

## **In The Autumn of My Life Approaching The Winter Years**

### **January 1, 2013: Prologue :**

The essence of this essay/commentary materialized in my mind several nights ago when I could not find sleep. As had happened in the past with nocturnal restlessness brought about by what was bouncing around in my mental musings, I was compelled to get out of bed and write down some notes lest they should be lost and forgotten in the morning. This has happened before, such as the time I had a premonition about a friend who subsequently passed on – it led me to get out of bed to jot down some cryptic notes that led me to write the short story “Goodbye Old Friend”.

The notes I jotted down that night foreshadowed my subsequent intent in this commentary, which is to dedicate this to my children and grandchildren as a sort of bridge from my generation to theirs. My hope is that this will provide a form of continuity in an historical sense to share with them at least some of my life’s experiences, as well as a way to let them know how much I love them and want for them the opportunities and blessings with which God and America have endowed me over my life’s journey. I pray that their journey will be as blessed as mine has been.

Secondly, I offer this as a fond remembrance/recollection/honorarium to the few wonderful and beautiful women with whom I shared love, and for whom I still feel love and affection.

Thirdly, I recall with loving remembrance mental “snapshots” of my parents, family and friends who have already gone onto heaven, as well as experiences shared with wonderful friends who are still with me on life’s journey.

This cannot be a full-fledged autobiography – that would take way too many pages and more importantly it would likely bore my progeny and any other readers to distraction. It would be presumptuous of me to assume that my history and life’s journey hold any great significance or is all that remarkable – very few humans can be viewed as having shaped history in a significant way. Consequently I am attempting herein to provide what I view as highlights of my journey to date through my times and the personal events I have experienced.

I am a devotee of history – it fascinates me to look back over the ages and learn how despite so many changes in the way humans have lived, suffered, overcome overwhelming odds, witnessed advances in medicine, agriculture, governments, work environments and technology, and so many other aspects of daily life, humans have not truly changed all that much when it comes to thoughts, feelings, emotions and their aspirations. Consequently I wish to impart to my progeny at least that part of history as observed through my life’s experiences, hopes and dreams.

For further absorption and appreciation I direct them (and any other readers) to the other content on my website; <http://www.lettersfromthebeach.com> to hopefully more fully provide a perspective on the limited history that I was blessed and fortunate to live through and wish to impart to them.

Perhaps a good lead in to what I am attempting to record is the following poem I found via a Google search:

## **“In the Autumn of My Life**

As I've aged, it seems I have come to the autumn of my life;  
Where I'm left with remnants of dreams & things that lag behind,  
Yet what remains is a mellow feeling of contentedness,  
It's liken to autumn -that brings a pause in time;  
When life comes to rest  
And one is given a chance to reflect upon the journey,  
Just as the shedding of the fall trees,  
We too shed ashes of things dead & left undone,  
Yet there continues a vibrance to our walk,  
Maybe just a little slower than before,  
For now it is a joy to partake of God's many gifts;  
And maybe it's enough to be thankful that I'm alive.

Jean Dament”

Looking back with fondness at the blessings and the good times of my life, I have concluded that I have always been an incurable romantic and expect to continue to be so. I prefer to focus and recollect the happy days and memories, the “hills” in my life, which far exceed the number of “valleys”. So I choose to put the truly few unhappy memories of days, events, and regrets in perspective and relegate them to the dustbin of my recollections. Sure, I have crossed some broken bridges in my life (some of my own making), as most if not all people have, but all in all I have had a great life.

### **A Bit of Ancestral History:**

My Dad’s parents were Elizabeth and Charles Chromy. They lived in the Yorkville neighborhood in Manhattan, NY on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of a walkup apartment building (i.e. no elevators). Yorkville was a middle- to working-class neighborhood, inhabited by many people of Czech, German, Hungarian, Irish, Jewish, Lebanese, Polish, and Slovak descent. Grandpa and Grandma Chromy were born in Bohemia, a country that was once a Kingdom, then became absorbed into the Austrian Empire and then after World War I into the modern-day Czech Republic.

The Yorkville neighborhood is on the Upper Eastside of Manhattan, bounded on the East by the East River, on the West by 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, on the North by lower Harlem, and on the South by 72<sup>nd</sup> Street. The Chromys lived on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between 92<sup>nd</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> Streets, across the street from the Ruppert Brewery, which was located between 90<sup>th</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues.

Grandpa Charles served with Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War. Later when married to Grandma Elizabeth, he worked as a tool and die craftsman.

My Dad had an older brother, Uncle Donald Chromy, who at the time of my youth drove a beer truck for the Ruppert Brewery, which was known for its Knickerbocker beer:



Uncle Donald's oldest child was my cousin, Connie. He had a son, Donnie Jr. who was killed at age 19 in a helicopter accident while in the Army. He also had a son, Cousin Robert, and twin daughters, Cousins Joan and Jerri.

Dad also had an older sister, Aunt Eleanor who married Joe Sommers. They had two boys, my cousins Joey and Robert. Last but not least Dad's twin sister was my Aunt Dorothy, who had a daughter, Cousin Renee.

