

## Legacy of George Duncan Meek

### My forebears

According to family trees given me by my father, George W. Meek (1910-1999), his father was George E. Meek (1870-1925), who ran a sporting goods store in Springfield Ohio that still bears his name. His obituary says "He was one of the best known businessmen of the city, being identified with many progressive enterprises and active in church, fraternal, and sport circles. He was an ardent supporter of amateur athletics, donating many trophies for amateur sport events and active in YMCA circles." The obituary adds that he was a Mason, a Methodist, and an Eagle. I never knew him because he died 11 years before I was born. I remember his wife, Emma, a frail woman who lived with George E. Meek's sister Gertrude (Deedee) in the house on Euclid Ave. in Springfield, with a water pump in the kitchen and gas logs for heat. As a boy, I liked to play with their calendar that had pages for each date. Deedee used to save stamps for me from the magazine publisher, Crowell-Collier, where she was a department head. She never married. I was a pall bearer at her funeral in 1954.

My great-grandfather, Emmanuel Meek (1823-1877) was born in Wales. He owned several flour mills around Springfield. My great-great-grandfather, James Meek, (1785-c1855), was born in Winforton, County Hereford, England but moved to Ohio with the majority of his family about 1850. My great-great-great grandfather, Samuel Meek II, was born in 1739 in Kingstone, County Hereford, England. Year and place of death unknown. My great-great-great-great-grandfather, Samuel Meek, was christened in Moreton-on-Lugg, Hereford, England, in 1710. My mother, Jeannette Duncan Meek (1907-1990), told me she rode to school on a horse. She went to Muskingum College in New Concord and became a high school English teacher who was younger than some of her students. Her parents were Calvin Duncan (1868-1935) and Angeline Fulton (1870-1950). I remember my Grandma Duncan rocking on her chair on a porch of a white house in New Concord and giving me the advice, "Always do rightly." I also remember her taking care of me in my mother's absence when a bee stung the top of my head. She put a poultice on it. I never knew my grandfather Duncan, who was a farmer. My great-grandfather John Duncan (1834-1904) also lived all of his life in Ohio.

### My birth

I was born on July 26, 1936, in Beloit, Wisconsin. My mother says it was during a record heat wave, in the days before air-conditioning. The official birth record was later destroyed in a courthouse fire, but I retained the hospital certificate with my footprints. I only lived in Beloit for a couple of weeks. Then my parents moved me to New Jersey, and thence to Syracuse, New York.

### Earliest memories

I remember the white house on Durston Avenue in the Eastwood subdivision mainly from the movies and snapshots that I later saw. I remember deep snow. There was a film showing me going on a sled to the nearby cemetery to visit the grave of my sister Nancy Carol who died shortly after birth in 1938. I believe there was a fenced yard for me to play in, and a swing.

### Melrose Avenue

After the birth of my brother Willis, when I was four, we moved a couple of miles to a two-story bungalow. From the front porch you entered the living room near where the stairs to the second story climbed the right wall. On the left wall there was a fireplace. A dining room and kitchen with linoleum floor completed the first floor. Upstairs, my parents' room was on the front, the boy's rooms on the back, and beyond them there was a sunroom where we slept in the summer. I don't believe it was heated for winter use. My father finished the basement as a recreation room, with a ping pong table and a little theater with a curtained cubicle on either side of the stage, so we could put on improvised plays. The back yard was turned into a skating rink during the cold, long winters, when the piles of snow beside the front walk were higher than I was. During this period I enjoyed walks to Sunnycrest golf course, up the hill

behind the house, and family picnics on Onondaga Lake. My greatest dislikes were my baby-sitter Delores Vogelsang (who smelled like vomit to me), and chicken noodle soup (which I was forced to eat against my will and made ME vomit). We used to play family games on the carom board. When my brother Jim was born in 1942 my parents asked me what I thought he should be named. I replied "Mickey Mouse," but they did not accept the suggestion.

Our most anxious moments were one cold and wintry Sunday morning when we forgot to keep an eye on Jim and he went out through the wooden storm entry on the side into the driveway and was nearly crushed to death by the car in reverse. His ear was badly torn, but stitched back up at the hospital.

I had at least three trips to the hospital myself. I recall a tonsillectomy, and the chance to eat all the ice cream I wanted. Also a broken arm from riding the tricycle into a light pole, and a cracked pelvis and broken arm from hitting a tree while sledding in Sunnycrest Park. That time we went to Ohio for Christmas and I got to sleep on a cot in the dining room because of my restricted mobility.

We boys enjoyed playing in the huge sandbox in one half of the two-car garage. We had our first pet, a black and white kitten whose name I cannot recall. It died and was buried under the lily of the valley on the side of the house.

Sunday was my favorite day of the week. After church we would often drive down the steep hill and go out to eat at Drumlins golf club restaurant. In the evenings we enjoyed a simple meal while listening to "The Greatest Story Ever Told" on the radio, which had a man with a very deep voice portraying Jesus. My other favorite radio programs, on weekdays, were Captain Midnight, Tom Mix and Jack Armstrong, the All-American boy. On Saturday mornings I liked "Let's Pretend."

My mother's hobbies were cooking and sewing and she was good at both. I loved her gingerbread cookies and raisin-filled cookies, and she made clothes for us including some flashy sport shirts.

#### School days

My only memory of kindergarten at Huntington Elementary School is the incident with the safety patrol boy. For some reason he incurred my animosity and I took a hammer from home and hit him. I hid under the table at class but was found and sent home, I believe to a good spanking. In later years I improved my demeanor. I recall the principal Gladys Christian, coaching me for the city-wide spelling bee by teaching me to spell "archipelago." I went down in the bee on an easier word, "sheriff," by putting two "r's" in it. I can't remember the names of any of my grade school teachers.

My education was no doubt encouraged by my mother's frequent reading at home. She read the whole series of the Children's Classics, and my favorite was Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves. I also enjoyed a subscription to the magazine that I think was called Highlights for Children or Children's Activities. I especially liked the jokes and the drawings with hidden objects in them.

#### War years

World War II impacted my childhood. We had rationing of gasoline and sugar, and we saved tin cans for recycling. We had a victory garden in the backyard and I learned to like Swiss Chard and rhubarb. We moved to Washington, first to Texas Ave. NE, then to Takoma Park, while my father worked for the War Production Board in the same building on Independence Avenue where I would find employment nearly four decades later with the Voice of America. Then he went to London and we returned to Syracuse.

