

My
Dear
Grandchildren



As told by Joseph Gregory Wolber Sr.
March 1, 1889 - November 26, 1985

Forward

This transcript is copied word for word from audio tapes made by Joseph G. Wolber Sr. while he was in Lourdes Nursing Home in Pontiac Michigan. While a small part of the information is incorrect (mostly dates of birth of ancestors), most of the details related are quite accurate. I have not corrected any misinformation, but leave it to the reader to understand that this was done to preserve the accuracy of the transcription. I have added footnotes to explain any misinformation where possible.

Many names of places and people are verifiable as to spelling; a few are not. In every case I have done my best to use the correct spellings. In several places the tape was cut off in the middle of a sentence. Where possible, I have supplied words in parenthesis to make a sentence understandable.

Please realize that Joseph was in his early nineties when he dictated these tapes. It is obvious when listening to the tapes that he is reading from notes. It has taken me about an hour per page to transcribe the tapes. Think of how much longer it must have taken to organize and write the notes he used, and then to dictate all of the information accu-

rately onto a tape. And all this was done as he was slowly going blind!


Joseph undertook this project as a legacy to his grandchildren. As one of those grandchildren, I am attempting to preserve that legacy for further generations. In listening to the tapes and reading his words, I have come to know my Grandfather even better than I did while he was alive. Some of the stories I remember hearing as a child; others are new to me, but through the telling and the listening I have come to feel even more of the great love he had for his family.

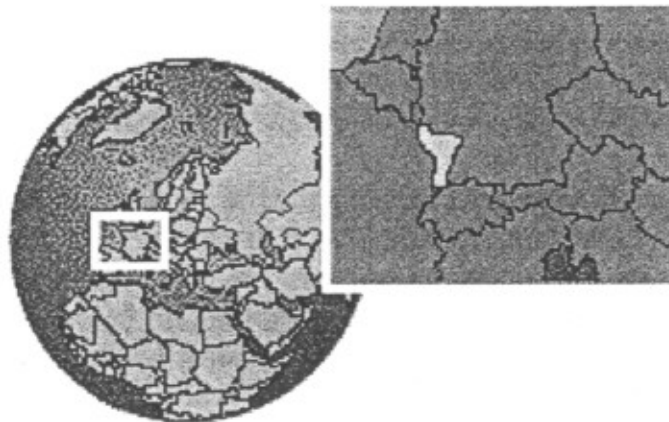
As a child and a young adult I always knew my Grandfather loved me. After completing this project, I am now overwhelmed by exactly how much he loved all of us. I miss him terribly.

Mary Theresa Wolber

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Alsace, administrative region and former province of northeastern France, now comprising the departments of Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin, and Territoire de Belfort. In addition to producing textiles and chemicals, Alsace has a well-developed agricultural economy. Important crops include grains, tobacco, and grapes.

After the empire of Charlemagne was partitioned in 817 and 843, Alsace became part of Lotharingia, the kingdom of Lothair. In 925 Alsace became part of the German duchy of Swabia or Alemannia and was absorbed into the Holy Roman Empire, of which it remained a part for some 800 years. It remained a German possession until the 17th century, and during this period strong feudal principalities, controlled largely by the Habsburg rulers of Austria, emerged. A number of rich and powerful towns, such as Strasbourg and Colmar, developed in the late Middle Ages and won status as free towns or miniature republics. By the terms of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which concluded the Thirty Years' War, Alsace was placed under the sovereignty of France. Alsace constituted a province of the kingdom of France until the French Revolution (1789-1799), when Alsace was split into the departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin. These departments, together with part of Lorraine, were incorporated into the German Empire after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. 



Alsace-Lorraine (German *Elsass-Lothringen*), historic frontier area of northeastern France, separated from Germany on the east by the Rhine River and drained by the Moselle River. The Vosges Mountains are in the east. Today Alsace-Lorraine consists of three departments: Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, in the French administrative region of Alsace, and Moselle, part of the region of Lorraine. The chief cities are Strasbourg, Mulhouse, and Metz.

After the breakup of Charlemagne's empire in the 9th century, the region became the object of disputes between French and Germanic rulers, passing from the control of one to the other. The term Alsace-Lorraine was first used in 1871, when, by the terms of the Peace Treaty of Frankfurt concluding the Franco-Prussian War, the former provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which had been under French rule since the middle of the 17th century, were annexed by Germany. They were returned to France in 1919, after World War I, by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. During World War II, under terms of the armistice of 1940 between France and Germany, the territory was ceded to Germany, but France regained it after Germany's defeat in 1945.

French is the dominant language in both Alsace and Lorraine. Alsatian, a German dialect, is also spoken in this area, chiefly in Alsace, although its use is decreasing. In many respects, the culture of the whole region is uniform, containing both French and German elements. At various times autonomy movements have been initiated, directed against Germany between 1871 and World War I and against France after World War I. The sentiment of the region during both world wars, however, was markedly pro-French. 

My dear grandchildren. The story I am about to tell you is my autobiography. It traces my family roots and heritage, and therefore some of yours also, back to the early eighteen hundreds. And because your Grandma Wolber became a part of my life, and therefore yours, I must tell you something of her background.

These forebearers of ours came to the United States from the land of Alsace, which is sandwiched between France and Germany, with Switzerland along the south border. The Rhine river flows along the eastern border of Alsace. Think of Alsace as about the size of Wayne, Macomb and Oakland Counties, a thousand six-hundred square miles area, with a population of over one million. And keep in mind that the province, now a part of France, had shifted back and forth several times to Germany, and again to France.

And so the Alsatian people were exposed to both the French and German languages, taking over some French words, also some German, and often with a change in pronunciation. They gradually developed a dialect; a language of their own, called Alsatian, examples of which I shall give you.

Two cities, Belfort in France and Mulhausen in Germany, about twenty-two miles apart, are important to my story. Belfort, a population of sixty-five thousand is my mother's birthplace. Mulhausen, or "Meel-hoos" in French, or "Meel-hee-say", as the Alsatians pronounced it, population one-hundred thousand, (is) the birthplace of my father. Both cities were largely industrial, producing machinery and textiles. Mulhausen was also the place of a brick-making industry.