My Mom, Muriel Flohl initially lived in Mineola, a village in Nassau County, NY. She worked in Manhattan with my Aunt Eleanor who introduced her to Dad. I was born in Brooklyn Hospital. While an infant, my parents moved us to an apartment on Columbia Avenue near Vailsburg Park north of South Orange Avenue in the Vailsburg neighborhood of Newark, just west of Seton Hall University.

When I was about three years old, Dad was drafted into the Navy during World War II and was stationed on a ship in the Pacific Theater. We moved to 11<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to be near Grandpa and Grandma Flohl. We lived in a six-family apartment building. There were three floors with two railroad flat apartments on each level, separated by a center hallway (i.e. each apartment had six rooms front to back of the building).

On one side of the first floor lived Grandma Beatrice and Grandpa Louis Flohl, my Mom's mother and step-father. Grandpa Lou married Grandma after his brother, Herman and Grandma divorced. Mom was the youngest of the children of Herman. There was an older brother, Uncle Leon, who died, I think in his twenties, of Leukemia, and a middle son, Uncle Ernie.

We lived on the other side of the first floor and when Dad was discharged from the Navy Grandpa Lou Flohl helped get him a job testing dynamotors at Continental Electric, in the "Neck" neighborhood of Newark at Ferry and Magazine streets, which to my knowledge is still predominantly a Portuguese neighborhood.

Grandma Bea and Grandpa Lou had three children. In 1953 Uncle Jerry was drafted into the U.S. Army, but fortunately the Korean War was coming to an end and he never went overseas. The twins, Aunt Dolores and Aunt Joan still lived with my grandparents. Jerry married and had three daughters. Dolores and Joan both married and had, if I'm correct, five and six children respectively. Those cousins in turn had multiple children and I confess with some regret to having difficulty in keeping track of them all.

In the summer of 1954 we moved to Mom's and Dad's first and only home in West Keansburg. Since I was still in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Newark and scheduled to graduate in January, 1955, as it was custom at that time in the Newark school system for children to start school in February if their birthday was in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the year. Thus, I commuted with my parents as Dad still

worked in Newark and Mom in Springfield. They would drop me off at Grandma and grandpa Flohl's apartment in the morning, pick me up in the evening and we would drive back to West Keansburg.

Upon graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Newark, Mom and I visited with George Search, the principal of Keyport High School (KHS) about the option of entering the freshman class when the school year was more than half-way over. He indicated that if I were to attempt to catch up with freshmen year studies it might prove a disadvantage and advised that I go back to 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Raritan Elementary School in West Keansburg and obtain another grammar school diploma. What cinched it for me was that he said I would not be eligible for sports, if I jumped into the middle of the freshman year at KHS. So I was entered into the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Raritan Elementary and obtained a second diploma. That proved to be a wise action, as I made many new friends with whom I went into KHS as freshmen.

### **Music:**

Music has been an important part of my life since childhood. One of my first memories of how music attracted and exerted a pull on me was when I was a youngster about 6 years old. In our railroad flat apartment in Newark, NJ I recall many days of sitting on the floor playing with my toys while Mom did laundry and other housework. The radio was always tuned to WNEW, NY with the Big Band music broadcasted on the show "The Make Believe Ballroom" with DJ Martin Bloch. There was something about that Big Band sound in the post-WW II years that was elevating, with the rich orchestrations and the wonderful lyrics sung by the talented band singers: Frank Sinatra, Bing and Bob Crosby, Dick Haymes, Helen O'Connell, Doris Day, Louis "Sachmo" Armstrong, Billy Eckstein, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, the Andrew Sisters, and the list goes on and on.

At about the time I reached the age of 12 and playing Little League baseball in a Boys Club of America league in Newark, I began to get interested in R&B music and early Rock and Roll. There was a radio station in NJ with the call letters of NVNJ that played mostly Black R&B music and Blues. One of the DJs I recall was named "Daddy" Sears. At night I was also able to pick up the AM 50 KW radio show from Cleveland with Alan Freed's "Moondog Show". I remember listening to Bill Haley and His Comets songs on the juke box at a local soda shop after a Little League game. Then in 1954, Alan Freed came to WINS in NY.

When I started attending KHS, R&B and early Rock and Roll began to merge into playlists on all the major AM music stations in NJ and NY. In my sophomore year I met a new friend, a black guy named Norris Lee, who was a few years older and had graduated from KHS. On one eventful Saturday the summer before my junior year, Norris led another new friend, Jay Phillips and I to take the bus and subway to Brooklyn to attend the Alan Freed show at the Brooklyn Paramount Theater. We saw The Platters, Jackie Wilson, Lee Andrews and the Hearts, a 15-year old from Canada, Paul Anka, who sung his first hit, "Diana", The Moonglows, Bill Halley and His Comets, Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers, the Cadillacs and a host of other entertainers.

