

Ch. 9 – My Take

As I looked over this history I have wondered how I can accurately reflect where I stood in relation to it. My biography helps illuminate how I look at and interpret my role in these events. Among the things that led me to this is that in the last couple of years a large number of people I know are no longer around. It brings home to me that I am 86 years old and in the last few years I have had many people urge me to write such a book.

And I have been thinking in terms of history. The School's turning 50 led me to be asked to write a history by the dean. I did what I could and the results, still in draft form, are in the chapters that follow. I could not do more because the school has kept almost no historical records and in the later years many things happened that I had no part in. The school did not get behind an organized effort to have all relevant faculty contribute to the history.

Another push to thing historically is that for more than the past year I have been in frequent email contact with a young man named James Slagle Mclintock. His grandfather Robert O. Slagle was in my company during WWII and James was writing a history of the company and the part his grandfather played in it. It was far larger than mine for I was an 18 year old replacement in February 1945 after my division had sustained heavy casualties I the battle of the bulge. James got in touch with all the survivors and had a lot of contact with me because of my academic background.

These experiences have made me aware of how fallible memory is and how records can be made for many purposes. Whatever I write here can stand corrected in many ways. But it is my best recollection and that is all I can do. The life history I present here has a skeleton of facts clothed with isolated memories. There is little continuity in the narrative and there is no intent to present or reconstruct a coherent history. It is just a question of how these experiences can relate to the School of Social Work's history.

I was born June 27, 1926 in Bridgeport. My earliest memories revolve around the apartment complex we lived in on State Street. In this complex my father had a candy store, soda fountain and lending library. I lived here about the first five years of my life. I remember the tiles on the bathroom floor when I had a bloody nose. A closet with a high shelf where they put a baseball glove my Uncle George, a ball player, had given me. There was an old house down the street and an old man lived in it. When he came to the store I was frightened. There was a

family across the street that had a Boston Bull dog that I dearly loved. I remember starting kindergarten at Roosevelt school. This was a pleasant experience. On the way I passed the Cargo's house they were friends of my family. He was sick and used to sit on the porch and I waved to him. My brother still has some needlepoint Mrs. Cargo did.

By the way I do not remember my brother's birth three years after mine. There was a family named Stern that lived in the next apartment building. The mother, Clara stern, was Golda Meir's sister. They had a son David who I played with. When I was about age 4 both of us were rushed out of the house and told to play outside because Golda was coming. This family later played a significant role in my life.

One of the little events that became family myth happened with a family named Sachs. They also lived in this apartment complex. When I was about three I wanted to get in their apartment – I don't remember why. They said they wouldn't open the door. I said, "If you don't I will 'frow' you out the window. Everyone thought this hilarious and I was reminded of it for years.

My favorite memories were the parades that passed in front of my father's store door on holidays. I remember civil war veterans with big white mustaches and big black hats sitting high up on a special car. And best of all I remember the truck with the Moxie Horse that came to my father's soda fountain and lending library. I can still visualize all the gears beneath me and the smell of the grease that kept them moving.



This nice existence soon came to an end. The depression made money tight and we moved to an older apartment still in the same school district. There my mother had what was called a nervous breakdown and she was hospitalized for a period. My memories of this place is that it was a large older house with 4 floors with an apartment on each floor. One big incident was that a bat got into the house and I remember my mother chasing it with a broom. The other feature of this place was a driveway lined with large lilac bushes that gave a wonderful smell.

We soon moved again to a house on Norman Street just in from state street. My recollection is that my parents split around this time. We lived on the first floor and the family that owned the home – Madaloni – lived on the second floor. They had an older daughter who was very nice to me. I remember playing in the backyard of this house and with a little girl next door Romola (Mola). I think she lived with her grandmother who often gave us lemonade and cookies. We soon

moved across the street to a similar house but we were on the second floor. I remember seeing a drawer full of candy bars and my mother saying that when that was gone there would be no more. This signaled that the soda fountain was no more. My other great memory of this period was being scared as hell with a baby sitter who was listening to "The Shadow." I have no memory of my brother during this period and little of my mother. I must have been five or six.

I soon went to live with an aunt in Ansonia and my brother went to live with an uncle also in the same time. This was upsetting and I became a bed wetter. This aunt was chronically sick and my chief caretaker was a cousin who was a kindergarten teacher. She devoted her life to caring for her mother. I was devoted to this cousin. The family my brother was with had a second hand furniture store. They were a wonderful and warm family. "Uncle" bought old furniture from a horse and wagon. Once when my father was visiting my brother had bed bug bites so he took him to live with his mother and father. I don't recall seeing him until we got together again. A few times "Uncle" took me with him when he went out to get furniture. This was a thrill I still remember and of some reason I was entranced by the horse drinking from a fountain in the city.

The family I was with was also in the furniture business. This was a partnership between a cousin from this house and another uncle. This had been started by my grandfather. He lived in a small town called Walnut Beach on the shores of the Long Island sound. He had retired from the furniture business and had a series of ramshackle cottages he rented in the summer. He also had a big chicken yard and always had a fox terrier named Trixie. I remember a fourth of July there and a lot of firecrackers. He was a gruff man, proud that he had served in the Russian army. This was unusual for a Jew. In Tsarist Russia Jews avoided the army because to them it was a life sentence. In my aunt's house there was a large picture of him in uniform. One other characteristic of him I remember – breakfast was two raw eggs and whiskey in a "yartzeit" glass. I have no memory of my mother or brother during this time.

My mother did not get along with her father. When he died she was left \$500. Other members of the family got much more. This was after me and my brother were back with her. She sued and I remember spending a day in the car – am not sure my brother was with me – while she was in court. She lost.

After a couple of years my brother and I were reunited with our mother in Bridgeport. We lived in the attic of a house close to Main Street.