

## CHAPTER I



**E**dith Harker was pregnant with her second child, having lost her first to convulsions in infancy. He was named Baby Roy and is buried in the San Gabriel Cemetery. The year of her second pregnancy was 1916 and as her delivery time drew near my dad took her to the Seaside Hospital in Long Beach where her pediatrician practiced. His name was Dr. Jones and he wore horn rimmed glasses and looked a lot like the famous movie comedian, Harold Lloyd.

She soon went into labor and in the early morning hours of September 23 I arrived in this world and, after a sound slap on my back, took my first breath and my place as a member of the human race and citizen of the United States. I don't really remember much about the event though.

After an appropriate time of laying-in Mother and I were taken home to my parents house at 1800 South Second Street in Alhambra where I was placed in a crib in an alcove of their bedroom. My mother and dad had built the house themselves in 1910 with the help of my two grandpas. In the summer of 1917 I became a victim of the terrible influenza epidemic that killed millions of people throughout the world. Being somewhat of a survivor I managed to come through the ordeal with no apparent permanent damage. About all I can recall of the incident was being wrapped in flannel and breathing vapors of eucalyptus oil that was heated on top of a

gas burner in the room. I'm not sure if I really remember that or if I heard my folks talking about it, but I do have strong memory of the flannel wrappings.

I don't recall a lot of detail of those first few years of my life, but I do remember getting my first dog when about 3 three years of age. He was a little black and white Fox Terrier that Earl Vanderveer, a friend of my folks, brought to me. Earl lived in Redondo Beach so we named the puppy "Dondo." I don't know what finally happened to him but I do remember we kept him tied to a pine tree in the back yard where I could play with him. I also remember spraying my Grandpa Harker with a garden hose while he was working in the back yard and he came after me yelling "Aye, Aye, Aye Billy." That was my first terrifying experience.

On August 26, 1920 I got a little brother who they named Harry Harland Harker, and later nicknamed Buddy which in later life became Bud for short. I had plenty of things going by then so the competition of a baby getting a lot of attention in the house did not bother me much.

In 1923, at the age of seven my mother took me to Ramona Grammar School at 6th Street and Valley Boulevard to enroll me in the first grade. I was so smart by that time that I skipped kindergarten. My first grade teacher was Miss Greenfield and I was scared to death of her. We sat at the old fashioned school desks with attached seat and an ink well in the upper right corner of the desk. We learned the alphabet and how to spell using wooden boxes about 12 inches long and two inches wide that had slots containing little cards with the alphabet letters printed on them in black. We would then take the cards out and lay them on the desk to spell words, sort of like anagrams.

My second grade teacher was a Miss Obe. It was about this time that I had my second of a number of terrifying experiences in my life which I brought on myself. In those days everyone had a garbage can that was put out at the curb every week to be picked up by the

city garbage collector who happened to be a black man. One day while he was picking up the garbage at our house I ran out in the back yard and hollered, "Hey Nigger!" He yelled something back to me which I can't recall, but Mother heard me and came running out of the house, dragged me inside and told me the fellow would be coming after me with a knife.

Turned out she had made an apology to him and he just laughed and said he understood as he had kids of his own. But for two weeks I would not walk to school alone and Mother had to accompany me as I watched over my shoulder for a black man coming after me with a knife.

It was about this time that my dad and his college fraternity brother Roy Harris decided to overhaul the family auto which was a two cylinder Tourist built in Los Angeles. They had both attended Troop College which later became Cal Tech and where Dad had studied electrical engineering. I remember they took the car completely apart and hung all the parts on a wood board fence that ran along the north side of our back yard. Some time later they put it all back together and had three parts left over and could never find where they went but the car ran OK without them.

The area where we lived in Alhambra was called Ramona Park and our house was only one of four on the block. Rabbits and squirrels would often run through our yard. Also a lot of doves and quail. Over the years however, the area built up until there was no more vacant land. Garfield Avenue was just a wide dirt road, but the streets where we lived had some sort of paving on them with concrete curbs and gutters.

