps. We had one of the best outfits in the State. We were called on to play all over the State in parades and at fairs and just to play for the people. We had eight snare drums. I had one on the right pivot and my brother John had the left pivot. Brother Joe clanged the cymbals with another guy and we had two bass drums with our school name on them. There were sixteen bugles and Eddie Doggett was the high stepper in front. We were decked out in a white uniform with a high hat and a tassel on it. We practiced marching twice a week. Whoever didn't show up lost his instrument to somebody else. We led the parade at the State Fair every year because we could play the loudest of any Band there. Our only trouble was it was all free from competition because we didn't have a sponsor. I remember we had to go to Peoria and play but I couldn't go after stepping on a nail while going barefoot all day. Boy was I hurt more from not being able to go than from the nail even though my foot was all swollen up.

Uncle Gino, the priest, came down from Michigan to see us and he took some pictures of us practicing. He mailed them to me and I still have them someplace.

Another big day was Christmas. Each year we were given a catalog which might have been Sears, to look at. We got the catalog along about July. We all took turns looking through it to find three choices of anything that didn't cost over \$1.50 that we wanted Santa to bring at Christmas time. They all looked at it alphabetically so you can imagine how torn up it was by the time it came to the U's. Every Christmas we would look out the window and see nine Santa Clauses coming down the road with a bag on their shoulders full of the presents we chose from the catalog. Each cottage got a Santa and he called out your name, gave you your present, a box of hard candy and an orange. All of the presents were bought by the state, put in a very large room and packaged with our name on it. One of the Legionnaires from your cottage's post would be Santa for the day. He left right after he gave the presents out. We couldn't do too much with the presents. One year I got a pair of high top boots that had a knife in the side pocket. The house officer saw me open the gift and took away the knife.

Sundays we all had to go to church and also Catechism. Church in the morning and studying in the afternoon. After church we took off our Sunday clothes and sat around listening to the Cubs and reading the funnies from the Daily Pantagraph. Our big deal was Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. The funnies were worn out after all thirty of us looked at them. We also received comic books from the Legionnaires. We swapped about everything we had day in and day out. Anything from colored rocks to baseball cards. Just about half of the kids including myself had a stamp collection. We received a couple bushels of stamps at once so we had a lot of separating to do.

One big day was Graduation Day. My graduation was in 1938. I worked all summer the year before detasseling corn for the Funk Seed Company. I made the most money of all the kids. Some wanted money for movies and candy, but I worked every hour I could. We left at four in the morning after fixing our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for lunch. The day before work we would swipe some apples and put them in our lunch, too. I ended up with around \$28.00 for the summer. I bought a new pair of black and white wing-toed shoes. I was the only graduate without a pair of black shoes. When we got our school picture, my wing-toed shoes stood out like a new dime. The day before graduation all the eighth grade boys went to a store room above the fire engine. There, to our amazement, was a long line of suits. You picked out the one that fit the best and wore it to graduation then brought it back and hung it up for the guys next year. After graduating, you moved to another cottage. I moved to the fourth cottage, which was Pershing Cottage. That was pretty nice because we were allowed to raise our own chickens and pigeons and have a chance to sell them at a profit. That summer I buddied up with a friend, Eggie Doggett, to raise chickens. We got tired of carrying water for them so we went to the farm by the hog pen and Eggie found a big wooden barrel. We rolled it home and filled it up with water. What we didn't know was the big barrel was a vinegar barrel. Well, the chickens got drunk, went around in circles and lost half their feathers. Boy, what a mess we had. We couldn't figure out what happened till the farmer across the field told us. We raised the chickens, killed them, dressed them and sold them for \$.10 a pound. We went to the farm and helped pick and shell corn in order to get some feed for the chickens. The only way we got new chicks was to go to Munroe's Hatchery and pick up the culls that they didn't want to keep. We built our own

coops and took good care of them. By the way, “Eggie” Doggett was called that because his head was shaped like an egg.

In the winter about six or eight of the kids, including myself, found some kind of a club and went through the corn fields hunting rabbits. We lined up about four rows apart and went through the field. We left one man back to stay fresh because we found out a rabbit will always run in a big circle and come back to the place where he got started. Then the fresh man would run him down, hit him in the head, and put his belt through a ligament of the leg. We sometimes got 24 or 25 rabbits in one day. We cleaned them and sold them to the grown-ups for \$.25 apiece. We all split the money up evenly.