I start with my Grandma, Maria Wolber. She was born February 29th, 1836¹, in Wurttemberg, Germany. Because she lived with my father and mother many years, I got to know her very well. She was a gentle lady, quite religious and loveable. She loved to knit for us children; stockings, scarves, mittens; often for our birthday or Christmas gifts. Grandma married twice. Her first husband's family name was Stolz. The word means "pride". Herr Stolz too, was born in Wurttemberg. Because he had acquired a weaving establishment in Mulhausen, he took Grandma there to settle down. Here their first child, Justine - that's French - was born. A daughter. Justine was pronounced by the Alsatians as "Shus-teen".

Misfortune came to Grandma soon. She lost her husband and after that she lost the weaving establishment. Life was difficult for her, trying to support herself and her daughter. In time however, she married again, to a man named Ferdinand Wolber; my grandfather. Ferdinand is the German pronunciation, Anglicized, but pronounced "Far-gee-nand" in Alsatian.

April 28, 1861, a boy was born to them. He also was given the name Ferdinand. Grandma's life was busy but happy. Then, when my father was five years old, misfortune again struck. Grandma injured her left leg in a fall that left her with a permanent limp. Worse still, her husband passed away suddenly. And so, Grandma Wolber found herself virtually helpless. Two young children; how to support herself and them. In desperation, she pulled Justine out of school,

¹ According to cemetery records, Maria Wolber was 84 at the time of her death. This makes her birth year 1829. Her date of interment is January 15, 1913.

the third grade, and kept her and my father, who was six years old home also. Then she sent both to the nearby brick factory to work at piling up bricks to help support the family.

Justine had learned to read and write, but my father never learned either, until he came to Detroit. With some help, he finally learned enough to pass the annual test for his boiler operator job. Justine - I use the Alsatian - learned to sew and during her teenage years worked as a seamstress. At the age of twenty she married Theofeld Schwab, a German also, having migrated to Mulhausen. They came to Detroit soon after. Two boys, Theofeld or Ted, and Alfonse - Al, were born in Detroit. I shall mention them again later.

As a teenager, my father worked as a laborer, now being his mother's sole support. When my father was twenty-four years old, he met his future bride, my mother-to-be, Adelle Kaufmann². She was born in Belfort, France, on the 14th day of April 1858. She had a younger sister Eugenie, pronounced "Eu-shee" in Alsatian, and two older brothers, Morris and Gustav³. The German name Kaufmann means "merchant" or "buyer".

Let me pause here to give you a sample of the Alsatian language in a little ditty that my father used to delight us with and surprise us with:

(He sings in Alsatian)

Translated it means:

Coo, coo, where are you?

What have you got?

A frog, gimme half.

No, no, miser!

Or, what my mother used to sing to us in German:

(He sings this also, this time in German)

Which translated means:

You, I keep in my heart,

you, I keep in my mind.

You cause me too much sorrow,

don't know how much I care for you.

It's not the rhythm, but it gives the idea.

Frequently, the first name, Ferdinand, and others, like Morris, Adelle, etc., were passed from one family to the oldest or other one in the families. When war with Germany broke out in 1870, Maurice - that's the French - my mother's older brother, now eighteen years old, was called into service. He delighted in later years to tell his nephews - he was my uncle - about his exploits in service. Most especially about capturing a saber from a German officer who was dead. He kept it as a trophy. He showed to us this trophy with great pride.

² Adelle Kaufmann (Wolber) used the Anglicized version of her name - Adeline - when she came to Detroit. Her death records show her name as Adeline Wolber.

³ Morris Kaufmann's given name was Maurice. The Anglicized version is Morris. Gustav Kaufmann changed his name to the Anglicized version - Joseph - when he came to Detroit.

France lost the war, as you know, and Germany once again took over the province of Alsace, and it's northern neighbor Lorraine. French economy suffered also. The Kaufmann family moved from Belfort to Mulhausen, where my mother's father and two brothers found jobs as machinists. Adelle had some thoughts about becoming a nun, and so she entered a convent in Paris. I regret that I never learned what order of Sisters that was. But after six months she changed her mind about convent life, and returned to her home in Mulhausen.

The eighteen-eighty years saw a heavy influx of immigration coming to America, prominently many Germans, and among them, Alsations. Many of these settled in Detroit. A good many too, were from the city of Mulhausen. To name a few: Adelle's brothers Morris, who had changed his name to the German form, (and) Joseph. They brought with them their wives and Adelle's younger sister Eugenie. Morris and Joseph readily found employment in Detroit. Being machinists, they found jobs at the Detroit Screw Works, an establishment near the lower part of the city, almost where the Renaissance Center is now.

Eugenie, or Eusie as she was known, found work with the Fred Saunders Company. She was the third employee to be hired by Fred Saunders. There were other immigrants from Mulhausen, whom I got to know personally. Two cousins with the Kaufmann name; Charles and Gustav. Charles became an early employee with the J. L. Hudson Company in the men's alteration department. Gustav entered the electrical business, then in it's infancy, and was one of the first electrical contractors in the city of Detroit.

There were also the Meyers; Gus and Ann. Gus became a tool and die maker for the Packard Motor Company. Ann opened an ice cream and confectionery store on Jefferson Avenue. The Bintners and the Schwabs: Al Bintner, one of the sons, worked for the Detroit Board of Education. He and I had frequent business contacts when I was principal both at Chadsey and at Cass.

Meantime, my father and mother had remained in Mulhausen. A daughter had been born to them, but she lived only a few days. Letters from my mother's brothers and her sister, extolling their life in America, finally convinced my father and mother to cross the ocean for the city of Detroit. And so my father, mother and Grandma Maria with them, came to Detroit. They were welcomed by my Uncle Joe and his wife Mary, whose home they shared. The house was located on Calhoun Street, now Mack Avenue, just off of Dequindre, where The Grand Trunk Railroad is.

I was born in this home, the date, March the 1st, 1889. And so too was my brother Morris. My father had found a job at the Eckhard and Becker Brewing Company as a steam-boiler operator. My brother and I were both baptized at St. Elizabeth's Church, on Canfield and McDougall, one of the many German churches built in Detroit by the German immigrants who came to America, such as St. Joseph's, St. Mary's, St. Boniface, Sacred Heart. There were now five of us in our family: Father, Mother, Grandma, Morris and myself. My parents decided to move closer to Father's work, so we moved to a place very close to The Eastern Market, and close to St. Joseph's church and school, moreover, only one block from the Eckhard and Becker Brewery.