Once while visiting my father's sister Lois and her husband Clarence and my favorite cousin Phil, in Springfield, I got a telephone call from Phil's brother Dave that he was coming home for leave from the army and would I please pass on the message so the family could meet him at the train station. The only problem was that I could not remember whether he said he was coming in to Columbus or Cincinnati. After all, I was only around eight and both cities started with "c." You guessed it, I sent the family to the wrong city, Cincinnati, and after waiting for

hours we went back to Springfield to find that Dave had gotten there on his own from Columbus.

#### Religious experience

During our years in Syracuse we were members of the Second Reformed Church on Teall Avenue. Pastor Thomas Kirkwood was a kindly, balding man who read from the King James Version of the Bible. For a period my father was superintendent of the Sunday School. I attended both Sunday School and church each week. I collected rockers for my pin for each year of perfect attendance, and brought notes when I attended churches out of town.

In one Christmas pageant, I had a part that I could say as an angel up above the dome of the sanctuary. That was fun. At age 11 I played Pedro in the Christmas play "Why the Chimes Rang," at which the offering went to "CARE packages for the hungry children of Europe."

One weekday afternoon each week I would attend a Bible school in a home near the church. It was taught by an English woman named Erla Flanagan, who used her "wheel" (bicycle) to get there. She used a flannel board with colored figures to illustrate the Bible stories.

One summer I attended a Bible Camp on a lake near Syracuse. It was the closest I came to a "conversion" experience. I really felt I had God within me. Pastor Kirkwood assured me that one did not need to have a dramatic conversion like Paul in order to be saved.

#### First business

When I was ten I answered an ad in a magazine and started a business selling packages of seeds in the neighborhood. They were flowers and vegetables, selling for 10 or 15 cents per pack. About that time Syracuse had instituted the sales tax, and all businesses, including mine, had to get a sales tax certificate. My father thought this was amusing. I don't think I actually collected and remitted taxes, because the individual sales were below the threshold amount for the sales tax.

#### Recreation

When I was eight or ten years old I was considered old enough to ride the bus to downtown Syracuse to pay the mortgage at the bank, borrow books from the Central Library, and swim nude in the heavily chlorinated pool of the YMCA across from the library. At the Y I joined the "Adventurer's Club" directed by "Captain" Adlai Wheel, who was another formidable influence on me. He was a malacologist (shell collector) who encouraged us to make our own collections of shells, minerals, etc. in shirt boxes for display. He took us to Rochester and Albany to present short papers on natural history subjects-- my first introduction to public speaking. We also presented them at local meetings, and kept copies of everybody's papers in a binder of wooden covers with a woodburned ship design on the front. Two of my papers were on tagua nuts ("Nuts to Buttons") and coffee. They were beautifully typed by my father's secretary Rose. Captain Wheel also took us to Washington DC in his old wooden-sided station wagon. I remember dropping my blue hat out of the top of the Washington Monument, and laying a wreath with our group at Arlington Cemetery. In addition to science, he taught us moral values and respect for each other.

Captain Wheel let me work for the summer of '48 for a couple of weeks at his pet cemetery at Onondaga Hill just west of Syracuse. I know it was '48 because I staying up to listen to the political conventions on the radio. I learned to line pet caskets with straw and satin. The water supply was a cistern that intrigued me, and there was an outhouse with a Sears Roebuck catalog for toilet paper.

My friends on Melrose Avenue were Dick Goodfellow and David Vandeventer around the corner. I don't remember what all we played, but I recall that once I was nearly hanged in a garage in one of the games and my parents thought that was not funny. I also played with Russell Gould, a red-headed Jewish boy from the Adventurer's Club and spent a night at his house.

My family used to go for outings to Watkins Glen and Green Lake State Park. I also went to a YMCA camp one summer, and recall outings to the shore of Lake Ontario or Lake Erie.

I started collecting postage stamps of the world when I was about 10. My father took me to a veteran collector who had a magnificent collection of stamps from his years in China (I don't recall his name). He gave me several stamps for starters, and a pair of tongs. I would get stamps from my Great Aunt Deedee, mentioned above. I started sending in envelopes for the special cancellation for first-day covers of U.S. stamps. I found the hobby interesting and educational, but my interest waned after high school for nearly 40 years until I had a spurt of collecting tropical fish stamps, organized with the help of Victor Springer, head of the Fisheries Section of the Smithsonian Institution.

#### Interest in girls

I attended some girls' birthday parties when I was around 10 or 11 -- Marliyn Pelitier and Bernice Feldman. We played kissing games like spin the bottle and post office, but I did not care much for them. I did have a first crush on Patty Harrison, who was a brunette and a Brownie, but I don't think I ever told her.

#### State Fairs

I can't recall whether I was 12 or 14, but around that time my parents let me take the train alone to visit my cousins in Ohio and my Uncle Lawrence's Guernsey dairy farm in Waukesha Wisconsin, near Milwaukee. On the farm I rode a manure spreader (great fun), picked strawberries as big as a fist, and went on a "date" to the movies with my older cousin Mary Frances "Frankie" who grew up to be a teacher in Colorado. I also attended the State Fairs of Wisconsin and Ohio by myself that year.

#### Junior High

I attended one semester of Junior High in Syracuse, having skipped a year somewhere along the way so I was in seventh grade at the age of 11. Must have been smart. I don't recall the academics, but I recall a scowling, gray-haired teacher named Mrs. Hooten or something like that.

#### Clifford Avenue

In the fall of 1948, when I was 12, we moved to Pelham, New York, a small upper-class suburb of New York City. Our white house with columns on the front porch was on a hill. When you entered, the living room and a sun porch was on the left and a dining room was on the right. Off the kitchen there was a breakfast nook with an entrance to the back porch. The first floor also had a maid's room and bath that we sometimes used for baths, and for our sunlamp treatments to get our Vitamin D in the winter months.

There were four bedrooms upstairs. Mine was on the back of the house, and after I became interested in newspapers I collected mastheads and used them to paper the wall. The heat was radiators. We had a large walkup attic and a basement where I installed my second business after the seed sales in Syracuse. It was a print shop with a platen press that was originally foot-driven but my father rigged up a motor for it. I had a couple of cases of loose type. I printed several things for fun, but as I recall only a couple of commercial jobs for the band teacher at high school, Mr. Sommers, who had a surgical supply business on the side.

In back of the basement was a crawl space under the kitchen where we occasionally retrieved a dead squirrel, but my favorite place in the house was the space under the sunporch. There was a small opening maybe two by three feet, but once you crawled down in the dusty area there was space to stand up. With scrap lumber I built a little house down there that was my private place to get away from the brothers. They were not allowed.

Behind the house were extensive terraced gardens with six-foot-high rhododendrons that had huge blossoms in June. Below them was a terraced area where we had a volleyball or badminton court with limed boundaries, and a place I could set up a tent to sleep in the summer. There was a vacant lot below.

