

A Collection of Memories

by
Tim I Mikkelsen

Copyright © 1990
all rights reserved

Introduction	3
A Little Background	4
Memories	6
Dad	17
Mom	22
Virginia	25
Amanda	29
Ben	34
Relatives	38
In-Laws	45
The Hotel	47
Religion	51
Pets	53
School	55
College	62
Dating	66
Early Jobs	68
My Professional Career	72
Resume	77
Trips	80
Heirlooms and Artifacts	86
Favorites	89
Recipes and Foods	101
Apartments and Houses	105
Vehicles	107
A Day	111
Thoughts	117

Introduction

April 30, 1989

This is a collection of memories. I am not putting these things down in any particular order. It is the parts of my life that I recall. I am writing these down because of my father - Marion Everett Mikkelsen. I remember a great deal of him and about him, the stories he told me. But I miss him and I want more than I can remember. I wish I could ask him how he felt about things. I guess I am writing this so that Mandy and Ben (my children) can find out a little more about me than we ever got around to talking about or that they might remember.

December 15, 1989

Well, I have gone through and written down a fair amount. Even though I didn't start out in any particular order, I ended up organizing the memories - I can't help it, organizing is in my nature. Obviously, I haven't remembered everything. I haven't written down everything that I remembered. I talked about some of this with Virginia and my Mom. It is interesting how things really happened and how you remember them. Trying to write all this down reminds me of a line from a Moody Blues song - *how can I tell you all the things inside my head.*

March 15, 1990

I am just in the process of finishing up this book of memories. I've enjoyed writing. But, I am ready to have it completed. It strikes me that I've spent enough time thinking about the past and that it is time to get this finished up. It is somewhat like engineering work - you can continue to improve something for a long time but at some point you need to say that you're done. I hope that you find it interesting.

Tim Mikkelsen



A Little Background

I was born July 27, 1953 in Harlan Iowa. I was born in Harlan because Missouri Valley (where my folks lived) had no hospital at the time. My Dad was Marion Everett Mikkelsen. My Mom is Norma Claussen Mikkelsen. My older brother is Tom. Tom was born five years before me.

My full name is Tim I. Mikkelsen. Note the 'I.' for a middle name. My parents thought that Tom and I should have our own choice for a middle name. So they only gave us an initial - which we could change latter. Tom's middle name is 'O.'. Note that our initials spell our first names. Mom and Dad were pretty clever. I have personally taken that 'I' is my middle name. It makes for interesting conversation at parties.

My Dad's side is the Mikkelsen family. My Mom's side is the Claussen (her dad) and Plagman (her mom). All of these families come from Denmark and Northern Germany. The families came over in the late 1800s and settled in Western Iowa farming communities. Most of them located in and around Harlan, Avoca, Walnut and other small farming communities. Some of the Claussen relatives have traced down the Claussen and Plagman names to the early 1600s in Denmark. There are still Mikkelsen relation living in Denmark (that my folks visited). Most of the family history shows that the people were farm-hands and carpenters. There were some children born out of wedlock.

Outside of being born in Harlan, I spent all of my childhood in Missouri Valley, Iowa. It was a small farming and farm support community when I was growing up. It is built on the side of a hill surrounded by rich river bottom farm land. (Yes, I know the name is 'Missouri Valley' for a town built on a 'Missouri hill'.) It is about 10-15 miles from the Missouri River. It had a population of about 3000 people when I was living there. The businesses seemed to be three banks, three feed and implement (farm supply) stores, three grocery stores, schools, a grain storage elevator, a dozen bars, a dozen beauty shops, some gas stations and about a dozen and a half churches. This is basically what farm support means - a place to get your goods, your entertainment and forgiveness for your entertainment. People called the town 'Mo Valley' or sometimes 'Misery Valley'.

The town was founded sometime around the 1850s or 1860s. During the early 1900s, it was a major railroad hub and was the junction between the North/South and East/West routes. There was an engine repair depot and a round-table. The town got up to 10,000 people during this period. With the decline of trains, the town took a major economic hit. The town took another small hit when the interstate system was put through the area. We had gotten a lot of traffic from Highway 30 (which went right through town - on main street).

The streets in town were pretty regular. The ones going up the hill were given numbers. The streets running across the hill (near the bottom) were given the names of the great lakes (Erie, Ontario, etc.). The Hotel where we lived was located at 6th and Erie. This was one block from the railroad tracks. Living in a Hotel, on a major highway and one block from a railroad is a major reason why I can sleep through just about anything.

Memories

When I Was Three

The first thing that I can remember was when I was three years old. I had just learned how to go to the bathroom by myself. At least I had learned how to unzip my pants and go to the bathroom. I hadn't quite gotten the hang of zipping up again. I had just finished going to the bathroom (the part that I knew). I went into the kitchen to get some help on the last part. My mother was sitting around the table with 3 ladies. I was a little bit bothered by the ladies being there, but not much. I just hope I put everything back in my underpants before I went into the kitchen.

Monsters under the bed

When I was little, I used to be terrified of monsters at night. I had a night light, but that didn't always help very much. (Think about it - are monsters scared of a little night light? Of course not!) My bed had a skirt on it. I thought that the monsters lived under my bed. They would come out at night but couldn't climb up anything. So I would be okay as long as I stayed in bed. This made getting tucked into bed very important. If I got securely tucked into bed (with my hands and arms under the covers), my arm wouldn't flop over the edge and be near the floor. Then the monsters couldn't get to it.

Whisker burns

Dad was clean shaven all of the time. At the end of the day he would get incredibly sharp 5-o'clock shadow. Sometimes in the evening, he would rough-house with Tom and I on the floor. I would laugh very hard. It hurt a little and my side would get red, but it was fun.

Hot Coffee

One weekend we were visiting Grandma Claussen. I was about five or six. There were a lot of relatives over for Sunday lunch. During the meal preparation, someone spilled a pot of boiling hot coffee on my left arm. It hurt like a son of a gun. Being little, I hadn't learned how to curse effectively - so I just cried. My Mom and Grandma applied their best medical knowledge to the problem - they put butter all over my arm. (Of course, cool water is the best thing to do for a burn.)

Little Mike

My Dad did not like the name Marion. He preferred to be called Mike. Missouri Valley was a pretty small town and most people new everyone else. Being a kid a lot of people knew I was Mike and Norma's youngest son. What would happen is people would call me 'Little Mike'. I still like the sound of that.

Being Flemish

Early in grade school, I had to write a story about my family history. I wrote up something about being Flemish - I think about a page's worth. I read up on the Flemish and being proud of my heritage. I think I showed my parents the paper. They laughed a long, long time - because we were Danish.

Hide Away

In our apartment in the Hotel, there were steps to the basement right next to the kitchen. These steps went right to the beauty shop. My Dad let my brother Tom and I have a little club house under the last four steps or so. We had a little table and played in this place a lot.

Why I don't drink

When I was four or five, I used to go through the bar in the afternoon and asking for sips of people's beer. My Dad, at some point, decided that this had to stop. One afternoon, I was doing my rounds and my Dad gave me a glass that was pretty full. I took a good gulp. It turned out not to be beer, but to be strong scotch or whiskey. That experience coupled with taking care of and cleaning up after drunks pretty much took care of any desire for alcohol that I might have had.

Cub Scouts

Mom was a den mother for cub scouts. In general, this was okay. However, at one point we (the cub scouts) had to do a 'dance'. Half of the scouts were to be 'boys' and half were to be 'girls'. I was not very lucky - I got to be a girl. This would have been bad enough, but my mother was a beautician. She did a job on me - a wig, makeup, clothes. She actually made me look good. This is one of the most mortifying experiences of my life. I remember comments about "oh doesn't he look so pretty". I was not very happy.

Babysitters

I only remember one main baby sitter: Mrs. Herriger. She was a small very old lady who lived over on 2nd street. She was very nice. My Mom tells me about a time that they went out and I wanted to play cowboys and indians. I was an indian. I evidently tied Mrs. Herriger up while she was sitting in a chair. I then went out to the neighbor's house for a while. My folks came back while I was gone. Mrs. Herriger was frantic that I had taken off. I would occasionally stop by her house and visit her. She reminded me a little of my Grandmother.

Dreams

When I was little there are two repeating dreams or types of dreams that I had: a flying dream and a nightmare. I also had some dreams about infinity - both of time and space. As a young boy (around 7 or 8 years old) I found the concepts really frightening.

The basic element of the repeating nightmare was that people and things were disappearing. They would be sucked up into a big tube-like apparatus. I would eventually be caught by the thing - after an extended chase. I would get sucked down the tube and end up pinned on a giant screen. Usually on the screen there would be some skeletons or some other people trapped. On the other side of the screen was machinery in a huge room. I don't remember now how they ended.

The flying dreams were wonderful. They would start just about the same way everytime: I would be at the Zuver school grounds. I would run south (towards the high school). I would put my arms out and I would feel a little bit of lift. As I got to the drop-off of the play-ground (about 8-10 feet at a 45 degree angle), I would lift off the ground. I would start rising slowly at first. Then I would see the tops of the trees. These were wonderful dreams. I would fly around the area and see things from above. Eventually I would come back down and have a gentle, running landing. When I first started having them, I remember being a little concerned about how I was going to land.

The Bee

I don't like insects, generally. I think that this is partially due to a time when I was under 10 years old. I was out playing. Something felt funny - and hurt. I ran into the hotel basement and into the laundry room. I dropped my pants and shifted my underpants. A bee came out. It had been stinging in my crotch area.

The Hills

On the west side of town, there was an elementary school that we called Third Ward. Behind this school there were a bunch of hills that went up to the top of the hill that Mo. Valley was built on. During the summers, my friends and I would go up into these hills (it wasn't a big area) and play. There were some shallow caves and small cliffs. It was a lot of fun - a separate world.

Leaves and Trees

Missouri Valley was heavily wooded. Most of the trees were not evergreens and so lost their leaves in the fall. It is really pretty during the fall in Iowa. My friends and I would collect Maple seeds - a seed and a 'wing' attached to it. These flew like little helicopters. If you got them green enough, they would also squish out liquid. I was always collecting pretty leaves and putting them in the encyclopedia or dictionary to press.

Cullivan Heights

This was a park that was the site of the original school in Missouri Valley. You can clearly see it in some of the late 1800s pictures of Mo. Valley. It was a small park. It was mostly flat with some brick terracing. There was a small brick structure left over from the school on one of the upper terraces. It was about a block from the Hotel. I used to go to play there a lot. It was a lot of fun playing on and in the small 'building'. The other classic thing was pumping on the swing as high as your nerves would let you and then jumping out of the swing and (trying to) land on your feet.

Hunting Mushrooms

Around Missouri Valley there is a kind of fungus that grows called morels. We normally called them sponge mushrooms. They grew out in the hills or in sandy areas. The entire family would go out hunting them in the spring - usually May. The best time was right after several days of rain followed by a couple of days of sun. We would go to friends farms or to the wildlife preserves to hunt for them. I really enjoyed this. We would tromp through the woods and see all sorts of birds and flowers and trees. The woods would be all green and alive. When we got back, we would clean them in salt water and either sauté them or deep fry them in beer batter. They were great.

The House on 6th Street

Most of the time I was in Mo. Valley, we lived in the east apartment in the Hotel (the address was 601 ½ East Erie). For a little while around the late 50s (I think), we lived in a big house on 6th Street. This was the second house north of the Hotel. My folks bought it for around \$12,000 with an interest rate of around 2%. (This is just mind-boggling now - living in a \$170,000 house with a 10.5% interest rate mortgage.) The house was a big two story with 4 bedrooms upstairs. Mom put in a shop on the side of it. It had a neat staircase with a wooden banister going upstairs from the entry-way. It also had an octagon shaped window by the front door. I liked this house. We only lived there about a year. I seem to remember my Mom saying that we sold it because Tom and I wouldn't keep it picked up and clean.

There were mulberry bushes in the back yard. During the summer, I would go out and pick fresh mulberries and eat them with ice cream. In the area around this house there were a lot of flowers and gardens. Before, during and after we lived in the house, I would spend hours playing in the gardens. I usually played 'army' in the back yards. There was a lilac bush right across the alley from the house. I would go into the middle of it every now and then and just watch what was going on.

Tom had a friend whose father was a mortician. Tom got 3 coffin shipping crates from the friend. He put these in the garage and nailed them one on top of the other with holes cut out so it was like a vertical maze. These were pretty neat to play in.

While we lived in the house, I was trying to learn how to tie knots (shoe laces). One night, my folks decided that we didn't need to watch TV or play. Tom and I were going to learn something. I got sat down with a shoe attached to a board. I learned how to tie my shoe laces.

Lego's

When I was between 8 and 10 years old, I got started with Lego building blocks. I really got into these. I would spend a lot of my spare money on new Lego sets and would always want them for presents. We would go to Omaha to go shopping on the weekends quite a bit (especially after they built the interstate - I-25). We went to the Crossroads shopping center - one of the first in the area. There was a toy store there that I would end up spending most of my time and money getting Lego's. I still like to play with them. Dad gave me a big case (at least 2x3 feet by 6 inches) and added partitions so that I could keep all my Lego's together. When I got too old for them, we gave them to my cousin Dale. I wish I could have kept them for Ben and Mandy now.

Toy Soldiers

I played 'army' and military sorts of things with my friends and by myself. One thing I did a lot was to take my 'indian' blanket (red and blue with an indian pattern on it) and pile it up in the middle of the floor to make it look like an island. I would form bays and coves. I would then put camps on either side. I could spend hours playing with this type of 'island'.

Paper Airplanes

When I would watch the front desk at the Hotel, I would make paper airplanes by the hour. There was a small metal paper dispenser that used paper from a roll about 3 inches wide. I made some really fancy planes - some even had small 'engines' made out of tightly rolled paper.

Winter

Winter in Iowa can be brutally cold. As a child, I grew up with it and was use to it, but I would have a hard time going back to it. When the snow came, it would last through the winter until spring (November to March timeframe - depending on the year). When I was little I would play in the deep drifts or piles made by the snow plows. One year (when I was about 5) we had snow that was about my height (around 3 feet) - it was a bizarre sensation to trudge through the Hotel parking lot in that deep of snow. Even in less severe times, the snow plows would pile up huge snow banks next to the Hotel (from clearing Highway 30 which ran in front of the Hotel). These snow banks would be up to 10 feet (or more). My friends and I would build forts out of them (sometimes of multiple levels).

The other thing I always did was to splash in the run-off that came down the hill as I came home from school. As my friends and I would walk and talk, we would make snow dams in the gutter that would go out into the street a couple of feet or more and see the water build up and then overflow. Another fun thing that went with this were crunching on the sheets of ice that formed on puddles during the cold weather. And of course there were the huge icicles that formed on roofs and cars. I think that I also got into a few extensive snowball fights.

As I got older, I got to help at the Hotel. During the winter, I got to shovel snow and put down salt on the sidewalk. During the really cold parts of the winter, ice would build up a few inches thick on the sidewalk and I would go out with a hoe to hack at it and break it up. When I was big enough, I got to run the snowblower. It was a big red self-propelled job with a big auger in front. It was fun wrangling the thing through the snow.

Eye Surgery

When I was in grade school, I developed 'lazy eye'. I was taken in for eye surgery to clip my left eye muscles. I don't remember being particularly frightened by all of this. In the operating room, the nurse gave me some 'story' about taking a plane ride - so I wouldn't be scared of the anesthetic. Even though I was young, I knew better than that. After the surgery, they put gooey salve on my eyes - it felt weird. Mom and I played cards in the hospital room before the surgery on little tiny cards (about 1" by 2").

Early Science Fiction

The first science fiction that I read was a book called 'Zip Zip and his flying saucer'. This was pretty early in grade school. I remember reading H.G. Wells 'War of the Worlds' when I was about 10 or 11 years old.

Space

I have always liked flying, space and anything related to space travel. Early on, I spent a lot of time at the library reading about NASA and various science fiction books. I got the address of the Government Printing Office and sent away for a bunch of pamphlets and information about space travel. I wanted to be an astronaut. As I grew up, my eyes got bad. This meant I couldn't be a pilot or an astronaut. During the early 80s, the shuttle program came around. I actually sent in an application to become a mission specialist. I just barely met the requirements on height and sight. I sent in a very carefully crafted one page letter. I figured that nobody would read anything long, so I put in the critical information. I found out from a friend that the sorting algorithm that NASA used was to throw away all the one page letters and all the letters of greater than three pages. They figured that if you rambled on, they didn't want you. They also figured if you could get it on one page, you wouldn't cut it either. Maybe next time.

Boat, Sports and Travel Shows

One of the things that we did as a family as I was growing was go down to Omaha to the annual 'Boat, Sports and Travel Exhibition'. This was held in a large exhibition hall near downtown Omaha. The shows had all sorts of 'stuff': boats of all sizes, camping gear, fishing gear, vacation packages, hunting gear, campers and trailers, food stands. The boats and vehicles were in a separate area. Most of the rest of the exhibits were on the main floor of the auditorium. There was usually a show associated with the exhibition. This was usually staged on a big tank in the middle of the show floor. The show involved different sorts of things but I remember: a man who did sound-effects with just his mouth, trained retrievers, archery exhibitions, fishing exhibitions.

These were a lot of fun to go to. Mom told me that I got lost at one of them. I faintly remember this. I think that Mom and Dad were more worried than I was. I also remember how tired I would be when we drove home at the end of the day.

Library

I spent a lot of time at the public library. I was a regular. I was especially big on science and science fiction. I really liked the librarian. She would watch out for new science fiction titles. I still could lose myself in a library or bookstore for hours.

Animals

I have always liked nature and animals. There have been a couple of times where I've tried to help animals and injured birds and lost dogs.

Mom was cleaning the house one Saturday. In the pile of dust and dirt, I saw something moving. I thought it was a bug, but it turned out to be a tiny tree frog - less than an inch long. I kept it to look at for part of the day and then let it go in a neighbor's yard.

Some neighbors had a dog that they would put out on a leash on a clothes line (vinyl coated wire between two steel T-shaped posts). The dog was a female. One day, the dog was 'in heat'. At the time, I didn't know about sex and related functions. A male dog came up and started to get excited. He mounted her and started 'going for it'. I didn't know was going so I tried to separate them. I started chasing them and the poor dogs would run to one end of the clothes line and get yanked back (since the neighbor's dog was still tethered). The dogs would then run to the other end and the same thing would happen. This went on for several passes. Finally, they got done and the male dog took off (like a shot). She looked really bedraggled at the end of all this. I thought I had been really helping the poor thing.

Drug Stores

There were 2 drug stores in town - Valley Drug and the Rexall pharmacy. When I was young, they both had fountains. This is stuff right out of the 40s and 50s. They had Bromoseltzer and phosphates (like carbonated drinks) and malts and so on. I used to get Green Rivers (a lime phosphate). They also had comic books and candy. They were neat places. When I was in high school, the drug stores were the place you had to go to get reeds for musical instruments (for my clarinet and saxophone). (I think it would be possible for a small town to get by with a drug store, a Coast to Coast and a grocery store.)

The Tamarac

The Tamarac was a restaurant, bar and bowling alley in Missouri Valley. It was the nicest place to eat in town. Yes, I know what it sounds like - fine dining in a bowling alley. It was a steak house sort of place done in a Mexican or Southern style. It was located near the top of the hill that Mo. Valley was built on. I would usually get the 'chopped steak dinner' with french fries and vegetable beef soup. The soup was really good.

About once every five years, the Tamarac would have a fire and they would get an insurance settlement and rebuild. I don't know if the fires were on purpose, but they did happen pretty regularly. The place always smelled of smoke because of the fires.

Atom Bombs

Since I was growing up during the 1950s and 1960s, there was a fair amount going on with atomic weapons. The schools had various places marked as fallout shelters. I don't remember having any drills for atomics attacks - but we did have drills for tornadoes (at least that is what they told us).

We lived in Mo. Valley which is just north of Omaha where the Strategic Air Command is located (with B-52 bombers stationed there). There was an Atlas missile site just a few miles south of Mo. Valley. This was built in the very early 1960s. I remember seeing an Atlas missile come through town to be delivered to the site. The site had 3 missiles in bunkers, lying on their sides. They would be erected and then filled with fuel. The sites were active around 1963 (I think), but decommissioned by 1970. A bunch of friends and I went out to rummage through the place when I was in high school. It was hard to get a sense of what it was like because we were there at night.

I don't know how affected I was by the 'Cold War'. I do remember having a series of brochures about how to 'survive' a nuclear attack. I knew that we would have about 15-30 minutes warning. I had figured out where in the hotel was the safest place for us to go. I had figured out which stores to get goods from - food and generators and so forth.

It is very odd to think the depth of hatred and distrust between Russia and the U.S. back then and the way things look these days. Especially, the removal of the Berlin Wall. I hope the trend continues.

Electrical Misadventures

I have worked building various electronics projects - a tube audio amplifier, an artificial neuron and an oscilloscope. I have not always had good construction or safety skills. One time (when I was in late junior high school), my folks threw out a re-chargeable flashlight. It was the kind that had a built in AC adapter. It had gone bad. I got it and tore it apart. In the process of taking it apart, I shorted the battery which had a lot of power left in it. It vaporized a glob of solder or wire and sprayed the molten metal across my face. The globs hit the center of my forehead, my right cheek and one big glob right in the middle of my right lens. I hate to think what would have happened if I hadn't been wearing glasses. (I have no desire to wear contacts - I feel I am a lot better off if I am always wearing something over my eyes.)

Another time (during high school) I had actually bought a 'cheap' oscilloscope - an EICO. My brother wanted it and traded me another 19 inch rack mount scope that didn't have a time base or much of a vertical amplifier. It was just a display scope - but it looked neat. I was working on it to add the other parts. It had a 'T' shape. One afternoon I was working on it and I noticed a clip on the display tube. I had the unit on my legs. I released the clip and the tube fell out like a bomb out of an airplane. I had this bad feeling as it fell and shattered between my feet.

I got quite a ways into building the oscilloscope (during high school) unfortunately I did not have a particularly good set of construction or theoretical skills at the time. On the scope, I got the amplifiers built and the high voltage supply. One night (during the graveyard shift at the Hotel) I was working on the power supply and had turned it on to test it. I got a couple of kilovolts out of it. I turned it off and started thinking about the circuit and was looking at the schematic. I layed my hand down - unfortunately I laid it on the metal can capacitors. My hand jerked off and was 'tingly' for about 4-8 hours. I had two brown 'freckles' on my left hand for the next 15 years where the electricity entered my hand.

Trivia Contests

I like trivia-related games like 'Trivial Pursuits'. In Fort Collins, one of the radio stations (KTCL) runs a marathon trivia contest periodically. It runs for 48 hours (from 6:00PM on a Friday through to 6:00PM on a Sunday). The questions are given once every 15 minutes for the entire period.

I got involved with a bunch of guys from HP and did this for a couple of years. Dave Cooper is the person who organized this and we usually do it at his house. The first year I did it, we were called 'the Ducks'. We came in second place. The next year we changed our names to 'the Mongolian Cluster Ducks' and we won (and 10 of us got a CD player). Since then, we haven't been doing as well. It can be very tiring.

The year we won, I was coming home late on Friday night and heard a question about the Wizard of Oz. I got our video tape of it out and found out what was written on the side of Professor Marvel's wagon:

"Professor Marvel, acclaimed by the crown heads of Europe. Let him read your past, present and future in his Crystal (ball). Also, juggling and slight of hand".

29th Birthday

My 29th birthday has been one of my hardest. When it came, it struck me that my Dad had died at age 58. If I lived the same amount of time, my life was half over. This was not a very pleasing thought. At that point, I started watching my health more carefully. It took me a couple years to start getting to a point where I was really health conscious.

Missile Silo

There was an Atlas missile silo just outside of Fort Collins. I heard from some friends at HP, that it was being auctioned off. I got a bunch of people together and tried to buy it. I got about 15 people going in on our bid. We did not get it. I don't know what we would have done if we had gotten it, but it would have been interesting.

Friends

When Virginia and I moved to Fort Collins, there were a bunch of people starting at the same time: Rick Turley, Dan Osecki, Roger Ison, Rob Uhrich and others. We did a lot of things together: getting together to watch TV, bowling, skating, skiing. Virginia and I had a fair number of parties and get-togethers. A lot of people that we know like to come to our parties, but don't have their own. This bothered Virginia and I for a while, but we've come to realize - that's just the way they are. A guy, who had been my boss when I started at HP, was hosting an interviewee. The person being interviewed asked about the social life around Fort Collins. The host said to talk to me about it. It really caught me off guard being viewed as 'social'.

