

# Chapter 1

## Clark Street, Freeport, Illinois

Three reasons prompted me to write this autobiography: first, to continue the tradition begun by my mother in her diary of life, second, for the enlightenment of family and friends who may find the details and decisions of our life of interest, and, finally, to record the circumstances which led to our achieving the American dream of moving from poverty to a life of satisfying achievement. At the earliest possible moment I want to express the deepest gratitude of my wife, Joyce and me, for the wise and supportive environments our parents provided from the very first through our college years and beyond. Their encouragement and guidance was essential in shaping our lives. We both owe them more than we can imagine.

I was born the same year as the Golden Gate bridge and as Dad got his GTD. Mom tells it best in her diary:

“Finally, Monday afternoon, July 5th, 1937 our son was born. We named him Morris William. He weighed eight pounds and had dark hair. Next day I had visitors and every day during the eleven days I was there in the hospital. One day I had twelve visitors.”

How many memories of the three years I lived on Clark Street is uncertain. Some were stimulated by the baby book Mom maintained. Some were stimulated by photographs my parents took.



My Parents and Me

One memory that stood out was the influence our neighbors had on my parents decision to look for a new home. The neighbors, the Myers, had a son, Donnie, who was about my age but slightly bigger. From stories my Mom told, Donnie and I got into altercations in which I came out on the short end. This upset her and was one of the reasons they chose to move.

Another recollection that stands out clearly was the great time we spent with another neighbor, Minnie Cooper. A single lady, she had great toys, and I loved it when she occasionally baby-sat for me. She also had a very productive cherry tree in her back yard, and she invited Mom, Dad, and me to pick as many as we wanted. This provided us with several tasty pies.

Minnie lived right across the street from us, but several houses east of ours, on the corner of Clark and Cherry, sat the grocery / general store. It served excellent ice cream, and several times during the hot weath-

er we indulged ourselves. It was also the hangout for local youngsters, and several times, when we felt brave, Donnie and I adventured there. It made us feel very grownup.

My folks began renting the home on Clark Street in 1934, shortly after they were married. Soon they had the opportunity to buy the house which they did for \$2800.00. Unfortunately, they stored their tennis racquets in the attic. The previous owner, Mrs. Ridgeway of Chicago, cleaned them out when she left. My parents bemoaned this fact for years afterwards, but never replaced them.

From the time of their marriage in 1934 till they moved to the farm in 1940, my parents were very active in the church. They were delegates to the Church of the Brethren (COB) District Conferences and the Annual Conference. Mom taught in vacation Bible School, and was involved in Ladies Aid. In 1936 they were elected Deacons for life in the Freeport COB. Throughout high school I had perfect Sunday School attendance and have the certificate with annual stickers to prove it!

One of the really neat traditions which evolved in the years between my parents marriage in 1934 and my coming on the scene was at Christmas. The pattern became: Christmas eve at Grandpa and Grandma Firebaugh's home and Christmas day at Grandpa and Grandma Hauger's home in Durand, IL.. Both had huge trees and a wealth of presents. I fondly remember sitting on Grandpa Firebaugh's lap while he read "Twas the Night Before Christmas" to cousin Zandra and me.

By the summer of 1940 my parent's search for a new home had centered on a 100-acre farm three miles west of Freeport. They managed to sell our home on Clark Street for \$3,449.00 and buy the farm for \$5,950.00 or about \$60/acre. The barn and corncrib were in good repair, but every thing else, including the house, was a mess. On March 1, 1941, we moved. Thus, I left Clark Street as a "city boy" and became a farmer.

Please forgive the short length and paucity of details of this chapter. The memories of a three year old are bound to be hazy, particularly after 77 years. The photos, as are all black and white photos, are courtesy of Mom's diary.

