WHERE I'M FROM

"... men and women are not only themselves; they are also the region in which they were born, the city apartment or the farm in which they learnt to walk, the games they played as children, the old wives' tales they overheard, the food they ate, the schools they attended, the sports they followed, the poets they read, and the God they believed in. It is all these things that have made them what they are and these are things that you can't come to know by hearsay, you can only know them if you have lived them. You can only know them if you *are* them."

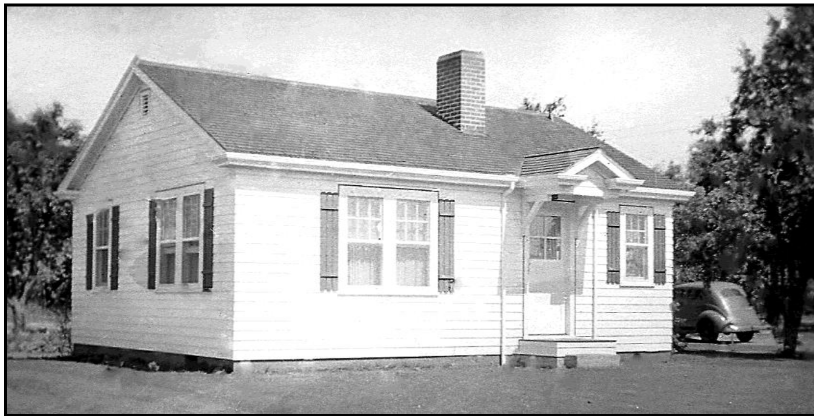
W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*

Official baby portrait of me, Charlotte Sue Potter, age two (December 1943)

Whenever I dream about a house, I know the dream is really about me, my inner self, my psyche. Especially nice are the dreams in which I go behind a wall and discover rooms I never knew existed, large and luxuriously furnished. Alarming are those in which I suddenly remember a house I've left behind and neglected, or visit a house I've forgotten about and find it empty, the doors standing open and the windows broken.

I was born in Eugene, Oregon, a medium-sized city at the south end of the Willamette Valley, midway between the Pacific Ocean and the Cascade Mountains. The soil is fertile and the climate mild—one of those spots people who live there call "God's Country." East of Eugene, two rivers, the Willamette and the McKenzie, cut through the Cascades on their way down to the valley. A few miles north of Eugene, the McKenzie River joins the Willamette, which then meanders up the valley for a hundred miles, fed by sloughs, creeks—Mill, Muddy, Ash, Balch, Fairview, Johnson, Kellogg, Pringle, Rickreal, Stephens, Tryon—and tributary rivers—Long Tom, Mary's, Calapooia, Luckiamute, South and North Santiam, Yamhill, Molalla, Pudding, Tualatin, Clackamas—until it loses itself in the mighty Columbia at Portland. The collected waters flow about seventy-five miles west, over the Columbia Bar ("graveyard of ships"), and into the Pacific Ocean.

Besides being roughly halfway between the mountains and the sea, Eugene is also halfway between the equator and the north pole—you see signs marking the 45th parallel along Interstate 5 near the Chemawa Indian school outside the state capital, Salem, sixty miles north of Eugene. A 2,000-foot basaltic mountain, Spencer Butte, stands at the south end of Eugene, with a smaller basaltic hump, Skinner Butte, at the other end. As you drive down I-5 from Portland, Spencer Butte rising in the south is the first indication that you're nearing Eugene. Or if you were born there, that you're almost home.



First house, River Avenue (1940)

The first house I lived in was a small white wooden house on River Avenue, in what was once farm country outside Eugene. River Avenue feeds into a larger artery, River Road, which follows the Willamette River north from Eugene to the town of Junction City. My father built the house in 1939–1940, after he and my mother married.

My father's snapshots of the new house—he was an amateur photographer and used both a still and a movie camera—show lap siding, a small covered front

porch, a chimney, double-hung windows with shutters, and part of an orchard in the background. Later came trellises on either side of the porch and bushes and flowers around the foundation that softened the little house's boxy shape. From photos taken while the house was under construction, it looks as though both my parents worked on it.

My parents working on their new house

Somewhere in an old film can is footage of a chubby baby—me, the firstborn—kicking her legs while lying on top of a portable canvas baby's bath-and-changing table called a "bathinette." A few months later, perhaps in the same old film can, there I am scooting on my rear (never crawling) across the floor toward the camera. None of this I remember, of course, but my father screened his home movies once a month or so for the family when I got older, along with Mickey Mouse cartoons and other purchased short features.

Me at nine months and two days (1942)

By the time I was born, on November 19, 1941, World War II was well under way. Germany had invaded the Soviet Union five months earlier and had occupied France for over a year. The flag of the Third Reich now flew over Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Greece, Croatia, Serbia, and Jersey and Guernsey in the Channel Islands. England was considered safe from German invasion after winning the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940. Japan had instigated the war in Asia by invading China in 1937. The Spanish Civil War, correctly feared as the run-up to a war encompassing all Europe, had ended five months to the day before Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

The United States was still at peace when I opened my baby blues for the first time. But eighteen days after Dr. Henry Talbot delivered me, weighing eight pounds, two ounces, at 10:38 on the morning of the third Wednesday of November at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. President Roosevelt pronounced it a "day which shall live in infamy" (his draft was more prosaic: "shall live in world history"), and then we were at war. The West Coast worried about attacks across the Pacific from Japan. The fears were not fantasies. In June 1942, a Japanese submarine shelled Fort Stevens, near Astoria, on the northwest coast of Oregon. Three months later, a Japanese submarine surfaced off Brookings, on the south coast of the state, and launched a small plane that dropped a bomb in the nearby forest, intending to start a destructive fire. The woods were damp, and firefighters quickly controlled any blazes the bomb ignited.

My first memory dates from about a year after the Japanese attacked Oregon. I am sitting with my mother next to a blackout curtain covering the window in a brightly lit train compartment. The train is traveling to Klamath Falls, a town in southeast Oregon about 150 miles from Eugene. The black curtain disturbs me. I

am twenty-one months old. My mother writes of that train ride in the baby book she kept for me, but she does not record the reason for the trip.

I have vague memories of high water next to our porch when I was around two and of hugging a neighbor's dog, but the first thing I clearly remember is my father holding me up outside a plate-glass window so I can look at my newborn sister Phyllis in the nursery at Sacred Heart Hospital. "Do you see her?" he says. I'm not high enough or he hasn't held me up long enough, but I say, "Yes." It isn't true, I can't see inside the nursery at all. I feel confused and guilty but I don't want to say that I can't see the baby. It is December 1944, and I am three years old.

My next memory is of being outside on a hot day, playing with my baby sister beside a concrete-block house. One of the adults walks out the door and says, "You'd better come inside." A feeling washes over me that something awful has happened. The adults are upset and I am frightened. When I was old enough to know about the events of World War II, I realized that this memory must be from August 1945, and that the awful happening must have been the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Me in 1945

Our family was visiting Aunt Esther and Uncle Andy—my mother's older sister and her husband—at their summer cottage in Bellingham, on the northwest coast of Washington state. The adults probably heard the news of the bombing on the radio, when President Truman spoke to the nation on Thursday, August 9, 1945. That was three days after the *Enola Gay* had dropped "Little Boy" on Hiroshima. By the time the president spoke to the nation, the United States had

blasted another Japanese city, Nagasaki, with a second atomic bomb, nicknamed "Fat Man."

I have had many dreams about the bomb over the years. Usually I see a flash in the distance, rising above the mountains, and I try to escape. I think the mountains will be the safest place from the radiation, but the roads out of town are clogged with traffic. Sometimes all I do is plan an escape route. Other times I'm in a building whose sides break and let the radiation inside.

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The year my parents married, 1937, was the worst year of the Great Depression. Despite the bad economy, Alma E. Hostick exchanged vows with Paul F. Potter in style. As reported in two local newspapers, the bride wore a full-length white satin dress and her mother's full-length veil and carried a bouquet of Cecil Brunner (what most people say, but it's really Cécile Brünner) roses, a climbing variety with small, pale-pink flowers. Her sister Esther was the maid of honor, and she had three bridesmaids, including my father's sister. Four friends of the groom acted as best man and ushers. About forty guests attended.