My friend Arthur Dana lived on the street behind us, just up the block, and for a time we had a private telephone line with old army field phones that you would crank to ring, sometimes

getting a shock. Once we had a disagreement over something or other and he did something to the rack on my bicycle, prompting me to write a protest note to his mother. My father kept it and showed it to me after I had teens of my own.

### Boy Scouts

Soon after moving to Pelham, at the invitation of my friends down the street, I joined Boy Scout Troop 1 at Huguenot Presbyterian Church, a mile or two away in Pelham Manor but not too far for an easy bike ride. In addition to camping skills, we learned to march like soldiers. Right face, about face, that sort of thing. We actually had competitions with the other troops in the annual court of honor to see which one was the best marching unit.

We took part in other competitions in the Camporees, including fire building by friction with a leather bow spinning a dry wooden spindle, or by flint and steel to generate a spark. We used tinder to blow the spark into flame, ignite kindling, and then burn strings at a certain height above the ground or boil water. We also had tent pitching races. My father gave me tips from his own scouting days.

Summers we went to Camp Siwanoy up in Dutchess County, learning to drink "bug juice" (kool-aid) and keep a neat cabin. One night we stayed out under the stars, waking up every few hours to see how they had moved.

I advanced through the ranks to Eagle Scout with the Bronze Palm for a few merit badges past Eagle. I also received the God and Country Award for work at church.

### Community Church

Speaking of church, we attended the small congregational church known as the Community Church of the Pelhams, a tudor structure at the bottom of the hill that was laid out on a grand style when they thought it would take off, but used only a small portion when we were there.

Pipe-smoking, balding Pastor Downes saw me through communicants class and into church membership. I sang in the choir--one of the few men--soon after my voice changed.

Despite its small size, the church had an active youth group called Christian Endeavor, led by layman Bob Hoffman, who also doubled as church usher and printer of the weekly bulletins with the order of service. He encouraged us to explore and explain our faith, and took us to "rallies" at churches around Westchester County, as well as the Easter Sunrise service at Kensico Reservoir.

One summer I made some money by painting the church basement, paid by my father.

### High School

My favorite teacher at Pelham High was Henriette Liboz, the Spanish teacher, who was my future wife's least favorite because she picked on her and ridiculed her. I was her pet, and with my mother's help in studying the vocabulary progressed rapidly, becoming president of the Spanish Club and winning the Cervantes Prize, a bronze medal given for the best student essay on Cervantes in the area. Miss Liboz took a group of us to Puerto Rico for a spring vacation, and that exposure to a dual culture, being surrounded by the foreign language, clinched my decision to pursue a career related to Latin America.

I also remember Mr. Moore, the Spanish III and IV teacher whom my neighbor Jean McLeod liked better. He predicted that we would get married because I sat behind her and played with her pigtails and wrote on her arm. I thought he was crazy. Once he gave her a penny for not paying attention to me during class.

I remember Julia Rockefeller, the geometry teacher who was a former Marine sergeant who smelled of cold cream. I remember Bess Marsten, the English teacher who taught the fine points of Homer; Mr. Keever, the English teacher who vastly expanded my vocabulary; and Albert Ridout, the drama coach who let me play Macbeth in an excerpt of the Shakespeare tragedy.

When I was in ninth grade, I worked in the cafeteria with Mr. Russo, who was never too happy with my performance. My job was to load and unload china and glassware from the square

wooden trays with wire mesh bottoms to go through the commercial dishwasher. There was some breakage.

I enjoyed working on the school paper with adviser Richard Lacy, who was also the track coach. I had an issue of the "Pel Mel" printed on cloth so my mother could make shirt out of it. I ran track (a slow miler) and cross country, where I enjoyed the outdoors semi-woody course along the scenic Hutchinson River, better known as Stink Creek. I got my time down to about 13 minutes for the 2.5 mile course. I also enjoyed races on the courses at VanCortland Park in the Bronx, and the Rockefeller Estate at Tarrytown, up the Hudson River.

I was not coordinated enough (or motivated enough) to play basketball, but I became a manager of the basketball team, keeping score at the games and doling out the chewing gum. I got a letter anyway.

In New York State high school students had to pass state-wide tests known as Regents' Exams in every course. They were not too tough for me, and I enjoyed the challenge of trying to get a perfect 100 percent on some of them. My memory fails, but I think I might have made it in geometry and had a near miss in typing, where I went really slow on the last assignment and made a typo toward the end.

I played the trombone in the band and orchestra, and for a while in the dance band, for which I wore a white tuxedo jacket. But for some reason I can't recall, I was expelled from the dance band -- some disagreement with the director. In one talent show my friend Hub Smith and I wore red pajamas and did a hammed-up version of the triumphal entry from Aida. It was terrible.

My senior yearbook indicates I kept myself busy in high school. Here is what it said: Yearbook board, honor society, newspaper (co-editor), band (president), chorus, orchestra, drama club, with parts in "Submerged," "Macbeth," "Our Miss Brooks," "Julius Caesar," Spanish club (president), math club, Red Cross, Basketball co-manager, varsity track, varsity cross-country.

### The Opposite Sex

My first date with a girl took place in about the ninth grade, when I took a skinny blonde cheerleader and bright student named Mary Andrews on the train and subway to Coney Island. We went on a few rides and came home. She didn't want to try the roller coaster. My mother had cautioned my brothers not to tease me about the date.

In 10th and 11th grade I got invitations to go to formal dances at the Manor Club, a private club. The first one I went to, with tux and white gloves, was memorable because I had to excuse myself and go to the bathroom as soon as I got there. The bands were usually Lester Lannin, swing sounds.

By the 11th grade I fell in love with Barbara Hazzard, a blonde with a cute nose. We went everywhere together and I spent many afternoons at her house. We kissed under the tiger lilies across the street. During the summer vacation, she sent me long letters care of general delivery. We worked together to write the anonymous gossip column for the high school paper. I was crushed when Barbara dropped me with no explanation in our senior year. To make matters worse she took up with my friend Bill Dutt, so I lost two friends.

In reaction I started going out with a dozen or so other girls, including one named Marilyn Way who was less than 5 feet tall (short for a 6-4 guy). I dated a younger girl, Kathy Ellison, who was the twin of a boy electrocuted when he crossed a train near their house. One of the girls (Jean McLeod), who would one day be my wife, I took to the Junior Prom in our senior year. We also had a romantic date on the Hudson River Dayliner to Bear Mountain on the senior trip, but I did not seriously date her until after graduation from high school. More about that later.

