

Chapter 1. Introduction

I, Jon Reid Brill Sr., being of sound mind and body, believe that it is important to leave for others something more substantial than material things that can be acquired with ease and disposed of with abandon. I recognize that without this document there would be little of anything that will remain from my life other than the family that means everything to me. By expressing to that family some of the hard lessons, my day-by-day attempt at understanding things and my acquired knowledge of ninety-plus years, I feel that I can possibly give some measure of wealth beyond whatever is left of my estate when the time comes to pass it on.

As you read the following, please keep in mind the intent, and forgive the shortcomings. In writing some of my opinions, I often quote from source material readily available on the internet. I have not generally attributed every instance of this occurrence but did try to do this in certain situations, particularly where there might be differences of opinion. I have always tried to verify facts when perusing someone else's opinion and I hope that you will do the same with any of my statements for which you don't have personal knowledge.

Two of our children are "Baby Boomers" and two are "Generation X". One grandson, David Matthew Wolff is also "Gen X". JoAnn and I were from the "Silent Generation" Read about that in this article from November 5, 1951.

TIME magazine [The Silent Generation](https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,856950,00.html)
<https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,856950,00.html>

Excerpts from that article:

TIME'S correspondents across the U.S. have tried to find out about this younger generation-by talking to young people, and to their teachers and guardians. What do the young think, believe, and read? Who are their heroes? What are their ambitions? How do they see themselves and their time? These are some of the questions TIME'S correspondents asked; the masses of answers-plus the correspondents' interpretation-contain many clashing shades of opinion but nevertheless reveal a remarkably clear area of agreement on the state of the nation's youth.

Youth today is waiting for the hand of fate to fall on its shoulders, meanwhile working fairly hard and saying almost nothing. The most startling fact about the younger generation is its silence. With some rare exceptions, youth is nowhere near the rostrum. By comparison with the Flaming Youth of their fathers & mothers, today's younger generation is a still, small flame. It does not issue manifestoes, make speeches, or carry posters. It has been called the "Silent Generation." But what does that silence mean? What, if anything, does it hide? Or are youth's elders merely hard of hearing?

Perhaps more than any of its predecessors, this generation wants a good secure job. This does not mean that it specifically fears depression, as some aging New Dealers claim. The feeling is widespread that anyone who wants to work can find a decent job; the facts confirm that feeling (and the starting pay is better 'than ever). But youth's ambitions have shrunk. Few youngsters today want to mine diamonds in South Africa, ranch in Paraguay, climb Mount Everest, find a cure for cancer, sail around the world, or build an industrial empire. Some would like to own a small, independent business, but most want a good job with a big firm, and with it, a kind of suburban idyll.

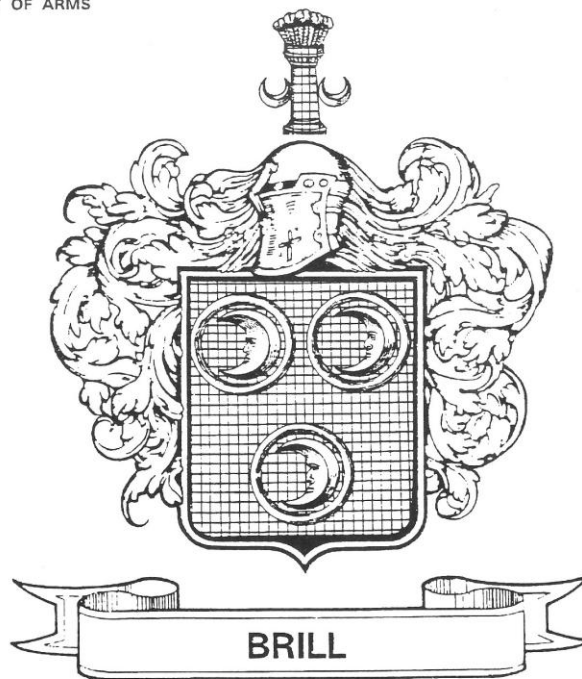
Chapter 2: Meet Our Family Through Its History.

Although our family line does not seem to have produced any widely known or notorious progeny, it does seem to have sprung a long series of hard-working fruitful families that have helped to grow this nation from less than three million inhabitants when some of them first arrived to over 340 million in 2026. My DNA shows me to have an ethnicity estimate of 49% Germanic Europe, 13% England and Northwestern Europe (below Germany), 20% Ireland, 18% Scotland. My mother's estimate is 42% Germanic Europe, 22% England and Northwestern Europe (below Germany), 22% Ireland, 14% Scotland. My dad's is 56% Germanic Europe, 4% England and Northwestern Europe (below Germany), 18% Ireland, 22% Scotland

The ethnicity of the Brill/Spaid/Cresswell/Kline families (581 people) shows 33% England and Northwestern Europe (below Germany), 22% Scotland, 20% Germanic Europe, 7% Sweden, 2% Norway.

The families of each of my four grandparents have a long history in America. Our eponymous family, the Brills, has been here on the North American continent since October 20, 1754, when Martin Briel (sic) and his wife Anna Maria and at least six of their seven children arrived in Philadelphia on the ship Halifax which sailed from Rotterdam, Holland. They were from what is called the Palatinate in Germany. They had a daughter, Maria Magdalena, who was recorded to have been born sometime in 1754, probably after their arrival in Philadelphia. A coincidence is that she later lived and died (about 1840) in Berkeley Springs, where my mother Mary Shackelford was born 65 years later.

THE BRILL
COAT OF ARMS



THE BRILL COAT OF ARMS HEREBY ILLUSTRATED IS OFFICIALLY DOCUMENTED IN RIETSTAP ARMORIAL GENERAL THE ORIGINAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ARMS (SHIELD) IS AS FOLLOWS:

"DE SA. A TROIS CROISS. FIGURES TOURNES D'ARG., CHAQUE CROISS. POSE DANS UN ANNELET DU MEME."

WHEN TRANSLATED THE BLAZON ALSO DESCRIBES THE ORIGINAL COLORS OF THE BRILL ARMS AS:

"BLACK: THREE SILVER CRESCENTS WITH A FACE, POINTS TURNED TO THE LEFT; EACH CRESCENT IS PLACED ON A SILVER RING."