The summer before my Senior Year, we went with Norris to see Ray Charles, his combo and the Raelets at Major's Lounge, the black nightclub in Keyport. Jay and I were the only whites in the place. This was when Ray Charles was still playing mostly in the black nightclub circuit. We later saw him with a fuller orchestra at a large concert at the Asbury Park convention center when he began to expand his music reach to larger multi-race audiences and fans.

My first exposure to Jazz was when Norris once took Jay and I to Birdland in Manhattan to see and hear Maynard Ferguson and his explosive trumpet. We sat in the wooden chairs against a short wall off from the bar with a side view of the stage, as we were not yet eighteen and old enough to drink alcohol.

In my college years 1959-1964, I became familiar with folk music - The Kingston Trio, The Four Freshmen, Bob Dillon, Peter, Paul and Mary are but a few; and songs my fraternity sang at the Greek Sing Competitions – songs like “No Man is an Island”. And then in addition to Elvis, The Beach Boys and the Beatles, there was Jazz.- MJQ, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Cannonball Adderley, Dave Brubeck, Dizzy Gillespie, Carmen McRae, Nina Simone and Ray Charles’s Jazz albums.

The attraction of Jazz continued when I taught elementary school at St. Benedict’s in Holmdel for two years from September 1965 to June 1967. If I recall correctly during those years when I was engaged to Doris René Tornillo, I took her to the Village Gate in Greenwich Village, NY to attend a show by Nina Simone. After I went to work at Prudential Insurance Company in Newark in July, 1967, and met my future wife, Patricia Ann Macaulay, a group of us would go to NYC to Jazz clubs at the Village Gate and Basin Street East.

As the years rolled on music became ever more my hobby – it afforded me a chance to dream and reflect and it became like a companion that reached down into my soul. Over the years I collected over 300 45’s and 300 LP’s, then lots of audio tapes and ultimately over 600 CD’s. My collection covers the gamut of music including Doo Wop, R&B, Blues, Rock and Roll, Classical, Country and Christian songs. The orchestrations and lyrics brought me contentment, joy, and connection with my deepest thoughts and emotions. The only music genres that I have never developed a connection with are Acid Rock and RAP. Perhaps my connection with music was due to my being an only child – Mom lost two births before I arrived and I was blessed with unconditional and devoted parental love from Mom and Dad, yet had no sisters or brothers with whom to share life’s events.

### **Sports:**

Sports became a big part of my life beginning from age 9 and on. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade I became deeply interested in baseball and football. The neighborhood of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Newark was primarily populated with Irish families, and a relatively few Jewish, German and Polish families. Practically all of my friends went to St. Antoninus Roman Catholic grammar school on South Orange Avenue and South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, while I attended the public school at South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, where there was a mix of whites and blacks. My Dad was a fan of the NY Giant baseball team. I liked the NY Yankees with players like Phil Rizzuto, Joe DiMaggio, and Mickey Mantle. Most of the blacks in my school were Brooklyn Dodger Fans, mainly due to the fact that they were the first to break the color barrier in professional baseball by first signing Jackie Robinson, then Roy Campanella, before the Giants brought in Willie Mays and the Yankees brought up Elston Howard.

We played touch football in the street with the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and South 10<sup>th</sup> Street as the end zone. We played box ball with those pink rubber balls – sometimes three bases in the middle of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and sometimes four bases using the four corners of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street.

As for football my interest was in College and Pro football. My favorite pro teams were the NY Giants, the Baltimore Colts, and the Detroit Lions. I read a book about how offensive plays were drawn up on the blackboard and how the various defense formations were set up. That

led me to get a small loose leaf notebook where I used what I learned from that book and my imagination to design football plays with offensive formations based on the Single-Wing formation, the T-formation, the Split-T formation, and the Spread formation.

Thus, after we moved to West Keansburg and I got to play football at Keyport High it was easy for me to quickly learn the coach's playbook. I attended KHS from September, 1955 through June, 1959. I played four years of baseball, three years of football, and one year of basketball. I was an intense player and had a bit of anger that was self-directed, as I expected a lot of myself, wanting to excel at sports as a way to prove myself and be respected and looked up to. That strong desire to excel aided me in baseball and football, but not so much in basketball. One of my coaches suggested I forget about basketball and focus on baseball and football, and thus I only played basketball in my sophomore year on the JV squad.

In my junior year I missed the last two games due to an injury. After constantly bruising my left thigh doing cross-body blocks, one cool night at football practice the helmet of a running back teammate struck me hard enough to cause the thigh muscle to pull away from the bone breaking the main vein. The school doctor thought it was just a bruise and gave me a diathermy treatment that increased the hemorrhaging. I was operated on that night at Perth Amboy hospital. I recovered in time to play baseball and football in my senior year and was blessed to be co-captain on both squads.

Our baseball team in our senior year won the Shore Conference by beating Toms River. We finished with an 18-2 record. I made All-Conference and in some papers 3<sup>rd</sup>-Team All-State. I received some conference recognition as a senior in football as well.