### Vacations

Somehow my father managed to get some big chunks of time off from his engineering consulting business down off Wolf's Lane in Pelham, and we took some extensive vacations all across the country. We visited just about every state. We camped in a large wall tent that my mother had sewn together. We took a canoe on top of the car, and one of the funniest

experiences was on the Kankakee River in Illinois when we couldn't paddle it back upstream and had to be rescued in the car.

### Cuban adventures

In the spring of 1953, at the age of 16, I traveled by myself to Cuba. It was originally planned as a trip with fellow student Creighton Sheffield, whose uncle lived in Havana, but Creighton decided not to go and I went alone. I hitch-hiked to Miami, getting one long ride from the George Washington Bridge to Palm Beach, just 60 miles from Miami. But there I was picked up by the police, who called my parents to make sure I was not a runaway. They let me go on my way, but on a bus for the rest of the journey.

In Cuba I stayed for a few days with Creighton's uncle, visiting a cigar factory and some swanky restaurants. Then I took a bus across the island. I stopped in Santa Clara, to watch the couples promenading around the town square. In Bayamo I visited a school and said a few words to an English class, taught by Nancy, who had lived in New Jersey. In the little village of Yara I slept in a bed with legs in water-filled coffee cans, for protection from the roaches. Then I traveled by jitney to a sugar mill, Estrada Palma, and set off to explore the foothills of the Sierra Maestra.

I walked on a dirt trail alongside a river, through farmland. I carried a couple of bottles of soda water and some snacks in a sack, but no maps. It got hotter and hotter. At midday I sat under what little shade I could muster under a palm tree. When I stood up and resumed walking, I felt dizzy and fell down, calling in my high-school Spanish, "Socorro, soy un americano enfermo" (help, I'm a sick American).

When I woke up I was lying on the dirt floor of a thatched hut, surrounded by farm animals. A family of four took me in for the night, encouraging me to drink water from the stream, which was not such a good idea. I entertained them by playing my harmonica and setting off some firecrackers. When I couldn't find an outhouse, I used my Spanish dictionary to look up the word for manure, estiercol. The people looked puzzled and pointed out some cow patties in the field. I said, "Where can I do it?" They said, "anywhere."

At night we sat by lantern light as people from neighboring farms came in to see the gringo. In the morning, I climbed on a large white horse behind a farmer and was taken back to civilization. By the time I flew into New York, I was very sick, vomiting green bile. But it was an adventure, and I vowed I would return.

I did come back to the same area two years later with my cousin Phil Smith from Ohio. We were fully equipped with jungle hammocks, jerry cans for water, and plenty of food. We hired porters to carry most of the stuff as we climbed the highest peak, Turquino, which is about 5,000 feet. We expected to be alone on top, but there was a small tent city of a mapping expedition that had dropped in by helicopter. They gave us a wall tent with cots and an electric light, and let us listen to the World Series on the radio. When we hiked down to the seacoast, we hitched a ride in a light plane that had brought fuel for the mapping expedition, back to Guantanamo Naval Base.

Phil and I were there in 1955, two years before Fidel Castro made the area famous. We had hoped to sell an article and pictures to the National Geographic, but it was cloudy the whole time we were on the summit, so the pictures were not too great. One of the men who helped us in Havana to plan for our trip was Antonio Núñez Jiménez, who turned out to be an important figure in Castro's government.

Many years later, I made two other trips to Cuba, one as a correspondent for the Voice of America, and the other on an evangelistic mission trip.

### College daze

I chose to go to Syracuse University because I liked their Journalism and Latin American Studies programs, and because a fellow I knew in Pelham, Ed Hardy, was there before me as editor of the Daily Orange, the student newspaper. I visited Yale but was not too impressed. In later years I often wonder how my life might have been different if I chose an Ivy League school.

In my freshman year I lived in Washington Arms, an apartment building on Walnut Avenue about six blocks from the academic buildings, with its own dining room in the building. That was a blessing because I didn't have to go out in the cold to get breakfast. There was snow on the ground almost constantly from October to April every year. My suite mates were Bob Vivian, Gary Lashway, and Loren Rhodes. The latter two I lost track of, but Bob and I were both interested in journalism (he in radio) and he was the one who persuaded me to go fraternity and join Sigma Nu. I moved into the fraternity house in my second year, lured by better food. In my freshman year I played in the marching band, 100 men and a girl (she was the drum major). I wore a flat-topped straw "steamer" hat and white buckskin shoes and an orange bow tie. It was fun, but too cold at some of the games. (In those days there was an open stadium, not the Carrier Dome that was to come later.)

Freshman were not allowed to have cars, but as a sophomore I got my first one -- a hump-shaped maroon 1948 Pontiac. My father had taught me to drive in high school on the big green Chrysler, which was a challenge to back up the driveway. I never took driver training, and he made me pay the extra cost on the car insurance premium to have me added as a driver. The Pontiac did not last for the college career. It was replaced by a black 1952 Plymouth.

I joined the staff of the Daily Orange, and enjoyed working nights at the "plant," which was in the Orange Publishing Company next to the stadium. That involved working from about 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. or later to put the paper "to bed" by proofreading the galley proofs from an old-fashioned hot-type linotype machine, casting headlines on a Ludlow machine from individual letters, and putting all the metal into large page forms. I really liked the work and didn't mind the loss of sleep. Men could stay out later than women to work there because women had a "curfew," which was about 9 o'clock during the week.

I became a junior editor of the paper in my sophomore year, and in the second semester of my junior year I became managing editor, a position usually reserved for seniors. This was because of a shakeup when the Publications Board dismissed the Editor-in-Chief for some reason or other. I was Editor-in-Chief in my senior year, with my own tiny office in the prefabricated metal hut of World War II vintage known as the Hellbox (a term used for the scrap can for used type; no theological implications). On my wall I had a picture of a gorilla that said "I greet your problems with enthusiasm."

I managed to graduate from Syracuse without taking any math courses, and the science I took was easy stuff for non-science majors. One of my favorite professors was Michael O. Sawyer. I think the course was American Studies, but what I liked was that he stimulated critical thinking. I also enjoyed Latin American anthropology, Latin American history, Spanish, and Portuguese. None of the journalism courses was as challenging or useful as my work on the student paper. I graduated magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, and was president of one of the Senior Men's Honorary Societies. My friend Bob Vivian was president of the other. An up and coming young U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, was the commencement speaker.

#### The big trip

In the summer of 1956, between my junior and senior years in college, my parents kindly financed an extensive trip to 16 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean. I made up my own itinerary and set out with a plane ticket several feet long.

The trip was almost cut short at my first stop, Mexico City, when I contracted a bad case of Montezuma's revenge (diarrhea), and felt like coming home. My father advised me by phone to take a couple of days off to try to shake it, and I went down to Cuernavaca to rest. Feeling better, I resumed the trip.