Some of the people that we hung around with were Harry Beaverstad and John Dong. These guys roomed together. Their names catch people off guard because they sound like slang sexual terms. One evening, a bunch of us were going to do something and we didn't have their number. I called information. I asked for Harry's number. The operator started laughing and said "Yeah, right". It didn't help that she couldn't find the name. So, I asked for John's number. She said "Oh, come on!". Then she looked it up and said "I'll be damned, there it is!". One Saturday evening we had a bunch of the guys over to watch Saturday Night Live. The TV we had was one that we had bought in college and was getting pretty old. The colors were getting out of balance. It is a scary sight to have something electrical that needs work and a room filled with engineers. They descended on it like vultures. There were about a half dozen that tried to adjust it. They didn't quite succeed at getting it tuned up. I was never able to get it working quite right and I went out in the next week or two and bought a new TV.

Rick Turley is one of my best friends. He came from New Jersey (sounds like bad science fiction). He had some wild flings when he first moved out here. He would come over and talk with Virginia and I about Joyce and another flame. He married Joyce. Rick and Joyce are some people that I hope I never lose track of. Although we have a lot in common, Virginia and I have very different tastes from Rick and Joyce. We went on a vacation together to Disney World during spring break 1988. The first part (at Disney World) was great. Virginia and I had made reservations at a nice hotel on the west side of the state. We canceled these and went with Rick and Joyce to Plantation Key and a motel they had found. It was a 'quaint' hotel - old and funky. Virginia was not thrilled - but Rick and Joyce loved it.

Dad



His early years

My Dad was born January 5, 1915. His parents were Anton and Martha Mikkelsen. They were first cousins and had to go to Canada to get married - it was illegal in America. My Dad had some early health problems. He had what he called Bright's disease or 'salt diabetes'.

When Dad was in junior high or high school, some bullies grabbed him. At that time, zippers were not on all pants. My dad was wearing knickers that had buttons in the crotch. It was all the rage to undo the buttons. This is what the bullies did. This was evidently very demeaning since it took so long to re-do the buttons.

When Dad was in 10th grade, he was thrown off a horse. He had his foot caught in the stirrup, so he was dragged by the horse for quite a distance. He came very close to dying. Because of this and some of his other health problems (albumen in is urine), he was kept out of school and did not return. He stayed with his Aunt Lena. She evidently cared about him a great deal. I always got the impression that he was closer to Lena than to most of his relatives (even his parents). It took about a half of a year to recover. While he was recovering, a lot of the time he would not take his medicine. After that he worked on the farm.

World War II

During 1940, Dad enlisted in the National Guard. I used to think he did this to get off the farm, but evidently he knew his draft number was coming up. When World War II broke out, he was sent off to England. This was a really great deal for my Dad. He was in the supply business. He and another soldier shared an off-base apartment. Working in supply, he evidently had it really good during the war. He made several good friends in England. He was stationed near Warwick (evidently) and became good friends with the Keene's. Mr. Keene was a caretaker of the Warwick Castle. The only time my Dad made it over to the continent, was when he was transporting an American prisoner to France towards the end of the war. Evidently, the frequent punishment that soldiers got for crimes was to be sent to the front (not a good place to be).

After the war

When Dad came back from the war, he went into meat cutting for a short while in Omaha. He married Mom in February 20, 1946. Around this time, Dad became a partner in the Hotel. The Hotel was owned by George and Lena True. Lena was my Dad's favorite Aunt.

Dad worked hard at the Hotel. He also drank a great deal. I think that this was partially due to the bar in the Hotel - but only partially. Dad would come upstairs from the bar between 10 and 11 at night. His eyes, nose and cheeks would be very red. He would drop into a recliner in the living room. I would turn off the TV and he would startle awake and say "I was watching that!". I would tell him it was a test pattern and he would say "Oh." I remember helping him get to bed. My Mom would get pretty upset at him for his drinking.

The car accident

He got into a serious accident in the late 1950s taking a babysitter home. The car got hit by a train. The train pushed the car several hundred yards. The babysitter was just shaken up, but Dad went to the hospital. Mom says that it was touch and go for a while.

Diabetes

In the early 60s Dad developed diabetes. He was able to take Ornace - an oral medication. He would also check his urine for blood sugar with the little test tapes. The medicine chest in the bathroom seemed to be filled with medication - blood pressure and a whole bunch of other bottles.

Flying

My Dad loved flying. He joined a flying club and had part interest in an airplane at the local airport. I would always read and look through the manuals and books - they had neat pictures.

The Broken Window

One day, Tom and I were playing on the front steps of the apartment (the one on the east side of the Hotel). The front door was wooden with something like 6 rows and 3 columns of window panes. We broke a window pane in the door. Dad saw it first and told Tom and me - "Let's not tell your Mother so she won't get upset".

Another time, Mom caught me doing something not very bright. She was scolding me. I don't remember what I did, but it wasn't too bad - normal kid stuff. Dad said "For God's sake Norma, leave the boy alone".

The Masonic Lodge

Dad was a Mason and a Shriner (Masonic lodge was the 'official' portion and the Shriners was the more 'social' portion). He was a 32nd or 33rd degree mason - top or next to the top. He belonged to a group out of Sioux City. We would go to various parades and celebrations and my Dad would ride around in the silly vehicles. It was a lot of fun.

One time, shopping in Omaha, we were in one of the shopping malls. Dad and I were in a store. Dad noticed a Masonic pin on the shop keeper. He said 'I see you have crossed the burning sands'. I still have several of Dad's Masonic books.

Heil Hitler

Dad was usually very easy going. He did like to argue and he loved to tease me. One time I was down in the bar and he told me to do something. I think he told me in an authoritarian way. I gave him a Nazi salute and said 'Heil Hitler'. I had never seen my father so mad and pissed. I got a talking to that I will never forget. To this day, I think about that whenever I hear 'Heil Hitler' or see a Nazi salute.

Movies

During the mid-1960's, we went down to Omaha quite a bit to see movies. We went down for the 'Cinerama' movies starting with the first. It had a name like 'The Thrill of Cinerama'. These Cinerama theaters were big and plush. They had intermissions. They usually sold an orange-drink, Toblerone, Callard and Bowser candies and other 'up-scale' sorts of refreshments. I remember seeing Mutiny on the Bounty (from the first row). One that also sticks in my mind is The Brothers' Grimm. We mostly did this as a family. One movie that Dad and I went to together (without Mom) was the Longest Day. (I don't remember if my brother Tom was along or not.)

Race

I got into a really heated debate with my Dad once about inter-racial marriages. He felt that black people had rights. He couldn't understand about inter-marriages. I waded right in. I said that I thought it was fine - all that mattered was that the people love each other. We went around for a while. Finally, I said - what if I were to meet a nice black woman and fall in love. Dad asked me - why would you be in a situation were you would have the opportunity? I tried really hard to explain my point of view - but Dad wasn't having any. Mostly, I think Dad was not bigoted, but there were some prejudices that ran pretty deep.

The Steam Bath

For a while, there was a steam bath in Mo. Valley. Dad would take me down in the winter during the year it was operating. The people who went there were mostly heavy set old men. It was fun going out and doing things like that with Dad.

Outdoor activities

We used to go fishing and camping a lot. We would go over to the bridge between Blair and Mo. Valley a lot. We would also go to DeSoto Bend. There were both Federal and State parks at DeSoto Bend. My Mom hated the water, but we would go out and barbecue, fish and drink with my folk's friends.

We would occasionally go hunting as well. Most often we would go to a friend's duck blind on a pond on the friend's farm. This was north of Mo. Valley - near Mondamin. It was in the fall, and it was usually cold and damp. Mostly, I just tromped around in the corn fields and played. I don't remember Dad ever getting anything.

The UPS Van

Dad bought a used UPS (United Parcel Service) brown Ford van in the late 1960s. It was a good deal. It had high mileage, but ran okay. He got it for \$200. We had it for a couple of weeks and Dad forget to set the parking brake. It was parked in the Hotel parking lot and rolled back and caught the driver's side door on the north-east side of the Hotel. I remember that we sold it not too long after that.

Dad's death

Dad had a stroke while he was in Denmark visiting relatives in 1972. When Mom and Dad got back, he went in to specialists. He had severe hardening of the arteries. The arteries in his neck were 70% and 90% blocked. They operated on those. He also had a blockage in his abdomen. He stopped drinking and worked on his diet a bit, but it had been going on too long. I had come home from college, early in December 1973. I hadn't really planned to, it just seemed right. That Friday night, Dad had a stroke. He was paralyzed on his left side. That morning - waiting for the ambulance, he was sitting in his recliner trying to exercise his right arm. His trying to exercise was the saddest thing I had ever seen. He couldn't really talk. He pointed to the bar. That morning, we took him down to St. Joseph's Hospital in Omaha. When I saw him that afternoon he was unconscious and never again woke up. Mother and I were at the hospital constantly. The following Thursday, I woke up in the room. No one but Dad and I were there. He was breathing very oddly. I went over and pushed the call button. About that time his chest heaved the last time and he died.

The next few days were very much a blur. Tom and Mom took care of the funeral arrangements. I drove over to Des Moines to get Virginia for the funeral. When I got to her apartment, we talked for a while. I started giggling and then I broke down and cried. I had held it in until then - I think trying to be strong for Mom. I brought Virginia back for the funeral. There were quite a few guys from my dorm house which was very nice. This meant a lot. The church was packed. We drove to Harlan for the actual burial. On the way, we got stopped by a train at the edge of town. It seemed appropriate - for all the times we had gotten stuck at the railroad tracks - for Dad to stuck one more time. It took long enough that the police escort had to ask the train engineer to break the train so we could pass.

This was a strange time. I felt very much at loose ends. For a while I thought about dropping out of school. This was so that I could help Mom. Both Mom and Virginia told me this wasn't necessary. I knew this, but it took a while for me to work through things.

Dad's Personality

I really admired my Dad. He had a lot of traits that stand out in my mind. He liked to have fun and had a great sense of humor. He teased people a lot. He had a good way of dealing with people of all sorts. He was gentle. He was clever but not educated.

Pinching

Every so often we would have a family portrait taken. Every time, Dad would reach around and pinch my Mom on her rear end. She always got flustered and upset with him for doing this, because she would always have these quirky "smiles" because of the pinching.

Mom



Her early years

Mom was born February 13, 1917. Her dad died when she was pretty young. They had to sell their farm and move in with a relative - Mom's Uncle Johnny Plagman. She finished high school and went to beautician's school.

When she was very young, some kid threw a fire cracker at her. It exploded in her face. She had to have her face cleaned with a wire brush which was very painful. She never liked fireworks (up close) of any kind.

Having Tom and I

She had my brother and I when she was 31 and 36 years old. She had a miscarriage before Tom and I were born. Dad got a vasectomy at some point after I was born.

Good Ears

I would study or play the saxophone or clarinet at home after school. It would always freak me out when I would try to sneak a cookie or a snack. I would be in the living room and go carefully into the kitchen and try to get something. Almost every time, my Mom would shout up to me to leave the cookies alone (or something similar). I couldn't figure it out. Now with children, I know that if it is ever quiet the kids are up to something they shouldn't be.

Mom's Personality

Mom is an incredibly hard working person. She is the sort of person who makes up her mind and just goes ahead. Sometimes (!?!!) this is maddening. She is also afraid of or doesn't like being around water.

Smoking

The thing that bothers me the most about my Mom is that she smokes. She always has, and I suspect always will. I think she smoked even when she was pregnant. She is very stubborn and unchanging about some things, and smoking is one of them. In 1987 (I think) she slipped and hurt herself. She had to go into the hospital. During this time she got a spot on her lung - pneumonia. This was a culmination of smoking and working around hairspray. Even during this period she would smoke cigarettes. She has some very good friends - Mildred Dewaele and Ruby Hoyt and several others. During this period, they would call and let me know how she was. They also let me know that it would really help if I came back - even for a few days.

Arguments

There was an incident where my Mom and Dad got really mad at each other. This happened on occasion. This one particular time really caught my attention. I saw how upset Mom was with Dad while we were in the apartment together. She had to go downstairs for a hair appointment. It was if someone had turned a switch. She was a totally different person. At the time, I couldn't figure out how she could change so quickly.

Being a Beautician

Being a beautician, Mom did all of our hair cuts. I was about 19 or 20 years old before someone other than Mom cut my hair. She would massage my scalp, I would just about fall asleep. To this day, it still feels weird to have someone else cut my hair. Mom had learned in beautician school how to give facial massages and back-rubs. She would occasionally do this for Tom and I. It felt wonderful. She taught me how to give good back rubs, a skill I am really thankful for (and so are Virginia, Mandy and Ben). When I was pretty young, Mom would give the whole family manicures on Sunday night.

My Art

I have been into drawing for quite a while. I had some books on drawing and watched some TV shows about how to draw. I think I did okay. At one point, when I was about 9 (and we were living in the house on 6th street), I started drawing nude women. (They were in some of the books.) I showed them to Mom. She said "I think that they would look much nicer with a bathing suite on". Looking back on it, my Mom responded very calmly to her young boy wanting to draw nudes.

Phone Calls

I talk to my Mom about once a week. She calls early on Saturday morning (around 8:00 or 8:30). She will always ask if she has gotten me out of bed. If she doesn't ask that, she will say "Oh, you're home". This is an indication that we are out a lot. I will call her on the weekends as well. Usually, I can tell when she is mad at me, because she won't call - she will wait for me to call.

Virginia



Meeting Virginia

I like the fall and spring seasons because fall reminds me of college and meeting Virginia for the first time and spring reminds me of falling in love with Virginia. I met Virginia Lee Mary Elizabeth Heckle in college. She was the girl friend of Bruce Karn. Bruce was one of the guys in the dorm house - Converse. The first time we met we shook hands. I liked her but for some reason said some really stupid things. I commented on her 'dead fish' handshake and how her hair looked. I can't imagine what came over me (or what she saw in me after I had been so stupid).

I became good friends with Bruce and Buffalo (one of his room-mates). I ended up seeing a lot of Virginia. We became friends. For a while, Virginia and Bruce and I did a lot of things together. At times, Bruce was busy so I took Virginia to some movies (one was 'The Baby Maker' - a really bad movie).

I read Virginia's palm once. (For a while in high school I had read up on the occult - it was interesting.) She seemed really interested in this and wanted me to write down the stuff. I wrote it down and she took the paper. Shortly after that, she would happen to be sitting outside of classrooms that I was in. It turned out that my schedule was on the other side of the paper I had used. I didn't figure it out. She told me about this years later.

One time, during winter quarter, we had been out someplace to eat in group. Whoever drove, parked in the west lot. As we were walking back to the dorm, Virginia fell really hard. I didn't think she had hurt herself and started laughing. It had been a hard fall and hurt. She was not amused about the laughing. I felt like a real heel.

We would occasionally play tennis in the old Armory and ping pong in the basement in Friley Hall. She was so pretty and funny and bright and easy to talk to. Once, while we were playing at the Armory, one of the guys there said something about 'my girl-friend'. Virginia and I thought it was funny. During all of this, I remember thinking that all the really nice girls are taken. Evidently it was apparent to everyone that Virginia and I were falling in love. At one point in the spring of 1972, Bruce told Virginia that before they settled down, he wanted her to date other people. She told me about this and we talked about it. One night, while we were playing ping-pong, I built up my courage and asked for a date. She said yes. It was very strange.

Dating

Our first date was on Saturday April 15th 1972. This was the weekend that her parents were moving into a different house. Bruce and a bunch of guys went down to help her move. (Really weird stuff - to go out on a date with a friend's girl-friend while he was helping move her parents.) I picked her up in Ames and drove down to Des Moines. She was wearing a purple outfit that had pants and a top. I wore nice pants and a yellowish pattern shirt. I met her parents. We went out to Bishop's Cafeteria for dinner. We went out to the Fleur Four Theaters and went to see 'Modern Times'. I don't remember anything about the movie - I never have. We drove back to Ames talking. It felt very awkward. We were friends and now we were on a date. Finally, we got to Ames. I was stopped at the stop sign behind C.Y. Stephens Auditorium. I reached over and kissed her. Oh Boy! We went over to OHOP - Original House Of Pies. She had tea and I had hot chocolate. We sat there just staring at each other and sighing. I was so excited, so happy and so scared.

We dated a lot that spring. I would be late for a lot of classes because I would go by her room and we just couldn't say goodbye. One day, I had a date with Virginia and Bruce had one after me. I had taken Virginia back to the dorm and was kissing her goodbye. We got done kissing and I turned to go. Bruce was standing in the archway staring at us. I thought I was dead.

During one of my visits back home, I told Mom about Virginia. She wasn't very happy. This surprised me. She told me something about Catholic girls wanting to get Lutheran boys to get them pregnant. It was an interesting discussion.

I went back to Mo. Valley that summer. I wrote a letter about every day. I had it bad. She came over to visit once in the middle of the summer around my birthday. There were aspects of the visit that were really good.

I knew after the first date that Virginia was the girl that I wanted to marry and spend the rest of my life with. The spring after my Dad died, Virginia bought a wedding dress (on sale) and told me about it. This didn't bother me. We knew it was going to happen. The weekend that I proposed, I stopped over to her parents house and asked Art for her hand in marriage. He thought that was pretty funny and said something like 'yeah, sure you can have it'. I proposed on the anniversary of our first date (April 15th).

Getting Married

We got married on November 23rd 1974. This was Thanksgiving break at school. This was important because I was a senior and still had to get stuff done. I was trying to get ready for finals and the wedding at the same time. I ended up missing a final because I was getting stuff moved into married student housing. Fortunately, I also missed getting penny-ed into my dorm room because I was doing this. (Penny-ing someone into their room was where someone pushed against your door and jammed pennies part-way into the door jam - so you can't open the door.)

We got married in Virginia's family church - Christ the King church - by Father Churchman. We had to make three visits to talk with the priest. Virginia had to sign some papers saying she would raise any children (Father Churchman called them 'bundles of joy from heaven') as Catholics. She signed them even though she didn't have any intentions of doing this.

I had a bachelor party at school (with raunchy movies). One with Johnny Wad 'sticks out' in my mind. The guys in the wedding party took me out the night before the wedding as well. Ed Zug (one of the ushers) arranged for all the drinks I got to be triples. He was getting mad because I wasn't showing the effects. We were playing video games and I was getting better. I did start laughing a lot more. I didn't know anything was wrong until we headed back to the motel. On the way back I stepped down from the curb and it took what seemed to be hours for my foot to reach the street. Back in the room, one of my 'friends' put a quarter in the 'magic fingers' machine (coin operated bed vibrator). I thought I was going to be sick. This is the only time I have ever been drunk or even had an appreciable amount to drink. The worst part of the wedding weekend was the few hours before the ceremony when I didn't have anything to do. I started to get a bit nervous. I also got a big pimple on the end of my nose.

Gene Snook was the best man. The groomsmen were Don Hanenberger, Gary Kent and Don McCurley. The maid of honor was Karen DeFino (now Ausen). The bridesmaids were Cindy and Vickie (Virginia's sisters) and Nancy Zug (a friend of Virginia's from where she worked at the time - Central Life Insurance). The wedding went well except Father Churchman asked if I would take Virginia as my lawfully wedded husband. The reception was fun. It was interesting because Papa Doc (Art's dad) was there with his first wife (Virginia Scher), his second wife (Rachel) and one of his girl friends (Tootsie - Lee's mother). My friends 'took care' of my car. They decorated it and fixed the distributor. Fortunately, Ed Zug had made sure it was in working order. We stayed the night in Des Moines in the Hyatt near the airport (I think). There was a college fraternity party going on.

We went on our honeymoon to Omaha - big time stuff here. Being a student, I couldn't afford much else (time or money). We were there for three days. The first evening, I opened a bottle of Champagne in the hotel room. I did this in the bathroom and the bottle had built up some pressure. The cork popped and ricocheted around the bathroom about a half a dozen times. It was a pretty funny sight.

The Early Days of Marriage

We really had a good life at Iowa State. Virginia had a good job - after she quit working at Central Life in Des Moines. She had to commute to this job. She found a job at the City of Ames. Between her salary and my assistantship at the university, we did really well. Our combined income was around \$1000 per month (over half was Virginia's). The student housing started out at under \$100 per month.

Virginia's early forays into cooking were interesting. She made a Welsh rarebit that was pretty bad - we've never tried it again. She also destroyed a pot roast. Fortunately, she learned very quickly and is a very good cook. In some ways, I don't like this because I used to cook a bit and I don't do much anymore.

One day, I was helping Virginia in the kitchen. I was crushing crackers for tuna-fish salad. I used a cork-topped glass container. I ended up jamming the cork into the glass. I tried to get it out and used a sharp steak knife. This cracked the glass and the knife plunged into my left hand between the thumb and index finger. We had to go to the emergency room so I could get stitches. Virginia was not amused partially because I hurt myself, but also because her hair was in curlers.

Intelligence

Virginia is a very smart person. However, she doesn't do well at math - I suspect mostly because of the teachers she had when she was little. She describes her geometry teacher as a cross-eyed nun who would draw parallel lines that intersected. When the nun would call on a student, two girls would stand up.

Virginia also mixes up some things: She can never get AM or PM right. She also has trouble with subscription versus prescription. I told her a memory device - you go to a Pharmacy for a Prescription.

When Virginia gets very tired, she can make up fabulous rhymes. Related to this talent, she can make up really cute songs with the kids when they are getting ready for bed.

Amanda



Amanda's Birth

Virginia was pregnant in 1979 with Amanda. During that year we had moved into the house at 3284 Silverthorne Drive. Virginia worked very hard to get the room set up. We didn't know whether Amanda was going to be a boy or a girl. Typical of many fathers, I was hoping for a boy. I would talk to Virginia's tummy calling Amanda by boy's names. Virginia got all sorts of weird food urges. She got really hooked on bean burritos. For a couple of years afterwards, she couldn't eat them.

The time came and went for the delivery. Virginia was getting really uncomfortable. Virginia developed a rash all over her body (except face and hands). She was miserable. The rash was 'Pups Syndrome' (I'm not sure of the spelling). It was a reaction to the high hormone levels (and is indicative of a baby girl). It got to be three weeks past the due date.

Virginia's family came out for Christmas. We had expected to have the baby by then. Her family brought out a cold or flu and everybody got sick. It hit Virginia the 25th. She got over it and went into a cleaning frenzy on the 26th. I got the flu on the 26th. Virginia went into labor early in the morning on the 27th of December. We went in to the Doctor Merkle's office using Art's station wagon - because there had been a pretty good snow storm. She had started labor, but we found out later that it was because of the sack in the birth canal. We went to the hospital and they took X-rays. We found out Mandy's head was too big to fit through Virginia's pelvis. We needed to have a caesarean section delivery.

Doctor Merkle acted sort of panicked by this (it didn't help our nerves). We had to sign the release forms (this also didn't help our nerves). Virginia got prepped. I was given a surgical gown and went in. I got to stand by Virginia's head and hold her left arm. The anesthesiologist gave her a spinal block. The surgeon started to make the incision. Virginia called out that she could feel the incision. The spinal block was too low. They rushed and gave Virginia a general anesthetic - knocking her out. I was getting very worried but kept telling Virginia that everything was okay. She went under. About that time, I started to get sick. I suspect it was a combination of the operating room, the flu and the stress. I was taken out and had mostly dry heaves in a scrub room.

Amanda was taken out at around 6:30PM. She weighed 9 pounds 5.5 ounces. I was watched Dr. Merkle clean her up. She went to the bathroom out of both ends - Dr. Merkle said that all the plumbing was working just fine. They got all done cleaning her up. Virginia was fine.

Dr. Merkle brought Amanda out to me. She had a good set of lungs. I took her in my arms. She seemed so small. I took her up to the nursery. All the way she just laid in my arms and stared at me. It was one of the neatest feelings I have ever had.

I don't remember much else about that day. Vickie got the flu that day and threw up when she saw Amanda for the first time (through the nursery window). Virginia woke up pretty slowly because of the general anesthetic. She tried to breast feed, but it wasn't working too well.

I was really proud, walking around work handing out chocolate candy and cigars.

Amanda's Personality

Amanda has always been a good person. She is sweet and nice. She works very hard at not hurting anybody's feelings. All of her teacher's like her a lot. She had a very close relationship with her 3rd grade teacher Mrs. Mahon.

Mandy seems to be a perfectionist. She works very hard and getting her school work and her art just right. Sometimes this makes her work harder than she needs to because she gets bogged down in the details.

She really likes art related things - drawing and clay and painting and so on. She does a really good job on her art. She makes a lot of pictures to give to Virginia and I. One of her early drawings of Max (the cat) is very good. She also did a self portrait in school in a cartoon-style that turned out really nice which Virginia had framed.

Teddy Bears

Mandy has a boat load of teddy bears and stuffed animals. She still loved them when this was written (at age 10). Art would give Mandy a teddy bear every time we would get together. After a couple of years, Art slowed down on this. Mandy got some pretty neat bears for a while.