ABOVE THE SHIELD AND HELMET IS THE CREST WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS:

"A BLACK COLUMN ADORNED ON EACH SIDE WITH A SILVER CRESCENT AND SURMOUNTED BY FIVE SILVER FEATHERS."

The Creswell (Criswell) Family of my grandmother Bessie Ouada Creswell Brill arrived in Pennsylvania sometime before 1700 as John Creswell came from Derby, England and in 1710 married Jane Edmeston, who was born in Scotland. The most compelling story comes from the Spaid family of Elizabeth Spaid, the grandmother of my grandmother Bessie Ouada Brill. The story springs from a 17-year-old who was kidnapped in Germany to fight for the British in the Revolutionary War and was captured by the army of General George Washington at the battle of Trenton, NJ on December 25-26, 1776. The following is an account that was written by Abraham Secrest, a third great grandson of George Nicholas Spaid (Spaht).

This is the story of a German schoolboy, who with a bundle of books under his arm, one fine morning in April 1776, was on his way to the High School of Cassell, the small capital city of the Grand Duchy of Hesse, when he was captured by two soldiers of the Grand Duke Friedrich II, to be sold to King George III of England for service in the rebellious colonies of America. He was quickly taken by the soldiers to their barracks and so closely was he held prisoner that he never again saw his parents nor his brother and sister. Nor would they let him go to bid his family farewell before he was shipped out by way of England to America. The seventeen-year-old schoolboy was George Nicholas Spaht, the elder son of Michael and Cunegunda Spaht. He had one brother Mathias and one sister Charity. Why did not his parents protest against such tyranny? Autocracy was not a new development in Germany. History teaches us if a mother protested in a case like this she was thrown into prison; if the father protested, he was flogged. And they were not alone in their suffering. This same Grand Duke furnished 22,000 soldiers to the English King and many of them were obtained the same way. The finances of the Grand Duchy were considerably augmented at the expense of the welfare and morality of the people, and the dissolute ruler kept up a splendid court on the proceeds of the pay.

The Hessians were the victims of the tyranny of their rulers, who sold the lives and services of their subjects to the highest bidder. The English government at the time was the best customer. Large profits were realized by the petty princes who were willing to sell mercenaries for war in the American colonies, as can be seen by examination of the contracts between the parties on either side, contracts which were not kept secret. _All told the expense to England for the German mercenary troops was at least seven million pounds sterling, the equivalent at present (btw 1922 my addition) of one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty million dollars. "The greatest of the German princes did not allow his subjects to be sold. Frederick the Great used his influence against the sale of recruits in other German states and refused to allow mercenaries who were intended for the American service to pass through his domains, says Prof. Faust in his great work "The German Element in America."

Dr. Holmes very tritely observes that "There are but two biographers who can tell the story of a man's Life – the person himself and the recording angel. The first cannot be trusted to tell the whole truth, and of the second never lets his book go out of his own hands." Now since our great ancestor did not leave the story of the his life, and I have not access to the recording angel's book, it is our intention to set down here only a few glimpses, as it were of the Great Progenitor.

We do not know how long he remained in England, nor how long the voyage lasted, but history tells us that on Christmas Eve, 1776 the Hessians under Col. Rahl were keeping the vigil of the Nativity in their customary manner at Trenton N.J., when General Washington with a handful of troops crossed the Delaware River amidst floating ice, surprised the hilarious Hessians, killed a few and captured more than a thousand and fled back to Philadelphia. Blessed, blessed night! that gave a redeemer to a sin-sick world! And if we had not been a temperance man for half a hundred years, we would add blessed be that booze that gave a thousand German prisoners to the Father of our Country!

That the American Colonists despised the German troops is not surprising and if the prison camps had been located among purely English settlers it is probable that at the first reverses the American troops suffered, all of the prisoners would have been massacred. So, with a wisdom almost divine the prison camps for the Germans were established in German settlements, the chief camps being at Germantown, near Philadelphia, and at Winchester, Va. Young Spaid was sent to the latter camp.

After the war, George Nicholas Spaid married Elizabeth Cale, the daughter of a pioneer German. They settled down in Hampshire County, WV (then VA), My Grandmother Brill is buried in the same cemetery as her grandfather Nicholas Spaid, the son of George Nicholas Spaid.

My Grandmother Hunter's family, the Henrys, has been in Morgan County, VA, now West Virginia since at least 1813. Johann Christian Heinrich (Henry) arrived in Pennsylvania about 1741. From the record, it appears that he left most of his family in Germany and came with only one son Johann Nicholas Heinrich. Christian came from an area around Dreisbach, Germany which is only about 260 KM from where Martin Brill was born.

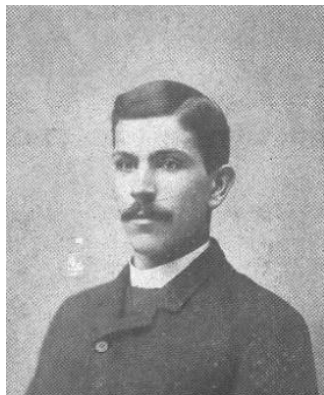
Martin Brill, our progenitor in the new world, was born in the town of Böckweiler, in the district Saar Pfalz-Kreis, in the state of Saarland, Germany near the current borders of France and Luxembourg. Böckweiler translates to "deer hamlet". Christopher Martin Brill immigrated to the English Colonies arriving at Philadelphia in 1754 with his wife and children. There is some confusion as to whether my great-great-great-great-grandfather was Martin's oldest son Johann Herman Brill or his second son Johann Heinrich Brill and whether they (actually) were brothers or whether Heinrich (Henry) ever existed. Most of the information I have found about Heimrich is a duplicate of what is recorded for Herman. The overwhelming evidence seems to point to Johann Herman being in our ancestry direct line.

Martin purchased 20 acres in Springfield Township, outside Philadelphia for 3 pounds and 2 shillings in 1759. During these early years our names were spelled variously as Prill, Preil, Briel, Brile, Bril, and Bruehl. We even have a fish (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brill_\(fish\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brill_(fish))) named after us. Since our family's residence in the United States predates the American Revolution, some members of our family are or have been members of both the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution. It should be an easy process for any of our line to apply for membership.

Just before the American Revolution, Martin decided to move his family about 200 miles west and ended up in Loudoun County, Virginia. From then, through the 1800's, the family lived in the part of Virginia and (later) West Virginia that was about 50 miles of where my dad was born.