In many countries I had letters of introduction to editors and correspondents from the Dean of the Journalism School, Wesley Clark. One of the most memorable visits was to El Tiempo in Bogotá, Colombia, where the editor showed me proofs that had been crossed out by censors under the military dictatorship. I kissed my American passport when leaving the country.

#### Courting days



Throughout the four years in college I dated Jean McLeod, a tall, blonde basketball player from around the corner on Fraser Street in Pelham. She went to New Paltz State Teachers College (now part of SUNY) about 200 miles down the New York State Thruway. She would take the train up to visit me for special weekends, or I would hitchhike down to see her, later driving when I got my car. We went to a lot of formal dances with big bands. She was elected White Star Queen of my fraternity, and she wore my fraternity pin, a signal of intent to marry. In December of 1956 I asked her for my pin back, and she said "if that's what you want," after which I gave her an engagement ring. Always kidding.

We were married on August 10, 1957 at Huguenot Memorial Church in Pelham (her family church, which happened to have been the one where I had attended Scout meetings and released time religious education in high school). The ceremony was conducted by George Sweazy, who recorded it for us as a keepsake. We arranged to take communion during the service, something not normally done in Protestant weddings and frowned on by Jean's stepmother, Dottie. The reception was in the McLeod's back yard, and a bird dropped a souvenir on my white dinner jacket.

We spent our honeymoon in Bermuda, flying down and coming back on the cruise ship, Queen of Bermuda. We had been warned to try the pool early before it got rough in the North Atlantic, and we saw the water swoosh from our ankles to our necks. We took Dramamine to keep our food down, and arrived in New York woozy and with one nickel left to call for a pickup.

#### Army life

My first experience in the army was in the reserves in college at the same time I was enrolled in the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). I joined the reserves band, playing the trombone, getting paid for a weekly drill and a two-week summer camp. The summer camp was at Camp Drum (later Fort Drum, probably closed now), north of Syracuse near Watertown. I remember that the food was terrible and I was made an instant hero on the rifle range because the company needed a hero. They just used a pencil to punch holes in my paper target so it looked like I was a deadeye. So I was honored at a retreat by standing in front of the battalion to get a marksman medal I hadn't earned.

Then my Latin American History professor, Robert Shafer, persuaded me to join his Army Intelligence Unit for two weeks at the Pentagon one summer, updating profiles on Latin American countries. I still remember the smell of the Pentagon coffee that everyone kept guzzling all day. I stayed in a barracks across the road in Fort Myer, and brought home some U.S. government memorandum paper for a souvenir.

In college ROTC the courses were easy but the twice-weekly drills with rifles were a pain. We drilled in all kinds of weather. My platoon had the football hero Jim Brown, who didn't care much for marching and couldn't tell his right foot from his left.

The army life became much more real in the six-weeks summer training I took between college graduation and marriage. (Most students took it between their junior and senior years, but I deferred it because of my travel to Latin America.) I went to Fort Bragg, NC, home of the 82nd Airborne Division. It was neat watching the airborne troops parachuting down for an exercise, but the rest was not too pleasant. We had an overnight map problem and lots of long marches. I got food poisoning formally called gastroenteritis and had to spend a few days in the infirmary. At the end, my mother came down on the bus to see me get my second lieutenant's bars.

I spent five-months in a holding pattern waiting to start my ACDUTRA (active duty for training), working in Baltimore as a clerk/messenger for a freight forwarding company, Universal Transcontinental Corp. My boss was an Italian, Leo Piovano, an amateur painter who gave us one of his seascapes, and invited us to his house for an Italian feast. I took bills of lading around to consulates and typed up brokerage invoices for shipping lines. (Jean was teaching kindergarten at Norwood School in Dundalk, and we lived in an upstairs apartment at 1206 Steelton Avenue with the monkeys I had sent her from Costa Rica, who were named Zita and Kiki).

When I went on active duty in February, 1958, it was for training in the course for counterintelligence agents at the U.S. Army Intelligence School at Fort Holabird in Baltimore. Army life was not too bad, with the cheap movies and the officer's club. The only unpleasant moments were during a tear gas demonstration at Edgewood Arsenal when we had to take off our masks, and crawling through an infiltration course under live ammunition at Aberdeen Proving Ground. We learned how to conduct background investigations and conduct surveillance (trail people). One of the best lessons was out of class, when a classmate (can't recall his name) cautioned me about not to use the "majority rule" concept to justify repression of minority opinions. Another classmate, Thomas Dodd, went on to become a professor at Georgetown University and Ambassador to Uruguay.

While I was at Fort Holabird, I got a letter from Uncle Sam indicating that there was a surplus of second lieutenants from the ROTC program, and if I wished I could end my active duty in six months rather than two years, and serve for a few years in the reserves. I accepted the offer, since I was not interested in an Army career. So after finishing the long course I spent a few weeks in the base Public Information Office and that was it. I never put the training to work. I did serve for a few years in the reserves in Washington, going to weekly meetings. I got promoted to First Lieutenant for good behavior, and then was honorably discharged.

### Study abroad

While in the Army I got the idea of spending a year abroad studying with a fellowship from the Inter American Press Association. I wrote letters to the prominent newspaper editors I met on my Latin American trip and asked them for a recommendation. I was one of about seven U.S. journalists chosen that year, and I elected to go to Chile.

We flew down on a DC-3 that took about 36 hours elapsed time from New York to Santiago, with many stops along the way. We took our monkeys in the bathroom of the plane, and had a special cage built for them in our apartment. The electric company wanted to fine us for using so much power, but we persuaded them that we needed it to use a space heater to keep the animals in a more tropical climate.

Our first experience in downtown Santiago was cowering in doorway to escape the furor of a student demonstration against the government. People were throwing the worthless money (the peso was then about one mill) and bags of flour. Water cannon on tanks were brought in to disperse the crowd.

While Jean was teaching English at the Nido de Aguilas American School, I was studying the foreign service program in the Political and Administrative Sciences School of the Faculty of Legal and Social Sciences of the University of Chile (what a name). I started taking notes in English, translating from the Spanish lectures, but decided this was pointless since the exams would be in Spanish anyway. In three months I was dreaming in Spanish, and passably fluent. The end of course exams were oral ordeals, where students were individually grilled by a panel of three professors up on a dais. They used a combination of colored balls to indicate the grade. As you can imagine, the black balls were the worst, and some malicious professors liked to roll them in their hands as they asked questions trying to discover your weak areas. Some of the female students broke down and had to ask for a handkerchief from classmates. I passed all my exams quite respectably. One of my most difficult ones was a challenge to defend American "imperialism."

