

*Chapter 8. Our Early Years of Marriage*

*JoAnn and I got engaged on September 15, 1955, and set the date for our marriage while there was a lot of chaos in my family. My brother Russell, Jr. and his wife separated for the last time. My mother's situation was muddled and uncertain as she was by now divorced from Tony Pateras. My older sister Nancy's husband, Sterling Webster was on duty in Japan and her daughter Susan had medical problems. My younger sister, Mary Bess, got married to James Stubbs and was now in North Carolina, where her son David was born 7/23/1955. After some issues with my employment at Isaly's, I took a job at the Toddle House Restaurant on Wick Ave. in Youngstown, as a short-order cook for about \$160 a month. I don't remember how much JoAnn was making at her job, which she worked until Carol was born in April 1957. She had only \$973 reported income for social security up to 1966.*

We were married November 8, 1955; a pair of twenty-year olds. That seems very young to me now, but it was about the average age at that time. My mother was 20, my brother was 20, 2 of my sisters were 17, and one was 19. The grooms of my 3 sisters were older, anywhere from 4 to 16 years.

Our ceremony took place at Trinity Methodist Church, 30 W. Front St. in downtown Youngstown by the Reverend Homer J. R. Elford with family members present. My sister Nancy, acting as Matron of Honor, dropped JoAnn's ring on the floor at the appropriate time. In addition to Mom and Dad – Nancy, her daughter Susan, Bud, Antoinette, and Aunt Martha celebrated with us that day.



Trinity Methodist Church



The best day of my life

The wedding was on Election Day, so we had to wait for the polls to close before the Master Bar on Federal St. in downtown Youngstown would open for our reception. After dinner, we went with Dad and Bud to see a "floor show"??? After that we met with some friends Walt, Betty, and Dick at the Hillside Inn for a drink and then we all went to the Toddle House to see friends there and then to the Purple Cow for coffee. We left at 4:00AM for Pittsburgh.



My brother Bud took this picture of our wedding reception.

JoAnn had moved into our apartment before we were married. One time when I went to pick up JoAnn to take her out to dinner, I noticed that her makeup was different and not flattering. Mrs. Pringle, our landlady noticed also and interceded with help. I can honestly say that that was the only time in our life together that I had any concern about my wife's appearance. JoAnn worked in the office of Stambaugh-Thompson, a large local hardware chain. We had several friends who were regulars at the Toddle House Restaurant, including two who went with Bud and me on my bachelor party drive to Pittsburgh. I worked the night shift mostly and JoAnn and I had our date night on my night off. Usually, it ended in a late-night visit to the Tropics Bar which was within a short walking distance of our apartment. One of our friends played the organ at the bar until closing. Bill would come home with us, and we would play cards the rest of the night. Our drink of choice at that time was Seagram's Seven Crown whiskey and lots of Seven Up.

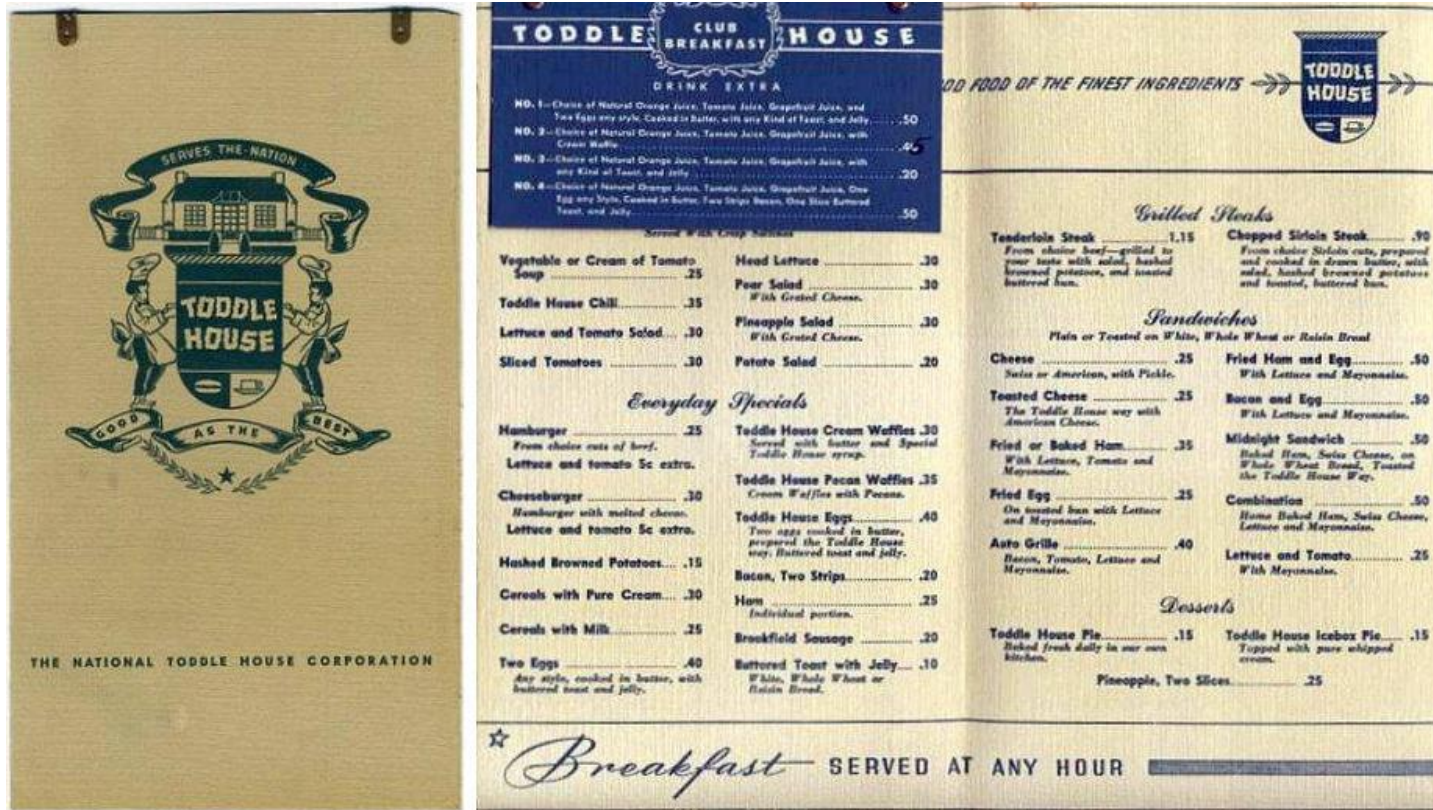
The Toddle House was a 24-hour forerunner of what became the Waffle House. It specialized in breakfast and most particularly the pecan waffle (which I had – topped with scrambled eggs and maple syrup, every morning when I worked the night shift). We also served a tenderloin steak for \$1.15, Toddle House Chili for 35 cents and Toddle House Ice Box Pie for 15 cents.

The Toddle House, as it looked similarly in Youngstown.





and the menu at that time.



In 1955, our country had just come through a recession, and the economy was on the rise. The average cost of a new house was \$10,950, average family income was \$4400 a year, and average rent was \$87 per month. Tuition at a University like Harvard was \$800 per year, so I could have gotten into local colleges for a few months' salary. Gasoline was 30 cents a gallon and stayed that low for at least 10 years. Bread was 18 cents a loaf and 1<sup>st</sup> class postage stamps were only 3 cents. Dwight Eisenhower was in his first term as President and Disneyland opened in California. On December 1, Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery Alabama for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. This led to a boycott by African Americans (usually called Negroes or Colored at that time) of the Montgomery bus system. This boycott lasted for over a year and led to the eventual end of segregation. In 1948, about 1% of American homes had television sets, but by 1955 it was in 75% of homes. I don't remember when we got our first TV, but watching television was not a big part of our lives. We still went to movies, read books and magazines and looked for other diversions, including spending time in taverns.

I left the Toddle House shortly after we were married to intern as a chef at the Town House Restaurant on the south side of Youngstown. *Fortunately*, the owner sold out after I had been there only a few weeks. I say fortunately because of the change of direction from something that it appeared that I was headed for in the dining area. I truly don't think our lives together would have been as eventful and as rewarding as they became.