We were just one block from the Pacific Electric car line that ran to Los Angeles. In the 1940's that rail line was torn out to make way for the 1-10 Freeway, a real mistake if ever there was one. Anyway, a lot of tramps would go along the tracks and often stopped at our house for some breakfast. Mother always gave them something and I would sit and watch them eat.

This was in the early 20's and most of them wore old army overcoats and hats. I think many of them were Vets from World War I. They were sure a scraggly looking bunch with beards, dirty hands, and smelled bad.

These were the days before electric refrigerators and we had an ice box on the back porch that held a 25 pound block of ice in the top and the food went on the bottom. The ice sat in a pan with a drain hole for the water as the ice melted and dad drilled a hole in the floor of the porch and ran a small rubber hose down to it so the water would go under the house.

Our ice man, a Mr. Peterson delivered ice once a week with a horse drawn ice wagon. When he arrived we kids would all come running to get some of the ice shavings to suck on. Only milk, cream and such things that had to be kept cold were kept in the ice box. Others, like vegetables, fruit, butter, etc., went in a cooler that was built into the house. It was just a small closet-like affair that ran from the floor to the ceiling with a door on it and wood slat shelves and was open at both ends so it would draw the cool air from under the house up and out the top. It actually worked very well.

Mother used to buy fruit and vegetables from a Chinaman named "Chang" but stopped using his produce when she caught him one day urinating on the side of his wagon. We also had a junk man who was a Russian Jew and spoke a form of English that no one could understand. He would come down our back dirt alley about every two weeks in his horse-drawn cart yelling, "yags, pecks, an bottoes secks," which translated into "rags, papers, bottles and sacks." We kids used him as our source of spending money, getting a few cents for junk we had collected while waiting for his arrival.

Alhambra did not have a fire station to serve our area at that time so a number of men in the neighborhood formed a volunteer fire department with a fire house located at the corner of Sixth Street and Valley Boulevard across from Ramona School on a bean field,

which played an important role in my life that will be told about later. My dad along with some of the other men in Ramona Park were volunteer firemen and were alerted to a call for action by a large bell in the fire station that held the only fire truck. It was painted pale yellow and they called it "Betsy." Dad kept his fire fighting gear that consisted of a heavy canvas and leather coat, a black metal helmet, rubber boots and a special wrench for turning on the fire hydrants, in my bedroom closet. When that bell rang, Mother would run to the phone and call the station to find out where the fire was while my dad came running into my room to suit up. Since he worked in Los Angeles during the day the above sequence usually occurred at night and he could spot the fire's location by the orange glow in the sky. Of course, all this activity would wake me up and he often took me with him to the fires. The worst one I can remember was when the barns at the Midwick Polo grounds caught fire and destroyed a large number of valuable polo ponies. The firemen would get them out but then they would run right back into the burning barns.

The volunteers would have to periodically check the fire hydrants in the neighborhood to make sure they were working OK. They would attach a fire hose and then water each other's front lawns.

Mother was way ahead of her time in the psychology of raising children. She taught me a lot about learning. When I was little we used to play a game of mamma bear and little bear and would go around growling at each other. We also played that the house was a ship and I was the captain. Dad mounted an old steering wheel to the back porch railing and I would stand there like the ancient mariner working the wheel and steering the ship. I also played electrician by poking at the insulators with a broom stick where the power wires came into the house. When I was about 12 years old Mother taught me how to balance the family check book and that became one of my chores each

time a bank statement arrived. Mail was delivered to the house by postmen on foot. After balancing the check book I would then organize all the cancelled checks in numerical order and file them in a desk drawer.

By the time I reached the third grade at Ramona Grammar School we started using the black boards and chalk. In those days they were really black, being made of black slate. Today most of them are green and made of a hard manufactured material. I always looked forward to the days when it was my time to be monitor. This duty was assigned on a rotating basis and consisted of passing out papers to the other students, sharpening the teachers pencils, cleaning the black boards at the end of the day and getting the chalk dust out of the felt erasers by smacking them together which always resulted in a cloud of choking white dust. By today's standards the teaching methods seem antique.