My parents' wedding photo, hand-tinted by my mother (August 1937)

A Lutheran pastor performed the ceremony at four o'clock on the afternoon of August 15, 1937, at the First Congregational Church on East Thirteenth Avenue in Eugene. My mother was twenty-three and my father twenty-six. An organist played wedding music, including the traditional "Wedding March" from Wagner's opera *Lohengrin*. The newspapers disagreed about the two vocal solos performed during the ceremony, but both reported that one was a song called "At Dawning":

> When the dawn flames in the sky I love you;
> When the birdlings wake and cry, I love you;

And so forth. The First Congregational Church is now the Bijou movie theatre and shows mostly art films.

The new Mr. and Mrs. Potter were both on the short side. Paul Fredric Potter stood five foot seven, had black hair, and came from a mixed English–French background. His bride, Alma Edythe Emma Hostick, was five foot three, blonde, and of wholly German extraction. Mrs. Paul F. Potter clearly regarded her marriage as a big deal. She started a scrapbook beginning with photos and articles about her marriage ceremony and embellished the pages with handwritten quotations. Two are written under a photograph of the newlyweds at the reception in the garden "at the home of the bride's parents," as the newspapers referred to the Hostick farm:

Newlyweds in the garden of the Hostick farm

> It is a glorious privilege to live, to know, to act, to listen, to behold, to love. To look up at the blue sky; to see the sun sink slowly beyond the line of the horizon; to watch the worlds come twinkling into view, one by one, and the myriads that no man can count, and lo! the universe is white with them; and you and I are here. — *Marco Morrow*

> Today is your day and mine, the only day we have, the day in which we play our part. What our part may signify in the great whole we may not understand; but we are here to play it, and now is our time. This we know; it is a part of action, not of whining. It is a part of love, not cynicism. It is for us to express love, in germs of human helpfulness. —*David Starr Jordan*

I'd never heard of either of those authors, but David Starr Jordan was the founding president of Stanford University and Marco Morrow was the assistant publisher of Capper Publications in Kansas, so I shouldn't be so snobbish. On the facing page, where she pasted a wedding invitation and a wedding announcement, Mother copied a popular Carl Sandberg poem:

> I love you for what you are, but I love you yet more for what you are going to be. I love you not so much for your realities as for your ideals. I pray for your desires that they may be great, rather than for your satisfactions, which may be so hazardously little. A satisfied flower is one whose petals are about to fall. The most beautiful rose is one hardly more than a bud wherein the pangs and ecstasies of desire are working for a larger and finer growth. Not always shall you be what you are now. You are going forward toward something great. I am on the way with you and therefore I love you.

In those days, newspapers kept close tabs on newlyweds. Mother saved an announcement that Mr. and Mrs. Paul Potter had gone on a short wedding trip to Crescent City, California, and were making their home in an apartment being vacated by a certain Mr. and Mrs. Marion Hall. The apartment was at 406 Fourth Street, in my father's hometown of Springfield, just east of Eugene. From its address, the apartment was directly across from his parents' house.

At the time my parents met, Mother was living in Eugene with her sister and working at one of the jobs she held after graduating from high school in 1931—tinting photos by hand at a photographer's studio or clerking at the Lane County assessor's office. My father was teaching social studies at Springfield High School, after graduating from the University of Oregon with a degree in education in 1935 (he went back to receive a master's degree in 1942). He always said he worked his way through college singing at weddings and funerals.

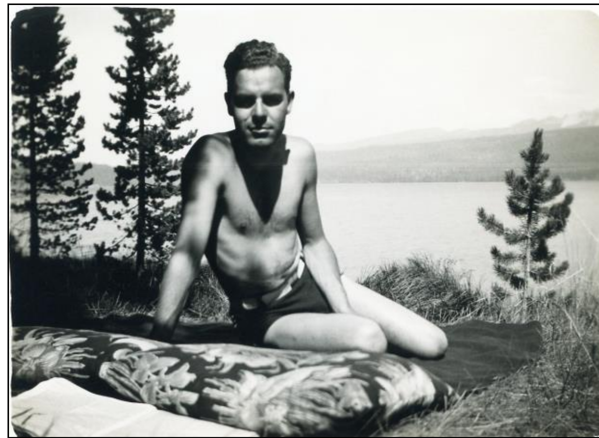
In the pile of sheet music he left when he died is a copy of the 1902 wedding song "Because," which he must have sung dozens of times, along with "I Love Thee" by Edvard Grieg and "How Do I Love Thee," a setting of the poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. There's also a tattered copy of "Pale Moon: An Indian Love Song," which clearly saw lots of use. For funerals, I found a marked-up copy of Handel's "Where'er You Walk" and two copies of "The Lord's Prayer."

I don't know how Paul Potter and Alma Hostick became acquainted. If Mother told me, I've forgotten, though I suspect it was through a mutual friend. The photo album my mother kept before she was married shows a pretty blonde

girl with lots of friends and more than one boyfriend, trips to the beach, hitchhiking with her best friend Ella, and hanging out at the Hostick farm. Mother has a pistol on her hip in one picture, standing next to Ella, who's carrying a sleeping bag. Mother told me they used to go camping by themselves.

My pistol-packin' Mama with her friend Ella, on their way camping (about 1934)

The only story I know about my parents' courtship is that after a date to go swimming, Alma left her purse in Paul's car, which meant that he had to see her again to return it. Deliberate or not, my mother's ploy worked.

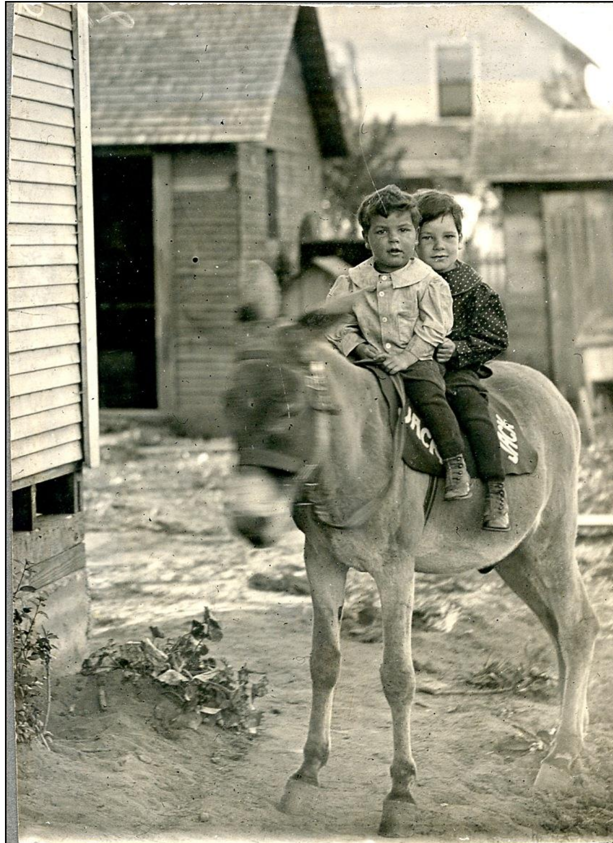


Beefcake shot of my father when he and my mother were courting

My father was born in Springfield in 1911. My chapter, "The Puritan Connection," outlines the part of his family tree that goes back to the settlers of New England in the 1600s. He was probably not related to the seventeenth-

century Dutch painter who shared his name, Paulus Potter, or to Beatrix Potter, the twentieth-century English writer and illustrator.

Paul Potter was a middle child. He had an older brother, Arthur Everett, born in 1909, and a younger sister, Dorothe Mae, born in 1915. I am short of information about my father's childhood. In one of Mother's photo boxes I found a picture of Paul and Arthur Potter riding a donkey in what looks like their backyard, taken around 1913, when my father would have been two (I'm guessing at the children's ages in these photos).