My grandfather Smith Reid Brill was born in Lehew, Hampshire County, West Virginia on February 23, 1862, during the Civil War. On April 7, 1862, General U. S. Grant defeated a southern Confederate army at the battle of Shiloh, Tennessee. Western Virginia was mainly on the Northern side and became a state on June 20, 1863. It appears that some members of our family fought on different sides.

In October 1861, the first almost instant communication between persons on our country's two coasts took place when President Abraham Lincoln received a telegraph message sent from San Francisco. In 1880, my great grandfather Jonathan Henry Brill, who I may be named for, lived on a farm in the Capon district of Hampshire County, WV with his wife Elizabeth, six of his 12 children, his 75-year-old father and 69-year-old mother.



Grandfather Smith Reid Brill

My grandfather Smith Reid Brill married my grandmother, Bessie Ouada Creswell in 1894. On April 14, 1900, my father, Russell Ervin Brill, was born in Hampshire County, WV. Grandad Brill moved his family, which included oldest son Walton, daughter Bama and my father, in 1906 into the Captain David Pugh House in Hooks Mill, Hampshire County WV; that house was built in 1835.

(see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_David_Pugh_House).

In the early 2000s, this building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, was in the hands of a new owner who called it Riversdell. I can recall or have evidence of five visits that I made to this house. The first was probably in June 1938 while on a trip to West Virginia with my parents to let my mother's parents see her new baby, Mary Bess. Dad and I took a side trip to see his mother and father. The second would be when my Grandmother Brill died in 1942. I was seven at the time and living in Berkeley Springs which is about two hours away. The third time, I was in my teens and came with my dad; Grandfather Brill was still alive and was close to 90 years old. JoAnn and I went to Grandfather Brill's funeral in 1957 with my dad and brother.



The last time I was in the house was in 2002 while JoAnn and I were on a genealogy trip with my niece, Susan Webster and brother, Bud. We are shown above, outside the house at "Riversdell".



Shiloh Church Cemetery

Shiloh Methodist Church, in Yellow Spring, WV, is where several generations of Brills are buried including my Aunt Bama, Uncle Walton, Great, Great Grandfather Abraham James Brill, and others.

The following is from my grandfather's death notices:

Smith Reid Brill was the sixth child of Jonathan and Elizabeth Reid Brill. He was born February 23, 1862, at Lehw (WV). He died June 27, 1957, at Winchester (VA) Memorial Hospital. He married Bessie Ouada Creswell on November 14, 1894. They were married by C. H. Wood. Bessie, a native of Yellow Spring (WV), was the daughter of James and Margaret Kline Creswell. She was born October 6, 1867, at Hooks Mill (WV) near Capon Bridge (WV). She died December 16, 1942. They are buried at Timber Ridge Christian Church (WV), where Bessie was a lifelong member. The Rev. R. A. Whitten presided at both funerals.

Smith Brill was one of the first schoolteachers at Mt. Pleasant and Red Bud School. Mt. Pleasant was later called Riverview. It was located on River Road near Capon Bridge. He attended school in the old log Shiloh church-school building when he was 5 years old. They did not teach with books but used pamphlets. This was just before the McGuffey's Reader came into use. Smith and Bessie lived at the Captain David Pugh place on Capon River near Hooks Mill. Smith was the Hooks Mill Postmaster for many years. He was a Methodist and a Democrat.

Smith and Bessie Brill have three Children:

Walton Earl Brill was born December 19, 1895, at Briggs, in Clarke County, Virginia. He married Letha Marie Spaid on September 10, 1931. He was drafted in World War I and landed in France shortly before the armistice.

Bama Estel Brill was born January 3, 1898. She married John Larrick. (1956 or 1957)

Russell Ervin Brill was born April 14, 1900. He married Mary Shackelford on October 22, 1925.

The death notices recall my grandfather's time as a schoolteacher. Education in the late 19th and early 20th century was very different from today's and even much different from my school days in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1910 only 59% of 5 through 19-year-olds attended school. In rural areas, children were required to do their farming chores in the early morning before starting off to school. In those areas, there were one-room schools for the most part to get them close to where the children were. Even so, many had miles-long walks in all kind of weather. Seasons dictated attendance. During harvest times, presence would be sparse. My future wife, JoAnn spoke often of starting off in the dark, walking over the mountain to get to the "hard road" where the bus would pick them up.

In cities, many children had jobs in factories and shops; they sold newspapers or did odd jobs. There were no child labor laws. Schools started early and hours were long, probably to keep them off the streets while their parents worked outside the home. Classrooms were crowded and had to serve all levels of learning ability and individualized learning was not yet common. Teachers often were called upon to teach every subject themselves. Of course, segregation was a reality still, particularly in the south.

Education in the 1920s relied heavily on memorization and recitation. Textbooks were limited and reused year after year. Emphasis was on character, obedience, patriotism and work-ethic. Classroom behavior was strictly controlled, and punishment was swift and rarely questioned. In some cases, corporal punishment was imposed.

The longest of my family lines that I have tracked is the Shackelford line. That line dates to at least 1660 in colonial America when the population of the colonies was about 75,000. I have tracked that line back to 1490 in the Village of Shackelford, Surrey, England from which the family name is derived. The family in England seems to spring from William de Shackelford who lived in the Village of Shackelford. There is often confusion in the spelling between Shackelford and Shackleford. I am not sure exactly when or if a change happened. I have tried to use the version that my mother used on the marriage certificate.

Aldro School in the center of the village was built as a mansion in the nineteenth century on the site of Hall Place, which William de Shackelford owned during the reign of Henry VIII (1491 - 1547). The first of our line to come to the English Colonies was Roger Shackelford sometime between 1650 and 1660 in Gloucester County, Virginia.



Shackelford, England Town Center recently

My Grandfather John P. Shackelford (1879 - 1904) was born in the Berkeley Springs area where he met and married my Grandmother Nannie Katherine Henry (1882 - 1973). He died of consumption (TB), 7 months before my mother, Mary Edna Shackelford and my aunt, Martha Ernestine Shackelford, were born on March 16, 1905. Grandmother and Grandfather Shackelford also had a son, John Theodore, born in 1903. My Grandmother married again and had 3 more children with J. Ed Hunter.