My memory goes back to the many times I carried a little basket of lunch to my father at the brewery, keeping in mind my mother's admonition, "be careful Joseph, not to spill the soup". In the year 1893, a depression hit the United States. My father lost his job and my mother did housework twice a week for some wealthy families who lived on Jefferson Avenue.

The City of Detroit planned digging the canals which you might have seen on Belle Isle, to provide more jobs. Among those hired was my father. One winter day, while digging, my father

slipped into the freezing water. Fellow workers pulled him to safety, took him to a shed used by the police, where he was stripped and wrapped in a blanket. His clothes were hung near a belly-pot type of stove to dry. Finally, he was clothed again and taken home. There were no ill effects, however.

Economic conditions gradually improved. My father got his old job at the brewery again, but living conditions in those days were still primitive in many ways. There was no inside plumbing, no electric light. The old fashioned privy, or back house, as it was called, served the purpose. Water came from a pump at the front of the lot, and you found your way to the privy by the light of a lantern at night. In the warmer months, my mother often collected rain water from a down-spout to be used for washing clothes, or even giving us a bath. A large ten gallon copper boiler filled with water, and heated on a gas plate often was used for boiling.

My mother cooked our food on a wood burning stove and so did your Grandma Wolber during her first year of marriage. Coal burning stoves were used to heat the house, and kerosene lamps gave us light. I am sure you find it difficult to picture these things, but the people accepted them as normal for the day.

In the winter of 1894, my sister Mary⁴ was added to our family. We now numbered six, counting Grandma Maria, and in September of that year, I started school at St. Joseph's located on Jay and Orleans streets, five blocks from our home. Two things come to mind about the first year. The first, the Immaculate Heart Sister teaching me, was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sporer who lived right next door to us. Number two as follows.

One day near the end of the school year, I was called upon to read. The story was a long one. I started reading. As I turned the page, I heard Sister say "next". That meant stop and let the boy next to me take over. I can't tell you what made me continue reading right to the end, but I did. And then came Sister's voice again. "Come up here Joseph." I reached her desk expecting the worst, but she just reached into her desk drawer, and pulled out the largest merit badge I ever saw. Pinning it on my blouse she said, "Take this home, show it to your mother and father and bring it back tomorrow. Now get to your seat, but next time obey me and stop when you're told to."

My father and mother were greatly pleased when they saw the badge. How my father envied me however, and how he reminded my grandma that it was her fault that he had not learned to read or write.

The next year passed and I found myself in grade five. Our teacher now was a Christian Brother. As a teacher I should have to rate him "C", but we managed to do some learning. One daily lesson was shine your shoes. At his signal, we all extended our feet into the aisle to await inspection. Anyone who didn't pass, came to the front, where he found the necessary materials to shine his shoes. As soon as the job was approved, he was told to bend over to receive his pay. Two smart raps on his rear end with a one-half inch rattan stick. The rattan stick never interested me.

While in the fifth grade, my father decided to rent a larger house. We moved to Erskine Street, near St. Auban, but still in St. Joseph's parish. Here a brother was added to the family, Ferdinand by name, but nicknamed Frank, and also a sister Adeline. Curiously enough, Adeline was born ten years to the day after my birth, March the 1st.

⁴ Her given name was Maria.

All of the fifth and sixth graders welcomed the chance to enter the sixth, but also the seventh, because both were taught in the same room, at the same time, by a Brother Elesian, a man in his early sixties. He was an excellent teacher, a real lesson drillmaster. The fact that the two grades were taught in the same room, was no hindrance to our progress. His ability to maintain discipline drew our admiration and respect, and in my case, sowed some early seeds about thoughts of becoming a teacher myself.

Meantime, I had become an altarboy, and the family living on Erskine Street was nearly a mile from church and school. Serving the five-thirty Mass for one week during the month of May and October, meant three trips to, and three trips back, between St. Joseph's and home. Also, I had acquired a paper route, about twenty-five customers from Gratiot Avenue to Forest Avenue, more than a mile north, and during the summer vacation I sold The Detroit News on the corner of Larned and Woodward, in front of The Swan Cafe.

Between editions, I used to walk to the ballpark to watch the Tigers play. About the seventh inning, I'd hurry back to the News building to pick up the sporting extra, as that edition was called. They sold like hotcakes. Often there were church friends to whom I sold papers. When there were funerals at St. Joseph's, I and two other boys usually sang the Requiem Mass in the church loft, something I really enjoyed. Also, we used to pump the organ to supply the necessary air for the music.

All along, three of us had vied for first honors at testing time, with more ties than firsts. I was nearing my twelfth birthday, when I first mentioned to Brother Elesian that I had some thoughts about becoming a teacher. He smiled and said, "you are still young, but do some praying". I mentioned this to Mom and Dad too, and their reaction was let's wait and see. After a couple of months, my mother decided to confer with Brother Elesian. He told her that special permission from the provincial would have to be found because of my age. For a while, the matter rested there.

The first of June, my parents met with Brother Elesian and me, and he told us that permission had been granted. So on the first of July, I was just twelve years and four months, Brother Elesian and I set out for Amawalk, New York, to enter the small novitiate as it was called. I had said good-bye to my family early in the morning, and reached Amawalk around dinner time in the evening.

The next morning I met my new companions and saw my new home. I learned that all of the postulants, as we were called, were older than I, except one, Eddie Dooley, a New York City boy. The rest ranged up to sixteen. There were fifty-four of us. There was a small lake in front of the building housing us, fed by the Mesquite River.

I adjusted rather quickly to the new quarters, and routine, which meant, get up at five-thirty, wash up, dress, say morning prayers together, Mass at six-thirty, breakfast at seven, after which daily chores. At eight-thirty classes began, lasting till about eleven-thirty. After noon prayers came lunch. Then the classes began again at one-fifteen till four p.m., followed by free hour for play, then spiritual reading at five-fifteen, prayers and dinner at six. A short walk followed, and then study again till eight-thirty p.m., night prayers and then off to bed.