We were taught "Ritin, Readin, and Rithmatic," to the tune of a wooden ruler rather than 'a hickory stick.' I seemed to have a propensity for getting into trouble and one day while in the second grade I smarted off at Miss Obe and was sent up to sit on the bench on the second floor lobby just outside the principal's office. That bench was akin to capital punishment as far as we children were concerned. It was a long mahogany affair with a high back and you were in full view of other students as they passed by. It was downright humiliating because they all knew you had done something wrong.

Anyway, on this particular day Miss Roule, the principal, came out and saw me sitting on the bench crying and I guess felt sorry for me because she gave me some animal crackers. I had just started eating them when Miss Obe came by and saw what was going on and asked where I got the crackers. When I told her she stormed in to Miss Roule's (pronounced Rowel) office and I could hear her screaming at the poor kind hearted principal for giving me the crackers when I was supposed to be doing punishment time.

Miss Roule was a tall slender older woman with

her gray hair piled up high on her head. She wore long black ankle length dresses with a white lace collar that almost went up to her ears and her rimless eye glasses were fastened on a chain that hung from a small silver device pinned to her dress at breast height. It was a spring loaded affair that retracted and wound up the chain so her glasses hung from it when she removed them from her face.

If you are wondering where the animal crackers came from I must tell you that it was my mother who started the school cafeterias and lunch rooms in California. Her first such effort was a small snack bar on the second floor lobby at Ramona Grammar School and that is where Miss Roule picked up the crackers. In later years the snack bar was expanded into a full fledge cafeteria on the ground floor and, as the word got around, school cafeterias began appearing all over the State of California.

Mother was heavily involved in the PTA and over the years often had my various teachers to our house for dinner and always addressed them by their first names which was not lost on me. One, my 6th grade teacher was named Frances E. Scott. She was a sharp looking gal and I sort of took a fancy to her.

One day, during an afternoon penmanship exercise in her class, when she was bawling out one of the other students, I rose to the occasion and berated her after addressing her as Frances E. Scott. She made me stay after school and word of my misdemeanor got back to my parents who raised holy hell with me and then got a little book with a chain on it which was fastened to the belt loop on my pants. I had to wear that damned book every day and, before I went home, the teacher had to make an entry indicating how my department had been that day. It was very humiliating to have to wear that book because the other students eventually found out what it was all about. It was very effective however, and my department improved over night.

Mother was always getting me involved in her PTA activities. My folks had me taking piano lessons at an early age and Mother got me to giving piano recitals

at PTA meetings. One time she got me in some sort of program that involved the March of the Wooden Soldiers that included a bunch of us little boys all dressed up in red pants, black coats and red and black soldier hats like the Foreign Legion used to wear. We had to march around the stage to the tune of "The March of The Toy Soldiers." We took quite a ribbing from some of our classmates over that.

In those early days I was fascinated by gravity, flying and centrifugal force. I was always throwing rocks and things up in the air to watch them fall back to earth and used to tie heavy objects on the end of a line and then swing them around in a circle until they were straight out from my body and defying gravity, or so it seemed to me. I was always looking for heavier objects to do this with and one day came on the idea of tying dad's square bladed spade to the end of a rope and swinging it around.

I was right in the middle of this experiment and getting quite dizzy from going round and round when my little brother Buddy, who was about 4 years old at the time, came wandering out into the back yard and right into the path of the flying spade. Believe me I never saw him coming. The sharp corner of the spade caught him right above his left eye cutting a deep gash in his forehead which bled profusely. As he screamed and bled all over the place I thought for sure he was dying. He survived but carried a small scar into his adult life marking the spot where he and the spade collided. That was another terrifying experience.