I attended a forum of some sort at the University and was interviewed by a local newspaper to get foreign impressions of current issues in Chile. I was asked whether I favored the legalization of the Communist Party (this during the depth of the Cold War)? I replied that if it is legal it is easier to keep track of it. The headline screamed: "Yankee says legal communism is better." I went down to the U.S. Embassy, worried that I might lose my passport, but they assured me that I had nothing to fear.

We went on a great summer vacation to Argentina, Brazil, and the lake country in Southern Chile with my parents.

Since we were expecting a baby in July, we went back to the states in May. I interviewed in Washington for a job as a foreign service officer at the US Information Agency, but was not

accepted. I did not know that 21 years later I would be hired by an arm of USIA, the Voice of America.

### Settling in Virginia

When Debbie was born in Miami, while we were staying with Jean's parents on Northwest 96th Street, a nurse at the hospital asked for my occupation for the birth certificate. I was embarrassed to say "unemployed." but it was the truth. I was a father with no income to support a family. But soon my feelers paid off and I was invited to come up to Washington for an interview by Mel Ryder, publisher of the Army-Navy-Air Force Register. He hired me as a reporter for \$90 a week, which was enough to support a family on in those days.

We gave a deposit on an apartment in the District of Columbia, in the Adams Morgan area, and actually had some furniture purchases sent there, but Jean's stepbrother Joe Godridge convinced us that it would be more pleasant to live in Maryland or Virginia. We chose Virginia, and rented a one-bedroom apartment in Sheldon Gardens on Patrick Henry Drive in Falls Church, next to the Seven Corners Shopping Center. One problem: pets were not allowed, and when a neighbor complained about seeing our monkeys in the window, we had to give them away. The woman in D.C. who took them eventually passed them on to the National Zoo, and we lost track of them.

My job included the Capital Hill and Pentagon beats. I interviewed some top military brass, and a southern Senator who was chairman of the Armed Services Committee. When I came to see him at 7 a.m. I asked if early morning was the best time to catch him. He looked over his glasses and said "Sonny, this isn't early. More'n half the world is at work by this time."

### Two decades at the OAS

My 20-year career with the Organization of American States started this way. In Chile, the Deputy Chief of the U-S mission, William Krieg, gave me a letter of introduction to his predecessor in that post, William Sanders, who was then the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS. When the USIA job fell through I went to see Mr. Sanders about a job. His assistant, a portly Peruvian woman with small glasses, named Julia MacLean, said "You're a nice young man. We need nice young men around here." Mr. Sanders sent me over to see people in Technical Cooperation and Public Information, but there were no jobs available at the time. After I had been working for the Register for about six months, I got a call from the OAS that a job had opened up on Américas, a trilingual monthly magazine (English, Spanish, and Portuguese). I interviewed and was accepted. Mel Ryder at the Register said he would offer me higher pay to keep me, but I was determined to leave for a career more in keeping with my training and interests.

The personnel officer commented that I was a young man (24) for a senior editor position, which started out at \$6,300 per year but had doubled to \$13,300 by the time I moved to my next OAS position six years later. During the period I moved up from being a general editor to being Managing Editor, supervising three editors much older than I and support staff. I wrote original articles and solicited, edited, and translated articles by other editors. We were heavy on cultural and historical topics, because we had to steer clear of any sensitive questions that might offend any of the OAS member governments. In addition to my regular duties I was editor of the staff publication, PAUSA (which meant pause in Spanish and stood for Pan American Union Staff Association). I also started serving as a document translator at overseas conferences, starting with the one in 1962 in Uruguay that excluded Cuba from participation in the OAS because of its communist government. I would serve at more than 20 conferences around the Americas over the next 18 years.

In 1966 the Assistant Secretary General, still Mr. Sanders, was looking for an assistant to help him write an occasional speech and serve as secretary to the Secretary General's Policy Board, composed of the senior officers. He hired me because he was familiar with my work on Americas. I accepted because I was ready for a change and it was a promotion. It was an easy job and I enjoyed receiving coffee service in gold-rimmed china. During the period I drafted

standards to govern OAS relations with other organizations and was president of the 1,500 member OAS Staff Association.

A new Secretary General was elected in 1968 -- former Ecuadorian President Galo Plaza. He was looking for an English speech writer (although his own English was excellent) and somehow his talent scout selected me. In the next seven years I wrote over 100 speeches and articles and two books for the Secretary General. He said, "You capture my ideas perfectly." In reality, I was projecting my own ideas, which happened to coincide with his. One book was Latin America, Today and Tomorrow, which had several printings and produced over \$20,000 in royalties for the nonprofit Pan American Development Foundation. The other book was Seven Years of Change, which summarized the accomplishments of the Plaza administration. I redesigned the annual report as a public relations showpiece, and continued to serve as secretary of the Policy Board. During this period I was president for two years of the OAS Staff Federal Credit Union.

When Mr. Plaza left, there was naturally a complete turnover in the Secretary General's staff. I had been hoping for a position as head of the Liaison Office, or as head of a new Office of Youth Affairs, both of which would have been a promotion. However, I was given the number-two spot in Youth Affairs, and served there for about three years. I founded and edited Juventud, a long-since defunct twice-yearly bilingual journal of youth affairs. I planned and organized the sending of experts to Latin American countries for technical assistance in sports and voluntary service. The job was somewhat of a letdown after the high-profile position in the SG's office.

For my last two years at the OAS I was back in the same room where I started in 1960, serving as Chief of the External Relations Unit in the Public Information Department. I was in charge of the visitor's service, speakers' bureau, audiovisual exhibits, and projects with schools and universities for a "Model OAS." During this period I also became involved in radio, because the OAS needed a native-English speaker to start weekly taped programs for the United States and the new Caribbean members of the organization. I learned to produce, narrate, and edit "The Inter-American Forum" for 20 noncommercial radio stations in the United States. It featured interviews on economic, social, or cultural topics, news of inter-American affairs, and music of the Americas. I adapted the program for 10 Caribbean radio stations under the title "Focus on the Americas." I served briefly as Acting Chief of the Radio Unit following some layoffs, but did not feel comfortable supervising radio professionals with my limited experience in the medium.

In 1980 my position was abolished as part of a budget-cutting exercise, and no amount of effort could get it put back in. I took my severance pay, and my lump sum retirement, which put all five children through college.