I judged the Brother Director in charge was a strange man, lacking warmth and patience, as witness the following. One day he lined us up in rows. "Stand perfectly still", he said, "no movement". We obeyed. Without warning he came over to me and slapped my face. I reeled and felt some tears on my cheek, but I lined up again and did my best not to move. Shortly after I was

assigned to the outhouse job. It meant mopping, dusting, hosing down a row of connected privies, spreading lime over the ground to make the situation sanitary. It was a one-boy job. I must have done well, because some months later, I was given the job of taking care of the chapel and the altar. Good teachers, regular study hours, hard work and a common goal helped us make rapid progress.

In the summer of 1903 we got a surprise. All of us were going to be moved to Ammondale, Maryland, thirteen miles east of Washington, D. C. The Baltimore province of Christian Brothers had just completed a new building situated on spacious grounds, ideally suited for our needs and quite modern. A few days later, we arrived there, took our belongings into our quarters which were much more comfortable than Amawalk.

Just about this time, too, we were beginning the senior high school subjects, and this under the tutelage of the man whom I name number one of all the teachers I ever had. What a lucky break to be taught by him.

One of the drawbacks at Ammondale however, was that we lost some of our sports. There was no water near the grounds, so we had no skating, no hockey, no swimming. One of our favorite sports was to take long hikes, because there were many trees about on the grounds, and so we roamed through the forests, went to neighboring cities, or rather towns, and generally enjoyed the scenery.

Our favorite spring and summer sport, of course, was baseball. About a dozen of us had played together for a little over two years. We were considered by most of the postulants as "regulars", but the subs were just about our equals, and we often played against each other.

My regular job was either pitching or catching. We had a nicely kept diamond to play on; about the normal size of a baseball field. There was one amusing feature. About two hundred seventy-five feet from home plate in dead left field there stood a large apple tree. Our right-hand batters aimed for that tree. It meant a sure home run if you aimed correctly. No left fielder could catch a ball that ricocheted from one branch to another as it fell, bringing one or two apples along.

One day, the Brother Provincial of the New York province arrived at Ammondale to make his annual visit. Among other things, he told us that he proposed giving us a written test. A type of general knowledge test, or general intelligence test. "Do not worry about it. Just do your best," he said. We really didn't have time to worry, because the test questions were passed out at once. When the time allowed expired, we turned in our papers and compared answers with one another.

One week later the Provincial returned. He began, "this test is not a means of finding out who fails or passes. It is intended to get some idea of general ability and general progress made by you. I shall post lists on the bulletin board, one under the heading "Good" another under "Very Good", both in alphabetic name order. The third list consists of ten names which I shall read. Number 10, Emil Biller - my special pal - number 9, Joseph Holten," and so down to number 3. "August Almond, number 3, Charles McArthy, number 2, Joseph Wolber, number 1". I thought I had done well, but not that well. Number one out of fifty. I felt a warm glow come all over me.

Spring of 1904 brought us the news that we were to be taken to the United States Capitol in the city of Washington on a sightseeing tour. Washington was only thirteen miles away so the train ride was quite short. The Capitol Building, The Treasury, The Smithsonian Institute, and several others were on our tour list, but unfortunately not The White House. But we were thank-

ful for what we could see. And while I was there I had a toothache and a tooth was extracted. What a time for that.

Now my days as a postulant were coming to a close and August 1st 1904 I was just short of 15 1/2 years when I became a novice. And August 15th a Christian Brother's habit and with it the name "Clement Gregory". Now we began serious training for the religious life. We studied rules and regulations, the art of meditation, something I never really learned according to the present plan that was prescribed. Catholic dogma, moral and worship and occasionally some thoughts about teaching methods.

A few incidents come to my mind. First, I was told to teach the other novices a lesson on the subject of prayer. I prepared myself well and was delighted to receive a good grade, "excellent" for my efforts. Next, I was asked to prepare an example of the art of meditation. My grade this time was the following: too lecture-like, the heart was lacking, and I realized only too well how true these criticisms were.

In the fall of 1904 all hands were called to the grape vineyard which supplied the grapes for making wine. A lay Brother, a wine expert from France, gave us a short instruction. Memories of the day when I was three or four years old and my Mother, after giving me a bath, held my arms while I stood over a tub full of Concord grapes tramping and crushing them with my feet. We were assigned definite rows and began picking.

Now, I was a great lover of Concord grapes, and the temptation to test one or two led to several more. How many, I don't know. I do know they were delicious. The picking ended and we returned to our quarters. Somewhat later that day we were gathered in the community room as usual. The director of novices had some announcements to make, and then I heard him call my name. I arose wondering.

"Did you enjoy picking grapes today?"

"Yes, Brother Director."

"And you ate some?"

"Yes."

"Could you guess how many?"

"Several, Brother Director."

"Maybe fifty?"

"Yes, Brother Director."

"You realize that your instructions did not include eating? You went beyond the instructions."

"Yes, I did."

"Well, starting for a two week period, tomorrow evening at rosary time, you will go to the chapel sanctuary rail and say the rosary with both arms extended as your punishment."

"Yes, Brother Director." I felt chastened and humbled. However, several of my closer friends told me in private to take all of this in stride, and that this was more a kind of recognition of his regard for me and a test of my attitude as a novice and my willingness to accept correction. Their words helped put down my resentment.

One afternoon we took a walk along the railroad track to a town five miles to the east. It was the town of Beltsville. This town is famous for Beltsville turkeys which the farmers raised in the area. At the edge of Beltsville we saw a large crowd of people cheering. Two groups of men playing some game. When we got close enough we saw it was a football game. It was the first

football game I had ever witnessed. I was a bit disappointed however, not to see the finish of the game.

In June of the year 1905 the Baltimore novices sent a challenge to the New York group. They proposed a baseball game on the afternoon of July 4th. Of course we accepted. We knew their team was tops, but so was ours. On the third of July team names and positions were posted. To my surprise I was listed at third base, a position I had never played, even once.

I was worried. Fielding grounders and catching high pop-up were not exactly my specialties. Pitching, catching, anything but third base. Well, we started. They were the home team. I walked out with a pupil, a little older than I, but who I knew well. He was "Vic" to me and I was "Joe" to him. As we took the field, he said to me "don't worry, you'll do all right".

By the sixth inning two grounders had come my way and I had thrown out the runners. The score at the end of the sixth was four to two, our favor. I had no hits, but I had scored a run on errors. At the end of the seventh the score was four to three. We still led by one. I began to feel butterflies again. In the ninth we managed to score another run to make the score five to three.