Mother wanted a rock garden and began collecting all sorts of rocks the size of melons everywhere we went. It did not seem to matter to her if they were granite, shale, volcanic, or cobble. Dad made a big pile of dirt in the back yard upon which mother carefully arranged her rocks and planted various types of cactus. Rock gardens and empty discarded glass bottles should be kept out of reach of small boys. Seeing the bucket of empty bottles out of one eye and the rock pile out of the

other gave me a great idea and I proceeded to throw the bottles into the rock pile. Of course, they smashed and scattered broken glass throughout the rocks and cacti. As I neared the end of the bottle supply, Mother looked out the kitchen window, saw what I was up to, and screamed for my dad who was at the other end of the house fooling around with a radio he had built.

Dad came out of the house with his dreaded leather razor strop in hand. I saw him coming and immediately sensed trouble so started running around the yard while he chased me yelling "Confound you Billy." It was the first time I had ever heard him swear and provided me with one more terrifying experience. Needless to say, the razor strop was applied to my bare behind with great accuracy.

While on the subject of corporal punishment I should add that we had a wood shed attached to the side of the garage that was well outfitted with wood shingles. Whenever Buddy or I got out of line a trip to the wood shed and a session with one of the shingles was a foregone conclusion.

As mentioned earlier, we lived just one block from the railroad track and one afternoon while a bunch of us neighborhood kids were playing kick the can in the street, word reached us that an old lady had been run over by the electric street car. We all raced down to the track and I will never forget the sight that met our eyes. Strewn along the track was a bunch of stuff that looked like old rags mixed in with raw hamburger. It turned out later that the lady was 80 years old and deaf. Just another terrifying experience for me.

Over the years our parents did a lot of remodeling and adding on to our home with the result that it and other structures on the property just about doubled the original square footage. One of the earliest improvements was to the kitchen with installation of a new sink and drain board. The old varnished wood drain board was replaced with a manufactured material that looked like, and was as hard as, polished granite.

Mother had a hair brush that had belonged to her great grandmother of which she was very fond. It was made of black ebony wood with an ivory surface where the bristles were imbedded. She was standing at the kitchen sink one day cleaning the brush under running water when I said something that greatly displeased her. She swung at me with the brush and I ducked causing her to miss and hit the edge of the granite like drain board. The brush split in half and I started to laugh and she started to cry and ran out of the house saying she was going down to the track and let the street car get her. Terrified, I started to cry and ran after her pleading for her not to do it. I've no idea what the neighbors thought was going on, but she finally relented and came back home with me. When dad got home and was told what had happened to the hair brush I was immediately sequestered for a session in the wood shed.

Somehow Mother had acquired an old red tar lined water barrel that came off a railroad bridge and was kept full of water to fight the fires that frequently occurred on the wooden bridges. She placed it in the back yard to collect rain water for use in washing her hair. Bud and I always saved some of our firecrackers after the 4th of July to play with later. We used them to blow up ant hills, tin cans and all sorts of things. One year I had saved several cherry bombs and wondered what would happen if I set one off in Mother's water barrel. There was only one way to find out!

I got a small empty glass jelly jar, drilled a hole in the lid, put some rocks in the jar so it would sink and stuck the cherry bomb fuse through the hole in the lid, screwed the lid on tight, lit the fuse and dropped the jar in the barrel. Nothing happened for a moment and then there was a loud 'kathunk.' About a bucket-full of water flew out the top and all the seams split open as the water poured out all around the barrel. It was empty in nothing flat. The barrel never would hold water after that and mother had to be content with using tap water

to wash her hair. All was not lost however as Dad filled the barrel with dirt and Mother planted pansies in it.

Another of my favorite pastimes was playing with a magnifying glass, using it to focus the sun's rays to burn things. I used to cremate ants and all sorts of bugs, burned designs into wood shingles, melted all sorts of stuff and even started a small fire in a pile of weeds in our back yard which I then extinguished with a garden hose.