Paul (age 2, front) and Arthur (age 4) on a donkey (about 1913)

A wonderful portrait that must have been taken by a professional photographer shows the three Potter children riding in a goat cart. The picture could have come from Russia in the nineteenth century. The curtains, the dark siding, the children's clothes, the wicker cart. And the handsome billy goat! There was a family story about a dog—it might have been the one named Treve—who could climb ladders. And the children must have had music lessons because Dorothe Mae played the piano and Paul played the violin. Arthur looks like an actor. But it is impossible to say what he might have turned out to be.

Dorothe Mae (age 3), Paul (age 7), and Arthur (age 9), with a billy goat (about 1918)

The most important part of my father's story must be the completely unexpected death of his brother Arthur at the age of twenty. Afterward, when anyone told the story, it ended with my father putting his violin under the bed and never playing it again. Arthur is otherwise a mystery to me, but in the old photos he is handsome, dark-haired, and somewhat taller than my father. I assume he was also popular, perhaps more popular than my father. I have a hunch that Arthur was his mother's favorite, too. My father surely looked up to his big brother.

As I understood the story, Arthur had gone to San Francisco with friends to celebrate their graduation from high school. A newspaper article from about 1960, reporting the gift of chimes by Arthur's mother (with his sister and brother) to the Ebbert Memorial Methodist Church in Springfield in honor of her husband and her son, says Arthur graduated from high school in 1928. He would have been nineteen then, which is rather old for graduating, and my cousin who's named after him told me that Arthur had gone to San Francisco to work.

At any rate, my grandmother got word that Arthur was gravely ill and immediately set out for San Francisco by train, but by the time she arrived, he was already dead, of meningitis or encephalitis. I found on the Internet an article about a serious outbreak of meningitis on the Pacific Coast in 1929, which the author, a senior surgeon in the San Francisco office of the U.S. Public Health Service, discusses, then dismisses, as possibly related to passengers arriving from infected ports in the Orient (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila). In California that year, there were 695 cases and 381 deaths from meningitis. Arthur Potter's tombstone is in the Laurel Hill cemetery in Eugene, where his grandparents and parents are also buried. The date on his tombstone is 1929.

Arthur (age 18), Grandpa Potter, Grandma Potter (Nana), Paul (age 16), Dorothe Mae (age 12), and dog (Treve?), about 1927—two years before Arthur's death

The family told the story of Arthur's death in such a way that it was obvious they took my father's putting his violin away as a sign of grief. But I'm not sure. He could have played the violin for solace, to remember his brother, for any number of soothing reasons. Instead, he put away the instrument. A psychiatrist once asked me, "Did your father deny himself?" The question gave me pause. What it meant was, Do you, like your father, deny yourself?

I suppose that as a teenager, Paul studied the violin and also sang. He would have spent time with his father in the shop behind the house, where he learned basic woodworking. His father and his grandfather were both cabinetmakers, of a rough-and-ready sort. I imagine that he and his father didn't talk much—nobody in the family talked much—as they planed wood or glued it and fastened it in wooden clamps to dry. He built a magazine rack and a stool in high school.

*

My mother was born in 1914 in Beatrice, Nebraska, a hundred miles east of Red Cloud, the town where Willa Cather grew up. I visited Beatrice in the fall of 2002, on my way to a job in Washington, D.C., and found rolling hills, which I hadn't expected, and restored tallgrass prairie at the Homestead National Monument outside town, site of the first property granted under the Homestead

Act of 1862. You walk through the same landscape early settlers encountered. The tall grasses are full of stickery plants that would have made the prairie difficult to walk or ride through.

Mother grew up on several different farms in the Willamette Valley, where she had moved from Nebraska with her parents and sister when she was nine months old. She went to grade school at Pioneer School, a little wooden schoolhouse on Meadowview Road between Eugene and Junction City. The school might have been started by my grandfather, who is listed as chairman of the school board in a little handwritten book Mother saved from first grade. She was one of four pupils, all girls (one of them her sister), and she finished both first and second grade that school year (1921–1922).

The teacher had prepared the booklet partly to celebrate the end of term. It says that the pupils and their families had a "basket dinner with a wienie roast" on the last day. But it was mostly to reward "The Modern Health Crusaders of Pioneer School." What in the world was that? I looked it up. It turns out that the Modern Health Crusade was a national program begun around the time of World War I. Its purpose was to teach good health habits to schoolchildren in the fight against tuberculosis, known as the Great White Plague. Pupils were given lists of "health chores," such as brushing their teeth twice a day, sleeping ten hours with the windows open, and taking a bath on Saturday night, to help "kill those bacteria pests that cause so many untimely deaths," as the teacher wrote. The crusaders were rewarded with pins or buttons for doing their health chores.

Mother's high-school graduation photo (1931)

When she was about thirteen, Mother started high school in Junction City. She studied French and business, played baseball, served as class secretary, class reporter, and student body secretary, and graduated as salutatorian at sixteen. Late in life, she told her minister that she took the Oregon Electric train to and from school, but I think she told me she boarded in Junction City for a while, maybe during her senior year. Her graduating class had twenty-four members. In the high school's 1931 yearbook (the *Junco-Ed*), she is pictured playing the starring role in a play that was popular at the time, a mystery-comedy called *The Jade Necklace*. She also won the girls' 100-yard dash on graduation day.

Back row: Wayne Forbis, Fern Morgan, Eugene Nelson, Wilma Mays, Hazel Kaping, Elva Petersen
Front row: Alma Hostick, Guy Gilmore

Photo from Mother's high school annual (1931), showing her starring in *The Jade Necklace*, a play presented by her senior class

Going through Mother's modest archive tells me that she was popular in high school. Her photo comes first in the annual, even though her name wasn't first alphabetically, and someone has written "Blondy" above her photo (it's not her handwriting). Everyone's entry is followed by a quote. Mother's was, "It is the quiet people who are lovable." Whoever chose the quote, it shows that my mother was very well-liked.

All my mother's ancestors were German. In her later years, she resembled Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain. That is not altogether surprising, considering that the British queen descends from the German House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Mother's forebears sailed to the United States from Germany as part of a wave of mass emigration, eventually numbering over three million, that began in the 1830s. Her ancestors came mostly from the Kingdom of Hanover (spelled

Hannover in German) and were probably farmers seeking land in America. They might have been cramped for land due to the practice of dividing farms among heirs. They might also have been escaping the economic hardship that Germany suffered after the Napoleonic wars earlier in the century. Or they could have left to escape the political unrest that preceded the German revolutions of 1848.

They might also have been starving. The German population had become dependent on the potato, and when the potato blight struck rural Germany in the 1840s (though not as devastatingly as in Ireland), impoverished Germans were encouraged to leave their homes by societies that gave one-way tickets to the poor. Organizations in the United States also boosted immigration—railroads recruited newcomers, aid groups helped immigrants when they arrived. Nebraska and Iowa were part of the "German belt" where German-Americans settled most densely.

When my German ancestors emigrated, Germany was not a country but rather a loose confederation of independent states that had replaced the Holy Roman Empire when it was dissolved in 1806. The independent Kingdom of Hanover was actually ruled by the king of Great Britain, under an arrangement known as a "personal union" between states. The personal union between Hanover and Great Britain began in 1714, when George I, the prince elector of Hanover, inherited the British throne. It ended in 1837, when Queen Victoria became the British monarch. Women were excluded from the Hanoverian succession by a salic law dating from the reign of King Clovis I (fifth century A.D.). Hanover became part of the unified German Empire in 1871.