On the home front

During the period I worked for the OAS we moved to our first home, a cozy three-bedroom brick colonial at 210 North Columbus Street in Arlington, VA. It bordered Lubber Run Park, a woodsy area with a stream, bike path, and amphitheater for summer plays and concerts. We fixed the basement up so Jean could run a small pre-school, which was not a profitable venture but it enabled us to charge the services of a part time maid as a business expense because she had to have another adult helping according to county law. There was some opposition in the neighborhood to the facility -- fears of excessive traffic, mainly -- but the County Board approved the use permit.

Before long the children were old enough to mow the lawn, so Dad retired from that chore at a young age. There was a level spot in the backyard for a badminton court.

We were adopted by a stray dog we christened Wags, a mut that was a combination beagle and whatever. She had a litter of puppies on Kevin's bed one night, after which she was treated to prevent further procreation. One night she wandered off in a snowstorm and we had to go and pick her up a couple of miles away in Westover.

With the advent of child number four in 1966, we outgrew the Columbus Street house, and kept it for a profitable rental property while buying a handyman's special at 2906 Key

Boulevard, also in Arlington. The house was originally built on an old orchard in the 1920's by the electrical inspector of the District of Columbia, and we found plenty of old romex electrical cable over the garage. In addition to the four bedrooms on the second floor, we fashioned two more on the third floor (walk-up attic), yet we all managed on a single full bathroom. There was a half bath off the kitchen, and we installed one in the basement as well, along with a recreation area for pool table and television. Quite an improvement from the fetid dog messes we found in the basement when we bought the place.

There was a balcony off our bedroom which proved to be a hazard for two-year-old Richard, who fell off it and nearly killed himself. He was in a coma in intensive care overnight but miraculously came out of it. Prayer undoubtedly played a part.

Jean supervised the kids on building an impressive swinging gate for the driveway, but it proved ineffective in keeping dogs from the clutches of the dog warden. She went to court more than once to fight the summonses, but we wound up paying the fines. In the pet department we also had two rabbits for a while, but they were eventually killed by a neighbor's cat when we left the top of the cage open. After Wags died we got Smoky, who liked to break through screens and run away. She eventually ran away for good in Atlanta.

We put a window in the top of the garage, and a little "fort" with carpets and sleeping pads, but I don't remember the children ever spending the night there. They enjoyed the tire swing in the big walnut tree next to the garage. The garage had room for all of our bicycles, along with a car which was at various times a Nash Rambler, a Ford Station Wagon, a Plymouth Station Wagon, and a Lincoln Town Car.

Our family was compete with the birth of Brian in 1970, and with seven around the dinner table, all in assigned seats, we had to take turns speaking in order to avoid bedlam. People would "ask for the floor." Young Brian once asked for the ceiling, just for variety. It was customary to ask the children to spell a word before they could leave the table. The word difficulty varied with the child's age, and sometimes they had to be given more than one.

I enjoyed playing "mousie, mousie, come into my housie" with the youngsters, which involved hiding in closets or wherever and being tickled when you were caught.

We had various long-term residents with us on Key Boulevard. First there was Frank Burgess, who police found under a bridge in Arlington with no idea of how to take care of himself. He was a senior drifter who thought radar on the highways was bad for his health and took off to ride the rails whenever the whim struck him. He died in the midwest. Then there was Lowry Trent, who had been let out of Salem Veterans Hospital after 50 or 60 years,. He eventually went to Tennessee to look for a "big woman." There was Alberto Cotto, a Puerto Rican teenager with an Afro haircut who stayed with us for about a year before he finished high school and went into the army. Finally we had an elderly manic-depressive from our church, Ann Herlihigh, who was evicted from her apartment for messiness. She eventually went to live in a motel.

We stayed in the Key Boulevard house for 18 years -- a long time in 20th century urban America.

### Pineview

In 1978 we bought a wooded lot near Front Royal, Virginia in a development called Apple Mountain Lake, and promptly built a two-bedroom cabin with a large porch, calling it Pineview. Jean supervised the construction and roughing in of the electric and plumbing. We all finished the interior, including the textured ceilings and a simulated stone backing around the woodburing stove that was the only heat source. The development was originally started as recreational property, and most early residents in the seventies were seasonal. However, as population pressure in the Washington metro area grew, many people decided to live at Apple Mountain Lake year round, and there were few wooded lots left. Everybody liked to have a lawn to mow. We enjoyed swimming in the lake, sometimes as late as October.

We kept our 1.25 acre lot wooded, except for the cabin, and bought an adjacent lot of the same size as a buffer, so we could have a bit of privacy. At first our street, Rome Beauty Drive, was a dirt road, but as more and more houses were built it was paved. In the early years we

often had frozen pipes in the winter from improper winterizing, but with experience this became less common. The mice were the uninvited guests, and stayed on despite an electronic sound device that was supposed to make them leave.

#### Civic involvement

During the 70's I was active in Civil Air Patrol, a civilian auxiliary of the Air Force which has a search-and-rescue mission. I went on a couple of simulated missions, camping in a cold pyramid tent somewhere near Manassas Airport, but no real missions. I did learn to fly a Cessna from a CAP instructor, and rented planes for several years for mostly local flying. The longest runs were to Syracuse and Atlanta. In Atlanta I took my nephews and niece for a ride, and one of them (Tim McLeod) got the aviation bug and grew up to be a commercial transport pilot. I was not coordinated enough to get an instrument rating to be able to fly through clouds, and I eventually gave it up in the early 80's because rentals became so expensive and the airspace was becoming increasingly controlled.

I began a career in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) by becoming president of the unit at Key Elementary School in 1975. There was some excitement when the treasurer absconded with the playground equipment fund and we had to call in the police. I went on to become president of the unit at Stratford Junior High, and to get involved at the state level, first as Community Action Chairman, then as First Vice President, finally as President. In that capacity I traveled to the far corners of the Virginia, from Okakroke on the Eastern Shore to Bristol on the Tennessee border, with many visits to Richmond, Roanoke, and Norfolk. Actually presiding over the state conventions with hundreds of delegates was not as much fun for me as being a delegate and speaking on the floor to amend resolutions.

As State President I was automatically on the National Board. After I stepped down as State President I ran in a contested election for Secretary of the National PTA and won. I think I was the first male in history to hold that post.

When I stepped down from that job, I was not through. I organized a PTSA (Parent-Teacher-Student Association) at Miami Killian Senior High, and presided it for two years.

Other civic involvement in this period came as Secretary of the Lyon Village Civic Association for a year.

#### Voice of America

I had visited the Voice of America's Brazilian Branch in 1963 when I was taking the advanced Portuguese course at the Brazilian-American Institute. I had no idea that I would one day work for VOA, and they would station me in Brazil.