During those years we kids all had what we called "Chugs" that were homemade coaster cars. We also made the traditional soapbox coasters using skate wheels. The "Chugs" were more sophisticated and consisted of a frame of 2 x 4's on two axles and four wheels removed from wagons, tricycles, baby buggies or anything else we could find. A wood box was mounted in front as a hood and a steering wheel on a broom stick was run through the box and ropes, from each end of the front axle which swiveled on a bolt in the middle, were wrapped around the broom stick so the front wheels turned as the steering wheel was turned. A candle in an empty coffee can was nailed to the front of the box for a headlight and the motive power was any friend you could get to push you.

In later years I built a bigger chug and powered it with an engine and drive wheel that I had used on my bicycle. It was my first powered car. On summer evenings we either rode in our chugs or played kick the can under the street lights. There was not much traffic in Ramona Park in those days.

Somehow I managed to get through the eight years of grammar school in only eight years. When I was in the 7th grade the PTA decided to put on a live stage play titled "The College Graduate" and I was cast in the leading role. I was the only non-adult in the production and made somewhat of a name for myself as we played to sold out audiences for three nights in a row. I have a lot of fond memories of those days at Ramona Grammar School. Like the time a guy in an old Jenny

biplane circled the school grounds at a low altitude during lunch hour and threw out hundreds of Baby Ruth Bars attached to tissue paper parachutes. They floated down and landed in trees and back yards bordering the school grounds as all us kids ran helter skelter to get them. I still can't look at one of those candy bars without remembering the event.

Then there was a game called mumblety-peg in which an open blade jackknife is flipped in such a way as to make the blade stick in the ground. The school grounds had some long narrow wood benches for kids to sit on while eating their sack lunches or resting. Well, we chose to play mumblety-peg on those benches by straddling them while facing each other. One day I flipped the knife and it went further than I intended piercing my opponents penis. After that the game was outlawed on the school grounds.

After Bud became of school age he and I would eat our lunches together that Mother had packed in our lunch boxes and if they contained hard-boiled eggs I would crack them by hitting Bud on top of the head with them. One day Mother mistakenly put a fresh egg in my lunch box and you can imagine the results when I smashed it on Bud's head. I had to take him to the boys restroom and scrub the egg yolk out of his hair.

We used to play a game called "Pirates and Treasure" in which we would draw little maps and hide them around the school for the others to find. Our favorite hiding places was in the mortar between the bricks of the all-brick school building. The mortar was of such a poor quality that we could scrape it out with our bare fingers. It was no wonder that the building collapsed in the great Long Beach earthquake of 1933. Obviously the contractor had cut some corners pocketing the savings but the school had been built so long before that they were never able to catch up with the guy.

One day, during noon recess a bunch of us were playing "work-up" baseball using one of those small

hard indoor balls that had leather seams that stuck up about an eighth of an inch above the ball's cover. I was next at bat and was standing just behind the kid who was up when he ticked a spinning foul that went over his left shoulder and right into my private parts. There was an immediate terrible pain and then everything went numb. I could feel my penis through my pants but it could not feel me squeezing it. I felt dizzy and ran to the boy's room where I unbuttoned my pants to see if my penis had been knocked off. Before I could find out I fainted and fell to the floor. Someone reported the situation to one of the teachers and I was revived and sent home for the rest of the day. Oh yes, I still have my penis!

That brings me to another subject. At the age of 12 my parents decided to have my tonsils and adenoids removed. Since I had never been circumcised they arranged for that at the same time. I will never forget the terror of having that sieve like thing with gauze on it placed over my face and mouth as they poured ether on it. The smell was awful and the few breaths I took trying to scream burned my nose and throat. I woke up several hours later hurting at both ends!

My eighth grade class wanted to have a plaque mounted on the wall of the upstairs lobby commemorating our presence over the years. It was decided to put on a stage play and charge admission to raise the money to pay for the plaque. Again, I had a leading roll and was becoming some sort of a ham, a quality that has never left me. During a practice session one night after school a classmate, Don Wallach stood on the wash basin in the boys bathroom in an attempt to look through a ventilation grate into the adjoining girls bathroom. His weight broke the basin from the wall and ruptured the water pipes. It was just after the rehearsal and we were all leaving so he said nothing about it. The water ran all night and seeped through the floor and the ceiling below, flooding the classrooms underneath. The damage was considerable and all the money we made

from the play went to help pay the repairs. We never did get that plaque on the wall.