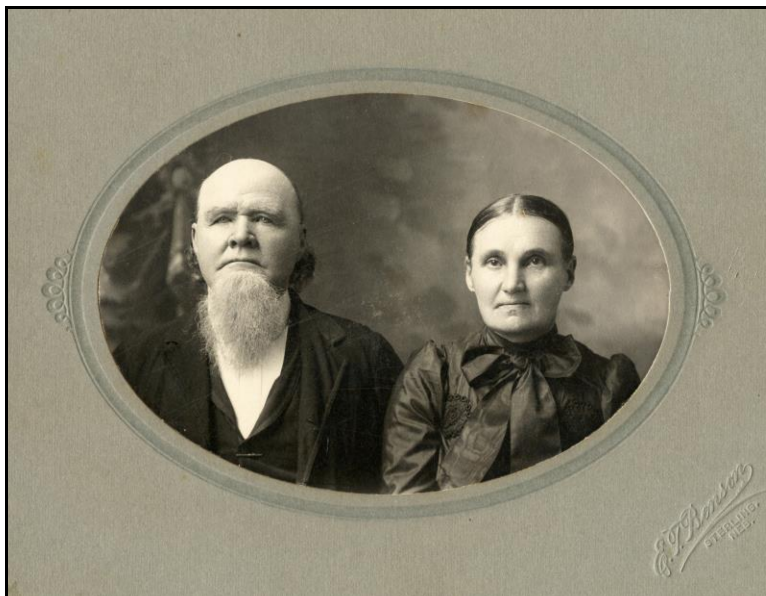
My mother's mother, Emma Elizabeth Stutheit, was one of eleven children born to Katharine (Katrina) Louise and Bernard Friedrich Stutheit. Both had come to the United States from northwestern Germany. Katharine, the daughter of Gerhard and Katherine Hempeler, was born in 1838 (possibly 1835) in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg. Bernard, the son of Gerhardt and Meta Stutheit, was born in 1832 in the Kingdom of Hanover. The two territories are now part of the modern German state of Lower Saxony, whose capital city is Hanover.

Katherine Hempeler Stutheit, my great-grandmother

In 1833, when he was less than a year old, Bernard Stutheit sailed from Hamburg to the United States with his parents, paternal grandparents, and four siblings on board the ship *Howard*. (His grandmother died at sea, according to the 1,027-page *Stutheit Family History: 1769–1981*, compiled in the 1980s by Bernard's descendant Dolores Hahn.) After landing in New York (not at Ellis Island, which did not yet exist), the Stutheit family first settled in Mercer County, Ohio, then moved to Clayton County, Iowa, where in 1855 Bernard Stutheit married Katherine Hempeler. She probably came to Clayton County from Oldenburg with her mother in 1852, about ten years after her father died. Her siblings, four brothers and one sister, must have emigrated about the same time. Two are recorded as having died in Nebraska, one in Iowa, and one, a Lutheran minister, in Missouri.

In 1866, Bernard and Katherine Stutheit moved their family to a farm in Johnson County, Nebraska. Katharine died at age forty-nine of tuberculosis in California, where the family had gone because of her ill health. Mother told the story that Katharine died of overwork. With eleven children to take care of and a farm to tend, no wonder.

Nine years after Katharine died, Bernard married a twenty-five-year-old widow, Caroline Schulte, who had emigrated from Germany in 1864 and with whom he had a son. At this point, the Stutheit family history gets complicated. Caroline had been married twice before, first to William Meyer, with whom she had a daughter, Callie. After William Meyer died in 1880, Caroline married William Schulte, and they had five children. William Schulte died in 1890, and after three years, Caroline married Bernard Stutheit. Caroline's daughter Callie ended up marrying her stepbrother, Theodore "Ted" Stutheit, one of Bernard and Katherine Stutheit's children. Thus, Callie's mother Caroline was both Ted Stutheit's stepmother and his mother-in-law.



Bernard Stutheit, my great-grandfather, and Caroline, his second wife

When Bernard Stutheit died in 1906, his obituary, originally published in German, described his death:

> The deceased enjoyed good health and a strong constitution until, five years prior to his death, a nerve fever brought him close to the grave, but his hour had not yet come and the Lord gave him new strength. However, in the following year, he did not begin with the same vigor and was more or less sickly, but his sickness could not be ascertained. After a two weeks journey, coming home his condition worsened. Infectious bronchitis caused him great breathing difficulty. His family spared no concern and expenses to relieve his suffering. Until Sunday, it seemed the treatment of the doctors had achieved the desired effect.
>
> By Monday afternoon the sickness attacked him in full fury and Tuesday the 28th at 1 p.m. in the circle of his family, he passed away. I can say with comfort and faith in the Lord who has redeemed him from his sins, he departed from us. How touching it was that on Thursday he partook of Holy Communion with his family. How earnestly he was on his knees and confessed his faith and sins. He was one of the quiet ones in the congregation.

Caroline Stutheit lived until 1941, staying on the farm with her children until 1930, when she moved to nearby Cook, Nebraska. Her obituary counted her time on earth exactly—"eight-four years, one month, and fifteen days"—and called her a "pioneer of Johnson County" who was "known to everyone for her kindly ways."

Bernard Stutheit's dozen children produced seventy grandchildren, giving Mother a slew of relatives in Nebraska with names like Schulte, Stutheit, Grotrian, Wiebke, Riensche, Ahntholz, Overbeck. One of the relatives Mother often spoke of was Agnes Riensche, the daughter of her mother's sister Louise, who had married the son of a prominent German settler in Fox Township, Iowa. Agnes, who was known as "aunt" although she was Mother's first cousin, cared for her parents on their farm near Cook until they died. She then moved to California and when she was sixty-five, married a Lutheran minister. After her husband died, Agnes moved back to Cook and died there herself at age ninety-seven.

Aunt Agnes came from California once to visit Mother. I was living in Los Angeles but vacationing in Oregon, staying in my parents' new house in west Eugene. That must have been in the mid-1970s. Mother served coffee in her white Royal Doulton bone-china cups with the platinum rims. Agnes sat primly in a straight chair by the picture window that looked east toward the Three Sisters mountains. I'm pretty sure Agnes didn't stay at the house or eat a meal with us. She might have gotten a homemade cookie or piece of pie with her coffee, but my parents did not seem to know how to entertain guests except in the context of a dinner party. I remember, with chagrin, the time friends of theirs from Southern California visited and were not offered so much as a cup of coffee.

Emma Stutheit, my maternal grandmother, was born on October 5, 1881, in Cook, Nebraska. At nearly twenty-nine, she was six years older than Alfred Henry Hostick when she married him on September 28, 1910, in Helena Precinct, Johnson County, Nebraska. Alfred was then living in Salina County, Kansas, according to their wedding certificate. The certificate is written in German, and among the papers in the German family Bible (Martin Luther's translation) handed down to my mother is a letter from the Evangelical Lutheran pastor, Johannes Lehmann, who married my grandparents.

The letter is written in *Kurrent* script, a German handwriting system based on medieval cursive writing that was practiced into the early twentieth century but that almost no one can read anymore. It took me a week to decipher a forty-three word postcard that my grandmother wrote to her brother as a birthday greeting in 1920, but the pastor's letter is beyond me. The postcard is also the only clue that my grandmother was fluent in German—I never heard her speak German and no one ever mentioned that she did.

Wedding photograph of Emma E. Stutheit and Alfred H. Hostick, September 1910

Stutheit–Hostick wedding party, with attendants Friedrich Grotrian and Alma Grotrian Schulte

My grandparents' wedding was held at St. Paul's Church in Johnson County, Nebraska, also known as the German Lutheran Church. Bernard Friedrich Stutheit had helped found the church after he moved his family to the county. Services were conducted in German until 1939, according to a newspaper article from 1941 about the church's seventy-fifth anniversary (my mother received newspapers from Nebraska, such as the *Johnson County Courier* in Sterling,

during the 1940s, and pasted articles from them in one of her scrapbooks), and German-American families such as the Stutheits spoke German at home. Considering their origins in northwestern Germany, what they spoke was probably the *Plattdeutsch* dialect, also known as Low German and more closely related to English than standard High German.