And then it happened. Baltimore novices got a man to second and another one to third, and a pretty good batter stood at the plate. He swung at the pitch and hit what I thought was the highest pop-fly I had ever seen, just between third and the pitcher's box. I realized at once that an error could mean a tie game. Hold tight. Don't lose it. Hold strong. Two runs can tie the game. And then it hit my glove. I had the ball. The game was over. Vic was there beside me. "Nice catch."

I said to him, "I never want to play third base again."

"You probably will never have to Joe. You weren't that graceful."

August 15th ended my year as a novice and I knew that in all likelihood I would receive a teaching assignment, though my age on September 1st, 1905 would be just 16½. And my assignment came. Buffalo, New York, 4th and 5th grades at the Cathedral Elementary School. A Brother Henry, whom I knew as a postulant would escort me to Buffalo and be my guide. I had misgivings. Two grades in one classroom, for a beginner. I just made up my mind I'd do what I could. Well, it was a difficult year. I wasn't all that bad, but neither was I good. I learned a lot about teaching and the pupils did make some progress, but I wasn't too happy.

And in August, 1906, I was told to report to Holy Redeemer School in New York. I was sure my superiors felt a change would be best for everybody concerned. So Holy Redeemer it was, and there I can honestly say I developed the ability to understand my pupils, be sympathetic to their needs and their failings. The result was better discipline, better cooperation and a mutual respect between pupils and me. I was quite pleased.

That summer, 1906, I made an eight-day retreat, followed by 1st vows, for one year. Poverty, chastity, obedience and perseverance, the last vow meaning remaining a Christian Brother. During the Christmas holidays, the young brothers like myself, were sent to Mt. Kisco, a suburb of New York City. We were to take what was know as the New York State third grade teaching certificate examination. We spent two full days there. A total of eighteen tests were to be given. You tried as many as you wished. Their advice was try eight. After considerable thought, I decided upon thirteen, one of which was current events, which I hesitated about. Each test was to last one hour. The only one I wasn't sure about was a current events test. Not having had access to newspapers or magazines I felt my chances were not too good.

Ended at five p.m. with lunch at twelve to one. Seven tests the first day, seven the second. The two days were tiresome, but when the results reached me in my New York City home, I was quite pleased. Thirteen excellent marks, one failure - current events, with a percentage of 69; six points below the passing mark. My superiors were both surprised and pleased, all but one. He and two who had taken the tests also were less friendly; a bit cold. I was being a show-off. That hurt me, but not for too long. When at the end of my retreat that summer, 1907, the new assignments were made, I found myself going to LaSalle Academy, Providence, Rhode Island, 1st year high school.

I knew that was real recognition. Now I was to teach English grammar and composition, and literature, algebra, ancient history and Christian doctrine. I felt more sure of myself as a teacher. I was getting good results, I thought. I was happy and yet I began to sense something was lacking. Was I also developing as a Christian Brother; religious. Or was I going through the motions. Early daily meditation, prayer, Mass, spiritual reading, etc., or was the daily routine that I was going through not sinking its roots deep. That bothered me. And so too the thought that after being away from home almost five years perhaps it was time that I asked for permission to visit my parents at the end of the current school year. Once before I had written a letter of request but had been turned down, the word "NO" being written across the face of my letter and sent back to me.

Up to now, I had faithfully written letters home and had received theirs. Among other things I had been told they had purchased a new home and that Grandma Wolber had been moved to the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor because of her old age. So in the spring of 1908, I once again wrote to Brother Joseph, the head of the New York province. Once again my letter with its request was returned, the word "NO" again across its face. To say that I was angry was putting it mildly. I knew of no one else who had been refused like that. My doubts about not having made deep roots into my life as a religious surfaced again. I decided that when the time for renewal of vows came around, I had better think twice about renewing, especially the vow of perseverance. I spent the summer of 1908 at the Canticle Hills, the site of the New York Novitiate which was new and had just opened. It was looked upon as the Mother House.

Just after a baseball game I unexpectedly met Brother Joseph. He greeted me with "here comes the Big Brewer from Detroit". I had just pitched a successful ball game with my favorite catcher who was with me and my companion. I interpreted the words "Big Brewer" as a sly slur at my Father's occupation at the brewery. I was so angry I just passed him by.

But let me go back now a few months to the Thanksgiving of 1908. One of our Brothers, three years older than I, took sick. He managed to hold on to his classes up to the Christmas holidays. I was told I had to replace him, and take on two of his classes, second year shorthand, second year bookkeeping. In my spare time I had taught myself some Graham method shorthand and maybe too, a year equivalent of bookkeeping. But to teach second year in both subjects after the students already were one half year beyond me, that was (hard). I never worked so hard in all my life to try to bridge the gap.

The two weeks during the Christmas holidays were days of eat, drink, sleep and dream about debits, credits, ledgers, trial balances along with word signs, phrasing, dictation speed etc. I got a little help from a French Brother who I'd (known). He dictated while I covered the blackboard with strange hieroglyphics in the hope I might reach a speed of twenty words a minute, while the students' speed was already about thirty. Somehow I got by and the school year ended.

In September of 1909, I again returned to LaSalle Academy in Providence to begin my third year there. Now I was to teach three subjects, new subjects, fourth year German, solid geometry, plain and spherical trigonometry. The last one, spherical trigonometry was new to me. Thanks to my early years in the elementary school at St. Joseph's, morning classes being held in German, I was well prepared for that subject. But once again I had to teach myself spherical trigonometry which was brand new. In fact, the challenge of a new form of mathematics delighted me and the year was a happy one.

And yet, once again, my request for a home visit was for the third time answered with the letters "NO" across the face of my letter. Now I was really angry.

During the year I had a rather unique and enjoyable experience. The Mass Saturday morning was celebrated in the small chapel in the house. It was my duty to prepare the altar, the gifts and also to serve the Mass. The other five weekdays we walked to the Providence Cathedral which was a short distance away. I again was privileged to serve the Mass each day, and at least once a week Archbishop Harkness was the celebrant, which delighted me.