I interviewed for a few jobs listed in the paper including one that I worked at one day before deciding that breathing in fiber glass dust all day was not healthy or to my liking anyway. I was then looking for any kind of job and signed up with an employment service which would cost my first month's salary. They sent me to Graybar Electric Company on West Rayen Ave. where I was interviewed by the Operating Manager, John Florig. He wanted to hire me but was concerned with my draft status. The employment agency sent me back to give them information that I was classified 3A since I was married. I was hired and started on

March 26, 1956, as a warehouse receiver (the second miracle of my young life - see *chapter 10 on My Career*). I later learned that I was hired to replace another employee who had left after ½ day in my job.

It was a hard job, as I unloaded and moved into stock, packages of merchandise that often weighed up to 80# for example in a crate of hardware. Considering my 135-pound frame, this was a big change for me. Fortunately, I was promoted out of the warehouse into the office within the first year. The increase in pay to \$250 a month (about \$2000 - 2500 today) helped when we became parents a year later. Keep in mind that this was a time when most families had only one paycheck and JoAnn would soon leave her job and become a full-time mom. I suppose we could have enlisted my mom or Aunt Martha to watch Carol, but I don't think that JoAnn would have even considered that.

In my new job, I found that I needed to learn many new things and utilize that learning. That even applied to the way I approached new things. Early in my career with Graybar, I had an office manager and another co-worker who had extremely caustic personalities. It was seldom that a friendly word was uttered by either of them. I realized that there must be reasons for their attitude, so I avoided confrontations with them; but when it was impossible to get out of their way, I had to make a choice. I could respond in kind, or I could figure out a more pleasant method of dealing with them. At that time, I decided that I wasn't going to let anyone pull me down to their level.

1956 was the year that President Eisenhower signed the Federal Highway Act. As a general during World War II, Eisenhower was impressed by Germany's autobahn expressway system, which had been started in the 1930s. He decided that the United States needed something comparable. After the war, the economy was booming, and the President decided the time was right to push through the Interstate Highway System. It was the largest public works project in American history. It took longer than expected to build - 35 years - and it cost more than \$100 billion. But the first coast-to-coast interstate highway, I-80, was completed in 1986, running from New York City to San Francisco. Over the years, trips that once took a whole day were shortened to hours. However, it took 35 years instead of 12 to accomplish coast-to-coast highways and \$100 billion instead of \$35 billion which were the original estimates.

On December 17, 1956, Nancy Leigh Webster was born in Charleston, WV to my sister Nancy and her husband Sterling. We still did not have a car or had ever driven one. So, we used public transportation for everything. JoAnn later found another apartment that we liked better that was in the home of an older couple named Bobala. When JoAnn became pregnant, we moved into a larger apartment above a furniture store at 1319 Market Street. It was for that apartment that we bought our first furniture and incurred payments on such. We couldn't afford a refrigerator until after Carol was born. Again, fortunately, I now worked for Graybar, and we sold all kinds of appliances, and I never had to pay full price for the next 25 years. Color televisions were just coming on the market (1954), but we could not afford one at that time. The first 12-1/2" color sets cost about \$1000, which today would be about \$9000.

Carol Edith Brill was born April 2, 1957 (my third miracle in 2 years) at St. Elizabeth Hospital (where my sister Betsy and I had been born). After taking JoAnn to the hospital early that morning by taxi, I walked a few blocks to the Graybar office. At that time, of course, the father was not allowed to be with his wife during the birth process. I waited at Graybar for the call that birth was imminent shortly before noon. I don't remember for sure, but it is possible that I may have worked at my desk while waiting. Carol was born at 12:30PM and weighed 6# 15 oz. JoAnn's 4-day hospital bill was \$145.80, and I believe the doctor was about \$100 total. Childbirth was not covered by very many company-health plans and there was not a lot of testing and office visits. It was a blessing that most health care at that time was employer sponsored or covered by non-profit insurance; and most doctors were working stiffs like the rest of us. I certainly never felt that medical care for our family was burdensome.



CAROL EDITH BRILL

FORM 79

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

**ST. ELIZABETH HOSPITAL**  
1044 BELMONT AVENUE  
YOUNGSTOWN 4, OHIO

MR JON BRILL  
1319 MARKET ST  
YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

DATE 4/6/57

FOR: MRS JOANN  
ADDRESS SAME

ADMITTED: 4/2/57 DISMISSED: 4/6/57

THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO SEPARATE FOR YOU THAT PART OF YOUR HOSPITAL BILL WHICH WE ESTIMATE YOUR HOSPITAL INSURANCE WILL PAY. WE SUGGEST YOU RETAIN THIS STATEMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS.

HOSPITAL CHARGES		COLUMN 1 TOTAL CHARGES	COLUMN 2 TO BE PAID BY HOSPITAL INSURANCE	COLUMN 3 YOU OWE TO HOSPITAL
PRIVATE ROOM	DAYS @			
SEMI-PRIVATE ROOM	4 DAYS @ 15.50	62.00		
WARD ROOM	DAYS @			
OPERATING OR DELIVERY ROOM		25.00		
ANESTHESIA BY HOSPITAL EMPLOYEE		25.00		
MEDICATIONS AND DRESSINGS		4.80		
OXYGEN - SERUMS				
LABORATORY		5.00		
X - RAY				
BASAL METABOLISM				
ELECTRO - CARDIOGRAPH				
BLOOD SERVICE				
PHYSIOTHERAPY				
EMERGENCY ROOM				
NURSERY CHARGE	4 DAYS @ 6.00	24.00		
BLOOD - WHOLE OR PLASMA				
TELEPHONE				
TOTALS		\$145.80		

**DUPLICATE COPY**  
ORIGINAL has been sent to your Insurance Company.

YOUR BILL HAS NOT YET BEEN PAID BY YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY. THEREFORE COLUMN 2 IS WHAT OUR RECORDS SHOW YOUR INSURANCE CO. WILL PAY. ANY OVERPAYMENT WILL BE REFUNDED IMMEDIATELY UPON PAYMENT TO US BY YOUR INSURANCE CO. [COLUMN 3] IS YOUR PORTION OF THE HOSPITAL BILL AND IS DUE ON DATE OF DISCHARGE FROM THE HOSPITAL.



Shortly after Carol was born, I received a selective service notice to report for a physical exam on June 7<sup>th</sup> in Pittsburgh. I didn't realize at the time that I could have avoided this by simply notifying the SSS that my status had changed with my marriage and the birth of a child. My dad drove us to Pittsburgh with the 2-month-old baby and we stayed in his apartment overnight. JoAnn was amazed that dad had filled the oven of his gas stove with papers (although he probably did this to get the clutter out of sight).

My Grandfather Brill died on 6/27/1957 at the age of 95. Dad drove us to Hooks Mill to attend the funeral. We left baby Carol with my mother. This trip was a little over 200 miles but probably took all day at that time (remember – no interstate highways yet). The house at Hooks Mill was still wired with a hand-crank telephone system. Every other house on that line could listen in on any calls. Each home had its own crank code that identified who the call was for. That system lasted in a few localities until 1983.



Granddad's home at Hooks Mill as it looked in 2002.

JoAnn met my grandmother Hunter on the same trip. I think that we and my brother Bud returned to Youngstown on a train from Hancock, MD just north of Berkeley Springs.

JoAnn's parents and sister Emaleen's family came to Youngstown to see the new baby later that summer. On September 8, 1957, Joanne (Dodie) Stubbs was born to Mary Bess and Jimmy Stubbs. During the next year I went through several changes of assignment at Graybar eventually becoming an Inside Salesman. I was always one of the first to arrive since I didn't want to cut time short and possibly miss a bus and be late. Those who arrived early opened the mail. It was a close organization that ate lunch in the lunchroom and enjoyed one another's companionship. There were 4 women secretaries and clerks. The switchboard operator had to answer all incoming calls and place all long-distance calls. We had a direct line to our main house branch in Pittsburgh and you had to be put on the wait list to make calls to someone in that office, which we had to do numerous times a day. The most difficult job was probably the order typist because the machine which produced our shipping, billing, and accounting copies (I think about 11 carbonized pages) wasn't an easy one to handle successfully. The calculator operator still used a Burroughs calculator that was patented in 1888.



On January 31, 1958, the U. S. put its first satellite, Explorer I, into earth orbit. The Soviet Union had previously launched Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite, into space on October 4, 1957. On December 10, the first domestic passenger jet flight in the U. S. flew from New York to Miami. On Sept. 12, 1958, Jack Kilby, a Texas Instruments company engineer, invented the integrated circuit. It would revolutionize the electronics industry and eventually make cell phones and computers widespread. On October 5, 1958, the recently desegregated high school in Clinton, TN was nearly leveled by a bombing.