Alfred Hostick was born in Otoe County, Nebraska, on April 21, 1888. His father, Henry Hostick, was born in Illinois in 1858, and his mother, Sophia Christina Maria Wilhelmina Wiebke, known as Mary, was born in Indiana in 1864. Henry Hostick and Mary Wiebke married in Nebraska in 1883 and came to Oregon about 1918. They must have joined their son Alfred and his family after they settled in Oregon. Henry Hostick died in Eugene in 1928, Mary in 1933. According to Internet records, all ten of their children also died in Oregon or southern Washington state. In other words, the whole family moved west.

Henry Hostick's parents—my great-great-grandparents—emigrated from Germany to the United States in the 1850s and married in Illinois about 1857. Henry's father, also named Henry, which has caused some genealogical confusion, was born in the Kingdom of Hanover in 1830 and died in Otoe County, Nebraska, in 1880. His mother, born Margaret Lienamann in 1832 or 1838, also in Hanover, died in 1906 in Otoe County.

Much to my astonishment, I discovered, while poking around on genealogical websites, that the parents of Mary Wiebke, my grandfather Hostick's mother, are both buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Eugene. I didn't even know that any of my mother's great-grandparents had lived in Eugene (I assumed they had stayed back in Germany), much less that they were buried a few blocks from where I lived for over twenty years. The cemetery is right next to the University of Oregon campus and I walked through it many, many times, both as a child and as a student at the university.

Mary Wiebke's father, Carl Heinrich Friedrich Wiebke, known as Charles, was born in Indiana in 1841 and served in company K of the Indiana infantry during the Civil War. It is possible that he was buried in the Pioneer Cemetery because he was a Civil War veteran. Mary's mother, Dorothy Nemmert (spelled several ways), was born in Saxony, Germany, in about 1838 and was married first to Christian Friedrich Wilhelm August ("Fred") Grotrian in about 1860 in Indiana. He seems to have died soon afterward. In any case, Dorothea married her second husband, Charles Wiebke, in about 1863. They moved to Oregon sometime between 1900, when the census recorded them as living in Nebraska, and 1910, when they were listed as living in Irving, Oregon, at that time a farming community just north of Eugene. Charles died in 1911 and Dorothea in 1915.

Grandpa Hostick had four sisters (Fern, Vera, Nettie Mae, and Edith) and five brothers (Lee Roy, Ed, Fred, George, and Charles). His sister Edith, the firstborn, lived on a farm west of Junction City after she married. Our family visited the farm once, and Aunt Edith served us coleslaw dressed with fresh cream from the farm's cows. In one of Mother's scrapbooks I found a newspaper clipping from

January 1929 about the death of Aunt Edith's seven-year-old daughter, Mary Margaret. She was accidentally shot by her older brother Robert with a .22 rifle "his parents had forbidden him to handle." Aunt Edith, who was married to a man named Charles Grimes, had two other sons, Charles and Buster, who I believe died a suicide. Despite the delicious coleslaw, my memory of the farm is of a gloomy, isolated place, so no wonder Buster shot himself, if that's what he did.

My grandfather Alfred Hostick (far right) and seven of his nine brothers and sisters (left to right): Lee Roy (b. 1908), Vera (b. 1905), Fern (b. 1902), Edward (b. 1901), Nettie Mae (b. 1897), Edith (b. 1882), and Fred (b. 1894). Not shown are Charles (b. 1883) and George (b. 1892). Judging from when the children were born, the photo dates from around 1912 (from Ancestry.com, public member photos and scanned documents, "Children of Henry Hostick and Mary Wiebke")

Alfred and Emma Hostick farmed in Kansas and Nebraska for a few years, then moved to Oregon after Mother, their second child, was born. Alfred was a tall, hawk-faced, silent man, a truck farmer who liked to buy land. Emma was soft-spoken but was the one who dispatched chickens with an axe for Sunday dinner.

Grandpa and Grandma Hostick and their family lived on a number of different properties before settling on a farm on River Road, in the Lone Pine district, a few miles north of the little house my parents later built. Their farmland bordered the Willamette River and consisted of rich river-bottom soil, laid down when the river flooded, which was nearly every year until the Army Corps of Engineers built regulating dams upstream. A few days before my birth, in fact,

there was a big flood, with the Willamette cresting above fifteen feet—the worst high water since 1927, according to the *Eugene Register-Guard*. "Willamette Goes on Rampage" blared the newspaper's page one headline on Sunday, November 16. It had rained nearly four inches in the preceding thirty-six hours. In one day, the paper reported, the river rose ten feet: "Augmented by great quantities of surface water racing in from tributary streams, the river was a muddy, boiling mass of water Saturday morning, having risen from –.68 of a foot at 7 a.m. Friday to nearly 10 feet by midmorning Saturday."

Mother told the story that before the waters receded, she needed to go into the nearby town of Santa Clara. My father was at work, so Mother hitched a ride with the truck that picked up milk cans from the farms along River Road and delivered them to a dairy. Mother said the driver was nervous (who wouldn't be?) at having a nine-months pregnant woman riding with him. Imagine the possibilities: I might have been born in a milk truck!

I always thought the flood happened two or three weeks before I was born. But according to the newspaper archives, the river flooded a mere two days before my birth. Two days? If high water had still covered the roads, my parents' drive to the hospital on Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning would have been dramatic, even dangerous. Or maybe they wouldn't have gotten out at all and I would have been born at home. But by Monday, the roads were open and traffic was moving normally, according to the newspaper. By Tuesday, the flood crest had moved downstream and was nearing Portland.

My grandfather's farm was originally part of five donation land claims north of Eugene dating from 1853, filed by Thomas Judkins (claim 48), George W. Evans (claim 46), Milton Aubrey (claim 39), John Vallely (claim 45), and Dr. H. Poindexter (claim 60).[†] The records of the land claims are on file at the tax office in Eugene, which I visited. The information is filed by tax lot, with maps of the tax lots bound in stiff blue covers with metal bindings. The early maps are all hand-drawn. A year after the original claims to what became my grandfather's property were filed, a surveyor wrote the following description in a fine copperplate hand: "Land level and gently undulating prairie with occasional sloughs, and swales. Soil 1st rate, sandy and clay loam, gravelly in places. Timber, Little Oak & Ash along the Swales." The surveyor's notes for donation land claims 45 and 46 read as follows:

> Commenced August 1st, 1854. John Vallely's claim no. 45. Notification n. 2962 containing 328.42 acres. Beginning at the N.E. corner of c.[laim]

[†] Oregon donation land claims were the result of a statute passed in 1850 and enacted by Congress. The statute granted "320 acres of designated areas free of charge to every unmarried white male citizen eighteen or older–and 640 acres to every married couple–arriving in the Oregon Territory before December 1, 1850. In the case of a married couple, the husband and wife each owned half of the total grant in their own name. The law was one of the first that allowed married women in the United States to hold property under their own name." (Wikipedia)

> 45 on Sec. 26. To post for S.W. corner of c45 & SE corner of c. on north boundary of C44 from which—a W oak 14 in. dia bears S 68° W. 900 links. A creek 30 links wide crosses south. Vallely's wheatfield 14 links north of S.W. corner abuts prairie.
>
> Enter a small prairie. Intersect left bank of meander line.
>
> N 88° W 9.71 Enter prairie from same point of the Willamette River & set post for corner of C. 45 in Sec. 26. From which—a Ash 6 in dia bears N 1/2° E, 02 links [,] a ditto 12 ditto ditto S 75°W 48 ditto. Thence meandered the Willamette River down stream on left bank var 19° 30´ E. Vallelys house bears S 78° W. To post on River bank from which a Tree 14 in dia bears north 27 links. An Ash 14 ditto ditto S 28° E 12 ditto. Land level, soil 1st rate. River banks from 10 to 15 ft clay and gravel. Timber Fir, oak, ash and c. 2nd rate.