Singing Mandy Asleep

When Mandy felt bad or couldn't get to sleep, Virginia or I would go in and try to get her back to sleep. We would try walking her or rocking her in a rocker. Most times, we would also sing to her too. I would sing Dan Fogelberg's "Longer" or Bette Midler's "The Rose" a lot. It felt good having her fall asleep in my arms.

A Horse Of Course

Virginia and I read to the kids almost every night. We had a book called "A Horse, Of Course". This had various clues about what animal was being talked about. After Mandy guessed, we would lift up the flap and show the animal. In this book, Mandy would have a regular sort of response (before we lifted the flap). For the spider - she would hit the book. For the horse, she would whinny. For the elephant she would put her arm up to her nose and trumpet.

Ta Da

When Mandy was almost 2 years old, Mandy had gotten sick and didn't feel good. It was 3 in the morning and she woke up crying for a bottle. Virginia got up (because I can sleep through anything). Mandy was barely awake and crying for the bottle. Virginia looked around but had trouble finding the bottle that Mandy had gone to bed with. She finally found and gave it to Mandy. As she handed to Mandy, Virginia said "Here it is, I found your bottle". Manda put her arms up in the air and said "ta da!".

Swimming Pool

When Mandy had just turned 2 years old, I was driving her to day care. It was winter and pretty cold. We passed by an outdoor swimming pool. Mandy wanted to go swimming. I told her it was cold out and the water would be very cold. She thought about this for a while and said - "why don't they heat it?".

The Shower

One day after work, Virginia and I were just beat. After supper we put Mandy in the shower. We let her play in there and laid down on the bed. We didn't have any energy to get up. After about 40 minutes, one of us got up to check on Mandy and she had plugged the drain with a wash-cloth. The water had over-flowed and filled the shower area, gotten the carpet next the bathroom wet and had been pouring down the air ducts from the furnace.

Water was everywhere. It was running out of the ducts in the basement and seeping through the drywall in the garage. It was a mess. It took an hour or so to clean up. Mandy felt very sorry. I felt bad because I had gotten really mad at her. Virginia had her come down to me in the basement and say she was sorry.

Baths

While Amanda was young, I would give her and Ben baths. Sometimes, we would - all three of us - take a bath together. This was fun.

In the house on Silverthorne, during their baths, I would also shampoo their hair. I would make shapes out of their hair like horns or various funny shapes. They liked to stand up and look in the mirror to see what they looked like.

Mandy loved to show off and pretend to be an Olympic swimmer. Virginia would be the announcer saying things like "And now the American entry, Amanda Mikkelsen, is coming up on the board". Mandy would pretend dive or swim. Of course, she always got a gold medal.

Day Care

When Mandy was first born, she would stay at a friend's house. This lady was Mimi Arnspiger (married to an HP engineer and friend). This worked out well - having someone to trust. After a little while, these folks moved back to Kentucky. Virginia was able to find a nice person to watch Mandy - Karen Parker. Karen was a very nice lady and had a boy (Chad) who was Mandy's age. I think it worked out really well to have Virginia work part time. This gave Virginia a chance to get out of the house. It also gave the kids a chance to interact with other children. It also gave them a lot time together.

Taking Care of Mandy

Virginia's grandmother, Tootsie, passed away when Mandy was about 3 years old. Virginia was going to fly back to go to the funeral. Mandy and I stayed here. I took care of Mandy for about a week. It was not easy and I have a lot better respect for single parents of young children. It was also really neat. I feel that this helped me get a lot closer to Mandy and to become a better parent. At the start it felt very awkward. By the end, it was normal getting her off to day care, picking her up, taking care of dinner, playing with her, et cetera.

Breakfast

When Mandy was about 5 years old, she started fixing breakfasts for Virginia and I on the weekends. She worked really hard on these. She would start by putting corn flakes in bowls and covering them with milk. Then she would make scrambled eggs in the microwave oven. She would over-cook the eggs. Then she would bring up a tray with all of this up to the bedroom. (With corn flakes that had been in milk for around 20 minutes - a little soggy.) She was so sweet about this. We would eat some of the cereal and then ask her to go get sugar or napkins or something so we could get rid of the cereal.

Odie and Garfield

We had gotten some fish for Mandy when she was around 5 years old. She named them Garfield and Odie (because one was an orange goldfish and the other was black). Odie died pretty quickly, but Garfield hung around for quite a while. One day Mandy came down stairs and said that Garfield was going to die. I went up to check, and he looked fine. I told her he would be okay and asked why she thought he was going to die. She said: "I just know". Well, he was dead the next morning.

What Amanda Wants To Be

Amanda has wanted to be different things at different times. It seems that she thinks she needs to be three things at once. For a while she wanted to be a doctor, ballerina and policewoman. At age 10 she wants to be an artist and play the flute. She is a smart girl and could do anything, but I think she might continue on with art.

Shopping

I suppose it was inevitable. Virginia has taken Mandy shopping over the years. Mandy has turned into a first class shopper. She also is very careful with her money. She will figure out the best value or how to get the most purchases with her money. In spite of this, she will still give Ben money or share her candy (quite often, anyway).

Ben



Ben's Birth

Virginia got morning sickness really bad with Ben. Because of this, she didn't gain much weight during the pregnancy. We sort of expected that we would need another caesarean section. We were ready for a VBACS (vaginal birth after caesarean section) - but it didn't happen that way. Virginia went to full term. She went beyond full term. We finally talked the doctor into a C-section.

This was in March. I know it was silly to want it this way, but I had been born on July 27th, Mandy on December 27th. I asked the doctor about March 27th. He wouldn't do it (I think because the operating room schedule was booked). We did the operation on March 28th. We went in early.

Again, I got to be in the operating room. The anesthesiologist was Dr. Pierson (Virginia's boss). This time it was somebody we knew. Virginia got a spinal block. It worked this time. It was strange because she started to feel claustrophobic and unable to catch her breath. She started flailing her arms around a bit. Dr. Pierson gave her something to counteract the effect. Ben was born at 8:00AM. He weighed 9 pounds 3.5 ounces. The doctor brought him up so Virginia could hold him for a minute.

It was very strange standing there looking into Virginia's open abdomen. After the delivery, they started cleaning things up. This involved putting the uterus outside of the opening and 'vacuuming' blood off of it. This was very weird. Virginia bounced back a lot faster this time. Doing a spinal (as opposed to a general) made a big difference. Mandy was really excited to hold her little brother.

I really liked having a boy and a girl. It made me feel like we had a complete little family. I know this is sort of silly - the most important thing is to have happy, healthy kids. I went to work and handed out chocolate cigars this time around.

Back To Iowa

When Ben was an infant, I took him back to Iowa by myself. This was in 1984. He and I flew back and visited my Mom and then Virginia's folks. This was pretty neat. Virginia thought I was crazy to do this. I think Mom and Virginia's folks were surprised that I would want to bring him back by myself.

Ben's Personality

Ben is very bright. He does get distracted easily and can get bored with stuff. But, when he wants to learn something - he gets it fast. Like most boys, he is pretty aggressive and can be destructive. But, he is also a good boy. In thinking about my early years, I played military sorts of games. When Ben talks about killing and destruction, I get concerned. I don't think that I really need to worry about this and I think my reaction is sort of odd.

Ben likes "digger-man" stuff - trucks and construction equipment. Recently, he has really gotten in to Lego toys. He can use these to build things and does a really good job.

Ben started kindergarten in 1989 and did well. One thing that he did was whine a bit. I went to the first parent-teacher conference and his teacher (Mrs. Tree) said that he was just fine except that he whined. When I got home, I told Virginia about the conference. Ben came down while we were talking. Virginia told him he was doing good except for one thing. She asked him if he knew what it was. "I'm a whiny boy" was Ben's answer.

At the Pool

Virginia and I had been consciously using proper terms for parts of the kids bodies. When Ben was about 3 and a half, Virginia was up with him at a local indoor swimming pool during a weekday. He walked around the corner while Virginia was getting Mandy dressed. He didn't have any clothes on. He walked up to a young woman who was getting dressed. He looked at her and said "I see you have a vagina". He then said "I have a penis". (I think that this is one of the funniest pick up lines I have ever heard.) The woman was pretty surprised and tried to move away. Virginia heard this and got Ben.

I like to take both of the kids to the swimming pool on the weekends during the winter. Virginia doesn't usually go. Up until age six, Ben preferred to stay in the shallow pool. When we get done swimming the Amanda likes to get nachos and Ben likes to get a pretzel or a snow-cone.

Christmas

Ben had not (at age 5) heard a lot of religious discussions. For Christmas 1989, he was wondering if it was Jesus inside the Santa suit. A week before Christmas, he had been doing some thinking about Christmas. He told Virginia that he knew that she and I were Santa and that we got the presents. He then went on to say that he doesn't like surprises. So, because of all that, he asked Virginia why we didn't just open up our presents right now.

Tact

We were at the kitchen table one day when it was very windy. We were talking about how windy it was. Ben must have been about 4 years old. Ben was talking about getting blown away. He said: "I'd blow away because I'm little. Mandy would blow away because she's skinny. Mommy wouldn't blow away because" There was a long pause. He finally finished with: "because she's not little".

Day Care

Like Amanda, Ben has been at several people's homes for day-care. The year before Kindergarten, he went to Children's World. This is a regular day care chain. The day care for Ben has worked out okay, but I don't think it was quite as good as Mandy's.

At the Office

I don't like to be away from the kids during the weekend. When I was first promoted and at various other times, I went in and worked during the weekend. So that I could still be around the kids, I would bring both Ben and Mandy with me. This worked out pretty well, most of the time. They would get drinks of water and paper cups. They would play with my 'white board' and colored markers or draw. I still have some of the things that they drew. As they have gotten older, they don't want to go to the office and I haven't been going in as much.

Sport-bud

Virginia and I use nick-names for the kids. These usually are names like 'Honey', 'Pumpkin' and things like that. Ben was not overly thrilled with these all of the time. A neighbor (Mike) called one of his sons (Brian) 'sport'. Ben liked the sound of this and asked us to call him sport. We've varied it and now we call Ben 'Sport-bud' quite a bit.

Ginger

Ben has always liked candy. When Ben was 4 or 5 years old, he got into Virginia's spice drawer to look for sprinkles or candy. He found a bottle of crystallized ginger. He opened it up and took one of the crystals. He was rather surprised at what the candy tasted like.

Toys

Ben likes all sorts of toys. His favorites have been cars and construction vehicles, Transformers, action figures and vehicles, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Legos. I like to play with Ben, especially with the Legos.

Space Ship

I built a 'space ship' for Ben when he was 5 years old. This is a large (3'x6' base about 3' high) grey wooden box with a bent metal top that has an opening in the front. I put in keyboards and front panels for Ben and his friends. As I was finishing the wooden base, I let Mandy and Ben help paint it. A neighbor (Deb Keegan) came over and saw this and thought it was a great idea so she sent her boys (Brian and Phil) over to help paint it as well. The neighbor boys were pretty good kids and friends of Ben's. So, I let them help. The kids use it as a fort, base, house, space ship, boat, airplane, et cetera.

The boys (Ben, Charlie Hoxmeier, Brian and Phil) were playing with space ship one afternoon. They were dressed up in snow suits. They were hanging all over the space ship and shooting at each other. Virginia asked them what they were doing. They stopped and looked at her and said: "We're playing Bambi".

Salt and Pepper

One Saturday, Ben had Charlie Hoxmeier (a friend) over. They were both 5 years old. I had fixed lunch for them (chicken hot dogs, cheeto's, green beans). While they were playing they were playing with the salt and pepper shakers. They noticed the holes in the top and noticed that they were shaped like letters - S and P. So they started talking about S-hole and then after a bit P-hole. They thought it was pretty funny (that they could say 'asshole' without getting into trouble). I thought it was pretty clever too.

What Ben Wants To Be

When Ben was three and four years old, he wanted to be a 'diggerman' or a garbage man. The 'diggerman' is a construction worker. He really likes construction equipment and tools. The garbage man was related to big trucks. He thought it would be really neat to be able to ride around on the big trucks. Recently, Ben has wanted to be like daddy and work at HP with me.

Parental Roles

The kids have developed a very strong sense of who does what in the family. Virginia is the person that they go to for permission for anything. I am the person that they come to anytime they want something fixed.

Relatives

Tom

Tom is my older brother. He was born about 5 years before me on September 27, 1948. Tom and I don't get along all that well. He would pick on me when I was little - especially when his friends were around. Tom is a perfectionist with things - his car, house ... He also had quite a mean and destructive streak in him. There is an incident at DeSoto Bend involving a fire-cracker and a frog that isn't very pleasant. I don't think Tom really understands how to deal with people very well. Tom was into ham radio and electronics. I suspect that a lot of my interest in this comes from Tom.

In general, I didn't fight back much when Tom bothered me. One time (when I was 7 or 8 years old), I had taken enough. Tom was bugging me. I had a pencil in my hand. I poked him in the stomach with it. This came as a big surprise to both of us. What came as a bigger surprise was that Tom got in trouble for it and I didn't. My folks figured that Tom must have really done something to get me to that point.

Tom liked to drink. Having the bar did not help this much. One time in particular, I was working in my little shop in the basement. Tom came in and was talking to me. What he was really after was for me to grab the beer that he was going to take from the store room (near the shop). I did it, but I felt guilty about it. Another time, Mom and Dad went away for the weekend when Tom was a senior and I was in 8th grade. Tom had some friends over and they got really drunk. I ended up taking care of Tom and his friends. While he was drunk, he said something about me being a good younger brother. This is one of the few times I remember Tom saying anything nice to me or about me.

Tom was not a great student. He didn't have great grades and was told in high school that he shouldn't bother with college. This really upset my folks. In spite of the 'counseling', he went to Nebraska State Teacher's College in Peru Nebraska. There he got an Industrial Arts bachelors degree. From there he went into teaching in Omaha (at a technical high school). He set up a TV studio there. From there he got into the Omaha TV stations. He then moved on to the Quad cities in eastern Iowa. From there he became head of technical operations at WGN in Chicago - a fairly big TV station. He had moved (in 1987 or 1988) on to a small TV system, but with more promotional opportunities. He just quit (January 1990) and went to work at a company owned by Winnebago located in north central Iowa. He seems to change jobs about every 2-4 years.

Tom and Mary Lee (his wife) have two children: Eric and Chrissy. I hardly ever see them. Eric was hyperactive. They gave him medication for treatment. He has had some trouble in school and was not able to graduate on time. It doesn't appear that he has much direction in life (at least at this point in time). Tom thinks it would do him good to go into the military. He has dropped out of high school and it isn't clear what he is going to be doing. (He will turn 19 soon.) Chrissy had some minor heart trouble when she was little, but is okay now. About all I know about her is that she does a lot of baby sitting and is quite a saver.

Grandma

Only two grandparents were alive when I was born - Martha Mikkelsen and Emma Claussen. Martha died when I was 5 or 6 years old. So, I only really remember one grandparent - Grandma Claussen. Her husband was killed when my Mom was very young (I think eight years old). She had a leg problem and wore a leg brace all the time. She was wonderful. She was a wrinkled, smallish woman. She seemed to be very determined.

She would pamper me when she came over. She would make my bed for me. This was a real treat growing up in the Hotel where I had to make mine and other people's beds.

Her house was surrounded by flowers and a garden. There were plants everywhere, even in the basement. It smelled very earthy. She had strawberries in the garden. They were small - about the size of a dime or nickel. They had so much flavor in them. She made preserves, cookies, cakes.... When Grandma would come over to visit, she would often make huge batches of chocolate molasses cookies with a white frosting. I would come home from school and the kitchen and the bedroom (next to the kitchen) would be covered in trays of the cookies. Her house was a cute, smaller Cape Cod style house. As you came into it, there was a small living room to the left and a dining room to the right. In the dining room there was a big, claw-footed dining room table. The kitchen was right behind the dining room. I remember eating home-made strawberry preserves on toast looking out the kitchen window onto the back yard. The toaster was an old wedge style with a cloth-covered electrical cord. Straight in from the main entrance was a series of very steep steps that went upstairs to a couple of bedrooms with dormer windows. Right behind the dining room was Grandma's bedroom and bathroom. One thing that really sticks in my mind is the mirrors in Grandma's bathroom. They had a greenish color and were mounted opposite each other over the toilet seat and the sink. Because of this, they had the appearance of an infinite receding sequence of mirrors. I was always fascinated by this effect.

When I was in junior high (I think), we were visiting her in Harlan. A rabbit had been at her garden. I was given a 22 caliber rifle and told to take care of the rabbit. I went out and tried to scare it off. I shot at it once, but it didn't run off. It went towards Grandma's house. I shot again and the bullet enter its neck and lodged in the brain. The poor thing convulsed and twitched. I don't think I shot it again to put it out of its misery, but I should have. I don't like hunting.

She died in 1969 while she was visiting us. She was down in the beauty shop with Mom. She got tired or didn't feel too well and sat down underneath one of the hair dryers. She died sitting there with my Mom. She just closed her eyes and passed away.

Harvey and Doris

Uncle Harvey is my favorite uncle. He is my Mom's brother. He and Aunt Doris had a boat load of kids: Harvey, Sheryl, Ted, Tony, Denise and Dale. For years they lived in Omaha in a nice brick house. The land the house was on was divided into three pieces: the house and its yard; a middle yard with a play area and work shop; a back yard with a small orchard and a big garden area.

I really liked going down there to play and visit. Denise and Dale were about my age so I had kids to play with. They had a lot of toys and stuff - model railroad stuff, the play ground, games, ... Sometimes the house was pretty rowdy and the kids got on each others nerves. Dale would drive Denise and Tony crazy - undressing their dolls and stuff. Dale was the baby of the family and was pretty weird at times, but I liked him. Dale was really into military stuff and in particular identified with and was fascinated by Civil War Confederacy things.

Doris made these very thin pancakes - sort of like crepes. I think it was normal pancakes with extra milk in them. They were good - covered with powdered sugar or jelly.

Harvey worked for PIE - a trucking company. Occasionally, a truck would overturn or have a problem and Uncle Harvey would end up with all sorts of stuff. One time it was a frozen strawberry shipment. We all got a lot of cartons of frozen strawberries. My folks experimented and discovered that if you blended the strawberries with some sugar it made a great topping for ice cream. I think that this is why I like strawberry sorbet so much.

I liked Dale, Denise and Tony. But, I don't see them hardly at all anymore. Dale went into the army for a while, and then went back to school - at Oregon State. Denise got married and divorced. She is remarried now - to the Chief of Police in Olympia Washington. Ted married a girl that my brother knew at college (Nebraska State Teachers College in Peru Nebraska). According to my brother, she was not very nice. Ted and she had three kids and she turned out to be not very nice. Ted got a divorce and kept the kids. He had been in the Army and was planning to retire after 20 years. Tony married an accountant who strikes me as not being a very nice person. Sheryl married a mechanic and after 15 or more years got a divorce. Harvey Junior got a divorce as well after several years. He got remarried a while ago and got divorced again. They have sort of a track record for divorce in the family.

Doris and Harvey moved out to California in the late sixties with most of their kids. We visited them a couple of times. It was neat because they lived in Whittier not too far from Disney land. They eventually moved again. Doris had some health problems and ended up with a metal plate in her head. She got sort of strange near the end and kept buying packages of sheets. When she died they had closets full of the things. After Doris died, Harvey remarried. His new wife was one of the ladies from the church and seems very nice.

Ella and Burhl

Aunt Ella was my Mom's sister. She and Uncle Burhl had four children: Burhl B., Bill, Robert and Jean. She was a nurse and he was a doctor. Ella always called him 'the Doctor' or would say 'the Doctor says that...'. They were very strict with their children. Their house was always neat and organized. The kids rebelled a bit as they got older.

Burhl B. went to the military for a while and then back to college and works now at a power company in Nebraska. He got married to a really weird girl. They had a son. They also did a bunch of strange stuff. Eventually she went off the deep end and they got divorced. Burhl B. got remarried to a very nice lady with a couple of kids. Bill became a teacher. He was married to a woman getting a law degree. They got divorced. Bill remarried. His new wife's name is Linda. They have a son. They started a software company that writes programs for insurance companies. Jean married a postal employee and moved out east. They adopted a son.

Ella and Burhl retired to a high rise in Omaha called the Masonic Manor. In the early 70s, there was a fire. Robert was killed by smoke inhalation trying to get other residents out. He had gone in several times.

Burhl died in the mid 1980's after a long bout with Parkinson's disease. Burhl had worked during the war in the military as a doctor. I think he worked on chemical or biological weapons. (This might have affected his health.)

Lil and Dick

Aunt Lil is Lily Plagman Plumb. She is my mother's aunt - my great-aunt. She is probably my favorite relative. She and Uncle Dick worked a farm near Harlan. Dick died in 1988 at the age of 87.

When Lil was young, she and Dick had a baby. The doctor had been very busy or was tired (or something). He forgot to tie off the umbilical cord. The baby bled to death during the night. Lil and Dick were not able to have another child and so they adopted.

We used to go visit them on their farm. They had a big farm and raised corn and popcorn. They also had peacocks. One time my brother shot a squirrel in a big tree next to the farm house. The squirrel died gripping the tree branch. Somewhere in my stuff, I still have the drawing of a tree with the dead squirrel in it.

Annie and Bill

Annie is another great-aunt - my mother's aunt. She and Uncle Bill had a farm in Corley - outside of Harlan. They had chickens and pigs and crops. I don't remember what the crops were. They had an old dog that had lost a leg. It was a neat old dog. Bill passed away in the 1960s. Annie died in 1988. She was a few days away from her 99th birthday. She slipped a bit the last few years of her life, but I hope that I survive that well and long.

Bernice

My father's sister was Bernice. She and Uncle Lyle had two children: Michael and Alan. They lived in Omaha. Michael is a good guy and I like him. Alan is not the most dependable guy I've met. Bernice and her kids had really short legs and really long torsos. She would always want a kiss. She would reach up and force my head down - it was a fun game. She was short until she sat down next to you, then her head was at the same height. I remember my Dad talking about Bernice and how his folks always gave Bernice what she wanted - but evidently Dad didn't get what he wanted very often.

Lyle was a photographer. He also gambled a lot - on horses primarily. He also wanted Michael and Alan to be sports figures (I guess). Michael became a teacher and (I think) a principal. Alan has bounced around various jobs.

Lena

Lena was my father's aunt - my great-aunt. She was married to George True. I don't remember anything about George. I remember what Lena looked like, but no specific things that happened. George and Lena inherited the Hotel from his father - O.B. True. Aunt Lena was my Dad's favorite relative. When they were starting out, Dad and Mom went into partnership with Lena and George in the Hotel. George and Lena eventually sold out and bought a motel in Missouri. After this they retired to Long Beach California.

Lena died the same day that my Dad died (within about 6 hours, I think). We (Mom, Tom, Mary Lee, Virginia and I) went out there the next summer to clean up her condo to sell. Lena smoked. When we went in to clean, the place was still thick with the smell of cigarettes - even after 6 to 8 months.

In-Laws

Art and Lee

Arthur Anthony Heckle and Thelma Lee Heckle are Virginia's parents. I really like them. Art is a 'crusty old fart' sort of person. He is friendly and outgoing but can be excessively colorful sometimes. Lee (Thelma) is one of the nicest people I know.

Virginia's family has a very interesting background. Art and Lee met when Art's dad (Papa Doc) and Lee's mom (Tootsie) were dating. Art was in his late teens and Lee was in her early teens. They got serious and got married when Lee was 15 and Art was 21 (I think). Art joined the army. He started out as an instructor. He eventually went overseas to Korea during the Korean war with an artillery outfit. Virginia was born during his tour overseas. Lee was 17 when Virginia was born.

I think that the Heckle family background is really neat. Their background includes Dutch, German, Irish, Spanish and more. One of Virginia's ancestors was a blackfoot indian. Virginia is 1/64th blackfoot.

Vickie

Vickie Lee was born about a year and a half after Virginia. Vickie is really funny and nice. She looks and acts a lot like Lee. She started dating Nick during high school. Nick is the brother of Virginia's high school best friend (Karen DeFino). They never dated anyone else and got married about a year after Virginia and I did.

Cindy

Cindy Lee is the youngest daughter. She was the 'baby' of the family for a long time. Cindy is very bright. She can, however, get really moody.

Cindy was in Stepperettes. This was a marching group associated with the Catholic school that all the kids went to. She was really into this. Art and Lee did a bunch of organizing and fund raising associated with the Stepperettes. There was a point when Virginia and I were dating where Art expected Virginia to do something to help. This turned into a minor fight. Virginia said she didn't understand why she had to help. Art explained it to her in his less than tactful way. It wasn't very pretty.