Jon Reid Brill, Jr. was born at 4:04 AM on December 13, 1958, in St. Elizabeth Hospital in Youngstown; he weighed 7# 7-1/2 oz. JoAnn got to choose his name since I had made the decision on Carol's name. Some other notable births in 1958 were Madonna, Prince, and Michael Jackson.



JON REID BRILL, JR.

Before Jonny was born, we had moved to a rented house on Glenwood Ave., McKinley Heights, across the street from JoAnn's Aunt Mary and Uncle Ben. We rented from an older woman, who everybody called Mrs. Ding because they couldn't pronounce her name. We could scrape by on my salary, but it didn't allow for many extras. We didn't have our car until several years later. I rode the bus into Youngstown for about an hour each way. Living across the street from JoAnn's aunt and uncle meant that our lives became entwined with theirs in many ways. Our diversions were connected to the local volunteer fire department, which her uncle was part of, in addition to taking a large role in running the weekly bingo sessions at the fire house. Occasionally, we would accompany them to the local bar where we drank beer and played shuffleboard. I found early on that I was not able to keep up with most of the regulars in my capacity to drink beer. I doubt that I was aware at the time that my father's sickness could be passed on genetically.



2196 Glenwood Ave. McKinley Heights as it now looks on Google Earth

We enjoyed living in McKinley Heights and while most of our time was spent with our two kids, we had other pastimes. One of the pleasures we found was going out to dinner at the orange roofed Howard Johnsons where we invariably had the fried clam dinner, and Carol and Jonny loved the ice cream of which HoJos advertised 28 flavors.



We lived in McKinley Heights from 1958 until 1964. Carol and Jonny grew from babies to toddlers to preschoolers and Carol went to the first grade. They had their little cousins Karen and Linda Treharn across the street to play with and had a normal childhood.



Jon, Jr., Karen, Linda, and Carol



Although I was never a volunteer fireman, Uncle Ben asked me to join the McKinley Heights Mutual Benefit Assn. which sponsored the fire department. For several years I was the treasurer and was on the committee that ran the annual festival and fire department parade as a fund raiser. The association bought a large tract of land and built a picnic ground for the community.



M.M.B.A. Park

On January 25, 1959, the first transcontinental commercial jet flight on American Air Lines Flight #2 took place. In February, the Dow-Jones Average closed above 600 for the first time. In March, the Barbie doll was introduced.

I have said that being hired by Graybar was one of the miracles that pulled my life together. There are several reasons I say this - first, is the close comradeship among the people I worked with due to a significant degree because Graybar is an employee-owned company. I became an owner in my third year with Graybar. Every 3 years, they gave all employees an opportunity to buy shares of stock in the company based on the size of their salary. In 1959, I was offered 54 shares of common stock for \$20.00 a share. This would cost more than 3 months' salary, so it was not lightly that I committed to buy this stock. Fortunately, Graybar arranged for time payments through a bank. My resolve was rewarded the following year when a 100% stock dividend was declared, and I had doubled my ownership. That original \$1080.00 investment is now worth about \$40,000 and has paid over \$75,000 in cash dividends over the last 60+ years. My stock ownership position has increased over the years from \$1080 to almost \$700,000. Annual income from dividends on this stock has historically been at least 10% (even in tough economic times); so, it now provides a substantial amount of our annual retirement income. To show how well Graybar treats its retirees, the value of the company stock that I owned at retirement has quintupled, due strictly to stock dividends, in just over 20 years.

The price of a can or bottle or glass of Coca-Cola was raised in 1959 from 5 cents after more than 70 years at that price. On August 21, Hawaii became the 50<sup>th</sup> state about a year after President Eisenhower signed the law that made Alaska the 49<sup>th</sup>.

In May 1960, the first birth control pills went on the market. JoAnn used them for a few years until we decided that we wanted another child (or two). The 1960s were turbulent times. The Viet Nam War began in earnest bringing all the problems around the draft and conscientious objectors. Almost half of our uniformed forces were deployed at one time or another to that conflict over a period of 12 years. The youth culture of that era was characterized as "sex, drugs, and rock and roll". Some of the fads of the 60s were tie-dye clothes, lava lamps, dancing the twist (also jerk, monkey, swim, Watusi, mashed potato, loco-motion), and riding banana-seat bikes.

In the summer 1960, we took our two kids on the bus to Virginia to see Emaleen, Harry, Judy and Harry Saville Jr. as well as JoAnn's mother and father in West Virginia.



Carol, Jonny, JoAnn, Judy, Emaleen and Harry Jr.

The presidential election of 1960 was on November 8, our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary. John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon by the narrowest margin of the twentieth century. I voted for Kennedy even though I had voted for Eisenhower and Nixon 4 years earlier.

Early in his presidency, Kennedy got some bad advice and approved an action against Cuba which had been taken over by Fidel Castro in 1959. Aided by our CIA, Cuban exiles made a landing on April 17, 1961, at what was called the "Bay of Pigs". This incursion of only 1500 men was quickly stopped by Castro, creating a huge embarrassment for our government.

JFK went on to serve a little more than 1000 days but had a very consequential presidency. As president, he broadened unemployment benefits, instituted the food-stamp program for low-income Americans, expanded Social Security, and increased library services and assistance for family farms. He initiated the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress as well as promoting civil rights and the central role of the arts in a vital society. May 25, 1961, in an address to a joint session of Congress, he proposed: **"I believe that this Nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth."**

On August 13, 1961, the Soviet Union began building what would become the "Berlin Wall" to separate those Germans living in the eastern section of Germany, controlled by the U.S.S.R. from unlimited access to the western section of Berlin, which was controlled by the Allied Powers, the U. S., Britain, and France. That wall became larger and more imposing until it finally came down with the fall of the U.S.S.R. in 1989. Our life was mundane compared to what was going on around us. On February 20, 1962, John Glenn's space capsule, *Friendship 7*, was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida as the first American to orbit the earth. On May 22, Continental Airlines Flight 11, from Chicago to Kansas City, MO crashed with 45 on board; the cause was a suicide bomber for insurance fraud. In the summer of 1962, Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" was serialized in the magazine "The New Yorker". Carson opened the book with a little fable that was a composite of several wilderness areas that she had observed. The fable described a spring morning in which there was no riot of birdsong, but only silence, because the ecosystem had been destroyed by the widespread misuse of harmful pesticides like DDT. This led directly to a study that was commissioned by President Kennedy to re-examine the government's policy on the use of pesticides, but it was 10 more years, on June 14, 1972, before DDT the most harmful pesticide was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency, which came into being in 1970.

1962 was the year of the full-service stand-alone discount department stores. Kresge Co., known for its 5 and dime stores, opened a small version of the Kmart discount stores in January and an 80,000 square foot version in March. Twenty years later there were over 2000 Kmart stores in the US and Canada.

On July 12, 1962, the Rolling Stones played their first show in London. In October 1962, the country had a scare that was short lived but was probably the most dangerous that the world ever faced up to that time and beyond. President John F. Kennedy announced on television that the Soviet Union and its Russian President Nikita Krushchev was building the infrastructure in Cuba to be able to launch nuclear missiles at the USA from 90 miles away, which would mean there would be no time for warning. Over a period of about 2 weeks, Kennedy imposed a blockade of Cuba to prevent further U.S.S.R. ships from bringing missiles or building materials. He further demanded that all missile related infrastructure and supplies be removed immediately from Cuba under threat of invasion. Shortly thereafter, Kennedy and Krushchev came to an agreement. The Russians would remove all missile material from Cuba, and we would promise not to invade Cuba again as we had previously done with the disastrous incursion into Cuba with Cuban anti-communist forces at the "Bay of Pigs." There was also a secret deal for the U.S. to remove its nuclear missiles from Turkey where they were less than 500 miles from several Soviet countries.



Not long after the opening of the first Walmart store in Benton, AR on 7/2/1962, on one of our annual trips to Grandma and Grandpa Exline's, we got to see Frank at his job working on gas wells. One of his jobs was to blow off the accumulated moisture in the gas lines. This made a shriek that caused Carol to cover her ears and Jonny to cry and hold his ears.