Geology of Oregon (1964), written by Ewart M. Baldwin, who was a friend of my parents' and a professor at the University of Oregon, describes the Willamette Valley as "a structural depression with hills of moderate relief in places separating broad alluvial flats." The bottom of the valley consists of volcanic rock, deposited by volcanic eruptions beginning in the Eocene, between 37 and 54 million years ago, and sedimentary rock from the seas. Overlying the rock is alluvium deposited at various stages. Elsewhere I read that until the great ice age of the Pleistocene, beginning two million years ago, the valley was covered by warm shallow seas. When the land rose and the water drained into the ocean, animals such as mastodons and giant beavers lived and died in the valley. People have found fossil evidence of their existence in the valley floor.

At the end of the ice age (15,000 to 13,000 years ago), the Missoula Floods, caused by the periodic rupturing of the ice dam of Lake Missoula in what is now Montana, swept down the Columbia River and flooded the Willamette Valley as far south as Eugene, depositing deep volcanic and glacial soil on the valley floor. The Willamette River and its tributaries would have inundated the southern Willamette Valley thousands of times over the ages since the Missoula Floods.

To reach the Willamette River from the Hostick farm you walked through Grandpa Hostick's orchards, then crossed a rope bridge and hacked through blackberries. On the way to the river you passed a slough surrounding an island that family legend said was once an Indian camp. A grove of tall Douglas firs grew on the island, and it looked like a place where Indians might have eaten and slept.

Underneath a hand pump in the yard between my grandparents' farmhouse and their garage was a stone bowl that someone had found on the island. The Indians who carved and used the bowl were probably hunter-gatherers of the Kalapuya (previously spelled Calapooia) tribe, the first people to live in the Willamette Valley. The bowl could have been used as a mortar to grind seeds into flour or perhaps to mash camas root, the Kalapuya's staple food.

Grandpa and Grandma Hostick at their farmhouse, silver wedding anniversary (1935)

Grandpa Hostick kept cows and pigs, the cows in the barn and the pigs in a sty next to it. The pigs got the buttermilk left after the cows' milk was separated and the cream was churned into butter. I used to help churn butter when I stayed at the farm as a child. Grandpa Hostick also raised chickens and geese. At least once I had to run like crazy down the field in front of the barn to keep a gander from pecking me. At the end of summer, the thresher and hay bailer moved across that field, cutting the grass and throwing it out in large bails. The hay would feed the animals during the winter.

Mother and my father's sister Dorothe Mae posing in front of Hostick farm (1937)

When I stayed at the farm, I ate Rice Krispies for breakfast ("Snap, Crackle, and Pop, . . . fun to listen to, fun to eat, Rice Krispies") and listened to stories on the radio, especially the adventures of Jiminy Cricket, who sang "When You Wish Upon a Star" in the 1940 Disney film *Pinocchio* and who was Pinocchio's conscience. One of my favorite storybooks, a giveaway, was *Flibbity Jibbit and the Key Keeper*, created to advertise Junket rennet custard powder and tablets. Written by Vernon Grant, the plot is that the lonely duck Flibbity Jibbit befriends the king's key-keeper, but then they accidentally drop the key to the king's rennet-custard refrigerator into the castle moat. The king, who is planning to have a rennet-custard party, puts the key-keeper in prison because he lost the key to the refrigerator. But Flibbity Jibbit, being a duck, dives down, finds the key, and he and the key-keeper are invited to the king's party. "WOWIE-KEE-FLOWIE,“ says Flibbity Jibbit, his favorite expression, and the book ends by telling us that "the King's rennet-custard party was a *great* success."

*

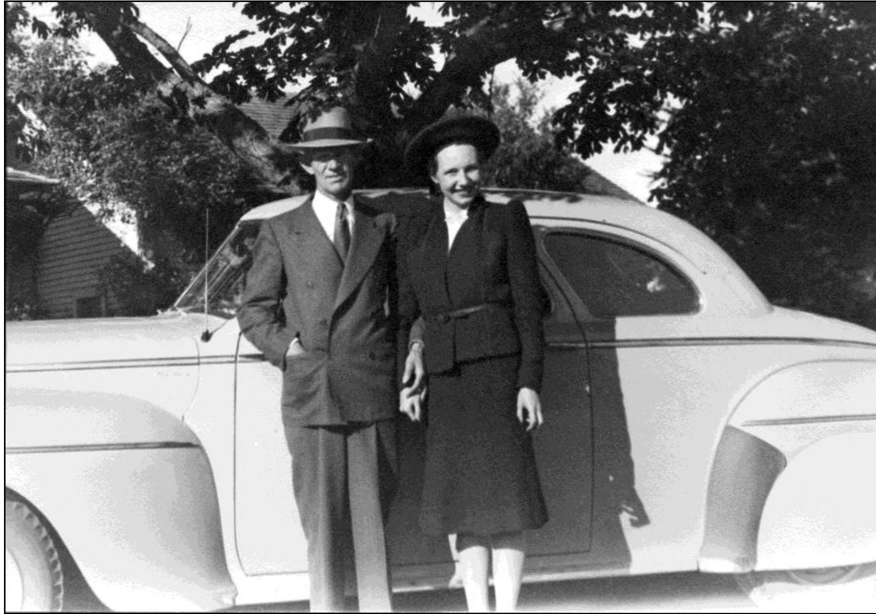
Mother was good at planning. She was proud that she gave birth to the same number of children as her mother did, with the same distribution of boys and girls and even the same number of years between births. That is, my mother and my grandmother each had three children: the first, a girl, three years older than the second, also a girl, and the third, a boy, six years younger than the second girl.

Mother (about 2) in the rocking chair and her sister Esther (about 5)

Mother's brother Herbert (about 16 months)

Herb, Mother, Grandpa Hostick, Esther, and Grandma Hostick at the farm (1937)

My mother, like my father, was a middle child. Her older sister Esther was an elegant woman who married a divorced Mormon from Utah named Andrew Olsen. Uncle Andy wore a diamond ring and usually drove a high-end car such as a Cadillac. Until I was around ten, he ran a movie theater in Seattle. He and Aunt Esther then moved to Eugene, where they built the North End Drive-In Theater on Highway 99.



Uncle Andy and Aunt Esther at the farm (1941)

Rather than seeing movies in the downtown theaters—the Heilig, Rex, or McDonald—our family went to the drive-in and watched films from Esther and Andy's house behind the theater. The house had a big picture window facing the screen and piped-in sound. At intermission Uncle Andy would take us kids to the cement-block snack bar in the middle of the drive-in and give us popcorn and soft drinks.

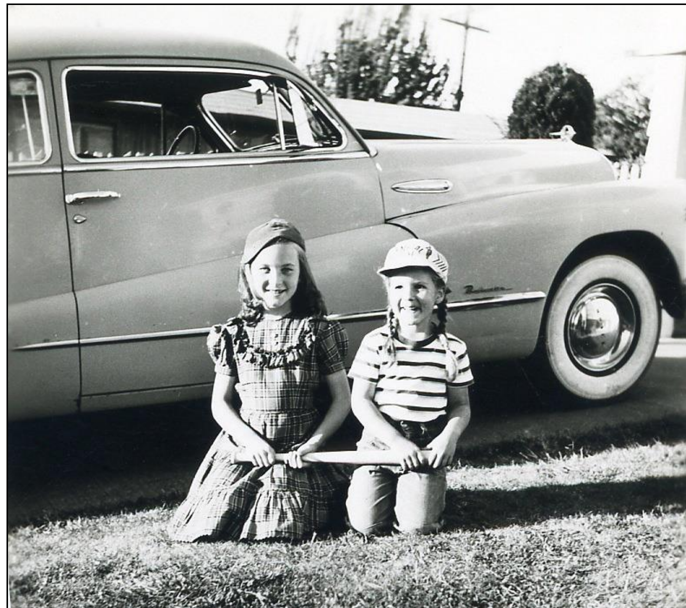
Movies always had a transformative effect on me. Whether from identifying with the characters or, as seems obvious now, a strong desire to be someone or somewhere else, I was a changed person after watching a film. I loved costume dramas such as *Ivanhoe*, where princesses waited for gallant knights to win the joust and carry them off as prizes. I usually saw movies like that downtown with my friend Jeanette, not at the drive-in. When I got home after a movie, I would put on the black peignoir set that Mother had when she was first married. The nightgown was of black satin, cut on the bias, with wide straps and a floor-length skirt. The peignoir was made of black net. It had long sleeves that ended in ruffles and dozens of covered buttons down the front, which had to be pulled through tight fabric button loops.