After graduating from KHS that summer one of my closest and long time friends, Ben Ochinegro, and I were invited to try out for the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team. I was fortunate to get the photo op in the local newspaper. Later that summer I was also invited to try out as a pitcher on Long Island for the Dodgers who had recently moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles, but I had committed to go to football camp at Marietta College where I was accepted with a small academic-sports scholarship. I was also accepted at Columbia College in NY and Colby College in Maine, but two of my KHS classmates were also accepted at Marietta, June Lavich and Vernon Stultz. In addition Rich Boggs, who had graduated the year before and with whom I had played KHS football was there and recommended me to football coach Ken Mead. Rich became my Big Brother when I was inducted into Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity.

During my freshman year at Marietta I was fortunate to get in three varsity games as part of the Marietta Pioneer football team. I got in as a receiver and halfback on offense and as a defensive end and linebacker, when the first team had established a good lead. I might have played in more games, but I missed a lot of practices due to afternoon lab classes for chemistry and physic courses. I also made the baseball team in my freshman year but not as a starter, again due partly to my afternoon labs.

After my freshman year I dropped out for a year to get a job to help offset the expense my parents undertook for my college expenses which exceeded my small scholarship grant-in-aid. In addition I felt a bit disappointed in myself and somewhat guilty for letting my parents down, having made the Dean's List my first semester then getting three D's my second semester after getting involved in fraternity life. The year 1960 -1961 that I dropped out was when I started smoking cigarettes at age 19. I didn't stop cigarettes until 1972, when I switched to a pipe and pipe tobacco, which allowed me to not have any withdrawal issues. I stopped the pipe in 1984 when NJ passed a law disallowing smoking in public and office buildings.

In the summer of 1960, I got a job in construction working for Joe Sylvestri and his partner Lou Mustillo. Both of these men were one-time high school football players and they were both sponsoring and playing for a local football club known as The Keyport Dukes. The Dukes were aligned with a semi-pro football league in the northeast. They invited me to play for the team. We played several games on Friday nights under the lights at the KHS field. One of the most interesting games we played was at a prison in Eastern Pennsylvania against prisoners. It was a bit scary to go through huge doors and hear them lock behind me and then to be searched by the guards.

The summer before returning to Marietta, Ben and I joined a baseball team, the Holmdel Dynamos. There were a few others KHS players on the team who had been teammates at KHS. Toward the end of the summer, Bill Hogan, Alex Peters and I were invited to try out for the Kansas City Athletics, the pro baseball team that several years later moved to become the Oakland Athletics.

When I returned to Marietta, the football coach wanted me to rejoin the team as a starting fullback. I told him I wanted to focus on my studies, but the more accurate reason was that I had realized that I did not want to take a chance at getting a serious injury, as college players were getting bigger and stronger due to a lot more weight-lifting training than I had undertaken. The thought of carrying the football and getting tackled frequently just was not appealing to me. Except for playing some flag football in fraternity intramurals my football career was over.

I did rejoin the Marietta baseball team as the starting right fielder in the spring of 1961, but that too was short-lived. The coach said that he wanted everyone to stay and practice during spring break, but I decided to go home to see my parents and friends. Upon returning, the coach benched me, and in a pique I quit the team, not one of my better decisions in life. Thus ended my baseball career; however I stayed active with fast pitch softball, basketball, touch and flag football while at Prudential. In 1973 not long after we moved to Succasunna, NJ, I tore the meniscus cartilage in my left knee while playing flag football. After recovering from surgery I was able to again play some basketball and slow pitch softball. I later took up golf in my 60's.

### **Working Career:**

During my formative years there were TV shows like "Father Knows Best", "I Love Lucy", and "Leave it to Beaver". These shows and others presented a rather fantasy life where the Father was the breadwinner who's main responsibility was to provide the financial support for the family and secondarily to be the arbiter of any family disagreements or decisions. For my grandparents this was probably true. But In my real life experience once I had reached school age my Mom had worked and helped provide financial security for us. This is what most middle class families had to do in order to provide for the few luxuries that a family enjoyed and to try to gain a better life style; and yet that image of the man being the primary economic provider and protector had already been implanted in my consciousness in that I was certain that that had to be my main responsibility when I got married and had children. I somewhat too late came to understand that such a singular view of what a man needs to be as a husband and father fell short and was unrelated to the reality of life In America in the years from the 1960's and beyond.

Given or perhaps despite the preceding paragraph, my work career gave me the opportunity to expand my horizons; working with a vast number of people of varying skills, knowledge and attitudes was one aspect; the opportunities afforded me to travel on business to both international locations as well as many areas within the U.S. provided me with a cornucopia

view of the world. But much of that came later in my career – allow me to step back in time to 1959.

While on the cusp of attending college and the following year I had a summer job driving an ice cream truck – the owner had a franchise called Mr. Softee. On the truck I served soft ice cream much like served in Dairy Queen stores. I had to prepare the ice cream in the dispensers before leaving the depot, and then when I drove into a neighborhood I had to play the musical jingle so that kids and adults knew the truck was coming. I would stop on the side of a street, move to the window on the side of the truck, take orders, collect the money and dispense the ice cream and other treats.