Roger Shackelford probably arrived in Virginia around 1658. He married Mary Palmer who also arrived in Virginia on the same ship. There is some confusion because, of their (possibly) 18 children on record, the first is recorded to have been born in Virginia in 1656. His wife? is listed on the passenger list as Mary Palmer and he is listed as Roger Shackleforth. We also have a problem with determining which of his 13 recorded sons would be my sixth Great Grandfather. The record is very confusing, and I think that our lineage has another breakdown before my great-grandfather. I am still trying to determine the actual makeup of our direct line and to correct the record on Ancestry.com.

Shackelford Coat of Arms



JoAnn Brill was born Carol JoAnn Puffenbarger. Her mother was Edith Della Donahoe, and her father was James V. Puffenbarger. Both of their families were in the new world before the American Revolution. The Puffenbargers arrived in 1733 at the port of Philadelphia. The Puffenbargers came from the same area of Germany as the Brills with only about 80 KMs between their hometowns. Johann Pfaffenbarger

from Ulmet, Germany came to Philadelphia September 29, 1733 on the ship "Pink Mary" with his soon to be wife Catherine.

JoAnn's mother's family, the Donahoes (also spelled Donahue and Donahew), originated in England or Ireland about 1680 with Henry Donahue coming to Baltimore MD in 1706 and residing in Harford with his wife of two years, Honor, who was born in Ireland. Edith Donahoe's mother, Lucy Myrtle Carpenter Donahue, died when Edith was 8 years old – shortly after Christmas 1926. Her father John Patrick Donahue was placed in Weston State Hospital in March 1927 where he died in July of 1929. Unfortunately, it appears that no one in their two families was in a position or wanted to help in this terrible time. The 5 children were fostered into 5 different families, possibly as workers in some cases. Edith Della lived with Weed and Gay Smith until she married in 1935 and kept a relationship with them until their end. Mary Elizabeth was taken by the McCoy family, and they may have adopted her as she used the McCoy name later in documents. Denvil lived with the John Burner family at least until 1930. He married in 1933 and died 2 years later. Dale lived with the Isaac Reger family, at least until the 1930 census. From some time after the 1930 census, John lived with Hattie Kidd and her mother Dora. He continued to live with "Miss Hattie" as we knew her until her death. He later married Mary Byrne.

JoAnn met the man she considers to be her father, Frank Exline, in or about 1938. Her mother was hired to help raise Frank's children who lost their mother just before Christmas 1937. Frank and Edith were married in 1943. Frank's family came from what was then Alsace, Germany, likely in an area within 160 KMs of the Brills. Georg Christoff Oechslen arrived in Philadelphia in 1727 and married Caterina in 1732. The families of our 8 grandparents have been here over 250 years and all before the American Revolution. At least one of those families has been here for over 10 generations. Four of our grandparent's families came from the same area of Germany within 180 KM of each other during the period 1733 to 1774.

Chapter 3. The Brill DNA

Over the years I have come to recognize my own personal traits that may have been passed down to me. There are also some physical and mental attributes that seem to be common. Some of these have been passed on to my children. I hope they nurture the good ones and obviate the bad ones.

The average survived age of the last 8 generations of male Brill antecedents (including myself) is 81 years. On my Grandmother Brill's side, eight direct antecedents average 73 years. In the near term, there are: my Dad's mother and father: Bessie O. Brill 75, Smith Brill 95; Grandmother Brill's brother James Creswell 98; my father's older brother and sister: Walton Brill 80, Bama Brill 95; my mother's mother: Nan Hunter 91; my mother and father: Mary Brill 81, Russell Brill, Sr. 69; my mother's twin sister: Martha Price 82; my older brother: Russell Brill Jr. 77; my older sister: Nancy Glass, 62; my surviving sister Mary Bess Rains is 2 years younger than me. My mother's father: John Shackelford died of an illness at the age of 25. Besides my Aunt Martha, my mother has a brother, two half-brothers, and a half sister, all of whom lived into their 70's or 80's. I believe that this indicates we are passing on good aging genes. But, to take advantage of this it is important to actively care for one's own health.

In addition to my grandfather Smith Reid Brill, who died at the age of 95, his 11 siblings include 3 brothers who also lived into their nineties, one of whom lived 101 years. I am striving to reach that 95-year plateau. That would mean that 3 consecutive generations of Brills lived to at least 95. That includes my father's sister Bama who died at 95.

Fortunately, I have not been cursed with alcoholism that had a major impact on my father's life. I am sure that it cut short his life. I am not sure why I was spared but, early on in my adult life, I had a significant scare with alcohol and driving that never left me. Although JoAnn and I were never teetotalers, from that time forward we were always careful. Over the years our alcohol consumption went from frequent social drinking – to less frequent social drinking - to wine with meals - to wine on special occasions – to almost none. We both also quit smoking in our early thirties.

I have alluded elsewhere in these accounts to a certain type of indolence or lack of drive that is exacerbated by procrastination. The offsetting trait that I believe that I saw throughout my family was honor to a commitment that we would treat others exactly as we would like to be treated. Often that commitment was to leave others alone if that was called for. We generally are not nosy or fixated on what others are doing to themselves. When I compare myself to others, I must judge that some of the laziness that I see in myself is simply an expression of the fact that I do not need to always have something to keep me busy. So, I do not look around for “busy work” and if something needs to be done, I will eventually do it after I make the judgment as to when it must be done and when I feel that it makes sense to do it. I try to judge whether I might have to redo something if I make the effort too early. Without a deadline, my interest moves very quickly to other topics.

In my dad and his family, I see the seeds of this behavior. Some of my earliest recollections of my grandfather's farm are of the clutter - a living room table completely covered with open and unopened mail, magazines, etc.; stacks of magazines on the back porches; and closets full of old, unused clothes and boxes of stored miscellanea. Part of the fun as a kid was exploring what was lying around in that big old house.

On a trip to Pittsburgh, JoAnn, our baby Carol, and I stayed with my dad at his apartment. JoAnn noticed that he had kept his mail and other papers in the oven of his gas stove (the pilot light was turned off). Maybe he just threw it in there to get it out of the way for our visit – who knows? My mother cleaned the house generally when we were getting company and as she saw the need. The first time that I brought JoAnn to meet Mom and my sister Antoinette, there was a dresser-drawer full of apples in the kitchen that

my sister forgot she wasn't supposed to mention. Since Grandmother Hunter was just the opposite, I can only conclude that my mother may have picked up this trait from living with my dad for the first 15 years of their married life?