That my mother had a black satin nightgown I find intriguing, though I didn't think twice about it when I was twelve. It shows a dramatic sense in her that I wasn't aware of. Satin nightgowns were the thing in 1930s movies. Did my mother go to the movies before she was married? My brother remembers her saying that Clark Gable was her favorite actor, so she must have.

When I had finished buttoning the peignoir, I would sit at the end of my bed and strike poses in the full-length mirror on the closet door. Eyebrows arched, I would stare at myself, changing position to get the best angle on my head, which is flat on top and looks best when tilted slightly forward. My left profile is the

best. If only my nose were a little less hooked and my chin a little less protruding. I pushed the end of my nose up to get the proper all-American-girl button-nose effect. Then I wished hard, after turning out the light and climbing under the covers, still in the black nightgown and peignoir, that when I woke up the next morning my brown hair would be black like Elizabeth Taylor's (or my father's).

Uncle Andy and Aunt Esther had no children. They died in a nursing home, Esther of multiple sclerosis and Andy of a stroke. Mother was the executor of their estate, and I inherited a diamond-and-platinum ring of Aunt Esther's. When Mother gave me the ring, she said, "Esther thought a lot of you girls," meaning me and my sister Phyllis. I have two red needlepoint pillows and two needlepoint footstools that Esther stitched, and four Royal Albert bone-china cups and saucers in the flower-of-the-month series that she gave me one at a time for Christmas during my grade school and junior high years.



Me and my sister Phyllis next to Uncle Andy's Buick Roadmaster (about 1949)

Mother's younger brother was my Uncle Herb. In 1941, while working at Lockheed in Burbank, California, he married my Aunt Lucille, an outgoing, independent-minded redhead from Irving, not far from the Hostick farm. Herb served on Guam in the Marines during World War II. Lucille came back to Oregon after he enlisted.

Aunt Lucille and Uncle Herb at the Hostick farm, in front of Herb's 1934 Ford (1937)

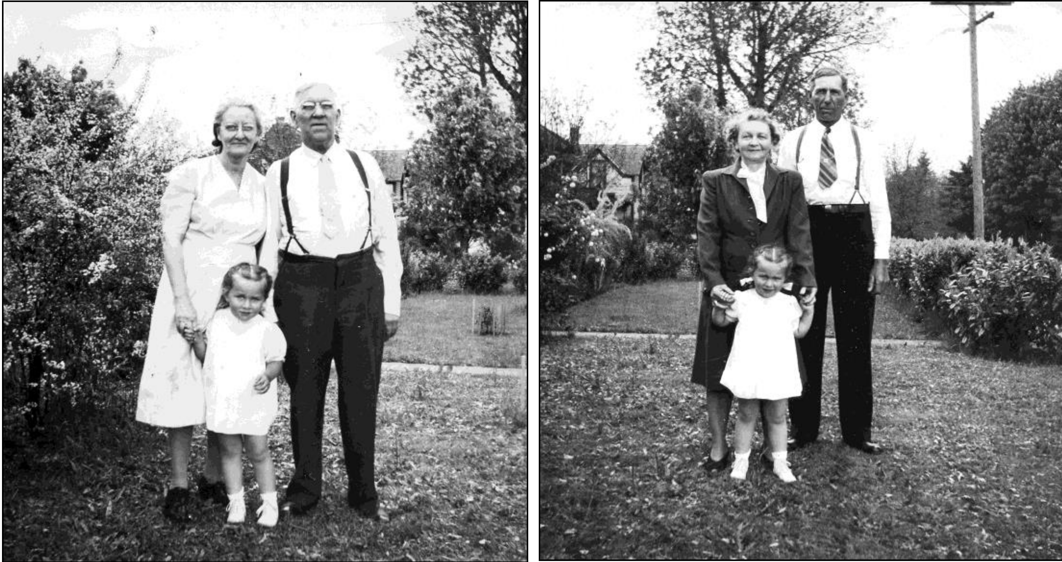
When he mustered out of the Marines, Herb joined Lucille in Oregon, where they raised two boys, my cousins Gary and David. They lived in a small house north of my grandparents' farm, then moved into the old farmhouse after Grandpa Hostick left to live in Eugene and be cared for by a nurse named Norma. He was ill with prostate cancer (which we children were never told) that metastasized to his liver. Grandpa Hostick died in 1955, after marrying Nurse Norma in Sparks, Nevada, in 1950. That was a year after Grandma Hostick died. She had suffered a stroke at age fifty-six and died in a nursing home twelve years later. Ever after, my mother was terrified of ending up in a nursing home herself.

Uncle Herb filled in the slough and planted the land in pole beans. He also grew strawberries, corn, and blackcap raspberries, but mostly he tended the orchards—at various times, Montmorency (sour) cherries, walnuts, and filberts. Herb told me that he walked through the orchard almost every night and ran the soil through his fingers to see how the earth was doing. He died in 2006, after living alone on the farm for several years. Aunt Lucille had lost patience with him and moved to a retirement home by herself after Herb turned their car into oncoming traffic and caused an accident that seriously injured her. Lucille died in 2007 after having a stroke.

*

My father's parents, Maude Gertrude Pitts Potter and Stephen Sherman Potter (or Sherman Stephen, it's not clear which)—known as Gertie and Sherm to my parents, Nana and Grandpa to me—lived in Springfield. People from Eugene, a university town, looked down their noses on people from Springfield, a lumber town. I usually spent a few weeks every summer with Nana and Grandpa when I was in grade school. Their house was at 4th and C streets, only four blocks from

downtown Springfield and a block or two from the railroad tracks. In those days, you could keep time by the trains, and the clickity-clacks and hoots were part of daily life.



Me with both sets of grandparents one day in Springfield—Nana and Grandpa Potter on left, Grandma and Grandpa Hostick on right (1945)

I spent most of my time at Nana's and Grandpa's reading, taking walks, and helping out around the house. I didn't have any friends in Springfield until high school, when I didn't stay with my grandparents anymore. Nana had books from her childhood, such as *Juan and Juanita* (which, not knowing any Spanish, I pronounced JEW-ahn and jew-ah-NEE-ta), published in 1888 and dealing with the escape of a young Mexican brother and sister from Indian captivity; travel books such as *Out of This World: Across the Himalayas to Forbidden Tibet* (1950) by Lowell Thomas, whose daily newscasts Nana and Grandpa followed on the radio; and several shelves of *National Geographic* magazines.

The books and magazines were kept in a dark oak case with glass doors in the dining room, next to a side door leading outside. The dining room also had a desk with a radio on top and a large dark dining table with ball feet. An oil stove in the corner of the dining room was the house's only heating. Nana and Grandpa would sit by the stove before going to bed and eat bread soaked in milk. They went to bed early and got up with the chickens that Nana raised in a coop next to her vegetable garden.

The house, which wasn't large, must have been even more cramped originally, since it had been added onto to create a living room and another bedroom. The second bedroom was always chilly. I slept there when I visited, below a popular Maxfield Parrish print, *Daybreak*, showing two girls on a terrace at dawn overlooking a lush valley painted in blues and greens. Nana had long black hair when she was young, she told me, until she got scarlet fever and her

hair fell out. I imagined that one of the girls in the print, the one lying down, was Nana.

The main bedroom was behind the dining room. Nana and Grandpa slept in twin beds in later years but I remember an earlier carved-oak double bed. Nana had a heavy oak dressing table with a mirror that her father, Hanover E. Pitts, had built. My great-grandfather Hanover Pitts was a cabinetmaker and also an inventor, holding patents to a cloth-measuring machine (patent No. 597,824, issued on January 25, 1898, when he lived in Nora Springs, Iowa) and a wire-tying machine (patent No. 2,230,773, issued on June 19, 1917, when he lived in Springfield). He was also coholder of a patent on a dual-purpose machine for ironing the pleats ("plaits") in shirts (patent No. 344,805, issued on June 6, 1886, when he lived in Nora Springs).