As the next year came along, we bought steel traps to catch muskrats and anything we could. One day I got a mink in the trap. I carried the dead carcass around and showed it off. We skinned all our own muskrats and stretched them on an orange crate’s slats and put them in the attic to dry. We shipped them to St. Louis after the season was over. Our favorite place to trap was also our fishing hole. It was a creek that was about three miles from the orphanage. One day I played hooky from school to run the trap line. While I was checking the traps I came across a hunter with a double-barreled shotgun. It was the first gun I ever saw. I asked him if I could shoot a barrel. He said I could shoot both barrels if I first took a chew of Beech Nut chewing tobacco. I studied the proposition for a while and said okay. Well, I got a big wad of chew in my mouth and chewed and chewed. He didn’t say anything about not swallowing, so I did. The more I chewed the more I swallowed. The more I swallowed, the greener and sicker I got. He looked at me and asked me if I was ready to shoot. About that time I couldn’t say a word, only vomit, shake my head no and run for the Home with the hunter standing there laughing his head off. I made it Home, but I was mighty weak. From then on I never dreamed of putting any chewing tobacco in my mouth.

We would skin the muskrats we trapped and take the carcasses down to Hobo Jungle and sell them to the bums for \$.10 and they would make stew out of them. Hobo Jungle was a wooded area next to the Chicago and Alton Railroad where bums would get off the train and make their stew and sleep. We sure heard a lot of tales from them if we brought something for the pot. We would go to the Root Cellar, which was built below ground and get some potatoes, turnips and carrots. Boy were the bums glad to see us. Once in a while we got a loaf of bread from the main kitchen when Joe the Cook didn’t see us. I think all the hobos in the country knew of our Hobo Jungle and the orphan boys with all the food.

All of our letters we wrote to our folks were censored. All of the mail that came in was censored. When our folks sent money, it was kept in an account under our name. Every Saturday we could check out ten cents to go to the movie in Normal. If you checked out any money you had to tell how it was to be spent. If they didn’t like how you wanted to spend the money, you wouldn’t get any. It cost eleven cents to get into the movie at Normal. I used to help Bud Mann, the baker, in the bakery after school every night cleaning mixers, pots and pans for a penny to make my eleven cents. Some guys had to hold their money two weeks to see one Saturday’s movie. We saw three cartoons, a short serial, the Pathé news, and a double feature for the eleven cents. We walked three miles to the show and three miles back.

A bunch of us guys would sneak out at night down the fire escape, go down by Big Bill's Cabins, which were next to the Royal Crown Bottling Company. We would steal a couple of bottles and drink them while hiding, then put the caps on the bottles and put them back in the middle of the crates so they couldn't see the empties.

Big Bill was a huge man who was crippled. My dad used to come up and sleep in Bill's Cabins while he visited us on a weekend. Dad and Bill got to be good friends so Dad would write letters to us and put money in the envelope and send them to Big Bill so it wouldn't go to the main office. We used to stop by from high school and see if we had a letter from Dad.

In the summer before we got into high school we were allowed two weeks at the East Bay Camp at Lake Bloomington. We had cabins to stay in at night. We fished, went hiking and swimming in the lake. Each cottage had two weeks at camp. I came back from hiking one day with blood running down my face. I didn't know what happened, but the nurse found a wood tick on my head which caused the bleeding. Brother John was swimming and accidentally went over the spillway. He tried to get up and walk ashore, but he couldn't get a footing on the mossy concrete. He slid and went over the second spillway which was a couple foot drop. At the bottom of the third spillway was a big bunch of rocks where people got killed after going over the last spillway. John grabbed a rock between the second and third spillway and held on until help came. Jimmy Goggins, who was our leader, had all the boys take off their belts. He hooked them all together, threw it out to Johnny and he grabbed it. They pulled him ashore. We were sure scared, but learned a lesson not to swim too close to the spillway again.

We sang songs and toasted marshmallows around the fire at night. These two weeks each year were sure something to look forward to.