Cindy moved out to Colorado shortly after Virginia and I did. She lived with us for about a month in our first apartment. She went to school for a little bit. Then she worked at the Fort Collins/Loveland airport for a while. Then she worked at National Car Rental. She has worked at the Weld county garage for a while now.

She recently started taking some computer classes. I think that this was in part due to Virginia and I telling her she was smart enough to do it. She doesn't like her current job and we said she should do something about it. She has taken an introductory course and a Lotus 1-2-3 (spreadsheet) class and did very well. She went on to a Pascal programming class. She is smart enough to do it, whether she gets through it depends on if she wants to.

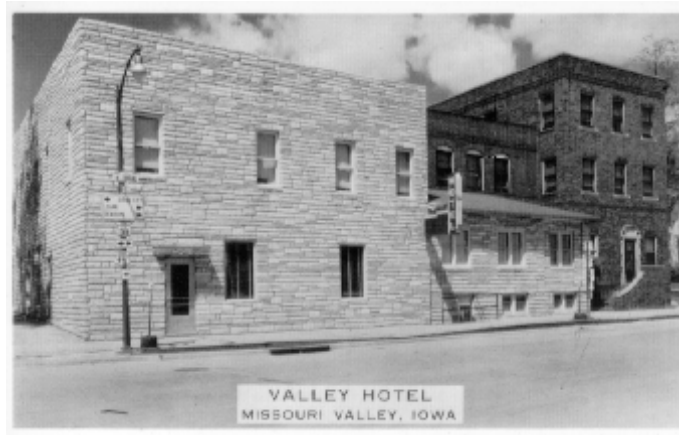
Chris

Chris is the youngest of the four. Art and Lee had the 3 girls and then 11 years later Chris. He was a cute kid. He was really into music but not much into school as such. He went to UNI for his first year of college. He went to Embry Riddle in Prescott Arizona. He went there because he thought he wanted to be come a commercial pilot. He came back to UNI after one semester. He graduated from UNI in 1989 with a degree in radio and TV arts or journalism.

He was very good looking. When he was in high school, girls would swarm a bit. They would call him up for dates. Some would actually drive by to look at him. Some of these girls were a couple of years older.

Chris got married in August 1989 to Julie. We went back for the wedding. Ben was a ring bearer and Mandy was a junior bridesmaid. They looked very cute all dressed up. They both did really well.

The Hotel



The Family Business

The Hotel was really a bunch of small businesses. We had the Hotel with 37 rooms and 2 apartments. We also had Mom's beauty shop. There was the bar downstairs. We also had the Greyhound Bus depot for Mo. Valley. On top of all that we had the Western Union teletype for the town as well. Early in its history, the Hotel also had a restaurant, but it had closed down long before I was born. Although the Hotel brought in some money, it was the bar and the beauty shop that really paid the bills.

It was a good place to grow up. It taught me a lot of valuable lessons. I met a lot of people, some nice and some not so nice. It taught me how to work and do all sorts of different jobs - desk clerk, bell boy, bartender, host, therapist, telephone operator, ticket clerk, teletype operator, janitor and maid.

The Hotel

We lived in the Hotel. For some reason, it strikes me that it should be capitalized - like a person's name. It's real name was 'The Valley Hotel'. My Dad and Mom had gone into business with my Dad's aunt and uncle (Lena and George) sometime after World War II. It was a big brick and stone structure sitting at 6th and Erie Street in Missouri Valley.

It was built in three pieces. The old part was on the west side and had an apartment and some of the old (cheap) rooms upstairs. This part also had the lobby. The middle section was the next oldest. It had the 'nicer' rooms on the first and second floor. In the basement was the bar and laundry room. Both of these parts had been refinished with a 'stone' facing. The new part was on the east, next to the alley. It had the shop, beauty shop and back room of the bar in the basement. Our apartment was on the first floor. There were rooms on the second and third floors.

Most of the rooms had solid wooden doors with glass transoms above them. Transoms are 'windows' above a door to let the air flow. Most of the floors had green linoleum tiles. There were copper fire extinguishers through-out the Hotel. On the landing going from the first floor up to the old part, Dad had put a print of 'American Gothic'.

Although the bar and beauty shop brought in much of the money, the Hotel did okay. Before the interstate system was built (before the mid-1960s), we got a lot of traffic from traveling salesmen (since we were right on Highway 30). After the interstate, Dad got a contract with the railroad (Burlington Northern, I think) for rooms for freight train crews. Dad also taught me that there was a specific guy that we always gave room 210 to. This was because the guy had a bladder control problem and room 210 had the rubber sheets.

The people

John Crum

John Crum was an extremely old man who stayed in the Hotel. He had lived in room number 1 or 2 (directly above the lobby) for as long I could remember. His room was just a square room with a bed and a sink and dresser. He was a nice man. He had had cataract operations (I think) because he wore these 'pop-bottle' wire-rim glasses. He also wore bib-overalls all the time. He was very thin and emaciated looking. I played checkers with him in the lobby a lot. He drove a red Ford Falcon.

Jim Seaton

Jim was a weird guy. He wasn't too terribly old. He lived in room number 4 in the old part (above one of the two apartments). He was a truck driver or laborer of some sort. I had these really long involved discussions about religion with Jim. He was very religious (in a weird sort of way). I tried to understand why he didn't go to church. He had a short wave radio that he was very proud and protective of. It seemed to let him live beyond the limits of his little room. I recall that my parents would occasionally discuss his use of the local prostitutes (there were two that I was aware of) - I assume this also let him live beyond the limits of his room.

Ione Gaver

Ione was a lady who would help out at the desk every so often. She had a very bright disposition but was very very heavy. She had the folds of fat that would hang around her knees. She also had a very bad self-image. She didn't feel she could figure things out. She was on social security so there was a certain amount of care taken on how much she worked. She eventually got into a low-cost housing development in Council Bluffs. We would occasionally see her. She was a 'grandmotherly' sort of lady. I really liked Ione.

Alma

She was the second shift clerk at the front desk of the time we owned the Hotel. I remember that she liked to think the Hotel was her domain. She was married, but her husband died at some point in my childhood. I think she eventually moved out to western Kansas with some relatives, but I'm not sure. I do remember that she would turn people away who had come to inquire about buying the Hotel. She didn't want us to sell it.

My Mom tells me that when I was very young, Alma would coax me out into the lobby to beg for pennies from the people sitting there. This really bothered my folks.

Alma was pretty heavy set. She liked to drink - a lot. There was a night that she was down in the bar and had gotten really plastered. At some point late in the night, she dropped her purse or something on the floor. She leaned around the padded rail (blue-green padded vinyl on top) that ran around the bar to get down to get it. She got it, but was in bad enough shape that she just tried to sit straight up. She slammed the back of her head into the rail. She couldn't figure out what was happening. My Dad tried to help her (sort of). He pushed her head down so she could try again. She came back up straight again - WHACK. My father continued to help her - at least three more times. The next day I clearly remember her talking to my Dad about this terrible headache she had - she just couldn't figure out where it had come from - she must be coming down with something. He tried to keep a straight face, but didn't succeed.

Clarence

Clarence was the night shift clerk. He was a tall, thin man. I don't remember that much about him except that Dad didn't trust him too well. Dad thought that he charged more for the rooms and then pocketed the difference.

Mrs. Gardner

Mrs. Gardner was this little old, grey haired lady who was a maid at the Hotel. I think she was pretty poor - she lived 'across the tracks'. She was my introduction to people not working very hard. When I would go up to the rooms during the middle of the day, she would be in a room sitting down on the bed. She would be sitting with a cigarette in her mouth. She would be running the dust mop around in a semi-circle around her - back and forth. It seems my Dad was always checking up on her to make sure she had changed the towels and dusted.

Shorty and Red Ziser

Shorty and Red were farmers who lived just outside of town. Shorty was a little, wiry guy and Red was a big, heavy set guy. About once a month Shorty would come into town and get blind drunk. He would stagger up from the bar and check in to a room. He would always buy about 5 or more candy bars and leave most of them for the maid. I would always be sure to walk him up to his room because otherwise he would wander around until he found an open door. While he was checking in, he would talk to me. This was invaluable, because it taught me how to look and sound like I was listening, when I really didn't have any idea what was being said.

Religion

My folks went to church a lot. We belonged to St. Paul's Lutheran Church. It was affiliated with the Lutheran Church of America (there were two other groups - the ALC and the Missouri Synod). It was a nice church to grow up in. I went to church services and to Sunday school. Mom taught Sunday school for a while.

The Church was a good sized (for a small town) brick building. It had a steeple in front. There were small stained glass windows lining the pews. There was a large stained glass window at the front. The pews were fairly simple wood. Down in the basement was the area where Sunday school and bible school was held. There was a shuffle-board game board on the floor in the basement as well.

When I was older, I was an acolyte (the Lutheran equivalent of an altar boy). I got to wear robes and light and extinguish the candles. During the summers, there was Bible School for the first 2 weeks in the summer. This was fun. We did crafts and learned things about the church and Christianity. I vividly remember the cookies and koolaid (in big heavy glasses).

I went through a series of classes for 'confirmation'. There were four of us. I remember Susan Fry and Joel Niebaum were in the class with me, but I don't remember the fourth. There was a final test by the minister and laymen from the church. I was very nervous. I recorded a bunch of notes onto tape and then tried to play them back while I slept. I passed without any problems, but I was still nervous. We went through a formal confirmation ceremony. After this, we could receive communion. It was neat.

I really liked one of the ministers: Reverend Robert Henderson. He was a really big (heavy) man with a beard. His parents had been missionaries (or something) overseas and he had a lot of interesting paraphernalia in his house. He got married, but his wife left the night of the honeymoon. There was a lot of gossip, but I never really heard what happened. He eventually left the ministry and is living in Texas now.

I did my senior English paper on a comparison of religions and their view of the move to join churches together. I talked to all of the 17 different ministers and priests in town. I also went to Omaha and talked to a rabbi (orthodox, I think). It was fascinating. The closer the religions, the stronger the reaction against joining together. It was also interesting that the Catholic priest and the Jewish rabbi were the only ones who made a push to convert me. (I didn't think well of these attempts.)

I went through a lot of doubt about religions my last year of high school and my first two years of college. I sat down with Reverend Henderson and talked about this a lot. He really tried to help me. (He also wanted me to think about becoming a minister.) To try to help, he arranged for me to teach to some of the bible school classes during the early summer during my Freshman and Sophomore years in college. This was interesting and fun, but didn't really help me.

I know that someday I am going to die (not a big surprise). I am frightened by it, but there is nothing I can do to stop it - only delay it. (Which I will do as much as I can.) One thing that I wouldn't like is outliving Amanda and Ben - I want them to have longer and happier lives. Basically, I am an agnostic - not an atheist. I suspect, want and hope that there is something more after death, but I am not sure.

Pets

The Hamsters

When I was around 8 or 9, my folks got me two hamsters and a small cage for them. I had a lot of fun with these guys. I would build Lego mazes and have them run through them. I must have misfed them, because first one and then the other came down with a GI-track problem and died. At the time I had the makings of a little mad scientist. I buried them in the back of the Hotel. I planned to recover their skeletons to see what they were like. I never found them.

Trudy

My family had a couple of dogs. But the first one that I really remember much about was Trudy - Gertrude. She was a part Daschund that I got. I don't know why I picked the name. She was a good dog - most of the time.

When she was still fairly young, Dad and I were at the kitchen table after supper. She was playing around our feet, begging for scraps. For some reason, Dad and I started teaching her how to climb up to the table first on a chair and then up to the plates. About the time we were making some real progress, Mom came in and asked "What do you think you're doing".

On a visit to Harlan to visit Grandma, I took Trudy along. Part way through the day, I took her for a walk - on a leash. We got about 3-4 blocks away. She got excited and wrapped the leash around my legs. I lost my balance and fell over - breaking my wrist.

I thought that Trudy was pretty well house trained. One day I dropped something and it rolled under my bed. I groped under the bed for it. I felt something 'different'. The bed had a skirting around it so you couldn't see. I lifted up the skirt and looked underneath. It looked like someone had built up a series of little mounds of dog shit evenly spaced under the bed. She got into a lot of trouble.

When I was in 10th grade, I came home for lunch. Trudy had gotten out. She was chasing a car on main street and got her neck snapped. It really bothered me. I asked Dad to bury her. I wanted him to do it pretty quickly. Dad made some comment about a Jewish funeral - I assume because I wanted it done before sundown. One thing that really bothered me was that my Grandma died shortly after this and I cried more when my dog died.

Ben the Cat

Ben was the cat that Virginia got when we were in our first house (on Fremont Court). He was a really mellow cat. He would do some normal cat sorts of things. He climbed up the screen on the sliding glass doors and got stuck and yammered for help.

He liked to come in when Virginia or I took a bath. He would climb up on the edge of the tub and would careful negotiate around on my knees and chest and wander around. Once he was looking into the tub and didn't really notice there was water left in it. He slipped and fell in (it was only up halfway on his legs). He was so panicked, he just stood there.

He would go strange when I pulled the car into the garage. He would run back and forth like a shooting-gallery target. Accidentally, I ran over his leg once. Later he got run over again (not by me). This time it destroyed his knee. Being in Ft. Collins, the vet suggested taking him to the vet college. Our cat was one of the first cats in the country with a \$300 artificial knee. (I was not thrilled.) Within about 3-6 months, Ben the cat ran away. (He hadn't been too thrilled with Amanda's interest in furry things.)

Max the Cat

We got Max for Ben and Amanda when we moved into the new house on Picadilly. It was something for them to look forward to. He is very mellow and well mannered.

When Max was still pretty young, Tom Huibregtse and Gary Fritz were over one night for a party. They got to playing with Max and some string. They trailed the string around so that Max would chase it. He kept chasing it until he started falling over. He had a hard time walking away from them. Since then, Max doesn't seem to like Tom very much.

Max has always been Mandy's cat. He sleeps on her bed with her. He comes when she calls. He follows her around. In some ways he acts more like a dog than a cat. Once, Virginia was 'attacking' Mandy. They were rough-housing around. Max came up and attacked Virginia's foot to get her off of Mandy. It was amazing.

We had him declawed and 'fixed' at the same time. Virginia told Mandy that we were going to have this done. The vet was a 'mobile vet'. Mandy wondered where Max would go, and we told Mandy that it would be done in the drive way. She couldn't believe this and had images of Max being operated on right on the concrete. When the vet came in, Max rolled over (like he almost always does). The vet was amazed at this. Max got his operations and was a pretty sorry sight. A couple of weeks later, he had recovered. When the vet came back, he was talking at the door. As soon as Max heard the vet's voice, he bolted and hid most of the day.

School

Kindergarten

My teacher was Mrs. Mary Briggs. She was a very nice lady and a friend of my Mother's. It is sort of interesting that she is good friends to the principal of Amanda's school - Paul Ehni.

I really liked playing with these large red card-board blocks. You could make all sorts of things out of them. My favorite was to build a boat. Of course, every day there was the obligatory nap on the little rugs.

Zuver

Zuver was the school where I spent most of my grade school years and my junior high years. It was a big, square brick building that was built in the late 1800s or early 1900s. I think there were four classrooms on each of the two floors. The bricks were really soft and with a nail or pen-knife you could write things in the brick.

When I started the grounds were just dirt. Part way through, the grounds were covered with crushed gravel. This was a real boon to the kids. We were able to shift through the millions of rock chips and find 'stuff'. The popular target for these searches were fossilized remains of various sea creatures and fool's gold (pyrite). I'm sure that most every mother in town had more than a few bad words for the amount of limestone that came into their houses.

On the north-west side of the building there was a big enclosed fire escape. We all looked forward to fire drills, especially if we were in that upper corner. We got to slide down this big metal tunnel. It was pretty neat. The girls were not as enthusiastic because it would mess up their clothes.

I had some trouble with reading and with pronouncing the letter 'R' in second grade. I worked on it and it got better. I got to where I did well on the yearly tests (Iowa Tests of Educational Development).

In junior high, my art teacher was Mr. Koablas. He was a good artist, but very overweight. His classroom was in the upper north-west corner of Zuver. During one of my English classes (which was in the lower north-west corner), the plaster started coming off the ceiling and dropping onto the kids and teacher's head - it was Mr. Koablas walking around. It was during one of these art classes that I noticed that I could read upside down without any trouble.

During junior high (I think), I took judo lessons down in Council Bluffs or Omaha with Mike Shannon. I don't remember why I wanted to take them. I got dropped pretty hard a couple of times and in general was not really thrilled with them. Mike was a pretty rough kid. He eventually dropped out of school and joined the Navy. I believe he died a few years ago from drugs. We did hang around together a little bit (and I remember going camping with him in the hills on the east side of town).

High School

The high school was immediately south of the gymnasium which was just south of the bus garage which was just west of Zuver. Being built on the hill that Missouri Valley is built on, this meant that these buildings stepped down the face of the hill. The high school and gym were brick structures as well.

There was a tunnel connecting the gym to the high school. It was sort of neat to be able to go back and forth between classes in the tunnel. We used the tunnel for tornado drills quite a bit. It got claustrophobic to be standing in the middle of the tunnel with hundreds of students jammed around you with very little air moving.

High School Classes

The classes are mostly a blur anymore. It seemed we spent forever on a few books in various classes. Sophomore English was Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar". Junior Civics was Sinclair Lewis's "The Jungle" - a thoroughly depressing book. Another was Robert Lewis Stevenson's "Kidnapped". It wasn't that I didn't like the books. I think that it was the pace. We all went through the book day after day. I would have much preferred to blast through the things in a week or so - not 2-3 months. (It might have been less, but it seemed to be that long.)

The area of sex education was essentially non-existent. I asked my parents about it, and they bought me a book. That was that - all taken care of. I read the book and it was okay but it didn't really help me that much. I loaned it to some friends and it never made it back. Once, in the physical education class (gym), the teacher showed a VD film. It was about a boy who was basically okay. He met a girl (I think during a vacation). They strayed from the virtuous path and had 'relations'. Unfortunately, the girl was of somewhat questionable repute (she had dallied before). The bottom line was that she gave the boy venereal disease. (This was before the AIDS problems occurred.) The last scene in the movie was the boy looking at the spreading disease spots on the back of his hands. As the lights came on in the crowded locker room - everyone looked at the back of their hands. It was a hilarious sight - all these 13 and 14 year kids (many of whom didn't even know what the act of sex entailed) looking at their hands.

I was a good kid. I didn't cause any trouble and I studied hard. Most of the teachers liked me and so did the school secretaries. At one point I asked about my school records and got to look at my IQ. The two numbers I remember were 131 and 138.

Mr. Iverson was my favorite teacher. He taught chemistry and physics. He usually wore a white lab coat and a bow tie. His hair was cut short in a butch or buzz cut style and he had sort of goofy looking eyes. He was very captivating. He would do demonstrations like eating off of a block of sulfur. He would also tell great stories about his childhood - prospecting for uranium, driving around his home town in an old convertible wearing a WWI German helmet (with the point on top). One of the favorites of these stories was about a hotel that burned down - he would finish this story with the line "A lot of good bedbugs died that night".

I also liked some other teachers - Mr. Liddicote (biology) and Mr. Tjarks (math). Thinking about this - the teachers I liked were the science and math related teachers. There was a student in both of these teachers classes who was always a pain in the rear - Ed McCallum. He was always doing stuff to show off or to get in trouble. One of the things I liked about Mr. Tjarks was that he let each student in the trigonometry class proceed at our own individual paces. Ed and I were clear out ahead. I really liked being able to go at my own speed.

Friends

Don McCurley

I met Don in high school - he had gone to a one-room country up until then. When I went to college, he and I roomed together the first year. He is a good guy. He has a 'thing' for the number 81. He used to believe (and might still) that he is going to die at the age of 81. When we were in college, Don was studying to become a teacher. He took a media class. For part of this, I helped him with some video taping.

At the time, there weren't any camcorders or the like. I did some video taping on a large 'portable' VTR (video tape recorder). It used reel-to-reel tapes. This was a lot of fun - doing the taping and editing.

Don became a teacher in north central Iowa for a while. This was in a small town called 'the Dows'. He got married to another teacher at the school. They a little bit later went to Des Moines so that he could become a respiratory therapist. She taught at Dowling - the catholic school in Des Moines where Virginia's brothers and sisters went to school. They had a little boy - Dan. Something happened and they got a divorce in 1987 or 1988.

Ken Delbridge

Ken was a friend all through grade school and high school. He was the son of a Church of Christ minister. We would walk home from school and have these long discussions about religion and science. It was fun. He eventually became a minister like his dad.

Dave Gould

Dave was another minister's son. His dad was the Episcopal minister (I think). They lived in an interesting house part way up 3rd street. I really liked Dave. He was very smart. He was also very strange. He liked to play with Ken dolls. He also wanted to be a cheerleader. His folks left for Red Oak (I think) before our senior year. I don't know what happened to him. We wrote a bit and I went down and visited him once. I remember how strange his family and he were. They ate weird stuff - yogurt and 'health foods'. It is really strange to look back and see eating habits that I have now.

Once, when I was in junior high, he invited me along to a Billy Graham revival. It sounded different, so I went along. The ride down was strange. This was because his mother had a young baby and she breast fed the child. Being a young boy who actually looked at National Geographic pictures for excitement, being crammed into a car with her breast feeding next to me was a pretty strange experience. We went to the revival. It was okay (in an entertainment sense). I went down to 'receive the spirit'. I got a little booklet of scriptures and lessons. I tried to read it over the next week but dropped it pretty quickly.

Bob Marshall

Bob was a friend in high school. We hung around a lot. We would go for hikes in the summer and drive around. He went to electronics technical school after high school. He also got married the year after high school to a very nice girl. After several years, they got divorced and Bob moved to Des Moines. There he got married to a Vietnamese woman. I would like to see Bob again. I hope he comes to the 20th high school reunion.

Steve Bloom

Steve was a friend in high school. His folks ran the local newspaper (Valley Times) when I was growing up. We would wander around the newspaper office occasionally. I still have the lead piece with my name on it from the Linotype machines (huge 'typewriters' that produced the type from molten lead). I think that he and I had a lot in common. We were both science oriented, big and overweight. I worked at not duplicating some of his less desirable traits. I also had a lot of respect for how bright he was and how good of a friend he was. This bothered me - that there were so many things that I liked and disliked. He loaned me a bunch of science fiction (the Lensman series in particular). I think that the first time I saw the Avengers TV show was at Steve's house.

The Arts

I inherited my brother's clarinet when I got old enough. I played this, badly, for a few years. I played in the third row (of three). There were about eight or nine players. When the pads got bad enough and had fallen out, I got switched over to a Tenor Saxophone. I did better with this, but mostly because there was only one other Tenor Sax player. I also got into marching band. This was a lot of fun.

I liked singing in junior high and tried out as a freshman. I was really disappointed when I didn't make it. I tried again my sophomore year and made it. This was a lot of fun and I enjoyed singing. I was able to join a group called the "Swing Singers". We did some chamber music and popular music (like Simon and Garfunkle). We got to wear these 'nifty' outfits - white pants and blue turtle neck sweaters. We got to go to various music competitions. These bus rides were fun.

There was a specific incident that really sticks out in my mind from chorus. We were practicing in the gym for some program. One of the other students (a Spear) was having trouble keeping rhythm. (Of course, he couldn't keep in tune either.) The director stopped us and did an extended rhythm session with the student. The poor guy could just not keep a beat to save his soul. It was very uncomfortable for most of us. I can hardly imagine how he felt.

I also spent some time as a lighting and crew person for school plays and productions. This was fun. It was tough at times because some of the school equipment was absolutely terrible. One spot light we used was from the 1920s (or there about). The down side of my stage career was the actual achievement of becoming a Thespian. To be a card-carrying member, you had to actually do some on-stage acting. My girl-friend at the time (Kris) got the idea of a play for me to be in. It turned out to be a play were an old man and women were remembering their youth. It also involved a kiss. It was quite a site with the school watching.

Extra-Curricular Activities

My parents wanted me to be well prepared for life. So, they made me sign up for the golf team when I was a junior and senior. I was pathetic. I didn't want to play golf and I couldn't see any point to it. I understand now what they wanted - a business-man's sport.

I signed up to be on the junior basketball team. Looking back at my pictures, it is clear why I didn't do very well. I was fat. I also wasn't very tall. Up until my senior year, I think I was average height. I ended up the senior year as the tallest kid. (I know this because they sorted us by height for the graduation ceremony.)

I got to play basketball in a few games - very few. The only one that I can remember is an away game in Blair Nebraska (right across the river). We were so far behind that the coach put a couple of the 'bench warmers' into the game. I did not do all that well. Most of my time was spent as the team statistician. At least I got to go to the games and do something useful. It was certainly better than sitting on the bench. I still really like basketball.