Not having a car until 1963, we took the bus to West Virginia to visit JoAnn's parents at least once every year and for other trips. Carol and Jon did not take too well stomach-wise to traveling on buses. They seemed to become very nauseous and vomited on almost every bus trip we took. When we did get a car, they did not do much better, so we mostly travelled overnight so they would sleep most of the trip. Our first car and every car that we owned from then on was purchased new except several times we bought a used car for a second car. Early on, we mostly had station wagons which provided space for the little ones to lie down in the back when we traveled. This was before interstate highways, so trips were longer, and roads were more winding which even affected JoAnn and me, when she was driving. This was before seat belt laws went into effect, which for us was in Missouri in 1985. When all the children were bigger, we started buying vans and sedans. This was before SUVs which did not become popular until the Jeep Cherokee of 1984.





Carol and Jon at Uncle John Donahue's farm in West Virginia

In June 1963, we drove to McKees Rocks for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my high school graduation. There were about 50 from that class in attendance. I'm 6<sup>th</sup> from the left, next to Howard Brewer, my best buddy at McKees Rocks High School.



On June 10, President Kennedy signed the equal pay act which attempted to see that the efforts of women in the work force were rewarded similarly to men. At that time the wage gap was 59%; it was up to 83.7% in 2023. In the summer of 1963, the Post Office began using the newly authorized Zip Code system. On August 28, the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom" brought more than 200,000 people to Washington, DC. This was put together by a group whose leaders included Bayard Rustin. It was completely peaceful and non-violent and was capped by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. West Chester, PA opened a high school in 2006 named for the civil rights leader Bayard Rustin. Our granddaughters, Lauren and Allyson attended that school.

JoAnn always maintained our correspondence with family members, and we visited some of them every year. That summer, we visited my sister Nancy and her family in Oak Hill, WV. JoAnn remembers that while there we saw the movie "To Kill a Mockingbird" which had been released for viewing on Christmas 1962.

On Friday, November 22, 1963, I heard at work that President Kennedy had been shot. I found out when I got home that he was dead. I rarely left the TV for that whole weekend, and I don't believe that I even stopped watching TV to sleep. This was probably the first 24-hour news story on TV. I watched live when Jack Ruby shot Kennedy's killer Lee Harvey Oswald two days later.

In December 1963, my mother and father remarried after almost 25 years of divorce. I know that they loved each other all that time, even though they didn't often express it. Dad bought a house with a few acres in Brownsville, PA; it was the only house they ever owned. They lived out his last years on his pride-and-joy farm. We visited them as often as we could from Pittsburgh and later Buffalo.



Mom and Dad after 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage

February 9 1964, the Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show for the first time, as teenage girls screamed hysterically in the audience and 73 million people watched from home — a record for American television at the time. Their appearance on the show is considered the beginning of the "British Invasion" of music in the United States. The Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show the following two Sundays, as well. On the first, they sang "All My Loving," "Till There Was You," "She Loves You," "I Saw Her Standing There," and finally "I Want to Hold Your Hand" -which had just hit No. 1 on the charts.

On March 27, 1964, a 9.2 magnitude earthquake (the largest ever in Alaska) occurred with a resulting tsunami that killed 124 with 18 occurring in California and Oregon. In May 1964, the computer programming language Basic was created by 2 Dartmouth College professors.



Carol and Jon with Susan and Nancy Leigh  
Webster at Mom and Dad's Brownsville house

In September 1964, I was offered a transfer to the Graybar office in Pittsburgh, PA. Even though I would be doing essentially the same job there, it was made clear that my opportunities for advancement would be greater from this office. That was certainly true since I was promoted twice in the next four years. I had made several close friendships in my 8 years with Graybar, and it was hard to leave those behind; although it turned out that I was to return on business trips to Youngstown many times. JoAnn and I had to decide if taking this step was right for our family. We had lived in McKinley Heights for about six years. Carol had completed her first year in school and Jonny would start in September. It seemed easy enough for me, but I had had at least 10 homes in my first 18 years. It was a harder decision for JoAnn, but she was always supportive of my career.

My closest friendship was with the salesman whose customers' business I handled in the office. He was a former army captain in World War II who spent some time in Europe after the war and met and married his wife in England. He won awards for being one of the top salesmen in the company. He tried to talk me out of leaving Youngstown and even told our manager that he would pay my \$50 a month promotional raise out of his own pocket.

On June 19, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which gave persons of all races the rights to all public accommodations. This was after the "Dixiecrat" filibuster which lasted about 3 months was overturned by a vote of 71-29. Since then, the Senate rules have been changed so that only 60 votes instead of 67 are needed to end the debate in a filibuster.

In July 1964, before our move to Pittsburgh, we drove to West Virginia to visit JoAnn's parents and drove on from there to Herndon, VA to visit with her sister Emaleen and brothers Joe and Jud. We've always tried, whenever we could, to visit relatives in West Virginia (Weston, Berkeley Springs, Charleston, Oakhill, Beckley), Reston VA, Wilmington, NC, and (after we moved to Pittsburgh) Youngstown, McKinley Heights, Brownsville, PA, and Cumberland, MD.





Carol and Jonny with Grandma and Grandpa Exline

We took a side trip to Blackwater Falls near Davis WV where the Blackwater River enters Blackwater Canyon.



While we were in West Virginia, we drove into Washington, D.C. to show Carol and Jonny our nation's capital. We visited many of the landmarks and government buildings. The most important thing we visited that day was the burial site of John F. Kennedy which was still under construction.

We moved into a rental house at 106 Oakwood Drive in Glenshaw, PA in September 1964 in time for Carol to enter second grade and Jon to enter first grade even though he was a little young (3 months to his 6<sup>th</sup> birthday). Glenshaw is a suburb of Pittsburgh, and our home was about 9 miles northeast of the Graybar office on Ridge Ave. on Pittsburgh's north side. In November, we joined the Epworth Methodist Church at 1300 Burchfield Rd., Allison Park. Reverend Robert G. Krouse baptized the four of us on November 1, 1964, and was a major spiritual help to our family. Later, I became chairman of the Official Board. The children enjoyed going to McDonald's take-out restaurant which had just reached Pittsburgh; the first one opened in California in 1953. You could get a meal including a "Big Mac", French-fries, and a milk shake for under a dollar, and sit in your car and eat it. Afterward, we would shop at the new Kmart store; those stores began in 1962.

In January 1964, the U. S. Surgeon General had concluded that “cigarette smoking contributes substantially to mortality from certain specific diseases and contributes to the overall death rate.” After a trip to West Virginia for Thanksgiving, we returned in a snowstorm and the roads were so bad we had to stop and help a woman get her car going. JoAnn ended up with pneumonia which she also had the previous winter. The doctor told her she needed to stop smoking, or she might die the next time that she caught pneumonia. Thankfully, I had quit smoking the year before and was glad to help her quit. My sister Nancy came to help care for her and the kids.

In February 1965, the first U. S. combat troops were sent into South Vietnam. On June 7, 1965, the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that a Connecticut law banning contraceptives was unconstitutional. The result of this opinion was remarkable. When you look at the numbers, it couldn't be clearer. From 1960 when the FDA approved “the Pill” to 2011, the percentage of women who completed four or more years of college multiplied by six; The numbers of married women in the labor force nearly doubled between 1960 and 2012.

On March 25, 1965, in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke on the steps of the State Capital what is called his “How long, Not Long” speech in which he quoted “How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

On May 2, 1965, Manuel Rey Arocho Jr. was the first child born to Antoinette and Manuel in Youngstown.

On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed **the Social Security Act of 1965** into law, creating the Medicare and Medicaid programs. It was the country's first national health insurance program. The first person to get a Medicare number was former President Harry Truman. I hate to think about what might have happened to people like our parents if programs like Social Security were not available. I think that the Great Recession of 2008 would have been a “Greater” Depression without those and other programs that were instituted since 1932 by Democratic Presidents.

On my birthday, 8/3/1965, the House of Representatives passed **the Voting Rights act of 1965**; the Senate followed on August 4, and President Lyndon Johnson signed it on August 6. The Act outlawed most of the “Jim Crow” laws of the southern states. Almost all the votes against the Act were from Democratic southern state lawmakers. On September 19, President Johnson signed the **National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act**, which created the founding of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

On Tuesday, November 9, 1965, an electrical power blackout occurred affecting parts of Ontario, Canada and Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Over 30 million people and 80,000 square miles (207,000 km<sup>2</sup>) were left without electricity for up to 13 hours.

1965 was notable in a quiet way regarding developments in technology. Two researchers at MIT developed a protocol that allowed two computers, one in Boston and one in California to “talk” to each other by exchanging packets of data over their network. Also in 1965, Gordon Moore made the observation that **the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit doubles about every two years** (actually, more like 18 months). This became known as “Moore’s Law. This doubling capacity means that current computerization is a billion times more powerful 60 years later.