In high school we had a little more leeway around the grounds. We each made ourselves a slingshot. Since we walked down the railroad tracks and had all kinds of rocks to shoot, we all became expert shots. At night we would follow Otto Ashbrook around. He was the night watchman for the Home. We would sneak up on the top of the school and ring the school bell in the early morning hours. Otto would come looking for us but we hid pretty good and would shoot the flashlight out of his hand. He never did catch us. Eggie, Bob (neck) McClain, Si Syster and I would go up to the main kitchen where the ice cream machine was kept. There was a pair of French doors with a lock on the bottom and a bar across the top door on the other side. We made a bar shaped like an "L." We would stick the "L" bar between both doors, lift up the arm, and steal a gallon of ice cream apiece. We then put the bar back, went to Lovers' Lane and ate the ice cream. Mother Moore was the only person with a key to the ice cream room. She just couldn't figure out how four to six gallon cans of ice cream would disappear. I came home on furlough after joining the Navy and told her. I guess she was mighty happy to know how it was done.

Lovers' Lane was a dirt road around two sides of the orphans' home. It must have covered about six miles. We would sneak out at night, go down to Lovers' Lane and catch couples making love. One of our nights turned out to be a nightmare. We found a couple kissing so we let them know we were there. Right away the man started the car but we picked up the back end so his tires were off the ground. He kept gunning the motor so we dropped him on the

ground. He sped off pretty fast but one of the guys picked up a rock and gave it a heave. The rock broke a window and later we found out it cut the girl's lip. We were walking down the lane hunting for more cars when we saw a car coming with two spotlights. We knew it was the law, so everybody started running across an open field. It just happened that I worked on the farm that day and we stretched a wire across the field about a foot high to keep the hogs out of the corn. I knew where it was and jumped it. All the other guys hit it and went for a roll. One guy climbed a tree along the road. The law stopped under a tree and shined a light on him and told him to come down. He told the law no so the police started climbing the tree while the other policeman stayed on the ground with the light. The kid in the tree took out his slingshot and shot the spotlight out, jumped from the tree and got back to the dormitory with the rest of us before the law got there. We all acted like we were asleep so they figured they had the wrong cottage. We played it cool for about a week before going down to Lovers' Lane again. All the guys that hit the wire had skinned up shins. We later caught the quarterback from Normal Community High School out with a girl that wasn't his steady. We ended up winning the Homecoming game that he was playing in or we would have squealed on him.

Homecoming at school was sure a lot of fun. We had a long snake dance where we all grabbed hands and went through the town – in one door of the theater and out the other – through stores, the police station and any place we found a door open. Then we had the bonfire, sang songs and raised the devil.

I was on the wrestling team at school. One match I won't ever forget was in a little hick town near Peoria. My match was first since I was the smallest man on the team. That corn-fed farmer put a grapevine on my legs and just about split me in half. I signaled that was enough to the referee. After he let me up, I thought I wouldn't walk again. He asked me if I still thought they were hicks. I said no and apologized, wobbling off the floor. I don't think I won a match in two years, but I made a lot of friends.

My two sisters left the Home and came to Joliet to a foster home in the 1930s. Mary later came down to the Home with her husband, Dave Larson, to see us. I was still in high school at the time. Brother Joe was raised in the second cottage and I was in the first cottage. We weren't allowed to talk to each other so the only time I would see him was at school and at Drum and Bugle practice.

In my early years in grade school we had a large concrete hole which was our swimming pool. I learned how to swim after the big kids picked me up and threw me in. There weren't any ladders to get out of the pool, just your own muscles to heave yourself up and out. I thought I would drown before I got out since I still had all my clothes on while the big kids stood and laughed.

Next to the big girls' cottage was our water tower. I didn't get enough guts to climb to the top, about 200 feet, until my third year of high school. Talk about being scared, I sure was. You were classified as a big guy if you got to the top.