As I mentioned, I was not particularly athletic. I did work as a trainer in my freshman and (I think) sophomore years. I would wrap ankles and wrangle equipment. Towards the end of practice, the other trainers and I would go up to the kitchen (in the gymnasium) and get huge jugs of orange juice. (Of course, the juice tasted really good right out of the jugs.)

I was also on the annual staff and in the Key Club (junior versions of the Kiwanas). I was photographer and business manager for the annual. I remember taking pictures and doing layouts but I don't remember anything about the 'business' end of things. The Key Club didn't do much for me. We would periodically go up to the Tamarack restaurant and eat. One year we went to Fort Dodge for a convention. I have never seen a worse behaved bunch of kids in my life.

I was also in the science club (of course). I would always work on a science fair project. The topics were physics (inertia), fiber optics, electric music (an electric organ) and electronics. My junior or senior year I went to the state science fair with an electronics project. I really had a lot of fun. The place was filled with people like me - science and technology nerds. I was close to an automatic tic-tac-toe machine project. The kid who did this project had a father worked for Digital Equipment and he had one of the neatest displays. His project had power supplies and circuit boards and a teletype. It was amazing. The guy was also a jerk. It was poetic justice when he won some runner-up award and went up and collected his \$15.00 transistor AM radio. I think that this guy went on to Iowa State in Computer Science. I think he is also the one who went on to work for NCR in Kansas and then re-enrolled in high school there so that he could become a winning gymnast. (All in all, a strange guy.)

Graduation

Through-out high school, I was not particularly popular. I had a small group of friends (about 10). Mostly we were the 'smart kids' or the kids who didn't fit in with the other groups - jocks, cheerleaders, cool crowd, hoods or farmers. I really wanted to belong. In the senior yearbook, I put in a quote: "A lie is as good as the truth if you can get somebody to believe in it". I still feel really stupid about putting that in the yearbook. It was a fairly lame attempt at being 'cool'. Oh well - I can't do anything about it now.

Normally graduation took place at the gym. Our graduation ceremonies took place at Cullivan Heights (the park near the Hotel). We did this right before it was turned into a retirement home. I graduated second in my class - right behind Lena Messerschmidt. She studied all the time. Being a good student, I was one of five students who spoke at the graduation. My speech was on the future of education. It was very interesting doing the speech. I generally got nervous doing speaking, but the crowd was large enough (around 500 people) that I didn't perceive them as individuals. I think I did pretty well. The writing style is a little 'clunky', but it's not bad.

The text of the speech is:

In the future of education there will be several technological changes. But we shouldn't concern ourselves with the technology of education. For example, a candle is to a light bulb as a text book is to a teaching machine. Both the candle and the light bulb provide light, just as the text book and the teaching machine give the student a guide to learning. The only difference is that the second in each group, the light bulb and the teaching machine, is more advanced.

I've said we shouldn't concern ourselves with education's technology. Where should the emphasis be placed? To me the most important things about education are its quality and its ability to prepare the young for life in the "outside" world. Quality education has always been a problem. It often takes a back seat to other programs in our nation. But education is the backbone of our democracy, all understanding, and any hope of world peace. I hope all people can someday recognize this.

We students are in a glass bottle. We know what is going on in the outside world but we can't get at it. Eventually the bottle is smashed and those enclosed are let out. Exactly how well are we prepared for the big smash, our graduation? I can't really say because how well a person is prepared is only answered by personal opinion. However, unless the educational institutions can change with our fast paced world, their usefulness will suffer greatly. All change must have a good purpose or education could suffer just as surely and just as greatly from change as it would from a condition of no change.

It is up to each of us what type of education the next generation will receive. And I am speaking especially to the seniors, all of us must do our best for the future for we are the next group of responsible citizens.

College

In high school, I always knew I was going to college. College was very important to my folks. I knew part way through high school I wanted to go into computers or engineering. I went to Central College (in Pella Iowa) and Iowa State (in Ames) to see what they were like. I looked at Central because I had received a small scholarship (\$1000). I also got one from Iowa State as well. Central was a nice, small school. But, the school didn't have very good facilities. Iowa State was a big impersonal school, but I liked it. I was accepted to ISU. My folks and I went over during the summer to sign up. I arranged to room with Don McCurley.

Mom and Dad had planned all along that Tom and I were going to college (at least that is what I remember). They payed Tom's and my way through our Bachelor's degrees. They did not ask me to get a job or do anything to help. It cost about \$450 per quarter (for room, board and tuition) and another \$100 for books. I cannot thank my parents enough for getting me into and through college. When I got there and talked to my friends (later in the year) I was one of the very few kids whose folks were just putting them through. (I did get jobs starting in my second year.)

My folks brought me over in August. We brought all my stuff including a 4.5 cubic foot refrigerator. (This was a big deal.) I got all the stuff into 4497 Converse house in Friley Hall. My folks dropped me off on a Saturday. After they left (fairly early in the day), I felt rather alone and unconnected - homesick. I sat there for about three minutes feeling that way. Then, it struck me: I'm on my own! I can pretty much do what I want. This was going to be okay!

Friley Hall was one of the biggest dorms in north America. (I think one in Moscow, USSR was bigger at the time.) It was a sprawling old brick structure. Converse was on the fourth floor. I went around and met some of the other guys in the dorm house. I met a bunch of the folks. Quite a few were returning from the previous year. It was a pretty diverse group of guys. Some of the guys I hung around with were Bruce Karn, Bob (Buffalo) Burgess, Gary Kent (Kunt), Don Hanenberger and some others.

At the south end of Friley was a grill called 'The Tea Room'. This was a favorite haunt the first year (only the first year because it got shut down). They would fix incredible snacks that cost next to nothing. A popular item was grilled egg and cheese (and occasionally included hamburger) with a side of fries and an ice cream or malt. (Not very healthy.)

Other favorite haunts were OHOP (Original House of Pies), the Cave-in (a pizza place) and the Pizza House. OHOP was a lot of fun. A bunch of us would roll in there about 10:30 or so at night after studying (I think that was what we had been doing). Christmas time 1971, a big group of us went over and sang Christmas carols. The manager gave us pie (singing for our supper). This was a lot of fun. Unfortunately, OHOP closed down the spring of 1972. We went there on the last night and commiserated with the waitresses. The waitresses were pretty upset and let some of us get some 'artifacts'. Buffalo got a OHOP mug (orange and white). I still have the menu from that night.

A lot of times, Buffalo and I would get a sausage, mushroom and onion pizza from the Cave-in. We would head back to the dorm to watch TV. He would light up a cigar and sit in an overstuffed (and old) chair covered with a bright green furry cover. He would then proceed to get gas. Hardly anyone sat in that chair except for Buffalo. Buffalo was also one of the fastest eaters. He could eat a full cafeteria meal and keep up a conversation. Once I timed him and he finished in 2 minutes and 58 seconds.

I was fairly naive (as in extremely naive). We had a get together with a girl's dorm house on the other side of campus. One of the girls was named Spike. She seemed nice and liked me. I went into her room and we talked after the get together wound down. She mentioned something about my being able to spend the night. I didn't figure out what she was talking about. This was, of course, really stupid. Even more stupid was my telling some of the guys about this.

Converse had three different awards: Casanova, the Ma Hittle and the Screaming Yellow Dildo. These awards were handed out at the weekly house meeting. Each of the awards was handed out based on stories told about people. The Casanova award was given for amorous aspects. The 'winner' had to prominently display the award (which consisted of three horse testicles in a jar) for a week - even if he had a date over.

While I was at ISU, the draft for the Vietnam war was still going on. My second year, the sophomores (19 year olds) put a pool together. Everybody chipped in 5 dollars. The low number won the pot. Another fellow and I won that year with a number of 60. This was one of the few things I had ever 'won'. Later in the year, the local draft board sent me a notice that I needed to get a physical. The military was getting ready for me. I went to Fort Des Moines for my physical (because I was in college and distant from my local draft board). I passed the physical. I found out they really do ask you to turn your head and cough. I was getting a tad concerned: the government didn't recognize college deferments anymore. I feel really lucky because President Nixon stopped the draft shortly before I got called up. (I think they got into the 40s or 50s that year.) What ever else Nixon did, I didn't have to go to Vietnam.

There were some really rude nick-names for people in Converse. Some of the better ones were Gina-man (Mark Stevenson), Fart (Mike Fellows), Anus (Paul Hayhurst), Phildo (Phil Hartman), Baby Jesus (Charlie Wheatly who died in a farming accident later), Bat-noodle (Steve Norby - now a lawyer in Des Moines), Kunt (Gary Kent), Mutton Puncher (Irv Meier), Road-ass (Leon Rodas - my room-mate for a year). It is a real experience being put together with a bunch of really weird people. I think it really helps because you have to learn how to live with them. My second year, Kelly Kullander and I got a new room-mate. His parents came up and visited and got him pulled out of the room. Given Kelly as a room-mate for a kid of mine, I would try to get a change too.

One of the worst things about ISU was the parking. Being students, we had to park in the south Friley lot or one past the gymnasiums. The walk wasn't all that bad (most of the time). The problems would start in the dead of winter (with below zero temperatures). After the frigid walk, you would get to the snow drift that hid your car and it wouldn't start.

ISU had these sidewalk sweepers that they would use to get the snow off the sidewalks during the winter. There was a particular hill between the class buildings and Friley that they would not so much clean as they would polish. You could tell new people because they were the ones who actually tried to walk up or down this little hill (and ended up flat on their rear).

During my first year, I went to a Marx brother's movie festival with Virginia at the student union. This was the first time I had seen a Marx brother's movie. They were great. I do remember, Groucho (in one of the movies) making some form of racist comment and some black students in the audience leaving.

During the first years of college, the other students and I had a lot of pent up energy after studying. We would go off and do 'stuff'. Generally, we were not destructive - although sometimes we got pretty cruel. One time we buried Greg's VW bug. Greg was the head resident (he was sort of a dormitory house chaperone).

My first year, I did not do all that well on classes. I was having too much fun. Winter quarter, I was taking calculus and physics and some other 'meaty' classes. I had not seen calculus before college and my first two instructors were foreign speaking. One of them did not know calculus (she was the wife of someone in the math department). I was not picking it up really well. Because of this physics was a lot harder - since it depended on the math. The final exam for physics was early one winter morning. I over-slept. The sensation of having studied hard the night before and waking up at 8:45 for an 8:00AM test is just hideous. I didn't do very well. I actually went back and took calculus over again my Junior year - it was easy.

The central campus was really pretty. Actually the entire campus was really nice. It was a combination of old buildings and new structures with a lot of trees. There was a big open area - central campus. There was an old tree near the main east/west sidewalk that someone had put a little (about 1 foot high) door with 'Bilbo' written on it (from the book 'The Hobbit'). It was a nice touch. There would be activists protesting one thing or another on central campus in the spring. In the winter, they would all go into the Memorial Union.

South of campus a few blocks, there was a small park called the Arboritum. Virginia and I would go over there for picnics occasionally. There was a little stream that ran through the park.

There was a spring-time celebration at ISU called Veisha. It stood for the names of the seven colleges (Vet, Engineering, Industrial Science, Science, Humanities, Home Economics and Agriculture. There was a parade and activities. I helped with the computer science department activities. This was a lot of fun. One year as part of the activities I got to meet Atanasof. He was one of the original inventors of electronic digital computers (in 1939).

Every year, Converse would have a senior kegger (a beer party). They would auction off the rights for the beer (preferences being pretty strong). We would then go out to a farm (allowed by the farmer) and have a steak barbecue and keg party. These were a lot of fun.

I still have some contact with some of these people: Don McCurley, Don Hanenberger, Gary Kent, John Ausen, Steve Norby. There are some others that I really liked or would really like to see again: Gene Snook, Curt Huyser, Mark Young, Don and Dave Losure, Buffalo (Bob Burgess), Bruce Karn (maybe). It would be interesting to see how these folks turned out.

Dating

I was not a particularly active fellow with respect to dating. I had a few dates - but not many. I have only had 'relations' with one other girl besides Virginia. (And that was just one time.) So, I am not a very experienced person. In writing these dating experiences down, it strikes me that almost all of them were fix-ups or at the girl's instigation. The only girl that I ever really asked out on my own (without help or prodding) was Virginia. (Virginia has pointed out that it took her months to get me to the point of asking her 'on my own'.)

Chris Spear

Chris lived near the Hotel on 6th street. During the early high school years a bunch of her friends fixed us up for a dance. It has been so long ago, I don't remember if we actually went or if I got out of it.

Stephanie

Stephanie was a very cute girl. Before I got a driver's license, I asked her out on some dates. The one that I remember most was the first, a party up in Loveland (Iowa). We were in someone's basement. Before the party, Stephanie and her sister taught me how to dance. The song that was played at the party was "Crimson and Clover". I discovered that dancing (especially slow dancing) was really great stuff. Unfortunately, Stephanie's family moved away during the summer. I did get a letter and a picture of her during my Sophomore year at college. Virginia was not amused.

Loretta Lane

I was selected to be Loretta's date for the prom my junior year in high school. She was a senior. I guess that she was not able to get any other suitable escort. We dated a few times, but she went away to college. It bothered me, but not that much.

Georgette

Georgette was a girl who lived out in a tiny area south of Mo. Valley called Gooseville. (That's what I remember.) I asked her out on a date. At least I thought it was going to be a date. She talked me into picking up some girl friends of hers. They had a box of rotten tomatoes. (This was in my parents Buick Electra 225.) They talked me into taking them to a gas station, where-upon they pelted the place with tomatoes. This was not my idea of a good time.

Annette Wiedemann

Annette was the foreign exchange student from Germany my senior year in high school. She asked me out for the 'Sadie Hawkins' dance. She was very short. I remember how bad my back hurt from bending over to dance with her. She was a nice person.

Kris Bjornsholm

Kris was probably my major 'flame' of my high school years. We dated for a long time (in teenage terms). I really like Kris. I remember my lips being numb from kissing in the Maverick for extended periods. Things were getting pretty serious between us. During the spring of my senior year, I talked with her about our relationship. Being an engineering oriented geek (even in those days), I started by describing our relationship as a graph that had a positive slope. I said that I didn't want to go to fast and end up with us breaking up. I wanted to level off. She did not take my metaphor or message very well. We ended up breaking up almost immediately. We saw each other once during college when I was back for a weekend. We might have dated more, but I fell in love with Virginia shortly after that.

Joan Dahlquist

Joan was another prom 'fix-up'. She was a nice person. We went to the prom together and that was about it. She and a friend did stop by Don McCurley's and my dorm room during college once. (She went to Iowa State too.) But, that was just to borrow a quarter (I think).

Early Jobs

The Hotel

Because of the family business, I did a lot of things around the Hotel. I worked at the front desk quite a bit. This meant renting rooms, selling candy, answering the switch board.

The switch board was a big wood and bakelite Bell switch board. It contained switches and relays and one tube. We had four phone lines into the hotel. When someone wanted to make a call, you had to do it for them and keep track of the charges. If they were calling long distance you had to call the operator and ask for time and charges. I learned how to carefully turn on the switch and listen in. I didn't do this very often, but I could do it pretty well.

The front desk also meant selling bus tickets. This was a real challenge because you had to figure schedules and multiple stops and fares and discounts. Some of the people couldn't do the more complicated tickets. We used a 'credit card' style machine to make the tickets and had pre-printed cards for the common destinations. I was a little nervous the first time I had to do a multi-part ticket.

The desk had a candy display and a cigarette machine. Dad would go to the local wholesaler to buy cigarettes, cigars and candy. Dad would get the candy that I wanted. This was really neat, but I ate a lot of candy as a kid. I remember coming home after school, getting a can of pop, a bag of chips and some candy (at least) before supper. It isn't a surprise that I weighed a bit too much (217 pounds as a senior in high school versus 180 pounds today). There were lots of candies that I liked: Triple decker Mounds, Almond Joy, Caravelle, Milkshake, Milky Way, Snickers, Three Muskateers, Lemon Drops, M&Ms and the list goes on and on. I would take M&Ms or the equivalent and put them on the brass lamp at the desk near the front desk and heat them up. The candy shell kept the shape, but the heat melted the chocolate - it tasted good, but sometimes I would burn my tongue if I got them too hot.

The front desk also had the Western Union teletype. This was sort of neat. There was a series of normal codes you used to communicate. We were hooked up to a central office in Council Bluffs. Our response to a 'call' was 'NV GA'. The last part stood for 'go ahead' (I think).

Occasionally, I would help out Mom in the beauty shop. This usually involved taking out curlers. This was okay when I was young, but not a whole lot of fun when I got older.

I also got to help at the bar occasionally. This meant fixing drinks and serving beers. Underneath the bar there were a couple of steel sinks, a pop 'head' (a hose and nozzle connected to tanks of soft drinks), and a beer cooler. Against the back wall was the cash register, the hard liquor, chips and popcorn and a small oven. We had pre-packaged sandwiches and pizza. We also had a juke-box close to the bar counter. I also had to change the light bulbs in the back room (where people would dance or have small parties). These were recessed ceiling lights. My arms would ache working on changing the bulbs (because they would go out in groups). There were also 'boxelder' bug carcasses in the fixtures.

Of course the other part of the Hotel were the rooms. I had to clean the rooms a fair amount. This meant that I had to get the towels and linen out and put clean ones in. It also meant sweeping and dusting. One time, a fellow and a girl rented a room. I was pretty young and didn't know much. I went in to clean the room the next day. I thought he had killed her or something. There was blood all over the bed. I ran down to tell Dad. He came up and thought it was pretty funny. I think he tried to calm me down and explained a little bit about monthly female cycles.

Early on, I would also do some of the laundry in the laundry room - next to the bar in the basement of the Hotel. There were big industrial washers and dryers and the 'extractor'. The extractor was a centrifuge that spun the water out of the wash. It had a big protective lid so you wouldn't rip your arm off before it had spun down. We also had a press for the linens. In the summer time it got damned hot down there. I can empathize with people who have worked in a Chinese laundry. Eventually we went to a linen service.

The paper route

As any normal boy growing up in a small town, I started out delivering papers. I don't remember clearly what I delivered - I think it might have been the Council Bluffs Herald. I would get the papers at the back of the post office. This was about a half of a block from the Hotel. My route was mostly straight up 6th street. There were occasional dogs and problems getting people to pay. But in general, the job wasn't too tough. It was okay at Christmas time - people would tip me (like boxes of chocolate covered cherries - this was really okay).

Sacking groceries

My 'job' sacking groceries lasted one entire afternoon. I wanted to make some more money. My folks said it was okay to try to get a sacking job. I went down to the Foodland at the far end of town, next to the park. I sacked groceries on a Sunday afternoon. I was in junior high so I was not able to keep doing it - the child labor laws.

Projectionist

My brother had been a projectionist at the local theater - the Realto. He was able to get me a job there after he went off to college. I didn't do this very often, but it was sort of fun. The projection booth had two arc lamps and projectors.

Each reel of film lasted about 20-25 minutes. I had to queue up each reel so there was a smooth shift between projectors. At a few minutes to the end of the reel, there was an arm in the reel feed that would drop and clang against the housing. (If you didn't set this, you would miss the change-over.) At this point you would start the other arc lamp. After this, I would start looking at the screen for the 'dots' in the upper right hand corner on the screen. The first dot meant to start the motor on the other projector. The second dot meant to switch the shutters. There were shutter controls I threw simultaneously.

Each reel had to be rewound. Sometimes, the movies were in Panavision. It got sort of interesting when you had to put on a regular lens on the projector for previews and a cartoon followed by a Panavision movie. Between rewinding, changing lenses, and keeping track of the arc lamps; it got pretty frantic.

The arc lamps were tricky. They had motor drives, but they were not automatic. I had to keep track of the arc and do various adjustments. To light the lamps, I started the power and with the anode and cathode adjustment knobs touch the anode and cathode rods together. My brother showed me the place where he had hidden the extra rods. This was a big deal because a projectionist only got enough rods to get through the night. If something went wrong, you really needed an extra.

The toughest part of the job was when a reel of film broke. You had to recover and keep the film going. Then when you got to the next reel, you had to repair the film. I got better at this, but it was a pain.

The guy who ran the theater was a real crusty guy. He smoked the most disgusting, foul-smelling cigars. They were always really chewed up on the end.

Hardee's

The summer of my sophomore year at Iowa State, I went to summer school at ISU. This was my first summer away from home. I got a part time job at Hardee's. Hardee's is a fast food hamburger chain. I had to go out and buy black levis as part of the 'uniform'. I flipped burgers and did some counter duty. The main problem with this job (outside of being a really bad job) was that there wasn't enough of it. I would work maybe 10 hours a week if I was lucky (making minimum wage). I spent about two months at this.

Virginia was in the restaurant one day while I was working. I made 'eyes' at her for a while. She told me afterwards that a couple of girls thought I was trying to get their attention. I was and am almost totally blind with respect to girls interest in me. Any time that I have been made aware of someone making a 'pass' or showing interest is because Virginia told me about it.

Target

After Hardee's I got a job at the Target store in Ames. I had a pretty good job as they go because I got to work in 'sound and photo'. I got to set up stereos (even though they were cheap) and got to play with the cameras. I worked at Target for about 4-5 months. I quit right before or after my Dad died.

My Professional Career

NADL

As part of the benefits from my Dad's death, I got a job at the US Department of Agriculture at NADL in Ames. NADL was the National Animal Disease Laboratory. The benefits were that a major part of my salary was covered by the Social Security (as I remember). I was a GS-4 clerk with responsibilities for running various programs. I also ended up writing programs and 'job control language' decks for programs. It was a good job to learn with. I saw the general level of effort and interest displayed by federal employees - almost none. It was like there were starting blocks in the offices at 3:00 (for the dash to their cars at quitting time).

I worked for Roy VanDuesen. He was a veterinarian working on porcine disease control. A statistician also worked in the office. They and the other professionals were okay. I worked in the front part of the U-shaped building. Around each of the sides was were all the 'animal work' took place.

I got layed off just about the time that Virginia and I were getting married (in 1974). This was a real blow. The layoff was because of federal budget cuts. I found another job in the EDP department at the school (ISU). I worked there one day as a computer operator (loading paper into printers and loading tapes, etc.). The next day, I got recalled to NADL. I finished out the year at NADL. I got an offer to have my school paid for by the USDA if I continued to work for them for some number of years as a GS-12 (or some other nearby level). Fortunately, I got a teaching assistant position.

Interviewing before Grad school

I went out on interviews during my senior year. It was a really bad year for jobs. I got two job interviews: Staley and SMS. SMS was Shared Medical Systems out of King of Prussia Pennsylvania. They did time-sharing information systems for hospitals. They ran 3 big IBM CPUs. This was a relatively interesting place. I did not get an offer. Staley was a company that did everything imaginable to soybeans. They were located in Decatur Illinois. They were looking for a programmer and management trainee. This was not a great job or town. I got an offer. It was not very good. So, Virginia and I decided that I continue on and get a graduate degree. This was one of the best things that happened to me - finishing graduate school.

Teaching and Research Assistant

I got a teaching assistant job at the end of the summer of 1975. I got 3 sections of the introductory FORTRAN class. I did this for two quarters. I liked doing this. The teacher was Dr. Grosvenor. He was a little spooky, but okay. I liked teaching. Each of my sections was about 20-30 students. In one of these sections, I had three students from the middle east. It was interesting looking over their homework. It was usually identical. Totally wrong and identical. A particular test that they took came back with identical answers on some of the problems. Everyone has a particular style of programming. Even on simple programs, everyone is a little different in format, variable names, structure, comments. In the second quarter of Fortran, I had a French woman as a student. This lady was trying very hard. She did not have a good grasp of English and she was trying to learn a programming language. She was still using European numeric notation - they use the comma as the radix (our decimal point) and they use the period for a 'thousands' separator (our comma). She was in tears at one point in the class. She really wanted to make it, but she wasn't ready for the class. I tried working with her, but suggested that she drop out of the class.

The third quarter, I got to be a teaching assistant for the SNOBOL class. SNOBOL is a string and symbol manipulation language (some characteristics similar to LISP). It was a strange language. A blank could be a variable, an operator or a constant. For some reason, the business school recommended SNOBOL as the language for business majors to take as an elective. COBOL was the normal business language. I guess they thought that any language that ended in 'BOL' was close enough. The class was filled with business majors who had a very tough time of it. The primary teachers were very disorganized.

Tektronix

Virginia and I went out to Oregon during 1976 for a 6 month co-op. I worked in a group in Beaverton working on a (electrical) network analyzer. I worked for a lead engineer by the name of Norm Kerth. He had worked a summer at HP and went to work for Tektronix. (Looking back now at Tektronix, I'm glad that I did the opposite.) I did the IEEE-488 code for the instrument. I also designed a Z-80 CPU board while I was out there. This was useful to do and I learned a great deal. Virginia went a little bit bizarre. She had intended to go out for an extended vacation. The weather was bad a lot (it rained and rained and rained) and we didn't think that we were going to be there forever. She started sleeping most of the day and staying up until after 2 or 3 in the morning.