Although, I am not completely cured of this lack of tidiness, I did learn lessons in life that stuck with me. While I was a short order cook, I was taught the lesson of keeping a work area orderly. When you are working a shift by yourself in a small diner with "a place for everything and everything in its place", you soon learn that, if you don't return things to the refrigerator or utensil drawer or the dishwasher, immediately, you will soon not be able to find things or not have any room to place things.

In my business life with Graybar, I learned early on that there are ways to order your routines and maintain your work area that assisted in being effective and productive. In a marriage, it makes it easier for the one partner that is not quite so orderly when the other partner is extremely neat - there is less confusion overall to keep organized. That is especially true if one partner is going to keep things neat regardless of how much help they receive. The important thing is for the unkempt partner to recognize the benefit of allowing their spouse to set the rules. Among the bargains I have struck for the sake of harmony are some that make perfect sense to me now but weren't always a high priority for me.

1. My clothes that have been worn are either hung back up to be worn again or placed in the laundry hamper immediately upon being removed. I generally change to more comfortable clothes when I return home. I can easily wear the same clothes 2 or 3-times so I hang those back up in a manner that helps me keep track of them.
2. I have always cleaned up after myself in the kitchen, probably because of my earlier mentioned work experience.
3. Although I do not always maintain the neatest office, I do force myself to straighten it up periodically and throw away some of the unneeded accumulation at least annually. Since I now live in the digital world, I have less use for paper records.

I think that I have made up for my shortcomings with another trait that I probably developed over the years. I have concluded that **moderation** is the key to success in most of life's functions. I try always to eat moderate portions and avoid going back for "seconds" unless there is something that I am exceptionally fond of and don't have frequently. I try to restrict myself to no more than one cup of coffee, cup of tea, glass of iced tea or fruit juice and only occasional soda. I try to limit my sugar and salt intake by not adding any more than necessary and I have also lowered my intake of artificial sweeteners. In my adulthood, I became more pantophagous and now eat several things that I said that I did not like as a child. However, I do not believe that I necessarily turned down any food that my parents provided even though it was not a choice that I would make. I am not eclectic in my range of nationality food choices and prefer American, Italian, German, Chinese and Mexican. I have a special fondness for seafood and always enjoy trips to places like Boston and Baltimore for the wide variety of seafood available.

I am drawn to reasonable ideas that do not alienate those that are not welded to divisive extremes. I prefer to deal with people on a fair basis assuming that most people are honest and above-board. I think everyone deserves the benefit of the doubt unless and until they have proved themselves unworthy of this.

My inclinations and pursuits have always been restrained, and I do not feel that I have ever "gone overboard" with any pastime, recreational activity, or interest. I tend to control my tone of voice and verbiage in discussions, but I must admit that I do occasionally escalate under pressure.

There are many attributes that one may have that can be classified as either positive or negative depending on its effects and/or the point of view of the judge and jury. One that I have that falls into this category is my extreme thriftiness. Since mine and my parents' generation lived through the Great Depression and WWII, it is probably not surprising to find that economy is among our virtues and frugality among our failings. I must admit that I am extremely "penny-wise" and often "pound-foolish". Having grown up in conditions that required my parents to be cautious and often penny-pinching, I feel that I come by this trait honestly. I have a reluctance to buy something that is not on sale, but I am unlikely to haggle. JoAnn and I are fortunate that we never had to juggle bill payments, but this was mainly because we did not buy something until we were sure that we could afford it. I was in my later twenties before I felt we could afford our first automobile; but it was a brand-new station wagon. We were in our mid-thirties before we felt secure enough to buy our first house, but it was a beautiful new four-bedroom home in a new suburban development.

I am not sure if I had any credit cards prior to 1981, but when Sears offered its new Discover Card, I got one and have used it ever since. I presently have more than a dozen different credit cards which I use all the time, including several store charge cards. I try to use all my cards to my best benefit, which means it depends on what they offer such as cash back, airline miles, and special terms. I charge everything that I can since that means that I have at least an extra month to pay off what I charge, and I get the best terms available on my cards. In 2022 through 2024, I charged over \$190,000 and received at least 3.3% cash back and some amount of airline miles. Besides that, I charged almost \$40,000 on 0% interest for 12 months. The extra time that I get to pay off my card balances is like getting an interest free loan every month of \$5000 to \$10,000.

Here is how this quality manifested itself in my life:

1. I don't want to pay full price for anything where the purchase can be postponed until it goes on sale.
2. I don't buy something that I would like to have if I don't really need it and I can't make a good case for the cost of the expenditure.
3. I am influenced to buy if I feel the price is right, but I don't spend a lot of time searching for a better price.
4. My Motto has always been:
"Use it up, wear it out,
Make it do and do without".
5. I clip coupons and check weekly sale ads.
6. I like to have a budget and stick to it but since retirement I have not bothered to keep one.

My health over the years has been exceptionally good. In my thirties, I had significant problems with heartburn and reflux. My brother had much worse problems with gastroesophageal reflux. For years, he had trouble swallowing food and had to have an operation in later life to repair his trachea. My mother and my sister Antoinette also had similar problems with a hiatal hernia and GERD. I learned later that hiatal hernia is common and that by age 60 fully 60% of people will have it. Narrowing of her trachea contributed to Antoinette's death. She had a treatable tumor but the fact that she could not swallow limited her ability to get strong enough for the treatments to begin.

After having multiple tests and treatments, I mentioned my reflux problem to my brother-in-law, Roger Glass, and he suggested that I take garlic capsules. I began doing that and over time also learned to control eating habits so that heartburn became infrequent. I currently have very few acid reflux problems. This is probably due to being careful in my eating habits; but I must attribute the fact that I overcame heartburn to the beginning use of odorless garlic capsules, which I discontinued 20-some years ago. I must also acknowledge that I have tried to stick to a regimen that would reduce the incidence of reflux.

That involves the amount and type of food and the lateness of the meal. Tums has usually been sufficient to help when I don't stick to the program.

During my forties and early fifties, I had back problems and several times had severe issues. I spent a lot of time with a chiropractor, but I feel that what got me past these problems was exercise. JoAnn and I joined the YMCA and used it religiously while we lived in St. Louis and later in Winter Garden.