After graduating at Marietta College in Ohio in June, 1964, I realized that I no longer wanted to become a civil engineer. Several of my friends from KHS had already become teachers, and I thought “why not”, that’s a good profession to give back something and to help educate other kids to be all they can be. So I got a job working in a Texaco gas station that was leased by Bob Thorne, who was a policeman in Raritan Township (now Hazlet Township) and a volunteer fireman at the West Keansburg Volunteer Fire Department, along with my Dad.

That gave me the money to take evening courses at Newark State College (later renamed Kean University). These were education courses needed to meet the minimum requirements to become a teacher-in-training in New Jersey. An additional requirement beyond these courses, if you wanted to teach in a NJ public school, was to take an additional course and get an assignment as a student teacher for a period of time where you were evaluated to be sure you could do the job and become “certified” and eligible to be hired as a full-time teacher. In lieu of going the student teacher route, I was fortunate that John Hettrick’s wife, Lorraine, was teaching at St. Benedict’s Roman Catholic elementary school in Holmdel.

Lorraine recommended me to Sister Mary Dolores, who was the school principal, and after an interview I was given the job of teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade. That first year I taught every subject except religion, since I am not a Roman Catholic. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year I taught math and science to the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades and was asked and pleased to start up and coach a boys’ basketball team.

I had started dating Doris Tornillo at the end of the summer of 1964, while working in the Texaco station. We got engaged in my first year of teaching. During those two years, Doris’s Dad, Pat, who was a mailman in South Orange, where they lived, got John Hettrick and I part-time jobs as bartenders for a Jewish delicatessen and butcher shop (Kartzman’s in Maplewood). Kartzman’s did a lot of catering for businesses and large social gatherings. Pat, John and I would wear our white shirts, black slacks and bow ties and man portable bars during these events. We were paid in cash which was welcomed.

During this time while teaching at St. Benedicts, I was helping Grandpa Lou who had retired and had become active in trying to get a corrupt mayor defeated at the polls. Grandpa Lou would tell me what he wanted to say and I would write letters to the editor for him to submit in his name. He also went door to door handing out letters that I wrote for him based upon what he wanted to communicate. This led to me joining the local Republican Party and being elected as Republican precinct committeeman to represent my parents voting district (I was still living at home).

By teaching two years in a non-public or parochial school, that served to replace the requirement for student teaching. Thus, I was now qualified to teach in a public school and obtained an offer to teach at the Union Beach public elementary school. At the same time I interviewed at Prudential Insurance Company in Newark and was offered a job as a



programmer trainee. Not coincidentally, John Hettrick had started working there around the same time as a pension analyst.

Given I was engaged to Doris Tornillo, and given that the salary at Prudential (Ma Pru, as the workers affectionately referred to the company) was somewhat higher and a future in computer programming appeared to provide further advancement, I opted for the Pru job. I honestly believe that this was one of many times that God was guiding me in my career decisions. I was scheduled to start work on Monday July 17, 1967, but received a call from an HR manager telling me to not come in that day – that was the last day of the Newark riots, which had begun on July 12. I was able to travel in from West Keansburg and start a day later.

The engagement with Doris did not last beyond the summer of '67. At the same time I was being considered to run for mayor of Raritan Township, but before that could become reality, Doris and I split, I had left teaching and moved to a bachelor apartment in Matawan, which took me out of that voting district.

After working at Pru a few months, I then met my future wife, Patricia Ann Macaulay who was also working there in the same Pension Department as me and we were married on December 21, 1968, after she left Pru to teach at a catholic school in Milburn. We lost our first child, a girl who was born premature and did not survive, but God blessed us so very much as Jennifer Elizabeth was born on November 9, 1970, and Brett Alexander was born on November 18, 1971.

During the eleven years I worked at Pru, moving up into lower management ranks, I also picked up a part-time job teaching programming at night in Edison, NJ. As the children grew and went to school, Patricia got a part-time job as a sales clerk at Haynes department store in the Rockaway mall – she eventually became a manager of an American Greetings card store in that mall, then later a manager at a Hoffritz cutlery store in the Maplewood mall.

Sometime around the end of 1977 John Hettrick left Prudential and took a job at Mutual Benefit Life (MBL) further down Broad Street in Newark. In the spring of 1978 I got a call from John telling me that MBL was reorganizing their data processing organization and they had brought in a new CIO to modernize their computer systems. He urged me to submit my resume – I gave him a copy and he went to bat for me with their HR department. Within weeks I was interviewed and offered a job as Systems Development Manager at a 22% salary increase. In the process of deciding, Patricia and I discussed the pros and cons of me leaving Pru using a list that I had written down. In those days it was the exception to change jobs, as most people worked for one company up until retirement, partly for the defined benefit pension plans that were the mainstay of retirement planning and for the security for one's final years. Once again God was in my court! We jointly decided that the additional money would go a long way toward enabling us to provide for the children's' future college and for a larger home as they grew. Plus since I had over 10 years with Pru, I was vested and guaranteed a small pension when I ultimately retired. I had also accumulated and was vested in a significant balance of money in the Pru employee savings plan, which accumulated over time with deductions from my pay and matching contributions from Pru.