Job interviews

I graduated in 1977 with my Master's degree in Computer Science. That year was a big change from 1975 for job interviews and hiring. The pickings had been pretty slim (non-existent) in 1975. I had 12 different plant trips schedule. My first interview trip was to Texas Instruments in Austin. The place was a sweat shop. The work was okay, but not great. My second trip was HP. I knew that this was the place I wanted to work. The people were great, they cared about my technical skills, the work was really neat. I also went to IBM, CDC, Bell Labs, Rockwell and Sperry. I finally got so tired that I ended up cancelling out of some other trips.

9845/9835 I/O ROMS

I've been at HP a long time now. I started out on a project called Autobahn. This was an I/O ROM for the 9845A desktop computer. I worked with two engineers. I came on about the time the product was announced. We didn't ship for about 9 months. The code was pretty unstable and buggy. After the 45A got out, I worked on the 9835 and 9845B I/O ROMs - mostly in testing related activities. This was a grind, but a useful experience.

HP 85 I/O ROM

After the 9845/9835 (around 1979) I got to work on the HP 85 I/O ROM. The 85 was called Capricorn and the I/O ROM was called ICE (for I/O for Capricorn and Eagle). Eagle was a portable version of the 85 that didn't make it. I got half of the I/O ROM (the ENTER statement and some miscellaneous commands). I wanted to do this one right. I did a top level design using recursive descent and some state machine design. After I did this, I did a simulation of the ENTER statement on the 9835 written in BASIC (translated from my design pseudo-code and state machines). I then translated from BASIC into assembly. My code ended up being small and fast. I only had one defect in my code. It was a translation error that I caught in testing. This is a project that I am the very proud of. I also helped design the I/O architecture. I worked with one of the hardware engineers and figured out a way so that all the I/O cards looked the same - the system didn't need to do anything different.

Marketing

I looked around and decided (over some protests from the R&D managers) to do a marketing rotation. I worked on the introduction and marketing of the 9915. This was essentially an 85 in a shoebox. This was a very valuable experience. I was there for about 16 months.

Pascal I/O

I came back into the lab and worked on the I/O system for the Pascal Workstations (PAWS) for the 9826/9836 systems. (I did a lot of I/O programming.) I didn't create a great technical monument, but I did get a big system done, by myself, in six months. I leveraged (borrowed) code from the HPL system on the 9826/9836.

DIL, MMU and Bricks

After PAWS, I worked on a MMU (memory management unit) design with 2 other engineers. This was sort of neat since MMUs were what my Master's paper was about. It was a challenge to get back into that five years later.

About this same time, another engineer and I worked for about 9 months on a modular operating system investigation. It was interesting, but frustrating. We were not able to start actually building something several times by management re-direction.

During this time I also worked on 'DIL' - the Device I/O Library for HP-UX (HP's version of the UNIX operating system). This was sort of interesting, but I had been doing I/O related things for so long. This got moved to another area since I was starting on AI - and so I didn't have to carry it to completion. I named the project not only as an acronym, but also as a play on words: The people who worked on this project were the "doer's" - DILdoer's. A few people at work caught the 'dildo' reference. The DIL name survived the project transfer.

Artificial Intelligence

After this, I came onto artificial intelligence. Almost immediately, I was promoted to project manager. Here I worked on the HORIZON project - the LISP system for the 9000s. I also managed expert systems tools and applications at various points. The hardest part (and a real learning experience) was organizing for IJCAI 85 (International Joint Conference on AI) in Los Angeles. The 3 months before this were some of the most stressful times I've had. One of the saddest aspects of this effort was that the team did a good job and we eventually shut AI down and transferred the remains to another division. This was mostly due to lack of upper management commitment and vision.

I still want to do some things with AI technology. I was writing a reference on XLISP (a public domain LISP interpreter) to publish. I was having a hard time finding a publisher so I just put it into the public domain. I thought that it would be better to have somebody use it than to spend another year trying to find a publisher. The feedback that I have heard was pretty good. I would like to do some more work with XLISP and some AI techniques - frames, forward and backward chaining rules, neural nets.

Mikkelsen on Management

During the early part of my time as a project manager, I posted a series of modified cartoons. I called them “Mikkelsen on Management”. It was a humorous view of the changes I was undergoing. A lot of people would see my name badge and say - “Oh, you’re the guy...”. After 2 years, I stopped putting them up. Dealing with problems through humor really helped me.

CASE

In 1988, I was promoted to section manager (a second level management position). This is a tough job. I miss dealing more directly with the technology. I think that I do a good job, but I don’t get much mentoring or guidance or help. It strikes me that I don’t seem to get a chance to catch my breath and make sure that I and the team reporting to me are going in the right direction.

In this job (as a section manager), I have been the program manager of “SoftBench” and “Encapsulator” - two products that help programmers do software development. I have been doing this for two years. At the end (November 1989), the team had at various times up to 50 to 60 people involved. The project cost about 6 million dollars to build. It would occasionally catch me that I was responsible for the success of the division, program and a bunch of people.

The job has been very frustrating, due to our management structure. Our general manager (Chuck House) is an interesting guy and a great speaker. He is not, however, good at business basics and follow-through. This would not be serious, but the R&D manager (Tom Christian) and marketing manager (Gail Hamilton) are new to their jobs as are most of the second level managers (myself, Rick Turley, Jim Borchert and others).

As an engineer I liked the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when I built something. In the section manager job, the sense of accomplishment is very indirect. I have had to get it through the accomplishments of others. This is not easy.

Resume

This is my resume from February 1990.

Personal

Name Tim I Mikkelsen
Age 36 years old
Family Married to Virginia Mikkelsen
 with two children, Amanda and Ben
Address 4316 Picadilly Drive
 Fort Collins, Colorado 80526
Phone 303-226-0292
Interests Flying, Amateur Radio, Downhill skiing,
 Woodworking, Music, Art, Movies, Science Fiction

Education

1975 Bachelor of Science degree from Iowa State University.
 Major: Computer Science. Minor: Mathematics
1977 Master of Science degree from Iowa State University.
 Major: Computer Science. Minor: Electrical Engineering

Professional Memberships

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)
Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)

Experience

1989- R&D Section Manager at HP (Fort Collins CO). Responsible for
 Computer Aided Software Engineering (CASE) product
 development. Specifically responsible for R&D program
 management of the SoftBench and Encapsulator products.

1983-1988 R&D Project Manager at HP (Fort Collins CO). Managed a LISP
 environment project, expert system tools development and a
 prototype C-based expert system tool.

1981-1983 Member of Technical Staff at HP (Fort Collins CO). Developed
 Pascal I/O subsystem for a UCSD-derivative system. Did
 research on modular operating systems and helped develop
 memory management unit (MMU) design for HP 9000 series 200
 computers.

1980-1981 Product Marketing Engineer at HP (Fort Collins CO). Worked on
 the 9915 computer introduction, field training manual, technical
 documentation, sales support, technical support, forecasts, pricing

and training.

- 1977-1980 Member of Technical Staff at HP (Loveland and Fort Collins CO). Developed Input/Output firmware for the 9835/9845 family of desktop computers. Developed I/O firmware and I/O architecture for the series 80 desktop computer.
- 1976 Student co-op engineer at Tektronix (Beaverton OR). Developed IEEE-488 (instrument bus) firmware for a network analyzer instrument.
- 1975-1977 Teaching assistant and research assistant at Iowa State University (Ames IA). Did research on micro-processor based page replacement algorithm for a non-homogeneous direct execution multi-processor computer. Assisted with FORTRAN and SNOBOL classes.

Publications

A Bit Slice Microprocessor Based Page Replacement Controller for the Symbol 2R Computer System. By Tim Mikkelsen. MCS72-03642-CL7704. Cyclone Computer Lab. Iowa State University 1977.

Adding I/O Capability to the HP-85. By John Nairn, Tim Mikkelsen and Dave Sweetser. HP Journal. July 1980 Volume 31 Number 7.

Desktop Computer Redesigned for Instrument Automation. By Tim Mikkelsen.

Design News. December 22, 1980 Volume 36 Number 24.

HP 9915 Networking System Development Technical Supplement. By Tim Mikkelsen. August 1981. HP Part Number 09915-90022.

Architecture of the 9915. By Tim Mikkelsen. HP Communicator. January 1981 HP Part Number 5955-6572.

So, You Want To Be A Consultant. By Tim Mikkelsen. Kilobaud.

December 1981 Volume V Number 12.

An Integrated Approach to AI, Symbolic and Conventional Programming on a General Purpose Workstation. By Jan-Erik Gustavsson and Tim Mikkelsen. 1987 Uniforum Conference Proceedings.

XLISP 2.0 Language Reference. By Tim Mikkelsen. Non-commercially available in the public domain. December 11, 1989.

XLISP 2.0 Objects Primer. By Tim Mikkelsen. Non-commercially available in the public domain. February 3, 1990.

Trips

Okaboji 1960s

My family went to Lake Okaboji a lot while I was growing up. We would stay in cabins that were run by friends of Dad's. On one of the trips, I got terribly sun burned. In the town, there was an 'attraction' called Trainorama. This was a building that an HO-scale (1/72nd) train enthusiast had turned into a giant train layout. It was pretty neat. I would go to this every year. There was also an amusement park that had a wooden roller-coaster. There was also a trampoline concession. This was fun too. On one of these trips, I had a dream where I was putting out a fire by urinating on it. I woke up to find out that the fire was a dream, but the urinating wasn't. I was 8 years old - and very embarrassed.

As I got older, besides the other things, I would read and draw. During the high school years, I remember seeing "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" in Okaboji. The family would also invariably play cards - mostly "Pitch". I got to be pretty good at this.

Minnesota 1960s

The other place we would go was up into Minnesota. We had some friends who had a vacation house on a lake. This mostly involved water-skiing and fishing. The water in the lakes were pretty cold.

Europe 1966

My parents took Tom and I to Europe for Tom's graduation present. This was a three week trip. We went to England and visited some relatives of my Mother's. During this, Tom and Mom and Dad went off to Windsor Castle. While they were there, I got to ride around on the underground by myself. This was a lot of fun.

After this we went on a 5 countries in 7 days whirlwind tour of Europe. We went to Brussels, Antwerp, up the Rhine, Luxembourg, Paris and back to England. It was a fast swirl of color, cities, cathedrals and sight-seeing. In Germany, we got a Nazi Deutschemark by some guy in the street. In Luxembourg, we saw a lady holding her daughter over a sewer in the street and letting her defecate. In Paris, everyone got to go to the Follies except for me. The tour guide and I spent the evening in a bar or walking around the Champs De Elyses. While walking, we ran into a couple who we tried to talk to. I didn't speak french, and the tour guide wasn't very proficient at it. After a few minutes we discovered that they were a couple from America.

When we got back to England, we went up to Warwick to visit my Dad's friends from World War II. Mr. and Mrs. Keene were the caretakers at the Warwick Castle. We got to take a tour of the castle. Mrs. Keene was a stop on the local tours since she would get the local peacocks to come at feeding time. They lived in an apartment that was once part of the stables. They were very nice people.

During the trip, I had been the primary calculator of exchange rates. I was able to figure out and convert the local currencies pretty easily. Everybody got sick at one point or another except for me - at least until we were on the plane coming home. I had one strawberry shortcake dessert too many on the return flight. I very clearly remember throwing up in the O'hare airport.

Europe 1980

While I was working in marketing, I got to go to Europe to help introduce the HP 9915 computer. This involved technical training and a trade show. Virginia and Amanda came over with me.

We got a late start from Fort Collins - very late. I had to arrange to leave the rental car out in front of the terminal. We just barely made it. (A indication of things to come.) The flight was okay, but long - especially with 10 month old Amanda. We came into Frankfurt. I had arranged in Ft. Collins about the paper work for all the stuff I was bringing (4 computers and documentation). It turned out that not everything was in order. We had landed around 8 in the morning. I couldn't get the gear through customs - it was impounded. I got Virginia, Amanda and our luggage into the rental car. I then tried to find a phone and call the Boeblingen plant. It took several hours to find someone to help me with the phones - they worked differently than they did at home. Nobody from the Bundepost (post office/phone company) or the guards or anyone else would help. A person from the US military aid station told me how to work it.

On one of the many trips to and from the car, I was alone in a corridor in the parking garage. A pair of Germans were walking towards each other. As they got close, they gave each other a Nazi salute. This did not exactly make me feel right at home. Finally, a person from the local sales office came and posted a bond and we got out. We drove down to Boeblingen (where the HP factory was located in Germany).

Most of the time, we were immersed in the local culture. This was fun and a great experience. However, we would go to McDonalds on Saturdays to get 'American' food and go back to the hotel and watch Armed Forces TV. It was amazing - the McDonalds tasted just the same. I tried to order in German at McDonalds (having spent a little time trying to learn the language). I asked for "tswai big macs mit pomme frites, und ...". The high school age boy asked me (in English) if I wanted anything else.

During the trip, we went to Paris (as part of the introduction). We had run out of clean clothes. Virginia called down to the hotel laundry to find out how soon we would get them back. The person on the other end asked if Virginia spoke french. After Virginia said no, the other person proceeded to say “Oh - too bad” and then spoke on in french. When we were out with a French person, everyone was very nice. The person who guided us around was Guy Cohen. At one point, he was trying to get us someplace quickly. He was in the right most lane of a 6-lane one-way street at a stop light. He peeled out and did a left turn in front of the other 5 lanes when the light changed. During this driving, he also drove on the sidewalk for awhile.

As we were getting back from Paris, we had trouble re-entering Germany because we kept looking for Duetschland (German for Germany). It took us a while to realize that the French called it Allemain. After we got back from Paris, I got very sick - probably the most ill I have ever been. I got non-specific urethritis - an inflammation of the urethra. It had all the symptoms of venereal diseases. The German doctor that I went to asked if I had been with a ‘bad girl’. If I hadn’t been in so much pain, it would have been funny. I have never felt so bad.

We went to Baden Baden, Tubingen and other places in the black forest. This was a very pretty area. On the way back to Frankfurt - to go home - there was a terrible accident on the Autobahn. We were stopped for hours. This put us into the airport with literally minutes to spare. Virginia went on with Amanda to the gate while I checked in. On the way to the gate I saw someone who was the spitting image of my brother Tom. I wanted to stop and find out who he was, but I didn’t have time. I got to the plane about 3 minutes before they closed the door. But, I still wonder what else my Dad did during the war in England.

Jamaica 1984

Virginia and I went to Jamaica for our 10th wedding anniversary. This was nice. However, the poverty of the area really bothered both of us. In the hotel compound, you could see people at the fences or in boats calling to you asking if you wanted your hair corn-rowed or if you wanted drugs.

Europe 1986

Virginia came with me on the first part of a business trip in March of 1986. We went to London. We stayed in a fancy hotel in the Covent Garden area (the Mountbatten). It was a tiny room, but very plush. We went to all the standard tourist attractions. We went to see CATS. This was a lot of fun. After Virginia went back home, I went on to Bristol and then on to Germany. In Germany I went to the Hannover Fair (“der Messe”). This is a huge technical fair. HP built a permanent structure in one of the exhibit halls just for the show. It was a huge 2 story affair that had an employee cafeteria area and a bar. I was demonstrating the LISP system. On the way back, I went through Frankfurt. It was strange feeling at home being back in Frankfurt.

Europe 1987

I was in Europe twice in 1987 - once to Sweden in June and again in August. The August trip started out in England. Virginia and Gary Fritz and I went together. We hung around London for a few days (and saw Chess). We stayed in the YMCA. We then went up to Warwick and over to Stratford on Avon and saw "The Twelfth Night". This was really neat. Virginia then took off. Gary and I went to Bristol for a day or two. We went on to Milan for IJCAI 87 (International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence). We then went on to Sweden again. I felt a bit at home the second time in Sweden.

Disney World 1988

This was a family vacation. We went down during spring break and did about 4-5 days around Orlando. We went to Disney World for 3 days and one day at NASA. Disney World was really nice. The kids were excited and had a lot of fun. We were all just exhausted at the end of the days at the park. When we first got there, the kids saw the big geodesic dome near the entrance. They called to us and said "Look, it's the great ball of Disney". Mandy was scared by some of the rides (the haunted house and the Michael Jackson 3D movie). Ben wasn't scared at all and really liked the rides. Outside of the 3D movie, there were some 'dancing water' spouts. These were large pots (like giant planters). Mandy thought they were really neat. It appeared like the water was running from pot to pot. Mandy positioned herself in front of one of the spots where the water would come from and after a few minutes she got splatted in the head. She thought this was really neat - it was funny.

The kids didn't seem excited about NASA which made me sort of sad - but it wasn't as exciting (or as nice) as Disney World for them. We met Rick and Joyce and their kids in Orlando. We all drove together down to the Keys. We stayed on Plantation Key in a "cottage" motel. The place was a bit run down (a little reminiscent of the Hotel). Virginia had some jewelry stolen and returned while we were there. Ben got ill from a sunburn - you could see Virginia's hand print where the suntan lotion had stopped. The last part of the trip was not the most fun, but the Disney part made up for it.

Uniforum 1989

I went to a computer conference in January of 1989 in Washington DC. I was presenting a paper along with Jan-Erik Gustavsson. I had worked with Jan-Erik during the previous several years on Artificial Intelligence and Prolog. Jan-Erik was Swedish and his company developed a Prolog language system that HP licensed.

I got in during the middle of the week and was scheduled at the last session on the last day. On top of this, Washington was hit with back to back blizzards - the worst in over 50 years. The mass transit ground to a halt. Virginia came out during the conference to spend the weekend in Washington - between the snowstorms. We had never been there and wanted to see the sights. Because of the snow, almost everything was closed or impossible to get to or see. It is sort of scary to see how badly shut down the nation's capitol is in what I would consider a moderate snow-storm. The place was shut down.

We did get to several places. We went on the White House tour - this was nice. We got to the Air and Space museum - which was really nice. They had a lot of well done exhibits. We also got through the Smithsonian, but this was mostly like a collection of state-fair exhibits. We went to an art museum (I've forgotten which - but it was near the Smithsonian). This had some really nice art work - sculptures, paintings, et cetera. It also had a painting of a nude women that had - well - texture. This was pretty bizarre - and obviously left an impression.

We also walked around the 'mall'. It was neat seeing Abraham Lincoln's statue. The most impressive memorial was the Vietnam memorial. The ground was covered in a lot of snow (I think about a foot). As you came up to it, it was this large black thing in the ground. It looked sort of big. As Virginia and I walked down towards the middle, the size of it started to hit home. As we walked more, it really struck me: the names that covered every piece of stone. This huge monument was covered with the names of young people who had died. When we reached the middle and looked out to both sides, it was quite an experience. Both Virginia and I started to cry a bit.

Europe 1989

As part of the roll-out of the SoftBench product in June 1989, I went to European for some of the press and field events. I went to England first. I am pretty familiar with England and the local sites. As part of this trip, I went to the British Museum of Science. One of the neat things to see was Babbage's computers. Babbage was very much ahead of his time (in the 1800s).

As part of the rollout, HP chartered a Learjet to go through the rest of Europe. A group of us flew from London to Paris in the jet. We landed at the airport. While taxiing to the hangar, I saw a big (747-like) transport and the Russian space shuttle. The 1989 Paris air-show was being held at the same time. I didn't get the chance to spend any time at the air-show. (This was a real shame.)

Kauai 1989

Virginia and I went to Kauai (in the Hawaiian islands) for our 15th wedding anniversary early in November (but before our anniversary). At work, I was just finishing up the SoftBench project. I had been working pretty hard. We got the tickets for the trip free because of the traveling I had done the previous couple of years.

My Mom came out to watch the kids along with a friend - Mary Briggs. Mary was my kindergarten teacher and her son and I had been class mates in Missouri Valley. When we called back the second day, Mandy got on the phone and said "Grandma is lazy and eats all the time". Mandy and Ben found out how easy we had been on them. My Mom made them do a bunch of chores.

We went over to totally relax. We had no plans at all. I brought a pile of books, swim trunks and our tennis rackets. I was able to totally relax and forget about work. This was nice. What surprised me was that I got tired of relaxing in about 2 days. Virginia needed to get away from the kids and planning and schedules. So essentially, we didn't do anything. We went swimming, read, sun bathed, drove around the island, did some shopping and ate.

I actually got depressed by the end of the week. With that much time, I got started thinking about life and things and I got thinking about dying. I felt down during the following couple of months (as I gradually got over it). In reflecting on this, it is very similar to the feelings I had as a child about infinity. It helped me understand how debilitating a depression can be for people. It has also made me realize that I need to enjoy myself more. Recently, I have not been doing much for my own enjoyment or pleasure.

I want to go back to Hawaii. Next time there are some recreational things I want to do: go snorkling or on the local helicopter rides. I also want to see the other islands. (Kauai is pretty small to spend 7 days on.) I know it bothered Virginia that I didn't enjoy total relaxation. I just like to do things - be active.

Heirlooms and Artifacts

Antiques

We have a few old antiques that are pretty neat. There are some others that I wish we still had - like the desk bell from the Hotel. I think it is worth writing about these since I hope that they get handed down through the generations.

The Sea Chest This is an old steamer trunk. It is made out of wood and tin and canvas (?). I think that this belonged to my great great grandfather Anders Mikkelsen who brought it from Germany.

Seafahrt Buch This is an old book that belonged to Anders as well. This is his 'sea faring book' - a sort of log book. This is from the mid 1800s.

Pipes There are a bunch of antique pipes. Most of them came from George True and his family. I don't have any other history on them. One that is from 1712 has a horse carved on the front. Another looks like a dragon's claw.

Two of them came from the Mikkelsen family. These are the cherry-wood stem pipes. The men would smoke these and chew on the stem until it got worn and then cut off the worn part of the stem. One of these has an coin dated 1641 (I think from Denmark) that I remember being told was a Danish tupence.

Books There are several old family bibles (small). One of these dates back to the early 1800s. Another is in German. There are also a few old text books from George True. One of these (a geometry text) is filled with George's drawings and doodles. He must have gotten very bored in class.

Dad's Memorabilia There are a lot of things from my Dad. This includes his papers and things from World War II. This includes pictures and discharge papers. This also had an unopened letter from his mother that he received after he got home. This also includes his 8mm movie camera and lots of film reels of home movies.

Wagon This is an old wooden toy wagon that belonged to George True. It has wooden wheels with iron rims. It is a "Teddy" made by White Wagon Works of Sheboygen Falls, Wisconsin. It must have been made before the early 1900s.

Plated pistol This pistol is the one that my Dad kept in the safe at the Hotel. It

is a nickel plated 5 shot pistol. Tom and I took it out to the dump in Missouri Valley and practiced shooting it.

Monster chair

Virginia has a large black Chinese chair from her family. This has dragon's claw style arms and legs. Virginia remembers everyone calling it the monster chair and being really scared of it when she was little.

Fire Extinguisher

The copper fire extinguisher is from the Hotel. Mom was able to get two of them from the people who bought the Hotel - one for Tom and one for me.

Business Desks

My Dad bought 4 of these big wooden desks (I think from UPS - United Parcel Service) for \$5.00 each. I have two of them - one a light oak and the other a dark mahogany. They are heavy and well built. They are not particularly in 'style' now, but I think they are pretty neat.

My Stuff

Furniture

I enjoy woodworking. I have made a variety of different pieces of furniture. I made most of this from 1978 through 1983. This was when I had some spare time to do things like that. I've made three different trestle style work tables (with oak parquet floor tiles for the table top). I also made a kitchen table that I currently use for my shop table for my electronics work. A person who was delivering some furniture a few years ago saw it and thought it was an old family antique. I made the kitchen table with a hand-held circular saw and an hand-held orbital sander (it was not easy).

I've also made a coffee table (which Cindy now has). I made some shelves right around the time Mandy was born. She uses some of these in her room.

Toys

I made a big toy box with a lid and two doors on the front for the kids. I also made a rocking horse out of red wood. I made the horse when Mandy was little.

I recently (for Christmas 1989) made three train sets that have sliding lids with an N-gauge train layout on top and the train cars inside the box. I made one for Mandy and one for Ben and one for me. I built them so that Mandy and Ben could play with them alone, but that they could be hooked together (and be more fun).

Tool boxes

I made a couple of tool boxes. I use the two with drawers in the basement for my tools. I also made four other small tool boxes. I gave one each to Mandy and Ben. The other two I gave to Rick Turley and Dan Osecky as presents in the mid 1980's.