It was while I was in the eight grade that I had my "official" grammar school girl friend and her name was Louise Magill. She was a pretty blond and about my own height whom, at the time, I thought the world of. I never did get to kiss her but did get my arm around her waist on a few occasions. She was frequently the object of my erotic nocturnal dreams and I was sure I was in love with her.

All of us have had childhood nightmares, but few that we can remember. I do however remember my worst one because it repeated itself over and over for a long time. It had to do with a little girl standing on tip-toe trying to put an envelope in a mail box that was fastened just above her reach on a telephone poll. I would go over to help her at which time something, a monster that I never got a good look at, would begin chasing me. As I ran my feet kept sliding and I could not make any headway. It was like running on a treadmill. Then, when little, I would wake up screaming and later when I was older I would wake up in a cold sweat. I never could figure out what it was all about.

Bud and I got a weekly allowance of 25 cents each for which we did the yard work, watering and helping with the dishwashing in addition to keeping our bedroom clean. There were a couple of big pine trees in the parkway on the north side of the house and we had to rake up all the pine needles which we would pile in the gutter and then burn. One day I had a particularly large pile and the fire was intense when suddenly there was a large explosion and pieces of concrete went flying across the street. Evidently there was an air pocket in the concrete curb and the heat caused it to expand where it blew out a two foot section of curb face.

When we had a bad infestation of garden snails Dad paid us 1 cent for each snail we captured and put in a can of salt which caused them to foam and boil to death. We saved most of our money all year long to buy

firecrackers for the 4th of July and within a couple of days had blown away a year's worth of savings.

In the prologue to this book I mentioned that Dad studied electrical engineering at Troop College. Upon graduation he went to work for Dr. Kilpatrick, an inventor working on developing a perpetual motion machine. His idea was to have an electric motor driving a generator that would produce the power to keep the motor running. Obviously the thing did not work, but they could keep it running for 20 or 30 minutes before friction finally took over and stopped it. People were really ignorant in those days and many were trying to come up with perpetual motion devices. Kilpatrick had constructed a building up in Santa Anita Canyon which housed his device and I went there several times with my dad to watch them experiment. I was always awed by the static electricity sparks that were thrown off the long leather belt running from the motor to the generator. If you got near the edge of the belt blue sparks would jump out and nip you.

Another guy built a large wheel about forty feet in diameter that was mounted on a shaft in the side of a hill up where the Arroyo Seco Freeway (Now Pasadena Freeway) was later built. The shaft pointed to the north star and the huge heavy laminated oak rim was suspended by cables instead of spokes. His theory was that once given a good start the earth's rotation would keep the thing going. It didn't work either.

Dr. Kilpatrick was very fond of me and bought me a \$100 Treasury Bond which Dad put away in the bank and then would take me down to let me clip off the dividend coupons. The good Doctor was a physicist and mathematician of some repute, but it took a child to stump him. My folks often related that one night when he was at our house for dinner I asked him where his lap went when he stood up and where the dark went when the lights came on. He was unable to give me an answer and two weeks later committed suicide by jumping off a ferry boat in San Francisco Bay. However I

don't really feel responsible for his death.

For several years in a row during this period our family along with our friends, the Harris and Birkhahn families would take two week vacations together traveling into Northern California and Oregon. One year we spent a night at a place called Little Lake next to a hill covered with cat tail cactus. After the morning breakfast we kids, Gardner Harris, Phil Birkhahn and I decided to climb the hill which was also studded with volcanic rocks. Near the top of the hill we came across the bones of a goat or sheep that had evidently got jammed between the rocks and died.