The decision to leave Pru was not without some trepidation – the assumption was that I would be working at MBL for a long time and would be adding to our future retirement funds. As it turned out that was not to be! Three years later I was asked to resign – I had a major disagreement with the direction of the contractors who worked for the then Ross Perot company, EDS. It would take more explanation than just a few sentences to provide the details, but suffice it to say that working alongside EDS in those days was no picnic, as their

employees were trained in following a self-serving agenda and tactics that led to circumventing or removing anyone who they could not convince that their way was the right way. It was “Our way or the highway” strategy.

During my three years at MBL 1978-1981, I got to go on a number of business trips with managers in the Pension and Annuity department. There were two trips to Juneau, Alaska to aid in modifying MBL’s annuity Fund Accounting system for the State of Alaska. Their state employees had opted out of the Social Security system and put their retirement requirements out to bid. I went to Trenton with MBL’s managers to witness the winning of the bid, then on to Juneau to work with the state’s managers to firm up their requirements in order to have the programmers back at MBL make the necessary additions to the MBL system. On one trip to Juneau in February, I experienced the phenomenon of only two hours of daylight.

Again at MBL there were trips to other insurance companies around the U.S. to participate with their business and systems people on committees that shared pension and annuity business processes. I made trips to Pacific Life in Newport Beach, CA and Northwest Mutual Life in Minneapolis, MN.

Within 3 months of leaving MBL in the fall of 1981, I landed a job as Quality Assurance Administrator at Dell Publishing Co. in Pine Brook, NJ. Dell was well-known for its comic books and pocket novels and was at that time a subsidiary of Doubleday Publishing Co., which published hard-bound books. While at Dell I wrote 90% of the computer department’s standards manual. I made a number of trips to Manhattan along with the head of Dell’s Computer systems department to participate on BISAC, the Book Industry Systems Advisory Committee and confer with the President of Dell, as well as managers and editors of Doubleday. During my time at Dell, I was fortunate to make my first two trips to Chicago; once to audit the systems and processes at the Dell distribution center in the northwest suburb of Schaumburg, IL, and a second time to attend a conference by the Data Processing Management Association (DPMA), an cross-industry organization of which I had become a member. Chicago instantly impressed me as a great city!

Nelson Doubleday bought the NY Mets baseball team in 1980 as part of the Doubleday Company. In the summer of 1984 rumors started to flourish that Nelson Doubleday wanted to focus more on ownership of the Mets and was negotiating with the German publishing company, Bertelsmann about selling the Doubleday Company, including the Dell Publishing subsidiary. That gave me the impetus to search for another job opportunity, which I found at Burroughs Corporation in Flemington, NJ, one of the big computer manufacturers at that time. When they offered me a position as Product Assurance and Support Manager with a salary increase, I jumped at the offer and gave notice to Dell. I started at Burroughs in the fall of 1984. Doubleday was eventually sold in 1986.

At the time I joined Burroughs the Chairman of the Board of the company was Michael Blumenthal, who had previously served as Secretary of the Treasury under President Jimmy Carter. Burroughs’s home office was in Detroit and consequently I made several trips to Detroit to participate on a corporate committee for quality standards relative to software and hardware on their computer workstations. In September of 1986 Blumenthal initiated the merger of Burroughs with the Sperry Corporation and the merged company was named Unisys, with the home office relocated to Blue Bell, PA, because Blumenthal wanted to leave Detroit and establish a home office nearer to Princeton, NJ where he wished to reside. He became Chairman of the Board and CEO of Unisys.

All told I worked seven years at Burroughs/Unisys, until I was laid off in the summer of 2001 during that recession. During my tenure at Unisys I had received excellent job ratings and had the good fortune to have work assignments in Hong Kong (7 days), England (14 trips in 10 months), and Camarillo and San Jose, CA (14 trips in that same 10 months).

The earlier business trip to Hong Kong involved writing an integration plan for the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank Corp (HSBC). On the next to last day, a Saturday, I presented the plan to the local Unisys Program Manager and the bank's CIO, while we were all dressed in blue jeans.

For the England assignment I had a staff reporting to me in both England and Camarillo, as I was managing the integration of software and hardware products from three Unisys manufacturing facilities. This was for the Trustees Savings Bank in England, a 1400 branch bank.

Most of my time in England was spent at the Uxbridge office just north of Heathrow airport and about 20 miles west of London. Typically I stayed at a Holiday Inn in North London by Regents Park and the Swiss Cottage neighborhood where many foreign diplomats stayed at that time. There were a few occasions where I would hop a shuttle plane to Mansfield in the midlands of England to work with people at the neighboring Stockport office of Unisys. My longest stay in England was 15 days and I got to spend a lot of weekends touring London and its fascinating historical landmarks (see my video on my website about my time in England).