In the summer of 1965, we made our usual trip to West Virginia, but this time it was from Pittsburgh, and we stopped at Berkeley Springs on our way to the farm near Weston.



JoAnn and Jonny with Grandmother Hunter in the  
backyard of Uncle Bill's house

In May 1966, I was promoted to District Warehouse Superintendent. In this position, I supervised about a dozen men who were mostly older than me and belonged to a teamster's union. The previous superintendent had a lot of trouble with the union and was constantly at odds with his workers. I let them know that I was interested in their ideas about how to get the job done and would listen to any suggestions. During my time there, I did not have any grievances filed; although there was a one-week contract strike that I had to work around with non-union employees. When I left that job to move to Buffalo, the warehouse employees bought me an expensive going-away gift.



official board and commission chairman of his local church.  
—R.E. Dapper, Pittsburgh.

10 Aug., Sept., 1968 OUTLOOK

In July 1966, the federal Medicare insurance program went into effect. Later, in 1966, we drove to North Carolina to visit my sister Betsy and her family. We had extra daylight hours as Daylight Savings Time was finally standardized in the U. S. after being dropped when WWII ended in 1945. On our way back, we stopped at Beckley WV to visit Nancy and her family. On our drive there, our car blew a water pump while we were in the middle of nowhere. I started walking ahead because I didn't remember passing through any towns recently. After about ½ hour a car stopped and told me there was nothing ahead for miles. They took me back to a town where there was a garage. The mechanic drove me back to our car and fixed it quickly and we were on our way at a cost of less than \$25. Am I lucky or what? My recollection is that we went to New River Gorge while we were there. In recent years a lot of bungee jumping has gone on there.

A new show came to television in September 1966; it was called "Star Trek" and was different from any other so-called "science fiction" we had seen before. On October 21, 1966, in Aberfan, Wales UK, a mound of spoil from the local coal mines collapsed and came down on the village where it overran the local junior school. 116 children and 28 adults were killed. It was a case where the mine was supervised by the National Coal Board and owned by the government. There were rules, best practices, common



sense, and human decency that were ignored, overruled, and swept under the rug. There must be oversight for industries, but oversight must be honest and effective.

On December 2, 1966, Antonis Michael Arocho was born to Antoinette and Manuel in Youngstown. Antonis was Antoinette's father's name.

The drive from Oakwood Drive to the office was always busy, traffic-wise, and even more so when it snowed. One of the shortcuts that I took crossed the railroad line in the middle of one of the towns along the way. There were alarms to warn you but no gates. One day I thought I could beat the train after the crossing alarm had started. As I crossed, I looked to my right and saw the engine bearing down on me. That scared me straight. I never took a chance like that again.

On January 15, 1967, the Green Bay Packers beat the Kansas City Royals 35 – 10 in the first Super Bowl. We moved from Oakwood Drive a few hundred feet into the house that our landlord had just moved out of at 1636 Middle Rd. It was in this house that we lived when Kenneth was born at 7:30 PM on May 17, 1967, at St. Margaret Memorial Hospital 815 Freeport Rd., Aspinwall, PA. The hospital was about 15 minutes away and, when I took Carol home from seeing her mother and new brother, she wasn't feeling well. The next morning, I learned that Carol had appendicitis, and we had to take her to the hospital where she and her mother spent the next few days. Carol had a great time racing the halls of the hospital after her operation and being "stitched up" with super glue. One of Carol's good friends from church was Susie Hannes, daughter of Joanne and Jim Hannes, who were our friends.



Kenneth Allen Brill

Kenneth was our largest baby at 9# 8-1/2 oz. and 22-1/2 in. and probably the fastest delivery. My uncle Charles Hunter died 3 days after Kenneth was born and there was some discussion with my mother about naming him Charles, but we had already picked his name from a baby name book.

On May 22, 1967, in Pittsburgh, a new program began on Public Television. "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" was a children's program that employed local actors and puppets to engage on various topics that would be of interest to children but never talked down to them. Fred Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian minister who studied at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Child Development and collaborated with a child psychologist for 30 years. He always spoke directly into the camera and often dealt with serious subjects like war, divorce, death, and competition.

On June 12, 1967, the U. S. Supreme Court decided unanimously in the case Loving v Virginia that it is unconstitutional to prevent marriage between individuals based strictly on racial guidelines. On December 3, 1967, the first human to human heart transplant was performed at the University of Cape Town, South Africa by Dr. Christaan Barnard. This followed several years of experimentation with animal hearts and preceded, unfortunately, the taking of human hearts without prior approval from dying black accident victims in Virginia.

We took our new baby Kenneth to visit Grandma and Grandpa Exline for Christmas 1967.

Early in 1968, my boss asked me to go with him to Buffalo on a training mission. While there I was to observe the warehouse operation and make notes of what could be done to rearrange the warehouse and otherwise make the operation more efficient. I went back a few weeks later and implemented those recommendations. What I did must have made an impression because later that year I was asked to transfer to Buffalo to be the Operating Manager. My first transfer to Pittsburgh was a very easy decision. The two children were still small, and Jonny was not yet in school. This second transfer was quite a bit harder with 3 children and one on the way. The deciding factor was the inducement that I would now be "in management" and getting management pay and bonuses.

The first Red Lobster Restaurant was opened in 1968 in Lakeland FL. Bill Darden the owner had a history of not only employing black workers but also serving them in his first restaurant dating back to 1938 in "Jim Crow" Georgia. The climate of the country turned ugly in April 1968 when Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot in Memphis TN where he had gone to support the strike of garbage workers. In June 1968, a law was passed that changed to Monday the day that certain national holidays were to be observed – Washington's Birthday (later President's Day) and Labor Day. At the same time, it created Memorial Day which had previously been observed for a hundred years on May 30, as Decoration Day. It also made Columbus Day a federal holiday and moved Veteran's Day which was later returned to November 11. The holiday remembering Martin Luther King Jr. was signed into law by Ronald Reagan in 1983 but was not fully observed in all 50 states until 2000.

1968 was also the year that protests to the war in Viet Nam reached a peak and there were violent confrontations with police at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago to nominate their presidential candidate. This probably contributed to the loss of Hubert Humphrey to Richard Nixon although the fact that George Wallace, the segregationist governor of Alabama won five traditionally Democratic states didn't help either. In the popular vote, Nixon got a 1.3 percent higher total.

For our move to Buffalo, we rented a duplex at 42 Lancaster Ave. in Lancaster, NY. There were three other young couples that lived in those duplexes with whom we became fast friends: Don and Carol Newkirk, Richard and Joan Trombley and Bob and Carol Cody. Next door there was a middle-aged couple Marge and George Frank, who were always very helpful neighbors. Shortly after we moved to Lancaster, we took the kids up to Niagara Falls, and visited Fort Niagara in Youngstown, NY. One of the ways that I broke the news to Carol and Jonny about our move was to tell them that we were going to see Niagara Falls. When they asked how long we were staying, I had to admit to "a few years".

We joined the Faith United Methodist Church at 5505 Broadway St., Lancaster, NY, where we became extremely involved with the youth ministry. Carol sang and Jonny played guitar and sang in Holy Day programs that we wrote and performed with our teen-age group. When the Broadway musical "Jesus Christ Superstar" came out in 1971, our group used songs from that show in our Christmas presentation. JoAnn and I participated in a lot of the Church's adult activities that included various types of marriage counseling.



Faith United after rebuilding from 1984 fire

The first big event of our move to Buffalo was the birth of Charles on September 22, 1968, at 8:05 AM in the St. Joseph Sisters of Charity Hospital in Cheektowaga, NY. He weighed 8# 4oz. and was 21-1/2". We did decide this time to name him after my mother's brother, my Uncle Charles Edward Hunter, who had died the year before.



Charles Edward Brill



During the next 6 years that we lived in western New York State, we explored that area a lot. We went to Niagara Falls quite a few times. We saw lots of the province of Ontario, Canada including Toronto, Kingston, and the Thousand Islands.



At Old Fort Niagara in July before Charles was born

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the 3 Apollo 8 astronauts circled the moon for the first time in man's history. They took turns reading from Genesis "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness."