Another common ailment in my family that affected me twice was cellulitis of the leg, my mother had this a couple of times, and also my sister Antoinette. All of us had infections that caused open sores on our legs near the ankle that would take months to heal. My second occurrence put me in the hospital for several days. The doctor prescribed Triamcinolone cream which I have used ever since, although I had only to apply it every week or two on my ankles to avoid the recurrence of a rash. This condition may or may not be affected by another common condition in my family which is dry skin. My sister Mary Bess was affected in her childhood with psoriasis and later in life by psoriatic arthritis. I have always had dry skin and dandruff. Strangely, the problem with cellulitis of my leg seems to have gone away and I no longer need to do any treatment. For many years, I have used Head and Shoulders Shampoo and skin lotion to control these conditions. A dermatologist suggested that I might consider showering every other day and washing my hair only once or twice a week. I do follow this advice when I can. In addition, I rarely use soap on my face, and I take cool showers. I believe that this helps my dry skin. Incidentally, the skin condition that I mentioned as well as fungal skin outbreaks that I suffered for years, stopped after I received my first Covid19 inoculations.

I have referenced my overall good health which I attribute to an immune system that protects me in very significant ways. I rarely get a cold or sore throat and seldom have flu symptoms. I do recall having very bad cases of the flu as a child. It may be that these bad cases immunized me for later. I recover from any illness or injury very quickly with most recuperation being in 24 – 48 hours. Occasionally, I will get a case of stomach distress which causes vomiting, which I am always able to shake in a couple of hours. The only case of Covid-19 that I incurred was due to relaxing my use of a mask for two days. The symptoms were no worse than a common cold.

My driver's license has always listed my height as 5'9" although I believe that I am now probably only about 5'7". My weight in my forties was over 200. My dad was listed at the age of 41 on his Selective Service card as 5'7" and 145#; so, I am a little bigger than he was, but my children were all a lot bigger than me. I was overweight at the time I retired and decided that I needed to lose 25 pounds. I did this and more in about 6 months after moving to Florida. Since then, I have lost an additional 10-15 pounds and have not wavered more than a pound or two from 170# since then.

My threshold for pain is extremely high and, consequently, I do not suffer from cold temperatures. JoAnn was just the opposite and was comfortable only in a narrow range but, since I was also not bothered too much by warm temperatures, it was no problem for me to adjust to her optimal thermostat setting.

My mother, father and siblings were all above average in intelligence, and voracious readers but mostly used this for internal satisfaction. Discussions were interesting; games were competitive; and humor was always in evidence. My sister Nancy started to teach me to read at 4 years of age, and I got my first book for Christmas before I started school (The Yearling – I think) from my Aunt Bama. My brother, who was 9 years older than me, liked nothing better than to get into an argument with me and then switch sides. Of course, that would confuse me, and I was told that one time that I asked "But Buddy, what am I 'apposed to say?"

I believe that everyone in my immediate family has had bad eyesight. My brother's eyesight was the worst. He had a bad case of amblyopia that was never corrected. JoAnn spent months taking Jon Jr. to eye doctors to correct his problems with "lazy eye" I was put into glasses at the age of 12 and wore glasses for all my waken hours for the next 60 years, until having cataract surgery. Since my visual acuity was 20/200 or worse (the biggest letters on the eye chart), I suppose that I was legally blind.

As a youth, I was prone to head aches, earaches, tooth aches, and other minor problems that required pain alleviation. I was also prone to boils or carbuncles and had weak ankles subject to twisting and sprains. At that time aspirin was the most common palliative. Eye strain from reading and sinus problems probably caused most of the headaches.

While we were living in Buffalo in the early 1970's, I read an article that made a significant impression on my understanding of life forces. It explained how the brain, nervous system and glands are constructed to constantly monitor and control functions and dysfunctions that occur. It stated that by introducing chemicals to ease pain, we were invariably reducing the body's own ability to ultimately control the causes of the pain. I resolved at that time, and have carried forward to this day, a determination to avoid over-the-counter palliative medicine.

I can honestly say that if I have taken any pain medication in the last 50 years, it was prescribed by a doctor for a serious condition. I know that I have avoided getting a prescription filled several times because I didn't think that I would need painkillers. I rarely have headaches or other pains that would cause one to seek palliation, but when I did get a (very, very infrequent) headache, stiff neck, or other pain, my treatment is to seek a hypnagogic state of solitude, peace, quiet, darkness and rest. In addition to garlic mentioned earlier and age-appropriate vitamins, I sometimes have taken other supplements to help with my joints, and I feel that this may have improved their action; I have relatively little joint pain for someone my age. In fact, I would describe any pain that I do have from internal causes to be just discomfort more than anything else.

Although I believe in a holistic approach to medical issues and have a strong interest in complementary medicine, I have an unshaken faith in science and believe that since doctors know more than I do about their field of expertise, I should listen to them. I have had physical exams every year since 1968 (many of them required and paid for by my former employer) and believe for the most part that has been beneficial in my overall good health. For over 20 years I took a statin drug to reduce cholesterol which, for me, has been under control for years. I take Levothyroxine to alleviate hypothyroidism, and in later years an alpha-blocker for BPH. I have also suffered from tinnitus for decades. JoAnn took a beta-blocker for heart arrhythmia, an anticonvulsant for pain control, an antispasmodic for bladder control, an anti-coagulant to help protect against a stroke with her nonvalvular atrial fibrillation, a cholinesterase inhibitor for memory impairment and the same thyroid hormone drug that I take. Fortunately, we did not need to take any of these medicines until we were well into our late middle age. I have only recently taken acetaminophen to simply reduce my body temperature one time.

Although JoAnn's bout with breast cancer was troubling and painful, we were thankful that it was diagnosed early and dealt with decisively. I think the fact that this did not appear until she was 75 would indicate that there is not any genetic predisposition to cancer. I think that at the time we dealt with the situation in a safe and sensible manner. Initially, the surgeon removed the cancerous malignancy and the lymph nodes under her right arm after a previous procedure to take a biopsy. When we consulted with the radiologist to begin the recommended treatment, he said that before beginning the radiology that would be followed by chemotherapy, more surgery would be required to expand the area that the surgeon had removed. The surgeon disagreed strongly. JoAnn and I finally decided that the best approach for her

would be a single mastectomy followed by 5 years of hormone treatment. This would eliminate radiation, and chemotherapy that would have followed the surgery recommended by the radiologist.