The third year at LaSalle, I think, was the most enjoyable. I had become a mature teacher and an excellent one. At the end of June many of the younger Brothers of the New York Province were ordered to report to Manhattan College in New York City. Four of us from Providence boarded the Fall River boat which went through the Long Island Sound to New York City. It was a night trip. We arrived about eight o'clock in the morning. After breakfast on board, we took the Elevated to Upper Manhattan where the college was located.

We were assigned to a student dormitory. We unpacked our bags while telling one another this could mean possible training in college subjects, which pleased us. Just before I had finished unpacking, I heard my name called out. The voice was unfamiliar. I answered. I was told to re-pack and report immediately to Second Street, LaSalle Academy, which had been my home at the time I taught at Holy Redeemer. The caller there was not known, but I was to go at once. I was dumbfounded, but I obeyed the call not knowing what to expect.

Arriving at the Second Street house, I was greeted by a Brother Simon, whom I knew very well. He was just as surprised as I as to who had ordered me to come, whom I was to ask for or why the call was made, or why I was told to report. I asked who else was there. He answered "no one except the bursar. Only I and the bursar are here. No one else." For several minutes I pondered. Then I spoke out. "This is the last straw. I am through. Take me to the bursar. I am going home."

Brother Simon pleaded. I said, "my mind is made up. I will not change." He took me to the bursar. "Please give me train fare to Detroit and an allowance for some clothes." He did so.

Brother Simon and I walked to the railroad station where I boarded the night train to Detroit. Arriving there at eight a.m., I walked to Campus Martius, awaiting the trolley to my parents' home. In Detroit, Brother Henry was there to meet me. He had received a call to do so and to plead with me to change my mind. Brother Henry and I had been good friends both at the Novitiate and at Buffalo. But I just felt that it was time to make the decision and I could not return.

About a half-hour later I arrived home. For the first time in nine years I saw my Mother, my Father, my brothers and my sisters. Adeline, the youngest, was now eleven years old. She was only two when I had left home. It was a very happy reunion. And a few days later I saw my brother Morris's wife of four months. Her name: Marie.

After a few days I became settled in my new surroundings and began thinking about getting a job. But let me interrupt my story for just a bit.

You may have wondered whether while I was at the Brothers' we had time for exercise and recreation. How were we able to maintain our physical condition in good shape? The answer is, definitely, yes.

Saturday and Sunday afternoons were times when we were privileged to take long walks. In Providence we walked ten miles forth and ten miles back to Lonsdale, Rhode Island which was about ten miles away. It was the site of the Trappist Monastery where we enjoyed our visit very much.

One Saturday, we took a long walk to Fall River, Massachusetts. This town was about twenty-two miles away from Providence. Two of the Brothers also walked back, but they paid for it by having blisters on their feet. I took the train back along with some others.

Also, both in New York and in Providence we were blessed with two outdoor handball courts, used very, very often. I got to be an excellent player and it was my favorite game during the extra time we had on Saturdays or after school. Later on, when my family lived in the Prairie home, I frequently played with all of my boys.

Back to my story. I began thinking about a job. With the help of my cousin, Charles Kaufmann, I was introduced to the vice-president of the J. L. Hudson Company, who hired me and told me to report to the bookkeeping department where my job was to check the sales slips of the previous day. At Christmas time all the employees got a little bonus. Mine was a two-and-a-half dollar gold coin.

In the spring of 1911, I began work at the Acme Whitelead and Paint Company in the shipping department. This was quite a different experience. And that summer I learned that the Orchard Lake Seminary needed a high-school teacher. I applied and after talking with the director of the school, was hired at the rate of fifty dollars a month, with room and board.

During that summer, I spent my evenings at Detroit Central High School studying Latin and Physics. My Physics teacher was a Mr. B. J. Rivett, who in later years became principal of Northwestern High School and who was my principal, when in later years I was transferred from Cass Technical High School to Northwestern as the assistant principal.

The Polish Seminary, as it is generally known, is located on the shores of Orchard Lake. Pine Lake is less than one quarter mile from our quarters there. I say our quarters, because two young men who had attended the University of Michigan for two years, also became teachers with me. There were also seven professors of the Polish descent.

My intention to spend the year at Orchard Lake was to put together some money to eventually go to college. I had just about decided on Olivet College, but my two U. of M. friends convinced me that my real decision should be to enter the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Our students were a well behaved group. It was a pleasure to teach them. There were other satisfactions too. Cross-country jogging available in any direction, even as far as Pontiac. Boating, tennis, baseball; it was a pleasure to be there.

During my year there too, I managed to direct a play. It had to do with the troublesome years of accession and trials of King Edward I to the throne of England. The play was a great success.

At the close of the school year I got a job as a timekeeper at the National Can Company. I worked until just the end of August, and a few days later I entered the university. Room rent was a

dollar a week, tuition thirty dollars a semester, a far cry from tuition and room and board today. (cut off) sophomore engineering, teaching and my library work.

Just before Christmas 1915, I had saved enough money to buy an engagement ring for Theresa. When she said yes, I just glowed with happiness. Then just before Easter, Professor Williams, a close friend, told me that a teacher at Cass had become very sick and they needed a substitute for about four weeks, would I go? How could I? I would lose three weeks of my post-graduate classes; one week was spring vacation. "I'll arrange with your professors," he said, "don't worry". I accepted, never dreaming that my four weeks at Cass Tech that spring, one day would result in my becoming principal there.

I completed my course work in June and there remained only to work out a problem and write up my thesis. I chose the making of a Tesla coil. I researched the project, drew up my plans, wrote the specifications for materials needed and awaited their arrival. By the middle of July, all was ready for assembly. By August 1st I had made my first test. The result; a spark of electricity eighteen inches long. More tests, more adjustments. Finally a spark over five feet. And the next day I had the satisfaction of displaying my Tesla coil before a group of sophomore engineers.

Now it was time again to look for a job. Home only a few days, I got a call from a post-graduate classmate of mine. Would I like to take a five or six weeks job preparing stress and strains tables in the metric system. Tables intended for the Albert Kahn steel bars, domes and other angular shapes to be used in the South American trade.

"Sure," I said. Two hours in the morning and two more after lunch using a slide rule was about the limit my eyes would take, but I enjoyed the work.