On July 20, 1969, the Apollo 9 Astronauts landed on the moon, we were all glued to our TV sets for that, and the splashdown return 4 days later. Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders, later said that although the astronauts went on their mission to explore the moon, what they really discovered was the planet Earth. He added: "I think it's important for people to understand they are just going around on one of the smaller grains of sand on one of the spiral arms of this kind of puny galaxy [...] it [Earth] is insignificant, but it's the only one we've got." On August 15, 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York and had almost a half million attendees.



Family at Dad's Farm, summer 1969

Dad died September 12, 1969, at the age of 69 in Brownsville. He had lived from 1900 when most of the travel was by horse or horse-drawn wagons (he was listed in the 1920 census as being a carpenter in an automobile factory) until 1969 brought men landing on the moon. We drove our family of 6 to Berkeley Springs for the funeral. He was buried at Greenway Cemetery in the Shackelford family plot where my grandfather was buried in 1904. Grandmother Hunter had signed the plot over to my mother and Aunt Martha since she was buried with her second husband Ed Hunter in another part of the cemetery.

JoAnn and I have discussed our final resting place, which will be in Greenway Cemetery in Berkeley Springs. My sister' Nancy, purchased 6 plots in the new section of the cemetery, and she is buried there with her husband, Roger, daughter Nancy and stepson Billy. Her daughter Susan has offered us one of these plots. It seems to make sense for us to do this as most of my family is buried there – maternal grandmother and grandfather; mother and father; older sister and brother, mother's twin sister and two half-brothers; aunts, uncles, cousins, niece, and nephew. I lived 6 of my foundational years in Berkeley Springs and with JoAnn and our family have taken many trips there over the years. I have always enjoyed the small town, and the quiet atmosphere that surrounds you there. In addition, Berkeley Springs is only an hour away from my paternal grandparents' home and a 2-1/2 hours' drive from JoAnn's family home in Weston. This area is really the nexus of our Brill family.

#### **Russell E. Brill**

Services were conducted Monday afternoon at three o'clock at the Hunter Funeral Home here for Russell E. Brill, of Brownsville, Pa., who died Friday afternoon.

A conductor on the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, he was born in Hampshire County, April 14, 1900, son of the late Smith R. and Bessie Creswell Brill.

He is survived by his wife, the former Miss Mary Shackelford, Brownsville; two sons, Russell E., Jr., Brownsville, and Jon R., Buffalo, N. Y.; three daughters, Mrs. Sterling Webster, Berkeley Springs; Mrs. James Staubs, Wilmington, N. C., and Mrs. Manuel Archo, Youngstown, Ohio; one sister, Miss Bama Brill, Winchester, Va.; one brother, Walton Brill, Capon Bridge; 13 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Services were conducted by his nephew, the Rev. William Price, pastor of First Congregational Church, Frostburg, Md. Burial was in Greenway Cemetery.



On September 2, 1969, in what is regarded as the beginning of the internet, a transmission is made from computer to computer at UCLA through a 15-foot cable. On October 29, 1969, the first message on ARPAnet was sent from UCLA to Stanford University. ARPAnet is the forerunner to the internet. The first message was "LO" since it crashed in the middle of the typing of "login". *The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network was the first wide-area packet-switched network with distributed control and one of the first computer networks to implement the TCP/IP protocol suite. Both technologies became the technical foundation of the Internet.* [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ARPANET)

In November 1969, a new program for children began on National Education Television (which later became PBS). It was called "Sesame Street". On 11/13/1969, Ervin Arocho was born to Antoinette and Manuel in Youngstown. He now goes by the name Frank. JoAnn and I visited Frank and his wife Diane many times in Fort Myers FL before and after Antoinette's death.

On April 22, 1970, the first "Earth Day" was held, bringing together over 20 million people to protest the violation of the earth by the use of products and processes that cause harm to the environment. This was, largely, brought about by the publication of Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" which was mostly about the effect of pesticides and other chemical pollution. What followed was the forming of the EPA and the

passage of Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts in the 1970s. These accomplishments were signed into law by President Richard Nixon, except for the Clean Water Act which he vetoed; but it was passed by Congress over his veto on October 18, 1972. Nixon also signed legislation on 4/1/1970 that banned cigarette advertising on television and radio. Newspaper and magazine advertising continued until December 1989 when that was also banned.

JoAnn had always made a lot of clothes for the children and for herself, which helped with the finances. Having clothes for the four children, even though she kept outgrown clothes for hand-me-downs, was expensive as we were particular about them always looking their best.



Carol is learning how to crochet with her mom.

Later, in 1970, we rented a camper and towed it behind our Ford Station Wagon on a trip that took us south through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.



After visiting my sister Betsy, in Wilmington, we drove north and stopped at Herndon VA to visit JoAnn's sister Emaleen. One of the memorable occurrences of this trip occurred because, at that time, we had no credit cards or gas cards. As we were getting close to Emaleen's, which was just off the Washington D.C. Beltway, we were getting low on gas and had just 50 cents left, enough for a gallon of gas. This was what we had to ask of the service station person (no self-service at that time) at the nearest gas station after we got off the Beltway. Emaleen's husband, Harry owned a grocery store at that time, so we were able to get a check cashed.

We enjoyed the camper so much that we bought one and used it to camp all over New York state, lower Canada and as far east as Vermont and south to Florida and west to Ohio. Many of these trips were with our good friends and Lancaster, NY neighbors the Newkirks. One of our family trips took us up into Canada around Lake Ontario to Kingston and the Thousand Islands area. Another trip was to Lake George in eastern New York State to visit another former Lancaster neighbor that we were close to. We took the "Jon boat" that Jonny had "purchased", strapped to the top of our station wagon.





We had a great week at Lake George but a big scare on our way back. Traveling on a highway at a high speed, the strap to the boat in the front of the car broke and the boat took off backward. Fortunately, the back straps held, and the boat ended up on the camper. I was so unnerved that when I stopped the car and got out to assess the damage, I neglected to turn off the engine. While Jonny and I were getting the boat back on the top of the car, Kenneth slipped into the front seat and stepped on the gas. That really shook us up.

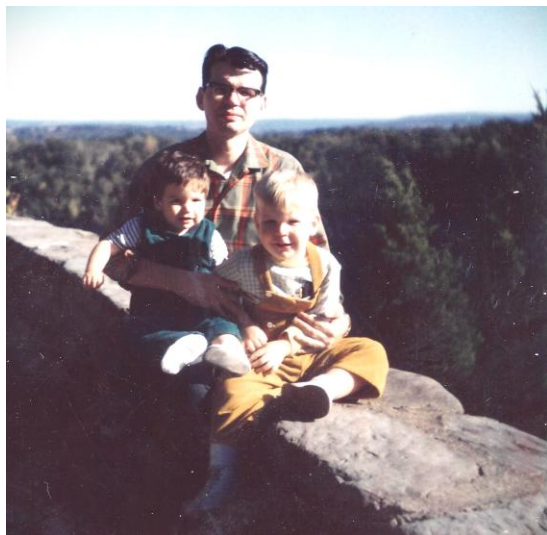


'Lake George' (1857), an oil painting by John William Casilear

Speaking of getting “shook up”, I had my most “white knuckle” moments on a flight back to the Buffalo airport. It was in the middle of winter and as we came in for our landing the plane pulled up suddenly and we were then told that a landing in Buffalo would be too dangerous and that we were diverted to Rochester, NY, only a short distance by air. When we arrived there, we were told that conditions were still not favorable and that we would land in Syracuse, NY. We arrived back at Buffalo airport by bus later that night. I don't remember what kind of concern this put JoAnn through, but I can imagine it was more worrying for her than for me. Almost 40 years later, the most recent major U.S. airline crash occurred in Buffalo under similar circumstances in February 2009, killing all 49 people on board.

Our most frequent trips were north to Niagara Falls and east to Indian Falls Lake. The Canadian side was a much prettier route for us to get to Niagara Falls. One time we did, however, run into a swarm of mayflies and had to stop because we couldn't see ahead of us. We also often went to Letchworth State Park which was less than an hour away and was near Rochester where our friends the Newkirks had moved. Our families were camping there in the fall and while on a hike we ran across a flock of turkeys. We also did a camping trip with the Newkirks on the upper shore of Lake Erie in Canada. One evening we took all the kids on a “Snipe Hunt”.





1969 At Letchworth State Park with Kenny and Chuck



Camping at Indian Falls, NY



Carol, Kenny, and Chuck at Indian Falls

During the summer, we often camped at Indian Falls Lake, sometimes with the Newkirks whose camper is shown next to ours above. From there I could drive to work, so we could stay for a week at a time. The kids fished and swam in the lake.