Art

Off and on, I have drawn a bit. Most of the stuff that I like is of plants (still-life). I also have one or two pieces of ceramics. One is a little tear drop that I did with Mandy in 1989. The other is a weird looking head. I did that in junior high in art class. It was supposed to be a Martian.

Favorites

What I like to do

Some of the things that I like to do are:

- learning** I like to learn about new things. I like the feeling I get when I figure something out ('A-HA!').
- electronics** I like to build, work on and fix electronic devices. Some of this involves debugging (tracking down) problems. I really like the feeling of figuring out the problem - it is sort of an 'A-HA!' feeling. When I was in high school I spent a lot of time in the Hotel basement working on electronics projects. I would get and read Popular Electronics and Radio Electronics and try some of the projects. I tried building various things - a tube audio amplifier, an artificial neuron and an oscilloscope (one of my biggest home-brew projects). I also put together a Heathkit transceiver (an HW-101).
- wood working** I like to build things out of wood. I have built tables, desks, book cases, toy boxes, tool boxes and so on. On most of these, I have stamped or marked my name and the date that I made them. It is sort of ironic, but I believe that the little bit of hobby wood working will survive longer and be remembered longer than anything I do technically or professionally. It helps me put my work life into perspective.
- reading** I like to read science fiction, some fantasy, some mysteries, science and some military information sorts of books.
- music** I like all sorts of music - folk, rock, classical. The only music I don't like is 'twangy' country western and opera. Mostly, I listen to music. During high school and college, I learned the guitar. Also during high school, I played clarinet and saxophone. Recently I started playing around with keyboards (in the musical sense). Some of my favorite musical artists are: James Taylor, early Cat Stevens, Elton John, Beatles, Alan Parsons, Moody Blues, Pink Floyd, Talking Heads, Kate Bush, Phil Collins, Simon and Garfunkle, Blood Sweat and Tears, Michael Jackson, Paula Abdul, Sheena Easton, Linda Rondstat, Leon Redbone.
- movies and TV** I really like to watch movies. My favorites are comedies, science fiction and mystery. One thing that really draws me to movies

(and TV and books) are ones that are self-referential or don't take themselves too seriously. Most TV that I like are comedies.

programming

I like to program computers. I get a real sense of satisfaction. It is like wood working: You start with raw materials and tools and an object in mind that you want to create. You then figure out how to take what you have and get to the end result. It is a transformation process. With programming, you are less hindered by physical constraints.

writing

After writing several articles, a book (a reference on XLISP) and these memories, I find that I like writing.

teaching

I like to explain things to people and to help them understand. I liked teaching in graduate school. I also did some for Bible school. I have also taught at the local VocTech school and at HP. In 1988/89 I was a visiting scientist at Mandy's school. Although it was hard work, I had a lot of fun doing this.

building models

I used to build a lot of models (cars and planes mostly) and entered them in contests and fairs. One model car that I remember really liking was a Chrysler turbine car. It came molded in brown and was very detailed. I won at a model contest for another car it was a "Don Garlet's" dragster. I also did a pretty nice job on a LeMan's style Porsche or Ferrari. I still will build the occasional model.

scale trains and cars

I liked HO (1/72nd scale) cars and trains. Tom and I had an HO train set and a car set. When I was very young, we had a Lionel train set (the big 3-track style). When I was around 10 or 12, we would occasionally go to Blair (Nebraska) where they had a big 1/32nd scale car track at a model store. This was a lot of fun.

When I was in grade school, some of the railroad people who stayed at the hotel took me on a train ride - in the engine. It was interesting and I remember it was loud and dirty and would be boring to do all the time. (Of course, most anything would get boring if it was all you ever did.)

photography

I got very active in photography starting in 10th grade when I bought a 35mm camera. I took a lot of pictures in high school (that ended up in the year book). Later on in college I took a photography class. I also took a lot of pictures during my early college years (mostly having to do with my dormitory house). I still like photography, but I haven't spent much time on it recently. I am still using the same camera in 1990 I got in the

10th grade (20 years before).

humor

I like humor and comedy. This is in cartoons, books, movies, etc. Specific favorites include: Firesign Theater, Ducks Breath Mystery Theater, Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, The Far Side, Gahan Wilson.

flying

I have recently started taking flying lessons. I like airplanes. I had not gotten into flying until recently because of the expense of lessons and a lack of time. It took a while to start up after the money wasn't a problem because I want to 'do it right' - I thought that my work schedule will get in the way and keep me from flying on a regular basis. This is a problem. I started in July of 1989 and had 5 lessons within a few weeks. My next lesson was in January of 1990. I just need to make and take the time.

Favorite Authors and Books

- J.R.R. Tolkein** Tolkein wrote the Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. I didn't read these until I got into college. Virginia lent me the Hobbit. This is escape fantasy for me. When things would get to be too much, I would start reading the Hobbit.
- Edgar Rice Burroughs** Burroughs wrote a series of fantasy/sci-fi books on Mars. The central figure and hero is John Carter. These books were filled with swords, fighting, chivalry, etc. I realize they are 'pulpy' but I like them a lot.
- H.G. Wells** H.G. Wells wrote some of the science fiction that I started on: War of the Worlds was the first 'major league' sci fi book I read.
- A. C. Doyle** I like the Sherlock Holmes series of stories.
- Tom Clancy** I like some military related stories. Clancy wrote The Hunt for Red October and Red Storm Rising and others that were good.
- Robert Heinlen** There are a lot of Heinlen that I like. In particular: Stranger in a Strange Land. The Moon is a Harsh Mistress. A short story called 'All You Zombies'.
- Isaac Asimov** I like Asimov's sci-fi: The robot series. The Foundation series.
- Larry Niven** Niven has written some books that really stick out in my mind: Ringworld. Ringworld Engineers. Protector. The Mote in God's Eye. A short story called 'The Fourth Profession'.
- A. E. Van Vogt** The Weapons Shops of Isher. The War Against the Rull.
- Orson Scott Card** He wrote Ender's Game, Speaker for the Dead and Wyrms.
- Douglas Adams** Adams did the 'Hitch-hikers Guide' series. This is a radio show and a TV show and a series of books. They each are a bit different, but all funny.

Comic Books and Cartoons

When I was young I used to read comic books a lot. They were 5 cents when I started reading them. Then they went up to 10 cents. I stopped reading them before they hit 25 cents. Some of favorites were: Fantastic Four, Silver Surfer, Thor, Superman and X-Men. I still like cartoon shorts and feature movies of all sorts of varieties.

- Warner Brothers** There are a lot of good Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck cartoons. Some favorites include: Transylvania, Aladin's Lamp, Broomhilda the Witch, Martin the Martian, Mad scientist, Duck Tracy, Duck Dodger in the 23rd and a half century. There were also some 'polite gopher' cartoons that were really good.
- Alf** I really like the AlfTales and Melmacian Memories Saturday morning cartoons. The AlfTales combines a bunch of stuff into a fairy tale. A recent one (I am watching cartoons at the age of 36) combined a Hitchcock style (mostly from Psycho) and Jack in the Beanstalk. Another combined Elvis, the Godfather and Cinderella.
- Rocky and Bullwinkle** Rocky and Bullwinkle is probably one of my all time favorites. It had poor cartoon quality, but had hilarious writing. They had self-referential jokes and puns constantly. One episode, Rocky and Bullwinkle were playing football at Whats-a-matta U. They were playing the Watch Makers Technical University. Of course, the opposing team was called 'Tic Toc Tech'. The show also had Fractured Fairy Tales, Mr. Peabody and Sherman (a dog and his boy doing time travel), Dudley Doright. It was a great show.
- Disney Cartoons** Disney does a great job. Some full-length favorites include: The Sword in the Stone, Robin Hood, Roger Rabbit.
- Animation Tourneys** There are a series of animation festivals. I've seen the 18th through the 21st (I think). These usually have about 20 or so cartoons each. About a third are marginal, a third are good and a third are great. Favorites segments include: Sky Whales, Safety Dog, The Cat Came Back, Vincent, Red's Dream, Luxo Jr., Tin Toy.
- Claymation** Wil Vinton has a process called claymation. He has done a bunch of short subjects, movies and TV shows. Mark Twain is one of the movies that is good. There is also a Christmas TV special. It is amazing work.
- Newspaper Comics** I really like Doonesbury, Bloom County and the Far Side.

Favorite Movies

- Classics** There are a variety of old black and white movies that are great. Philadelphia Story: with Cary Grant, Jimmy Stuart, Katherine Hepburn. My Man Godfrey: with William Powell and Carol Lombard. Harvey: with Jimmy Stewart. Alice in Wonderland: This is an old B/W live action 'Alice' that is just wonderful. It has cameos by Cary Grant (as Mock Turtle) and W.C. Fields (as Humpty Dumpty) and a bunch of others.
- Screwball Comedy** Marx Brothers: Sometimes, they get to be a bit much, but I really like the Marx Brothers: Coconuts and Duck Soup. International House: This is a old movie with W.C. Fields and Burns and Allen that is set in Wu-Hu China at a hotel that is quarantined. John Goldfarb Please Come Home: This is a mid-60's comedy with Richard Crenna, Peter Ustinov and Shirley Maclaine. It is about a U2 pilot who crashes in Faz (Saudi Arabia). It is a screwball comedy. What's Up Doc: This is 70's comedy with Barbara Steisand and Ryan Oneil.
- The Thin Man** This is a series of six movies with Myrna Loy and William Powell. They play Nick and Nora Charles. Nick is a detective who marries Nora who is a socialite. The early ones were the best, but the banter between Nick and Nora Charles is great.
- Humphrey Bogart** There are several classic Bogart movies: The Maltese Falcon and Casablanca are my favorites. I have not yet seen some of his other movies.
- Horror films** The original Frankenstein, Dracula and The Mummy movies are all great.
- Mel Brooks** Although some of his more recent films have not been as good, his early work is fantastic: Young Frankenstein, The Producers, Blazing Saddles, High Anxiety.
- Adventure** There are several adventure movies I like: The Prisoner of Zenda (the 1930s version with Ronald Coleman), The Great Race (with Jack Lemon and Tony Curtis), The Princess Bride.
- Fantasy** There are several good fantasy movies. These are generally (but not always) set in medieval times. Good ones are: LadyHawke, Legend, Neverending Story, Labrynth. The Wizard of Oz is a classic. When I was growing up, this was on television once a year - and we would all watch it together. There is a sequel made

recently called Return to Oz that is very good. (I also like a ‘spoof’ comedy called Under the Rainbow.)

Science Fiction

A classic is 2001, A Space Odyssey. The Star Wars trilogy is good. An older movie (mid 50s) is Forbidden Planet.

Monty Python

The Python’s made several great movies. The Life of Brian is a classic Monty Python movie. I really liked the absurdity of this movie. When I first saw it in a theater, the house was packed. At one point in the movie, there is a line where Brian says to the throngs “You are all individuals” which the crowd echoes back. One little guy shouts out “I’m not!”. I was rolling with laughter. I was the only one in the theater laughing at this. (After a while, you learn to live with being different.) The Meaning of Life is another classic Monty Python movie. This has some really interesting music as well (“Every Sperm is Sacred” in particular).

Cult classics

Buckaroo Bonzai: A cult classic about a neuro-surgeon, physicist, rock-star hero. Rocky Horror Picture Show: this is the essential cult classic. I feel strange liking this movie, but I do like it. (I just don’t want to take my mother or children to it.) It is about extra-terrestrial transsexual transvestites. It also has good music. The King of Hearts: this is an anti-war classic. Done in various ‘foreign languages’ (French, Germany, Scottish) and English. Raising Arizona: an odd movie about a couple kidnapping a baby.

Black Comedy

Into the Night: with Jeff Goldblum. An adventure with black comedy aspects that I like because the engineer ends up with the girl and the money. After Hours: a really bad night for a guy in New York. Clockwise: with John Cleese. The systematic downfall during one day of a British school headmaster.

Firesign Theater

There is a group of ‘weird guys’ who did a series of ‘weird albums’ and radio shows and small movies. They don’t really belong under movies, but they don’t fit anyplace really well. They are amazingly complex and filled with real information but move too fast to keep up with. My favorites are a set of four albums: How can you be two places at once (Nick Danger and Hour of the Wolf Movie); Don’t crush that dwarf, hand me the pliers; Waiting for the Electrician (Temporarily Humbolt County); I think we’re all bozos on this bus (Future Fair/Wall of Science).

Bad Movies

There are some campy, bad movies that I like. A bunch of friends and I would get together to watch them in the middle of the week. This has happened less frequently since the group has all had

children. (The group was usually Gary Fritz, Larry Rupp, Tom Huibregtse and I with some others on occasion.) Some of the movies although bad warrant mention: Death Race 2000, Attack of the Killer Tomatoes, The Toxic Avenger, Doc Savage. I also have a soft spot for bad Japanese sci-fi: Rodan, Mothra, the original Godzilla and some others.

Favorite TV Shows

- Twilight Zone** The original Twilight Zone series were classics. Some that I remember are: 'To serve man' about aliens and what turns out to be a cook book. A time travel episode with Buster Keaton going from the late 1800s to the 1950s. A Christmas episode about a bum who gets a magic sack. I much preferred the comic or happy-ending episodes.
- Anthology** I am not sure how else to describe these shows other than as anthologies - they are related to the Twilight Zone show. The Outer Limits and Night Gallery were similar to the Twilight Zone and also very good. There was a short-lived revival of The Twilight Zone. This was very well done, but it was difficult to find it. There was also an 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents' and some similar shows. There was also a series called Amazing Stories. A good episode was 'The Mummy's a Daddy'.
- Star Trek** Star Trek (the original) was good. I actually like the new show - Star Trek: The Next Generation - better than the original. The acting, writing and special effects are generally better than the original. (The first show of ST: TNG was really pretty bad.)
- Science Fiction** There are several sci-fi shows that I have liked. The old Lost in Space series was pretty bad, but it was bad enough and campy enough to be funny. I also liked a short-lived show called Quark with Richard Benjamin about a space garbage man.
- Avengers** The Avengers was a British spy/adventure series. The ones I really liked were the ones with Patrick MacNee and Diana Rigg. (The later New Avengers were pretty good too.) They were done with a good dose of humor. Some episodes that I liked are 'The Winged Avenger' and 'The House That Jack Built'.
- The Prisoner** The Prisoner was a spy show was on PBS. This was a pretty convoluted show. The final show was really strange. I liked the show because it was so different and because of the shifting reality they used.
- Detectives** There were several good private detective series: Moonlighting was very good (early on). It was done very tongue in cheek. The Atomic Shakespeare episode is great. Remington Steele was also very good (early on). A favorite episode is the one about the 'Abbot of Costello' (which is a take-off of Hitchcock's 'The Trouble with Harry').

- Adventure** Wild Wild West was an adventure series about James West and Artemus Gordon - Secret Service agents in the 1860s. It was essentially a James Bond in the old west. A favorite villain was Emilio Lovelace. I liked all the gadgets and gizmos that were used. A show that sticks in my mind is an episode about an old, haunted southern mansion. I think that I most closely associated with Artemus. There was a short lived series called QED. This was about an early 1900s scientist in England. This was a very well-done and funny show.
- Weekend** This was a once a month show that alternated with Saturday Night Live. It was one of the more intelligent, insightful shows. It was hosted by Lloyd Dobbins and later co-hosted by Linda Ellerbee. It had a variety of informational and humorous segments. It was also very enlightening. It would show things the major network news stayed away from.
- Variety** Saturday Night Live was a classic. I've liked most of the seasons. The show is variable. John Belushi was great: Samuri, Joe Cocker. The segment where Belushi dances on the others' graves is eerie. Other great segments are the Lubners, Mr. Roberts' Neighborhood.
- Fridays was a short-lived show on ABC that was comparable to Saturday Night Live. It had some similar characteristics - it was highly variable. It had some very good sketches: The Ronnie Horror Picture Show was a send up of Ronald Reagan and Rocky Horror.
- Comedy** WKRP was a great comedy series about a radio station. Many are very thought provoking - religious groups and censorship, finishing school, late pregnancy ... There have been a series of other good comedies that I like: Night Court, Rosanne, Cheers, Designing Women, Mork and Mindy, Soap, ...
- The old Ernie Kovacs show was on when I was 5 or 6 years old. It was an amazing show with tremendous visual sight gags. I keep hoping that Edie Adams (Kovacs widow) will be able to re-release some of the shows.
- During the early 1960s, Dick Van Dyke had this half hour comedy show that was very good. It had a great supporting cast (including Mary Tyler Moore). One show that I remember is a dream sequence show where Dick thinks everyone is being taken over by aliens.

Sports

I am not a big sports fan in the normal sense. Generally, I do not get enthused about watching a game on TV or other spectator sports. There are some sports that I have enjoyed and do enjoy participating in:

- Skiing** I like to down hill ski. I am an intermediate level skier. Every year since we moved to Colorado, we try to go on a family ski vacation during December or March. Virginia's parents are the ones who taught us how to ski.
- Basketball** I've always liked basketball. In college, the dorm house (Converse) would head out at 5:00PM most days for a game at the gym.
- Tennis** I took a class in this in college. I really like this (even to watch on television occasionally). This is also a game that Virginia and I played a lot. It holds many fond memories. Virginia and Cindy and I were playing once in Ft. Collins right after we moved here. I broke my foot.
- Raquetball** I played this in college and have started playing in again recently. It seems that whenever I start, I end up hurting myself (or getting hurt).
- Fencing** I haven't done much of this, but I took a class in college. I enjoyed this a lot (except when I wore shorts and my opponent would slap my legs with his foil).
- Swimming** I do this mostly to splash around, but I do enjoy being in water.

Recipes and Foods

I like to eat and I like to cook. These recipes are ones that I like to eat or that I like to eat and cook.

Grandma Claussen Chocolate Molasses Cookies

My grandmother used to make these all the time when I was little. When she came over to Mo. Valley for a visit she would make a batch and every flat surface in the kitchen and Tom's and my bedroom would be covered with cooling cookies. My mom makes these now and sends them out at Christmas every year. I don't think Mom makes them quite as well as Grandma (but it might be perception).

1/2 lb grated melted chocolate
2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup margarine
1 cup molasses (dark, brair rabbit brand)
3 egg yolks (save whites)
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp salt
2 tsp baking soda
1/2 cup boiling water
1/2 cup sour cream
5-6 cups flour
tsp vanilla

Dissolve the 2 tsp. soda into the 1/2 cup boiling water. Pour this over the melted chocolate. Mix this into the rest of the ingredients to make the dough. Roll the dough flat with a rolling pin. Cut into shapes with cookie cutters. I don't have the temperature for time, but I think it was about 350 degrees F, for 10-15 minutes.

The cookies are topped with a white frosting.

3 egg whites (from above)
2 1/4 cups granulated sugar
3/8 tsp cream of tartar
1/2 cup cold water
1 dash salt
1 tsp vanilla

Place all ingredients except vanilla in a double boiler. Beat one minute with electric mixer. Cook and continue to beat constantly until peaks begin to form. This should take about seven minutes. Remove from the heat and add the vanilla and beat again. Continue beating until the mixture gets to spreading consistency.

Custard

I like to make custard with Ben and Mandy. It is really good on a cold winter night right before bed time. The recipe is essentially out of the Betty Crocker cook book.

3 beaten eggs
2 cups scalded milk
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla
1/4 tsp salt

Boil the milk until a film forms on the surface and then cool it down. Mix the ingredients and put into small cups or into a single dish. Top with some nutmeg. Put this dish into another pan that has water in it. Put this in the oven for 40-45 minutes at 325 degrees F or until you can insert a knife and it can be removed clean.

Cheese Dip

My dad would make this cheese dip for potato chips for the bar every fall (around Christmas). He would work over the stove making huge pots of the stuff making it alternately smell better and worse. This is definitely a 'by taste' sort of recipe.

1 cup milk
16 oz Velveeta Cheese
8 oz Cheeze Whiz
1 oz Blue Cheese
1 envelope Lipton's dry onion soup
2 tsp Horse Radish
1 tsp Worcestershire Sauce

Put the milk into a sauce pan and start heating it. Add cut up chunks of the velveeta. This will take a little while to be smooth and blended in. Spoon in the Cheeze Whiz. Add the blue cheese. After the cheese has melted into the milk, keep the heat on low. Add in the envelope of onion soup mix (I add a little water to the soup mix to make it blend in easier). Finally add in the horse radish and worcestershire sauce. Be careful with the horse radish - how much you need is determined by its strength. Keep mixing until everything is stirred in.

Twaeback

Tsvaibaken is German for 'twice baked'. My grandmother used to make this a lot. It is essentially hot dog buns (or any bread) that you butter and then sprinkle a sugar and cinnamon mixture on top. Bake them in an oven at 350 degrees until brownish on top (about 5 minutes). My folks used to dip it in their coffee. It is really good when it just fresh out of the oven.

Baked Beans

My mom would make baked beans. She would make in a brown ceramic bowl (which we still have but don't use too much) with bacon on top. When it is summer time, I like to make baked beans when we are having a barbecue.

16 oz Campbell's pork and beans
1/2 cup brown sugar
2 tbsp mustard
4 tbsp ketchup
dried onions
bacon

Add the sugar (or honey) to the beans. Mix in about 2 parts ketchup to 1 part mustard. Add some dried onions (if desired). Put all of this into a bowl or casserole. Put the bacon on top. Bake in a 350 degree F oven for about 45 minutes to an hour. Recently, I have been using barbecue sauce in this as well.

Other Things

There are a number of things that I like:

- Scalloped Potatoes & Ham** This is a casserole dish made with sliced baked potatoes, Campbell's golden mushroom soup, ham, cheese and some milk. This is one of the few meals that I like as much or better warmed up as left-overs.
- Peanut butter & Bananas** This is a whole banana sliced in half. Spread peanut butter between the halves and cut.
- Peanut butter & Pickles** This is a sandwich. It consists of peanut butter on two pieces of bread with sweet chip pickles spread on the sandwich. It sounds gross but I like it.
- Jam & Summer Sausage** Another sandwich. Make a sandwich with strawberry jam and put slices of summer sausage on it. Again - sounds gross, but tastes good.
- Kraft Macaroni & Cheese** I know this is not the healthiest or the fanciest meal, but I used to eat it a lot and fixed it a lot for myself when I was in junior high and high school.
- Fried Summer Sausage** I never said that I always ate properly. I also would have fried bologna.
- Fried Tuna Fish** Take a tuna fish salad (tuna, boiled egg pieces, crumbled crackers, sweet pickle pieces or relish, mayonaise) and fry it.
- Pie Crust Pieces** Grandma would also make a lot of pies. Since she made her own pie crusts, she would have leftover crust fixings. She would roll this out into thin pieces and cover it with sugar and cinnamon and then bake it. This stuff is really good.

Apartments and Houses

University Village

University Village was the married student housing at Iowa State University. Unit 134D was the unit that Virginia and I moved into as our first apartment after getting married. These were very nice brick apartments. They were two story structures with two bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs and a small kitchen and a living room downstairs. These were incredibly cheap (at around \$100-120 per month for rent).

The apartments were nice - mostly. One time we lived next to a Hindu couple who did not believe in killing anything. This would not be too bad and I can respect their beliefs - except we had a major league cockroach infestation. Everyone in the building we were in requested fumigation. This didn't work, because the bugs went to the Hindu couple's apartment and then very quickly came back out after the fumigation was over.

The major problem with these apartments was the bitter Iowa winter. There were no garages - just parking lots. The assigned spaces were usually not very close to the apartment. During the winter months, everyone would run extension cords to the 'tank heaters' in the cars so that they would start. Getting a very cold car to start is a pain.

Cameo Apartments

During my masters degree program, Virginia and I went out to Oregon so I could do a student co-op at Tektronix. We lived in the Cameo Apartments in Beaverton. These were okay. There was a pool and some recreational facilities. We had rented our furniture (which was not very nice). Our unit was on the second floor and had a living room, kitchen, bedroom and a bathroom. It was close to work and a shopping center. At the end of the six months, we moved back to Ames and University Village (unit 163D).

Willow Lane Apartments

This was where we moved to Fort Collins. Virginia and I had looked around at some units. Virginia had been interested in some units more in the center of town, but we ended up at Willow Lane. The unit was a two story with 3 bedrooms and a bath upstairs. Downstairs there was a living room, dining area and kitchen. It was pretty nice. The units had car ports right in front of the units. The units had fenced areas in the front and back (very small areas).

The people were pretty nice on one side - a divorced mother and her son. On the other side were 3 women who were 'party animals'. Virginia and I were not thrilled to listen through the walls to their loud music (downstairs) and their other activities (upstairs).

1742 Fremont Court

This was Virginia's and my first house. Virginia was always looking at new and different houses. She saw the style in one development and we ended up buying it in another development.