I sent resumes all over the world when my job at the OAS was abolished in 1980. An occasional translator at the OAS, Guillermo Cabrera, gave me a name at VOA's Spanish Branch and suggested I check it out. They didn't have a job, but the Worldwide English Division was hiring, looking for someone to start broadcasting to the Caribbean to counter the perceived menace of Cuban subversion through the revolutionary government in Grenada. I started in March as a "purchase order vendor", which is bureaucrateze for daily rate workers with no benefits. By September my security clearance was finished and I was hired as a regular employee. It was a cut of more than \$20,000/year from what I had been making at the OAS, but still plenty to live on.

I started the Caribbean Report, a 20 minute news program Monday-Friday that was broadcast on short wave and on medium wave from a powerful transmitter in Antigua. I wrote the program and someone else voiced it. I was impressed with the editorial independence of VOA, not receiving any guidance from the State Department on what to cover or how to cover it. I started going to the annual Miami Conferences on the Caribbean, and doing some travel in the region. I also wrote a weekly half-hour program for Sunday evenings called "Spotlight," with features and interviews of special interest to listeners in Latin America and the Caribbean. I took voice lessons from Frank Oliver to learn how to read a radio script without sounding like you're reading it, so I could voice some "correspondent reports."

In 1984 they announced a vacancy for chief of VOA's Bureau in Miami. I applied and was selected. There I spent a lot more time traveling around the region. There were fun trips to charming little islands like Saba, Statia, Barbuda, Nevis, and Tobago -- really off the beaten path. There were not so fun trips to Haiti, which was so desperately poor and at one point in a shooting war. I watched rockets fired from the top of the Holiday Inn, and saw a dead soldier in a burned out jeep, and filed a report with a bed of gunfire in the background.

There was also some excitement in Suriname, when I drove a rental car into no-man's land during a guerrilla uprising and was surrounded by a squad of rebels with rifles pointed in my direction. They thought I was a spy, planning to report their position to the Army so it could send helicopters in to wipe them out. I assured them that I was not, and that it would hurt their cause internationally if they were not to release me promptly. I asked the leader if he wanted to say a few words on tape about his objectives or demands, but all I could record was his "No." When I played it back for him he demanded the cassette and crushed it under his boot on the pavement. End of interview. After 20 minutes that seemed much longer, they let me go on my way.

We had put down roots in Miami and were prepared to stay there indefinitely, having sold our house in Arlington. But in 1988 I was again the victim of a budget cut and abolished position, and was given an ultimatum to quit, with severance pay, or return to a job in the VOA newsroom in Washington. It would be at a lower grade, but I would retain my pay level. I had two weeks to decide. After a few frantic feelers in the Miami area, we decided to move back to Washington.

It was hard to leave Miami. We enjoyed our spacious home with swimming pool, a 19-foot power boat for water skiing on Biscayne Bay, year round golf and tennis, snorkeling in the Florida Keys, cycling in the Everglades. We had become active in the Kendall Methodist Church, and had taken in a foster child with learning disabilities and behavioral problems, Clifford Mangus, who was a ward of the state because of an abusive situation at home. After two years, we had to turn him over to a group home, and he eventually was allowed to go back with this mother.

Anyway, we moved back to Arlington. After three months in temporary housing in Crystal City, we bought a townhouse near Ballston at 639 N. Abingdon St., not far from our first house on Columbus Street. It was hard to get used to living on three levels, but we had a nice little garden in the back and we installed a hot tub that we used almost every night.

On the job, I was soon made Latin America regional editor, responsible for selecting, rewriting, and editing news about Latin America and the Caribbean, supervising three writers. I also had some opportunity for travel in the region, including five weeks filling in for the Correspondent in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 while he was on home leave.

I was getting tired of being desk-bound in Washington, and anxious to resume the reporting career that had been interrupted in Miami. I applied unsuccessfully for positions in Costa Rica, Brazil, and the White House, but when I applied for the Rio job a second time in 1995 I was selected. This turned out to be the most enjoyable four years of my 20-year career with VOA.

In Rio I worked at a converted apartment overlooking Corcovado Mountain, with the statue of Christ the Redeemer on top. He was looking the other way, but was still a comforting presence. Giant mango, palm, and bamboo trees surrounded the third-floor office. I had a chance to travel from time to time to the other South American countries. Two of the most interesting assignments were in 1998 to cover the violence in southern Colombia and the forest fires in northern Brazil. In Colombia I went to a town that was like at the end of the world, where they did not accept traveler's checks or credit cards, and you could not make international telephone calls. There was no central electric grid. The mayor's bodyguards fingered submachine guns and the funeral home was the busiest place in town, as a result of massacres by rightist death squads chasing suspected guerrilla sympathizers. I did not actually see any shooting. In the forest fire coverage, I flew with three other reporters in a small airplane to the Yanomami Indian reservation for a look at a primitive lifestyle, and had to take a 10 hour bus ride to Manaus because smoke had closed the airport at Boa Vista. But at least the international telephone connections worked, and I got great service on my Brazilian cell phone.

### The Appalachian Trail

As a young boy I had the dream of one day hiking the 2000-mile Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia. I went on a small section of it in Bear Mountain Park, and then in 1976 did about 75 miles in Shenandoah National Park with Deborah, Steven, Kevin, and our French visitor, Isabelle Moulonguet.

In my 50's I decided that it would be great to hike the whole trail after I retired. Then I decided not to put it off, but to get a head start. Brian and I hiked the first length, the 120-mile Maine wilderness section from Mt. Katahdin, in 1994. The following year the other children joined me for sections in Pennsylvania, and the next year Deborah came back for part of New Jersey. In 1997 nephew David joined me for two weeks, but then struck out on his own because he preferred independence and a faster pace. I was also accompanied for two weeks by Harry Hance, and a couple of days by Terry Tinkel. The 1998 hike, finishing the northern section, was solo.

I finally completed the AT in October of 2000, shortly after my retirement from the Voice of America in June of that year. I wrote a book that was published by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club in 2003: *Time for Everything: A Six-Year Adventure on the Appalachian Trail*. I then hiked the complete Florida National Scenic Trail between 2003 and 2011.

### Poetry

I wrote a verse a day from 1990-2000, and posted them all on my website designed by son Kevin: <https://poet.mEEKconsulting.com>. I selected 366 of the most inspirational poems, paired them with Bible verses, and published *Manna Calendar: An uplifting poem and scripture verse for every day of any year*. It was originally published by Pleasant Word in 2006, and is now available from Redemption Press or Amazon.com.

### The Jefferson

In 2015, Jean and I moved five blocks from our town house on Abingdon Street to The Jefferson, a high-rise retirement community just one block from the Ballston Metro Station. We call it our perpetual cruise ship because we have so many activities, such good food, and such good friends here. We love it. I soon became secretary of the Condo Association.