Christmas 1970



In August 1971, we travelled to Wilmington, NC to see Mary Bess and her family and took this picture with Dodie (Joanne) and David Stubbs.

In October 1971 Disney World opened but we didn't make our first trip there until 1975. Also, in 1971, the Intel 4004, a 4-bit central processing unit (CPU) released by Intel Corporation, was the first commercially produced microprocessor. This was also about the time that Graybar began to automate more manual processes. I had to go to Minneapolis for training on the new equipment so that I could train our personnel. From this point on, I was very closely involved with Graybar's computerization activities. October 1971 also saw the opening on Broadway of the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar". Songs from this show were used by our church teenagers during that year's holiday celebrations.

*The United States Congress passed the **Comprehensive Child Development Act** in 1971 as part of the Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1971. The bill would have implemented a multibillion-dollar national day care system designed partially to make it easier for single parents to work and care for children simultaneously, thereby alleviating strain on the welfare system. It was vetoed by President Nixon.* Wikipedia

The bill had originally passed the Senate 63 to 17 but failed to get the 2/3 majority to override the President's veto.

On December 12, 1971, Edward Arocho was born to Antoinette and Manuel Arocho. Edward is autistic and has lived with his brother Frank since his mother passed away. On January 30, 1972 (Bloody Sunday), British Paratroopers shot 27 unarmed demonstrators in Derry, Northern Ireland. Thirteen died, half of them children. The "Troubles" between Irish Catholics and Northern Ireland Protestants lasted about 30 years from 1968 until 1998 when an agreement was reached. The settlement was negotiated by former U. S. Senator George Mitchell. Senator Mitchell had previously led the U. S. Senate to the enactment of the first childcare law and authored the low-income housing tax credit program.

In the late 1960s, Graybar instituted a new policy regarding the annual bonus system. In addition to an annual cash bonus there would be a profit-sharing distribution of a certain percentage of your salary which would be the same percentage for everyone. This money would be placed in a retirement account and invested. As time went on this improved substantially as to the method of investing, although essentially it was up to me to make the decisions about the specific investment method. By this time, we were starting to feel a little better about our financial situation. However, during the recession of the early seventies, our investments in the stock market were losing money every year. At that time, it seemed to me that it would be better to withdraw all that was allowed and use it to buy our first owned home.

In April 1972, we found a beautiful, almost new 4-bedroom colonial on a half-circle drive at 11768 Manitou Dr. Alden, NY, about 15 minutes from our duplex in Lancaster and 45 minutes from Graybar. We paid \$35,000 (equal to \$200,000-225,000 in 2020) with about \$15,000 down payment. It was in this house that Charles first started school. Several times when the school bus picked him up, the driver had to bring him back and his mother had to drive him to school. We had a problem with some local teenagers who didn't like that we reported them for misbehavior. We came home one time to find nasty words painted on the house.



Our first owned home

We also had drainage problems in the basement. This was the first of three houses that we bought that later had drainage problems. The basement had a sump pump that mostly kept water out but several times when the power went off, there was a problem. Once after a holiday trip we came home to about a foot of water in the basement almost up to where our laundry appliances were raised. We spent the next day or two using buckets to throw water out of the basement windows. We also had to replace the pump on our water well during our time there.



1972 trip to the Thousand Islands area

In June 1972, a long national nightmare began with the arrest of 5 “burglars” in the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Complex. Over the next 2 years it was revealed that the Richard Nixon reelection campaign was involved in a conspiracy of “dirty tricks”, illegal money payments, subversion of the justice system, and other felonies as well as a broad cover-up by the president and his administration officials of whom 48 were convicted of crimes. The cover-up was so successful that Nixon was reelected in November 1972, only to resign on August 9, 1974 when tape recordings proved that criminal actions had been approved by the president.

In later years, Robert Redford, who starred in the movie “All the President’s Men” which told the story of the criminality within the Nixon administration, discussed a publicity tour for another movie that he made in Florida in July 1972. The studio had him make “whistle stops” in several cities. He says he drew crowds that were larger than 3 of the Democratic candidates for nomination of their party for president. He admitted to the crowds that he had nothing to say. It really shows how little interest that people show in preparing for the most important duty of a citizen.

In time for Christmas 1972, the video arcade game Pong debuted in California, but they could only produce about 10 working models a day. Pong was a one- or two-person game where a blip on a screen was flipped back and forth across the screen by a controlled paddle operator, something like tennis. On the last day of 1972, Roberto Clemente, one of the Pittsburgh Pirate’s best and most famous players was delivering a load of aid to victims of an earthquake in Nicaragua. The plane crashed, killing all on board.

On April 3, 1973, a Motorola engineer, Martin Cooper made the first ever call on a cell phone prototype. This phone, the Dyna TAC 8000x, sold for \$3,995 and took 10 hours to charge for 30 minutes of call time. The phone was featured in the movie “Wall Street”, used by Michael Douglas starring as Gordon Gekko. On May 14, 1973, America’s first space station, Skylab was launched. It served as a solar observatory, a microgravity lab, a medical lab, an Earth-observation station, and a proving ground for new technology that enabled humans to survive in space. Microgravity toilets, showers, and sleeping bags — among other necessities — were developed or perfected on Skylab. It was only used for 6 months and eventually crashed into the Indian Ocean in 1979. It was the precursor to the International Space Station which was launched in 1998.

On September 3, 1973, Grandmother Hunter died in Berkeley Springs at the age of 91. We drove to Berkeley Springs for the funeral and burial in Greenway Cemetery. In the chapter on My Early Years, I recount how my two sisters and I lived with Grandmother off and on from 1941 to 1947. She was a major influence in my life, probably more so than my parents.



Grandmother Hunter at 90



From October 6 – 25, 1973, Israel and a coalition of Middle East Arabic countries aided by Russia fought what has been called the “Yom Kippur War”. Israel repulsed the invasion of territory that they had taken in a previous “6-day War” fought with Egypt and Syria. After that, mid-eastern petroleum producing countries began a 5-month oil embargo on the U. S. which began gasoline shortages and price hikes. Ration, long lines at gas stations and thefts from car gas tanks were prevalent for several years. Year-round Daylight Savings Time was returned in January 1974 in response to the OPEC oil embargo. As in the past it was controversial, and changes have been made every few years.

My work life in Buffalo was both exhilarating and wearying. I was learning every day about managing people and dealing with new technology while being brought more and more into the actual management of our business. I had to deal with our employees and customers in far different ways than I did in my previous positions. It was also grueling to be restricted in the scope of decisions that you were permitted to make on your own. We were a very close group partly because of the much smaller number of people involved than in Pittsburgh but also because those in our management group were more familiar with each other. We bowled with each other, had others to our homes, lunched frequently and had holiday parties at our new home in Alden.



For Christmas, 1973, Jonny got a guitar which he became quite good at playing and singing with Carol. While in Buffalo, I interviewed for a position in New York City. It was one instance where my whole heart would not have been for the move, but I probably would have accepted the offer if it had been forthcoming. My last 3 years in Buffalo were very frustrating and late that final year I made a decision that could have led to my departure from Graybar. I told my boss that I could not continue in my present job since I disagreed so strongly about some decisions that upper management had made that affected our branch negatively. I have written about the circumstances of this decision more broadly in the chapter on my Career and the Chapter on my Regrets. I look at this time as a turning point at which my family's life could have gone in several different directions. It seemed to me, at the time, that if I were to leave Graybar, I would rather that it be in Pittsburgh than in Buffalo. Because of this, I accepted a demotion to my previous position of Warehouse Supervisor in Pittsburgh.

Chapter 9: COUNTING MY BLESSINGS.

*I have much to be grateful for in my life and I try to acknowledge that every day. It isn't always easy to recognize that whatever success or happiness that you have is mostly based on your very good fortune. It took a lot of years and a lot of self-examination to begin to understand how much this is true. JoAnn and I were teenagers when we met, 20-year-olds when we married and 21 years old when we had our first child. I think we were fast learners because we had to be. We started our family life with an income that put us in the lowest quartile of American family standings. I had three different jobs in our first year. JoAnn's contribution to that income ended after 17 months with the birth of Carol. Our company medical plan did not cover childbirth. We did not have a refrigerator for several months before Carol was born (it was winter, and we had a back porch). Our transportation was buses (I think we did take a taxi to the hospital). My dad was 60 miles away and her family 200 miles away. We did have my mother and Aunt Martha nearby and we took advantage of whatever help was available. Many marriages fail in the first few years due to unfounded expectations. I think our marriage got stronger during those difficult starting years because we learned to depend on each other, and our upbringing taught us not to expect more than what was necessary.*

If I were a fatalist, I would certainly feel now that I was destined to meet JoAnn Puffenbarger, so I had to make the, seemingly, very bad decision to abandon what turned out to be my only chance of a full college education. And it was a very bad decision since I would never return to Duquesne University (and my 4-year, full tuition scholarship); and the lack of a college diploma would be a drawback the rest of my life. Still, I hate to think what might have happened if I hadn't made that life-changing decision. When I discuss my introspections, later, I will explain more fully why I feel that I needed JoAnn to complement my life which, otherwise, might have ended up much less successful.