The Detroit schools were opening the next week. I received a call from the assistant principal at Cass Tech. Was I free to accept the job in evening school five nights a week from five p.m. to ten, teaching electrical subjects and some mathematics. Pay, twenty-five dollars a night. I accepted and I began.

Just before the Albert Kahn work was completed, I was asked again, would I take a full-time day job at Cass. I would gladly, I said, if it could be arranged so that I could finish the metal tables job at Albert Kahn. They would arrange my hours they said. And so my daily routine for the next few days was up at five, metric tables from six to eight, physics classes from nine to one-thirty including lunch, metric tables two to four, a bite to eat and classes five p.m. to ten p.m., five days a week.

Early October the Albert Kahn job was over. By December 1st I was relieved of some evening classes, but most importantly, I had reached my goal; I was a teacher again. And my earnings plus Theresa's savings enabled us later to make a down payment on our first home. Theresa had decided that the following January 24th date would be her choice for our wedding, so our thoughts both centered on that important day.

I had obtained the necessary leave days from my teaching duties. Wednesday, the 24th of January was a mild, bright sunny day. There was some snow on the ground, but we proceeded to Holy Nativity Church in brilliant sunlight. There, at nine o'clock, the nuptial Mass began. Theresa's sisters and my younger brother were the bridesmaid and the groom⁵. Fr. Heidenricht, our pastor later, was the celebrant. As we left the church, I turned and kissed my bride for the first

⁵ I believe he means groomsman or best man.

time ever. That may seem curious to you, but that's what we had agreed to, and that's the way it was. And I cherished that moment all the more.

Theresa was one of six sisters. There were eight children all told, seven girls, one boy. The first child, a girl, had died as an infant. The last child, a boy, passed away two weeks after his father passed away, so their mother was a widow at 32, when Theresa was only 7.

Augusta Dashkee, her mother, was born in Berlin, Germany, and so too was Theresa's father Franciscus Quardt. He was a molder by trade, working at the Detroit Stove Works on Jefferson Avenue by the Belle Isle bridge. He was 24 when he married Theresa's mother at 19 at the Sacred Heart Church on Rivard and Elliott Streets in Detroit, and took his bride to their home on Riopelle near Leland, not far from the Eastern Market. The home was his gift to his bride, free and clear of debt. He must have been a very thrifty person.

The Dashkee family ran a grocery store and butcher shop close by, and often in the evening Francis Quardt helped make ready the next days' meat supply for the trade, also bringing home the family meat supply. Blessed with a fine tenor voice, he sang in the church choir at the Sunday High Mass. His happy disposition made him a favorite among all his friends, most of whom were German. His main concern however, in life, was his family.

Theresa's mother, Augusta Quardt, faced the death of her husband and infant boy squarely and bravely. She not only did part-time work herself, but as soon as the two older sisters, Martha and Marie were old enough, they accepted jobs. Meantime, Theresa herself lost a year of schooling because of illness. However, the family made a go of it, and before long the mother was able to build a new home on Iroquois near Gratiot Avenue. And there I made the all too infrequent visits to see Theresa when I could spare the time from the university, or when I brought her back from Ann Arbor after a football game.

But to return to our wedding day. We had agreed to limit the guests to a very few. The festive dinner was served at the Quardt home, and about four o'clock in the afternoon Theresa and I left for the four day honeymoon. A visit to Chicago. I had to be back at Cass for the opening of the new term the very next Monday.

While waiting for the completion of our first home on McClellan, near the Nativity Church, we lived with Theresa's mother and sisters. It was fun to plan buying the many items to furnish our home which would be needed. First, how the money would last, etc., just what to buy. And when the day came to eat our first meal, dinner, in our new home, lo and behold, there were no spoons to eat the chicken soup. We had to borrow a couple from a neighbor. It was both ludicrous and embarrassing.

Gradually the five rooms took on a homey look and we were comfortable. It was in this home that three of our children were born. Joseph, Germaine and Robert. After six years, in 1923, we decided on larger quarters. We purchased our second home, one with four bedrooms, directly across from the Quardt home on Iroquois. Joe was 5½, Germaine 3, and Robert only 1.

We spent eight years here. And when Robert was 3½ years old, we lost our son. It was a very painful experience, but it brought us closer together. Joe and Germaine had started St. Anthony's School. They were both there three years. It was in this home that two more boys were born and added to our family. William and James. By this time I had received a couple of promotions at Cass Tech. First to department head, then to group head over four departments. Also, I had been summer school principal for five years.

At the close of summer school, 1930, the family had planned a two-week vacation trip in our new Ford car. The day prior to leaving, I got a call from the assistant superintendent of schools. He asked me if I were interested in becoming the assistant principal at Northwestern High School. I didn't have to be asked twice. He told me to report to the principal at Northwestern two days later, but there were no regrets.

I duly reported to Mr. Byron Rivett who greeted me with the words, "you were a student of mine at Central High School, in the evening school". And that was the beginning of fourteen years of Northwestern from 1930 to 1944.

Two reasons made me and Theresa decide to move to our third home, one just recently built. We wanted Joe to start at the U. of D. High School, and later the University of Detroit. Also, the work would be closer to my home. So we purchased a very beautiful home on Prairie and moved there in September of 1931.

Joe immediately started at the U. of D., Germaine at Gesu School, seventh grade. The home on Prairie became for us a home of loving children, devoted parents; a close knit family, and a stay of some 32 years. A home full of happy memories as we return our thoughts to those days. We lived there 32 years.

But the first few years in our Prairie home became a struggle. In 1929 the stock market collapse caused financial problems nationwide. In 1933, President Roosevelt closed the banks. Our savings were tied up with the result that the Detroit School Board was unable to issue paychecks. Their employees received script for their pay, and script was not acceptable everywhere. But your Grandma always had food for her family. By hard work she found merchants who accepted script. The mortgage company gladly took large payments in script, and together we weathered the storm.

All four children were now in school, ranging from Jim in 1st grade to Joe in 1st-year college engineering at the U. of D. And with great joy and satisfaction we watched their successful passage through the grades, through high school, and through college.

Two Chemical Engineers, one Mechanical Engineer - and later a Lawyer, one Teacher, plus two Tau Beta Phi Keys from the Engineering Society, a scholarship organization. Their mother and I were so proud of our children.