My only brushes with cancer were small basal cell carcinomas on my arms, shoulder and face that were probably caused by excess exposure to sunlight and were successfully removed. JoAnn had similar removals and several squamous cell removals.

My father had problems with angina and used nitroglycerine pills when he felt chest pains. My mother had what I believe was lactose intolerance. Except for hard cheese, she did not care for milk products. She had severe calcium shortage which caused her to have bad teeth for as long as I can remember. I was told that as a baby I was treated for rickets (which is caused by a lack of vitamin D in the diet). That probably explains my small wrists.

We do not have an insight into the health of JoAnn's father or other relatives than her mother and Aunt Mary. As far as we know JoAnn's mother had no serious health issues except septicemia in the loss of a child in the late 1950's. In the early 1990's she had a serious fall in her home after her husband died and she was living alone. We had asked her earlier to come live with us in Missouri, but she didn't want to leave her home. She was in very bad shape after that fall and finally agreed. I believe that the several years of living alone were also bad for her mental health. She exhibited signs of dementia for the last 5 years of her life where before that she was always sharp and alert.

Temperament is another thing that many of my immediate family have in common. I don't know anyone in my immediate family that could be said to have any kind of volatile temper. In fact, most of us could more likely be described as complacent. Rather than start a confrontation, we would, more than likely, try to find some way to ameliorate a touchy situation. Some of us are more adept at this than others, but all would rather postpone a trying situation (that may have a bearing on the procrastination that was mentioned before).

It's almost as though we Brill men had a complete separation between our vocations and our home life. We all seemed to over-compensate at the workplace. I think particularly of my brother, who basically ruined his marriage by ignoring family needs in his drive to succeed at work. Of course, the faults that I have described could also be attributed to divergent priorities. It is important to live up to commitments in the workplace as well as with your family; however, it is more important that a husband-and-wife works together to see that familial interests are always addressed first.

I have read an entire newspaper almost every day of my adult life and have solved crossword puzzles for many years. Lately, my "senior absent-mindedness" has reached new heights, which is aggravating but I am not overly concerned. My mind has always been difficult to keep its focus, and I have a habit of multi-tasking even when there is no need or call to do so. I basically have a good memory for information, I suspect that in 90 years I have created many, many strings of detail that must be combed through to recall all the minutiae that goes into my every waking moment. This may partially account for an idiosyncrasy that I recently have uncovered in my daily routines. Just in the last year of Covid-19, I encountered a significant number of these routines that were a part of my regimen were not the most thought out and sensible if I had been more observant of all the surroundings and circumstances. I have determined that I should make the effort to control my thought patterns to try to avoid distracting myself with a new subject before I complete the task at hand. I think that is what the teachings on meditation hope to accomplish.

Lately, I feel that I possibly have dealt my whole life with a mild form of OCD. I possibly have these three symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder:

- **Washers** are afraid of contamination. They usually have cleaning or hand-washing compulsions.
- **Counters and arrangers** are obsessed with order and symmetry. They may have superstitions about certain numbers, colors, or arrangements.
- **Hoarders** fear that something bad will happen if they throw anything away. They compulsively hoard things that they don't need or use.

(1) I wash my hands at least 12 or 15 times a day. I don't know how long this has been true, but I am extremely careful in the kitchen. This may also be part of the reason that I would never allow a cat in my home. (2) I like to have things arranged in what I consider logical order. I do things most of the time in routines that I have set up for myself. I always felt I was doing it that way to avoid forgetting to do something. The order in which I do certain routines is important. I have always felt that my way of doing things was better than anybody else's to the extent that I would sometimes rather just do it myself. (3) I am loath to throw away anything that I think I may need in the future. This is particularly true of financial documents and family pictures. For the last twenty years, I have kept this type of thing digitally for the most part, but I do have documents and pictures going back 100 years or more.

It is entirely possible that JoAnn had three symptoms of OCD. These are:

- **Washers** are afraid of contamination. They usually have cleaning or hand-washing compulsions.
- **Checkers** repeatedly check things (oven turned off, door locked, etc.) which they associate with harm or danger.
- **Doubters and sinners** are afraid that if everything isn't perfect or done just right something terrible will happen, or they will be punished.

(1) JoAnn kept the cleanest house of anyone I have ever known, and she would get up off her sick bed to ensure that her home was as neat and clean as possible. (I have seen that happen)

(2) For most of our marriage, physical security had been near the top of JoAnn's check list. We had an alarm system for at least 40 years, and she needed to be reassured every night that the alarm was set.

(3) She was the consummate housekeeper and has such a high standard that few people, even her own family, could live up to it.

All in all, I feel that I have encountered more positives than negatives in being a Brill, so I am at peace with the cards I have been dealt with.

Chapter 4. WHY NOW? WHY NOT EARLIER?

Because I have not been one to interact at any length with my private thoughts to anyone, my feelings are probably mostly those of a stranger to all my family. JoAnn lived with this reserve for almost 70 years and may have heard me express bits and pieces of the thoughts and ideas that will come forth with this; but she would have seen many things here that would have been new and even mysterious to her. Soren Kierkegaard said: "Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward." So, I am looking backward, hopefully with understanding that comes with having lived through most of the 20th century and over 2 decades of the 21st.

The reticence that I speak of is something that I have struggled with in recent years when I could see the effect that it quite often had, particularly within my family. I am sure that those who might think that it is too little and obviously very late will not find any significant argument against that thinking in the following. I hope those people will continue to read and try to understand.

Misunderstandings and hurt feelings have resulted from my reticence. Change will be hard but maybe it can be done (or undone?).

Although I was always to some degree socially reserved, I think that my teen years, when I was mostly alone while at home, at least four or five days a week, caused me to turn more to my own thoughts and to be more reserved socially. What other people had to say always seemed to be more interesting than most of what I was thinking; or, if I did have something to say, I usually had to consider first what others would think of it. By the time I decided if something I thought of saying was worthwhile, the moment often had passed. Since small talk was never my strong suit, I often avoided groups where the sole purpose was for everyone to display their own expressiveness.