JoAnn graduation picture

It is amazing that JoAnn had the patience or the interest in sticking it out with me considering the very unorthodox courtship that I put together. This covered the period of the summer of 1954 to the fall of 1955. During this time, I mostly stayed with my mother and sister, Antoinette, in their apartment on Rayen Avenue in Youngstown. Occasionally, I stayed with my brother, particularly after he moved his family to Niles. I went on from working at his dairy store to being an assistant manager at other Isaly's stores, and a short order cook at a Toddle House fast food restaurant.

Marrying JoAnn was the first miracle in my life. Soon after we were married on November 8, 1955, I started looking for a better job and was hired at the Town House Restaurant on the south-side of Youngstown, where I was to train to be the chef. After a few months, the owner, who was not well, decided to sell out and I had to look for another job.

I was interviewed with Graybar Electric Co. and on March 26, 1956, was hired for a warehouseman's job at an amazing \$250 per month. This was the second miracle in my short adult life. Every day for the next 48-3/4 years, I knew where my next paycheck was coming from. The people at Graybar recognized some potential in me and provided both a nurturing and a challenging environment. Though there were many times over my career that people disappointed me or tested my endurance, I always saw the possibilities of what might be if I persevered (refer to my Career and Resume' in later sections).

On April 2, 1957, the third miracle that would change my life forever happened; Carol Edith was born. My complete motivation in life came to succeed at my job so I could provide a life for my family that did not look anything like the life that I knew as a child. A year and eight months later, on December 13, 1958, our first son, Jon Jr., was born.

We were so blessed with our first two children that, after a six-year wait, we both felt that we wanted to have more. We found that JoAnn would need an operation to allow this possibility. Fortunately, the procedure was a success and a few years later our family was completed with the arrival of Ken on May 17, 1967, and Chuck on September 22, 1968.

I would be remiss if I didn't relate other instances of luck in my life; particularly when two of them were the difference between life and death. When I was 5 years old, living on Yale Ave. in Youngstown, Ohio, I was hit by a car which resulted in a broken collar bone. Yale Ave. was a one block street, and our apartment was at the top of a steep grade. I was sledding down this hill with my cousin Bill who was about 9 years older. After he was done, I wanted to take one more slide. At the bottom of the hill on the cross street, Arlington. I ran into a car. My parents were told that the car ran over the front of my sled and threw me up on the hood.

When I was 10 years old in Berkeley Springs, WV, I went on my bicycle with a group of my buddies to the sand mines which were a couple of miles north of town. Coming out of the entrance to one of the caves, I drove directly into traffic on route 522 and was hit by a car driven by a middle-aged schoolteacher. Even if she was not driving the 35 MPH speed limit, she was probably traveling at least 30 MPH. The police reported that I was thrown 200 feet and had lost both of my shoes. I received a concussion, broken ribs, torn ligaments in my legs and probably a broken nose. It was my only hospital stay for the next 40 years.

Other instances of luck in my life are discussed in the section titled The Brill DNA. These include my avoidance of the alcohol dependency that plagued other members of the family, my excellent health and immune system, high threshold of pain, and broad-spectrum equanimity. Both JoAnn and I were extremely fortunate that, even though we started smoking cigarettes in our high teens, we decided to quit before we were 30. Although I smoked for at least 10 years, my mother never saw me smoking. She smoked most of her life, but I could not bring myself to confirm to her what she must have already known.

JoAnn and I were together for 68 years and although we weathered many differences of opinion and many lapses of my interpersonal skills, our marriage was never in any real jeopardy. I was employed by Graybar Electric Co. for a total of 48 years and 9 months. Other than being disappointed that, sometimes, my opinions were not given more serious consideration - or that I was several times passed over for promotion by others I felt to be less qualified, and I lost my strongest business mentor and proponent to death at an early age, I now count those years as an overwhelming success.

Another lucky circumstance occurred when I let my hubris decide that I needed to make a drastic change in my working life. I was dissatisfied with the way my recommendations as Operating Manager in Buffalo were dealt with by upper management. This led to me requesting a transfer to Pittsburgh. Even though I had to take a demotion to get this transfer, I received two promotions in the next 2 years. I was lucky that this error in judgement didn't result in a stifling of my career (the full story of this episode is in the chapter on my Career).

The final piece of luck that I had in relation to Graybar was that along the way, I had made an impression with some people at our headquarters, and they decided to bring me to St. Louis to assist in creating a new business computer system. This brought about the best and most rewarding 20 years of my working life.

In 1997 as I approached retirement, I decided that I needed financial advice as a continuing part of that planning. I also wanted to have someone in our lives that JoAnn could depend on for advice if something happened to me; after all my dad died at the age of sixty-nine. We were fortunate to find someone who would advise us for the next 24 years. Paul Davis was both an advisor and a friend over the years. My decision not to retire in August 2000 when I became 65 – a time that I had always assumed would be “it” – turned out to be a magnificent stroke of luck. Financially, it would have been a disaster. I probably would have received my lump-sum pension payout and had a significant portion invested in the stock market, which dropped 30% over the 6 months from May to October 2001. As actually happened with my own personal stock market investments, I lost about \$50,000 during that drop.

The real benefit of that experience came when I did retire from full-time employment in June 2002. Having gone through big drops in the stock market in 1987 and 2001, I was careful about investing my retirement proceeds. From April to October of that year (2002) the market dropped about 30% and I lost little in this downturn on much larger amounts. Again in 2008, the stock market lost 50% of its value, but we were fortunate to lose only 24% and we were able to get all of that back over the next 5 years with the help of Paul Davis. Another benefit of retiring in 2002 instead of 2000 was that the interest rates had dropped almost 5%, which meant that my lump sum settlement would be significantly larger.

JoAnn and I had the good fortune of giving birth to four healthy children and were able to raise them in conditions that then and today would be considered entirely ordinary middle class. Maybe it was not upper middle class, but it surely was not lower middle class. They all were normal well-behaved children who grew into successful adults and wonderful parents. They have blessed us with sixteen beautiful grandchildren. We enjoyed having our grandchildren and great grandchildren around us for over 40 years. One drawback to living a long life is that you outlive many that you love. I deal every day with the emptiness resulting from the loss of my wife and our beautiful, loving daughter who gave us pride and joy for over 62 years. Following the passing of our baby Charles at the age of 53, we managed our grief by hoping that we could be a positive factor in our grandchildren's and great-grandchildren's lives.

As far as my health is concerned, I have had relatively few illnesses and, other than accidents mentioned above, have been spared any serious or debilitating injuries. JoAnn's health until a few years ago was relatively free of illness. For a woman in her late eighties, having given birth to four children and suffered many falls, she was in remarkable condition. We were able to vacation for many years in Hawaii during which time we usually played golf at least 3 or 4 times a week for from 4 weeks to as many as 11 weeks. After 2017 JoAnn could no longer play, my interest in golf has diminished significantly. Over the years we had met many wonderful people there who became both golf partners and friends.

Neither of us could have ever imagined at the age of 20, that our life would see us living in 5 different states; traveling to 45 states and at least a dozen countries; flying at least ¾ million miles between the two of us all over the world; visiting dozens of national, state and local parks; and being active travelers since the day we were married, alone, together and with our family.

I feel fortunate that my nature allows me to follow the advice of Aesop who in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC said: “Gratitude turns what we have into enough.” When I look at relatives, friends, acquaintances, and people that I see every day who are struggling with serious and, in some cases, life-threatening illnesses, injuries, dementia and personal conflicts, I can only reflect that I have no reason to complain about my condition or circumstances. Appreciation of the good that comes your way makes accepting the not so good much easier. So, when I suggest that I feel that I am the luckiest man that I know, there is ample evidence for me to base that on.