The indoor swimming pool was built about 1938 after I graduated from Felmley Grade School. I learned how to swim pretty good so I got a job at the pool. I passed out the swimming

suits to the boys and girls. I also was put in charge of chlorinating the water plus later on I became a Life Guard. I saved three kids along life's line. The swimming pool was very nice and clean. I got a great idea the day before Legion Day. I asked the man in charge of the pool, Mr. Salisbury, if he would loan me twenty pennies and two dimes. When the Legionnaires came around to see the new pool, I would throw the pennies one at a time and see if I could hit one of the three lines in the bottom of the pool. When they saw me do it, they would try. I ended up telling them the bigger the coin the better the chance of hitting the line. At the end of Legion Day you couldn't see much of the bottom of the pool for the coins. I paid Mr. Salisbury back his money and kept the rest only to end up splitting with Si Seyster and "Neck" McClain because I thought I would never get done getting the coins up by myself. Made a good piece of change that day.

We used to walk to high school every day and back after school. I think it was about 2 ½ or 3 miles. In the winter we would hop a ride with our sleds on the back of the bus. We had to make a chain reaction since there were too many sleds. The bus driver saw us in the back holding onto the bumper and he would zig-zag the bus trying to shake us off. We got a lot of cuts from the sharp runners when we were shaken off the bus. I remember going through Fell Park as a shortcut in my freshman year just to get chased by some man with a knife. He said if he caught us he would cut off our ears. I think he only had half of a deck, and didn't know where left field was, but we outran him every day. We sometimes would take the long way around.

Once, in my freshman year, I went down to Hilderbrant's drug store. I looked all around and didn't see any clerk watching me so I took two packs of Black Jack chewing gum. As I stuck them in my pocket I heard the guy at the counter ask "How much is my coke." As soon as he said that, the clerk or owner ran over to me and held me until the police came. They asked me what I had in my pocket and I said two packs of Black Jack chewing gum that I bought at Tom Manning's store. The owner called Tom up and asked him if he sold that brand of gum. Tom said no so the police took me to the station. They talked to me and said they would lock me up for a week and I started crying and said I wouldn't do it again so they let me go to school. That sure taught me a lesson.

I used to sell my 50 cent tablet of paper for a dime to a guy named O. B. Streepy. His dad ran the movie projector at the Home so I knew him pretty good. My house officer got wise shut my school paper supply off so there went my ten cent caper.

We had about 1500 kids in the Children's School and I think I just about knew them all by name. It was called an orphanage but it was a home for kids that lost their mothers or fathers or both after the First World War.

In my senior year, which was in 1942 after the war started, my Science teacher gave me an "F" on my report card in pencil. She said whoever had a failing mark in pencil could take the test over to improve their grade. The day the test came up she changed them all to ink. We got so mad we quit school. George (Eggie) Doggett, Herbie Downing and myself decided to join the Navy. We went to the managing officer's office and ask if he would sign our papers to release us from the orphans' home to join the Navy. He said no, to go back to school. We ended up threatening to throw Mr. Thorp out of the two story window if he didn't sign. Well, he signed.

The three of us were sworn in together. George was called first, Herbie second, and I went in December 13, 1942. I heard that Herbie tried to come home for his sister Eugenia's funeral after she was killed in an auto accident. He went AWOL, threw his in the garbage can and deserted the Navy because they wouldn't let him come home for the funeral. Eggie ended up as a signal man aboard a ship. That was the last I heard from either one.

After getting sworn into the U.S. Navy, I waited until I got called up. That happened the 30th of December, 1942, so I was in Company 1 in Camp Moffett at the Great Lakes Training Station. I spent 10 weeks in training then came home to my sister Mary's house for a seven day furlough. That's when I also stayed at 613 Morgan Street with my brother John. After my furlough I was shipped to New York City on Long Island waiting for orders to board a ship. My first ship was a Liberty Ship, the Zebulon B. Vance. There were about 12 Navy men on it and the rest were Merchant Marines. We left New York Harbor and headed for Cuba. We hit a ten day storm off Cape Hatteras, Virginia [*sic*] where I got my first taste of being seasick. I was green for the whole ten days. It was one of the worst seasicknesses I ever recalled having. We got to Cuba just in time to see a tanker torpedoed in front of us so we were told not to stop but to proceed to the Panama Canal. We got to Panama and pulled some neat time ashore. One night we went to the George Washington Hotel right next to the ocean. There was a wedding going on so four of us Navy men went in uninvited. I cut the wedding cake while one guy danced the first dance with the bride. We ended up jumping in the swimming pool with our uniforms on.