I could have continued on this assignment, but Jennifer was about ready to graduate from Roxbury High School and look at potential colleges, and Unisys had just set up a Systems Development group in Uxbridge, so I recommended that my job assignment be transferred to that group. I then got reassigned as a Manager of Network Software development in Clinton, NJ.

After Unisys I got a job several months later as the Software Development Manager at Datability, a small privately owned company located in the Carlstadt, in the NJ Meadowlands. Unfortunately the recession took its toll again and in June, 1992 I was once more out of work. This was a period of financial difficulty for our family; with Jennifer and Brett both in college and two mortgages to pay (we had taken out a second mortgage to help cover the college costs).

Two months later it all turned around. I got my first job as an Information Technology Consultant working in Parsippany at a company that was a unit of AT&T. This was as a Project Manager and lasted two years - my working career as a consultant had begun! Once again the good Lord was looking out for us. It was the beginning of making more money than I ever had as an employee. Two years later AT&T offered to hire me as an employee, but another consulting opportunity came along through a colleague, and now that I had experienced the independence and higher salary that being a consultant afforded me, I was eager to take on the next challenge to help a company accomplish a business objective.

That next Project Manager consulting job brought me back to Prudential in Roseland, NJ for a 12 month project. Next it was AIG's World-wide Insurance Group in Livingston for a 6 month project and then back to Pru for an 18 month project.

Two months later in January 1997, I started what turned into a 5 year assignment at the National Exchange Carriers Association (NECA) in Whippany. With corporate concerns about the impending Y2K impact on computer systems at the turn of the century, consulting rates increased during this time. Shortly after starting at NECA I established my S-Corp, Information

Technology Corporation, Inc. As the Owner, President and sole employee I was able to command much higher salary as a sub-contractor to other consulting companies that provided the up-front marketing and business development contacts with hiring companies. This was the best of all possible worlds for me as a consultant; while previously working on a W-2 basis my annual income had advanced to the low end of six-figures, by the end of my five years at NECA my annual income had doubled over that of earlier consulting engagements. Of course being paid on a Corp-to-Corp basis has additional expenses (e.g. Employer and employee share of Social Security and Medicare payments, self insurance for healthcare) but there were also tax benefits in the form of business deductions.

It is often true that all good things must eventually come to an end, and toward the end of my fifth year at NECA late in 2002, they had a budget issue and could not renew me for another year. It was also during 2002 that an event with even greater disappointment surfaced. Patricia and I had agreed to divorce after nearly 34 years and when I learned that my contract with NECA would end as well, it added an even bigger cloud of uncertainty about the future.

Fortunately within two months NECA hired me on in another division as an employee at a drastically reduced salary, a rate that was way less than what I had made at my last employee jobs. Again the good Lord acted on my behest about 16 months later in June of 2004 and I landed a consulting job with Volvo. Volvo had bought Mack Truck in Hagerstown, MD and wanted to change Mack Truck's manufacturing software systems over to the Volvo software. In August our no-fault divorce was finalized. In the fall of 2004 I spent two weeks in Sweden at the Volvo truck factory auditing the software changes Volvo was making for Mack Truck.

My consulting career continued on after Volvo. In sequence I landed assignments at Penn Treaty America Insurance, CareFirst Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Maryland, the Illinois State Police in Joliet, IL, and in June 2008 Bowne Publishing in West Caldwell, NJ.

At that time I was beginning to experience sciatica back pain, and while I was welcomed to continue at Bowne, I decided to leave after three months and look into relocating to Charleston, SC where the medical facilities are high quality and plentiful. John Hettrick and his second wife, Lainie, had moved to Charleston from Boca Raton, FL after John underwent heart surgery, and several of us close friends had visited there a number of times. Ben Ochinegro retired in September 2008 and moved to Charleston to be with Darleen. I then decided I had enough of the cold weather and Charleston seemed like a better alternative than Venice, FL where I had initially thought about retiring, as there are several KHS schoolmates and friends there, and I am nearly as much in love with Venice as I am with Charleston.

I also wanted to give myself the opportunity to see if I had the skills to be an author, as I had finished writing a novel ( which I started in 2003) and a couple of short stories while working in Joliet. The housing market was in decline and I could not find a buyer for my NJ townhome, so I rented it and in January 2009 I bought a townhome in the Charleston area.

After three years of being a less than successful author and bored with the retirement life, I landed a contract with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in Springfield, IL. When the six month contract was over I was offered an extension for at least four more months. I wanted to get back to Charleston and agreed only to stay a few more weeks. I still search for consulting gigs, but have been selective in that I only want jobs that are within about at most a four hour drive, so I can be home every weekend.

### **Religion and Church:**

As a baby I was baptized (it was called a Christening in those days) in a Lutheran Church in Newark. Growing up in Newark, neither my parents nor my grandparents attended church, thus I had no incentive to attend. By the time I graduated from Marietta College I had considered myself to be an agnostic, as well as somewhat of a liberal. One of the women I dated during my college years was a black woman, Patty Walker.