In the mornings, when I stayed with Nana and Grandpa, Nana would stand in front of the dressing table and watch in the mirror while I positioned myself behind her to pull the laces and tie the strings of her corset. Most women gave up constricting undergarments in the 1920s, but not my grandmother. The bathroom was behind the kitchen. Nana called it "the devil's room," without explanation.

Behind the house, connected to it by a covered breezeway, was Grandpa Potter's woodworking shop. It held many beautiful old hand tools, including a curved plane for shaping barrel staves. Grandpa Potter worked in a local sawmill until an accident cost him a hand. He ended his working life as a janitor in a bank, a job someone found him out of kindness. His black-and-white spaniel Muggs used to wait on the sidewalk for him to come home from work every night.

Grandpa Potter with Muggs (1948)

Nana made bread once a week. She always supplied the rolls for holiday dinners, and raisin cream pie. When I stayed with her, she let me help make noodles. My job was to cut the dough into ribbons after she rolled it out. She

served the noodles with stewed chicken and white gravy. (That can't have been too often or she would have run out of chickens.) She bought coffee from the Caswell Coffee man, who delivered the cans to her door. She cooked on a black cast-iron woodstove for most of the years she lived in that house, then my father had an electric stove installed. Nana preferred the woodstove.

Nana washed clothes on Monday and ironed on Tuesday. Bread-baking was on Saturday, the same day she cleaned the house. She had an upright vacuum with a light in front that I used to run over the carpets for her. I liked to play with a rust-and-white ceramic dog, which looks like Staffordshire pottery and that occupied a shelf in Nana's living-room cabinet. Auntie Mae, my father's sister, gave me the figurine after Nana died. Above the cabinet Nana had hung a reproduction of a painting by Rosa Bonheur. It must have been Bonheur's famous "Horse Fair," but I remember something wild, like horses fighting.

Nana lived until the day before what would have been her ninety-third birthday in 1972. I wonder how many quilts she made during her lifetime? She usually had a quilting frame set up in her dining room, which meant the big black dining table could not be used for eating. She belonged to a group of women who called themselves the Quilters and met once a week at the Ebbert Memorial Methodist Church two blocks from her house. Nana often did the quilting on quilts other women had pieced together. She charged a hundred dollars a quilt. She subscribed to *Capper's Weekly*, a farm publication from Kansas, which printed quilt patterns on its pages. She made blue-and-white quilts for me, my sister, and my brother, embroidered with characters from nursery rhymes, such as Little Bo Peep and Jack and Jill.

Nana working on a quilt (1963)

My grandfather Potter was the youngest of the seven children, all boys, born to Dr. Charles Potter and his wife Caroline. The family lived in Iowa when Grandpa Potter was born in 1874. He moved to southern California in the early 1900s, where he found work in an orange-packing plant and married my grandmother, also originally from Iowa. They settled in Springfield sometime between 1907 and 1909. Grandpa Potter suffered a stroke one afternoon in 1954 while he was in the attic of our house with my father and Uncle Bud, Auntie Mae's husband. Later, when Grandpa Potter lay dying in his bed in Springfield, Auntie Mae took me to a park.

Uncle Bud, whose real name was Cecil H. Ireland, worked as an accountant and amazed me by adding long columns of numbers in his head. He informed me that if an accounting error is evenly divisible by 9, you have a transposition mistake. For example, if your checkbook says you have $150 but, after accounting for outstanding checks, your bank balance is only $141, you've reversed the numbers in one entry—writing, say, 23 instead of 32. Auntie Mae also worked in numbers, doing payroll and managing doctors' offices. She loved dogs and had two when she died in 2011 at age ninety-six. One was named Penny, after the red cocker spaniel she had when I was a child.

My parents with Auntie Mae and Uncle Bud (1945)

Nana lived alone after my grandfather died and was often lonely. "I cry myself to sleep," she told me. She got a boxer dog to keep her company (Muggs was long dead), but Biff was too strong for her to control and used to drag Nana down the street when she walked him, so my father removed him. Auntie Mae finally took Nana into her house, but they got along badly. Nana became senile

toward the end. One Christmas when we were all at Auntie Mae's for dinner, Nana looked at my father and said, "I think I've seen you before but I can't remember who you are."

Nana's forebears had wonderful names. Her grandmother on her father's side was Beersheba Drouillard, born in Toulouse, France—or, at least that's what Nana always said. Genealogical research by my cousin Arthur (son of Auntie Mae and Uncle Bud) did not confirm Beersheba's French origins. He found that she was born in Ohio in 1813, and also that her name was spelled Barsheba. He also discovered that her father, John Droullard (Drouillard is the French spelling), was an immigrant from Paris. John Droullard married an American named Rebecca Draper in Ohio in 1809 and died in Wisconsin in 1865.

Family stories are often garbled, but the genealogical records suggest the source of Nana's belief that her forebears came from Toulouse. The records show that in 1833, in Illinois, Rebecca Droullard, Barsheba's sister, married a French-Canadian named Jefferson Toulouse. His family appears to have originated in Toulouse, France, and to have assumed the name of that city when they emigrated to Canada around 1800. The original family name was probably Raymond, a common name among the southern French nobility in the Middle Ages—Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse, for example, was a leader of the First Crusade. Jefferson Toulouse is recorded as the son of Ramah-*dit*-Toulouse. *Ramah* looks to me like an approximation of the French pronunciation of Raymond. *Dit* in French means "known as" or "so-called."

Nana's mother, Violetta Lambert, was born in New York in 1852. Hanover Pitts, Nana's father, the inventor, was born in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1851. His family ran the Pitts Hotel in Burwell, Nebraska. He married Violetta in Iowa in 1870 and sometime later, for unrecorded reasons, went with his family to Riverside, California. According to his obituary, he and his family moved to Springfield in 1905. His obituary notes that he was the last family member to bear the name Pitts.

Hanover Pitts worked as a planing mill operator and cabinetmaker in Springfield, where he died in 1930. His wife Violetta had died seven years earlier. You would think someone might have mentioned to me that my father's grandparents had lived in Springfield—maybe in the same house as my father—and are buried in the Laurel Hill cemetery in the Glenwood district along with other family members. I had no idea about this part of my past until I stumbled on an online photo of Hanover Pitts's gravestone and realized that important family information had never been passed on.

Nana told me many times, however, the story of how, as a young woman in Riverside, she worked packing grapefruit. Or maybe it was oranges. Or both. The packing plant might in fact be where she met my grandfather. She told me that the girls in the plant wrapped each piece of fruit in a separate sheet of paper and put them in boxes decorated with colorful decals. Nana was proud that Carrie Jacobs Bond had composed the popular song "A Perfect Day" while staying at

Riverside's Mission Inn in 1910. Nana kept the sheet music of that song on her upright oak piano, which might have come to Oregon with her by train after she and my grandfather married in San Bernardino, California, in 1907. I used to play the piano during family gatherings at Nana's and Grandpa's house on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. I probably drove everyone crazy but no one ever made me stop.

On her back porch, across from the washing machine, Nana kept a trunk that contained souvenirs of her life, such as embroidery work and a turn-of-the century brass mirror. My father chucked the trunk out when he moved Nana out of her house after Grandpa Potter died. Luckily, before then she had given me the mirror and two pieces of handwork, an embroidered black-satin underskirt and a pieced and embroidered black silk pillowcase. I also have Nana's wooden painter's palette, a sketchbook with her name on it, and the glass Fire-King plate she baked her holiday pies in. Her glass double-boiler I gave to a friend some years ago.

*

The little house on River Avenue no longer stands. In its place are a McDonald's fast-food restaurant and parking lot, and a freeway called the Beltline runs through what was once the house's backyard and orchard.