After going through the Canal it took us 93 days to get across the Pacific Ocean to Perth, Australia. While coming across we ran out of meat and lived on Spam and bread. After staying in Australia for three days, we headed for Abadan, Iran, in the Persian Gulf. We docked at an oil refinery, where we refueled. We then proceeded to Bushire (spelled different in Iran as Persia). The captain wanted some fresh meat so he traded three jars of orange marmalade for a goat. He planned on eating the goat. We hit another storm going from Persia (Iran) to Durban, South Africa. Since I was the youngest man on the ship, they took my blanket for the goat to sleep on. The farther south we went, the colder we got and I wanted my blanket. Well, the goat got seasick and dirtied my blanket from both ends of him. Every time I went for my blanket, he chased me up the mast. I never got my blanket until we docked at Durban where the skipper gave the goat away. I dragged the blanket halfway across the Atlantic trying to get the stink out. While we were in Iran, the temperature got over 110 degrees so we had to work at night and sleep in the day. My job was to wet down all the ammunition with a wet mattress every 30 minutes to take the temperature down so it wouldn't explode from the heat. I got a heat stroke and passed out from the heat. We rigged a shower on the stern of the ship. As soon as we left our quarters, we got wet but by the time we got to the front of the ship, we were dry only to have to get wet again to return to our quarters.

After leaving Durban, we docked at Capetown, South Africa where we went to see the Zulu tribe. I had some pictures taken with them. We then crossed the Atlantic and docked at Buenos Aires, Argentina where we had a lot of fun while our ship was being loaded. I stayed in a hotel for two nights only to find out after we left that a rich uncle of ours owned it. I received a letter when we reached Trinidad to look him up if I ever got there, but it was too late.

We got back to New York where I got a fourteen day furlough. I received my pay of \$328.00 for the eight months at sea. I came home and saw my sisters, Mary and Livia, and my Dad. John, my brother, was an M.P. guarding German prisoners at a camp down south near Rantoul, Illinois, so I went to see him. I later went to Danville to see the redhead that I was going with. After returning to New York I was shipped to an upper state Rest Camp where I met a first cousin of mine named Pio Ferraro for the first time. It was a very nice resort in the mountains where the scenery was beautiful. We went to town every night and had a ball. After leaving there and stopping at Long Island, New York, I went to Norfolk, Virginia. From there I was sent to Crane, Indiana, to catch an LST 690 which was a flat bottom tank landing ship used to hit the beaches during invasions. We took the LST 690 down the Mississippi River to New Orleans where we practiced landings on the beaches. We then proceeded to the Atlantic where we convoyed with another 107 ships and proceeded with them to North Africa.

After passing the Rock of Gibraltar, we were attacked by German torpedo planes. It was at night and we were on the corner of the convoy because we had 500 tons of black powder on board ship. A JU 88 dropped a torpedo that went two feet in front of our ship. I think if it would have hit us, we would still be going up.

After unloading our cargo at Tunisia, North Africa, we proceeded to Naples, Italy where we picked up a load of tanks and a lot of Army personnel. We landed on the beaches of southern France, not getting too much action from the Germans. An LST 73 was along side of us. She lost her stern anchor so she couldn't get off the beach. She was hit with a V-2 rocket that blew her to pieces. Only three people survived.

After going to Salerno, Sicily, [*sic*] we took a couple loads back to the beach. In a couple of days I was sent home to get another ship. Again I boarded another LST. This number was LST 1103. After more training runs with this second ship, I again went through the Panama Canal only to head north to Hawaii. After leaving Pearl Harbor, we went south to different islands such as the Solomons, Guam, Tarawa, Eniwetok, Okinawa, Marshall Islands and others. We went to Yap Island and picked up a load of Japanese prisoners. While taking them south to Guam, we were given orders to proceed and load up for the invasion of Japan. That was just before they dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. We had the prisoners on board ship when we heard the war was over. We had all the Jap prisoners throw all our ammunition overboard.

After I got enough points to get discharged, I boarded the U.S.S. Henrico and came home to California. It took five days on a troop train to get to Chicago. I was discharged honorably the 16th of February, 1946.

After coming home to 1604 Marcella Avenue, I was whistled at by a short blonde, who I later married.