Patricia Macaulay and I married in her Missouri Synod Lutheran church in Plainfield, NJ. Upon moving to Succasunna, NJ, as our children were growing up, I made the decision that I should become involved in the church where Patricia taught Sunday school. At the time I came to believe that it is important for both parents to set a unified example in a commitment to religious life and teachings, which involves not only giving money (“treasure”) to sustain a congregation’s and church-wide body’s expenses, but our time and talents as well in support of its service to a community and those who are in need.

After becoming a member of Redeemer Lutheran Church, I found that my faith and belief system had been reborn; somehow it had always been there. Subsequently I became increasingly involved in the affairs of Redeemer, serving on Church Council as President and then for six years as a Deacon, which included bringing communion to homebound congregants, and once filling in and giving a sermon when the pastor was called away. There were also some fun times – for six years prior to my contract in Joliet, I wrote, recorded the music and directed musical comedy plays where the men of the church and I entertained the women around Valentine’s Day. The men prepared a hot and cold brunch and for the most part men played both female and male roles. The six years plays were based on: Romeo & Juliet, As Time Goes By, From Here to Eternity, Gone With The Wind, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and Cinderella. I have videos of the six plays.

Since moving to the Charleston area, I joined All Saints Lutheran Church after trying another on Sullivans Island. I was elected to church council this year and serve among others as an Assisting Minister and Lector. I also serve on a team that brings communion to the homebound.

### **Back to The Present:**

To repeat: this was in no way intended as a full-fledged autobiography. Such an undertaking would take a short book to cover in detail all I have experienced and thought about in my 71 years.

As I approach my 72 birthday, I have become increasingly aware that I am rapidly getting closer to the end of my life and further away from my birth. With each passing year I find that that I have become ever so much more sentimental – tears of joy or sadness seem to percolate up more easily and frequently than when I was a younger man. A happy ending in a movie, a scene of redemption or reconciliation between two people, the remembrance of parents, relatives or friends who are no longer here can make the tears flow, yet not as overwhelming as when I reflect on the love that fills me to overflowing, when I dwell on thoughts of my children, Jennifer and Brett, my daughter-in-law Jami, son-in-law Andy, and grandchildren, Cade, Saula, Gavin, and Kelsey.

It occurs to me that I need to recognize and accept that sometime in the near future my faculties will dissipate. At some point I won’t be as active and mobile as I am now. Driving privileges will eventually be curtailed or removed. Taking long car trips to visit family and friends has been one of my most enjoyed pleasures over the past 10 years. I truly enjoy the freedom of driving long distances and seeing the beauty that this country offers. My bucket list

includes a desire to see areas of the U.S. that I have yet to visit; I want to do this by driving across country – from the East Coast to the West Coast via the northern routes of I-80/I-90, then back along southerly routes. If I am to accomplish this it will have to be within the next few years, so I need to start thinking and planning more seriously.

### **Epilogue:**

In closing I have included several music videos that seem appropriate to highlight what I have attempted to impart to all who have read what has been on my heart as I approach the winter of my life.

Excerpts from Google search and Wikipedia follow along with several YouTube videos that hopefully add an exclamation point to the end of my commentary:

1). **“A Place in the Sun”**, sung by Stevie Wonder. Copyright EMI, Written by Ronald Miller and Bryan Wells.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLOdFy5FZik>

2). My Way with Italian Lyrics: **“My Way”** is a song popularized by Frank Sinatra. Its lyrics were written by Paul Anka and set to music based on the French song “Comme d'habitude” composed in 1967 by Claude François and Jacques Revaux

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaKuDIIZ0KQ>

3). Jimmy Durante version of **“September Song”**: “September Song”; composed by Kurt Weill, with lyric by Maxwell Anderson, introduced by Walter Huston in the 1938 Broadway musical *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-ldVj34Sfo>

4). **“What a Wonderful World”** is a song written by Bob Thiele (as “George Douglas”) and George David Weiss. It was first recorded by Louis Armstrong and released as a single in 1967. Intended as an antidote for the increasingly racially and politically charged climate of everyday life in the United States, the song also has a hopeful, optimistic tone with regard to the future.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Aba0lVdE2c>

5). **“I’m Just an Old Chunk of Coal (But I’m Gonna Be a Diamond Someday)”**; is a Christian Gospel song written and originally recorded by Billy Joe Shaver.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwxYbb5uils>

6). **“It Was a Very Good Year”** is a song composed by Ervin Drake in 1961 for and originally recorded by Bob Shane of The Kingston Trio and subsequently made famous by Frank Sinatra's version in D-minor, which won the Grammy Award for Best Vocal Performance, Male in 1966. The last stanza of this song is a good way to sum up my attempt to leave behind a memory of my journey in life.

“But now the days grow short  
I’m in the autumn of the year  
And now I think of my life as vintage wine  
from fine old kegs  
from the brim to the dregs  
And it poured sweet and clear  
It was a very good year”