While still in school, Joe had applied for admission to the Naval Training school at Groton, Connecticut. The school which trained officers in the art of coding and de-coding messages between ships and naval stations. After receiving his commission as an Ensign in the Navy, he was assigned to an Admiral's ship, which saw service in three theatres of the war; the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific.

Having completed four years in the naval service, he returned home to accept a job with the R. P. Sherer Company, the maker of capsules for the medical trade. About three years later he moved to the Parke Davis Company, from which, as I write these words, he is about to retire after more than 30 years.

Germaine became a teacher after her graduation from Wayne. She taught at Berkley, Michigan, but not for long. Applying for a job as a woman police officer, she was accepted, entered training and served for almost eight years. While serving as a policewoman, Germaine became much interested in the writings of a Thomas Merton, a Trappist Monk. And during these years too, she very often attended the rosary and benediction service at the Quincy Convent of Mary Reparatrix.

Very often I joined her, and I discovered that her thoughts were turning to life as a Mary Reparatrix nun. One October evening in 1949, at the dinner table, she said, "Let's talk about giving Christmas gifts this year." Strangely, she kept her peace; not having a word to say, giving not the least hint as to what she would like for Christmas, while all of us others had responded.

I said, "Gerry, you started this. It's your turn."

"Don't bother about me," she said. "I won't need anything."

Knowing of her growing desire to be a nun, I said, "Gerry, have you decided to enter the convent?" Her reply, "yes".

We all turned from our food. I dropped knife and fork, though I had really expected this. Months later, on the 22nd of February, 1951, Germaine kissed us good-bye, walked about six blocks to the convent to become a nun.

Meantime, Bill's studies at the University of Michigan had been interrupted by a call into the Navy service. He was assigned to duty after his training - teaching electronics to the naval personnel at Annapolis, Maryland, near the city of Washington, D. C.

In June 1950, Bill had received his degrees from the Engineering School. He had also become engaged to Velma Campbell, a liberal arts student at the university. Their marriage took place in the student chapel at Ann Arbor. Returning from their honeymoon, Bill and his bride lived in our Prairie home while we journeyed to Europe, thanks to the generosity of Joe and Germaine who gave us a gift of one thousand dollars to help defray our expenses.

Our itinerary took in Ireland, England, France and Italy. Among the highlights were visits to Dublin, London, Paris, Lisieux, the home of the Sister Terese de Little Flower, Lourdes, Paray-le-Monial, Turin, Mont Blanc, Cour Maier in the Alps mountains, Florence and Rome.

While we were away Bill had taken a job at the U. S. Royal Tire Company. Bill was the first to leave his home, and Gerry the second. Now there were Grandma, Joe, Jim and myself.

In August, 1951, I had been principal at Chadsey for 7 years. I received notice of a transfer to Cass Tech. I had often wished that I could return there as principal. I had often prayed that this would come about. And my prayer had been answered. I loved my work at Chadsey, but I think I loved Cass more.

Not wishing to be drafted into the Army, Jim had applied for admission to the Marine Officer's Training School in North Carolina. His call came shortly after he finished his work at the U. of D. getting his Bachelors Degree in Mechanical Engineering. Part of his training was done in Puerto Rico and an island just close by. He told us that if he got hungry, he needed only to open his window, reach out and take a banana from a banana tree close by.

At the close of the training period, Jim was made a 2nd Lieutenant, and then he was returned to the States and became a 1st Lieutenant. Among his assignments was the job of defense attorney in court martial cases. His experience there made him think about entering the law studies when he returned to the civil life. (It) made such a deep impression on him that he decided upon his return home that he would enter the Law School at the University of Michigan. This he did, and after three years he had his law degree.

While at the university, he met his future bride, Christine Hodge. She had been doing nursing work at the University of Michigan Hospital. Jim had, in the meantime, accepted a job with the Pure Oil Company of Chicago as a patent lawyer. The marriage of Jim and Christine took place at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in the parish church of Christine's parents. The date was

June 21st, 1958, just one day before my retirement from Cass Tech and the Detroit School System.

Among the happy memories that Grandma and I treasure highly, are the friendships our children made with schoolmates and neighboring youngsters. Our home was open to these youngsters whom we came to accept as fine, responsible people. They engaged in various projects, often in the basement recreation room of our home.

Jim and Bill made model airplanes, played self-originated war games, having made their own guns and ships. Germaine's group of girls assembled layettes which they donated to expectant mothers, especially needy ones.

Joe was athletically inclined. Softball, handball, tennis, golf. Two of Joe's pals deserve special mention. Bert Hamnett and Jerry Coleman, both engineering-mates at U. of D. during five years. Bert and Joe spent most Saturdays on the golf course. Come Sunday afternoon, and the aroma of Grandma's pies - especially blueberry - seemed to reach their nostrils, for they would surely come to our home. It was uncanny.

As yet, I have not mentioned Joe's marriage. He was still home, though he was in his thirties. It seems too, that his pals Bert and Jerry, and Joe, had debates among themselves as to who would be the first to accept a bride. Jerry and Joe had joined a club called "The Tobi Club". A group of Catholic youths eligible for marriage. The club planned social affairs for mutual enjoyment.

And sure enough, Joe found his bride-to-be in the Tobi group; Marjorie Harris, a parishioner of Nativity Church. There, they were married by Joe's cousin, Father Wolber. They purchased a home in Allen Park, and still live there, although in another home.

All of our children had now left our Prairie home to settle in their life vocations for themselves. Our home seemed to be a bit empty. Also, the stairs to the second floor and basement became more tiresome. We began thinking of finding a one-floor ranch home, if that were possible. We found one, and we moved there in June of 1963, on the very day that my brother Morris passed away and was buried.

Our home in Lathrup, for almost 18 years was notable for two festive occasions; namely our 50th and 60th Anniversaries, the latter even more so, because except for three of our grandchildren who were in school, all the rest were able to attend.

As Grandma and I look back over the years, we realize how good God has been to us. So many red-letter days, so relatively few days of sorrow. As we approach our 65th Anniversary, what further can I say to you?

Just this. We pray daily that you too, may receive a full measure of God's gifts. You will if you remain faithful to Him.

Have we a secret for a long life? Not really. We know that sensible living helps. Hard, steady work helps. Mix these with daily prayer and you're on the right track.

*Your loving Grandma and Grandpa,
God bless your families.*