This house was a one story ranch house with an unfinished basement and a two car garage. It was located on a cul-de-sac. The upstairs had about 740 square feet of living space (pretty small). There were 2 small bedrooms. The 'master' bedroom was located right next to the neighbor's drive way (because of an error in the positioning of the house). This meant we would be awakened during the winter by the neighbor starting his pickup truck.

I finished the basement myself. I put in a study, a bedroom, a utility room and a family room. I did pretty good on the framing and wiring. My ceiling dry-wall left a lot to be desired. (I didn't line them up on joist boundaries.)

We bought the house in 1978 for \$49,900 and sold it 11 months later for \$59,000. To buy the house, we had to borrow \$1000 from my Mom. She and my brother Tom came out and Tom 'helped' by writing up a 'contract' for the loan. This bothered me a bit since Tom has borrowed money from Mom, and I doubt if he signed an agreement. Because of the loan, Virginia and I didn't feel we could ask Mom not to smoke in the house. (She had helped us get into it.) It was a cute little house.

3284 Silverthorne Drive

This house was a 4 bedroom tri-level with an unfinished basement and a two car garage. It had about 1,980 square feet finished. I finished off the basement (which brought it up to about 2,500 sq. ft.). I also added a fence and a multi-level deck in the back yard. The house was located on a corner.

It cost us \$69,900 in 1979. We sold it in 1987 for \$108,000. We did really well by that house. Virginia had done a lot of nice decorating and it was a very nice, comfortable house. The neighborhood was nice. There were quite a few kids for Ben and Mandy to play with. We did have a problem with one neighbor. He thought we had called the police on him for some noise. We hadn't - another neighbor had called in and given our name. So he called the building inspectors about the deck I had built. I was able to get approval with very little trouble.

4316 Picadilly

This is the house we live in currently. It is a large ranch with a finished upstairs. The house has about 3,900 square feet finished with another 1,500 sq. ft. in the basement (that I plan to finish). It has a three car garage and is on a 20,000 sq. ft. lot. It has (right now) 5 bedrooms, 3 family rooms, 3 bathrooms, kitchen, dining room and breakfast nook. It is a big house. We were able to get it for \$165,000 which was an incredibly good deal.

Vehicles

Being a normal American male, a lot of memories come from the various cars and bikes that I have had over the years.

Bicycles

I got a regular bike when I was like 5 or 6 years old. When I got older I got a full sized bike. I named my first full sized bike 'Mary Ann'. I felt really neat on that first big bike. I would go from the Hotel up 6th street one block and head west toward the fairgrounds. I could usually go all the way to 1st street without touching the pedals or the handlebars.

When I was in 4th or 5th grade, I liked zooming down some of the steep hills. One day after school, I was near the high school. I would start on 7th street and head for 6th (a pretty steep hill). I would try to get to the top of 5th street (up again). The problem, of course, was that 6th was a relatively busy street. I just missed getting creamed (and killed) by an older lady in a car. She stopped after the near collision. I stopped. I got in big trouble. I didn't zoom the hills quite as much after that.

Right before I went to college, I got a really nice brown Schwinn Varsity 10 speed. It was a nice bike. During the fall at Iowa State, it was stolen even though it was chained. I got a replacement the following spring. But the bike I got was really bad - it was very cheap. I left it outside the dorm for about two weeks unlocked before it was stolen. I still have the bike that I got to replace this one.

1960's Falcon

The car my Dad taught me to drive in was a white Falcon station wagon. Dad took me out to the gravel roads outside of town. This car had a 3-speed manual transmission on the steering column. It had a lot of miles on it when we got it, but it was a good car.

Suzuki 125cc

When I was a 11th grader in high school, I got a used motorcycle. I had a lot of fun with this. During the summers, after working the night shift at the Hotel, I would go out for a ride. It felt really nice riding in the cool morning air. I was riding down 8th street one afternoon after it had rained a little - . . . j . . . niorome sand and a slick spot on the hill and slide into the curb. Fortunately, I only scratched myself up a little. On one ride to Council Bluffs, I got a bee in my helmet. This is not a fun experience.

1939 Plymouth

This was the car that Grandma Claussen owned from 1939 until she died. It was a dark purple 2-door sedan. My folks let me drive it my junior year in high school (1970). It was in great shape. It had a flat-head 6 cylinder engine and it kept up pretty well. It is the only car I have ever been in that had enough leg room in the front and the back seat for me.

1970 Ford Maverick

My folks got me this car to drive when I was a senior in high-school. It was reddish - actually called 'Thanks Vermillion' - with a black and white checked interior. My folks let me have it at college after my first or second quarter (session). It is amazing to remember how I could get all my worldly belongings into a two door Maverick. This include a 4.5 cubic foot refrigerator, all my clothes, books, stereo, etc. The Maverick was a good, reliable car. It was one of the few cars that would start out in the student parking lots after a really long, cold week.

When I started out with cars, I didn't know anything about them. I had taken driver's education (from David David Davidsaver - no joke). But this didn't help. I didn't know you had to watch for tire wear or oil changes. At one point, I had driven all four tires bald and kept on driving. Eventually a tire got so thin that it ballooned and popped. I hadn't changed a tire before. I got started and I forgot to keep the tire on the ground to loosen the nuts. I finally had to call my Dad to help change it. Later on, I had met Virginia. Her father asked me when I had changed the oil in the car. I asked Art what he meant. I had driven the car about 30,000 miles without changing the oil. I'm sure gas station attendants had added some - but this is not the way to treat a car. Art taught me how to change the oil.

While I was dating Virginia, we had a boating accident with the Maverick. We had gone to see a movie at the Fleur Four theaters, close to where Virginia's folks lived at the time. It had been raining very hard. When we got out of the theater, I took the back alley to Virginia's house. This was behind the shopping area near the theater and had a Dahl's supermarket and a Target. The alley looked okay so I started driving through. A little bit shy of half way in we noticed we had a problem. There were boxes floating by the car. The water was getting pretty high - but it wouldn't get much higher (I thought). A little bit further the water was up to the windows, the headlights where shining UP into the water and water was coming in Virginia's vent. The car kept going - for a while. It died. I tried to re-start it. For some amazing reason, on the second or third try it started and we drove on through. The only problem was there was some water in the car from the vent and there was some condensation in the distributor cap.

1968 Pontiac LeMans

After Virginia and I got married, we sold the Maverick and bought a two-door green LeMans from Art. It was a pretty nice car.

We drove it to California for one of our first vacations together. On this vacation we stopped in Scottsbluff Nebraska to visit Gene Snook. As we drove south to Denver we passed an exit for Fort Collins. I remember wondering what the town was like. We really liked Colorado and the mountains. On this trip, I was sleeping in the car while Virginia drove. She finally woke me on some two lane highway. We were low on gas and she was not sure where we were. We finally made it into a town running on gas fumes. When we got to California, we stopped at Disneyland. We went immediately to the park. After most of the day we were dog-tired. We went back to the motel room to just rest. We layed down on the bed (a water bed whose heater was not plugged in) and fell asleep. We woke up and thought we had been sleeping for a half hour or hour. It was 11:00AM the next day.

We also drove the LeMans to Oregon for my CO-OP at Tektronix. We drove out and back with a U-Haul trailer. On the way out we were 'taken' by a gas station in Wyoming for a new set of shock absorbers.

Toyota Corolla

The LeMans was breaking down a lot and the winters in the student housing parking lot did not help. We broke down and bought a used Toyota Corolla (with Art's help) from a dealer in Ames - I think we spent \$1800 for it. It was a small blue two door sedan. It had a little 1100cc engine. It was a very reliable car. I had to put oil and gas in it and that is about all it took.

The only problem it had was it stopped and wouldn't re-start in Brady Nebraska. It turns out the middle of Nebraska on Interstate 80 is 'Bermuda Triangle' for car problems. Virginia, Cindy and I were going back for Christmas. The problem turned out to be that I had put in an electronic gadget called a dwell extender. This worked really well and made spark plugs and points last a long time. The problem was that a block on the points had worn down and prevented any spark from occurring. It took about five hours to figure this out.

Plymouth Volaire

The Volaire was probably the worst car we have owned. It would always stall - in the middle of intersections. It threw a rod in the middle of Nebraska (you see - Nebraska is trouble). While we were being towed backwards on the interstate, Mandy kept saying "Wheee". She thought it was great fun. We had to rent a U-Haul truck to haul the damned thing back to Fort Collins. I know Chrysler has improved, but it will take a long time for me to buy another one.

1978 Chevy Van

The Chevy Van was a big, ¾ ton stretch conversion van. It was very nice. We put a lot of miles on it going to Iowa. It was really great to travel back to Iowa with it. I had put in plugs so we could have a portable TV and VCR in it. That way we could take cartoons and movies for the kids to watch. This would keep them busy for about a third to a half of the trip. We kept it up to 108,000 miles. We finally got rid of it because it started having an entire series of minor (if expensive) mechanical failures.

Triumph TR-4

Due to lack of judgement, I have had two different Triumphs - a TR-4 and a TR-4A. I bought my first one - the TR-4A from Don McCurley's brother while I was in college. This was while Virginia and I were in college. I finally sold it, but I think the spoke wheels were worth more for salvage value than what I got for the car. It was not in very good shape when I got it: it had no top, was in poor mechanical condition and had some body damage. It was not in any better shape when I sold it.

I bought the second TR-4 in Fort Collins. Virginia saw it on a side street in town. A student needed to sell it. For some reason, she told me about it. I learned a fair amount about how to fix cars from this one. At one point, the starter, regulator and magneto gave out (all made by a British company - Lucas Electric). There is a joke that British sports car owners know: "Why do the British drink warm beer? Because they have Lucas refrigerators." I got to where I could change the starter in the TR-4 in 34 minutes. They were a lot of fun - driving around with the top down. I finally sold the second one because I just didn't have time to keep it running.

Pontiac Fiero

I bought the Fiero in 1986 or 1987. The Fiero is a reliable car, but one that is pretty sporty. It starts, it stops, it's red. The only problem is that it is not a convertible. But, it is warm in the winter and cool in the summer - attributes the Triumph's didn't have. I bought it after I tried a bunch of other, more expensive, sports cars. It was one of the few that I was able to fit in. It also didn't cost much. (It was a used car - like all the cars I've had except the Maverick.)

During the fall of 1989, Virginia and I were out to dinner and a movie. When we got back, I waited in the driveway for the baby sitter (Nicole). After about five minutes, she came out and I drove her home (which was just around the block). When I was coming back, I notice a big black spot in the driveway. I pulled the car in and got out to check the spot. The spot was a big oil spot. The bolt that held one side of the engine in place had fallen out and the engine had dropped. The oil filter was what was holding it up. The vibration had cut through the filter right as Virginia and I had gotten home. I was very lucky the engine didn't catch fire while I was sitting in the driveway while I was waiting for the sitter.

A Day

I thought it might be interesting to describe a day from start to finish. What I am describing is Wednesday, November 15th 1989. After going through the day, I would say it is a reasonably normal day.

- 6:20 AM I wake up. I normally get up somewhere between 6 and 7 in the morning, depending on what I have to do. My 'pajamas' are jockey shorts (underpants) and a T-shirt. I take off my T-shirt to weigh myself. I weigh 181 pounds. After weighing, I take a shower. I almost always shower in the morning. I wash all over with soap, but I don't use a wash-cloth. I don't really know why I don't use one. I use a dandruff shampoo. After I dry off, I dry my hair right away with a blow dryer (one that I got years before from a car rental company promotion).
- 6:35 I go into the bedroom and put on my clothes. Normally, I wear blue jeans, a long-sleeved shirt and tennis shoes. Today I have a meeting that I need to be dressed up a bit for. I put on gray slacks and a blue long-sleeved shirt. I put on some comfortable, but semi-dressy shoes. I get a tie out of the clothes closet, but I don't put it on. I hardly ever wear a tie, and generally, I only wear them during the specific time I have to be dressed up.
- 6:45 I go down stairs and outside to pick up the two newspapers. The Fort Collins Coloradoan is right by the front door (as always) and the Rocky Mountain News is right by the road in the middle of the driveway (as always). I bring the papers back in and put them on the table while I get breakfast ready.
- 6:50 I have Cheerios (oat cereal) with skim milk - but without any sugar. I try to avoid eating much sugar because I have a problem that causes my body to convert sugars into triglycerides (a genetic problem called type 4 hyperlipoproteinemia). I think that this is what my father had which contributed to his hardening of the arteries. I eat my Cheerios while I read the newspaper. I usually read the big stories on the first few pages of each paper and the business sections. I read these things first, but what I am really after is the comic strips.
- 7:00 I hear Ben going to the bathroom. I stop reading and go in and check on him to make sure he is okay. I give Ben a 'good morning' hug and kiss. He wants breakfast, so I get him Honey Nut Cheerios. He sits down and eats with me at the kitchen table. He asks me about the tie - wondering why I have it (since he doesn't see me in one very often).
- 7:05 I finish reading the paper and put my cereal bowl in the kitchen.

Sometimes I remember to put it in the dishwasher - most times I don't. I go into Mandy's room to wake her up. I do this by opening her shades and turning on the lights and the little black and white TV in her room. Mandy is fairly slow to wake up and Virginia and I have found that waking her up this way is best. I give her a kiss and hug as she starts to wake up a little. I go back up stairs to brush my teeth and shave. I have a full beard and so my 'shaving' is really trimming underneath my beard. I brush my teeth. I use an electric razor to shave.

- 7:15 I give everybody a kiss goodbye - Virginia, Mandy and Ben. Virginia is in bed, just starting to wake up. As I am kissing her goodbye, I tell her about Ben's bowel movement - since it was not normal - runny. He had been sick for the last couple of days. I had turned the TV on in the living room so Ben can watch cartoons. As I leave I get him a blanket so he won't get cold.
- 7:20 I get my car (in the garage), open the garage door (with the electric opener) and drive off to work. As I drive to work, I listen to some music on the radio.
- 7:40 I get to work. Right now, I don't work at the main site for HP in Fort Collins, but at a small building that houses the 80 of us who work in SESD (Software Engineering Systems Division). Most of us who work at SESD prefer being at 'Plum Tree Plaza' (which we sometimes call 'Scum Tree Detention Center' because we are located in an industrial park near a county prison). HP has an 'open seating' approach. My area is a 10' by 12' carpeted cubicle with 5 foot high partitions around it. I have a desk and a round meeting table with some chairs.
- 7:45 I check my voice mail (audio digital answering machine facility) and I have 3 new voice mail messages. I also check my electronic mail (computer mail on my UNIX workstation). I have 64 messages with about 20 of those new. The workstation is a diskless computer (HP340 with 12 megabytes of memory) and display (1024x768 pixels).
- 7:55 I have gotten my paycheck. I make \$6800 per month so my paycheck is for \$3400 'gross' (before taxes) and \$2082 'net'. I know it is worse in other countries, but the government (state and federal) take a big bite out of my paycheck. I don't mind some of it, but I wish the federal government would go to a flat tax (say 10%) and just forget all the funny loop-holes and tax laws. I also wish that I didn't have to pay into social security - since I don't expect to be able to collect from it. (I suspect it will eventually fall apart when the number of elderly on social security gets too great.)
- 8:00 I spend the next hour or so preparing for my 'post mortem' meeting on the

following day. This is a meeting that I scheduled with the project teams that worked on SoftBench and Encapsulator - the projects that I was the 'program manager' for. The meeting is intended to figure out how to do a better job on our next projects. I am writing up the agenda and setting up some teams of people for break-out groups. I finish editing my memo with these changes and send it out to the people coming to the meeting (about 50 people).

- 9:15 I spend the next 15 minutes re-reading some slides for the 'release to customer shipments' meeting I am going to later today. This is the meeting that I brought the tie for. I do the opening agenda slide and the closing slide with 3 speakers in between.
- 9:30 I get Nancy Steffens (a project manager in my section) and we go through my introduction and her slides. She is the second presenter at the meeting. I wanted to do this to make sure the transition was smooth. We spend the next 30 minutes going through the slides. I point out areas that could cause problems during the presentation.
- 10:00 I drive over to the main site to a modular conference room with Becky Hennig (a marketing engineer who worked on the projects). She and I set up the room - rearranging chairs and desks and getting the overhead slide projector focused.
- 10:30 The release to customer shipments meeting starts. There are about 25 people in the room including my boss (Tom Christian - the R&D lab manager) and the marketing manager for the division (Gail Hamilton). Most of the R&D (research and development) project managers and the other two R&D section managers (Rick Turley is one of the section managers) are there as well. (I am an R&D section manager.) I am a little nervous, but not much. The meeting goes very smoothly with almost no questions until the end.
- 11:20 At the end of the meeting there is a round of applause and Gail Hamilton and Dennis Vetter (a marketing section manager) comment on what a good job was done. I thank all the people that helped including the 60-70 engineers who actually did the work. I forgot to mention the quality department, but fortunately Tim Tillson (a project manager in my section) reminds me. Afterwards, I talk with several people about the meeting and the project (which I have been working on for 2 years). I drive back to Plum Tree with Tim Tillson.
- 12:00 Rick Turley and Steve Joseph and I are scheduled to have an R&D staff meeting with Tom Christian at noon. Not everyone is ready, so I briefly read my E-mail (electronic mail). After a fifteen minutes, we are ready. There is lunch in the room (chicken sandwich, carrot cake and diet pop).
- NOON

We start on miscellaneous staff topics. Some of this had to do with recent re-organization activities (with Apollo - a company that HP purchased). Some had to do with support that marketing needs from R&D.

- 2:00 We take a break. I get some more diet pop and 2 cookies. (Even though I try to watch my sugar intake, this is hard to do.) We then spend about 2 hours working on R&D planning for the next year using a 'hoshin' planning process. We don't make as much progress as we want to or need to (but this is pretty normal). It is unclear what our head-count (the allowed number of people) is for the division or which components will be in the division (Fort Collins, Palo Alto, Pinewood England, Chelmsford Massachusetts).
- 4:00 The staff meeting ends. I talk to Becky Hennig for a little while. She was up for a promotion to a first level marketing manager, but didn't get it. I talk to her. She would have been good and I try to give some advice for how to be ready the next time. Lee Huffman (a support manager) comes by and asks for help in getting a signature from Bill Parzybok (3 levels above me). I am unable to help him - since I'll be in a meeting when he needs the signature. I talk to some people about an engineer who is leaving the division.
- 4:30 I get a phone call from Brian Fromme (an engineer on the Encapsulator project). He has found a bug (a software defect) in the product we just released. I am not really thrilled about this and we set up to talk about it on Thursday. (Later on, I figure out a work-around that allows us not to re-release the software.)
- 5:00 I figure out my itinerary and turn in a travel request form for some travel that I am going to do at the end of the month. Virginia calls and asks when I coming home. She wants to know if she should turn down the oven (if I am going to be a while).
- 5:20 I get ready to go home. I get some books and slides to take home so I can prepare for the post mortem presentation I am giving on Thursday (which I don't have ready). As I am getting ready, Tom Christian asks me to come over to his desk. He, Rick Turley and I talk about ways to de-fuse concerns that engineers have over upcoming project planning. I get in the car and drive home. I get home in about 15 minutes.
- 6:00 I kiss Virginia. I sit down with her for a few minutes. I say 'hi' to the kids. Mandy doesn't have any homework (except for some math due on Friday). I look through the mail (an IEEE magazine, one mass mailing letter and two catalogs - Radio Shack and one for pilot's books).
- 6:15 We sit down and eat supper. We have baked ham with pineapples, bagels,

baked potatoes and green beans. For dessert, I have 'fake' ice cream and canned pineapple. The ice cream doesn't have sugar - it uses sorbitol. During supper, Ben starts whining and I get upset with him. I think it is because he is tired and not feeling too good. After supper, Ben and Mandy get silly and run around a bit. Virginia and I sit and talk about the day at the kitchen table. Mandy starts working on her math. Virginia and I clean up the table.

- 7:00 I sit down with Ben and start watching a TV show called 'WINGS' (a series about airplanes). This show is about the Lockheed C-130 Hercules military transport. Virginia is typing a notice up on a computer and is having some trouble. I help her. Ben and I start playing with Lego building blocks while we watch TV. Virginia has some trouble with the printer on the computer. The printer's batteries have gone bad. (I had worked on them recently, but there were still problems.) I try to find a battery to use in the printer.
- 8:00 I start helping Mandy with her math homework. I try to show her how to do things by showing her on a different problem - not just giving her the answer. Mandy is very meticulous and hard working. Mandy is in fourth grade. The problems include multiple column addition and subtraction, and graph oriented problems (trying to give kids a visual understanding of mathematics). Mandy is smart and does really well with these problems.
- 9:00 I get Ben started getting ready for bed. Virginia found the batteries that I was looking so I fix the printer and print out Virginia's note that she had been working on.
- I wrote the notes for this day on 3" by 5" cards all through the day. Mandy asks me what I am doing. I tell her that I am trying to write down what I did today so that I can put it in my 'memories' book. I tell her that I am doing this so they can read it some day.
- 9:15 Ben is in his bedroom playing with Legos. I think that he is supposed to be going to sleep. So, I take the Legos away and he gets really upset. Virginia tells me that she said it is okay - that she said he could play with them until he fell asleep. I lay down with Ben and after he gets settled down, I give him his Legos.
- 9:30 I watch the end of 'Quantum Leap'. It is a science fiction fantasy series about a physicist who 'leaps' into different peoples bodies in different times. It sounds hokie, but I like it. I have a little bit of white chocolate. I give Mandy a goodnight kiss.
- 10:20 I start working on the slides for the post mortem meeting. I do this in my office upstairs. It has been a long day and I am pretty tired, but I need to

get this done. I would like to have done a better job of preparing, but I do the best I can.

11:20 I go downstairs and check on the kids (both asleep) and kiss them. I go upstairs and start getting ready for bed. I do my exercises. I do about 20 minutes almost all the time. This includes jumping rope (150-200 times), leg lifts, push ups, toe touches, jumping jacks and riding on an stationary exercise bicycle. Tonight, I don't get do the bike because I am so tired.

11:50 I lie down to go to bed. I am very tired. Virginia is riding the exercise bike and watching TV. She asks if it will bother me if she watches TV. I tell her no. After about 15 minutes or so I fall asleep.

Thoughts

Family

Virginia and Amanda and Ben are the most important parts of my life.

The meaning of life

I have thought about this a lot over the years. Why am I here? What should I do? Does it matter? I don't have any great answers to any of the questions. I want to live as long as I can. I want to enjoy myself. I want to contribute to society and the world (not be a burden on it). I want my kids to grow up happy, healthy and productive. I would like to have been a positive influence.

Don't panic

About the worst thing you can do is to get flustered. If you panic or get too worried, you can't respond to the problems that face you. It doesn't matter how bad something is, getting upset only makes it worse. During school, I always found that going into a test with a good, positive attitude was a big deal. I would do better with a good attitude than if I studied my brains out, but went in with a negative attitude. Basically, this means to do the best you can and then don't worry about it.

People matter

At home and work and play, it is the people around that are important. An aspect of this that I firmly believe is that no one is better than anyone else. People who think they are better than someone else really bother me.

If you're going to do something, do it right

My grandmother would always say this. I can still hear her voice saying this. If you are going to go to the effort of doing something - do a good job. Otherwise, don't bother.

Be positive and constructive

With yourself and others, try to be positive. In most cases, being negative doesn't do anything useful. I don't understand people who are mentally or physically destructive.

Be honest

Although you should be positive and constructive, you should also be honest. At work, I have found that immediate feedback (good and bad) is the only thing that makes sense. It is really hard to give somebody bad news or negative feedback. However, people seem to really appreciate hearing the 'straight poop'. I think this is partially because people understand that only people who really care bother to give honest feedback.

Admit mistakes and learn from them

Everyone makes mistakes. The real trick is admit that you do and to learn from them.

Just buckle down and do it

If you sit and worry about something or keep putting it off, it will never get done. Just start out and do a little bit of it. Then do a little bit more. Before you know it, you've accomplished something big. (And I really like feeling of accomplishment.)

Life is not a zero-sum game

In 'game theory', a zero sum game is one where there is a winner and a loser. A lot of people approach life this way: for me to win, you have to lose. I don't believe in this. In most things, there are ways for everyone to come out ahead.

Don't take yourself too seriously

Occasionally, I start to talk myself too seriously. This is a load of crap. I'm just a guy who makes mistakes like everyone else. (Of course, the fact that I am writing this 'thoughts' horse-shit down is an indication that I am taking myself too seriously again.)

Balance

A life needs balance. You need to have a reasonable balance of family, friends, work, play, dreams, goals and whatever else is important to you. No one aspect of your life will always be perfect. By having a balance between the major parts of your life, you can better handle the problems that come up - it gives you a better perspective.

Have Fun

Life is to be experienced. Enjoy it the best way you can.