If you think that it's strange that someone would almost always consider carefully what he said before expressing himself, think about this. What if that person spent 6 of his most formative years mostly alone or with a distant and otherwise occupied father? That might not be the root cause, but it is very difficult to say why I am clearly different in this respect from the rest of my family. During my teen years I spent a whole lot of time in my own head. Other than school and many weekends with my mother and sisters in Youngstown or with a good friend and his family who lived about half an hour's bus ride away, I was basically alone. This was exacerbated by my proclivity to skip school. During my sophomore and junior years, I missed over 60 days; I was able to cut this down in my senior year to 12. I was not sickly, so this was caused either by laziness, lack of preparation for schoolwork or some domestic reasons. I once answered the door to the truant officer – I was alone at the time and not unable to go to school.

What a coincidence that my generation (between the "Greatest Generation" and the "Baby Boomer Generation") was described in a 1951 Time Magazine article as "The Silent Generation". At the time I was 16, this is what Time magazine had to say about our generation: "Youth today is waiting for the hand of fate to fall on its shoulders, meanwhile working fairly hard and saying almost nothing. The most startling fact about the younger generation is its silence. With some rare exceptions, youth is nowhere near the rostrum. By comparison with the Flaming Youth of their fathers & mothers, today's younger generation is a still, small flame. It does not issue manifestos, make speeches, or carry posters. It has been called the "Silent Generation." But what does the silence mean? What, if anything, does it hide? Or are youth's elders merely hard of hearing?"

The Silent Generation encompassing the years 1925 to 1942 did not produce any President but Jimmy Carter came closest, being just 3 months off that era. Looking back on his presidency and post-presidency, I can see traces of the traits ascribed to us. And he is the most long-lived, the most active President in retirement, as well as the most charitable and the least political.

I know for a fact that my lack of expressiveness was not by design; but I have also had a strong restraint that helps me to not blurt out personal information (of my own self or as heard about others) which I have always felt stood me in good stead. I know that trait possibly keeps people from really knowing me, but it also helps others to avoid getting the wrong idea. Many people have the bad habit of repeating half-truths and innuendos. Above all, I have tried to adhere to the saying "if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all" which I have adjusted to include "if you can't say what you know to be a fact - - -."

I believe it was Dwight Eisenhower who said, "Never miss a good opportunity to keep your mouth shut." And Mark Twain said, "It is better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid than to open it and remove all doubt."

In the King James Version of the Bible:

Proverbs 15:2 says, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."

Proverbs 17:28 says, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips, is esteemed a man of understanding."

Proverbs 20:19 says, "meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."

Proverbs 21:23 says, "whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."

I truly believe that my ability to listen (because I was not always anxious to get in my 2 cents worth), was helpful in many ways, but most fortunately because it allowed me to absorb and understand what was being said. While others were searching their databases for something relevant to say, I could analyze and put what I was hearing into perspective.

It wasn't that I couldn't compete verbally, for I was tested and found to have the largest vocabulary in my college English Comp class. It also wasn't that I was shortchanged linguistically, as my eighth-grade English teacher commented on one of my themes that she would like to adopt me. I wasn't tongue-tied or completely afraid of audiences as I played one of the lead roles in our senior class play "My Sister Eileen".

What may be even harder to understand is that, in business and other public venues such as church gatherings, I have not had any significant problem with addressing large or small groups. I learned to do this early on because my job required it. When the subject is something that I am knowledgeable about, I can engage in both prepared and extemporaneous talks and discussions. I suppose that I may have learned to do what was necessary for my vocation.

Even in business, I employed one strategy that articulates this reserve. If I felt that a particular course of action was correct but was misunderstood or not popular, I would generally not stress my support for that course but would work for it behind the scenes and wait for a more opportune time to champion it. The problem with this strategy is that it requires that I know without any doubt that the support I am suppressing would not prevail at the present time. I think that this meant that I had to listen more closely and evaluate better. In business meetings and informal business and social discussions with business associates, I learned to express what I think and know - if only I had tried to be more open in other settings.

I will endeavor in this document to do several things:

1. I will try to give my family a basic family history from my perspective. I was never one to ask a lot of questions about people's personal lives, so I just know bits and pieces of my mother's and father's life. I have an excellent memory for facts, figures, and knowledge of things that I have read and studied, but memories of occasions in my early life are not plentiful. Even more recent events may not be strong in my memory - I think probably because I have not reinforced those memories by telling and retelling them as others do. I do have a database of things in my life that I feel affected who I am and what I value. Those vignettes will appear as I discuss their importance to me.
2. I will discuss why I think that I am the luckiest (and most fortunate) person that I know. I have navigated ninety plus years with the bare minimum of heartaches, disappointments, and struggles. Starting out in a lower middle class, broken home (dysfunctional is not far from the truth); I was blessed to find a mate to complete me, a vocation to spur me, and my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to make everything worthwhile.
3. I can describe a career of almost ½ century that makes me proud; one, which I feel I was able to get the most out of my abilities, my education, and my personality. Although doggedly pursuing this career had its costs, I was able to provide for my family, have meaningful accomplishments, afford a comfortable retirement, and have the ability over the years to assist my family financially.
4. I might supply some insight into the physical and psychological DNA of our wing of the Brill clan. I think there are some unique factors that can be both beneficial, if they are understood, and detrimental, if ignored or misunderstood.
5. I shall put on paper some of the introspections that occurred to me while I was holding those discussions with myself over the years. I am not one to believe everything that I see, read, or am told. I usually do at least one of these things:
 - a. Try to figure out what makes sense to me.
 - b. Investigate by getting more evidence.
 - c. Try breaking an argument into its components and explaining it to myself to see if it holds water.
 - d. Research other points of view to compare theories or hypotheses.
6. I must acknowledge some deep regrets that I have about things that I have done or not done over the years for which I am not proud.
7. Place my political views on record for all to see. One social barrier that I have almost always adhered to is that I would not initiate a discussion of politics with someone who I felt probably would be on the other side of a matter. The few times that I varied on this tenet were when I felt that the other person would not take offense if I displayed a deeper understanding of an issue that is more divisive than rational thought should indicate.
8. Express some of my opinions on religious matters. This is another topic that I have mostly kept off the table. As you will see from this, I have probably been more traditional in thinking than you would expect from my other expressed views.

This ethical will is evolving and is presently in the editing and rewrite phase. I suspect that process may continue for several more years. I certainly hope it will be worthwhile reading.