This was indeed an exciting find for us and we all began running down the hill to tell our folks. I was in the lead and no one had ever told me of the dangers involved in running down hills. I kept going faster and faster which required larger and larger steps until I was almost flying when I stumbled over one of the rocks and dove smack dab into the nearest cacti. The rest of the trip down the hill was made at a much slower stiff-legged-pace and it took Dad a half hour with a pair of pliers to get all the needles out of me. They said I looked like a porcupine but the humor escaped me at the time.

On a later vacation we went salmon fishing at the mouth of the Klamath River in Oregon and setup camp near the small Indian village of Requa (pronounced wreckwaw). The best fishing was where the river ran into the ocean as you could catch the big one's there as the salmon made their way up the river to spawn.

The technique was to row a boat out into the river and then drift with the current until you were about 100 yards from the mouth of the river where it emptied into the ocean amidst large rolling breakers and masses of foam. Dad and his friend, Abe Birkhahn rented a row boat and took Abe's son Phillip and me to go catch some salmon. As we got to the point where about a dozen other boats were anchored Dad threw out our anchor and when it took hold in the river bottom the boat

swung around with the stern facing the ocean. The roar of the surf was frightening.

We had caught several good sized fish, had eaten our bagged lunches and were into the Oreos when another fisherman came down the river and anchored too close in front of us. When his boat swung around with the current it hit our boat and knocked our anchor loose which began to drag along the bottom. Dad and Abe each grabbed an oar and began rowing frantically against the current which was a mistake and no-win situation. They should have rowed the boat with the current and toward the shore.

In their panic they pulled so hard on the oars that they broke both of them and we were helpless to maneuver the boat anywhere. As we passed an anchored boat occupied by an Indian, they threw Phillip into the Indian's boat and then put me in the next boat we passed that had a fellow in it that looked like Gary Cooper. He immediately pulled up his anchor and headed for a sand bar and pulled the boat and me up on the sand. During this time I had not relinquished my fishing pole and in the midst of the excitement hooked a 20 pound salmon which I managed to land while on the sand bar.

The Indian who had Phillip on board pulled up his anchor and took off after Dad and Abe. He was obviously familiar with the river and knew just what to do. He began rowing down-river and overtook Dad and Abe and then nudged their boat over to the shore about 50 feet from the breakers. That was one more terrifying experience, but one that I did not cause to happen. When we got back to camp word had already reached our mothers on what had happened and they were crying and overjoyed to see us. We found out later that day that two fishermen had been swept out to sea and drowned just the day before.

Roy Harris and his son Gardner had decided to fish up river from a foot bridge so missed all the excitement. They also caught several large 19 pound salmon.

The dads took all our fish to the local cannery at Requa and exchanged them for an equal amount of canned salmon which we took home.

One afternoon when we got back from fishing Phil and I got into some sort of argument over a matter that escapes me and the altercation escalated into a shoot to kill duel with our BB rifles. We each scored several hits but our heavy camping clothes protected us from serious injury, just a stinging sensation when one of the BB's found its mark. Fortunately we did not hit either other in the face or we might have put an eye out. Both rifles were confiscated by our mothers when they found out what we were up to.

On another such vacation we camped at Blue Lake, arriving late at night after dark. While driving around looking for a campsite, Roy Harris drove over an empty sleeping bag, the fortunate former occupant of which was in the nearby outhouse relieving himself.

While at Blue Lake we kids got on a wooden floating ramp that was anchored to the shore. It was quite cold and we all had on heavy clothes and wool sweaters. We got out on the end and started rocking the ramp from side to side. The end was covered with wet moss and very slippery. My brother Bud, who was about four at the time, slipped and fell in the water coming back up under the ramp. We could not reach him so I dove in the ice cold water, got hold of him and pulled him out. He was sputtering and screaming but none the worse for the wear. That was a terrifying experience for all of us kids and we had some explaining to do when we got back to camp soaking wet and shivering.

After going back and reading what I have written so far it sounds like I must have been incorrigible but I did have some redeeming attributes which I shall relate further on if I can remember what any of them were.